# Boethius' Metaphysics. An Annotated Bibliography: Second Part: K - Z

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"Yet this reasoning, based on the dialectic of Platonic and Aristotelian tradition will remain paradoxical and difficult to accept from the standpoint of common-sense thinking. It is also hard to imagine such paradoxical dialectic bringing any real consolation to someone who is in plight like that of Boethius the prisoner. What, then, should we make of the encounter of Dame Philosophy and Boethius?

4. Suggestion of a solution

It is my opinion - and in this I am in full agreement with John Marenbon - that in trying to interpret the Consolation it is worthwhile to realize the importance of the literary genre in which this work was written, namely the Menippean satire. The cynical philosopher Menippus in his lost writings upheld stoical ideals and derided human vices and weaknesses. He made fun of philosophical theories by introducing personifications of abstract concepts and parodies of mythological and literary characters (32).

It seems, by the way, that element of comedy is not totally absent form the Consolation, as in the scene of chasing the Muses from Boethius' bedside, though it is overshadowed by the pathos of Boethius’ fate. Now Dame Philosophy is a typical allegorical character personifying the Platonic and Aristotelian ideal of wisdom. Yet, impressive as she is, it seems she is not the principal character of the work. The focus seems to be rather on Boethius the prisoner, it is he that is the dynamic character of the piece, as he undergoes a radical metamorphosis.

We know of him that he received excellent education in philosophical schools of late antiquity, to which Dame Philosophy clearly testifies by saying that he had been nourished with Eleatic and Academic teachings (33). It is no longer doubtful that, like other Roman aristocrats, Boethius was a Christian and a Catholic, and that he took special interest in theological discussions. He put to good use his philosophical skills and experience in explaining and clarifying theological notions and in perfecting theological methods. Why, at the end of his life, faced with a violent death, should he look for consolation to philosophy rather than religion?

It may be the case that Boethius, in choosing this precise literary genre and in constructing his dialogue the way he did, wanted to call into doubt sufficiency of human reason alone, or human reason deprived of assistant from living, painful experience, in discovering the Supreme Good, that would give man his happiness. Philosophy demonstrates that there exists the Supreme Good that is both God and Providence, yet this supreme goodness is constantly found to be incommensurable with the expectations of the humans and thus philosophical reasoning and everyday thinking part company. As Karl Jaspers wrote: "Philosophizing has, as it were, two wings, one that moves in the medium of communicable thinking, common theory, the other, whose medium is the individual existence. Only these two wings together are able to effect flight. And a number of lines above he affirms: Every essential philosophical idea points beyond itself to reality, without which it is not possible that the meaning of philosophizing be fulfilled." (35) Thus it is life experience coupled with philosophical reasoning that can provide a proof there existing a reality that, though not apparent, yet can be discovered by the philosopher, who may bear witness to this discovery even by a sacrifice of his own life; for this hidden reality is no other than the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Good. Consolation - writes von Albrecht - is merged in the conversion to God. His work is a προφθαργήσις εἰς θεόν rather than a consolatio, (36) Boethius came close to that reality under the guidance of the Dame Philosophy, yet he had to testify to the truth of his knowledge by laying down his life. As we know he was eventually executed in 524 or 525, some sources say that he had to undergo torture before his death. King Théodéric allegedly ordered his body to be cleared away in order to prevent spreading of the martyr’s cult, so claims in his History of the Wars (37) Procopius of Caesarea. Yet his scheme came to naught and Boethius has ever since been venerated as a martyr, his feast day being the 23 October, formally approved on the 15 December 1883." (pp. 316-317)


(37) Cf. Procopius of Caesarea, History of the Wars I, 1, 34, tr. By H. B. Dewing, Cambridge Mass., London 1953, p. 13: Symmachus and his son-in-law Boetius were men of noble and ancient lineage, and both had been leading men in the Roman senate and had been consuls. But because they practised philosophy and were mindful of justice in a manner surpassed by no other men (...) they attained great fame and thus led men of the basest sort to envy them. Now such persons slandered them to Théodéric, and he, believing their slanders, put these two men to death, on the ground that they were setting about a revolution, and made their property confiscate to the public treasury.


Abstract: "This paper presents an outline of the way Boethius conceived the human path to the Supreme Good (Summum bonum). In order to achieve this goal one has first to specify the way he construed this Supreme Good, and this discussion is naturally related to the much-discussed problem concerning the
Christian identity of Boethius: was he indeed a Christian? does his Consolation, from which any overt allusions to Christian faith are absent, provide us with any clue as to whether the Supreme Good of Boethius can be identified with the God of the Gospel? In the course of the analysis we propose a hypothesis that the message that Boethius puts forward through the means of his Consolation and the utterances he puts in the mouth of his dame Philosophy are not far removed from the advice offered by Fulgentius to Proba. She, too, was encouraged to acknowledge her own weakness and lack of sufficiency, to be contrite, and to have humble trust in wisdom and guidance of God, who is the best of all doctors. Is dame Philosophy’s message not very similar? did not Alcuin, who regarded himself as a faithful «disciple» of Boethius, share a conception of philosophy as being the «teacher of virtues» and wisdom, as the one who leads man along the path of wisdom towards the divine light?" 

5. King, Peter. 2007. "Boethius: First of the Scholastics." Carmina Philosophiae no. 16:23-50. "Boethius was the first of the scholastics in much more than paraphrases and his word-for-word commentaries, Boethius also provided the medieaval world with an object lesson in how to think about it. His theological treatises set the style for later scholastic investigations of dogma: concise, tightly-reasoned chains of argument applied to matters of faith, rich enough to be commented on in their own right. His intellectual influence was so pervasive in the Middle Ages that we might be tempted to paraphrase Whitehead’s famous dictum (1) and declare medieaval philosophy to consist in a series of glosses on Boethius. One work, however, has been left out of this accounting. While the influence and impact in the Middle Ages of Boethius’s translations, paraphrases, commentaries, and theological treatises has long been studied and is well known, the same cannot be said for his masterpiece, the Consolation of Philosophy. Yet it too received its ‘series of glosses’ in the Middle Ages. In what follows I propose to look into this neglected history, focusing primarily on the reception of the Consolation as a philosophical text by later medieaval thinkers. Putting aside its literary qualities, then, we can ask: What did later scholastics make of the Consolation as a philosophical treatise? What philosophical problem did they take it to address, and how did they take it to solve that problem? I’ll proceed as follows. In §1, I’ll describe the tradition of philosophical commentary on the Consolation, as far as it can be made out at present. In § 2, I’ll discuss the interpretation of the logical structure of the Consolation in the commentary tradition. In § 3, we’ll look at the particular question of how the issues and arguments given in Book 5 are related to the rest of the work, a question that has consequences for the unity of the Consolation as a whole. In § 4, the medicinal metaphors Boethius uses to present the ‘therapeutic’ arguments will be looked at in detail as an example of how the commentary tradition can illuminate the logical structure of the text." (p. 23) (1) Alfred Whitehead [ Process and Reality. New York: Macmillan, 1929] 63: “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists in a series of footnotes to Plato.” 

6. ———. 2011. "Boethius' Anti-Realist Arguments." Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy no. 40:381-401. "Boethius opens his discussion of the problem of universals, in his second commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge, with a destructive dilemma: genera and species either exist or are concepts; but they can neither exist nor be soundly conceived; therefore the enquiry into them should be abandoned ( In Isag. maior 1.10). Boethius’ strategy to get around this dilemma is well known. He follows the lead of Alexander of Aphrodisias, distinguishing several ways in which genera and species can be conceived, and he argues that at least one way involves no falsity. Hence it is possible to conceive genera and species soundly, and Porphyry’s enquiry into them is therefore not futile after all (1.11). Boethius thus resolves the second horn of his opening dilemma. Yet he allows the first horn of the dilemma, the claim that genera and species cannot exist, to stand. The implication is that he takes his arguments for this claim to be sound. If so, this would be a philosophically exciting and significant result, well worth exploring in its own right. Yet there is no consensus, either medieval or modern, on precisely what Boethius’ arguments are, or even how many arguments he offers, much less on their soundness. (1) One reason for the lack of consensus is that Boethius’ arguments need to be understood in the light of their ancient philosophical sources — particularly his difficult regress argument, which can be reconstructed only in this light — and this is rarely done. (2) In what follows I shall try to establish Boethius’ dependence on his sources, and to show that Boethius offers three arguments as part of a unified dialectical strategy to establish that genera and species cannot be things (in some suitably robust sense of ‘things’)." (pp. 381-382) (1) The secondary literature is sparse. Boethius’ arguments do not rate even a single mention in J. Marenbon (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Boethius [ Companion] (Cambridge, 2009). There is an analysis of Boethius’ entire discussion in M. Tweedale, Abairald on Universals [Abairald] (Amsterdam, 1976), and of these arguments in P. Spade, ‘Boethius against Universals’ [ Boethius], which takes into account unpublished work by Spade and King. The brief treatment in A. de Libera, La Querelle des
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"Boethius's famous definition of "person" as naturae rationabilis individual substantia (an individual substance of a rational nature) is frequently cited without reference to the specific theological purpose of his formulation (an attempt to provide some clarification about the mysteries of Christ and the Trinity). This article elucidates some of the theological issues that required philosophical progress on the nature of "personhood." It also considers some of the residual difficulties with the application of this definition to divine persons that have been raised by subsequent theologians such as Thomas Aquinas who are otherwise sympathetic to Boethius's definition of person when applied to human beings."


