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Bearing Gifts: Reciprocity and the Chaos/Order Opposition in Virgil's Aeneid

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I. Introduction:

Timeo danaos et dona ferentis
~I fear the Greeks, especially bearing gifts (*Aeneid* 2.49)

The above quote is one of the most famous in literature and takes place in a crucial moment in Virgil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*. Laocoon, the Trojan priest, does not trust the intentions of the Trojan Horse and intends to destroy it. He refers to the Trojan Horse as a gift to be feared. But what makes this gift an object to be feared? The answer is a complex one, because the Trojan Horse is simply one part of a pattern of reciprocity present throughout the *Aeneid*. In this paper, I examine both the function of this pattern of reciprocity within the *Aeneid* and, by placing the *Aeneid* in multiple contexts, examine how this pattern of gift giving relates to the society and culture in Augustan Rome.

I have analyzed the pattern of gift giving in the *Aeneid* using structural oppositions. Structuralist anthropology involves identifying and analyzing oppositions within cultural patterns. Based on the concept of holistic culture, where every element functions within a larger, overarching pattern, structuralism is concerned with identifying oppositions and categorizing actions within these oppositional areas (See Benedict 1946; Levi-Strauss 1962; Leach 1976). Critiques of structuralism have argued that the approach of identifying oppositions within a cultural system is too deterministic, ignores both the agency of the participant as well as the role of history, and places too much stress on the universality of the results ("poststructuralism" 2007:1; See also Derrida 1995, 1997; Bourdieu 1997). However, I have found that the gifts given throughout the *Aeneid* correspond to a structural opposition of chaos and order.

The opposition of chaos versus order is one common to many anthropological studies. Dumézil discusses this relationship between order and chaos using the concepts of *celeritas* and

gravitas. *Celeritas* is “dynamic, free, violent,” while *gravitas* is “static, regulated and calm” (Dumezil 1988:34). *Celeritas* and *gravitas* alternate throughout the temporal frame, with *celeritas* periods creating *gravitas* and *gravitas* breaking down into *celeritas* (Dumezil 1988:34). These periods are controlled and manifested by the social order: *celeritas* is controlled violence (Dumezil 1988:53). Within the *Aeneid*, it is easy to correlate *celeritas* with war, and *gravitas* with social order.

The *Aeneid* as a whole is particularly focused on creating order in the face of chaos, which is characterized in the epic poem as war. War is prevalent throughout the story; the first line references this concept: “I sing of arms and a man” (*Aeneid* 1.1). War is integral to the plot of the epic: it is the beginning of the destruction that causes Aeneas to search for Italy, and it is finally ended in Book 12 through the death of Turnus. The entire work can be read as attempting to create order in the face of this chaos and destruction. Aeneas is fleeing the pure destruction of the city of Troy in order to create a new race: the Romans. His very actions have been read as dealing with this opposition. Aeneas is not trying to recover his past home like Odysseus in the *Odyssey*; instead, Aeneas is founding a new one (Williams 1990:28). He is forced to lead himself and his companions, the last remnant of Troy, to safety (Scherer 1963:182). Aeneas cannot die a hero’s death typical of Greek heroes such as Achilles (Scherer 1963:182). He cannot be eliminated by destruction; instead he must control it. He must create new order out of war and destruction. As such, the myth of Aeneas is attempting to solve a social and cultural opposition which underlines all aspects of the *Aeneid*, one of which is gift giving.

Chaos versus order is not just manifested through the main points of the plot. Even the most minor actions in the work are part of a larger pattern of chaos versus order. One common element throughout all 12 books is the giving and receiving of gifts, both spiritual and mundane.

Gifts are given in almost every social relationship in the work, and Book 2 boasts one of the famous gifts in Western cultural thought: the Trojan Horse. Like elements of the general plot, these gifts operate under the same chaos vs. order opposition. Within the *Aeneid*, order is created through gifts, and by violating the obligations of gift giving, the gifts wield the destructive force. In addition to this basic function, gifts often operate on a variety of levels, sometimes creating bonds while reinforcing fractures within them. Gifts both control and manifest violence, often within different social contexts. In order to fully understand how gifts function within the *Aeneid*, both social and religious context for the Augustan Period, when Virgil was writing, as well as anthropological literature on gift giving theories is needed.

II. The Life of Virgil

I must begin this study by providing the social context of the poet and his times. Though little is known about his personal life or history, Virgil lived his life during a time of great change in the Roman Republic. Born in 70 BC, near Mantua, a Roman city which was associated with the Etruscans, Publius Vergilius Maro—the English spelling of Virgil is traditional—was a child of a middle-class family and a Roman citizen (Levi 1998:13-14). Virgil lived a retiring childhood that has been lost to history, though it is known that “his mother’s and father’s families held office as magistrates in Rome” (Levi 1998:13-14). Rome at this time was in a state of upheaval and conflict. By the time Virgil was eleven, Julius Caesar had won a consulship despite strong opposition from other prominent Romans, and in 49 BC, when Virgil was twenty, civil war broke out (Levi 1998:23). Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC, and his adopted great-nephew Octavian, later called Augustus, took control following yet another civil war with Mark Antony (Levi 1998:24).

Virgil was educated by philosophers Siro and Philodemos, and he was interested greatly in writing (Levi 1998:23-24). Virgil’s primary patron was Maecenas, who worked for Augustus (Levi 1998:30). Virgil wrote three major works, the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and, of course, the *Aeneid*. His first work, the *Eclogues*, was published around 36-37 BC and met with “enormous popular success” (Levi 1998:28). Virgil was “publicly lectured on in his lifetime” (Levi 1998:224). The *Aeneid* was even more popular. This epic captured the interest of the Roman public and quickly became a staple of poetic literature.

Virgil is commonly thought to have spent eleven years on this poetic work, writing from 30-19 BC (Levi 1998:131). The *Aeneid* is composed of twelve books, based on the Greek epic

style of Homer. The first six books are based on the structure of the *Odyssey*, and the last six are based on the structure of the *Iliad*. Virgil may have started writing the poem in any of the twelve books; he did not necessarily write in a chronological order (Levi 1998:141). Virgil was well aware of the famous Greek epics. He read not only Homer himself but also conflicting commentaries on Homer (Levi 1998:125). However, that is not to say Virgil simply copied from the Greek epics. Instead, as Peter Levi argues, “he [was] as liable to do the opposite of what Homer did as to translate him” (1998:224). It is generally accepted that Virgil used multiple sources when composing the *Aeneid*.

The *Aeneid* gives details of the wanderings of Aeneas, a Trojan prince and survivor of the fall of Troy, to Italy and also explored the founding of the Roman race. The Aeneas story was well known among the Roman people, and though I shall refer to it as a myth, it had become part of Roman historical thought and was considered factual by many Romans. This Aeneas myth was of great interest to Augustus, and Augustus would later be instrumental in the publication of the *Aeneid* (Levi 1998:227). Augustus’s interest in Virgil’s work was not untypical; Augustus took an active interest in the lives of many Roman authors, both historians and poets, including Livy, Horace, and Virgil (Jones 1970:154). It is not known whether the work was suggested to Virgil by Augustus; Jones thinks not, while Levi argues that Augustus was known to have put pressure on his other poet, Horace, and that Virgil’s poetry shows “an increasing influence of the Augustan establishment” (Jones 1970:156-157; Levi 1998:122).

Regardless, when he heard of Virgil’s work on the *Aeneid* in 27 BC, Augustus wrote and asked to read part of the work; Virgil refused this request, but did eventually read aloud to him books two, four, and six, all from the beginning of the work (Levi 1998:123). Augustus’ interest in the *Aeneid* continued, and he was instrumental in having it published after Virgil’s death in 19

BC. The *Aeneid* was never completed, and Virgil may have tried to burn the unfinished work so it would never be published (Levi 1998:227). At the time of its publication, both the *Aeneid* and Virgil received much public praise. Virgil's *Aeneid* soon became part of the Roman world both "at the level of popular culture and of official ideology" (Tarrant 1997:56). Graffiti that quote the *Aeneid* adorn the walls at Pompeii, and Virgil's work with discussed in depth by later authors, including Seneca (Levi 1998:224). Ancient critics had very little doubt about Virgil's purpose in writing the *Aeneid*: its primary function was to glorify Rome and Augustus (Williams 1990:21).

Despite the retiring nature of its author, Virgil's *Aeneid* was intimately connected with the politics of the time. The *Aeneid*'s subject matter, the arrival of Aeneas from Troy and the founding of the Roman race, was of immense importance to Augustus, who claimed descent through the Julian line to Aeneas's son, Iulus, also called Ascanius (Levi 1998:209-210, Feeney 1991:139, Beard, North and Price 1998:3, 144). This was not a new concept: "the claim to be descended from Ascanius, or the political usefulness of that claim, appears to be about a hundred years old when Virgil was writing" (Levi 1998:166). Affiliation with a god or goddess was often used in Rome as a political tool, and by claiming descent from Aeneas, and thus his mother, the goddess Venus, Augustus reinforced himself as the *pater patris*, or the father of the land (Beard, North and Price 1998:138-144). Additionally, Augustus was reshaping the Roman Empire after several decades of civil war, and it was important for him to solidify his rule by establishing connections between himself and the glorious, Roman epic past. Augustus's watchword was "restoration," not revolution, and he utilized the golden history of Rome's founding as propaganda for his rule (Beard, North and Price 1998:167). Augustus aimed to project the image of "a united state, Italy as well as Rome, senate and people, and above all the gods" (Williams

1990:25). This concept of one united Italy, which Augustus' policy favored, was certainly central to Virgil's literary aims regarding the *Aeneid* (Levi 1998:223).

The *Aeneid*, then, retells a classic mythological story in the political, religious and social context of Augustan Rome. But Virgil neither simply copied an existing version nor created the story from a pure, fictional basis; instead, he interpreted the preexisting stories of Aeneas and rewrote them as an epic poem and treatise to Augustus' political and religious authority. The Aeneas myth was already known during this time period, but it took its most definitive form in the *Aeneid*.

III. The *Aeneid* as Myth: Comparisons and Mythical Reality

Virgil was known to use multiple sources in forming his version of the Aeneas myth. In fact, Virgil may have had problems sorting through the variety of mythological stories about Aeneas (Levi 1998:135). Many pre-Augustan writers wrote versions of the Aeneas story and the founding of Rome, including Homer, the Greek historians Hellanicus and Diokles, the Roman historians Cato the Elder, L. Cassius Hemina, poet Stesichorus, and the Latin poets Ennius and Naevius, among others (Erskine 2001:23; Levi 1998:125-126). Unfortunately, almost all of these works are lost today, and we can only speculate on what they may have contained and what their influence might have been. Aeneas's story begins in Homer's *Iliad*. According to the Greek tradition, Aeneas was known to the Greek armies as a great warrior of Troy, second only to Hector (Galinsky 1969:35). In fact, Aeneas's prowess in arms is emphasized over all his other qualities. In other pre-Augustan Roman authors, including Ennius and Naevius, the emphasis lies on Aeneas' divine parentage and his carrying of the *Penates*, or gods of Troy, to Italy (Galinsky 1969:59). Levi believes Virgil would have had knowledge of Ennius' and Naevius' works, and that Naevius possibly influenced book four and the story of Dido (1998:5). But none of these authors gives us as nearly complete a version of the myth as those writing in the Augustan period.

