

The Cambridge Companion to
BOETHIUS

Edited by John Marenbon

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23. According to Ebbesen 1990b, 386, Boethius "understood Porphyry's de-ontologising of logic and his economy of assumptions so well that on occasion he refused to follow his teacher when the master forgot his own principles." This interpretation depends on the view that Porphyry was concerned to strip logic of its metaphysical connections, an interpretation which is based on a reconstruction of Porphyry's logic put forward in different ways by Lloyd 1956 and 1990, and Ebbesen 1990b. Both hold that Porphyry's doctrine of imposition provides a sufficient semantics for his logic. This interpretation has been recently challenged by Chiaradonna 2007 and 2008, and the interpretation offered in this article is sympathetic to Chiaradonna's position. The appearance of ontological neutrality in Boethius seems to be driven by pedagogical, rather than logical, considerations. The semantic theory on which his logical theory is based, as interpreted here, is ontologically rich. Settling this debate, however, stretches beyond the limits of this article.
24. Marenbon 2003a rightly objects to the suggestion in Tweedale 1976 that Boethius' ideas are so confused that nearly anything can be based on or drawn from them.
25. See for example Travis 2004.
26. Compare Travis 2004: "Accuracy conditions come into the picture only after you take the environment as it is presented to you to be some specific way."
27. For a more detailed analysis of Boethius' philosophy of language in contemporary terms see Martin, forthcoming. I would like to thank both Chris Martin for sending me a copy of this yet unpublished paper, and Riccardo Chiaradonna for his excellent, yet-to-be published, critical notice of J. Barnes' *Porphyry: Introduction*.

5 The *Opuscula sacra*: Boethius and theology

The *Opuscula sacra* are a collection of brief but dense and highly influential theological treatises. Their unquestioning commitment to Catholic orthodoxy, not to mention their concern over issues of dogma, has seemed to many to be at odds with the philosophical detachment of Boethius' other works. For a time in the nineteenth century scholars almost unanimously denied their authenticity, but this situation was reversed in 1877 with the publication of a fragment from a hitherto unknown work by Cassiodorus. The fragment states that Boethius "wrote a book concerning the Holy Trinity and certain dogmatic chapters and a book against Nestorius."¹ This description corresponds nicely to the first, fourth, and fifth of the treatises that have come down to us. Although the others are not mentioned, since they are included in all the manuscripts, and all save the fourth are explicitly attributed to Boethius, there seems little reason to doubt them as well. Our concern here will be the relevance of the treatises for revealed theology, as distinct from their relevance for metaphysics (to be discussed in the next chapter). Accordingly we will set aside the third treatise, the so-called *Quomodo substantiae* or *De hebdomadibus*, and focus upon the others.

The only treatise for which we have definite knowledge concerning the circumstances of its composition is the fifth. Boethius tells us in its preface that he was concerned by the hasty reaction in Rome to a letter from some Greek bishops about certain points in Christology. This letter survives and can be dated to autumn 512, so that the fifth treatise was probably written in late 512 or early 513.² The other treatises give no certain information about their own composition, but scholars have generally accepted the argument of Viktor Schurr, in a ground-breaking study, that the first and second were prompted

by a further interchange between Rome and the East in 519.³ In that year a delegation of Scythian monks was sent to Rome by Justinian bearing a proposal for certain theological formulae which they thought might succeed in reconciling the disputing factions in the Church. Among them was the theopaschite assertion that "one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh." This assertion was controversial, not only because of its apparent rejection of divine impassibility, but because of its assumption that the persons of the Trinity can be numbered and treated as distinct subjects of experience. Apparently it was this aspect of the controversy which led Boethius to compose his first and second treatises, which deal with the issue of numeration in the Trinity. The fourth treatise stands apart in that it does not deal with any particular controversy. It is sometimes assumed to precede the others because it is comparatively elementary; however, this assumption is at best rather tenuous, since an accomplished scholar might well choose to write an elementary treatise at any point in his career.

The chronological order, then, was that the fifth treatise was written first, followed by the first and second, with the timing of the fourth unknown. Nonetheless I have chosen here to follow the order in which the treatises are found in the manuscripts and in which they are generally printed. This is partly because the fifth treatise is the longest and raises distinctive issues which are most easily reserved until the end. In addition, the manuscript order may well reflect Boethius' own wishes. Three of the five treatises (the second, third, and fifth) are addressed to the deacon John, who later became Pope John I (523-6).⁴ It is plain from the manner in which John is addressed that he and Boethius were on close terms and discussed theological matters together frequently. Boethius also seems to have entrusted to John the compilation of his writings, for he asks him regarding the fifth treatise, "If you pronounce it to be sound I beg you to place it among the other writings of mine" (77).⁵ Thus it seems likely that the manuscript order is due to John, who in turn would have been in a good position to know Boethius' wishes, if he had any.

ON THE TRINITY

According to some manuscripts the full title of Boethius' *On the Trinity* is *Trinitas unus deus ac non tres dii*, "the Trinity is one God and not three gods." This title brings to mind a short treatise

by St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Quod non sint tres dii*, "that there are not three gods." Gregory's treatise is representative of the Trinitarian theology of the three Cappadocian Fathers – Gregory, his brother St. Basil, and their colleague, St. Gregory Nazianzen – whose writings helped pave the way for the formulation of orthodox Trinitarian doctrine at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381. A brief glance at it will be helpful in situating Boethius' work in relation to the larger history of Trinitarian theology.

Gregory seeks to answer the question of why the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three divine persons who share a common nature, are not three gods in the way that Peter, James, and John are three men. He begins by observing that, properly speaking, the divine nature cannot be named: "that nature is unnameable and unspeakable, and ... every term invented by the custom of men, or handed down to us by the Scriptures, is indeed explanatory of our conceptions of the divine nature, but does not include the signification of that nature itself."⁶ The term 'god', *theos*, is a case in point. Gregory derives it from *thea*, an act of beholding, and takes it to indicate the divine operation of overseeing or superintending the cosmos. Since that operation is shared equally by each of the three persons, each is equally God. No doubt it is true that we often refer to those who share in a common labor as many – as, for instance, many carpenters or shoemakers. The difference is that in such a case the joint action can be resolved into separate actions performed by each agent, whereas the action of the Trinity cannot similarly be resolved into three separate actions. As Gregory observes, "although we set forth three persons and three names, we do not consider that we have had bestowed upon us three lives, one from each person separately; but the same life is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, and prepared by the Son, and depends on the will of the Father." He concludes that "the name derived from operation cannot be divided among many where the result of their mutual operation is one."

Given that the three persons are one God, however, in what sense are they three? Gregory's answer is deliberately brief and cryptic. "One is the Cause, and another is of the Cause; and again in that which is of the Cause ... one [the Son] is directly from the first Cause, and another [the Spirit] by that which is directly from the first Cause." In other words, they are distinguished solely by their relations of origin. Gregory emphasizes that such distinctions do not

constitute a difference of nature, and indeed do not pertain to nature at all. He offers as an analogy the question of whether a given tree was planted or grew of itself. In answering such a question one makes an assertion only about the manner or mode of its existence, not about what it is.

These remarks illustrate both the content and the style of the Trinitarian theology of the fourth century. Gregory writes in simple language intelligible to any educated layman. The center of gravity of his argument lies in Scripture rather than philosophy, and his fundamental premise is the separate personal existence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which he considers a datum of revelation. The question of how these three can be one God is answered by an analysis of the meaning of the term 'god'. This in turn begins by positing the unknowability – and hence, in the relevant sense, the unnameability – of the divine nature. Apophaticism is thus woven into the fabric of even such kataphatic assertions as those of Trinitarian doctrine.⁷ Gregory is at pains to underscore that, however the individuating characteristics of the three persons are understood (and he gives somewhat different accounts of them elsewhere), they do not undermine this apophaticism, for they do not shed light upon the fundamental mystery of the divine nature.⁸

Even a superficial acquaintance with Boethius' *On the Trinity* will reveal that we are here in a different world of thought. Boethius, like Gregory, seems to have written in response to an immediate practical need within the Church. Unlike Gregory, however, he prefers to present his results as a private theoretical inquiry. He emphasizes that he writes only for his father-in-law Symmachus, whom alone he judges capable of understanding the subtleties of his argument. Indeed he warns that he will deliberately use philosophical jargon to put unlearned readers off track: "I purposely use brevity and wrap up the ideas I draw from the deep questionings of philosophy in new and unaccustomed words such as speak only to you [Symmachus] and to myself ... The rest of the world I simply disregard since those who cannot understand seem unworthy even to read them" (5). Such elitism may offend modern sensibilities, but we must remember that Boethius was not a bishop, as were Gregory and most others who had participated in the fourth-century debates, so he had no obligation to teach theology publicly. No doubt he was aware of how much damage had already been done by irresponsible or premature

speculation, and he sincerely wished for the approval of a guide whom he trusted before putting his thoughts before others.

Boethius also informs us – or, rather, Symmachus – that the treatise will reveal "whether the seeds of argument sown in my mind by St. Augustine's writings have borne fruit" (5). It is striking that Boethius, whose facility in Greek could have opened for him the entire world of patristic theology, mentions only the work of Augustine. As we shall see, there is little sign either here or elsewhere that he read any of the other Church Fathers. Thus from the outset we are alerted to two salient features which set his work apart from those of earlier writers on the subject. One is that it will draw extensively from technical philosophy; the other is that, apart from philosophy, its main inspiration will be Augustine.

At first glance this might seem an unlikely combination. Augustine, after all, was not a professional philosopher, and his works employ a combination of exegesis, argument, and prayerful meditation quite unlike the scholastic style preferred by Boethius. Yet Augustine did know well the *Categories* of Aristotle, and he had pioneered the application of the Aristotelian categories to the Trinity. Even more importantly, he had developed a natural theology which emphasized the simplicity and *intrinsic* intelligibility of the divine essence, however much our current bodily state prevents us from knowing it directly.⁹ This was a new departure within patristic theology, one sharply at odds with the apophaticism of the Greek tradition, and even of earlier Latin authors such as St. Hilary of Poitiers. Boethius correctly recognized that this Augustinian natural theology was largely compatible with Aristotle's theology of the Prime Mover.¹⁰ To place Augustinian wine into Aristotelian wineskins was therefore not an unpromising project.

Signs of this synthesis are apparent from the outset. Boethius begins with an assertion of the sole validity and authority of the Catholic faith, which teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God. The cause of their union, he says, is simply "absence of difference" (7). This leads him to a brief analysis of the types of sameness and difference, including the important observation that "numerical difference is caused by variety of accidents" (7). Next he invokes the Aristotelian division of sciences into physics, mathematics, and theology, with theology understood as the study of form which is independent of both matter and motion.¹¹ He adds that "in theology we should not be diverted to play with imaginations, but

rather apprehend that form which is pure form and no image, which is very being (*esse ipsum*) and the source of being" (9). In essence Boethius here inserts an Augustinian description of God into an Aristotelian understanding of the nature and methods of theology. For Augustine, too, God is "the uncreated and most perfect form" which gives being to all things, and can equally be described as being itself, *ipsum esse*.¹² The warning against being misled by imagination – that is, by the reliance of our thought on sensory images – is also a familiar Augustinian theme.¹³

Next we learn that since the divine substance is form without matter, it has no parts, and is thus identical with its own essence or *id quod est* (11). The strong emphasis here upon divine simplicity is characteristic of Augustine, although Augustine typically describes this simplicity not as the identity of God with His own essence, but as the identity in God of that which He is with that which He has.¹⁴ Boethius also argues that since forms cannot be substrates save insofar as they are present in matter, and God is form entirely without matter, God can take on no accidents. This too is a solidly Augustinian conclusion, although reached via an Aristotelian argument.¹⁵ It allows Boethius to apply to God his earlier assertion that the cause of numerical difference is variety of accidents. He concludes that "in God, then, is no difference, no plurality arising out of difference, no multiplicity arising out of accidents, and accordingly no number either" (13).

If there can be no plurality or number in God, however, the obvious question is how God can be a Trinity. Even Augustine, despite his strong emphasis on divine simplicity, had conceded that it is necessary to speak of *three* persons in God in order to avoid the modalism of Sabellius.¹⁶ Boethius' initial attempt to address this point is perhaps best seen as an exploratory gambit. He distinguishes two kinds of number, that which consists in numerable things (one, two, and so forth) and that in virtue of which things are numerable, such as unity and duality. The mere repetition of the former, he says, does not make plurality. Apparently by this he means that a single item can be named in many ways, for he goes on to give as an example "one sword, one brand, one blade" (15). Unfortunately this is of little help in thinking about the Trinity, for to regard Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the same object named in three different ways would be a form of modalism. Boethius recognizes that the analogy ultimately will not do, for he concedes that whereas the brand and blade are

identical, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not. Apparently reversing his earlier conclusion, he states that "there is not, therefore, complete lack of difference between them, and so number does come in – number which we explained was the result of diversity of substrates" (17).

How are these two incompatible positions – the denial of plurality in God and its recognition – to be reconciled? Boethius does not immediately answer this question, but instead turns to a more sustained investigation of the Aristotelian categories. Its main point consists in a distinction between what he calls objective (*secundum rem*) predications, which "point to a thing as being something," and those which instead "attach something external to it" (25). The first class includes predications of substance, quality, and quantity, and the second those in the other seven categories. Boethius observes that two categories in the latter group (situation and passivity) do not apply to God at all, and that the others change in meaning when applied to Him; for example, to say that God is everywhere means that every place is present to Him, and to say that God ever is means that His "now" embraces all of time. (It is in the course of this discussion that Boethius makes his famous distinction between the eternity which is proper to God and "sempiternity," that is, continuance through endless time.) *Secundum rem* predications also change in meaning when applied to God, but in a different way, for because of divine simplicity any predication of quality or quantity to God is in fact a substantial predication. Thus God is not only just but is the Just itself, He is not only great but is the Great itself, and so on.¹⁷

The importance of this distinction for Trinitarian doctrine lies in its application to the category of relation. Boethius regards relation as perhaps the paradigmatic example of an external predication. In illustration he cites relations such as that of a master and slave or of one man standing to the right or left of another. Such relations exhibit two features which seem to be clear signs of externality: (a) if one term is "suppressed," the other is as well (e.g., if the slave is freed, the master is no longer a master); (b) the relation can change without any intrinsic change in the object (e.g., one who is to my left can come to be on my right without himself changing in any way). The persons of the Trinity, however, "are predicates of relation, and, as we have said, have no other difference but that of relation" (27).¹⁸ It follows that

each such relation "will not imply an otherness of the things of which it is said, but, in a phrase which aims at interpreting what we could hardly understand, an otherness of persons" (27-9). In effect, Boethius has now reconciled the denial of plurality in God with its affirmation: the only cause of plurality in God is relation, and relation is always merely external, so that the plurality introduced by relation leaves unity of essence intact. He summarizes his view in the dictum, "the substance preserves the unity, the relation makes up the Trinity" (29-31).

How should we assess this argument? Perhaps its most troublesome feature is that Boethius has so little to say about "otherness of persons." He does not explain why the otherness he has identified must be specifically one of persons, nor what the term 'person' (*persona*) means in this context.¹⁹ This is not merely an oversight, but a serious gap in the argument, for a thing can be related to itself. (For example, to borrow Boethius' earlier illustration, there is the relation of a brand to a sword when the two are the same object.) Because of this possibility, it does not follow merely from the fact that there are relations in the Trinity that there is a difference of persons; we need some independent description of what the relations are between. Far from amplifying on this point, however, Boethius instead returns to his earlier claim that "in concrete enumerations the repetition of units does not in any way produce plurality" (29), and goes on to describe relation in the Trinity as "a relation of identicals" (31). Such assertions heighten rather than alleviate the worry. Precisely how is it that a "relation of identicals" is supposed to introduce plurality - and if it does not, in what sense are there three persons?²⁰

Another doubt concerns whether Boethius' key premise, that predications of relation are external, is actually correct in the case of the Trinity. The trouble is that examples such as the relation of master and slave or the relations among spatial objects are not cases where the things related differ *only* by their relation. (In fact it is hard to think of examples of this type, although identical figures in geometry may be a candidate.) If two things do differ only by their relation, surely it is plausible that the relation is essential; after all, one role of an essence is to constitute a thing as what it is, and in such a case that role is played by the relation. Thus it seems either that Boethius is wrong in holding that relations in the Trinity are merely external, or at least that he has failed to establish his case.²¹

I shall have more to say regarding the general character of Boethius' Trinitarian theology. First let us look at the second treatise, which continues the investigation begun by the first.

WHETHER FATHER AND SON AND HOLY SPIRIT
ARE SUBSTANTIALLY PREDICATED OF THE
DIVINITY

The second treatise (known generally by its abbreviated Latin title, *Utrum Pater*) is the briefest of the five, and is generally regarded as either a sort of appendix to the first or perhaps as a preliminary essay. Since the two works make no reference to one another, either order is possible. Whatever their relationship, the *Utrum Pater* can be read on its own and raises important questions in its own right.

The first pertains to its title. When Boethius refers to the names of the three persons being "predicated of the divinity," does he have in mind statements such as "God is the Father," "God is the Son," and "God is the Holy Spirit"? That would be odd, for such statements have never been part of Christian teaching about the Trinity, and in fact Boethius never makes such a statement. What he seems to have in mind instead is a question which had been discussed by Augustine: whether each of the three is called by His personal name in relation to Himself or in relation to the others.²² On the first answer the names are predicated in the category of substance (or "substantially"), and on the second they are predicated in the category of relation. Augustine's answer is that the names are predicated in the category of relation, and Boethius agrees. The difference is that, whereas Augustine was content to argue for this conclusion simply from the meanings of the terms 'Father' and 'Son' (which plainly are relative to one another), Boethius does so on philosophical grounds.

The argument runs as follows. Each of the three is substance (*substantia*), yet, when they are taken together, "the result is not several substances but one substance" (33). Hence the substance of the three is perfectly one and indivisible. This substantial unity provides a test for whether a given predication is made in the category of substance: "everything ... that is predicated of the divine substance must be common to the three" (33), in the sense that it is predicated both of each individually and of the three collectively.²³ Conversely, anything said of one of them individually which cannot be said of the

others is not predicated in the category of substance. Obviously this includes their personal names, so that "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not predicated of the divinity in a substantial manner, but in some other way" (35) – namely, in the category of relation.

There are also a number of corollaries which Boethius interweaves into his discussion. The unity of substance of the three persons implies that anything predicated of one of them individually in the category of substance can be predicated of the others, as well as of the three collectively. Thus it is true not only that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but that the three together are one God; likewise, not only is the Son truth (as attested in the Gospel of John), so are the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the three collectively are one truth. Furthermore, given the test mentioned earlier, anything predicated of the three collectively which is not predicated of them individually is not predicated in the category of substance. This means that the term "Trinity" is not predicated substantially of God, since it cannot be predicated of each of the persons individually; it is instead, like the personal names, predicated only relatively.

Taken as a whole, this is a remarkably compact and tightly woven piece of reasoning. If it goes wrong it is likely to do so at the beginning, and that is indeed where difficulties arise. What precisely is meant in saying that each of the three is *substantia*? Owing to the absence of the indefinite article in Latin, this could mean either that each of the three is *a* substance (using 'substance' as a count noun) or that each is substance (using 'substance' as a mass noun).²⁴ In support of the former interpretation is the fact that Boethius goes on to say that the three taken together are "not several substances but one substance," where substances are clearly things that can be counted. In support of the latter is the fact that he also speaks of "the one substance of the three" (33) and of whether terms such as "Trinity" "belong to substance" (37). In locutions such as these, substance would seem to be an ontological component of that to which it belongs, much like an Aristotelian essence or a Platonic Form.²⁵ If we take the term in this way, then, in saying that each of the three is substance, Boethius means that each is *simply* substance, i.e., identical to that which makes it what it is.²⁶

Presumably one should adopt whichever reading produces a valid argument. The trouble is that neither actually does so. On the first

reading, if each of the three is a substance and the three taken together are a substance, how does it follow that "the one substance of the three" (which must be taken in the second sense, as an ontological constituent) is indivisible? One can readily imagine three substances which together make up one substance, without the one substance being simple in the relevant sense.²⁷ On the second reading, the initial premises of the argument turn out to be about quite different subjects: the first says that each of the three is substance (i.e., identical to its own essence), whereas the second says that the three taken together make up *a* substance. These premises do not yield the conclusion that the substance of the three (which, again, must be taken as an ontological constituent) is one and indivisible.

Thus there are serious logical problems in the *Utrum Pater*, as there were also in *On the Trinity*. In light of these difficulties, what conclusions should we draw regarding Boethius' Trinitarian theology? The high status which these treatises later came to be accorded should not obscure how radical they are from the standpoint of the earlier Christian tradition. Boethius attempts to demonstrate the coherence of Trinitarian doctrine on purely philosophical grounds, without reference to Scripture, and without the apophaticism or the careful attention to the limitations of language which had been characteristic of earlier authors. It is an audacious enterprise, and if it ends in failure, perhaps the lesson to be drawn is that the undertaking itself is misguided. Boethius himself probably had a better sense of the risks accompanying his enterprise than did some of his later commentators; as he remarks at the end of *On the Trinity*, "if human nature has failed to reach beyond its limits, whatever my weakness takes away, my prayers will make up" (31).

ON THE CATHOLIC FAITH

On the Catholic Faith is the only one of the treatises whose Boethian authorship is still widely doubted. The main reason is that in the manuscripts it is not explicitly attributed to Boethius, as are the others; in addition, some have felt that as a mere dogmatic statement it is not the sort of thing which one might expect to come from the pen of Boethius. The first objection has been met by the reply that this treatise, unlike the others, has no particular addressee, and therefore would not normally receive a superscription.²⁸ The second objection

has led several scholars to make a detailed comparison of the treatise's style and content with those of Boethius' other writings. These investigations on the whole support the conclusion that the treatise is authentic.²⁹ There is also the important point that the *Anecdota Holderi* refers to Boethius as the author of "certain dogmatic chapters," and, of the writings which have come down to us under his name, only the fourth treatise fits this description.

Assuming Boethian authorship, it would be fair to say that in the fourth treatise, more than any other, Boethius speaks in the voice of a Roman senator. The tone throughout is measured, confident, and authoritative. Indeed, authority (*auctoritas*) – its marks and proper locus – is perhaps the treatise's most fundamental theme. The first sentence begins, "The Christian faith is proclaimed by the authority of the New Testament and the Old" (53); and the second sentence continues, "Now this our religion which is called Christian and Catholic is supported chiefly on these foundations which it asserts," proceeding then to a string of dogmatic affirmations. Despite the confident appeal to Scripture, Boethius makes no attempt to support his assertions on that basis, resting instead on the authority of *religio nostra*.³⁰ Trinitarian doctrine is presented without any effort to show either that it is internally consistent or that it is the best (if perhaps mysterious and paradoxical) interpretation of Scripture. Instead we are simply told, "our religion calls the Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God, and yet not three Gods but one" (53). The manner in which the Son is begotten by the Father, and how procession differs from generation, are among the things which cannot be understood by the human mind but must be accepted because they have been "laid down for our belief" (55). Here and throughout, Boethius seems deliberately to be challenging his reader to believe the Church's teaching for no reason other than that it is the Church's teaching.

Why he adopts this procedure is a matter for conjecture. E.K. Rand, in his classic work *Founders of the Middle Ages*, suggests that Boethius wrote *On the Catholic Faith* to summarize for himself his own beliefs, with no intention of circulating it further.³¹ Another suggestion is that of William Bark, who proposes that it was written to explain Christian doctrine in a simple way for an audience confused by theological debates.³² Neither of these conjectures accounts either for the work's tone or for the balance of its content, which

inclines more toward biblical history than controversial theological issues (although several heresies are discussed briefly). A more likely suggestion is that of Henry Chadwick, who remarks that "the tract reads almost like a gage of challenge to the educated, late Roman, aristocratic reader, emphatically, even defiantly insisting on the supernatural and distinctive elements in orthodox Christianity."³³ That would explain why Boethius adopts such a dogmatic and peremptory tone: he is deliberately underscoring for a proud and sophisticated audience that Christianity requires an act of intellectual submission.

Yet there is an irony in the work which seems to have gone unremarked by previous commentators. Although Boethius claims to be presenting the faith of the Catholic – that is, universal – Church, what he presents is in fact the faith of the *western* Church. Signs of this limitation are apparent from almost the beginning, when he asserts that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (55). This is the famous doctrine of the *filioque*, which later became one of the primary bones of contention between the eastern and western halves of Christendom. Since he addresses the subject in only half a sentence, Boethius is apparently unaware that the Greek Fathers held that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone (or, in some variants, from the Father "through the Son").³⁴ He also seems unaware that the notion that the guilt of Adam's transgression (and not only its debilitating effects on human nature) is physically propagated to Adam's descendants is specifically western, and indeed Augustinian.³⁵ So too is the notion that mankind was created to replace the ranks of the fallen angels.³⁶ More generally, the heavy emphasis that Boethius places on the "arrogant disobedience" of man, and the justice of the consequent punishment, is alien to the outlook of the Greek Fathers, who tend instead to see the Fall as the consequence of ignorance and immaturity, and the subsequent punishment as a kind of medicine given to heal our fallen nature. The difference is most marked in the strange assertion that God allowed Abel to die before Adam so that Adam, "doomed to death himself, might be the more powerfully tormented by the apprehension of it" (61).³⁷

These differences must also be seen against the background of what Boethius does not say. Admittedly, since *On the Catholic Faith* belongs to no particular genre one cannot say precisely what

should be expected of it; it is not a catechetical instruction, nor a refutation of heresy, nor an exhortation delivered for a particular occasion, nor an enchiridion of the sort composed by Augustine. Nonetheless, the exclusive focus on what the Church *asserts*, as opposed to what she practices, is certainly striking. There is no mention of prayer, or liturgy, or monasticism, or reverence for the saints, or the elementary duties of charity and almsgiving. A brief mention is made of the sacraments, but it consists only in the statement that Christ "instituted certain health-giving sacraments [so] that mankind might recognize that one thing was due to it through the fault of nature, but another thing through the gift of grace" (69). This statement is striking on two counts: first for the typically Augustinian dichotomy between nature and grace, and second for its reduction of the role of the sacraments to a teaching function. Faced with such a strange concentration on what the sacraments say, as opposed to what they *do*, one may legitimately wonder whether any account of Christian belief, presented wholly in isolation from Christian practice, can succeed even as an account of belief.

AGAINST EUTYCHES AND NESTORIUS

As mentioned earlier, *Against Eutyches and Nestorius* was the first of the theological tractates, being written in late 512 or early 513 in response to a letter from some unnamed Greek bishops to Pope Symmachus. More precisely, it was written in response to what Boethius saw as the hasty and ill-informed reaction to the letter when it was read in the Senate. In his preface Boethius gives us a vivid picture of the reading and the subsequent commotion, but without going into detail regarding what was said. He does mention that the letter proposed that Christ should be confessed to be both "of" (*ex*) and "in" two natures, and that this is what sparked the heated discussion. A little background is needed to appreciate the importance of these prepositions. That Christ is *in* two natures, human and divine, was a key element in the *definitio fidei* of the Council of Chalcedon (451). The Council affirmed that Christ is "made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one person (*prosōpon*)

and individual being (*hypostasis*) – not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, the only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ."³⁸ This emphasis on the continuing distinction of the two natures is the hallmark of a dyophysite Christology such as that advocated by Pope Leo the Great, whose *Tome* formed part of the basis for the Council's definition.

Dyophysitism is opposed to a monophysite view such as that advocated by St. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria (412–44). Cyril's favorite formula was that there is in Christ "one incarnate nature of God the Word," that nature being both human and divine. Cyril's explanations make it plain that by "nature" he had in mind not a common essence or set of properties, but the individual concrete being who was Christ. Eventually Cyril was persuaded to accept that, as regards such terms, "theologians employ some indifferently in view of the unity of person [in Christ], but distinguish others in view of the duality of natures," and thus that to speak of two natures in Christ can be perfectly orthodox.³⁹ Although Cyril died before the Council of Chalcedon, his concession on this point offered some hope that the Council's description of Christ as one person in two natures, although superficially dyophysite, would be acceptable to monophysites as well. In the event this hope was not realized; the monophysites instead rallied against the Council, leading to a further round of debate in which the two sides grew increasingly polarized.

This is not the place to recount the complicated history of the Christological controversies in the sixty years between Chalcedon and the time of Boethius' treatise.⁴⁰ Suffice to say that the two persons against whom Boethius wrote, Eutyches and Nestorius, were by 512 long dead and had few followers, at least within the Empire. Each was instead an emblem for a certain type of theology, and to be called a follower of either was a kind of smear (much as today Hitler and Stalin are emblems for a certain type of politics, and to be called a Hitlerite or Stalinist is a smear). Nestorius had been patriarch of Constantinople from 428 until he was deposed in 431. The hallmark of his theology was the view that Christ was of two natures and two hypostases, which were united in what Nestorius called the "*prosōpon* of union." *Prosōpon* would seem to mean here not so much "person" as "face or outer aspect," so that Nestorius found in Christ only a unity of action and outward manifestation, but not of being. After his condemnation Nestorius was widely seen as

representing an extreme and untenable dyophysitism, and the accusation of Nestorianism was a favorite charge used by monophysites against their opponents. Eutyches had been the archimandrite of a monastery outside of Constantinople, and was an extreme follower of Cyril. He was known for his express denial that Christ was of two natures "after the union," and for apparently teaching – although this is less certain – that in Christ the human nature was "swallowed up" by divinity. He was deposed at Chalcedon in 451, and became thereafter the emblem of an extreme and untenable monophysitism.⁴¹

We now are in a position to appreciate the letter of the Greek bishops. Despite his reluctant acceptance of the notion that Christ is "in" two natures, Cyril had preferred to say that Christ is "of" (or "from," *ek*) two natures, thereby leaving room for speaking of one nature after their union. The bishops at Chalcedon had, in fact, originally used the more ambiguous "of," and had changed it to "in" only under pressure from the Roman legates. The significance of the letter of the Greek bishops lay in its seeking the Pope's approval for a modest compromise, one that would use both the Cyrillian "of" and the Chalcedonian "in," and would thus offer hope of reconciling the more moderate monophysites. Although Boethius does not say so explicitly, part of what moved him to write was apparently his frustration at the intransigence of Pope Symmachus, backed by the curia and the Senate, in refusing any such compromise. Their attitude is illustrated by the statement some years later of the Roman presbyter, Trifolius: "The apostolic see of Rome has never permitted a single syllable or a single dot to be added to or subtracted from the faith of the Synod of Chalcedon. Beware lest anyone deceive you with empty philosophical fallacies!"⁴² The carefully reasoned support which Boethius gave to the compromise played an important role in changing such attitudes. Eventually the compromise formula was accepted officially at the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553).

Let us turn now to Boethius' text. The first issue addressed is the meaning of 'nature'. Boethius distinguishes four meanings of this term, of which the first three are each progressively narrower in scope. Nature can be all those things which exist and are in some way apprehended by intellect; substances alone, i.e., those things that can act or be acted upon; or the internal principle of movement present in corporeal substances. He then adds a fourth definition, which will turn out to be the one most relevant to Christology: "the

specific difference that gives form to anything" (81). A "specific difference" is here the defining characteristic that distinguishes one species from another in the same genus; it "gives form" in the sense that it determines the actual content of the genus, to which it stands as form to matter. As Boethius observes, it is this fourth sense which is at issue in the debate over whether Christ is of one or two natures.

Next is the definition of 'person' (*persona*). Here Boethius reverts briefly to the second sense of 'nature', identifying person as something predicated of nature in the sense of substance. But which substances? In answer Boethius analyzes the types of substance, concluding that 'person' is said of both rational corporeal substances (human beings) and rational incorporeal substances (God and the angels). He thereby arrives at his famous definition of person as "the individual substance of a rational nature" (85).

Both the procedure by which Boethius arrives at this definition, and the definition itself, raise important questions. The procedure seems to place God within a genus, that of rational incorporeal substance, whereas traditionally God is held not to belong to a genus. More specifically, to identify God as a type of substance runs afoul of Boethius' own recognition, in Chapter 4 of *On the Trinity*, that properly speaking God is "beyond substance" (*ultra substantiam*) because He is identical with His own attributes.⁴³ It is true that, a few pages later in the present treatise, Boethius will defend the application of the term 'substance' to God on the grounds that "He is as it were the principle beneath all things, bringing it about for all things that they have existence (*ousiōsthai*) and subsist" (93). However, this makes God substance in quite a different sense from that of creatures, whereas the procedure of dividing the various types of substance and locating God among them requires that 'substance' be univocal.

Another problem is that Boethius seems to treat God as a single person, whereas in Trinitarian doctrine God is three persons rather than one. This difficulty is linked to another, namely that, on Boethius' own showing, the names of the divine persons are said in the category of relation rather than that of substance. How then can person itself be a kind of substance? This apparent inconsistency has led many critics to reject Boethius' definition as fundamentally misguided.⁴⁴ Yet Boethius has some eminent defenders, among them Thomas Aquinas, who argues that the Boethian definition can be reconciled with his own view that the persons of the Trinity are

subsistent relations.⁴⁵ We cannot enter into the intricacies of this topic here, save to note that the ambivalence of Boethius regarding whether God is one person or three may in part derive from a similar ambivalence of Augustine.⁴⁶

Boethius next adds that by *persona* he means the same as what the Greeks call *hypostasis*, that is, "the individual subsistence of a rational nature" (87). This claim could be challenged on two counts, one of which Boethius addresses and one of which he does not. The issue he addresses is that *persona* is etymologically closer to *prosōpon* than to *hypostasis*. Boethius observes that both of the former terms originally signified a mask worn by an actor, and came thereby to mean someone designated according to his appearance or social role.⁴⁷ However, he sees this as merely an etymological point, not one that should bar him from defining *persona* as strictly an ontological category. The other concern is that *hypostasis* in fact did not mean what Boethius alleges, the individual subsistence of a *rational* nature; it meant an individual subsistence of *any* nature, including, for example, a horse or a rock. This is partly why it had regularly to be paired with *prosōpon* in the Trinitarian and Christological debates.⁴⁸ However, it is true that because of their frequent association the two terms had come to be seen as more or less equivalent within these limited contexts, and it is this context-dependent sense that Boethius no doubt has in mind.

There follow a number of further claims about Greek and Latin equivalents. Boethius cites as an axiom of the Greeks that "essences can indeed exist (*esse, einai*) in universals, but they have substance (*substant, hyphistantai*) in individuals and particulars alone" (87).⁴⁹ He adds that one must distinguish having subsistence (*subsistere*) from having substance (*substare*): the former refers to not requiring accidents in order to be, whereas the latter refers to providing other things with a substrate enabling them to be. Thus genera and species have subsistence only, whereas individuals have both subsistence and substance. Surprisingly, whereas up to this point Boethius has explained *hypostasis* in terms of individual subsistence, he now states that *hypostasis* is equivalent to *substantia* as he has defined it, whereas the equivalent of *subsistentia* is *ousiōsis*. This is surprising not only because it is a shift from his earlier usage, but because *ousiōsis* normally refers to the process of bringing something into being rather than to the thing which results from that process.⁵⁰ However, the

equivalencies between verbs cited by Boethius (*ousiōsthai* for *subsistere*, *hyphistasthai* for *substare*) are more plausible, and he has probably chosen the nouns as necessary to correspond to the verbs.

However interesting they are in their own right, these equivalencies play little role in the subsequent arguments against Eutyches and Nestorius. Boethius understands Nestorius as teaching that Christ was two persons, one human and one divine. From this view Boethius rapidly deduces a number of absurdities. Nothing can be formed out of two persons, which means that for Nestorius Christ is either nothing at all, or he is two Christs, one man and one God. Alternatively, if only the human person is to be called Christ because God worked through him, then why should not any thing through which God works also be named Christ? Finally, on Nestorius' view there can have been no true Incarnation, for "so long as the persons remain, we cannot in any wise believe that humanity has been assumed by divinity" (99). Unfortunately all of this deals with something of a straw man, since it ignores Nestorius' emphatic teaching that Christ was a single person, the "*prosōpon* of union." It is true that Nestorius also held that each of the natures retained its own *prosōpon*. Surely what this means is that a *prosōpon* is not for Nestorius, as it is for Boethius, a strictly ontological category; it is instead a form of appearance, the concrete presentation of a nature *ad extra*. Boethius' argument is thus less a critique of Nestorius than of a view which had come to be popularly associated with his name.

The critique of Eutyches is more elaborate. Boethius focuses on the puzzles raised by the notion that there were "two natures in Christ before the union and only one after the union" (103). First, when did the union occur? If at the time of Christ's begetting, one is left with the odd supposition that Christ possessed a human nature before he existed, which seems plainly absurd.⁵¹ The other possibility is that the union occurred at the other terminus of Christ's earthly life, the resurrection. Boethius deals with this possibility through a complex argument by division. First, on this view did Christ receive human flesh from Mary? If not, then he was not truly human, and there was no Incarnation. But if he did, then there are three possibilities: "either divinity was translated into humanity, or humanity into divinity, or both were so modified and mingled that neither substance kept its proper form" (109). The first possibility can be dismissed because divinity is by nature immutable. The second requires more attention,

but Boethius argues against it on the grounds that for one thing to be changed into another requires that they possess a common substrate, and neither the human body nor the human soul possesses a common substrate with God.⁵² The most interesting possibility, and the one which Boethius thinks the Eutychians actually hold, is the third. On this view the fusion of the natures produced a third thing in which each nature lost its separate identity, as when honey is mixed with water. Surprisingly, Boethius does not argue against this view, merely observing that it is contrary to the Catholic faith (1115).

