WAR AND PEACE IN VIRGIL’S AENEID

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ARISTOTLE in the Seventh Book of the Politics, discussing the supreme good for individuals and states, lays it down that the virtues of peace are the most necessary for both. He criticizes the states that have lived for war and conquest, and maintains that war cannot be regarded as a reasonable object for any state, since it is nothing but a means towards the securing of peace. “Facts as well as arguments”, he says, “prove that the legislator should direct all his military and other measures to... the establishment of peace. For most of the military states are safe only when they are at war, but fall when they have acquired their empire; like unused iron they lose their edge in time of peace. And for this the legislator is to blame, since he has never taught them to lead the life of peace.”

I have wondered whether something of the same doctrine is not implicit in the latter part of the Aeneid. The war which is fought by Aeneas has been undertaken reluctantly and with no purpose of conquest: it is directed always to the aim of securing peace, both for his own people whom he wishes to see quietly settled in Italy their ancestral home, and for his Latin opponents whom he has no wish to subdue or enslave. He pursues war not for the sake of despotism, but for mutual peace and goodwill and the well-being of the governed. By contrast, his counterpart Turnus appears to have no higher end than conquest and victory: he is a man of war, educated only for fighting, showing indeed excellent qualities in action, but knowing nothing of the arts and virtues of peace, and therefore incapable of maintaining a state except in preparation for war and in the active conduct of war.

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on Wednesday, the 11th of March 1953.
2 Arist., Pol. vii. 2. 9-12.
3 Ibid. vii. 14. 22.
4 Virg., Aen. xi. 108-13. All references, unless otherwise stated, will be to Virgil’s Aeneid.
5 vii. 206 ff. and 240 ff.
6 xii. 189-91.
8 Cf. ix. 603 ff.
The climax towards which the *Aeneid* moves is the defeat of Turnus by Aeneas and the consequent fusion of the Trojan and Latin peoples into one nation; and from this in the fullness of time, by the will of heaven, is destined to come the Empire of Augustus which will confer the Pax Romana on the whole world.

In writing the *Aeneid* Virgil had more than one purpose. Primarily and ostensibly he was composing an epic in the Homeric manner about the Trojan leader Aeneas and his adventures and exploits as he leads the remnant of his people to a new home in Italy after the capture and ruin of Troy by the Greeks; and the poem may be read, and often is read, for the immediate interest of the story alone. But a tradition, which by the time of Virgil was universally accepted, connected Aeneas with the pre-historic origins of the Roman people; and therefore the deeper and more serious purpose of the epic is to honour the Roman state, partly by recounting its noble beginnings in the heroic age, and partly by using every artistic and poetical expedient to project the mind of the reader down the centuries to the greatest events and personages of Roman history and especially to Augustus himself, whose rule is seen as the culmination and perfection of the thousand years that preceded. It would have been interesting to know by what process of experimentation Virgil arrived at the decision to make Aeneas the hero and theme of his epic. It is clear from indications in his earlier works, the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, that he had first thought of a historical poem, probably on the model set by Ennius in the *Annales*, in which the poet takes for his subject a famous period of history and uses it for the purpose of a laureate epic. But, in doing so, he necessarily loses the power of artistically designing his plot and shaping his characters; and he cannot select from the available material just so much as will suit his purpose, because in a historical subject the fixed order of events and the known character of the personages permit only the smallest modification; so that in this type of epic the only outlet for invention lies in a rhetorical and psychological treatment such as later we find in Lucan's *Pharsalia*.

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1 vii, 98-101 and 255 ff.
2 i. 286 ff.
3 Virg., *Ecl.* vi. 3: *cum canerem reges et proelia.*
4 Virg., *Georg.* iii. 46-47: *accingar dicere pugnas Caesaris.*
Virgil's choice of a mythological hero, yet one connected tra
ditionally with the origin of Rome, had two results: it released
him from the limitations of the Ennian epic, and it put him in
command of his material—to accept or reject, to modify or invent,
as best suited the needs of his work. Certainly war is a theme
which is common to both the Homeric and the Roman type of
epic: the war which Aeneas fights has elements of both types:
it is set in the Homeric age and the action is largely modelled on
the Homeric pattern: but the chief actor, Aeneas, is more a
Roman than a Homeric character—he is invested in the Aeneid
with the Roman qualities of fortitude, devotion to duty, and
political sagacity; and, as by much labour he wins through to
victory in a war which was forced upon him, and as he uses his
victory not to exact vengeance (as the Greeks had done at Troy)
but to unite the Trojan and Latin peoples in a statesmanlike
peace, it may well be that Virgil wished his readers to see in this
primaeval ancestor of Rome a prototype of the historic qualities
by which many great Roman soldiers and statesmen, and especially
Augustus, had consolidated their country in strength, unity and
peace.

