

MAENG 2.6



**M.A. ENGLISH
SEMESTER - II**

**(REVISED SYLLABUS
AS PER NEP 2020)**

**COURSE XI- (B)
CULTURAL STUDIES**

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Programme Name: **M.A. (English)**

Course Name: **Cultural Studies**
Major Elective Course

Total Credits: 04

University Assessment: 50

Total Marks: 100

College Assessment: 50

Pre requisite: Basic knowledge of English Literature & Intermediate level proficiency in English language

Preamble:

This course exposes students to Cultural Studies as an academic discipline, emphasizing its trajectories, theoretical approaches, and interdisciplinary character. It brings in new views to tackle the essential concerns of our times by analysing how culture is formed, where it is located, how it operates on individuals and societies, and how it engenders consensus or resistance. Students are introduced to some of the key themes, concepts, and critical approaches that make up the area of Cultural Studies. The thinkers and texts chosen aim to create discursive spaces both inside and outside of the classroom that inspire students to analyse the circumstances in which they live. The course will assist students in analysing subcultures and subcultural activities as well as the twenty-first century consumer culture. The course will also orient students with an understanding of how race, class and gender are produced and consumed in the mass market.

Objectives of the Course:

- To enable an understanding of the basic concepts of cultural studies
- To create an understanding of the broader theoretical and critical debates in Cultural Studies
- To engage in an interrogation/analysis/dialogue with other interdisciplinary areas of study like Gender, Caste, Nation Space, Digital narratives and the like
- To develop critical inter-cultural understanding of civilizations
- To develop and critically apply the student knowledge to their lived spaces

Course Outcomes:

Students will be able to

- Locate the interconnections of culture and its significance as an academic subject
- Develop a critical engagement with various aspects of culture
- Develop an interdisciplinary perspective to study the diverse and sometimes contested Interpretations of cultural artifacts and processes.
- Gain a fundamental understanding of the theoretical frameworks of Cultural Studies.
- Discover ways of connecting cultural knowledge to everyday life and behaviours.

Semester II – Course – XI (B)
Title of the paper: Cultural Studies

Credits: 4

Total Lectures: 60

MODULE I : (2 CREDITS)

Unit I: Introduction: Origin and Development of Cultural Studies 15 Lectures

- Matthew Arnold's Concept of Culture
- T.S. Eliot: The Definition of Culture
- F R Leavis: Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture
- Richard Hoggart: 'Who are the "Working Classes" and Working-class Culture
- E.P. Thompson: Conception of Class and Class Consciousness
- Raymond Williams: The Analysis of Culture
- Stuart Hall: Encoding, Decoding

[Questions will be set on the concepts outlined and not on any specific texts.]

Unit II: Key Concepts in Cultural Studies 15 Lectures

- Subculture and Counterculture
- Subjectivity and Representation
- Identity, Race, Class, Gender; Ideology
- Hegemony, Resistance, Agency
- Technoculture

MODULE II : (2 CREDITS)

Unit III: Language and Cultural Studies 15 Lectures

- Signs, texts and codes: structuralism in cultural studies
- Poststructuralism and the crisis of representation
- Derrida and cultural studies
- Foucault: Discourse, Practice and Power
- Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Zizek
- Wittgenstein and language games

Unit IV: Understanding Cultural Studies through a few Critical Texts: 15 Lectures

- Johnson, Richard. What is Cultural Studies Anyway? Social Text, No.16, Winter 1986-87, pp. 38-80.
- Storey, John. "What is Popular Culture?" in Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction, London: Routledge, 2018. pp 1-17.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in Illuminations: Essays and Reflections, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York: Schocken, pp. 217-252.
- Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in Simon During (ed.), The Cultural Studies Reader, London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 31-41.
- Butler, Judith. "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions," Gender Trouble. New York: Routledge, 1990, pp.128-41.

Evaluation Pattern:

College Assessment = Total Marks: 50			
S. No.	Nature of Assessment	Marks	
1	Classroom Participation (Student led discussions/activities) & Attendance	10	
2	Mid-Semester Written Test (on Unit I & II)	20	
3	Written Assignment	10	
4	Oral Presentation	10	
University Assessment (Semester End) Total Marks: 50			
S. No.	Pattern of Question Paper	Marks	Unit
Q.1	MCQ (10 Questions)	10	I, II, III & IV
Q.2	Short notes on ANY TWO out of four	10	I & II
Q.3	A. Essay Type Question Or B. Essay Type Question	15	III
Q.4	A. Essay Type Question Or B. Essay Type Question	15	IV

Recommended Reading:

- 1) Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- 2) Barker, Chris and Emma A. Jane. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. New Delhi: Sage Publication Ltd. 2016.
- 3) Barker, Chris and Dariusz Galasin Âski. *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis A Dialogue on Language and Identity*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2001.
- 4) Castells, Manuel. "The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy". *The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy*, Castells, Manuel and Gustavo Cardoso ed. Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2005, pp.3-22.
- 5) Eliot, T.S. *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Faber and Faber, 1948.
- 6) Elliott, Anthony. ed. *Routledge Handbook of Social and Cultural Theory*. New York, Routledge, 2014.
- 7) Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding". *Cultural Studies Reader* ed. Simon During. London: Routledge ,2001, pp. 507-517.

- 8) Hoggart, Richard. "Who are 'the working classes'?" In *The Uses of Literacy and the Cultural Turn: Aspects of Working Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments*. Australia: Penguin Books, 1960. Pp 3-14.
- 9) Leavis, F.R. 'Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture', in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, John Storey ed., Harlow: Pearson Education, 2009.
- 10) Prensky, Marc. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants". *On the Horizon* Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001.pp 1-6.
- 11) Stam, Robert . "Cultural Studies and Race" in *A Companion to Cultural Studies*, ed. Toby Miller. Blackwell, 2001.pp 471-489.
- 12) Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2018.
- 13) Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Penguin, 2013.
- 14) Thwaites, Tony et al. *Introducing Cultural and Media Studies: A Semiotic Approach*. New York, Palgrave,2002.
- 15) Walton, David. *Introducing Cultural Studies Learning through Practice*, New Delhi, SAGE Publications, 2008.
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- Hawkes, Terence, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, London: Methuen, 1977.
- Jameson, Fredric Jameson. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" *Social Text*, No.1(Winter, 1979), pp. 130-148.
- Kluge, Alexander, "On Film and the Public Sphere," *New German Critique*, No. 24/25,Autumn, 1981 – Winter 1981, 206-220.
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- Oswell, David. *Culture and Society An Introduction to Cultural Studies*. New Delhi, Sage Publication,2006.
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Multiculturalism and the Media by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, London & New York: Routledge, 1995. pp.13-36.

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INTRODUCTION : ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES - I

Unit Structure :

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Objectives

1.1.2 History and Origin of Cultural Studies

1.1.3 Importance of Cultural Studies in Literature

1.2 Matthew Arnold

1.2.1 Matthew Arnold's Concept of Culture

1.3 T. S. Eliot's Definition of Culture

1.3.1 Objectives

1.3.2 T. S. Eliot

1.3.3 Notes Towards the Definition of Culture by T. S. Eliot

1.3.4 Significance of Tradition in Cultural Studies

1.3.5 Key Features of Eliot's Definition of Culture

1.4 Conclusion

1.5 Suggested Questions

1.6 Works Cited

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unintituled *Origin and Development of Cultural Studies (Part I)* outlines the term *Cultural Studies*, its origin and history. It offers a detailed and comprehensive study of Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot's definition of the scholarly notion of *Culture* and their literary contribution to cultural studies.

This Unit focuses on Cultural Studies. It predominantly appraises Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot's literary concept of *Culture Studies*. Arnold articulates that culture is a way of living while pursuing perfection and conveys that it is the resolution to the many complications of society. According to Arnold, culture is constructive, while disagreeing with the anarchy of the modern approach of the individuals. On the other hand, T.

S. Eliot expresses that culture is interconnected with religion. He believes that culture is not only a bond of the individual but also considers the other contexts of life, religion, tradition, and literature in which culture is understood.

1.1.1 Objectives

- To define cultural studies' noteworthiness to English Literature
- To study cultural studies relatively in shaping individual and collective identities through literature.
- To analyze the critical approach of culture through the lens of Matthew Arnold and his contribution to cultural studies.
- To study culture as a collective subject and to understand the class structure of society represented by Matthew Arnold

History and Development of Cultural Studies

1.1.2 History and Origin of Cultural Studies

The prevalent term *Cultural Studies* was introduced at the foundation of the *Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies* at Birmingham University during the year 1964 by Richard Hoggart. The cultural study was greatly associated with the British theorist who wrote profoundly in the late 1950s to 1970s. Cultural study is an interdisciplinary and academic field which combines various subjects like *art, geography, history, politics, sociology, social and literary theory*. This popular term is also associated with *Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams* and other theorists involved in Cultural Studies. After the establishment of the *Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies* at Birmingham, the term *culture* was broadly spread all over the world. Moreover, this literary term has stimulated various academic disciplines, fields and contemporary scholars. Various scholars have signified their discernment towards the culture related to social ideology, nationality, morality, social classes, gender etc. and how it left a lasting impact on the same.

The main purpose of the *Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies* is to analyze and study the everyday living of humans, society and their cultural ideology in the modern era. The cultural study is substantial for the individual and group for the construction of a better future and generations. The center was dedicated to the responsibility of in-depth research on culture and a critical approach to the modern age, which helps to analyze how society will make improvements and great progress. The history of culture studies shows that literature, language, art, media and history always contributed to protecting the heritage of the authenticity of the culture and society.

To comprehend the significance of cultural studies in literature it is also required to shed light on what culture is. '*Culture*' is an interdisciplinary field which holds its authenticity in the societal norms, institutions and social behaviors for better living. It is also a part of the individual's

beliefs, values, knowledge, customs, and habits. It is connected deeply to other traditions, linguistic and geographical boundaries and also shows the theorist's main apprehension about the *culture* losing its basic morality due to modernization, trade and lifestyle.

Society and *humans* are the basic elements of the culture. To be familiar with the authentic culture it is required to learn the process and progress of social ideology and structure. In such a social structure, we can effortlessly trace the diversity of the culture as per the various religions, customs, traditions and local boundaries. During the modern age, it is recorded that cultural values may erase the people's or society's way of behavior, living, approach and religious perspective towards modernity. Culture beholds the surroundings like dressing, linguistics, and humans' outward behavior which is a format towards the expected society.

The literary term '*cultural study*' is an academic footing which explores contemporary culture along with its historical and social aspects. This literary notion shows how culture, power and society are associated through literature. The concept was profoundly introduced in the 20th century and shares that culture continuously changes and progresses. Culture is always seen as part of the literary text which is to be read, analyzed and interpreted. The meaning of the cultural studies is demonstrated in the direction of rituals, practice and social ideology. However, it also focuses on the contemporary culture which refers to the current belief and customs which inspires the society in a specific time. Understanding the contemporary culture helps to identify the challenges of the society due to the future trends and approaches to modern lifestyle.

1.1.3 Importance of Cultural Studies in Literature

The significant approach of cultural studies lies in interpreting the connection between culture and society. The cultural study emerged to address the contemporary criticism which is highly influenced by the authors who contributed to gender, race, ethnicity, class, colonialism, globalization, modernism, and commercialization which is accountable for the obliteration of our old cultural values. Cultural studies greatly inspire the readers to understand the various perspectives regarding those who were marginalized, non-western or colonized. While discussing '*Cultural Studies*' we come across some significant yet major theories introduced in the mid-20th century. They are Marxism, post-colonialism, post-structuralism, feminism, gender studies and cultural materialism. However, this term helps to comprehend the fall of the culture and society due to modernism and industrialization with the trace of literature.

1.2 Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold was an eminent English poet, scholar, writer and cultural theorist. Today, his contribution to cultural studies is highly rewarded. He is also identified as a *Sage Writer*, a term used for those writers who make the readers aware of contemporary problems in the fields of philosophy, history, politics and economics. He served as a school inspector for thirty-five years and presented his sturdy support for the concept of secondary

education. In 1857, he was selected as the first *Professor of English* at Oxford. He delivered a lecture *On Translating Homer*, in 1960. Through this lecture, he deliberates that his ideologies of literary criticism appropriate to the *Homeric Epic* and translation of the same in a classical text.

1.2.1 Matthew Arnold's Concept of Culture

Matthew Arnold is a prominent scholar who was promoted to the field of cultural studies through his glorious work *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*, published in the year 1967-68. Through this literary work, Arnold represents the concept of perfection through human living and faculties which appreciate the best thoughts and ideas for society. Matthew Arnold's concept of culture also emphasizes the thoughts of serious concern for societal progress and moral development. He defines *culture* as,

Culture as a study of perfection. Culture seeks to do away with classes: to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere: and to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light.

(Arnold, 1869)

The above quote accentuates human potential by equally balancing the intellectual and moral sense in society. According to Arnold, culture is a pursuit of the human's highest and ideal life. He defines culture, as the determined brilliance and enhancement of ideal thoughts, good knowledge and behavior. In the above lines, he promotes that culture is not bound to any particular class otherwise it helps to integrate the society to achieve the highest thought to individual's better life. The phrase *Sweetness and Light* is taken from *The Battle of the Book* by Johnathan Swift to underline sweetness and harmonious living. The *sweetness* refers to morality and joy and the *light* represents the truth. So, the central aim is to create a society in a perfect way where every individual life must be enriched.

According to Arnold, culture is a heritage endeavor to appreciate and achieve human refinement with the help of art, literature, ethical and moral values and fostering a harmonious society. His culture concept metaphorically recommends that culture is a principal way to face the present or modern difficulties. He states that culture is considered total perfection, which means that knowing everything matters.

Matthew Arnold states,

"a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world".

(Arnold, 1869)

By understanding the cultural concept, society's contemporary complications can be removed. Culture always provides the best in

everything. Through culture, harmonious perfection can be found by developing and understanding the finest living of humanism and societal norms by manifesting the moral, social, and ethical characteristics of culture. Arnold represents that perfection is the true essence of the culture. At the time, he was more worried about globalization and modernism and how badly it impacted the society's psyche. He highlighted *anarchy* which is a possible danger to the social ideology. Culture opposes *anarchy*, a new society which doesn't follow any canons, directions or intelligence of direction. Arnold also criticized the English class system, which fundamentally challenged the perfect life in society. He divided the class system into three parts,

- The Barbarism (The Aristocracy)
- The Philistines (The Middle Class)
- The Populace (The Working Class)

He classified the social order into the above classes. *Barbarism*, represents the higher standards, spirit and their neglecting approach to culture and ideas. The *Philistines*, are strong believers of religion and the *Populace*, a working/minority class. Arnold gives much importance to the *Populace* and considers them the most influential class of society as they are deeply rooted in social norms and structure. Arnold always believes that the true follower of culture can come from any social class. It means that to keep the cultural values all the social classes should contribute equally, but the contribution of the working class to follow and keep the cultural values is highly noticeable. In this book *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold outlines the concepts of *Hebraism* (Semantic Influence) and *Hellenism* (Classical Greek and Roman Influence). He potentially conveys how both ideas represent more contrasting cultures in English literature. Hebraism shows the religious and moral aspects while following discipline and law. It supports ethical conduct. On the other hand, Hellenism takes its legacy from the Greek and Roman cultures. It shows the intellectual life while looking for beauty and knowledge. Arnold portrays that the balance between these two cultures is essential to achieve a harmonious culture in society.

1.3 T. S. ELIOT'S: THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE

1.3.1 Objectives

- To study T. S. Eliot's concept of culture in relevance to society, tradition and culture
- To understand the interconnection between culture and religion
- To analyse T. S. Eliot's influence in relevance to culture studies
- To foster an understanding of the cultural diversity through T. S. Eliot's literary work

1.3.2 T. S. Eliot

Thomas Stearns Eliot was a popular writer, essayist, philosopher and playwright. He was a renowned poet in *English-language Modernist Poetry*. During this time, he bolstered the art with the use of his language, writing style and poetry structure. His critical essay also re-evaluated and redefined cultural implications and beliefs. In the year 1948, he was awarded the *Nobel Prize in Literature* for his outstanding contribution to poetry. Today, he is acknowledged for *Prufrock and Other Observation* (1917), *The Waste Land* (1922), *The Hollow Men* (1925), *Ash Wednesday* (1930), *Four Quartets* (1945), *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1920) which are of great significance in the history of English Literature.

1.3.3 Notes Towards the Definition of Culture by T. S. Eliot

T. S. Eliot's '*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*' is a critical discourse which was initially published as a series of articles in *New England Weekly* in 1943 and later published in a book form in the year 1948. In this article, he characterizes culture as *organic*, it can be based on common beliefs and values that cannot be planned or artificially induced. Through this work, he prominently discusses the significance of society and its interconnection with religion. His literary work induces the structure between poetry, society, culture, religion and art.

T. S. Eliot highlights his personal opinion that there is an interrelation between culture and religion as it depends on each other and the creation of society. He mentions in his essay that culture can change or develop for future generations. It also outlines the political, social and economic interests of the society. If so, both aspects of culture and religion should reflect its diversity and unity so that it can be transmitted to the generations. Another perspective to define the culture is that '*it is part of the something in a confusing or complicated way*'. However, Eliot contemplates that culture is also constructed based on the educational and political backgrounds of the society.

Culture is always seen as a sacrifice due to societal aspects, religion, and political perspectives. Still, Eliot redefined the term while saying that one should be clear about understanding the approach of sacrifice to society. T. S. Eliot states three approaches to express the term *culture*, as the evolution of the individual, a group and society. Eliot gives reference to Matthew Arnold's, *Culture and Anarchy* to shed light on the class and its influence on cultural studies. He used the various contexts of the culture as a way of living, manners, philosophy, art, and literature. To accomplish the factual connotation of the culture one should comprehend all these approaches and the various classes of a cultural society in a very clear way.

T. S. Eliot specifies culture as a societal organism which develops and is exceedingly influenced by history, political goals, economics, society, religion, and education and also a noteworthy part of the social experience of the people for better living. The practices, values and traditions show

the culture which grows through the generations and significantly shapes the society in cohesion.

1.3.4 Significance of Tradition in Cultural Studies

T. S. Eliot in his essay *Tradition and Individual Talent* presents the concept of Tradition. Eliot defines tradition as a fundamental role of the culture. Culture shows the existence with the strong interconnection with continuity from the past to present. He stresses that without religious practices culture would lack the exact necessity for a human's better lifestyle and outlook for the mode lifestyle.

1.3.5 Key Features of Eliot's Definition of Culture

While defining Culture, Eliot also highlights its important key features,

I. Culture as a Measure of Civilization and Society

Eliot outlines that culture is a principal aspect of civilization and society which explores the growth of the same. Culture gives a proper measurement of the human and the society and it also helps to establish the appropriate interconnection among the culture, civilization and society. It is required to keep a healthy culture for a strong bond between the intellectual and spiritual life. T. S. Eliot's main purpose for healthy societal norms is to have faith in divine practice and intellectual thought more than the individual's desire for the modern lifestyle and trends.

II. The Faith in Religion

According to Eliot, in culture, *religion* plays a substantial part. He highlights his concern that the modern lifestyle, age, and trends are the main reasons for the erosion of the cultural heritage and faith in religion. That is why he has a strong belief that religion sets an equivalent stability for upholding the moral and spiritual framework of culture. Furthermore, Eliot shares that humans and society must develop an awareness about how to respect and honor culture which has its roots in past life. Faith in religion and culture maintains the inheritance of healthy enlightening surroundings. To favor modernity and sacrifice the value of our tradition may lead to the destruction of the culture.

III. Integration of Intellectual and Religious Society

T. S. Eliot emphasizes that culture is not only a part of the artistic life but is widely spread to the spiritual, religious and intellectual perspectives. To keep the authenticity of the culture it requires the beliefs and practices of intellectual and religious life of the society. Being intellectual, spiritual and religious share a special purpose for the growth of society, than reflecting the individual desire for the modern lifestyle.

IV. Crisis Due to the Modernity

Eliot significantly marks the modern age, especially after World War I and how it developed as a crisis. Due to modernism, society is seen as

fragmented, with hostility, and ignorance towards the real culture which was previously observed among the individuals and society. Modernism is the central root of materialism, industrialization and commercialism. Like other theorists, he also shows his concern for modern life and higher culture which is highly appreciated by the generations.

V. Culture as Organic

T. S. Eliot defined culture as *Organic*, as it keeps fluctuating and growing as per the individual’s desire and interest over time. Culture is continually formed by the history, customs and collective experience of the people. Culture may be transmittable through the next generation but it should not reduce the local manifestation. Such ideology is incomprehensible by rationalism as it is concerned with religion which only represents the unity and diversity of the culture for the establishment of a better lifestyle with the essence of the local culture.

1.4 CONCLUSION

The theorists, *Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot* wrote principally to define culture and its significance in human life and society. They also talk about their main apprehension that due to modernism the values and beliefs of culturalism may degenerate day by day. Humanism and society show their desire and interest in the modern lifestyle and higher culture, which doesn’t follow the traditional approach to the local culture. While defining the concept of *culture* both meaningfully highlight how the other aspect of society helps to shape the culture. Moreover, critically their study reveals that to keep the authentic culture is the main aspect of the society. The approach of the individuals and communal society helps to keep the true heritage of the culture among the individuals for living a better lifestyle. Culture is an interdisciplinary study which can be nourished through understanding other fields like history, art, literature, religion, and tradition. Both the author's vision about cultural studies is a consideration to learn the role of tradition, religion and societal norms in this fast-moving world. Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot explored their point of view about the culture throughout their literary career. They represent that culture is not only an artistic approach but also a complex field that encompasses the religion, social norms, customs, tradition, values and practices which prove helpful in determining the individual and collective identity of a people. Additionally, both authors denote that culture and religion are interrelated with each other. The term culture and religion are the product or part of the social structure. The detailed analysis of Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot shows that culture, religion and literature strongly reflect and represent each other. These two critics emphasize that culture significantly contributes to building social identity.

1.5 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. What is culture? Discuss its significance in English Literature.
- II. State the history and origin of the cultural studies in detail.

- III. Discuss Matthew Arnold's concept of culture in detail.
- IV. Define T. S. Eliot's concept of 'culture.'
- V. Define the term culture and religion and how they are interconnected with each other.
- VI. Comment on how modernism is reflected as a crisis.

1.6 WORKS CITED

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INTRODUCTION : ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES - II

Unit Structure :

- 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.1.1 Objectives
- 2.2 F. R. Leavis
 - 2.2.1 Introduction of the Essay 'Mass Civilization and Minority Culture'
 - 2.2.2 Themes of the Essay
- 2.3 Richard Hoggart's Who are the Working Classes and Working-Class Culture?
 - 2.3.1 Objectives
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 - 2.3.4 Introduction of the book 'The Uses of Literacy'
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 - 2.3.6 Characteristics of Working-Class Culture
- 2.4 Conclusion
- 2.5 Suggested Questions
- 2.6 Work Cited

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unintitiled '*Origin and Development of Cultural Studies (Part II)*' sheds light on the substantial works of F. R. Leavis' *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* and Richard Hoggart's '*Who are the 'Working Class' and Working-Class Culture.*' This Unit focuses on both the theorists' perspectives, concerns, and assumptions about the culture, working class, and modern approach which always impose tension in the society.

F.R. Leavis and Richard Hoggart, well-renowned critics and scholars are greatly associated with the term *Cultural Studies* during the 20th century. These are eminent figures whose literary contributions have overwhelmingly been designed in the fields of literary criticism and

cultural studies. Though they are from different academic fields, their work shares the same concerns for the moral culture and a better society. As cultural theorists, their work are deeply engaging and associated with the culture, protest for modernization, working class and working-class culture. Richard Hoggart was the founder, who introduced the *Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies*, which is the foundation of cultural studies and to helps understand its implications over the ages. The contribution of both authors in literature gives an in-depth perspective on culture studies. These essays are highly noteworthy in analyzing and interpreting the cultural aspect with the help of these two critics' perspectives.

2.2 F. R. LEAVIS 'MASS CIVILIZATION AND MINORITY CULTURE'

2.1.1 Objectives

- To encapsulate F. R. Leavis' essay *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* and its relevance to cultural studies
- To examine the 20th century with reference to the impact of industrialization and mass media
- To determine F. R. Leavis' substantial contribution as a theorist in Cultural studies
- To state the differences between *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture*
- To study and analyze Leavis' awareness of societal values and intellectual life

2.2 Frank Raymond Leavis

F. R. Leavis was a British critic and writer of the 20th Century. He worked as a teacher at *Downing College, Cambridge* and *the University of York*. He also originated the quarterly journal *Scrutiny* which he worked on and edited till 1953. Leavis was the most influential literary figure, who introduced the term *Seriousness* in English Literature. His concept of *Seriousness* outlines his extreme faith that the literary text in literature is an influential way to address the moral and ethical problems of society. *Literary Criticism and Philosophy* a noteworthy essay by Leavis how cases the various concepts to represent his approach related to literary criticism.

Raymond always insists that literary criticism is an authentic approach and intellectual spirit in society, which equally helps in shaping contemporary society. His literary work is principally constructed on the careful interpretation of the text. He always has a reliance on the literature and its intrinsic value. The term *Leavisism* is named after F. R. Leavis who was momentarily enthused by the work of Matthew Arnold and his ideological involvement in cultural studies. His contribution to cultural studies shares that *culture* is the fundamental point for civilization and society and also highlights his apprehension about the minority class for their struggle and lack of education.

His essay *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* primarily deals with the civilization, media and culture which arose strongly in the modern century. He strongly agrees that the revolution of industrialization, commercialization and materialism proved harmful to the local culture.

2.2.1 Introduction of the Essay Mass Civilization and Minority Culture

Mass Civilization and Minority Culture (1930) is a seminal essay by F. R. Leavis. The author outlines the interdisciplinary term *culture* which became immensely popular in the mid-20th century. *Matthew Arnold*, *T. S. Eliot*, *Richard Hoggart* and *F. R. Leavis* also considered that the acceptance of industrialization and modernization affected social culture. In this essay, he prominently discusses the two important aspects of society- *Civilization* and *Culture*. These two concepts were broadly represented by Leavis in his essay in relation to minority people. He also conveys that minorities are substantial elements in keeping the heritage of culture in the best way.

This function is important in the modern world in which the whole civilization is, to a much greater degree than the civilization of Greece and Rome, mechanical and external and tends constantly to become more so.

[Culture and Anarchy, 1869]

This remarkable quote is taken from Arnold's essay *Culture and Anarchy*. Through the above quote, Leavis firmly states that the term 'culture' depends on the minority class of the society where art and literature appreciate the same. The term 'Function is important' redefines that the function of culture always works as a guiding power to humans and social development and the modern world shares the beginning of industrialization. The accepting trends for the mechanical was increasing while neglecting the real culture. Further, he remarked that the concept of culture only belongs to those who are spontaneous and able to handle first-hand judgments. According to him, the minority class people are only capable of appreciating first-hand judgement with their genuine personal responses, this is why the culture is still kept protected by the minority community. Leavis' work highlights the minority class and culture in the modern age. Here, he also highlights the relevance of culture while imposing the challenges of increasing capitalism and its impact on the mass civilization.

The prominence of such a border concept reflects understanding the modern approach of civilization and how culture lost its distinguished remark in the society. Here are the prominent themes in the essay,

2.2.2 Themes of the Essay

I. Mass Culture and Minority Culture

Leavis outlines the approach of the mass or higher culture and minority culture in society. Through this essay, he gives considerable precedence to the minority class. He believes that minority classes bring the highest culture to the individual and society. Such an approach is greatly helpful for the students and readers to investigate the minority class and their contribution to the masses. He states, in context to the social and class approach that culture has always relied upon minority people.

Many times, it is observed that the higher class always seem to follow or believe in modern culture. However, minorities are deeply rooted in society's necessities and therefore it is said that culture has always been seen to be held back by the minority. Leavis' approach is highly supportive of emphasizing the differences between the mass culture and minority culture. His belief in the superiority of the minority culture in standings of intellectual values and societal structure is aptly portrayed.

II. Industrial development in the Contemporary Age and its Consequences on Culture

Leavis momentarily criticizes the Industrial Development in the modern age. Alongwith the contemporary critics, Leavis also illustrates his apprehension that due to modernization and industrialization culture trails in its basic moralities in society. In the modern age, the mass class is profoundly seen to be obsessive and shows much interest in contemporary trades and lifestyles, an exceedingly concerning thing for critics. Leavis disapprovingly points out all the facts and fads which are considered detrimental to cultural decay. Such modern ideology grows faster among the mass culture with the emergence of the mechanized revolution, especially after World War I. The development of *radio*, *cinema*, *magazine culture*, and *TV* is genuinely pretentious for society's basic norms even though in such modern surroundings humans find it difficult to adjust or be comfortable with each other.

It also proves harmful for the generations as they don't share any proper communication with their parents. Such kind of moral devastations among the individual, family and society were not a temporary concern for the critic, but they underlined the everlasting consequence of society while assuming the destruction of the culture. Leavis argues that industrialization deeply obstructed mass civilization, which shows the disparities in society, lack of individual creativity, family communication etc. The protest for industrial development and to keep the culture safe is only shadowed by the minority class.

III. The Ignorance towards the Culture Standards:

Leavis likewise points out that, the decline and ignorance towards the cultural standard may be instigated due to the higher class' a scendency for modernization and acceptance of the same. Expressively the mass were

involved in the modern revolution which resulted in unfamiliarity towards the culture emphasized by Leavis. The modern trades and lifestyles were greatly influenced by the entertainment that had taken place over the culture. Such entertainment purpose is highly cherished by the masses. Further, he outlines that literature and art which are known for their cultural text heritage are losing their connectivity and significance due to the modern perspective. Even literature and art are read only for entertainment purposes.

IV. The Role of the Intellectual Minority:

To keep the heritage of a culture and its moral value depends on the intellectual minority. The intellectual minority was highly aware of the consequences of accepting modernization. Minorities were never interested in such modern trends and approaches. Minority people are accountable for preserving the cultural standard and they always serve to denote the broader aspect of the cultural heritage to the society and to engage in a meaningful way through an educational and working approach.

