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Subject Lessons is a monograph which I am confident will remain a jewel among the other paperbacks which are rapidly becoming petrified wood on my bookshelf. In the academy, where one reads primarily for work-related purposes (as research, for teaching, etc.), it is always a treat to come across a book which is both enjoyable to read and informative. Seth's prose is simultaneously descriptive and theoretical in such a way that I am able to get lost in the world of the text—in colonial India—but not forget that I am understanding the simultaneous historic and immediate rendering of "colonial India" through western, "colonizing" devices, namely, western philosophy and western education. Using hermeneutic historical analysis, Seth has successfully rendered a useful "fusion of historical horizons" (Gadamer, 1976; Schrag, 2003) both within the world that the text seeks to report (i.e. between western and nationalist bodies in India) and between the world of the text and the reader.

Sanjay Seth

Seth highlights the power of discourse to generate various, often oppressive, ideologies and policies and provides examples from colonial India which no doubt mirror current educational trends, especially in the United States' current No Child Left Behind era of standardized testing. Although Seth never points to contemporary educational practices, he will make any judicious reader rethink the ways in which we challenge or praise contemporary educational policies, and our rhetorical strategies for discussing these policies. Just as various western pedagogical practices and discourses about western education in India did not allow for the possibility of particular subjectivities so does all of our contemporary discourses tend to produce "*failed* subjects"—a theme which runs through each chapter. The central questions in *Subject Lessons* are phenomenological and Foucauldian in character and are the same questions, I believe, we should be asking today: What are the (historical) conditions which make possible the constitution of particular subjectivities and policies; What do our dispositions simultaneously conceal from and reveal to us?; How did we come to so readily accept our current ways of being as predetermined? Through such line of questioning about colonial discourses (in its historic and contemporary form), Seth provides various explanations of why colonial education *seemingly* failed in India, and what subjectivities this discourse historically produced and continues to reproduce today. I find Seth's critical interrogation to be sophisticated and timely, our own discursive practices concerning pedagogy and education also seems to limit our individual and cultural possibilities. So what makes this book really smart is that it is broad enough in scope that it can inform a multiplicity of academic disciplines and topics, but focused enough that it never loses its agitation with the hegemony and colonizing power of western education/philosophy in general and in (post)colonial India in particular. Because Seth's analysis and critique are refreshingly presented in both a non-combative tone and with new and unique perspectives, I believe that higher-level undergraduate and graduate-level students in courses as varied as education, critical pedagogy, postcolonial studies, history, communication, identity studies, cultural studies, and philosophy (especially phenomenology) will find it useful, yet non-prescriptive. The book, like all good books, provides me with more questions than answers. It also reminds me of the frustrating tension between hope and anguish that pedagogy in our everyday lives at once generates and alleviates.

The central purpose of the book, as Seth explains in the introduction, is to "study…how western knowledge came to be disseminated in India…[and] is principally concerned not with the thinking and intentions of the colonizer but with how western education was received and consumed by the colonized" (p. 3); however, his secondary purpose (and the one I find most thought-provoking) is how various discourses about Western education in India "…posited and served to create – and sometimes failed to fully create – certain sorts of subjects" (p. 5). While the book is informed by postcolonial theory, Seth more arguable situates his analysis within a Foucauldian genealogy of the subject and a Heideggerian view of history, which propose, according to Seth, that "New knowledges [as disseminated by education]…serve to create new people" (p. 4) and "History writing is always the 'history of'—that is, it has a subject whose past it recapitulates" (p. 7). Seth shows at every turn of the page that various discourses about the Indian subject, in and between the conversations of colonialists and nationalists about Indian education, rendered the Indian subject always already deficient to western/modern standards and without a centered subjectivity

through which to capture a "picture" of the world. (Seth uses Heidegger's notion of "picture of the world," a concept metaphorically derived from the invention of motion picture; Heidegger believed that technology sought problematically to grasp the world as if it is "for" modern humans; pp. 6-8; pp. 198-199, footnote 19.) While this was tantamount to rendering Indians as non-modern subjects incapable of self-actualization—a racist belief hinged on western epistemologies—Seth shows that this "outlook" was not as problematic as might appear because Indian modes of historiography did not always treat the world as object. Nevertheless, trying to understand the cultural "viewpoints," "outlooks" and "experiences" of pre-colonial Indians is to already be doing modern inquiry because such concepts already place humans at the center of things. By drawing on Heidegger, Seth places his analysis within the very world of modern thinking and tries to explain its limitations. Seth tries to answer whether it is possible to write history if we do not place humans at the center of inquiry as humanistic-anthropological approaches do; whether the denial of subjectivity has the effect of denying history, and vice versa; and what the status of the knowledge we produce is when we do try to write history from non-western perspectives, i.e. through agents who discursively have been rendered powerless. While these questions are a matter of concern for a history of colonial India, I believe they are also questions which are central to contemporary society, especially in regard to disenfranchised, marginalized, and oppressed groups within our own cultures and institutions.

