BOETHIUS THE DEMIURGE:

TIMAEAN DOUBLE-CIRCLE SPIRAL STRUCTURE IN THE *CONSOLATIO*

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
April 2020

For my Opa, Karl Heinz Hiob

1926-1999

Vir doctissimus

& lover of words,

who first introduced me to Latin

Ars longa, vita brevis

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to relate the content and form of the central poem (IIIM9) of Boethius' *Consolatio* to the narrative structure and philosophical movement of the work as a whole. A line-by-line metrical analysis of IIIM9 yields a double-circle spiral pattern reflecting its Timaean content; IIIM9 is thus a *microcosmos*, with Boethius, as author, in the position of Demiurge. This pattern in turn serves as paradigm for the narrative of the *Consolatio*, which likewise falls into two circles, each consisting of a fall from a previous pinnacle followed by an ascent to a new pinnacle. In the first circle, that of the Same, the Prisoner attempts to return to God by leaving behind the divided world of human experience and *ratio* to attain the unified realm of divine *intellegentia*. However, his human inability to consistently hold onto this unity causes him to undergo a second fall. In the circle of the Different, the Prisoner must combine human *ratio*, represented by rectilinear motion, with divine *intellegentia*, represented by circular motion, to yield a composite motion: the spiral. This spiral mode of return to God, an "inclusive perfection," allows the Prisoner and all created beings to participate in the divine unity without losing their individual identities and natures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To begin with, my deepest thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Wayne J. Hankey, for his help, guidance, and patience over these past three years. My gratitude as well to my other committee members, Dr. Michael Fournier and Dr. Peter O'Brien, for their helpful suggestions and the timely elimination of several glaring errors. I also thank all the other professors at Dalhousie Classics from whose seminars I have learned so much, and Donna Edwards for her tireless work on all our behalf. My gratitude as well to the Killam Trusts, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and Dalhousie University.

Thanks to my family -- my mom, dad, and sister -- for their encouragement and support, not only during the writing of this thesis, but throughout the long and sometimes wandering path that my studies have taken; I could not have reached this milestone without them. In particular, thanks to my mother for teaching me to read and to my "bookworm" family for giving me a lifelong love of literature. I remember with love my Opa as well, who taught curious 5-year-old Cristalle her first Latin words (*puer, puella, aqua, cibus* -- see, I still remember them!), awakening in me a lasting passion for this beautiful language.

Thank you to all my colleagues (both past and present) at Dalhousie Classics; I look forward to many more years of discussion and companionship as a lasting member of this vibrant community. My thanks as well to the King's College Chapel community and First Congregational Church for spiritually and musically enriching my time in Halifax and for providing help and encouragement in difficult times. Thanks as well to all the Latin students I've worked with as a TA and tutor at Dal, and from whom I have been able to learn even while I taught.

I wish to thank by name three close friends in particular: Lorraine DeVanthey, who first suggested in 2015 that I pursue an MA at Dal Classics (and gave me persistent nudges over the subsequent months until I started listening); Michelle Joy Ochitwa, whose chance Facebook post about a mysterious volume she'd found in a used bookstore first introduced me to the *Consolatio* (Divine Providence strikes again!); and my first Latin teacher, Sarah Van Der Pas, who helped me master the rudiments with her patient explanations and engaging Latin games, and whose expert help I continue to seek regarding particularly tricky points of grammar and syntax. I thank as well the LatinD online community who first brought Latin to life for me and Markus Bindig in particular, who double-checked some scansions and helped me wade through academic German.

My lasting gratitude, of course, to Boethius himself for leaving us with such a rich, rewarding, and deeply healing work: one by which I am continually nourished, finding new treasures of beauty and complexity each time I open the *Consolatio*. We all find ourselves, sooner or later, in need of consolation, and a better "medicine" than this work cannot be imagined.

And, now and ever, to the One who, through Divine Providence, orders all things for the good; who is *principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem*; the great Divine Author, without whose creative power no human work would ever come to be: S.D.G. Amen.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Though the thirty-nine meters of Boethius' prosimetric work *Consolatio Philosophiae* have been largely overlooked in the literature in favor of the prose sections, recent studies by Blackwood, Curran, and Magee have sought to analyze the poetry and elucidate its relation to the prose and overall structure of the *Consolatio*. The ninth meter of the third book (IIIM9), a hymn to God as Creator whose content draws upon Plato's *Timaeus*, is generally recognized as being of particular importance and in some sense the work's "pivot." Curran, in his studies of circular imagery in the *Consolatio* and its relation to prayer, has, with Scarry and others, argued that IIIM9 is circular in structure, embodying the return to God as source sought by all created things. In this thesis I will show that the metrical structure of IIIM9, examined line by line, yields a double-circle spiral rather a simple circle. This microcosmic double-circle structure reflects IIIM9's macrocosmic Timaean content, placing Boethius himself as author in the position of Demiurge. I will then demonstrate how this double-circle spiral functions as paradigm for the narrative movement of the entire *Consolatio*. Each of the two circles features the Prisoner's fall from a prior pinnacle, followed by an ascent to a new pinnacle. The first ascent is a unified process carried out by a single speaker, Philosophy, and tending towards a single goal -- true happiness, which is identical with the *summum bonum*, God, and unity -- via a unifying logic that seeks to leave behind the embodied and subjective human perspective, including human *ratio*, to ascend to the divine level of *intellegentia*. This vision, however, cannot be sustained; a "clash of arguments" occurs, leading to a second fall. The second ascent, a cooperative process requiring the full participation of both

Philosophy and the Prisoner, operates via a logic that seeks to explain and systematize the subjective human experience of multiplicity and, in particular, freedom of the will without sacrificing the understanding of divine unity that has already been attained. In this ascent, the Prisoner's human faculties, including *ratio*, are not abandoned but redirected and raised aloft to the level of *intellegentia*. This form of ascent is best represented not by pure circular motion, nor by simple linear motion, but by the combined motion of the spiral, which returns to its origin while preserving the distance travelled. Thus, in the *Consolatio*, all things return to God as source while retaining their distinct identities and natures as created beings.

CHAPTER 2: POETRY AND THE CIRCLE IN THE *CONSOLATIO:* AN OVERVIEW

2.1 A "MULTIFACETED" *CONSOLATIO* AND AUTHOR

The first book of the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, the final work of the late ancient philosopher Boethius, opens with Boethius as Prisoner,[1] falsely convicted of and imprisoned for treason,[2] venting his despair in self-pitying poetry and longing only for death. Suddenly the tall figure of a woman appears in his cell. Wiping the tears from his eyes, she reveals herself as Philosophy come to his aid, and proceeds to diagnose the Prisoner's condition. His illness, she declares, is one of forgetfulness: he has forgotten what he is and how and to what end the world is governed. Fortunately she has the means to cure him; through her "medicines" of rhetoric, monologue, dialogue and poetry, she will remind him of what he has forgotten. This cure is effected in the remainder of the work (Books II-V).

What genre or genres does this work belong to, either in whole or in part? Robert Crouse, detailing the "multifaceted" nature of the *Consolatio*, lists: "personal *apologia*, philosophical dialogue, *protrepticus*, work of theology."[3] Others have suggested literary

[1] Since "Boethius" is the name of both a character in the narrative and the author, to avoid confusion I will refer throughout to the character Boethius as "the Prisoner" and to the author as "Boethius." When I refer to "Philosophy" (with a capital P) this will always indicate the character (as opposed to "philosophy").
[2] Though we of course cannot know with certainty that the accusations against the historical Boethius were false, it is integral to the Prisoner's narrative (as literary character) that he has been falsely imprisoned.
[3] Robert Crouse, "St. Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolation* of Boethius," *Dionysius* 22 (Dec 2004): 95.

consolatio,[4] theodicy,[5] revelation/apocalypse,[6] drama,[7] therapeutic theurgy,[8] and Cynic-Stoic diatribe,[9] to which we might add Augustinian *confessio* and poetic, literary, and philosophical encyclopedia. As summed up by Crabbe, "in short it parallels no genre precisely yet is like almost all";[10] similarly, Curley argues that "Boethius the author is consciously playing the whole gamut of ancient literary genres and he wants his reader to be aware of the fact."[11] Overall, the most clear-cut formal identification seems to be that of *prosimetrum* (a work consisting of prose sections alternating with poetry), also termed Menippean satire: a genre pioneered by Menippeus of Gadara in the third century BCE and of which we have extant examples from Meleager, Varro, Petronius (*Satyricon*), Seneca (*Apocolocyntosis*), as well as Boethius' quasi-contemporaries Martianus Capella (*De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*) and Fulgentius (*Mitologiarum Libri Tres*).[12]

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[4] Though, as pointed out by Courcelle, a rather unusual one as here the victim rather than the bereaved is consoled; Courcelle thus terms it "a consolation for life" ("Philosophie le console de la vie"). Pierre Courcelle, *La Consolation de Philosophie Dans La Tradition Littéraire* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1967), 18. Cited in Anna Crabbe, "Literary Design in the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*," in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence,* ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 238.
[5] Michael Fournier, "Boethius and Homer," *The Downside Review* 128, no. 452 (2010): 183.
[6] Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources*, trans. Harry E. Wedeck (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 296.
[7] Or, as he terms it, a "dramatized therapy." Thomas F. Curley III, "How to Read the *Consolation of Philosophy*," *Interpretation* 14, no. 2 (1986), 214.
[8] Stephen Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 20.
[9] Friedrich Klingner, *De Boethii Consolatione philosophiae,* 2nd edition (Zürich: Weidmann, 1966), 12-27.
[10] Anna Crabbe, "Literary Design," 238.
[11] Curley, "How to Read," 251.
[12] Curley, "How to Read," 243-44.

Is Boethius' *Consolatio,* then, meant satirically? The general consensus, from the Middle Ages to our own day, has been that it is not,[13] though recently both Payne and Relihan have argued for a satirical reading of the *Consolatio* on both literary and philosophical grounds:[14] a reading critiqued as "idiosyncratic" by Curley.[15] In fact, there are certain formal characteristics of the *Consolatio* that clearly mark it as unusual among ancient *prosimetra* (in Mras' terms, a "purified" Menippean satire[16]). These include: a near-equal attention to the prose and poetic sections (contrasting with the primarily "intermittent" and "decorative" use of poetry by previous authors)[17]; the inclusion of original poetry, rather than quoted verses; the relatively small role played by narration as

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[13] Though it cannot be denied that there are comedic touches here and there: take Boethius the narrator's subtle (self-)mockery at, e.g. IM1-P1 or IP5.1.

[14] F. Ann Payne, *Chaucer and Menippean Satire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 55-85, and Joel C. Relihan, "Old Comedy, Menippean Satire, and Philosophy's Tattered Robes in Boethius' *Consolation*," *Illinois Classical Studies* 15, no. 1 (1990): 183-94. Payne views the *Consolation* as an "uneven" construct of "disparate elements" that fails to successfully address Boethius' situation or return him to his "home." Relihan's reading is based upon both literary (the "comic" precedents of Philosophy's torn, dirtied robes) and philosophical grounds (the supposition that "Philosophy does not accomplish the work that she sets out to do, to teach the narrator who he truly is" (referring to IP6.14ff)). Against this, Scarry points out that Philosophy does in fact give a corrected definition at VP4.35: "Man is an animal rational and biped" (versus "rational and mortal"), as will be further discussed in Chapter 6. Elaine Scarry, "The External Referent: Cosmic Order; The Well-Rounded Sphere: Cognition and Metaphysical Structure in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*," in *Resisting Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 155.

[15] Curley, "How to Read," 214. Here and in his article "The Consolation of Philosophy as a Work of Literature" he advances an opposing theory: that Boethius deliberately chooses the Menippean Satire form, not in order to cast his philosophy as comedy, but to effect a "reconciliation" between the genres of philosophy and poetry (often previously displayed as mutually antagonistic, e.g. in Plato's *Republic* Book II and by later authors).

[16] He states that Boethius is "einer der seltenen Fälle, wo es dem Nachahmer gelingt, sein Vorild zu übertreffen und die von seinem Vorgänger eingeschlagene literarische Richtung zu veredeln." K. Mras, "Varros menippeische Satiren und die Philosophie," *Neues Jahrbuch für Philologie* 33 (1914): 391, quoted in Payne, *Chaucer and Menippean Satire*, 58.

[17] Curley, "How to Read," 244.

such (in favor of dialogue/monologue) and by fantastical elements (here confined to Philosophy's physical manifestation); and, most importantly, its strongly protreptic aims. The *Consolatio*, then, is a serious work of philosophy, but one effected in a genre somewhat foreign to philosophy. We will further discuss the importance of the *Consolatio's* poetry later in this chapter.

If the *Consolatio* defies easy classification, so too does its author: philosopher, translator, author (both of commentaries and original treatises), rhetorician, poet, Christian theologian, father and husband, and politician. All of these roles are reflected, in varying degrees, in the *Consolatio*, though no explicit mention is made of Boethius' Christian faith. This absence has provoked a lively debate in the literature over the last two centuries; even in the Middle Ages there were some misgivings regarding non-Christian doctrines in the *Consolatio* (e.g. the pre-existence of souls in IIIM9, commented on by Bruno von Corvey[18]), though Boethius' Christianity was never questioned and he himself was venerated as a saint and martyr.[19] In the nineteenth century, however, the lack of clear Christian doctrinal commitment in the *Consolatio* led many scholars to deny Boethius' authorship of the *Theological Treatises* and declare Boethius himself a pagan. Holder's discovery of a Cassiodorus fragment attributing four of the *Tractates* to Boethius (the authorship of *De fide Catholica* remains uncertain) put this particular doubt to rest.[20] In any case it would have been nearly impossible for a

[18] Joachim Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius,* De Consolatione Philosophiae, 2nd edition (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 38.
[19] His bones, along with Augustine's, are laid in the Basilica di S. Pietro in Pavia. Robert Crouse, "*Semina Rationum:* St. Augustine and Boethius," *Dionysius* 4 (Dec 1980): 75.
[20] Crouse, "*Semina Rationum*," 79; Hermann Usener, *Festschrift zur Begrüssung der XXXII Versammlung deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner zu Wiesbaden: Anecdoton*

pagan to hold such a high office under the Gothic king Theodoric,[21] and, as Marenbon points out, if Boethius had wished to depict himself in the *Consolatio* as non-Christian, he would have needed to do so in the clearest possible terms to counter his contemporary readers' natural assumptions.[22] Nevertheless, the question remains: why should a man who has been Christian all his life, imprisoned and facing execution, either himself turn to "philosophy" rather than Christian doctrine for "consolation," or implicitly advise his readers to do so?

Suggestions that Boethius' Christian faith was merely nominal all along or "collapsed" under the strain of misfortune[23] are unlikely; we see in the *Tractates* a well-grounded theology consistent with Boethius' other philosophical work. Rather, as Crouse states, Boethius seeks here not a purely *Christian* consolation but an "ecumenical Platonic theology" accessible to any reader, regardless of faith.[24] Elsewhere he writes, after pointing out that Boethius quotes by name no author, Christian or pagan, later than Cicero: "The *De consolatione* addresses an issue which belongs to the theological tradition universally (whether Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Epicurean, or Neoplatonic, whether pagan or Christian): that of providence (or predestination) and human freedom; and the authors and exempla she draws upon belong to the ancient and universal

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Holderi (Bonn: Carl Georgi, 1877), 4, 48-59, https://archive.org/details/anecdotonholder00unkngoog/page/n4/mode/2up.

[21] C.J. de Vogel, "The Problem of Philosophy and Christian Faith in Boethius' Consolatio," in *Romanitas et Christianitas*, ed. W. den Boer *et al.* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1973), 361.

[22] John Marenbon, *Boethius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 157.

[23] E.g. Arnaldo Momigliano, "Cassiodorus and the Italian Culture of His Time," *Proceedings Brit. Acad. XLI* (1955), 212; cited in H. Liebeschütz, "Boethius and the Legacy of Antiquity," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval History,* ed. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 551.

[24] Crouse, "*Semina Rationum*," 77.

inheritance of wisdom, and stand apart from “modern” controversy."[25] Both Courcelle and Gersh agree that Boethius is aiming in the *Consolatio* at a "synthesis" of Neoplatonic philosophy and Christian theology, though Courcelle tends to emphasize the Neoplatonic aspect, arguing for a "unity of thought" in the *Consolatio* that ultimately derives from Neoplatonic teachings,[26] while Gersh emphasizes the other side of the equation: Boethius' synthesis works along the lines developed by Augustine, in which "only those aspects of Platonism consistent with the Christian teaching could be adopted."[27] Courcelle goes on to argue a methodological basis for the exclusion of Christian doctrine from the *Consolatio:* that Boethius "above all [...] wanted to keep separate in his books the domain of reason and the domain of faith."[28] Against this, Crouse has argued that such a "Scholastic" division is alien to Boethius' thought;[29] rather, as Aquinas writes in *De Trinitate,* Boethius (unlike, say, Augustine or Ambrose) uses reason alone, *presupposing* what others have established by *auctoritates.*[30] Thus, Christian doctrines which find their ultimate support in Biblical or ecclesiastical authority are not explicitly cited.

This does not imply, however, that Boethius' Christian faith is felt nowhere in the *Consolatio*. Firstly, there is a widely accepted reference in IIIP12 to the Wisdom of Solomon[31] and several other probable allusions (or, as de Vogel terms them, "literary

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[25] Crouse, "St. Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism," 100.
[26] Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 319.
[27] Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition, Volume II* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 653.
[28] Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 321.
[29] Crouse, "*Semina Rationum*," 80.
[30] Crouse, "*Semina Rationum*," 81, 84. In the *Consolatio,* these presupposed axioms also include Boethius' correct opinion regarding the world's governance by God: see IP6.4 and 20.
[31] This is discussed in detail in Robert Crouse, "HAEC IPSA VERBA DELECTANT: Boethius and the LIBER SAPIENTIAE," in *Veritá nel tempo. Platonismo, Cristianesimo*

reminiscences").[32] As regards philosophical content, de Vogel argues convincingly that Boethius' view of prayer in VP3 is expressed in predominantly Christian rather than pagan terms.[33] Several other passages with possible Christian allusions or resonances will be discussed in the course of this current study.

Finally, a brief discussion of Boethius' philosophical sources is necessary. The Platonic texts are evidently viewed with reverence by Boethius, given Philosophy's repeated "*my* Plato," as are (to a lesser extent) Homer,[34] the Eleatics,[35] Pythagorean teachings,[36] and perhaps the Chaldean Oracles as well.[37] By contrast, though references are made to certain Stoic and Epicurean philosophers and some of their teachings, these schools are ultimately viewed as diminished and partial fragments of the true

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e contemporaneitá. Studi in onore di Luca Obertello, ed. A. Campodonico (Genoa: Il Melangolo, 2004), 54–61.

[32] C. J. de Vogel, "*Boethiana* II," *Vivarium* 10, no. 1 (1972), 16-7.

[33] de Vogel, "*Boethiana* II," 4-6; he terms Boethius' view of prayer "utterly unphilosophical" (i.e. by the standard of Hellenic philosophy), and "the feelings of a simple Christian believer" (de Vogel, "The Problem of Philosophy," 363). Other "clearly Christian features" discussed in the same article include the use of *Princeps* (translated by de Vogel "Lord") as an un-Neoplatonic term for God, and the identification of the "Creator-God" of the *Timaeus* (Plato's Demiurge) with God as First Principle/Supreme Good. This latter feature, however, can also be explained as derived from Ammonius, as will be further discussed in Chapter 2**;** see Liebeschütz, "Boethius and the Legacy," 554, regarding the "theological interpretation of the Demiurge." Another facet of de Vogel's analysis which deserves mention is the image of the goddess Fortuna in IIP1-P3 as arbitrary controller of human affairs (as opposed to the nearly universal Stoic/Platonist teaching that Divine Providence encompasses the entire cosmos, including human individuals) and its relation to the Tyche cult popular in the late ancient world. This is not to claim that Boethius himself was a worshipper of Tyche; only that, as a pervasive cultural current in his time, it could not help but impact on some level his view of "Fortune" (de Vogel, "*Boethiana* II," 17-27, 38.)

[34] Discussed in Fournier, "Boethius and Homer," 190-6.

[35] IP1.10, and the Parmenides quote at IIIP12.37.

[36] i.e. ἔπου θεῷ at IP4.38; discussed in Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 297.

[37] IVP6.38: a quote of unknown provenance, perhaps ultimately from the Chaldean Oracles or an "Orphic" text: see Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 304.

"Philosophy."[38] Though, as mentioned, Boethius cites by name no author more recent than Cicero, extensive investigation has revealed him to be equally conversant and eager to engage with the philosophical thought of his own day, Neoplatonic writers in particular. Though attempts to definitively place him, in his student days, in either Athens or Alexandria have failed,[39] parallels in the *Consolatio* (as well as his other works) to passages in Macrobius,[40] Plotinus,[41] Iamblichus,[42] Proclus,[43] and Ammonius[44] have all

[38] As pictured vividly in IP1.5: these are the "hands," it is implied, which have torn fragments from Philosophy's robe in a failed attempt to grasp her complete.
[39] C. J. de Vogel, in "*Boethiana*," *Vivarium* 9, no. 1 (1971): 52, argues for Athens from a letter of Ennodius, which conclusion he later withdraws in "*Boethiana* II," 37; Courcelle, firmly against Athens and for Alexandria, where he makes Boethius Ammonius' student (Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 316-318). Shiel (1958) and Rijk (1964) argue for Boethius' Greek learning as derived indirectly from Athens (i.e. at a distance), with no connection to Alexandria (cited in "*Boethiana* I," 50-51). Though all are intriguing possibilities, no clear-cut proof is available.
[40] Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 299
[41] Wayne J. Hankey, ""Ad intellectum ratiocinatio": Three Procline logics, *The Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena's *Periphyseon* and Boethius' *Consolatio philosophiae*," in *Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, August 21-26, 1995*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 4.
[42] Martin H. Curran, "The Immaterial Theurgy of Boethius" (MA thesis, University of Dalhousie, Halifax, 2012), Faculty of Graduate Studies Online Theses. Iamblichus is also quoted in the commentary on the *Categories* (Gersh, *Middle Platonism,* 701). Gruber, however, depicts Boethius as avoiding "extreme Neoplatonic positions such as the daemonology of Iamblichus or the theurgy of Proclus" ("Boethius extrem neuplatonische Position wie etwa die Dämonenlehre des Iamblich oder die Theurgie des Proklos vermeidet"): Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius,* 38.
[43] Klingner, *De Boethii,* 40-67; Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 302-316; Hankey, "*Secundum rei vim vel secundum cognoscentium facultatem:* Knower and known in the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius and the Proslogion of Anselm," in *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John Inglis (Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2002), 127. *Contra* these Gersh argues that the recent emphasis on Proclus' supposed influence is "somewhat excessive," and points out that Proclus is nowhere named in the Boethian corpus (Gersh, *Middle Platonism,* 701).
[44] Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 302-316. Here he argues not only for textual and philosophical parallels between the two writers, but that even Boethius' methodology in commentary writing derives from that of Ammonius' "Alexandrian School."

been noted, and Gruber sketches out five major categories of Neoplatonic influence in the *Consolatio*.[45]

2.2 The Meters of the *Consolatio:* A Neglected Study

As discussed above, the *Consolatio* is composed of alternating prose and metrical sections (also referred to as "meters"). There are thirty-nine metered sections in total; all but four (IM1; IM3; IM5; VM3) are spoken by Philosophy, with the remaining four spoken by the Prisoner. These thirty-nine poems utilize a nearly encyclopedic array of Greek and Latin meters, drawn from lyric (many examples in the *Consolatio*), epic (IIIM9), dramatic (IIM7, 3MIII), satirical (IIM1, IIIM11) and even pagan religious ritual (VM5) verse: an astonishing accomplishment in itself, and one that reveals the depth and breadth of the author's poetic skill and knowledge.[46] Given this, it is hardly surprising that contemporary evidence suggests Boethius was known in his day not only as a philosopher, commentator, politician, and highly experienced orator, but specifically as a poet.[47]

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[45] Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius,* 38. The other four are: 1) procession from and return to the One, who is God and the highest good; 2) the eternity of the cosmos; 3) the discussion regarding the nature of evil (following Proclus); 4) the discussion of Providence and Necessity (following Proclus and Ammonius); 5) The "*Timaeus* interpretation" of IIIM9.

[46] For a chart classifying the meters and showing their symmetrical organization see Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 255, adapted from Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius,* "Überblick über die Gedichte der Consolatio," fold-out chart located between p. 20 and 21.

[47] From the testimony of Cassiodorus: *condidit et carmen bucolicum*, given in Usener, *Anecdoton Holderi*, 4. It is also worth noting that Boethius' rhetorical skill and accomplishments (closely related to poetry) are here praised in detail, and (along with his poetic ones) are discussed before his philosophical accomplishments are mentioned:

It is therefore rather strange that the poetry of the *Consolatio* has been, by and large, overlooked in the literature. As Blackwood discusses, the general tendency among modern scholars is to view the *Consolatio*'s poetry as subordinate, or even superfluous, to the philosophical "argument" of the work as advanced by the prose sections. When commentators do treat the poetry, it is generally not *as* poetry but strangely arranged and metered prose; ideas and themes are treated, but most poetic and in particular aural considerations (e.g. meter, assonance, rhythm, word order) are ignored. Thus Chadwick, in his important study *Boethius: the Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* does not even discuss the *Consolatio*'s meters, despite the close relationship between music and poetry in ancient thought.[48] Scheible's *Die Gedichte in der Consolatio Philosophie des Boethius* and O'Daly's *The Poetry of Boethius* do little better, despite their promising titles: both scholars are adept at seeking out a host of thematic and textual parallels both in the *Consolatio* and other authors, but avoid any discussion of metrical or aural details.[49] Gruber, in his *Kommentar zu Boethius*, classifies the meter of each poem and demonstrates their large-scale arrangement around the midpoint of the work. However, he rarely considers Boethius' reasons for choosing a given meter, nor is there any more detailed poetic analysis. Why this widespread neglect?

Much has been made, in Gruber, Scheible, and others, of the so-called "banishment of the Muses" in IP1 and its supposed implications for the role of poetry throughout the

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utraque lingua peritissimus orator fuit. qui regem Theodorichum in senatu pro consulatu filiiorum luculenta oratione laudavit.

[48] Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: the Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[49] Helga Scheible, *Die Gedichte in der Consolatio Philosophiae des Boethius* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1972); Gerard O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

work. This scene is generally read as a re-enactment of the banishment of poetry in Book II of Plato's *Republic,* which in turn epitomizes the ancient "conflict" between philosophy and poetry (e.g. in Plato's *Ion*).[50] When Philosophy drives away the Muses who are dictating a poem in elegiac couplets to the Prisoner, she is (so the reasoning runs) clearly condemning poetry, or at least poetry that exists only for its own sake; henceforth, poetry in the work will be at the service of philosophy. So much seems reasonable. But along with this there generally goes an unspoken identification of "philosophy" with "prose," and thus the implication, or even outright statement, that -- for Philosophy and in turn the author Boethius -- poetry is inherently "inferior" to prose and thus the poems of the *Consolatio* are less important, or worthy of study, than its prose.

This reading, though popular among scholars, is in my view faulty, as it obscures or fails to take into account several aspects of the "banishment" scene as well as the *Consolatio*'s overall use of poetry and prose. To begin with, in the very same breath with which Philosophy drives out the "poetic Muses" which are clustering around Boethius' bed, she substitutes her *own* "Muses" which are to care for and heal Boethius (*meisque*

[50] Curley, "How to Read," 244. Curley proves a welcome exception to the general trend: he points out the poetry of the philosophers Parmenides, Empedocles, and Lucretius, mentioned below. His conclusions are somewhat inconsistent in that he states that, though there is a "tension between philosophy and poetry throughout [the] text, the outcome of the feud is a draw," yet in the next paragraph points out that philosophy is not, in fact, "opposed" to poetry in the way that prose is: "I do not mean to suggest that Boethius has cast his philosophy in prose and his poetic aspirations in verse. The verse and prose sections are equally poetic, or literary; the philosophy is not to be found in any one specific mode of discourse but in the arrangement of the work as a whole." He goes on to discuss poetry in the *Consolatio* as a "pharmakon": a powerful substance with "almost magical" properties which can either cure or kill, depending on what use is made of it. As we will see, this could easily apply as well to prose forms such as rhetoric.

eum Musis curandum sanandumque).[51] We might be tempted, given the mention of "poetic Muses," to assume Philosophy's "Muses" are some *other* (non-poetic) sort of Muse, were it not for the fact that Philosophy's *very next action*, other than sitting down on Boethius' bed, is to recite a poem of her own (IM2). Her words (*curandum sanandumque*) make it clear that poetry is the means, or at least among the means, by which the Prisoner is to be healed; though it may play a smaller or larger part in his cure at one moment or another, it is never in the *Consolatio* transcended or jettisoned as something which has served its function and is no longer relevant. Nor are the ancient poets such as Homer criticized, as Plato does in the *Republic*; indeed, Homer is reverently quoted four times in the prose sections (IP4.1; IP5.4; IIP2.13; IVP6.53), and once in the verse (VM2).[52] Secondly, the identification of "philosophy" with "prose" against "poetry" ignores the work of thinkers such as Parmenides (quoted in IIIP12), Empedocles, and Lucretius, who framed their philosophy in poetry. It also ignores the existence of deeply non-philosophical genres of prose: perhaps most notoriously, rhetoric. Yet Philosophy is able to put even rhetoric to good use (most notably, in Book II); as she explicitly states in IIP1, the "sweetness of rhetoric" (*rhetoricae suadela*) is, for all its sordid history, able to proceed on the "right path" (*recta calle*) if it is guided by "our (i.e. Philosophy's) institutions" (*nostra instituta*). It seems that what Philosophy is objecting to in IP1 is not "poetry" as such, nor some particular poetic genre or metrical scheme; the elegiac couplet returns, "purified" (to use Mras' term) at VM1 and, though Philosophy's denigration of

[51] Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae; Opuscula Theologica*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (Monachii: Saur, 2000), 6. All subsequent Latin quotations from the *Consolatio* are from the same edition.
[52] Michael Fournier, "Boethius and Homer," 190-6.

Boethius' Muses as "theatrical harlots" (*scenicas meretriculas*) might imply an attack on dramatic poetry, the use of iambic trimeter (the standard meter for Latin drama) at IIM7 and 3MIII dispels this hypothesis. She is not even opposed to Boethius, at the right moment, expressing his thoughts and emotions in verse (IM5 and VM3); indeed, she herself demands it at IP4.1 (*oportet vulnus detegas*: "you must bare the wound"). Rather, it seems what she is objecting to in IM1 is a particular poetic *attitude*, one highly imitative and unreflective (suggested by the fact that Boethius is *taking dictation* from his Muses), and above all self-pitying: the sort of poetry that, as she says, inflames rather than cures Boethius' despair.

The general view of the *Consolatio*'s poetry as unimportant or ancillary is thus unjustified; nonetheless, it persists. It is only in recent years that several scholars have focused on the *Consolatio*'s poetry in a set of recent studies. Firstly, Magee in his 1999 book chapter "Boethius' Anapestic Dimeters" examined a particular series of poems using a single repeated meter (the anapestic acatalectic dimeter series: IM5, IIIM2, IVM6, and VM3), and advanced a convincing argument that these poems share a common theme ("the thought that what ought to be one is somehow divided against itself") which is developed as the series progresses.[53] Curran, in his 2012 thesis *The Immaterial Theurgy of Boethius*, took up this same series along with IIIM9 (hexameter) and further developed Magee's ideas, arguing for an understanding of these poems informed by Iamblichan theurgy, the image of the circle, and the role of prayer in the *Consolatio*.[54] Finally,

[53] John Magee, "Boethius' Anapestic Dimeters (Actalectic), with Regard to the Structure and Argument of the "Consolatio"," in *Boèce ou la chaine des savoirs: Actes du colloque international de la Fondation Singer-Polignac: Paris, 8-12 juin 1999,* ed. Alain Galonnier (Louvain and Paris: Peters, 2003), 150.
[54] Curran, "The Immaterial Theurgy of Boethius."

