Amor quo caelum regitur

I

Boethius, Consolatio philosophiae II, metrum 8

Quod mundus stabili fide
Concordes uariat uices,
Quod pugnantia semina
Foedus perpetuum tenent,

5 Quod Phoebus roseum diem
Curru prouehit aureo,
Vt quas duxerit Hesperos
Phoebe noctibus imperet,
Vt fluctus auidum mare

10 Certo fine coerceat,
Ne terris liceat uagis
Latos tendere terminos,
Hanc rerum seriem ligat
Terras ac pelagus regens

15 Et caelo imperitans amor.
Hic si frena remiserit,
Quidquid nunc amat inuicem
Bellum continuo geret
Et quam nunc socia fide

20 Pulchris motibus incitant,
Certent soluere machinam.
Hic sancto populos quoque
Iunctos foedere continet,
Hic et coniugii sacrum.

25 Castis nectit amoribus,
Hic fidis etiam sua
Dictat iura sodalibus.
O felix hominum genus,
Si uestros animos amor

30 Quo caelum regitur regat.'
That this fair world in settled course her several forms should vary,
That a perpetual law should tame the fighting seeds of things,
That Phoebus should the rosy day in his bright chariot carry,
That Phoebe should govern the nights which Hesperus forth brings,
That to the floods of greedy seas are certain bounds assigned,
Which them, lest they usurp too much upon the earth, debar,
Love ruling heaven, and earth, and seas, them in this course doth bind.
And if it once let loose their reins, their friendship turns to war,
Tearing the world whose ordered form their quiet motions bear.
By it all holy laws are made and marriage rites are tied,
By it is faithful friendship joined. How happy mortals were,
If that pure love did guide their minds, which heavenly spheres doth guide!

The vs. 1-12 describe the stable course of the world: there are alternating changes, but they are ‘in concord’, i.e., they show a regular order (2); the elements (semina) are opposite the one to the other, but are in a perpetual equilibrium (3-4); there is the alternating sequence of day and night (5-8); the sea keeping its waves within certain bounds lest it should overflow the earth (9-12). This cosmic order is said to be due to Love which governs both the earth, the sea and the heavens (13-15). If that divine Love will cease from ruling, the concord in the universe will be broken: things that now love each other will be suddenly at war, and instead of keeping up the world-structure by harmonious motions, they will do their best to tear it into pieces (16-21).

This divine Love also acts as a social bond: it holds both nations and individuals together; it is the base of marriage and of friendship (22-27).