

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY IN CULTURAL STUDIES

Current influences on thinking about Cultural studies include a number of French philosophers.

Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924–1998)

He wrote a highly influential work on post-modern society called, **The Postmodern Condition** (1984). The work was a critique on the current state of knowledge among modern post-industrial nations such as those found in the United States and much of Western Europe. In it Lyotard made a number of notable arguments, one of which was that the post-modern world suffered from a crisis of “representation,” in which older modes of writing about the objects of artistic, philosophical, literary, and social scientific languages were no longer credible. His definition of the post-modern was **incredulity toward metanarratives.**”

He suggests that:

The Postmodern would be that which in the modern invokes the unrepresentable in presentation itself, refuses the consolation of correct forms, refuses the consensus of taste permitting a common experience of nostalgia for the impossible and inquires into new presentations--not to take pleasure in them, but to better produce the feeling that there is something unrepresentable.”

Lyotard also attacked modernist thought in "Grand" Narratives or what he termed the Meta(master) narrative with the famous phrase incredulity toward metanarratives. In contrast to the ethnographies written by anthropologists in the first half of the 20th Century, Lyotard claims that an all-encompassing account of a culture cannot be accomplished. He suggests that we replace those narratives by less ambitious “little narratives” that refrain from totalizing claims in favour of recognizing the specificity and singularity of events.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

He was a historian and philosopher of science who developed an approach to intellectual history, “**the archaeology of knowledge**”, that treated systems of thought as “**discursive formations**” independent of the thought and intentions of individual thinkers. The focus of his questioning is the modern human sciences (biological, psychological, social). These claims to offer universal scientific truths about human nature that are often mere expressions of ethical and political commitments of a particular society. Foucault's “**critical philosophy**” undermines such claims by exhibiting how they are just the outcome of contingent historical forces and are not scientifically grounded truths. He recognized that the discipline of archaeology gave no account of transition from one system to another and he introduced a “**genealogical approach**” which explained changes in systems of discourse by connecting them to changes in the non-discursive practices of social power structures. He allowed the standard economic, social and political causes but refused any unifying explanatory scheme as in the Whig or Marxist versions of history. New systems of thought are seen as contingent products of many small, unrelated causes not fulfillments of grand designs. His genealogical studies stressed the connection of knowledge and power. Bodies of knowledge are not autonomous intellectual structures that can be employed as instruments of power, but rather as bodies of knowledge they are tied to instruments of social control. The connection of knowledge and power reflects Foucault's view that power is not only a repressive but a creative source of values.

Discipline and Power published in 1975 is a genealogical study of the development of the “gentler” modern way of imprisoning criminals rather than torturing or killing them. While recognizing the element of genuinely enlightened reform, Foucault emphasizes how such reform also becomes a vehicle of more effective control: “to punish less, perhaps; but certainly to punish better”. He further argues that the new mode of punishment becomes the

model for control of an entire society, with factories, hospitals, and schools modeled on the modern prison. We should not, however, think that the deployment of this model was due to the explicit decisions of some central controlling agency. In typically genealogical fashion, Foucault's analysis shows how techniques and institutions, developed for different and often quite innocuous purposes, converged to create the modern system of disciplinary power.

At the core of Foucault's picture of modern "disciplinary" society are three primary techniques of control: **hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and the examination**. To a great extent, control over people (power) can be achieved merely by observing them. So, for example, the tiered rows of seats in a stadium not only makes it easy for spectators to see but also for guards or security cameras to scan the audience. A perfect system of observation would allow one "guard" to see everything. But since this is not usually possible, there is a need for "relays" of observers, hierarchically ordered, through whom observed data passes from lower to higher levels. A concrete example of Foucault's thinking can be seen in the pervasive use of CCTV (Closed-circuit television) in post-industrial society, where a technological system designed to prevent crime and protect commercial property is now a source of information and social control.

