

BOETHIUS *CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY* 1.2.6 AND
VIRGIL *AENEID* 2: REMOVING THE CLOUDS OF
MORTAL ANXIETIES

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IN THE *CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY*, during the depths of Boethius' despair, Lady Philosophy complains of her pupil's confusion and suggests that his vision is clouded by undue attention to mortal affairs. Accordingly, she promises to "wipe his eyes covered with a cloud of mortal concerns" (*paulisper lumina eius mortalium rerum nube caligantia tergamus*, 1.2.6).¹ She quickly follows through with her own suggestion and clears Boethius' eyes, thereby preparing him for his long process of recovery. While in the most literal sense the passage refers to the drying of Boethius' tears, which have dimmed his vision, the lines clearly contain Platonic images symbolizing Lady Philosophy's attempt to restore Boethius' ability to use his reason, as Joachim Gruber (1978: 92–94) and Pierre Courcelle (1970: 210–212, 236–238) have shown.

Both Gruber and Courcelle mention a variety of sources and parallels for *Cons.* 1.2.6, including Homer *Iliad* 5.127–128 and 20.341–342 and Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 1.26.64. However, one very important source for Boethius' lines, Virgil *Aeneid* 2.604–606, where Venus wipes away the cloud preventing Aeneas' mortal vision from perceiving the destructive actions of the gods, has received almost no notice in the critical literature. While Gruber mentions the passage as a cross-reference illustrating the philosophical implications of the image of clouded mortal vision, it is apparently only W. F. J. Knight (1962) who has claimed that *Aeneid* 2.604–606 is a direct source for the Boethian passage in question. In his article Knight mentions almost as an aside that the Boethian epiphany of Lady Philosophy is built on *Aeneid* 2.604–607. After quoting the Virgilian text, Knight (1962: 12) alludes to it as a source for a similar passage in the *Consolatio* which he does not quote, saying only, "Suppongo che tutti voi conosciate molto bene questo capolavoro." The passage Knight has in mind must be *Cons.* 1.2.6, as I shall show below. Although Knight offers no evidence beyond his own considerable *auctoritas* and the assumed agreement of the audience, he is surely right in making his claim.

That Boethius would allude to the famous Virgilian epiphany when describing his protagonist's enlightenment should come as no surprise when we consider how often allusions to the *Aeneid* occur in the *Consolatio*. Gruber (1978: 20) notes that in the *Consolatio*, "Vergil ist gleichsam immer präsent; das gilt nicht nur für die Gedichte, sondern auch für die Prosa."² The very opening of Boethius'

¹ Citations of Boethius will be from the text of L. Bieler (1984); Virgil will be cited from the *OCT* of R. A. B. Mynors (1969). All translations are my own.

² See similarly Schmid 1956: 122; Glei 1985: 232; Mueller-Goldingen 1989: 382; O'Daly 1991: 24. Crabbe (1981: 241) notes that "many of Boethius' metra display a freedom of creative variation

work evokes Virgil's concluding lines in the *Georgics* (4.564–566) and possibly the spurious opening of the *Aeneid* (1.1a–b):³

*carmina qui quondam studio florente peregi,
flebilis, heu, maestos cogor inire modos.* (1.m.1.1–2)

Boethius' initial allusion to Virgil is only the first of several passages in the *Consolatio* that are far too close to Virgil's wording to suggest anything but intentional echoes of the epic poet. Boethius' debt to Virgil is obvious, for example, at 4.2.28, where Lady Philosophy speaks of men who "seek neither slight not worthless prizes" (*neque enim levia aut ludicra praemia petunt*), a clear echo of *Aeneid* 12.764–765 (*neque enim levia aut ludicra petuntur / praemia*).⁴ Equally striking is the similarity between *Cons.* 4.6.32, *iustissimum et aequi servantissimum*, and *Aen.* 2.426–427, *iustissimus unus / . . . servantissimus aequi*, a passage that, like 2.604–606, comes from Virgil's description of the fall of Troy.⁵ Other virtually certain allusions to Virgil's *Aeneid* are found at *Cons.* 1.4.4 (cf. *Aen.* 6.849–850)⁶ and *Cons.* 2.4.9 (cf. *Aen.* 5.687–688).⁷

Having established the probability of Boethian references to the *Aeneid* in the *Consolatio*, let us now look at the contexts of our two passages in question. At the beginning of *Aeneid* 2, Aeneas recounts, at Dido's request, the story of Troy's fall, a tale of "unspeakable pain" (*infandum . . . dolorem*, 3). The *dolor* of which

on his predecessors, exceptional at this late date, which would demand that he had much of Latin poetry by heart." On the pervasiveness of Virgil's influence in late antiquity, see, e.g., Hagendahl 1967: 384–389; Kaster 1988: 169–196.

