

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, U.S. Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If electronic transmission of reserve material is used for purposes in excess of what constitutes "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

No further Transmission of this material is permitted.

insert citation here:

Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Green, Richard, trans.
New York: Macmillan. pp. 121-130, 21-22, 40, 61-65, 73-74, 96-97.

THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY

BOETHIUS

Translated, with introduction and notes, by
RICHARD GREEN

.....
The Library of Liberal Arts

published by
Macmillan Publishing Company
New York
Collier Macmillan Publishers
London

SUMMARY

Book One. Boethius sets the stage for his dialogue with Philosophy by presenting himself as a man driven almost to despair by adverse fortune. Poetry is his only comfort, or so he thinks, until the vision of a majestic woman appears. She is Philosophy, the personification of the fullest possible achievements of human reason, who stands in figurative opposition to the emotional comforts offered by the Muses of poetry. She offers herself as the only true source of consolation in so extreme a case of human misery.

First, she reminds Boethius of his former strength and intellectual freedom, his former devotion to the wisdom she represents. She reminds him that all her best followers had suffered at the hands of wicked and stupid men, and that it is the duty of the wise and good to oppose them. The wise man stands above good and bad fortune, serene in the strength he derives from self-mastery. But Boethius is too overcome by his misery to understand these general truths; and so, at Philosophy's suggestion, he gives a detailed account of the causes of his despair.

He recalls that he entered the public service because Plato had said that civil government ought to be in the hands of wise men, and that if it were left to the wicked the common good would suffer. He goes on to recount many instances in which his devotion to honesty and justice had embroiled him in conflicts with cruel and venal public officials. In the end, however, he was destroyed by the treachery of corrupt politicians. He was accused of having prevented the enemies of the Senate from giving testimony which would have imputed treason to the Senate, and of having hoped for Roman liberty. Boethius proudly concedes the truth of these charges but denies that he is guilty of any crime. He remarks that he is not surprised at the attack made upon him by wicked men;

but he is appalled that the wicked should overcome the innocent, and he wonders how such injustice can be permitted by God. In spite of his innocence, and his long record of distinguished service, he has been condemned to exile and death by the very body which he sought to protect.

His personal losses are bad enough: he has been ruined professionally, stripped of his possessions, his reputation is destroyed, his liberty lost, and he faces execution. But because he is a wise and public-spirited man, he observes some other more general consequences of his downfall. The attack upon him is an attack upon wisdom and virtue, and the success of his enemies is a victory for the forces of irrationality and evil. Other good men will be terrorized into helplessness by his fate, and evil men will be encouraged in their struggle against public and private virtue.

Philosophy, however, remains unimpressed by this display of self-pity. She says that Boethius' account of his misfortunes reveals an even more desperate weakness in him than she had at first imagined. He has not been driven from his true country of wisdom; he has willfully banished himself from that free city of the self-possessed mind into the land of bondage imposed by false values. She concedes that everything he has said of himself and his unjust treatment is true, but she implies that he is a fool to suppose that justice, in terms of temporal rewards and punishments based on merit, will be found in this life. She observes, however, that for the present he is in no condition to follow her most profound arguments, and so she will lead him gently and slowly to a full understanding of his true condition and the attitude he should take toward it.

She begins by reminding him of the basic truth that the world is governed, not by chance, but by the rational control of the divine Creator. The first book is concluded by Philosophy's general diagnosis of the mental illness suffered by her patient: he has forgotten man's nature and purpose, and so is incapable of understanding the true meaning of what has happened to him. But she can begin with his grasp of the

essential truth of God's government of the world and gradually lead him from the darkness of error to the light of truth.

Book Two. Philosophy begins her treatment with a discourse on the nature of Fortune. It is Fortune's nature to be changeable, and it is good to know this by personal experience. For no man who has been deceived by Fortune can ever trust her again; if he puts himself in her power, at least he will have no illusions about the future. Every man comes into the world naked, lacking in everything. Whatever temporal possessions he receives are gifts of that blind and capricious goddess, given or taken away at the whim of a force whose only certain characteristic is its mutability.

