

FORUM

Wissenschaft



Postkoloniale Hochschule

Zwischen Amnesie und Aufarbeitung

- ◆ Debatte zum WissZeitVG
- ◆ »Holodomor« als Genozid?

Auch wenn sich an manchem Kiosk (und vielerorts im Internet) noch Souvenirs zur Pflege kolonialer Nostalgie erwerben lassen, hat doch hierzulande seit einiger Zeit eine Debatte um die Auseinandersetzung mit der kolonialen Vergangenheit Deutschlands begonnen. Es geht um die Anerkennung von Verbrechen, die bis zum Genozid reichen, um die Restitution kolonialer Raubgüter und um die Formen einer würdigen und angemessenen Erinnerungspolitik. Dabei stößt das wachsende Bewusstsein für die Probleme kolonialer Kontinuitäten konfliktvoll auf gewachsene Traditionen der Erinnerung an die Shoa. Wie kann die Anerkennung der Verantwortung für ein historisches Verbrechen gelingen, ohne zur Herabwürdigung des anderen zu führen?

Auch an den Hochschulen hat die Forderung nach einer strukturellen Dekolonisierung Raum gewonnen, die über eine rassismuskritische Auseinandersetzung mit Lehre und etablierter Forschungspraxis hinausgeht. Dabei geht es nicht nur um die Verschiebung inhaltlich hegemonialer Wissensordnungen, sondern auch um die Anerkennung unterschiedlicher Artikulationsweisen – letztlich um die Aufhebung ungleicher Machtverhältnisse zwischen Wissenschaftler*innen und Hochschulen des Globalen Nordens einerseits und des Globalen Südens andererseits.

Forum Wissenschaft widmet sich in dieser Ausgabe unterschiedlichen Aspekten des umfangreichen Themenfeldes »Rassismus und (Post-)Kolonialismus in Wissenschaft und Hochschule«.

Hochschulen sind Teil der Gesellschaft und mithin auch keine rassismusfreien Räume. Doch wie steht es um Bemühungen, rassistischen Strukturen entgegenzuwirken? Reichen dafür wohlklingende Worte und ein engagiertes »Diversity-Management«? Welche Rolle spielt die selbstreflexive Diskussion »Weißer« Privilegien? Und welchen Raum bekommen die Erfahrungen von Wissenschaftler*innen of Color? Wie können koloniale Hierarchisierungen in der westlichen Wissenschaft abgebaut und dekoloniales Wissen stärker verankert werden?

Wir wollen mit diesem Heft dazu beitragen, die Diskussion um eine Dekolonisierung der Hochschulen weiterzuentwickeln und freuen uns über Rückmeldungen dazu.

Wir laden alle Interessierten zum gemeinsamen Austausch darüber ein: am 5. Juli wollen wir im Rahmen unserer digitalen Veranstaltungsreihe »BdWi-Mittwoch« dieses Heft vorstellen.

Wir danken allen Autor*innen dieser Ausgabe für ihre Mitarbeit.

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Eine anregende Lektüre wünscht im Namen der Redaktion



Steffen Käthner



Auch Hochschulen sind keine rassismusfreien Räume. Anstatt sich jedoch tiefgreifend mit (institutionellem) Rassismus auseinanderzusetzen, setzen viele Hochschulen stattdessen auf neoliberal grundierte Diversity-Konzepte, kritisiert Karima Popal-Akhzarati. Ihr Beitrag geht der Frage nach, welche Auswirkungen die gesellschaftliche und institutionelle Nicht-Benennung und Dethematisierung von Rassismus auf die Verhandlungsweisen von Rassismuserfahrungen der Betroffenen haben. S. 4



In den vergangenen Jahren verstärkte sich auch hierzulande die Debatte um eine Dekolonisierung akademischer Wissensproduktion und um die Aufhebung ungleicher Machtverhältnisse zwischen Wissenschaftler*innen und Hochschulen des Globalen Nordens einerseits und des Globalen Südens andererseits. Fabricio Rodríguez und Cita Wetterich gehen in ihrem Beitrag der Frage nach, wie eine Dekolonisierung von Forschung und Lehre in den Internationalen Beziehungen aussehen könnte. S. 9



