ONE of the most distinguished of living British philosophers once declared that the most which any system of metaphysics could hope to do was to suggest a new point of view. At the moment he was lecturing on the mysterious Hegel; and though it was twenty-five years ago I still remember the feeling of relief which his declaration produced. Here was a profound student of Hegel, no mean author himself of metaphysical theory, deliberately acknowledging that no philosophic system, however brilliant, could hope to be literally true; he was content if we recognised that all great systems provided new and fruitful points of view from which the world could be studied. Somewhat in this spirit even those who have no claim to be philosophers may still, perhaps, discern something in a great poet which it is not unreasonable to describe as a philosophy, pervading his mature work. It certainly does not amount to a metaphysical system; but it does seem to open to us a rather striking point of view. All lovers of Vergil know the lines in Tennyson’s address to him, and we all recognise their truth—

Thou that seest universal nature moved by universal mind,
Thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of humankind.

Behind and beneath these two conceptions which Tennyson ascribes to Vergil there was a certain mental attitude which I should like to make clear, if I can.

The theory is submitted to criticism with some diffidence, yet in the conviction that it is at least true so far as it goes, and that it co-ordinates and explains many features in Vergil’s work, both in his style and in his thought.

The attitude which we are to study is that which I believe Vergil

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library, 10 November, 1920.
to have held in the maturity of his powers, that is, in the part of his life occupied in writing the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*. Nothing therefore need be said here about the sympathy with Epicurean teaching which, as we all know, marked Vergil's youth. On the other hand his relation to Stoicism will naturally come into view.

Let me begin by remarking a general fact about Vergil which is too little realised. We are apt to regard him merely as what he became, the truest and most complete representative known to us of Roman life. Yet when we compare him with the writers of his own day and of the preceding generation, I think it is true to say that in one respect he stands apart from them all, namely in the depth of his knowledge of Greek writers, and the eagerness with which he seeks to infuse his own account of things Roman and Italian with a spirit drawn directly from Greek sources. A simple example is the deliberate way in which (to the confusion of some modern critics) he has continually coupled Greek and Italian folklore in the *Georgics*. At the outset 1 the Greek wood nymphs, the Dryads, are invited to join the dance of purely Italian deities, the Fauns; 2 and Pan, the Greek god of the Arcadian hills, is to come and take part with Silvanus, a typically Italian figure. So in the charming passage 3 describing the farmers' festival, purely Italian fashions like those of the sacred masks (*oscilla*) hung on fruit trees to swing with the wind, appear side by side with Greek rites in the worship of Bacchus associated with the Greek drama. I need hardly even remind the reader of the countless passages in the *Aeneid* where Vergil has adapted to his purpose some incident or utterance of Greek poetry. Let me rather ask attention to one or two more general characteristics of his attitude.

There were deeply imprinted on Vergil's mind some of the most typical of all Greek habits of thought. The late Mr. A. W. Benn, in his brilliant survey of *The Philosophy of Greece* 4 pointed out two features, closely related, which appear in almost all Greek systems of

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1 *Georgics*, I., 11 ff. "It is rather striking that Pan is appealed to by his love for his own Arcadia (*tua si tibi Maenata curae*). If he loves Arcadia he must needs love Italy's woodlands too. There is the same pride in Italy shown in the next passage referred to; Italy has the Bacchic festival too as well as Greece *nece non Ausonii*." [W. B. A.]


3 *Georgics*, II., 380-396.

4 London, 1908.
Philosophy; one was the dread of extremes, a faith in that most national of all Greek virtues which they called \( \sigma \omega \phi \rho \omicron \sigma \omega \varsigma \nu \eta \), a word which we variously, and always unsuccessfully, translate by—“temperance,” “moderation,” “self-control,” “sanity” “sound-mindedness”; that central firmness and serenity of character which preserves men from being the victims of sudden passion in the world of action or of wild extremes of belief in the world of thought.

The second characteristic, which seems at first less interesting, was the habit of antithesis, of considering things in pairs, such as heat and cold, darkness and light. This in the Greek language is well represented by the humble and everyday particles which, on the threshold of his acquaintance with Greek writers the English schoolboy finds so hard to represent, the simple \( \mu \varepsilon \nu \) and \( \delta \varepsilon \) “on the one hand,” “on the other hand” as he laboriously renders them. I suppose no one ever began to read, say, the speeches of Thucydides without wishing that the Greek affection for these particles had been less pronounced. Yet if we turn to the writings of the tutor of Thucydides, the rhetorician Antiphon, and see how every page is studded with these antithetic points, we realise that Thucydides, even in his most argumentative moments, was probably less given to antithesis for its own sake than was the average Greek speaker of his boyhood.