Instead he turns to expounding the Catholic view. He explains that there are two meanings of the preposition "of": one, assigned to it by the Eutychians, in which it implies that the two natures do not retain their separate identity; the other, assigned to it by Catholics, in which the two natures endure like the gold and gems in a crown. In effect, Boethius here sanitizes the preposition "of" from its contamination by Eutyches. He also observes that the preservation of both natures in Christ implies the legitimacy of theopaschitism: "God may be said to have suffered, not because manhood became Godhead itself but because it was assumed by Godhead" (1119). As mentioned earlier, the legitimacy of theopaschite language was the question that would provoke Boethius to write his two treatises on the Trinity, although he addresses it explicitly only here.

The last chapter of the work is a kind of appendix addressing the relationship of Christ's humanity to original sin. Certain unnamed persons had objected that if Christ's human flesh derived from Mary he would be subject to original sin. Boethius takes this as the opportunity to clarify precisely what sort of human nature Christ assumed. Was it like that of Adam prior to the Fall, after the Fall, or as he would have become apart from the Fall? In reply he offers a carefully balanced account granting a place to all three. Christ's mortal body was of the condition of mankind after sin; his command over his body of the condition of mankind prior to sin; and his will (i.e., his absence of all desire for sin) of the condition mankind would have achieved had the Fall not occurred.⁵³

CONCLUSION

I have observed that each of the four treatises discussed here is problematic. The problems derive in part from Boethius' desire to

treat theological issues using a purely philosophical method, and in part from his exclusive reliance on Augustine as a theological authority. In addition, there is a certain tendency to exaggerate the role of authority itself within theology, as if theology's sole task were to make authoritative pronouncements which it is then the job of philosophy to render rationally coherent. This is not a very fruitful way to think of the relationship between the two disciplines. Despite such problems, however, the treatises remain a remarkable achievement. Boethius almost single-handedly made philosophy into theology's indispensable handmaiden, in the process raising theology to a new level of sophistication.⁵⁴ Anyone who finds his views unsatisfactory would do well to consider the challenge posed at the end of the *Utrum Pater*: "if you are in any point of another opinion, examine carefully what has been said, and if possible, reconcile faith and reason" (37).

NOTES

1. See Usener 1877. The fragment is known as the *Anecdoton Holderi* after its discoverer, Alfred Holder. Usener's conclusion that it is by Cassiodorus has been challenged by Galonnier 1997; even so, Galonnier 2007 concludes, on other grounds, that the *Opuscula* are by Boethius.
2. See Schurr 1935, 108–27; Chadwick 1981, 181–3; Daley 1984, 178–80.
3. Schurr 1935, 136–227; cf. Chadwick 1981, 185–90, 211–13; Daley 1984, 183–5.
4. See Chadwick 1981, 26–9.
5. Quotations are from the Loeb translation by Stewart, Rand, and Tester (Boethius 1973), with page references in the text. For the Latin see the Loeb or the critical edition by Moreschini (2005) (which rarely differ save in punctuation).
6. For Gregory's treatise see Gregory of Nyssa 1952–III.1, 37–57, and for a translation see *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* v, 331–6. I pass over another argument offered by Gregory (pertaining to the unity of human nature) which is not relevant here.
7. 'Apophaticism' (from *apophasis*, denial) refers to the denial of predicates to God, and more generally to an emphasis upon the inadequacy of human language or concepts in describing God; 'kataphaticism' (from *kataphasis*, affirmation) refers to the ascription of such predicates, and more generally to their acceptance as adequate.
8. For further discussion of fourth-century Trinitarian theology see Kelly 1978, 223–79, or (in greater detail) Behr 2004. I have discussed some specifics of Gregory's argument in Bradshaw 2004, 154–64.

9. See Bradshaw 2004, 222–9.
10. The similarity is not accidental, for Augustine was largely inspired by the Plotinian description of Intellect (the second hypostasis of Plotinus' system), and this in turn was inspired by Aristotle's description of the Prime Mover, particularly as it had been interpreted by Alexander of Aphrodisias; cf. Bradshaw 2008.
11. See *Metaphysics* vi.1, and for comparison with the somewhat similar division in Boethius' first commentary on the *Isagoge* see Gersh 1986 n, 658–64. (Admittedly, Aristotle does not say that the subject of theology is *form* existing separately from matter, but this is a plausible construal in light of his discussion of the Prime Mover.)
12. For God as the first and highest form see *On True Religion* 11.21, 18.35, 36.66, *On Free Choice* 11.16.44–17.46, *City of God* viii.6; and for God as *ipsum esse* see *On the Trinity* v.2.3, *Commentary on the Psalms* 134.4, Sermon 7.7.
13. For example, Augustine, *On the Trinity* vii.6.11, viii.2.3, x.5.7–6.8, 8.11, xi.5.8.
14. See Augustine, *On the Trinity* v.10.11, vi.7.8, vii.1.2, xv.5.7–8, 13.22, 17.29; *City of God* viii.6, xi.10. Boethius returns to the subject of divine simplicity in Chapter 4 of *On the Trinity*, and his discussion there is more typically Augustinian.
15. Compare Augustine, *On the Trinity* v.4.5, which argues to the same conclusion from divine immutability.
16. Augustine, *On the Trinity* vii.4.9. He also observes that the plural is freely used of God in Scripture, as in the statement of Jesus that "I and my Father are one" (vii.6.12).
17. We may note in passing that the application of these distinctions to God is not as straightforward as Boethius seems to suppose. For example, Augustine holds that God is identical with His own eternity, a view which became standard among the later scholastics (*Homily 2 on Psalm 101*, Ch. 10). Would Boethius differ from him on this point, or would he instead hold that 'God is eternal' is not a predication in the category of time, after all? (The treatment of divine eternity in the *Consolation of Philosophy* suggests the latter, but if so it is at odds with the present work.) It is also far from clear that the category of action is merely external as applied to God, if Augustine and the scholastics are right in identifying God with His own knowing and willing. Note that in the *Quomodo substantiae* Boethius asserts that God's being and acting (*agere*) are the same (51).
18. Boethius has not in fact said that the three persons differ only by relation, but perhaps he takes this as implied by his earlier denial of plurality in God.

19. He does offer a definition in the fifth treatise (to be discussed below), but its applicability within the Trinity is far from clear.
20. A similar point is made by Marenbon 2003a, 86, in observing that Boethius does not reconcile the notion that relation introduces plurality in God with the claim that the relation is "like that of the same to the same."
21. For a similar criticism see Stump 1983, 141–3.
22. See Augustine, *On the Trinity* v.5.6.
23. Compare the similar rule in Augustine, *On the Trinity* v.8.9.
24. Both translations can be found, e.g., the Loeb translation and the more recent English rendering by Eric Kenyon (available at www.pvspade.com/Logic) give the former; Galonnier 2007 gives the latter.
25. See particularly *Phaedo* 65e, where the Forms are the substance (*ousia*) of sensible objects.
26. This is the meaning of the term in the passage of *On the Trinity* pp. 16–18 where Boethius says that only God is substance, since other things owe their being to something other than themselves.
27. For example, a body and its parts (assuming that the parts of a substance can be substances), or three water droplets which merge into one.
28. Cappuyns 1937, 372.
29. See Bark 1946, Chadwick 1980, and Galonnier 2007, 380–409; but see also the cautionary note sounded on the basis of stylometric analysis by Lambert 2003.
30. Later it appears that Scripture itself is merely a mark of the most comprehensive religious authority, the Catholic Church. The Church can be known by three signs: "whatever is believed in it has the authority of the Scriptures, or of universal tradition, or at least of its own and proper teaching" (71). Thus there is no need to ascertain whether a given teaching has the support of Scripture provided that it is taught by the Church.
31. Rand 1928, 157.
32. Bark 1946, 68–9.
33. Chadwick 1981, 179–80.
34. See Principe 1997. Galonnier 2007, 402 makes the interesting suggestion that Boethius' words (the Spirit is *a patre quoque procedentem vel filio*) mean only that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *as the Son is engendered*, thus leaving the Father the sole causal principle. It seems to me that if this were what Boethius meant, he would have offered some explanation; besides, as Galonnier notes, Chapter 5 of *On the Trinity* states simply that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, without any such qualification.
35. See Williams 1929, 167–314; Meyendorff 1975, 143–6. Williams does note some precedents for the idea in Origen, Ambrose, and Ambrosiaster, but its later prevalence was unquestionably due to Augustine.

36. See Augustine, *Enchiridion* Ch. 29, 61-2; *City of God* xxii.1. Here too there is a precedent in Origen (*Homilies on Ezekiel* xiii.2), but the notion's prevalence was due to Augustine.
37. For discussion of the rather meager precedents of this idea see Galonnier 2007, 405-8.
38. Kelly 1978, 340.
39. The quotation is from the Symbol of Union accepted by Cyril in 433; see Kelly 1978, 328-9.
40. See, for example, Meyendorff 1975, 13-46; Gray 1979.
41. For more on Nestorius and Eutyches see Kelly 1978, 310-17, 330-4.
42. Quoted by Daley 1984, 180; cf. Chadwick 1981, 190.
43. See also the hesitations of Augustine in applying the term *substantia* to God (*On the Trinity* vii.5.10).
44. For example, Ratzinger 1990; cf. extensive discussion in Schlapkohl 1999 and Hipp 2001.
45. *Summa theologiae* I, Q. 29.
46. See Augustine, *On the Trinity* vii.6.11.
47. This is not quite right, since *prosōpon* originally meant "face," and that seems to have been the root of most of its later development; but it is true that this development included the sense of "mask."
48. For discussion of the complex history of these terms see Prestige 1952, 157-90; Stead 1994, 173-83, 194-9.
49. The source of this dictum is probably Alexander of Aphrodisias; cf. Chadwick 1981, 193. (I have changed the Loeb rendering of *substare* to "have substance" in order to maintain consistency.)
50. See the relevant entries in Liddell and Scott 1996 and Lampe 1961.
51. Actually it may not be so absurd, if what Eutyches had in mind was something like the Platonic ideal of humanity (as suggested by Stead 1994, 212). Boethius does not consider this possibility.
52. For the requirement of a common substrate see Aristotle, *Physics* 1.7, *On Generation and Corruption* 1.1; cf. Chadwick 1981, 199-200. Even granting the applicability of this doctrine from Aristotelian physics to God and humanity, there seems to be a confusion here. As Marenbon observes, "the question is about whether human *nature* can be transformed into, or mixed with, divine *nature*; and these natures correspond to the qualities (A and B, winey or watery) not to the things (a and b, wine or water) in Boethius's physical example" (2003a, 75).
53. For the sources of this division in Augustine see Chadwick 1981, 202.
54. As Daley 1984 observes, this process occurred almost simultaneously with a similar movement in the Greek-speaking East, so that scholasticism had two more or less independent births.

6 The metaphysics of individuals in the *Opuscula sacra*

Three of the five treatises that comprise the *Opuscula sacra* contain interesting philosophical material.¹ All three treatises attempt to make aspects of God intelligible using Greek philosophical concepts. The treatise *Quomodo substantiae* (OS iii) discusses how something can be essentially predicated of both God and His creatures. *On the Trinity* (OS i) and *Against Eutyches and Nestorius* (OS v) are concerned with the individuality and unity of, respectively, God and Christ. Along the way to formulating his solution to his chosen puzzles, Boethius presents some of the elements of a general theory of individuals.

In this chapter we will concentrate on the general theory of individuals that can be reconstructed from Boethius' *Opuscula*.² The theological treatises are not the only places that he discusses individuals, and at times we will make use of Boethius' commentaries on Aristotle and Porphyry to flesh out some of his remarks.³ Nonetheless, we will focus on the account of individuals that can be reconstructed from the theological treatises for two reasons. First, this account has exerted a tremendous influence on subsequent generations. Second, Boethius admits that his main role in the logical commentaries is to present a sympathetic elucidation of Aristotle's or Porphyry's views.⁴ The doctrines in the *Opuscula* presumably are Boethius' own.

After we have examined and reconstructed Boethius' general treatment of individuals, we will finish this chapter by asking whether this general account of individuals can illuminate the nature of the Incarnation and the Trinity.

THE METAPHYSICS OF INDIVIDUALS

A complete metaphysical theory of individuals should account for the things that we pre-theoretically take to be paradigmatic cases of individuals. Hence, the theory should be able to account for things like Adam and Eve, Loti the cat and Leafy the tree, and individual artifacts such as my car and my toaster. It may be that our theory will tell us that these things are not real or that they are derivative beings. Nevertheless, the theory will need to explain why Adam, Loti, Leafy, and my car appear to be individuals.

In addition to these paradigmatic cases, we will need to entertain the possibility that aggregates, such as flocks of geese, crowds of humans, and piles of stones, are individuals. We will also consider whether the constituents and properties of our paradigmatic individuals can themselves be individuals.

When considering the nature of individuals, one must first disentangle two dominant senses of the term "individual." In one sense of the term, Adam is an individual in that he is not a universal. As Boethius puts it in his commentaries on Aristotle and Porphyry, a universal is predicable of many, whereas an individual is at most predicable of one thing.⁵ Adam is at most predicable of one thing, because we can only claim that this thing is Adam. We cannot say that both *this* thing and *that* thing are Adam.

Boethius is also working with this first sense of "individual" when he claims that individuals are indivisible, whereas universals are divisible. At first glance, the claim that individuals are indivisible might sound strange. Adam is divisible into form and matter. Adam is also divisible into his various organs. And if we were truly gruesome, we could also saw Adam down the middle. But this is not what Boethius means when he claims that particulars are indivisible (2IS 195.12-18; cf. CAT 174B):

However, "individual" is said in several ways. An individual is said to be that which cannot in any way be cut – as is the case with a unity or mind. An individual is also said to be that which cannot be divided on account of its solidity – as is the case with a diamond. And an individual is said to be that whose predication is not suitable for any other like thing (*in reliqua similia non convenit*) – e.g. Socrates. For, even though there are other men similar [to Socrates], the property and predication of Socrates is not suitable for any other.

The last sense of "individual" mentioned is what is important for our purposes, and it is a sense of "individual" or "indivisible" that is distinct from the sort of division that occurs when one cuts Adam into parts. The division of Adam into form and matter and the division of Adam into his organs fall under a different mode of division, namely, the division of an *integral* whole into its parts.⁶

In contrast to the divisions of an integral whole into its parts, the divisions of the universal into universals and of the universal into particulars are logical divisions. It is not always easy to see that logical divisions are a different sort of division because ancient and medieval authors often describe universals as "wholes." The items that fall under a universal are called that universal's "parts." However, Boethius, like most ancient and medieval thinkers, is not proposing that universals are literally composed out of the items that fall under them. So, for example, it is not the case that humanity is composed out of Adam, Eve, and all the other human beings in the world. In the case of universals and particulars, collection and division are logical operations. When one groups things together because they share a common feature, one is *collecting* together things. When one itemizes the things that fall under a universal, this is known as *division*. Accordingly, when I classify all things like Andrew and Eve as humans, I am collecting a multitude under a single species, humanity. When I classify all things like Adam, Eve, and my cat Loti, I am collecting a multitude under a single genus, namely, *Animal*. When I say that some animals are rational and some animals are irrational, I am beginning to divide the genus into species. When I divide the species humanity into the things that fall under it, I am dividing the species into individuals. Hence, when Boethius claims that Adam is logically indivisible, he is alluding to the fact that Adam is neither a genus nor a species.

There is a second important sense of "individual," which is alluded to in the previous quotation from Boethius' commentary on the *Isagoge*. Adam is not merely non-universal, Adam is an integrated whole. Pre-philosophically, we think that the parts of Adam are glued together in such a way that Adam can move about in and interact with the world "as a whole."⁷ It is when we turn to this second sense of "individual" that we begin to wonder whether aggregates are sufficiently integrated to be individuals. This second sense of individual also seems to not apply to many of the constituents of Adam. Adam's humanity, Adam's

paleness, and perhaps even Adam's matter may be individuals in the first sense, but they are not individuals in the second sense.

When ancient authors focus on individuals in the second sense, they often describe them as "unities." Boethius himself does not always take care to distinguish these two senses of individual. But let us try to distinguish them by speaking of "instances" when we are talking about individuals in the first sense, and "integrated unities" when we are discussing individuals in the second sense.

A complete metaphysical account of individuals will attempt to answer at least the following questions:⁸

- (1) If *x* is an integrated unity, what makes *x* an integrated unity?
- (2) If *x* is an instance, what makes *x* an instance?

The second question can be broken down into two parts:

- (2a) If *x* is an instance, what makes *x* an instance of a universal, or kind? That is, why does *x* belong to a type that includes other instances?
- (2b) If *x* is an instance, what makes *x* distinct from other instances of that kind?

This last question also needs to be disambiguated, for we might be asking for an answer to the question:

- (2b¹) Why is *x* an instance, which is distinct from all other members of a kind?

Or, we might be asking

- (2b²) Why is *x* this instance, which is distinct from all other members of a kind?

The difference between (2b¹) and (2b²) is this: the former question is asking for the reason why Adam is an instance of the universal *human being*. The second question is asking for the reason why Adam is Adam, and not Eve, who is also an instance of the universal *human being*.

Question (1) is asking for an account of integration. Question (2a) is asking for the metaphysical reason why instances belong to kinds. Question (2b) in all its forms is asking for an account of individuation. Let us turn to Boethius' account of integration in the next section. In the two sections that follow, we will then turn to his accounts of belonging to a kind and of individuation, respectively.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF INTEGRATED UNITIES

Some integrated unities do not have parts. We will say that these entities are *mereologically simple*. Other integrated unities have parts. We will say that they are *mereologically complex*. It would seem at first glance that no account of unity is required for mereologically simple unities. But as we will see, Boethius seems to think that some mereologically simple entities are more unified than others. But before we examine the grades of simple unities, let us consider the construction of mereologically complex integrated unities.

In *On the Trinity* Boethius tells us that the parts of a composite give the composite its "being" (OS I, II, 94-7; Boethius 1973, p. 11 - all references to OS in English are to this Loeb edition):

Each and every thing gets its being from those things which compose it (*ex his ex quibus est*) - i.e. from its parts. That is, [each composite thing] is this and this (*hoc et hoc*) - that is, its parts conjoined - and not this or this taken singularly.

As Boethius tells us in his *On Division*, material individuals can be divided in any number of ways (D 888A-B).⁹ But the parts that Boethius is most interested in are form and matter - or, in the case of a human being, soul and body.¹⁰ Let us call these parts *hylomorphic* parts.

Boethius tells us in a number of places in his logical treatises that a whole is "naturally prior" to its parts (D 879B-C; TC (Cicero 1833) III, 331.23-9 and I, 289.35-9). It is not entirely clear whether "x is naturally prior to y" means that y is ontologically dependent upon x.¹¹ If that were the meaning of this rule and if the rule were entirely general, it would have some perverse results. For a house would be ontologically dependent upon its windows, and Adam would be ontologically dependent upon his finger.

When restricted to a discussion of the hylomorphic parts of an integrated unity, it is clear that Boethius thinks that the composite integrated unity ontologically depends upon its form and its matter. Nevertheless, the integrated unity ontologically depends upon its matter in a different manner than it depends upon its forms. The matter is only potentially the thing. It may (as we will see below) also play a role in individuating the thing. But while some matter needs to

be present to combine with forms – and this matter may need to be the right sort of stuff – the matter does not contribute to the thing's "being" in the strictest sense (OS I, II, 83–9; Loeb p. 111):

All being comes from form. For a statue is not said to be a likeness of some animal in virtue of the bronze, which is its matter, but rather in virtue of its form, which has been impressed into the [bronze]. And this is not said to be bronze in virtue of earth, which is [the bronze's] matter, but in virtue of the [Aristotelian] form of the bronze (*aeris figuram*). And earth itself is not spoken of *kata tēn hulēn* [sc. in virtue of its matter], but in virtue of dryness and heaviness, which are its forms.

Clearly, Boethius is playing with several senses of "being" in this passage. One sense of "being" is existential. The form is the cause of the fact that the thing exists, since by itself matter is not the thing. The matter is potentially the thing, but it needs the form to actually be the thing. There is a second sense in which the form causes the being of a thing. When a form combines with matter it makes a thing of a certain type exist. In other words, the thing is an *F* – say, a dog or a human or pale – because a form is present. Hence, while a material thing requires both form and matter in order to exist, its *actual* existence and its *being something* are due to its forms, and as the passage above makes plain this holds at every level of analysis all the way down to formless, or prime, matter. Because prime matter has no form, it is hard to have an adequate understanding of it (OS V, I, 69–72; Loeb p. 79). It is also for this reason that one could say that prime matter is the lowest form of existence.

For many ancient and medieval philosophers there is another way in which a form can cause the being of a thing, for at least some forms are the metaphysical glue that holds a thing together through time and change. The forms that bind and preserve the unity of a thing through change are the thing's essential forms. For example, if a dog were to lose one of its essential forms, the dog would cease to exist. Granted, there would still be some organic material – and this material might still have the shape of a dog – but this material stuff and the forms that it possesses would not be a dog. Other forms are accidental forms. These forms can be gained or lost without compromising the existence of the thing. For example, our dog might gain or lose weight (i.e. change quantitative forms), or its coat might change color (i.e. change qualitative forms).

In the Aristotelian tradition, essential forms are often called substantial forms. This is due to the fact that, for many Aristotelians, the only things that possess essential forms are substances. It is also claimed that only natural things are substances. Artifacts, no matter how complex, are thought to have accidental forms. Hence, the unity of a bed or a car is weaker than that of a tree, a dog, or a human. Boethius alludes to this tradition when he tells us that one sense of "nature" is that it is the "principle of *per se*, not accidental, change" (OS V, I, 96–8; Loeb p. 81). Natural objects have natural ways that they can change and yet stay the same thing. Artifacts do not have natural motions. The natural motions that they do have are due to the substances, such as the wood in the bed or the metal in the car, that compose the artifacts (I, 101–8; Loeb p. 81).

Hence, form and matter are the constituents of an integrated unity, and the binding of form to matter makes the composite individual integrated and unified. In the Aristotelian tradition, unities come in degrees. Both a crowd and Adam are unities. But Adam is more of a unity than the crowd. A crowd is merely the sum of its parts, the people. This means that if even one human is removed, that specific crowd disappears. Adam, in contrast, can lose some of his parts and yet survive. This difference is due to the fact that the crowd only has an accidental form whereas Adam has a substantial form. A crowd has some degree of unity, since the crowd exists when some substances are located in relative proximity to one another. And, in a looser sense, the crowd can endure the addition or removal of some humans, although our inability to pinpoint precisely how many humans it takes to form this crowd and how many humans must leave before it disperses suggests that this crowd is not a well-defined and well-integrated individual. Moreover, the behavior of the crowd supervenes upon the behavior of the people who constitute the crowd. The arrangement and proximity of the humans does not change the nature of the humans themselves. People may act differently in crowds, but they are still *humans* when they act differently. In contrast, the matter of Adam changes substantially when Adam's substantial form binds with, or imbues, the matter. The elements, which by themselves are substances, cease to exist except "in potentiality" when the form of a human being imbues them. The notion that substantial forms cause substantial transformation is at the heart of Boethius' discussion of mixtures of natures in *Against Eutyches* VI–VII (Loeb pp. 109–23).

In his *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius tells us that everything subsists so long as it is one (3.11.13). As we have seen, there are grades of being one. An aggregate is a weak unity. An artifact, such as a bed, is a stronger unity than an aggregate, but a weaker unity than a composite of substantial form and matter. But the truest sorts of unities are mereological simples. Composites of matter and form have parts. Hence, they are dependent upon their parts. But forms do not have parts, and so they are not dependent upon their parts for their existence, their being something, or their persistence. Forms, then, are truer integrated unities than composites.

All forms are mereologically simple. However, the story does not end here. Some forms are truer unities than others, for most forms are distinct from their causes, whereas one form is identical to its cause. This one is the truest sort of integrated unity there is. It is God.

At the level of material beings, Boethius embraces Aristotelian hylomorphism. But, in addition to Aristotelian forms and matter, Boethius must find a place for Platonic Forms.¹² (From this point forward I will use the capitalized term to refer to Platonic Forms and the lower-case version to refer to Aristotelian forms.) According to Boethius, Aristotelian forms are "images" of Platonic Forms (OS I, II, 113-17; Loeb p. 13):

Those forms, which arise in matter and body, come from those Forms that exist apart from matter. We are accustomed to call the others, which are in bodies, "forms" even though they are images, since they resemble the Forms that are not established in matter.

We are allowed to call these images in matter "forms" because they resemble Forms. But Boethius stresses that the true forms are the Forms. And just as images depend upon their archetypes for their existence, these Aristotelian forms depend upon Platonic Forms for their existence. Hence, Platonic Forms are more unified than Aristotelian forms.

Adam's humanity is different from the Platonic Form Humanity with respect to a difference between an effect and its cause. Humanity has a greater degree of unity than Adam's humanity. But the Forms are not the highest degrees of unity, since they too are caused by something external to their being. God provides the subsistence of all other existing things (OS V, III, 261-4; Loeb p. 93). Only God is identical with respect to cause and effect, for God has no other cause than Himself. God's Form is Being itself (OS I, IV, 184;

Loeb p. 19). Everything else gets its being by participating in Being itself (OS III, 37-8; Loeb p. 43).

God is the truest integrated unity. Even mereologically simple entities, including it would seem the Forms, are lesser grades of unity when compared to God. God is the truest sort of individual. He is not only unique, in that He is not an instance of any kind, He is the truest sort of unity. He is not only partless, He is not even distinguishable from His cause.

HOW INSTANCES BELONG TO A KIND

We have seen that forms are the cause of a thing's existence, persistence, and unity. We have also noted that the form is the cause of a thing being something, that is, the cause of a thing belonging to a kind of thing.

The default position of ancient and medieval metaphysicians is usually that a form is a universal, that is, it is shared by many instances. Accordingly, the default answer to the question why two instances belong to the same kind is this: the instances in question share a common form. In his theological writings Boethius does not appear to shy away from this default position.¹³ Although, we will press him on this aspect of his thought when we turn to the theory of individuation.

Hence, Boethius' answer to question (2a) begins in this way. Adam and Eve belong to the same kind *human being*, because Adam and Eve share the Aristotelian form humanity. But, since humanity is an image of a Platonic Form, the full answer to question (2a) must include Platonic participation in the Forms, and ultimately in God.

We saw in the previous section that everything save God gets its being from God. Most things get their being from God indirectly through the Forms. The Forms make things exist and make those things what they are. But Adam is not just human; he is also pale, tall, and knowledgeable. Hence, Adam is also a pale thing, a tall thing, and a knowledgeable thing. In other words, there are two senses in which Adam is "something" (OS III, 35-6; Loeb p. 41):

To be merely something (*tantum esse aliquid*) is different from to be something in virtue of the fact that it exists. The former signifies an accident, the latter substance.

Adam is "merely something" – for example, a pale thing – because he has copies of accidental Forms present in him. Adam is "something in

virtue of the fact that he exists" because he participates in Humanity, that is, because a copy of Humanity is part of him.

Combining the accounts from the three philosophical treatises, the metaphysical analysis of a material thing such as Andrew can be summarized in this way:

In the case of substantial forms,

"Adam is human" is true because Adam is a composite of the Aristotelian form *human being* and matter, and

human being composes Adam because *human being* participates in ϕ , where ϕ is one of the Forms in God's mind.

In the case of accidental forms,

"Adam is pale" is true because *paleness* inheres in Adam, and *paleness* inheres in Adam because Adam participates in ϕ .

It is not clear whether every Aristotelian form has a correlative Form. It might be that *paleness* participates in the Pale and that humanity participates in Humanity. But if pressed, Boethius might follow some Neoplatonists and reduce the Forms to some smaller set.¹⁴ Hence, it might be that

paleness inheres in Adam because Adam participates in ϕ , θ , and ψ , and, perhaps, even that

the substantial form *human being* composes Adam because *human being* participates in ϕ , θ , and ψ .

Boethius does not give us too many clues about what Forms the forms participate in (other than the Good, which is identical to Being). His use of the common Platonic metaphor of images and archetypes suggests that the correlation is one-to-one, but he is not forced to think this, and there are perhaps good reasons why one would not want all immanent forms to have corresponding Forms. For instance, there may not be such Forms as the Hot and the Tall.

INDIVIDUATION

We have seen that there are two related senses of individual. A thing is individual because it is an integrated unity. Integrated unities, in virtue of their form, are instances of a kind of thing. We have seen

why two instances belong to the same kind. We now must address our last set of questions and ask what makes two integrated unities two distinct instances of the same kind.

Boethius gestures at three theories of individuation in *On the Trinity* and *Against Eutyches*. The first suggestion is that individuation is caused by accidents. The second suggestion is that individuation occurs when forms occupy different locations at the same time. The third suggestion is that individuation is due to matter. Let us examine each proposal in turn.

Individuation by accidents or by location

In *On the Trinity* Boethius informs us that plurality is caused by difference. There are three modes of difference: generic difference, difference in species, and numerical difference (OS I, 1, 51-6, Loeb p. 7; cf. 2IS 191.21-192.16). Generic difference occurs when two items belong to different categories. For example, *grey* and *cat* are generically different. Likewise, and perhaps derivatively, my cat's hair color and my cat are generically different. Specific difference occurs when two items belong to different species. My cat and I are generically the same, since we are both animals. But *cat* and *human* are different species, and, hence, my cat and I are different in species.

The important mode of difference as far as individuals are concerned is numerical difference. Numerical difference is applied to two items that are the same in genus and species, such as Adam and Eve. Both Adam and Eve are human. But they are different individuals. We have two of *human*, not one. The cause of numerical difference is that Adam and Eve have different accidental forms (OS I, 1, 56-63; Loeb pp. 7-9; cf. TC III, 332.29-31):

But a variety of accidents make numerical difference. For three men differ with respect to their accidents, not with respect to genus or species. Even when the mind separates all accidents from these [men], there is still a distinction among them with respect to place, which is something that we can in no way pretend to be one. For two bodies cannot occupy one place. Accordingly, they are numerically many, since they are made many by accidents.

Without much fanfare Boethius has suggested a theory of individuation. Notice that the theory seems to assume the universality of the

substantial form of a human being. Adam's substantial form is identical to Eve's substantial form. But Adam is not identical to Eve because Adam is a composite of humanity plus a bundle of accidental forms, *A*, and Eve is a composite of humanity plus a bundle of accidental forms, *E*, and *A* is not identical to *E*.

But buried in the passage that we just quoted is a hint of a second theory of individuation. Boethius proposes that we imagine stripping all the accidental forms from Adam and Eve. The humanity in Adam will still be distinct from the humanity in Eve because they occupy two distinct locations at the same time. Occupying a place at a time is, for Boethius, an accidental feature. This may explain why he does not carefully distinguish between the proposal that a bundle of accidents generates instances of a kind and the proposal that a special type of accident, namely spatio-temporal location, generates these instances. But it is important to keep these two proposals separate. First, one could argue that spatio-temporal location is not a form, but rather a grid on which one realizes forms. Second, even if spatio-temporal location is treated as a form, the second theory effectively proposes that some accidents are more important than others.

Both proposed theories lead to the same fundamental difficulty: as Paul Spade puts it, these theories "freeze" individuals.¹⁵ Consider the first proposed theory. If Adam is individuated by all of his accidents, then it seems to follow that any addition or removal of an accident belonging to this bundle will entail the destruction of Adam. Adam is the form *human being* plus a set of accidents *A*. Now imagine that Adam gets a suntan. *Paleness* is now gone and *brownness* is now present. But this means that the form *human being* is now connected to a set of accidents that is not *A*, but rather *B*. But, by hypothesis, Adam was individuated by *A*. Hence, it seems that Adam no longer exists. The theory prohibits Adam from changing in any respect. Adam, if he is to survive, must freeze.

The same problem in essence bewitches the second proposed theory, which insists that spatio-temporal location is the true cause of individuality. For example, imagine that the only difference in accidental forms between Adam and Andrew is in fact their location. Adam is at L_1 and Andrew is at L_2 . Let *A* be the set of all the other accidents that Adam and Andrew have in common, and let *H* stand for the form *human being*. According to the thesis under consideration, Adam is $H + A + L_1$ and Andrew is $H + A + L_2$. Now have Adam

and Andrew switch locations. At this next moment in time, let us ask who is $H + A + L_1$? Intuitively, we want to say that it is Andrew, but the theory forces us to answer that it is Adam.

There is another potential problem for these two theories of individuation. By suggesting that all or some accidental forms are the cause of individuation, Boethius seems to contradict what he says in *Against Eutyches* when he distinguishes between subsisting things and subsisting things.¹⁶

Another theory of individuation?

In *Against Eutyches* Boethius draws a distinction between two modes of existence. Some things merely "subsist" (*subsistere*), other things not only subsist, they "substand" (*substare*). Universals merely subsist. But individuals not only subsist, they substand (OS v, m, 213-20; Loeb p. 89). Boethius tells us that individuals do not require accidents in order to substand. But because they substand individuals can be a subject, or substratum, for accidental forms. This claim is clearly in tension with what Boethius proposes as the principle of individuation in *On the Trinity*, for the first two theories of individuation seem to be proposing that Adam and Eve substand *because* they are bundled with either all or some accidental forms.

But if accidents do not cause Adam and Eve to substand, what does? In *Against Eutyches* Boethius tells us that "now that they have been informed by proper and specific differences" individual substances can be a foundation for accidents (OS v, m, 217-20; Loeb p. 89). What are these "proper and specific differences" and whence did they come? Boethius does not give us an answer. But if we turn back to *On the Trinity* we find a hint at the cause of individuation (II, 102-10; Loeb pp. 11-13). The Divine substance is a form without matter. Hence, it cannot be a subject for accidents, and if it is not a subject for accidents, it cannot be many in number. Aristotelian forms, on the other hand, can be subjects for accidents because they are images in matter. This suggests a third theory of individuation. One creates individuals by making copies of a Platonic Form in matter. Matter is, therefore, the principle of individuation. Adam and Eve are different instances of Humanity because Adam is humanity informing this hunk of matter and Eve is humanity informing that hunk of matter.

This third theory gets the relation between substances and accidents right. The individual substance is an integrated composite of form and matter. And this integrated unity is not frozen. It can take on different accidental forms and it can move about in space and time.

But individuation by matter has its own problem to overcome: what happens when matter migrates?¹⁷ Suppose that at t_1 Adam is the substantial form H binding to a hunk of matter a , and Eve is the substantial form H binding to a hunk of matter b . The following premises seem to be true:

- (1) H is identical to H .
- (2) a is not identical to b .
- (3) H binding with a (i.e. $H+a$) is not identical to H binding with b (i.e. $H+b$).
- (4) At t_1 Adam is identical to $H+a$ and Eve is identical to $H+b$.

This entails

- (5) At t_1 Adam is not identical to Eve.

So far, so good. But we believe that Adam can change his matter over time through natural metabolic processes. Indeed, it is possible that over time all the matter that constituted Adam at t_1 is now, at t_{1+n} , the matter of Eve, and vice versa. So, at t_{1+n} , we have two hylomorphic composites $H+a$ and $H+b$. It is still the case at t_{1+n} that $H+a$ is not identical to $H+b$. But the question now is this: at t_{1+n} , which composite, if any, is Adam? We would like to say that Adam is $H+b$. But the theory does not give us the tools to say with confidence that $H+b$ is *Adam*. In other words, the theory gives us a satisfactory answer to question (2b¹): when H combines with some matter m , we get an instance $H+m$. But it does not seem to give us the tools to satisfactorily answer question (2b²).

This difficulty can be avoided if matter permanently contaminates the form with individuality. In other words, once a copy of a Form is made in matter, this copy is an independently individual instance, and it can now act as the metaphysical glue for further accidental and material changes. So, instead of picturing individual substances as a combination of universal form and matter (i.e. " $H+m$ "), perhaps we should represent individual substances as a combination of an individuated form and matter (i.e. " H^i+m "). The revised theory of individuation would look like this. When a copy of the Form of Humanity

is made in a hunk of matter a , we immediately create an individualized form H^a . At the time of creation this individualized form plus a constitutes Adam. So, at t_1 , Adam is H^a+a . But, over time, Adam can become H^a+b . What allows for this transformation is the persistence of the individualized substantial form H^a .

Which theory does Boethius prefer?

This revised version of the third theory is the most satisfying account of individuation of the three. Is there any reason to think that Boethius subscribes to this theory? There is some evidence that supports this reading. First, this third theory of individuation could make sense of Boethius' claim that a standing individual has already been informed with "proper and specific differences." Second, recall that Boethius refers to Aristotelian forms as "images" of Platonic Forms. It would seem that these images are particular. Consider an analogy offered by the Neoplatonic philosopher Ammonius.¹⁸ Suppose that I have a signet ring and enough wax to make several impressions. I take this ring and press it into two portions of the wax. Both impressions will resemble one another and they will share a common cause (the ring), but they will be numerically distinct impressions. In other words, they are particularized impressions. Ammonius likens the pattern in the signet ring to a Platonic Form. Just as the signet ring makes copies of its specific sign in various pieces of wax, the Form makes many copies of itself in matter. These copies all resemble their cause, but each of the images in the wax is individualized.

But while there is some reason to hope that Boethius really prefers the third theory of individuation, the evidence is too thin to conclude definitively that individuation by matter is Boethius' preferred theory. Indeed, if the third theory of individuation that we reconstructed represents Boethius' considered views on individuation, why does he suggest that individuation is due to accidents in *On the Trinity*, where we must remember the problem of individuation is explicitly raised? We can only canvas some of the possible answers here.

First, it could be that Boethius is confused, and he thinks that all three theories are somehow equivalent, even though they are clearly not.

A more charitable interpretation would be that Boethius changed his mind. Ideally, he wrote *On the Trinity* first and then came to realize that the theory offered there was flawed. But it could also be the case that Boethius wrote *On the Trinity* after he wrote *Against Eutyches*.¹⁹ If that were true, we would have to accept that Boethius took a step backward.

It could be that the accounts of individuals in the two treatises are compatible, not because the two accounts are complimentary metaphysical accounts, but rather because the metaphysical theory of individuation in *Against Eutyches* is complemented by an epistemological theory of identification in *On the Trinity*. While a bundle of accidents might not be the cause of an individual being an instance, it may still be true that we tend to identify an individual by fixing upon the accidents that accrue to an individual.²⁰ And, in extreme cases, we can determine that there are two qualitatively similar things because two regions of space are occupied at the same time.