Boethius acknowledges the general truth of Philosophy's argument, but he finds it cold comfort for a man in his desperate condition. Philosophy then reminds him of the extraordinary good fortune he has enjoyed up to the time of his fall; she remarks especially on his adoption by the noble Symmachus, his happy marriage, his honorable and honored sons. She also reminds him that the life of man is a temporary pilgrimage and that death is an end to fortune, whether good or bad. Again, Boethius admits the truth of Philosophy's argument but observes that the worst part of misfortune is the memory of the happiness which preceded it. Philosophy remarks sharply that it is silly to suppose that happiness depends on good fortune, and then goes on to remind Boethius that his most precious possessions, the members of his family, are still unharmed.

She reminds him that human happiness is neither complete nor permanent, and that therefore anxiety is a necessary condition of such happiness as men achieve. No one has everything he wants, and no one can be sure of keeping what he has. True happiness is within, founded on the rational possession of one's self; it cannot be found in the transitory, external gifts of unstable Fortune. For the human soul is immortal, and cannot be satisfied with the kind of happiness which must end with the death of the body.

Philosophy now begins to examine the various kinds of transitory goods in which men commonly seek happiness. An abundance of material possessions cannot bring happiness, she says, not only because they are easily lost, but because they are external goods which can never fully belong to the one who owns them. Compared to the divine gift of reason, they are lifeless toys which increase our anxiety instead of providing contentment. Nor are public honors and the exercise of power good in themselves. They are more often possessed by the wicked than by the virtuous. None of these gifts of Fortune are good in themselves; whatever goodness is associated with them is to be found in the personal probity of those who may happen to possess them.

Boethius protests that he has not been driven by desire for material possessions and that he has not sought positions of public honor and responsibility for personal satisfaction. Philosophy acknowledges that this is true, but goes on to say that even the fame earned by good men in the performance of important work is a limited and insufficient goal. It is true that excellent men desire glory, but they should remember that such glory is local and short-lived. When the immortal soul is freed from the prison of this world, it will look down from heaven on the earthly fame it sought for and find it an insignificant thing which will ultimately be lost in a kind of second death. Philosophy then concludes the second book by observing that, although the wise man should rise above good and bad Fortune, the latter is actually better—because it is more profitable—than the former. Good fortune tends to enslave the one who enjoys it by deceiving him with specious happiness; bad fortune, however, frees him from the bondage to mutable things by showing him the fragile nature of earthly felicity.

Book Three. Boethius professes to be strengthened by what he has heard so far and to be ready for the stronger medicine of philosophical argument which Philosophy had promised.

earlier. Philosophy tells him that she will lead him to recognize the nature of true blessedness. It is the nature of man to desire happiness, and perfect happiness can be achieved only in the possession of the supreme good, which contains in itself all lesser goods, and therefore completely and finally fulfills all human desires.

Unfortunately, men are driven by folly and error to mistake limited and transitory objects of desire for this supreme good. They desire riches, or public honors, or power, or fame, or pleasure, or several of these in combination. All these are good, and worthy of desire, and it is natural for men to strive for them; but they are merely partial aspects of the supreme good. Man's troubles arise from treating them as though they were sufficient in themselves. Philosophy then undertakes to show that each of these objects of human desire is insufficient and dangerous. Riches drive men to avarice because they never seem to have enough. Popular acclaim cannot make a man virtuous or wise; indeed, it usually serves to reveal his weaknesses, and besides, such honors are at best temporary. Political power, too, is gravely flawed. The man in power lives in insecurity, full of anxiety and fearful of his enemies and those who profess to be his friends. Fame, too, is a deceptive thing, even for those who merit it by wisdom and virtue; it is limited in time and place, and often rests on unreliable popular judgment. The fame which accompanies noble birth is especially deceptive since it derives from one's ancestors; and, after all, the whole race of men comes from one stock, one father. Thus true nobility is a matter of virtue, and baseness is the product of enslavement to vice. Finally, bodily pleasure cannot lead to perfect happiness. The inordinate satisfaction of bodily appetites caters to the animal part of man's nature and leads only to misery.

