

Workshop

Beyond the timeline: How to write History (for example of the Middle Ages) in different ways

15./16.09.2020

Internationales Begegnungszentrum (IBZ), Michaelisstraße 38, 99084 Erfurt

It is part of human experience that developments happen from earlier to later stages. Hence, the courses of these developments are usually written from the time that has longer gone to those times that are closer to us. Such a chronologically progressing historiography is generally accepted, though theoretically and methodologically admitted that researching narrating the past always happens from a present by looking backwards into the past. The question then can be raised to what extent it is reflected, that such a chronological account implies a kind of causally determined history of reception in addition to the impact our own, contemporary view points have.

The historian of early Christianity and the medieval times, Markus Vinzent has recently criticised this type of historiography of reception of the past. In his book of the year 2019 *Writing the History of Early Christianity. From Reception to Retrospection* (Cambridge University Press) Vinzent introduces the perspective of retrospection as a critical method of historiography and exemplifies this by several showcases from the 'beginnings' of Christianity. One of the basic ideas of retrospection is that writing history must by necessity be progressive (as all our thinking and writing is progressive), while its (re-)construction is always done in a regressive mode, working anachronologically against the timeline. If this is recognised, continuities and linearities disappear. Vinzent's historiographical method of retrospection dissolves the difference between sources (or an original, authoritative reference text) and secondary literature and questions past authorities (*auctoritates*). Retrospection rather foregrounds the author of the historiographical production as subject of history which targets different objects of the past.

Does retrospection mean, we should simply turn back the timeline and alter the direction of writing history, or what changes when we approach history deliberately anachronologically? Can we give up – without the loss of a critical instance – the difference between sources and interpretations? Are not timelines and chronologies essential elements of the work of historians?

Beyond a chronologically oriented historiography, the workshop will explore examples from the Middle Ages (not only, however) to discuss several methods and forms of historiography. Potential topics could be:

- (1) *Into which direction of time should we write?:* What impact does the timeline have in narrating history? Can we, and if so, how can we alter the direction of writing history?
- (2) *Beyond the timeline:* What is the meaning of time in historiographical concepts? What differences does retrospection make in historiography? How can one write retrospectively? Writing retrospectively, does it lead to novel forms of history (particularly of the Middle Ages)?
- (3) *Narrativity and time:* What additional insights do we get from narrative elements in historiographical productions? What is the meaning of Flashbacks and Flashforwards in narrating history? What do we learn from contrafactual or *virtual history*? What happens, if historians become agents of history?

The workshop invites contributions from history, literature, cultural studies, philosophy, religious studies, cultural anthropology, sociology and related subjects. We particularly invite young scholars to contribute to the workshop.

The workshop will be based on *pre-circulated papers*. In these contributions which will be distributed to the conference participants at the latest a fortnight before the workshop. During the workshop the *papers* shall be introduced by their authors and will then be discussed. The evening lecture will be given by Prof. Dr. Markus Vinzent who is going to present his new book.

Please submit your paper proposal with an abstract (ca. 500 words). Abstracts and papers can be presented in German or English and will be discussed in both languages.

We are working towards a thirdparty funding of the workshop.

Deadline for the application is 15.2.2020 to Julia Seeberger: julia.seeberger@uni-erfurt.de.