

The Philology of the Physicists. Textual Knowledge and Practices within the Academic Culture of Quantum Physics.

Initiative: Freigeist-Fellowships

Ausschreibung: Freigeist Kollegium

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In their published works and posthumous fragments, the German-speaking founding fathers of quantum theory frequently demonstrate their deep philological knowledge. We propose that not only their writings, but also their working techniques and methods of creating knowledge are affected by the philological training, which the physicists and 'Bildungsbürger' had undergone in the course of their humanistic education. Neither the history of philology nor the history of science has so far systematically investigated this phenomenon. The project's aim is to historically fathom the interrelations between physics and philology on the epochal threshold around 1900 under the methodological umbrella of literary and cultural studies. In particular, we will look at praxeological convergences: To what extent were the techniques of reading, interpreting, translating and generating texts, practiced in the philological and physical seminars of the time, compatible with one another? Under what conditions could philology function as a 'knowledge model' in modern physics? Or can transdisciplinary similarities rather be seen as simultaneous emergence of comparable practices in comparably organized epistemic spaces and situations? By answering such questions, the project not only highlights the exposed position of philology in the production of knowledge beyond disciplinary boundaries. It also contributes to an (interdisciplinary) history of intellectual and scientific practices and will set new impulses for the literary debate, in the course of which not only the 'end of philology', but also its 'return' and its 'future', its 'promises' and its 'power', have been proclaimed.

Projektbeteiligte

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