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THE MEANING OF THE *PHARSALIA*.

In a brief but illuminating study Sikes has shown that the whole conception of the *Pharsalia* would have been different if Lucan had not been a Stoic, and that "commentators have strangely underrated the importance of philosophy as the chief—if not the only—cause of Lucan's complete break with epic convention." [1] He points out the best approach to an understanding of the *Pharsalia* when he states that the absence of myth and the poet's attempt to explain the motives of human actions are based upon his philosophy. Sikes, however, is more interested in the cause of Lucan's failure to give the gods some place in his poetry, as Lucretius had done, or to find some convincing substitute for them by using, for instance, the device of Personification, than he is in the meaning, structure, or aim of the poem.

In this paper I wish to suggest that the *Pharsalia* is an experiment in the technique of epic poetry, and an interesting if a not very successful one. I shall attempt to show that Lucan, who knew Aristotle's statement that the unity of a plot does not consist in having one man as the hero but in having an action that is organically unified, deliberately planned an epic in which the reader's interest was not to be focussed upon one central figure. The poem has been misunderstood because its composition and the deeper meaning of the characters involved have not been clearly seen and because critics have been too intent upon looking for a hero whose selection colors their discussions of the meaning and value of the poem.[2]

Thus for Teuffel,[3] Butler [4] and Heitland,[5] Caesar dominates

[1] E. E. Sikes, *Roman Poetry* (New York, 1923), pp. 194-209.

[2] See for instance Alfred Klotz, *Gesch. der röm. Lit.* (Leipzig, 1930), p. 258: "Das Werk ist also nicht nach einem Plane entstanden, sondern der Dichter hat sein Ziel wesentlich verändert, als ein Teil des Werkes bereits veröffentlicht war. Daraus erklärt es sich, dass das Gedicht überhaupt keinen Helden, keinen einheitlichen Inhalt hat." See also pp. 259 f. Additional references will be found in R. J. Getty, "Who is the Hero of the Poem?", *M. Annaei Lucani De Bello Civili Liber I* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. xxiv-xxix.

[3] W. S. Teuffel, *Gesch. der röm. Lit.* (Leipzig, 1910), II, p. 266: ". . . aber für Pompeius entschieden Partei nimmt, dessen Sache für

the poem, "a hero," says Teuffel "not in virtue of the poet's efforts but in spite of them." Pichon supports the candidacy of Cato for the central position in the *Pharsalia*,[6] while Plessis would allow Pompey a prominent place in books four to eight, Caesar being the hero of the first books and the Roman people the hero of the whole poem.[7] Nutting is convinced that Lucan intended to glorify Freedom,[8] Giraud claims the same position for the Roman Republic,[9] Merivale is no less certain that the poet's choice was the Senate.[10] According to Summers' view there are three heroes, Pompey, Caesar, and Lucan himself.[11] But Duff would prefer Caesar, Pompey, and Cato;[12] "a triumvirate," says Eva Sanford, "from which the Muse of Epic Unity would have averted her face in very shame."[13] Her point is that epic unity does not demand a single hero but a single theme and she considers the civil war as the theme that gives unity and purpose to Lucan's epic. The suggestion that Lucan may not

den Dichter die von Roms Freiheit und Grösse ist. Da aber der Held der historischen Ereignisse Caesar ist, so ist von vornherein ein Zwiespalt in das Gedicht gekommen."

[4] H. E. Butler, *Post-Augustan Poetry*, p. 105.

[5] W. E. Heitland, Introduction to Haskins, *M. Annaei Lucani Pharsalia* (London, 1887), p. lxii.

[6] R. Pichon, *Histoire de la litt. latine* (Paris, 1930), p. 567. See also Wolf H. Friedrich, "Cato, Caesar und Fortuna bei Lucan," *Hermes*, LXXIII (1938), pp. 391-423, and particularly pp. 421 f.: "Vom Standpunkt Cato's aus betrachtet er das Geschehen, und insofern kann man sagen, dass dieser der wahre Held des Epos sei: Caesar bestimmt die Ereignisse, Cato ihre Darstellung."

[7] *La Poésie latine* (Paris, 1909), p. 560.

[8] H. C. Nutting, "The Hero of the Pharsalia," *A. J. P.*, LIII (1932), pp. 41-52.

[9] For a discussion of his views see E. M. Sanford, "Lucan and the Civil War," *Class. Phil.*, XXVIII (1933), pp. 121-7.

[10] *History of the Romans under the Empire* (New York, 1885), VI, p. 237.

[11] *The Silver Age of Latin Literature from Tiberius to Trajan* (New York, 1920), p. 41: "As for its composition, its defects can be summed up very briefly: half the episodes would be better away, and there are three heroes. For the formal hero is overshadowed by the villain Caesar, and the person whom we are expected to admire is—Lucan himself."

[12] J. Wight Duff, *A Lit. Hist. of Rome in the Silver Age* (New York, 1927), p. 329.

[13] *Loc. cit.*, p. 121.

have intended to build his poem around a central hero is undoubtedly correct since, if this had been his intention, his readers would have been aware of it and there would not be such a multiplicity of eligible candidates to choose from. For, even though he was not a poet of genius, Lucan knew a great deal about the technique of epic poetry. But he also knew that a poet is not a historian and that, to paraphrase Aristotle's *Poetics*, the essential distinction lies in the fact that the historian relates what has happened, and the poet represents what might have happened, that poetry tends rather to express what is universal and typical whereas history relates particular events as such, in a word, that poetry is more philosophical than history.

While Stoic critics recognised the unequalled excellence of Homer in epic poetry they had to exert much ingenuity in order to extract hidden meanings from a mythology which they could not accept literally. We know that the necessity for allegorical interpretations of Greek myths and the use of the supernatural in poetry were subjects frequently discussed among the later Stoics. Heraclitus, probably under Augustus, had explained the allegories of Homer [14] in such an elaborate etymological, ethical, physical, and allegorical manner that he could take his place among the mediaeval commentators of the classics. Homer, he declares, is the fount of all knowledge and has left posterity his whole philosophy to extract from his allegories. Those who are steeped in the philosophical doctrine and have already penetrated within the holy precincts must search for the sacred truth hidden in the songs of the poets. They will realise that, far from writing shameful things about the gods, he constantly veiled deep truths under allegories.