³The allusion to *Georgics* 4.564–566 has been noted by Scheible (1972: 12), Gruber (1978: 51), Crabbe (1981: 247–248), Mueller-Goldingen (1989: 370, n. 5), Astell (1994: 41), and Walsh (1999: 115). The possible allusion to *ille ego qui quondam modulatus avena / carmen* (*Aen.* 1.1a–b) is more problematic, since it does not appear in any ms before the ninth century, although some commentators (e.g., Scheible 1972: 12; Crabbe 1981: 247–248; Lerer 1985: 96–97; Mueller-Goldingen 1989: 370, n. 5; Astell 1994: 41) have assumed a connection between the two passages. In support of Boethius' knowledge of these lines is their frequent citation by Priscian, who wrote three treatises dedicated to Boethius' father, Symmachus. For the connection between Priscian and Symmachus, see Chadwick 1981: 6; Kaster 1988: 347–348. For Priscian's references to *Aen.* 1.1a–b, see Keil 1855–60: 2.583, 16; 3.117, 23; 143, 21; 180, 2; 191, 22; 201, 16; 206, 22; 211, 12. These citations, however, come from the *Inst.* rather than treatises dedicated to Symmachus. Therefore, it seems best to consider *Aen.* 1.1a–b as a possible, but not a certain, source for Boethius. On the authenticity of the verses, see Austin 1968 and Hansen 1972. Austin believes the verses are spurious, while Hansen considers them authentic.

⁴Cited at Weinberger 1934: 83; Fortescue and Smith 1976: 109; Gruber 1978: 17, 92–94; Obertello 1979: 248; Bieler 1984: 68; Courcelle 1984: 696; Glei 1985: 231; Mueller-Goldingen 1989: 385; Walsh 1999: 146.

⁵Cited at Weinberger 1934: 99; Fortescue and Smith 1976: 127; Gruber 1978: 361; Glei 1985: 231; Mueller-Goldingen 1989: 385–386.

⁶Cited at Weinberger 1934: 8; Schmid 1956: 122, n. 1; Gruber 1978: 115; Bieler 1984: 7; Courcelle 1984: 497.

⁷Cited at Courcelle 1967: 107; 1984: 408; Gruber 1978: 188. Additional passages are found in the indices of Weinberger (1934: 132); Bieler (1984: 119); Fortescue and Smith (1976: 209); Courcelle (1984: 754). For further examples and discussions of Boethius' use of Virgil, see Gruber 1969; Alfonsi 1979–80; Courcelle 1984: 754; Glei 1985: 230–232; Mueller-Goldingen 1989: 384–386.

Aeneas speaks is caused not simply by his remembrance of the sorrow and fear resulting from the ruin of his city but, more importantly, by his sense that the gods do not care for the just or punish the guilty. The complicity of the gods in Troy's destruction runs as a thread throughout Aeneas' story, as does the theme of the successful guile of the Greeks. Aeneas sees the Trojan horse, for example, as built through the "divine skill of Pallas" (*divina Palladis arte*, 15) and brought into Troy through "Greek treachery" (*Danaum insidias*, 65) and the "unfair fates of the gods" (*fatisque deum . . . iniquis*, 257). Upon awakening to find Troy in flames, Aeneas is in a shaken state. He is crazed (*amens*, 314) as he joins forces with those who burn (*ardent*, 316) for war. His mind is driven by *furor* and *ira* (316), and he quickly comes to the conclusion that it is not wise to trust in unwilling gods (402).

Such a bleak view of divine justice and love is only confirmed in Aeneas' mind as he witnesses the deaths of Ripheus, "one most good and most observant of right, though the gods thought otherwise" (*iustissimus unus / . . . et servantissimus aequi / [dis aliter uisum]*, 426–428; quoted above), and Panthus, who dies despite his role as priest of Apollo (429–430). Shortly thereafter, Aeneas witnesses the cruel and sacrilegious slaughter of Priam, which causes him to stop short in astonishment (*obstupui*, 560) at the *saevus . . . horror* (559) that such a fate could also befall Anchises.

At this point (or just after the brief Helen-episode [567–588], if we retain it)⁸ Aeneas is confronted by his mother, Venus. It need hardly be stated that Aeneas is literally at a moment of crisis. He is confused, horrified, and temporarily unmoving, as he describes himself in 559–566. He is also, as Venus notes, full of pain (*dolor*, 594) and fury (*quid furis?*, 595), forgetful of his love for his wife, father, and son (596–598). By implication, Venus suggests that he is consumed with blame of and hatred for those he considers guilty in Troy's destruction. "*Non tibi Tyndaridis facies invisita Lacaenae / culpatusve Paris*" (601–602), she tells him. It is instead the gods who are to blame (602–603). Accordingly she bids her son to look upon Troy with clearer vision, while she wipes away the mist clouding his eyes:

*aspice (namque omnem, quae nunc obducta tuenti
mortalis hebetat visus tibi et umida circum
caligat, nubem eripiam . . .)* (604–606)

Venus does fulfill her promise, and so Aeneas is able to move beyond his mortal perception and see that the gods are indeed behind the ruin of Troy.

