CICERO'S EXPERIENCE OF THE TRAGIC

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A STUDY OF HIS POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS IN THE LIGHT OF THE EQUILIBRIUM THEORY OF TRAGEDY

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: Based on a reading of the Epistulae, the De Natura Deorum, the De Re Publica and the De Legibus, this study formulates an hypothesis, in the light of the equilibrium theory of tragedy, concerning Cicero's political and philosophical position. It is contended that in his experience of the tragic -- in terms of the conflicts with which his age confronted him, the response which his nature and training led him to make to these conflicts, and the suffering which he endured as a result of that response -- he acquired an awareness of the ultimate questions of tragedy and a perception peculiar to the tragic experience.

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Considerations of accessibility have unfortunately resulted in the use of ancient texts that are not necessarily either the most recent or the most authoritative. Abbreviations have been used throughout for Cicero's works as follows:

D.L.	De Legibus
D.N.D.	De Natura Deorum
D.R.P.	De Re Publica
E.A.	Epistulae ad Atticum
E.B.	Epistulae ad Brutum
E.F.	Epistulae ad Familiares
E.Q.F.	Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

In a well-known passage in his tenth satire Juvenal speaks of Demosthenes and Cicero in terms reminiscent of the tragic theatre.[1] Each of these famed orators, he says, was destroyed by the excellence that made him famous. There is not, in Juvenal's illustration, more than an outward resemblance between the excellence of oratory and the excellence of an Oedipus or an Antigone. The Greek word here represented by "excellence" is ἀρετή, which can mean excellence in a personal and spiritual sense or simply being good at something without these deeper implications. But the point of comparison itself may well lead to reflection and insight on a more profound level. The ἀρετή of the classical tragic hero was a strength and power of perception in his nature which drove him,

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[1] Eloquium ac famam Demosthenis aut Ciceronis
incipit optare et totis Quinquatribus optat,
quisquis adhuc uno parcam colit asse Minervam,
quem sequitur custos angustae vernula capsae.
eloquio sed uterque perit orator, utrumque
largus et exundans leto dedit ingenii fons.
ingenio manus est et cervix caesa, nec umquam
sanguine causidici maduerunt rostra pusilli.
"O fortunatam natam me consule Romam":
Antoni gladios potuit contemnere, si sic
omnia dixisset. ridenda poemata malo
quam te, conspicuae divina Philippica famae,
volveris a prima quae proxima. saevus et illum
exitus eripuit, quem mirabantur Athenae
torrentem et pleni moderantem frena theatri.
dis ille adversis genitus fatoque sinistro,
quem pater ardentis massae fuligine lippus
a carbone et forcipibus gladiosque paranti
incude et luteo Volcano ad rhetora misit.

contrary to limits imposed by destiny, to question and to challenge what fate had apparently decreed for him. It led him through suffering far beyond that of his fellows to a knowledge greater than theirs. Cicero's life shows a superficial resemblance to tragedy in the rise and fall of his consulship and exile, it is true, and in the manner of his death; but it is the contention of this thesis that there is a more profound resemblance as well between him and the classical tragic protagonists, in the struggle in which he engaged on behalf of a type of government with which he came so closely to identify himself that its sufferings and defeats mirrored and became his own. Cicero, like Demosthenes before him, fought on behalf of political self-determinism against tremendous odds; inevitably, at least in retrospect, he lost. To fight a losing battle and to meet with an inevitable defeat is not itself necessarily tragic; but to choose defeat and to contend right to the bitter end because this cause is in some way the better one and defeat the lesser of two evils, this is to make the kind of choice with which tragic protagonists are often faced.

One might well liken the last days of the Republic of Rome to a tragedy in which the protagonist is republican rule itself. The value of republicanism (because in its respect

for responsible government this value may be likened to an ἀρετή) lies in its potential for developing and utilizing in the common weal the best minds from among its people. With tragic irony the gift of the gods becomes a curse when the protagonist, by his own free act, turns this power against himself; what was good and creative becomes evil and destructive. The same heroism that brought Oedipus to the throne of Thebes drives him from the city an exile by his own edict.

Republican Rome nurtured within herself the violence and apathy which would work hand in hand to bring about her destruction. Cicero was caught between those on the one hand who sought to bend the constitution to suit their ends and those on the other hand who either did not see what was happening or did not care. In one sense his position was determined for him by the age into which he was born and the temperament with which he met it, in another and equal sense he chose the way he went. Determinism and free will both are essential factors in the course on which the tragic protagonist engages; in his biography of Cicero Petersson attests the interplay of both these forces in Cicero's career:

> Under normal Roman conditions the attainment of the consulship would have ended the strenuous part of his career; an ex-consul pleaded in the courts when he so desired, took a grave and influential part in senatorial debate, was honoured by all, and, for the rest, with the full approval of everybody, devoted his time to his own private pursuits.

> He was entitled to a dignified leisure, otium cum dignitate. Cicero had earned these privileges, but suddenly, through no fault of his own, he found himself face to face with political anarchy. Partly from choice and partly from necessity he entered the strife. He had personal triumphs and momentary successes, but he was on the losing side. He fought for the retention of the existing government; for his country, as he saw it; wisely or not, according as men will judge; without selfishness; and the government was doomed . . . . He was living through the tragic ending, long drawn out, of a long drama.[2]

Others, too, have remarked on the dramatic tension of those years as setting this age apart from that which preceded and that which followed in the struggle of transition between the two:

> By a most fortunate chance a man of rare liveliness and literary gifts . . . was there to play the part of chorus, and sometimes of protagonist, in that fascinating and moving tragedy. The dramatic quality of those years . . . was realized even by the participants.[3]

In what sense, conceding the tragic quality of the age itself, could Cicero be said to have played the part of chorus? In his letters he read his response, sometimes with exaltation, more often with despair, at the events played out on the stage before his eyes. In his meditations on government, on justice and the laws, we often read passages reminiscent of the reflections of a Sophoclean chorus on the nature of man, knowing that these passages taken from Greek models, have nonetheless undergone the adaptation of his own experience. Aristotle contends that the most

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[2] P. 12.

[3] L. P. Wilkinson, Letters of Cicero: a selection in translation (London, 1949), p. 13.

effective chorus also takes part as an actor in the drama.[4] These letters and treatises were written to inspire, to rebuke and to effect a change. In Seven Against Thebes the chorus is divided by the fate of the brothers and suffers with an anguish that marks the extent of their participation in the tragedy itself:

> τί πάθω; τί δὲ δρῶ; τί δὲ μήσωμαι;
> πῶς τολμήσω μήτε σὲ κλάειν
> μήτε προπέμπειν ἐπὶ τύμβον;
> Ἄλλα φοβοῦμαι κἀποτρέπομαι
> δεῖμα πολιτῶν.[5]

Cicero also is torn between the forces which divide his country in civil war. In the Prometheus Bound the chorus is made clearly to understand the implications of its decision to stay with Prometheus and to share his sufferings:

> Ἀλλ' οὖν μέμνησθ' ἅτ' ἐγὼ προλέγω
> μηδὲ πρὸς ἄτης θηραθεῖσαι
> μέμψησθε τύχην, μηδέ ποτ' εἰπηθ'
> ὡς Ζεὺς ὑμᾶς εἰς ἀπρόοπτον
> πῆμ' εἰσέβαλεν, μὴ δῆτ', αὐταὶ δ'
> ὑμᾶς αὐτάς. εἰδυῖαι γὰρ
> κοὐκ ἐξαίφνης οὐδε λαθραίως
> εἰς ἀπέραντον δίκτυον ἄτης
> ἐμπλεχθήσεοθ' ὑπ' ἀνοίας.[6]

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[4] Poetics, XVIII, 1456a, 25-27.

[5] vv. 1063-1067.

[6] vv. 1071-1079.

The manner is not unlike that used by both sides in the succession of rivalries in Rome to intimidate those standing off in indecision. And in what sense can Cicero be called protagonist? He fought as consul, as proconsular senator, as lawyer, as man of letters against threats to constitutional government. He contended with both advocates of violence and apathy, on the state's behalf.

But there is, I think, a larger sense as well in which Cicero may be called protagonist in that tragic drama. He espoused the cause of constitutional rule with sincerity and with vigour. From the time of his consulship on he regarded himself as saviour of that constitution. His exile only strengthened that feeling; the blow dealt him by the enemies of the state was a blow dealt the state herself. Maffii sees Cicero's personal misfortune as a kind of reflection of the misfortune of the state:

> Le cours de la justice avait été violé par un abus de pouvoir, la Constitution foulée aux pieds. La conscience politique, juridique et morale du sénateur d'Arpinum avait été blessée au vif de la façon la plus atroce. Son cas mettait en évidence la décadence de l'Etat. Pour Cicéron, il ne s'agissait pas seulement de sa fortune personnelle mais de tous les idéaux pour lesquels il avait combattu, plaidé, souffert, vécu. Les garanties les plus sérieuses de l'existence civile, fruit de cinq siècles de conquêtes intérieures, avaient été supprimées. Et ce qui affligeait le plus l'exilé, c'était la résignation passive avec laquelle les meilleurs citoyens s'adaptaient, les uns par peur, les autres par calcul, à l'anarchie débordante.[7]

On his return from that exile he was forced to compromise principles and even past friendships out of obligation to those who had effected his recall. Faced with demands

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[7] Ciceron et son drame politique, p. 134.

backed by the threat of violence, republicanism too was forced to compromise herself, and in order not to be overcome grant concessions dangerous to her own existence: hence the desperate efforts on Cicero's part to achieve some settlement before the civil war between Pompey and Caesar. Cicero began to speak more and more often in his later years of the malady with which the Republic was afflicted and of the venomous potions brought as curses to her aid.[8] He speaks of her sufferings and death as though they were his own. The Republic dies with those of her people, like Cato at Utica and Brutus and finally Cicero who, alive, gave body to the concept of constitutionalism.

What are the essentials of tragedy and how may these be said to have characterized the last days of the Roman Republic in a significant way? How can Cicero be likened to a tragic protagonist and why particularly Cicero, if it be conceded that the age itself was tragic?

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[8]Cf. Livy, Ab Urbe Condita, Praefatio, 9: . . . labente deinde paulatim disciplina velut desidentes primo mores sequatur animo, deinde ut magis magisque lapsi sint, tum ire coeperint praecipites, donec ad haec tempora quibus nec vitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus perventum est.

Of what significance might this interpretation of the man and his times be for an understanding of his work as author? In answer to these questions it is hoped to show that the political, social and philosophical tensions of Cicero's times found express resonance in his ability to perceive and assimilate them in his career as lawyer-politician and his work as author. This is not an attempt in any way to defend what may have been his vacillations, to excuse what may have been his egotism, or to gauge the accuracy of his views on the events of his time. It is primarily a study of method and of a point of view, both of which could well be styled tragic in accord with this specific application of that word.

This study makes use of the equilibrium theory of tragedy. This is obviously not the definitive theory, but it is a plausible one, and in the light of it, it may be possible, without denying the validity of other theories (it is admitted that no one theory is going to be definitive for all Greek plays and every Greek protagonist), to find aid toward an understanding of Cicero's life and work. Specifically it is hoped that some illumination may be cast upon the special contribution of that life and work to western civilization. Cicero transmitted a large body of philosophical and theological theory from Greek literature

to his Latin readers; but to say that he was a transmitter only and gave nothing of his own would be to underestimate his contribution. He shows marked sympathies with certain political and philosophical views, but is not seen as totally committed to any one of them. His contribution, then, is not so much in terms of any one doctrine as his personal credo, but in the manner of presenting doctrines generally. A study of the manner of that presentation, illuminated by this theory of tragedy, is valid inasmuch as the method seems already to be found in Cicero himself. The development of this thesis began with a reading of certain of Cicero's works (a choice which I shall explain), then, prompted by indications of tragic experience which my reading had seemed to provide, I moved on to formulate an hypothesis in explanation of Cicero's career based on this theory of tragedy. The equilibrium theory is expounded principally by Taubes, Sewall and Ellis-Fermor. Because of the emphasis it gives to the elements of conflict and ambiguity, it seemed to shed considerable light on Cicero's situation. Fergusson's analysis of the tragic pattern as a progression of "purpose, passion, perception" also proved helpful[9] in an understanding of the response of tragic figures to their tragic environments. The conclusion

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[9] See below, p. 84.

of these preliminary considerations was that Cicero experienced the tragic in a more profound sense than that to which Juvenal drew our attention.

The study is based on the Epistulae as these provide a running commentary not only on the external events of his age but on the internal response of his mind to those events, on the De Natura Deorum as illustrating in a particularly helpful manner the close relationship between rhetorical dialogue and the tragic method, and the De Re Publica and De Legibus as these exhibit the interweaving of received theory with first-hand experience in a way that draws more closely into focus the man of the forum and the man of letters. It is hoped that some indication is given of the reality and importance of this tragical aspect of Cicero's contribution to our civilization. When the sensitivities of a man's nature coincide in a particularly striking way with the circumstances of an ill-starred life, he may in his suffering acquire that self-knowledge and faculty of perception which are peculiar to experience of the tragic. Una Ellis-Fermor testifies of that perception that its expession need not be confined to the dramatic form: "Many writers in other forms, narrative verse or prose, have revealed that perception of tragic balance which would in drama have produced tragedy".[10]

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[10]Una Ellis-Fermor, The Frontiers of Drama (London, 1946), p. 146.

CHAPTER I

Tragedy

"An adequate definition of tragedy," says Susan Taubes,[1] "is so difficult because the tragic position is essentially unstable, a dynamic tension between alternate positions." Albin Lesky observes in his work on Greek tragedy that any attempt to define tragedy ought to begin with Goethe's assertion: "all tragedy depends on an insoluble conflict".[2] The truth of these two statements, as they apply to the tragedy of Cicero's situation, will appear in the course of this discussion; but for the moment, in answer to the questions raised by this study, we may begin with those impressions of tragedy which the Greek drama imprints most forcefully upon our minds, and derive from these impressions not so much a definition -- tragedy seems essentially to elude definition -- as indications of characteristics essential to the tragic situation.

Most outstanding is the impression one has of a certain dramatic irony in the events themselves which, strung together in sequence, provide the narrative: Agamemnon, Oedipus, Hippolytus, Antigone are all brought low in suffering and even in death by the very 'αρετή which

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[1] Susan Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy", Review of Metaphysics, VII (1953-1954), pp. 193-206.

[2] Albin Lesky, Greek Tragedy (London, 1965), p. 8.

singled them out from among their peers and raised them to heights of heroism. They are thrust, sometimes born, into situations which pre-existed them and for which they cannot in the first instance be held accountable -- this is the tension, the circumstantial conflict, of which Taubes and Lesky speak. The protagonists choose to respond to that tension in a way that defies what fate has apparently decreed for them, isolating themselves from those who either do not see, or if they see do not acknowledge, the conflict as their own. They suffer with a suffering as incomprehensible to their fellows as was the stubborness of their original choice. And out of their suffering is born knowledge, not knowledge of good and evil but a knowledge which transcends these, a knowledge of the ultimate insolubility of the conflict with which all men are faced but of which to them alone, at the price of their suffering, is given understanding. Tragic protagonists pass through suffering to defeat, the inevitable result of a fated choice between evils; the particular struggle which itself finds resolution with their defeat and death is the transient and concrete expression of the universal struggle which knows no resolution. It is to a kind of purifying awareness on this second level that tragedy brings her victims in suffering. And through these, by the mediating agency of the stage, she brings the chorus and spectators to pity and fear.

That ultimate conflict, of which the tragedies afford us particular representations,[3] is the ambiguous positon in which man finds himself vis-à-vis what Susan Taubes calls the noumenal world.[4] Man can neither absolutely affirm nor definitively deny its existence: belief in it and denial of it both spring apparently from the foundation of his own being. If it does exist he does not know whether the powers behind it are well inclined towards him, or hostile, or indifferent. He cannot escape the question because to deny it would be to deny his own nature; neither can he answer it. The question itself transcends him, and is both inescapable and insoluble. He is held by it in a state of suspended ambiguity, in a tragic tension between equally powerful and mutually exclusive alternatives. Religions and philosophies deny the question in its tragic cast by affirming absolutes,

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[3]Anouilh's Antigone was presented in Paris during the German occupation of World War II. The ambiguity of the conflict evidently permitted self-identification, not only on the side of the French in Antigone, but on the side of the Germans as well in that of Creon -- a certain "right" can be adduced on either side; also, each can see the other's position as untenable.

[4]Noumenon, whence the adjective noumenal, is defined by the Oxford dictionary as "object of intellectual intuition devoid of all phenomenal attributes . . . taken by Kant as antithesis to phenomenon." The word, as Taubes uses it and as it is used in this thesis, has reference to a world perceptible to the mind or spirit and distinct from the phenomenal or physical world, and exerting influence upon the latter. In the tragedies this noumenal world is attested, for example, by the Aeschylean curse on the house of Atreus, the divine law to which Sophocles' Antigone yields obedience, and, in my opinion, the powers of Artemis and Aphrodite in Euripides' Hippolytus.

espousing faith in the benevolent will of the gods or the orderly functioning of a universe of which man's reason is a gauge, or on the other hand by denying the reality of either such gods or such order. Either a negative or a positive attempt to answer the question is in itself a denial of tragedy's fundamental stance. The tragic conflict is an ambiguous one, inasmuch as its tension is not between good on one hand and evil on the other, but between complexes of good and evil on both sides. Neither good is attainable without its consequent evil; neither evil, entailing defeat, can be avoided. Tragedy is fundamentally humanistic because its focus is upon man, the only constant set over against the ambiguity of his place in the universe.[5]

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[5] But cf. H. D. F. Kitto, Form and Meaning in Drama (London, 1956), chapter entitled "Religious Drama and Its Interpretation", pp. 231-245: "From this examination [of the Agamemnon, Choephori, Eumenides, Philoctetes, Antigone, Ajax] there has emerged the conception of 'religious' drama, a form of drama in which the real focus is not the Tragic Hero but the divine background . . . . They [the Medea and Hecuba] make good sense only when we see that the real Tragic Hero is humanity itself . . . . The essential question is whether the play exists on one level or on two, whether the real focus lies in one or more of the characters, or somewhere behind them; in fact, what the field of reference is . . . . our analysis of religious drama, if it is correct, shows that the centre of a play is not necessarily a Tragic Hero . . . . If it [Aristotle's theory of tragedy] is based on a different drama [other than the Tyrannus] -- which perhaps we ought to assume, since Aristotle was something of a scientist, accustomed to the observation of facts -- that drama would be one which we might call humanistic or secular; if on the Tyrannus, then on the Tyrannus interpreted in a purely humanistic way, as the tragedy of a great man, with the divine background omitted." With such a purely humanistic definition of tragedy, Kitto, then, would disagree.

Essential then to the way in which tragedies mirror this ultimate conflict is the portrayal of tensions between alternatives which are both inescapable and insoluble. No matter which alternative he chooses the protagonist is faced with evil and defeat: is Orestes to disobey Apollo in order to escape the avenging furies which will in turn hound him? is Antigone to deny the law of the gods in order to escape the censure of Creon's law? The protagonist is thrust into circumstances which present him with a choice like this. Sophocles' Antigone bewails a fate she has neither caused nor can escape:

> Ὦ κοινὸν αὐτάδελφον Ἰσμήνης κάρα,
> ἆρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι Ζεὺς τῶν ἀπ' Οἰδίπου κακῶν
> ὁποῖον οὐχὶ νῷν ἔτι ζώσαιν τελεῖ;
> Οὐδὲν γὰρ οὔτ' ἀλγεινὸν οὐτ' ἄτης ἄτερ
> οὔτ' αἰσχρὸν οὔτ' ἄτιμόν ἐσθ', ὁποῖον οὐ
> τῶν σῶν τε κἀμῶν οὐκ ὄπωπ' ἐγὼ κακῶν.

(1-6)

So does Euripides' Electra:

> ἰώ μοί μοι.
> ἐγενόμαν Ἀγαμέμνονος
> καί μ' ἔτεκεν Κλυταιμήστρα
> στυγνὰ Τυνδάρεω κόρα,
> κικλήσκουσι δέ μ' ἀθλίαν
> Ἠλέκτραν πολιῆται.

(114-119)

These, in common with other protagonists of classical tragedy, are faced with a choice between evils which entails suffering and defeat on either side. Agamemnon at Aulis, like Abraham on Mount Moriah,[6] is forced by the will of the gods to transgress divine law:

ἄναξ δ' ὁ πρέσβυς τότ' εἶπε φωνῶν·
"βαρεῖα μεν ἡ μὴ πιθέσθαι,
βαρεῖα δ', εἰ τέκνον δαΐ-
ξω, δόμων ἄγαλμα,
μιαίνων παρθενοσφάγοισιν
ῥείθροις πατρῴους χέρας
πέλας βωμοῦ· τί τῶνδ' ἄνευ κακῶν;

(205-211)

Prometheus too attests this paradox of choice between evils:

Ἀλγεινὰ μέν μοι καὶ λέγειν ἐστιν τάδε,
ἄλγος δὲ σιγᾶν, πανταχῇ δὲ δύσποτμα.

(197-198)

From this choice between evils there is no escape and Eteocles is forced by the dictates of strategy to pit himself against his brother in defence of Thebes:

ΧΟ Ἀλλ' αὐτάδελφον αἷμα δρέψασθαι θέλεις;
ΕΤ Θεῶν διδόντων οὐκ ἂν ἐκφύγοις κακά.

(718-719)

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[6]Abraham was summoned by God to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, given him in his old age as pledge of God's covenant with him. This was a divine command to break the divinely instituted covenant, and therefore type of the tragic choice between evils. (Genesis, XI).

Such is the tension between evils that only in defeat can the protagonists know resolution of that tension.

The person confronted by potentially tragic circumstances actualizes the tragedy in himself when he becomes in his own soul the battleground for the conflict between opposing forces. He does not stand between these two forces aloof from the struggle but willingly engages himself on the side of one of the forces against the other even though he knows, because both forces have some measure of evil, that he cannot entirely win. He does this because his own strength and power of perception, that is to say his 'αρετή, compels him to choose as he believes right and to act in that choice knowing full well that he cannot wholly succeed. The tragedy does not begin with the situation itself, for as Aristotle asserts tragedy is the portrayal of actions and life,[7] but with the response of the person confronted with a conflict which is both inescapable and insoluble.

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[7] ἡ γὰρ τραγῳδία μίμησίς 'εστιν οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ πράξεως καὶ βίου. Poetics VI, 1450a, 16-17.