Blackwood's groundbreaking 2015 monograph *The* Consolation *of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy* emphasized the importance of an *aurally*-focused study of the *Consolatio*'s poetry, taking into account meter, rhythm, word choice and order, assonance, and similar poetic devices. Blackwood argues that the general understanding of the *Consolation* as purely abstract philosophical argument expressed chiefly through prose leaves out an entire dimension of the text: its aural effect (particularly, that of the meters) upon the reader's body, emotions, and mind, for "if the human being is inescapably embodied, then the only route to salvation is an embodied one." For Blackwood, the *Consolatio*'s poems are "therapeutic medicine in a text of an explicitly aural character […] in which literary form takes on theurgical power."[55] Blackwood goes on to provide an in-depth study of the meters of Book I and their relationship to each other, as well as a (slightly less detailed) analysis of six repeated meters (elegiac couplet, limping iambics, anapestic dimeter catalectic, sapphic hendecasyllable, anapestic dimeter acatalectic, and glyconic). Finally, he has further developed Gruber's diagram of meters, presenting a generally symmetrical pattern centered around IIIM5.[56] Though *The* Consolation *of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy* clearly represents an enormous advance in our understanding of the *Consolatio*'s poetry, there nevertheless remains a great deal of work to be done.[57]

[55] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 19-20.
[56] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 280.
[57] Among other things, Blackwood has largely neglected those poems which do not fall into his symmetrical system or which are composed of two or more meters in alternation, and while he has dealt with the large-scale arrangement of the meters, he has only completed detailed line-by-line analyses for the poems of Book 1. He also fails to take into account the results of Curran's research, in particular the philosophical and theological basis for the use of poetry in the *Consolatio*.

2.3 IIIM9: CENTRAL PIVOT, TIMAEAN PARAPHRASE, PRAYER

One notable exception to the trend described above is the ninth meter from the third book of the *Consolatio*. Even those scholars who have tended to largely dismiss the *Consolatio*'s poetry have, by and large, recognized the importance of this particular meter. There are a number of reasons for this: it is the only poem in the work in stichic dactylic hexameter,[58] the meter used by epic and thus associated with elevated subject matter and tone; its stable, regular beat lends it an inherent *gravitas* (as Blackwood points out, it is one of the *Consolatio*'s few poems that "could be read to a metronome").[59] IIIM9's content matches its form, for, explicitly addressed to God as Creator throughout, it depicts the creation of the cosmos, recalling the *minima scintillula* of IP6 that will allow Boethius' cure. Its roughly central location in the work has led most commentators to regard it as, in some sense, "pivotal" or "central"; Beierwaltes, for instance, refers to it as the "fulcrum" of the *Consolatio,*[60] and Blackwood points out that it marks the "turning point" from negative argument (consideration of false goods) to positive argument (what the true good, or happiness, is).[61] Yet it is unclear whether IIIM9 can, in fact, be regarded as the true center of the *Consolatio*. In terms of textual extent, as Gruber points out, IIIM9 does lie quite near (if not *precisely* near) the center of the work.[62] *Structurally*,

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[58] Not, however, the only poem that *uses* hexameter, as the elegiac meters (IM1 and VM1) of course contain hexameter in alternation with pentameter.
[59] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 91.
[60] "Dieser Hymnus ist in gewissem Sinne der Angelpunkt der >Consolatio<." Werner Beierwaltes, "Trost im Begriff: Zu Boethius' Hymnus 'O Qui Perpetua Mundum Ratione Gubernas'," in *Communicatio Fidei: Festschrift für Eugen Biser Zum 65. Geburststag*, ed. Eugen Biser *et al.* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1983), 243.
[61] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 92.
[62] Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 22, f. 43.

however, it is off-center, as it comes twenty-fourth out of thirty-nine poems; IIIM5 is actually the "central" poem, mathematically speaking. This unfortunate reality has proven somewhat frustrating for commentators, as IIIM5 is in no regard particularly distinguished. Blackwood, somewhat reluctantly, accepts IIIM5 as the "actual" center and, building on Gruber's work, shows that Gruber's pattern of repeated meters around IIIM9 can in fact encompass even more meters if constructed around IIIM5 instead.[63] However, given the relative insignificance of IIIM5's meter, style, and subject matter compared to IIIM9, it is difficult to conclude that Boethius truly intended IIIM5 as "center" to the *Consolatio* (it should also be noted that even Blackwood's "symmetrical" structure fails to account for a number of meters). We will return to the question of IIIM9's placement in the Conclusion.

In addition to IIIM9's meter and placement, its content -- an account of the creation of the universe by God -- marks it out as extraordinary among the *Consolatio*'s poems. The evident similarity between IIIM9 and the account given in Plato's dialogue *Timaeus*, together with the explicit reference at IIIP9.32 to the *Timaeus* (see below) have led many scholars to term it a "Timaeus paraphrase." There is, however, evidence that IIIM9 reflects Plato's original dialogue read through various Neoplatonic interpretations, particularly Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus*: a question that we will revisit in Chapter 2.[64]

It is not, however, only the form, position, and Timaean content of IIIM9 that has led previous commentators to regard it as important; one of two poems in the book (the other

[63] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius,* 147-148.
[64] See Klingner, *De Boethii,* 40-67, and Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers,* 301-4.

is IM5, spoken by Boethius) explicitly addressed to God, it is termed a "prayer" by Philosophy who herself sings it. In the immediately preceding prose, Philosophy has just stated (IIIP9.31) that it is time for Boethius, having recognized false goods for what they are, to seek the true happiness, and Boethius assents. "But since," she goes on,

> "as is my Plato's opinion in the *Timaeus*, we ought to implore God's help in even the least of matters, what do you think we should do now, that we may be worthy to discover the abode of that highest good?"
>
> "We must call upon the Father of all things," I said, "for if this is omitted no beginning can be rightly and properly based."
>
> "You are right," she said, and at once began singing in this way:
>
> *"O you who in perpetual order govern the universe..."*[65]

IIIM9 is thus a prayer to God as governor (*gubernas*, IIIM9.1) and Creator (*sator*, 2) of the universe. Klingner analyzes it as a hymn in the ancient Hellenic style, with a tripartite composition of ἐπικλήσεις (invocation, 1-6: here indicated by the repeated *qui...qui...quem*), ἀρεταλογία (profession of divine works, 6-21: here a description of God's creation of the cosmos), and εὐχαι (petitions, 22-28: here a request to view God,

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[65] IIIP9.32-IIIM9.1: 32 *Sed cum, uti in Timaeo Platoni, inquit, nostro placet, in minimis quoque rebus divinum praesidium debeat implorari, quid nunc faciendum censes, ut illius summi boni sedem repperire mereamur? --* 33 *Invocandum, inquam, rerum omnium patrem, quo praetermisso nullum rite fundatur exordium. -- Recte, inquit; ac simul ita modulata est: O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas,...* The translation I give above is from Boethius, *Theological Tractates; The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. and ed. by H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand, and S.J. Tester (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), 270. All subsequent quotations are mine except those identified as being from Tester or from another translator.

the highest Good and source of true happiness).[66] As Gersh points out, this resembles the triadic structure of Proclus' hymns.[67] Theiler, using a similar division, finds in it the structure of procession (1-20) and reversion (20-28).[68]

Although prayer is not explicitly discussed in the *Consolatio* as often as some of its other major themes (e.g. Providence or evil), the three passages that treat it extensively show clearly that both Philosophy and Boethius as author consider rightly-made prayers to be at once effectual and essential. Firstly, there is the above-mentioned passage directly preceding IIIM9, in which Philosophy states that even "in the least of matters" (*in minimis quoque rebus*) "divine aid" (*divinum praesidium*) "ought to be implored" (*debeat implorari*). Boethius, prompted by Philosophy, agrees that in their quest to find the highest good "the Father of all things must be called upon" (*invocandum rerum omnium patrem*), for "when this is omitted no beginning can be rightly made" (*quo praetermisso nullum rite fundatur exordium*). The second passage occurs at VP3.34, where Boethius, worried about the consequences if free will is proven not to exist, declares:

> "And so that sole intercourse between men and God will be removed, that is, hope and prayer for aversion (if indeed at the price of a proper humility we deserve the inestimable return of God's grace), and that is the only way in which men seem able to converse with God and to be joined by the very manner of their supplication

[66] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 40.
[67] Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism,* 703.
[68] Willy Theiler, *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1966), 322.

> to that inaccessible light, even before they receive what they seek. Now if these things, once the necessity of what shall be is admitted, be thought to have no power, how should we be able to be joined and cleave to him, the highest principle of all things? So it will necessarily follow, as you sang a little while ago [IVM6.43-4] that human kind would, torn apart and disjoined, in pieces fall from their origin."[69]

Thus, for the Prisoner, prayer is the single, essential means of communication and, ultimately, union with the Divine. Nor does Philosophy disagree; indeed, her final exhortation to the Prisoner highlights the importance of rightly made prayers (VP6.46): "'Nor vainly are our hopes placed in God, nor our prayers, which when they are right cannot be ineffectual. Turn away then from vices, cultivate virtues, lift up your mind to righteous hopes, offer up humble prayers to heaven.'"[70]

In his thesis as well as his article "The Circular Activity of Prayer in Boethius' *Consolation,*" Curran takes up the theme of prayer, tracing it through the anapestic dimeter acatalectic series.[71] The first poem in the series, IM5, one of the few poems

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[69] 34 *Auferetur igitur unicum illud inter homines deumque commercium, sperandi scilicet ac deprecandi, si quidem iustae humilitatis pretio inaestimabilem vicem divinae gratiae promeremur; qui solus modus est quo cum deo colloqui homines posse videantur illique inaccessae luci, prius quoque quam impetrent, ipsa supplicandi ratione coniungi.* 35 *Quae si, recepta futurorum necessitate, nihil virium habere credantur, quid erit quo summo illi rerum principi connecti atque adhaerere possimus?* 36 *Quare necesse erit humanum genus, uti paulo ante cantabas, dissaeptum atque disiunctum suo fonte fatiscere.* Translation from Tester.

[70] 46 *Nec frustra sunt in deo positae spes precesque, quae, cum rectae sunt, inefficaces esse non possunt.* 47 *Aversamini igitur vitia, colite virtutes, ad rectas spes animum sublevate, humiles preces in excelsa porrigite.* Translation from Tester.

[71] Martin Curran, "The Circular Activity of Prayer in Boethius' *Consolation*," *Dionysius* 29 (Dec 2011), 193-204; Curran, "The Immaterial Theurgy of Boethius."

spoken by the Prisoner, is addressed to God as governor of the cosmos, and can thus, like IIIM9, be read as a prayer; Curran contrasts these two metered prayers, arguing that the latter is rightly made (and thus effectual) while the former is not. His argument is based upon a geometrical image repeatedly used throughout the *Consolatio* and explicitly present in each of these four poems: that of circular motion and the circle or sphere, as further discussed below.

2.4 THE CIRCLE IN THE *CONSOLATIO* AND IN IIIM9

Boethius, of course, is far from the first philosopher to make use of circular imagery. In so doing, he is drawing upon a tradition going back at least to the *Timaeus* and *Laws* of Plato, with precedents in Empedocles' cosmic sphere and Parmenides' depiction of Being "like the bulk of a sphere well-rounded on all sides" (πάντοθεν εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ), quoted in the *Consolatio* at IIIP12.37.[72] In the *Timaeus*, the self-similarity and inherent completeness of the circle make it an ideal shape for the cosmos (*Timaeus* 33b), which is then given a rotary circular motion upon its own center -- "that one of the seven motions which is especially associated with understanding and intelligence" (34a2).[73] Time, similarly, "imitates eternity and circles according to

[72] For an in-depth discussion of circular imagery in Plato, see Lynn Ballew, *Straight and Circular: A Study of Imagery in Greek Philosophy* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1979), 79-122, and Edward N. Lee, "Reason and Rotation: Circular Movement as the Model of Mind (Nous) in Later Plato," in *Facets of Plato's Philosophy*, ed. W.H. Werkmeister (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976), 70-102.

[73] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1238. All subsequent translated Timaeus quotations are from this edition.

number" (38a8: χρόνου ταῦτα αἰῶνα μιμουμένου καὶ κατ᾽ ἀριθμὸν κυκλουμένου),[74] and the stars and planets likewise trace out circular orbits within the two great spheres that comprise the cosmos, that of the Same (the outside sphere) and of the Different (the inside) (36b9-37a, 38c4-e). Human beings, too, reflect this sphericity, though only partially; our "ball-like" (σφαιροειδὲς) heads are the most "divine part of us, and master of all our other parts" (44d5), and our power of sight is given to us "so that we might observe the orbits of intelligence in the universe and apply them to the revolutions of our own understanding" (47b8-10). Finally, noetic activity (whether divine or human) is associated with rotary circular motion upon an axis: the gods are given "an unvarying movement in the same place, by which the god would always think the same thoughts about the same things" (40a8-b1: τὴν μὲν ἐν ταὐτῷ κατὰ ταὐτά, περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀεὶ τὰ αὐτὰ ἑαυτῷ διανοουμένῳ), and orderly noetic thought, as exemplified by perfect circular revolution, is the goal of human existence (42a-44c4). In Book X of the *Laws*, Plato further explains this analogy; reason and rotary motion in a single location (illustrated by "a sphere being turned on a lathe") are both "determined by a single plan and procedure and [...] (a) regular, (b) uniform, (c) always at the same point in space, (d) around a fixed center, [and] (e) in the same position relative to other objects" (898a10-b1: τὸ κατὰ ταὐτὰ δήπου καὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ περὶ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ἕνα λόγον καὶ τάξιν μίαν ἄμφω κινεῖσθαι).[75] Lee argues that this implies not only self-similarity and

[74] Plato, *Platonis Opera,* ed. John Burnet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0179%3Atext%3DTim.%3Asection%3D17a. All subsequent Greek quotations from the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* are from this edition.
[75] Plato, *Laws*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1555.

completeness but an "overcoming of all perspectival limitation, or the cancelling of perspectivity."[76]

A number of recent studies of the *Consolatio* have recognized the importance of circular imagery. In "The External Referent", Scarry describes Boethius' progression through the "cognitive hierarchy" of Book I (sensation), Book II (imagination), Book IV (reason), and Book V ("insight," or intelligence). Book III, the central book, is in her view "lifted out of and above the material world of creation"[77] by "the perfection of its reasoning, by the "inextricable labyrinth of arguments" with which Philosophy creates a "wonderful circle of divine simplicity""; it is "a retreat from the world into "the most secret seat of the mind", where Philosophy and her student attain the sight of God, after which they return to earth"" and compared to which the other books, "even at their height, are capable of only a lesser perfection, flawed by their participation in the created world."[78] She points out the evolution of circular imagery throughout the work: Fortune's wheel in Book II corresponds to the faculty of imagination, and the concentric circles of Book IV that of reason; both are transcended by the "singularity, the stillness, and the three-dimensionality of that shape considered by Parmenides and Plato to be of all shapes the most perfect: "a sphere well-rounded on all sides"," which for Scarry also forms the shape of the *Consolatio* as a whole.[79] Fournier, disagreeing with Scarry concerning the role of Book III (he associates it, along with Book IV, with the faculty of reason), nonetheless takes up the theme of spherical imagery, tracing it through all five books of

[76] Lee, "Reason and Rotation," 81.
[77] Scarry, "The External Referent," 156
[78] Scarry, "The External Referent," 157.
[79] Scarry, "The External Referent," 166-177.

the *Consolatio* as he connects the four faculties (sense, imagination, reason, and intelligence) with the subjects of the *quadrivium* (astronomy, music, geometry, and arithmetic). For Fournier, Book V, rather than III, forms the pinnacle by reducing the circle to its center, which represents divine simplicity and unity, in which everything is contained.[80]

Finally, Curran builds on Fournier's analysis, arguing that the circles throughout the work are a form of "immaterial theurgy" similar to that discussed in Iamblichus; the Prisoner, by contemplating the circles given to him by Philosophy at different stages, ascends progressively through the levels of understanding. Simultaneously, the divine circles (the Iamblichan *sumbola*) within the Prisoner himself are awakened, and his own faculties of thought and prayer are brought into harmony with this ideal circular motion. For Proclus, the circle in itself exemplifies remaining, procession, and return; proper prayer, circular in motion, causes the one praying to re-unite with the One, which is at once his origin and end. Thus the circle can be seen as the "finishing point" or end towards which the Prisoner strives throughout the work -- consistent with, as Curran states, a tradition in which "circular action is the best kind."[81] IIIM9 is an effective prayer because in its imagery and content it embodies this circular action, while IM5 ascribes a circular order to the heavens but not the human world, and therefore lacks the fully circular nature, and the efficacy, of a proper prayer such as IIIM9. Scarry adopts a similar view, emphasizing the self-sufficiency of circular action as not only ideal but divine: "for it is in the final and perfect shape of the work, the well-rounded sphere, that the nature of

[80] Michael Fournier, "Boethius and the Consolation of the Quadrivium," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, no. 34 (2008): 1-21.
[81] Curran, "The Circular Activity," 194.

divine consciousness is apprehended. In creating that shape, Boethius intended the work to be, like Plato's perfect cosmos, ‘able of itself because of its excellence to company with itself and needing none other beside, sufficing unto itself as acquaintance and friend’ *(Timaeus* 34)."[82]

Symmetrical, complete, sufficient unto itself -- it might well seem that in such a system there is no room left for the *reader* of the work, nor indeed anyone or anything apart from God. It is certainly true that the circle is the most widely used shape in the *Consolatio*'s explicit imagery, running through nearly all parts of the work; it is also hard to deny its general association in the *Consolatio* with the nature and action of divinity. We will find, however, that the circle/sphere, though important, is not the only significant geometrical shape in the *Timaeus*, nor the only one adapted by Boethius in his *Consolatio* or found in the works of Boethius' fellow Neoplatonists (including Proclus, Iamblichus, and Dionysius). Neither, as we will see, are its connotations for the Prisoner exclusively positive. Indeed, pure circular motion carries with it the implicit threat of either total assimilation of *all* being and activity to the Divine, or an unattainable perfection that serves only to mock and tantalize human beings. However, rectilinear motion (corresponding to the Greek *X*) and spiral motion (corresponding to the helix) play an important role in the *Timaeus*, are taken up by Proclus and other Neoplatonists, and act as paradigmatic shapes within IIIM9 and throughout the *Consolatio*. The *Consolatio*, thus, cannot be fully understood without an examination of these latter shapes and types of motion.

[82] Scarry, "The External Referent," 177.

The present study will use IIIM9 as focus and model for the larger shape of the work. Curran and others have argued that the *content* of this meter employs circular imagery throughout -- but does the detailed metrical structure of the poem likewise exemplify circular motion? This, as well as the tightly knit relationship between the content and structure of IIIM9, remains to be explored. Magee, promisingly, remarks in his 2003 article "Boethius' Anapestic Dimeters" that IIIM3's "central lines [13-17], the abridgement of *Timaeus* 35a-36e, are therefore *almost self-referential in literary import*" (emphasis mine). Yet this self-referentiality, for Magee, is limited to IIIm9's position and function in the work as a whole ("the central ὀμφαλός around which a larger structure revolves").[83] My thesis, as will be seen, is that IIIM9 is not "almost" but *in fact* highly self-referential; its Timaean content provides the necessary framework through which not only its own formal structure but that of the *Consolatio*'s broader narrative may be understood. IIIm9, in short, does not simply describe the process by which the Demiurge embodies an eternal model of the cosmos in matter and time. It is *itself* a poetic "Timaean cosmos" in miniature, embodied by a Demiurge (Boethius himself) in poetic "matter" (words, comprised of syllables) and "time" (meter), which displays not only circular, but also rectilinear and, ultimately, spiral motion, and which in turn serves as a "model" for the "cosmos" of the work as a whole**.** Due to this close linkage of content and form, before we can understand the structure of IIIM9 and its wider implications for the *Consolatio*, we must first investigate the content of IIIM9 as adapted from Plato's *Timaeus* and read through the interpretive lens of Proclus' commentary.

[83] Magee, "Boethius' Anapestic Dimeters," 151.

CHAPTER 3: IIIM9 AS *TIMAEUS* PARAPHRASE

In this chapter I will summarize the main concepts of the *Timaeus* which are relevant to the content of IIIM9. I will then show how IIIM9 utilizes and adapts the *Timaeus* material, at the same time touching upon the most salient references to later Neoplatonic works, in particular Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus*, following Klingner's analysis.[84] Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a focused look at non-circular motion in the *Timaeus* as well as some Neoplatonic writings.

The *Timaeus* can be broken down into four major sections. The Introduction stretches from 17a to 27c and sets the context for Timaeus' speech on the origin of the cosmos. The first part of the speech, beginning at 27d, describes the cosmos and its various inhabitants as the work of Intellect. The second part, starting at 47e, discusses the role of Necessity and the "receptacle" in which the cosmos is created. The third section, beginning at 69a, seeks to draw Intellect and Necessity together as it provides a fuller picture of the nature of human beings (both body and soul) and their proper end. Of these parts, the first part of Timaeus' speech is by far the most relevant to IIIM9 *per se*: six central concepts -- the eternal Model, the Demiurge, the elements, the structure of the World-Soul, time, and the creation of lesser souls -- are all introduced here. However, the other three sections do contain passages of interest for the wider *Consolatio*, which I will touch upon briefly.

3.1 INTRODUCTION (17A-27B)

[84] Klingner, *De Boethii*. I have chosen to follow Klingner's analysis as it is the first, and most detailed, analysis of exactly which elements in IIIM9 derive from Proclus' commentary, and is repeatedly referenced by Courcelle and others.

The dialogue opens with Socrates, Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates meeting the day after they have held a lengthy theoretical discussion on the ideal city. After a brief recapitulation of its most salient features, Socrates expresses a wish to hear a speech depicting the ideal city in living action. Critias complies with a brief story about long-ago Athens' defensive war against an aggressive Atlantean empire, promising a fuller version after Timaeus (the "most astronomical" among the group) has had a chance to lay the proper groundwork in his speech, "beginning with the origin of the universe" (ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως) and "ending with the nature of human beings" (τελευτᾶν δὲ εἰς ἀνθρώπων φύσιν). Socrates assents, suggesting that Timaeus invoke the gods before speaking, which he does (27c-d).

We have already touched upon Timaeus' invocation with respect to IIIP9; however, two additional features of this section deserve note. Firstly, it has been pointed out that Socrates' desire to see the ideal city not as a purely theoretical structure but in reality parallels the Demiurge's desire to see the abstract Model brought into physical existence;[85] this suggests that Critias functions here as a sort of human "Demiurge." Secondly, Timaeus' plan to "begin with the origin of the universe" and "end with the nature of human beings" recalls Philosophy's overall plan for healing the Prisoner: to start with the *minima scintillula*, his correct belief about the origin of the universe, and end with the regained knowledge of his own human nature.

3.2 First Part of Timaeus' Speech (27d-47e)

[85] Dr. Eli Diamond, personal communication, January 2019.

3.2.1 The Eternal Model

Timaeus begins by distinguishing between, on the one hand, that which always *is*, has no cause, and is grasped by a reasoned account (λόγος), and, on the other, that which comes to be and passes away, has a cause, and is grasped by sensation (αἴσθησις) and by opinion (δόξα) (28a). Clearly, the perceptible, corporeal cosmos falls into the latter group (28c); its pattern or Model (παράδειγμα), though, must be eternal, for only the craftsman[86] who looks at a changeless model will create a beautiful work. Furthermore, the Model is no lifeless, abstracted blueprint; neither is it a part (μέρος) of anything else. Rather, it is a single, self-complete unity (31b), a Living Thing (ζῷον) that contains within itself all "intelligible living things" (τὰ γὰρ δὴ νοητὰ ζῷα πάντα), just as "our world is made up of us and all the other visible creatures"; the "best of the intelligible things" (τῶν νοουμένων καλλίστῳ), it encompasses them all.

3.2.2 The Demiurge

As previously mentioned, δημιουργὸς is first used at 28b in its literal sense; it reappears at 29a, where the visible cosmos is created by a *divine* craftsman or Demiurge, the "most excellent" of causes. At 29e we learn why he created the universe: he is

[86] δημιουργὸς. This is Plato's first use of the term in this dialogue, and there is no implication as yet of a *divine* Demiurge; the metaphor is merely that of a human craftsman or artisan.

"supremely good" (30b), and thus, "free from jealousy" (φθόνος ἐκτὸς), he "desired everything to become as much like himself as possible" (πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα ἐβουλήθη γενέσθαι παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ); that is, for "everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as was possible" (ἀγαθὰ μὲν πάντα, φλαῦρον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι κατὰ δύναμιν). This means the cosmos must be ordered, for the Demiurge believed "that order was in every way better than disorder" (ἐκεῖνο [sc. τάξις] τούτου [sc. ἀταξία] πάντως ἄμεινον). Finally, the Demiurge is identified with "divine providence" (τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ πρόνοιαν), a concept that will be central to Books IV-V of the *Consolatio*. It is worth briefly listing other names and epithets for the Demiurge that appear elsewhere in the *Timaeus*: "The Maker" (ὁ ποιῶν, 31b), "the Builder" (ὁ συνιστάς, 32c), "eternal god" (ὄντος ἀεὶ θεοῦ, 34b), "the god" (ὁ θεὸς, 34c), "Father who had begotten (i.e. the universe)" (ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ, 37c) and, most elaborately, "the maker and Father of this universe" (τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς, 28c).

3.2.3 The Elements

The elements (fire, air, water, earth) serve as raw material for the cosmos: "that which comes to be must have bodily form (σωματοειδὲς), and be both visible (ὁρατὸν) and tangible (ἁπτόν), but nothing could ever become visible apart from fire, nor tangible without something solid, nor solid without earth" (31b). Hence earth and fire, at a minimum, are necessary for a visible, tangible cosmos, and these two elements cannot be properly combined without an intermediary to act as a "bond" (δεσμός), that is, as the middle term in a geometrical series. In a two-dimensional universe this could be

accomplished by a single middle term (a:x = x:b), but in a three-dimensional universe two middle terms are required (a:x = x:y = y:b): hence the need for both air *and* water as intermediaries.[87] Being thus ordered in a self-similarly proportionate mathematical series, the elements make the world they comprise a "symphony of proportion" and "bestow friendship" upon it, ensuring that it cannot be undone by any except the Demiurge himself (32c).

3.2.4 The World's Body and Soul

The Demiurge shapes the cosmos' body as a round sphere, equidistant from the center on all sides, and smooth on the outside; not only is this shape "the best" due to its self-similarity, it is also most practical for a cosmos that is to encompass all other things. Unlike lesser living things, the cosmos is a complete whole, entirely self-sufficient and singly existent (i.e. there is *nothing* outside it) and thus has no need for sensory organs, a respiratory or digestive apparatus, or appendages (33c-34a). It has a single self-similar motion befitting its sphericity: a rotary motion upon its own axis in a single location (34a), the motion "which is especially associated with understanding and intelligence" and thus appropriate for the visible cosmos, a "blessed god (εὐδαίμων θεός)."[88]

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[87] See Francis Macdonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1948), 45-52, where he demonstrates with a sample sequence formed from powers of 2: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512... It can be observed that every second number (4, 16, 64) is a square (a two-dimensional number); thus squares are joined by a single connecting term. Cubes (three-dimensional numbers), however, occur every *three* numbers (8, 64, 512) and thus require not one but two connecting terms to join them.

[88] Discussed as part of the description of the body, although, properly speaking, caused by the World-Soul, as motion in the *Timaeus* is *always* associated with soul: on this point

The description of the World Soul and its formation (35a-37a) is a great deal more intricate than that of the body.[89] Just as the latter was formed from the elements combined in specific proportions, the soul is formed from several mixtures: 1) a mixture of indivisible (eternal) Being and divisible (corporeal) Being which, together, form an intermediate form of Being; 2) a mixture of the indivisible Same and the divisible Same, and their intermediate; and 3) a mixture of the indivisible Different and the divisible Different, along with their intermediate. All three mixtures are blended together, and the entire mixture divided into parts, to form a mathematical series alternating between the first four powers of two (1, 2, 4, and 8) and those of three (1, 3, 9, and 27).[90] The intervals are then "filled in" with smaller portions of material, producing intermediate ratios between the members of the series and using up the mixture.[91] The image, Zelda states, is that of a metalworker inscribing precisely spaced gridlines along a long strip of metal.[92] The Demiurge is now described as cutting the entire strip in half along its length, riveting or soldering the centers of the two thinner strips together to form an *X* (Greek

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see Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 119, citing Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus* (iii, 119).

[89] For a fuller discussion, see Sergio Zelda, "How to Build a World Soul," in *Reason and Necessity: Essays on Plato's* Timaeus, ed. M.R. Wright (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 23-41, and Luc Brisson and Walter Meyerstein, *Inventing the Universe* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995), 32-35.

[90] Together, the two series form the following: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 8, 27, hence seven intervals in total (not eight, as the first member of both series is 1 and thus identical).

[91] Though, again, there is some ambiguity on this point, for human souls are later being described as created from "what remained of the previous ingredients" (41d), which happen to be at lesser grades of purity. Zelda, in "How to Build," 33-35, argues that the seeming contradiction arises from two differing metaphors: the "geometrical metaphor" of marking proportionate intervals deals with pure mathematical quantities (in which no "excess material" can possibly be left over) whereas the image of a craftsman cutting and soldering metal suggests the possibility for producing thin shavings or other scraps.

[92] Zelda, "How to Build," 28.

chi) shape, and, bending each strip back in a circle upon itself, soldering the opposite ends together in the same manner.[93] Both circles are then made to rotate upon themselves as previously described, yet with opposing motions: one, the outer, revolves "toward the right by way of the side" with a dominant motion that turns the entire cosmos from perimeter to center; the second, inner circle revolves "towards the left by way of the diagonal" with a motion oblique to the first. The outer circle is undivided (hence "of the Same", ταὐτοῦ) while the inner one is divided six times, to make seven circles corresponding with the seven intervals previously described and moving in varying, though proportionate, directions and speeds (36c-d; hence "of the Different", θατέρου). The soul is now woven together with the body "center to center," extending to its periphery. It is important to note that the World-Soul is emphatically *not* a mindless clockwork mechanism: rather, it is able to reason and draw conclusions concerning both perceptible and intelligible objects in a far more accurate manner than human minds. When it encounters something perceptible, "the circle of the Different goes straight and proclaims it throughout its whole soul," producing "firm and true opinions and convictions"; when something intelligible, the circle of the Same "runs well and reveals it," yielding "understanding and knowledge" (37a-c).

3.2.5 Time

[93] "Riveting" or "soldering" is, of course, metaphorical here: indeed the two circles cannot be fixed to one another in any rigid way, for they must revolve simultaneously and independently of one another.

After creating the visible cosmos, the Demiurge observes it "in motion and alive," and, delighted, wants to make it still more like his Model. Unfortunately, one aspect of his Model -- its eternal nature -- cannot be completely replicated in that which *comes to be*. The Demiurge is forced to compromise: the visible cosmos cannot have eternity bestowed upon it, but it can become a "moving image of eternity" (εἰκὼ κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος), moving "according to number" (37c-d). The Sun, Moon, and five other "wanderers" (πλάνητες, 38c) are placed in the appropriate pre-marked intervals in the Sphere of the Different and begin to revolve according to these intervals; time thus "imitates eternity and circles according to number" (χρόνου ταῦτα αἰῶνα μιμουμένου καὶ κατ᾽ ἀριθμὸν κυκλουμένου). Indeed, Timaeus goes on to remark that "time really *is* the wanderings of these bodies" (τὰς τούτων πλάνας) (39d). By "imitating its sempiternal nature" (πρὸς τὴν τῆς διαιωνίας μίμησιν φύσεως), the "turnings" of these stars and planets make this cosmos as much like the "perfect and intelligible Living Thing" as possible.

