1980, the fifteen hundredth anniversary of the birth of Boethius, saw, delightfully, a flurry of activity. The results of this activity are just emerging from the presses. Much of the life and works of Boethius, aristocrat, scholar and would-be statesman who was executed so ignominiously at Pavia in 524/5, has been, until recently, more familiar to the middle ages than to the present century. Now this imbalance is being corrected.

The present collection is designed primarily to extend the range of scholarly attention. This it does. It contains twenty substantial conference papers ordered under six carefully devised headings (Boethius and theology, Pavia, history, philosophy, the classical tradition, the middle ages), and eight ‘communications’. The majority of the contributions (17) is in Italian, eight are in English and three are in French. The credentials of the contributors are impressive. The volume is carefully edited and proof-read, and is provided with that increasingly rare luxury, footnotes which are both substantial and at the foot of the page. It is not, however, given an index. This omission is particularly sad when the volume is in other respects so well-produced and is of such technical intricacy.

The strictly historical papers have a great deal to offer. We owe the now confident assertion that Boethius was imprisoned in Pavia itself to the previous work of Mgr. Gianani. He offers here a further discussion of the counter claims of Milan and, with his help and that of Dr Catherine Morton we can now, from this collection alone, describe both place and manner of Boethius’s death. The difficult historiographical problems associated with Boethian sources and their many interpreters are thoroughly discussed, and so are the chronological ones concerning the journey of Pope John I and the linking of the fates of Boethius, Symmachus and Theodoric. The death (Dr Obortello) may have taken place early in 525. some reconstruction, furthermore, is offered of the political intrigues and hatreds which led to it. Boethius emerges as a victim not only of Gothic distrust but (Dr Demougeot) of the thwarted ambitions of his Roman contemporaries and (Dr Zecchini) of the Catholicism of his own Anician forebears.

As is perhaps to be expected, by far the greater number of contributions bears upon Boethius’s intellectual and literary interests. At this point there is some disappointment. We have long been in need of detailed work upon the later manuscript transmission of Boethius’s writings. Glosses and commentaries upon the De Consolatione Philosophiae, more particularly those upon the widely discussed verse beginning ‘O qui perpetua’ of Book III, ix,
stand in pressing need of attention. It is arguable that ever since the fundamental work of Edmund Silk and Cora Lutz this has been the most obvious problem confronting Boethian scholarship. It receives little attention here. Only the better known later Carolingians, John Scotus Eriugena and Remigius of Auxerre appear (Dr d'Onofrio). Fortunately another anniversary collection (ed. M. Gibson, *Boethius, His Life, Thought and Influence*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981) has done much to fill this gap and the two may, indeed must, now be read in concert.

Four other papers treat of the transmission of Boethius to the middle ages. One is upon the later influence of the *De Institutione Arithmetica* (Dr Masi), one on that of Boethius's theory of Topics, (Dr Stump) and two are upon concerns common to Boethius and Thomas Aquinas (Drs Mauro and Hankey). Dr Masi's article (and that of Dr Pizzani on Boethius and the Quadrivium may be read now as an extension of the few pages on Boethius's arithmetic provided in yet another anniversary publication (H. Chadwick, *Boethius. The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1981). Dr Stump's work on the *De Topicis Differentiis* of Boethius (Cornell U.P. 1978) has already established her as a distinguished contributor to the history of logic in the middle ages and here she makes an interesting effort to describe and place Abelard's particular use of this treatise. We certainly do not lack manuscript fortification in this article, but there are several infelicities of expression (what, for example, are we to make of 'polematically'? ) The reader has, therefore, a somewhat undue struggle with an admittedly demanding subject. Dr Mauro considers the attitudes to providence and destiny of both Boethius and Thomas Aquinas and draws welcome attention to the effect the intervention of Arabic astrology had on that of the latter. Dr Hankey argues for the primary influence of Christian Neoplatonism on the Trinitarian theology of both and discusses the influence of Eriugena upon Thomas. Here again we come up against the clear need for work upon medieval glosses and commentaries on the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, especially upon the commentary on it by William of Conches. However, this paper, together with the contribution of Dr Leonardi on Trinitarian controversy in the lifetime and in the writings of Boethius himself, and that of Dr Quacquarelli, may be read with theological profit.

The remaining contributions to this section of the subject concern either the influences of earlier writers upon Boethius or matters upon which particular light may be gleaned from Boethius's own works. Some of the themes tackled are extraordinarily difficult and have a long, tangled and discouraging history. Efforts to establish links between Boethius's works and those of Augustine remain inconclusive and, once more, of those questions upon which we need to hear most (for example, Augustine and the
Tractates) we hear least. Nonetheless, four papers attack other aspects of this, Dr Crabbe, on Anamnesis and Mythology, with especial ingenuity. Others deal with Boethius's Neoplatonic and Greek heritage. Theodoric's Italy saw a striking revival of interest in the Greek and Latin traditions of Platonism and Neoplatonism. Both early and late antique Greek sources fired it, and Boethius's involvement in this revival is carefully demonstrated (Dr Moreschini, Dr de Vogel, Dr de Rijk). Greek and Latin linguistic problems clearly claimed a large share of Boethius's intellectual energies and dominate the *Contra Eutychen* (Dr Micaelli). The *Mathematike Syntaxis* of Ptolemy may have stood (Dr Lucidi) behind both Boethius's lost treatise on astronomy and small sections of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* I, ii, (though Chadwick, *op.cit.*, p.102, suggests that Proclus's summary was the true medium). Dr Della Corte directs welcome attention to the delicate political position in which Boethius's early mechanical interests placed him and, in particular, to his access to Archimedes. From all these papers it becomes clear how necessary is a knowledge of Greek to a full understanding of Boethius's concerns and, indeed, to an entry into the problems of those who drew upon him.

As befits its subject, this collection provides material for a wide range of interests and, again appropriately, makes no concessions to the uninitiated. It is one which universities and institutions of scholarship should be careful to acquire.

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The title of this little work might lead one to suppose that the attacks on the family in the ancient world were prompted by or in the interests of the rhetorical schools. This is not so, however: it was first the philosophers promoting the superior claims of their school, then the religious sects (especially the Christians) promoting similar claims and the superior merits of virginity, who attacked the values enshrined in the Classical (Graeco-Roman) family; rhetoric was merely the tool with which they pushed their claims against the age-old instincts of society. This point Professor Lambert in fact establishes, but the title of his work misleads.

Professor Lambert does not pose more fundamental questions, however; he takes for granted that Xenophon in *Memorabilia* really represents the