Thus all these apparent goods are limited and deceptive; they cannot provide the happiness they seem to promise. True happiness can be found only in the one, all-embracing, perfect good. Human depravity has broken this unity of the good

into fragments, and none of the parts can be wholly satisfying. Still, a consideration of false goods can show us the true and perfect happiness which is the full possession of all of them at once. Such happiness can make a man self-sufficient, powerful, worthy of reverence and renown, and full of joy; and the full possession of any one of these necessarily implies the full possession of all the rest.

Philosophy is now approaching the climax of her argument in which she will reveal the only source of this perfect human happiness. In *The Consolation's* most famous poem, she invokes the inspiration of God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, the perfect Good who is the source of felicity. The poem is followed by her detailed argument in support of the poem's implications. There must be a supreme good, she says, because without some standard of perfection we would not be aware of the relative imperfection and incompleteness of those goods which men habitually pursue. Since God is good, without any imperfection, he must be the supreme good, the source of perfect happiness. But if this is so, it follows that men acquire goodness and happiness by acquiring divinity, by becoming as godlike as their nature allows. The achievement of the supreme good and of perfect happiness are one and the same thing and are found only in God. All other partial and apparent goods are not constituent parts of the supreme good, but aspects of it.

Unity, Philosophy goes on, is the principle of existence. Everything in nature strives to maintain its existence by maintaining its oneness, and to lose this unity of being is to corrupt and die. Since perfect unity is the same as perfect goodness, and since perfect goodness is the same as perfect happiness, all things strive to attain the supreme good as their end or goal. Now, if God, who is the supreme good, is also the ruler of the universe, he must necessarily order and direct all things toward the good. All those, then, who fix their desires on God aspire to true happiness by seeking it at its source. But those who turn their eyes from God and fix their desires on partial, transitory possessions can find only

unhappiness. Philosophy illustrates this profound truth with the story of Orpheus told in a poem which concludes the third book.

Book Four. Boethius acknowledges the truth of Philosophy's doctrine that true happiness and the perfect good are the same and are to be found only in God. But how, he asks, can there be evil in a world governed by the omnipotent Good; and, even more puzzling, how is it that this evil not only goes unpunished, but tramples virtue underfoot? Philosophy concedes that it would indeed be monstrous if evil did in fact prevail in the world; but, she says, it does not. Evil men are weak, and never go unpunished; good men are powerful, and virtue is always rewarded. If it is true, she says, that all men seek happiness and desire the good, but only good men can attain these things, it follows that the wicked are powerless to achieve what all men, good and evil, desire. They try to attain the good by unnatural and ineffectual means because they are blinded by ignorance and weakened by intemperance. Worst of all, evil men suffer from lack of existence itself; you can say that they are evil, but you cannot say, in an absolute way, that they *are*, since their very nature is corrupt. Evil is nothing, a negation of true being; hence, the ability to do evil is a weakness, not a power. Furthermore, the good are always rewarded and the evil are always punished. For absolute good is the aim of all human action, but only good men can achieve it. The punishment of the wicked is their wickedness, that loss of goodness which is the loss of human nature. Such men are transformed by vice into beasts.

Boethius acknowledges the truth of Philosophy's argument, but he still regrets that the wicked are permitted to ruin good men. Philosophy, however, argues that this very power is a part of the punishment of the wicked, for their wickedness is the source of their unhappiness. Moreover, they are more unhappy if they remain unpunished than if they are punished, because just punishment is a good which would lessen the evil which is the basis of their misery. If this argument

seems incredible to ordinary men, Philosophy observes, that is because ordinary men tend to consult their own feelings rather than the true nature of things. Philosophy further argues that viciousness is a disease of the soul, that the wicked are sick and ought to be regarded with compassion rather than hatred, and that punishment should be regarded as a cure for their sickness.

