

THE INITIATION OF ÆNEAS

Todd Memorial Lecture

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BY

SIR JOHN SHEPPARD, M.B.E., Litt.D., LL.D.
*Senior Fellow and formerly Provost of King's College
Cambridge*

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THE INITIATION OF ÆNEAS

MR. CHANCELLOR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

When I heard I was to have the privilege of meeting you in Sydney, that City Beautiful of which so many gallant young Australians had told me, I wrote, of course, to tell my friend and teacher, Dr. Gilbert Murray, the inspired interpreter of what is best and kindest in the Classics, and I asked him, since I knew that he was born here but had left Australia as a boy, eleven years of age, whether he began his classics here or later. To my delight he answered that he learnt his first Greek at a school in the bush, at Mittagong, from a grandson or great-nephew of the poet Southey. How appropriate that Murray should have learnt his first Greek from the kinsman of a poet. "In my first Greek lesson", he wrote, "I was reading *Μοῦσα*, and Southey puzzled me by calling it *ἡ Μοῦσα*, which made me for a moment think the μ must be an η , so that I called it *ἡοῦσα* and disgraced myself." How delightful that the first of all his brilliant emendations gave a new name to the muse he loves so well.

To-day we join in honouring the memory of a devoted teacher and a lover of the classics, and especially of Latin—Frederick Todd. I never met him, but have heard, as most of you have heard, of his deep interest in his pupils, his rare gift for graceful composition, and the pleasure which he used to give his friends by declaiming to them some of his best-loved passages from Virgil. Certainly Todd, the author of your *Campanarum Canticum*, was, in the true Virgilian sense, a *pius vates*, a dedicated teacher, one of those of whom the poet says "They have made some remember them by being worth remembrance"—

*sui memores aliquos fecere merendo.*¹

How many sacred memories that phrase suggests to all of us. Will you, before I speak of the Initiation of Æneas,

share with me some that have been much in my thoughts during my visit to your country?

The first Australian who ever came to King's was a priest, *sacerdos castus*, Frederick Sharland. He came to us from Hobart High School in 1867, just two years after good King Henry's Cambridge family opened its gates to boys from other schools than Eton. Three years later he was ordained and returned to Hobart to begin a faithful ministry of half a century.

Two others, whom I specially remember, were scholars of my own first year at King's. One of them, Wilfred Agar, was an English boy and presently became a Fellow of the College. In later life, for twenty years, he was beloved and honoured as Professor of Zoology at Melbourne. The other was George Lewis Blake Concanon, who came to us from Brisbane. After only one year with us he went home, I know not why. What I do know is that at Gallipoli he gave his life *ob patriam*, and that his name is written on our War Memorial at King's.

Yet another boy who was at Hobart School when Sharland was a curate was to prove a man of genius, wonderfully gifted, wonderfully modest—Lyndhurst Giblin. He surpassed Æneas in his *pietas*, deep loyalty of spirit, but in many ways was much more like Odysseus, that great-hearted, much-enduring hero. Only he was not self-centred as Odysseus was. He gave himself for others. Certainly he was 'a man of many devices'. He could make his own clothes, bake his own bread, teach a little boy to make his own toys, help him to enjoy good books, and later, if he showed good promise, 'rub up' his own Greek and introduce the lad to Homer or the plays of Æschylus. By turn a Cambridge Blue, a Senior Optime in Mathematics, a gold-digger, a muleteer, a lumberjack, a merchant seaman, what he loved best was his home on the Tasmanian farm from which, like Cincinnatus, he was called to serve the State, first in the war of 1914, then much later in what proved the most exacting and most fruitful service of his life, the unsolicited professorship at Melbourne, and those

other grave responsibilities he bore so quietly, so nobly, and with such advantage to us all. We at Cambridge loved him too. It was a joy to us in 1937-8 that for some months he lived with us, as a Fellow of the College, and I know, in 1948, it was a joy to him to help us with advice in the creation of the studentship for young Australian graduates which bears his name.

