

XII. Three Problems of *Aeneid* 6

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The *Aeneid* is a poem. We can only solve the problems of its interpretation when we solve them in *poetical* terms. I treat here three apparent inconsistencies or difficulties in *Aeneid* 6. My object is not so much to give new solutions—though actually I have been forced to introduce an unavoidable minimum of novelty—as to suggest the kind of analysis which the *Aeneid* needs and, so often, has not had.

I. The Two Kinds of Immortality

The inconsistencies in Vergil's account of the underworld have been often pointed out¹ and still await what may be called a solution. Norden writing in 1893² thought that he had it but retracted the "solution" in his commentary³ and there admitted that Vergil's underworld showed "keine einheitliche Vorstellung" because it represented a "compromise" between popular belief and theological science. The contamination of heterogenous motifs is, he believed, to be traced back to Vergil's sources.

The main inconsistency is between the "mythological Hades" (located in Vergil's scheme between Acheron and the "parting of the ways" which lead to Tartarus and Elysium) and the "theological Hades" of the Lethe Valley where the souls about to be reborn are assembled. Conington⁴ puts the matter trenchantly when he says: "They (i.e. the souls of the mythological Hades) exist on the assumption that departed spirits remain in a fixed state, each preserving its own individuality. The latter doctrine (i.e. of transmigration) takes all spirits alike as soon as they have been separated from the body, puts them through a thousand years' purgation, and then sends most of them to reanimate other frames." One cannot get out of this difficulty, as Norden first

¹ E.g. R. Sabbadini, *Studi critici sulla Eneide* (Lonigo 1889) 79 f.; A. Dieterich, *Nekyia* (Leipzig 1893) 150 f.

² "Vergilstudien" *Hermes* 28 (1893) 360-406.

³ E. Norden, *Vergilius Aeneis Buch VI*³ (Leipzig 1926).

⁴ John Conington, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* 2 (London 1876) 425.

tried to, by assuming all the souls of the "mythological" past to be *prematurely* dead and forced to await the expiration of a hundred year span before being subjected to purification, transmigration, etc. Some of the "mythological" souls have been dead for far longer than that, yet stay none the less where they are, in the "fixed state" to which Conington refers. Consistency is obviously not to be found in Vergil's theology. But was he in search of such consistency? Conway⁵ sees in Vergil's "silence" as to the lots to be given the "mythological" souls by Minos the poet's own ignorance of what the lots are. He deliberately passes by the "hard cases" which make "bad law." But Vergil does not so much keep silent out of ignorance as out of a desire to pass over the inconsistency: his whole "mythological" Hades cannot be called a case of "bad" law or theology. It obviously does not fit the rest of the scheme as Vergil seemingly knew. Nor are we helped by seeing in the inconsistent schemes a deliberate attempt to *combine* poetic, philosophic, and civic conceptions of the after-life.⁶ Scaevola's distinction of three kinds of gods has no application to the sixth *Aeneid* since, as is quite obvious from the Augustinian text, his point of view is anything but poetical. Nor is there any real indication in the text that Vergil was deliberately trying to "satisfy the whole man" because "the human spirit possesses something of all three."

Clearly we need to account for the inconsistencies of the book in terms of its poetical design and structure. Büchner⁷ is right when he says after acknowledging the incommensurability of the theology and the poetry-mythology: "Es erwächst daraus aber die Pflicht, das poetische Phänomen positiv zu würdigen" (359). But his actual analysis of the book still leaves us uncertain as to what his "positive estimation" of the phenomenon really is (though he certainly leaves some hints). On the whole the best "positive estimation" of this that I have found is in a brief article by L. A. Mackay.⁸ He lays down what I consider to be the

⁵ *New Studies of a Great Inheritance* (London 1921) 112-39.

⁶ Cf. Frances Norwood, "The Tripartite Eschatology of *Aeneid* VI," *CP* 49 (1954) 15-26. Scaevola's definition of the three kinds of religions or three types of gods is given in Aug. *C.D.* 4.27: unum [*sc.* genus] a poetis [traditum], alterum a philosophis, tertium a principibus civitatis.

