

In the *Aeneid*, Vergil presents concord as an elusive goal reached only after devastating conflict. Scholars have explored this process and its consequences both among the epic's social groups, as in the anticipated unity of the Trojan and Latin peoples, and between individuals, as in the closing settlement between Jupiter and Juno. Yet at least one fundamental mode of social interaction underlying the success or failure of reconciliation remains largely unaccounted for, namely the norms for economic exchange, which Vergil makes central to the disruption and restoration of social harmony.

Both Homeric precedent and Roman society presented Vergil with a basic dichotomy between reciprocal and commodity exchanges. Homeric heroes and the elites of Augustan Rome exhibited a decided preference for reciprocal exchange which helped consolidate their elite status both economically and socially. These reciprocal exchanges took the form of favors or gifts which could form a bond between giver and recipient by creating a sense of ongoing mutual obligation. Forms of commodity exchange, where completed transactions left no debts of gratitude to be discharged, did not produce such relationships, and were consequently viewed as inferior and ignoble. Roman elites differed from the Homeric heroes, however, in that they often engaged in commercial forms of commodity exchange to maintain their wealth and status. In the *Aeneid*, Vergil explores the dichotomy between these two modes of exchange and ultimately presents reciprocity as essential for social concord, but both inherently flawed and often blocked by those who think in commodity exchange terms.

Two figures in the *Aeneid*, Juno and Ascanius, stand at opposite ends of the continuum of exchange relations, and thereby represent the poles of concord and discord. Through consideration of these two characters, this paper will therefore offer a new perspective on how concord is achieved within the *Aeneid*. According to prevailing readings of the epic, Aeneas either establishes social harmony by triumphing over anti-Roman lawlessness, or destroys such harmony as existed in Italy while imposing the hollow peace of imperial subjection. From the perspective of the social-economic relations in the poem, however, the domination of the weaker by the stronger with which the poem ends is just the inevitable result of an underlying breakdown of reciprocity. We can therefore approach Vergil's conception of concord more closely by moving beyond the question of possible justifications for the use of force to the question of how multiple groups, taken as components of one society, should foster the fundamental social conditions which would obviate recourse to arms.