As mentioned above, the Aeneas myth had particular import for Augustan rulers. Augustus, when unifying Italy and Rome under his rule, was highly interested in portraying his leadership as a predestined, divinely ordained phenomenon. To this end, the Aeneas myth was adapted into a form of pro-Augustan propaganda. First, a connection was emphasized from Augustus through the Iulus/Ascanius line back to Aeneas, who descended from Venus. Venus

was the “partisan of Aeneas and the Trojans, as well as the ancestress of the Roman people” (Feeney 1991:139). She had also been declared previously to be the patroness of the Iulus line; Caesar “paraded her as his particular ancestress” (Beard, North, and Price 1998:145). Thus, by emphasizing his descent through the Iulus line, Augustus proclaimed himself directly descended from the gods.

Descent from the gods had developed into an important political tool by the late Republic. This concept of divine descent was based on the idea that the categories of gods and men were mutable. There were a variety of “nymphs and heroes” which straddled the line between god and man; additionally, many great figures, such as Romulus, and possibly Aeneas, were known to become gods after dying (Beard, North and Price 1998:141). These humans/gods could also contribute specific virtues or favors to their descendents; they were more likely to support a human who was descended from them. The favor and support of the gods was necessary for success. One could not be successful without support of the gods, and politicians such as Augustus, used that support to help explain their current accomplishments and promise other success in the future. Thus, Augustus was interested in portraying himself as Aeneas’ descendent.

Religious association with the gods was only one reason Augustus was interested in the Aeneas myth. Association with Aeneas additionally recalled the glorious, historical past of Rome. Augustus was “restoring” Rome with his new government, and emphasis was placed on the religious aspects of Rome’s founding, particularly the movement of the *Penates* to Italy and renewed worship among the Romans (Beard, North and Price 1998:4, 167). Aeneas thus becomes a “national icon,” and a founder equivalent to the historical figures of Romulus and Numa (Tarrant 1997:57). By drawing connections between the religious creation of Rome and

his own rule, Augustus was adapting the Aeneas myth to fulfill his political goals. Thus, the versions of the myths put forth during this time period were not only highly politicized but also were fully developed because of the government's interest in the topic.

The best and fullest examples of the Aeneas myth come from Virgil; Titus Livius, better known as Livy (64 BC- AD 17); and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek historian (1st century BC) (Erskine 201:15). All three of these authors wrote during the beginning of the Augustan regime. Livy was known to be a great friend of Augustus, though Augustus ignored Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Jones 1970:154-155). A brief comparison of these myths will be helpful to establish differences between the stories, expand on the changes that Virgil may have made—particularly in the *Aeneid*—and examine how other authors treat the concept of reciprocity within the myth. However, this comparison must begin with one caveat: Virgil was an epic poet, while both Livy and Dionysius wrote history. Thus, their descriptions and writing styles differed. The histories described and discussed meanings, but they were not active in the same sense as the *Aeneid*. The gods in the *Aeneid* could act, while the gods were discussed most often through portents in history (Feeney 2007:136). However, both epic poetry and history are interested in exploring the relationship between gods and men, and they should most definitely be considered important rival versions of the Aeneas myth.

Livy wrote his history of Rome, *On the Founding of the City*, and published the first five books in the early 20s BC (Beard, North and Price 1998:169). His first book, in which the Aeneas story was told, can be dated to approximately 27-25 BC (Luce 1998:xii). Livy drew almost exclusively on accounts of earlier historians, and he has generally been determined to be reliable in terms of religious procedure (Beard, North and Price 1998:9). Livy's version of the story, which begins his first book of history, is relatively brief compared with the massiveness of

the *Aeneid*. Livy's version of Aeneas's story almost eliminates religious overtones, focusing instead on political relationships. In this version, though "the fates had destined him for different things," Aeneas is allowed to leave Troy because of his political position advocating the return of Helen to the Greeks and his ties to guest friendship with the Greeks (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.1.1-3). These ties to the Greeks are nonexistent in Virgil's poem. Livy ignores the story of Dido and quickly drops Aeneas off in Italy, focusing instead on the marriage alliance between Aeneas and Latinus and the subsequent battles over Lavinia, the daughter of the king (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.1.7-16). The union with Lavinia produces Ascanius, the famous ancestor of the Iulus line (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.1.17-18). Livy kills off Aeneas and buries him, "whether he should be called man or god," though he is later called "Jupiter Indignes" (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.2.10-11). Livy then addresses the debate over the origin of Ascanius and the Iulus line but refuses to commit himself on "a matter so ancient" while subtly reinforcing Augustus's connection (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.3.1-4). Livy's account is short, to the point and primarily focused on political elements instead of religious ones.

On the other hand, the version written by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek historian, was far more descriptive and very involved. Little is known about Dionysius of Halicarnassus. His birth remains a mystery, but he came to Italy around 30 BC and published at least part of his work *Roman Antiquities*, around 7 BC (Cary 1937:vii). He explained that the purpose of this work was to "prove that the Romans were really Greek" (Erskine 2001:25). He, writing in Greek, was interested in proclaiming the glories of Rome as also glories of Greece. This is possibly why he focuses so much on how the Greeks interact with Aeneas rather than on Aeneas himself, at least at the beginning of his story. Dionysius cites various other historians as sources of

information about Aeneas and provides alternative versions of Aeneas instead of Virgil's unified image.

The best example of this involves Aeneas' role at the fall of Troy. First, Dionysius details how Aeneas actually stayed in the city and held out in the citadel until the Greeks offered a truce, allowing him to leave the city with his people and personal possessions (*Roman Antiquities* 1.46.1-3). However, Dionysius also gives Sophocles' version, which has Aeneas leaving for Mount Ida before the fall, and Menecrates' version, which has Aeneas as a traitor to the Trojans (*Roman Antiquities*: 1.48.1-4). It is therefore difficult to distill a Dionysian version of the myth. However, Dionysius does emphasize a few key points. He mentions several times how Aeneas was able to remove his people and important, valuable possessions from the fallen city (*Roman Antiquities* 1.46.1-2, 1.46.4, 1.47.4). Additionally, Dionysius describes in great detail the interaction between the gods that takes place when Aeneas lands in Italy. Aeneas interacts with a river god, follows the words of the oracles, and makes multiple sacrifices which take place at the site of Alba Longa (*Roman Antiquities* 1.55.1-1.57.4). Dionysius then details the treaty that commenced between Latinus and Aeneas, focusing on what was exchanged and also on the marriage alliance between the Latins and the Trojans (*Roman Antiquities* 1.59.1-1.60.1). Dionysius declares that Aeneas' first son was left at a stop along the travels to Italy and that Ascanius was born in Italy, but he does not directly address the Augustan connection to Ascanius (*Roman Antiquities* 1.47.6).

These two alternative versions of the *Aeneid* myth focus far more on political aspects and relationships than religious ones. Religion is definitely downplayed, if not ignored outright. Given the historical aspect of both versions, it is probably not surprising. Both authors attribute a Roman birth to Ascanius, instead of a purely Trojan one as Virgil does. They seem very

interested in keeping the Roman origins in Italy, instead of Troy. Additionally, in neither version do the gods interact with mortals or determine destiny in the way Virgil's gods do. Descriptions of gifts, if they are described, are not nearly as detailed as in the *Aeneid*. Some of this may have to do with length and the limits of historical writing, but it definitely illustrates important differences in focus. For example, Dionysius introduces an important element with the story of Aeneas as traitor. This idea was apparently influential and, if not common, at least known (Galinsky 1969:61). Virgil steadily ignores this concept, for obvious political reasons. He is trying to glorify the Roman order, not vilify it (at least not obviously). Instead, Virgil creates an image of *pius* Aeneas, a religious, devout, obedient caretaker of the gods who will bring religion to Italy (Galinsky 1969:35). It was far more important that Aeneas fulfill his duty to the gods than he pursue a glorious death in battle, though Aeneas is still presented as a warrior in the text (Scherer 1963:182). In Virgil's version of the myth, religion plays a pivotal role in the foundation of civilization and as a characteristic of successful political leadership. Aeneas's piety can easily be read as comparable to Augustus's, and the *Aeneid* was considered in this way after it was published (Galinsky 2007:51). Virgil's version of the story quickly became the official one, as the "embodiment of Rome and Augustus' Trojan past" (Erskine 2001:18).

Virgil's *Aeneid* may not be an historical, accurate work; in fact, it is probably horribly inaccurate. The Romans were forced to connect Aeneas, a survivor of a war that took place "in the late twelfth century BC with the founding of Rome in the eighth" (Scherer 1963:206). But historical accuracy hardly matters when discussing these mythical aspects of Roman culture. These stories of the founding of Roman religion are "more myth than history," but that does not mean that these stories are useless for establishing concepts and facets of religion in Ancient Rome (Beard, North and Price 1998:4). Instead, they are "true in a different way", illustrating

important cultural concepts and as such can be analyzed as a Roman cultural phenomenon (Beard, North and Price 1998:4). Neither does it matter that Virgil may have drawn elements of his stories from Greek sources, and this has been identified by other scholars. “It would be to miss the point of the complex cultural interactions that had characterized Roman culture from its earliest history to suggest that simply because the origin of a particular story can be traced to Greece, it could somehow not count as Roman” (Beard, North and Price 1998: 172). In the *Aeneid*, Virgil takes the Aeneas myth and reinterprets it through the Roman perspective, giving it particularly Roman characteristics and meaning. These stories may have been considered historical facts by the Romans, but they also represent a source of mythology for the Roman people. I believe these sources, Virgil, Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, constitute a type of mythical reality for the Roman people, as described by Maurice Leenhardt and Marshall Sahlins.

Mythical reality, a term first coined by Leenhardt in his work *Do Kamo*, refers to how the “meaning of behavior is revealed through mythic forms of life” (1979:2). He argues that “rituals can be understood in terms of myth” (Leenhardt 1979:2). Thus, if the story of Aeneas is a mythical reality for the Roman people, the rituals the Romans perform should be able to be understood in terms of mythology. Sahlins expands on this idea in his work *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*, arguing that for the Hawaiians, their mythology was their history: “Hawaiian history often repeats itself, since only the second time is it an event; the first time it is myth” (Sahlins 1981:9). The mythological stories were expressed in Hawaiian society as both history and social fact; despite the fact that these were just “stories,” they had practical consequences. This can be pushed even further; in fact, history can be in itself a type of mythical reality. It is immaterial whether the historical works put forth by Virgil, Livy, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus are accurate; all that matters is that they were believed to be so. If they were

believed to be accurate, it would affect the common everyday practice of Roman society. In this way, the works of Virgil, Livy and Dionysius do more than detail historical stories. They, in fact, reflect meaning and context through their myths and, thus, can represent Roman society. As such, these stories, whether factual or not, will still provide valid information and data for understanding gift relationships.

