



CANTO 32

The Empyrean, continued: the ranks of the blessed: Hebrew women and men—Christian women and men—infants—the Virgin Mary and Gabriel, Adam, saint Peter, Moses, saint Anna, saint Lucy

- 1 Fixed on his pleasure, that contemplative
freely assumed the office of teacher, and he
began these holy words:
- 4 "The wound that Mary closed and anointed,
that soul so beautiful at her feet is she who
opened and inflicted it.
- 7 Below her, in the third tier of seats, sits
Rachel with Beatrice, as you see.
- 10 Sarah and Rebecca, Judith, and her who was
great-grandmother to the singer who, grieving at
his sin, said: '*Miserere mei,*'
- 13 you can see, following each other down tier
by tier, as I with the name of each go from petal
down to petal in the rose.
- 16 And from the seventh degree downward, as
down to it, there follow Hebrew women, parting
all the hairs of the flower,
- 19 because, according to the direction looked in
by their faith in Christ, these are the wall where

- the sacred stairways divide.
- 22 On this side, where the flower is mature with
 all its petals, are seated those who believed in
 Christ to come;
- 25 on the other side, where the semicircles
 are interrupted by vacancies, are those
 who had their faces turned toward Christ
 already come.
- 28 And, as on this side the glorious throne of the
 Lady of Heaven and the others beneath it make
 so great a division,
- 31 so, opposite, the throne of the great John
 who, ever holy, suffered the wilderness and
 martyrdom and then Hell for two years,
- 34 and below him in the same way Francis,
 Benedict, and Augustine have been assigned to
 divide, and others down to here from circle to
 circle.
- 37 Behold now God's high foresight: for the two
 gazes of the faith will equally fill this garden.
- 40 And know that down from the degree that
 strikes the midpoint of the two divisions, sit
 souls that have no merit of their own
- 43 but that of others, with certain conditions: for
 all these are spirits absolved before they had
 true power of choice.
- 46 You can perceive it well by their faces and
 their childish voices, if you look well and listen to
 them.
- 49 Now you have a doubt and are silent in your

- doubt, but I will untie the strong bonds with
which your subtle thoughts are gripping you.
- 52 Within this ample kingdom no effect of
chance can have a place, no more than
sadness or thirst or hunger,
- 55 for eternal law establishes whatever you see,
so that here there is an exact fit between ring
and finger;
- 58 and therefore this people that has hastened
to the true life is not *sine causa* more and less
excellent among themselves here.
- 61 The King through whom this kingdom
reposes—in so much love and so much delight
that no will has ever experienced more—
- 64 creating all minds for the joyful sight of him, at
his pleasure endows them with grace differently,
and here let the effect suffice.
- 67 And this is noted expressly and clearly for you
in Holy Scripture, in those twins whose anger
was aroused while still within their mother;
- 70 therefore, according to the color of the hair of
each one's grace, as is fitting, they take their
wreathes of highest Light.
- 73 Thus, without any merit from their conduct,
they are placed in different tiers, differing only in
their first acumen.
- 76 In the earliest centuries the faith of the
parents alone, along with innocence, was
enough to bring salvation;
- 79 after the first ages were completed, males

- were required to acquire power for their
innocent wings by circumcision.
- 82 But once the time of grace arrived, without
perfect baptism in Christ such innocence has
been detained below.
- 85 Look now at the face that most resembles
Christ, for its brightness alone can enable you
to see Christ."
- 88 I saw so much joy raining upon her, carried in
the holy minds created to soar through that
altitude,
- 91 that all I had seen before had not suspended
me in so much admiration, nor shown me
anything more resembling God.
- 94 And the love that first descended there,
singing "*Ave, Maria, gratia plena*," had spread
forth his wings before her.
- 97 On every side the blessed court answered
the divine cantilena, so that every eye became
brighter because of it.
- 100 "O holy father, who for my sake endure being
here below, leaving the sweet place where you
sit by your eternal lot,
- 103 which is that angel who so joyously is gazing
into the eyes of our queen, so filled with love
that he seems of fire?"
- 106 Thus I appealed again to the teaching of him
who was made beautiful by Mary, as by the sun
the morning star.
- 109 And he to me: "Boldness and joy, as great as

- can be in either angel or human soul, are all in
him, and thus we wish it to be,
- 112 for he is the one who carried down the palm
to Mary, when the Son of God wished to burden
himself with our flesh.
- 115 But come along now with your eyes as I go
speaking, and note the great patricians of this
most just and merciful empire.
- 118 Those two who sit happiest up there, being nearest
to Augusta, are as it were two roots of this rose:
- 121 the one who is just to her left is that father for
whose bold taste the human race tastes so
much bitterness;
- 124 on her right behold that ancient father of Holy
Church to whom Christ entrusted the keys to
this lovely flower.
- 127 And he who saw, before he died, all the
heavy times of the lovely bride who was bought
with the spear and the nails,
- 130 sits alongside him, and next to the other rests
the leader under whom the ungrateful, fickle,
back-sliding people lived on manna.
- 133 Opposite Peter see Anna sit, so happy to
gaze on her daughter that she does not move
her eyes, though singing hosanna,
- 136 and opposite that greatest father of the family
sits Lucy, who sent your lady when you bent
your brow to fall.
- 139 But because the time is fleeting that holds
you asleep, here we will make an end, like a

good tailor who makes the garment according to
the cloth he has,

142 and we will direct our eyes to the first Love,
so that, gazing toward him, you may penetrate
as far as possible into his radiance.

145 Truly, lest perhaps you fly backward moving
your wings, believing you move forward, we
must gain grace by praying,

148 grace from her who can help you, and you
shall follow me with your love, so that your heart
will not depart from my words."

151 And he began this holy prayer:



CANTO 32

Affetto al suo piacer, quel contemplante
libero officio di dottore assunse,
e cominciò queste parole sante:

"La piaga che Maria richiuse e unse,
quella ch' è tanto bella da' suoi piedi
è colei che l'aperse e che la punse.

Ne l'ordine che fanno i terzi sedi,
siede Rachèl di sotto da costei
con Bëatrice, sì come tu vedi.

Sarra e Rebecca, Iudit e colei
che fu bisava al cantor che per doglia
del fallo disse: '*Miserere mei,*'
puoi tu veder così di soglia in soglia
giù digradar, com' io ch' a proprio nome
vo per la rosa giù di foglia in foglia.

E dal settimo grado in giù, sì come
infino ad esso, succedono Ebree,
dirimendo del fior tutte le chiome;

perché, secondo lo sguardo che fée
la fede in Cristo, queste sono il muro
a che si parton le sacre scalee.

Da questa parte, onde 'l fiore è maturo
di tutte le sue foglie, sono assisi
quei che credettero in Cristo venturo;

da l'altra parte, onde sono intercisi
di vòti i semicirculi, si stanno
quei ch' a Cristo venuto ebber li visi.

1

4

7

10

13

16

19

22

25

- E come quinci il glorioso scanno 28
de la Donna del Cielo e li altri scanni
di sotto lui cotanta cerna fanno,
così di contra quel del gran Giovanni 31
che sempre santo 'l diserto e 'l martiro
sofferse, e poi l'inferno da due anni,
e sotto lui così cerner sortiro 34
Francesco, Benedetto e Agostino,
e altri fin qua giù di giro in giro.
- Or mira l'alto proveder divino: 37
ché l'uno e l'altro aspetto de la fede
igualmente empierà questo giardino.
- E sappi che dal grado in giù che fiede 40
a mezzo il tratto le due discrezioni,
per nullo proprio merito si siede,
ma per l'altrui, con certe condizioni: 43
ché tutti questi son spiriti asciolti
prima ch' avesser vere elezioni.
- Ben te ne puoi accorger per li volti 46
e anche per le voci puerili,
se tu li guardi bene e se li ascolti.
- Or dubbi tu e dubitando sili, 49
ma io discioglierò 'l forte legame
in che ti stringon li pensier sottili.
- Dentro a l'ampiezza di questo reame 52
casüal punto non puote aver sito,
se non come tristizia o sete o fame,
ché per etterna legge è stabilito 55
quantunque vedi, sì che giustamente
ci si risponde da l'anello al dito;

e però questa festinata gente
a vera vita non è *sine causa*
intra sé qui più e meno eccellente.

58

Lo rege per cui questo regno pausa—
in tanto amore e in tanto diletto
che nulla volontà è di più ausa—
le menti tutte nel suo lieto aspetto
creando, a suo piacer di grazia dota
diversamente, e qui basti l'effetto.

61

E ciò espresso e chiaro vi si nota
ne la Scrittura santa, in quei gemelli
che ne la madre ebber l'ira commota;
però secondo il color d'i capelli
di cotal grazia l'altissimo lume
degnamente convien che s'incappelli.

64

Dunque senza mercé di lor costume
locati son per gradi differenti,
sol differendo nel primo acume.

67

Bastavasi ne' secoli recenti
con l'innocenza, per aver salute,
solamente la fede d'i parenti;
poi che le prime etadi fuor compiute,
convenne ai maschi a l'innocenti penne
per circuncidere acquistar virtute.

70

73

Ma poi che 'l tempo de la grazia venne,
sanza battesmo perfetto di Cristo
tale innocenza là giù si ritenne.

76

Riguarda omai ne la faccia che a Cristo
più si somiglia, ché la sua chiarezza
sola ti può disporre a veder Cristo."

79

82

85

- Io vidi sopra lei tanta allegrezza 88
piover, portata ne le menti sante
create a trasvolar per quella altezza,
che quantunque io avea visto davante 91
di tanta ammirazion non mi sospese
né mi mostrò di Dio tanto sembiante.
- E quello amor che primo lì discese, 94
cantando: "Ave, Maria, gratia plena,"
dinanzi a lei le sue ali distese.
- Rispuose a la divina cantilena 97
da tutte parti la beata corte,
sì ch'ogne vista sen fé più serena.
- "O santo padre, che per me comporte 100
l'esser qua giù, lasciando il dolce loco
nel qual tu siedi per eterna sorte,
qual è quell'angel che con tanto gioco 103
guarda ne li occhi la nostra regina,
innamorato sì che par di foco?"
- Così ricorsi ancora a la dottrina 106
di colui ch' abelliva di Maria
come del sole stella mattutina.
- Ed elli a me: "Baldezza e leggiadria 109
quant' esser puote in angelo e in alma
tutta è in lui, e sì volem che sia,
perch' elli è quelli che portò la palma 112
giuso a Maria quando 'l Figliuol di Dio
carcar si volse de la nostra salma.
- Ma vieni omai con li occhi sì com' io 115
andrò parlando, e nota i gran patrici
di questo imperio giustissimo e pio.

Quei due che seggon là sù più felici,
per esser propinquissimi ad Agusta,
son d'esta rosa quasi due radici:

118

colui che da sinistra le s'aggiusta

121

è 'l padre per lo cui ardito gusto
l'umana specie tanto amaro gusta;
dal destro vedi quel padre vetusto
di santa Chiesa a cui Cristo le chiavi
raccomandò di questo fior venusto.

124

E quei che vide tutt' i tempi gravi,
pria che morisse, de la bella sposa
che s'acquistò con la lancia e coi clavi
siede lungh' esso, e lungo l'altro posa
quel duca sotto cui visse di manna
la gente ingrata, mobile e retrosa.

127

Di contr' a Pietro vedi sedere Anna,
tanto contenta di mirar sua figlia
che non move occhio per cantare osanna,
e contro al maggior padre di famiglia
siede Lucia, che mosse la tua donna
quando chinavi a rovinar le ciglia.

133

136

Ma perché 'l tempo fugge che t'assonna
qui farem punto, come buon sartore
che com' elli ha del panno fa la gonna,
e drizzeremo li occhi al primo amore,
sì che guardando verso lui penètri
quant' è possibil per lo suo fulgore.

139

142

Veramente, *ne* forse tu t'arretri
movendo l'ali tue, credendo oltrarti,
orando grazia conven che s'impetri,

145

grazia da quella che puote aiutarti;
e tu mi seguirai con l'affezione
sì che dal dicer mio lo cor non parti."

