

Platonic and Cartesian Philosophy in the Commentary on Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* by Pierre Cally

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I

When the Cartesian scholar Pierre Cally published his text of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* and his commentary on it in 1680, he became part of a very long and venerable tradition that went back to the early days of the Carolingian period.¹ During all those centuries, the *Consolatio* had remained immensely popular, and through glosses, commentaries and translations into the vernacular languages, it had been made available to readers from all social ranks. To a large extent, its reception - like that of any classic - was determined by the cultural and intellectual climate of the time, which is to say that interpretations could show an overtly Platonic, Aristotelian or Christian character and for most of the time, of course, a mixture of these.² But what these different interpretations had in common was their stress on the *Consolatio* as an *Erbauungsbuch*. Its combination of Stoic morality and Platonic metaphysics, the discussions of various crucial issues such as divine providence versus free will, eternity versus a history that is finite, the creation of the world, the role of fortune and the status of evil, along with the prosimetric style in which the dialogue between Boethius and Lady Philosophy is couched, were all well appreciated by medieval readers. They would certainly have agreed with the (exaggerated) text from the blurb of a recent (German) edition saying that the book 'may serve even today to provide guidance in life for any reader yearning for a spiritual direction, and hoping to find personal happiness through reflecting on the true values of human life'.³

By the time Pierre Cally (or Petrus Calluus) was asked to contribute to the series of editions of classical texts for the education of the Dauphin, the future king of France, he could therefore fall back on a tradition of very long standing. Much of the glossing and explanatory

¹ *Anicii Manlii Severini Boetii...Consolationis Philosophiae libros quinque interpretatione et notis illustravit Petrus Callyus*, Lutetiae Parisiorum apud Lambertum Roulland 1680 (the Delphin edition). In this article I refer to this edition and to the reprint in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 63.547-862. Cally's work was reprinted at least three times (Paris, apud F. Leonard, 1695; 1823 London, A.J. Valpy, 1823; Migne, PL 1847).

² Commentaries with a strong Aristotelian bias are those of William of Aragon (early thirteenth century) and Pierre d'Ailly (fourteenth century) while rather Platonic is the one by William of Conches (twelfth century) of which I am preparing an edition for the *Corpus Christianorum*. Late-medieval vernacular commentaries tend towards Christianization, in the Low Countries perhaps under the influence of the Moderna Devotio, but research on this is just beginning. On the other hand, Badius Ascensius, whose commentary was published in Paris in 1495, rejected the 'interpretatio christiana'. Needless to say, one should be careful in applying these characterizations. For discussion of the two most important medieval commentaries, see A.J. Minnis and L. Nauta, 'More Platonic loquitur: What Nicholas Trevet really did to William of Conches', in A.J. Minnis (ed.), *Chaucer's "Boece" and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius*, Cambridge 1993, 1-33 where more bibliography is cited.

³ *Boethius. Trost der Philosophie*, O. Gigon and E. Gegenschatz (eds.), München and Zürich 1990.

material on, for example, Boethius' reference to the political upheavals of his time, the different kinds of metre that were employed in the work, the mythological lore in some of his poems, and many (philosophical) words and phrases, had been handed on by successive generations of commentators. Of course, given the fluent character of the commentary tradition, in due course many glosses and explanations were adapted to new standards, corrected, revised or omitted. Not a few silly medieval glosses such as the one on Alcibiades ('a very beautiful woman' in many commentaries) or on the Academia ('a city where Plato studied') were subject to the complacent smile of the early humanists who naturally had much more historical and philological material at their disposal than the rank and file of the medieval commentators.

For Cally, then, it would no longer have been necessary to delve too deeply into the commentary tradition in order to clarify Boethius' philosophical doctrines or his allusions to classical mythology and history. In this respect (which is not uninteresting in itself), Cally's work shows clearly to what a large extent a commentary from the seventeenth century is indebted to a long tradition on which it was grafted, although his arguments against Glareanus seem to be new: the latter had argued, like Erasmus, that the prose sections of the *Consolatio* could not have been written by Boethius.⁴ What I shall discuss in this article, however, is the new shoot that was growing on this trunk of tradition, namely Cally's use of Cartesian philosophy or, at least, Cartesian notions, in explaining Boethius' text. Given the rise of Cartesian philosophy in France at the very time Cally was active, his Cartesian reading should perhaps not surprise us, but it has not been noticed so far and it remains to be seen what kind of fruit this new interpretation of an old text bore. Without claiming too much originality for Cally or, for that matter, ascribing too much importance to his commentary, I hope to show, among other things, that it reveals something of that particular brand of Platonic-Augustinianism that characterizes much Cartesian philosophy of the seventeenth century and the opposition that the burgeoning Cartesianism was meeting in France during this time. As a mixture of old and new elements, Cally's work, moreover, might be said to be a typical product of the period.⁵ Although his name is now largely forgotten, we should bear in mind that his edition of the *Consolatio* and his commentary on it was reprinted several times and found its way into Migne's *Patrologia Latina* and, consequently, must have already reached a fairly large readership by the time the scholarly editions were published, such as that of Peiper in 1870.

II

⁴ For the text of the *Consolatio*, Cally based himself on the edition of Renatus Vallinus (1656), as he himself acknowledged in the preface (PL 63.553).

⁵ See the essays in T. Sorell (ed.), *The Rise of Modern Philosophy. The Tension between the New and Traditional Philosophies from Machiavelli to Leibniz*, Oxford 1993. Cottingham's essay on Descartes in this volume is outstanding and its closing words are well worth quoting: '...in the real world, paradigm shifts are seldom instantaneous; revolutions seldom occur as suddenly as is suggested in retrospective schematisms of the historians' (p. 166). Although I focus on the New Philosophy in Cally's commentary, his debt to St Thomas and scholastic philosophy is clear from his quotations and some of his terminology.

When Descartes died in February 1650, Pierre Cally was 19 years old and much of his future life was to centre on the controversies that the introduction of the philosophy of Descartes had raised within the French schools. Born near Argentan, Cally studied and taught philosophy in Caen, a town which, according to Bayle's account, had the best university in France after Paris.⁶ In Caen he met Peter Daniel Huet, who was his exact contemporary and at that time an ardent follower of Descartes' philosophy; they became friends. Since the role of Cartesian philosophers within the schools was still marginal, conferences were organized at which the principles of Descartes' system were popularized and explained.⁷ Rohault's Wednesday conferences in Paris were notable, and it may be that Huet found inspiration there to organise Cartesian sessions in Caen too.⁸ Cally was soon converted to Cartesianism by Huet and wrote a Cartesian schoolbook, *Institutio philosophiae* (1674), reworked and published in 1695 under the title, *Universae philosophiae institutio*, dedicated to Bossuet.⁹ In this book Cally followed the logic of Port-Royal in refuting the maxim that all knowledge derives from the senses (to which I shall return). Malebranche's conception of ideas as seen in God is rejected; an idea is simply defined as 'vera imago materiae sibi subjectae'. His adherence to the philosophy of Descartes led him to attempt to reconcile the Cartesian view on matter as *res extensa* with the dogma of transubstantiation.