In the first half of his poem Virgil makes it clear that part
of his subject will be war. Arma virumque cano, he begins:
and he strews hints of the coming battles all through the first six
books. In the First Book Jupiter foretells that Aeneas bellum
ingens geret Italia. In the Third, Helenus speaks prophetically
of Italiae populos venturaque bella, and Anchises at the first sight
of Italy exclaims bellum, o terra hospita, portas. In the Fourth
the final imprecation of Dido refers to Aeneas as bello audacis
populi vexatus et armis. In Book Five the spirit of Anchises
tells Aeneas: gens dura atque aspera cultu/debellanda tibi Latio est.
And in Book Six, when Aeneas has landed in Italy at Cumae and
the critical time is nearer, the Sibyl gives a vivid intensity to the
prophesy by exclaiming, bella, horrida bella / et Thybrim multo
spumantem sanguine cerno; and at the end of the Book, when the war is immediately imminent, Anchises gives his

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1 i. 263. 2 iii. 458. 3 iii. 539. 4 iv. 615. 5 v. 730-1. 6 vi. 86-7.
son advice as to how he should meet it: *exim bella viro memorat quae deinde gerenda / Laurentesque docet populos urbemque Latini.*¹ There is thus, in the earlier part of the poem, a continual preparation for the events of the latter part; and when in Book Seven the poet addresses himself to the theme of the war, which we already know to be critical for Aeneas’ mission and therefore critical for Rome, it is natural that he should call on the Muse for her special help because *maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, / maius opus moveo,*² “a greater history opens before me, and a greater task I commence”.

It would be wrong to interpret this as suggesting any elation on Virgil’s part at the prospect of describing the war or as meaning that war in itself and for itself is glorified in the *Aeneid.* War in the *Aeneid* is a much grimmer business than in the *Iliad*; it has not the same vital energy and éclat as in Homer’s portrayal; there is still the same pathos, but not the same verve. The fact is that Virgil was not a man of war and is describing war, not from life as does Homer, but from a distillation blended by his imagination from his reading of Greek poetry and history. Virgil in truth hated war. That is clear from the cruel realities that lie behind the idyllic fictions of the *Eclogues*³ or that emerge in the early part of the *Georgics,*⁴ two works on which the civil wars of his youth have left a deep mark, partly in the sadness he feels at the destruction of human happiness and prosperity and at the desolation caused in the countryside, and partly in the welcome he gives to the young Octavian⁵ who appears as the divine liberator and the author of peace and restoration. Here in the *Aeneid* he characterizes war by such epithets as *horridum,*⁶ *infandum,*⁷ *lacrimabile,*⁸ *crudele,*⁹ *triste,*¹⁰ and condemns it in one scathing and comprehensive phrase as *scelerata insania belli.*¹¹ But at the outset of Book Seven, when Aeneas has accomplished the first part of his mission, Virgil is conscious that his hero stands at a turning-point even more critical than at Dido’s court in Carthage. The future of the Trojan people and of the

¹ vi. 890-1. ² vii. 44-5. ³ Virg., *Ecl.* i. 67 ff. and ix. 2-4. ⁴ Virg., *Georg.* i. 489 ff. ⁵ Virg., *Ecl.* i. 42 ff. and *Georg.* i. 500-1. ⁶ vii. 41. ⁷ xii. 804. ⁸ vii. 604. ⁹ viii. 146; xi. 535. ¹⁰ vii. 545; viii. 29. ¹¹ vii. 461.
Latin people and of the Roman people that will spring from their union—all this depends on the result of the coming war. It is in this fateful sense that Virgil speaks of the war as *maior rerum ordo, maius opus*; for this will be the climax of his epic.

