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The Consolation Of Philosophy

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THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Thomas Joseph Burke

A Dissertation
submitted to the Department of Philosophy
of Carroll College in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts

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Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius was born at Rome about 480 A.D. He descended from a consular family and was left an orphan at an early age. He received his education from his guardian and later father-in-law, Symmachus. (1) Other than what has been said we know very little of his early life. At the age of twenty he began his laborious translations from Greek into Latin. (2)

"He also, following the advice of Plato, entered into public service, won the favor of Theodoric, and was made patrician and consul." (3)

Boethius's political relations with Theodoric start at least as early as 506, possibly 500, the date of Theodoric's visit to Rome... In 510 he was elevated to the consulship. The year 522, in external pomp, was the most distinguished of his life, for his two sons were the consuls... In the following year, if not before, Boethius was created magister officiorum, a high position involving constant attendance upon the king. In the next to last year of his life, Boethius received a quite unexpected honor, conviction of high treason. (4)

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"..... In summer or early autumn of 523, Cyprian... accused the patrician of sending letters to the emperor Justin, hostile to the royal rule of Theodoric." (5) "After a period of imprisonment he was tortured by the twisting of a cord around his head and then killed by a blow from a club." (6)

Wherever there is a discussion about Boethius the questions arise, whether or not he was a Christian, and if he was did he die a martyr's death. The first of these question can readily be answered, while no definite answer can be given to the second. In defense of Boethius' Christianity Rand says, "First of all, we should take account of the political situation, and in particular, of the code of laws promulgated by Theodoric." (7)

....As for Pagans, "If anyone be detected in offering sacrifice according to Pagan rite, or if anyone be found practising the arts of soothsayer or diviner, he shall suffer capital punishment. Anyone who is an accomplice to in magic arts shall suffer confiscation of all his property, and if of high birth, be sentenced to perpetual exile, or if of low birth, suffer capital punishment." Not much inducement to be a pagan in the days of Theodoric. (8)

Turner says, "There can be no reasonable doubt, then, that Boethius died a Christian, though it is not easy to show from documentary sources that he died a martyr for the Catholic faith." (9) By proving that Boethius was the author of the

(8) Loo. cit.
theological tracts we prove that he was an Orthodox Christian.
"The authenticity of the Tractates was freely denied. We know better now. The discovery of Alfred Holder, and the illuminating discussion by Hermann Usener, of a fragment of Cassiodorus are sufficient confirmation of the manuscript tradition." (10) "That he remained a Christian is the obvious inference from the ascertained fact of continued association with Symmachus." (11)

William Bark says, "In the circumstances the hardiness of the belief that he died a martyr to his faith is surprising, for the Church has never adopted it and historians have repeatedly rejected it." (12)

Though he, Dom Cappuns, treats the question with circumspection... he still considers it a possibility, for he suggests that, unknown to Boethius, his Catholicism may have been an issue at his trial. It is possible according to this view, that Boethius may have played part in the defense of orthodoxy that was not always to the taste of Arians. (13)

Since the king who condemned him was an Arian heretic, he was popularly considered as a Christian martyr. (14) Since we can give no more definite answer to this question, let us say with Rand, "A certain saintliness attends a scholar who lost so fine a library and yet could transport so much of it, inside

(10) H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, Boethius, Tractates, Consolation, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926, ix
(13) Ibid., 316
him, to his dungeon cell." (15)

No such treatment of Boethius would be complete unless his philosophic works were mentioned. These works are: (i) Various translations; notably of the *Isagoge* of Prophyry, and the *Categories*, *De Interpretatione* and other works of Aristotle. (ii) Commentaries; a double commentary on the *Isagoge*, *Categories*, and *De Interpretatione*, and a single one on each of *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, and the *Topics* of Cicero. (iii) His original works; *De Syllogismo Categorico*, *De Syllogismo Hypothetico*, *De Divisone*, *De Differentiis Topicis*, and *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. (16)

The *Consolation of Philosophy* was written by Boethius in 524 or 525. Because it was written in prison at Pavia it is called prison literature. (17) The *Consolation* has been accused of not being a Christian work because it does not mention the name of Christ or of the Bible. With De Wulf we respond:

We may respond in the last place with Rand and Klinger that we already find in Boethius a clear distinction between faith and reason (*fides*, *ratio*). That is why the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* does not refer to Christianity but builds up a system of Natural Theology by the unaided efforts of human reason; while in the *opuscula sacra* it is the theologian who speaks. A distinction of this kind provides a simple solution of the difficulties which have been raised against Boethius' Christianity, and show to what high degree of intellectual maturity this fifth century thinker had attained. (18)

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(15) Rand, *Founders*, 180
"The De Consolatione is an original work which contains the foundations of a system of moral philosophy and of metaphysics." (19) It is thought by some that the book was never finished because Boethius did not have time to complete it before his execution. (20) "The Consolation of Philosophy is indeed, a Gibbon called it, 'a golden volume, not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or of Tully'." (21)

Manlius Severinus Boethius was a first-class representative of humanistic and philosophic culture. He belonged to lineage of the Anicli, and while quite young was sent, about 480, to Athens, where he came into contact with Aristotelianism, neo-Platonism and stoicism. In 510 he became minister to Theodoric, who showered honours upon him (he is sometimes called Manlius the Consul). Suspected of political high treason, and perhaps accused of astrology, he was thereupon disgraced, imprisoned, and executed in 524 or 525 at the king's orders.

