

*Publius Vergilius Maro*  
*Mens agitat molem*

**Anchises reveals the single order**

Virgil's celebrated *mens agitat molem* is part of the opening lines 724 *et seq.* of Virgil's *Aeneid*, VI (THE TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS), where Aeneas finally meets his father in the underworld. Regrettably, the higher meaning implicit in this statement has been dulled by the spiritual aridity of our age. Amplifications of its philosophical significance can be found in our Secret Doctrine Study Notes, "Proposition 2 – Unknown & Unknowable," and "Proposition 3 – The Nous of the Greeks." J.D. Casten's translations are presented herein with permission of the copyright owner.

### John Dryden's translation

Know, first, that heav'n, and earth's compacted frame,  
And flowing waters, and the starry flame,  
And both the radiant lights, one common soul  
Inspires and feeds, and animates the whole.  
This active mind, infus'd thro' all the space,  
Unites and mingles with the mighty mass.  
Hence men and beasts the breath of life obtain,  
And birds of air, and monsters of the main.  
Th' ethereal vigor is in all the same,  
And every soul is fill'd with equal flame;  
As much as earthy limbs, and gross alloy  
Of mortal members, subject to decay,  
Blunt not the beams of heav'n and edge of day.  
From this coarse mixture of terrestrial parts,  
Desire and fear by turns possess their hearts,  
And grief, and joy; nor can the groveling mind,  
In the dark dungeon of the limbs confin'd,  
Assert the native skies, or own its heav'nly kind.



## Virgil's original lines

Principio caelum ac terram camposque liquentis  
lucentumque globum lunae titaniaque astra  
spiritus intus alit totamque infusa per artus  
mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet  
inde hominum pecudumque genus vitaeque volantum  
et quae marmoreo fert monstra sub aequore pontus  
igneus est ollis vigor et caelestis origo  
seminibus quantum non corpora noxia tardant  
terrenque hebetant artus moribundaque membra  
hinc metuunt cupiuntque dolent gaudentque neque auras  
dispiciunt clausae tenebris et carcere caeco  
quin et supremo cum lumine vita reliquit.

## JD Castens' "transparent" translation

Principally are the celestial and terrestrial, and the liquid camps,  
and the lucent lunar globe, and Titan stars,  
Which an inner spirit nourishes; and infused through the totality of artifacts,  
the mental agitates the molecular and mixes itself with the magnificent  
corporeal.  
Thence are the birth of humans and animals, and the vitality of the flying,  
and the monsters which the ocean ferries under marbled waves.  
In these is an ignited vigor and origin from celestial  
seeds — as much as they are not retarded by noxious bodies,  
heavy in terrestrial limbs, and moribund members.  
Hence they fear and desire, suffer and rejoice; yet, not the heavenly breezes  
do they perceive when in closed darkness and blind incarceration,  
but rather when, with a supreme illumination, life releases.

## JD Casten's "looser" translation

In the beginning, an innate spiritual nature, mind,  
initiated, substantiated, and pervaded,  
heaven, earth, vast oceans, the glowing orb moon and divine stars,  
intermingling with the entirety of all being.  
Mind ignites life, creating humans, animals, birds  
and the sea creatures carried under marbled waves,  
as much as these life forces are not slowed by bodies and  
weighted down in earthly, death bound joints and limbs.  
Thus, they mentally fear and desire, suffer and rejoice,  
and do not breath the heavenly air  
from their darkly blind and closed bodily prisons,  
until life is given up with a final enlightenment.



## JD Castens' paraphrase

Mind's natural innate spirit, interpenetrating all being,  
established the heaven of divine stars, planets, and luminous lunar orb,  
which circle round the vast oceans and lands of Gaia where  
consciousness ignites the vital breath: We humans, the beasts of land  
and flight, even creatures swept under the maritime marbled waves;  
all bearing the slowing gravity of mortal joints and limbs; with  
psychological phobias afflicting and affections affirming, while we fail  
to scale the sky's summit, trapped blindly in dark carnal dungeons,  
until life's release in supreme enlightenment.

## AS Kline's translation

Firstly, a spirit within them nourishes the sky and earth,  
the watery plains, the shining orb of the moon,  
and Titan's star, and Mind, flowing through matter,  
vivifies the whole mass, and mingles with its vast frame.  
From it come the species of man and beast, and winged lives,  
and the monsters the sea contains beneath its marbled waves.  
The power of those seeds is fiery, and their origin divine,  
so long as harmful matter doesn't impede them  
and terrestrial bodies and mortal limbs don't dull them.  
Through those they fear and desire, and grieve and joy,  
and enclosed in night and a dark dungeon, can't see the light.



Departure of the Winged Ship by Vladimir Kush