IV: Roman Religious Context

In the *Aeneid*, a large number of the gifts are presented in the religious sphere (see Appendix A, Chart 1). Thus, a survey of the basic tenets of Roman religion must be undertaken. Such information is extremely important in order to establish a social and cultural context for the *Aeneid* and the Aeneas myth. However, establishing religious context can be difficult, as identifying and defining a religion is a major point of contention among anthropologists. Religions vary throughout the globe, and there is no universally accepted definition for the concept of religion and religious phenomenon. Evans-Pritchard provides one definition of religion, describing it as the reciprocal relationships between persons and spirits (1956:vi). Roman religion has been discussed by many scholars in terms of reciprocal relationships and therefore, I find Evans-Pritchard's definition useful.

When discussing Roman religious ideas, it is important to realize that Roman religion was "based on traditions that went back earlier than the foundation of the city itself" (Beard, North and Price 1998:2). There was no central Roman religious formula or rite. Roman religion drew on a variety of sources, including Greek religious customs. Whatever the source, by the end of the sixth century BC, the Roman religious framework was set (Beard, North and Price 1998:3).

The essence of Roman religion was to maintain a favorable relationship, also known as the *pax deum*, with the gods (Orlin 2002:15-16). The Romans believed in many gods, "so numerous that they might be infinite in number" (Belayche 2007:278). Such a large number of gods allowed for the gods to "embrace the whole world" (Belayche 2007:278). The identity of the gods of the early Romans was determined by their function (Versnel 1981:16). There were

“gods of war, gods of home life, gods of cultivated soil and gods of the hunt,” just to name a few, and “each imposed his or her own rites” over various activities (Dupont 1989:75). Gods were active participants in the world, “expected to be influential and at any moment of life” (Belyache 2007:278). Thus, religious activities had to be performed before any major action or event in order to feel confident of the gods’ support; having no support would be disastrous (Belyache 2007:278-279). Because of this intimate relationship between god and activity, Roman religion was an essential part of day-to-day life and society; it was a “tissue of daily, monthly, and yearly rituals” that were crucial to action (Dupont 1989:216). Because success in any action, personal or political, depended so heavily on the gods’ support, religious events were not just matters of personal spiritual connection. Instead, they were a form of social expression and of extreme importance in the smooth running of the Roman Republic and, later, Empire.

Typical religious events included prayers, votive giving, and sacrifices. All three are closely connected, and together they create a pattern of reciprocity between gods and men (Van Straten 1981:65). Virgil stressed Aeneas’ piety over his other characteristics, as mentioned above, and prayers play a central role throughout the work. A prayer, also known as a *prex*, generally accompanied all sacrifices and offerings; it was the “most ubiquitous form of religious ritual in Rome” (Hahn 2007:235). According to Versnel, the prayer act itself was formally divided into “invocation (the calling by name, surname, epithets and descriptive predicates), the *pars epica* (why the supplicant is calling on this particular god for help, what his relationship with the deity is, and why he thinks he can count on his assistance), and the actual *preces* [sic] (the content of the wish)” (1981:2). Prayer was a complicated process that was usually followed strictly, although it has been noted that Roman prayers hesitate “concerning the identity of the gods”

(Versnel 1981:16). In this process, “at a certain moment, poems and prayers could be regarded as a sacrifice to the gods” (Versnel 1981:52).

The content of the prayers could vary dependent on the wish of the supplicant, but typically the Romans made distinctions between petitions, vows, oaths, and prayers of thanksgiving (Hahn 2007:239). Petitions included references to the reason that the deity should respond favorably, often to present or future offerings (Hahn 2007:240). A vow, or *votum*, was a petition that was expressed in a conditional statement. More specifically, “what characterizes a prayer as a vow is the inclusion of a promise to make a sacrifice in the future if the petition is favorably answered” (Hahn 2007:240-241). In other words, petitions simply asked, while vows offered up an if/then condition for the god. Vows were often uttered as a means of escape from all sorts of danger and were typically used in periods of crisis (Versnel 1981:9; Beard, North and Price 1998:32). Vows were also linked to votives, which will be discussed below. Oaths involved requesting that a divine power witness a statement or action and usually inflict a punishment on another party; this could often be used in ratifying treaties or declaring war (Hahn 2007:241). Another type of oath was the revenge prayer, which was common during the period of Roman imperialism (Versnel 1981:21). Finally, prayers of thanksgiving were often coupled with an offering, and were considered to be a “necessary response” for a divine act (Hahn 2007:241).

All four of these kinds of prayers can be found in the *Aeneid*, and together with votives and sacrifices, make up the pattern of reciprocity between gods and men. It is important to remember that prayers were performative, and that by saying that they were giving thanks, the Romans were actually performing the action of giving thanks (Hahn 2007:236). Words can be exchanged between social actors the same way as objects are exchanged (Weiner 1983:691-692). Thus, prayers, and the words spoken during them, can be interpreted as gifts to the gods, part of

the same reciprocal gift relationship as the physical objects given in votive offerings and sacrifices.

Votives and sacrifices were gifts presented to the gods. Generally speaking, the primary difference between votives and sacrifices was the element of consumption. An object is considered a sacrifice when it is intended for consumption (human or divine) while votive offerings are “basically durable” (Van Straten 1981:66). Votives were intimately connected with prayers or vows. A prayer was often followed by a votive offering. Votives were offered to redeem a vow previously made to the god or to expiate possible problems. Usually the votive gift was a showpiece, since it was intended to be used by the deity and not destroyed (Van Straten 1981: 75). However, the relationship between the god and the giver did not really depend on the physical item itself. The external form of the gift did not really matter; the manner in which it was presented did (Versnel 1981:58). Votives were usually used to complete a condition made previously in the vow; as such, votives were only one part of the continuing social relationship. Votives were often “attestations of gratitude,” but the act of giving was actually continuing the social relationship, not ending it (Versnel 1981:42). During the votive procession, the supplicant would often make a new prayer or vow, often because “he thought the god to be particularly well disposed to him” (Van Straten 1981:72). Thus, there is a continual social relationship between the gods and men, created by the “prayer/vow-gratification-votive offering-new prayer” system, which establishes social connections and creates a pattern for reciprocity.

Sacrifice was another method of offering to the god. There were three reasons why sacrifices should be made: in order to honor the gods, or to thank them, or to ask them for something good (Versnel 1981:46). Sacrifices are very similar to votives, but the item is destroyed or consumed with the god. It is difficult to describe a typical sacrifice because a

variety of practices existed in Rome. However, most sacrifices followed a four part structure that was similar to Greek sacrifice: preparation, sacrifice, the offering, and then the meal (“sacrifice, Roman” 2007:1; Beard, North and Price 1998:36-37). Preparation for sacrifice included ritual washing; the selection of a sacrificial animal, usually a cow, sheep, or pig; and the gathering of items for offering (Scheid 2007:264). Selection of the animal was an arduous process; the victim had to be checked to make sure it was suitable, and there were precise rules involving the sex, age, color, and type of victim that had to be followed (Beard, North and Price 1998:36-37). Other items offered at the same time as the primary sacrifice could include incense, foods such as grains, and libations (Scheid 2007:264). A procession then entered the site for the sacrifice, which was usually held in a public domain (Scheid 2007:264). At the altar, the sacrificer would pour wine and meal on the animal’s head, and “run a knife along its back,” consecrating the animal (Scheid 2007:265; Beard, North and Price 1998:36-37). The killing would then proceed; usually, the victim had to be killed by a single blow (Beard, North and Price 1998:36-37).

The final stages of the sacrifice, the offering and the feast, involved the division of the animal into portions for both the sacrificer and the god. Sacrifice, for Romans, was deeply connected to feasting. “The notion of the feast was inseparable from that of sacrifice,” and, because of both this connection and the social aspect of religion, feasts were frequent (Dupont 1989:47). On a feast day, “the cult of a particular god was celebrated” as prayers and sacrifices were made to “entice” a visit from the god (Dupont 1989:197). During the sacrificial feast, the rule was that “only a part of the sacrificial beast was to be burnt for the gods and that the rest of it was to be eaten by the author of the sacrifice”(Van Straten 1981:70). Gods usually received the vital organs, the liver, lungs, gall-bladder, peritoneum, and the heart, also known as the *exta* (“sacrifice, Roman” 2007:1). These organs were cooked and usually burned on the altar (Scheid

2007:266). This stage of the sacrifice would be accompanied by prayers to the god “which explicitly stated, who was making the offering, who was receiving it, and who would reap the reward for the ritual” (Scheid 2007:266). The sacrificer and others would then consume their portion of the offering (Scheid 2007:266). Separating the meat from the victim served two contrary purposes; it set boundaries for the differences between the gods and simultaneously provided a connection between the heavenly and earthly spheres. The people could not eat what was set aside for the gods; clear boundaries were set between what was the god’s and the man’s (Beard, North and Price 1998:36-37). However, the very act of feasting was an important avenue for communication between the gods and men. Prayers, messages, warnings, and messages of acceptance were all a part of the ritual (Beard, North and Price 1998:36-37). In fact, these messages delivered through the sacrifice were so important that they preceded battles as a method of determining favor. Sacrifices which were rejected by the gods were signs not to join in battle (Beard, North and Price 1998:44).

The Romans used a variety of methods in order to connect with and establish relationships with the gods, and I have described many of them here. In the *Aeneid*, many of the gift giving acts fall somewhere between the categories of prayer, votive gift, and sacrifice. I will describe examples from this work in detail below, but my primary goal is to explore the nature of these relationships between men and gods and how they relate to gift giving. The Roman relationship between gods and men has been discussed both by the Romans themselves and by many classicists studying them. Many Romans have wondered about the character and nature of their gods, but it was in the late republic, when Virgil was growing up and just beginning to write, that their “speculation was transformed into written, intellectual analysis.” It is generally assumed that “an educated contemporary of Virgil must have been as skeptical and rational about

Roman religion as the modern observer;” however, this opinion has been controversial now for many years and is still being debated (Feeney 1991:178-179).

Thus, a more useful focus might be to ask what was Virgil’s opinion of religion and how did his religious views influence his work. Much speculation has gone on dealing with Virgil’s religious and philosophical views. Levi argues that he was an Epicurean who did not believe in the gods in the first place (1998:22, 28). One cannot ignore this speculation, but one must be careful not to attach too much weight to it. Virgil absorbs ideas from a variety of sources, but his works cannot be illuminated simply through philosophical means (Braund 1997:214, 220-221). He was known for a “prerogative of eclecticism,” adapting what he said according to the demands of the poem (Feeney 1991:177). Additionally, Virgil does not focus much on “the accurate and minute points of details” of sacrifices or religious procedures (Feeney 1998:141-142). This does not mean that the *Aeneid* is useless in terms of religious gift analysis; instead, it simply means there is no easy answer, no “homogenous background of belief” that Virgil believed and transferred to his work. The best and most useful analysis of Virgil’s religious impact comes from Susanna Morton Braund, who argues that while the gods in Virgil’s works are intimately linked with morality, politics trumps “the labeling of philosophical ideas” (1997:210). Braund writes that “the intellectual context of the elite Romans” was “heavily influenced by strands of Hellenistic thought, but these strands were adapted to serve specifically Roman needs” (1997:207). Virgil thus presents a conglomeration of religious ideas through a distinctly Roman lens.