Boethius considered it a patriotic duty to instruct his fellow citizens on the great problems of thought. That explains why, in spite of his active life, he has left a considerable number of works. In philosophy, he planned to translate Plato and Aristotle, and to show how their tendencies could be harmonized. Although he was not able to realize this completely, he managed to write a number of important works, which constitute so many portions of the edifice he had planned. (22)

In the following part of this work I shall endeavor to summarize the Consolation of Philosophy from the point of view of philosophy. I shall omit what, I believe, is not related to philosophy. The Consolation is written as a dialogue between Boethius and Philosophy, and I shall attempt to avoid that dialogue as much as possible without losing the sense of

the original text. It must be remembered by the reader that Philosophy is personalized as a woman by Boethius and while this makes the Consolation easy reading it makes it obscure in places.
Surrounded by the Muses of poetry, Boethius sits in his prison cell writing about his straitened circumstances. Then Philosophy appears to him in the form of a beautiful woman. When she sees the poetical Muses, she sends them away so that they may not destroy the fruitful crop of reason. Philosophy has had many other followers who found consolation in her during their last days on earth. Two of these, she points out, were Socrates and Zeno. Because this is so she said to Boethius, "Should I forsake thee, my disciple, and not divide the burden, which thou bearest through hatred of my name, by partaking of thy labour?" (23) Boethius, a sick man, has to make known the cause of his suffering so that he might be nursed back to health by Philosophy.

Not understanding how an injustice can come to a just man he wonders if this prison and all of his hardships are the fruit of his following the teachings of philosophy. He points out that he entered public office because he followed the ad-

(23) H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, Boethius, Tractates, Consolation, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926, 139
(24)
vice of Plato, and that this is the cause of his present suf-
f ering. (24) He enumerates his services to the citizens, to
the kind and to the senate, all of which he did for the sake
of justice and for which he is now accused.

Neither hath sorrow so dulled my wits in this matter
that I complain of the wicked endeavours of sinful men
against virtue, but I exceedingly marvel to see that they
have brought to pass the things they hoped to do. For
the desire of doing evil may be attributed to our weak-
ness, but that in the sight of God the wicked should be
able to compass whatsoever they contrive against the
innocent is altogether monstrous. Whence not without cause
one of thy familiar friends demanded; 'If,' saith he,
'there be a God, from whence proceed so many evils? And
if there by no God, from whence cometh any good?' (25)

Declaring that he had always been guided by the dictates
of Philosophy, he says, ".....I was never delighted in my own
praise, for the secret of a good conscience is in some sort
diminished when by declaring what he hath done a man receiveth
the reward of fame." (26) Because he has received the reward
of vice instead of true virtue, nearly despairing, he says:

Creator of the sky,
Who sittest on Thine eternal throne on high,
Who dost quick motions cause
In all the heavens, and givest stars their laws,
...
None from Thy laws are free,
Nor can forsake their place ordained by Thee.
Thou to that certain end
Governest all things; deniest Thou to intend
The acts of men alone,
Directing them in measure from Thy throne?
For why should slippery chance
Rule all things with such doubtful governance?
Or why should punishments,
Due to guilty, light on innocents?

(24) Cf. Ibid., 143
(25) Ibid., 149
(26) Ibid., 151
And now he ends with the plea;

O Thou that joinest with love
All worldly things, look from Thy seat above
On the earth's wretched state;
We men, not the least work Thou didst create,
With fortune's blast do shake,
And for the earth provide
Those laws by which Thou heaven in peace dost guide. (27)

Mentioning all that he had done, and that because he had sunk to such a lowness Philosophy says that she cannot begin, at once, to apply the most forcible remedies, but that she will have to build up his strength with milder ones.

When asked by Philosophy whether or not the world is ruled by chance, he answered that he could not imagine a world ruled by chance, and that he knew that God both created and governs the world. (28) Philosophy notes that he had said this in his verse and that he only doubts that man is governed by reason.

He says that he cannot remember what the end, to what nature tends, of things is. Boethius knows that all things come from God. Philosophy then says, "And how can it be that, knowing the beginning, thou canst be ignorant of the end?" (29)

As a definition of man Boethius gives, "..... a reasonable mortal living creature." (30) To him, at this time, man is nothing more.

Now that which is ailing Boethius is apparent. Now it is

(27) Ibid., 159
(28) Cf. Ibid., 165
(29) Ibid., 165
(30) Ibid., 167
clear why he mourns the loss of his material goods. Being ignorant of the end of things, he believes that wicked men are powerful and happy. However there is a spark which can be enkindled and bring him back to peace of mind. This spark is that he recognizes the world to be governed by divine reason.
Languishing for his former fortune has caused this depression in Boethius. He imagines that the loss of it has changed his mind. He does not realize that Fortune seems most familiar to those whom she will desert and thereby cause intolerable grief. This sudden abandonment by Fortune has caused Boethius to lose his former frame of mind. He knows that Philosophy, which he learned as a youth, will be the cause of his recovery. However he knows that he will again have to slowly prepare his mind for the stronger medicines of Philosophy. (31)

Feeling the sorrow caused by the loss of his material effects, Boethius now knows Fortune as she really is, and he is no longer deluded by her false happiness. If we ponder into the depth of things, we see that happiness does not come from what meets the eye, and thus we will not fear the loss of Fortune. Once we have abandoned ourselves to Fortune we are like a ship in a breeze; that is, we can go only where the breeze blows us. When we ride with Fortune we are on a wheel; that is,

(31) Cf. Ibid., 173 ff.
one moment we are on top, the next we are on the bottom. (32)

Man is born naked, and Fortune takes care of him by clothing him, by educating him, by bestowing honors of him, and by taking care of his other material wants. Riches and honors belong to her; they are her servants, and they leave when she leaves. Has man the right to lament the loss of that which is not his own? No, he has no right to complain of Fortune turning the estates of men just as he has no right to complain about the change in the seasons. We live in a world common to all men, and therefore we have no right to desire being governed by laws peculiar to ourselves. (33)

Such an argument as this will only lessen the pain of suffering while it is heard, and so it is not intended to be a panacea. It is meant only to be a preparation for the more potent medicine which is yet to come.