It was especially their teaching on this issue that was to cause so much trouble for the Cartesians in France. Rejecting the scholastic theory of substance and accidents, Cartesians had to formulate an alternative solution in terms of matter and its modes to the Tridentine teaching of the existence of the accidents of bread and wine independent of the substances to which they belong. The result of the controversy was that Descartes' philosophical works were placed on the Roman Index in 1663, and that Cartesian philosophy was proscribed by the University of Paris in 1671 and the Theology Faculties at Angers in 1675 and Caen in 1677. Moreover, some Cartesians were dismissed from their chairs. At Cally's own university at Caen, for example, the Theology Faculty declared: 'Descartes' principles of philosophy seem to us contrary to sounder theological doctrine'.¹⁰ Before the publication of his *Universae*

⁶ For the brief facts of Cally's life and works, see: F. Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, Paris and Lyon 1854 (2 vols.), vol. i, pp. 463, 518-21; the article in the *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, vol. vii, p. 910 and in F.-X. Feller's *Biographie Universelle*, p. 298; H. Gouhier, *Cartésianisme et augustinisme au XVII^e siècle*, Paris 1978, p. 203 n.4.

⁷ See D.M. Clarke, *Occult Powers and Hypotheses. Cartesian Natural Philosophy under Louis XIV*, Oxford 1989, pp. 15-22.

⁸ Cally mentions these conferences when, in commenting on Boethius' reference to the 'Stoa Poilike' in Athens (V metre 4) where (Stoic) philosophers convened, he writes: 'sic suus Cadomi [= Caen], Bajocarum [= Bayeux], caeterarumque minorum urbium locus, in quem plures dicendarum audiendarumque rerum novarum causa convenire consueverunt' (p. 340; PL 63.850).

⁹ J. Mabillon recommended the work of Cally in his *Traité des études monastiques*, 1691, pp. 248, 250.

¹⁰ '...declaramus [i.e. sacrae Theologiae Ministri] principia Philosophiae Renati Descartes saniori Theologorum Doctrinae contraria nobis videri, & perpetuo Decreto statuimus neminem eorum qui illa sustinere, aut defendere voluerint, ad ullum hujus Sacrae Facultatis gradum esse deinceps admittendum...'; du Plessis d'Argentre, *Collectio*

philosophiae institutio, Cally had already rendered himself suspect by holding conferences with protestants from his own parish of St Martin at Caen where he had become priest in 1684. His opinions and activities led to accusations of Jansenism and Cartesianism (the two often went together),¹¹ and Cally was dismissed from his chair at the University of Caen and from his priesthood at St Martin, and expelled to Montdidier during the years 1686-1688.¹² After his exile, Cally found his old friend Huet turning from an enthusiastic propagator of Cartesianism to one of its fiercest enemies, and after the publication of the latter's *Censura Philosophiae Cartesianae* in 1689, Cally broke off their friendship. Later, Huet passed a rather harsh judgement on his old friend:

He applied himself with such a fervent zeal to Cartesian philosophy that he renounced the maxims and dogmas he had held for so many years; he never spoke but in Cartesian terms either in public or private conferences. He did that in such a tactless and impudent manner that in touching matters of the faith he did not temper himself, and even defiled and corrupted faith with his Cartesian comments. At last, this turned out to be harmful and unflattering to himself.¹³

Some years later, Cally devoted a separate treatise to the issue, entitled *Durand commenté, ou l'Accord de la philosophie avec la théologie, touchant la transsubstantiation de l'Eucharistie*.¹⁴ For this he was censured by the bishop of Bayeux, but to the latter's surprise, perhaps, Cally retracted his work most readily, and did so with great humility. He also voluntarily suppressed all copies of his work that he could lay his hands on. In 1709, Cally

judiciorum de novis erroribus..., Paris, 1728-36 (2 vols.), iii.344. Cf. T. McClaughlin, 'Censorship and Defenders of the Cartesian Faith in Mid-Seventeenth Century France', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40, 1979, 563-81 (on Caen, pp. 567-8).

¹¹ See Clarke, *Occult Powers and Hypotheses*, pp. 28-34.

¹² See Pierre Bayle's remarks in *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, Janvier 1687, Amsterdam 1687, pp. 80-97 on the accusations of Jansenism. In the article in the *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, Moulins is incorrectly given as the place of Cally's exile. (According to Bayle, M. Malouin was expelled to Moulins.) On the censorship of Cartesian views and the accusations of Jansenism, see McClaughlin. 'Censorship and Defenders'.

¹³ '...tamque vehementi ad eam studio exarsit, ut tradita a se tot annos praecepta & dogmata palam ejuraret; nec aliud quidquam creparet, vel in publicis lectionibus, vel in privatis colloquiis, quam Cartesium. Quod & tam inconsiderate tamque licenter ab eo factum est, ut cum rerum sacrarum attingeret doctrinam, minime temperaret sibi, quin eam quoque respergeret Cartesianis commentis, & corrumperet. Atque id ipsi demum noxae & decori fuit'; *Commentarius de rebus ad eum pertinentibus*, Amsterdam 1718, pp. 386-7. Since Huet himself had been responsible for Cally's conversion to Cartesianism, his judgement seems to be somewhat unfair, and, in any case, does not accord well with Cally's reputation as a gentle and humble man (see the article in F.-X. Feller's *Biographie Universelle* on Cally).

¹⁴ Cologne 1700. See G. Vattier, 'La doctrine cartésienne de l'Eucharistie chez Pierre Cally', *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* 12, no. 163, 1911-12, pp. 274-96. For the general debate, see R.A. Watson, 'Transubstantiation among the Cartesians', in: T.M. Lennon, J.M. Nicholas and J.W. Davis (eds.), *Problems of Cartesianism*, Kingston and Montreal 1982, 127-48 (but he does not mention Cally).

died in his hometown of Caen. It is against this background of a burgeoning Cartesianism and its condemnations that we have to situate Cally's commentary on Boethius' *Consolatio*, to which I now turn.

