THE ELEMENT OF PROPAGANDA IN VERGIL

by T. J. Haarhoff

Virgile, attaché à la terre natale par toutes des fibres de son être — Villeneuve. If we turn to the big Oxford English Dictionary, we find that 'propaganda' was originally singular in number derived from congregatio de propaganda fide and used in a good sense of a systematic scheme for spreading a particular doctrine or practice.

But, like the word 'rhetoric', it is often used today with the disparaging meaning of advertising an idea for selfish purposes. There are fashions in words, as Horace tells us (A.P. 70):

multa renascentur quae iam cecidere cadentque quae nunc sent in honore vocabula;

and the fashion today is not favourable to 'propaganda' as a term of commendation.

Servius, in his Life of Vergil, says that the Aeneid was suggested, propositam, by Augustus and that Pollio suggested, proposuit, the Bucolica, and that Maecenas suggested, proposuit, the Georgica. Proposuit probably means 'urged him to publish'. Vergil's thought had long been busy with these themes.

To take this, and this has been done, in the sense that Vergil's motive in writing these works was merely to please the political powers, would be an insult to the genius of the poet and a profound misunderstanding of his mind. Eminent scholars like Saint-Denis, the editor of the Budé Georgica, and Paratore¹ have discounted the statement of Servius. Tenney Frank,² whose scholarship we must respect, says: 'We may then at once reject the statement of the scholiasts that Vergil wrote the Eclogues for the purpose of thanking Pollio . . .' and refers to the commentators who 'apparently assumed that poets as a matter of course wrote what they did in order to please some patron'.

But let us accept that suggestions urging publication were made to Vergil. Vergil was extremely diffident about his own writing because of his very high ideals. I have no doubt that he wrote some of the poems in the Appendix, but decided to suppress them. On his death-bed he wanted the Aeneid to be destroyed. It is, therefore, not surprising that he needed external pressure to get him to publish.

But his primary impulse was not to advertise a popular policy. It lay deep down in his own experience and in his Roman sentiment.

². Vergil, a Biography, New York 1922, p. 111.
Vergil grew up on a farm in Gallia Cisalpina. He was an Italian, not a Roman. It was only in his twentieth year that his province was granted full citizenship by Julius Caesar, who, if we can believe Hirtius, was received by the population with incredible marks of honour and affection when he passed through Gallia Cisalpina. There is no doubt that Vergil, and most people in Gallia Cisalpina, came to look on Julius Caesar as their champion and that they transferred their feeling for him to Octavian and the family of the Caesars. Vergil was perfectly sincere in believing that Octavian-Augustus was the one man who could save Italy from fratricidal strife and restore stability and peace. When we regard the first two centuries of the Empire, built on foundations securely laid by Augustus, a period of immense importance for Western Europe during which the Greek cultural tradition could be stabilised and Roman law consolidated and Roman organisation spread over the civilised world, we must admit that Vergil's judgment, on the whole, was justified.

It was a sincere inner conviction, not propaganda sold to him from outside, that formed his political motive. He shared in the tremendous outburst of gratitude that rose from the various parts of the Roman world when it seemed that the Civil Wars were at last coming to an end. No doubt in the inscriptions we may see an element of rhetoric and adulation; but there is clearly also genuine relief and thankfulness. Striking testimony comes from the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (to quote only one out of hundreds) writing about A.D. 41: 'The whole race of mankind would very nearly have been destroyed by mutual slaughter but for his (Augustus') control.'

'First of all it seems quite plain that Vergil himself was a convinced Augustan. He was clearly inspired by his theme: he believed in his “ideology”. He really saw in Augustus the type of man who could bring peace out of fratricidal war, order from anarchy, self-control from selfish passion, in a sense an “age of gold” from an age of iron. He also saw in Rome the paradigm and goal of all historical activity, in Roman pietas, virtus and consilium the only hope of peace and social order, of humane behaviour associated with strong government.'

