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**The Past, the Present, and the Future: Memory and Literature as Gateways from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-First Century With a focus on Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival***

**Albrecht Classen**

**Abstract**

The crucial question we are facing today in the Humanities pertains to the issue of how we engage with the past and how we converse with literary or philosophical voices from the Middle Ages, for instance, and recover their relevance for us today. This paper examines the meaning of cultural history at first and then turns to two major voices from the past to illustrate the central concern, first the late antique philosopher Boethius (d. 525), then Wolfram von Eschenbach (active ca. 1200–1220). Both endeavored to explore the meaning of human life and offered intriguing perspectives that appear to have timeless value. Whereas Boethius investigated the issue of how the individual can productively face or dismiss misfortune and thereby gain an understanding of the true meaning of happiness, Wolfram outlined in his Grail romance *Parzival* how the human individual must forge his/her path through life in order to discover the true goal of one's self. While the future is waiting for us, we can prepare ourselves by listening to those past voices as guides through all existence.

**Keywords:** Past and present, Timeless Humanities, Boethius, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Path through Life, Relevance of Literature, Philosophy.