

## *Semina Rationum:* St. Augustine and Boethius

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The splendid romanesque Basilica di S. Pietro in Ciel d'Oro, in Pavia, contains the tombs of both Boethius and St. Augustine. Pavia was the site of Boethius' execution, and his relics now repose in a modern sarcophagus in the crypt of S. Pietro, directly beneath the high altar. The body of St. Augustine, earlier translated from North Africa to Sardinia, was ransomed thence by King Luitprand, in the third decade of the eighth century. The relics are now contained in the magnificent fourteenth-century *Arca di Sant'Agostino*, at the high altar.<sup>1</sup> This year, as Pavia celebrates the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of its venerable martyr, Boethius, the fortuitous, or providential, juxtaposition of the relics of these Christian doctors in S. Pietro invites us especially to consider the relation between Boethius and St. Augustine.

The comparison between these two doctors is attended by many difficulties. Although less than a century separates the death of the African Bishop from that of the noble Roman statesman, it was a time of radical change, and they lived in very different worlds. St. Augustine's world was still the ancient Empire, however ravaged by invasions of Goths and Huns and Vandals. Boethius, contemporary of St. Benedict, lived already in medieval Europe, at the court of Theodoric, Ostrogothic King of Italy. For St. Augustine, as many passages in the *Confessions* and the *City of God* attest, the lingering traditions of Roman paganism were still of great concern. Like every other Christian doctor of the early centuries, he was deeply indebted to pagan learning, especially in rhetoric and other branches of philosophy, and acknowledged that debt. Yet, his relation to that tradition was ambivalent, and often polemical. If the early dialogues, written in the Christian retreat of Cassiciacum, betray nothing of the opposition, his deeper penetration of Christian doctrine, and perhaps especially the vicissitudes of the Pelagian controversy, brought the polemic to the fore. Thus, in the *Confessions*, he reviews the literary studies of his youth, which had taught him "*multa verba utilia*", and denounces

1. For the historical and iconographical details, see F. Gianani, *La Basilica di S. Pietro in Ciel d'Oro nella storia e nell'arte*, 2 ed. (Pavia, 1972), pp. 31-69.

them as "*fulmen tartareum*";<sup>2</sup> and in the *City of God*, when he considers the virtues extolled by the pagan philosophers "*in impia civitate*", he concludes that "*non virtutes, sed vitia iudicanda sunt*".<sup>3</sup>

A century later, with Boethius, *magister officiorum* in a new Christian (albeit Arian) kingdom, that polemical standpoint has disappeared. Perhaps one might see in him an anticipation of the world of medieval humanism, a world in which the Christian scholar might use the intellectual legacy of Greece and Rome with as little inhibition as the medieval architect would use the columns of a Roman temple to furnish the arcades of a Christian church, or a medieval sculptor would carve an image of Plato to stand among the figures of the prophets on the facade of a cathedral. But for Boethius and his contemporaries (including Cassiodorus, and even Theodoric<sup>4</sup>), there is a much more self-conscious and programmatic revival of ancient ways: the issue is the recovery and survival of civilisation. The translations, and the commentaries on the Aristotelian logic, and the works on the other liberal disciplines, are obvious elements in that programme; but, under changed circumstances, the same attitude is to be discerned in the *Consolatio*, in its antique literary form, and especially in the metric passages, where ethical and theological arguments are summed up in images from classical authors and from the ancient mythology, understood allegorically. It is a very studied, "artificial" poetry, seeking to restore the sense of poetic forms which have become largely unintelligible. As with Lady Philosophy herself, the stature of the poetry is ambiguous, "*ut nullo modo nostrae crederetur aetatis*".<sup>5</sup>

In all this, there is a profound change of attitude, a change of fundamental importance for the subsequent history of Christian thought and European civilisation. Gone are St. Augustine's misgivings about the Platonists: Boethius is ready to find a consensus of learned men,<sup>6</sup> and to find it by way of the

2. *Confessiones*, I, XV, 24; I, XVI, 26 (ed. A. Solignac, Bibliothèque Augustinienne, Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, 13, pp. 316, 318. All references to works of St. Augustine are to the volumes of the BA edition).