⁷ R. Büchner, *P. Vergilius Maro, der Dichter der Römer* (Stuttgart 1955) = *RE*, s.v. "Vergilius."

⁸ "Three Levels of Meaning in *Aeneid* VI," *TAPA* 86 (1955) 180-89.

primary axiom for interpretation of the book, in the sentence: "Whether we regard Aeneas' experience in the Sixth Book as a dream, or as poetically actual for him, the chief directing theme in the journey is certainly its direct personal relevance to the character of Aeneas and his role in the story" (184). Thus "the primary importance of the journey is that it represents a spiritual purification and illumination that fit him for his mighty task." So the "culminating illumination" (i.e. the Show of Heroes) is preceded by the "recall and dismissal of two great traumatic experiences, the tragedy of Dido and the disasters of Troy." This is, I think, a true and most valuable observation though, unfortunately, Mackay does not seem to see how it explicates the "inconsistencies." Rather, like Frances Cornford, he falls back for his explanation of them on "three levels of meaning" according to which a "primitive" amoral conception of survival is supplemented by an ethical and by a philosophic. So what was initially an attempt to explain the book in *poetical* terms becomes instead a moral-philosophical approach to it.

Similarly Perret's⁹ brief remarks on the book are suggestive but again fail to reach a coherent explanation of the problems involved. Henry Nettleship,¹⁰ writing as far back as 1875, came closer than anybody else to the heart of the problem when he said: "The ordinary popular mythology is put side by side with the doctrine of transmigration, and the reader is left to harmonize them as he can. His logical instincts may not be satisfied, but more than satisfaction is given to his imagination." It is too bad that Nettleship failed to realize and make precise the full implications of the final clause of the sentence quoted!

Mackay's article certainly points to a seemingly obvious (though usually overlooked) fact—the book's central concern with Aeneas and the spiritual processes at work in his psyche. Actually (as we shall see later) it is probably to be taken as a *dream*. In any event its central meaning (as indeed of the *Aeneid* as a whole) is psychological and moral. Conway and now Perret and Mackay (to some extent also Büchner) have seen that in the "mythological" Hades Aeneas encounters his past in a definite order (Conway, 129: "The reverse order to that in which they have formerly met us in the narrative"). He then, after *hearing* the Sibyls' *description*

⁹ *Virgile, l'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris 1952) 114.

¹⁰ *Lectures and Essays* (Oxford 1885) 139.

of Tartarus and a brief passage through Elysium, proceeds to encounter his future under the direction of Anchises. Here then we have the past and the future in juxtaposition or opposition, with the "moral" section of the poem (punishments and rewards, Tartarus and Elysium) in between. The symbolism seems fairly plain: Aeneas sees his past in final perspective, he grasps the great moral purpose which governs the world and he then sees and accepts his future. The *settings* (i.e. the mythological, moral and philosophical visualizations of the after-life) correspond to the *psychological* characteristics of his past, his moral present and his future.

In the mythological Hades, the spirits remain—to use Conington's apt phrase—"in a fixed state" or precisely as they were when alive or at the exact moment of death. (This is why the notion that these souls are only provisionally placed where they are—"in semplace luogo di passaggio e di attesa" to quote Funaioli¹¹—seems quite improbable: they have no future at all, simply a past.) Dido is now "living in the past" with Sychaeus: she refuses, as it were, to recognize the existence of Aeneas. Deiphobus is just as he was when butchered in his sleep on Troy's last night. This is the unchanging past which Aeneas cannot alter or affect—for all his speeches and attempts to prolong it by fruitless reminiscence—*because it is unalterable*. He can only leave it, but in recalling it and leaving it he achieves also freedom from its "traumatic" hold upon him. Here indeed we encounter the problem of Aeneas' unreadiness or weakness before the beginning of Book 6: the "flaw" which the ship-burning of Book 5 made quite obvious, despite the apparent "recovery" from the passion of Book 4. His conscience—in regard to both Dido and Troy—is uneasy, and his "unease" is basically that of one who cannot face his future because he has not come to terms with his past. It is still somehow alive for him in the wrong way (this is what one might call a tragic nostalgia), and he can only be liberated from its hold by realizing that it is dead. For the moment we need only stress the admirable fitness of the mythological Hades (which is of course the traditional Hades, the Hades of Homer's *nekyia*) to render the fixity, deadness or static quality of the past as past—also, which is perhaps quite as important, the pathetic and

¹¹ *L'Oltretomba nell' Eneide di Virgilio* (Palermo 1924) 57.

lamentable nature of this past. This Hades, as Achilles once remarked, is worse than the lowest form of life on earth.