This method had been forced upon the Stoics for, in spite of their admiration for Homer, they could not countenance any "willing suspension of disbelief." L. Annaeus Cornutus, one of Lucan's Stoic teachers and a freedman of the Annaei, had written

[14] On the allegorical interpretations of the Stoics see E. Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics*, translated by Rev. O. J. Reichel (London, 1892), pp. 354-69.

On Heraclitus see Reinhardt's article in *R.-E.*, *s. v.* "Herakleitos," no. 12. Bibliography in Überweg, *Gesch. der Philos.*, p. 158*; Christ-Schmid-Stählin, *Gesch. der griech. Litt.*[6] (Müller's *Handbuch*, VII, 2, 1), p. 368.

an essay on the ethical meaning of mythological tales. He was also interested in the epic genre, and had composed a commentary on Vergil whom he criticised freely.[15] Discussions must have taken place among his disciples about the supernatural machinery of epic poetry, the value of historical epics, and the possibility of reviving a genre which many considered dead.[16] Lucan may also have heard his uncle Seneca express doubts as to the value of the allegorical method of interpreting Homer and the use of allegory in epic poetry.[17]

Sikes, with much penetration, has seen that Lucan's abandonment of the gods in his epic poem was a drastic step requiring courage and due entirely to his Stoic philosophy. He believes that if the personifications of Roman religion had been less shadowy and abstract they might, in the *Pharsalia*, have taken the place of the Homeric and Vergilian divinities.[18] But it seems clear to me that Lucan had something far more revolutionary in mind than a mere substitution of poetic personifications for mythological gods.

His imagination had been fired by the doctrines of his Stoic teachers and he intended that his poetic treatment of the civil war should reveal his view of the government of the world and the fate of man. He thought that, by adopting the pattern of the historical epic and, through the use of Stoic philosophy, by endowing the particular men and events with universal significance, he could pour new life into the old mould of the epic. The following pages will show why I believe that, when Lucan chose to write a poem on the Civil War, he conceived a poem with a double theme, the obvious historical one of the vicissitudes of the struggling armies and their generals, the deeper and far more important one of the tribulations of humanity in its struggle toward the Stoic ideal of wisdom and harmony with the divine principle. The long tradition of allegorical interpretations among the Stoics made it natural for him, both as a Stoic and as a poet, to express himself on two levels, to expect his readers to grasp

[15] Aulus Gellius, *N. A.*, IX, 10, 5; II, 6, 1.

[16] For ancient comments on the difficulties of the historical Epic see J. F. D'Alton, *Roman Lit. Theory and Criticism* (London, 1931), pp. 416 ff.

[17] *Ep.* 88, 5 ff.

[18] *Op. cit.*, pp. 205 ff.

the deep ethical and mystic significance of the forces at work in the segment of human history which he was describing and to see their projection on the universal plane. Under the thin covering of the story of the civil war he intended to give poetic and dramatic treatment to the Stoic idea of divine man, and to replace the gods by god-like men whose virtues and vices would make them incarnations of the Stoic conception of Wisdom, Virtue, and Wickedness.

He chose for the setting of his poem a crisis in Roman history close enough to his own time for the men involved to be vividly remembered, as giants perhaps, but also as real, living heroes; and one in which events had been of such proportions that some of these heroes had already become idealised types who had acquired universal significance. If the plot was limited in time and space, the real theme was eternal.

Lucan follows closely the somewhat eclectic philosophy of the later Roman Stoics. His universe is the materialistic universe of the Stoics, created from the primal element, fire, by a divine ruler who has established the chain of causes for all eternity, binding to them man, the gods, and himself. All beings have a common origin and are inseparable from the gods, for all animate and inanimate things contain a spark of the divine fire. This fire, which has given birth to all things, will again consume the universe, for at the end of ages a conflagration will dissolve the whole world which will revert to primeval chaos. Fate, the power which rules over men and gods alike, is the eternally fixed order whose ultimate purpose is good. Lucan at times seems to lose sight of this ultimate end and bitterly complains of Chance and Fortune. We are reminded of Plutarch's criticism of Chrysippus who apparently sometimes attributed the evils that overcame good men to causes which implied a reflection upon Providence. Although lines are found in the *Pharsalia* which express doubts and pessimistic views, they are no more characteristic of Lucan's real thought than similar passages in the works of other Stoics are characteristic of Stoicism. Davidson remarks that optimism is a distinctive trait of the Stoics in their reflective moods, "although, when they were confronted by the actual experience of life's pains and hardships and by the deep-rooted depravity of human nature, they could not help sometimes giving expression

to pessimistic thoughts. This is very noticeable in Seneca, who, even when administering comfort in bereavement, cannot help being despondent."[19] I do not agree with Friedrich's view (*loc. cit.*) that Lucan's conception of the *Pharsalia* was wholly determined by his revolt against the gods' government of the world. Friedrich believes that in regard to the relationship of Fate and mankind Lucan's position was the exact opposite of Vergil's, that for Vergil virtue consisted in fulfilling the will of the gods, for Lucan in opposing it. The pessimistic lines in which Lucan suggests the possibility that the gods may be indifferent and mankind ruled by chance are very reminiscent of many passages in Seneca's tragedies, like the famous Ode to Nature and the Ruler of Olympus in the *Phaedra* (972-988). Again his bitter denunciations of Fortuna have many parallels in the statements of the later Stoic philosophers who, though scornful of the goddess, saw in her betrayals and in the apparent injustice of the gods an opportunity for the wise man to demonstrate his independence of worldly goods and material success. Passages in which Seneca and Lucan express their indignation at such injustice are highly rhetorical and represent passing moods rather than fundamental beliefs.

Again, the fact that Lucan occasionally outlines several theories and seems to be in doubt as to their respective value should not be misunderstood. Seneca also frequently uses the rhetorical device of presenting his readers with several choices without clearly stating his own even in cases where only one of them represents the Stoic doctrine and his own.[20]

While most of the later Stoic theories are in the background of the *Pharsalia,* what matters most to Lucan is man and his place in the scheme of things. His heroes are men in their different relations to Fate and the Divinity, men who symbolize man's destiny in the world. On a small scale the history of the civil war is the history of all mankind. The constant allusions to the Stoic theory that history repeats itself in a series of cycles serves not only to foreshadow the coming catastrophes but also to give the particular events and heroes of the war universal significance. For there is a close correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm:

[19] *The Stoic Creed* (Edinburgh, 1907), p. 212.

[20] For instance *Ad Polyb. De Cons.*, 9, 3; 5, 1; *Ep.* 16, 5, etc.

