

Colloquium at the VU Amsterdam, April 11, 2008

On Friday, April 11, 2008, a small International Colloquium will take place at the VU University of Amsterdam on the occasion of the publication of the study: 'Absolute Beginners'. *Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten* (Brill: Leiden-Boston, 2007) by Wouter Goris, professor of Ancient, Patristic, and Medieval Philosophy.

Absolute Beginners is the outcome of a 10 years-research project on the medieval debate on the first known, a debate on the principles of human reason, in which all the major thinkers of the 13th and 14th centuries participated: Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Henry of Ghent, Meister Eckhart, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. In this debate, a new epistemic constellation emerges, that has proved to be of utmost importance for the historical development of modern philosophy. Key moments in this constellation are the rise of the transcendental (i.e. the first and most common notions like being, one, true, and good), the invention of the a priori of human reason, and a modified stance towards human experience. *Absolute Beginners* investigates how the traditional topos of the reliance of human reason upon the Absolute became confronted with and was forced into this new epistemic constellation. It affects a variety of actual discussions in current scholarly research on medieval philosophy: intentionality, skepticism, concept formation and cognitive psychology (attention etc.).

Apart from these philosophical themes, the colloquium will deal with the question of the construction of the historical object. What is the status of the concepts and theories on which our writing of the history of philosophy rely? Are they simply given, or do they demand an opening act to appear? The theory-ladenness of our perception of historical objects urges a critical reflection on the presuppositions which determine the way we write the history of philosophy.

Two experts, from leading institutes at the Universities of Louvain and Cologne, will discuss the findings of *Absolute Beginners* with an eye to themes in current scholarly research and questions of historical methodology. Anyone interested is welcome to attend!

PROGRAM:

15.30 Opening and short introduction on the book 'Absolute Beginners'

15.45 Dr. S. Nottelmann (Cologne): "Immanence - The Methodological Key To The Absolute"

Discussion

16.30 Prof. Dr. R.L. Friedman (Louvain): "'Absolute Beginners' in the Light of Recent Discussions on Medieval Epistemology"

Discussion

17.15 A brief reply by the author, Prof. Dr. W. Goris (Amsterdam)

17.30 Reception