Aeneas the hero of the epic carries over from the *Iliad* a very considerable reputation as a warrior and leader of men; and Virgil establishes his renown by giving us in Book Two a vivid picture of his courage and prowess against the Greeks on the night of Troy's capture and ruin. If we require any further evidence, it is given almost incidentally in the description of the panic and excitement caused among the spirits of the Greek warriors in the Underworld when they see their former enemy Aeneas approaching in the half-light of the Elysian plains; or later in the poem when Diomedes, once the most valiant of the Greek fighters at Troy and now a settler in Apulia, sturdily refuses to take the field against a man whom he speaks of as equal only to Hector in the courage and skill with which he had held the Greeks off from Troy for ten years. Wherever Aeneas goes in his wanderings, his fame has preceded him, and he is recognized as a famous soldier whose support and alliance it would be worth much to secure. But Aeneas is no soldier of fortune, no mercenary. His sole purpose is to find the land promised by fate and to settle his followers there in a new city of Troy.

In Book Seven the request which he makes by his ambassadors to King Latinus is utterly peaceful:

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dis sedem exiguam patris litusque rogamus
innocuum et cunctis undamque auramque patentem.```

The whole emphasis of this early part of Book Seven is on peace. The Trojans beg for peace. Their envoys carry the emblems of peace: Latinus promises them peace: and the ambassadors return to Aeneas as the bearers of peace. The contrast with the latter part of the book is artistically contrived; for the situation that had seemed so promising is changed almost in an hour; and instead of a treaty Aeneas is involved in a war which, with battles and slaughter, and much disturbance in

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1 vi. 489-93.  
2 xi. 246-7.  
3 xi. 281 ff.  
4 Cf. i. 565 ff., and vii. 195-6.  
5 Cf. vii. 236-8.  
6 i. 205-6; vii. 239 ff.  
7 vii. 229-30.  
8 vii. 153-5.  
9 vii. 260 ff.  
10 vii. 285.
heaven as well as on earth, will continue almost to the end of the poem. Though Aeneas' mind is often perplexed, his will never flinches. He is assured by signs and omens that he is the earthly agent of the divine purpose and he therefore trusts that in the end the cause favoured by Heaven will prevail. He arms himself for the fray, and inspires his men with his own resolution: on the battlefield he fights, leads, and directs with a ubiquitous energy that reminds Virgil of the giant Aegaeon breathing fire from fifty mouths and operating a hundred hands at once. But Aeneas has the vision to see beyond the war. He loses no chance to be conciliatory or to create a predisposition for peace, as when he grants the truce to the Latins, or hands back the body of Lausus to his people, or offers to limit the general conflict by meeting Turnus in single combat on terms that guarantee the security of both peoples. This is the Aeneas who emerges as the hero of the poem. He is much more effectively revealed in the second part than in the first.

When the Trojans entered the Tiber and built their fortified encampment on the south bank near the river-mouth, the internal situation in Italy, unknown to Aeneas, had in several ways been prepared by the will of Heaven to his advantage. Immediately south of him lay the kingdom of Latium, ruled over by King Latinus, an old man without male heir (his only son, we learn, had died in youth fato divum) but with a marriageable daughter Lavinia, sought by many suitors from all over Italy both for her beauty and for her dowry which would bring the reversion of the kingship to a son-in-law. Just south of Latium was the neighbouring kingdom of Daunus, king of the Rutulians, with Ardea as his capital. Daunus too was old, but he had a son to succeed him—the young, enterprising soldier Turnus, who was generally thought to be the most favoured suitor for Lavinia, since he was handsome and of noble lineage and had the influential support of the girl's mother, the queen Amata. But King Latinus had been put off by mysterious omens and
oracles in which (significantly for Aeneas) Heaven had warned him not to marry his daughter to any Italian suitor but to wait for a foreign son-in-law. Meanwhile, a revolution had broken out in the Etrurian city of Caere to the north of the river and the tyrant of the city, Mezentius, had escaped with his son Lausus and had taken refuge with his friend Turnus at Ardea. The Etruscans were determined to reclaim Mezentius for punishment, and had mobilized their army and fleet in readiness to sail south and attack Turnus—only again Heaven had intervened (significantly for Aeneas) forbidding them to move unless under the command of a foreign leader. Aeneas learns of the Etruscan situation when he visits the kingdom of Evander, which lies up the river, exactly on the spot which was later to be the site of Rome.

