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Response

Seven of the eight contributions to the forum for this *Journal for the History of Knowledge* approach the topic of decentering by undoing culturally and/or geographically defined centrisms in the history of knowledge. Only Ito Kenji's essay "Who knows?" considers the undoing of the anthropocentric paradigm that has shaped most histories of knowledge written during the Anthropocene/Capitalocene/Chthulucene/Plantationocene. Demanding a posthuman approach, his intervention considers the challenges that artificial intelligence and machine learning pose to anthropocentric definitions of processes of learning and knowledge. Ito's primary investment in posthumanism does not, of course, mean he is unaware of the (socio-)culturally defined constraints of the ways histories of knowledge have been written. This is show-cased by his powerful attack on the "tyranny of English" in academia, which he refers to as "a remnant of colonial legacies" and that, as Projit Mukharji's contribution points out, has led to mainstreaming, bifurcation and alienation. Suffice to say (and easy to imagine), if this forum's section had been written in Chinese by Chinese scholars for a Chinese readership, it would look radically different. (And Chinese here, of course, serves as a placeholder for a diversity of other languages that could make the point equally well.)

Clearly, the further decentering of the histories of knowledge requires the translation of more, and a wider variety of, non-English-language sources beyond those that currently dominate discourses in English-speaking and non-English-speaking sections of academia. In the age of DeepL, Google Translate, and other such apps, specialized texts written in a large range of idioms are no longer the preserve of the linguistically trained specialist but available to anyone with a good internet connection. Regardless of AI-induced translation flaws, language barriers are increasingly diminishing, while the linguistically imperfect agency of the machine-translator poses new problems to inter-human communication. Despite the possibilities for linguistic diversity and communicative development that technological advancement has to offer,

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as Ito points out, it "remains to be seen whether machine-mediated communication and the resulting linguistic equity could liberate those who suffer under the tyranny of English." This "tyranny" can, of course, not just (and not even primarily) be reduced to a matter of language.

As the seven other contributions to this forum showcase, it is an uneasy project to graft the global onto the legacy of a (singular) history of knowledge. Rather than embracing the diversity and pluralism of multiple histories of knowledge written by specialists from a range of cultural backgrounds on their own terms, some of the contributions cling to notions of comparison across cultures (that other contributions reject) and hold on to the premise of master narratives according to which, they assert, the grand narrative of a "global" history of knowledge should be crafted. That grand narrative, it seems, should be more inclusive and expansive and transnational than previous ones, but still be told by one (or at least very few) authoritative voices. Presumably in English. If such an undertaking were possible, it would indeed be convenient. Yet it seems like a twentieth-century solution to a twenty-first-century problem.

Instead of referring to strategies of "decolonizing" as a transitory fashion (as Michiel Leezenberg's contribution does), it seems more appropriate to acknowledge that even "in the long run" the conceptual and theoretical decentering of "the" history of knowledge cannot be divorced from the diversification of academia itself, which is inherently an act of decolonialization (given the history of the establishment of Western-style academic institutional structures and curricula worldwide and the dominance of European languages for teaching and academic publishing). This can only be achieved by work on multiple levels, including the employment of methods derived from Indigenous studies and postcolonial theory (as discussed by Projit Mukharji and implemented by Andrés Vélez Posada), as well as the expansion of diversity through revisions to hiring and publishing strategies and transcultural forms of collaboration (the latter suggested in Eugenia Leam's and Harun Küçük's contributions). The kind of "epistemic pluralism" that Küçük proposes—time-sensitive and global-minded but not attempting to extend existing analytics—seems highly recommendable. Similarly, a refined attentiveness to the dynamics between knowing and not-knowing in precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial contexts is key to our understanding of what constitutes dominant epistemological histories (as highlighted by Helen Tilley). In the view of Projit Mukharji, epistemic change can relate to "the demands of institutional change." This may also play a role in the shaping of epistemics within the ever-changing structures of academia at a time when many universities worldwide are intensifying their efforts to diversify their staff and student bodies.

Aspects of "the" history of knowledge as it is traditionally understood can be seen not only as synonymous with Whiteness but also, to some extent, with Maleness. Yet, not one of the eight contributions specifically addresses gender in relation to decentering. Given the increasing importance and visibility of LGBTQ+ communities within and outside of academia, the

inclusion of a nuanced discussion of decentering "the" history of knowledge as largely informed by histories that center around white-cis-male-dominated cultural phenomena and white-cis-male-dominated academic authorships (despite abundant references to Lorraine Daston and Donna Harraway in almost all contributions) may be appropriate. It appears that queer and feminist approaches—especially eco-feminist positions—will continue to provide highly constructive tools in decentering histories of knowledge.

Expanding on some of the contributions' discussions of practice-based knowledge cultures and practice-led learning, insights into the special potential of (contemporary) artistic research to impact the ways in which we configure histories of artistic and non-artistic knowledge could be added. In a similar vein, the entanglements between an ecology of knowledge and an ecology of materials—especially recent work on material agency and vibrancy—could further enrich discussions on the undoing of the anthropocentric paradigm (and position Irina Podgorny's approach to objects and Andrés Vélez Posada's references to "ecosystems" and "the animacy of matter" in a broader context). Furthermore, as flagged by Eugenia Leam's reference to "new directions in the field, including climate and environmental studies," it could be of additional value to unpack why the decentering of future histories of knowledge is impossible without taking the agency of animals and plants into consideration.

In many regards, what is being addressed in these eight insightful contributions is as interesting as what is not. And the same is possibly true of this brief response. Not only, but also because there is always more work to be done to achieve diversity.

About the Author

Anna Grasskamp is Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Studies at the University of Oslo. Her publications include *Objects in Frames: Displaying Foreign Collectibles in Early Modern China and Europe* (2019; second edition 2022) and *Art and Ocean Objects of Early Modern Eurasia. Shells, Bodies, and Materiality* (2021).