SOME NOTES IN REPLY TO "THE FUROR AND VIOLENTIA OF AENEAS"—S. FARRON, ACTA CLASSICA XX, 1977)

I wish to make some kind of reply to the article "The Furor and Violentia of Aeneas" by Steven Farron (Acta Classica XX, 1977, pp. 204–8).

The whole piece is based on an unproven assumption: namely that furor and violentia are inconsistent with the picture of a pious hero, dedicated to a higher mission—that of founding the city Rome. Where is this argued out? It seems to be assumed that we shall all be in agreement automatically. I do agree that there is plentiful evidence that furor and violentia are inconsistent with the concept of a Roman citizen in peacetime. However, the contexts referred to in the article are all in battle scenes. Thus, we require the author to adduce strong evidence from other contemporaneous sources that furor and violentia were frowned on in Roman soldiers in the midst of battle.

The Romans regarded pietas as obedience towards the gods and observance of the duties they imposed e.g. towards one’s country and family. We find in Catullus,

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\begin{align*}
\ldots \text{cum se cogitat esse pium} \\
\text{nec sanctam violasse fidem, nec foedere nullo} \\
\text{divum ad fallendos numine abusum homines}
\end{align*}
\]

(Catullus, 76, 2–4).

It seems reasonable to treat lines 3–4 as an expansion of line 2 and therefore as expanded definitions of pietas. The founding of Rome was Aeneas’ duty to the gods and this state has, of necessity, to be established by warfare. This warfare, then, forms part of Aeneas’ pietas. Vergil tell us that his duty includes parere subjectis et debellare superbos

(Aeneid 6, 853).

By omitting the second half of this line, the author of "Furor and Violentia" contrives to give a highly misleading impression of pietas or of the warlike functions of Aeneas and the Romans generally. We get an impression of a

1. Cf. eg. Cicero, Pro Milone, esp. 32.
2. Cicero, De Rep. 6,16, Iustitiæ cole et piétatem, quae cum magna in parentibus et propinquis, tum in pacta maxima est; id. Pro Pielnio, 33,80, Quid est pietas, nisi voluntas gratia in parentes?
3. Thus Aeneid 1,234–7.
4. Aeneas, pietate insignis et armis;
   cf. 1,544–5,
   Rex erat nobis quo iustior alter
   nec piétate fuit nec bello maior et armis;
   6,769–70,
   Silvius Aeneas, pariter piétate vel armis egregius.

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demand for mildness and gentleness. This is far wide of the truth. The Romans regarded it as right to pursue mercilessly the building of Rome's power. We can see this clearly in the compound de-bellare. I think we might find the *superbos* refers to anyone arrogant enough to resist the Roman power, but it certainly refers to Turnus and his peoples.

As a matter of further detail, what reason does the author have for associating Aeneas with *violentia*—other than his own emotional response to the "brutality" he perceives? *Violentia* is very much a feature of Turnus' and his people, but not of Aeneas. Once one has eliminated this aspect, then, it remains to ask when *furens* is explicitly excluded from war-time *pietas*? If no evidence is available, we would have every reason to assume, from Vergil's usage, that a *pius* hero may certainly be *furens* in battle with no reflection on his *pietas*.

*Parcere subjectis* means, of course, to treat sparingly the people who had accepted subjection to Roman imperium. It does not and never did imply sparing individuals who have submitted on the battlefield, while their fellows go on fighting. It was never accepted practice to spare prisoner of war, however pathetic their pleas for mercy. Neither the Romans nor the Homeric Greeks were impractical enough to produce an ethic of this kind. In the battles of the times, which tended to be a series of individual combats within an unorganized context, it would have been suicide to leave defeated enemies alive when moving on to the next combat. The only reasonable circumstances for such mercy were if the defeated ones could be safely withdrawn from battle and confined for future ransom or slavery. And even so this could be termed folly by Agamemnon in Homer. I will return to this point a little later in more detail.