Invida fatorum series summisque negatum
Stare diu nimioque graves sub pondere lapsus
Nec se Roma ferens. Sic cum compage soluta
Saecula tot mundi suprema coegerit hora,
Antiquum repetens chaos . . . (I, 70 ff.).

At the very start the struggle is compared to the Gigantomachia and thus raised above the level of an incident in the history of Rome (I, 33 ff.).

It is significant that, of the protagonists in the great contest, Caesar and Cato are the first to appear. For they are two superhuman, almost allegorical figures, standing at either pole of the dualistic ethical system of Stoicism, as uncompromisingly opposed as darkness and light. Pompey, who makes his first appearance only near the end of the second book, represents man, buffeted between the powers of good and evil, his life determined by Fate, yet free to choose his course and to determine himself.

The Stoics, and particularly the Roman Stoics, were practical philosophers. As teachers of ethics they realised that the examples of great and virtuous men provided better models than theoretical exhortations. The Schools had therefore adopted a number of wise men whom they set up as models of perfection and whose lives had been idealised in order to make them supremely worthy of imitation.[21] Thus ethical myths were developed, Roman names being added to the traditional list of the older Stoics, and Cato surpassing them all in wisdom and virtue. Lucan must have thought that powerful inspiration could be derived from such idealised characters if, through epic treatment, they were endowed with warmth, reality, and the breath of life. In so doing he was much influenced by the Stoic textbooks of ethics and especially by Seneca's moral teaching. Thus the Stoic practise of depriving individuals of personal characteristics, of turning them into models to be admired or abhorred, influenced Lucan more when he introduced philosophical types into his epic than the Aristotelian theory of the Universal.[22] As Homer had given to the

[21] E. Vernon Arnold, *Roman Stoicism* (Cambridge, 1911), pp. 295 ff.; Davidson, *op. cit.*, pp. 184 ff.

[22] Sikes, *op. cit.* p. 201: "Lucan, however, whether consciously or unconsciously, pushed the Aristotelian theory of the Universal to an extreme from which Aristotle himself might well have recoiled."

Greeks in Ulysses an exemplar of the Sage, so Lucan determined to endow Latin literature with a true philosophical epic of man. He was to be the Latin Homer, thus rivalling the two Epicurean poets of Rome, Lucretius and Vergil:

> Nam, si quid Latiis fas est promittere Musis,
> Quantum Zmyrnaei durabunt vatis honores,
> Venturi me teque legent; Pharsalia nostra
> Vivet, et a nullo tenebris damnabimur aevo
> (IX, 983-986).

This aim determined for Lucan the choice of subject matter. For the Roman Stoics were agreed that "the immortal gods have given to us in Cato a truer exemplar of the wise man than to earlier ages in Ulysses and Hercules" (Seneca, *Const.*, 2, 1). A perfect Sage other than Cato could not conceivably have become the hero of a Stoic epic in Latin. And since he was to be represented in relation to other human beings, for the Stoics taught that Nature does not intend man to live alone, the Civil War must of necessity be the subject of Lucan's poem.

The architecture of the *Pharsalia* was obviously planned in its minutest details. From this point of view the treatment of Cato is interesting. Since he was to be in direct contrast to Caesar, while Pompey was to be in contrast to both Cato and Caesar, all three characters must be clearly drawn at the start. But if Cato and Pompey were pictured as acting and living together Pompey would be constantly dwarfed by Cato. Therefore Lucan sketched Cato's personality vividly, but in the first part of the poem in outline, giving him only a static character, while he represented him in action as a brilliant orator and a dynamic leader of men after Pompey's death. Thus the five passages in which Cato is mentioned before the ninth book portray the Cato of the philosophical textbooks, the ethical myth of Stoicism, and sound somewhat like versified passages of Seneca.

The demonstration that in the *Pharsalia* Cato incarnates the Stoic ideal of perfect goodness and wisdom need not detain us long. He has attained the state of ἀταραξία, the sublime impassivity of a man truly free because he is under no compulsion and suffers nothing. Like Seneca's good man, he has offered himself to fate (*praebere se fato, Prov.*, 5, 8), conforms his course to the divine law of the universe, bases his judgment on

reason, and is wholly free from irrational desires. Inspired by "the god that dwells within his breast" (IX, 564), Cato has insight into the real values, his intelligence aided by intuition perceives the right course at a glance without the need of any guidance, human or divine. With courage and complete self-control he majestically follows the path of wisdom.

The famous description in the second book in which he is praised as a lover of austerity and the living image of the four cardinal virtues, wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice, sounds again like a school exercise on the ideal wise man, or like the versification of some of the numerous passages in Seneca's works in praise of Cato (*Prov.*, 2, 9; 3, 14; *Const.*, 2, 2; 7, 1; *Epp.*, 24, 6; 64, 10; 71, 15; 104, 29, etc.). Cato's duty as a perfect Stoic is to strive actively and energetically toward the common good. But it is characteristic of his godly disposition that he does so without passion. His universal philanthropy and his justice are cold because he is totally devoid of interest in or emotion about any individual. In one passage, Cato sounds less detached, when he declares to Brutus that he will not "without feeling fear himself watch the stars and the world fall down. For, he will not sit with folded hands when the high heavens crash down and the earth trembles with the confused weight of a collapsing world." "O gods," he says, "keep far from me this madness that I should be indifferent while Rome falls" (II, 296 f.). The early Stoics might well have taken exception to this evidence of inner disturbance on the part of a wise man, but not so the Stoics of the later Roman schools. Cicero had stated that emotions cannot be entirely uprooted from the heart of a wise man, *nisi ex eius animo exstirpatam humanitatem arbitramur* (*De Amic.*, 48). Speaking of the ruin that befalls one's country in the midst of a war, Seneca says: "I admit the wise man feels such things, for I do not claim that he has the hardness of stone or steel . . ." (*Const.*, 10, 4). He adds that the wise man is not insensible but that he knows how to overcome his feelings, knowing that all things work toward an ultimately good end and that external evils are no evils (*Prov.*, 2, 2).

But on the whole Cato is impervious to human emotions. He passes through life, serene and imperturbable, without a pang, for reason is ever his guide and he knows that God disciplines

those whom He loves (Seneca, *Prov.*, 4, 7). He tells his soldiers that "endurance finds delight in hardship and virtue rejoices in proportion to the difficulties it overcomes" (IX, 403). For Lucan, as for Seneca, he is godlike, sacred, worthy of divine worship (IX, 600 ff.; cf. Seneca, *Ep.*, 64, 10), and his utterances are oracular (*arcano sacras dedit Cato pectore voces*, II, 285; cf. IX, 255, etc.). With great care Lucan has adapted Cato's style to this character, his eloquence is restrained, his arguments sober and always based on reason. Lucan has eliminated from Cato's vocabulary all words denoting emotions, pleasure, desire, fear.

