

Paradiso: Cantos XI - XII

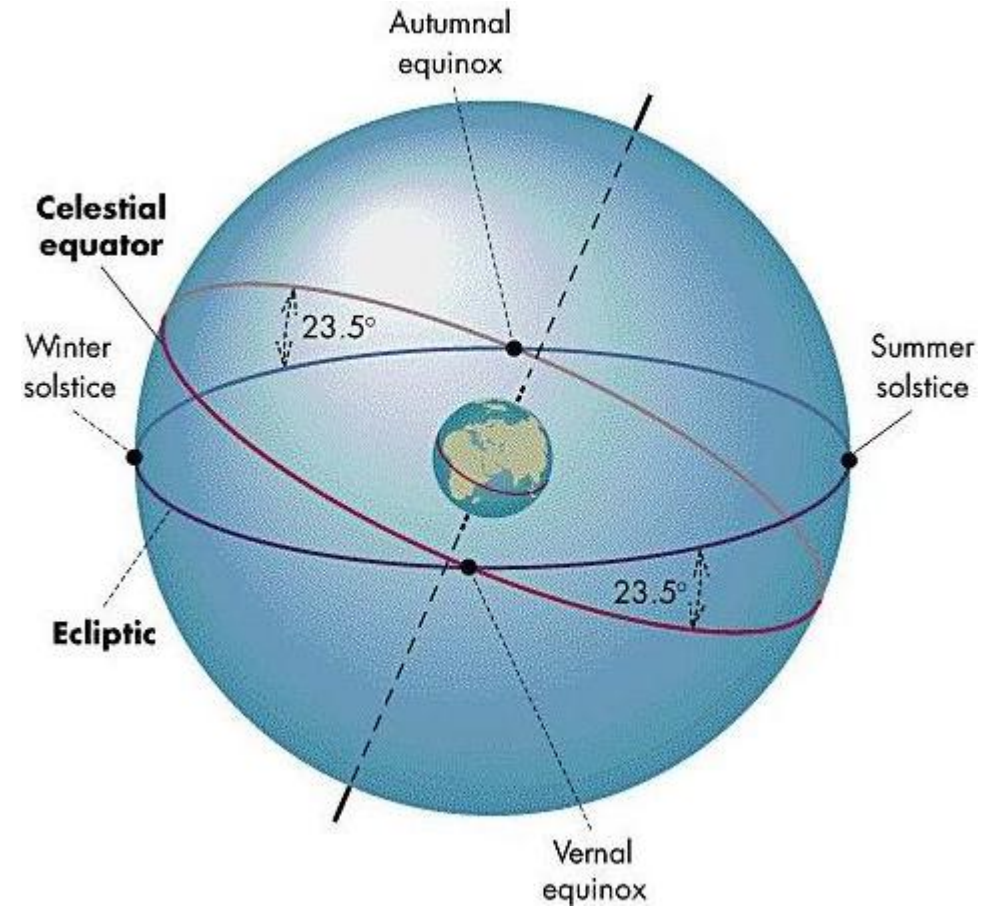
27 April 2020

Dante's journey

- Mercury – Cantos 5-7
- Venus – Cantos 8-9
 - Third Sphere (of Lovers, deficient in temperance)
 - He meets Charles Martel and Folquet de Marseilles
 - Critique of Florence and clergy
- Sun – Cantos 10-14
 - Fourth Sphere (of the Wise, no deficiency)
 - It is explained that they have passed out of the shadow of the Earth (medieval belief of universal shape) and thus the influence of the Earth (deficiencies) disappears
 - Dante sees 12 bright souls circling, then 12 bright souls form an outer circle
 - Clock imagery
 - Light = Time