Our own view of this judgment may be modified by the corruption that came into the empire later. But Vergil himself, while he praised the achievement of Augustus, who restored order and reorganised the government of the provinces and tried in a general way to restore moral standards, saw the shadow-side of the new regime.

I said in my Vergil the Universal that, while Vergil was in sympathy with the general situation brought about by Octavian, he disapproved of his

3. Legatio ad Gaium c. 21.

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action towards individuals. There was Cicero, there was Ovid, there was Augustus' daughter Julia, there was Cornelius Gallus 'cuius amor tantum mihi crescit in horas / quantum vere novo viridis se subicit alnus'. The later Augustus showed signs of greater 'humanitas' as Seneca notes (Sua soriae 43) and it is not impossible, as Conway thinks, that Vergil helped in this direction.

Vergil himself shows in his poems the weak side of Augustus' regime. In Eclogue I he praises Octavian as a divine restorer of peace when he thinks of Tityrus—who, here at any rate cannot be Vergil in any complete sense because he had been a slave, and Vergil would not be so ignorant of Rome as Tityrus is nor so old in years. Vergil shows quite clearly that his real sympathy is with Meliboeus who lost his farm as he himself had done. I believe Eclogue IX, which also deals with the confiscations, is prior to Eclogue I in time. This is also the view of H. J. Rose. The final note is one of sadness.

It appears that Octavian meant to leave the citizens of Mantua some three miles of land around their walls but that a subordinate stripped them of most of that. 'The injustice', says H. J. Rose, 'found no less a person to protest against it than Cornelius Gallus; what success his speech had we do not know; but putting it together with what Vergil says... I suggest that Octavian's attention was drawn to the state of affairs... and that he insisted that his original orders be carried out (i.e. that three miles around Mantua should remain untouched). This would surely be reason enough for the modified gratitude and laudation which the poem expresses'.

We must not misunderstand the Roman term 'deus' applied to a human being. There were grades of deity. There was the old Roman conception of 'genius'—the divine part of man that could function as a sort of guardian angel. Horace says:

\[ \textit{scit Genius, natale comes qui temperat astrum} \]

Our Genius knows, he who is our companion and rules our star of birth.

But Lucretius, the materialist, says quite clearly that Epicurus was a god and compares him favourably with Hercules. Lucretius could only mean that Epicurus was a man of outstanding insight and genius. So, filled with the marvel of a world freed from war, Vergil praises the genius of

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Augustus whose benefactions here nevertheless are limited to Tityrus and his class. He allowed people to worship him as a god, outside Italy. He followed a fashion set by Alexander and his successors. There is no great gap between the conception of 'god' and 'man' as there tends to be in modern thinking.

On the question of the confiscations, therefore, Vergil does not blindly follow imperial policy. The cry barbarus has segetes — and I believe barbarus means more than 'stranger' — has a bitterness that was felt by Vergil himself. The Ninth Eclogue shows us the earlier hopes Vergil had for his farm. But 'a short trial convinced him that even to appeal to personal friendship for the preservation of his own property was likely to result in nothing but repulse; he could save neither himself nor his fellows. Servius says that he actually was in personal danger'.

Here let us note Vergil's conception of the poet's function. Aristophanes says, rather crudely, that the poet is to the community what the teacher is to children and, broadly speaking, that was the attitude of antiquity. Regard for poetry, as we can see for example from Cicero's Pro Archia, was higher than it is today. The poet was vates not merely poeta; he had deeper insight than the mere technician and he was the acknowledged interpreter of the life of the people. Vergil's interest was to interpret in poetic terms the life of the Roman. Of the Eclogues the First and the Ninth are concerned with the confiscations, which presented a difficult problem for the government — the land of eighteen cities had to be divided between some 100,000 soldiers (Saint-Denis) — and the complaints of the dispossessed had to be met. The Fourth deals with the pressing Roman problem of world peace. The Fifth, in the opinion of many scholars, refers to Julius Caesar. The Sixth in part refers to Cornelius Gallus, to whom the Tenth is devoted. These references to contemporary problems, largely of a political nature, form a strong contrast to Theocritus and do not spring from propaganda but from Vergil's genuine personal interest. The Georgics again are based on his experience and on his sympathy with the farmers caught in the economic tangles of the time. Mecum miseratus agrestes, 'pity the farmers as I do', he says to Octavian and he writes of agriculture with the vision of a poet on a higher level than Hesiod, so that Dryden called the Georgics the best poem by the best poet. Tennyson said of Vergil 'Lord of language, more than he who sang the Works and Days'.

