

# VERGILIUS

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Augustus' Divine Authority and Vergil's "Aeneid"

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# Augustus' Divine Authority and Vergil's *Aeneid*

SABINE GREBE

## I. Introduction

As is well known, Vergil's *Aeneid* contains a political message. Scholars have interpreted this message in two opposing directions, often labeled as "anti-Augustan" and "pro-Augustan." Ralph Johnson calls them "the pessimistic Harvard school" and "the optimistic European school"<sup>1</sup> whereas, more recently, Michael Putnam speaks of "loyalist and subversive ways of understanding <the *Aeneid's*> meaning".<sup>2</sup> Both interpretations of the *Aeneid* were recently examined by Ernst A. Schmidt.<sup>3</sup> Putnam identifies many ambiguities in Vergil's epic. Despite the pessimistic view of the Harvard school and of Putnam, a strong case can be made that Vergil celebrates and, more importantly, legitimizes Augustus' power as an autocrat. Augustus himself considered authority (*auctoritas*) as the basis of his rule. This essay claims that the *Aeneid* may be read as such a legitimizing effort. The *Aeneid* locates the origins of authority in the divine and thereby ensures, at least in Roman culture of Augustus' time, a legitimate role for Augustus as *primus inter pares*.

In ancient Rome, politics and religion were closely connected to each other.<sup>4</sup> Politics sought to preserve and increase the foundation of Rome. This foundation possessed a sacred character

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Ralph Johnson, *Darkness Visible: a Study of Vergil's Aeneid* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1976) 9; 11; 15.

<sup>2</sup> Michael C.J. Putnam, *Virgil's Aeneid: Interpretation and Influence* (Chapel Hill and London 1995) 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst A. Schmidt, "The Meaning of Vergil's *Aeneid*: American and German Approaches," *CW* 94 (2001) 145-171.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gunther Gottlieb, "Religion in the Politics of Augustus: *Aeneid* 1.278-91, 8.714-23, 12.791-842," in Hans-Peter Stahl (ed.), *Vergil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context* (London 1998) 21-36.

so that it remained binding for all future generations. By ruling in accordance with the procedural requisites of authority, those in authority augmented the foundation of the *Urbs*. As Hannah Arendt writes in her influential essay, “All authority derives from this foundation, binding every act back to the sacred beginning of Roman history, adding, as it were, to every single moment the whole weight of the past.”<sup>5</sup> Authority was derived from a deeply rooted past. Hence, the deeds of the ancestors (*maiores*) played an eminent role in Roman thinking and politics. The ancestors exhibited a model for rulers. Their institutions and acts bound future generations. The actions of Roman politicians were evaluated in terms of the intent of the ancestors. A Roman official had to act within the boundary of authority established by the ancestors. The official had to justify his decisions and deeds in terms of the past. In sum, a Roman politician derived his authority in a backward-looking process that could be traced to the very first beginnings of Roman history. It was inconceivable that an official would act without authority (and tradition). The trinity of authority, tradition, and religion permeated Roman politics.<sup>6</sup>

How do these reflections about the Roman concept of *auctoritas* impact Augustus and the *Aeneid*? To answer this question we must examine, first, Augustus’ divine authority as described by Vergil in the *Aeneid*, and, second, the sources for Augustus’ divine authority. According to the *Aeneid*, it is the wish of the Olympian gods that Roman history culminate in Augustus. Thus, Vergil’s epic is a piece of propaganda, though a very sophisticated one, in that it reinforces the divine foundation of the Emperor’s *auctoritas*. The *Aeneid* offers two ultimate sources for the Emperor’s *auctoritas*--the mythic origins of Rome and of the Roman people, on one hand, and the divine sphere on the other. To

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<sup>5</sup> Hannah Arendt, “What is Authority?” in: Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future. Six Exercises in Political Thought* (London 1961) 91-141, esp.123.

<sup>6</sup> Arendt, 120-125. For a recent discussion of authority in the context of the history of Western legal thought see William E. Conklin, *The Invisible Origins of Legal Positivism. A Re-reading of a Tradition* (Dordrecht and Boston 2001) (*Law and Philosophy Library* 52), esp.57-61.

this end, Vergil traces Augustus' political position not merely to Romulus, the mythic founder of Rome, but even further back in Roman history to Aeneas, the founder of the Roman people. It was the mythic origins of Rome and of the Roman people which authorized Augustus to act as *primus inter pares*, the first among equals. It is best for us to understand the *Aeneid* as an effort to explain the extraordinary significance of the very first and divine beginning of the Romans as the ultimate source for the Emperor's *auctoritas*. This aspect of the *Aeneid* has not yet been fully analyzed in the research literature on Vergil and Augustus. The purpose of this essay is to show that Vergil's epic did support Augustus' regime by the retrieval of the very first divine beginning of Rome and her people. Exploiting the Roman concept of *auctoritas* by tracing an official's position backward in history to the origins as described above, Vergil was able to link the principate with the mythic origins of Rome. I shall argue that Vergil interprets Augustus as the rightful heir of Aeneas and of Romulus and thus presents the principate as an integral part of Roman political and legal culture in the *Aeneid*. Vergil's interpretation of his contemporary history is made possible by the Roman concept of *auctoritas*, a theme which scholars have not yet fully addressed.

Despite this positive interpretation of the gods and Roman history I am aware of the fact that for Vergil neither the gods nor Rome's history were *per se* good or beyond doubt. Although Aeneas is supported by Jupiter and Venus, he experiences divine hostility (*Aen.*2.257: *fatisque deum [...] iniquis*). Venus knows that "the gods' harshness" (*Aen.*2.602: *divum inclementia*) caused the destruction of Troy, and Vergil himself, in despair and commiseration, exclaims about the civil war between Trojans and Latins:

tanton placuit concurrere motu,  
Iuppiter, aeterna gentis in pace futuras? (*Aen.* 12.503-4)

*Was it your will, O Jupiter, that peoples who were to live at peace for all time should clash so violently in war?*<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the *Aeneid*, Juno is hostile toward Aeneas and the Trojans. Only in the last book is she finally willing to allow the Trojans to settle down in Italy (*Aen.* 12.807-841). In addition, Rome's prehistory and early history are marked by the destruction of Troy, the fratricide committed by Romulus, and the rape of the Sabine women.<sup>8</sup> Yet in the end, this dark side of history leads to a positive outcome. There would be no Rome, no Romans, and no Augustus without these appalling events. Apparently, in Vergil's view, violence, destruction and death are necessary for the establishment of something new and stable. In fact, the ambitious undertaking to create order implies a preceding state of disorder with which to compare and privilege the order. Thus, Vergil's reference to violence, destruction and death does not necessarily mean that the *Aeneid* presents a negative view of history. Aeneas, furthermore, had to fight against the Latins in order to fulfill his divine mission, namely, the foundation of a new city and a new people. Similarly, Augustus had to undertake the civil wars, initially against Caesar's assassins and then against Mark Antony, in order to create the principate. Both Aeneas and Augustus founded political and cultural order out of disorder. They brought back stability and security after a period of war and destruction. Aeneas was able to establish a new home for his Trojan followers with the help of the gods. Vergil's likening of Augustus to Aeneas suggests that Augustus, too, can create order out of disorder, with divine support—this is the positive message of the *Aeneid*.

