Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences
VII Balvant Parekh Memorial Lecture and Symposium
(Part of the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Centre)

Theme of the Lecture:
“Epistemic Reconstitution(s), Colonial/Imperial Differences and Border Thinking”

Speaker: Walter D Mignolo, William H. Wannamaker Professor of Literature, Duke University
Dates: December 12, 2019 at 4 pm (Lecture); Symposium (on the topic of the Lecture) on 13 & 14 December 2019
Venue: Balvant Parekh Centre, C-302, Siddhi Vinayak Complex, Behind the Railway Station, Baroda 390007

Summary of the Lecture

In my talk, I will address what I see as an urgent task of our time and on the planet: to engage in epistemic reconstitution(s). I write (s) in parenthesis to indicate that the orientation of the task and that plurality of local histories (geo-and body-graphical) in where the task shall be performed. Westernization of the planet took place between 1500-2000. In spite of the political, religious, national, disciplinary, aesthetic, artistic diversity of Western Civilization, there was, and there is, a common ground that for example cohere Catholics and Protestants and set them apart from Sunnis and Shias, from Hindus and Shintoism; although they are different schools of sociology and philosophy, as well as distinct positions in theoretical physics, they cohere them and set them apart from other forms of knowledge and knowing that are labelled (from the common ground of Western sciences, human and natural, and philosophy) wisdom, folklore, myth, storytelling.

Although non-Western knowledges, ways of knowing and of world-making were never killed, they were suppressed and silenced for a long time. No longer. In the twenty-first century, there are growing evidences and work being done to restitute knowledge, knowing, and praxis of living that were destituted by the hegemony of Westernization. For these reasons, epistemic reconstitutions require to start from “someplace else” since it cannot be obtained without disobeying and delinking from Western epistemology (e.g.: Mahatma Gandhi’s and Martin Luther King’s civil disobedience was at once also epistemic disobedience). Epistemic reconstitution is taking place today in two distinct spheres: one is De-Westernization, and it is State lead; the other is decoloniality, and is spirited by the emerging Political Society with its back to the State and concomitant institutions.

Symposium

In relation to the symposium planned for the next two days, I will underscore that this task cannot be limited to the Global South. The Global South is 25% of a presupposed totality: Global North, Global East, Global West. Each of these regional configurations are somewhat idealistic as if only the Good was in the Global South and the Bad and the Ugly in the Global North. What about the remaining 50%, the Global West and the Global East? I will argue that: a) Epistemic reconstitutions is a task to be advanced and doesn’t matter in what regions of the planet. There is no regional privileges for epistemic reconstitution; b) Epistemic reconstitution are responses to colonial and imperial differences created as a necessity by the long five centuries of Westernization; c) Epistemic reconstitution, for what I said in point b), presupposes border thinking, and that border thinking emerges, not from geographical locations, but from the experience of dwelling in planetary borderland and border lines.

Kindly send an email to the Academic Fellow, Dr. Bini B.S. (binisajil@gmail.com) if you wish to participate in the symposium.

Speaker

Walter Mignolo is William H. Wannamaker Professor of Literature at Duke University and has joint appointments in Cultural Anthropology and Romance Studies. He has published extensively on semiotics and literary theory, and has in the past years been working on different aspects of the modern/colonial world and exploring concepts such as global coloniality, the geopolitics of knowledge, transmodernity, border thinking, and di/pluriversalities. His recent publications on these latter topics include: The Idea of Latin America (2005), Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes, co-edited with Elizabeth H. Boone (1994), and The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, Colonization (1995), which won the Katherine Singer Kovacs prize from the Modern Languages Association.