The nature of the relationship between gods and men has been a common subject for Roman classicists. Almost every text mentions the conditional nature of this relationship between the gods and men. The Romans seemed to negotiate with their gods, offering objects in

return for favor. Nothing was given for free, and the commercial nature of the transaction has been continually stressed (Versnel 1981:56). In fact, the Romans almost treated the gods as if they were “great, immortal men” (Versnel 1981:56). This conditional relationship “is regarded as characteristic of the Roman religious attitude in practically every textbook on the subject” (Versnel 1981:57). All of these religious actions have therefore been perceived simply as negotiations between man and the higher powers. However, these negotiations were always one-way streets; and no relationship with a god could ever be purely reciprocal. Gods do not have to respond, and they frequently didn’t. Offerings could be made, but sometimes the god did feel the need to respond or return the favor.

Were men therefore at the mercy of this one-sided relationship? Could the gods be punished for refusing to answer his or her supplicants? Classicists have argued that “a god who did not lend an ear had to beware: people easily decided that the god was not worth much or perhaps did not even exist” (Versnel 1981:41). By turning their backs on the gods, the worshippers retaliated and limited their influence (Versnel 1981:42). This ignorance of their worshipers could be, ironically, how gods die. Versnel writes that a “large number of Roman gods died owing to their loss of function, although this was usually determined socially” (1981:41). Were gods then at the mercy of social relationships with men? If not, how can we explain religious action between them? I believe anthropological theories of gift giving can help illuminate some issues present in these relationships.

V: Theories of Giving

Gift giving is a classical area of anthropological study. The way objects move among people and the effect these transactions have on social order has been discussed and deliberated by many anthropologists. The very term gift itself has been questioned and debated throughout the anthropological community, and it is almost impossible to talk about gifts without mentioning the concept of commodities. Generally, commodity and gift exchanges were considered opposite sides of the spectrum; gift exchanges were defined by “the exchange of inalienable objects between transactors who are related,” while commodity exchange was established through exchange of alienable objects between independent transactors” (Gregory 1982:71; Godelier 1999:165, Morris 1986:2). In many cases, money is this “alienable object” of commodity exchange. The goal in a gift economy was to try to maximize debt as social collateral, while commodity economies were interested in minimizing it (Gregory 1980:636). Clear divisions thus developed between gifts and commodities.

This strict dichotomy was later challenged with theories such as the social life of things, which argues that any object can change from a gift to a commodity based on social context and vice versa (Appadurai 1988:13; Godelier 1999:108; Gregory 1982). Either way, important distinctions are made between gifts and commodities depending on context. Within the *Aeneid*, almost every transaction is described in the text as a gift or a comparable religious term, such as votive, sacrifice or offering. Thus, for this paper, I have focused mostly on theories of gift giving instead of commodities. Romans at the time of Augustus did have a monetary system and coinage, but commodities are only mentioned once in Virgil’s poem. There is a reference to the *Iliad* where Achilles sells the “lifeless body of Hector for gold” (1.598). This reference is part of

an ekphrasis description, and the event does not actually occur within the real time presented in the *Aeneid*. This commercial transaction, which is viewed in a physical representation by a grieving Aeneas, is obviously held in a strong negative light, which might explain why the rest of the transactions in the work fall within the general gift category. Additionally, the *Aeneid* was intended to recapture the glorious history of ancient Rome, and it may ignore “modern” monetary exchange to do so.

It is easy to term exchange in the *Aeneid* as gift exchange. However, gifts by themselves are not easy to define. Marcel Mauss, author of the classic anthropological text *The Gift*, described gifts as being a total social phenomenon. When gifts are given, “all kinds of institutions are given expression at one and the same time,” including political, religious, social and moral ideas and concepts (Mauss 1950:3). Gifts represent a variety of different contexts and can be read in any or multiple of them (Mauss 1950:20). For example, even gift giving to gods can have multiple contexts. A gift between a man and a god can be a representation of the social connection between god and man, but it can also reflect gift relationships between men, through the idiom of transaction with the god (Gregory 1980:644). Gifts are thus metaphors for different relationships and take on a variety of meanings. Objects have the capacity to “materialize the invisible, to represent the unrepresentable” (Godelier 1999:109). However, it is important to place these objects within a context. Gifts must be fitting to the “character of the recipient” (Needham 1979:34). However, the character of the recipient does not necessarily refer to the personality of the recipient; instead the character is determined by the person’s social status (Needham 1979:34). We will see how social status affects gifts given in the *Aeneid*. Additionally, gifts can be identified with certain people and can even retain elements of the person; they form bonds between persons (Mauss 1950:30). As such, they are intimately

connected with the person and concepts of the self (Beidelman 1989:231). Therefore, to reject the gift is to reject not just the physical item, but also the giver (Godelier 1990; Mauss 1950; Weiner 1983).

Thus, it can be difficult to determine exactly what constitutes a political or religious gift. Mauss' theory of total social prestation allows for gifts to represent and symbolize far more than just a simple economic transaction. They can represent the meanings behind social, religious, and political actions. Gift giving does not exist in a vacuum. Because gifts reflect more than economic concerns, it is crucial to establish a general, holistic pattern of gift exchange as it represented in the *Aeneid*. To ignore the role of gifts between men and the gods in a society while trying to understand gifts given to men is "like attempting to understand a hierarchical society while ignoring the top status group" (Osbourne 2004:2). Though I am studying primarily spiritual gift exchange, I like, Osbourne, cannot ignore the opposite end of the spectrum. To do so would be to only see part of the pattern in the larger web of the Augustan Roman social reality.

But gifts do not simply exist as representative yet disconnected symbols in this pattern of social order. They also function to create social bonds and communal ties (Mauss 1950:70). Mauss describes the social function of gifts by listing three obligations of the giver and the recipient: to give, to receive, and to reciprocate (1950:13). The giver is responsible for giving the gift, while the recipient is expected to both accept and, later, reciprocate the gift. This is not just done for purely economic means. Through these obligations, the transactors create and maintain a social relationship. Giving a gift to someone creates a social tie through debt, one not easily ended. One has done something for someone else, which the person can choose to accept or not. The social relationship is continued through the recipient's acceptance of the gift, for "to refuse

to accept. . . is to reject the bond of alliance and commonality” (Mauss 1950:13). If the gift is accepted, the social bond is not ended. The debt between the two transactors is not inactive; it retains a bond to the original owner that forces the receiver to reciprocate (Mauss 1950:12; Orenstein 1980:69). Reciprocation is necessary. Although it may be the “true, voluntary ideal”, there is no such thing as a free gift with no debt or lasting bond (Bowditch 2001:36). Ultimately, a gift creates a social relationship between the giver and the receiver, tied together through the need to reciprocate.

By proper maintenance of all three obligations, the donor and the recipient will maintain a workable relationship made up of prestation and counterprestation. But how does a gift relationship begin? This question is not easily answered, for there is no “ordinary gift” (Gasche 1998:111). All givers are already in some kind of social relationship with the recipient before the first gift is given. This preexisting relationship determines the kind of gift given and other elements of the transaction. Every prestation is also a counterprestation (Gasche 1998:111). For example, in our own culture, a neighbor can give a gift basket to a new resident on a street because, in relation to the giver, the recipient is new. The recipient and giver occupy social statuses which dictate both the gifts and the social relationship already existing within a transaction. There is no beginning to the gift exchange, because the donor is already “in the game at the very start of the game” (Gasche 1998:111). Thus, the gift relationship is a continual exchange of prestation to counterprestation to counterprestation, etc (Gregory 1980:638).

Gift relationships, particularly in relation to reciprocation, are invariably affected by social status. When a “superior gives more than the inferior,” he can force a social bond and compel reciprocation, sometimes on a level on which the inferior cannot meet (Mauss 1950:74; Van Baal 1976:164). Reciprocity between the two participants is thus centrifugally

asymmetrical, with the giver at the center and receiving the debt from the recipient (Ornstein 1980:70). This bond, however, can be destructive. The “giver obtains power over the person who accepts this gift,” and ambiguities remain over what kind of power this is (Mauss 1995:30). Some studies of gift giving have examined gifts in this light and have found that gifts have destructive attributes and are used to destroy or humiliate the recipient (Beidelman 1989:249; Mauss 1950:75). Destruction of the recipient does not imply only financial ruin. Instead, the person’s self may be threatened. By giving gifts, the recipients can be placed under such a debt that they can never pay it off.

Gifts can fall into two categories: gifts given between men and gifts given between gods and men. For the purposes of this paper, these gifts will be termed mundane and spiritual respectively. There are important differences between spiritual and mundane gifts. Complete alienation of the object given is impossible in a gifts-to-men system; the giver, being identified with the gift, is never completely separated from it (Gregory 1980:641). Reciprocation is expected, if not certain. However, the term sacred implies that the nature of the human, the mundane quality of the gift, disappears (Godelier 1999:171; Walens 1981:60-61). The human connection must be removed from the gift. By giving a gift to a god, the giver surrenders the possession; by destroying the object or ending the object’s usefulness, the gift becomes alienable (Gregory 1980:645).

The concept of reciprocation also functions differently in terms of a gift to a god relationship. It has been argued that humans give gifts to gods in order to receive because “those gods who give and return gifts are there to give a considerable thing in place of a small one” (Mauss 1950:17). Humans want to receive benefits from the gods for their gifts. However, other arguments state that the gods are not bound by the three obligations outlined above.

Reciprocation from the gods is always necessarily ambiguous and unclear (Godelier 1999:186; Osbourne 2004:2; Van Baal 1976:172). The gods “are good enough to accept”, but they are not obliged to give, accept or reciprocate (Godelier 1999:185). Reciprocation is not necessary for gods because what they give cannot be countered or one-upped by men (Godelier 1999:185). Gods in the Roman world are identified with so many elements of the universe that they are actually behind all action in life; they are the point around which all action revolves. Men can do nothing without the support of the gods. Because men can achieve nothing in life without the support of the gods, men must continue to negotiate and develop social relationships with the gods. This makes the idea of a contract between men and the all-powerful gods extremely questionable. Men are too dependent on the gods for support, so they cannot really dictate their relationship with the gods, and this is certainly the case within the *Aeneid*.

Sacrifice is a special type of sacred gift exchange, and understanding it has spawned another branch of anthropological literature. Anthropologically, a sacrifice is defined as “an offering that is put in service of the god, but changes its nature”; the sacrifice is destroyed, loses part of itself, and is made sacred (Hubert and Mauss 1964:11-12; Morris 1986:9). Sacrifice is a rite that transforms the objects involved because “an object passes from the common into the religious domain; it is consecrated” (Hubert and Mauss 1964:9). Sacrifice is thus a transitional process that makes the mundane something appropriate for the spiritual. Sacrifice serves as an “intermediary between the sacrificer/object and the deity”; there is not direct contact between the god and the man (Hubert and Mauss 1964:11). However, there is still a relationship formed. Mauss’ view holds that sacrifice creates a relationship with a god by attempting to bind them to “a contract” (Hubert and Mauss 1964:66). The purpose of destruction by sacrifice is then “that it is an act of giving that is necessarily reciprocated” (Mauss 1950:16). Destruction is done in the

service of the gods in order to benefit the social framework (Gregory 1980: 626). Sacrifice “nourishes social forces” and creates social bonds and through those bonds, order (Hubert and Mauss 1964:102).