It is necessary, before leaving the subject of the World Soul's intricate motions, to point out what will be a repeated leitmotif in the *Timaeus* -- namely, that both circles (the Same and the Different) are absolutely required to create a complete cosmos that images the entirety of the eternal Model and thus fulfills the Demiurge's purpose. Although the Circle of the Same is repeatedly described as "dominant," both in motion (39a; 40a) and epistemologically (i.e. possessing knowledge as opposed to opinion), there is no suggestion that the Circle of the Different is at any point to be done away with or transformed into a duplicate of the Same. Though the outer motion is dominant, *both* motions are required to weave the intricate array of orbital turnings that resemble the

incredible complexity of the eternal Living Thing. If the inner circle were to be removed, the cosmos would suffer for it, as it would no longer be as accurate an image of the eternal Model. Moreover, the capacity of the World-Soul to *reason* would be impaired, as it could only judge regarding intelligible, not sensible, things. This leads us to, perhaps, a startling conclusion: "inferior," to Timaeus and to Plato, does *not* signify "in need of improvement or change (or, worse, "elimination")." This theme will prove important to the *Consolatio*'s narrative as well.

3.2.6 The Creation of Lesser Souls

If the cosmos is to adequately embody its model, it must contain "the same kinds and numbers of living things as those which, according to the discernment of Intellect, are contained within the real Living Thing" (39e), i.e. the Model. These are, in order: the "heavenly race of gods"; winged creatures that travel through the air; creatures that live in water; and creatures with feet that live on land (including humans). The heavenly gods, the stars, are created by the Demiurge himself and placed throughout the Outer Circle; each of them has two movements, rotation upon its own axis (like the cosmos) and revolution, as they are continually carried along by the motion of the Same (40a-b). Earth, too, as our nurturer and "the maker and guardian of day and night," is a god (indeed "the foremost" one: 40c), as are, presumably, the planets;[94] and there are other, non-stellar gods (i.e. the Olympian deities), about which we can know little and must be content with what we have been told (40d-e).

[94] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 119.

Together, these gods are entrusted with the task of creating the remaining three sorts of mortal beings; if the Demiurge himself made them, they would be immortal, and the cosmos would be incomplete, for it must contain *all* sorts of living things (i.e. mortal as well as immortal). Here again we see in another form the conundrum raised above: the universe, in order to be the *best* it can be, requires the existence of mortal and thus *inferior* beings! The Demiurge will make only their souls, which are "divine" and share the immortality that the gods possess. After mixing together the (less pure) residue of the previous ingredients,[95] he divides the mixture into a number of souls equal to the number of the stars, assigning each soul to a star; then, mounting it into a "carriage," he shows it the nature of the universe (41d-42a). The law of reincarnation is explained: all the human souls are to be implanted in human bodies designed by the gods; after death, they will be reborn in accordance with their actions. Just souls are reborn as men; unjust ones as women, then (after further unjust lives) as beasts (42b-d) a process described in more detail in Part III.

The section closes with a first look at human anatomy, intellect, sensation, and movement; we will discuss the passages relating to motion in more detail towards the end of this chapter. Two other aspects of human existence are pertinent here: 1) humans contain, within their heads (ball-shaped, in imitation of the cosmos) the same two orbits (the Same and the Different) that the cosmos uses to reason and which, presumably, operate in the same manner, though their functioning is impeded by the "disturbances" induced by rectilinear human motion and by sensation (43a-45b); 2) the proper goal for

[95] From, presumably, the making of the World Soul, not its body, as the Demiurge is crafting human *souls,* even though these ingredients were described as being "completely used up"; see Footnote 91 above.

human beings in this life is to "observe the orbits of intelligence in the universe and apply them to our own understanding," as this will stabilize the disordered revolutions within us through imitation of the cosmic god's own revolutions (47b-c).

3.3 Second (47e-69a) and Third (69b-92c) Parts of Timaeus' Speech

Timaeus now explains that he must begin again, from a new starting point (47e-48b): he has discussed "what has been crafted by Intellect" (νόος), i.e. the structure of the cosmos, its body and soul, and the living beings it contains, but he has hitherto neglected the role of "Necessity" (ἀνάγκη). This ordered cosmos, he explains, is of "mixed birth" (μεμειγμένη γένεσις), the offspring of a union of Necessity and Intellect. Although Intellect has to a large degree "prevailed" over Necessity by "persuading (τῷ πείθειν) it to direct most of the things that come to be toward what is best", there are limits to its persuasive power. Necessity, it appears, is not infinitely malleable as it has a peculiar nature of its own as the "Wandering Cause" (ἡ πλανωμένη αἰτία): to set things adrift (literally, "in motion" (φέρειν πέφυκεν)).

What precisely does Timaeus mean by "Necessity"? The clearest statement, perhaps, occurs at 48e-49a, where he explains that we have previously distinguished only two sorts of things: an eternal Model, "intelligible and always changeless," and the visible cosmos, its imitation. A third thing is necessary, called here a *receptacle* (ὑποδοχή), though Timaeus employs a range of other terms as well to capture a concept he admits is "difficult and vague": a "wetnurse of becoming" (γενέσεως...τιθήνη, 49a), a "mother"

(μήτηρ, 50d), or "space" (χώρα, 52b)[96], which cannot be apprehended either by understanding or by the senses, but by a dreamlike sort of negative reasoning ("bastard reasoning," 52b). He puts forward two main arguments for this concept: 1) space must exist if anything is to exist, because the alternative (that things exist and yet do not do so in any place) is absurd (52b); 2) an image of a Form must come to be *in* something other than the Form, or else (i.e. if it inheres *only* in the Form and nothing else) it is no image at all but rather *identical* to the Form (52c).

It should be noted that this receptacle is *not* identical to the elements (fire, air, water, earth); rather, the elements with their distinctive forms and qualities come to be and pass away within it (50e; 52e). A "likely account" of the elements' internal structure and of natural phenomena such as burning, condensation, and weight follows, which leads naturally into an examination of how sensory phenomena are produced. It is worth noting Timaeus' ethical conclusion regarding the receptacle (68e-69a): we must search for the divine in all things if "we are to gain a life of happiness to the extent that our nature allows"; as for the necessary, we must search for it "for the sake of the divine," for the divine cannot (by us at least) be discerned or visualized on its own without the necessary. We cannot ourselves see the Forms directly: we *must* see them as imaged or embodied in the physical world. This will have implications for the Prisoner's own search for God throughout the *Consolatio* and the various means by which this search is undertaken.

[96] As Cornford (*Plato's Cosmology,* 102-3) points out, our modern phrase "space and time" (which puts the two on a more or less equal footing) is alien to Timaeus' thinking here. Time, for Timaeus, is the regular motion of heavenly bodies directed by Soul; space is a plastic medium in which qualities come to be. The two are not at all alike.

Finally, Timaeus combines his two approaches -- the role of Intellect and that of Necessity -- in an extended inquiry into the anatomy and nature of human beings. Here again the ethical conclusion is most important for our purposes. First, at 87c-88c, we learn that human beings must nurture and exercise both the soul and body so that they can balance one another; like the Circles of the Different and the Same, the body is "inferior" to the soul in the sense that it is (or should be) ordered and directed by it, but it is not to be neglected *in favor of* the soul. Similarly, each part of the tripartite soul is to be exercised, although the highest, sovereign part of our soul (i.e. our capacity for reason) is the part which leads us "up away from the earth and toward what is akin to us in heaven, as though we were plants (φυτὸν) grown not from the earth but from heaven" (90a) -- a striking image.[97] What does this "leading" entail? A dedication to the "love of learning and true wisdom," so that the motions which are proper to our reason, the revolutions "thrown off course at our birth," may be righted and brought into conformity with the divine revolutions. By this we achieve our goal: our thoughts will be "immortal and divine" (ἀθάνατα καὶ θεῖα) -- that is, we will partake of immortality to the extent that human nature is capable of, and this is "the most excellent life offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore."

3.4 IIIM9 AS NEOPLATONIC-INFLUENCED TIMAEAN PARAPHRASE

[97] Compare the rather anthropomorphic discussion of plant life at IIIP11:18-24 of the *Consolatio*.

It is now time to turn to IIIM9. As Klingner states in his commentary, it is essential to distinguish the elements of this hymn that are directly derived from Plato's *Timaeus* from those that are clearly inspired by Neoplatonic writings;[98] however, I find he tends to minimize IIIM9's dependence upon the *Timaeus* and exaggerate Boethius' debt to Proclus and his fellow Neoplatonists.[99] I will concisely work through IIIM9, outlining both those passages that seem to point to the *Timaeus* and those that Klingner most strongly identifies as Neoplatonist, with a focus on philosophical content as opposed to mere similarities of phrasing.

Line 1: *O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas...*

This opening line attributes to the Demiurge not creation *per se* but rather *governance* of the world by means of "perpetual reason": not an activity which he performs in the *Timaeus*. (In fact, the entity which answers most closely to this description in the *Timaeus* is not the Demiurge but the World-Soul, itself "a blessed god" (34b) which, endowed with reason, directs the motion of the cosmos!) Klingner is right to trace this to a hymn of Cleanthes and related sources.[100]

Line 2: *terrarum caelique sator...*

Sator can mean not only literally "sower, planter" but also "Father" or "begetter": an epithet used repeatedly for the Demiurge (28c; 37c), though Klingner instead cites a

[98] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 40.
[99] For example, Klingner (*De Boethii*, 41) states that nothing in lines 1-3 relates to the *Timaeus* paraphrase, which I find an extreme view; as discussed below, there are aspects of these three lines that are clearly *Timaeus*-derived.
[100] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 41.

hymn of Euclerius[101]; in fact, *caelestum* or *hominum sator* is a common epithet for Jupiter.

Line 2-3: *qui tempus ab aevo/ire iubes...*

Klingner points out the similarity to *perfectasque iubens* in line 9; he argues that this language of "command," applied to the divine, is more common to Jewish and Christian than to Hellenic thought, citing in support the Psalms and several Christian hymns.[102] However, the general idea that time derives *from* an eternal model is clearly Timaean: the Demiurge wishes the corporeal universe to imitate the eternal one, and it does so through the movements of the stars and planets, which themselves constitute time (39d).

Line 3: *...stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri...*

Klingner rightly identifies the depiction of *stabilis* (nowhere predicated of the Demiurge) and its opposition to *moveri* as Neoplatonic, rooted in the scheme of remaining and procession;[103] although, of course, it is not incorrect to say that the Timaean Demiurge "causes all to be moved" (i.e. by endowing it with soul, which is the cause of motion).

Lines 4-7: *quem non externae pepulerunt fingere causae*

materiae fluitantis opus, verum insita summi

forma boni livore carens; tu cuncta superno

ducis ab exemplo...

Insita summi forma boni and *livore carens* are clear references to 29d-30a: the Demiurge is good, supremely good, and free from jealousy. I disagree with Klingner that

[101] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 41.
[102] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 41.
[103] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 42.

non externae pepulerunt fingere causae cannot be traced to the Timaeus.[104] On the contrary, we read at 30a-b that the "most preeminent reason (ἀρχὴν κυριωτάτην) for the origin of the world's coming to be" was the Demiurge's own supreme goodness and his wish that the world be as good as possible; it is an obvious inference that nothing *external to* the Demiurge drove him to create the world. *Opus* is a clear reference to the craftsman metaphor; the Demiurge's work is an artistic creation. *Materiae fluitantis* refers to the Receptacle: it is "fluid" both in the sense of "moving" (52d-e) and in the sense of "having no fixed shape or attributes" (50b-51b). Finally, the Demiurge models his creation upon an eternal Model (*superno...exemplo*) from which he "draws out" all corporeal things (*cuncta*).

Lines 7-9: *...pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse*

mundum mente gerens similique in imagine formans

perfectasque iubens perfectum absolvere partes.

We see no precise equivalent of *pulcherrimus* used to refer to the Demiurge; however, he is said to be the "most excellent" (ἄριστος) of "all that is intelligible and eternal" -- i.e. of all things, since intelligible and eternal things are the best sorts of things. The implicit identification of "most beautiful" with "most excellent" can be traced to the Neoplatonic unification of the First in the *Symposium* with that in the *Republic* and *Parmenides*. *Mundum mente gerens* also presents a problem. As Klingner states, nowhere does Plato say that the Demiurge carries the Model in his *mind*, though some sort of identification of the Demiurge with the Model is implied by Timaeus' statement that the Demiurge "wanted everything to become as much *like himself* as possible" (πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα

[104] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 42.

ἐβουλήθη γενέσθαι παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ, 29e). This is taken up by Neoplatonic authors who teach that the divine mind carries the intelligible forms and thus the ideal cosmos *within* itself.[105] Klingner traces line 9 to 32d: "[the Demiurge's intentions were] that as a living thing it should be as whole and complete as possible and made up of complete parts (τέλεον ἐκ τελέων τῶν μερῶν)."[106]

Lines 10-12: *Tu numeris elementa ligas, ut frigora flammis,*

arida conveniant liquidis, ne purior ignis

evolet aut mersas deducant pondera terras.

Numeris elementa ligas clearly refers to the bond (δεσμός), a geometrical series, that the Demiurge creates between the elements of fire and earth, whose attributes of lightness and solidity would otherwise pull them apart (*ne purior ignis evolet aut mersas deducant pondera terras*). The consistent numerical proportion produced brings each element into a unity (*conveniant*) with its neighbors (31c).

Lines 13-14: *Tu triplicis mediam naturae cuncta moventem*

conectens animam per consona membra resolvis;

Animam is clearly the World-Soul; Klingner relates *triplicis...naturae* to *Timaeus* 35a (Soul is formed of a threefold mixture of Being, the Same, and the Different, each of which is in turn a threefold mixture).[107] *Consona membra* refer to the mathematical series of precise intervals into which the blended mixture is divided (35b-36b); Klingner also

[105] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 44.
[106] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 45.
[107] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 45, f. 5.

references 37a: "[the Soul] was divided up (μερισθεῖσα) and bound together (συνδεθεῖσα) in various proportions."[108]

Lines 15-17: *quae cum secta duos motum glomeravit in orbes,*

in semet reditura meat mentemque profundam

circuit et simili convertit imagine caelum.

Most of this is a clear paraphrase of *Timaeus* 36c-d: the World-Soul is cut (*secta*) into two pieces, which the Demiurge then curves back on themselves (*glomeravit*) into two circles (*duos...orbes*). The World-Soul thus rotates back upon itself (*in semet reditura*) and, as it does, turns the heavens with a similar motion (*simili convertit imagine caelum*). The one element entirely alien to the *Timaeus* is the idea that the World-Soul circles a *mentem profundam*; Klingner argues this stems from the repeated theme in Plotinus that "the soul goes around the mind, the mind around the One," possibly influenced as well by a hymn from Synesius.[109]

Lines 18-19: *Tu causis animas paribus vitasque minores*

provehis et levibus sublimes curribus aptans

in caelum terramque seris, quas lege benigna

ad te conversas reduci facis igne reverti.

These three lines, which end the *Timaeus* paraphrase, are clearly drawn from the creation of human souls (*vitasque minores*) in 41d-42e. *Causis paribus* refers to the fact that the Demiurge uses leftover material from the World-Soul's creation and the same mixing bowl (κρατήρ); once the human souls are made, they are mounted (*aptans*) into

[108] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 45, f. 6
[109] Klingner, *De Boethii,* 46: *anima mentem circumeat, mens illud Unum*. He lists three Plotinus references: I,7,1; VI,8,18; and VI,9,8.

chariots (*curribus*) and shown the laws of rebirth (*lege benigna*); finally, they are sown (*seris*) into the Earth (*terramque*) and other heavenly bodies (*caelum*). The major points of divergence are a) the soul's return (*ad te conversas facis reverti*), discussed further below; b) the image of "returning fire" (*reduci igne*), not found *per se* in the Timaeus.[110] Klingner, at any rate, traces this to Proclus' commentary, probably influenced by two passages from the Chaldean Oracles: the *reduci igne* is a holy and purifying fire which cleanses the soul of all defilements it has incurred in embodied life.[111]

Lines 21-28: *Da, pater, augustam menti conscendere sedem,*

da fontem lustrare boni, da luce reperta

in te conspicuos animi defigere uisus.

Dissice terrenae nebulas et pondera molis

atque tuo splendore mica; tu namque serenum,

tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,

principium, uector, dux, semita, terminus idem.

It is in these lines (and 20, *ad te conversas*) that the greatest divergence from the *Timaeus* is seen. As discussed above, the soul's final end in the *Timaeus* is to return "back to its dwelling place in its companion star (πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ συννόμου πορευθεὶς οἴκησιν ἄστρου)," by correcting the disordered revolutions in its head; a life described at 90d as

[110] Though perhaps it could be drawn out through the following reasoning: the soul, in order to return to its origin, must correct the disordered orbits of the Same and Different within it (42d; 44b; 90d); to do so, it must observe the heavenly bodies (46e-47c); and this is done by means of vision, which is effected through fire (45b-e).

[111] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 49-51. He claims that the idea that divine assistance (implied by the *reduci igne*) aids the soul in its return is absent from the *Timaeus* and found only in Proclus: possibly a false dichotomy, as what are the rotations of the heavenly bodies and, particularly, sight, if not "divine assistance" given to the soul to aid it in its return?

"that most excellent life (ἀρίστου βίου) offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore," by which it will be "supremely happy" (διαφερόντως εὐδαίμονα, 90c). There is no suggestion here that the soul will eventually see the Demiurge, nor that he himself is the *vector, dux, semita* by which its return is accomplished; nor that this is the soul's true end and happiness itself (*tu namque serenum...te cernere finis*). Both this concept and the language it is framed must rather be sought in Neoplatonic sources, both pagan and Christian: hymns and prayers which address not the Demiurge *per se* but rather the Neoplatonic One and/or the Christian God, and which reference the tripartite structure of remaining, procession, and return.[112]

3.5 RECTILINEAR AND HELICAL MOTION; THE *X* AND THE SPIRAL

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to briefly discuss the types of motion referenced in the *Timaeus*. As discussed in Chapter 1, circular motion is by far the sort of motion discussed most frequently, and it is repeatedly held up as the ideal motion, just as the circle is seen as the best sort of plane figure. The cosmos is spherical, and the two circles of the World Soul rotate within themselves; the stars, too, exhibit rotary motion as well as revolution under the influence of the Circle of the Same. Two other shapes and sorts of motion, however, are featured in the dialogue as well.

The first is rectilinear motion, first mentioned in a negative sense at 34b: out of seven possible motions, the Demiurge "takes away" six (the rectilinear motions) and gives the

[112] Klingner, *De Boethii*, 40, where he calls IIIM9:21-28 a "Neoplatonic hymn." His full discussion (51-67) of the sources for this section is, unfortunately, far too lengthy to reproduce here.

cosmos only one (rotary motion). These remaining six are listed explicitly at 43b, when human souls are created which move "forwards and backwards" (εἴς τε γὰρ τὸ πρόσθε καὶ ὄπισθεν), "to the right and left" (εἰς δεξιὰ καὶ ἀριστερὰ), and "upwards and downwards" (κάτω τε καὶ ἄνω) -- inferior varieties of motion that, in contrast with the perfect rotations and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, are described as "disorderly, random and irrational" (ἀτάκτως μὴν ὅπῃ τύχοι προϊέναι καὶ ἀλόγως). Nor do human beings exhibit the ideal shape, save in their spherical heads which contain the two orbits of the World-Soul; rather, their bodies have "length" (μῆκος) and four limbs (44e), designed for the purposes of carrying the head over the uneven terrain that human beings will encounter on Earth.

If the figure of a circle typifies circular motion, what plane figure in the *Timaeus* typifies rectilinear motion? I will posit that it is the *X* mentioned at 36b, for several reasons. Firstly, this is the first time in Timaeus' speech that we see motion that falls outside the path defined by a single circular orbit. To be sure, the *X* describes how two circular orbits meet, but they meet "obliquely" and thus cannot be resolved into a single plane; whichever of the two orbits has been "dislocated" (presumably the Different) will exhibit rectilinear motion *relative to* the reference orbit (the Same). Secondly, the *X* seems an ideal figure for a type of motion quintessentially *human*, as it clearly resembles the four limbs and vertically elongated body of the human as described by Timaeus. Finally, the *X*, in its spatial properties, signifies incompleteness in the same way the circle typifies completeness and self-similarity. A circular line returns inevitably to its starting point; all points on the path are equidistant from the center, and motion along any part of the path does not lead *away* from the remainder of the figure but *towards* it. By contrast,

the four paths of motion defined by the *X* are each *intrinsically incomplete*. The further I move along the upward right-hand limb in a "positive" direction (i.e. away from the center), the further I move away from all the other three limbs. I cannot, in a continuous unitary motion, move along all parts of the figure; I can only traverse one part of the *X* at once, and choosing one direction precludes all the other possibilities, at least for the moment. Put another way, the circle is one single line connected to itself in a fluid, unbroken motion; the *X* is formed from a single line "fragmented" into four pieces, just as human motion and mortal existence are inherently fragmentary and partial compared to the sempiternal, complete motion of the heavenly spheres.

Proclus, in his *Commentary on Euclid*, defines circular and rectilinear motion as the two basic kinds of motion: the first has the nature of the Limit, the second of the Unlimited. However, as Proclus goes on to discuss, a third type of motion also exists, a composite or Mixed motion formed from the combination of the Limit and Unlimited, i.e. the circle and the line.[113] This is *helical* motion, which we can represent by the plane figure of the *spiral*; Proclus defines the helix as a three-dimensional motion formed by tracing a continuous circle around a uniformly-ascending cylinder.[114] It is important to note that the helix is not a "compromise" midway between circular and linear motion; rather, it simultaneously embodies both fully.[115] The circle traced around the cylinder *is* a

[113] Proclus, *A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, trans. Glenn Morrow (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 84-88 (103.18-109.5). He assigns the "point" to the One, and states that there are "three hypostases below the one: the Limit, the Unlimited, and the Mixed," which correspond respectively to circle, straight line, and spiral (though it should be noted that he recognizes a wide variety of potential "mixed" lines, not merely the most basic one, i.e. the regular cylindrical helix).
[114] Proclus, *Commentary on Euclid*, 104.24-106.17.
[115] Made clear by Proclus, *Commentary on Euclid*, 117.22-118.20.

true circle in the horizonal plane; the vertical progress made by the ascending helix *is* true rectilinear motion (in the "up" direction). This is the motion assigned at *Timaeus* 39a-b to the planets, which share in both the uniform circle of the Same (the dominant motion) and the rectilinear X which characterizes inferior (less than divine) motion: "For it [the movement of the Same] gives all these circles a spiral twist, because they have two distinct forward motions in opposite senses (πάντας γὰρ τοὺς κύκλους αὐτῶν στρέφουσα ἕλικα διὰ τὸ διχῇ κατὰ τὰ ἐναντία ἅμα προϊέναι)."[116] This passage is difficult to understand, and Proclus treats it at some length in his *Timaeus* commentary.[117] "Two contrary motions," he explains, does not mean that the movement of the Different is *opposite* to that of the Same, for these would not produce a "helical" motion but simply cancel each other out. Rather, as explained above, the plane of the Different is *oblique* to that of the Same, which allows for rectilinear motion in four directions; in fact, Proclus seems to have held that the planets had, as well, the capacity to move *closer to* or *further from* the Earth, thus granting them the full six rectilinear directions: motion in longitude (μῆκος), latitude (πλάτος) and proximity to the Earth (βάθος).[118]

This all has, of course, rich symbolic implications for Proclus and his fellow Neoplatonists. As the heavens are *divine* (pure circular motion) and human beings (except for, of course, their souls) are *mortal* (rectilinear motion), so the planets are intermediate and share in both (yielding helical motion).[119] Proclus, apparently following

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[116] Adapted from Cornford's translation (*Plato's Cosmology*, 122).
[117] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus, *Volume V: Book 4: Proclus on Time and the Stars,* trans. and ed. Dirk Baltzly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 152-54 (78.30-80.22).
[118] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus, 79.8-18.
[119] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus, 79.13-21; 80.5-19.

Timaeus' assertion that "time really is the wanderings of these bodies [i.e. the planets]" (39d), connects the helix with time,[120] an association strengthened by the fact that Chronos, the god of time, is described in Plato's *Cratylus*, on which Proclus also commented, as the god "of crooked counsel" (ἀγκυλομήτης).[121] The helix, then, is the shape that Time itself traces out as its instruments, the planets, wind their way around their spiral path. Nor is Proclus alone in recognizing the significance of the helix: Damascius, arguing that not all sacred figures need to be "bounded", lists the helix as a "sacred figure,"[122] and Proclus relates that Julian the Theurgist, too, "celebrated time as spiral in form and as both young and old."[123] As for the *X*, Proclus describes it as the "character or shape most evocative for recalling the divinization of the world and our souls."[124] To Boethius as Christian theologian, of course, the *X* must surely symbolize Christ as well. The circle, then, is not the only theurgically significant shape in the *Timaeus*; the X and the spiral are also important (arguably, equally so).

Gersh, extrapolating from several Neoplatonic sources, finds within circular, linear, and spiral motion the familiar Neoplatonic triad of remaining, procession, and return. The circle (characterized as unity, limit, and eternity) is, he argues, naturally associated with

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[120] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus, 20.1-21.7; 40.20-41.2; 80.5-22. See also the discussion in James Miller, *Measures of Wisdom: The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 449-58 and in particular the figure on p. 459.
[121] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Cratylus, 66:25-7, cited in Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 75.
[122] Damascius, *Dub et Sol* 127.20.21, cited in Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 202.
[123] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus, 80.13; Baltzly also provides a reference to the *Chaldean Oracles* 199 (Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus, 21.3).
[124] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus II, 247:14-29, quoted in translation in Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 171.

remaining, the straight line with procession. Their combination, the helix, would then signify reversion: a conclusion supported by Damascius, who characterizes reversion as a *combination* of remaining and procession,[125] and two passages from *On the Divine Names*: i) "The divine intellects (= angels) move in a circle when contemplating God, in a straight line as exercising providence over the lower realm, and in a spiral when combining the two" (*D.N.*704D); ii) "The three motions are applied by analogy to God and represent his self-identity, the emanation of his power towards created beings, and the simultaneous combination of these aspects" (*D.N.*916CD).[126]

Boethius, as we have seen, knew Proclus' commentary thoroughly, and perhaps the works of other Neoplatonists who touch upon these three types of motion; he thus would have been well aware of the significance that they held for Proclus and (by implication, to a Neoplatonic commentator) for Plato himself. As we will see in the next chapter, when Boethius sets out to create a Timaean cosmos "in miniature" in IIIM9, he will deliberately replicate not the circular but also the rectilinear and helical motions of the *Timaeus*.

[125] Damascius, *Dub et Sol* I.169.18-21, cited in Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena,* 75.
[126] Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names,* quoted in translation in Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena,* 75.

CHAPTER 4: IIIM9 AS DOUBLE-CIRCLE TIMAEAN COSMOS

It is time to turn to the structure of IIIM9. I will begin by presenting my line-by-line rhythmic analysis of the meter, demonstrating its distinct double-circle/spiral pattern. I will then show how the double-circle form of IIIM9, reflecting its content, is a Timaean cosmos in miniature, and how Boethius' creative activity as author thus resembles that of Plato's Demiurge. I will conclude with a brief discussion of the precedents for such an interpretation in Neoplatonic theories of literature as microcosm and author as human Demiurge.

4.1 THE RHYTHMIC PATTERN OF IIIM9

As previously mentioned, IIIM9 is the only poem in the *Consolatio* in stichic dactylic hexameter. This meter consists of six feet per line; while the final two feet are generally fixed (dactyl + spondee[127]), each of the first four feet may be either a dactyl or a spondee, as the poet wishes (for example, the four variable feet of the first line scan as SDSD). There are thus 2^4, or 16, possible rhythmic patterns for any given line; Boethius uses twelve of these in IIIM9. The poem contains 28 lines in total, falling into two halves of 14 lines each (more on this below).

There are some fairly obvious parallels between the rhythmic patterns of a few individual lines in IIM9 and their content. For example, line 11, which mentions the more

[127] The final syllable is scanned as *anceps*: i.e. a short syllable may stand in for the final long syllable.

volatile elements of water and fire (*liquidis, ignis*) is rich in dactyls, implying rapid motion, whereas line 12, portraying the heavy, solid element of earth (*terras*), is almost entirely spondaic. However, such techniques of word-painting cannot account for all the rhythmic complexity of IIIM9. Is Boethius simply allowing the dactyls and spondees to fall where they will by chance, or is there a deeper order at work? According to Blackwood, even subtle rhythmic shifts may have a profound aural effect on the listener; it would thus be remiss of us *not* to undertake a more thorough analysis of what, if any, organizing logic underlies the rhythmic variations observed in IIIM9.

I present, below, the text of IIIM9. Each line is accompanied by: 1) the scansion pattern of its first four feet (the last two feet, as previously mentioned, scan invariably as DS); 2) a letter representing that particular rhythmic pattern, assigned in order of appearance, with subsequent lines employing the same rhythmic pattern represented by the same letter. As can be observed, a complex structure emerges:

1	O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas,	SDSD	A
2	terrarum caelique sator, qui tempus ab aevo	SSDS	B
3	ire iubes stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri	DDDS	C
4	quem non externae pepulerunt fingere causae	SSDS	B
5	materiae fluitantis opus, verum insita summi	DDDS	C
6	forma boni livore carens; tu cuncta superno	DSDS	D
7	ducis ab exemplo, pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse	DSSS	E

8	mundum mente gerens similique in imagine formans	SDDD	F
9	perfectasque iubens perfectum absolvere partes.	SDSS	G
10	Tu numeris elementa ligas, ut frigora flammis,	DDDS	C
11	arida conveniant liquidis, ne purior ignis	DDDS	C
12	evolet aut mersas deducant pondera terras.	DSSS	E
13	Tu triplicis mediam naturae cuncta moventem	DDSS	H
14	conectens animam per consona membra resolvis;	SDSD	A
15	quae cum secta duos motum glomeravit in orbes,	SDSD	A
16	in semet reditura meat mentemque profundam	SDDS	I
17	circuit et simili convertit imagine caelum.	DDSD	J
18	Tu causis animas paribus vitasque minores	SDDS	I
19	provehis et levibus sublimes curribus aptans	DDSS	H
20	in caelum terramque seris, quas lege benigna	SSDS	B
21	ad te conversas reduci facis igne reverti.	SSDD	K
22	Da, pater, augustam menti conscendere sedem,	DSSS	E
23	da fontem lustrare boni, da luce reperta	SSDS	B
24	in te conspicuos animi defigere visus.	SDDS	I
25	Dissice terrenae nebulas et pondera molis	DSDS	D
26	atque tuo splendore mica; tu namque serenum,	DSDS	D
27	tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,	DSDS	D
28	principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem.	DSSD	L

The first half of the poem begins with the rhythmic pattern SDSD (A) and "travels away" from it through other rhythmic patterns in the course of the first seven lines; it then returns to A (line 14) over the next seven lines, like a circle returning to its origin. The second half, like the first, begins with A (line 15); though this seems to hint that it will follow an identical course, it defeats our expectations. The rhythmic pattern C, which dominated the first half (4 occurrences), is here nowhere to be found; in its stead new patterns appear (I, J, and K). In the penultimate three lines a "climax" is observed, with pattern D repeated three times in a row (lines 25-27), and in the final line an entirely new pattern is observed: L, which is in fact a close variant of A (DSSD instead of SDSD; feet 1 and 2 are transposed). The second half of IIIM9 is thus best understood *not* as a simple circle, but rather a helix or spiral which returns, not to its exact origin, but to a slightly altered origin; hence it embodies both circular and progressive (i.e. rectilinear) motion. Together, the two can be visualized as a double-circle spiral structure, graphically represented as follows (Figure 1):

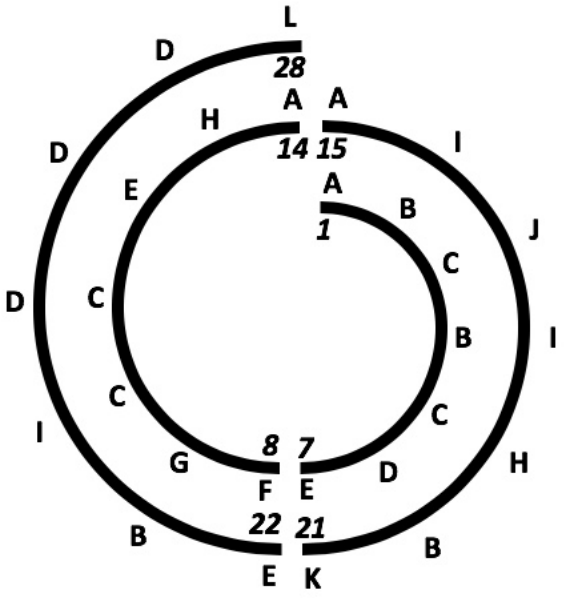

Figure 1: The Double-Circle Spiral Structure of IIIM9

Could this pattern simply have emerged by chance? Several pieces of evidence argue strongly against this possibility. Firstly, the rhythmic pattern A falls precisely at the beginning and ending of the first half and the beginning of the second half, and is observed nowhere else in the poem; this suggests Boethius deliberately reserved it to clearly delineate the two circles. Secondly, the climax at 25-27 (further discussed below), with the same pattern repeated three times, is extremely unlikely to be a chance occurrence. Finally, it is surely significant that an entirely new pattern (L), a slight transformation of A, replaces it at the end of the poem. It should also be pointed out that Boethius was by no means the first ancient poet to conceal a hidden structure within a poem. Various Hellenistic poets created "pattern poems" by varying the number of letters in each line to form shapes on the page: a technique (*technopaignion*) which the fourth-century Latin poet Publilius Optatianus took to new heights, creating a dazzling series of poems (the *carmina figurata*) containing hidden acrostic structures known as *versus intexti.*[128] The discussion of Neoplatonic literary theory at the end of this chapter will present further evidence for a deliberate origin to the structure observed in IIIM9.