The roots of the Aeneid go back not, in the first place, to Homer or

14. cf. Michael Grant, The Birth of Western Civilization, London 1964, p. 288: 'The subtleties of his romantic Aeneid are far removed from Homer's balladlike extroversion, and so is the hitherto unimaginable rhythmical elaboration and sonorous majesty of the Aeneid'.

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Augustus but to Vergil's own deep interest in the growth of the various racial elements in Italy and the birth of a nation in the midst of many difficulties and failures — *Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*. Otis\(^{15}\) speaks of the essentially Roman and non-Hellenic origin of the Aeneid. Now the earlier epics were mostly objective in their approach while Vergil's work was largely subjective. 'Virgil did not start with Homer but with his own Augustan symbol-complex and his own subjective style. He did not so much copy Homer as fit Homeric motifs in a radically un-Homeric scheme that he had elaborated without reference to either Homer or the epic genre or indeed any sort of narrative plot or story.\(^{16}\) Homer really came last in the genesis of the Aeneid: he was, as it were, the necessary model, the high classical model advocated by Horace, but he was a model only in the sense that he was made to fit a pre-existent structure. What he did to Virgil — how Virgil's central design was affected by Homeric motifs — is the important question' (p. 221).

This is the statement of Brooks Otis and I expect there will be divergent opinions about it. My main concern is that in order to understand the Aeneid we must start with the mind and feelings of Vergil himself. He would have produced his national poem of which he had thought since the days of Eclogue VI even if nobody had urged him to do so. Rome's destined work in the world, Carthage and similar themes, were constantly in his mind. Milton's note-books show that he, too, during his earlier lyric period was haunted by the thought of writing an epic.

Consider some examples of Vergil's handling of Homeric motifs. He certainly did not, as some have said, take Homer and then add Roman scenes. You have the general Homeric motif in outline, but when you examine the details in the Vergilian adaptation you find something quite different and the total aim of the epic is entirely new. You have the Odyssean motif of Nostos and you have the Iliadic motif of fighting, but the order is reversed. Again, Odysseus makes his way back to his old home; Aeneas has to create a new home. The Greeks seek to destroy a town; Aeneas has to build, *condere*, and create. The catalogue is an established convention of the epic. You have in Aeneid VII what Warde Fowler called 'the gathering of the clans', a list of the various tribes that engage in the war, but it is totally different from the catalogues in Homer. Here you have Vergil's deep feeling for the Italians like Camilla. He looks forward to eventual union of Italy and Rome — *sit Romana potens Itala virtute propago*, as he says in Book XII. The outcome of the war is creative — something you do not find in Homer.

The Tragedy of Dido in Aeneid IV has no counterpart in Homer. Briseis is quite different. In Aeneid V you have the general similarity of the funeral

games that we find in Iliad XXIII. But in Vergil there are distinctive features that are not merely added but conceived in a Roman spirit and in accordance with artistic unity. The book recalls the Roman parentalia, the devotion of the family to the dead, part of the fundamental pietas on which the poem is based. It reminds the Romans of the physical exercises in the Campus Martius and the game of Troia which Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. and Augustus after him had revived. It recalls the Roman connection with Segesta and the famous temple of Venus on Mt. Eryx. It reminds us of Aeneas' difficulties in the episode of the burning of the ships by the women and it gives the connection with the next book by the vision of Anchises — visa dehinc caelo facies delapsa parentis. All these points are foreign to the Homeric scheme.