So why are spiritual gifts and sacrifice so prevalent in the *Aeneid*? Identification with a *pius* Augustus, Virgil’s patron, was obviously a contributing factor to the work. However, one cannot explain the prevalence of spiritual and mundane gifts solely through the political context. Gift giving plays too important role within the work, and these exchanges do not always relate to the Aeneas/Augustus character. I believe that the answer lies not only in the political context but also in the structural construct of order and chaos. Both the mundane and spiritual gifts of the *Aeneid* are used to reinforce order via continuing relationships and controlling chaos and violence. By examining the various examples of spiritual and mundane gifts within the work, one can discern a particular desire to maintain social order between people, the physical world and the heavens.

This concept of gifts reinforcing and recreating the social order is not a radical one. Once personal relationships have been established, “any exchanges that are desired could take place within a framework of mutual dependence” (Morris 1986:5). Kinlike relations could lead to alliance or marriage, both fundamentals of the social order (Beidelman 1989:242). Society was then reestablished through exchange through opposing groups; it is not “individuals but collectivities that impose obligations of exchange and contract upon each other” through transactions such as alliances (Mauss 1950:5, 82). However, while these gifts do form the social ties between people, they also simultaneously symbolize them. Gifts do not create society; society already exists before gifts are given, because as mentioned previously, gifts are not given in a vacuum. Instead, gift giving recreates the social order and relationship between members.

Gifts recreate and maintain social bonds through the existing social structure. Gifts can be used to bring people into the preexisting social order by symbolizing their predetermined role in gift giving patterns. We will see this occur several times in the *Aeneid*. Thus, the overall result is order: “the gift is an answer to the fundamental problem of the human condition, that of man’s uncertainty about himself as a part of the universe” (Van Baal 1976:167). This has particular relevance in relation to the uncertainty man feels in relation to the ambiguous nature of the gods. As will be seen in the *Aeneid*, gifts are given to gods particularly to prevent chaos and “buy peace” (Mauss 1950:17; Van Baal 1976:168).

Without gifts, the social order would break down. Sahlins argues that exchange is a method of alliance in opposition to war and chaos (1997:83-95). Reciprocity is a way of “checking the nature of violence” as well as “maintaining it within certain boundaries”; gifts can also be destructive forces. Mauss identified this very concept when discussing the concept of gift and gift-poison. For archaic Germany, libations and drinks were exchanged between allies as a gift of friendship and solidarity (Mauss 1997:30). However, it was very easy to poison a drink and kill off an ally (Mauss 1997:30). The drink exchange can wield destruction but also controls the manner of it. In this sense, social order is recreated through the medium of gift exchange (Bowditch 2001:77; Godelier 1999:150). Gifts can be wielded as a destructive force, but that force is still constrained by society (Godelier 1999:150). By giving gifts, one recreates order in opposition to the utter chaos and anarchy that exists in the absence of gift giving.

VI: Mundane Gift Giving and Social Relationships

The *Aeneid* is littered with examples of gift giving (see Appendix A, Chart 1). For easier discussion and analysis, I have divided the gifts in the *Aeneid* into two spheres: mundane and spiritual. I have defined mundane gift exchange as gifts given between human partners or communities. Spiritual gift exchange is defined as gifts given between a human and a spiritual partner. A large percentage of gift giving in the *Aeneid* falls into the spiritual category, due probably to the prevalent theme of *pius* Aeneas, which deals with “the acceptance and fulfillment of duty towards gods and men” (Scherer 1963:182). However, this does not mean that mundane giving relationships are unimportant; they operate within the same social pattern and reflect the same structural opposition of chaos and order.

Gifts in Multiple Contexts: Dido and Aeneas

Mundane gift giving is at the heart of many relationships and interactions within the *Aeneid*. One of the most famous relationships within the *Aeneid* is the love story between Aeneas and Dido, Queen of Carthage. As the Queen of Carthage, Dido gives aid and shelter to Aeneas as he journeys to Italy. She falls in love with him and wishes him to stay with her in Carthage. Aeneas is tempted to live with Dido, but is forced by the gods to remember his duty to his people. He leaves Dido in order to found the city of Lavinium in Italy, which will, after his death, eventually come under the sway of Rome.

The tragic relationship between the characters of Dido and Aeneas has had a great impact on Western culture within the literary sphere. Dramatists and scholars have read the relationship as a metaphor for the importance of duty over passion, and the foolishness of love. However, it is

also possible to read this relationship anthropologically, through the study of gift giving.

Through this reading, one can see how the gifts given create both order and alliances between the couple, or alternatively, once the gifts are rejected, misused, or destroyed, how they manifest and create violence and destruction.

Gifts are given between both Dido and Aeneas throughout the *Aeneid*. Soon after meeting Aeneas, Dido offers up “sacrifices in his honor” (*Aeneid* 1.774). She then later sends to his men “. . . twenty bulls, a hundred boars with great bristling backs, and as many fat lambs with their dams, the day’s joyful gifts” (*Aeneid* 1.775-778). Dido’s gifts to Aeneas and the Trojans—both spiritual and mundane—could be considered the first prestation. However, this prestation was not made in a vacuum; Dido and Aeneas already exist in a previously established social context, and thus the gifts she gives to him and his people reflect that context. Dido has briefly met him, and she was aware of his princely status even before meeting him (*Aeneid* 1.752-753; 1.690-709). She also has great respect for the Trojans and pities their downfall (*Aeneid* 1.690-709). The nature of Dido’s gifts to the Trojans reflects Dido’s interest in the Trojan people, not just Aeneas. Dido sends Aeneas’ *men* food and livestock. Dido is not giving gifts in this instance to the person of Aeneas. Her gifts are given to the men, the survivors of Troy, who are essentially all that remain of the Trojan race. Dido is acknowledging her support of the Trojan people, not just one man.

Because Dido is giving these gifts in context of a preexisting relationship, it is difficult to determine what comes first: the giving of a gift or the social relationship the gift reflects. In fact, trying to make that determination is practically useless, resulting in a paradox similar to the classic chicken or egg scenario. Gift giving and social relationships simultaneously reflect each other, and thus, there is really no original prestation.

Aeneas then gives Dido a counterprestition of priceless Trojan artifacts: Helen's mantle "stiff with gold-stitched figures", a veil "fringed with saffron acanthus," a scepter of Priam's eldest daughter, Ilione, a pearl necklace, and a coronet (*Aeneid* 1.790-800). These gifts are associated with Troy itself; they are salvaged from the fall. These Trojan gifts are symbols of what remains of the Trojan community, and they are presented to a queen as a ruler, not Dido as an individual. Aeneas is not only returning the favor of aid from Dido, but he is also simultaneously asking for help from the Carthaginian people through these symbols of Trojan identity. Next, Virgil describes how, with the aid of Cupid, disguised as Aeneas' son Ascanius, Dido burns with desire as "she gazed at the boy and was equally moved by the sight of the gifts" (*Aeneid* 1.873-874). After accepting these gifts, sharing food and hearing his tales, Dido invites the Trojans to stay with her. The gifts have worked. The social status has been recreated between the two races: Trojan and Carthaginian. This exchange of gifts constitutes a treaty, symbolizing friendship.

Dido and Aeneas's previous prestations constitute bonds between the races, but gifts can function on multiple social levels. Dido and Aeneas continue these interactions on a personal and political level through the exchange of swords. Dido, following the cyclic method of (counter)prestition-counterprestition-counterprestition, begs for an exchange of swords and gives other gifts to Aeneas. Aeneas receives a sword "enstarred with yellow jasper" and a "mantle blazing with Tyrian purple, a splendid gift from Dido, who had stitched the fabric with threads of gold" (*Aeneid* 4.295-298). In exchange, Dido receives "Aeneas' warrior sword" (Basto 1984:333). This exchange is far more complicated than the previous one described because it can be read in multiple contexts. For Dido, this exchange is highly personalized; a social bond is created between two people, not two peoples. Dido herself has made her gift,

which fits Aeneas' personal, physical form. These gifts are symbols of his role in a relationship with Dido; note the Tyrian purple and gold of the mantle, colors associated with royalty.

However, Aeneas gives Dido his warrior sword, which a great symbol of both his personal history and his life as a Trojan. The warrior sword says little about Dido personally; this sword is not a gift with feminine connotations. The sword is an appropriate gift to a ruler, not a lover or a wife. While his sword does represent Aeneas's person, the giving of it also reflects Dido's role as queen. Aeneas is not giving a gift to Dido solely in a personal context; instead, he has focused on her political role in society. The gifts have created a social relationship which orders the relations of Dido and Aeneas; however, that relationship is asymmetrical. Dido is connecting with Aeneas on a personal level, while Aeneas is giving at least partly in terms of a primarily political/social relationship. A difference, manifested through gift exchange, exists between how Aeneas understands their relationship and how Dido understands it. This difference reflects and foreshadows the problems between Dido and Aeneas which will eventually contribute to the relationship's tragic breakdown.

That breakdown is also evidenced through gift giving; the asymmetrical social relationship is broken by the use and destruction of the exchanged gifts. Dido and Aeneas never return the gifts, so the bond is not directly refuted. However, Aeneas, after receiving warnings from Mercury, uses the jasper studded sword, a gift from Dido, to free the ships cables as he flees Carthage for his future (*Aeneid* 4.579-580). By using the gift that forged his personal relationship to leave Dido, Aeneas outwardly "symbolizes the severance of their relationship" (Basto 1984:333). Aeneas turns the gift on itself, using its power to create order to dismantle it; the gift is manifesting the very separation it was given to prevent. Dido's gift from Aeneas performs the same action. When she uses Aeneas' sword to commit suicide on a funeral pyre,

she is ending her social relationship with Aeneas through the means of the very gift that symbolized and created it (*Aeneid* 4.647, 664). Destruction is actually created by means of the gift. With Dido, the ruler and authority of the Carthaginians dead, the societal relationship between the peoples is gone also. The gifts ending this story reveal the dangerous power of gift giving, and how easily the power to create and order can be used to create chaos and destruction.

Simultaneous Creation and Destruction

Gifts in the Dido/Aeneas story function both to create order and chaos as the relationship between the couple progress. This opposing concepts can be seen working simultaneously through other gift giving examples. Gifts are also given by Helenus, another Trojan survivor, to Aeneas as he sails on the way to Italy. Helenus, captured as a slave in Troy, was a prophet, a “son of Priam,” and a friend of Aeneas (*Aeneid* 3.399). Once again, Aeneas and Helenus have a preexisting bond which determines the nature of the gifts given before they are even transacted; the gifts given reflect Troy and the Trojan people, which is Helenus and Aeneas’ primary connection. After receiving word from Apollo and informing Aeneas of his duty to the gods, Helenus then presents Aeneas with “gifts of heavy gold and sawn ivory, massive silver and cauldrons from Dodona, a coat of golden mail, and a superb helmet crested with plumes”. . . as well as “gifts for [his] father, horses, and pilots, extra oarsman, and gear for [his] crews” (*Aeneid* 3.543-551).