Yet, appealing as the compatibilist line is, it does not seem to do justice to the texts. When Boethius proposes that accidents make Adam numerically different from Eve, the most natural interpretation of these remarks is that Boethius is making a metaphysical claim. Boethius wants to demonstrate that God is metaphysically simple, not merely simple in our understanding. Part of his argument for his claim that God is metaphysically simple is that the Persons of the Trinity are not subjects for accidents, and hence they are not numerically distinct.

This leaves us with one final possible interpretation. It may be that Boethius' considered view is more Platonist than Aristotelian.²¹ Two Neoplatonists who probably exerted some amount of influence on Boethius, Plotinus and Porphyry, have been interpreted as bundle theorists.²² Our objections to the theory of individuation by accidents had a distinctively Aristotelian bias. Our preferred theory satisfied a fundamentally Aristotelian desideratum, namely that things like Adam are independent entities capable of surviving accidental change. But a Platonist need not share this belief. A Platonist thinks that the material world is a pale reflection of the real world. One of the signs that the inhabitants of the material world are reflections and images of that which is real is precisely the fact that material beings have ill-defined identity and persistence conditions. Hence, the fact that it is hard to determine whether a bundle of forms is the same

individual as a previous bundle of forms does not point to a failure of the theory, it points to the fact that individuals in the sensible realm are not beings, they are things that both are and are not (cf. Plato, *Republic* v.478b-479d; *Timaeus* 51e-52d).

Unfortunately, Boethius does not give us enough information to definitively choose one of these possibilities. This is due in no small measure to the fact that, in the theological treatises, Boethius is not interested in individuals as such. The bits of a theory of individuals that he gives are presented as means to another end, namely to clarify our understanding of two special sorts of individual, God and Christ.

GOD'S INDIVIDUALITY AND THE LIMITS OF METAPHYSICS

The two explicitly Christian problems that Boethius tackles in his *Opuscula* are both problems pertaining to the individuality of God. Like Judaism and Islam, Christian orthodoxy demands that there is only one God. Christian philosophers, like Boethius, who are influenced by Neoplatonism also insist that God is absolutely simple. But, unlike the other two monotheistic faiths, Christianity asserts both (1) that God is three persons and (2) that one of these persons, Christ, is made of and consists in two natures.

The notion of *person* is the link to our previous discussions of individuals, for as we will see a person seems to be a certain kind of individual. Father Joseph W. Koterski has observed that the notion of a person must be flexible enough to distinguish the members of the Trinity without dividing the unity of God, but sturdy enough to describe the "single abiding identity" of Christ (2004, 206). In what follows, I will ask whether the notion of person, at least as Boethius defines it, can meet both demands.

The Incarnation and the unity of a person

Let us start with the Incarnation, for it is in his polemic against the Eutychians and Nestorians that Boethius offers his explicit account of personhood. The orthodox position is that one person, Christ, is not only made out of two natures: Christ consists in two natures. Boethius attempts to defend this position from two heretical positions.

Boethius tries to demonstrate that two natures can be present in one person by first defining his terms. In Chapter 1, he defines four notions of nature. The fourth definition is the one that Boethius prefers for his present discussion. According to this definition, a nature is "the specific *differentia* that informs any one thing" (OS v, 1, 111-12; Loeb p. 81). In short, a nature seems to be a substantial form. At the beginning of Chapter 3, Boethius offers his considered definition of person. A person is "an individual substance of a rational nature" (iii, 171-2; Loeb p. 85). But the notion of a substance needs clarification. A nature is an essence (*ousia*), which Boethius claims only subsists. A person is a substance (*hypostasis*), which not only subsists but also substans (iii, 254-64; Loeb p. 87). That is, a person can be the subject for accidents. A person, then, is both an instance and a composite integrated unity.²³

With these definitions in hand, Boethius first turns to the Nestorian heresy. Nestorius agrees with the orthodox that Christ consists in two natures. But he infers from this that Christ consists in two persons (iv, 275-7; Loeb p. 93). The claim that Christ consists in two persons is equivalent to asserting that Christ is two instances of a rational nature. But this undermines the unity of Christ. At best Christ is now a universal. At worst, since there is no common underlying substance that unifies the human person and the divine person, "Christ" becomes no more than the name of an aggregate (iv, 294-301 and 356-8; Loeb pp. 95 and 99). Boethius thinks that neither result is acceptable. Christ is clearly not a universal.²⁴ Indeed, He is not even an instance, since there is no universal of which Christ is an instance. (This is part of what Boethius means when he says that God is "beyond substance.") Nor can Christ be an aggregate. Boethius' reason for rejecting this possibility is that Christ would be "nothing." Clearly, Boethius is overstating his case. Christ would be an aggregate. But the true point is that Christ would not be an integrated unity. Orthodoxy demands that Christ is as much an integrated unity as any other human.

Boethius next turns to the position of Eutyches. The Eutychians assume that there is one person if and only if there is one nature. Consequently, since there is only one person who is Christ, there can only be one nature. The Eutychians do not deny the claim that Christ was made from a divine nature and a human nature. They merely assert that these natures must have combined to form one nature.

This is where Boethius attacks the Eutychians. Which nature is now present in Christ? There seem to be only three options: (1) the two natures combine to form a divine nature, (2) the two natures combine to form a human nature, or (3) the two natures combine to form a new nature, which is neither human nor divine. Boethius thinks that none of these options is acceptable (vi, 497-541 Loeb pp. 109-13). The first option is ruled out since a corporeal rational substance cannot be converted into an incorporeal rational substance. The second is ruled out since an incorporeal rational substance cannot be converted into a corporeal rational substance. Boethius reminds us that substantial transformation occurs when one substantial form leaves some matter and another substantial form arrives in its place. But, in both cases, there is no common matter that can stand under the change. The third possibility is ruled out since a rational substance must either be corporeal or incorporeal; there is no third option.

Boethius thinks that the only option that is left is to assert that Christ is made from two natures, and Christ consists in two natures. (He cannot deny that Christ is made from two natures. That would be blasphemy.) Boethius thinks that two natures, or essences, can be present in one person, or concrete individual. He tries to make this intelligible by resorting to an analogy. Two natures can be mixed together in such a way that they are lost. For example, when hydrogen and oxygen are mixed, they yield water, which has a nature distinct from both hydrogen and oxygen (vii, 589-94; Loeb p. 117).²⁵ This is a case of substantial change. Boethius' previous argument was meant to show that this way of mixing natures cannot occur in the case of the Incarnation. But one can also mix two natures so that they both remain intact. For example, a gem-encrusted crown retains both the gem's nature and the gold's nature (vii, 595-607; Loeb p. 117). Just as the crown is one thing consisting both from and in two natures, Christ can consist both from and in two natures.

Such is the argument in outline. We cannot fully critique this argument, but at least two difficulties should be briefly noted.

First, it is not clear that Boethius has resolved the real puzzle concerning the Incarnation, namely: how can two substantial forms combine to form an integrated unity without compromising the existence of the two substantial forms? There is, after all, a good reason to think that there is one nature if and only if there is one individual. Recall our earlier attempt to locate the principle of

persistence for Adam through accidental change. The most promising principle seemed to be Adam's substantial form. The existence of Adam's copy of Humanity is a necessary (and perhaps sufficient) condition for Adam's persistence. Now consider the persistence conditions of Christ. Should we say that Christ persists only if both the divine substance exists and a specific copy of Humanity exists? An orthodox Christian will probably be wary of such a formulation, for it implies that the Person of Christ exists temporarily, not eternally. But, aside from this worry, notice that the persistence condition only demands that the divine nature and the human nature coincide. In other words, the tie between the two natures is contingent and accidental. Clearly, this is also something that Boethius will want to avoid. But how can we get a necessary and non-accidental unity out of two distinct natures? Appealing to the example of a crown has only limited value, for a crown is a man-made object, and many Aristotelians would argue that the mark of an artifact is that the form that binds together the parts is an accidental form.

There is a second worry. In his treatment of the Incarnation, Boethius defines the person of Christ as a subsisting individual consisting of two natures. But is this understanding of the personhood consistent with the account of persons in *On the Trinity*? In his treatment of the Trinity, Boethius will want to show that the persons of the Trinity are real, but non-substantial, manifestations of the Divine. Given that God is Form without matter, God merely subsists. By asserting that Christ subsists, has Boethius compromised God's absolute simplicity?

The Trinity

In the section on the construction of integrated unities (pp. 136-137), we saw that God is the truest integrated unity. He has no matter, He has no parts, and He is not even distinct from His cause. Yet, God is also three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. On the face of it the doctrine of the Trinity threatens God's unity and simplicity. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. These are all substantial predications. But the Persons are not identical to one another. That is, the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. If the Persons are not identical, and yet they are all God, it seems that there are three gods,

and God is a universal. But God is neither a universal, nor for that matter an instance of a universal.

The knot could be unraveled if it could be shown that predications such as "The Father is not the Son" are not substantial predications. But Boethius needs to avoid another pitfall. In the fourth chapter of *On the Trinity*, Boethius tells us that the ten categories do not apply to God, for God is "beyond substance" (OS I, IV, 184; Loeb p. 17). Predications that seem to fall within the ten categories must be reinterpreted. Statements of the form "God is *F*" must be interpreted as either statements about God's substance or they must be taken as figurative statements. For example, qualitative predications, such as "God is just," must be reinterpreted as identifications. When we say that Adam is just, we are attributing justice to Adam. But when we say that God is just, we mean that God is identical to Justice (IV, 207-12; Loeb p. 19). Other predications are to be taken figuratively or by transference. For example, "God is everywhere" is true, not because God is in every place, but because all places are present to Him (IV, 224-8; Loeb p. 21).

The Persons are neither parts of God's substance, nor are they accidents of God. But if the names of the Persons do not denote parts of God's substance or accidents of God, then there *seem* to be only two available options:

- (1) Contrary to orthodox belief the Father is the Son, the Son is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the Father.
- (2) Claims such as "God is the Father" or "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father" are figurative, not literal.

But Boethius wants to avoid the heterodox option, and he wants to deny that sentences pertaining to the Trinity are figurative. The Persons are real features of God, and there is a real difference between the Persons. But he wants to show that this real distinction does not compromise God's absolute unity. To extricate himself from this dilemma Boethius proposes that there is a third way to predicate something of God:

- (3) One can predicate non-accidental relations of God (OS I, v, cf. OS II, III).

Relational predications do not compromise the substance of the things that are related.²⁶ For example, if Adam stands to the right of

Eve and then moves so that he stands to her left, neither Eve nor Adam has changed in substance. Likewise, if Abel's father dies, Abel is no longer a son, but Abel's substance has not been compromised. Abel is still what he is. Boethius proposes that the Divine Persons are relational predicates of God. If the Persons are relations, then the Persons in no way compromise God's substance. If the Persons are relations, they also are real. "Adam is to the left of Eve" and "Abel is the son of Adam" are both facts about the world. The relations that obtain between Adam and Eve, and Abel and Adam, are real. Likewise, the relations that hold between God and the Father, and the Father and the Son, are real, not figurative. The main difference between Divine relations and categorical relations is that the latter are accidents of enmattered substances. The Persons, on the other hand, are non-accidental relatives.

Boethius hopes that this solution will ward off the threat to God's unity and simplicity. However, it is not clear that the relational analysis of the Persons will preserve God's simplicity. It seems that, in order to have relations, one must have at least two distinct *relata*. But how can God stand in a relation to Himself? In Chapter 6 of his *On the Trinity* Boethius acknowledges this puzzle. His answer is that it is not always true that a relative predicate is predicated of something different. For example, the relation *being the same as oneself* is not predicated of something different (OS I, vi, 349-50; Loeb p. 31).

It is not clear that the property of *being the same as oneself* is a proper relation.²⁷ But even if we grant that it is, there is a deeper worry. Recall that the Persons of the Trinity do not possess accidents. This eliminates the possibility that the Persons are numerically distinct from one another. But one of the three Persons is Christ, who is an individual *substanding* thing of a rational nature. Substanding things can bear accidents, and certainly while Christ was on Earth he actually bore accidents. So, which claim is true? Can a Person possess accidents, or not?

Boethius is trying to satisfy two desiderata: first, that the Persons of the Trinity are real, distinct manifestations of the Divine, and, second, that these manifestations do not compromise the absolute unity of the Divine. Unfortunately, it appears that these two desiderata cannot be mutually satisfied.

Boethius seems to be aware that his treatments of the Incarnation and the Trinity will not completely satisfy the philosopher. After he notes that an object can stand in relation to itself, he adds that, if one cannot find a good example of an incomposite thing that is related to itself, that is because one is looking at transitory things with one's imagination, and not at eternal things with one's intellect (OS I, vi, 352-6; Loeb p. 31).²⁸ Our intuitions about relations, and indeed our intuitions about sameness and difference, are derived from examining material, composite, and changing entities. When we attempt to understand things that transcend matter, composition, and change, we should expect that these tools are limited. Likewise, in his treatment of the Incarnation, Boethius gives a hint early on in his treatise that at some point our human reason must give out, for the first definition of "nature" that he offers is this: a nature belongs to anything that, when it exists, can be captured by an understanding in some manner or other (OS V, I, 65-7; Loeb p. 79). Boethius claims that he must add the caveat "in some manner or other" because there are some things that exist but cannot be grasped by a "full and complete" understanding. Instructively, the two examples that he gives are prime matter and God (I, 69-72 Loeb p. 79).

CONCLUSION

In his *Opuscula sacra*, Boethius presents some of the elements of a metaphysical theory of individuals. He does not flesh out his theory. But what he does tell us is tantalizing. It is little wonder that Boethius' brief and incomplete treatments of individuals captured the imagination of numerous medieval philosophers.²⁹ The elements of the theory of individuals that he presents in the *Opuscula* are marshaled in order to make the Incarnation and Trinity intelligible in so far as these Divine truths can be made intelligible to the unaided human intellect. Our assessment has been that Boethius comes up short. But then again, Boethius admits that his task is doomed to fail. These inadequacies, however, should not detract from the importance of Boethius' *Opuscula*. The student of medieval metaphysics should begin with Boethius. Boethius defines the problems that will inspire generations of philosophers, and he gestures toward many of the solutions that subsequent philosophers will offer.

NOTES

1. All references are to the Latin edition by Claudio Moreschini (Boethius 2000), in the format of number of the *opusculum*, followed by its section and the line of the edition. As an aid to students who do not have much Latin, citations of passages from the *Opuscula* will include a reference to the corresponding English passage in the Loeb edition (Boethius 1973). The Loeb edition is still the only volume that contains a complete English translation of the *Opuscula*. For a good, recent English translation of *Quomodo substantiae* see MacDonald 1991b. A good, recent translation of *On the Trinity* is Kenyon 2004. There is a new French translation of *Quomodo substantiae* with commentary in Galonnier 2007. Galonnier's translations of *On the Trinity* and *Against Eutyches* are to appear in a future volume.
2. For this reason, we will not be able to touch upon many of the interesting and puzzling aspects of the *Quomodo substantiae*. The third theological treatise is an extremely difficult one, and there is significant disagreement over its structure and meaning. For introductions to *Quomodo substantiae* see Marenbon 2003a, 87–94 and Chadwick 1981, 203–11. For detailed studies see De Rijk 1988; MacDonald 1988; and McInerney 1990, 161–98. There are book-length studies by Schimpf (1966) and Siobhan Nash-Marshall (2000), and a detailed commentary by Galonnier (2007). Pierre Hadot's interpretation of Boethius has been extremely influential. See, in particular, Hadot 1963 and 1970. Recently there has been a lot of work on Boethius' metaphysical *Opuscula* in Italian. For example, see Maioli 1978; Micaelli 1988 and 1995.
3. For a survey of Boethius' remarks on individuals and individuation that carefully considers not only the *Opuscula sacra*, but also the logical commentaries, see Gracia 1984, Chapter 2, 65–121.
4. For example, in his famous discussion of universals Boethius announces that he has provided an Aristotelian solution to the problem because he is commenting on an Aristotelian treatise, not because it is the best solution (2IS 167.17–20; English translation in Spade 1994, 25).
5. When commenting upon Aristotle, Boethius repeats Aristotle's claim that an individual "is said of no subject" (CAT170B; cf. Aristotle *Cat.* 1b6–7, and *De Int.* 17a38–7b1). In his commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Boethius repeats the Porphyrian maxim that the individual is predicable of only one thing (2IS 195.18–19, and 233.20–1; cf. Porphyry *Isag.* 7.19–21).
6. On integral wholes and integral parts see Arlig 2006, sections 2.1 and 3.1.

7. The sense in which an individual can move about and causally interact with the world *as a whole* will need to be flexible enough to allow for changes in parts over time, for intuitively Adam can lose some of these parts and gain others (as humans seem to do when they eat, eliminate waste, shed dead skin cells, and so forth).
8. Cf. King 2000, and also Gracia 1984, Chapter 1.
9. For Boethius' treatment of other kinds of parts, see his *On Division* (esp. 879B–880A and 887D–888D). For an interpretation consult Arlig 2006 and 2005, Chapter 3.
10. Aristotle defines a soul as the form of a body (*De Anima* II.1, 412a19–21). For Christian thinkers a soul, while perhaps not a form, plays the same role as a form in hylomorphic compositions.
11. For a discussion of the relation of natural priority see Arlig 2005, 89–96; Barnes 2003, 248–53, and 361–4; and Magee in Boethius 1998, 83–4.
12. For an overview of the Platonic elements in Boethius' philosophy see Chadwick 1981, *passim* and Gersh 1986 II, esp. 675–701 and 706.
13. See Gersh 1986 II, 655–7. Boethius' position in the second commentary on the *Isagoge*, which has been the source of much study, is somewhat more ambiguous (Tweedale 1976 and Spade 1996). In his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* 1b25–2a10, Boethius discusses individual accidents. This has led some interpreters to think that Boethius embraces tropes, or individual forms. But we should be careful. First, Boethius is discussing Aristotle's views, not his own. Second, accidents are derivatively individual at best, for Boethius tells us that Adam's paleness and Eve's paleness are different because Adam's paleness is present in Adam and Eve's paleness is in Eve (CAT 170A, 171D–172A; cf. 2IS 184.1–11). These claims are consistent with the position that if paleness were stripped from Adam and from Eve, there would be only *one* pale form, not two. In support of this interpretation, observe that the corresponding individual substances are not particular humanities, but Adam and Eve – i.e. composite substances.
14. For example, Plotinus reduces the ten Aristotelian categories, or highest genera, to five categories (*Enneads* VI.1–3; cf. *Enneads* V.1.4).
15. Spade 1985 I, Chapter 23. Cf. King 2000 and Gracia 1984, 204–10.
16. Spade 1985 I, Chapter 23.
17. See Fine 1994, 14–16.
18. Ammonius 1891 41.13–42.19; 68.25–69.2 (cf. Simplicius 1907, 82.35–83.20).
19. See Chadwick 1981, 180.
20. Cf. 2IS 234.3–6.
21. Aristotle seems to endorse the view that matter is the principle of individuation at *Metaphysics* Z.8, 1034a5–8. Cf. *Metaphysics* Δ.6, 1016b31–5.

- This is certainly a popular understanding of Aristotle's metaphysics of individuals from St. Thomas Aquinas to the present (see, e.g., Lloyd 1970). For a critique of this interpretation see Gill 1994 and Furth 1978, esp. 642-4.
22. Plotinus, *Enneads* vi.8.19-23 (cf. Lloyd 1990, 94-5). In an earlier paper, Lloyd attributes the bundle theory to Porphyry (Lloyd 1956). But see Lloyd's later revision of his view (1990, 45-7).
 23. Cf. Hadot 1973, 130.
 24. Cf. OS II, 1, 9-15; Loeb p. 33.
 25. Boethius' own example is that of honey and water, which he thinks will yield a new nature. But clearly Boethius has in mind a case where mixture brings about chemical transformation.
 26. For an overview of ancient and medieval theories of relations see Weinberg 1965, Chapter 2, 61-119; Brower 2005; and for the Scholastic Period Henninger 1989.
 27. Indeed, it is not clear that *being the same as oneself* is even a proper property (see, e.g., Black 1952, 153-5).
 28. Compare this claim to what Lady Philosophy asserts in the fifth book of the *Consolation*. Philosophy tells her interlocutor that minds do not comprehend *x* in accord with the "force" (*vim*) of *x* itself, but rather in accord with the faculty used by the mind to comprehend *x* (5.4.25). Hence, what may be divided from one perspective (say, that of the imagination) may be one from another, higher perspective (say, the faculty of understanding) (5.4.26-29). Philosophy uses this principle to show why it is hard for humans to comprehend that Divine foreknowledge is compatible with the freedom of the human will (5.6).
 29. On Boethius' influence in general see the next chapter. For Boethius' influence on medieval ruminations on the metaphysics of individuals, start by consulting Gracia 1984; Spade 1985 I, Chapter 23; and King 2000.

7 The medieval fortunes of the *Opuscula sacra*

Boethius wrote five treatises of Christian theology grouped under the title *Opuscula sacra*. At least three of them – among which the two most important ones, the *De Trinitate* (OS I) and the *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium* (OS V) – deal with Trinitarian or Christological issues. These treatises came to take a central part in medieval thought and had a surprisingly wide influence upon it. During the Middle Ages, the danger of heresies was a less urgent topic than it had been during the first centuries of Christianity,¹ a time marked by frequent doctrinal disputes. Arius and Nestorius were no longer a danger for a now established dogma and, in the Latin West, the Church was unified. In consequence, the *Opuscula sacra* were no longer topical because of their rooting in doctrinal controversies; they appeared less as a display of militant strength in the struggle of orthodoxy against heresy. Once transferred into the intellectual context of the medieval Latin West, they took on a new life, distant from the task of defending Christian dogma, but central to philosophical thought. From the beginning of the Middle Ages onwards, the influence of the *Opuscula sacra* reached beyond dogmatic theology, into the fields of logic, ontology and metaphysics. For 400 years, from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, the *Opuscula* were among the reference texts of philosophers, beside Aristotle's *Categories* (or its paraphrase, the *Categoriae decem*) and *Peri hermeneias*, and Porphyry's *Isagoge*.² The theological thought of Boethius came to be called upon as a philosophical authority in discussions on the problem of universals and common forms, in accounts of the individuality of individuals, in theories of participation and, later, in the debate on the distinction between being and essence. The height of the influence of Boethius' theological treatises was reached during the twelfth century, when they were often commented

upon and became the centre of philosophical questioning. During the twelfth century Boethius came to be evaluated as follows in the words of Peter of Poitiers: *magis fuit philosophus quam theologus*.³ Even if Boethius was greatly renowned as a theologian,⁴ the medieval reception of the *Opuscula sacra* is true to this saying because its influence on philosophical debate was so great. In the period before the gradual entry of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* into the Latin West and before it took the central role it was to occupy subsequently, the *De Trinitate* and the *De hebdomadibus* (OS III) contributed importantly in defining the scope of first philosophy. The problems of Latin metaphysical thought which were discussed before the rediscovery of Aristotle's natural and metaphysical writings – categorical ontology, the application of the categories to God, ontological participation and dependence, and the doctrine of paronymy (or denominative predication) – are related in important ways to the *Opuscula sacra*.

It would nevertheless be a mistake to believe in a one-directional and unitary doctrinal influence. Boethius' authority was called upon by thinkers whose theories were sometimes completely incompatible; for example, his texts were taken to provide arguments both for accepting and rejecting the real existence of universals. The structure itself of the *Opuscula* and their lack of strong doctrinal unity⁵ made possible such a diverse influence. Medieval thinkers did not seek faithfulness to Boethius' teaching, the coherence of which remains difficult to ascertain, but drew from the *Opuscula sacra* the concepts and theses they needed to expound their own thought.

The history of the medieval reception of the *Opuscula sacra* shows that, like late ancient philosophy, medieval philosophy was often a question of exegesis. Early medieval philosophy is characterised by its frequent reliance on ancient, late ancient and Patristic texts, as a basis for speculation. Commenting on an authority was often the occasion of expressing original thought, as noted by John Marenbon: 'It is in commentaries that much of the most important philosophical work of the ninth to twelfth centuries was accomplished.'⁶ Despite its particular rules, the practice of commentary did not restrain philosophical thought; on the contrary, it often stimulated it. Gilbert of Poitiers and Thomas Aquinas are good examples of this phenomenon.

I shall proceed in three stages: first, I shall give an historical overview of the medieval reception of the *Opuscula sacra*; I shall then consider the methodological and lexical influence of Boethius, and

conclude with a presentation of some of the philosophical discussions which Boethius initiated in the Middle Ages.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Three of the five *Opuscula* – OS I, OS III, OS V – were particularly influential during the Middle Ages. The way in which they were read and the use made of them was different from one century to another. I will consider the most important moments and the more pronounced influences.⁷ Three particular periods constitute the essential stages of Boethian influence: (1) the early Middle Ages, during which the *Opuscula sacra*, added to the set of treatises of Aristotelian logic known as the *Logica vetus*, were the textual basis of philosophical thought; (2) the twelfth century, during which the *Opuscula sacra* became, particularly in the context of the so-called 'School of Chartres', the reference text on which theological, logical and philosophical discussions focused; (3) the scholastic period, during which the *Opuscula sacra* remained an influential text, as testified by the commentaries dedicated to two of the *Opuscula* by Thomas Aquinas, despite the fact that they were not part of the curriculum of the universities, which had by then reached its fully developed form.

The early Middle Ages

The manuscript tradition testifies to a wide diffusion of the *Opuscula sacra* during the early Middle Ages.⁸ More than forty manuscripts copied before the twelfth century are extant,⁹ originating from the *scriptoria* of important Carolingian cultural centres: Fleury, Tours, Saint-Denis and Corbie. Alcuin appears not to have known the *Opuscula sacra*, but they were used around 800 in the *Munich Passages*, a collection of short texts by Candidus and other disciples of Alcuin.¹⁰ The first example of significant influence is given by Gottschalk of Orbais († 867). He cites extensively the definitions of *persona* and *natura*, as well as the discussions on *essentia*, *substantia* and *subsistentia*, material originating in OS V.¹¹ He also transcribes almost entirely the treatise *Utrum Pater* in his *Responsa de diversis*, but without explicit reference to Boethius.¹²

OS V is also carefully discussed by Ratramnus of Corbie in his *Liber de anima ad Odonem Bellocensem* [c.865]. The book reproduces a debate

between the disciple of an Irish master called Macarius and Ratramnus, on the soul understood as a species, which leads to a discussion on the existence of universals.¹³ Whereas OS I would be used, during the twelfth century, to uphold a realist theory, Ratramnus provides an interesting example of a conceptualist position (universals are only concepts) which makes use of the vocabulary and positions of OS v. Ratramnus uses the Boethian notions of *persona*, *subsistentia* (to qualify generic and specific universals) and *substantia*, which is used to refer to primary substances only (Ratramnus of Corbie, 1952, 71: 19–30). According to Ratramnus, universals have no ontological superiority over individuals; on the contrary, universals draw their subsistence from individual substances. Universals are only concepts; they only exist in the mind.¹⁴ A species is a resemblance among beings, which is perceived by the soul.

John Scottus Eriugena († c.877) probably knew the *Opuscula sacra*.¹⁵ E.K. Rand attributes to him a *commentum* – in reality a set of glosses – on four of the five *Opuscula*, the exegesis of the last one (OS iv) being, according to Rand, the work of Remigius of Auxerre († 908).¹⁶ M. Cappuyns questioned this attribution,¹⁷ and argued that the whole text was written by Remigius of Auxerre: he noted the absence of Greek authorities, the use of Latin Trinitarian formulae, and doctrinal discrepancies.¹⁸ What is certain is that these glosses originate in an intellectual context strongly influenced by Eriugena, and contain several 'Eriugenian' doctrinal elements. In addition to their Neoplatonic vocabulary (e.g. *hyperousios*), they deal with the theme, central to Eriugena's thought, of the procession of beings, which are first hidden in God, then appear in genera et species, places and times (ed. Rand, 1906, 51: 22–52: 14).¹⁹ These glosses contain some long developments on the real and eternal forms, which are incorporeal, as opposed to the immanent forms, which are only images of them (37: 4–15). Let us also mention discussions on the divine being (40: 19), on relations in God (44: 23 and 45: 9), on *pluralitas* (38: 17), and on the distinction between *aeternitas* and *sempiternitas* (42: 30). These glosses were widely diffused; approximately thirty early medieval manuscripts are identified.²⁰

The twelfth century

Marie-Dominique Chenu rightly proposed that the twelfth century should be called an *aetas boethiana*.²¹ This name is justified by the

importance of Boethius in the philosophical and theological thought of the period.

We can identify two important philosophical debates during the twelfth century. Both dealt with logical-ontological problems (mainly the status of universal entities) and were, at least originally, exegetical in nature, and tried to decide on the correct interpretation of 'authoritative' texts. The first set of discussions was held in the schools of logic in Paris during the first decades of the century, and concentrated on the interpretation of works of Aristotelian logic, i.e. Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Categories* and *De interpretatione*, and Boethius' *On Topical Differentiae*.²² Various, often anonymous, commentaries were written during this period, which discussed the problem of whether these logical texts dealt first and foremost with words (*in voce* exegesis) or things (*in re* exegesis). Among the prominent philosophers in this debate we may identify William of Champeaux and Peter Abelard.

Around the middle of the twelfth century another debate took place, not in Parisian logical schools, but in the context of the so-called 'School of Chartres'.²³ This second debate was also exegetical, but the reference text and the authority commented on were different. It was centred on the interpretation of Boethius' *Opuscula sacra*. In the Chartrian milieu, interested in the *Timaeus* and open to Platonism, the *Opuscula sacra* became the basis for heated discussions on the ontology of the sensible world and on universals. This debate was initiated by one of the most original medieval philosophers, Gilbert of Poitiers († 1154). He wrote a set of commentaries on the *Opuscula sacra*. These commentaries have particular importance for the history of medieval philosophy, since they are the only extant exposition of Gilbert's philosophy.²⁴ Gilbert sets out his own philosophy through his exegesis of Boethius' texts. He constructs a strictly particularist ontology, notable for its rejection of common entities. According to Gilbert, every thing is singular (*Quidquid enim est, singulare est*, 1371b). This is true of substances, of essences, and of properties. In order to set out his particularist position, which is different from that defended by Boethius in the *Opuscula sacra*, Gilbert sometimes allows himself some liberties with Boethius' text (see below, pp. 167, 170–1). Gilbert's very original commentaries attracted strong criticism, on both theological and philosophical points. His commentary on OS I was put into

question, in particular by Bernard of Clairvaux, at the Council of Reims (1148),²⁵ notably because of his distinction between *deus* and *divinitas*. Basing himself on Boethius' distinction between *esse* and *id quod est*, Gilbert states a distinction between divinity, *divinitas quae est in deo*, and God, *Deus in quo est divinitas*, in an analogy with the distinction between humanity and man. He believes in the causality of forms and therefore holds that God is God through divinity.

Despite the recriminations of the council – Gilbert was not officially condemned – the manuscripts of Gilbert's commentaries circulated widely.²⁶ Gilbert came to acquire a privileged status in the Boethian tradition and was even sometimes called 'the commentator' in the context of the *Opuscula sacra*. His commentaries gave rise to a strong 'conservative reaction' (in the words of M. Gibson), as testified by the commentaries originating in the circle of the disciples of Thierry of Chartres († c.1155) and those of Clarembald of Arras († after 1170), Thierry's student. From the circle of Thierry originated a *Commentum super Boetii librum de Trinitate*, a set of *Lectiones* and a *Glosa* on the same text. A fragment of a commentary on OS III (*Fragmentum Admuntense*) and one of a commentary on OS V (*Fragmentum Londinense*)²⁷ allow us to think that Thierry of Chartres taught on the whole set of *Opuscula sacra*. These texts probably record the teachings of Thierry with additions by his pupils. They develop for example a theory of creation based on the efficient causality of the *forma essendi* in OS III.²⁸

Clarembald of Arras wrote two commentaries, on OS I and on OS III (around 1157–8).²⁹ The texts originating in the circles of Clarembald and Thierry are doctrinally close and agree in their rejection of the particularist metaphysics of Gilbert (see below, p. 171). On several occasions, Clarembald criticises Gilbert on universals and forms,³⁰ and reproaches him repeatedly for postulating numerical difference among the three persons of the Trinity.³¹ Clarembald insists particularly on two things in his commentary: the secondary status of the forms of the sensible world (see below, p. 168), and the unity of individuals (see below, p. 171). A commentary formerly attributed to Bede, edited by Migne in the *Patrologia* PL 95, 391–411) seems to agree with Clarembald. Because this commentary mentions the Council of Reims and Gilbert, it cannot be attributed to Bede.

The thirteenth century

Although they remained respected texts, the *Opuscula sacra* did not retain their central position in philosophical practice. They were not included in the teaching programmes of the newly established universities. This explains, at least partially, why the *Opuscula sacra* played a relatively secondary role during the final part of the Middle Ages, and why next to no commentaries were written on them during the scholastic period. Other explanations can be given, such as the complete restructuring of the set of logical texts which were used, a lessened interest (in comparison with the twelfth century) for Trinitarian problems in theological debate, and the growing use – through translations from Arabic and Greek – of the works of Aristotle and the entry of Arabic philosophers, Avicenna principally. So the *Opuscula sacra* were part neither of the teaching in universities,³² nor of the group of texts on which philosophical attention was focused. Most of the philosophical and theological activity centres on university practice and the study of the *corpus Aristotelicum*. The theological method conveyed by the *Opuscula sacra*, and developed and systematised by Gilbert of Poitiers, also lost part of its significance. Two important exceptions must be noted: on the one hand, Thomas Aquinas commented on Boethius, and on the other hand some Boethian axioms are frequently called upon in the debate on being and essence.

Thomas Aquinas wrote two commentaries, on OS I and on OS III.³³ Both are works from his youth (probably c.1255–9), when he was a master at the University of Paris. They belong to different literary genres. The commentary on OS I has two parts: first, a brief literal exposition of the text, then a series of questions which deal in a detailed way with the doctrinal problems set out by Boethius' text. Aquinas limits himself to commenting on the prologue, the first chapter, and a part of the second. The commentary on OS III is made up of just an *expositio*, i.e. the explanation of the text, taking each proposition in turn (Aquinas used the same method when commenting on Aristotle). Aquinas' texts have little in common with the previous discussions of the *Opuscula sacra*; Aquinas did not know Gilbert's commentary despite the fact that it was widely diffused in his time. It is of particular significance that, in his commentary on OS I, Aquinas did not go as far as the doctrine of relations and the status of categories, when this part of the text had been of central interest to

twelfth-century commentators. He was more focused on the epistemological problem of the status of Christian theology as a science.

The discussion given in the commentary on OS I,³⁴ structured in questions, follows the classical structure of a *disputatio*, with six questions of four articles each. For each theme which is the subject of an article first the arguments in favour of a solution are expounded, then those in favour of the contrary solution (*sed contra*), the exposition of Aquinas' own solution (*responsio*) and finally the answer to the arguments given at the beginning (*ad argumenta*). Questions 1-3 deal with the possibilities and limits of human knowledge about God. Aquinas defends the possibility of scientific knowledge about God. Question 2, article 3 contains a forceful defence of the use of philosophy in theology. Question 4 deals with the causes of plurality and of the principle of individuation (see below, pp. 171-2) Questions 5 and 6 give a division of theoretical sciences and present their respective methods. Aquinas aims at distinguishing between theology as transmitted by Scripture and philosophical or metaphysical theology.

The other noticeable example of the presence of the *Opuscula sacra* during the thirteenth century can be found in a dispute between Dietrich of Freiberg, Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome on being and essence. In this dispute, axioms from OS III³⁵ and Gilbert of Poitiers' commentary to the text are frequently called upon. Gilbert was considered by scholastic authors as *the* commentator of Boethius (like Averroes for Aristotle). In a debate with Aquinas, Dietrich quotes long passages from Chapter 2 of OS I in his *De ente et essentia* (1.7) and uses axioms from OS III and their interpretation by Gilbert. The interpretation of the Boethian distinction between being and that which is (*esse* and *id quod est*) is central to the controversy between Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome. In his ninth question on being and essence, Giles of Rome³⁶ uses Boethius in order to defend a real distinction between being and essence. Henry of Ghent, according to whom this distinction is intentional, answers him in the seventh question of *Quodlibet* 10 (Henry of Ghent, 1981, 145-97) with a criticism of the interpretation of Boethius given by Giles.

A METHOD FOR RATIONAL THEOLOGY

The list of the authors who commented on or used Boethius' text does not give a complete idea of the profound influence which the *Opuscula*

sacra exerted on medieval thought, not only from a doctrinal standpoint, but also from a methodological and lexical one. Boethius transmitted to medieval thinkers a theological method based on the use of Aristotelian logic, and he contributed to establishing the Latin theological and philosophical vocabulary, mainly in ontology.