The "moral" Hades—Tartarus and Elysium—is far less important in the book: Aeneas merely *hears* about Tartarus and hastily goes through Elysium with his mind entirely on Anchises. Obviously the moral principle which governs the universe is important to Vergil (and to Aeneas), but Elysium is certainly not represented as anything like the climax of moral or spiritual effort: indeed there too the heroes relive their past in a quite static way though it is a quite different kind of past they relive. If they are after all receiving a final purging, as Anchises' words in 743 f. suggest, this is not emphasized or stressed. Clearly Elysium is mainly part of the passage between Aeneas' real past and his future, with which Anchises is wholly identified: the valley of Lethe is definitely set away from Elysium proper.¹² The philosophical after-life—purgatory, reincarnation, etc.—there set forth is, however, also only a symbolic setting to the Roman future. The solemn philosophical background lends great dignity to the Roman history, but the Roman history cannot be reconciled with the philosophy. Vergil, as we shall see, is not concerned with the *next* (post-Roman) reincarnation of these souls or with their ultimate liberation from somatic life. His great end and goal is clearly Rome itself. But just as the mythological Hades "fits" the past (Aeneas' past), so this philosophical Hades fits the future. The reincarnation motif serves to direct the vision away from the past toward what is to come. Here everything and everybody look ahead, toward what will be, toward what they are to do on earth, in Italy, at Rome. Anchises, the Trojan converted to a Roman *pietas* (Book 2), is the fitting symbol of the past turned away from itself toward the future. And this reorientation now becomes real also for Aeneas.

In such a perspective the inconsistencies of the poem cease to matter or, rather, themselves express the difference or the inconsistency between the past and the future. In the dream state a symbolic unity often underlies a great disparity of the parts which compose the superficial action. It seems clear, as Norden pointed out, that Vergil here has "contaminated" several sources: the eleventh *Odyssey*, a *catabasis* of Heracles (possibly Perithous), an Orphic or Orphic-Pythagorean *catabasis*, as is evidenced by the

¹² Seclusum nemus, 6.704.

parallels between *Aeneid* 6 and the recently discovered "Orphic" *catabasis* on a Bologna papyrus.¹³ But these sources only gave Vergil the "settings" he needed: the mythological Hades was the setting of *Aeneas'* past (i.e. of Palinurus, Dido, Deiphobus): the philosophical, of his future (Anchises, Show of Heroes).

Aeneas' return to the past is given its peculiar tonality by the infernal setting: it is an ordeal, the ordeal of life traversing death, of present facing the past. The worst part of the journey is clearly the "mythological" part, and this is symbolized by the fact that Aeneas does not give up the golden bough until he has left this part behind him. Note the lines (immediately after the description of Tartarus):

629 "sed iam age, carpe viam et susceptum perface
manus;"

635 occupat Aeneas aditum corpusque recenti
spargit aqua ramumque adverso in limine figit.
His demum exactis, perfecto munere divae,
devenere locos laetos et amoena virecta.

The mythological Hades is the "valley of the shadow"—lugentes campi, ultima arva—which has to be crossed before the happy Elysium and the meadow of Lethe can be entered. One is the scene of death and the past; the other of life and the future. Aeneas literally loses his old self and finds a new one: he dies, as it were, to rise again.¹⁴ The bough, in having brought him out of the past, out of the future-less dead world, has fulfilled its purpose.