Fortune had made Boethius one of the happiest men that ever lived, and this is the first time that she has ever left him. How can we expect to find things of life constant when life itself is not constant? Boethius was made to be one of the happiest men living, and now the swift abandonment of Fortune causes his pain to be all the deeper. He does not realize that the more a man loses the more it hurts, but yet he finds some consolation in the fact that his wife, sons and father-in-law, the greatest causes of his happiness, are still safe even

(32) Cf. Ibid., 177
(33) Cf. Ibid., 181
though separated from him.

Because human happiness is never gained in its totality and because it is quickly lost it is always doubtful. There is, even in the happiest estates of men, something which has not yet been experienced and which will molest men with misery when it is experienced. There are men so wretched that they would think it heaven to have what is left of Boethius' fortune. Philosophy then shows the relativity of happiness by saying, "So true it is that nothing is miserable but what is thought so, and contrariwise every estate is happy if he who bears it is content. Who is so happy that if he yieldeth to discontent, desireth not to change his estate?" (34) Man is always surrounded by much that would make him unhappy, but these things become manifest only when that man is abandoned by happiness.

Man, for he will never cease to be, should be his own cause of happiness in order that he may never lose it and in order that Fortune man never take it away from him. Ignorance blesses the happy man for he does not know that it can be taken away from him. The wise man fears less he lose his happiness, and thereby his happiness is lessened. We know, by innumerable demonstrations, that the soul of man is immortal, and we know that causal felicity is ended with the death of the body. If this be the only felicity, man falls into misery by death. Man men have sought true felicity by affliction and death. How then can present happiness make man happy since its loss does not cause misery? (35)

(34) Ibid., 193
(35) Ibid., 195
Riches can cause no true happiness. They are of value only in virtue of man's nature. They are precious only when bestowed on another, and a man cannot have what is given to another. Liberality makes a man famous, but it also makes him poor. If a man were to have all the money in the world, all other men would be poor, and therefore unhappy. Riches always, therefore, cause unhappiness because if we have them they are of no value unless they are given to another, and, if we do not have them, we desire them.

Aesthetic happiness is not true happiness, and it is unworthy of man's dignity. Man's reason shines greater and is of more value than any jewel. Inanimate objects enjoy such a base and inferior beauty that they do not deserve the admiration of man. Man should not rejoice in outward goods for they are not his. "The fruits of the earth are doubtless appointed for the sustenance of living creatures. But, if thou will only satisfy want, which sufficeth nature, there is no cause to require the superfluities of fortune." (36) What is added beyond the want of nature becomes either hurtful or unpleasant. Men desire those things which seem precious, but those things which are precious because of their nature please men, though they do not belong to him.

The more a man has, the more he requires to protect what he has. Man is rightly accounted divine, for he is endowed with the gift of reason. Yet man seems to find no good in himself

(36) Ibid., 201
but only in the possession of material goods. The greatest good of everything is found in itself, not in its relation to another. Man insults his divine gift by ornamenting it with the most vile and base things. By so doing he places himself, in his own estimation, under them. Man, when he knows himself, surpasses other things, but when he lacks that knowledge he is worse than a beast. Then man, knowing that things of this world cause no real happiness and endanger his safety, ought to rejoice when leaving this life, for he is but a passenger in this life. (37)

In respect to his body man is the weakest of all animals. One man can control the body and fortune, which is even less, of another, but beyond this he cannot control another. The will is free, and it cannot be forced into action by another; a soul, settled in firm reason, cannot be driven by another from the quiet state which it possesses. (38) Like the man of old who, being tortured by an unjust king in order that he would tell who his confederates were, bit off his tongue so that he could not talk and betray his confederates, every man can change temptations and coercion to do evil into virtue. It also must be remembered that no man can control another in a way which he cannot also be controlled by another. So, then, what is power? It is an improper name given to something, for it does not do that which is proper to its nature; that is, it does not make man master of himself. Dignities and powers have

(37) Cf. Ibid., 203
(38) Cf. Ibid., 207 ff.
Moreover, if dignities and power had any natural and proper good in them, they would never be bestowed upon the worst men, for one opposite useth not to accompany another; nature refuseth to have contraries joined. So that, since there is no doubt that men of the worst sort often enjoy dignities, it is also manifest that they are not naturally good which may follow most naughty men. Which may worthily be thought of all Fortune's gifts which are most plentifully bestowed upon every lewd companion. Concerning which, I take that also to be worthy of consideration, that no man doubteth him to be a valiant man in whom he seeth valour, and it is manifest that he which hath swiftness is swift. So, likewise, music maketh musicians, physics physicians, and rhetoric rhetoricians. For the nature of everything doth that which is proper unto it, and it is not mixed with contrary effects but repelleth opposites. But neither can riches extinguish unsatiable avarice, nor power make him master of himself whom vicious lusts keep chained to strongest fetters. (39)

Therefore we can say that nothing is to be desired which is not always bestowed on good men, or which does not make the men (upon whom it is bestowed) good. (40)

The inhabitable portion of the earth is just a pinhead in comparison to the rest of the universe. Many people differ in customs, race, and language, and they all inhabit this small portion of the earth. No individual man could spread his fame to all of these people; even the Roman Empire failed to do so. The diversity of laws and of customs prohibits a man from being famous in all countries. If a man desires fame, he can have it only in one country. Many famous men are forgotten because of the need of writers. Therefore, a man cannot make himself immortal by securing fame. One minute and ten thousand years have some proportion, though very small, because they are both limited; but no number of years can be compared with etern-

(39) Ibid., 209 ff.
(40) Cf. Ibid., 211
nity, for the limited cannot be compared to the unlimited. Now we know that man cannot become immortal through fame, and therefore a man should free himself from earthly goods, so that he may enjoy heaven more thoroughly.