148

E cominciò questa santa orazione:

151

NOTES

1–3. Fixed on his pleasure ... these holy words: As the commentators observe, "pleasure" refers to Mary, the object of Bernard's devotion; the lines also refer to his fame as a contemplative, and his eloquence as a preacher and teacher of his monks (for whom he wrote the sermons on the Canticle of Canticles and his other works): they summarize his reputation. In his "office of teacher" Bernard acts like a university lecturer imparting doctrine (see 24.46–51 and note).

3. holy words: "holy" is used frequently in this canto: see lines 32, 68, 89, 100, and, at 151, the "holy prayer," referring to the next canto.

4–138. The wound that Mary closed ... bent your brow to fall: The arrangement of souls in the "merciful empire" (line 117) of the rose derives from the major phases of salvation history (lines 4–6, 76–84): mentioned are the communities of faith before and after Christ (37–39); the two cities, of the saved and the reprobate (implied at lines 67–69); the genealogy of Christ (10–12); the Incarnation (lines 94–96, 113–14), Crucifixion (127–29), and Apocalypse (implied in lines 37–39). The pilgrim's rescue at the beginning of the poem (lines 136–38) follows mention of the Exodus from Egypt (lines 130–32).

4–84. The wound that Mary closed ... detained below: Bernard explains that the rose is divided vertically (lines 13–18, 31–36) between those who believe in Christ already come and those who believed in Christ yet to come (lines 19–27, 37–39), and also horizontally: below are children who owe their places to the merits of others (lines 40–48); they too have distinct degrees of beatitude (lines 52–84). For the further articulations of the rose, see note to lines 22–36.

4–39. The wound that Mary closed ... equally fill this garden: The two groups of the blessed face each other, as if the two halves of a hemisphere; numbers on the two sides are nearly the same, but some seats remain unfilled among those who believe in Christ already come (lines 25–26): some time remains before the Last Judgment. Dante recalls at *Conv.* 3.7.5 the idea that God made man in order to replace the tally of fallen angels, placing a limit on the souls destined for Heaven (144,000, according to Apoc. 7.4–8).

4–18. The wound that Mary closed ... the hairs of the flower: The first vertical group, the "wall" (line 20) descending from Mary in the top rank through the first seven tiers, is of OT matriarchs and heroines; and from there downward, additional Hebrew women. The idea that the "hairs" of the rose, referring to the blessed, its "petals," are divided (or parted) suggests an image of the Empyrean as a head (Alain de Lille gives personified Nature a coiffure articulated and adorned like the heavens in the first prose section of his *Plaint of Nature*). For the importance of the head, see Additional Note 14.

4–6. The wound that Mary closed ... opened and inflicted it: Human nature was wounded by the sin of Eve and healed by the son of Mary (the pithy “that one struck the blow, this one healed it” [*illa percussit, ista sanavit*] is found in several sermons attributed to Augustine). See Rom. 5.19: “For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just.” Christian salvation history is compressed into three lines.

Benvenuto noted that since wounds are medicated before they close, and inflicted before being opened, the actions of Eve and of Mary are given in reverse order [*hysteron proteron*]; a reversal of temporal order and causation also puts Mary before Eve, and above her (line 5): Redemption, the ultimate goal, is logically prior to the Fall that set in motion God’s plan (juxtaposing Alpha and O; see Additional Note 14). For the wound of nature in the pilgrim, see 31.88–89, *Inf.* 1.30 and notes.

7–39. Below her ... equally fill this garden: The Empyrean is seen simultaneously as a flower (line 15), a garden (39), and an amphitheater, with ascending ranks of seats (lines 7, 13–14, 16, 20–21), which modifies the image of the ladder (see 22.68). Buti thought of the Roman arena of Verona; the Roman Colosseum is also a possible reference; see [figure 9](#). Dante knew from Isidore of Seville (*Etym.* 18.42) that the word for “theater” derived from the Greek word for “gazing” [*theoría*].

7–9. Below her ... Rachel with Beatrice, as you see: Below the mother of God and the mother of humankind sits Rachel, wife of Jacob (Israel) and mother of Joseph and his brothers (patriarchs of the twelve tribes), and thus of the Jews as the chosen people (see *Inf.* 4.59–60 and note); to her right is Beatrice. In the third dream of *Purgatorio*, Rachel prefigures Beatrice (27.100–108; see notes).

10–12. Sarah and Rebecca ... *Miserere mei* [have mercy on me]: OT Hebrew women with faith (see Heb. 11.11–12; Rom. 9.8–13): Sarah was wife to Abraham, with whom God made a covenant (see note to lines 76–84), promising to multiply his seed; she gave birth late in life to Isaac (Gen. 17.15–21; 21.1–3); Rebecca, Isaac’s wife, bore Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25.19–25; see lines 67–69); next is Judith, the virtuous widow who saved Israel by seducing and beheading Nebuchadnezzar’s general Holofernes (Judith 8–16, esp. 15.10; see *Purg.* 12.58–60 and notes; and see *Purg.* 29.85–86 and note, for her relation to the cult of Mary). Named last is Ruth the Moabite, first a widow, then wife of Boaz, father of Obed, father of Jesse, father of David (Ruth 4); along with Eve, Ruth and David are named through periphrasis. Ruth anchors the Jewish genealogies to the ancestry of Christ, whose descent from Jesse is spelled out in Matt. 1.1–17 and represented visually in the Jesse tree (a feature of illustrated Bibles; see note to *Purg.* 7.121). As mother to the twelve tribes, and because of her relation to contemplation and to Beatrice, Rachel has pride of place among the matriarchs.

12. *Miserere mei*: These words from the third verse of Psalm 50 are quoted and echoed by the pilgrim’s first words in the poem, spoken to Virgil (see *Inf.* 1.63)—another instance of first and last, Alpha and O. The psalm was traditionally held to have been written by King David to

atone for his love of Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, sent by David to die in battle in order to make possible the king's marriage with his widow (2 Kings 11–12; see 20.37–42, *Purg.* 10.55–69 and notes). This is the last of several uses of this psalm in the poem (*Purg.* 5.24, 31.98; *Par.* 14.88–93 and notes); along with *Ave Maria* and *Hosanna* (also mentioned in this canto), Psalm 50 is the most frequently used liturgical element in the poem.

11–12. grieving at his sin: Dante's word for David's "sin," *fallo*, is the same word used of the "first fault written down" of Guinevere (16.15 and note).

19–39. because, according to the direction ... fill this garden: Like the presence in the Heaven of Justice of souls who believed in Christ's feet yet to suffer [*passuri*] and which had suffered [*passi*] (see 20.100–105; also 19.103–5 and notes), the division of Dante's Empyrean into two groups is expressed in grammatically coordinated terms, a future participle, *venturo* [to come] in line 24, and a past participle, *venuto* [already come] in line 27, given in reversed temporal order (see note to lines 4–6). See Additional Note 4.

21. where the sacred stairways divide: The Jewish matriarchs and the heroic Judith define one limit within the rose; line 17 indicates that the vertical line of seats goes to the bottom and center of the rose (where the pilgrim stands with Bernard, looking up); this means the two "seams" also delimit two sides of the lower half (see lines 40–84). The claim that the upper register is complete with seven rows, with an equal number in the lower register, giving a total of fourteen rows for the rose, cannot be reconciled with the vast distance said to separate the pilgrim from Beatrice as he stands at the bottom of the rose (31.73–76 and note). "More than a thousand tiers" [*soglie*] at 30.113 must refer to ranks, not individual seats.

22–36. On this side ... from circle to circle: In the other half of the rose are souls who believe in Christ after his Advent. Defining the limit of this region, in the row opposite that of the Hebrew women, is found John the Baptist, directly across from Mary, under whom, in descending degrees, are located Francis (cf. 11.43–75), Benedict (cf. 22.37–42) and Augustine.. See [figure 8](#).

22–25. On this side ... on the other side: Bernard indicates the near side, his right, and a far side, to his left; if he faces the "wall" of Hebrew women, this means that the group who believed before Christ are to Mary's left, and the group who believed after Christ to her right, perhaps the "better" side.

25–26. where the semicircles are interrupted by vacancies: If the ranks are semicircles, then the rose is hemispheric; Lana terms it a *scudella* [bowl]; see lines 7–39, 30.115–17 and notes. See [figure 9](#).

31–33. so, opposite ... Hell for two years: This is John the Baptist, the herald of Christ, "ever holy" because he is "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1.15). Martyred by decapitation twenty months before the Crucifixion, he descended to Limbo, where according to the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus he preached the imminent descent of Christ

to the ancient just. The lives of the Baptist and his counterpart Mary span the transition from the time before Christ to the time after: John is traditionally the last prophet of Christ, and his baptism, of water only, the intermediary rite between circumcision and Christ's baptism; see lines 76–84. For the Baptist as patron saint of Florence, a role he shares with the Virgin Mary, see *Inf.* 13.143–44; *Par.* 16.25–27, 40–42, 46–47 and notes.

34–35. and below him ... Benedict and Augustine: A column of "fathers" of the Church complement the matriarchs opposite. All the "fathers" in this group promulgated a rule of religious life; the same group (along with Dominic) is at *Conv.* 4.28.9. As a founder of Cistercian houses, Bernard's place, from which he departs to guide the pilgrim [31.65–66] is perhaps in this column (Picone in *LDT* Canto 32) Placement of monastic founders beneath John reflects the austere life of the Baptist as a desert hermit (line 32; see *Purg.* 22.151–54 and note).

After the Fourth Lateran council in 1215 discouraged new monastic rules, Augustine's rule, compiled from his letters, was adopted by several new orders, including the Dominicans, the Augustinian canons, and the Knights of Mary, or Frati Gaudenti (*Inf.* 23.103 and note). The new rules Francis wrote were ratified by the papacy (11.94–99 and notes), though his will was later rejected. See Additional Note 5.

37–39. Behold now ... fill this garden: Note the emphasis on sight (also evident at lines 19 and 27): both God's foresight [*proveder*] and the two "gazes" [*aspetto*] or "aspects" of the faith. See note to lines 7–39.

39. will equally fill this garden: See note to lines 133–38.

40–84. And know that ... detained below: Halfway down, the rose is divided horizontally, below which are the souls of children, also divided according to their birth before or after Christ; their salvation depends not on their merit, but on the faith of their parents or of the Church, and on predestination, which endowed them at birth with differing degrees of intellectual acuity.

44–45. for all these are spirits ... true power of choice: The children were spared damnation, the penalty of original sin (see *Purg.* 16.76–78 and note). Since the souls appear as if reunited with their bodies, it would be confusing to take "absolved" [*asciolti*] to mean released from the body, as some suggest.

46–48. You can perceive it well ... listen to them: As in the case of Bernard, seen as an old man (31.59, 94), Dante's placement of children in the Empyrean departs from prevailing opinion, based on Eph. 4.13 and enunciated in Augustine's *De civ. Dei* (22.14–16), that all the resurrected, regardless of age at death, would in Heaven have bodies suited to perfect age, that is, about thirty-three years old, Christ's age at his death (see also *ST* 3a Suppl. q. 81 a. 1). Dante's Heaven is thus less uniform in human shapes and sizes than those of Augustine and Aquinas. The childish faces and voices are perceptible because of the provision at 30.44–45.

49–84. Now you have a doubt ... detained below: Bernard answers the pilgrim's unspoken question: if children who die before the age of choice do not acquire personal merit, how are they given different ranks within the rose? (lines 49–51). Each enjoys a different endowment of grace at birth (61–75); their salvation is also subject to different criteria (76–84), based on distinct ages of salvation history.

52–66. Within this ample kingdom ... let the effect suffice: Since all things the pilgrim sees in Heaven are determined by eternal law, nothing is left to chance, including the placement of every soul in the rose. See also note to lines 64–66.