But what, it will be asked, has this rather quaint peculiarity of Greek diction to do with such serious things as those of which philosophy treats? The answer is quite simple. Namely, that in almost all Greek philosophers there is an implicit duality of some kind or other. For example, the contrast in Plato between the invisible, real, existing Ideas and the imperfect copies or approximations to them which make up the visible world. Or in Aristotle’s *Ethics*, the conception of every virtue as the middle term between two extremes, the virtue of courage, for example, being the middle point between the extremes of cowardice on the one hand and rashness on the other. In earlier systems we recall the Mind which Anaxagoras conceived as imposing order on Chaos; or the two principles of Love and Strife, centripetal and centrifugal forces, which Empedocles regarded as governing the physical as well as the human world. These examples will be enough to show that the characteristic Greek habit of thinking and speaking in antitheses was not merely a trick of words but corresponded to something quite substantial in the Greek view of
things. Most of us who have any interest in Philosophy know how striking and impressive a revival was given to this kind of antithesising by the speculations of Hegel with his fundamental proposition that every notion implies and generates its opposite.

To these two characteristics of the Greek temper we may add a third which everyone will recognise, a certain childlike capacity for wonder—a standing readiness for new experiment, the virtue of perpetual hope and youth in the sphere of thought. This was the most engaging thing about Socrates, and Socrates in this was a typical Greek. There was no problem which he was not prepared to discuss in the hope that careful study of its conditions might reveal new light; and the same refreshing candour in discussing first principles meets us on every page of Greek Tragedy. In Homer, though it is not common in the political sphere, it is very marked in Odysseus and lies indeed almost at the root of his character; as Dante saw in that famous Twenty-sixth Canto of the *Inferno* which represents Odysseus as meeting his end through continually pressing forward to explore new tracts of ocean and win new knowledge of humanity; a conception which Tennyson's *Ulysses* has made familiar to English readers.

Now I think it may be maintained that all these three characteristics of the Greek spirit are more deeply marked in Vergil than in any other Roman. First the reverence for self-control, secondly the habit of wonder, and thirdly the method of looking at things from a dual, antithetic standpoint.

On the first, Vergil’s hatred of extremes, and love of self-control, I need say little. It was shared, as we all know, by his intimate friend Horace, though perhaps the Golden Mean, which Horace so faithfully celebrates, did not signify quite all that Vergil meant by *servare modum*—‘keeping the limit’. We need only recall in passing the contrast on which the whole story of the *Aeneid* is based; that Æneas does learn to practice self-control, to sacrifice his own private hopes and desires to the call of duty, even in the hardest case where it bade him abandon his love for Dido. But his brilliant rival Turnus never will make the sacrifice. He is *violentus* from first to last, passionate, reckless and contemptuous of any law or promise that would interfere with his own wild, impulsive will.

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1 Compare Plato, *Theaet.*, 155D. [W. B. A.]  
he broke through the fixed custom of what the ancient world counted honourable warfare by stripping the armour from the body of the lad Pallas whom he had slain, and making it his own instead of dedicating it to a god; and he persists in his suit for Lavinia’s hand in defiance both of her father and of what he himself confessed was the command of Heaven.

Nor again, need we stay to note examples of the eager, child-like wonder, merged in a deeper sense of mystery,1 which was constantly in Vergil’s mind as he looked upon the affairs of the world. The only remark that I will add on these two characteristics is this: that they may be both regarded as connected with the third, namely, the habit of looking at things from antithetic standpoints. For the self-control, which the Greeks loved, is a compromise in practice between contrasted motives of action; and the mysticism, which is a continual sense of wonder unsolved, may be regarded as a kind of spiritual compromise between contrasted views of the truth.

But it is the third point which I am now mainly concerned to examine, Vergil’s antithetic or dualistic habit of mind. It is so characteristic of his thought that it has left a marked impress on his style; and it may well be that when it is once stated, it may seem to be so commonplace a matter as hardly to deserve a name, much less any long discussion. If the reader does so recognise it, and admit its reality, I shall be only too pleased. But then I must ask him to add it to the characteristics of Vergil’s poetry which it is desirable for all Vergil’s readers to understand; for, unless I am greatly mistaken, you will not find it stated in any of the commentaries.

