Recent appraisals of Boethius rightly have highlighted his contribution to the study of logic in the Middle Ages. After all, he translated seminal Aristotelian and Hellenistic logical texts, he provided commentaries on their often tersely expressed and obscure content, and he authored his own independent textbooks. These works enjoyed fairly wide diffusion throughout the Middle Ages, and in the minds of medieval philosophers, Boethius’s authority as a logician ranked alongside that of Aristotle’s. Yet, odd as it may seem, logic as we study it today does not owe much, or really anything, to Boethius’s own work. He was not a terribly original logician insofar as much of the content of his commentaries and the textbooks was derived, if not simply borrowed wholesale, from ancient exemplars. Furthermore, his work bequeathed to his ardent students in the Middle Ages some common late ancient confusions about some fairly basic matters of logic. All was not lost, however. For it turned out that medieval scholars found that Boethius also had provided them with the means for finding their way out of the confusion. In this chapter I plan to tell that story. But I will also say something about some other important Boethian contributions to medieval logic, in particular his definition of the problem of universals and his translation of Aristotelian logical works.

Telling such a story has some hefty prerequisites, including working knowledge of first-order logic, a more than casual acquaintance with the relevant texts of Boethius, Aristotle, and the Stoics, as well as a familiarity with medieval logic. Many readers have met these; many more have not. But even for the non-expert, such a story as that of Boethius’s contribution to the study of logic in the Middle Ages—even if only in broad outline—is one worth knowing. Accordingly, this chapter will presume very little by way of the prerequisites, and, given limitations of space, it will aim to

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1 For the most recent assessments of Boethius and his influence on later medieval philosophy, see John Marenbon, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Boethius (Cambridge, 2009); and John Marenbon, Boethius (Oxford, 2003), especially pp. 164–82.

2 As with many other philosophers, Boethius confused Stoic propositional logic with Aristotelian hypothetical syllogistic. Anthony Specia has studied this confusion in Hypothetical Syllogistic and Stoic Logic (Leiden, 2001).
present Boethius’s contribution to medieval logic in its broad outlines. I will begin with a brief introduction to the basic features of ancient logic relevant to Boethius’s most noteworthy contributions to medieval logic. Then in the following three sections I will discuss the three primary avenues of Boethius’s influence upon medieval logic: his translations, commentaries, and original logical treatises.

Logic

In the late ancient world, the Aristotelian and the Stoic systems of logic were considered to be incompatible rivals. For a time, following the death of Aristotle, the Stoic system was in the ascendancy, but Late Antiquity saw the resurgence and eventual dominance of an altered form of Aristotelian or Peripatetic logic, one which contained confused elements of Stoic logic. The form of Aristotelian logic survived and was translated into the Middle Ages in the work of Boethius. This meant that medieval logicians learned about categorical propositions, syllogisms, and the problem of universals, rather than propositions, disjunctions, and conditionals. But, since the Aristotelian logic Boethius passed along contained confused elements of Stoic logic, it also meant they were slow to recognize the nature and the power of propositional logic and its independence from the Aristotelian system.

Aristotle’s works on logic are collected in what was later called the *Organon*, or “instrument”—the first five or so works in the traditional catalogue of his works. Late ancient philosophers read these works as telling a single story, one that starts with an analysis of the basic elements of logic in the *Categories*, continues with an account of predication in *De interpretatton* (known through much of the Middle Ages under its Greek name, *Peri Hermeneias*), and proceeds to develop the complex theory of reasoning in *Prior Analytics, Posterior Analytics, Topics* (with the *De sophisiticis elenchis*).

Aristotelian logic is a “logic of terms,” in which the fundamental elements of analysis are terms, classes, or categories, such as “rational ani-

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3 For a more general picture of the history of logic up until Boethius (and well after), see William and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford, 1962); and, more recently, Dov Gabbay and John Woods, eds., *Handbook of the History of Logic*, vol. 1, *Greek, Indian, and Arabic Logic* (Amsterdam, 2004), and vol. 2, *Medieval and Renaissance Logic* (Amsterdam, 2008).

4 See Speca *Hypothetical Syllogistic and Stoic Logic*, p. 5.