

OLD IDEAS IN NEW MINDS:

STRATEGIES OF AUTONOMY FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE RENAISSANCE

Call for Papers

Old Ideas in New Minds: Strategies of 'Autonomy' from Antiquity to the Renaissance

14.09.2026 – 16.09.2026, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

Deadline for submissions – 29.03.2026

heteronomy, autonomy, dependence, reception, interpretation, transformation, re-use, commentaries, compendia, collections, translations, encyclopaedias, re-narration, re-creation, imitation, improvement, authority, authorship, materiality

What happens when existing concepts are applied in new historical, intellectual, or cultural contexts? How does a mere copy become more than a copy? When engaging with 'pre-texts' – the source texts used in the composition of new texts – authors employed various adaptive strategies, from faithful translation to wholesale reinterpretation. Different fields had different methods of adapting texts and concepts. For example, while providing a foundation for later texts, pre-texts were often reinterpreted and re-evaluated through commentary (Sorabji 1990), resulting in different and sometimes conflicting interpretations of the same text. Even the simple addition of a preface could significantly influence the reception of a pre-text, and reorganization within manuscripts could create entirely new textual units, thereby leading to recontextualization (Piccione 2003). Through selection, curation, and editing, the successive copying of source texts transformed them into new, autonomous texts (Herzog 1989). Concerning literature, the term *wiedererzählen* (retelling) has been coined to describe different forms of remodelling a text and to prompt questions about authorship itself (Worstbrock, 1999). While the stories that were retold remained fundamentally similar, the narrative focus, style, and many other aspects changed drastically.

All the above textual strategies have one thing in common: they consciously rely on a pre-text or source. We refer to this phenomenon as heteronomy. Our Research Training Group focuses on heteronomous texts that still are original, autonomous products through their commentary, continuation, compilation, or adaptation. Building on our first international conference, '(Re)Create. Towards a Theory of Heteronomous Texts', we seek to explore the concept of 'autonomy' through interdisciplinary examination of texts from various fields of research.



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We welcome papers addressing topics such as:

- how heteronomous texts and concepts differ from their sources depending on cultural/historical context,
- how they interpret renowned authors and treat their authority (as well as their own),
- how they developed in the context of their historical intellectual reception and hermeneutic interpretation,
- whether every difference to the original text can be perceived to be an autonomous aspect,
- how to deal with authorship in heteronomous texts,
- how material and aesthetical expressions were used and interpreted.

We invite contributions from (but not limited to) the following fields:

Theology and Biblical Studies, Latin, Middle and Neo Latin Studies, Greek and Byzantine Studies, Syriac Studies, Ancient and Medieval History and Philosophy, German Medieval Studies, and Roman Law.

Proposals may take the form of either:

- a 30-minute presentation followed by 15 minutes of discussion, with the possibility of publication in the conference proceedings, or
- a 10-minute project pitch followed by a short discussion (especially encouraged for early career researchers).

In your abstract (max. 300 words) please specify your chosen presentation format and include, on a separate page, your name, profession, affiliation, short academic CV, and email address or equivalent contact information. Please submit your abstracts to Daniele Bonino and Jonathan Trächtler via email at:

oldideasinnewminds@uni-jena.de

We very much look forward to your proposals and will aim for gender parity in our selection. The language of the conference is English. Reimbursement for hotel and travel costs will be available.

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Bibliography

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Porter, J. I. (2010). Why Art Has Never Been Autonomous. *Arethusa*, 43(2), 165–180. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44578324>

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Worstbrock, F. J. (1999). Wiedererzählen und Übersetzen. In W. Haug (Ed.), *Mittelalter und frühe Neuzeit* (pp. 128–142). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110949407.128>