But, because his every action is a manifestation of Stoic virtue, because he has no weaknesses and can neither lapse nor progress, we find in him nothing lovable. "His virtue," as Seneca says of the Sage, "has placed him in another region of the universe and he has nothing in common with you" (*Const.*, 15, 3). He feels no pity, no tenderness, no imaginative sympathy for human suffering. "He is nailed to his pinnacle" (Seneca, *Clem.*, I, 8, 4). Greatness which so transcends the limits of man's nature leaves us cold and unconvinced. Rather than a magnetic leader of men he remains a lifeless abstraction, an allegorical figure.

The splendid artifice of contrast, to borrow De Quincey's phrase, is for Lucan more than a rhetorical device. It is the translation on the literary plane of the dualism of Stoic ethics. Heraclitus, explaining that things are known to us only through their opposites, had said: "Disease makes health pleasant and good; hunger, satiety; toil, rest."[23] Thus evil is the necessary counterpart of goodness and in order to enhance the brightness of his picture of virtue Lucan must oppose to it a symbol of the wicked in all its blackness. The subject matter of his poem again determined the choice of Caesar to become Cato's opposite, the type of all that is evil in the human soul. The idea of contrasting the personalities of Cato and Caesar was of course not new. Every Roman interested in the growth of the Cato legend would remember Sallust's sharp and dramatic characterization of the two men in which every quality of the one is balanced by a phrase describing its exact opposite in the other.[24]

[23] Frag. 111 (Diels).

[24] See Kurt Latte, *Sallust* (Leipzig, 1935), p. 26; cf. T. R. S. Broughton, "Was Sallust Fair to Cicero?," *T. A. P. A.*, LXVII (1936), p. 43.

The Stoics had concentrated their teaching upon the virtuous and the good, and spent far less time in analysing the negative quality of evil. They did not have such a set of stock-characters to represent vice as they had in Socrates, Hercules, Ulysses, Cato, etc. to represent virtue. Seneca opposes Alexander to Hercules: "Alexander was considered the equal of Hercules. But what resemblance to him had that mad youth for whom fortunate rashness took the place of virtue? Hercules conquered nothing for himself . . . he was a peacemaker. . . . But Alexander was from boyhood a robber and a plunderer of nations, a scourge both to his friends and to his enemies, one who thought it the highest happiness to terrorise all mortals, forgetting that it is not only the fiercest animals, but also the most cowardly, that are feared on account of their venom" (*Ben.*, I, 13, 3). Alexander was a madman, great only in that which is puny (*Ep.*, 91, 17), driven by his mad ambition to lay waste other men's countries (*Ep.*, 94, 62). His aim was to control all things but his emotions (*Ep.*, 113, 29). His greed and ambition were such that he was ever unsatisfied, being always in need of as much as he still desired (*Ben.*, VII, 2, 6). Adorned and amplified, such passages seem to have become Lucan's model for his outline of Caesar's character. And it is interesting to note that in the beginning of the tenth book he pictures Caesar hastening to the tomb of Alexander:

> Illic Pellaei proles vaesana Philippi,
> Felix praedo, iacet, terrarum vindice fato
> Raptus: sacratis totum spargenda per orbem
> Membra viri posuere adytis . . .
> . . . non utile mundo
> Editus exemplum, terras tot posse sub uno
> Esse viro . . .
> Humana cum strage ruit gladiumque per omnes
> Exegit gentes; ignotos miscuit amnes
> Persarum Euphraten, Indorum sanguine Gangen,
> Terrarum fatale malum fulmenque, quod omnes
> Percuteret pariter populos, et sidus iniquum
> Gentibus . . .

Lucan, in this picture of mad wickedness incarnate, so clearly meant to represent Alexander as a prototype of Caesar that I need not point out the numerous verbal parallels between this passage and others where Lucan describes Caesar.

Caesar does not seem to have exemplified wickedness for the Roman Stoics as Cato did virtue. But since Alexander had often been used by Seneca to represent the incarnation of wickedness, Lucan, by this pairing of Caesar and Alexander in conjunction, so to speak, was attempting to introduce Caesar among the traditionally wicked men. Moreover he takes great pains to point out that Caesar is no ordinary human being but an ally of the powers of darkness, of Stygian madness and crime (VII, 168 ff.) "Wherever he wanders, like Bellona brandishing her bloody whip, or Mars urging on his Bistonian steeds and lashing them, terrified as they are by the aegis of Pallas, there a vast darkness of crimes descends, slaughter begins, and a groaning is heard like one great cry, and arms resound with the fall of breastplates and swords snapping swords" (VII, 567-573). Here we have not only Caesar the general but a demon out of Hades, a magnificently evil fiend, a superhuman antagonist worthy of the saintly Cato. Just as in the Stoic system evil served mainly to set off goodness, so in the *Pharsalia* Cato's virtue was to shine more brightly and to be more inspiring in contrast to Caesar's wickedness. That Cato became Caesar's foil instead reminds us inevitably of Milton's treatment of Satan and Christ.

While calm reason rules over Cato, Caesar is all impulse and passion. His actions are controlled by irrational emotions, his end is the criminal assumption of power after a criminal civil war. Thus over and above the individual conflict of the war between Caesar and Cato there is the far more significant eternal struggle between reason and passion. While a wise man's course follows the divine law of an ordered universe, for "where unity and harmony are there must also be the virtues" (Seneca, *V. B.*, 8, 6), Caesar is as unpredictable as the blind forces of nature. He is likened to the lightning which strikes terror into men's hearts and whose course cannot be opposed (I, 151 ff.), to a gale or a great fire (III, 363), to Etna if it were sealed up (X, 447 f.), or again to wild beasts, the mother tigress (V, 405), or the lion, lashing himself with his tail (I, 205). Like theirs his rage is fierce and uncontrolled and Lucan accumulates words like *rabies, furor, crimina* (VII, 551), *acer, indomitus* (I, 146), *in arma furens* (II, 439) to describe him and his actions. As destructive as the elements, he rejoices in devastation, in ruining lands with

fire and sword (II, 440). His mind filled with violent emotions (*ingentes motus*, I, 184), he rushes on frantically and with impetuous haste destroys all obstacles.

