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*The tradition of Boethius: a study of his importance in medieval culture.* By HOWARD ROLLIN PATCH. New York: Oxford University Press, 1935. Pp. viii+200.

The tradition of Boethius which Professor Patch traces is that of the author of the *Consolation of philosophy*. The Boethius who as author of the theological treatises contributed richly to the terminology and "sentences" of the Middle Ages, the Boethius who as translator and author of logical treatises was quoted with Aristotle and Porphyry through centuries of logical inquiry and debate and whose commentaries, themselves glossed, guided an almost endless series of commentaries, the Boethius who as author of the *De arithmetica* and the *De musica* contributed to the fundamental texts on which the growing medieval interest in the quadrivium was based, all appear in more abbreviated form and usually in statements derived from secondary sources. Even in such brief statement there is much that might be questioned. Studies of the medieval discussion of the universal have in recent years brought out a complexity which resists the simple realist, nominalist, conceptualist generalizations of earlier scholars. Scholars have likewise abandoned the aged myth that the Middle Ages was set debating the problem of the universal by a sentence in Porphyry, but Professor Patch repeats it without question (pp. 35 and 41); yet significantly when he wishes to call Boethius a realist, he quotes not Boethius' commentaries on Porphyry but one of his theological treatises. Or again to say that Boethius' conception of Fortune "may justly be regarded as a personification of Aristotle's 'incidental cause'" would be extremely difficult to illustrate by texts from Aristotle. Professor Patch, on the other hand, remarks in his preface that it is impossible at the present time to draw a rounded and balanced estimate of the influence of Boethius in medieval Europe, and he wisely devotes the greater part of his book, chapters iii and iv, to a history of the translations of the *Consolation* and of the imitations and the influence of that work. Even limited in that fashion, the field is vast. The earlier translations are described in some detail, and occasional samples are offered in citation; the later translations are necessarily treated somewhat summarily, and after the consideration of Jean de Meun the history is limited to translations into English. The influence of Boethius is traced primarily in terms of the *saturnus* form of his work, the alternation of passages of prose and verse, in terms of the personification of

philosophy or some surrogate for philosophy who retains her traits or vestments, who appears with personified handmaidens and engages in exhortation or debate, in the theme of consolation, the conception of fortune, or the circumstance of composition in prison. Professor Patch has undertaken an enormous subject, in the performance of which it would be easy to note the omission of some trait of Boethius or some aspect of his tradition; but such criticism would neglect the great value of his book in bringing together compendiously so many aspects of a manysided figure. The notes and bibliography are excellent for the literary tradition of the author of the *Consolation*.

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