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Boethius: The Consolation of Philosophy. Translated with Introduction and Explanatory Notes by P. G. Walsh. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999. LVIII, 171 S. £ 7.99. ISBN 0-19-815228-0.

Among the European languages English has the longest running history with Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy: Alfred the Great made a translation in the late ninth century, after which came Notker's Old High German and then a host of various medieval and modern vernaculars. The last century has brought at least six English renderings to light,[1] among which, in this reviewer's opinion, Walsh's claims pride of place. The volume divides into five parts: introduction (pp. xi–l); summary and bibliography (pp. li–lvii); translation (pp. 3–114); explanatory notes (pp. 115–65); index and glossary (pp. 166–71). Walsh did not have access to Moreschini's new Teubner edition[2] and so based his translation on the Latin text of Bieler, which is still of considerable value.[3] The traditional internal divisions of the text are conveniently keyed to Bieler's edition, although page-by-page indicators (for the notes as well) of book and chapter numbers would have made the book more convenient still. The great value of this volume lies in the overall balance of its interpretation: the translation catches appropriate literary nuances without sacrificing philosophical precision, and the notes make judicious use of the most important bibliography on Boethius' difficult work.[4]

The introduction is in ten parts, covering general historical background, Boethius' career, his literary achievements, his Neoplatonism, his theological works, the structure and content of the *Consolatio*, its sources, prosimetric form, meters, and Fortleben. Walsh has deftly managed the competing demands of completeness and conciseness, and as a result readers will have good access to the essential facts without having to wade through trivial or eccentric matters of interpretation. Thus Boethius' political career and its implications for the extant corpus, the extent of (limitations on) his use of ancient sources both literary and philosophical, his

[1] J. Gruber: Boethius 1925–1998 (2. Teil). Lustrum 40, 1998, 199–259, at 205f.; add now the translation of J. C. Relihan (Indianapolis-Cambridge 2001).
[2] Munich-Leipzig 2000 [reviewed in Plekos 3, 2001: http://www.plekos.uni–muenchen.de/2001/rmoreschini.html].
[3] Pp. v; liii (n.b. "Weisenberger," twice).
[4] Above all (still), J. Gruber: Kommentar zu Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae. Texte und Kommentare, Bd. 9. Berlin-NY 1978, and H. Scheible: Die Gedichte in der Consolatio Philosophiae des Boethius, Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften, Neue Folge, Bd. 46. Heidelberg 1972. Walsh also makes extensive use of O'Daly's and Sharples' more recent studies.

theological views — all this and more is treated with care and insight. Walsh is perhaps too quick to assume that Boethius was "familiar" with Plotinus' writings and "certainly" influenced by those of Proclus, and he shows only a little more caution in respect of Ammonius (p. xxxvif.). That the latter converted to Christianity (pp. xxv; cf. xxxvi) is not an established fact.[5] And it is not quite correct to hold (p. xxvii, with n. 31) that 4 carm. 6 presupposes an "Aristotelian notion of the eternity of the world." An Aristotelian account of elemental transformation is indeed understood, although *aeternos* (v. 16) is intended only to emphasize the cyclical nature of celestial and phenomenal change, which in Aristotle's view is the closest approximation of eternal being.[6] Moreover, insofar as Philosophia remains "true to her ancient spokesmen" as against the "Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*," she evidently prefers Plato's *Timaeus* to Aristotle's *De caelo* on the question of the world's perpetuity.[7]

The translation is of course the centrepiece of the book, and Walsh rises splendidly to the challenges presented by the mixed form. The prose chapters are rendered with accuracy and clarity, without unnecessary straining after technical jargon. We may note, for example, the plural forms *Canios … Senecas … Soranos* at 1,3,9, which Walsh translates, "such figures as Canius" (etc.); this brings out very nicely the hint that the list of persecuted Roman philosophers is in fact longer than is actually indicated, reaching up into Flavian (or indeed later) times. Again, Walsh sees that at 5,5,4 *sola* is transferred from *divini* to *intellegentia*. He rightly translates: "(belongs) solely (to the divine)."[8] Here are some passages which merit reconsideration:

1 carm. 5,27: *merito* cannot mean "justly", since the complaint (cf. *questibus* 1, 5,1) is precisely that God fails to impose due measure (*modo*) on human actions as on the rest of the world.

