

Within the lecture series  
**DIASPORA. EXPLORING A LIFE MODEL**  
the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue kindly invites to

## **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**

Columbia University

# **“OUTSIDE THE METROPOLIS: DIASPORICS?”**

Curated and moderated by  
**Isolde Charim**

**Thursday | February 19, 2009 | 19.00 h**

Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue | Armbrustergasse 15 | 1190 Vienna

The lecture will be held in English.

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### **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**

born in Calcutta, India. Undergraduate degree in English at the University of Calcutta (1959), graduating with first class honours, MA in English from Cornell University, Ph.D. while teaching at the University of Iowa. It was her subsequent translation of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* that brought her to prominence. She included a translator's introduction which has since been described as "setting a new standard for self-reflexivity in prefaces". She has often referred to herself as a "practical Marxist-feminist-deconstructionist". Her overriding ethico-political concern has been the tendency of institutional and cultural discourses/practices to exclude and marginalize the subaltern, especially subaltern women. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, published in 1999, explores how major works of European metaphysics (e.g., Kant, Hegel) not only tend to exclude the subaltern from their discussions, but actively prevent non-Europeans from occupying positions as fully human subjects. Spivak had taught at several universities before arriving at Columbia in 1991. On March 9, 2007, she has been appointed University Professor, the institution's highest faculty rank.

Spivak founded The Pares Chandra and Sivani Chakravorty Memorial Literacy Project, a not-for-profit organization, in 1997, to provide a primary education of quality for children in some of the poorest regions of the globe. The project currently operates schools in rural areas of West Bengal, India. By setting up schools and giving sustained training to local teachers, the project seeks to offer children in these areas the resources to enter the mainstream education system for high school and beyond. The project is committed to using the existing state curriculum and textbooks to train teachers, in the belief that by using these materials they can better enable their students to enter the national education system on equal terms with others. "Since India constantly brags about being the world's largest democracy, and this is a large sector of the electorate, what I'm trying to do is develop rituals of democratic habits," she said of the project.

### **Isolde Charim**

born in Vienna in 1959, philosopher and free lance journalist.

### ***Diaspora. Exploring a Life Model***

*Contrary to the dictum that economic conditions will bring forth matching types of people, we are currently confronted with a pronounced mismatch. The dynamism of capitalist economics is generating an apparently boundless mobility. Whereas locations follow the pull of flexibilisation, the people attached to them remain tied to fixed, 'grounded' identity concepts. The cultures of our nation states hold no mental resources for the life of modern nomads. In view of this situation, we shall embark on a mental oil-drilling exercise in search of such resources. Our starting point is the concept of DIASPORA: The centuries-old dispersion of diverse peoples will not be perceived as synonymous with plight and displacement, but in its positive sense as a rich source of experience. The present series is an attempt at exploring a variety of ways of tapping this source. There may be national, cultural or economic differences, but what is common to all diaspora groups is the development of a specific form of non-territorial, supra-national network identity "avant la lettre", which signifies neither total integration nor parallel society.*

***Previous participants in the series have been: Khaled Fouad Allam, Benedict Anderson, Bashir Bashir, Rainer Bauböck, Homi K. Bhabha, Birand Bingül, Diedrich Diederichsen, Tony Judt, Hanno Loewy, Sari Nusseibeh, Saskia Sassen.***

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### **Isolde Charim**

Good evening. I'd like to welcome you to a further session of our lecture series Diaspora. Exploring a Life Model. A series means that every evening stands for itself and at the same time fits into the serial of evenings that preceded

it. Meanwhile the list of our guests is quite long. Let me just mention a few of them like Tony Judt, Benedict Anderson, Saskia Sassen, or Homi Bhabha. Like Saskia Sassen our guest tonight is not only a woman but one of the most acknowledged female theorists. And like Homi Bhabha our guest is of Indian origin. Gayatri Chakra... Spivak was born in Calcutta. She started her formation in India and a most successful academic biography led her from Calcutta to New York where she teaches since 1991 at the Columbia University. Gayatri Spivak is full of contradictions, a colored woman who has been appointed with the greatest academic honors. Since 2007 she is University Professor which is the highest faculty rank. She often calls herself a practical Marxist feminist deconstructionist. While the object of her research as well as her ethico-political concern is discourses and practices to exclude the subaltern, especially the subaltern women. With her question "Can the subaltern speak?" which is the title of her famous essay that has been recently published in German and her answer "No" she became a worldwide important voice, an icon of post-colonial studies. Also she told me on the phone before coming that she has written this text 20 years ago, and her work and thinking has moved a lot since then. And last but not least Gayatri Spivak is an academic who is very much engaged in a project to train teachers in some of the poorest regions of the globe. As to her motivation to accept invitations like ours she said with disarming charm and frankness, "I am instrumentalizing you as anybody I can for this project." To say it with Gertraud Auer, Secretary General of the Kreisky Forum, if the Kreisky Forum can contribute by this evening to such a development project there is nothing to be said against it. In this sense welcome to the Kreisky Forum, Gayatri.

### **Gayatri Spivak**

Thank you, that was really quite charming. Well, I'm really deeply honored to have been invited to join the group that you mentioned. Most of them I know, they are my friends. While they are certainly at the head of thinking about diasporas I'll share with you thoughts that are still kind of in progress, and you will instruct me. That's really why one does these things. So let me begin without further ado.

My title is "Outside in the Metropolis, Diasporics". I published a book in 1993 which is called "Outside in the Teaching Machine". I like to think about that structure, outside - in, rather than simply outside. And that I think is something that one has to consider also with diasporics. Aristotle is supposed to have felt a foreigner in Athens because he was a Stagirite. He called himself a methis and contrasted himself to Plato who was a polites because he belonged to the Polis. Baudelaire felt himself a stranger in his own city as the famous poem "The Swan" testifies. There is the quotation from Edward W. Said quoting Auerbach quoting ... "The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner." The reason why I read the Latin is because clearly what he is doing is also undermining the call of patriotism and nationalism, dulce decorum est pro patria mori. That's behind that sentence which you don't get in the English. "He to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong." Again in the Latin there is no question of native or mother soil or anything. It's, "Fortis autem cui omni solum patria east." "But he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign land." Again listen to the Latin and you will see that it is not quite as a foreign land. "Perfectus vero cui mundus totus exilium est." which is a little bit different from what the English translation tells us.

Can we claim this as a value in the face of both fierce nationalism all around the world and the political mobilization of diaspora? It is forever an enticing and aporetic thought. And this aporetic train - I'm sure you know what it is but I speak quite often to people who are very negative about this kind of words, demography is alright, morphology is alright, somehow aporetic is not alright. The idea of an aporetic train is where you have contradictory messages coming at the same time like a double bind and therefore what you learn - I mean we have changed this into a more palliative method these days, we call it sustainability. How can you do the minimum of something in order to do the maximum of something else? But actually the aporetic train is harsher. You recognize that that solution is always interested in perhaps a less good way. So contradictory instructions coming at the same time, nonetheless you go through it and you know what it is that you have been up to after having crossed this uncrossable thing, an aporia. So it is different from a contradiction, it's different from a paradox. These are descriptive things. Or it's different from antinomies which can be solved. So this question, the three people that I talked about, their idea of what is value - and one could add Socrates there telling his judges to treat him as a foreigner because he did not believe that social engineers knew enough to understand the critique of society. So can we claim this as a value in the face of both fierce nationalisms all around the world and the political mobilization of diaspora? It is forever an enticing and aporetic thought. It would at least make us together, revise your semantic title, diaspora is not a single life model but many.