Antigone and her sister Ismene are thrust both of them into the same potentially tragic situation; Antigone summons Ismene to respond:

> Οὕτως ἔχει σοι ταῦτα, καὶ δείξεις τάχα
> εἴτ' εὐγενὴς πέφυκας εἴτ' 'εσθλῶν κακή

(37-38)

But Ismene replies:

> Τί δ', ὦ ταλαῖφρον, εἰ τάδ' ἐν τούτοις, ἐγὼ
> λύουσ' ἂν εἶθ' ἅπτουσα προσθείμην πλέον;

(39-40)

Antigone becomes tragic and her sister does not; had both remained aloof there would have been no tragedy. In the response of the protagonist there is an element of the absurd: he goes beyond what is reasonable and even in some cases beyond piety. The heroes of the Greek drama, Oedipus and Medea for example, are awesome because of their strength and fearsome because of what that strength leads them to do in defiance of all the precepts of σωφροσύνη. Their haughty fearlessness can never be approved by those lesser than themselves. In their defiance of moderation they are censured time and again by their subordinates and by the chorus to yield before necessity as the chorus of sea-nymphs counsels Prometheus:

> Οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τὴν 'Αδράστειαν σοφοί.

(936)

They seize hold on some purpose and follow where it leads them, defying the law of the land and even, in some cases,

the laws of the gods in order to fulfil this destiny. Orestes and Medea, bent on revenge, contravene the most sacred of family ties in the accomplishing of their purposes. Like Antigone and the other heroes of the tragedies, they respond to the potentially tragic circumstances into which they are thrust and become tragic.

Response entails suffering. The element of determinism inherent in the situation which confronts an Oedipus or an Antigone with the dread choice between evils is answered by an act of the free will when these choose to act against the evils laid upon them. The suffering they endure has not, then, an entirely external cause and is not simply deserving of pity because it is fated; more than that, it is a suffering for which they themselves have assumed responsibility wilfully and in full cognizance. Hence it is a bitter suffering. In the Antigone for instance, Creon, in the resolve deriving from his ἀρετή, brings upon himself a ruin commensurate with that strong resolve:

> Ἄγοιτ' ἀὴν μάταιον ἄνδρ' ἐκποδών,
> ὅς, ὦ παῖ σέ τ' οὐχ ἑκὼν κάκτανον
> σέ τ' αὖ τάνδ', ὤμοι μέλεος, οὐδ' ἔχω
> ὅπᾳ πρὸς πότερον ἴδω.
>
> (1339-1342)

The tragic protagonist is struck with a terrible delusion, by the force of the gods goading him on to self-destruction:

> βροτοὺς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρόμητις
> τάλαινα παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων.
>
> Agamemnon (222-223)

He is bereft of all surety no longer knowing whether the gods are for him or against him. What was their gift has become their curse. So as the chorus lament the curse fallen upon the house of Atreus they are led to question, if not to defy, the will of the gods:

> ἰω ἰή, διαὶ Διὸς
> παναιτίου πανεργέτα.
> τί γαρ βροτοῖς ἄνευ Διος τελεῖται;
> τί τῶνδ' οὐ θεόκραντόν ἐστιν;
>
> Agamemnon (1485-1488)

In this questioning there is doubt concerning the will of the gods. Such doubt is the cause of grievous suffering. For the man afflicted with this suffering good is twisted into evil and evil appears good. The chorus of the Antigone sings of such a man:

> τὸ κακὸν δοκεῖν ποτ' ἐσθλὸν
> τῷδ' ἔμμεν ὅτῳ φρένας
> θεὸς ἄγει πρὸς ἄταν·
>
> (622-624)

Like Aeschylus' Eteocles he is forced to conclude that

he is alone and stands condemned by the gods themselves:

> Θεοῖς μὲν ἤδη πως παρημελήμεθα,
> χάρις δ' ἀφ' ἡμῶν ὀλομένων θαυμάζεται·
> τί οὖν ἔτ' ἂν σαίνοιμεν 'ολέθριον, μόρον;

(702-704)

Forced by a necessity, to which he has given free consent, to choose between evils, the victim of tragedy knows that he can no longer rely absolutely on heaven's favour. He knows also that he will suffer defeat in some form or other because he has only evils from which to choose. He can only assume that it is from the gods themselves that doubt, like a blindness, has come upon him.

Through suffering comes knowledge. To speak of both the guilt and guiltlessness of the same act is to speak paradoxically. To speak of a choice necessitated between evils which is at one and the same time inescapable and insoluble is to speak of a mystery. This is the paradoxical mystery of tragedy which, inasmuch as it is a mystery, transcends reason; knowledge of it, as the tragedies attest and as Aeschylus himself specifically confirms, is acquired only by suffering:

> τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδώ-
> σαντα, τῷ πάθει μάθος
> θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν.

Agamemnon, 176-178)

Δίκα δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦ-
σιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει.

(Agamemnon, 249-250)

Like Cassandra, whose suffering and knowledge evoke the pity of the Agamemnon's chorus, the wise person is one whose wisdom is got at the price of much suffering:

Ὦ πολλὰ μὲν τάλαινα, πολλὰ δ' αὖ σοφὴ.

(1295)

To suffer tragically is to acquire knowledge. Sewall remarks that Dostoevski might well have said: "Suffering is the sole origin of consciousness".[8] The tragic protagonist, who is also the victim of tragedy, learns that the tragic fault, his error, was neither a matter simply of privation of reason or will.[9] In the former instance his suffering from guilt would be mitigated by the fact that he acted in ignorance, in the latter the fault could be attributed to insufficiency of faith. The tragic fault is committed in the absence of the ethical sureties which religion and philosophy may provide. The realm of tragedy is a universe in which the two ultimate realities, the worlds of men and gods, remain distinct and irreducible either way the one to the other. Religion posits ultimate reality on the side of the gods, making salvation depend in the final analysis on willed subservience

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[8]Richard Sewall, :The Vision of Tragedy", Review of Metaphysics X (1956-1957), pp. 193-200.

[9]Taubes, p. 203.

to the will of the gods. Philosophy may posit reality on the side of men, making salvation accessible to the power of reason, or deny the possibility of salvation altogether. Tragedy knows no such ultimate one-ness; it cannot reduce either reality ultimately to the other. Knowledge acquired through tragic anguish is knowledge of this mystery, knowledge of the force of reason and the power of order, knowledge also of forces in no way subject to such rational knowing. Having passed through the fires of suffering to a plane beyond that of the particular, the victim of tragedy attains a self-knowledge and a knowledge of the condition humaine[10] not accessible to those who have not so suffered. It is not a knowledge, therefore, that can be communicated directly as bodies of knowledge can, but must transmit itself indirectly, as across the stage. There we are arrested, as Susan Taubes affirms, "before the spectacle of human transgression that is neither accidental nor due to man's depravity, but whose cause lies so deep in man's nature and what is noble in it and is bound so inextricably with his conditions and aspirations, that it can never be suppressed or conquered." [11]

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[10] This term is used technically in deference to the modern French school of writers, e.g. Sartre and Camus, who, I believe, in their tragical emphasis show direct line of descent from Greek tragic drama.

[11] p. 204.

What then are the characteristics essential to a tragic situation? We have observed a kind of latent dramatic irony in the situations into which the heroes of tragedy are thrust; they are given a chcice between evils which they cannot solve and from which there is no escape. We have observed also that the real tragedy commences with their response; they accept what fate, in the form of circumstances, has decreed for them but cling tenaciously to the purpose which is dictated by their own inner law. Passing beyond the precepts of moderation they bring on themselves bitter suffering, are isolated fro among their more reasonable, more moderate peers, and know loneliness and much misery. Through suffering and defeat, inevitable result of the choice they have made, they attain knowledge, a knowledge born out of the terror of that suffering. These essentials -- an insoluble and inescapable conflict, a wilful and knowledgeable response, the suffering which that response entails, and the kind of knowledge which is born out of this suffering -- we shall apply in this study to Cicero's life and work.

Cicero was born into an age of tension, political, social and philosophical. The conflicts of these last days of the Republic exhibit essentially the same characteristics as do the stories of the tragedies which present in particular forms the ultimate ambiguity of tragedy. Cicero's natural bent, his training and his experience led him, in response to potentially tragic circumstances, to assume the role of protagonist on behalf of constitutional government in those last days of the

Republic when republican senatorial government was dying in Rome. His response to the dilemma of his time was one of active involvement on behalf of republican rule in the face of violence and apathy alike. His natural genius was such as to render him particularly sensitive to the element of dramatic irony; his training in rhetoric sharpened this natural sensitivity, and his experience in the courts and in the assemblies equipped him well to respond with vigour to the conflict which was being waged around him. He is sometimes forced to choose, on behalf of a form of government which seems on the wane, the part of the equestrian order against the senate although he knows each is primarily interested in its own welfare as opposed to that of the state. Sometimes he must choose Pompey against Caesar and sometimes the reverse when he knows that neither is bent on saving the constitution. On at least one occasion he is forced to accept Milo's support as defence against Clodius although he has himself no sympathy with violence. Having accepted a role as defender of the constitution he cannot escape the inherent evil in opting for any one of these three pairs of alternatives. Whichever one of a pair he chose, he chose evil mixed with the advantage it brought him. His choice is tragic because it is made in the interests of the state and against the state (for both selfinterest and violence are enemies of republicanism). He suffers with the Republic as

republicanism passes through compromise after compromise, becoming more and more vulnerable. He is isolated and alone between the Caesars, violently impatient with tradition, and the Brutuses, idealistically hostile to compromise. The suffering he endured, so very akin to the suffering of victims of tragedies, led him, I believe, to a knowledge of self and of the condition humaine that was tragic in its perception. And this knowledge, acquired in suffering, is transmitted indirectly in his written work.

CHAPTER II

The Insoluble Conflict

The last century of the Roman republic was a period marked by political, social and religious ferment, an age of transition from one type of government to another, from one concept of society to another, from one set of values to another. The transition was not a smooth one in any of these spheres and for a long period in each, for much longer than the span of a man's mature years, the struggle between opposing methods and conflicting views was being waged back and forth. In retrospect it is not difficult to discern trends, to speak of them as leading inevitably in certain directions, and to assign effects to obvious causes, but for the participants themselves things were not so clear. The issue of struggles in which those participants were the contenders were not at all so obvious to them as they appear to us in retrospect. Historians attest this discrepancy in perspectives: "Looking back, we can trace the road to the final conflict, and can believe that it was inevitable: the men alive at the time did not know what the end would be, and in the contemporary record we can follow their hopes and

fears".[1] The farther we are removed from that period and the wider our perspective upon it, the more difficult it becomes to gauge the force upon men's decisions of influences which history cannot measure: conflict of personality, public opinion, rumours of events too distant to be accurately reported without delay. It is not easy, for example, to say to what extent wishes for some sort of return to republican senatorial rule were simply wishful thinking and to what extent they had some base in possibility. To speak about what might or might not have been and to contend for what might be -- these represent two entirely different perspectives. The more extensive our knowledge of that age, the greater our reticence to judge easily the complexities which shaped policy and the policies which made history. The difficulties inherent in Cicero's position and the demands they imposed upon him have been cited by Hunt: "That Cicero must have had high principles to guide him is made more evident as, in our expanding understanding of Roman history, we develop an increased

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[1] J. R. Hawthorn and C. MacDonald, Roman Politics 80-44 B.C. (London, 1960), p. vi.

appreciation of the difficulty of his role."[2]

Historians testify to the extent to which this age was an age of transition in a sense in which neither the preceding nor subsequent ages were. Politically the conflict was waged between representatives of constitutional rule and those who aimed at one-man or coalition supremacy, and for a long period of time now one, now the other of these, held temporary sway. The outcome, because it was still in the making, was not self-evident. Two mutually exclusive alternatives were presenting themselves, but neither could win a clear verdict. In this sense the age was a tragic one. Socially as well, and in matters of religion and philosophy, the same sort of equilibrium obtained between the traditional Roman way of life and thought and the still relatively new Hellenism. Stoicism, though part of the new, seemed particularly suited, because of its strong moral fibre, to the former; the teachings of Epicurus to the latter. These were not of course simple, clear-cut alignments any more than were political partisanships direct and constant. The opposites in tension varied their form with great complexity, but the tension, though its expression varied

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[2]H. A. K. Hunt, The Humanism of Cicero (Carlton, 1954), p. 203. Hunt's comment underlines the fact of the difficulties themselves and the insight into them which a knowledge of his times produces in the student of Cicero. This is not to say that one must agree with Hunt's estimate of Cicero's motivation.

from moment to moment, remained itself so strong a feature as to characterize the age.

The Greek dramas show, in the conflicts confronting particular individuals, types of the universal conflict. These particular conflicts, as we have seen, present their victims with choices between evils and are insoluble except in defeat. They are thus able to point through defeat to a greater moral conflict beyond -- one which transcends the tension of the particular and is not resolved in its resolution. The particular conflict gets resolved, but through defeat, so that a larger spiritual question remains unanswered: is the order of the universe benevolent or not? Wherein might it be said that the political, social and religious conficts of the last days of the Roman republic similarly point beyond their particular resolutions to a still unanswered, ultimate tragic question? To begin with the particular conflicts themselves, it can be said that party tensions existed since before the time of the Gracchi, but it was from their time onward that they became increasingly taut. With Marius and Sulla we get the first outstanding instance of gravitation to opposite sides of the state. And this phenomenon will be increasingly in evidence in the ensuing years. Demagogues and their followings, like nuclei dividing to the opposite

poles of a cell, will be one of the most salient features of the days of Pompey and Caesar, Octavian and Antony. Sometimes one leader, sometimes the other, sometimes one party and sometimes the other seems to have the welfare of the state most at heart, or, perhaps more realistically, has aims and interests which coincide more nearly with the common republican well-being. Constitutional government remains the only kind of constant and it is set between the violence of conspiring revolutionaries like Catiline and the apathy of those who simply want to be left alone to enjoy their wealth.[3] Those who oppose the status quo do so with the reforming vehemence of Caesar or the idealistic archaism of Cato. The equestrian order and the senate come into harmony from time to time to serve common interests, then separate, once co-operation is no longer advantageous, at the expense of the state. Caesar, Pompey and Crassus enter into coalition to thwart the senate and control the elections and the assembly; then, on Crassus' death Caesar and Pompey draw apart. Pompey allies himself with the senate against Caesar. Cicero exhorts the senate

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[3]See below, p. 74.

to support Octavian against Antony, but the senate alienates the young general and drives him into coalition with its enemy. Politically, time after time it is a question of balancing one force off against another in support of a continuing republican government which, each time such a choice between evils is made, becomes progressively weaker and more vulnerable because of the compromises it has made in order to save itself.

In literature, we see evidence of abrupt breakage with the past alongside persistent clinging to tradition: this is the age of the neoteric school and of Lucretius.[4] The influence upon city life of Hellenism is strong and the converging waters of the old patriotism and the new individualism do not flow together smoothly:

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[4] Cf. J. W. MacKail, Latin Literature (London, 1924): " . . . in certain points of technique Lucretius was behind his age, or rather, deliberately held aloof from the movement of his age towards a more intricate and elaborate art. The wave of Alexandrianism only touched him distantly; he takes up the Ennian tradition where Ennius had left it . . . Contemporary with Lucretius, but, unlike him, living in the full whirl and glare of Roman life, was a group of young men who were professed followers of the Alexandrian school." pp. 59, 62.

> Certainly when the broad universalism of the first era of Hellenism narrowed before the more exacting demands of the Roman state a restatement of the theory which reconciled individualism and universalism was appropriate and more so when new forms of dictatorship began to threaten the Republican ideal, which, after all, in Cicero's view, did maintain an adequate respect for the individual.[5]

This was an age of philosophical and religious encounter also, not only between the old and the new but between varying expressions of the new as well. Cumont has remarked on the religious oppositon between the two great philosophical schools of the time: "If Epicureanism chose its ground as the passionate adversary of religious beliefs, the other great system which shared its dominance of minds in Rome, Stoicism, sought, on the contrary, to reconcile these beliefs with its theories."[6] The Stoics spoke, for example, of an ideal of justice pre-existing all just acts and serving as a standard to measure them. By the degree in which these acts conformed to that ideal, their justice could be determined.[7] Epicureanism saw, either as obtainable in the act itself or pre-existing it, no such ideal type, but took justice to be inherent in the consequence of the act committed.[8] There was much in these

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[5] Hunt, p. 197.

[6] Franz Cumont, After Life in Roman Paganism (Berkeley, 1938), p. 12.

[7] Andre Bridoux, Le Stoicisme et Son Influence (Paris, 1966), chapter entitled "La Morale", pp. 93-131.

[8] See discussion of Epicurean concept of justice in DeWitt's Epicurus and His Philosophy (Minneapolis, 1954), pp. 294-297.

ways of thinking not only to appeal to the would-be demagogue who infested the streets with his pack of armed retainers, but to disturb as well those who considered profoundly the direction in which the state of affairs was and should be tending. The old order of patrician rule, established against a background of loyalty to the ancestral gods and the mos maiorum, no longer held the sway it once had held; the new era with its periods of one-man rule, extended longer than ever before and without the old legality, was just beginning and had not yet won the day. The two sides were locked in combat in a way that could only result in defeat for both of them and in irreparable damage to the political entity within which they were contending, that is to say, the state of Rome itself.

Students of literature are careful to note this feature of the age because of the impression it was bound to have in oneway or another on the literature of the period. Of Cicero Rose asserts: "Unhappily for him his was an age of strongly opposed tendencies, republican and monarchical, and he was too good a lawyer not to see that a case could be made out, not only for the old order, which he upheld and idealized, but for the new".[9] The spirit of an age passes via participants into the literature in a particularly direct fashion when those who

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[9]H. J. Rose, A Handbook of Latin Literature (London, 1954), p. 159.

involve themselves politically also write. Cicero's experience of politics and of politicians, and his direct knowledge of the courts was bound to exert some influence upon his adaptations of the theoretical works of Plato and the teachings of Panaetius.[10] In law and politics he felt most keenly the conflict between theory and practice and out of this conflict created, adapting Greek theory to Roman practice, his most original formal works:

> Peut-être l'idée d'écrire un livre sur l'Etat correspondait-elle à un besoin de son esprit tourmenté par l'incertitude. Depuis un certain temps, Cicéron ne voyait plus clair en lui'même. C'est pourquoi il espérait qu'en méditant avec méthode sur la République, il trouverait là le moyen le plus sûr pour examiner à nouveau, en fonction de la réalité, sa pensée politique.[11]

Philosophy too he presented from a practical viewpoint, putting to the test of experience the theory that he had received from others. Hunt attests this critical approach: "Cicero, far from being the mere transmitter of a static body of dogma, was actively criticizing the modifications of Stoicism and was watching developments which had an immediate appeal for him".[12] His ideal statesman is not a theoretical fiction; that he should fail to find in

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[10] Tenney, Frank, Life and Literature in the Roman Republic (Berkeley, 1930), chapter entitled "Prose of the Statesmen", pp. 130-168.

[11] Maffi, p. 181.

[12] Hunt, p. 189.

Pompey or in Octavian or even in himself the actualization of this statesman is a mark of his tragedy and the tragedy of his times, not an indication of the impractability of that standard. If his own philosophy failed him in times of crisis,[13] it is again a mark of his tragedy,[14] and of his own honesty, and it does not imply that the philosophy was ill-conceived or unduly abstract. A closely-knit fabric bound together his public life and his work as author. The particular tragedy of his age transcends that age in his work as an awareness of the ultimate questions of tragedy confronting all men.

He himself saw in his own age and in the events of his own life many of the essentials of tragedy. The remark he makes in his letter of the spring of 56 to Atticus on reading of the death of Lentulus, "Sed ille, ut scripsi, non miser, nos vero ferrei", may, or may not, allude to Hesiod's Iron Age.[15] In any event Cicero's view of his own times accords essentially in its most significant features not only with that poet's description of the fifth era

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[13] cf. Van den Bruwaene who cites E.A., IX, written in March 49 after death of Pompey: "Nunc mihi nihil libri, nihil litterae, nihil doctrina prodest."

[14] The equilibrium theory of tragedy asserts that while philosophy and religion each posit answers to the ultimate questions of man's place in the universe, tragedy does not. That Cicero failed to find answers to his suffering in either philosophy or religion strengthens the thesis that his viewpoint was neither philosophic nor religious, but tragic.

[15] Winstedt footnotes in Loeb text (p. 289): Ferrei, according to Kayser, contains an allusion to Hesiod's Iron Age: but others take it as simply "callous".

but with passages from Aeschylus and Sophocles' Antigone as well, all of them descriptive of tragic times: lawlessness and injustice but for the restraint of Zeus himself would overrun everything; might is right; the unjust get greater justice than the just.[16]

Writing to Atticus in July 59 Cicero is troubled both for the constitution and for his own safety. The coalition established in 60 was unpopular, this was the year of the consulship of "Julius and Caesar", and Clodius, now that Cicero no longer had the security of a magistracy, was becoming more outwardly threatening: "Multa me sollicitant et ex rei publicae tanto motu et ex iis periculis quae mihi ipsi intenduntur et sescenta sunt . . . Scito nihil umquam fuisse tam infame, tam turpe, tam peraeque

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[16] cf. the following: Hesiod, Works and Days, 190-193, 202-210, 270-272; Sidgwick on Agamemnon -- "The refrain of human life is the prayer, "Woe: but let good prevail", which recurs in the first chorus: and the conclusion of the whole matter is "it is hard to discern", δύσμαχά ἐστι κρῖναι (1561), p. xiv; also opening lines of Antigone. Expressions of like sentiments are not, of course, exclusive either to Hesiod or to the tragedians and may be found even in comedy; however, the feeling that the times are "out of joint" is essential, if not exclusive, to the development of the tragic theme. We are reminded, in Cicero's statement concerning the positon of the New Academy on epistemology (see below, p. 48) that Hesiod's Age of Iron was an age in which good and evil were intermingled. Ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ τοῖσι μεμείξεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν. (Works and Days, 179).

omnibus generibus, ordinibus, aetatibus offensum quam hunc statum qui nunc est, magis mevhercule quam vellem non modo quam putarem." (E.A., II, xix) In October of the same year he complains to Atticus of the Vettius affair;[17] apparently in no immediate danger himself he is sickened and appalled at the ugliness of the whole business and the shameless attempt at informing: "Hominum quidem summa erga nos studia significabantur; sed prorsus vitae taedet; ita sunt omnia omnium miseriarum plenissima . . . nihil me infortunatius, nihil fortunatius est Catulo[18] cum splendore vitae tum †hoc†, tempore." (E.A., II, xxiv) Fear that the state is already on the verge of the sort of violence characteristic of Hesiod's Age of Iron he expressed earlier in a letter to Atticus in July of this year: "Neminem tenent [Caesar, Pompey, Crassus] voluntate; ne metu necesse sit iis uti, vereor."[19] (E.A., II, xix) Cicero

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[17]Vettius, whom Cicero had earlier used to obtain information against Catiline, had attempted, apparently at Caesar's instigation, to cast suspicion on Curio by claiming to know of an attempt planned on Pompey's life. The plan to implicate Curio failed when the latter went to Pompey. Vettius was arraigned before the senate. The following day Caesar permitted him to address the assembly and Vettius named those on whom he wished suspicion thrown.