V. To Emphasize the Hazards of Mass Media:

Leavis states that mass media accentuates the hazards to individuality by encouraging the use of mass media identical to radio, cinema, TV and magazines. In promoting such vibrant aspects, society greatly lacks cultural progress and morality. He conveys that such mass media-controlled society and their entertainment purpose largely affect civilization. Mass society is inspired by the entertainment in which *American films* play a key role. Culture is mainly exaggerated by the media as they are the source of entertainment, emotional attachment and appeal to society. Leavis gives a warning to such people who strive for modern culture, and society have the highest risk of losing their logical and ethical compass.

However, Leavis' essay *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* always remains a noteworthy critical approach to consider the perilous consequences of industrial development and mass media in society. The essay serves as a gentle reminder about intellectual engagement and the necessity of an equal balance of mass culture and the preservation of cultural value with artistic excellence.

2.3 Richard Hoggart's 'Who are the Working Classes and Working-Class Culture'

2.3.1 Objectives

- To explore the relevance of Richard Hoggart's interpretation of culture and digital media as a founding figure of cultural studies
- To understand the suffering of the working class and their culture
- To examine the working class' responsibility of balancing the high cultural standards in society

- To study the socio-cultural context in Richard Hoggart's *Who Are the Working Classes and Working-Class Culture*
- To compare the Higher-class and Working-class cultural values and practices in the modern age

2.3.2 Richard Hoggart

Herbert Richard Hoggart was an English academician who premeditated in sociology, literature and cultural studies. He also participated in World War II and served in the *Royal Artillery*. He was employed at the University of Hull as a staff tutor from 1946 to 1959. In the year 1951, he printed his first book titled *A Study of W. H. Auden's Poetry*. He worked as a senior lecturer and professor at the *University of Birmingham and Leicester* around the 20th century. The institute of the *Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies* was founded by Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart in 1964. He also worked as a director of the same foundation till 1969. This organization plays a substantial role in analyzing and interpreting cultural studies through literature, art, and behavior. His book *The Use of Literacy* principally studies and underscores the working class and their culture.

2.3.4 Introduction of the Book *The Uses of Literacy*

Richard Hoggart is recognized for his noteworthy book *The Uses of Literacy* which was published in the year 1957. This book is autobiographical and highlights the author's thoughtful apprehension about the loss/decay of dependable working-class people, especially in Northern England.

Here, he outlines the history of several nations that inspired the culture of England. The combined culture in the intellect of the Christian religious life, its connection/interaction with the European culture, the culture of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and its direct impact on the British culture etc. is finely portrayed through this book. Hoggart directly rejects the obligation of a modern mass culture, along with this he also criticizes the advertisements, mass media and especially American culture. According to Wikipedia, the term *Americanization* stands for growth and modernization in the 20th century. Modern society was all over controlled by the Americanization culture as it was only seen as an entertainment source for people and society. *The Uses of Literacy* represent that the culture is a communal and self-made entertainment. This ideology is measured to be an unconventional study of Leavisism. This book was a genuine attempt to understand the term *massification* and also identify experimental fluctuations in British Culture due to capitalization.

Massification in British Culture

The term *massification* is a commercial practice and a way to make obtainable luxury products for the mass market. It has observed certain changes in society due to the massification in British culture. Nevertheless, Hoggart also rejected or showed disinterest in massification and towards the mass media. He defined more about the massification in

the parameters of class, culture and academics. He highlights the extreme upsurge of *mass publicist* spread more effectively and comprehensively in the modern age as compared to the past. However, the word *mass publicists* are used for those who developed and promoted the mass culture and products in society.

2.3.5 Who Are the Working Classes and Working-Class Culture?

Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* is divided into two sections. The first section on 'An 'older' 'order', 'is based on Hoggart's childhood understanding of the working-class culture around the 1930s. The second *Yielding Place to New* is dedicated to a traditional working-class culture which was highly preserved by the new trends of mass culture and entrainment of the 1950s. He states that in the 1930s people lived the culture and on the other hand people started to refuse the cultural ideology in the 1950s due to modernization. He greatly appreciates the life and culture of the people in the 1930s which he calls *the rich full life* which marked a sense of communal bond.

Hoggart's work on cultural studies examines the working class and working-class culture in the post-war period in Britain. He gives a detailed interpretation of who is considered the working class and also what is the working-class culture and its various characteristics.

Who is the Working Class?

Richard Hoggart, a British cultural theorist, defines the working class as those, who work as laborers or workers with an inferior income and less education compared to the other classes. He also conveys that the culture of the working class is distinct with qualities like faith, practice, customs, tradition, and belief in the local culture. Hoggart distinguishes the working class by their morality, approach and attitudes to keep the cultural values. He also appreciates the working-class culture as systematic and as reflected through communal experience. However, he admits their defenselessness in accepting the mass media and the modern trades. Hoggart's essay shows the complexities and struggles of the working class and their culture. His work aimed to highlight and celebrate their perspective on the culture and also the dominance of the modern culture.

According to Hoggart, the people who rely on the work industry as labourers for their daily needs, livelihood and earning a wage in modest were considered working class.

- Working class identity is based on the struggles of economically disadvantaged people, their values and traditions.
- Hoggart's approach towards his struggle for economics and poverty changed his perception of the social structure and working-class people.
- Working-class social structure is conventional, especially in urban or industrial areas without any curiosity for the modern lifestyle and that's why Hoggart believes that social ties are stronger among working-class people or individuals.

2.3.6 Characteristics of Working-Class Culture

In this work, Hoggart discusses the features of the working-class culture which is based on their everyday life, practice and customs. At the same time, he declined the mass media ideology as he believed that such modern factors were replacing or changing the ordinary culture and life of them with their product.

I. Traditional Values

The culture of the working class and strong bond of communication along with friendly support to each individual is at the core of their lifestyle. Their traditional values help them shape their lifestyle as per their daily needs and are often grounded with real-life challenges. Such challenges help to keep their faith in culture. While considering their moral norms regarding the economy the writer emphasizes on their honesty and sincerity at their traditional workplace.

II. Cultural Practice and Faith

For their entertainment purposes songs, storytelling, participating in local events and reading the literature represent their practices and extreme faith in the culture proves helpful in keeping the authentic culture in the society.

III. Resilience and Adaptation

In the 20th century, the working class adapted/accepted the changes in economics and culture, while preserving their core values for their cultural heritage. Suffering from a hard life, daily needs, and economic conditions, their life's resistance is underlined by extreme poverty.

IV. Threats to the Working Class

Through this book, Hoggart shows his concern about the strong influence of the mass media and culture affecting the working class. The great rise of mass culture and products like TV, cinema, and radio is an extreme risk that may change or replace the local and authentic culture.

2.4 CONCLUSION

While concluding this Unit we can underline the cultural perspective and extreme faith in culture highlighted by F. R. Leavis and Richard Hoggart. They strongly convey their concern about the working class and minority class. Both authors aptly represent the classical struggle of the working or minority class for their daily necessity, financial conditions, their cultural values while facing the challenges created due to encouraging and accepting modernism and its practice. Their literary work provides a historical background of the efforts of working-class culture and the protest for industrialization and mass media. The works of both the writers lament the erosion of the working-class culture due to the sudden urge and the growing influence of capitalism, mass production and media all over the world especially in England. F. R. Leavis directly criticizes that England is greatly influenced by the illusion of the American culture,

on the other hand, Richard Hoggart strongly shows support to the working-class people for declining the mass culture and believing in core values of their local culture loyally. Both the author's works show their extreme protest for modernism and capitalism along with the struggle of working people. Further, their literary text highlights the great consequences of accepting the modern culture and its impact on future generations.

The support, basic understanding and genuine care for the working class and showing strong protest for the dominance of the mass media is crucial for the social building. Such perspective and concern were outlined by the cultural theorist F. R. Leavis and Richard Hoggart. They firmly convey their thoughts that culture is a fundamental element of society and that it should mainly focus on the minority class and their education. Their literary works reflects the mass danger to the common and working-class people that the progress of industrial development will destroy their unity regarding their cultural identity.

2.5 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. Analyze the consequences of modernism in F. R. Leavis' 'Mass Civilization and Minority Culture'
- II. Define the significance of Richard Hoggart's perspective regarding the working class and their culture.
- III. How does Richard Hoggart show his apprehension for the working class?
- IV. State F. R. Leavis ideology regarding the Mass Civilization and Minority Culture.
- V. Discuss the consequences of Mass Media Production on society and working-class culture.
- VI. Discuss the influence of F. R. Leavis in the field of Cultural Studies.
- VII. What is the primary focus of F. R. Leavis relating to the Minority Class'?
- VIII. State the difference between the higher class and the minority class.
- IX. What is the contribution of Hoggart's book 'The Use of Literary' in Cultural Studies?

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ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES - III

Unit Structure :

- 3.1 E. P. Thompson: Conception of Class and Class Consciousness
 - 3.1.1 Objectives
 - 3.1.2 About the Writer
 - 3.1.3 Conception of Class and Class Consciousness
 - 3.1.4 Definitions
 - 3.1.5 Analysis
 - 3.1.6 Conclusion
- 3.2 Raymond Williams: The Analysis of Culture
 - 3.2.1 Objectives
 - 3.2.2 Introduction
 - 3.2.3 Background of the Essay
 - 3.2.4 Raymond Williams: “The Analysis of Culture” – The Three Categories
 - 3.2.5 What is Culture?
 - 3.2.6 The Three Levels of Culture
 - 3.2.7 Analysis of Culture
- 3.3 Stuart Hall: Encoding and Decoding
 - 3.3.1 Objectives
 - 3.3.2 Introduction
 - 3.3.3 Encoding and Decoding: Key Concepts
 - 3.3.4 Limitations of the Model
- 3.5 Conclusion
- 3.6 Suggested Questions
- 3.5 Works Cited

3. Origin and Development of Cultural Studies: An Introduction

This Unit titled '*The Origin and Development of Cultural Studies*' (Part III) deals with three theorists and their essays. The three writers and their works taken up are,

- E. P. Thompson: Conception of Class and Class Consciousness
- Raymond Williams: The Analysis of the Culture
- Stuart Hall: Encoding and Decoding

Their writings help us to explore and understand various aspects of cultural studies. These theorists investigate the role played by culture in the organization of power locally and globally. We comprehend in a better manner that the meaning is created within the social structures with allegiance to nationality, ideology, gender, class, ethnicity etc. This essay will help us to understand the complex patterns of everyday life with reference to how texts, beliefs, objects are value-laden and socially patterned.

3.1 E. P. THOMPSON: CONCEPTION OF CLASS AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

3.1.1 Objectives

1. To understand the necessity and meaningfulness of the concepts of class and class consciousness
2. To understand the history of the working class
3. To understand Thompson's analysis of the history of the working class

3.1.2 About the Writer

Edward Palmer Thompson was an English historian, socialist writer and peace campaigner. He is best known for his writings on the radical movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is best known for his work *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). The term *history from below* was coined by Thompson (1966) and this was used to describe his approach to social history. This went up to become the greatest developments within the discipline of global history. He also participated in the founding of the British New Left in 1950's and later went on to become one of the prominent antinuclear activists of Europe.

3.1.3 Conception of Class and Class Consciousness

E. P. Thompson's *Conception of Class and Class Consciousness* comes from his book *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).

This book concentrates on English artisans and the working-class society. Thompson makes efforts to recreate the life and experiences of the working class and this makes his book truly influential. He makes an attempt to add an element of humanism to social history thereby being critical of those who meted out inhuman treatment to the working class.

Throughout the book, Thompson uses the term "*working class*" instead of "*classes*". This was chiefly to emphasize the growth of a working-class consciousness.

In the Preface to the book, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Thompson states that,

In the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. Thompson's book presents class as a "happening" rather than a 'thing'. He emphasizes that the material foundation of class is strong and the productive related people born into determines the class experience. The book was also an attempt at answering political questions relevant to his time and the quest for modern socialism. Therefore, *The Making of the English Working Class* is considered a milestone in the sphere of social history. It set the schedule for a generation of labor historians and is considered a mandatory dawn for any deliberation of working-class history.

Thompson's *Conception of Class and Class Consciousness* analyses the history of the working class and how through the political agency they were able to forge themselves as a class. Thompson's work is considered an inspiration because of its meaningfulness even in contemporary times. He attempted to shape history by defending the poor and the excluded lot. His theories on working class consciousness focuses on the core values like solidarity, political radicalism, collectivism etc. Let us look at a few definitions to understand the terms Class and Class consciousness in a better light.

3.1.4 Definitions

I. Class

"And class happens when some men, as result of common experiences (inherited as shared) feel and articulate the identity of their interest as between themselves and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born or enter involuntarily".

(Preface to The Making of the English Working Class, 1963)

Class, as a relationship develops when common experiences are shared distinct from others. Thompson believed that class is happening that is not only open-ended but also resets theoretical modeling. Class is not a structure but a relationship that starts with human interactions. Class is a dynamic process that develops over time. It is also a historical phenomenon that can be observed overtime and being a product of productive relations, it is this productive relation that determines class. Class is also an embodiment found in all cultural forms like traditions, value systems, ideas and institutional forms.

II. Class Consciousness

Class Consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodies in traditions, value systems, ideas and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class consciousness does not. We can see logic in the responses of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predict any law. Consciousness of class arises in the same way in different times and places, but never in just the same way. Class consciousness is about how people deal with their class experiences in cultural forms.

(Preface to The Making of the English Working Class, 1963)

Thompson believed that class, being a relationship that changes overtime, is worthy of historical investigation. He was of the opinion that class formation which includes class struggle, class and class consciousness is basically a product of working-class activities and aspirations.

3.1.5 Analysis

According to Thompson, the term class loosely ties together a bundle of discrete phenomena. Class is a historical phenomenon which unifies disparate and unconnected events, both in the raw form of experience and in consciousness. He doesn't see class as a 'structure' but as something which happens in human relationships. The notion of class also includes the idea of historical relationships. The embodiment of the relationship should be in real people and in a real context. Thompson is of the opinion that there cannot be two distinct classes, independent of itself. They cannot be brought into a relationship with each other. Class happens only when men sharing common experience articulate the interest among themselves. They should also feel the difference with people with different/opposed interests. Class consciousness is when these experiences are handled in cultural terms. Class Conscious does not happen when the experience appears as determined. Class consciousness arises in similar ways at different places and at times, but never happens in the same way.

3.1.6 Conclusion

This Unit helps in comprehending concepts of Class and Class Consciousness by E. P. Thomson. His analysis is a fine account of the experiences of the working class. His concept of class can be used to examine his own work and similar ideas and others work.

3.2 RAYMOND WILLIAMS: THE ANALYSIS OF CULTURE

3.2.1 Objectives

- To analyze culture as a whole and the relationship between its elements
- To understand how culture is shaped by material and social relations

- To analyze the expression of culture in everyday behaviours, learning and art.

3.2.2 Introduction

Raymond Henry Williams was a Welsh Socialist writer, novelist, academician and critic. He contributed to the Marxist Critique of Culture and the Arts through his writings on politics, culture, literature and media. His writings laid the foundation for the field of cultural studies and cultural materialism.

While in the discussion of *Culture*, the use of vocabulary and its changing meaning was something that Raymond Williams was keen to establish. He commences with the word 'Culture' itself and about sixty vital words appeared as an appendix to 'Culture and Society' in 1958. William published 'Culture' (1981) where the term is defined as "*a realized signifying system*". He also wrote on the 'means of cultural production and the process of cultural reproduction'.

3.2.3 Background of the Essay

R. Williams '*The Analysis of Culture*' is taken from his book 'The Long Revolution'. The 20th century has been shaped by gradual changes in the sociocultural, political, and economic spheres. William traces the development of a common language while revealing the link between social history, literary forms and ideas. The book is a groundbreaking analysis and discusses if a common culture can be achieved. This book has been recognized as a foundation document in the cultural analysis of English-speaking culture. The title 'The Long Revolution' is a cultural revolution which unfolds along with the democratic revolution and industrial revolution. This book helps to recognize the significance of the growth of standard English, the growth of the popular, and the growth of the reading public in English-speaking culture and the western culture. William also discusses how culture is to be defined in the development of cultural studies as an independent discipline.

3.2.4 Raymond Williams: "The Analysis of Culture" – The Three Categories

Raymond explores the nature of culture through 3 categories namely Ideal, Documentary and Social. Raymond works out a definition of culture which will be inclusive of the three areas of culture. He titled the following as, the ideal definition, the documentary definition and the social definition.

I. Ideal: The process of human perfection that can be discovered and described in lives and works is known as culture. Timeless values or those of a permanent nature with reference to human condition are sought by this analysis.

II. Documentary: A body of imaginative and intellectual work that records human thought and experience is known as a documentary. Here

the analysis of culture refers to a process of criticism that evaluates the nature of the thought process and experience. In addition to this language, form and convention in which the above are expressed is also analyzed

III. Social: A description of life that expresses meanings and values in art, institutions, learning and behavior is also known as culture. Williams was also of the belief that culture is dynamic and complex. It encompasses not only high arts but everyday life. He believed that culture evolves in response to social and economic factors. Cultural forms could both shape and reflect social differences and power structures. William broadly views culture as '*a whole way of life*' and this has been used often to study popular culture and justify the same.

In order to analyze culture in the third way, the analysis of the first two methods needs to be integrated. Social and cultural development as a whole can be discovered and understood through certain general, laws and trends.

3.2.5 What is Culture?

Culture for Williams, is something that expresses meanings and values. These can be clarified only through cultural analysis. While describing the society's constant change which he refers to as *the structure of feeling*, William suggests that young people of every generation, respond towards society and its norms. But while doing so they create their own value system and cultural identities.

3.2.6 The Three Levels of Culture

The Lived Culture: Something that people experience in their everyday lives at a particular time and in a specific place

Period Culture: The daily facts and products from a culture are recorded

Selective Tradition: The previous types of culture are connected. Factors like the values and interests of the dominant class are considered, as they influence the selection of the texts and other materials chosen for a better understanding of the lived culture.

3.2.7 Analysis of Culture

I. The Ideal and Culture:

Culture as the ideal deals with 2 aspects,

- It discovers culture
- It describes culture

There are some inevitable social aspects which determine the perfection of human beings. This also explores universal norms and values and that go on to confirm human perfection.

To William,

Culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values (48).

Some value system and principles considered to be universal and absolute and held by the society. If we consider these values as the determining factors in a culture then practicing the same would help in exploring values which are rigid and so for unquestioned. Culture identifies the *process of human perfection with the discovery of absolute values (49).*

Values, he says, are an extension of the existing values which aid in the formation of a society. These values are discovered by the individuals and they are kept alive by the social inheritance. *If values help 'to enrich his life, to regulate his society and to control his environment' (49)* it becomes universal as they empower individuals. This entire process depends on the 'creative handling of experience and intellectuality'.

II. The Documentary and Culture

Williams states that the documentary is a category of culture and a way of assessing a culture critically. He states that culture is *the body of intellectual and imaginative work (48)*. Human thoughts and experiences are recorded in multiple ways. *The nature of thought and experience, the details of the language, form and convention* are evaluated. The process of documentation aims at exploring, clarifying and evaluating the traditions and social phenomena. The culture as a documentary is valued *only in the written and painted records (49)*.

To understand this clearly, we can take the example of *Sophocles Antigone* in which the dramatist has tried to establish, the communication of certain values by certain artistic means' (50). There is a lot of inner conflict and tension along with criticism. Raymond's response to this kind of argument is based on the belief that values/art should be analyzed in the light of their social context. He concludes by stating that culture in the documentary sense 'is of great importance because it can yield specific evidence about the whole organization with which was expressed.' (51)

III. The Social and Culture

Culture, on the social level, clarifies the meanings and values existing in a society.

Williams observes culture as a *description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviors (48)*. Society is guided by different types of entities such as *the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which expresses or govern social relationships, the characteristics forms through which members of the society communicate (48)*.

3.3 STUART HALL: ENCODING AND DECODING

3.3.1 Objectives

- To understand how Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model helped establish *cultural studies*.
- To understand how audiences are not passive recipients but active interpreters
- To analyze how the audience can interpret messages based on their experiences and perspectives

3.2.2 Introduction

Stuart Hall, a Jamaican-born British was a cultural theorist, Marxist sociologist and political activist. He was one of the founding figures of the school of thought known as British Cultural Studies. Hall played an influential role in expanding the scope of cultural studies. He was called 'one of the country's leading cultural theorists' by *The Observer* (British Newspaper). His involvement is also worthy of praise.

Stuart Hall's works deal with issues related to Cultural Studies and hegemony. He suggests that language operates within a framework of power, politic/ eco criticism and institutions. This suggests that people are both producers and consumers of culture. He developed the theory of encoding and decoding, an approach to textual analysis which focuses on the scope for negotiation and opposition on the part of the audience.

Hall presented his Encoding and Decoding philosophy at several talk events *Encoding and Decoding* in the *Television Discourse* (1973) was a paper he first wrote for the Council of Europe. He also presented his Encoding and Decoding model, in the year 1980 in *Encoding Decoding* in Culture, Media, Language.

3.3.3 Encoding and Decoding: Key Concepts

Stuart Hall's essay, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse' (1973) introduced a model of communication. This model basically challenged the idea that media producers control how audiences interpret media.

Encoding: Refers to the use of signs (by the producers) to convey a program's meaning based on their ideologies and resources.

Decoding: The message is interpreted by the viewers using their knowledge and in the social contexts.

Audience Role: The audience becomes active participants where the process of decoding is concerned. They can change the message through collective actions.

Communication Process: Hall's model is a 4-stage process inclusive of production, circulation, use and reproductions. He opined that every stage is not only autonomous but also interdependent. The message that is conveyed is affected by each stage.

Media's Role: The media plays a vital role in constructive narratives and discourses. Events are simply not transferred/ communicated

Stuart Hall's model has greatly influenced in the development of cultural analysis of different forms. It has also been widely used in analyzing the visual and printed words in sports media when juxtaposed. Hall's approach deals with how media messages are produced, disseminated and interpreted. Encoding and decoding help in understanding messages easily. When a message is decoded, the meaning of the message is extracted so that it is simplified. Decoding refers to both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Decoding nonverbal communication includes observing body language and the emotions associated with it. e.g.: signs, crying, hand movements, facial expressions, and even silence are all monitored.

Encoding

The production of a message is the encoding of a message. It consists of coded meaning and so the sender needs to know how the message would be comprehensible to the audience. In the encoding process, the encoder (sender) makes use of verbal and nonverbal language/symbols. The symbols could include words, numbers, signals, actions, images, facial expressions etc.

Decoding

It is about understanding others on the basis of the information gathered. It is a process of obtaining information, absorbing the same and utilizing it them.

The level of connotation of the visual sign, of its contextual references and positioning in different discursive fields of meaning and association, is the point where already coded signs intersect with the deep semantic codes of culture and take on additionally more active ideological dimensions.

----- Stuart Hall, 1980

Hall, in his essay, compares the 2 models of communication

The traditional model of communication was criticized for its lack of structured conception or a complex structure of relations. He then proposed a four-stage model of communication which includes the production, circulation, use and reproduction of messages. Each step defines the one that follows.

a. Production

Here begins the construction of the message. This process is framed by ideas and meanings. Social ideologies, social beliefs and values are drawn upon. Numerous factors like knowledge, technical skills, ideologies, and assumptions about the audience are involved in the production process. The socio-cultural and political structure includes aspects such as topics, events, images, personnel, situations, the audience etc.

b. Circulation

This includes how individuals perceive things. Circulation influences how people receive messages and utilize them. Circulation and reception of messages are incorporated into the production process through feedback

c. Use (Distribution and Consumption)

"The broadcasting structure must yield encoded messages in the form of a meaningful discourse." This makes the purpose of the message successful. First, the message being adopted as a meaningful discourse has to be decoded in a meaningful way. The interpreting or decoding of a message needs active recipients.

d. Reproduction

This stage comes after the interpretation of the message by the audience. This will be done based on their beliefs and experiences. The decoded messages have 'very complex, perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological, or behavioural consequences. Individuals may react/take action after being exposed to a specific message.

3.3.4 Limitation of the Model

Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model has its set of limitations, which include:

- 1. Decoding Positions:** The model's decoding positions may not fully cover the complete range of the interpretations made by the audience.
- 2. Oversimplification:** The complex responses of the audience, which are varied, may not be captured entirely by the model
- 3. Specific Intentions:** The intentions of the producers are specific. However, the content of the media can be varied or ambiguous. Certain key terms can also lead to ambiguity
- 4. The Model Superstructure:** The model was developed on the basis of social totality. This can lead to confusion while dealing with political or economic bases.
- 5. Subjective Interpretation:** Based on the subjective Interpretation of the audience it may not address the presence/absence of effects since the audience's interpretation is based on their social and cultural background.

3.5 CONCLUSION

E. P. Thompson, Raymond William and Stuart Hall being eminent contributors to the field of cultural studies challenged the dominant theories of humanities, especially during post-war Britain. Their works helped develop social critiques of their line. All these theorists played a significant role in expanding the scope of cultural studies. They expanded the conception of culture that went beyond the literary conception.

3.6 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. How does Thompson define class?
- II. How does Thompson define class consciousness?
- III. Discuss a few highlights of the book "The Making of The English Working Class" by Thompson.
- IV. What is culture according to Williams?
- V. How does Williams categorize culture?
- VI. What is Williams' purpose in the Analysis of Culture?
- VII. Discuss Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model
- VIII. Describe the 4 stages of the model
- IX. How is Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model relevant even today?
- X. What are the limitations of the model?

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KEY CONCEPTS IN CULTURAL STUDIES

Unit Structure :

4. Subculture and Counterculture -- Subjectivity and Representation

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4.1.2 What is Subculture?

4.1.3 History of the Subculture

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4.2 Subjectivity: Introduction

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4 Subculture and Counterculture -- Subjectivity and Representation

4.1 OBJECTIVES

- To understand the concepts of subculture and counter culture.
- To analyse the concept of subculture and counter culture.
- To explore how the subculture shapes the group in its totality.

4.1.1 Introduction

The term subculture is used to refer to a group of people who share certain behaviour, beliefs and attitudes that are different from the culture of their environment or context. Therefore, it is a culture inferior to the predominant culture of its community. The members of each subcultures have common characteristics that differentiate them from the other members and, in turn, are united with the members of their subculture by sharing a similar appearance and lifestyle that can be easily distinguished. Subculture is defined as a culture originating from a small group of people who exist within a culture and which differentiates itself from the parent culture. Often the founding principles of parent culture are maintained in the subculture. It can also be defined as a group within a larger group which have interests and beliefs different from the broader culture. Subcultures have their values and norms concerning political, cultural and sexual matters. Subcultures are an integral part of the society, and they keep specific characteristics intact. Hippies, Bikers, Goths are a few examples of subcultures. Subculture is perceived as a subversion to normalcy. Subcultures can also be seen as unfavourable because of the nature of criticism to many standards of society.

4.1.2 What is Subculture?

A subculture is a term for a group of people within a society who hold different values from the society at large. Members of a subculture typically have shared beliefs and values that draw them to and are codified by their subculture. They may have a particular aesthetic, a set of interests, a specific political stance, or a musical preference that forms the basis of their subculture. Many people belong to subcultures at one point or another in their lives; there are many, many subcultures that exist in contemporary societies.

Definition: “*A subculture is a group of people within a larger culture who share interests, beliefs, or activities that are different from those of the larger culture.*”

(Oxford English Dictionary)

It is like a smaller group inside a big group. The subcultures can be based on anything from music and fashion to sports or religion. They have their own rules, lingo, and ways of doing things, but they're still part of the bigger culture they come from. A subculture cannot exist unless its

members have a shared sense of identity. They need to incorporate their participation in the subculture into their sense of self to give life to the subculture. Participation in a subculture is about more than simply a passing interest in an activity or aesthetic; bikers are considered a subculture, for instance, but not everyone who rides a motorcycle is part of that subculture. In addition to being essential for the formation of a subculture, a shared identity can also be a social necessity for members. Feeling connected to a group by a shared sense of self encourages continued participation in that subculture. Of course, the degree to which any individual will incorporate a subculture into their identity is variable; some people will go further than others. But in order to qualify as a subculture, a group must have members who consider their participation in the group to be a major facet of their identity that shapes how they live their lives.

Shared meaning in subcultures refers to the ways that members of the group relate to the elements of that subculture. A subculture's values, practices, and cultural objects are typically interpreted in the same or similar ways by members. Shared meanings evolve and can change rapidly as subcultures create new meanings and social interactions. In many cases, the ways that members of a subculture interpret meaning can deviate from social norms. For example, members of a musical subculture may put a lot of effort into interpreting the lyrics of a new song, deriving a very different (but shared) meaning from the standard meaning that casual listeners might find.

4.1.3 History of the Subculture

In the mid-twentieth century, in 1950, the American theorist and sociologist David Riesman observed that in a majority community there was a group of people who did not follow the same patterns of life. Riesman saw this subculture as a culture with its own peculiarities within the dominant culture.

Dick Hebdige, a social researcher, published his book: *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, in 1979. Hebdige considers that members of a subculture, when validating their belonging to it, must have certain peculiarities such as style, clothing, language and/or the way of linking, so that the study towards a given subculture often lies in the association to a certain style of clothing, musical tastes, language, etc., among the individual members, since these attitudes contain an emotional and subjective charge only for that subculture.

4.1.4 Ways to Identify the Subculture

There are six ways proposed by Gilder in which the subcultures can be identified. They are as follows:

- Subcultures are often negative relations to work.
- They have ambivalent or negative regard to class

- They have an association with territory instead of an association with a property like the street or the club, etc.
- They have a moment out of home into many of the non-domestic types of belonging like social groups other than the family.
- They have many stylistic ties of exaggeration and access, but this may be with some exceptions.
- The refusal can identify them on when as it is of the regular life. There are usually against the status quo.

4.1.5 Characteristics of Subculture

- Formal leadership is absent in subculture.
- Explicit structure is not present.
- On the contrary, subcultures have informal participation as the boundaries of what and who embodies subculture is debatable.
- The membership is not exclusive for everyone since subculture is usually identified simultaneously with people in other social networks as well as in different cultures.
- This is why the boundaries between mainstream and subculture are indistinguishable. This happens because both cultures try to coexist and share the same ideas in the lives of people.
- Shared identity- There are a few generally agreed-upon aspects among participants
- Shared meaning- There are a few generally agreed-upon aspects in subcultural activities and people who choose, for a variety of reasons, to engage in similar beliefs and behaviours.
- Resistance to aspects of mainstream culture.
- Marginalization- the members of the group are marginalized.

