

ON FATE

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

I. ... because it relates to character, called in Greek *ethos*, while we usually term that part of philosophy 'the study of character,' but the suitable course is to add to the Latin language by giving this subject the name of 'moral science.' It is also necessary to expound the meaning and the theory of propositions, called in Greek *axiomata*; what validity these have when they make a statement about a future event and about something that may happen or may not is a difficult field of inquiry, entitled by philosophers *Peri Dynaton*; and the whole subject is *Logike*, which I call 'the theory of discourse.' The method which I pursued in other volumes, those on the Nature of the Gods, and also in those which I have published on Divination, was that of setting out a continuous discourse both for and against, to enable each student to accept for himself the view that seems to him most probable; but I was prevented by accident from adopting it in the present discussion on the subject of Fate.

For I was at my place at Puteoli, and my friend Hirtius, the consul designate, a very close friend of mine and a devoted student of the subjects that have occupied my life from boyhood, was in the neighbourhood. Consequently we were a great deal together, being engrossed as we for our part were in seeking for a line of policy that might lead to peace and concord in the state. For since the death of Caesar it had seemed as if a search was being made for every possible means of causing fresh upheavals, and we thought that resistance must be offered to these tendencies. Consequently almost all our conversation was spent in considering those matters,— and this both on many other occasions and also, on a day less occupied by engagements than usual and less interrupted by visitors, Hirtius having come to my house, we began with our daily and regular topics of peace and tranquillity.

II. These dealt with, Hirtius remarked, "What now? I hope you have not actually abandoned your oratorical exercises, though you have undoubtedly placed philosophy in front of them; well then, is it possible for me to hear something?"

"Well," I said, "you can either hear something or say something yourself; for you are right in supposing that I have not abandoned my old interest in oratory, — indeed I have kindled it in you also, although you came to me an ardent devotee already; and moreover my oratorical powers are not diminished by the subjects that I now have in hand, but rather increased.

For there is a close alliance between the orator and the philosophical system of which I am a follower, since the orator borrows subtlety from the Academy and repays the loan by giving to it a copious and flowing style and rhetorical ornament. This being so," I said, "as both fields of study fall within our province, to-day it shall be for you to choose which you prefer to enjoy."

"That is most kind of you," rejoined Hirtius, "and exactly like what you do always; for your willingness never refuses anything to my inclination.

But I am acquainted with the rhetorical discourses of your school, and have often heard and also often shall hear you in them; moreover your Tusculan Disputations show that you have adopted this Academic practice of arguing against a thesis advanced; consequently I am willing to lay down some thesis in order that I may hear the counter-arguments, if this is not disagreeable to you."

"Can anything be disagreeable to me," I said, "that will be agreeable to you? But you will hear me speaking as a true Roman, as one who is nervous in entering on this kind of discussion,

and who is returning to these studies after a long interval."

"I shall listen to your discourse in the same spirit as I read your writings; so begin. Let us sit down here."

III. "... a in some of which, for instance in the case of the poet Antipater, in that of persons born on the shortest day, or of brothers who are ill at the same time, in the cases of urine and finger-nails and other things of that kind, natural connexion operates, and this I do not exclude — it is not a predestined compelling force at all; but in other cases there can be some elements of chance, for instance with the shipwrecked sailor we spoke of, or Icadius, or Daphitas. Some cases even seem (if the master will excuse my saying so) to be the invention of Posidonius; at all events they are ridiculous.

For consider: suppose it was Daphitas's destiny to fall off his horse and meet his end in that way, was it off this horse, which as it was not a real horse had a name that did not belong to it? or was it against these little four-in-hands on the sword-hilt that Philip used to be warned to be on his guard? just as if it was the hilt of a sword that killed him! Again, what is there remarkable about that nameless shipwrecked sailor's having fallen into a brook? although in his case indeed our authority does write that he had been warned that he was to meet his end in the water.

Even in the case of the brigand Icadius I swear I can't see any trace of destiny; for the story does not say that he had any warning, so that if a rock from the roof of a cave did fall on his legs, what is there surprising about it? for I suppose that even if Icadius had not been in the cave at the time, that rock would have fallen all the same, since either nothing at all is fortuitous or it was possible for this particular event to have happened by fortune.

