Interpretation

In the *Consolation*, Boethius answered religious questions without reference to Christianity, relying solely on natural philosophy and the Classical Greek tradition. He believed in the correspondence between faith and reason. The truths found in Christianity would be no different from the truths found in philosophy.[6] In the words of Henry Chadwick, "If the *Consolation* contains nothing distinctively Christian, it is also relevant that it contains nothing specifically pagan either...[it] is a work written by a Platonist who is also a Christian."[7]

Boethius repeats the Macrobius model of the Earth in the center of a spherical cosmos.

The philosophical message of the book fits well with the religious piety of the Middle Ages. Boethius encouraged readers not to pursue worldly goods such as money and power, but to seek internalized virtues. Evil had a purpose, to provide a lesson to help change for good; while suffering from evil was seen as virtuous. Because God ruled the universe through Love, prayer to God and the application of Love would lead to true happiness.[9] The Middle Ages, with their vivid sense of an overruling fate, found in Boethius an interpretation of life closely akin to the spirit of Christianity. The *Consolation* stands, by its note of fatalism and its affinities with the Christian doctrine of humility, midway between the pagan philosophy of Seneca the Younger and the later Christian philosophy of consolation represented by Thomas à Kempis.[10]

The book is heavily influenced by Plato and his dialogues (as was Boethius himself).[10] Its popularity can in part be explained by its Neoplatonic and Christian ethical messages, although current scholarly research is still far from clear exactly why and how the work became so vastly popular in the Middle Ages.

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