

Visions of the History of Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity and in the Greek and Arabic Middle Ages.

Initiative: Freigeist-Fellowships

Ausschreibung: Freigeist Kollegium

Bewilligung: 11.04.2022

Laufzeit: 5 Jahre

Projekt-Website: in progress

Constructing knowledge on the formative period of Greek philosophy is not an easy task. Texts authored by the philosophers started falling apart in pieces from the outset and are only preserved in a fragmentary way. Anyone interested in Greek philosophy depends on reconstructions made by predecessors. While different traditions and sources produced in the past have been queried by modern scholars for information on the early Greek philosophy itself, they have been little studied for what they really were: visions of the Greek philosophy's past. Meanwhile, these visions reflected how specific intellectual groups and particular authors viewed philosophy as such, what they needed it for and how they understood their own place in its development. Of these, we focus on some of the earliest and most diverse phases of this process: the early Roman Empire, Late Antiquity ("pagan" and Christian), the Arabic and Byzantine Middle Ages. Our working hypothesis is that the different visions of Greek philosophy could be placed somewhere between four poles. On the one hand, they could emphasize the role of reason in the "heroic" times of philosophy - or rather put to the front the role of authority, often of prophetic, divine or simply religious nature. On the other hand, depending on the purpose and context of a particular vision, a later author could either present Greek philosophers as all having the same opinion on some major issues (usually the same as himself), or as differing in their views - for instance, progressing from the wrong to the right opinions in the eyes of Christian or Islamic scholars. Crucially, this process continues until today and modern scholarship is part of it. Despite best efforts to stay objective, every scholar has their own worldview and vision of the past which shapes their image of Greek philosophy.

Projektbeteiligte

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