Let us now turn to the second paragraph of the article under discussion. Dr. Farron refers to Aeneas' "three most brutal acts". In my opinion, words such as "brutal" should be used with care. We may well be projecting our values on to an age where they are irrelevant. "Brutal" is defined as "inhuman, unfeeling, stupidly cruel and sensual". Were these acts of Aeneas inhuman in terms of the values of his time? It is important to remember that what seems to us full of "brutality" or pathos may have been for authors such as Homer and Vergil no more than a factual description of events. We might regard

> inferias quos immolet umbirs captivoque rogi perfundet sanguine flammis

*(Vergil, Aen. 10, 519–20)*

as pathetic in the extreme. Yet in a sense it is no more than a physical description of what happens when humans are sacrificed. If human sacrifice is accepted, as

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5. Eg. *Aen.* 5,473; 12,326.
6. Cf. *Aen.* 10,151; 11,376; 12,9; 12,45; by allusion 11,354.
7. *Iliad* 6,55.
it was at that time and under these circumstances, one cannot, strictly speaking, call it brutal except in terms of our own values or the values of a later time and culture. There are those who say that to treat the ancients in terms only of their own values amounts to pedantry. I, however, think that it rather needs defence if one chooses to ignore historical authenticity and to project values of another time and culture upon characters to whom they had no relevance.

The author adds, "In all three, Vergil introduces changes which make the episode even more horrible and brutal than the Homeric model". He quotes selectively Homer's reference to the sacrificial victims as "in a dazed condition". If we are to respond to Vergil's picture of them as animal sacrifices (inferias . . . imnolet) and to see this as adding pathos and brutality, can we not also perceive the same effect in the words omitted by Dr. Farron where Homer refers to Achilles' victims as a poinen of the dead Patroklos and as being stunned or dazed "like fawns"? Surely this suggests the same things more subtly? We are asked to shudder at Vergil's use of "that he (Aeneas) might soak the flames of the funeral pile with the blood of captives". One might contrast this with "the iron-hard force of the fire leaped upon them, in order to feed on them" (Iliad 23, 177) which is surely no less "brutal".

As regards the killing of Magus, there is, I think, a far closer parallel in the incident with Adrastus in Iliad 6. There Adratus begs to be spared on the grounds that there will be a generous ransom. Menelaus is tempted, but Agamemnon remonstrates, calling him pepon, "foolish", and asking why he takes on kedos, care or concern, for other men. After all, he adds, "Have the Trojans treated you well in your house?" (Iliad 6, 55-6). In other words, he reminds Menelaus, as Aeneas reminds himself, that, in the "belli commercia" (10, 532), he is "one down" at the moment—a disgraceful position to be in. He owes them nothing—in fact, they owe him. In the case of Menelaus and Adrastus and that of Aeneas and Magus, the response is the killing of the respective supplicant. This reminds one yet again of the essentially practical values of the Homeric Greeks and the Trojans of the Aeneid. One might note, too, that, by mentioning the high price Achilles had received for selling Lycaon after his first capture, Lycaon subtly promises Achilles the same profit again. Therefore the mention of money in the case of Magus hardly represents a dramatic contrast, as the author implies with "on the other hand".

In discussing Lycaon, also, the author fails to point out that the claim to be "as good as a supplicant" has no real basis because it is as a prisoner (21, 77) that Lycaon shared Achilles' bread. No one would consider this as making him Achilles' xenos and yet this alone, together with the reminder of potential

13. Cf. note 11 above.
ransom money, could form the basis for a plea of mercy. It is a piece of special pleading, as Lycaon himself is aware: he dares only to say that he is a “sort of” supplicant (anti . . . hiketao, 21, 75).