Cally's edition was originally published in the famous series of editions of classical texts *in usum Delphini*, i.e. for the education of the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV and future king of France. The idea for this series came from the duc du Montausier and was taken up by Bossuet, bishop of Caen and tutor of the Dauphin. Bossuet was soon joined by Huet in carrying out the programme of inviting contributors and in supervising the editions.¹⁵ With regard to Boethius, both scholars felt that this author had been treated unjustly by his commentators, who had especially confounded or ignored the important issue of the reconciliation of free will and divine providence. Given the importance of the text (even Leibniz had made an abbreviation of at least Books 1 and 2 for his own use) and the great number of (somewhat faulty) editions, the *Consolatio* had to be included in the series. Huet asked his friend Cally to undertake the task. The volume appeared in 1680 and is addressed to the Dauphin. It is unlikely that the Dauphin actually read Cally's edition, for he married in that year and ended his studies. But even if he had read it, he would hardly have guessed that Cally's interpretation adhered to Cartesian philosophy, since Cally mentioned 'Cartesians' only once and in an unfavourable sense at that. Apparently, it was safe not to make too much of a song and dance about Cartesianism even in such an "innocent" work as a commentary on a classical text. In view of the recent condemnations in Caen, Angers and Paris, Cally perhaps had to introduce the Cartesian elements silently. In what follows I shall discuss three themes and show into what kind of service Cartesian notions were pressed by Cally: a) a theory of knowledge and especially the so-called 'seeds of truth', b) the creation of the universe and the vortex-theory, and c) the animal spirits.

III

Seeds of Truth

As is well known, Cartesians rejected the scholastic maxim that 'nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu'.¹⁶ For them, to say that all knowledge comes from and depends on the senses is to build knowledge on an insecure foundation. Sense-experience is often unreliable and hence cannot be trusted. Descartes himself had often emphasized that hasty judgement and prejudiced opinions were the result of too great a reliance on the senses.¹⁷ On

¹⁵ For some comments on the series see the letters of Bossuet to Huet in 'Mélanges Historiques. Choix des documents' in: *Collection de Documents Inédits sur l'Histoire de France*, t. ii, Paris 1877, pp. 611-76; Huet, *Huetiana ou Pensées diverses de M. Huet, Evêque d'Avranches*, Paris 1822, ch. xxxvii 'Auteurs Dauphins'.

¹⁶ For an excellent discussion of the various positions of (French) Cartesians on Descartes' theory of knowledge, see Clarke, *Occult Powers and Hypotheses*, pp. 43-70. Descartes' own position is well treated by N. Jolley, *The Light of the Soul. Theories of Ideas in Leibniz, Malebranche, and Descartes*, Oxford 1990, 12-54.

¹⁷ E.g. *Principles of Philosophy* II 3; Ch. Adam and P. Tannery (eds.), *Oeuvres de Descartes* (12 vols.), new edn.

the Cartesian account of knowledge, the soul must be credited with an autonomy and independence of bodily sensations and sense-experience; indeed, a turning inwards of the mind upon itself is called for if we want to attain truths concerning extra-mental reality. Whatever the precise nature of the soul's contribution to the acquisition of knowledge, it certainly had to be far more important than the data from sensation which could only occasion but never explain the formation of ideas. This assertion of the autonomy of the powers of the human mind was sometimes conveyed in terms of 'seeds of truth' (*sémenes de vérité*) that God had implanted in the mind at birth and which functioned as catalysts for getting to know the world.¹⁸ They needed only stirring by learning and teaching, and could then grow from seeds to a mature tree of knowledge. Descartes was not very clear on this aspect of his epistemology, i.e. whether innate ideas were, as it were, stored up in full dress in the treasury of the mind, or whether they existed only potentially (*in potentia*) or, on still another reading, whether we are born with an innate disposition that produces ideas whenever we wish.¹⁹ What is clear, however, is that for Descartes the bodily sensations often hinder the mind in thinking. 'In early childhood', he writes, 'the mind was so closely tied to the body that it had no leisure for any thoughts except those by means of which it had sensory awareness of what was happening to the body'.²⁰

The Platonic and Augustinian background of these ideas and their expression have been universally recognized, by both Descartes' own contemporaries and by later scholars. It has given rise to terms such as 'cartésianisme augustinisé' and 'augustinisme cartésianisé' for certain strands within the Cartesian movement.²¹ What is less well known is the importance

Paris 1964-76, vol. viii-1, pp. 41-2 (henceforth abbreviated as AT). I quote from the translation of J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (2 vols.) Cambridge 1984-85, vol. i, p. 224 (henceforth abbreviated as CSM). Descartes' letters are quoted from the translation made by the three scholars of CSM and A. Kenny, henceforth abbreviated as CSMK (Cambridge 1991).

¹⁸ *Discourse on the Method* V and VI; AT vi.40-1 and 64/CSM i.131 and 144. For an interpretation of the 'seeds of truth' see D.M. Clarke, *Descartes' Philosophy of Science*, Manchester 1982, pp. 186-92. Cf. also *Cogitationes privatae* (AT x.217): 'The seeds of knowledge in us, as in a flint, are brought to light by philosophers through reason; struck out through imagination by poets they shine forth more brightly'; transl. A.C. Crombie, 'Descartes' in C.C. Gillespie (ed.), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (16 vols.) New York 1970-1980, vol. iv, p. 51. The same sort of formulations can be found in other Cartesians. See, for example, Bernard Lamy as quoted in Clarke, *Occult Powers and Hypotheses*, p. 66.

¹⁹ We must be careful not to identify the seeds of truth with the innate idea, but it would be inappropriate to discuss this difficult issue here. Cf. Jolley, *The Light of the Soul*, pp. 32-54. What is involved in stirring the seeds of truth is also unclear in Descartes' account. Clarke, *Descartes' Philosophy of Science*, pp. 190-91 suggests 'reflection on ordinary experience' instead of some kind of purely intellectual reflection.

²⁰ *Principles* I 71; AT viii-1.35/CSM i.218. Cf. 'Fifth Reply'; AT vii.375/CSM ii.258, and his conversation with Burman where he is reported to have said that 'the body is always a hindrance to the mind in thinking and this is especially true in youth'; J. Cottingham (trans.), *Descartes' Conversation with Burman*, Oxford 1976, p. 8. Descartes even used the old but controversial metaphor of the body as prison in a letter to the "Hyperaspites"; AT iii.424/CSMK 189-90.