4.1.1 Lines 25-28: Adonic Climax and Bucolic Diaresis

[128] See Margaret Graver, "*Quaelibet Audendi*: Fortunatus and the Acrostic," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 123 (1993): 219-45; J. Stephan Edwards, "The Carmina of Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius and the Creative Process," in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History, Vol. XII,* ed. Carl Deroux (Bruxelles: Latomus, 2005), 447-66, https://www.somegreymatter.com/carmina.htm.

One section of IIIM9 of particular interest is the final four lines (25-28). As mentioned, lines 25-27 feature rhythmic pattern D (DSDS), repeated three times; this forms a "climax" before the novel element L appears in line 28. In fact, a closer examination of these lines reveals that they are constructed from the repetition of an even more basic rhythmic element: the adonic rhythm, or dactyl + spondee (– ˘˘| – –). As mentioned, every line in a standard hexameter line must end with these two feet; when combined with rhythmic pattern D, this creates a six-foot pattern repeating the adonic rhythm three times in succession, which is in turn repeated three times in 25-27. Furthermore, this pattern "fuses" on either side with the four-foot adonic ending of line 24 and the two-foot adonic beginning of line 28 to create an astonishing *twelve* successive repetitions of the adonic rhythm:

1 2

(– – | – ˘ ˘)| – ˘ ˘ |– – |– ˘ ˘| – –

...in te conspicu**os animi defigere visus.**

3 4 5

– ˘ ˘ |– – | – ˘ ˘| – – | – ˘ ˘| – –

Dissice terrenae nebulas et pondera molis

6 7 8

– ˘ ˘|– – | – ˘ ˘|– – | – ˘ ˘ | – –

atque tuo splendore mica; tu namque serenum,

9 10 11

– ˘ ˘|– – | – ˘ ˘|– – | – ˘ ˘| – –

tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,

12

– ˘ ˘| – – | (– – | – ˘ ˘ | – ˘ ˘ | – –)

principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem.

This "adonic climax" -- in musical terms, an *ostinato* -- recalls one of the meters of Part I, IM7, composed entirely of two-foot adonic lines. Blackwood comments on the effect of this "single focused rhythm," repeated thirty times in IM7: "a consistency that is both soothing and exhortative, both steady and enlivening," like "a wave that washes over the prisoner...rhythmically washing away the emotions that cloud his soul."[129] The result is a "rhythmic medicine" that, through its "steady, yet invigorating rhythmic beat," has the theurgic power to actually *calm* the prisoner rather than simply advising calm. The adonic climax of IIIM9 has a similar sense of focused concentration, yet the intention here appears to be excitatory rather than calming. The Prisoner does not merely have a fleeting and rather weak desire to see God; no, this is an urgent *demand* to see God, or, rather, a demand for the divine aid without which that vision cannot be achieved; a persistent knocking or even hammering at a closed door. It is no surprise, then, that the petition succeeds in the final line:

– ˘ ˘|– – | – – | – ˘ ˘ | – ˘ ˘| – –

principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem.

[129] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius,* 74-8.

The new pattern, L, both *arises out of* the preceding adonic ostinato (mirroring it in the first two feet) and *supersedes* it (as it contains a spondee instead of the expected dactyl in the third foot). There is a sense of prison walls falling away, of breakthrough into a hitherto inaccessible realm (remember that L, though a transformation of A, has never before occurred in IIIM9). If the thirty times-repeated adonic climax of IM7, combined with its content, has the theurgic power to induce calm and focused attention in the Prisoner, this would seem to infer that the adonic climax of IIIM9, together with its content -- a direct plea to God for divine aid in seeing him -- likewise has the power to assist in bringing about this very vision.

One final feature of line 28 requires discussion. In addition to the main caesura (//) in the third foot (the most common location for the main caesura) and a lesser caesura (//) in the second foot, there is a strong fourth-foot diaresis (||) where the end of a word (*semita*), along with a pause in the sense, coincides with the end of the foot. This is often termed a *bucolic diaresis* (or *bucolic caesura*):

– ◡ ◡|– // – | – // – | – ◡ ◡ || – ◡ ◡| – –

principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem.

Relatively rare in Latin hexameter apart from Juvenal, it is associated with pastoral poetry, such as the *Idylls* of Theocritus and the *Eclogues* of Vergil.[130] The effect here is one of a pause or "breath" which falls before the final two words of the line, emphasizing

[130] R.G.M. Nisbet, "The Style of Virgil's *Eclogues*," *Proceedings of the Virgil Society* 20 (1991): 8-9.

them: *terminus idem*. We are reminded that Boethius, as previously mentioned, was known by his contemporaries as the author of a *carmen bucolicum*; this bucolic diaresis may then serve as a *sphragis*, or poetic "signature." This is hinted at by the first words of the *Consolatio* (IM1:1): *Carmina qui quondam,* a simultaneous allusion to two Vergil passages: a) the possibly spurious alternate opening (*principium*) of the *Aeneid* (*Ille ego,* qui quondam *gracili modulatus avena*/carmen...) and b) an excerpt from the final lines (*terminus*) of the *Georgics* (564-6: *Illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat/Parthenope* studiis florentem *ignobilis oti/*carmina qui *lusi pastorum*...); both reference Vergil's own prior accomplishments as a pastoral poet.[131] Finally, Boethius' incorporation of a reference to his human life and work into the midst of a line depicting the ultimate vision of God hints that the ascent to the divine does *not* involve leaving behind one's humanity: a theme which will be taken up in Chapter 5 of this study, with particular reference to VM5.

4.2 IIIM9 AS TIMAEAN MICROCOSMOS; BOETHIUS AS DEMIURGE

To summarize: it has been demonstrated that IIIM9 contains two "circles"; the first (lines 1-14) returns to the *same* rhythmic pattern with which it began (A), while the second (15-28) returns to a *different* yet similar pattern to the original (L). The form of IIIM9 thus clearly mirrors the description of the World Soul in the *Timaeus*: it is "cut" into two halves precisely where the World Soul is described as "cut" in the poem and each half shaped into a circle, with the first half corresponding to the Circle of the Same,

[131] Scheible, *Die Gedichte*, 12-3; Crabbe, "Literary Design," 247-8.

the second to the Circle of the Different. It should also be noted that each half contains 14 lines, an exact multiple of 7, recalling the seven circles into which the Circle of the Different is divided (36d). IIIM9, then, does not merely recount the creation of the cosmos by the Demiurge; rather, it *is* a Timaean cosmos in miniature, created by an author (Boethius) who, like Plato's Demiurge, looks to an ideal model (the cosmos as described in the *Timaeus*) and creates an "image" of it in poetic "matter" and "time."

What are the poetic analogues to the matter out of which the cosmos is created (the "receptacle") and to time? The obvious candidate for the latter, of course, is the meter and rhythm of the poem, divided into lines: poetic elements which *must* be perceived "in motion" (read aloud, or at least heard inwardly) to be fully comprehended. It should also be noted that there are 28 lines in total. Not only is this, as mentioned, a multiple of seven (the number of planets, as well as the number of days in a week); it is also the (approximate) length of the lunar month and as such had, along with the number seven, theurgic significance for Proclus and his fellow Neoplatonists.[132] In the number 28, then, the cycles of the sun (1 day), the moon (28 days) and the planets (7 days) coincide, recalling Timaeus' statement that "time really is the wanderings of these bodies." The poetic analogue to matter would then logically be what remains after meter and rhythm are removed: words and the letters and syllables that comprise them. Just as there is a

[132] See the discussion of the heptad in Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 183-6. The seven planetary spheres, each of which had a planetary angel or *Daimon,* were associated with the seven vowels of the Greek language and the seven notes of the musical scale ("heptachord"). They were also seen to be "in harmony" with the "28 lights of the moon," i.e. the approximate number of days in the lunar month (Ruelle, "Le hant des sept voyelles grecques," *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 2 (1889): 40, quoted in Shaw, 186). The Month itself was acknowledged by Proclus to be a god: see Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus*,* 32:16.

certain "intractability" to the Receptacle, which requires the "persuasion" of intellect to properly mirror the model cosmos, so there is an intractable givenness to the lexical content of a language. Words are, by and large, not designed with metrical use in mind and are not infinitely malleable (e.g. one cannot simply command a long vowel to be short, or decide that a four-syllable word is now to have three syllables). The creation of a proper poem thus requires the intellect of an expert poet, who, like Plato's Demiurge, will know how to skillfully select and arrange words in order to produce the desired formal structure. IIIM9 is thus a "moving" and "corporeal" image of a non-temporal, non-corporeal model: the abstract structure of the cosmos as described by Timaeus and present in Boethius' intellect. Obviously, Boethius cannot replicate every facet of the Timaean cosmos in a 28-line dactylic hexameter poem, any more than the ideal cosmos to which the Demiurge looks can be fully mirrored in corporeal matter and time. Nevertheless, it is recognizable as an image.

4.3 Microcosmos and Demiurge in Neoplatonic Literary Theory

An objection might here be raised. It does appear that the double-circle structure of IIIM9 closely reflects its Timaean content and that, by implication, Boethius stands in the same relation to IIIM9 as Plato's Demiurge to his work, the cosmos. However, can we be reasonably confident that Boethius intended us to view the matter this way? Is this, in other words, the sort of interpretation that he or other commentators of his time would have been likely to advance? In fact, the conventions of Neoplatonic literary criticism make it not just plausible but nearly inevitable that the correspondence between IIIM9

and the Timaean cosmos on the one hand, and himself as author and the Demiurge on the other, should be explicitly present in Boethius' mind. This warrants a brief discussion.

As Coulter states in his study of Neoplatonic literary theory, one of the central requirements for a literary work to be considered well-composed was *unity*. All sections and aspects of the work were to arise from a single theme, be arranged according to a single overarching logic, and work towards a single goal (σκοπός), the conscious intention of the work's creator. This arose out of not only "the Neoplatonic preoccupation with the problem of unity in general"[133] but specifically the discussion of good speech-making in the *Phaedrus* (264B-E).[134] Closely connected with the idea of unity and likewise arising from the *Phaedrus* was the metaphor of *organicism*: a literary work should resemble a living organism, in that it must be complete -- i.e. possess all the parts ("head," "legs," etc.), properly arranged, that such an organism naturally possesses -- and that these parts must function properly in relation to one another and the whole.[135] The ultimate exemplar for the Neoplatonists of both these concepts, unity and organicism, was the cosmic Model of the *Timaeus* (a "Great Living Thing") and the corporeal cosmos, itself a living unity, which mirrors it. A well-composed work of literature should therefore be a miniature analogue to the cosmos, a "microcosmos," with its human creator naturally (through a simple inversion of the original δημιουργὸς metaphor) regarded as analogous to the Demiurge; as Coulter writes, "both create with their gaze fixed on

[133] James A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm: Theories of Interpretation of the Later Neoplatonists* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 78.
[134] Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm*, 73-5.
[135] Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm*, 73.

intelligible models."[136] Neoplatonist commentators elaborated this metaphor, seeking to find in Plato's dialogues elements analogous to those which constitute the cosmos: "matter" was identified with characters and setting, cosmic "form" with the style of the dialogue, "soul" with the philosophical arguments, and so forth.[137]

Therefore, it is only logical that Boethius should -- particularly in composing a poem whose content paraphrases the *Timaeus* -- regard the work as analogous to the created cosmos and himself, as author, to the Demiurge. Such a correspondence would occur naturally to the Neoplatonists who, as we have seen, regarded *any* well-composed literary work as a microcosmos; for a work which draws upon the *Timaeus* itself, it would be extremely odd if this interpretative possibility were ignored. It is thus not at all surprising that Boethius should seek to extend the standard metaphor of the Demiurge and the microcosm to encompass the rhythmic form of IIIM9. In doing so, Boethius makes himself doubly analogous to the Demiurge: not only does he create a unified and organic literary work, generically a microcosmos, but, looking to an intelligible model (the abstract structure of the cosmos) he creates a poem which is *structurally* a Timaean microcosmos in its rhythmic arrangement as well. IIIM9 is therefore a Neoplatonic

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[136] Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm,* 95. This idea is specifically brought out by Proclus in his *Commentary on Plato's* Republic: "Consider also how he (i.e. Plato) looks up again at his models (i.e. the intelligible world) and says that Pythodorus 'often' met Zeno and Antiphon 'often' met Pythodorus" (672.37-673.4); "it is obvious from what has been said how one is to relate these details to intelligible reality" (672.20-22). Quoted in translation in Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm,* 121.

[137] Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm*, 102-3 and 120-6. Such correspondences were not assigned arbitrarily, but rather reflected the respective roles of these elements. For example, just as matter is subordinate to cosmic form in the *Timaeus*, so "in Plato's dialogues the "matter" can never constitute, by itself, the purpose of the dialogue, but is, of necessity, always subordinate to this purpose" (120).

literary masterwork, organic and unified on every level, with its form mirroring its content: a Timaean microcosm *par excellence*.

4.4 IIIM9 AND THE *CONSOLATIO* NARRATIVE

We have seen that the rhythmic structure of IIIM9 reflects the structure of the Timaean cosmos it describes. As such, it is not only an impressive poetic achievement but also opens up potentially fruitful avenues of investigation for other poetic works. However, a question must now be raised: does IIIM9 have any larger significance for the larger *Consolatio*, or is it simply an isolated literary curiosity, a testament to Boethius' poetic skill to be sure, yet (like the *carmina figurata* of Optatianus) ultimately self-contained? In fact, upon examining the overall narrative arc of the *Consolatio,* we observe a similar spiral path traced by the Prisoner in his philosophical journey, one composed of repeated risings and fallings. IIIM9 is thus not simply a microcosmic image of the Timaean cosmos; rather, it itself in turn serves as Model, providing a structural paradigm for the movement of the *Consolatio* as a whole. It is to this spiral narrative we will now turn.

CHAPTER 5: IIIM9 AS MODEL FOR THE *CONSOLATIO*: THE CIRCLE OF THE SAME (IP1-IIIM12)

In this chapter I will begin to trace the narrative path followed by the Prisoner on his journey through the *Consolatio*, demonstrating how each section relates to the double-circle/spiral paradigm laid out in IIIM9. I will seek in particular to explore the role played by certain key poems, including Magee's anapestic dimeter series and several of those touched on by Blackwood. This chapter will deal with the material that comprises the Circle of the Same (IP1-IIIP12.23), as well as a "crossover" stage (IIIP12.24-38) that leads into the Circle of the Different which the next chapter will treat. A two-dimensional spiral representation of the Circle of the Same and its stages appears below (Figure 2)[138]:

[138] Note that, though I have chosen for purposes of clarity to represent the *Consolatio* narrative as a two-dimensional spiral here and in Chapter 6, the ideal shape remains the three-dimensional cylindrical helix discussed in Chapter 3: specifically, a cylindrical helix tilted at a slight angle, such that in every iteration there is a slight fall followed by a rise to a new height. This is shown in outline in Appendix 1. I thank Dr. Michael Fournier for bringing to my attention the advantages of using a three-dimensional helix here.

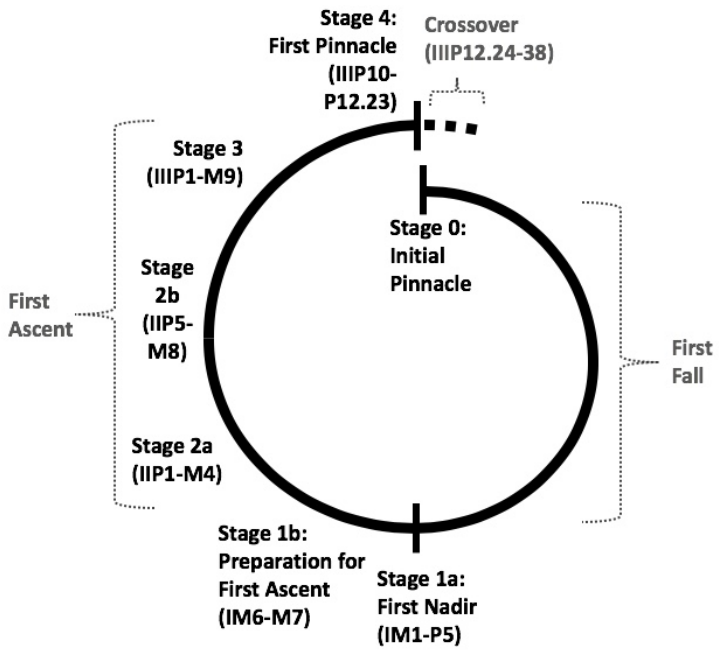

Figure 2: The Circle of the Same in the *Consolatio* Narrative

5.1 INITIAL PINNACLE (STAGE 0), FIRST FALL, AND FIRST NADIR (STAGE 1A): IM1-IP5

As Book I of the *Consolatio* opens, we see the despondent Prisoner in his cell writing the elegiac poem IM1, dictated to him by the poetic Muses: a narrative time frame we might label Stage 1a. However, to properly begin our double-circle spiral journey, we must start not at this low point but in a projected *past* time frame (Stage 0), one alluded to throughout Book I by both the Prisoner and Philosophy. This is an initial pinnacle which sharply contrasts with and sets into relief the nadir of the Prisoner's imprisonment. Indeed, the two are inextricably connected from the first line of the work: the Prisoner reflects upon past times of "flourishing zest" (*carmina qui quondam studio florente peregi*), only to mourn in the next line his current low state (*flebilis heu maestos cogor*

inire modos). They, and the fall which led from one to the other, must therefore be treated together. As will be shown, the Prisoner and Philosophy view very differently the nature of the pinnacle which the Prisoner once enjoyed and his current position, as well as the cause of his fall.

The Prisoner's conception of his former and present state displays throughout Book 1 two characteristics, both strongly evident in IM1. The first is *corporeality* or *physicality*: a characteristic displayed to an obsessive, indeed oppressive, extent in IM1. The three abstract entities discussed in detail (the Muses, Death, and Fortune) are personified throughout: the Muses, represented as *comites* ("companions"), are *lacerae* ("torn"); "savage" (*saeva*) Death is represented as "turning" (*avertitur*) from the miserable (*miseros*) with a "deaf ear" (*surda...aure*); Fortune, depicted as *nubila* (cloudy), has changed (*mutavit*) her "cheating face"[139] (*fallacem...vultum*). Moreover, the effect of these abstract entities and the Prisoner's general circumstances upon the Prisoner himself is similarly conceived in almost entirely physical terms: his cheeks are wet with tears (*fletibus ora rigant*), his hair is white (*funduntur vertice cani*), his body, skin hanging loose, trembles (*tremit effeto corpore laxa cutis*), and Death refuses to close his weeping eyes (*flentes oculos*). As we continue through Book I, we see that the Prisoner views his problem in primarily material terms, identifying his self with his physical body. He is, he states, physically imprisoned in unpleasant surroundings (*nihilne te ipsa loci facies movet?* IP4.2), in exile and alone (*has exsilii nostri solitudines*, IP3.3), five hundred miles away (*quingentis fere passuum milibus procul,* IP4.36) from his beloved library (*haecine est bibliotheca?* IP4.3). Furthermore, he has lost his good reputation (*existimatio bona*,

[139] Translation from Tester.

IP4.43) and his honors (*dignitatibus exutus*, IP4.45); his material goods have been confiscated and he himself is condemned to death (*morti proscriptionique damnamur*, IP4.36).[140]

The second characteristic of IM1 is *passivity*. We have already seen how the Muses dictate to the Prisoner what to write (3). This helplessness persists throughout the poem: the Prisoner is unable or perhaps unwilling to struggle against old age (*senectus*), grief (*dolor*), death (*mors*), and fortune (*fortuna*) as one by one they wreak their devastating effects upon his body and emotional state. This passive attitude is likewise mirrored throughout Book 1, particularly in the Prisoner's initial response to Philosophy's arrival. He is struck dumb (*tacitus*, IP1.13) and, blinded by tears, does not recognize her (IP1.13); stupefied (*te...stupor oppressit,* IP2.4), he remains mute (*elinguem prorsus mutumque*) and lethargic (*lethargum patitur*, IP2.5) in response to her questions. In IP4, we see that the Prisoner views himself as a helpless victim of fortune (*fortunae in nos saevientis asperitas*, IP4.2) and of "wicked" (*improbis*) men, "more powerful than myself"[141] (*potentiorum*, IP4.9) who have maliciously brought about his downfall (*quibus...deferentibus perculsi sumus*, IP4.16) through no fault of his own. The wicked appear able to do unrestrained evil at will to the virtuous, who are powerless to resist: a situation which can only be remedied, he believes, by active divine intervention, prompting him in IM5 to call upon God to rule the earth with the same firm law as the heavens (*et quo caelum regis immensum/firma stabilis foedere terras*, IM5.47-48).

[140] This obsession with physicality is reflected in Fournier ("Boethius and the Consolation of the Quadrivium") and Scarry's ("The External Referent") analyses, both of which identify Book I with the level of sensation.
[141] Translation from Tester.

Philosophy, however, has a very different view of the situation. She does not dispute the material facts of the situation -- that the Prisoner has been exiled, imprisoned, and sentenced to death -- but she denies that they are of real importance. As she states in IP5, what matters to her is not a physical library, elaborately ornamented with "ivory and glass" so as to reflect wealth and status, but rather the ideas contained within the books and retained within the Prisoner's mind (IP5.6). Similarly, the Prisoner's physical exile is not the real issue; what matters is that he is exiled from his "homeland," his "native country" of the mind, ruled not by human beings but rather "one ruler, one king," i.e. God. When in IM2 she describes at length the Prisoner's initial state, she makes no mention of the goods or freedoms that the Prisoner laments in IP5. Rather, it is knowledge and the free life of the mind that the Prisoner has lost:

> *Hic quondam caelo liber aperto*
> *suetus in aetherios ire meatus*
> *cernebat rosei lumina solis*
> *et quaecumque vagos stella recursus*
> *exercet varios flexa per orbes*
> *comprensam numeris victor habebat...*
> *rimari solitus atque latentis*
> *naturae varias reddere causas.* (IM2.6-12, 22-23)

For Philosophy, it is not chiefly the Prisoner's body but his *mind* that is imprisoned. This is made clear in the opening and ending lines of IM2, which draw upon the imagery

of *Republic* VII to portray the Prisoner as one of the prisoners, chained and deprived of the true light, in Plato's Cave.[142]

Heu, quam praecipiti mersa profundo
mens hebet et propria luce relicta
tendit in externas ire tenebras...
nunc iacet effeto lumine mentis
et pressus gravibus colla catenis
declivemque gerens pondere vultum
cogitur, heu, stolidam cernere terram. (IM2.1-3, 24-26)

Similarly, Philosophy does not deny that wicked men have done unjust things to the Prisoner, but she does dispute the Prisoner's claim of passivity. He has not been "driven" from his homeland, but has wandered away; nobody, in fact, could have driven him away but he himself, by ceasing to desire to live there (IP5.3-5). Similarly, after lamenting the Prisoner's fallen state in IM2, she states: "And yet I bestowed upon you such arms which would, if you had not previously thrown them away, now keep you in unvanquished safety" (*Atqui talia contuleramus arma quae, nisi prior abiecisses, invicta te firmitate tuerentur,* 1P2.3): a metaphor taken up again in IP3 and IM4. True philosophers hold wicked men in contempt, for they can do them no real harm: safe in the fortress of Wisdom, they watch from on high and laugh while their enemies carry off "useless

[142] Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius*, 92-4; Wayne J. Hankey, "Placing the Human: Establishing Reason by its Participation in Divine Intellect for Boethius and Aquinas," *Res philosophica* 93, no. 4 (October 2018): 589-90.

baggage" (IP3.11-14). Those who "leave hope and fear aside" cannot be harmed by the wrath of tyrants; but one who is unstable and not master of himself "has thrown away his shield, and left his post, and links the chain by which he can be led" (IM4.11-18).[143] As Philosophy sees it, the Prisoner is himself to a large degree responsible for his own fall, a view hinted at in the last line of IM1 (*Qui cecidit, stabili non erat ille gradu*: "one who has fallen did not have a stable stance"). It is possible that the Prisoner means, here, political or material rather than mental stability; however, this line is rather more reflective than the remainder of IM1, and it is arguably this flash of self-insight that provides the necessary opening for Philosophy to come to his aid.

It is necessary at this point to briefly discuss IM5, the first of the anapestic dimeter series. This poem immediately follows IP4, the Prisoner's lengthy exposition of his current situation and its causes. It is by far the longest of the four poems spoken by the Prisoner, and the first one to contain anything resembling a philosophical argument (IM1 is self-pitying lament, IM3 descriptive). The Prisoner directly invokes God (1-4: *O stelliferi conditor orbis*), describes his elaborate governance of the non-human cosmos (5-24), laments the unjust and lawless state of the human world (25-41), and begs God to intervene to bring it to the same order as the cosmos (42-48). IM5 is thus, like IIIM9, a prayer or hymn, consisting of ἐπικλήσεις, ἀρεταλογία, and εὐχαι. Also like IIIM9, it falls into two equal and distinct halves; the first half (1-24) invokes God and describes the cosmic order, while the second half describes the disordered human world and the vagaries of Fortune and pleads for divine intervention (25-48). As Blackwood discusses, the meter is highly symmetrical and, for most of the poem, provides a steady pulse.

[143] Translations in this and the previous sentence are from Tester.

However, there are two exceptions where Boethius deliberately "perturbs" the meter of IM5 to reflect the disordered state of the human world. One is line 36 (exactly three quarters of the way through the poem) which, instead of four feet, contains only two (*crimen iniqui*): half the line is missing. The "crime of the wicked" has, it seems, sliced away the extra two feet in the same way that the human part of the cosmos appears to evade God's governance. Contrariwise, in line 45, an extra short syllable has somehow managed to make its way into a full four-foot line: *homines quatimur fortunae* **sa***lo*.[144] Just as "human beings are shaken by the salt wave of Fortune", so the meter has been literally "shaken" by the word *salo* ("salt wave") which stubbornly refuses to submit to the meter's "governance."

Before leaving this preliminary stage, it is important to emphasize that, though Philosophy rejects the Prisoner's account of his circumstances as primarily physical, she does not (as we will see in Books IV and V) despise or reject the physical *in favor of* the mental. Hankey identifies six forms of physicality operative in the *Consolatio,* writing that "for Boethius consolation is physical, as well as rational, moral and emotion, all the way through: beginning, middle, and end."[145] Indeed, her manifestation in the Prisoner's cell is an extraordinary concession to the physical: not only does he see and hear her, but she is able to sit on his bed (IP1.14), touch his chest with her hand (IP2.5) and dry his eyes with a fold of her gown (IP2.7). As Blackwood notes, the meters described as "sung" by Philosophy lose much of their power if they are not perceived physically, i.e.

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[144] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 67-8.
[145] Wayne J. Hankey, "Founding Body in Platonism: A Reconsideration of the Tradition from Origen to Cusa," in *The Edinburgh Critical History of Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Andrew LaZella and Richard A. Lee, Jr. (George Square, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 325.

aurally. Philosophy is, it seems, entirely willing to meet the Prisoner on whatever level he is capable of, even that of physical touch. In addition, she is careful not to deny or dismiss his emotional state as irrelevant: indeed, she herself encourages him to "bare the wound" (*vulnus detegas*, IP4.1)[146], allowing him to "bark out" (*delatravi,* IP5.1) at great length his grief. Philosophy's approach is thus one fully appropriate for *all* aspects of the human.

5.2 Preparation for First Ascent (Stage 1b): IM6-IM7

We next enter a short preparatory phase in which Philosophy lays the groundwork for the Prisoner's first ascent. This consists of two activities. Firstly, Philosophy must diagnose the Prisoner's condition: that is, she must discover the exact weakness or gap in the Prisoner's understanding that has allowed him to be reduced to his present low state (IP6.9); this diagnosis will allow her to tailor her cure to his specific condition (IP6.1). Philosophy finds that the Prisoner is suffering from a twofold illness of forgetfulness. Though he remembers that God is the origin and governor of all things, he has forgotten their end and does not know the precise means by which they are governed (IP6.19). Likewise, he has forgotten what he himself is, telling Philosophy that he is "a rational, rational animal" (*rationale animal atque mortale*), "nothing more" (*nihil...aliud*). This definition is not false, simply incomplete. Philosophy's task for the remainder of the *Consolatio* will be to build upon his current limited understanding of both these subjects

[146] Translation from Tester.

(God as origin and governor, and himself as a rational, mortal animal) in order to lead the Prisoner to a more complete understanding of both God and himself.

Philosophy's second and equally important task in this section is to bring the Prisoner into a state which will allow him to be properly receptive to her philosophical teaching. At the moment, he is clearly not yet ready for "stronger medicines" (*firmioribus remediis,* IP6.21: i.e. rigorous philosophical discourse), or even the weaker ones (rhetoric and music) which she will use in the first four chapters of Book II; rather, he is "buffeted by a tumult of different emotions, and grief and anger and sorrow pull [him] in different directions" (IP5.11).[147] Hence Philosophy, before beginning his cure proper, sings two poems (IM6 and IM7) designed to calm him and focus his mind. Blackwood, discussing these poems in detail,[148] points out that both are stichic (employ a single meter), providing the Prisoner with a single calming rhythm to focus upon throughout. The imagery exhibits a "childlike simplicity,"[149] being made up almost entirely of examples drawn from the natural world, from which a straightforward moral is drawn. As previously discussed, the goal is not simply to *prescribe* calm and stability to the Prisoner but rather, through the skillful use of aural therapy, to induce in the Prisoner a state of calm free from the conflicting emotions which previously tormented him. Their success can be seen in the opening of Book II (IIP1.1): Philosophy's recitation, followed by meditative silence, has managed to gain the Prisoner's attention (*attentionem meam modesta taciturnitate collegit*) and he is ready for her cure. It is worth noting that each book of the *Consolatio*, save the last, ends with a poem which invariably, as here, both

[147] Translation from Tester.
[148] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 69-78.
[149] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 71.

reflects what has come before and looks forward to the next stage of the Prisoner's journey.