52–54. Within this ample kingdom ... thirst or hunger: Commentators note the reference to the redeemed at Apoc. 7.16–17 (see also 21.4): "They shall neither hunger nor thirst any more ... God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"; Dante reverses the order of terms.

55–57. for eternal law ... between ring and finger: The reward (the ring) is proportionate to the soul's merit (the finger). In the context of "the two gazes of the faith" (lines 37–39), the choice of the ring, which signifies faithfulness (the wedding band is *la fede* in modern Italian), may be associated with the faithful wives, widows, and patriarchs on both sides of the rose; the ranks are themselves rings or circles, *giri*. See *Purg.* 5.130–36 and note.

61–62. The King through whom this kingdom reposes: Further indication of Heaven as a monarchical realm, sharing many of the principles of Dante's idealized (but not unhistorical) earthly empire as described in *Monarchia*. See Additional Note 2.

64–75. creating all minds ... in their first acumen: God grants to individuals different intellectual capacities and potentials to receive grace (cf. *Purg.* 16.85–90 and note); thus the placement of infants in the rose reflects not their acts while alive, but their congenital endowment with the ability to see and understand God. How Providence overrules heredity in distributing natural gifts was explained in *Par.* 8.97–136 (see note).

64–66. creating all minds ... let the effect suffice. Infants receive distinct gifts of nature and grace at birth (see Nardi 1964), which is consistent with the first words of the cantica and with the philosophical ideas in *Ep.* 13.68–70 (see 1.4–5 and note) and *Conv.* 3.7.2–3. Discussing the moment when the soul is created and infused in the new creature,

after the supreme deity, which is God, sees his creature prepared to receive of his benefits, he grants them as abundantly as he may, insofar as the creature is prepared to receive them (*Conv.* 4.21.11).

Bernard's discussion of the infants in the rose is thus relevant to the fundamental principles that organize *Paradiso*. See lines 73–75, 4.82–88 and notes.

67–72. And this is noted ... wreaths of highest Light: Bernard's example of differing

endowments are the twins Jacob and Esau, who "struggled" while still in Rebecca's womb (see 8.130–32 and notes, Gen. 25.22–27, Mal. 1.2–3, and especially Rom. 9.10–15) and whose differing destinies—Esau the reprobate who sold his birthright for a dish of lentils, Jacob the father of the twelve tribes of Israel—were manifest in the difference of hair color (see *ST* 1a 2a q. 112 a. 4).

Dante's rhyming of "hair" [*cappelli*] with "enwreathing" [*incappelli*, another coinage using *in-*] juxtaposes congenital hair color with the crown of bliss, earthly origins with ultimate reward. The struggling twins at the canto's midpoint also recall, at the other extreme of the universe in the like-numbered canto of Hell (*Inf.* 32.55–60), the rival brothers Napoleone and Alessandro, as well as the classical Eteocles and Polynices and the biblical Cain, slayer of Abel (see *Inf.* 26.52–54 and notes).

75. differing only in their first acumen: Intellectual sight, then, leads the approach to God as truth; hence the look or gaze of faith through which the two groups contemplated Christ (lines 19, 38). The happy gaze of the Creator (line 64; see *Purg.* 16.89; 25.70–72 and note) is reflected in the congenital ability of the creature to see and understand God, as suggested in the use of *acume*, whose derivation from Lat. *acus* [needle] alludes to the sharpness of the eye beam (from the extramissive model of sight). See note to 4.82–88.

76–84. In the earliest centuries ... detained below: During the first ages, between Adam and Abraham, parental faith alone secured children salvation (Rom. 4.2–5, Gal. 3.5–9, *ST* 3a q. 70. a. 4); after the covenant with Abraham, the faith and virtue of the Jews was confirmed by circumcision (Gen. 17.1–14, Rom. 2–3; *ST* 3a q. 7[0]. a. 2); but after the coming of Christ, baptism into the Church is required for salvation (John 3.5, *ST* 3a q. 70. a. 2). Christian baptism in the Spirit is "perfect" in relation to circumcision, its imperfect foreshadowing (*ST* 3a q. 70 a. 1), and to the baptism of John the Baptist, which is of water only.

80–81. males were required ... by circumcision: Pruning feathers in order to impede captive birds from flying away was a common practice, but in this mixed metaphor, circumcision adds to the soul's virtue in its flight toward God (see 15.53–54 and notes). A similar pun on *penne* (feathers, plumage) is at *Inf.* 20.40–45 (see note); for this same rhyme scheme, cf. *Purg.* 24.55–60 and note to 58–59.

83–87. without perfect baptism ... to see Christ: The fourth and last of the triple rhymes on Christ in the *Paradiso* (see 12.71–75, 14.103–8, 19.103–5 and notes), establishing a pattern of 3, 3, 3 (= 9) plus 3 (= 12), or 3 + 1, with probable allusion to the nine celestial spheres plus the Empyrean (see *VN* 29.2). Each of the first three appeared in one of the central spheres of the cantica (the sun, fourth of seven planets; Mars, fifth of nine spheres; and the sixth, Jupiter, the mediator of Saturn and Mars (22.145–46); this last instance seals the universe with the name of Christ; see note to 19.100–111, and Additional Notes 4 and 8.

Each use of the name here refers to the role of Christ in history and in the poem, and does so in terms of vision, that is, understanding: in line 83 it demarcates the two "aspects" [*aspetti*] or "sights" of the rose; line 85 has the pilgrim gaze on the human resemblance of Christ and his

mother; line 87 points to Mary's mediation to Dante of the sight of Christ, the goal of the poem.

84. detained below: Standard terminology for relegation to Limbo or Hell; see *ST* 3a. q. 5, a. 7: "In inferno *detinentur*" [they are detained in Hell].

85–114. Look now at the face ... with our flesh: In these ten terzinas the pilgrim's gaze is directed toward Mary and the reenactment of Gabriel's annunciation to her; see note to lines 94–114.

85–86. Look now at the face ... to see Christ: Because of Mary's likeness to her son, gazing at her leads to the sight of God; this also justifies lines 133–35. Since Mary and Christ are the only two souls in Heaven to have their bodies (25.122–29, with note), Mary's resemblance to Christ is that of a complete human being.

94–114. And the love ... with our flesh: Gabriel's veneration of Mary is her third triumph in *Paradiso* (see 23.88–111, 31.118–38 and notes), and is placed here because the Incarnation, which began with the salutation of Mary, is, with the Atonement, the central event of salvation history and defines the principal articulation of the rose—indeed, makes the rose possible at all.

94–99. And the love ... brighter because of it: The entire rose answers Gabriel's salutation of Mary (see next note), probably with "blessed art thou among women"—like a psalm sung antiphonally, with Gabriel leading the chorus.

95. Ave Maria, gratia plena [Hail Mary, full of grace]: Mary's name is not in the biblical version of the Annunciation story; its use here reflects liturgical or private prayer (instituted by 1176; see 23.88–89 and note).

100–102. O holy father ... your eternal lot: These words closely echo those of Virgil to Beatrice in *Inf.* 2.82–84.

106–8. Thus I appealed again ... the morning star: Mary is again like the rising light before the sun (see 31.118–20 and note); within the radiance shed by Mary, Bernard glows like Venus, the "planet that comforts to love" (*Purg.* 1.19), in the light of the sun. For meanings attributable to the morning and evening star, see *Conv.* 2.2.1–5.

109–11. And he to me ... thus we wish it to be: Gabriel is described with the virtues of a knight suing for his lady's favor (see lines 103–5). The angel's chivalric virtue reflects Bernard's own service to the Virgin, often compared to that of a knight (Warner 1976; and see 11.55–75, 101–2 and notes).

109–14. And he to me ... with our flesh: Gabriel gives Mary the palm of victory, because in giving birth to Christ she will bring about the victory over death. Cf. also 9.118–25

and note.

114. wished to burden himself with our flesh: That is, to assume human nature in the Incarnation; see 7.28–30, 119 and notes; and compare *Mon.* 2.11.5, which echoes Is. 53.4: "He hath borne our infirmities, he hath carried our sorrows."

115–38. But come along now ... your brow to fall: The ocular tour of the rose resumes (see 31.46, 97) with a return to Mary, where it begins and ends. There are places for Adam, Peter, John the Evangelist, and Moses (arranged chiastically, OT/NT, NT/OT). As before, Bernard directs the pilgrim's gaze to the other side: opposite Peter is Anna, mother of Mary, and opposite Adam is Lucia, to whom Dante was especially devoted (see *Conv.* 3.5.11–18). The order of naming is again chiastically NT/OT, OT/NT, but in a reversed (thus also chiastic) pattern with regard to the previous list. Peter and John are "columns" of the Church (Gal. 2.9).

115–26. But come along now ... this lovely flower: This canto contains more than fifty Latinisms, some eight of which are found in this passage (see next note).

116–20. and note the great patricians ... two roots of this rose: The most illustrious of those in the rose are named after the patricians, the highest Roman social group, and the hegemonic political form achieved by Rome, that of empire. "O qui perpetua," line 23 prays for the mind's ascent to the "august throne" [*augustum sedem*] of the Father; and Mary herself is *agusta* as the soul of Henry VII on earth is destined to be *agosta* (30.136). The rose thus also resembles the historical Roman Empire, pacified under Augustus. Dante uses *empireo* [Empyrean] only at *Inf.* 2.21; but *imperio* [empire] here, one of only four uses in the poem, is nearly an anagram of it. See Additional Note 2.

117. most just and merciful empire: See 19.13 and note.

118–26. Those two who sit ... this lovely flower: Bernard now shifts between the two historical groups, pointing first to Adam, root of the group believing in Christ to come, on Mary's left, whose "taste of the forbidden fruit / brought death and all our woe," and, on Mary's right, to Peter, who as Christ's vicar held the keys of Heaven (Matt. 16.19; cf. *Purg.* 9.117–27 and note); the man who lost eternal life and the warden of Paradise are juxtaposed (cf. lines 4–6). As elsewhere (see 27.115–20 and note), the roots are above, the leaves below.

123. the human race tastes so much bitterness: The tasting of the bitter fruit that precipitated Adam's fall echoes the pilgrim's rumination on his harsh destiny (see 18.3 and note) and the "taste" of the herbs that transformed Glaucus (see 1.67–69 and note), as well as Bernard's visions (31.111 and note).

127–32. And he who saw ... lived on manna: The chiastic ordering places John, who witnessed a persecution of the Church, "the lovely bride," and prophesied future travails in the Apocalypse (see *Purg.* 32.109–60 with note, and *Purgatorio* Additional Note 15), directly to the right of Peter, first in the apostolic succession (see *Inferno* Additional Note 7); on the other side

of Peter is Moses, who led Israel in its desert wanderings, restive to his authority (see *Purg.* 18.133–35 and note), and backsliding into idolatry (cf. *Purg.* 11.13–15 and note). The pairing of Moses and Peter as leaders of the chosen people before and after the Incarnation is traditional (cf. Raphael's 1511 *Disputa* in the Vatican).

133–38. Opposite Peter see Anna sit ... your brow to fall: Anna was wife of Joachim and mother of Mary, known through apocryphal accounts digested in the *Golden Legend* (Chapter 131) and in painted cycles of the life of the Virgin whose subjects were derived from the same sources (e.g., Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel, ca. 1307). Lucia was the virgin patroness of Syracuse, whose name was etymologized as *lucis via* (way of light). When alerted by Mary, Lucia moves Beatrice to the pilgrim's rescue (*Inf.* 2.97 and note); of the three ladies in the court of Heaven who aid the pilgrim at the beginning of the poem, she is the last mentioned.