Seth notes that the historically-situated and culturally-generating Indian was discursively rendered as an always already failed and unrealized subject both in western educational theory and in the various discourses about the education of Indian children. This is a point I think we should seriously reflect upon as we talk about issues of identity politics and education today. As various discourses circulate about what we should do about the disparity between public, inner-city schools and elite, private schools, for example, we must remain skeptical of how our ways of talking about such "problems" have the effect of rendering particular individuals as successful and/or failed. We know that the stakes are high because we have a historical example of how education and talk about education resulted in colonization.

Seth's interrogation of historiography leads him to ask a thorny questions pertaining to writing about Indian history which, for me, haunts all modernist ethnographic and historic projects: "[I]f…modern knowledge failed to produce a subject and to produce 'the world as picture' in India, then how do we write history, and what is the status of the knowledge we produce when we do write it?" (pp. 7-8). Seth examines the question through western knowledge as such and shows that this question is not easily answerable. What we can argue, however, is that so long as western knowledge in general and representational epistemologies in particular are positioned as axiomatic, the world we constitute will be (dare I say, *is*) a fairly limited one. It is on this point that I take each the chapter's main points as not just a "historical record" of a rather grotesque situation in a far away land, during a horrific time, but see them as inter- and extra-disciplinary "lessons" by which we should reflexively think about our past, present, and future interactions with others. I think that each chapter provides a plethora of "lessons" of this sort and I'd like to highlight a few I find useful, by chapter.

Part one, "Subject to Pedagogy," is a reflection on discourses of pedagogy, Western epistemologies, and historical methods as a means through which individual subjects were posited and sometimes produced. In Chapter one, "Changing the Subject: Western Knowledge and the Question of Difference," Seth shows how the discourses of instrumentalism (i.e., degrees have capital utility) and "cram" (learning by rote memorization) when contrasted with "the Indian heart"—i.e., Indian being—revealed deficiencies in western thinking and pedagogical practices. But there is no direct "who" to blame, rather blame should be directed at the discourse: "…the discourse of cram and instrumentalism articulated the perception that western education could neither presume, nor had succeeded in creating, an Indian subject who could value and appropriate it the terms that it required" (p. 26). In other words, the discourse which was at play and I would argue is at play in discussions about current educational practices in the West, especially in the United States, sets up a situation in which education is always already a failure in regard to

making (democratic) subjects. This is an important point to keep in mind as we wage critiques about current politics in education. We must always ask, is our discourse maintaining a way of thinking which will always make education a failure? Indeed, what sort of "subject" (and why just one sort of subject) are we trying to create anyway?

Seth encourages us to keep in mind that perhaps what is needed is a new discourse, one that does not seek to locate intentions for explaining whether a policy is right or wrong, but rather reflects on the process of how the discourse produces its effects. Thus, when we think about accountability, we must be aware of how testing, for example, produces a "cram" strategy by its very process but also not say that a student who crams or does not cram has failed or succeeded in any particular way. To do this is to embrace a way of thinking that lends itself to a western sentimentality that takes "difference" as failure: "All forms of subjectivity turn out to be variations upon—and more precisely, partially realized versions of—a single subjectivity: a 'different' subject is always one who has failed to 'fully' become a subject" (p. 43). While Seth never cites Judith Bulter, I am reminded of her often cited phrase, "identity is a stylized repetition of acts" (1990, p. 272) but I am further drawn to a point that one of my colleagues, John Warren, raises when he reads Gilles Deleuze, "that…[a marked performance of identity] is always an original act" (2007, June). I believe this line of thinking is one by which we can heed Seth's advice: "I suggest that we need to search for ways by which we can 'think' this difference without substantializing it into another 'subjectivity,' and thereby bringing it under a category which erases with one hand the difference which it writes with the other" (p. 45).

Our arguments about educational policy today should embrace a more pluralistic understanding of how people come to be who they are. We must not see "difference" as failure, but original variations upon repetitive, taken-for-granted acts which give rise to various subjectivities. We can't allow our discussion of "difference" be one that enables a colonizing mentality in our own societies in a contemporary form. When we discuss issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality, we must remain concerned about the ways in which the discourse enables essentialist positions. Our task is to constantly knead the discourse so that it fold and refolds into itself, never giving rise to static positions which interrogates individuals. We must also interrogate philosophy of science itself, which provides our understanding of what is "proper" education.