5.3 First Ascent (Stages 2a, 2b, 3): IIP1-IIIM9

The logic of the first ascent has been repeatedly outlined by Hankey.[150] In brief, this phase of the Prisoner's journey consists of two main stages. The first (Stage 2) is split into two substages; in the first, Stage 2a (IIP1-M4), Philosophy employs the "gentle medicines" (IIP1.7-8) of rhetoric alternating with verse to help the Prisoner understand the inherently inconstant nature of Fortune. Next, in Stage 2b (IIP5-M8), Philosophy goes through the apparent goods bestowed by Fortune -- earthly wealth, power, honor, and fame -- showing that each is extrinsic to the true self and not worth possessing. In contrast, Stage 3 (IIIP1-M9) outlines how wealth, honor, power, fame, and pleasure are not in actual fact worthless but rather partial and deceptive goods: they each promise happiness, but cannot on their own deliver it. Rather, the real good is that which unifies in itself *all* of these lesser goods, i.e. true happiness, the ultimate good or *summum bonum*: that is, God. This divine unity cannot be found without prayer, hence IIIM9.

Several characteristics of this first ascent reflect its location within the Circle of the Same. Firstly, the process is directed entirely by a single speaker, Philosophy; the Prisoner is still too passive and intellectually weak to exert any real influence. Nearly all

[150] E.g. Wayne J. Hankey, "*Ratio, Preces, Intuitus*: Prayer's Mediation in Boethius' *Consolation*," in *Praying and Contemplating: Religious and Philosophical Interactions in Late Antiquity, Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity*, ed. Eleni Pachoumi and Mark Edwards (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2018), 77-78.

of the prose material is comprised of monologues by Philosophy, and she sings all seventeen of its poems; the Prisoner listens and either assents or (less frequently) raises brief objections which she answers at length. In addition, she herself repeatedly discusses her method, saying what she will do and then carrying it out (IP6.21; IIP1.7-8; IIP5.1; IIIP1.3-4). Hence the first ascent is a carefully planned, unified process operating through a unifying logic, by which apparent goods are carefully examined and demonstrated to be parts of the true good, and which deliberately tends toward a single goal: true happiness, which is God.

As foreshadowed in IP6, it is necessary for Philosophy to first dispel the "fog" (*caligo*) of false ideas that grips the Prisoner's mind, before trying to introduce true ideas in their place. Foremost among these are his incorrect ideas regarding Fortune and her gifts; he believes that he has been ill-treated by Fortune. His image of Fortune, personified in IM1, is not entirely incorrect -- he correctly describes her as "unfaithful" (*male fida*) and "changing her cheating face" (*fallacem mutavit vultum*) -- but it is subjective and egocentric: she once "favored" the Prisoner and does so no longer, hence she is to blame for his unhappiness. In IIP1-M4, Philosophy uses rhetoric and poetry to make the Prisoner aware of the true nature of Fortune. In short, it is simply untrue that Fortune once favored him and does so no longer. Rather, she was always treacherous and inconstant: a fact which the Prisoner knew all along. It is the nature of her "whirling wheel" to raise things up, only to suddenly cast them down. This is vividly depicted by the unpredictable rhythms of IM1, whose meter, limping iambic trimeter, is associated with satire and invective.[151] Here it is used to mock those who, like the Prisoner,

[151] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 96-9.

unrealistically expect only good from Fortune and not bad. Indeed, Philosophy continues, all of nature exhibits the same cyclical contrasts (IIP2.8); by eternal law, *nothing* in the physical world remains fixed and stable. This is illustrated by the three poems (IIM2-4) that follow, each of which uses a pair of contrasting meters in alternation, with the first a longer and/or more difficult meter (IIM2, lesser Asclepiad; IIM3, Sapphic hendecasyllable; IIM4, iambic dimeter catalectic); this is followed by a (generally) shorter, simpler, and more stable meter (glyconic in IIM3, and pherecratic -- a slight extension of adonic -- in IIM2 & 4). Philosophy's aim is to simultaneously reinforce the two simple, stable meters (glyconic and adonic) which she had used to calm and focus the Prisoner in Stage 1b, and to gently push beyond them toward a capacity for handling more complex ideas. In IIP3 and P4, after the Prisoner objects that her arguments display a "honeyed speciousness" (*speciosa quidem ista...oblitaque...melle dulcedinis*, IIP3.2), Philosophy firmly points out that Fortune has not treated the Prisoner so very badly; he has been honored greatly in his time, more so than any other private citizen, and in fact has received much more good than bad from Fortune (IIP3.9-11). In addition, he retains the greatest of his possessions: the love and safety of his father-in-law, his mother, and his two sons. It is, in fact, simply foolish to look to Fortune's gifts for happiness: they are all transient and undependable, and, even if retained in life, all finally are lost when death comes. Indeed, the seemingly best fortune is at the same time the most unstable, as "even the very tiniest thing can topple the most fortunate from the summit of their happiness" (IIP4.15);[152] this is illustrated in IIM4 using the metaphor of a house built neither upon

[152] Translation from Tester.

the summit nor upon the unstable sands, but upon a firm, low rock (reflected in the highly stable pherecratic meter used in the alternate lines).

Now that Philosophy has corrected the Prisoner's view of Fortune, it is time (IIP5) to begin to use "stronger medicines": that is, to methodically and critically examine each one of Fortune's apparent gifts (earthly riches, honor, power, and fame). Each of these, she demonstrates, is by its nature not only transient but *external*, and thus unable to confer any true benefit upon its owner. Riches are not precious in themselves, but only when spent and thus lost; gems, landscapes, and fine clothes, though in themselves beautiful, do not make their owners beautiful (IIP5). Indeed, riches *degrade* their owners, who value their worth above that of their own selves; great wealth, moreover, invites attack by robbers and thus must be guarded, making its owner neither free from need nor safer than before. In IIP6, Philosophy turns to honors and power; neither of these confer virtue upon bad men, but rather magnify their badness. The power that humans seek, political power, is only an external sort of power; it does not grant its owner control over his own body or mind, and those who use power to subjugate others are often in turn subjugated by others. Furthermore, power over another person is power over the body only, for a free mind cannot be constrained. The total inability of power to grant goodness or even self-control is illustrated in IIM6, whose wildly syncopated meter (Sapphic hendecasyllable) and imagery depicting the harsh geographic extremities of the Roman Empire reflect, as Blackwood argues, the unrestrained ferocity of Nero.[153] This geographical imagery leads naturally into a discussion of fame's worthlessness in IIP7: in comparison to the vastness of the Earth's surface, the multiplicity of different peoples,

[153] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius,* 107-8.

and, even more so, the infinitude of time, the greatest fame that a single person could possibly gain is paltry and quickly forgotten. The poem which follows, IIM7, is an interesting and difficult poem, worth a brief discussion. Following two stichic poems (IIM5 and 6), it once more employs alternating meters: iambic trimeter, a complex meter that admits of many substitutions, and iambic dimeter, a much simpler and shorter meter. Iambic trimeter, as previously mentioned, is the meter of Roman comedy; this suggests a likeness between the fleeting glory of one's earthly life and the transient spectacle of a theatrical farce, which in the second line is reduced to the stark and inevitable simplicity of death. Three lines are of particular note: in 13, Boethius substitutes two short syllables for a long syllable twice,

– – ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡

creating a run of seven short syllables (*involv***it humile pariter**) followed by three long

– – – ◡ –

syllables (**et celsum** *caput*). The effect is comic: the "humble" man (depicted by cramped, hurried syllables) and the "high" one (by leisurely, long syllables) are treated alike (*pariter*) by Death. The same effect is employed in line 25,

– – ◡ – – ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ – ◡ –

(*cum sera vobis* **rapiet hoc eti***am dies*) to give the impression of rapid motion as one's very name is "snatched" away by Death. Finally, in line 16, Boethius replaces an

◡ ◡

expected long syllable with two short syllables (**rigi***dus Cato*): Cato, it seems, has lost in death the (metrical) rigidity for which he was famous in life! Stage 2b of the ascent concludes with IIP8, where Philosophy, summing up what has been discussed, states that

the best sort of Fortune is bad Fortune, for it is truthful and instructive rather than deceptive and, in fact, helps one distinguish true friends -- the "most precious of all kinds of riches"[154] -- from false ones. This is followed by IIM8, the second of the stichic glyconic poems, which, picking up the idea of *amor* (love) from the preceding discussion of friendship, both anticipates what is to come in Book III and provides a partial answer to the Prisoner's indignant question in IM5. It is love which binds together opposing forces in the cosmos and produces the regular harmony of the days, seasons, and years; if love ruled in the hearts of human beings as well as in the remainder of the cosmos, the human race would indeed be happy (*felix*) as the Prisoner desires.

The third section of the first ascent begins at IIIP1, with a short introductory section (IIIP1-2) where Philosophy lays out the goal for this stage: *veram...felicitatem*, true happiness (IP1.5). However, the Prisoner cannot properly recognize true happiness until he has "turned his eyes upon its opposite" (*cum in contrariam partem flexeris oculos,* IP1.7):[155] false happiness, or rather those things which promise happiness to human beings but fail to deliver it. This "turning" to gaze at false goods strangely inverts the characteristic "turning" motion of Platonic conversion (away from false shadows towards the true light): a disquieting hint that the path which lies ahead may not be the single straightforward ascent it has so far generally appeared to be. The poem which follows, IIIM1, underscores the point of the previous prose section: the Prisoner, who now perceives only false goods, must -- by critically looking upon them and thus fully comprehending their incomplete nature -- clear them from his mind so that he may see

[154] Translation from Tester.
[155] Translation from Tester.

the true good. This somewhat ambiguous imagery of "turning" is reflected in the meiuric tetrameter, consisting of three dactyls (– ˘˘) followed abruptly by an iamb (˘ –): a sudden "swerve" in the opposite rhythmic direction which throws the established beat upon its head.

In IIIP2 Philosophy further explains that all human beings long for true happiness, the highest of all goods, but do not know how or where to find it. Rather, they are led astray down various paths: some think that self-sufficiency is the highest good, and seek it through accumulation of riches. Others seek respect, through high offices; still others power, through ruling; celebrity, through fame; or joy, through pleasure. Such people, however, are not altogether wrong in believing these things good, for what is excellent and best must clearly be self-sufficient, honorable, powerful, celebrated, and free from unhappiness. IIIM2 is the second of the anapestic dimeter series explored by Magee and Curran; it expands upon the previous discussion by demonstrating that all things, in seeking happiness, seek their *origin*, to "link their beginning to their end and make of themselves a stable circle" (*fini iunxerit ortum/stabilemque sui fecerit orbem,* IIIM2.37-8). The obvious inference, as Curran concludes, is that the Prisoner's task is to do the same: that is, to leave behind the human world of fragmentary (and thus unstable) rectilinear motion and adopt in its place the purely circular (and thus stable) motion of the divine.

The next set of prose chapters (IIIP3-7) go through the false (or rather incomplete) goods mentioned above, demonstrating how each not only does not convey happiness but does not even convey the good sought. For example, wealth does not bring self-sufficiency, for even the rich are troubled by worry, become hungry and thirsty, and

require help to keep their wealth safe (IIIP3). These chapters are set off by a number of short poems (IIIM3-7) in a bewilderingly diverse array of meters, including several seen nowhere else in the *Consolatio*.[156] None are longer than ten lines, and two (IIIM3 & 7) are only six lines, scarcely long enough to count as an independent poem; their purpose appears more that of "punctuation" between a set of prose chapters which form a single interconnected argument than that of serious commentary or aural therapy as in Books I and II. At any rate, I will not discuss them in detail here, save to say that this is one reason I do not see IIIM5 as a realistic candidate for the "center" of the *Consolatio*, as Blackwood argues (and as will be discussed further in Chapter 6). In IIIP8, Philosophy briefly sums up: these apparent paths to happiness are only "by-paths" which lead nowhere save to various evils; they do not deliver even partial happiness. The poem which follows (IIIM8), rather more substantial than its predecessors, strikes a comedic note in comparing such stupidity (*ignorantia*) to seeking fish on a mountain or gold on a green tree. Yet, by seeking and gaining "false goods with labor great", human beings may at last learn to recognize true ones (IIIM8.20-22).[157]

The final step of the first ascent shows how this is possible. As Philosophy argues in IIIP9, the "perversity" of human reason divides and separates that which is one in nature. True sufficiency cannot lack power (for then it would be in want of something); similarly, that which is sufficient and powerful must be in turn honorable, renowned, and

[156] These are: IIIM3, iambic trimeter/pentameter; M4, phalaecean hendecasyllable/Alcaic decasyllable; M5, anapestic dimeter catalectic; M6, tetrameter (catalectic) + ionic dimeter; M7, anaclastic ionic dimeter (Blackwood, *The* Consolatio *of Boethius,* 255). The metrical diversity observed here is perhaps intended to reflect the diversity of the apparent paths to happiness pursued by human beings.
[157] Translation from Tester.

joyous. Thus the *substance* of sufficiency, honor, power, fame, and pleasure are the same; only their names differ. It is thus futile to seek one without the others; if possessed all together, though, they bestow the full and perfect happiness that the Prisoner longs to find. Before seeking this, the Prisoner and Philosophy must first call upon the "Father of all things", for unaided human *ratio* cannot bring one to the unified "abode of the highest good" (*summi boni sedem*),[158] which can only be understood through *intellegentia*.[159] Hence the prayer in IIIM9, which, as discussed in Chapter 3, functions theurgically to elevate the Prisoner (and the reader) to the first pinnacle, where he is able to perceive this highest good and true happiness -- that is, God.

5.4 First Pinnacle (Stage 4): IIIP10-IIIP12.23

The first pinnacle, like the first ascent, exemplifies the Circle of the Same, both in its subject matter (the divine, i.e. God) and in the consistently unifying motion by which it operates. To briefly summarize this motion: in IIIP10 we learn that, in order for imperfect goods (as previously discussed) to exist, there must be a perfect "fount of all goods" (*omnium fons bonorum*) from which they arise. God, the principle of all things, must not only be good but have perfect goodness -- indeed, he himself *is* the highest good; the highest good is true happiness; therefore true happiness must reside in, rather *is,* God. From this Philosophy draws the corollary that human beings are made happy by the acquisition of happiness, which is divinity; therefore, to be happy is to have acquired

[158] Translation from Tester.
[159] Hankey, "Placing the Human," 13-4.

divinity and thus to be (by participation at least) a god. In IIIP11, Philosophy turns to the subject of unity. Things become good by the acquisition of unity; but, since what is good is good by participation in the good, this means the one and the good are the same. Indeed, since what subsists does so only by virtue of its unity, all things -- in the human, animal, plant, and even mineral realms -- strive after and desire continued unity; unity and goodness are the same; therefore all things desire goodness, which must therefore be the end of all things -- one of the matters which the Prisoner had forgotten in IP6. Accordingly, in IIIP12 Philosophy moves to the next matter the Prisoner claimed not to know: by what sort of governance the universe is ruled. It is (as the Prisoner himself acknowledged in IP6) ruled by God; God is happiness itself, and thus self-sufficient (since sufficiency is a characteristic of true happiness); therefore he needs no outside assistance and disposes all things by himself. Furthermore, God is the good itself; therefore he disposes all things by the good. Finally, since all things seek the good, all things are ruled voluntarily; in fact, they cannot, while remaining true to their nature, go against God. "It is therefore," Philosophy concludes, "the highest good which rules all things firmly, and sweetly disposes them" (*quod regit cuncta fortiter suaviterque disponit*, IIIP12.22) -- a statement which pleases the Prisoner by its very wording (a reference to the Book of Wisdom) even more than by its content. At this point, he professes himself to be satisfied, declaring that the "folly which tortured me so cruelly is ashamed" (IIIP12.23).[160]

The naïve reader might be forgiven for thinking at this point that the *Consolatio* is nearly at an end. Yet an even more difficult journey awaits, one foreshadowed in part by

[160] The translations in this and the previous sentence are from Tester.

the two poems placed between these prose chapters. At first glance, they each appear to be fairly straightforward commentary on the preceding chapter's arguments, employing Platonic imagery (IIIM10, the Cave metaphor from the *Republic*; IIIM11, the doctrine of forgetting and recollection from the *Phaedrus* and *Meno*). Small details, however, hint of conflict to come. IIIM10 strikes a discordant note with the emphasis on "rest" in lines 4-5 (*haec erit vobis requies laborum,/hic portus placida manens quiete*). Though this clearly recollects the *tu namque serenum,/tu requies tranquilla piis* of IIIM9, it is alien to Plato's Cave as such. The philosopher ascends out of the Cave not to seek "rest" but the true and the good; having ascended, he does not remain "at rest" in the upper world but rather descends back into the Cave to assist the other prisoners. This hints at a second descent; the promise of *requies* is further belied by the restless shifting of the meter between phalaecean and Sapphic hendecasyllable. In IIIM11, the didactic content clashes with the limping iambic trimeter: the meter of satire and invective, used only here and in IIM1. The image of Fortune's wheel cannot help but come to mind, particularly given the doctrine of the fall into the body and the forgetfulness that accompanies it (9-10), the circle imagery in lines 3-4, and subtle similarities of wording (*dudum* in IIM2.3, IIIM11.7; *verterit vices* in IIM2.1, *vestigat verum* in IIIM11.1). Fortune, we recall, plays with her victims (*ludit*, IIM1.7), and in IIIP12 the Prisoner will likewise accuse Philosophy of "playing" with him (*ludisne?* IIIP12.30). IIIM11 thus acts as a "reprise" of IIM1, at once hinting of a fall to come and providing advance consolation: just as Fortune's wheel descends only to rise again, all is not lost after a fall, for the soul contains some memory of what has been forgotten.

5.5 "CROSSOVER": IIIP12.24-38

5.5.1 *X*: A Clash of Arguments

At this point, the narrative takes an unexpected and seemingly jarring turn. No sooner has the Prisoner declared himself satisfied than Philosophy proposes a new approach: "Would you like us to clash together our arguments [*rationes*], for perhaps out of a conflict of this kind some fair spark of truth will fly out?" (*visne rationes ipsas invicem collidamus? Forsitan ex huius modi conflictatione pulchra quaedam veritatis scintilla dissiliat,* IIIP12.25).[161] The Prisoner grants his permission, and Philosophy continues: God has power over all things; there is nothing that God cannot do; but God cannot do evil; therefore evil is nothing (*malum igitur...nihil est*). The Prisoner's reaction is immediate and furious: "Are you playing with me?" (*Ludisne, inquam, me*). In a speech thick with sarcasm (*mirabilem; munusculum*; *simplicitatis orbem complicas*), he accuses Philosophy of "weaving an inextricable labyrinth with your arguments (*inextricabilem labyrinthum rationibus texens*)" by "[going] in where you are going to come out again, and...[coming] out where you went in (*nunc quidem qua egrediaris introeas, nunc vero quo introieris egrediare*)," without any "proofs...from outside" (*nullis extrinsecus sumptis*): in other words, through (as he suspects) clever sophistry and circular reasoning.[162] Her conclusion -- that evil is nothing -- seems preposterous in the extreme to the Prisoner, who is suffering first-hand the very real consequences of human evil. As

[161] Translation from Tester.
[162] Translations in this sentence are from Tester (slightly modified as indicated).

foreshadowed in IIIM10 and 11, this reminder of his personal misery sends the Prisoner into a second fall, effected in part through the final poem of Book III (as will be discussed in Chapter 5). Thus, as Book IV opens, the Prisoner -- newly reminded of his "inward grief" -- asks how, "although there does exist a good ruler of the universe, evil can exist at all and even pass unpunished."[163] It will be the task of Books IV and V to fully explicate the answer to this question.

Why this second fall, one deliberately provoked by Philosophy through her "clash of arguments"? The image is of two sticks or rocks being brought sharply together at oblique angles, recalling the *X* from the *Timaeus*. Just as the Circle of the Same and Circle of the Different are set at oblique angles to one another and thus not resolvable into a single plane, so two truths -- Divine unity, goodness, and power on the one hand, and the human experience of evil on the other -- each appear undeniable, yet, to the rational human mind, mutually irreconcilable. As Blackwood explains, this is only the tip of the iceberg, for "the problem with the conclusion of the preceding prose passage -- that God rules all things sweetly by disposing them towards the good -- is that it seems to lead to the total collapse of human freedom. The prisoner, though he does not yet know it, has assented rather abstractly to a proposition that will seem to imply the obliteration of his every mode and activity...By awakening his earthly grief while instructing him to look above, Philosophy heightens the tension between the prisoner's (subjective) perception of the temporal world and the realm of (objective) divine simplicity in the world above...The Prisoner is risk of losing the subjective side of the question with which he so urgently

[163] Translations from Tester.

began, and so Philosophy must revive his pain and reopen his wound, so it can become the site of the healing word."[164]

The problem of human suffering and freedom cannot be dealt with through simple denial or evasion; indeed, the Prisoner and Philosophy will need the entire remainder of the *Consolatio* to demonstrate the complex relationship between divine governance and human freedom. To assert the unity, power, and goodness of God in an absolute sense is to leave behind, both intellectually and emotionally, the reality of the human world. The Prisoner must be brought back to earth, even if the fall that results is a painful one. Thus the "clash of arguments," out of which leaps a "spark of truth": a truth (i.e. the reality of his human suffering) that he has temporarily forgotten. This *veritatis scintilla*, recalling and replacing the *minima scintillula* of IP6, will set him on a new course which will complete his healing. This final section of IIIP12 thus acts as a "crossover" stage, transitioning out of the first circle of the narrative (the Circle of the Same) into a new, more difficult, and more complex circle: the Circle of the Different.

5.5.2 An Incomplete Consolation?

In order to fully appreciate the importance of this "crossover" section and its new trajectory, it is worth briefly considering a counterfactual: what if Boethius had chosen to end the *Consolatio* after IIIP12.23? What would be the implications for Philosophy's cure of the Prisoner and for the *Consolatio* as a whole? One might object that the remaining gap in the Prisoner's understanding from IP6 (i.e. the definition of what it means to be

[164] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 133.

human) has not yet explicitly been addressed; yet as the Prisoner recalls in IIIP12, Philosophy's corollary in IIIP10 demonstrated that human beings are made happy by the acquisition of divinity -- by participation (*participatione*), as she subsequently states. In what does this acquisition of divinity consist? If we take at face value (as Curran does) the repeated admonitions in IIIM2 and IIIM11 to turn oneself and one's motions into a circle, as well as the prayer in IIIM9 to "rise to God's august seat", it would seem to consist in entirely leaving behind the human realm of *ratio* (typified by rectilinear motion) to rise, by means of prayer, to the divine realm of *intellegentia* (typified by circular motion): a conclusion reinforced by the apparent contempt for the body in IIIM11.9-10 (*non omne namque mente depulit lumen/obliviosam corpus invehens molem*) and the Parmenides quote at IIIP12.37. Furthermore, the Timaean microcosm of the *Consolatio* would remain incomplete, composed of a single circle (the Same) with a single, unvarying movement: pure circular motion.

Why is this not in actual fact the solution adopted by Philosophy and by Boethius as author and literary Demiurge? Is the problem that human beings cannot sustain such a union with the divine, or is there something essential in the human realm itself that not only cannot but *should* not be transcended? I believe that it is both. We must recall that the Prisoner's original definition of the human (a mortal, rational animal) is not *false* but only incomplete; also, that throughout the *Consolatio* Philosophy directs her healing medicines to the fully embodied Prisoner, including his rational, emotional, and sensitive faculties as well as his intellect. What Philosophy intends is to heal the totality of the Prisoner *as* human, not to facilitate an escape to another realm -- one that (as it would entail complete union with the divine) would cause his effective annihilation as a human

being. We remember, too, that the Timaean Demiurge must create *both* the superior Circle of the Same with its constant circular motion and the inferior Circle of the Different with its oblique motion, as well as both immortal and mortal souls; only thus will the cosmos fully mirror its eternal Model.

To summarize: a *Consolatio* that ended at IIIP12.23 would still be, certainly, an extraordinary literary and philosophical work -- a rewarding intellectual journey, paired with a dazzling poetic anthology and capped with an intricate exercise in Platonic dialectic -- but it would not be a complete Timaean microcosm. Nor would it be a *consolation*; that is, it would not provide true healing for a reader in a situation like the Prisoner's. At best, it would provide a momentary distraction from their troubles via a series of intellectual exercises, set off with pleasant poetry; at worst, its full implications ("evil is nothing") realized, it would seem a cruel mockery of their suffering. Scarry is thus at once right and wrong in her assessment. The end of Book III does rise to an extraordinary, even divine height; however, it is not one that can be fully and consistently realized by human beings, nor should it be. To take up the metaphor presented just before Philosophy's "clash of arguments": such a direct assault upon the divine realm is like the giants attacking heaven (*lacessentes caelum Gigantas*), whom "a kindly strength put in their proper place" (*benigna fortitudo disposuit*), just as Philosophy's kind but firm guidance will steer the Prisoner back from his intoxicating flight into pure *intellegentia* to his proper place in the human realm. Reason, *ratio*, must be restored, along with the Prisoner's emotional and sensitive faculties; [165] the human being is to be transformed, not annihilated. As we will see, the motion which the Prisoner will ultimately adopt in his

[165] Hankey, "Placing the Human," 14-8.

second ascent is not the purely circular motion of the divine, nor the purely rectilinear motion of the human world, but the composite motion of the spiral.

5.6 Interlude: "Orpheus" and the Second Fall (Stage 5): IIIM12

Directly following Philosophy's "clash of arguments" in IIIP12 and the Prisoner's indignant reply, we find IIIM12, the longest and, as Blackwood writes, "perhaps the...most difficult" poem of the *Consolatio*.[166] Though technically part of the Circle of the Different, it hangs suspended between the "clash" of IIIP12 and the new beginning of IVP1, taking up many of the first ascent's themes and images while illustrating vividly the problems they entail, whose magnitude the Prisoner must fully grasp before attempting to solve them in the second ascent. At the same time it continues Philosophy's emotional therapy from IIIP12, further reawakening and even (like the Muses in IM1) inflaming the Prisoner's deep anguish that he has temporarily forgotten; singing "softly and sweetly" (*leniter suaviterque*, IVP1.1)[167], she gives voice both to his former sorrow as well as his new bewilderment at her "clash of arguments." Placed like IIM8 at the end of a book and sharing its glyconic meter together with much of its thematic material, IIIM12 depicts its dark inverse: a hellish nightmare of a cosmos in which divine *amor* deliberately ordains human suffering, prayer is ineffectual, and free will and the good have no meaning. IIIM12 is, without a doubt, among the most complex of the

[166] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 128.
[167] Translation from Tester.

Consolatio's poems, and to fully explicate all its details would be well beyond the scope of this thesis, but I hope to provide at least a brief summary.

The default interpretation of this poem by commentators and translators is an allegory, one suggested by the last seven lines.[168] Upon this reading, "Orpheus" is the Prisoner, "Eurydice" is his mind, "Hades" is the mental darkness into which he has fallen, and the "upper day" the the vision of the highest good, God, to which he aspires. The Prisoner's "turning" in IIIP12 from the vision of the divine as perfect unity to "look back" upon the divided world of human experience and his own suffering is thus a catastrophic failure prohibiting further ascent. As Blackwood argues, though, there are pressing reasons why this seemingly obvious interpretation will not do. Firstly, there is the fact that "the poet comes through on Orpheus' side," as the *maior lex* of love makes Hades' condition impossible to fulfill; "the poet's voice is heavy with compassion."[169] Secondly, the Prisoner's "looking back" in IIIP12 clearly does *not* prohibit further ascent, as Books IV and V demonstrate. Finally, there is the fact that Philosophy herself resembles Orpheus even more closely than the Prisoner does. She too is a poet -- indeed, she sings nearly all of the poems of the *Consolatio*; it is she, and not the Prisoner, who has voluntarily descended from the "highest heaven" (*supero cardine,* IP3.3) to the living hell of the dungeon cell where the Prisoner has been forcibly confined, and it is *she* who seeks to

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[168] *Vos haec fabula respicit/Quicumque in superum diem/Mentem ducere quaeritis./Nam qui Tartareum in specus/Victus lumina flexerit,/Quidquid praecipuum trahit/Perdit, dum videt inferos.* Tester translates these lines thus: "To you this tale refers,/who seek to lead your mind/into the upper day;/For he who overcome should turn back his gaze/Towards the Tartarean cave,/Whatever excellence he takes with him/He loses when he looks upon those below." It should be noted in particular that "your mind" here is an interpolation; the Latin reads simply *mentem* ("a/the mind").

[169] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 132.

lead his mind toward the upper light.[170] Furthermore, it is Philosophy herself who deliberately, with her clash of arguments, causes the Prisoner to "look back" in IIIP12. However, I agree with O'Daly that no single allegorical interpretation can suffice to explain IIIM12, for it is not intended as an allegory.[171] Rather, we must walk through the narrative with (indeed, *as*) Orpheus, noting carefully the manifold symbolic and emotional associations of the vocabulary and imagery it employs.

First, though, some general observations are in order. As mentioned, IIIM12, like IM6 and IIM8, is in glyconic meter, which Blackwood describes as "gentle" and "reassuring" in IM6 since it is a short, simple rhythm which allows no substitutions.[172] However, while IM6 is only 22 lines long and IIM8 is 30, IIIM12 is nearly double the latter at 58 lines. The relentless, unvarying repetition soon takes on an oppressive, even stifling air, its short lines mirroring the claustrophobic confines of the underworld. Four major themes can be observed in the imagery and vocabulary used. One is song and the power of song, discussed by Blackwood in detail.[173] The second is the language of coercion (*coegerat*, 9; *subegerant*, 16; *impotens*, 24; *dominos*, 28; *captus*, 30; *vincimur* and *arbiter*, 40; *coerceat*, 44; *victus*, 56) already used in relation to the divine in IM6 (*coercuit*, 18) and IIM8 (*imperet*, 8; *coerceat*, 10; *regens,* 14; *imperitans*, 15; *frena*, 16; *dictat*, 27; *regitur regat*, 30); here, though, we see it change from a reassuring coercion which maintains the cosmic harmony into an oppressive coercion that negates the possibility of human freedom. Thirdly, there is the repeated use of the word *amor*, also

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[170] This interpretation is further supported by the Prisoner's first words of IVP1: *O, inquam, veri* ***praevia*** *luminis...* ("O, you who **lead the way** to the true light...")
[171] Gerard O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius*, 191.
[172] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 70-1.
[173] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 134.

prefigured in IIM8.15 and elsewhere; here, however, the issue is not that *amor* does *not* rule in human hearts, but rather precisely that it *does* rule Orpheus, compelling him to turn and in doing so to destroy both Eurydice and himself (51).[174] Finally, there is cyclic or repetitive motion, particularly manifested in "looking back" (*lumina flectere*, 46); the same circular motion which promised happiness and a return to God in IIIM2 and IIIM9 here threatens to destroy all possibility of permanent happiness and with it all hope for the Prisoner's cure. This references and subverts the language of Platonic conversion as seen in the allegory of the Cave from the *Republic*, where the prisoners must first of all be unchained and made to turn around toward the light: an inversion anticipated in the ambiguous "conversion" imagery of IIIP1. Hence the same circular motion which promised happiness and a return to God in IIIM2 and IIIM9, here threatens to sever the Prisoner permanently from the Divine. It is essential to note the two-sidedness of these latter three which further develop the theme of contradiction introduced in the "clash" of IIIP12: promising salvation in the first part of IIIM12, as well as in the first ascent, they ultimately bring about Orpheus' and Eurydice's destruction in the poem, and seem to jeopardize as well both the Prisoner's hope of finding true happiness and his cure.

