

## THE SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT IN LUCAN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BOOK V.

By

WAHEEB KAMEL :

Lucan's civil war is fought without Olympian Gods. Olympians were almost even then out of date. In Virgil their corporality has so dwindled away that they are ripe for interpretation away into the higher heavens of Philosophical abstraction. Lucan adds the extra touch of stoicism and they are not there. Besides, Lucan was not trying to write a Virgilian epic. He was starting a new genre in literature i. e. the historical epic. Pichon says "L'histoire n'est pas pour Lucain un prétexte à beaux développements: c'est le fond, la substance du poème. Il n'y a rien d'imaginé; l'invention personnelle de l'auteur se borne à choisir parmi les faits, sans y rien ajouter: c'est cet amour de l'exactitude historique qui explique la repulsion de Lucain pour le merveilleux. Bien que le sujet fût moderne, il aurait pu y mêler quelques dieux: Vénus, dont César se glorifiait de descendre, aurait pu y jouer un rôle analogue à celui que Virgile lui attribue dans l'Énéide: Jupiter aurait pu régler le sort de César et de Pompée, comme il l'avait fait pour Turnus et Enée. Lucain a cru que la réalité à elle seule était plus intéressante, qu'il suffisait de l'exposer, simple et nue."<sup>1</sup>

The Pharsalia Knows no father of Gods and Men with scales and a dread nod. There is certainly a very active Jupiter, supported by gods plural: *dei*<sup>2</sup> and *superi*.<sup>3</sup> But these Gods plural have no independent substantive existence, being merely functions or aspects of the one god Jupiter, who is neither a Romanized Olympian Zeus, nor a Capitoline Jove. What is then the definition of the Lucan Stoic Jupiter? He, or It, is, in the final synthesis, the Universe which is divine and self-regulating because there can be nothing outside or beside it

(1) It is with deep sorrow that we announce the death of Dr. W. Kamel one of the few promising young classicists Egypt has produced. His sudden death is a severe blow to his friends and a great loss to scholarship. (The Editing Board).

(2) René Pichon, *Histoire de La Littérature Latine*. Paris 1897. P. 563.

(3) V. 42, 59, 112, 119, 124, 136, 222, 229, 271, 393, 340, 352, 499, 529, 636, 698, 778.

(4) V. 38, 69, 86, 114, 159, 297, 482, 626, 632, 655, 669, 814.

to terminate or regulate it. Thus Jupiter is the divine regulator of the divine self-regulating Universe. As being of passive and material substance he is not very interesting to Lucan. But as being of active and mental substance he is very much so. The Stoic poet of a physical war between two human moralities or ideologies as we call them these days, must reckon first and foremost with his deity, if that deity, rather than the warriors is the war's author. And such the Stoic Jupiter is.<sup>1</sup> He is the sole fountain of the world's activity, motion and change: He is the sole repository of season, order and law. He is the sole cause of all effects, none of which can be cause except in accordance with the Universal law (— Jupiter) or principle of season (— Jupiter) permeating an all-rational universe (— Jupiter). Lucan sets humanity firmly in the care and control of the Providence which is Jupiter. Chance *τύχη* has no hand in the ordering of mundane matters. And, in short, there is a Destiny which shapes our ends.

The idea of this stoic supreme controlling power, fate, or destiny is intelligible enough. With us destiny is familiar synopsis of the product of the individual's collision with his environment, and we speak of destiny as controlling a man and of a man's having a destiny which controls him. So is the case with Lucan. But he creates a difficulty for his readers by using, somewhat loosely, a rarity of synonyms for destiny. These are (i) *fatum*, *fata*<sup>2</sup> (ii) *dei, superi, numina* + *deus*;<sup>3</sup> (iii) *fortuna*.<sup>4</sup> Normally there is a real sense-distinction felt between the three. *Fata* (*fatum, fata*) carries the notion of impersonal law. *Deity* (*deus*), and even more so, deities (*dei, superi, numina*) suggests personal intelligence. *Fortune* (*fortuna*) implies the absence of fixed law, or, at most, the presence of a law either uncomprehended by us, or incomprehensible. But Lucan ignores most of such analytical

(1) cL IX. rss 573 sq.

Haeremus cuncti superis, temploque tacente  
Nil facimus non sponte dei.

(2) V. 48, 92, 122, 137, 283, 293, 490, 696.

(3) V. 41, 57, 180, 185, 189, 198, 205, 219, 293, 301, 325, 342, 482, 536, 654, 660, 683, 688, 730, 733, 758, 762, 767, 781.

(4) V. 203, 233, 499, 581, 658, 695, 756.

(5) V. 88, 116, 132, 148, 170, 188, 211, 302, 536.

(6) V. 3, 26, 42, 59, 208, 292, 302, 327, 354, 460, 484, 506, 510, 522, 582, 593, 668, 697, 730, 753.

niceties. *Fata, dei, fortuna* -- each stands for destiny (= Jupiter). One concession Lucan makes. Though each one of the Gods plural (*superi, nomina, dei*) is only a particular aspect of the one fate-deus; he feels the incongruity of speaking of gods (= destiny) as belonging to a man. The following passages throw some light on this point of view.