⁸The scholarship on the authenticity of the Helen episode is enormous, and no clear consensus has been reached. See recently Egan 1996, arguing for the authenticity of the passage. See also Austin 1961; 1964: 217–228; Conte 1986: 196–207; Koster 1988: 31–47; Berres 1992. Most of these authors see the passage as an unfinished "piece of raw material" (Austin 1961: 198) by Virgil, which the poet would have significantly revised had he lived longer. Arguments against the authenticity of the passage are found in, e.g., Goold 1970 and Murgia 1971. Because of the strong possibility that Boethius would not have known of the passage, I have not included citations from the Helen episode in my discussion of *Aeneid* 2.

Although the settings for the divine epiphanies of Aeneas and Boethius are very different, the mental states of both men are remarkably similar. In the opening metrum Boethius speaks of *terror* (5) and *dolor* (10), the latter word being used three times in *Aeneid* 2 to describe Aeneas' pain (2.3, 594, 776). At times Boethius is like Aeneas in his hesitation and astonishment. He, too, uses the verb *obstipescere* (cf. 1.1.13 and *Aen.* 2.560) to describe his state, although his confusion is based more on sorrow and nagging fear than on the frantic terror that Aeneas faces as he thinks of the harm that might come to his family. A further similarity between the emotional states of both men is that they each feel that they have suffered injustice. While Aeneas, on the one hand, blames Helen and the treachery of Sinon and the Greek army for the fall of Troy,⁹ Boethius blames the Senate and his accusers for his plight (1.1.4).

To both men there appear divine beings who are immediately recognized as such (cf. *Aen.* 2.589–593 and *Cons.* 1.1.1–3). To Aeneas, Venus appears *clara . . . / pura . . . in luce* (589–590) and to Boethius, Lady Philosophy appears *oculis ardentibus* (1.1.1). These deities prove to be maternal figures. In Aeneas' case, the deity is his *alma parens* (591), Venus, while in Boethius' case she is his foster mother, Lady Philosophy, who had nourished Boethius with her own milk (1.2.2).¹⁰ Venus immediately grasps Aeneas' hand to bring him physically back to reality before she speaks to him (592), just as Lady Philosophy places her hand on Boethius' chest (1.2.5) before she clears the mist from his eyes. Both maternal figures upbraid the despairing men and lament that they do not have faith in the concern their "mothers" have for them. Venus pointedly asks her son:

*nate, quis indomitas tantus dolor excitat iras?
quid furis? aut quonam nostri tibi cura recessit?* (594–595)

and bids him:

*. . . finemque impone labori;
nusquam abero et tutum patrio te limine sistam.* (619–620)

Similarly, Lady Philosophy questions Boethius:

tunc ille es, . . . qui nostro quondam lacte nutritus nostris educatus alimentis in virilis animi robur evaseras? . . . agnoscisne me? quid taces? pudore an stupore siluisti? (1.2. 2, 4)

and

⁹ As noted above, Venus, at 2.601–602 (not part of the Helen episode), implies that Aeneas is blaming Helen and Paris. For Aeneas' condemnation of Greek treachery and dishonesty in Book 2, see 2.65–66, as well as 2.44, where Aeneas reports Laocoön's words. Dido had earlier set the tone for the negative attitude towards the Greeks as she asked Aeneas to speak of "Greek trickery" (*insidias . . . Danaum*, 1.754). See also Heinze 1982: 9–10.

¹⁰ Boethius refers to Lady Philosophy as his *nutrix* at 1.3.2 and 2.4.1, and he is called her *alumnus* at 1.3.4, 3.9.28, and 3.11.40.

an . . . te, alumne, desererem nec sarcinam quam mei nominis invidia sustulisti, communicato tecum labore partirer? (1.3.4)

In each accusation the maternal figure shows astonishment that these men have lost their use of reason because of adverse circumstances. After delivering a mild scolding, the divine figures promise to wipe away the mist of mortal concerns that cloud the men's eyes. This they do, and there follow epiphanies for both men (cf. *Aen.* 2.624–633 and *Cons.* 1.m.3). Aeneas is now able to perceive the actions of the gods in the fall of Troy, while Boethius now sees clearly his divine healer.