II. The Two Goals of the Soul

The inconsistency of Vergil's other-worldly and ascetic doctrine in *Aeneid* 6 with his Roman emphasis and purpose has seldom been emphasized by the critics and commentators. Conington,¹⁵ however, called attention to it with characteristic trenchancy (425). He well says: "While Virgil is expounding his doctrine

¹³ Cf. R. Merkelbach, *MusHelv* 8 (1951) 1-11. The relevance of the papyrus for *Aeneid* 6 is discussed by Max Treu, "Die neue 'Orphische' Unterweltsbeschreibung und Vergil," *Hermes* 82 (1954) 24-51.

¹⁴ The bough's duality as both life and death-dealing is well recognized. Vergil virtually identifies it with the mistletoe (*viscum*, 6.205 f.) whose ambiguous status in this respect is a commonplace of folklore. The matter, from this point of view, has been well discussed by Robert A. Brooks, "Discolor Aura," *AJP* 74 (1953) 260-80.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.* (above, note 4) 425.

he is clear: when he comes to paint it in its results he becomes confused.” He points out that nothing is said about the *past* of the souls in the Show of Heroes (their former incarnations) nor about their *future* (“And what is to be the condition of Silvius and the earlier posterity of Aeneas after they have fulfilled their new term on earth? Will they reappear in successive generations as later Romans?”). Norden here sees only a conflict of philosophical-theological and poetic-mythological ideas.¹⁶ The essential conflict, however, is between two fundamental philosophies, one of which is explicitly adopted, the other of which is only implicit.

Clearly the end and goal of Platonic or Pythagorean reincarnation is eventual escape from the body altogether in a life that is divine, ideal, or in the full Plotinian sense, one with the ineffable source of all goodness. In the *Phaedrus*, for example, a soul that is reincarnated three times as a true philosopher is finally winged and will never undergo incarnation again (249A). But it is equally clear that for Vergil the end is really patriotic service to Rome: *others* will philosophize better; the *Roman's* task is to rule. We can of course reconcile the two points of view by a little ingenuity (we can e.g. invisege Roman political activity as a stage in the preparation of the true philosopher), but evidently the whole tenor of Vergil's presentation is against this kind of argument. Here the *Roman* attitude toward philosophy expressed in Tacitus' description of Agricola—*memoria teneo solitum esse narrare se prima in iuventa studium philosophiae acrius ultra quam concessum Romano ac senatori hausisse*—seems clearly prefigured in *excurrent alii* etc. (847 ff.).

Perret¹⁷ seems to me therefore right when he insists that the true parallels to *Aeneid* 6 must be sought in such *Roman* works as the *Somnium Scipionis* and possibly the *Somnium Aeneae* of Fabius Pictor to which Cicero refers in the *De divinatione* (1.21.43), though this dream would seem to refer only to Aeneas' past, *omnia quae ab Aenea gesta sunt quaeque illi acciderunt*. The *Somnium Scipionis* is, however, a true parallel and reveals exactly the same inconsistency as the sixth *Aeneid*, though the apparent consistency is much

¹⁶ E. Norden (above, note 3) 297 f. The fact of Vergil's obvious lack of concern with prior or later incarnations of the heroes on display in Book 6 is of course only the superficial aspect of his lack of concern with the *raison d'être* of the whole reincarnation process. He is thinking of Rome, not of the cycle of birth and rebirth or its spiritual end in complete liberation from the body.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.* (above, note 9) 114.

greater. For Cicero makes *political* activity and *virtue* the primary means of attaining the disembodied and passionless life among the stars¹⁸:

iustitiam cole et pietatem, quae cum magna in parentibus et propinquis, tum in patria maxima est. *Ea vita* via est in caelum, etc. . . . sunt autem optimae curae de salute patriae, quibus agitatus et exercitatus animus velocius in hanc sedem et domum suam pervolabit; idque eo ocius faciet, si iam tum, cum erit inclusus in corpore, eminebit foras et ea quae extra erunt contemplans quam maxime se a corpore abstrahet.

Yet there is, for all that, an inherent antithesis between the life of this world and of the next or between the philosopher and the statesman, which cannot be eliminated. In terms of the Platonic system *life on earth in the body* must of necessity be devalued and it hardly seems that a political career is the best way of *contemplating what is especially removed from the corporeal*.