As for Book VI, nothing could be further from the truth than the statement that it resembles Odyssey XI. The external circumstances, the scene at Cumae, the figure of the Sibylla, the journey through the spirit-world, the Golden Bough are completely different. Above all the conception of the life after death is Vergilian not Homeric. In Homer the earth life is the prime reality. At Iliad I. 4 Homer refers to the bodies of the heroes as autouμ, the real persons, and Van Leeuwen comments: 'ipsa eorum corpora, vox opponitur nunc ταίς ψυχαίς, sive animis, quae umbrarum instar sunt.' This is what we find in the Odyssey. The persons in Hades 'flit like shades' and squeak like bats and Achilles says he would rather work on earth for a poor man than be a king among the dead. Vergil has a totally different picture — one that implies progress by purification and includes a scale of ethical standards, not found in Homer, that determine the lot of the spirit. Thus we have artistic and scientific discovery and the general ideal of service: quique sui memores alios fecere merendo. The national part of Book VI is not a mere addition; it is fundamental to Vergil's purpose.

The difference in Aeneid VIII is much more than the fact that the shield of Achilles has pictures of social life while the shield of Aeneas deals with Roman history. The important point is that the first real friend Aeneas finds in Italy is Evander who is a Greek. Dido's attraction had been vitiated by the element of passion, which caused a dereliction of duty on both sides. Now there is genuine friendship based on simplicity and sincerity — qualities dear to the heart of Vergil. There is also the revelation of the services of the Greek Herakles to Italy in getting rid of the terrible monster Cacus and the institution in Italy of the worship of Hercules. Vergil here looks forward to the co-operation of the Greek and the Roman traditions and provides the vision of the future site of Rome in which the two cultures will strengthen each other. Here again you start with a general skeleton idea found in Homer, but given life and meaning in a specifically Roman sense, created into something new.

Vergil's work represented the perfect harmonisation of the Greek and Roman cultural traditions and here Vergil and Augustus were at one. But
again there was no question of propaganda: they grew independently to that position through the evolution of the Roman tradition. Elsewhere I have described the steps in the process. The Roman soldier-farmer preoccupied for centuries with pioneering problems and fighting for his existence, who gradually becomes aware of letters and culture; the advent of Greek as a cultural force in the third century B.C. when Livius Andronicus began to translate Homer and the Greek theatre made itself felt; the fear of the new fashion on the part of conservative nationalists like Naevius, fear lest the infant Roman writing should be swamped by the older Greek literature with its world prestige; the strong philhellenic movement of Ennius, the first real poet, who spoke disparagingly of the beginnings of Roman writing in the old Saturnian metre:

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\begin{align*}
\text{scripsere alii rem} \\
\text{versibus quos olim Fauni vatesque canebant} \\
\text{cum neque Musarum scopulos superaverat ullus} \\
\text{(unquam) nec dicti studiosus erat . . .}
\end{align*}
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Ennius despises the old inspiration found in the life of the woods and its seers, he uses the Greek word \textit{Musae} where Naevius and Andronicus had used \textit{Camenae} or \textit{Casmenae}, the spirits of the spring, and he discards the Saturnian for the Greek hexameter. Cicero is rather attached to the archaic style and regards Ennius' contempt for it as overdone. And, indeed, it produced another reaction in people like Cato the Censor who refused to use Greek and is said to have learned it only when he was ninety. Waves of anti-Greek feeling made their appearance from time to time, but gradually a balance was found on the basis that Latin literature was to retain its individuality, having by now gained in strength, and that Roman literature should co-operate with the rich resources of Greek culture, not merely adopting but adapting to the Roman tradition the great works of the Greeks. This produced a rich harvest, and it is surprising to find in our time scholars like F. A. Wright and authors like Robert Graves who think that the Romans should have avoided Greek influence and followed a separate line of development. The \textit{homo utriusque linguae} was the finest product of Roman culture. Cicero would have been infinitely poorer without Greek as part of his tradition and his type of culture held the field for some 650 years, from the middle of the third century B.C. to about the fourth century A.D., when Greek began to migrate to Byzantium and when the standard of culture began to decline.

