

Boethius on Time, Eternity, Providence and Philosophy as a Way of Life

Texts & Bibliography

Text 1

<p>Pseudo (?) - Boethius, De diis et praesensionibus, in I. C. Orellius - I.G. Baiterus, eds., M. Tulli Ciceronis Scholiastae, I, Turici: Typis Orellii, Fuesslini et Sociorum, 1833, p. 390. 35-391, 24. Stangl</p>	
<p>duobus enim constamus, anima et corpore. Anima immortalis est. Si immortalis est, a divinis descendit. Si ergo a divinis descendit, cur omnium virtutum habitu perfecta non est? Quod quale sit, ab eiusdem philosophiae adytis eliciatur. Anima enim necdum in contagionis corporeae indumento evoluta, in illa absolutissimae puritatis suae specula omnium rerum peritiam perfectissime considerat. Postquam autem in hoc luteum corpus obruitur, acies eius terrenae admixtionis tenebris caligosa ab illa suae ingenitaeque visionis claritudine caecatur. Latet tamen introrsum semen veri, quod excitatur ventilante doctrina¹. Aiunt enim nullo modo fieri posse, ut a pueritia tot rerum atque tantarum insitas atque quasi consignatas in animis notiones, quae ennoias vocant, habemus, nisi animus ante, quum incorporaretur, in rerum cognitione viguisset. Neque ea plane videt animus, quum repente tam insolitum tamque turbulentum domicilium immigravit: sed quum se recollegit atque recreavit per aetatis momenta, tum agnoscit illa reminiscendo.</p> <p>Postquam enim quodam crasso corporis tegimine irretita anima et circumfusa quandam sui oblivionem subierit, quum deinde studio ac disciplina detergeri coepit atque nudari, tunc in naturae suae modum animus revertitur atque revocatur ...</p> <p>Quod totum evidentius declarat Socrates in illo libro, qui Menon inscribitur,</p>	<p>For we consist of two things, soul and body. The soul is immortal. If it is immortal, it descends from the divine things. But if it descends from the divine things, why is it not perfected by the possession of all virtues? Let the state of this matter be drawn from the very sanctuaries of philosophy. For the soul, before it is wrapped in the garment of bodily contact, examines in that watchtower of its absolute purity the knowledge of all things most perfectly. However, once it sinks into this body of clay, its sharp vision, obscured by the darkness of earthy mingling, is rendered blind to the clarity of its inborn vision. However, the seed of truth lies hidden within, and is awakened as it is fanned by instruction. For they say it can by no means happen that from childhood we have notions, which they call <i>ennoias</i>, of so many and such great things inserted and as it were sealed upon our souls, unless our soul flourished in its cognition of things before it was incarnated. Nor does the soul fully see these things, when it suddenly entered such an unaccustomed and turbulent abode; yet once it collects itself and becomes refreshed in the course of the ages of life, then it recognizes them by remembering.</p> <p>For after the soul is ensnared and enveloped by some thick cover of the body and undergoes some forgetfulness of itself, when thereafter it begins to be wiped clean and denuded by study and instruction, then the soul reverts and is called back to the manner of its nature...</p> <p>Socrates declares all this more clearly in the book entitled <i>Meno</i>, asking a certain</p>

¹ Cf. Boeth. Cons. 3.c11.11-12: Haeret profecto semen introrsum veri/quod excitatur ventilanti doctrina

<p>pusionem quendam interrogans quaedam geometrica de dimensione quadrati. Ad quae sic ille respondit, ut puer: et tamen ita faciles interrogationes sunt, ut gradatim respondens eodem perveniat, quasi geometrica didicisset. Ex quo effici vult Socrates, ut discere nihil aliud sit nisi recordari. Quam rem multo accuratius ille explicat in sermone, quem habuit eo die, quo excessit e vita.</p>	<p>little boy some geometrical questions about the dimensions of a square. He answers them like a child, yet the questions are so easy that by answering little by little he reaches the same result as if he had learned geometry. Socrates will have it that follows from this that learning is nothing other than remembering. He explains this must more accurately in the speech he gave on the day in which he left this life.</p>
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Text 2

