

ANDREA COLLI

Aevum, aeterna tempora, and tempus generale between history and metaphysics.

A note on the Patristic reading of time and duration¹

Abstract

Medieval thinkers are often seen as “accountants” engaged in a classification of all substances forming the world with their modes of duration. This image, corresponding to the approach of some 13th-century theologians, does not reflect the origin of the problem. In the Patristic tradition the existence of durations beyond eternity and time is not related to an inventory of the world, but rather aimed at explaining the sequence of different stages in salvation history (from the creation to the end times). The present study considers some examples of the Patristic approach to the problem of duration, exploring sources and possible links with later medieval reflection on the matter.

¹ The present paper is a partial outcome of the research project *Un tempo senza movimento. Rappresentazioni alto-medievali della durata e del “quando”* conducted at the Department of Civilizations and Forms of Knowledge of the University of Pisa, in the framework of the activities of Excellence Project *I tempi delle strutture. Resilienze, accelerazioni e percezioni del cambiamento (nello spazio euro-mediterraneo)*. I thank prof. Stefano Perfetti for his precious suggestions and the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading and many insightful comments.