²¹ Gouhier, *Cartésianisme et augustinisme*. On the medieval background of Descartes' thinking in general, see E. Gilson, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien*, Paris 1967, esp. pp. 9-50

of these notions and the occurrence of the metaphors in Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*, and I shall, therefore, start by discussing Cally's interesting attempt to couple Boethian Platonism with Cartesian Platonism. In Book III metre 11, for example, Boethius writes that 'Whoever with deep thought searches out the truth, and will not be deceived by paths untrue, must on himself turn back the light of his inward gaze (*intimi lucem visus*)'.²² Although the soul is weighed down with bulky oblivion by the body, some 'seeds of truth' (*semen veri*) have remained which can be stirred 'by learning's breeze'. And Boethius concludes that Plato's notion of knowledge as recollection of what the soul has seen and known in a previous life must be true, hinting at the often quoted example of the slave boy in Plato's *Meno* who could draw up out of himself the right answers to a geometrical problem by being questioned in an orderly way. Not surprisingly, Descartes used the same example in a letter to Voetius.²³

In explaining Boethius' metre, Cally introduces the Cartesian notions of *cognitio clara et distincta* and the innate ideas. Knowledge has to be found within the mind itself. A true and certain judgement can only arise out of a clear and distinct notion, and this *cognitio clara et distincta* cannot be had unless the mind knows itself. By frequent meditating on and attending to its cogitations (as if undergoing interrogation by God) the mind is able to come to true knowledge.²⁴ For although the body impedes the mind's activities, as Author of the mind's natural light, God guarantees that this inner light (*innatum lumen*) cannot be extinguished and will be active as long as the mind will live, i.e. perpetually (with a beginning but no end).²⁵

This metaphorical way of speaking of light that cannot be extinguished and of the body that hinders the natural thinking of the mind, suggests that in a previous life the soul had known things in a more perfect way but had lost this knowledge on uniting with a body. Indeed, Boethius, as we have seen, refers to this Platonic doctrine. Moreover, it seems to be hinted at in the words of the Book of Wisdom: 'corpus enim quod corrumpitur, aggravat animam, et terrena inhabitatio deprimit sensum multa cogitantem', which are also quoted by

on 'l'innéisme cartésien'.

²² For text and translation, see the Loeb edition of H.F. Stewart and E.K. Rand (eds.) and S.J. Tester (transl.), Harvard 1973. I have slightly adapted Tester's rather archaic translation. III metre 11 on p. 296 (Loeb).

²³ AT viii-2.167/CSMK 222-3. Referring to the same example, Leibniz wrote in his *Discourse on Metaphysics* that Plato's theory of reminiscence 'has much solidity provided that one takes it in the right way, that one rids it of the error of pre-existence [of souls]...'; in G.H.R. Parkinson (ed.), *Leibniz. Philosophical Writings*, London 1973, p. 36.

²⁴ '...frequenti tamen meditatione mens humana suas cogitationes attentius cogitans, ipsum etiam animum eo putatur docere, quod, mente veluti Deum interrogante, Deoque eidem respondente, naturale lumen sic diffundatur, ut quod ante latebat, id fugata caligine animadvertatur' (p. 242; PL 63.775. Cf. p. 30; PL 63.604). Cally seems particularly fond of the phrase *clara et distincta*; it recurs very often in his commentary.

²⁵ Cally is not consistent in his uses of the words *aeternum* and *perpetuum*. The former is only to be applied to God, he writes, because *aeternum* means 'with no end and no beginning'. But apart from the fact that this is something different from Boethius' 'tota simul-eternity' (*Consolatio* V prose 6), Cally elsewhere also uses *aeternum* to refer to the soul's duration (p. 333; PL 63.846 and pp. 349-350; PL 63.859).

Cally at this point. Some commentators on the *Consolatio* had tried to save Boethius from subscribing to these Platonic notions of the pre-existence of the soul and knowledge as recollection, for these were obviously at odds with either creationism (God creates new souls daily) or traducianism (souls are created from the souls of the parents), which were the two main (Christian) alternatives to the Platonic view.

Cally does not hesitate to reject the Platonic doctrine as 'falsa', although as he notes, early Christian authors such as Origen were attracted to it.²⁶ He subscribes to the view of the 'philosophi': the human soul is the 'effect of God' and the form of the human body, and as such forms a link between God and the sensible world. At birth it has been imprinted by God with 'cogitationes' and 'affectus' with regard to the supreme good, but 'the mind is so disturbed by the conflicting impulses from the body that they [i.e. ideas imprinted by God] are swamped or at least obscured'.²⁷ But some 'semen veri' have remained, and this seed of truth is 'nothing else', Cally writes, than 'an innate cogitation from which arises a true judgement' (*cogitatio, ex qua insita fit verum iudicium*). Elsewhere, commenting on book V metre 3, where Boethius hints again at the Platonic notion of knowledge as recollection, Cally admits that Boethius might well have subscribed to the Platonic view - Boethius after all was more a Platonist than an Aristotelian - but that 'after having refuted Plato's position, Boethius' words can be understood differently', namely as referring to the pre-Adamite state of men. In that paradisiacal state, the human soul had known most things as particulars. After the fall in paradise, men had only recourse to universals for getting to know the world since the soul was disturbed by 'perturbationes'.²⁸ This reading of the Platonic fall of the soul in terms of Adam's fall in paradise generated its problems for the creationist position - the descending part of the circular course of the Platonic soul did not have an equivalent in the Christian unilateral scheme. Nevertheless, it was accepted by some of Cally's predecessors in commenting on Boethius' text and on other accounts of the soul's knowledge and descent as in Plato's *Timaeus* and Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*.²⁹

Cally's main strategy to escape the "tyranny of the letter", however, was to suggest that the Platonic and Boethian account of the pre-existence of the soul and knowledge as recollection can be interpreted along Cartesian lines: recollection means nothing more than that notions arise out of preceding notions: 'For in every method one progresses from more known to less known notions, so that a more recent notion is a *praenotionis modus*'.³⁰ The

²⁶ Cally, p. 245; PL 63.778.

²⁷ Cally, p. 243; PL 63.776. Cf. the position of Descartes quoted above.

²⁸ '...posito eo, in quo credimus Adamum conditum fuisse, *innocentiae statu*: in hoc enim statu mens humana peculiari quodam modo *cernebat mentem altam*, nempe Deum: unde maximam partem rerum cognoscendarum non solum generatim, sed etiam singulatim cognoscebat: *pariter summam et singula novat*. At ejus posterius, in poenam peccati hujus sui primi parentis, perturbationibus ita afficiuntur, ut eorum mens, nondum tamen omnino oblita sui, plura non singulatim sed generatim solum cognoscat'; Cally, p. 332; PL 63.845. Words in italics come from the *Consolatio* V metre 3.

²⁹ More on this will be found in a forthcoming article of mine, 'The Pre-existence of the Soul in Medieval Thought' in *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 63:1 (1996).

³⁰ Cally, p. 245; PL 63.776-7. Cf. Descartes, *Meditation* IV; AT vii.59/CSM ii.41.

notions impressed on the mind by God at birth occupy the first step within this process of modifying 'notiones' and 'appetitiones', which is why the mind must turn inwards and listen to the old adage: Know thyself. This account also suggests why the Stoic philosophers were wrong when they thought of the soul as a 'tabula rasa' and a passive recipient of sensations from the outside.³¹

The Cartesian emphasis on the interior mind as the natural light and the treasury of innate ideas is well supported by Boethius' text, and thus offers Cally plenty of opportunity to interpret it in Cartesian terms. He is aware that his position is at odds with that of the 'Academicos' and the 'Dogmaticos', i.e. the sceptics and the scholastics, the two camps of opponents of the Cartesians. Yet, like many other Cartesians, Cally does not seek to throw away the data of sense-experience. What does appear from his commentary is that he objects to the 'nothing' in the scholastic maxim 'nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu', and in this his position reflects that of his fellow Cartesians.³² The weakness of the body (i.e. matter) and the occurrence of conflicting sensations impede the mind in attaining to true knowledge but, nevertheless, sensation also occasions the mind's activity.³³ In summary, Cally's interpretation is much indebted to Cartesian philosophy and terminology. The presence of the Platonic-Augustinian elements in Cartesian philosophy served him well in commenting on the Platonic aspects in Boethius' *Consolatio*.

