



Giordano Bruno on Wonder

Dilwyn Knox (University College London)

Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) occupies a special place in European philosophy. He can claim to be the first thinker since antiquity to integrate a metaphysics, physics, psychology and ethics into an original, if unsystematically presented, philosophy, one that aspired to go beyond the reelaborations of Platonism, Aristotelianism or scepticism within a Christian context that had hitherto prevailed. The outcome was a radical alternative to medieval and Renaissance interpretations of human nature, the cosmos and God. His ‘new philosophy’, as he called it, proposed versions of metempsychosis, polygenism, panpsychism and, renouncing Christian emphases on human imperfection, advocated a morality that exhorted individuals to perfect their intellectual powers. God’s image, the infinite, eternal, universe, raised the individual soul that engaged with it philosophically to a state of ‘wonder’. Revealed religion, by contrast, through its fraudulent ideas and practices, sought to ‘stun’ the credulous. Bruno’s interpretation of wonder was, then, quite distinct from those presented by ancient philosophers, and medieval and Renaissance thinkers in their train, for whom wonder was a state of mind that should be superseded by knowledge or ataraxia. Wonder was a state of fulfilment. On what grounds did Bruno make this claim? And does it relate to later philosophical developments?

Zeit: Tuesday, 20. November, 6 pm

Ort: Zentrum für Alte Kulturen, Langer Weg 11, SR 5