Canto 10

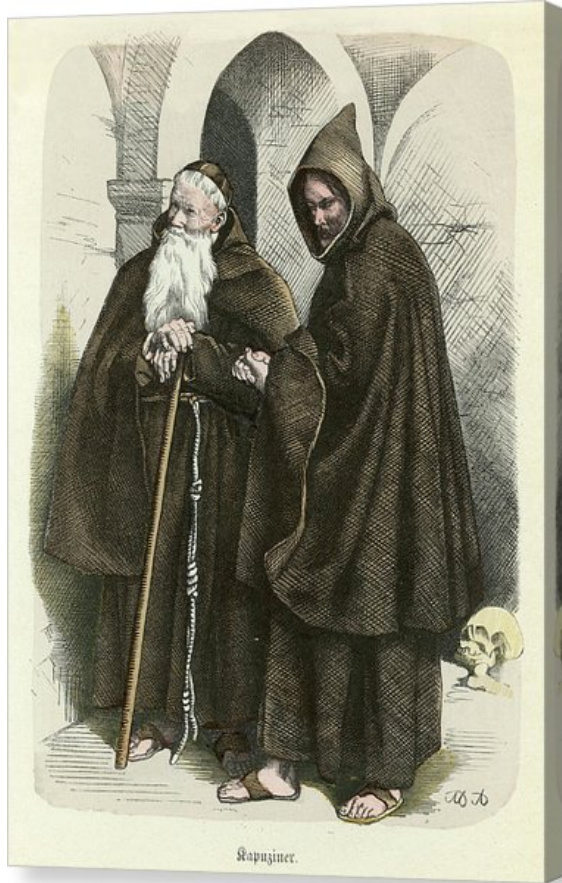
Gazing at [...] the first ineffable Power
Made all that turns in the mind or through
Space with so much order that one who
Contemplates it cannot be without a taste of him.
Lift therefore your gaze to the high wheels
With me, reader, straight to the place where the
One and the other motion strike each other,
And there begin to marvel. [...]
Now stay there, reader, on your bench
Thinking back on your foretaste here, if you wish
To rejoice long before you tire;
I have set before you: now feed yourself, for
All my care is claimed by that matter of which I
have become scribe.
The great minister of Nature, which
Stamps the world with the power of the heavens
And measures time to use with its light." ll. 1-27



Historical Intro: Medieval Orders

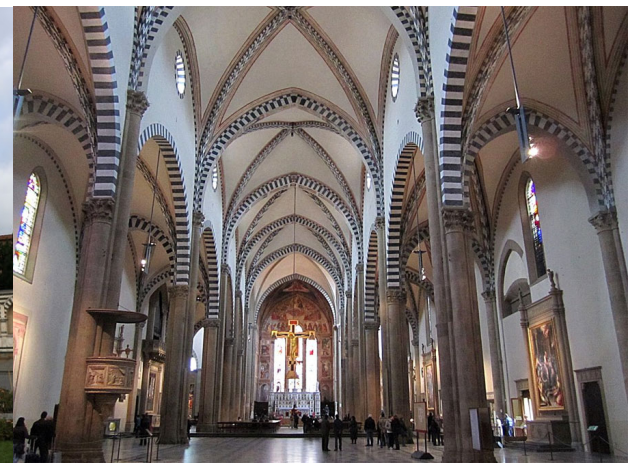
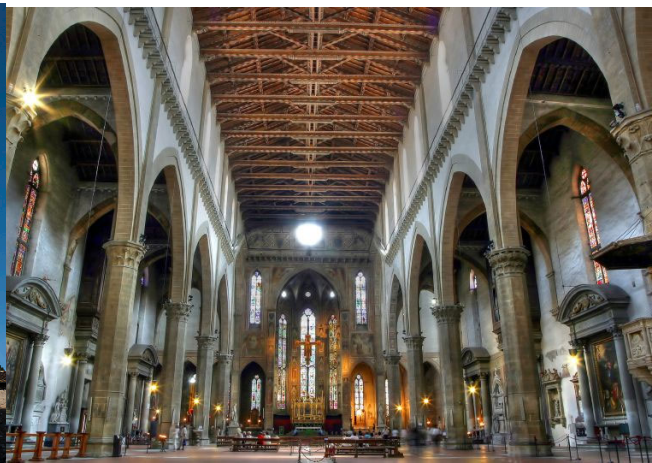
- Monastic vs. Mendicant orders
 - Monastic orders were traditional (secluded, rural, landholders)
 - Mendicant orders were new, revolutionary (traveling, urban, beggars)
 - The Church saw them, at first, as problematic
- Franciscans and Dominicans are the two foundational mendicant orders
 - Domingo de Guzman was born in Spain in 1170, formed the Dominican order in 1216)
 - Francis of Assisi was born in Italy in 1181, formed the Franciscan order in 1210
- These orders were influential in medieval Universities, especially as Scholasticism became popular, creating such theologians as Thomas Aquinas (Dominican) and Bonaventure (Franciscan)

Fun Fact



Problems with the Mendicant Orders in Florence and Beyond

- There was a rivalry of the mendicant orders in Florence
- Part of the problem can still be witnessed today in two of the main city churches
 - Santa Croce
 - Santa Maria Novella
- Another part of the problem was the Inquisition



A Chiasmus in Cantos XI and XII

- Chiasmus: a rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form
- In Canto XI, Dante has the Dominican Scholastic, Thomas Aquinas, present Francis and his Franciscans
- In Canto XII, Dante has the Franciscan Scholastic, Bonaventure, present Dominic and his Dominicans
- He calls the structure a double rainbow, and refers to both the poetic form and the cosmic form in this designation:
 - “As through a tenuous cloud two arcs curve / parallel and colored alike [...] the outer born from the inner one.” XII: ll. 10-12
 - In this image, Dante-poet is also alluding to the ethical shape of the universe, in that, he will return to his argument of the relationship between desire, will and intellect in these cantos. Intellect is primary to will. The Outer circle/light is born from the Inner.

