Aeneid Essay, Research Paper

The Aeneid In the Aeneid, the author Virgil outlines the significance of authority by reiterating the need for Aeneas to fulfill his destiny in relation to pietas, devotion to family and country, as the central Roman virtue in the underworld. Virgil successfully uses the underworld to capture and dramatize the importance of authority by allowing Aeneas to see the future Rome due to his leadership through many forms and histories of Roman authority. Once the Trojans were on the shores of Italy, Aeneas had yet another duty to fulfill: a visit to the underground, where he met Sibyl, the “holy prophetess (pg. 149).” After the God Delian (pg.149) breathed “visionary might” into Sibyl, she and Aeneas were able to visit the Earth’s hidden world. In this world, he learned what happens to the souls of the dead. Most likely, it served as a future lesson for Aeneas (especially after being guilty of neglecting his duty for his true love of Italy while indulging with Dido) which is still believed and practiced today: the kind of life that we lead; the way we die, self – inflicted or not; and how we are buried after death are all of great significance – that all good deeds in life deserve the goodness of heaven, and all bad deeds deserve the pain and the punishment of hell. “Philgyas in extreme of misery cries loud through the gloom appeals warning to all mankind: Be warned, learn righteousness; and learn to scorn no god (pg. 165-66).” “All have dared a monstrous sin and achieved the sin they dared. Even had I a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths and a voice of iron, I yet could not include every shape of crime or list every punishment’s name (pg. 166).” Aeneas finds his father Anchises in the underworld and is told of the future of Rome and how his descendants will found it. When Aeneas saw his father in the ‘Homes of Peace (pg.168)’, Anchises explains the reincarnation process which is also believed today by a great number of people. All the details of their descendants and future wars confirmed what Aeneas knew all along: his true love, Italy: the future of Rome and the “glory to be, will be (pg.174).” Book VI contains the following passage: “You are the only soul who shall restore Our wounded state by waiting out the enemy. Others will cast more tenderly in bronze Their breathing figures, I can well believe, And bring more lifelike portraits out of marble; Argue more eloquently, use the pointer to trace the paths of heaven accurately And accurately foretell the rising stars. Roman, remember by your strength to rule Earth’s peoples – for your arts are to be these: To pacify, to impose the rule of law, To spare the conquered , battle down the proud.” Lines 1143-1154 Within this passage, Virgil uses literary allusions to the Iliad and the Odyssey by allowing Anchises to give Aeneas some history of his people as an incentive to carry out his mission as a leader. By mentioning the downfall of his people during the Trojan War and foreshadowing his destiny by “Sparing the conquered” Trojans and “battle down the proud” Greeks, can be looked upon as a reinforcement of his duties not only to his dead father and family, but to the entire Trojan population. To let another character found and rule Rome would just prove the failure of his people again, as shown through the Trojan war. Aeneas feels great pride and energy regarding his role in history and is anxious to continue on his journey. The gods are trying to convince Aeneas to value duty to his city and family, a kind of affiliation or relation by virtue of descent as-if from a parent, above duty to a lover by mere affiliation, or arbitrary association. This perspective on an appeal to authority still hinges on a relationship between Aeneas’ desire for affiliation and public authority as the authority of filial priority. We learn early on in this epic that Aeneas is a very important character because of his divine parentage. After all, his mother is the Goddess Venus and his father’s brother was the King of Troy. His mother is more concerned with his destiny than with his happiness. She makes Dido fall in love with Aeneas and then he falls in love with the Carthaginian queen in return. Despite the fact that he is happy, his mother is one of the gods working to make him fulfill his destiny. This “destiny” is truly revealed to Aeneas in the underworld when he encounters a few fellow Trojan comrades. One such comrade Aeneas encounters in the underworld is Palinurus who was also duty bound, a helmsman on Aeneas’ ship and a faithful servant who falls overboard and drowns, failing to finish his duties. He now suffers and begs Aeneas for a “quiet haven”, a proper burial in his death. He says to Aeneas, “deliver me from captivity, Unconquered friend! Throw earth on me-you can-Put in to Velia port! Or if there be Some way to do it, if your goddess mother Shows a way- ..”Book VI Lines 493-500. This conversation is not only significant in helping Aeneas to realize the costs of authority when your duties to your people and country are not carried out thoroughly ( as seen by Palinurus being held captive in the underworld without a proper burial), but in helping Aeneas realize even more that the gods, including Aeneas’ mother, are powerful in determining the fate of an individual during life of duty as well as after life in the underworld. The need of a proper burial in the underworld is essential in attaining some feelings of gratification for carrying out duty to his people and country. Aeneas can now realize what it means to be “Roman” and carry out his duties as destiny prescribed to avoid the chance of an overlooked and proper burial. Virgil uses Aeneas to personify the spirit of the Roman Empire by encompassing the scope of both Iliad and Odyssey. By allowing the underworld to open many aspects of Greek history, Aeneas is able to understand the importance of his family values, striving to fulfill his duty, or his mission, even though Dido almost prevented it. Because of the underworld, he has gained compassion for his lost men by always thinking about the welfare of his people. He has proved to be a great leader who showed responsibility by keeping his spirits high when times were tough, even though he had great honor which gave him desire and determination to fulfill his duties regardless of the circumstances. Virgil wrote the Aeneid in order to arouse patriotism in the Roman people. His references to oracles and prophesies are implications that Rome was founded because it was destined to be founded by the gods who just happen to be the most powerful and influential beings during Virgil’s era. The entire Book VI, referring to the underworld, is intended to show how the future leaders of Rome are destined to found it. The fact that they consume almost the entire good part of the underworld shows that they are the “chosen ones.”

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