

Zukunftsphilologie: Revisiting the Canons of Textual Scholarship

Lecture cum Seminar

Thursday, February 9, 2012, 16.00 – 19.00

Freie Universität Berlin, Room J 23/16, Habelschwerdter Allee 45

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(Universität Potsdam)

Philology and Racism in 19th-Century Europe

Chair: Islam Dayeh

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From the Enlightenment on, Europeans characterized the cognitive status and performance of themselves and other people and “races” by giving a largely Eurocentric analysis of the diverse semiotic systems and textual cultures. Edward W. Said has shown the crucial part philology played, specifically after the epistemological break around 1800, in the construction of a European hegemonic discourse. His analysis, however, has also given birth to central hermeneutic problems – as, for example, the neglect of the struggle in discursive modelling – and made necessary a deeper understanding of the nexus between ‘racial logic’ and philology. Therefore, starting from Leo Spitzer’s polemical remark that the pseudo-biological term “race” would etymologically spring from Latin ‘ratio’ and hence originate itself in an idealistic understanding of the mind (*Geist*), the paper seeks to show the relevance of a pre-raciological, hermeneutic philology that understands and describes linguistic structures, characteristics of texts and cultural potency as originally and organically intertwined. Monumentalizing textual cultures such as the ‘Indian’ especially strengthened this kind of argumentation. It provided racial anthropology with cognitivist arguments and a historico-philosophic substratum. The combination of both became then relevant in Hegelian (or decadent) and naturalistic framings. Going back to the early period of the history of modern philology therefore seems all the more important as it shows, as in the works of Wilhelm von Humboldt or Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat, epistemological resistance against organicistic and determinist structures of cultural argumentation.

Seminar texts:

1. Friedrich Schlegel: *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*, Chapters 4 & 5 (446-458).
2. August Schleicher: *On the Significance of Language for the Natural History of Man*.

Markus Messling is Assistant Professor for Romance Studies at Universität Potsdam and head of the research group "Philology and Racism in the 19th-century" granted by the German Research Foundation. He studied Romance Studies, German Studies and Comparative Literature in Berlin and Lyon and holds a Dr. phil. from Freie Universität Berlin (2007). For his dissertation on the reception of French philosophy and anthropology in Wilhelm von Humboldt's theory of writing he was awarded the Tiburtius Prize by the Universities of Berlin (2008). From 2007 to 2008, he was Project Director in the research and scholarship department at the ZEIT-Stiftung in Hamburg. In 2008, he received a post-doctoral fellowship at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales Paris (EHESS) granted by the German Academic Exchange Service and the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme. In 2009 he received an Emmy Noether Research Grant from the German Research Foundation, and was awarded the Science Award of the Land Brandenburg in the Humanities in 2010. In spring 2011, he was Visiting Professor at EHESS Paris.

Publications related to the paper: *Pariser Orientlektüren. Zu Wilhelm von Humboldts Theorie der Schrift*, Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich 2008; "Wilhelm von Humboldt and the 'Orient'. On Edward W. Said's Remarks on Humboldt's Orientalist Studies", in: *Language Sciences* 30/5: 482-498; "*Der Mensch ist nur Mensch durch Sprache*". *Zur Sprachlichkeit des Menschen*, München 2009 (co-editor); *Champollions Hieroglyphen: Philologie und Weltaneignung*, Berlin (forthcoming, March 2012); *Wort Macht Stamm. Rassenlogik in der Philologie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München (co-editor, forthcoming); "Representation and Power: Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat's Critical Philology", in: *The Journal of Oriental Studies* (Stanford/Hong Kong, vol. 44/January 2012); "Philologie et racisme. A propos de l'historicité dans les sciences des langues et des textes", in: *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales* (1/2012).

Lecture-cum-Seminar

The Lecture-cum-Seminar series is a central element of the scholarly program of the Zukunftsphilologie project. It is conceived as a working seminar of 3 to 5 hours. The lecture (ca. 45-60 minutes) is meant to introduce the audience to the research problem and provide the general analytical and theoretical framework for the topic. This is followed by a practical seminar, wherein the speaker demonstrates his or her case by reference to texts in the original language and in English translation. It is hoped that this Lecture-cum-Seminar series, a combination of theory and a direct engagement with texts, will enable scholars to examine the comparative aspect of the problematic without neglect of the local and singular nature of the texts examined.

Zukunftsphilologie: Revisiting the Canons of Textual Scholarship

The project Zukunftsphilologie endeavours to promote and emphasize primary textual scholarship beyond the classical humanistic canon. In an age of advanced communication, intellectual specialization, and unprecedented migration of knowledge and people, the discipline of philology assumes new relevance. Zukunftsphilologie aspires to support research in neglected varieties of philology with the explicit aim to integrate texts and scholarly traditions from Asia, Africa, the Middle East as well as from Europe itself.

Zukunftsphilologie refers to the polemic between the classicist Ulrich von Wilamowitz and Friedrich Nietzsche around the method and meaning of classical studies. As a project it sees itself as part of a growing trend towards a more global intellectual history. It is inspired in particular by the work of Edward Said and Sheldon Pollock.

In order to promote historically-conscious philology, Zukunftsphilologie will foster research in the following areas: genealogies and transformations of philological practice, philology's place in the system of knowledge (e.g. its relation to science, theology and jurisprudence), and philology and the university. Furthermore, Zukunftsphilologie aims to support critical reviews of historical and philological practice. In revisiting important „philological wars“, the goal is not to merely evaluate the argumentative worth of these debates, but to reflect on the wider cultural and political context in which these „philological wars“ emerged and how they have shaped our knowledge of the past.

The project Zukunftsphilologie is co-directed by Angelika Neuwirth, Manan Ahmed and Islam Dayeh (all Freie Universität Berlin) and is associated with and located at the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School for Literary Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Zukunftsphilologie is a project at the Forum Transregionale Studien.

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For more information on the Forum please see

- www.forum-transregionale-studien.de

For more information on Zukunftsphilologie please see

- www.zukunftsphilologie.de

- www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/en/friedrichschlegel/