Vergil2 could never be content to see a fact, or a feeling, or an event, in which he was interested, as something which stood by itself. He instinctively sought for some complementary, some companion fact, to set beside the first. We may dismiss briefly one large group of these pairs, since it is not characteristic of Vergil only, the cases

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1 On this I may refer to my New Studies of a Great Inheritance, pp. 35 ff.
2 This paper is deeply indebted throughout, and especially in the passage which follows, to the wise and generous criticism of my colleague Prof. W. B. Anderson, Litt.D., to whom I owe not merely the notes marked with his initials but a great deal of other help which has purged away many defects.
where the second fact involves no clear contrast, only a reinforcement of the original statement; such as *Italiam Lavinaque litora*, ‘Italy and the Lavinian shore’. It resembles very strongly the habit of parallel statement in Hebrew poetry, so familiar to us in the Psalms (*He hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods*); and in this some scholars see evidence of a direct acquaintance on Vergil’s part with some of the Jewish Scriptures. Be that as it may, this duality of mere confirmation is not what I am concerned to examine now.

But there is an interesting set of cases on which something must be said, though I should myself refer them to the same class. In all of them Vergil mentions a natural cause for some event side by side with a divine cause, and he gives us to understand that both causes are true; so that if we are to give a name to this we must call it not “supernatural” but rather “internatural”. When Nisus opens to Euryalus his daring project to leave the Trojan camp by night and make his way through the enemy’s forces and take word of their danger to Æneas, he asks Euryalus, ‘Is it the gods who inspire us with such ardour as I feel now, or does each of us make his own desires into a god?’ Here the parallel is put in the form of a question.

But I have noted well over a score of examples where the parallelism is positive and complete, though here I must mention only a few. Perhaps the most explicit case is in the Fall of Troy in Book II. of the *Æneid*, where Æneas has his eyes opened by Venus, so that instead of walls and houses crumbling in fire or before the assaults of the Greeks, he sees the hostile deities actually at work, Pallas with her thunder-cloud and Gorgon-shield, Neptune with his trident, themselves crushing the doomed city into dust.

In the battle, in the Tenth Book of the *Æneid*, Æneas only just escapes destruction from a band of seven brothers, who are all attacking him at once, because ‘some of their darts are beaten back

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1 X., 184.
2 603-616.
3 ‘That is how Venus in her vindictive way has described them. But all that Æneas himself relates is that:—

Dread forms appear
And mighty powers of heaven hating Troy.”—[W. B. A.].
4 X., 328-331.
from his shield and helmet,' and 'some are turned aside from grazing him by his divine mother'. In the same Book, the reader wonders why the two young warriors Pallas and Lausus never meet in conflict, and Vergil gives two reasons; first¹ that their supporters on each side crowd up so thickly that neither hands nor weapons can be used; and then (four lines further on) that 'the ruler of great Olympus has forbidden them to meet; each will soon find his fate before a greater foe'. At the end of the Eleventh Book² we learn that Turnus deserts the ambush, which he has laid for Æneas, in anger at the news of the death of Camilla. But Vergil adds 'and so the cruel will of Jove demanded'. Just as in the Second Book, the Wooden Horse, which the Trojans themselves are dragging with enthusiasm into their city, is said to arrive there by 'fate' (fatalis machina).³

So earlier in the same book the cause of the fall of Troy is given four doubly; 'the fates of the gods and the Trojans' own minds' were both bent to destruction. Destiny had decreed that Troy must fall; the Trojans fulfilled this destiny by their cowardice in leaving Laocoon to perish unaided—their panic is four times⁵ mentioned—and by interpreting his death as due to his wicked daring, not to their own folly.

The same double thought appears in the taunt of Remulus to the Trojans, 'What god, what madness, drove you to the shores of Italy?'⁶

Above all in the crowning scene of the defeat of Turnus, at the end of the poem, the action of fate, in the shape of the small bird, which Turnus takes for an evil omen,⁷ is put side by side with the inward reproach⁸ of Turnus' own conscience, which he avows after he has fallen. 'I deserve it, I confess' are his first words then. The two causes are almost explicitly identified in the lines in which Vergil tells us first that the 'dread goddess' (that is, the bird by which Turnus is daunted) 'denies him success wherever his valour seeks it'; and then that 'his breast is full of conflicting thoughts, he glances towards the city, hesitates, and then turns to cast his dart, and cannot decide whether to fly or to attack'.⁹

This frequent suggestion, that the will of heaven is, after all, carried out by the action of human beings moved by motives which

¹ X., 432 f. ² XI., 901. ³ II., 237. ⁴ II., 54. ⁵ II., 200, 212, 228, 244. ⁶ IX., 601. ⁷ XII., 862-868. ⁸ XII., 894-895 and 931. ⁹ XII., 913-917.
they think their own, is characteristic of Vergil’s treatment of the whole idea of Providence, and shows some affinity with the Stoic doctrine of the identity of Jove and Fate. But from our present point of view it is only a conspicuous illustration of Vergil’s habit of regarding the same thing from more than one standpoint.