<p>Simplicius, In Cat., p. 12, 18ff. Kalbfleisch.</p> <p>ψυχή δὲ πρὸς μὲν νοῦν ἐστραμμένη τὰ αὐτὰ δευτέρως ἔχει, ὅτε καὶ γεννητικούς, ἀλλ' οὐ γνωστικούς μόνον ἔχει τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ</p> <p>(20)</p> <p>λόγους, ἀποστᾶσα δὲ ἐκεῖθεν καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ λόγους τῶν ὄντων χωρίσασα καὶ διὰ τοῦτο εἰκόνας αὐτοὺς ἀντὶ τῶν πρωτοτύπων ποιήσασα διέστησεν ἀπὸ τῶν πραγμάτων τὴν νόησιν,</p> <p>καὶ τοσοῦτῳ μᾶλλον, ὅσῳ καὶ τῆς πρὸς τὸν νοῦν ὁμοιότητος ἀπέστη, καὶ λοιπὸν ἀγαπᾷ σύμφωνα τοῖς πράγμασιν προβάλλεσθαι τὰ νοήματα.</p> <p>πεσοῦσα δὲ εἰς γένεσιν καὶ λήθης ἀναπλησθεῖσα</p> <p>(25)</p> <p>ἐδεήθη μὲν ὄψεως, ἐδεήθη δὲ ἀκοῆς πρὸς ἀνάμνησιν· δεῖται γὰρ τοῦ ἤδη τεθεαμένου τὴν ἀλήθειαν διὰ φωνῆς ἀπὸ τῆς ἐννοίας προφερομένης κινουῦντος καὶ τὴν ἐν αὐτῇ τέως ἀπεψυγμένην ἔννοιαν·</p>	<p>As for the soul, when it is turned towards the Intellect, it possesses the same things [sc. as the Intellect] in a secondary way, for then the rational principles (<i>logoi</i>) within it are not only cognitive,</p> <p>20</p> <p>but generative. Once, however, the soul has departed from there [sc. the intelligible world], it also separates the formulae (<i>logoi</i>) within itself from beings, thereby converting them into images instead of prototypes, and it introduces a distance between intellection and realities. This is all the more true, the further the soul has departed from its similarity to the Intellect, and it is henceforth content to project (<i>proballesthai</i>) notions which are consonant with realities.</p> <p>When, however, the soul has fallen into the realm of becoming, it is filled with forgetfulness²</p> <p>25</p> <p>and requires sight and hearing in order to be able to recollect³. For the soul needs someone who has already beheld the truth⁴, who, by means of language (<i>phônê</i>) uttered forth from the concept (<i>ennoia</i>), also moves</p>
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2 The theme of forgetfulness goes back ultimately to Book 10 of Plato's *Republic* (621a-c), with its myth of the plain of Lêthê.

3 *Pros anamnêsin*. The reference is to the Platonic doctrine of *anamnêsis*, the recollection of the knowledge we had when, prior to our incarnation, we accompanied the chariots of the gods and enjoyed direct communion with the intelligible Forms. Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248c, *Republic*, Bk. 10, 621a-c; Ammonius, *In De Interp.* p. 38, 8-17.

4 That is, according to Ph. Hoffmann (1987, pp. 83ff.), the philosophy teacher. Cf. Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, §235, 8-10 Westerink = vol. 2, p. 285 Segonds.

<p>.... ἀπὸ γὰρ νοήσεων προϊῶσαι</p> <p>(13.) νοήσεις καὶ αὐταὶ κινουῦσι προσεχῶς καὶ συνάπτουσι τὰς τοῦ μαθάνοντος ταῖς τοῦ διδάσκοντος, μεσότητες ἀμφοῖν γινόμεναι. αἱ δὲ νοήσεις οἰκείως κινηθεῖσαι ἐφαρμόττουσι τοῖς πράγμασιν, καὶ οὕτως γίνεται ἡ τῶν ὄντων γνῶσις καὶ ὁ αὐτοφυῆς ἔρος τῆς ψυχῆς ἀποπίμπλαται.</p>	<p>the concept within [the soul of the student], which had until then grown cold⁵ ...For intellections (<i>noêseis</i>) which proceed forth 13,1 from other intellections⁶ also cause motion immediately, connecting the learner's intellections to those of the teacher, by becoming intermediaries (<i>mesotêtes</i>) between the two. When intellections are set in motion in an appropriate way, they fit realities, and thus there comes about the knowledge of beings, and the soul's innate <i>eros</i>⁷ is fulfilled.</p>
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Text 3