Sic alterna duces bellorum voluera passos  
In Maecum terras miscens aduersa secundis  
Servavit fortuna pares. <sup>1</sup>

Cum prope fatorum tantos per prospera cursus  
Avertere dei. <sup>2</sup>

quidquid gerimus, fortuna vocatur  
Nos fatum sciat esse suum. Licet omne deorum  
Obsequium speres, irato milite, Caesar,  
Pax erit. <sup>3</sup>

Fata sed in praecipis solitus demittere Caesar  
Fortunamque suam per summa pericula gaudens  
Exercere venit. <sup>4</sup>

nunquam sic cura deorum  
Se premet, ut vestrae morti vestraeque saluti  
Fata vident; <sup>5</sup>

Credit iam digna pericula Caesar  
Fatis esse suis. "Quantusne evertere?" dixit  
Me superis labor est, parva quem puppe sedentem  
Tum magno petiere mari? si gloria leti  
Est pelago donauit mei bellisque negamur.  
Intrepidus, quamecumque datis mihi numina, mortem  
Accipiam. Licet ingentes abruperit actus  
Festinata dies fatis, sat magna peregi.

(1) V. 1-3

(2) V. 239-40

(3) V. 292-295

(4) V. 301-303

(5) V. 340-342

Aetous domui gentes, infinita subegi  
 Arma metu, vidit magnum mihi Roma secundum.  
 Iussa plebe tibi fasces per bella negatos;  
 Nulla meis uberit titulis Romana potestas.  
 Nec sciet hoc quisquam, nisi tu, quae sola meorum  
 Conscia votorum es, me, quantvis plenus honorum  
 Et dictator eam Stygias et Consul ad umbras  
 Privatum, Fortuna, mori.<sup>1</sup>

Si numina nostris

Impulerint acies, maneat pars optima Magni.  
 Sitque mihi, si fata prement victorque eruentis,  
 Quo fugisse velim.<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine of destination conflicts with the doctrine of human freedom of will long accepted by ancient philosophers as necessary to any notion of morality and moral responsibility. Lucretius, therefore like other Stoics, finds himself uncomfortably placed. If destiny controls the civil war and arranges that the outcome of all the stupendous efforts made on behalf of Roman freedom by Pompey and holy Cato,<sup>3</sup> shall be the triumph of the evanescent puppet Caesar, then judged by human standards of morality destiny is cruel and immoral. Lucretius accepts this conclusion and is inclined to find fault with Providence

Victrix causa deis placuit, sed vieta Catoni<sup>4</sup> But he has two refuges from pessimism. First he points to the fact that, if Providence decreed the field of Pharsalia, equally it decreed the Ides of March:

Vindictis an gladii facinus poenasque futurum  
 Regnaque ad ultores iterum redeuntia Brutes  
 Ut peragat fortuna, taces?<sup>5</sup>

(1) V. 654-668

(2) V. 756-759.

(3) cf. IX, v. 601-604

Ecce parens verus patriae, dignissimus ans,  
 Roma, tuis, per quem nunquam iurare pudebit,  
 Et quem, si steteris unquam, cervice soluta,  
 Nunc, olim, fuerat deum es.

cf. also IX, 556-7. Similar praise is given to Pompey (VII 682-9) and to Brutus (VII, 588-9).

(4) I. 128.

(5) V. 206-8.



The second and better refuge, however, lies in stoic orthodoxy — in accepting Providence's uncomfortable ways of preserving the universe, and in remembering that happiness belongs only to virtue. The apparent cruelties and injustices inflicted by destiny consist in the giving to Caesar of such things as wealth, mastery, and office; which are mere advantages (*commoda*), not true goods (*bona, honesta*). When stoic standards are applied it is realised that Caesar does evilly and is not therefore, but is therefore not, happy; while Cato does virtuously, and because he dies so, cannot but be happy. Destiny decrees happiness to the righteous cause.

As to Lucan's interest in prophetic technique (e. g. Erichtho's scene in Book VI. 507 sqq. and the Oracle scene in Book V. 71-236) — there he is partly influenced by his uncle's tragedy shambles, partly attracted by the fashionable vices of his time,<sup>1</sup> and wholly, willing to exploit the natural popularity of astrological and necromantic incident with a superstitious audience. Stoicism as a whole was much interested in such practices. "Lucan tries to reconcile Prophecy with Stoicism" by arguing that the history of the Universe is planned by Providence, the future is as certain as the past and the present is on record and can be read. How read? Lucan answers with confidence. The divine mind (Jupiter *alias* Apollo), regulating all motion, change, life in the universe and charged with all knowledge, passes in an unbroken ether-circuit from ether to Earth, indwelling in the earth and enabling the earth to keep its position in the total physical system. This ether-circuit of divine mind passes through the Delphic cavern. The priestess intercepts it; and all knowledge passes into her. But it must be admitted that Lucan does not contrive to give to the practices of oracle consultation and necromancy his poet's approval. He shows that those who resort to divination are the less worthy characters; while the results obtained are of no practical value.

(1) Appius (Claudius Pulcher) who consulted the Oracle in Book V. was a notable amateur of the occult sciences. cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* I. 16, inde eaque meus amicus Appius verborumque faciebat. His Delphic consultation is recorded by Valerius Anaxinus and Orosius in substantial agreement with Lucan's account.

(2) cf. V. 66-102.