But take now a more sharply cut type of this duality, where the two points of view are not identical or even parallel, but definitely contrasted and hostile, so that we feel a certain surprise and are conscious not of two parts of a single fact but apparently of two conflicting if not quite contradictory experiences. In a word, Vergil seems to strike two notes which make not a harmony but a discord. The result is an incongruity which is either amusing or pathetic or both; and sometimes we cannot tell whether humour or pathos is uppermost. Take first an absolutely simple example, so simple that perhaps it may seem almost childish to dwell on it. Among other instructions to the bee-keeper for choosing a place for his beehive Vergil warns him that it must not be near the nests of swallows. Why? Because they will carry off the bees to feed their young. Now how does Vergil describe this most annoying procedure on the part of the swallows?

Ore ferunt dulcem nidis immittibus escam.

Now I venture to think that no other Latin poet, and perhaps no other poet that I can name, of any nation, would have worded this statement quite in that way. It would have been natural for him, one thinks, to write facilem instead of dulcem—'an easy prey for their cruel nestlings'. That would have enforced the point, namely, the greediness of the baby swallows and the consequent danger to the bees. But it may be objected that dulcem for this purpose is just as good as facilem; 'a sweet morsel' is just as likely to tempt the

1 Compare Prof. E. V. Arnold’s remark (Roman Stoicism, Cambridge, 1911, p. 390). "Vergil, however, appears truly to hold the Stoic principle that Fate and Jove are one; he thus takes us at once to the final problem of philosophy, the reconciliation of the conceptions of Law formed on the one hand by observing facts (the modern 'Laws of Nature') and on the other hand by recognising the moral instinct (the modern 'Moral Law'). . . . Vergil shows us how they may be in practice reconciled by a certain attitude of mind; and that attitude is one of resignation to and co-operation with the supreme power."

2 Georgics, IV., 17.
swallows as an ‘easily captured’ one. True; but what has Vergil done by choosing *dulcem*? We shall see at once if for the word *immitibus* we substitute a more common epithet of young birds, say, *crepitantibus* ‘tittering, clamorous’. What should we have then? ‘A sweet morsel for their clamouring (i.e. hungry) young’. If Vergil had written that, you would have seen clearly that he was expressing sympathy with the swallows and that he had forgotten to be sorry for the bees. But by using both the word *dulcem* and the word *immitibus*, ‘a sweet morsel for their cruel nestlings,’ Vergil expresses his sympathy first with the swallows and then with the bees, in one and the same line, much to the schoolboy’s perplexity. He does the same thing in the passage where he exhorts the farmer to clear away the long-standing wood and make the land subject to the plough.\(^1\) What is the result? The ‘newly conquered land gleams with the sheen of the ploughshare’; but the birds have had to leave their ancient homes and fly aloft deserting their young. There is no doubt of Vergil’s meaning. This is the farmer’s duty; but all the same it is a tragedy for the birds. So in the fine simile at the beginning of the Twelfth Book of the *Aeneid*, where Turnus is compared to a lion who is wounded but turns at bay and breaks the shaft that has struck him, our sympathy is clearly meant to be roused for the lion’s victims; but we are to admire and be sorry for the lion himself. For how is the man who has shot him described? The shaft which the lion breaks is called the shaft of a *latro*, ‘a brigand,’\(^2\) a highwayman who has invaded the lion’s country, and set an ambush and forced him to fight. One might search through a goodly number of lion-hunting stories without finding one in which the hunter is described as a ‘brigand’. So again in the *Georgics*,\(^3\) where Vergil is telling the farmer to dip his sheep again and again in the health-giving river (*fluvio mersare salubri*), how does he describe the sheep who are to be dipped? They are the ‘bleating creatures’ (*balantum gregem*); and the two contrasted words *balantum* and *salubri* bring before us the whole scene—the terror of the sheep at being seized and dragged to the pool, and the noise they make when the turn of each comes. The epithet ‘bleating’ suddenly gives us the sheep’s point of view instead of the shepherd’s, and gives it, of course, with a smile, caught up at

\(^1\) *Georgics*, II., 207-211. \(^2\) *Aeneid*, XII., 7. \(^3\) I., 272.
once by the word *salubri* which shows how benevolent the shepherds are, whatever the sheep may think.