Poetic Chiasmus

Canto 11

Thomas Aquinas Presents St. Francis

Aquinas introduces himself (10.99)

- Begins by introducing both saints together (11.35)
- Parallels the two men (11.40-2)
- Locates Francis 11.43-54
- Associates him with the rising sun (11.53-4)
- Francis is named explicitly:(11.73)
- Francis is 'wed' to Lady Poverty (11.73)
- Seed of virtue = Love:(11.76-78)
- Disciples (11.79-84)
- Papal approval of the order (11.91-98)
- Associates Franciscans with Dominicans (11.118-23)
- Laments how Dominicans have strayed (11.124-32)

Canto 12

Bonaventura Presents St. Dominic

- Begins by introducing both saints together (12.35-6)
- Parallels the two men (12.43-5)
- Locates Dominic (12.46-55)

Associates him with the setting sun (12.46-51)

- Seed of virtue = Mind (12. 58)
- Dominic is 'wed' to Faith:(12.61)
- Dominic is named explicitly: (12.70)
- Papal approval of the order: (12.88-96)
- Associates Dominicans with Franciscans (12.106-11)
- Laments how Franciscans have strayed(12.115-26)
- Bonaventura introduces himself: (12.127)*
- Disciples: (12.130-40)

Cantos of the Sun (10-14), specifically (11-12)

- Dissolves Rivalry -> Becomes reciprocity
- Threshold Canto
 - We exit the shadow of the Earth
 - (Cantos 9-10 in Inferno took us into Dis, in Purgatorio into the Gates)
 - The cantos of the sun are the literal center of the planetary cosmos
- We are given to understand that, though the circles move together (like eyes blink together (XII 25-27), the will (represented by Francis) follows the intellect (represented by Dominic)
 - “The one was seraphic in his love, the other in / wisdom was a splendor.” (XI 37-38)

Shadows Disappears

- With the shadow, so disappear figures
 - Paradoxically, as Dante is further 'illuminated', he becomes increasingly blinded in a sense, figures become more and more like pure light
 - We move from the physical to the purely intellectual
 - We will increasingly see the inexpressibility topos
 - This inexpressibility topos implies one of two things
 - Either that Dante doesn't have the words to express what he saw (unlikely for a poet like Dante, who is willing to make up new words)
 - OR that he is 'seeing' in the sense of 'understanding' and recreating that understanding in figurative language
 - It implies something that is explicit in *Timaeus*: namely, that one can only make reasonable theories about the nature of the universe, one cannot physically see it and thus empirically prove it
 - Theory v. Dogma
- With the shadow, so disappear deficiencies in the souls of these sphere
 - This implies a parallel between the characters and planets, it is not a mere categorizing
 - It is problematizing the limits of free will (power of planetary influence)
 - While at the same time arguing for the power of Intellect over Will (mind over matter)
 - A nuanced argument that we will see in Neoplatonism as well

Theme

- These cantos reintroduce the subject of love, desire and restraint.
- Here Dante-pilgrim learns that Will follows Intellect, through intellect we restrain false love
 - Francis represents ardor, will, passion
 - Dominic represents intellectual thought
- Though this hierarchy is intentionally confused in these Cantos and intrinsically bound, he still gives us to understand that the Intellect has primacy.
- CENTRAL TO THE ENTIRE WORK: Dante's goal with the *Divine Comedy*, as we have discussed before?

Central goal laid out here

From *Timaeus*



- Dante writes in his letter to Cangrande that he wants to give people the means to lead themselves from a state of misery to a state of happiness.
 - Like Kant with his Categorical Imperative and his theory of Aesthetic Judgment
- Dante says in Cantos 10-14:
 - Lift up your eyes, contemplate the sky.
 - Read this book carefully (read all the books I mention so you can understand it).
 - Contemplate it (while you are on your bench contemplating the sky).
 - Then, in life, follow your mind/intellect, not your heart.
 - When desire comes into your heart, recognize whether it is desire that leads to the 'ideal' state, or which leads away.
- This is how we can be ethical by our own judgment.