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<sup>7</sup> All translations are by David West (ed.), *Virgil: The Aeneid: a New Prose Translation* (London 1991).

<sup>8</sup> An anonymous referee of this paper made me aware of these problems.

## II. The Problematic Of Augustus' Unlimited Power

### a) The Problem of the Legitimacy of Monarchy in Rome

Why was it important for Augustus' government to be traceable to a divine foundation? To respond to this question we must briefly examine the monarchy and the Republic in the Roman theory of politics.

The Romans had an ambivalent attitude towards kingship.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, they were conscious of the Greek idea of kingship as the best form of rule. They were aware of the philosophical justifications of the monarchy.<sup>10</sup> Most Roman kings were generally portrayed as good rulers: they were considered moral role models and the founders of important institutions (for instance, the division of the citizenry into tribes and the organization of the major priesthoods and the calendar). Many kings were praised in literature and history and honored with statues on the Capitol.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, monarchy was linked to tyranny, oppression and the usurpation of power after the Romans expelled the Tarquin kings in 510 BCE. The last king, Tarquinius Superbus, was described as a tyrant who had illegally usurped authority.<sup>12</sup> Kingship and freedom were considered exclusive of each other, with kingship associated with tyranny, its philosophical opposite.<sup>13</sup> It was not the popular view but rather aristocratic ideology that perpetrated these associations. During the Republic the aristocratic ruling class was extremely suspicious of any charismatic individual who rose to power, particularly if the individual had popular support. In this context, the hostility towards kingship served as an excellent means of propaganda in daily political battles. Thus it is

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Rawson, "Caesar's Heritage: Hellenistic Kings and Their Roman Equals," *JRS* 65 (1975) 148-159, esp. 151. Francis Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic* (Cambridge and New York 1989) 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Rawson, 151.

<sup>11</sup> Rawson, 152f.

<sup>12</sup> Cic. *Rep.* 2.44-46; Liv. 1.49.1-1.60.3 (esp. 1.49.1-7); Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.41.1-4.85.4 (esp. 4.41.1-4).

<sup>13</sup> Rawson, 149-152.

not surprising that the king-like pretensions of Julius Caesar startled the Roman elite. Eventually the elite, fearful of a monarchy, conspired to assassinate Caesar in 44 BCE.

As a consequence of the negative experience Romans associated with their last king, republican ideology subordinated the individual to overriding legal boundaries of power within which the individual had to make decisions. Three characteristic features of the Roman magistrates manifested these jurisdictional boundaries: the magistrates were elected, they exercised authority only temporarily, and they were organized into hierarchical colleges. Augustus' newly introduced autocratic rule, however, defined a new hierarchic relationship between individual and community. Augustus, however, acquired the authority that had formerly been distributed among many magistrates during the republican period. By 29 BCE, no Roman enjoyed as much *auctoritas* as Octavian did, and, by the time he was Emperor he was pre-eminent among his fellow Romans.

#### b) The Problem of the Legitimacy of Military Power

Through his military and political achievements, Augustus acquires *potestas*. Vergil predicts the extraordinary spread of the Roman Empire under Augustus, who will "mark the boundaries of the empire with Ocean" (located at the edge of the earth) (*imperium Oceano...terminet*, *Aen.* 1.287). In Anchises' prophecy to Aeneas about how far the Roman rule will extend throughout the world (*Aen.* 6.794-805), it is said that Augustus will take Rome's power beyond the known bounds of the world: his empire will include even more lands than those seen by Hercules and Bacchus (both of whom had traveled to many distant parts of the world). Vergil also depicts Octavian celebrating a triumph over many defeated peoples: in the South, the Nomads and Africans; in the East, the Leleges, Geloni, Parthians, and Dahae; in the West, the Gauls; and in the North, the Germans (*Aen.* 8.724-728). The military conquests provide evidence of the grand size of Augustus' empire. Augustus completes all civil and foreign wars and, for this reason, closes the Temple of Janus, the symbol of complete peace

(*Aen.* 1.291-296).<sup>14</sup> Vergil compares this peaceful situation with the Golden Age, which Augustus will reestablish in Italy (*Aen.* 6.792f.: *aurea saecula*). Re-establishing a Golden Age implies that for some period of time it has not existed. This, however, does not necessarily mean that Vergil has a negative view of Roman history. Rather, he seems to claim that it is possible to bring back a heavenly state after a disaster. Further, he says that Augustus is the man who is able to restore Rome from its current, devastating state of disorder. Augustus' military victories culminate in the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium (31 BCE). Vergil glorifies this crucial victory on several occasions: Augustus is "laden with the booty of the Orient" (*Aen.* 1.289: *spoliis Orientis onustus*), and "the troubled mouth of the sevenfold Nile is in confusion" (*Aen.* 6.800: *septemgemini turbant trepida ostia Nili*). He gives a detailed description of the Battle of Actium in *Aen.* 8.671-728, a passage to which I shall soon return.

In sum, Vergil praises the military success which contributed to Augustus' power. But was his military and political power legitimate, and if so, in what way? Vergil's *Aeneid* sets out to explain why Augustus' *potestas* was authoritative, and therefore legitimate.

### c) Unlimited Power

There was another facet of the need to legitimize Augustus' power: Augustus had learned from Caesar's assassination how deeply rooted in the culture of the Roman aristocracy were republican ideas. With this in view, Octavian formally turned over the *res publica* to the "Senate and people of Rome" (*senatus populusque Romanus*) on January 13, 27 BCE. He believed that if his supreme power were identified with *auctoritas*, he could guarantee order as well as his own powerful position in the state, and this confidence led him make this gesture of returning the *res*

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<sup>14</sup> The closing of the Temple of Janus in times of complete peace had happened under Numa, in 235 BCE, three times under Augustus, and off and on during the imperial period.