"Introduction. Boethius's two commentaries on Aristotle's De interpretatione contain an account of the metaphysical foundations of contingency in their discussions of Chapter 9. (1) For the countless medieval discussions of future contingents only De interpretatione 9 itself is of greater historical importance than Boethius's discussions of it. In this chapter, however, my concern is with the content of Boethius's theory of contingency and not with its historical sources or influences. In order to give his theory the kind of consideration I think it deserves, I need to extract it from the other material in the commentaries and expound it in its own right; I also want to examine some of its consequences. Because those tasks are the only ones I can undertake in this paper, I am not now concerned with what the later medievals thought about Boethius or with what Boethius thought about Aristotle or with what Aristotle thought about contingency, but only (or as nearly as possible only) with what Boethius thought about contingency in his two commentaries on De interpretatione. (2)" (p. 23)


(2) See also Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy in Boethius. The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy, H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (eds.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass 1968, Bk V, esp. Prose 1 and 2; and In Ciceronis Topica in Ciceros Opera, J. C. Orelli and G. Baierus (eds.), Zurich 1833, Bk V, chs. 15.60-17.64. I owe the latter reference to Eleonore Stump.


"Lukasiewicz's interpretation of Aristotle's response to determinism in Int. 9 has stood, in one version or another, at the center of the modem controversy that has its source in his 1930 article. (*) (...) "Recent commentators on Int. 9, whether they acceptor reject the oldest interpretation, have tended to follow Hintikka's lead in designating it 'the traditional interpretation'. (5)" (p. 25)

(...) "My concern here is with the principal ancient rival to the so-called traditional interpretation, a rival whose subsequent medieval career was so long and so eminent that it provides another reason for feeling uneasy about calling the simple denial of universal bivalence 'the traditional interpretation'. Since the one I am focusing on is the second-oldest on record, I will refer to it simply as the second-oldest interpretation and continue referring to the denial of universal bivalence as the oldest. I will also continue to refer to both of them as interpretations even when I am primarily interested in them as responses to
logical determinism, regardless of their accuracy as interpretations of Aristotle. The second-oldest interpretation's claim to preserve bivalence while rejecting determinism is what essentially distinguishes it from the oldest interpretation. Its details will emerge gradually." (p. 25)

"Boethius' version of the second-oldest interpretation is based on his thoroughgoing Aristotelian correspondence theory of truth: 'the nature of predicative [i.e. categorical] propositions is acquired from the truth and falsity of things, events, or states of affairs; for however they are, so will the propositions that signify them be'. (28) For that reason propositions 'about past and present things, events, or states of affairs are, indeed, like those things themselves, stable and definite; ... [and], for that reason, of that which has happened it is true to say definitely that it has happened ... And concerning the present as well: whatever is happening has a definite nature in that it is happening. It is necessary to have definite truth and falsity in the propositions, too; for of whatever is happening it is definitely true to say that it is happening, [definitely] false that it is not happening.' (29)"


(28) II 188,14-17: 'praedicativarum autem propositionum natura ex rerum veritate et falsitate colligitur. quemadmodum enim sese res habent, ita sese propositiones habebunt, quae res significant.'

(29) II 189,5-7, 9-10, 13-18: 'de praeteritis quidem et de praesentibus, ut res ipsae, stabiles sunt et definitae... idcirco de eo quod factum est verum est dicere definite, quoniam factum est... et de praesentibus quoque: quod fit definitum habet naturam in eo quod fit, definitam quoque in propositionibus veritatem falsitatemque habere nescesse est. nam quod fit definite verum est dicere quoniam fit, falsum quoniam non fit.'


"It is commonly asserted that Boethius defined free will as the judgment of the will or a rational choice. Accordingly, sin or evil is identified with ignorance or vice of the intellect, which prevents or distorts rational deliberation. However, Boethius adopted a more complex understanding of the self-motion of the soul and, consequently, articulated a more nuanced account of sin and the healing effects of Providence. Boethius treated human freedom as a complex including a natural motion, identified as the desire for happiness, the determination of reason following the judgment of deliberation, and the sovereignty of the will over its own acts and, to some extent, over other acts of the soul. Sin, therefore, involves mistaken ideas about reality but also deformations in the affective orientation of the will to the world and in the exercise of the will's control over the soul."


"In this essay I shall set out the basic terms and relations for an explanatory account of the central meaning of Boethius’ De hebdomadibus. The basic terms and relations include bonum, esse and id quod est as well as the principle that terms which refer to objects that share a particular meaning but that subsist differently are analogically predicated. I shall argue that Boethius distinguished between the meaning of predicates and the mode or manner in which their referents are said to subsist.

Boethius offered only very brief and often tantalizing explanations of these concepts, leaving much room for interpretation as to their exact meaning. I will approach my interpretive task from two directions. First, I shall investigate Boethius’ logical commentaries and treatises, in which he discusses foundational questions of human knowing and the manner in which the content of one’s predications may be brought closer to the meaning that one intends to communicate. Second, I shall adopt a hypothesis that locates Boethius’ third tractate in the context of trinitarian theology. What I have to offer with respect to the meaning of De hebdomadibus will not verify the hypothesis, but I think that the hypothesis sheds light on the possible intention and meaning of the tractate. Thus, the linking of the hypothesis and the data of the text will yield an advance in ‘understanding’. (1) (p. 248)

(1) Boethius commented on the importance of the task of understanding prior to judgment, noting that Aristotle treated the two parts of logic, understanding and judgment, whereas the Stoics neglected understanding. Cf. Commentaria In Topica Ciceronis, Lib. I–IV, PL 64, col. 1039–1174; English trans. by E. Stump, Ithaca 1988. Despite the fact that in this context judgment appears to be a logical activity concerned with the forms of arguments, evidence from the De divisione liber (cf. infra, n. 18) suggests that Boethius recognized the importance of a range of activities in the articulation of a definition. If we consider that predication involves not simply the synthesis of meanings but also the positing of a
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Appendix: Boethius's De Hebdomadibus (How Can Substances Be Good in Virtue of the Fact That They Have Being When They Are Not Substantial Goods?), translated by Scott MacDonald, pp. 274-279.

"Boethius's short treatise Quomodo substantiae, known in the Middle Ages as De hebdomadibus (DH), has been oddly neglected. (1) It deserves close attention for at least two reasons. First, in it Boethius presents a philosophically sophisticated defense of a provocative metaphysical position, viz., that all substances are good in virtue of the fact that they have being. Moreover, in the course of defending this position he lays out and attempts to resolve a deep philosophical problem the resolution of which appears to be necessary for any account of the nature of goodness, not just his own. Second, DH deserves attention because of its historical significance. The extant De hebdomadibus commentaries from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the number of references to DH in the works of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, for example, testify to the use made of it by later medieval philosophers. (2) In addition, the subject matter of the treatise places it in a long and distinguished philosophical tradition: Boethius's thesis that all substances are good in virtue of the fact that they have being is clearly a near relative of the Augustinian view that everything which exists is good insofar as it exists and of Aquinas's claim that 'being' and 'good' have precisely the same referents although they differ in sense. (3) The fact that the account underlying Boethius's thesis is significantly different from either Augustine's or Aquinas's makes DH's position in the philosophical tradition all the more interesting. In this paper I will offer a detailed analysis of DH in order to evaluate the support Boethius offers for his counter-intuitive thesis and identify the historical context into which his account of the nature of goodness fits." (pp. 245-246)

(1) I have provided a translation of De hebdomadibus in an appendix. All references to DH are to line numbers of this translation.