Eighteen souls are named as present in the rose, ten women and eight men; if, as Picone suggests in *LDT*, Beatrice is subtracted (she is anomalously placed to the right of Rachel in a section reserved for males who lived after Christ) while Bernard is added (see note to lines 34–35), the gender tally is nine apiece, Dante's favorite number. Still, with the inclusion of Beatrice women named outnumber named men (by the measure of Betrice), and with the inclusion of Anna, Mary's mother (but cf. lines 38–39), Jews named outnumber named Christians (even without including the Baptist, Peter, John, and Mary as Jews) by the measure of Anna, Mary's mother (but cf. lines 38–39). **133. Opposite Peter see Anna sit:** In the *Golden Legend* Anna is aunt to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, as well as the mother of Mary. She bore to two subsequent husbands two further daughters named Mary, who gave birth to six of the apostles. As kin to the chief forerunner and grandmother of the disciples of Christ, Anna complements the Jewish matriarchs opposite her; her name rhymes with the *manna* of the Exodus, while the other rhyme, another Hebrew word, *Hosanna* (O save) echoes that used to hail Christ as he entered Jerusalem; thus she fittingly sits near the divide between the two groups.

135. does not move her eyes, though singing hosanna: Anna's focus on her daughter, even while praising God, seems to acknowledge human affections (see 14.61–66, 23.121–27 and notes) and permit divided attention in the blessed. For another interpretation, see Kay 2003a.

135. hosanna: Last of the three Latin liturgical phrases in the canto: the first, from David's psalm (line 12), acknowledges sin (*Inf.* 1.65); Gabriel's salutation of Mary (line 95) opens the possibility of redemption (*Purg.* 10.34–36 and note); this last is a song of praise and victory. See notes to lines 109–14, and 8.29, 28.118 (and 28.94, *osannar*), and Additional Note 4; see also *Purg.* 11.11 and 29.51.

138. when you bent your brow to fall: Mention of the brow links the pilgrim's risk of ruin (*Inf.* 1.61) to the fall of Lucifer, who had "raised his brow" in pride to his maker (*Inf.* 34.35). For the pilgrim's *upward* look for divine help, as in Ps. 120.1, see *Inf.* 1.17–18 and *Par.* 25.38–

39, 31.118–38 and notes.

Lines 122–23 (Adam's fall), 127–29 (John the Evangelist, the Crucifixion), 130–32 (the Exodus), and 137–38 (the pilgrim rescued by Lucia) recapitulate salvation history in relation to the pilgrim's journey; allusions to the Cross and to the Exodus as contiguous exemplify the fourfold principles of *Conv.* 1.2.2–7 and *Ep.* 13.20–21 (see our introduction to *Purgatorio*, pp. 12–15).

139–51. But because the time ... this holy prayer: After recalling the beginning of the journey, Bernard now draws attention to its final object, God, "primal love" (cf. *Inf.* 3.5–6, *Par.* 26.37–39 and notes), and recalls the necessity of obtaining assistance from Mary for this final ascent (see line 87).

139–41. But because the time ... the cloth he has: Commentators suggest the sleeping state signifies the pilgrim's visionary trance (cf. *Purg.* 29.142–44 and note); but the plain sense of line 139 is that the pilgrim has a dream-vision, now hastening to its end (see Introduction, pp. 15–16). The simile of the tailor recalls the poet's careful allotments in the whole poem (cf. *Purg.* 33.139–40, with note), possibly echoing the thirteenth-century rhetorician Boncompagno da Signa, who advised letter writers to set out enough paper for the task, "just as a provident tailor the cloth from which he intended to make a shirt or a skirt" (Alessio 1989, quoted in Hollander 2006).

145–47. Truly, lest perhaps you fly ... gain grace by praying: Self-reliance at this point would result in failure, like the mad flights of Icarus or Ulysses (see 27.82–84; *Inf.* 26.110–11, 125 and notes; and *Inferno* Additional Note 11); aid must be requested (see *Purg.* 11.13–15).

148. And he began this holy prayer: Note the echo of line 3.



CANTO 33

*The Empyrean, continued: saint Bernard's prayer to the Virgin—
invocation—the pilgrim's vision of God*

- 1 "Virgin mother, daughter of your Son, humble
and exalted more than any other creature, fixed
term of eternal counsel:
- 4 you are she who ennobled human nature so
much that its Maker did not disdain to make
himself his own creature.
- 7 Within your womb that Love kindled itself
again whose warmth, in the eternal peace, has
caused the germinating of this flower.
- 10 Here to us you are a noonbright torch of love,
and down below among mortals you are a lively
fountain of hope.
- 13 Lady, you are so great and so powerful that if
anyone wishes grace and does not turn to you,
his desire seeks to fly without wings.
- 16 Your good will succors not only those who
ask, but many times freely runs before
the asking.
- 19 In you mercy, in you compassion, in you
magnificence, in you is united whatever there is

of goodness in any creature.

22 Now this man, who from the lowest pit of the
universe up to here has seen the lives of the
spirits one by one,

25 supplicates you, of grace, for so much power
that he may lift his eyes up higher toward the
ultimate salvation.

28 And I, who for my own vision never burned
more than I do for his, extend to you all my
prayers—and I beg they not fall short—

31 that you dissolve every cloud of his mortality
with your prayers, so that the highest Delight may
be unfolded to him.

34 Again I beg you, O queen, for you have the
power to do what you will, that you will preserve
the health of his affects, after so great a vision.

37 May your protection overcome his human
impulses: see how Beatrice and so many blessed souls
join in my prayers and fold their hands before you!"

40 Those eyes beloved and venerated by God,
fixed on the suppliant, showed us how much
they are pleased by devout prayers;

43 then they turned directly to the Light, into
which, we must believe, no other creature's eye
penetrates so clearly.

46 And I, as I approached the goal of all desires,
perfected within me, as I should, the ardor of my
desire.

49 Bernard was beckoning to me and smiling, to
make me gaze upward, but on my own I was

- already such as he wished,
- 52 for my sight, becoming purer, entered deeper
and deeper into the ray of the supreme Light that
is true in itself.
- 55 From here onward my seeing was greater than
speech can show, which gives way before such a
sight, and memory gives way before such excess.
- 58 As is one who sees in dream, and after the
dream the passion impressed remains, but the
rest does not return to the mind:
- 61 so am I, for almost all my vision has ceased,
but still there trickles into my heart the sweetness
born of it.
- 64 Thus the snow comes unsealed in the sun,
thus in the wind, on the fluttering leaves, the
Sibyl's meaning was lost.
- 67 O highest Light that rise so far beyond our
mortal thought, lend again to my memory a little
of how you appeared,
- 70 and make my tongue so powerful that it may
leave a single spark of your glory to the people
yet to be,
- 73 for, if it comes back somewhat to my memory
and resounds a little in these verses, more will be
conceived of your victory.
- 76 I believe, because of the sharpness of the
living ray that I sustained, that I would have been
lost if my eyes had turned away from it.
- 79 I remember that therefore I became bolder to
endure it, so much that I joined my gaze with the

infinite Worth.

- 82 Oh overflowing grace whence I presumed to
probe with my eyes the eternal Light, so deeply
that I fulfilled all my seeing there!
- 85 In its depths I saw internalized, bound with
love in one volume, what through the universe
becomes unsewn quires:
- 88 substances and accidents and their modes as
it were conflated together, in such a way that
what I describe is a simple light.
- 91 The universal form of this knot I believe I saw,
because I feel my joy expand as I say this.
- 94 One point alone is greater forgetfulness
to me than twenty-five centuries to the
enterprise that made Neptune marvel at the
shadow of the Argo.
- 97 Thus my mind, entirely lifted up, gazed fixedly,
immobile and intent, and became ever more
aflame to gaze.
- 100 In that Light one becomes such that it is
impossible ever to consent to turn away from it
toward any other sight,
- 103 because goodness, the object of the will, is all
gathered there, and what is perfect there falls
short elsewhere.
- 106 Henceforth my speech will be briefer, even
about what I remember, than that of a child that
still bathes his tongue at the breast.
- 109 Not because there was more than one simple
aspect in the living Light into which I gazed, for it

- is always what it was before,
- 112 but because my sight was growing stronger
in me as I gazed, one sole appearance, as I
changed, was transformed for me.
- 115 In the profound and clear Subsistence of the
deep Light I saw three circles, of three colors and
of one circumference,
- 118 and one seemed reflected from the other like a
rainbow from a rainbow, and the third seemed
fire breathing equally from both.
- 121 Oh how short is speech and how hoarse to my
thought! and this, next to what I saw, is such that
to say "little" is not enough.
- 124 O eternal Light, who throne only within yourself,
solely know yourself, and, known by yourself
and knowing, love and smile:
- 127 that circulation which seemed in you to be
generated like reflected light, surveyed by my
eyes somewhat,
- 130 within itself, in its very own color, seemed to
me to be painted with our effigy, by which my
sight was all absorbed.
- 133 Like the geometer who is all intent to square
the circle and cannot find, for all his thought, the
principle he needs:
- 136 such was I at that miraculous sight; I wished to
see how the image fitted the circle and how it
enwheres itself there.
- 139 But my own feathers were not sufficient for
that, except that my mind was struck by a flash in

which its desire came.

- 142 Here my high imagining failed of power; but
already my desire and the *velle* were turned, like
a wheel being moved evenly,
145 by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.



CANTO 33

"Vergine madre, figlia del tuo Figlio,
umile e alta più che creatura,
termine fisso d'eterno consiglio:

1

tu se' colei che l'umana natura
nobilitasti sì che 'l suo Fattore
non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura.

4

Nel ventre tuo si raccese l'Amore
per lo cui caldo ne l'eterna pace
così è germinato questo fiore.

7

Qui se' a noi meridiana face
di caritate, e giuso intra 'mortali
se' di speranza fontana vivace.

10

Donna, se' tanto grande e tanto vali
che qual vuol grazia e a te non ricorre
sua disianza vuol volar sanz' ali.

13

La tua benignità non pur soccorre
a chi domanda, ma molte fiate
liberamente al dimandar precorre.

16

In te misericordia, in te pietate,
in te magnificenza, in te s'aduna
quantunque in creatura è di bontate.

19

Or questi, che da l'infima lacuna
de l'universo infin qui ha vedute
le vite spiritali ad una ad una,
supplica a te, per grazia, di virtute
tanto che possa con li occhi levarsi
più alto verso l'ultima salute.

22

25

E io, che mai per mio veder non arsi
più ch' i' fo per lo suo, tutti miei prieghi
ti porgo—e priego che non sieno scarsi—

28

perché tu ogne nube li disleghi
di sua mortalità co' prieghi tuoi,
sì che 'l sommo piacer li si dispieghi.

31

Ancor ti priego, regina, che puoi
ciò che tu vuoli, che conservi sani,
dopo tanto veder, li affetti suoi.

34

Vinca tua guardia i movimenti umani:
vedi Beatrice con quanti beati
per li miei prieghi ti chiudon le mani!"

37

Li occhi da Dio diletti e venerati,
fissi ne l'orator, ne dimostraro
quanto i devoti prieghi li son grati;
indi a l'eterno lume s'addrizzaro,
nel qual non si dee creder che s'invii
per creatura l'occhio tanto chiaro.

40

43

E io ch'al fine di tutt' i disii
appropinquava, sì com' io dovea
l'ardor del desiderio in me finii.

46

Bernardo m'accennava e sorridea
perch' io guardassi suso, ma io era
già per me stesso tal qual ei volea,
ché la mia vista, venendo sincera,
e più e più intrava per lo raggio
de l'alta luce che da sé è vera.

49

52

Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio
che 'l parlar mostra, ch'a tal vista cede,
e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio.

55

Qual è colüi che sognando vede,
che dopo 'l sogno la passione impressa
rimane, e l'altro a la mente non riede:

cotal son io, ché quasi tutta cessa
mia visiōne, e ancor mi distilla
nel core il dolce che nacque da essa.

Così la neve al sol si disiglia;
così al vento ne le foglie levi
si perdea la sentenza di Sibilla.

O somma luce che tanto ti levi
da' concetti mortali, a la mia mente
ripresta un poco di quel che parevi,
e fa la lingua mia tanto possente
ch' una favilla sol de la tua gloria
possa lasciare a la futura gente,

ché, per tornare alquanto a mia memoria
e per sonare un poco in questi versi,
più si conceperà di tua vittoria.