A distinctive feature of modern power, disciplinary control, is its concern with what people have not done, that is a person's failure to reach required standards. This concern illustrates the primary function of modern disciplinary systems: to correct deviant behavior. The goal is not revenge but reform, where, of course, reform means coming to live by society's standards or norms. Discipline through imposing precise norms is quite different from the older system of judicial punishment, which merely judges each action as allowed by the law or not allowed by the law and does not say that those judged are "normal" or "abnormal". This idea of normalization is pervasive in our society: e.g., national standards for educational programs, for medical practice, for industrial processes and products.

The examination (for example, of students in schools, of patients in hospitals) is a method of control that combines hierarchical observation with normalizing judgment. It is a prime example of what Foucault calls power/knowledge, since it combines into a unified whole "the deployment of force and the establishment of truth". It both elicits the truth about those who undergo the examination (tells what they know or what is the state of their health) and controls their behavior (by forcing them to study or directing them to a course of treatment).

Foucault died in 1984, an early victim of AIDS, before he could publish his complete study of the history of sexuality where seeing through modern biological and psychological sciences of sexuality how individuals are controlled by their own knowledge as self-examining and self-forming subjects.

His linking of power and knowledge has had a profound effect on the contemporary direction of Cultural Studies.

Jean Baudrillard (1929 – 2007)

He was one of the foremost intellectual figures of the present age whose work combines philosophy, social theory which reflect on key events of phenomena of the epoch. A sharp critic of contemporary society, culture, and thought, Baudrillard is often seen as a major guru of French postmodern theory.

His work comments on some of the most important cultural and sociological phenomena of the contemporary era, including the erasure of the distinctions of gender, race, and class that structured modern societies in a new postmodern consumer, media, and high tech society and the impact of new media, information, and cybernetic technologies in the creation of a qualitatively different social order, providing fundamental mutations of human and social life.

The early Baudrillard described the meanings invested in the objects of everyday life, for example, the power gained through identification with one's car when driving, and the structural system through which objects were organized into a new modern society, for example, the prestige or sign-value of a new sports car. In his first three books, Baudrillard

argued that the classical Marxian critique of political economy needed to be supplemented by semiological theories of the sign which articulated the diverse meanings signified by signifiers like language organized in a system of meaning. Baudrillard argued that fashion, sports, the media, and other modes of signification also produced systems of meaning articulated by specific rules, codes, and logics.

Baudrillard located his analysis of signs and everyday life in an historical framework and argued that the transition from the earlier stage of competitive market capitalism to the stage of monopoly capitalism required increased attention to demand management, to augmenting and steering consumption. At this historical stage, from around 1920 to the 1960s, the need to intensify demand combined with the need to lower production costs and to expand production. In this era of capitalist development, economic concentration, new production techniques and the development of new technologies, accelerated the capacity for mass production and capitalist corporations and focused increased attention on managing consumption and creating needs for new prestigious goods, thus producing the regime of what Baudrillard has called sign-value.

In Baudrillard's analysis, advertising, packaging, display, fashion, "emancipated" sexuality, mass media and culture, and the proliferation of commodities multiplied the quantity of signs and spectacles and produced a proliferation of sign-value. Henceforth, Baudrillard claims, commodities are not merely to be characterized by use-value and exchange value, as in Marx's theory of the commodity, but **sign-value** — the expression and mark of style, prestige, luxury, power and so on — becomes an increasingly important part of the commodity and consumption.

From this perspective, Baudrillard claims that commodities are bought and displayed as much for their sign-value as their use-value, and that the phenomenon of sign-value has become an essential constituent of the commodity and consumption in the consumer society. For Baudrillard, an entire society is organized around consumption and display of commodities through which individuals gain prestige, identity, and standing. In this system, the more prestigious one's commodities; houses, cars, clothes, and so on, the higher one's standing in the realm of sign value. Thus, just as words take on meaning according to their position in a differential system of language, so sign values take on meaning according to their place in a differential system of prestige and status.

In **The Consumer Society**, Baudrillard concludes by extolling "multiple forms of refusal" of social convention, conspicuous consumption, and conformist thought and behavior, all of which can be fused in a "practice of radical change." Baudrillard alludes here to the expectation of "violent eruptions and sudden disintegration which will come, just as unforeseeably and as certainly May 68, to wreck this white mass" of consumption. On the other hand, Baudrillard also describes a situation where alienation is so total that it cannot be surpassed because "it is the very structure of market society." His argument is that in a society where everything is a commodity that can be bought and sold, alienation is total. Indeed, the term "alienation" originally signified "for sale," and in a totally commodified society where everything is a commodity, alienation is ubiquitous. Moreover, Baudrillard posits "the end of transcendence" where individuals can neither perceive their own true needs or another way of life.

