

MEMS 2020 Seminar Series

Thursday 19 November
2:00pm (Melbourne)

Medieval Philosophy of Mind: the first treatise

Professor Margaret Cameron (University of Melbourne)

Professor Margaret Cameron is Head of School of Historical and Philosophical Studies in the Faculty of Arts where she is also a member of the Philosophy discipline.

After completing the University of Toronto's Collaborative Programme in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, Margaret worked in New York City, Cambridge UK, and Victoria, British Columbia. At the University of Victoria, she held the position of Canada Research Council Chair in the Aristotelian tradition from 2008–2018.

Abstract:

Peter Abelard's *Treatise on Understanding* is the first work in the Latin medieval tradition on the philosophy of mind, and perhaps the first work ever written in the Western philosophical tradition that is expressly and exclusively dedicated to the topic of human understanding. Abelard's theory is original and highly sophisticated. It anticipates several developments even in contemporary philosophy of mind and psychology.



In this work, Abelard distinguishes understanding from other cognitive activities, and then carefully delineates the characteristics of understanding (how they come to be, how they can be judged to be sound, and either true or false). I will show how Abelard's novel theory of cognitive unity was developed as a critical response to the leading theory of meaning in his day. This treatise was written a century before Aristotle's *On the Soul* was available, and deserves to be recognized for its ingenuity.

To register: MEMS.seminar@acu.edu.au