In all these cases Vergil practises a kind of brief quotation, a sort of suppressed "oratio obliqua". He describes part of the scene for a moment, as it appeared to the eyes of one of the actors in it. It is this which makes the story of the competitors in the Games so fresh and full of life; every one of them, in this way or that, is somehow allowed to present his own case; and we follow the rising and falling fortunes of each in sympathy quite as much with those who fail as with those who win.

In the larger lines of the story of the *Aeneid* everyone will remember how continually it is shaped as a dialogue between two actors, very rarely more than two; for example, between Jove and Venus, or between Dido and Ilioneus, in the First Book. And it is not only in the dialogues that this antithetic habit appears. The action is continually shared by two leading characters at a time, each presented to us with almost equal sympathy. Illustration is really needless. But we may glance at one typical scene, that between Juno and Venus in the celestial debate in Book X. The book opens upon an assembly of the gods which has been summoned by Jove, who hopes to persuade the rival partisans to come to an agreement and so to end the war in Latium without further bloodshed. When Jove has stated the situation, and mildly deprecated their quarrel, Venus breaks in with a long plea on behalf of the Trojans, appealing to the oracles of Fate which had been so often declared to Aeneas. Why, she asks, has Jove permitted the resistance of the Latins? Why are the Latins allowed to attack the camp just when Aeneas has gone to seek help from Evander? Why must her dear Trojans be for ever in danger? The plea, like most of the speeches of Venus, is pathetic and ingenious rather than forceful; and it is not without covert allusions to Juno, as the source of the mischief, though Juno is not expressly named, but only described as "she"—the guilty "she"

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1 *Aeneid* V., for instance in the ship-race, 150-243.
2 He had of course many examples before him, especially the frequent pairs of speeches in Homer, Thucydides and Greek Tragedy, as Prof. Anderson reminds me.
3 The poet's intense sympathy with both Aeneas and Dido in Book IV. is of course the most striking example; see *Great Inheritance*, pp. 149 ff.
who had sent Iris from the clouds to encourage Turnus to fight, and raised the fury Allecto from hell to incite the Latins. By this complaint Juno is roused to great anger and replies fiercely and directly to Venus, altogether forgetting "to address the chair". A rough paraphrase will show the character of her speech; and it is really well to ask the reader to recollect that Æneas is Vergil's hero:—

Then hotly moved
Queen Juno spake: "Why wilt thou have me break
Deep silence, and proclaim the wrath I veiled?
Did god or man compel Æneas now
To challenge war in Italy, or rouse
The King's resistance? Oracles, forsooth,
And mad Cassandra's ravings, drive him on
To Italy? So be it; did they too
Bid him desert his men and put to sea,
Disturb the loyal peace of Tuscan tribes,
And leave a boy in charge of camp and war?
What cruel power of heaven or mine constrained him?
What share had I? What rainbow-messenger
Prompted such folly? Dost thou count it crime
If Latin hands gird yon new Troy with flames,
Or Turnus fight to save his fatherland?
What censure hast thou then for Trojan hordes
Seizing Italian fields and driving cattle
And flinging deadly brands on Latin towns?
Choosing new kin, they drag affianced brides
From lawful husbands, humbly sue for peace
But nail upon their prows the badge of war.

Why hast thou stirred a city big with battle,
Kindling fierce hearts? Was I concerned to sink
Your fallen fortunes deeper in the dust?
I? or the man who threw unhappy Troy
Into Greek hands to spoil? Where lay the guilt
That mingled continent with continent
In war, and broke their treaties by a theft?
Did I take Paris into Spartan homes?
Did I breed war and give it Love for food?
'Twas then thou shouldst have taken thought to save
Thy darlings; now too late thy anger flames,
In taunts that lost their meaning long ago'.