For Baudrillard, **reification** — the process whereby human beings become dominated by things and become more thinglike themselves — comes to govern social life. Conditions of labour imposed submission and standardization on human life, as well as exploiting workers and alienating them from a life of freedom and self-determination. In a media and consumer society, culture and consumption also became homogenized, depriving individuals of the possibility of cultivating individuality and self-determination.

Symbolic Exchange and the Postmodern Break

In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* Baudrillard champions “**symbolic exchange**” which resists capitalist values of utility and monetary profit for cultural values. Baudrillard argues that there is a break with the values of capitalist exchange and production or the production of meaning in linguistic exchange. These cases of “symbolic exchange,” Baudrillard believes, break with the values of production and describe poetic exchange and creative cultural activity that provides alternatives to the capitalist values of production and exchange.

For Baudrillard, modern societies are organized around the production and consumption of commodities, while postmodern societies are organized around simulation and the play of images and signs, denoting a situation in which codes, models, and signs are the organizing forms of a new social order where simulation rules. In the society of simulation, identities are constructed by the appropriation of images so that codes and models determine how individuals perceive themselves and relate to other people. Economics, politics, social life, and culture are all governed by the mode of simulation, whereby codes and models determine how goods are consumed and used, politics unfold, culture is produced and consumed, and everyday life is lived.

In addition, his postmodern universe is one of **hyperreality** in which entertainment, information, and communication technologies provide experiences more intense and involving than the scenes of banal everyday life, as well as the codes and models that structure everyday life. The realm of the hyperreal, for example media simulations of reality, Disneyland and amusement parks, malls and consumer fantasylands, TV sports, Reality TV, video games and other excursions into ideal worlds, is more real than real through which the models, images, and codes of the hyperreal come to control thought and behaviour.

Baudrillard, a “strong simulacrist,” claims that in the media and consumer society, people are caught up in the play of images, spectacles, and simulacra, that have less and less relationship to an outside, to an external “reality,” to such an extent that the very concepts of the social, political, or even “reality” no longer seem to have any meaning. As simulations proliferate, they come to refer only to themselves: a carnival of mirrors reflecting images projected from other mirrors onto the omnipresent television and computer screen and the screen of consciousness, which in turn refers the image to its previous storehouse of images also produced by simulatory mirrors. In the universe of simulations, the “masses” are “bathed in a media massage” without messages or meaning, a mass age where classes disappear, and politics is dead, as are the old ideals of disalienation, liberation, and revolution.

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)

He was the founder of “**deconstruction**,” a way of criticizing not only both literary and philosophical texts but also political institutions. Although Derrida at times expressed regret concerning the fate of the word “deconstruction,” its popularity indicates the wide-ranging influence of his thought, in philosophy, in literary criticism and theory, in art and architectural theory and in political theory. Indeed, Derrida's fame nearly reached the status of a media star, with hundreds of people filling auditoriums to hear him speak, with films and television programs devoted to him, with countless books and articles devoted to his thinking. Beside critique, Derridean deconstruction consists in an attempt to re-conceive the difference that divides self-reflection (or self-consciousness). But even more than the re-conception of difference, and perhaps more importantly, deconstruction works towards preventing the worst violence. It attempts to render justice. Indeed, deconstruction is relentless in this pursuit since justice is impossible to achieve.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction is the most famous of Derrida's terms. We can get a general sense of what Derrida means with deconstruction by reading Descartes's First Meditation. There Descartes says that for a long time he has been making mistakes. The criticism of his former beliefs both mistaken and valid aims towards uncovering a "firm and permanent foundation." The image of a foundation implies that the collection of his former beliefs resembles a building. In the First Meditation then, Descartes is in effect taking down this old building, "deconstructing" it. We have also seen how much Derrida is indebted to traditional transcendental philosophy which really starts here with Descartes' search for a "firm and permanent foundation." But with Derrida, we know now, the foundation is not a unified self but a divisible limit between myself and myself as an other.