The Creation of the Universe

Cartesian influence is also notable in other parts of Cally's interpretation, especially in his commentary on Boethius' famous hymn 'O qui perpetua' (III metre 9), where the latter summarized Plato's myth of the creation of the world.³⁴ As is well known, this part of the *Consolatio* had always attracted most attention from readers and commentators.³⁵ Despite the presence of some pagan elements, the hymn could be read without much difficulty as a Platonic version of the first chapter of Genesis, and as such formed a litmus test for the positive or negative attitude of the Christian commentator towards Boethius. For although author of four theological treatises, the absence of any reference to the Bible, to Christian faith and to Christ himself in the *Consolatio* had rendered him somewhat suspect in the eyes of some of his commentators.

³¹ Cally, pp. 340-2; PL 63.850-4 (on V metre 4).

³² See Clarke, *Occult Powers and Hypotheses*, pp. 43-70, esp. 64-7.

³³ '...quod quidem vitium non est: cum nostra cognitio, utpote quae non est nihili, a rebus exterioribus pendeat, velut effectus a causa, nec vitiosum sit, cognoscendi effecti gratia, causam considerare'; p. 242; PL 63.776; cf. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* VI; AT vi.64/CSM i.144.

³⁴ *Consolatio*, pp. 271-275 (Loeb); *Timaeus* 27C-42D.

³⁵ See P. Courcelle, *La consolation de philosophie dans la tradition littéraire. Antécédents et postérité de Boèce*, Paris 1967, pp. 275-332; A.J. Minnis and L. Nauta, 'More Platonic loquitur'.

For Cally these pagan elements did not distract from Boethius' authority. In his preface he had already taken issue with Barnartius who had argued in his commentary of 1607 that Boethius, by his untimely death, was deprived of writing a proper end to the *Consolatio* in which he would have sought consolation from theology in lieu of philosophy.³⁶ But for Cally, Boethius' aim was precisely to show the way to *all* people that by natural light (*naturale lumen*) we can gain insight in our true destiny. To this effect he quotes from the preface of Lipsius' *De Constantia*, who was likewise being accused of focusing exclusively on ancient, pagan philosophy as a guide for man's life. In the *Consolatio* there is only one place, Cally writes, where Boethius quotes from the Bible (in III prose 12: 'regit cuncta fortiter suaviterque disponit'; cf. Wisdom 8.1), and this fact should not surprise or worry us: Philosophy draws only on natural light, which is nothing else than an idea (*notio*) of divine origin or (*sive*) implanted in us by nature.³⁷ But we shall see that Cally's interpretation, although not hindered by an urge to read more of Christian faith in Boethius than was in fact there, was somewhat strained by the introduction of notions such as the vortex and animal spirits with which he was acquainted from his Cartesian reading.

On the pattern of the eternal forms, God, according to Boethius' hymn, had created the world out of prime, flowing matter ('*materiae fluitantis opus*):

You draw out all things, and being yourself most fair, a fair world in your mind you bear, and forming it in the same likeness, bid it being perfect to complete itself in perfect parts. You bind its elements with law, so that the cold come together with flames, the dry with liquids, lest the fire, becoming too pure, flies out, or lest it pull down the overwhelmed earth.

Cally begins his explanation by pointing out that the world is the same as the '*res quoqueversus extensa, cujusmodi materia*'.³⁸ Heaven, earth and all other bodies together form the universe and have been in perpetual motion. Out of this flowing matter, the four elements are created. The various combinations of these elements result in what is called mixed bodies (*mista*); these mixtures make up the universe and give it its appearance.³⁹ They fill the

³⁶ J. Barnartius (Moretus, Antwerp 1607). He was followed in this by P. Bertius (Maire, Leiden 1633; 1st ed. 1620, pp. 35-9) who wrote: 'Quibus si sextus accessisset de vita aeterna, in quo ostendisset ad vitam illam contententibus ferenda esse multa adversa, exemplo Christi, Prophetarum, Apostolorum, haberemus plenam et consummatam adversus omnia hujus vitae mala consolationem' (p. 44). The central place of III, metre 9 around which the various metres are grouped, along with other arguments, have dispelled all doubts about the completeness of the *Consolatio*.

³⁷ '...ab ortu divinitus datum, sive a natura insitum ingenitumque: *modificatum* denique, quatenus est primum clarum et distinctum; deinde paulo longius diffusum; postremo veri certique judicij norma'; Cally, p. 31; PL 63.605 (on I prose 3). For Cally's quotation from Lipsius, see p. 80; PL 63.579-80 (Censura Librorum Boetii II).

³⁸ Cally, p. 221; PL 63.758.

³⁹ Cf. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* V; AT vi.44/CSM i.133 on 'mixed' or 'composite bodies'. Descartes' system, of course, admits only three elements, fire, air and earth, distinguished in terms of size, shape and motion, not in terms of quality. I am not suggesting that Cally has picked up these terms from reading Descartes. They

universe completely; vacuum does not exist. Elsewhere in commenting on book I prose 4, Cally writes that 'God in creating Matter, impressed shape (*figura*) and motion on it, so that from that moment onwards when something acquires shape and motion, this only means a modification of its previous shape and motion or, as it is called, *determinatio*'. In Cartesian philosophy, determination means, roughly speaking, the *direction* of the motion of the object.⁴⁰ More important than the use of this notion is Cally's grafting of a central tenet of Descartes' view on matter onto Boethius' text. According to Descartes:

God implanted various motions to the parts of matter when he first created them, and he now preserves all this matter in the same way, and by the same process by which he originally created it.⁴¹

For Descartes, God's creation and preservation of the universe are not really distinct acts. (Moreover, the total quantity of motion in matter remains the same.) Cally uses these ideas in a number of passages.⁴² The opening line of the hymn, 'O you who in perpetual order govern the universe', is explained by the notion that the world, after having been created by God, is governed by the laws instituted by God; the same holds true for the world soul about which we will speak shortly. But since God's creation is its preservation, the course of the world might be said to be due to God's 'perpetual miracle' - also in this Cally follows Descartes - when he explains the Boethian concordance between the contrary elements. And where Boethius writes that God himself remains immutable, Cally, echoing Descartes' mechanistic definition of motion, writes that 'God himself immutable moves everything because, since motion is nothing else than a body touching with its outer boundary a greater boundary, all things have their motion from him'.⁴³

Although Cally's use of Cartesian notions is restricted to a few, rather general ideas and leaves out - naturally enough given the character of the work - all technical details, his attempt to explain the Boethian lines by having recourse to Descartes' model of the creation of the universe is an interesting piece of updating the commentary tradition of the

abound in scholastic commentaries. Cally's use of scholastic terminology (e.g. 'alterativae et motrices' as qualities of the elements; 'interiores et exteriores causas'; the truth as a two-fold kind of 'res extra mentem' and 'modus intra mentem') reveals his natural debt to scholastic discussions.