What I want to know therefore is (and this is a matter that will have a wide bearing), if there were no such word at all as fate, no such thing, no such force, and if either most things or all things took place by mere casual accident, would the course of events be different from what it is now? What is the point then of harping on fate, when everything can be explained by reference to nature and fortune without bringing fate in?

IV. "But let us give Posidonius the polite dismissal that he deserves and return to the subtleties of Chrysippus. And first let us answer him on the actual influence of connexion; the other points we will go on to afterwards. We see the wide difference between the natural characters of different localities: we notice that some are healthy, others unhealthy, that the inhabitants of some are phlegmatic and as it were overcharged with moisture, those of others parched and dried up; and there are a number of other very wide differences between one place and another. Athens has a rarefied climate, which is thought also to cause sharpness of wit above the average in the population; at Thebes the climate is dense, and so the Theban are stout and sturdy. All the same the rarefied air of Athens will not enable a student to choose between the lectures of Zeno, Arcesilas and Theophrastus, and the dense air of Thebes will not make a man try to win a race at Nemea rather than at Corinth.

Carry the distinction further: tell me, can the nature of the locality cause us to take our walk in Pompey's Porch rather than in the Campus? in your company sooner than in someone else's? on the 15th of the month rather than on the 1st? Well then, just as the nature of the locality has some effect on some things but none on others, so the condition of the heavenly bodies may if you like influence some things, but it certainly will not influence everything.

You will say that inasmuch as there are differences in the natures of human beings that cause some to like sweet things, others slightly bitter things, and make some licentious and others prone to anger or cruel or proud, while others shrink in horror from vices of that sort, therefore, we are told, inasmuch as there is so wide a difference between one nature and another, what is there surprising in the view that these points of unlikeness result from different causes?

V. "In putting forward this view Chrysippus fails to see the question at issue and the

point with which the argument is dealing. For it does not follow that if differences in men's propensities are due to natural and antecedent causes, therefore our wills and desires are also due to natural and antecedent causes; for if that were the case, we should have no freedom of the will at all [nothing would be in our power].

But as it is, though we admit that it does not rest with ourselves whether we are quick-witted or dull, strong or weak, yet the person who thinks that it necessarily follows from this that even our choice between sitting still and walking about is not voluntary fails to discern the true sequence of cause and effect. For granted that clever people and stupid people are born like that, owing to antecedent causes, and that the same is true of the strong and the weak, nevertheless it does not follow that our sitting and walking and performing some action are also settled and fixed by primary causes.

The Megarian philosopher Stilpo, we are informed, was undoubtedly a clever person and highly esteemed in his day. Stilpo is described in the writings of his own associates as having been fond of liquor and of women, and they do not record this as a reproach but rather to add to his reputation, for they say that he had so completely mastered and suppressed his vicious nature by study that no one ever saw him the worse for liquor or observed in him a single trace of licentiousness. Again, do we not read how Socrates was stigmatized by the 'physiognomist' Zopyrus, who professed to discover men's entire characters and natures from their body, eyes, face and brow? he said that Socrates was stupid and thick-witted because he had not got hollows in the neck above the collarbone — he used to say that these portions of his anatomy were blocked and stopped up; he also added that he was addicted to women — at which Alcibiades is said to have given a loud guffaw!

But it is possible that these defects may be due to natural causes; but their eradication and entire removal, recalling the man himself from the serious vices to which he was inclined, does not rest with natural causes, but with will, effort, training; and if the potency and the existence of fate is proved from the theory of divination, all of these will be done away with.

VI. "Indeed, if divination exists, what pray is the nature of the scientific observations (I use the term 'observations' to render *theoremata*) which are its source? For I do not believe that those who practise divination dispense entirely with the use of observation in foretelling future events, any more than do the practitioners of all the other sciences in pursuing their own function.