Derrida has provided many definitions of deconstruction. But three definitions are classical. The first is early: deconstruction consists of "two phases". Simply, deconstruction is a criticism of Platonism, which is defined by the belief that existence is structured in terms of oppositions and that the oppositions are hierarchical, with one side of the opposition being more valuable than the other. The first phase of deconstruction attacks this belief by reversing the Platonistic hierarchies, of which one specific opposition, the opposition between appearance and essence, is important in Cultural Studies. **In Platonism, essence is more valuable than appearance. In deconstruction however, we reverse this, making appearance more valuable than essence.**

How? Here we could resort to empiricist arguments that show that all knowledge of what we call essence depends on the experience of what appears. In Derrida's argument we have to return to the idea that every appearance or every experience is temporal. In the experience of the present, there is always a small difference between the moment of now-ness and the past and the future. In any case, this infinitesimal difference is not only a difference that is non-dualistic, but also it is a difference that is, as Derrida would say, "undecidable." Although the minuscule difference is virtually unnoticeable in everyday common experience, when we in fact notice it, we cannot decide if we are experiencing the past or the present, if we are experiencing the present or the future. As the difference is undecidable, it destabilizes the original decision that created the original hierarchies.

Having made „difference“ crucial in the discussion Derrida changes the term's orthography, for example, writing "différence" with an "a" as "**différance**" in order to indicate the change in its status. Différance is a neologism combining "difference" and "deferral". Meaning is continually changed and deferred in the course of time because an original appearance changes as it is described. Consequently, there is no absolute truth in our description of appearances. With regard to the representational function of language this has an impact on how we can trust the truthfulness of a representation. There is no fixed or "essential" meaning outside representation in language.

This first definition of deconstruction was refined Derrida claimed that deconstruction is practiced in two styles These "two styles" do not correspond to the "two phases" in the earlier definition of deconstruction. On the one hand, there is a genealogical style of deconstruction, which recalls the history of a concept or theme. On the other hand, there is the more formalistic or structural style of deconstruction, which examines a-historical paradoxes or **aporias**. Derrida lays out three aporias, although they all seem to be variants of one, an aporia concerning the unstable relation between law and justice.

Derrida calls the first aporia, "the epoche of the rule". Our most common axiom in ethical or political thought is that to be just or unjust and to exercise justice, one must be free and responsible for one's actions and decisions. Here Derrida effectively asks: what is freedom? On the one hand, freedom consists in following a rule; but in the case of justice, we would

say that a judgment that simply followed the law was only right, not just. For a decision to be just, not only must a judge follow a rule but also he or she must “re-institute” it, in a new judgment. Thus a decision aiming at justice (a free decision) is both regulated and unregulated. The law must be conserved and also destroyed or suspended, suspension being the meaning of the word “epoche.” Each case is other, each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation which no existing coded rule can or ought to guarantee. If a judge programmatically follows a code, he or she is a “calculating machine.” Strict calculation or arbitrariness, one or the other is unjust, but they are both involved; thus, in the present, we cannot say that a judgment, a decision is just, purely just. For Derrida, the “re-institution” of the law in a unique decision is a kind of violence since it does not conform perfectly to the instituted codes; the law is always, according to Derrida, founded in violence. The violent re-institution of the law means that justice is impossible.

Derrida calls the second aporia “the ghost of the undecidable. A decision begins with the initiative to read, to interpret, and even to calculate. But to make such a decision, one must first of all experience what Derrida calls “undecidability.” One must experience that the case, being unique and singular, does not fit the established codes and therefore a decision about it seems to be impossible. The undecidable, for Derrida, is not mere oscillation between two significations. It is the experience of what, though foreign to the calculable and the rule, is still obligatory. We are obliged to give oneself up to the impossible decision while taking account of rules and law. As Derrida says, “A decision that did not go through the ordeal of the undecidable would not be a free decision, it would only be the programmable application or unfolding of a calculable process”. And once the ordeal is past then the decision has again followed or given itself a rule and is no longer presently just. Justice therefore is always to come in the future, it is never present. There is apparently no moment during which a decision could be called presently and fully just. Either it has not followed a rule, hence it is unjust; or it has followed a rule, which has no foundation, which makes it again unjust; or if it did follow a rule, it was calculated and again unjust since it did not respect the singularity of the case. This relentless injustice is why the ordeal of the undecidable is never past.