Io credo, per l'acume ch'io soffersi
del vivo raggio, ch' i' sarei smarrito,
se li occhi miei da lui fossero aversi.

E' mi ricorda ch' io fui più ardito
per questo a sostener, tanto ch' i' giunsi
l'aspetto mio col valore infinito.

Oh abbondante grazia ond' io presunsi
ficcar lo viso per la luce eterna,
tanto che la veduta vi consunsi!

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
legato con amore in un volume,
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna:

58

61

64

67

70

73

76

79

82

85

sustanze e accidenti e lor costume
quasi conflatì insieme, per tal modo
che ciò ch' i' dico è un semplice lume.

88

La forma universal di questo nodo
credo ch' i' vidi, perché più di largo,
dicendo questo, mi sento ch' i' godo.

91

Un punto solo m'è maggior letargo
che venticinque secoli a la 'mpresa
che fé Nettuno ammirar l'ombra d'Argo.

94

Così la mente mia, tutta sospesa,
mirava fissa, immobile e attenta,
e sempre di mirar faceasi accesa.

97

A quella luce cotal si diventa
che volgersi da lei per altro aspetto
è impossibil che mai si consenta,
però che 'l ben, ch' è del volere obietto,
tutto s'accoglie in lei, e fuor di quella
è defettivo ciò ch' è lì perfetto.

100

Omai sarà più corta mia favella,
pur a quel ch' io ricordo, che d'un fante
che bagni ancor la lingua a la mammella.

103

Non perché più ch' un semplice sembiante
fosse nel vivo lume ch' io mirava,
che tal è sempre qual s'era davante,

106

ma per la vista che s'avvalorava
in me guardando, una sola parvenza,
mutandom' io, a me si travagliava.

109

Ne la profonda e chiara sussistenza
de l'alto lume parvermi tre giri,
di tre colori e d'una contenenza,

112

115

e l'un da l'altro come iri da iri
parea reflesso, e 'l terzo parea foco
che quinci e quindi igualmente si spiri.

118

Oh quanto corto è il dire, e come fioco
al mio concetto! e questo, a quel ch' i' vidi,
è tanto, che non basta a dicer "poco."

121

O luce eterna che solo in te sidi,
sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta,
e intendente te ami e arridi!

124

Quella circulazion che sì concetta
pareva in te come lume reflesso,
da li occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,
dentro da sé, dal suo colore stesso
mi parve pinta de la nostra effige:
per che 'l mio viso in lei tutto era messo.

127

Qual è 'l geomètra che tutto s'affige
per misurar lo cerchio, e non ritrova,
pensando, quel principio ond' elli indige:

130

tal era io a quella vista nova;
veder voleva come si convenne
l'imago al cerchio e come vi s'indova.

136

Ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne,
se non che la mia mente fu percossa
da un fulgore in che sua voglia venne.

139

A l'alta fantasia qui mancò possa,
ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l *velle*,
sì come rota ch' igualmente è mossa,
l'Amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.

142

145

NOTES

1–145. Virgin mother, daughter ... and the other stars: The canto falls naturally into two parts, the second nearly twice as long as the first: (1) preliminaries to the vision (lines 1–50), and (2) the vision itself (lines 51–145).

1–50. Virgin mother, daughter ... me gaze upward: The chief preliminary is saint Bernard's elaborate, ceremonial "holy prayer" (32.151) to the Virgin (lines 1–39); it is followed by her expression of acceptance (lines 40–45), the pilgrim's readying of himself (lines 46–48), and the saint's invitation (lines 49–50). One notes the intricate deployment of the traditional Catholic structure of hierarchical sponsorship or patronage (like the entire tradition of veneration of saints, as a social structure it goes back to the importance in ancient Roman society, under both Republic and Empire, of the dependence on the influence of powerful men, called *patrones* [patrons, or great fathers; the word is an augmentative of *pater* (father)], of lesser individuals, their *clientes* [clients]): Bernard, as the pilgrim's sponsor, prays to his own sponsor—the Virgin, the supersponsor. A chief function of the preliminaries is, of course, to intensify the reader's anticipation of the remarkable climax and culmination of the poem, which reaches a pitch of intensity unique in all literature, far transcending that of the preliminaries themselves.

1–39. Virgin mother, daughter ... hands before you: Saint Bernard's prayer is a compendium of themes and language from the long tradition of praise and supplication of the Virgin (see Warner 1976, Barnay 1999, both fundamental; typical examples are Raby 1959 nos. 69, 71, 163; see Additional Note 4, as well as *Purgatorio* Additional Note 5). The prayer falls into three parts: (1) lines 1–9: invocation of the Virgin, her nature and place in salvation history; (2) lines 10–21: the Virgin's present power and good will as intercessor; and (3) lines 22–39: the specific pleas on behalf of the pilgrim. This structure goes back ultimately to that of ancient pagan hymns, analyzed in Norden 1912 and Klingner 1921 (the latter in relation to Boethius' "O qui perpetua": see pp. 686–87): invocation [*epiklēses*]; acts/power [*aretología*]; petitions [*euchaī*]. Bosco/Reggio sees a parallel between the two overall parts (lines 1–21 and lines 22–39) and the two parts of the Ave Maria: praise followed by the request for prayer "now and at the hour of our death"; this ignores the sharp break at line 10.

1–9. Virgin mother, daughter ... of this flower: Three terzine on the nature of the Virgin and her place in salvation history.

1–6. Virgin mother, daughter ... his own creature: As the commentators point out, the first six lines feature four traditional paradoxes: she was both virgin and mother, both daughter (because she is his creation) and mother of Christ, both humblest and most exalted of creatures, and through her God became a human being, one of his own creatures.

1–3. Virgin mother ... eternal counsel: The first terzina, composed entirely of substantive constructions, is formally the most clearly invocative of the first three, leading to the statements beginning with "tu se" [you are]. Compare the transition in Boethius' "O qui perpetua" from "O qui" [O you who] in lines 1–6, formulas of invocation, to the independent clauses starting with "tu" [you] plus finite verbs, independent clauses that begin in line 6.

1. Virgin mother: In the Italian, both of these words are strongly nouns, and the expression has a characteristic terseness that is untranslatable.

3. fixed term of eternal counsel: That is, the Virgin was chosen by God's wisdom from eternity, as a "fixed term," i.e., an essential *terminus* [end point] in the plan of salvation, to which a long history and genealogy would lead (cf. Matthew 1). Cf. also Prov. 8.23 (the speaker is Wisdom): "Ab aeterno ordinata sum, et ex antiquis antequam terra fieret" [I have been ordained from eternity, and of old, before the earth was made].

4–9. you are she ... blossoming of this flower: These lines recapitulate salvation history. There is a sharp break after line 9, with a turning to the present (prepared in line 9: "this flower") and the Virgin's present power and activity as intercessor.

4–5. you are she ... nature so much: In the Middle Ages, the Virgin was virtually universally believed to be entirely free of sin, either sanctified in the womb, after being naturally conceived, as saint Bernard and after him the Dominicans held, or miraculously conceived without sin by her parents (the so-called Immaculate Conception, argued for by the Franciscans and widely believed, but made an official dogma only in 1854). In *Conv.* 4.5.5 Dante seems to regard her superiority to all other humans as providentially ordained and prepared naturally, since "the dwelling prepared for the king of Heaven must be entirely clean and pure," but he avoids the technical question of her sinlessness. In any case, the Virgin is a "fixed term" in the logical sense as well as others.

7–9. Within your womb ... germinating of this flower: "That Love" refers of course to God's love for human beings, which reached its fullest expression in the Incarnation ("kindling" or quickening in the embryonic Jesus) and the Atonement (cf. John 3.16), reestablishing peace between God and human beings (cf. *Purg.* 10.34–36) and led to the raising of the blessed to the heavenly rose here in the Empyrean. Dante's term "germinating" includes the entire basis of the formation of the heavenly rose, but note the imagery of sunlight causing the blossoming of flowers, as in 23.70–96 and 30. 61–81; the motif of the rose is particularly associated with the Virgin as well as with Christ (see our notes to 31.1–27).

10–21. Here to us ... goodness in any creature: The present significance of the Virgin, first in Heaven (lines 10–11), then on earth (lines 11–21): after Christ she is the most important intercessor. These lines clearly reflect the traditional *areatalogía* (recitation of the deeds of the deity).

10–12. Here to us ... fountain of hope: The two metaphors, "torch of love" and

"fountain of hope," repeat the motifs of the sunlight and the river of light (cf. the note to lines 7–9). "Noon-bright" (*meridiana* [literally, noontide]) is the status of full beatitude in Heaven, as midnight is that of the ultimate wretchedness of Hell (cf. *Inf.* 10.100–108, with notes).

13–18. Lady, you are so great ... before the asking: The pilgrim is an example: the Virgin initiates the chain of intervention (Virgin, Lucia, Beatrice, Virgil: *Inf.* 2.94–112), which precedes the pilgrim's cry for help (*Inf.* 1.65; cf. our note to lines 22–24). The tradition includes many instances of her maternal solicitude and "prevenient" help; perhaps the most popular legend (there are more than two hundred versions) was that of the doorkeeper, sometimes the treasurer, of a convent (in one version her name is Beatrice; cf. Guiette 1953) who, seduced and abandoned, spent years as a prostitute; when she repented and returned trembling to the convent, she found that the Virgin had replaced her so that no one had noticed her absence.

19–21. In you mercy ... in any creature: Return to the praise of the Virgin's qualities. One should recall the Virgin's being the first and most important example of each corrective virtue on the terraces of the mountain of Purgatory (cf. *Purgatorio* Additional Note 12).

22–39. Now this man ... hands before you: Almost half of the prayer sets forth the petitions led up to by the first two sections (see the note to lines 1–39): (1) the power to sustain direct gaze into God (lines 22–33); and (2) preservation of his state of grace after the cessation of his vision (lines 34–36). Lines 37–39 are a conclusion associating the prayers of the rest of the blessed with those of the saint (note *prieghi* [prayers] in line 39).

22–33. Now this man ... unfolded to him: The first petition has two parts: lines 22–27, an initial statement of the pilgrim's petition for the vision, and lines 28–33, an amplification adding the saint's own fervent request for this favor.

22–27. Now this man ... the ultimate salvation: The saint begins by stating the pilgrim's request for him: power (the primacy of intellect is implied but not stated) to dare to look at God.

22–24. Now this man ... one by one: Note the brief recapitulation of the entire poem (not the first or last in this canto, which is particularly rich in them); God is the ultimate goal, as well as the final completion of the poem (cf. Additional Note 14).

28–33. And I, who ... unfolded to him: The saint's charity (cf. 31.61–63, 109–11) extends to his fervent support of the pilgrim's desire for the vision; "all my prayers" indicates "all my capacity of devout supplication," as opposed to "prayers" in the sense of "specific petitions," as in line 39.

31–33. that you dissolve ... unfolded to him: This is an amplification of the initial statement of the pilgrim's desire (lines 22–27); it specifies both removal of the obstacle to vision, the "cloud[s] of his mortality" (his bodily limitations; note the parallel with "O qui perpetua," lines 25–26), and the goal of participation in God as absolute joy (for the human

capacity for pleasure as integral to the resemblance to God, see *Purg.* 16.85–90, with notes). Saint Bernard's descriptions of his own mystical raptures (in his *De diligendo Deo*) treat them as exclusively affective, not intellectual.

34–37. Again, I beg ... his human impulses: These lines provide an important indication that (contrary to what some commentators suppose) Dante's conception is not that the pilgrim would automatically remain in a state of grace after the ending of the vision. That the request is made indicates that without the help of continuing grace the pilgrim could fall again. This is a separate question from that of his predestination to salvation, but both questions gain additional poignancy from the literal facts of the poet's situation, whether the poem is viewed as a dream or as entirely a fiction.