Subculture not only share values and practices and their cultural objects but also identify with others of the same subculture. For example, Straight Edgers, value their culture and community and their relationship amongst each other. They often practice substance-free or clean living and purchase objects which are only essential like the most famous rock albums. As the subcultures emerge, there are very distinct meanings for defining the unique practices and their cultural objects. This is also true to distinguish the subculture from the mainstream culture. These meanings often grow and change as sub culturists (people who follow subculture or study them) debate the current definition and the new ones. They know particular rituals, values and objects as a part of their subculture and these knowledge factors are unique to this subculture.

4.1.6 Types of Subcultures

I. Subcultures by Nationality:

In some places of the world, it is common for the entrance of emigrants to another country, this population contains its own characteristics as: language, clothing, behaviours and other aptitudes, which belong and identify them with their place of origin, however, when their culture arrives to another region or continent it is not predominant, therefore, it would be classified as a subculture. For example, these groups of people have centres in countries that are not of their origin, where they meet specifically to remember or live experiences similar to those of their native country, such as their gastronomy, clothing or lifestyle.

II. Religious Subcultures:

Around the world there are multiple beliefs and affinities towards a specific Cosmo vision and this variety of religious beliefs allows that in different regions exist different types of beliefs, not only one.

For example, in Argentina, where Catholicism is one of the most predominant beliefs, there are also different religious beliefs, such as the Protestant churches, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Jehovah's Witnesses, among other minor religions of great importance for their native countries but with communities in other continents, such as Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. In spite of this, in Argentina there is also the case of not belonging to a specific dogma or religious belief, such as atheism, agnostics and humanist currents.

III. Geographical or Regional Subcultures:

Although several individuals share geographically in a given space-time context, they do not have the same beliefs, customs, traditions, ways of dressing, eating, language, among other things. It can be observed that within the same country different cultural peculiarities occur according to the region of that country, this could be denominated as regional identity. This is linked to what would be the sense of belonging of each individual according to their city of origin.

IV. Racial Subcultures:

In each continent, country or/and region, certain racial groups predominate, such as, for example, the original ethnic groups, however, one lives in an increasingly racially varied world, where one's own cultures predominate in a specific region. But there are people born in that region, but with parents of origin from another part of the world, however, these people acquire the characteristics of the site.

V. Hipster Subculture:

It is a contemporary subculture made up of young people and young adults who had their origins during the twentieth century, around 1950 and then reappeared at the end of the nineties. It is still popular today as it is

characterized by an independent ideology which tries to move away from the predominant fashions by taking second-hand clothes, old-fashioned clothes or clothes bought in vintage stores. Thus, it is characterized by the use of unusual clothing and non-commercial musical tastes, including indie and alternative music. Although it could be a homogeneous subculture, there is a diversity of particularities among them, they do not have as much cohesion as other subcultures with well-defined characteristics, since they only seek to generate their own thought in their search for individuality through a contemporary and alternative lifestyle, outside of all conventionalism.

VI. Gothic Subculture:

The Gothic subculture arises from the Romanticism of the nineteenth century, it is associated with satanic cults, go against religious dogma, and relate to death. Likewise, this subculture is related to the socio-cultural aspects of Europe in the Middle Ages, which is why its members were given the name “Gothic”, in reference to the artistic manifesto whose architectural style left aside the ideal of strength and greatness to focus on a magnificent beauty. At the end of the 20th century, around the 1970s and 1980s, this subculture began to flourish, with the influence of the Gothic rock bands of the time, literature and horror films. They try to express themselves, although not very successfully, since the culture of the predominant society does not share their ideals, such as their attraction to the colour black, given that it is associated with mourning and death.

4.1.7 Counterculture: Introduction

A counterculture is a culture whose values and norms of behaviors differ substantially from those of mainstream society, sometimes diametrically opposed to mainstream cultural mores. A countercultural movement expresses the ethos and aspirations of a specific population during a well-defined era. When oppositional forces reach critical mass, countercultures can trigger dramatic cultural changes. Countercultures differ from subcultures.

Prominent examples of countercultures in the Western world include the Levellers, Bohemianism the more fragmentary counterculture of the Beat Generation and the globalized counterculture of the 1960s which in the United States consisted primarily of Hippies and Flower Children.

4.1.8 What is Counter Culture?

Countercultures are groups whose members adopt cultural patterns in opposition to the larger culture. Countercultures are groups of people who differ in certain ways from the dominant culture and whose norms and values may be incompatible with it. Counterculture is a term for a movement that rejects or opposes mainstream cultural values. It differs from a subculture in that subcultures are able to coexist with mainstream culture, while counterculture movements define themselves in opposition to the mainstream culture.

Counterculture was the term coined by Theodore Roszak, in his book *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society*. Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture*, traces the countercultural phenomenon beyond the American streets. He delineates it within the European consciousness stretching from Germany, England to France. He states that "the heirs of an institutionalized Left-wing legacy, the young radicals of Europe still tend to see themselves as the champions of 'the people' (meaning the working class) against the oppression of the bourgeoisie (meaning, in most cases, their own parents)"

Definition

"A counterculture is a culture whose values and norms of behaviour differ substantially from those of mainstream culture, society, sometimes diametrically opposed to mainstream cultural mores."

(Oxford English Dictionary)

John Milton Yinger originated the term "*contraculture*" in his 1960 article in *American Sociological Review*. Yinger suggested the use of the term contraculture "wherever the normative system of a group contains, as a primary element, a theme of conflict with the values of the total society, where personality variables are directly involved in the development and maintenance of the group's values, and wherever its norms can be understood only by reference to the relationships of the group to a surrounding dominant culture."

Some scholars have attributed the *counterculture* to Theodore Roszak, author of *The Making of a Counter Culture*. It became prominent in the news media amid the social revolution that swept the Americas, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand during the 1960s.

4.1.9 Characteristics of Counter Culture

Scholars differ in the characteristics and specificity they attribute to "counterculture". "Mainstream" culture is also difficult to define, and in some ways are identified and understood through contrast with counterculture.

Oppose the Mass Culture: Counterculture might oppose mass culture, or middle-class culture and values. Counterculture is sometimes conceptualized in terms of generational conflict and rejection of older values.

It is not political: Counterculture may or may not be explicitly political. It typically involves criticism or rejection of currently powerful institutions, with accompanying hope for a better life or a new society. It does not look favourably on party politics or authoritarianism.

Poses the challenge: Cultural development can also be affected by way of counterculture. Scholars such as Joanne Martin deem counterculture and cultural development as "a balancing act, some core values of a

counterculture should present a direct challenge to the core values of a dominant culture".

Therefore, a prevalent culture and a counterculture should coexist in an uneasy symbiosis, holding opposite positions on valuable issues that are essentially important to each of them. According to this theory, a counterculture can contribute a plethora of useful functions for the prevalent culture, such as "articulating the foundations between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and providing a safe haven for the development of innovative ideas". During the late 1960s, hippies became the largest and most visible countercultural group in the United States.

4.1.10 Reflection of Counterculture:

a. Literature-

Counterculture is very much evident in literature. The counterculture of the 1960s and early 1970s generated its own unique brand of notable literature, including comics and cartoons, and sometimes referred to as the underground press.

b. Media-

Some genres tend to challenge societies with their content that is meant to outrightly question the norms within cultures and even create change usually towards a more modern way of thought. More often than not, sources of these controversies can be found in art such as Marcel Duchamp whose piece *Fountain* was meant to be "a calculated attack on the most basic conventions of art" in 1917.

c. Music-

Counterculture is very much evident in music particularly on the basis of the separation of genres into those considered acceptable and within the status quo and those not. Since many minority groups are already considered countercultural, the music they create and produce may reflect their socio-political realities and their musical culture may be adopted as a social expression of their counterculture.

d. Assimilation-

Many of these artists though once being taboo, have been assimilated into culture and are no longer a source of moral panic since they do not cross overtly controversial topics or challenge staples of current culture. Instead of being a topic to fear, they have initiated subtle trends that other artists and sources of media may follow.

e. Digital Counterculture-

Digital countercultures are online communities, and patterns of tech usage, that significantly deviate from mainstream culture. "That online activity relates to (dis) embodiment that the Internet is a platform for authenticity and experimentation, and that web-based interactions are placeless."

f. Disembodiment-

The basis for online disembodiment is that, contrary to the corporeal nature of offline interactions, a user's physical being does not have any relevance to their online interactions. However, for users whose physical existence is marginalized or shaped by counterculture, their lived experiences build a subjectivity that carries over into their online interactions.

g. Authenticity and Experimentation-

Arguments that the Internet is a platform for authenticity and experimentation highlight its role in the creation or enhancement of identities. This approach asserts that norms of non-virtual social life restrict users' ability to express themselves fully in person, but online interactions eliminate these barriers and allow them to identify in new ways. One means by which this exploration takes place is online "identity tourism," which allows users to appropriate an identity without any of the offline, corporeal risks associated with that identity. However, especially for countercultures that are marginalized or demonized, experimentation can allow users to embrace an identity that they align with, but hide offline out of fear, and engage with that culture.

h. Placelessness-

The final approach is on online communication as placeless, asserting that the consequences of geographic distance are rendered null and void by the Internet. Lingel argues that this approach is technologically determinist in its assumption that the placelessness provided by access to technology can single-handedly remedy structural inequality. Socio-cultural, power hierarchies on the Internet shape the mainstream, and without these mainstreams as a point of comparison, there are no grounds to define digital counterculture.

In short, there is a difference between a subculture and a counterculture movement, although there is overlap between the two terms. A counterculture movement is typically a movement that seeks to change broader culture. They are a kind of subculture that focuses on rejecting cultural values. Subcultures are necessarily somewhat divorced from society, but they are not by definition countercultures.

4.2 SUBJECTIVITY: INTRODUCTION

Subjectivity is based on personal feelings, tastes, or opinions, while objectivity is not influenced by personal feelings or opinions. Since a subject is a person, subjectivity refers to how a person's own uniqueness influences their perceptions. Subjectivity is a form of bias and also individuality. Subjectivity is the opposite of objectivity, which is based purely on the facts and isn't personal. Subjectivity is usually opposed to objectivity, where knowledge is seen to be independent of the subject who is producing it. The subject's experiences and biography influence their knowledge and understanding of the world. There has been considerable

debate around the extent to which the subject is able to act freely or whether actions are constrained by higher powers.

In writing, subjectivity refers to the expression of a writer's personal opinions, feelings, beliefs, and perspectives. Subjective writing often involves first-person pronouns (I, me, my) and emotional language, as the writer shares their thoughts and reactions openly. It can be found in various forms of writing, including personal essays, memoirs, creative fiction, and opinion pieces.

Subjectivity comes with consciousness of myself as a self. It encompasses the emotional and intellectual resources that the individual is born with. Subjectivity is what the individual is as a human being. Now the problem of subjectivity is to decide how to choose—what rules or models the individual is going to use to make the right choices? What are the right choices? Who defines right? To be truly an individual, to be true to himself, his actions should in some way be expressed so that they describe who and what he is to himself and to others.

4.2.1 Definition:

“Subjectivity means judgment based on individual personal impressions and feelings and opinions rather than external facts.”

‘Subjectivity refers to how someone’s judgment is shaped by personal opinions and feelings instead of outside influences. Subjectivity is partially responsible for why one person loves an abstract painting while another person hates it.

“Subjectivity is the understanding that everyone has their own perspective and beliefs, which can be communicated and influenced by their context and interactions with others. It refers to the individual's self-reflexive awareness and their ability to explain their beliefs and motivations in a coherent manner.”

Subjectivity is the idea that represents some subjective properties, or properties that are dependent on the mind. This is in contrast to objective representation, which holds that experiences only represent objective properties. Subjective representation can accommodate cases of illusion-free phenomenal inversion, and it captures the transparency of experience. Subjective can also mean based on a person's personal perspective or preferences. For example, one person may find the weather pleasantly warm, while another may find it too hot. Both views are subjective.

Subjective analysis refers to the evaluation or interpretation of data, information, or experiences based on personal opinions, feelings, and interpretations rather than objective facts. This type of analysis is often influenced by individual perceptions, biases, and emotions, making it inherently personal and variable from one person to another.

Subjective Vs Objective

To simplify the difference between the two terms, given below is an example to know the difference between subjective and objective.

“Bharatnatyam is one of the oldest Indian classical dance forms.” This is an objective statement as it is a fact and has been known for years.

“Even after putting in efforts, not everyone can learn how to perform Bharatnatyam”. This is a subjective statement since it is a person’s opinion and is subjective to vary from person to person.

Thus, the key difference between objective and subjective is that objective information is based on unbiased and factual data. Whereas, subjective statements are biased and based on opinions and interpretations.

4.2.2 Characteristics of Subjectivity:

- a. **Personal Perspective:** It reflects the unique viewpoints and experiences of the individual conducting the analysis.
- b. **Interpretation of Qualitative Data:** Subjective analysis is often used in qualitative research, where data is gathered through interviews, open-ended surveys, or observations, and the results are interpreted based on the researcher's insights.
- c. **Influence of Emotions and Bias:** The analyst's feelings, beliefs, and biases can significantly shape the conclusions drawn from the analysis.
- d. **Contextual Understanding:** Subjectivity often considers the context in which data is gathered, acknowledging that different contexts can lead to different interpretations.

In a literary analysis, a critic may provide a subjective interpretation of a character's motivations based on their own experiences and feelings about the themes presented in the work. This differs from an objective analysis, which would focus solely on textual evidence and established literary theories. Overall, subjectivity plays an important role in understanding complex human experiences but should be used with awareness of its inherent biases and limitations.

4.2.3 Limitations of Subjective Analysis

Subjective analysis has several limitations:

- a. **Bias and Interpretation:** Analysts' personal biases and perspectives can distort interpretations, leading to conclusions that may not accurately reflect the data.
- b. **Lack of Generalizability:** Findings derived from subjective analysis are often context-specific and may not be applicable to other settings or populations.
- c. **Variability in Perspectives:** Different researchers may provide varying interpretations of the same data, making it difficult to reach consensus or establish a unified understanding.

- d. **Difficulties in Replication:** Subjective analyses can be challenging to replicate, as they often depend on individual insights and experiences, which are not easily reproduced.
- e. **Limited Use of Quantitative Data:** Emphasis on qualitative insights may overlook important quantitative data, leading to incomplete analyses.
- f. **Emotional Influence:** Personal feelings and emotional reactions can cloud judgment and affect the objectivity of the analysis.
- g. **Challenges in Validation:** Validating subjective findings can be difficult, as they may not easily align with objective measures or empirical standards.
- h. **Dependence on Context:** The context in which data is collected and interpreted can greatly influence results, making it hard to draw universal conclusions.

In short, while subjective analysis can provide rich insights, researchers must be aware of these limitations and consider supplementing it with objective methods to enhance the robustness of their findings.

4.2.4 Conclusion:

Subjectivity in literature is the expression of a writer's personal opinions, feelings, and experiences. It is a form of bias that influences how a reader interprets a text. Scientists and historians, for example, study the objective world, hoping to elicit the truth of nature—or perhaps the truth of history. In this way, they hope to predict how the future will unfold in accordance with these laws. In terms of history, by studying the past, the individual can perhaps elicit the laws that determine how events will unfold—in this way the individual can predict the future with more exactness and perhaps take control of events that in the past appeared to fall outside the control of humans.

4.2.5 Representation: Introduction

Representation has many meanings, including the act of describing or showing something, or a person or thing that stands for something else. Representation comes from the Latin word *repraesentare* meaning "bring before, exhibit." A representation is an exhibit, whether it comes in the form of legal guidance or in the form of artistic expression. The act of representation has to do with replacing or acting on behalf of an original. Representation is the use of signs that stand in for and take the place of something else. It is through representation that people organize the world and reality through the act of naming its elements. Signs are arranged in order to form semantic constructions and express relations. Representation has been associated with aesthetics (art) and semiotics (signs).

A representation is a type of recording in which the sensory information about a physical object is described in a medium. The degree to which an artistic representation *resembles* the object it represents is a function of resolution and does not bear on the denotation of the word. For example,

both the Mona Lisa and a child's crayon drawing of Lisa Giocondo would be considered representational, and any preference for one over the other would need to be understood as a matter of aesthetics.

Since ancient times representation has played a central role in understanding literature, aesthetics and semiotics. Plato and Aristotle are key figures in early literary theory who considered literature as simply one form of representation. Aristotle for instance, considered each mode of representation, verbal, visual or musical, as being natural to human beings. Therefore, what distinguishes humans from other animals is their ability to create and manipulate signs. Aristotle deemed mimesis as natural to man, therefore considered representations as necessary for people's learning and being in the world.

4.2.6 Definition:

"Representation means the act of representing; standing in for someone or some group and speaking with authority in their behalf."

(Oxford English Dictionary)

The term 'representation' carries a range of meanings and interpretations. In literary theory, 'representation' is commonly defined in three ways.

- To look like or resemble
- To stand in for something or someone
- To present a second time; to re-present

The reflection on representation began with early literary theory in the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, and has evolved into a significant component of language, Saussurian and communication studies.

Plato, in contrast, looked upon representation with more caution. He recognised that literature is a representation of life, yet also believed that representations intervene between the viewer and the real. This creates worlds of illusion leading one away from the "real things". Plato thus believed that representation needs to be controlled and monitored due to the possible dangers of fostering antisocial emotions or the imitation of evil.

Aristotle went on to say it was a human activity. From childhood man has an instinct for representation, and in this respect, man differs from the other animals that he is far more imitative and learns his first lessons though imitating things. Aristotle discusses representation in three ways—

- **The object:** The symbol being represented.
- **Manner:** The way the symbol is represented.
- **Means:** The material that is used to represent it.

The means of literary representation is language. An important part of representation is the relationship between what the material and what it represents. The questions arising from this are, "A stone may represent a

man but how? And by what and by what agreement, does this understanding of the representation occur?"

4.2.7 Reality and Representation:

One apprehends reality only through representations of reality, through texts, discourses, images: there is no such thing as direct or unmediated access to reality. But because one can see reality only through representation it does not follow that one does not see reality at all... Reality is always more extensive and complicated than any system of representation can comprehend, and we always sense that this is so—representation never "gets" reality, which is why human history has produced so many and changing ways of trying to get it. Consequently, throughout the history of human culture, people have become dissatisfied with language's ability to express reality and as a result have developed new modes of representation. It is necessary to construct new ways of seeing reality, as people only know reality through representation. From this arises the contrasting and alternate theories and representational modes of abstraction, realism and modernism, to name a few.

Representation matters because what we see in the media doesn't just reflect reality – it also shapes it. On the other hand, positive representation can shift public opinion for the better and create greater understanding and appreciation between cultures and communities.

4.2.8 Plato's Opinion:

It is from Plato's caution that in the modern era many are aware of political and ideological issues and the influences of representations. It is impossible to divorce representations from culture and the society that produces them. In the contemporary world there exist restrictions on subject matter, limiting the kinds of representational signs allowed to be employed, as well as boundaries that limit the audience or viewers of particular representations. Despite these restrictions, representations still have the ability to take on a life of their own once in the public sphere, and cannot be given a definitive or concrete meaning; as there will always be a gap between intention and realization, original and copy.

Consequently, for each of the above definitions there exists a process of communication and message sending and receiving. In such a system of communication and representations it is inevitable that potential problems may arise; misunderstandings, errors, and falsehoods. The accuracy of the representations can by no means be guaranteed, as they operate in a system of signs that can never work in isolation from other signs or cultural factors.

For instance, objects and people do not have a constant meaning, but their meanings are fashioned by humans in the context of their culture, as they have the ability to make things mean or signify something. Viewing representation in such a way focuses on understanding how language and systems of knowledge production work to create and circulate meanings.

4.2.9 Conclusion

Representation is simply the process in which such meanings are constructed. In much the same way as the post-structuralists, this approach to representation considers it as something larger than any one single representation. A similar perspective is viewing representation as part of a larger field, as Mitchell, saying, "...representation (in memory, in verbal descriptions, in images) not only 'mediates' our knowledge (of slavery and of many other things), but obstructs, fragments, and negates that knowledge" and proposes a move away from the perspective that representations are merely "objects representing", towards a focus on the relationships and processes through which representations are produced, valued, viewed and exchanged.

4.3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. What is subculture?
- II. Trace the history of subculture and mention the different types.
- III. Reflect on the term Counter Culture
- IV. Write a detailed note on subjective vs objective.
- V. What is subjectivity? Explain in detail

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KEY CONCEPTS IN CULTURAL STUDIES

IDENTITY, RACE, CLASS, GENDER, IDEOLOGY

HEGEMONY, RESISTANCE, AGENCY, TECHNO-CULTURE

Unit Structure :

- 5.1 Introduction
 - 5.1.1 Objectives
 - 5.1.2 Identity: Introduction
 - 5.1.3 Complex Concept
 - 5.1.4 Definition
 - 5.1.5 Collective Identity
 - 5.1.6 Cultural Identity
- 5.2 Race: Introduction
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- 5.3 Class: Introduction
 - 5.3.1 Meanings of the Word Class
 - 5.3.2 Definition
- 5.4 Gender: Introduction
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- 5.5 Ideology: Introduction
 - 5.5.1 Definition
- 5.6 Hegemony: Introduction
 - 5.6.1 Definition
- 5.7 Resistance: Introduction
 - 5.7.1 Definition
- 5.8 Agency: Introduction
 - 5.8.1 Cultural Construction of Agency
 - 5.8.2 Agency and Language

5.9 Techno Culture: Introduction

5.9.1 Definition

5.9.2 Erosion of Tradition Cultural Practices

5.9.3 Technology is a Tool of Oppression

5.10 Conclusion

5.11 Suggested Questions

5.12 Work Cited

Key Concepts in Cultural Studies Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

5. Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology, Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Key concepts in cultural studies are of great significance as they help to critically analyse how culture is created, shared and preserved. They also reveal the power dynamics within a society thereby helping us to comprehend how our beliefs, attitudes and identities are constructed. This in turn enables better societal critique and positive change.

5.1.1 Objectives

- To investigate the role played by culture in the human civilization.
- To help the students to understand various concepts related with culture
- To understand the cultural practices and forms in past and present
- To understand the implications of culture on human life.
- To understand how meaning is generated and disseminated through cultural patterns
- To understand the power structure generated by culture.

5.1.2 Identity: Introduction

It ultimately comes from the Latin *idem*, meaning “*the same*.” Generally speaking, the traits that make up a person’s identity are what identifies them as remaining the same under different circumstances. Conception and discussion of identity has evolved over time, especially in the context of sexual identity, gender identity, and racial identity. In these contexts, identities relating to these characteristics were traditionally defined with rigid categories. In contrast, many modern conceptions of these aspects of identity place them along a spectrum or don’t limit them to any predefined categories.

Identity is the unique set of characteristics that can be used to identify a person as themselves and no one else. On a personal level, identity often refers to a person’s sense of self, meaning how they view themselves as compared to other people. Literature has always been important in forming both personal and cultural identities. Literature reflects the

complexity of human identity via the representation of individuals' experiences, cultural origins, and personal development.

5.1.3 Complex Concept

The concept of identity is complex and can involve all kinds of characteristics, qualities, experiences, interests, and other aspects of a person that make them distinct from anyone else. In the term identity politics, identity refers to the cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, religious, social, or other facets that a person considers as inherent to who they are, especially in relation to their belonging in a particular group or community of similar people. Identity is shaped by social and cultural factors and how others perceive and acknowledge one's characteristics. Identity encompasses various aspects such as occupational, religious, national, ethnic or racial, gender, educational, generational, and political identities, among others. Identity in literature can encompass a variety of personal aspects, such as culture, ethnicity, gender, and social roles. It can also explore how these elements intersect with societal norms and expectations. Literature can be a mirror that reflects the human experience, and the stories it tells can have the power to shape our identity.

5.1.4 Definition

"Identity refers to our sense of who we are as individuals and as members of social groups. It also refers to our sense of how others may perceive and label us."

Oxford English Dictionary

Identity plays an important role in empowering individuals to exercise their rights and responsibilities fairly and equitably in modern society. It is imperative for social, economic and digital inclusion. In general, 'identity' is used to refer to one's social 'face' – how one perceives how one is perceived by others. 'Self' is generally used to refer to one's sense of 'who I am and what I am'. However, these are not dualistic constructs. The term "identity" is most commonly used to describe personal identity or the distinctive qualities or traits that make an individual unique. Identities are strongly associated with self - concept, self - image, self - esteem, and individuality. Individuals' identities are situated, but also contextual, adaptive and changing.

5.1.5 Collective Identity

Many people gain a sense of positive self-esteem from their identity groups, which furthers a sense of community and belonging. Different social situations also compel people to attach themselves to different self-identities which may cause some to feel marginalized, switch between different groups and self-identifications, or reinterpret certain identity components. These different selves lead to constructed images dichotomized between what people want to be (the ideal self) and how others see them (the limited self). Educational background and occupational status and roles significantly influence identity formation in this regard.

5.1.6 Cultural Identity

Women and men may have several identities simultaneously, both personal and cultural. Cultural identities often refer to feelings of belonging and are frequently plural in contemporary society, in particular as a result of geographical and social mobility. For example, many people in today's world live in more than one environment in the course of their lives, each adding new dimensions and cultures to their sense of self. Cultural identity is the result of a process whereby individuals or groups evaluate consciously or subconsciously their own situation in society, and attempt to establish a sense of self-esteem and self-confidence which enables them to accept their own place in life and society.

Key Concepts in Cultural Studies Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

5.2 RACE: INTRODUCTION

Race is a social construct that has historically been used to classify human beings according to physical or biological characteristics. Race is a categorization of humans based on shared physical or social qualities into groups generally viewed as distinct within a given society. The term came into common usage during the 16th century, when it was used to refer to groups of various kinds, including those characterized by close kinship relations. By the 17th century, the term began to refer to physical traits, and then later to national affiliations. Modern science regards race as a social construct, an identity which is assigned based on rules made by society. While partly based on physical similarities within groups, race does not have an inherent physical or biological meaning. The concept of race is foundational to racism, the belief that humans can be divided based on the superiority of one race over another.

Race is not intrinsic to human beings but rather an identity created, often by socially dominant groups, to establish meaning in a social context. Different cultures define different racial groups, often focused on the largest groups of social relevance, and these definitions can change over time. Historical race concepts have included a wide variety of schemes to divide local or worldwide populations into races and sub-races.

Social conceptions and groupings of races have varied over time, often involving folk taxonomies that define essential types of individuals based on perceived traits. Modern scientists consider such biological essentialism obsolete, and generally discourage racial explanations for collective differentiation in both physical and behavioural traits.

5.2.1 Definition

“Any one of the groups that humans are often divided into based on physical traits regarded as common among people of shared ancestry”

-Oxford English Dictionary

“A group of people sharing a common cultural, geographical, linguistic, or religious origin or background”

-Webster English Dictionary

Although commonalities in physical traits such as facial features, skin colour, and hair texture comprise part of the race concept, this linkage is a social distinction rather than an inherently biological one. Other dimensions of racial groupings include shared history, traditions, and language. For instance, African-American English is a language spoken by many African Americans, especially in areas of the United States where racial segregation exists. Furthermore, people often self-identify as members of a race for political reasons.

In this sense, races are said to be social constructs. These constructs develop within various legal, economic, and socio-political contexts, and may be the effect, rather than the cause, of major social situations.

5.2.2 Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination often coincides with racist mind-sets, whereby the individuals and ideologies of one group come to perceive the members of an out group as both racially defined and morally inferior. As a result, racial groups possessing relatively little power often find themselves excluded or oppressed, while hegemonic individuals and institutions are charged with holding racist attitudes. Racism has led to many instances of tragedy, including slavery and genocide.

5.3 CLASS: INTRODUCTION

In literary studies, the term "class" refers to a political project and a framework for understanding representation. It's not just a historical phenomenon, but also a sociological idea, a political concept, and an activist slogan. The term became visible due to the efforts of trade unionists, activists, and Marxist scholars in the early 20th century.

Class is not a term like style that refers to a quality inherent in the literature itself, or genre, that while historically produced, nonetheless is imagined to have formal properties. "Class" understands working class literature in a US context, as literature that was once about working class people, from the mediated publication of slave narratives, to the middle class gaze of realism, to its transformation in the 20th century into literature about the subjectivity of working class people themselves.

5.3.1 Meanings of the Word Class

The word "class" has multiple meanings, including:

- A group of people with similar social, economic, or educational status
- A major social class or order of people
- A social class separated from others by hereditary rank, profession, or wealth
- A collection or division of people or things sharing a common characteristic
- A group of pupils or students who are taught and study together

5.3.2 Definition

“In literature, “class” refers to a social stratification system that categorizes people based on their wealth, education, occupation, and economic status.”

Key Concepts in Cultural Studies Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

Literature can encourage readers to question the legitimacy of power structures and consider alternative ways of understanding human experience. Understanding class helps in analysing how different social factors intersect, creating unique experiences for individuals within marginalized communities. Class is not only determined by income but also involves cultural factors such as lifestyle, education, and social networks. The intersection of class with gender and sexuality can amplify experiences of discrimination or privilege, leading to unique challenges for individuals in marginalized groups.

Class consciousness refers to the awareness of one's social class and the implications it has on societal dynamics and individual experiences. Economic inequalities often dictate access to resources like healthcare, education, and housing, significantly affecting the lives of those from lower socio economic backgrounds. Class significantly influences how individuals experience their gender and sexual identity. For example, those from lower economic backgrounds may face compounded discrimination due to their class status, which can impact their access to resources such as education and healthcare. Class consciousness is vital in gender and queer studies because it allows for a deeper understanding of how societal structures influence the experiences of different groups.

5.4 GENDER: INTRODUCTION

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society. Gender identity is not confined to a binary (girl/woman, boy/man) nor is it static; it exists along a continuum and can change over time.