The third is called “the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge”. Derrida stresses the Greek etymology of the word “horizon”: “As its Greek name suggests, a horizon is both the opening and limit that defines an infinite progress or a period of waiting.” Justice, however, even though it is un-presentable, does not wait. A just decision is always required immediately. It cannot furnish itself with unlimited knowledge. The moment of decision itself remains a finite moment of urgency and precipitation. The instant of decision is then the moment of madness, acting in the night of non-knowledge and non-rule. This urgency is why justice has no horizon of expectation. Justice remains an event yet to come. Perhaps one must always say “can-be” (the French word for “perhaps” is “peut-être,” which literally means “can be”) for justice. This ability for justice aims however towards what is impossible.

Despite the influence of twentieth century French thinkers, an American Philosopher has also exerted a profound influence on the way we think about culture.

Richard Rorty (1931–2007) developed a distinctive and controversial brand of pragmatism that expressed itself along two main axes. One is negative—a critical diagnosis of what Rorty takes to be defining projects of modern philosophy. The other is positive—an attempt to show what intellectual culture might look like, once we free ourselves from the governing metaphors of mind and knowledge in which the traditional problems of epistemology and metaphysics are rooted. In his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* Rorty's principal target is the philosophical idea of knowledge as representation, as a mental mirroring of a mind-external world. Providing a contrasting image of philosophy, Rorty tried to integrate and apply the achievements of Dewey, Hegel and Darwin in a pragmatist synthesis of historicism and naturalism.

Pragmatized Culture

Rorty examines Naturalism, Liberalism and ethnocentrism.

Naturalism

To be a naturalist in Rorty's sense is to be the kind of anti-essentialist who sees no breaks in the hierarchy of increasingly complex adjustments to novel stimulation, for example the hierarchy which has amoeba adjusting themselves to changed water temperature at the bottom, bees dancing and chess players check-mating in the middle and people fomenting scientific, artistic, and political revolutions at the top.

In Rorty's view, both Dewey's pragmatism and Darwinism encourage us to see vocabularies as tools, to be assessed in terms of the particular purposes they may serve. Our vocabularies, Rorty suggests, "have no more of a representational relation to an intrinsic nature of things than does the anteater's snout or the bowerbird's skill at weaving."

Pragmatic evaluation of various linguistically infused practices requires a degree of specificity. From Rorty's perspective, to suggest that we might evaluate vocabularies with respect to their ability to uncover the truth, would be like claiming to evaluate tools for their ability to help us get what we want — full stop. Is the hammer or the saw or the scissors better — in general? Questions about usefulness can only be answered, Rorty points out, once we give substance to our purposes. In this respect Rorty comes close to Wittgenstein's views about language and meaning.

Rorty's pragmatist appropriation of Darwin also defuses the significance of reduction. He rejects as representationalist the sort of naturalism that implies a program of conceptual reduction to terms at home in a basic science. Rorty's naturalism echoes Nietzsche's perspectivism where a descriptive vocabulary is useful when the patterns it highlights are attended to by creatures with needs and interests like ours. Darwinian naturalism, for Rorty, implies that there is never a special vocabulary whose purpose it is to serve as a critical touchstone for our various descriptive practices.

For Rorty, then, any vocabulary, even that of evolutionary explanation, is a tool for a purpose. He justifies his own commitment to Darwinian naturalism by suggesting that this vocabulary is suited to continue the secularization and democratization of society that Rorty thinks we should aim for.