The fact is that history—man's action in time—has no final place in Platonism or Pythagoreanism since their goal is, precisely, timeless and unchangeable being. The problem here is at bottom the problem of time: to one who values history and the concrete event and loyalty, time takes on a very different meaning than it does to one who sees history and its concreteness as only the shadows, faint images and "broken lights" of eternal, immutable ideas and forms. The idea so fundamental to Christianity—and recently so wonderfully expressed in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*—that one can only transcend history by accepting and traversing history, is quite foreign to Platonic or Stoic philosophy. Thus what is really the greatest good for Cicero and Vergil—historical achievement and Rome as its climax—is not recognized in the system (a stozified Platonism) to which they, in their philosophical capacity, adhered.¹⁹

But here we encounter a quite fundamental distinction between

¹⁸ Karl Nawratil, "Die Geschichtsphilosophie der Aeneis," *WJS* 57 (1939) 113–28, points out (126) that Cicero in the *De re publica* speaks of an "ideal" (timeless) commonwealth, not an *explicitly* Roman one: hence Cicero is less Roman-historical than Vergil in the "Show of Heroes." But the difference seems to me more one of form than reality. Certainly Scipio is very much concerned with Rome. The quoted passage is from *De re publica* 6.28 (the closing peroration of the *Dream of Scipio*).

¹⁹ I am, of course, referring here to the philosophy used by them in *Aeneid* 6 and the *Somnium*, not necessarily to their own or personal philosophy.

Greek and Roman attitudes. The Roman could not recognize it because he had no philosophical understanding of his own attitude, failed even to see how irreconcilable it was with Greek philosophy. Later the Jewish-Christian notion of a divine shaping of history toward an eschatological climax in which man and God would finally be reconciled in a new "kingdom of heaven" supplied a religious or religio-philosophical basis for the validation of history. This is indeed partly visible in St. Augustine's *City of God*, and to it the Roman attitude greatly contributed (we see nothing like it in Greek or Eastern Christianity); but Cicero and Vergil lacked the indispensable Christian background for attempting such a perspective. They did not see Rome as part of an historical process moving toward *extra-historical* fulfillment but rather as a final end in itself: *imperium sine fine dedi*.

It seems to me that Karl Nawratil²⁰ has thus erred in trying to read a "philosophy of history" into Vergil. We can say that up to a point Vergil identifies Roman (Aeneas') *future* with the Stoic *logos*, but it is hard to see how the Show of Heroes can be considered the "source" (Quellpunkt) of Vergil's *idea of history*. To be sure, Norden in urging the Poseidonian origin of the *Somnium Scipionis* as well as of the conclusion of *Aeneid* 6 tended to overlook their specifically Roman character, but the philosophy *per se* is not Roman. Hence the contradiction to which we have pointed. From the strictly *poetical* standpoint, however, the philosophy does enhance the dignity and importance of the *Roman* theme. We feel at once that the Roman theme is far more suited to solemn philosophy than to mere mythology. Hence we can say, perhaps, that the latter part of *Aeneid* 6 is good poetry but poor or inconsistent philosophy.

III. The Two Gates of Sleep

Few passages of the *Aeneid* have given rise to more controversy and divergence of judgments²¹ than the lines on the twin doors of sleep (893-99):

²⁰ *Op. cit.* (above, note 18) 125.

²¹ Two good reviews of the literature of the question are contained in H. R. Steiner, *Der Traum in der Aeneis* (*Noctes Romanae* 1952), esp. the bibliography on 105-107; and Louis-François Rolland, "La porte d'ivoire," *REL* 35 (1957) 204-23. These and the following works will be cited hereafter simply by the author's last name: E. Norden (above, note 3); E. L. Highbarger, *The Gates of Dreams* (Baltimore 1940); T. J. Haarhoff, "The Gates of Sleep," *Greece and Rome* 17 (1948) 88-90; F. M.

Sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur
 cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris,
 altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,
 sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia manes.
 his ibi tum natum Anchises unaque Sibyllam
 prosequitur dictis portaque emittit eburna,
 ille viam secat ad navis sociosque revisit.