Gender refers to a personal identification with a particular gender and gender role in society. The term woman has historically been used interchangeably with reference to the female body, though more recently this usage has been viewed as controversial by some feminists. There are qualitative analyses that explore and present the representations of gender; however, feminists challenge these dominant ideologies concerning gender roles and biological sex. One's biological sex is oftentimes tied to specific social roles and expectations.

Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female, some combination of male and female, or neither male nor female; gender expression refers to the physical and behavioural manifestations of one's gender identity. By the end of the century gender by itself was being used

as a synonym of gender identity. Among those who study gender and sexuality, a clear delineation between sex and gender is typically prescribed, with sex as the preferred term for biological forms, and gender limited to its meanings involving behavioural, cultural, and psychological traits.

5.4.1 Definition

"Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people."
Oxford English Dictionary

Categorizing males and females into social roles creates a problem for some individuals who feel they have to be at one end of a linear spectrum and must identify themselves as man or woman, rather than being allowed to choose a section in between. Globally, communities interpret biological differences between men and women to create a set of social expectations that define the behaviours that are "appropriate" for men and women and determine their different access to rights, resources, and power in society and health behaviours.

Many cultures have different systems of norms and beliefs based on gender, but there is no universal standard to a masculine or feminine role across all cultures. Social roles of men and women in relation to each other is based on the cultural norms of that society, which lead to the creation of gender systems. The gender system is the basis of social patterns in many societies, which include the separation of sexes, and the primacy of masculine norms.

Being female characterizes one as a woman, and being a woman signifies one as weak, emotional, and irrational, and incapable of actions attributed to a "man". More recent criticisms of Judith Butler's theories critique her writing for reinforcing the very conventional dichotomies of gender.

The *World Health Organization* defines gender as *"the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed"*. The beliefs, values and attitude taken up and exhibited by them is as per the agreed upon norms of the society and the personal opinion of the person is not taken into primary consideration of assignment of gender and imposition of gender roles as per the assigned gender.

The assignment of gender involves taking into account the physiological and biological attributes assigned by nature followed by the imposition of the socially constructed conduct. *Gender* is a term used to exemplify the attributes that a society or culture constitutes as "masculine" or "feminine". Although a person's sex as male or female stands as a biological fact that is identical in any culture, what that specific sex means in reference to a person's gender role as a man or a woman in society varies cross-culturally according to what things are considered to be masculine or feminine.

5.5 IDEOLOGY: INTRODUCTION

Key Concepts in Cultural Studies Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

The word “ideology” is derived from the French *idéologie*. The concept arose as part of a French philosophical movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century period of Enlightenment, and its original meaning was to denote a science of ideas. *Ideology* has been in use in English since the end of the 18th century and is one of the few words whose coiner we can identify. The French writer Destutt de Tracy proposed it as a term to designate the “science of ideas,” and in that sense the word was quickly borrowed into English. The word today is largely used neutrally, most often to refer to a systematic body of concepts, and especially to the set of ideas and beliefs held by a particular group or political party. Ideology is a system of ideas that can include political, economic, and cultural beliefs. It can also be a form of rhetoric that presents a group's interests as the interests of the whole community. Ideologies can be used to justify social and political actions. An ideology is a set of opinions or beliefs of a group or an individual. Very often ideology refers to a set of political beliefs or a set of ideas that characterize a particular culture. Capitalism, communism, socialism, and Marxism are ideologies.

The word first made its appearance in French as *idéologie* at the time of the French Revolution, when it was introduced by a philosopher, Destutt de Tracy, as a short name for what he called his “*science of ideas*,”. It was Bacon who had proclaimed that the destiny of science was not only to enlarge human knowledge but also to “*improve the life of men on earth*,” and it was this same union of the programmatic with the intellectual that distinguished Destutt de Tracy’s *idéologie* from those theories, systems, or philosophies that were essentially explanatory. Some historians of philosophy have called the 19th century the age of ideology, not because the word itself was then so widely used, but because so much of the thought of the time can be distinguished from that prevailing in the previous centuries by features that would now be called ideological.

Ideology in the stricter sense stays fairly close to Destutt de Tracy’s original conception and may be identified by five characteristics:

- It contains an explanatory theory of a more or less comprehensive kind about human experience and the external world.
- It sets out a program, in generalized and abstract terms, of social and political organization.
- It conceives the realization of this program as entailing a struggle.
- It seeks not merely to persuade but to recruit loyal adherents, demanding what is sometimes called commitment.
- It addresses a wide public but may tend to confer some special role of leadership on intellectuals.

5.5.1 Definition

“Ideology is a set of beliefs and values that shape a narrative. It can also refer to the ideas that define a culture”.

The most sincere exponents and believers of a particular ideology often belong to the class which that ideology represents. However, rhetoricians and others from various backgrounds usually appear to lend their pens, voices, and physical might to the promotion of specific ideologies. So, ideologies are not merely fantasies or aggregations of tendentious lies. Indeed they may, in some instances, constitute the most enlightened and perceptive understanding of human thought and action. This is possible because ideologies are always generated by social reality. They are not, however, simply straightforward reflections of reality, but partial and incomplete attempts to apprehend and explain reality. Thus, an ideology mediates between actual human practices and understanding of the nature of those practices.

The manner in which ideologies are created and transmitted will obviously vary according to the general conditions pertaining to a given society; it suffices to state that the proponents of an ideology will almost certainly try to utilise whatever means are available to propagate, establish, and maintain.

Ideology is a more or less coherent set of beliefs and has roots in a class or group of people at a particular time. A socio-economic system with its neutral looking structures appropriates old beliefs and views and also generates new ones to perpetuate its stranglehold on people's minds. Religion, morality and ethical principles form the core of many a ruling class ideology. A discussion of ideology is greatly helpful in understanding the meaning and message of a literary work as well as its aesthetic appeal. One can see a particular ideology influencing and determining a writer's consciousness as also the way in which that consciousness shapes characters, voices, responses and situations in a literary work.

An alert reading of literature is sure to grasp the broad political function of an ideology. There is definitely an important way in which ideology and literature are related. The two do not merely coexist in the act of writing but also influence each other. In one way, an ideology, already formed in the mind of the writer in the course of living stands constantly challenged by certain new aspects of life that have emerged on the scene.

5.6 HEGEMONY: INTRODUCTION

Hegemony refers to a kind of domination. It was borrowed in the mid-16th century from the Greek word *hēgemonia*, a noun formed from the verb *hēgeisthai*, “to lead.” At first hegemony was used specifically to refer to the control once wielded by ancient Greek states; later it was applied to domination by other political actors. By the 19th century, the word had

acquired a second sense referring to the social or cultural influence wielded by a dominant entity over others of its kind.

Key Concepts in Cultural Studies Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

The concept of hegemony played a significant part in the development of cultural studies and was a core concept of the field during the 1970s and 1980s. According to this theory, there is a strand of meanings within any given culture that can be called governing or ascendant. The process of making, maintaining and reproducing this authoritative set of meanings, ideologies and practices has been called hegemony. Hegemony is not a static entity but is constituted by a series of changing discourses and practices that are intrinsically bound up with social power. Since hegemony has to be constantly re-made and re-won, it opens up the possibility of a challenge to it; that is, the making of a counter hegemonic bloc of subordinate groups and classes.

5.6.1 Definition

“In literature, hegemony is a form of domination where one group has power over another. It can also refer to the social or cultural influence of a dominant group.”

Oxford English dictionary

Hegemony is the dominance of one group over another, often through consent rather than force. It can be achieved by making other alternatives seem impossible. Hegemony the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group. Fundamentally, hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all. Domination is thus exerted not by force, nor even necessarily by active persuasion, but by a more subtle and inclusive power over the economy, and over state apparatuses such as education and the media, by which the ruling class interest is presented as the common interest and thus comes to be taken for granted.

The term is useful for describing the success of imperial power over a colonized people who may far outnumber any occupying military force, but whose desire for self-determination has been suppressed by a hegemonic notion of the greater good, often couched in terms of social order, stability and advancement, all of which are defined by the colonizing power. Hegemony is important because the capacity to influence the thought of the colonized is by far the most sustained and potent operation of imperial power in colonized regions. Indeed, an ‘empire’ is distinct from a collection of subject states forcibly controlled by a central power by virtue of the effectiveness of its cultural hegemony. A hegemonic class is one that is able to attain the consent of other social forces, and the retention of this consent is an ongoing project. To secure this consent requires a group to understand its own interests in relation to the mode of production, as well as the motivations, aspirations, and interests of other groups.

5.7 RESISTANCE: INTRODUCTION

Resistance literature is a subfield of literary studies that examines how literature can be used to resist dominant ideologies and challenge culture practices. Resistance literature can be found in a variety of genres, including poetry, novels, essays, and plays. Some common themes in resistance literature include identity, belonging, and the struggle for justice and equality. Resistance literature can be used to resist gender-based oppression, or to demonstrate difficulties in liberation struggles or writing in exile. For example, in post-colonial literature, resistance theory uses the language of empire to rebut its dominant ideologies.

Barbara Harlow's 1987 book *Resistance Literature* is considered a defining work in the field. Harlow's book analyses the literatures of contemporary "Third World" liberation movements, and argues for the political significance of literary texts. Resistance Literature not only analyses literary texts. It also concisely informs readers about some of the urgent political and cultural debates taking place within liberation movements. Resistance literature often includes a diverse range of genres, such as poetry, novels, essays, and plays that articulate resistance against oppression. Key themes in resistance literature include identity, belonging, and the struggle for justice and equality.

5.7.1 Definition

"Resistance as "the refusal to accept or comply with something"; and "the ability not to be affected by something, especially adversely."
The New Oxford American Dictionary

Resistance is the ability to maintain control over not being adversely affected by circumstances or another's actions that feel unsafe.

- Resistance literature often includes a diverse range of genres, such as poetry, novels, essays, and plays that articulate resistance against oppression.
- Key themes in resistance literature include identity, belonging, and the struggle for justice and equality.
- This type of literature frequently employs metaphor and symbolism to convey complex ideas about power dynamics and cultural identity.
- Many resistance writers draw from their cultural heritage to reclaim narratives that have been historically suppressed or distorted by dominant cultures.
- Resistance literature has played a crucial role in social movements by inspiring activism and fostering a sense of solidarity among marginalized groups.

Resistance embodies hybridity by blending elements from both colonized and colonizer cultures, creating unique expressions that challenge dominant narratives. Resistance literature provides a platform for subaltern voices by narrating their experiences and perspectives, which are often omitted from mainstream historical accounts. By documenting these narratives, resistance challenges prevailing historical narratives and emphasizes the importance of including diverse viewpoints in understanding history. This inclusion helps reveal the systemic inequalities faced by marginalized groups and underscores their role in shaping societal change. Resistance holds significant importance in contemporary social movements as it articulates shared struggles and aspirations, fostering a collective identity among marginalized communities.

Key Concepts in Cultural Studies Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

5.8 AGENCY: INTRODUCTION

In cultural studies, agency is the ability to make choices, initiate actions, and control outcomes. It is a fundamental part of our sense of self. Classically, the concept has been used to analyse how people try to influence, or change, their life and how they act within, or even resist, powerful structures.

In anthropology, agency is broadly defined as the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act. Classically, the concept has been used to analyse how people try to influence, or change, their life and how they act within, or even resist, powerful structures. At least since the 1990s, agency has been a prominent and much-discussed concept in anthropology. Emerging out of practice theory, agency was frequently imagined as a positive capacity to act within, and even to resist, potentially oppressive structures.

Anthropologists, however, have always emphasised that what people understand by agency, or how they believe they can act in and upon the world, greatly varies across cultural and historical contexts. Agency is a socio-culturally mediated capacity. It is shaped by social and cultural contexts. It is closely related to subjectivity, ownership, and affordances. It is the capacity to influence events in the world. It is the capacity to act independently and to make free choices.

5.8.1 Cultural Constructions of Agency

Anthropologists have tended to emphasise that the meanings of agency differ substantially between different social, cultural, or historical contexts. Such differences in meaning can have an immediate effect on how and by whom agency can be exercised and how it is valued. For example, if people believe that God, or spirits, or dead ancestors, are powerful agents, this will affect not only how people *explain* their world, but fundamentally shape many aspects of social life itself. One influential way of defining agency is therefore that it is 'the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act'. Although the meanings people attach to agency in different contexts shape the way people can and do act, beliefs about agency are not

always in line with how people try to exert influence on the world. Furthermore, even though there are hegemonic understandings of agency, most people rely on a plurality of models to explain human action and behaviour.

As the examples in this section show, agency is to a certain extent culturally constructed—it is shaped by religious beliefs, political and media discourses, but also by what it means to be a person in a given social context. Conceptions of agency will almost certainly vary depending on whether a person is imagined as an individually crafted self or a highly influential and malleable entity. However, even in very specific cultural, linguistic, or historical contexts, meanings of agency and related ideas such as creativity, freedom, and intention are usually plural and dynamic, and they change over time.

5.8.2 Agency and Language

Contemporary understandings of agency have been influenced by linguistics, notably by speech act theory. The latter proposes that language does not only describe the world, but that it can in fact change it. When a priest says, ‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’, he does not simply describe what he is doing. Instead, he performs an action with very tangible effects. Most linguistic anthropologists see language as a form of social action, as something that is continually made and remade by its speakers, and as something that, to a certain extent, constructs and creates social reality. The interconnections between language and agency have been debated in relationship to different issues.

Different languages allow for different ways of assigning and marking agents and subjects, with far-reaching implications for how agency is understood and how it can be described and encoded. In English, for instance, one can avoid assigning agency by using the passive form. For instance, rather than saying ‘Peter verbally attacked Wendy’, someone who might not want to cast blame on Peter could simply say ‘Wendy was attacked in the discussion’. Different languages have different ways of encoding agency through their grammatical structure—for instance through rules regarding how a subject or object in a sentence are marked and related to each other.

Language is one of the most fundamental structures that humans are faced with in almost every social situation. While we have control over the words we decide to speak, we are bound by existing vocabulary, grammatical structures, and often embodied conventions of speaking, which—while dynamic and ever-evolving—do not change at any one speaker’s individual will.

5.9 TECHNO CULTURE: INTRODUCTION

Mr. Penley and Andrew Ross popularized the term Techno Culture in their 1991 book of essays *Techno Culture*. It refers to the interactions between,

and politics of, technology and culture. Techno culture is a societal environment where technology and science are important in shaping social and political aspects. It is a way of looking at how people interact with technology and the meaning they derive from those interactions. It is a way of looking at how new technologies impact society and culture. Techno culture explores the many ways in which technology and culture are intertwined, to consider how technologies shape culture and how culture transforms technologies. It discusses the intimate intrusion of personal technologies, as well as the social impact of large-scale technological projects. Technology has played a significant role in the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage. The effect of technology on culture is multifaceted, with both positive and negative consequences. Technology has transformed the ways in which people create, consume, and share cultural content, leading to new forms of artistic expression, communication, and interaction. However, it has also brought about challenges related to the erosion of traditional cultural practices, the homogenization of culture, and the rise of digital divides.

Key Concepts in Cultural Studies Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

Technology, particularly the internet and social media, has enabled the rapid exchange of cultural ideas, values, and practices on a global scale. This increased connectedness has facilitated cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, enabling people to learn about and appreciate diverse cultures. At the same time, it has led to the spread of global popular culture, which can sometimes overshadow or displace local customs and traditions.

5.9.1 Definition

“Techno culture is a term that describes the relationship between technology and culture, including the politics of those interactions.”
Oxford Dictionary of English Language

Technology has revolutionized the ways in which artists create, distribute, and promote their work. Digital tools, such as image editing software, music production platforms, and 3D printers, have expanded the range of creative possibilities, allowing artists to explore new mediums and techniques. The democratization of creative tools has also enabled more people to participate in artistic and cultural production, fostering greater diversity and inclusivity in the arts.

The rise of digital technologies has altered the ways in which people consume cultural content. Streaming services, e-books, and digital art galleries have made it easier for individuals to access and enjoy a wide range of cultural products from around the world. However, these changes have also led to concerns about the devaluation of cultural content, as the abundance of digital media can make it more difficult for artists to earn a living from their work.

The widespread adoption of technology, particularly in communication and entertainment, can lead to the erosion of traditional cultural practices

and the homogenization of culture. As people increasingly rely on digital platforms for communication and leisure, they may become less engaged with local customs and traditions, leading to a loss of cultural diversity and distinctiveness

5.9.2 Erosion of Traditional Cultural Practices

The concept of “technoculture” is widely used in modern fiction. In terms of the traditional concerns treatment of technology is essential. This very idea—along with the suggestion that a viable society might be able to exist without machines—is striking in a modern context. The principal concern of its author is that machines might eventually evolve to the point where they develop consciousness, after which they might be able to supplant humanity as the dominant intelligent species on earth. The word “technoculture” vividly portrays modern society and its discontents. Technoculture provides an important supplement to most fictions of technology in its focus not on a society that uses technology for expansion, but on one that is the object of such expansion. The term “Technoculture” means a way of life followed by modern society with its appliances, cars, and computers.

5.9.3 Technology is a Tool of Oppression

“Technoculture” and “White Noise” show that technology is a tool of oppression, rather than healing, obviously echoing treatment by the new social establishment. The value and importance of “White Noise” is that it presents readers with a mixture of realism with fantasy designed to challenge those assumptions by presenting alternatives of technology. The basic assumption states that society is not predestined or otherwise forced to a particular technology. Thus, the way and mode of life are shaped by technoculture. The first is changes in the scope and uniqueness of the main sectors – technology, information, and industry. This representation classifies industrial production into traditional and high-tech industries, each with diverse needs for technology and innovations. Technoculture allows modern people to exchange information faster and simpler than ever before.

Technoculture provides people with innovations and information applications that have emerged exponentially but play a great role in the everyday life of society. As modern technology advances, society becomes bounded by computers, from large ones handling medical and scientific tasks to microcomputers in cars, home appliances, games, entertainment centres, and everywhere else. Overdependence on technology is explained by the fact that people cannot live and perform well without technology and innovations that enter everyday life.

5.10 CONCLUSION

In sum, the term and concept of “technoculture” reflect the essence of modern society and its overdependence on technology. Still, it leaves open the possibility that both the opportunities and weaknesses are merely projections of technological innovations. Techno culture penetrates all spheres of life and dictates norms and standards of living.

Key Concepts in Cultural Studies Identity, Race, Class, Gender, Ideology Hegemony, Resistance, Agency, Techno-culture

5.11 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. How are the identities formed?
- II. How are the identities marginalised?
- III. What is the cultural identity?
- IV. How does the cultural identity influences identity and learning?
- V. What is the role of agency in class relation?
- VI. What is the role of cultural institutions in social and political movements?
- VII. Discuss the concept of Identity in detail?
- VIII. Discuss the concept of agency and it's importance.
- IX. Why cultural identity is important?
- X. Why the cultural identity of women is flexible?
- XI. What is the importance of resistance and class in cultural study?
- XII. Comment on the importance of technoculture in modern age?
- XIII. How does the resistance is important in shaping the culture?

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

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6.1 INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

This Unit on Language and Cultural Studies delves into the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and society, showcasing the profound impact of language on cultural values, beliefs, and identities. Through an interdisciplinary lens, we will explore linguistic diversity, cultural storytelling, social norms, and language's role in shaping our perceptions. Key theories from structuralism, post-structuralism, and Derrida will illuminate the significance of language and cultural studies. In this unit we will be looking at *Introduction to Language and Cultural Studies*, *Signs, Texts and Codes: Structuralism in Cultural Studies*, *Poststructuralism and the Crisis of Representation* and *Derrida and Cultural Studies*

6.1.1 Objectives

1. To introduce the field of Language and Cultural Studies, exploring its key concepts and interdisciplinary nature.
2. To provide a background on how language, culture, and communication are interrelated and how they contribute to the formation of identity, social relations, and societal norms.
3. To understand the key theories and approaches that have shaped Language and Cultural Studies, including its development as an academic field.

6.1.2 Introduction to Language and Cultural Studies

Language and Cultural Studies is a multidisciplinary field that examines the relationship between language and culture, focusing on how language both shapes and is shaped by the cultural contexts in which it exists. This academic discipline draws from diverse fields such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and media studies to explore the intricate connections between language, identity, power, communication, and society.

Language is not merely a tool for communication but also a fundamental part of the social structures that govern our lives. It reflects the values, ideologies, and power dynamics embedded within a particular culture. In turn, culture is a system of meanings and practices shared by a group of people, and language plays a central role in creating, maintaining, and transmitting these meanings. Cultural studies, with its critical approach,

seeks to understand the ways in which language both reflects and constructs culture.

6.1.3 Background

The origins of Language and Cultural Studies can be traced to the development of linguistic and cultural theory in the 20th century. While traditional linguistic studies focused on language, structure and grammar, scholars such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky, and Michel Foucault expanded the scope of language analysis to include its social, cultural, and ideological functions.

In the early 20th century, Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, revolutionized the study of language by introducing the idea of language as a system of signs. According to Saussure, the meaning of words is not inherent but is determined through their differences from other words within a system of language. This idea of signifiers (the word or symbol) and signified (the concept the word refers to) became foundational in the field of semiotics, which is the study of signs and their meaning-making processes.

As cultural studies emerged, scholars like Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams began to apply these linguistic concepts to the study of culture. They emphasized how cultural practices, such as literature, television, and film serve as forms of communication that encode meanings about race, gender, class, and other social identities. Cultural studies thus evolved as an interdisciplinary field that used the study of language to examine cultural products, practices, and ideologies.

This theoretical evolution led to the emergence of post-colonial studies, feminist theory, and critical race theory, each of which addressed how language and culture intersect with power dynamics in different contexts. In each of these areas, scholars highlighted how language both constructs and reflects social hierarchies, shaping identity and cultural narratives.

6.1.4 Summary

The field of Language and Cultural Studies explores the relationship between language, culture, and society, emphasizing how language not only conveys meaning but also shapes the way people understand and construct their identities. Language is both a tool of communication and a vehicle for the transmission of cultural norms, values, and ideologies. Cultural studies scholars investigate how language functions within cultural and social contexts, considering how various forms of communication (literature, media, art, etc.) are used to create, challenge, and reinforce social meanings.

At the core of cultural studies is the belief that culture is not a neutral, passive reflection of society but an active force that shapes individuals and communities. Structuralism and post-structuralism are two key theoretical frameworks in this field. Structuralism examines the underlying systems and structures that govern culture and language, while post-structuralism

challenges the notion of fixed meaning, emphasizing the fluidity and multiplicity of interpretations. These approaches are critical in understanding how language functions as both a social and cultural practice, shaping the ways in which individuals and groups perceive themselves and others.

Language and cultural studies also address the role of power and ideology in shaping culture. Critical theory and postcolonial theory, for example, explore how dominant groups use language and culture to maintain control, while marginalized groups resist and challenge these narratives through alternative forms of expression and meaning-making.

6.1.5 Analysis

The significance of Language and Cultural Studies lies in its ability to connect linguistic theory with cultural practices, offering a holistic view of human communication and social life. Language is deeply embedded in cultural practices. The words, symbols, and metaphors we use to describe our world shape how we perceive it. Whether we are talking about gender, race, class, or nationality, language plays a crucial role in the creation of meaning and identity.

The semiotic approach, pioneered by Saussure, emphasized the relational nature of meaning. According to Saussure, meaning arises from the differences between signs. For example, the meaning of the word "man" is not defined by its intrinsic qualities but by how it differs from the word "woman." This relational model of meaning-making is useful for understanding how language constructs social categories, including gender, ethnicity, and class.

Cultural studies expand on this linguistic approach, arguing that culture is made up of symbolic practices through which meaning is produced and transmitted. Media, art, and literature are all cultural forms that communicate ideologies and power relations. For example, advertisements and films may perpetuate stereotypes about race, gender, and class, reinforcing societal norms. By analysing the language and symbols used in these cultural texts, scholars can reveal the hidden power structures and ideologies that shape public discourse.

A critical aspect of Language and Cultural Studies is its focus on power. Scholars like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu have explored how language and culture are used to exercise power. Foucault's work on discourse and knowledge highlights how language constructs social realities and how power is embedded in the way we talk about the world. For example, the medical profession's discourse about illness and health shapes our understanding of the body and society's treatment of the sick. Similarly, Bourdieu's theory of habitus suggests that language is deeply connected to social class and cultural capital, affecting how people navigate social spaces and interact with others.

6.1.6 Conclusion

Language and Cultural Studies is a vital interdisciplinary field that allows us to understand how language and culture are inextricably linked. The evolution of structuralism and post-structuralism in cultural theory has provided new ways of thinking about meaning and representation. While structuralism emphasized the importance of underlying systems in culture, post-structuralism challenged the idea of fixed meanings and underscored the fluid, contested nature of interpretation. Ultimately, Language and Cultural Studies provides a critical framework for examining how language and culture intersect with social power and identity. By exploring these connections, the field offers important tools for understanding the role of communication in shaping our world.

6.2 SIGNS, TEXTS, AND CODES: STRUCTURALISM IN CULTURAL STUDIES

6.2.1 Objectives

1. To define and explain the concepts of signs, texts, and codes within the context of structuralism in cultural studies.
2. To explore how structuralism provides a framework for understanding culture as a system of signs.
3. To analyse how structuralism influences contemporary cultural analysis and its impact on the study of culture, identity, and power.

6.2.2 Introduction

The study of culture is intricately connected to the analysis of signs, texts, and codes. Structuralism, a theoretical framework that emerged in the early 20th century, provides a systematic approach to understanding how meaning is produced and organized within cultural systems. The key components of structuralism, signs, texts, and codes are essential to understanding how cultural meanings are constructed and communicated. Signs are the basic units of meaning, texts are organized structures of meaning, and codes are systems of rules and conventions that govern how signs and texts are interpreted. In cultural studies, these concepts are used to decode the complex web of meaning that makes up cultural products, ranging from language and literature to media and everyday social practices.

6.2.3 Background

Structuralism emerged as a dominant intellectual movement in the early 20th century, particularly in the fields of linguistics and anthropology. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure is often credited as the founding figure of structuralist theory, especially for his work on the sign and its role in meaning-making. According to Saussure, language is a system of signs, and the meaning of these signs arises from their relationships to one another rather than from any inherent properties they may possess.

Saussure's distinction between the signifier (the physical form of a word or symbol) and the signified (the mental concept the sign represents) laid the groundwork for later structuralist thought in cultural studies.

Following Saussure's work, Claude Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, extended the principles of structuralism to the study of culture. Levi-Strauss analysed myths, rituals, and other cultural phenomena as systems of signs that could be understood through their structural relationships. He argued that these cultural forms were not random or arbitrary but followed a set of underlying rules or structures, much like language.

In cultural studies, the structuralist approach was further developed by theorists such as Roland Barthes and Stuart Hall, who sought to understand how meaning is produced in cultural texts such as literature, media, and advertising. Barthes' work on semiotics (the study of signs) and mythology explored how dominant ideologies are embedded in cultural products and how they shape societal values. Stuart Hall, a key figure in the development of cultural studies, applied structuralist ideas to media analysis, arguing that cultural texts are sites of struggle and negotiation where meaning is constantly constructed, contested, and interpreted.

In the mid-20th century, structuralism became a dominant framework in cultural theory, offering new ways of analysing everything from literature and art to everyday social practices. However, the limitations of structuralism especially its focus on fixed structures and its neglect of individual agency led to the rise of post-structuralism, a movement that critiques the stability and determinism of structuralist thought.

6.2.4 Summary

At its core, structuralism is concerned with the study of systems and structures that govern meaning. In cultural studies, structuralism is used to analyse the way cultural meanings are produced, communicated, and interpreted. The concepts of signs, texts, and codes are central to this analysis.

- Signs are the basic units of meaning, consisting of a signifier (the word or symbol) and a signified (the concept or idea the sign refers to). The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and defined through differences from other signs within the system.
- Texts are organized systems of signs, where the individual components are structured in ways that create specific meanings. Texts may include everything from literary works to advertisements, films, and even everyday conversations.
- Codes are the conventions and rules by which signs and texts are interpreted. These codes are shaped by cultural norms, ideologies, and social practices, and they govern how people understand and make sense of cultural phenomena.

Structuralism in cultural studies examines how these components, signs, texts, and codes interact to produce meaning. For example, in literature, the structure of a narrative, the relationships between characters, and the use of symbols all contribute to the overall meaning of the text. In the media, the way certain images and messages are encoded and decoded by audiences reflects the broader cultural codes that shape interpretations of race, gender, and class.

Structuralism's focus on underlying structures has been instrumental in revealing how culture is not a random collection of individual expressions but a system of organized meanings that reflect social orders and power relations. However, as the theory developed, it faced criticism for its determinism and neglect of individual agency, leading to the rise of post-structuralism.

6.2.5 Analysis

Structuralism offers a powerful analytical tool for understanding culture, as it provides a framework for deciphering the complex web of meanings in cultural texts. The theory's emphasis on systems, structures, and rules allows cultural studies scholars to examine how culture functions as a system of signs that produces meaning.

One of the major strengths of structuralism is its ability to uncover the hidden structures that shape cultural practices and societal norms. For example, Roland Barthes' work on mythologies revealed how seemingly innocent cultural products, such as advertisements or popular films, can serve to propagate dominant ideologies. Barthes argued that cultural texts often encode "myths," unquestioned assumptions and beliefs that support the status quo. These myths are constructed using signs, and they function to perpetuate power relations within society.

Another important contribution of structuralism is its insight into the relational nature of meaning. As Saussure emphasized, meaning is not inherent in a sign itself but arises from its differences from other signs in the system. This insight has been crucial in understanding how meaning is negotiated and constructed within cultural systems. In the media, for instance, the portrayal of gender roles in television shows can be understood in relation to the portrayal of masculinity and femininity in other media texts. The way these roles are constructed and interpreted depends on the cultural codes that govern social expectations.

However, structuralism has also been criticized for its limitations. One significant critique is its determinism, the idea that culture is governed by underlying structures that dictate meaning. Critics argue that this approach overlooks the role of individuals in actively shaping culture and meaning. Post-structuralism, which emerged as a reaction to structuralism, challenges the stability and determinism of structuralist thought. Jacques Derrida, for example, argued that meaning is never fixed but is always in a flux, as language is inherently unstable. Post-structuralists emphasize the importance of difference, ambiguity, and the fluidity of meaning.