Liberalism

Rorty is a self-proclaimed romantic bourgeois liberal, a believer in piecemeal reforms advancing economic justice and increasing the freedoms that citizens are able to enjoy. The key imperative in Rorty's political agenda is the deepening and widening of solidarity. Rorty is sceptical about radicalism that is political thought which claims to uncover hidden, systematic causes for injustice and exploitation and on this basis advancing enormous changes to set things right. The task of the intellectual, with respect to social justice, is not to provide refinements of social theory, but to make us aware of the suffering of others and refine, deepen and expand our ability to identify with others, to think of others as like ourselves in morally relevant ways. Reformist liberalism with its commitment to the expansion of democratic freedoms in ever wider political solidarities is an historical contingency which has no philosophical foundation and needs none. Recognizing the contingency of these values and the vocabulary in which they are expressed, while retaining the commitments, is the attitude of the liberal ironist. **Liberal ironists** have the ability to combine the consciousness of the contingency of their own evaluative vocabulary with a commitment to reducing

suffering, especially, with a commitment to opposing cruelty. They promote their cause through re-descriptions, rather than arguments. The distinction between argumentative discourse and re-description corresponds to that between propositions and vocabularies. Change in belief may result from a convincing argument. A change in what we perceive as a possible interesting truth value comes from acquiring new vocabularies.

Rorty's romantic version of liberalism is expressed also in the distinction he draws between the private and the public. This distinction is often misinterpreted to imply that certain domains of interaction or behaviour should be exempted from evaluation in moral or political or social terms. Yet the distinction Rorty makes has little to do with traditional attempts to separate a private and a public domain and determine which aspects of our lives we have to we and which we don't have to answer for publically. We should, Rorty urges, be "content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable (having no method of assessment in common." Rorty's view is that we should treat vocabularies for deliberation about public goods and social and political arrangements, on the one hand, and vocabularies developed or created in pursuit of personal fulfilment, self-creation, and self-realization, on the other, as separate tools.

Ethnocentrism

Rorty's liberal ironists, recognizing — indeed, affirming — the contingency of their own commitments, are explicitly ethnocentric. For the liberal ironist, “...one consequence of anti-representationalism is the recognition that no description of how things are from a God's-eye point of view is going to free us from the contingency of having been acculturated as we were. Our acculturation is what makes certain options live, or momentous, or forced, while leaving others dead, or trivial, or optional.”

So the liberal ironist accepts that bourgeois liberalism has no universality other than the transient and unstable one which time, luck, and discursive effort might gain for it. This view looks to many readers like a version of **cultural relativism**. True, Rorty does not say that what is true, what is good, and what is right is relative to some particular ethnos and in that sense he is no relativist. But the worry about relativism, that it leaves us with no rational way to assess conflict, seems to apply equally to Rorty's ethnocentric view. Rorty's answer is to say that in one sense of "rational" that is true, but that in another sense it is not, and to recommend that we drop the former. Rorty's position is that we have no notion of rational warrant that exceeds or transcends or grounds the norms that liberal intellectuals take to define open-minded, reflective discussion. It is an illusion to think that the force or attractiveness of these norms can be enhanced by argument that does not presuppose them. Persuasion across such fundamental differences is achieved, if at all, by concrete comparisons of particular alternatives, by elaborate description and re-description of the kinds of life which promote different practices.

MAIN POINTS

Lyotard

Incredulity toward metanarratives. Like Wittgenstein's attack on the desire of philosophers to arrive at general propositions Lyotard questions the validity of overarching narratives particularly arising from anthropological research with tendencies to apply them as general rules for human kind. He suggests that little narratives are more appropriate to retain the context and specificity of descriptions and avoid misleading generalisations.

Foucault

The archaeology of knowledge. Foucault developed an approach to systems of thought as discourses independent of their thinkers. Claims that the truths on human nature that they

offer are universal are often misleading as they are dependent on the ethical and political nature of the society in which these “truths” arose.

Foucault

He noted that archaeology provides no account of the transition of from one system to another and introduced a second metaphor, **the genealogical approach**, which described changes to systems of thought through the changes in non-discursive practices in the power structures.

