

calcauit & inculcauit, quam hanc Fatalem. Nec abijt reliqua poëtarum stirps a suo patre. Euripidem, Sophoclem, Pindarum: & e nostris, Virgilium vide. Ad historicos me vocas? omnium illae voces, Fato hoc tale accidisse, & Regna euersa aut stabilita Fatis. Ad philosophos? quibus cura maior eruendae & tuendae contra vulgum veritatis. At illi cum in plerisque alijs diuersi ierint, studio & malo ambitu certandi; mirum quam omnes conuenerint in vnus huius viae capite, quae ducit ad Fatum. Capite viae dixi, quia non eo negatum, quin ea in plures mox semitas secta: quas tamen omnes ad hoc Quadrifinium videor posse reducere, Fati Mathematici, Naturalis, Violenti, Veri. Quae explicabo breuiter, & tamquam pedem in singulis ponens: quia vulgo confusio hic & error."

## CAPVT XVIII.

*Tria prima genera Fati explicata breuiter. omnium definitio siue descriptio. Stoici leuiter & breuiter excusati.*

"Ac Fatum Mathematicum quidem appello, QVOD LIGAT ET NECTIT FIRMITER ACTIONES OMNES EVENTVSQVE AD VIM SIDERVM ET POSITVRAM STELLARVM. Cui Chaldaei & Astrologi, primi auctores: interque philosophos fundus & subscriptor, sublimis ille Mercurius. qui Prouidentiam, Necessitatem, Fatum, subtiliter nec vane prorsus distinguens, ait: πρόνοια ἐστὶ ἀυτελής λόγος τοῦ ἐπουρανίου θεοῦ· δύο δὲ τούτου δυνάμεις ἀυτοφυεῖς, Ἀνάγκη καὶ Εἰμαρμένη. ἡ δὲ εἰμαρμένη ὑπηρετεῖ προνοία, καὶ ἀνάγκη. τῇ δὲ εἰμαρμένη, ὑπηρετοῦντι οἱ ἀστέρηρες· οὔτε γὰρ εἰμαρμένην φυγεῖν τις δύναται, οὔτε φυλάξαι ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς τούτων δεινότητος. ὅπλον γὰρ εἰμαρμένης, οἱ ἀστέρηρες. κατὰ γὰρ ταύτην πάντα ἀποτελοῦσιν τῇ φύσει καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. *Prouidentia est perfecta & absoluta ratio caelestis dei. cui duae cognatae facultates, Necessitas & Fatum. Et Fatum quidem subseruit ministratque Prouidentiae, simul & Necessitati: at Fato ipsi, subseruiunt stellae. Nam nec Fati vim effugere quisquam potest, nec cauere sibi a vi & potentia stellarum. Haec enim, tela & arma Fati. cuius arbitrio, cuncta efficiunt & perficiunt Naturae atque Hominibus.* Et in eadem stulta nauis hodie (pudor Christiani nominis!) Astrologorum fere vulgus.

shed light on Fate. Come, then, and listen to Homer, first and wisest of poets: I am lying, if his divine muse has trodden and left more tracks on any path than this of Fate. And the rest of the race of poets does not depart from their father. Consider Euripides, Sophocles, and Pindar, and among those of our Latin tongue, Virgil. Do you remind me of historians? The utterance common to them all is, 'Such a thing has happened by Fate'; and, 'kingdoms are overthrown or established by the Fates'. And what about Philosophers, whose major concern is unearthing the truth and protecting it against the mob? Even though they may have gone in various directions on many other matters, through an eager and regrettable ambition for disputation, it is remarkable how they have all come together at the beginning of this one way that leads to Fate. I said at the beginning of the way, because I will not deny that it soon branched out into many footpaths. Still, I seem able to reduce them all to four categories: *astrological, natural, violent, and true*. I shall explain them briefly, taking, so to speak, a step down each one, because here there is commonly confusion and error."