This eloquent protest did not convince Jupiter, who is merely grieved at the continued hostility of the rival goddesses, and dismisses

\[1 \textit{Æneid}, \textit{X.}, 62-95.\]
the assembly of the gods as useless. Fate must do its work without their help. But Juno's speech has had at least one success; it has deceived no less a critic than Prof. Saintsbury into thinking that its rhetorical statement about Lavinia, where Juno speaks of 'dragging brides from their lawful husbands,' really corresponded to the facts, instead of being a partisan misrepresentation. Lavinia, of course, was never betrothed to Turnus, but was solemnly betrothed to Æneas. We will not, therefore, follow Prof. Saintsbury quite so far; but we may at least agree that the case against Æneas and the Trojans is vigorously and sympathetically presented.

Observe further that this antithetic, dramatic habit of Vergil's mind, his way of quickly changing from the point of view of one of his characters to the view taken by some one else (who is perhaps an enemy) continually gives an undertone of humour even to the dignified story of the Epic. In the most solemn of all the Books, that which describes the Descent into the Underworld, what restrained amusement colours the picture of old Charon with his soiled raiment and unkempt hair—but with the green and fresh old age—of what? Of a god. Or of the Sibyl, who has always a threat upon her lips but a concession in her heart. One feels that Vergil, "in his shy way," is looking at the old-world figure of the priestess, both as she appeared to Æneas and as the professional dealer in oracles appeared to the critical student of human history in Vergil's own day. There is, indeed, one line in the Æneid which amounts to direct and bitter satire; satire of a kind, which, if it had occurred in a Christian poet, would have been regarded as something like blasphemy. In the Twelfth Book, who is the leader of the Latins who persuades them to refuse to let Turnus fight in single combat, and who thus makes them break the truce to which their king has solemnly sworn? It is the augur Tolumnius. He had seen what he took for a portent; a flock of swans forcing an eagle to release one of their number whom it was carrying off. This the swans did by flying above the eagle and pressing him down by mere weight of numbers. Tolumnius cries out with pious exultation: 'This, this is what I have prayed

1 Except perhaps in virtue of Amata's ius maternum (Æn. 7, 402), which probably meant more in primitive Latium than at Rome (Æn. xi. 340); see Brit. Acad. Proceedings III. (Who were the Romans?) p. 16.

2 VI., 304.

2 XII., 259.
for again and again; I recognise and accept heaven's answer to my prayers. 'Follow me, ye Latins, and grasp your swords.' And he goes on to promise them, in virtue of his sacred authority, that the wicked invader, namely Æneas, shall be routed by their united effort, just as the eagle has been routed by the troop of swans. What is the sequel? When the battle has begun Tolumnius himself is slain. Such was the answer to his prayer.

I must not linger on these examples of Vergil's keen sense of the incongruous; but I cannot leave altogether unmentioned the strange case of the young Ascanius—though if anyone pleads that it is even more natural than strange, I can hardly demur. Somehow Vergil never seems to mention Ascanius without a smile. Think of him first in the Sack of Troy, while his parents are weeping because his grandfather will not leave their home to escape the approaching flames; the child, of course, is only half conscious of the trouble. But it is on him that the miraculous sign appears, 'a harmless halo of flame plays upon his curls.' His anxious parents try to extinguish the flame by pouring water over it; but the old Anchises recognises it as an omen and prepares to depart. Later on when Æneas is carrying his father on his back and his wife follows behind, the little Ascanius holds his hand, 'keeping up with unequal steps,' adds Vergil. I wonder how many other poets, in describing such a scene, would have found room to mention the child's short steps. Wordsworth, you will say: but then perhaps Wordsworth might have omitted to mention anything else. Again, when Dido and Æneas ride out to their fateful hunt in the woods, each attended by stately troops of followers, it is clear that the one person in the whole multitude who is full of pure delight is the boy Ascanius, 'riding on a swift horse leaving behind now one band of comrades, now another, and longing that he may have (not mere stags to hunt but) some foaming boar or tawny lion from the Libyan hills'; his bright figure is like a gleam of sunshine across the lurid sky. Or again take the scene in Book V. when the desponding old ladies of the Trojan host in Sicily have been evilly inspired to set fire to the ships, so as to put an end to their wanderings. News is brought to the warriors who are absorbed in the Games, and Ascanius at once breaks away from his own part in them and

\[ \text{XII., 461.} \quad \text{II., 683.} \quad \text{II., 723.} \quad \text{IV., 156-159.} \]
rides off to the beach at full speed greatly to the dismay of his tutors. 'Why, you must be mad,' he cries, 'my poor ladies, what can you be expecting? This is not the camp of the enemy, it is your own hopes that you are giving to the flames. See, I am your own Ascanius'; and, like a boy, he pulls his helmet off and dashes it down on the ground before them, so that they may see at once who it is. There is an echo of the same delicate, sympathetic humour wherever Ascanius appears in the fighting in the later books, though it would take too long to trace it here.