3. *De civitate Dei*, XIX, 9; XIX, 25 (ed. G. Bardy, BA 37, pp. 94, 164, 166).

4. On Theodoric's interest in Hellenism, and his conception of himself as Philosopher-King, see P. Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources* (English trans. by H. Wedeck, Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 274.

5. *Consolatio philosophiae*, I, pr. 1 (ed. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, *Boethius, The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*. Loeb Classical Library, London and New York, 1926, p. 130. All page references for the *Consolation* and the *Tractates* are to this edition; translations are my own).

6. *Consol.*, III, pr. 10 (pp. 266, 268): *Deus rerum omnium principem bonum esse*

interpretation of Plato and Aristotle, the paragons of philosophic wisdom, the voice of universal reason. Thus, the *Consolation of Philosophy* presents a Platonic theology which one might describe as "ecumenical". It is very different, certainly, from the systematic complexity of Proclus, whose work Boethius knew,<sup>7</sup> and whose theology and theurgic doctrine seemed to Justinian a threat to Christianity. Yet in Boethius, one finds no polemic against such positions. He is closer, perhaps, as Courcelle especially has argued, to the thinking of Ammonius and the School of Alexandria, where a simpler Platonism seems to have prevailed, and where Christians and pagans found themselves mainly in agreement. Boethius evidently depends upon Ammonius in points of detail, both in the logical commentaries and in the *Consolation*, and the influence may be more general. Unfortunately, we have no theology from Ammonius to serve as a comparison.<sup>8</sup>

With typical "traditionalism",<sup>9</sup> Boethius, in the *Consolation*, cites no "modern" author: the latest authority is Cicero. No Christian source is called upon, and no explicit Christian doctrine is advanced. The precisions of Catholic dogma, and the points of contention between orthodox and heretic, are to be discussed only privately, among those prepared to understand them, and the discussion is to be attended by all the obscurities of brevity and technical language, which are the *arcani fida custodia*.<sup>10</sup> Such

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*communis humanorum conceptio probat animorum; cf. Quomodo substantiae* (p. 42): *tenet enim communis sententia doctorum omne quod est ad bonum tendere, omne autem tendit ad simile; ibid.* (p. 44): *ex omnium doctorum indoctorumque sententia . . .*

7. On Boethius's knowledge of Neoplatonic works, see P. Courcelle, *op. cit.*, chapter 6 (especially on his knowledge of Ammonius of Alexandria); H. Liebschutz, "Boethius and the Legacy of Antiquity", in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 553 ff.; C. J. de Vogel, "Boetiana I", *Vivarium*, 9 (1971), p. 54; J. Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae* (Berlin and New York, 1978), pp. 38-40.

8. On the influence of Ammonius, see especially Courcelle, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*; on the School of Alexandria cf. the comments of A. C. Lloyd (*Cambridge History*, Pt. IV, "The Later Neoplatonists", pp. 271-325): "At Alexandria, more than in Greece, students and professors alike were often Christians. . . . By burying themselves in Aristotelian psychology and logic they could avoid the ideological stresses altogether. And for the most part they did — it is not just that the texts have been lost; they did not write theologies of Plato or commentaries on the *Timaeus*" (p. 315).

9. Cf. A. H. Armstrong, "Pagan and Christian Traditionalism in the First Three Centuries", forthcoming in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica* (Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 1975).

10. Cf. *De trin.*, *prol.* (p. 4): *Idcirco stilum brevitate contraho et ex intimis sumpta philosophiae disciplinis novorum verborum significationes velo, ut haec*

matters are discussed, therefore, only in the *Theological Tractates*, which are essentially private documents. The *Consolation*, on the contrary, is an exoteric work, and has an ecumenical character; it is the harvest of ancient speculation, as Boethius understands it, on the most profound ethico-theological questions. Lady Philosophy, calling upon the testimony of her ancient Greek disciples, shows the way to a *patria* of final happiness, in the contemplation of the highest Good.