Boethius, however, is still unable to reconcile himself to a situation in which good men suffer the punishments designed for criminals and wicked men enjoy the rewards intended for the just. In a world governed by chance, these reversals would not be surprising, but in a world ruled by God they seem inexplicable. Philosophy admits that this is the greatest of all philosophical problems, involving the related questions of the relations between Providence and Fate, divine foreknowledge and the freedom of the human will. She will, however, undertake to explain and solve the problem as well as she can. All things that come into being have the cause of their origin, and all the things they do and suffer, in the unchanging mind of God. The government of all mutable natures, insofar as it resides in the divine mind of God, is called Providence; and this same government, looked at with reference to the temporal, mutable things and events which it governs, is called Fate. Providence is the divine reason itself by which all things are ordered; Fate is that order and disposition as it is seen in the unfolding of events in time. Thus, the operations of Fate may seem confused and discordant, but that is because human judgment is often incapable of discerning the providential order by which they are governed. God's providence is wise and good, whether or not we are able to comprehend it. All fortune is good, since it has as its purpose the reward or testing of good men, or the correction and punishment of the wicked.

Book Five. Boethius now wonders whether Philosophy's doctrine of God's providential government of all things leaves any room for chance. Philosophy replies that if by chance we

mean an event without causes, then there can be no such thing. But if we mean simply an event whose causes are neither foreseen nor expected, then chance does exist.

At this point Boethius raises the inevitable and profound question of the possibility of free human choice in a world governed by divine Providence. Philosophy replies that every rational nature must have free will, for the power of judgment and decision necessarily implies the power to choose between what should be desired and what should be shunned. But, she continues, the exercise of this power depends on clarity of judgment and integrity of will, so that men who are blinded and corrupted by enslavement to their passions cannot see clearly and choose freely. Now Boethius raises the most difficult problem of all. If God, with the perfect clarity of divine vision foresees everything, and if whatever his providence foresees must happen, how can man be free to choose what he desires? If the outcome of human events can depend on the free choices of men, they must be uncertain and unnecessary, and, if so, how can God know them? On the other hand, if nothing can be uncertain to Him who is the certain cause of all things, whatever He knows will happen, must happen. Boethius sees the implications of his argument. If men cannot choose freely, then the entire social structure of rewards for the good and punishment for the wicked breaks down; vice and virtue are without meaning, and God himself must be held responsible for the evil which He determines. Prayer would be meaningless, since everything is determined by God's unalterable foreknowledge. All this is unthinkable, but Boethius sees no way out of the dilemma.

Philosophy answers that the cause of confusion in this important matter lies in the fact that human reason is incapable of comprehending the simplicity and perfection of divine knowledge. Men assume that God must know in the way that human reason knows, and so they ascribe to God's knowledge the limitations they find in their own. Human reason properly regards future events as uncertain, if their outcomes are unknown, or as necessary, if their outcomes are known with

certainty. But the divine intelligence, unlimited by dependence on time, sees all things not as past, present, and future, but as eternally present. For eternity is the whole, perfect, and simultaneous possession of endless life. Thus, God does not, properly speaking, have foreknowledge but knowledge of a never changing present; He sees things as present as they will later turn out to be in what we regard as the future. And in this way He sees things which happen through free human choice as well as things which happen through necessity.

It is true, Philosophy goes on, that what God sees as happening must necessarily happen; but in the case of things freely chosen by men the necessity is found only in God's knowledge of the event, not in the nature of the event itself. All things will happen which God knows will happen, but some of them will happen as a result of man's free will. Nor is God's knowledge changed by our changes of mind. Providence anticipates every future action and sees immediately what seems to us a succession of choices and actions. The freedom of the human will is inviolate and imposes upon men a grave obligation to act virtuously, for all their actions are done in the sight of a Judge who sees all things and rewards and punishes according to his perfect knowledge.