As we move to a verbal comparison of the passages in question, the evidence suggests an almost certain use of Virgil by Boethius. Let us compare the lines:

. . . paulisper lumina eius mortalium rerum nube caligantia tergamus.
(*Cons.* 1.2.6)

*aspice (namque omnem, quae nunc obducta tuenti
mortalis hebetat visus tibi et umida circum
caligat, nubem eripiam . . .)* (*Aen.* 2.604–606)

The brief Boethian quotation contains no fewer than three significant words that appear within the Virgilian passage of less than three lines. Lady Philosophy will wipe away from Boethius' eyes a cloud (*nube*) of mortal (*mortalium*) cares that obscures his darkened (*caligantia*) vision. Similarly, Venus had promised to snatch away the cloud (*nubem*) which darkened (*caligat*) Aeneas' mortal (*mortalis*) vision. Two of the Boethian words, *nube* and *caligantia*, are, of course, used metaphorically in exactly the same way that Virgil uses them. If we compare the Boethian passage with the other passages cross-referenced or quoted by Gruber (1978: 92–94) and Courcelle (1970: 210–212, 237–239), we find none that contains more than one of the significant words used in 1.2.6.¹¹ In addition to employing these three words in nearly identical ways, both Virgil and Boethius also speak of wiping or snatching away hindrances from the eyes of their disciples (cf. *tergamus* and *eripiam*).

While it might be objected that the mist covering Aeneas' eyes is conceived of as a literal obstacle that prevents a mortal from seeing divine action, as appears to be the case with Virgil's Homeric models, there is good reason to believe that Boethius would have read *Aeneid* 2.604–606 in an allegorical manner. *Iliad* 5.127–128, which inspired the Virgilian passage (Serv. in *Verg. Aen.* 2.604; Conington 1872: 171; Page 1962: 256), depicts Athena clearing the clouds from Diomedes' vision and was interpreted by the Neoplatonist Proclus (*Hymn* 4.5–7) as symbolizing the enlightenment of the soul.¹² This passage, and similar Homeric

¹¹ See Murgia 1985: 459–464 for a discussion of citation-stemmatic methodology to establish literary imitation. According to the criteria of this method, *Cons.* 1.2.6 can be considered an imitation of *Aen.* 2.604–606.

¹² See Lamberton 1986: 178. For Boethius' familiarity with Proclus, see also Klingner 1966: 38–73; Courcelle 1969: 302–305; Chadwick 1981: 129. Courcelle contends that some of Boethius' acquaintance with Proclus comes via Ammonius.

references to Athena, caused the Neoplatonists to see her as a divine guide for unenlightened souls.¹³ Virgil's lines certainly also lend themselves to interpretation in terms of Platonic and Neoplatonic understanding of the soul's enlightenment and release from mortal cares, as Gruber (1978: 97) suggests. Austin (1964: 234 on 2.605), for instance, draws attention to *hebetat*, a "Virgilian coinage," which he compares with *Aeneid* 6.732, where the same verb has clear Platonic overtones in its description of the "clogging" of the soul by the body.¹⁴ Similarly, the noun *caligo* and the verb *caligare* are frequently used by the Neoplatonists to describe the absence of the soul's light (Courcelle 1970: 238–239, notes 142–143). It is no surprise then that the Neoplatonist Macrobius in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, a work that greatly influenced the *Consolatio*, cites *Aeneid* 2.604–606 as evidence that the soul enclosed in a mortal body is often unable to see the truth (1.3.19).¹⁵

That Boethius, imbued as he was with Neoplatonic thought,¹⁶ would have interpreted *Aeneid* 2.604–606 in an allegorical Platonic and Neoplatonic vein, as Macrobius did, can hardly be doubted. During late antiquity the *Aeneid* was widely understood in such terms, as we see in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, Servius, and Fulgentius' *De continentia Vergiliana*.¹⁷ As O'Daly (1991: 57) notes regarding Virgil, "the authority of the poet canonized by Roman Neoplatonic tradition must be remembered when Boethius' undertaking is considered." Two of the words Boethius borrows from Virgil convey overtones that are clearly Platonic and Neoplatonic. Boethius uses *nubes* as the Neoplatonists frequently did to signify the loss of perception caused by excessive attention to earthly matters (Schmidt-Kohl 1965: 15–16). And, as we have already noted, *caligare* is suggestive of the

¹³ See Schmidt-Kohl 1965: 1–2; Klingner 1966: 117; Courcelle 1967: 22; Gruber 1969: 177, n. 38; Chadwick 1981: 225 and 304, n. 2.

¹⁴ Two lines later, at *Aen.* 6.734, the depiction of souls who *neque auras / despiciunt clausae tenebris et carcere caeco* seems to evoke both Plato's allegory of the cave (*Resp.* 514a–518b) and his description of the body as a prison of the soul (*Phd.* 62b, 67d, 82e, 114b–c; *Cra.* 400c). On the motif of the soul's bondage in the *Cons.*, see Schmidt-Kohl 1965: 4–5; Scheible 1972: 27. Scheible compares *Aen.* 6.734 with *Cons.* 1.m.2.24–25 in terms of Platonic imagery; Fortescue and Smith (1976: 83) similarly compare the Virgilian passage with *Cons.* 3.m.9.13. Virgil's description of the Underworld also owes much, of course, to Plato's "Myth of Er" (*Resp.* 614a–621d). See Norden 1927: 10–19; Austin 1977: 182–183, 202.