When St. Augustine, in Book XIX of the *City of God*, discusses the positions of the ancient philosophers on these issues, the standpoint is very different: "It is very certain", he says, "that the philosophers in the godless city, who have claimed that the gods are their friends, have fallen into the power of the malign demons, to whom that whole city is subject, and with whom it will share eternal punishment."<sup>11</sup> Lady Philosophy has a very different perspective, and it is perhaps not surprising that those modern scholars who have attempted to argue for the Augustinian inspiration of the *Consolation* have met with little success.<sup>12</sup> E. K. Rand was perhaps correct in his assertion that "there is nothing in (the *Consolation*) for which a good case might not have been made by any contemporary Christian theologian, who knew his Augustine";<sup>13</sup> but there cannot be any very direct correlation. If there is little in the doctrine of Boethius which could be called specifically "un-Augustinian", it seems that there is also very little which can be traced unambiguously to St. Augustine.

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*mihi tantum vobisque. . . . conloquantur; Quomodo substantiae, prol. (p. 38): Prohine tu ne sis obscuritatibus brevitatis adversus, quae cum sint arcani fida custodia.*

11. *De civitate dei*, XIX, 9 (B.A. 37, p. 94).

12. Cf. R. Carton, "Le Christianisme et l'augustinisme de Boèce", *Mélanges augustiniennes* (Paris, 1931), pp. 243-329. Many scholars have thought to discover in St. Augustine's early dialogues a precedent for the *Consolation*; cf. G. Bossier, *La Fin du paganisme* (2 ed., Paris, 1894), Vol. II, p. 428; P. de Labriolle, *Histoire de la littérature latine chrétienne* (Paris, 1920), p. 672; John-Baptist Reeves, "St. Augustine and Humanism", in *A Monument to St. Augustine* (London and New York, 1930), pp. 144f; E. T. Silk, "Boethius' 'Consolatio Philosophiae' as a Sequel to Augustine's 'Dialogues' and 'Soliloquia' ", *Harvard Theological Review*, 32 (1939), 19-39. On this point, see the reservations of C. J. de Vogel, "The Problem of Philosophy and Christian Faith in Boethius' *Consolation*", in W. den Boer *et. al.*, *Romanitas et Christianitas* (Amsterdam and London, 1973), pp. 368-369. A fresh and more profitable line of argument on the relation of Boethius to St. Augustine is proposed by C. J. Starnes, in his paper, "Boethius and the Development of Christian Humanism: The Theology of the *Consolation*", to appear in the Proceedings of the Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani (Pavia, October, 1980).

13. *Founders of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1928), p. 178.

Indeed, it has been a problem for modern scholarship, since Reformation times, to recognize Boethius as even a Christian. The *Consolation*, generally interpreted throughout the Middle Ages as a thoroughly Christian work,<sup>14</sup> has seemed to many modern scholars simply pagan — a pastiche of Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic elements — and it was therefore long supposed that the *Theological Tractates* must be spurious. Only Holder's discovery, just a century ago, of a fragment of Cassiodorus, attesting the authenticity of four of the *Tractates*,<sup>15</sup> renewed the quest to discover the essential Christianity of the author of the *Consolation*.

A century of source-criticism of the *Consolation* has, however, disclosed little to the point. The text has been finely sifted for echos of Scripture and other Christian texts. There is perhaps a reminiscence of the Book of Wisdom (noticed already in the Middle Ages),<sup>16</sup> and a few other words or phrases possibly suggestive of the language of the Scriptures or the Fathers.<sup>17</sup> The doctrine of the work seems generally not inconsistent with Christian belief, yet there seems to be nothing there unthinkable in pagan Neoplatonism. Thus, there is a tendency in recent studies once again to regard the *Consolation* as essentially a pagan work. Ferruccio Gastaldelli in his recent book on Boethius, claims that Boethius found consolation in a context exclusively Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic, not only not Christian, but definitively pagan;<sup>18</sup> and J. Gruber, in his recent commentary on the

14. Cf. P. Courcelle, *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire* (Paris, 1967); pp. 239 ff., and C. J. de Vogel, "The Problem of Philosophy", pp. 358f. Dante speaks for the Middle Ages when he places Boethius in the Heaven of the Doctors (*Paradiso*, X, lines 124-129).