In all these cases the reader's sense of incongruity is aroused just because the point of view of the narrator is changed. For example, in the first case, from the thoughts of the anxious parents with their pail of cold water which is to extinguish the mystic flame, the point of view shifts suddenly to the insight of the old Anchises who discovers what the portent means. In the second example we pass from the absorbing anxiety of Aeneas in burning Troy to his feeling seven years after in retrospect, when he realises the picture of little Ascanius trotting by his side quite unconscious of the danger, only thinking, perhaps, that his father is walking rather fast.

But does all this, it may be asked, illustrate anything more than a habit of Vergil's imagination, lively enough and perhaps characteristic? What has it to do with philosophy in any shape? And after all, why be concerned to ask about Vergil's philosophy at all, when, in the revelation which he gives us through the lips of Anchises in the Sixth Book, he declares explicitly the truth of a large part of the regular Stoic creed? Especially its pantheistic belief in the World-soul, that is, in the divine origin of all life and the share in the divine nature which every living thing can consequently claim. Further, the characteristically Stoic doctrine (though the Stoics were not the first to invent it) of the wickedness inherent in matter; and how evils of every kind spring from our material bodies—the excitements of passions and fears, of pain and pleasure. All this, you say, and say with truth, Vergil declares to us on the high authority of Anchises, and Anchises in Elysium, as something which Aeneas was told to believe quite seriously. Why then look further for any philosophic attitude on Vergil's part, when his own utterances in one of the latest parts of his work seem to pledge him so clearly to a Stoic creed?

\[1\] V., 667.
But to this question there is an answer. It is that we must not judge Vergil's theory of life merely by one passage of twenty or thirty lines taken in isolation from the rest. I have no doubt that Vergil was wholly sincere in commending the Stoic doctrines that I have mentioned; and he certainly commended also the Stoic pursuit of virtue for its own sake. But if we ask whether he accepted their theoretic ideal of philosophic calm, that is, of complete indifference to joy and to sorrow, as the aim of the philosopher's endeavour, that which we popularly understand by Stoicism to-day, and which was certainly a part of their creed generally recognised in Vergil's time and later, then, surely truth compels us to reply that in that sense Vergil was not a Stoic, nor was even Anchises, at the very height of his revelation, whatever he might preach. For Anchises rejoices\(^1\) keenly with \(\beta\)Eneas in the greatness of Rome to be; and Anchises weeps bitterly\(^2\) over the bereavement which Rome suffered in the death of the young Marcellus. When, therefore, Vergil puts upon the lips of Anchises\(^3\) the famous Stoic doctrine that desire and fear, sorrow and joy, are all equally the fruit of our evil material condition, he does not and cannot mean, we may be quite sure, every kind of sorrow and every kind of joy, but only the selfish kinds, akin to the selfish fears and covetings which the first half of the maxim condemned. That is, clearly, the limit within which Vergil could accept or meant to accept the Stoic creed. Some joys and some sorrows were to Vergil the most sacred and the most precious part of life.

This brings us to my last and chief point—Vergil's attitude to what seemed to him the supreme paradox of life; the supreme example which proved the need of stating things by antithesis, of always seeing two sides to every human event. Let me state simply what I think to have been Vergil's view; and let me confess that my perception of what he felt has been probably quickened by the tragic experience of the last six years—an experience only too closely resembling that of Vergil's generation in the last seventeen years of the Civil Wars. There was only one thing to Vergil that really mattered in this world, and that was the affection of human beings, their affection first for their own human kind, secondly for their fellow-creatures, and