Die Geschichte des Rassismus ist eng verknüpft mit der Entwicklung der ökonomischen Verhältnisse des Kapitalismus. Zur Legitimation dieser gesellschaftlichen Machtverhältnisse hat die moderne Sozialwissenschaft wesentliche Beiträge geleistet. Dennoch – so plädieren Daniel Lieb, Sophia Schorr und Anna Kamenik – sei es falsch, die herrschende Wissenschaft in Gänze zu verwerfen. Stattdessen gelte es, ihre erhaltenswerten Bestandteile herauszuarbeiten und weiterzuentwickeln. S. 39



Europaparlament und Bundestag verabschiedeten Ende 2022 vor dem Hintergrund des anhaltenden Krieges Russlands gegen die Ukraine Erklärungen zum »Holodomor«. Die Hungerkatastrophe in der Sowjetunion Anfang der 1930er Jahre wird durch politische Mehrheitsentscheidungen als Genozid klassifiziert, obwohl die historischen Vorgänge Bestandteil nicht abgeschlossener wissenschaftlicher Kontroversen sind. Maxi Schneider skizziert Problemlagen und mögliche Folgen dieser Entscheidung. S. 57

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De-fetishizing restitutions!

On the Ethical Stakes of Restitutions Debate¹

Science, then, is, in principle swimming against the current.

Klaus Holzkamp

In the preamble to his book *Sein und Zeit*, Martin Heidegger, reviewing the history of Western metaphysics, stated: The question of *being* has now been forgotten. The same can be said today, albeit in a different context, of the *being* of the African artist: it has been forgotten. But the *being* in question is not to be confused with Heidegger's *being*. It is neither the *being* of metaphysics nor of ontology but of the living. *Being* is life as it is manifested in the experience of the rights of the subject: to be heard, to be recognized, to be welcomed as a living, of which artwork is one sign among others of the mind's creative drive. So how is it that every time one talks about the restitution of African art objects, the creator of these works is somehow shrouded in an uncanny silence as if they were a creation *ex-nihilo*? And what are the implications of such an oversight for how we relate to African artists of yesterday and today?

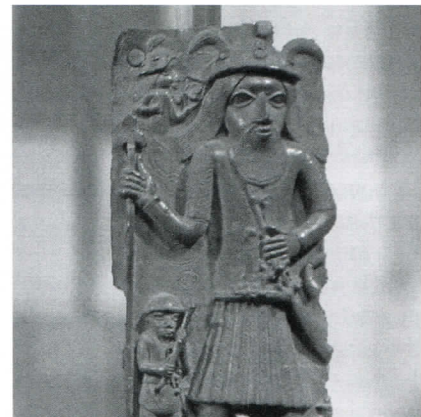
This article aims to discuss the ethical contours of the restitutions debate. I assume that ethics is not external to this issue but essential. It questions the validity of the concept of restitution by asking: What is the ultimate subject of restitution? And how can one explain the forgetfulness of this subject? I argue that the ultimate subject of restitutions is the *being* of the artist and his rights. A reflection on restitutions that forgets the figure of the artist – either African or not – would be a pure mystification. I refer to this as *fetishization*: It is the forgetful-

ness of the artist's life and memory and the unilateral concern for his or her objects. To raise the issue of the rights of the artist is ultimately a) to question our relationship to the objects that are the creations of his or her mind; b) to recognize the ontological difference that exists between the *being* of the artist and the objects of our claims; c) to expose the inexorable ontological primacy of the *being* of the artist over his art objects.

The forgetfulness of African artists

There is no doubt that African cultural heritage is recognized worldwide today. One might argue that restitution aims to rehabilitate this art by the Africans themselves and the West.² But what place does the memory of the African artist occupy in this debate? On the one hand, it is still forgotten. On the other hand, African legacy remains barely recognized as a product of the aesthetic genius of individuals whose existence was not only conflated with that of their community. One even wonders whether it is legitimate to qualify these objects as »artworks«, i. e. a »real aesthetic«, or whether they should not simply be defined as »cultural products«.³ These stereotypes closely mirror those that, until recently, surrounded African philosophy. Africans might be, it was said, the »Mr Jourdain« of philosophy: they were practising philosophy without being aware.⁴ As we know, these stereotypes were rooted more in arrogant ignorance than in rigorous philosophical inquiry.⁵ Our concern is to examine how these

This article discusses the ethical contours of the restitutions debate. It questions the validity of the concept of restitution. Korassi Téwéché argues that the ultimate subject of restitutions is the being of the artist and his rights.



beliefs, which have shaped the Western and African minds for centuries, affect the way we address issues related to African arts today in the context of restitution debates.