Well then, here is a specimen of the observations of the astrologers : 'If (for instance) a man was born at the rising of the dogstar, he will not die at sea.' Keep a good lookout, Chrysippus, so as not to leave your position undefended; you have a great tussle about it with that stalwart logician Diodorus. For if the connexion of propositions 'If anyone was born at the rising of the dogstar, he will not die at sea' is true, the following connexion is also true, 'If Fabius was born at the rising of the dogstar, Fabius will not die at sea.' Consequently the propositions 'Fabius was born at the rising of the dogstar' and 'Fabius will die at sea' are incompatible, and since that he was born at the rising of the dogstar is predicated with certainty in the case of Fabius, the propositions 'Fabius exists' and 'Fabius will die at sea' are also incompatible. Therefore also 'Fabius exists and Fabius will die at sea' is a conjunction of incompatibles, which as propounded is an impossibility. Therefore the proposition 'Fabius will die at sea' belongs to the class of impossibilities. Therefore every false proposition about the future is an impossibility.

VII. But this is a view that you, Chrysippus, will not allow at all, and this is the very point about which you are specially at issue with Diodorus. He says that only what either is true or will be true is a possibility, and whatever will be, he says, must necessarily happen, and whatever will not be, according to him cannot possibly happen. You say that things which will not be are also 'possible' — for instance it is possible for this jewel to be broken even if it never will be —,

and that the reign of Cypselus at Corinth was not necessary although it had been announced by the oracle of Apollo a thousand years before. But if you are going to sanction divine prophecies of that sort, you will reckon false statements as to future events (for instance a prophecy that Africanus was not going to take Carthage) as being in the class of things impossible, and also, if a thing is truly stated about the future and it will be so, you would have to say that it is so; but the whole of this is the view of Diodorus, which is alien to your school.

For if the following is a true connexion, 'If you were born at the rising of the dogstar you will not die at sea,' and if the first proposition in the connexion, 'You were born at the rising of the dogstar,' is necessary (for all things true in the past are necessary, as Chrysippus holds, in disagreement with his master Cleanthes, because they are unchangeable and because what is past cannot turn from true into false) — if therefore the first proposition in the connexion is necessary, the proposition that follows also becomes necessary. Although Chrysippus does not think that this holds good universally; but all the same, if there is a natural cause why Fabius should not die at sea, it is not possible for Fabius to die at sea.

VIII. "At this point Chrysippus gets nervous and expresses a hope that the Chaldaeans and the rest of the prophets are mistaken, and that they will not employ conjunctions of propositions putting out their observations in the form 'If anyone was born at the rising of the dogstar he will not die at sea,' but rather will say 'It is not the case both that some person was born at the rising of the dogstar and that that person will die at sea.' what amusing presumption! to avoid falling into the hands of Diodorus himself he tutors the Chaldaeans as to the proper form in which to set out their observations! For I ask you, if the Chaldaeans adopt the procedure of setting forth negations of indefinite conjunctions rather than indefinite sequences, why should it not be possible for doctors and geometricians and the other professions to do likewise? Take a doctor to begin with: he will not set forth a scientific principle that he has ascertained in this form, 'If a person's pulse is so and so, he has got a fever,' but rather as follows, 'It is not the case both that a person's pulse is so and so and that he has not got a fever.' And similarly a geometrician will not speak as follows, 'The greatest circles on a sphere bisect each other,' but rather as follows, 'It is not the case both that there are certain circles on the surface of a sphere that are the greatest and that these circles do not bisect each other.'

What is there that cannot be carried over in that sort of way from the form of a necessary consequence to that of a negation of conjoined statements? And in fact we can express the same thing in other ways. Just now I said 'The greatest circles on a sphere bisect each other' ; but it is possible for me to say 'If certain circles on a sphere are the greatest,' and it is possible for me to say 'Because certain circles on a sphere will be the greatest.' There are many ways of stating a proposition, and none is more twisted round than this one, which Chrysippus hopes that the Chaldaeans will accommodate the Stoics by accepting. Yet none of the Chaldaeans really use that sort of language, for it is a bigger task to familiarize oneself with these contorted modes of expression than with the risings and settings of the constellations.

IX. "But let us go back to the argument of Diodorus already mentioned, which they term *Peri Dynaton*, in which the meaning of the term 'possible' is investigated. Well, Diodorus holds that only what either is true or will be true is possible. This position is connected with the argument that nothing happens which was not necessary, and that whatever is possible either is now or will be, and that it is no more possible for things that will be to alter than it is for things that have happened; but that whereas in the things that have happened this immutability is manifest, in some things that are going to happen, because their immutability is not manifest, it does not appear to be there at all, and consequently, while the statement 'This man will die of this disease' is true in the case of a man who is suffering from a deadly disease, if this same statement is made truly in the case of a man in whom so violent an attack of the disease

is not manifest, none the less it will happen. It follows that no change from true to false can occur even in the case of the future. For 'Scipio will die' has such validity that although it is a statement about the future it cannot be converted into a falsehood, for it is a statement about a human being, who must inevitably die.