3 carm. 12,1: "Would" is evidently a typographical error for "who" (*qui*), under the influence of "could" (*potuit*).

[5] L. G. Westerink, J. Trouillard, A. Ph. Segonds: Prolégomènes à la philosophie de Platon. Paris 1990 (ed., trans., notes), p. xiv (p. 327 in the volume cited next); R. Sorabji (Ed.): Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence. Ithaca-NY 1990, p. 12.

[6] Cf. vv. 19–24; Aristotle, De gen. et corr. II 4; "Boethius' Anapestic Dimeters (Acatalectic), with Regard to the Structure and Argument of the *Consolatio*," in A. Galonnier (Ed.): Boèce ou la chaîne des savoirs. Louvain-Paris (forthcoming), pp. 693–716, at 702–706.

[7] 3 carm. 9; 5,6,6–14; cf. Gruber, Kommentar 409–411. Just as *aeternos* (4 carm. 6,16) should not be pressed too hard for the strictest possible sense, so also with *perpetua*, 3 carm 9,1 (Gruber, Kommentar 278 ad loc. 1).

4,6,15: "(the closer to the axis of the world) which (a thing approaches)." The restriction is unwarranted by *quanto illum rerum cardinem vicinius petit*.

5,1,1: "diverting." Diversion is unacknowledged before 5 (*aversa … deviis*). Philosophia is about to turn (*vertebat* conative, or inchoative) to the next stage of discussion, when "Boethius" interrupts her train of thought with the question about chance.

5,4,29: "appearance." As a rendering of *speciem(que ipsam)* (εἶδος) this is weak, although it is indeed difficult, given *formam* (ἰδέαν) and *formaliter* at 30 and 32f., to suggest a suitable English alternative; 32 (*universales species*) and 35 (*universale*) would suggest simply *species*, taking into account an Aristotelian notion of abstraction, as at In Isagogen II 164,5–167,7. There may be an echo of the double-form distinction as at *De trinitate* 2 (113f. M.).

The notes will prove useful to a wide audience. Walsh has made good use of Gruber's distinguished commentary, to which he has occasionally added findings. He remarks, for example, at 3,12,29 (p. 143; cf. 4,2,39) the Neoplatonic theme of the non-being of evil. A possible nuance has perhaps been overlooked in connection with 4 carm. 2. Walsh observes (p. 147) that the earlier Stoics divided the passions into appetite, fear, grief, and pleasure, and Boethius must indeed have known the ancient classification.[9] But it seems probable, especially in light of the reference to Plato at 4,2,45, that *libido … ira* (4 carm. 2,6f.) suggest instead the Platonic tripartite division of soul (minus *ratio*). Calcidius deploys *ratio*, *iracundia*, and *libido* in that way.[10]

But these are relatively minor observations. Price may remove Walsh's translation from competition for a place in undergraduate classrooms (where Relihan's recent version probably has the edge); but that it is overall the most satisfying modern English rendition seems certain.

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[8] Cf. 5,4,33; 5,5,11f.
[9] Cf. 1 carm 7,25–28, with Walsh p. 122; Gruber, Kommentar 161 ad loc. 25ff.; Scheible, Die Gedichte 44f. ad loc. 25–28.
[10] comm. 140; cf. 139; 182f.; 187; 223; Macrobius, somn. 1,6,42 (with Boethius, in Porph. comm. pr. 31,22f.); Plato, Rep. 441E f.; Tim. 70A–D; Phaedr. 246B; Alcinous, Epit. 23f.