

Translating Atonement: Can Countries Learn From Each Other?

An international conference organized by the Einstein Forum Potsdam in cooperation with the Hamburg Institute for Social Research

Open and free for all, no registration required. Contact: einsteinforum@einsteinforum.de.

The ethical and legal ramifications of past atrocities are a subject of controversy in many countries. For all the differences between commemorative cultures, all these national conversations have one thing in common: Be it in Rwanda or Cambodia, Japan or the United States, every debate about guilt and responsibility will eventually focus on the experience of other countries. What is the purpose of these comparisons? Can one nation's way of dealing with the consequences of mass terror, genocide, or war crimes serve as a positive or negative model to other nations? Why do some models seem to attract more attention than others—for example, the German culture of atonement or the South African-style truth commission? Do national models compete with each other? Or does every society have no choice but to find its own unique way of dealing with its past? Can countries really learn from each other?

Participants:

Aleida Assmann, *Professor of English Literature, Konstanz University*

Jürgen Aßmann, *State Prosecutor, Hamburg*

Murat Belge, *Professor of Comparative Literature, Bilgi University Istanbul*

Hans-Otto Bräutigam, *Botschafter a.D., Berlin (former Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany in the GDR and Ambassador to the United Nations)*

Wendy Doniger, *Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions, University of Chicago Divinity School*

Alexander Etkind, *Reader in Russian Literature and Cultural History, King's College Cambridge*

Konstanty Gebert, *Journalist, Warsaw*

Gerd Hankel, *Research Fellow, Hamburg Institute for Social Research*

Sune Haugbølle, *Assistant Professor of Arabic and Middle East Studies, Copenhagen University*

Fatima Kastner, *Research Fellow, Hamburg Institute of Social Research*

Stephen Marshall, *Assistant Professor of American Studies, University of Texas, Austin*

Jacqueline Nießer, *Postgraduate Research Fellow in Southeast and East European History, University of Regensburg*

Anson Rabinbach, *Professor of Modern European History, Princeton University*

István Rév, *Professor of History and Director of the Open Society Archives, Central European University, Budapest*

Sveta Roberman, *Postdoc Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies*

Franziska Seraphim, *Associate Professor of History, Boston College*

David Shulman, *Renee Lang Professor of Humanistic Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

Claudia Weber, *Research Fellow, Hamburg Institute of Social Research*

Kirsten Weld, *Florence Levy Kay Fellow in Latin American History, Brandeis University*

Christiane Wienand, *Research Fellow, University College London*

Program

Thursday, June 2

19:00 Opening event at the Martin Gropius Bau (Niederkirchnerstr. 7, Berlin)

Introductory remarks by Susan Neiman
Introduction by Mischa Gabowitsch

Hans-Otto Bräutigam: *title TBA*

David Shulman: Present Trauma, Prospective Memory: Israel--Palestine, 1947--2011

Friday, June 3 (Haus der Brandenburgisch-Preußischen Geschichte, Am Neuen Markt 9, Potsdam)

10-12 ATONEMENT AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Kirsten Weld: Some Truth, Less Justice: Opening the Archives When Impunity Trumps Atonement
István Rév: Selling the Revolution for Human Rights: The Bicentenary and the Transition
Konstanty Gebert: The Ambiguousness of Forgiveness
Moderator: Claudia Weber

12-13:30 LUNCH BREAK

13:30-15:30 ENCOUNTERS

Christiane Wienand: "Have Fun Atoning!"--*Aktion Sühnezeichen* and the Role of Youth in Reconciliation Discourse and Practice
Sveta Roberman: Memories on Parade and Memory Under Siege: Identities, Contexts, and War Stories
Commentator: Aleida Assmann

16:00-18:00 LAW

Anson Rabinbach: "*We Charge Genocide*": African Americans, Memory, and the Genocide Convention
Gerd Hankel: Atonement under Duress – The Dubious Process of Dealing with Rwanda's Past
Jürgen Aßmann: The Cambodian War Crimes Tribunal and German Legal Expertise
Moderator: Fatima Kastner

Saturday, June 4 (Haus der Brandenburgisch-Preußischen Geschichte, Am Neuen Markt 9, Potsdam)

10:00-13:00 MODELS

Sune Haugbølle: Memory Cultures and Atonement in Lebanon
Franziska Seraphim. "A Japan that Cannot Say Sorry?"

Jacqueline Nießer: The German Reference in Creating a Regional Truth Commission in
Post-Yugoslavia
Moderator: Mischa Gabowitsch

13:00 LUNCH BREAK

15:00-18:00 Panel discussion: **Memory Wars**

Murat Belge
Alexander Etkind
Wendy Doniger
Stephen Marshall