## Chapter 18

*The first three kinds of Fate briefly explained: a definition or description of them all. The Stoics slightly and briefly excused.*

"Now what I call Astrological Fate is the view *that links and firmly binds all actions and events to the power of the constellations and the placement of the stars*. The Chaldaeans and the astrologers were its first authors, and among philosophers its foundation and underwriter is the sublime Mercury, who, subtly and not altogether vainly distinguishing among Providence, Necessity, and Fate, says,

Providence is the perfect and absolute reason of the heavenly God, in which there are two related faculties, necessity and fate. Fate is the subject and minister of Providence, and at the same time of necessity, but the stars serve fate itself. Now no one can flee the power of fate or guard himself from the force and influence of the stars. These indeed are the missiles and armor of fate, by whose authority they set in motion and complete all things in nature and among men.<sup>78</sup>

In this same ship of fools today (the shame of the name Christian) is generally the mob of astrologers.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Corpus Hermeticum*, vol. 3, frag. 12. See above, n. 64.

<sup>79</sup> In the editions before 1599, Lipsius had written that the "ship of fools" was populated "not only by all the astrologers, but also (oh shame!) by many theologians." The ship of fools is a reference to the familiar late medieval and early Renaissance tradition exem-

"At Naturale Fatum voco, ORDINEM CAUSSARVM NATVRALIVM QVAE (nisi impediatur) VI ET NATVRA SVA CERTVM EVMDIQVE PRODVCVNT EFFECTVM. Aristoteles in hac parte: si Alexandro Aphrodisiensi fides, interpreti eius haud infido. itemque Theophrastus, qui clare scribit, τὴν εἰμαρμένην εἶναι τὴν ἐκώστου φύσιν, *Fatum esse, vniuscuiusque naturam*. Ex horum mente, quod homo hominem gignit, Fato fit: quod moritur ab internis & sine aliena vi caussis, Fato. & retro, Quod homo serpentem gignit aut monstrum, praeter Fatum: itemque, quod gladio occiditur aut igne. Sententia non valde peccans, quia ad vim Fati ne adsurgit quidem. Quis autem casum non vitet, qui non adscendat? Et talis in diuinis vbique fere Aristoteles est: libellum illum de Mundo excipio, qui totus aureus, ab alia mihi videtur & magis caelesti aura. Quin hoc amplius in Graeco scriptore lego, Aristotelem censuisse, τὴν εἰμαρμένην οὐκ αἰτίαν μὲν, τρόπον δὲ τινα αἰτίας συμβεβηκότος πῶς τοῖς τῆς ἀνάγκης τεταγμένοις. *Fatum non esse caussam, sed modum quendam caussae accidentem ijs quae a Necessitate ordinata*. Cor philosophi! qui Fortunam Casumque serio numerare inter caussas audet, non audet Fatum.

"Sed hunc mitto: ad Stoicos meos venio (non enim dissimulo: in pretio & amore mihi ea secta) qui auctores Fati Violenti. Quod definitio, cum Seneca, NECESSITATEM RERVM OMNIVM ACTIONVMQVE, QVAM NVLLA VIS RVMPAT; aut cum Chrysippo, δὴναμιν πνευματικὴν, τάξει τοῦ παντὸς διοικητικὴν, *vim spiritalem, ordine Vniuersum hoc gubernantem*. Nec abeunt definitiones illae nimis a recto aut vero, si sane & modeste interpretere. Vti nec tota fortasse eorum sententia, nisi iugulasset eam pridem conuersus pollex omnis vulgi. Tribuunt ijs duo impia. &. Quod deum subijci faciunt trigis fati: &, Quod actiones item internas, & nostrae voluntatis. Nec fidenter nimis eos purgem vtriusque culpa. E scriptis enim eorum, quae pauca restant, est vbi haec elicias; est etiam, vbi magis saniora. Seneca sane, porticus illius tibicen haud infirmus, in prius illud impingere videtur, libro quo minime debuit, De Providentia: *Eadem necessitas, inquit, & deos alligat*.

