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THE REALISM OF VIRGIL

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I begin on very familiar ground. For perhaps a century or more, the status of the Aeneid as an unquestioned masterpiece has been frequently and energetically challenged. It is equally true that the Aeneid and, in particular, its problematical hero, Aeneas, have been vigorously and eloquently defended, more especially perhaps in recent years, and not least by some of those who have addressed this Society. I believe it to be true that disputants on both sides, though more frequently the hostile than the favourable critics, have tended to give inadequate emphasis to an aspect of Virgil's art which provides a clue with which we may extricate ourselves from some of the mazes of Virgilian criticism. The clue is a very simple one, but it is often ignored or at most only hinted at rather than fully stated and developed. But before I come to it, I should like to set out briefly the problems.

We may start with the view that what is wrong with the Aeneid is that it is after all a political poem, and that politics is not a fit subject for poetry. Rome and Augustus, however skilfully the pill be sugared with a coating of mythology and grandeur of style, could not provide the theme for a successful epic. To these broad generalizations it is not hard to find an answer, and the simplest answer to this basically romantic preconception about the proper subjects of poetry is an appeal to the practice of poets through the ages.

It is not so much, we shall be told, the mere fact that the Aeneid has a political content that causes offence. The weaknesses of the poem are the result of its being a product of political patronage of literature in a despotic society. Poetry produced to order cannot be as good as the poetry which is the product of unfettered inspiration. Here certain questions are begged about the relationship of the Augustan poets to Augustus and Maecenas, but even if we accept the view of that patronage here implied, it is perfectly possible to question with supporting evidence, say our own Elizabethan poets, the again romantically-inspired generalization on which the argument rests. But we are not yet out of the wood. 'We grant,' it may be said, 'that political achievements, and those of Rome and Augustus in particular, are fit subjects for poetry, that patronage may encourage, not stifle, inspiration: but in the end the Aeneid won't do because Virgil was the wrong man for this particular job. Virgil's very breadth of sympathies, and in particular his affection for the small and helpless, the defeated and the underdog, make him the most unsuitable poet imaginable to hymn the praises of the victorious and successful'. As Cicero said, intus intus inquam est equus Troianus. For this view has been stated with all the authority and eloquence of a past President of this Society, in a paper delivered in 1951.

Now let us turn to some more particular points. Point one: Dido. One may simply feel that Aeneas' desertion of Dido won't do, and there's an end of the matter. However, resourceful defenders of Aeneas' behaviour are not lacking.

The first line of defence is in essence that Aeneas and Dido are not human beings but symbols. Aeneas is the embodiment of Rome and Augustus, and a Stoic sapiens, to boot. Who is Dido? She is Carthage and Hannibal, she is Cleopatra, and she has more than a touch of the barbarian witch of Greek legend, Medea. If we are upset by Dido's fate, it is in sum our historical sense which is at fault. And we shall never get far with Virgil until we realise that pietas has little to do with either piety or pity as we moderns understand the terms.

But in reply to all this I shall make no appeal to an imaginary objector, for I myself feel most strongly that this line of defence will not hold. Surely such defences for all their elements of truth make of the Aeneid little more than an historical curiosity, and it is not as an historical curiosity but as a great poem that the Aeneid still retains its power. We are under no sort of obligation that I can see to admire Aeneas because he is a Stoic hero, if Stoicism entails behaving as Aeneas does to Dido. Equally Dido is for us Dido, queen and woman, not that strange compound of which I just spoke. If she is what she is for us, and she was something fundamentally different for Virgil and his contemporaries, the Aeneid becomes, as I have said, more a field for antiquarian study than a still living masterpiece.

I sympathize more with the approach which leaves antiquarianism on one side and points to the evidence of Aeneas' humanity. He behaves to Dido as he does because he is not perfect, and is still only dimly aware of his responsibility and his mission. Divine admonition is needed before pietas, the sense of where his real duty lies, triumphs over his own feelings.

