

CORRESPONDENCE

R. W. Sharples writes:

In reviewing my *Cicero: On Fate and Boethius: Consolation of Philosophy 4.5–7*, 5 in *CR* 43 (1993), 56–8, A. E. Samuels of Lancaster finds inconsistencies in the level of knowledge expected of readers. In an ideal world there might indeed be a different treatment, and a different book, for every type of reader; but in practice, since Cicero's treatise is unlikely to attract a huge readership (though I hope I am wrong about this) there seemed to be a case for compromise. Moreover, few students nowadays are going to be so at home with the strained and idiosyncratic Latin of the *De fato* that literal translation and the keying of the commentary to it are not going to be of some help to them; and since readers of this text are likely to include many with a considerable understanding of philosophical argument and a modest understanding of Latin, I do not see why they should be shielded from textual issues or scholarly debates. Even those who do not yet have Latin at all may benefit from having it drawn to their attention – rather than concealed in an appendix – how uncertain some of the textual readings are, and may indeed be provoked into learning the language so that they can judge these points better for themselves.

I hope S. is not making the mistake of supposing that sophistication in potential readers is to be measured along a single axis – that of linguistic fluency, in the sense of ability to dispense with translations. If that was ever true, which I rather doubt, it is not so now. S.'s review includes no detailed reference to any philosophical doctrine, argument, or interpretation; I imagine Cicero and Boethius might find this rather surprising. The connections in argument were indeed my motive for including the two texts in a single volume in the first place.

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