"Natural Fate, I call, *the order of natural causes which* (unless they are hindered) *by their own force and nature produce the same, certain effect*. Aristotle was of this party, if Alexander of Aphrodisias; his by no means untrustworthy interpreter, may be trusted.<sup>80</sup> Likewise Theophrastus, who plainly writes, 'Fate is the nature of each thing'.<sup>81</sup> According to their thought, that a man begets a man results from Fate; that he dies from internal causes without external force results from Fate. Conversely, that a man begets a serpent or a monster is outside of Fate;<sup>82</sup> likewise, that he is slain by the sword or by fire. It is not a terribly mistaken view, because it does not even rise to the power of Fate; indeed, who fails to avoid a fall if he doesn't climb? In matters of divinity, Aristotle is almost everywhere like this—I make exception for the short treatise *Of the World*, which seems to me all golden, of another, more heavenly atmosphere. Besides, I read this in a Greek writer, that Aristotle maintained 'that Fate was not a cause, but a certain mode of a cause happening in those things that necessity had ordained'. Is this the mind of a philosopher, who seriously dares to count Fortune and Chance among causes, but not Fate!<sup>83</sup>

"But I am done with this. I come now to my Stoics (I shall not conceal my esteem and affection for this sect), who are the authors of Violent Fate. This I define, along with Seneca, as *the necessity of all things and actions that no force can break*,<sup>84</sup> or along with Chrysippus as *a spiritual power governing this universe by order*.<sup>85</sup> 'These definitions do not depart too far from the sound and true, if you will interpret them discreetly and moderately. As neither perhaps does their whole way of thinking, if the thumbs-down of all the common people had not long since condemned it. They ascribe to the Stoics two blasphemies, that they make God subject to the chariots of fate, and likewise our inner actions and our will; and I would not too confidently clear them of either fault. For it is in their own writings, few of which remain, where you may draw these things out; it is also where you find sounder things. Seneca, hardly a weak prop in their gallery,<sup>86</sup> really seems to rush into the first of these errors in a book where it is least appropriate, *On Providence*: 'The same necessity also binds the gods; its unalterable course carries the human

<sup>80</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Of Fate* 6.

<sup>81</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogae Physicae* 1.6, 17b. See *Ioannis Stobaei Eclogarum Physicarum et Ethicarum*, ed. August Meineke (Leipzig: Teubner, 1860), 1: 54.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.696–699; Cicero, *On Fate* 11.26–13–30.

<sup>83</sup> Lipsius' (or Langius') favorite work by Aristotle, *Of the World*, is no longer attributed to him (see above, n. 52). I have been unable to identify the "Greek writer" or locate the quotation ascribed to him. For a sense of Aristotle's ideas about chance or "luck" as causes, see *Physics* 197a and *Metaphysics* 1065a.

<sup>84</sup> Seneca, *Natural Questions* 2.36.

<sup>85</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 7.2.1; *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 2. 264 (Chrysi-

*irreuocabilis humana ac diuina pariter cursus uehit. Ille ipse omnium conditor ac rector scripsit quidem Fata, sed sequitur. Semper parat, semel iussit. Et indissolubilis illa cathena nexusque caussarum, quo omnia & omnes ligant, vim facere non obscure uidetur Arbitrio humano.*