What was really at stake in colonial India (and still today throughout Western education) is what we shall consider "proper" education. As Seth notes, "The discourse of cram and instrumentalism expressed the fear that not only was western education failing to remake colonial subjects, but Indian students and native practices were deflecting and 'remaking'—that is, bending and distorting—education" (p. 31). As Seth further notes, it is important to remember that while indigenous education is "different," it is not unilaterally different—there were plural forms of education in India from ad hoc to institutionalized and from secular to religious. What was at stake was "different" subjectivities, which western philosophy cannot accept but one—a "free" (and there is already a certain notion of what this means) modern "Man." Thus, Western philosophy is not very accepting of difference—which as Seth shows in chapter 2 leads to a moral crisis—because it seeks a limited "archeology of Man." Seth provides, therefore, a very important point for those of us who engage in a critique about the proper role of education. This is such an important point that I feel it is necessary to quote Seth at length on this point:

> It seems to me necessary to entertain the thought that cramming and instrumentalism testified to the presence of another subjectivity, and to travel this route of argument. Without doing so—if we do not 'stretch' the category of 'subject' so that we could imagine different subjects—the questions of cramming and instrumentalism would remain ones of pedagogy and technique, and 'difference' would appear only in its racist form, as the question of the stubbornly unintelligent Indian. (pp. 44-45)

Chapter one teaches us that education is a contested space for making subjects because whether we recognize it formally or not, practices do produce different ways of being, not just knowing. It is through this frame of reference that the rest of the book is located.

"Diagnosing Moral Crisis" (chapter 2), explores how an "object" is necessary for diagnosis. In this sense, the chapter is an exegesis of the process of diagnosing the diagnosis, providing lessons for theologians and philosophers because, as Seth notes, citing Richard King and John Hick "…the very notion of 'religion' is itself 'a Christian theological category,' 'a modern invention which the West, during the last two hundred years or so, has exported to the rest of the world'" (p. 62). But if in India, where proselytizing was banned from schools, why would the missionaries—who desired to transform Hindus and Muslims into Christians—not object to the provision of secular learning given they were exporting this belief system worldwide? And, how did missionaries come to colonize most of the non-Western world? This answer, which might go a long way to explaining why the "founders of the United States" advocated for a secular society despite being God-fearing folks, is that western education practices and Christianity are believe to be symbiotic. The missionaries believed that once a person was exposed to Western ways of knowing and western pedagogy, she or he could only logically believe in a Christian scheme. Given the discussion in the first chapter about being, this seems to be a possible explanation for a Westerner's pompousness and inability to see Hindu systems, for example, not as a belief or religion but simply for what they are. In many respects Hinduism, at least in the way in which Seth describes it, is a postmodern-like way of thinking/being. As Seth shows, many Hindus did not reject a Christian God, but understood it in terms of their own discourses—which placed "God" as living and existing among us, in the same way as Kali or Krishna. As various conversations gave rise to multiple discourses, one which seemed to persist was the one of "moral crises." Throughout the early 1900s, debates would be waged to deal with the fluidity and liminality of the various subjects who had become "fundamentalist," Hindu-Christian or terminated their belief all together. Whatever the case, it seemed that education once again was failing and blame could be fixed not on the colonizers or on education itself, but on the failed subjects who had not yet fully become.

Chapter 3 is the most "methodological" chapter and will definitely serve as a playful space for anyone interested in hermeneutic phenomenology, historiography, anthropology, and, especially, the works of Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg-Gadamer. What is wonderful about this methodological discussion is that Seth presents arguments in an easily accessible manner, even for readers who have a rudimentary knowledge of hermeneutics. In other words, this is a great chapter for students, especially those interested in alternatives to logical positivism and who need an example of how a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis might be written. While Seth is highly critical of "Which Past, Whose History?" we are engaging with methodologically, he fulfills his promise of complicating the issue of knowing even further. The key question is whether "history" is even possible for Indians—whether we can write about people through a code of history to which they do not prescribe. As Seth shows, these are not easily answerable questions. The "code of history [i.e. historiography, hermeneutics] which we now use to write of Indian pasts" does not bear a trace of any Sanskrit or indigenous tradition; however, this does not mean that Indians had not adopted western subjectivity. Seth notes that "this code was an imposition, an act of 'epistemic violence' [Gayatri Spivak's term]…. It did not engage with Indian traditions, did not refute them and thereby replace them. Its victory was won cheaply—through a colonial administrative fiat. As a result, the code of history cannot even fulfill the hermeneutic function that it fills elsewhere" (p. 103). Nevertheless, this does not mean that it cannot be used, rather it must be used with this understanding as the preconditions for interpretation. Seth simultaneously uses, therefore, Heideggerian and Gadamerian approaches while remaining skeptical: "The assumption that Man [sic] is creator of meanings and values, I suggest, is not a 'transcendental presupposition' we are entitled and even obliged to make, but rather a form of 'transcendental narcissism'…" (pp. 103-104), and so if we are going to understand India through this code, we must ask "whether 'transcendental narcissism' of the West succeeded in also becoming a narcissism in the East…"