Turnus is presented as a foil and contrast to Aeneas. The older man is experienced, prudent, and dignified, with a grave Roman sense of responsibility. Turnus is the typical heroic fighter, brave, resourceful, impetuous and confident, but also headstrong, and at times cruel. He lives for fighting and profits by fighting; we are told that he has won many cities by war; he has beaten off the Etruscans from attacking Latium, and has seemed likely to win Lavinia and Latinus’ kingdom as his reward. He had great influence and power both among his own Rutulians and among the Latins; and he is threatening Evander’s city at the key-point of the Tiber valley. There is evidently much probability in the argument which Aeneas uses in his first diplomatic speech to Evander that Turnus is aiming at the complete conquest of central Italy from the Tuscan Sea to the Adriatic. But the unexpected arrival of the Trojans in Italy has upset his plan. Here is a new element in the situation—very disturbing to the balance of power. Latinus no longer need rely solely on Turnus for military protection, and indeed he has actually offered Aeneas both Lavinia and part of the kingdom as a guarantee of peace between them. It was not to be expected that an ambitious militarist like Turnus would allow his plans

to be thwarted without attempting to destroy the intruder who had suddenly become his rival.  

Virgil, following the Homeric tradition which permits the active intervention of the Gods in human affairs, invests the outbreak of this war with a special importance by making Juno appear to engineer its beginning. He imagines her as provoked beyond endurance by the persistence and hardihood of the Trojans in opposing her will and in successfully making their way to Italy in spite of her disapproval: and so she now calls to her aid a Fury from Hell, Allecto, the very spirit of strife, whom she commissions to break the peace between the Trojans and Latins and embroil them in a dispute leading to bloodshed and fighting. This permitted epic device is most effectively used by Virgil: as we watch the malignant power with which Allecto works on the passions of men and women so that they forget reason and sanity and human kindness and are utterly possessed by the lust of war, she seems to embody that spirit of destructive nihilism which in one aspect or another is manifest at some time in most wars. Even Juno is appalled; and in fear of what the Omnipotent Father may do to the disturbers of his world, she sends the Fury back to nether darkness.

In his account of the war, Virgil makes the action proceed on two interconnected planes, the earthly and the heavenly. On the heavenly plane it is known how much for the future of Italy depends on Aeneas' success: on the earthly plane the actors are so absorbed in the immediate duties and problems of the war, that only occasionally do they catch hints of the future, partially interpreted and partially understood. The intervention of the heavenly partisans is not impulsive and intimate as it was in Homer: it is the serious and deliberate participation of far-sighted powers who seek to forward or retard political ends which are related to one climax only—the destiny of Rome. For it is Virgil's theme in his epic that the Roman State and, above all, the Empire of Augustus have been brought about by

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1 Cf. vii. 467 ff.  
2 vii. 308 ff.  
3 vii. 323 ff.  
4 Cf. vii. 545 ff.  
5 vii. 552 ff.  
6 vii. 315: (Juno speaks) at trahere atque moras tantis licet addere rebus. Cf. viii. 398-9; x. 622 ff., and xii. 803-6.
the will and care of Heaven, exercised not only in the centuries of its record growth and development, but also in its remote legendary beginnings. And therefore, while the appearance of the Gods serves superficially in the poem to give interest and variety to the scene, there is always a far deeper and more serious reason for the interaction between the heavenly and earthly spheres. Juno may be said to intervene because in Homer she was affronted by the judgement of Paris and so was unfriendly to Troy and all Trojans: but now she has in mind the future danger to her new city of Carthage. Venus may be said to intervene because Aeneas is her son: but she is really concerned for the Julian gens which will be her greatest glory. Jupiter, who in the Aeneid is an infinitely patient and tolerant deity, intervenes seldom and then only to check opposition that is presuming too far on his good-nature: but his will, never despotic, never pompous, is nevertheless immutably set to establish the Rome of Augustus as the greatest power on earth for the government and peace and well-being of mankind. That is why this war between Aeneas and Turnus, viewed from the heavenly plane, takes on a significance and importance immeasurably greater than its human appearance. But, if we view Turnus on the earthly plane only, he had sufficient excuse for his attitude to the Trojans and to Latinus. Contrary to his expectation Lavinia had been promised to Aeneas; and with the loss of Lavinia, he had also lost the chance of doubling his kingdom. So he has a good human cause for taking action. The action he does take is characteristically military: he mobilizes the Rutulian army and marches into Latium with the intention of coercing Latinus, annulling the alliance, and ridding Italy of its foreign intruders. He thus makes the first movement towards war and is the first to break the peace.

