

## Research Project

### The new nature: Anti-aristotelian explanations of motion in the early 17th century

#### Project funded by own resources

**Project title** The new nature: Anti-aristotelian explanations of motion in the early 17th century

**Principal Investigator(s)** Müller, Gabriel ;

#### Organisation / Research unit

Ehemalige Organisationseinheiten Theologie / Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte (Zahnd)

Departement Künste, Medien, Philosophie / Geschichte der Philosophie (Hindrichs)

**Project start** 01.07.2019

**Probable end** 31.07.2022

**Status** Completed

Natural philosophy in the early modern sense covers a wide range of theoretical endeavors. Following Aristotle's ideal of science as guided by first principles and following the division of his works, natural philosophy is seen as the study of the whole of nature, i.e. all physically existing things that undergo motion. By the early 17th century, there are an increasing number of voices that challenge Aristotle's status as the central philosophical authority. Within these debates, motion is an important point of contention, because in the Aristotelian tradition, the concept of motion encompasses but also any kind of change in physical things.

The project examines the texts of four Anti-Aristotelians published in the 1620s: Sebastian Basson, David Gorleus, Daniel Sennert and Francis Bacon. It starts from a narrow question: The motion of what kind of thing explains observable everyday motions? Because Aristotle remains a constant fixture, an author's stance on motion will affect his stance on a number of issues related to motion in Aristotle's system, e.g. matter theory, the possibility of teleological arguments and the disciplinary unity of natural philosophy. For this reason, the issue of motion also provides insights into the problems motivating the search for a new philosophy of nature that was so famously successful later in the century. The 1620s are an especially interesting moment in this development, as the fundamental problems are clear but it is an open question what the best solution could be.

The four authors whose texts are under consideration here exemplify all of this. In keeping with the general eclecticism of the period, there are no positive tenets to unite all four authors and distinguish them from all forms of Aristotelianism. The approach taken here is to compare the texts as four synchronous positions on motion which are unified prima facie only in their negative attitude towards Aristotelianism. This does not privilege any one explanation of their similarities or dissimilarities from the outset. A benefit of this method is that it helps to navigate the difficult historiography of the question: One must not fall into the trap of assuming a specific development as essential to all 17th century innovators, as has been claimed from various sides for the "mechanical philosophy", the abolishing of substantial forms, the victory of empiricism or mathematization.

The underside look at one of the foundational episodes of the very idea of a science of nature that the project aims for can also serve as a reflection on the disciplinary divides between sciences that we today take for granted.

#### Financed by

University funds

Other funds

**Add publication**

**Add documents**

**Specify cooperation partners**