We can quite briefly deal with the defects of some previous interpretations:

(1) E. L. Highbarger puts the "ivory gate" at the *Vestibulum Orci* (273) where the *vana somnia* are gathered on the great elm: Aeneas leaves by the "ivory gate" because he must go out by the same gate wherein he entered. The great objection to this thesis is that it widely separates the two doors and forces Aeneas to prolong his journey to an extent in no way indicated by the text. Surely the natural interpretation of 11.893 f. is that the "twin doors" are side by side. There is no mention of doors at the *vestibulum*.

(2) The interpretation of W. Everett, which Norden takes to be certain, is that Aeneas exits by the ivory gate because it is *before* midnight and true dreams can only emerge *after* midnight according to Horace, *Sat.* 1.10.33. This thesis is unacceptable on several counts. There was no such common belief in the veracity of after-midnight dreams as Everett and Norden postulate (cf. J. B. Stearns, *Studies of the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama* [Diss. Princeton 1927]). Furthermore there is no indication that Vergil is here concerned with the time in this precise sense, i.e. as a criterion of true and false dreams.²²

(3) Rolland's thesis is that Aeneas exits by the "ivory gate" because, lacking the golden bough, he has to evade the scrutiny of the watching Manes in order to get out: he would be noticed if he tried to leave with the pale and discolored shades (*verae umbrae*)

Brignoli, "La porta d'avorio nel libro VI dell' 'Eneide,'" *Gior. ital di filolog.* 7 (1954) 61-67; **W. Everett**, "Upon Virgil, *Aeneid* VI., Vss. 893-898," *CR* 14 (1900) 153-54; **J. van Ooteghem**, S.J., "Somni Portae," *Les études class.* 16 (1948) 386-90. There is, of course, much other earlier material on this *Streitfrage*. Needless to say, I do not wish to suggest that I am the first to hold that Aeneas' *catabasis* is a dream! The point of these remarks is to clarify one's reasons (I hope also Vergil's) for holding it to be a dream.

²² Cf. Rolland's and Steiner's criticism of this thesis and especially the interpretation of Horace in Pasquali, *Orazio lirico* (Firenze 1920) 579, note 1.

but can pass in the crowd of *false dreams* who are deceptively real-looking simulacra of human beings. This seems to me highly improbable. Aeneas is guided to the exit by Anchises and has already indicated to Proserpina his *bona fides* by depositing the bough. Nor is the notion of his trying to pass himself off as a *false dream* very suitable to his dignity at such a moment.

(4) T. J. Haarhoff supposes that *ad caelum* in line 896 means not *to the sky* or *upperworld* but *in relation to the sky: falsa ad caelum* thus signifies: "false in relation to the material world." This is the "hidden meaning" of *ad* here: the vision, however true in itself and for Aeneas, is "false to the world above," i.e. to the majority of men, Vergil's contemporaries who differed from him as to the destiny of Rome. All we can say here is that the "hidden meaning" of *ad* which Haarhoff postulates seems utterly arbitrary: *falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes* means surely that the Manes *send false dreams to the world above*. Any other meaning is as unnatural as it is unnecessary. *Ad* can mean "in relation to" but surely not in a simple construction with *mittunt*.

(5) Brignoli thinks the ivory gate signifies Aeneas' failure to grasp the truth of reality: hence it is *to him* a dream or a false dream. He is meant to win by his own merit, not by preknowledge of his fate. This interpretation would eliminate the whole point of the Show of Heroes and the sixth book! Nor is it true that Aeneas in Books 7–12 is really *ignarus rerum*: the phrase (8.730) refers only to his wondering ignorance of the details set forth on the shield. Naturally he does not know them in advance. Brignoli's alternative or "deeper" explanation that Aeneas (in contrast with Augustus and the truly historical Romans of the Show of Heroes) is *mythical* (66)—in effetti un semplice mito—and hence a false dream seems to me even more destructive of Vergil's poetic intention.

