



Oddělení pro studium antického a středověkého myšlení FLÚ
zve na přednášku

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Misdirection: concerns about the use of modern logic in the reconstruct and evaluation of historic arguments

Abstract

Even if a logic is topic-neutral, it is not neutral with respect to methods and concepts. How does a lack of neutrality impact our efforts to reconstruct and evaluate the history of philosophy? The history of philosophy includes historic concepts and methods (call them all 'notions'). Yet a topic-neutral logic can either distort or preclude historic notions. When the commentator's logic does not support historic notions, the commentator either upgrades or replaces each ill-fitting notion with a modern notion. Such changes misdirect our efforts to study history: shifting the focus to what is not there, and obfuscating what is present. I will show that the standard view that Plato is a rationalist (in the sense that knowledge comes from intuition and inference) exemplifies misdirection. Given his notions, early Plato can be neither a rationalist nor an empiricist. I will show that his appeal to a mathematical proof in the *Meno* is an appeal to a method of proof that cuts across the distinction between rationalism and empiricism. With the focus on rationalism and empiricism, the central epistemological concern of this period is obfuscated: a criterion for unity. As a result, significant facts have been obfuscated: Plato's initial criterion for unity prohibits logic as we know it; his later development opens the door for Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*. There is a hidden history here; it is a history away from which we have been (mis)directed.

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