Thinking of him and of those other memories, I ask you now to come with Virgil to a little port near Naples, Cumæ, and to watch, through Virgil's eyes, the first arrival of the Trojan pilgrim fathers in their promised land of Italy. No sooner were the anchors down than 'in a flash' the young men were ashore—*juvenum manus emicat ardens*—scouring the countryside. "Plenty of water here!" "What splendid timber!" "Flints for firing!" Everything, in fact, they need for building their new Troy. Everything? Their leader, who knew better, went at once to pray and to seek guidance. He knew, man does not live by bread alone, but by the word. In the vestibule of Apollo's ancient temple he and his companions paused a while to gaze with wonder at a series of strange frescoes, symbols of a prehistoric Cretan mystery, a tale of hate and cruelty and of their nemesis, of grim perverted lust, but also of the pity which can sometimes turn the worst of what we suffer to a seed of something infinitely precious. First there was a picture of Androgeos, the Cretan envoy, treacherously killed by Athens, then of the Athenian youths and maidens sacrificed in barbarous requital. Here were depicted the grim secrets of the Labyrinth; there the pity of the master-craftsman Dædalus, his flight to Cumæ, and his unfinished picture of the boy, his child, who did not heed his warning and who died because he flew too near the sun.

Have we not sometimes in our own dark days remembered Icarus, and said, "It was the purest light of heaven for whose fair sake they fell"?

Examining these pictures, brooding on their meaning, they would have lingered still had not the Sibyl's voice abruptly called Æneas—

This is no time for poring over those works of art.
Just now you would do best to sacrifice, seven bullocks
That have not yet been yoked and as many properly
chosen sheep.³

It is indeed a somewhat harsh and abrupt challenge. I have ventured to quote the version given us by Mr. Day Lewis, because it renders so faithfully the Sibyl's brusque and agitated intervention. It has been suggested by a great authority, the late Dr. Mackail, that Virgil, had he lived to make a last revision, would have rounded off her paragraph and made it smooth by adding something. I can't think so. To me the Sibyl's call seems greatly needed, and the fact that it is brisk, and barely courteous, makes it all the more effective. Do we not remember—certainly the Sibyl does—that in Carthage long ago Æneas brooded on a set of pictures?⁴ They were scenes of Troy, and at the sight of them Æneas cried: "Here, even here, honour is paid with honour and they weep because such things are true." After all, he began to think, this people, with their wonderful new city, happily already building, are not savages; they pity what is pitiful, they honour what is good. It is the first step in the process which will end in tragedy for him and Dido. Longing as he does, and always will, for an end of his unhappy pilgrimage, he very soon begins to think that, after all, perhaps a settled home in Carthage might be a solution not rejected by the gods. Who knows? So he had felt in Crete not long ago, and would begin to feel again in Sicily. Perhaps, in spite of all . . . ?

So at Carthage he looked back, not forward, and almost, not quite, forgot his duty and his mission. Here at Cumæ he has much to learn. He has to see a vision of the glory of the future and be strengthened by it. Better still, he has to learn, as he has never learnt before, the secret of the tragic paradox that makes life worth the living not in spite of its inevitable hardships, but because of them. If he is to become a worthy leader of his people and a worthy father of the Roman race, he has to understand that mystery—no, not quite

understand it—no one can—but recognize it, feel it, learn from it, and even so be strengthened for his task.