⁴⁰ Descartes, *Principles* II 41; AT viii-1.65-6/CSM i.242 ff. Cally, p. 45; PL 63.616.

⁴¹ *Principles* II 36; AT viii-1.61-2/CSM i.240. Cf. *Discourse* V; AT vi.44-5/CSM i.133.

⁴² '...a quo ut creantur, sic conservantur, cujusmodi est solus Deus' (p. 221; PL 63.758); 'cum enim conservatio nihil sit aliud, quam continuata productio' (p. 227; PL 63.764). In a number of passages, Cally stresses that the universe is governed by the laws instituted by God. Although the 'creatio continua' is not exactly the same as the law-like regularity ('uniformité'), neither Descartes nor Cally seems to distinguish them very clearly.

⁴³ Cf. the definition of motion in Descartes' *Principles* II 25 and III 28; AT viii-1. 53-4 and 90/CSM i.233 and 252: 'motion is the transfer of one body from the vicinity of the other bodies which are in immediate contact with it, and which are regarded as being at rest, to the vicinity of other bodies'.

Consolatio.⁴⁴ Moreover, his commentary on Boethius and, indirectly, on its source, Plato's *Timaeus*, reveals, I think, something of the structural similarity between the nature of the undertaking itself, i.e. of giving an exposition of how the world has come about. This must essentially be a guess, a likely story, a model. In this light, Descartes' emphasis on the *model*-character of his description of the origin of the universe (and, consequently, of its maintenance and present state) seems not too different from Plato's emphasis on the *myth*-character of *Timaeus*' account (his mouthpiece in the dialogue).⁴⁵

Anima and its various manifestations

Next, Boethius comes to the creation of the world soul:

You, binding soul together in its threefold nature's midst, soul that moves all things, then divide it into harmonious parts; soul thus divided has its motion gathered into two circles, moves to return into itself, and the Mind deep within (*mentem profundam*) encircles and makes the heaven turn, in likeness to itself.

This is a succinct statement of the account in Plato's *Timaeus* where the Demiurge in creating the world soul, divided it into two parts: an outer circle carrying the motion of the firmament ('the Same') and an inner circle, again divided into seven unequal circles, carrying the irregular movements of the wandering planets ('the Diverse'). The Mind being the moving soul in the outermost, invisible heaven, turns the visible heaven in its perfect, circular motions. Out of the same cup from which the world soul was made, lesser souls (for men and animals) are created and allotted to stars where they stay until the moment comes to glide down to enter terrestrial bodies. The pagan overtones cannot be avoided, and most commentators had to take the passage in an integumental way, i.e. to look for sound, Christian meaning under the veil (*integumentum*) of pagan words. Cally tries, however, to make sense of the passage not by filling in the missing details from the *Timaeus* but by interpreting it in Cartesian terms.

For Cally, souls - the world soul as well as the lesser souls of men and other creatures - function as motors of their 'machines' (*machinae*); they are created out of the same *materia fluitans* and obey the same God-given laws of nature. The world soul is nothing else than a very fine stuff ('corpus liquidissimum' or 'corpus quoddam subtilius') which governs a

⁴⁴ To add one more example: The vastness of the heavens referred to in *Consolatio* II metre 7 elicits the comment that we should call the vastness 'indefinite' rather than 'infinite'; 'hoc est, latius diffusum, quam ut mens nostra imaginando illud possit definire' (p. 161; PL 63.713-4). The same in Descartes, *Principles* I 26 and 27; AT viii-1.15/CSM i.202.

⁴⁵ *Timaeus* 29C-D. *Discourse* V; AT vi.41-6/CSM i.132-3. On the use of models, see his letter to Morin in AT ii.368/CSMK 122. According to Baillet, Descartes used to say to his friends that his philosophy was nothing more than a 'roman de la Nature'; A. Baillet, *La vie de M. Des-Cartes*, Paris 1691, p. xviii. Cally's phrasing (e.g. 'the world soul *must be born* [*debet nasci*] after the constitution of the elements'; my italics) often reflects the hypothetical status of the Cartesian account.

machina such as a planet. It first moves around greater vortices, then around lesser ones ('per majores, deinde per minores mundi vortices') to return upon itself at last, just as in the Platonic account of Boethius.⁴⁶ The vortex-theory of Descartes, on account of which the celestial matter, in which the planets circling around their own vortices are located, turns like a big vortex with the sun at its centre, is used here by Cally in a rather odd way. The result is unsuccessful, for when he comes to explain this movement, his interpretation becomes muddled. The soul, Cally writes, is of a two-fold nature: a greater kind of soul which circles around a greater whirlpool of the world and a lesser one around a lesser whirlpool of the same world. The 'mind deep within' (*mens profunda*) of the Boethius text is then interpreted as one of the lesser whirlpools around which the heaven turns 'as a wheel around its axis'. Since the word *profunda* seems to suggest a geocentric world view, Cally thinks that 'perhaps it is the earth which is shaped by that *mens profunda*. For although it cannot be proved by any demonstration that the earth is the centre of the world, nevertheless it can be said to be the centre of the whirlpool-system that we inhabit'. If this *mens profunda* turns out not to be our earth, 'then one of the other lesser *animae* probably is'.

Cally's account is confusing. He does not make clear whether the vortex is the *anima* itself and what the centre is of what. The movement of the world soul around greater and lesser vortices remains even more vague. Perhaps Cally thinks of the system of the universe as the big vortex comprising the smaller scale vortices of the individual planets. This, however, would be at odds with the central place and role of the *mens profunda* in the Boethian picture. Apparently, Descartes' heliocentric world view is not to be easily reconciled with a Platonic *mens profunda*.