Indeed, African artists seem to be the object of a double homicide. Forgotten by politics as regards the protection of their rights and ignored by scholars, they become a product of widespread consumption in the continent.⁶ Their life and status vanish behind a fetishistic relation to their works. What remains of African arts seems to be no longer the artist himself but those exotic artefacts exhibited in the media or museums as a claim for folkloric African authenticity.⁷ But these exotics, which are the remnants of colonial ethnology, might not draw our attention away from the daily persecutions of which artists are today victims on the African continent due to their commitment to justice and equity.⁸ Their life, as well as the production of their mind, withdraws behind the mask of folklorist consumerism, political instrumentalization and fetishist exoticism.

Yet the forgetfulness of the artist in the debate on restitution goes back to the scandal of colonization, which was a brutal encounter between Africa and the West. The colonial violence was a negation of the humanity of the colonized, the absolute appropriation of his land, and the alienation of his heritage. From a philosophical point of view, colonization was based on the idea of a negation of the ontological difference between the *being* of the colonized and his objects and the affirmation of the latter's primacy over the former. More than any other subject in the colony, artists experienced the consequences of this double homicide. Once they had escaped physical death, yet another death hung over them, that of the erasure of their memory.⁹ The reduction of his creations to vulgar cultural objects by ethnologists, or the dilution of his identity behind his community, were two symptoms of this homicide. Neither was there an attempt to honor the genius of their inventive mind nor to acknowledge and valorize their individuality.

In sum, a critical analysis of the historiography of African arts reveals to us the genealogy and nature of the forgetfulness of African artists. Rarely has it been a need to recognize them as em-

blematic manifestations of organic human history in their creative genius and aesthetic depth. Such forgetfulness is translated, in the context of post-colonial African states, by the denial of the rights of artists. Among them are the rights to recognition, dignity, the protection of life, creativity and memory. Instead, the relation to the artistic creations has almost been that of fetishistic violence, i. e. a unilateral and almost narcissistic fixation on objects at the expense of their creator. This obsession, I have shown, is symptomatic of (post)colonial history.

The Psychoanalysis of Fetishism

How do we explain this tendency to prioritize objects rather than artists? It requires going back to the psychoanalysis of the colonial subject, of which Frantz Fanon gave us a deep understanding. He explained how the same logic governed both the colonist and the colonized, which he called »double narcissism«. The issue is formulated as such: »It is a fact: Whites consider themselves superior to blacks. It is also a fact that Blacks want to demonstrate to Whites, at all costs, the richness of their thinking.«¹⁰ Fanon concludes: »How can we get out of this?« Fanon's dialectics between critical theory analysis and the praxis of medicine aimed to provide an alternative to the vicious dilemma of narcissism, that what we called »fetishization«. For him, three principles define the narcissist: the pleasure principle, the possession principle, and the security against death.

Indeed, whether »white« or »black«, the colonial subject is governed by a narcissistic pleasure. The Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho gave a representation of narcissism in the prologue of his bestseller »*The Alchemist*«. A young man named Narcissus was drowned by contemplating his image upon the reflection of a river. In other words, what defines the narcissist is an irrational fascination for an object that leads to the forgetfulness of *being* and, finally, to death. Had Narcissus been aware that he was only contemplating a mirror, perhaps he would still be alive. Describing the narcissist colonial mind, Fanon wrote: »I try to read admiration in the eyes of the

other, and if by misfortune the other sends me back an unpleasant image, I devalue this mirror: decidedly this other is an imbecile. [...] I am Narcissus, and I want to read in the eyes of the other an image of myself that satisfies me.«¹¹ Thus, we understand that for Fanon, the colony per se signifies this state of being affected by objects. Certainly, the colonial subject observes the world. But what he sees is, above all, objects that behave like mirrors. A screen of pleasure separates him from the world, which inevitably mirrors its self-image.

Moreover, the narcissistic subject is governed by the desire for possessions. Ownership, Fanon argues, is equivalent to unlimited enjoyment. Following this argument, Mbembe uses the metaphor of the »erected phallus« to analyze the narcissism of the (post)colonial subject, which is both the turgescence of a desire, irrational violence, and a quest for the annihilation of the Other.¹² Possession, forgetfulness and a narcissistic pleasure are therefore three characteristics of the erected phallus as well as emblematic symptoms of the colonial violence, that what we call fetishization. One might ask: where does this fascination for objects come from, this exuberance of pleasure that sometimes turns into delirium and madness? Beyond the pleasure derived from the possession of objects, Fanon argues that the colonial subject is in search of security.

