THE WORD AND TRAGEDY: THE REVELATION OF DIVINE MYSTERY IN THE PORTRAYAL OF MAN AS LANGUAGE

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This study suggests that tragedy sees human action as synonymous with language and that it uses a method similar to that of a hermeneutic phenomenology to portray man as experiencing spirituality in a confrontation with expression. This confrontation takes the form of a pattern that leads to a revelation that all human action springs from the spirit. Word as action is thus placed into a spiritual context, containing in itself the key to the divine significance of the human experience. As a cultural manifestation, this pattern exists not only in literary tragedy, but also in the Hebrew Scriptures as narratives and poetry. This study examines this tragic pattern in Genesis, the Book of Job, Oedipus, and King Lear.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of western philosophic and religious history is the use of language to approach fundamental concerns. The inspired visionary turns to society to speak of his vision, to preach what he has learned, using both parable and sermon to capture the hearts and minds of his people. The intellectual takes his ideas from, and places them back into, a "Great Conversation" of other ideas; concepts grow out of argument, debate, and the tensions of dialectic viewpoints. Insofar as this dependence on language to inspire and nurture civilization involves both religious and philosophic disciplines, our spiritual and intellectual traditions are tied together in a common concern for the value of language and the type of experience language can create. The present study suggests that tragedy, in narrative, poetic, or dramatic form, contains in its own structure a reflection of this cultural faith in the value of language. Tragedy creates a vision of human action, deeply ingrained in our traditions, that draws together the life of the mind and the life of the spirit into a life centered on the word as a sacred extension of the human will. Within tragedy, we may find a reflection of a

cultural intuition that all human endeavor, both philosophic and religious, revolves around the function and significance of language in man's struggle to understand the spiritual nature of his own thoughts, and the divine impetus of his own actions.

Tragedy portrays this vision by showing man in a confrontation with himself as language, coming to grips with his own ideas about the world and about himself in the context of the creative word as a medium that allows him to be in every sense, to conceive of his own being, and to make sense out of his life. In this confrontation, man comes to see, in a series of transformative stages endemic only to tragedy, that nothing is truly real but that which is made real through acts of symbolic expression. To come to grips with this fact creates a break, or fissure, between man himself as an entity and the forms that, through his language, give order and meaning to his experience. The stages involved concern first his concept of the objective world, and second his subjective identity. Through this tragic confrontation with expression, man is "purged," so to speak, of all form and thus is left to face the formlessness of himself as spirit. He is also faced with the artifice of the word as his only "passage" into formal existence, his only means of expressing his spiritual intent. Because in tragedy the word itself reveals indirectly the spirituality of man, and also distinguishes itself as the medium through

which the spirit is directed toward form and meaning, a new context for action is created in which the word becomes a scared extension of that which is divine in man.

What causes this confrontation in tragedy on both the objective and subjective levels is the manifestation of divine order, or universal will, through the very word itself in such a way that shatters any notion that either a universal pattern in the natural world, or a concept of the ultimately "real" self, can be perceived directly without the interposition of the word, without a dependence on symbol. We will explore how and why this intrusion has the effect that it does. In some cases the intrusion is direct, being manifested in the actual words of one all-knowing God. In other cases, the intrusion is indirect, being manifested in oracles or the intervention of gods into human affairs where the words of men are the intercessors between divine intent and mortal subjects. In any case, the result is the initiation of an examination of the word as it governs human actions and values. The divine is made a part of the human experience on a fundamental level: man's assumption of meaning in the world and within himself through language. The result is a struggle to answer a single religious and philosophical question: What is man's relationship to divine intent or universal design regarding his actions? Put in other terms, What is the universal nature of justice?

The answer is revealed as a paradox, a non-rational

revelation of the spiritual nature of thought and its qualitative relationship to divine design and creativity. The mystery is contained in the word itself and the paradoxical relationship it establishes between the namer and the named: that which is given order and being through the word is necessarily separate from the entity that wields the word and thus the word points indirectly to the namer as that which is force and energy, spirit and intention, but not in itself form. The relationship that the word establishes is, then, a sacred one in itself, and so the word, in all of its manifestations in terms of law, action, creativity and thought, is also sacred. In tragedy, universal order manifests itself by forcing a confrontation with the word directly, and in so doing "arights" human intent with divine intent through the word. It is a redemption, a "buying back" in an unspeakable new meaning, of what had become, in the progress of the tragic pattern itself, arbitrary and meaningless. This can only be called a "tragic revelation" that is experienced as a profound religious feeling. It is a speechless perception of the mystery of the human condition, a sense of the mysterium tremendum that is in effect a renewal of all form. As such, tragedy provides a religious context for all of human action in its interpretation of language as both the means and the end of spiritual suffering.

The special pattern of the development of this

confrontation can be found not only in ancient Greek drama, with which tragedy is normally associated, but in the Hebrew Scriptures as well. Therefore, as an historical result, many of our own cultural intuitions concerning the ultimate nature and value of human action can be seen reflected in this medium. Its pattern has survived intact from antiquity as a consistent religious and artistic endeavor, recognizable in the tragedies of Shakespeare, Goethe, and others.

We will examine this pattern first in the Hebrew Scriptures, focusing on the creation story in Genesis and then on the Book of Job. Here in the Bible divine intervention is manifested directly through the word with divine law, as handed down by God, intertwining with the actions of men in the expression of the Covenant. For the ancient Hebrews, this tragic perspective arises from the connection between the gift of language to man and the holy word of Yahweh. Within the word lay the tragic context of the life of man. It is because of this, the great significance of the word, that the Old Testament is a religious document: not because it is the keeper of theological doctrine, but because it inspires a religious feeling that is inseparable from a human context. Here the tragic pattern, with its confrontation with the word of Yahweh, or his anointed representatives, manifests itself in the form of stories, the trials of individuals and

societies, in which man comes to grips with himself and his understanding of the world in the face of the divine word. In man's confrontation with this word he sees the illusions he has built around his life and finally comes to the knowledge that he is a spiritual being, a revelation that comes with an understanding of the word itself, both his and God's, and the sacred relationship it reveals between himself as creator and the order he creates. Through suffering, not instantaneous revelation, he sees the touch of the divine in his laws and his descriptions of the world, even in their most corrupt and deplorable forms. He is brought, by divine intrusion through the word, to see the divine in his own words, and so to seek in his own actions the divine mystery of himself. Thus, the Covenant is the joining of the divinity of God and the divinity of man, not in the law merely, but in the word, which in its own proportion represents the divine intent behind it.

We will also examine this same pattern in Greek tragedy, though more briefly and as a bridge to examining Shakespeare and the literarily accepted form of tragedy as recovered from the Greeks. Though the mode and style of Greek tragedy are different from those of the ancient Hebrews, the basic pattern of confrontation with language on first the objective and then the subjective levels is the same, as it is in all tragedy.

For the Greeks, tragedy was an event of the stage, a

public performance of religious significance that was judged for both its aesthetic and social value. Its speeches and choral poetry inspired what might be called "experiences of language," events, if you will, of symbolic expression that took its audiences through a spiritual adventure and struggle as surely as the personalities portrayed on the stage. Here, divine intervention is manifested in terms of oracles and the manipulation of men's words by the gods. Though there is no specific, all-powerful deity which speaks directly to man, no single God controlling fate as well as form, the destinies of men are shaped by universal design in manifestations of language, and these words initiate the same confrontation with language as do the direct words of Yahweh in the Hebrew Scriptures. The final tragic vision and sense of renewal in human action through the word is the same: the order of man is aligned with the order of heaven through an understanding of the sanctity of the word and the inherent value of struggle in achieving that understanding.

The common battleground, so to speak, for all tragedy, whatever the culture, is the word, its place in man's spiritual understanding of himself, and the spiritual context of his use of it in law, action and art. In tragedy, theological matters are not of paramount importance; the divine center of human action remains within the word as a spiritual imperative, and in this way tragedy draws our culture's endeavors toward a common religious

point of reference. This same religious point of reference can indeed be found in the tragedies of Shakespeare, and it is to his King Lear that we turn last in this study.

Part of this study explores the idea that tragedy is not merely a possible literary component of the Hebrew Scriptures, but that it is central to their foundation and the message they communicate. Such an attempt has its opponents, to be sure. It has been vehemently asserted by such figures as Karl Jaspers and Reinhold Niebuhr that tragedy is not only not a part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but cannot be, and in fact contradicts its very essence (Cox 298-99). Others see some stories as similar in many ways to tragic drama, such as the story of Saul and in some aspects the Book of Job. But the tragic view, often described as the struggle of the individual will against an alterable, but inexorable fate, even of will against will, remains for most a product of the culture of the ancient Greeks and not a central force of the Bible. What tragedy really is, however, remains controversial, and as long as this is so, any assertion that tragedy can or cannot be a part of the Old Testament depends on one's theory of tragedy. This approach is based on the most ancient of assumptions about language in an attempt to understand the original purpose of the tragic portrayal and its spiritual significance.

This approach to tragedy comes originally from seeing

strong similarities between this confrontation with language in tragedy--both ancient and Shakespearean--and the stories and poetry of the Old Testament. The distinction between the realm of poetics, wherein tragedy belongs, and the realm of religious texts vanishes when we realize that tragedy addresses questions which involve the nature of universal justice and man's place in a divine scheme of things, and that it does so indirectly through a high style of language. The drama of the stage evolved from religious ceremony, both in Greece and medieval Europe, not as didactic sermons on religious doctrine, but as indirect portrayals that treated words as mystical inroads to the spirit. These portrayals were not mere stories, but stylized searches for truth through a myriad of symbolic expressions. Indeed, tragedy in its purest form is at the very least a critical treatment of metaphysics and idealism, the core of which involves a critique of the symbols and constructs of thought in which these beliefs are contained and given life. In tragedy, the highest ideals of men are scrutinized against a backdrop of the expressions that constitute those ideals in an attempt to find within these expressions the true source from which all words and deeds flow. It is the portrayal of a struggle, a search for the one true motivation for acting and living, a digging into and a clearing away of conceptual forms to make way for the divine waters to rush in and fill the meaningless void that words can become.

It is with the experience of language, then, that this examination of tragedy begins. We must approach in detail the connection between tragedy and the critique of idealism mentioned above as it centers on the experience of language as the foundation of meaning. To do so, it is necessary first to explain fully the nature of the paradox contained within language, and second how tragedy portrays a confrontation with this paradox as preparatory to a spiritual perception of language. Such is the focus of Chapter Two of this work.

Because tragedy is a kind of "critique" of language as a foundation for experience, tragedy as a medium has itself many characteristics of a kind of hermeneutics of ideas. In addition, because this "critique" in tragedy depends on the actual experience of language, while holding forth language as the object of scrutiny, we have before us in tragedy a kind of hermeneutic circle presented as a phenomenon of experience, both for the personalities involved and the audience. This experience of the hermeneutic circle is really at the heart of the paradox of language that tragedy seeks to confront directly. Tragedy attempts to make an audience live through this paradox, to reveal the hidden spiritual mystery of the human will, and thus to foster a revelation of the divine center from which this will flows.

To explain the pattern of this conflict, this study makes use of many of the terms and relationships common to

phenomenology, and specifically those used by Paul Ricoeur in his description of hermeneutic phenomenology. Once the paradox of language is explained and then linked to tragedy, Ricoeur is left behind for the most part. It is not, of course, the overall intention of Ricoeur's work to explain the principles involved in tragedy, but his ideas are applicable to an explanation of the theory of tragedy introduced here.

Unlike other treatments of tragedy, the concern here is not so much with matters of form as it is with the patterns and principles involved. As a result, this work is part history, part literary theory, part theology and part philosophy. Indeed, one of the goals of this study is to cross these disciplines and use their respective terminologies in the context of the subject at hand without doing injury to their own concerns and methods. This approach rests on no particular system of thought, but utilizes ideas which make explanation as clear as possible.

CHAPTER II

THE WORD

Tragedy is first of all an experience of language. Whatever else we may call "tragic" in our history or our daily lives becomes true tragedy only through its expression in words. That is to say, any living thing can suffer, but this in itself does not constitute tragedy or the tragic. It is only when suffering has meaning and significance, only when pain and loss transcend the physical and become the pain and loss of the ideas that hold the mind and the will together, that experience becomes tragic. In the ancient world, physical pain and suffering in and of themselves meant very little. They were certainly things to be avoided, but they were also very much a part of everyday life. Suffering alone does not inspire a people to great self-reflection, or to producing great works. Only when the physical is transcribed into meaning and context through symbols are men allowed the possibility of participating in a world larger than the immediate, to live lives beyond their own, and to perceive some cosmological significance in their actions. To suffer in this realm is to suffer from the soul, to live in peril of losing the very foundations of meaningful experience, and to place in harm's way the significance of life itself. Such is the realm of tragedy,

and so to deal with tragedy, one must deal with the symbols, the signs, the language of which this realm is made.

The most significant and distinctive quality about the human mind is its ability to separate itself from the physical things around it and live only within a world of meaningful symbols. Whether meaning itself resides within objects or within the mind is irrelevant; it does, however, reside within the symbols or signs that communicate or stand for it and so float, in a sense, in between the mind and the thing. With the symbol comes not only a separation between the self and the object, but a relationship between them that can be moved with the symbol. That is to say, meaning is portable, self-contained, and possesses, in a very real sense, a life of its own. The world, then, becomes separate because it is known. We are concerned and tortured over the meanings of things only because we live in a world of symbols and ideas, and not of objects. Language, as a system of symbols, makes us separate by giving us living, communicable, transformative thought. For man it is not the world, but the word that reveals.

This is the first half of language's great irony: we are trapped within it, incapable of touching the thing in itself, and yet it is language that frees us from an existence merely in a world of things. Like a bar of constantly shifting sand, language is the only bridge we have to stand on between appearance and reality. We are

there shifting with it. If man is anything, he is what his language tells him he is. Man's action in the world, then, is so rooted in language and its products that action becomes inseparable from the use of the word.

If the study of the struggle of the will of man is to be our business in a study of tragedy, then the manifestations of language must be our prime currency. It is my contention that tragedy operates on this currency and achieves its purposes through it. Man as rational, man as spirit, man as flawed or man as moral do not serve in a study of tragedy, for if man is language, he is all and none of these things. From the point of view of language, man is, more than anything else, alienated, simply because he has ideas.

This concentration on language is not new. Ernst Cassirer builds much of his thought upon the idea of man as language, as does Heidegger, Urban, Ricoeur, and, in a sense, Frederich Nietzsche. But Cassirer, in An Essay on Man, perhaps most clearly opens up the idea of the transformative nature of language, which is the way I will approach it in this study of tragedy:

> Man cannot escape from his own achievement. He cannot but adopt the conditions of his own life. No longer in a merely physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe. . . . No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as

> it were, face to face. . . . Instead of dealing with the things themselves man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself. He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium. (43)

Not only are we trapped within language, but we respond to its products as if they were realities. They do in fact transform our lives. Language functions less like a tool and more like a revelation. Here, then, is the other half of the irony of language: man is free to create his own world through the word, and yet his words can become discoveries in themselves. It is this transformative function of language that opens up the possibilities for thought. It is here that man finds his freedom, his self-expression and the expression of his self-understanding. In this "Great Conversation" his expressions <u>are</u> his understanding.