On a smaller scale, the human body (or a plant or an animal) also functions as a system of a *machina* (Descartes: 'machine de terre') moved by *animae*, but the souls are now interpreted as animal spirits carrying out their movements in 'circuitus'. Here the Cartesian account of animal spirits, which are the finest parts of the blood and have, as Descartes writes, 'no property other than that of being extremely small bodies which move very quickly',⁴⁷ is clearly at the back of Cally's mind. Some of his descriptions under the heading of the world soul apply better to the animal spirits than to an ether-like stuff, as when Cally writes that the *anima* is a medium between the insensible mind and the sensible body or that it is a 'corpus liquidissimum' of which the parts penetrate the various members of its body and causes locomotion.⁴⁸ Elsewhere he explains Boethius' text (V metre 5: 'Yet their downturned faces make their senses heavy grow and dull') by writing that the senses do not function unless spirits, which come from the heart, enter the brain and from there are diffused through the nerves to the other parts of the body.⁴⁹ In circulating through the body, the soul

⁴⁶ For what follows, see Cally, pp. 225-6; PL 63.761-3. Descartes' vortex-theory is found in *Principles* III 30; AT viii-1.92 ff./CSM i.253 ff.

⁴⁷ *Passions of the Soul* I 10; AT xi.334-5/CSM i.331-2.

⁴⁸ Cally, p. 224; PL 63.761: 'anima enim illa corpus est liquidissimum, cujus partes ut moventur, sic in varia loca resolutae varia subeunt corporis informati membra'. For spirits moving the limbs, see also Descartes, *Treatise on Man* AT xi.130/CSM i.100 and elsewhere.

⁴⁹ Cally, p. 347; PL 63.357 and p. 182; PL 63.729 (on III metre 2). Elsewhere the same ideas. Cf. Descartes,

moves as long as it is not resisted.⁵⁰ Hence, when Boethius writes that the soul spreads through the world's 'harmonious limbs' ('per consona membra'), this refers to the close cooperation between the *machina* and its *anima*.

What is striking is not so much Cally's use of these physiological ideas as his easy switch from the large scale of the universe and its soul to the microcosm of the lesser souls in their *machinae* (plants, animals, man), and back again. On both levels he writes in the same terms: an *anima* in a *machina* moving in a *vortex* or *circuitus*, and being a very fine (*subtilius*; Descartes: 'subtil') elemental body which is diffused through the body and moves in accordance with the God-given laws. Thus, the Platonic, circular course of the soul moving from and returning back to its Creator, and its division into two spheres of movements, are interpreted in Cartesian physical (*vortex*) and physiological terms (animal spirits).

Without doubt, the ambiguous word, *anima*, has led Cally into this odd reading of a definitively *spiritual* sense of the soul in Boethius' *Consolatio*. This tendency to materialize the soul is, of course, avoided by Cally and other Cartesians by distinguishing the incorporeal, immortal soul from the medical spirits. The latter, which man has in common with animals, only carry out sense-perception, motor-activity and the lower psychic functions (appetite, common sense, imagination); the former is man's thinking faculty (*res cogitans*). Cally seems to be aware that the application of the term *anima* to the thinking faculty 'deprives the medical spirits of the name and dignity of *anima*', for when it is said that man has only one *anima*, it is, of course, the *mens* or *res cogitans* which is meant.⁵¹ As we have seen, Cally does not completely avoid a blurring of the distinction between the incorporeal soul and the corporeal spirit, but he was not the only one who had moved in the direction of religiously unorthodox opinions and metaphysical difficulties.⁵²

Another example of an even more serious pitfall was the association of the Holy Spirit with corporeal (and thus created) spirits. In commenting on Boethius' hymn, 'O qui perpetua', the twelfth-century master William of Conches, for example, had identified the world soul with the Holy Spirit, and in doing so was followed by Abélard. After its condemnation by the Church, it was dangerous to hold such a doctrine, notwithstanding the temptation to find Christian dogmas in pagan writings. We find this unorthodox move towards interpreting the world soul as the Third Person of the Trinity in Cally too. He cannot refrain from quoting

Passions of the Soul; AT xi.331-7/CSM i.330-3. It must, however, be noted that these ideas are not typically Cartesian. See G. Verbeke, *L'Évolution de la Doctrine du Pneuma du Stoïcisme à S. Augustin*, Paris 1945, pp. 206 ff.

⁵⁰ Cally seems to hint at Descartes' first law of nature, i.e. the law of inertia and the requirement of a cause to change the state of a body. *Principles* II 37; AT viii-1.62 FF./CSM i.240 ff.

⁵¹ Cally, p. 225; PL 63.762. Medical spirits are to aid the mind - a traditional idea deriving from Galen and Aristotle. See Verbeke, *L'Évolution de la Doctrine du Pneuma*, pp. 202-3.

⁵² For this see the excellent articles by D.P. Walker collected by P. Gouk as *Music, Spirit and Language in the Renaissance*, London 1985, especially articles IX ('The Astral Body in Renaissance Medicine') and XI ('Medical Spirits in Philosophy and Theology from Ficino to Newton'). Walker mentions and discusses Telesio, Bacon, Michel Servet, Agostino Donio, Jean Bodin and Melanchton.

Ecclesiastes 1:6 ('lustrans universa in circuitu pergit spiritus, et in circulos suos revertitur') and adding: 'inquit Spiritus Sanctus'.⁵³ Boethius' words on the world soul 'in semet reditura meat mentemque profundam/ circuit et simili convertit imagine caelum' are obviously too similar to the words from Ecclesiastes *not* to be interpreted in a Christian (albeit unorthodox) manner.

The Platonic account of the 'lesser souls' (*Timaeus* 41D-42D) was even more difficult to reconcile with Christianity, for it implied the pre-existence of the soul and metempsychosis. In Boethius' words:

You from similar origins bring forth souls and lesser lives, and giving them light chariots (*leves currus*) fitting their heavenly nature, disperse them through sky and earth, and by your bounteous law they, turned towards you, come back to you through fire that brings them home.

Each soul is allotted to an astral body as its chariot or vehicle, and after having glided down into a body and lived for a certain time, will re-ascend to heaven or descend still further to Hades for curative punishment. As D.P. Walker writes:

This astral body, or vehicle of the soul, is made of very fine, lucent stuff; this may be identical with the substance of the stars and spheres, through which the soul passes while descending from its origin to this earth, or, if not identical, it has received successive celestial influences or imprints during this descent. Its natural shape is starlike, i.e. spherical [...] It is the mean, the link, between the terrestrial (fleshly) body and the incorporeal soul. Its functions in this life are similar to those of medical spirits, but with more emphasis on imagination or phantasia and less on ordinary animal functions.⁵⁴

Without going into the complex origins of this cluster of Neoplatonic ideas and Aristotelian medicine, it is interesting to see that Cally's most direct predecessor among the commentators on the *Consolatio*, Renatus Vallinus, knew all about this pagan philosophy and drew on it in commenting on these lines. A soul, Vallinus writes, inasmuch as it is animal, has a spirit as its vehicle which comes from the most pure and fine parts of the blood and helps the soul to diffuse through all parts of the body. Likewise, a soul, inasmuch as it is rational and intellectual, has an almost heavenly body, which, because of its very fine nature, is an apt vehicle of the soul, and helps it to come to a knowledge of things divine. Being both a corporeal body (yet of the finest nature) and of heavenly origin, this astral body, Vallinus concludes, is a link between the terrestrial body and the incorporeal soul.⁵⁵ He then tries to

⁵³ Cally, p. 225; PL 63.762. Cf. p. 223; PL 63.760: '...spiritus ille Universi agnoscitur non solum a sacris auctoribus Ecclesiastae 1. "lustrans universa [...]"; sed etiam a profanis, ut Platone, Aristotele, pluribusque aliis', and he then quotes the famous lines from Virgil's *Aeneid* VI.724 ff.: 'Principio caelum, ac terras, camposque liquentes... spiritus intus alit...'