Before we look into the many faces of diaspora, keeping exile as the last in mind -that's that long ago quote from Hugo Sanvictor - let us look at what may be in common in them. Not everyone in a diaspora knows the word. This is something that people forget. In worldwide diasporas or in gender politics a line can be cut through those who know and can claim and recognize the world and those who can't. That's not to be forgotten. Not everyone in a diaspora knows the word. Those of us who can use it and recognize it must at a distance refer to the Alexandria codex where we first see the word. It's fantastic to actually look at it. It's in the British Library. We will spend a moment on this below. Now let's say that the common thing is that every diasporic feels a pull of somewhere else while located here. If we consider the model of exogamous marriage, which is generally a more common model, with reference to that sentence we might have to revise the entire city-country model implicit in my title in metropolis and think that women in gendering have always shared this characteristic with what we today have learned to call diaspora even when it doesn't have much of a resemblance with what happened so long ago in Alexandria. In terms of the Hindu tradition of Bengal which also informs the counter-theological Islamic secularism of the grassroots, rather different from the European traditions that I know, and certainly from the traditions that have established themselves in what is collectively called the United States, in other words in the cultural texts included in my sense of my past and indeed my present the married daughter as a diasporic is so strong an image that our high holiday, the Durga Buddha, has thousands of songs written to celebrate a daughter's return that really does recode diaspora talk. It's something that is forgotten when we talk about diaspora simply in the context of European migration. And indeed the diaspora talk is recoded there as songs of advent, diaspora recoded in terms of exogamous marriage in terms of the woman. And these songs, when I say that there are thousands of songs of the sort, if I in fact simply put my paper aside and started translating these songs you would see exactly what I was talking about.

It has often seemed to me as I have commented on the need to gender the concept of the diaspora one thinks of Ruth and the Hebrew Bible I have wondered if one shouldn't look at the staging of marriage in older cultures before the ideas of romantic love took over. And let me add that even though not everyone, indeed not every diasporic is acquainted with the word or knows that it might apply to her, all underclass female diasporics feel what I have sketched in this picture of exogamous marriage. It is as if the double bind of one's fulfillment as woman by being married is compounded by the double bind between culture and civil society which is the mark of a diaspora.

Incidentally I should say that when in German speaking countries and Dutch speaking countries and French speaking countries Frau and Madame is just simply translated Missis. It's an ugly feeling. It's the same thing. All our work to get that word out of use somehow doesn't seem to have crossed the pond. This idea of the double bind of finding fulfillment diasporically by marrying as a woman and the double bind between culture left behind and civil society there is a certain kind of displacement which one must take into account.

The double-bind between culture and civil society. When we write the diaspora as a single life model that double-bind is rewritten as sustainability between culture and civil society. Everything like the Hijab stuff and all sort of cultural rights, quarrels and the Sikhs in Canada, the mounted police wearing their turbans and so on, this is the sustainability. How far, how big does the cross have to be that you are wearing around your neck to qualify as something that should be prohibited? Maximum of Christianity, minimum of Islam, if you don't mind my saying this. That's sustainability.

I have tried to understand this elsewhere as the diasporic life being an economy between the performative and performance. I want to cite here an example that is not strictly speaking from what you would call a diaspora unless you realized, once again, that diaspora is of many models. After I have discussed the example, an example that I have cited before I would like to suggest how it relates to diaspora as we understand it today. W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the most brilliant intellectuals in the world in the last century. Towards the beginning of the century he wrote his very famous book "Souls of black folk". The book is about how to be both a Negro and an American. Today that question has been answered at the very top level in the United States, but not everywhere. In his book Du Bois at the head of each chapter inserted a few lines of the hymns that were composed by slaves, at the time called Negro spirituals, Du Bois called them sorrow songs. Those of you who have seen this wonderful book know that at the head of each chapter a bit of Negro spiritual is given in European notation, no words. This I would call

asking you to recode the performative, that with which you compute your life as performance, that which becomes acknowledged as a source of the de-transcendentalizing work that art does.

"The first step in class mobility in the diasporic. When the underclass diasporic denied class mobility in the civil society of his or her choice has nothing but the culture of origin with which to understand and operate in this new place. It is still his or her chief performative instrument. If and as she or he goes up in class the culture of origin becomes a performance of choice on special occasions in which one hopes, it's a struggle in school curricula, in museums, in concert halls where the subject of the culture is not transformed into an object except by himself or herself."

There is a real difference there. Devois does not give the words of these songs as he gives the notation. In other words, he wants the then majority white readers not to have the secret of the performative too easily, studying other cultures too easily, but only become curious about the performance as he or she through the European notation is able to surmise its musical quality. At the end of the book there is a chapter that is only about these spirituals, and there are no notations there, and how they have made a connection between Africa and the slave diaspora. Those of you who know the book will remember that he actually quotes an extremely moving spiritual that his grandmother sang in some African language which they could not understand. How they have made a connection between Africa and the slave diaspora, and the book ends with one of these songs, now without the notation. It is as if the mostly white reader has been moved through an education in the desired move from a constraining performative to the possibility of social performance through class mobility. I doubt that I will be able to add anything to this robust example given to us at the beginning of the last century.

The great narrative of the African America acknowledged chattel slavery in nascent capitalism, unacknowledged domestic and female slavery is rampant in the world today, but this was acknowledged, has been for me a classic example of post-colonialism for a very long time. Not India, not Algeria, not any of these places, but that. It is necessary to think of it also as an extreme case of diaspora where as in the codex the sense of diaspora as deprivation was very strong as the musical tradition, and the slave narratives, and the history of the exceptional ex-slaves show us.

I haven't mentioned how it would be if we took the old big diasporas into account. China, the Arabs, the Jews, the Muslims, and in a more modern context Indians. Not surprisingly I know the checkered history and geography of the Indian diaspora best. Without really trying and also not particularly surprising I am more interested in the Indian diaspora of the previous centuries than in the one in my own time and to my own place, the United States. In those earlier diasporas what we now call somehow derisively assimilation meant solidarity in many different kinds of contexts when unmarked by the history of that word in the United States or in Britain. I remember my former student Chetty saying to me when I first met him in the early 80s at Wesleyan University that as a South African of Indian origin he thought of himself as a black African and not a diasporic Indian, thinking that by saying this he would offend the stereotype of Gayatri Spivak. It was of course the beginning of a long friendship. In 2004 my brilliant colleague, Marie Sconde, invited me to her birth place, the island of Guadeloupe in the Antilles to speak at the 150th anniversary of the bringing of the first indentured Indian labor to that area. You know the story. Because of the insubordination of the former African Caribbean slaves in those islands after emancipation France and Britain did a deal. France gave Britain Canada so that Britain would transport indentured labor from poorer areas of India into these islands. As a mainland Indian, when they even wanted to look at my Indian passport with Calcutta written as my place of birth in a passport because they had come in the 19th century from Calcutta, from Bondy cherry, from the Malabar coast and so on, to them it wasn't a place, but how was it that I was from there written in a passport? As a mainland Indian speaking to them as an equal and indeed I gave them a keynote in French, unraveling the sanctioned ignorance of the mainland by explaining and singing through a famous song by Rabindranath Tagore on a trip to an imaginary island. Rabindranath Tagore on a trip to an imaginary island which completely ignored the predicament of the Indian indentured labor in some of the most spectacular islands of the world, a sanctioned ignorance comparable to the taking of the Eurocentric migrant and Europe's problems as the model of the diaspora today. As a mainland Indian then I belonged for them to what Guguris has called "a dream nation" because they have been without well recorded origins when they were brought and they had not risen like the African Americans within a post-colonial frame they could not imagine going back to that land their ancestors had left 150 years ago. I am against nationalism or national originism, but for me this was a chastening experience. I

