

ATRIUM-Ringvorlesung im Wintersemester 2019/20

Zentrum für Alte Kulturen, Langer Weg 11, SR 1



Dienstag, den 05.11.2019, 18.00 Uhr:

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On Jan Baptista van Helmont: Understanding Language and the Mind

Jan Baptista van Helmont (1579–1644) wrote in the introduction to his medical work *Dageraad* (Amsterdam, 1659) that writing in one's mother tongue allows for verbalizing ideas closest to the "first understanding of the soul". This concept, described as *primus animae conceptus* in his Latin *magnum opus Ortus medicinae* (Amsterdam, 1648) and the role of the language in which an author is able to communicate his ideas form the core of this paper. Van Helmont wrote by far most of his works in Latin despite his own understanding of the translation process from idea to language, and from language to language. How did translation work for him and when does language begin to play a relevant role? When looking at his own writings on language, highly philosophical and theoretical in Latin and on the contrary full of concrete associations in Dutch, it seems that Van Helmont's languages gave him different entries into his own mind. By analyzing the introductions to his works in Latin and Dutch and his chapters on the philosophy of mind, we will discuss the struggles of a seventeenth-century author to write truthfully for different audiences.