Lucan has been sharply criticised for attributing wicked motives to Caesar's every action. But the Stoics always held that before a man could be pronounced good or bad his motives and principles must be investigated. Marcus Aurelius says that " man is worth as much as what he is interested in is worth " (*Med.*, VII, 3). Since Lucan accepted the theory that evil consists in intention and inclination at least as much as in actual deeds, that character counts above all else, he must keep pointing out that what seemed harmless or magnanimous in Caesar only appeared so because of his hypocritical deceit. Inspired by pride and ambition, two passions against which the Stoics had much to say, Caesar aims at absolute power, at enslaving the Commonwealth. He has left behind him peace and legality and burns with desire for a regal throne (VII, 240; V, 668). In this pursuit he is completely lacking in moral principles and his cynicism is such that he cannot believe in the purity of anyone's motives. He knows that " the causes of hatred and of popularity are determined by the supply of food " and that willing service may be bought (III, 55 f.). For no one is more skilled in deceit and trickery than he is. The tears he sheds when he first recognises the head of Pompey are insincere and hide his delight (IX, 1037 f.). He lies when he assures his soldiers that his desire is to return to private life and to play the part of an ordinary citizen (VII, 266), but Fortune alone is aware of his secret ambition to be crowned (V, 665).

The Stoics held that " a wicked and foolish man does not lack any vice. . . . All vices are in all men, but they are not all conspicuous in each man " (Seneca, *Ben.*, IV, 27, 3). In Caesar, Lucan has created a superhuman figure endowed in almost equal degree with all the sins, an exemplar of evil, the incarnation of abstract Sinfulness. We need only review the lists of emotions which, according to the Stoic teachers, constitute the four sinful conditions, to realise that not one is absent from Caesar's portrait: *Omnesque eae sunt genere quattuor, partibus plures, aegritudo, formido, libido, quamque Stoici communi nomine corporis et animi* ἡδονήν *appellant, ego malo laetitiam appellare, quasi*

gestientis animi elationem voluptariam (Cicero, *Fin.*, III, 10, 35). Fear alone is not a prominent characteristic of the great general who rather inspires fear in others. His soldiers are terrified of him (I, 356), conquered men look at him with silent terror (*gaudet esse timori*, III, 82), "he is glad to be so dreaded by his countrymen and he would not have preferred their love" (III, 81 f.). His own physical courage is magnificent but at the same time he is the prey of other fears. He dreads that the weapons and hands will be denied him for the execution of his crimes (V, 368), that his soldiers will return to their senses (V, 309), that he will lose the fruit of his crime as his troops come near to deserting him (V, 242). What is more striking, Lucan has even endowed him with the panic fear of lesser men, so that not one of the major or minor vices may be missing from his make-up. At the start of the battle of Pharsalia he is deeply afraid for a moment (VII, 248) and later, when he is surrounded by his enemies in the Egyptian palace, he feels both rage and fear, "fear of an attack and rage at his own fear" (*tangunt animos iraeque metusque, Et timet incursus indignaturque timere*, X, 443 f.). In his desperate plight he dreads the wickedness of slaves and "like a helpless woman when her city is taken" he wanders uncertainly (X, 458 ff.) doubting whether to fear death or pray for it (X, 542). And at the Rubicon, when the vision of Rome appears before him, "trembling seized the leader's limbs, his hair stood on end, numbness stopped his motion and arrested his feet on the edge of the riverbank" (I, 192-194).

In the catalogue of those morbid emotions which make the exercise of reason impossible, the Stoics emphasised greed, anger, cruelty, grief or worry, fretfulness, disappointed ambition, restlessness, misanthropy, sexual indulgence.[25] All these traits Lucan so stressed in his portrait of Caesar as to make it obvious to any disciple of the creed that he meant him to incarnate vice and wickedness. If Cato is a saint, Caesar is the very spirit of evil. Enough passages have already been quoted to show Caesar's inclination to anger and his delight in slaughter and bloodshed. His soldiers prefer to commit sacrilege than to disobey him for "they had weighed his wrath against the wrath of heaven" (III, 439). He hates peace and the absence of a foe (III, 365) and,

[25] Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 331 ff.

while many degrees and variations of anger are distinguished by the philosophers, his is more cruel, fiercer, and wilder than that of ordinary human beings. Even when he pardons his enemies and appears most humane he does so for evil motives, either to induce others to surrender or to dishonor the men to whom he shows mercy (II, 518).

While a dignified and impersonal form of grief may be experienced by the Sage, as when Cato mourns over his country and deplores the madness of men, grief in its many varieties is a disease unknown to the wise. A few quotations will suffice to show that Caesar is suffering from disappointed ambition, fretfulness, and restlessness. He feels that he has been robbed of the reward of his toil and is filled with bitterness because he has been refused honors and a triumph. He cannot endure a superior (I, 125) and even after he has been loaded with the triumphs of victory he feels frustrated (V, 666 f.). For him "the whole expanse of the Roman world is not enough and he would think his kingdom small if he ruled at once India and Phoenician Gades" (X, 456 f.). No victory can satisfy his impetuous haste (III, 50 ff.), in his folly he follows up each success, ever pursuing the unattainable (*successus urguere suos*, I, 148). Even victory is not worth the price of waiting and, impatient of peace or of any pause in warfare (II, 651), he loathes even a short delay (VII, 241). His reckless energy cannot rest (I, 144) for he thinks nothing done as long as anything remains to do (*in omnia praeceps, Nil actum credens, cum quid superesset agendum*, II, 656). Resignation to what cannot be avoided, acceptance of fate, these virtues of a reasonable man he lacks utterly.

The description of the magnificent feast in the Egyptian palace, a palace equal to a temple in size and luxury, is clearly a companion piece to the description of the austerity of Cato's dwelling; and the banquet in which every choice delicacy that earth, air, the sea, or the Nile produces is served to Caesar and Cleopatra is in contrast to the grave and simple ceremony of Cato's marriage. Caesar's departure from soberness, the "gestientis animi elatio voluptaria" as Cicero defines this sinful condition (*Fin.*, III, 10, 35), is illustrated by his relation with Cleopatra, again in contrast to Cato's virtuous union with Marcia. Cleopatra has won her petition and his favor, not because of the justice of her

cause but because of her "wicked beauty" (X, 105 f.). Caesar not only lacks restraint and self-control but he has succumbed to the temptation of foul pleasure. He has mocked the sanctity of marriage, "mingled adulterous love with his worries, joined unlawful wedlock and illegitimate offspring with warfare . . . given Julia brothers by an abominable mother" (X, 74-78). Even worse, he has endangered the safety of the Roman state, for "just as Spartan Helen with her harmful beauty overthrew Argos and Troy, so Cleopatra stirred up the fury of Italy" (X, 61 f.). As a result of this fateful union, "there was doubt, by the waters of Leucas, whether a woman, and not even a Roman woman, should rule the world" (X, 66 f.).