These gifts represent the bond between Helenus and the Trojan people and function to transfer the burden of Trojan political identity onto Aeneas; the same occurs in the spiritual arena when Aeneas accepts the *Penates* from the ghost of Hector (*Aeneid* 2.347-350). By giving Aeneas supplies and troops, Helenus adds to his cause and strengthens the Trojan state. He uses

the gifts to pass on and maintain Trojan identity. Andromache echoes this same idea when she gives gifts of cloth, to Ascanius, Aeneas' son: "Take these last gifts of your people, you, the sole surviving image of my Astyanax!" (*Aeneid* 3.570-571). Andromache is identifying the Trojan people with the gifts and is placing Troy's fate into the hands of another. By supporting this new Trojan identity, Helenus and Andromache are aligning and ordering their social bonds, throwing off those to Troy while simultaneously attaching them to Aeneas. These gifts simultaneously recreate and destroy social bonds. Gifts are used to create order instead of chaos, but they also destroy preexisting social ties with the Trojan identity. They are recreating order in Aeneas while also destroying the old Trojan order. As such, these gifts represent the productive power of *celeritas* (chaos) to create *gravitas* (order). In this instance, the gifts control the chaos and channel it. It should be noted that Aeneas and Ascanius give nothing directly in return for these gifts mentioned above. His reciprocity will not take a physical form. Instead, his actions of founding the future of the world and continuing the Trojan race, despite the delay, will ultimately return the favor.

These bonds of friendship as evidenced through gifts do not just pass between contemporaries, such as Aeneas and Helenus. In Book 8, in a very brief mention, Evander, ruler of the Arcadians, greets Aeneas by referencing his previous relationship between Aeneas' father, Anchises, who is now dead. Evander describes the gifts that Anchises gave him:

"When he left he gave me a beautiful quiver,
 With Lycian arrows, a cloak woven with gold,
 And a pair of golden bits that my Pallas now has.
 So the hand you seek is now joined with yours. . . (*Aeneid* 8.194-197).

These bonds of friendship, previously created and represented through the fathers, are now passed on to father and son, and then between the sons. Evander has no problem siding and aligning with Aeneas because of the previous social relationship, represented through the unique and wonderful nature of the gift giving. Evander then supports Aeneas materially, with two hundred cavalry and also through the support of his son, Pallas (*Aeneid* 8.589-591). To reciprocate, Aeneas is to “do [his] duty” and lead (*Aeneid* 8.584). Additionally, Aeneas is asked to watch over Pallas (*Aeneid* 8.585). Through the reciprocation of the gift of support, Evander recreates the social relation between Anchises and himself as a social relation between his son and his ally, one that is integral to the solution of the poem. However, the social order (*gravitas*) cannot survive alone without the power of the chaotic war. It is Pallas’ death in battle (*celeritas*), caused by Turnus, which brings about Aeneas’ final actions and closes out the work, creating the final movement of order over chaos. Thus, these structural oppositions are crucial to the maintenance of social order, which is created through gift giving.

Gifts in War

Most of these scenarios have resulted in ordering the sociopolitical bonds between peoples in the early part of the work. The first six books of the *Aeneid* are considered comparable to Homer’s *Odyssey*, and the last six to the *Iliad*. In this last section, gift giving supports and destroys social order almost blatantly through the use of gifts as means of treaty. When Aeneas first arrives on the shore of Italy, the land is ruled by Latinus, king of the Latins (*Aeneid* 7.183). Aeneas sends his men “with olive branches to offer gifts and beg peace for the Trojans” (*Aeneid* 7.186-187). Again, the gifts given are predetermined by social context before Aeneas even meets

the Latinus. The Trojans are outsiders, invaders to the native people. They occupy a varying social status from the Latins; they must take to immediate action to sue for peace.

When Aeneas sends gifts to Latinus, it is not as Aeneas the person. As seen previously with Dido, Aeneas is negotiating through gifts as a representative of the Trojan people. He offers “these tokens of our former fortune, rescued from Troy as it burned”: gold bowls, scepter, sacred tiara and royal robes.” Though these gifts do not move the king as they did Dido, their identity with the Trojan people does matter to Latinus (*Aeneid* 7.303). He does not spurn their gifts, and sends back signs of his favor: three hundred horses for the Trojan men and a chariot led by fire-breathing mystical horses for Aeneas, the strange foreigner (*Aeneid* 7.315, 331-346). While the exchange of these gifts forges the beginning of a treaty, it also subtly reinforces cultural difference in a different context. It is the foreign nature of Aeneas and the Trojans being represented simultaneously with the social bonds typical of previous gift exchanges. It is important to Latinus to emphasize the “Otherness” of Aeneas because of the prophecy concerning his daughter. He has been told that his daughter must marry a foreigner, so it is Aeneas’s status as the Trojan Other that interests him, and he reinforces it with his choice of the gift of fire-breathing horses (*Aeneid* 7.303-306). By maintaining Aeneas’s status as an Other, Latinus can claim to be fulfilling the prophecy and ultimately bring Aeneas into the fold of the Latins. Gifts are thus operating on multiple social levels during this exchange.

It is gifts that begin the treaty with the Latins, but it is under the banner of giving the ultimate gift, a woman in marriage, that the treaty breaks down. Lavinia, Latinus’ daughter, was originally engaged to marry Turnus, a Rutulian prince whose was a native of Italy, but was still technically an Other to the Latins (*Aeneid* 7.500). However, Latinus decides to give her to Aeneas to fulfill the oracle’s prophecy (*Aeneid* 7.305-311). Turnus, with the aid of divine

influence, then goes on the rampage and starts, in conjunction with more divine handiwork, war with the Trojans (*Aeneid* 7.538-650). The gift of Lavinia, who has almost no role in the text other than as an object of value, is supposed to create peace and order. Instead, the giving of her actually manifests the violence it was intended to stop. The gift has functioned to disrupt order and create chaos. Thus, chaos and destruction stems from the giving of Lavinia.

The chaotic, negative element of gift giving is heavily prevalent throughout other mundane gifts at this time. As war with Aeneas rages on, Latinus reaches out to other peoples through gifts of gold, and they refuse him (*Aeneid* 11.269). Diomedes even tells him: “The gifts that you bring me from your country, give them to Aeneas instead” (*Aeneid* 11.336-337). This scenario is a classic representation of Mauss’ second obligation: by not receiving the gifts, Diomedes is refusing to support Latinus, and by extension the Latins. The social order is not established, and the gifts, like the gift of Lavinia above, actually break down the existing social ties and further add to the chaotic nature of war.

There are many more examples of mundane gift giving in the text; I have merely chosen some of the most significant ones. As illustrated above, gifts in the *Aeneid* both control and manifest violence and destruction. While attempting to control and recreate the social order, they can also disrupt it. The gift giving represents a diametric opposition between chaos and order. This opposition can be similarly seen when examining when gift giving relationships with the gods.

VII: Spiritual Gift Giving and Social Relationships

We have seen how mundane gifts both organize society and also disrupt it in the *Aeneid*'s text. However, mundane exchange is only one part of the pattern of reciprocity; we must also examine spiritual exchange. *Pius* Aeneas is an important thematic element throughout the *Aeneid*, and thus there are a variety of spiritual gift examples from which to choose, almost all of which fall into the various categories of sacrifice, votive, and prayer (See Appendix A, Chart 2). A lasting relationship with the god was established through the process of prayer, votive/sacrifice, and another prayer or prayer of thanksgiving. As we examine this pattern of reciprocity, we can see that the spiritual gifts in the *Aeneid* function to combat chaos and destruction, often personified by the gods, with the ordered nature of social relationships. It is important to remember, that, as many classicists have previously analyzed, the Romans treated their relationships with the gods as at least a kind of human relationship. By considering their gods as human counterpoints, though extremely powerful, extremely changeable beings, the Romans were capable of conducting spiritual gift giving in the same way as their mundane gifts.

However, a spiritual gift giving relationship is not as contractual as in a mundane exchange; instead, the transaction is more conditional. In mundane exchange, it is the violation of the three obligations of the gift that can usually manifest chaos and disrupt social order. For example, Diomedes rejects Latinus' gifts and thus the social relationship with the giver. It is the rejection of the gift which disrupts the social order, causing chaos. However, in spiritual gift giving, the gift can be accepted by the god, and yet no benefit can occur. In book ten, Pallas faces Turnus in man to man combat, and prays for success from Hercules, who is worshipped as a god by Pallas's father Evander (*Aeneid* 10.558-562). He petitions that:

“Hercules, by the welcome you received
 In my father’s house, come to me now
 And help me in my need. Let Turnus see me
 Strip the bloody armor from his dying limbs,
 Victorious over him as his eyes close in death. (*Aeneid* 10.558-562)

However, Pallas fails and dies at Turnus’ hand. Pallas was not violating his social relationship with the gods when he prayed for victory, invoking his previous actions as evidence of his piety. Pallas was asking for reciprocation from a previous offering: his devotion. Hercules obviously recognizes and accepts the devotion of Pallas. Hercules wants to help him, but instead he can only shed “useless tears” (*Aeneid* 10.564). Pallas is still killed.

The gods do not have to reciprocate properly according to any of the obligations of gift giving because the social relationship between gods and men is so asymmetrical that the gods are not required to reciprocate. The gods are the means of success, action, and life in the universe; determining success in action is the particular realm of the gods, and it cannot be matched by mortals. The life the gods give to mortals is a gift so large that humans cannot reciprocate enough to compel a god to respond. While mortals can try to negotiate for success, they can never be sure when the gods will be listening, and they have no way of forcing them to respond. The condition of the social relationship depends on the god, not the human, and the influence of human agency in the spiritual gift giving relationship is limited. Sometimes the gods reciprocate; other times they do not.

Gifts to gods are always unpredictable. However, the exchange of gifts between men and gods does still follow the same structural opposition of chaos and order.

Bearing Order and Chaos: The Trojan Horse

The most famous prestation in the *Aeneid* is the Trojan Horse. It is important to examine this gift in its proper place within the social/political/religious context of the story and its role within reciprocal relationships between gods and men. After ten long years of war, the Greeks leave the shores of Troy for good—it seems. However, they hide behind the island of Telos and leave “a horse the size of a mountain”, with its ribs made out of “beams of fir” stuffed full of men (*Aeneid* 2.20-21). They also leave behind Sinon, who tells the ostensible, official story behind this gift. According to Sinon, the Greek’s success in battle depended on a strong, positive relationship with Pallas Athena, also called Minerva (*Aeneid* 2.193-194). However, “wicked Diomedes and Ulysses” entered her temple, murdered the guards, and stole the Palladium, a symbol of the goddess (2.195-198). This violated the Greeks social contract with the goddess, and she turned her back on them, evidenced by strange actions taken by the Palladium itself (*Aeneid* 2.202-209). Oracles were consulted, and to expiate the “godhead wronged,” the horse was created as a votive offering to the goddess (*Aeneid* 2.220-221).