15. Reported and discussed in H. Usener, *Anecdoton Holderi* (Leipzig, 1877).

16. *Consol.* III, pr. 12 (p. 290): "Est igitur summum", inquit, "bonum quod regit cuncta fortiter suaviterque disponit". Lady Philosophy seems to quote Wisdom 8:1 (cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, 103, 8, *sed contra*). The response of Boethius seems particularly significant: *Tum ego: "Quam", inquam, "me non modo ea quae conclusa est summa rationum, verum multo magis haec ipsa quibus uteris verba delectant, ut tandem aliquando stultitiam magna lacerantem sui pudeat"*.

17. For discussion of other possible Biblical references in the *Consolation*, see C. J. de Vogel, "Boetiana II", *Vivarium* 10 (1972), 4-7, and "The Problem of Philosophy", p. 362.

18. Cf. F. Gastaldelli, *Boezio* (Rome, 1974): "La Consolatio di Boezio — che significa il suo riscatto dall'errore, la sua purificazione e pacificazione interiore, il suo consegnarsi alla verità e alla fede in Dio — avviene in un contesto esclusivamente platonico aristotelico e stoico, cioè non cristiano, e in definitiva 'pagano'. . . . Boezio ha trovato la sua catarsi in una religiosità non cristiana" (pp. 54-55).

*Consolation*, noting the absence of anything specifically Christian, concludes that the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, which had governed the whole life of Boethius, governed also his final work.<sup>19</sup>

Other scholars, however, have defended and continue to defend the Christian authorship of the *Consolation*.<sup>20</sup> Most commonly, the argument has been that Boethius anticipates scholasticism, and observes the "scholastic" distinction between philosophy and theology, one the work of natural reason, the other the exegesis of divine *auctoritates*. Thus, the *Consolation* is philosophy, the *Tractates* are theology.<sup>21</sup> But whatever one may make of that distinction as an account of scholastic method, it will hardly suffice as an explanation of Boethius. For him, theology is simply the highest division of speculative philosophy, distinguished from physics and mathematics, considering the divine substance, without matter or motion, proceeding *intellectualiter*.<sup>22</sup> Lady Philosophy certainly includes theology: she lifts her head to pierce the very heavens;<sup>23</sup> she has descended from above to aid her patient in his exile;<sup>24</sup> and her object is to bring him to see his predicament from the standpoint of divine *intelligentia*.<sup>25</sup> Her method is not that of *auctoritates*, but neither is that the method of the *Tractates*.

While the authority of Scripture and of the universal tradition of the Fathers (*maiorum*) and of local custom is recognized by Boethius,<sup>26</sup> he does not justify doctrinal positions by appeal to those authorities. When there is a matter of conflict between

19. Cf. J. Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae* (Berlin and New York, 1978): ". . . alles spezifisch Christliche fehlt. Die platonische und aristotelische Philosophie, die das ganze Leben des Boethius bestimmte, bestimmt auch sein letztes Werk" (p. 15).

20. See, for instance, L. Obertello, *Severino Boezio*, 2 vols. (Genoa, 1974), Vol. I, Chapter VIII, "Boezio pensatore cristiano", pp. 746-781; Obertello rightly observes: "Un cristiano del sesto secolo ben difficilmente poteva identificare la filosofia col paganesimo" (p. 762). See also the argument of C. J. Starnes, in the paper cited above in note 12.

21. Cf. M. Grabmann, *Di Geschichte der scholastischen Methode*, I (Freiburg i. Br., 1909), p. 176; E. K. Rand, *Founders*, pp. 154ff; P. Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, pp. 320-322: ". . . above all, he wanted to keep separate in his books the domain of reason and the domain of faith" (p. 321).

22. *De trin.*, II (p. 8): *Nam cum tres sunt speculativae partes, naturalis . . . mathematica. . . theologica, sine motu abstracta atque separabilis (nam dei substantia et materia et motu caret). . . in divinis intellectualiter versari oportebit.*

23. *Consol.*, I, pr. 1 (p. 130).