*publica* and his extraordinary power to the Senate and people of Rome.<sup>15</sup> He pretended to adopt the republican system by reinstating the magistrates, Senate, and the people in their old constitutional roles. Thus, Augustus' republican form of government concealed his *de facto* imperial power. In return, the Senate granted him the position of *imperium proconsulare*. He received numerous honors, including the title "Augustus," a name etymologically connected with *auctoritas*. Augustus also received the golden shield (*clupeus aureus*) which celebrated his virtues: courage, clemency, justice, and piety. Although Augustus claimed to have restored the *res publica* and to have become only *primus inter pares*, he effectively centralized unusual power in his own person. For example, he retained the consulship each year from 31 to 23 BCE. He enjoyed the tribunician sacrosanctity (*sacrosanctitas*). As the "son of a god" (*divi filius*) and the member of the four major priesthoods, including the augurate, he gained an exceptional religious authority (*augur*, too, is etymologically linked to *auctoritas*). In addition, the militarily most powerful provinces (Spain, Gaul, Syria, Cilicia, Cyprus, and Egypt) were granted to Augustus. He was very popular among soldiers, veterans, new citizens, provincials, and the *plebs urbana*. In effect, his reign manifested a covert absolutism.

#### d) Political Insecurity

Despite his military and political power, Augustus' position remained politically insecure, as the *princeps* faced political opposition. The first crisis of the principate took place between 27 and 23 BCE.<sup>16</sup> In 27 BCE, M. Licinius Crassus, a grandson of the triumvir, challenged Octavian's authority by claiming to celebrate a triumph and by dedicating the *spolia opima*, spoils offered by a

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<sup>15</sup> Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: an Interpretative Introduction* (Princeton 1996) 17f.

<sup>16</sup> I confine myself only to the first crisis because this is the only one which happened during Vergil's lifetime. Later crises happened, for example, in 18 BCE and 2 BCE (both involving conspiracies against Augustus' life).

Roman general who had killed an enemy leader in single combat, to Jupiter Feretrius. Octavian rejected the latter claim on the grounds that only the commander of the army was entitled to the *spolia opima*. In the same year Augustus had to sacrifice C. Cornelius Gallus, one of his closest associates. Octavian had appointed Gallus to be the first *praefectus* of the new province of Egypt. Gallus, however, exhibited excessive pride in his powerful position, considering himself successor to the pharaohs<sup>17</sup> and the dynasty of the Ptolemies. When Augustus withdrew his favor and friendship, Gallus committed suicide. In the following year, Messala Corvinus was made *urbis praefectus*, but resigned after five days on the grounds of his incapacity to exercise the power of this office (Tac.*Ann.*6.11). Moreover, Augustus' steady effort to keep the loyalty of the *plebs urbana*, particularly after 27 BCE, offers further evidence of his uncertainty that their loyalty would persist.

Another sign of the continual political insecurity of the principate was the case of M. Primus, proconsul of Macedonia (23 BCE). When Primus was accused of having waged war on the Thracian Odrysians without the permission of the Senate, Primus claimed to have acted with the consent of Augustus and the *princeps*' son-in-law, Marcellus. Augustus, however, denied that he had given such instructions and thereupon withdrew his support from M. Primus. Also in 23 BCE, A. Terentius Varro Murena, Augustus' co-consul in 23, conspired against the Emperor. This conspiracy was uncovered in time, but the conspirators had been forewarned and, consequently were able to flee from Rome—Maecenas had reported the affair to his wife, Terentia, and Terentia had informed her brother, Varro Murena. In the same year, Augustus became seriously ill and the question of succession arose. There was a rumor that the *princeps* had designated a successor, thereby bypassing the Senate. In this tense situation

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<sup>17</sup> Werner Eck, *The Age of Augustus* (Oxford 2003, with new material by Sarolta A. Takács) [= *Augustus und seine Zeit*, Munich 1998. Translated by Deborah Lucas Schneider] 52f.

Augustus resigned from the consulship which he had held without interruption since 31 BCE.<sup>18</sup> His successor as consul was the senator L. Sestius, an old republican, who had formerly fought on the side of Brutus. In return, Augustus received the total power, although not the authoritative office, of a tribune of the people (*tribunicia potestas*). This *de facto* power was manifested in legislative initiatives, including the prerogative to convene the Senate. Augustus' resignation from the consulship was an attempt to reconcile the new regime with republican opposition among the senators.<sup>19</sup> Although Augustus was repeatedly urged to hold other magistracies, he rejected such proposals. His refusal to accept such magistracies was one of the hallmarks of his reign (RG 5-6). Legally speaking, he was a private citizen (*privatus*) during most of his reign—but a private citizen with exceptional powers.

### III. Meanings of the Roman Concept of Authority<sup>20</sup>

*Auctoritas* is derived from the Latin verb *augere*, meaning “to increase, to augment.” The root of *auctoritas*, *auctor*, means ‘author, creator,’ or ‘founder.’ One of the early meanings of *auctor* goes back to the Twelve Tables (c.450 BCE) and persisted in later times. Originally a seller would guarantee to the would-be buyer that the sold item really belonged to him and the seller guaranteed that, if this should prove not to be the case, he would compensate buyer and pay him an additional fine. Then it came to signify a guardian guaranteeing his warden’s action and, by doing so, making the action legally binding. Finally, in the political sphere, it signified the authority of the Senate (*auctoritas senatus*) in approving resolutions of the popular assemblies before they could

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<sup>18</sup> After 23 BCE, Augustus held the consulship only two more times, in 5 and 2 BCE.

<sup>19</sup> Dietmar Kienast, *Augustus: Prinzeps und Monarch* (Darmstadt 1982) 67-92.

<sup>20</sup> See Richard Heinze, “Auctoritas,” *Hermes* 60 (1925) 348-366. Leonhard Krieger, “Authority,” in: Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* (New York 1973-1974) 1, 141-162, esp. 142-146. Galinsky, 12f.

become law.<sup>21</sup> In these three contexts, the *auctor* is a person who, “in an authoritative and effective way, approves the action which is to be undertaken by another person (or, which is the same, approves the intention to undertake the action); ‘authoritative’ involves that a certain degree of responsibility is taken on by the approver”.<sup>22</sup> The *auctor* achieved his *auctoritas* by a special insight. Accordingly, his *auctoritas* has so much weight that the person asking the *auctor* for advice will almost certainly follow it.