[18]Catulus, a staunch republican, died in 60 before the formation of the first "triumvirate".

[19]Cf. also "Re publica nihil desperatius, iis, quorum opera, nihil maiore odio." (E.A., II, xxv)

feels acutely the ambiguous nature of these times "out of joint". On the acquittal of Gabinius in October 54 he writes from Rome to his brother Quintus in Gaul on the state of public affairs and the courts: "Sed vides nullam esse rem publicam, nullum senatum, nulla iudicia, nullam in ullo nostrum dignitatem." (E.Q.F., III, iv, 1) This is an expression of total political and personal despair.

Hesiod's graphic parable of the hawk and the nightingale and Antigone's taunt to Creon[20] ring true for these turbulent days in Rome as well. Writing to Brutus in June 43 concerning the young Octavian's desire for a consulship, Cicero comments on such a claim for irregular office and the senate's oppositon to it against the background of the times:

> numquam enim in honore extraordinario potentis hominis vel potentissimi potius -- quandoquidem potentia iam in vi posita est et armis -- accidit ut nemo tribunus plebis, nemo alio in magistratu, nemo privatus auctor exsisteret. Sed in hac constantia atque virtute erat tamen sollicita civitas: illudimur enim, Brute, tum militum deliciis, tum imperatoris insolentia: tantum quisque se in re publica posse postulat, quantum habet virium; non ratio, non modus, non lex, non mos, non officium valet, non iudicium, non existimatio civium, non posteritatis verecundia.
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> (E.B., xviii, 3)

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[20] The nightingale, caught in the talons of the hawk, is entirely at her captor's mercy. She can make no plea to justice; only brute strength can avail. (Works and Days, 202 ff.) Antigone, likewise, is powerless to resist Creon's force (506-507).

The ineffective legality of constitutional government is held powerless in the tighening grip of unbridled force; reason, respect for the mos maiorum, loyalty to the ancestral gods, like the nightingale's song, are of no avail. Loyal citizens are caught, like Antigone, between the universal law which they cannot suffer to see broken and brute force, the efficacy of which they cannot deny.

Civil war, with brother pitted against brother --- as in the Hesiodic Age of Iron when men strove to pillage the cities of one another, and as at the gates of Thebes when the seven matched the seven -- marred Cicero's age and left a profound and bitter impression upon those who lived through it.[21] "De sua potentia dimicant homines hoc

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[21] Syme, The Roman Revolution (Oxford, 1939), speaks of the fall of the Roman Republic in tragical terms, expressing the sentiments of Tacitus, Appian and Lucan, and referring to civil war as a particularly striking expression of that tragedy:

"The anger of Heaven against the Roman People was revealed in signal and continuous calamities: the gods had no care for virtue or justice, but intervened only to punish. Against the blind impersonal forces that drove the world to its doom, human forethought or human act was powerless. Men believed only in destiny and the inexorable stars.

"In the beginning kings ruled at Rome, and in the end, as was fated, it came round to monarchy again. Monarchy brought concord. During the Civil Wars every party and every leader professed to be defending the cause of liberty and of peace. Those ideals were incompatible. When peace came, it was the peace of despotism. 'Cum domino pax ista venit.'"

In a footnote Syme cites Appian's Bellum Civile (I, vi, 24) in which resemblance to the Theophrastian περίστασις might be seen ὧδε μὲν ἐκ στάσεων ποικίλων ἡ πολιτεία Ῥωμαίοις ἐς ὁμόνοιαν καὶ μοναρχίαν περιέστη. Cf. this with Cicero's use of the term as quoted below, p. 48.

tempore," Cicero writes bitterly, "periculo civitatis." (E.A., VII, iii) In neither of the adversaries can one place any hope at all for the safety of the state. On March 13 of 49 he writes to Atticus from Formiae concerning what will happen if Pompey's forces prove victorious: "Etsi quid te horum fugit, legibus, iudiciis, senatu sublato libidines, audacias, sumptus, egestates tot egentissimorum hominum nec privatas posse res nec rem publicam sustinere?" (E.A., IX, vii) When might is right there is no restraining those in power who know no self-restraint. The present hangs in perilous balance between a structured and familiar past and a chaotic and unknown future.

This age, like Hesiod's age of Iron, is an age of the triumph of injustice over justice. Appearances are grossly deceiving. Injustice is mistaken for its opposite, and violence and force are of greater value than right living.[22] To be just or honest is to be a disadvantage. Those whose interests are the interests of the state are torn apart, like the state herself, between the warring

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[22]Cf. οὐδέ τις εὐόρκου χάρις ἔσσεται οὔτε δικαίου οὔτ' ἀγαθοῦ, μᾶλλον δὲ κακῶν ῥεκτῆρα καὶ ὕβριν ἀνέρα τιμήσουσι· δίκη δ' ἐν χερσί, καὶ αἰδὼς οὐκ ἔσται. (Works and Days, 190-193).

parties. The conflict for these is, then, both inescapable and insoluble. To Atticus in the spring of 56 Cicero remarks concerning the death of Lentulus that death seems to be the only possible release from the suffering which afflicts those who do not feel that they can with integrity support either of the contending factions: "Nam quid foedius nostra vita, praecipue mea? . . . ego vero qui, si loquor de re publica quod oportet, insanus, si quod opus est, servus existimor, si taceo, oppressus et captus, quo dolore esse debeo?" (E.A., IV, vi) The effect of the age is the strange and ironic appearance of freedom where no freedom exists, and of empty bravado in servitude. This spectacle causes Cicero to write in despair to Atticus early in the summer of 59: "Universa res eo est deducta spes ut nulla sit aliquando non modo privatos verum etiam magistratus liberos fore. Hac tamen in oppressione sermo in circulis dumtaxat et in conviviis est liberior quam fuit. Vincere incipit timorem dolor, sed ita ut omnia sint plenissima desperationis." (E.A., II, xviii)

The times have changed as though from some earlier age of gold to one of iron, and have by necessity drawn in their train a baser code. In 53 Cicero wrote from Rome to Curio who is serving as quaestor to C. Clodius in Asia, urging him to support a return to the ways of an earlier age, in both political and private morality: "Tu tamen, sive habes aliquam spem de republica sive desperas, ea para, meditare, cogita, quae esse in eo civi

ac viro debent, qui sit rempublicam adflictam et oppressam miseris temporibus ac perditis moribus in veterem dignitatem ac libertatem vindicaturus." (E.F., II, v, 2) Ten years later he writes in March 43 to Q. Cornificius, governor of Africa Vetus, accepting his excuse for not having followed instructions regarding a certain Sempronius on the grounds that times have changed and that standards once valid have been rendered ineffective by the course of events: "Accipio excusationem tuam de Sempronio; neque enim statuti quid in tanta perturbatione habere potuisti. 'Nunc hic dies aliam vitam defert, alios mores postulat,' ut ait Terentius". (E.F., XII, xxa, 5) Had Cicero not seen in this "age of iron" the necessity for compromise of past ideals, he would not have been so painfully aware of the conflict between the past and the future.

Even in the formal, more abstract presentation of the De Natura Deorum written in 45-44 we perceive the same awareness of change which characterizes Cicero's view of his own times. Cotta testifies to the force of the old way of thinking in his concession that, publicly, it would be awkward if not dangerous to question traditional beliefs frankly, and bears witness to the force of the new in his confession of grave personal doubts. Nonetheless, the argument from ancestral authority suffices for him and surpasses, in effect, that of reason: "Mihi enim unum sat erat, ita nobis maiores nostros tradidisse." (III, iv, 9) Elsewhere as well, in the De Legibus, the grave weight of

antiquity in the matter of the state religion is attested: "Iam ritus familiae patrumque servare id est, quoniam antiquitas proxume accedit ad deos, a dis quasi traditam religionem tueri." (II, xi, 27) And this antiquity is again given precedence, this time over the rationalization of the Stoics: "docebo meliora me didicisse de colendis dis inmortalibus iure pontificio et more maiorum capedunculis iis quas Numa nobis reliquit . . . quem rationibus Stoicorum." (D.N.D., III, xvii, 43) But antiquity is itself losing ground and the prevailing movement is away from tradition. Old yields to new with every succeeding generation but more abruptly in this age of rapid change. "Nostis, quae sequuntur," says Cicero in dialogue with his brother and Atticus on the subject of the Twelve Tables with which all three are quite familiar, "discebamus enim pueri duodecim ut carmen necessarium; quas iam nemo discit." (D.L., II, xxiii, 59) Quickly gone is that reverence for tradition which required schoolboys in Cicero's childhood to learn the Twelve Tables by heart.

We have already noted[23] the theatrical aspect of the age, and Cicero's awareness of it as a kind of "Iron Age" ambiguous in its standards and subject to rapid change. Cicero employs the metaphor of the theatre when writing to

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[23]See above, page 40, note 21.

his brother Quintus about provincial duties,[24] and to Brutus on the death of Porcia,[25] and makes explicit reference to tragedy when speaking of divine punishment.[26]

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[24] Quare quonian eiusmodi theatrum tuis virtutibus est datum, celebritate refertissimum, magnitudine amplissimum, iudicio eruditissimum, natura autem ita resonans, ut usque Roman significationes vocesque referantur, contende, quaeso, atque elabora, non modo ut his rebus dignus fuisse, sed etiam ut illa omnia tuis artibus superasse videare. . . . Diligentissimus sis, ut hic tertius annus imperi tui, tamquam tertius actus, perfectissimus atque ornatissimus fuisse videatur.

(E.Q.F., I, i, 42, 46)

[25] Tibi nunc populo et scenae, ut dicitur serviendum est; nam, cum in te non solum exercitus tui, sed omnium civium ac paene gentium coniecti oculi sint, minime decet, propter quem fortiores ceteri sumus, eum ipsum animo debilitatum videri.

(E.B., xix, 2)

[26] at vero scelerum in homines atque in deos inpietatum nulla expiatio est. itaque poenas luunt non tam iudiciis . . . sed ut eos agitent insectenturque furiae non ardentibus taedis, sicut in fabulis, sed angore conscientiae fraudisque cruciatu.

(D.L., I, xiv, 40)

It is not surprising, then, that he should think of his own extremes of fortune in dramatic terms. The contrast between the height he attained in his consulship as saviour of the state and the depths into which he subsequently was forced to descend as "enemy" of that state lends itself most appropriately to theatridal interpretation. So he writes to his brother from exile in June 58, grieving the loss of all that his exile has torn from him: "Meus ille laudatus consulatus mihi te, liberos, patriam, fortunas, tibi velim ne quid eripuerit, praeter unum me," (E.Q.F., I, iii, 1). The irony of the cruel twist fortune has taken, turning the excellence of his own political accomplishments against him, does not escape this victim of tragedy. A few days later he writes to Atticus in the same vein: "Quaeso, ecquod tantum malum est quod in mea calamitate non sit? ecquis umquam tam ex amplo statu, tam in bona causa, tantis facultatibus ingeni, consili, gratiae, tantis praesidiis bonorum omnium condidit?" (E.A., III, x) And again to Atticus from Rome in 54, disgusted with public affairs and wishing to withdraw and find consolation in study, he writes: "Dicendi laborem delectatione oratoria consolor; domus me et rura nostra delectant; non recordor unde ceciderim sed unde surrexerim." (E.A., IV, xviii) Oedipus Tyrannus comes to mind:

Ὦ πάτρας Θήβης ἔνοικοι, λεύσσετ', Οἰδίπους ὅδε,
ὃς τὰ κλεὶν' αἰνίγματ' ἤδει καὶ κράτιστος ἦν ἀνήρ,
οὗ τις οὐ ζήλῳ πολιτῶν ἦν τύχαις ἐπιβλέπων
εἰς ὅσον κλύδωνα δεινῆς συμφορᾶς ἐλήλυθεν,
ὥστε θνητὸν ὄντ' ἐκείνην τὴν τελευταίαν ἰδεῖν
ἡμέραν ἐπισκοποῦντα μηδέν' ὀλβίζειν, πρὶν ἂν
τέρμα τοῦ βίου περάσῃ μηδεν ἀλγεινὸν παθών.

(pp. 127-129)

Such parallel is by no means due entirely to chance; Cicero sensed tragedy in an essentially tragic age, thrust as he was into tensions pre-existing him and knowing no resolution within his lifetime.

Undoubtedly he made the theatrical most of the cruel and treacherous blow which fate had dealt him; but this was only possible because the events themselves suited so well the typical tragic sequence. The seeds of ruin he had himself sown in the action that attained him the height of renown.[27] Yet the exile was undeserved, completing as it were the conditions demanded of a truly tragic hero: an unmerited and unexpected fall from a high estate brought by the victim upon himself. The contrast he

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[27] In putting down the Catilinarian conspiracy in order to save the Republic, Cicero, as consul, put to death Roman citizens. Though acting by a decree of the senate, he was later sent into exile on the charge of having committed an offense against the constitution.

draws between himself as novus homo and the patrician Cn. Domitius Calvinus[28] in a letter to Atticus in the fall of 56 on the question of deserts does not lack a certain pathos:

De Domitio

> σύκῳ, μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα, σῦκον οὐδὲ ἓν
> οὕτως ὅμοιον γέγονεν,

quam est ista περίστασις nostrae vel quod ab isdem, vel quod praeter opinionem, vel quod viri boni nusquam; unum dissimile, quod huic merito. Nam de ipso casu nescio an illud melius. Quid enim hoc miserius quam eum qui tot annos quot habet designatus consul fuerit fieri consulem non posse, praesertim cum aut solus aut certe non plus quam cum altero petat?

(E.A., IV, viiia)

The technical term which Cicero here employs of his own life, περίστασις, is the word famously employed by Theophrastus, Aristotle's pupil, in the definition of tragedy. We have already noted Appian's application of this term to Cicero's age.[29]

Aristotle had asserted that tragic drama should be the imitation of actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation.[30] To

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[28] Calvinus, as candidate for the consulate in 54, made an infamous compact with the then consuls. The compact was disclosed and disturbances followed. Calvinus was, however, elected consul in July 53 for the remainder of that year.

[29] See above, p. 40, note 21.

[30] Poetics XIII, 1452b, 32-33.

inspire pity the misfortune must have been undeserved.[31] Cicero contends, in a letter written to Lucceius in the spring of 56, that his own sitution would have the same sort of appeal as that of tragic drama, if recorded either within the body of the history of Rome which Lucceius was in the act of writing, or treated separately as an entity in itself:

> Nihil est enim aptius ad delectationem lectoris quam temporum varietates fortunaeque vicissitudines. Quae etsi nobis optabiles in experiendo non fuerunt, in legendo tamen erunt iucundae; habet enim praeteriti doloris secura recordatio delectationem; ceteris vero nulla perfunctis propria molestia, casus autem alienos sine ullo dolore intuentibus etiam ipsa misericordia est iucunda.
>
> (E.F., V, xii, 4-5)

His own political vicissitudes might well be treated "quasi fabulam." The effect which such a treatment would have upon a reader would be like that of the tragedies: "At viri saepe excellentis ancipites variique casus habent admirationem, expectationem, laetitiam, molestiam, spem, timorem; si vero exitu notabili concluduntur, expletur animus

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[31] Poetics, XIII, 1453a, 4-6.

iucundissima lectionis voluptate." (E.F., V, xii, 5) He speaks of an exitus notabilis, presumably meaning a glorious end involving vindication and triumph. One remembers that this kind of ending is compatible with tragedy as conceived by Aristotle.[32] But in the present passage Cicero is unconsciously prophetic. His end was defeat and death, yet it was perhaps the noblest moment of his life.

The vicissitudes which brought Cicero from the glory of the consulship to the ignominy of exile, and finally to his death, are tragical indeed. But he is tragic as well in a deeper sense, one which the theory of tragedy here employed serves to illuminate. We have observed in this present chapter the fact that the age was one of transition, and that the tensions of that transition presented again and again the kind of choice, at once inescapable and insoluble, between alternate evils which is characteristic of tragedy. We noted also how the particular conflicts of this period by resolution in inevitable defeat had the potential for

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[32] Poetics, XIII.

pointing beyond themselves to the ultimate questions of tragedy. Cicero saw, in the political especially but also in the social and philosophical upheavals of his time, the essentials, in violence, injustice and spiritual ambiguity, of ages like those of the tragedies and the Hesiodic Age of Iron. He was aware as well of change. He saw a theatrical age in theatrical terms and himself as actor in that drama. In his consulship, his exile, and his death he experienced the tragedy of his times. In the subsequent chapters we shall note successively the response he made to his potentially tragic environment, actualizing that tragedy in himself; the suffering he endured, a specifically tragical suffering, as a result of that response; and the knowledge which he acquired in that suffering, a perception peculiar to his personal experience of the tragic. There will be some inevitable overlapping in the treatment of these themes of response, suffering and knowledge; but in a broad kind of way they can be distinguished and separately discussed.

CHAPTER III

Response

The tensions of the times, then, set the stage for tragedy. Cicero, like the protagonists of the Greek plays, is born into a situation potentially tragic for himself, and like them he will come to grief. He will suffer and will die because he reacts against the circumstances that beset him. The real tragedy, after all, begins not with circumstances in themselves, but with the response of protagonists to them. Ismene, for example, did not react to fate as did Antigone and did not become tragic. This mixture of determinism in the situation and free will in the response is the peculiar mark of tragedy. Those who choose to buck what fate has decreed for them choose inevitable defeat and become tragic. This explains how a potentially tragic situation may be actualized as tragedy for one person and not for another, although both are confronted in the same way by it. The excellence of the protagonist is that indefinable something in his nature which enables and compels him to respond as he does and singles him out, in that response, from among his fellows.

What enables and even compels Cicero to respond as he does to a potentially tragic situation and so to actualize that tragedy in himself? I shall examine the form that response will take, in his political career and in his work as orator and author; but I shall first inquire whether his nature and his rhetorical training do not equip him in singular fashion to respond as he does and in responding to become tragic.

When we speak of the ἀρετή of a tragic protagonist we are referring to a kind of strength which enables him to resist the thrust of fate. We are reminded that reeds bending with the wind outlast a storm which uproots oaks. I think an examination of the form Cicero's response took will make it abundantly clear that his was a strong and in its own way stubborn and unyielding resistance. Because we feel that we know Cicero so well through his letters, we are perhaps taken aback somewhat by the suggestion that he was particularly well suited to make such a tragic response. The heroes of the Greek plays tend to be men and women of arrogant and stubborn decisiveness. We have a quite different impression of Cicero's character: he is self-centred, over-sensitive to both praise and blame, a man of hesitation and doubts and not of action; he boasts of his consulship and laments too loud and too long his exile, he compromises ideals in order to win friends, he is inconsistent in his loyalties. Many of his contemporaries might seem to

fit the category much more suitably: Caesar the stubborn, reckless, strong-willed man of action, Cato the unrelenting idealist who would rather die by his own hand than outlive the Republic, Brutus, Cassius, even Mark Antony -- all these leave a much more determined, wilful impression on the pages of history. Indeed, we tend to think of the manner of Cicero's death as in some noble way atoning for and vindicating a life of egocentric indecision. But we must be wary of derogations of Cicero's character based in large measure on the evidence of his letters; the honesty with which he gives vent to his doubts and fears and hopes and disillusionments has all too often been turned against him by those who forget that had he not been so honest they could not have judged with such bitter precision. Maffii discusses the question of Cicero's self-interest, his vacillation between Pompey and Caesar, and his political involvement on behalf of the constitution and comes to the conclusion that the events themselves bear out the honesty of Cicero's motivation:

> Si le sénateur d'Arpinum changeait d'idées ou de parti toutes les fois que son intérêt le lui commandait, la demande que nous venons de nous poser [comment semble-t-il avoir oublié si facilement et vite ses nombreux motifs de rancune et de méfiance envers Pompée?] devient oiseuse et la réponse inutile. Mais les faits à venir nous mettront en garde contre une interprétation aussi commode. Lorsque le conflit entre César et Pompée éclatera, il soutiendra la cause de Pompée avec la conviction profonde d'adopter un parti destiné à l'insuccès; mais il le soutiendra quand même parce qu'il estimera défendre jusqu'au bout l'intérêt suprême de l'Etat.[1]

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[1] p. 208.

Coupled with a dogged adhesion to the principles of republican government, Cicero gives evidence of a flexibility of mind which enables him to move with that government through stages of progressive deterioration. In the resistance of an Oedipus or an Antigone there is an inescapably absurd element in that they go beyond what reason could counsel. They are not bound by the gospel of σωφροσύνη and show the frightening freedom of minds that move where their inner law leads them even though that entails suffering. Martin van den Bruwaene testifies in his book on Cicero's theology to Cicero's capacity for allowing himself to be impressed by the ideas and events of the moment, a capacity foreign to those bound by the rigidity of creeds:

> Il n'est donc pas du tout contradictoire de reconnaître que Cicéron, dans ses lettres, n'attache que peu d'importance à la religion, et d'admettre d'autre part que, dans ses traités, il s'est laissé très honnêtement entraîner par les raisonnements par lesquels son esprit très ouvert devait se laisser impressionner fortement.[2]

In the light of this mental flexibility Van den Bruwaene sees no contradiction between what Cicero wrote in his treatises on religion and the lack of religious expression

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[2]Martin van den Bruwaene, La Theologie de Ciceron (Louvain, 1937), p. 48.

in his letters:

A lire les lettres, rien ne permet d'affirmer que Cicéron n'est pas convaincu de ce qu'il prend à son compte dans ses maîtres, aucune trace de scepticisme religieux ne peut être relevée dans sa correspondance, mais jamais, d'autre part, on n'y découvre un vrai sentiment de piété, ni un appel convaincu à l'aide divine, ni un espoir clairement exprimé d'une vie meilleure après la morte.[3]

Evidently not what we would call a religious man, Cicero is not so bound either one way or the other as to be unable to let his facile mind follow in the direction that the situation or work at hand dictates. He himself maintains that he has practised what he taught in his works on philosophy: "Et si omnia philosophiae praecepta referuntur ad vitam, arbitramur nos et publicis et privatis in rebus ea praestitisse quae ratio et doctrina praescripserit." (D.N.D., I, iii, 7) But Van den Bruwaene disagrees and finds Cicero failing to apply those very precepts; yet he sees no insincerity in this failure:

En 59, un peu désabusé par l'ingratitude des Romains, Cicéron va quitter la vie publique, la philosophie le séduit, il se sent entraîné dans une vie nouvelle. Mais vienne 58, l'année de son malheur: un philosophe convaincu aurait sans doute essayé les remèdes de sagesse; quant à Cicéron, il crie qu'on le prive de sa gloire et de ses honneurs. Il n'est plus question de philosophie. En 59, comme en 58, Cicéron est sincère.[4]

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[3] pp. 245-6.