(2) The medieval commentaries on DH which have been edited are the ninth century glosses edited by E. K. Rand in Commentaria in Boethium, Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters (München, 1906), the twelfth-century commentaries by Gilbert of Poitiers, Thierry of Chartres, and Clarembald of Arras, all edited by Nikolaus M. Haering in (respectively) The Commentaries on Boethius by Gilbert of Poitiers (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1966), Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and his School (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1971), and Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1965), and the commentary of Thomas Aquinas edited by Fr. M. Calcaterra in the...
For Albert's use of DH, see his *Summa de bono*, vol. 28 in *Opera omnia* (Cologne edition), edited by Henricus Kuehle (Cologne, 1931), especially the first seven articles of the first question. For Aquinas's use of DH outside of his commentary, see especially *Summa theologiae* Ia.5—6 and *De veritate* I and XXI.
(3) For a statement of Augustine's thesis, see, e. g., *Confessiones* VII. For Aquinas's claim, see *Summa theologiae* Ia.5—3.
"It is difficult to determine how much of the corpus [of Boethian works] has disappeared. There may have been a translation, possibly with draft commentary, of the *Physics*. (15) Boethius was acquainted with the *Posterior Analytics*, although it is uncertain whether he translated or commented on it; he certainly had access to Themistius’ paraphrases of both *Analytics* and to Praetextatus’ translation thereof (In *Perih.* 2.3.7–4.3; *Div.* 885d; In *Top. Cic.* 1051b). A bucolic poem has evidently vanished, but the *Liber de definitionibus* transmitted under his name belongs to Victorinus (In *Top. Cic.* 1098a; 1100b). Certain works are mentioned in such a way as to make it impossible to say whether they were merely planned, partially drafted, or actually completed. A treatise *De ordine Peripateticae disciplinarum* was evidently written some time between the second *Peri Hermeneias* commentary and *De divisione*; another on the harmony of Plato and Aristotle was planned but may not have been written, and the same holds for a planned compendium of the *Peri Hermeneias* (In *Perih.* 2.80.1–6; 2.251.8–16; *Div.* 877b). Boethius obviously planned numerous projects in advance and must have worked on more than one at a time, and although some of his cross-references furnish reliable evidence for establishing relative chronology, others, having been penned with an eye only to his readers’ presumed order of study, carry no implication as to the order of composition. Boethius’ failure to mention a work, or his mentioning it in such a way as to suggest borrowing from a source, does not amount to proof that he had no direct knowledge of the same. For example, certain hints of *De generatione et corruptione* in the commentaries may well reflect mere borrowing from a source (e.g., *In Cat.* 262a [cf. *Porph.*, *In Cat.* 141.14]), but the *Consolation*, which draws from many sources but is a copy of none, suggests direct acquaintance with the treatise (cf. below, p. 802)." (p. 796)
17. ———. 2014. "Boethius’s *Consolation* and Plato’s *Gorgias.*" In *Boethius as a Paradigm of Late Ancient Thought*, edited by Kirchner, Andreas, Jürgasch, Thomas and Böhm, Thomas, 13-29. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
"Our understanding of Boethius the Platonist is remarkably less clear than that of Boethius the Peripatetic, owing to the fact that the precise range of Boethius’s later Platonic sources is difficult to ascertain from his extant writings, which include no translation of or commentary on a Platonic dialogue. (1) Although there has been much discussion of his interpretation of the *Timaeus*, especially as evidenced in *Consolation* III,m9 (2), and although numerous allusions to other Platonic dialogues have been teased out of various Boethian works, the evidence is generally rather piecemeal. For example, does Boethius’s reference to Plato on the rule of philosopher-kings (3) indicate a direct knowledge of the *Republic* or is it merely echoing a commonplace? (4) And if the former, then how much of the *Republic* are we entitled to read into our interpretation of the *Consolation* or of Boethius’s Platonism generally? The most notable exceptions to this rather sparsely populated terrain are perhaps *Consolation* I,2 and IV,4, prose sections which since Klingner have been taken to reflect direct engagement with Plato’s *Gorgias*. (5) The contrast between Boethius’s use of the *Timaeus* and his use of the *Gorgias* seems particularly striking. For if the *Timaeus* serves in the context of the *Consolation* to affirm the essential goodness of creation and to foster hope for the mind’s ascent to the ordered serenity of the heavens, the *Gorgias*, with its pessimistic sense of a philosophical life desperately wagered (6) on hopes for improved conditions here on earth, is suggestive of much darker undercurrents within Boethius’s dialogue. It seems worth reconsidering the case of the *Gorgias*, and in what follows I hope to shed some light on Boethius’s understanding of that great dialogue. Did he merely copy from it, or did he form an original interpretation? If the latter, then is it necessary to suppose that he had a copy of the *Gorgias* to hand when he wrote the *Consolation*, or did he work from memory? And did he work exclusively from Plato, or did he consult a later intermediary?" (pp. 13-14)
(1) Cf. John Magee: “Boethius”; in: Lloyd P. Gerson (Ed.): *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, vol. 2, Cambridge 2010, 798–810. I would like to thank my hosts in Freiburg, especially Dr. Thomas Jürgasch, for their hospitality and the invitation to present the paper on which the present essay is based.
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"Today, the Tractates are again generally accepted as Boethian. The turning point was the publication in 1877 of a fragment of Cassiodorus discovered by Alfred Holder in a Reichenau manuscript and edited by Hermann Usener. In this fragment, called the Anecdoton Holderi, (2) Cassiodorus remarks that Boethius wrote a book on the Holy Trinity, some chapters on dogma, and a book against Nestorius. (3) This list seemed to accord well with the topics covered by the works themselves. Specifically, the 'book on the Holy Trinity' corresponded with Tractate I, and that 'against Nestorius' with Tractate V. The 'chapters on dogma' were taken as references to Tractates II and III, which deal respectively with the questions whether Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be predicated of God as substances; and how substances can be good simply by existing. The genuineness of Tractate IV, 'On the Catholic faith', remained in doubt. E. K. Rand wrote a doctoral thesis to disprove its genuineness, (4) but some years later 'deemed it expedient to recant' and concluded that the work was after all by Boethius. (5) It now seems clear that it is to this tractate that the term 'chapters on dogma' most aptly applies; and it may therefore be reasonable to treat Tractates I, II and III as together constituting the 'book on the Holy Trinity'. (6) At all events, even if perhaps not yet irrefragable, (7) the authenticity of the Opuscula Sacra seems beyond reasonable doubt, and is assumed in what follows." (pp. 206-207)

(1) The text of the Tractates, with English translation, is most conveniently available in the Loeb Library revised edition by H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester (Cambridge, Mass./London, 1973), pp. 1-129. The Latin text in this edition is based upon Rand's collations of all the important manuscripts (Introduction, p. VII), and is substantially the same as that printed in the first Loeb Library edition in 1918. See further below, p.211.


(3) Scripsit [Boethius] librum de sancta trinitate et capita quaedam dogmatica et librum contra Nestorium: op. cit., p.V.


(6) Cappuyns, op. cit., 371.

(7) For the view that excessive reliance may have been placed upon the Anecdoton Holderi see H. F. Stewart, Boethius (Edinburgh/London, 1891), pp. 11—14. A. Hildebrand, Boethius und seine Stellung zum Christentumme (Regensburg, 1885), pp. 148-314, argued from internal evidence for the authenticity of the Tractates.


"I should like to address myself to the contention of several contemporary commentators to the effect that there is a critical inconsistency between Boethius’s rejection of realism and his own solution to the “problem of universals.” I shall propose an interpretation which will charge the time-honored transmitter with terminological laxity rather than basic conceptual confusion.

In his second commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge (1) Boethius takes as his starting point Porphyry’s question as to whether genera and species are extramental entities (subsistent) or are only concepts or mental entities. On pp. 161-163 he rejects the first option and concludes (p. 163) that the genus, or any other universal (which would, under Porphyry’s classification, be a species, differentia, property or accident), cannot be an entity existing in re. A realist theory of universals requires that one and the same
thing exist in many at the same time as a whole, but Boethius adduces considerations which, he believes, show this to be impossible. The genus, for example, if present as a whole at the same time in several species, will lose its unity and fail to be as “one over many.” (p. 35)

(1) All references to this work are to In Isagogen Porphyrii Commenta, ed. Schlepse and Brandt, CSEL, 48 (Vienna, 1900).


"Boethius is a difficult figure to place in the history of philosophy. Considered just in himself, he clearly belongs to the world of late antiquity. Born in 480, at a time when Italy was ruled by the Ostrogoths under their king, Theoderic, Boethius was adopted into one of the most distinguished patrician families of Rome and benefited from an education which made him at home not only in classical Latin culture but also in Greek literature and philosophy. Although most historians doubt that Boethius actually went to Alexandria or Athens to study, he certainly knew the work of Greek neoplatonists of the immediate past: Proclus, Porphyry and probably Ammonius. Although a Christian, writing in Latin, he therefore falls into a tradition stretching back directly to Plotinus and, ultimately, to Aristotle and Plato. Yet considered as a late antique philosopher, his importance is limited. Most of Boethius’ ideas and arguments derive from his Greek sources; his own contribution lay more in choosing, arranging and presenting views than in original thinking.

By contrast, from the perspective of medieval philosophy, Boethius looms large. Only Aristotle himself, and perhaps Augustine, were more important and wide-ranging in their influence. Besides providing scholars in the Middle Ages with two of their most widely-read textbooks on arithmetic and music,(1) through his translations, commentaries and monographs Boethius provided the basis for medieval logic.

His short theological treatises helped to shape the way in which logical and philosophical techniques were used in discussing Christian doctrine.

His Consolation of Philosophy, read and studied from the eighth century through to the Renaissance, and translated into almost every medieval vernacular, was a major source for ancient philosophy in the early Middle Ages and its treatment of goodness, free will and eternity continued to influence thirteenth- and fourteenth-century thinkers. In short, it would be hard to understand the development of philosophy in the medieval Latin West without looking carefully at Boethius’ work — and it is for this reason that, although he falls outside its chronological limits, a chapter on his work (with glances forward at its medieval influence) begins the present volume." (pp. 11-12)

(1) For these works (and possible works on geometry and astronomy), which fall outside the scope of this discussion, see Chadwick [1.12] 69–107 and the articles in Gibson [1.16] by Caldwell, Pingree and White.