But - with Dido there is always a 'but' - granted that the break was inevitable and right, need it have happened as Virgil depicts it? Let us leave Dido for the moment, and turn to other aspects of Aeneas' character and actions. The view that Aeneas fails as an epic hero because he could, in the poet's intention, do no wrong, but in fact constantly affronts us by his behaviour, has been effectively countered up to a point by the picture of the Aeneas of the first six books as a character developing and learning by experience. Less attention has been paid to the Aeneas of the second half of the poem, yet here too a battle has raged, not only violent but also confused. A paper read by Dr. Lockwood to this Society some years ago enhanced our understanding of Aeneas' own view of the events in which he takes part. But Professor Dudley in his 'Plea for Aeneas' here abandons his brief: the Aeneas of Books vii-xii is infallible and therefore 'as dull as a batsman who cannot be bowled'. Yet in 1951 Professor Maguinness subjected this 'infallible' Aeneas to close criticism from which Aeneas emerges with little credit. From the moment he lands on the Tiber, he puts not a foot right. While offering peace, he fortifies his position. War breaks out, because Ascanius wounds Silvia's pet deer, and Aeneas does shamefully little to prevent this trivial incident leading to major hostilities. And so forth. While we are looking at these last six books, we may refer to Mr. Dale's strictures on the conduct of the two heroes of Book ix, Nisus and Euryalus. In pursuing useless slaughter and plunder instead of their proper mission

they are guilty of inefficiency and, worse, dereliction of duty. Their mission anyway was ill-conceived and ill-organized.

Now I have presented these many different views of the Aeneid, related to its whole theme, its leading characters, or to smaller details, in the form of a debate pro and con. I hope I have not been unfair in my presentation of them (though I recognize that some of the papers I have cited may not necessarily represent the present views of their authors). Yet I feel that it is quite inappropriate to pose the questions that the Aeneid makes us ask, as they are so often in effect posed, in terms of prosecution and defence, and to ask 'Whose side are we on? Is it the same side that Virgil was on?' and then to deliver a final critical verdict between Virgil the poet of Empire (whom some, it is true, approve of, but most do not) and Virgil the poet of the tragic victims of Empire. In my view the dilemma is unreal. Neither Aeneas nor Virgil need be put in the dock, nor are we called upon to decide whether to turn thumbs up or down. It is this determination to take sides that gives rise to almost all the disapproving criticisms that I have mentioned, and equally drives outraged Virgilians to look in their turn to their weapons and to meet the critics on their own ground. Yet it is the wrong ground, whether we concern ourselves with theme or with character.

What Virgil has done is to present an unpartisan view of all the issues. He has told the truth. Rome's achievement was splendid; its cost was heavy - I have deliberately avoided inserting any conjunction between those statements, for they are great and equal truths. So too Aeneas was right - and fallible. In our human condition success, even the success of a righteous man, brings tragedy with it. Virgil is no shallow romantic optimist for whom everything is all right; he is no inverted romantic for whom all the glory is a hollow sham, and failure, tragedy, and, in the last resort, evil are the abiding realities. And as it is with human activities in the large, so with individual human character. Aeneas is no superman, nor is Virgil, either consciously or unconsciously, debunking him. Aeneas is a human being, but he is a great man, and great men learn, among other things, to be harsh on themselves and on others.

I should like now to see whether this very simple clue, that Virgil is in the strict meaning of the word a 'realist', can help to make sense of some of the problems I have mentioned and others like them. But I must first say that I am not one of those critics who expect and claim to find perfection in the literature created by imperfect human beings. Virgil, like his hero, could make mistakes, and his realism has its gaps, as I shall argue later. None the less, Virgil, despite any flaws and limitations, in general rises superior to us who criticize him in that most of the shocks he gives us are due to his essential truthfulness, that often results, as is the way with truthful people, in his telling us things which we do not much care to hear, and which we refuse to acknowledge when confronted with them.

I want to take first of the difficulties I have mentioned the one I referred to last, since here the moral issues involved are least complex, the story of Nisus and Euryalus. Let us accept all Mr. Dale's strictures on the conduct of the Trojans. The night patrol is ill organized, the participants turn to massacre and plunder instead of sticking to their assignment, the result is disaster. Certainly the poet himself seems unaware of all these

military deficiencies in his characters. Yet after all he has told the unpopular, unromantic truth about war, its incompetence muddle and illogicality - yet without denying the heroism.

Virgil's evident hatred of war has often provoked the criticism that the war-scenes of the last books lack the appropriate zest, though indeed the occasional catalogues of slaughter demanded by epic convention, dull and repellent as they are, are not duller nor more repellent than the Homeric equivalents. I concede to Virgil's critics that he never hints at that Homeric 'Joy of battle' which a fully realistic picture of war would demand, for it is certainly a real human experience. Virgil sees war simply as a loathsome necessity in which his hero takes a reluctant part. But all in all is this the wrong attitude to war? Do we really want it glorified and glamorized?