When Fortune is adverse, she is of more advantage to men than when she is favourable, for then she is true. She instructs man when she is true, deceives him and imprisons his mind in false happiness when she is false. When true, she shows man her uncertainty, and shows that prosperity calls man from true goodness and and adversity call him back.

She has severed thy assured from doubtful friends; prosperity at her departure took away those that were hers, and left thee thine. How dearly wouldst thou have bought this before thy fall, and when thou seemest to thyself fortunate! Now thou dost even lament thy lost riches; thou found friends, the most precious treasure in all the world. (41)
Phantasy has so dimmed Boethius' mind that he cannot recognize true happiness as it is. In this book Philosophy intends to show wherein true happiness lies. In order to discover true happiness, she will first point out its opposites.

Happiness, which is that good which, being once obtained, nothing further can be desired. Which is the chiepest of all goods, and containeth in itself whatsoever is good, and if it wanted anything it could not be the chiepest, because there would something remain beside it which might be wished for. Wherefore, it is manifest that blessedness is an estate replenished with all that is good. (42)

All men seek that which is good, but they do it by many different ways. Man naturally tends to that which is good, but error draws him from what is good to what seems good. Riches, honors, respect, power of authority, and pleasures are sought by some men as the greatest good. Sometimes one of these is sought only as a means to another. All corporal goods can be reduced to power and pleasure. Friendship, which is attributed to virtue, is not a gift of Fortune. Man seeking happiness considers that estate which he prefers above all others to be happy.

Nature leads man to the good, while manifold error draws

(42) Ibid., 229
him from it. We will admit that a thing is able to make man happy if it wants nothing else. However, if that which is sought is lacking something, it has the false appearance of happiness.

The wealthy man is not happy for he desires something which he does not have, or the absence of something which he has. He who desires is not sufficient unto himself and therefore is not happy. Since money, which promised to make man happy, can be confiscated against the will of its possessor, it requires many things to protect it. It creates new wants, and yet it is not able to satisfy the desire of the poor completely. Therefore, money cannot cause true happiness.

Although the rich man from his mines of gold
Dig treasures which his mind can never fill,
And lofty neck with precious pearls enfold,
And his fat fields with many oxen till,
Yet biting cares will never leave his head,
Nor will his wealth attend him being dead. (43)

Wickedness is not banished but rather made more splendid by public office. Wicked men sometimes secure high offices. A man cannot be judged worthy of respect who is not judged worthy of office. A man endowed with wisdom and virtue has a certain respect endowed upon him by virtue. Although a man may be respected in one country, he may be despised in another. If respect were natural to dignities, as it is to virtue, it would never be forsaken in any country. False opinions of men attribute such respect to honors, and in other countries these

(43) Ibid., 239
honors are not thought to be honors. "Wherefore if dignities do not make us respected, if they can easily be defiled with infection of the wicked, if their worth decays with the change of times, if diversities of nations make them contemptible, what beauty have they in themselves, or can they afford to others, worth the desiring?" (44)

Though the fierce and lustful Nero did adorn Himself with purple robes, which pearls did grace, He did but gain a general hate and scorn. Yet wickedly he officers most base Over the reverend Senators did place. Who would have esteem of fading honours then Which may be given thus by the wickedest men? (45)

Kingdoms and familiarity with kings do not cause happiness for we have seen kings, past and present, change their happiness for misery. If kingdoms be the cause of felicity, they bring unhappiness when they are defective. No empire can extend itself over the whole earth, therefore it has limits. If the size of an empire be the cause of happiness, it limits, which are much greater, are the cause of unhappiness. A king, being under steady fear of his life, is not mighty, for he fears others more than they fear him.

Who would be powerful, must His own affections check, Nor let foul reins of lust Subdue his conquered neck. For though thy dread command Far Thule's isle obey, Unless thou canst withstand And boldly drive away Black care and wretched moan, Thy might is small or none. (46)

(44) Ibid., 243
(45) Loc. cit.
(46) Ibid., 247
Glory does not add to a wise man's conscience, for he measures his own, not by rumors of people but rather by his own knowledge. Nobility is a certain praise proceeding from our parents' desserts, and therefore it belongs to fame, and not to us. Nobility may hinder the noble from degenerating from the virtue of his ancestors, and if it does this, that is the only good which it does. (47)

The general race of men from a like birth is born. All things one Father have, Who doth them all adorn, Who gave the sun his rays, and the pale moon her horn, The lofty heavens for stars, low earth for mortals chose; He sould fetched down from high in bodies did enclose; And thus from noble seed all men did first compose. Why brag you of your stock? Since none is counted base, If you consider God the author of your race, But he that with foul vice doth his own birth deface. (48)

The desire of bodily pleasures is full of anxiety, but their enjoyment only produces repentance. As fruits of wickedness they bring forth intolerable diseases and griefs in the body. Their end is sadness. If they caused true happiness, all animals would be truly happy, for their whole intent is on the satisfaction of the body. Honest pleasure should proceed from husband and wife, for he who has no children is happy only by being unfortunate.

The form of false felicity having been seen, we will now attempt to show wherein true happiness lies. It cannot come from wealth, power, fame, dignities, or bodily pleasure. Man takes that which is simple and indivisible and attempts to divide it, and thus man tries to divide truth and perfection.