References


Contents: Abbreviations of Boethius’s Works XV; 1 Introduction 3; 2 Life, Intellectual Milieu, and Works 7; 3 Boethius’s Project: The Logical Translations and Commentaries 17; 4 The Logical Textbooks and Topical Reasoning: Types of Argument 43; 5 The Opuscula Sacra: Metaphysics, Theology, and Logical Method 66; 6 The Consolation: The Argument of Books I-V.2 96; 7 The Consolation, V.3-6: Divine Prescience, Contingency, Eternity 125; 8 Interpreting the Consolation 146; 9 Boethius’s Influence in the Middle Ages 164; Notes 183; Bibliography 219; Index Locorum 237; General Index 243-252.

"I shall argue that, in his theological treatises (Opuscula sacra) and in the Consolation, Boethius is an original and important thinker — one who fully deserves to have been treated by medieval readers as a great author. His individual arguments are often far more careful, sophisticated, and, in their own terms, successful than has usually been recognized, although it is certainly true that Boethius often bases himself on ideas taken from others. But Boethius’s especial distinction as a thinker lies in how he uses, combines, and comments on philosophical arguments. The Opuscula are innovative in their very approach to theology. The Consolation is, as its complex literary structure should immediately suggest, a work not just of but about philosophy: a subtle text which can be understood on various levels. The remaining writings — treatises on music and arithmetic, logical translations, commentaries — that make up Boethius’s œuvre are not usually innovative, but they are at the least very competent examples of genres where originality was not sought. The logical monographs offer an insight into two branches of logic, hypothetical syllogistic and the theory of topical inferences, about which there are no other extensive treatises from late antiquity. The logical commentaries are remarkable for the way they continue the project of the first great Neoplatonic logician, Porphyry, rather than follow the more usual approach of Boethius’s contemporaries." (pp. 4-5)


25. ———. 2013. "Divine Prescience and Contingency in Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy." Rivista di Storia Della Filosofia no. 1:9-21. Abstract: "This article discusses Boethius's argument in Consolation V.3-6 that divine omniscience of even the future is compatible with some things happening contingently. Section 1 argues that, according to Boethius, the kernel of the problem is not that God's beliefs about the future are true, but that they must be incapable of turning out false – something which seems incompatible with the unfixedness of contingent events. Section 2 looks at the Modes of Cognition Principle (everything that is cognized is cognized, not according to its own power, but rather according to the capacity of those who are cognizing), one of the building blocks of Boethius's solution, and contends that it is far bolder than anything Boethius may have found in his sources, putting forward as it does a limited relativism about knowledge. Section 3 argues that the other important building block, the view that all things, past, present and future, are present to God, should be understood epistemically (he knows them as if they were in his present) rather than metaphysically (God's present is co-extensive with worldly past, present and future)."

26. ———. 2014. "Boethius's Unparadigmatic Originality and its Implications for Medieval Philosophy." In Boethius as a Paradigm of Late Ancient Thought, edited by Böhm, Thomas, Jürgasch, Thomas and Kirchner, Andreas, 231-244. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. "The title of this article needs an apology and an explanation. Not only is it unwieldy. It also presents itself as a discordant rejection of the line of thinking about Boethius on which this volume, and the conference which gave rise to it, are based. But 'paradigm' is, in my view, a strange word to use in connection with Boethius. Rather than acting as a paradigm, he is a writer who seems to resist being fitted into any of the apparently appropriate existing paradigms. This exceptionality emerges even when trying to answer some of the simplest questions about him. Was he a Church Father (like, for instance, Jerome or Gregory of Nyssa) or an ancient philosopher (like his near contemporary Ammonius)? The answer is obviously neither — and both. Does he belong to the Middle Ages — his birth coincided with the deposition of the last Western Roman Emperor — or to antiquity, with which his cultural ties were so much closer than those of Augustine, a century earlier? Again, it would be wrong to choose either alternative, and the same would be true even if it were asked, simply, whether he fits best into Greek or into Latin culture." (p. 231)


28. Marshall, Mary Hatch. 1950. "Boethius' Definition of Persona and Mediaeval Understanding of the Roman Theater." Speculum no. 25:471-482. "In this paper, I wish to draw attention to a rather explicit source of information on ancient representation of formal comedy and tragedy, widely known in the Middle Ages, which has hitherto been ignored in histories of mediaeval drama — Boethius' definition of persona in his fifth theological tract, De Duabus
Naturis et Una Persona Jesu Christi, contra Eutychen et Nestorium, c.3. Cloetta mentioned the passage, but only to show that Boethius himself knew the old dramas, since he alluded familiarly to rôles in plays by Euripides and Seneca, Plautus and Terence. (10) This tract, longest and most interesting of Boethius’ Opuscula Sacra, was of fundamental importance to post-Augustinian conceptions of the Trinity; and the definition of persona, widely accepted but often contested or modified, was a crux of the Trinitarian controversy of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. (11) One conservative monk of the eleventh century, Otloh of St Emmeram, in the preface of his Dialogus de Tribus Quaestiomibus objected vehemently to dialecticians who put more credence in Boethius than in Holy Scriptures for some things, and who reproved him if he used persona in any but the Boethian theological sense. (12) Although criticized by conservatives, Boethius’ theological authority was second only to Augustine’s in the early scholastic period. Because Boethius’ definition of the important theological concept of ‘person’ refers to the ancient theatrical masks called personae and their uses, many men of learning with theological interests incidentally derived from it a reasonable idea of the representation of Roman plays by masked actors using voice and gesture. In the evidence to be presented here from Boethius and his mediaeval commentators and interpreters, it is clear that some understanding of the Roman theater was a great deal more common than we have thought, particularly in the twelfth century in France.” (p. 472)

(10) W. Cloetta, Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters und der Renaissance (2 vols. in one, Halle, 1890-1892), I: Komodie und Tragodie im Mittelalter, 16-17.


"This volume has been a long time emerging from well over a decade of research aimed at writing “a book about Boethius,” a project I had the temerity to announce in an article devoted to Boethius and Saint Thomas which appeared in the 1974 commemorative volume of Rivista di filosofia Neo-Scolastica. Originally I thought of presenting the thought of Boethius in all its scope to English readers, by which I mean of course readers of English. J. K. Sikes’s book on Abelard and Gilson’s on Augustine and Scotus suggested models of what I might do. A chapter on Boethius in Volume 2 of the History of Western Philosophy I undertook with my late colleague A. Robert Caponigri was the first fruits of my labors. The work I wrote on Thomas for the Twayne series on world authors dwelt on the role Boethius had played in the formation of Thomas’s thought. And various papers, notably several read at the spring gatherings of medievalists in Kalamazoo at Western Michigan University, formed if only in my own mind pieces of the larger thing.

By 1974, I had made enough progress to permit me to refer in a footnote to a “work in progress, devoted to the thought of Boethius in its full scope.” However, that same year appeared the imposing two volumes of Luca Obertello’s Severino Boecio. Boethian studies would never be the same again. Here was a massive survey of the Boethian corpus along with the secondary literature on it accompanied by a full volume of bibliography. I will not say that my thunder had been stolen, since that would suggest that I could, then or now, achieve what Obertello had. But I did feel a bit deflated. My hopes began to revive when I considered that there are many who do not read Italian. And, after all, the book I planned was not at all like the one Obertello had written. And then in 1981 came the publication of Henry Chadwick’s masterful book on Boethius.
Chadwick’s book did, so much better than I ever could, what I had dreamt of doing that it forced a rethinking of my whole project. I leaved through the chapters I had written on Boethius’s Quadrivium Pursuits and acknowledged that the world would not be a poorer place if they were never published. But it was not until 1985, after I resigned as Director of the Medieval Institute, that I saw my way clear. The book I would write would be a focused monograph on the relation between Boethius and Thomas Aquinas.” (pp. XII-XIII).


"Whoever undertakes to treat of Boethius finds himself in illustrious company. Potentates, churchmen, scholastics, and philosophers have busied themselves with this “last of the Romans.”

It would appear that but little remains to be said on such a well worn subject. Much less does it seem fitting in a beginner to essay that little. Yet, as the recent researches of Usener and Brandt and the acute suggestions of Rand have marked an epoch in Boethiana, one may hope to gain still further insight into the character and mode of thought of the author of the Consolatio. With this purpose in view, by the help of the so-called stylistic method, I intend to examine the writings of Boethius, in case it may be possible more accurately to place works the dates of which are not yet certain. To be explicit, I hope to show that the De Arithmetica and the De Musica should be placed neither first nor together; more definitely to place certain other works; to throw light on the authenticity of the De Geometria and the De Fide Catholica, and incidentally to test the value of the so-called stylistic method in determining the relative chronology of an author’s writings.

For a definition of the meaning of stylistic method, and an illustration of its application, I may refer to the well-known work of Lutoslawski, entitled The origin and growth of Plato’s logic with an account of Plato’s style and of the chronology of his writings, 1897." (p. 123)

(...)