Virgil is also at much pains to show how war can spring from such trivial immediate causes as the accidental shooting of the pet deer, when other impulses, represented in Virgil by the 'celestial machinery', are already driving human beings into a war, even into a war they may think they wish to avoid. And in such a context, where irrational passions dominate, the criticisms that have been directed at Aeneas' conduct are in a strict sense misplaced. In other circumstances we might demand more of him, but here there is nothing he can do - except what he does, in arranging for the defence of his followers. There is nothing dishonourable in his preliminary fortification of a camp while he awaits Latinus' as yet unknown answer. (If he ends by taking a good deal more than he had originally asked for, again such things have been known to happen in war). So too the shooting of the deer is accidental, and Virgil makes it quite plain that the Trojans had no choice but to defend themselves against the Italian natives infected by irrational passion. Things soon got out of control. But the death of the melee of old Galaesus, the would-be mediator, reflects the brutality of war, not especial brutality on the part of the Trojans. In short, the suggestion that Virgil, intentionally or not, consistently shows the Trojans and their leader as in the wrong does not accord with my reading of the text.

For to my possibly unsophisticated way of thinking, the striking features of the last six books are those which Virgil appears to have intended to be striking. I mean of course such things as Aeneas' tenderness towards the youthful victims of war, Lausus and Pallas; and we notice, because Virgil asks us to, the significant brevity of Aeneas' final farewell to Pallas, which sums up so much of these last books:

> 'nos alias hinc ad lacrimas eadem horrida belli
> fata vocant; salve aeternum mihi, maxime Palla,
> aeternumque vale.' nec plura effatus ad altos
> tendebat muros gressumque in castra ferebat.

Nec plura effatus, Aeneas as so often goes on because he must.

We hear much of Virgil's sympathy for the helpless, but in truth all Virgil's main characters are in a sense helpless, even his hero. We want our epic hero to dominate and be in control, not, let us say, be reduced to faltering or silence by a woman's passionate eloquence - but of that more in a moment - yet even in the second part of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas, far though he has

travelled in body and spirit since the night of Troy's fall, can be caught up in events which he cannot dominate. What he does achieve he owes not to his own qualities alone but to divine guidance and strengthening. Now we are ready to see human helplessness in the tragedy of an Oedipus, though even here a kind of inverted human pride is reflected in the common misinterpretation of Aristotle's 'hamartia' which claims that all such catastrophes are fully explicable in terms of the human character. But the helplessness of the successful is an idea harder to take. But I suggest that it is a Virgilian idea, and a true and important one.

Here I must leave the last six books. Retracing our steps through the problems I sketched earlier, we come back to Dido, and the question I left in the air. Granted that Aeneas must leave Dido, need it happen like this? I believe that there are real difficulties or weaknesses in the Fourth Book, but I do not find them where most critics do, in the final encounter of Aeneas and Dido, and Aeneas' subsequent behaviour. My difficulties are these. As every reader at once notices, we are shown so little of Aeneas as lover that the very words sound incongruous and unreal. All the meagre scattered hints of his real feelings come when it is too late to matter, as indeed do all the allusions to any physical relationship between the lovers (the references to the _parvolus Aeneas_, the _notum cubile_, and Mercury's description of Aeneas as _uxorius_) apart of course from the scene in the cave. Our only direct information about the early happy days of the relationship is supplied by Rumour, and Virgil explicitly tells us that Rumour can be unreliable - 'pariter facta atque infecta canebat'. Of Aeneas' feelings we know nothing, though elsewhere throughout the epic he is a far from unemotional character. I believe that Virgil's handling of this part of his story _is_ defective, and that his purpose is in a measure defeated by that intense reticence on sexual matters which is so marked a feature of all his work. Here is a great gap in Virgil's realism, though one may feel content that later literatures have fully made good this deficiency, and now nothing remains unsaid or unsayable in this field of human relationships. Here, I think, was something that Virgil did not visualize with his usual clarity. Hence comes, for instance, the surprise we feel when Mr. Dale points out that if Dido and Aeneas were sharing a bed, it is strange that Dido has not heard earlier about the constant nocturnal visitations from Anchises. Mr. Dale hints that this proves Aeneas' allusion to the visitations to be lies. I think it more likely, as I have suggested, that Virgil has simply not visualized the implications of sharing a bed.