began to realize how diversified, cross checked the experience of diaspora was. To explore that life model would probably be without interest here and now. What I will mention, however, is Marie Sconde's spirit of the exultation in the face of division to bring the two sectors of the established population of all these islands together as Caribbeans rather than Indo-and Afro-Caribbeans forever diasporic. Again, a model that will not travel to situation where the racism of the dominant keeps the underclass diasporics at bay even as it welcomes and exoticizes the upperclass diasporic speaking for the entire historic lifestyle. Myself, Homi, Anthony Appia, Edward Said escaped it because for him the ground of exoticization would have been the open wound of Palestine and there be dragons.

This then is the conclusion. The givens of diasporic existence are deeply differentiated by history, geography, the reason for the diaspora class and at the base gender in many different ways. Examples could be multiplied. So far I've been trying to resist taking however vaguely the Alexandria codex as a model. You will forgive me, in this crowd I don't really need to say this. But this talk will travel. So also I may make mistakes. I don't really know what I am talking about in depth. If I make mistakes in what comes now just say so, not a problem, I am not claiming anything.

The word diaspora means something like scattered abroad. Moses predicted that the Jews would be dispersed if they did not obey the Ten Commandments although it is particularly to be noted that deportation to a foreign land is not the sole prospect which the author holds out before his people. It is but one beside many other afflictions, most of which are to fall upon Israel in its own land. Diaspora is one of the punishments a people suffer if it disobeys the law. In Deuteronomy, the book of the Old Testament where the curses are uttered, they are balanced against the rewards, indistinguishable at this stage from the blessings that are earned if the people obey. Deuteronomy was among the first books of the Bible to be translated into Greek which gives us the word diaspora. The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, were translated into Greek in Egypt before the middle of the third century B.C. The evidence shows that it was prompted by the need of Jews in Egypt for a version of the scripture in the Greek language, then more familiar to them than Hebrew or even Aramaic, either for public use in the synagogue or for private reading and study. Diaspora is thus full of effect and the word is an innovation in the language that is not at home. The word is give wide currency among migrant groups with a certain degree of education and class position today for the sake of the effect because otherwise Eurocentric economic migration does not know how to deal with itself. But the connection with responsibility and reparation, we are here because we are guilty by some unspecified guilt against the law is now gone or legitimized by reversal, we are here because you are guilty, we are here because you were there.

These last few words on the diaspora lead me to an essay I wrote on Jamaica Kincaid's novel "Lucy", a novel that brings back the ancient diasporic thematic of responsibility and reparation. For this author diaspora on migration is a way of severing connection as a solution rather than the source of a problem. We receive the shock of that displacement in the very beginning of the novel. "Oh, I had imagined that with my one swift act, leaving home and coming to this new place I could leave behind me as if it were an old garment never to be worn again my sad thoughts, my sad feelings, and my discontent with life in general as it presented itself to me." Again, one could talk about a lot of stuff here but let's hold it. But the author also judges. The employer Maria says to Lucy, "I was looking forward to telling you that I have Indian blood (meaning native American). But now I feel you will take it the wrong way." So Lucy thinks, "Wrong way, right way? What could she mean? My grandmother is a Carib Indian. My grandmother is alive. The Indians she came from are all dead. In fact, one of the museums to which Maria had taken me devoted a whole section to people all dead who were more or less related to my grandmother." The novel questions the self-indulgencies of contemporary diasporism but at the same time dwells on Lucy's inability to establish a connection with her proper name through the history of its other holders, John Milton's Lucifer and William Wordsworth's Lucy, her inability in other words to inhabit colonial hybridity in comfort. The country of origin is not an unmarked space of nostalgia.

Brent Edwards has added important distinctions to this general historical sense of diaspora. In his piece "Langston Hughes and the Futures of Diaspora" he reminds us that diasporic practices cannot be reduced to epiphenomena of the nation state or of global capitalism. The term globalization, slippery and contested as it is, might be considered first and foremost an attempt, Edwards writes, to name the present whereas the term diaspora would seem to name a relation to a past as a designation for the aftermath of the scattering of a population. Globalization calling forth contemporary ??? implies the imposition of a single mode of exchange everywhere even if that standardization is produced by and entails the proliferation of difference and inequity whereas diaspora

foregrounds as I am also insisting the divergence that will not let us explore a single diasporic life model. Edwards also points out, "In Jewish discourse a vision of ??? is an important component of the condition of diaspora, that is a deeply significant distinction emerges in the Jewish intellectual tradition between diaspora, the Greek term, appropriated as a self designation by Jewish communities around the Mediterranean basin and Galut, the Hebrew term for exile. Often diaspora is used to indicate a state of dispersal resulting from voluntary migration as with the far flung Jewish communities of the Mediterranean. In this context the term is not necessarily laced, Edwards writes, with a sense of violence, suffering and punishment in part because Jewish populations maintained a robust sense of an original homeland physically symbolized by the Temple in Jerusalem. Strikingly Jewish settlements around the Mediterranean were commonly called apoica ??? or colonies. Very differently the term exile, Galut, connotes anguish, forces homelessness, and the sense of things being not as they should be and is often considered to be the result of the loss of that geographic center, an imagined home with the destruction of the second Temple in 70 C.E. It is above all, Edwards concludes, in Galut that that inheres an eschatological dimension in the longing for return and redemption. If I have indicated the importance of a sense of responsibility and judgment in diaspora itself taken as a common noun Edwards distinguishes between robust diaspora and anguished exile in the tradition. So much for what is in common.

How shall we relate this to the extra-metropolitan diasporic themes today. Labor export to the Gulf. China in Africa. Latin America in Japan. Why has it become important to isolate movement to the European Union and to the United States and form a definition? Let us remember that also there are partition narratives, Ireland, Pakistan, Bangla Desh. Let us remember that consolidations of definitions are always exclusivist. What do we exclude? We exclude - and I will explain this, this sounds a little awful - the hierarchy in the access to self-metonomization. I am a literary critic. A metonym, a ??? are figures, are not a rational choice person or as we say when we are talking to each other rat choice person. I am not a rat choice person, I am a literary person, I look at figuration. We exclude the hierarchy in the access to self-metonomization. We do not consider the place of exodus as Kincaid's novel does. We do not consider generations. We do not consider the intensification of diaspora consciousness as time passes for certain kinds of institutional reasons because this has an oblique relationship to globalization and because gender is equal to culture here. I am often invited to European centers as I was on this trip to Switzerland and to Germany, and before that to Copenhagen, to Denmark, and to Heidelberg. I am often invited to European centers to speak about the new study of Asia which has nothing to do with diaspora. The question of the diasporas does not arise there. That's because China and India arising. Central Asia is the terrain of Nato. So you can produce prepackaged ??? of gendering in Central Asia, surrogate proletariat, ??? But those invitations have nothing to do with diaspora. I have no doubt African studies proceed in the same way. It is an interdisciplinary division of intellectual labor.