BOOK II

PROSE I

Philosophy reminds Boethius of the nature and habits of the goddess Fortune.

Philosophy was silent for a while; then, regaining my attention by her modest reserve, she said: "If I understand the causes of your diseased condition, you are suffering from the absence of your former good fortune. What you regard as a change has greatly upset you. I am well acquainted with the many deceptions of that monster, Fortune. She pretends to be friendly to those she intends to cheat, and disappoints those she unexpectedly leaves with intolerable sorrow. If you will recall her nature and habits, you will be convinced that you had nothing of much value when she was with you and you have not lost anything now that she is gone. But I do not suppose that I have to labor this point with you. JN ←

"When Fortune smiled on you, you manfully scorned her and attacked her with principles drawn from my deepest wisdom. But every sudden change of fortune brings with it a certain disquiet in the soul; and this is what has caused you to lose your peace of mind. Now is the time for you to take some gentle and pleasant remedy which may prepare you for stronger medicine. I shall use the sweet persuasion of rhetoric, which is suitable enough if it does not contradict the truths of philosophy, and I shall add the grace of Music, a servant of mine whose songs are sometimes happy and sometimes sad. }

"What is it, my friend, that has thrown you into grief and sorrow? Do you think that you have encountered something new and different? You are wrong if you think that Fortune has changed toward you. This is her nature, the way she always behaves. She is changeable, and so in her relations with you she has merely done what she always does. This is }

the way she was when she flattered you and led you on with the pleasures of false happiness. You have merely discovered the two-faced nature of this blind goddess. Although she still hides herself from others, she is now wholly known to you. If you like her, abide by her conditions and do not complain. But if you hate her treachery, ignore her and her deceitful antics. Really, the misfortunes which are now such a cause of grief ought to be reasons for tranquility. For now she has deserted you, and no man can ever be secure until he has been forsaken by Fortune.

"Do you think that your lost happiness is a precious thing? Can present good fortune be dear to you, even though you know that you may lose it, and that the loss will bring sorrow? If you cannot keep her, and if it makes you miserable to lose her, what is fickle Fortune but a promise of future distress? It is not enough to see what is present before our eyes; prudence demands that we look to the future. The double certainty of loss and consequent misery should prevent both the fear of her threats and the desire of her favors. Finally, once you have submitted yourself to her chains, you ought to take calmly whatever she can do to you. If you were to wish for a law to control the comings and goings of one whom you have freely taken for your mistress, you would be unjust and your impatience would merely aggravate a condition which you cannot change. If you hoist your sails in the wind, you will go where the wind blows you, not where you choose to go; if you put seeds in the ground, you must be prepared for lean as well as abundant years.

→ { "You have put yourself in Fortune's power; now you must be content with the ways of your mistress. If you try to stop the force of her turning wheel, you are the most foolish man alive. If it should stop turning, it would cease to be Fortune's wheel.

fame entrusts their empty names to some few books. But, although we know these fair words, we cannot know the dead. Then lie there, quite unknown, for fame will not keep fresh your memory. If you hope to live on in the glow of your mortal name, the day will come at last to take that too, and you will die a second death.

PROSE 8

Philosophy argues that misfortune is more beneficial than good fortune, for good fortune deceives, but misfortune teaches.

“But do not think that I am engaged in total war with Fortune; for there is a time when that goddess no longer deceives, and then she deserves well of men. That is the time when she un.masks herself, when she shows her face and reveals her true character. But perhaps you do not yet understand what I mean. What I am about to say is so strange that I scarcely know how to make my meaning clear. I am convinced that adverse fortune is more beneficial to men than prosperous fortune. When Fortune seems kind, and seems to promise happiness, she lies. On the other hand, when she shows herself unstable and changeable, she is truthful. Good fortune deceives, adverse fortune teaches. Good fortune enslaves the minds of good men with the beauty of the specious goods which they enjoy; but bad fortune frees them by making them see the fragile nature of happiness. You will notice that good fortune is proud, insecure, ignorant of her true nature; but bad fortune is sober, self-possessed, and prudent through the experience of adversity. Finally, good fortune seduces weak men away from the true good through flattery; but misfortune often turns them around and forcibly leads them back to the true good.

