

Workshop

Owning: A most Human Passion

21.01.2016, 9:30–15:00 Uhr, Karl Jaspers Haus

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Owning has always been looked at with great suspicion by philosophy and religion alike, tolerated as a necessary concession to be made to human finite-ness rather than a constitutive feature of the *humana natura*. Objects in turn were seen as the very opposite of the human. Plato was the first to criticize the seemingly intrinsic greed embedded within the phenomenon of possessing objects. His critique resonated through centuries until the modern age, but with and after the Renaissance the rise of merchant bourgeoisie and the spreading of the phenomenon of collecting showed that the issue of owning could not be addressed only in terms of suspicion towards the *sacra auri fames*, as it was in Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham. In time, and especially with the explosion of mass consumerism in the second half of the 20th century, owning started to pose another sort of danger, that of de-humanization (man becomes an object, a thing), as in Heidegger. But are objects condemned to perpetual inhumanity, and is such pseudo-humanistic paradigm really impossible to overcome?

The workshop will address these issues:

- a) The ethical issue: are ethical condemnations of, or suspicions about, owning fully or partially justifiable?
- b) The ontological issue: is the ontological issue sensible?, i.e. does owning actually affect in a negative way the humanity of the human? What about the relation between owning objects and the satisfaction of human desire?
- c) The historical issue: Owning as one of the engines of history and its power of pushing change through the power of desire.

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