Foucault

Hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and **the examination** are the three primary techniques of control in contemporary society

Foucault

Disciplinary control. Foucault notes that those who have power in a society are not so much concerned with punishing deviation from rules as requiring people to reach certain common standards. Reform rather than revenge with the idea of normalization being pervasive in society, for example the introduction of compulsory targets in all the education systems in Britain.

Baudrillard

Sign-value. The expression and mark of style, prestige, luxury, power and so on. According to Baudrillard sign-value has replaced use-value and exchange-value in the development of late capitalism in the latter part of the twentieth century. People in advanced industrial societies buy commodities for their prestige and brand (mark) reputation.

Baudrillard

The end of transcendence: a situation where individuals can no longer perceive their own real needs or another way of life.

Baudrillard

Reification. For the Frankfurt School and Baudrillard the process where human being become dominated by things and become things themselves.

Baudrillard

Symbolic exchange. A concept where there is a decisive break with the values inherent in production and a turn towards poetic and creative exchange.

Baudrillard

Hyperreality is where the experiences provided by the entertainment industry and the media become more intense and involving than those offered in the course of everyday life.

Baudrillard

Simulacra. Imitations or copies without an original to refer to. They aid experiences in the hyperreality of contemporary culture. Disney World is cited as an example where multi-media experiences are provided by simulacra.

Derrida

Deconstruction. A complex term, typically shifting in its uses. It refers to Derrida’s attack on the binary distinctions made in philosophy beginning with the dualist element in Plato.

Derrida

Différance. A neologism made up of ‘difference’ and ‘deferral.’ Our representation of an experience is always different from our representation of it in language and therefore the meaning of the language we use to refer to the experience is always deferred as we constantly qualify our original representation.

Derrida

Epoche of the rule. Derrida's insight into lack of fit between the application of rules and the act of making judgment to particular cases where the rules appear to apply. It's worth pointing out that Derrida's insight is dependent on an understanding of Roman law where judges decide guilt or innocence, liability or non-liability. In Anglo-Saxon law cases are often decided by a lay jury after they have heard the evidence. However, under both systems the act of judgment is arbitrary however compelling the evidence.

Derrida

Undecidability. In logic an undecidable proposition is one which can neither be proved nor disproved. Derrida regards each case of justice as unique and therefore without precedent. Existing rules cannot apply and therefore each case is undecidable. The just person has to experience undecidability in order to arrive at a just decision which is impossible because as soon as a person applies a rule the decision is no longer just.

Rorty

Pragmatized culture. Rorty distinguishes three elements, **naturalism, ironic liberalism and ethnocentrism.** His naturalism sees no hierarchical distinction in from the simplest forms of life to human kind. There is no privileged perspective created by human activity as opposed to those by any other living entity. Ironic liberalism perceives that the vocabulary it uses is contingent not essential and yet is able to maintain a commitment to reducing suffering. Ethnocentrism is inevitable as all individuals grow up in a particular culture and there is no way of standing outside the effects and processes of one's own acculturation.

SEMINAR EXERCISES

- Think of family grocery shopping in Britain and family grocery shopping in Slovakia. Apart from the obvious, what are the similarities and the differences. If you compare the two activities can you make a generalisation about consumerism?
- Two stereotypes, the British male and the Slovak male. Write down up to five characteristics for these stereotypes. What is their genealogy; history, the media, environment, social structure?
- Education: hierarchy, normalizing judgment and the examination. Is this a good framework to describe education systems at all levels in British and Slovak societies?
- Sign value: Have you got T-shirt, pair of trainers, handbag, laptop and so on which is a favourite? How much does its brand and appearance contribute to your liking?
- Think of a media production such as Britian / Czechoslovakia has talent. What do you think is important in these productions? Consider the atmosphere of the shows, the relative talent on display, the use of disadvantaged performers, the „different personalities“ of the judges, the visual components such as costumes, hairstyles and so on.
- Remember a decision you have made. How did you justify it to yourself, in terms of past experience or expected future results? Did you make the decision based on what you were feeling when you made the decision? And can you trust your memory?
- Think of an aspect of Anglophone culture that you really love. Is this determined by something similar in Slovak culture or something missing in Slovak culture? How much can you be free of your slovak cultural conditioning?

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<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/derrida/>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rorty/>