“Do you think it a small matter that your terrible misfortunes have revealed the feelings of those friends who are faith-

was the founder of the Roman Republic. Marcus Porcius Cato (the Greater) was Consul in 195 B.C. He was a model and proponent of strict private and public morality.

ful to you? Fortune has separated your true friends from two-faced ones; when she left you, she took her followers with her and left you your own. Think how much you would have given for this knowledge when you were still on top and thought yourself fortunate. Now you complain of lost riches; but you have found your friends, and that is the most precious kind of wealth.

POEM 8¹²

"That the universe carries out its changing process in concord and with stable faith, that the conflicting seeds of things are held by everlasting law, that Phoebus in his golden chariot brings in the shining day, that the night, led by Hesperus, is ruled by Phoebe,¹³ that the greedy sea holds back his waves within lawful bounds, for they are not permitted to push back the unsettled earth—all this harmonious order of things is achieved by love which rules the earth and the seas, and commands the heavens.

"But if love should slack the reins, all that is now joined in mutual love would wage continual war, and strive to tear apart the world which is now sustained in friendly concord by beautiful motion.

"Love binds together people joined by a sacred bond; love binds sacred marriages by chaste affections; love makes the laws which join true friends. O how happy the human race would be, if that love which rules the heavens ruled also your souls!"

¹² This is a classic statement of the medieval idea that love is the principle of harmony in the universe. Divine love established and governs the changing and potentially discordant universe; it should also govern the microcosm, man, in his relations with others. Cf. Book IV, Poem 6.

¹³ The moon.

have turned again toward You, by your gracious law, You call them back like leaping flames.

"Grant, Oh Father, that my mind may rise to Thy sacred throne. Let it see the fountain of good; let it find light, so that the clear light of my soul may fix itself in Thee. Burn off the fogs and clouds of earth and shine through in Thy splendor. For Thou art the serenity, the tranquil peace of virtuous men. The sight of Thee is beginning and end; one guide, leader, path, and goal.

PROSE 10

Philosophy teaches Boethius that the supreme good and highest happiness are found in God and are God.

"Since you have seen the forms of imperfect and perfect good, I think it is now time to show where this perfection of happiness resides. First, we must ask whether a good of the kind you defined a short while ago can exist at all, so that we may not be deceived by an empty shadow of thought and thus be prevented from reaching the truth of our problem. Now, no one can deny that something exists which is a kind of fountain of all goodness; for everything which is found to be imperfect shows its imperfection by the lack of some perfection. It follows that if something is found to be imperfect in its kind, there must necessarily be something of that same kind which is perfect. For without a standard of perfection we cannot judge anything to be imperfect. Nature did not have its origins in the defective and incomplete but in the integral and absolute; it fell from such beginnings to its present meanness and weakness.

"But if, as I have just pointed out, there is a certain imperfect happiness in transitory goods, no one can doubt that there is a perfect and enduring happiness."

"That is firmly and truly established," I said.

"Now consider where this perfect happiness has its dwelling place. It is the common conception of the human mind that

God, the ruler of all things, is good. For, since nothing can be thought of better than God, who can doubt that He is the good, other than whom nothing is better. And that God is good is demonstrated by reason in such a way as to convince us that He is the perfect good. If He were not, He could not be the ruler of all things; for there would be something better than He, something possessing perfect good, which would seem to be older and greater than He. For all perfect things have been shown to come before less perfect ones. And so, if we are to avoid progression *ad infinitum*, we must agree that the most high God is full of the highest and most perfect good. But we have already established that perfect good is true happiness; therefore it follows that true happiness has its dwelling in the most high God."

"I agree," I said. "Your argument cannot be contradicted."

