



# The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION

By Joel C. Relihan

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

## The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION

By Joel C. Relihan

The Roman philosopher Boethius (c. 480-524) is best known for the *Consolation of Philosophy*, one of the most frequently cited texts in medieval literature. In the *Consolation*, an unnamed Boethius sits in prison awaiting execution when his muse Philosophy appears to him. Her offer to teach him who he truly is and to lead him to his heavenly home becomes a debate about how to come to terms with evil, freedom, and providence. The conventional reading of the *Consolation* is that it is a defense of pagan philosophy; nevertheless, many readers who accept this basic argument find that the ending is ambiguous and that Philosophy has not, finally, given the prisoner the comfort she had promised.

In *The Prisoner's Philosophy*, Joel C. Relihan delivers a genuinely new reading of the *Consolation*. He argues that it is a Christian work dramatizing not the truths of philosophy as a whole, but the limits of pagan philosophy in particular. He views it as one of a number of literary experiments of late antiquity, taking its place alongside Augustine's *Confessions* and *Soliloquies* as a spiritual meditation, as an attempt by Boethius to speak objectively about the life of the mind and its relation to God.

Relihan discerns three fundamental stories intertwined in the *Consolation*: an ironic retelling of Plato's *Crito*, an adaptation of Lucian's *Jupiter Confutatus*, and a sober reduction of *Job* to a quiet dialogue in which the wounded innocent ultimately learns wisdom in silence. Relihan's claim that Boethius's text was written as a Menippean satire does not rest merely on identifying a mixture of disparate literary influences on the text, or on the combination of verse and prose or of fantasy and morality. More important, Relihan argues, Boethius deliberately dramatizes the act of writing about systematic knowledge in a way that calls into question the value of that knowledge. Philosophy's attempt to lead an exile to God's heaven is rejected; the exile comes to accept the value of the phenomenal world, and theology replaces philosophy to explain the place of human beings in the order of the world. Boethius Christianizes the genre of Menippean satire, and his *Consolation* is a work about humility and prayer.

“Acknowledging that the *Consolation of Philosophy* is ‘over-familiar and under-read,’ Joel Relihan puts to the side old bromides about the work and instead pays careful attention to the narrative(s) Boethius constructs, grounding his readings in the contexts the work cultivates, especially its Menippean elements. The result is perhaps the first satisfying reading of the *Consolation* to be produced, a satisfaction felt also in the ways Relihan mirrors Boethius himself in the thoroughness of his scholarship and the elegance of his exposition. No one who studies Boethius will be able to ignore this book.” —**Joseph Pucci, Brown University**

“Anyone who has been fascinated, intrigued, or perhaps puzzled by the meaning, structure, or argument of Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* will find Joel Relihan’s new book a welcome addition to the study of this core text of the early medieval world whose influence extends to the present time. Relihan’s study is a tour de force that belongs in the library of all those who appreciate Boethius’s depth and subtlety. Fortune’s wheel has indeed turned in the favor of those who wish to explore with Relihan the intricacies and brilliance of the *Consolation*.”

—**Fr. John Fortin, O.S.B., Saint Anselm College**



[Download The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in ...pdf](#)



[Read Online The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death i ...pdf](#)

# The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION

By Joel C. Relihan

## The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan

The Roman philosopher Boethius (c. 480-524) is best known for the *Consolation of Philosophy*, one of the most frequently cited texts in medieval literature. In the *Consolation*, an unnamed Boethius sits in prison awaiting execution when his muse Philosophy appears to him. Her offer to teach him who he truly is and to lead him to his heavenly home becomes a debate about how to come to terms with evil, freedom, and providence. The conventional reading of the *Consolation* is that it is a defense of pagan philosophy; nevertheless, many readers who accept this basic argument find that the ending is ambiguous and that Philosophy has not, finally, given the prisoner the comfort she had promised.

In *The Prisoner's Philosophy*, Joel C. Relihan delivers a genuinely new reading of the *Consolation*. He argues that it is a Christian work dramatizing not the truths of philosophy as a whole, but the limits of pagan philosophy in particular. He views it as one of a number of literary experiments of late antiquity, taking its place alongside Augustine's *Confessions* and *Soliloquies* as a spiritual meditation, as an attempt by Boethius to speak objectively about the life of the mind and its relation to God.

Relihan discerns three fundamental stories intertwined in the *Consolation*: an ironic retelling of Plato's *Crito*, an adaptation of Lucian's *Jupiter Confutatus*, and a sober reduction of *Job* to a quiet dialogue in which the wounded innocent ultimately learns wisdom in silence. Relihan's claim that Boethius's text was written as a Menippean satire does not rest merely on identifying a mixture of disparate literary influences on the text, or on the combination of verse and prose or of fantasy and morality. More important, Relihan argues, Boethius deliberately dramatizes the act of writing about systematic knowledge in a way that calls into question the value of that knowledge. Philosophy's attempt to lead an exile to God's heaven is rejected; the exile comes to accept the value of the phenomenal world, and theology replaces philosophy to explain the place of human beings in the order of the world. Boethius Christianizes the genre of Menippean satire, and his *Consolation* is a work about humility and prayer.