Despite these critiques, structuralism remains an essential theoretical tool in cultural studies, particularly in its ability to decode cultural products and reveal how meaning is constructed within specific social and cultural contexts.

6.2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, structuralism has been a foundational theory in cultural studies, providing a framework for understanding how cultural meanings are produced and communicated through systems of signs. This approach has been instrumental in analysing how ideologies, power relations, and social norms are encoded in cultural texts and practices. While structuralism has been criticized for its determinism and lack of attention to individual agency, it has nonetheless contributed significantly to our understanding of culture as a system of meaning

6.3 POST-STRUCTURALISM AND THE CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION

6.3.1 Objectives

1. To define post-structuralism and explain its emergence as a response to structuralism.
2. To investigate the implications of post-structuralism for cultural theory, particularly in relation to the production of meaning and the role of language.
3. To examine how post-structuralism challenges traditional notions of truth, identity, and the stability of meaning.

6.3.2 Introduction

Post-structuralism is an intellectual movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a reaction against the determinism and structuralist methodologies that dominated the intellectual landscape of the early 20th century. Where structuralism focused on uncovering the stable structures underlying culture, language, and society; post-structuralism seeks to challenge these assumptions by emphasizing the instability of meaning, the fragmentation of truth, and the constant play of interpretations. Central to post-structuralist thought is the crisis of representation, which refers to the realization that language and other forms of representation do not directly mirror reality but instead construct and mediate our understanding of the world. This crisis questions the very foundation of how meaning is produced and understood.

6.3.3 Background

Post-structuralism arose as a reaction to structuralism, a dominant intellectual approach in fields like linguistics, anthropology, and cultural studies. Structuralism, influenced heavily by figures such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss, sought to uncover the underlying

structures that govern language, culture, and society. Structuralists believed that by analysing the systems of signs (language, rituals, myths, etc.), it was possible to reveal the universal structures that shape human behaviour and thought.

In contrast, post-structuralism rejects the idea of universal, stable structures. Instead, it emphasizes difference, deconstruction, and the fluidity of meaning. It arose primarily in France during the 1960s and 1970s, and its key figures include Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Jean Baudrillard. These thinkers challenged the structuralist assumption that language and representation functioned in a stable, coherent way. They argued that meaning is never fixed, always deferred, and subject to interpretation. In the context of the crisis of representation, post-structuralists contend that representations (whether through language, media, or images) do not faithfully represent an objective reality, but rather are shaped by cultural codes, power relations, and the context in which they are produced.

The crisis of representation is also deeply linked to questions of identity, truth, and subjectivity. Post-structuralists argue that subjectivity is not fixed but fragmented, fluid, and constructed through discourse and language. There is no singular, unified truth or self but a multiplicity of meanings and perspectives that shift and evolve.

6.3.4 Summary

Post-structuralism is best understood as a broad intellectual movement that critiques the assumptions of structuralism and questions the possibility of objective, stable representations of reality. The crisis of representation is central to post-structuralist thought, as it reveals that representation is not a straightforward reflection of the world, but a complex, contingent, and mediated process.

The key figures in post-structuralism include:

- Jacques Derrida, whose work on deconstruction questioned the binary oppositions that structure language and thought (e.g., presence/absence, truth/falsehood). Derrida argues that meaning is never fully present; instead, it is always deferred and in flux—a concept known as difference.
- Michel Foucault, who explored how knowledge and power are intertwined argues that discourses (systems of knowledge and representation) shape how we understand the world and ourselves. For him, power operates through representation, determining what is accepted as truth and marginalizing other forms of knowledge.
- Roland Barthes, famously declared that "the author is dead," arguing that the meaning of a text is not determined by the author's intentions but is open to a multiplicity of interpretations. Barthes emphasized the importance of the reader's role in creating meaning, suggesting that

texts are sites of conflict, where various interpretations battle for dominance.

Post-structuralism challenges the idea that language can directly represent or reflect reality. Rather than being a neutral tool that faithfully represents the world, language is seen as a site of struggle, where meaning is constantly shifting and subject to interpretation. This crisis of representation has profound implications of how we understand culture, truth, identity, and power.

6.3.5 Analysis

The crisis of representation marks a fundamental shift in our understanding of language and meaning. Post-structuralism highlights that representation is not a passive reflection of the world but an active process that constructs and mediates our understanding of reality. This process is deeply influenced by power relations, ideology, and the social context in which representations are produced. The crisis of representation reveals that meaning is never fixed or stable, and that every representation carries with it a potential for ambiguity, contradiction, and contestation.

Jacques Derrida's deconstruction is a central tool in post-structuralist thought. Derrida's notion of difference suggests that meaning is always deferred in language; we never arrive at a fixed, stable meaning. Instead, meaning is continually delayed as words and concepts depend on each other for their definition. For example, the meaning of a word is not inherent but arises through its relationship to other words in the system of language. Derrida's deconstruction challenges binary oppositions (such as male/female, light/dark, truth/lie) by showing how these oppositions are unstable and constructed.

Michel Foucault's work on the relationship between power and knowledge furthers the critique of representation by demonstrating how discourses (systems of knowledge and representation) shape what we consider to be true or real. For Foucault, power operates through representation, dictating what can be said, known, and accepted. In works like *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explores how institutions (such as prisons, schools, and hospitals) construct representations of knowledge that reinforce social norms and control. Foucault's analysis suggests that knowledge and truth are not objective or neutral but are produced through social power relations, which influence how we perceive and represent the world.

Roland Barthes' essay "The Death of the Author" challenges traditional ideas about authorship and interpretation. Barthes argued that the meaning of a text is not determined by the intentions of the author but is created through the interaction between the text and the reader. By focusing on the reader's role in meaning-making, Barthes emphasized the plurality and openness of texts. The meaning of a text is not fixed but is subject to various interpretations, each shaped by the reader's background, context, and experiences. This approach decouples meaning from an authoritative source and places it in the hands of the audience.

The crisis of representation reveals the limitations of traditional forms of understanding and interpreting the world. No representation can claim to be an objective mirror of reality, as every representation is shaped by culture, ideology, and power. Language, images, and symbols do not passively reflect the world but actively construct it. The post-structuralist rejection of stable meaning undermines the possibility of achieving a final, definitive truth, leaving room for interpretation, ambiguity, and contestation.

6.3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, post-structuralism represents a radical shift in our understanding of meaning, representation, and truth. By emphasizing the instability and relativity of meaning, post-structuralists challenge the assumption that language can objectively represent the world. The crisis of representation reveals that our knowledge of the world is always mediated through language, discourse, and power, and that meaning is never fixed but always in flux.

Though post-structuralism has faced criticism for its perceived relativism and nihilism, its insights remain vital for understanding the complexities of meaning and representation in contemporary culture. The crisis of representation is not a crisis of meaning itself, but rather a challenge to the traditional ways in which meaning has been understood, allowing for a more fluid, dynamic, and critical engagement with the world.

6.4 DERRIDA AND CULTURAL STUDIES: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS

6.4.1 Objectives

1. To introduce Derrida's key concepts, including deconstruction and difference, and how they challenge traditional understandings of meaning, identity, and culture.
2. To investigate how Derrida's work has been applied to cultural studies, especially in fields like literature, film, gender studies, and post-colonial studies.
3. To reflect on the ongoing relevance of Derrida's ideas within cultural studies and the evolving nature of this interdisciplinary field.

6.4.2 Introduction

Jacques Derrida, a French philosopher best known for developing the theory of deconstruction, had a profound impact on various academic fields, including cultural studies. Cultural studies, which emerged as an interdisciplinary field of study in the mid-20th century, seeks to understand how culture shapes and is shaped by power, identity, and society. Derrida's ideas, particularly his deconstructive approach to texts and meanings, provide a critical lens through which cultural artifacts, from

literature to film, from everyday practices to institutional structures, can be interrogated.

Derrida's challenge to the Western metaphysical tradition, which prioritized stable meaning and clear distinctions, has led to new ways of interpreting cultural phenomena. Cultural studies, concerned with analysing how cultural products and practices function within broader social contexts, has benefitted from Derrida's critique of language, representation, and power. We will delve into the ways in which Derrida's philosophical innovations have shaped the landscape of cultural studies, enabling scholars to challenge conventional readings of cultural texts and explore the complexities of meaning and identity in ways that foreground issues of marginalization, hybridity, and power dynamics.

6.4.3 Background

Jacques Derrida was a key figure in the development of post-structuralist philosophy, which arose as a reaction against structuralism and traditional epistemological assumptions. His influential works, including *Of Grammatology* (1967) and *Writing and Difference* (1967), introduced concepts that destabilized traditional binaries (such as presence/absence, speech/writing, etc.) and questioned the stability of meaning itself. Derrida argued that meaning is always deferred, always contingent and that there is no ultimate, foundational truth in language or in the world. He coined the term *différance* (a play on "difference" and "deferral") to suggest that meaning is never fixed or fully present but always in a state of flux.

In the context of cultural studies, Derrida's ideas provided a critical framework for understanding how culture is constituted through language, representation, and power. His critiques of Western philosophy's reliance on stable meanings, clear distinctions, and binary oppositions resonated with cultural studies scholars who sought to examine the ways in which cultural practices and identities are constructed, maintained, and contested in various forms.

6.4.4 Summary

Cultural studies, which focuses on understanding cultural practices, identities, and institutions within the broader socio-political context, has been significantly influenced by Derrida's ideas. His approach to deconstruction challenges the idea that cultural texts possess inherent, fixed meanings. Deconstruction seeks to reveal the multiple, often contradictory meanings embedded in texts, thus destabilizing their purported coherence. This opens new possibilities for cultural criticism, allowing scholars to examine how certain cultural products reinforce or challenge social norms, ideologies, and power structures.

In cultural studies, Derrida's work is often applied to examine issues related to identity (gender, race, sexuality), the representation of marginalized groups, and the ways in which cultural artifacts reflect or subvert dominant ideologies. For instance, in gender studies, Derrida's ideas have been instrumental in critiquing the binary construction of

gender and sexuality, enabling scholars to explore the fluidity of gender identities. In post-colonial studies, his critique of binary oppositions (such as colonizer/colonized) helps to analyse the complexities of cultural exchange, power, and identity in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Furthermore, Derrida's focus on language and its role in constituting reality has made him an important figure in the study of media, film, and literature, where scholars use deconstruction to analyse how texts produce meaning and how power is inscribed in cultural representations. Cultural studies scholars, drawing on Derrida, critique the assumption that cultural artifacts have straightforward meanings and instead focus on how they are sites of ideological struggle, negotiation, and contestation.

6.4.5 Analysis

One of the key contributions of Derrida to cultural studies is his insistence that meaning is never stable. Traditional approaches to cultural analysis often assume that meanings in texts (whether literary, visual, or oral) can be deciphered through a clear reading. Derrida's deconstructionist perspective, however, contests this assumption by demonstrating that all texts are internally contradictory and are continually shifting in their meaning due to the play of language and the instability of signs.

In cultural studies, deconstruction encourages scholars to interrogate the ways in which meaning is produced, asking how cultural texts are implicated in power relations and ideological systems. For example, when studying a film or a piece of literature, Derrida's influence prompts readers to look beyond the surface narrative and consider the underlying assumptions, contradictions, and silences that shape cultural meaning. In doing so, cultural studies scholars aim to expose how cultural representations are never neutral but are embedded in and reflective of broader historical, social, and political contexts.

Moreover, Derrida's work has been crucial in reframing questions of identity, particularly in relation to gender, race, and sexuality. His challenge to binary oppositions has opened space for more nuanced explorations of the fluidity of identity. For instance, in the context of feminist cultural studies, Derrida's critique of binary gender categories has influenced scholars to rethink essentialist notions of sex and gender, leading to more inclusive and fluid representations of identity. Similarly, post-colonial cultural studies have benefited from Derrida's approach to deconstruction, as it helps to deconstruct the binary opposition between colonizer and colonized, emphasizing the complexities and ambiguities of colonial relationships.

Despite its usefulness, Derrida's deconstruction is not without its critics. Some argue that it can be overly focused on the deconstruction of texts, leaving little room for constructing positive, emancipatory alternatives. Others suggest that Derrida's emphasis on language and textuality can obscure the material realities of power and oppression, focusing too much on the abstract and symbolic aspects of culture while neglecting the material and social conditions that shape cultural practices.

6.4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, Jacques Derrida's philosophical ideas, particularly his theory of deconstruction, have a significant impact on cultural studies. His challenge to the stability of meaning and his critique of binary oppositions have reshaped how cultural texts are analysed, providing new ways of understanding power, identity, and ideology in culture. Derrida's ideas have helped cultural studies move beyond traditional approaches that seek to uncover fixed meanings and have encouraged a more critical, nuanced understanding of how cultural practices function within a web of power and representation. However, while Derridean thought has opened new avenues for analysis, it also faces criticism for its focus on deconstruction and its abstract nature. Despite these critiques, Derrida's influence remains vital in the ongoing development of cultural studies as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry.

6.5 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. How does language function as a tool for constructing and negotiating identity in different cultural contexts?
 - II. How does structuralism help us understand the relationship between language and culture?
 - III. How does post-structuralism challenge traditional views of representation in cultural texts?
 - IV. In what ways can Derrida's ideas of *difference* be applied to the study of race and post-colonialism in cultural studies?
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LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

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7.3 Wittgenstein and Language Games

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Building on the previous Unit, this Unit on Language and Cultural Studies delves into the influential theories that shape our understanding of language, culture, and power. We will examine Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse, practice, and power, as well as psychoanalytic theories from Freud, Lacan, and Zizek. Additionally, we will explore how

Ludwig Wittgenstein's Language Games contribute to the development of thought and language acquisition. In this chapter we will be looking at *Foucault: Discourse, Practice and Power*, *Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Zizek* and *Wittgenstein and Language Games*

7.1 OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce Foucault's understanding of discourse and how it shapes knowledge and social structures.
2. To understand the relationship between discourse, practice, and power in Foucault's work.
3. To reflect on the impact of Foucault's work on cultural studies, sociology, and political theory.

7.1.1 Introduction to Michel Foucault:

Michel Foucault, one of the most prominent and influential philosophers of the 20th century, revolutionized social theory with his concepts of discourse, practice, and power. Unlike traditional thinkers who focused on the role of ideology, Foucault explored how power operates through knowledge, language, and social practices. In his work, Foucault challenged established understandings of power, showing that it is not merely held by specific groups but is diffused throughout society and enacted through everyday practices.

Foucault's conception of discourse is central to his analysis of power. He argued that discourse is not simply a set of ideas or language, but a system of practices that shapes our understanding of reality. Discourses govern what is considered knowledge, truth, and normalcy, and thus determine who and what can be said, thought, and done in society. By connecting discourse with power, Foucault revealed how social norms, institutions, and practices are not neutral but are integral to the workings of power in shaping human experience. This essay will analyse Foucault's theories in depth, examining how power and discourse are intertwined, and how his insights have influenced the study of social institutions, cultural practices, and identity.

7.1.2 Background:

Michel Foucault's career spanned across several decades (1926-1984) and was marked by a series of groundbreaking works that revolutionized the way we understand power, knowledge, and social systems. Foucault's early work, particularly in *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), critiqued the ways in which Western societies classify and marginalize individuals—especially those deemed mentally ill or diseased. He argued that knowledge about these subjects was tied to systems of power that constructed categories of normality and abnormality.

Foucault's later work, including *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976), further developed his theories about how power is embedded in social practices. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault analysed the transformation of punishment in Western societies, showing how the shift from corporal punishment to more subtle forms of discipline reflected a broader shift in how power is exercised. He explored how institutions such as schools, hospitals, and prisons use disciplinary practices to regulate individuals' bodies and behaviour.

One of Foucault's key contributions to social theory was his understanding of power. Rather than seeing power as something that is held or possessed by individuals or groups, Foucault conceptualized power as diffuse, embedded in everyday practices, institutions, and discourses. Power is not just top-down or repressive but is productive and constitutes knowledge, social norms, and identities. This view of power is a central aspect of his analysis of discourse, as he showed how knowledge and truth are produced through discursive practices.

7.1.3 Summary:

Foucault's analysis of discourse, practice, and power is primarily concerned with the relationship between knowledge and societal control. Discourse, in Foucault's terms, refers to systems of knowledge and language that structure how individuals and groups understand the world. These systems are not neutral; they are imbued with power and are instrumental in creating and maintaining social hierarchies. Discourses define what can be said, what can be known, and who has the authority to speak. This relationship between discourse and power is crucial to the understanding of Foucault's approach to social theory.

In his seminal work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault argues that discourses are governed by rules that determine what counts as legitimate knowledge in each society. These rules shape institutions, social practices, and individual identities. For example, in *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault demonstrates how medical knowledge and practices, which emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries, transformed, how bodies were understood and treated. The discourse of medicine defined what was considered healthy or abnormal, and the practice of medicine itself became a mechanism for regulating individuals' bodies.

Foucault's concept of power is intricately tied to discourse. Power, for Foucault, is not just a force wielded by the state or dominant groups but is embedded in all social relations and institutions. Power is enacted through discursive practices and shapes knowledge, behaviour, and social norms. This is particularly evident in his study of prisons and surveillance in *Discipline and Punish*, where he analyses how the shift from sovereign power (exercised through public spectacles of punishment) to disciplinary power (exercised through surveillance and normalization) reflects broader shifts in how societies control and regulate their populations.

Foucault's analysis of power also emphasises its productive nature. Power does not simply repress or constrain; it shapes reality by creating

categories of knowledge, norms, and identities. For instance, in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault shows how the discourse surrounding sexuality has shaped modern conceptions of the self, identity, and morality. Instead of repressing sexuality, modern power systems have created new ways of understanding and talking about it, influencing how individuals relate to their own bodies and desires.

7.1.4 Analysis:

Foucault's theories about discourse, practice, and power have had a profound impact on a wide range of fields, including sociology, political science, cultural studies, and gender studies. His rejection of a top-down view of power, which focuses on the state or specific groups controlling others, has paved the way for more nuanced analyses of power dynamics in society. By focusing on how power operates in everyday practices, institutions, and knowledge systems, Foucault has introduced new ways of understanding how social control operates through cultural norms, medical practices, educational systems, and even personal identities.

One of the most significant contributions of Foucault's work is his focus on the relationship between power and knowledge. His concept of *power/knowledge* demonstrates that what we know and what we take to be true is always connected to systems of power. This insight has profound implications for cultural studies, as it encourages scholars to think critically about how cultural products like films, literature, media, both reflect and reproduce dominant power relations. Discourses, whether in the form of media representations, legal frameworks, or medical diagnoses, play a crucial role in shaping societal norms and behaviours.

Foucault's work on surveillance and discipline, particularly in *Discipline and Punish*, has been instrumental in understanding the transformation of modern forms of power. The idea of the panopticon, a prison designed to allow a single guard to observe all prisoners without them knowing when they are being watched has been widely adopted as a metaphor for the ways in which surveillance operates in contemporary society. In modern contexts, the rise of surveillance technologies, data collection, and social media can be understood through Foucault's lens, highlighting how power operates not only through visible institutions but also through invisible networks of surveillance.

Foucault's ideas have also influenced feminist and postcolonial theory. In feminist theory, his critiques of the construction of gender identities and the regulation of the body resonate with analyses of how patriarchal discourses shape women's experiences and bodies. In postcolonial studies, Foucault's analysis of the ways in which colonial powers constructed knowledge about the "Other" offers insights into how colonialism shaped racial and cultural identities.

However, Foucault's work has also faced criticism. Some scholars argue that his analysis of power is overly diffuse, making it difficult to identify concrete sources of oppression. Others suggest that his focus on discourse and knowledge sometimes obscures material conditions of power, such as

economic inequality and class struggle. Additionally, his emphasis on the productive nature of power has been critiqued for potentially neglecting the ways in which power can be explicitly repressive and violent.

7.1.5 Conclusion:

In conclusion, Michel Foucault's theories of discourse, practice, and power have a profound impact on how we understand the dynamics of knowledge and control in society. By showing how power operates through knowledge systems and everyday practices, Foucault provided new tools for analysing social institutions, cultural practices, and identity formation. His rejection of the traditional notion of power as something held by specific groups or individuals has reshaped how we think about authority and domination, emphasizing the role of discourse in constituting social reality. While his work has faced some criticism, particularly for its focus on abstract forms of power, Foucault's ideas continue to shape contemporary debates in cultural studies, sociology, gender studies, and political theory

7.2 PSYCHOANALYSIS: FREUD, LACAN, AND ZIZEK

7.2.1 Objectives:

1. To introduce the foundational concepts of Freud's psychoanalysis, especially the unconscious, repression, and the Oedipus complex.
2. To examine Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud, particularly his theories of the mirror stage, the symbolic order, and language.
3. To analyse Zizek's contemporary appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis and its application to ideology, politics, and popular culture.
4. To discuss the impact of these thinkers on contemporary cultural theory, including their influence on fields such as literature, film studies, political theory, and philosophy.
5. To reflect on the ongoing relevance and critique of psychoanalysis in the 21st century

7.2.2 Introduction:

Psychoanalysis, founded by Sigmund Freud, revolutionized our understanding of the human psyche, offering new insights into the unconscious, desire, and the nature of human subjectivity. Over time, Freud's theories have been developed, critiqued, and expanded by several prominent thinkers, including Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Zizek. Each of these figures has made significant contributions to psychoanalytic theory, influencing not only clinical psychology but also a wide range of disciplines, including literature, philosophy, film studies, and political theory.

Freud's foundational ideas about the unconscious and repressed desires laid the groundwork for psychoanalysis as both a therapeutic method and a lens through which to view human culture and society. Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, reinterpreted Freud's work by introducing novel ideas, such as the mirror stage and the symbolic order, which linked psychoanalysis more closely with linguistic and structuralist theories. Slavoj Žižek, a contemporary Slovenian philosopher and psychoanalyst, has applied Lacanian psychoanalysis to critique ideology, politics, and popular culture, offering a unique fusion of Marxism, psychoanalysis, and postmodern theory.

This unit will trace the development of psychoanalytic theory from Freud through Lacan to Žižek, highlighting the key concepts that define their work and exploring how they have been used to understand human subjectivity, desire, and social structures. It will also analyse the implications of these ideas for contemporary cultural and political theory.

7.2.3 Background

Psychoanalysis emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries through the work of Sigmund Freud, who is often regarded as the founding figure of psychoanalytic theory. Freud's theories of the unconscious, repression, and the interpretation of dreams introduced a revolutionary approach to understanding the human mind radically shifting, how people thought about mental illness, sexuality, and the inner workings of the psyche.

Freud's major contributions included the concept of the unconscious as a repository of repressed desires and traumas, which manifest in dreams, slips of the tongue, and neurotic behaviour. He also developed the theory of Oedipus complex, which posited that children experience unconscious desires for the opposite-sex parent and rivalry with the same-sex parent. Freud's work laid the foundation for a new approach to psychology that emphasized the importance of unconscious drives and early childhood experiences in shaping adult behaviour.

However, Freud's theories were not without controversy. His emphasis on sexuality, particularly the idea that all human behaviour is motivated by repressed sexual drives, was met with resistance from both the medical community and society at large. Despite these controversies, Freud's work had a profound influence on a wide range of intellectual fields, including literature, philosophy, and cultural theory.

Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, significantly reinterpreted Freud's ideas in the mid-20th century. Lacan introduced a more linguistic approach to psychoanalysis, drawing on structuralism and post-structuralism to argue that the unconscious is structured like a language. His work on the mirror stage, the symbolic order, and the real and imaginary registers reshaped psychoanalytic theory by emphasizing the role of language and social structures in the formation of the self.

Slavoj Žižek, a contemporary philosopher and cultural critic, is a leading figure in the intersection of psychoanalysis and political theory. Drawing

heavily from Lacanian psychoanalysis, Žižek has used psychoanalysis to critique ideology, capitalist society, and contemporary culture. He has also applied psychoanalytic concepts to a wide range of cultural texts, including literature, cinema, and popular media, offering a unique perspective on how the unconscious is implicated in both individual subjectivity and collective social structures.

7.2.4 Summary:

Freud's psychoanalysis fundamentally reshaped how we understand human psychology, focusing on the role of unconscious desires and repressed memories in shaping behaviour. He argued that the mind is divided into three structures: the id (which contains basic drives), the ego (which mediates between desires and reality), and the superego (which represents internalized societal norms). Freud's theory of the unconscious and repression suggests that much of human behaviour is driven by hidden desires and memories that are not accessible to the conscious mind.

Lacan, while building on Freud, introduced new theoretical frameworks that linked psychoanalysis with structuralism and linguistics. One of his key concepts, the mirror stage, describes the moment in an infant's life when they first recognise their reflection in a mirror, marking the beginning of the formation of the ego. Lacan argued that this self-recognition is a fundamental moment of alienation, as the infant identifies with an image that is both themselves and not themselves. Lacan's focus on the symbolic order, the realm of language, social norms, and cultural symbols also redefined psychoanalysis as a theory deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts.

Žižek, drawing on Lacanian theory, has used psychoanalysis to analyse ideology and political structures. He argues that ideology is not simply a set of ideas imposed by elites, but is embedded in unconscious desires and social practices. For Žižek, ideology is a kind of "fantasy" that helps individuals make sense of the world, but also sustains social structures that maintain power. Žižek uses psychoanalytic concepts to explain how individuals' desires are shaped by ideological structures, and how these structures can be subverted through political engagement and social change.

7.2.5 Analysis:

The contributions of Freud, Lacan, and Žižek to psychoanalytic theory represent a development from Freud's focus on the individual psyche to Lacan's emphasis on language and social structures, and finally to Žižek's application of psychoanalysis to political ideology and cultural critique.

Freud's psychoanalysis was revolutionary in its emphasis on the unconscious and the role of repressed desires in shaping human behaviour. His concept of the unconscious suggested that our desires and fears are not fully under our conscious control, and that much of what we do is influenced by hidden, repressed forces. Freud's theories of sexuality, neurosis, and the Oedipus complex also provided important insights into

human development and the formation of social roles. However, his focus on sexuality as the primary driving force behind human behaviour has been criticized for being too reductive and overly focused on individual pathology.

Lacan's work took Freud's ideas further by linking the unconscious to language and the symbolic order. By emphasizing that the unconscious is structured like a language, Lacan moved away from Freud's emphasis on drives and instincts, focusing instead on the way that language, culture, and social structures shape the self. Lacan's notion of the mirror stage, in which the child first identifies with an image of themselves in the mirror, marked a shift in psychoanalysis from a focus on individual pathology to an exploration of how the self is formed through cultural and social processes. Lacan's work derived a new way of understanding identity as fragmented and mediated by social norms, language, and the "Other."

Zizek's work builds on Lacanian psychoanalysis to analyse ideology and political structures. Zizek argues that ideology operates at an unconscious level, shaping the desires and fantasies of individuals and societies. For Zizek, ideology is not merely a set of ideas or beliefs, but a structure of unconscious desires that organize society. This view offers a powerful way of understanding how power operates in modern capitalist societies, where ideological fantasies obscure the true nature of exploitation and inequality. By using psychoanalysis to critique ideology, Zizek offers a unique method for analysing the intersection of desire, power, and culture in contemporary politics.

While each of these thinkers offers important insights into the workings of the human psyche and society, their ideas have also been critiqued. Freud's theories, particularly his emphasis on sexuality, have been criticized for being overly deterministic and for neglecting the social and cultural factors that shape behaviour. Lacan's theories of the mirror stage and the symbolic order have been criticized for being abstract and difficult to apply to practical situations. Zizek's Marxist interpretation of psychoanalysis has also faced criticism for its complexity and for its reliance on a somewhat pessimistic view of human subjectivity.

7.2.6 Conclusion:

Freud, Lacan, and Zizek have each made significant contributions to the development of psychoanalysis, transforming it from a clinical practice into a powerful tool for understanding culture, ideology, and power. Freud's pioneering work on the unconscious and repression laid the foundation for psychoanalysis, while Lacan's focus on language and the symbolic order redefined psychoanalysis as a theory of the self-embedded in cultural and social structures. Zizek has taken Lacanian psychoanalysis further by using it to critique ideology and political structures, offering a unique way of understanding the intersection of desire, power, and culture.

Despite criticisms of their work, the theories of Freud, Lacan, and Zizek continue to shape contemporary thought and have had a profound impact on a wide range of fields, from literature and philosophy to political theory

and cultural studies. Psychoanalysis, through the work of these thinkers, provides a powerful framework for understanding the complexities of human subjectivity and the ways in which unconscious desires shape both individual lives and societal structures.

7.3 WITTGENSTEIN AND LANGUAGE GAMES

7.3.1 Objectives

1. To explain the key aspects of Wittgenstein's theory of language, focusing on how meaning arises from practical use and social context.
2. To analyse the implications of language games for the understanding of meaning, communication, and linguistic diversity.
3. To examine how Wittgenstein's notion of language games challenges traditional views of language, meaning, and philosophy.
4. To consider the impact of Wittgenstein's ideas on contemporary linguistic and philosophical debates, especially in relation to philosophy of language, semantics, and epistemology.

7.3.2 Introduction:

Ludwig Wittgenstein is regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, particularly in the realm of philosophy of language. His work marks a profound shift in how language and meaning are understood. In his later writings, most notably in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein introduced the concept of *language games*, a central idea that challenges traditional theories of meaning and understanding.

Wittgenstein's earlier work in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* had focused on the logical structure of language, positing that language functions as a picture of reality. However, in his later work, Wittgenstein came to reject the idea that language's function could be reduced to a set of logical propositions or pictorial representations. Instead, he emphasized the importance of the use of language in everyday practices, suggesting that meaning is not inherent in words themselves but arises from the context in which they are used. This led him to the notion of *language games*, where language is seen as a collection of interconnected activities, each governed by its own set of rules.

This lesson will explore the idea of language games, its theoretical implications, and how it reshapes our understanding of meaning, communication, and social practices. Through this exploration, we will see how Wittgenstein's later philosophy offers an alternative to traditional approaches to language and contributes to contemporary debates in the philosophy of language.