The poem opens with four rather cryptic lines:

Felix, qui potuit boni

fontem visere lucidum,

felix, qui potuit gravis

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[174] As O'Donnell (*Boethius* Consolatio Philosophiae: Commentary) points out, the first i of *occidit* must for metrical reasons be short ("he died"); thus it must refer to Orpheus rather than Eurydice ("he killed her"), which would be redundant with *perdidit* in any case. http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/boethius/jkok/3m12_n.htm#Metrum%2012.

terrae solvere vincula.

To whom do these lines refer -- Orpheus or the Prisoner, or perhaps any human being? At this point in the poem, we cannot know. The use of the perfect tense (*potuit*), though, suggests that, whoever is meant, they no longer experience this blessed state. This opening thus evokes a wistful atmosphere of mourning for what has been and will not return, one reinforced by the faint echo of IM1 in the emphasized *qui* and the perfect tense. From here we pass on to the initial depiction of Orpheus' music and its effects upon the natural world (7-13):

...postquam flebilibus modis

silvas currere mobiles,

amnes stare coegerat

iunxitque intrepidum latus

saevis cerva leonibus,

nec visum timuit lepus

iam cantu placidam canem.

Despite the mention of *flebilibus* (8), the overall atmosphere of these lines is a happy one. The scene, depicting opposing aspects of nature brought into harmony through Orpheus' song, has all the gentle beauty of a children's tale, recalling at the same time the divine *amor* of IIM8 and the *foedus perpetuum* (IIM8.4) it maintains throughout the cosmos. Too soon, though, the story turns dark; Orpheus' music cannot soothe his own great grief, and so he descends to the underworld. In both this descent and the scene of cosmic harmony that precedes it, another important symbolic association of Orpheus becomes apparent: as exemplar for Christ, prophesied in Isaiah 11.6-8 to reconcile

predators with their prey, who descends to Hell post-Crucifixion to free the souls trapped there.[175]

...inmites superos querens

infernos adiit domos (18-19).

The mention of *inmites* ("inexorable", with connotations of "cruel, savage") is significant, for this is the first time in the *Consolatio* that the divine has been portrayed as actively oppressive rather than passively negligent, as in IM5. Yet Orpheus hopes that the gods of the underworld, at least, will be moved by his sweet prayer (*dulci...prece*) to grant him, and Eurydice, mercy (*veniam*, 27). All of Tartarus is soothed by Orpheus' music, with even the torments of the damned momentarily relieved (34-9):

...non Ixionium caput

velox praecipitat rota

et longa site perditus

spernit flumina Tantalus;

vultur dum satur est modis

non traxit Tityi iecur.

[175] The association of Orpheus with Christ can be observed in early Christian iconography in a number of places: Huskinson lists the catacombs of S. Callixtus, Domitilla, and SS. Peter and Marcellinus, among other locations. He is generally depicted as seated on a rock playing his lyre, surrounded by wild and/or domestic beasts. As Huskinson writes, "Eusebius...compares the singers (*De laudibus Constantini,* 14): as Orpheus is said to have charmed Nature by his song, so the Saviour of the World stills men's souls and fills the world with the harmonious music that He plays upon His chosen instrument, human nature." Janet Huskinson, "Some Pagan Mythological Figures and their Significance in Early Christian Art," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 42 (1974): 69-72.

The resemblance of Hell and its torments to the sufferings of the Prisoner in his dungeon cell, which the power of Philosophy's music and speech has temporarily driven from his mind, are obvious. Beyond that, though, there is a further parallel to be drawn. The tortures mentioned -- ever-recurring hunger and thirst, physical pain, and the endlessly whirling wheel of Fortune -- are simply the conditions of embodied life in general. The Prisoner feels doubly trapped in his dungeon and in his physical body, and longs to escape both -- an escape, it appears, made possible by Philosophy/Orpheus/Christ (40-3):

Tandem "Vincimur" arbiter

umbrarum miserans ait.

"Donamus comitem viro

emptam carmine coniugem;

The language used (*vincimur; miserans*) appears to refute the earlier implication that the divine is inflexible and unpitying. Orpheus' music has done its work, and Hades, the *arbiter* of Hell, has consented to allow Eurydice to accompany him. But there is one condition (44-6):

...sed lex dona coerceat

ne dum Tartara liquerit

fas sit lumina flectere."

In fact, this seemingly simple condition will set at naught Hades' entire gift (*dona*), for Orpheus is constrained by a greater law (*maior lex*, 48): *amor*. The very *amor* that drove him to descend to Hades to rescue Eurydice and which gave his music its power to move Hades to grant his request; the same divine *amor* which, we are told, holds all things in a

harmony through their own innate nature (IIM8), now forces Orpheus to turn and look despite himself (49-51):

Heu, noctis prope terminos

Orpheus Eurydicen suam

vidit, perdidit, occidit.

Orpheus looks back at Eurydice and destroys both her and himself; Philosophy, with her "clash of arguments," causes the Prisoner to glance back at, and thus fall back into, the embodied human world of his physical and emotional sufferings. To consistently hold onto the vision of the Divine attained in IIIP10-12 demands a complete control of the mind which no human possesses. The circular movement of all things toward their source as end that seemed to promise a return to the divine (IIIM2) has here been transformed into a circular "turning" that sets at naught Orpheus' entire journey and plunges Eurydice back into the sufferings of hell. Both Platonic conversion and Christ's death, as paths to the Divine and thus to salvation, are rendered null and void in such a cosmos.

Moreover, this very turning was itself caused, indeed specifically *decreed*, by the divine *amor* of God's governance. If God ordains all things for the good, as Philosophy has claimed, then it seems He ordains the Prisoner's own "looking back" and thus the ultimate failure of his ascent. The cry of Hades -- *vincimur* -- becomes, in the *victus* of line 56, Orpheus' own implicit cry: indeed that of every character in the story. Eurydice is conquered by death; Orpheus is conquered by grief; Hades is conquered by music; Orpheus is conquered by love; Eurydice is conquered anew by death -- *all* are conquered by the inescapable coercion of their own nature as established by God's governance. The entire narrative thus becomes a vicious circle which ends precisely where it began,

accomplishing nothing except the suffering of its participants, yet every step of which for some reason is divinely decreed. Indeed, if the divine *amor* truly "sweetly disposes" all things, we must accept that it also sweetly disposes Ixion's whirling wheel and Tantalus' unquenchable thirst, as well as the very crimes for which these torments are the clearly unjust retribution. Prayer (*dulci...prece,* 27) is rendered useless, for if God determines all things from the beginning, nothing can possibly be changed or averted. To attempt to make this devastating conclusion palatable by claiming that "evil is nothing" is to solve nothing, for if God does all things and yet does only good, what does "good" even mean? Does it not lose all significance except for simply "the things which God does" -- the same circular reasoning against which the Prisoner protests in IIIP12?

These problems are not resolved in IIIM12; indeed, it will take the entire second ascent, covering Book IV and V of the *Consolatio*, to fully do so. For now, it is enough that they have been brought to the Prisoner's attention and that with the help of Philosophy's own *flebilibus modis* he has remembered his human grief. Book III thus ends upon a note of suspense: is all hope lost for the Prisoner? Fortunately, the first chapters of Book IV will show that this is decidedly not the case.

CHAPTER 6: IIIM9 AS MODEL FOR THE *CONSOLATIO*: THE CIRCLE OF THE DIFFERENT

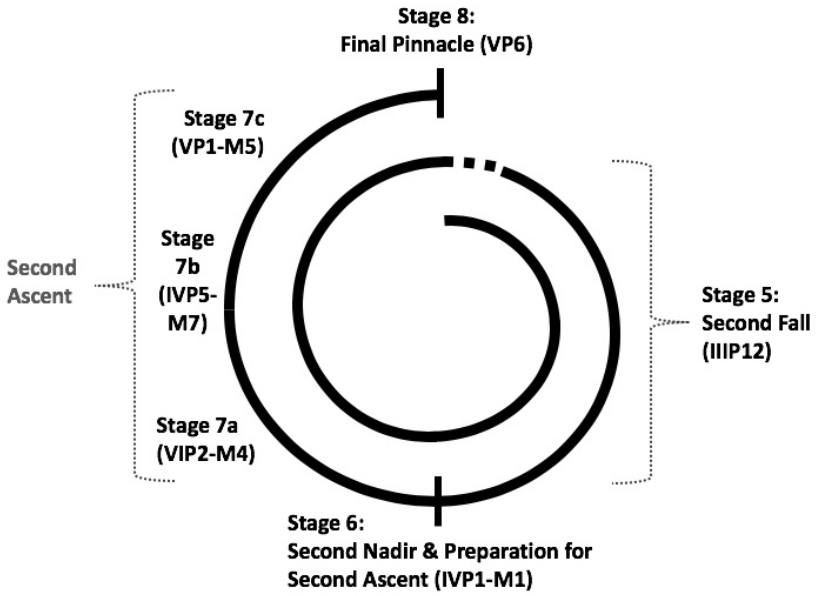

Figure 3: The Circle of the Different in the *Consolatio* Narrative

6.1 SECOND NADIR & PREPARATION FOR SECOND ASCENT (STAGE 6): IVP1-M1

As Book IV of the *Consolatio* opens, we are confronted with an all-too-familiar sight: the dejected Prisoner in his dungeon cell. Philosophy's "clash of arguments" and its provocative statement that "evil is nothing," followed by her Orpheus poem, have done their work: the Prisoner, turning from the vision of perfect happiness as the highest good, unified and divine, has once more awakened to his own plight and the physical and emotional reality of his suffering. Despite even the beauty and perfection of the second pinnacle, where God is visualized as the "well-rounded" Parmenidean sphere, he has, he says, "not yet forgotten my deeply seated grief" (*ego, nondum penitus insiti maeroris*

oblitus, IVP1.1).[176] Furthermore, we are told that the Prisoner was "not previously totally ignorant" (*non tamen antehac prorsus ignorata*) of what Philosophy has just taught him, though he had forgotten it through the "pain of [his] injuries" (*ob iniuriae dolorem*, IVP1.2),[177] reminding us of the Prisoner's own confession in IM1 that his initial position was not a stable one (IM1.22). Thus the Prisoner's second fall is, to some degree, a repeat of the first.

Have we then returned to our exact starting place? Is the Prisoner's journey, as hinted in IIIM12, only an endless cycle in which the terminus is the same as the beginning, repeated rises are inevitably followed by falls, and no true progress is made? Thankfully, it becomes quickly apparent that this is not the case. To begin with, the Prisoner of IVP1 is a very different person than the Prisoner of IM1. Far from being *elinguem prorsus mutumque* (IP2.5) he is entirely able, even eager, to speak; indeed, his first action in Book IV is to "interrupt" Philosophy "as she was just preparing to say something more" (*intentionem dicere adhuc aliquid parantis abrupi*, IVP1.1).[178] Secondly, although the suffering of which he has been reminded is a deeply personal one, the objection to which he gives voice is not, as in IM1, subjective and egocentric, but objective and generalized.

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[176] The Latin text here is ambiguous. *Penitus* may either, as Tester takes it, modify *oblitus* ("not yet having **completely forgotten**...") or *insiti* ("...my **deeply seated** grief"). I believe the latter reading is more convincing, both because, far from merely "not completely" having forgotten his grief, he has at this particular moment been vividly reminded of it, and also because the wording closely recalls the Prisoner's objection in IIP3 that the hurt of his wrongs lies deeper than Rhetoric and Music, once they have ceased to be heard, can assuage (*sed miseris malorum altior sensus est. Itaque cum haec auribus insonare desierient,* ***insitus*** *animum maeror praegravat*, IIP3.2). The implication is that the Prisoner fears that the vision of divine unity and goodness will prove in the end no more effective for his pain than rhetoric and music: an implication suggested by, in IIIM12.14-17, the inability of the *flebilibus modis* to soothe Orpheus' overly great grief.

[177] Translations from Tester.

[178] Translation from Tester.

The "very greatest cause of my grief," he tells Philosophy, is not simply his personal sufferings but the fact that "although there does exist a good ruler of the universe, evil can exist at all and even pass unpunished,"[179] combined with the fact that wickedness is all too often rewarded and virtue punished. Finally, the Prisoner clearly retains much of what he has learned along with the process by which it was reached, since he refers to it as "not only divine contemplated on its own but also invincible because of your arguments" (*cum sui speculatione divina tum tuis rationibus invicta*, IVP1.2). It is clear that the Prisoner, though he has to some degree lost the ecstatic vision of the second pinnacle and the temporary happiness it granted him, has retained the capacity for critical thought and philosophical discussion that he gained during the first ascent, and furthermore is ready and eager to apply it to the difficult ethical problems that he correctly identifies as unresolved. The second nadir thus occupies very little space relative to the first; there is no need for Philosophy to wipe the Prisoner's eyes, remind the Prisoner of her identity, or convince the Prisoner to "bare the wound" -- in fact, he himself has spontaneously done the last already.

Philosophy can thus proceed directly to the preparation for the second ascent, which comprises the remainder of IVP1 as well as IVM1. She begins by laying out, in response to the Prisoner's challenge, what she plans to demonstrate: the good are always powerful, the bad are always weak, and virtue is always rewarded while vice is punished. This is accompanied by a highly concrete image, likely intended to help focus the Prisoner's mind at a moment when he is again somewhat preoccupied with the physical: a great master's house where worthless vessels are cherished while precious ones are allowed to

[179] Translations from Tester.

become filthy (the exact opposite of the scenario which Philosophy states *is* actually the case). Finally, she promises the Prisoner that, after laying out those things she deems necessary, she will show him the way "back home" (*domum*, IVP1.8), affixing (in a second vivid image) "wings" (*pennas*) to his mind by which it may "raise itself aloft" (*se in altum tollere possit*) to his "homeland" (*patriam*), "under my guidance, on my path, and in my carriage" (*meo ductu, mea semita, meis etiam vehiculis,* IVP1.9).[180] The path ahead is thus one explicitly described as an ascent. It should be noted also that, unlike in the preparation for the first ascent (IP6-M7), Philosophy does not need to instruct the Prisoner to calm or "cast away" his emotions. Indeed, her use of imagery here and, even more so, in the poem that follows is designed to excite eager anticipation, in contrast to the sorrow she likewise deliberately evoked in IIIM12. Its success in this vein can be clearly seen in the exclamation that follows: "Wonderful! What great things you promise me! Nor do I doubt that you can do them, but do not hold me back, whom you have now so aroused" (*Papae, inquam, ut magna promittis! nec dubito quin possis efficere, tu modo quem excitaveris ne moreris,* IVP2.1).[181]

IVM1, in sharp contrast to the "claustrophobic" glyconic meter of IIIM12, employs dactylic tetrameter alternating with iambic dimeter; both admit of many substitutions, granting the rhythm at once an expansive freedom (also conveyed through the broad line of the dactylic tetrameter) and upward buoyancy (from the iambic dimeter) that mirrors the imagery used. Picking up the idea of "wings" from IVP1 (a theme I will discuss further below in conjunction with IVP3), Philosophy depicts a soaring journey through

[180] Translations from Tester.
[181] Translation from Tester.

the cosmos, past the spheres of air and fire and the orbits of the planets, until the voyager freely traverses the orbits of the stars. Here we first observe a novel use of stellar imagery. Philosophy has, of course, often depicted the stars in previous poems, as has the Prisoner himself (IM5, 6; IIIM3, 9), but strictly as *exempla* of the order and beauty of God's creation; never before as a realm somehow *attainable* to human beings -- a theme which subsequent poems (IVM7, VM5) will take up. (Even in the *Timaeus*, the goal was to return to one's own "companion" star, not to roam freely over the stellar sphere.) Yet the voyager, we are told, rises even beyond the stars themselves to see God seated outside and hence as governor over the cosmos, a journey which culminates in the triumphant exclamation: ""This," you shall say, "I remember, is my native land; here I was born, here I will halt my step!"" (*"Haec," dices, "memini, patria est mihi,/hinc ortus, hic sistam gradum*", 25-6).[182] Once more we are reminded of the Prisoner's assertion in IM1.22 that the cause of his initial fall was that his stance (*gradu*) was not stable (*stabili*). The suggestion is that *this* ascent, unlike previous ones, will at last deliver what the Prisoner longs for: a stable stance in his homeland, from which he will not fall again. This stability is gained through the wings with which his mind is endowed, granting him the ability to ascend as well as descend at will and averting the possibility of a second catastrophic fall.

This is underscored by the ending of the poem: a retrospective look back at the earth the Prisoner has left behind.[183] (If we had any doubts remaining about not taking the last

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[182] Translation from Tester.

[183] This passage, along with much of the imagery in IVM1, draws heavily upon Seneca's *Ad Marciam de Consolatione* XXV: ***deinde ad excelsa sublatus*** *inter felices currit animas. Excepit illum...parens tuus, Marcia. Ille nepotem suum...****uicinorum siderum meatus docet****...****Et in profunda terrarum permittere aciem iubet; iuuat enim ex alto relicta respicere****.* Seneca, *Moral Essays: Volume 2*, ed. by John W. Basore (London and

five lines of IIIM12 as a general prohibition, this would surely put them to rest.) Here the one ascending is not forbidden but allowed, indeed positively encouraged, to look and even intently *gaze* back (*noctem relictam visere*, 28; compare IIIM12: *fontem visere lucidum,* 2 and *noctis prope terminos*, 48). Indeed, it is suggested that looking back will be pleasing (*placeat*, 27), and in fact the journey begins as well as ends with a downward glance (*terras perosa despicit*, 4). The implication is that the traveler cannot fully understand the true worthlessness of earthly power until, having once seen the "lord of kings" (*regum...dominus*, 19) and of the entire cosmos, he gazes back at the *human* institution of kingship, finally capable of assessing it accurately. Indeed, we already see anticipated here the outlines of an answer to the Prisoner's challenge: those wicked people who appear to be powerful tyrants are actually exiles from their "true homeland," and the power they appear to wield is exercised entirely under God's control and governance. He (in contrast to Hades, the supposed *arbiter* of IIIM12 yet in fact powerless) is the true *arbiter* (22), the *regum dominus*. It will be the task of the second ascent to explain how this governance operates and how it is consistent with human freedom.

6.2 Second Ascent (Stages 7a, b, c): IVP2-VM5

The second ascent occupies most of the remainder of the *Consolatio*. Like the first ascent, it can be divided into three main stages: Stage 7a (IVP2-M4), which lays the

New York: Heinemann, 1932), Section XXV, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0018.

foundation for a solution to the ethical problems the Prisoner has raised; Stage 7b (IVP5-M7), in which a preliminary exploration of the relationship between fate and Providence is made before returning to complete the ethical investigation; and Stage 7c (VP1-M5), which explores in more detail and with greater intensity the issues surrounding fate, chance, free will, and divine Providence.

Several characteristics of the second ascent exemplify the Circle of the Different in the same way that the first ascent did the Circle of the Same. Firstly, where the first ascent was planned and carried out by a single speaker, Philosophy, the second ascent is much more of a cooperative effort. To be sure, Philosophy is still very much presented as the *magistra*, and she still speaks the majority of the prose material and all but one (VM3) of the poems. Nonetheless, the Prisoner is far more an equal partner than passive listener and at times he even anticipates her arguments (e.g. "you run ahead rightly" (*recte...praecurris*, IVP2.25).[184] The Prisoner, in fact, takes the leading role in directing the overall course of the conversation, as both Stages 7b and 7c begin (as did IVP1) with the Prisoner interrupting Philosophy with a new query: an initiative not only welcomed (witness her smile at IVP6.2) but rewarded by Philosophy, who each time consents to take up his question at length.

The subject matter and logic of the second ascent is also reflective of the Circle of the Different. Where the first ascent sought to establish the end of all things, that is, God, the second ascent is far more concerned with the two remaining topics on which the Prisoner's knowledge was shown in IP6 to be lacking: the nature of the human and the mode by which God governs the cosmos. A deep interest in the *human* is reflected

[184] Translation from Tester.

throughout the second ascent. In Book IV in particular, the Prisoner and (to a lesser extent) Philosophy are determined that their arguments and conclusions should make sense from a human, not only a divine, viewpoint, a caution learned from the "clash of arguments" in IIIP12; hence the references to the "talk of common people" (*vulgi sermonibus*) and the "practice of humanity" (*humanitatis usu*, IVP7.7). This interest in the human realm is also reflected in Book IV's prominent use of heroic (i.e. human or demi-human) mythical exemplars -- Odysseus (IVM3, 7), Agamemnon, and Hercules (IVM7) -- which, along with Orpheus in IIIM12, contrast with the complete lack of extended mythical reference in IM1-IIIP12.[185] The importance of the human is definitively established at the conclusion of the second ascent in VM5.

In a more general sense, while the logic of the first ascent was concerned with tracing a diversity of apparent goods (riches, honor, power, etc.) back to a single unified source of happiness, the supreme good, which was then identified with God, the second ascent is concerned with examining a multiplicity of subjects: various ethical issues, the relationship between fate and providence, and the nature of chance and of free will. To make sense of these diverse subjects will require a systematizing approach. It is for this reason that Philosophy presents in the second ascent the two great theoretical models of the *Consolatio:* Fate and Providence as concentric spheres (IVP6) and the four levels of knowing (VP4-6). Thus the first ascent operates through a *unifying* logic, while the

[185] O'Daly, in his study of the *Consolatio*'s poetry, identifies *four* extended mythical passages: along with the three poems I have identified, he lists IIM5 which depicts the so-called "Golden Age" (O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius*, 179-88). I disagree with him that this first poem is in any real sense "mythical"; no explicitly mythical figure(s), either divine or human, are identified, and the material appears more indebted to Socrates' theoretical depiction of a proto-urban society in *Republic* II:372a-e than any mythical account.

second ascent seeks to *establish a systematic basis for multiplicity* integrated with this prior unifying logic. It is important to note that the second ascent does not operate via a simple *opposition* to the first; this would provide no consolation, nor any satisfying conclusion, but only an unresolved paradox. Rather, just as the Circle of the Different moves with *two* motions -- that of the Circle of the Same, as well as its own proper *oblique* (*not* contrary!) motion, which produces the "spiral twist" of the planets -- the second ascent operates under a double necessity: it must retain the divine unity which has already been established and, without sacrificing what has been learned, show how it is logically compatible with a diversity of created beings which have real individual existence (demonstrated in, for instance, free will). Leaping ahead briefly to borrow an image from VM3.29-31, the task is to retain the whole (*summam*) that the Prisoner perceived from the first pinnacle (*alte visa*) and to add to it the forgotten particulars (*singula*) or parts (*oblitas...partes*).

6.2.1 Stage 7a (IVP2-IVM4)

In this first stage of the second ascent, Philosophy, in dialogue with the Prisoner, will lay the groundwork for an answer to the ethical questions he has posed in IVP1. Her first goal is to prove that good people always possess power and that the wicked lack all strength, and that this is rooted in the nature of good and evil as contraries: if the former is powerful, the latter is weak (IVP2.2-3). Furthermore, in order to prove her arguments more strongly, she will proceed by "either path" (*alterutro calle,* IVP2.4), supporting her

propositions now from one side, now the other, and thus avoiding the "one-sidedness" of argument which contributed to the Prisoner's second fall in IIIP12.

Philosophy's first step is to argue that two things, will and ability, are required for successful human action. One who wants to achieve something and cannot clearly lacks the ability to do so, and thus is weak in this respect, whereas one who can achieve it is strong. All people, good and evil alike, seek happiness, which is also the good. Good people are made good by obtaining the good; evil people, though, clearly do *not* attain good, or else they would become good. Thus the good, obtaining what they desire, are strong, and the evil, who fail to do so, are weak. To this she adds a second argument: those who perform an action in a natural manner are stronger than those who attempt to perform it in an unnatural manner. Good people seek the highest good in a natural manner (by the natural function of their virtues) while evil people seek it in an unnatural manner (through their "fluctuating desire" (*variam per cupiditatem*, IVP2.23)); therefore the good are powerful, the evil weak. A rather lengthy speech follows, in which Philosophy will "heap up many arguments together" to further support the two foregoing conclusions.[186] Wicked people, she points out, must either be ignorant of the true good, which is a weakness, or lack self-control, also a weakness; or, if they forsake the good on purpose, they cease to *be* through failing to pursue their own end, i.e. to preserve their own nature: a "strange" conclusion which will be explained more in IVP3. Finally, Philosophy builds upon her proposition from IIIP12 that "evil is nothing": the highest good, which can do all things, cannot do evil at all; human beings, who cannot do all things, *can* do evil; therefore those who do evil do less than those who do good. The evil

[186] This translation and that in the previous sentence are from Tester.

cannot obtain, *through* evil, what they seek, thus "the ability to do evil is not a power" (*malorum possibilitatem non esse potentiam*, IVP2.44):[187] an extremely important conclusion, as it explains and sets into context Philosophy's earlier statement that "evil is nothing."

A fairly short poem (IVM2) follows, which picks up the image of the earthly kings from the last four lines of IVM1 to explain why these "tyrants" are in fact "exiles." In fact, Philosophy sings, these tyrants are themselves "tyrannized" by arbitrary forces that bind and compel them. In contrast to the free and effortless movement of the voyager in IM1, the kings are *saeptos* ("hedged in," 2) and *anhelos* ("breathless/gasping") on account of their *rabie* ("frenzy," 3). Their apparent splendor (*cultus*) is in fact empty (*vani*, 4), and though they appear free, they bear "tight chains" (*artas...catenas*, 5) within, imprisoning them even more thoroughly than the Prisoner himself! In contrast to the healing medicines of Philosophy, they are sickened by "greedy poisons" (*avidis...venenis*, 6) and "turbid anger whips their minds" (*flagellat ira mentem...turbida*, 7) much as the *turbidus Auster* churned the seas of the Prisoner's own mind in IM7.6. Driven by *libido, ira, maeror,* and *spes* (recalling again Philosophy's exhortation in IM7 to drive out *gaudia, timorem, spem* and *dolor*) they are perpetually in the "turbulent" state which the Prisoner has successfully left behind. Such a ruler, the poem concludes, pressed by "so many tyrants" (*tot...tyrannos,* 11) within, cannot do what he himself wishes to do and thus is actually powerless.

In IVP3, we see a further extension of the argument from IVP2 to address the question of reward and punishment. Good deeds, Philosophy argues, never lack rewards and

[187] Translation from Tester.

wicked deeds punishments. We have established that happiness, which all people seek, is the good itself; therefore goodness is its own reward. Recalling the corollary from IIIP10, she further states that those who are good and happy are gods. Thus the reward for good people is to become, by participation, gods: a reward that nobody can take away, unlike the extrinsic goods critically examined in the first ascent. Conversely, for wicked people, wickedness (i.e. a lack of good) is its own punishment, and since goodness is also unity, "whatever falls from goodness, ceases to be": that is, wicked humans cease to *exist* as human. While goodness raises people above the human to the divine level, evil thrusts them down below to the animal level, where life becomes a perpetual satisfying of pure appetite without recourse to *ratio*. The conclusion is that "he who having left goodness aside has ceased to be a man, since he cannot pass over into the divine state, turns into a beast" (*qui probitate deserte homo esse desierit, cum in divinam condicionem transire non possit, vertatur in beluam*, IVP3.21).[188]

Here we first see clearly presented[189] the idea that the human state, as such, is unstable; we must either rise to what is above us or sink to what is below us. This is illustrated by the image of "wings" from IP1-M1, an attribute not present in human nature as such. We must either, through the help of divine grace, gain a capacity that is in some way *super*human, or we must leave behind the human state for the metaphorical wings, fur, or scales of a beast. As Hankey argues, human reason (*ratio*), in itself, is not a secure

[188] This and the previous translation are from Tester.
[189] This concept is foreshadowed in IIP5.29, where Philosophy argues to cease to know one's own nature degrades one even lower than the beasts (*infra bestias redigatur si se nosse desierit*), but it is not yet fully worked out there.

place to stand; there is a precariousness to what we have by nature alone.[190] This principle is illustrated by the poem that follows (IVM3), depicting the transformation of Odysseus' sailors by Circe into beasts. As in IIIM12, also in glyconics, there is a nightmarish quality to the narrative and in particular the sailors' full human awareness of their transformation combined with their powerlessness to avert it. This renders the moral at the end all the more convincing: if the horror of external transformation into a beast is great, how much worse must be to lose one's own mind, one's very *self* (*detrahunt hominem sibi*, 36). It is also worth pointing out that the end of the original story (the sailors' transformation back into men) is not depicted; IVM3 thus contains the additional threat that there may be no way back from such a degradation of the human. As Blackwood points out, the glyconic meter of this poem is slightly "perturbed"; in many lines the second long syllable is replaced with a short syllable.[191] This rhythmic transformation of the meter through a diminishment of the second syllable reflects the sailors' transformation and their diminishment from the human to the bestial level. Finally, the mention of the true "strength" of men as hidden in an interior citadel (*intus est hominum vigor/arce conditus abdita*, 33-4) recalls Philosophy's statement in IP3.13

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[190] Wayne J. Hankey, "Placing the Human: Establishing Reason by its Participation in Divine Intellect for Boethius and Aquinas," *Res Philosophica* 95 no. 4 (October 2018): 12-8.

[191] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius,* 124. For this reason, Blackwood excludes it from the glyconic series -- a decision he welcomes for the reason that it renders the glyconic series more "symmetrical" around IIIM5. I disagree with him concerning this for several reasons: firstly, this change is not observed in all lines of IVM3; secondly, the meter is still quite recognizable as basically glyconic; and last and most importantly, Boethius' entire reason for introducing the metrical change can only be appreciated if it is seen as an (slightly transformed) glyconic. (Another factor is that I do not agree with Blackwood concerning the importance of the "symmetry" of the meters in general, as I discuss in Chapter 7 below.)

(*nostra quidem dux copias suas in arcem contrahit*) and further serves to underscore the powerlessness of the *reges* in the previous two poems, which, like the "feeble hand and powerless herbs" of Circe (29-30), have power only over the external body but not the mind (see also IIP6.6-7).

In the past two prose sections, Philosophy has led the Prisoner through a difficult and close-woven series of arguments, one that he likely fears is approaching the overly abstract, "inhuman" dialectic of IIIP12. Thus in IVP4 he raises four objections. Although they deal with different facets of Philosophy's arguments, they all exhibit a desire for *external* coercions and/or rewards and punishments for goodness and evil above beyond the *inherent* coercions, rewards, and punishments that arise out of the very nature of good and evil themselves; to adopt Blackwood's phrasing,[192] he seeks to assert the *subjective* side of the question in response to Philosophy's generally *objective* approach. It will be Philosophy's task to answer his objections by demonstrating, in a manner convincing even to the subjective/human perspective adopted by the Prisoner, how such external forces would be both superfluous and, in many cases, undesirable. His first objection (IVP4.1) is to wish that evil people did not have it within their power to destroy good people; Philosophy replies that this would in fact relieve the punishment of the wicked, since evil desires can bring only wretchedness, and a greater wretchedness if one has the capacity to carry them out instead of only the desire to do so (2-5). The Prisoner wishes in return that they *would* lose that misfortune by being deprived of the capacity to do evil (6), to which Philosophy points out that they *will* lose it, as the uncertain chances and (all else failing) brief span of life puts an end to even the worst person's wickedness and, with

[192] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius,* 133.

it, their misery (7-9). In response to the Prisoner's passing remark that this is a difficult conclusion to accept, Philosophy goes even further, demonstrating that the wicked are actually happier when they are justly punished, not merely insofar as such punishment is corrective, but because it is *just* and thus good; when goodness of any kind is added to a wicked person, they cannot help but become happier, since goodness is happiness, while the injustice of going unpunished only makes a wicked person more miserable (10-21). The Prisoner, still seeking some purely *external* punishment for the wicked, asks (with perhaps a shade of desperation) whether there are any punishments for souls after death (22), to which Philosophy replies that there certainly are, but it is not her intention to discuss them now -- implying that they are extrinsic to the ethical debate as such (23).

