

# Lezing | Axel Honneth: One step forward, two steps back

Postcolonialism and the West

**Activiteit van Duitsland Instituut Amsterdam**

**Datum:** donderdag 4 juli 2024 om 20:00 uur

**Locatie:** SPUI25, Spui 25-27, Amsterdam / Online

**Informatie:** Voertaal: Engels. [Aanmelden](#)

**Toegang:** Gratis

Axel Honneth wordt gezien als een van de belangrijkste stemmen in de kritische theorie van vandaag. Zijn werk vertegenwoordigt zowel een voortzetting en herinterpretatie van de belangrijkste thema's van de vroege *Frankfurter Schule*, als een verruiming van deze traditie. In deze lezing, die deel uitmaakt van een tweedaagse conferentie ter gelegenheid van zijn 75e verjaardag, zal Honneth zich bezighouden met de postkoloniale situatie en de relatie daarvan met de Europese verlichting.

There are many ways to understand the theoretical and political claims of recent postcolonialism. In this lecture, Axel Honneth understands it as a powerful and fully legitimate attempt to raise awareness of the fact that colonialism is still oppressively present in the West, even in an age that presents itself as postcolonial. In order to meet this challenge, Honneth will explore in what ways European culture needs to change its own self-understanding with regard to the past, the present and the future.

What transformations in “our” collective memory, in “our” conceptualization of our institutional system, and in “our” moral universalism are necessary today to pay tribute to the colonial crimes committed by our ancestors in the past? The lecture will proceed in three steps: First, it will be shown that our social-theoretical tradition needs not only a postcolonial rereading of all the classical authors of the West, but also an inclusion of studies and literary products that have challenged this tradition from within the colonial experience. Second, a radical decentering of our key

political-historical concepts seems necessary in order to be able to describe as belonging to “us” or even to attribute to “ourselves” the institutional conditions that the European states once created in the countries they colonized. And third, a revision of our moral universalism seems necessary because it presupposes a kind of anthropocentrism that seems unacceptable from the perspective of the descendants of the people colonized in the past.

## [Register](#)

About the speakers

[Axel Honneth](#) is Jack C. Weinstein professor at Columbia University New York. From 2001-2018, he was the director of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. He is the author of many books, such as *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995 / 1992), *Freedom's Right* (2014) and *The Idea of Socialism* (2016).

[Beate Roessler](#) is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. She has published widely on privacy and other topics in ethics, social, and political philosophy; her latest book is *Autonomy: an Essay on the Life Well Lived* (Polity, 2021). She is a co-editor of the *European Journal of Philosophy* and a member of the Göttinger Akademie der Wissenschaften and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her book *Being Human in the Digital World* which she is editing with Valerie Steeves is forthcoming with Cambridge UP (2024).

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