I suggest to you that not the Sixth book only, but the whole *Æneid* is the tale of the initiation—education, if you will—of a good man, but not, at first at any rate, a very great man, for a mission which entails a burden of responsibility so heavy that it well might seem to us beyond the powers of any man. For such a task he needs indeed the qualities of which we have already seen in him the promise, but not as yet the ripeness, the achievement. That is still to come. Again and yet again, not only in the Dido episode, which is a climax and a grave defeat—not irretrievable, but grave—some of us have felt, if not, with Charles James Fox, the man is 'odious' or 'insipid', certainly that the wise and courteous words of Dryden are just a little kinder than our own uncharitable thoughts. 'On the whole matter, humanly speaking', we all 'doubt there was a fault somewhere'. A fault in Æneas? Yes, and in Dido too. But in the poet? I don't think so. I think he meant us to face facts and recognize that even heroes are not ready-made, impeccable, and that sometimes, for a very great mission, destiny, or Jupiter, or whatever power we reverence, does choose what seems a most imperfect human instrument. In the Prologue Virgil didn't say 'the glorious Æneas', as Homer said 'the glorious Achilles' and even 'the glorious Odysseus'. Why? Because his theme will not be 'glorious Æneas', but the way in which a loyal-hearted man with many failings learns to play his part with others in the service first of Rome herself and then of all the Roman race.

In the light of that intention, is it still astonishing—is it a sign of Virgil's failure?—that he introduces his Æneas for the first time in a crisis in which many of us think—I don't say *I* do—that we should behave at least a little better than the hero. A hurricane is coming. The sky lours, lightning flashes, the sea is turbulent and the winds clearly threaten shipwreck, yet Æneas doesn't, as the Admiral of the whole fleet, vouchsafe his men a word of encouragement—"Good

cheer, my hearties"—he doesn't take the helm . . . he gives no orders . . . Simply he lifts his hands in horror, and shouts aloud how much he wishes he had died at Troy.⁵ The fact is, he is nearly at the end of his tether. He is, for the moment, almost a nervous wreck. His quality is shown next morning, when he has recovered, and he does quite well for the rest of the day. But we are warned. We know now what the strain on him has been, and sympathize. We understand much better why, from time to time, he fails. There *is* a fault, he *is* a human creature, subject to our human weakness. So, I venture to say, was Charles James Fox, if he had only known it. Virgil has done what he intended, and has given us the clue. The man is deeply loyal to his duty, when he sees it plainly; he is kind and grieves for human sorrow; on occasion he can show fine leadership. But far too often he still lacks decision; his imagination is not disciplined; his human sympathy itself sometimes becomes a source of weakness; and, above all, he lacks, not faith exactly, but the zest for life which kindles hope and strengthens faith itself. His need is not to be 'converted' but to be 'fired' in spirit. That, you will find, is the poet's own word at the end of the great experience at Cumæ. Anchises, having shown his son the vision of Rome's grandeur, and her spiritual mission, 'fires his soul' with a passionate love of his great future—

*incenditque animum famæ venientis amore.*⁶

So much for the Sibyl's rough, but necessary call to action. It has taught us something. But here is another curious example of what scholars call 'a difficulty' or 'a crux'. The prophet Helenus, you may perhaps remember, in Book III,⁷ informed Æneas that the Sibyl, if he could persuade her not to trust her oracles to easily mislaid and scattered papers, nor to couch them, like some modern planners, in an unintelligible jargon, will provide him with particulars about the peoples he will have to meet in Italy, the wars he will have to fight, and generally how he is to cope with difficulties or evade them. All this she will 'map out' for him, the prophet says—

expediat cursumque dabit.

"Oh dear!" some learned scholars cry, "Oh dear, she does nothing of the kind!" Has Virgil blundered? Well, they say, not quite as bad as that. If he had lived to revise the whole work, he would probably have altered what the prophet said.⁸

I think not. In his first prayer to the Sibyl, Æneas, so it seems to me, expects the sort of thing the prophet told him she would give him. Indeed, he almost dutifully asks for it, before he mentions a much greater boon, much nearer to his heart and much more difficult to ask with faith: "I want to go down to the other world and see my Father." "War awaits you still", she says, "a Tiber for a Simois, a new Achilles", and of course, in her own complicated and at times quite unintelligible fashion, she might well have gone on to explain the details . . . but he cries "All this I know. For all I am prepared. But first, my Father!"⁹