¹⁵ Symmachus, Boethius' foster-father and father-in-law, edited a manuscript of the *Somn. Scip.* For Macrobius' influence on the *Cons.*, see Courcelle 1967: 117–124; 1969: 299–300; Chadwick 1981: 7–8; Gersh 1986: 675; O'Daly 1991: 1–2. On Macrobius' interpretation of the Virgilian passage, see Bitsch 1911: 37; Courcelle 1984: 200–201. Courcelle (1984: 201) suggests that Ambrose (*Exam.* 4.1.1 [*CSEL* 79: 186]) follows Macrobius' interpretation of Virgil's lines. On the theme of the dimming of the soul's perception in the *Cons.*, see Schmidt-Kohl 1965: 15–17; Courcelle 1967: 116–124; 1969: 298–300; 1970: 236–239.

¹⁶ On Boethius' Neoplatonism, see, e.g., Schmidt-Kohl 1965: *passim*, esp. preface; Klingner 1966: 49; Courcelle 1969: 295–297; Chadwick 1981: xv, 16–22; Gersh 1986: 647–718.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Murrin 1980: 23, 32; Jones 1986; O'Daly 1991: 57; Astell 1994: 27–28. For the possible influence of Fulgentius' *De continentia Vergiliana* on the *Cons.*, see Lerer 1985: 56–69; on the *Myth.*, see Klingner 1966: 114–116; Courcelle 1969: 296; O'Daly 1991: 21.

soul's need for enlightenment in Platonic and Neoplatonic terms (Courcelle 1970: 236–239).

In interpreting Virgil's lines in a Platonic and Neoplatonic framework, Boethius is consistent with the surrounding context of the *Consolatio*, in which he portrays his protagonist's enlightenment as a Platonic growth in understanding.¹⁸ When Lady Philosophy appears to Boethius, she wears a gown woven by her own hand, reminiscent of Athena's *peplos*, which was a popular source of allegory for the Neoplatonists.¹⁹ On the gown from the letters Π to Θ extend steps "in the manner of a scale" (*in scalarum modum*, 1.1.4), suggesting the Platonic and Neoplatonic ascent of the mind (Courcelle 1967: 36; Gruber 1978: 64). Lady Philosophy's first act, her banishment of the muses of elegy, likewise seems to recall Plato's scorn for the morally debilitating effects that poetry can have.²⁰ In the following metrum, just before she wipes the mist from Boethius' eyes, Lady Philosophy complains that Boethius' blunted mind is caused by a lack of inspiration (*mens hebet et propria luce relicta / tendit in externas ire tenebras*, 1.m.2.2–3).²¹ In lines reminiscent of Plato's cave (*Resp.* 514a; see Schmidt-Kohl 1965: 4, 15; Chadwick 1981: 226), Boethius is described as bound with chains (*pressus gravibus colla catenis*, 1.m.2.25) and forced to cast his head down, looking only upon the ground (*stolidam . . . terram*, 1.m.2.27). Lady Philosophy further observes that he is forgetful of himself (*sui . . . oblitus est*, 1.2.6) but that he will soon recover, which does, of course, begin to happen after Boethius' eyes are cleared. As Schmidt-Kohl (1965: 18), Gruber (1978: 93), Lerer (1985: 104), and Gersh (1986: 652) note, Boethius' forgetfulness is here described in terms of Platonic and Neoplatonic teachings on anamnesis. The initial stages of Boethius' enlightenment are described in 1.m.3, where light is used in a Platonic and Neoplatonic fashion, especially in the image of the sunlight stunning eyes that are used to darkness (9–10), again recalling the allegory of the cave (*Resp.* 515c, 516a).²² Finally, Boethius drinks in the light (*hausi caelum*, 1.3.1), an image that Gruber (1978: 99) rightly links to the Platonic use of light to symbolize the realm of ideas.²³ Although, of course, this is only the beginning of Boethius' enlightenment, it offers a dramatic

¹⁸ See Schmidt-Kohl 1965: *passim*, esp. 54–55; Astell 1994: 48, quoted below.

¹⁹ See esp. Procl. *In Ti.* 1.167.22. See also Gruber 1978: 63; Chadwick 1981: 255 and 304, n. 2; Lamberton 1986: 199.

²⁰ See esp. Pl. *Resp.* 377b–378d, 398a–b, 607a–b. See also Gruber 1978: 66; O'Daly 1991: 39, 59. For Boethius' attitude towards the value and dangers of poetry in general, see Crabbe: 1981: 250; O'Daly 1991: 59–73.

²¹ Compare the use of *hebetat* at *Aen.* 2.605 and *Cons.* 1.6.10, where Boethius, having been asked if he remembers what the end of all things is, replies, "*audieram . . . sed memoriam maeror hebetavit.*" See also 1.m.2.2; 1.4.28; 5.m.59.

²² See Scheible 1972: 31; Gruber 1978: 95. Schmidt-Kohl (1965: 4) notes that the allegory of the cave was fundamental to the teachings of the Neoplatonists.