Further explanation revealed that the large size of the horse was to prevent the Trojans from drawing down the benefits of the offering on their own city:

“for if [they] lay violent hands
upon this offering to Minerva,
Destruction will fall. . .upon Priam’s realm.
But if your hands bring it into the city,
Asia will wage war upon Pelops’ walls,
And this fate awaits our children’s children. (*Aeneid* 2.226-232)

This was Sinon's explanation as presented to the Greeks, and this is the explanation the Trojans believed—to their detriment. The story was at least believed by enough of the Trojans to allow the Horse to be brought into the city. By believing his tale, the Trojans' behavior and actions were framed as if Sinon's story were true. It does not matter that the story was false; the belief made it true in its consequences. As such, it is important to examine how this explanation, made true since it was believed by the Trojans, functions within the terms of gift giving theory. What does this story say about gift giving and its relationship between the structural opposition of chaos and order?

I classify the Trojan Horse as a votive offering. Other scholars have noted this aspect as well. Smith discusses the Horse's role as a *votum* (1999:504). It is offered to the god as a penance for an action taken against a previous relationship; it is attempting to reestablish the orderly social relationship that the Greeks previously had with the goddess. The Trojans believed this to be the case and accepted the horse as this type of gift. So what was the social relationship reflected and constructed through the horse?

Sinon presents the horse as a *religio*, or religious object, so the gift is obviously operating in a religious sphere between a god and human; the Horse is not a gift given to the Trojans (Austin 1959:20). It is possible that Virgil specifically modified existing myths to emphasize this point (Harrison 1990:52). As such, it is important to read the Horse as a prestation. Like other gifts, it is given in a specific social context. The Greeks offer it to Minerva as penance for an offense. By giving the gift, they want to relieve themselves from Minerva's wrath. However, while expiating their previous transgression, the Greeks also simultaneously ask for victory over the Trojans. They do not want to simply be free of Minerva's anger; they also want to win the war. Thus, the giving of the Trojan Horse both recreates the previously damaged social

relationship with the god and also asks for benefits from the reconstituted relationship. The Trojan Horse thus represents this complicated social dynamic between the Greeks and Minerva, one that the Trojans believed existed and wished to have. The Trojans took the Horse into their city in order to not offend Minerva and also to reap the benefits bestowed by the giver of the votive offering. The Trojans wanted the same social relationship the Greeks had with Minerva; they wanted victory in war.

However, this social relationship is still representative of the chaos/order dichotomy prevalent throughout the *Aeneid*. Ostensibly, the Greeks offered the gift in the first place to end and try to control chaotic elements. The Greeks were at the mercy of a goddess' wrath, which was unpredictable and violent. For the Greeks, and by extension the Trojans, Minerva was the chaos that had to be negotiated with or, at least, appeased. The gift of the Horse was trying to recreate order out of this chaotic relationship. Additionally, the benefits hoped to be received by the Greeks were also associated with order: the benefits returned by the goddess gave the giver victory in war. The Trojan Horse is thus a vehicle that recreates social order, controlling chaos and violence.

As a vehicle for order, damaging and destroying the gift to the goddess results in a disruption of social order and causes destruction for the Trojans; Laocoon and his sons are killed by Minerva for damaging the Horse with a spear (*Aeneid* 2.239-269). Laocoon is killed through forces wielded by the gods; these forces are external, but they are still related to the Horse. Disrupting or threatening the order created by the horse results in death and destruction, as the gods themselves reinforce the Horse's role as a vehicle for order by causing chaos. The spiritual social relationship represented by the Horse functions to create order; when this function is disrupted, the result is the chaos caused by the gods.

This chaos wielded by the gods is related to the overall destruction of Troy, the ultimate example of chaos in the *Aeneid*. Despite taking the Horse into the city, the Trojans did not receive the benefits of victory believed to exist in a social relationship with Minerva. Instead, the gift to Minerva has a belly full of soldiers, who cause chaos for the Trojans through the sack of the city. This “trick,” using a sacred spiritual gift as an object of deception goes unpunished by the gods. In fact, the chaos the “trick” causes the Trojans is supported and allowed by the gods. The gods themselves are the sources of chaos and, as such, play a crucial role in the destruction of the city of Troy itself. Venus shows them to Aeneas to convince him that continuing to fight is pointless: “No it is the gods, the remorseless gods, who have ruined Troy, And burnt the topless towers of Ilium” (*Aeneid* 2.707-709). The violence unleashed in Troy is intimately connected with the god’s wrath, and no sacrifices or prayers can help the Trojans, though many are attempted at various altars. The gods have decided against the Trojans, and there is no way for them to negotiate, least of all through the gift of the Trojan Horse. That is why the Trojan Horse is a gift to be feared; though it is a religious offering, the gods do not have to respond and the result is chaos.

The gift of the Trojan Horse ultimately causes the destruction of Troy. However, this destruction is a *celeritas* that will lead to an eventual *gravitas*. Aeneas and a certain number of Trojan’s survive the chaos, and head forth to establish new *gravitas* and order. The period of destruction, though horrific, is brief. The social relationship represented by the gift of the Horse functions to both destroy the old order and create a new one.

Organizing Chaos: Votives to Mars

The Trojan Horse is not the only votive offering that operates using the oppositions of chaos and order. Aeneas makes various offerings throughout the work, but none is as integrated with chaos and order as a votive offering made to the god Mars in Book 11. Aeneas has previously prayed to Mars for victory in battle. After the ending of one of the battle sequences in book 10, Aeneas “fulfills his vows at the day’s first light,” and acknowledges his temporary victory as a sign of the preexisting relationship between himself and Mars, god of war (*Aeneid* 11.4). The offering to victory, or order in battle, is interestingly constructed:

“He erected the trunk of a mighty oak
 High on a mound and clothed the wood
 In the gleaming arms stripped from Mezentius. . .
 He nailed up the crests dewy with blood,
 And the breastplate pierced a dozen times.
 On its left side he bound the shield of bronze
 And hung from its neck the ivory sword (*Aeneid* 11.5-12).

Aeneas is organizing battle memorabilia into a votive gift. This gift to the god is a physical representation of how war and chaos is organized and balanced. Note how the items are nailed, and are hung and placed in specific locations. Order is being given to these physical items, and their violent capabilities are controlled through a social relationship with the god. Additionally, it is a votive offering for victory and peace, but is given to the god of chaos. However, the gift is made of the instruments of war. Elements of destruction are creating order. The balance between

order and chaos remains. *Celeritas* is, once again, creating *gravitas* through the medium of the gift.

Vows and Order

Not all gifts to the gods are physical items. At certain times, vows can be given to the gods promising a later gift for help now. They are essentially a credit card, an ask now, pay later transaction. However, even these vows are evidence of the chaos/order dichotomy. Cloanthus, a Trojan ship captain, prays for success in a boat during Anchises' funeral games. He offers the gods of the sea a sacrifice consisting of "a shining bull to discharge my vows, [the] cast[ing of] entrails in the waves, and pour[ing] forth wine" (*Aeneid* 5.265-269). He wins the race and receives the prize he wanted. Cloanthus, at the moment of his vow, was at the mercy of the chaos of the sea, neck in neck with Mnestheus for the prize. He calls on a social relationship with Neptune to create order—in this case a finishing order.

Cloanthus's prayer was for a minor cause. Other major vows take place within the later books. Ascanius, Aeneas's son, who is even more crucial to the future of Rome than Aeneas is, asks for help from Jupiter during his first arrow shot in battle. He offers yearly gifts to his temple and "will set before [his] altar an ox with a gilded brow, white as the moon" (*Aeneid* 9.738-741). Jupiter lets his arrow fly true and kill a prominent kinsmen of Turnus, Numanus Remulus (*Aeneid* 9.744-745). Ascanius is praying for order in battle. He is creating it through his actions by taking out a leader, but he needs the support of the gods. Order is a spiritual matter as much as a human one, and when controlling chaos, humans only have so much agency. The gods must do the rest.

Sacrifice and Chaos:

The sacrifices and offerings declared in these vows are not fulfilled in the text but are intended to be soon after the founding of the city. However, some sacrifices do take place during the action in the *Aeneid*. The most elaborately described sacrifice is one that is actually not completed, and highly politicized as well. In book 12, intending to settle the war with a man to man combat between Turnus and Aeneas, the Latins and their allies sacrifice to consecrate a treaty with the Trojans and their allies. The sacrifice and correlating vows occupy over 60 lines. The sacrifice proceeds through three of the four steps outlined above: preparation; sacrifice; offering; and meal. The animal sacrifice is prepared and consecrated with salted meal, wine libations, and cutting the forelocks (*Aeneid* 12.207-209). The sacrifice commences after both Aeneas and Latinus make vows to practically all the gods, laying out the terms for the combat (*Aeneid* 12.211-215, 12.236-241). If Aeneas loses, the Trojans will withdraw, or if Turnus loses, both nations will combine for “everlasting peace under equal laws” (*Aeneid* 12.228). Latinus agrees to abide by this and not to break the peace (*Aeneid* 12.243-245). The animals are then killed, and entrails piled on the altar (*Aeneid* 12.255-258). However, before the Trojans and Latins feast, the gods step in.

The previous sacrificial ceremony has been orderly; it proceeds in an orderly fashion, following proper procedure. Vows are made in an appropriate manner. The vows of both parties reinforce peace and order: note Aeneas’ statement about equal laws and everlasting peace. Additionally, the killing of the animals is controlled. The destruction of the offering is crucial to enacting the creation of order, even though it stems from chaos. The sacrifice must be alienated from the mundane sphere in order to “nourish” the forces of the gods (Hubert and Mauss 1964:102). The actions taken by the giver confirm order over chaos and violence.

All the action taken by the humans in this negotiation point to order. However, Juturna, Turnus' sister, a nymph, sparks discontent and leads the Latins and their allies into battle. Additionally, she provides an omen of swans mobbing an eagle attempting to eat a swan— a representation of chaos —to spur them into battle (*Aeneid* 12.296-307). The gods in this transaction are refusing the sacrifice and causing chaos. If the whole point of the sacrifice is to create peace, then the humans have obviously failed. The *celeritas* of war is necessary to bring the *Aeneid* to a close. The end cannot be achieved through solely peaceful means; the gods do not allow it.

Spiritual gift giving in the *Aeneid* can both simultaneously establish and disrupt social relationships with the gods, similar to the ways social relationships between humans are constituted and broken through mundane gift giving. Gift giving reinforces and symbolizes a structural order/chaos dichotomy. However, a primary difference occurs as human agency is further removed from playing a prominent role in the relationship; there is “deadly weakness” in man's ability to negotiate with the gods, often literally (Feeney 1991:149). The Roman gods are always in control of reciprocation in their relationships with mortals; they hold the purse strings. The classicists are right that the gods must be negotiated with for success. However, humans are not just negotiating with normal men. They are instead bargaining with the forces which move their society—chaos and order—and they do not always succeed. Gift giving to the gods involved an element of uncertainty and danger; one never knew what one would receive because the Roman gods were capable of wielding and embodying both destruction and order. Thus, spiritual gifts, like the Horse, were to be feared.

Fearing gift giving stems from the structural opposition of chaos and order that is central to the plot of the *Aeneid*. But why does order and chaos play such a central role in the text? To

answer this question, we must examine the central role the myth of Aeneas played in constructing the political ideology of Augustan Rome.

