



Philosophische Fakultät



CCLS: Tim Grant (Aston University)

The idea of progress in forensic authorship analysis

Monday, 15 November 2021, 2:00 p.m.

Using Robert Nisbet's 1979 essay on *The Idea of Progress* in Western civilisation, I ask what progress ought to look like for research and practice in forensic authorship analysis, and in what sense any progress has been achieved over the last 25 years.

I examine the history, nature and purpose of stylistic and stylometric authorship analysis, and I ask what makes an analysis suitable for use in Court. I examine fundamental linguistic ideas of individuals as authors, and of advances in understanding of forensic evidence in terms of (i) the validation of techniques, (ii) confirmation bias of experts, and of (iii) logical inference by decision-makers in Court, and I ask how this understanding can change research and practice.

I propose that the focus needs to shift to validation of protocols for approaching case questions, rather than on validating specific language features or systems, and show how this could be done.