38–39. see how Beatrice ... hands before you: The brief conclusion of the saint's prayer, associating others with his requests. The text mentions only Beatrice and "so many" of the blessed as joining their prayers to his, but we are surely to imagine a very large number, if not all of them. The joining of the hands in prayer is traditionally a sign of withdrawal inward from the outer world; it is a curious touch when imagined of the souls of the blessed (is there an unstated connotation of the joined hands as vectors pointing, directing the prayers toward the Virgin?). Chiavacci Leonardi usefully reminds us that the pilgrim is seeing the blessed *as if* they had bodies (as Beatrice observes in 31.44–45): they are only appearances to his imagination.

40–51. Those eyes beloved ... such as he wished: Further preliminaries: the Virgin's indication of her acceptance of saint Bernard's prayer and her turning to God to further it (lines 40–45), the pilgrim's preparing himself (lines 46–48), and the saint's invitation (lines 49–51).

40–45. Those eyes beloved ... penetrates so clearly: The Virgin's gaze—we are to understand that it is loving and joyful—indicates clearly that she accepts the saint's prayers, and she turns into the light, obviously in order to add her prayers to his. That the Virgin's vision penetrates more deeply into God than any other creature's is probably to be understood as the result of the intensity of her love (otherwise there may be some discrepancy with Aquinas's discussion of Adam and Christ as the highest human intellects in 13.37–49, where there is no mention either of Eve or of the Virgin); thus she may be an exceptional instance of the primacy of love.

46–47. the goal of all desires: The idiomatic syntax of the Italian "tutt' i disiri" allows both "all desires" (i.e., all human and angelic desires) and "all my desires," which coexist in the phrase in quite untranslatable fashion: he is both individual and Everyman.

46–51. And I, as I ... wished: The transition to the pilgrim's inward experience is complex: in lines 46–48 the emphasis is on his participating fully in the intensity of the saint's prayer, mustering and focusing his own desire; but lines 50–51 show him already, even before the saint's gestures of lines 49–50, he says, transcending all tutelage, he is on his own and thus, without any marked syntactical division, in line 52 the utterly unprecedented account of the

vision begins.

52–145. for my sight ... and the other stars: The matchlessly eloquent climax of the poem is remarkable in many ways. As an effort to imagine the experience of the beatific vision of God as it might be granted to a still living human being, it departs sharply from the entire tradition of reports by practicing Christian mystics: although the cognitive aspect of the pilgrim's vision transcends, as the poet says, the capabilities of his memory as well as of human language (themes asserted at each level: lines 55–66, 94–96, 106–8, 121–23), he insists on the primacy of intellect in the experience, and the gradation of its evolution is anchored on four stages of substantive intellectual insight: (1) the intuition of the "universal knot" joining substance and accident (lines 85–93); (2) the triune nature of God and the internal relation of the three Persons of the Trinity (lines 109–20); (3) the presence of Christ; and (4) the union of Christ's divine and human natures (lines 127–41). It hardly needs to be said that these themes derive from Dante's reading; they are transfigured by his imaginative power and his ability to muster his extraordinary powers of expression (for the implicit assertion of authority here, see Ascoli 2008).

The passage is remarkable also in gathering together themes, motifs, and images from the preceding parts of the poem, bringing them to bear on the climax in a way that has no parallel, as a structural fulfillment, in any other literary text (the closest parallel might be the extraordinary recapitulations and codas of the late works of Beethoven). One should note how thorough the repeated recall of the themes and language of the opening of the cantica is, especially of 1.1–12.

One major governing sequence in the three canticle of the poem is that the endings of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* include major anticipations of the final vision. In the *Inferno* the anticipation is dark indeed, as the figure of Satan is parodic both of the triune nature of God and of the Crucifixion (see Freccero 1964 and *Inferno* Additional Note 16). In the *Purgatorio* Christ is present in the Gryphon but in the mode of opacity: the union of the two natures is represented in the hybrid of eagle and lion; reflection can see each separately but not the principle of their union (see especially our notes to *Purg.* 31.121–31); in the final vision, the theme and mode of transparency replace the earlier darkness and opacity.

52–66. for my sight ... meaning was lost: A preliminary stage of the vision in which the pilgrim experiences the deeper and deeper penetration of his gaze into the infinitely transparent light, but not yet reaching its goal (this will begin in lines 79–81). As in 30.97–108 (the initial description of the transmission to the universe of God's creative power through the ray of his light), Dante is drawing on the traditional theory of the three lights (those of nature, revelation, and glory), God's glory (1.1–12) being also the medium of the beatific vision (Singleton 1957).

52–54. for my sight ... true in itself: Each of the stages discussed in the introductory note on the passage is reached via the gradual strengthening of visual acuity (the faculty of sight in question is of course not the eye of the body but of the mind; note the important parallel with "O qui perpetua," lines 23–24). For the bodily eye as emitting light that

penetrates external space, see *Inf.* 9.7–73, with note. This theme of the strengthening of the pilgrim's sight began in the *Purgatorio* (see *Purg.* 15.7–13, with notes) and has continued steadily through the *Paradiso* (major moments of the process include 1.49–57, 4.139–5.12, and especially 30.46–50). The divine light is "true in itself" because God is himself the Truth—"the good of the intellect" (*Inf.* 3.18), the loss of which is the most fundamental anguish of Hell (*Inf.* 4.42: even the virtuous in Limbo "without hope ... live in desire").

55–66. From here onward ... meaning was lost: This is the first in the series of expressions of the dual impossibility of expression: the experience transcends both language and memory (but what escapes memory is intellectual in nature; see next note).

58–63. As is one who sees ... sweetness born of it: See also the note to line 64. Dante's emphasis on the relative permanence of the affective aspect of the pilgrim's vision ("the passion impressed," line 59) does echo the testimony of such mystics as saint Bernard, although not his insistence on its primarily intellectual nature (of which the affective dimension is the result), in "seeing" (line 55), "sight" (line 56), "the rest" [*l'altro*], and "mind" (line 60), and "vision" (line 62), and later, which is the reason for the repeated emphasis on the loss of the memory. For the importance of what may seem the mere analogy of dream here, see our Introduction, pp. 17–19.

64–66. Thus the snow ... meaning was lost: Two analogies that resound with other parts of the poem. Although they express the impermanence of the pilgrim's memory, the tone is that of rejoicing at having had the vision; in both cases earlier negative implications are replaced with positive ones (cf. our note on *Purg.* 30.20).

64. Thus the snow comes unsealed: Note how the image of the melting snow continues that of distillation in line 62. Compare the long simile in *Purg.* 30.85–99, where the compassionate singing of the angels brings the melting of the ice (of guilt and fear) surrounding the pilgrim's heart, compared to the trickling [*trapelare*] of melting snow, closely related to lines 62–63 here. In *Paradiso* 2 the analogy of snow losing its form in the rays of the sun (lines 104–11) is used of Beatrice's disproof of the pilgrim's errors about the moon spots, and the truth, she says, will "inform" his intellect (i.e., impose on it the permanent form of true doctrine).

65–66. thus in the wind ... meaning was lost: Dante knew of this traditional idea from *Aen.* 3.443–51 (Helenus is advising Aeneas not to rely on the writings of the Cumæan Sibyl but to speak with her directly):

insanam vatem aspicies, quae rupe sub ima
fata canit foliisque notas et nomina mandat.
quaecumque in foliis descriptsit carmina virgo
digerit in numerum atque antro seclusa reliquit:
illa manent immota locis neque ab ordine cedunt.
verum eadem, verso tenuis cum cardine ventus

impulit et teneras turbavit ianua frondes,
numquam deinde cavo volitantia prendere saxo
nec revocare situs aut iungere carmina curat.
[You will behold the mad prophetess, who in a cave in the cliff
sings destinies and entrusts her words and names to leaves;
whatever verses the virgin has written down on her leaves
she arranges in order and stores hidden in her cave:
they remain unmoving in their places and do not change their order.
But when a light breeze touches them, as the door turns
on its post, and disturbs the fragile leaves,
never again does she take them up as they flutter about the cave,
nor cares to call them back to their places or join the poems together.]

Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, so important for Dante's view of him, begins with a reference to the Sibyl's prophecy of a new age (see text and translation in our *Purgatorio*, pp. 584–87, our note to *Purg.* 22.79–81, and Additional Note 14 there). Dante probably connected the Vergilian theme of the loss of the Sibyl's prophetic insights with the pathos of Virgil's loss of salvation (cf. *Inf.* 8.128–30 and 9.1–9, with notes).

67–75. O highest Light ... of your victory: The last appeal for help in the poem (but not the last apostrophe of God), closely related to 1.19–24, where the memory of the vision is called its *ombra* [shadow]. Note that the invocation asks twice, in parallel constructions, for help with both memory (lines 68 and 73) and expression (lines 70 and 74). A puzzle is presented by line 75: what is the "victory" of God that is referred to? In our view the term should probably be taken to refer to God's utter transcendence, above all created things, but the tonality is strange, as if posterity (line 73) would have to depend exclusively on Dante's poem for knowledge of God. Perhaps the lines suggest that Dante hopes his poem will rival more conventional religious texts.

76–93. I believe, because ... as I say this: The intensity of the poet's invocation leads naturally to intensification of the vision, and to its first substantive content, "substances and accidents and their modes." Some commentators express surprise that the poet's vision of God should involve increased understanding of the universe (see our notes on lines 85–93). Characteristically, although this stage of the vision is said to grasp the most fundamental structure of created things, all that remains of the insight is the feeling of expanded joy (lines 91–93). For the issue of Dante's authority, implicit here and throughout, see Ascoli 2008.

76–81. I believe, because ... the infinite Worth: These lines introduce the motif of the sharp power of the light, such that he cannot turn away and would be lost if he did so (note the parallel with the discussion of the angels: 29.49–66); this idea strengthens his resolve to see more deeply, and at this point his gaze reaches God himself ("the infinite Worth," line 81).

82–84. O overflowing grace ... fulfilled all my seeing there: This first substantive phase begins with the exclamation of overflowing gratitude at the gift of grace, as the second

one will end with a parallel expression of awe and wonder (lines 124–26), which allows him to penetrate the divine light with his sight ("ficcar lo viso"): he is no passive recipient of divine favor; as Sapegno observes, the theme of his intense intellectual striving is a far cry from the mystics' sensations of abandon and annihilation in ecstasy; it is much closer to Boethius' conception in "O qui perpetua." *Consunsi* (line 84) has received differing interpretations; we understand it with Vellutello and many modern interpreters: his (intellectual) seeing reached the utmost fulfillment of its potentiality—he saw all that he was capable of seeing; the remark is to be taken as commenting on line 81, that is, on the complete vision from here to line 142.

85–93. In its depths ... as I say this: The first substantive intellectual perception is that of the metaphysical structure of creation: "substances and accidents and their modes." This is the culmination of the basic approach of the entire *Comedy* previous to the Empyrean—the knowledge of God as he is revealed in his works, i.e., in creation: the contemplation of the universe is the first stage in the knowledge of God (cf. our note on *Purg.* 28.80). Fundamental texts for the entire poem are Rom. 1.20 ("For the invisible things of [God], from the creation, of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: his eternal power also, and divinity") and, especially relevant to the *Paradiso*, Ps. 18.2–3 ("The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night sheweth knowledge"). The recapitulation of this theme in the "simple light" of God, in which the pilgrim intuits "the universal form" of the metaphysical knot constituting the unity of each created thing, amounts to a vision of the Logos, the Christian version of the Neoplatonic principle of *noûs* [absolute Mind], which contains all the forms or ideas of existing things by knowing them, and thus brings them into existence: "In the beginning was the Word ... All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1.1 and 3–4). Thus, as we might perhaps expect, in the pilgrim's vision, Christ is both "Alpha ... the Beginning and," as we shall see, "O ... the End" (Apoc. 21.6); again, see Additional Note 14. Still, although the principle intuited in the vision is identified, the intuition itself, of course, utterly transcends human memory and speech; indeed, the principle basis for the claim is the expanding joy he feels as he states it (lines 92–93).