[4] p. 51.

we read in the letters that Cicero wrote his De Consolatione in an effort to comfort himself in his grieving for Tullia and that the attempt was a failure.[5] On his return from his province he is anxious to celebrate a triumph, yet writes to Atticus that were it not for this inordinate desire he might have approached his own ideal of the republican statesman.[6] He is honest with himself about his rapid changes of mood, his likes and dislikes, his fears, his feelings of guilt, his hesitations and doubts; and he illustrates in these honest admissions the strength of the bending reed. He knows himself well and in self-knowledge there is strength.

The tragic protagonist is not deceived in his choices by any kind of false optimism or illusion of success; he knows full well that his is a choice between evils and that the evil he chooses will eventually come crashing down upon him. He is aware of the irony of his situation.[7] Cicero demonstrates this appreciation of the ironic element in the choices presented him. He gives frequent expression

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[5] E.A., XII, xiv and E.A., XII, xviii.

[6] E.A., VII, iii.

[7] Even during the years immediately following his consulship when the concordia ordinum is most nearly attained, Cicero is troubled by the necessity of having to shift his support from party to party in order to maintain the balance. Awareness of such ironic choice between evils becomes more acute, however, with the advent of the first triumvirate and the outbreak of civil war.

to this in his letters by the terse, epigrammatic style employed in certain parts of tragic drama.[8] When he writes from exile of the bitterness of having chosen not to see his brother in these bitter times it is with a sense of irony that he writes: "Huius acerbitatis eventum altera acerbitate non videndi fratris vitavi." (E.A., III, ix) To Caelius Rufus from Cumae in the early stages of the civil war, in answer to the suspicion that he is near the sea in order to embark at the first adverse indication to join Pompey, he writes these words: "Nam ad bellum quidem qui convenit? Praesertim contra eum, cui spero me satis fecisse, ab eo, cui iam satis fieri nullo modo potest." (E.F., II, xvi, 2) He is acutely aware of the irony in the conflict itself as it impinges upon him, and he transmits this irony in his writing to others. After all, he remarks pointedly in a letter to Atticus, "Ego vero, quem fugiam, habeo, quem sequar, non habeo." (E.A., VIII, vii) When in January of 45 Rome is awaiting word of the issue in Spain between Caesar and the sons of Pompey, Cicero writes grimly to Cn. Plancius: "agiturque praeclare, si nosmet ipsos regere possumus, ut ea, quae partim iam adsunt, partim

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[8] e.g. Oedipus Tyrannus, ll. 558 ff.

impendent, moderate feramus; quod est difficile in eius modi bello, cuius exitus ex altera parte caedem ostentet, ex altera servitutem." (E.F., IV, xiv, 1) This whole war he had sought at all costs to avoid, aware of the terrible and ironic necessity of having to betray what was just in order to ward off greater injustice; so to Atticus in defense of his policy for peace he wrote four years earlier: "Quae vel iniusta utilior est quam iustissimum bellum cum civibus." (E.A., VII, xiv) These are, none of them, words of passive resignation. Seeing the situation as it is, and for this Cicero was especially well suited, is the first step towards a realistic and effective response. Maffii points out Cicero's sense of the tragic in a discussion of the De Re Publica wherein Cicero examines the three forms of government and notes the way in which each carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction, as Maffii expresses it, "ces vices d'origine que chacun porte en soi."[9] The terseness of expression, of which a few examples have been given, and the sense of the tragic irony of self-destruction reflect

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[9]pp. 214 ff.

the quickness of mind which had lent itself so readily to rhetorical training. By a personal irony of his own Cicero was to benefit from that training with such success that it destroyed him.

Rhetoric is an amoral art, and in this perhaps more than in any other feature it has much affinity with the ambiguity of tragical expression. Jaeger has pointed out the amoral aspect of the work of a logographer like Demosthenes who on at least one occasion and probably many more was required to write for the defence and the accusation of the same man.[10] Rhetoric serves the end assigned it and does not make evaluation of that end. The sophists taught the rhetorical method and were famous for their ability to argue on either side of a given question. The _suasoriae_ at which Roman schoolboys practised were intended to perfect the method. As a method its most valuable instruction was ultimately one of mental discipline: it fitted a man for the life of a citizen teaching him how to discern as well as how to persuade, in the courts, in the assemblies and in the senate. Cicero excelled in all these

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[10] Werner Jaeger, _Demosthenes: the origin and growth of his policy_ (Berkeley, 1938), p. 40.

rhetorical arenas. His power to influence public opinion orally and through his published speeches made him a valued ally and a fearsome opponent. Like Demosthenes, he too was required on more than one occasion to speak inspite of himself to both sides of the same question; and subsequent to his return from exile he was required out of obligation to Pompey to defend Vatinius whom he had formerly accused.[11] In such an instance we see the application, though unwilling, of the method in a manner nonetheless illustrative of its basically amoral essence.

What has this method to do with the mind of a man who responds to what is potentially tragic? It equips him, sharpening his natural powers, to see the choice between evils for what it is. It affirms also the flexible strength of the bending reed to turn this way and that with the shiftings of the wind. It enables him as well to hold judgment in abeyance until both sides have been heard and all possible alternatives tried. As a method it lays down certain canonical bases: do not assume that you know what you do not know; do not allow specious authority to cloud issues. The first of these we find expressed in the first chapter of the De Natura Deorum where Cicero is laying the foundation for the manner in which that dialogue will

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[11] Cf. also his defence of Gabinius on the charge of extortion, and that of Rabirius.

proceed: "Aut quid tam temerarium . . . quam aut falsum sentire aut quod non satis explorate perceptum sit et cognitum sine ulla dubitatione defendere." (I, i, 1) And the second appears in answer to a query concerning his own views. He refuses to allow the authority of his personal beliefs to interfere with the logical development of an argument: "Non enim tam auctoritatis in disputando quam rationis momenta quaerenda sunt." (I, v, 10) The method does not proceed in accord with pre-conceived concepts of right and wrong but, as a method assuming a measure of right and wrong on both sides, is prepared to base judgment solely on the weight of the evidence presented. Like the footsteps of the tragic hero who has gone out beyond the charted areas of reasonable and pious experience, those of the rhetorical searcher have nothing absolute to guide them.

The rhetorical method is also essentially that of the philosophical dialogue wherein arguments for and against a given question are presented by proponents of the opposing sides. The De Natura Deorum provides, as dialogue, an example of the rhetorical method applied in a theological sphere. The question What is the nature of the gods? or, more precisely, What theory of divine nature seems most likely?[12] is presented as before a court to which the whole

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[12]Hunt, p. 132.

world is summoned to sit in judgment:

> Quo quidem loco convocandi omnes videntur qui quae sit earum vera iudicent . . . ut adsint cognoscant animadvertant, quid de religione pietate sanctitate caerimoniis fide iure iurando, quid de templis delubris sacrificiisque sollemnibus, quid de ipsis auspiciis quibus nos praesumus existimandum sit (haec enim omnia ad hanc de dis inmortalibus quaestionem referenda sunt).
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> (I, vi, 13-14)

It is evident to his contemporaries that Cicero's sympathies are strongly with the Stoic theory; nevertheless, in answer to an objection to this effect put by the Epicurean Velleius, Cicero maintains: "Tu autem nolo me existimes adiutorem huic venisse sed auditorem, et quidem aequum, libero iudicio, nulla eius modi adstrictum necessitate ut mihi velim nolim sit certa quaedam tuenda sententia." (I, vii, 17) Pro-Stoic as he is, Cicero is not inconsistent in his desire to stand aside as impartial observer and let the weight of the arguments carry the case. It is the momenta rationis rather than the momenta auctoritatis which weigh significantly with him. This is the second principle of the rhetorical method to whichwe alluded earlier. The ability to present successfully the opposing points of view in philosophical dialogue is once again seen as clear evidence of the quickness of mind necessary to the tragic response. In this dialogue the balance of blow-for-blow exchange is reminiscent of the tragic exchange; occasionally it even approaches the rapidity of the ἄμιλλαι λόγων. Compare for example Cotta's academic refutation of

a point of Stoic theology: "'At non numquam bonos exitus habent boni'. Eos quidem arripimus attribuimusque sine ulla ratione dis inmortalibus;" (D.N.D., III, xxxvii, 89) with the following exchange from Euripides' Medea:

Ια αὐτὴ τάδ' εἵλου μηδέν' ἄλλον αἰτιῶ.
Μη τί δρῶσα; μῶν γαμοῦσα καὶ προδοῦσά σε;
Ια ἀρὰς τυράννοις ἀνοσίους ἀρωμένη.
Μη καὶ σοίς ἀραία γ' οὖσα τυγχάνω δόμοις.

(605-608)

When the dialogue comes to a close it is with an assertion of probability, not a doctrinal pronouncement: "Haec cum essent dicta, ita discessimus ut Velleio Cottae disputatio verior, mihi Balbi ad veritatis similitudinem videretur esse propensior". (III, xl) In accord with the principles of the rhetorical method the case is judged on the basis of the evidence brought forward.

Supporting that method in principle, and serving as well to affirm the honest quickness of mind so congenial to tragical response, is the philosophy of the New Academy. To this philosophy, specifically to its method of inquiry, Cicero professes allegiance in the dialogue we have been discussing: "Non enim sumus ii quibus nihil verum esse videatur, sed ii qui omnibus veris falsa quaedam adiuncta esse dicamus tanta similitudine ut in iis nulla insit certa iudicandi et adsentienda nota."[13] (I, v, 12) It is the professed achievement of this school to be able to argue for and against all philosophical

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[13] We have already noted this characteristic of the Hesiodic age of iron; see above page 37 note 16.

systems.[14] It is not surprising that Cicero, an orator, should show such sympathy with a philosophical method so closely akin to that of rhetoric. As a student in Athens and in Rhodes he had heard the foremost teachers of his time persuasively expound their doctrines and had found in this method a means of weighing what he heard. Hunt, in his work on the humanism of Cicero, attests the affinity between the teachings of the New Academy and Cicero's own view: "His was the moderation which believes that man cannot know anything for certain and must on occasion determine his conduct by calculation of expediency but which believes nevertheless that there is a system of truth to which man, despite his imperfect reason, may approximate."[15] The "calculation of probability"[16] of the New Academy will enable Cicero to modify the Stoic teaching with which he has strong sympathy in order to uphold belief in freedom of the will. We shall see in the examination of the form Cicero's response takes the way in which his rhetorical training and the method of the Academy work themselves out in a moderate political position.[17] Of this moderate position, which, like the rhetorical method,

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[14] D.N.D., I, v, 11.

[15] p. 204.

[16] Hunt, p. 125.

[17] By political moderation is meant Cicero's lack of partisan politics, in his bid for the consulship in 64 and subsequently throughout his political career. He did not align himself with any

looks ahead to the evidence to be presented and not back to preconceptions, Hunt affirms: "It has also been characteristic of the moderate to demand proof rather than accept dogma, but to accept provisional standards based on sincere observation where certainty is lacking and to throw moral responsibility on man. All this Cicero did by virtue of his loyalty to the tradition of the New Academy".[18] Had Cicero not seen man as morally responsible though beset by the determining influences of fate he could not have responded to his own ill-starred circumstances in the way he did. For these two realities constantly attend the tragic protagonist who becomes the victim of his own choosing: the force of fate, and his own free will. Without both in mysterious and inextricable union there can be no tragedy.

Let us proceed now to an examination of the form Cicero's response to his tragic circumstances takes, a response for which both his nature and his training are particularly well fitted. That response is one of moderation, not moderation according to principles so much as moderation with a view to obtaining some kind of working rule. We saw in his rhetorical training and in his sympathies with

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[17] one platform for longer than would seem to serve the state's interest. In this sense he maintained a political independence. Such moderation in line with a purpose to which he adhered stubbornly, the maintenance of the constitution as he saw it, is not to be confused with the rational moderation indicated by σωφροσύνη whose sole loyalty is to reason; Cicero's sole loyalty was to the constitution.

[18] pp. 204-205.

the teaching of the New Academy a tendency to test alternatives as they presented themselves and on their own weight rather than by pre-established principles. Hunt testifies to the close association between Cicero's politics and his philosophy:

> We feel greater admiration for Cicero as a man who stuck consistently to the course of moderation amidst extreme violence and whose moderation was not the middle course of inactivity; for he did try to influence events . . . That he should be a moderate in politics was inevitable because of the nature of his philosophy. But he was a moderate with a sense of purpose.[19]

Tenney Frank emphasizes the progressive adoption of this middle position as the alternatives prove extreme: "Through these years of revolution, therefore, Cicero's sympathies were determined chiefly by antipathy to the respective leaders of both extremes rather than by any party allegiance."[20] Cicero believes in republicanism as a workable system of government; its effectiveness depends on the disinterested and enlightened involvement of the majority of its citizens, and unfortunately for Cicero in his fight to achieve and maintain this kind of effectiveness that involvement is not to be found. Hunt again testifies to this belief and this

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[19] pp. 203-204.

[20] Tenney Frank, A History of Rome (New York, 1938), p. 201.

struggle:

> We can now see that Cicero's fight for the Republic was inspired by principles in which he had a strong personal belief. He felt that his ideal of a stable and balanced state guided by an enlightened ruler or ruling body could be achieved by the existing system, with senate and people observing their separate functions in pursuit of the common good.[21]

What is to be found in place of that involvement is the kind of selfish, partisan mistrust which plagues the senate meeting which is to discuss the Auletes affair: "Eo die senatus erat futurus. Nos in senatu, quem ad modum spero, dignitatem nostram, ut potest in tanta hominum perfidia et iniquitate, retinebimus." (E.F., I, ii, 4) In Clodius' acquittal too, the instability of the legal as well as of the political branches of power is shown: "Sed postea quam primum Clodi absolutione[22] levitatem infirmitatemque iudiciorum perspexi, deinde vidi nostros publicanos facile a senatu diiungi, quamquam a me ipso non divellerentur." (E.A., I, xix) Cicero's involvement through the senate and through the courts in the public interest takes its base in the kind of candid estimate of the situation which we find in his letter of 51 to Curio, newly become tribune of the plebs: "Quanta vis in re publica temporum sit, quanta varietas rerum, quam incerti exitus, quam flexibiles hominum voluntates, quid insidiarum, quid vanitatis in vita, non

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[21] p. 202.

[22] Arraigned on a charge of profaning the Bona Dea mysteries, Clodius was finally acquitted by bribery.

dubito quin cogites." (E.F., II, vii, 2) That same involvement moves on from such candid appraisal to action whether direct and personal or indirect by way of influence upon others; always it is on the side of constitutional government. Caesar recognizes the force of Cicero's response and endeavours to channel it in directions other than those which Cicero himself esteems constitutional; Cicero refuses. As Hawthorn and MacDonald testify: "Caesar recognized Cicero's authority and Cicero too was displeased with the senate's refusal to follow his own leadership or accept Pompey. But whatever his other vacillations Cicero stood firmly for constitutional methods throughout his life."[23] Cicero's response elucidates in his consulship, in his year of duty in Cilicia, in his outstanding record as pleader, as in his political and philosophical writings, the meaning of citizenship. Maffii attests this emphasis on citizenship in the face of the long-standing patrician feeling of the right to rule. He speaks thus of Cicero's bid for the consulship:

C'était la première fois que les droits de la capacité, de l'honnêteté, de l'intelligence individuelles étaient non seulement élevés à la hauteur des plus anciens titres nobiliaries mais proclamés comme étant les seules et uniques qualités dignes de déléguer un citoyen au gouvernement.[24]

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[23]p. 62.

[24]p. 62.

In Cicero's fight to make republicanism last and to save the state as he sees it, the word virtus signifies the highest expression of public service: "Pour un homme d'une semblable nature, il n'existe de virtus que dans l'exercise désintéressé d'une activité politique intelligente, inspirée par le sincère désir de servir l'Etat de la meilleure façon."[25] This ideal of public service will guide him and goad him to response. In the light of it he will judge all men and all parties. Because of it he will ally himself now with one, now with the other. Even his own desire for a triumph on his return from his province is placed second to a desire to serve the state as honourably as possible. Maffii cites Cicero's letter to Atticus to that effect and proceeds to define Cicero's sense of honour in these terms:

> "Assurément, on ne peut pas aspirer au triomphe et agir librement en politique; mais sois bien assuré que ce qui sera . . . le plus honnête me semblera toujours préférable." "Honnête", pour Cicéron, c'est ce qui hommes est avantageux à la République et par conséquent honorable, conforme au devoir, désintéressé pour celui qui professe en toute droiture de conscience ces vertus civiques illustrées par lui dans son dernier livre. A ces yeux, en ce moment, la ligne de conduite de César n'est pas "honnête". Il est convaincu que ce dernier pense davantage à sa position personnelle qu'au salut de l'Etat.[26]

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[25] Maffii, p. 20.

[26] p. 261.

Historians have sharply debated the extent to which Cicero was indeed motivated in his response to his times by sincere and selfless desire to serve the state and not by desire for personal glory. Whatever his motivation there seems to be general consensus of opinion that he did align himself with constitutional government and that he fought with singleness of purpose in that alignment.

Cicero's proconsular relations with the senate and with the equestrian order to which he belongs provide an excellent example of the way in which adherance to the welfare of the whole state leads him to vacillate between parties and compromise himself on the state's behalf. In a letter to Atticus from Rome in December 61 Cicero makes reference to the offence taken by the equestrian order at the publication of a senatorial decree for an investigation into cases of bribery of jurymen. The offence, he felt, was not properly taken but for the sake of harmony, vital to the welfare of the state, he compromises himself to speak for the offended order:

> Qua in re decernenda cum ego casu non adfuissem, sensissemque id equestrem ordinem ferre moleste neque aperte dicere, obiurgavi senatum, ut mihi visus sum, summa cum auctoritate et in causa non verecunda admodum gravis et copiosus fui. Ecce aliae deliciae equitum vix ferendae! quas ego non solum tuli, sed etiam ornavi.
>
> (E.A., I, xvii)

When, a year later, the equestrian order breaks with the senate over the latter's refusal to review the regulations controlling provincial revenues, Cicero again, in spite of

the fact that he does not entirely agree with the equestrian objection, takes issue with the senate in the larger interests of the state. Maffii attests to this compromise on the state's behalf:

Ce brusque détachement (dont l'importance ne nous semble pas avoir été suffisamment appréciée à sa juste valeur par les historiens) apparut à Cicéron dans toute sa gravité. Il reconnut en principe que la prétention des "chevaliers" était exagérée; mais devant la menace de malheurs pires pour la République, compte tenu des conditions peu florissantes des provinces, il estima que le gouvernement pouvait faire quelque chose de plus pour satisfaire les demandes des compagnies qui n'étaient pas toutes sans fondements.[27]

These compromises illustrate the application of the sort of 'calculation of probabilities' we noted earlier as advocated by the New Academy. In a letter to his brother Quintus, propraeter of Asia, Cicero writes of the difficulty of dealing justly with the provincials whom the senate has entrusted to his care without alienating the equestrian order whose financial interests are with the tax collectors:

Atqui huic tuae voluntati ac diligentiae difficultatem magnam adferunt publicani. Quibus si adversamur, ordinem de nobis optime meritum et per nos cum republica coniunctum et a nobis et a re publica diiungemus; sin autem omnibus in rebus obsequemur, funditus eos perire patiemur quorum non modo saluti sed etiam commodis consulere debemus.

(E.Q.F., I, i, 32)

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[27] p. 118.

Between those who would overthrow the constitution by violence and those who in their indifference would fail to defend it, Cicero walks the same kind of middle path, though in this case he has sympathies with neither extreme. What he says of Antony in September 44 in a letter to L. Munatius Plancus he might have said earlier of any one of a whole succession of others, from Catiline through Clodius to Caesar, whose means were violent and whose aim was power:

> Sed me patria sollicitat . . . Quae potest enim spes esse in ea re publica, in qua hominis impotentissimi atque intemperatissimi armis oppressa sunt omnia, et in qua nec senatus nec populus vim habet ullam, nec leges ullae sunt nec iudicia nec omnino simulacrum aliquod ac vestigium civitatis?
>
> (E.F., X, i, 1)

Of these men of violent means Caesar was by far the most efficient and it is of interest to note the philosophy popularly held to lie behind the means he used. Suetonius records two expressions of Caesar's views on the state and on law: "Nihil esse rem publicam, appellationem modo sine corpore ac specie;"[28] and the following misappropriated reference from Euripides:

> Nam si violandum est ius, regnandi gratia violandum est; aliis rebus pietatem colas.[29]

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[28] Divus Iulius, 77: Nec minoris inpotentiae voces propalam edebat, ut Titus Ampius scribit: . . .

[29] Divus Iulius, 30: quod existimasse videbatur et Cicero scribens de Officiis tertio libro semper Caesarem in ore habuisse [est in Phoenissis: εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι κάλλιστον ἀδίκημα· τα δ' ἄλλα εὐσεβεῖν χρεών.] Euripidis versus, quos sic ipse convertit . . .

Both of these illustrate the wide gulf separating Cicero and Caesar in the way they thought and acted vis-à-vis the state.

The years following Caesar's death, as Hawthorn and MacDonald testify, are marked by an increase in the violence of particular interests turned against the well-being of the state:

> Within a year of the rebirth of the Republic it was clear that it could not live. The following thirty years make a tortuous story of intrigue and propaganda. Violence is the rule rather than the exception. Minds which should have been devoted to the government of the country were occupied in maintaining personal power and combatting private enemies.[30]

Anti-constitutional violence on the one hand is met all too often by indifference on the other. This was evident as early as January 60 when Cicero complained in a letter to Atticus of the silence of Pompey and Crassus who, fearing for their own popularity, would risk nothing. He also criticized the wealthy who thought they could afford not to become involved:

> Sed interea πολιτικὸς ἀνὴρ οὐδ' ὄναρ quisquam inveniri potest; qui poterat, familiaris noster (sic est enim; volo te hoc scire) Pompeius togulam illam pictam silentio tuetur suam. Crassus verbum nullum contra gratiam. Ceteros iam nosti; qui ita sunt stulti ut amissa re publica piscinas suas fore salvas sperare videantur.
>
> (E.A., I, xviii)

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[30] p. 134.