If the form of the statement had been 'Scipio will die by violence in his bedroom at night,' the statement in that form would have been a true one, for it would have been a statement that a thing was going to happen that was going to happen, and that it was going to happen is a necessary inference from the fact that it did happen. Neither was 'Scipio will die' any truer than 'Scipio will die in that manner,' nor was it more inevitable for Scipio to die than it was for him to die in that manner, nor was it more impossible for the statement 'Scipio has been murdered' to change from a truth to a falsehood than for the statement 'Scipio will be murdered';

Epicurus need not have invented his "swerve" of the atoms to defend against arguments for fatalism nor, these things being so, is there any reason for Epicurus's standing in terror of fate and seeking protection against it from the atoms and making them swerve out of the perpendicular? and entertaining simultaneously two utterly inexplicable propositions, one that something takes place without a cause — from which it will follow that something comes out of nothing, which neither Epicurus nor any natural philosopher allows —, the other that when two atoms are travelling through empty space one moves in a straight line and the other swerves.

For it is not necessary for Epicurus to fear lest, when he admits that every proposition is either true or false, all events must necessarily be caused by fate; for the truth of a proposition of the form 'Carneades will go down to the Academy' is not due to an eternal stream of natural and necessary causation, and yet nevertheless it is not uncaused, but there is a difference between causes accidentally precedent [by chance] and causes intrinsically containing a natural efficiency. Thus it is the case both that the statement 'Epicurus will die in the archonship of Pytharatus, at the age of seventy-two,' was always true, and also that nevertheless there were no fore-ordained causes why it should so happen, but, because it did so fall out, it was certainly going to befall by a definite series of causes.

Moreover those who say that things that are going to be are immutable and that a true future event cannot be changed into a false one, are not asserting the necessity of fate but explaining the meaning of terms; whereas those who bring in an everlasting series of causes rob the human mind of freewill and fetter it in the chains of a fated necessity.

X. "But enough of these subjects; let us examine others. For Chrysippus argues thus: If uncaused motion exists, it will not be the case that every proposition (termed by the logicians an *axioma*) is either true or false, for a thing not possessing efficient causes will be neither true nor false; but every proposition is either true or false; therefore uncaused motion does not exist.

If this is so, all things that take place take place by precedent causes; if this is so, all take place by fate; it therefore follows that all things that take place take place by fate.' At this point, in the first place if I chose to agree with Epicurus and to say that not every proposition is either true or false, I would rather suffer that nasty knock than agree that all events are caused by fate; for the former opinion has something to be said for it, but the latter is intolerable. Accordingly Chrysippus exerts every effort to prove the view that every *axioma* is either true or false. For just as Epicurus is afraid that if he admits this he will also have to admit that all events whatever are caused by fate (on the ground that if either of two alternatives is true from all eternity, that alternative is also certain, and if it is certain it is also necessary. This, he thinks, would prove both necessity and fate), similarly Chrysippus fears that if he fails to maintain that every proposition is either true or false he will not carry his point that all things happen by fate and spring from eternal causes governing future events.

But Epicurus thinks that the necessity of fate is avoided by the swerve of an atom; and so

in addition to gravity and impact there arises a third form of motion, when the atom swerves sideways a minimal space (termed by Epicurus *elachiston*). Also he is compelled to profess in reality, if not quite explicitly, that this swerve takes place without cause; for the atom does not swerve in consequence of being struck by another atom, since how can impact between them take place if they are indivisible bodies travelling perpendicularly in straight lines by the force of gravity, as Epicurus holds? but it follows that if one is never driven aside by another, one will never even meet another; the consequence is that, even granting that the atom exists and that it swerves, the swerve is uncaused.