"But observe," Philosophy continued, "how you may prove scrupulously and inviolably what I have just said, namely, that the most high God is full of the highest good."

"How?" I asked.

"By avoiding the notion that the Father of all things has received from others the highest good with which He is filled, or that He has it naturally in such a way that He and the happiness which He has may be said to differ in essence. For, if you should suppose that He receives it from someone else, you could think that the one who gives it is greater than the one who receives it; but we worthily confess that God is the most excellent of all beings. And if He has this happiness by nature, but differs from it, then someone else who can will have to explain how these diverse things are joined together, since we are speaking of God the Creator of all things. Finally, that which is different from anything cannot be the thing from which it differs; therefore, that which according to its nature differs from the highest good cannot be the highest good. But it is blasphemous to think this about One other than whom, as we know, nothing is greater. And surely there can be nothing better by nature than its source; therefore, I may conclude

with certainty that whatever is the source of all things must be, in its substance, the highest good."

"I agree."

"And do you also agree that the highest good is happiness?"

"Yes."

"Then," said Philosophy, "you must agree that God is happiness."

"I found your earlier arguments unassailable, and I see that this conclusion follows from them."

"Then consider whether the same conclusion is not even more firmly established by this, that there cannot exist two highest goods which differ from one another. Clearly, when two goods differ, one cannot be the other; therefore, neither can be perfect since it lacks the other. But that which is not perfect certainly cannot be the highest good; therefore, those things which are the highest good cannot be diverse. But I have proved that happiness and God are the highest good; therefore, that must be the highest happiness which is the highest divinity."

"I can think of nothing truer, or more reasonable, or worthier of God," I said.

"From this conclusion, then, I will give you a kind of corollary, just as the geometricians infer from their demonstrated propositions things which they call deductions. Since men become happy by acquiring happiness, and since happiness is divinity itself, it follows that men become happy by acquiring divinity. For as men become just by acquiring integrity, and wise by acquiring wisdom, so they must in a similar way become gods by acquiring divinity. Thus everyone who is happy is a god and, although it is true that God is one by nature, still there may be many gods by participation."

"This is a beautiful and precious idea," I said, "whether you call it a corollary or a deduction."

"And there is nothing more beautiful," Philosophy went on, "than the truth which reason persuades us to add to this."

"What is that?" I asked.

"Since happiness seems composed of many things, would you say that all these are joined together in happiness, as a variety of parts in one body, or does one of the parts constitute the essence of happiness with all the rest complementing it?"

"I wish you would explain this point by recalling what is involved."

Philosophy then continued. "Do we not agree that happiness is good?"

"Indeed, it is the highest good," I replied.

"Then we must add this good to all the others; for happiness is considered the fullest sufficiency, the greatest power, honor, fame, and pleasure. Now are all these to be regarded as good in the sense that they are members or parts of happiness, or are they simply related to the good as to their crown?"

"I understand the problem now and am eager to have your answer."

"Here then is the solution. If all these goods were constituent parts of happiness, each would differ from the others; for it is the nature of parts to be different things constituting one body. But I have proved that all these goods are one and the same thing; therefore they cannot be parts. Otherwise, happiness would seem to be constituted of one part, which is a contradiction in terms."

"There is no doubt about that," I said, "but you have not yet given me the solution."

"Clearly, all the rest must be related to the good. For riches are sought because they are thought good, power because it is believed to be good, and the same is true of honor, fame, and pleasure. Therefore, the good is the cause and sum of all that is sought for; for if a thing has in it neither the substance nor the appearance of good, it is not sought or desired by men. On the other hand, things which are not truly good, but only seem to be, are sought after as if they were good. It follows, then, that goodness is rightly considered the sum, pivot, and cause of all that men desire. The most important object of desire is that for the sake of which something else is sought as a means; as, for example, if a person wishes to ride horseback in order

to improve his health, he desires the effect of health more than the exercise of riding.