Thus, although the Stoics held that even the wicked retained some spark of the divine fire, some germ of virtue (*inest interim animis voluntas bona, sed torpet*, Seneca, *Ben.*, V, 25, 6), Lucan has given Caesar no redeeming characteristic. He has made him an undisciplined, unreasonable, and fundamentally wicked figure, the incarnation of evil. The character which was to be pictured for the ultimately greater glory of divine virtue has assumed loftier and more heroic proportions than his opposite. For although they are both symbolic figures, Caesar is more complex, more finely drawn, and far more alive than Cato.

No character in Lucan's *Civil War* has been more thoroughly and more generally misunderstood than Pompey. For most critics have attempted either to make him a pure hero or to deprive him entirely of any admirable quality. If my interpretation of the poem is correct, Pompey is neither black nor white, but represents those men whom the Stoics called *proficientes* (probationers).[26] In other words, while Cato and Caesar are universal types, symbols at either end of the ethical system of Stoicism, Pompey is an ordinary man, a very human figure made up of vices and virtues, slowly striving toward the good. While the early Stoics had been unwilling to accept any intermediate steps between the two extremes of goodness and evil, a graded scale of achievement was soon developed, according to which moral improvement and a progressive march toward the ideal were possible. Cleanthes' description of humanity strikingly applies to Pompey: "man lives in wickedness all his life or, if not all the time, at

[26] Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 326 ff.

least most of the time. If he ever does acquire some virtue, he does so late and toward the setting of his days." [27]

At the beginning of the poem Pompey has not yet started on his philosophical pilgrimage. He is a foolish man whose wickedness is caused by the wrong direction of his will. He desires to enjoy external goods and thirsts for power and glory. In the course of his ordeal he will be deprived of all these false goods until in the anguish of his defeat he learns voluntarily to renounce them.

In books one and two, blinded by excess of ambition, Pompey joins the wicked compact which will deprive Rome of freedom (I, 87) and aims at increasing his power. He dreads the prospect of an equal (I, 126), and his jealous resentment of Caesar's exploits urges him, in spite of his declining years, to enter the conflict. Filled with a vanity which knows no bounds, he courts reputation, is lavish to the common people, and is swayed by popularity (I, 132). "It was not virtue or reason," says Seneca, "which persuaded Gnaeus Pompey to undertake foreign and civil wars but his mad craving for false glory. Now he attacked Spain and the faction of Sertorius, now he went forth to enchain the pirates and pacify the seas. They were merely excuses and pretexts for extending his power. What drew him into Africa, into the North, against Mithridates, into Armenia, and every corner of Asia? It was certainly his boundless desire to grow bigger when he appeared to himself alone not to be big enough" (*Ep.*, 94, 64).

Cato has no illusions about the motives of Pompey, who "looks forward to mastery over the world" (II, 321). The theme of Pompey's first speech to his soldiers is his own greatness, his exalted place in Rome (II, 531 ff.), and such a speech is no inspiration to the soldiers. Moreover, because he has always been fortunate, he lacks determination and vigor in time of danger and flees Rome at the approach of Caesar (I, 522). "While all excesses are harmful," says Seneca, "the most dangerous is unlimited good fortune: it stirs the brain, it creates vain fancies in the mind and covers with darkness the boundary between the false and the true . . ." (*Prov.*, 4, 10). Now that Fortune is beginning to prove untrue, Pompey develops yet another fault,

[27] Frag. 529 (von Arnim); cf. Zeller, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

"his mind is tortured with doubt and anxiety" (II, 681), he lacks assurance and self-confidence (II, 628).

With the third book, Pompey's thoughts begin to turn toward higher things. In a famous passage Seneca clarifies the moot question of man's progress toward wisdom: "Though he who makes progress (*qui proficit*) is still numbered among the fools, yet he is separated from them by a long interval. Among the very persons who make progress, there are also great differences. They may, according to some philosophers, be divided into three classes" (*Ep.*, 75, 8 ff.). Lucan, still following the textbooks of ethics closely, is going to show Pompey's progress through these three classes.

After his nightmarish vision of Julia in the guise of a vengeful Fury, Pompey knows that he is threatened with death and disaster (III, 36). He may now be numbered among those beginning to strive toward wisdom, the novices whom Seneca describes as those *qui sapientiam nondum habent, sed iam in vicinia eius constiterunt* (*Ep.*, 75, 9). The first indication of this progress is his struggle to rid his mind of the terror of death:

> Aut nihil est sensus animis a morte relictum
> Aut mors ipsa nihil (III, 39-40).

From now on the theme of death will recur at intervals throughout the poem in passages marking Pompey's development (III, 290 ff., V, 204 ff., VII, 37 ff., etc.). His mind now "made up for evils" (III, 37), his assurance returned, he prepares for the battle, but the huge armies he receives will serve "to accompany the measureless ruin and to provide a funeral procession worthy of his burial" (III, 290). When he next appears, in book five, he is hailed by the senators "who place upon him the burden of their own and their country's fate" (V, 48). He has acquired dignity and a measure of humility (V, 44 ff.) and has already so grown in stature that he is no more a general fighting for his own selfish ends but the leader of a just and great cause (V, 40). Yet traces of his former guilt remain. Though he has renounced his country and accepted the loss of external goods, he is still passionately attached to his wife, and because of her "he is doubtful and afraid of battle" (V, 728 f.). His love for her obscures the clear vision of his duty.

The Stoics taught that marriage was in accordance with the law of nature, and that a man with a sense of duty must marry for the sake of having children. They placed the affection between man and wife among the things to be preferred. When excessive, however, this love became a serious fault, and Pompey's not only lacks soberness but is inopportune on the eve of a fateful battle.

But Pompey has already reached a point from which he cannot fall back. If, near Dyrrhachium, he keeps his soldiers from fighting a battle which might have been followed by victory and peace, he does so not through cowardice but because of a noble weakness, because scruples (*pietas*) hold him from fighting his kinsman and fellow citizens (VI, 298 ff.). And when his officers urge him to return to Rome, the speech in which he refuses because Italy must not become the battle ground shows inner dignity and loftiness of purpose.