If we are to assume that tragedy represents a confrontation with language, there must also be an implicit philosophy of being at its base that involves the establishment of meaningful experience through words. This philosophy involves the relationship between the intent of the will--the <u>force</u> of the mind--and the forms of experience as they are projected onto the world by that intent through

language. The form, or "shape," words bring to experience is an extension of the intent behind them. In this sense, the word takes on a fundamental importance in the establishment of being. When the intent is so tied to form through description that one cannot separate oneself from the world, or in other words, when the intent is seen as consistent with meaningful form through language, intent and form become one. Life is consistent with its description; the will becomes the word itself and the word is synonymous with meaningful action and participation in the world. When this scheme is challenged, however, by something unaccountable by language, the meaning of form, and so form itself, are brought into question, and the intent has no ground for action and must be "realigned" somehow and given direction through a new description.

For example, if I have come to know the stars above as pinholes of light shining through a vast dome from the light of heaven, I describe them as such and so my experience becomes what the words create. The words themselves command the forms of experience. The motivation of my will is tied to my use of language; intent and form are as one exertion, being tied to one another through language. If, however, a great spaceship were to land and carry me up and away at the speed of light through these "pinholes" and out into space, the shape, or form, which I had given to my universe would now be shattered. The intention that is my motivation

through that universe would now have to be "re-bonded" with something new, or else my ability to act, my very will to live, would be in danger of being shattered also. No doubt I would conclude that I was wrong before about the nature of the heavens and reevaluate it in terms of a new physics, or conclude that I had died and gone to heaven, or think I had gone mad, or in some other way keep form and intent tied together by means of new descriptions that, in themselves, create new meaningful forms of experience.

Such is an example of a physical event that would require a "re-bonding," so to speak, of form with intent through language. The relationship is paradoxical in that the two sides pull at one another, like atoms in a molecule, in order to retain the illusion of oneness and consistency in experience, but the relationship survives by adapting itself via words and form and intent remain complementary.

If, on the other hand, language itself is brought into question and made to appear transitory, rather than binding and affirmative, then the tie between form and intent is entirely torn apart and the tension between them, maintained through language, becomes more strained and desperate because the link that ties them together, the word, has become arbitrary. There can be no re-bonding or readjustment without some redemption of the word itself. Every idea, every attempt to restructure the world, ends in failure because, in a sense, the bonding agent has been

dissolved. All things, then, become relative and pointless. There can be no direction because all descriptions, and so all forms of experience, being products of language, are false. Being itself, the sense of belonging to the world and having a place in it, becomes an impossibility, for there is no order and no context; there can be no sense of self, since this too was intrinsically tied to description. All that was given shape and meaning through language--identity, beauty, love--finds no foothold, no solidity, in the forms of experience; meaning would now be even less than subjective, for self-reflection itself would be arbitrary. Reality, which became real only through the sharing of common descriptions, is lost. The will becomes like an unaccommodated wraith.

To bring about such a complete disruption of the validity of experience would require a confrontation with language of such an extreme nature as to make all expression, and therefore all meaning, seem arbitrary. Such is the case in tragedy. For Hamlet, life becomes "stale and unprofitable" and he cannot act; for Macbeth, life becomes ". . . but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more" (Mac. 5.5.24-25). The loss is that of the viability of ideas. The cause is some event of language that brings language to bear on itself, something spoken that renders all language strangely arbitrary and rips intent away from

form and thus removes its ability to project itself onto the world.

What separates tragedy from pathos, however, is its portrayal of a discovery, a revelation, through which the will to be may be saved. In tragedy, this upheaval of the validity of meaning, of the motivation to act, opens up the "dikes," so to speak, for a spiritual intent, a universal will to rush in and fill the void and redeem, or "buy back," expression, and therefore the will to be. In tragedy, through a confrontation with a paradox involved in the use of language, a paradox contained within its very function, form is separated from intent in such a way that the intent or will is directed to what is above and beyond itself. Though it is to words that the intent finally returns, it is guided now by what may be called a "divine intent."

Such is the philosophy of being that is at the heart of tragedy as a confrontation with language upon which is based its spiritual message and its introduction of universal values. The unfolding of tragedy becomes itself the unfolding of a hermeneutic circle of the most desperate kind. Heidegger has said, "What is significant is not how to get out of the circle, but how to come into it in the right way" (qtd. in Hermeneutics 58). It is toward this goal that the drama of high language that is so characteristic of tragedy unfolds. Yet there is a pattern of sorts, not always consistent from tragedy to tragedy, but

an identifiable pattern nonetheless, that marks this unfolding and that moves in stages or phases toward the culmination of spiritual discovery. Indeed, it is in identifying this pattern in the Old Testament that we see how tragedy is endemic to the biblical message. Its fundamental principle involves the function of the word in establishing the relationship between form and intent. In a confrontation with the word, this relationship is disrupted, finally ending in a redemption of that relationship through a redemption of the word with a new spiritual intent behind it. The stages involved here have to do with the word itself, how it works to establish the world of meaning around us, and how within it lies the divine mystery of the spirit.

The first stage is an illusion that involves the creation of the objective world through language, a world of which the self is a part as an object or form. When language is confronted as arbitrary, this world is shattered, much like in the example above, with the exception that in this case, the world no longer can be reached and redescribed in any valid way since it is the very description of form that has been invalidated. With the loss of confidence in objective truth comes a "movement" away from the objective world, a turning inward in an attempt to establish the ultimate truth of the self, the establishment of a kind of "self-posited ego" that is

inviable. This is the second stage and marks what is commonly known as the ultimate act of hubris in tragedy. It is, however, also an illusion, for it is yet another readjustment of form and intent through language with the self as the new description of the form and shape of experience. Once again, as in the first stage, the intent behind the creation of form is confused with form itself. This becomes increasingly clear and the relationship between form and intent is entirely lost. Even individual experience loses its truth. This, of course, sets the stage for the final revelation of universal meaning. In this light, tragedy becomes a true hermeneutic critique of objectivism and idealism as a preparation for revealing universal truth.

To lend us a vocabulary with which to describe these stages, we turn to Paul Ricoeur in his description of hermeneutic phenomenology. Here can be found a way to describe how the word ties intent to form and how, though not by design of Ricoeur, tragedy unfolds as a confrontation with the paradox of language. This can best be described by using Ricoeur's principle of "belonging and distanciation," a principle that centers on a paradox contained in the word itself as it works to establish a sense of being and reality.

Ricoeur's theory of language begins as a critique of idealist phenomenology. It states the basic

phenomenological argument that our world is a human world, not an objective world that is conceivable outside of the human context. First and foremost, the world is experienced and only then is it understood. The question is, what constitutes meaningful experience and what is it that ties one individual's experience to another's? The great phenomenological dilemma is how to escape being lost in a completely relative world of subjective experience. In blasting the notion of an objective order in reality, idealist phenomenology replaces it with its own notion of a potentially sharable transcendental subjectivity. Its goal remains, as Kohak says, "a faithful articulation of the clearly given" (143). For Ricoeur, it is just this notion of articulation that such an idealism overlooks. In attempting to expose a world of human experience shared in common, idealist phenomenology has in fact retreated into a deep subjectivity, neglecting the one thing that makes sharable understanding possible: language. Ricoeur approaches language by explaining a paradox that is contained in the word itself as it works to establish meaning and position in experience: the idea of belonging and distanciation, which he borrows in part from both Heidegger and Gadamer (Hermeneutics 105-6).

When an individual sees meaning in the world around him or in other words understands what is happening around him, he then "belongs" to that world. He is a part of it in the

sense that there is a relationship between his being in the world and his own understanding of it. Once I understand that the long vertical object sticking out of the earth is a telephone pole, I then develop a certain relationship to it. It occupies a functional, meaningful place in the scheme of things that I call my surroundings. This is true of everything around me. Nothing is "truly given" but that which is "given" in some kind of finite meaning. That finite meaning is inseparable from the language I use to describe it. Certainly, if I did not have the term "telephone pole," the vertical object would still be there, but it would have no meaning without some symbol with which to link it to my world view. When it is named, it then becomes part of a world to which I can "belong." The world unfolds before me and around me in terms of meaning, significance and purpose, and it does so only through language. Without language, I would in a sense be without landmarks, and so without what are called objects of consciousness. I would have no "care" for the world, but would in fact be lost in a world of transitory data. This care for the world through language is essentially what is behind the concept of "belonging" as we will refer to it here.

On the other hand, in order to name or give meaning to an object through language, I must first understand that I am not the object itself. I must distance myself from it in

order to give it a meaning to which I can "belong." This notion arises from the accurate assumption that human beings cannot "belong" to objects alone, but only to objects of meaning. Thus we have a simultaneous, two-fold process of belonging and distanciation centering on the word that is essentially a paradox, but that nevertheless establishes a world in which we can "be."

In principle, and without the emphasis on language, this process coincides with the concept of "intentionality" as it is referred to by traditional phenomenology. In-so-far as it is concerned with the establishment of order in terms of meaningful objects, it is also referred to by phenomenologists as the "natural attitude," and is the basic attitude of science, which must assume at the outset that what it uncovers and proves are facts of an objective world. But for both idealist and hermeneutic phenomenology, this establishment of the objective world remains an illusion, for there can be no ultimate validation of that world. For the ideal phenomenologist, objective order remains fundamentally subjective, and he must turn elsewhere for some kind of ultimate foundation for the truth of experience. For Ricoeur, however, this objective world remains an illusion because it is fundamentally the product of language. To believe in the ultimate reality of perceived objective order is, for Ricoeur, to be naive about the function of language in the establishment of meaning,

and he refers to this attitude as the "first naivete." He too must turn elsewhere for some confirmation of the real.

The ideal phenomenologist next turns to the self. Let us say that while I have established a world of meanings to which I can now belong, but which by necessity is not myself, I am then left with the problem of who or what I am. I can treat myself as if I were an object, like a telephone pole, and thus remain in the first naivete, or I can posit myself as merely given, somehow transcendent and above all the meanings I hold true. I would then be pure ego, a pure subjectivity that "sees" and that, by virtue of its transcendental position, "sees" truly. This is the position of the ideal phenomenologist. For Ricoeur there is a problem here. If this transcendental ego is to become part of the idealist's description of valid experience, then it too has become an object through a distancing of the self, even from the self through language, though the idealist does not realize it. This Ricoeur calls the "second naivete" and an extreme act of hubris (Hermeneutics 106). To Ricoeur, it is but a second kind of distancing, identical in principle to the first, which must occur in order to "belong" to the idea of the transcendental ego at all. Both illusions involve the same principle of belonging and distanciation; the only difference is the subject of attention.

For Ricoeur, both the first and second illusions occur

and remain within the realm of language. The direction of Ricoeur's work is to dispel the second illusion without returning to the first. Toward this purpose, he calls for a "second Copernican revolution," which shall be the result of a "Poetics of the Will," or a final reading of the will in a poetics (Ricoeur "Foreward" xv). Further, he states that this second Copernican revolution ". . . must begin with the discovery that this poetics is first of all an understood and appropriated mythic word and that meaning comes to the ego through the power of the word" (Ricoeur "Foreward" xv). So far, Ricoeur's approach to this final reading remains necessarily indirect:

> For hermeneutics, the problem of ultimate foundation still belongs to the sphere of objectifying thought, so long as the ideal of scientificity is not questioned as such. The radicality of such questioning leads from the idea of scientificity back to the ontological condition of belonging, whereby he who questions shares in the very thing about which he questions. (Ricoeur Hermeneutics 106)

As we examine tragedy as a confrontation with language involving the relationship between form and intent, we will refer to the stages involved in this movement in terms of first and second illusions, since tragedy, as a critique of objectivist and idealist positions, closely parallels

Ricoeur's critique primarily because of his emphasis on language. This approach of course differs from most examinations of tragedy since it deals with principles rather than matters of form and structure. But if the Bible, in its many different forms, is to be among our subjects here, we cannot always expect to find those structures common to the stage play or to the novel. Our attention must turn to the principles involved in tragedy and to the patterns that are common to those principles. Indeed, when we seek to identify in literature what is tragic and what is not, we do not, in the end, turn to constants of literary form for guidance, but to philosophies and theories of principle which we believe essential to the production of the tragic effect. By following the methodology laid out above, this study may not only introduce the possibility of tragedy on the Old Testament, but also lend a hand in making a definition of tragedy more accessible.

CHAPTER III

THE WORD AND TRAGEDY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

To bring this theory of tragedy, with its emphasis on the word, to bear on the Old Testament, it must first be true that the word occupy a central place in the presentation of the biblical message. It has been shown by other writers on the Hebrew scriptures that in the structure of the narrative words in themselves have significance beyond the representation of things and ideas, beyond their use in communication. The narrator deals with the spoken word in the text as if the words themselves constituted action. The personalities that speak in the Bible, including Yahweh, utilize words as if they were spells that could shape or alter reality. Often they are used not only to predict, but to prescribe events yet to come. Conversations between characters, and particularly conversations with Yahweh, have the quality of existence in the process, the throes, if you will, of creation. When people talk, the course of history changes; when words are exchanged, time itself is in flux. Even "divine providence," as we would say today, is momentarily up for grabs when man presumes to exchange words directly with God. In the Hebrew Scriptures we see the use of words as the pinnacle of action, of risk, of responsibility. One word

can determine the fate of an entire nation for generations.

There is also in this conception of the word as action a consistently recurring element in the ancient Hebrew's relationship to their God. It is the word of God that is heard by Abraham, Issac, Jacob and Moses. It is a voice speaking that comes from the burning bush, the pilar of fire, the smoking mountain; and words comprise the most sacred of ancient Israel's possessions, the Covenant of Sinai. The very universe itself is brought about by words. All but man is created by verbal command, and man, alone among all the creatures of the world, is brought to life by the breath of God and so is given the one divine power that rules destiny: the power of the word. To speak in the Old Testament is, in a sense, to participate in the original act of creation. To give man this power and this freedom is essentially to leave him unfinished, thus making the actions of man through the word significant to his own spiritual fulfillment.

In this unfinished quality of man, which stems from the freedom of his use of the word, there exists a conflict in his relationship to God, to himself, and to the world, which necessarily revolves around the word itself. Man is caught in a dilemma: on the one hand, there are the forms of the world--trees, birds, sky, water, cattle, earth--all apparently perfect and good in the eyes of God. On the other hand, there is the deep, unfathomable presence of

Yahweh himself--formless, beyond imitation, absolute, infinite, grand and terrible. By possessing the word, man has one foot on one level of being and one foot on the other. He is chained to this world as an animal form himself and yet, with the creative power of the word, he is distinguished from the forms around him. By naming and describing, and so "creating" the reality around him, he essentially establishes that that reality "is not what I am." What man truly is remains the mystery to be solved. What, then, is a world created by words like, and what is man as not only a participant in such a world, but also as the sole possessor of the very magic which has brought it into being? As a creature of spirit, reflection and freedom, how shall man reflect upon himself? The significance of the word in the portrayal of man's spiritual self-discovery is the key to understanding the Old Testament as tragedy, bringing together both history and theology into one vision of the spiritual power of the word.

In looking at the significance of the word in the Hebrew Scriptures, a pattern of movement begins to reveal itself, a movement back and forth between earthly form and divine essence. All the stories in the Old Testament involve people in a movement, both conscious and physical, between the forms, contexts and values of the material world and the essence, or will, of God. Always Israel is guided by the word of Yahweh away from the forms of the world

toward some promise that involves a closeness to and knowledge of the awesome nature of the divine. Always the words of man bring him back to a "sinful" indulgence in forms. The conflict centers on man's use of the word and his perception of the will of God in the divine word. Ultimately, it is a question of freedom. As man uses the gift of language to seek power, both over the material world and himself, there is a movement that brings history back to its beginnings in the wilderness, a destruction and purification of forms, where exile and slavery are freedom and wealth and power are bondage, where "fair is foul and foul is fair." The field of battle in which this movement of conflict takes place is the word.