According to Jean Béranger, the imperial *auctoritas* had a moral character: “the ultimate power of the emperor is on another level: the moral level.”<sup>23</sup> *Auctoritas* was not an unchangeable attribute of an individual's personality, social status or political position. Rather, *auctoritas* was recognized by one's fellow citizens. If the latter judged an individual's achievements legitimate, one was granted *auctoritas*. Hence, there was a recognition by the ruled that the ruler possessed *auctoritas*. *Auctoritas* “presupposes the approbation and voluntary adherence

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<sup>21</sup> This idea of *auctoritas* was applied to executive officials, such as consuls and military leaders, to the Senate, and to the *princeps*. During the later Republic, the authority of the Senate meant prescriptive consultation. In this context, *auctoritas* was “*mehr als ein Rathschlag und weniger als ein Befehl, ein Rathschlag, dessen Befolgung man sich nicht füglich entziehen kann*” (“more than an advice and less than a command; an advice which one cannot properly ignore.” Theodor Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* (Leipzig 1887) [*Handbuch der römischen Alterthümer* 3,1] vol. 3, 1034). “*Der Willensact der Gemeinde, dem Irren und Fehlgreifen ebenso ausgesetzt wie der Willensact des unmündigen Knaben, bedarf der ‘Mehring’ und der Bestätigung durch den Rath der Alten*” (“the will and the act of the people, like the will and the act of underage boys are exposed to errors and mistakes and need the ‘augmentation’ and confirmation of the council of elders.” Mommsen, vol. 3, 1038f.).

<sup>22</sup> “*die von einem anderen auszuführende Handlung (oder, was auf dasselbe hinauskommt, den Entschluß dazu) maßgeblich und wirkungsvoll gutheißt; das ‘maßgeblich’ enthält zugleich in sich, daß dabei eine gewisse Verantwortung vom Gutheißenden übernommen wird.*” Heinze, 351.

<sup>23</sup> “*la toute-puissance de l’empereur se situe sur un autre plan: le plan moral.*” Jean Béranger, “Recherches sur l’aspect idéologique du principat,” in *Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft* 6. Basel 1953:115.

to those on whom it is exerted.”<sup>24</sup> *Auctoritas* was achieved by merit rather than by inheritance, although, if one was a member of an influential family, one had, of course, an advantage in the acquisition of *auctoritas*.<sup>25</sup> *Auctoritas* meant “the kind of substance on which real influence is based.”<sup>26</sup> Power was exercised through *auctoritas*.

Because authority is attributed to someone who commands someone who obeys the command, authority is often wrongly understood as a kind of power or violence.<sup>27</sup> But *auctoritas* must sharply be separated from *potestas*. A crucial document for this distinction is chapter 34 of Augustus’ *Res Gestae*, where he describes his position after 27 BCE, when he formally restored the *res publica* and when he was given in return the title “Augustus,” among other honors. Augustus writes: “After this time, I excelled all in authority (*auctoritas*), although I possessed no more official power (*potestas*) than others who were my colleagues in the several magistracies.”<sup>28</sup> Augustus himself considered *auctoritas*, “authority,” the center of his rule. All other aspects of power and influence were secondary to this concept.<sup>29</sup>

#### IV. Augustus’ Divine Authority in the *Aeneid*

The *Aeneid* reinforces that idea Augustus, as the *telos* of Roman history and as the ultimate head of the secular authority, signifies the gods’ will. Although Augustus is mentioned only three times in the *Aeneid*,--in Jupiter’s prophecy (1.286-296), in

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<sup>24</sup> “suppose l’approbation et l’adhesion volontaire de ceux sur lesquels elle s’exerce.” Joseph Hellegouarc’h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la république*. Paris 1972, 2nd ed.: 302.

<sup>25</sup> Galinsky, 14; 28f.

<sup>26</sup> Galinsky, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Arendt, 92f.

<sup>28</sup> *RG* 34.3: *post id tempus auctoritate omnibus praestiti, potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt*. The English translation is drawn from Peter A. Brunt / J.M. Moore (eds.), *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (Oxford 1967).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Galinsky, 12.

Anchises' revelation of Rome's future (6.791-805), and in the description of Aeneas' shield (8.671-728)—Augustus is present in the subtext in many passages. In the three mentioned passages Vergil elevates Roman history and Augustus to the divine level.

### a) Explicit References

The first time Augustus is mentioned in the *Aeneid* is in the context of Jupiter's prophecy of the future fame of Rome (1.257-296). There Jupiter announces Aeneas' future victories in battle and his foundation of Lavinium, Ascanius' foundation of and reign in Alba Longa, the birth of Romulus and foundation of Rome, and the Roman rule of the world which will be unlimited in space and time. Finally, Jupiter prophesies that Augustus (or Caesar?) will enjoy endless glory, be deified, complete all wars, and establish peace:

nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar,  
 imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris,  
 Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo.  
 hunc tu olim caelo spoliis Orientis onustum  
 accipies secura; vocabitur hic quoque votis.  
 aspera tum positis mitescent saecula bellis:  
 cana Fides et Vesta, Remo cum fratre Quirinus  
 iura dabunt; dirae ferro et compagibus artis  
 claudentur Belli portae; Furor impius intus  
 saeva sedens super arma et centum vinctus aënis  
 post tergum nodis fremet horridus ore cruento.

(*Aen.* 1.286-296).

*From this noble stock there will be born a Trojan Caesar to bound his empire by Oceanus at the limits of the world, and his fame by the stars. He will be called Julius, a name passed down to him from the great Iulus. In time to come, have no fear, you will receive him in the sky, laden with the spoils of the East. He too will be called upon in prayer. Then wars will be laid aside and the years of bitterness will be over. Silver-haired Truth and Vesta, and Romulus Quirinus with his brother Remus, will sit dispensing justice. The dread Gates of War with*

*their tight fastenings of steel will then be closed, and godless Strife will sit inside them on his murderous armour roaring hideously from bloody mouth, hands shackled behind his back with a hundred bands of bronze.*

This text links Augustus with the divine sphere. Jupiter prophesies to Venus that Augustus will be deified and worshiped by mortals, and that Vesta and Quirinus will legislate laws during Augustus' reign. Vesta, whose cult represented and guaranteed Rome's permanence over time, was the goddess of the hearth-fire. Quirinus, an ancient god of whom not much is known, was assimilated with the deified Romulus. Vergil thus presents an Augustus closely connected with the gods. The corollary is that the *princeps* is particularly favored by the gods.

Vergil's Augustus represents the culmination of Roman history. Augustus is said to stand in one line with Aeneas, Ascanius, and Romulus, each of whom had founded a city: Aeneas founded Lavinium, Ascanius Alba Longa, Romulus Rome, and Augustus re-founded Rome through the establishment of peace, law and order after Rome had been dominated, for a century, by war, chaos, and disorder. Each of the mythic figures ruled alone as king. His foundation of a city and the monarchic form of rule connect Augustus with his ancestors. Here Vergil selects only kings. Vergil omits the famous Romans of the republican period who, however, are mentioned in the two other prophecies of Roman history (in the pageant of heroes in *Aen.* 6.756-886 and in the description of Aeneas' shield in *Aen.* 8.626-728). Jupiter determines that Augustus will establish the monarchy. Vergil clearly emphasizes that the prophecy is the explicit desire and irrevocable decision of Jupiter, the supreme god: "no argument changes my mind" (1.260: *neque me sententia vertit*), "on them I impose no limits either in space or in time: I have given them an empire without an end" (1.278f.: *his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono: / imperium sine fine dedi*), "so it has been decreed" (1.283: *sic placitum*).