Let me unpack the notion of self-metonomization. One of the things we do not consider in diaspora as a space of difference. Let us begin with the Spinozist idea that singularity is repeatable difference. This is what produces what Antonion Negri and Michael Hart have called contemporary multiplicity. The singular is to universalize the ??? Agency on the other hand calls for the putting inside of difference. So we distinguish. I am not one with Negri and Hart in their hope for the multitude because agency is difference from singularity and ethical speculation. There is Derida's wonderful question to Jean Luc Nancy who felt that there could be a community of singulars. The question being "how many votes for the unconscious?" So you have to take the intending subject seriously. Agency on the other hand calls for the putting aside of difference. Agency presumes collectivity which is where a group acts by senektoky. The part that seems to agree is taken to stand for the whole. It's common sense, isn't it. I mean I could be with many of you here if I decided that the part of me that is called woman for a different genetical structure, a different secondary sexual characteristics and so on, that's me. So I join with the woman here to form a collectivity. That's a senektoky. With this ??? theories about agency today this is also included. They use other words. But it's common sense, isn't it. Again, I could talk here with people who believe in socialism, and I would take that as the senektoky that represents me best. So then I would form a different kind of collectivity. Those are agency decisions. I could in fact choose the people here who are in the humanities, not the social sciences, and I would then establish, I would say the part in me that goes for the imagination, the part that does the humanities is me. By senektoky then I would join with the humanities teachers, the crafters of the imagination of the world. So agency calls for the putting aside of difference. Agency presumes collectivity which is where a group acts by senektoky. The part that seems to agree is taken to stand for the whole. I put aside the surplus of my subjectivity and metonomize myself - the part for the whole is what I am talking about here -, count myself as the part by which I am connected to the

particular predicament so that I can claim collectivity and engage in action validated by that very collective. All the people who opposed Israel's policy in Gaza, signing a letter, academic freedom in Gaza, we became a collectivity. So that part which really objects to the restraint of academic freedom in any way seemed to represent me. That's the kind of thing. All calls to collectivity are metonymic because attached to a situation and they work by senektoky. Now in order to be able to restrict singularity by ??? intuition and immense labor of infrastructural change, this is what the subaltern cannot speak about, the labor of infrastructural change so that resistance could be made to count and recognized which is what didn't happen in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" must be undertaken. This is where humanities education kicks in, sees the way reasonable agency is nestled in the permission to be figurative. In other words, the right to the metonymy senektoky choice in the political performance of collectivity. When the potential agent is not publicly empowered to put aside difference and self-senektokized to form collectivity then the group will difference itself as a senektokic element, difference slides into culture, often indistinguishable from religion, and then the institution that provides agency is reproductive heteronimity which is the broadest and oldest global institution. Just talking about women does not solve the problem of the underclass gender diasporic because of internalized gendering self-rationalization is often coded as freedom in metropolitan discourse. So this whole business of the freedom of choice and this metronym senektoky part.

I really don't want to speak for too long, but I would say these schools were I train teachers, the only way that I metonomize myself there is that one person one vote. I am an Indian citizen. These people also vote. They saw there is that metonymy. I am a collective with them, one person one vote. I have one, they have one. But on the other hand their votes are bought and sold. They have no idea, nothing, no democratic intuition, nothing. India is supposedly the world's largest democracy, but they are below the radar, nothing. On the other hand I can escape from this metonomization. I am an uppercast, upperclass Calcutta person who can then become a very highly honored professional at one of the most powerful universities in the world whereas all those people who are collective with me through that metonym - it is a collectivity, it is not some NGO doing good from the top, they are not millennium goals, one works together, it's not fake. But nonetheless I can in fact choose another one. I can be speaking to you here. They can't in fact metonomize and senektokize themselves out of that one. So that in fact it becomes what? Non-figurative. So that's the kind of thing that I am talking about.

Let's say then that because of internalized gendering in the metropolitan context where class mobility is stopped, they cannot metonomize themselves. They fall back into culture differences taken as the unifying thing. That's where a lot of diasporism comes from. Culture is indistinguishable from religion because the idea of culture is not so old after all. And then it is reproductive heteronimity that kicks in to give agency. And then quite often because of internalized gendering self-rationalization is coded as freedom in metropolity discourse. This is a terrible situation.

So self-rationalization and freedom. In this metropolitan discourse we have to quote Kant because it's still that's being given to us, self-rationalization as "the assertion of the equal dignity of rational nature in all persons". Most people believe that this dignity can only be achieved within the thought of democratic structure developed in modern Euro-US. This conviction is extremely broadly shared. I am not saying that I don't share it. I talk about the use of the enlightenment form below and so one. One will have to think historical reasons. It's not because Europe is wonderful. But this is something that people do take for granted. It is the basis of human rights work. I think it this conviction that makes Kant speculate in the notorious note 1520 of the reflections of anthropology that all non-white races will become extinct. People have found this a very difficult thing as they should. In his dissertation on Kant, race and sex Suria Parek offers a summary. "It is this uneasy co-ordination, this universal demonstration of reason in the phenomenal human that race negotiates. The outcome of which is to secure a univocal concept of the human." I mean you have to understand what Kant is trying to do. It's not because we do so many things in the human rights area which in fact share in a confused way these kinds of assumptions that just to point a figure at this very smart, relentlessly honest man is a mistake. Suria Parek himself is a man of color. So he writes, "The outcome of which is to secure a univocal concept of the human. The project of race is a failure. The note 1520 is evidence of this. Kant speculates that all the other races who bear no evidence of moral feeling will be wiped out. The moral Geschlecht is limited to whites. The white race is the only race to transition from a rationalized state of nature. After the third critique the significance of race diminishes. The necessity of reproduction no longer rests on race but on the linking of the teleology of nature with the teleology of freedom. In the later texts race again becomes

dynamic. Kant wonders if nature will produce new races in the futures. Nonetheless the figure of the raw man identified with the new world inhabitant remains."

In a certain sense Dubois's diasporic giving instruction as he or she moves from performative to performance is Kant's new hybrid race. Here we see the very definition of modernity expanding. I don't have much patience to the counter-modernity arguments where you have history and I have tradition. I don't find that interesting. Here we see the very definition of modernity expanding. The abstract structure of statehood as giving an analogy to world governance can be historically called European as long as it is not confused with the post-Westfalian identification of nation and state as Hannah Arendt among others has demonstrated. This problematic only confusedly imaginable at the time of Kant's entry into the question of race in the period of nascent capitalism and colonialism can be called becoming white, this assimilation, getting your legal papers. I know what I am talking about. I have called it elsewhere upward race mobility. White is not a skin color concept except when you are being boringly racist. There are very interesting ways of being racist and then one sees what to do with it. At the time of Kant's entry into the question of race and the period of nascent capitalism and colonialism, this problematic can be called becoming white or in Homi Bhabha's lovely phrase becoming not quite not-white. That the enrichment of these abstract structure through a felt connection to the possibility of multicultural performance, not the performative that makes you work, in the broadest sense as the definition of this world can no longer be confined to the adjective white, but moves towards the adjective global hybrid. It is this movement that is disrupted by the injustices within diasporas.