7.3.3 Background:

Wittgenstein's early work, particularly *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), was heavily influenced by the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle, which sought to explain meaning in terms of logical form. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* argued that language is a representation of reality and that meaningful statements are those that can be empirically verified or are tautologically true. The *Tractatus* had a profound impact on philosophy, but Wittgenstein himself later came to view the book as incomplete and misleading.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Wittgenstein began to distance himself from his earlier views, which culminated in his later work, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). In this text, Wittgenstein develops a new perspective on language that is pragmatic and contextual rather than logical and representational. The key insight in this later philosophy is the idea that meaning is rooted in the practical use of language within different forms of life.

The concept of *language games* emerges as a metaphor to capture the diverse and flexible ways language is used. Wittgenstein argues that language cannot be understood as a single, unified system with fixed meanings. Instead, language consists of a multiplicity of practices, each with its own set of rules that guide communication. These practices include everything from giving directions, making promises, or telling a joke to scientific discourse, legal arguments, or everyday conversation.

7.3.4 Summary

Wittgenstein's concept of *language games* provides a new way of thinking about the relationship between language and meaning. In contrast to the picture theory of language proposed in the *Tractatus*, where words are seen as mirrors of the world, Wittgenstein's later view emphasizes the practical, social, and contingent nature of meaning. According to Wittgenstein, the meaning of a word is not defined by a rigid relationship to a specific object or situation in the world, but the word is used within particular social practices or "games" of language.

A key element of the concept of language games is the idea of *rule-following*. In any language game, participants agree to follow certain rules that govern how language is used. However, Wittgenstein is careful to point out that these rules are not always explicit, and the meanings of words are not fixed in advance. Instead, meaning emerges through shared practices and agreements among speakers in each context. The diversity of language games, ranging from everyday conversations to highly specialized technical languages, shows the flexibility and adaptability of language.

Another important aspect of Wittgenstein's theory is his rejection of the idea that language must mirror a fixed, external reality. Instead, language functions within different *forms of life*—the broader social, cultural, and historical contexts in which language is used. Wittgenstein argues that the

meaning of words is always contingent upon the practice in which they are embedded. Thus, meaning is not something that exists independently of language use, but something that is shaped by human activities and the social roles they play in.

7.3.5 Analysis:

The introduction of language games marks a decisive break from the traditional theories of meaning that dominated philosophy until Wittgenstein's time. Classical theories, including those of Frege, Russell, and the logical positivists, treated language as a system of signs that correspond to objective meanings or facts about the world. Wittgenstein's later philosophy rejects this idea and proposes that language is inherently tied to human practices. Meaning is not a matter of referring to objects in the world but is shaped by how we use words within specific contexts.

One of the central insights of Wittgenstein's concept of language games is that meaning is not static or fixed, but arises from the social and contextual use of language. This is a radical departure from the idea of meaning as a definable, objective relationship between words and the world. By emphasizing the multiplicity of language games, Wittgenstein highlights the diversity of human linguistic practices, showing that different social contexts require different modes of speaking and understanding. For example, the meaning of the word "justice" might vary depending on whether it is used in a legal context, a moral context, or a political context. Each context constitutes a different language game with its own rules and norms of interpretation.

Another key implication of Wittgenstein's theory is the challenge it poses to the notion of private language. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein famously argues that a truly private language, understood only by a single individual, is impossible. This is because language, according to Wittgenstein, is inherently social. The meanings of words can only be established through shared practices and mutual understanding. A private language, by definition, would lack the social context necessary for meaning to arise. This argument challenges theories of meaning that rely on an individualistic conception of mental states or private experiences.

Moreover, Wittgenstein's rejection of fixed meanings in favour of context-dependent usage has important consequences for philosophy, especially in areas such as epistemology and ethics. The idea that meaning is embedded in social practices suggests that knowledge, truth, and ethical norms are not objective or universal, but are shaped by the language games we play. This view opens a more relativistic approach to issues of meaning and understanding, as it highlights the plurality of human experience and the ways in which different cultures and communities develop distinct systems of meaning.

Wittgenstein's notion of language games also has far-reaching implications for the philosophy of science and the study of meaning in general. By focusing on the practical use of language, Wittgenstein encourages philosophers to study how language works in real-life

situations, rather than trying to construct abstract theories of meaning. This shift from theoretical analysis to ordinary language usage has influenced later developments in pragmatism and linguistic philosophy, and has been particularly important in the study of meaning in contemporary philosophy.

7.3.6 Conclusion:

Wittgenstein's concept of language games represents a fundamental shift in the philosophy of language, one that challenges traditional views of meaning and truth. By focusing on the pragmatic use of language within social practices, Wittgenstein offers a more flexible, context-dependent account of meaning that rejects the idea of fixed, objective definitions. His theory emphasizes the importance of rules, shared practices, and social context in shaping the meanings of words and the ways in which we understand the world.

Language games not only provide a new perspective on how language works, but they also have significant implications for epistemology, ethics, and the philosophy of mind. Wittgenstein's rejection of private language and his focus on the social nature of meaning suggest that knowledge and truth are contingent upon the linguistic and cultural practices we engage in. His work continues to influence contemporary debates in philosophy, linguistics, and cultural studies, and offers a powerful critique of traditional theories of language and meaning.

7.4 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. How does Foucault's concept of *power/knowledge* challenge traditional views of knowledge as objective and neutral?
- II. What are the implications of Foucault's work for understanding the relationship between the state and the individual in modern society?
- III. How does Freud's theory of the unconscious challenge traditional views of human consciousness and behaviour?
- IV. How does Zizek apply Lacanian psychoanalysis to critique contemporary political ideologies?
- V. How does Wittgenstein's concept of language games challenge traditional views of meaning as a relationship between words and the world?

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UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL STUDIES THROUGH RICHARD JOHNSON'S “WHAT IS CULTURAL STUDIES ANYWAYS?”

Unit Structure :

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Objectives

8.2 Introduction to the Richards Johnson's Essay “What is Cultural Studies Anyways?”

8.2.1 Background

8.2.2 The Major Themes and Concepts in Cultural Studies

8.2.3 Methodologies

8.2.4 Conclusion

8.3 Suggested Questions

8.4 Work Cited

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Richard Johnson, who was a leader of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham was the also the author of *What is Cultural Studies Anyways?* He believed that the Cultural Studies influence academic disciplines and could also be used as the research methodology and theoretical framework.

8.1.1 Objectives:

- To familiarize students with various theoretical discourses surrounding cultural studies, from which most of the academic programmes draw work/inspiration and prompting practice programmes to embed their practice in social-historical-cultural contexts, thus deepening their disciplinary knowledge of ‘culture.’
- To enable critical thinking and analytical reasoning vis-a-vis a canon of writing from cultural studies and how the discipline has proceeded in India.
- To make the students appreciate the link between their creative and scholarly work with cultural studies as a discipline as well as to make

certain key themes (such as ideology, identity, everyday life, the popular and others) speak to them.

8.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE RICHARDS JOHNSON'S ESSAY "WHAT IS CULTURAL STUDIES ANYWAYS?"

Within the broad field of cultural studies, Richard Johnson's important work, *What is Cultural Studies Anyway?* is a key starting point for grasping this active area. Johnson carefully explores the difficult and unclear aspects of cultural studies, questioning usual definitions and highlighting its mix of disciplines. By looking at the social and political situations from which cultural activities arise, he encourages readers to think deeply about how culture influences, and is influenced by, power structures and beliefs. This introduction not only prepares the way for a wider discussion on the importance of cultural studies today but also pushes for a look at the methods used in the field. By breaking down Johnson's ideas, one gains a better understanding of the complex connections between culture, identity, and power, which helps build a crucial base for further study of the details of cultural studies.

Cultural studies are an academic interdisciplinary discipline that is rooted in subjects from both the humanities and the social sciences and is based upon theories and practices from the same. While many of the seminal texts of cultural studies and early theorists of the discipline were based in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century, its proper establishment and recognition as an area of academic study is vital for understanding society at large and what has happened later to it.

In his article in the year 1986\87 *What is Cultural Studies Anyway?* Richard Johnson has tried to address his title question in a sort of a mix between a descriptive and normative strategy. At the beginning of his article Richard Johnson seems to equate the very question "what is cultural studies anyway?" with the question of "should cultural studies aspire to be an academic discipline?". This question is from the point that is important because Cultural Studies does not accept, and attempt to codify its methodology for its "mix and match" inclinations and interdisciplinary traditions. Richard Johnson stresses criticism as an attitude essential for cultural studies as something that evades methodological codification. Johnson reminds us those cultural studies in many ways was born when literary criticism turned its attention to virtually any human product which bears meaning, that is the historical extension of the denotation of "text".

Cultural Studies is a complex field that goes beyond old academic limits, looking at how culture works in different settings. This area mainly examines how culture, society, and power connect, making cultural items important for study. Richard Johnson pushes for a wider view that looks at more than just texts, including the social and political settings that influence how culture is created and received. This idea supports the need to focus less on the text and more on the unseen forces behind cultural activities, as shown in the ethnographic studies mentioned in (Christopher

Boulton, p. undefined). Moreover, cultural studies focus on how metaphor and representation affect how society views things, as shown by changes in multimodal communication that demonstrate how culture is formed through different ways of expression, as explained in (Elena Mattei). In the end, cultural studies aim to encourage critical thinking and enable change in society.

Understanding Cultural Studies through Richard Johnson's "What is Cultural Studies Anyways?"

8.2.1 Background

The history of Cultural Studies has emerged as a field in post-Britain war in the 50s and 60s, from the minds of scholars such as Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall. They wanted to study to see how the emergence of mass media and consumer society was changing the cultural landscape of Britain. Their own positionalities and lived experiences (being working class, being Black) played a role in the themes they wanted to study. It is important to note here that these pioneers never considered Cultural Studies as only an academic discipline.

While the academic analysis of pop culture is an old age concept to us now, it was not so a few decades ago. In 1964, Richard Hoggart founded the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, the first institution solely dedicated to cultural studies. They were not given much encouragement, as their endeavour to study the workings of mass culture was not one that was easily accepted by other academicians around them or the establishment. It was only in the coming years that cultural studies expanded and gained intellectual attention all over the world and engaged with other schools of thought.

While fields of study such as art, history or literary studies have existed for a very long time, most people in academic background at that time did not consider studying the mass culture as a worthy exercise. However, cultural studies proved to be different. Cultural Studies theorists were the ones that argued that one should engage with and study not just what was traditionally considered culture as in highbrow art or literature but also mass culture and popular (pop) culture and that both were equally important and had to be studied in order to gain a deeper understanding of the society in which we live. Hall redefined culture as "experience lived, experience interpreted, an experience defined."

Cultural theorists analyse not just texts themselves but also the ways in which cultural knowledge is produced and consumed in the real world. This means taking into account the socio-economic, political, and historical context in which texts are made, and the positionalities and marginalities of the makers and the people being represented in the texts. Texts here refer to not just books or literature but photos, art, films, television, fashion, etc – anything that is imbued with cultural meaning.

8.2.2 The Major Themes and Concepts in Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies as a field, especially with regard to its origins, is one that is hugely influenced by the Marxist school of thought and critical theory and is politically inclined with the Left. Some of the major theories that

Cultural Studies is influenced by include structuralism, post-structuralism, semantics, post-colonialism, feminist theory, queer theory, literary theory, etc. It aims to look into how the vectors of race, gender, class, sexuality, etc shape the production and dissemination of culture and media.

The encoding/decoding model, also known as Reception Theory is a landmark theory under Cultural Studies developed by Hall initially in 1973, with reference to television media. He argued that the earlier present model of communication, which is linear, is not accurate as messages in media are encoded with meanings which may be interpreted (decoded) by audiences in different ways based on their sociocultural standing and experiences. He stated that based on this, audiences would arrive at one of three readings – the dominant or preferred reading, wherein audiences decode the messages the way the producer intended them to; the negotiated reading, where there is a mixture of accepting some of the intended meanings but also adding some of their own; and finally, the oppositional reading wherein audiences reject the intended meanings and form their own based on their background.

8.2.3 Methodologies

Johnson begins his article with a description of the goals of cultural studies. The most inclusive of his insights is that "culture involves power and helps to produce asymmetries in the abilities of individuals and social groups to define and realise their needs" (76). In other words, cultural studies aim to study (in various ways) how culture creates asymmetries of power. He moves on to claim that, among other definitions, cultural studies should be defined by "*its characteristic objects of study*"(78). Before Johnson describes the "*characteristic objects of study*," he presents two key terms--consciousness (the characteristically human ability to desire and dream) and subjectivity (that we are to some extent *produced* by the culture in which we live)--and claims that for him "cultural studies is about the historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity" (80). He presents these terms because it is in the ambiguous space between--the play between the two--in which the study of culture takes place.

Johnson then presents a map of the "circuits of culture" which include the initial production of an object, the "text" of the object itself and the texts that surround that object, the readings that these texts encounter, and, closely related to the last point, the lived cultures of which those texts are a part. These circuits of culture are in every case influenced by the social conditions in which they are produced, including their political and economic contexts. It is these cultural forms, then--objects or indeed entire cultures as they travel through these circuits--that constitute the "characteristic objects of study." Those objects of study, then, are not necessarily things like movies or TV. shows or student life, but rather how those things move through a circuit.

The map of the circuit of culture also offers Johnson a way to talk about the characteristic approaches to cultural studies--production studies,

textual studies, and lived cultures--and the advantages and drawbacks of each method. He concludes by arguing that, to the extent possible, a cultural study should take advantage of all three approaches.

Understanding Cultural Studies through Richard Johnson's "What is Cultural Studies Anyways?"

Let us now understand what are the various methodologies that can be used in cultural studies. Despite the disputes about the status of knowledge and the people, it is quite clear which methods are most widely deployed within cultural studies, though researchers disagree about their relative merits. We can start with the standard methodological distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods. That is, between, respectively, methods that centre on counting of things and numbers (e.g. statistics and surveys) and those that concentrate on the meanings generated by actors gathered through participant observation, interviews, focus groups and textual analysis. On the whole, cultural studies have favoured qualitative methods with their main focus on cultural meaning. Work in cultural studies has centred on three kinds of approach:

- **Ethnography:** In which it has often been linked with culturalist approaches and a stress on the actual 'lived experience.' Ethnography is an experience based and theoretical approach which is inherited from anthropology which seeks a detailed overall description and analysis of cultures based on intensive fieldwork. In classical conceptions, 'the Ethnographer participates in people's lives for an extended period of time, watching them to find out what is happening, listening to what is said, asking questions' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:) The objective of this study is to produce what Geertz famously described as 'thick descriptions' of 'the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures' (1973: 10). This would include the unspoken and taken-for-granted assumptions that operate within cultural life. Ethnography concentrates on the details of local life while connecting them to still wider social processes.
- **Textual approach:** which is a range, which have tended to draw from some non-linguistic sign systems, poststructuralism and Derridean deconstruction.
- **Reception studies:** a series which are cross-disciplinary in their theoretical roots.

There are also various other theories and concepts that have been developed and expanded upon by Cultural Studies thinkers. Some such important concepts and areas of study include themes of representation of certain groups, their identities, subcultures, power, belief system and supremacy. Ideology or belief system here is meant to be understood as "*commonly meant maps of meaning that, while they give an impression to be universal truths, but are historically having specific understandings that obscure and maintain power*" (Barker, 2007). Hegemony or supremacy is a concept that was first introduced by the scholar Antoni Gramsci, which can be explained as the processes through dominant groups maintaining social authority over marginalized groups – through

producing and maintaining norms and ideas that legitimized their dominance.

So, after understanding the above point of view we come to address and understand the concept of Richard Johnson an important figure of his time as a cultural activist. He along with others have tried to show how cultural studies are very important and also how it will become a big area to explore by the coming generations.

Richard Johnson shows how developments in cultural studies coincide with similar trends in history which began to show interest in mass culture. Marxism is mentioned as claiming fatherhood of cultural studies, though if anything this discipline is founded on harsh criticism towards old-fashioned "red" thinking, with the formerly hailed Stalin now taking all the heat. And on the corpses that ran through the Gulags, there arose a new strand of neo-marxism in the 70's. In short, cultural studies were in a sense formed when Althusser and Gramsci were translated into English.

Therefore, Richard Johnson proceeds to ask about the inheritance of cultural studies from Marxism and he suggests a triad of premises. Cultural studies' first inheritance is from Marxism which is a notion that *"cultural processes are intimately connected with social relations"* (p.39). The second premise suggested by Johnson is that *"culture involves power and helps to produce asymmetries in the abilities of individuals and social groups to define and realise their needs"* (p. 39). The third is that *"culture is neither an autonomous nor an externally determined field, but a site of social differences and struggles"* (p. 39). Another Marxist contribution to Cultural Studies, Johnson notes, is the work of the Historians of The Communist Party who saw everyday common life as an object of their interest.

Richard Johnson also traces some other influences that contribute to the rise of Cultural Studies that converged at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies (CCCS) To name a few like the literary criticism of F. R. Leavis that first related the conventionalist nature of "High" culture and his successors, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart which have shifted the discussion of art-society relations to "lower" culture with which Cultural Studies have been preoccupied ever since.

"Production" is a key concept in Cultural studies and Richard Johnson's attempt to address to the question of "what is cultural studies anyway?". For him, what is unique for Cultural Studies and Birmingham school (CCCS) is the treatment of production in the wake and context of larger social groups. Cultural and political processes and especially the space and time of both production and consumption, with latter not necessarily determined by the former.

Richard Johnson does not oppose the formalist approach, for the textual analysis method residues in cultural thought as some other more postmodern thinkers describe. He claims that the form alone does not determine function. He states that he understands formalism negatively,

but not as abstraction of forms from texts, but as the abstraction of texts from the other moments" (p. 62). The approach which Johnson terms as Advanced Semiology has led to the notion of narrative creating a stance or subject position towards them in the reader (narratives or images always imply or construct a position or positions from which they are to be read or viewed (p.66)). However, he argues that such subject positions are generated only by formal features (such as "readable" or "writeable" in Roland Barthes' thought) but also by the somewhat unforeseeable idiosyncratic circumstances of their consumption. He notes that "the text-as-produced is a different object from the text as read" (p.58)

What Richard Johnson seems to be after is some formation or formulation of a paradigm for Cultural studies that guide its course, questions and modes of answering, what if the Althusserian view might be termed "problematic", thus enabling to view it "if not as unity, at least as a whole" (p.41). He also takes notice of the field's inherent left wing politics while noting that "cultural studies form a part of the very circuits which it seeks to describe" (p.53).

In his final maneuver in "What is Cultural Studies Anyway" Richard Johnson sums up the three prevailing approaches for Cultural Studies: production based-studies, text-based studies and studies of lived cultures. Each of these approaches isolate a different moment in the life cycle of a cultural object, thus missing out on the big picture. Therefore, Johnson sums up by saying that *"It is not therefore an adequate strategy for the future just to add together the three sets of approaches, using each for its appropriate moment. This would not work without transformations of each approach"* (p.73)

8.2.4 Conclusion

In today's time, the field of cultural studies is one of the most sought field that has vast popularity and has also gained importance across the globe. (e.g reality shows on television) There are numerous associations, research centres and journals that are centred around cultural studies present worldwide, and various international conferences that focus on cultural studies. The importance of cultural studies is relevant now more than ever as the world is experiencing upheavals whether it be socio-cultural, political or environmental with cultural practices and media playing a bigger role.

How can we justify the character of truth in cultural theory and cultural politics? This is one of the central problems of cultural studies. For modernists, the adoption of a realist epistemology has allowed writers and researchers to make universal truth claims. It follows that once we know the truth about the workings of the social world, then we can intervene strategically in human affairs with confidence. All the social sciences, from sociology to economics and psychology, were founded on the premise that conceptual and empirical truth can be discovered. However, realist epistemologies have largely been displaced within cultural studies. This is a consequence of the influence of poststructuralism,

postmodernism and other anti-representational paradigm shifts. These widely accepted (within cultural studies) strands of thinking have undermined the notion of objective and universal truth. For the philosopher Nietzsche (1968) truth is expressed in language so that sentences are the only things that can be true or false. Truth is an ‘army of metaphors and metonyms. An acculturated authority arbitrates between these sentences. Thus ‘truth’ is a question of whose interpretations count as truth. Truth is embroiled in power. Foucault (1972, 1973), whose work was greatly informed by Nietzsche, argues that different epistemes, or configurations of knowledge, shape the practices and social order of specific historical periods. In place of Truth, Foucault speaks about particular ‘regimes of truth’. Similarly, Rorty (1980, 1989) argues that all truth is culture-bound and specific to times and places. Knowledge and values are located in time, space and social power. To argue that all knowledge is positional or culture-bound is not to embrace relativism. Relativism would imply the ability to see across different forms of knowledge and to conclude that they are of equal value. Instead, as Rorty argues, we are always positioned within acculturated knowledge. There is no final vocabulary of language that is ‘true’ in the sense of accurately picturing an independent object world called reality. Our vocabularies are only final in the sense of currently being without a tenable challenge. Thus, our best bet is to go on telling stories about ourselves that aim to achieve the most value.

8.3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. Describe the various methodologies used to study culture.
- II. Explain the study of culture according to Richard Johnson.
- III. Elucidate on the word Popular Culture.

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Understanding Cultural Studies through Richard Johnson's "What is Cultural Studies Anyways?"



UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL STUDIES THROUGH JOHN STOREY’S “WHAT IS POPULAR CULTURE?” IN CULTURAL THEORY AND POPULAR CULTURE: AN INTRODUCTION

Unit Structure :

- 9.1 Introduction
 - 9.1.1 Objectives
- 9.2 Background
 - 9.2.1 Different Definitions of Popular Culture
 - 9.2.2 Summary
 - 9.2.3 Conclusion
- 9.3 Suggested Questions
- 9.4 Works Cited

9 Understanding Cultural Studies through John Storey’s “What is

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Popular culture (or "pop culture") generally refers to the traditions and material culture of a particular society. In western countries, pop culture refers to cultural products such as music, art, literature, fashion, dance, film, cyberculture, television, and radio that are consumed by the majority of a society's population. Popular culture is comprised of types of media that have mass accessibility and appeal.

The term "popular culture" was coined in the mid-19th century, and it referred to the cultural traditions of the people, in contrast to the "official culture" of the state or governing classes. In broad use today, it is defined in qualitative terms—pop culture is often considered a more superficial or lesser type of artistic expression.

9.1.1 Objectives

- To make students understand the concept of Culture
- To explain the various ways a culture or cultures can be seen.
- To help students to see the different aspects of popular culture

9.2 BACKGROUND

Understanding Cultural Studies Through John Storey's "What is Popular Culture?" In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: an Introduction*

The historical context of cultural studies is crucial for understanding its evolution and relevance in contemporary discourse. Emerging from the intersections of sociology, media studies, and critical theory, cultural studies gained prominence in the mid-20th century as a response to the complexities of modern society. Central to this discipline is the examination of how cultural phenomena reflect and influence power dynamics, identity, and social structures. Scholars like Raymond Williams emphasized the importance of cultural materialism, which critiques traditional views by incorporating socio-economic factors into cultural analysis. Additionally, as noted by (Christian Fuchs), the influence of the Frankfurt School's key thinkers laid a foundation for a critical theory that scrutinizes communication within digital capitalism. This scholarly lineage highlights how cultural studies continues to adapt, addressing both historical contexts and contemporary issues like digital media's role in shaping popular culture, thereby offering a robust framework for analysis. Moreover, the discussions surrounding entrepreneurial activity, despite varied interpretations, illustrate the need for nuanced evaluations in understanding cultural and economic interactions, reinforcing the dynamism inherent in cultural studies as articulated.

(Paul Nightingale et al., p. 113-143).

Scholars trace the origins of the rise of popular culture to the creation of the middle class generated by the Industrial Revolution. People who were configured into working classes and moved into urban environments far from their traditional farming life began creating their own culture to share with their co-workers, as a part of separating from their parents and other groups.

After the end of World War II, innovations in mass media led to significant cultural and social changes in the west. At the same time, capitalism, specifically the need to generate profits, took on the role of marketing: newly invented goods were being marketed to different classes. The meaning of popular culture then began to merge with that of mass culture, consumer culture, image culture, media culture, and culture created by manufacturers for mass consumption.

9.2.1 Different Definitions of Popular Culture

In his wildly successful textbook *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (now in its 8th edition), British media specialist John Storey offers six different definitions of popular culture.

- Popular culture is simply culture that is widely favoured or well-liked by many people: it has no negative connotations.
- Popular culture is whatever is left after you've identified what "high culture" is: in this definition, pop culture is considered inferior, and it functions as a marker of status and class.

- Popular culture can be defined as commercial objects that are produced for mass consumption by non-discriminating consumers. In this definition, popular culture is a tool used by the elites to suppress or take advantage of the masses.
- Popular culture is folk culture, something that arises from the people rather than imposed upon them: pop culture is authentic (created by the people) as opposed to commercial (thrust upon them by commercial enterprises).
- Popular culture is negotiated: partly imposed on by the dominant classes, and partly resisted or changed by the subordinate classes. Dominants can create culture but the subordinates decide what they keep or discard.
- The last definition of pop culture as discussed by Storey is that in the postmodern world, in today's world, the distinction between "authentic" versus "commercial" is blurred. In pop culture today, users are free to embrace some manufactured content, alter it for their own use, or reject it entirely and create their own.

All these six definitions of Storey's are still in use, but they seem to change depending on the context. Since the turn of the 21st century, mass media—the way popular culture is delivered—has changed so dramatically that scholars are finding it difficult to establish how they function. As recently as 2000, "mass media" meant only print (newspapers and books), broadcast (televisions and radio), and cinema (movies and documentaries). Today, it embraces an enormous variety of social media and their forms.

To a large extent, popular culture is today something established by niche users. How is "mass communication" moving forward? Commercial products such as music are considered popular even when the audience is tiny, in comparison to such pop icons as Michael Jackson and Britney Spears in the west or the reality shows. The presence of social media means consumers can speak directly to producers—and are producers themselves, turning the concept of pop culture on its head.

So, in a sense, popular culture has gone back to its simplest meaning: It is what a lot of people like.

Culture is a way of being; it is the knowledge system shared by a group of people. Culture includes values, beliefs, norms, language, religion, social roles and habits, shared experiences, food, clothing, holidays, music, the arts, and so much more. Derived from the Latin term *colere*, at the root, culture relates to growth and nurturing; it is the story of a particular group of people and how they came to grow with the Earth around them.

Today, when people travel the world, even with just a backpack while staying at hotels, they will be considered to have important cultural knowledge. Traditionally, to be defined as **cultured**, a person needed to be

associated with high social status, wealth, intellect, power, and prestige. **High Culture** is defined as the subset of experiences that shapes those in the highest class of society. People associated with high culture are part of an elite class who often have political power; they are the ones who attend the ballet or opera on the weekends. Furthermore, high culture is connected to higher education and affluence, often including consistent involvement in the arts and literature. This type of culture depends on money and how it is spent, making membership in high society quite restrictive.

Although defining someone as cultured may seem outdated, the fact is that high culture is still prevalent in modern high-class societies. In today's world, the following examples of cultural activities can be associated with high culture: eg. Ballet, Classical music, theatre, opera, red carpet events, Art exhibitions, Charity events and auctions reserved only for the rich, or expensive caviar serving restaurants.

In examining the discourse surrounding high versus low culture, John Storey critiques the traditional hierarchies that often privilege the former at the expense of the latter, challenging the inherent assumptions about value and meaning in cultural production. Storey posits that high culture is frequently associated with elitism and refined tastes, while low culture is marginalized as mere entertainment or mass consumption (Ted Baker et al.). This dichotomy not only undervalues popular cultural forms but also overlooks their significant role in shaping societal norms and collective identities. Storey urges a re-evaluation of these categories, suggesting that popular culture, which is often dismissed as trivial, can serve as a vital site of resistance and expression for marginalized voices. By fostering a more inclusive framework, Storey illuminates the complexities of cultural status and encourages a deeper understanding of how cultural practices reflect and influence broader social dynamics (Sandra Fredman, p. 37-63).

9.2.2 Summary

At the core of what we know as popular culture studies today is the work of scholars associated with or influenced by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Popular culture itself and intellectual interest in its risks and possibilities, however, long predate this moment. Earlier in the 20th century, members of the Frankfurt School took an active interest in what was then referred to as "mass culture" or the culture industry. Semiotics, emerging in the latter half of the 20th century as an exciting new methodology of cultural analysis, turned to popular culture for many of its objects as it redefined textuality, reading, and meaning. The works of Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco are exemplary in this regard. The work of the Birmingham school, also known as British cultural studies, drew from both of these intellectual traditions but went on to forge its own unique methods drawing on Marxist and poststructuralist theoretical legacies. Quickly spreading across the Anglophone world, Cultural Studies is now widely recognized, if not as a discipline proper, as a distinctive branch of the humanities. Other methodologies contemporaneous with this trend are also now clubbed together as part of

this generalized practice of cultural studies. Important among these are feminist approaches to popular culture exemplified by work on Hollywood cinema and women's melodrama in particular, the study of images and representations through a mass communications approach, and ethnographic studies of readers of popular romances and television audiences. A minor, theoretically weak tradition of popular culture studies initiated by Ray Browne parallelly in the United States may also be mentioned. More recently, Slavoj Žižek has introduced startlingly new ways of drawing popular cultural texts into philosophical debates. If all of these can be taken together as constituting what is generally referred to as popular culture studies today, it is still limited to the 20th century. Apart from the Frankfurt School and semiotics, British cultural studies also count among the precursors it had to settle scores with, the tradition of cultural criticism in Britain that Matthew Arnold and in his wake F. R. Leavis undertook as they sought to insulate "the best of what was thought and said" from the debasing influence of the commercial press and mass culture in general. But the history of popular culture as an object of investigation and social concern goes further back still to the 18th and 19th centuries, the period of the rise and spread of mass literature, boosted by the rise of a working-class readership.

This Unit outlines some of the general features of the debate that the study of popular culture has generated. It is detailed in different ways historically, theoretically and methodologically, in which popular culture has been defined and analysed. The concept of Ideology is crucial in the study of popular culture. The main argument is that popular culture is in effect an empty conceptual category, one that can be filled in a wide variety of often conflicting ways, depending on the context of use. The introduction of the concept of ideology suggests that relations of power and politics inescapably mark the culture/ideology landscape; it suggests that the study of popular culture amounts to something more than a simple discussion of entertainment and leisure. The claim that popular culture is from American culture has a long history within the theoretical mapping of popular culture.