The basis for this movement establishes itself early in the Bible. It is plain that in Genesis the word stands between God and his inventions. It separates, defines, individuates, and points to form as that which is not essence, that which is effulgency and resolution, but not in itself God. The word paradoxically connects and separates form and essence, or appearance and the ultimately real. It creates by its own nature a cosmos that is a dichotomy: behind the appearances of all things there lies a reality that binds them together into a greater whole, a spiritual meaning.

This scheme is not at all unusual. It is common to many religions. But here, form and essence have a different

relationship because of the way they are tied together by the word. The word changes the idea of pure essence into one of divine intention, a force active in the world, and yet made separate from it by the very nature of the word that is its contact with material forms. Further, man is allowed to participate in this action by means of his own possession of the word, and it is in the word itself that he may see that the divine is both separate from and involved in the affairs of the world. What is significant to a study of tragedy is that in this strange relationship, man may also see himself as a wielder of the word, and thus see himself as also separate from, yet involved in, the forms language brings to life and meaning. Because this link between God and man lies in the realm of action, it is only through action that man may learn of it, and thus only by confronting the implications of the word may he "see" the presence of the divine within himself.

The movement between form and essence, or divine intent, is a movement toward just such a confrontation, with the word of the covenant as the point of departure and return. This cyclic motion of leaving and returning is based on the belief that within the word lies a paradoxical relationship between man's own intent and the forms of experience he creates around himself. By confronting this paradox, man is made aware of the spiritual nature of his intent and thus of his relationship to the divine. The gift

of language to man is, then, essentially the gift of the secret of divine intent, revealed in the Old Testament indirectly through varied portrayals of dramatic confrontations between man and his own expressions. Thus, the stories of the Bible unfold as tragic dramas and may be described in terms of the first and second illusions and the paradox of belonging and distanciation contained in the word itself. In the opening chapters of Genesis, this pattern is established as a basis for the trials of Israel and her patriarchs.

As discussed earlier, the tragic pattern involves a movement through two illusory "worlds," so to speak, created by language, in an ill-fated attempt to verify both the ultimate validity of reality and the individual will's direct link to it. We have called these two worlds, after Paul Ricoeur, the first and second illusions. They could as well be called the objective world and the subjective world, respectively. The point here is that they are both established through language and as such are subject to the same principle inherent in any use of the word, i.e., the principle of belonging and distanciation in which one belongs to the world only by distancing one's intent or will from it. They become illusions when it is assumed that, in either case, the will or intent is one with the form the word brings into being and that no such paradox exists. These illusions are shattered only when the paradox inherent

in the word itself is confronted and the paradox is seen as unavoidable. The result is the "loss" of all form in any ultimate sense, and a displacement of the intent into, quite literally, an unspeakable realm. This is the final "death" or "fall" in any true tragedy, leaving behind a realization of the completely spiritual nature of the intent and a glimpse, through this realization, of the nature of divine intent, from which human intent is inseparable.

But the very word intent, as we use it here, implies direction, and rightly so, for in tragedy we see a renewal of action in spite of, or rather because of, the death of form. The world of the word is reentered, and reentered as it is, a paradox, guided by a tragic perspective which now sees a qualitative relationship between the actions of the divine and the actions of man. It might best be described as an "arighting" of man and the divine through the word. All of these things can be seen in the creation story of Genesis, the narrative that lays down the conditions for the history of man in the Old Testament.

We have already seen that Yahweh, by bringing the cosmos into being through the word, establishes that the relationship between himself and the cosmos is a paradoxical one. Man he does not create through the word, but instead brings his body out of the existing earth and gives life to him with his own breath. Through this breath man is given the gift of the word and this word shall be his life.

Action through the word, then, is to be the hallmark of man. The source of this action, man's will or intent, is somehow within the numinous character of the divine breath which powers or drives the word. That which powers the word is portrayed as something in constant motion, unfixed, implying that this aspect of man cannot be fixed by the word and so, like the divinity of Yahweh, cannot be named.

The first act of man in the garden is to wield this word and to name the animals brought to him. Here we see the establishment of the objective world. Like Yahweh, man, indeed in Yahweh's own image, "creates" a world through the word. The principle of belonging and distanciation is at work here. The creatures are not man. Form and intent are ostensibly aligned and in balance through the paradox of the word. (The woman is an exception to this, for her name is literally "out of man." She is not separate and her "name" is not properly a name but rather a description. She is at this point equal to the man.)

Yet to all of this Yahweh adds a quite arbitrary admonition: not to eat of the tree of knowledge. Significantly, this is presented in the form of dialogue rather than narrated by the author. By having the two humans confront these arbitrary words of Yahweh, a situation is created in which man, through this confrontation, must come on his own to realize that the world he has created for himself is indeed <u>not</u> himself. Man must now not only deal

with the reality around him, ordered by his own words, but with the word itself, out of context and with obscure meaning.

This element of the story is significant for two reasons. First, it takes the focus of the story away from physical aspects (i.e., the garden itself and the style of continued life there) and places it on the word and man's reaction to it. An intrusion into the scene has taken place, interrupting the continuity of man's life as he has established it through his own words. Second, this intrusion of words foreshadows a conflict about to take place. Even if the reader, or listener, were to come to this story with no knowledge of its outcome, when Yahweh makes this arbitrary admonition it would be obvious that something is about to happen that will disrupt the peace of the scene. What is interesting here is that this warning of Yahweh's indicates that man is already guilty of perceiving himself, his intent, and the forms around him as one, rather than being separated by the interposition of the word in his naming of these forms. Yahweh's words are a signal that a conflict is about to occur because they act as a challenge for man to see the word, rather than the object of the word, as a reflection of what he really is as an actor. In short, the reader suspects that man is living an illusion because he senses that man's perception of things is about to be shattered by the arbitrary words of Yahweh. Our own

reaction to the story is an indication that man has perhaps already made a mistake.

The dialogue between the Serpent and the woman is a narrative device that confirms this. Though throughout much of the Old Testament the first illusion is shattered by the words of Yahweh alone, or by an anointed representative, Satan is often used by the author as a tool of Yahweh's intervention into human affairs on a more basic or conventional level, such as in Job. Here the words of the Serpent are a continuation of the intrusion begun by Yahweh himself. Once again the focus is on words, rather than on physical objects, and again the words are seemingly arbitrary, coming from an indefinable, or rather inexplicable, source and having about them an air of obscurity and complex meaning.

In being challenged in such a way, both by Yahweh's warning and the Serpent's temptations, the couple is made aware that they are willful beings, unchained by objects and disconnected from forms. It being now impossible to perceive themselves as synonymous with the objects around them that they have described, they long to turn elsewhere for a truer definition of themselves. That they decide to partake of the fruit and learn the secret of good and evil and so become, as the Serpent says, like gods, is but an indication that they were living some sort of illusion before, that they are now aware of the mistake, and that

they have chosen a new course. The stage is now set for them to turn away from the objects of the world and face inward for some more ultimate definition of themselves. They become essentially self-conscious and so enter the second illusion. The actual eating of the fruit is only incidental; the decision has been made.

This second illusion is identical in principle to the first. When man first names the animals, all is apparently well. However, the subsequent events show that man has misperceived things from the beginning and in a consistent way. The story is told in such a way as to show man as a creature created complete from the beginning, with the potential to do good or bad. However, in order to come to the truth of himself, he must go through a series of mistakes before he realizes that, in the beginning in the Garden, all would have been well had man perceived himself in the correct way. It is the paradoxical nature of the word he misses. In the same way that he identifies himself in the first illusion with the objects of his description, in the second he treats himself as an object of description in the attempt to make himself the center of all things and so disassociate himself from the illusion of objects. Again, he is unaware of his error, though it is the same error as before.

This turning inward to the self is uniquely illustrated by man's awareness of his own nakedness. By becoming aware

of himself as actor and thus as will, he then makes the mistake of treating that will, treating himself, as an object of description. In a sense, his words have turned away from the world around him and have been focused on himself. That man hides himself from God, that he could conceive of himself as something that could be hidden, indicates that he has objectified his own will, his own intent. It is implied here that man has, in effect, named himself, and the paradox of the word is at work, though he is unaware of it as in the first illusion. By entering into a subjective world, he has, paradoxically, labeled himself as an object through a description of himself as subject. Soon, this is no longer implied but clearly confirmed by the way the couple responds to Yahweh.

Yahweh asks, "Where are you?" In this highly compact and symbolic narrative this immediately indicates two things. First, that man's sense of his own place in the scheme of things is to be the focus of attention, and second that Yahweh is interested in responses. Certainly, Yahweh knows where they are and what has taken place, but like a father testing his children, he is less concerned with actual events than with his children's responses to those events. The man's response, that he has hidden because of his nakedness, confirms that he has become quite self-conscious, self-concerned, and subjective, the center of his concern and description. Yahweh then asks, "Who told you

you were naked?" and before he receives an answer, he asks if they have eaten of the tree. If one assumes that the decision to eat of the tree is the mark of man's decision to establish himself as the center of all things, then the "who" asked for here is most certainly the man himself. The man's response is most significant. He shifts the blame for disobeying God's command onto the woman. This shifting through words of the man's own actions, his own guilt, onto another is an indication that the man assumes that he can describe with words alone the nature of his intent. He assumes that, through the manipulation of words, he can alter his intent, displace it, mold it to his liking and thus separate himself from God, as well as from the world of objects, by labeling his own force of will. The woman, in turn, does the same by shifting her guilt onto the Serpent. They have committed the same error as in the first illusion: assuming that the intent and the form the words bring into being are one.

There is also in this the beginning of the breakdown of this second illusion through this second confrontation with the words of Yahweh. By forcing them to describe themselves in words, Yahweh has forced them into yet another displacement of the will, similar to the intrusion that shattered the first illusion. Because the principle of belonging and distanciation applies to any use of the word, to describe the will itself is to make it a part of a world

to which one can belong, and yet to distance it at the same time. If the intent is distanced from the intent itself through description--surely an untenable situation--then the man's true intent has slipped away again. The turning inward toward the self through language is revealed, as before, as an illusion. The soul, the true intent, is now completely lost.

This final displacement of the will into the undefinable and indescribable is the true "fall" of this tragic drama. The true nature of man's intent is now as numinous as at the moment of his creation when the formless breath of Yahweh was made part of his being. At this final point in the story of the Garden of Eden, man is formless and without direction. He can neither go back to the simplicity of the first illusion, nor can he maintain the hubris of the second, seeing now through his confrontation with the word of Yahweh that both were indeed misperceptions of himself. So the question arises, as it does in any tragedy, What should man then do? Where is he to go? Having now glimpsed the true nature of his intent and its affiliation with the divine, how is he to use this as a guide for action, and action of what sort? The answer is revealed in Yahweh's "curse."

Rather than a curse or punishment, Yahweh's speech at the end of man's sojourn in the Garden is a prediction, an explanation of what shall be, given what now has taken

place. Man shall be set against himself in a paradox reflective of the word that will govern his action in the world. He is to be essentially at war with his very origin: the numinous breath of intent shall be in conflict with the earthly substance of his body. The woman is to be likewise at odds with her origin as she shall be dominated by the man out of whom she came. They are then cast out into the world with this paradoxical condition attached to them. By entering into the second illusion through the decision to eat the fruit, and by having this illusion shattered by a confrontation with the words of Yahweh, man now knows the good and evil of himself, which can now be translated as the knowledge of intent and form, respectively, and the paradox which governs their relationship to one another. Throughout the ancient Hebrew tradition, evil is always associated with form, as good is associated with that formless part of man closest to Yahweh. It is apparently not a part of Yahweh's plan for humankind, nor the author's plan for a description of the beginnings of history, that individuals live forever with this knowledge, but rather that they should be set out on a course in which they develop their own history, that they go forward into action with this knowledge. So man is cast out into the wilderness and the cycle begins again.

There is in this beginning story an establishment of the character of history and of its purpose. With the knowledge man has gained through trial, he must now go forth

and begin the cycle over, in many ways similar to the way he began: as a creature of paradox. The access, so to speak, to this paradox is now the word. Man, from this point forward, shall attempt to find the truth of himself within the word. The nature of his conflict, his action, his history shall be a continued confrontation with himself through the word. Behind this is the notion that though the forms that are the products of the word are illusions, the only direction for the formless intent is back into the word itself. The word in this new context, then, stands as the sacred link between the spirit and the order and proportion man brings to the world through his own expressions.

Rather quickly this knowledge will be lost again and the pattern of the first and second illusions repeated. But this is the character of the cycle of history as portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures. Through the word the connection between divine intent and human intent is rediscovered, and an "arighting" of man and the divine through the word takes place again and again. Here is the revelation of divine mystery through struggle, through interaction, through history, not through instantaneous revelation; and consistently throughout the Old Testament this struggle is a struggle with the word. In a very real sense, the word is the focus of Hebraic history. It is for this reason that the ancient Hebrews chose the story, the movement of generations, the dialogue, in short, history as the way to

portray the revelation of divine intent. There is in this a marked difference from the eastern tradition of self-enlightenment through prayer and meditation. In the Old Testament, with spiritual knowledge gained through conflict and a tragic loss of the form of the self, comes the necessity to act, to wield the word, to do. What separates tragedy from pathos is not only discovery, but the need to answer the question, What must we then do? The answer to this question, though indirect, is contained in the notion of man as language and therefore man, in the most spiritual sense, as history.

With the conditions for this cyclic pattern established in the opening chapters of Genesis, the repetition of this pattern throughout the stories of the Old Testament, both on large and small scales, becomes increasingly clear and relevant. There is first the word of Yahweh, which calls for a movement away from form and out into the wilderness. There is then a confusion of intent with form in an overemphasis on the rule of the word, rather than on the spiritual nature of it. There is then an intrusion by Yahweh himself, again in the form of words, and then a second confusion of intent with form with man as the center of all things. This may appear in the stories as a loss of faith in all things but the self, or it can appear as madness, irreverent anger, or self-indulgence and the worship of hedonistic deities. Then there is a final

intrusion by the words of Yahweh in which the solid will of man is shattered and made formless once again, often quite destructively, and man begins his journey once again in the wilderness, guided now by a knowledge of the spiritual paradox of the word alone.

Often this cycle is portrayed in the saga of a single character, while at other times the people of Israel serve as the collective protagonist. Physical symbolism is also a great part of this portrayal. Where one man experiences a wilderness of the mind, the people of Israel may experience the actual wilderness of the desert. Always there is the covenent of words, often standing at the beginning of each cycle, usually standing at a point at which it shatters the first illusion, indicating, as in the creation story, that an illusion has taken place, and foreshadowing the second illusion to come. Always the word stands at the end, after the final fall, as the paradoxical answer to the loss of form and to the necessity to act.

Often mistaken by scholars, as well by the Hebrews themselves, as a rule or the specifications of law, the covenent, in its many forms, rather represents action in the face of paradox, the spirit of the word rather than the rule of the letter. It stands for the notion that the word itself is sacred and that it must be confronted directly for its mystery to be revealed. To assume that the word brings forth literal truth is to break with its spiritual

significance, for such an assumption carries with it the belief that a manipulation of the word can in turn alter the face of the ultimately real. It is in this way that the first covenent between Yahweh and Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of knowledge is "broken" before they even partake of the fruit. It is not the breaking of its letter, but the misperception of its spiritual importance that is the crime that sets the cycle in motion. They must confront the word through trial and tragedy before they see its true function. It is in this way that the covenants of Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Moses are tied together and function as a single spiritual center of history. Without the tragic cycle of history, there could be no understanding of the true meaning of the covenent, no revelation of the true tragic nature of man as langauge.