In this year the equestrian order was offended by the senate's refusal to deal adequately with the demands of the publicani in Asia. Because of the senate's intractability, Pompey was forced into coalition with Caesar. Bibulus was bribed into office as Caesar's colleague. Against this background the charge of apathy against the senatorial order takes on a larger dimension. Disruption of the concordia ordinum leaves the gate open for attack on the constitution: "Nunc vero, quom equitatus ille . . . senatum deseruerit, nostri autem principes digito se caelum putent attingere si mulli barbati in piscinis sint qui ad manum accedant, alia autem neglegant." (E.A., II, i) Eleven years later when Caesar is on his way south through Italy at the head of an army and Pompey is ready to evacuate Brundisium, if indeed he has not already left, war, massacre of political enemies, and a general ravaging of the countryside threaten on the horizon; but there are many who are content not to raise their eyes from their plots of ground: "Multum mecum municipales homines loquuntur, multum rusticani; nihil prorsus aliud curant nisi agros, nisi villulas, nisi nummulos suos." (E.A., VIII, xiii) As between the senate and the equestrian order, so also between the violent and the apathetic, Cicero finds himself in a middle position. He has aligned himself with the state against illegality; but he cannot avail against those on whom the welfare of the state depends.

In the light of the first triumvirate we see perhaps more clearly than elsewhere Cicero's political moderation on behalf of the constitution. Ironically enough, the agreement reached among the triumvirs reflects the kind of concordia ordinum for which Cicero strove so hard, but the very fact of the coalition defies the constitution. Cicero opposes it, as Maffii attests, and is for the most part alone in his opposition:

> Cicéron ne se fit pas d'illusions sur les conséquences d'un triumvirat militaire qui s'opposait sans aucun doute à l'esprit de la Constitution. Tout d'abord, l'entente entre César et Pompée et la réconciliation de celui-ci avec Crassus lui firent espérer un retour à cette bonne entente entre l'ordre nobiliaire et l'ordre équestre qu'il estimait être le fondement essentiel de l'autorité de l'Etat; mais il s'aperçut bientôt que la coalition prenait un tout autre chemin et il fut l'un des rares à comprendre que l'on s'acheminait vers l'effritement du régime. Son anxiété devint de l'angoisse lorsqu'il s'aperçut que la République souffrait d'une terrible pénurie d'hommes de volonté, d'esprits clairvoyants et énergiques.[31]

But even in this he shows himself flexible. He is not concerned to oppose for the sake of opposing but for the sake of the state, and he does not hesitate to support now one, now the other of those coalition members in an effort to aid the state's cause. At first he favours Pompey as a check to Caesar's power. Then, beginning to fear Pompey, he turns his support to Caesar, whose legislative programme, except

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[31] p. 120.

for the agrarian reform bill, and whose activities as conqueror of Gaul, seem most nearly to coincide with the interests of the state:

> Toutefois, ce n'est pas le triumvirat que Cicéron soutient, mais César. Les lettres, les discours politiques, les plaidoiries devant le tribunal révèlent chez Cicéron l'intente de se rapprocher du conquérant des Gaules. En esquissant cette tentative, il ne fait pas pour autant le sacrifice de ses principes. Il favorise César sur le plan des propositions législatives faites par ce dernier qui selon lui coïncident avec l'intérêt de l'Etat. Mais il ne remue pas le petit doigt en faveur de la loi agraire qu'il estime préjudiciable.[32]

In his support of Caesar he offends the senatorial order who thought him predictable and sure. He is interested in the state and will, without regard to consequences, swing his support behind whichever individual or party seems at the moment to serve the interests of the state best. In this respect he resembles the tragic protagonists who move where their inner law leads them even though that entails suffering.

It soon becomes clear, however, that Caesar and those who support him are no longer concerned for the state when its interests conflict with their own. Caelius testifies to this in a letter from Rome to Cicero in his province: " . . . quam facile nunc sit omnia impedire, et quam hoc Caesari, qui sua causa rem publicam non curent, superet, non te fallit." (E.F., VIII, v, 3) Cicero's opposition to Caesar, as to Pompey, and to all those who

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[32]Maffii, p. 170.

put their own interests ahead of the state, takes its base in his own conception of himself as saviour and defender of the constitution. Caesar's hatred of and opposition to the senate is opposition to the institution which above all others characterizes republican government. Cicero cannot condone such offence, no matter how inept the senate has been and he writes to Atticus in shock: "'At ille impendio nunc magis odit senatum. A me,' inquit, 'omnia proficiscentur.'" (E.A.X, iv) It is obvious that Caesar is at war with the Republic, at least with the Republic as Cicero sees it. Cicero, then, feels himself called to the defence of that Republic as in the days of his consulship. He will oppose Caesar, as he opposed Catiline, on the state's behalf. In this opposition he will turn to Pompey, also suspect but the lesser of the two evils, compromising himself for the sake of the state.

Cicero's response to the threat of civil war is the response of a peacemaker, determined at all costs to avoid a civil war from which the Republic may never recover. His position is difficult, to say the least; he has affiliations with both sides and is driven to much conscientious self-examination. He supports Pompey nominally while holding the door open as long as he dares for communication with the other side in the hope of peace: "Rescripsi ad Trebatium . . . quam illud hoc tempore esset difficile; me tamen in praediis meis esse neque dilectum

ullum neque negotium suscepisse. In quo quidem manebo dum spes pacis erit." (E.A., VII, xvii) He is pressed first by Balbus and then by Balbus and Oppius together, working from Caesar's side, to act as go-between. He feels the Caesarians are mocking him but cannot, nonetheless, ignore the slimmest chance of effecting some settlement. Oppius writes to him in February of 49: "Obsecro te, Cicero, suscipe curam et cogitationem dignissimam tuae virtutis ut Caesarem et Pompeium perfidia hominum distractos rursus in pristinam concordiam reducas." (E.A., VIII, xva) And in March they both write:

> te hortari non desineremus ut velles iis rebus interesse, quo nisi facilius et maiore cum dignitate per te, qui utrique es coniunctus, res tota confieret . . . Sed cum etiam nunc, quid facturus Caesar sit magis opinari quam scire possimus, non possumus nisi hoc, non videri eam tuam esse dignitatem neque fidem omnibus cognitam, ut contra alterutrum, cum utrique sis maxime necessarius, arma feras.
>
> (E.A., IX, viia)

To effect such a settlement would be to effect a compromise, but a compromise on behalf of what was left of republican government and in the interest of the state as a whole. Peace would be but the beginning, certainly no panacea. But given the alternative, civil war, peace is decidedly the lesser of two evils. Cicero's response, hanging doggedly to that possibility, moves with the situation, regardless of the suffering which that response is bound to entail, in the form of criticism from both sides. According to Matius' reply to Cicero's letter of inquiry

concerning Caesar's request for advice and assistance, it is peace that Caesar wants: "Respondit se non dubitare, quin et opem et gratiam meam ille ad pacificationem quaereret. Utinam aliquod in hac miseria rei publicae πολιτικὸν opus efficere et navare mihi liceat!" (E.A., IX, ii) If Cicero desires to step into the limelight it is in the interest of the state and with a clear conscience that he so desires; his interests coincide with the public welfare.

Between Caesar's death and his own, Cicero continues in his response on behalf of the Republic; each time constitutionalism is threatened, so long as some champion for her defence can be found, whether some party or individual whose interests seem at least to coincide with her own, Cicero supports that means of defence. In March 43 he writes to Lepidus who is wavering between Antony and the directives of the senate:

> Pacis inter civis conciliandae te cupidum esse laetor. Eam si a servitute seiungis, consules et rei publicae et dignitati tuae; sin ista pax perditum hominem in possessionem impotentissimi dominatus restitutura est, hoc animo scito esse omnes sanos, ut mortem servituti anteponant.
>
> (E.F., X, xxvii, 1)

It is in defence of the Republic that he swings his support so solidly behind Octavian and opposes Antony with such bitterness. In February 43 it seems as though the senate has firm support in the persons of the consuls

Hirtius and Pansa, Decius Brutus and the young Octavian; these are all appraised in the light of that apparent support: "Consules egregii; praeclarus D. Brutus; egregius puer Caesar; de quo spero equidem reliqua." (E.F., X, xxviii, 3) With the demise of the consuls, Cicero's response, wearied but bitter, is left to fall back on the boy Caesar in his campaign against Antony whom the senate on the 22nd April had declared a public enemy:

> Hirtium quidem et Pansam, collegas nostros, homines in consulatu reipublicae salutares, alieno sane tempore amisimus, republica Antoniano ouidem latrocinio liberata, sed nondum omnino explicata; quam nos, si licebit, more nostro tuebimur, quamquam admodum sumus iam defetigati. Sed nulla lassitudo impedire officium et fidem debet.
>
> (E.F., XII, xxvb, 6)

His support of Octavian and his oppositon to Antony are, he thinks, in the interests of the state. He is aware that he is compromising himself, but then it is the state he serves and not principles. Moderns, like Wilkinson, accord frequently with his contemporaries in censuring him for this support: "It is tragic to find him, at the end of a life which he believed devoted to freedom, justly reproached by Brutus with sacrificing the principles of freedom to his enthusiasm for the nineteen-year-old boy who was to become the emperor Augustus: 'It were better not to live than to live by his kind permission."[33] When Cicero

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[33] p. 19.

writes to Brutus in answer to this charge, one has the impression that he is exercising rather desperately a calculation of probabilities on the state's behalf:

> Qui si steterit fide mihique paruerit, satis videmur habituri praesidii; sin autem impiorum consilia plus valuerint quam nostra aut imbecillitas aetatis non potuerit gravitatem rerum sustinere, spes omnis est in te. Quam ob rem advola, obsecro, atque eam rem publicam, quam virtute atque animi magnitudine magis quam eventis rerum liberavisti, exitu libera: omnis omnium concursus ad te futurus est.
>
> (E.B., xviii, 4)

In his letter to Paetus, from Rome in February 43, he defends his past and present course of action with an almost prophetic foresight:

> Sic tibi, mi Paete, persuade, me dies et noctes nihil aliud agere, nihil curare, nisi ut mei cives salvi liberique sint. Nullum locum praetermitto monendi, agendi, providendi; hoc denique animo sum, ut, si in hac cura atque administratione vita mihi ponenda sit, praeclare actum mecum putem.
>
> (E.F., IX, xxiv, 4)

Cicero chose the losing side when he refused Caesar's invitation to join the first coalition at Luca. when he chose to join Pompey's camp in Epirus, when he chose republican government against the effective violence of Antony; each time he chose knowledgeably, preferring defeat on the side of constitutional government to victory in her opponents' camp. His response in these choices was essentially tragic.

Brutus' criticism of Cicero's support of Octavian is essentially a criticism of the moderation which Cicero's response was bound to exhibit. We noted above the absolute

lack of ideology with which Caesar evidently approached the political arena. Cato and Marcus Brutus exemplify the other extreme. They are the highminded idealists who will brook no compromise. Cicero, caught between the alternatives, takes issue with the anti-constitutional violence of the former and the blindness to reality of the latter. In June 60 when the question of bribery and trial for bribery is brought before the senate, Cato votes in accord with principles and helps effect a rift between the senatorial and the equestrian orders; the country, Cicero feels, has suffered for the sake of an ideal no longer practicable: "Nam Catonem nostrum non tu amas plus quam ego; sed tamen ille optimo animo utens et summa fide nocet interdum rei publicae; dicit enim tamquam in Platonis πολιτείᾳ, non tamquam in Romuli faece sententiam." (E.A., II, 1) Cicero will imply the same ineffective idealism in answer to Brutus' reproaches. Because the Ides of March had not made a clean sweep of offenders, allowing Antony to go unharmed, Cicero seems to have considered it a work stronger in idealism than in application. He calls on Brutus the idealist to back up that idealism now with the only voice which, in these dark times, can make itself heard, that of force. Cicero had been forced, upon his recall from exile and before the civil war, in an effort to avert that disaster, to abandon one by one principles he once had held, choosing each time some lesser evil to avoid a greater. Tragedy is

not static, but moves with the actions and life of its protagonist. In The Idea of a Theater,[34] Francis Fergusson speaks of a tragic rhythm of action, and divides it into three moments: purpose, passion, perception. He means by this that an original purpose is formulated, then contradicted by opposing forces (the "passion" moment). Thereupon ensues an insight (perception) which causes the protagonist to re-formulate his purpose in revised terms, and the rhythm begins again. Cicero's purpose lay in the support and defence of the state; this purpose was countered time and again by varying forms of threat to republicanism; the purpose itself never changed but by compromise and vacillation was re-formulated to meet each specific threat. This was the manner of Cicero's lonely progression on the state's behalf through the tragic rhythm. He could not listen to the censure of those who had not so moved because their censure lacked basis in the reality he refused to turn his back on:

> Le sénateur d'Arpinum ne l'écouta pas. Il ne pouvait pas l'écouter. C'étaient les propos des rétrogrades, des anciennes factions nobiliaires fossilisees dans cette idée que la République, devenue aussi vaste qu'un monde, ne pouvait être gouvernée avec les mêmes systèmes en usage que lorsqu'elle n'était guère plus grande que le Latium.[35]

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[34] Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theater (Princeton, 1949).

[35] Maffii, p. 382.

Between the idealists, then, and those not bound in any way by the restraints of tradition, Cicero was to find himself once again in a middle position.

From his consulship through the Philippics Cicero's response to his situation accorded well with the inclinations of his nature and the training of the courts. He was a moderate politically, philosophically, and in religion, and in all three a moderate with an unyielding sense of purpose. His compromise in the name of the state was merely an expedient to maintain as far as possible his ideal of the state. Hence in his compromise he vacillated between parties and among individuals, and progressed alone where his inner law led him, caring less for the suffering he would have to endure than for the dictates of that single purpose.

CHAPTER IV

Suffering

The tragic protagonist, as we have seen, is drawn by the ἀρετή that is his own strength and power of perception into response to the tragic circumstances which beset him, and in his response incurs suffering commensurate with the force of that response. Cicero's response was bound to entail suffering, first in a general way because he was politically active and not withdrawn, and secondly in a more specific and personal way because of his determined support of republican government. We have seen that the times were tragic and that Cicero's essentially tragic response actualized the potential of tragedy in the events in which he participated. Suffering and defeat are essential to tragedy. After these have occurred the particular conflict is resolved. But in its resolution it points beyond itself to a larger conflict. It implies ultimate, universal questions which still remain unanswered.

We shall examine in this present chapter the forms which that particular suffering assumed for Cicero. The conflicts which arose so frequently throughout those years

of tension caused acute anxiety to many citizens; recurrent tension, and the ambiguous kind of suffering it caused, were a mark of the age. Time and again Cicero and those of his contemporaries who were politically involved on behalf of constitutional republican government were presented with choices between evils in the interests of that government and they suffered as men do when forced to choose defeat as a lesser evil than immoral victory. Cicero himself, however, as we have noted, was both by nature and by training susceptible in a greater degree than most to the kind of suffering such choice entails. In his exile, the ironic result of his efforts to save the state, he suffered bitterly, and his anguish was aggravated, as we shall see, by the knowledge that, in some sort of Aeschylean blindness, he had brought this upon himself. Cicero aligned himself with the state as he saw it, and opposed at the expense of his own security and happiness the recurring threat of one-man rule. With the approach of civil war he suffered in his efforts to effect a compromise and a peaceful settlement between the warring parties, and was mocked in these efforts by what he saw as a mirus furor taking hold upon loyal and unloyal alike. In the death of republicanism he agonized with the state as with some next of kin. Throughout his career, as we have seen, he pursued a moderate path vacillating from party to party and from person to person, compromising his own ideals in an

effort to preserve as he thought some vestige of senatorial government; this vacillation and what he took to be the necessity of compromise proved, as we shall see, to be the source of much anguish. He was censured for it by his personal and professional associates. More deeply, he suffered for it in his own mind as he came to know defeat and to question the nature of the choices he had made. As we examine the manner of his suffering and its expression in his work, we shall sometimes of necessity repeat references to incidents cited in the previous chapter where they illustrated the manner of his response. The order followed will not always be strictly chronological, since the aim is to reveal a pattern of tragic experience which, generally speaking, remained consistent throughout his life.

It is a peculiarity of tragic tension and the suffering which it causes that no matter in which direction the tension is resolved the specially tragic suffering ceases with its resolution. This is another indication of the ambivalent nature of tragedy, and springs from the fact that the tension is caused by a conflict between evils, not between a good and an evil. Defeat always awaits the protagonist, as we have seen; it is in defeat that the particular tension is resolved. We saw too how a particular conflict, even though it is eventually resolved, can, prior to and even through that resolution, mirror

the universal tragic conflict which knows no such resolution. The victim of tragedy suffers on both levels. He does not know what will be the outcome of the particular conflict in which he is engaged, and his not knowing is anguish. The tragic nature of this anguish makes him more susceptible to the larger experience of man's suffering in the face of an ambiguous universe. Cicero writes to Atticus in February 49 maintaining that, since it is now obvious that there is no possibility of a settlement between Caesar and Pompey, each of whom wants to rule, his own anxiety has ceased: "Levatur enim omnis cura cum aut constitit consilium aut cogitando nihil explicatur." (E.A., VIII, xi) So long as there was some possibility of a settlement this possibility was set in perilous balance over against the possibility of no settlement and the mind was held in anguish between the two; when the possibility of a settlement is removed so is the special anxiety which accompanied the two possibilities held in poise. Taubes maintains that tragedy leaves the door open to nihilism as well as to faith;[1] she is referring to the universal tragic situation, that of man's uncertainty in the face of the ultimate

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[1] p. 204.

unknown. Cicero's remark that the tragic ambiguity of a particular situation is resolved as effectively by despair as it could have been by hope illustrates how well his situation mirrors the ultimate suffering of tragedy. Rome is waiting to hear how things have gone between Caesar and the Pompeians in Africa when Cicero writes to Mescinius Rufus who in 49 had been in doubt about which side to join: "Est enim res iam in eum locum adducta, ut, quamquam multum intersit inter eorum causas qui dimicant, tamen inter victorias non multum interfuturum putem. Sed plane animus, qui dubiis rebus forsitan fuerit infirmior, desperatis confirmatus est multum." (E.F., V, - xxi, 3) The tragic uncertainty concerning the outcome of the war has resolved itself, not on the side of hope, but of despair; and, since there is no longer cause for hope, there is no longer the kind of suffering, peculiar to tragedy, which plagued the minds of those who were holding both hope and despair as possibilities in perilous balance. Cicero becomes very familiar with this recurring anxiety as tension after tension arises and is resolved, sometimes successfully for the Republic, more often not.

To distinguish true from false becomes an all-important question for the tragic protagonist, and the inability to do so the source of much suffering. He moves in an ambivalent world where conflicting absolutes appear to guide him and where he can find nothing sure

on which to reply. This kind of ambiguity characterized Cicero's relations with friends (or those whom he took to be friends) and with professional associates almost continuously from his exile until his death. He suffered because of this, anxious about which way to turn and to whom. These are disturbed and disturbing times and it is difficult to say to what extent men's minds affect or are affected by their environment. Hesiod's Age of Iron was an age of darkness in which brother was turned against brother and friend against friend. Confusion of the signs by which to distingish friend from foe and good from bad mars this age as it marred the ages of tragedy. The signs of the times themselves confound men's judgments. When Atticus goes out to meet Caesar on his way into Rome at the head of an army bent on war against his own country, Cicero seems to have taken issue with him; and then, when Atticus defends his actions, Cicero refers the matter to the confusion of the times: "'Num igitur peccamus?' Minime vos quidem; sed tamen signa conturbantur quibus voluntas a simulatione distingui posset." (E.A., VIII, ix) With the conclusion of the civil war, those whose support had been on the losing side, find themselves enveloped in a dark cloud of hatred and suspicion: "Quis est tam Lynceus, qui in tantis tenebris nihil offendat, nusquam incurrat?" Cicero complains to Varro in April of 46. Writ-

ing from Rome in July of 46 to Papirius Paetus he speaks of his apparently sound association with Caesar's favourites and cynically gives his reasoning for regarding their attentions as disinterested:

> Sic enim color, sic observor ab omnibus iis, qui a Caesare diliguntur, ut ab iis me amari putem; nam etsi non facile diiudicatur amor verus et fictus, nisi aliquod incidat eius modi tempus, ut quasi aurum igni sic benevolentia fidelis periculo aliquo perspici possit; cetera sunt signa communia, sed ego uno utor argumento quam ob rem me ex animo vereque arbitrer diligi, quia et nostra fortuna ea est et illorum, ut simulandi causa non sit.
>
> (E.F., IX, xvi, 2)

While the tension of the particular conflict lasts, evil appears on both sides and what there is of good on each is inextricably entangled with a greater evil. This is the sort of situation which Cicero describes in a letter to Atticus from Formiae in December of 50 when the Senate is faced with Caesar's bid as head of an army for the consulship in absentia:

> quod horum malorum quorum aliquod certe subeundum est minimum putes . . . O rem miseram! si quidem id ipsum deterrimum est, quod recusari non potest et quod ille si faciat, iam iam a bonis omnibus summam ineat gratiam. Tollamus igitur hoc quo illum posse adduci negat ; de reliquis quid est deterrimum?
>
> (E.A., VII, ix)

We noted earlier the natural sensitivity to irony which Cicero's experience had sharpened.[2] When Caesar is marching on Rome in the manner of some bold enemy of the state or worse because as a citizen he is bent on a kind of parricide, he tactfully shows great clemency to those who come over to his side, welcoming deserters of the other camp

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[2] See above, p.57.

as though they have suddenly come to their senses. Pompey, in the meantime, acting apparently in defense of the Republic under assault, abandons his holdings and his supporters in withdrawal to Brundisium with the obvious intention of deserting Italy. Cicero sees in this whole conflict the irony of the state's tragic suffering: "Sed obsecro te, quid hoc miserius quam alterum plausus in foedissima causa quaerere, alterum offensiones in optima? alterum existimari conservatorem inimicorum, alterum desertorem amicorum? (E.A., VIII, ix) Cicero himself is going to have to choose to support one or the other of these two eventually. The alternatives are mutually exclusive and equally unsatisfactory. To side with Caesar would in all probability be to win, but to win unjustly and against the constitution for which Cicero stands; to side with Pompey would in all probability be to lose, but in this loss there would at least be the consolation of having lost on the side of justice.