Neoplatonism

- Dante in the Cantos of the Sun is attempting to reconcile Scholasticism and Neoplatonism
 - Scholasticism: a method of critical thought which dominated teaching by the academics of medieval universities in Europe in the middle ages (even through the 1700s)
 - Neoplatonism: The dominant philosophy of late antiquity, suggesting a cosmological and ontological system that can be divided between the invisible world and the phenomenal world.
 - The former containing the transcendent One from which emanates an eternal, perfect essence (Nous), which, in turn, produces the world-soul.
 - The latter which is constituted by the Earth and the events and beings that make it up.

Neoplatonism

- The dominant philosophy of late antiquity
- Greatest achievement was a synthesis of the profound intellectual heritage absorbed across the entire Hellenic heritage
- Created a powerful system of that thought that reflected scientific and moral theories of Plato, Aristotle, and the ethics of the Stoics
 - That is, reflection on the sum-total of ideas produced over centuries of sustained inquiry into the human condition

Neoplatonism

- Two fundamental assumptions of both Neoplatonists and SPA:
 - First: that mindful consciousness (intellect) is ontologically prior to the physical realm, which we understand as reality (mind over matter)
 - Second: reality, in its cognitive and physical manifestations, depends on the highest principle, which is unitary and singular
- Neoplatonism strives to understand everything on the basis of a single cause that they referred to as “the First”, “the One” or “The Good”
- They find it reasonable that this cause, since it must be ontologically prior, therefore must be conceived of as more real than its effect.
 - That is, in the hierarchy of being, the first principle, whatever it is, cannot be less ‘real’ than the phenomena it is supposed to explain.
 - So if we search for truth, we search in the direction of the First/the One.

Neoplatonism

- Fundamental question of Neoplatonism:
 - How are we to understand and describe the emergence of the universe, with all its diverse phenomena, as the effect of a singular principle of consciousness?
 - In particular, how is it possible to understand the emergence of the physical, material universe from a singularity that is in every sense unlike this universe?
- The Neoplatonic answer to this question went beyond any prior cosmic aetiology, including that of Plato's *Timaeus*, in both its elegance and its sophistication.

- DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- With this description of Neoplatonism in mind, why would I say that Dante in Cantos 11-12 (or across Paradiso so far) is trying to reconcile, or bridge, Neoplatonism with contemporary philosophy/dogma?

Timaeus

- Plato, 360 BCE
- Timaeus introduces his account as a ‘likely story’, that is, a theorization, or a reasonable account
 - For, a definitive account eludes humans (see Dante’s transition from empirical to faith-based)
- In the *Timaeus*, Plato presents an account of the formation of the universe and an explanation of its order and beauty.

Timaeus

- Distinguishes between a physical and eternal world
 - The physical world changes and perishes, it is the realm of fact (factum) and opinion
 - The eternal world is unchangeable and everlasting, it is the realm of truth (verum) and reason
- “Anything that becomes is caused to become by something” (28a4–6, c2–3).
 - He proposes that the universe is a product of rational, purposive and beneficent agency.
 - Made by the Intellect, which he anthropomorphizes as the “Demiurge” (dêmiourgos, 28a6), who imposes mathematical order on a preexistent chaos to generate an ordered universe (kosmos).
- The Intellect models the physical world on the eternal world, using **ideal ‘forms’** as the templates for real ones.

Timaeus

- The arrangement of the kosmos is not fortuitous, it is deliberate. It is the production of the Intellect, which plans and constructs a world that is as excellent (see: good/ordered) as its nature permits
- How does the Intellect do this?
 - Out of the chaotic 'substance' of the unordered physical world, the Intellect creates four harmonious elements
 - Earth, fire, water, air (there is a fifth element, aether)
 - It forms the world into a globe
 - It gives the globe a circular movement
 - It creates the World-Soul
 - This beautiful orderliness is not only the manifestation of the Intellect, it is also the model for rational souls to understand and to emulate
 - In understanding and emulation, a soul returns towards the Ideal

Timaeus and ethics

- Plato inherited from Socrates the conviction that knowledge of goodness has a salvific effect upon human life.
- *Timaeus* follows the *Republic* and *Phaedo*, which both seek to determine the role of Good in the world. This work, seeks to articulate, rather, how cosmic good manifests in the universe so that humans will recognize it, understand it, and emulate it.
- This, in turn, will lead humans to become truly virtuous and, thus, happy.
 - Very similar, indeed, to Kant's rationale in his third, critique, the Critique of Judgment.

Discussion

- How can the goals of Dante-Poet and the journey of Dante-Pilgrim be conceived of in terms of *Timaeus*?
 - How would you characterize the central goal of the *Divine Comedy*?
 - How would you describe his journey, using Platonic terms?

Central goal laid out here

- Dante writes in his letter to Cangrande that he wants to give people the means to lead themselves from a state of misery to a state of happiness.
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