"In the beginning of my paper I implied that any such study as I have undertaken, to be of value, must serve to give us a deeper insight into the character of our author. What have the present results contributed to this end? One thing at least. If the De Arithmetica and De Musica were not written first of Boethius’s works nor together, we must place a new estimate on our author’s temperament and habits.” (pp. 154-155)

(...)

"For all must concede that before he had carried out his plan of translating and perhaps of commenting on all the works of Aristotle and Plato, he had begun to work on Cicero. In the same way, he may have undertaken the De Musica as a parergon.” (p. 156)


"This paper systematically reconstructs Boethius's reflections on God, attempting to find the common element to which all of the variations in these reflections can be retraced. This common element is constituted by the continuous tension between kataphatic and apophatic theology. Boethius apparently both kataphatically defines God in his logical works, and maintains that God can only be defined apophatically in his theological works. This tension can, at times, cause some incoherence as one moves from one level of discourse to another: that is, from the logico-linguistic to the metaphysical-ontological level of discourse. Boethius's thought manifests this incoherence. This incoherence is in part common to Neoplatonic thought and its sources, but would also seem to be dictated by the nature of the very operation of reflecting upon God.”


"As is well known, Aristotle's analysis of future contingents in De interpretatione. Chapter 9 has generated since ancient times a lot of discussion (1), which ranges from the interpretation of his own words to the philosophical meaning and adequacy of the solution proposed by him. Unfortunately, the former question is entailed by the latter and there is no agreement between scholars about the kind of answer that Aristotle gives to the question of determinism, despite the astonishing quantity of works dedicated to it. I would by no way like to be involved in the problem of Aristotle's interpretation. My task here is to illustrate the meaning and relevance of Boethius' analysis of future contingents, and I will consider his commentary on the De interpretatione for its own sake. In other words, I do not feel myself committed to evaluate the adequacy of Boethius' proposal with respect to Aristotle, even if, of course, he
believed that his interpretation was faithful to the pages of the *De interpretatione*. Nor will I try to compare Boethius' solution with other solutions which have been proposed by ancient and modern interpreters who have tried to explain Aristotle's text. I will just consider one view different from that of Boethius, because Boethius himself discusses it, and his discussion is relevant to the understanding of his position." (p. 47)


Contents: Foreword 7; 1. Boethius’ great cultural project 9; 2. Philosophy and Theology in Boethius’ *Opuscula Theologica* 35; 3. The *Consolatio Philosophiae* 92; 4. 4. Boethius’ Christianity 132; Bibliography 145; Selected Sources 145; Works Cited 146; Index nominum 153-155.

"The core of this book has its origin in the lectures I delivered at the University of Bremen in October 2011 during the annual graduate seminar "Christentum als antike Religion" organized by Christoph Auffarth, Marvin Doebler, and Hinca Tanaseanu-Doebler.

(...) As it may be inferred from it, this book is neither an introduction, nor a general study on Boethius, but is meant to investigate the question of Boethius’ Christianity, secular and at the same time theologically profound. Secular, because Boethius was a layman, who did not belong to the Church, and because he used almost exclusively the heritage of Greek (and partly Latin) Neo-Platonism together with those rational tools typical of a philosophical system. On the other hand, he was thoroughly interested in the issues of contemporary Christianity, starting from Augustine, whose legacy is perceivable even when not overtly mentioned. "The last of the Romans" (as Martin Grabman called Boethius, a designation that has...


"In *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium* (CEN), as is well known, Boethius offers a definition of persona and hypostasis. This definition is influenced by the dispute between the Western Christian tradition, which since Tertullian and the Arian debate normally employed *persona* for the persons of the Trinity, and the Greek tradition which used ‘hypostasis’. The debate was provoked by a misunderstanding, which is testified, for instance, by Gregory of Nazianzus (On The Great Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria 21, 35, delivered on 379 AD):

"We use in an orthodox sense the terms one Essence and three Hypostases, the one to denote the nature of the Godhead, the other the properties (ιδιότητες) of the Three; the Italians (1) mean the same, but, owing to the scantiness of their vocabulary, and its poverty of terms, they are unable to distinguish between Essence and Hypostases, and therefore introduce the term Persons, to avoid being understood to assert three Essences. The result, were it not piteous, would be laughable. This slight difference of sound was taken to indicate a difference of faith. Then, Sabellianism was suspected in the doctrine of Three Persons, Arianism in that of Three Hypostases, both being the offspring of a contentious spirit." (2)

This was a momentous dispute between Oriental and Western Christianity. Boethius, thanks to his philosophical education, perceived much more than other Christian writers in the West the imprecision of the word persona: in CEN, since he is discussing the nestorian and Monophysitic Christology, he is compelled (so to say) by the Western tradition to employ persona, but he considers ‘hypostasis’ much more exact.

Introducing, therefore, persona in philosophical or theological vocabulary is, in his opinion, not without inconveniences, which he tries to avoid. Yet just for these reasons he has to face other difficulties." (p. 83)

(1) That is, the Western theologians when discussing Trinitarian problems.


"What Siobhan Nash-Marshall offers in this volume is a study in Hoethian metaphysics by focusing on participation and the good. Neither doctrine is unambiguous in the texts of Boethius — in fact, the prima facie claims seem contradictory and relatively obvious problems appear to go unresolved. Boethius never explicitly employs any of his axioms (let alone those that mention participation) in his explanation, of the ontological goodness of composite beings. Yet, he envisions participation as crucial for the resolution of the problem of how things can be good by virtue of their essences without thereby being substantial goodness (that is, God). The variety of definitions offered for the good in the Consolation of Philosophy sometimes invoke the notion of participation, for instance, in the claim that the human good re-stiles in one’s participation in the prime good, and yet the inclusion of such language seems directly at odds with other definitions, including the notion that the human good consists in the self-possession of one’s own being, for this cannot involve participation in anything other than one’s own nature.

By engaging in the thoughtful reconstruction of both of these key Boethian doctrines — participation and the good — Nash-Marshall proposes a credible and sustained case for better understanding the inner logic of Boethius. But in doing so she also offers an exceptional insight into the very problems that drew Boethius to begin to articulate his own views — whether so tersely in the succinct deductions of the Quomodo or so tantalizingly unreconciled a set of affirmations that undergird the conversations of the Consolation.

Central to her re-thinking of the issues is the assumption of the dialectic of exitus and reditus that Neoplatonists are always traversing, but to which they consciously advert as seldom as travelers do to the road itself when their minds are fixed on getting to their destination or getting back home. Yet, this simple distinction enables both the philosopher and the historian of philosophy to make better sense of the fragmentary comments in Boethius’s texts about participation. From this distinction too one gains a stance by which to reconcile the apparently contradictory claims Boethius makes about the substantive and teleological definitions of the good for composite beings. On the basis of the difference between exitus and reditus, Boethius needs to assign analogous meanings to participation which in turn help us to grasp why composite beings must already be good in their essence and yet still need to acquire the perfections appropriate to their existence by their participation in God and in their own essences. To grasp the inner logic of Boethius’s reasoning on these issues entails a readiness to complete the articulation of a synthesis Boethius envisioned but was unable to provide. While some scholars have thought the project impossible, Nash-Marshall ventures a thoughtful reconstruction of the connections intrinsic to his positions." (from the Foreword by Joseph W. Koterski, pp. Xi-XII)


"One of the primary concerns of the Consolatio is to draw out many of the paradoxical conclusions concerning the relation between creation and God that stem from the premises of classical creationist metaphysics, and attempt to solve them. Once one accepts that God does exist, is omnipotent, omniscient, and simple, it becomes viciously difficult to explain: (1) how anything contrary to God's will--evil--can exist; (2) how any cause can act independently of God's will--human freedom; and (3) how "independent causes" can relate to God through their own agency--human prayer. This naturally begs the question: why should we accept the premises of classical creationist metaphysics? This paper addresses this question by analyzing and defending two of the central premises of Boethius's version of classical creationist metaphysics as they are addressed in Consolatio 3,10: (a) that God exists, and (b) that God is simple."


"My two general points here are meant not just to give an account of the current state of Boethian affairs. They are also a caveat of sorts: no article written at the present time can hope to give an exhaustive overview of Boethius’s influence on medieval metaphysical and theological thought. There is simply too much basic work left to be done to hope for a comprehensive overview. (22) It is also true that Boethius's influence on medieval thought is so pervasive that no article would begin to do it justice.

In what follows, I will attempt merely to sketch a partial picture of that influence, based both on current manuscript work and, above all, on an impartial recognition of Boethius’s originality as a thinker. The sketch will be divided into two primary parts. In the first part, it will outline and broadly discuss the characteristics of Boethius’s thought and their significance with respect to the development of medieval thought. In the second, it will briefly present the history of the process through which medievals came to
appropriate Boethian texts and thought. The second part will itself be divided into two sections, which will deal with the logical and the "theological" texts respectively." (p. 171)

(22) This is one of Troncarelli's complaints with respect to the status of studies of medieval manuscripts of the Consolation. See, on this point, Fabio Troncarelli, Cogitatio Mentis. L'eredità di Boezio nell'alto Medioevo (Naples, 2005), p. 9: "Se esaminiamo, ad esempio, le edizioni critiche della Consolatio, ci rendiamo conto che un uso poco coerente dei manoscritti ha generato una condizione di confusione, in conseguenza della quale è assai difficile stabilire se alcune questioni siano irresolubili o, piuttosto, non siano state ancora risolte"... (If, for example, we examine the critical editions of the Consolatio, we will realize that the hardly coherent use of the manuscripts has generated a condition of confusion, the consequence of which was made it very difficult to establish if certain questions are irresolvable, or, on the other hand, have as yet to be resolved...]