Meanwhile in Latium an incident had occurred, trivial in itself and capable of adjustment, but having the unfortunate result of antagonizing the Latins and Trojans. The trouble was that Ascanius, out hunting, had shot a stag which proved to be

1 i. 25-8.
2 i. 19 ff.
3 Cf. i. 288.
4 Cf. i. 257 ff.
5 vii. 467-70.
6 vii. 477 ff.
7 vii. 481-2.
a household pet of Latinus' chief herdsman; and, I suppose, annoyance leading to anger and anger to blows, a fight followed in which men from both sides were killed. When the countrymen complained to the king, Turnus had arrived from Ardea and we see him\(^1\) (in a change of plan) going about in the crowd and working on their feelings and tempers by insinuating that these same Trojan marauders were to be the new rulers of the kingdom and that no native Italian would have any chance against them. There follows one of the most vivid and arresting descriptions in the *Aeneid*—of how the mob threw over restraint and, in spite of the king's protests, insisted on an immediate declaration of war.\(^2\) The war-frenzy spread from the city to the country and into the neighbouring states,\(^3\) until all normal work was suspended and the people abandoned themselves to a frantic preparation of armaments. Finally we are shown the contingents from the various states massing at Laurentum to form a united army under the supreme leadership of Turnus.\(^4\) This is the threat that confronts Aeneas and his small company of Trojans at the end of Book Seven.

I have analysed at some length the situation disclosed in this Book, because I believe that the method Virgil uses in its construction shows artistic talent of a kind I should call dramatic rather than epic; and I think that a similar analysis would show a similar kind of construction in other books too. Here in Book Seven, the prospect at first seems most favourable for Aeneas; but, after the intervention of Juno, almost in a moment he is faced with ruin. By a sudden, unexpected turn his promising fortune has vanished, and again he and his followers seem to be homeless and friendless exiles, just as they were at the opening of the epic. Come now to the beginning of Book Eight. We are there given a remarkable picture of Aeneas' mental conflict,\(^5\) in the famous simile where the agitation of his mind is compared with the reflections that flicker and shimmer on the surface of water. The appearance of irresolution in Aeneas is Virgil's dramatic way of showing the man's perfectly normal human

\[^{1}\] vii. 577-9. \(^{2}\) vii. 582 ff. \(^{3}\) vii. 623 ff. \(^{4}\) vii. 647 ff. \(^{5}\) viii. 22-5.
reaction to the change of fortune and the host of troubles in which he was suddenly involved; and further, it is a necessary prelude to the Book, since it dramatically stresses the contrast with the sequel—where the threat of ruin will be averted and the hopes of Aeneas will be raised by the assurances of the river-god, the friendship of Evander, the chance of winning the Etruscans as allies, and the marvellously timed gift of the shield engraved with scenes from Roman history which would be meaningless apart from Aeneas' victory in the coming war against Turnus. And the reader's feelings, which were meant to be moved to pity for Aeneas at the beginning of the book, are correspondingly reassured and braced as he is seen to have won clear from the earlier dangers. The sympathy created by these contrasts gives Aeneas a much greater human significance; and Virgil's use of dramatic presentation is much more effective and moving than any straight narrative of events.