How ungrateful and how odd some of us are. That exclamation marks the moment when Æneas *does* begin to look as if, with all his conscientious scruples, all his tendency to doubt and brood and blunder, and almost despair, he really *is* to be the sort of hero that Anchises and the rest of us, indeed the world and Jupiter himself, require if the new Troy is not to be a failure. This is the moment we have waited for so long, and just to mark that moment Virgil has made Æneas dutifully listen while the Sibyl starts to give him just what Helenus suggested, her ethnological map of Italy and her handlist of campaigning tactics, but break in impatiently before she has the time to sort her papers and expand her periods, and tell her: "What I really want is to see Father." I for one love him for it, and I'm grateful to the prophet (if he knew about this grand adventure) for not telling him about it in advance. He left that theme alone—or, if you please, he very wisely left it to Anchises. That's a different matter, and, of course, Anchises, knowing what his son is like, has had many anxious moments, but believes the lad will come.

Anyhow, Æneas does it, and some of us love him for it. By a curious coincidence—or is it merely a coincidence?—just the same sort of learned persons find a ‘difficulty’ in the *Odyssey* on precisely the same kind of point. When Circe, recognizing the great power of the herb Moly, acknowledges Odysseus as her master, and restores his crew to human shape, we might well think that the episode was at an end. But no! Their joy at the recovery and the miraculous union with their friends leads to a scene of such hysteria that Circe, by no magic arts but just a woman’s way, enchants them all again.” “Poor dears”, she says, “you’ve had a terrible time in your adventures, and you’ve quite forgotten how to enjoy yourselves. Stay here and recover your tone.” So they stayed, and she gave them a good time (thanks to Moly, with no fear of consequences), till, after a whole year of it, the crew themselves—not Odysseus, mark you—thought it really must be time to go.

So Odysseus asked her most politely for permission and she graciously consented. “Heaven forbid I should keep you, if you really want to go”—then, with a touch of delicious feminine malice, “I’m so sorry for you, as your next adventure really will be grim. You’ll have to visit the dim country of the dead in order to consult Teiresias. He’ll plot your course for you and give you all directions”. In the sequel, to the consternation of what Mr. F. L. Lucas calls the ‘owls’ of scholarship, Teiresias does nothing of the kind. And why? Odysseus carries out the necessary ritual, keeps off the shades, except his own unlucky friend Elpenor, till Teiresias is ready; and the prophet gives him the most strict injunction not to eat or let his comrades eat the Sun-god’s cattle, drops a hint or two about the situation he will find at home—the first hints that Odysseus has yet had of trouble there—but tells him nothing, not a word, about the rest of his homeward voyage. Why? Is it as some Germans gladly tell us, and some Englishmen resignedly repeat, that Homer here has blundered—or perhaps it isn’t Homer at all? I can’t agree. Consider what

has happened. After the solemn warning about the Sun-god’s cattle and the hints of trouble nearer home, Odysseus could so easily have asked him to continue with the promised plotting of his course, etc. He doesn’t. Why? Unpractical, not like a fuehrer. The truth is that he wants to talk to Mother.” That, to some of us, is surely touching. I for one am very glad of it, because this is the first of many things in this brave story of the hero’s visit to the shades—by sea, of course, because he is a sailor—which throw for us a new light on his character, a new light on Homer’s spirit too, the same loving spirit which shapes both his tales, and makes him in his own most human way the prophet and forerunner and inspirer of the spirit which we call Virgilian and even Christian. His Odysseus doesn’t so much want to have his course mapped out; he wants to talk to Mother. And, she tells him, she has no fresh news of home. All was much the same there, when she died, except that she was pining for his loving kindness and the light had gone out for her.