The *Opuscula sacra* are a model of the application of dialectic to theology. Boethius uses the Aristotelian logical tradition as it had developed within Neoplatonism to solve theological problems and to tackle heresy. Boethius himself took his inspiration from Aristotle's idea of science. His theological method consists of the application of the logical rules of definition and demonstration to whatever of the divine nature is determinable by human rational understanding. Before him, the Cappadocian Fathers, such as Gregory of Nyssa, had already turned to logic. But Boethius opened the way to the Middle Ages by showing the relevance of the use, in theology, of Aristotelian logic. He makes use of a set of strong philosophical concepts which originate in Aristotle and the Neoplatonic philosophers, and gives the Biblical text and the authorities a secondary role. Aquinas was quite conscious of this when he wrote that there are two ways of considering the Trinity – through the authorities or through reason – and that Boethius preferred the second method.³⁷

The Boethian tradition, in Gilbert of Poitiers as well as Aquinas, is one of rational theology, whereby man can explain the Trinity with rational arguments. Gilbert says that, in God, the unity of essence can be explained through the *rationes theologicae*, and the diversity of the persons through the *rationes naturales*. The natural reasons to which the theologian must turn in order to explain the trinity of the divine persons are no other than the ten Aristotelian categories. Gilbert's understanding of the role of theology as reasoning on divine being (*essentia*) is influenced by Boethius. In his *Theologia summi boni*, Abelard exemplifies the Boethian method of using logic as a way of attaining a rational understanding of the Trinity. From a formal point of view, the axiomatic method of OS III can be seen as the model for that used by Alan of Lille in his *Regulae theologiae*.³⁸

The use of logic in theology gives new life to the problem of the application of the categories to God, known under the medieval name of *praedicatio in divinis* – a problem which was first formulated by Plotinus (*Ennead* VI.1) and inherited from the discussions on the relevance of the categories to the intelligible world which can be

found in Neoplatonic commentaries to the *Categories*. This problem – which was also considered by Augustine – was hotly discussed during the early Middle Ages, as testified by the first book of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, which is entirely dedicated to it.³⁹ Boethius defends a *mutation* of categories when applied to God.⁴⁰ His solution is based on the principle of the dependence of categories on the subject: the categories are such as the subject permits them to be (*talia sunt <praedicamenta> qualia subiecta permiserunt*; this axiom was to have a long medieval posterity). So, with the exception of relation, all categories can be predicated of God after modification. This modification – Boethius uses the word *mutatio* and not *translatio* like Augustine – is justified by the fact that substance in God is not really substance, but beyond substance. The problem of theological predication is particularly developed during the twelfth century by Gilbert of Poitiers and Thierry of Chartres (see in particular the *Lectiones in Boethii librum de Trinitate* iv.17, Häring, 1971, 191: 83–8).

DEFINING THE TERMS

Like the Greek theologians who were his contemporaries, Boethius attached great importance to defining the words he used. He shares the common opinion of late ancient Greek theology (say from Leontius of Byzantium to John of Damascus), according to which many heresies can be avoided if words are correctly defined; the second chapter of OS v is revealing on this point. We can maybe interpret it as inherited from Aristotle, who considered definitions to be the principles of demonstrations (*Posterior Analytics* 9b24). Defining the terms (mainly *natura* and *persona*) is both the problem with and the solution to the heresies of Eutyches and Nestorius. Boethius' legacy on this point is not so much having transmitted the taste for definitions to the Latin world as having contributed to establishing the definitions themselves. Boethius contributed to establishing the Latin equivalents of some Greek terms (*essentia* for *ousia*,⁴¹ *subsistentia* for *ousiōsis*, *substantia* for *hypostasis* and *persona* for *prosōpon*). Boethius also contributed to defining the semantic field of subsistence to refer to the mode of being of universals. Both his translation of the *Isagoge* and his remarks in OS v were influential. He states that the mode of being of universals is *subsistere*, whereas that of individual substances is *substare*.

Boethius' two most important definitions are those of *natura* ('Nature is the specific differentia which informs a thing') and of *person*⁴² ('an individual substance of a nature endowed with reason', *naturae rationabilis individua substantia*). These definitions, which were elaborated for theology, come from the field of logic. The first presupposes the system of genera and species of Aristotle's *Categories*, as put forward by Porphyry in his *Isagoge*, and the second presupposes the distinction between individuals and universals.

Although Boethius' definition of *person* – which was elaborated from notions of traditional ontology – was widely accepted and very frequently referred to, it was also the subject of criticism and attempts were made to reformulate it. It was criticised from a theological point of view by Abelard (*Theologia Christiana* iii.179; Peter Abelard, 1969, 262) and by Richard of St Victor (*de Trinitate* 4, xxi, Richard of St Victor, 1959, 279–81) who consider it not to be applicable to the Trinity. In the *Trinity*⁴³ – a treatise which was written shortly after the Council of Reims – Richard († 1173) removes the notion of substance from the definition of person, insisting on the fact that 'substance' answers the question 'what is it?' (*quid*) whereas 'person' answers the question 'who is it?' (*quis*). He emphasises the notion of singular and incommunicable existence (*incommunicabilis existentia*), which is, according to him, more adequate for defining what a person is.

Boethius' definition has also sometimes been modified on philosophical grounds: Odo of Cambrai, a realist thinker of the end of the eleventh century, said that *persona est individuum rationalis naturae* (PL 160, 1080CD). By removing *substantia* from his definition, Odo gets rid of the substantiality of the person, keeping only the *individuum*. Since the individual is substantially nothing different from its species, Odo can define the person as an instantiation of the universal man which has no particular substantiality.

DOCTRINAL ISSUES

Several theses of the *Opuscula sacra* were given particular importance by their medieval reception. I shall discuss two examples which illustrate the philosophical importance of the *Opuscula sacra*: forms and individuality. The first example highlights the fact that, even if Boethius gave an important role to Aristotelian logic in his theological method,

from a doctrinal point of view the *Opuscula sacra* also had a Platonic influence. The second example shows the role played by Boethius' theological tractates in the transmission of late ancient philosophy.

True forms and images

In the *Opuscula sacra*, Boethius transmitted a thesis which became fundamental to the philosophy of twelfth-century thinkers related to the School of Chartres. It deals with forms:

For from forms which are without matter come the forms which are in matter and produce bodies. For it is to speak improperly (*abutimur*) to call forms those which are in bodies, since they are images. (OS 1171: 113-16)

This passage, a piece of pure Platonic metaphysics, contains a thesis which has serious consequences. It entails a Platonic metaphysical principle according to which the 'forms' of the sensible world (the immanent forms) are not real forms but only images of real forms. The rejection of the idea that real forms are mixed with matter is also Platonic. A Platonic reading of this thesis gives less ontological reality to the image, and thus establishes two ontological levels: that of the real forms, and the lower one of images. In consequence, real substantiality is not in individuals; since in them, mixed with matter, only images or imitations can be found. The acceptance of this thesis creates a division between twelfth-century philosophical systems, a contrast between the 'Chartrian' discussion of the *Opuscula sacra* and the 'Parisian' logical debates. Thinkers related to the Schools of logic preferred to follow Boethius the logician, and remained within the Aristotelian framework of logic and the theory of the *Categories*.⁴⁴ On this view, individuals (and the universals in them if one adopts a realist standpoint) are the real substantial elements. For example, one of the doctrinal advantages of an ontological realism such as that of William of Champeaux is to guarantee the substantiality of the sensible world by placing the real substantial entities, the universals, in it. Accepting the Boethian thesis of the forms of the sensible world as images has the contrary effect: that of taking true substantiality out of the sensible world, and leaving in individuals only images, copies of the real forms which are separated.

The Parisian dialecticians worked in an Aristotelian frame of mind and wanted to guarantee the substantiality of the individual, on the

other hand, the Chartrian thinkers happily endorsed (and even amplified) one of the most Platonic aspects of Boethius' theological thought. In a coherent interpretation, they complement Boethius⁴⁵ with ideas from their other favourite point of reference, Plato's *Timaeus*. The *Timaeus'* cosmology entails that things which are not, but seem to be, owe their appearance of being to the fact that they are images.

This idea can already be found in the glosses of pseudo-Eriugena,⁴⁶ but Gilbert is the first to theorise it. In a Platonic way, he states the existence of pure forms which are separated from the sensible world and from matter. He calls these forms *sincerae substantiae* (Gilbert of Poitiers, 1966 = G, 100: 14). According to him, forms in bodies 'are not ideas but their images' (*non ideae sed idearum icones*, G 100: 22). Gilbert distinguishes pure ideas or archetypes (*exemplares*) from the forms which, when mixed with matter, produce bodies (G 100: 17-19). Jean Jolivet writes about Gilbert: 'he found most of his Platonism in the author [i.e. Boethius] who was for medieval thinkers one of the main sources of it' (1992, 63). In Gilbert, this Boethian theory is balanced by the high ontological status which is given to individual realities. His metaphysics are a subtle combination of Platonic elements founded on Boethius (such as this statement of the existence of ideas) and a strictly particularist ontology which values and emphasises the reality of individuals.

Thierry of Chartres goes much further in assimilating this Boethian thesis into his metaphysics. Where, on the one hand, Gilbert balances the Boethian theory by a valuation of substantial individual reality, Thierry, on the other hand, denies any proper substantial reality to individuals (as we shall see with regard to the next point, he holds that the essence is common to the individuals of the same species and that it is properly speaking possessed by none of them). For Thierry, only the images of the forms exist in matter, and they come from the real forms which exist in the divine mind.⁴⁷ His world is, according to John Marenbon,⁴⁸ a world of *imagines*. To this Platonic doctrine, Thierry adds another element related to the problem of universals. He accepts the existence of uninstantiated universals, which means that the existence of a universal does not depend upon that of the individuals which instantiate it: this is an obvious sign of a strongly Platonic position. For example, Thierry states that the *forma humanitatis* is imperishable: if no individual man were to

exist, then the form 'humanity' would not perish; but it would lose its specific identity and return to the simplicity of the *forma divina* (Häring, 1971, 84: 81-4).

Clarembald also insists on the secondary status of the forms of the sensible world. They are the images in bodies of the real forms which are in God. Forms in bodies are an outflow of real forms: *omnis ... corporum forma ab illa forma ... profluit* ('the entire form of bodies flows from that form', Häring, 1965, 115). Immanent forms are degenerate images of prototypical forms. They descend (*descendunt*) from the *purissimae substantiae* by a kind of fall or degeneration (*degeneraverunt*).⁴⁹

Individuality caused by accidents

The notion of forms separate from matter was accepted almost unanimously by the commentators of Boethius; but this was not the case for another Boethian thesis, dealing with the individual. Having introduced three possible types of identity or difference – through genus, through species (Felix the cat and Cicero are different as to their species) or through number (Socrates is numerically different from Plato) – Boethius introduces an explanation of numerical difference: the variety of accidents produces the difference as to number (*numero differentiam accidentium varietas facit*, OS I 168: 56-7)

Individuals of the same species are different owing to the variety of their accidents. Even alone, this thesis involves a metaphysical position, in that it rejects the essential individuation of the particular. Two individuals of the same species do not differ through their own essence, but through their accidents. This entails two things: (1) the essence is common to all the individuals of the same species (since, if each individual had its own essence, individuals would differ from one another essentially); (2) all the substantial being of the individuals is contained in the species⁵⁰ (since the difference between two individuals of the same species is accidental, their substantial being comes from what they have in common, their species). The idea that the difference between two individuals of the same species is due to a bundle of properties originates in Porphyry's *Isagoge* (AL I.6-7, 13: 21-14: 6), where the individual is said to be constituted by a unique bundle of properties. Boethius makes Porphyry's theory even more explicit by adding that these properties are accidental. Note that this

Porphyrian thesis was favourably received among the Greek Church Fathers, in particular among the Cappadocians,⁵¹ it was therefore not unnatural for Boethius to call upon it in a Trinitarian context.

Like Porphyry in the case of universals, Boethius provided the terms for the problem of the ontological constitution of individuals for the first centuries of the Middle Ages. The problem is not that of finding a principle of individuation (*principium individuationis*), but that of knowing what causes (*facit*) numerical difference, that is, of finding an ontological explanation of individuality. Boethius contributed to the understanding of individuality as a kind of difference: to be individual is to be dissimilar to other things.

In OS I – with reminders in his commentary to the *Isagoge*⁵² – Boethius defends an explanation of the individuality of the individual which had already been formulated in other words by Porphyry, and popularises it in the Latin world.⁵³ This theory of individuation through accidents would come to be very widely accepted during the early Middle Ages. As demonstrated by Jorge Gracia,⁵⁴ it is used by John Scottus Eriugena, Odo of Cambrai, William of Champeaux, Thierry of Chartres and Clarembald of Arras. We may add Anselm of Canterbury to this list:⁵⁵ he advocates a theory of the individual as *collectio proprietatum*, which is in line with Porphyry's and Boethius' thought. We can identify two major critics of this thesis: Peter Abelard and Gilbert of Poitiers.

Abelard rejects this theory and, more widely, the relevance of individuation itself. For Abelard, substances are individual essentially and of themselves; therefore they need nothing other than themselves for their individuation. Abelard states this very clearly in the *Logica ingredientibus* (Peter Abelard, 1919-33, 13: 18-25) by referring to the following thought experiment: take two individuals of the same species; if their accidents were removed, these two individuals would remain different from each other and would continue to subsist in their proper essence because their personal difference (*discretio personalis*) – the fact that this one is not that one – does not come from accidents but from an essential difference. Abelard makes a powerful criticism of the thesis of individuation through accidents. This criticism is not so much aimed at Boethius himself, as at a contemporary of Abelard who endorsed this Boethian theory, William of Champeaux. Material essence realism – the first theory of universals to be held by William – does indeed take the Boethian

thesis as one of its central axioms. One of the arguments of Abelard against this theory is that it entails an unacceptable consequence: the priority of accidents over particular substances (since then particular substances will not be able to act as the substrate for accidents).

In his commentary on Boethius' text, Gilbert gives a theory which depends on the essential individuation of the particular. He states that Plato and Cicero are two distinct individuals, not only through accidental properties, but more importantly through substantial properties (G 58: 45-7). This point is interesting with regard to Gilbert's intellectual attitude. Despite the fact that the theory of the essential individuation of particulars contradicts a literal reading of the Boethian text he comments on, Gilbert develops it in his commentary. He uses Boethius' conceptual tools, but does not hesitate to take his distance from, or even correct, Boethius' text when it is in obvious contradiction with his interpretation. Gilbert bases himself on Boethius' doctrine (in OS III) of the *esse* and *quod est* to develop his theory. According to Gilbert, everything is what it is (*quod est*) by virtue of something which makes it so (*quo est*). For example, a man is what he is (a man) by humanity, a white thing by whiteness. A *quo est* (like, of course, a *quod est*) is necessarily particular. Gilbert distinguishes between two types of *quo est*, those which are substantial and those which are accidental. Borrowing this term from OS V, he calls *subsistentia* a substantial *quo est*, that is, a *quo est* which makes a thing the sort of thing it is. A *subsistentia* can therefore be generic (animality), specific (humanity), differential (rationality). Gilbert introduces the word *subsistens* to refer to the individual entity which is what it is through a subsistence. A 'subsistent' is everything it is by means of a 'subsistence'. Socrates is a subsistent which is a man, by means of the subsistence humanity which is proper to him. Gilbert insists on the particularity of subsistences. The form of one reality cannot be the form of another reality; a subsistence can only constitute one subsistent (*una singularis subsistentia non nisi unum numero faciat subsistentem*) (G 58: 42-5). The plurality of individuals presupposes a plurality of forms or substances which are all particular. Each subsistent has its own essence (*singularitas essentiae*, G 145: 92) which is constituted by the 'collection' of subsistences (generic, specific, differential: G 262: 40); Plato for example has a *collecta Platonitas* which is strictly particular, as are the accidents which compose it, like whiteness

(*singularis albedo*, G 273: 51-2). This ontological position is very distant from the metaphysical framework given by Boethius in OS I. Therefore, Gilbert does not accept the Boethian theory of individuation through accidents; on the other hand, he gives an epistemic role to the bundle of accidents. Gilbert introduced a distinction between the principle of numerical diversity and the principle of the discernibility of numerical diversity. So where Boethius states that the variety of accidents causes the difference among individuals, Gilbert replaces the word *facit* by *probat*: the diversity of accidents only testifies of, and makes visible, the essential ontological particularity. It is the sign and not the proof of it.

This theory attracts strong criticism from the circle of Thierry of Chartres and Clarembald of Arras, who return to a literal interpretation of Boethius' treatise. Thierry rejects the thesis of the plurality of humanities; when he mentions this thesis, he adds the following comment: *quod omnino falsum est*. According to him, the species is one and the same form for all the subordinate individuals. It is not the case that there are several humanities; there is only one human nature for all men: *una omnino humanitas omnium hominum*. Plurality comes from accidents, not from human nature, and concerns individuals, not forms.⁵⁶ In Plato, Socrates and Cicero, Thierry sees three distinct human beings, three individuals who differ through their accidents. But in them all, there is only one nature, the unique humanity (*una natura una et eadem sit humanitas in omnibus*). The plurality of individuals comes from the diversity of accidents, not from a diversity of natures (*ex diversitate accidentium non nature hominum provenire pluralitatem*).⁵⁷ Clarembald continues his criticism by accusing Gilbert, whom he always calls 'the Bishop of Poitiers', of establishing several humanities, when in fact all men are men by the same humanity (*ex eadem humanitate*). So, according to Clarembald,⁵⁸ in three given men, one and the same humanity can be found. The plurality of individuals in a given species is founded in a diversity of accidents.

Thomas Aquinas devotes the second article of the fourth question of his commentary on OS I to the problem of whether the variety of accidents causes numerical diversity among individuals of the same species. With the help of the new conceptual tools provided by the rediscovery of the natural and metaphysical writings of Aristotle (in particular, hylomorphism), Aquinas offers a completely

different solution from what had been previously stated, by introducing the notion of matter. Aquinas begins by noting that Boethius' statement according to which otherness is the principle of plurality does not hold in the case of all beings in general, but only in the case of composed beings. Aquinas explains that, just as diversity of matter causes diversity in genus (inasmuch as it underlies a common form), and diversity of form causes diversity in species, in like fashion this form and this matter produce diversity in number. A form is individuated by the fact that it is received into this matter which is distinct and determined in the here and now. And matter is made to be this matter because it exists under indeterminate dimensions⁵⁹ – Aquinas calls this particularised matter *materia signata* (the word *signatum* was often used by the Latin translator of Avicenna). It is only as this designated matter, i.e. as matter subject to dimensions, that matter can individuate the form it receives (matter considered just in itself cannot individuate anything). The human form can be rendered individual by being received in particular matter, determined as to this place and as to this time. Thus the principle of individuation, the cause of numerical diversity, is matter as subject to quantity and its dimensions. Accidents are therefore not, according to Aquinas, the principle or cause of individuation; however, they are the principle of discernibility of individuals. Aquinas insists on the fact that accidents 'are the cause of our knowing the distinction between individuals', because it is through these accidental differences that we recognise individuals.

The two examples discussed above demonstrate that Boethius was influential in very different doctrinal directions. Another example illustrates well the variety of interpretations of Boethius' text: namely the axiom of OS III⁶⁰ in which Boethius explains the difference between being (*esse*) and that which is (*id quod est*); Pierre Hadot proposed to understand this as Porphyry's distinction between *einai* and *on*.⁶¹ Medieval commentators gave various interpretations of it. Pseudo-Eriugena considers the *esse* to be the being of a thing in divine thought and the *id quod est* to be the thing as it is realised in the sensible world and determined by the hierarchy of genera and species. Gilbert of Poitiers identifies *esse* and *subsistentia* – the Porretan version of Aristotelian secondary substances – and *id quod est* and *subsistens*, i.e. the individual subject. Clarembald understands *esse*

as God, the *primum bonum*. The *id quod est* is the concrete thing. Aquinas interprets *esse* as the pure act of being, taken abstractly, without subject, and the *id quod est* as the subject which receives the act of being.

Other Boethian theses played an important role in medieval thought; here are some examples. Through the notion of *forma essendi*, Boethius gave a 'formal' and not only existential interpretation of being. The Boethian axiom according to which all being comes from the form (*omne esse ex forma est*) had a rich posterity. Through its discussion of the convertibility of goodness and being, OS III is one of the sources of the problem of transcendentals. OS I played an important role in the question of the division of sciences. OS III puts forward a theory of participation; it contains one of the most influential metaphysical schemes, and it provides an alternative to an Aristotelian point of view. Such is the rich medieval history of the *Opuscula sacra*.

NOTES

1. This did not prevent thinkers from accusing their contemporaries of giving new life to old heresies. Note for example the letter of Bernard of Clairvaux *Contra Petrum Abelardum* to Pope Innocent II, in which he accuses Abelard of repeating the mistakes of Arius, Pelagius and Nestorius.
2. The fact that, in addition, these three Greek texts were read in Boethius' Latin translation illustrates the importance of Boethius' influence on early medieval thought.
3. See Chenu (1966), 154–6.
4. However, Boethius also gave rise to negative reactions, in particular among the adversaries of dialectic, who, like Otloh of St Emmeran, considered him to be a dangerous author: see Courcelle (1967), 301.
5. Nevertheless, we can find in Thierry of Chartres and Clarembald of Arras, two twelfth-century Boethian commentators, an attempt to present the unity of Boethius' thought in a systematic way. See Evans (1983).
6. Marenbon (1982), 446.
7. On the medieval influence of the *Opuscula sacra* see Gibson (1981b); Galonnier (2007), 205–26; Marenbon (2003a), 170–2.
8. For a general presentation see d'Onofrio (1986) and Gibson (1982).
9. See Troncarelli (1988).
10. See Marenbon (1981).

11. *Opusculum grammaticale primum*, Gottschalk (1945), 383: 15-16.
12. *Responsa de diversis II*, Gottschalk (1945), 134: 25-136: 15.
13. See Delhaye (1950).
14. See for example Ratramnus of Corbie (1952), 105: 29-31: *Porro species, sive genus, non sunt res existentes; sed in cogitatione per intellectum quadam similitudine formantur.*
15. See d'Onofrio (1980a) and (1980b).
16. Rand (1906).
17. Cappuyns (1931). See also d'Onofrio (1981).
18. Rand replied to these criticisms in Rand (1934).
19. On the hierarchy of genera and species and the determination of space and time as a double determination of the sensible world in Eriugena see Erismann (2007).
20. See the list given by M. Cappuyns (1931), 239-41. Nevertheless, they do not all contain a homogeneous text.
21. Chenu (1966), 142-58.
22. See the various studies gathered in Marenbon (2000); see also Marenbon (2004).
23. It is not the place here to discuss the existence of the 'School of Chartres'. Let us only acknowledge the existence of a community of learning in which the *Opuscula sacra* played a central role. From this Chartian context also originated William of Conches, who wrote, among other things, an important commentary on the *Consolatio*. On the reality of the School of Chartres see the opposing points of view of Southern (1970) and Häring (1974).
24. On the metaphysics of Gilbert see Marenbon (1988); Van Elswijk (1966), 153-203; Westley (1959-60); Maioli (1979), 179-364; de Rijk (1988-9); Jolivet (1992); Nielsen (1982), 47-86.
25. See Häring (1966) and Hayen (1935-6).
26. See the list of manuscripts in Häring (1978).
27. All these texts are edited in Häring (1971).
28. See Häring (1955) and Parent (1938).
29. The Latin text is edited by Häring (1965); this edition has to be supplemented by the critical remarks of Châtillon (1965). English translation in George and Fortin (2002).
30. See Häring (1965), 28: 28; 45: 12; 45: 23; 51: 35; 65: 10; 67: 15; 77: 25.
31. Häring (1965), 51: 35: *Mirum ergo, quomodo episcopus Pictavensis tres in Deo personas numero diversas scripsit; unde, sicut supra memoravimus, tantum virum reprehendere quidem veremur, sequi autem nolumus.* See Häring (1965), 38-45.
32. Note nonetheless that teachings were dedicated to OS III during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Universities of Erlangen, Cracow and Vienna.

33. For the Latin text see Aquinas (1992). English translation of the commentary on OS I in Aquinas (1987) for questions 1-4 and (1953) for questions 5-6. For the commentary on OS III see Aquinas (2001).
34. For a general analysis of the work see Hall (1992).
35. Before this controversy, Albertus Magnus had already discussed OS III in his *De bono* q1, a7: *Utrum omne quod est, in quantum est, bonum est.*
36. See Nash (1950).
37. *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, Prologus: Aquinas (1992), 76b.
38. See Evans (1980).
39. See O'Meara (1983).
40. See de Libera (2005).
41. On Boethius as a translator see Courtine (1980).
42. On Boethius' notion of 'person' see Nédoncelle (1955); Schlapkohl (1999); Lutz-Bachmann (1983); Hipp (2001), 105-9; Elsässer (1973); Micaelli (1981); Milano (1984), 319-82.
43. See den Bok (1996).
44. The two most important thinkers of the twelfth century, Abelard and Gilbert of Poitiers, who share many doctrinal views, notably a strict ontological particularism, are separated by their relation to Boethius. Abelard considered only the commentaries on the *Organon* and was not interested, as a philosopher, in the *Opuscula sacra*. Gilbert, on the other hand, commented on the *Opuscula sacra* because he found in Boethius' work a metaphysics of *esse* and flow which was useful to developing his own thought.
45. John of Salisbury (*Metalogicon* IV, 35; John of Salisbury, 1991, 173: 32-7) testifies to the importance of Boethius' text for the genesis of this thesis: *Sed ex his formae prodeunt nativae, scilicet imagines exemplarium, quas naturas rebus singulis concreavit. Hinc in libro de Trinitate Boetius. Ex his formis quae prae materiam sunt illae formae venerunt quae in materia sunt, et corpus efficiunt.*
46. Rand (1906), 37: 4-15: *Formae s[cilicet] aeternae. Formae omnium rerum aeternae sunt et incorporeales, et illae verae formae sunt, ad quarum similitudinem haec, quae in corporibus sunt, productae sunt. Quia ergo illae aeternae formae meliores sunt, quam materia corporalis, cum tempore, quia aeternae, cum stabilitate, quia immutabiles, satis congrue ea quae sunt secundum illas potius quam secundum materiam nominantur.*
47. *Lectiones in Boethii librum de Trinitate* II.65, Häring (1971), 176: 40-3: *Vere, imago esset si esset in materia. Nam he formae quae sunt in materia non sunt vere formae sed veniunt in materiam ex veris formis quae sunt in mente divina vocantur ydee ex quarum scilicet coniunctione cum materia fiunt ista actualia.*

48. Marenbon (1982), 448.
49. It is easy to see how remote the idea of degeneration is from the theory of immanent universals advocated in the schools of logic, particularly in a theory like that of material essence realism defended by William of Champeaux.
50. This thesis is expressed by Boethius in the second commentary to Porphyry, in which Boethius explains that the species is the whole substance of its individuals. Man is the whole substance of Socrates and Cicero (2IS 215: 16–18).
51. In Cappadocian thought and in the spirit of the Council of Nicaea, the distinction between essence and *hypostasis* (this distinction can easily be interpreted as one between the species or secondary substance and the individual) was superimposed upon that between what is common (*koinon*) and what is particular (*idion*). *Ousia* is related to *hypostasis* as the common is to the proper. If that which is common is the *ousia*, the essence, that which is particular and proper to each individual can only be accidental. Both Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa describe the *hypostasis* as a combination of properties. In his treatise *Ad Graecos*, Gregory states (Gregory of Nyssa 1952–III.1, 31: 18–20) that persons are different from each other not because of their essence but because of their accidents.
52. 2IS, 200: 5–7: *quae enim uni cuique indiuiduo forma est, ea non ex substantiali quadam forma species, sed ex accidentibus venit*; 2IS 241: 9–10: *ea vero quae indiuidua sunt et solo numero discrepant, solis accidentibus distant*; 2IS 271: 18–20: *quocumque enim Socrates a Platone distiterit – nullo autem alio distare nisi accidentibus potest*.
53. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, however, Boethius takes the seemingly different position that accidents depend on substance and hence are individuated by it. In this perspective, substances individuate accidents rather than the converse.
54. Gracia (1984).
55. See Erismann (2003).
56. See *Lectiones in Boethii librum de Trinitate* II.62, Häring (1971), 175: 2–5 and II.63, Häring (1971), 175: 11–17.
57. Thierry of Chartres, *Commentum super Boethii librum de Trinitate* I.8, Häring (1971), 64: 66–82: *Hec ergo huius summa est sententiae quod natura semper una est, persone vero diverse: ut in his quidem mutabilibus humanitas sine dubio una est in omnibus, diverse vero sunt humanitatis persone ut Plato Socrates et Cicero. Sed licet in his una sit humanitatis natura, ex personarum tamen pluralitate naturam subintrat pluralitas ut – cum Plato sit homo, Socrates sit homo – plures homines sint: non unus homo ... Quoniam enim humanitatis persone*

- accidentibus distant, plures homines esse concedimus licet una natura una et eadem sit humanitas in omnibus. Nemo ergo Platonem cum Socrate unum esse concludat hominem licet Socratis et Platonis unam eademque concesserimus humanitatem. Immo taceat in sua sopitus inscitia qui ex diversitate accidentium non nature hominum provenire pluralitatem ignorat.*
58. *Tractatus super Librum Boetii de Trinitate* 20, Häring (1965), 73: *Verum in tribus hominibus licet eadem sit humanitas, ut in sequentibus liquet, tamen accidentium varietas pluralitatem constituit.*
59. Aquinas endorses here Averroes' notion of indeterminate dimensions; in others works, such as the *De ente et essentia*, he uses the Avicennian doctrine of determinate dimensions.
60. The medieval history of OS III is detailed in Schrimpf (1966).
61. See Hadot (1963) and (1970).

8 The Good and morality: *Consolatio* 2-4

FORM AND CONTENT

Readers coming to the *Consolatio* for the first time are bound to be struck by a certain formal consideration that serves to set Books 2-4 apart from Books 1 and 5: whereas each of the three central books begins with prose and ends with poetry, Book 1 both begins and ends with poetry as Book 5 does with prose. Books 2-4 in fact highlight the shift in balance from poetry to prose by holding the two in strict equilibrium. This element of formal coherence goes hand in hand with a unity that over the course of the central books obtains at the level of a fundamental literary and philosophical motif, that of the circle or orb. The motif appears in the first two chapters of Book 2 in the form of Fortuna's wheel,¹ whose spinning symbolizes the constant mutability² of human life and seasonal change,³ and it re-emerges in the penultimate chapter of Book 4 in the figure of the nested orbs of fate.⁴ That we are in each case considering one and the same reality is evident both from the fact that the final chapter of Book 4 takes a last look back at fortune in its popular or vulgar sense,⁵ and from the dramatic irony and foreshadowing with which 2.1 is brought to a close: "Would you halt the movement of [Fortuna's] spinning wheel? But fool! The moment it stops, it ceases to *be* fortune."⁶ For fortune, as becomes clear at the end of Book 4, is nothing more than a common misconception for fate, which is in turn the ordered temporal change that emanates from immutable providence.⁷ Looking to what lies at the heart of the three central books, and thus of the *Consolatio* as a whole,⁸ we note that the central lines of the great Timaeon hymn "O qui perpetua" (3.m9) eulogize the divine force (*mens profunda*) that drives the celestial circulations

from within.⁹ The hymn inaugurates the second half of the *Consolatio*, and Plato is its acknowledged source of inspiration.¹⁰ With this overarching structure Boethius (the author) has effected an impressive convergence of literary form and philosophical themes: two instances of the circle (orb) motif, the second emphasizing the divine immobility of the hub, and both standing at equal removes from a passage that describes the divine mind at the centre of all cosmic rotation. Books 2–4 form a coherent and self-contained ring structure, and it is therefore worth considering them apart from Book 1, which charts Philosophia's course of therapy but initiates no philosophical argumentation as such, and from Book 5, which pushes in a new direction.

Boethius himself provides a clue to the interpretation of the recurrent circle motif and thus to the larger ring structure. At the end of Book 3 "Boethius" (the interlocutor), after expressing bewilderment at the complexity of Philosophia's arguments, asks:

Are you playing with me, weaving an inextricable labyrinth with your reasoning, entering at one moment where you would exit then exiting at the next where you entered, or are you weaving some fantastic orb of divine simplicity?¹¹

He goes on to recapitulate the conclusions drawn in 3.10–12, observing that none has depended on extrinsic assumptions.¹² To which Philosophia then replies:

I am playing no game whatsoever. Through the gift of God, to whom we prayed a while back, I have accomplished the greatest task of all. For such is the form of the divine substance that it neither slips away into, nor receives, anything external to itself; but rather, as Parmenides says, "like unto the mass of a sphere well-rounded on all sides" it turns the moving orb of the universe while maintaining its own immobility. That my arguments have not come from without but were set within the ambit of our subject matter should not surprise you, for you have learned on Plato's authority that our language should be akin to the things it expresses.¹³

The general tenor of her response evokes *Timaeus* 33a–b, on the sphere as the shape most resistant to extrinsic corruption, but the passage of Plato actually referred to is 29b–d, the meaning of which has been altered.¹⁴ For whereas Plato warns against taking the cosmological "myth" as a matter of scientific certainty, Boethius, in

drawing attention to the kinship of language and things expressed, is in effect indicating to his readers that the architecture of the *Consolatio* is a literary manifestation of its philosophical themes. This is a point of some interest, for it suggests that literary motifs are made to recur for a *philosophical* reason.

And the reason is not difficult to guess. Books 2–4 fully develop the therapy metaphor that is set in motion in Book 1 and fades from view with Book 5; by way of a parallel development "Boethius," although highly visible in 5.3–m3,¹⁵ effectively disappears thereafter,¹⁶ leaving the final chapters of the *Consolatio* to dissolve at last into a kind of soliloquy. His silence betokens healing, and given that the course of treatment is not quite underway in Book 1,¹⁷ the main therapy necessarily falls to Books 2–4, over the course of which Philosophia sounds two calls for "stronger" medications.¹⁸ Her timing¹⁹ is significant: the first call comes immediately after a preliminary probing of "Boethius'" tolerance for dialectical reasoning, and immediately before an extended section which involves a repetitive (double) treatment of themes, split between Books 2 and 3; the other ushers in the second phase of that treatment. The implication is clear: the function of the repetition is to occasion a more rigorous treatment of the same set of problems. Like a physician who builds up dosages against a persistent illness as the patient gathers strength, Philosophia brings stronger arguments to previously considered problems as "Boethius" proves ready for them. Boethius had had ample opportunity to contemplate the underlying methodological point in the course of writing his double commentaries on Aristotle, and the results of his reflections are put to effective use in the *Consolatio*.

What is the philosophical manifestation of the process of recovery? The problem that above all binds Books 1 and 5 is that of freedom, political freedom in the first instance, free choice of the will in the second. In Book 5 the solution to the question of *libertas* is made to depend upon the doctrine that the level of knowledge on the continuum that ascends from sense perception to intelligence is determined not by the nature of known objects but by the powers of knowing subjects – a doctrine that is significantly illustrated by the figure of a sphere.²⁰ Sense perception responds to the "shape" (*figura*) of the material particular, imagination "judges" (*iudicare*) it in separation from matter, reason defines the shape qua universal "species" (*species ipsa*), and intelligence comprehends the "form" (*ipsa illa forma*) in its

pure simplicity. The object remains the same, but the mode of comprehension changes. This doctrine represents the philosophical fulfillment of what in Books 2-4 is achieved by way of the repetitive literary strategy and the therapy metaphor: the fundamental questions posed by the *Consolatio* remain constant, but the philosophical perspective develops. On the literary side the strategy plays out in the form of a shift, over the course of Books 2-4, from rhetoric to dialectic, and on the philosophical side, from Seneca/Epictetus to Plato/Aristotle.²¹ 4.7, immediately before the "digression"²² that is Book 5, is the one point in the *Consolatio* where progress is halted in order to reflect on where things are (fate, providence) as opposed to where they have been (fortune).²³ It gives Philosophia the opportunity to revisit the paradoxical claims that misfortune is a boon²⁴ and that every fortune, qua mere state of mind,²⁵ is a function of free choice.²⁶ By 4.7 both have gained in depth: the first is underpinned by a comprehensive diaeresis accounting for the providential distribution of lots,²⁷ the second by the charting of the soul's flight from the bonds of fate to the freedom of providence.²⁸

Books 2-4 have two main tasks to accomplish. The first, which is set in advance²⁹ and brought to completion at the end of Book 3,³⁰ is to demonstrate that the Good is both the final and efficient cause of all that exists and happens in the world. The second, which is made to appear as a kind of afterthought and fits within the confines of Book 4, is to draw out the moral implications of the conclusions reached by the end of Book 3, more precisely, to explain how evil can exist in a world that is universally governed by the Good.³¹ Hence, although Book 3, in completing the course of treatment prescribed by Philosophia in Book 1, ought to bring the dialogue to a close, Book 4 emerges as a necessary continuation by applying the metaphysics of the Good to moral considerations that have troubled "Boethius" from the start.