In the seventh book, Pompey enters the second class of those who make progress and who, according to the passage of Seneca from which a section has already been quoted "have laid aside both the greatest ills of the mind and its passions, but in such a way as not yet to be in assured possession of immunity" (*loc. cit.*, 13). Just as in the third book a vision preceded Pompey's entrance upon the path of progress, so here again, in the beginning of the seventh book a troubled dream precedes the final renunciation which brings him a step closer to wisdom. He sees in a vision the things which have made him appear great in his own and in his countrymen's eyes. Sitting in his theatre he hears countless multitudes joyfully shouting his praise, he reviews his first triumph and his defeat of the Spaniards and Sertorius, and remembers giving peace to the West and being worshipped by the Senate (VII, 10-44). This dream of past glory is followed abruptly by a passage describing the present rebellious mutterings of Pompey's soldiers who accuse him of cowardice, and by Cicero's taunts and reproaches (VII, 45-85). But Pompey has accepted the change in his fortunes. Calmly he attempts to justify the course he has planned and with sad and dignified resignation bow to the will of destiny (VII, 85-123), stating that "victory is no more welcome than death" (VII, 119). Though fully aware of the fact that Heaven is now against him, he feels no rebellion: *tota vix clade coactus Fortu-*

nam damnare suam (VII, 648 f.). He does not wish to make mankind share his ruin and prays that Rome may survive him (VII, 658); and in order that the Romans may live he is ready to make the supreme sacrifice. He offers his sons and his wife as hostages to Fortune: *iam nihil est Fortuna meum* (VII, 666). If he refrains from courting death it is not through lack of courage but because Fate has decreed that he must not die away from his wife (VII, 676). His supreme solace is that he will now know, as only the conquered can, the love of his true and loyal friends (VII, 726 f.). He relapses for a moment at the start of the battle as he "stands, speechless, with frozen blood" (VII, 339). And his mournful speech to the soldiers (VII, 382) lacks vigor and even dignity. But after his final defeat he seems almost invulnerable. "There was no moaning, no weeping, but only noble grief with dignity unimpaired, such a sorrow as it was fitting for Magnus to feel at the calamity of Rome (VII, 680-682). This passage echoes the description of Cato's noble despair at the start of the war. Pompey has now laid down the burden which Fate and Rome had put upon him (VII, 686). God has so despoiled and disciplined him that he seems already to have died himself along with Rome and the whole world (VII, 617-634):

> Ac se tam multo pereuntem sanguine vidit (653).

The war is no longer a struggle between the ambitions of two leaders, a war of conflicting personal interests, but the eternal contest between freedom and slavery:

> Non iam Pompei nomen populare per orbem
> Nec studium belli, sed par quod semper habemus,
> Libertas et Caesar erit (VII, 694 ff.).

Caesar has won the battle of Pharsalia but he has lost in a far greater contest (*vincere peius erat,* VII, 706), and the war will go on after Pompey's death.

Pharsalia marks the last stage in Pompey's conversion. In the eighth book he reaches the third class of those aspiring to wisdom, "who are beyond the reach of many vices, of the great vices, but not beyond the reach of all. They have overcome avarice but still feel anger; they no longer are troubled by lust but are still troubled by ambition; they no longer covet but they still fear.

And, because of their fear, while they firmly withstand some things they yield to others. They scorn death and are terrified of pain" (Seneca, *loc. cit.*, 14).

Seneca's description of the last class of probationers applies very closely to this stage of Pompey's development. At times he is the prey of almost panic fear, but at the very end he reaches the sublime detachment of the truly wise. During his flight from Pharsalia he fears the sound of the wind in the trees, the approach of comrades who join him causes him anxiety for the safety of his own person (VIII, 5 ff.). Trembling, "he slinks, a terrified passenger, into a little boat" (VIII, 39). In the agony of his soul he yearns for anonymity and bitterly resents his past honors:

> Nisi summa dies cum fine bonorum
> Adfuit et celeri praevertit tristia leto,
> Dedecori est fortuna prior (VIII, 29-31).

But before he reaches Lesbos he has mastered this rebellion and the trip from Lesbos to Syhedra gives him time to wrestle with his anguish and to regain his self-control. "Often, burdened with care and loathing of the future, he threw off the wearing anxiety of his conflicting thoughts and questioned the pilot concerning all the stars . . ." (VIII, 165-167). Thus he recovers the vision of his fateful mission. Ambition, his last infirmity, has but one brief moment when, in a belligerent speech, he urges continuation of the war and an alliance with the Parthians (VIII, 262-327). But soon he yields to destiny (*cedit fatis,* VIII, 575). If Fate has determined his life, he can at least determine himself, for he has learned the lesson of wisdom, that "the approach of his wretched end is the law of destiny and a decree of the eternal order" (VIII, 569) and that detachment and peace lie in acquiescence. And so he enters the Egyptian boat, knowing that he will perish, not trapped by his enemies but willingly conforming to the law of Fate (*letumque iuvat praeferre timori,* VIII, 576). He has worked out his own salvation and with hardly a thought he leaves behind him his supporters, his son, and wife. Death is his victory and Lucan's description of it is, in its dignity and simplicity, in the best Stoic tradition:

> Ut vidit comminus enses,
> Involvit voltus atque indignatus apertum

> Fortunae praebere caput; tum lumina pressit
> Continuitque animam, ne quas effundere voces
> Vellet et aeternam fletu corrumpere famam.
> Sed postquam mucrone latus funestus Achillas
> Perfodit, nullo gemitu consensit ad ictum
> Respexitque nefas, servatque inmobile corpus,
> Seque probat moriens atque haec in pectore volvit:
> " Saecula Romanos nunquam tacitura labores
> Attendunt . . .
> . . . Ne cede pudori
> Auctoremque dole fati. . . .
> . . . Talis custodia Magno
> Mentis erat, ius hoc animi morientis habebat
> (VIII, 613-635).

He now acknowledges himself fortunate, and his only wish is that his death, which will release him from bondage, may be dignified and worthy of his fame. *Seque probat moriens*—at the last he vindicates himself and for a moment reaches the supreme heights of philosophy and wisdom.