Cultural Theory and Popular Culture in the ninth edition of his award-winning introduction, John Storey presents a clear and critical survey of competing theories of, and various approaches to, popular culture. Its breadth and theoretical unity, exemplified through popular culture, means that it can be flexibly and relevantly applied across a number of disciplines. Retaining the accessible approach of previous editions and using appropriate examples from the texts and practices of popular culture, this new edition remains a key introduction to the area.

The Ninth Edition has the following things to offer: It is full of contemporary examples of contemporary popular culture.

It talks about *Black Lives Matter* with intersectionality and an expanded section on Richard Hoggart and Utopian Marxism brand.

This new edition remains essential reading for undergraduate and postgraduate students of cultural studies, media studies, communication studies, the sociology of culture, popular culture and other related subjects. John Storey is Emeritus Professor of Cultural Studies at the Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Sunderland, UK, and Chair Professor of the Changjiang Scholar Programme at the Comparative Cultural Studies Centre, Shaanxi Normal University, China. He has published widely in cultural studies, including twenty-six books. The most recent is *Radical Utopianism and Cultural Studies* (2019).

Before considering in detail the different ways in which popular culture has been defined and analysed, let us try to outline some of the general features of the debate that the study of popular culture has generated. As Tony Bennett points out, 'as it stands, the concept of popular culture is virtually useless, a melting pot of confused and contradictory meanings capable of misdirecting any number of theoretical blind alleys'. Part of the difficulty stems from the implied otherness which is always absent/present when we use the term 'popular culture'. As we shall see in the Units which follow, popular culture is always defined, implicitly or explicitly, in contrast to other conceptual categories: folk culture, mass culture, dominant culture, working-class culture, etc. A full definition must always take this into account. Moreover, as we shall also see, whichever conceptual category is deployed as popular culture's absent /present other, will always powerfully affect the connotations brought into play when we use the term 'popular culture'. Therefore, to study popular culture we must first confront the difficulty posed by the term itself. That is, 'depending on how it is used, quite different areas of inquiry and forms of theoretical definition and analytical focus are suggested'." The main argument that readers will take from this book is that popular culture is in effect an empty conceptual category, one which can be filled in a wide variety of often conflicting ways, depending on the context of use. In order to define popular culture we need to define the term 'culture'. Raymond Williams calls culture 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'. Williams suggests three broad definitions. First of all, culture can be used to refer to 'a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development.

9.2.3 Conclusion

In simple words, popular culture can be understood as a set of cultural products, practices, beliefs, and objects dominating society. It affects and influences the people it comes across towards these sets of objects or beliefs. From music to dance, movies, literature, fashion, it encompasses everything that is believed and consumed by the majority of people in any society.

Coined in the 19th century, the term popular culture is complex and hard to define. It depends on the context it has been used or on the people who are using it. Viewed literally, it means the culture of the people. Being the culture of the people, it generated through the day- to- day interactions

people engage in, the language they use, the beliefs they hold, the rituals they follow, etc. Historically, it used to be equated with the culture of the poor, and lower classes which were uneducated thus projecting it as an inferior culture against the upper official classes having higher education. This distinction became more prominent during the late 19th century.

According to John Storey, “*popular culture is the culture that is left over, after we have decided what is high culture*” (Storey 2009, p. 6). After the world war, growing social changes and evolving media and technology associated it with that of media culture, image culture, consumer culture, music culture and so on. The use of the term pop in place of popular also shows the influence music culture had on popular culture. However, the term pop is narrower than that of popular. The author John Storey argued that the coming of the industrial revolution and urbanization led to its development. It is constantly evolving and reaching wide areas due to the improvement of mass media in modern times.

The importance of popular culture is seen in the way it impacts society. It influences peoples’ choices, the clothes they wear, the food they eat, the music they listen to. There exist two views about its meaning. It brings a large number of heterogeneous people coming for differing social backgrounds to see themselves as a collective unit, a social group. It unites the people playing an inclusionary role and gives them a sense of identity. It not only provides self-satisfaction but also helps in building a communal bonding.

One view observes popular culture as a tool by which the elites try to influence and control the lower class of uneducated masses by gaining control over the mass media and other ventures of popular culture. It is said that through this culture, the elites divert the people away from the important issues to gain benefits in their favour. The other which is completely in contrast to this is the view that it is the weapon through which the subordinate and lower classes or groups engage in rebellion against the dominant groups.

The idea of popular culture can be spread through or generate from various sources including films, television programs, pop music, sports, books, radio, games and sports, the internet, etc. The ongoing importance of popular culture is evidenced by its profound capacity to reflect and shape societal norms, values, and collective experiences. As an essential realm of cultural studies, popular culture provides insight into the everyday lives of individuals and communities, facilitating a shared sense of identity and belonging. According to (Ashton et al.), during periods of socio-political strife, popular culture often becomes a crucial vehicle for hope and education, allowing people to process their experiences through music, film, and art. Additionally, as demonstrated by evolving educational frameworks like the Bachelor of Entertainment Industries at QUT, there is a recognition of producing skills that merge artistic and business acumen (McKee et al.). This development signifies a growing acknowledgment of how popular culture can be cultivated and harnessed

for both creative expression and commercial viability, thus underlining its enduring relevance in contemporary society.

In conclusion, it becomes evident that Storey's multidimensional approach enables a deeper comprehension of the intricate relationships between culture, identity, and society. His assertion that popular culture serves as a site of both resistance and conformity invites scholars to explore how cultural artifacts and practices reflect broader social dynamics, including power structures and ideological frameworks. By dissecting the layers of meaning embedded in popular culture, Storey enhances our appreciation for its role in shaping lived experiences and community narratives. Ultimately, this exploration underscores the importance of an interdisciplinary perspective in cultural studies, as it reveals how popular culture not only mirrors but also influences societal change. Thus, understanding cultural studies through Storey's insights not only enriches academic dialogues but also informs our engagement with cultural phenomena in everyday life.

Understanding Cultural Studies Through John Storey's "What is Popular Culture?" In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: an Introduction*

9.3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- I. What is an example of popular culture?
- II. What are two examples of high culture?
- III. Why popular culture is in great demand today?
- IV. Importance of Popular Culture in today's society?

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UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL STUDIES THROUGH WALTER BENJAMIN'S 'THE WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION' IN ILLUMINATIONS: ESSAYS AND REFLECTIONS

Unit Structure :

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 Objectives

10.2 About the Author

10.2.1 Background

10.2.2 Summary

10.2.3 Analysis

10.2.4 Key Concepts

10.2.5 Impact on Art and Society

10.2.6 Critique of Aura and Reproduction

10.2.7 Mechanization of Art Production

10.2.8 Art as Commodity

10.2.9 Distraction vs. Contemplation

10.2.10 Conclusion

10.3 Suggested Questions

10.4 Works Cited

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Walter Benjamin's essay, "*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*", first appeared in 1936 in France. The text is divided into 19 sections (15 sections followed by an epilogue in the original manuscript used in Hannah Arendt's edition of 1955, titled *Illuminations* and translated into English in 1968). Walter Benjamin addresses the artistic, cultural, social, economic, and political functions of art in a capitalist society. The essay examines how mechanical reproduction –

particularly via photography and film – transformed the nature, value, and perception of art. It offers a profound critique of the impact of technology on art and the nature of aesthetic experience. Benjamin has made a multifaceted analysis by addressing the cultural, political and philosophical terrains of art in the modern world. The essay examines how the meaning and value of art changes in mass production. It explores how mechanical reproductions alter the aura and authenticity of artworks and reshape our understanding of artistic value. The essay also challenges conventional ideas on artistic expression and the role of art in society, igniting thought-provoking discussions on culture and mass media.

10.1.1 Objectives

The essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* by Walter Benjamin can serve a variety of objectives. Some of them are as follows:

- To study the relationship between Art and Technology.
- To understand the concept of "Aura"
- To analyze the socio-political implications of Art
- To explore the shift from "Cult Value" to "Exhibition Value"
- To understand Art in the context of Modernity
- To connect Art and Capitalism

10.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Walter Benjamin, a German Jewish essayist, philosopher, cultural critic, and media theorist was connected with the Frankfurt School of critical theory. One of the prominent thinkers of the 20th century, Benjamin has published a series of works on culture and society. He has made influential contributions to aesthetic theory, literary criticism, and historical materialism. He is famous for his critical works- *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) and *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940). His major work as a literary critic includes essays on Franz Kafka, Karl Kraus, Nikolai Leskov, Marcel Proust, Charles Baudelaire, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and translation theory.

Walter Benjamin was quiet unknown during his lifetime but, his writings had a deep impact on subsequent aesthetic theory, literary and cultural criticism, and artistic practice.

Born into a Jewish middle-class family, his education took him to Berlin, Munich and Bern before returning back to Berlin in his late twenties. Benjamin was a student of philosophy. He wanted to be an academician but his ambition was disillusioned when the University of Frankfurt dismissed his doctoral thesis as outlandish. He has made enormous contribution as a literary critic, essayist, and translator before shifting to Paris in 1933 which followed the rise of Nazism. During his stay in Paris, he continued to write for literary journals but then Paris succumbed to

Nazi occupation and he fled toward Spain in the hope to gain onward passage to America. When he reached the French-Spanish border town of Portbou he was mistakenly told by a border official that he would be turned over to the secret police of Nazi Germany. In despair, Benjamin committed suicide.

Understanding Cultural Studies through Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*

10.2.1 Background

Walter Benjamin's essay *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* is one of the earliest attempts to theorize the effects of mass media like, photography and film on human perception. The essay was composed in 1935. A year later he revised it and composed the second version of the essay. Both the versions of the essay were published in English posthumously, in the 1970s. The essay looks at the consequences of rapid technological change in the first half of the twentieth century on the *artistic process*. Benjamin analyses how technological tools intervene the process by which we perceive the world. It aims at rethinking the relationship between technology and human sensory apparatus. The essay was written just before the Second World War. Fascism was gaining a stronghold during this period in Europe, especially in Germany. The dangers of technology when used for war are implicated in the text towards the end. Being a Jew, he foresees the threat of the Fascist regime in reorganizing the mass for the world as well as for him. This is suggested in the last section of the essay where he discusses the dangers of Fascism.

10.2.2 Summary

The essay is divided into 15 parts, including an epigraph, preface, an epilogue, and endnotes. In an epigraph, Benjamin cites the French modernist poet Paul Valéry, who anticipates "profound changes" and "great innovations" in the fine arts. Benjamin points out that historically great change have required substantial spans of time. To illustrate his point, he gives the example of Karl Marx whose critique and indictment of the capitalist system occurred early in the development of capitalism.

Reproducibility is the principle of work of art according to Benjamin. He put forth a brief history of art's evolution and the introduction of technologies that made it possible to make art reproducible, including the printing press, the lithograph, and the camera. He exemplifies contemporary film to figure out the way technology has influenced artistic production and reception. Benjamin opines that due to its connection to ritual and history art traditionally maintains its value. It is this connection to tradition which generates a work of art its uniqueness, or what according to Benjamin is its "aura." It is the work of art's presence in time and space.

According to Benjamin, changes in the conditions of production have brought major changes in both art and the way we perceive art. For Benjamin, the reproducibility of artwork through photographs and film renders possible a new way of thinking about the original versus the copy and of the physical object of art versus the derivative copy of it. He says,

the original work of art has an aura, whereas it diminishes in reproductions. "Aura" revolves around the unique existence of the work of art which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction. The technique of reproduction, Benjamin says, detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition as reproductions in principle are infinite. There's only one original portrait of Mona Lisa, but there could be infinite images of the Mona Lisa. So, this plurality, let's say, of the reproductions is substituted for the unique existence of the work of art.

Benjamin says that there are two different plains or poles of valuing art traditionally, one is "cult value", and the other is "exhibition value". Cult value is based on ritual whereas exhibition value results from a piece of art being on view. Benjamin argues that contemporary art is valued entirely for its exhibition value, and thus art is being created with entirely new functions and purposes. Benjamin says that exhibition value reaches its apotheosis in photography and film. He says they are the most serviceable exemplifications of this new function, the new artistic function which he associates with exhibition value. Photography and film are particularly well equipped for exhibition value.

Benjamin argues that film-making is a central example of how the aura of artistic work has vanished. He explains that films are shot in scenes, and not continuous productions. Film audiences do not connect with the actor but with the camera, so the uniqueness that one defined in artistic modes like theater vanishes. The audience views films through a critical, expert lens.

According to Benjamin, Film and photography have fundamentally changed the "nature" of art itself, and their political potential too. Benjamin compares Theater and Film with regards to the actors and the audience with regards to the camera. While a stage actor's performance is presented mostly by the actor himself, it is the camera which presents screen actor's performance. Film also changes viewers' own perception of their world. Technologies like *low-motion* and *close-ups* used in the film make it possible to show "unconscious optics". In this way, Film is able to show us different aspects of reality which we can't normally perceive with our naked eyes.

In the epilogue, Benjamin addresses the political element of his argument, saying that fascists aestheticize politics. He argues that the only result of an aestheticized political discourse is war, and that exponents of war will try to make war and its technologies seem beautiful and valuable. Benjamin concludes the essay asserting that destruction of the aura has ultimately alienated mankind.

10.2.3 Analysis

Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, found in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, provides a profound analysis of the impact of mass production technologies -such as photography and film, on the concept of art, culture, and aesthetics. Benjamin contends that art objects are usually reproducible; the

mechanical reproduction of art by the late 19th and early 20th century in Europe initiated a shift in our understanding and perception of art. With the advance forces of production and technologies like camera we have influential changes in cultural forms- i.e. birth of photography and cinema. These cultural forms present in the superstructure effect changes in people in order to change the way a society's mode of production is configured. Benjamin thinks that photography and film has potential for emancipatory politics to advance society to a higher level than capitalism. His ideas contribute to understanding cultural studies in several key ways:

10.2.4 The Key Concepts

a. Aura and Authenticity:

Walter Benjamin contends that evolution of technology in the late 19th and early 20th century Europe drastically changed our perception of art. He explores the concept of the "aura" of a work of art and how this aura diminishes in a mechanical reproduction.

"Aura" is work of art's presence in time and space. It revolves to the unique existence of the work of art in time and space that conveys authenticity. The space denotes the notion of closeness and distance. The art object gains more "aura" the more "distant" it is from you, meaning that you socially cannot perceive it up close. We observe this in case of heavily valued paintings or sculptures in galleries where one cannot observe it very closely. These artifacts or objects have their own "aura". Reproductions of these objects in the form of photographs or in other media remove this distance between observer and the object. Aura is vanished here. This loss of the aura, according to Benjamin, marks a shift in how art is consumed and appreciated. This is particularly relevant for cultural studies, as it highlights the democratization of art and culture, but also the potential loss of meaning and depth when mass production and reproduction dominate.

b. The Decay of the "Cult Value" and the Rise of "Exhibition Value"

Benjamin says that there are two different plains or poles of valuing art traditionally, one is *cult value*, and the other is *exhibition value*. **Cult value** is associated with its ritual, ceremonial, and authentic nature while **exhibition value** is related to how the work of art is viewed in public and consumed in mass culture. According to Benjamin, in the age of mechanical reproduction, we find a shift or the emphasis from cult value to exhibition value. Art no longer serves its original, ceremonial function but becomes something that is exhibited and consumed by a broad audience in different contexts. Film, by virtue of its reproducibility and widespread distribution, is a prime example of this shift. This transition from cult value to exhibition value means that art is increasingly understood not as something to be revered in isolation but as something that can be widely shared, interpreted, and interacted with on a social and political level.

c. **Aura and Reproduction**

Benjamin argues that, in the age of mechanical reproduction this *aura* is progressively diminished or even destroyed. Reproductions- whether photographic images or mass-produced prints - allow the artwork to be seen at various places, by various people, and outside its original context. These reproductions are *copies*, and the *aura* of authenticity, uniqueness, and originality is lost. For example, when you see a photograph of the Mona Lisa, you are experiencing an image of the painting, not the original itself. The aura of the Mona Lisa- its historical importance, the experience of seeing it in the Louvre, its unique position in the art world-is absent in the reproduction.

10.2.5 Impact on Art and Society

Benjamin connects the loss of the aura to broader cultural and social shifts.

a. **Art loses its ritualistic function:**

In traditional societies for a long period of time, art was primarily connected to rituals and sacred practices. Mechanical reproduction has slowly divorced art from its original function with respect to ritual. For Benjamin, "ritual" denotes traditions like ceremonies and spiritual services. Benjamin asserts that art originally began as a form of magic, with pre-historic and ancient people attempting to communicate with the gods through drawings. These private works were considered "art," only in later days as their original function was never aesthetic. This function of art-which Benjamin calls it "cult" function-has disappeared and has been replaced by the "exhibition" function. The reproduction of art thus, transforms the artwork into a commodity removing its ritualistic context.

b. **Democratization of art:**

Benjamin on the one hand laments the loss of aura; he also notices the potential in the accessibility provided by mechanical reproduction. With mechanical reproduction, art become available to the masses which was once confined to elite institutions or individuals. This democratization leads to a transformed relationship between art and society, where art no longer serves solely as a commodity or a status symbol but rather as a medium for social and political engagement. In this sense, film and photography break down traditional hierarchies of art appreciation. A painting that used to be viewed only in a museum or a private collection is no longer restricted by its physical location. With film, people can experience storytelling, performances, and emotions that were once limited to particular spaces and times. Benjamin suggests that this could lead to a new mode of perception- one that is more aligned with modern democratic and social values.

c. **Changing perception of art:**

According to Benjamin, the reproducibility of art changes the way people experience and perceive it. Mass distribution of work of art as in photography and film; make it more accessible to a broader audience. This mass-distribution and widespread availability alters the experience of the art. It becomes more about viewing or consuming art as a commodity rather than appreciating it as a unique object. The experience of art shifts from being a contemplative, almost sacred engagement to something more commercial or practical. The artwork becomes more about its function, its presence in the mass media, or its appeal in popular culture, rather than its unique cultural status.

d. **The Politics of Art**

Benjamin discusses how the mechanical reproduction of art affects its political function. Traditional art, with its unique aura, was often tied to ritualistic and hierarchical social contexts. In contrast, mass-produced art forms such as film or photography have the potential to be more accessible, enabling a broader range of people to engage with cultural products. This shift has profound implications for politics because it means that art is no longer the exclusive domain of the elite or powerful; it becomes a tool that can be used to reach the masses. Benjamin suggests that film, for example, can be used to communicate political messages in a direct and powerful way, capable of influencing public opinion. He suggests that the changes in the nature of art brought about by photography and film have broader consequences for culture and society.

Mass-produced art, like films and photographs, can be used for propaganda purposes. The ability to reproduce images and ideas on a massive scale gives new power to political and ideological forces. Films, in particular, become powerful tools for shaping public opinion, creating new forms of collective identity, and propagating political ideologies.

Benjamin is both wary and hopeful about these possibilities. While mass media can be used for authoritarian purposes (e.g., propaganda), he also sees the potential for political engagement and collective action. The reproduction of art opens up new ways of influencing public perception, organizing resistance, and spreading revolutionary ideas. In cultural studies, this insight helps examine the role of mass media and art in shaping social consciousness, ideology, and collective identity.

10.2.6 Critique of Aura and Reproduction

While Benjamin acknowledges the loss of the aura, he doesn't necessarily lament it. Instead, he sees it as an opportunity for new forms of art, like film, to emerge. In the case of cinema, for instance, the mass reproducibility of the film and its ability to be shared widely allows for a new mode of engagement with art. Films, unlike traditional artworks, can be experienced collectively, and its mass reproducibility allows for more dynamic interactions with the audience, including the potential for political engagement and change. Benjamin also notes that while the aura

of traditional art is lost, its destruction can lead to new forms of critical and revolutionary art. This is a major theme in Benjamin's work: the idea that historical change, even in the form of destruction or loss, opens up new possibilities for transformation.

10.2.7 Mechanization of Art Production

The technological advances of mechanical reproduction (e.g., photography, film) represent a major shift in how art is produced and consumed. While traditional art creation was highly individual and associated with a personal connection between artist and viewer, mechanical reproduction allows art to be reproduced endlessly and consumed by a mass audience.

This shift leads to a change in the relationship between the artwork and its audience. Benjamin sees this process as one that could democratize culture, making it accessible to more people. However, he also warns that this could lead to the commercialization and commodification of art. From a cultural studies perspective, this discussion helps explore how capitalism influences culture, and how mass production can change the function of art from something to be revered to something to be consumed.

10.2.8 Art as Commodity

Benjamin also discusses the economic implications of the reproduction of art. As art becomes more reproducible, it is increasingly subject to market forces. This ties in with a key concern of cultural studies: how culture is produced and consumed in capitalist societies. The reproduction of art diminishes its value as a unique, authentic object and turns it into a commodity that can be bought and sold.

The commodification of culture can lead to a situation where art is produced primarily for profit rather than for its intrinsic cultural or aesthetic value. Benjamin's critique of the commodification of art allows cultural studies scholars to critically examine how culture is shaped by and shaped for the marketplace.

10.2.9 Distraction vs. Contemplation

Benjamin also contrasts the ways in which traditional art and mass-produced art engage viewers. Traditional art demands a more contemplative, focused engagement, while film and other reproduced media offer a more distracted, fragmented form of experience. This distinction resonates with contemporary debates in cultural studies about the changing nature of attention, media consumption, and how technologies shape our experiences of culture.

Benjamin notes that like sports and literature, film has developed the audiences who partake in it and become sort of experts in it. During Benjamin's days, readers of literary material and news could also send their material to the press for publication. In our time, the growth is unparalleled. People now literally comment on any cultural piece or

practice in social media like critics. He notes that there is a fusion between the enjoyment of the work and the orientation of experts as a critic or a commentator. The critical and the receptive modes of the masses intersect. The reason for it Benjamin argues is that film is consumed in *masse* unlike the painting which is more generally appreciated through individual contemplation. The individual's reception to film is affected by the experience of other people who watch it. For Benjamin, paintings cannot give a good aesthetic experience for a collective public the way films can offer. Film has the potential to form habits of seeing the world, which in some way is an ideological operation. For Benjamin, it is precisely the habit-formation potential in film's bombardment of images that leave no room for contemplation, what he calls the shock effect, which allows a distracted audience somehow critical, and therefore, potent for mass mobilization.

In this context, Benjamin's ideas help cultural studies scholars analyze how modern media may change the ways in which audiences relate to the works of art or culture they consume. It also raises questions about the impact of new technologies on attention spans, deep engagement with culture, and intellectual development.

10.2.10 Conclusion

Walter Benjamin's essay provides a critical analysis of how mechanical reproduction alters the status of art, its relationship to its audience, and its potential for both political change and commodification. The loss of the "aura" leads to a shift from a cult-like appreciation of art to a more utilitarian, mass-consumed form of cultural production. While this has the potential to democratize art and bring it to a wider audience, it also carries with it the risk of being manipulated for ideological purposes. Ultimately, Benjamin's essay is a meditation on how technology reshapes culture, art, and politics in modern society.

Through Benjamin's analysis of the mechanical reproduction of art, cultural studies scholars gain insight into the complex interplay between technology, art, politics, and culture. His work challenges us to think critically about how mass media and the reproduction of culture shape collective experiences, identities, and ideologies in a rapidly changing world. By understanding the ways in which the uniqueness and aura of art are diminished through reproduction, we can better understand broader cultural shifts in the age of mass media.

10.3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. What does Benjamin mean by the "aura" of a work of art, and how does mechanical reproduction affect it?
2. How does Benjamin distinguish between the "cult value" and the "exhibition value" of art?
3. Why does Benjamin argue that mechanical reproduction changes the function of art in society?

4. How does Benjamin's essay reflect the historical context of the early 20th century, particularly in relation to technology and politics?
5. What role does Benjamin see for film as an art form in the age of mechanical reproduction?
6. How does the essay engage with Marxist theory, particularly in its analysis of art's commodification?
7. Does Benjamin view the loss of aura in art as entirely negative? Why or why not?
8. How does the essay address the relationship between art and mass audiences?
9. What are the implications of Benjamin's argument for the autonomy of the artist?
10. How might Benjamin's ideas apply to modern digital media, such as photography, video, and virtual art?
11. What parallels can be drawn between Benjamin's critique of mechanical reproduction and debates around artificial intelligence and creativity?
12. In what ways might social media platforms amplify or undermine Benjamin's concepts of aura and authenticity?

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UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL STUDIES THROUGH THEODORE ADORNO AND MAX HORKHEIMER'S: "THE CULTURE INDUSTRY: ENLIGHTENMENT AS MASS DECEPTION"

Unit Structure :

- 11.1 Introduction
 - 11.1.1 Objectives
 - 11.1.2 Introduction to the Writers
- 11.2 The Frankfurt School
 - 11.2.1 The Culture Industry
- 11.3 About the authors
 - 11.3.1 Theodor W. Adorno
 - 11.3.2 Max Horkheimer
- 11.4 Summary of the Essay
 - 11.4.1 The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception: A Critical Analysis
 - 11.4.2 The Culture Industry as a Mechanism of Control
 - 11.4.3 Mass Deception, Standardization, the Loss of Authenticity and the Role of the Audience
 - 11.4.4 Enlightenment as Mass Deception
 - 11.4.5 Pessimism and the Role of the Individual
 - 11.4.6 Relevance in the Contemporary World
 - 11.4.7 Critique of the Culture Industry's Influence
 - 11.4.8 Conclusion
- 11.5 Suggested Questions
- 11.6 Works Cited

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Theodore W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, both German scholars, developed the concept of the culture industry in their book "Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947)." Their theory is a critique of the mass production of cultural works, the commodification of the art and the way in which culture is used to manipulate people.

11.1.1 Objectives

In this unit, we will discuss the critical essay *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*. It involves several key objectives. These objectives will help in critically analyzing how culture operates under modern capitalist societies and the ways it shapes individual consciousness and societal structures.

- To study the concept of the culture industry.
- To understand the Dialectic of Enlightenment.
- To analyze how the Enlightenment's promise of reason, freedom, and progress evolved into systems of control and domination.
- To explore the contradictions within the Enlightenment project, where the pursuit of rationality and technical progress led to the suppression of critical thought and individuality.

11.1.2 Introduction to the Writers

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno published a book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1944. Both writers belong to the Frankfurt School. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, was written during his exile days in the United States. This book is arranged into several essays and fragments while focussing on a specific theme. It remains noteworthy for the approach towards understanding the consequences of modernism, enlightenment, and mass culture's development. It sheds light on the various areas that are widely applied to media study and cultural criticism and also evaluates power structure and capitalism. Such criticism highlights the book's tone as pessimistic and deterministic, which gives scope for confrontation or optimism. It also critiques mass culture, challenges the elitist, it shows how scholars unappreciated the agency and audiences' creativity. Despite such criticism, this book exceedingly shaped the other fields like sociology, philosophy, critical theory and especially cultural studies.

The essay *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* is one of the Units in the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. It explores the contradictions of the Enlightenment project, critiquing how the pursuit of reason and progress has led to domination, alienation, and new forms of oppression. It examines the role of mass culture in capitalist societies. It argues that culture, once a means of personal and intellectual liberation, has been commodified and turned into a tool for social control under capitalism. The text remains foundational for understanding the Frankfurt School's critique of modernity, culture, and society.

11.2 THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

The Frankfurt School refers to a group of intellectuals associated with the *Institute for Social Research* at the University of Frankfurt in Germany. It was established in the year 1923 and is now known for its emerging critical theory. It is an interdisciplinary approach which critiques power,

society and culture while merging the other notions taken from cultural studies, philosophy, marxism and psychoanalysis in English Literature. The key concepts of the Frankfurt School are as follows:

Understanding Cultural Studies through Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer's: "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception"

I. Critical Concept: The foremost aim of the society is not only to interpret the globe but also help to change the same while challenging the foundations of industrialization, capitalism, modernism and commercialization.

II. Dialect of Enlightenment: The theorists, Horkheimer and Adorno state that the Enlightenment focuses on the development of the new forms of cultural industry, dominance and fascism.

III. Cultural Industry: Commercialization in the modern age held responsibility for the mass culture and strengthening social control.

IV. Psychoanalysis and Social Structure: According to the Frankfurt School and Sigmund Freud's interpretation of psychoanalysis conveys the fact that modernization and commercialization manipulate the individual's ideology and emphasize traditionalism.

V. Authority and Authoritarianism: Studies like *The Authoritarian Personality* explored the psychological and social roots of fascism and authoritarianism.

VI. Alienation and Reification: Building on Marx, they analyzed how capitalism alienates individuals from their labour, culture, and fellow humans, reducing social relations to commodity exchanges.

Several scholars have contributed to the *Frankfurt School*, Max Horkheimer was the director of the Institute and co-author of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer developed the concept of Critical Theory and critiqued instrumental reason. Theodor W. Adorno contributed to cultural criticism, aesthetics, and philosophy. He is best known for his critiques of the culture industry and his work on authoritarianism. Herbert Marcuse, a philosopher and social theorist's works, such as *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), critique advanced industrial society and became influential during the 1960s countercultural movements. Walter Benjamin is known for his essays on art and culture, including *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin explored how technology transforms cultural production and experience. Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst and social psychologist, examined the psychological effects of capitalism and modernity, emphasizing themes of alienation and freedom. Jürgen Habermas, although not a part of the original Frankfurt School, is often considered as its second generation. He developed theories of communicative action and deliberative democracy.

The Frankfurt School had a profound impact on various fields, including philosophy, sociology, political science, cultural studies, and media studies. Its critical perspective has inspired:

- Analyses of mass media, consumer culture, and advertising.
- Critiques of authoritarianism, capitalism, and neoliberalism.
- Movements for social justice, including the 1960s counterculture and contemporary critical theory.

While some critics view the Frankfurt School's pessimism about modernity as overly deterministic, its ideas continue to inform debates about culture, power, and the possibilities for emancipation in contemporary society.