"Whoever undertakes to treat of Boethius finds himself in illustrious company. Potentates, churchmen, scholastics, and philosophers have busied themselves with this "last of the Romans."

It would appear that but little remains to be said on such a well worn subject. Much less does it seem fitting in a beginner to essay that little. Yet, as the recent researches of Usener and Brandt and the acute suggestions of Rand have marked an epoch in Boethiana, one may hope to gain still further insight into the character and mode of thought of the author of the Consolatio. With this purpose in view, by the help of the so-called stylistic method, I intend to examine the writings of Boethius, in case it may be possible more accurately to place works the dates of which are not yet certain."

("For a definition of the meaning of stylistic method, and an illustration of its application, I may refer to the well-known work of Lutoslawski, entitled The origin and growth of Plato's logic with an account of Plato's style and of the chronology of his writings, 1897." (p. 127)

"Bearing in mind the foregoing facts, we are now ready to take up our chronological study of the writings of Boethius. Any such research must be based on the painstaking and masterly investigation (1) of Samuel Brandt. Utilizing all the references made by Boethius to his own writings, he has fixed beyond all question the chronology of most of the works. He has made out an almost complete framework, leaving now and then a gap of more or less uncertainty which, I hope, may be at least partly supplied by my investigations." (p. 130)

"Having thus traversed the whole series of Boethius's extant writings, I may briefly recapitulate the results of this examination. The so-called stylistic method is a recognized form of investigation, applied notably in the case of Plato. In any stylistic study of Boethius two traits must be taken into account. There is, first, the influence of translation on his style. Translation tends to explain new phenomena in style. It tends to unification of vocabulary. Its influence is more transient than one might anticipate. The second trait is Boethius's marked desire for variety. Bearing these influences in mind and basing my study on Professor Brandt's researches as a framework, I have shown that works of a given period agree and works of a different period disagree. Then I classified them stylistically, giving up Professor Brandt's classification, based on subject matter. I have shown that my criteria fit in exactly with all the arguments, inductive and deductive, that Professor Brandt has formulated." (p. 153)


"To label the poetry of the Consolation 'didactic' is too simplistic a response to its many functions, unless we are aware of the importance and value of moral and metaphysical reflection and instruction in Greek and Roman cultural life, and in literature as well as philosophy. This book has explored several of the traditions of which the Consolation is a beneficiary, and to which it contributes. It has attempted to show that a responsive reading of Boethius’ work depends upon a realization of the many kinds of allusiveness in that work. Virgil, Ovid, and Senecan tragedy, no less than Plato and the Neoplatonists, Cicero’s philosophical writings, and Epicetus, form the imaginative and intellectual world of the Consolation. In this world the art of poetry has its privileged place. We cannot know what sense Boethius may have had of writing at the end of a long tradition: it is unlikely that he saw with the clarity which historical hindsight has given us that he was, in Gibbon’s words, 'the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman'. The Consolation of Philosophy has often been regarded as the final chapter of ancient philosophy. This book has endeavoured to show that its cultural importance is much wider: when Boethius sought consolation in his captivity, he was also consoled by the idioms and images of Latin poetry, and his own poetry is a late and subtle flowering of that art form." (pp. 236-237)
"The great figure of the orb of destiny in the Fourth Book of the Consolatio Philosophiae is the means
used by Boethius to present his unusual conception of a mutable Fate. The stability of the centre is
occupied by Providence; all else controlled by the turning sphere is subject to Fate, who, however, by this
very fact is also subservient to God. The whole idea, justly famous and well known to later writers,
immediately suggested to many the corresponding idea that Fate's more customarily fickle sister, Fortune,
is also subject to God, and thus helped to give us the Christian conception of Fortune.' Brief study will
show, nevertheless, that the mutability of Fate is probably not original with Boethius; and the whole
passage has been traced, with apparent satisfaction among scholars, to the works of Proclus. It is my
intention here to offer a different explanation, and to suggest that more important problems are involved
than have so far been appreciated." (p. 62)

44. ———. 1935. The Tradition of Boethius. A Study of His Importance in Medieval Culture. New York:
Oxford University Press.

"Necessity, one had always supposed, admits of no conditions. Release for man in this fashion is
startling, and at first sight the solution may appear like a verbal device to escape from a logical dilemma.
But it has a more dignified basis in reasoning than that. As a brief review of its history will show,
Boethius did not invent the conception. His originality consisted rather in the way in which he adapted it
to his purpose.
A study of the force of necessity in the scheme of things, as he saw it, will show that in his references to
the frame of nature and the power of fate he is loyal to most of its implications and shows no willingness
to ignore them. (3) For his sufferings in prison the idea would have afforded him a natural consolation.
But his courage was too great and his moral integrity too vigorous to let the question rest there, and he
pressed his search further until he found justification for a belief in some degree of human freedom
although that also implies moral responsibility. In fact he obviously strove to justify such responsibility
together with its appropriate reward of pleasure or pain. In his debate he was guided partly by the treatise
De Prouidentia et Fato of Proclus; I have elsewhere pointed out hints for the plan of his discussion that
were available to him there. But he added material from other sources, and Proclus did not give him his
present solution. The process by which his theory of conditional necessity was first thought of and then elaborated may be possible to discover. In following something of the distinguished history of the phrase we may actually have the opportunity of seeing Boethius at work, and, although the centuries that intervene since his day must make anyone cautious about jumping at conclusions, some light may be
thrown on his method in composing the book." (pp. 393-394)
(3) Cf. Contra Eutychen et Nest., i, 45 ff. (Boethius, etc. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, London, 1918,
Loeb Libr., p. 80), and Cons. Philos., v, pr. iii.

"The thesis of this article is three-fold. First, I suggest, uncontroversially, that Boethius was in many ways
influenced by Neopythagorean ideas. Second, I recommend that in light of our appreciation of his
Neopythagorean inclinations in at least some of his writings, we understand his esoteric reference to the ‘hebdomads’ — at the outset of his treatise often called by that name — as a reference to something
Neopythagorean. This I suggest in light of the fact that, as I will discuss, the ‘hebdomad’ plays an
important role within the Neopythagorean literature of Nicomachus of Gerasa, an author with whose
writings Boethius was intimately familiar. Lastly, I suggest — following Dillon’s analysis of the Triad and
the Hebdomad within Nicomachus’ works [*] — an interpretation of the ‘hebdomad’ within the
Neopythagorean corpus which, if correct, would make appropriate Boethius’ reference to it at the outset
of a treatise on the nature of God and creation." (p. 29)
[* John Dillon, The Middle Platonists (New York: Cornell, 1977).]

Substantiae.” Carmina Philosophica no. 10:57-72.

"Hermann Usener whose justly admired interpretation of the Anecdota Holderi (*) has done more than
any single publication toward restoring Boethius to his rightful place among the Christian theologians,
suggests in this work a theory with regard to the composition of the Consolatio, to which nobody hitherto
has devoted the consideration it deserves." (p. 1)

(3) Cf. Contra Eutychen et Nest., i, 45 ff. (Boethius, etc. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, London, 1918,
Loeb Libr., p. 80), and Cons. Philos., v, pr. iii.
chapters from Aristotle’s *Protreptikos*, and the Neoplatonic section." (pp. 3-4)

(…)

"The *Consolatio* does not, like the *Opuscula Sacra*, deal directly with problems of Christian theology, but it is the work of a Christian theologian who holds fast the distinction between *fides* and *ratio*. There are naturally no traces of Christian doctrine in the *Consolatio*, for the reason that Philosophy speaks and not Faith. Boethius is trying by the unaided effort of the reason to establish a theodicy for which revelation has its own proofs, and for this reason, inevitably, recurs to the utterances of the schools and not the councils. But, be it noted, the solution at which he arrives, though expressed consistently in terms of Philosophy, is at one with the conclusion of Theology: reason could not prove something contradictory of faith. (1) Sometimes we meet a doctrine that would not have been accredited by St. Thomas (that of the world’s perpetuity, for instance), because it had not been definitely excluded from orthodoxy when Boethius wrote. (2) Sometimes Boethius includes what would doubtless have been dangerous in contemporary theology, as, for instance, the Neoplatonic imagery in 5, pr. 2. But these are matters of detail. The general scheme of the *Consolatio* is in harmony with Christian theology.