I do not intend, in this paper, to deal with the actual methods of warfare used by the warriors in the Aeneid. Really the whole business is very primitive and, with few variations, resolves itself into a single formula of challenging, baiting, hammering, wounding, killing, and taking of spoils. It is true that, in Book Eleven, Turnus does attempt a rudimentary form of surprise in the shape of an ambush which looks like the primeval model of Hannibal's strategy at Lake Trasimene. But in these battles of the heroic age there is little need for strategic planning: it is physical strength and hard hitting that count, whether the combatants fight on foot, or horseback, or from chariots; and frankly I always find the descriptions both tedious and gruesome. I say gruesome, because Virgil, like Homer before him, has diversified the casualty-lists by adding much anatomical detail; and though this may have interested ancient readers, it is repugnant to modern sentiment. What does appeal to a modern reader is Virgil's humanity and pity for the fallen. Few of these doomed combatants are treated by him as nonentities. They may make only a momentary appearance on his stage, but to him they are

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1 viii. 36 ff. 2 viii. 154 ff. 3 viii. 475 ff. 4 Cf. viii. 532-6. 5 viii. 626 ff. 6 xi. 511-16.
named individuals with a personal history and personal traits, and he has a sympathetic feeling for their fortune, predicament, and fate. This is specially notable in his treatment of the young men, and not only of young men like Nisus and Euryalus who form the subject of a major episode in Book Nine, but of many others who have left their homes and families and cities and have come to the war inspired by a passion for glory—perhaps the most wasteful of all the passions in war—and are destined to be killed, some gloriously (as they reckon it) by the hand of Turnus or Aeneas, others ignominiously by a chance arrow or spear never intended for them. Virgil is conscious of the pathetic futility of it all—that war seems to be the only outlet for their energies and the only opportunity they have for distinguishing themselves, and that they count life well lost for the gain of renown,¹ and that the renown is all the greater in proportion to the fame of their killer. It is amazing to see the particularity of care with which our poet raises over so many of them a memorial inscribed with a personal and distinctive record of their existence, to save them, as it were, from anonymous and obliterating nothingness. His feelings too are touched deeply by the sorrow of bereaved parents: over and over again he mentions the heartache and grief of mothers in wartime;² and there are no more touching passages in Roman literature than the lament of the old Trojan mother over her son Euryalus ³ or of King Evander over the body of his only son Pallas.⁴ Even the tyrant Mezentius is saved from utter reprobation by the depth of grief with which Virgil, always so humanly just to his characters, makes him mourn for his son and welcome the death that will re-unite them.⁵ The same is true of Turnus. Virgil at the end does not make him repent (that would have been out of character and artistically wrong), but he shows him facing death with a courage of spirit that acknowledges the fairness of what befalls him,⁶ and is willing to pay the price; and this is much more impressive than his earlier self-confidence and defiance.

¹ Cf. xii. 49: letum . . . pro laude pacisci.
² Cf. viii. 556-7; ix. 284 ff.; xi. 215 ff.; xi. 877-8.
³ ix. 481 ff. ⁴ xi. 152 ff. ⁵ x. 846 ff.
⁶ xii. 931: equidem merui nec deprecor.
The actual course of the war is extremely simple in its main outline: it has four distinct phases, corresponding to the separate actions of Books Nine to Twelve. First, the Latin army advances north from Laurentum against the Trojan camp at the mouth of the Tiber: this attack occurs during Aeneas' absence on his diplomatic mission up country, and it is almost successful: it marks the peak of Turnus' good fortune, and the most desperate crisis for the Trojans—so desperate, that special envoys are sent to recall Aeneas and, on the heavenly plane, a special council of gods is convened to discover which of them has been secretly opposing the will of Jupiter by working against the Trojans.

In the second phase the situation is retrieved. Aeneas returns by sea with an army of Etruscans, forces a landing on the beaches and relieves the camp. The fighting here is exceedingly heavy and costly for both sides; but it ends in a Trojan victory, and Turnus' army is thrown back on Laurentum. This is the turning-point of the war, as may be seen when the third phase opens and Aeneas is found confidently assuring his commanders that the worst is over, "maxima res effecta, viri; timor omnis abesto, quod superest"; and he outlines his plan for an offensive against Laurentum—which is, to send his cavalry to clear the maritime plain while he leads the main force by an inland hill-route. Turnus counters by sending the Latin cavalry to the plain and by using his infantry to lay an ambush in the hills for Aeneas; but his cavalry is defeated, and the news of this forces him to abandon the ambush and hurry back with his army to protect the city. The third phase ends, therefore, with another victory for the Trojans and the unimpeded arrival of their army before Laurentum. In the fourth phase, for reasons which I will mention later, it is arranged that Aeneas and Turnus will settle the issue by single combat, but the plan falls through and the fight becomes general again. Aeneas turns all his forces against the city itself and is breaking his way in through the