"The reason why Epicurus brought in this theory was his fear lest, if the atom were always carried along by the natural and necessary force of gravity, we should have no freedom whatever, since the movement of the mind was controlled by the movement of the atom. The author of the atomic theory, Democritus, preferred to accept the view that all events are caused by necessity, rather than to deprive the atoms of their natural motions.

XI. Carneades showed greater insight: his doctrine was that the school of Epicurus could have maintained its cause without this fictitious swerve. For it would have been better for the dogma of the possibility of some voluntary movement of the mind to be maintained than for them to introduce the swerve, especially as they were unable to invent a cause for it; and by maintaining that dogma they could easily have withstood Chrysippus, for in admitting that no motion is uncaused they would not have been admitting that all events are due to antecedent causes, as they would have said that there are no external and antecedent causes of our volition.

Therefore when we use the expression 'Somebody wishes (or does not wish) something without cause, we are perverting the accepted convention of language; for we are using the phrase 'without cause' in the sense of without an external and antecedent cause,'not without a cause of some kind.' Just as when we say that a vessel is empty we do not use the expression in the sense in which it is used by the natural philosophers, who hold that no absolute vacuum exists, but we employ it to mean that the vessel has (for example) no water in it, or wine, or oil, similarly when we say that the mind moves without cause we mean that it moves without an antecedent external cause, not without any cause at all. Motion without cause can be predicated of the atom itself in moving through void by reason of gravity and weight, because there is no additional cause from outside; but on the other hand, for fear lest we all be laughed at by the natural philosophers if we say that anything takes place without a cause, a distinction must be made, and the matter must be put in this way, that it is the nature of the atom itself to be kept in motion by weight and gravity, and that its nature is itself the cause of its travelling in this manner. Similarly no external cause need be sought to explain the voluntary movements of the mind; for voluntary motion possesses the intrinsic property of being in our power and of obeying us, and its obedience is not uncaused, for its nature is itself the cause of this.

This being so, what is the reason why every proposition is not either true or false, if we do not allow that whatever takes place is caused by fate? The reason is, says he, that future things that have not got causes *why* they will be in the future cannot be true; therefore those that are true must necessarily have causes; accordingly when they have occurred they will have occurred by fate.

XII. That ends the business, inasmuch as you are bound to admit either that everything takes place by fate or that something can take place without a cause.

Consider the statement 'Scipio will take Numantia': if an external chain of interlinked causes is not going to bring this about, can it be true in any other manner? could it have been false if it had been said innumerable ages ago? And if the statement 'Scipio will take Numantia' had not been true then, even after Numantia has fallen the statement Scipio has taken Numantia' is not true either. Therefore is it possible for anything to have happened that was not previously

going to be true? For just as we speak of past things as true that possessed true actuality at some former time, so we speak of future things as true that will possess true actuality at some following time.

Yet it does not immediately follow from the fact that every statement is either true or false that there are immutable causes, eternally existing, that forbid anything to fall out otherwise than it will fall out. The causes which bring it about that statements of the form 'Cato will come into the Senate' are true statements, are fortuitous, they are not inherent in the nature of things and the order of the universe; and nevertheless 'he will come,' when true, is as immutable as 'he has come' (though we need not on that account be haunted by fear of fate or necessity), for it will necessarily be admitted that if the statement Hortensius will come to his place at Tusculum' is not true, it follows that it is false. Our opponents hold that it is neither; which is impossible.

"Nor shall we for our part be hampered by what is called the 'idle argument' — for one argument is named by the philosophers the *Argos Logos*, because if we yielded to it we should live a life of absolute inaction. For they argue as follows: If it is fated for you to recover from this illness, you will recover whether you call in a doctor or do not; similarly, if it is fated for you not to recover from this illness, you will not recover whether you call in a doctor or do not; and either your recovery or your non-recovery is fated; therefore there is no point in calling in a doctor.'

XIII. This mode of arguing is rightly called 'idle' and indolent, because the same train of reasoning will lead to the entire abolition of action from life. It is even possible to alter the form by not introducing the word 'fate' and yet to retain the same meaning, thus If the statement "You will recover from that illness" has been true from all eternity, you will recover whether you call in a doctor or do not; and similarly if the statement "You will recover from that illness" has been false from all eternity, you will not recover whether you call in a doctor or not; the conclusion following as before.

