PREFACE

Il y a plus affaire à interpréter les interprétations qu’à interpréter les choses.

Montaigne

The present study investigates the concept of fortuna in several distinct stages of its historical development up through the eleventh century: in its religious and literary significance in ancient Roman, especially Neoplatonic and early Patristic thought; in Boethius’ interpretation and adaptation of earlier traditions, which he incorporated into the system of cosmological order in his De Consolatione Philosophiae; in the further modifications of the Boethian concept in the early Latin commentaries on the Boethian text; and in the interpretations by Alfred the Great and Notker Labeo in their translations of the Consolatio. The study is thus a semantic investigation of the terminological complex fortuna as it appears in the works considered, and as such, it seeks to provide a ‘definition’ of the concept(s), as it functions in each system of thought.

In order to mark off the semantic boundaries of fortuna in each case, two separate stages of analysis have been employed: 1) the relationships of the various component parts of the concept are analyzed in detail in order to determine the semantic and philosophical significance of the constitutive parts of fortuna; 2) the function of this composite fortuna in the larger metaphysical system of order is determined by means of contrast with the other functional elements of the system. By this means, the semantic limits of the concepts of fortuna are established, as are, ultimately, also the limits of the other elements of the metaphysical system.

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