In the purification of apotheosis which follows directly, and which conforms closely to Seneca's theories of the afterlife and of the relation of body and soul,[28] Pompey receives the reward of his many virtues. His spirit is released and " steeped in true light." " Gazing at the planets and the fixed stars of heaven " he joins for a moment the heroes (*semidei manes*) " whose fiery quality has made guiltless and has fitted to endure the lower limit of ether " (IX, 1-12). But his life has not been guiltless nor has he raised himself to absolute perfection. Therefore his soul cannot await with those of the perfectly wise the day of the final conflagration. In the clear, bright ether, his spirit has been purged, has smiled at the mockery done to his headless body, and is now worthy to take up its abode in the heart of better men. " His spirit flitted over the fields of Emathia, the standards of bloodthirsty Caesar, and the ships on the sea until, the avenger of crimes, it settled in the holy breast of Brutus and the sacred heart of Cato " (IX, 15-18). Pompey, who had begun his career as an ally of Caesar, in league with all that is evil, after a long and dreary pilgrimage through life is now united with virtue and wisdom. By living in Brutus and Cato his soul will at last attain perfection.

[28] *Ad Marciam De Cons.*, 25; *Ad Polyb. De Cons.*, 9, 8-9, etc.

Thus the *Pharsalia* is the epic of humanity according to the later Stoic conception of man's character and position in the Universe. But what was the final aim of the poem? This must depend in part upon the missing conclusion. If the expression of faith in the empire found in the prooemium is accepted as a sincere expression of Lucan's beliefs, the opening lines give us a clue as to the organisation of the end. Since optimism is an essential part of the Stoic doctrine, these lines may foreshadow a final prophecy of the peace, calm, and prosperity of an idealised Roman empire under such a ruler as Marcus Aurelius. All the wickedness of the civil war would then appear to have been a part of the ordered destiny of the world, and, after ruin, carnage, and destruction, after the apotheosis of Cato and the punishment of Caesar, peace would be shown flying over the earth while at last men laid down their arms. Mankind united in the empire would seek its own welfare (I, 35-66). In a final vision the poet might have shown the divine power, driving humanity toward a utopian kingdom where all nations loving one another would live in harmony under a god-like ruler. The reader, having been assured at the very start that "Rome owes much to civil war" (I, 44), would know throughout the dreary recital of evil deeds and wicked warfare that sin has a part in the scheme of things and that all is ultimately turned to good.

This reconstruction seems to be supported by passages in Seneca in praise of the beneficent rule of kings. Perhaps the great hopes universally placed in Nero justified such a conversion to the empire. But verses scattered throughout the poem, in which Freedom is praised and the wickedness of the rule of one over many is stressed repeatedly, argue against it. The very excess of the extravagant praise of Nero in the prooemium may point to a disguised, but to the initiated obvious, satire of the emperor.[29] The mediaeval commentators, who had seen ancient commentaries on the *Pharsalia*, are almost unanimous in considering the pro-

[29] In a recent article, "Seneca's Ad Polybium De Consolatione: A Reappraisal," *Trans. Royal Soc. of Canada*, XXXVII (1943), pp. 33-53, W. H. Alexander argues convincingly that Seneca's *Ad Polybium De Consolatione* is a satire of the emperor Claudius. He suggests that "overstress of laudation results in the acutest satire." The initiated among Lucan's readers would recognise Seneca's technique in the ironic adulation of the Prooemium of the *Pharsalia*.

oemium as ironical and sarcastic, a veiled attack against Nero. If this is so, the description of the murder of Caesar must have been followed by a hymn in praise of Freedom, in the spirit of the many allusions to the avenging sword of Brutus and the punishment of tyranny found in the extant part of the poem (V, 206 ff.; VI, 791 f.; VII, 587 ff.; X, 340 ff., 530, etc.). Pompey's ghost, which was to appear to his son in Sicily (VI, 813), may have prophesied Caesar's murder and railed at his successors. The bitter references to the deified emperors and the lying titles given to the masters of Rome indicate no reconciliation with the empire: "civil wars will make dead men the equals of the gods above. Rome shall adorn them with thunderbolts and haloes and stars and in the temples of the gods shall swear by their shades" (VII, 457-459; cf. VI, 809; VIII, 835, etc.). The passionate attacks against those who have dared to enslave their fellow citizens (see for instance V, 381-402) may suggest some hope that they will be overthrown and that Rome will be liberated from her tyrants. Indeed there is more than a hint of this in the following passage in praise of Cato:

> Ecce parens verus patriae, dignissimus aris,
> Roma, tuis, per quem nunquam iurare pudebit,
> Et quem, si steteris unquam cervice soluta,
> Nunc, olim, factura deum es (IX, 601 ff.).

Again, in the bitter complaint that all future generations were conquered by Caesar's sword at Pharsalia (VII, 641), one feels the spirit of rebellion: "In this battle a wound was inflicted upon the nations more severe than their own age could bear. What perished was more than life and safety. We were overthrown for all time to come. All future generations of the world were doomed to slavery by these swords. How had the sons and grandsons of those who fought deserved to be born in a kingdom? Did we bear arms timidly, did we protect our throats? The punishment of the cowardice of others is fastened upon our necks. To us who were born after the battle, O Fortune, you gave a master. Since you did this you should have given us also the chance to fight" (VII, 638-646).

I cannot help thinking that these passages foreshadow the final call of the conspirator to a general rebellion. Is it too fanciful to see in this appeal to the Romans "to free their necks and

stand upright now or later" (*nunc olim,* IX, 604) the hope that Lucan shared with many of his contemporaries? Already involved in plots against Nero, Lucan may have intended to complete his poem after the successful end of the conspiracy. What he had said in veiled allusions before could then have been proclaimed clearly. A panegyric of Cato's suicide (probably in the spirit of Seneca's *Prov.,* 2, 10 ff.) and an exalted description of his apotheosis, contrasted with the grimness of Caesar's murder, probably was to precede a final vision of the freedom which would follow the end of Nero's tyranny and his assassination. With a return to a strong republic and lawful government, another cycle of history would have revolved, all things and all men, virtuous and evil, would have been instrumental in preparing the ultimate end ordained by a beneficent Supreme Being. Thus Eternal Providence was to be asserted and the ways of God justified to men.

In conception Lucan's poem had no less epic grandeur, no less noble a theme, than the *Aeneid* or *Paradise Lost.* But only the mature powers of a poet of genius could have done it justice. The *Pharsalia* is a failure because Lucan was incapable of keeping the balance between the incidental story of the civil war and its vast philosophical implications and because his lavish use of all the devices of rhetoric could not compensate for his lack of sustained inspiration.

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