Nor need we ponder why Boethius chose a philosophical rather than a theological consolation in his last hours. Schrock remarks, (3) “Unwirksam waren sie (i. e. philosophische Trostgründen) doch eines christlichen Gelehrten nicht. Es sind sehr sehne mit seiner Religion verwandte Gründen; es ist der letzte und edelste Erfolg seiner vielfährigen philosophischen Untersuchungen.” The fundamental aim of the work is to make the language of philosophy approach as closely as possible to the meaning of faith; for Boethius was neither a Pagan, nor a cold eclectic, nor a dilettante reviser of others’ texts, but the first of the scholastics." (pp. 27-28)


(1) This point is clearly expressed in an admirable discussion of this matter by Schrock, *Christliche Kirchengeschichte*, 1792, Theil 16, p. 99 ff., a work quoted by Nitzsch, *Das System des Boethius*, Berlin, i860, p. 33, and Dräseke, ["Über die theologischen Schriften des Boethius", *Jahrbuch für Protestantische Theologie*, XII, 1886, p. 327, and deserving still wider recognition by students of Boethius.

(2) See *Jahrbuch für Protestantische Theologie, Supplement*, XXVI, p. 427.


Preface IX; Texts, Translations, Terminology, *Dramatis Personae* XIII; Chapter One. The Ironic *Consolation* and Its Reception 1; Chapter Two. Two Digressions and a Pointed Conclusion 15; Chapter Three. Universality and Particularity 34; Chapter Four. *Consolation* and the Genre of *Consolation* 47; Chapter Five. Death and Meditation 59; Chapter Six. The Odyssey of *Consolation* 75; Chapter Seven. Models and Rewritings 93; Chapter Eight. The Menippean Boethius in the Personification Allegories of the Middle Ages, bv William E. Heise 111; Chapter Nine. The Wisdom of Boethius 127; Appendix I. Latin Texts: *Consolation* 4.1; 5.1; 5.6.44-48 137; Appendix 2. Boethius, *In de interpretatione* 3.9, 221.27-227.12 Meiser 141; Appendix 3. Maximian, *Elegy* 3 147; Appendix 4.

Agathias Scholasticus, *Greek Anthology*. 11.354 155; Notes 158; References 206; Index 217.

"Both response and resistance to a dozen years of scholarly activity have proved fruitful. A number of works appeared immediately after the publication of *Ancient Menippean Satire* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993]" (…)

"Classicsists and medievalists may be surprised to discover how popular the term Menippean satire has become in discussions of modern literature, and how many works have been claimed to fall under its influence, among them Tristram Shandy, Moby Dick, and Gravity’s Rainbow. Such contemporary critical approaches to the genre offer welcome insight into the intellectual enterprise of *Consolation*, but Boethius rarely finds a place in them."

(…)

"Granted, *Consolation* is awkwardly poised between the usual traditions and divisions of Western literature, but the fundamental problem is the general lack of recognition that *Consolation* is critical of the intellectual synthesis that it both presents and undermines, that it is both philosophical and ironic. I wish to place *Consolation* in the genre’s vital center, which I understand more in terms of the parody of encyclopedic knowledge than in the exaltation of polyphony; my debts to Northrop Frye’s anatomy are ultimately greater than those to Bakhtin. The questions that need to be raised and answered about
Consolation have to do with plot and intertextuality, with irony and the presentation of wisdom, with literary history and a many-branched reception. Modernists must be called to take Boethius into account; classicists must be urged not to allow their knowledge of late antiquity and its philosophical and religious traditions to determine the interpretation of the text, but to let an understanding of the Menippean Consolation modify their understanding of late antique culture.

(…)

"I used to rattle the Christian presence in Consolation more as a latent thing, as the path not taken, as the way out of Philosophy's labyrinth that is hinted at but never achieved. But, emboldened by the work of others, I now see it much more actively at work—the prayer advocated at the end is not the philosophical path to God that Philosophy had earlier intended the prisoner to travel, but a different, Christian path that the prisoner chooses, offered grudgingly by a Philosophy forced to admit that her intended approach does not quite satisfy or console this particular patient, a Philosophy who wanted to lead but who ultimately only can point him to his true home. Boethius is truer to Plato by not being as optimistic as Augustine: there is no logical path, and certainly no trivial or quadivial path, that leads from the world of human logic and perception to the divine realm. What is most remarkable about Consolation, in its relation to Platonic and Christian worlds, is that the author tries so hard to resist apocalypse, and that the narrator is neither an Er nor a Scipio nor a St. John nor a Plotinus. After all of its intellectual heavy weather, Consolation is about humble access to God through prayer, not revelation." (from the Preface, IX-XI).


Abstract: "Among those who study medieval philosophy there is a divide between historians and philosophers. Sometimes the historians chide the philosophers for failing to appreciate the historical factors at work in understanding a text, a philosopher, a school, or a system. But sometimes the philosopher may justly criticize the historian for failing to engage the past philosopher adequately as a philosopher. Here I defend a philosophically charitable methodology and offer two examples, taken from John Marenbon's book Boethius, as instances where exercising more philosophical charity would likely have resulted in more adequate or complete interpretations. The examples are taken from Marenbon's analyses of the conclusion of Boethius's discussion of freedom and divine foreknowledge and of Boethius's argument against Euthyche's understanding of the Incarnation."


"The specific aesthetic structure of the Consolation has until recently been ignored. Earlier commentary on its structure tended to stress the generic influence of such classical forms as "consolation literature" (Cicero, Seneca), "incentives to philosophy" (Aristotle, Cicero), and "Menippean satire." Emphasis on these genres has inevitably carried with it the implication that a hard center of thought and feeling must be made palatable by presentation in a leisurely style. Even E. K. Rand's admiring consideration of the Consolation occasionally threatens to slip into the diminutive: "To vary the presentation, to break the flow of dialogue, a number of little poems are interspersed — thirty-nine in all—which now sum up the argument of the preceding prose section, and now themselves carry it on." (1) While the leisurely element of the work should be recognized, the words of Boethius in Quomodo Substantia should be remembered: "[I] would rather bury my speculations in my own memory than share them with any of those pert and frivolous persons who will not tolerate an argument unless it is made amusing." The "leisure" of the Consolation might be more accurately described as the grace with which Boethius presents a rigorously premeditated structure. It is in part by understanding the logic of that structure, its aesthetic integrity, that the passion of the author's conviction and the power of his Consolation are made accessible to the contemporary reader.

As this essay will show, the structure of the work reflects and sustains the idea of the work. The circular relation of form and content is immediately suggested by the title "consolation of philosophy": Philosophy originally consoles Boethius (book 1) so that he will be receptive to philosophy, by means of which he may eventually attain philosophy and so be consoled (book 5). Philosophy is the cause of its own consummation; philosophy is the cause of the consummation of consolation; consolation is the cause of its own consummation; consolation is the cause of the consummation of philosophy. Knowledge and happiness are one in the co-incidence of form (cause) and idea (end). The consistency with which form recapitulates idea will be shown after first suggesting Boethius's attitude toward this circularity." (pp. 92-93, notes omitted).


"Persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia." So runs the classic definition of Boethius. (1) But is it a definition that is still of value? Or, to put it another way, is this the sort of definition that will serve for a philosophy of persons? Certainly it is not Boethius's definition that is operative in contemporary discussions about persons. (2)"
"In conclusion then, I think it may be said that Boethius’s definition is by no means an obvious non-starter for the philosophy of person. In fact in many respects it may be the best one. In which case a philosophy of person grounded on that definition is going to be more accurate and more compelling than others. It will also direct attention back to key ideas such as nature, reason and substance, that are in particular need of close analysis, and which may yield more fruitful results than even the term ‘person’ by itself, or any of the moral and other features mentioned earlier. Such a philosophy of person may prove to be a better way to sort out the problems of person than any current alternative.” (p. 220)

(1) “A person is an individual substance of a rational nature.” The definition is given in Boethius’s Liber de Persona et Duabus Naturis, ch. 3.

(2) It is notable that the most recent article on persons in The New Scholasticism rather summarily dismisses Boethius: D. O Dahlstrom, “Personal Pleasure”, The New Scholasticism, LX, 1986, pp. 276-277. I respond to this article later.


"The definition is set out in the Opuscula Sacra, which with all probability date back to 512. Amid the conflicts that followed the Council of Calcedon, and therefore in a period dense with intricate political and religious events, Boethius wrote these Opuscula. As he did so, he addressed the problem of giving rigorous definition to the concept of person.

The first of the Opuscula was De Trinitate, the second Utrum Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus substantialiter praedicitur, the third De hebdomadibus ( Quomodo substantiae in eo quod sint bonae...); the fourth De fide catholica, and the fifth the Liber de persona et duabus naturis contra Eutychen et Nestorium, thereafter known more simply as Contra Eutychen et Nestorium.

The most interesting of the Opuscula for my purposes here is the last of them, because it contains the definition of person that made Boethius famous in his own lifetime (5).

The Council of Calcedon had laid down the celebrated formula that in Christ there are two natures and one person. In the introduction to his Treatise, Boethius points out that the premises established by the Council lead only to four possible conclusions: 1. that in Christ there are two natures and two persons, as Nestorius maintained: 2. that there is one nature and one person, as Eutychus claimed; 3. that there are two natures and one person, as the Catholic faith affirmed; 4. that there is one nature and two persons - though this conclusion, Boethius wrote, was so nonsensical that no heresy affirmed it. Boethius’ main concern was to structure his work with clear and unambiguous language.