²³ Gruber (1978: 99) goes on to note Boethius' borrowing of *Aen.* 10.898 (*Tyrrhenus, ut auras suspiciens hausit caelum mentemque recepit*). Although Boethius seems to allude here to Virgil's lines to provide a memorable phrase rather than to establish a contextual connection, this borrowing does

turning point in his progress towards understanding, just as Venus' revelation helps Aeneas learn that his efforts to fight against the work of the gods are pointless.

As he wrote of his protagonist's enlightenment in an allegorical and symbolic manner, Boethius would have found the stunned and disconsolate Aeneas of *Aeneid* 2 a very attractive model. The Virgilian use of the image of the cloud and its removal, representing the presence and then the removal of anxieties, would have seemed particularly rich to the Boethius, just as it had to Macrobius (1.3.19). In reading *Aeneid* 2.604–606, Boethius would also have seen Venus as a useful point of comparison with Lady Philosophy. While Homer's Athena is surely also in Boethius' mind as he describes Lady Philosophy,²⁴ Virgil's Venus likewise displays much of the protreptic character that Boethius wished to display in Lady Philosophy. Both of Venus' epiphanies in the first two books of the *Aeneid* (1.314–405 and 2.589–621) are modeled on appearances of Athena in the *Odyssey* (7.18–81 and 13.221–440) and the *Iliad* (1.193–222) respectively.²⁵ Like Athena in the Homeric poems, Venus instructs her protégé in a protreptic manner, scolding him for his lack of understanding. As Knight (1932: 65–66) correctly observes, Venus in *Aeneid* 2 emerges more as a figure of wisdom and noble love than as an erotic goddess.

Despite the similarity between Lady Philosophy and Venus, Boethius does not see Aeneas and Venus as figures completely paralleling Boethius and Lady Philosophy. In employing *Aeneid* 2.604–606, where Aeneas learns not to trust the Trojan gods, in a context in which Lady Philosophy is urging her pupil to have faith in divine benevolence, Boethius the author seems to be adapting Virgil through *Kontrastimitation*. As K. Thraede (1962: 1039) notes, *Kontrastimitation* is a process by which Christian authors made reference to ancient pagan texts in such a way that the pagan views were explicitly contrasted with Christian ones. This mode of imitation was frequently used by Prudentius in his attempts to employ pagan literature in depicting a Christian world view. An example Thraede (1962: 1040) gives of Prudentius' *Kontrastimitation* of the *Aeneid* is when Prudentius alludes to Jupiter's proclamation of granting Rome *imperium sine fine* (*Aen.* 1.279) in order to show that Christ truly, and for a more magnificent purpose, had ordained Rome's eternal power (*C. Symm.* 1.542). Similarly, as Boethius recasts *Aeneid* 2.604–606, he presents a picture of enlightenment that is different from that of Aeneas in a crucial way. Unlike Venus in *Aeneid* 2, Lady Philosophy will urge her pupil to believe in divine goodwill, rather than resign himself, as Aeneas must, to a certain degree of divine malevolence. In the case of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas' cloud of anxieties represents to a great extent his futile attempts to find

offer another good example of how Boethius cited Virgil in an allegorical, Neoplatonic manner. Schmidt-Kohl (1965: 9–10) also discusses *Cons.* 1.3.1. in terms of Platonic enlightenment.

²⁴ See esp. Schmidt-Kohl 1965: 1, 16; Gruber 1978: 93; Lamberton 1986: 276–277.

²⁵ On the connection between Athena's epiphany in *Iliad* 1 and Venus' in *Aeneid* 2, see Harrison 1990: 47. See also Harrison 1990: 49–51 on Venus as a guide for the despairing Aeneas in Book 2.

justice in the actions of the gods. In removing the cloud before Aeneas' eyes, Venus displays for Aeneas the *divum inclementia* (2.602) that he must learn to accept as part of the nature of the world. Although ultimately the maliciousness of the gods, in particular Juno, will not be successful in countering the goodwill of Jupiter in allowing Aeneas' mission to be successful, the haunting question of the ill will of the gods (*tantaene animis caelestibus irae?*, 1.11) is never fully answered in the *Aeneid*.²⁶ Virgil's suggestion that the gods are unpredictable in their care for mankind was noted by Servius, who came to the conclusion that the deities in the *Aeneid* were "remote and in the last resort unknowable" (MacCormack 1998: 170), living in an Epicurean *ataraxia* that did not allow great concern for mortals.²⁷ In Augustine this Virgilian *divum inclementia* is frequently alluded to in order to show that "the gods of Troy as described by Vergil would capriciously abandon their worshipers" (MacCormack 1998: 167).²⁸ While we cannot be certain that Boethius would have read Aeneas' epiphany as a criticism of the Trojan gods, it seems likely that he would have realized and expected the reader to realize that Aeneas' necessary distrust of the gods was in opposition to the lesson Lady Philosophy was trying to teach her pupil. The lack of trust in divine benevolence is, of course, the very thing that Lady Philosophy seeks to eliminate in Boethius. Although Fortuna might seem to represent this capricious nature of divinity, Lady Philosophy eventually demonstrates to Boethius that his complaints against divine governance, such as those we find in 1.m.5.25–48 are totally incorrect. Boethius will not learn that the gods are sometimes hostile and not to be trusted, but rather that the "rudders by which the earth is steered" (*quibus gubernaculis mundus regatur*, 1.6.19) are indeed benevolent and that God, the *summum bonum*, directs all things towards the good.²⁹ Lady Philosophy makes a similar point later in the *Consolatio*, where she alludes to the *Aeneid*, but in a way that sharply contrasts with the Virgilian context. At 4.6.32, as Lady Philosophy seeks to persuade Boethius that God ordains all things for the good, she notes that the man whom Boethius might consider *iustissimum et aequi servantissimum*