That, I assure you, is the work of the same poet who created an Achilles, in his right mind merciful to captives, a youth who hated a lie, and who dreamt of honour and the praise of men; then in the nemesis of his own pride and his great error, learnt that he cared far more for friendship than for glory—

Mother, all these things indeed hath Zeus accomplished,
But what profit is there in these things. My friend is
dead . . .

and I did not help him.”

And again, that same Achilles, when he vainly tries to make amends for his great fault by vengeance, has to learn that vengeance too is vanity compared with simple human feeling, so that he spares and honours Priam, though he fears himself, lest passion come again. Such a poet is not lightly disregarded when we study Virgil, Dante or the Gospels. He who made Achilles in his pity for Patroclus say “You weep like a little girl who runs behind her mother, plucking at her skirts and

begging to be taken in her arms"¹³ was loved by him who made the little boy Iulus slip his hand into his father's hand and plod upon his way with him, *non passibus æquis*.

The initiation of Æneas is, I venture to suggest, essentially initiation into thoughts like these.

The Golden Bough, found through the guidance of his mother's doves, will make it possible for him to go and to return unscathed, nay armed with something better than a map, a plan of operations, a spirit strong in hope, a heart made kinder, more intelligent by human pity,

*ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram.*¹⁴

I am reminded of some words which were quoted for our help in the dark days by our beloved King George VI: "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'. And he replied: 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'"

At the threshold of the shadow-world are symbols of our common lot, anxiety, disease, old age; fear, hunger, poverty and death; toil, and for solace, death's kind brother sleep; mischievous joys which hurt us in the long run: furies and discord, frenzied, poisonous. All these are facts which we must know, and sometimes must accept, if life is to be fruitful and our quest not vain.

But yonder, in the Elm of Superstition, are swarming creatures of our own imagination, monsters against which no weapon except reason and a clean imagination can avail. Life is hard, but need not be so hard as our own superstition makes it.

So we come to the grim ferryman and the souls, as numerous as fallen leaves in autumn and as birds that gather at the season of migration. All are eager to pass over to the other side—

*tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore.*¹⁵

What did the poet mean? The same, I think, as he meant in the later, larger vision. Surely that life still beckons always, here and everywhere, and perhaps hereafter. The spirit moves us still, and we must needs press on, whatever may await us.

When we have passed the river and hear voices¹⁶ on the further shore of infants wailing for the light of life they never knew, because they died at the mother's breast; of men condemned to death unjustly; of innocents whose poverty and grinding toil became so hateful to them that they threw their lives away, and women to whom love brought an untimely death, and warriors, cut off in battle, I confess that I am moved, and don't much care to question why each company is there. Virgil, the learned scholars tell us, either did not know Professor Norden's admirable theory or, if he knew it, didn't think it worth his notice. Very shocking! Dr. Norden's theory is that by an ancient superstition those who died untimely had to wander without rest until the term of their natural life was ended. But if Virgil really knew this, he has blundered about several details, and of course it is, so we are told, 'a positive blemish' that he does not give the necessary explanation of their presence here—it would only, after all, take a few lines. So my learned friends conclude, 'it is more respectful' to the poet's reputation to suppose that, had he lived, he would have rewritten the whole passage. Also, had he lived, he would have changed his reference to Minos, who, we are told, has no right to be here. That, say my friends, is the most 'charitable' assumption.¹⁷

But, seriously, who in the world except the learned critic wants an explanation? If we listen simply to the poet without too much ingenuity, we shall understand. Here are children who have died, we say, untimely. That is common. Virgil wishes his Æneas, and his readers, to remember that. Men have been condemned to death unjustly. That also happens. So does suicide by very gentle, innocent people, and men and women have indeed been known to kill themselves or others, because of misdirected love or jealousy or that despair of

love which really is not love at all. And some, we know too well, have died in war.