While it is certainly beyond the scope of this work to examine even the major stories of the Old Testament in this context, it is possible to pick out one book, one story, that not only illustrates this idea clearly and directly, but is also emblematic of the pattern and message of the Old Testament as a whole. For this purpose I have chosen the Book of Job. Granted, it is probably the book most worn by interpretation. But it serves my purpose well in that it is composed almost entirely of discourse. That is to say, it is made up of words that are active, in use, and transformative in their immediate effect on the

participants. The setting of the story and the basic story line itself are gotten out of the way quickly (as they often are in the Hebrew Scriptures) to make way for the presentation of a revelatory experience issuing exclusively from an active confrontation with language.

This kind of presentation of the active, transformative use of language is a common motif in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. Seldom in the Bible is theology presented in a direct, didactic way. Much more often the biblical message is delivered in the form of stories in which words are used as manifestations of being, power and identity. The effect of these words is to change the destinies of men and often the destinies of nations. Their transformative effect is paramount, far overshadowing their reflective or descriptive qualities.

Job, in its direct address to the theological issues of the Bible in the form of discourse, is one of the most concentrated treatments of the power of the word. The revelatory experience brought about in Job himself is one of the most direct treatments of the power of language in the Old Testament. As a tragic drama, it is perhaps without equal in the Bible for having modern significance while at the same time capturing the essence and purpose of tragedy throughout the Old Testament.

CHAPTER IV

JOB

What makes Job a tragedy, and what makes it as a book emblematic of a tragic theme in the Old Testament, is its presentation of a confrontation with the non-rational quality of the Word and the way it depicts this confrontation as a religious revelation. In dealing with the relationship between the words of men and the words of God, it is identical, both in method and goal, to the non-rational, spiritual perception of the word in tragedy.

Even though we have laid out a kind of pattern in tragedy from the point of view of language, it should be remembered that each tragedy has its own way of moving through this pattern and that there is no strict sequence of events. What is important is that language, the word, is the center around which the events revolve and that the transformations that take place are the consequences of the way language is used and perceived. What is common to all tragedy is the result of a confrontation with the word.

The Book of Job as a whole can be seen as a story with three primary elements: an individual character who has been the victim of some misfortune and thus has fallen out of the norm and become an object of scrutiny; the world of men, or society, with which this character must deal while in this

position as an outsider; and a silent, all-seeing and all-knowing will or design that is addressed and questioned, but that, until the end, does not respond. This basic triangle (with some variation concerning how and when the universal mind responds, if at all) repeats itself in many stories of the Old Testament, and in all tragedies. And, as in all tragedies, in the Book of Job the struggle is for a definition of justice, an explanation of fate, a purpose for action. Once again, the battlefield is the word.

Fundamentally, this struggle involves a conflict between a standard form of justice, agreed upon by most men, which asserts that evil men shall be punished and good men shall be rewarded, and the idea that there is no such justice beyond that which is declared by the individual in his own words. This latter side is taken up by the unfortunate protagonist who, by way of his own experience, sees himself as a guiltless victim of indifferent chance, and who alone can declare his own innocence. The conflict is severe in that the protagonist, in his eloquence and sincerity, represents a danger to the design and proportion of society upon which the majority of men base their actions. He has threatened justice itself. Throughout the conflict, the universal will or order stretches out above, to which the protagonist makes hopeless appeal and angry challenge, and to which society makes reference for proof of a cause-and-effect morality that can explain or justify the

fate of the protagonist. In the midst of this conflict stands the word through which both sides express their views and on which the "truth" of either side depends.

In this scenario, the protagonist has moved beyond the first illusion and entered the second because of a confrontation with the word itself that has shattered his trust in the truths of men and their descriptions of the order of the world. The rest of society remains in the first illusion, and so appears more ignorant and naive than the protagonist. The illusion of the protagonist, however, is the same in principle as the first: he sees that the description of the morality of men is an illusion because of a confrontation he has had with the word itself that has shattered his faith, yet he turns inward and describes himself and his actions as the final judge of his own intent, thus repeating the same illusion on another level. Only through an intrusion, directly or indirectly, of the universal will can this second illusion be broken. In Job, as in the rest of the Old Testament, this intrusion comes in the form of a second confrontation with the word, in this case the word of Yahweh. Though the stories of the Old Testament follow this pattern in different ways, it is easily identifiable in Job.

As is the case in many other biblical stories, the fate of Job is not a punishment, but a test of how Job will respond to a particular kind of challenge. The portrayal of

his response is to serve as a religious lesson for the reader or listener, the goal of which is to reveal something about the word and the theological mystery it contains. That what befalls Job is a test and not a punishment is clearly laid out in the Prologue in the form of an implied wager between Yahweh and Satan. The object is to find out if Job does indeed fear God and shun evil. Since the subject is Job, the judgments of Job's "comforters" serve as "word challenges," almost as temptations, that force Job to act on his predicament in the form of verbal responses. As a dialogue the Book of Job presents acts of language, rather than described physical deeds. Here, as throughout the Old Testament, words are synonymous with action. Thus the test is test of words, a battle of descriptions.

Almost every speech by any character in the Book of Job begins with a direct reference to the words of the previous speaker. Because each speaker begins with a reference to the previous speaker, even to his very phrasing, the focus is not on the content of what is being said, but on the way in which it is said. The reader, then, is put in a position in which he does not judge the speeches as correct or incorrect, proper or improper, but in which he must work to understand the vision of evil, or justice, that the words themselves evoke, the perspective on the world that each speaker's language creates. The Book of Job is thus more than a morality play in which such questions are easily

answered. The reader does not know who is right and who is wrong; his attention is focused on the words themselves, as is the attention of the characters. Any answer, then, that might be found concerning the true nature of evil or divine justice is inseparable from the words that bring it into being. Like Job, the reader is made to confront the word directly, and the word itself is on trial.

That Job in the end resolves to take his words before God, proceeding "by due form of law," is highly significant in this regard (13.18). The word-shattering, yet revelatory nature of his final confrontation with the words of Yahweh makes the Book of Job an extremely direct example of the tragic paradox of the word within which is found the mystery of divine law and divine justice.

Job begins as a prosperous man, well in line with the rest of society both in terms of material wealth and religious observance. He was

> a sound and honest man who feared God and shunned evil. Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. And he own seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-donkeys, and many servants besides. This man was indeed a man of mark among all the people of the East. (1.1-3)

He is, if any man was, guiltless, and as guiltless as the first man, Adam. Yet, as a tragedy, this story is not

concerned with guilt or innocence, but a realignment of human intent with divine intent through the word. Thus, that Job observes the rule of the law stands only as a preliminary condition for his fall so that the lesson may take its course. Any assumption that his prosperity is a result of his "righteousness" is revealed as an illusion through the destruction of this prosperity in a confrontation, not with explainable events, but with words that are the products of an entirely alien intent.

We have already seen that the event that marks the shattering of the first illusion is a confrontation with seemingly arbitrary words that come from outside the context of the protagonists's normal world view. These words have an other-worldly quality, having about them a reason and a sense, but a reason and a sense that is undefinable. They seem to have an intent behind them, but an intent or design deeper and more mysterious than the literal meaning of the words alone. Like the eerie shudder that runs through Homer's Cyclops upon hearing the name of Odysseus, which confirm for him the oracles of old, the words create a feeling that goes beyond their literal meaning. In themselves they are less soul stirring than the strange, supernatural intent that seems to lie behind them.

Job's first encounter with his misfortunes is not an experience of the events themselves, but of the words of his messengers. All is well, when suddenly Job hears a series

of reports, each overlapping the other, of the destruction of his family and property. Each report is blunt, to the point, and devastating with a repetition of phrase and rhythm that denotes an eerie indifference. They are almost formulaic, carrying in their tone no hint of emotion or care:

> He had not finished speaking when another messenger arrived. `Your sons and daughters' he said `were at their meal and drinking wine at their eldest brothers house, when suddenly from the wilderness a gale sprang up, and it battered all four corners of the house which fell in on the young people. They are dead: I alone escaped to tell you.' (1.18-19)

Job does not witness the events described, nor does he experience them. There are only the words, alien, arbitrary, touching not the body, but the mind and the soul.

There is a similarity between these initial words and the oracles in Oedipus, the words of the witches in Macbeth, Cordelia's response to Lear, the message of the ghost of Hamlet's father, and the words of the spirit in the first part of Faust. Here are words so alien and removed that the physical event they portray or respond to is less important than the mysterious and terrifying intent behind them. Life is not shattered, but the meaning of life is. Its rational and justifiable context has been ripped away, and ripped

away with words. Again, that Job encounters the words of the messengers is an indication that what is about to follow is not a conflict of the body, but a conflict of the mind and the spirit as they are grounded in meaning, grounded in language. Job's first response to this language, and after he has become afflicted with weeping sores, illustrates the inadequacy of his attempts to place what has happened into a proper context of words, words that are obviously inadequate, having lost their hold on objective reality and become mere illusions.

At this point, "the news of all the disasters that had fallen on Job came to the ears of three of his friends. Each of them set out from home . . . " (2.11), and came to look at him "from a distance" (2.12). Here they sit "for seven days and seven nights" and no one says a word. The emphasis here is on the total lack of speech, the absence of any words at all. Though Job's friends are silent as well, their attention, as well as ours, is focused on Job. If language is what grounds the main character to the world, then the absence of language here is in keeping both with Job's shattered life and the importance of language in the reordering of his perspective. How Job reorders his perspective in lieu of what has happened is the central issue of the poem; therefore we hang upon <u>his</u> silence, rather than that of his friends, and our attention is drawn to the way in which Job uses language to confront the

disorder that has fallen upon him. Had his friends spoken first, Job's first words would then be a response to, rather than a reestablishment of, order through expression. As the story stands, Job's own initial assessment of what has happened to him sets the tone of the entire dialogue, making his silence crucial to the overall meaning of the poem. It is the objective order of Job's world that has been shattered by a confrontation with the word, a world to which he can no longer "belong." He now sees the first illusion for what it is and the old words cannot bring it back; there is no returning. Hence, there is only silence until Job establishes another sort of order through language to which his friends must respond.

Surrounded by the society of men, Job finally breaks the silence:

> May the day perish when I was born,
> and the night that told of a boy conceived.
> May that day be darkness,
> may no light shine on it. (3.3-4)

Job has indeed lost the world and now has only his life, which, set adrift in a meaningless sea of illusions, may as well have never been. If we consider the principles discussed earlier concerning belonging and distanciation in the use of language, it appears that Job, by using words again, must be attempting to belong to something, if not now to the world around him. Indeed he is, and that something

is himself, though at this point in an entirely negative sense. The man "Job" no longer has a purpose in life, yet it is because of this that his attention turns to himself. With his first words, Job has begun to enter the second illusion.

To these first words, Eliphaz of Teman responds with an attempt to "comfort" Job by giving an explanation of his plight:

> Many another once you schooled,
> giving strength to feeble hands;
> your words set right whoever wavered,
> and strengthened every failing knee.
> And now your turn has come, and you lose patience too;
> now it touches you, and you are overwhelmed.
> Can you recall a guiltless man that perished,
> or have you ever seen good men brought to nothing? (4.3-7)

Eliphaz is speaking from the first illusion in which there is a logical explanation for the differing fates of men, an illusion in which words can set the world right again. For Eliphaz, all that has happened to Job is but a lesson to be learned, and once learned, happiness will be restored:

> Happy indeed the man whom God corrects!
> Then do not refuse this lesson from Shaddai.
> . . . . . .

In ripe age you shall go to the grave,
like a wheatsheaf stacked in due season.
All this, we have observed: it is true.
Heed it, and do so to your profit. (5.17, 26-27)

Yet Job has gone beyond this and sees all the acts of men as pointless drudgery. Eliphaz's description of justice is a part of the past; it is obliterated. All that remains for Job is the self, which dies and is hidden away from the eyes of men and God, and so from this formulaic justice as well:

Remember that my life is but a breath,
and that my eyes will never again see joy.
The eye that once saw me will look on me no more,
your eyes will turn my way, and I shall not be
there.
As a cloud dissolves and is gone,
so he who goes down to Sheol never ascends again.
. . . . . .
No wonder then if I cannot keep silence;
in the anguish of my spirit I must speak,
lament in the bitterness of my soul. (7.7-9, 11)

More than bitterness, it is a mounting terror: terror of the consequences of being unable to act, and so to belong to the world, because the root of human action, the wielding of the word, no longer has validity. This is not merely loss or sadness, but knowledge that comes from an

unforgettable confrontation with the arbitrariness of the word. Nietzsche's discussion of the similarity between the Dionysiac man and Hamlet seems to compare well with Job's apprehension:

> . . . both have looked deeply into the true nature of things, they have understood and are now loath to act. They realize that no action of theirs can work any change in the eternal condition of things, and they regard the imputation as ludicrous or debasing that they should set right the time which is out of joint. Understanding kills action, for in order to act we require the veil of illusion; such is Hamlet's doctrine, not to be confounded with the cheap wisdom of John-a-Dreams, who through too much reflection, as it were a surplus of possibilities, never arrives at action. What . . . overbalances any motive leading to action, is not reflection but understanding, the apprehension of truth and its terror. (51)

Yet, like Hamlet, Job insists that he must speak, and in so doing he enters fully into the second illusion. The only way for Job to face his despair is to turn inward and find the words to state his case. There can be no justice in the designs of men; his own experience is proof of this. All that is left for him is to depict himself truly before

himself and before God.

Job is entirely alone, entirely subjective, and this is the only truth. His own words are now the only measure of his guilt or innocence, and his speeches from here on become more and more concentrated on this point. The speeches of his "comforters," by contrast, repeatedly stress a cause-and-effect notion of justice, yet this is nothing Job has not heard, indeed believed, before. They are reflections of an illusion he has moved beyond:

> I have seen all this with my own eyes,
> heard with my own ears, and understood.
> Whatever you know, I know too;
> I am in no way inferior to you.
> But my words are intended for Shaddai;
> I mean to remonstrate with God. (13.1-3)

Job means to speak with God, and in so meaning assumes that his words will depict accurately the truth of his soul. The second series of speeches (chapters 15-27) are but intensifications of this point and his increasing distance from those around him. His discourse with his friends becomes less and less an exchange and more and more a trading-off of two opposing views as Job moves further and further into his own description of himself, the absurdity of his life's destiny, and the necessity to act on his own behalf and his alone. "Your old maxims are proverbs of ash, / your retorts, retorts of clay" he tells his "comforters"

(13.12) as the speeches of his friends become more repetitious, and his words become more centered on himself:

> Silence! Now I will do the talking,
>
> whatever may befall me.
>
> I put my flesh between my teeth,
>
> I take my life in my hands.
>
> Let him kill me if he will; I have no other hope
>
> than to justify my conduct in his eyes.
>
> (13.13-15)

What Job has done by entering the second illusion, by making the assumption that his intent is one with the forms his words bring into being, is a reflection of the same movement that takes place in the Garden, the same movement that takes place in the stories throughout the Old Testament. It is this movement that carries the subjects toward a final confrontation with the word of God. This apparent arrogance or hubris is but a necessary second stage of a cycle that repeats itself over and over in the Hebrew Scriptures, a cycle that ends in a revelation of the mystery of the word. The words of the messengers mark the first intrusion, initiated by supernatural design, which shatters the first illusion and forces Job into the second.