Augustus, at any rate, though not himself a great literary figure, was enthusiastically in favour of Greek. Suetonius says that when he attended games conducted on the Greek model, he made it his business to be strictly

17. \textit{Vergil the Universal} and \textit{The Stranger at the Gate}, passim.
18. Aug. c. 45.
impartial. He was greatly interested in Greek studies and gained distinction in them under the tutorage of Apollodorus of Pergamum. He was fond of the Old Greek Comedy and arranged for its performance, Suetonius tells us, and he used to make extracts from authors utriusque linguae of sentiments that could be useful later, for sending to his subordinates. He carefully fostered the outstanding literary men and listened indulgently and patiently to the reading aloud of poems and histories, of speeches and dialogues. But he showed his support of Roman custom e.g. when he objected to a crowd of people at a meeting wearing the lacerna or dark cloak instead of the white toga and he cited Vergil's line: Romanos, rerum dominos, gentemque togatam.

He established bilingual libraries. The first public library at Rome was founded by Asinius Pollio. 'But the decisive impulse' says Kenyon, 'was given by Augustus, who founded two libraries . . . one in the Campus Martius and the other on the Palatine'. In Aeneid VI. 69 Vergil refers to the Palatine temple of Apollo, opened in 28 B.C. by Augustus, and Suetonius refers to it in his life of Augustus (c. 29). Both libraries were connected with temples and comprised separate Greek and Latin sections and a hall or reading-room. 'This model', says Kenyon, 'was generally followed'. Vergil grew up with the Greek tradition and like most educated men of his day was perfectly at home with it. He had several Greek friends in Rome who spoke and wrote in Greek like Parthenius, and there was a great deal of Greek in the literary circle at Naples to which Philodemus belonged. We remember that in Cicero's time the Greek Archias was received with great enthusiasm and gave Greek improvisations to audiences in Italy without any difficulty. To Vergil Greek was something natural and spontaneous; but this was not so in the case of St. Augustine in the fifth century A.D. in Africa when Greek was dying out in the West. Vergil loved Greek literature and followed its technique, but upheld at the same time the Roman tradition in literary and social matters. We see this in his frequent references to Roman custom and Roman character.

In regard to war certain critics have blamed Vergil for referring to a stone hurled by a hero as ten times the weight that a normal man could lift, whereas Homer in a similar case says 'twice'. Hence they condemn Vergil as 'artificial'. But Vergil was not interested in the actual weight of the stone. Twice or ten times would do to indicate a stone of enormous weight. What interested him was the question of war. He followed the tradition of the Homeric epic in describing detailed fights between the heroes like those in Iliad XVI and XVII. But in Vergil we have a difference. I quote Brooks Otis: 'The notion that war is only permissible as an

19. Aug. c. 89.
instrument of pacification, of universal government, was, of course, quite beyond Homer's ken as, indeed, it was beyond that of anyone who could not envisage humanity as a single society or order for which actual rulers could be held responsible... The Latin War is seen by Virgil as a simply horrible instance of furor and violentia on a social scale. It is not only war but civil war, war between destined fellow-citizens and in fact actual fellow-citizens whose foedus or plan of union has been impiously disrupted. It is Juno's final and most horrible attempt to thwart fate and it leads to a terrible perversion of human character, both Latin and Trojan.22

Virgil calls war in Italy dirum. It is a curse. But, in the imperfect state of human development, unavoidable. And it is a mistake to regard Aeneas, purely in his role of warrior, as a poltroon. When we read Aeneid XII we see that is not the case. But Vergil's main interest is in peace. Pacique imponere morem (to adopt the current reading) means to implant the custom of peace (ponere is used in the Georgics of planting) and to make war against the opponents of peace — the superbi, the haughty ones who are out for their own power.

