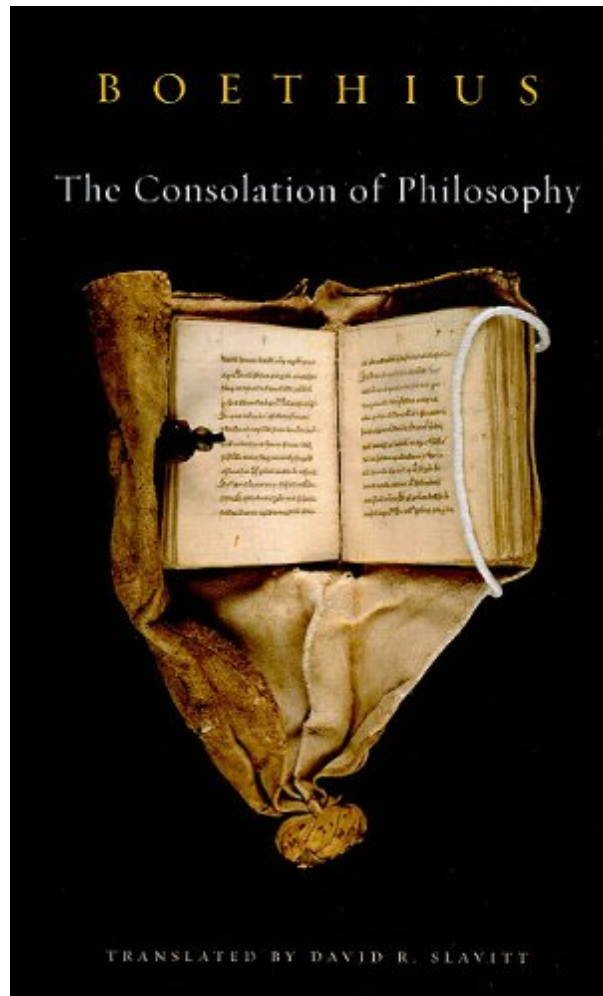


THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY BY BOETHIUS



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BOETHIUS

The Consolation of Philosophy



TRANSLATED BY DAVID R. SLAVITT

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In this highly praised new translation of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*, David R. Slavitt presents a graceful, accessible, and modern version for both longtime admirers of one of the great masterpieces of philosophical literature and those encountering it for the first time. Slavitt preserves the distinction between the alternating verse and prose sections in the Latin original, allowing us to appreciate the Menippian parallels between the discourses of literary and logical inquiry. His prose translations are lively and colloquial, conveying the argumentative, occasionally bantering tone of the original, while his verse translations restore the beauty and power of Boethius's poetry. The result is a major contribution to the art of translation.

Those less familiar with *Consolation* may remember it was written under a death sentence. Boethius (c. 480–524), an Imperial official under Theodoric, Ostrogoth ruler of Rome, found himself, in a time of political paranoia, denounced, arrested, and then executed two years later without a trial. Composed while its author was imprisoned, cut off from family and friends, it remains one of Western literature's most eloquent meditations on the transitory nature of earthly belongings, and the superiority of things of the mind. In an artful combination of verse and prose, Slavitt captures the energy and passion of the original. And in an introduction intended for the general reader, Seth Lerer places Boethius's life and achievement in context.

- Sales Rank: #98571 in Books
- Published on: 2010-09-01
- Released on: 2010-04-12
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.16" h x .64" w x 4.34" l, .40 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 208 pages

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Short, Beautiful and Profound!

By SusieQ

This book inspired Dante and many others for centuries. Written in prison by a person of great intellect and fortune, until he met with treachery and died in AD 524, he questions his Fate. It is a Theodicy, but it is presented as a conversation between the prisoner and Lady Philosophy. Boethius questions everything, but finds all the answers. It is a shame that such a beautiful (and short) work of art, with such profound, clear thinking is not required in all colleges. Even high school! I had to wait until after I graduated to be exposed to such rich ideas, rich vocabulary, and profound thought. It is a shame. The analogy of the Wheel of Fortune was made popular by this book and there is so much wisdom in Lady Philosophy. I can't tell you how much I loved this book for challenging me to reflect on philosophy on many levels, to a degree that not many books force. The insight gained by understanding this book is immense and influences my thoughts today.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

A worthy edition of a worthy book

By Richard P. Cember

I begin my comments with two disclaimers: (1) I would not presume to "review" Boethius, but I can offer a few superficial comments on this edition which may be of use to potential buyers; and (2) I do not know Latin, but can read Boethius only in translation.

There were many passages in this translation that I recognized as being definitely idiomatically modern. Those passages felt anachronistic to me and made me doubt to some extent that I was reading "the real

thing", at least as much as one can ever read "the real thing" in translation. On the whole, though, allowing for that one not insignificant complaint, I recommend this translation for its fine, clear style.

The evident modernity of the translation made me want to read some other translation, so that when I was finished with this one, then just for something different, I chose Chaucer's Middle English translation, "Boece". I could not have successfully read "The Consolation of Philosophy" for the first time in Middle English, but I can read it in M.E. the second time. I am still chipping away at that, but so far Chaucer's translation seems distinctly more emotional to me than Slavitt's, and thus conveys a very different feeling. Maybe Chaucer and Slavitt have both impressed the emotional styles of their own ages onto the text? But how would I ever know? In any case, if the style of Slavitt's translation made me at once mostly happy, and yet needing to read another, then that is a sign of success for the translation.

As for Lerer's introduction, and also the physical quality of the book, I second the favorable comments of another reviewer, Mr. Allen Shull; see his review.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent Book

By Akhilesh Pillalamarri

This is an excellent book to keep by the bedside, in order to glean some wisdom before sleep or when one has a bit of free time. In some ways, this book is to Greek philosophy what the Bhagavad Gita is to Indian philosophy. It summarizes and reconciles various streams of Greek philosophical thought with each other and with the concept of divinity and presents them not only as abstract philosophy (as later Western philosophy would evolve) but as praxis- as knowledge meant to be acted upon. The Consolation of Philosophy is thus a work that turns philosophy into religion. It is an interesting read and inspiration, especially if you are looking for something beyond the usual spirituality titles and its rationality is refreshing.

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