1 ix. 8 ff.
2 Cf. ix. 756-9; x. 118 ff.
3 Cf. ix. 226 ff.
4 x. 1-10.
5 x. 146-56.
6 x. 287 ff.
7 x. 604-5.
8 x. 755-7.
9 Cf. xi. 17.
11 xi. 446 ff., and 511-14.
12 xi. 515-19.
13 xi. 896-902.
14 Cf. xii. 34: bis magna victi pugna.
15 xi. 904 ff.
16 xii. 161 ff.
17 xii. 282-6 and 548-53.
18 xii. 567 ff.
gates and walls,\(^1\) when Turnus, appalled at the danger to the city, stops the fighting by offering himself for single combat,\(^2\) and the war ends with his death.

Such is the basic scheme of the war: it has no more sublety or complexity than the celebrated manoeuvres of the Grand Old Duke of York: and no strategist would commend it as a textbook design for warfare—even though Virgil has been at pains to vary the pattern by introducing not only infantry fighting but also a cavalry battle and even a form of naval operations! But considered on the purely formal and structural side of the poem, the war was meant to fulfil, and it does fulfil, a useful function in the epic: I think something like this basic scheme must have resulted when Virgil first sketched the prose draft of his plot: it provides an adequate containing framework inside which the poet is free to arrange the material he really valued—the episodes, the personages, the descriptions, which are the main substance and pleasure of his epic. And here, in the struggle between Aeneas and Turnus, it is not so much the military part, but what I may perhaps call the political aspect that is interesting to a modern reader: for it is by political pressures as much as by defeats in the field that Turnus is weakened, stripped of support, and compelled to face the last personal decision; and this touches more closely on human nature and on the emotions and passions that are perpetually present in war-time.

We have seen Turnus taking advantage of the clamour in Laurentum to seize control of the war against the Trojans. He fits in exactly with the mood of the people, and their fury exactly suits his interests. As long as he is successful, no one questions his leadership. The king has retired into the background, a pathetic old figure whom no one follows or heeds; and the authority of Turnus is paramount. But after the battle for the Trojan encampment there is a change. As often in such cases, the despondency, resulting from the defeat and the losses, creates in the city a party friendly to the Trojans and opposed to the continuance of a struggle which now seems to be waged solely on behalf of Turnus' personal ambitions: and this

\(^1\) xii. 654-6. \(^2\) xii. 672-80 and 693-6.
party, led by Drances a political rival of Turnus, begins an agitation for peace. Virgil has excellently contrived the development of this political situation: the elements in it are timed and coordinated to create a cumulative sense of the political enmity gathering against Turnus. First, Aeneas’ generous reply to the request for a truce and his unexpected offer of peace-terms; then, the anguish of the bereaved citizens, skilfully used by Drances to disparage Turnus; next, the disappointment at Diomedes’ refusal to become an ally; and finally the meeting of the State Council, with the debate on the king’s proposal for peace and the bitter wrangle between Turnus and Drances. Turnus posing as the champion of national independence, Drances speaking for the common citizens, “the no-account souls” (as Day Lewis translates), who are being sacrificed “a multitude unburied and unmourned, so that Turnus may marry the heiress to the throne”—all this gives an intensely vivid picture of political movements and reactions during war-time in a country suddenly threatened with ruin; and it shows the extent and depth of a feeling which later, after the defeat in the second battle, becomes so universal and overwhelming that it compels Turnus to accept the fateful necessity of settling the issue by personal combat with Aeneas. As so often in history, it is the political consequences arising from the course of the war that are decisive.