These things the poet chose to place at the beginning of the revelation to Æneas of the meaning of all life—life here, as well as life hereafter and life not as it might be if desire came true but as it is, so long as we are what we are. These things are true, and Minos is a kinder judge than Rhadamanthus. That is a good reason for his presence. He will judge these spirits mercifully, and assign each to a lodging—but a lodging only on a pilgrimage, for them, as for us all.

Therefore, because he has just seen and felt these things, when Dido passes, cold, aloof and silent, and rejoins Sychæus, the true love of all her life, Æneas for the first time fully understands what he has done, confesses and breaks down in tears of pity, not for himself, but her.

Why did the poet make Æneas meet Deiphobus just after that great moment? Deiphobus was horribly mutilated, on that last grim night of Troy, through Helen's treachery and cruelty? He had lived with her as a lover, but on that black night, unarmed and undefended, he slept while she brought Menelaus to the house and had her lover murdered by her husband. Why remind us of that hateful incident just now?

I think it was because on that same night at Troy Æneas very nearly left his father and his wife and child quite undefended in the home while he was desperately seeking death in what he knew was futile, hopeless fighting. Hector's spirit had come to him and told him "Troy is lost. Do not attempt to fight any more, but save the gods of Troy and carry them away abroad to safety". But Æneas, when he heard the noise of fighting in the streets, rushed out to fight again. It was a fault for which we cannot blame him, but it was a fault. And when at last he heard the Queen's sad cry, and saw the mutilated body of old Priam, suddenly he knew where duty lay.

Then, then, for the first time fierce horror came on me. I stood appalled. I seemed to see my own dear father's form, my wife deserted, and my house in ruins, and the fate of my dear little son.¹⁸

Those lines were read by Shakespeare at the Stratford Grammar School, and to some purpose. That is why Hamlet let Polonius stop the player at that point, dismissed him courteously, and railed upon himself.

Æneas rushed at last, at long last, to his duty, and at that moment suddenly met Helen, and his impulse was to kill her. But his mother's voice came to him and rebuked him. "First your father and your wife and little son."

Well, well, all that is now a memory. Æneas by this time has learnt his lesson. Virgil has not recorded any comment from him on the story told him by Deiphobus. Indeed what could he say? Æneas is no criminal, but a good man, sorely tried and much perplexed. There is no need for him to see the fate of souls whose guilt is past redemption. It is enough for him to hear the Sibyl's warning and to pass out from the realm of darkness to the light and the pure air of the Elysian plain. And there, what does he see?¹⁹

First athletes, still rejoicing in their games. How kind that intuition of our poet was. Then, at the centre of the picture, Orpheus with a choir of dancers and of singers, teaching them, we imagine, a new, better song; then, balancing the athletes, Knights of Troy, at peace, but still as proud as ever of their cars and weapons, still as kind as ever to their horses.

All these he passed, and entered a sequestered fragrant laurel-grove, where a serene, grave company were either feasting or just risen from their places for their grace after meal, Apollo's pæan. Who were these?

Some who had suffered and were wounded, fighting to defend their fatherland; some priests whose lives were priestly; poets and teachers, faithful to their calling, whose words were worthy of Apollo, and others who by arts they

had discovered made life civilized—that is a little gentler, better ordered. And last, not least, those who made some remember them by being worth it.

Not all are here who will be. Some are still on their way. Who knows? Perhaps, by Minos' leave, some of those children? Some unhappy lovers? Nor will all stay here for ever. Some, though happy here, press on to further trials, further service.

*Hic manus ob patriam pugnando volnera passi,
Quique sacerdotes casti, dum vita manebat,
Quique pii vates et Phoebæ digna locuti,
Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artis,
Quique sui memores aliquos fecere merendo."*

Great as they are, these noble lines are still an introduction to an even nobler theme. Virgil is rising to the height of his great argument. Now we are ready for the meeting of the father with the son, the father's cry "At last! My son, I knew that you would come. I knew your loyalty would conquer all the difficulties and the dangers of the way. I have been counting the days", and for the revelation of the wonder of the world, the mystery of life and suffering and hope. "Why", asks Æneas, still depressed, still anxious, "Why are these souls possessed by this insane desire to live again on earth?" The answer comes "*Spiritus intus alit . . .*" and finally he sees the pageant which reveals the hope, the glory and the grandeur which is Rome. After that Æneas is to be a different man, at last a hero, worthy of the name and of his mission.