FIRST IMPULSES

Book 2 is in two parts of four chapters (and poems) each. The first part enters directly into discussion of the question of human happiness (*felicitas*),³² postponing to the end mention of the goods (*bona*) variously associated with happiness.³³ The central concern is the preservation of mental tranquility in the face of the unforeseen vicissitudes of life,³⁴ and the approach is described as "sweetly rhetorical,"³⁵ postponing "stronger remedies" until the second part of the book.³⁶

Consequently the first part is literary rather than dialectical in tone and provokes some of Boethius' most memorable writing. Philosophia evokes Epictetus in her manner of addressing "Boethius,"³⁷ and 2.1 concludes with a rapid-fire series of metaphors and moral *sententiae* that are redolent of Seneca.³⁸ She employs, in other words, the *omnibus* style associated with the (misleadingly dubbed) philosophical diatribe.³⁹ Seneca above all informs her clipped periods and provocative manner: until "Boethius" is ready for sustained philosophical reflection on happiness and the Good, Philosophia will cast the discussion in terms of his *apparent* joys and sufferings,⁴⁰ and for that Seneca provides some useful guidance. Wherever Seneca is seen to inform the style of the *Consolatio*, however, we should be alert to the possibility of Plato's influence at a deeper level. The personification of Fortuna in 2.2 is a case in point. Although Seneca's personification of Nature in the *Consolatio ad Marciam*⁴¹ might appear *primo spectu* to settle the question of Boethius' "source," the general *mise-en-scène* of the *Consolatio* and the particular implications of the closing words of 2.2 point to more profound resonances with the personification of the Laws in Plato's *Crito*: Having freely chosen Fortuna's regime - having *benefitted* therefrom - would "Boethius" now opt out?⁴² It is not, in other words, a question of a "source," Seneca or Plato, but of the way in which Boethius plays authors and texts off one another in order to achieve his particular ends. The Seneca/Plato tension in particular can be felt throughout, as for example in the figure of the nested orbs, or in the handling of the *quid est homo* theme.⁴³ The rhetoric of the first part of Book 2 is made to adhere to the "straight path" of reason,⁴⁴ and already in the earliest stages "Boethius" has to confront two apparently oxymoronic claims the significance of which emerges only gradually: mutability is the constancy of Fortuna, and subjugation to her tyranny is a function of *free choice*.⁴⁵ By the end of Book 4 the second has been inverted: freedom from the changes of fortune and fate means *bondage* to the motionless stability of providence.⁴⁶

The first moment of philosophical reasoning comes at the end of 2.4. With five swift attacks on the value of things fortuitous Philosophia probes for the "hub" of supreme happiness:

- (1) The most highly valued possession is the self; [since no one willingly forfeits that which is most highly valued, and the

- self cannot be taken against one's will, happiness lies in] *self*-possession [or possession of that which is most highly valued and] is never lost through choice or compulsion.⁴⁷
- (2) Happiness is the highest good for rational beings, and the highest good cannot be removed [against the will of those who possess it], since there would then have to be another good which [being irremovable] was higher still; [hence *happiness* cannot be removed against the will of those who possess it; but since] fortuitous things [are removable, they] cannot confer happiness.⁴⁸
- (3) One either does or does not know that [his] happiness is mutable (fortuitous); if the latter, then he is unhappy, being in a state of ignorance [which is incompatible with happiness]; if the former, then he is either perturbed or unperturbed by the thought of losing [said mutable happiness]; if perturbed, then unhappy; if unperturbed, then that the loss of which is tolerated with equanimity is an insignificant good [incapable of conferring happiness].⁴⁹
- (4) The mind is immortal [and the body mortal; that which perishes cannot confer happiness after perishing]; since fortuitous happiness [pertains to and] perishes along with the body it [inevitably] occasions unhappiness [in the immortal mind; hence happiness ultimately pertains to the mind].⁵⁰
- (5) Many have identified happiness with death and suffering; if [for them fortuitous happiness] does not occasion unhappiness in its perishing, then neither does it occasion happiness by its abiding.⁵¹

The dialogue conceit strains under this scholastic array of arguments, the elliptical and incoherent quality of which seems designed to bewilder rather than aid the ailing "Boethius." One difficulty is that the arguments do not obviously lead anywhere. They end abruptly, "Boethius" being given no opportunity, or being in no condition, to respond, while the "stronger medicines" of 2.5 point in a new direction. The arguments, however, form part of a network of issues running throughout the *Consolatio*. (1) has its roots in Book 1 and will bear fruit in Books 2-4.⁵² (4) picks up a related concern, and its assumption concerning the immortality of the soul (mind) touches on an issue that is central to the work as a whole.⁵³ (2) anticipates

an argument concerning the Good in Book 3.⁵⁴ The substance of (3) resurfaces in Book 4 in connection with the question why vice is chosen over virtue.⁵⁵ The reference in (5) to voluntary death appears unmotivated until we recall that *Philosophia* has just been tallying up the benefits "Boethius" has received from *Fortuna*, thereby echoing Stoic advice concerning suicide.⁵⁶

DEAD ENDS

Nearly a fourth of the *Consolatio* is dedicated to consideration of the causes underlying unhappiness. The discussion is split between two parallel treatments, at 2.5-m7 and 3.3-m7, each of which announces the application of stronger medications.⁵⁷ The distribution of themes is as follows:

Riches	2.5, m5	3.3, m3
Office	2.6, m6	3.4, m4
Rule	2.6, m6	3.5, m5
Glory	2.7, m7	3.6, m6
Pleasure	-	3.7, m7

The first phase conflates (office, rule) and omits (pleasure) subjects, while the second reins in the poetry,⁵⁸ both symptoms raising hopes for a more rigorously philosophical analysis in Book 3. Although it may appear as though *Philosophia* has her sights on a traditional set of Roman values,⁵⁹ her selection of themes arises directly out of the complaint lodged by "Boethius" in 1.4: having used - *under her tutelage* - his wealth, position, and name only for the public good, never for private gratification, he now feels cheated of them all by fortune. Hence her attack on Roman traditions is secondary to her concern for "Boethius."

Certain correspondences serve to link the parallel discussions. In the case of wealth, for example, we note that 3.3.5-11 echo 2.5.32-4 on the anxieties of possessing, as 3.3.12-16 echo 2.5.22f. on the dependencies created by it, and as 3.3.17-19 echo 2.5.16 on the minimal requirements of nature. There are, however, clear differences. The treatment in Book 2 is governed by two questions: Are fortuitous goods ours? And are they of any value?⁶⁰ 2.5 is consequently dedicated to showing that what we seek and admire in wealth (money, gems, land, etc.) is of no value precisely because it is never really *ours* to

possess. The tone is reminiscent of Seneca and of ancient display oratory⁶¹ up until its more tightly argued conclusion.⁶² The approach announced at the beginning of Book 3 is by contrast dialectical, in that it involves clearing away false conceptions in preparation for the discovery of true ones;⁶³ more precisely, it means ascertaining the pattern or "form"⁶⁴ of the happiness falsely "promised"⁶⁵ by riches, office, rule, glory, and pleasure in order to reveal the pattern of true happiness. Philosophia is after both the natural intention⁶⁶ that seeks the good and the error that distracts from it, and she already has her eye on Plato's *Gorgias*⁶⁷ in drawing what is in effect a distinction between what people want (the end, or good) and what seems to them best (means) as regards the pursuit of happiness.⁶⁸ And as Plato identifies the counterfeiting that goes on between (e.g.) rhetoric and justice in relation to the soul and between cookery and medicine in relation to the body,⁶⁹ so Philosophia distinguishes between false pursuits (goods of the body),⁷⁰ what they counterfeit (goods of the soul), and the good that stands behind them all. The general principle governing the analysis is articulated at the end of 3.2:

So these are the things people want to obtain, and they desire riches, offices, rule, glory, and pleasure for this reason, that they believe that by means of them there will come *self-sufficiency, reverence, power, nobility, and joy*. The *good* is therefore what they seek through their various pursuits ...⁷¹

As to wealth, the thing counterfeited is self-sufficiency (*sibi sufficientia = autarkeia*). People pursue money in order to gain independence, which is a genuine good; but since money is never securely in their possession and actually adds dependencies to those they seek to free themselves of by its possession, it inevitably fails to deliver on its promise.⁷² Hence the fundamental difference between the parallel treatments of wealth is that 3.3 probes for human motivation in a way that 2.5 does not. The problem, it turns out, is not wealth as such, but understanding why it is mistaken for a "true" good.

In 3.4-7 Philosophia endeavors to explain how false substitutions occur in respect of the remaining pursuits (office, rule, glory, pleasure), and although her intention is presumably to add depth to what is said in Book 2, the treatment is strangely disappointing, falling back all too frequently on the earlier rhetorical approach. Office and rule, for example, are treated together in 2.6 but separately in 3.4-5, raising

hopes for a more rigorous analysis in the latter. Yet in their appeals to Greek and Roman *exempla*⁷³ and to the *dignitas indignos ostentat* theme,⁷⁴ in their arguments against the intrinsic worth of offices,⁷⁵ and in their providing the occasion for poems on Nero,⁷⁶ the treatments nearly duplicate one another. Insofar as 3.4-5 are not an obvious philosophical improvement on 2.6, it is difficult not to feel that progress has slowed down. It is, somewhat surprisingly, in their rather minimal poems, 3.m4 and 3.m5, that philosophical development is in evidence. The crucial point of the first Nero poem (2.m6) is stated toward its conclusion:

So was lofty power finally able
To curb the savageness of vicious Nero?⁷⁷

The thought arises directly from an observation made in 2.6: office extinguishes tyranny no more than wealth extinguishes greed.⁷⁸ There is a clear hint that the real issue is Nero's inability to curb his instincts, i.e. his *soul*, as opposed to the political office. Now the second Nero poem (3.m4) takes a different approach in concentrating on the corrupting effect of Nero's patronage; the difference follows from the fact that 3.4, unlike 2.6, considers offices separately from rule. 3.5 picks up the subject of rule, of course, and although its poem (3.m5) never mentions Nero, it nevertheless reconsiders what was said about him in 2.m6. 3.m5 pushes in the direction of a more *abstract* consideration of impotence, and in devoting only three lines to the outer manifestations of power inverts the balance of concerns in 2.m6.⁷⁹ The series of poems on tyranny (2.m6, 3.m4, 3.m5) reaches its culmination in 4.m2, which brings *akrateia* and the Platonic tripartite soul into view.⁸⁰ Hence the poems display a progression of thought that is lacking in their prose counterparts (2.6, 3.4-5), a progression from rhetorical *topos* to Platonic psychology. Happiness, as Philosophia remarks early on, lies *within*,⁸¹ and to turn the gaze inward is to turn it upward. A similar pattern is discernible in the parallel treatments of glory; for whereas 3.6 does little more than recycle material from 2.7,⁸² their respective poems stand in pointed contrast with one another. 2.m7, casting a glance back to what has been said earlier about Fortuna,⁸³ affirms human equality under the "mortal yoke" of death, while 3.m6 affirms it with the observation that we are all the "noble shoot" of the one God: from mortal body to immortal soul.⁸⁴

PLATO, OR THE GOOD

If the primary function of the first part of Book 3 is to expose the "falsity" of riches, office, rule, glory, and pleasure by reducing them to their "true" counterparts (self-sufficiency, reverence, power, nobility, joy), the purpose of the second part of the book is to reveal "true" happiness by carrying the reduction further: not only are the five counterfeit goods substantially identical to (but different in name from) their corresponding genuine ones, but qua good the five genuine ones are substantially identical to (but different in name from) one another.⁸⁵ Happiness is the state that entails the complete congregation of all goods,⁸⁶ and the essential unity of self-sufficiency, power, reverence, nobility, and joy depends on the assumption that differences between them would derogate the shared substantial property of goodness. Through participation in unity they are said to become good,⁸⁷ the practical corollary of which would appear to be that by our turning from counterfeit to "true" pursuits we discover the Good. Philosophia speaks in terms of a mental conversion⁸⁸ or seeing things from higher perspectives, as with the *scala cognitionis* in Book 5.⁸⁹ Our errors in judgement stem from a proclivity for making multiplicity out of unity:

So then, that which is by nature one and simple human depravity breaks up, and in trying to get a part of that which has no parts it gets neither a part (for there is none) nor the thing itself (which it is not even seeking).⁹⁰

This has been foreshadowed by the allegory of Philosophia's gown in 1.3: Stoics and Epicureans stole pieces of it, each believing that he possessed the whole. The intention in 1.3 was to contrast the Hellenistic schools with Socrates/Plato,⁹¹ and as 3.9 marks Plato's point of entry⁹² it appears that the contrast has now been completed: the Stoic elements permeating the first half of the *Consolatio* will gradually fade from view, to emerge again only for purposes of a final assault.⁹³

The reference to Plato in 3.9 heralds a series of three poetic monuments to his thought (3.m9, 3.m11, 4.m1). 3.m9 is a hymn to the Creator. It stands at the centre of the *Consolatio* and inaugurates its second half.⁹⁴ Its placement might well have reminded Romans of the invocation that launches the "Iliadic" half of the *Aeneid*,⁹⁵ but the actual contents of the poem would instead have suggested Plato's

Timaeus.⁹⁶ The very fact that such a hymn is included in the *Consolatio* marks a departure from Plato, whose interlocutor Timaeus in effect disregards Socrates' request for an invocation.⁹⁷ The prayer in the *Timaeus*, insofar as there is one, is a mere prelude to the cosmology; 3.m9, by contrast, is the cosmology of the *Consolatio*.⁹⁸ Such a hymn is necessitated by "Boethius'" failed prayer to the Creator at 1.m5,⁹⁹ i.e. by the need for a more philosophical consideration of the goodness of creation.¹⁰⁰ It is frequently asked which of the commentators and Neoplatonists influenced Boethius' reading of the *Timaeus*. Modern interpreters are divided on this question, and it is a difficult one to answer.¹⁰¹ The influence of the Latin poetic tradition has the effect of obscuring doctrinal points in 3.m9, whose handling of the *Timaeus* itself is associative rather than exegetical. Most of the allusions are extremely elliptical, as with the participle *reditura* ("about to return," v. 16), the future tense of which serves as shorthand for Plato's description of Soul's "beginning of unceasing life" in circumulations back upon Herself,¹⁰² or with *livore carens* ("lacking ill-will," v. 6), a two-word epitome of *Timaeus* 29e. Did Boethius use only the *Timaeus* or did he also consult a later intermediary? Since the phrase with which the second example construes, *insita summi forma boni* ("the indwelling form of the highest good," v. 5f.), runs against the doctrine of the *Timaeus* by implicitly moving the divine ideas into the mind of the *deus-artifex*,¹⁰³ there must have been an intermediary, but which one remains uncertain.¹⁰⁴ For a text as complex as 3.m9 it is essential to consider all of the relevant background, but any quest for its "source" is bound to end in disappointment.

3.m11 epitomizes the Platonic theory of reminiscence.¹⁰⁵ It is occasioned by the conclusion reached at the end of 3.11, that the Good is the end of all things,¹⁰⁶ which at 1.6.10 "Boethius" claimed once to have known but subsequently forgotten. Hence the poem can be seen as the celebration of a specific act of recollection within the immediate *mise-en-scène*. That, however, leaves the philosophical doctrine unanchored in the broader context of the *Consolatio*, and Philosophia is presumably doing more than merely offering congratulations. 3.m11 forms a pair with 5.m3,¹⁰⁷ the two together summing up Plato's theory without building on any particular dialogue.¹⁰⁸ One of the metaphors employed in 3.m11 is that of fanned kindling, or (presumably) of embers that are rekindled into flame. The Latin term

for kindling is *fomes* and the fanning is said to be effected through *doctrina*;¹⁰⁹ *doctrina* in turn evokes a figure borrowed from Plato in 3.12, to the effect that dialectical reasoning "ignites" truth (*veritatis scintilla*).¹¹⁰ Now *fomes* has an alternative in *fomentum* ("poultice/remedy," "kindling"), which appears several times in connection with the therapy metaphor,¹¹¹ and in diagnosing "Boethius" in 1.6 Philosophia in fact mixed metaphors by playing the two words off one another: the kindling or *remedy* – i.e. a true conviction coupled with dialectical reasoning – would generate a vital spark (*scintillula*) in the patient.¹¹² The label used in 1.2 for "Boethius" condition is "lethargy," and Boethius, ever the translator, there has Philosophia elicit for the benefit of his Roman readers the precise philosophical (Platonic) implications of the underlying Greek compound: "Boethius" suffers from obliviousness of who he is.¹¹³ Hence 3.111 has a double function: it commemorates an act of recollection in 3.11 while commenting generally on the Platonic therapy appropriate to the malaise specifically diagnosed in Book 1.

4.11 epitomizes *Phaedrus* 246a–248e, on the soul's ascent to the "place beyond the heavens."¹¹⁴ The theme is announced at 4.1.9, where Philosophia promises "Boethius" wings to bear the mind aloft. 4.11 gathers energy from the end of Book 3, in that it, like 3.110, sounds the call for the soul's return to its haven (homeland)¹¹⁵ and, like 3.112, focuses attention on the soul's backward (downward) gaze.¹¹⁶ The poetic adaptation significantly alters the *Phaedrus* myth. The charioteer and pair of winged horses, Plato's figure for the tripartite soul, and eight of the nine patterns of life into which the soul is said by Plato to descend, are omitted, leaving only that of the tyrant. The boldest change occurs in connection with the latter, for against the expectation that the downward gaze will be said to initiate the soul's becoming filled with oblivion and falling,¹¹⁷ Philosophia describes the soul as *free and aloft*, looking down upon the tyrants who terrorize nations. In effect, Philosophia sidesteps the issue of metempsychosis (rebirth as philosopher, king, politician, etc.) and instead has the soul calmly looking down upon the last, and lowest, form of life mentioned by Plato, viewing it as a state of *exile*.¹¹⁸ Without the theory of metempsychosis there is no place for an eschatological myth to offer consolation for the injustice of tyranny,¹¹⁹ and there is a sense in which the *Consolatio* never fully comes to grips with the desire for revenge. As "Boethius" in 1.115 reassures himself that Fortuna will eventually overturn tyrants, and

not just the innocent, so *Philosophia* in 4.111 assures him that the just soul will peacefully gaze down upon their exile.¹²⁰ The isolation of the tyranny theme draws the moral concerns of Book 1 back into focus, thereby charting a course for Book 4.

The poetic epitomes of Plato do not constitute philosophical arguments as such, but neither are they mere literary adornment. Despite the long-range shift in balance between poetry and prose, there is a sense in which the literature/philosophy dichotomy breaks down with the *Consolatio*, and the philosophical poems in particular are best viewed as stenographic affirmations of crucial philosophical doctrines and measures of the work's general progress.¹²¹

The structure and purpose of the second and final part of Book 3 are transparent, in that 3.111–112 provide explicit indications of where the *Consolatio* is and ought to be. They arise out of the diagnosis conducted by *Philosophia* in 1.6, which consisted of four questions:

- (1) Is the world ruled by chance or by reason?
- (2) By what mechanisms is it governed?
- (3) What is the end for which all things strive?
- (4) What is man?¹²²

"Boethius" answered (1) correctly, was at a loss for (2), had forgotten the answer to (3), and got (4) wrong, and it was from his responses (or silence) that *Philosophia* was then able to assess his condition, taking the gathered evidence chiasmatically:

- (4) explains his sense of exile and deprivation;
- (3) explains his belief that the wicked are powerful and happy;
- (2) explains his belief that fortuitous events are without governance;
- (1) is the "kindling" from which a "spark" of health will be generated.¹²³

The chiasmus is reflected also in the order with which answers to (2) and (3) are reached in 3.112 and 3.111, respectively. The solution is in each case the same: the Good is both the final and efficient cause of all creation.¹²⁴ Hence what emerges in 3.111–112 is the realization that 1.6 has a programmatic function, establishing the course of therapy for Books 2 and 3.

The fact that no reply to (4) is explicitly announced has led to the suspicion that our text of the *Consolatio* is defective.¹²⁵ There is,

however, an answer to the 'What is man?' question, although it is delivered in stages rather than at a single blow. In 1.6 "Boethius" can only summon in response to Philosophia's interrogation the thought that man, that *he*, is a "rational mortal animal," a definition backed by Aristotle but ultimately falling short.¹²⁶ From that moment the hunt for the immortal soul is on. Already by the end of 2.4, as we have seen, Philosophia mounts an argument which on the basis of "numerous demonstrations" presupposes its immortality,¹²⁷ and in 2.5 she returns to the question by remarking man's habit of thrusting himself below the level of beasts through willed obliviousness of his divine and godlike dignity.¹²⁸ The latter idea is developed with an argument in 3.10, to the effect that we are deified through participation in divinity,¹²⁹ and with another in 4.3, to the effect that we become beasts through ignorance of the Good.¹³⁰ The general principle is articulated in 4.4: it is divinely sanctioned that by redirecting its gaze the human soul should "become what it contemplates."¹³¹ The description of Philosophia herself is probably an allegory for the idea of its mobile, intermediate status.¹³² Like spirit, nature, the heavens, angels, and demons, the soul is an instrument of providential influence over the phenomenal world and is the particular key to human self-determination.¹³³ Its descent is in three stages, contact with corporeality and then with earthly limbs, followed by a moral fall, each stage involving further loss of memory, freedom, and self.¹³⁴ Boethius never explains what triggers the downward impulse, but it does not exaggerate to say that the whole of the *Consolatio* constitutes his moral and metaphysical reflection on the process of conversion and return. The soul exists prior to incarnation and while in the body retains dim visions of truths previously known;¹³⁵ as if inebriated it dreams of revisiting its homeland.¹³⁶ The cultivation of philosophy is what ignites the spark that initiates the return,¹³⁷ what stirs the "agent" intellect,¹³⁸ and there are hints that the most deeply buried truths are through the aid of divine grace or illumination recollected in a flash of insight, prayer playing an important part in the process.¹³⁹ The Plotinian hierarchy of Soul-Intellect-One (Good) is never mentioned but is implicit, particularly in the idea that Soul revolves around or radiates from Mind.¹⁴⁰

What is the fate of the soul after the body? Philosophia declines to reply, as though the question were not hers to answer.¹⁴¹ Her refusal comes in a passage inspired by Plato's *Gorgias*, which suggests that

Boethius is warning readers not to expect an eschatological myth comparable to the one that follows Socrates' colloquy with Callicles.¹⁴² As has been noted, there is no myth because there is no theory of metempsychosis to support it. Philosophia several times specifies that humans become (are) *like* beasts or God as a result of changes within the mind,¹⁴³ but even her stronger claim that in redirecting their gaze they become (are) beasts or gods carries no suggestion of reincarnation. She explicitly says that the mental state changes although the human form remains,¹⁴⁴ thus inverting an ancient myth: Circe's potions altered only the *bodies* of Odysseus' companions.¹⁴⁵ In 4.m1, as has been noted,¹⁴⁶ Philosophia diverts the *Phaedrus* myth from the theory of rebirth, and in 4.4 she unambiguously speaks of the soul-body diremption, the "final death," as initiating an "infinite" and "eternal" state.¹⁴⁷ The wicked will not be reincarnated as beasts, but the changes their souls undergo in this life are nevertheless real to the extent that evil qua privation represents an absence of being: in ceasing to be fully human (godlike), the soul can only devolve to its bestial self.¹⁴⁸ The idea of deification, on the other hand, is ultimately unproblematical for the Christian Boethius, and Moreschini rightly emphasizes the acquisition of divinity over assimilation to it.¹⁴⁹

3.10 sets in motion the densely argued style briefly foreshadowed at the end of 2.4. There are five arguments:

- (1) Imperfection is unimaginable in the absence of perfection, in that it is a falling away or procession from a perfect source. Hence the imperfect happiness associated with lower goods implies a perfect Happiness.¹⁵⁰
- (2) It is universally held that nothing better than God is imaginable, and that-than-which-there-is-nothing-better is obviously good. If the Good is not in God, then there must be something superior to God to possess it. But since there cannot be an infinite hierarchy of goods, God must fully possess the Good, which has earlier been shown to be Happiness. Happiness is therefore in God.¹⁵¹
- (3) *Sed contra*: to say that God fully possesses the Good is to posit a source of goodness extrinsic to God - even if the Good and God are said to be only conceptually distinct. But to separate God from the Good is unthinkable, since nothing is

superior to its source and we hold nothing to be superior to God. Hence the source of all things, God, must be the Good; but since the Good is Happiness, Happiness must be God.¹⁵²

- (4) If there are two highest Goods, then in lacking the other each will be imperfect. But that which is imperfect cannot be highest; hence there cannot be two such Goods. But since Happiness and God have been shown to be the Good, Happiness must be Divinity.¹⁵³ *Corollary*: people become happy by obtaining Happiness; but since Happiness is Divinity, they become happy by obtaining Divinity; and in the same manner as they become just by obtaining Justice and wise by obtaining Wisdom, so they become gods by obtaining Divinity. Hence every happy person is a god, not by nature (for God is one) but by participation.¹⁵⁴
- (5) Is Happiness a whole of which self-sufficiency, power, reverence, nobility, and joy are the constituent parts? Parts differ from one another, but self-sufficiency, power, reverence, nobility, and joy have been shown to be one; since Happiness [qua whole] cannot consist of a *single* part, the whole/part relation cannot obtain. They are therefore related to the Good as to a final cause (*summa causa*) for the sake of which (*cuius causa*) they are pursued. But since Happiness is that for the sake of which they are pursued, the Good and Happiness must be substantially one; and since God and Happiness are the same, the substance of God must therefore be in the Good.¹⁵⁵

As analysis of this important passage would require extensive commentary, general observations must suffice.¹⁵⁶ The purpose is to bring Happiness, the Good, and God under a *reductio ad unum*, and the arguments revolve around the principle that, if the first of two identical things is identical to a third, then the second is as well. (1) begins by positing supreme Happiness. (2) argues from Good = in God and Good = Happiness¹⁵⁷ to Happiness = in God. (3) removes the assumption vitiating (2),¹⁵⁸ that goodness is an incidental attribute (*inesse = hyparkhein*) of God, in order to demonstrate that Happiness is (*esse = einai*) God. (4) draws essentially the same conclusion as (3), inserting Divinity for purposes of the corollary. (5) argues from Good = Happiness and God = Happiness to Good = God. The function of (5) is to bridge the discussion of false pursuits in 3.3-7 and the

consideration of the Good qua final cause in 3.11. As at the end of 2.4, so here the argumentation strains the conceit of conversational spontaneity, and the tension becomes especially evident at the seam between (2) and (3), where Philosophia affects a Socratic tone.¹⁵⁹

3.11 furnishes the answer to the third of the four diagnostic questions posed by Philosophia in 1.6.¹⁶⁰ It involves no serious repetition of the final argument in 3.10, which demonstrated that every desire is of the Good but not that *everything* desires it.¹⁶¹ The mainspring of 3.11 is the notion that all things, animate and inanimate, move by natural intention¹⁶² toward the Good. The movement is manifested most immediately in the universal drive toward being or subsistence. Animate beings naturally seek what is most favorable to their existence, just as inanimate ones move in accordance with what their innate natures determine.¹⁶³ The purport of the argument is to make unity into a kind of middle term between being and goodness: everything seeks to be; but whatever seeks to be necessarily seeks to be one,¹⁶⁴ and whatever seeks to be one seeks the Good; thus everything seeks the Good. The argument involves a shift from the conclusion that self-sufficiency, power, reverence, nobility, and joy are good only insofar as they are one to the further inference that unity is goodness, and is based on the assumption that since unity and goodness produce the same effect (making things good) they are therefore one in substance.¹⁶⁵ The path is then clear for a reply, in 3.12, to the second question raised in 1.6.¹⁶⁶ "Boethius" explains why at the start he recognized the world as being ruled by God rather than by chance, noticing that its observable unity can only bespeak a governing force that is itself one, God.¹⁶⁷ If God is Happiness and Happiness entails complete self-sufficiency, then God rules the world only through Himself; but God is the Good; hence He rules the world through the Good. Since, moreover, everything spontaneously hastens toward the Good, there is a complete convergence of aims between ruler and ruled: submission to the Good is both compulsory *and* voluntary (*fortiter suaviterque*), a thought the biblical resonance of which pleases "Boethius."¹⁶⁸ The latent dualism driving his complaints about Fortuna in Book 1 is finally obliterated by the conclusion that, since divine omnipotence is incapable of evil, evil is nothing.¹⁶⁹ If 3.11 is our path up to the Good, then 3.12 is its path down to us. The *Anecdoton Holderi* confirms what was to be inferred from 3.11-12: the *Consolatio* and *De hebdomadibus* flow from the same pen.

MORALITY

The *Gorgias*, particularly the Polus colloquy,¹⁷⁰ influences the argument of the *Consolatio* more transparently than any other Platonic dialogue does. Although its presence is felt already in Book 3,¹⁷¹ the dialogue comes into full view in 4.2-4.¹⁷² Boethius was faced with the difficulty of adapting some of Plato's most compelling writing to the requirements of his own very different work, and the incommensurable equations, Socrates = Philosophia, Polus = "Boethius," have the inevitable effect of privileging *arguments* over the psychological interplay between their exponents. Philosophia is ill at ease in the role of Socrates, "Boethius" lacks Polus' impetuosity, and there is no Callicles to bring matters to a head. The difference becomes noticeable in Philosophia's stiff attempt at the end of 4.4 to imitate the paradox and irony with which Socrates brings the Polus colloquy to a conclusion: her digression on the subject of oratory appears slightly intrusive and flat, especially without a Callicles to seize upon its apparent absurdity.¹⁷³

4.2-4 target a series of paradoxes:

- 4.2: that the good are always powerful and the wicked impotent;
- 4.3: that virtue is always rewarded and vice punished;
- 4.4: that the wicked are unhappier in attaining their ends than in failing them;
that the wicked are less unhappy when punished than when not;
that those who do wrong are unhappier than those who suffer it.

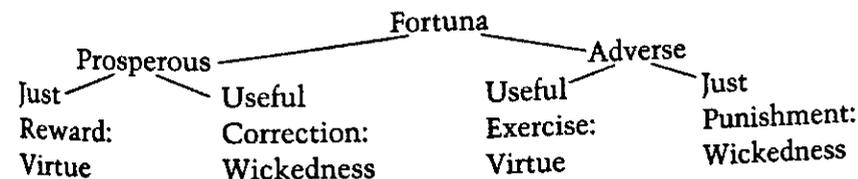
Those in 4.2 and 4.4 derive from the *Gorgias* and preserve Plato's general order of treatment. Their respective themes point to the particular symptom associated in 1.6 with "Boethius'" ignorance of the *finis rerum*: his failure to see the universal end has led to the belief that the wicked are *powerful and happy*.¹⁷⁴ 3.11-12 have not given a fully satisfactory solution to the problem, in that their discovery of the Good as final and efficient cause avoids the most immediate questions. "[T]here is no indication," as Marenbon observes, "of how the individual man, Boethius, is supposed to relate to true happiness, which is God."¹⁷⁵ Book 4 must therefore fill the gap, and the *Gorgias* furnishes its starting point.

In distinguishing between will (*voluntas*) and power (*potestas*) as forming the basis of all human action, 4.2 makes a central tenet out of an idea that is by comparison peripheral to the arguments of the *Gorgias*,¹⁷⁶ the importance of the distinction is highlighted by the addition of a third element, accomplishment (*perficere*), in the course of establishing a basis for the arguments of 4.4.¹⁷⁷ Although 4.2 is thoroughly Platonic in both its thrust (confusion of end and means, of what one wills and what to one seems best) and its conclusion (that the despot acts against his will), Stoic resonances too are heard (only the wise rules).¹⁷⁸ The triad on which 4.4 is built (*velle, posse, perficere*) finds no precise analogue in the *Gorgias*, and for the third member Boethius has had to reach beyond the Polus colloquy.¹⁷⁹ Philosophia appears at least once to fall asleep at the wheel,¹⁸⁰ and she diverts from at least three distinctions that are crucial to the arguments of the *Gorgias*: that between doing and suffering *vis-à-vis* just punishment; that between pleasure and benefit *vis-à-vis* the Good; and that (seized upon by Callicles) between what is by nature worse and by convention more shameful.¹⁸¹ The paradox treated in 4.3 appears to be of Boethius' own device and can be explained in connection with our previous observation¹⁸² that the *Consolatio* leaves no room for an eschatological myth. Philosophia's express purpose is to show that virtue is its own reward and vice its own "inseparable" punishment - in *this* life.¹⁸³ Hence, although the *Gorgias* paradoxes form a kind of skeleton for the flesh of Philosophia's arguments, 4.2-4 ultimately exhibit a structure all their own.

"Boethius" frames his concerns in an implicit square of opposition:

Virtue $\begin{matrix} \text{---} & \text{---} \\ \text{---} & \text{---} \end{matrix}$ Wickedness
Reward $\begin{matrix} \text{---} & \text{---} \\ \text{---} & \text{---} \end{matrix}$ Punishment,

the diagonal pairs of which bring the discussion directly back to the problems expressed by him in Book 1.¹⁸⁴ Philosophia, in elucidating the providential order behind the apparent confusion of lots,¹⁸⁵ then reconfigures the square, producing in its place an implicit diaeresis:



The division explains the injustice signalled by the diagonally disposed pairs in the square of opposition and is intended to put Fortuna to rest once and for all: even those who are prepared to credit common parlance must acknowledge that *every* fortune, in that it can be shown to be either useful or just, is good.¹⁸⁶ Although these schematizations are foreign to the *Gorgias*,¹⁸⁷ they are completely at home with Boethius the Peripatetic commentator. The *reportatio* of Olympiodorus' lectures on the *Gorgias* everywhere evinces a similar fondness for such organization of ideas and shares with the *Consolatio* an interest in finding in the *Gorgias* grounds for exonerating God from responsibility for unjust suffering - or in seeking divine justification for it.¹⁸⁸ It is not surprising that Boethius' adaptation of Plato should breathe the dry air of the Neoplatonic schoolroom, only that it should capture some of the spirit of Plato's literary genius without resorting to the wild allegories that so intoxicated certain Neoplatonists.

4.6 finally brings to light the dilemma that has been building from the start. In 1.6 "Boethius" plumped for a world ruled by divine reason rather than by chance (*casus*), thereby giving Philosophia a foothold for the course of therapy that develops over the course of Books 2-4.¹⁸⁹ What he could not foresee is that he was painting himself into a corner. For 4.6 brings matters to the brink of strong determinism in claiming that fate not only governs the movements of the cosmos but "constrains ... the actions and fortunes of men by means of an indissoluble concatenation of causes."¹⁹⁰ "Boethius" has gotten what he asked for, in that his original complaint was precisely that God controls the cosmos but refuses to constrain human actions, abandoning them instead to Fortuna.¹⁹¹ Hence at the beginning of Book 5 he feels compelled to ask whether there is any room left for chance (*casus*), by which he means unnecessitated events subject to the influence of free choice.¹⁹² The fact that Book 5 is made to appear as a diversion¹⁹³ suggests another attempt to imitate Plato's technique of dramatic irony: Boethius' plan¹⁹⁴ was that the pendulum should swing between the extremes of Fortuna (2.1-2; cf. 4.7) and fate (4.6) before finally settling on a compromise between providence and free choice.

NOTES

1. 2.1.19; 2.2.9.
2. 2.1.10.

3. Magee 2003a: 159f.
4. 4.6.15-17.
5. Magee 2003b: 362f.
6. 2.1.19.
7. Magee 1987: 529-33.
8. Gruber 2006: 232; 275, ad 3.m9.
9. 3.m9.13-17.
10. 3.9.32.
11. 3.12.30.
12. 3.12.31-5; cf. 2.4.22; 3.3.14; 3.m9.4; 3.10.12f.; 3.12.11; 4.3.6; 5.4.13; 5.5.1.
13. 3.12.36-8.
14. Klingner 1921: 73f.
15. Magee 2005: 348-50.
16. Cf. Gruber 2006: 387, ad 7 (= 8, *minime*).
17. Cf. 1.5.11f.; 1.6.21; 2.1.7; 2.3.3f.
18. 2.5.1; 3.1.2f.
19. Note in this connection the themes of 1.m6 and 3.m1.
20. 5.4.25f.
21. Cf. 2.1.8; 2.3.2; 3.12.25; Klingner 1921: 74.
22. 5.1.5.
23. The recapitulations at 1.5.7-10, 3.12.31-5, and 4.4.24f. do not mark significant shifts in perspective.
24. 4.7.2; cf. 2.8.3; above, n. 5.
25. 2.4.18; cf. 1.5.5; 4.6.15f.; Seneca *Ep.* 9.20-2; Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 5.
26. 4.7.22; cf. 2.1.16-18.
27. Cf. below, p. 199.
28. 4.6.14-16; cf. 4.1.9; 4.m1; etc.
29. 1.6.7-19.
30. 3.11.40f.; 3.12.2f., 14.
31. 4.1.1-5; cf. 1.4.30.
32. 2.1.13.
33. 2.4.25, 27.
34. 2.1.6.
35. 2.1.8; 2.3.2.
36. 2.5.1.
37. 2.1.9; cf. 2.2.2; 2.4.22; 2.6.4; 3.3.1. The teacher/disciple relation evokes Epictetus as well (e.g. 1.3.3f.).
38. 2.1.16-18; cf. Seneca *Ep.* 12.4f.
39. Klingner 1921: 8-20.
40. 2.3.11.
41. Seneca, *Consolatio ad Marciam* 17.6f.

42. 2.2.14; Plato, *Crito* 50a-52d. Note *commune ... proprio*, with *to koinon ... hypo idiotōn* (50a8-b4).
43. Nested orbs: 4.6.15 (Neoplatonic); Seneca *Ep.* 12.6. *Quid est homo*: 1.2.5; 1.6.14-17; Seneca, *Consolatio ad Marciam* 11.1-3 ("mortal" is the problem for Boethius but strikes the consolatory note with Seneca).
44. 2.1.8; cf. 1.m7.23f.
45. 2.1.10, 16-18; cf. 4.6.15; 4.7.22; 5.2.10.
46. 4.6.19; cf. 1.5.4; 3.12.17.
47. 2.4.23.
48. 2.4.25.
49. 2.4.26f.
50. 2.4.28.
51. 2.4.29.
52. 1.2.5; 1.6.17; 2.5.24-9; 3.10.22-6 (4.3.8-10); 4.3.15-21; 4.4.26-31.
53. Cf. below, pp. 193-5.
54. 3.10.7-10; cf. 3.2.3; 3.8.12; below, p. 195.
55. 4.2.31.
56. 2.3.4-9; 2.4.4-9. On suicide, cf. 1.m1.13f.; 3.11.32; and on the Stoic "calculus," Cicero *Fin.* 3.18.60 (with *Off.* 1.18.59); Seneca *Ep.* 58.32-6; Pliny *Ep.* 1.12.3f.
57. Cf. above, n. 18.
58. Gruber 2006: 233.
59. E.g. Cicero *Tusc.* 5.15.43-16.46.
60. 2.5.2.
61. E.g. Seneca *Ep.* 41.6-9. Comparison of 2.5.8-10 (gems) with Petronius, *Satyricon* 55.6.9-13 (cf. IIS 132, 3), and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.20, gives some sense of the complex intermingling of traditions.
62. 2.5.24-35.
63. 3.1.7; 3.m1.11-13; 3.9.1, 24.
64. 3.1.7; 3.2.12; 3.9.24.
65. 3.3.4, 11; 3.8.1, 12; 3.9.22, 31.
66. 3.2.9, 15; cf. 1.6.10; 3.3.1; 3.7.4; 3.11.30, 33; 3.12.17; 4.2.10, 12, 26; below, pp. 197-8.
67. Cf. below, p. 198.
68. Plato, *Gorgias* 467b-468b.
69. Plato, *Gorgias* 464b-466a.
70. "Falsely named" goods (2.6.19; cf. 3.12.38).
71. 3.2.19f.
72. 3.3.9-19.
73. 2.6.8-12; 3.5.6-12.
74. 2.6.18; 3.4.1-10.
75. 2.6.13-20; 3.4.14-16.