(47) Cf. Ibid., 249
(48) Ibid., 249
By so doing he turns truth and perfection into falsity and imperfection. That which needs the help of another lacks power; therefore, perfect satisfaction and power have the same essence. Such a nature is worthy of veneration, and so we add veneration to power and satisfaction and judge these three to be the same. Since it cannot lack anything it cannot lack glory, and so we will now rank glory with the other three. Unhappiness could not come to such a being, and we have to grant that it is happy. Though perfect satisfaction, power, glory, veneration and happiness differ in name, they have the same essence. This, then, is a simple being by nature. Man attempts to get a fraction of that which has no parts, and he receives, then, neither the part nor the whole. Unless the whole is desired, none can be had.

We have shown above that none of these things can give happiness, and, therefore, if a man were to seek them all, he could not become happy. Having the form and cause of false felicity, we can now turn and find the cause and form of true felicity. Those things give man an idea of the true good, but it cannot be had in this mortal world. To find the true good we will ask for the help of God.

O Thou, that dost the world in lasting order guide,
Father of heaven and earth, Who makest time swiftly slide,
And, standing still Thyself, yet fram'st all moving laws,
Who to Thy work wert moved by no external cause:
But by a sweet desire, where envy hath no place,
Thy goodness moving Thee to give each thing his grace,
Thou dost all creatures' forms from highest patterns take,
From Thy fair mind the world fair like Thyself doth make,
Thus Thou perfect the whole perfect each part dost frame.
Thou temp'rest elements, making cold mixed with flame,
And dry things join with moist, lest fire should fly,
Or earth, opprest with weight, buried too low should lie.
Thou in consenting parts fitly disposed hast
Th' all-moving soul in midst of three fold nature placed.
Which, cut in several parts that run a different race,
Into itself returns, and circling doth embrace
The highest mind, and heaven with like proportion drives.
Thou with like cause dost make the souls and lesser lives,
Fix them in chariots swift, and widely scatterest
O'er heaven and earth; and then at Thy fatherly behest
They stream, like fire returning, back to Thee, Their God.
Dear Father, let my mind Thy hallowed seat ascend,
Let me behold the springs of grace and find Thy light,
That I on Thee may fix my souls well cleared sight.
Cast off the earthly weight wherewith I am opprest,
Shine as Thou art most bright, Thou only calm and rest
To pious men whose end is to behold Thy ray,
Who their beginning art, their guide, their bound and way. (49)

Does perfect good exist, or is it merely the product of reason? We call the imperfect imperfect because it lacks some perfection. It follows that, if in any genus we find something imperfect, there must also be the perfect in the same genus for, if there is no perfect, we cannot imagine how the imperfect came about. Nature began from the perfect and fell into the imperfect. Therefore, if we show that there is imperfect felicity, we know with certitude that there is perfect felicity. (50)

God is held to be good by the common opinion of man. Who doubts that God is good? for nothing better than God can be imagined. Thus reason shows that God is not only good but that He is perfectly good.

For unless He were so, He could not be the chief of all things. For there would be something better than He, having perfect goodness, which would seem to be of greater antiquity and eminence than He. For it is already manifest that perfect things were before the imperfect. Wherefore,

(49) Ibid., 263 ff.
(50) Cf. Ibid., 267
lest our reasoning should have no end, we must confess that the Sovereign God is most full of sovereign and perfect goodness. But we have concluded that perfect goodness is true happiness, wherefore true blessedness must necessarily be placed in the most high God. (51)

One should not think that the Father of all has received the good which He has from another, for then one would think that the substance of blessedness and that of God were diverse. If He received it from another, He from whom He received it is better than Himself, but God is the most excellent of all things. He has blessedness by His nature since He could not have received it from another. Nothing is the same as that from which it differs; therefore, that which is naturally different from sovereign good is not the sovereign good itself. We know with certitude that God is the greatest good and is so in His own substance since nothing can be greater than its beginning. God, being the highest good, is happiness, for happiness is the highest good.

There are not two greatest goods, for each would lack the other, and neither would be the highest. Now, having proved that God and blessedness are the highest good, we must prove that they are the same.

The following corollary is arrived at by deduction: Man becomes divine by acquiring happiness, for happiness is identical with God. As a man becomes just by acquiring justice, so a man becomes divine by acquiring happiness. "Wherefore everyone that is blessed is a God, but by nature there is only

(51) Ibid., 269
one God; but there are many by participation." (52)

We hold perfect satisfaction, power, respect, fame and pleasure to be happiness. Are these members of a body happiness, or do they bear relations to the good as members to a head? We have proved that they are the same; that is different names for the same thing. Because this is so they cannot be members of the body happiness because members of a body differ individually as parts of that body. If these things were members happiness would be formed from one, and this is impossible. Goodness is the sum and cause of all things desired, for all things that are desired are desired because they are thought to be good. That which is not of its nature good is sought because it is thought to be good. Goodness, therefore, is thought to be the origin, sum and cause of all that is sought after. Because all things are desired for the sake of goodness they are wanted for the sake of goodness, not for themselves. Some things are desired for the sake of happiness alone; therefore happiness and goodness, having the same essence, are the same. We have shown that God is true happiness, and that happiness is synonymous with goodness; therefore the essence of God is absolute goodness. (53) We come to know God by knowing goodness.

What men seek differs among men; therefore men do not

(52) Ibid., 273. This statement, when taken in context, does not mean that Boethius is a pantheist. He clearly states that there is only one God, and that men somehow become like God by sharing blessedness with him.

(53) Cf. Ibid., 273 ff.
seek the perfect good. When the things which men seek are
gathered under the one form and operation they are the true
good. Things which differ among themselves are truly good
only when they obtain unity; therefore sufficiency, power,
respect, fame, and pleasure become good by the attainment of
unity. Every good is good by participation, and thus unity
and good must be identical for they have the same nature and
operation.