As migration displaces globalization it shows us that, I quote Robert Reich, "The solution is to erect a stronger barrier between super-capitalism and democracy." How are the humanities dealing with the globalization of racism is a question I am often asked. I gave you the figurations before an understanding of what's happening rather than self-rationalization, metonym senektoky, and tie it to the implications of Reich's comment super-capitalism and democracy. How to teach for democracy? How to be "world-wide"? The focus is on the worldliness of the task of the humanities in a world where mandatory migration is punished as it is used and provides proof of the auto-immunity of democracy understood as structure even by responsible thinkers such as Noah Feldman, Farid Zakarain, Michael Doyle. And education in the humanities attends to the weaving of the epistemic texture of democracy which is rather different from the structural position of the agent. Agency is built upon or woven into something which this kind of education in figuration gives us. John Suharti of Kenya who used to be a teacher suggests that money cannot solve Africa's problems. He suggests the development of human capital. ??? springs up out of the difference between the basic human characteristic of needing and making. So one can go upstream from the notion of capital. Everything that is neither reasonable nor unreasonable and yet irreducible springs up in that difference between what you need and what you make. There is no subsistence farming, no subsistence hunting, no subsistence gathering, no subsistence anything. It's that different. There is no need to call it just capital. In order to turn it to a social rather than capitalist use you have to work at this epistemologically. This is the long-term possibility of the restoration of the welfare state. This is the epistemic structure of democracy. This is the task of the humanities. Persistence at this is what will turn the tide of migration management, always disruptively. There are no two ways around it. It is impossible to deny that in order to produce in the simulacrum of ideomatic continuity with the oppressed groups so that activism in the social movements can represent them. We activists have to learn to inhabit the lingual memory of the oppressed. This is an idea that comes from Anton Becker and it is completely to be distinguished from cultural memory which I don't think is a very good thing. To learn to inhabit the lingual memory of the oppressed I am on record in writing and in life about this but do not have enough time to discuss this now. Since the question of representation in the social movements is not subject to the abstract structures of state run democratic procedure for better or for worse of course this is particularly important because they are generally self selected moral entrepreneurs. There is no particular system of any kind of check. It is particularly important in this sphere and gives the lie to universalism in a practical way. Unless universalism is mediated by linguistic diversity and not by the ruse of metropolitan translation alone this is the entire idea of doing something about migration. And today's diaspora is not for long term.

Let us transfer this thought to conflictual ancient migrations and consider Darfur in Gerard Gramshy's words. "In spite of the rhetoric which accompanied the demise of the cold war our culture has not undertaken a human rights revolution or embraced humanity as one." And I discussed what that involves before. "It has simply developed a specialized task force to take care of such things and tragedies like Darfur remain a job for the

humanitarians. But beyond the shock and the emotions they remain an essential task trying to understand through deep language learning. ??? speaking at Columbia University had urged us to be mindful in exactly the same way in the case of Darfur. Our inclination sometimes is to say death is the end of history, the constitutive fever of the archive. But the archive remains. And the prevention of untimely mass death, be it war or genocide, is bound to intertextuality with history and lingual memory which should be distinguished from cultural memory." I am skipping a little bit of Gramshy. Think of the twelve languages of Darfur among the 134 languages of the Sudan as one single example of the enormity of the task of the humanities. Will the connections become immediately clear? No. It is at least as hard as learning to play tennis. Will such work stall the immediacy of problem solving? Probably. When did we decide to forget that the work of the humanities is a slow build-up for the practice of freedom which supplements top-down problem solving. I think this happened when the absence of democratic structure produced a culture of relentless fundraising. Potential funders do not generally come out of the humanities. For them art and performance are good investments and think tanks lend prestige. But the teaching of the humanities seems a wasteful anachronism unless the study of fictive characterology is seen as training for business management.

I have already remarked that singularity is de-universalizable, difference repeated. A setting to work of the singular as the universal is to be seen in l'hospitalité where Oedipus is read as choosing to be the immigrant without paper. Remember, I began with ideas that are not connected to our notions about diaspora where the value of diasporic ties is questioned from a very different perspective. This again is different. Thesias of Athens has offered Himsenia the terms of the treaty between Athens and Thebes, in other words documentation. Oedipus refuses and chooses an unmarked, an undisclosable grave and I quote Derida "a sort of illegal immigrant. He will be concealed there in death." This is offered as the universal condition of mourning, the only possible mourning. Derida makes his move in order to disclose Antigone as the agent of interminable mourning. Earlier in the text he lays out the usual place of women in hospitality as put forward in Pierre Klosalky's "Robert ???". As hostess she belongs to the guest, as mistress of the house she belongs to the host. Antigone undoes this as subject of mourning, belonging to no one. Her singular example, elite subalternized as daughter or sister leads us to the woman in a foreign country, an endless story as capital plays out its role of endless subalternization. Where is gender in our exultation to the metropole, to be a good host. France might give us an answer. The question I am foreclosing is, what is to choose to be an illegal immigrant? As Darko Suvin insists, all immigration is also emigration. And I am repeating it myself as well. Through the lense of gender we look at the place left behind which is where I began and say with Gramshy and ??? James "we need Jacobines". Those are the abstract structures of a modernity historically called European. Habermas is correct in speaking of the right for constitutional patriotism. In the global south some of us think about re-inventing the state as abstract structure, out of its restructured ruins, persistently fighting against nationalism, fascism, and militarism which comes with the invention of states and changing somehow the conditions of emigration that would alter our discussion. It is persistent work, the work of feminists who are not taken in completely by the feudal structures of the World Social Forum. What we are looking for is a critical regionalism.

Most people expect me to say a word about the subaltern in talks of this sort. Antonion Gramshy began his essay on the historiography of the subaltern with this passage. "The historical unity of the ruling classes is theorized in the state. And there history is essentially the history of state and the groups of states. But it would be wrong to think that this unity is simply juridical and political. The fundamental historical unity concretely results from the organic relations for the ruling classes between state or a political society and civil society. The so-called subalterns by definition are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a state. Their history therefore is intertwined with that of civil society and thereby with the history of states and groups of states. In terms of this powerful and bold introduction the entire problem of so called illegal immigration, a crucial element of mandatory migration, falls within the purview of subaltern studies. My own definition of subalternity is a little out of joint with this. Let me end before I launch into that interminable story. Thank you.

### **Isolde Charim**

I will try to break with a long tradition of this house and instead of starting with questions to Gayatri I will ask you for your questions and maybe I will intervene.

