

Categories of Complicity: Philosophy under National Socialism (Fellowship von Dr. Adam Knowles am Deutschen Literaturarchiv Marbach)

Initiative: Postdoctoral Fellowships in den Geisteswissenschaften an Universitäten und Forschungsinstituten in Deutschland und den USA

Ausschreibung: Postdoctoral Fellowships in den Geisteswissenschaften an Universitäten und Forschungsinstituten in Deutschland

Bewilligung: 26.03.2019

Laufzeit: 1 Jahre

Was there a National Socialist philosophy? If so, then who were the National Socialist philosophers? Did denazification reform disciplines such as philosophy, or did professors recognized and treated as politically reliable by the regime continue to teach and publish after the war? "Categories of Complicity: Philosophy under National Socialism" examines the behavioral patterns of philosophy professors in the Third Reich in order to show how Nazi higher-education policy influenced this "ideologically critical" discipline. Turning away from prominent cases such as Heidegger, Schmitt and Benjamin, this project focuses on the everyday teaching, administrative and publishing practices of philosophy professors in the Third Reich in order to understand how they negotiated either distance or proximity to the regime. This project builds upon a 1942 Security Service report prepared for the Reich Ministry of Education which categorized all philosophy professors into five tiers: National Socialist, politically reliable, indifferent, liberal and confessionally bound. It develops case studies from each of these categories and supplements it with the category of the philosopher in exile. It analyzes the policies, personal rivalries, and surveillance practices which influenced these classificatory decisions. It seeks to complicate the range of complicit positions by demonstrating the ideological incoherence of Nazi higher education policy and the diversity of possible political positions tolerated and cultivated by different agencies within the regime. Philosophers with political ambitions often sought to align themselves ideologically with Nazi racial politics. However, many professors cultivated an instrumental relationship to the regime, primarily by accepting invitations to party functions and pursuing a Germanic or phil-Hellenic teaching and research agenda. However, whichever path an individual philosopher decided upon, the party did not impose a top-down ideological vision upon their scholarly work.

Projektbeteiligte

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