Job becomes more and more rebellious as he seeks to set out his case before God, and vindicate his spirit with his own words. In this way he wishes to "see" his own vindication, though his life, the form of the world which he

knew before, is lost:

> Ah, would that these words of mine were written
> down,
> inscribed on some monument
> with iron chisel and engraving tool,
> cut into the rock for ever.
> This I know: that my Avenger lives,
> and he, the Last, will take his stand on earth.
> After my awakening, he will set me close to him,
> and from my flesh I shall look on God. (19.23-26)

Taking accommodation only in himself, Job seeks "the undiscover'd country" beyond illusion, beyond the forms of the dreams of men; Job seeks an audience with Yahweh himself:

> Who can get me a hearing from God?
> I have had my say, from A to Z; now let Shaddai
> answer me.
> When my adversary has drafted his writ against me
> I shall wear it on my shoulder.
> and bind it round my head like a royal turban.
> I will give him an account of every step of my
> life,
> and go as boldly as a prince to meet him.
> (31:35-37)

Taking refuge in himself, Job takes the only action left to him: he must go beyond the forms and illusions of

the world and face with his words what amounts to nothing less than death. He goes not to end his life, but to find its source, the great wisdom from which all words and deeds flow. Yet in facing Yahweh himself, Job must face the illusion of even this, his last stronghold of language and so face the spiritual paradox of the word itself.

In chapter twenty-eight there occurs an unusual poem, a hymn concerning wisdom and its inaccessibility. The significance in the context of the dialogue is obscure, as well as the original position in the text, though it serves as a preparation for the speech of Yahweh. Its occurrence is similar in many ways to that of the chorus in Greek tragedy, standing as a comment on the events that have taken place and, more importantly, their possible outcome. It speaks of mines and mountains, the explorations and discoveries of men, yet it asks the question, ". . . where does wisdom come from? / Where is understanding to be found?" (28.12). It says that it cannot be bought, or traded, or measured, that

> It is outside the knowledge of every living thing,
> hidden from the birds of the sky.
> Perdition and Death can only say,
> `We have heard reports of it.´
>
> (28.21-22)

"Only God," sings the hymn, "has traced its path / and found

out where it lives." And then God said to man, "Wisdom? It is fear of the Lord. / Understanding?--avoidance of evil" (28.28). These last two lines indicate that wisdom is indeed accessible to man, despite the inaccessibility of wisdom implied by the poem. But these phrases, though apparent answers, are obscure in themselves and bring up the question again: How is man to recognize evil? How is man to know that he possesses a fear of God?

If one looks at the consistent message of the stories of the Old Testament, one sees that the answers to these questions can only be found in the word of God, in his Covenant. Only there may the wisdom of man be aligned with the wisdom of God. If indeed the Book of Job is a tragedy and as such represents a cycle in which divine mystery is revealed in the portrayal of man in a confrontation with himself as language, then this hymn begins to take on great significance to the dialogue in which it occurs. The hymn indicates that wisdom resides beyond words and cannot be described, just as the truth of a man's soul cannot be reached by words. When this happens, wisdom and man become as fixed as the words themselves, as fixed as descriptions of the world, and as fixed as the law, for descriptions fall apart, as in the case of Job, and man ceases to belong and can no longer act. Wisdom then lies beyond the forms of the world, as the poem says. It cannot be mined or purchased or found to reside at the source of some wild river; it lies

beyond what words bring into being.

If this is so, then the reader of this poem gains an insight concerning Job: wisdom does not reside within the words of Job either. The mine in which he digs is as much a product of words as the theology of his "comforters." In this way, this obscure hymn indeed paves the way for Yahweh's speech, and the mystery of the word.

In chapter thirty-eight, Yahweh speaks to Job "from the heart of the tempest" and shatters Job's final illusion:

> Who is this obscuring my designs
> with his empty-headed words?
> Brace yourself like a fighter;
> now it is my turn to ask questions and yours to inform me. (38.2-3)

From an ever-moving, unfixed whirlwind the words of Yahweh burst forth in an assertion of his absolute power over all. There is no order to it, no measuring of one thing over another, no justification of it, no explanation at all. What is described is a whirling scene of terror and grandeur, without reason, without plan, without logic. The creatures are described in massive language, strong, relentless and beautiful. Always there is the question, Can you master these?

> Leviathan, too! Can you catch him with a fish-hook?
> or run a line round his tongue?

Can you put a ring through his nose
or pierce his jaw with a hook?
Will he plead and plead with you,
will he coax you with smooth words? (40.25-27)

These are the forms of man's world, yet here they are beyond his conception. Though man may name them, they are beyond his ideas. Can man say "I know the world" after this? Indeed can he say "I know myself"?

The effect of the non-rationality of these words is to direct the attention away from the creatures being described, and on to the unfathomable intent that lies behind their creation. Similar to the words of the messengers, what the words say is less important than the implied intent behind them. Against this intent Job's "case" means less than nothing, for he is dealing with a force beyond words, beyond explanations, and so beyond the law, whether it is the justice of the society of men, or the justice of the self.

In confronting the words of Yahweh, Job also confronts a principle that shatters the second illusion he has created, and it may be described in terms of belonging and distanciation in the use of the word. In order to belong to that which is brought about by words, one must also distance oneself from that product in order to name it. It is to assert that whatever is named is "Not What I Am." Therefore, to describe human intent, as Job has done, is to

make the same error as his "comforters" in their descriptions of justice. The belief that the forms that the word brings into being have an existential reality beyond the words themselves is to ignore the hidden spirit that is the source of all words. The only way to "see" this spirit is to confront the word directly and the paradox it contains.

The cycle has come full circle again and the divine mystery has been revealed: the paradox within the word reveals in itself the formlessness of the spirit behind it and thus its qualitative relationship to the divine spirit, or divine intent. The result is a tragic loss of form, almost a death, together with a renewal of the sanctity of the word for what it in itself makes manifest to man. The lesson is not to follow the rule of the letter, but the spirit of the word, for it is through the word that the spirit acts and finds its link to God. This is the mystery of the Covenant: not what it says, but the paradox it represents.

With this one may understand Job's final answer:

> I know that you are all powerful:
> what you conceive, you can perform.
> I am the man who obscured your designs
> with my empty-headed words.
> I have been holding forth on matters I cannot understand,

on marvels beyond me and my knowledge.

. . . . . .

I knew you then only by hearsay;
but now, having seen you with my own eyes,
I retract all I have said,
and in dust and ashes I repent. (42.2-6)

That Job has had to learn this mystery through a painful ordeal explains why Yahweh "burns with anger" against Eliphaz of Teman and his two friends, who have not spoken "truthfully" of God as Job has done. The second illusion, in its desperate struggle to maintain a description of the will, is a necessary stage for the cycle to complete itself. Job, in his very trial, has all along spoken truthfully of Yahweh in that the only way to come to an understanding of divine mystery is through tragedy and the pattern of language that makes it so. Job's "comforters" have not gone through this and so have incurred the wrath of God, indicating not only that this is a sacred and right process, but central to the very theology of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses with whom God made his Covenant. The power of prayer is given to Job (42.8).

The sense of renewal here is unmistakable. Job's fortunes are restored and Job dies "an old man and full of days." What sets tragedy apart from pathos is its portrayal of discovery and of a renewed will to be. Though the cycle will repeat itself again, there is a return, for the moment,

to the word, a "reentry" into language, so to speak, a restructuring of order from chaos, only now informed by a spiritual "vision." It is a "vision" that sees the word as a vessel for the spirit, or rather its access into being. Form and intent are now aligned, with the paradox of the word seen as forever separating and yet joining the two. The deep sense of renewal that corresponds with this "vision" is the one true hallmark of tragedy. It is Nietzsche's eternal life of the will translating itself once more into images and forms (Nietzsche 101-2). It is Hamlet's voice from the "undiscover'd country beyond" telling Horatio to "tell my story." As Heidegger has written, "what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way" (qtd. in Ricoeur Hermeneutics 58). Such is the decisive movement of tragedy. The mind becomes inseparable from the soul; art becomes inseparable from religion; the law becomes inseparable from God; and the connecting link between God and man is the mysterious paradox of the word. That this is revealed only through suffering, only through tragedy, is the heart of the theology of the word.

CHAPTER V

MOIRA AND THE LOGOS

Thus far we have seen that tragedy is a revelation of divine mystery through the dramatic or narrative portrayal of man in a confrontation with his own expressions, his own word, and that behind this portrayal is the assumption that within the word lies the paradoxical secret of the joining of divine intent and the human will. In this way, tragedy opens a pathway for action in which spirit and form are aligned, action that, in the end, seeks fruition in the word itself. Around this argument we have constructed a method by which the pattern of this portrayal might be identified and have then applied this method to the Old Testament. This method can also be applied to the tragedy of the ancient Greeks.

The point here is not to say that the Greeks were similar to the Hebrews because they both had tragedy, but merely that tragedy was present in both cultures and as such is an aspect of the ancient world that has become a part of the tradition of the modern world, surviving from antiquity as a consistent religious and artistic endeavor. To this purpose it is necessary to discuss tragedy as something that stands on its own, that has its own principles and its own concerns, consistent above and beyond its many different

forms. That these concerns and principles reach across cultures as different as the Greeks and the Hebrews is perhaps the most significant aspect of this approach. There is a danger in discussing one culture in terms of the other, which is at best a very risky and irresponsible business, particularly when the subject involves the unification of ethics and aesthetics. Obviously forms of artistic expression will differ from culture to culture. Greek tragedy, evolving as it did from Dionysiac ritual, was always a public affair, a drama of the stage, and as such had its own particular forms and effects, quite different from the narrative style of the Old Testament. Certainly its audience expected different things than would a Hebrew audience! If we were to begin with Greek tragedy, we would have to begin by identifying the elements that are peculiarly Greek in style and then attempt to bring Hebraic tragedy into line with those elements, since such a discussion would elicit an assumption that tragedy began in the Greek form, that it is tied to that form, and that all other forms must always be compared with it.

If, however, we are to label the pattern laid out already in the Old Testament as tragedy, then Greek tragedy must also follow this pattern, containing in its structure the same ideas of form and intent and their relationship through the word. Indeed, it is through an understanding of Greek tragedy from these ideas that tragedy as a whole can

be seen as a consistent pattern of dealing with religious concerns that reaches across many forms and yet remains tragedy, in the Old Testament as well as in Shakespeare.

In the Old Testament there is an inevitability to the intervention of Yahweh into the affairs of men. There is a repeated cycle through which man must move, during which he moves away from the will of Yahweh towards his own will, falls, and is realigned with the divine through an inevitable contact with the word of God. Though Yahweh himself is indefinable and unpredictable, his intrusion into men's lives must come to pass. Though there is no schedule, the unfathomable order of his intent will prevail. For the Hebrews, universal order was subsumed in the one divine being, the single all-powerful mind, and this mind remained not only untouchable and unseeable, but unnameable. He reveals himself only in his word, which is his action in the world. This word is the law, the Covenant, and it is the repeated fruition of each tragic cycle in the Old Testament. Through this law man is aligned with God; his intent is linked to divine intent and is aligned with the forms of the world through the sanctity of this word, not its rule. To follow the word is more than to merely obey the law; it is to bring a sanctity to action itself. Thus human action and the spirit are joined. Through the stages of the first illusion and the second illusion the inevitable realignment with God through the word of the Covenant is brought about

and the cycle begins again. Thus, through this tragic pattern, with its focus on the word, is divine order restored to the actions of man.

This same pattern of inevitable realignment with the divine can be found in the tragedy of the ancient Greeks. We begin by first discussing Greek tragedy in terms of the philosophical and religious principles it worked with, and how it worked with them and so link this tragic pattern to the very culture and history of the Greeks for which tragedy was a unifying force, its fundamental significance reaching far beyond the particular anomalies of authorial style. We will then go on to discuss briefly how this pattern works in terms of an individual character in perhaps the most famous of Greek tragedies, the myth of Oedipus.

The beginnings of the tragic pattern can be found in the religious philosophy of Solon and the retribution of Zeus, which, as Werner Jaeger writes, ". . . is the very core of the religious doctrine which, a century later, created Attic tragedy" (145). The inevitable intervention and alignment of divine intent and human intent through the word can be found here, in the intersection of Moira and the Logos.

Long before Solon, the idea of fate, destiny, a man's portion in life, or divine Moira existed for the ancient Greeks as an elusive, unfathomable force that not even the gods could control. It was, in a sense, the inevitable,

long-term balancing of all things, an order with no apparent rhyme or reason, and yet it alone separated the universe and time from chaos. It was a notion of universal pattern, yet with no discernable rule. It can be found in almost all epic poetry, like a great backdrop against which the dramas of life are played, and of which the gods themselves are a part or an extension. Its relationship to, or contact with, the rules and actions of men remained the darkest of mysteries. Yet it was the poetry of Solon that brought this obscure universal order to earth, so to speak, in the form of moral force that intervenes into the affairs of men, bringing all men to divine justice, or dikê. For Solon, its mystery lay in the mean or measure, the proportion in which all things must come into balance. The powerful man shall fall and the weak man shall rise, but in a measure and a proportion beyond the designs of mortals. As Jaeger writes of Solon,

> Moira, Fate, makes all human effort fundamentally insecure, how ever earnest and logical it may seem to be; and this Moira cannot be averted by foreknowledge, although . . . misery caused by the agent can be averted. . . . The relation of our success to the acts which we will is entirely irrational. Even the man who tries his best to succeed, frequently comes to ruin, and the man who begins badly is often allowed by God to prosper and escape the consequences of his folly. There

> is risk in all human action. (145)

And yet this did not mean for Solon that men should submit to divine will with resignation and apathy. There was the possibility for wise action and responsibility in the face of this force, and this is perhaps Solon's greatest influence on Attic tragedy. Though this wisdom finds its fruition in the Logos, the laying down of the laws and words of man, it would not necessarily come from a rational source. As Jaeger writes further of Solon,

> . . . he takes the objective view, God's view, and asks himself and his audience whether facts which humanity thinks irrational facts may not have an intelligible justification from a higher point of view. (146)

Though difficult to recognize, it is "the invisible Mean of judgment, which alone contains the limits of all things" (qtd. in Jaeger 148). This Solon called gnomosynê, or judgment, which, as Jaeger writes, ". . . is both true insight and the will to put it into action" (149).

In this rare wisdom, Solon saw the possibility of bringing together the spirit and the state, the intersection of Moira and the Logos, in a sense of moral proportion that was to become so important to the Athenian mind, and so fundamental to the educational and political character of Greek tragedy. There was in the time before the great rationalists in ancient Greece no separation between

aesthetics and ethics, matters of form and matters of the spirit, just as, in the best of all possible Athenian worlds, there should be no separation between the state and the spirit. It was during this time that Aeschylus took the philosophy and hope of Solon and saw that the way to reach "the invisible Mean of judgment," the gnomosynê, was through suffering (Jaeger 239, 252, 266), and that this suffering was not a suffering of the body, but a suffering of ideas, a confrontation between man and his own expressions. The battle would be waged in the Logos, the mind, the word, and the divine force of Moira would intercede and bring all to proportion. The way it would intercede would be as the Logos itself, on the stage, in the tragic drama.

