

Michael Edwards

Paper: *Time and the soul in early modern Europe, in and between disciplines*
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Michael Edwards is a Junior Research Fellow and, in Lent and Easter terms 2008, Director of Studies in History at Christ's College; he completed a PhD at Cambridge in 2006. His research interests are in early modern intellectual history and the history of science, particularly in the connections between Aristotelianism and the 'new philosophies' of the seventeenth century. He has several articles and book chapters on early modern psychology and natural philosophy forthcoming in 2008, and is currently working on a book project on 'Time and the Soul in the Seventeenth Century'.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century Aristotelian and scholastic traditions, the phenomenon of time was presented as a philosophical topic of particular complexity and difficulty. It was also an issue that was divided up between a number of distinct disciplines - chiefly, those of natural philosophy, metaphysics and psychology. This paper explores some of the dynamics of this anxious, fractured and apparently inconsistent attitude to time through an examination of the association between time and the human rational soul in the disciplines of metaphysics and psychology. The connection between time and the soul was a fundamental part of the early modern Aristotelian treatment of time, but one in which assumptions drawn from natural philosophy sometimes seemed to sit uneasily with those made within psychology. I end with some broader reflections on the place of time in early modern philosophy by contrasting the complex, inter-disciplinary account offered by Aristotelian and scholastic authors with the narrative about time in the seventeenth century that most historians have previously emphasized - the development of Newton's theory of 'absolute time'.

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