The Prisoner's final attempt is to simply state baldly that Philosophy's conclusions would be seen as laughable by nearly all people; this is so, Philosophy replies, because their eyes are like those of night birds blinded by the light. Though an evocative image (one borrowed from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 993b9) it is not in itself an entirely satisfactory reply, for which reason Philosophy appends to it a more philosophical explanation: such human beings look not to the "order of things" (*rerum ordinem*) but rather to their own desires (27). This is an important step, for, by showing that the judgment of human beings is *relative* to their subjective desires rather than to the objective order of the cosmos, it explains how these subjective and objective positions are, within their own frames of reference, valid judgments and thus logically compatible. Finally, Philosophy closes the chapter with one more set of arguments: as the wicked are unhappy, those people who commit evil are more wretched than those who suffer it (33-36). Thus those who commit injustice are to be justly treated with mercy; like sick

people, they should be brought to doctors to be healed. Indeed, if the wicked could see through "some small chink" the reality of virtue and vice, they themselves would seek out corrective punishment. Thus, Philosophy concludes, there is "left no place at all for hatred"; only a fool could hate good people, and the wise would not even hate wicked ones. Just as the sick are pitied, so should the wicked be, for vice is a "disease of the mind" much more oppressive than any bodily illness (38-42).[193]

The poem that follows (IVM4) at first appears unrelated to the directly preceding material, as it depicts chiefly the causes and effects of war. It is perhaps better taken as a further elaboration upon the theme of earthly tyrants that has dominated the poems of Stage 7a. Here the *reges* "stir up great commotion" (1), inviting their fate with their "own hand" (2) through their endless and futile wars; one might as well actively seek Death (3).[194] There is no sufficient (*satis*) *ratio* for such savagery (*saevitiae*) (10). Indeed, reiterating the conclusion of IVM3, such tyrants have descended to the level of beasts, for they seek each other with their swords just as serpents and lions do with their teeth (5-6). If fair return (*aptam...vicem*) is sought for evil, it cannot be obtained through physical combat; one must rather "justly love the good and pity the evil" (*dilige iure bonos et miseresce malis,* 12). Together with this overt theme, though, there is a more deeply hid allusion, for this poem in fact evokes many of the aspects of IM1. Like IM1, it uses pentameter (here in alternation in Phalaecean hendecasyllable); its assertion that *si mortem petitis, propinquat ipsa* (3) is in direct opposition to the Prisoner's complaint in IM1.13-6 that, though he sought Death, it turned away from him; finally, the rhetorical

[193] This and the translations in the previous two sentences are from Tester.
[194] These translations are from Tester.

question, "Why do you invite your fate with your own hand (*quid...propria fatum sollicitare manu*)" -- addressed not only to the *reges*, but the Prisoner himself -- once more contradicts his initial claims of passivity. In fact, Philosophy's assertion in the concluding lines of IVP4 that wicked people are themselves oppressed by a "disease of the mind," one "crueller than any bodily weakness," cannot help but bring to mind the Prisoner as he was in the opening of the *Consolatio*.[195] Like theirs, he was oppressed by a "disease of the mind," his cure only possible through the divine grace and mercy shown to him through Philosophy's healing medicines: a cure, he must remember, not entirely complete even now. Such an approach draws together both the subjective and objective sides of the Prisoner's experience to yield a powerful answer to his ethical objections. If the Prisoner believes that he himself was and is deserving of pity, he must justly in turn pity and not hate even those very men who inflicted such great suffering upon him.

6.2.2 Stage 7b (IVP5-IVM7)

At this point the Prisoner poses a new challenge that pushes the argument in a slightly different direction, one logical rather than ethical. He is satisfied that happiness and wretchedness are the intrinsic rewards for good and evil respectively. However, he considers that there must be *some* truth in the popular idea of good or bad fortune, for no wise person would actually prefer to be exiled, poor, and disgraced, to remaining in his own city, wealthy, honored, and powerful. Indeed, the Prisoner continues, the earthly office of wisdom is better and more consistently handled when good citizens are given

[195] Translations from Tester.

the external rewards of virtue, while the wicked citizens are given torments in punishment. Why, then, does God as governor -- surely the wisest of rulers -- not hand out reward and punishment in a consistent manner, rather than the inconsistent jumble that is observed? Indeed, how is his governance distinguishable from outcomes determined by pure chance?

Both Philosophy's brief prose reply, and the poem that follows, are based upon the idea that when a thing's causes are unknown, it is naturally thought random and confused. God's governance cannot be fully known to human beings, yet they, knowing that a "good governor orders the universe" (*bonus mundum rector temperat*), should not doubt that "all things are rightly done" (*recte fieri cuncta*, IVP5.7). The subsequent poem (IVM5) illustrates this principle using a number of astronomical phenomena such as the movement of the circumpolar stars and the eclipse of the moon, which terrify those who do not know their (in truth, perfectly regular) causes, whereas even uneducated people can grasp the connection between meteorological phenomena such as sun and melting snow. Likewise, the untrained *vulgus* (20) cannot hope to understand the complexity of the divine causes, though they do possess a basic grasp of tangible, "common-sense" causes and effects. This poem is in a highly unusual metrical scheme (one, it appears, invented by Boethius himself): two short lines in alternation, one composed of a trochaic monometer plus an adonic, the other an iambic monometer plus an adonic. To any listener not fully trained in all the intricacies of Greek meters -- that is, nearly all listeners, even in Boethius' day -- the continual, unpredictable fluctuation of the beat would indeed sound "random" and "confused." Yet the poet who crafted the poem knows

the hidden pattern behind the meter's complexities; thus there is nothing truly random about it.

Though the Prisoner accepts Philosophy's assessment of the overall situation, he nonetheless entreats her to explain what she can of these hidden causes (*latentium rerum causas*, IVP6.1), for he is deeply troubled by the apparent discrepancy between God's good governance and the topsy-turvy state of human reward and punishment. The fact that he does not accept Philosophy's first, simple answer is a testament to the substantial progress that he has made, acknowledged by Philosophy's smile (*illa paulisper arridens*, 2): her first and only smile in the *Consolatio*, and one of her few facial expressions mentioned after Book I. Obliging, she nonetheless warns the Prisoner that this matter is of all the most complex and nearly irresolvable, for "when one doubt is cut away, innumerable others grow in its place, like the heads of the Hydra" (*una dubitatione succisa innumerabiles aliae velut hydrae capita succrescant*, IVP6.3).[196] We are reminded of the *pravitas* of human *ratio*, which insists on dividing that which is a unified whole into incomplete parts (IIIP9.16).[197] Just so, unaided human reason cannot hope to fully explicate the workings of the divine governance, under which fall matters as diverse as "the singleness of providence, the course of fate, the suddenness of chance, the knowledge and predestination of God, and the freedom of the will"; nor, Philosophy states, would there be any end to the bifurcating doubts raised by the cutting motion of *ratio*, if "if one did not repress them with the most lively fire of one's mind."[198] (It is worth noting that the Latin word here for "doubt," *dubitas*, derives from *duo* and *habeo*:

[196] Translation from Tester.
[197] Hankey, "Placing the Human," 13.
[198] Translation from Tester.

that is, to hesitate between two, seemingly paradoxical, alternatives.) Thus, just as prayer was needed in IIIM9 for Philosophy and the Prisoner to rise above dividing *ratio* to the unified vision of the highest good, so *ratio* will only be able to resolve the issues now raised with the help of the higher level of *intellegentia*, bestowed not through unaided human effort but through divine grace sought in prayer. It should also be noted that, just as Heracles was unable to slay the Hydra without Iolaus' help to cauterize the necks, so this new search cannot be undertaken by a single person alone but will require *both* Philosophy and the Prisoner's full participation and effort.

Before they begin, Philosophy warns the Prisoner that he must postpone his desire for music for some time, for this new discussion will be lengthy -- indeed, IVP6 is by far the longest chapter within the *Consolatio*, and it is only the Prisoner's eventual flagging of attention that causes Philosophy to bring her discourse to a temporary end. In the first half, Philosophy lays out her model of how Fate and divine Providence relate to one another. In fact, they are the same thing, seen from two perspectives: all things are given their "causes, order, and forms" (*causas, ordinem, formas*) from the "stability of the divine mind" (*ex divinae mentis stabilitate*, 7). When these forms and causes are seen from above, as "contemplated in the utter purity of the divine intelligence," they are called Providence; when seen from below, they are called Fate. Indeed, Fate is the "disposition inherent in movable things" through which divine Providence enacts its governance, much as a craftsman conceives a model in his mind in a single atemporal instant and then produces it in a set of temporal stages: an image clearly drawn from the *Timaeus*.[199] Providence is the motionless and unified pattern conceived by God, Fate the

[199] This and the translations in the previous two sentences are from Tester.

manifold sequence of steps by which it is carried out -- a distinction that Philosophy helpfully visualizes as a set of concentric spheres. The innermost one, closest to the center, turns the least quickly; the outer ones, in contrast, must whirl with a much greater velocity if they are to keep up, as their rotation passes over a far larger greater space. That which is nearest the center, the simplicity of divine Providence, is likewise largely free from motion, while that which is furthest is ceaselessly whirled around by the motion of Fate. Philosophia concludes (IVP6.17): "As reasoning is to understanding, as that which becomes to that which is, as time is to eternity, as the circle is to the center, so is the moving course of fate to the unmoving simplicity of providence." However, we can already see a potential problem, for Philosophy goes on to state that the course of Fate "binds the acts and fortunes of men in an unbreakable chain of causes, which since they start from beginnings in immovable providence must also be themselves immutable."[200] Is human free will, then, swallowed up in and indeed negated by an all-determining Providence? This question is not pursued further in Book IV, but it will be taken up again in the third and final stage of the second ascent.

Having established this theoretical model of Fate and Providence, Philosophy returns to the more practical question of why there often is an apparent confusion between people's merits and their deserts. While human beings can at most discern (in a purely external and thus fallible way) good people from evil ones, the divine mind alone, like a skilled doctor, can see the "inner temperament" (*intimam temperiem*, 26) of human minds and knows what medicines will best help them. Here again we are reminded of Philosophy's own healing of the Prisoner, sometimes using sweet medicines, sometimes

[200] This and the translation in the previous sentence is from Tester.

bitter ones. Since only God knows what is most fitting for each individual, only he can properly ordain whether any given person should receive good or evil at a particular moment, and his judgment can be surprising: for example, the defeat of Cato -- widely renowned as a highly just man -- at Caesar's hands (33).[201] There are, Philosophy describes, many reasons why people receive the fortunes they do. One man is spared because adversity would make him worse, another because he is already good enough that he does not need further perfecting; while sometimes power is given to the good so that wickedness might be for a time beaten back. At another time, Providence gives wicked people evil to restrain their excess, or troubles good people with hardships to strengthen their virtue and to test them, as well as creating exemplars for other of how virtue can be unconquered by evils.

This is accompanied by a quotation, possibly from the Chaldean Oracles: ἀνδρὸς δὴ ἱεροῦ δέμας αἰθέρες ᾠκοδόμησαν, "The heavens did build the body of a holy man" (38).[202] The implication appears to be that God's governance does not ignore the human realm as the Prisoner asserted in IM5, nor is that realm ultimately less important than the celestial realm of the planets and stars. Indeed, the development of human virtue is *so* important that the course of Fate itself is to a great extent directed towards giving human beings what they need to become better. Far from being a lowly and overlooked part of the cosmos, we are actually in a sense the "central focus" of the cosmos, with the

[201] As Dr. Michael Fournier has pointed out to me, divine judgment in this case is seen to take into account factors beyond Cato's own character: Lucan is "opposing Cato's vision of Rome's future with that of the gods." Therefore, "the pinnacle of human judgment, Cato, is wrong about a matter of the greatest importance." Dr. M. Fournier, Personal communication, April 13, 2020.

[202] This is my own translation; Tester's translation ("The body of a holy man the heavens did build") is syntactically ambiguous and potentially misleading.

workings of Fate arranged for our ultimate benefit: a surprisingly radical humanism.[203] The heavens themselves, it seems, conspire in God's plan to make us virtuous. Nor are evil people exempt from this plan, for they inflict suffering not only upon good people but also upon one another. Thus "evil men make evil men good" (50), and God can even use apparent evil to bring about good: an important conclusion which further explains Philosophy's assertion in IIIP12 that "evil is nothing." God's order embraces all things, even our evil actions, so that "that which has departed from the rule of this order appointed to it, although it slips into another condition yet that too is order" (53).[204] Even our own disorder is, through the workings of divine Providence, made part of God's ultimate order.

"But it is grievous that I should talk of all this as if I were a god" (ἀργαλέον δέ με ταῦτα θεὸν ὥς πάντ᾽ ἀγορεύειν, 53).[205] With this quote from the *Iliad* (XII:176), Philosophy takes a step back from the intricacies of her argument (probably, as is implied a few lines later, after noting the Prisoner's fatigue): we cannot know all the workings of divine Providence, and it is futile to try. It is enough to know that Providence disposes all things toward the good, such that what seems at first like disorder to us is actually the workings of a higher and unified order. Though we do not know many of the hidden causes of things, the fact that we know the general *manner* and *end* towards which Providence, through Fate, operates means that we will be far better able to accept our unavoidable uncertainty about what exactly will happen and why. The Prisoner's

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[203] For discussion of a similar "radical humanism" in Aquinas, see Wayne J. Hankey, "The Conversion of God in Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*: Being's Trinitarian and Incarnational Self-disclosure," *Dionysius* 35 (2017): 134-72.
[204] This and the translation in the previous sentence is from Tester.
[205] Translation from Tester.

curiosity is not fully satisfied, nor (being only human) can it be; "long since burdened by the weight of this enquiry and tired by the length of the argument" (*iam dudum et pondere quaestionis oneratum et rationis prolixitate fatigatum*, 57), he must stop for a while and take a draught of poetry for refreshment. However, his ability to trust in God's good governance has been rendered firm, providing him with a true and lasting *consolation* even as he faces those trials which that same Providence has ordained for him.

This consolation is reinforced by the poem which follows (IVM6): drawing upon the familiar and highly stable metrical structure of anapestic dimeter, it uses the astronomical imagery with which the Prisoner is familiar to reassure him and stabilize his mind and emotions, no doubt reeling beneath the many particulars and scenarios discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, IVM6 forms the third poem of Magee and Curran's anapestic dimeter series; exactly the same length (48 lines) as the Prisoner's poem (IM5), falling like it into two halves, and employing much of the same imagery, it can be seen in large part as an answer to it. Here, the human world is not portrayed in opposition to the celestial realm; rather, all things, celestial (1-24), meteorological (25-29), and human, are guided by God's governance, originating in Him and returning to Him as their final end (30-33). This "due proportion (*haec temperies*) nourishes and brings forth (*alit ac profert*) whatever breathes life in the world (*quidquid vitam spirat in orbe*)"; conversely, "the same order (*eadem [temperies]*) seizing (*rapiens*) all that was born (*orta*), bears and hides it away (*condit et aufert*), burying it (*mergens*) in its final end (*obitu...supremo*)." This vivid language of life and death is significant; the Prisoner, who is "constrained within a

narrowly limited time" (IVP6.5)[206] -- surely a reference to his impending execution -- cannot help but be reminded of the fate he faces. These four lines thus bring him personal consolation as well as theoretical understanding: he need not dread death, for it is a return to God as highest good, true happiness, and the source of all things. The poem climaxes with a threefold rhythmic repetition in 35-7, depicting God as governor:

– – ◡ ◡ – || – ◡ ◡ – –

Rerumque regens flectit habena,s

– – ◡ ◡ – || – ◡ ◡ – –

rex et dominus, fons et origo,

– – ◡ ◡ – || – ◡ ◡ – –

lex et sapiens arbiter aequi...

Line 36 is the line that, in the Prisoner's original poem, was "cut" in half by the *crimen iniqui*. Here, though, the second half of line 36 (*fons et origo*) is present.[207] This reflects how much the Prisoner's understanding has advanced since IM5, where he acknowledged God as the creator and governor of the universe (*rex et dominus*) but did not understand the mode of his governance; now he knows that God directs all things by being at once their source and end (*fons et origo*). This *arbiter*, unlike Hades, does not coerce his subjects through capricious laws but rather by wisdom (*sapiens*) and justice (*aequi*); indeed, he himself *is* "the law" (*lex*) by which he guides all things. In the spatial imagery that follows (40-43) we see straight, circular, and spiral motion all present: God,

[206] Translation from Tester.
[207] Additionally, there is no metrical perturbation in line 45 like that observed in IM5 ("salo").

"recalling" (*revocans*) the "straight paths" (*rectos...itus*) of all created beings, causes (*cogat*) them to spiral into "bent circles" (*flexos...orbes*); if he did not, they would fall disjointed from their origin (*dissaepta suo fonte fatiscant*). It is, Philosophy concludes, the communal love of all things (*cunctis communis amor,* 44) to seek to be bound by their end, for they could not endure, i.e. exist, in any other manner except by seeking their own cause through "returning love" (*converso...amore*, 47). The threat of the Orpheus poem -- that *amor* will lead us to our own destruction, either severing us permanently from the Divine or annihilating us within it -- is here refuted. *Amor* leads all things only toward their own good, that is, to God, and even when it causes an apparent fall (such as the Prisoner's second fall in IIIP12) this too is for our ultimate benefit. In short, the divine *amor* does not abolish the "straight lines" of procession, but instead "bends" them into circular spirals of reversion, enabling us to return to our source while still retaining our individual natures as human beings.

In contrast to IVP6, the final prose section of Book IV and Stage 7b serves to summarize, fairly concisely, the consequences of the foregoing arguments. Its argument is clearly analogous to the final prose section (IIP8) of Stage 2b, which concluded that *bad* fortune was actually good, because it allowed one to know one's true friends. Here, Philosophy concludes that *all* fortune is useful and thus good, for it either rewards or exercises good people or punishes or corrects the bad. Though the Prisoner largely concurs, he nonetheless raises the objection that "the common talk of men (*hominum sermo communis*) usually says...that some men have ill fortune" (IVP7.6). In return, Philosophy concedes to frame her response in common terms, "in case we seem to have withdrawn too far, as it were, from the practice of men (*humanitatis usu*)," again

reflecting a willingness to engage with the Prisoner in terms that make sense on the subjective/human, not only objective/divine, level.[208] Going once more through the four combinations of virtue and vice paired with reward and punishment and analyzing each on the *subjective* level, she derives the "surprising" conclusion that to those who possess or seek virtue, all fortune is good, while to those who persevere in badness, all fortune is bad. Therefore, a wise person should not take it badly when they are brought into conflict with fortune (*in fortunae certamen adducitur*), any more than a brave person at the sound of war; rather, they should seize it as an opportunity for training their wisdom and virtue, a practice to which she exhorts the Prisoner. Indeed, she concludes, "it is placed in your own hands, what kind of fortune you prefer to shape for yourselves" (*in vestra enim situm manu qualem vobis fortunam formare malitis*, IVP7.22).[209] Thus the Prisoner's claims of passivity in the face of Fortune (IM1.17-20) have been utterly disproven. Philosophy's final conclusion concerning Fortune is this: whether Fortune is good or bad depends not upon what the particular fortune *is*, but rather upon how it is *received*.

The poem that follows (IVM7) summarizes the second stage of the ascent while looking forward to the third. As Blackwood points out, the meter causes us to recall IIM6, also in Sapphic hendecasyllable, which depicted the "perverted madness" of Nero, the prototypical tyrant (continuing the theme of the earthly *reges*).[210] Philosophy contrasts with this bestial fury the virtuous self-control of three mythical exemplars: Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Heracles, all of whom in some way transcend the human realm. Agamemnon, sternly "putting off the father," sacrifices his beloved daughter so

[208] This and the translation in the previous sentence is from Tester.
[209] Translation from Tester.
[210] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 110.

that the Greek fleet can sail to Troy; Odysseus, mourning his lost companions, nonetheless craftily blinds the Cyclops to regain his freedom; Heracles exhibits great courage as he faces twelve dangerous labors, and is rewarded by being made divine (31). The message is that our struggles, however painful, lead us towards the good by training and exhibiting our virtue. The poem ends with an exhortation to the Prisoner to put off his former passivity (*cur inertes/terga nudatis?,* 33-4). Indeed, we have come a long way from the Prisoner of IIM2, staring downward at the dust with chained neck (*pressus gravibus colla catenis*, 25); now, like Heracles who held up the heaven "with unbended neck" (*inreflexo...collo*, 29-30), he is called upon to follow the exalted path of virtue.

The vocabulary used in IVM7 exhibits two main features. The first is a preoccupation not merely with the human but the human specifically as *physical*, with human body parts mentioned throughout (*iugulum*, 7; *alvo*, 10; *ore*, 11; *laevam*, 18; *fronte,* 23; *ora*, 24; *umeros*, 28; *collo*, 30; *terga*, 34): a theme that will be developed further in VM5.[211] Furthermore, all three *exempla* show a conflict with some inward tendency (selfishness, grief, fear) as worked out in *physical action*. Thus, as Blackwood states, "it is...mistaken to read the poem as an anti-worldly exhortation...because the examples are of heroes wholly engaged with worldly events."[212] The fact that many of Heracles' labors involve the subduing of beasts, and that his final end is divinization, further reminds us that the human as such is unstable. We must either sink into bestiality, or, by conquering it and rising to what is above us, become divine.

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[211] To forestall the possible objection that some of these terms (e.g. *alvo* in 10, *fronte* in 23) refer in VIM7 to body parts of non-human mythical creatures, I will point out that a) these creatures are largely human in form, and b) no body parts are mentioned which are characteristically *non*-human.

[212] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius,* 109.

The second feature is the use of redemptive language and in particular the imagery of ritual sacrifice: *piavit,* 3; *redimit cruore*, 5; *sacerdos*, 7; *rependit*, 12; *celebrant*, 13; *pretium...meruit*, 30-31. Such language and, in particular, the assumption of Heracles upon his funeral pyre to heaven (*ultimi caelum meruit laboris*, 31), cannot to the Prisoner help but recall Christ, to Christians the *magnum...exemplum* (32-3) of virtue who leads (*ducit*) his followers on the exalted path (*celsa via*) to heaven (*caelum*).[213] Indeed, even earlier it is all but inevitable that the Prisoner, upon learning the general principle that God makes good out of evil (IVP6.52) should be strongly reminded of Christ's redemptive work. Nonetheless, this principle can be understood here in a more general sense as well: all three mythical exemplars are called upon to put to right some disturbance in the order of things (Menelaus' "violated marriage-bed" (*amissos thalamos,* 3) and a fleet that cannot sail; Odysseus' imprisonment by a monstrous half-human; Heracles' slaughtering of his wife and children due to madness, as well as the violence of the beasts and tyrants that he must subdue) and, through virtuous self-denial and self-control, are able to do so.

The poem ends with an adonic *clausula* (*sidera donat*): a feature not yet observed in the *Consolatio*. However, we *have* seen a similar half-line stranded in the middle of an anapestic dimeter poem: the metrically anomalous *crimen iniqui* (also an adonic) from

[213] As with Orpheus, there is some evidence that Heracles featured as an exemplar for Christ in early Christian iconography; he appears in five frescoes in cubiculum N of the Via Latina Catacomb, including his defeat of the Hydra as well as his retrieval of Alcestis from the land of the dead (the latter scene in particular having obvious Christian overtones). However, scholars are divided on whether cubiculum N belonged to a pagan or Christian family (or was shared by both). See: Huskinson, "Some Pagan Mythological Figures," 81-2; Beverly Berg, "Alcestis and Hercules in the Catacomb of Via Latina," *Vigiliae Christianae* 48 (1994): 219-34.

IM5.36. There is, in the entire *Consolatio*, only one more adonic *clausula*, and it occurs at the end of VM3: *addere partes* ("to add the [forgotten] parts"). If we take this implicit suggestion and add the "forgotten parts" -- *crimen iniqui* -- to the half-line from IVM7 (*sidera donat*), the two adonics combined give us a metrically complete as well as grammatically coherent line of anapestic dimeter: *crimen iniqui sidera donat* ("the crime of the wicked grants the stars"). This seems unlikely to be mere coincidence. Indeed, the "reconstructed" line summarizes the ethical conclusion of IVM7 and at last poses a satisfactory answer to the Prisoner's question in IM5. At the same time, it completes the unfinished half-line from IM5, repairing the jarring breach in the meter together with the breach in the Prisoner's initial understanding of the cosmic order; it is thus therapeutic on an aural as well as an intellectual level. *Why* is the "crime of the wicked" allowed to exist? Because, Philosophy answers, it is through this very *crimen* that virtue is developed and exercised, and we ourselves become divine. Good is made of our evil, just as a metrically complete line is made out of the incomplete "*crimen iniqui*"; the crimes of the wicked, received in the right manner, grant us the stars.

6.2.3 Stage 7c (VP1-M5)

As in the first ascent, where the third stage (3) recapitulated the second (2b) from a slightly different perspective, so in the second ascent we see that Stage 7c takes up and further develops material that was first introduced in Stage 7b: the nature of and relationship between chance, fate, divine Providence, and human free will. Simultaneously, however, Stage 7c functions as a "reprise" of Book 1; the two share the

same overall structure, as visualized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Book V as "Reprise" of Book I: Parallels

Book I	Book V
(no parallel)	VP1 Introductory prose chapter; discussion of chance
IM1 *Meter:* elegiac couplets	VM1 *Meter:* elegiac couplets
IP1, IM2, IP2 Prisoner once free (had mental light), now captive (eyes clouded by mist)	VP2 Free will (perceive "light of truth") vs. captivity (clouded by mental "fog")
IM3 *Meter:* hexameter/dactylic tetrameter *Content:* light of Phoebus as image for return of memory	VM2 *Meter:* dactylic tetrameter *Content:* light of Phoebus as image for all-seeing divine Providence
IP3, IM4	*(no parallel)*
IP4 Prisoner's first monologue	VP3 Prisoner's second monologue
IM5 *Meter:* anapestic dimeter *Content:* Spoken by Prisoner, who asks: why does divine governance apparently not rule the human world?	VM3 *Meter:* anapestic dimeter *Content:* Spoken by Prisoner, who asks: how does all-seeing divine Providence leave room for human freedom?
IP5 Philosophy's reply to Prisoner	VP4 Philosophy's reply to Prisoner
IM6 *Meter:* glyconic *Content:* illustrative of preceding prose: changing seasons united by divine order	VM4 *Meter:* glyconic *Content:* illustrative of preceding prose: mind unites particulars by eternal forms
IP6 Philosophy's diagnosis, prescribed treatment	VP5 New "prescription" ("let us be lifted up...")
IM7 *Meter:* adonic (shortest in *Consolatio*: highly focused) *Content:* exhortative, theurgic poem; banishment of joy	VM5 *Meter:* dactylic tetrameter + ithyphallic (longest in *Consolatio*: expansive) *Content:* exhortative, theurgic poem; return of joy
(no parallel)	VP6 Final pinnacle, conclusion and exhortation

Stage 7c begins, as did 7b, with the Prisoner taking the initiative; as she is about to turn to other questions, he interrupts her to ask "whether...chance is anything at all, and if so, what" (*an esse aliquid omnino et quidnam esse casum*, VP1.3).[214] She appears initially reluctant to take up his question, for the reason that she is attempting to lead him back to his *patria* by the most direct route and his question may prove overly fatiguing. However, upon his assurance that it will instead offer a "place of rest" (*quietis...loco*, 6) and will make her subsequent arguments stronger and more convincing to him, she bows to his will (*morem, inquit, geram tibi*, 8). Her explanation, as before, turns upon the distinction between the human/subjective and divine/objective perspectives. From the divine perspective, there is no such thing as "chance," for this would mean an event that comes "from nothing," i.e. is purely random motion, and is unexpected and unforeseen even to God. Since the divine Providence, as we have seen, "constrains all things into [its] order" (8) and its purposes are always fulfilled, it is unthinkable that anything should, from the divine perspective, be caused by "chance." However, "chance" understood from the human perspective -- "the unexpected event of concurring causes among things done for some purpose"[215] -- is a real phenomenon, for, since, humans do not see all causes, purely fortuitous and unexpected things can occur (e.g. if a man buries gold in a field and another man digs it up by accident).

The poem (VM1) which follows cannot help but recall IM1, also in elegiac pentameter, though the two share little thematic material in common. VM1 uses an elaborate hypothetical -- the rivers Tigris and Euphrates diverging from a single mountain

[214] Translation from Tester.
[215] This and the translation in the previous sentence is from Tester.

spring only to be brought back together into one -- to illustrate the true nature of chance; no human could possibly predict the complex pathways of the re-mingled waters, but they are nonetheless fully determined by the force of the flow and the sloping contours of the land. The ethnographic reference with which the poem begins is no mere display of erudition but in fact a striking image of the human experience of chance: the fleeing Parthian suddenly turns in the saddle and fires an arrow, unexpectedly wounding his pursuer. The syntactical structure of the sentence enhances the element of surprise. As the reader finishes the first line (*Rupis Achaemeniae scopulis, ubi versa sequentum*) they can only assume that *sequentum* is governed by *versa*, apparently the subject: "the turned thing/things of the pursuers." Yet in the second line -- *pectoribus figit spicula pugna fugax* -- the actual meaning leaps out all at once: *versa* actually modifies *spicula* (the object), *pectoribus* governs *sequentum*, and *pugna fugax* is the subject: literally, "the fleeting battle line fixes reversed arrows in the breasts of its pursuers." Thus the reader or listener is syntactically caught off guard by the suddenly-reversed arrow! The image of the rivers is also notable because it illustrates not only chance, but the general procession of multiplicity (the dividing rivers) from a unified source (the spring) followed by a return into unity (*cursumque...revocentur in unum*): an end, in this case, quite different from the beginning, as the rivers have dragged tree trunks (*vulsi...trunci*) and ships (*puppes*) along with them. Finally, Blackwood notes that *fors* in the final line is closely related to *Fortuna*.[216] *Fors* itself, Philosophy asserts, "endures its own bridle, and itself

[216] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius,* 94.

moves by law," answering once more the Prisoner's complaints against *Fortuna* in IM1.[217]

The demonstration that there is, objectively, no such thing as chance causes the Prisoner in VP2 to ask the obvious next question: does freedom of the human will (*nostri arbitrii libertas*) actually exist, or is this concept likewise meaningless in an objective sense? To this Philosophy gives a definitive answer: it exists (*est*, 3). Free will, she explains, is inextricably bound up with a rational nature; that which uses reason has the faculty of judgment and therefore of choice, allowing it to distinguish what is desired from what is to be avoided and to seek the former while fleeing the latter. What has reason thus has in itself "freedom to will or not to will" (*Quare quibus in ipsis inest ratio, inest etiam volendi nolendique libertas*, 6), a freedom unconstrained by necessity. However, not all things which possess reason have the same degree of freedom; "heavenly, divine substances" (*supernis divinisque substantiis*, 7) possess the greatest freedom, while among humans, those who rise to the "contemplation of the divine mind" and thus (since the divine is unity) preserve their own existence, are more free. Those who, through vice, leave reason behind to sink into a bestial nature also with it lose their freedom. Such people are "in a way made captive by their freedom" (*sunt quodam modo propria libertate captivae*, 10): a statement that reminds us once again of the Prisoner's own captivity in Book 1. Yet, Philosophy concludes, divine Providence who "looks forth on all things from eternity," is able to see all and "disposes all that is predestined to each according to his deserts" (*suis quaeque meritis praedestinata disponit*, 11).[218]

[217] Translation from Tester.
[218] All translations in this and the next paragraph are from Tester, except where indicated.