I feel puzzled, too, by the author’s words at the end of his paragraph about Magus’ death. Magus’ plea includes the words “the victory of the Trojans does not depend on me nor will my life make such a big difference”. The author comments: “This argument underscores how irrational and gratuitous Magus’ murder is”. I do not feel happy with the use of the word “murder” in a battle context. Moreover, Magus’ argument could, in fact, be used by anyone but a selected few of the participants in the battle, if they were prepared to undervalue themselves and to appear relatively kakos in order to escape death. Lycaon also in a sense uses this argument by urging that he is not a true brother of Hector. I doubt very strongly whether this type of special pleading—“I am too worthless to die”—would have carried any weight at the time. Kakoi were beneath consideration. Why then should they be spared? I wonder, in fact, whether Achilles is not showing his reaction to this self-devaluing plea when he asks why Lycaon weeps at the thought of dying since Patroklos was “a much better man than you” (21, 107). Achilles suggests here, that since Lycaon is less important than Patroklos, as he himself has implied in his plea, he should not object to dying. The “belli commercia” would not be upset by his death—he is not important enough for that. To sum up, in an intensely success-orientated culture, I cannot see that a plea of worthlessness could earn pity but simply contempt. Kakoi deserved no consideration and that includes pity.

Aeneas does not throw Magus’ appeal to pietas back at him. But why not? What bond of pietas could there possibly be between Aeneas and Magus? By what logic can Aeneas be expected to extend his duty towards his father into a duty to protect an enemy? Turnus’ words as he kills Pallas:

cuperem ipse parens spectator adesset (10,443)

are a more natural reaction on the battlefield, but they say nothing about Turnus’ pietas towards his father. Magus’ plea is an act of desperation, a piece of special pleading.

The contrast between Aeneas’ pietas and the lack of it in his opponents is emphasized elsewhere. We note especially that, after the prolonged tale of the breaking of the truce by the Italians under Turnus, we find the abrupt forceful contrast:

At pius Aeneas dextram tendebat inermem
nudato capite (12, 311–2).

15. \textit{Aen.} 10, 532.
16. \text{ Cf. Adkins, op. cit. passim esp. pp. 30 ff.; Iliad 6, 208, “always aristouein and to be superior to the others”\].

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The moral values of this time were essentially practical. They would certainly not urge a one-sided observation of co-operative values. But even if the other side were meticulous in observation of "pietas", this might influence Aeneas' conduct towards them in a co-operative way, but it cannot be demanded of him. There is no aspect of pietas which could bid Aeneas to show mercy to enemies in battle.

I agree with the author about the extra horror, for us, of "impassi" to describe the fish who lick the corpse's wounds. For Aeneas, exultation over the body of a dead opponent was accepted practice. Therefore, a word which simply adds greater effectiveness to the exultation cannot be taken as a criticism of Aeneas' moral values—except anachronistically. I cannot help feeling, too, that Vergil has reduced the effect on us of the Homeric episode. In Homer, we follow Lycaon through his plea for mercy, the killing and then the exultation. In Vergil's example we watch Magus' pleading and rejection and then another man, Tarquitus, is killed and made the object of exultation. Our sympathies have therefore been less directed towards Tarquitus before the exultation and we feel correspondingly less pity.

We come now to the concluding arguments. I agree wholeheartedly that Vergil is the master of his style. However, I repeat that there is a difference between portraying brutality and giving a vivid and detailed description of wartime activities. I disagree therefore that Vergil can necessarily be seen as making descriptions "more brutal". He merely adds more vivid details. The same point applies, I believe, in explaining why Homer is not "squeamish". It is and remains important to remember that our values and emotions must not be assumed to be shared by classical authors or the people of whom they write.

With reference to the final two paragraphs, I would merely add two points. I do not like the use of the word "murder" in the battle context. It carries emotive connotations which do not belong here. Finally, "gloating over" a dead enemy was accepted practice, as I have pointed out above and whereas Vergil's contemporaries would indeed have regarded human sacrifice with horror, that does not apply to Aeneas and his contemporaries—and surely it is in those terms that we should judge Aeneas.

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20. (As remarked above at p. 154); Acta Classica XX, 1977, p. 208.

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