



The Consolation of Philosophy

Boethius

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One of the most influential books in the history of Western thought, *The Consolation of Philosophy* was written in a prison cell by a condemned man. Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c. 480–524) was a Roman scholar, theologian, philosopher, and statesman. Imprisoned by the Ostrogothic king Theodoric, probably on trumped-up subversion charges, he was thrown into a remote prison where he was eventually executed.

While awaiting his fate, he wrote this dialogue in alternating prose and poetry between himself and his spiritual guardian. Its subject is human happiness and the possibility of achieving it in the midst of the suffering and disappointment that characterize human existence. As Richard H. Green notes in the introduction, "For the reader of the Christian Middle Ages, *The Consolation of Philosophy* celebrated the life of the mind, or reason, and the possibility of its ultimate victory over the misfortunes and frustrations which attend fallen man's pursuit of transitory substitutes for the Supreme Good which alone can satisfy human desires."

Mr. Green's translation is quite literal in order to remain as faithful as possible to Boethius's original meaning. He has also provided an informative introduction and notes. The result is a superbly accessible edition that still exercises a powerful influence on contemporary thinkers and theologians and represents a source of comfort and solace for the general reader.

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