76. 2.m6; 3.m4.
77. 2.m6.14f.
78. 2.6.18.
79. 3.m4.5-7; cf. 2.m6.1-13.
80. Magee 2005: 354f., with n. 30; cf. Scheible 1972: 136, ad 9-10; O'Daly 1991: 96.
81. 2.4.22.
82. 3.6.4f. (with cross-reference) = 2.7.3-12 (the more impressive treatment).
83. 2.m7.14 (*summis infima*); 2.2.9 (*infima summis, summa infimis*).
84. Similarly, the contrast between 1.m1 ("Boethius") and 1.m2 (Philosophia); both rest on the same *quondam ... nunc* antithesis (1.m1.1, 19; 1.m2.6, 24) but pit body against soul (*effeto corpore/lumine mentis*, 1.m1.12; 1.m2.24); cf. *heu* (1.m1.2, 15; 1.m2.27); *cogor/cogitur* (1.m1.2; 1.m2.27). On 1.m5 and 4.m6 cf. Magee 2003a: 155-62.
85. 3.9.15.
86. 3.2.3; 3.8.12.
87. 3.11.5-9; cf. below, p. 197.
88. 3.9.24.
89. Cf. above, p. 183.
90. 3.9.16; cf. 3.9.4.
91. 1.3.6f.
92. 3.9.32.
93. 5.m4; cf. Magee 2005: 359-63.
94. 3.9.33 (*exordium*); cf. above, n. 8.
95. Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.41-5.
96. Esp. 29e-42d. Boethius had access to Cicero's translation (TC 1092d) as well as the Greek original, and his study of the *Timaeus* dates back to the time of the mathematical works (Bakhouche 2003: 7-11). Macrobius was known to him (cf. IIS 31, 22f.), but his knowledge of Calcidius remains a question.
97. Plato, *Timaeus* 27b-c.
98. Although the *Timaeus* itself makes two further appearances (3.12.38; 5.6.9-14).
99. Cf. 1.5.10 (*vota*).
100. Magee 2003a: 153-6; 2005: 352f.
101. E.g. Klingner 1921: 44-51; Scheible 1972: 111; Chadwick 1981: 234; Gersh 1986: 701-5.
102. Plato, *Timaeus* 36e.
103. Cf. 3.m9.8; 4.6.12; Plato, *Timaeus* 29a.
104. The idea goes back at least to Cicero (*Or at.* 2.9f.) and was widespread by the sixth century.
105. 3.m11.15; 3.12.1.

106. 3.11.40f.
 107. Cf. also 5.m4.35-40.
 108. The dilemma stated at 5.m3.11-19 is found in (e.g.) the *Meno* (80d-e), *Theaetetus* (191a-b), and Augustine's *Confessions* (10.18.27). Cf. Scheible 1972: 163, ad 20-31.
 109. 3.m11.12-14.
 110. 3.12.25; Plato, *Republic* 435a.
 111. 1.6.21; 2.3.3; 2.5.1.
 112. 1.6.20f.; cf. Gruber 2006: 164, ad 1.6.21.
 113. 1.2.5.
 114. 4.m1.15-18; Plato, *Phaedrus* 247c.
 115. 4.m1.25f.; 3.m10.4-6.
 116. 4.m1.27-30; 3.m12.52-8.
 117. Plato, *Phaedrus* 248c.
 118. With 4.m1.25, 30 (*patria ... exsules*) cf. 1.5.3-5.
 119. Cf. below, pp. 194-5.
 120. 1.m5.39-41 [reading *gaudet*]; 4.m1.27-30; cf. 1.3.14.
 121. Magee 2003a: 169.
 122. 1.6.3-16.
 123. 1.6.17-20; for the chiasmus cf. 5.4.28-37; Magee 2005: 362, n. 63.
 124. 3.11.40f.; 3.12.2, 14.
 125. Tränkle 1977: 152f.
 126. 1.6.14-18.
 127. 2.4.28; cf. 2.7.22; above, p. 186 with n. 50.
 128. 2.5.25-9.
 129. 3.10.24f.; cf. 4.3.10; below, pp. 195-6.
 130. 4.3.15-21.
 131. 4.4.28-31; cf. 11S 9, 4.
 132. 1.1.2; cf. 1.m2.6f., 26f.; 5.m3.20-31; 5.m4.22f.; 5.m5.13-15.
 133. 4.6.13; cf. 2IN 231, 11-232, 10.
 134. 5.2.8f.; 3.12.1; cf. 1.1.9; 1.5.11; 1.6.10; 1.m7; 11S 9, 2f.; Macrobius *In Somn.* 1.11.12.
 135. 3.m11; 5.m3.20-31.
 136. 3.1.5; 3.2.13; 3.m2; 3.3.1; 3.12.9; 4.1.8f.; 4.m1; 5.1.4; cf. Macrobius *In Somn.* 1.12.9-12.
 137. 3.12.25; cf. above, p. 192 with n. 110.
 138. 5.m4; 5.5.1.
 139. 3.9.32f.; 5.3.33f.; 5.4.30-3; 5.5.11f.; 5.6.46f.
 140. 3.m9.15-17; cf. 4.6.17.
 141. 4.4.22f. (also 14). Cf. 4.6.38, 53f.; 5.6.1, 25; *De fide catholica* p. 204, ll. 234-40 Moreschini.
 142. Plato, *Gorgias* 523a-527a; cf. above, p. 192; below, pp. 198-9.

143. 2.5.26; 4.3.17, 19; 4.4.30; cf. 4.6.55.
 144. 4.3.15; 4.4.1.
 145. 4.m3.27-32; cf. Scheible 1972: 140; O'Daly 1991: 213.
 146. Above, p. 192.
 147. 4.4.9.
 148. 3.12.29; 4.2.32-6; 4.3.15; cf. Gruber 2006: 309, ad 26ff.
 149. Moreschini 2003: 34; cf. Chadwick 1981: 211; Marenbon 2003a: 111; Gruber 2006: 293f., ad 23ff.
 150. 3.10.2-6.
 151. 3.10.7-10.
 152. 3.10.12-17.
 153. 3.10.18-21.
 154. 3.10.22-6.
 155. 3.10.27-43.
 156. Cf. Marenbon 2003a: 108-12.
 157. Established at 3.2.3; cf. 2.4.25 [above, p. 186, with n. 48].
 158. Cf. OS 14.
 159. 3.10.11; cf. generally Klingner 1921: 74-83.
 160. Cf. above, p. 193.
 161. Marenbon 2003a: 112f.
 162. Cf. above, p. 188 with n. 66.
 163. 3.11.14-29.
 164. 3.11.10-13.
 165. 3.11.5-9, 36f.; cf. 3.9.4, 16; above, p. 190 with n. 90.
 166. Cf. above, p. 193.
 167. 3.12.4-8; cf. 1.6.3f.
 168. 3.12.22; cf. Gruber 2006: 308, ad 22.
 169. 3.12.29; cf. 4.2.34-9.
 170. Plato, *Gorgias* 461b-481b.
 171. Cf. above, p. 188 with n. 67.
 172. Klingner 1921: 84-8.
 173. 4.4.38-40; Plato, *Gorgias* 480b-481b.
 174. 1.6.19; cf. above, p. 193.
 175. Marenbon 2003a: 112.
 176. 4.2.5; Plato, *Gorgias* 509d.
 177. 4.4.5.
 178. Klingner 1921: 85, n. 3; cf. Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 33f., *Tusc.* 4.6.12; Epictetus, *Discourse* 4.1.53, etc.
 179. Plato, *Gorgias* 525e; but cf. 468e-469a; 471a-d.
 180. 4.4.4 (*willing evil*); she may have the "Calliclean man" in mind (*Gorgias* 491e-492c).
 181. Plato, *Gorgias* 476b-e; 477a; 482d-e.

182. See above, pp. 192, 195.
 183. 4.3.11-13; cf. above, n. 141.
 184. 4.1.4; 4.5.4; cf. 1.4.30; 1.m5.29-38.
 185. 4.6.23-47.
 186. 4.7.2f.; cf. above, n. 5.
 187. *Gorgias* 463e-466a may furnish the sole methodological analogue.
 188. Olympiodorus, *In Gorgiam* 19.3. Similarly, Olympiodorus' description of passions dominating the tyrant (26.4) resembles C 4.m2.9f.
 189. 1.6.3f., 20; cf. 3.12.4-8.
 190. 4.6.18f.; cf. 1.5.4; 3.12.17.
 191. 1.m5.25-9.
 192. 5.1.3.
 193. 5.1.5.
 194. *Pace Tränkle* 1977: 153.

9 Fate, prescience and free will¹

The reconciliation of divine foreknowledge and human freedom is the culmination of the *Consolation of Philosophy*. Boethius' is the most persuasive attempt in Greco-Roman antiquity to solve the problem, and the basis for subsequent medieval discussion. Whether it is successful, and whether the issue is now of any interest except as a philosophical exercise, may be questioned; Boethius' treatment is however of great historical importance. The details of his argument, and its relation to his own earlier work and that of his predecessors, are controversial. In this chapter I will begin by considering in the section on 'Future truth and the *Commentaries* on Aristotle's *On Interpretation*' not the *Consolation* but the two *Commentaries* on Aristotle's *On Interpretation* 9. These are chiefly concerned not with the problem of divine foreknowledge but with that of future truth; but they are doubly relevant to the *Consolation*, first because they make points which are taken up in the argument in the *Consolation*, and second because comparison with the *Commentaries* shows how the *Consolation* goes beyond them. Philosophy at C v.4.1 refers to Boethius' earlier consideration of the issues (see below); this gives us Boethius' own warrant for considering the *Consolation* and *Commentaries* together.

I then proceed to consider the argument in the *Consolation*. In the section on 'Providence and fate' I consider the discussion of fate and providence at the end of book 4. In the section on 'The ingredients in Boethius' solution to the foreknowledge problem in the *Consolation*' the three essential elements in Boethius' solution to the problem of divine foreknowledge are identified and discussed. The section on 'The three elements and the solution in the *Consolation*' considers how they are brought together in the solution, and emphasises that

all three are essential to it; this also provides an opportunity to spell out how Boethius' solution is an advance over his predecessors. Finally, the section on 'The concluding part of C v.6 and the problems it raises' deals with the unresolved puzzles that remain at the conclusion of the work.

As will be clear from this summary, the structure of the present chapter is determined by the requirements of an analysis of Boethius' arguments; it does not follow the course of his treatment in sequence, and is not a paraphrase of his discussion. Consequently it should not be read as a substitute for Boethius' own presentation, but as ancillary to it.

FUTURE TRUTH AND THE COMMENTARIES ON ARISTOTLE'S ON INTERPRETATION

In Chapter 9 of *On Interpretation* Aristotle raises, and apparently to his own satisfaction resolves, the problem that, if every statement is either true or false, and the statement that, for example, 'there will be a sea-battle tomorrow' is true today, it would appear that the occurrence of a sea-battle tomorrow is already decided and that nothing anyone can do can alter this. Similarly if the statement is false; so either way the naval commander has no option in the matter. Various solutions to the paradox have been advanced both in antiquity and in modern times. The questions 'What is the correct solution?' and 'What is Aristotle's own solution?' are distinct, though the principle of charity may incline interpreters of Aristotle, both ancient and modern, to attribute to him the solution that they themselves find satisfactory.

One 'solution', if it can be so described, adopted by the Stoics as determinists, is to accept that the paradoxical conclusion is in fact true and the occurrence (or not) of the sea-battle must already be fixed.² Apart from this, three main lines of interpretation can be distinguished: (A) to avoid the unpalatable consequence, it must be accepted that statements about undecided future events (future contingents) are neither true nor false; (B) future-tense statements are all true or false, but the truth (or not) of a future-tense statement is itself decided by the occurrence (or not) of the event, and cannot then be appealed to as *itself deciding* the occurrence of the event; (C) statements about contingent events in the future are true or false (against (A)) but are true or false

indefinitely (against (C)). Whether middle ground can in fact be found between (A) and (B) is itself an issue which will concern us.

(A) is the solution adopted in antiquity by Epicurus and his followers;³ it is the solution which some have understood Aristotle himself to favour (it is the reading of Aristotle identified by McKim 1972 as the 'Standard Interpretation');⁴ and it inspired Łukasiewicz to develop multi-valued logic (with intermediate values as well as 'true' and 'false').⁵

(B) is the solution to the paradox advanced by the Academic Sceptic Carneades in the second century BC, as reported by Cicero, *On Fate*.⁶ He expresses it by insisting that sentences referring to future contingent events are, if the event will in fact occur, *as true now* as they will be when the event occurs; I quote the relevant passages, as the way in which they are expressed will provide significant points of comparison with Boethius' own account:

T1. '[Epicurus] will die when he has lived 72 years, in the archonship of Pytharatus' was always true, and yet there were no causes in fate why it should so happen; but because it did so happen it was certainly going to happen just as it did happen (19).

T2. Nor do those who say that the things that are going to be are *unchangeable*, and that a truth that will be cannot be turned into a falsehood, establish the necessity of fate, but [rather] they are explaining the meanings of words (20).⁷

T3. The causes which render true those statements which will be made like 'Cato will come into the senate' are fortuitous, not inherent in the nature of things and the universe; nevertheless, it is as *unchangeable* that he will come, when it is true [that he will come], as that he has come (28).

Similarly Ryle 1954, 15-35, who notes the misleading connotations of expressions like 'true prediction'. Rephrase the paradox as saying that, if someone's *guess* today that a certain horse will win the race tomorrow turns out to have been *correct*, then the result of the race must have been fixed in advance, and it will be rather less convincing. This is also, according to some, the solution favoured, in effect, by Aristotle himself; it is the reading of Aristotle identified by McKim 1972 as the 'Non-Standard Interpretation'. And it is the solution to the paradox itself which is generally accepted now.

(B) as an interpretation of Aristotle has derived support from a passage at the start of Aristotle's solution, which is significant for Boethius' discussion both in the *Commentaries* and in the *Consolation*, though not, as we shall see, in the way in which interpretation (B) would suggest.

T4. That what is is when it is, and what is not is not when it is not, is necessary; but it is not the case either that all that is, necessarily is, or that [all] that is not, [necessarily] is not. For it is not the same thing for all that is to be of necessity when it is, and [for it] to be of necessity without qualification (*Peri hermeneias* 19a23-6)⁸

This passage has been taken (e.g. by Anscombe 1956/1968) as an indication that the issue turns on distinguishing between truth and necessity, and recognising that the necessity of the event is a different issue from the analytical necessity involved in the definition of the term 'true'. That the truth of the prediction and the eventual occurrence of the event each necessarily imply the other is simply, as suggested by T2, a consequence of the meaning of the term 'true' in a correspondence theory of truth; it has nothing to do with whether the event in question is itself necessary or not.

This point can be expressed in terms of a distinction in the scope of the modal operator 'necessary'.⁹ Using Polish notation (L = necessarily, C = implies, Cpq = p implies q, "p" = the statement that p),¹⁰ Aristotle can be seen as distinguishing between Lp and what, for the moment, I will formalise as LC"p"p. LC"p"p is true; C"p"p, the claim that the truth of the statement makes the event necessary *in itself*, is not. However, interpretation in terms of a *scope* distinction is questionable in the context both of Aristotle and of Boethius. The Peripatetic tradition draws a distinction *not* between the necessity of a conditional and the necessity of its consequent, but between two types of necessity which apply to the consequent,¹¹ or to the event which it describes.¹² (In what follows, for the sake of brevity, I will use 'the consequent' for both; in the context of a correspondence theory of truth this will not affect the argument.) The distinction is expressed as one between the *absolute* necessity of the consequent and *the consequent's* – not the *consequence's* – being only conditionally necessary.¹³ Against this background, to speak of a contrast between LCpq and CpLq is misleading; I will therefore use L' to indicate conditional necessity (the context identifying the condition

in each case) and will formalise the contrast rather as that between CpLq and CpL'q.

(c) In later antiquity commentators on Aristotle adopted – and attributed to Aristotle himself – a solution which is labelled by Kretzmann 1998 as the 'second-oldest interpretation'. This, as noted above, involves the claim that statements about contingent events in the future are true or false (thus agreeing with (B) rather than with (A), which denies them truth-values at all) but they are true or false *indefinitely*.¹⁴ This is the solution which Boethius in his *Commentaries* adopts, and I shall argue that, in his understanding at least, it is different from (B) as well as from (A). (c) is advanced not only by Boethius but also by the sixth-century AD Alexandrian Neoplatonist Ammonius in his commentary on Aristotle's *On Interpretation*. There has been much discussion of the relation between the two commentaries; probably, rather than Boethius being dependent on Ammonius, they both derive from a common tradition.¹⁵

It is possible to interpret (c) in such a way that what is indefinitely true is true *simpliciter*, in which case solution (c) in effect collapses into solution (B).¹⁶ However, it is also possible to read (c) as denying that future contingents can be described as true or false *simpliciter* at all. The Greek *aphorismenōs* can mean 'separately' as well as 'definitely' (White 1985, 60); the point is that one cannot separate the affirmation and the negation, and declare that *this one* is true and *this one* false. Moreover, as Boethius repeatedly makes clear,¹⁷ this is because of the contingent nature of the event, not just because of the limitations of our knowledge.¹⁸ The question will indeed arise whether (c) collapses, not now into (B), but into (A).¹⁹

Boethius emphasises that the truth of future contingents is *changeable*:

T5. Statements in a certain way have a double nature; some of them are such that, not only are truth and falsehood found in them, but one of them is definitely true, the other definitely false; in others however one indeed is true, the other false, but indefinitely and changeably (*commutabiliter*), and this through their own nature, not in relation to our ignorance and knowledge (2IN 208.11-18 = Sorabji 2004 523; my emphasis).²⁰

As we have seen (above, T2 and T3), one of the points Carneades, according to Cicero, emphasised in advancing solution (B) is that the truth-value of statements relating to future contingents is

unchangeable; if the event occurs, the statement that it will occur is as true before the event as the statement that it has occurred is afterwards. The question is how we are to understand 'changeably' in Boethius' account.

- (i) 'There will be a sea-battle on 21 October 1805' was true before the event, but became false afterwards because the future tense was no longer appropriate.²¹ But this would hardly justify talk of *indefinite* truth.
- (ii) The change in question is simply the change from being indefinitely true or false to being definitely true or false once the event has occurred (or the outcome has become irrevocably fixed).²² This certainly draws the contrast with Carneades' position (β); but it may be questioned whether anyone not familiar with Carneades' discussion would read T5 in this way, and whether the point that what is indefinite is changeable just in the sense of potentially becoming definite would deserve the emphasis that Boethius apparently gives it.²³
- (iii) The truth of the prediction changes this way and that along with the likelihood of the impending event.²⁴ This might draw support from one possible reading of Aristotle's remark at 19a35-9 (emphasis mine):

T6. This applies to things that are not always so or are not always not so. For in the case of these it is necessary that one part of the disjunction be true - or false - but not this one or that one but whichever it may be; and one [may be] true *rather [than the other], but not yet [or: 'not just for that reason'] true or false.*²⁵

Kretzmann argues, rightly, that (iii) is incoherent: the statement 'there will be a sea-battle tomorrow' cannot be *true* (or '*more true*') at 9 p.m. today and *false* (or '*more false*') at 10 p.m. just because, say, the commander has become more nervous.²⁶

- (iv) *commutabiliter*, which could (but need not) mean 'exchangeably with each other', could simply be a way of saying that it is impossible (and impossible not just because of the limitations of our knowledge) to identify either part of the disjunction as the true or the false one as opposed to the other. This is perhaps the most likely interpretation, but we should also note that

- (v) Ammonius, and to a lesser extent Boethius, conduct their discussions partly in terms of a 'statistical' notion of contingency; that is to say, they consider *types* of situations that sometimes occur and sometimes do not, rather than individual *token* events.²⁷ It might therefore seem that Boethius in T5 is referring to types rather than tokens, and that 'changeably' simply indicates that we are considering what is contingent rather than what is necessary.²⁸ However, consideration *purely* of types constitutes an *ignoratio elenchi* where the Sea-Battle paradox is concerned; after all, it refers to a sea-battle *tomorrow*, a token rather than a type. With some degree of charity Ammonius, and more easily Boethius in 1IN, can be read rather as drawing *inferences* about predictions of token events from what applies to types; and at 2IN 248.13-14 Boethius explicitly presents this inference as an *argument* separate from what has preceded.²⁹ We may conclude that, even if Boethius' talk of changeability reflects (v), it nevertheless in his view implies (iv) also.

To divine *foreknowledge*, as opposed to future *truth*, Boethius makes only passing reference in 2IN, at 224.27-226.25.³⁰ Crucial is 226.9-13:

T7. God knows future things not as coming about of necessity, but as doing so contingently, in such a way that he is not unaware that something else too could happen, but what comes about he knows on the basis of the human beings themselves and their actions.

This suggests that Boethius holds that God knows what our future choices will in fact be, and also holds that they are not necessitated and that God knows this to be so. The ancient sources point out that if God foreknew the contingent as necessary rather than as contingent he would, impossibly, be in error. But this is ambiguous between saying (a) that he knows the outcome, while knowing that it could be otherwise, and (b) that he just knows what the possibilities are, but not which of them will be realised. The point is used in the first way (a) by Proclus,³¹ and in the second (b) by Alexander and Calcidius.³² The emphasis of Boethius' discussion in 2IN is almost entirely on the fact that God avoids the error; it is only in the last clause of the passage cited above, the last of the entire discussion, that it becomes

clear that Boethius is opting for (a) rather than (b).³³ Boethius consistently maintains, in 2IN and in the *Consolation*, both that God knows what we will choose and that he knows that we could choose otherwise;³⁴ but 2IN offers this as a position, and does not yet offer a solution. Gaskin indeed notes that, because Boethius in 2IN does not appeal, as he will in the *Consolation*, to the idea that to God all time is as the present, his account of divine knowledge risks jeopardising his insistence on (c) rather than (b) where future *truth* is concerned.³⁵

It is uncertain whether Boethius at the time of writing the *Commentary* had not yet developed the solution in the *Consolation*, or whether he thought fuller discussion of the topic would be inappropriate in the context even of the more advanced of his two commentaries. At C v.4.1 Philosophy refers to Boethius' previous consideration of the question, and says that neither Boethius nor anyone else has yet explained the matter adequately. Since the contrast is with the explanation in written form that Boethius is going to put into the mouth of Philosophy, it is natural to take the reference as being to the written exposition that Boethius had given earlier in the *Commentary*; clearly the thoughts of the author Boethius – as opposed to the character in the dialogue – have advanced beyond what is stated in the *Commentary* by the time he comes to write the *Consolation*, but this passage cannot itself tell us whether they had done so at the time of writing the *Commentary* itself. Ammonius certainly thought the topic of divine knowledge suitable for extended consideration in *his* commentary (132.8–137.11, discussed below); ironically, the very fact that Boethius' solution in the *Consolation* is superior to that of Ammonius, and requires a more complex discussion, may have made it less suitable for inclusion in his *Commentary* even if it had already suggested itself to him.

PROVIDENCE AND FATE

In C iv.6 Philosophy draws a distinction between providence and fate. The distinction already had a long history; it became particularly significant in the Platonist tradition of which Boethius is part, where it was emphasised not only that fate is the working-out of the providential plan in space and time,³⁶ but that rational human souls can rise above the level of fate.³⁷ Philosophy gives expression to

this in the memorable image of circles revolving around the divine mind; the nearer one moves to the central pivot, the more one is freed from fate (C iv.6.14–17).³⁸ The initial point of the contrast between providence and fate is to explain the apparent arbitrariness of providence,³⁹ of which the Prisoner had complained in C iv.5; it is hard, she says, for us to see from our perspective (C iv.6.21), but in fact providence orders all things for the best – as Philosophy proceeds to argue with such questionable examples as the wicked person who is allowed to prosper as he might otherwise do even worse things (C iv.6.45). In C v.2 it is argued that human souls are most free when they contemplate the divine mind, less so when they turn away from reason and subject themselves to ignorance, 'being in a certain way prisoners through their own freedom'.

This is not, and is not intended to be, an argument that can preserve human freedom of action, if this is understood simply to mean an ability to perform either of two opposed courses of action, an ability unconstrained by any factors, even those internal to the agent.⁴⁰ To use the notion of rising above fate to establish *this* sort of autonomy would risk the absurd consequence of arguing that the internal workings of our minds are free even though our physical actions are not, so that freedom would not extend to the ability to refrain from committing theft, which is a physical event predetermined by fate, but only to the ability to regret committing it.⁴¹ But the view that autonomy is simply unconstrained freedom to perform either of two opposed courses of action was no more universally accepted in antiquity than it is now.⁴² For Platonists freedom is not the unconstrained ability to do otherwise than one chooses to do, but rather freedom from error, that is from ignorance; human beings have autonomy to choose whether to pursue wisdom or ignorance, and their actions will depend on the consequences of *this* choice. The actions of human agents, whether free or self-enslaved, are not themselves brought about by divine providence, but are none the less worked into its plan.⁴³

However, the special status accorded to human choice in C v.2 is threatened by the fact that God, if he is omniscient, can foreknow the workings of our minds just as much as he can foreknow physical events.⁴⁴ Boethius thus proceeds to the discussion of the relation between divine foreknowledge and human freedom in C v.3–6.

THE INGREDIENTS IN BOETHIUS' SOLUTION
TO THE FOREKNOWLEDGE PROBLEM IN THE
CONSOLATION

The distinction between absolute and conditional necessity (henceforth: 'ACN') discussed in the section on 'Future truth' above is one of three ingredients which enter into Boethius' solution in C v.3–6 to the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom. Boethius' discussion differs from all previous ones in bringing the three ingredients together.⁴⁵ How it does so has been a subject of dispute. It will be convenient first to consider the other two ingredients, and then to proceed to an analysis of the use to which Boethius puts them.

The second ingredient is that the nature of knowledge is determined by the nature of the knower rather than by that of the thing known. This claim can be traced back to the Neoplatonist philosopher Iamblichus (c.245–c.345 AD)⁴⁶ and has been labelled by Evans 2004, 268–9 as the 'Iamblichus Principle', a label which it will be useful to retain (as 'IP') in what follows.⁴⁷ IP was apparently originally advanced, and was certainly regularly used, as an answer to the problem how the divine can have knowledge of what is different in character from itself, without thereby taking on the alien character of the thing known.⁴⁸ This is not always connected with the specific issue of future contingents. IP is indeed used by Proclus to find middle ground between the positions of the Stoics, who (i) held that God cannot foreknow future contingents and (ii) argued from this that, as God has universal foreknowledge, there cannot be any future contingents, and the Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias, who agreed with (i) but argued conversely that, as there are future contingents, God cannot have universal foreknowledge. Proclus uses IP to reject (i); God can have necessary foreknowledge of what in itself is only contingent.⁴⁹ On its own IP does not provide an adequate solution to the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom; it asserts that God *can* foreknow even what is contingent, but does not yet suggest how this foreknowledge and the contingency of the event may be reconciled. Ammonius indeed links it rather (I32.19–I33.15) to the discussion in Plato, *Laws* 10 of whether providence is burdensome for the gods.

IP, baldly stated, may not seem very plausible to those who do not share its underlying theological assumptions. Boethius in C v.4.24–39

and C v.5.1–12 supports it by a persuasive analogy; for us to deny that God can know things in a way that transcends their own nature would be like sense-perception, which is of particulars, claiming that the universals apprehended by reason do not exist (C v.5.6). That different living creatures have fewer or more cognitive faculties, and that some have sense-perception but not reason, has been indicated at C v.5.2–4, the ultimate source being Aristotle's *On the Soul*. It is no accident that C v.5 is followed by the last poem in the *Consolation*, on the theme – going back to Plato's *Timaeus*, 91e – that only human beings can, and should, stand upright and look to the heavens, this giving the final poetic answer to the Prisoner's dejection in C metr.2.⁵⁰ Boethius may not have been the first to give IP such a telling expression, but the surviving earlier accounts, at least, are in the dry prose of the lecture-room commentary.⁵¹ A further distinctive feature of Boethius' presentation of IP in the *Consolation* is that he does not – for good reason, given his concern with human autonomy – link it with the notion of God knowing all things as their *cause*, except at the very end of his discussion.⁵²

The third ingredient in Boethius' solution is the notion that to God all time is as the present is to us – 'the Eternal Present', or 'EP' for short. In C v.6.1–14 EP is explicitly contrasted with endless duration as a succession of experiences; to God past, present and future are present *simultaneously*. The contrast derives ultimately from Plato, and is expressly attributed to him by Philosophy herself (C v.6.9–14), alluding to *Timaeus* 37d. However, a distinction may need to be drawn between being outside time altogether and being in a situation where past, present and future are all experienced as present.⁵³ For if God is outside time altogether, far from the future being as accessible to him as the present and the past, it might seem that everything in time would be equally inaccessible.⁵⁴ The specific notion that future and past are equally present to God is found in Ammonius' discussion of *On Interpretation* 9;⁵⁵ anticipations have also been found in Augustine.⁵⁶ Ammonius, however, connects EP, like IP, *only* with the question of how the gods can know future contingents, and ACN *only* with the eventual solution to the paradox of future truth. To be sure, the structure of a section-by-section commentary on *On Interpretation* 9 does not encourage a connection between all three principles, for Boethius in his *Commentaries* any more than for Ammonius.

THE THREE ELEMENTS AND THE SOLUTION IN
THE CONSOLATION

ACN, IP and EP all have a part to play in Boethius' solution. It might seem that ACN is the crucial point, in other words, that Boethius' claim will be that while God's foreknowing what I will do implies that I will do it, so that it is *conditionally* necessary given God's foreknowledge, it does not follow that my doing it will *in itself* be necessary rather than voluntary. And this is in a sense right; it is where Boethius' argument will end up, at C v.6.25–36. However, Boethius introduces ACN at the *start* of the discussion of divine foreknowledge, to make the point that, while the Prisoner is well aware that God's foreknowledge does not itself bring my action about (and thus remove my autonomy), he is still concerned that God's foreknowledge necessarily implies the occurrence of what he foreknows (C v.3.10–11).⁵⁷ This amounts to saying that *even conditional* necessity is still a problem. Philosophy does respond by insisting (C v.4.11–20) that necessity must be in the event and extend to the prediction, rather than being imposed on the event by the prediction, and arguing that, if present events are not made necessary in themselves by our observing them, foreknowledge need not make future events necessary in themselves either. But this points forward to the need to introduce IP and EP; if ACN alone provided the solution, the discussion could have finished at C v.4.20.⁵⁸

While ACN is not enough on its own to provide the solution, another argument, found in Aquinas,⁵⁹ is, as Marenbon and Evans have emphasised,⁶⁰ not part of the problem and solution as considered by Boethius at all. This argument turns on the necessity of the past, admitted by Aristotle at *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139b8 and *Rhetoric* 3.17, 1418a5; it claims that God's knowing in advance what I will do will itself be past, and therefore irrevocable, even before the event occurs, and that this necessity will be transmitted to the future event. (Even if LCpq is to be distinguished from CpLq, rejection of CpLq does not entail rejection of CLpLq.)⁶¹ But, as Marenbon points out, if this were the issue it would hardly be an answer to say, with EP, that God's knowledge is *present*.⁶² True, the irrevocability of the past is beyond question in a way that the necessity of the present is not; one can regard the present as the time in which we perform our free actions.⁶³ Nevertheless, EP would hardly be the most persuasive answer to the supposed argument.

The issue that continues to concern Boethius after C v.4.20 can best be expressed in terms of *accessibility*. The problem is not so much whether divine foreknowledge implies the necessity of future events in a sense that conflicts with human freedom, but rather how, if we grant that some future events are *not* necessary in a sense that conflicts with human freedom, divine knowledge can have access to them – the original context of IP.⁶⁴ Putting the matter in formal terms, if 'S' = 'is known' and 'F' indicates the future, so that 'Fp' = 'p will be the case', then for *human* knowledge CSpLp and CSFpLp are both true, CSpLp is false (we can know things that are not and never were necessary in themselves), but CSFpLp is *true* – we can only foreknow things that are necessary for some reason *other* than the fact that they occur or that we foreknow them. The challenge to Philosophy is to show that CSFpLp does not apply to God's foreknowledge. And this is where IP and EP play their part in the argument.⁶⁵

If one holds that God's unchanging nature prevents his knowing things that are changeable, the problem of how God can know my actions, for example, will apply as much to my present and past actions as to my future ones. The point is that in *our* experience there is a particular problem about the accessibility of undetermined *future* events. The argument that God's knowledge of the future is like our knowledge of the present, which itself rests on the combination of EP and IP, is used by Boethius to give God access to a future which is concealed from us. By doing this it removes the requirement, which applies to *our* knowledge of the future, that anything that is foreknown must be necessary in itself independently of its being foreknown.

The distinction between absolute and conditional necessity, ACN, is thus part of Boethius' solution, but not in itself *the* solution.⁶⁶ For it is not enough simply to distinguish between the two types of necessity involved. The argument that God's knowledge of the future is like our knowledge of the present is needed to *legitimise* the application of the distinction.⁶⁷

The combination of ACN with IP + EP is finally made at C v.6.19–21: CSpLp is false for God's knowledge of our future just as it is for our knowledge of the present. Immediately before this, God's foreknowledge (*praevidential*) has (C v.6.17) been renamed *providentia*, 'looking forth'. God does not foresee the future but sees past, present and

future all at once, as if looking from a high mountain.⁶⁸ It is after this (C v.6.25–36) that Philosophy draws the general distinction between absolute and conditional necessity, illustrating it with the example that, if someone is walking, it is necessary that he be walking (CpL'p), but not that his walking is itself necessary in the sense of being compelled (not CpLp). This analysis is then applied ('in the same way', C v.6.30) to God's *providentia*; and the discussion of this point concludes with an echo (C v.6.36) of the example of reason and the senses used to illustrate IP in C v.5.

All three of ACN, IP and EP are present in Ammonius' discussion of *On Interpretation* 9, but he does not combine them to give a solution like Boethius' in the *Consolation*. To understand Boethius' argument requires us to see the issue in terms of the accessibility of future contingents to divine knowledge, rather than just in terms of the implications of divine knowledge for the things it is agreed that it knows. But Ammonius, in the part of his discussion concerned with divine knowledge, focuses on the accessibility issue *exclusively*.⁶⁹ The notion of conditional necessity is brought in only later, where it occurs in Aristotle's text.⁷⁰ And what is missing is the crucial insight in Boethius that, of four cases of knowledge – God's knowledge of our present, God's knowledge of our future, our knowledge of the present and our knowledge of the future – the first three are all alike, and all unlike the fourth, in requiring only conditional and not absolute necessity.⁷¹

THE CONCLUDING PART OF C V. 6 AND THE PROBLEMS IT RAISES

Philosophy proceeds by putting the principle that God's knowledge of the future is like our knowledge of the present to further use in denying (C v.6.37–41) that God can be affected by our decisions. I cannot, by changing my mind about what I will do, force God also to change his judgement about what I will do (a problem raised at the start of the discussion, in C v.3.6). For God foresees the whole story in one go, as it were, my changes of mind included. However, Philosophy goes further and denies that our actions are the cause of God's foreknowledge of them at all (C v.6.41–43; an issue raised, as she says, by the Prisoner at C v.3.15–16). But her explanation is unclear: 'this power of [divine] knowledge, embracing all things in

its present knowledge, has itself established a limit for all things, and owes nothing to things that come after it'. If this suggests that the truth of God's knowledge does not depend on its correspondence with the free choice that I will in fact make, it goes against the model of the relation between knowledge and its objects that has been the basis of the whole preceding discussion; it is not clear that IP can remove *all* dependence of knowledge on its object. For a Platonist like Boethius the difficulty will not indeed be apparent in the sort of case he used to illustrate IP in C v.4–5; the content of Intellect's knowledge of the Form of Man determines, rather than being determined by, the content of sensation's awareness of a man (in so far as the latter is not also affected by such things as direction of view, lighting conditions and so on), for flesh-and-blood men are themselves what they are because of the Form of Man, not vice versa. But it is difficult to see how a similar account can be given of God's knowledge of a human agent's individual future choices.

Perhaps Philosophy's point is just that it would be inappropriate for God's knowledge to depend on *future* actions, and that EP removes *this* necessity. The alternative is that Philosophy in this passage concedes that God determines our actions after all, thus destroying her own argument.⁷² But the remarks that follow (C v.6.44–8) seem to endorse human autonomy; our wills are free from all necessity, and divine providence *concur*s with our actions, rather than causing them. The final sentence engages in deliberate word-play: 'A great necessity to be good is laid upon you.' Our actions may not be necessitated in the sense of being determined by forces outside our control, but that does not remove – indeed it creates – the moral necessity to act virtuously.