### **Question**

Thank you for this wonderful talk. I was very interested to hear about your notion of metonymy and senektoky in building agency. I was reminded of the fact that the forces of hegemony always have a lot of options in terms of metonomizing themselves in addressing the subaltern or whoever is what's at stake whereas the subaltern only has a very limited reservoir available to them which ends up being the foundation of something like an essentialism of race, or culture, or religion. You brought up Dubois who was probably a master of metonomizing himself in the source of black folk in which he put on ten or twelve different hats of the historian, the poet, the ethno-mythocologist, the sociologist. He is all these things in that book that he used to convince white people of the humanity of black folks, the fundamental quality of humanist that inheres in those black bodies. But in the end he came up with this very straightforward identitarian concept of the duality, the two souls that are supposed to be reconciled into one truer self. You mentioned Guadeloupe and this idea of Carribeanness and I was reminded of Eduard Lusan who has this notion of mythisage and ??? in which he sees the relation as the foundation of all these expressions of identity. Do you see any versions of bringing gender into his theory of Carribeanness and/or Dubois' notion of the post-colonial within the United States because they sure don't talk about this ever. Glissan has the maroon as his figure and Dubois is the new Negro and so forth. Nobody has ever in my opinion tried to broaden all these concepts in terms of gender.

### **Spivak**

I must say that I don't really bring gender into anything. I don't know any other way of thinking. To Dubois this is not fair because Dubois wrote a lot about women. "A Dusk of Dawn" for example, that sort of autobiography of a race concept. At the beginning he wrote a great deal and he dismissed thoughts of black folk later saying that he didn't know enough Freud and Marx. He thought that the talent attempt was a good idea but in fact it led to what in the United States we call, I forgot his actual words, but he says like black highrollers. And the new Negro was of course Allan Lockstrays. It was when Dubois was asked to contribute to the collection called the "The New Negro". Dubois was asked not as a member of the Harlem renaissance but as an older generation. So what Dubois wrote about was the negro mind reaches out, about diaspora, exactly African diaspora in the colonies. So although Dubois was of course not a person who was okay in his gender politics, there is a wonderful book edited by Alice Weinbaum where the feminist contributors write as to how we can still read Dubois and be instructed by him. And there is one essay which says no way, and that's Hazel Carby. She is writing about ??? and saying this is what Dubois' idea of having children undermining racism, this is where it led. So it's a terrain of conflict. You can't just say Dubois never did. The conflict could only arise because he was again and again writing about women in one way or another.

I don't really bring gender into anything. You saw that when I began thinking about diaspora the first thing I thought about were those ??? Most people would say my God, where is that coming from? It has nothing to do with the Hijab debates and it has nothing to do with the multiculturalism. But that's where it comes from because reproductive heteronomitivty is the oldest, the biggest, the most geographically spread agency of validation within which we are in a double bind. It's an aporetic terrain. If you love your mother you're in whether you are gay or straight or you love having children, you don't love having children. It doesn't matter. It's a double bind. So therefore I am not going to factor gender in. Anything that thinks that human beings are only one-gendered is boring. But then something will happen to change.

### **Question**

You used some terms from the humanities to describe contents which are also analyzed by social sciences. Do you think that this is the future for the humanities, to go together to sort these things out and to let this border fall or to create something new out of this dialogue? You said that there are groups of subalterns and how they could organize themselves. Could you name some of these groups who have some success and who are powerful? Don't you think that Mr. Naipaul, you remember this novel where he described how difficult it was for him to arrive at a kind of psychological spirituality in England. He succeeded in changing the performative to a performance.

### **Spivak**

I think it's also the future for social sciences. It's not just a future for the humanities. I don't know how it is here. But certainly in my neck of the woods the social sciences are fiercely quantifying. So you can in fact do comparative social sciences without knowing a single language. So it seems to me that those of us with a slightly thoughtful turn of mind rather than number crunching if we are social scientists we will welcome being with the humanities. There is a huge difference of course. The social sciences cannot not be veridical whereas we learned from the singular and

the unverifiable. But given the fact that the veridicality creeps into our work also I think it's a good idea to join. Mind you, I think that the border shouldn't go completely because a disciplinary formation is what teaches you how to construct your object of knowledge. The problem with people who don't think this through they think that their disciplinary way of constructing the object of knowledge is the correct one. What interdisciplinarity can do is welcome those who want to into the methods courses of the other disciplines rather than just take one course or the other in some way. There is a story I have told many times. I have a friend called Roald Hofman who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry 1981. He is a poet and all that stuff. I invited to the University of Pittsburgh when I was running the cultural studies institute to give a talk on the concepts of naturals and synthetics because I knew he would do it in such a way that it would be poetic, people would understand. We are sitting together, the room is filling, and Roald turns to me and says, Gayatri, you see human beings, I see molecules. That's disciplinary formation. But there are people who don't understand this, especially very small minded philosophers, they are not even social scientists. They will say to you, I don't understand, meaning you don't fulfill the conditions of intelligibility. The only answer as a feminist woman to give to such a philosopher is, let's try again, because that's not what they meant in the first place. So I think yes, it's a good thing. But I don't think the borders should fall. And given the fact that the humanities are so committed to deep language learning, given the supplementing of the unification of even good globalization, international socialism is a good globalization, it failed. So since humanities are so committed to it it will always be a little difficult for the social sciences to be completely like the humanities. But I think yes, they should go together, they should work together.

Did I mention that subalterns have actually joined together and done things? When?

**Question**

But you said how they could construct themselves.

**Spivak**

At the end, you mean?

**Question**

Yes. That's what I understood.

**Spivak**

That was Gramshy. And I said my idea of the subaltern is a little bit different.

**Question**

Yes. But where are they? In the Gramshian or in your definition?

**Spivak**

What Gramshy did was he saw that if it were only in terms of capital logic, the dictatorship of the proletariat however transitional, Gramshy's credit was that in a small European country, Italy, he was able to see a problem that actually allows us to think the world today, a very smart thing. So therefore his idea was to instrumentalize the intellectual even from the south and in a master-disciple relationship. But the disciple was the intellectual learning from the cultural environment to produce the subaltern intellectual in a kind of give and take of coercion and consent, what I call the un-coercive rearrangement of desires knowing that all education must have moments of coercion. Education has the violence of the erotic within it so that we you do indeed is think about the future ???, something will have happened because you are teaching in this way. Marx knew it that there must be difference within education. There is that idle dream of the 60's, I became an assistant professor in 1965, it was not productive, taking away the power. So I didn't really say that there were people somewhere who had become subaltern groups who were together and joined. Because once you are able to join you are not a subaltern anymore. Subaltern is a position without identity. It's the name of a position. It is being cut off from lines of social mobility. Sometimes the exceptional subaltern brings subaltertnity to crisis on her or his own. Evo Moralez, the President of Bolivia. The Vice-President of Bolivia did me the singular honor of inviting me to come and talk about the possibility of education because I have this teacher training stuff with aboriginals and so on, and that's the problem there, right. I was just completely blown away. But there from the audience was the question a woman asked, how about the fact that our President is a subaltern? I said no, your President is not a subaltern. Your

President is a President. You can certainly say your President is of aboriginal origin. You can certainly say that your President turned around the fact that he only had high school education, that he turned the whole thing around. But you cannot say he is a subaltern. Subalterns coming together etc., that's a little like primitivism. But I am glad you asked me the question.

### Question

Unfortunately I had another engagement and came too late, I could only attend the last ten minutes of your talk. In the invitation it is written about this project of the "Pares Chandra and Sivani Chakravorty Memorial Literacy Project". Can you tell us a little bit more about this? The fact that the basic education in India is of rather low standard I once heard that this was more or less intentional by Nehru and his group. Would you agree to that?