Vergil presents Augustus' monarchy as an indispensable and natural part of both Roman history and Jupiter's will. That is, the principate is justified and legitimized by a long tradition of Roman kingship as well as by the plan of the highest god. Thus, Augustus' new form of government has a double foundation: history and divine providence. Jupiter's prophecy and Augustus' role in Roman history appear at the beginning of the *Aeneid*, where Vergil's words serve as a programmatic statement from the beginning of the epic.

But to whom does Jupiter's prophecy refer—to Julius Caesar or Augustus? Who is meant by *Caesar* in line 286 and *Iulius* in line 288?<sup>30</sup> Karl Galinsky rightly points out that "Vergil is deliberately blurring the line between the two."<sup>31</sup> Augustus, as Caesar's son by adoption, cultivated his ties to Caesar. Vergil's text is consistent with Augustus' own attitude towards Caesar.<sup>32</sup> Vergil's ambiguity is more deeply rooted, however. The poet gives historical and divine reasons for the contemporary establishment of the monarchy. After all, the monarchy was the very kind of rule which the Roman aristocracy had feared from Caesar. Caesar had paid for his political ambition and overzealous haste with his life. Vergil seems to infer that Caesar's assassination ought to be interpreted as an historical error and, even worse, as a violation of Jupiter's will. Hence, Vergil's ambiguous language implies that Caesar was moving in the right direction and that Augustus is now continuing this direction in history.

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<sup>30</sup> Vergil's ambiguous language has puzzled many scholars. A detailed discussion and bibliography can be found in R. Dobbin, "Julius Caesar in Jupiter's Prophecy, *Aeneid* Book I," *ClAnt* 14 (1995) 5-41.

<sup>31</sup> Galinsky, 251.

<sup>32</sup> Galinsky, 251f.



The firm establishment of Augustus' monarchy in Roman history also becomes clear in the pageant of heroes in the sixth book. Anchises shows Aeneas the future Roman heroes. Anchises' order of the heroes differs from the chronological order:

Chronological Order:

- (1) Alban kings
- (2) Roman kings
  - (2.1) Romulus
  - (2.2) Numa
  - (2.3) Tullus
  - (2.4) Ancus
  - (2.5) Tarquinian kings
- (3) Republican heroes
- (4) Caesar
- (5) Augustus

Anchises' Order:

- (1) Alban kings
- (2) Roman kings (I)
  - (2.1) Romulus
  - (4) Caesar
  - (5) Augustus
- (2) Roman kings (II)
  - (2.2) Numa
  - (2.3) Tullus
  - (2.4) Ancus
  - (2.5) Tarquinian kings
- (3) Republican heroes

In the historical order, Caesar and Augustus conclude the long list of Roman heroes. However, Anchises, or rather Vergil, inserts both among the kings of Rome. According to Eduard Norden, the position of Augustus between Romulus and Numa shows that the *princeps* is both a second Romulus (as renewer of the city of Rome) and a second Numa (as renewer of Roman religion).<sup>33</sup> Francis Cairns points out that the distortion of the chronological order brings Caesar and Augustus next to Romulus, the founder of Rome, and gives both the divine aura of Romulus-Quirinus.<sup>34</sup> Michael von Albrecht counts the lines Vergil uses for the description of the kings and discovers that the length of the passages increases with the importance of the monarchs. He writes:

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<sup>33</sup> Eduard Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro: Aeneis Buch VI* (4th ed. Stuttgart 1957) 327.

<sup>34</sup> Cairns, 60f.

“Virgil proportionally enlarges its (sc. the catalogue’s) parts to suit the meaning: ... The order is dictated by function and importance rather than by chronology. Virgil is not interested in cataloguing facts, but in showing how they grew out of one another and how they may be related to each other typologically.”<sup>35</sup> But we must press further than Norden, Cairns, and von Albrecht do. Vergil presents Caesar and Augustus as the rightful heirs of the Roman kings, i.e., as an integral part of Roman monarchy, thereby providing an additional, historical basis for Augustus’ monarchy which had been rejuvenated under Caesar.

To sum up: two of the most splendid passages in the *Aeneid* legitimize Augustus’ authority by tracing him to several mythic kings in Roman history, thus linking the principate with the very beginning of Rome. Since Augustus’ political and cultural program sought to restore the past, and since the monarchy arose from the very beginning of Roman history, Augustus’ restoration of the monarchy was the logical consequence of his politics. The monarchy thereby became an integral part not only of Roman history but also of Augustus’ restorative political program.

What does Anchises say about Augustus in the sixth book?

hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,  
 Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet  
 saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva  
 Saturno quondam, super et Garamantas et Indos  
 proferet imperium; iacet extra sidera tellus,  
 extra anni solisque vias, ubi caelifer Atlas  
 axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum.  
 huius in adventum iam nunc et Caspia regna  
 responsis horrent divum et Maeotia tellus,  
 et septemgemini turbant trepida ostia Nili.  
 nec vero Alcides tantum telluris obivit,  
 fixerit aripedem cervam licet, aut Erymanthi

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<sup>35</sup> Michael von Albrecht, *Roman Epic: an Interpretative Introduction* (Leiden 1999) 111. That typology rather than chronology is crucial for the whole catalogue of heroes is shown on pp.117-119.

pacarit nemora et Lernam tremefecerit arcu;  
 nec qui pampineis victor iuga flectit habenis  
 Liber, agens celso Nysae de vertice tigris.

(*Aen.* 6.791-805).

*Here is the man whose coming you so often hear prophesied, here he is, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, the man who will bring back the golden years to the fields of Latium once ruled over by Saturn, and extend Rome's empire beyond the Indians and the Garamantes to a land beyond the stars, beyond the yearly path of the sun, where Atlas holds on his shoulder the sky all studded with burning stars and turns it on its axis. The kingdoms round the Caspian sea and Lake Maeotis are even now quaking at the prophecies of his coming. The seven mouths of the Nile are in turmoil and alarm. Hercules himself did not make his way to so many lands though his arrow pierced the hind with hooves of bronze, though he gave peace to the woods of Eurymanthus and made Lerna tremble at his bow. Nor did triumphing Bacchus ride so far when he drove his tiger-drawn chariot down from the high peak of Nysa, and the reins that guided the yoke were the tendrils of the vine.<sup>36</sup>*

As in Jupiter's prophecy in the first book of the *Aeneid*, Vergil again associates Augustus with the gods. Augustus is the son of a god, namely the deified Caesar, and is also a second Saturnus, since Augustus will re-establish the Golden Age.<sup>37</sup> According to divine oracles, Augustus will defeat many peoples in the East. The *princeps* is not only equal to other gods: Augustus will even surpass them. For Augustus' empire will comprise more countries than Hercules and Dionysus had seen. Hercules had gone to numerous countries throughout the world in order to perform his

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<sup>36</sup> The English translation is drawn from West (note 7 above).