This argument is criticized by Chrysippus. For, he says, there exist in actuality two classes of facts, simple and complex. An instance of a simple fact is 'Socrates will die at a given date'; in this case, whether he does some action or does not do it, the day of his death has been determined. But if it is fated that 'Laius will have a son Oedipus,' it will not be possible for the words 'whether Laius mates with woman or does not' to be added, for the matter is complex and condestinate' — he gives that name to it because he thinks it is fated both that Laius will lie with a wife and that he will beget Oedipus by her: in the same way as, supposing it were said that 'Milo will wrestle at Olympia' and somebody replied 'If so, he will wrestle whether he has an opponent or not,' he would be wrong; for 'will wrestle' is a complex statement, because there can be no wrestling without an opponent. Therefore all captious arguments of that sort can be refuted in the same way. 'You will recover whether you call in a doctor or do not' is captious, for calling in a doctor is just as much fated as recovering. These connected events, as I said, are termed by Chrysippus 'condestinate.'

XIV. "Carneades refused to accept this class of things entirely, and held the view that the line of argument in question was not quite accurately thought out. In consequence he used to put his case in another manner, and did not employ any trickery; his argument ran like this: If everything takes place with antecedent causes, all events take place in a closely knit web of natural interconnexion; if this is so, all things are caused by necessity; if this is true, nothing is in our power. But something is in our power. Yet if all events take place by fate, there are antecedent causes of all events. Therefore it is not the case that whatever events take place take place by fate.'

This line of argument cannot be made more rigidly conclusive. For if anybody chose to repeat the same point and to put it thus, 'If all that will be is from eternity true, so that it must

certainly turn out as it will be, events necessarily take place in a closely knit web of natural interconnexion,' he would be talking nonsense. For it makes a great deal of difference whether a natural cause, existing from all eternity, renders future things true, or things that are going to be in the future can be understood to be true even without any natural eternity. Accordingly Carneades used to say that not even Apollo could tell any future events except those whose causes were so held together by nature that they must necessarily happen.

For what consideration could lead the god himself to say that the Marcellus who was three times consul was going to die at sea? this had indeed been true from all eternity, but it had no efficient causes.

Therefore Carneades held the view that Apollo had no knowledge even of these past events which had left behind them no trace of their passage — how much less had he knowledge of future events, for only by knowing the efficient causes of all things was it possible to know the future; therefore it was impossible for Apollo to foretell the fate of Oedipus when there were no causes fore-ordained in the nature of things making it necessary for him to murder his father, nor could he foretell anything of the sort.

XV. Hence if, while it is consistent for the Stoics, who say that all things happen by fate, to accept oracles of this sort and all the other things connected with divination, yet the same position cannot be held by those who say that the things which are going to happen in the future have been true from all eternity, observe that their case is not the same as that of the Stoics; for their position is more limited and narrow, whereas the Stoic theory is untrammelled and free.

Even if it be admitted that nothing can happen without an antecedent cause, what good would that be unless it be maintained that the cause in question is a link in an eternal chain of causation? But a cause is that which makes the thing of which it is the cause come about — as a wound is the cause of death, failure to digest one's food of illness, fire of heat.

Accordingly 'cause' is not to be understood in such a way as to make what precedes a thing the cause of that thing, but what precedes it effectively: the cause of my playing tennis was not my going down into the Campus, nor did Hecuba's giving birth to Alexander make her the cause of the death of Trojans, nor was Tyndareus the cause of Agamemnon's death because he was the father of Clytemnestra. For on those lines a well-dressed traveller also will be said to have been the cause of the highwayman's robbing him of his clothes.

To this class of expression belongs the phrase of Ennius —

Would that in Pelius' glade the pine-tree beams
Had never fallen to earth by axes hewn!

He might have gone even further back, 'Would that no tree had ever grown on Pelius!' and even further, 'Would that no Mount Pelius existed!' and similarly one may go on recalling preceding events in infinite regress.

Nor thence had made inception of the task
Of laying down a ship.

What is the point of recounting these past events? because what follows is this:

For were it so, my roving royal mistress,
Medea, from her home had ne'er set forth,
Heartsick and by love's cruel weapon wounded.

It was not the case that those events brought the cause of love.