Everything has existence as long as it retains unity,
and perishes when it loses unity. Animals strive to preserve
their existence by preserving their unity; therefore each
strives to preserve that which is suitable to itself and des­
troyes that which is not. Nature demands that man preserves
both himself and the race. We can refuse these commands by
voluntary death or celibacy.

All things which seek to continue in existence seek unity,
for unity is necessary for existence. Unity is the same as
good. Therefore all things seek the absolute good. We must,
therefore, allow that the good is the end of all things. (54)

It is not to be doubted that God is the ruler of the uni­
verse.

This world could never have been compacted of so many
divers and contrary parts, unless there were One that
dothe unite these so different things: and this disagree­
ing diversity of natures being united would seperate and
divide this concord, unless there were one that holdeth
together that which He united. Neither would the course
of nature continue so certain, nor would the different
parts hold so well-ordered motions in due place, times,

(54) Cf. Ibid., 284
causality, space and qualities, unless there were One, Himself remaining quiet, disposeth and ordereth this variety of motions. This, whatsoever it be, by which things created continue and are moved, I call God, a name which all men use. (55)

Since complete satisfaction exists in true happiness, and God Himself is true happiness, God needs no external aid in governing the universe. If God needed aid he would not be completely self-sufficient. He arranges all things by Himself, good, and guides the world like a ship steadfast and uncorrupted.

Now all things tend to goodness, and God rules them by goodness; therefore, God rules things according to their own will. Things themselves turn their will to that of the divine disposer. To oppose God is to oppose the supreme cause of all happiness and, therefore, to fail. The total rule of God is gentle and sweet.

No sane man doubts that God is all powerful and that He can do all things. God cannot do evil; therefore, if He who can do all things cannot do evil, evil must be nothing. This argument, Philosophy says, is divinely simple. (56)

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(55) Ibid., 287 ff.
(56) Cf. Ibid., 291
Since the governor of all is good, how can there be evil, and how can evil go unpunished? Wickedness rules the people while virtue is down trodden and punished. We will now try to prove that things are not what they seem to be to man. If things were so, God would be like a householder who cares for the cheap utinsels and allows the more expensive ones to go to waste. The good are always powerful, the evil weak; virtue is rewarded, the evil punished; the good are happy, the evil are not. Without knowledge of true blessedness, and without knowing where it is to be found, we cannot find it. (57)

The statements that the evil man is always weak and that the good man is always strong are contradictories; so we prove one by proving the other is not so, and by proving one, we disprove the other. We will attempt to prove our statements by proving that the good are always strong and that the evil are always weak.

All human actions require will and power. If either is lacking, nothing can be done. If will is lacking, power is in
vain. If a man desires that which he cannot obtain he is
lacking power. Everyone is mighty in that which he can do,
and weak in that which he cannot do. Man is hastened to hap­
piness by his will, though the way that the individual arrives
at it may differ from another. We have shown that blessedness
and goodness are the same, therefore when we seek blessedness
we also seek goodness. Men are made good by obtaining good­
ness. Therefore good men obtain that which they desire, good­
ness, for they are good. Evil men do not obtain that good
which they desire, for if they did they would be good. Since
they both seek goodness, which the good man obtains and the
evil man does not, there can be no doubt that the good is
powerful and the evil weak. (58)

If two men seek the same thing by their nature and the
one obtains it by the use of his natural functions and the
other by an imitation of the first the first is strong and the
other is weak. Let us take walking as an example. Walking is
natural to the nature of man. If a man who has lost his feet
attempts to walk by crawling on his hands in imitation of one
who has not lost his feet he who has not lost his feet is the
stronger. Hence he who uses his natural function is the stron­
ger. The good seek to obtain the supreme good by the natural
function virtue while the evil seek the good by the unnatural
use of concupiscenes. Again we are allowed to deduct that the
good are strong and that the evil are weak.

(58) Cf. Ibid., 307
Vicious men are weak for they cannot arrive at the end which nature intends. The man who obtains all that he desires is most powerful. Wicked men leave the good because of ignorance, passions, intemperance, or of their own volition. When they leave the common end of all things they leave being. It is strange that evil men, who are the majority of men, are not at all. Evil men are evil, but of their essence they are not so.

A man is to keep nature and order, but wicked men do not. Therefore they leave the to be of their essence and cease to exist as men. They exist like the body of a dead man, which can be called a dead man, but not a man. Since evil is nothing and since that is all that an evil man can do, he can do nothing. God, who is all good, can do everything. Only a mad man thinks that he himself can do everything. Those who do evil do nothing and therefore they have less power than those who can do something, good. The possibility of doing evil is no power, and it is not related to goodness so it is not to be wished for. All power is to be wished for, and from this it becomes more evident that the possibility of doing evil is no power at all. Thus, the power of the good becomes manifest and the weakness of the evil becomes manifest.

That for which a thing is done is the reward of that action. All things are done for blessedness, goodness, and therefore goodness is the reward of all human actions. The wickedness of others does not deprive the virtuous of their just reward, for if a man rejoices in that which he has from another he may
lose it, but if he rejoices in virtue, which is its own reward, he cannot lose it to another. All good men are happy, for goodness itself is happiness. When the good become as gods there can be no doubt that the wicked will be punished. This is so because goodness and evil are opposites as are rewards and punishments, and we have seen that reward falls on the good, therefore it is necessary for punishment to fall on the evil. Evil is its own punishment. If evil men only considered their own estates they would see that they are punished by being strongly infected with evil. Whatever is is one. Unity and goodness are the same, and therefore everything that is must be good. "And in the same manner, whatsoever falleth from goodness ceaseth to be, by which it followeth that evil men leave to be that which they were, but the shape of men, which they still retain, showeth them to have been men: wherefore by embracing wickedness they have lost the nature of men." (59)

The vicious, though they appear to be men, are really brutes. Evil men are punished by their liberty, for then they achieve their end which is evil, and as we have said it is its own punishment. Though it is miserable to desire evil it is more miserable to achieve it.