### Spivak

No. India is a huge place. I am the result of an education in India. I only had three years of graduate work. And because I knew how to take exams therefore the first semester I got an A+ grade. Because I took exams well I came to a huge university with 175,000 students. So therefore they said without understanding at all that this is not necessarily an advantage she has a ??? skill, let us train her. This is not completely unimaginative at Cornell. Oh it was great, she can design her own curriculum and sort of misplaced the idea of freedom. That's a mistake that they made. So in fact my formation is completely Indian, Bengali medium schools. And I went there as an MA student. So I am really shining proof that education is not necessarily bad in India. For such a large country you cannot say ??? What kind of a statement is that? One can say education in Germany is also very poor. It wouldn't really be meaningful. The idea that the leader of a country would keep education down is not an appropriate idea. One should go and look at what he wrote. So I am not going to talk about those things.

But I can certainly talk about the foundation. I of course don't just train teachers in those backward districts of West Bengal, I also train teachers in New York City. What one has to really take into account is that I work extremely hard at two ends of the spectrum. I have not chosen to be just like a do-gooder of the poor. No. This side is helped by that side in the thinking and the research. Although the income tax people don't believe it. I am an Indian citizen giving money, self-subsidize to these fools. It looks very bad, a foreign person giving money to a foreign country for schools. What does it look like? I won't bring the words to my mouth. So I am always under investigation, and income tax has now told me that I owe them 20,751,-- dollars for 2006. So they don't like it. I should show you folks what I wrote for the income tax as a description of this work and why it should qualify. But anyway. What is it? I began this work in 1986. But before that I was doing primary health care in Bangladesh with Safula Joudari. Why did this happen? Be prepared factoring in gender. I was married for 21 years and was in a miasma. I am sure there are wonderful marriages. My parents' marriage was wonderful. I never encountered men who would be able to tolerate the fact that their wife was intellectually successful. I know they exist, but I didn't meet them. But at any rate, when I came out of the last one I began to realize that I could - and that was 1986 - do things and so therefore I turned to what I would want to be doing. I was teaching and writing. So I asked Amartya Sen since I had heard that floods in Bangla Desh were the result of the international community not allowing for certain kinds of conferences. I said to Amartya who is also an Indian citizen, what should I do. Amartya said Gayatri, don't do anything because the government of India is going to tell you you folks are in the United States, you're okay, and there was no flag waving about diasporics at that time. Now they love us. But they will say you are in the United States, you're okay, we are a poor country, so don't interfere, stay where you are. I thought I got to do something. So I went to Bangladesh and I began doing primary health care, travelling with rural paramedics etc. It opened my eyes into how what's the difference between problem solving which is Doctors Without Borders, NGOs and so on, and changing the cultural infrastructure. The humanities teacher really has something to do there. Without language learning you cannot do anything like primary health care. There is no way were you trying to change normality. So then I was also translating for reasons that I will not go into some Bengali stuff. And because everybody was wanting then Third World stuff, it was really a horrible story, they were inviting me because I was then, the whole wave of making translations with inadequate knowledge of the languages, I'm selling them right, left, and center, had not yet come into being. So therefore I was asked all over the place and given nice large fees. And I felt bad about it because I had no schools to support. So then I felt bad about getting big fees. So I went to one of these people I translated for and said, I don't know what to do. I can't insult you and give you this money. But on the other hand it just seems to be such bad face, I'm a Europeanist, I translated this damn things for very narcissistic reasons and not I'm getting all this money. That was in the early 1980s. So she said to me okay, you can go to this place and they need money. So I

went. But money I gave, money is easy to give if you have a little, and I had at that time. But what I saw was happening was - you see what a long answer I'm giving. Wherever I am I teach in this odd and horrible way. I could tell you many stories about giving lectures to perfect strangers like the ancient ??? So I found that people were coming out of the woodwork who had for the worst possible reasons like these are animals, you must help them, local people who were doing literary and numeracy, they were all clustering and I was telling them where they were making spelling mistakes and this and that and what the decimal system really was. They thought that was just an absurdity, visited by the ruling class upon them, just putting dots here and there. So that's why they never went into the science stream. No kid from there. And so they remained where they were because the decimal system killed them, third year of school. When I found out that this was happening one of the middle class activists wrote me a letter with a little budget saying, can you do this, establish schools. I waited for some months because I didn't want to do anything because it is scary. And then finally I did. I called my Ma and said this is harder than getting married, you can't get out, I've done something very scary. This was 1986. So then it went on, it went on. Then my friend Lora died in 1997, Lora Metzger who is from Frankfurt. She had run off from Nazi Germany in 1938, a wonderful woman. She was only an English teacher, but she left me 10.000 dollars for my literary stuff. I don't call it a project, it's not a project, I'm learning as much. Therefore I then established a foundation in the name of my dad and when my mum died in the name of my dad and my mum.

No money is spent from the foundation. I got everything ??? The schools are subsidized by myself. Your salary goes a long way. What is really needed is time and skill. What is needed is not money in those kinds of areas. The first bunch of schools was closed by the landowner and the person I translated because of her feudalness because the young boys, the girls remained traumatized, began to question authority in the shape of the quality of education, not just thank you Sir, you have given me a school, which is more or less the ethnic, more or less the video or foto ops that you see because none of these people is able to evaluate the quality of education. Now ??? seven schools. And I am training teachers learning from my mistakes. It's been many, many years. As to the detail of what I do you would also have to ask me the detail of what I do in my Columbia class room, they are connected. I'm paid for what I do at Columbia. But to change the mind of superpower folks from helping the whole world with an interpreter is just as hard as giving electoral education to the poorest of the poor in India. I'm sorry it's gone to such lengths, but I have given you a summary of what it is that I do. I have never written a book about that other stuff because I'm learning from my mistakes, I'm not ready to generalize. And if I went in thinking I'm not very keen on either Paul or Freddy or Dewey I fell upon this Gramshy much later because I used to teach Gramshy in a horrible way in the English translation stuff because some women thought I was doing something with Gramshy in Italy when I wasn't. And then as I began to read him carefully in Italian I was absolutely gobswabbed by the fact that this young man sitting in jail had actually figured out some of the things that I have learned after years of making mistakes in the field. So that's why I'm keen on Gramshy still. So that's the story.

Can I say just one thing? I hope it was clear that this is also once it's published and you read it a theoretical talk about how to define diasporas and how to consider the value of effort and struggle outside of the context of effort and struggle. It was really not simply about how diasporics feel when they are abroad in the outside but also inside. It was a bit of an attempt at that. I didn't make it very clear because you didn't really ask me questions along those lines.

**Charim**

You talked about the double bind, the bind to the civil society and to the culture. Is this bind the same way of being attached? Or if not what is the difference?

**Spivak**

Between this and what?

**Charim**

Between being bound to a civil society and to a culture. I think that's a different way of being connected to civil society than being connected to a culture.