XVI. "But they declare that there is a difference whether a thing is of such a kind that something cannot be effected without it, or such that something must necessarily be effected by it. None of the causes mentioned therefore is really a cause, since none by its own force effects the thing of which it is said to be the cause; nor is that which is a condition of a thing's being effected a cause, but that of which the access necessarily produces the thing of which it is the cause. For at the time when the snake-bite had not yet caused Philoctetes to be afflicted with a sore, what cause was contained in the nature of things that would bring it to pass that he would be marooned on the Isle of Lemnos? whereas afterwards the cause was nearer and more closely connected with his death.

Therefore it was the principle underlying the result that revealed the cause; but the proposition 'Philoctetes will be marooned on an island' had been true from all eternity, and this could not be turned from a truth into a falsehood. For it is necessary that of two contrary propositions — by contrary I here mean propositions one of which affirms something and the other denies it — of these two propositions therefore it is necessary, *pace* Epicurus, that one should be true and the other false; for example, 'Philoctetes will be wounded' was true, and 'Philoctetes will not be wounded' false, for the whole of the ages of the past; unless perhaps we choose to follow the opinion of the Epicureans, who say that propositions of this sort are neither true nor false, or else, when ashamed of that, they nevertheless make the still more impudent assertion that disjunction consisting of contrary propositions are true, but that the statements contained in the propositions are neither of them true.

What marvellous effrontery and pitiable ignorance of logical method! For if anything propounded is neither true nor false, it certainly is not true; but how can something that is not true not be false, or how can something that is not false not be true? We shall therefore hold to the position maintained by Chrysippus, that every proposition is either true or false; reason itself will insist both that certain things are true from all eternity and that they are not involved in a nexus of eternal causes but are free from the necessity of fate.

XVII. "And my own view at all events is that, as between the two opinions held by the old philosophers, on the one hand the opinion of those who deemed that everything takes place by fate in the sense that this fate exercises the force of necessity — the opinion to which Democritus, Heraclitus, Empedocles and Aristotle adhered — and on the other hand the opinion of those who held that the movements of the mind are voluntary and not at all controlled by fate, Chrysippus stood as unofficial umpire and wished to strike a compromise, — though as a matter of fact he inclines to adhere to those who hold that the mind is released from all necessity of motion; but in employing formulae peculiar to himself he slips into such difficulties that against his will he lends support to the necessity of fate.

And let us if you please examine the nature of this doctrine in connexion with the topic of assent, which I treated in my first discourse. Those old philosophers who held that everything takes place by fate used to say that assent is given perforce as the result of necessity. On the other hand those who disagreed with them released assent from bondage to fate, and maintained that if assent were made subject to fate it would be impossible to dissociate it from necessity. They argued as follows:

If all things take place by fate, all things take place with an antecedent cause; and if desire is caused, those things which follow desire are also caused; therefore assent is also caused. But if the cause of desire is not situated within us, even desire itself is also not in our power; and if this is so, those things which are caused by desire also do not rest with us. It follows therefore that neither assent nor action is in our power. From this it results that there is no justice in either praise or blame, either honours or punishments. But as this is erroneous, they hold that it is a

valid inference that not everything that takes place takes place by fate.

XVIII. "But Chrysippus, since he refused on the one hand to accept necessity and held on the other hand that nothing happens without fore-ordained causes, distinguishes different kinds of causation, to enable himself at the same time to escape necessity and to retain fate. 'Some causes,' he says, 'are perfect and principal, others auxiliary and proximate. Hence when we say that everything takes place by fate owing to antecedent causes, what we wish to be understood is not perfect and principal causes but auxiliary and proximate causes.' Accordingly he counters the argument that I set out a little time ago by saying that, if everything takes place by fate, it does indeed follow that everything takes place from antecedent causes, but not from principal and perfect but auxiliary and proximate causes. And if these causes themselves are not in our power, it does not follow that desire also is not in our power. On the other hand if we were to say that all things happen from perfect and principal causes, it would then follow that, as those causes are not in our power, desire would not be in our power either.