From his early days Vergil had the ideal of peace. In Eclogue I peace or otia is seen as a divine gift and in Eclogue V we read that amat bonus otia Daphnis. In Eclogue IV we see the ideal of peace and it is dedicated to a supporter of Marcus Antonius, not to Octavian. It is not merely national but universal. There are, for example, no lions in Italy to terrify the flocks; and neither Octavian nor the sidus Iulum is mentioned. The Wonder Child who is to introduce the age of Peace seems to correspond to one of Carl Jung's archetypes that manifest themselves in various forms throughout the world. But it looks as if Vergil had seen an actual prophecy as Salamon Reinach believes and as Wagenvoort says in his article, 'Vergil's Vierte Ekloge'.23 The language of the Sibylline prophecies used similar symbols, which probably explains the language in Isaiah about the Prince of Peace and the wolf lying down with the lamb (Royds: Virgil and Isaiah). The Saviour Child is a symbol of the renewal of the Universe; so Karl Büchner interprets him,24 and Eduard Norden understood him as such and so he appears in existing Sibylline Oracles (e.g. Orac. Sibyll. III. 652) and in Egypt and Persia. Coins were struck towards the end of Julius Caesar's career showing the head of the Sibyl and the figure of a child, sometimes accompanied by the sun, the moon and the planets. On the astronomical side, there may be a reference to mid-winter — the shortest day when the year in the Northern hemisphere begins to turn to spring. 'Tuus iam regnat Apollo' is also a symbol of renewed life. On the political side there is the reconciliation of Antony and Octavian: the hope of a new beginning. But

22. cf. Vergil's query: 'Was it your will, Jupiter, that nations destined to live in perpetual peace should meet in such terrible battle shock?' (Aen. XII. 304).
23. Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen 1929, p. 36.
Vergil himself sees a set-back before peace finally is established. The last lines suggest Vergil’s practice of connecting general ideas with concrete human beings — compare the murder of Orpheus, which is not left to a theological rivalry but referred to the jealousy of the Thracian women; compare the gathering of soot round the wick of the lamp as a sign of rain, which Aratus merely states, to which Vergil adds the picture of the girls continuing their work on the wool into the night — ne nocturna quidem carpentes pensa puellae | nescivere hiemem. The identity of the human child does not matter: he remains the concrete manifestation of the symbol of peace. Vergil feels the majesty of the world-shaking event, passing far beyond the immediate concerns of Octavian:

Aspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum,
terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum;
aspice, venturo laetentur at omnia saeclo.

That is the vision of the future. But by the end of the first Georgic the fear of civil war is renewed and a desperate appeal is made that Octavian should be spared as the sole remaining hope: Ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae . . . So, when racing chariots (to quote C. Day Lewis) have rushed from the starting-gate,

They gather speed on the course and the driver tugs at the curb-rein,
His horses run away, car out of control, quite helpless.

Augustus brought back stability. The furor representing Civil War will be chained and the gates of War closed, in the prophecy of Jupiter, Aeneid I. 294. Listen to the threatening ‘s’-sounds in Vergil’s lines:

Furor impius intus
saeva sedens super arma et centum vinctus aenis
post tergum nodis fremet horridus ore cruento

— ‘will shriek ghastly with blood-stained lips’. All this is entirely outside the Homeric picture.

At the entrance to the spirit-world we see this ‘Discordia demens’ grouped with the Furies, twining her snaky locks with blood-stained chaplets.

When Anchises in the spirit world shows Aeneas the future heroes of Rome, he sees the strife of Julius Caesar and Pompeius and earnestly begs them not to accustom their minds to the thought of war and not to wound their country:
ne, pueri, ne tanta animis adsuescite bella
neu patriae validas in viscera vertite vires.

To Julius he says:

tuque prior, tu parce, genus qui ducis Olympo,
proice tela manu (Aen. VI. 832 ff)

In Aen. VIII. 324 ff. Evander, the Greek friend of Aeneas, refers to the early state of peace in Italy, the Saturnia regna of Eclogue IV when Saturn placida populos in pace regebat.

But war returned through greed for possessions. So Dante (Purg. XXVIII. 139) said of the Earthly Paradise: ‘They who in olden times sang of the Golden Age and its happy state, perhaps dreamed in Parnassus of this peace. Here the root of man’s race was innocent; here, spring everlasting.’ In Dante, as in Vergil, the loss of peace is due to the loss of morality.