(6) Ooteghem merely offers us a choice between explanation (2) or simply holding that Aeneas had to leave by the ivory gate because he was *not* a true shade. The latter is correct so far as it goes but does not carry us far. We need not waste time on Servius' fantastic explanation that the gate of horn refers to the eyes (which see true), that of ivory to the teeth (which speak false). Cf. the well-known refutation of it by Heyne (Excursus XV).

It is evident, first, that Aeneas—not being a *vera umbra* in any sense—could not leave by the gate of horn. Therefore he leaves

by the ivory gate, the gate of *false dreams*. The *verae umbrae* seem clearly to be *shades of the actual dead* who appear to the living in dreams and speak the truth to them.²³ Brignoli (63) denies that Aeneas must leave by the ivory gate on the ground that, even if he is not a true shade, "egli e tanto meno—appunto perchè presente col corpo—un *falsum insomnium*, cioè l'immagine di un' ombra." But of course *if* the *catabasis* is a dream, Aeneas did *not* descend as an actual body. He (the figure of the dream) is thus a *falsum insomnium*, a character of his own dream state. We can, if we like, imagine him (the dream Aeneas) to be sent by the true shade, Anchises (896). Here Brignoli illustrates well the difficulty we can get into by taking the *catabasis* as literal truth. But even on this assumption, it would seem more natural for Aeneas to leave with the *falsa insomnia* than with the actual shades (cf. Rolland on this point).

The important point is that Vergil here assimilates Aeneas to the *insomnia* rather than to the *verae umbrae*. This is what has to be explained. And this, as I see it, clearly signifies that his Hades vision is a dream and a "false dream" in the sense that it is not to be taken as literal reality. That the ivory gate adjoins the gate of horn signifies, as Steiner (96) has well said: ". . . dass das Reich der Träume und das Reich der Abgeschiedenen aneinander grenzen, ja ineinander übergehen; oder anders gesagt: weil Unterwelt und Traumwelt auf gleicher Ebene liegen, kommt den Unterweltserlebnissen ein traumhafter Charakter zu." I cannot see that, because Vergil shows a close acquaintance with Lucretius, we have to interpret the *falsa insomnia* in a technical Epicurean sense, as Agnes K. Michels does.²⁴ Rather Vergil is telling us that the whole *catabasis* is a dream and that in fact sleep and death are alike in their revelation of an underworld unknown to the waking consciousness yet exerting upon it the most powerful effect, precisely because it is only in such a realm that the meaning of time—of past and future, of history and its climax in Rome's eternal empire—can be found.

What links the dead Anchises and the living Aeneas, the past and the future, and the present to both, is a reality beyond all of

²³ Cf. Steiner, 90: ". . . und zwar sind die Schattengebilde 'verae' im doppelten Sinne: sie künden Wahres—im Gegensatz zu den täuschenden insomnia, sind zugleich auch wahrhaftige, leibhaftige Totengeister, nicht falsche Vorspiegelungen wie die 'falsa insomnia'."

²⁴ "Lucretius and the Sixth Book of the *Aeneid*," *AJP* 65 (1944) 135-48.

them which the hero can see only in vision or dream but which in fact determines all that is really significant in his life to come. This is of course suggested rather than stated, but surely the suggestion is there for him who wants to find it. The marvelous—the miraculous, incredible and mythological—all that in Homer is the simple belief of an heroic age, is here put in that dream-world in which reality is rather symbolized than stated. But the symbols mean far more than any obvious “prophecy” since they disclose the end of all true effort and struggle. The ordeal of Aeneas is no less an ordeal for being an ordeal of the mind and spirit, and the revelation of Rome’s future no less veracious for being withdrawn from the cold light of actual day. The important thing was for Aeneas to come to terms *with himself*, to face his own past (as he had not yet faced it) and to see his future and his country’s future (as he had not yet seen them).