Hence the train of argument in question will be valid against those who introduce fate in such a manner as to make it involve necessity; but it will have no validity against those who do not allege perfect and principal causes as antecedent. For they think that they can easily explain the meaning of the statement that assent takes place from pre-ordained causes; for although assent cannot take place unless prompted by a sense-presentation, nevertheless since that presentation supplies a proximate and not a principal cause, this, according to Chrysippus, is explained by the theory which we stated just now, not indeed proving that assent can take place without being aroused by any external force (for assent must necessarily be actuated by our seeing an object), but Chrysippus goes back to his roller and spinning-top, which cannot begin to move unless they are pushed or struck, but which when this has happened, he thinks, continue to move of their own nature, the roller rolling forward and the top spinning round.

XIX. 'In the same way therefore,' he says, 'as a person who has pushed a roller forward has given it a beginning of motion, but has not given it the capacity to roll, so a sense-presentation when it impinges will it is true impress and as it were seal its appearance on the mind, but the act of assent will be in our power, and as we said in the case of the roller, though given a push from without, as to the rest will move by its own force and nature. If some event were produced without antecedent cause, it would not be true that all things take place by fate; but if it is probable that with all things whatever that take place there is an antecedent cause, what reason will it be possible to adduce why we should not have to admit that all things take place by fate? — only provided that the nature of the distinction and difference between causes is understood.'

As this is the form in which these doctrines are set out by Chrysippus, if the people who deny that acts of assent take place by fate nevertheless would admit that those acts take place without an antecedent sense-presentation, it is a different theory; but if they allow that sense-presentations come first, yet nevertheless acts of assent do not take place by fate, because assent is not prompted by the proximate and contiguous cause stated, surely this comes to the same thing. For Chrysippus, while admitting that the proximate and contiguous cause of assent is situated in a perceived object, will not admit that this cause is necessary for the act of assenting, so that if all things take place by fate all things take place from antecedent and necessary causes; and also the thinkers who disagree with him in admitting that assent does not take place without the previous passage of sensory images will similarly say that, if everything were caused by fate in such a manner that nothing did take place without the precedent occurrence of a cause, it would have to be admitted that all things take place by fate; and from this it is easy to understand that since both parties, when their opinion has been developed and unfolded, come to the same ultimate position, the difference between them is one of words and not of fact.

And putting it broadly, inasmuch as the distinction can be made that whereas in some things

it can truly be said that when certain antecedent causes have occurred it is not in our power to prevent certain results of which they were the causes from happening, yet in some things, although antecedent causes have occurred, it is nevertheless within our power to make the event turn out otherwise, — this distinction is approved by both sides; but one of the two schools holds that although fate does govern those matters in which when antecedent causes have occurred it is not in our power to make the results turn out otherwise, yet fate is not present in the case of matters which are in our power. . . .

XX. "This is the proper method of discussing this question, — one should not seek assistance from atoms that roam and swerve out of their path. 'The atom does swerve,' he says. In the first place what causes the swerve? for the motive force that they will get from Democritus is a different one, a driving force termed by him a 'blow'; from you, Epicurus, they will get the force of gravity or weight. What fresh cause therefore exists in nature to make the atom swerve (or do the atoms cast lots among them which is to swerve and which not?) or to serve as the reason for their making a very small swerve and not a large one, or for their making one very small swerve and not two or three swerves?

This is wishful thinking, not investigation. For you do not say that the atom moves its position and swerves owing to being driven by an external force, nor that there has been any factor in the void through which the atom travels to cause it not to travel in a straight line, nor that any change has taken place in the atom itself to cause it not to retain the natural motion of its own weight. Accordingly although he introduced no cause to occasion this swerve of yours, nevertheless he thinks that he is talking sense when he is saying something that all men's minds scornfully reject.

And in truth no one in my opinion has done more to uphold not only fate but also an all-controlling necessity, or to abolish voluntary movements of the mind, than has this philosopher who confesses that he has been unable to withstand fate in any other way than by taking refuge in these fictitious swerves. For if one granted the existence of the atoms, although I for my part find it entirely impossible to accept that they do exist, nevertheless there would never be any explanation of those swerves that you talk of; for if it is owing to a necessity of nature that the atoms are assigned the property of travelling by force of gravity, because every heavy body must necessarily move and travel when nothing hinders it, is that alleged swerve also necessary for some atoms, or, if they choose, for all, in the order of nature? . . ."

Cicero. *De Fato*. Trans. R. Rackham.