“At germani tamen verique Stoici, aperta fronte professi numquam ista; aut siquid tale ijs elapsum in calore illo, vt fit, scribendi siue disserendi: verbis id magis tale comperies, quam re & sensu. Chrysippus ipse (qui primus corruptit & eneruauit virilem sectam spinoso acumine quaestionum) de libertate imminuta apud Agellium diluit & purgat. Nec Seneca noster deum Fato subijcit (sanior illi mens) sed genere quodam sermonis, deum deo. Nam qui inter eos proxime verum accessere, Fatum alias Prouidentiam ipsam appellabant, alias Deum. Itaque Zeno cum definisset εἰμαρμένην, δύναμιν κινητικὴν τῆς ὕλης κατὰ τοῦτα, καὶ ὡσαύτως: *Vim secundum eadem eodem modo materiae motricem*: addidit, ἦν τινα μὴ διάφορον καὶ πρόνοιαν καὶ φύσιν καλεῖν: *quam nihil intersit, Prouidentiam etiam aut Naturam dixisse*. Et Chrysippus ab eadem mente Fatum alibi dixit λόγον αἰδίων τῆς προνοίας: *Prouidentiae aeternam rationem*. Iam Panaetius Stoicus θεὸν ἀπεφαίνετο τὴν εἰμαρμένην, *Deum ipsum dixit esse Fatum*. Quod idem sentiens clare Seneca: *Quoties uoles, inquit, tibi licet aliter hunc auctorem rerum & naturarum compellare. Et Iovem illum optimum ac maximum rite dices, & Tonantem & Statorem: qui non, vt historici tradiderunt, ex eo quod post votum susceptum acies Romanorum fugientium stitit, sed quod stant beneficio eius omnia Stator Stabilitorque est. Hunc eundem & Fatum si dixeris, non mentieris. Nam cum Fatum nihil aliud sit, quam series implexa caussarum: ille est prima omnium caussa, ex qua ceterae pendent. Quae postrema tam pie dicta, vt calumniari ea nec Calumnia ipsa possit.*

and divine along equally. He himself, creator and ruler of all things, wrote down the Fates, but still he obeys them. He always obeys; he commanded but once.<sup>87</sup> And that unbreakable chain and knot of causes, in which they bind everything and everyone, seems evidently to wreak violence upon the human will.

“Real, genuine Stoics, however, never professed these ideas unambiguously; or if they did, it was such a lapse as occurs in the heat of writing or arguing—as such more a matter of words, as you will discover, than of sense or content. Even Chrysippus, who first corrupted and enfeebled that manly school with a thorny subtlety of questioning, according to Aulus Gellius, explains and clears them of having diminished liberty.<sup>88</sup> And our Seneca did not subject God to Fate (his understanding was sounder than that), but in a certain way of speaking, God to God. Now those among the Stoics who came closest to truth sometimes identified Fate with Providence itself, sometimes with God. And so when Zeno would have defined it as ‘a power moving behind the same matter in the same way’, he added, ‘it would make no difference to have called it Providence or even nature’.<sup>89</sup> And Chrysippus from the same point of view says in another place that Fate is ‘the eternal reason of Providence’.<sup>90</sup> Then there is the Stoic Panaetius: ‘He said that God himself is Fate’.<sup>91</sup> Clearly Seneca is thinking along the same lines:

As often as you will wish, you may accost this author of things and natures in a different way. You fittingly will say, Jove, the best and greatest, and Thunderer and Sustainer. He is called this last not, as the historians have handed down, because after receiving a prayer, he steadied a fleeing Roman army; but because everything stands by his blessing is he the Sustainer and Establisher. If you will say this is the same as Fate, you will not lie. Since Fate is nothing else but the interwoven succession of causes, he is the first cause of everything, from which the others hang.<sup>92</sup>

This last sentence is so reverently stated that malice itself cannot accuse it.

<sup>87</sup> Seneca, *On Providence* 5.8.

<sup>88</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 7.2.6–10.

<sup>89</sup> *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 1.44.35 (*Zenonis fragmenta* B.1.6.176).

<sup>90</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogues* 1.5.15, *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii*, ed. Wachsmuth, 1: 79.

<sup>91</sup> I have been unable to locate the source of this quotation.

<sup>92</sup> Seneca, *Of Benefits* 4.7.1. N.B. the ascription “optimus maximus” to Jupiter and