To an immortal soul this life is short. The wicked are punished shortly. The longer a man is wicked the longer he is unhappy, but this unhappiness does not end with death for wretchedness is everlasting. To deny this inference is to deny all

(59) Ibid., 319
that went before. (60)

Wicked men are more happy when they are punished than when they are not. Evils are corrected by chastisement, and reduced to virtue by punishment; if by no other means by the example which prevents others from leaving virtue. Punishment is good, and so the wicked man is to be made happy by punishment, for then something good is added to his misery. Since the wicked should be punished they should be made happy. By reason of punishment, which for the sake of justice is good, the evil are made good. By reason of justice non punishment is evil. Therefore he who goes unpunished has another evil added to him and becomes more unhappy than he who is punished. It is evil and unjust to allow the wicked to go unpunished for then we make them more miserable.

The good man needs no judge to reward him. The evil man needs no judge to punish him for evil is its own punishment, and virtue its own reward. All wicked men are miserable and deserve punishment. He who does an evil is more unhappy than he who suffers the offense. The evil should be brought to justice by compassionate accusers in order that their faults might be removed and replaced by virtue. If the wicked see virtue in action they will render themselves to their judge so that their faults might be replaced by virtue. "By which means it cometh to pass, that in wise men there is no place for hatred." (61) It is contrary to reason to hate the wicked.

(60) Cf. Ibid., 325
(61) Ibid., 333
for vice is a sickness of the soul and deserves to be treated with compassion. You should love the good and pity the ill. (62)

The generation of all things, and all the proceedings of mutable nature, and whatsoever is moved in any sort, take their cause, order, and forms from the stability of the Divine mind. This, placed in the castle of its own simplicity, hath determined manifold ways for doing things; which ways being considered in the purity of God's understanding, are named Providence, but being referred to those things which He moveth and disposeth, they are by the ancients called Fate. The diversity of which will easily appear if we weigh the force of both. (63)

Providence is the Divine reason itself. Fate is the disposition inherent in changeable things, by which Providence connects all things in their due order.

For Providence embraceth all things together, though diverse, though infinite; but Fate putareth every particular thing into motion being distributed by places, forms, and time; so that the unfolding of temporal order being united into the foresight of God's mind is Providence, and the same uniting, being digested and unfolded in time, is called Fate. Which although they are diverse yet the one dependeth on the other. (64)

Providence conceives, fate executes. Providence is simple, stable, eternal; fate is composed of multifold agencies, acts and shifts constantly, and is subject to time. Fate includes weather and the fortunes of men, which are thus indirectly of divine appointment. All, therefore, is done well, even by the apparently wicked, of whose temper only the all-seeing judge can be certain. ...God gives to each, Philosophy continues, good and bad alike, exactly the medicine that his cure demands; perhaps the prison, she intimates, is exactly what Boethius needed. Nor is there any escape from divine dispensation. One may leave the order in which he is set, but only fall into another order. Love rules all, and nothing can exist unless it return to this love that gave it being. (65)

All fortune is good, for it either exercises or corrects.

(62) Cf. Ibid., 335
(63) Ibid., 341
(64) Ibid., 343
(65) Rand, Founders, 175
Anything which either exercises virtue or corrects vice is good and profitable. Therefore, every fortune is good, because it either gives an entrance to virtue or an increase of virtues.
Does chance exist, and if it does what is it? If it is defined as something produced from a confused motion, and with no connections of causes, it cannot exist. God disposes everything in order so confusion can have no place. Nothing can come from nothing. If something has no causes it comes from nothing, and therefore it is nothing. Chance therefore, as defined above, cannot exist. (66) "When something is done for a certain cause, and some other thing happeneth for other reasons than that which was intended, this is called chance..." (67) Though the cause of what we call chance are not foreseen they do exist.

Does freedom of the will exist? Yes, it does. Without it there could be no reason, for the will is required to make a judgement. By it we decide what is to be secured and what is to be avoided. The will of man is most free in the contemplation of God, and it is the most enslaved in the following of vice. This is so because in following vice it takes its eyes from the true light and is blinded by darkness.

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(66) Cf. Ibid., 367
(67) Loc. cit.
It seems repugnant to reason that God should foresee all things before they come to be and that there should be freedom of the will. If God knows from eternity the deeds, consuls, and will acts of men there can be no freedom of the will; for there can be no deed or will which Divine intelligence, which cannot err, has not foreseen. If a thing could be withdrawn from the foreseen end, foreknowledge would only be an uncertain opinion, but God can have no uncertain opinion.

Some men say that things do not come to pass because they are foreseen, but rather that they are foreseen because they are to come to pass. Therefore it is necessary that those things which are to happen be foreseen. In so arguing they argue which is the cause of that which is to come, the foreknowledge or necessity of foreknowledge of things to come. The event of a foreknown thing is necessary, even if the foreknowledge does not cause the necessity, for the cause of truth proceeds from the future event, but yet truth is found in knowledge.

Even if future things are foreseen, it is foolish to say that temporal things are the cause of everlasting foreknowledge. When I know that a thing will happen it must necessarily happen, and therefore the event of a foreknown thing is necessary. If a thing need not happen with necessity it cannot absolutely be known beforehand, for knowledge cannot be mixed with falsity, and everything must be understood by knowledge. Nothing can be doubtful to God, and so he knows all things
which shall be. Thus there can be no free act of the will, for it is set at a definite end.