"Since, therefore, all things are sought on account of the good, it is the good itself, not the other things, which is desired by everyone. But, as we agreed earlier, all those other things are sought for the sake of happiness; therefore, happiness alone is the object of men's desires. It follows clearly from this that the good and happiness are one and the same thing."

"I cannot see how any one could disagree."

"But we have also proved that God and true happiness are one and the same."

"That is so."

"We can, therefore, safely conclude that the essence of God is to be found in the good, and nowhere else."

POEM 12

"Happy is he who can look into the shining spring of good; happy is he who can break the heavy chains of earth.

"Long ago the Thracian poet, Orpheus, mourned for his dead wife. With his sorrowful music he made the woodland dance and the rivers stand still. He made the fearful deer lie down bravely with the fierce lions; the rabbit no longer feared the dog quieted by his song.

"But as the sorrow within his breast burned more fiercely, that music which calmed all nature could not console its maker. Finding the gods unbending, he went to the regions of hell. There he sang sweet songs to the music of his harp, songs drawn from the noble fountains of his goddess mother, songs inspired by his powerless grief and the love which doubled his grief.

"Hell is moved to pity when, with his melodious prayer,

²⁰ Parmenides, *Fragment VIII*. 43.

²¹ *Timaeus* 29b.

→ { he begs the favor of those shades. The three-headed guardian of the gate is paralyzed by that new song; and the Furies, avengers of crimes who torture guilty souls with fear, are touched and weep in pity. Ixion's head is not tormented by the swift wheel, and Tantalus, long maddened by his thirst, ignores the waters he now might drink. The vulture is filled by the melody and ignores the liver of Tityus.

Kt's Tale → ("At last, the judge of souls, moved by pity, declares, 'We are conquered. We return to this man his wife, his companion, purchased by his song. But our gift is bound by the condition that he must not look back until he has left hell.' But who can give lovers a law? Love is a stronger law unto itself. As they approached the edge of night, Orpheus looked back at Eurydice, lost her, and died.

↳ "This fable applies to all of you who seek to raise your minds to sovereign day. For whoever is conquered and turns his eyes to the pit of hell, looking into the inferno, loses all the excellence he has gained."

POEM 6

"If you wish to discern the laws of the high and mighty God, the high thunderer, with an unclouded mind, look up to the roof of highest heaven. There the stars, united by just agreement, keep the ancient peace. The sun, driven by red fire, does not impede the cold circle of Phoebe. Nor does the Great Bear driving its course at the world's top hide itself in the western ocean; it never wants to drown its flames in the sea, though it sees other stars plunge beneath the waves. The faithful Hesperus announces the ap-

• Homer, *Iliad* XII. 176.

proach of night at the assigned time; then, as Lucifer, it brings back the warming day.⁷

"Thus mutual love governs their eternal movement and the war of discord is excluded from the bounds of heaven. Concord rules the elements with fair restraint: moist things yield place to dry, cold and hot combine in friendship; flickering fire rises on high, and gross earth sinks down. Impelled by the same causes, the flowering year breathes out its odors in warm spring; hot summer dries the grain and autumn comes in burdened with fruit; then falling rain brings in wet winter.

"This ordered change nourishes and sustains all that lives on earth; then snatches away and buries all that was born, hiding it in final death. Meanwhile, the Creator sits on high, governing and guiding the course of things. King and lord, source and origin, law and wise judge of right. All things which He placed in motion, He draws back and holds in check; He makes firm whatever tends to stray. If He did not recall them to their true paths and set them again on their circling courses, all things that the stable order now contains would be wrenched from their source and perish.

"This is the common bond of love by which all things seek to be held to the goal of good. Only thus can things endure: drawn by love they turn again to the Cause which gave them being.

PROSE 7

Philosophy, at the request of Boethius, restates in popular form her thesis that all fortune is good.

"And now," said Philosophy, "do you understand the implications of what I have told you?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"That all fortune is good."

⁷ Both these stars refer to the planet Venus. See p. 15, note 20.