As always, Vergil is not one-sided or rigid in his judgments. ‘The most remarkable fact about the poem perhaps,’ says Otis (p. 391), ‘is its treatment of the victims: the two great action books, Four and Ten, end with the tragic deaths of Dido and Mezentius; the whole epic ends with the death of Turnus. And these deaths are certainly not invested with the colour of mere triumph — the gloating of the conqueror over the conquered — but almost entirely the pathos, the tragic pathos of defeated heroism. It is especially noteworthy that Vergil describes at length the last agony of Troy and says nothing of the Trojan triumph at the end: we know that it has taken place, that Latin resistance has ended with Turnus’ fall, but the last word of the epic is about Turnus, not about Aeneas and his victory or the joy that the Trojans must have felt at the conclusion of all their toil and suffering. It has even been difficult for many readers of Virgil to understand this: hence the fruitless and perverted attempts to complete the Aeneid! All of which points to the pivotal importance of humanitas as one of the two essential elements of the poem’.

The other element is seen by Otis as furor. ‘Such humanitas is a new and strange attribute to warfare but it is, for Vergil, the secret of Rome’s greatness, the moral reason for the first truly ecumenical empire.’

There is Vergil’s ‘feeling for what is humanly admirable in the “bad” characters and for what is humanly blameworthy in the “good”. We have humanity combined with realism and it is this that gives the Aeneid its balance, its fluidity, its richness and complexity of texture’. More than mere patriotism is needed to justify Rome’s imperium; there must be the universal peace-giving mission, pacti imponere morem, the establishment of a civilised way of life.

Vergil uses the Olympian gods, adopted by the state, and entrenched in many traditional ceremonies, as part of the Homeric technique, but this is

not his personal belief. He is like Euripides who was bound by tradition to use the Olympians but used them in such a way that he suggested his own doubts to the audience. They were deities made by men in their own image, anthropomorphic reflections of existing society.

So Vergil, right at the beginning of his poem, talking about the wrath of Juno against the Trojans, asks with incredulous wonder \textit{tantae-ne animis caelestibus irae?} ‘can the minds of gods feel such terrible anger?’ Can we really believe in such gods as divine?

Father Festugière has taught us to distinguish between the personal religion of educated persons in antiquity and the religious beliefs and ceremonies of the state. As early as Xenophanes of Colophon in the sixth century B.C. we have the doubt concerning anthropomorphic deities and about those who make their gods in their own image. Oxen and lions, he says, if they had hands, would make themselves gods after their own likeness. The Aethiopians imagine their gods as black and snub-nosed, the Thracians theirs as blue-eyed and red-haired. But in reality there is one god only who without effort moves all things by the force of the spirit.

Vergil, like Euripides, shows us these anthropomorphic gods in action and lets us judge to what extent we can call them divine. He does not doubt the existence of spirit forces and a creative universal spirit, but men have distorted the nature of these beings and endowed them with human weaknesses. Thus to the character of Juno has been attributed unworthy motives. Her anger against the Trojans is based on personal grievances: the beauty competition, Ganymede, Electra who became the mother by Jupiter of Trojan Dardanus. In Aeneid I she descends to the level of bribing Aeolus to let loose the storm against Aeneas. She traps the unfortunate Dido in the cave at Carthage and is shortsighted enough to think that it will make Aeneas stay in Carthage. She organises the persecution of Aeneas and her malevolence never ceases. In Book VII she presses into her service the dreadful Fury Allecto and utters her threat \textit{Flectere si superos nequeo, Acheronta novebo}. She is prepared to use the powers of evil — or is it only men that have seen her with these human weaknesses? Is she merely symbolical of the unknown forces in life that are sometimes bad and sometimes good? For in the end she is converted and lets Aeneas settle in Italy on condition that the main traditions of the Italians are not violated.\textsuperscript{26} She now sees the future of Italy as growing strong in partnership with Trojan Rome.