(p. 104). His answer is, of course, yes. In order to explore this complex issue one must chart the various processes by which this imposition took place—which Seth does in part 2.

Chapter 4 is the first chapter in part 2 ("Modern Knowledge, Modern Nation") and seeks to show that education was "an important site where projects for the founding of collective identities were played out" (p. 110). One such identity was the "backward but proud Muslim" (p. 110) which by the mid-1800s had become a major concern for various parties (including Muslims). The circulating discourses posited that the government-sponsored system of western education was failing because of Muslims' lack of English language acquisition and/or the secular nature of governmental education. Most important to this discourse was the then new idea of census taking (a reflection of how figures were collected more than any "reality" of which they measured) which placed the government in a new position of regulating "population" and validated that Muslims were behind all other pupils. Providing an exemplar of how complicated theory can be used to explicate a phenomenon, Seth applies Foucault's "governmentality," to demonstrate how an idea of "population" (as obtained through census) gives the state authority to invest more fully in life through and through. Seth also highlights how government's involvement in education can be problematic: "Colonial governmentality [i.e., the conduct of the government] functioned to at once posit the possibility and desirability of governance through liberty, but always within a frame where that possibility was deferred, and where autonomous conduct was not possible – yet" (p. 122). While Seth argues that this "colonial governmentality" is different than Western governmentality, I saw an eerie parallel: Our own discourses about education have declared that self-governance and democracy are deferred, awaiting the appropriate system to "free" us. Colonial governmentality qua education also arguably facilitated an emergence of new collective identities, particular between Hindus and Muslims, forming the conditions for the later Hindu-Muslim occupational disparities and partition. This left me with two questions: What kind of collective identities are our own current forms of governmentality and discourses of education forming? What unintentionally setting up for conflict? Anyone wanting to take these questions as a potential research endeavor will find Seth's book a fine starting point.

Despite his critique of census taking in chapter 4, in "Gender and the Nation" (chapter 5), Seth begins with a slew of discouraging statistics: "Well under 1 percent of girls of school-going age (narrowly defined) were enrolled in any educational institutions at any level, and for every thousand boys enrolled, there were only forty-six girls. By early in the new century there were 160 females in arts colleges, but of these 124 were European, Eurasian, Indian Christian, Parsi, leaving thirty-six Hindu and Muslim girls attending college" (p. 129). If this does not grab the attention of anyone interested in gender studies, the discourse about Indian women, as Seth presents it, certainly will. Seth takes what seems to be common sense, everyday discussions about the need to increase women's place in Indian education and shows how such conversation placed the Indian women's body, both from the colonialists and the nationalists (of which the leaders were predominantly, if not fully, male), as perhaps the most contested terrain for waging their political war. As Seth illustrates, while the status of women in India was low, they were, ironically, iconic. The issue was so important, notes Seth, that the status of women was a popular essay and exam question in the first half of the nineteenth century (p. 133). For nationalists, colonialism was to blame: traditional poetry showed how women loved to frolic in the fields and were a symbol of delight, she was an icon of Indian beauty; thus, the decline of "native customs" as a result of western influence was to blame (pp. 133-136). For colonialists, nationalism was to blame because, as the earlier chapters suggest, in the discourse of the day Indians were eternally failing to become "enlightened" subjects (pp. 137-142). But whatever the issue, a large emphasis was placed on educating women for various reasons including making them "virtuous wives" who would be able to engage in educated conversations with their modern husbands, taking on household management as a scientific affair, and/or returning to Hinduism which, as many nationalists argued, advocated learning (a characteristic set off from the "backward Muslim" who did not want educated females). Whatever the position of individuals and groups, such arguments had the effect of desexing and denationalizing women in India. The lesson that we can learn from this is to be more careful about the ways in which we arrange our discussions about identity. The discourse

can give rise to various interpretations and understanding which might be against our actual desires.