<p>Boethius, <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i>, 5.6.2-8</p> <p>[5.6.2] Deum igitur aeternum esse cunctorum ratione degentium commune iudicium est. [5.6.3] Quid sit igitur aeternitas consideremus, haec enim nobis naturam pariter diuinam scientiamque patefacit. [5.6.4] Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis uitae tota simul et perfecta possessio. Quod ex collatione temporalium clarius liquet. [5.6.5] Nam quicquid uiuit in tempore id praesens a praeteritis in futura procedit nihilque est in tempore constitutum quod totum uitae suae spatium pariter possit amplecti, sed crastinum quidem nondum apprehendit hesternum uero iam perdidit; in hodierna quoque uita non amplius uiuitis quam in illo mobili transitorioque momento. [5.6.6] Quod igitur temporis patitur condicionem, licet illud, sicuti de mundo censuit Aristoteles, nec coeperit umquam esse nec desinat uitaeque eius cum temporis</p>	<p>[5.6.2] That God is eternal, therefore, is the common judgement of all those who live according to reason. [5.6.3] Let us consider, therefore, what eternity is, for this will make clear to us at the same time the divine nature and <the nature of> divine knowledge. [5.6.4] Eternity, then, is the perfect possession, all at once, of unlimited life. This will become more clear by comparison with temporal things: [5.6.5] for whatever lives in time proceeds, when present, from the past into the future, and nothing constituted within time can embrace equally the entire extent of its life, but tomorrow's extent it cannot yet grasp, while yesterday's it has already lost. Even in today's life, you live no more broadly than in that mobile, transitory moment. [5.6.6] Therefore, whatever is subject to the condition of time, even if, as Aristotle thought of the world, it never began to be, nor shall it cease, and its life extends along</p>
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5 On the *logoi* in the soul - portions of the *nous* which is the substances of the intelligible Forms - as a spark buried in ashes, the rekindling of which constitutes the process of learning, cf. Philoponus, *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, p. 4, 30ff. Hayduck.

6 Sc. those of the teacher.

7 On the soul's innate *erôs* for knowledge - derived ultimately from Plato's *Symposium* - cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.*, I, 25, vol. I, pp. 109, 10 - 110, 8 Saffrey/Westerink; *In Tim.*, vol. I, p. 212, 21-22 Diehl.

infinitate tendatur, nondum tamen tale est ut aeternum esse iure credatur.

[5.6.7] Non enim totum simul infinitae licet uitae spatium comprehendit atque complectitur, sed futura nondum, transacta iam non habet.

[5.6.8] Quod igitur interminabilis uitae plenitudinem totam pariter comprehendit ac possidet, cui neque futuri quicquam absit nec praeteriti fluxerit, id aeternum esse iure perhibetur idque necesse est et sui compos praesens sibi semper assistere et infinitatem mobilis temporis habere praesentem.

with the infinity of time, is nevertheless not yet such as to be rightly believed to be eternal. [5.6.7] For it may be that it does not comprehend and embrace, all at once, the extent of infinite life, but the future it does not yet have, and what is completed it has no longer. [5.6.8] Therefore, that which comprehends and possesses equally the entire fullness of illimitable life, that for which nothing of the future is lacking, nor has anything of the past flowed away, this is rightly agreed to be eternal, and it is necessary that, present and master of itself, it must always both attend itself and have present the infinity of mobile time.

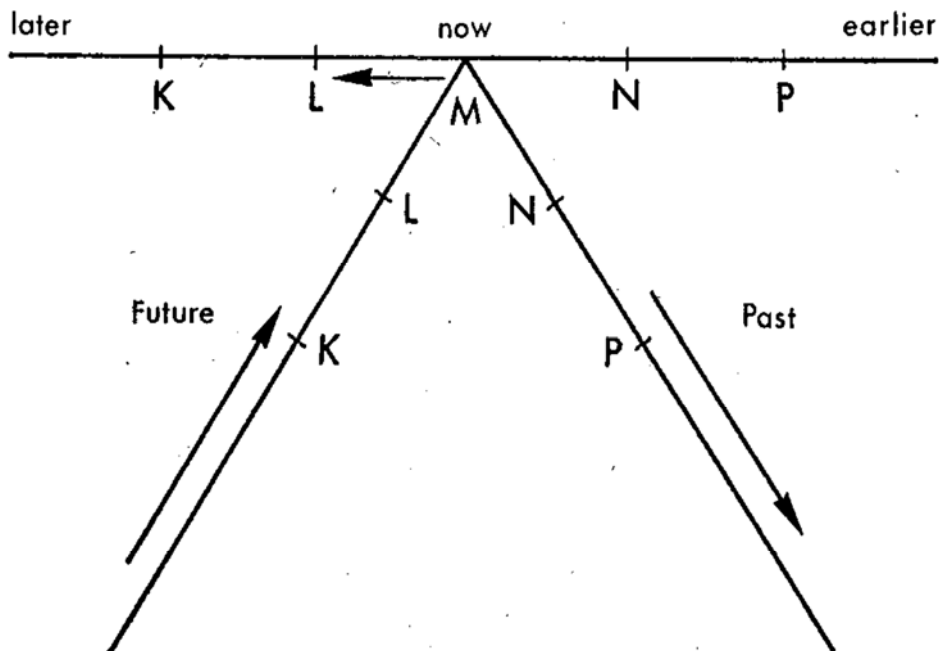


Table 1

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