



Anne Conway is known through her friendships with the Cambridge Platonist Henry More and the alchemist Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont. Very little is known about her original metaphysical system, in which Conway reconciles Platonism, Kabbalah, Quakerism, Italian Vitalism, and her own understanding of the world. Conway held some revolutionary (and then heretical) ideas: there was no hell, redemption was just gross matter becoming subtle spirit through the process of rarefaction, and every individual of the world was reborn until they were pure spirit. A bad horse could become a stone and a good one a human being. A good human being could become an angel and enjoy an eternal more and more volatile existence. There is, however, a tension in Conway between the earthen spirit of men (which can become grosser or subtler) and the celestial spirit which in fact distinguishes humans from the rest of the Created world. In this paper I discuss the role of the heavenly soul and its relation with the natural processes of rarefaction and condensation.

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Image: Lady Anne Conway, about 1660, a detail from the domestic portrait by Samuel van Hoogstraaten (from Wikimedia Commons)

# Workshop ERC EarlyModernCosmology

## Cosmology and Redemption in Anne Conway's Metaphysics

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