But perhaps an even greater difficulty lies in Aeneas' sudden volte-face after the appearance of Mercury. At once Aeneas _ardet abire fuga dulcisque relinquere terras_. _Dulcis_ does not save the situation. Virgil shows us, I think very effectively, the conflict between Aeneas' resolution and his emotions in what follows. But I for one feel the resolution itself to be too easily formed, even though a messenger of such a kind could not lightly be ignored.

Yet from this point on, as Mr. Speaight has said to this Society, 'The psychology of the Fourth Book is unimpeachable. There are situations in which there is practically nothing a man can say'. Critics do not like Aeneas' furtive preparations for departure while he wonders how to tell Dido the news, _quae prima exordia sumat_. Yet I state with confidence that a good many men have sometimes wondered anxiously how to set about conveying to their wives news

or views not likely to be too well received, even when what they had to say was far less disturbing than what Aeneas had to tell Dido. Of the terrible last encounter itself, I shall only say that it seems to me supremely realistic - it is what would really happen. Dido's eloquence is passionate and uncontrolled. Aeneas is halting, unintentionally brutal, and truthful. If we pass censorious judgment on either, we are judging ourselves, and our criticism of Virgil should be not of the scene itself but of his failure to prepare us for its shattering realism.

I claim the same psychological rightness for the contrast between the tormented sleeplessness of Dido and the peaceful sleep of Aeneas on his ship, iam certus eundi. To high emotional tension sleep is not a rare or unnatural reaction, only an unromantic one. Aeneas sleeps; for him the issue is now settled. The issue is settled, that is, as far as it ever will be. For to quote Mr. Dale again, 'the tale goes on, but "never glad, confident morning again". Perhaps the love of Dido and Aeneas was never truly 'glad confident morning'. It was ill-starred from the first -

> ille dies primus leti primusque malorum
> causa fuit.

It was no boy and girl affair. These are mature people, not only, as has often been stressed, with responsibilities for the future, but with tragedy in the past. Hence the deeper tragedy that their happiness is doomed to be fleeting. But it is true that after Dido, something goes out of the story; nothing will be the same again.

Now here surely is a real problem. Virgil, that careful unhurried craftsman, risked shattering the proportions of his work by introducing this tense and tragic episode with the story of its hero barely under way. Yet we can be sure there was nothing accidental about this. After all, as everyone knows, since Dido was some three or four centuries junior to Aeneas, Virgil was not obliged to invent or borrow the version of legend in which the two met. Had a forecast of the hostility of Rome and Carthage been his main or only purpose, he certainly chose the oddest way to achieve it. It is equally impossible to believe that he intended to depict a casual liaison of which the ultimate rupture would shock nobody, least of all his contemporaries, with their 'loose moral standards'. That such an argument could be used, as it has been by some who tell us that our historical sense is at fault when we criticize Aeneas' desertion of Dido, seems almost incredible. So far as Virgil is saying anything about Rome and Carthage or about casual love-affairs, it can only be first that even Carthaginians were human, and secondly that Eros is not to be trifled with.

So we are back with our problem, the placing of the episode in the whole poem. I suggest that Virgil put the story of Dido where he did and treated it with such fulness because life too does not place its tragedies with a neat regard for Aristotelian canons. True, the Fourth Book reaches its quiet close in approved tragic fashion. But it is only Dido who is at rest. Aeneas must go on, as ever, carrying now among his burdens whatever burden the loss of Dido inflicted on him.

'That Aeneas did suffer we must suppose. That he suffered like Dido, let him suppose who will.' So Mr. Dale, and assuredly Virgil does not suggest a different view. But I do not think that Virgil depicts Aeneas as he does at

this point, and again at the meeting with Dido in the underworld, primarily because of what Mr. Dale calls 'disillusion with the quality of victorious efficiency in high places', but simply because, even granted that the task of Aeneas or Augustus is necessary, beneficial, and righteous, only such a man can do it. Virgil's much talked-of compassion embraces the successful with that measure of ruthlessness and insensitivity that political success generally entails. They too have their tragedies. Indeed I find that when I think of Dido and then of Lavinia, it is not the familiar equation of Aeneas with Augustus that springs to my mind. I remember rather Tiberius, and how Augustus forced him to divorce the wife he loved and take in her place the deplorable Julia - as Suetonius says, *non sine magno angore animi*, and he goes on to relate how Tiberius once accidentally caught sight of Vipsania *et tumentibus oculis prosecutus est*. Augustus took care that they never saw each other again. Yet some people are surprised and censorious because in later days Tiberius tended to be morose. Virgil was dead before these events, but he knew all about dynastic marriages of convenience, and he never pretends that Aeneas' betrothal to Lavinia is anything more.

