Three writers of late antiquity, all of them Neoplatonists, refer to the psychological doctrine of a certain Boethus. Several philosophers of that name are known, and the fragments have been variously assigned to the Stoic, Boethus of Sidon, who lived in the middle of the second century BC, and his Peripatetic namesake, active about a century later. The purpose of this article is to see what exactly we can learn about this thinker from the extant fragments and then to determine which of the various Boethi he is most likely to have been.

Our richest source is Porphyry, who wrote a work in five books entitled *Against Boethus on the soul* (Πρὸς Βοήθουν περὶ ψυχῆς), from which nine quotations have been preserved by Eusebius. The first four fragments come from the first book of Porphry's work (ap. Euseb. PE 11.28. II

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2 See the catalogue of Porphyry's writings in the Suda Π 2098, IV 178.20 Adler. The Suda also lists a separate work Πρὸς Ἀριστοτέλης τοῦ ἐναὶ τήν ψυχὴν ἔντελεξον; this topic was also discussed in the larger work, but it is not known how the two were related. There was also a treatise *On the soul* of which a part is extant in Arabic (ed. W. Kutsch in *Melanges de l'Université Saint Joseph* 31.4 (1954) 264-86). In the extant part Porphyry tries to use Aristotle's doctrine of the Active and Passive Reason to explain why we do not remember our existence before birth. His tone and approach are very similar to those of his theological writings, such as the *Sententiae*, and there is no need to doubt the attribution, but we find none of the polemics of the Πρὸς Βοήθου and when Aristotle is named, he is given a laudatory epithet (§4 p. 271 in Kutsch's German translation). Probably therefore this is taken from a different work, written from a different point of view. In any case the Arabic fragment does not mention Boethus and deals with matters which only interested Platonists.

3 Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, ed. K. Mras, Berlin 1954-6. The quotations from Porphyry's work are in volume II and are referred to by page and line of this edition, and according to Mras' numbering.
62.25ff. Mras) and are concerned with the third argument for immortality in Plato’s Phaedo (79-81), based on the incorporeal nature of the soul and its affinity with the intelligible world. Eusebius’ purpose in quoting these passages is to show that Plato and his followers agreed with the Pentateuch in believing that man is made in the image of God and his soul is immortal. 4

1 This, the longest fragment, contains Porphyry’s restatement of Plato’s position (p. 63.2-24). It is immediately followed by

2 (p. 64.1-10), purporting to give Boethus’ counter-argument, taken from the beginning of his book (see p. 63.25f.). After remarking on the difficulty of proving that the soul is immortal, the writer concedes that its activities, especially continuous movement, thought and the power of making decisions reveal its nature to be more godlike than any other human faculty. This is supported by a dictum attributed to Alcmaeon of Croton, perhaps derived from Aristotle’s De anima, to the effect that the soul, like the heavenly bodies, is divine and naturally averse to rest. 5

3 (p. 64.11-25), introduced by the words καὶ ἔξης ἐπιλέγει: if it is accepted at the outset that the soul is akin to God, what need is there of further argument for its immortality? If it maintains its divine nature even when buried in the corruption of the body, will it not reveal its full divinity when released?

4 (p. 65.2-18), introduced by the words καὶ ὑποκαταβὰς φησιν: the soul’s dual nature, divine and mortal, is manifested through its affinity with God and its involvement in mortality. Sensualists, practical men and philosophers are all human; this is why true philosophers remain unrecognised because of the multitude’s inability to appreciate their inner superiority.

5 (PE 14.10, II 287.3-7): a complaint against eristics and sceptics, who are prepared to ignore all evidence and rebut all arguments for immortality. – This isolated fragment is one of a number of passages from different works of Porphyry containing complaints against the quarrelsomeness of philosophers, quoted by Eusebius in order to demonstrate that “the philosophy of the Greeks arose from human guesses and much contentiousness and error, but from no clear grasp of the truth” (p. 286.8ff.). It tells us nothing about Boethus.

The next three fragments are in a section of the PE directed against Aristotle’s doctrine that the soul is the entelecheia of an organic body (PE 15.11); they are preceded by quotations from Atticus (fr. 7 des Places) and Plotinus (Enn. 4.7.8’).

4 See Euseb. p. 58.11ff., 65.19ff.
5 τὸ μὲντοι τῶν περὶ ἡμᾶς ὁμοίτερον μηδὲν γενέσθαι θεῷ ψυχής, οὐ πολλὰς δὲν τις δεινεῖς πραγματείας πιστεύοντες, οὐ μόνον διὰ τὸ συνεχές καὶ ἀπαυστὸν τῆς