Vergil accepts the Olympian gods as part of the traditional technique, but he has no illusions about anthropomorphism. His personal interests lie elsewhere. He is not upholding the gods of the state in his tribute to Lucretius — I have no doubts myself that he did refer to Lucretius in \textit{felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas}. Happy is the philosopher who under-

\textsuperscript{26} Aen. XII. 818 ff.
stands intellectually the principles of Nature. But he adds *fortunatus et ille*, happy also is he *deos qui novit agrestes*, who has learned to know the gods of the country, the divine element in Nature. I do not think we can take *deos agrestes* as equivalent to the whole Olympian hierarchy and make of Vergil here a defender of the traditional order to please Augustus. His conception of Nature falls into two parts, (a) scientific study in which he shows his interest in Catalepton V which I hold to be genuine, and (b) spiritual harmony with the universal life of Nature, which he was aware of poetically much as Wordsworth was aware of it in *The Prelude*. I have tried to make this point in my *Vergil the Universal*.

For a brief summary of part of Vergil’s personal faith we must turn to the words put in the mouth of Anchises at *Aeneid* VI. 723. There we have aspects of the Stoic and Orphic teachings that attracted Vergil.

*Principio* — ‘first in order’ and also ‘in the beginning’ — *spiritus intus alit* — a spirit, a life-force, the Anima Mundi, inly sustains the whole Universe, the Sun and the planets; and here I prefer Dryden’s *Titanaque et astra*, ‘the Sun and the Stars’, in spite of the condescending attitude of professional scholars — *totamque infusa per artus mens agitat molem* — and Mind, Intelligence, pervading the whole in all its parts, gives it movement and life. That is what Xenophanes said. The Anima Mundi passes through the mighty frame. From this source, *inde*, from this universal *anima mundi*, this union of mind and matter, all forms of human and animal life spring. *Igneus est ollis vigor et caelestis origo seminibus* — Fiery is the force of these atoms (the archaic form *ollis* lends a kind of solemnity) and heavenly their origin. *Seminibus* (like *semina* in Ecl. 6: 32) takes us back to Lucretius who calls the atoms *semina*, and to Vergil’s earlier attachment to Epicureanism. But now, after the Stoic doctrine of the Anima Mundi (which, however, had a counterpart of Epicureanism. Cf. Ecl. VI), we go on to Plato. The origin of our atoms is ‘heavenly’: *quantum non noxi a corpora* tardant, / *terrenique hebetant artus moribundaque membra*. This is the Platonic doctrine; the body is the prison of the soul and dulls our understanding and perception of non-material truths. Shakespeare, speaking of the music to which ordinary mortals are not attuned, says:

‘Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it’.

*Hinc*, (because the soul is so imprisoned) *metuunt cupiuntique, dolent gaudentique . . .* — people are filled with fears, with desires, with feelings of

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27. I prefer the reading *noxia corpora* to *corpora noxia*, because it emphasises by its position the harmfulness of the body to spiritual understanding.
sorrow and joy. Neque auras dispiciunt, and they do not discern the light. 28 They do not discern the light clausae tenebris et carcere caeco ‘because they are shut in by gloom, their dark prison’ (et is hendiadys). After death comes the process of purification and the operation of the law of cause and effect — quisque suos patimur manis, we each suffer the spiritual doom we have largely made for ourselves within the scheme of Providence. And so there is progress for the soul (a totally un-Homeric concept) by various processes to a higher state of being. Here we touch the thought of St. Augustine. And the Aeneid remains, as Otis says, the point at which Roman antiquity and Western Christendom meet.

In the material world Vergil supported Augustus’ policy from inner conviction as the best available in the circumstances. But in his mind he goes far beyond Augustus. So far from being the instrument of his propaganda he looks down on him from a great spiritual height. In Vergil, we may say with Brooks Otis, the human is given cosmic depth, the cosmic is given human significance.

28. I believe aura here has this meaning, as it has in v. 747: aurai simplicis ignem, ‘the spark of elemental light’ and as it has in v. 204: auri per ramos aura refulsit, ‘the gleam of gold shone through the branches.’
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