This idea of suffering within the Logos runs throughout the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, though each emphasized a different aspect of the same struggle. Aeschylus, being concerned with basic religious principles, made great use of the chorus as the observer of the acts of gods and their trials--trials of ideas and words, acts of language--and eloquent choral responses that contained within them the suffering of the audience as they participated in this search for justice through the high language of poetry. Sophocles, being concerned with the individual character, made less use of the chorus, but developed the dialogue between characters to such an extent that the struggle of words became even more central to the

action and development of individual personalities. In the tragedy of Sophocles, Moira touched the individual through the language of the individual, and thus brought divine proportion closer to the man, the personal will, and so closer to the personal lives of the audience. Euripides, often banned or run off the stage for his abuses of traditional mythological themes, is perhaps closest to our own modern idea of tragedy in its deep psychological explorations of religious fervor and obsessive action. Yet even here the principles of tragedy remain. The discovery of divine proportion, or Moira, is portrayed by all of these tragedians as a discovery made by suffering through that which is out of proportion, and this disproportion is always portrayed as a disproportion within the Logos itself, a confusion of the human intent with the forms that are the products of words. The intrusion or intervention of Moira, whether it is through the irrational words of an oracle, the unexpected, yet feared, words of a messenger, or from Apollo himself, occurs always within the Logos, arighting it, and showing to men, in their own language, the "intelligible justification" of irrational facts, the view from above, the view of Solon.

Jaeger writes, "Tragedy . . . owes both its traditional material and its ethical and educational spirit to epic, not to its own Dionysiac origin" (43), and it is in this ethical and educational spirit that its lesson of proportion and

"invisible Mean" comes to bear on the law. Through tragedy, reason and religion, Moira and the Logos, are joined. The end lesson is, in a sense, the cryptic notion of man as language: the secret of man lay within the invisible measure of his own Logos. There is here, as in the tragedy of the Old Testament, a paradox of great meaning within the word that can only be discovered by suffering through a confrontation with the word itself, by first going through the life that is out of balance, where intent and form are confused as one and the spiritual paradox of the word is missed.

The tragic pattern of confrontation with the word and the movement through the first and second illusions is perhaps best illustrated in Greek tragedy by Sophocles' Oedipus the King and Oedipus at Colonus. These two tragedies deal specifically with the myth of Oedipus, from the time of his solving the riddle of the Sphinx and his lordship over Thebes to his miraculous death near the grove of the Furies at Colonus in Attica. Through the individual character of Oedipus the struggle to align the state with the order of heaven is played out. As in all tragedy, the focus of this struggle is the word, and it begins with a confrontation with the word itself.

Oedipus moves through the first and the second illusions entirely in Oedipus the King. In Oedipus at Colonus, Oedipus has already been transformed into a

character of sacred significance, and thus the focus of this play is to bring to fruition the events that transpired in Oedipus the King. It is in Oedipus the King that Oedipus' life is shattered by a confrontation with the word.

This entire play is dominated from the very beginning by the way in which language determines the destinies of men. Already, as we learn in the play, oracle and prophecy, the intrusions of the gods into the affairs of men through language, have brought Oedipus to Thebes in an attempt to escape the prophecy that he will murder his father and marry his mother. Oedipus' life is motivated at the outset by events of language. He moves away from one experience of strange and powerful language and meets yet another in the Sphinx. His solving of the riddle brings him great fortune and power and the word that so disrupted his life before becomes his saviour. The power he gains as king is in itself tied to his use of language: his word creates his reality directly and he lives with a supreme confidence that his true power is his own use of the word.

Oedipus lives, in the beginning of the play, in the first illusion. His life and the events that surround it are for Oedipus explainable and predictable through language. All is well: he has escaped the prophecy of his past, and indeed he has apparently conquered it with his own wit, his own manipulation of words. The forms of his experience and his own intent are one and the same. His

words have made it so.

Yet all is not well with Thebes, and it is this that suggests to the audience that Oedipus is indeed living an illusion. A blight is on its people and on its crops and the priests come to Oedipus for a solution. Living still in the first illusion, the solution for Oedipus must lie in some explanation, some verbal confirmation, of the cause of his city's troubles. To acquire this explanation, he has sent Creon to the Pythian temple of Apollo, "that he might learn there by what act or word I could save this city" (lines 71-72).

Creon returns to speak of a murderer in their midst who must either be banished or killed for the blight to be lifted. Of course the murderer is Oedipus himself, though he does not yet know this. With Creon's words, the audience becomes fully aware that it is Oedipus' stubborn confidence in his own explanations that clouds his perception of events. The Greek audience knows the story of Oedipus coming to Thebes and of his killing of a man at a crossroads. Why does he not recall that event now? Oedipus is not dull or stupid, so his present blindness cannot be accounted for by this. It is his blind trust in his own ability to explain or shape reality through language that sets him on a course toward an encounter with his own illusions. This message of Creon, taken from an oracle of divine origin, does not in itself shatter Oedipus'

illusions, but alters the course of his life toward just such a confrontation, dismantling his life piece by piece. Through the word the divine has become intertwined with Oedipus' life and the tragic pattern begins to take shape.

The first illusion is finally shattered when Oedipus confronts the words of Teiresias, again from a divine source, as Teiresias is a seer. Through Teiresias the oracle of Creon's report begins to take on a strange and frightening meaning, though Oedipus refuses to acknowledge the connection between Teiresias' proclamation and his own act of murder. Rather, Oedipus responds with anger, accusing Teiresias and Creon of plotting against him and trying to manipulate him with lies. This is an anger that comes from fear, fear that all that Oedipus once trusted as fact and order in his life was mere illusion. Indeed, he comes to see all men's use of language as illusory and as manipulation. In the face of this, Oedipus strikes back at the world from a self-contained position. He stands alone against all deceit and seeks to banish Creon and Teiresias from his own world. His temper becomes increasingly violent, in contrast to his controlled manner in the beginning of the play. In many ways, he appears to be losing his mind, yet this is not the case. Oedipus has entered the second illusion in which the only constant is his own description of his own intent. This he holds up against the words and prophecies of other men in a rage

against fate and descriptions of the preordained. As Teiresias asks his servant to lead him away, Oedipus agrees, saying "Yes, lead him off. So long as you are here, / you'll be a stumbling block and a vexation; / once gone, you will not trouble me again" (445-47).

This second illusion begins to crumble when Oedipus hears Jocasta's description of an oracle that came to Laius: "that it was fate that he should die a victim at the hands of his own son" (713). Upon hearing that he was instead, as Jocasta believes, killed by robbers at a crossroads, Oedipus begins to question even himself and his own identity:

> O dear Jocasta,
> as I hear this from you, there comes upon me
> a wandering of the soul--I could run mad.
> (726-27)

Oedipus begins to make the connection. Once again, the reported words of divine origin come to Oedipus, now shattering the second illusion of his own self-knowledge. He cannot return to the simplicity of his former life, which was dominated by the illusion of objective truth, yet now even his own sense of subjective truth is threatened. He now has " . . . a deadly fear that the old seer had eyes" (747).

Yet Oedipus holds on, though his grip on his own life, his own intent, is loosening. He must hear the words of the herdsman who alone escaped the attack on Laius at the

crossroads. If indeed he speaks of robbers, rather than of a single man, Oedipus is safe. Here we see a continuation of Oedipus' dependence on language to confirm truth, but now the subject of attention is himself. If the herdsman confirms that more than one man killed Laius, then the prophecies and oracles were wrong and Oedipus is a man free to choose his own destiny, despite the deceit of others. We see that though Oedipus has entered the second illusion, it is the same in principle as the first: a belief that form and intent are one. Like Job, Oedipus seeks a vindication of his soul through language.

As the herdsman and a messenger from Corinth meet and exchange memories and information, Oedipus confronts directly in their words the truth of his origin. But more important than this alone is his confrontation with the irony of his own destiny and the touch of the divine in his own actions. Through words he has learned of the illusion of language itself, even as it governs his own sense of identity. The second illusion, like the first, is shattered by divine intrusion through the words of men into human affairs. What drives Jocasta to suicide is her own shame. What drives Oedipus to gouge out his eyes and leave the city to wander in exile is a perception of the inability of man to ever know himself, to ever conceive of the world or of his place in it through language. To see would be to see only illusion, only lies. In his own actions, Oedipus has

participated in divine intent, and what is more he has seen this with his own eyes. Ripped away from all faith in the forms of the world, his sight is turned only toward what is formless and without a home, his own wandering spirit:

> O, O,
> where am I going? Where is my voice
> borne on the wind to and fro?
> Spirit, how far have you sprung?
> (1309-12).

Like his blindness, Oedipus' own knowledge of the formless nature of himself is irreversible. The justice he has witnessed is not a moral justice, the sort that can be explained and formalized into cause-and-effect relationships, but an unspeakable intersection between human life and divine order. Throughout the play, this intersection has taken place through the word. What Oedipus sees in his blindness, and what the audience is forced to "see" by participating in Oedipus' agony, is the strange mystery that lies within acts of language: the non-rational in human experience, Moira touching the Logos.

Oedipus' vision of his own participation in divine intent allows him to take control of his language in a way much different than his assumed mastery of it before. He asks Creon to send him away from Thebes that he may live outside its borders (1517). Oedipus "sees" now that there is a divine intent at work in his actions and that he must

leave for the city to be cleansed; the state is cured through Oedipus' own self-discovery. As in all tragedy, this discovery is a result of a confrontation with language. Oedipus' spoken request to be sent away illustrates that he has indeed reentered the circle in the "right way." As an individual character, Oedipus leaves form behind and reenters the wilderness from which he came, a movement that is strikingly similar to the symbolic physical movement that takes place in the Old Testament at the end of each tragic cycle, setting the stage for the cycle to repeat itself.

In the second play, Oedipus at Colonus, the spiritual significance of what has happened to Oedipus is made clear. Any assumption that equal punishment has been handed down from heaven for an equal crime vanishes here. We have seen that in tragedy there must be an arighting of human order with divine order, of the state with heaven, through a reentrance into the circle of symbolic interpretation. Such is the case in Oedipus at Colonus, in which Oedipus, now a figure graced by God, gives his blessing to Athens and passes on his secret knowledge by allowing Theseus alone to witness his miraculous assumption into heaven. What Oedipus has discovered through suffering is the pure spirit of man. In the absolute meaninglessness of experience, he has been given the gift of a new meaning: that in order to belong to the world, man must yet forever be separate from it. This is the paradox Oedipus faces at the end of Oedipus the King,

a paradox now made sacred in the grace of his own character. Through suffering, which alone can make man confront the mystery of the divine in his own actions, a way is seen to come back to the Logos without illusion. Theseus has himself gained a tragic wisdom and nobility through his own experience of exile that Oedipus recognizes from his own spiritual perspective; as Theseus says, "I know I am only a man; I have no more / To hope for in the end than you have" (566). Thus, it is to Theseus that Oedipus passes on his secret knowledge and mysterious blessing.

There is, in the depiction of Oedipus being graced by heaven, a notion of divine retribution that goes beyond theological and moral description. There is a religious significance in action itself, for it is in the very nature of action that man may find the divine within himself. Retribution is therefore not so much punishment as it is realignment. In tragedy, those who receive retribution are not doomed, but given the gift of seeing the spiritual grace within the material form, the Moira within the Logos. Through such retribution, law, action, and thought are revealed as sacred in themselves. The emphasis is shifted from how to act to <u>why</u> act at all. It is this knowledge of the why that Oedipus gives to Theseus, and it is in this way that the state, for Sophocles, is aligned with heaven. The word itself in its ability to give form to the spirit contains the divine center.

In Greek tragedy, as in Hebraic tragedy, the sanctity of the word, rather than its rule, becomes the focus. The tragic movement through the hermeneutic circle, through the first and second illusions, becomes, as Heidegger says, not a matter of getting out of the circle, but of coming into it in the right way. Through tragedy divine order is restored to the actions of men, and for both the Greeks and the Hebrews, action was a matter of words set against the backdrop of the law, of order, as a combination of divine and human intent. For the Hebrews, the focus of all human trial in the Old Testament is the Covenant, in all its forms. For the ancient Greeks, the focus was proportion in the Logos, the merging of the spirit and the state. For both, tragedy served as the educative device that brought this lesson home.

The great message of tragedy remains for both cultures as an admonition that to merely obey the rule of the letter, rather than perceive the sanctity of the word and as such the presence of the divine in human action, is the first error that leads inevitably to what has been called the sin of pride or hubris, the state referred to here as the second illusion. It is in the first illusion that life is made disproportionate, that intent and form are no longer aligned through the paradox of the word. It is here that the words of Yahweh, or the intrusions of Moira into the Logos, no longer make sense, and the second illusion is entered as a

matter of survival. For Aeschylus, it was this that led to the great pride and power of the Titans, over which Zeus triumphed and about which the chorus prays in Agamemnon. It was this that led to the Tower of Babel, the temples of Solomon, and the inevitable diaspora of the children of Israel. It would be ironic indeed if Nietzsche were right in saying that the great rationalists of classical Greece represented the sunset of Greece, rather than its bright noon, for surely they followed the rule of the letter in the extreme and tragedy dissolved for them into repetition and finally into nothing. But it is our mistake to perceive their great philosophical works as finished and static, serene and without struggle, pure, as we say, "in the classical sense," for such was not the spirit of their origin. The chorus of Aeschylus prays in Agamemnon:

> Zeus, who guided men to think,
> who has laid it down that wisdom
> comes alone through suffering.
> Still there drips in sleep against the heart
> grief of memory; against
> our pleasure we are temperate.
> From the gods who sit in grandeur
> grace comes somehow violent. (40, ln. 176-183)

It is then from both the ancient Greeks and the ancient Hebrews that tragedy as a revelation of divine mystery in the portrayal of man as language has come down to us, and

its recurrence in history stands, in many ways, as the apex of western culture. Though its center is the word, it remains the triumph of order over chaos, though in a spiritually paradoxical, non-rational sense because of its focus on the word. That we recognize tragedy most often in its Greek form in no way alters the notion that consistent principles are at work wherever and however tragedy occurs. We use the word "tragedy" to describe certain plays by Shakespeare, Goethe and others--indeed they called what they wrote tragedy--because of an acknowledgment of similarities in form and style between certain plays of the modern world and certain plays of the ancient Greeks. This is a matter of historical movements and aesthetic values. The point is that tragedy has survived, its principles and pattern intact. Indeed it has survived best in the works of Shakespeare, perhaps most profoundly in King Lear.

CHAPTER VI

LEAR

In the Old Testament, the intrusion of the divine will into the affairs of men comes directly in the form of the word from a single source, a single mind, Yahweh himself. In Greek tragedy, this intrusion is not the act of a single being, but the inevitable coming around of divine order as a whole, an aligning force lying behind all the functions of the natural world and the destinies of men. Its intrusion is manifested indirectly, rather than directly as is the case with Yahweh, in the speech of certain mortal (or immortal) characters involved in the drama as personalities. In their speech is a strange quality and intent that carries with it the hint of divine direction, and as such this speech disrupts the first and second illusions as the main character moves through them. The divine nature of this intrusion, and its manifestation in words, is the same in principle, however, as Yahweh's intervention, arighting through language the intent of man with the intent of divine will. The primary difference is the greater emphasis in the Old Testament on the actual source of this power and on the word itself as a direct extension of divine will, holding within it a mystery that begins with the very creation of the universe.

Where the Old Testament brings forth the words of Yahweh as a direct extension of God, Greek tragedy intertwines the influence of supernatural order in the speech of men and the riddles of oracles. Even here there is a human intercessor involved. An intercessor is often used in the Bible, as with Amos, but there is nothing cryptic about the source of the divine influence. For the Greeks, Moira was an all-encompassing influence that mysteriously, yet inevitably, brought order to chaos, unassociated with a specific deity.