The fairly short poem which follows (VM2) recalls IM3 in both its meter (stichic dactylic tetrameter; IM3 used tetrameter in alternation with hexameter) and its reference to Phoebus. In IM3, the Prisoner used the simile of sunlight to depict his own mental awakening as he recognized Philosophy; in VM2, Philosophy quotes a line from Homer (*Iliad* III:277: the last Homer quote of the *Consolatio*) which depicts Phoebus as "seeing all things and hearing all things" (Πάντ᾽ἐφορᾶν καὶ πάντ᾽ἐπακούειν).[219] Yet powerful as sunlight is, it cannot pierce the inner depths of earth or ocean. The Creator, in contrast, is unlimited by space or time, as, "viewing all things from his height" (*ex alto cuncta tuenti*, 8), he sees "in one swift mental stab" (*uno mentis cernit in ictu*, 12) what is, was, and will be (*quae sint, quae fuerint veniantque*, 11); he can thus be called the "true sun" (*verum...solem,* 14).[220] Though the relation of the image to divine Providence is spelled out clearly, the poem's relevance for free will is less obvious. However, the light imagery recalls from VP2 the "light of the highest truth" (*summae luce veritatis*) which the vicious leave behind to look instead at "inferior, darkling things" (*inferiora et tenebrosa*) and lapse into "the cloud of unknowing" (*inscitiae nube,* VP2.10): the same state of mental "fog" that oppressed the Prisoner in Book I. The implication is that, though the fullness of divine Providence -- which can see through solid objects, across time, and even the inner temperament of human hearts (IVP6.26) -- is far beyond human capacity, still human beings can attain to some degree the "light of the highest truth"; furthermore, it is through

[219] This is my own translation, with the intent of preserving the Greek syntax.
[220] O'Donnell (*Boethius* Consolatio Philosophiae: commentary) notes the wordplay: *solus* (13) and *solem* (14), http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/boethius/jkok/5m2_n.htm#Metrum%202. The use of *respicit* in 13 also continues the theme of "looking down/back" from a great height, seen in IVM1.

this very light, one which "no night with dark clouds thwarts" (*non nox atris nubibus obstat*, VM2.10) that their wills are made as free as is possible for human beings. Just so, the Prisoner himself has been freed from his servitude to false ideas and passions through his own contemplation, with Philosophy's help, of the truth.

From the following prose section (VP3, a lengthy monologue by the Prisoner parallel to IP4) until the end of Stage 7c, we observe a second "clash" of arguments: a second crisis accompanied by an *intensification* of seeking, questioning, and praying, culminating in VM5 and corresponding to the climactic adonic ostinato (lines 25-27) in the spiral paradigm of IIIM9 (see Chapter 3 above). The Prisoner, as he says, is "again confused, with a still more difficult doubt" (*ambiguitate*, literally "dilemma": VP3.1).[221] Philosophy encourages him to tell her what it is, recalling her admonition in IP4.1 to "bare the wound"; though a logical problem, the Prisoner's doubt here nonetheless causes him deep emotional upheaval as well, for it appears to not only make a mockery of justice but also remove all hope of communion with the divine. Simply put, he sees no way that true freedom of the will can be compatible with a divine Providence who foresees with *total certainty* what is to happen. Some people, he says, attempt to solve the problem by reversing the direction of causality -- i.e. Providence sees that a thing is going to happen because it will, and not the other way around -- but this fixes nothing, for the *necessity* of it happening remains (7-9). The very nature of knowledge, in fact, cannot help but imply necessity, for if I *know* something, that logically entails that it *is* (10-13). Thus, if God foreknows that something will happen, there is no chance that it could turn out otherwise; if it could, and yet God thought with utter certainty that it would happen,

[221] Translation from Tester.

this is no knowledge but mistaken opinion, impious to predicate of God (22-23). Yet a divine Providence that grasped nothing certain but saw the future as mere fluctuating uncertainty would be as ridiculous as the "prophecy of Tiresias" which the Prisoner quotes: "Whatever I say, either it will be or it will not" (*Quidquid dicam, aut erit aut non,* 25). This quote, from one of Horace's *Satires*, is in fact a dactylic tetrameter, echoing and implicitly satirizing the tetrameter Homeric quote from VM2; the "all-seeing and all-knowing" divine Providence is reduced to an empty tautology, a charlatan's trick.

However, if the divine Providence *does* in fact foreknow all things with utter certainty, this implies that human freedom of the will and thus of choice is constrained by that foreknowledge. This has devastating ethical consequences, for if human beings do not act from a "free and voluntary motion of their minds" (*liber ac voluntarius motus animorum*, VP3.30) unconstrained by "necessity" (*necessitas*, 31), rewards for goodness and punishments for evil are not just, but supremely unjust. Furthermore, if God controls all things, even our vices are ordained by God, the source of goodness (29-32). Prayer, too, becomes null and void, for if all happenings are predetermined and bound together in an "inflexible sequence" (*series indeflexa*, 33), there is no point in praying that anything happen or not happen. "And so," the Prisoner concludes, "that sole intercourse between men and God will be removed...and that is the only way in which men seem able to converse with God and to be joined by the very manner of their supplication to that inaccessible light" (*Auferetur igitur unicum illud inter homines deumque commercium...qui solus modus est quo cum deo colloqui homines posse videantur illique inaccessae luci...ipsa suppliciandi ratione coniungi,* 34). Unable to pray and thus to return to God, humankind can only, "torn apart and disjoined, in pieces fall from their

origin" (*dissaeptum atque disiunctum suo fonte fatiscere,* 36).[222] This last line is a close paraphrase of IVM6.43; there, Philosophy asserted that without the divine order of *communis amor* to direct them back to their source as end, all things would *dissaepta suo fonte fatiscant*. Here, though, that same all-encompassing divine order appears to pose the same threat that it once promised to avert.

This quote from Philosophy's second anapestic dimeter poem calls forth a poem from the Prisoner himself (VM3), the last of the anapestic dimeter series: at once a response to IVM6 and to his own first anapestic dimeter poem (IM5). There, the Prisoner lamented that God's governance did not extend to the human realm, while here he struggles with the exact inverse: God's governance appears to leave no room for human freedom. Though VM3 is not explicitly a prayer, it shares with IM5 its tone of earnest questioning and seeking and as such can implicitly be regarded as one. Its first line, *quaenam discors foedera rerum/causa resolvit?* is a clear answer to IVM6.3, *Illic iusto foedere rerum*; the order that bound all things together now threatens to tear them apart. In the lines that follow, we clearly once more see the "clash of arguments": what God, the Prisoner asks, has set such enmity between two truths -- Divine Providence and human freedom -- such that they stand apart singly but cannot be mixed (an image reflected in the word order, with *veris...duobus* literally separated by *statuit bella*, 3). Again we are reminded of the *X* where the Circle of the Same and the Circle of the Different obliquely meet and appear, on a two-dimensional plane, to collide. Yet, to one who, perceiving three dimensions, can see that the latter circle actually lies *inside* the former, it becomes clear that not only do they not obstruct one another's motion, but together produce a harmoniously spiraling

[222] Translation from Tester (as when quoted earlier).

pattern of movement. Just so, the Prisoner quickly recognizes that in actual fact there can be no such discord between truths. Truth is one, but the "suppressed light's fire" (*oppressi luminis igne*, 9)[223] of the embodied human mind cannot grasp the whole, and thus human *ratio* insists on dividing what is unified into pieces (*carptim*, 4); it does not yet possess the intellectual fire needed to defeat the many-headed Hydra. However, though a step towards the *logical* resolution of the apparent contradiction, this only appears to further remove all hope of communion with the Divine, for it appears that to find the *inaccessa lux* we need the very *lumen* which, due to our embodiment, is "suppressed"!

This is a slight variation on Meno's paradox, and it is to that question that the Prisoner turns next (11-19). If the complete truth is beyond our mind's grasp, why do we seek it "with such great love" (*tanto...amore*, 11)? Or do we know it already -- but then why seek? -- or, if we do not know it, how do we know where to seek, or even recognize it when it is found? The Prisoner then advances (20-31) a tentative answer based upon the Platonic doctrine of anamnesis: the mind, before birth, perceived both the whole and its separate parts. Now, "clouded and hidden"[224] by the body (*membrorum condita nube*, 22) by embodiment, it keeps the whole that it glimpsed but loses the separate parts; thus it neither knows nor is entirely ignorant. Truth is found by adding the separate parts to the whole that the mind has not only retained but actively recalled and reflected upon (28-9). Though ostensibly concerning the mind's state before and after embodiment, this model at the same time reflects the Prisoner's current position: he perceived the complete and unified whole from the "height" (*alte visa,* 29) of IIIP10-12. Now he is struggling to

[223] Translation from Tester.
[224] Translation from Tester.

make the "forgotten parts" -- the particulars of human experience, including free will -- cohere with the memory of the universal that he has retained (just as the perceptive reader must, when prompted, "add the forgotten parts" of IM5 together with the adonic *clausula* of IVM7 to obtain a coherent whole as discussed above.)

In her answer (VP4), Philosophy lays the groundwork for her solution to the problem of providence and free will, stating that "the cause of this obscurity is that the movement of human reasoning (*ratiocinationis motus*) cannot approach the simplicity of divine foreknowledge (*divinae praescientiae simplicitatem*, VP4.2)."[225] In fact, she argues, we ourselves know present things without imposing any necessity upon them: for example, when we watch the actions of charioteers in a race. Just so, God foresees our future actions without introducing necessity into them by that very foreknowledge. To explain how this is possible, Philosophy introduces here the second great model of the *Consolatio,* based upon the principle that "everything which is known is grasped not according to its own power but rather according to the capability of those who know it" (*omne enim quod cognoscitur non secundum sui vim, sed secundum cognoscentium potius comprehenditur facultatem*, 25).[226] Certain lower animals can know things only through sensory perception (*sensus*); higher, non-human ones have the capacity for imagination (*imaginatio*) as well; humans also know through reason (*ratio*); and the divine knowledge of *intellegentia* is higher still, for "passing beyond the process of going round the one whole, it looks with the pure sight of the mind at the simple Form itself"[227] in "that single stroke of the mind" (*illo uno ictu mentis*, 33). Furthermore, the higher

[225] Translation from Tester.
[226] Translation from Tester.
[227] Translation from Tester.

contains the lower, such that humans possess *ratio*, *imaginatio*, and *sensus*. Thus, she concludes, God's foreknowledge does not stem from any certainty inherent in the thing known, but is rather a consequence of his own ability to perceive things *with certainty*. No thing is certain or uncertain in itself. (Here, too, we see the redefinition of the human as "a rational, bipedal animal" (35), which will be dealt with in the discussion of VM5 below.)

A poem (VM4) in glyconic meter follows, answering and building upon the Prisoner's own attempted resolution of the Meno paradox in VM3. The first two lines open with a lightly deprecating, teasing tone that echoes the "gently maternal, didactic character" of IM6 remarked upon by Blackwood.[228] Just as it would be silly to hunt for violets in autumn woods or grapes in spring, so, Philosophy hints, these "overly obscure old men" (*obscuros nimium senes*, VM4.2) whom the Stoic Porch has produced are rather foolish, believing as they do that the mind is like a blank page which passively receives the imprint of letters, i.e. sense impressions. Such a theory cannot possibly explain the mind's ability to collect and group perceived singulars into a "common concept" or universal, such that it "now lifts its head to highest things and now to lowest things descends" -- recalling the initial appearance of Philosophy, who changes moment to moment from merely human height to then touch and even reach beyond the heavens (IP1.1-2), as well as the four types of knowing laid out in VP4. Yet the Stoics are right, at least, that sense impressions are *necessary* for the mind to operate, for they are what "stir and move the powers of the mind" (30-1) that are innate.[229] Thus, she concludes, the mind when

[228] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius,* 71.
[229] This and the translations in the previous sentence are from Tester.

awoken by the particulars of sense perception calls upon its universal forms within and, applying one to the other, is able to understand what it sees. The human mind is therefore neither wholly active nor wholly passive.

In the following prose chapter (VP5) Philosophy continues to elucidate her four-level model of knowing. Since the higher contains the lower but the inverse is not the case, the latter must give way to the former if their judgments appear to conflict. If sense and imagination were to argue with reason, claiming that because they do not perceive or understand universal forms they therefore do not exist, reason's judgment would nonetheless be the more perfect one, since it *can* perceive the objects of sense and imagination as pertains to their universality, whereas sense and imagination can in no way perceive the objects of reason. In the same way we, who possess reason, imagination, and sense, must recognize that the divine intelligence (*divinam intellegentiam*, 8) which lies above them is able to perceive future things in a manner that seems self-contradictory to these lower faculties. Therefore, Philosophy concludes, "just as we have judged that imagination and sense ought to give way to reason, so we should think it most just that human reason (*humanam...rationem*) should submit to the divine mind (*divinae...menti*). Wherefore let us be raised up, if we can, to the height of that highest intelligence, for there reason will see that which she cannot look at in herself" (*Quare in illius summae intellegentiae cacumen, si possumus, erigamur: illic enim ratio videbit quod in se non potest intueri*, 11-12).[230] The verb *erigamur* deserves further comment, as it is ambiguous between passive ("let us be raised up") and middle voice ("let us raise ourselves up"). The implication is that, just as the mind is neither wholly

[230] Translation from Tester.

active nor wholly passive, so the activity of being "raised up" requires *both* our own effort and divine grace sought through prayer. We cannot hope to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps, as it were, but neither will we be lifted up if we simply wait for it passively.

This exhortation to the Prisoner forms the basis for the final poem of the *Consolatio*, VM5, which ends the second ascent. The poem is in stichic Greater Archilochian, a rather unusual meter[231]; each line consists of a dactylic tetrameter (featured in a number of the *Consolatio*'s other poems) immediately followed by ithyphallic meter, unique to VM5 (– ˘ – ˘ – –). This extremely rare meter is taken from the ritual chants sung at Greek religious processions celebrating Bacchus; the name *ithyphallic* is derived from ἰθύς ("straight, upright") + φαλλός, referring to the large mock phalluses that the participants waved upright while marching.[232] The two meters feature contrasting rhythmic qualities: the dactylic tetrameter is solid, regular, and balanced, evoking the physicality of the embodied human as well as the methodical, step-by-step workings of *ratio*. In contrast, the double syncopation of the ithyphallic meter propels it forward with an elastic energy, bounding upward in a manner akin to the effortless, instantaneous mental "flash" of

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[231] Horace uses the Greater Archilochian meter in alternation with iambic trimeter catalectic in his *Odes,* I.4. Allen and Greenough, *New Latin Grammar* (New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1991), Section 622, 626.11; see also Footnote 182 below. The Greater Archilochian is a (slightly altered) Latin derivative of the archilochean meter featured in Greek drama, including stichically in Aristophanes' *Wasps*. L.P.E. Parker, *The Songs of Aristophanes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), xvii, 258-61.

[232] J. M. van Ophuijsen, *Hephaestion on Metre: A Translation and Commentary: Supplements to Mnemosyne, 100* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 73. Note that these "phallic" connotations are echoed in Horace, *Odes* 1.4 (a likely poetic antecedent for *Consolatio* VM5) which depicts the rebirth of the natural world during Spring, celebrated by a chorus of dancing nymphs led by Venus, goddess of fertility. Dr. Peter O'Brien, personal communication, April 13, 2020.

intellegentia. The Greater Archilochian meter also features the longest line lengths of any poem in the *Consolatio* and, as Blackwood points out, represents a "metric anthology" of the *Consolatio*'s poetry as a whole, as "every line contains at least one substantial metric segment of every line of every other poem in the *Consolatio*";[233] it is thus a poetic retrospective, a chance for the Prisoner to look back and consider how far he has come in his journey (emphasized by *despicitque terras* (VM5.11), echoing once more the last four lines of IVM1).

The dual nature of the meter is reflected in the poem's content, which describes the many different species of animals the world contains and compares them to the unique nature of the *human* animal. Significantly, the animals are from the beginning (*terras...permeant*, VM5.1) characterized by their movement: some slither across the ground, creating furrows in the dust (2-3); others float through the liquid air on light wings (4-5: an image enhanced by the use of smooth-sounding liquids and the semivowel *v*, e.g. *liquido longi, vaga verberetque ventos*); others press footprints into the ground as they traverse green fields or woods (6-7). However, all animals except humankind have faces turned down to the ground, weighing down and dulling their senses. The human race alone "lift high their lofty heads and lightly stand with upright bodies, looking down so upon the earth" (*unica gens hominum celsum levat altius cacumen/atque levis recto stat corpore despicitque terras,* 10-11). The poem ends with an admonition to the Prisoner: "You who with upright face do seek the sky, and thrust your forehead out,/You should also bear your mind aloft, lest weighted down/The mind sink lower than the body

[233] Blackwood, *The* Consolation *of Boethius*, 219.

raised above" (*qui recto caelum vultu petis exserisque frontem,/in sublime feras animum quoque, ne gravata pessum/inferior sidat mens corpore celsius levato*, 13-15).[234]

The "upright" ithyphallic meter thus mirrors the human posture: standing on two feet, face lifted up to the sky. We are reminded of how Philosophy "redefined" the human in VP4.35: "a bipedal, rational animal" (*homo est animal bipes rationale*). Scarry, discussing this revised definition, writes that "man is stripped of his mortality and endowed with two feet, changes that stress his capacity to carry himself toward immortality."[235] However, bipedality has the even more important quality that it frees the hands from assisting with locomotion, redirecting the human body into an upright posture, with the human head and vision raised aloft. This, we read in the *Timaeus*, is the quality that allows human beings to, by observing the regular motions of the heavenly bodies, make the disordered orbits in their heads properly spherical, finally allowing them to return to their "companion star" (*Timaeus* 42b; 46e5-c; 90d). Yet Boethius, unlike Plato, does not suggest here that the rectilinear "straightness" of human movement is something to be transcended in favor of circular movement, but only *redirected*: turned upward toward the sky rather than forwards and backwards, a posture which (since mind and body are connected) likewise redirects our thoughts towards the higher realm of *intellegentia*. Far from being opposed or irrelevant to the intellectual, then, the physical provides the basis for it, as we saw already in VP4, where the mind operates by processing physical sensations and comparing them to the forms held within. Indeed, this has been the case throughout the *Consolatio*; the Prisoner has been healed of his illness,

[234] This and the translation in the previous sentence is from Tester.
[235] Scarry, "The External Referent," 155.

not as a disembodied mind, but as a human being with a fully integrated body and mind, such that he has required Philosophy's aural poetic therapy as much as her abstract intellectual arguments for his cure. The ithyphallic meter of VM5, drawing upon Greek religious chant mediated by Latin lyric, is no exception; its bounding, syncopated rhythm excites the Prisoner's body and emotions, theurgically aiding his own efforts to "lift up" his thoughts. VM5 can then, like IIIM9, be seen as a properly constructed prayer whose form itself assists the one praying to achieve the desired state.

It is useful here to compare VM5 to IM7, its analogue in the first book (see Table 1 above). The lines of IM7, employing adonic meter, were the shortest and simplest in the *Consolatio*, focusing the Prisoner's attention and helping him to banish the distracting emotions of joy, fear, hope, and sadness. In contrast, VM5 features the longest lines in the *Consolatio*; in their expansive breadth, they represent a comprehensive summing-up of all that makes the Prisoner human, including his emotions. Joy is allowed to return, evoked by the leaping rhythm and even the comedic "phallic" connotations of the meter, for *no* aspect of the Prisoner's physicality is to be excluded.[236] The Prisoner is thus, in VM5, invited to look back over his journey and see how far he has come. He is then called upon to join the procession, a joyful celebration of created life, and furthermore to take his own rightful place within it: a mortal animal, yet one with an immortal mind; an animal endowed, as no other animal, with rationality, as well as the potential to attain, through prayer, the divine level of *intellegentia*.

[236] For a longer discussion of this emphasis on the corporeal in the *Consolatio*, see Hankey, "Founding Body in Platonism," 324-26.

6.3 FINAL PINNACLE (STAGE 8): VP6

Philosophy's exhortation and the ithyphallic meter of VM5 have done their work; the Prisoner, head and thoughts lifted up, is at last ready to understand -- insofar as is possible for a human -- the manner in which Divine Providence knows the outcomes of contingent future events. Philosophy begins by reiterating the principle that what is known is known not according to its own nature but the nature and mode of the knower. God is eternal; thus what He knows, He knows in an eternal mode. The next step is to define eternity: "the whole, simultaneous and perfect possession of boundless life" (*interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio,* VP6.3). In contrast, temporal things -- even *perpetual* temporal things, i.e. the universe -- "possess" only the present moment; they do not yet grasp the future, and have already lost the past. The Timaean cosmos "falls from immobility into motion," imitating its eternal model through movement *in* time, but God, himself immobile, holds "as present the infinity of moving time" (*infinitatem mobilis temporis habere praesentem*, 8).[237] Thus the Timaean relationship between the cosmos and its eternal Model is generalized here into the relationship between that which is temporal (all created things) and that which is eternal (God).

God, being eternal, sees all things according to His eternal nature, in a single flash (*ictu*), as though they were now happening; his eternal knowledge thus no more constrains the outcome of human choices than the spectator at the chariot race constrains the charioteers' movements. Therefore, it is incorrect to speak of God's "foreknowledge" (*praevidentia*), for there is no *prae* ("before") where God is concerned; rather, one should

[237] All translations in this and the following paragraph are from Tester.

speak of his *providentia* or "providence." To illustrate this, Philosophy introduces the image of the "highest peak of the world" (*excelso rerum cacumine*, 17), from which divine Providence looks forth (*prospiciat*) upon all things (*cuncta*); just so, God, set above all times, simultaneously sees them all. To understand this image requires *all* of the Prisoner's faculties. His sensory experience of vision and height, his imagination which allows him to visualize the mountain peak and the broad view it gives, and his rational understanding of time are combined and taken up into the *intellegentia* that allows him to understand eternity: a thing which neither sense, imagination, nor unaided reason can comprehend. "Just as you see certain things in this your temporal present," Philosophy concludes, "so he perceives all things in his eternal [present]" (*uti vos vestro hoc temporario praesenti quaedam videtis, ita ille omnia suo cernit aeterno,* 20). No matter how many times a human changes their mind regarding what they will do, the ever-present eye of God's providence inevitably "runs ahead" to perceive it, without changing the freely chosen nature of the action itself.

We are reminded, here, of the many times that the Prisoner took the initiative during the second ascent, advancing his own questions so as to move the conversation into a new direction unanticipated by Philosophy. In fact, Philosophy herself, as much as the Prisoner, is subject to divine Providence; despite her slight misgivings regarding the time remaining to the Prisoner, she is for the most content to trust in that providence, allowing and even encouraging the increasingly active Prisoner to participate in his own ascent -- her smile (IVP6) a token of her own trust in God's all-seeing vision, which is not defeated by the Prisoner's exercise of his free will but rather "runs ahead" to anticipate it and act accordingly. As Philosophy states, it is part of the Prisoner's medicine that he know these

things (IVP6.5), and by the end of the second ascent he has indeed learned what he has needed to, even if in not quite the order that Philosophy might have preferred.

Thus, the Prisoner's fears in VP3 and the "nightmare" vision of IIIM12 have been finally and decisively annulled. Freedom of the will remains inviolate, as do the earthly laws that prescribe rewards for goodness and punishments for evil. Furthermore, above and beyond our human justice, God as divine Judge views all things in His eternal present and dispenses rewards and punishments accordingly. Hopes (*spes,* 46), driven away in IM7, now return, provided that they are rightly placed in God and not the shifting course of Fortune. Neither are our prayers (*preces*) vain, which "when they are right cannot be ineffectual," as we have observed throughout the *Consolatio*. Philosophy ends with a solemn exhortation to the Prisoner and, through him, the reader, to continue in the path of virtue that she has prescribed: "Turn away then from vices, cultivate virtues, lift up your mind to righteous hopes, offer up humble prayers to heaven" (*Aversamini igitur vitia, colite virtutes, ad rectas spes animum sublevate, humiles preces in excelsa porrigite*, 47). There is a great necessity laid upon us as humans to do good, for we "act before the eyes of a judge who sees all things" (*cum ante oculos agitis iudicis cuncta cernentis*, 48).[238]

[238] This and the translations in the previous two sentences are from Tester.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 THE SPIRAL RETURN AND INCLUSIVE PERFECTION

It is time to look back over the Prisoner's journey and summarize what has been gained. The "two truths" of human free will and all-seeing divine Providence, which to the rational human mind appeared to clash like the Timaean *X*, have been shown from the higher level of *intellegentia* to not only be consistent with one another but to form, like the Circle of the Same and the Different, a harmoniously interwoven pattern. This new understanding allows the Prisoner to comprehend what he did not before, the mode in which God governs the world: an *amor* that draws all things toward itself through their own desire to return to their source as end, the *summum bonum* and true happiness; an all-seeing divine Providence that observes, but does not coerce, the outcome of human choices, working through the manifold changes of Fate to bring about the ultimate good of every individual human being. Furthermore, the Prisoner has remembered what he himself is: a bipedal, rational animal with an immortal mind (IIP4.28) who is, through divine grace, capable of rising to the level of *intellegentia* and thus becoming, by participation, a god as promised in IIIP10. In doing so, the Prisoner has not left behind the physical world of embodied life, the rectilinear movements of human locomotion and *ratio*, his emotional capacity, or his animal faculties of sense and imagination. Rather, all these have all been transformed, redirected upward, and raised aloft to share in the divine level of *intellegentia*. This *participatory* mode of return to and union with God preserves and perfects distinction rather than abolishing it. The path traced is thus not a pure circle

in which the end is identical to the beginning, nor a straight line which travels away from its source indefinitely, but the spiral motion of the helix which preserves progressive movement while still returning to its origin. The result is an *inclusive perfection*, discussed repeatedly by Hankey, who finds it in the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas.[239] It is not surprising that it is present in Boethius as well.

This is an appropriate juncture at which to return to a point briefly touched upon in Chapter 1: the surprising position of IIIM9, which (as Gruber points out) is almost exactly at the center by length but (as Blackwood points out) is quite a bit past the center as reckoned by poem number. In fact, IIIM9, calculated by poem number, appears at the (inverse) golden mean. This is the mathematical proportion (first defined by Euclid in Book VI.3 of the *Elements*) of two quantities A and B such that B is to A as A is to A + B; the ratio of the lesser to the greater is, in decimal notation, approximately equivalent to 0.618.[240] This is, in the *Consolatio*, almost precisely the point at which IIIM9 occurs (it is the 24th poem out of 39 total, giving 24/39 = 0.615). A self-similar and highly pleasing

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[239] Wayne J. Hankey, "'*Complectitur Omnem'*: Divine and Human Happiness in Aristotle and in Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*," *Kronos* VII (2018): 187-205. "Inclusive perfection is the end as return to source, or beginning, but with this difference, the beginning as end includes what is traversed between the source and the end" (199). "The human mind is such that it can be strengthened for the vision of God so that, by this gracious elevation, the integrity of human nature is preserved in a human happiness" (204). Wayne J. Hankey, "*Participatio divini luminis*, Aquinas' doctrine of the Agent Intellect: Our Capacity for Contemplation," Dionysius 22 (Dec 2004), 149-78. "Every difference is maintained, and every extreme is mediated. We shall be made "*deiformis*," by means of the light of glory without ceasing to be human" (78).

[240] "Golden Ratio," Štefan Porubský, *Interactive Information Portal for Algorithmic Mathematics*, Institute of Computer Science of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic, accessed March 7, 2020, https://www.cs.cas.cz/portal/AlgoMath/MathematicalAnalysis/MathematicalConstants/GoldenRatio.htm.

geometric proportion, this ratio is an appropriate choice for the relative sizes of the two parts corresponding to the outer Circle of the Same and the inner Circle of the Different.

The positioning of IIIM9 is thus no accident. It is the center of the work by extent and divides it, by poem number, into two parts related to one another in a self-similar geometrical proportion; at the same time, it serves as the "pivot" upon which the work revolves and furthermore its structural paradigm. Then why, as Blackwood argues, can a more "symmetrical" arrangement be obtained if we take IIIM5 as the pivot? In fact, even if we follow Blackwood's suggestion and make IIIM5 the "center" of the work, it is clear from a glance at his list of poems that there are still plenty of exceptions; meters used only once, poems which employ two diverse meters in alternation, slight variations upon existing meters (e.g. IVM3), and so forth, which defy all attempt to force them into any perfectly regular pattern.

What does this say about the microcosm of the *Consolatio*, as modelled on the Timaean cosmos? Surely, if Boethius as author had wished to make the meters of the *Consolatio* perfectly symmetrical, he could easily have done so. Timaeus' Demiurge, too, could easily have created only the Circle of the Same with its pure circular motion. Yet, "symmetrical" though it might be, such a cosmos would fall far short of the organic complexity of the eternal Model, the Great Living Thing. A dynamic flexibility -- made possible by *asymmetrical* rectilinear motion and the composite motion of the spiral -- is required for the Timaean microcosm of the *Consolatio*, and thus Boethius' work as literary Demiurge, to be fully complete.

Finally, it remains to discuss how the *Consolatio* provides a true and healing *consolation* for the Prisoner himself. By this I mean that the conclusions reached must

not only be abstract intellectual generalities, interesting as those may be; rather, they must provide solace for and a deepened understanding of his own particular situation. At the end of the *Consolatio*, the Prisoner is still in his cell, facing (it is implied) imminent execution; yet hope and joy have both returned. His suffering has not been abolished, but it has been situated within a wider context, explained, and thus redeemed. The Prisoner does not know all the intricate workings of divine Providence, but he is convinced that a good God governs the universe and disposes all things for the good, even his own imprisonment and impending death. The wicked men who caused his downfall are not to be hated, for they are suffering from a similar "disease of the mind" to that which afflicted the Prisoner himself; just as Philosophy had pity upon him, so he himself must pity instead of hating the evil. The universe is not a topsy-turvy chaos in which rewards and punishments are dispensed at random, nor is it a lawless anarchy where the evil invariably prosper and the good suffer, nor a tyranny governed by compulsion in which free choice and justice have no real meaning. Rather, it is a realm in which "there is one ruler, one king," who "delights in associating with his subjects" and ordains all for the good such that "to be guided by his hand and obey his justice is perfect freedom" (IP5.4),[241] even for the chained Prisoner awaiting execution in his cell. Through his own earnest search for the good augmented by the divine grace bestowed by Philosophy, he has returned to his "homeland" and is rewarded with the divine vision of *intellegentia* through which he can to some degree understand eternity and the workings of divine Providence itself -- that is, to participate in the divine vision and thus in God himself, which is perfect happiness.

[241] Translation from Tester.

Furthermore, it is not only the Prisoner as literary character but Boethius as author who is granted this divine vision and thus consolation. As Curley points out, we must remember that the *Consolatio* is explicitly framed as an autobiographical work. Through the Prisoner's journey, ultimately his own, Boethius the author has made sense of his own suffering and thus has himself risen to the divine level of *intellegentia*.[242] In so doing, he participates in divinity not only through a deepened understanding of God, but also through imitating his creative work; in writing the *Consolatio*, he places himself in the same relation to the microcosm of his work as God's relation to the macrocosm of our world. If this microcosm, like the Timaean cosmos, is to be as beautiful and complete as possible, Boethius the author must exercise within his work the same guiding Providence that God does in governing the universe. Such a Providence does not alter the freely chosen acts of human beings: for Boethius, the autobiographical facts of his own downfall and imprisonment. Rather, regarding them from an eternal perspective, it weaves them into a larger pattern to bring a higher order out of apparent disorder, just as Plato's Demiurge, through skillful persuasion, brings order and beauty out of the primeval chaos of the Receptacle. Having elucidated in detail the intricate Timaean structure of the *Consolatio*, we can say with certainty that Boethius has accomplished this difficult creative task with an extraordinary, even divine, result. One hopes that Boethius, facing death, may have caught some timeless glimpse of the immense good that his own suffering -- understood and creatively redeemed through his own efforts, aided by divine Providence -- would bring about for the *Consolatio*'s many readers through the centuries,

[242] Curley, "How to Read," 236.

the present writer among them. If so, the consolation of Boethius could truly be said to be complete.

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APPENDIX A: THE *CONSOLATIO* NARRATIVE AS THREE-DIMENSIONAL CYLINDRICAL HELIX