\(^1\) VI., 718.  \(^2\) VI., 868.  \(^3\) Hinc metuunt cupiuntque dolent gaudentque, VI., 733.
thirdly, for the power which we call Nature, who to Vergil was a being not less throbbing with life and affection, not less bountiful of love to men, than any human mother to her child. Need I attempt to illustrate this supreme characteristic of Vergil’s personality? Through all the ages it is this which has endeared him to thousands of unknown readers who, through the veil of mist raised by the strangeness of his tongue and the distance of his times from their own, have felt the central, inner glow of his human affection, the throbbing pulse of that great heart. Think of his picture in the *Georgics* of the farmer at home with his children ‘hanging round his kisses’; think of the delight with which he notes the ways of animals small and great, but especially the small ones—birds and insects and little creatures of the soil; how more than once he bursts into an enthusiastic avowal of gratitude to the beneficent power that strews men’s path with blessings. But perhaps, since the *Aeneid* is less often read as a whole, we are less conscious how often the same note sounds in that poem. Think of the line in the Sixth Book where, among those who receive the highest honour in Elysium, the snow-white garland, the last class consists of those who, ‘by their good deeds, have made two or three folk remember them’ (*quique sui memores aliquos fecere merendo*). With what gentle sympathy does Vergil sketch the figure of every aged man—Anchises, Evander, Latinus—and of every youth—Pallas and Lausus, Nisus and Euryalus? Or when Galaecus is slain at the outbreak of the fighting in Book VII., failing in his effort to pacify his countrymen, how many readers have noted how his flocks and herds at home and all the people of his farm are brought into the picture to represent the mourning for their master? Or when Menoetes falls in the last battle, how we are bidden to think of the little hired farm which he had taken over from his father and the peaceful life there on which he had counted? Think again of the feeling shown for Silvia’s pet stag, whose accidental wounding by Ascanius, in his hunt, is the signal for the outbreak of war. This incident is actually censured by a wise modern critic as merely pretty (genrehaft) and purely Alexandrine, quite beneath the dignity of the Epic!

But I need not prolong the enumeration. Let me ask the reader

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1 *Georgics*, II. 323 ff.; 433; 516.  
2 XII., 517.
now to realise the tragic paradox which Vergil found beneath this loving-kindness of the world, the fact that our human affection is the source both of the only joys worth counting joys, and of the only sorrows worth counting sorrows. Every one of the troubles of the _Æneid_, every one of its tragedies, springs ultimately from this. The tragedy of Dido, first from the misguided affections of Juno and Venus, and then from her own; the tragedy of Juturna from her love for her brother; the war in Latium from Silvia’s affection for her stag and her followers’ affection for Silvia; the second war from Turnus’ love for Lavinia and his followers’ devotion to Turnus; the tragedies of Brutus and Torquatus, briefly mentioned in the vision of Anchises; the tragedy of Marcellus, pictured in golden lines at the end of the same revelation—the essence of all these lies in the affection of some men or women, ill guided or ill governed, or crossed by physical calamity. With the solitary exception of Drances (who plays but a small part) there is no such motive in the whole of the _Æneid_ as that from which the _Iliad_ starts, the high-handed selfishness of one primitive chieftain compensating himself by robbing another? Compare and contrast with this the crowning scene of the _Æneid_ in which the conquered Turnus might have been spared but for what to the ancient mind was his inhuman cruelty to Pallas and his father, of which he still wore the trophy in the baldric of Pallas girt upon his own shoulder. Such an offender must not survive into the new era; the violence of Turnus would have continued to trample on the sacred laws of humanity; yet even Turnus Vergil could not doom without a note of pity; in the last words of the whole epic the soul of Turnus passes ‘indignant to the shades’.

Now it was in this common source of human sorrow and human joy that Vergil found the supreme paradox which for him wrapped the world in mystery. Yet strange and mysterious as the contradiction was, he held it to be the key of life.

Here then we have reached the centre of Vergil’s thought. All the sorrow and all the joy of the universe seemed to him to spring from one root, and he accepts, nay, he welcomes them both. There

1 These were of a political, nationalist type, but affections none the less; see a fuller discussion of this in _Great Inheritance_, p. 161.

2 This point is developed more fully in _The Messianic Eclogue of Vergil_, p. 46.
could be no human affection, so Vergil saw, unless it were such as to make its possessors capable, and capable in equal degrees, both of the most exquisite suffering, and of the most exquisite joy. This to him is the fundamental fact of the universe—that all pain and all joy is to be measured simply in terms of human love. And if you ask him his last word upon this mystery, the mystery on which he has pondered year after year, viewing it from both sides, through all his study of life, he will tell you that the Golden Bough is always found in the shadows of the forest, when it is sought in fulfilment of duty. And while others may turn away from the sight or thought of those shadows in mere dread or disbelief, Vergil will bid us, like his hero, pluck the Golden Bough eagerly and trust it gratefully, to bring us through even darker shadows out into the light beyond; to trust that somewhere, somehow, Death itself is overcome by the power and persistence of Love.