Until that time, as we have seen, although Æneas has been learning, very slowly, and with many setbacks and backslidings, he has never satisfied us, never satisfied his modern critics. I think the poet meant us to feel like that. I think it was his purpose from the outset.

Think again of his prologue Arms and the man . . . fate's refugee . . . the wrath of Juno . . . the Penates . . . Latium . . .

the Alban fathers and the walls of Rome. Juno's appalling persecution of the man, distinguished for his *pietas*, Juno's great scheme for Carthage . . . the founding of the Roman race. A greater theme than any man's achievements, a greater load than almost any man could bear.

Contrast that with the Prelude of the *Iliad*, . . . Achilles . . . Wrath . . . grief . . . death . . . the will of Zeus . . . the glorious Achilles. There is the whole plot of the *Iliad*, from the first calling by Achilles of the Greek assembly to the moment when he cries "Mother, all these things indeed hath Zeus accomplished but what profit is there in these things; my friend is dead"; and again after the appalling sequel and the hero's loss almost of his humanity, to the word of Zeus, "This is the honour that I give him",²⁰ to be himself again, a man in his right senses, merciful.

Now let us look again at that multitude of souls that throng, like murmurous bees, to drink the waters of oblivion and be reborn. Æneas asks—he has to ask it—just as Scipio, in his dream of heavenly music, had to ask, "Why should we not stay here? Why go back to the stress and strain of life?" So now Æneas asks, "Father, how can it be? Unhappy souls, why does this fearful craving for the life of earth possess them?"

Is it possibly for the same reason for which hands, so long ago, were stretched out for the love of the further shore? We have now reached the culminating moment of the vision. Let me read you part of Dryden's version, because Dryden better than the rest, I think, has understood the poet's thought.

Know first that heaven, and earth's compacted frame,
And flowing waters, and the starry flame,
And both the radiant lights, one common soul
Inspires and feeds and animates the whole.
This active mind, infused through all the space,
Unites and mingles with the mighty mass.
Hence men and beasts the breath of life obtain,

And birds of air, and monsters of the main,
 The ethereal vigour is in all the same,
 And every soul is filled with equal flame—
 As much as earthy limbs and gross allay
 Of mortal members subject to decay
 Blunt not the beams of heaven

After that, Anchises expounds the doctrine of the soul's purgation, and tells of the great cycle of birth, death, suffering, reincarnation: and after that he shows the pageant of the future, the glory and the mission of the sons of Rome. And yet, you know, the vision which began at Cumæ with the picture of the boy who died because he flew too high ends with the sorrow of the poet, and of all who loved Marcellus, for that other youth of noble promise, who died too soon. Here is the counterpoint of the whole poem: Arms and the Man . . . the walls of Rome . . . the Roman race; Icarus, Rome, Marcellus.

manibus date lilia plenis.

May I read you just a few more lines, this time from the version given us by my friend Mr. Day Lewis?²¹ They are very different in effect from Dryden's lines, but they are also noble poetry and give us something of what Virgil meant.

The life-force of these seeds is fire, their source celestial,
 But they are deadened and dimmed by the sinful bodies
 they live in—

The flesh that is laden with death, the anatomy of clay:
 Whence these souls of ours feel fear, desire, grief, joy,
 But encased in their blind dark prison discern not the
 heaven-light above.