⁵⁴ 'The Astral Body', pp. 122-3.

⁵⁵ 'Corpus illud seu quasi corpus aetherium, coeleste esse, ejusdem cum astris substantiae Platonici existimabant,

save Boethius from having held such an *opinio a veritate Christiana abhorrens*: Boethius had died 'many years' before these doctrines were condemned as Origenist (i.e. at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, but there had been earlier condemnations, which Vallinus does not mention).

Cally's strategy is different. Without going into the Platonic background of the passage, he interprets Boethius' 'light chariots' (*leves currus*) simply as bodies, i.e. bodies of plants, animals and men, which are moved and governed by spirits (*animae*) just as a horse-drawn cart is guided by its driver. The 'dispensing of souls through sky and earth' about which Boethius speaks, must, consequently, be given a rather fanciful interpretation too: perhaps (*forte*) a certain spirit is present in the starry sky that performs the circular courses and thereby - we must presume, for Cally does not make this clear - gives birth to the lesser spirits. At last, also the return of the souls to their Source, with which Boethius concludes, must on Cally's interpretation apply to the animal spirits, and here the Cartesian law of inertia is invoked to interpret God's 'bounteous law' (*lex benigna*).⁵⁶

We might conclude, then, that Cally's interpretation of the *anima* from Boethius' text in terms of corporeal spirits led him away not only from the rather plain Platonic meaning of the *Consolatio*, but also into a theologically dangerous direction, blurring the distinctions between the several distinct senses of the word *anima* (Holy Spirit; the superior, divine part of the soul; corporeal spirits). In introducing the Cartesian concept of vortex, he further muddled his interpretation, since he did not distinguish carefully between the levels at which the different *animae* are supposed to operate.

Cally was more successful in bringing Cartesian notions on knowledge to bear on Boethius' text. The Platonism of the *Consolatio* could be translated into a Platonic Cartesianism without much difficulty. In this light, Cally's commentary shows something of the link between Platonism and Cartesianism and hints at the formative role of the former in

animaeque in inferiora labenti adhibebant, ut esset non solum quod animaret anima, [cui semper adesse oporteat corpus quod animet] sed quemadmodum animae, qua animalis est, spiritus ille, qui est e puriori tenuiorique sanguinis substantia, pro vehiculo est, quo illa in omnes corporis partes diffunditur. Sic animae, qua rationalis intellectualisque est, in haec inferiora labenti, adesse corpus illud, seu quasi corpus, coeleste seu aetherium volebant: quod tenuissimum cum sit, recte simplicissimae animae vehiculum esse perhiberetur; quo illa comite in Dei substantiarumque intelligibilium cognitionem tolleretur' (Leiden, apud Fr. Hackium 1656, pp. 61-2 of the 'Notae'). He then goes on to quote Plotinus, Proclus, Themistius, Origen and others. In his Boethian commentary Murmellius too clarifies the Platonic doctrine (ed. 1570, p. 1046; PL 63.1028-30) by equating the 'vehicula' with 'aethera corpora' and quoting Ficino's Platonic commentary.

⁵⁶ '...hae enim animae, utpote quae generali corporum motorum lege, quae nunc vocant *benigna*, qua minus resistitur, tendunt, in coelum, qua minus resistitur iisdem, nituntur: veluti *igne reduci*: maxima quippe est similitudo inter has animas & ignem (p. 226; PL 63.763). But commenting on a passage where Boethius writes that the looser the connection is between the soul and the body, the more free the soul is (V prose 2), Cally now (rightly) interprets it as man's thinking faculty (*mens*), and not as (corporeal) spirit (p. 320; PL 63.836). He distinguishes four conditions of the soul: a) separated from the body (when the soul is most free), b) conjoined with the body (as in Adam before the Fall), c) afflicted by 'perturbationes', but not consenting to them, and d) consenting to them. This account suggests (though does not state) a descent of the soul, and shows again the tension in the Christian scheme which resulted from the use of Platonic terminology while rejecting the doctrines behind that terminology.

the Cartesian view of knowledge. Cally, however, does not recognize his debt to Descartes and only once refers to 'Cartesianos'.⁵⁷ Perhaps he felt it not to be the commentator's job to colour a commentary, which after all was just an *instrumentum studiorum*, by his own philosophy, or that he, at least, should not do so without making his debts explicit. But given the condemnation of Cartesian views by his own University of Caen at the time he was preparing his commentary, he would have been better advised to opt for a silent use of Cartesian philosophy. Since the book had to be published under the king's *privilège* and was destined for the Dauphin's education, it was not wise to propagate openly the controversial New Philosophy and risk the accusation of 'troubler la tranquillité de l'Etat et à corrompre les mœurs des sujets du roi'.⁵⁸ Cartesianism found much support within Jansenist circles and hence rendered itself suspect in the eyes of the king and defenders of the establishment and traditional school philosophy. In any case, Cally's commentary enjoyed some popularity: it was reprinted a couple of times, most notably by Migne to accompany the text of the *Consolatio Philosophiae* in the *Patrologia Latina*. This suggests that it was considered to be a worthy contribution to the rich and varied *Nachleben* of that masterpiece of the 'last of the Romans and first of the scholastics'.⁵⁹

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⁵⁷ He does not quote Descartes at all. Among his (near) contemporaries he quotes Malebranche (from the *Recherche de la Vérité*; p. 303; PL 63.822 and p. 313; PL 63.830), Antonius Hallaeus (p. 262; PL 63.790), Gassendi (p. 68; PL 63.638), Vivès (p. 294; PL 63.814) and Badius Ascensius (from his Boethius commentary of 1495; p. 298; PL 63.819).

⁵⁸ Quoted in M. Marion, *Les Institutions de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Paris 1923, p. 77. On Louis XIV's attitude towards Cartesians, see McClaughlin, 'Censorship and Defenders', p. 568, who also notes that 'there was never any question of his [i.e. Louis XIV] preventing members of the royal family from reading Descartes' (n.26). See also R.A. Watson, 'Transubstantiation among the Cartesians'.

⁵⁹ I would like to thank Professor John North and Dr Han van Ruler for their comments on an earlier draft of this article, and Dr Mark Atherton for checking my English.