La pensée de Cicéron est claire: le choix n'est maintenant plus possible. Il faut soutenir Pompée à tout prix parce qu'il est l'unique défenseur de l'Etat en danger; toutefois Pompée a sa part de responsabilités . . .[3]

So far as the State is concerned and the public welfare it very soon becomes apparent that in Pompey's camp there is little thought of anything but the kind of plunder and vengeance, should that side prove victorious, that is generally expected of Caesar's conquering force:

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[3]Maffii, p. 262.

Regnandi contentio est, in qua pulsus est modestior rex et probior et integrior et is, qui nisi vincit, nomen populi Romani deleatur necesse est, sin autem vincit, Sullano more exemploque vincet. Ergo hac in contentione neutrum tibi palam sentiendum et tempori serviendum est.

(E.A., X, vii)

All power is in the hands of these two men, Caesar and Pompey, for good or for evil; and both of them have turned against the state. However strategically sound Pompey's departure from Rome and from Italy in the face of Caesar's advance, the effect it had on Cicero was to drive him into a state of the keenest anguish; only in peace had there been any hope and neither of these men wanted peace:

Dominatio quaesita ab utroque est, non id actum, beata et honesta civitas ut esset. Nec vero ille urbem reliquit, quod eam tueri non posset, nec Italiam quod ea pelleretur, sed hoc a primo cogitavit, omnes terras, omnia maria movere, reges barbaros incitare, gentes feras armatas in Italiam adducere, exercitus conficere maximos. Genus illud Sullani regni iam pridem appetitur multis, qui una sunt, cupientibus. An censes nihil inter eos convenire, nullam pactionem fieri potuisse? Hodie potest. Sed neutri σκοπός est ille, ut nos beati simus; uterque regnare vult.

(E.A., VIII, ii)

Cicero was bound by gratitude to Pompey, and this accords with what justice would have him to, that is, to support the just cause. But Pompey's evident lack of desire for peace and the sequel to victory if he wins, these have been and

will be anything but just. There is then no escape from the duality of evils: either way Cicero will be forced to support or to participate in some injustice.

Coupled with the anguish of not knowing, and adding to that anguish, is the determination to adhere, inspite of uncertain ties, to the losing cause, not because it is the losing cause, but because it is the lesser of two evils. The agrarian reform bill, backed by Caesar, came before the senate in January of 59.[4] Cicero had very definite feelings about the measure and was determined not to support it, in spite of the positive feelings he was entertaining for Caesar at that time. By opposing the bill he could hope to win loud but empty praise in many quarters; by supporting it he could count on Caesar's affection and that could well entail no small future security. Whether he supported or opposed it he would be severely censured on one side or the other. Anxious, he writes to Atticus for advice, setting out the alternatives point by point with Academic precision:

Est res sane magni consili; nam aut fortiter resistendum est legi agrariae, in quo est quaedam dimicatio sed plena laudis, aut quiescendum, quod est non dissimile atque ire in Solonium aut Antium, aut etiam adiuvandum, quod a me aiunt Caesarem sic exspectare ut non dubitet . . . Hic sunt haec, coniunctio mihi

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[4]This measure, for the distribution of the Ager Campanus among Pompey's veterans, was defeated by the senate but subsequently carried by the assembly.

summa cum Pompeio, si placet, etiam cum Caesare, reditus in gratiam cum inimicis, pax cum multitudine, senectutis otium. Sed me κατακλεὶς mea illa commovet quae est in libro tertio.

(E.A., II, iii)

The situation repeats the choice of evils which is characteristic of tragedy. The suffering such a choice entails is peculiar to tragedy in that it knows no satisfactory resolution, and could be debated back and forth so long as gods and men exist. Cicero suffers especially, because, like Antigone bound to keep the eternal laws and Oedipus bound to rid Thebes of the plague, he too is bound to preserve the Republic. His is the anguish of the tragic protagonist who has made a choice not knowing where that choice will lead him, and bound by his own inner law to endure the suffering and defeat it will entail. When he writes to Atticus from Formiae early in February of 49, not knowing precisely the whereabouts of either Pompey or Caesar, unable to follow the former, unwilling to join the latter, his question, in itself unanswerable, points beyond the particularity of his present dilemma to the larger and tragic questions of honour and guilt:

Ego quid agam? qua aut terra aut mari persequar eum qui ubi sit nescio? Etsi terra quidem qui possum? mari quo? Tradam igitur isti me? Fac posse tuto (multi enim hortantur), num etiam honeste? Nullo modo. Equidem a te petam consilium, ut soleo. Explicari res non potest.

(E.A., VII, xxii)

One is reminded of the plight of Aeschylus' Eteocles who, when about to meet his brother in a battle to the death, laments the cruel complex of ill coupled with dishonour which he cannot avoid:

> Εἴπερ κακὸν φέρει τις αἰσχύνης ἄτερ,
> ἔστω· μόνον γὰρ κέρδος ἐν τεφνηκόσιν
> κακῶν δὲ κἀσχρῶν οὔτιν' εὐκλέαν ἐρεῖς.

(683-685)

It is the choice he has made and the purpose to which he consequently adheres that visits upon the victim of tragedy the tragic result of his own excellence.

Cicero's exile, bringing him from the heights of fame to the depths of disgrace, was, as he himself observed, typical of the downfall of a tragic hero. Technically at least it was the direct result of the action by which he had saved the state. It evoked in him, besides a great loneliness and a profound feeling of despair, the suffering of one who has unwittingly betrayed himself: "Nullum est meum peccatum nisi quod iis credidi, a quibus nefas putaram esse me decipi aut etiam quibus ne id expedire quidem arbitrabar." (E.Q.F., I, iv, 1) This is an

essentially tragic suffering. Tecmessa in the Ajax declares that the greatest suffering is the suffering one brings upon oneself.[5] The victim of tragedy suffers not so much in the knowledge of a friend's betraying as in the fact that he has deceived himself. So Medea suffered when she realized that she had betrayed herself in her judgment of Jason. Exiled in Thessalonica, Cicero has no idea, with a few exceptions, who are his friends and who his enemies in Rome. Personal and social relations have taken on the ambiguous aspect of tragedy and there is no way of knowing for sure whether those in power are friendly or hostile or indifferent. He writes to his brother Quintus in June of 58 revealing the ambiguous nature of his positon:

> Quantum Hortensio credendum sit nescio. Me summa simulatione amoris summaque adsiduitate cotidiana sceleratissime insidiosissimeque tractavit adiuncto Q. Arrio; quorum ego consiliis, promissis, praeceptis destitutus in hanc calamitatem incidi . . . Messalam tui studiosum esse arbitror; Pompeium etiam simulatorem puto.
>
> (E.Q.F., I,iii, 8)

Pompey's ambivalence was to prove a source of much suffering, especially since he was to become the last hope for

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[5] τὸ γὰρ ἐσλεύσσειν οἰκεῖα πάθη,
μηδενὸς ἄλλου παραπράζαντος,
μεγάλας ὀδύνας ὑποτείνει.

(260-262)

constitutional justice before the outbreak of civil war. Cicero's choice of Pompey's cause during that war and the suffering that choice affords with Pompey's defeat typify the choice of what is apparently the lesser of two evils. It is a choice made freely, and in this its consequent suffering is the more bitter. The victim of tragedy becomes aware of his own hand turned mysteriously against himself; the good he thought he would accomplish has become ironically an evil: "Mihi cum omnia sint intolerabilia ad dolorem, tum maxime quod in eam causam venisse me video ut sola utilia mihi esse videantur quae semper nolui." (E.A., XI, xiii) Succumbing to obscurity, deceived by appearances, the person confronted with a dilemma typical of the tragic ambiguity, is nonetheless aware that the mistake he makes is his own and that the ruin he brings upon himself by faulty judgment is indeed self-inflicted. It is in this vein that Cicero wrote to Terentia from exile: "Quae si, tu ut scribis, 'fato facta' putarem, ferrem paulo facilius; sed omnia sunt mea culpa commissa, qui ab iis me amari putabam qui invidebant, eos non sequebar qui petebant." (E.F., XIV, i, 1) Ruin brought about through no fault of the victim's does not typify the tragic fall; neither does ruin brought about entirely by the victim's own fault. In order to typify the tragic fall both elements must be present in that sort of paradox peculiar to the whole tragic situation.

Cicero's sufferings in exile, in the degree to which that exile contravened constitutional authority, personify the sufferings of the state. These two, the state and her defender, continue to suffer at the hands of those who set personal power and their own interests ahead of republican well-being. Cicero identifies himself with the state; he is warmly inclined towards those who serve the state well, either by act or by apparent intention, and he takes offense when they offend her. His suffering, then, mirrors hers. He has no wish, nor has any freeborn Roman, to become a slave. When the state, through whom all citizens are free, is threatened by slavery, and then reduced to slavery, he suffers through her servitude and in her place as any freeborn citizen, aware of what has taken place, would be expected to suffer. Republicanism and one-man rule are as antithetical as citizenship and servitude. The De Re Publica establishes this antithesis:

> cur enim regem appellem Iovis optimi nomine hominem dominandi cupidum aut imperii singularis, populo oppresso dominantem, non tyrannum potius? tam enim esse clemens tyrannus quam importunus potest; ut hoc populorum intersit, utrum comi domino an aspero serviant; quin serviant quidem, fieri non potest.
>
> (D.R.P., I, xxxiii, 50)

Cicero's oppositon to the threat of slavery determines his political sympathies and the onset of tht slavery his political and personal anguish. He does not hesitate to speak of himself and the republic in the same breath; they

have common enemies and common friends, and the wealthy Marius from Arpinum is one of the latter: "Haec ad te scripsi verbosius et tibi molestus fui, quod te cum mei tum rei publicae cognovi amantissimum." Cicero is anxious that Marius know the guiding principle behind his vacillations and his bid for peace in the years proceeding civil war: "Notum tibi omne meum consilium esse volui, ut primum scires me numquam voluisse plus quemquam posse quam universam rem publicam; postea autem quam alicuius culpa tantum valeret unus ut obsisti non posset, me voluisse pacem;" (E.F., VII, iii, 5) What Cicero suffers during Caesar's reign is what the freeborn suffer when reduced to servitude. A slave has neither opportunity nor authority to advise, even though he might avert some ruin menacing his master's house. What Cicero has contended consistently against has come to pass in Caesar's reign. "Omnia enim delata ad unum sunt; is utitur consilio ne suorum quidem, sed suo". (E.F., IV, ix, 2) If all citizens are the slaves of one man, he is himself no less a slave to circumstances. From Cicero's senatorial point of view this is in itself a source of suffering. In the common counsel of public minded citizens there is a buffer to the assaults of fortune which is not present when one man alone wilfully steers the ship of state. Even the Epicurean Paetus, though in keeping with his philosophy he is not a man of politics, can understand the anguish this situation

causes those who are men of the state:

> Hoc tamen scito, non modo me qui consiliis non intersum, sed ne ipsum quidem principem scire quid futurum sit; mos enim illi servimus, ipse temporibus. Ita nec ille, quid tempora postulatura sint, nec nos, quid ille cogitet, scire possumus.
>
> (E.F., IX, xvii, 3)

Nor would it have been any different had Pompey come off the victor, as Cicero reminds the proconsul Marcellus. Pompey did not follow his advice when he was consul, nor the advice of his cousin, consul the following year, nor the advice of any but those to whom he chose to listen when in arms against Caesar. Cicero would have been as much deceived in his support of Pompey as he is in whatever support he had ever shown Caesar: "Quod non multo secus fieret, si is rem publican teneret, quem secuti sumus. (E.F., IV, ix, 2)

The lack of harmony among parties in opposition to the welfare of the state as well as to one another, a harmony for which Cicero strove throughout his public life, was to provide the setting and eventually the stimulus for civil discord and civil war. Cicero wrote to Tiro from Capua in January of 49 some two weeks after Caesar crossed the Rubicon:

> In eum locum res deducta est ut, nisi qui deus vel casus aliquis subvenerit, salvi esse nequeamus. Equidem ut veni ad urbem, non destiti omnia et sentire et dicere et facere quae ad concordiam pertinerent; sed mirus invaserat furor non solum improbis sed etiam iis, qui boni habentur, ut pugnare cuperent me clamante, nihil esse bello civili miserius.
>
> (E.F., XVI, xii, 1-2)

The "strange madness" of which he speaks is reminiscent of a kind of Aeschylean blindness by which the gods bring it about that the hero destroys himself. The prolongation of this conflict Cicero saw as the last, the final blow, from which republican government in Rome would never recover.

nullum enim bellum civile fuit in nostra republica omnium, quae memoria mea fuerunt, in quo bello non, utracumque pars vicisset, tamen aliqua forma esset futura rei publicae; hoc bello victores quam rem publicam simus habituri, non facile affirmarim, victis certe nulla umquam erit.

(E.B., xxiv, 10)

If Cicero was appalled by Caesar's anti-constitutional violence, he was no less appalled by Pompey's evident lack of concern for peace. Peace, in Cicero's mind, stood for disinterested service to the state, war for self-centred particularism. In answer to Atticus' query concerning the chance of a peaceful settlement between Caesar and Pompey, Cicero replies bitterly: " . . . quantum ex Pompei multo et accurato sermone perspexi, ne voluntas quidem est. (E.A., VII, viii) And when Pompey is accused of lack of political and military application in the state's defence the accusation is more than a criticism of Pompey's political savoir faire: "Nec vero ille me ducit qui videtur; quem ego hominem ἀπολιτικώτατον omnium iam ante cognoram, nunc vero etiam ἀστρατηγότατον (E.A., VIII, xvi) Cicero's suffering is the suffering of the state about to be torn between these her two sons.

Si la guerre éclatait, quel que fût le vainqueur, ce n'en serait pas moins un désastre pour la République. Autant

valait donc jouer le tout pour le tout et tenter la dernière carte. On le voit, ce serait une erreur d'affirmer que Marcus Tullius après l'entrevue de Capoue fut convaincu par les discours de Pompée. Il était au contraire douloureusement frappé par l'optimisme excessif de l'ancien proconsul touchant les résultats d'une guerrre et par son impatience d'en finir avec les tentatives de conciliation.[6]

His efforts on behalf of peace, and his anguish as he sees Pompey's callous disregard for the well-being of the state, are the last struggles and anguish of the dying Republic.

In his writing Cicero personifies the state, speaking of Rome as though she had been wounded in battle and were sinking to her death. As early as January of the year 60 he is writing to Atticus in this vein:

. . . in re publica vero, quamquam animus est praesens, tamen [vulnus] etiam atque etiam ipsa medicina efficit. Nam ut ea breviter quae post tuum discessum acta sunt conligam, iam exclames necesse est res Romanas diutius stare non posse.

(E.A., I, xviii)

A year and a half later: "Certi sumus perisse omnia; quid enim ἀκκιζόμεθα tam diu?" (E.A., II, xix) Ten years later he has all but given up hope: "Et omitto causam rei publicae, quam ego amissam puto cum vulneribus suis tum medicamentis

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[6] Maffii, p. 267.

iis quae parantur". (E.A., IX, v) The state is the parent of sons who in civil war are guilty of parricide:

Et me tamen doleo non interesse huic bello! In quo tanta vis sceleris futura est ut, cum parentis non alere nefarium sit,[7] nostri principes antiquissimam et sanctissimam parentem, patriam, fame necandam putent. Atque hoc non opinione timeo, sed interfui sermonibus.

(E.A., IX, ix)

With Caesar's death the efficacy of the blow dealt republicanism by his violence and the apathy of others becomes apparent: " . . . ut tantum modo odium illud hominis impuri et servitutis dolor depulsus esse videatur, res publica iaceat in iis perturbationibus in quas eam ille coniecit." (E.F., XII, i, 1) The real tragedy is that of the Republic whose own leading citizens have turned against her. Having personified the state, it is not a long step towards self-identification with her; the treachery she suffers at the hands of her sons he has himself suffered in her behalf at those same hands:

Non est credibile quae sit perfidia in istis principibus, ut volunt esse et ut essent, si quicquam haberent fidei. Senseram noram inductus, relictus, proiectus ab iis. Tamen hoc eram animo ut cum iis in re publica consentirem. Idem erant qui fuerant.

(E.A., IV, v)

They were as indifferent to his pleas in the days of his exile, these leaders of the state, as they now prove to be to the state as they prepare for war, not so much against one another as against the fatherland they both seek to rule.

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[7] Cf. Hesiod, Works and Days, 187-188 . . . οὐδέ κεν οἵ γε γηράντεσσι τοκεῦσιν ἀπὸ θρεπτήρια δοῖεν.

Alter ardet furore et scelere nec remittit aliquid, sed in dies ingravescit . . . Alter, is qui nos sibi quondam ad pedes stratos ne sublevabat quidem, qui se nihil contra huius voluntatem facere posse, elapsus e soceri manibus ac ferro bellum terra et mari comparat . . .

(E.A., X, iv)

The ἀρετή of republican government entailed the ruin of that Republic; Cicero's ἀρετή was that of Republican statesman and identified him in his struggle and suffering with her struggle and her death. To Brutus in the middle of June, 43 B.C. he wrote from Rome in fear of the death of the free state: "Velim deinceps meliora sint: sin aliter fuerit quod di omen avertant! rei publicae vicem dolebo, quae immortalis esse debebat, mihi quidem quantulum reliqui est?" (E.B., xviii, 5) The loss of the state is the loss of her statesmen: not a sudden death but a lingering one as blow by blow is dealt the dying constitution. In 46 to Papirius Paetus he wrote: "Patriam eluxi iam et gravius et diutius quam ulla mater unicum filium." (E.F., IX, xx, 3) and again to the same: "Sed ego ista, mi Paete, non quaero, primum quia de lucro prope iam quadriennium vivimus, si aut hoc lucrum est aut haec vita, superstitem rei publicae vivere . . . " (E.F., IX, xvii, 1) In the "death" of the Republic, then, as earlier in his exile and in the civil war, Cicero suffered for the choice he had made to defend the state, regardless

of the consequences, with any and every means to hand.

Accompanying this public and political suffering caused by the illness and demise of the Republic, a personal and moral anguish as well troubled this defender of the state. If Cicero experienced tragic pangs of indecision it was not because he could discern no absolute rule of thumb at all to guide him, but because he saw on the one hand an unchanging standard and on the other an inescapable necessity. He believed, I think it is clear, in a universal law; there was no doubt in his mind either concerning virtue, honour, and true glory. The Stoic Balbus sets a spiritual emphasis on religion which accords well with Cicero's own mind on Stoicism and the gods:

> hoc eos et venerari et colere debemus. Cultus autem deorum est optimus idemque castissimus atque sanctissimus plenissimusque pietatis ut eos semper pura integra incorrupta et mente et voce veneremur.
>
> (D.N.D., II, xxviii, 71)

His definition of true praiseworthiness in a letter to Atticus from Rome in December of 61 is similar to the view given Balbus in that dialogue: "Vera quidem laude probitatis diligentiae, religionis neque me tibi neque quemquam antepono . . . " (E.A., I, xvii) And it is of interest to note, in corroboration of the roles he assigns there to Atticus and to himself, private and public respectively, the following remark from the Republic concerning glory and the public welfare: " . . . principem civitatis gloria

esse alendum, et tam diu stare rem publicam, quam diu ab omnibus honor principi exhiberetur". (D.R.P., V, vii, 9) This glory is earned in virtuous service given selflessly to the republic; and the final judge of that must be the giver himself. Scipio's advice drives this point home: "suis te oportet inlecebris ipsa virtus trahat ad verum decus, quid de te alii loquantur, ipsi videant, sed loquentur tamen." (D.R.P., VI, xxiii, 25) It is evident that a man's motives may be misjudged by his fellow citizens either for the better or for the worse; self-knowledge then for the virtuous man is reward in itself (sapientibus conscientia ipsa factorum egregiorum amplissimum virtutis est praemium D.R.P., VI, viii, 8) just as for the wicked man his wickedness is in itself a punishment. Happiness and unhappiness are experienced in these terms, as the universal law has decreed. To Aulus Torquatus Cicero writes from Rome in January of 45:

> si enim bene sentire recteque facere satis est ad bene beateque vivendum, vereor ne eum, qui se optimorum consiliorum conscientia sustentare possit, miserum esse nefas sit dicere. Nec enim nos arbitror victoriae praemiis ductos patriam olim et liberos et fortunas reliquisse; sed quoddam nobis officium iustum et pium et debitum rei publicae nostraeque dignitati videbamur sequi . . .
>
> (E.F., VI, i, 3)

But set over against this absolute, virtue in purity of motive and disinterested public service, is the chaotic turbulence of not knowing precisely what in a given situation constitutes a virtuous act. If Cicero thought of himself as having failed simply through lack of perseverance

to measure up in actuality to the standard to which he held in theory, his guilt would be like that of a religious man who sees his own impurity in the pure blaze of divine revelation. He does express this sort of sentiment to Atticus on returning from his province in 50: "Quod si ista nobis cogitatio de triumpho iniecta non esset, quam tu quoque approbas, ne tu haud multum requireres illum virum, qui in sexto libro informatus est. (E.A., VII, iii) But the whole issue is much more tragic than religious. The good and happiness are intimately caught up in and find expression through public service, and that not in a general sense, but specifically service rendered via republicanism, the form of government which engenders and nourishes this possibility. Republican government in Rome was coming to a painful close in Cicero's lifetime. His public involvement forbade him the retreat of the idealists; he was drawn with republicanism, through compromise of those ideals, to a kind of last stand:

Ego sum, qui nullius vim plus valere volui, quam honestum otium; idemque, cum illa ipsa arma, quae semper timueram, plus posse sensi, quam illum consensum honorum, quem ego idem effeceram, quavis tuta condicione pacem accipere malui, quam viribus cum valentiore pugnare.

(E.F., V, xxi, 2)

Against the unchanging standard is set an inescapable necessity. The force of the sword silences, in spite of themselves, those who would cease to speak for liberty:

Sed nec sine periculo quisquam libere de re publica sentiens versari potest in summa impunitate gladiorum, nec nostrae dignitatis videtur esse ibi sententiam de re publica dicere, ubi me et melius et propius audiant armati quam senatores.