Yes, not even when the last flicker of life has left us,
 Does evil, or the ills that flesh is heir to, quite
 Relinquish our souls

Each of us finds in the next world his own level

(That is surely a very reticent and euphemistic way of treating *quisque suos patimur manes*. The meaning rather is,

I think, 'We suffer, each of us, for being what we are'. But the rest is accurate and lovely)—

Each of us finds in the next world his own level: a few
 of us
 Are later released to wander at will through broad
 Elysium,
 The Happy Fields; until in the fullness of time, the ages
 Have purged that ingrown stain, and nothing is left but
 pure
 Ethereal sentience and the spirit's essential flame—

*aetherium sensum atque aurai simplicis ignem.*²²

Shakespeare knew and loved that line, and that is why his Cleopatra, at the end, can say, when nothing else is left for her but suffering and love,

I am fire and air, my other elements
 I give to baser life . . . Husband I come.

But what is, in effect, the answer given to Æneas by his father?

All these souls when they have finished their thousand
 year cycle
 God sends for. And they come in crowds to the river
 of Lethe
 So that, you see, with memory washed out, they may
 revisit
 The earth above and begin to wish to be born again²³

The answer is, you see, that what inspires these souls is not 'a terrible craving' for the life of mortal men, but a wish for the next stage in a pilgrimage and a rebirth that brings them further on the road towards a perfect consummation, when all evil shall be purged away.

Virgil's doctrine isn't exactly ours, and how far Virgil thought of it as true in fact or only 'somehow like the truth', no one can say. But I am sure that this initiation as a whole

prepares the hero not simply for a mystical experience here or hereafter, but for life and work in Italy for Rome, as Rome should be, and therefore for us all.

Is it not true that Virgil's poetry speaks, as Mackail has said, of actual life directly to us, coming afresh to each generation, to each reader, as a revelation of the beauty of the world and the wonder of the human soul?

When Dante's Beatrice sent Virgil to the help of Dante, I am sure it was not simply because Virgil's style had kindled Dante's love for his own language and inspired his verse. Nor was it simply that in Virgil's praise of Rome and of the Roman race he found a prophecy, a prayer and an assurance of that Holy Roman Empire to which, hoping against hope, he looked for peace and justice in the world; nor even because Virgil was believed by him to be a prophet of the birth of Christ. Rather, I think, it was because each poet in his own way had discerned a clue, though not the answer, to the eternal mystery of life and death and joy and sorrow, and that clue somehow was found in thoughts of sacrifice as the condition of achievement, and love of which the price is pain. Homer, Virgil, Dante, let us remember all of them. They all are worth remembrance.

NOTES

¹ *Æn.*, VI, 664.

² *Æn.*, VI, 5-9.

³ *Æn.*, VI, 37-39.

⁴ *Æn.*, I, 456 ff.

⁵ *Æn.*, I, 92-101.

⁶ *Æn.*, VI, 889.

⁷ *Æn.*, III, 441-460.

⁸ See Professor H. E. Butler's Introduction and Notes. I have learnt much from his edition, but on points like these feel bound to differ from his view.

⁹ *Æn.*, VI, 103 ff.

¹⁰ *Od.*, X, 449 ff.

¹¹ *Od.*, XI, 141 ff.

¹² *Il.*, XVIII, 79-80.

¹³ *Il.*, XVI, 7-10, *Æn.*, II, 724.

¹⁴ *Æn.*, VI, 268.

¹⁵ *Æn.*, VI, 314.

¹⁶ *Æn.*, VI, 426 ff.

¹⁷ See Professor H. E. Butler's edition, pp. 11-14.

¹⁸ *Æn.*, II, 559-563.

¹⁹ *Æn.*, VI, 660 ff.

²⁰ *Il.*, XXIV, 110. The significance of this line was, among modern scholars, I believe, first discerned by the late Sir John Myres.

²¹ The *Æneid* of Virgil, translated by C. Day Lewis; London, Hogarth Press, 1954.

²² *Æn.*, VI, 743-747.

²³ *Æn.*, VI, 748-751.