<sup>37</sup> However, Augustus' Golden Age will be quite different from Saturnus' Golden Age. Contrary to the latter the former will be connected not with leisure but with toil and effort.

cycle of Labors; Dionysus, according to the legendary tradition, had been raised in India, a country which, for the ancients, was located at the edge of the world. Vergil's comparison of Augustus with both gods is not accidental. Both gods played an eminent role in the Hellenistic ruler cult and they were interpreted as the source of civilization. Both were considered redeemers of men because they had brought blessings to humankind. As Brooks Otis points out, in Vergil's pageant of heroes, Augustus is identified as a *theios aner*, a divine man, who, like Hercules and Romulus, will achieve divinity through his deeds.<sup>38</sup>

The description of Aeneas' shield contains another text where Augustus is associated with the gods (*Aen.* 8.671-728). While Jupiter's and Anchises' prophecies praise Augustus in general terms, in this passage Vergil here concentrates upon the Battle of Actium (31 BCE) and Augustus' Triple Triumph (29 BCE). Once again, Augustus is traced back to the gods. The shield is made by Vulcan, the god of fire, on the request of Venus, Vulcan's wife and Aeneas' mother. The divine creator is mentioned three times within the description of the shield (628; 710; 724). The shield functions as a divine weapon. Because the gods are believed ultimately to tell the truth, the shield's predictions are true.

The Battle of Actium described in the center of the shield is not only a struggle between Augustus on one side and Mark Antony and Cleopatra on the other. Rather, the battle is also a struggle between the Roman gods and the Egyptian gods. Philip Hardie analyzes the Gigantomachic aspects of the Battle of Actium in Vergil's description of Aeneas' shield.<sup>39</sup> Augustus is supported by the Penates, the gods of the household and of the state, and by the great gods (679: *penatibus et magnis dis*). The latter refer to Neptune, Venus, Minerva (699), and Apollo (704). Neptune's aid

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<sup>38</sup> Brooks Otis, *Virgil: a Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford 1963) 302.

<sup>39</sup> Philip Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford 1986) 336-376.

of Augustus is surprising for several reasons.<sup>40</sup> First, Augustus descends from the Trojan Aeneas. In Homer, Neptune was hostile towards the Trojans and towards Odysseus, the model for the Vergilian Aeneas. Second, Caesar's and Augustus' enemies had a close relationship with Neptune.<sup>41</sup> Although Octavian's lineage could be traced to the Trojans, Octavian was now reconciled with Neptune. This is evident from a coin which shows the *princeps* as Neptune (*ca.* 31-28 BCE).<sup>42</sup> The reconciliation between Octavian and the god is made clear here.<sup>43</sup> Venus is the mother of Aeneas and, thus also the divine mother of Augustus. When Vergil mentions Venus as having intervened on Octavian's behalf in the Battle of Actium, the poet not only elevates the struggle itself to a divine level, but also alludes to Augustus' divine origin. Minerva, the third of the gods named in 699-704, is a member of the Capitoline Triad along with Jupiter and Juno and for this reason is one of the highest gods in Rome. Apollo, finally, had a sanctuary near Actium and was accordingly said to have helped Octavian against Mark Antony and Cleopatra. The god was Augustus' "divine alter ego"<sup>44</sup> and was honored with a temple next to the *princeps'* house on the Palatine.

Vulcan, Neptune, Venus, Minerva, and Apollo are the highest Olympian gods in the Greco-Roman world. They stand in stark

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<sup>40</sup> Neptune also supports Aeneas in the beginning of the *Aeneid* where the god intervenes on Aeneas' behalf and calms the sea which is churned up by Aeolus (1.124-156).

<sup>41</sup> Neptune appears on one of the *denarii* of Caesar's murderers, Brutus and Casca. Sextus Pompey, who had supreme power on the sea until his defeat in 36 BCE, and Antony both identified themselves with Neptune.

<sup>42</sup> Galinsky, 22f.

<sup>43</sup> Octavian's reconciliation with Neptune is also evident from *Aen.* 1.148-156 which I shall analyse later. Cf. Galinsky, 22f.

<sup>44</sup> Galinsky, 188. For Augustus' special association with Apollo see most recently Maria José Strazzulla, *Il principato di Apollo: mito e propaganda nelle lastre 'Campana' dal tempio di Apollo Palatino* (Rome 1990). Paul Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (Munich 1987 [= *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, Ann Arbor 1988. Translated by Alan Shapiro]) 57-61. Galinsky, 215-219; 277-299.

contrast to the monsters fighting on the side of Mark Antony and Cleopatra. Vergil calls them “every kind of monstrous gods” (698: *omnigenumque deum monstra*) but singles out only Anubis, the divine guardian of the dead in Egypt. Anubis was represented with a dog’s head. The Egyptian monsters are associated with a grotesque and wicked sphere. They represent the strange “other” who must be defeated. Vergil describes the Battle of Actium in opposing terms as a struggle between light (Apollo is the god of the sun) and darkness (Anubis as lord of the dead), between good and evil, between order and disorder.<sup>45</sup> This black and white picture elevates Octavian and humbles his enemies. Vergil’s description of the shield demonstrates that it was the will of the highest gods that Octavian would defeat Mark Antony and Cleopatra. The poet offers divine justification for Octavian’s victory. This victory historically led to his autocracy.<sup>46</sup>

After the Battle of Actium, Octavian shows his gratefulness towards the gods by sacrifices (718f.; 721f.) and by the dedication of three hundred temples to them (716), the most famous of which is the temple for Apollo (720). The sacrifices and the dedication demonstrate Octavian’s piety (*pietas*). Piety was a condition for the existence and welfare of the Roman Empire. Vergil thus links the

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<sup>45</sup> Hardie, 97-110.

