

them. Other propositions are true with only conditional necessity: “Socrates is sitting down”, for instance, or “Plato is going for a walk” is necessarily true while (and only while) Socrates is in fact sitting down and Plato is in fact going for a walk, respectively. The same is true for phenomena like chariot races: the drivers’ skillful maneuvers are necessary while I am observing them, but they were not necessary beforehand, since they are the result of the drivers’ free will. Thus, things and events that are simply necessary are so because of their own nature; things and events that are conditionally necessary are so owing to extrinsic or accidental circumstances.

#### 4. BOETHIUS ON PREDESTINATION AND FREE WILL

This argument is in fact based on an adaptation of the Aristotelian definition of knowledge: if I *know* something, then the object of my knowledge necessarily<sup>150</sup> is the way I know it to be, simply because that’s the way knowledge (Greek *epistēmē*, Latin *scientia*, Arabic *‘ilm*) is defined – at least in one of its many Aristotelian senses.<sup>151</sup>

##### 4.2.1. The distinction between absolute and conditional necessity<sup>152</sup>

One Aristotelian text that is important in this regard is this one from the *De interpretatione* (19a23-6):

*That what exists is when it is, and what does not exist is not when it is not, necessary.*<sup>153</sup>

For Aristotle, there can be *epistēmē* in this strict sense – the sense, that is, in which such knowledge is always true (*APo* II, 19, 100b18) – only of universals.<sup>154</sup> Indeed, the reason why knowledge is bereft of falsehood is that it is *necessary* for things to be in the way knowledge understands them to be.<sup>155</sup> This is clear, for instance, from a passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VI, 3, 1139b20-25):

150 As Weidemann points out (1998, 198), Boethius’ addition of the modal operator “necessarily” transforms Aristotle’s consequentiality relation of *being* into a consequentiality relation of *necessity*.

151 “It is impossible for that of which there is knowledge in the absolute sense to be otherwise <than it is>,” says Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* (I, 2 71b9-15).

152 Cf. Obertello 1989, 95ff.; Weidemann 1998; Bechtel 2006, 274f.

153 Το μὲν οὖν εἶναι το ὄν ὅταν ἡ, καὶ το μὴ ὄν μὴ εἶναι ὅταν μὴ ἡ, ἀνάγκη. Cf. Frede 1972.

154 Cf. *Metaph.* K 1, 1059b26; 2, 1060b20; B 6, 1003a15; M 9, 1086b5.10; 1086b 33; *Anal. pr.* 31 87b33; *De an.* 2.5417b23; *EN* 7, 6, 1140b31; 1180b15. The Narrator begins by speaking not of knowledge but of opinion, only to slip into talking about knowledge by virtue of the (Platonic!) equivalence true opinion = knowledge.

155 Cf. *Cons.* 5.3.21: *Ea namque causa est cur mendacio scientia careat, quod se ita rem quamque habere necesse est uti eam sese habere scientia comprehendit.*

*We all suppose that what we know is not capable of being otherwise (...) therefore the object of knowledge is of necessity. Therefore it is eternal, for things that are of necessity in the unqualified sense are all eternal*<sup>156</sup>; *and things that are eternal are ungenerated and imperishable.*

The reason this distinction is important is as follows: the Narrator reasons that (1) necessarily, if an event *p* will happen, then God foresees it ( $N(p \rightarrow F(G, p))$ ); and (2) necessarily, if God foresees *p*, it will happen ( $N(F(G, p) \rightarrow p)$ ). Note that the necessity here bears upon the entire implication: it is a *necessitas consequentiae*. It has been argued<sup>157</sup> that Boethius now makes a simple logical mistake, inferring from (1) and (2) that (3) if *p*, then necessarily God foresees *p* ( $p \rightarrow NF(G, p)$ ), and (4) if God foresees *p*, then necessarily *p* ( $F(G, p) \rightarrow Np$ ), where in both the latter cases the necessity bears upon the consequent (*necessitas consequentis*).

Yet it is not the case that it is necessary now that (*p*) be true, and it is also not the case that it is necessary that ( $\sim p$ ) be true, i.e.

$$\sim(Np) \wedge \sim(N\sim p)$$

I believe this analysis is mistaken. Boethius does believe both (3) and (4) are true, but they are true only *conditionally*, where the condition is God’s knowledge. In other words, the necessity imposed by God’s knowledge of a future event is of the same kind as that which necessitates that Socrates be sitting when I know he is sitting: such conditional necessity (*kath’ hupothesein* in Greek<sup>158</sup>; *secundum praecessionem* in the Latin of Chalcidius<sup>159</sup>) imposes no constraint upon Socrates, but simply concerns the nature of knowledge.<sup>160</sup> As Boethius will claim, such future events can be said to be necessary with regard to God’s knowledge but free with regard to their own nature.

Вященника ἐσσήν (так Иосиф Флавий воспроизводит греческими буквами библейский термин ἵνα, хошен) соответствует греческий термин λόγιον, «прорицание» (ср. Септуагинта: λογεῖον).

These considerations go some way toward explaining the key point of how God can know future events, which are by their nature indeterminate, in a determinate way. The reason why this seems counter-intuitive to us is

156 Cf. *De Caelo* I, 12, 281a28-282a4.

157 Graeser 1992; Marenbon 2003a, 533ff.

158 Cf. Eustratius, *In EN VI*, p. 293, 1-2 Heylbut (CAG 20): ὡς εἶναι τὰ ἀπλῶς ἐξ ἀνάγκης πάντα αἰδία. ἀπλῶς δὲ λέγομεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὅσα μὴ καθ’ ὑπόθεσιν ἐξ ἀνάγκης, οἷον τὸ καθῆσθαι τινα ἔστ’ ἂν κάθηται ὁ καθήμενος, ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἶναι λέγομεν τὸ καθῆσθαι αὐτόν, ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ ἀπλῶς ἀλλ’ ἐξ ὑποθέσεως (“thus, all things that are simply by necessity are perpetual [*aidia*]. We call ‘simply by necessity’ whatever is not hypothetically (*kath’ hupothesein*) by necessity: for instance, the fact of sitting: as long as the seated person is sitting, we say that the fact that he is sitting is necessary, yet not simply but by hypothesis (*ex hupotheseōs*)”).

159 Chalcidius, *In Tim.*, p. 186, 15 Waszink.

160 In the words of Bächli 2001, it is an “epistemological necessity”.