If Philosophy has sacrificed human autonomy, Boethius' account is paradoxical. If she has retained it, Boethius' account is incomplete. For he has only attempted to reconcile human autonomy with divine *omniscience*. God can foreknow what I will do without removing my power of independent action. But there still remains the problem of the relation between human autonomy and divine *omnipotence*.⁷³ Solutions can indeed be suggested – for example, that God himself chooses to limit his power by giving human agents the freedom to err, since only thus is virtue (and, of course, vice) possible; but this problem is not one that the *Consolation* claims to resolve.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Peter Adamson, Jonathan Barnes, John Magee, Daniel Schulthess and Gerhard Seel for discussion and suggestions, and to Gerhard Seel for inviting me to give a paper on the topic of the first part of this chapter in Bern. The responsibility for errors or misunderstandings is my own.
2. Cicero, *On Fate* 20-1 (= LS 38G). This is to be distinguished from the claim, *not* made by the Stoics, that the truth of the prediction itself *causes*, rather than *requires*, the event to be necessary. Cf. e.g. Sharples 1991, 12 n. 1.
3. Cicero, *On Fate* 21, 37-8 (= LS 20H); *Academica* 2.97 (= LS 20I).
4. As McKim 1972, 81 n. 4 notes, view (B) below had already been labelled the 'Non-Standard Interpretation' by Rescher 1963, 46, discussing al-Farabi.
5. Relevant papers by Łukasiewicz are collected in McCall 1967.
6. Cicero, *On Fate* 17-20; 27-8 (= LS 70G).
7. Added emphasis mine; on 'unchangeable' see further below.
8. Echoed by Ammonius, *On Aristotle's On Interpretation* (CAG IV) 153.13-154.2, Boethius 1IN 121.20-122.20, 2IN 241.1-243.28. In the former Boethius expresses the contrast as between 'temporal' (*temporale*) and 'unconditional' (*simpliciter*) necessity, in the latter as between 'conditional' (*condicionalis*, 243.26) and 'unconditional' (*simplex*). Gaskin 1995, 91 discusses various labels for the first type and opts for 'relative necessity' or 'necessity relative to the facts'; cf. id. 114-15, 128. Ammonius' commentary and Boethius' two commentaries are translated in Blank and Kretzmann 1998. All references to Ammonius in this chapter are to this commentary.
9. Cf. e.g. Sorabji 1980, 122-3.
10. 'C' is to be read as 'implies' rather than as 'causes': Cpq and Cqp may both be true, but both of two states of affairs cannot each be the *cause* of the other, at least not in a single sense of 'cause'.
11. Cf. Weidemann 1998, Marenbon 2003b, especially 537-8, 2005, 45-6; and, of Aristotle's own practice in the *Prior Analytics*, Patzig 1968, Ch. 2, especially 16-28. Sorabji 1980, 122 n. 7 suggests that the scope distinction is found in Aristotle not in T4 but at *Soph. el.* 4 166a23-31; however, that passage too is arguably better interpreted in terms of absolute and conditional necessity.
12. Marenbon 2003b, 535.
13. At SH 1.6.6-7 pp. 276-7 Obertello = PL 64 839d-840a Boethius distinguishes between (i) the necessity of sitting when sitting, (ii) the necessity of a living creature's having a heart when alive, and (iii) the necessity of

- God's being immortal; Rescher 1967, 37; Galonnier 2003b, 592-3 n. 87. The same tripartition (in the reverse order, with (iii) and (ii) presented as subdivisions of a single type contrasted with (i)) appears at Ammonius 153.13ff., with the example for (ii) of fire necessarily being hot as long as it is fire (cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 103d; Aristotle, *Categories* 10 12b38). Cf. Theophrastus, frs. 100ABC FHS&G; Boethius 2IN 187.29-188.2, 239.6-7. Further elaborations of these classifications in Islamic philosophy are discussed by Rescher 1967; see also Sharples 1978b; Kretzmann 1998, 28; Sorabji 1998, 8-9 and n. 25.)
14. Ammonius, *In De int.* (CAG IV) 131.2-4, 138.16-17, 139.14f.-15, 144.9-14 (Sorabji 2004 5a8), 149.15-18 (Sorabji 2004 5a10); Boethius, 1IN 106.30-107.16 (Sorabji 2004 5a4), 2IN 191.5-10, 208.11-18 (Sorabji 2004 5a3, quoted below), 215.21-6, 245.9-19, 246.12-15, 249.28-250.1. Chadwick 1981, 157-63; Kretzmann 1998; Sorabji 1998, 10.
 15. See Sten Ebbesen's chapter in this volume.
 16. Cf. Mignucci 1989, 51 and 2001, 267-8; Seel 2001, 35-6 ('the difference between Carneades and Ammonius and Boethius in this respect is not fundamental'); *contra*, Gaskin 1995, 155 n. 41. Sorabji 1998, 17 (cf. Sorabji 2004, 111) allows that (B) might be the view of Ammonius but not of Boethius, and notes that the divergence might be explained by Proclus' having been an intermediary between Porphyry and Ammonius. (Seel 2001, 35 n. 60 (cf. Mignucci 2001, 247 and n. 305) misinterprets my 1978a as supporting (B): I specified there that in my view Ammonius and Boethius do *not* 'admit the unqualified truth' of future contingents.) At C v.4.19 Boethius seems to allow that what happens was previously going to happen, without inserting any qualification; but Gaskin 1995, 173 n. 90 points out that this is at a stage in the argument that is superseded by what follows (below, n.58).
 17. E.g. 2IN 139.15-19, 245.9-12; Kretzmann 1998, 31-2.
 18. Cf. Gaskin 1995, 146-59.
 19. Mignucci 2001, 250-5 criticises Gaskin's reading of Ammonius and Boethius for introducing a third truth-value either-true-or-false and thus reducing (c) to (A). Gaskin himself claims that (c) preserves the existence of only two truth-values 'in an extended sense' (1995, 151); he concedes (1995, 146) that (c) is not logically, only 'rhetorically', distinct from (A) (cf. Frede 1985, 42-3; *contra*, Mignucci 1989, 51), but insists that (c) is nevertheless closer to Aristotle's intentions than (A) is. Kretzmann 1998, 44 argues that future contingents may retrospectively become true (or false) for a time even though they were not true at that time; *contra*, Gaskin 1995, 176-9.
 20. Mignucci 1989, 69 n. 47 notes that a good MS, E, has *incommutabiliter* (corrected by E²). But this is presumably just a copying error resulting

- from the preceding *indefinite*. See also 1IN 108.4-5 (the truth and falsity shared between the disjuncts is "without distinction and variable", *indiscreta atque volubilis*); Kretzmann 1998, 47-48 n. 43.
21. For this argument see Alexander, *On Fate* 10, 177.7-9 = Sorabji 2004 5e6.
 22. Kretzmann 1998, 35.
 23. Moreover, *past* events and propositions are described as 'stable' at 2IN 189.5-7; 'stable' is presumably the opposite of 'changeable', and the point about past propositions is presumably not just that they *remain* definite.
 24. Considered and rejected by Kretzmann 1998, 32 and n. 44.
 25. On T6 as evidence for (c) rather than (A) or (B) see Gaskin 1995, 164-5 and n. 71.
 26. See White 1985, 48-9. However, the passages cited against (iii) by Kretzmann 1998, 48 n. 44 (1IN 115.30-1, 2IN 200.14-18) are more naturally read as simply saying that *at every time* one of the affirmation and the negation is (indefinitely) true, the other false, rather than that it is always the same one. Cf. also Mignucci 1989, 64.
 27. Notoriously, Hintikka 1973, 147-78 interpreted Aristotle's own discussion in these terms (though with some doubts and considering (iii) above as an alternative; 173); against this, Gaskin 1995, 39 and 164. See Knuuttila 1993, 51-8; Evans 2004, 251-7.
 28. So Knuuttila 1993, 58. Cf. Ammonius, 155.2-8 and Boethius, 1IN 125.12-14, on T6. Boethius at 1IN 126.18-21 compares the variable truth of the future-tense sentences to the way in which the things themselves are going to be 'changeably and indefinitely'; cf. 125.5-7, with Mignucci 1989, 69; 2IN 247.7-10. At 2IN 193.5 things, and at 214.9 sentences, that admit of either alternative are described as 'unstable'.
 29. See Mignucci 1989, 69-70 and 2001, 278; Gaskin 1995, 132-7; Seel 2001, 209.
 30. Divine foreknowledge is also mentioned at 2IN 203.1, but only to make the point that God foreknows what is already certain to nature (though there are problems with the example used: Kretzmann 1985, 40-1; Blank and Kretzmann 1998, 189 n. 32).
 31. *Ten Problems* 8.
 32. Alexander, *On Fate* 30, 201.13-18 (Sorabji 2004 3a3) and Calcidius 1975 195.4-7. See Sharples 1991, 27-8.
 33. Boethius in 2IN is interpreted as advocating (a) by Courcelle 1967, 213-14 and 1969, 309; Sharples 1991, 28; Gaskin 1995, 171-2 n. 877; Blank and Kretzmann 1998, 190 n. 50; (b) by Huber 1976, 18 n. 45 and Chadwick 1981, 159. In the *Consolation* (C v.3.25) the Prisoner dismisses (b) as like 'that ridiculous prophecy of Tiresias, "Whatever I say either will happen or won't."' (I follow Lerer 1985 in using 'Boethius' to refer to the author of the dialogue, 'Philosophy' and 'the Prisoner' to refer to the characters.)

34. For (ii) see C v.3.18-28, C v.6.24.
35. Gaskin 1995, 172-3 and n. 89. Mignucci 1989, 74-6, conversely, uses this to support his view that Boethius endorses a position closer to (B).
36. Plotinus 3.3, 5.14-25 = Sorabji 2004 4b1; Proclus, *On Providence* 10, 13-14 (Sorabji 2004 4b5). See Sharples 1991, 29-31 and references there.
37. Plotinus 3.1.9-10, cf. 3.2.10, 3.3.4; Proclus, *On Providence* 4; Calcidius 1975, 186; Augustine *City of God* 5.9. Cf. Boethius 2IN 231.12-232.10, contrasting humans with other animals in this respect; Chadwick 1981, 242.
38. On the sources of the image see Sharples 1991, 205 and references there; particularly significant are Plotinus 6.8.18, 6.9.8-9.
39. It also anticipates the contrast between the passage of time and God's eternal present in C v.6, as Marenbon 2003a, 119 points out; see further below, the section on 'The ingredients in Boethius' solution'.
40. On the contrast between internal and external factors see (in the context of Stoicism) Brennan 2001, 279-83; 2005, 288-96. Kretzmann 1985, 34 and n. 52 connects Boethius' view of human autonomy with the modern theory of agent causation: significantly, both Alexander of Aphrodisias (*On Fate* 15) and, earlier, Carneades (as reported in Cicero, *On Fate* 25) adopt a similar view (Sharples 1991, 10 and references there; 2001, 556-9 and references in 558 n. 320).
41. A frequent misinterpretation of the Stoic position too, for which Epictetus' fondness for extreme cases (the prisoner bound hand and foot but free to resist the tyrant in his mind) is largely to blame. See Sharples 1986 and 2005; Brennan 2005, 315-20.
42. See Bobzien 1998 and 2000.
43. C iv.6.52, cf. C v.2.11, Plotinus 3.3.5; and so already the Stoic Cleanthes, SVF 1.537 = LS 54I.
44. Marenbon 2003a, 126-7.
45. Emphasised by Huber 1976, 44-58; see also Courcelle 1967, 221; Dronke 1969, 126; Scheible 1972, 176-7 n. 3.
46. Iamblichus cited by Ammonius *In De int.* 135.14-137.1 (Sorabji 2004 3a10), cf. Stephanus *In De Int.* 35.19-33. Huber 1976, 40ff.
47. Cf. Marenbon 2003a, 130-5, where it is referred to as the Modes of Cognition Principle.
48. Cf. for example Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 124, *In Ti.* 1.352.11-16 (Sorabji 2004 3a11), *In Parm.* 957.14ff., Ammonius 136.1-21 (Sorabji 2004 3a15).
49. Proclus, *On Providence* 63 (Sorabji 2004 3a16) and *Ten Problems* 8; cf. Alexander, *On Fate* 30 = Sorabji 2004 3a2-3, and Hager 1975; Sorabji 1980, 123-5 and 2004, 69-78; Sharples 1991, 25-8 and 2001, 574-5; Gaskin 1995, 351-67.
50. Reiss 1982, 136.

51. Ammonius' account is closer to the standard Neoplatonist hierarchy, for while Boethius places Intellect at the top of his scale in C v.5, Ammonius notes (135.28-32, cf. Stephanus, *In De Int.* 35.26-9) that Intellect knows even higher things only as an inferior.
52. Marenbon 2003a, 134, contrasting Proclus, *On Providence* 65, *Ten Problems* and *In Parm.* locc. citt., and Ammonius 137.1-11.
53. Marenbon 2003a, 136-8, cf. 2003b, 543-4 and 2005, 48-53.
54. Cf. Sorabji 1983, 253-67. On eternity see Stump and Kretzmann 1981.
55. Ammonius 136.1-25 = Sorabji 2004 3a15. Ammonius cites the *Timaeus* and also the *Parmenides* (140e-141e, which does seem to place the *One* outside time altogether; Blank and Kretzmann 1998, 123 n. 31). Proclus, *On the Timaeus* 3, 42.23-33 Diehl, argues that the present tense 'is' has a double sense, and that the sense that applies to the intelligible is that which is not contrasted with the past and the future.
56. Augustine, *City of God* 11.21 = Sorabji 2004 3a13, *Ad Simplicianum* 2.2.2 = 3a12.
57. Cf., of future *truth* (rather than knowledge), Ammonius 149.22-34.
58. Gaskin 1995, 173 n. 90; Weidemann 1998, 201.
59. Aquinas, *De veritate* q.2 art.12 arg.7; *Summa theologiae* 1 q.13, 2 art.14; *Commentarium in Sententias Petri Lombardi* 1 dist. 38 qu.1 art.5 arg.4. Kenny 1969; Wippel 1985, 218; Marenbon 2005, 140. Sorabji 1983, 255 outlines the argument and the solution, but recognises that this is not the way in which Boethius himself presents the issue. Cf. Sorabji 1980, 125.
60. Marenbon 2003a, 141; 2003b, 533; 2005, 15-18. Evans 2004, 265-6.
61. This argument is in fact a version of Diodorus Cronus' Master Argument, with the link between knowledge and the truth of what is known playing the role that was taken in Diodorus' original version by the assumption that all statements about the future are already either true or false, and in some other similar arguments by the thesis of causal determinism. Cf. Hintikka 1973, 201-5; White 1985, 79-90.
62. Marenbon 2003a, 207 n. 31; 2003b, 538.
63. The present is sometimes coupled with the necessary past and contrasted with the future (Aristotle, *Peri hermeneias*. 9, 18a28), but sometimes not (Aristotle, *De caelo* 1.12, 283b13). Cf. Hintikka 1973, 183.
64. That accessibility is the issue is signalled at C v.4.21-22, immediately followed by the statement of the Iamblichus Principle at C v.4.24ff. Cf. also C v.5.8-9. Knuuttila 1993, 60; Marenbon 2003a, 129-30; 2003b, 540; 2005, 27.
65. Marenbon 2005, 34-6 shows that IP is needed as well as EP and ACN; the argument is not just that present knowledge does not render what is known necessary in itself and that what is future to us is present to God.
66. Cf. Marenbon 2003a, 139-41; 2005, 27 and 40.

67. As noted by Evans 2004, 263 in connection with the example of the charioteers at C v.4.15. Or, putting it the other way round, with Marenbon 2003a, 142, ACN shows that there is nothing strange in an event's being conditionally necessary but not absolutely necessary; it remains to show that the necessity involved in divine foreknowledge can be of the former type but not also of the latter.
68. This is the image developed by Aquinas (*Summa theologiae* 1 q.14 art.13 ad 3), who presents God watching us proceed along a road when *we* can only see those who have gone before us and not those who will come after us. (But the image is not perfect: to comprehend past, present and future all at once God would have to see me not as I proceed along the road, but simultaneously *both* before I come to a fork in the road *and* after I have taken one route or the other. See Sharples 1991, 229.)
69. Cf. Sorabji 1980, 125.
70. Ammonius has indeed, at 136.30-137.1, the statement that what is contingent in its own nature is definite in God's knowledge. But this is not expressed as a contrast between two ways of being *necessary*.
71. Marenbon 2003b.
72. Marenbon 2003a, 143-5; cf. Gegenschatz 1958, 128-9, and Marenbon 2003b, 545-6.
73. Cf. Gegenschatz 1958, 128.

10 Interpreting the *Consolation*¹

This chapter concerns itself primarily with the literary interpretation of the *Consolation*. This will involve taking account of generic markers, sources, allusions, and narrative patterns and structures to read the *Consolation* accurately and meaningfully. There will be some coverage of different types of critical approaches applied to it, especially those of more recent critics. The chapter will conclude with some discussion of a matter that is not strictly speaking literary, namely the Christianity of the *Consolation*. For one can indeed think of texts, in addition to authors, as having religious affiliations, and much of the evidence used to determine such affiliations requires philological detective work.

The *Consolation*, an undisputed masterpiece of Latin literature, was widely read and imitated and exerted a powerful literary influence during the Middle Ages and beyond. The very fact can be distorting, for most educated readers, willy nilly, are aware of its later *fortuna*, and can experience difficulties in taking off the multiple colored lenses of reception to recover the work in its original historical and literary context. It is still, astonishingly, alive, as a touchstone for the eccentric, appalling (but also appealing) Ignatius Reilly in *A Confederacy of Dunces*.² The *Consolation* stands at the end of many ancient traditions that it consciously invokes and evokes and is a work of considerable literary innovation in its own right. Boethius wrote the *Consolation* as a last work,³ and it is tempting to see him shoring fragments up, not just against his own ruin, but against that of the *Romanitas* he so prized, and whose last, most glorious representative he arguably was. All these features conspire to create a dense and often cryptic text. While the *Consolation* can be understood at a flat narrative level by the reader lacking a rich classical education,

and the philosophical argumentation can be absorbed whole, much would be lost in translation.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE POET: QUI AURES
AUDIENDI HABET, AUDIAT!

A rich and resonant intertextuality informs the work from the very first words and signals volumes to the literate reader.⁴ The opening lines, *Carmina qui quondam studio florente peregi, eheu, nunc maestos cogor inire modos* ("I who once completed verses with flourishing eagerness am now forced to enter sad measures"), contain an encapsulated poetic and Vergilian biography, mixing an allusion to the interpolated proem to the *Aeneid*:

Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena
carmen, et egressus silvis vicina coegi
ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono,
gratum opus agricolis: at nunc horrentia Martis ...
arma virumque cano

I am he who once, having played song on the slender reed,
and, leaving the woods, forced the fields to obey the farmer,
however greedy he might be, work pleasing to farmers: but now
the bristling arms of Mars I sing and the man ...

with the authentic Vergilian sphragis to the *Georgics*:

Illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat
Parthenope studiis florentem ignobilis oti,
carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa,
Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi [cf. *Buc.* 1.1].

At that time sweet Naples nourished me, Vergil,
flourishing in the eager pursuits of inglorious leisure,
I who played the songs of shepherds and bold in my youth,
sang you, Tityrus, under the cover of the spreading beech.

Vergil harkened back nostalgically to his earlier bucolic verse, resuming the first line of the first *Bucolic* in haunting echo.⁵ His move would be forwards and upwards, namely to the higher genre, epic. Boethius' imprisonment marked a key change from major to minor. Not the demoting Ovidian bump from hexameters to the elegiacs of love, but those of exile and sorrow.⁶ External evidence fleshes out the

image of Boethius-*poeta* when he was a younger and happier man. His lost bucolic verse is attested by the *Anecdota Holderi*:⁷ *Condidit et carmen bucolicum* ("He also composed a bucolic poem").⁸ For his life in elegy, we need go no further than his ambiguous role as pander in Maximianus, *Elegia* 3.⁹ So Boethius self-consciously alludes to his own past career as a secular Latin poet. And, if we read the poems of the *Consolation* in their literary historical context, we see many signs of the later Roman epigrammatist in, for example, the shorter poems of C 3.¹⁰

DIALOGUE AND THE PHILOSOPHER

Previous efforts

Boethius has a better-documented record in the field of Latin philosophy and the *artes*. He knew how to translate,¹¹ how to adapt,¹² and how to evoke the world of the philosophical dialogue. Unlike the handbooks on the *disciplinae*, the commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge* features an introduction and scene-setting that are comparable to those used by Augustine in his Cassiciacum dialogues. In this case it is time-hallowed winter nights and the Aurelian mountains.¹³ Boethius used a fictitious interlocutor, Fabius.¹⁴ Unlike his Latin predecessors, Cicero and Augustine, Boethius may not have had a suitable living conversational partner for even such a fictitious dialogue; Fabius is no more than a template for inculcation.¹⁵ The external markers of dialogue are clear.

Classical sources

A closer inspection of the *Consolation* allows us to see which dialogues are most important for its generic parentage. Aristotle's *Protrepticus* and Cicero's *Hortensius* are early ancestors; neither survives, but both can be (in part) reconstructed from surviving fragments in multiple authors and from generic imitators, such as Iamblichus.¹⁶ Plato is, of course, crucial, be it for the last days of the righteous philosopher in prison, awaiting death (*Crito* and *Phaedo*), the flight of the soul (*Phaedrus*), the Cave (*Republic*),¹⁷ the philosophy of punishment (*Gorgias*), or for cosmogony (*Timaeus*).¹⁸ The *Consolation's* title evokes the *logos paramythetikos* or consolation,

not in this case for the death of a friend or relative, but for literal and metaphorical exile.¹⁹ Philosophy's consolation addresses the condition of a righteous man in a world where evil happens. In the scenes with Fortune in Book 2 we see a far loftier version of the sort of street-smart snappy answer to fortune's ills that are preserved in the Pseudo-Senecan *De remediis fortuitarum*.²⁰ And we need to acknowledge at various key rhetorical moments the influences of monologic forensic *apologiae* too.²¹ But there is more to the prose *Consolation* than that.

Talking personifications

The *Consolation* differs from its classical literary models in that one of the interlocutors in this sublime conversation is not a human being.²² The status of Philosophy poses important questions. Not divine, not strictly human,²³ presented as an external epiphany in all her strange glory,²⁴ she is a living personification, a type of figure taken for granted in serious didactic medieval literature, but not in classical. By framing the work as a dialogue between a supernatural entity and a human being, Boethius borrowed from the tradition of religious revelation discourse.²⁵ Trappings, such as the epiphany and the different natures of the interlocutors, point to revelation, but the prose content is no different from that of any philosophical dialogue, and the human interlocutor shows much more independence than, say, the interlocutors of the *Hermetica*. The *Consolation* emerges as a fusion of the Platonic dialogue²⁶ and the revelation discourse.²⁷ The human interlocutor, however, is firmly anchored in historical place and time, and the knowledge gained is rational, not the stuff of revelation.

To understand what Boethius meant by conversing with Philosophy herself, we must examine the reception of personifications in late antiquity. After his conversion Augustine experienced growing anxieties about figures like Philosophy, because they seemed to be pagan holdovers.²⁸ And while no hard connection can be proven,²⁹ one may be permitted to ask oneself whether Augustine's decision to hold a soliloquy with a Ratio who is not unambiguously an exterior voice, and may well be his own *ratio*, had some influence on Boethius' Philosophy.³⁰ After all, although she stands for all that is right in the philosophical tradition, she cannot logically express more than the sum of philosophical knowledge in Boethius' own head. After

Martianus Capella and Boethius the fate of such personified learned ladies was secure – they were there to stay and became domesticated goddesses in the Middle Ages.³¹

And what a Protean creation Boethius' Philosophy was!³² This authoritative figure emerges very much in the round. Her characterization modulates from that of Athena-like divine epiphany (C 1.1.3), ancestor *imago* (C 1.1.3), impatient or jealous mistress³³ or *arbitrix morum* (C 1.1), Thetis, kind mother and goddess (C 1.4.1), doctor (annoyingly discussing her patient in the third person in his presence at C 2.2.5–6), former nurse (C 1.3.1), impersonator of Fortune (C 2.2.1) teacher, stand-in for the *philosophus*,³⁴ totality of philosophy (C 1.1.1) and state of the subject in historical time (C 1.1.5 and C 1.3.6–7). This goes far beyond Synesius on Hypatia: mistress, mother, sister, teacher, but Synesius provides a model for a possible relationship of a male student with a brilliant woman philosopher.³⁵

We are not forced to regard her epiphanic appearance as anticlimactic on the grounds that in the final analysis she has no supernatural powers to help Boethius.³⁶ Elements of divine epiphanies had long since migrated to the *adventus* of allegorical personages in the Later Roman Empire.³⁷ In addition, the options open to the author were limited. Since he chose to converse with a personification, which had to enter a prison secretly, the author had few choices: dream, vision, or epiphany. Epiphany, given that a lengthy dialogue needed to take place, seems the best choice. Philosophizing in a dream or vision would have required embedding and framing-closure with the inevitable worries about *mise en abyme*. Boethius, unlike Augustine and Sidonius, had no qualms about taking over an unabashedly pagan form of encounter without bothering to Christianize it.³⁸

SOME FUNCTIONS OF VERSE IN THE CONSOLATION

Thus the *Consolation* springs from familiar modes of the Greco-Latin prose dialogic tradition. But it also comprises many types of verse that have an important role to play throughout the work:³⁹ we have seen above what Boethius can pack into his first two verses. The prosimetric interplay provides varied punctuation and structural separation through polymetry, and significant polymetry,⁴⁰ as well as variety of texture. At the opening of the work we find the Muses

consoling Boethius. After they are packed off by Philosophy, she is free to accommodate their meters to her muses.⁴¹ And most of the *metra* are sung by her.⁴² They provide intellectual reinforcement and illustration, rest and refreshment,⁴³ a way of visualizing the natural world beyond the cell,⁴⁴ revelations of material inaccessible to reason alone, and different generic voices for Boethius and Philosophy. It has been recognized that there is considerable rhyme and reason in the assignment and placement of the different *metra*.⁴⁵ The highly schematic form of *prosimetrum* employed by Boethius is unparalleled in extant Latin literature. It most probably represents a formal innovation of his own, and invites the reader (dangerously, as we shall see) to consider the work as a perfectly wrought urn, with an elegant cyclical structure of alternating verse and prose, pivoting around the great *metrum* in the only meter that is not used at least twice: 3.M.9 in hymnic hexameters.⁴⁶

PROSIMETRY AND MENIPPEA

The prosimetric form of the *Consolation* raises questions that affect the work's interpretation, for prosimetry is a formal characteristic of the ancient *satura Menippea*, a corpus that includes texts such as Varro's fragmentary *Menippeae*, Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, some of the works of Lucian, and Julian's *Caesares*. All these *Menippeae* have unquestionable comic, ironic, and satirical overtones appropriate for a genre that was *spoudogeloion* ("jesting in earnest"). The nub of the difficulty concerns four of the later texts, Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, Ennodius' *Epistle to Ambrosius and Beatus*, Fulgentius' *Mythologiae*, and Boethius' *Consolation*. Are these also standard satirical *Menippeae*, or do they belong to a special educational prosimetric subgenre?⁴⁷ After all, there had been a few epistolary works that exhibited prosimetry without being *saturae*.⁴⁸ This begins as an argument about generic taxonomy.⁴⁹ (One could think about it as like trying to decide at what point a dinosaur became a bird, and stopped thinking "dinosaur" as species and started thinking "bird.") But, as we shall see, it also has hermeneutic implications.

Cases have been made that both the *De Nuptiis* and the *Mythologiae* show strong generic ties to the *Menippea*, and Boethius clearly worked from the *De Nuptiis*.⁵⁰ In addition to formal prosimetry many thematic motifs are shared between these works and the

Consolation.⁵¹ But while the *De Nuptiis* and the *Mythologiae* clearly have intentionally humorous elements that link them more closely to earlier *Menippeae*, the *Consolation* does not. Thus modern critics are divided on the significance of the Menippean form of the *Consolation*. For a long time it was simply noted and left at that.⁵² Nineteenth-century critics such as Hirzel (and their followers) saw actual generic evolution at work: the *Menippea* began to be used for instructional rather than satirical purposes, viz. it took on a more serious face.⁵³

GENRES "ON THE GROUND"

To understand the hermeneutic relationship between genre and text one needs to consider genre itself and its observed behaviors.⁵⁴ A genre is a literary form with freight. No genre was a genre at the time its first exemplar was written. Genre is created by sequences of authors doing the same thing as well as doing it with a difference,⁵⁵ where the difference evoked the original work (or even just its genre). Generic markers create expectations. Genres comprise formal elements (verse vs. prose, various specific meters) as well as content, attitude, function, and themes,⁵⁶ and even far more specific tropes (e.g. the *recusatio*) and *topoi* (the time-description). Some *topoi* can inhabit more than one genre; others would be out of place. Genres can be declared explicitly by the author or left up to the reader to discern.⁵⁷ Some genres can be inserted into others (e.g. a hymn in an epic). While it would be a fine thing to have a comprehensive family tree of all genres and types of writing,⁵⁸ the project is impractical because there is such abundant cross-fertilization, and usually the moment at which a genre was born is unknown.⁵⁹ Above all genres evolve and cross or re-combine. Often we cannot be sure whether an author is writing with some sort of Platonic form of a genre in his mind or whether he is bouncing off a specific text, in part or in whole.⁶⁰ For this reason it can be fallacious to assume that any text that shows generic affiliations to a given genre must be interpreted according to the generic criteria of the collectivity of its predecessors.⁶¹ To take a crude example: an epic is heroic; a mock epic is parodic and parasitic, inverting what it imitates, but incomprehensible without some knowledge of epic and the specific texts parodied. Thus, although there are close generic links, it would be simply silly to apply the same critical standards to both sorts of text. We would

be in equivalent trouble if we insisted that the authors of novels, such as Petronius or Apuleius, and the authors of novelistic *hagiographica*, such as the *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, had identical views of the ontological status of their subject matter.

THE DECONSTRUCTIVE MENIPPEA

Joel Relihan, a recent quasi-deconstructionist⁶² interpreter of the *Consolation*, however, has tried to use evidence from Menippean predecessors and congeners to discern a satirical tone and message in the work. Everyone to date has "missed the joke."⁶³ The prisoner, we are told, never gets wings to fly out of prison – so Philosophy fails.⁶⁴ Whatever happened to metaphorical interpretation? If Philosophy's arguments are not perfect, the author must be signaling something to us. What is the author signaling? Recourse to Christian faith, *a via media*, we are told.⁶⁵ Yet faith is never mentioned in the *Consolation*. We must also remember that no philosophical text can know more than its author does.⁶⁶ Who *has* solved the problems raised by Boethius?⁶⁷ Philosophy promises *acriora remedia*, which must be "surely Socrates' cup of hemlock," so when the prisoner does not die within the narrative, we have yet another failure of Philosophy's.⁶⁸ Boethius was not as fortunate as the martyr Perpetua, who found someone to publish her diary with an account of her execution!⁶⁹ And why cannot we see the immediate *acriora remedia* in the tight arguments of Philosophy in C 3?⁷⁰ Likewise to assert that Books 4 and 5 are digressions, away from Philosophy's original intent, is simply not true.⁷¹ They clearly respond to the theodicy question posed at C 1.4.29–30.

This approach reminds the present author of a Cornish innkeeper who cornered her many years ago with his crypto-Gnostic view of the universe. Didn't she know that the evidence that we are *all* asleep is to be found in *Genesis*, for God cast a deep sleep upon Adam, *but Adam never woke up*?⁷² The exegetic fallacy here is overinterpretation that demands a level of consistency of a text that is inappropriate or inapplicable.⁷³ We all constantly take innumerable shortcuts in conversation and writing that rely on the "need to know" principle. "Someone told me." If your interlocutor doesn't need to know *how* they told you (telephone, face-to-face, email, letter, fax, carrier pigeon), then there is no need to specify and no license to "problematize" the

statement and thereby create an untrustworthy narrator. The narrative economy does not require the specification, so it simply doesn't matter. Relihan has fallen prey to a kindred fallacy in the demands he puts upon the *Consolation*. Recourse to argumentation such as his indeed seems "a desperate compulsion of evidence to fit a theory."⁷⁴

METADIALOGIC MODERNISM

Another modern trend is an interest in examining the *Consolation* not for its primary content, but for its setting, mechanics of dialogue, and metadialogic markers,⁷⁵ an approach that bears some similarity to postmodern architecture with exposed pipes and struts. Thus the *Consolation* is read as being "about" itself and its own dialogic process. This is the approach of Seth Lerer in his *Boethius and Dialogue*. The very title poses an ambiguity: is this a book about Boethius or one about dialogue?⁷⁶ This approach breathes the critical Zeitgeist of the seventies and eighties, when Alexandrian self-consciousness about the act of writing and its reception at Rome fueled an industry of studies on *recusatio*, poetics, metaphors for poetic production and activity, poetic apologia, and encounters between poet and predecessor or poet and Muse. Poems were about poetry. Texts were self-referential or self-reflexive. And similar things could be done with Boethius. "The speakers come to talk more and more about the structure of the dialogue itself. Their discussions become self-reflexive, in that it is fundamentally concerned with elucidating its own method. It also becomes self-referring, in that key terms presume the reader's familiarity with their use elsewhere in Boethius' writings."⁷⁷ There is however an important and neglected difference. Philosophical texts were written in dialogue form in part for pedagogic reasons, so that the recreation of an authoritative dialogue could work on the mind of the external reader, who reacts sympathetically in parallel with the internal participants. Explicit outlining of the progress and procedures thus has a very practical and mundane function for the reader. One must beware of overpathologizing it.

MORE TRADITIONAL LITERARY APPROACHES

Despite such aberrations, excesses, and monomanias, literary scholarship over the years has taught us much about how to interpret the

Consolation. Take the matter of close attention to the crucial distinction between author and persona.⁷⁸ Not many years ago a scholar as sensitive as C.J. De Vogel could be fully aware of the possibility of distinctions in characterization between Boethius-prisoner and Philosophy,⁷⁹ but could miss the possibility of nuance in the evolving characterization of Boethius-prisoner, through whom the narrative is focalized. She therefore concluded that there was a significant popular pagan element in Boethius' thinking, the subjection of the world to Tyche, without considering the possibility that Boethius-auctor may have characterized his distressed alter-ego, the prisoner, as having succumbed to such denial of divine Providence – without believing it himself qua author.⁸⁰

Close reading can reveal new problems and possibilities. Take C 1.4.26: *de compositis falso litteris, quibus libertatem arguor sperasse Romanam*. Were these hostile forgeries purporting to be Boethian autographs? Or were they false allegations about Boethius' treason? A close look at C 1.4.26 suggests that, according to Boethius, the *delatores* were, or should have been, tortured. We might be astonished to see this anti-humanitarian attitude in someone who himself would die under torture.⁸¹ Close and watchful reading must continue, for there are still passages that remain obscure.⁸²

SPACE REMAINING FOR SOURCE CRITICISM

There has been a great deal of extremely valuable source criticism on the *Consolation*.⁸³ Virtually no word in the work lacks genetic commentary. But this approach still has surprises to offer. I'd like briefly to discuss one example that provides an interesting glimpse through a glass darkly at a lost work that must have been related to the *Consolation*.

Philosophy's hymn, C 3.M.9, and its Timaeian content have long attracted attention. C 3.M.9 falls within a tradition of hexametrical philosophical hymnography that goes back on the Greek side to Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* and on the Latin side to Valerius Soranus. Latin congeners of Boethius' *metrum* include hymns by Ausonius, Tiberianus, and Martianus. It is the hymn by Tiberianus, however, as we shall see, that is suggestive.

The introduction to the hymn, C 3.9.32 *ut in Timaeo Platoni nostro placet* ("as it pleased our Plato in the *Timaeus*"), deliberately points the reader to the *Timaeus* 27c 2–d1, where the necessity of prayer

before minor, let alone major, enterprises is stated by Timaeus.⁸⁴ Philosophy then invokes the *pater*, but uses an aretology that reprises important elements from the cosmogony of the *Timaeus*.

Over sixty years ago an important posthumous article by Hans Lewy on the Tiberianus Hymn (Tiberianus, *Carmen* 4) was published.⁸⁵ In it he suggested that the poem's heading, *Versus Platonis a quodam Tiberiano de Greco in Latinum translati* ("Verses of Plato translated from Greek into Latin by a certain Tiberianus"), should be taken seriously, and that Tiberianus did translate it from Greek into Latin. Lewy pointed out the fact that this poem is not just any hymn, but specifically the hymn that Plato might have used for Timaeus' prayer in the *Timaeus*. The questions at the end of the poem make this clear.⁸⁶

Quem (precor, adspires), qua sit ratione creatus,
quo genitus factusve modo, da nosse volenti.
Da, pater, augustas ut possim noscere causas,
mundanas olim moles quo foedere rerum
sustuleris animamque levem quo maximus olim
texueris numero, quo congrege dissimilique
quidquid id est vegetum, per concita corpora vivit.⁸⁷

To know it [sc. the universe], why it was created (I pray you grant inspiration)
how born or made, grant to one desirous.
Grant, father, that I may be able to know the lofty [first] causes
by what bond of the elements you once hung the massy universe,
by what proportion (number) you, greatest, wove the delicate
[world-]soul, by what
[number], same or other, whatever it is that is alive lives
through bodies set in rapid motion.⁸⁸

Lewy then tried to figure out where this poem might first have been published. He thought it Middle Platonic in content, and suggested that it was written at the end of the second century, and translated by Tiberianus to be put in the mouth of Plato in the same work in which Socrates may have spoken about gold.⁸⁹ He also suggested that the poem may have appeared in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*.⁹⁰ It is not clear which solution he finally settled for, presumably because the piece was published from his *Nachlass* without the authorial *summa manus*.

