

BLOCK 3

As we have already introduced in the previous block what Continental philosophy is and the earlier continental philosophers who lay the foundation to what is to come, here we consider some of the later continental philosophers. Structuralism as such is the analysis of the cultural products like language, mythologies and so on and the major thinkers being Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, and the main poststructuralist's are Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. One of the most important movements in the postmodern period is hermeneutics which deals with interpretation of texts. The period is also influenced by the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt school. While modernist critical theory concerns itself with forms of authority and injustice that accompanied the evolution of industrial and corporate capitalism as a political-economic system, postmodern critical theory politicizes social problems by situating them in historical and cultural contexts, to implicate themselves in the process of collecting and analyzing data, and to relativize their findings

This block is divided into four units which will systematically introduce us to the various movements that took place during the contemporary period in the western philosophy.

Unit 1 deals with Structuralism and Poststructuralism. Here we have four thinkers, the structuralists: Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes and the Post structuralists: Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. In general we will look at their contributions towards the analysis of linguistics and other cultural artifacts that are very often overlooked, and they called their work as 'structural analyses'.

Unit 2 highlights the trends and thinking of postmodernism in a philosophical way. Although the term itself is used in a variety of disciplines, here we will deal with its philosophical implication and usage. A differentiation is made between the pre-modern, modern and post-modern periods and drawing upon the general characteristics, and concluding that the contemporary cultural phenomenon called postmodernism is quite original and differently oriented.

Unit 3 highlights the contribution towards the field of hermeneutics and interpretation. Beginning with Hans-Georg Gadamer, who is considered to be the father of Philosophical hermeneutics, we have a number of thinkers: Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur. This unit interprets philosophical hermeneutics as a well organised, systematic, historically based and independent discipline in philosophy.

Unit 4 deals with the Critical Theory. We locate the historical context of the critical theory, the legacies they inherited from Marxism and Hegel, and the views of thinkers like, Max Webber, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Habermas. Among them, Habermas is the best known face of the Frankfurt School.

Structuralism, during the later period of Continental Philosophy, sought to clarify systems of signs through analysing the discourses they both limit and make possible. Saussure conceived of the sign as being delimited by all the other signs in the system, and ideas as being incapable of existence prior to linguistic structure, which articulates thought. This led continental thought away from humanism, and toward what was termed the decentering of human: language is no longer spoken by human to express a true inner self, but language speaks human. Post-structuralism began to dominate the western thought over the 1970s onwards, through the contributions of thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Roland Barthes.