11.2.1 The Culture Industry

The concept of the *Culture Industry* was introduced by the scholars Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. It was presented as critical vocabulary in the essay *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, in the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. They argued that popular culture is akin to a factory producing standardized cultural goods—films, radio programs, magazines, etc.—that are used to manipulate mass society into passivity. Consumption of the easy pleasures of popular culture, made available by the mass communications media, renders people docile and content, no matter how difficult their economic circumstances. The inherent danger of the culture industry is the cultivation of false psychological needs that can only be met and satisfied by the products of capitalism; thus Adorno and Horkheimer perceived mass-produced culture as especially dangerous compared to the more technically and intellectually difficult high arts. In contrast, true psychological needs are freedom, creativity, and genuine happiness, which refer to an earlier demarcation of human needs.

11.3 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

11.3.1 Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969)

Theodor W. Adorno was a German philosopher, sociologist, musicologist and critical theorist. He was one of the foremost members of the Frankfurt School due to his contribution to Critical Theory. His literary work is still considered influential in the fields of philosophy, sociology and cultural studies. As a critical theorist, his work itself states his multidisciplinary effort to like the Marxian critique of society in association with culture and psychoanalysis. His work purposefully highlighted how the modern and commercial mindset moulds and continues to dominate society. The book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explains how the instrumental reason lies in Enlightenment rationality while looking for the possible progress of the society and also highlights the system of domination, oppression and dehumanization. Adorno shares his critique on the modification under the influence of capitalism. The rationality failed to create fascism which is promoted under the forms of social control.

Together with Horkheimer, he coined the term *Culture Industry*, to describe the mass production of culturally standardised products – such as

film, music and television – to enforce conformity and suppress critical thinking.

Adorno's work was philosophically grounded in Hegelian dialectical writing and critical writing about Marx and was influenced strongly by Kant and Nietzsche. A philosophy that refuses to close, remains in contradiction, says his book *Negative Dialectics*, while rejecting the concept of systematic philosophy. Adorno's position in aesthetics was that art exists independently of social norms and is an arena for uprisal.

Although, he esteemed modernist art for its challenging everyday ideologies and forms, his literary work is an extended way to study the departments of philosophy which created a debate between critical theory and postmodernism through cultural studies. His literary criticism of the culture is often seen as superior and his ideology regarding the connection between culture, society and power eventually endures in contemporary examination.

11.3.2 Max Horkheimer (1895–1973)

He was a German philosopher and sociologist who acquired fame primarily for the role of foundations in the *Frankfurt School of Critical Theory*.

Max Horkheimer, was born in a Jewish family in Germany on 14th February 1895. He decided to join his father's family business but unknowingly deviated to the academic field. He was associated with psychology, sociology, and philosophy and also contributed to the study of culture, society and power. He is also known for his analysis of mass culture, commercialization, and the enlightenment. In 1922, he completed his Ph.D. at the University of Frankfurt and also studied philosophy and sociology from the same. However, he was associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in the year 1930. His great contribution to this institute and leadership qualities greatly motivated the scholars to work and develop Critical Theory. This interdisciplinary approach is a combination of Marxism and other theories like cultural studies, psychoanalysis, and sociology to improve modern society and its social conditions. Horkheimer's most influential work, *Traditional and Critical Theory* (1937), highlights the distinction that there are theories which describe the world and theories which want to change the world.

Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) is a social and philosophical work co-authored with Theodor W. Adorno. This work discusses the development of the Enlightenment and criticizes domination and its control over unparalleled propagation.

The promise of progress and rationality of the Enlightenment is the target of the critique that it was the precursor to domination and control on unprecedented propagation. Horkheimer, in this book, also criticizes instrumental reason. Horkheimer fled away to Nazi Germany and settled in Paris, where he reformed the Institute for Social Research at Columbia University in 1933. During World War II, he went back to Germany and

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reconstructed the institute at the Frankfurt University. His work is often considered on a pessimistic note and disillusionment with the hopes for changes informed by his thought. His literary work continued to be influential in the fields of sociology, political science, cultural study and philosophy. His critical approach and views on media, culture and power in modern society became an inspiration for the Frankfurt School and other scholars. On 7th July 1973, he died in Nuremberg, Germany.

11.4 SUMMARY OF THE ESSAY

The cultural industry represented by Horkheimer and Adorno highlights the notion of the mass culture and production of entertainment like film, music, radio and magazines. They convey that culture is produced for profit purposes like other commodities for the target audience in the modern age.

According to the authors, the culture industry doesn't just entertain; it manipulates and pacifies the masses. It promotes certain ideologies, (i.e., consumerism, social conformity) and conditions individuals to play the role within capitalist society.

The Cultural Industry makes people think that their interests and desires are theirs when the contrary is true. This means that culture is the way to maintain status in society instead of cultivating enlightenment, personal autonomy, and critical thinking. On the other hand, it also demonstrated that people may choose different cultures for their passion and approach to films, music, radio, television shows, etc. The essay predominantly stresses reason, individual autonomy and the enlightenment which the Cultural Industry has undermined.

Mass-produced culture has taken the place of people being encouraged to question the world around them, or about the world at all, or to think critically about their own lives or about the world that surrounds them. This mass-produced culture reinforces the existent power structures and we as people are distracted and entertained by this culture instead of being critical and pulling apart relationships and structures.

Adorno and Horkheimer say that the culture industry is responsible for narrowing down cultural diversity. Such cultural ideology is standardized and talks less about genuine artistic expression. It demonstrated that the culture will serve the needs of capitalism rather than the emotional and intellectual development in society. Both theorists claim that films, music and literature are not connected anymore and the lack of proper artistic expression is also highlighted. Due to capitalism, culture is mass-produced and thereby standardized. The cultural industry's repetitive and formulaic content encourages conventionality and critical thinking. Such ideology trains a consumer about entertainment which is meant to be emphasized and enhance the prevalent hierarchies of power in society. Adorno and Horkheimer represented that the cultural industry provides society with numerous options, which proved to be superficial. Mass production is significantly designated to match the preferences, tastes and so forth, to

control and predict consumer behaviour. The culture industry greatly manipulates society to accept modernization. Society should divert its attention from social inequalities and satisfy itself with consumer behaviour. In such circumstances, profit-driven entertainment is responsible for replacing authenticity and critical engagement.

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11.4.1 The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception-A Critical Analysis

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attention from social inequalities and satisfy itself with consumer behaviour. In such circumstances, profit-driven entertainment is responsible for replacing authenticity and critical engagement.

11.4.1 The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception: A Critical Analysis

Theodor W. Adorno's essay *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* is a part of the critical theory; it sheds light on modernization and mass culture. Adorno and Horkheimer while defining the term Cultural Industry represent his critiques of how the culture has become commodified under the influences of capitalism and particularly the entertainment industry. Their literary work explores how culture is commoditized due to the capitalist society with the impact of mass media and entertainment to pacify and manipulate individuals and society.

In this sense, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that which once served as an instrument of enlightenment, through self-expression, is now integrated into the entirety of capitalist production culture.

11.4.2 The Culture Industry as a Mechanism of Control

Culture once a means of individual expression now becomes commodified under capitalism argues Adorno and Horkheimer. The transformation of culture into a product implies that culture can be produced, marketed, and consumed for profit, just as any other product. The culture industry like film, radio, television, music and magazines, create and distribute massive numbers of culture products. Mass culture no longer is used as an instrument of enlightenment or individual artistic expression but of the control of society. Mass culture, through repeated patterns, formulas and standardization encourages passive consumption, and discourages critical thinking.

The culture industry is industrialized and commodified, at the core of Adorno and Horkheimer's argument. The authors argue that culture in its commodified form acts as a tool for personal development or a means of critical engagement with the world, is no longer. Instead, it is made into a product that is manufactured, promoted, and used for a benefit akin to any other industrial product.

Like other sectors of the economy, the culture industry produces standardized, mass-produced cultural products made to appeal to a wide audience. As a result of this standardization, there has emerged a type of cultural homogenization that, in the name of creativity and autonomy, enforces a repetitive and predictable form where individual creativity and autonomy are stripped away to maximize consumption.

11.4.3 Mass Deception, Standardization, the Loss of Authenticity and the Role of the Audience:

The culture industry is an idea central to the essay because it is a dulling of the critical faculty of the masses, a mechanism of control. Adorno and

Horkheimer argue that standardizing their cultural products (movies, radio programs, music, etc.), creates predictable experiences for the audiences. Here the predictability of the future discourages independent thought and critical contact with the world, producing a docile, manipulated populace that will not dissent from the status quo. Culture industry, they say, reduces our ability for true enlightenment and hinders us toward conformity.

Through the repetitive presentation of similar forms of entertainment, the culture industry produces audiences who believe they enjoy these experiences, and that these experiences are even necessary to achieve personal fulfilment. As a result, we have a passive acceptance of the fact that we live in a capitalist, authoritarian society.

Adorno and Horkheimer maintain that the culture industry is a sort of mass deception. Not only is the public consuming entertainment but it is being taught to accept capitalist society as it is. In its place of liberating or enlightening the audience are forced to understand themselves to reflect their desires and experiences as perceived by the culture industry. It is the mass-produced cultural products which reinforce the values and the ideology of capitalist society—industrialization, consumerism, 'conformity', and passivity—to appear natural and inevitable.

Repeated exposure to the same formulas of culture tends to make people less critically aware of their own lives or the world. Rather than a site for developing critical thinking, it is rather a space for defining passive enjoyment while divesting the public from social injustices and structural inequalities. The commodification of culture by the culture industry has resulted in one of its greatest consequences: standardization. Reaching a broad audience and profitability is the goal of cultural products—films, music, or radio shows—because they use formulas and templates to achieve that need. As a result, the production of culture becomes formulaic and entirely predictable. Adorno and Horkheimer's play, by this standardization, the capability of genuine artistic expression is reduced and this is replaced by mass-market materials and goods to keep the consumer passive.

Standardizing culture, they argue, results in conformity because people are repeatedly exposed to the same set of perspectives or ideas and become neither challenged nor exposed to varying or dissimilar ones. Consequently, individuals become used to the existence of a narrow, homogeneous spectrum of cultural expressions, and as a consequence are unable to work meaningfully or critically with culture.

11.4.4 Enlightenment as Mass Deception:

The title of the essay is the contradiction of the ideals of the Enlightenment and the facts of modern capitalist society. The culture industry has inverted the Enlightenment into its opposite, that of the tongue-tied, autonomous, dissenting individuals that it inflicts upon us. In its original sense, enlightenment stressed reason; individual autonomy; and the capacity to critique question; and understand the world. However,

Adorno and Horkheimer claim that the culture industry has stood the ideals on their head. Adorno and Horkheimer argue, however, that modern culture does not support the critical thought that enlightenment thinkers encouraged because culture fosters instead, social conformity.

Unlike promoting autonomy and critical thinking mass culture reproduces social control through shaping people's desires and perceptions to suit the purposes of capitalist production. We learn to derive happiness from consuming cultural products not from asking or altering the world. As a result, the culture industry becomes a *mass deception* that stifles true enlightenment. In such a sense, culture under capitalism is not a tool or ideal of human liberation, but a tool of social control. But if the Enlightenment was meant to emancipate people from superstition and oppression, through reason, the culture industry has replaced that emancipatory potential with enslavement through passive entertainment which numbs the mind and precludes real reflection.

The essay criticizes the very idea of Enlightenment that it has in modern capitalist society. Adorno and Horkheimer make a point that Enlightenment thinkers stressed autonomy and reason, but rightly argue that this ideal was assimilated by the industry of culture. However, the culture industry uses cultural products to create a form of false consciousness instead of equipping people to become more self-aware and independent. The idea is people are led to believe that what they want, what they like, and what their preferences are is theirs, when in fact it is produced by outside forces such as advertising, corporate interests, the media, etc.

Adorno and Horkheimer's critique suggest that the Enlightenment's promise of human liberation has been undermined by the very forces of modernization that were supposed to deliver it. The culture industry, rather than promoting rationality and freedom, reinforces the structures of power and control that maintain capitalist society.

In short, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the Enlightenment, which sought to liberate humanity through reason and knowledge, paradoxically resulted in new systems of control. The drive to dominate nature, rooted in Enlightenment thought, extended to the domination of humans by humans, manifesting in capitalism, imperialism, and fascism. They critique the instrumentalization of reason—reason used solely as a tool for achieving practical ends—at the expense of ethical and moral considerations.

11.4.5 Pessimism and the Role of the Individual

A critical analysis of Adorno and Horkheimer's argument might point to their somewhat pessimistic view of human agency. They suggest that individuals are largely passive and manipulated by the culture industry, offering little room for resistance or transformation. This view may be seen as overly deterministic and dismissive of the potential for individuals to find subversive or critical ways of engaging with culture. Critics have pointed out that people can still engage with culture in ways that subvert or resist its dominant messages. For instance, audiences may interpret

cultural products in ways that reflect their own experiences, or they may repurpose and recontextualize media for political or social purposes. Additionally, the rise of alternative media and countercultural movements shows that there is still potential for resistance within the cultural sphere.

But that is not the authors' point: individuals are not necessarily completely passive, but the culture industry restricts possibilities for resistance of all individuals by shaping collective consciousness. Subversion is possible but it is becoming harder in hegemonic structures of the culture industry.

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11.4.6 Relevance in the Contemporary World

Adorno and Horkheimer wrote their critique in the mid-20th century, but their point remains relevant today. With social media, streaming platforms and digital content, culture's commodification has just gone deeper. Now, algorithms determine what we watch, listen, and buy and with that, they strengthen the standardization of cultural products. It makes us wonder if the world we live in can ever truly be individual or autonomous, even if it is heavily mediated. Moreover, there is the concentration of media ownership in the hands of just a few mega-corporations which makes the culture industry more powerful and pervasive. Because the subject remains critically important – the role of mass entertainment is reinforcing social norms, political ideologies and economic interests.

11.4.7 Critique of the Culture Industry's Influence

While Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of mass culture is insightful, one limitation of their analysis is that it does not fully account for how audiences can be active participants in cultural consumption. In some cases, people actively engage with popular culture, subverting its intended meaning or using it as a tool for resistance. The postmodern turn in cultural studies, for example, has focused on how individuals can interpret and re-appropriate cultural products in diverse ways.

Furthermore, Adorno and Horkheimer's work also assumes that *true* enlightenment is a product of autonomous, critical thinking—something that mass culture inhibits. However, this perspective overlooks the possibility that mass culture could serve as a starting point for critical reflection and social change, depending on the context in which it is engaged.

11.4.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, Adorno and Horkheimer's *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* offers a powerful critique of the commodification of culture under capitalism and its role in perpetuating social control. However, in contemporary media and technology where the culture industry continues to form public consciousness, the essay remains relevant. Yet passivity and lack of resistance on the part of audiences in cultural consumption is perhaps overstated on their part, especially given

more recent cultural developments suggesting more complex forms of engagement.

The culture industry abetted by Adorno and Horkheimer, serves as a means of social control serving to induce conformity, passivity and false consciousness. Their essay is still a powerful analysis of how mass media and popular entertainment work to define public consciousness while threatening that consciousness with an inability to think critically or to take an active part in shaping its own culture. But we may have to rethink their somewhat pessimistic view of human agency and resistance in light of contemporary cultural developments that appear to show that even though people are constrained by cultural definitions, they continue to engage with and transform culture in ways that counter dominant narratives.

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the culture industry is a means of wide-scale deception. It prevents enlightenment; it makes people passive; people remain complicit in capitalism's power structures. Instead of liberating people culture in capitalism traps people, turning them into passive consumers of products, which they consume to shield them from questioning the status quo. The essay, in general, criticizes the spirit of commodity culture in capitalist society and its function in extending social control through the suppression of critical thinking and reinforcement of conformity. Adorno and Horkheimer's critique remains highly relevant in the analysis of contemporary culture, including:

The role of streaming platforms like Netflix and Spotify in shaping consumption habits.

The standardization and algorithmic control of social media content.

The commodification of subcultures and countercultural movements.

The use of entertainment to distract from systemic inequalities and crises.

While their views have faced criticism for elitism and pessimism, *The Culture Industry* offers a powerful lens for understanding the interplay of culture, capitalism, and ideology.

11.5 Suggested Questions

- I. Explain the term "culture industry" by Adorno and Horkheimer. How does it differ from traditional notions of culture?
- II. How does the culture industry serve the interests of capitalism and the ruling class?
- III. What role do standardization and pseudo-individualism play in the products of the culture industry?
- IV. How does the critique of the culture industry apply to contemporary platforms like social media, streaming services, or influencer culture?

- V. In the age of digital algorithms, has the culture industry become more pervasive or oppressive compared to the time of Adorno and Horkheimer's writing?

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11.6 WORKS CITED

- Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*. Dialectic of Enlightenment. Translated by John Cumming, Stanford University Press, 2002, pp. 94–136. Originally published in 1944.
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JUDITH BUTLER: BODILY INSCRIPTIONS, PERFORMATIVE SUBVERSIONS

Unit Structure :

12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 Objectives

12.2 About the Author

12.2.1 Summary

12.2.2 Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions

12.2.3 Gender Performances/ Performativity of Gender

12.2.4 Conclusion

12.3 Suggested Questions

12.4 Works Cited

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Judith Butler's works have been of great influence in the field of cultural studies. The development of cultural theory, gender studies and queer theory have been shaped by her theories on gender and sex. Butler being one of the most influential thinkers of the modern times inspired key debates and scholarships around gender, sex and identity. Her work has transformed our perspective about gender and sex and gone ahead influencing academia, activist and cultural producers. Butler, a exceptional thinker writers about the society, politics, literature and ethics focusing on how to build more inclusive and sustainable societies.

12.1.1 Objectives

- To explore the influence of Butler's work on the development of cultural theories
- To investigate the learned performance of gendered behavior
- To comprehend gender as a social construct and that there can be multiple genders
- To analyse how Butler challenges the idea of gender as a natural, fixed identity

12.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judith Butler: Bodily
Inscriptions, Performative
Subversions

Judith Pamela Butler (1956) is an American feminist philosopher and scholar of Gender Studies. Her works have greatly influenced political philosophy, literary theory, queer theory, ethics and the 3rd wave feminism. She has taught at the University of California, Berkeley, in the Department of Comparative Literature and program of Critical Theory.

Butler challenges the conventional, heteronormative notions of gender and development theory of gender performativity. This theory has its influence on the feminist and queer scholarship. She studied and debated at the film study courses focusing on gender studies and performativity. She has also rendered her support to the LGBT rights

Some of The Noteworthy Works of Butler Include:

- Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990)
- Bodies That Matter on the Discursive Limits of Sex (1993)
- Imitation and Gender Insubordination (1991)
- Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence (2004)
- Undoing Gender (2004)
- Who's Afraid of Gender? (2024)
- The Force of Non-Violence (2020)
- The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection (1997)
- Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative (1997)
- Giving an Account of Oneself (2005)
- Towards a Feminist Ethics of Non-Violence (2021)
- Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly (2015)
- Undoing Gender (2004)

Awards and Honors:

- Guggenheim Fellowship (1999)
- David R. Kessler Award for LGBTQ (2001)
- Elected to the American Philosophical Society (2007)
- Mellon Award for her Exemplary Contribution to Scholarship in Humanities (2008)
- 25 Visionaries Who are Changing Your World (2010)
- Theodore W. Adorno Award (2012)
- Elected as a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy (2015)
- Elected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2019)

12.2.1 Summary

The present essay *Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions* is taken from the book *Feminist Theory and The Body*

In the essay *Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions* the complex relationship between the body, identity and language is explored by Judith Butler. Inspired by great theorists like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, Butler examines how the norms and conventions which regulate the construction of gender and sexuality can be subverted and challenged through bodily inscriptions and performative acts.

Through her essay, Butler opines that every individual's understanding of his/her body is socially and culturally constructed. She states that our bodies are sites of power and resistance and not merely passive entities. Through aspects of bodily inscriptions like our dressing, hairstyles, gestures and much more, we not only convey our gender and sexual identities but also embody the same. These inscriptions reflect our inner being and our identities are constantly shaped by these performative acts.

Examining how bodily inscriptions can aid in resisting and subverting the norms that regulate gender and sexuality, Butler argues that certain subversive acts, for example, cross dressing and others forms of embodiment not based on norms (non-normative) result in the disruption of the regulatory power of heterosexual norms. The gender stability and sexual categories can be challenged by bodily inscriptions. This can further open up fresh possibilities where desires and identities can be expressed.

Throwing light on the 'idea of drag', one of the key concepts discussed by Butler in her essay, she says that this is an act of performative subversion. She is of the opinion that drag performances go on to reveal artificialities of gender categories in addition to challenging the norms that control the gender performances. There is a lot of mocking /ridiculing and exaggeration done by the drag performances and it is here that the constructed nature of gender identities are revealed. This can also disrupt the stability of these categories. This may further result in the possibility of alternative modes of gender identification and expression.

In short, Butler in her essay, *Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions* draws our attention by focusing on the ways identity is constructed. The same is regulated by means of bodily inscriptions and performative acts. Butler demonstrates the power for subversion and resistance within the sphere of gender and sexuality. This she does through her exploration of subversive bodily inscriptions and drag performances. The spontaneity and reliability of these categories being challenged, Butler also opens up new avenues for substitute approaches of identification and expression. Her work continues to be an inspiration in the realm of gender studies demanding us to reconsider the relationship between the body, identity and language.

12.2.2 Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions

Judith Butler: Bodily
Inscriptions, Performative
Subversions

In Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions Butler makes several arguments about the performative nature of gender and how traditional gender norms are subverted by individuals.

She explores how the body is shaped by cultural norms, gender and sexuality. Gender identity performances are based on imitating these norms.

I. Social constructionism

"The body is culturally shaped by norms of Gender and sexuality and should be understood as broadly situated within a social construct".

(Gender Trouble, 25)

Butler argues that the body should not be understood as naturalized but as a social construct. The social constructionists suggest that reality is constructed utilizing social interactions and cultural norms

For example:

Social constructionism encompasses a wide range of aspects like self-identity, gender, race, language, ethnicity, social class, norms, hierarchy, marriage, education, social institutions, nationality and the idea of social construct itself.

Judith Butler is known for her social constructionist views on gender. This she has explored in her book *Gender Trouble*. She challenges the idea that gender is natural. She argues that gender as a performance is socially constructed. According to her, gender is solely a social construct and not tied up to any material bodily facts

II. Gender Performances

Gender identity performances are based on the repetition of acts. These performances create themselves through the act of performing. Gender Performance is the idea that gender is a social construct that people learn and perform through their mannerisms, behaviour and expressions. The idea that gender is a fixed trait or a natural result of biological sex is challenged.

For example: A man wearing a dress is an example of gender performance. The idea of gender performance was popularized by American post-structuralist philosopher Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990).

Butler states,

Gender proves to be a performance, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed

Gender is not just a process but *a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame.*

III. Normative Gender Discourses

Butler argues that heterosexual norms are produced by normative gender discourses. These norms justify themselves through reproductive heterosexuality. Normative Gender Discourses studies how gender is constructed and maintained through language, media and other discourse forms. Gender discourses combine the study of gender and discourse analysis to examine how gender norms are produced and reproduced. Judith Butler argues that gender is not a natural or essential quality but something that is socially constructed and performed. She challenged the idea of gender identity and feminism. She fought for the rights of oppressed identities that do not confirm to normative heterosexuality. She further questioned the distinction between gender and sexuality.

IV. Learned Performances:

Butler questions the belief that certain gendered behaviour comes naturally and that learned performances are imposed by normative heterosexuality. Gender Performances is the idea that gender is a learned behaviour that is performed on the basis of the cultural norms.

This includes understanding the facts that

- Gender is natural
- Gender is a learned performance
- Gender performance is a way of thinking about gender as a social construct that can be reproduced and resisted

V. Drag:

Drag performance: A form of entertainment where artists use costumes, makeup and other tools in order to exacerbate gender expression. It is a form of self-expression and celebrates LGBTQ pride. Drag is used to resist unjust forces and express the different side of oneself.

The cultural practice of drag is used by Butler to expose the illusory nature of an inner gendered self. Butler explores the idea that our social experiences are through our bodies. She challenges the belief that the body is passively scripted with cultural codes. On the other hand, she opines that the body and cultural conventions are mutually constitutive. She believes that gender is not bound by material bodily facts and that gender does not aspire to any objective ideal. The body remains a site which generates cultural values and social power.

12.2.3 Gender Performances/ Performativity of Gender

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Butler argues that gender is not being inherent/ biological. It is something performed/enacted through our behaviour and repeated actions. These performances construct gender identity and are shaped by cultural norms and expectations.

For example: Gender identity is made up of the way individuals dress up, speak, behave through and other performances.

Performative Acts: Butler explores the idea of gender as a series of performative acts which draw attention to the ways in which individuals 'do' gender in association with their behaviour, speech and appearance. Gender is constructed through the acts of repetition. The foundation of Butler's critique of traditional understanding of gender and identity are formed by these arguments. She offers a framework to comprehend how gender is constructed, performed and subverted within the social context.

a. The Power of Performative Acts

Butler emphasizes the power of Performative Acts which help in shaping and maintaining norms of gender. Butler highlights the fact that individuals 'do' gender through everyday behaviour and actions. This contributes continually to the reproduction of gender identities.

This perspective focuses on the different ways in which power operates through social practices and interactions.

b. Fluidity and Contingency

Emphasizing the fluid and contingent nature of gender identities, Butler says that it is neither stable nor fixed. Gender identities are subject to variations over time. Recognizing gender as fluid allows for greater flexibility. This contingency helps in understanding how individuals express their identities in a better manner. Butler's recognition of gender as fluid challenges the binary formation of gender as strictly male or female. The acknowledgement of variance and multiplicity of gender identities helps to open up space for greater comprehension and recognition of varied expressions and experience of gender.

c. Power Dynamics

Power Dynamics refers to the role of power in the performance and regulation of gender. While certain performances of gender are privileged and normalised, others are marginalized or stigmatised. The performance and enforcement of gender is shaped by the unequal distribution of power. Others deviate from norms of social sanctions or discrimination.

For eg: Transgender individuals often are discriminated against or face violence for challenging identities and traditional gender norms

d. Critique of Power Dynamics

A critical examination of Power Dynamics in relation to gender is included by Butler in her analysis. She focuses on the privileged and normalised performances of gender in addition to the marginalized and stigmatized. Gender Performances, how they are enforced, reinforced etc are influenced by the unequal distribution of power. This also is inclusive of existing inequalities and hierarchies. Butler's critique of Power Dynamics and her recognition of the gender aspects of fluidity and contingency has gone ahead and opened new perspectives and prospects regarding gender identity and expression. Her focus on power and resistance has been instrumental in empowering individuals to challenge predominant gender standards and uphold for more considerate and equitable depiction of gender within the society.

e. Gender Essentialism:

Butler's essay is a vital deconstruction of the idea of gender essentialism. She challenges the traditional idea of gender as having a fixed and immutable characteristic feature. This is done by positing gender as performative rather than innate or biologically determined. This deconstruction helps for a better-nuanced understanding of gender identity and expression.

f. Critique of Essentialism

Butler's rejection of gender essentialism has been both received with praise and critical reviews. Her emphasis on the performative nature of gender has been innovative in undermining traditional notions of identity. Critics are of the opinion that there is a risk of eliminating the material realities and experiences of marginalized people, especially in relation to transgender and non-binary individuals. Critics opine that focusing solely on gender performative overlooks the ways in which individuals may experience gender dysphoria (anxiety/ depression), and seek medical interventions (intercession/ help) in order to coordinate their bodies with their gender identities.

g. Subversion and Disruption

Butler discusses the potential for subverting and disrupting traditional gender norms. This is built on the concept of performativity. She believes that individuals have the power to confront and refrain from dominant gender roles/needs through their performative acts. This can be inclusive of gender-bending or other unconventional forms.

h. Resistance and Agency

In spite of the various restrictions imposed by power dynamics, Butler accentuates the power of individuals to resist and subvert relevant gender norms. Butler suggests that the refusal to accept can open up prospects for alternative forms of gender expression and identity.

i. Intersectionality

Here, the primary focus is on the performative nature of gender. Butler's analysis cuts through to the other aspect of Identity like race, class and sexuality. She admits that individuals experience intersecting forms of maltreatment and benefits based on these intersecting identities which further complicates the performative construction of gender.

Analysis of Intersectionality

Butler's essay helps in a better understanding of gender by acknowledging the different ways in which gender intersects with identity and its different facets like race, class etc. This intersectional analysis has aided in expanding the scope of feminist and queer theories highlighting the complicated and interrelated nature of the system of oppression and privilege

12.2.4 Conclusion

The influence of Butler's work goes beyond academia. Her essay challenges discrimination based on gender and oppression. Her focus on the performative aspects of gender has inspired new approaches to Activism. This includes different forms of resistance and protest which aims at disrupting traditional norms of gender and hierarchies.

Butler's present essay forms the cornerstone of her broader work, especially her famous book '*Gender Trouble*'. Her works have left a lasting influence and legacy within Feminist and Queer theories. They challenge the traditional understanding of gender and identity thereby inspiring scholars, activists and artists across the globe. Her perspective that gender is socially constructed and enacted through our day-to-day practices gained great momentum. Her theoretical framework has also greatly influenced varied interdisciplinary spheres including cultural studies, critical theories, sociology etc.

A common criticism of Butler's writings speaks about the complexity of her work and dense theoretical language. Critics feel that these aspects may alienate readers not familiar with traditions of continental philosophy and critical theory. There was also an accusation of elitism and academic jargon against her, thereby hindering the potential impact of her ideas beyond the academic circles.

However, Butler received critical acclaim and condemnation for the political implications found in her writing. Butler being associated with the Progressive and Radical parties; critics were of the opinion that her theory may have a politically disempowering or depoliticizing effect. Critics suggest that she should rather focus on discursive practices and symbolic resistance. They fear that her work would downplay the significance of material struggles for social justice and economic equality. Some critics opine that her emphasis on identity contingency may result in a political identity formation being disconnected from the broader arena of political movements.

12.3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. What is the theory of Performativity?
2. How does drag performance reveal the nature of gender?
3. Write a note on gender performances or performative of gender
4. Write a note on Power Dynamics
5. What is fluidity and contingency? Explain in detail.
6. Explain the terms Subversion and Disruption
7. Explain the terms Resistance and Agency

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