²⁶ See MacCormack 1998: 132–134, 164–167. MacCormack (1998: 166–167) suggests that Aeneas' virtue is shown by his "willingness to endure divine wrath and hostility as one would endure a force of nature, endurance being the proper response because such a force cannot be called into account."

²⁷ See Serv. in *Verg. Aen.* 1.11; 2.515, 688; 4.379.

²⁸ For several passages in the *De civ. D.* and a discussion, see MacCormack 1998: 159–167; Hagendahl 1967: 389–393. Hagendahl stresses Augustine's view of the impotence of the gods more than their injustice. On this theme, see also MacCormack 1998: 159–160. The attitudes of Augustine and Servius are given in order to show the disturbing attitude towards the gods that fourth- and fifth-century readers found in the *Aeneid*. I am not intending to argue that Boethius was directly influenced by Augustine's attacks upon the Roman gods, although that is possible. There has been a great deal of debate regarding Boethius' acquaintance with Augustine. For a useful summary, see Lerer 1985: 46–47; see also Gersh 1986: 652–653, arguing for a strong influence of Augustine on Boethius.

²⁹ See esp. 2.m.8; 4.6.30–31; 4.m.6.35.

could be the exact opposite in the mind of all-knowing Providence. As was noted above, this passage is almost certainly an allusion to *Aeneid* 2.426–427, where Aeneas had grieved to see Rhipeus, *iustissimus . . . et servantissimus aequi*, die, seemingly without the gods taking notice of his goodness (*dis aliter visum*, 428). As Mueller-Goldigen (1989: 386) argues, Boethius is not simply offering a gratuitous citation of Virgil, but reinterpreting it to show that man's *perversa confusio* (4.6.34) cannot judge what God should do.³⁰

Just as Boethius adapts and, in a sense, corrects *Aeneid* 2.426–428 to show the limitations of man's judgment of other men, so he adapts the description of Aeneas at *Aeneid* 2.604–606 to illustrate the need for, and the nature of, the enlightenment of a distressed hero. Sorrowing in his imprisonment, Boethius, like Aeneas in his ruined city, must become enlightened and dispense with false impressions in order to engage in his epic struggle—in this case a symbolic journey to find the truth, his *patria*, the *summum bonum*.³¹ As Astell (1994: 48) notes:

The process of Platonic remembrance, which constitutes the discursive plot of the dialogue, thus becomes a heroic action as the prisoner's mental journey in conversation with Lady Philosophy parallels the arduous journeys of Odysseus to Ithaca and Aeneas to Italy. Indeed, Lady Philosophy constantly uses the word *patria* ("fatherland") to designate the goal of her philosophical hero.³²

Both Aeneas and Boethius make truly heroic journeys, in Aeneas' case spiritual and physical, in Boethius' case purely spiritual. Yet because their ends are different, so too must be their initial lessons about the nature of divine providence. In Aeneas' case, he must accept, endure, and work within the frame of divine opposition in an effort to found a nation that is not in keeping with Juno's desire. In Boethius' case, however, the pathway to the *summum bonum* can only be traveled when he realizes that God is the *summum bonum* and that God, therefore, can never truly cause man harm. Thus the pilgrimages of Boethius and Aeneas will be cast in a similar manner but with important differences. Like Aeneas, Boethius

³⁰ Mueller-Goldingen seems right in opposing Glei's (1985: 231–232) suggestion that Boethius (the author) misunderstands the Virgilian passage. On the contrary, Boethius seems to understand Aeneas' words and has Lady Philosophy suggest that such a sentiment is unjustified. O'Daly (1991: 73) opposes Mueller-Goldingen, but he seems to take insufficient notice of Lady Philosophy's condemnation of the sentiment that man can properly assess the justice of other men.