(E.F., X, ii, 1)

Cicero maintained as we noted earlier that a man must judge himself for himself, that happiness lies in a clear conscience, and that this clear conscience depends upon purity of motive. In a letter to Papirius Paetus from Tusculum in July 46 he takes consolation in knowledge of this principle and in the achievements attained by his pure endeavours on the state's behalf:

. . . nihil esse sapientis praestare nisi culpam. Qua mihi videor dupliciter carere, et quod ea senserim quae rectissima fuerunt, et quod, cum viderem praesidi non satis esse ad ea obtinenda, viribus certandum cum valentioribus non putarim. Ergo in officio boni civis certe non sum reprehendendus.

(E.F., IX, xvi, 5)

Again he is clear in his own mind when he writes in the fall of 55 to his Arpinate friend M. Marius:

Sed tamen vacare culpa magnum est solacium, praesertim cum habeam duas res quibus me sustentem, optimarum artium scientiam et maximarum rerum gloriam; quarum altera mihi vivo numquam eripietur, altera ne mortuo quidem.

(E.F., VII, iii, 4)

His political vacillation does not impinge upon this clarity of conscience: "'Totiensne igitur sententiam mutas?' Ego tecum tamquam mecum loquor. Quis autem est tanta quidem de re quin varie secum ipse disputet?" (E.A., VIII, xiv) Rather, his own indecision makes him more sharply aware of difficulties confronting men. Nonetheless (and in this we re-iterate the suffering of the tragic protagonist) though you cannot blame a man for having seen a particular situation in a particular light: "quisque de illo opinionem habeat." (E.B., xvii, 6)[6] Neither can you remove for him or from him the sense of frustration and guilt that comes to him when he sees that, in some mysterious way, he was deceived, and is to blame. Philosophically it is perhaps not so hard to assert with a certain bravado, as Cicero does in his letter during January 45 to Aulus Manlius Torquatus: "nec enim, dum ero, angar ulla re,

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[6] Even Brutus concedes this of Cicero: "sed persuade tibi de voluntate propria mea nihil esse remissum, de iudicio largiter, neque enim impetrari potest, quin, quale quidque videatur ei, talem".

cum omni vacem culpa, et, si non ero, sensu omnino carebo. (E.F., VI, iii, 4) But, in actuality, suffering and guilt are not so easily kept at bay. Politically he had dealt himself a bad hand and had no one to blame but himself. So in November of 48 he wrote to Terentia from Brundisium: "Sed perturbati dolore animi magnisque iniuriis metuo ne id consili ceperimus, quod non facile explicare possimus." (E.F., XIV, xii) and in December of that same year: "Omnino de omnibus rebus nec quid consili capiam nec quid faciam, scio." (E.F., XIV, ix) Circumstances, and the response he made to them in the past, have turned him with cruel irony against himself; in the courts he is forced to defend those whom he had once prosecuted, and to do this at the expense of his former friends: " . . . tum vero hoc tempore vita nulla est. Neque enim fructum ullam laboris exspecto, et cogor non numquam homines non optime de me meritos rogatu eorum, qui bene meriti sunt, defendere." (E.F., VII, i, 4) The acute anguish of the tragic protagonist arises from the fact that he has in some way or other been turned against himself. What he had considered blessings have proven to be curses; what he did to save himself has brought about his ruin.

Figuratively speaking, the Roman Republic destroyed herself; the evil that came against her to overthrow her came from within. I think this is the sort of injury of

which Cicero speaks in his letter to T. Fadius Gallus in 52, living in exile in Italy:

> . . . qui te non ex fortuna, sed ex virtute tua pendimus semperque pendemus, et maxime animi tui conscientia, cum tibi nihil merito accidisse reputabis et illud adiunges, homines sapientis turpitudine, non casu et delicto suo, non aliorum iniuria commoveri.
>
> (E.F., V, xvii, 5)

The victim of tragedy is led in his suffering to see his fate as the work of his own hand in that mysterious union of guilt and guiltlessness we marked earlier as the outstanding indication of a truly tragic downfall. Not only those who took up arms against their state are responsible for her fall but even those as well who sought with wisdom to defend her:

> Sed me hercule et tum rem publicam lugebam, quae non solum suis erga me, sed etiam meis erga se beneficiis erat mihi vita mea carior, et hoc tempore, quamquam me non ratio solum consolatur, quae plurimum debet valere, sed etiam dies, quae stultis quoque mederi solet, tamen doleo ita rem communem esse dilapsam ut ne spes quidem melius aliquando fore, relinquatur. Nec vero nunc quidem culpa in eo est in cuius potestate omnia sunt (nisi forte id ipsum esse non debuit), sed alia casu , alia etiam nostra culpa sic acciderunt ut de praeteritis non sit querendum.
>
> (E.F., VII, xxviii, 3)

Republican government met its death at the hands of those who brought about, or allowed to come about, one-man rule. Out of apathy or self-interest or misjudgment this death blow gathered force in a way that left guilt even with those who had thought they were saving that government. To Atticus from Formiae March 1, 49 Cicero writes in this vein:

"Et vide quam conversa res sit; illum quo antea confidebant, metuunt, hunc amant quem timebant. Id quantis nostris peccatis vitiisque evenerit non possum sine molestia cogitare." (E.A., VIII, xiii). The excellence of the republican form of government lies in the freedom it provides for the development from within of minds trained in statecraft; when these well-trained minds prove effective against it or turn away from it its downfall is tragic. And there are perhaps no more poignant testimonies to this tragedy than those which Cicero offers of Caesar, to Trebonius who is with Caesar in Spain in 45: " . . . Quod olim solebant, qui Romae erant, ad provincialis amicos de re publica scribere; nunc tu nobis scribas oportet (res enim public istic est)". (E.F., XV, xx,2) And to Atticus of Caesar from Campania in January of 49 as the general makes his way south against Rome: "Quaeso , quid est hoc? aut quid agitur? Mihi enim tenebrae sunt. 'Cingulum,' inquit, 'nos tenemus, Anconem amisimus; Labienus discessit a Caesare.' Utrum de imperatore populi Romani an de Hannibale loquimur?" (E.A., VII, xi)

The strength and power of perception with which Cicero responded to the conflicts of his time, persevering as citizen of the Republic in the face of an inescapable necessity, brought him great suffering. He saw the irony of his own exile, and the irony of the civil war. His nature, his training, and his experience led him to

vacillate between parties and persons, and to compromise himself on behalf of the state. Opposed to those who opposed the constitution, he progressed in isolation with a dying form of government, his sufferings personifying hers. The strange madness which afflicted his fellow citizens on the eve of civil war found resonance in the moral anguish with which he was himself tormented. He had no doubt about the meaning of virtue -- selfless civic involvement -- but in the confusion of tragic times, it was impossible to see clearly what constituted a virtuous act. Often in retrospect a good became an evil, such that neither injustice nor dishonour could be avoided. When Cicero wrote of his suffering on the state's behalf to Pompey from Formiae in February 49, "Memineram me esse unum qui pro meis maximis in rem publicam meritis supplicia miserrima et crudelissima pertulissem". (E.A., VIII, xid) the addressee as well as the letter imparted tragic dimension to his anguish.

CHAPTER V

Knowledge

It is commonly held that the tragic protagonist is led through suffering to knowledge. We have examined in the preceding chapters of this thesis the potentially tragic conflict of circumstances into which Cicero was born, the wilful and knowledgeable response by which he actualized the tragedy in himself, and the suffering he endured as victim of that tragedy. We must now endeavour to see in his work evidence of the knowledge to which his specifically tragic suffering led him. We established earlier that this was to be primarily a study of method[1] and not an attempt to evaluate Cicero's political stance. We asserted also that, inasmuch as tragedy arises out of a conflict between evils and not between a good and an evil, the knowledge to which it leads its victim is not a knowledge of a specific good as opposed to a specific evil.[2] We spoke of that knowledge in terms of a perception of the ultimate conflict with which man is faced by an ambiguous universe. We described it also as a knowledge of

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[1] See above, p. 8.

[2] See above, p. 12.

the mystery of tragedy: that man is confronted by a choice between evils and that he is forced to choose suffering and defeat as the lesser of these evils. Knowledge of this mystery is self-knowledge; it is acquired only by those who see themselves so confronted. Through the self it becomes knowledge of humanity, of what French authors in recent years have come to call the condition humaine. It has been our contention that Cicero, in response to tragic circumstances, acquired this self-knowledge and knowledge of humanity through his suffering; and that he transmits this knowledge indirectly through his work in the same way the authors of the tragedies transmitted knowledge of man's suffering through their work. Because of the nature of this knowledge -- it is not a system or body of knowledge but the perception of a state -- and because of the indirect manner of its transmission, it is, like tragedy, an elusive thing. Cicero's readers cannot 'get at it' by compiling quotations and citing references the way they would amass evidence for this or that doctrine. One can only sense it, the way you sense the reality behind the Greek plays, and through a measure of pity and fear assimilate something of it.

We have already noted in the course of this study expressions in Cicero's written work which, in their reminiscence of the Greek dramas, indicate on Cicero's part and

convey to his readers a perception of the irony of tragedy.[3] We have noted as well the coincidences between his rhetorical training and his sympathies with the method of the New Academy, and have seen the result of such coincidences in his letters and in his more formal treatises. Expressions which convey the ambiguity of particular situations and which bear witness to choices between evils point, more emphatically perhaps than any other single element in his work, to an awareness of the ultimate questions facing men. One such expression from the De Legibus illustrates the way men are deceived about divine Punishment: "Non enim, Quinte, recte existimamus, quæ poena divina sit, sed opinionibus vulgi rapimur in errorem nec vera cernimus." (II, xvii, 43) This same basic deception to which men are prone leads to the asking of the question in answer to which the De Natura Deorum is written:

> utrum [dei] nihil agant, nihil moliantur, omni curatione et administratione rerum vacent, an contra ab iis et a principio omnia facta et constituta sint et ad infinitum tempus regantur atque moveantur, in primis magna dissensio est, eaque nisi diiudicatur in summo errore necesse est homines atque in maximarum rerum ignoratione versari
>
> (D.N.D., I, i, 2)

It is significant that this dialogue, as we noted earlier ends with an affirmation of probabilities only and not a doctrinal assertion. Until man knows one way or the other

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[3] See above, p. 57.

he will be a spiritual wanderer. In his public and private affairs he will be afflicted with a profound uncertainty not dissimilar to that with which the tragic protagonist is faced in the problem of fate and his own free will. Tragedy attests the ambiguity of man's situation vis-à-vis the universe and does not reduce either of these two realities, the world of man and the world out there, to one ultimate reality. Particular conflicts, like the conflicts which confronted Cicero, point beyond themselves to the larger conflict and do not attempt to resolve it; they affirm rather that it has, in human experience, no perceptible resolution. Hunt concludes, from his study of Cicero's work, that Cicero kept these two realities distinct and that he saw man's plight as an ambiguous one caught between the two:

> Thus we can see that the Ciceronian case for freedom falls between the two modern theories. It is not entirely anthropocentric, nor is it altogether theocentric. It cannot agree with the modern naturalistic humanist's assertion of man's self-sufficiency in so far as it supposes a principle higher than man. Nevertheless it is confused about the nature of this higher principle and cannot therefore establish a clear relationship between man and God in the Christian sense nor assert the fulfilment of God's purpose in the immortal life of the individual soul.[4]

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[4] p. 196.

It would seem, then, that Cicero's experience of ambiguity in particular conflicts leads him to assert the reality of the universal ambiguity to which the tragedies attest.

Those expressions also which bear witness to choices between evils point beyond themselves to ultimate choices confronting man. In choices of this kind it is impossible to have the good without the evil entangled with it. Speaking of the office of the tribune Cicero says: " . . . sed bonum, quod est quaesitum in ea, sine isto malo non haberemus." (D.L., III, x, 23) To abolish the office in an attempt to avoid its potential misuse would be to lose the good of it; either way there is a certain unavoidable disadvantage. In argument the same relation between opposites is observed: "Si enim rationem hominibus di dederunt, malitiam dederunt; est enim malitia versuta et fallax ratio nocendi; iidem etiam di fraudem dederunt, facinus ceteraque, quorum nihil nec suscipi sine ratione nec effici potest." (D.N.D., III, xxx, 75) It is impossible to argue that the gods are good because they gave man reason which is good and to dissociate that good from the evil use to which it is applied; because this particular good and this particular evil are inseparable in man's experience the implication is that they are inseparable in relation to the gods their givers as well. Neither alternative can be avoided in the other.

As in general expressions throughout his written work which demonstrate an awareness of the ultimate questions of tragedy, so in the subject matter and manner of the De Natura Deorum we find even more specific expression of this same tragical perception. During the course of this dialogue arguments are advanced on both sides of the question concerning the existence of the gods. These arguments touch upon all the varying shades of affirmation and denial. The interlocutor presents and refutes theoretical arguments in the same manner in which he elsewhere presented and refuted practical alternatives offered by some particular situation.[5] Elsewhere in his work, in the De Legibus and in his the Epistulae for example, we find reiterations of the pros and cons of the question as presented in this specific treatise. The argument for the existence of god based on universal religious awareness appears in the De Legibus:

> itaque ex tot generibus nullum est animal praeter hominem, quod habeat notitiam aliquam dei, ipsisque in hominibus nulla gens est neque tam mansueta neque tam fera, quae non, etiamsi ignoret qualem habere deum deceat, tamen habendum sciat. ex quo efficitur illud, ut is agnoscat deum, qui unde ortus sit quasi recordetur et agnoscat.
>
> (D.L., I, viii, 24)

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[5] Cf. for example, his weighing of alternatives concerning the agrarian reform bill, page 95 above.

And an expression of faith in the divinity which moves the universe and in the spark of divinity within each individual accompanies and supports an exhortation to public service from the famous Somnium Scipionis:

> Tu vero enitere et sic habeto, non esse te mortalem, sed corpus hoc . . . deum te igitur scito esse, siquidem est deus, qui viget, qui sentit, qui meminit, qui providet, qui tam regit et moderatur et movet id corpus, cui praepositus est, quam hunc mundum ille princeps deus; et ut mundum ex quadam parte mortalem ipse deus aeternus, sic fragile corpus animus sempiternus movet.
>
> (D. Re. P., VI, xxiv, 26)

Yet this same question of public service, a question of immense importance to Cicero, trails with it the shadows of cynicism and doubt. The doubt which in the following passage is placed on another's lips is surely no less applicable to Cicero's own situation:

> Cur igitur duo Scipiones, fortissimos et optimos viros, in Hispania Poenus oppressit? cur Maximus extulit filium consularem? cur Marcellum Hannibal interemit? cur Paulum Cannae sustulerunt? cur Poenorum crudelitati Reguli corpus est praebitum? cur Africanum domestici parietes non texerunt?
>
> (D.N.D., III, xxxii, 80)

If the gods do exist, on whose side are they? Are they concerned for justice and the law? Writing to Terentia from exile Cicero can see no greater evidence of divine concern than of human trustworthiness: "si haec mala fixa sunt, ego vero te quam primum, mea vita, cupio videre et in tuo complexu emori, quoniam neque dii, quos tu castissime coluisti, neque homines, quibus ego semper servivi, nobis

gratiam rettulerunt. (E.F., XIV, iv, 1) And in the crisis brought to a head by the estrangement between Caesar and Pompey, the former's march on Rome and the latter's defection to the east, heaven has apparently little if any part to play: "Quam ob rem obsecro te, mi Tite, eripe mihi hunc dolorem aut minue saltem aut consolatione aut consilio aut quacumque re potes. Quid tu autem possis? aut quid homo quisquam? Vix iam deus.[6] (E.A., IX, vi) But these are the kind of doubts which arise quite naturally out of fear and despair. More serious are the challenges which spring from considerations weighed carefully over long periods of time, considerations of the way in which fortune toys with the best and worst of human intentions;

> Dies deficiat si velim enumerare quibus bonis male evenerit, nec minus si commemorem quibus improbis optime. Cur enim Marius tam feliciter septimum consul domi suae senex est mortuus? cur omnium crudelissimus tam diu Cinna regnavit? At dedit poenas. Prohiberi melius fuit impedirique ne tot summos viros interficeret quam ipsum aliquando poenas dare . . . quid dicam de Socrate, cuius morti inlacrimare soleo Platonem legens? Videsne igitur deorum iudicio, si vident res humanas, discrimen esse sublatum?
>
> (D.N.D., III, xxxii, 81)

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[6] Cf. Van den Bruwaene, p. 47: Le ton de la lettre, la nuance irréelle de l'allusion à deus, dispense de commentaire: Cicéron pour lui-même n'envisage pas l'idée d'un secours divin.

Also to be considered is the way in which religions and religious sensitivities have been used by manipulators of the masses to achieve desired and perhaps desirable ends: "Quid, ii qui dixerunt totam de dis immortalibus opinionem fictam esse ab hominibus sapientibus rei publicae causa, ut quos ratio non posset eos ad officium religio duceret, nonne omnem religionem funditus sustulerunt?" (D.N.D., I, xlii, 118) The observation that this view is entirely destructive of religion antedates by several hundred years the Marxian contention that religion is but an opiate of the people.[7] What Cicero himself believed is not at this point important -- he himself as we have noted belittles specious use of authority to cloud issues; what is of importance to our discussion is the manner in which, not in one dialogue only, but in those other treatises as well upon which this study has been based, and in his letters, he presents for consideration varying and mutually exclusive points of view.

The question round which the De Natura Deorum revolves is a practical one. What becomes of a civilization founded on a man's moral obligations to the gods of his father's house if these gods are found either not to exist or not to care? What becomes of loyalty, integrity, the sense of right -- those cornerstones of the Republic -- if they be found insubstantially laid?

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[7] Such considerations also antedate Cicero, to be sure, but find, in his relating of them to the events of his time, a validity born of personal experience.

Haec enim omnia pure atque caste tribuenda deorum numini ita sunt, si animadvertuntur ab iis et si est aliquid a deis inmortalibus hominum generi tributum. Sin autem dei neque possunt nos iuvare nec volunt, nec omnino curant nec quid agamus animadvertunt, nec est quod ab iis ad hominum vitam permanare possit, quid est quod ullos deis inmortalibus cultus honores preces adhibeamus?

(De N.D., I, ii, 3)

Cotta, in refutation of the Epicurean Velleius on the nature of the gods, reiterates this same assertion that piety, holiness, religion depend upon the active interest of the gods:

aut quid omnino cuius nullum meritum sit ei deberi potest? Est enim pietas iustitia adversum deos; cum quibus quid potest nobis esse iuris, cum homini nulla cum deo sit communitas? Sanctitas autem est scientia colendorum deorum; qui quam ob rem colendi sint non intellego nullo nec accepto ab iis nec sperato bono.

(D.N.D., I, xli, 116)

Epicureanism is said to be effectively atheistic because, although it will not deny the existence of the gods, it does deny their involvement in human civic and private affairs. To say that the gods do not make their mark in the affairs of individuals and the state is tantamount to saying they might as well not exist. Assuming that they do exist, there is implied a question that takes on further tragic dimension. The question takes on tragic dimension when it begins to ponder the nature of divine involvement, to ask whether the gods are friendly or hostile, whether they are good or evil.

Religion, based itself on the assumption that there is an existing divine justice, is useful and necessary in the founding and preservation of a state:

> Sit igitur hoc iam a principio persuasum civibus, dominos esse omnium rerum ac moderatores deos, eaque, quam gerantur, eorum geri iudicio ac numine, eosdemque optime de genere hominum mereri et, qualis quisque sit, quid agat, quid in se admittat, qua mente, qua pietate colat religiones, intueri piorumque et impiorum habere rationem; his enim rebus inbutae mentes haud sane abhorrebunt ab utili aut a vera sententia.
>
> (D.L., II, vii, 15)

Fear of the gods and a consciousness of what is "right" mould the laws and constitution of such a state. Thus when these laws are transgressed and that constitution threatened it is in obedience to divine will that right and lawful action is taken to preserve what the gods themselves have established. When Lepidus defects from senatorial instruction by a policy of conciliation toward Antony in 43, Cicero writes to Brutus that Lepidus himself and not the State is responsible for the punishment he has brought upon his own house by the actions which have caused him to be declared a public enemy. The law itself that visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children is just and good:

Nec vero me fugit, quam sit acerbum parentum scelera filiorum poenis lui, sed hoc praeclare legibus comparatum est, ut caritas liberorum amiciores parentes rei publicae redderet; itaque Lepidus crudelis in liberos, non is, qui Lepidum hostem iudicat.

(E.B., xxii, 2)

Cotta's Academic criticism of the Stoic teaching, however, expresses a quite different view of the ramifications of a law of this type, and he points his remarks with a quotation from the Latin tragedies:

Quem vos praeclare defenditis, cum dicitis eam vim deorum esse ut etiamsi quis morte poenas sceleris effugerit expetantur eae poenae a liberis a nepotibus a posteris O miram nequitatem deorum: ferretne civitas ulla latorem istius modi legis, ut condemnaretur filius aut nepos si pater aut avus deliquisset?

quinam Tantalidarum internecioni modus
paretur, aut quaenam umquam ob mortem Myrtili
poetnis luendis dabitur satias supplici.

(D.N.D., III, xxxviii, 90)

So long as the gods at least appear to love the good and hate the evil, the justice on which the state is built remains unshaken. But when the gods by their indifference

or even their complicity appear to sanction parricide against the state, lawlessness, violence and injustice, what basis for hope is there in them? Sometimes divine reward and retribution appear to be pointedly on the mark. In this first reference Cicero may well have his tongue in his check when he writes to Quintus in the fall of 54:

Viget illud Homeri:

> ἠματ' ὀπωρινῷ, ὅτε λαβρότατον χέει ὕδωρ
> Ζεύς, ὅτε δή ῥ' ἄνδρεσσι κοτεσσάμενος χαλεπαίνῃ,

cadit enim in ab olutionem Gabini

> οἳ βίῃ εἰν ἀγορῇ σκολιὰς κρίνωσι θέμιστας,
> ἐκ δὲ δίκην ἐλάσωσι, θεῶν ὄπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες.
>
> (E.Q.F., III, vii, 1)

But in the De Legibus his reflections on divine punishment are seriously drawn from actuality:

quid ego hic sceleratorum utar exemplis, quorum plenae tragoediae? quae ante oculos sunt, ea potius adtingam . . . omnia tum perditorum civium scelere discessu meo religionum iura polluta sunt, vexati nostri Lares familiares, in eorum sedibus exaedificatum templum Licentiae, pulsus a delubris is, qui illa servarat. circumscpicite celeriter animo (nihil enim attinet quemquam nominari), qui sint rerum exitus consecuti. nos . . . . . iudicia senatus, Italiae, gentium denique omnium conservatae patriae consecuti sumus . . . . quorum scelere religiones tum prostratae adflictaeque sunt, partim ex illis distracti ac dissipati iacent, qui vero ex iis et horum scelerum principes fuerant et praeter ceteros in omni religione inpii, non solum vita ignominia cruciati atque dedecore, verum etiam sepultura et iustis exsequiarum caruerunt.