24. *Ibid.*, I, pr. 3 (p. 138): "Et quid", inquam, "tu in has exilii nostri solitudines o omnium magistra virtutum supero cardine delapsa venisti?"

25. *Ibid.*, V, pr. 4 (p. 388).

26. *De fide cath.* (p. 70).

orthodox and heretic, it is the universal character of orthodox doctrine and cultus that guarantees that form of belief as a starting point.<sup>27</sup> Just as the argument of the *Consolatio* begins from true opinion (*vera sententia*) and proceeds from that *minima scintillula* to understanding,<sup>28</sup> so the arguments of the *Tractates* move from correct (i.e. "universal") beliefs to logical explication. Thus, there is indeed in Boethius a "*fides quaerens intellectum*", but not in the "scholastic" (i.e., "Thomistic") sense; that is to say, Boethius does not draw the distinction between a revealed theology, based on faith, and a natural theology, based on reason. For him, as for Eriugena, and for early scholasticism generally, faith is the preliminary form of a knowledge which the philosopher attempts to establish by necessary reasons, by logical explication. In the *Consolation*, the relation between Boethius and Lady Philosophy is precisely that of "*fides quaerens intellectum*", and the method is not essentially different from that of the *Tractates*. As St. Thomas Aquinas remarks, in the preface to his commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate*, some of the Fathers, as Augustine, used both reason and authority; others, as Hilary and Ambrose, used authority alone; but Boethius used only reason, presupposing what others had established by authorities.<sup>29</sup>

In method, the *Consolation* and the *Tractates* are similar; in either case it is a matter of the logical explication of received (i.e., "universal") beliefs, and the explication is itself the demonstration, conjoining faith and reason. In style, they differ strikingly. In the *Tractates*, Boethius chooses obscurity and brevity, and a highly technical language, to discuss difficult points of theology which are matters of contention even among Christians.<sup>30</sup> By comparison, the *Consolation* has an ecumenical and protreptic character. Lady Philosophy is the whole of wisdom, and although warring schools have sought to divide the heritage of Socrates, tearing little pieces from her garment, thinking they possessed the whole, yet philosophy remains intact: *nos desuper inridemus*.<sup>31</sup> God himself has inserted her in the minds of the wise;<sup>32</sup> her office is to dissolve the

27. *De trin.*, I (pp. 4-6).

28. *Consol.*, I, pr. 6 (p. 166).

29. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate, prologus*. (ed. B. Decker, Leiden, 1965, p. 47): *Boethius vero elegit prosequi per alium modum, scilicet per rationes, praesupponens hoc quod ab aliis per auctoritates fuerat prosectum*.

30. This point is strongly stated at the beginning of each of the tractates, except for the *De fide catholica*.

31. *Consol.*, I, pr. 3 (pp. 138, 140).

32. *Ibid.*, I, pr. 4 (p. 144).

clouds of false opinions, and bring her patient to behold the splendour of true light.<sup>33</sup>

It is Platonism (in the most general sense), the voice of universal reason, which governs the argument of the *Consolation*; but that is not to say that it is in any way inconsistent with the more arcane theology of the *Tractates*, which also, taken as a whole, present a Platonic system of theology, exhibiting, as St. Thomas observes, the typical pattern of *exitus* and *reditus*.<sup>34</sup> One may suppose that for Boethius the argument of the *Consolation* depends upon and presupposes the more precise theology of the *Tractates*; that, for him, the "simple" Platonism of the *Consolation* holds implicitly the unity of divine hypostases, as in the tractates on the Trinity, the notion of creation by divine act of will, as in *De hebdomadibus*,<sup>35</sup> and the Chalcedonian doctrine of the Incarnation as the basis of man's divinisation, as in the *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium*.

Thus, in the *Consolation*, Boethius can speak of the "First Good" as universally acknowledged "by learned and unlearned men and by the religions of barbarous peoples";<sup>36</sup> but surely the nature of its unity, and the relations of subordinate hypostases are problematic. He can speak as simply as he does of the *summum bonum*, in the third book of the *Consolation*, only because he understands its unity in the form of trinitarian doctrine. The argument there is certainly Platonic, but that is not to say that the doctrine of the Trinity is alien to the consideration; rather, that doctrine is for him the logically necessary explication of the unity of the hypostases.<sup>37</sup> As

33. *Ibid.*, I, pr. 6 (p. 168).

34. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. sup. lib. Boethii de Trin.*, prolog. (ed. cit., p. 47).

35. On the interpretation of the '*De hebdomadibus*' (*Quomodo substantiae*) as concerned with the doctrine of creation, and on the relation of that discussion to the *Consolation*, see my paper, "The Doctrine of Creation in Boethius: the '*De hebdomadibus*' and the *Consolatio*", forthcoming in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica* (Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 1979). Prof. L. Obertello kindly informs me that he has made analogous comments in his recent edition of the *Consolation* and the *Tractates* (Milan, 1979), which I have not yet been able to consult.

36. *Quomodo substantiae* (p. 44).

37. Cf. C. J. de Vogel, "On the Neoplatonic Character of Platonism and the Platonic Character of Neoplatonism", in her *Philosophica*, Pt. I (Assen, 1970), pp. 355-377: "When, in the sixth century, Boethius, who spoke as a philosopher, invoked God and called Him 'of threefold nature' (*Con.* III, metr. ix), we may be sure that this 'last of the Romans' considered the Trinity of God as a legitimate Platonic doctrine — because the theory of the three basic hypostases was in his eyes true Platonism" (p. 356). Such a view was not altogether novel; as de Vogel indicates: "Plotinus says, speaking of his three main hypostases: 'these theories are not new. They



one sees in the first tractate, he argues against Arian views not on the basis of authorities, but only on grounds of logical necessity. Likewise, in the *Consolation* he can speak quite simply of participation and divinisation, with no apparent sense of the difficulties of these conceptions. But in the third and fifth tractates, one sees how those problems have been resolved for him in the doctrines of creation and Incarnation. Again, the demonstrations are worked out simply in terms of logical necessity: they are demonstrated within Platonism, as though they were implicitly present there.

To ask whether the *Consolation* is philosophy or theology, or whether it is "natural" as distinguished from "revealed" theology, is to ask misleading questions, presupposing distinctions belonging to the later history of philosophy and far from the mind of Boethius. To ask whether it is Platonic or Christian is also misleading: for Boethius, Plato is surely *Plato christianus*.

In his complete espousal of classical tradition, Boethius seems far removed from St. Augustine. While St. Augustine was conscious of deep indebtedness to the theology of the *platonici*, he was still more conscious of the need for a fresh beginning, a new *principium*, in terms of which he saw a radical revision of philosophy, and a resolution of its dilemmas, intellectual and moral. The Platonists were not without the Word of God, inwardly illuminating: the argument of Book VII of the *Confessions*, where the *libri platonici* are compared to the Prologue of St. John's Gospel,<sup>38</sup> is the strongest possible assertion of that point. The illuminating *principium* of all creation and of human thought surely abides within, but fallen man, wandering in exile from the *patria* of eternal truth, cannot surely comprehend it; and therefore his return is possible only if he is prompted and recalled by the illumination of the external word, the word temporally uttered, made flesh.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, for St. Augustine, the Revealed Word must be the new starting-point of philosophy, and therefore, in his treatise, *De trinitate*, for instance, a beginning is made by establishing the doctrine on the authority of Scripture. Only after that has been done can one turn "inward" (in Book V) and proceed with the

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were professed in very ancient times, only not in such an elaborate form. And what I said now, is only an interpretation of those former doctrines, the antiquity of which is attested to us by the writings of Plato himself" (p. 355). The Plotinus reference is to *Enn.*, V. i, 8. St. Augustine, of course, had also noted the tendency of Platonism in this direction.

38. *Conf.*, VII, 11 (BA 13, p. 608).