**Spivak**

I was actually thinking of civil society in an extremely skeletal way. There is a huge amount of scholarly literature on civil society, social science stuff, my friend Jean Cohen, for example. But there is also a way in which the word civil society has been picked up by these self-selected moral entrepreneurs who say civil society because non-governmental sounds bad and so since it is not the state it's civil society, so certainly it's international, civil society with no structure under it. This is why I felt enabled to use the word civil society in a very rarified way. It's not Gramsci there because Gramsci's notion of civil society is very tough and it's thick, it's rich. It's a thick description in the sense of give or gets. Gramsci's sense of hegemony, civil society, they are more like pharma, and I'll come to that. I was thinking like this. I was thinking of the state being abstractly reducible. What is irreducible about the state is abstract structures. The rational structures don't ??? What is irreducible about civil society is also juridical, legal and reducible. On the other hand identity is fuzzy. Citizenship and identity go like that. State is abstract, nation is fuzzy. So I was thinking in that sense civil society and culture where there is no agreement between the cultural production. Because what you do when you migrate is you leave one civil society for another. And then the underclass diasporic of course doesn't even make it into this one. But even the upperclass one, whether you make into the civil society or not is not the point there. There is still what is recognized by European racists, not at all by all Europeans or wasps or Euro-US folks, that this civil society, the enlightenment structures, hegemony of that sort, this is not the appropriate narrative of that culture. So therefore there is a double bind. It's seen again in female situations very, very strongly. As I have written, the mother thinks honor, the daughter thinks reproductive right. It really does make a difference there, cultural stuff. The biggest change I think is in gendering. So that's what I was thinking about. You can say that this is the case actually everywhere, but in diaspora it becomes very fullblown. And that's where notions of hybridity come from really.

### **Question**

Maybe you could say something more about the state because this is very interesting for me personally and this notion of diaspora?

### **Spivak**

The citizen uses the state. I'm being as idealistic as possible. This is like defining the law as identical with the will of the people. But one must start from these very, very broad grand examples. When I'm dealing with the subalterns in my schools in India, and I'm going there, I'll be there in five days, what I'm trying to do is trying to show them that the state belongs to them. This is an intuition, a democratic intuition which is absolutely impossible for them. This is completely counter-intuitive. I'm not saying it to them because that's not how you educate, not in the humanities. ??? He didn't care about educating anybody but he certainly had a very strong, good idea about how to change people's habits and minds. You don't tell them this. But you try in the way you teach to make this happen. That's what happened after so many years, 20 years, in the first place. But there is another problem. It's not Nehru. The local rural gentry are not particularly interested in the real subalterns truly getting educated rather than going to these terrible primary schools with so called free primary education. This is a country where at the bottom there is a lot of cast prejudice still. There is also something that's against it, but it certainly still exists. So therefore you can't train people that the police belongs to them, that the law enforcement staff belongs to them, that the courts belong to them when there is a whole structure of local folks. What would it sound like? It would sound like a foreigner coming and talking nonsense. It would sound like the wild duck. So therefore to make this intuition happen is a tremendous responsibility. You can't just do it in terms of training the people right there. So this idea of knowledge is knowledge about knowledge, which is what the conservative scholars in my university think good scholarship should be, is completely laid to waste in the Indian context but also in the US context. Because it is in New York, the same place that the UN is, and the university is deeply involved with the United Nations, even the most conservative ones like Jeffrey Sachs. They are deeply involved with the United Nations. The School of International Public Affairs, deeply involved with middle level bureaucrats from what used to be called the Third World were coming and getting the message and going back. The state is being established as a certain kind of thing. And of course in the business school they are noticing that the world is changing so that the state is no longer the repository, the state is no longer susceptible to the possibility of constitutional redress. It is a managerial state. So therefore the citizen owning the state is being even as at the bottom to the subaltern you are trying to construct an electoral education the principles of which will give this intuition. That requires that you fight with the rural gentry. But you can't fight too much because they are going to kill you. You don't live there, you are alone. That's why when the old latifundists closed the schools the schools remained closed. So you have to know how to strategize there. Gramsci comes in very, very well because the idea of maneuvering wars until you get to the

position where you will be able to make a decision, that's a very good way of working there to make the state accessible to its own definition as that which is used by the citizen. So I would say that you will get from me as a humanities person who is interested in the social sciences a kind of activist notion of the state as it moves in the lives of human beings rather than a theory of the state like ???, people of that sort. Of this answer I'm not ashamed.

### **Question**

You said something about the need for a critical regionalism. Could you relate that notion to the notion of planetarity? Is there a connection?

### **Spivak**

Let me first talk about planetarity. The planetarity is not responsibility for the planet. If you go look at the place where I talk about it, where I really talked about it is the speech I gave to Stiftung Dialogik in Zurich. They were changing from being hosts to holocaust refugees to refugees from Ruanda, from Afghanistan and so on. And they did me the honor of asking me to give a talk to celebrate this change in their own practice. So a thought came to me and sent it off to Brent Edwards and said, what do you think of this? He said, this is marvelous, this is fantastic. What I say there is that there is no self-consolidating other of the planet. What is on the other side of the planet is not something that can consolidate the planet. I quote sometimes Laurie Anderson. She was a musician in residence at Nasa, the space thing. She was asked why are you by ??? why do you want to go there, why did you like to be there? She said because it gives me a sense that human beings are worms. Now to an extent I won't use that kind of language. But the planetary thing is where one realizes that whether the planet lives or dies might matter to us as human beings or as animals living on the planet, but planetarity is not a position. The planet is in the species of alterity. You cannot take the planet ???, you can't consolidate it with planetarities ??? So it is not the responsibility for our planet that I try. I do that sort of stuff. In five days I will be walking 72 blocks with the ecological, agriculture and so on. But that's not planetarity. Planetarity is like high fever. It stops everything or it doesn't stop everything. It doesn't matter what it is. But unless you have a sense of that anything you do is useless. So that to an extent it's the great name of a kind of an underived aporia because it's not in contradiction with anything. The planet is susceptible to contradictions.

The critical regionalism is a different kind of thing altogether. Let me just cut this long story short and say that there are regional organizations that are generally economic. What we are interested in is critical regionalism because it's not a kind of geopolitical competition that we are interested in. We are interested in jurisdiction that crosses national borders so that things like trafficking in women, things like women living with HIV/Aids, things of this sort. The idea came out of that. And then it developed with Prof. Petkovic in Bulgaria. The idea came out of that kind of notion. And before that ??? even he wrote Asia before Europe he was already suggesting that you think of Asia and you think of Africa as a continent you have to think the set Europe as a continent before because these are not continents. So therefore let us look at what the regional maps would be like. And so he suggested the Indian Ocean rim. Once you begin to look at these places in that way you begin to see why a regionalism would also be important in terms of historical topography as well as for social justice. But critical because generally speaking the only models we have are economic and regionalism can be very easily riddled by nationalism which you see for example when I go to work with Bangla Deshis, when I go to work in Japan or I go to work to other kinds of places I have to say that you cannot prove you're better by saying others are bad. This is not a good idea. Therefore critical comes because nationalism - and I have written a great deal about nationalism and why competition can led on to in the public sphere - nationalism is a public thing. But it comes out of something that is so private that it is even before the definition of being human. It's almost this attraction to my corner, this plot of land, the dog pisses on it. That thing, that private thing is on what this eminently public thing which makes states fuzzy is good. Therefore it's critical to be critical. And language after all also which is such an opener also closes doors there. So that's why critical. It has nothing to do with planetarity. the planet has no language.

### **Charim**

Thank you so much Gayatri Spivak and thank you all for coming.