<sup>46</sup> According to Robert A. Gurval, *Actium and Augustus: the Politics and Emotions of Civil War* (Ann Arbor 1995) 246, “Vergil gave Augustus and his regime what Actium had previously lacked, not simply poetic expression and epic grandeur...but political interpretation, meaning, and import.” On the same page Gurval interprets the *Aeneid* as “a political myth of Augustus and Actium.” However, Michael C.J. Putnam, “The Ambiguity of Art in Virgil’s *Aeneid*,” *PAPS* 145 (2001) 162-183, esp. 183 points out the hidden code in the last lines of the ekphrasis of Aeneas’ shield (728: *pontem indignatus Araxes*): “where, in place of climax, we might expect a final glimpse of the emperor in all his glory we find instead a river bridged by Rome but objecting to the loss of *dignitas* that such subjugation implies....The shield in several senses contains the prowess of Rome, and its synecdoche, Caesar’s bridge, controls the elemental forces within that jurisdiction. But here...nature is only apparently dominated by culture. Bridges are ultimately washed away when nature’s innate forcefulness prevails.” Cf. also Putnam (1995, note 2 above) 3; 247.

outcome of the battle and the celebrations after the battle with the divine.

### b) Implicit References

Having examined the passages where Augustus is mentioned, I shall now analyze those texts which implicitly refer to the *princeps*. First, in book one, Juno and Aeolus cause a storm which churns up the sea, which Neptune then calms. Vergil compares the god's action in the sea with a statesman's action in a civil revolt (*Aen.* 1.148-156). The statesman appeases the infuriated masses with his authority (*pietate gravem ac meritis...virum*, 1.151-2). His authority is based on his piety, merit, and ability as a speaker. Galinsky rightly points out that the statesman of this simile refers to Augustus, who had ended the civil wars.<sup>47</sup> A cameo from the late 30s BCE shows Octavian as Neptune. He holds the trident mentioned by Vergil in 1.145 (*tridenti*) and steers his *quadriga* drawn by horses (1.156) over an enemy who drowns in the waves and who can be identified either with Sextus Pompeius or, more likely, with Mark Antony.<sup>48</sup> Marie-Louise Vollenweider aptly interprets this cameo as a metaphor which describes the contrast between the vehemence and chaos of the civil wars in the 30s BCE, on the one hand, and law and order embodied by the upright standing charioteer, on the other.<sup>49</sup> According to Feeney, the simile in the first book of the *Aeneid* expresses one of the main topics of the epic, the "correlation of divine power in the cosmos and human power in history."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Galinsky, 21.

<sup>48</sup> Galinsky, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Marie-Louise Vollenweider, *Die Steinschneidekunst und ihre Künstler in spätrepublikanischer und augusteischer Zeit* (Baden-Baden 1966) 51f. Galinsky, 395f. n.48 also refers to *Georg.* 1.512-514, written in the chaos of the 30s. Here Vergil worries that Octavian, the charioteer, may lose the control over the chariot and the horses.

<sup>50</sup> Denis C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic. Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford 1991) 137.

Second, Vergil associates Augustus with the divine sphere by saying that Augustus lies in a lineage that begins with Aeneas, the son of Venus, and Hercules, the son of Jupiter. Both Aeneas and Hercules prefigure Augustus. Each of them created order from disorder. Aeneas had fled from the destroyed Troy to Italy and had to fight against Mezentius and Turnus before he could found Lavinium and a new people by unifying the Trojans with the Latins. Hercules is known as the great savior in ancient myth. He redeemed humankind from terrifying monsters and thereby brought blessings, culture, and civilization to humankind. Vergil mentions some of Hercules' labors and narrates in detail his killing of Cacus, a savage, fire-breathing monster which had lived in a cave on the Aventine<sup>51</sup> and had terrified the local inhabitants. After the killing of Cacus, the locals set up an altar for Hercules and celebrated their rescue with hymns honoring and praising their savior (*Aen.* 8.184-305) and established a religious cult. Like his predecessors—Aeneas and Hercules—Augustus, too, had to fight against chaos before he could restore law and order. Thus Aeneas, Hercules, and Augustus had to use violence to dominate chaos. In the end, this violence led to death but was necessary in order to found a new life in safety and happiness. Furthermore, each of them combines the divine and human sphere within themselves, since each is of semi-divine origin: Aeneas' mother is Venus, Hercules' father is Jupiter, and Augustus' father by adoption is the deified Caesar. Through Aeneas (the son of Venus), Caesar and Augustus are descended from Venus. And they all join the company of the gods after their death. Finally, Aeneas and

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<sup>51</sup> According to Vergil, *Aen.* 8.231. But the *Scalae Caci* on the Palatine implies that Cacus had lived on the Palatine. According to Otis, 335, Vergil altered the Cacus story in order to lift it to a heroic, divine level. For the interpretation of the fight between Hercules and Cacus as described in the *Aeneid* see Michael C.J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid: Four Studies in Imaginative Unity and Design* (Cambridge, MA and London 1965) 130-134; Hardie, 110-118; Putnam (1995, note 2 above) 30. On pp.256-258 Putnam (1995, note 2 above) has a critical view of Hercules, whose characteristics in the eighth book of the *Aeneid* are pride and anger.



Augustus share a common quality, *pietas*, devotion to the gods and their country.

Augustus' claim to be closely related to the gods raises a third implicit connection. Not only was he connected to Venus (through Aeneas), and the deified Julius Caesar, but also to Mars (through Romulus). Throughout the *Aeneid*, Vergil emphasizes Augustus' descent from Venus and Mars through his association with Aeneas and with Romulus (in Jupiter's prophecy in book one and in Anchises' speech in book six). The passages referring to Romulus were examined above. In *Aen.* 6.792, *divi genus* refers to Augustus' descent from the deified Julius Caesar, and in *Aen.* 8.681 (*patrium sidus*). Augustus eagerly showed the world his special relationship with Julius Caesar. Thus the *princeps* took "Caesar" as his family name, which is often mentioned in the *Aeneid*: 1.286 (*Caesar*), 6.792 (*Augustus Caesar*), 8.678 (*Augustus Caesar*), 8.714 (*Caesar*). Consequently, Vergil makes it absolutely clear that Augustus considered himself to be, and in fact was, the legitimate heir of Julius Caesar.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, let us examine the title "Augustus" which Vergil uses in *Aen.* 6.792 and 8.678. The Senate gave the name 'Augustus' to Octavian on January 13, 27 BCE when Octavian had returned the *res publica* to "the Senate and people of Rome." and the name, thus, refers to the divine sphere. According to Dio (53.16.8), this name signified that someone "was more than human; for all the most precious and sacred objects are termed *augusta*."<sup>53</sup> Ovid discusses the divine aspect of the title in detail in *Fast.* 1.607-616: "the name is allied to the highest Jupiter"<sup>54</sup> and "the fathers call

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<sup>52</sup> Augustus cultivated his special relationship with Julius Caesar: The *princeps* was very interested in Caesar's cult, founded a temple for the Divus Julius in the Forum Romanum in 29 BCE, and let himself represented with the *Hüftmantel*, an attribute of Caesar and emblematic of his deification, in the Augustus statue from Prima Porta. Cf. Galinsky, 251f.