Once this is admitted human affairs are destroyed. Vice and virtue will be the same, for they both, then, must flow from the true good. Hope and pray is also, then, in vain for they could have no force. (68)

The cause of this blind opinion in men is that they cannot comprehend Divine simplicity, which, if they could, would remove all doubt. Now we must see that the will is not hindered by foreknowledge, and that foreknowledge causes no necessity on future things. If there were no Providence there would be free will. Now let us suppose that there is foreknowledge, and that it imposes no necessity on the will, then too is the will free.

Then it will be said that foreknowledge is a sign of that which must happen. If there were no foreknowledge the events of future things would be necessary, for signs show, but they do not cause what they designate. Consequently it must be proved that all things happen necessarily in order that foreknowledge be a sign of this necessity. If there is no necessity there is no foreknowledge, for without necessity it cannot signify that which is not. We must draw every proof from intrinsical and necessary causes, and not from far fetched arguments. Those things which Providence foreknows have no necessity of being. Art is without necessity in doing, so also

(68) Cf. Ibid., 371 ff.
all things are without necessity before they are accomplished. Present knowledge of things in becoming causes no necessity, and so foreknowledge of things to come causes no necessity.

Some say that foreknowledge can be had only of those things which happen with necessity, and that nothing can be perfectly known unless it is certain. The cause of error is that we think that all that is known is known by the force and nature of things, but this is not so. A thing is known according to the faculty of the knower, for instance sight and touch.

The superior force of comprehension embraces the lower, but the lower does not embrace the higher. The sense sees form in matter, imagination separates form from matter, reason considers the universal, understanding sees the simple form in itself. The higher faculty knows the lower, but does not use it.

Reason belongs only to man, and understanding belongs only to the Divine. When man says that Divine reason does not behold future events differently than man he is saying that reason does not behold things differently than the senses. Above we have pointed out that this is not so. Human reason should submit itself to the Divine mind as sense to reason. If we could see with Divine reason we could understand. (69)

To the best of our ability let us now see what the state of the Divine substance is so that we may know what his knowledge is. Since it is the common opinion of man that God is

(69) Cf. Ibid., 383 ff.
Eternity therefore is a perfect possession altogether of an endless life, which is more manifest by the comparison of temporal things, for whatsoever liveth in time, that being present proceedeth from times past to times to come, and there is nothing placed in time which can embrace all the space of its life at once. But it hath not yet gained to-morrow and hath lost yesterday. And you live no more in this day's life than in that movable and transitory moment. Wherefore, whatsoever suffereth the condition of time, although, as Aristotle thought of the world, it never began nor were to ever end, and its life to endure with infinite time, yet it is not such that it ought to be called everlasting. For it doth not comprehend and embrace all the space of life together, though that life be infinite, but it hath not the future time which is yet to come. Then that which comprehendeth and possesseth the whole fulness of an endless life together, to which neither any part to come is absent, nor of that which is past hath escaped, is worthy to be accounted everlasting, and this is necessary, that being no possession itself, it may always be present to itself, and have an infinity of movable time present to it. (70)

Those who, having heard that Plato thought the world not to have beginning of time and end, think that the world is co-eternal with God are mistaken, for it is one thing to exist through a continual life and embrace the whole presence of that life at one time. God cannot be regarded older than any of his creatures, but only by a peculiar property of his nature. God is eternal, but the universe is continual.

Since everything apprehends the subject of its knowledge according to its own nature God views everything as taking place in the present. His knowledge passes over the change of time. Foreknowledge, belonging to Him, should not be considered as future knowledge but rather as present knowledge. Why should

(70) Ibid., 401. This has come to be the classic definition of eternity.
man considers all things to happen with necessity when he does not consider everything he can see necessary? When man sees something present he does not attach any necessity to it. Therefore he should not put any necessity on future things which are seen as present to Divine Providence. Things are future only in regards to the condition of time, and as we have seen God is not conditioned by time. There are two kinds of necessity; one simple and the other conditional. A simple necessity is, "All men are mortal," and a conditional necessity is, "The man walks," for if he walks he cannot do otherwise at the same time. And so if Providence sees a thing in the present it indeed must be, but of its own nature it has no necessity. If things are looked at in themselves they do not lose their freedom, but if they are looked at from the point of view of God's insight they come to pass under the condition of Divine knowledge. Therefore all things which God knows come to pass, but some of them come to pass through free will. Though things result by coming into existence they do not lose their own nature for they also could have not come into existence. (71)

Man may say that I may change my mind and thereby disregard Providence. But we say that you cannot disregard Providence, because it knows in the present that you can change your intention, and in which way you will change it. Divine foreknowledge does not change itself if I change my mind because it precedes all future things and recalls them back into the present time. We also see now that it is also true that future things are not the cause of God's knowledge.

(71) Cf. Ibid., 407
All which being so, the free-will of mortal men remaineth unviolated, neither are laws unjust which propose punishments and rewards to our wills, which are free from all necessity. There remaineth also a beholder of all things which is God, who foreseth all things, and the eternity of His vision, which is always present, concurreth with the future quality of our actions, distributing rewards to the good and punishments to the evil. Neither do we in vain put our hope in God or pray to Him; for if we do this well and as we ought, we shall not lose our labour or be without effect. Wherefore fly vices, embrace virtues, possess your minds with worthy hopes, offer up humble prayers to your highest Prince. There is, if you will not dissemble, a great necessity of doing well imposed upon you, since you live in the sight of your Judge, who beholdeth all things. (72)
Bibliography


