

Think Tank Identity Politics – Talks and Abstracts

April 8, 2010 – April 10, 2010

Thursday, April 8, 2010

HOMI K. BHABHA

Spectral Sovereignty

My brief talk will explore cultural and political issues associated with the aleatory conditions of contemporary globalization. I will focus on three issues: (1) spectral sovereignties that create nation-centered affiliations despite the growth of global dissemination; (2) the virtues and vicissitudes of vernacular cosmopolitanism; and (3) global memory.

DAN DINER

Reconsidering Enlightenment. On Modernity and Modernity in Reverse

The paper intends to discuss the question of Enlightenment tradition at the backdrop of the critique of modernity, while re-considering the somehow irritating assumption of multiple modernities. In somehow returning full circle to the sources while transpassing the canon of post-modernist discourse implicitly and questioning its further validity, the basic argument re-imagines some fundamental material as well as spiritual presuppositions of enlightenment thought – especially the arsenal of its Scottish tradition and contrasted against its continental juxtaposition.

LUIZ COSTA LIMA

Are you Convinced that the Earth is Egg-Shaped?

To think about identities means to think over differences. In this articulation of identity and difference, one must consider the asymmetrical position that the cultural agency occupies in so-called metropolitan and marginal areas of the world. According to these differences, each mentioned area shows two different attitudes, respectively defined as the negative and positive ones. For metropolitan areas: the automatic behavior (negative pole) and the exploration of limits (positive pole). For marginal areas: imitative behavior (negative pole) and the explosion of limits (the positive one). The description of the cases must emphasize the asymmetry of each couple.

Friday, April 9, 2010

EUN-JEUNG LEE

In Search of Korean Identity - from Self-Peripheralization to World Power

In Korean discourses on identity during the last two centuries, Korea has moved from the periphery of the Chinese-Confucian cultural sphere to the “center of the world”. The self-peripheralization narrative has disappeared completely from Korean identity discourses. In this presentation, the thesis “from the periphery to the center” will be explored in its details.

KIEN NGHI HA

Towards Transnational Asian German Studies: Theoretical and Conceptional Challenges

Asian German Studies is an innovative field of research now emerging from the new cultural landscape of globalized immigration in Germany. As a work in progress its framework is still very rudimentary and is in need of a much more sophisticated exploration. Therefore, I like to envision some conceptual and theoretical elements of Asian German Studies in conjunction with transnational Asian Diasporic Studies.

ESIABA IROBI

What Did I Do to Be so Black and Blue? Race, Sex, and Biraciality as Primal Factors in the Construction of Political Identity and Citizenship in Europe and the European Diaspora e.g. the USA

This paper uses the controversies surrounding the 1787 sexual relationship in Paris between Thomas William Jefferson (46 years of age at the time and later the third president of the USA) and Sally Hemming (an underage African American slave girl who was 14 when the sexual tryst happened) as a historical prism to telescope and examine how race, sex, and biraciality (as in the case of Barack Obama) constitute primal factors in determining the political possibilities i.e. how much or how little people of African descent can participate or be totally disenfranchised from the political processes of Europe and her diasporas' supposedly “democratic” countries e.g. the USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa, South America.

SUSAN ARNDT

The Longevity of Whiteness. Colonial Myth, Social Position and Critical Category of Analysis

In a doomed attempt to justify and legitimate what was neither to be justified nor legitimated – the enslavement of millions of Africans, genocide and colonial conquest of territories and their riches – Europeans invented a myth of superiority based on a concept of Europeanness that was pillared by both Christianity and the

invention of 'races' which situated *white* as superior. The terror of National Socialism, Apartheid and right-wing extremism is just the tip of the iceberg of racism, which continues to affect *white* Western knowledge systems, languages and belief systems. In my paper I wish to discuss the emergence of the notion of 'race', tracing the development of its theorems back to classical antiquity. Starting from a genealogical exploration of 'race', I will elaborate on the concept of the 'racial turn', which provides us with a transformed understanding of *race* as a social position and critical category of analysis.

HELEN GILBERT

Performance, Belonging, Community

Using concepts drawn from new cosmopolitanism as well as Jill Dolan's work on utopia, I will explore public performance as a particularized space for the negotiation of local and national belonging/identities. Examples discussed pertain to Refugee and Aboriginal theatre in Australia.

Saturday, April 10, 2010

NIKITA DHAWAN

Whose Cosmopolitanism? Old Wine in New Bottles?

The figure of the 'cosmopolitan' has gained renewed prominence in current political thought as an agent of global justice, peace and democracy. In the face of increased transnational movement of capital, commodities, people, ideas, and images, cosmopolitans seemingly overcome narrow territorial-based affiliations in favour of an allegiance to all of humanity. Such an expansive consciousness of world citizenship has the pursuit of 'solidarity across borders' as its normative ideal. Despite well-intentioned efforts to offer a more critical version of plural and discrepant cosmopolitan identities which challenge the Eurocentric and androcentric bias as well the imperial origins of cosmopolitanism, counter-discourses risk reproducing a form of "Feudality without Feudalism" (Spivak). My paper will explore the challenges and prospects of the politics of cosmopolitan identities.

AKEEL BILGRAMI

The Mentalities of Identity

I will diagnose why liberalism finds it particularly difficult to cope with identity politics by looking to the clash of mentalities (that is to say the contrasting epistemologies and moral psychologies) that underlie liberal ideals and the ideals of identity.