So we come to the political aspect of the poem. You will be prepared for what I have to say on this. There is no humbug about Virgil's praise of Augustus, about his patriotic feelings for Rome and for Italy. In no way does his patriotic message cramp his genius. But he knew what such achievements cost in human terms. Still he does not take sides. He is not glorifying Augustus without understanding the cost; nor is he trying to show the achievement and the ideals as a hollow sham. He holds the balance equal between the valour, the devotion, the *pietas* that leads to success, and its heart-rending consequences for victors and vanquished alike. Here as in other ways, Virgil seems to add a new dimension to Greek thought about human life, for no Greek, I think, shows us quite as Virgil does the inevitable cost not of human failure and wickedness but of human success in a righteous cause. It is precisely because Virgil in the *Aeneid* sounds simultaneously the bright notes of hope and achievement and the darker sounds of despair and sorrow that his work inevitably leaves so often the impression of discords unresolved. Within the human framework these discords cannot be resolved. I shall not pursue the point further: I need only refer you to the closing pages of Mr. Speaight's 1958 Presidential Address to this Society.

Now all that I have been trying to say Virgil himself said, better, of course, and a great deal more briefly. He said it, in fact, in the most famous lines of the whole Aeneid:

sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi;
sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.

Professor Laughton some time ago recommended the Society to take the second line in its context and as referring only to the specific occasion of its utterance. It is no generalized statement about suffering. That we must take the two lines together I agree. But does not the rest of the argument overlook *etiam*? Here *too*, *even* here, are human beings who react in familiar human ways to human achievement and misfortune. There is certainly implied, though admittedly not stated, a general statement about humanity here. But it is not only about the 'vale of tears'. As Professor Laughton emphasized, Virgil's renowned 'melancholy' is only one side of the picture. There is fine achievement (*laudi*) and its due acknowledgment as well (*praemia*).

And is it not possible that mortalia refers to the praemia as well as the lacrimae rerum?

If Virgil then is a 'realist', he is one not in the one-sided sense of the word which refers to those who concentrate on the squalid and sordid, the debunkers and the 'angry', but because he presented a rounded picture of human life in its discordant complexity. I want now to consider briefly how his technique as a writer harmonizes with this interpretation of his view of life.

Technically, of course, realism is impossible. You cannot put the whole of life into a book, without some method of selection and presentation. There is some literal symbolism here, but there is also that at which the hair stands on end. There is too Aeneas' strange vision of the Phrygian penates in Book iii, where the borderline between sleeping and waking is curiously blurred. Professor Austin has shown how authentically dreamlike is the vision of Hector in Book ii.

In narrative, Virgil has one particular device for communicating the same effect of vivid visualization which is at the same time free from any artificial clarity untrue to our actual experience. Over and over again he introduces us to a new scene with an imperfect tense. This simple linguistic device gives an extraordinary sense to the reader of being shown the events as they happen, yet without the crisp definiteness of the preterite perfect. It is incidentally one of the many things in Virgil which suggest to me that aspects of his technique which are often called 'dramatic' are really 'cinematic'. His ability to project long mysterious vistas is one such aspect. Another is the tendency to write in short scenes with changes of time and place indicated by passages of powerful visual effect - in Virgil we find the highest development of this old epic device of ekphrasis. And this use of the imperfect tense does something which the cinema can do freely but the stage only at curtain-rise, that is, it shows us an action already under way.

Take the very beginning of the story:

> vix e conspectu Siculae telluris in altum
> vela dabant laeti et spumas salis aere ruebant.

A little later,

> corripuere viam interea qua semita monstrat,
> iamque ascendebant collem qui plurimus urbi
> imminet.

So comes Sinon (ecce...trahebant) and Cassandra (ecce trahebatur)
So also Laocoon

> sollemnis taurum ingentem mactabat ad aras.

Much later, the most impressive and familiar example of all:

> ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras.

There are many other examples. In sum, in his descriptive and narrative writing, Virgil is as truthful to our actual experience of the physical world as he is in his handling of theme and character truthful in representing other aspects of life.