VIII: The *Aeneid* in Political Context

As I have shown above, gift giving in the *Aeneid* symbolizes and recreates a structural opposition between chaos and order. However, examining how this opposition functions within the *Aeneid* is only part of the story. Structural oppositions are part of a larger pattern of culture, and the chaos/order opposition is echoed in other areas of Augustan culture, including the social/political/religious context. The *Aeneid* was not written in a vacuum; when Virgil was writing the poem, he had to take into account the political and social context of the time. Though he was a retiring person who refused to spend much time out in public, Virgil was well aware of the political and social climate; Augustus, working indirectly through Maecenas, was Virgil's primary patron. Though Virgil did not take part in any of the wars or hold an office in Roman society, unlike his friend Horace, he was still connected to the political world at this time, and Virgil wrote the *Aeneid* in this context (Levi 1998:24). Thus, the poem reflects what was going on politically at the time of the Augustan regime.

Augustus was faced with the difficult task of establishing a period of *gravitas* out of the *celeritas* of civil war which had plagued the Roman Republic for many years before his rule. He had recently taken over the rule of the Roman Republic as a *princeps*, or first man, following a long period of civil wars, and he was trying to consolidate his power and solidify a new government (Purcell 1998:2). Therefore, Augustan propaganda was very interested in the opposition between chaos and order; they were literally trying to recreate it out of the chaos of war. Augustan ideology portrayed his leadership as an orderly, predestined, divinely ordained phenomenon through the concept of piety. Piety, also known as *pietas*, implies a functioning social relationship with the gods; one is obedient and dutiful in respecting and honoring the gods.

If one was *pius*, one would be successful. The gods would give order to the world and success to the giver.

If success was associated with piety, then destruction and failure was associated with impiety. The gods turned their back or damaged their social relationship with the humans. Augustan propaganda emphasized this connection between piety and success, as well as its logical opposite. Augustan supporters argued that the Roman Republic, which had fallen into chaos, failed because it was ruled impiously. The senators ignored signs from the gods and did not have divine support; this is an important point brought up several times in the works of other historians, such as Livy (Luce 1998:xv-xvi). By emphasizing impiety as a cause for destruction, Augustan propaganda also emphasized both the Republic and its civil wars that preceded him as being not divinely supported; at this point, Augustus steps in with as a divinely sanctioned *princeps* (Beard, North and Price 1998:120-124).

Because piety becomes associated with political success, religion and politics are inextricably mixed in Augustan Rome. One of the most crucial artistic works of the time, the *Ara Pacis*, or Altar of Peace, functions on both a political and religious level. This altar was constructed between 13 BC and 9 BC, several years after the *Aeneid*'s publication (Galinsky 1969:10). The altar features several elements of which emphasize Augustus' religious authority, including a procession of important ancestors, but Aeneas himself, performing a sacrifice to the gods, is featured on a relief (see Appendix B, Figure 1). Aeneas is represented as a *pius* figure; he is performing a sacrifice following the proper, appropriate procedure (Galinsky 1969:10). As we have seen in examples from the *Aeneid*, the spiritual exchange associated with sacrifice involves an attempt to recreate order and establish a successful social relationship with the gods. By sacrificing to the gods, Aeneas symbolizes both religious duty and political authority. A

image of a *pius* Aeneas on an altar constructed by Augustus represents the importance of the piety of Augustus (Galinsky 1969:10). Aeneas's obedience to the gods results in the triumph of order and the creation of Rome; Augustus's piety results in a rule sanctioned by the gods, and restores order to the chaotic republic. By portraying Augustus' rule as a divinely sanctioned form of order, the *Ara Pacis* represents the dichotomy between chaos and order in a pro-Augustan light.

Similarly, the myth put forward in the *Aeneid* functions as a form of pro-Augustan propaganda. It is important to remember that the *Aeneid* itself was a gift, a work written by Virgil for Maecenas and by extension, Augustus. As mentioned above, the gift must be fitting to the character of the recipient (Needham 1979:34). The Aeneas myth had particular import for Augustan rulers, emphasizing their divinely supported rule and linking them to an idealized, historical Rome.

Throughout the *Aeneid*, Virgil utilizes and expands on the Roman religious concepts of piety and impiety, linking them with order and disorder respectively, and connects them to Augustus. Augustus is explicitly described in the poem as creating "great altars" and bringing upon a "Golden Age" (Virgil 2005:8.818-825; 6.939-947). Additionally, Augustus is associated with Aeneas throughout the work (Galinsky 1969:10; Erksine 2001:18). Aeneas is a *pius* figure; he is divinely supported in his efforts to found Italy. By extension, Augustus is supported as he attempts to restore the glories of Rome. The gods support both the Trojan and the *princeps*. However, Virgil goes even further in the *Aeneid*. Virgil has the Aeneas/Augustus character triumph in war at the end of the *Aeneid*. Order is recreated or "restored". By reiterating his divine right to rule and historical connections, Virgil implies and emphasizes that the rule of

Augustus was restoring or recreating social order in contrast to the chaos of the previous Republican period; he justifies the rule of the princeps.

Thus, this structural opposition of chaos and order seen in the patterns of reciprocity in the *Aeneid* is just part of a larger image of Augustus as a divinely sanctioned ruler. In terms of propaganda and political ideology, Virgil's work is a fitting gift for Augustus, glorifying his rule and emphasizing, down to the minute details of gift-exchange, a structural opposition between order and chaos.

IX: Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated how the pattern of reciprocity in the *Aeneid* reflects and reiterates a structural opposition between chaos and order (*celeritas* and *gravitas*). This structural opposition was an important concern in the political/religious/social context of Augustan Rome, and the *Aeneid* functions as piece of Augustan propaganda by emphasizing the importance of the new Augustan order over the chaotic nature of war.

The *Aeneid* has long been considered a staple of classical literature and has been much studied by classicists. It is significant that one read the *Aeneid* in the light of anthropology, focusing on how society functioned within the epic poem and relating this function to the larger Roman culture. Anthropological theories are truly interdisciplinary, working in tandem with other areas of study to illuminate how culture and society was organized. By unpacking the *Aeneid* text using anthropological theories as well as establishing a classical, historical context, we can read the poem as an expression of Augustan culture and society.

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Appendix A:

Chart 1

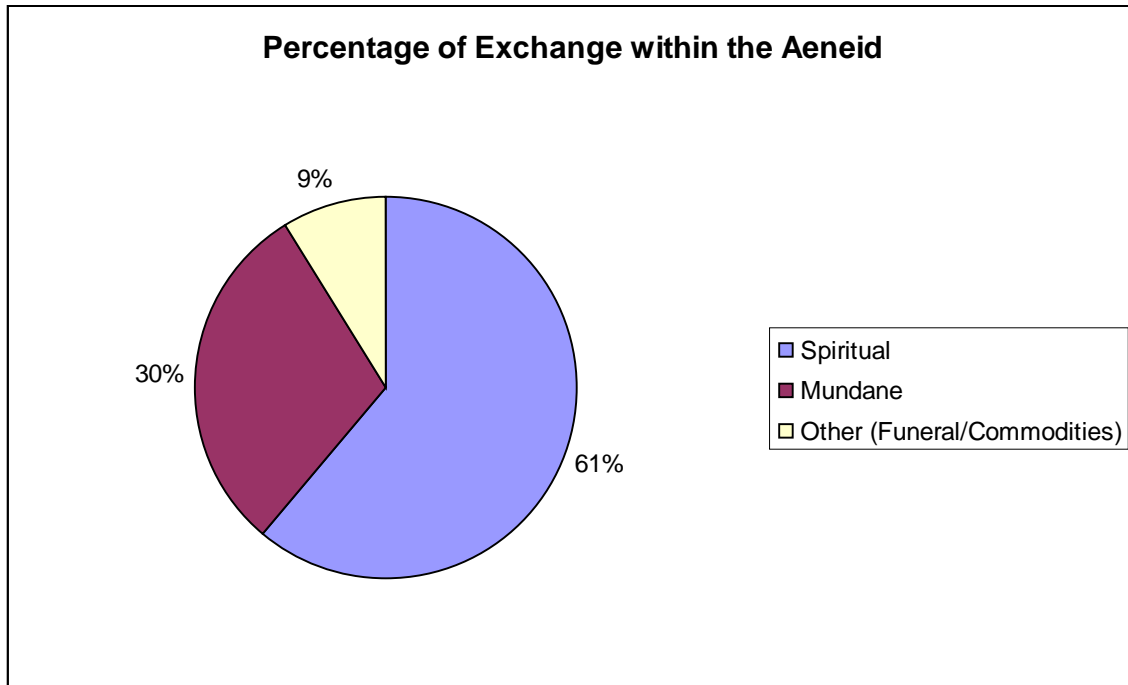
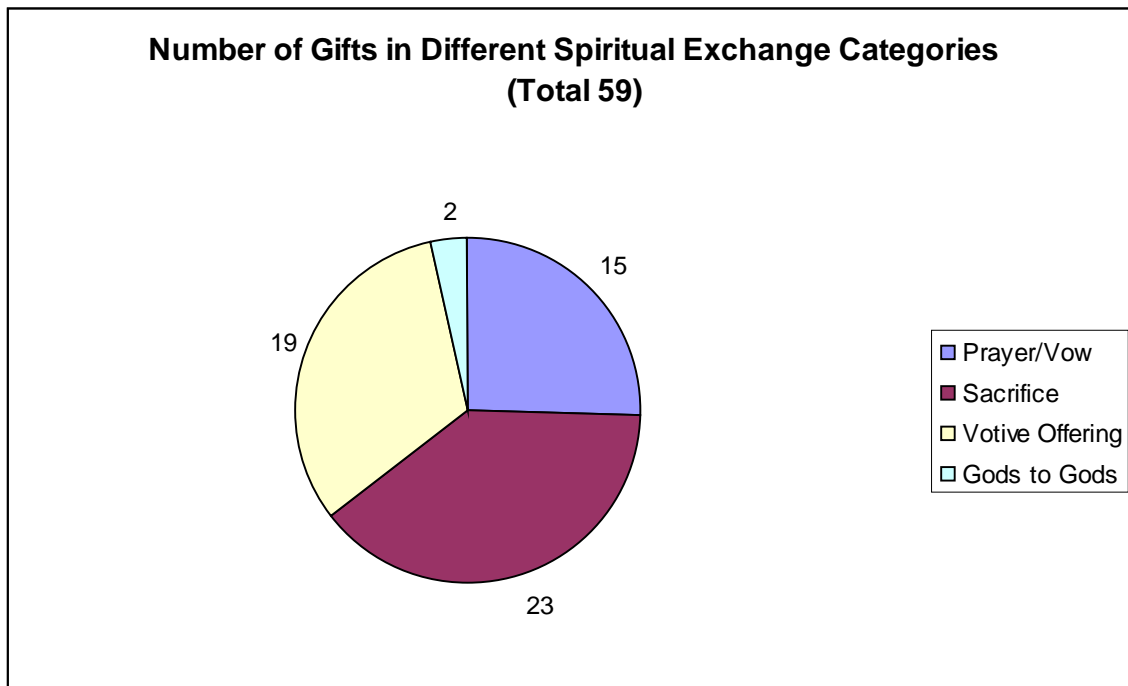


Chart 2



Appendix B:



Figure 1: Aeneas Sacrificing, *Ara Pacis Augustae*, 13 BC-9 BC. Image found at www.artstore.org