Here and there in the narrative Virgil gives a picture of that strangely indefinite being, King Latinus. He is prominent at the beginning of the war, and again towards the end. None of the major characters seems to give him credit for good intentions or good faith: he is misunderstood by Aeneas who, not knowing the situation in Laurentum, thinks him responsible for treacherously beginning the war and treacherously prolonging it; and he is misunderstood by Turnus who believes that the king had wished to ally himself with the Trojans. Latinus certainly does

4 xi. 316 ff.  5 xi. 336 ff.  6 xi. 419 ff.  
7 xi. 360-3.  8 xi. 371-3.  9 xii. 1-3 and 10-17.  
10 xi. 113-14; xii. 580-2.  
11 Cf. vii. 470: se satis ambobus Teucrisque venire Latinisque.
not impress us as a strong figure: he evidently cannot control the war-party of Queen Amata: and in the crisis leading to the war he tended to wring his hands and retire. But he is an old man, overtaken by an unexpected emergency in the affairs of his kingdom, troubled in his conscience by the virtual promise of his daughter to his kinsman Turnus, and unable to reconcile this promise with the revealed purpose of Heaven and the obedience to it which his religious duty required. He deplores what he knows to be the wicked folly of his people in rushing into the war: he pities them for the inevitable nemesis and repentance: but he can do nothing to dissuade or prevent them; even his refusal to take part in the ceremony of opening the Gates of War is only a symbolic gesture of disapprobation. At every appearance later in the poem he blames himself for not taking a stronger line and for not having had the courage to make Aeneas his son-in-law at once. After the defeats he uses each opportunity to press for a settlement; and he is willing to divide his kingdom with the Trojans if that will help to get rid of war and restore peace. Nothing could be kindlier or more fatherlike and tactful than the talk he has with the intransigent Turnus in Book Twelve, when he appeals to him to recognize the military and political and religious facts of the situation and so enable an old friend and wellwisher like himself to save the life of his young kinsman. But everything goes wrong for Latinus: Turnus is obdurate: the treaty so solemnly ratified is broken: Aeneas indignantly blames Latinus for breaking it: the queen takes her own life: and the old king appears as a pitiable figure of tragedy, broken by a train of events which he was powerless to hinder or avert or control:

\[
\text{it scissa veste Latinus} \\
\text{coniugis attonitus fatis urbisque ruina,} \\
\text{canitiem immundo perfusam pulvere turpans.}\]

The character grows in humanity and in appeal, as the poem moves to its conclusion. He is not just the typical king or tyrant.

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1 vii. 580 ff.  2 vii. 593 ff.  3 Cf. vii. 366.  4 Cf. xii. 27-31.  5 vii. 583-4.  6 vii. 595.  7 vii. 616-19.  8 Cf. xi. 471-2; xii. 31.  9 xi. 316 ff.; xii. 195 ff.  10 xi. 19 ff.  11 xii. 45 ff.  12 xii. 322.  13 xii. 257 ff.  14 xii. 580 ff.  15 xii. 595 ff.  16 xii. 609-11.
Everything he does has significance in adding to our judgement of him: and in the end he has a strong claim on our sympathy as a war victim, a worthy and well-meaning man who, at the close of a peaceful and good life, is involved undeservedly in the turmoil of war and in the sorrow which war brings both to himself and to his people. Virgil depicts him without comment: he draws no lesson and points no moral. War is a stern and cruel business, with which only the strong can cope; and the meek and good often suffer accordingly. That, I suppose, is the meaning of Latinus.

I return to where I began. If war is not properly an end in itself, but a means towards an end which is peace, then the war of Aeneas in Latium seems to fulfil Aristotle’s precept. He fought it at first to win safety (which is right and honourable) and then to win peace (which is best). Virgil does not describe his victory as a brilliant conquest: Aeneas is no Alexander or Pyrrhus—that was more the type of his counterpart, Turnus. But Aeneas’ aim was the creation of a stable peace that would keep the conquered (no longer to be regarded as conquered) in the firm bond of an equable and enduring union—as he says himself:

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paribus se legibus ambae
invictae gentes aeterna in foedera mittant.1
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Is it fanciful to see in this prehistoric beginning a characteristically Roman attitude to war? to see in it the germ of that continuous policy of law and peace so peculiar to the Romans throughout their history?

1 xii. 190-1.