39. *Ibid.*, XI, 8 (BA 14, p. 288); cf. *De trin.*, IV, 18 (BA 15, p. 396).

logical explication of the doctrine, which will be its demonstration.<sup>40</sup>

When Boethius approaches the same subject, in the *Tractates*, there is no Biblical exegesis, indeed, no exegesis of *auctoritates* of any sort; there is only logical explication. As St. Thomas remarks, Boethius uses only reason, presupposing what others have established by authorities.<sup>41</sup> The point is that, for Boethius, the doctrine is established in the world. He can begin, therefore, with the Catholic doctrine, which is called "Catholic", he says, because of the universal character of its precepts and its *cultus* which has spread throughout the world.<sup>42</sup> In the *Tractates* generally, the principles are there to start with, as universally established, but in the undemonstrated form of faith. To demonstrate them, to "cojoin faith and reason", means to provide the logical, categorical explication of them. And, in fact, the method of the *Consolation* is not different: *philosophia* is there to start with, whole, established and indestructible. Boethius begins with correct opinion about the government of the world. His 'consolation' requires only its logical explication.

St. Augustine is presupposed. In the first tractate, *De trinitate*, Boethius asks Symmachus to judge "whether the seeds of reasons (*semina rationum*) coming to us from the writings of St. Augustine have borne fruit".<sup>43</sup> There are no quotations from St. Augustine (nor from any other Christian author, nor from Scripture); but St. Augustine has established the doctrine in the universal tradition of philosophy, and Boethius need only understand it in reasoned (i.e., logical) form. What Boethius himself here suggests about his debt to St. Augustine might be said in varying degree of the other tractates, and thus of the *Consolation* also. There are, no doubt, "seeds of reasons" from other sources, too, from Plato, Aristotle, Stoics and Neoplatonists, pagan and Christian. But, for the most part, Boethius finds no need to distinguish them: they all belong to universal reason, the indestructible weave of Lady Philosophy's garment.

St. Augustine provides "seeds of reasons", but those seeds come to fruition in a very different clime. For St. Augustine, there

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40. This argument about the method of the *De trinitate* is more fully developed in my "Master Theme" paper for the Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies, forthcoming in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica*.

41. *Supra*, n. 29.

42. *De trin.*, I (p. 4f.).

43. *De trin.*, prol. (p. 4): *Vobis tamen etiam inspiciendum est, an ex beati Augustini scriptis semina rationum aliquos in nos venientia fructus extulerint.*

is still the tension, very directly experienced, between a pagan culture and Christianity, and the need to distinguish between them. For him, Rome has still the air of the *impia civitas* which gives itself to the false love of idols, and he has a profound ambivalence towards the philosophical culture which informs it. For Boethius, noble Roman, Rome means civilisation, and his great effort is turned towards the recovery and defence of ancient institutional and intellectual forms. His world is Christian Rome, and his controversies are with those heresies which divide the Christian mind.

Boethius belongs to medieval Europe, particularly to that element of medieval culture which would treasure the legacy of antiquity, for whom Rome would be the earthly image of the true heavenly Rome, "wherein", says Dante, "Christ dwells a Roman".<sup>44</sup> To the scholastic life of that world, he would contribute immensely, not only by the transmission of the materials of ancient learning, but also in showing how those materials could belong to Christian thought. For the development of philosophy, he would provide a model of that typically scholastic method which moves from principle to logical explication, from *fides* to *intellectus* — a method which would find more complete expression in the theological system of John Scottus Eriugena, for whom Boethius is "*magnificus*".<sup>45</sup>

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44. Dante, *Purgatorio*, XXXII, lines 100-102:

"Qui scarai tu poco tempo silvano,  
e sarai meco senza fine cive  
di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano."

(Dante, *Opere*, ed. M. Porena and M. Pazzaglia, Bologna, 1966, p. 614).

45. *De divisione naturae*, I, 55; I, 61 (*P. L.*, CXXII, 498B; 503B). On the development of methodology between St. Augustine, Boethius and Eriugena, see J. A. Doull, "Augustinian Trinitarianism and Existential Theology", in *Dionysius*, 3, (1979), 111-159, esp. pp. 151-52; and for the later medieval influence of Boethius in this regard, see W. J. Hankey, "The *de Trinitate* of Boethius and the Structure of the *Summa theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas", forthcoming in the Proceedings of the Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani (Pavia, October, 1980).