(De. L., II, xvi, 41)

This evident reference to Clodius' death[8] clearly portrays the gods as aligned on the side of justice and constitutional rule and taking an active part in the struggle against lawlessness. But there are many instances in which the role of the gods is so far from being clearly on the side of right that one might well be led to doubt the fact of their concern at all, and Quintus is hastily made to point this up in answer to the above assertion. As Cicero set out the laws for his republic he affirmed the usefulness of instilling in men's minds fear of divine punishment as an effective deterrent against those who would contravene the constitution: "Quod autem non iudex, sed deus ipse vindex constituitur, praesentis poenae metu religio confirmari videtur." (D.L., II, x, 25) This particular transgression is of the rites of public worship. But for Cicero public ritual and personal integrity are inseparable -- republican government can function only so long as citizens maintain a strong sense of loyalty to the state and respect for fellow citizens. The figure of speech he uses to describe the punishment of those who repudiate these divine demands is taken, as we have seen,[9] significantly, from the tragic theatre.

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[8] Killed by Milo's retainers near Bouillae about the middle of January 52. Cicero was working on the De Legibus, as sequel to the De Re Publica as late as 44.

[9] See above, p. 45 note 26.

Guilt is thus attested in terms transcending the laws of men, a thing to be pursued and punished by the wrath of the gods themselves.

— To speak with absolute faith of a universal law, unchanging and eternal, established in heaven and on earth, by which the just are recompensed and the unjust condemned, is not to speak tragically. Faith in the existence of such a law and in the effective power of its divine executors reduces the universe to a singe ultimate omnipotent reality with whom all powers will eventually be seen to reside. The tragic position admits this as a possibility but admits as an equal possibility the fact that there may be no such ultimate power or interested rule or justice. The tragic protagonist is unable to affirm or to deny with finality either of these possibilities but must live in a state of suspension between alternatives, forced to choose as though he knew what he does not know; he is aware that he does not know but chooses nonetheless in proud defiance of his own blind plight. In the De Republica we read an affirmation concerning universal law;

> Est quidem vera lex recta ratio naturae congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quae vocet ad officium iubendo, vetando a fraude deterreat; quae tamen neque probos frustra iubet aut vetat nec improbos iubendo aut vetando movet. huic legi nec obrogari fas est neque derogari ex hac aliquid licet neque tota abrogari potest, nec vero aut per senatum aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus, neque est quaerendus explanator aut interpres eius alius . . .

unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium deus, ille legis huius inventor, disceptator, lator; cui qui non parebit, ipse se fugiet ac naturam hominis aspernatus hoc ipso luet maximas poenas, etiamsi cetera supplicia, quae putantur, effugerit.

(D.R.P., III, xxii, 33)

It is this universal law which is "the right reason of supreme Jupiter (ratio est recta summa Iovis)"[10] and which, pre-existing nations and states, "is coeval with that God who guards and rules heaven and earth (aequalis illius caelum atque terras tuentis et regentis dei)".[11] Men contravene this law, they are led into error and do not perceive the truth. They miscalculate when they see suffering, pain and death as signs of divine displeasure and sources therefore of unhappiness, and do not see that the punishment for their wickedness lies in the commission of that wickedness itself: "sceleris est poena tristis et praeter eos eventus, qui sequuntur, per se ipsa maxima est." (D.L., II, xvii, 43) In figurative language we spoke earlier of the Roman Republic as of a tragic protagonist who brought about her own downfall. Cicero speaks of states as suffering punishment in death, apparently from having transgressed this universal, divine law:

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[10] D.L., II, iv, 10; translation that of C. W. Keyes, Loeb.

[11] D.L., II, iv, 9; translation that of C. W. Keyes, Loeb.

Sed his poenis quas etiam stultissimi sentiunt, egestate, exilio, vinculis, verberibus, elabuntur saepe privati oblata mortis celeritate, civitatibus autem mors ipsa poena est, quae videtur a poena singulos vindicare; debet enim constituta sic esse civitas, ut aeterna sit. itaque nullus interitus est rei publicae naturalis ut hominis, in quo mors non modo necessaria est, verum etiam optanda persaepe. civitas autem cum tollitur, deletur, extinguitur, simile est quodam modo, ut parva magnis conferamus, ac si omnis hic mundus intereat et concidat.

(D.R.P., III, xxiii, 34)

As with the Stoic belief in divine providence whereby the guilty are punished and the good rewarded, examples, like that of the constitution going to its death, may be adduced to support belief in a universal law.

Set opposite faith in universal law, however, Cicero gives evidence of conviction that there is an evil in the world, or evil men, against whom that law, even with its exhortations to duty and its dire threat of avenging punishment, can avail nothing. In a passage cited earlier,[12] Cicero asserts that this law neither exhorts the good in vain nor has any effect on the wicked. These wicked are restrained by fear of detection and punishment alone and when these barriers are removed they exercise no restraint of conscience whatsoever:

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[12] See above, p. 130.

nam quid faciet is homo in tenebris, qui nihil timet nisi testem et iudicem? quid in deserto quo loco nactus, quem multo auro spoliare possit, imbecillum atque solum? noster quidem hic natura iustus vir ac bonus etiam conloquetur, iuvabit, in viam deducet; is vero, qui nihil alterius causa facit et metitur suis commodis omnia, videtis, credo, quid sit acturus.

(D.L., I, xiv, 41)

The wicked man is motivated by an impurity of the mind or the heart which cannot in any way be removed, not even apparently by the power of the gods themselves. The symbolism of ritual offers therefore an incomplete analogy: "nam illud [corporis labes] vel aspersione aquae vel dierum numero tollitur; animi labes nec diuturnitate evanescere nec amnibus ullis elui potest." (D.L., II, x, 24) This pessimistic view of human nature resulted surely from Cicero's experience and set itself opposite faith in the traditional Roman ideals in a way that reinforced his tragic view of life. The expression in his work of opposites such as belief in a universal, divine law and the intractability of human nature illustrate his awareness of tragic ambiguity, and his refusal to reduce either of those realities to the other for the sake of a solution.

Experience is the fulcrum upon which these opposites balance. Cicero's 'experience' of divine providence and of divine indifference acts as second moment in the tragic rhythm, leading him to re-formulate the beliefs with which he began. He was a practical man and did not allow his theoretical work to get beyond the reach of a certain practical

reality. We have emphasized the practicality with reference to the De Natura Deorum: unless, in the absence of certainty, some calculation of probability be applied, man remains both privately and publicly a spiritual drifter. Certainty is not to be found, for what might appear at first as absolute -- belief in universal law and the justice of divine intervention -- comes up against the shock of experience. It is this experience and his refusal to relinquish belief in law and justice which prevent Cicero from escaping the tragic conflict and which, through suffering and defeat in particular conflicts, direct his gaze beyond the particular to an ultimately inescapable conflict. In his work on fate, good and evil, William Chase Greene attests the effect of experience on Cicero's De Natura Deorum when he speaks of the antithesis in that dialogue between personal doubt and theological speculation:

> Probably there is at work here not only the attitude of the official, who appreciates the social value of religion as a disciplinary and cohesive force, even if it be merely "the opiate of the people," but also, at least on Cicero's part, a genuine and deep-seated temperamental inclination, in a world in which there is much to be said on both sides of the ultimate problems of existence and of the ways of God to men, to admit that certainty cannot be found by the pure reason, and therefore that one must for practical purposes live by faith, testing one's faith by its moral results.[13]

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[13] Moira: Fate, good and evil in Greek thought (New York, 1963), p. 356.

Cicero's one overriding purpose was the maintenance and defence of the state as he saw it; by this end his standards were gauged and to it he made consistent and conscientious application of the teachings of philosophers and theologians alike.

We find the same tragical pattern in his political theory as we found in the theological, and arising out of that pattern the same perception of an ultimate ambiguity. Once again received theory comes up against experience. We saw in the chapters on response and suffering how he conceived of himself as saviour and guardian of the state and how he suffered because of this self-conception. He believed in republicanism as a Roman institution; he believed in its practicability and stuck with it through vacillation and compromise in an effort to make it work: "sic enim decerno, sic sentio, sic adfirmo, nullam omnium rerum publicarum aut constitutione aut descriptione aut disciplina conferendam esse cum ea, quam patres nostri nobis acceptam iam inde a maioribus reliquerunt." (D.R.P., I, xlvi, 70) He believed also in republican citizenship and held no virtue higher than the virtue of disinterested involvement on the state's behalf: "Neque enim est ulla res, in qua propius ad deorum numen virtus accedat humana, quam civitatis aut condere novas aut conservare iam conditas." (D.R.P., I, vii, 12) To this conviction he attested not only in formal works of theory but in his letters of

exhortation as well: " . . . nec quicquam ex omnibus rebus humanis est praeclarius aut praestantius quam de republica bene mereri." (E.F., X, v, 2) The Somnium Scipionis established the civic virtue within a meaningful and reverent cosmic frame:

> omnibus, qui patriam conservaverint, adiuverint, auxerint, certum esse in caelo definitum locum, ubi beati aevo sempiterno fruantur; nihil est enim illi principi deo, qui omnem mundum regit, quod quidem in terris fiat, acceptius quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati, quae civitates appellantur; harum rectores et conservatores hinc profecti huc revertuntur.
>
> (D.R.P., VI, xiii, 13)

And in this specific frame of reference Cicero may be seen consistently throughout his life. In this he is tragic. He never retreats from the arena for good when experience confronts this ideal with ugly reality, not even when defeat appears inevitable. His retreat is always strategic, to allow for change of weapons or re-formulation of plan.

In such re-formulation of plan is seen the third moment in Cicero's political application of the tragic pattern. Neither a household nor a state can function without base in law and order: "sine quo nec domus ulla nec civitas nec gens nec hominum umiversum genus stare nec rerum natura omnis nec ipse mundus potest; nam et hic deo paret, et huic oboediunt maria terraeque, et hominum vita iussis supremae legis obtemperat." (D.L., III, i, 3) The law and order upon which the Republic of Rome was founded

was being subjected, during the last century of that Republic, to constant attacks by which the enemies of the state sought to disrupt and demolish the constitution. The evident measure of success in those attacks finds an apprehensive echo in the pages of the De Natura Deorum. Against the absolute solidarity of a past based on the foundations of piety, reverence and the bonds of religion is set the vision of an imminent chaos should those stays of the constitution be removed: "quibus sublatis perturbatio vitae sequitur et magna confusio; atque haud scio an pietate adversus deos sublata fides etiam et societas generis humani et una excellentissima virtus iustitia tollatur." (D.N.D., I, ii, 3-4) Between these alternatives -- the unchanging standard of the past and the inevitable necessity of the future -- appears an awareness of the dilemma they pose, a dilemma to which only a certain calculation of probability can be applied. The "high ideal of conduct" of which Hunt speaks becomes in application, tainted as it inevitably is by compromise and injustice, the lesser of two evils:

> [Cicero's system] did reveal a real concern for the welfare of men and society and there was no little glimmer of emotion in the concern which he expressed in the De Natura Deorum that to deny religion would break the bonds of society. He adopted for himself a high ideal of conduct. Because of his reservation on man's attainment of perfection it was a working rule rather than a principle established with philosophic certainty.[14]

In Cicero's witness to the breaking of the bonds of society which characterized his day, there is more than a passing reference to the irony of a state bent on self-destruction: "Nam divitiae, nomen, opes vacuae consilio et vivendi atque aliis imperandi modo dedecoris plenae sunt et insolentis superbiae nec ulla deformior species est civitatis quam illa, in qua opulentissimi optimi putantur." (D.R.P., I, xxxiv, 51) The state, in her statesmen, has deceived herself and brought about, in her delusion, her own defeat and death. The accomplishments of her proud strength have turned against her.

Like consideration of the nature of the gods, so consideration of the nature of the state, so closely allied with it, manifests, as a result of the conflict between theory and experience, the same tragic awareness. Republicanism, like belief in the gods, has entered into conflict with its adversary, and, for the moment, neither is strong enough to unseat the other. While the tensions last, both hope and despair must be held in equivocal and perilous balance. In a sense, the gods stand or fall with the state;

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[14]Hunt, p. 196.

certainly, the whole civic structure rests upon the foundations of piety, reverence and the bonds of religion. Should these be overthrown, neither household nor state could stand firm. And these in their turn are based unquestionably upon the interested support of the gods. The conflicts of the state, and the suffering these conflicts induce, point beyond the particular to an awareness of a greater ambiguity. This perception of tragedy, taking base in Cicero's particular experience of the tragic, transmits itself in his work as a kind of humanism, of which Hunt affirms: "Thus it seems certain that Cicero had a coherent system and it deserves the name of humanism because it was concerned with man first and foremost and with other things only in so far as they were relevant to man's position in the world".[15] Man and the ambiguous world confronting him remain for Cicero two independent realities, in keeping with his tragic perception, irreducible by any considerations of system one to the other.

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[15] Hunt, p. 188.

The philosophers, the theologians and the tragic poets all ask the same ultimate questions about man's place in the universe; it is in the way in which they answer these questions that they differ. Philosophy and theology tend, as we have seen, to posit answers on the side of man or the gods respectively; tragedy, as seen in the equilibrium theory, contends that these ultimate questions remain unanswerable. Cicero's failure to find answers to these questions in either philosophy or religion brings him to the tragic position, somewhere between that of the philosophers and the theologians and nearer that of the tragic poets. It would be contrary to the nature of tragedy to suggest that its perception is higher or better than the precepts of religion or philosophy; tragic awareness differs essentially from these. When Clytemnestra addresses the Argive elder with the words σὺ δ' αἰνεῖν εἴτε με φέγειν θέλεις ὁμοῖον (Agamemnon 1403-4) she is not disclaiming guilt for the murder of Agamemnon (or even simply warning him to beware of force) so much as indicating the irrelevance of the choric standards of good and evil for her in the place to which she has come. The tragic suffering stems from the necessity of having to choose between evils or between complexes of good and evil, not between an evil and a good. Cicero, like the victims of the tragedies, recognized that he was fighting a losing

battle to the extent that he was aware of the choice between evils being forced upon him. The knowledge attained by suffering is not a knowledge of some specific good as opposed to some specific evil; it is knowledge of the impossibility of disentangling good from evil. Clytemnestra, Creon and Electra for instance, all come to the realization that in their efforts to ward off evil they have become part of that evil and are tainted with a guilt that cannot be purged:

ΚΛ ἀλλὰ καὶ τάδ' ἐξαμῆσαι πολλὰ δύστηνον θέρος·
πημονῆς δ' ἅλις γ' ὕπαρχε μηδέν· ἡματώμεθα.

(Agamemnon, 1655-1656)

ΚΡ . . . πάντα γὰρ
λέχρια τἀν χεροῖν, τα δ' ἐπὶ κρατί μοι
πότμος δυσκόμιστος εἰσήλατο

(Antigone, 1344-1346)

ΗΛ τίς δ' ἔμ' Ἀπόλλων, ποῖοι χρησμοὶ
φονίαν ἔδοσαν μητρὶ γενέσθαι;

(Electra, 1303-1304)

Nor have they any recourse to divine forgiveness; they have offended the gods as well as men. Their knowledge of good and evil is not in abstract terms but in the spectacles of pity and fear which they have themselves become, in their own eyes. If they lament the plight of humankind they do so first and foremost in their own persons; through particular sorrow they come to universal pity:

ΚΡ Οἴμοι,
ἔχω μαθὼν δείλαιος . . .
. . . . . .
Φεῦ φεῦ, ἰὼ πόνοι βροτῶν δύσπονοι.

(Antigone, 1271-1276)

The tragic knowledge is not an abstract knowledge, but a knowledge acquired in experience. As Cicero saw the state tottering on the brink of chaos he felt his belief in a rational world order also tottering. In the oncoming collapse -- indeed, in the already accomplished death -- of the Republic he saw the work of his own hand. His nature, his training and his experience forbade him the solace of either philosophy or religion. Surface indications of tragedy in his career have led, I think, to the conclusion that his experience of the tragedy went much deeper. The real tragedy is that of humanity. Cicero's tragedy, to which he was sometimes chorus sometimes protagonist, was that of the Republic. The dictates of his own inner law bound him to this form of government, even though republicanism was apparently doomed, as the form of government most expressive of the highest in human possibility. This law he followed to the end.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

It has been the aim of this study, taking its clue from a certain dramatic irony in the events of Cicero's life and the cause and manner of his death, to penetrate what appeared to be a surface resemblance to tragedy, in order to ascertain whether there were not, in his times, and his response to those times, elements of suffering and tragical awareness on a deeper level. He played a part as participant chorus in the agonies of a dying Republic; he was also protagonist on that Republic's behalf in a final bid for the survival of government by republican constitution. His ἀρετή, the excellence of a republican statesman, personified hers, the excellence of a Republic. In that excellence lay the seeds of self-destruction.

The concept of tragedy is an elusive thing, not easily caught in the web of words. We have seen it in terms of dynamic tension between irreconcilable opposites, as an insoluble conflict, ironic in its dramatic progression. The tragedies point by means of transient, concrete expressions

on a first plane beyond particular people and times to a universal conflict on a second plane, that of man's anxiety before an ambigious universe. These particular expressions point, by means of the suffering they induce, to questions which cannot be solved or avoided. The tragedies tell of the choices between evils with which their heroes, who are also their victims, are confronted. The protagonists of tragedy seize hold on what they deem to be the lesser evil and cling tenaciously to it regardless of consequences, regardless of the suffering they bring upon themselves. They are by nature possessed of a strength and power of perception which enables them to try to fly in the face of fate; by this same strength and power of perception they are brought low in suffering and defeat. Through these they attain to a certain knowledge, a perception of two realities -- the reality that is man and the reality of the universe -- as irreducible to one another. The tragic perception, unlike philosophical and theological systems of doctrine, does not posit answers to one side or the other of this ambiguity. The perception to which tragic suffering attains is a self-knowledge, and through the self, a knowledge of humanity. We spoke of this movement through suffering to knowledge as a kind of rhythm; we spoke also of the essentials of tragedy, delineating these as conflict, response, suffering and knowledge, considering these to be phases of an organic whole, distinguishable only as they throw greater light upon that

whole.

Cicero's age was an age of transition, characterized by tensions that typified the dynamic tension of tragedy caught between irreconcilable alternates. The great political conflict of the age was that being waged between republicanism and advocates of one-man or coalition rule. But there were also social, philosophical and religious tensions which made the present a battleground between a familiar past and an unknown future. Traditional Roman ways and values were being set in the balance against a relatively new and foreign Hellenism. Stoicism and the teachings of Epicurus; violent power politics and political indifference; equestrian, senatorial and popular party interests against the well-being of the State as a whole; politically powerful individuals in opposition to one another -- each and all of these particular tensions to a greater or less degree contributed to the tragic cast of the age. Cicero himself saw his age as tragic, like a Hesiodic Age of Iron marked by the violation of justice and civil war. He felt the actuality of change and was held between the inescapable necessity of the new and the universal validity of the old. He spoke of his times in dramatic metaphor, and saw the irony in the events of his own life. Between those events and his work as author there was a consistently close relationship, such that his written work mirrors the tension of the age and shows the marks of the

conflicts to which he was subjected.

The tragic protagonist assumes his role as actor in the drama when he responds to the tragedy latent in the circumstances which confront him. His response is born of a certain strength and power of perception. Though Cicero's character does not at first glance resemble the character of an Oedipus or an Antigone, he does nonetheless show in his response to his own circumstances the same unyielding wilfulness which characterizes them. He is honest with himself, knows his own weaknesses, shows a flexibility of mind and an ability to adapt to change; in these respects he is well suited by nature to hold as he does to republicanism and to move with it as circumstances vary. He excels in rhetoric, has sympathies with the teaching of the New Academy, employs the dialogue form with ease in formal treatises, and recalls, in his ability to debate issues with a clear, sharp style, the lucid rapidity of certain parts of Greek tragic drama. By nature, by training, and by literary and political experience, then, he is suited to a path of purposeful moderation on the state's behalf. He reacts to parties, persons and specific issues with no consistency other that that dictated by the public interest. Although he will not let go of faith in traditional values, he cannot deny either the efficacy of forces hostile to those values, and is led thus, progressing where there are no guides, to compromise on the state's

behalf. Neither the proponents of violence nor the idealists respond as he does to their common situation: he becomes tragic when they do not.

Responding to potential tragedy in an essentially tragic manner, Cicero suffers with the anguish of a tragic victim. He feels himself bound to serve the Republic first and foremost, and experiences at the hands of personal and professional associates the same ambiguity with which they treat the state. His sufferings in exile personify the state's sufferings. He is torn by obligations, personal ties, and civic interests between Pompey and Caesar. Again and again he is forced to choose, in the interests of the state as he sees it, the lesser of two evils: the equestrian order against the senate, Pompey against Caesar, Octavian against Antony. With each such choice he suffers in the knowledge that he is compromising his own standards and the standards of republicanism a little more. He has no doubt that good is a civic good and that virtue is to be defined in terms of public service, but is tormented by the obscurities of his age, unable to discern in these dark times what constitutes virtue on the state's behalf.

Out of this suffering, because it is an essentially tragic suffering, is born knowledge of the tragic. Particular anguish and particualr ambiguities point beyond themselves to an anguish that is caused by man's fear and doubt before

an ambiguous universe. In the tensions that confronted him with choices between evils, Cicero became sensitive to the evils of assuming answers to unanswerable questions and the evil of ignorance. Of these he chose what he deemed the lesser, preferring in the darkness which enshrouds all men to proceed with a calculation of probabilities. He saw what he considered to be a kind of wilful blindness in the stance of the idealists, not being able himself to close his eyes to the necessity of the present. He refused at the same time to relinquish hold upon the other alternative, faith in law and order and the possibility of a justly governed state. In this stubborn retention of two mutually exclusive alternatives in perilous balance, and in his unwillingness to reduce the two to one in order to avoid the anguish of that poise, he became in his life a tragic figure. The tragic perception, acquired in suffering, makes itself felt in his work in the degree to which that work illumines for the reader Cicero's experience of the tragic; through his suffering we are led, as by the suffering of the protagonists of classical tragedy, to an appreciation of the tragic view.

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