According to Boethius, it is entirely legitimate to enquire as to the unitary definition of the term person, in that the philosophy and theology of ancient Christianity had failed to give it a precise definition. In order to understand what was meant by the word, he analysed the concept of nature which, in fact, has a broader meaning than person and to some extent is its genus proximus.” (p. 166)


"Apart from his Consolation of Philosophy, perhaps the most well known text of Boethius is his discussion of universals in the Second Commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge. In that passage, he first reviews the arguments for and against the existence of universal entities, and then offers a theory he attributes to Alexander of Aphrodisias, a kind of theory called in recent times "moderate realism,” according to which there are no universal entities in the ontology of the world, but nevertheless there is an objective, non-arbitrary basis for the formation of our universal or general concepts about that world. At the very end of the passage, Boethius adds the intriguing comment that he has presented this view not necessarily because it is his own, but because it is the one that fits Aristotle’s doctrine the best, and Porphyry’s Isagoge, the work Boethius is commenting on, is intended after all as an introduction to Aristotle’s Categories. (2)

There are many interesting things about this passage, not the least of which is that it is an early example of a form that would later be codified in the scholastic quaestio: a yes/no question is stated (or in general some question expressed in terms of an exclusive dichotomy), then arguments are presented on both sides, pro and con, the author gives his own answer to the question, and finally (although this part of what would become the classic form is missing from Boethius’ discussion) the arguments for the losing side of the question are answered.

I do not intend to discuss the whole of Boethius’ passage in this paper, and in fact will not even be saying
very much about Boethius' own theory of universals in the passage — if indeed it contains his own theory. What I want to focus on instead is just one part of the discussion’s quaestio structure: the preliminary statement of the case against universals." (pp. 1-2, note 1 omitted)

(2) See ibid., p. 25, § (37).


"When one considers the history of metaphysics in the Latin West, there is at least one important forerunner, Boethius, who not only had provided the Latin speaking community up to the middle of the twelfth century with its only Latin translations of Aristotlean writings, namely of the Organon with the exception of the Posterior Analytics. Moreover, in his ‘theological treatises’, especially in the second chapter of his Liber quomodo Trinitas unus Deus ac non tres Dii (or De sancta Trinitate), he displays the division of the three theoretical sciences according to Book E of Aristotle’s Metaphysics. (3) In the twelfth century especially this divisio philosophiae became the point of reference for the epistemological enterprise, notably in the ‘Chartrian’ and ‘Porretanean’ schools, to establish a scientia naturalis based on reason and argument alone, and to establish theology as a deductive science, which proceeds more geometrico in a strong axiomatic order and provides the highest and most common principles (maximae or rationes communes) for the other sciences." (p. 93)


(7) Cf. the title-heading of McInerny’s Epilogue to his book on Boethius and Aquinas (cf. n. 6), p. 249.


Abstract: "Anicius Manlius Seuerinus Boethius has been regarded one of the major sources of Platonism in the Middle Ages, and the influence of different Platonists on his thought has been widely discussed. In his Aristotelian commentaries, however, Boethius rejects Platonists’ opinions while saying that Aristotle and Plato essentially agree. Boethius may have intended to show the agreement he saw, but did not provide any explanation in his works. In this article, I consider how Boethius could have seen such an agreement. While reexamining past remarks about Platonism in Boethius, I conclude that he adopts Porphyry’s view that Aristotelian logic functions as a step toward the metaphysical appreciation of the universe, which Platonists consider to be the most essential form of philosophy. However, Boethius follows Iamblichus in holding that the highest level of metaphysical appreciation involves mathematization."


61. Troncarelli, Fabio. 2014. "Boethius from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages." In Boethius as a Paradigm of Late Ancient Thought, edited by Kirchner, Andreas, Jürgasch, Thomas and Böhm, Thomas, 213-229. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
"Boethius, the Roman Boethius, the philosopher Boethius, invented himself as a theologian and invented, as well, Scholastic theology, as St. Thomas recognised in his commentary on the first Boethian theological treatise. Quoting Father Marie-Dominique Chenu, we can say that after Boethius: Theology is a science. The best medicine against Augustine and the poison of his deep pessimism.

1. Boethius inventing Boethius

But Boethius invented himself in another way, becoming, for the second time, the best antidote against Augustine, because he invented his death. The execution of an innocent was more than a crime: it was a murder, the murder of the “Civilization”, the murder of the last philosopher of Antiquity as well as the last of the Romans.” (p. 218)


"The Stoics mistake a small part of Philosophy’s garment for the whole of her. Instead of possessing the fullness of philosophy, as did Plato and Aristote, the Stoics possess only a portion of its appearance. Stoicism is philosophically superficial and incomplete. (2)

This severe take on Stoicism must be qualified, however, in light of a subsequent passage in Book 1, [of Consolation of Philosophy] in which Philosophy relates how not only Greek philosophers suffered for her sake, but Roman ones as well. The three Romans she names - Canius, Seneca, and Soranus - were all Stoics (Cons. 1.3, 31-7). The pieces of her garment that they snatched sufficed for facing adversity in an exemplary fashion. (3) Something about Stoicism, then, is able to fortify human beings in times of distress.

This mixed review makes sense in the Consolation; for there Stoicism is presented as a necessary stage within the Prisoner’s philosophical development. Though it be superficial and incomplete, it is also indispensable. This dual characterization, moreover, illuminates Boethius’s criticism of Stoicism in earlier works; (4) for it helps us see what those critiques are ultimately driving at, namely, the philosophical superficiality and incompleteness of Stoicism, which compares poorly with the multidimensional, expansive thinking Boethius finds in Plato and Aristotle.

In what follows we explore Boethius’s works chronologically in order to elucidate his twofold judgment of Stoicism. Beginning with references to the Stoics in his logical works (5) and then turning to the Consolation, we delineate the intelligible contours of Stoicism as Boethius sees it, including the positive impetus Stoicism provides toward a philosophical apprehension of reality as well as its innate inadequacy for attaining the full measure of wisdom available to us through philosophical inquiry." (pp. 71-72, note 4 and 5 omitted)

(2) Indeed, in light of these passages, we can see why one might arrive at the judgment that in Boethius’s eyes “the Stoics . . . in general are considered to be pseudo-philosophers” (Marenbon [Boethius] 2003: 154).

(3) Each of these Romans, like Boethius, suffered under the reigning authority: Canius was executed by Caligula; Seneca was forced to commit suicide by Nero; and Soranus was condemned to death by Nero and committed suicide. Canius is mentioned again at 1.4, 9; Seneca, at 3.5, 28-36. Soranus is not mentioned again.


Abstract: "Objections to the traditional view that God knows all of time eternally stand or fall on what one means by “eternally.” The widely held supposition, shared by both eternalists and those who oppose them, such as Open Theists, is that to say God knows all of time eternally entails that he cannot know all of time from a temporal perspective. In this paper I show that Boethius’s characterization of God’s eternal knowledge employs a different meaning of “eternal,” which is incompatible with this supposition. I argue that Boethius’s claim that “the most excellent knowledge is that which by its own nature knows not only its own proper object but also the objects of all lower kinds of knowledge” entails that God is not limited by perspective and so eternally and simultaneously knows every temporal event from a temporal as well as a timeless perspective.”


"The definition of the summum bonum itself comes in the tenth prose section of book 3 [of The Consolation of Philosophy]. The main steps of Boethius’ argument are as follows:

1. Human beings agree that God, the ruler of all things, is good-and further, that he is perfectly good (3.pr.10.7).
2. But the perfect good is true happiness (sed perfectum bonum veram esse beatitudinem) (3) constituitus (3.pr.10.10).
3. There cannot be two perfect, highest goods, because if one lacked anything of the other, it would not be perfect (3.pr.10.19).
4. Therefore true happiness and God, being both the same thing, arc both the summum bonum, and the supreme good is identical with supreme divinity (Atqui el beatitudinem et deum summum bonum esse collegimus; quare ipsam necesse est summam esse beatitudinem quae sit summa divinitas: 3pr.10.20).
Later Boethius adds that a person becomes *beatus* by attaining divinity and that, while by nature there is only one God, there can be many by participation. (4)

Boethius’ identification here of the *summum bonum* with God is explicit." (p. 217)

(...)  
"Boethius offers just such a preethical vision, a concept of the ideal good. True, it is one that leaves the hard questions of justice, morality, and mercy unsolved; but it does demand an ultimate framework within which the answers to penultimate questions are sought. His creation of this concept of the summum bonum, argued through dialogue, illustrated and enlarged through poetry, and presented with the powerful effect of drama throughout, suggests to us that in his own life Boethius did achieve in the end some sense of the unity and goodness he sought." (p. 220)

(3) Boethius uses the terms *beatitude, felicitas, verum or perfectum bonum*, and on one occasion (3.pr. 10.38) even *bonitas* all interchangeably with *summum bonum*.

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