"Acknowledging that the *Consolation of Philosophy* is 'over-familiar and under-read,' Joel Relihan puts to the side old bromides about the work and instead pays careful attention to the narrative(s) Boethius constructs, grounding his readings in the contexts the work cultivates, especially its Menippean elements. The result is perhaps the first satisfying reading of the *Consolation* to be produced, a satisfaction felt also in the ways Relihan mirrors Boethius himself in the thoroughness of his scholarship and the elegance of his exposition. No one who studies Boethius will be able to ignore this book." —**Joseph Pucci, Brown University**

"Anyone who has been fascinated, intrigued, or perhaps puzzled by the meaning, structure, or argument of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* will find Joel Relihan's new book a welcome addition to the study of this core text of the early medieval world whose influence extends to the present time. Relihan's study is a tour de force that belongs in the library of all those who appreciate Boethius's depth and subtlety. Fortune's wheel has indeed turned in the favor of those who wish to explore with Relihan the intricacies and brilliance of the *Consolation*." —**Fr. John Fortin, O.S.B., Saint Anselm College**

**The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan  
Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #3774042 in Books
- Published on: 2006-11-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .70" w x 6.00" l, .82 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 240 pages



[Download](#) The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in ...pdf



[Read Online](#) The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death i ...pdf

## Download and Read Free Online The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan

---

### Editorial Review

#### Review

“Going beyond the stance that the *Consolation* has merely some latent religious convictions, Relihan argues that Boethius is using the resources of Menippean satire to show the limits of pagan philosophy and the need to turn to prayer instead... The present volume is a masterful re-thinking of a classic text that rightfully has an honored place in the philosophical canon. Its thesis is carefully argued and richly deserves a scholarly hearing.” —*Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 46, 3, July 2008

“Relihan’s book argues that the *Consolation* is Menippean satire, a parody of both philosophy and the form of consolation. There is much to admire in this complex and literarily sophisticated reading. The connections it makes—not just to Job but to Matthew’s gospel, to Plato’s *Crito*, to the book of Esther, and to the *Odyssey*—appreciably deepen our understanding of the *Consolation*.” —*Religious Studies Review*, vol. 36, no. 3, September 2010

“This text will become one of the most important critical sources for study on the Menippean problem. . . . Relihan makes an important and compelling argument for paying attention to the narrative of the *Consolation*. . . . Relihan does a valuable service to the reading and teaching of the *Consolation*. He brings a sense of excitement and even suspense to the text.” —*Speculum*, 2009

“Relihan develops the innovative interpretation of Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* that he previously advanced in his *Ancient Menippean Satire* and elsewhere. . . . Although Relihan’s conclusions will be considered radical by many, he offers thoughtful approaches for examining some of the difficulties of the *Consolation*.” —*Choice*, June 2007

#### About the Author

**Joel C. Relihan** is professor of classics at Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts. His translation of Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* was published in 2001.

### Users Review

#### From reader reviews:

##### **Robert Holt:**

In other case, little persons like to read book The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION. You can choose the best book if you like reading a book. Given that we know about how is important any book The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION. You can add knowledge and of course you can around the world by way of a book. Absolutely right, since from book you can know everything! From your country till foreign or abroad you may be known. About simple factor until wonderful thing it is possible to know that. In this era, we could open a book as well as searching by

internet device. It is called e-book. You should use it when you feel uninterested to go to the library. Let's examine.

**Jerold Niemi:**

Do you certainly one of people who can't read satisfying if the sentence chained from the straightway, hold on guys that aren't like that. This The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION book is readable by you who hate the straight word style. You will find the data here are arrange for enjoyable reading experience without leaving actually decrease the knowledge that want to deliver to you. The writer involving The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION content conveys the thought easily to understand by many individuals. The printed and e-book are not different in the content material but it just different available as it. So , do you still thinking The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION is not loveable to be your top record reading book?

**Lawrence Pomerleau:**

People live in this new time of lifestyle always try and and must have the time or they will get lots of stress from both way of life and work. So , if we ask do people have time, we will say absolutely without a doubt. People is human not only a robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity are there when the spare time coming to you of course your answer will unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, the actual book you have read is usually The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION.

**Carolyn Scott:**

Do you like reading a e-book? Confuse to looking for your favorite book? Or your book had been rare? Why so many problem for the book? But any people feel that they enjoy regarding reading. Some people likes studying, not only science book but novel and The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION or even others sources were given knowledge for you. After you know how the good a book, you feel need to read more and more. Science publication was created for teacher or perhaps students especially. Those books are helping them to increase their knowledge. In other case, beside science guide, any other book likes The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION to make your spare time more colorful. Many types of book like here.

**Download and Read Online The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan  
#X8AZ4NCKJYG**

# **Read The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan for online ebook**

The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan books to read online.

## **Online The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan ebook PDF download**

**The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan Doc**

**The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan MobiPocket**

**The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan EPub**

**X8AZ4NCKJYG: The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's CONSOLATION By Joel C. Relihan**