Here we must avoid the fatal error of taking the concept *dream* too literally and thus wondering how a man could “dream up” the Show of Heroes. This is of course meant to be a real revelation: this is Aeneas’ vision of his fated future which comes from far beyond his *own* imagination. Vergil is not here denying the reality of fate or its revelation. He is rather trying to express the cruciality of the experience in which a revived past and a revealed future come together in the hero’s *psyche* at the moment when *pietas* is to be tested in the *maius opus* toward which all heretofore has been looking. The dream-atmosphere provides the “distance” and strangeness needed to justify and color the experience. In Book 8 the vale of Caere, in which the arms are presented to Aeneas by Venus, is likewise “off the map” of Aeneas’ ordinary experience: there is even a distant, legendary quality about the site of Rome as he visits it. The real action takes place by the sea near Laurentum and the Tiber mouth. Here Vergil uses distance—the remoteness of Aeneas from the other Trojans—to achieve an effect of “unreality” or dream-likeness. Similarly in Book 3 the marvelous—Polydorus, the Harpies, Achaemenides—is a reflection of the hero’s uncertainty, despair, and, above all, his sense of being lost in a “bad dream” where everything is vague and uncanny,—a world of *monstra* and ambiguous portents.

In the case of the underworld “dream” of Aeneas, Vergil is of course engaged in revealing the future (actually his own present: Augustus) from the narrative perspective of the legendary past.

Aeneas, ostensibly and for narrative purposes standing in "Homeric time," anticipates "Augustan time." This was necessitated by Vergil's decision to confine the narrative to the Homeric or heroic age, thus to avoid the contamination of *mythos* by *alêtheia* or *historia* which he found in Ennius, in other Roman annalistic epic, or in the *historical* Greek epic inaugurated by Choerilus.²⁵ But Vergil's use of prophecy or revelation to introduce Augustus and his own times was very far from a superficial addition to *Homeric* epic.

The Hades-dream of Aeneas, like the shield of Book 8 (or even the Jupiter-prophecy of Book 1) "succeeds" poetically only because all the legendary, Homeric or heroic elements of the poem have *already* been transmuted from sheerly objective (Homeric) reality to what is really a subjective and symbolic schema. Aeneas is not merely *shown* the future in dream: he is also in waking reality—in the narrative proper—acting *for* the future, giving up *both* past *and* present (Troy, Dido) for the future. This is why (or mainly why) his peculiar problem of motivation looms so large. In the *Iliad* both Achilles and Hector reach a moment of decision in which they choose death rather than accept a (to them) destructive loss of self-respect. Achilles cannot permit Hector to go unpunished even though he knows that his own doom is bound to Hector's, nor can Hector avoid the conflict with Achilles even though he correctly foresees its result. In both cases the motivation is unambiguous, passionate, and personal: in Hector's case, in fact, "patriotism" would seem clearly to point toward the duty of self-preservation (as his father and mother urged). But Aeneas must sacrifice this kind of warrior's pride or shame in the interest of something too strange and remote to be clear or emotionally apprehensible.

Again, the desire to get home—the great *nostos* motif—must be sacrificed to the necessity of accepting the loss of home. Dido, unlike Calypso, is thus really a substitute for home, a relief from *nostalgia*, not a major cause of it. Here again the subjective struggle—the struggle to accept or acquire a new motivation—is preeminent. All this explains how and why the *clarification* of the new, strange goal is essential to the whole plot and design of the poem. On the one hand Aeneas must outgrow, overcome his

²⁵ The clearest statement of what must have been Vergil's principles on this point seems to me that of Horace's *Ars poetica* (esp. 128 f.).

most basic original motivations—which can be defined as Achillean or Hectorean *aidôs*, Odyssean *nostos*—or any emotive substitute or equivalent for them (Dido); on the other, he must seize, understand and emotionally appropriate the new Roman motivation. This is why he must—at the crucial moment of his career—come to a final confrontation with his past (Troy, Dido) and a revelation of the future sufficiently vivid to give it motivational power adequate for the supreme struggle (*maius opus*). In such a perspective the vision of the future becomes meaningful and necessary: without it, it becomes merely a bit of prophecy stuck on an Homeric anachronism. Most fundamentally then, the identification of Aeneas' vision as a *dream* signifies that the primary struggle and action of the poem (or more exactly of the Odyssean *Aeneid*, Books 1–6) is *within* Aeneas' own consciousness, not *outside* it.