The ambiguity of outlook to which Virgil was led by his grasp of the

complexity of human life is certainly reflected in the notorious ambiguity of his style in the more limited sense of that term, the choice and combination of words, to use an ancient classification. On this topic I have had confirmation at a down-to-earth level from a friend of mine, who worked for a time on a projected Latin Dictionary. No author gave so much trouble when it came to classifying his vocabulary under different significations. Virgil so often means several different things at once.

But in talking of Virgil's style, I take my main point from a curious ancient judgment on it. Donatus records that Agrippa described Virgil as *novae cacozeliae repertorem non tumidae nec exilis sed ex communibus verbis atque ideo latentis*, that is, as 'the inventor of a new sort of affected style, one neither turgid, nor meagre but made up of the normal vocabulary and so hard to detect'.

On Virgil's methods I shall make three points, the first two concern his narrative and descriptive technique, the third concerns his style in a narrower sense.

I do not need to demonstrate Virgil's great abilities in description and narration. But it is significant for my purpose that many of his greatest successes are in scenes of sombre or mysterious colouring. He has a feeling for the sea, for night and moonlight, for long vistas in space - and in time, too. Think of his characteristic use of such words as *ingens*, *immanis*, *vastus*, *umbra*. For him human experience of reality is not confined, as it largely was for the Greeks, to what can be sharply defined and fully known; it embraces also much that is blurred and ambiguous. He can be brilliant as well, as in Dido's first entry, the hunt, or the description of Elysium, but others could do that sort of thing too. Where he has no rival is in depicting, so far as it *can* be depicted, the mysterious and - the word is inevitable - the 'numinous', those aspects of reality on which the Greeks for the most part turned their back. (Their resolute rationalism was essential to their achievement, and a noble thing - but it leaves out some inescapable elements in our actual experience). To take an example, what a gulf separates the straightforward symbolical or allegorical dreams of classical Greek literature from Dido's authentic nightmare of desolation: on the one hand, Atossa in the *Persae* or Xenophon's oracular dream based on a pun on *diabainein*, on the other hand this:

> agit ipse furentem
> in somnis ferus Aeneas semperque relinqui
> sola sibi, semper longam incomitata videtur
> ire viam et Tyrios deserta quaerere terra.

Now we picture Agrippa as a man of action rather than a man of letters, and are not surprised to find him unhappy at the characteristics of what was after all for him 'modern poetry'. None the less he was able to express his opinion in the very exact terminology of traditional rhetoric. The basis of his judgment is the conventional doctrine that there are three styles, the grand, middle, and plain, and that the grand and plain tend towards vicious extremes, the grand towards bombast (*tumidum*) and the plain towards poverty (*exile*). The place of the middle style was always problematical, but probably because its inventor was Theophrastus, arguing like his master Aristotle that the Mean, in style as in all else, was the best, it does not normally appear to have attached to it any corresponding *cacozelia*. This is true even of

those who, like Cicero, rejected the idea that the middle or 'mean' style was actually the best. An exception is the anonymous author of the Rhetorica ad Herennium. But though this work is usually dated to about 85 B.C. I have recently argued elsewhere on quite other grounds that that date is too early, possibly much too early. Anyway Agrippa obviously did not know of the doctrine there found that there is a faulty style corresponding to the middle style, because his remark means that Virgil himself has invented such a style. That is, Virgil's style is faulty, but in neither of the accepted directions, towards bombast or meagreness, but in a subtle exaggeration of the smooth normality and harmoniousness which was the mark of the middle style according to the current teaching of his time.

I have explored Agrippa's meaning at some length not because I agree with it, but because it may serve to correct the idea that Virgil is above all, and must always have been regarded as, an exponent of the grand style, the proper style we should suppose for high epic. Modern scholars have indeed shown that Virgil's style is not all grandeur, and that alongside the archaisms (olli, infit, etc.) are elements even of the colloquial. Of course there are many things that Virgil prefers not to say, and many words that he does not care to use; his language is a literary one, not the language of Horace's Satires, still less that of Petronius. But I do not find it difficult to accept this much from what is implied by Agrippa's comment, that the style Virgil forged for his purpose was neither grand nor plain, but an as it were central all-purpose style adapted to cover the widest range of human experience, and so a fitting medium for what I have been trying to analyse under the title of the Realism of Virgil.