Indeed, the enjoyment of the object is only worthwhile because it closes the subject in on itself. It is both an escape and a denial of responsibility towards fellow human beings: »The object is denied its individuality and freedom. The object is an instrument. It must enable me to achieve my subjective security. I give myself as full (desire for fullness) and do not admit any scission. The Other enters the scene to furnish it. The hero is me. Applaud or criticize; it doesn't matter much to me; I am the center. Should the other attempt to worry me with his desire for enhancement (his fiction), I expel him without further trial. He no longer exists. Don't talk to me about him. I don't want to experience the clash of objects. Contact with the object is a conflict.«¹³ Thus, what matters for the narcissist is less the encounter of the person in the Other and the creation of the relationship, but rather the »subjective security« through possession and ultimate



Benin-Bronzen

enjoyment of objects. The more one becomes attached to objects; the less one feels the duty and responsibility to encounter the Other. For in the colony, the Other represents »the possibility of its impossibility.«¹⁴

Thus, the historiography of African arts is based on the forgetfulness of artists' existence and the fetishistic entanglement with their objects. Fanon's psychoanalysis of the colonial subject provided us the basis for examining the reasons for this annihilation. How does one readdress the issue of the status of African artists behind the mask of artifacts, as witnessed in current debates on restitution. In other words, how to de-fetishize restitutions? And what does such a project mean?

Living beyond Having

To de-fetishize restitutions means assuming our shared responsibilities for the life and memory of artists rather than their creations. Humanity as a whole is concerned with this ethical project. From the perspective of the philosophy of art, this implies reconsidering the ontological difference between the artwork and its creator. For creation is only a mediation, i.e., a symbol. The theologian Paul Tillich explains how every symbol is relative. That is, it exists

only as a mediation towards something that transcends it, which is life itself.¹⁵ Works have no value in themselves since they are the expression of their maker's life. This view explains the claim of the ontological importance of the artist over the work. It implies rehabilitating its forgotten memory by constantly revising human art history. But how to rediscover, behind the forgotten memory, the artist's living existence and legacy? What does it mean today to write a de-fetishized aesthetic of artworks, either in Africa or in other historical contexts? Answering these questions implies intellectual honesty and courage, through which the living figure of the creator of each work becomes visible. But beyond the historiographical stakes, it is a matter of ethics, in other words, of our human ability to discover, behind each artist, whose existence has been denied, a fellow human being. To revive this forgotten existence is not to dismiss the value of the work produced. Instead, it means bringing it back to its existential ontological root.

The affirmation of the ontological primacy of the artist over their creation raises issues concerning the epistemology of art history, contemporary epistemology, and ethics insofar as they underpin the relationship that humans have with objects and people in daily lives. This statement is part of a long tra-

dition of continental philosophy and of the post-colonial paradigm of philosophy, of which it is difficult to provide an exhaustive overview in this article. What Karl Marx, in his critique of political economy, called »commodity fetishism«, and Eboussi Boulaga, in his critique of religion, called »fetish Christianity«, are all part of the same phantasy: the reification of the living, their effacement behind things and the loss of organic responsibility. Philosophers such as Aimé Césaire, Paul Gilroy, Edouard Glissant, Bruno Latour, and Achille Mbembe, have shown how our *zeitgeist* is marked by this decline concerning the fellow living being and the resurgence of animism, the other name for Idolatry. In other words, fetishism mirrors not only the intrinsic colonial mind but also the ethos of our time. Aims of the ethics of restitutions are to challenge oneself to think critically about our responsibility towards life beyond our irrational daily entanglement with objects. Ethics ground our understanding of the ontological difference between beings and things, which is the precondition for sharing our life and protecting organic rights and memories. De-fetishization aims to recover behind artworks, artists' incommensurable existence, organic life, and memory. I assume this is the necessary condition for a philosophical debate on restitutions.