<sup>53</sup> The English translation is drawn from: Earnest Cary (ed.), *Dio's Roman History. With an English Translation*, vol.6 (London and Cambridge, MA 1968).

<sup>54</sup> *Ov.Fast.* 1.608: *socium summo cum Iove nomen*.

'august' what is holy, 'august' are called the temples that are duly consecrated by the hand of the priests."<sup>55</sup> Ovid mentions the common etymological origin of *Augustus*, *augurium* ("prediction"), and *augere* ("to increase") and ends with the pun that Jupiter may increase (*augeat*) the reign and years of the *princeps*. Finally, the name "Augustus" reminded the contemporaries of the *augustum augurium*, the twelve vultures that had appeared when Romulus had founded Rome (*Enn. Ann. fr. 155 Skutsch*) and again appeared when Octavian assumed his first consulate on August (still called *Sextilis*) 19, 43 BCE (*Suet. Aug. 95*).<sup>56</sup> All these things contributed to the divine aura of the title "Augustus".

Vergil offers numerous examples which legitimize Augustus' divine authority and which demonstrate that the *princeps* was in a privileged position to increase his *auctoritas*. According to Vergil, Augustus' monarchy is the result of Jupiter's irrevocable decision. The gods therefore supported Octavian in the Battle of Actium. Augustus' close relationship with the gods is evident from his title and from his association with Neptune and the hero-gods, Aeneas and Hercules. Moreover, Augustus himself is of divine origin and will be deified. The gods particularly favor the *princeps*.

Having considered these explicit and implicit references to Augustus' divine authority in the *Aeneid*, we must now examine the sources for his *auctoritas*.

## V. Sources for Augustus' Authority

Augustus' political power rose from his military victories, his expansion of the Roman Empire, and his restoration of peace, law and order after he ended all civil and foreign wars. Further, his political position, religious offices, and the numerous honors bestowed upon him by the Senate, including the title "Augustus" and the golden shield, contributed to Augustus' power. But

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<sup>55</sup> *Ov. Fast.* 1.609f.: *sancta vocant "augusta" patres, "augusta" vocantur / templa sacerdotum rite dicata manu.*

<sup>56</sup> Galinsky, 315-317.

Augustus' power was neither self-defining nor self-sustaining. Augustus' power needed to be authorized by a prior source. Once one appreciates that Vergil's *Aeneid* seeks to explain why Augustus' military and political power are grounded in an authoritative source deep within the mythic and divine origins of Rome and the Roman people, one can better understand why the *Aeneid* is "pro-Augustan" rather than "anti-Augustan". The ultimate sources for Augustus' authority, as opposed to his power, were his relationship to the divine and the legitimizing trace of Augustus to the mythico-historical origins of Rome and the Roman people.

Both the divine and historic origins of authority played an eminent role in the political and cultural program which Augustus initiated. The Statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, the Gemma Augustea, the *Ara Pacis*, and the temples dedicated to Apollo, Mars Ultor, and Divus Julius, all associated the *princeps* with both the gods and with the Roman past. Art and architecture made Augustus' propagandistic ideas visible to everyone and were an extremely important factor in a society where the majority of the populace was illiterate.

Literature also played an eminent role in this context. The *princeps* may have tried to encourage the poets, such as Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, Vergil, and later Ovid, to write poems which would support him and his new regime by endorsing the values which the principate fostered. Poets were supposed to be inspired by Apollo and the Muses and hence to have access to divine knowledge. The central term for the Augustan poet was *vates*, meaning "prophet, seer." It was assumed that the poet had access to divine knowledge, and, for this reason, was a reliable source of truth.

Among the Augustan poets, Vergil is most significant, for he links Augustus' authority to two ultimate sources--Augustus' relationship with the divine and with his ancestral credentials; these would include his lineage from Aeneas, Romulus, and the deified Caesar; his sacred title in his priesthoods; and the concept that the gods wished Augustus to occupy the inexorable summit

and final *telos* of Roman history. The *Aeneid* reinforces these ideas in a very sophisticated way. The association of the divine with the *princeps* runs throughout the epic on different levels. It contains direct references to the divine background of the principate and the *princeps*, such as the above three passages in the first, sixth, and eighth books. But Augustus' divine aura is also present in the subtext—in metaphors, comparisons, learned allusions, and the like. Vergil's emphasis on Augustus' divine authority is not crude and obtrusive, but subtle and sophisticated. The description of Augustus' divine aura is part of the praise associated with the ruler-cult but also gives a strong authoritative basis to Augustus' rule, for Vergil makes it clear that a ruler who is as loved and honored by the gods must be a good and legitimate ruler.

## VI. Conclusion

Authority in Roman times was derived from mythico-historical origins that carried divine pretensions. Accordingly, Augustus and Vergil had to reach back into Roman history and tradition to locate the *auctoritas* of Augustus' military and political power. Alexandre Grandazzi speaks of "a nostalgia for origins"<sup>57</sup> that permeated the last century of the Roman Republic and the Principate of Augustus. The *princeps* participated in this retrieval of the past with his political program of the restoration of the Roman state and society. His politics were particularly concerned with the strengthening of the family and religion as they had been in early days of Rome. He wished to improve the morals which had been corrupted during the chaos of the last century of the Roman Republic. It was believed that those public and private morals had a higher standard in the past. The past, however, was not only a model for a supposedly better life but also provided Augustus with the *auctoritas* that he needed for political power.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Alexandre Grandazzi, *The Foundations of Rome: Myth and History* (Ithaca–London 1997 [= *La fondation de Rome. Réflexion sur l'histoire*, Paris 1991. Translated by Jane Marie Todd]) 34.

<sup>58</sup> Augustus re-established ties with the Rome's origins by the dedicating a chapel to Vesta on the Romulean hill, for in early Rome the Vestals were

Whereas Augustus referred to an undeterminate past, Vergil turned to Aeneas, at a time preceding the very first beginnings of Rome— and Romulus. The *Aeneid* connects Augustus with Aeneas, the legendary founder of the Romans, and then with Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome. Vergil thus associates the *princeps* with the earliest possible days of Roman history, describing Augustus as a second Aeneas as well as as a second Romulus. This is why Vergil wrote an *Aeneid* rather than an *Augusteid*,<sup>59</sup> recalling the mythic and divine origins which would provide the ultimate source for Augustus' authority.

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considered daughters of the king, and the hearth they honored was that of the king's residence. Cf. Grandazzi , 167.

<sup>59</sup> According to Galinsky, 20, Vergil was more interested in the beginnings of Rome and the formation of the Roman people than in the Augustan Rome and its people. "He shifted the emphasis to endeavor and process rather than achievement and therefore wrote...an *Aeneid* rather than an *Augusteid*."