³¹ See esp. *Cons.* 1.5.3–5; 4.m.1.25–26. See Schmidt-Kohl (1985: 38–39) on the connection between the Boethian use of *patria* and *sedes* as the equivalent of Augustine's *civitas dei* (*De civ. D.* 11.1) and the flight to god of Plotinus (*Enn.* 1.6.8.22). See also Gruber 1978: 93 and *Enn.* 4.8.4.30. Odysseus, of course, makes a similar journey to that of Aeneas. Among the Neoplatonists (including Boethius) the spiritual nature of that journey was emphasized. On the spiritual interpretation of Odysseus' voyage, see *Enn.* 1.6.8.18–21; Lamberton 1986: 41–43, 279; O'Daly 1991: 207–235; Astell 1994: 48–49; *Boeth. Cons.* 4.m.3 and 4.m.7. On the general theme of Boethius' spiritual crisis, see Rapisarda 1953.

³² As examples of Boethius as an exile, Astell (1994: 48–49) cites 1.5.3; 1.5.4; 2.4.17; 3.12.9; 4.1.9; 4.m.1.25; 5.1.4. On Boethius' metaphorical exile, see similarly Schmidt-Kohl 1965: 26–27, 39; Lerer 1985: 130–131, 184.

is described as a man enduring *labor*, *cura*, and *dolor*, although these terms are predominantly suggestive of his mental state.³³ He is also a wanderer and an exile in the early part of the poem, but, as Lady Philosophy contends at 1.5.3–5, his exile is of his own making, not God's. In this self-imposed exile Boethius is often portrayed as a man metaphorically lost, wandering and foundering like a ship. Lady Philosophy, for example, warns him that we should not be surprised "if we are tossed about on the sea of this life by blasts of winds" (*si in hoc vitae salo circumflatibus agitemur procellis*, 1.3.11).³⁴ Yet these blasts of wind are actually only illusory, for the wise man laughs from his tower of safety while he is being assaulted (1.3.14). Boethius' self-imposed exile is simply a matter of a lack of knowledge of the *summum bonum*, for the awareness of divine providence allows the calm man (*serenus*, 1.m.4.1) to ignore the raging sea (1.m.4.5–6). Thus the literal buffeting of Aeneas in the *Aeneid* becomes in the *Consolatio* the sorrows that a man brings upon himself through his own ignorance of the nature of the *summum bonum*, much in the way that Augustine would see Aeneas' *errores* in terms of his own youthful wanderings from God (*Conf.* 1.13).³⁵

This symbolic and allegorical reading and adaption of the *Aeneid* is what we would expect of Boethius as he sought to imitate the great Roman epic. As we have noted, it is obvious that Boethius understood the *Odyssey* in a thoroughly allegorical and Neoplatonic manner as a story of a spiritual as well as a literal journey. There can be little doubt that Boethius would also have seen the *Aeneid* not simply as the story of a man trying to find a physical home, but as the depiction of a pilgrim seeking a spiritual place of rest. As a perceptive, even if probably too allegorical, reader of the *Aeneid*, Boethius saw both the *errores* of Aeneas in Book 3 (Astell 1994: 48) as a model for his protagonist's spiritual wanderings and the *dolor* and *furor* of the despairing Aeneas of Book 2 as a source for the depiction of the disconsolate and dimly perceptive Boethius of the beginning of the *Consolatio*. Within the context of this connection between the protagonists in both works, however, Boethius probably expected his readers to realize the stark difference in the lessons taught by the divine guides. Boethius, in essence, compares his protagonist with the greatest of Roman heroes by linking both men at the time when they began their struggle to arise from mental and emotional darkness. Yet the Christian Boethius also wanted his reader to see that for his hero the lesson to be learned was not one of resignation to fate and simple determination to fulfill one's duty, but rather the abandonment to the providence of a benevolent God. Boethius' use of *Aeneid* 2.604–606 is thus not simply a learned but relatively insignificant allusion to a famous literary work. It is instead a thoughtfully adapted

³³ See, e.g., 1.m.2.5; 1.3.4; 1.5.10–11. For *labor*, *cura*, *dolor*, and the theme of exile in connection with Aeneas, see, e.g., *Aen.* 1.1–11, 208–209; 2.3, 775–776. For a comparison between the spiritual wanderings of Boethius and the physical ones of Odysseus and Aeneas, see Astell 1994: 48–49.

³⁴ For the motif of the soul as a storm-tossed ship, see Schmidt-Kohl: 1985: 27; Gruber 1978: 107; O'Daly 1991: 107–110, 131–132.

³⁵ See Stock 1996: 77–78; MacCormack 1998: 96–99.

allusion to Virgil used to describe a new, more spiritual pilgrim seeking his *patria*, the *sumum bonum*, and thus it plays an integral part in the artistic design of the opening book of the *Consolatio*.³⁶

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³⁶ A shorter version of this paper was presented at the meeting of the Southern Section of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South at Savannah, Georgia, in October 1996. I am grateful to the Editor and anonymous referees of *Phoenix* for helpful suggestions.

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