Shakespearean tragedy, whose form was influenced by Greek tragedy, carries with it this intertwining of divine intrusion with the words of men--or spirits--without directly identifying its source as God. Nevertheless, the spiritual implications of all tragedy are strong, though perhaps not as obviously theological as the stories in the Bible. For the tragedies of Shakespeare, as with those of the Greeks, the special spiritual significance of language in the presentation of a spiritual message is implicit in the pattern of the plays themselves. It is by struggling through the paradox of language that chaos is restored to order. Approached in this way, King Lear, like Job, is identifiable as a tragedy not because it is similar to Greek tragedy, but because it exhibits a pattern that is peculiar only to tragedy, regardless of its placement within history or culture.

In the opening scene of King Lear we witness the division of Lear's kingdom among his daughters. Lear feels too old for the affairs of state and wishes to "crawl toward death" unburdened. Here there is a great weight placed on the words of the daughters, the way they express their love for their father. Only after hearing their speeches will Lear pass on to them his kingdom. This is not simply an eccentric emphasis on ceremony by a senile king. As a man prepared to leave behind his life and purpose as king, as a father to a nation, Lear wants to hear in words the confirmation of his place as father to his children. Just as his subjects declare their political love for their liege in spoken words, Lear wants the filial love of his children declared in the same way. Though Lear certainly feels love for his daughters (particularly Cordelia), he knows no other way to confirm place or purpose than through a fixed declaration and promise of that love through language. Truly for Lear, words are synonymous with deeds. He has built his life as king upon this assumption. Indeed, this is the only way he has come to know himself.

Goneril and Regan give to Lear what they know he longs to hear. Though their designs may be malicious, they do know their father. Cordelia also knows her father and therefore prepares for the worst, for her love, being true, cannot be expressed conventionally and she cannot respond as Lear expects or desires; that is, she cannot conventionalize

in words the depth of her love without formalizing it and thus belittling its essentially spiritual nature.

When asked what she can say to top the eloquence of her sisters, she responds, "Nothing." "Nothing will come of nothing," returns Lear, and gives her another opportunity to give her love form through language, which for Lear is a confirmation of its reality. Cordelia says, "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty / According to my bond; nor more nor less" (Lr. 1.1.93-95). Once again, Lear gives her a chance to change her speech and so, for him, her heart: "How, now, Cordelia! mend your speech a / little, lest it may mar your fortunes" (Lr. 1.1.94). Cordelia responds,

> Good my lord,
> You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I
> Return those duties back as are right fit,
> Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
> (Lr. 1.1.95-98)

Cordelia will not make conventional what she knows is beyond knowledge, thought and reason, namely her love for her father. She addresses only those things that can and should be conventionalized, "nor more nor less." She will not conventionalize her love for it comes from that part of herself that has no form, her spiritual, inner self that cannot be fixed by speech.

Lear's reaction to Cordelia's words is extreme. He

becomes furious to the point of distraction, and one's first judgment is likely to be that Lear is mentally unstable. Either this, or there is something else at work here that has yet to be revealed. Since we do not yet know enough about Lear's character to truly make a judgment about his mental stability, and since we are not yet familiar enough with Cordelia's relationship to her father to infer some past cause for his anger, our attention is focused on this exchange of words alone. What does Lear's reaction to Cordelia's words tell us about him? What is implied by her words that brings out of Lear such emotion and hostility? Indeed, this first exchange of words sets in motion the pattern that makes King Lear a tragedy and, as such, a portrayal of a man's confrontation with himself through language. It marks the beginning of Lear's disillusionment and his consequent struggle with himself and acts as a foreshadowing of the kind of conflict that is to follow.

Lear sees all things, including love, as real only insofar as they fit into a preconceived order, operate in terms of graspable relationships, and so are capturable in language. Outside of this realm there can be only emptiness, an emptiness that can only threaten all that is right and good and fair. Because of this, Cordelia's words are both incomprehensible and a threat to Lear's worldview. It is as if Cordelia, with these words, has unwittingly come from completely outside Lear's world and challenged it on

the most fundamental level.

For such words to come from his own child, indeed his favorite child, brings into question for Lear the ultimate validity of all the ideas he has made the stock-in-trade of his life. For Lear, all things, both above and below, are fixed and determined by words. Men die by the slogan, councils deliberate the law and turn to hear the commands of kings, and men live by oaths of love and honor. Yet Cordelia has altered this view by implying that words in themselves do not capture ultimate truth. There is an implied, yet haunting paradox at the heart of her speech: that the true speaker is forever separated from the world he lives in by the very word he uses to bring form to that world; to belong to an ordered world, the truth of one's heart, the truth of one's soul, and so the truth of one's significance in the greater scheme of things, must forever be distanced from that world.

There is an intent behind Cordelia's words that Lear cannot fathom, yet that frightens him to the point of fury. This is too much for Lear the king, who must stand on the side of pure reason and form to make sense of his life and to exercise his will. Thus, he casts her out of his world, disclaims her, and does so by appealing to the powers of reason that for him govern life itself, swearing "By all the operations of the orbs / From whom we do exist, and cease to be" (Lr. 1.1.111-12).

Lear's anger, then, comes not from Cordelia's impertinence (for he gives her a chance to redeem herself there), but from fear--fear for his very life, and fear that he may never escape the implications of her words. His anger is quickly turned on Kent, not because Kent supports Cordelia, but, as would seem to follow, because he stands between Lear and his words. Such an affront is a challenge to Lear's very being:

> Hear me, recreant!
> On thine allegiance, hear me!
> Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,
> Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd
> pride
> To come between our sentence and our power,
> Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,
> Our potency made good, take thy reward. (Lr. 1.1.166-171)

Lear then banishes Kent, like Cordelia, from his sight and his world forever.

In the very beginning of the play, then, Lear lives in the first illusion of language. For Lear, the world is fixed, understood, and natural through the words of men. The word governs thought; the word measures truth; the word constitutes deed; the word constitutes being. From the moment Lear confronts the words of Cordelia, however, his world, like that of Job and of Oedipus, crumbles apart piece

by piece. He enters a strange period of both lucidity and confusion, characterized by mental stops and starts, a testing out of different ideas, philosophies and perspectives, each dissolving into illusion as he sees through their conventions. He begins to see clearly the deceit of others, in his daughters, in Edmond, in Oswald. All the trappings and conventions of his life, including the very roof over his head, are stripped from him. Goneril and Regan, his own daughters, turn him away from their doors. He is exposed to the raw, indifferent, unfeeling and arbitrary elements as he begins to see that men and their ideals are but shallow constructions. Even the "physics" of the play reflects the disruption of order in the microcosm of Lear, as Nature itself is disrupted by tempest and "eclipses in the sun and moon" (Lr. 1.2.111). (Such a corresponding physical disruption often appears in tragedy, such as the plague in Oedipus the King, though it does not appear in all tragedies.)

Like Adam and Eve after confronting the words of Yahweh and resolving to eat of the fruit, Lear is left exposed and naked, forcing his attention to turn to himself in an effort to find there some solidity, some justification for his being. The first illusion, which has held the fragments of Lear's world together in comfortable order, begins to dissipate, leaving intact only the self that sees, but can no longer belong.

Interestingly, Lear's closest companion during this time is a fool. More than a familiar companion, the Fool is an essential comfort for he is the embodiment of what is missing in Lear: the ability to find accommodation and mobility in the illusions of the world, a world bound together by the illusions of language. From the moment of Lear's confrontation with the seeming arbitrariness of Cordelia's words he becomes an unaccommodated man. Lear's association with the Fool provides Shakespeare with an ingenious device with which to present man in the throes of a world made absurd by a removal of its foundation in the forms of language. That Lear tolerates the Fool's criticisms and cutting rhymes is a foreshadowing that language is a key element throughout the play and that Lear's salvation may indeed lie in a fool's understanding of the paradox of the word.

It is important to note that Lear shows no conscious realization that the reason for his lost sense of place in the world stems from a confrontation with language, any more than does any protagonist in any tragedy. This is a realization implicit in the very form of the play: it is not the events surrounding Lear's life that shape his destiny, but the words of others. This is in every aspect a play of language. One of the most difficult challenges in producing King Lear on the stage is the extreme abstractness of setting, the turbulence and motion of scene. The actual

political intrigues and affairs that make up much of the plot are but backdrops, like lightening and tempest, for the power and consequence of the words of the players. Like Oedipus, Lear begins his journey to the soul with his reaction to certain words and this remains an inescapable condition under which the rest of the drama must play itself out.

Lear's loss of accommodation in the forms of the world pushes him into making a rather drastic conclusion about himself out of shear desperation: he posits the ultimate validity of himself as merely given. Lear decides to stand alone before the elements of discord, both human and non-human, shaking his fist at the elements as if they were in league against him, and as if he and his conception of himself were stable enough for Nature to push against.

> Rumble thy bellyful; spit, fire; spout, rain.
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters.
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.
> I never gave you kingdom, called you children.
> You owe me no subscription. Then let fall
> Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man,
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That will with two pernicious daughters join
> Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this. O, ho, 'tis foul!

(Lr. 3.2.14-25)

Lear, in a figurative sense, takes his leave of the world of men and moves into a deep subjectivity. He places himself outside the realm of what he sees as illusion and stands alone. In doing so, Lear enters fully into the second illusion.

Lear enters this second illusion not out of arrogance or disdain for the powers that be, but out of fear, fear that if meaning and significance in the world are but illusions, the soul of a man can find no justification for its own existence, no context within which judgments may be made concerning what is right or wrong, no realm for acts of the will. Like Job, this is unacceptable to Lear, and though he may not be able to return to the world he once knew, he cannot question the validity of his own soul. Instead, he denies the world around him and criticizes its conventions, as if from the stronghold of a high tower which is consistent and justified in and of itself. By means of escape, the world becomes a kind of distant plaything, separate and apart, to be analyzed and criticized, but never again to be taken seriously. Now all conventions are absurd, and his insights into human conduct, human manipulation of language, though keen, seem pointless, since the context for his insights is no longer the world of men, but only the justification of his own view, his own existence. Like Job, Lear has escaped the world of

illusion, but his own being he cannot question: it is absolute and untouchable. In the second illusion, Lear is no longer unaccommodated: his accommodation is himself.

When Lear appears dressed in wildflowers, it is clear he has made a transition (Lr. 4.5.79). What appears as madness to those around him is actually Lear's loss of faith in any truth but the truth of himself. Only from this position of distance can Lear criticize and characterize life as it comes to us through language, appearing to others, as Edgar puts it (Lr. 4.5.170), as ". . . matter and impertinency mix'd! / Reason in madness!" Lear's view is from high above, looking down on a world he is no longer connected to.

As in all tragedy, this stage in the development of the main character is extremely moving and disturbing; particularly so with Lear. The audience, like the players around him, see the madness that has come upon Lear, yet they also see the element of truth in his words. This mixture of wisdom and insanity calls up memories of private, individual torment that all men have experienced, and yet keep to themselves. It is the razor's edge between truth and an abyss of emptiness. The real torment comes from the knowledge that Lear has no choice but to remain in this precarious position for fear of the abyss on the one side, and what the truth may reveal on the other. All that remains is the mad clarity of the subjective eye, proud yet

frightened, belonging only to the self, seeing clearly, but alone:

> Through tattered clothes great vices do appear;
> Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
> And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
> Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.
> None does offend, none, I say none. I'll able 'em.
> Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
> To seal th'accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,
> And, like a scurvy politician, seem
> To see the things thou dost not. (Lr. 4.5,160-166)

Yet Lear has arrived at this position only through language and remains in the realm of the word, despite his separation from his fellow man. Lear is still trapped in language, still hiding in the concept of his own being, albeit on a secondary level. In trying to escape being a mere object in a world tossed about by interpretation and manipulation, Lear has entered a second illusion that is still an interpretation of himself. Woven out of fear, this is the veil Lear has drawn about himself. And yet this illusion is eventually and finally broken for Lear, as it is in all tragedy. In order to accomplish this, however, a complete loss of form is necessary, a loss specifically of

the form arrived at through the conventions of language, namely, the self-conceived self.

To dispel this second, ultimate illusion takes yet another confrontation with convention and form (which for our purposes is still the product of language) on such an arbitrary and foreign level that it is often portrayed in tragedy as just preceding death, or even as death itself. At this point there is no possibility of entering into the hermeneutic circle again without some kind of complete end and rebirth with a new perspective, for the hero or for the audience of a tragedy. If confronting the arbitrariness of meaning in language makes us, and the hero, grapple with the idea of non-being, then the dispelling of this second illusion requires nothing short of a direct confrontation with being itself in terms of the conventions it is grounded in, which is no doubt why it is associated with death.

It should be understood that when we look at tragedy from the point of view of language, it is not essential that the protagonist physically die. Tragedy, whether in the Bible or on the stage, is a medium for the delivery of a message. Death here, like the death of Oedipus, is of another order, more on the level of a shattering of a sense of being and form than the end of life. The notion of being and whatever rebirth is involved may be passed on to the audience with tremendous force through the death of the protagonist, leaving behind, so to speak, the spirit which

drove the form of the body through its acts of language. What is essential is that an "end" take place regarding the conventionalization of the self through language, and thus in form. Tragedy's goal is a reentry into the hermeneutic circle from a different perspective, a non-rational perspective, that must be prefaced by a failure of language and form to come to grips with any idea of ultimate or true being.

The final dispelling of this second illusion and the great transformation of the tragedy comes when Lear loses Cordelia and dies, literally, of a broken heart, a broken will. Ironically, the ultimate grounding for Lear's displaced identity is his love for Cordelia, a love that was, from the very beginning, beyond words; it is the thing that pushed him out from the world of men, and yet it is the thing that holds him together as a personality. It is this love that draws out of Lear the beginnings of a change in his perspective on the whole of language and the conventions that are its product.

Shortly before Cordelia's death, Lear expresses a willingness to live in a world of illusion, a prison, if only to be warmed and guided by the unspeakable love that lies forever outside the circle of language and yet gives light to it. Almost as an epitaph to Lear's earlier dependence on language and convention, Lear attempts to operate on this feeling in terms of some convention, some

rapport with language. The moving, almost pathetic way Lear expresses his affection for Cordelia signifies finally the futility of this, given what Lear has experienced:

> No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to
> prison.
> We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage;
> When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
> And ask of thee forgiveness; so we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them
> too--
> Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out,
> And take upon's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out
> In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones
> That ebb and flow by the moon. (Lr.5.2.9-18)

When Cordelia dies, this last tie--which Lear had always misconstrued as being bound up in language alone--is broken and Lear must turn and face directly the ego he has separated as absolute and untouchable. Upon her passage into nothingness, Lear faces and addresses the absolute non-rationality of creation, and no doubt includes himself in that creation:

> No, no, no,
> life?

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And though no breath at all? (Lr. 5.3.281-2)

Lear thinks he sees the dead Cordelia's lips move with breath, asking us to "Look there, look there!" The horror we as spectators feel as we see Lear finally gone mad and then die, is actually a glimpse of the dramatic change that has taken place in Lear and his perception of the world. For a fleeting moment, Lear sees the true spirit of a loving young woman, a woman he had never really seen before. The horror and awe we experience at seeing Lear act this way come from our own experience of the immensity of his perception, the renewal that has taken place within him. In the next moment, Lear is dead; his form as we have known it is gone. The concentration of emotion and perception in these last few seconds of the scene mark a tremendous achievement in literature. The last few lines of the play are borne on the power of this moment and we hear them as if we too had been transformed.