Seth's exegesis of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* (1927) will forever make me cautious about the way in which I think about feminism in (post)colonial contexts. His analysis is an example of how literary exegeses may be approached so that it incorporates a constant link between content and history. However, what is original about Seth's account, which I find to be a highly persuasive as a cautionary tale for all ethnographers—including western feminists—is the literary effect of narrative and rhetorical choice. The fervor that *Mother India* created, that similar books of the time did not seem to create within India, Britain, and the United States, was not simply a result of the timing in which it was published, as some contemporary scholars suggest. Seth argues that it had more to do with the way in which it was written. In this sense, form trumped content. By using an opening narrative of a bus traveling to a "backward" ceremony with both lawyers and laypeople, Mayo illustrates that "western-educated Indians are as much a part of backward India as their poor and uneducated countrymen are" (p. 155). The result is that *Mother India* did not cause, but rather became a catalyst for nationalists to take the upper hand in the struggle for Indian sovereignty. As Seth notes, Mayo's claim suggested that the "backwardness and barbarities...[suggested] that not only was India something less than modern, but that those who claimed to be in a position to lead her to modernity were themselves not modern; incapable of transforming their homes, how could they transform the nation they wished to lead?" (p. 156). The debate the book ignited was already much earlier staked out by the nationalists, who believed that modernity would come through modernizing its women first, which Mayo advocated. Thus, nationalists used the book to further their rhetorically argument by showing that their claim, "the claim that nationalism was the only agency with the authority and ability to modernized Indian women and Indian homes" (p.158) was the best strategy for achieving a modern India. Nationalists continued, therefore, to reform education in regard to gender but the result was at a potential loss to both women's sovereignty and indigenous ways.

In the last chapter, "Vernacular Identity: The Nationalist Imagination," Seth focuses on the criticism of nationalists that western education was "denationalizing" its people. This critique was not necessarily related to the evaluation that Western education was failing as vehicle of modernity often voiced by both nationalists and colonial authorities. As a mode of opposition, nationalists established "national schools" which had great potential, so it initially seemed, in reenergizing students, and challenging both "rote" and instrumental learning. While "nationalist" schools tried to define themselves in various ways (from teaching in Hindu to being political), Seth argues (providing another lesson for critical educators in the West) that "no one seriously proposed what might seem the most obvious answer of all: that national education purvey the traditional or indigenous knowledges of India" (p. 167). Despite all of its opposition to content and approach by nationalists, the western educational framework remained, and "colonialism as a form of pedagogy" (p. 172) still advanced in cultivating and failing to produce westernized subjectivities. If educators really want to challenge the types of subjects that western education tends to produce, we must move beyond our desire to be "modern but different" and embrace fundamentally different modes of being.

Seth's overall lesson is summarized in the epilogue, "Knowing Modernity, Being Modern": "Modern knowledge is thus at once a cause, a consequence, and an emblem of modernity" (p. 183). This book challenges various discourses which were at play in colonial India, but it simultaneously critiques—or at least reminds us to critique—our current discourses. We have a tendency in our conversations to equate modernity with western educational practices, if not make them as indivisible. To this extent, various discourses are to be found around the site of pedagogy, making everything at once pedagogic. Citing a report from a 1913 government inquiry, Seth quotes in the introduction, "The Committee regards the provision of proper latrine and urinal accommodation as not only necessary in the interests of…health…[and] sanitation…but also as having a distinctly educative value" (p. 2). This book is a brilliant expose on the power of discourse about education. It seems to have as much of a colonizing effect as western education

itself. As someone who is somewhat sentimental to critical pedagogy, I am alarmed by our own governmentality via education which seeks to place the federal state as the regulator of content. However, I now understand that when I begin to state my position, the discursive effect is potentially beyond my control despite my best intentions. It is for this reason that I take Seth's lesson serious and will rethink how I say things given the competing discourses and current political environment.

The subject lessons in *Subject Lessons* are plenty. I am sure that others will find an assortment of other lessons which will be useful to their own scholarship. Seth complicates issues as much as he resolves them. He lives up to his promise to provide an analysis of education while not "…engaging in polemics, treating the arrival of the western knowledge in India neither as the triumph of Reason over ignorance or unreason nor as an insidious form of intellectual and cultural colonization" (p. 185). I think we all have something to gain from Seth's writing style and his ontic explanations. He provides us with a valuable lesson: Be careful of our conversations concerning pedagogy as the discourses which arise from such conversations effect what kind of subjects/subjectivities we pass or fail in our world.

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