"Neque abiit hac parte a Stoicis scriptor ille magnus ad regem magnum: οἶμαι δέ, inquit, καὶ τὴν Ἀνάγκην οὐκ ἄλλο τι λέγεσθαι πλὴν τοῦτον· οἶον ἀκίνητον οὐσίαν· εἰμαρμένην δέ, διὰ τὸ εἶρεσθαι τε καὶ χωρεῖν ἀκωλύτως. id est: *Existimo autem & Necessitatem non aliud dici debere, quam Deum, tamquam stabilem naturam. & Fatum item ipsum, quod connectat omnia, & progrediatur libere ac sine impedimento. Qui sermones siquid improvidi habent, nihil tamen impii: & apud aequos interpretes haud longe absunt a vero nostro Fato. Illud quidem elogium serio Stoicorum genti do. non aliam sectam maiestatem suam & prouidentiam deo magis adseruisse: Non aliam homines ad aetherea illa & aeterna traxisse magis. Et in fatalis huius stadii decursu siquid lapsi: credo, a laudabili bonoque studio fuit, caecos mortales a caeca Dea reuocandi. Fortunam inquit. cuius non solum numen ab iis fortiter explosum, sed & nomen.*"

## CAPVT XIX.

*Quartum siue Verum Fatum explicatum. De nomine ipso dictum breuiter. Id definitum tenuiore filo: & ostensum a Prouidentia differre.*

"Sed de sensu veterum aut dissensu, dixi satis. Cur enim curiose nimis aut subtiliter scruter τὰς ἐν ἄδου τριακάδας? Cum vero Fato adfatim mihi negotij: quod nunc propono & illustro. Id autem hic appello, aeternum Prouidentiae decretum: quod tolli non magis e rebus potest, quam Prouidentia ipsa. Nec nomen mihi aliquis cauilletur, quia, fidenter hoc adseuero, non aliud huic rei proprium in Romana lingua. Abusi eo veteres? nos vtemur: & eductam e Stoicorum carcere vocem, trahemus ad lucem meliorem. Fatum enim certe a fando: nec aliud proprie

"And on this issue that great writer addressing a great king did not depart from the Stoics:

In my assessment, however, Necessity ought not to be called anything other than God, as a stable nature, and likewise Fate itself, which links together all things and proceeds freely and unhindered.<sup>93</sup>

Even if there is something imprudent in these words, there is nothing irreverent; and among fair-minded critics they are not far from our true understanding of Fate. In all seriousness I grant this testimony to the tribe of the Stoics: that no school has done more to preserve the majesty and Providence of God, that no other has done more to draw men to what is spiritual and eternal. And even if they have stumbled in the course of this fateful race, I believe it resulted from a laudable and worthy eagerness of calling blind mortals back from the blind goddess. Of course I mean Fortune: they not only vigorously hissed her authority out of their midst, but even her name."

## Chapter 19

*An Explanation of the fourth or True version of Fate. A brief discussion of the name itself. That definition more finely honed and shown to differ from Providence.*

"But I have said enough about the attitude of the ancients, or their dissension. Why should I too curiously and subtly sift through 'the mysteries of hell'?<sup>94</sup> I have enough to occupy me now with setting forth and clarifying true Fate. I here define it as the eternal decree of Providence, which can no more be taken away from things than Providence itself. And let no one quibble with me about the term, since I confidently maintain that there is none in the Latin language more appropriate to this thing itself. Have the ancients abused it? Let us *use* it, and having summoned the word from the prison of the Stoics, let us place it in a better light. *Fatum* most certainly comes from *fari* ["to utter"], and properly means

<sup>93</sup> Pseudo-Aristotle, *On the World* 401b. What is rendered "as a stable nature" is a close approximation of Lipsius' Latin rendering of the quotation, but the original Greek is more nearly, "as the unchanging ground of being."

<sup>94</sup> Lipsius' marginal note reads, "Our Desiderius [Erasmus] has badly turned and badly selected this adage." See Erasmus, *Adagia* 1839, in *Opera*, vol. 2.4 (1987), 240. Erasmus renders the Greek adage as *Qui sunt apud inferos terniones*, and maintains that it "ridicules those who track down secret, obscure matters with a certain curious diligence." Lipsius renders it *Tricesimas quae in orco*. I cannot see why Erasmus' interpretation does not work in Lipsius's context. See also E.L. A. Leutsch and F.G. Schneidewin, eds., *Corpus Pseudepigrapharum Graecorum* (1839; repr. Hildesheim: Göttingen, 1962), 1: 255.