If one looks at the Tiberianus Timaeon hymn, described as *versus Platonis*, praying for a revelation of what will be (in part) the content of the Timaeus side-by-side with its Boethian parallel, a hymn of Timaeon content sung by Philosophy, it is clear that the parallels cannot be coincidental.⁹¹ The Boethian hymn, it seems, clinches Lewy's case for ascribing the Tiberianus poem to a work (whether his own or in a Greek source) involving Plato (or Timaeus), a prayer, and the *Timaeus*.⁹² We are thereby licensed to read C 3.M.9 within the context of late antique discussions of philosophic prayer, for it shows us not just the or a philosopher (Plato?) praying to the creator for understanding, but Philosophy herself. This discussion was linked to a specific exegetic moment anchored in *Timaeus* 27c. Proclus' *In Timaeum* (ad loc.) clearly shows us that Porphyry had discussed prayer, probably in his own lost commentary on the *Timaeus*.⁹³ The coincidence between Tiberianus and Boethius is the visible sign of a submerged textual iceberg that might have helped us read C 3.M.9 in a more sophisticated fashion,⁹⁴ and would have helped us understand more about the history of the quasi-submerged Latin late Platonic tradition.⁹⁵

ANALYST CRITICISM

Analyst criticism has raised important questions about whether the *Consolation* is a complete work. And, dismayingly, the arguments involved pro and con can often cut both ways. An experienced critic can, like Carneades, argue *in utramque partem* with equal conviction. For example, at C 4.4.22 the prisoner asks Philosophy whether there are no punishments for souls after death. She answers that there are indeed tortures, both punitive and purgatorial, but that "it is not her plan to talk about these now." Tränkle suggested that the work could well have been intended to end with a Platonic myth.⁹⁶ And yet Courcelle has explained this *renvoi* to a later treatment by maladroit plagiarism of a Greek Neoplatonic commentary on the *Gorgias*.⁹⁷ A third alternative is that Philosophy was simply cutting Boethius off altogether: "now" meaning "now," not "now as opposed to later." Tränkle also pointed to other curious features such as the lack of explicit response to the question, "Quid ipse sis,"⁹⁸ the dangling *alia quaedam* at C 5.1.1, the way in which the use of dialogue diminishes in Books 4 and 5, and the lack of a final *metrum*.⁹⁹

There is no denying these features, but different responses are possible. One might argue, to take one case, that there is in fact an implicit answer to the question of what Boethius-man is at C 4.3.10, namely divine by participation¹⁰⁰ or alternatively that the question hinted at the immortality of the human soul, a point made explicit in various places.¹⁰¹ One can argue that increasing haste as the author's execution approached affected the composition.¹⁰² One could agree that the work is indeed unfinished and speculate about how it might have ended. One could argue that what appear to be imperfections cannot be used to prove that the work was unfinished, because they could easily be examples of the author "nodding."¹⁰³

PRIMARY AUDIENCE

One could profitably add other questions. For example, to what extent is the consolation of the *Consolation* customized for the prisoner-auctor? At the beginning, particularly in C 1.4, Boethius wallows defensively in the specifics of his own case. After this point at various times Philosophy directly adverts to his own position and situation.¹⁰⁴ In other cases it is harder to tell. Is the criticism of the *longus ordo famulorum* (C 2.5.18) a pet weakness of Boethius' or simply something appropriate for the sort of Roman aristocratic audience he imagines? The constructed image of false happiness in C 3.9 is still clearly a secular Roman aristocrat's. Interesting likewise is the omission of *voluptas* from C 2 and its introduction at C 3.1.7 *voluptate diffluere* and C 3.1.10, with a full development at C 3.7 and 3.M.7. Does Boethius feel he must introduce it here as an afterthought because the topic of C 3 is the *summum bonum*, and *voluptas* was thought to be Epicurus'?¹⁰⁵ Or should we perhaps see it as a belated concession to bad behavior that he himself may have displayed?¹⁰⁶ Is there a not-so-subtle reproof in C 4.7.22 that all bad fortune tests, corrects, or punishes?

CHRISTIANITY

I will conclude with some thoughts about the Christianity of the *Consolation*. Critics of the *Consolation* have historically been starkly divided on this question. The debate started in the tenth century with Bovo of Corvey.¹⁰⁷ A major landmark was Usener's

publication of the *Anecdota Holderi* in 1877, for it proved beyond a doubt that Boethius was the author of the *Opuscula sacra*.¹⁰⁸ Christians wanted Boethius to be Christian.¹⁰⁹ But the controversy has continued and been refined with some such as Momigliano arguing for apostasy; Chadwick saying, "The *Consolation* is a work written by a Platonist who is also a Christian, but it is not a Christian work";¹¹⁰ Galonnier, apparently, seeing some sort of token Christian;¹¹¹ and now Relihan arguing recently that the *Consolation* is "about humble access to God through prayer, not revelation."¹¹² The present author takes her starting point from the sociolinguistic and philological work of Mohrmann¹¹³ and De Vogel¹¹⁴ to get a sense not of whether or not Boethius was a Christian (for he clearly was), but of *what sort of a Christian he was*. But to work out what Boethius is, we must observe what he *does*.

One might profitably start with examining Boethius' relationship to the Bible and to the Christian *Sondersprache*. To do so one needs a somewhat scientific way of categorizing his alleged citations.¹¹⁵ The following has proved a helpful taxonomy:

- Explicitly flagged with intent to enable identification of precise quotation and original context (=citation);
- Not flagged or discreetly flagged, but nonetheless precise: "Peek-a-boo." Under this heading should go deliberate examples of contrast imitation that produce a *Verfremdungseffekt*;
- Vaguer with intent to provide recognizable coloration or flavor, but not necessarily invoke a precise passage;
- Allusion with careful rewording or disguise (neutralization);
- "Bleed through" "seepage," or *lapsus*, where the author is not aware that a cat has poked its nose out of a bag.¹¹⁶

What we find, if we do this responsibly, is that he neutralizes,¹¹⁷ either "repossesses" or is unaware,¹¹⁸ avoids explicitly Christian language, such as *creator* (but *creatus* "bleeds through"),¹¹⁹ uses Christian sources,¹²⁰ and deliberately plays with what Jacques Fontaine calls "double transparence."¹²¹ The moments at which he adverts to various important theological topics (martyrdom and asceticism,¹²² supplicatory prayer, hell and purgatory, and creation) exhibit *at best* syncretistic paraphrase. It is far from clear that the hints of Christian terminology and thought are allocated primarily to Boethius and surface only in Philosophy's words as "bleed through."¹²³ There is only one example

of a clear biblical signal transmitted and received, and that is the quotation from Wis 8:1 *adtingit enim a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suaviter*.¹²⁴ I have argued elsewhere that Boethius' pleased reaction is not to the Christian or biblical language, but to the fact that Philosophy refers specifically to the OT book of Wisdom, a text in which he would have found many congenial thoughts and scenarios.¹²⁵ He has few plausible echoes of the NT. There is no hint in the *Consolation* of Christ, or of the incarnation, both acid tests for a Christian.¹²⁶ The doctrine of the preexistence and descent of the soul hinted at in C 3. M.9.18–21 and C 5.2.8 would have been unacceptable to orthodox Bible-centered Christians.¹²⁷ There is only one brief allusion to divine grace.¹²⁸ Instead the *Consolation* mostly emphasizes self-help, making the ascent on one's own. A passage such as C 4.4.28: *nihil opus est iudice praemium deferente. Tu te ipse excellentioribus addidisti*, might suggest that the author did not believe in *post mortem* judgment, but at C 5.6.48 Philosophy mentions the need for probity when pleading one's case before the judge who sees all.¹²⁹ There are several passages that allude to the problem of prayer, and their use of the words *humilis* and *humilitas* and *commercium* betrays a Christian sensibility.¹³⁰ It needs to be emphasized, however, that prayer was not a Christian monopoly, and pagan philosophers regularly discussed it.¹³¹ As expected, the evidence is mixed, but the overall picture that emerges is of suppression of religious specifics.

The Christianity of the *Consolation* is of a curious, non-NT based, sapiential¹³² and philosophic, sort, with its strongest parallels in the syncretism of a much earlier period, namely Hellenistic Judaism. We need to have a more nuanced view of spectrums of belief and practice that leave a place for people such as Boethius. They cannot simply be pigeon-holed under monolithic labels, such as "Christian" or "pagan." Synesius *Epistula* 105, written to his brother shortly before he became a bishop, is instructive, for in it he details his religious exclusions, what he is prepared to do and believe, and what not.¹³³ Topics covered include celibacy, the preexistence of souls, the destruction of the world, and popular views about the Resurrection.¹³⁴ We need to think about Boethius in a similar fashion.

Boethius was a highly educated denizen of the late antique world, not just a serious philosopher who read a great deal of Latin poetry. His opening scene, if read with the eye of the body, shows us a famous funerary image: the *homme cultivé* surrounded by the Muses.¹³⁵

His Philosophy's pi and theta owe something to the *gammadia* on later Roman garments.¹³⁶ While Boethius did not inhabit Gregory of Tours' theological *rus* of exorcisms and healings, demons, and visions, nonetheless *maleficium* was still a useful political charge in his circles.¹³⁷ This is hardly surprising, for his world was peopled by a more complex set of entities than ours is today. One could depict oneself conversing with an incarnated female personification of human reason,¹³⁸ who herself acknowledged the existence of one even higher than herself, who spoke in hexameters.¹³⁹ One could imagine a holy man who was completely exempt from physical ailments.¹⁴⁰ The world of the *Consolation* included a *summum bonum*, God, and also a personified Wisdom,¹⁴¹ but no Christ.

Reading silences is always tricky, but the *Consolation* is the product of a writer who works hard not to send signals to fellow Christians, not merely by not sending them, but also by muting and damping them whenever he can. Why? In Ostrogothic Italy there was no reason for a Christian to be coy about his Christianity, although there is evidence that high functionaries would wisely function on a vague common level by merely talking about *divinitas*, perhaps to avoid Christological divisions.¹⁴² That alleged stylistic or generic proprieties forced the average Christian author to construct a firewall is unlikely. If the *Consolation* is complete, and if Boethius had wanted to suggest that faith in a Christian divinity and theology was man's only ultimate recourse, he could and would have signaled that fact clearly and could have done so without employing aversive pious or priestly terminology.

It has been suggested that Boethius' Christianity in the *Consolation* is similar to that of Augustine at Cassiciacum – with the clear implication that it is therefore non-problematic and hence "acceptable."¹⁴³ This seems to me to be a flawed argument. Augustine's failure to mention Christ, etc. is explicable by the fact that he was on his way in, so to speak, and in a process of conversion. Boethius was the seasoned veteran of theological tractates at the time he wrote the *Consolation*, and a documented Christian. So his silences cannot be explained the same way. Indeed they invite the suggestion that he was on his way out, if not an actual apostate, or that he was consciously exploring an alternative route. The historical circumstances of the composition of the *Consolation* make his approach all the more marked, for, at such a time, above all, men are wont to seek the

consolations of religion. One is left with either some form of apostasy or failure of faith or else with a conscious decision to work with the philosophical minimum required to establish common ground between the matter of philosophy and that of religion, to think outside the Christian framework.

Ultimately the answer will depend on who one sees as the audience of the *Consolation*. If one focuses exclusively on the author addressing Boethius-prisoner within the framework of the text, then one will be more likely to feel the lack of explicitly Christian consolation as problematic, given Boethius-prisoner's known religious affiliations. If however one imagines an external audience quite separate from the prisoner,¹⁴⁴ one's perspective changes, and it is far easier to see the work as an experimental philosophical work aimed at anyone seeking answers to any of the major philosophical problems touched on in the *Consolation*. Since none of these has yet been susceptible of either a philosophical or a religious solution, it is fallacious to judge the work as if it had in some way either failed intentionally or intended to depict the failure of a philosophical solution.

Thus in the *Consolation* we see yet another genetically mixed and creatively conceived opus from late antiquity. It borrowed form and some overarching and individual themes from the ancient *Menippea*, but dropped the *spoudogeloion* ("jesting in earnest") along the way. It exhibits none of the biting satire of Seneca or teasing archness of Martianus. While there are moments of wit,¹⁴⁵ the nature and amount are similar to what one might meet in a Platonic or Ciceronian dialogue – with even less satirical *reductio ad absurdum* or *ad hominem* customization. We can never be certain – for much has been lost¹⁴⁶ – but on the available evidence we can only conclude that Boethius, with a little help from his predecessors,¹⁴⁷ was an innovator in casting a serious work, with a tragic frame-narrative, in what had been a serio-comic form.¹⁴⁸ If one defines the *Menippea* as satire with no solutions to offer,¹⁴⁹ then the *Consolation* does not qualify. It was and is something new.

The *Consolation* was one of those odd works that did not attract much serious attention immediately after they were written.¹⁵⁰ But it took off in the ninth century with the appearance of its earliest MSS.¹⁵¹ The *Consolation* used many different poetic forms and voices, often to striking effect.¹⁵² The poetry of the *Consolation* lived its own life in the Middle Ages. It was its prose *mise-en-scène*, and

philosophical content, however, that proved most potent, unforgettable, and empowering: prisoner, prison, muses, celestial visitant, fortune, wheel, divine providence, and human free will.¹⁵³ But that is a topic for other chapters.

NOTES

1. Members of my Boethius seminar at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Fall 2006 helped me work through some of the issues discussed here. Howard Jacobson kindly commented on a draft for me and, as always, was ready to discuss philological and religious problems. Howard Weinbrot read a draft and took the time to send me generous and detailed advice on literary matters. I have benefited considerably from discussions with John Marenbon, our patient editor. And Karen Dudas and Bruce Swann of our Classics Library *always* found me the books.
2. Toole (1980) 42–3 for a scene that begins with the *Consolation* and ends (after a canine epiphany) with a masturbatory climax.
3. Shanzer (1984).
4. For the following, Daly (1991) 37–8, working from Alfonsi and Crabbe.
5. Verg. *Ecl.* 1.1: *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi*.
6. See Ovid *Am.* 1.1.27–8; 3.1.7–8. Also Crabbe (1981) 244–8.
7. Usener (1877) 4.
8. His interest in the genre may materialize in an example in ISC 767 B, where he cites *Ecl.* 2.36–7: *est mihi disparibus septem compacta cicutis / fistula*.
9. Boethius advocates premarital sex to Maximianus' youthful male literary persona. There is also a contemporary epigram of Ennodius' that seems to be mocking Boethius' sexual exhaustion. For both see Shanzer (1983) 183–95; Barnish (1990) 16–32, arguing at 27 for a rehandling of the themes of the *Consolation*; or O'Daly (1991) 10, who transposes Boethius' sex life to a putative persona in unattested erotic poems.
10. E.g. C 3.M.3, 3.M.4, 3.M.5, 3.M.6, and 3.M.7. Also compare C 4.M.7.13–31 with Ausonius, *Eclogae* 17 and Sidonius, *Carmina* 9.93–100.
11. 2IS 1.3, p. 135: *cum verbum verbo expressum comparatumque reddiderim* acknowledges his procedure in the *editio prima*.
12. *De arithmetica* praef. p. 4.27: *At non alterius obnoxius institutis artisima memet ipse translationis lege constringo, sed paululum liberius evagatus alieno itineri, non vestigiis, insisto*.
13. 1IS 1.1, p. 3.1–4.3; 2.1, p. 85.1–4; 2.32, p. 132. 2–5 where the dialogue and the night end with a quotation from Petronius: *sol tectis arrisit* (Fr. 5b Müller). See Hirzel (1895) 363.

14. Boethius (1906) ix.
15. Ibid. Contrast Augustine's vividly sketched companions at Cassiciacum: Licentius, Trygetius, Navigius, Adeodatus, and Monica.
16. See for example Bywater (1869); Usener (1873); Hartlich (1889); Rand (1984); Alfonsi (1951). There are numerous protreptic themes in the *Consolation*, e.g. C 3.2.2. The genetic fingerprint is most clearly discerned at C 3.8.10 (the eyes of Lynceus).
17. C 3.1.5 and 3.M.1.11-12.
18. The *Meno* also is evident in C 3.M.11.
19. Seneca, *Consolatio ad Polybium* and *Consolatio ad Helviam*. Menander Rhetor 2.9, pp. 161-5 Russell and Wilson. O'Daly (1991) 23.
20. Seneca, *De remediis fortuitarum* v. 3. There is a notable link to its terminology, friends as *ancorae*, at C 1.5.2.
21. See Boethius' in C 1.4 (characterized as *oratio* in C 1.5.2) and Fortune's in C. 2.2; Socrates' lurks in the background too. Shanzer (1984) 363-6.
22. The *nomoi* of *Crito* 50a ff. being a rare exception. But they never make a direct appearance; Plato uses imagined prosopopoeia.
23. C 4.6.32 *quae ratio valet humana* and 4.6.53-4. Philosophy is not a god.
24. C 1.1.1-6.
25. Klingner (1921/1966) 113; Thomassen (2004) 218 for the term "revelation discourse."
26. For Platonic dialogue see especially Klingner (1921/1966), 75 ff.
27. Courcelle (1948) 279, following, presumably, Klingner (1921/1966) 113, says that the teaching is administered in the form of a revelation. This is not strictly true any time after the opening of Book 1. After her epiphany, Philosophy functions like a Socratic interlocutor (aside from her singing!).
28. Shanzer (2005a).
29. Pace the suggestive work of Silk (1939).
30. Schmidt (1963) 125: "beide reden im Grunde mit sich selbst."
31. Newman (2003).
32. For her multiform nature see Crabbe (1981) 239.
33. Ibid. 250.
34. See C 1.3.4-6 for the symbiotic relationship between Philosophy and her *familiares*. When they are on trial, she is on trial.
35. Synesius, *Epistulae* 10 δέσποινα and 16 μήτηρ, ἀδελφή, διδάσκαλος.
36. Marenbon (2003a) 153 and at 162, the "pretensions of her goddess-like initial appearance are satirized in the *Consolation*."
37. See Pabst (1994) 172-8 and Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis, passim*.
38. For Augustine's concealed epiphanies in the *Confessions* see Shanzer (1992) 56. Sidonius cleaned up his Philosophy in *Epist.* 9.9.12-13 like the fair captive of Deut. 21:10-14 (in Jerome, *Epistulae* 21 and 70.2).

39. Although they do not do much for the philosophical argument. See Marenbon (2003a) 147.
40. E.g. in C 1.M.1 elegiacs for mourning; in C 3.M.9 hexameters for a hymn; in C 3.M.12 and 4.M.3 glyconics for mythological narratives. See also Marenbon (2003a), 150 for poems sung by Boethius.
41. C 1.1.11.
42. Marenbon (2003a) 147 counts twenty-eight.
43. C 2.1.8 and 4.6.57.
44. E.g. C 1.M.2.6-23; 1.M.5.1-24; 4.6.
45. Gruber (2006) 20-2.
46. There may be a (partial parallel) in the *Supergedicht* posited for Prudentius' oeuvre by Ludwig (1963).
47. See Gruber (1981) 209 for the "paränetisch-protreptisch" genre. He omits Fulgentius.
48. Ibid.
49. Viz. are these texts a splinter-group, a genetic branch of their own, or was the genre itself evolving and changing, as genres do?
50. Shanzer (1986) 32.
51. See for example Shanzer (1986) 32; Pabst (1994) 162-8. So it no longer seems appropriate, as Gruber (1981) did, to ascribe these works not to the genre, *Menippea*, but to the prosimetric form. See O'Daly (1991) 20.
52. See, for example, Courcelle (1967) 17.
53. Hirzel (1895) 347: "This pitifully poor piece of work [sc. Fulgentius' *Mythologiae*] is none the less noteworthy, because in it the Menippean satire begins to take on a serious face." Also Hirzel (1895) 347 "Here, now holy seriousness has completely taken over a literary form that initially served comic purposes," or as Klingner (1921/1966) 114 put it, apocalypse was combined with *Menippea*.
54. Weinbrot (2005) 4 calls genre itself (as opposed to its instantiations) "a necessarily uncertain, but certainly necessary construct."
55. For a felicitous formulation, Halsall (2005) 64: "Writers can play with the rules of composition as well as within them."
56. Formal criteria are not sufficient for a meaningful typology. See Schmidt (1963) 108.
57. The distinction is analogous to a piece labeled "tango," vs. a piece with no label, whose rhythm and phraseology are nonetheless unmistakable as anything but a tango.
58. E.g. *consolatio*, comedy, dialogue, elegy, epic, epigram, epitaph, didactic, history, *Menippea*, novel, protreptic, satire, tragedy ...
59. Jokingly Perry (1967) 167: "The first romance was deliberately planned and written by an individual author, its inventor. He conceived it on a Tuesday afternoon in July, or some other day or month of the year. It did

- not come into being by a process of development in the literary plane. What had really developed was the complex cultural outlook, the Weltanschauung, of society as a whole in the Alexandrian age ..." Pabst (1994) 2: "neue Formen sich selten adhoc bilden."
60. Weinbrot (2005) deserves great credit for pointing out Bakhtin's historical fallacies in reading Dostoevsky as Menippean satire and also for attacking the intolerable bagginess of the genre as defined by many modern literary critics outside Classics departments. Conte (1996) 144 discusses how questions are turned into answers to explain the form of Petronius' *Satyricon* with the result that "we are in danger of attributing a distinct identity to a creature whose generic characteristics are so indefinite as to be unrecognizable by any reader."
61. Conte (1996) 37 wisely reminds us that "categorical distinctions, after all, are merely a compromise with chaos."
62. Relihan (2007) xi. While the goals of Relihan's readings (namely to crown faith as "present by absence" in the *Consolation*) are not compatible with true deconstructionist denial of authentic meaning, his exegetic methods, the consistent excessive, "semiotically aroused" (in Richard Landes' inimitable phrase), demands put on the text create a *Tendenz* that is indeed deconstructionist.
63. Ibid. 9.
64. Ibid. 4 in reference to C 4.1.9 and C 4.M.1.
65. Ibid.
66. The point is made in a positive sense by Gibbon, quoted at O'Daly (1991) 23.
67. Emotional responses are never addressed, e.g. C 2.4.2 and its sublime imitation by Francesca da Rimini in Dante, *Inferno* 5; likewise C 4.5.2-4. The problems of evil and God's providence (C 4.1.3-9) are hardly susceptible of simple solutions. See Philosophy's own remarks at C 4.6.2-3.
68. Relihan (2007) 5. Note however that the final words, far from suggesting that Boethius lives, contain a threat in *si dissimulare non vultis*.
69. *Passio Perpetuae* 10.15: *hoc usque in pridie muneris egi; ipsius autem muneris actum, si quis voluerit, scribat*, with the following vision of Satorius and anonymous continuation describing the martyrdoms.
70. See Marenbon (2003a) 103. The contrast is to the popular philosophical harangues of C 2 that are informed by rhetoric. C 2.1.1 and C 2.1.7 *molle atque iucundum*; C 2.1.8 *rhetoricae suadela dulcedinis*; C 2.3.2 *oblitaque rhetoricae ac musicae melle dulcedinis*.
71. Relihan (2007) 21 and 129. How can we know what Philosophy intended? Both she and the prisoner Boethius are creations of Boethius-auctor.
72. Relihan (2007) 48 also has the narrator dictate the first poem of the *Consolation* in his sleep and not wake up ...

73. For more on exegetic principles see Shanzer (2005b) 360-1.
74. Relihan (2007) 6. "If the shoe fits ..." The key on the cover and the words on p. 8 about "figuring it out" say it all. Pabst (1994) 3-4 thinks much the same.
75. Relihan (2007) 3 likewise relied heavily on this sort of reading.
76. If the former is the case, then the walk-throughs of Cicero and Augustine are odd, because the literary connections between Boethius and his two famous predecessors have not been firmly proven, and it is not clear what they have to do with Boethius.
77. Lerer (1985) 125.
78. We face the same problems as Dantisti with Dante-poet and Dante-pilgrim. Boethius, who makes his *prosopopoeiai* (Fortune and the multiple personae of Philosophy) speak in self-consciously different voices and is well aware of modulations in his own self-represented discourse (mourning, apologia, etc.), clearly is operating with a persona theory. For more on the spectrum of "persona" see Weinbrot (1988). With Boethius there is no evidence for a completely separable (non-plausibly authorial) mask. He represents himself, both as he would like himself seen (viz. in a noble light), but also at different emotional moments and stages.
79. De Vogel (1972) 3 and 35.
80. Ibid. 26-7 and 35. At 39, though, it is clear that she comes close to seeing Boethius-prisoner's thinking as a symptom of depression.
81. Anonymus Valesianus 2.87.
82. E.g. C 3.11.23-4 (for intent and significance) or C 1.5.5 (for syntax).
83. The works of Rand, Klingner, Courcelle, Schmidt-Kohl, Scheible, and Gruber are especially valuable.
84. ... ἐπὶ παντός ὀρμῆ καὶ σμικροῦ καὶ μεγάλου πράγματος θεὸν αἰεὶ που καλοῦσιν- ἡμᾶς δὲ τοὺς περὶ τοῦ παντός λόγους ποιῆσθαι πῆ μέλλοντας, ἢ γέγονεν ἢ καὶ ἀγενές ἐστίν, εἰ μὴ παντάπασι (C5) παραλλάττομεν, ἀνάγκη θεοῦς τε καὶ θεᾶς ἐπικαλουμένους εὐχεσθαι πάντα κατὰ νοῦν ἐκείνοις μὲν μάλιστα, ἐπομένως (d) δὲ ἡμῖν εἰπεῖν.
85. Lewy (1946) 243-58.
86. Ibid. 245.
87. The text is a hybrid in part based on Mattiacci (1990) 59 (who prints without comment a hypermetric line at v. 32), but to a greater extent also on Courtney (1993) 432-3, e.g. v. 30 *levem*.
88. Translation mine, but developed with reference to the commentaries of Lewy (ad loc.), Mattiacci (1990) 194-9, and Courtney (1993) 433-7.
89. Lewy (1946) 256. I since then noted the allusion to the Arian controversy (*genitum factumve*, alluding to *genitum non factum*) to date the Tiberianus hymn (if not its original) to the early fourth century at least. See Shanzer (1990) 306-18.

90. Lewy (1946) 258.
91. The coincidence of significant relations is greater than between either Boethius and Martianus Capella, *De Nuptiis* 2.185-93 or Martianus and Tiberianus. See Mattiacci (1990) 166.
92. More (including Agozzino's improbable suggestion that Tiberianus' hymn was written to introduce Cicero's translation of the Timaeus) in Mattiacci (1990) 160-1.
93. Proclus *In Tim.* 1.207.21: Δει δὴ οὖν πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων ἡμᾶς περὶ εὐχῆς τι γῶναι σαφές, τίς τε ἡ οὐσία αὐτῆς καὶ τίς ἡ τελειότης, καὶ πόθεν ἐνδίδοται ταῖς ψυχαῖς, ὁ μὲν γὰρ φιλόσοφος Πορφύριος διοριζόμενος.
94. If those scholars are right who conjecture that Tiberianus may have been the author of lost *Menippeae*, he gains even more literary-historical importance. The suggestion about *Menippeae* was originally made by Lersch (1844) 774, who imagined Varronian satires with mixed meters or something like Martianus Capella. For its more recent history see Mattiacci (1990) 21, 24, 161, and 67.
95. Tiberianus, however, does not appear in Gersh (1986), though he deserves to be discussed in connection with the problem of Calcidius.
96. Tränkle (1977/1984) 318.
97. Courcelle (1948) 290-1 cites *In Gorg.*, p. 119.24 Norvin: "How the punishment under earth can be called eternal, we will learn in the myth." He then assumes that the sentence was in Olympiodorus' source, Ammonius.
98. C 1.6.17.
99. Tränkle (1977/1984) 312-18. The *De nuptiis* ends with one. The absence is said to be intentional by Lerer (1985) 231-2: Boethius now has no need to read.
100. Klingner (1921/1966) 7 and C 4.3.10 *deos fieri*.
101. E.g. C 2.4.28 *mentes hominum nullo modo esse mortales*; C 2.5.26 *vos autem dico deo mente consimiles*; C 2.7.22 *nostrae rationes* prohibit thinking that men die altogether: *toti moriuntur homines*.
102. A possibility not listed by Marenbon (2003a) 159, but presumably intended by C 4.6.5 *angusto limite temporis saepti*.
103. One should consider the problems of composing with pen and parchment and a limited library under the conditions faced by Boethius. Their results cannot simply be classified as "ineptitude." See Marenbon (2003a) 159.
104. C 1.3.9 *quoniam sunt peregrina* (perhaps mocking him with the implication that he will not know about Greek philosophers); also C 2.4.5-7, the reasons he still has to be happy.
105. C 3.2.12.
106. For Boethius and sex see above, n. 9. If this is true, then here is some seepage (or belated honesty *malgré lui*) that confirms unattractive evidence about Boethius in the external tradition.

107. Chadwick (1981) 247.
108. Usener (1877). For the most recent historiography of the question see Galonnier (1997) 34-53.
109. See, for an example, Hildebrand (1885).
110. Chadwick (1981) 249.
111. Galonnier (2007) 19 sees a "relatif échec." "Nous n'en possédons aucun [sc. indice] capable de nous faire comprendre son soi-disant tournant théologique, ni les raisons de sa disgrâce, tant que l'on persiste à leur trouver un motif d'ordre religieux. Ce bilan ne fait que confirmer un christianisme se réduisant à une formalité, dont on ne s'acquitte pas moins avec conscience, à une attitude extérieure dictée par les nécessités politiques et familiales." Also Galonnier (1997) 36-40 for the opinions of others.
112. Relihan (2007) xii.
113. Mohrmann (1984 [1976]) 302-10. Note also C 3.12.8: *usitato cunctis vocabulo deum nomino*.
114. De Vogel (1972).
115. The laundry list presented by Fortescue and Ludwig Bieler in Boethius (1984) 109 is grossly overdistended. In addition, the source-criticism that guarantees that the apparent allusion must come from the Bible is frequently of a very poor standard. Consider Relihan (2007) 127, who insists that C 5.6.48 *ante oculos agitis iudicis cuncta cernentis* must imitate Esth. 16:4 *sed dei quoque cuncta cernentis arbitrantur se posse fugere sententiam*. One has only to consider Curtius Rufus 9.11.4 *cuncta cernentis e ripa*, Lucan, *Bellum civile* 4.699 *cernit cuncta* and Manilius, *Astronomica* 4.194 *qui possint cernere cuncta*, not to mention C 5.M.2.1, to see that the alleged *iunctura* is far from probative.
116. The concept is invoked in the case of a similar problem in Jacobson (2006) 216.
117. See C 5.3.34: *illique inaccessae luci prius quoque quam impetrent ipsa supplicandi ratione coniungi*, with Klingner (1921/1966) 101 and De Vogel, (1972) 6. For Christian *Sondersprache* neutralized see C 1.4.14 and C 1.4.36 *sacrae aedes* for *ecclesia*. Also C 1.4.39 *vilissimi spiritus* for *daemones*.
118. His use of "second death" (Apoc. 20:14 and 21:8) in C 2.M.7.25.
119. Hildebrand (1885) 89 notes *creatis a se rebus* in C 3.11.33 with reference to *providentia*.
120. E.g. C 3.M.9.24 *conspicuos visus* is related directly to Prudentius, *Hamartigenia* 863-4: *Ne mirere locis longe distantibus inter / damnatas iustasque animas concurrere visus / conspicuos meritasque vices per magna notari*, and indirectly to 1 Cor. 13:12 *facie ad faciem*. See

- Klingner (1921/1966) 53–5. Boethius inverts the infernal context of the Prudentian original to use it *in bonum* to convey the Pauline idea of “face to face.”
121. Fontaine (1968) 103 and 11. My colleague Maryline Parca explains to me that “transparent” is used in the sense of “dont le sens caché se laisse deviner” (as in “une allusion transparente”) – hence “with a double hidden meaning.” The latter passage, a discussion of Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 31.1–7, merits comparison with Boissier (1889) 454 who points out that everything in Boethius seems to be classical, even things one might be tempted to think Christian, such as C 2.4.29 on those who bought victory through death.
122. E.g. C 3.11.32.
123. Pace Marenbon (2003a) 157–8. One need only look at Philosophy’s citation of Wisdom.
124. Septuagint, Wisdom 8.1 διατείνει δὲ ἀπὸ πέρατος ἐπὶ πέρας εὐρώστωσ και διοικεὶ τὰ πάντα χρηστῶσ.
125. In a lecture, “*Haec quibus uteris verba: The Bible and Boethius’ Christianity*”, delivered at the Seventh Biennial Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity Conference (Boulder, Colorado: March 2007). The proceedings will be published (Shanzer, forthcoming). My treatment here overlaps with that in the conference volume.
126. See the *non ibi legi* sequence at Augustine, *Confessiones* 7.9.13–14.
127. Pace the clear implications of a text such as Gen. 2:7 cited (even!) by Porphyry, *Pros Gauron* 11.1–2.
128. C 5.3.34: *si quidem iusto humilitatis pretio inaequabilem vicem divinae gratiae promeremur*. While *divina gratia* is very much a Christian locution (see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v. ‘gratia’ 2226.52–2227.69: *de favore dei in homines*), *gratia* here does not seem to be used in its more loaded sense of “state of grace.” It could mean no more than a favor from God.
129. Mistranslated by Relihan (2007) 42 who takes *agitis* as “acts” rather than [*causam*] *agitis*.
130. See the commentary of Mohrmann (1984 [1976]) 304. For the absence of the *aqua humiliationis* in pagan thinking see Hildebrand (1885) 140 citing Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 31.18 and Quacquarelli (1981) 245. *Humilitas* was already ascribed to Moses in Num. 12:3. Unfortunately the dichotomy is not as perfect as scholars like to pretend. See Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.16.22; Verg. *Aen.* 12.930; Ovid *Her.* 4.147 for a few pre-Christian examples. For prayer as *sacrum commercium*, Herz (1958).
131. Pace Relihan (2007). There is no evidence that prayer is “offered grudgingly by Philosophy.” For pagan discussion of prayer see Festugière (1966) 27ff. and 35 for different types of prayer = *In Timaeum* 1.206.26–214.12

- Diehl. The views of the philosophers characterized at *In Timaeum*, pp. 208.3ff. Diehl precisely correspond to those of Philosophy; Maximus of Tyre, *Oratio* 5, and Rist (1967) 199–212.
132. See C 4.3.5: *Quantumlibet igitur saeviant mali sapienti tamen corona non decidet, non arescet*, compared to Proverbs 14:24; *corona sapientium divitiae eorum, fatuitas stultorum imprudentia* (also Wisdom 1.22 *corona sapientiae timor domini*). This is definitely a Christian expression. The first example of *corona* and *sapient** is in Tertullian. See also Methodius of Olympus, *Symposium* 9–10 τοῖς ἀμιάνοις τῆς σοφίας ἀναδήσασα πετάλοις.
133. *Ep.* 105, Synesius (2000) 239.98–100 shows him drawing lines between philosophy and faith, using analogies from philosophy and myth. εἰ ταῦτα και οἱ τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἱερωσύνης συγχωροῦσιν ἐμοὶ νόμοι, δυναίμην ἂν ἱερασθαι τὰ μὲν οἶκοι φιλοσοφῶ, τὰ δ’ ἔξω φιλόμυθος· εἰμι διδάσκων. Nonetheless, pace Courcelle (1948) 302–3, who invited us to read Boethius like Synesius, the former’s practice is very different from Synesius’, who sought a rapprochement between Platonic and Christian terminology in his Doric hymns, but never leaves us in any doubt about his Christianity. See Bregman (1982) 78–124.
134. See especially *Ep.* 105, Synesius (2000) 238–9.
135. Marrou (1938).
136. Quacquarelli (1981) 242–3.
137. See C 1.4.37–9, which could describe either theurgy or *maleficium* (C 1.4.41)
138. Courcelle (1967) 21–2.
139. Shanzer (1983).
140. C 4.6.37. One could adduce a very interesting comparandum against Boethius’ theory from Firmicus Maternus’ *Mathesis* 1.7.14 on Plotinus and his use of providence to combat *fortuna*. At *Mathesis* 1.7.20 Firmicus narrates his appalling death from disease, from which even the cardinal virtues could not protect him: the stars got him!
141. For some intriguing pages on the possible Anician and Constantinopolitan connections of Hagia Sophia see Troncarelli (1981) 67–70.
142. See Shanzer, forthcoming and above, n. 125.
143. Boissier (1889) 460. For a modern exponent see Chadwick (1981) 249.
144. The external reader is signaled in generalizing vocatives such as C 2.4.22 *O mortales!*; C 3.3.1 *terrena animalia*. Also plurals, such as C 3.M.12.52 *vos haec fabula respicit*; C 4.M.7.32 *ite nunc fortes*. And likewise Philosophy’s sudden switch to *vos* at C 5.6.47–8.
145. Dark witticism at C 1.4.27; Ironic *papae* at C 1.6.6 and C 4.2.1; Stoic-Cynic arguments at C 2.6.4–5 *mures* and *musculae*; the silent philosopher at C 2.7.20.

146. E.g. Acilius Severus' prosimetrical autobiography attested by Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 111. In addition, there are probably quite a few places where Boethius alludes to lost work. Even now new sources can be found. See Shanzer (1991) 143.
147. E.g. Martianus.
148. See Pabst (1994) 160 on how those who try to read it as a typical *Menippea* must fail.
149. Weinbrot (2005) 24.
150. See Galonnier (1997) 34 n. 98.
151. See Troncarelli (1981) and (1987).
152. Scheible (1972) and O'Daly (1991).
153. One should start with Courcelle (1967).

11 The *Consolation*: the Latin commentary tradition, 800–1700

INTRODUCTION

'There is nothing superfluous in such a perfect work as the *Consolation* written by such a perfect philosopher as Boethius.'¹ These words, written by the twelfth-century master William of Conches, express a sentiment which was almost universally shared by readers and commentators in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The popularity of the *Consolation* was immense, in fact almost unparalleled. It was translated into different vernacular languages from an early time onwards, which ensured an unusually wide readership, in which every stratum of society is represented: kings and queens, the nobility, monks, clerics, university teachers, school masters, and lay men and women.² As a school text it was glossed by thousands of school teachers, and though it did not find a fixed and permanent place in the university curriculum, it was also frequently studied at this highest level. In this chapter we shall study some aspects of its reception, focusing on the Latin commentary tradition.³ It goes without saying that this can only be done in a highly selective way. There is a huge number of commentaries and glossed copies of the text, and many of them still await a first inspection. Courageous attempts are now being made to catalogue all the manuscripts, and to study and edit sets of glosses and commentaries.⁴ This has resulted in a much fuller but also much more complicated picture of the reception of the *Consolation*. Scholars have come to realise that the modern notion of a text written by one single author is hardly of use in charting traditions of fluent texts such as glosses and commentaries. They were often considered to be common property, and each commentator took from older works what fitted his