85–87. In its depths ... unsewn quires: The statement of this stage of the vision is introduced by a famous passage using the metaphor of the book (a useful survey of the book metaphors in the *Comedy* is the classic discussion in Curtius 1953). The effectiveness of the metaphor hinges on the ambiguity of the key term "volume," often used by Dante to connect the idea of the universe as a book with the turnings of the heavens (an etymological play, since Lat. *volumen* [a thing turned] originally referred to scrolls; with the advent of the codex, of course, it is no longer the rotation of a spindle but the turning of pages that constitutes the manipulation of a book). Codices are made up of quires [quaternions, It. *quaderni*: paper or parchment folded three times to form eight leaves or sixteen pages], gatherings that are sewn together at the spine. Hence Dante's daring metaphor: in the Logos he sees, "bound together with love in one volume" (a daringly appropriate metaphor for the enclosing sphere of the godhead, combining both spherical enclosure and the Logos or Word as like a book), what

(literally) "through the universe becomes freed from its gathering": *si [di] squaderna*, like the loose leaves of the Sibyl. For the "knot," see the next note. The love that binds the "volume" is the love that prompted the creation (cf. 29.13–18, with notes).

91. The universal form of this knot: The knot or node [It. *nodo*] is the principle that unifies form with matter, thus "substances and accidents and their modes." As Dante knew (cf. Shapiro 1998), it was frequently used to refer to the union of soul and body (also a joining of form and matter—cf. Donne's "The Extasie," line 64: "The subtle knot that makes us man"; and cf. *Purgatorio* Additional Note 11).

94–96. One point alone ... shadow of the Argo: The literal sense of these lines is that the pilgrim's vision of God's omniscience and omnipotence contained (and his memory lost) more than the entire experience of humanity since the voyage of Argo. Probably the "one point" is the one just identified, the "universal knot" whose tying brings substances—i.e., the whole creation—into being; there is also the possibility that the reference is to any of the instants of the vision that is unfolding. The multivalent terms "knot" and "point" are brought into close proximity (see the note to 28.14).

The image of Neptune and Argo was suggested by Statius's *Achilleid* 1.25–76, in which Achilles' mother, the sea-nymph Thetis, sees from the bottom of the sea the ship carrying Paris and Helen to Troy; she foresees the Trojan War and the death of her son, and pleads with Neptune to sink the ship (Curtius 1950). Tragic pagan motifs are again transfigured into Christian triumph (see *Purg.* 30.20, with note).

The matchless suggestiveness of these lines serves to bring full circle the references to the voyage of Argo in 2.1–18 (see our notes): there the point of view is that of the Argonauts themselves, in the ship Argo or watching Jason plow with the fire-breathing bulls; here Argo is far above Neptune, who wonders at it from the bottom of the sea: so high above are the pilgrim and his poet. The term *letargo* [forgetfulness] is formed from the Greek word *lethe* [forgetfulness], as well as rhyming with, containing, and thus preparing, *Argo*: it is striking that when the pilgrim faints into Lethe (*Purg.* 31.88–90), it is excess of penitent self-knowledge that overcomes him, as here it is the excess of the vision of God, when, at the very end, his imagination is overcome. "Un punto solo" [one point alone] is a conspicuous echo of *Inf.* 5.132 (see the note to 29.9).

97–99. Thus my mind ... aflame to gaze: A summing up of this first substantive phase, predominantly in the past tense.

100–105. In that light ... falls short elsewhere: These lines, in the present tense, beginning after a full stop, and turning from the state of the pilgrim's attention to the nature of the light itself, smoothly begin the transition to the second phase. Note the relation with "O qui perpetua," line 22, on the "fount of Good" as the object of intellectual vision—the characteristic Neoplatonic fusion of goodness and truth. Other goods than God, although they are good by reflecting or participating in his goodness, are not the absolute (cf. *Purg.* 17.127–35; *Par.* 13.52–54, 26.28–36).

106–23. Henceforth my speech ... is not enough: The second phase of the vision, preceded by the inexpressibility *topos* (lines 106–8) and commenting on the growth of acuity (lines 109–14), followed by another version of the inexpressibility *topos*.

106–8. Henceforth my speech ... tongue at the breast: After the past tense (lines 97–105) and the present tense (lines 100–105), the future tense in these lines has considerable force in suggesting the continuing dynamism of the vision. The term *fante* (from the present participle of Lat. *for, fari* [to speak]) refers to a child that has begun to speak (an *infante* is one who has not yet begun to speak); one may recall the reference to childish speech in *Inf.* 32.7–9: the bottom of Hell cannot be described by a child that says “Mama” or “Daddy,” and an adult who has had the ultimate vision of God has even less power of speech than a very small child beginning to speak but still at the breast.

109–14. Not because there ... transformed for me: The vision changes as the pilgrim’s power of sight increases—the “transformation” of what is seen results from the further penetration; this principle is made explicit here because the vision of the Logos in lines 85–93 expresses the relation of God to his creation, a relatively external aspect, so to speak. Lines 109–14 prepare for the continuing changes, into both the second and third stages of objective vision (lines 127–41).

115–20. In the profound ... equally from both: The three circles are an “appearance” (line 113) of the three Persons of the Trinity: perfect (“circles”), equal (“of one circumference”), but distinct (“of different colors”); the Son is identified first, for his is the circle “that seemed reflected from the other”; “the other” is the Father, and the third is the Holy Spirit, “breathing equally from both.” The symbolic representation of the Trinity as interlocking colored circles was traditional in manuscript illustrations. Note the recall of the earlier passages on the Trinity: 10.1–6; 13.25–27, 53–54, and 79–81; and 24.139–44.

121–23. Oh how short is speech ... is not enough: The poet strives to express his thought, but the power of language does not go far in such matters, and it becomes “hoarse” [*fico*], and unexpressive as well; for this term, cf. *Inf.* 1.63: Virgil is one “who through long silence seemed hoarse.” Again, the pagan failure to worship the true God (*Inf.* 1.72) was silence concerning him, and the overwhelming joy of the mystery of the vision will reduce the poet, too, to silence: he is even unable to say how far “this” (his thought) fails to convey “what I saw.”

124–32. O eternal Light ... all absorbed: These lines, the description of the third phase of the vision, are addressed to God himself (the “you” [*te*] in line 128), in the last apostrophe of him in the poem.

124–26. O eternal Light ... love and smile: Another deep breath taken, a pause in the rhythm of this extraordinary passage, preparing the reader for the next phase of ascent. The “eternal light” is the godhead considered as a unity (lines 85–90, 109–14); the light that “thrones” is of course the Father; the “knowing” belongs especially to the Son (the Logos); the union of the two is expressed in the next pairing (“known by yourself and knowing,” lines 125–

26), and the Holy Spirit is the love and joy that breathes between Father and Son.

127–32. that circulation ... all absorbed: The third phase of the vision. The circle (called a *circulation* in the sense that the circle achieves itself) of the Son, which seemed generated (Dante's word is *concetta* [conceived]) like reflected light (or a mirror image; the reference is to the eternal "begetting" of the Son) contains "within itself ... our image": this is a vision of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, who "was made flesh ... became a man" (Nicene Creed; cf. John 1.14). The identity of color of the human image with that of the circle no doubt signifies the complete union of the two natures. The pilgrim's attention is entirely drawn to it. Dante's pronouns, since they have gender, avoid the ambiguity inherent in Eng. *it*, which we therefore avoid here: "in lei" [in, or by, it] refers to *effigie* [effigy], the only feminine noun in the sentence. Norman O. Brown once commented in conversation that in this passage the *Comedy* comes to a close with a "redeemed narcissism." Cf. the introductory note to lines 52–145 and the note to lines 85–93.

133–38. Like the geometer ... enwheres itself there: The famous problem of the squaring of the circle (i.e., determining the side of a square with the same area as a given circle) is insoluble, since π is an irrational number, incommensurable with linear units. Such is the pilgrim striving to grasp the principle of what he sees.

136. such was I at that miraculous sight: For Dante's associating the terms *nova* [literally, new thing] and *nove* [nine] with the idea of miracle, see VN 29.

137–38. I wished to see ... enwheres itself there: He wishes to see how the human nature and human body of Christ (who ascended to Heaven after his resurrection) fit the divine circle of the second Person of the Trinity: the human and divine natures being incommensurables, how can Christ's human nature and his resurrected body find a place there? This hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ is the fundamental mystery of Christian faith, and the pilgrim's intuition of its principle will bring the vision to its fourth phase and its end: Christ as Omega. *Indovarsi* [to enwhere oneself] is the last—the culminating—coinage of Dante's many daring neologisms (see the notes to 4, 28, 9.7 3–81).

139–41. But my own feathers ... its desire came: The pilgrim's own intellectual and imaginative powers, even raised so far, are not sufficient to penetrate this supreme mystery; but, like lightning, a final flash of illumination touches his mind, which receives its "desire" [*voglia*] (another reference to the truth as "the good of the intellect," *Inf.* 3.18).

The entire imaginary journey is to be understood as a gift of grace, of course (see 1.75, etc.), and this canto has insisted on the entire vision as a "trasumanare" (1.70–72). Even so, the poem has already explained (32.52–75) that each individual soul is gifted with a certain capacity for vision and beatification that can be raised by illuminating grace but never entirely transcended (cf. our note to lines 82–84). Dante thinks of the pilgrim as close to the borderline; the ultimate illumination comes, but it is even more lost to memory than what preceded it: nothing is said about it except that it happens.

139. my own feathers: "Feathers" is a metonymy for "wings"; it is the last indirect reminder in the poem that Dante is an *alagerus* (in Italian, an *Alighieri*): a wing-bearer (see *Inferno* Additional Note 6 and the note to *Inf.* 26.125); for the inevitable ambiguity of *penne* as "feathers," "wings," and "pens," see *Purg.* 24.52–59, with notes; to what extent the pun is operative here is worth some reflection.

142–45. Here my high ... and the other stars: The poem comes to an end with four lines whose meaning is not self-evident; one thing at least is clear—that the imaginative vision ends, leaving the pilgrim's soul in an ecstatically peaceful affective state, a feeling of complete harmony and integration into the cosmos and the love of God. (Cf. lines 58–63, with note. For further discussion, see Additional Note 9.)

142–43. Here my high imagining failed of power; but: Critics do not agree on the precise sense of this verse. Many Italian critics (Sapegno, Chiavacci Leonardi, Bosco and Reggio, Pertile) take the view that the pilgrim rises to an ultimate intellectual vision of God that transcends images. Our view is that the entire intellectual vision—of the Logos, the Trinity, and the human-divine nature of Christ—has been derived from Dante's reading and, however vividly imagined, has been represented in images (in the last analysis the poem represents the entire journey to the other world as taking place through the pilgrim's *phantasia* [image-making faculty]; see our Introduction); that after line 141 there is no reference to any further illumination (cf. the introductory note to lines 52–145); and that Dante's idea is that the intellectual/imagistic phases are terminated and that the pilgrim has reached a state that is exclusively affective (as in lines 59–60); otherwise the "but" beginning line 143, which marks the transition, would be unmotivated (i.e., if there were a further intellectual ascent, the connective would not be adversative).

143, 145. già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle ... l'Amor: The subject of *volgeva* [was turning] is *l'Amor* [the Love], the order of subject and verb being inverted; this is not possible in English, but "the Love ..." must be in the very last line. Hence the change of the active verb into its passive form.

What exactly is the distinction between "my desire and the *velle*"? The difficulty lies in the term *velle* (the infinitive, used substantively, of the Latin verb *to wish, desire, or will*), which appears only one other time in all Dante's works, namely in *Par.* 4.25. In our notes on that passage, we argue that the context (especially 4.1–12), involving the relations among desire, intellect, and will, require *velle* to be understood to refer to the will as determined by the intellect, and we believe it should be taken in the same sense in 33.143. "Il mio desio," then, would refer to the appetitive aspect of the soul, desire, considered independently of intellect, and the relatively impersonal nature of decision dictated by intellect would account for the absence of a possessive with *velle*. God, then, is the object of the soul's most fundamental desire [*desio*], independently of reason, and God is also the true object of intellect and of will determined by intellect [*velle*], even though intellect is now asleep. Lines 143–44 would thus refer to the fullest possible affective integration of the soul.