Conclusion: Eight Thesis on Restitutions

1. The ultimate object of restitution is organic human dignity, of which the artist's life and rights are the symbols par excellence.
2. Since human dignity is necessarily expressed in a historical context through the artistic and cultural forms of the human mind, every art and culture is entitled to protection.
3. The protection of art and culture requires the rehabilitation of the dignity and rights of artists. This means the remembrance of their memory and the preservation of the heritage they have left to humanity through their community.
4. Since every heritage is transmitted in a specific context, each community or individual has the responsibility to protect the heritage of their ancestors. In case of violation of the right to one's heritage, those who have suffered the damage have the right to demand and obtain reparation.
5. An honorary mention, including each artist's name and biography, must be made on each work of art. If this is not possible, a note such as: »Homage to the Unknown Artist« should be made. This applies, for example, to works of African art stolen during colonization.
6. The ultimate goal of cultural and artistic heritage is generational, i. e., the sharing of organic life among all living beings. The objects of the fulfillment

of the organic life on Earth are spiritual, intellectual, cultural, physical, and economical.

7. By virtue of the organic right to life, no community has the right to exclude another from the organic right to enjoy the inheritance of its ancestors. This means that there is only a shared heritage: what belongs to a particular community is the organic heritage of all humanity.
8. A Fund for the sharing of the organic heritage of humanity is essential, the function of which will be the protection of artists and their works. This planetary fund will abolish worldwide inequalities among artists in their process of artistic creation. It will provide all humans free and equal access to the cultural and artistic heritage of humanity.

Anmerkungen

- 1) I owe my sincere gratitude to my partner Darice Malabon and friend Evans Appiah whose conversations on African philosophy and art inspired this text.
- 2) Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy 2018: *Restituer le patrimoine africain*. Philippe Rey. Read also: Bénédicte Savoy 2022: *Africa's Struggle for Its Art*, Princeton University Press.
- 3) Jean-Marie Schaeffer 2004: »Objets esthétiques?«, in: *L'Homme*, vol. 170, no. 2: 25–45. Read also: Peter Mark 1998: »Est-ce que l'art africain existe?«, in: *Revue d'Histoire d'Outre-Mers*, 318: 3–19.
- 4) Fabien Eboussi Boulaga 1968: »Le bantou problématique«, in: *Présence africaine*: 4–40.

- 5) Achille Mbembe 2017: *Critique of black reason*, Duke University Press.
- 6) Jean-Godefroy Bidima 1997: *L'art négro-africain*. PUF, Paris.
- 7) Ibid.: 28–30. For a synthesis of the debate in Germany: Leonie Benker 2021: »Koloniales Erbe und deutsche Erinnerungskultur: Die Restitutionsdebatte und ihre Fortläufer in deutschen Medien (2018–2020)«, in: *Baessler-Archiv*, 67; Oussounou Sandja, A. A. 2022: »(Post)koloniale Provenienzforschung: Zur Debatte rund um die koloniale Raubkunst«, in: *Geschichte für heute*, 15(4), 73–84.
- 8) John Pepper 2009: *Art and the end of Apartheid*, Minnesota Press: 745.
- 9) Darice Malabon and Fouellefak K. Celestine C. 2019: »L'incidence de la guerre de libération nationale sur les productions artistiques et les manifestations culturelles dans l'Ouest-Cameroun (1955–1971)«, in: *Le temps des maquis*, Intel'Actuel 2: 141–165.
- 10) Frantz Fanon 1971: *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Seuil, Paris: 7.
- 11) Ibid: 172.
- 12) Achille Mbembe 2020: *Brutalisme*, La Découverte, Paris: 197.
- 13) Frantz Fanon 1971: 171.
- 14) Ibid: 177.
- 15) Paul Tillich 1958: »The religious symbol«, in: *Daedalus* 87.3 (1958): 3–21.

Korassi Téwéché is interested in philosophy, art – photography, cinema – and African (post)colonial history. He is a doctoral student writing his Ph.D. thesis on the idea of planetary justice as a critique of the absolute property right from the works of the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe.

VSA: Zu Rassismus, Kolonialismus, Antisemitismus



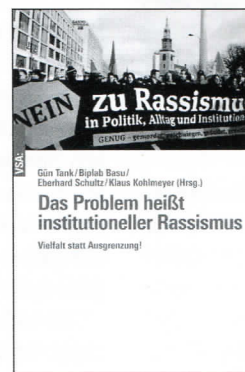
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mit Inputs von Timo Daum und Christian Meyer

▶ Freitag, 15.9.2023

Macht und Kämpfe
mit Inputs von Anne Roth, Cansu Güner (angefragt) sowie Michael Achmann und Daniel Guagnin (angefragt)

▶ Samstag, 16.9.2023

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mit Inputs von Leonie Ackermann, Mirjana Mitrovic und Sebastian Kubon

▶ Sonntag, 17.9.2023

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