

Pantheon Project/Cartography in Antiquity (Karman Center, Bern)

Gerd Grasshoff

DOCTORAL RESEARCH GRANTS

Applications are well-come for the following two Doctoral Research Grants at the new Karman Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities in Bern. One concerns the methodology of interpreting artefacts using the research about the Pantheon in Rome as example; the second grant relates to a research project about ancient cartography.

For further information about the projects and the grants can be found on the website of the Karman Center:

<<http://www.karmancenter.unibe.ch/grants>>

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Please also do not hesitate to contact me or Dr. Bernd Kulawik (<<mailto:kulawik@philo.unibe.ch>>kulawik@philo.unibe.ch) if you have any questions.

Though the dateline for the applications is June 30, we may also be able to consider later applications

Yours sincerely

Prof. Dr. Gerd Grasshoff

History and Philosophy of Science, University of Bern, Switzerland

gerd.grasshoff@philo.unibe.ch

Pantheon Project: Methodology of interpreting artefacts

This dissertation project operates in collaboration with the ongoing research of the Bern Digital Pantheon Project. Its objective is to analyse a set of methodological criteria by which hypotheses and interpretations of artefacts are justified. In many scientific and scholarly subjects, hypotheses of real objects are the main type of investigation. While in the natural sciences the determination of causal processes are dominant, in the humanities objects created by individuals or groups of people are the subject of investigation. Often, the intentions connected with the creation of artefacts need to be determined in order to explain why the artefact has

its particular properties.

In the case of the Pantheon in Rome, the question of how the building was ideally construed by its architects is a widely discussed issue. Does the cupola circumscribe a hemisphere? If yes, why is the counterpoint of the lowest point of the full sphere not a tangent on the floor of the building? The geometrical figure intersects the floor and only significantly under the floor level we find the virtual resting point of the construed ideal sphere. Was this an intended feature of the building? If yes, was there a general conception behind it, or was it just accidental?

These kinds of issues, which are representative of the wide range of questions in the humanities, cannot be answered by referring to texts or even comparable artefacts. Typically, the scholar faces situations where an interpreting hypothesis must be developed without any direct historical evidence.

The main objective of this dissertation is to develop methodological models about the ways in which interpretation hypotheses for unique historical artefacts, with no additional textual evidence, are justified. Second, where competing hypotheses are available, which provides a better explanation? The Pantheon shall act as the central case study. Currently available alternative explanations concerning selected features of the building should be chosen to illustrate the methodological conceptions. Other unique artefacts can also be introduced into the study.

Project 'Cartography in Antiquity'

Our research team has prepared a new edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia*, which will be published by Schwabe, Basel, this autumn. While our work has been up till now primarily philological and historical, it forms the basis of a more general question concerning cartography in antiquity: what were the underlying primary data that were used for geographical maps and catalogues? This project aims to provide an answer. For practical reasons we have selected one geographical region as a test case: Asia Minor, with its abundance of geographical and archaeological sources.

The peninsula of Asia Minor (that is, present-day Turkey up to the Issus-Euphrates-Trapezunt line), which in Antiquity was the gateway between East and West, was predestined for a broad scientific investigation into the development of geographical data: there is a wealth of literary sources (geographical literature, itineraries and maps) as well as archaeological remains (streets, milestones and stadiasmoi) spanning a long period. In addition, thanks to geographical and topographical conditions there exists a broad spectrum of inhabited structures and trade routes.

Despite this wealth of data, very little research on the data has ever been carried out; in particular, the many different kinds of data have never been correlated, nor has any research been done on common characteristics or

ArtHist.net

errors.

Reference:

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(accessed Mar 17, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/28302>>.