

Planetary Utopias – Hope, Desire, Imaginaries in a Post-Colonial World

Veranstalter Akademie der Künste, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/bpb.

Veranstaltungsort Akademie der Künste, Berlin

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Symposium at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin

In the third symposium “Planetary Utopias – Hope, Desire, Imaginaries in a Post-Colonial World” of the event series “Colonial Repercussions/ Koloniales Erbe”, Nikita Dhawan (Professor of Political Theory and Gender Studies), together with renowned international scholars, activists and artists rethink new visions of a postcolonial future. For centuries, European colonizers have trawled the globe in search of adventures, chasing the allure of pristine, untouched land and people. Colonies served as fantastic projection screens onto which Europe mapped its forbidden desires and fears even as they functioned as laboratories of European hopes and imaginations.

Although Europeans betrayed and abused the Enlightenment ideas of equality, liberty, justice, rights and democracy, the lofty postcolonial ambitions to rescue the enabling legacies of the Enlightenment from the Europeans is turning out to be a missed appointment with history. With the endemic problems of economic, social, and political global inequality, echoing revolutionary slogans of anti-colonialism seems “out of place” in the face of deep malaise and looming crises. Reimagining postcolonial futures, requires a move beyond the belief that undoing European colonialism would be sufficient to usher in a world without injustice and oppression. This confronts us with the problem of postcolonial oppositional criticism: whom and what should it be directed against? What should be the grammar of this critique? How are we to overcome the acute paralysis of will and sheer lack of vision? Does the world in which we live make postcolonial utopias implausible to imagine? And given these impossible conditions how do we script our hopes, desires and

imaginaries to overcome the disillusioned present?

The symposium “Planetary Utopias - Hope, Desire, Imaginaries in a Post-Colonial World” attempts to imagine a post-imperial politics from the (non)place of planetarity by acknowledging the non-formulaic openness of planetary utopias that involves not only reflecting on what is to be hoped, desired and imagined, but also on the limits of our best efforts to do so. For imagining the unimaginable and hoping in the face of hopelessness is precisely the task of utopias, a nostalgia for that which is yet to be, the not-yet. “Colonial Repercussions/Koloniales Erbe” is a joint event series by the Akademie der Künste and the Federal Agency for Civic Education/bpb.

More information