Lear's death is the final destruction of the form that stood so long as defined by the meaning of words. For the audience, the word itself and its cruel paradox is confronted directly and they experience the "tragic perspective." It is a knowledge beyond words, for there is a meaning, a significance, to Lear's death that cannot be spoken, yet it is nonetheless quite real. It becomes a perspective only after the business of life is taken up

again, as it is by Edgar in the last few lines of the play:

> The weight of this sad time we must obey;
> Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
> The oldest hath borne most. We that are young
> Shall never see so much, nor live so long. (Lr. 5.3.299-302)

Edgar's speech indicates the nature of this perspective, with the word at the heart of it. We use the folio text here because in this version, Albany appears to turn the matter of the state over to Kent and Edgar, which Kent must refuse. To this Edgar responds in a manner guided by the perspective Lear's trial has provided and the "circle," in this case the state, is reentered with a new wisdom. Just as in Oedipus at Colonus, the state is aligned with the order of heaven; destiny fulfills itself with the acquisition of a new understanding concerning the question, What must we then do? How must we then live? Just as the Covenant is the fulfillment of tragedy in the Old Testament, so here the word is reentered as sacred in the governance of action.

We have seen Lear face the circle of understanding, the hermeneutic circle, on the two levels that are possible: the objective level (the first illusion) and the subjective level (the second illusion). Death removes us from the circle completely and allows us a view of the circle itself from outside. Left on the stage, hovering above it, as it

were, remains the true intent, the spirit, which governs all form through the word. The only way for this intent to act, to seek being, is through the word, though now only through the paradox of belonging and distanciation. This is done through the words of Edgar. We are, quite literally, renewed in the word, and form and intent are aligned. Action, order, justice are now joined to spirit through the mysterious paradox of language.

The tragic perspective, in causing us, along with Lear, to confront the word itself, allows us a "right way" to come into the circle again, as Heidegger would say, a kind of redemption or "buying back" of understanding and knowledge. It is, as Nietzsche might have said, a willful return to language and the thought it constitutes, but from a new perspective, a perspective that was achieved only by going through the circle itself, as Lear has done. This perspective dictates in itself a way to approach the conventions of life. Edgar's last lines indicate that this way is one of feeling and spirit, an indefinable, yet experienced imperative to be human.

The direct confrontation with the word in King Lear is a confrontation with what can be called the mysterium tremendum, a spiritual sense surrounding the use of the word and all that it constitutes that is peculiarly human as opposed to rational; it is characterized not by the irrationality of the Word, but by the non-rationality of it.

In The idea of the Holy, Rudolf Otto writes that religious truth, when it is expressed in language, becomes rational simply because it becomes, through language, conceptualized and conceived in terms of constructs (2). Language necessarily requires constructs to make it intelligible; thus, anything that is expressed through these constructs will necessarily become rational, whether the original idea was rational or not. This of course results in a rationalization of a spiritual message or feeling that originally had very little to do with rational thought. Otto goes on to define an understanding of "the holy" as something neither rational, nor anti-rational, but non-rational, having both mental and emotional elements, yet in the end resolving itself into a perception that is characterized by a "a peculiar difference of quality in the mental attitude and emotional content of the religious life itself" (3). To understand the spiritual, mystical nature of the end of Lear, the question remains, then, what the function of language in the pursuit of this "quality" ultimately is, since, as Otto himself points out, a general characteristic of the mystics is their "copious eloquence," rather than unbroken silence (2).

From the point of view of language, the mystical nature of this tragedy becomes clear. As with Oedipus, in Lear the direct confrontation with the paradox of the word (containing as it does both the mental and the emotional)

creates in the tragic hero the beginnings of a perception of the non-rational in human existence. Being neither absurd nor pathetic, this perception is fundamentally spiritual, resulting as it does in a sense of tremendous mystery surrounding the life of man that is ultimately meaningful. It carries with it the characteristics of a mystical discovery. Though this discovery cannot be spoken of directly, it is the direct result of language and is not pre-linguistic or primordial in any sense. It is a mystery perceived only through a critical struggle, not instantaneous revelation. Because of this, the result is a change in attitude toward the whole of language, of human convention, the forms and functions of daily life. The mysterium tremendum, then, the very idea of the holy, is brought back into the circle of language as a "peculiar difference of quality," precisely because it was arrived at by the struggle to escape the circle in the first place.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

> As with all paradox, the hardest part is not to answer but to conceive the question.
>
> ---J. Bronowski

Any philosophy that hopes to encompass the most basic issues of our culture and tradition must come to grips with tragedy. Yet, for this very reason, it is difficult to be objective, not to see oneself in the subject of examination, for tragedy contains as its own subject matter the nature of inquiry, the struggle to define, and the ultimate failure of finite truth. In this way tragedy is often empathic: it can take into itself the foundations of one's approach and then reflect those foundations as the shades of the restless culture from which both the examiner and tragedy come. Thus, though there are many different definitions of tragedy, it remains one thing, able to keep alive the discussion while eluding final agreement concerning its true inner workings.

Yet to identify tragedy as a portrayal of man's spiritual confrontation with his own expressions perhaps reveals the basis for this empathic quality of tragedy and in so doing reveals more about our cultural concerns than it does about tragedy as a specific genre with a specific

structure. That is to say, to approach tragedy in this way is to imply that tragedy itself is a result of a culture's concern for certain issues, a recurring product of a tradition's intuitive desire to express a relationship between thought and religion through language and so provide a greater context and purpose for the search for value and truth. As such, it continues to hold great meaning for us even as our attempts to express that meaning fail to do so directly and end in obscurity. Here, then, is an indirect description: whenever being itself is confronted through suffering as a thing grounded in the paradox of expression, there is tragedy, and there we confront ourselves.

That tragedy can occur in the Bible as well as in the culture of the ancient Greeks, and reemerge on the stage in Europe a thousand and more years later, that it can be found in Homer as well as the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, tells us that there is something at work here that goes beyond the recurrence of a special literary form. Its recurrence represents a bringing together of religious beliefs and intellectual dialectic, of the life of the mind and the life of the spirit, in a way that reveals something about our entire history, our preoccupation with language, our suspicion of all expressions of ultimate truth, and our inability to remain the same, our inability to, in short, be content.

Looked at in this way, tragedy reflects an eternal

motion within or culture, reoccurring at points in our history when certain authors with great historical insight recall in art the impetus behind action and law, confronting the fragmentation of ideas and fusing them into a common spiritual imperative. Their insight has at its heart a cultural intuition concerning the spiritual significance of language, and its spiritual link to suffering and trial in human experience, and in this suffering an intuition of hope. Though tragedy aims to provide a glimpse of the holy, the mysterium tremendum, it does not end there, contenting itself with mystery alone, but turns back to action, to the world of men, to the significance of the word as a prescription for political, intellectual and poetic thought. Tragedy, then, cannot be said to begin or end anywhere, in any time period; it cannot be "transplanted" into the Old Testament as a genre born in another time, nor can it be said to have necessarily originated there, though its religious significance in the forming of the Judeo-Christian tradition reveals its fundamental importance to our culture. It is, rather, a unification of philosophical inquiry and religious feeling in a perception of the sanctity of the word itself, a "re-portrayal" of an historical tradition's need to reinvolve itself, through its own brand of trial and error, in an original intent from which all words and deeds flow.

If true, this description of tragedy as a portrayal of

the spiritual significance of language has many implications concerning the relationship between our culture's intellectual and theological endeavors. Unlike other cultures whose philosophies are inseparable from their religious beliefs, our history shows philosophy and religion sometimes at odds with one another. The pattern of tragedy, with its critique of illusion leading toward a religious revelation of the unification of mind and spirit in the paradox of the word, appears to reflect this oscillation in terms of a self-correcting tendency. Indeed, tragedy appears in literature and drama at just such times when a unification of intellect and religion is needed or in progress. Such was the pattern of tragedy's reoccurrence in Greek culture. That we find such meaning in tragedy, yet also find it difficult to formalize that meaning, is perhaps because its paradoxical message of hope lies at the end of a kind of suffering we find most noble, even as we strive to overcome that suffering in our own struggle for truth. Perhaps we see an untouchable part of ourselves in tragedy that we cannot experience directly. When it emerges in history and we are drawn to it, perhaps it is because we seek a unification of our thoughts and creations in a single vision that is ours alone. Indeed, the issues that tragedy deals with and the way it deals with them bring our own concerns, both philosophical and religious, into a perspective that is unified, even in their own discordance.

In tragedy may be found a message of great hope in adversity in the ceaseless dialogue within our own culture, a noble significance in rhetoric itself, which has dominated our history so much more than the achievements of art or great music. Though true tragedy is no longer created today, a reexamination of it as a confrontation with language may yet provide us with a perspective on our own affairs and so help us, as it has done in the past, to see ourselves and so confront our own problems in a more positive and creative way.

As mentioned earlier, tragedy moves through two successive illusions of language which are equivalent to objective and subjective descriptions of experience, respectively. Any western philosophical school of thought, past or present, can be entered by understanding on which side of the dialectic of subjective/objective experience it falls, or at least how it purports to deal with the two sides together. Whether it seeks refuge from the problem altogether in a metaphysics, or ignores the implications of one side or the other in some self-reliant system of verifiability, in its solution to this dilemma lies the core of its approach to human experience, and this solution will set it at odds with other philosophies that offer different approaches. No prescription for action can be considered complete without addressing this problem.

If tragedy reflects, in its pattern of development, a

recurring cultural concern with this problem, then perhaps in tragedy may be found a common cultural "solution" to this bone of contention that so divides philosophical movements. In other words, in tragedy might be found some greater context for the struggle itself, some positive aspect in the very experience of such a dialogue, without resolving the problem into an intellectual formalization.

If tragedy indeed uses language as a basis for man's confrontation with himself in order to reveal a paradox within language, and so reveal within this paradox a life-giving spiritual mystery, then it is in the contention over the paradoxical nature of human experience itself that that mystery can be found. That philosophical debate exists concerning the question of subjective/objective experience is, from the perspective of tragedy, part of the way our culture should proceed in its search for an ultimate order and sense in experience, and as such the struggle itself becomes a noble one. If the word itself is sacred and contains within it the core of this dilemma in terms of belonging and distanciation, then action through the word carries with it the connotation of a spiritual quest, with spiritual significance, yet without being attached to a special religious dogma. Tragedy reveals that only by confronting directly this paradox as it is contained in expression will the true significance of this "Great Conversation" become apparent. The lesson philosophy may

learn from tragedy is that it is in conversing, rather than in a cessation of dialogue, that our own faith in the significance of human action may be found, for it is in the very use of the word, with its internal paradox, that any final or formal assessment of the nature of human experience becomes secondary to the search itself. For tragedy, in the significance of action alone lies the paradoxical "solution" to the problem.

The question remains, of course, what action is wrong and what action is right? The question becomes a question of ethics. To answer this, philosophy must turn to religion, though not necessarily to formal theology. In tragedy, this question is "answered," so to speak, by confronting the paradox of the word and so revealing the spiritual, yet formless nature of the intent behind the creation of all form through language. The revelation that the word itself provides the means by which the intent may find being and purpose creates a deep respect for the spiritual nature of all action. All action, then, is measured by the way in which it fulfills this sacred function. As in the Covenant of Israel, the law in itself is less important than the meaningful paradox it stands for.

This is precisely the distinction much of philosophy fails to acknowledge. In the intellectual's search for verifiable truth, he often does not acknowledge the necessity of failure, and so remains ignorant of the

cultural message tragedy offers regarding action itself, dialogue, and the sanctity action's dependence on language entails. In a sense, within tragedy philosophy may find its own cultural reflection and the inherently spiritual nature of its struggle.

As a second implication of this approach to tragedy, religion may find in the tragic pattern an explanation of its own preoccupation with the word, with ritual and its dependence on myth and symbol to express what cannot be expressed directly. Much of the disagreement concerning tragedy in the Judeo-Christian tradition stems, as mentioned in the beginning, from definitions of tragedy that do not jibe with accepted theological ideas, particularly regarding the nature of good and evil. Yet to approach tragedy as a confrontation with the word in no way contradicts basic religious tenets, either Jewish or Christian, at least as they are portrayed in the texts of the Bible itself. Indeed, in the New Testament, tragedy as a confrontation with the word appears even more directly, in many ways, than in the Old Testament. Certainly, it is an extension of the same basic theology that surrounds the sanctity of the word of God.

The difficulty arises from seeing tragedy as a dismal depiction of human life, devoid of the triumph of good over evil, rather than as a depiction of a process whereby an active reinvolvement in the world is made possible through a

confrontation with the presence of both good and evil in the word. In tragedy, the word inseparably bonds together good and evil, as it does intent and form. To say that the revelation of divine mystery can only be experienced by confronting the word is to say that good and evil, like intent and form, are necessarily involved in the perception of divine intent, which contains both. The paradoxical nature of this perception gives rise to its expression in myth, symbol, and story, rather than in didactic moral lessons. Indeed, such moral lessons are often presented in the Old Testament as examples of narrow vision, rather than vision that is inspired (e.g., the moralizing of Job's comforters). The key here is the tragic presentation of the meaning of suffering. That this presentation of suffering, enlightenment, and reinvolvement in action centers on the word itself makes the message a distinctly human one, while elevating human action to a spiritual level.

This elevation of both good and evil in human action is the central religious problem associated with this approach to tragedy, and here the philosophical problem of ethics overlaps: its reevaluation of the nature of sin. To interpret the Old Testament as a tragic portrayal of man confronting the paradox of himself through the paradox of the word implies that, though man may drift away from the spiritual part of himself that is closest to God, in this very drifting he is fulfilling a fundamental aspect of his

own nature as he was originally created. As illustrated in Genesis, man was, in a sense, created with this "flaw" as an essential part of his being, for it is only through this flaw that he is able to know himself as a spiritual being. From this perspective, man cannot "sin" as such, but only move toward a more spiritual understanding of himself, either individually or as a nation. This is not to say, of course, that man can do no wrong; on the contrary, this is actually to say that man, for the most part, does far more wrong than good. But to describe man as tragic, as we have approached tragedy here, is to include the element of hope within action itself, within the very use of the word to construct the world around us. The notion of "original sin," then, takes on a new, or perhaps very ancient, meaning, though the essential concept remains the same. There is no contradiction here, but rather a confirmation of fundamental beliefs.

The greatest implication of this approach to tragedy, however, is the intrinsic relationship it suggests between religion and philosophy. While philosophy concerns itself with the first and second illusions, religion concerns itself with the battle between form and intent. Both become in tragedy essentially the same endeavor, though at present they do not often recognize one another. It is through the word that they are joined. Without the insight that tragedy provides, religion loses itself in ceremony and dogma, its

very other-worldliness, or, in the other extreme, in its infatuation with material reward for suffering or correct behavior, as if, as Eliphaz of Teman might say, one pays a little here, one gets a little there. Philosophy, or any intellectual endeavor, such as science (which is, of course, a philosophy in itself), loses itself as well within its own systems, refusing to break ranks, and often making the troubles and pleasures of human life into abstractions that have little or nothing to do with the "little deaths" and "little births" individuals endure every day.

In tragedy, philosophy and religion come together through language in the common suffering of the human mind and the human soul. The great message of tragedy to the individual is that whenever a man speaks, and so acts through language, on whatever level, he participates in a realm that draws all of human action together into something of great significance, consequence and responsibility, regardless of how inconsequential or irresponsible his words may seem. Our varied visions of the world, grounded as they are in a mysterious paradox of language, stem from a single human effort that is rooted at its base in a spiritual imperative, though indefinable. Tragedy suggests the possibility of reinstating in ourselves a cultural, spiritual faith in the humanness of thought, and thus, through the suffering that is our mortal inheritance, we are allowed the possibility of coming back into the circle in

the right way.

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