The split between intellect and desire is a central theme of the entire *Comedy*. As Freccero

1959 demonstrated, it first appears in *Inf.* 1.28–30; it is the principal problem confronting the souls in Purgatory: as *Purg.* 17.127–29 and 18.61–75 explain, the split in their natures must be healed so that their fundamental desire for God eliminates misdirected loves and subordinates all others to itself. Purgatory corrects desire as such, and the ascent through the spheres illuminates intellect, with the concomitant strengthening of love and joy. Thus, whether the passage refers to one motion only or to two (see Additional Note 9), it would go without saying that the motions of desire and will would no longer be opposed as formerly.

145. the Love that moves the sun and the other stars: Some critics have taken this last line of the poem to refer to the love the creation feels for God (as in Aristotle's idea that the movement of the heavens is caused entirely by the love of the movers of the spheres for the "unmoved mover"). It seems to us, rather, that the last line of the poem must be read recalling the first mention of the sun and the stars in *Inf.* 1.39–40, where the sun is rising with the stars that were with it "when God's love first set those lovely things in motion." This would seem to be the definitive gloss on 33.145 (cf. *Consol.* 2.m.9.28–30, cited also in *Mon.* 1.9.3). As the commentators observe, each cantica of the poem ends with the word *stelle* [stars]: *Inferno* 34.139: "E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle" [And thence we came forth to look again at the stars], recalling the very beginning of the journey (*Inf.* l.38–40), and implicitly recalling the final goal. *Purgatorio* 33.145 has the pilgrim explicitly prepared: "puro e disposto a salir a le stele" [pure and made ready to rise to the stars]; and the poem as a whole ends recalling and summing up the entire journey, now completed and consummated in "the love that moves the sun and the other stars."

THE NICENE CREED

Credo in unum Deum, patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum. Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula, Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero. Genitum, non factum, consubstantiale Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis. Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Santo ex Maria Vergine: Et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato: passus et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas. Et ascendit in caelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos: cuius regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum et vivificantem: qui ex Patre et Filio simul adoratur, et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et unam sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor etiam unum baptismum in remissionem peccatorum. Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum. Et vitam venturi saeculum. Amen.

[I believe in one God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of the Father, born of the Father before all time, God of God, light of the light, true God from true God, born, not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things were made. Who for the sake of us men and for our salvation descended from heaven. And he was made flesh by the Holy Spirit through the Virgin Mary, and he became a man. Crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, he suffered and was buried. And on the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. And he ascended into heaven: he sitteth at the right hand of the Father: And he shall come in glory to judge the quick and the dead; his reign shall be without end. And in the Holy Spirit, Lord and lifegiver, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who is worshipped together with the Father and the Son and has spoken through the Prophets. And in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism to the remission of sins. And I await the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. Amen.]

NOTE

The Nicene Creed: The most divisive controversy in early Christendom was that involving the views of Arius, who maintained that Christ, the Son, was subordinate to the Father. The division was so severe that the emperor Constantine in 323 convoked a council of all the bishops in Nicaea, in Asia Minor, to settle the matter. After endless discussions over terminology, agreement on the doctrine of the Trinity was reached and a statement of orthodox belief was drafted (and was forcibly imposed on the dissidents by the emperor). The version that has come down to us dates from about half a century later and has been further refined in its elaborate definition of the exact status of the three Persons of the Trinity, as well as the making explicit of the orthodox interpretation of the first chapter of the Gospel of John. The text is from the *Liber usualis*.

"O QUI PERPETUA MUNDUM RATIONE GUBERNAS"

(Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae* 3, metrum 9)

O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas,
terrarum caelique sator, qui tempus ab aevo
ire iubes stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri,
quem non externae pepulerunt fingere causae
materiae fluitantis opus, verum insita summi
forma boni livore carens: Tu cuncta superno
ducis ab exemplo, pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse
mundum mente gerens similique in imagine formans
perfectasque iubens perfectum absolvere partes.

Tu numeris elementa ligas, ut frigora flammis,
arida convenient liquidis, ne purior ignis
evolet aut mersas deducant pondera terras.

Tu triplicis medium naturae cuncta moventem
conectens animam per consona membra resolvis,
quae cum secta duos motum glomeravit in orbes,
in semet redditura meat mentemque profundam
circuit et simili convertit imagine caelum.

Tu causis animas paribusque vitasque minores
provehis et levibus sublimes curribus aptans
in caelum terramque seris, quas lege benigna
ad te conversas reduci facis igne reverti.

Da, pater, augustam menti concendere sedem,
da fontem lustrare boni, da luce reperta
in te conspicuos animi defigere visus.

Dissice terrenae nebulas et pondera molis

3

7

10

14

17

21

24

atque tuo splendore mica: tu namque serenum,
tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,
principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem.

28

(Text from Bieler.)

**"O YOU WHO WITH PERPETUAL REASON
GOVERN THE WORLD"**

O You who with perpetual reason govern the world,
sower of earth and sky, who from eternity command
time to move and, fixed, give motion to all else,
whom no external causes drove to fashion
the work of fluid matter, but rather the indwelling form
of the highest Good, free of all envy: You derive all things
from the eternal example; most beautiful, You carry
in Mind the beauteous world, form it to like pattern,
bid its perfect parts to fill it out and make it complete.

3

You bind the elements with numbers, so that freezings
with flames,

10

dry things may fit together with liquid, lest the purer fire
fly up or its weight cause earth to drown.

To be the midpoint of triple Nature, to move all things,

You attach Soul and diffuse it through adapted members,
and Soul, cut in two, has globed its motion in two orbs,
goes forth to return into itself, circles about the depth
of Mind, and curves the heavens to like pattern.

14

With similar causes You bring forth souls and lesser
lives, and, fitting those sublime creatures to light chariots,
sow them in sky and earth, and by a kindly law,
when they turn back to You, make them return by
ascending fire.

17

21

Grant, Father, that the mind ascend to your august
throne, grant that it circle the fount of Good, grant that
finding the Light it may fix its sharpened sight
deep in You.

24

Dispel the clouds and weight of earthly matter
and flash forth with your splendor: for You are the
clear sky, You are the peaceful rest of the just, to see You
the Goal, the Beginning, the Mover, the Guide,
the Path, the End, the Same.

28

(Translated by R. M. D.)

NOTES

Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* [The Consolation of Philosophy] is the masterpiece of this Roman senator, high-ranking public servant, translator of and commentator on major Greek philosophical texts, and a Christian. It was written during his imprisonment for treason by the Ostrogoth king of Italy Theodoric (he was eventually executed in ad 524), as a dialogue between the "author" and Philosophia (philosophy personified) in Menippean form (alternating prose and verse), in five books. A skillful introduction to philosophy, during the Middle Ages the *Consolatio Philosophiae* was one of the most widely studied of all the available philosophical texts. Boethius was the last important Platonic thinker of late Antiquity to study at a Greek philosophical school with an uninterrupted tradition (Justinian closed the Academy in 528; Boethius probably studied at Alexandria), and he was fully recognized as an authority by the schools of the high Middle Ages.

"O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas" is placed at the climax of Book 3, the central book of the *Consolatio* (and at the numerically central lines of the work as a whole), when Philosophia has at last succeeded in raising the "author"'s contemplation away from his personal disaster and the instability of fortune to the cosmos as a whole and to its creator. "Boethius" has just come to understand his need for the full intellectual ascent of philosophy and for illumination, and Philosophia now expresses his yearning. "O qui perpetua" was widely studied as a summary of some of the central ideas of Plato's *Timaeus*, which it presents in a Christianized Neoplatonic version particularly congenial to medieval thinkers. It was frequently commented and used as a school text; in manuscripts it is often found without the rest of the *Consolatio*. (See Courcelle 1967; all the passages of the *Timaeus* crucial to "O qui perpetua" are from the portion translated by Calcidius and thus available to Dante.)

"O qui perpetua" is a particularly clear instance of a poem consciously crafted as a microcosm, and Dante studied it with great care; its influence—formal as well as doctrinal—is discernible in his writings from as early as the *Vita nova* (see Durling/Martinez 1990). Especially noteworthy is its influence on the proem to the cantos of the sun and on the last

canto of the poem (see Dronke 1994).

One should note the intensely anaphoric structure: 1. apostrophe of invocation: *O qui* [O You who], line 1; *qui* [who], line 2; *quem* [whom], line 4; 2. statement: *tu* [you], lines 6, 10, 13, 18; 3. petition: *da* [grant] plus infinitive, lines 22, 23 (twice); 4. renewed invocation: *tu*, lines 26, 27, and *te* [you, accusative], line 27.

1–9. O You who ... make it complete: The first section of the poem (parallel, as Klingner 1921 pointed out, to the opening invocations of Greek and Roman pagan hymns), addresses God in terms that blend the Judaeo-Christian Creator, the demiurge [divine craftsman] of Plato's *Timaeus*, and the Neoplatonic transcendent One.

1. who ... the world: God governs the world according to fixed, eternal principle [*ratio*]. Note how the Latin words for "O you who govern" surround the rest of the line, and those for "perpetual reason" surround that for "world."

2–3. sower of earth ... motion to all else: God exists in eternity; in Plato's famous phrase (*Tim.* 37d): the demiurge "took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness of eternity ... an everlasting likeness that moves according to number—that to which we have given the name of Time" (Cornford 1937). In Plato's account the demiurge is repeatedly said to "sow" and to be the "sower" of aspects of the world, including souls (and is referred to as the Father).

3. fixed, give motion to all else: A reference to Aristotle's "unmoved mover" (*Physics*, Book 8).

4–6. whom no external ... free of all envy: The "indwelling form of the highest Good" is a reference to the passage in Plato's *Republic* 6.515–18 (the myth of the cave), culminating in the analogy of the eternal Form of the Good, the highest of the Forms, with the visible sun; the lines also echo *Tim.* 29: the demiurge "was good; and in the good no jealousy in any matter can ever arise. So ... he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself." (In Aristotelian terminology, this is a statement of the *final cause*—the purpose—of the creation of the world.) Cf. *Par.* 29.13–18, with notes.

6–9. You derive all things ... make it complete: The world is formed after the model of the eternal Ideas (Forms) of perfection and beauty (*Tim.* 29a, 37a-38a) and is complete and perfect in itself (*Tim.* 33b, 37d). (Boethius is descending through the hierarchy of causes; this is a statement of the *formal cause* of the world.)

7–8. You carry ... beauteous world: This terminology derives from Plotinus' conception of absolute Mind [*noûs*] as the first overflowing of the transcendent One, foreign to Plato's conception; in content Boethius is drawing on the Christian doctrine of the Word [*lógos*] as the mind of God (John 1.1–3), holding the Forms of all things, itself derived from Middle Platonic ideas.

8. form it in like pattern: In fashioning the world after the eternal pattern, God is also identified as its *efficient cause*.

10–21. You bind ... by ascending fire: If lines 1–9 described the Creator, his motive, the model, and the forming of the world, lines 10–21 describe its structure: the elements, matter (corresponding to the *material cause*); the World Soul (lines 13–17); and human souls (lines 13–21).

10–12. You bind ... earth to drown: Based on *Tim.* 31b-32c. According to Plato, who speaks of only four elements, the elements cohere and can be transformed one into the other because of their elaborate numerical proportion. This reconciliation of opposites becomes the famous principle of *concordia discors* [discordant harmony] (see Spitzer 1963).

13–17. To be the midpoint ... to like pattern: For Plato the world is a living creature whose visible, tangible body is the image of its soul, incarnate in matter and space; his account of its fashioning by the demiurge is a particularly elaborate part of the *Timaeus*, summarized very briefly by Boethius.

13. To be the midpoint of triple Nature: The three principles inherent in Nature are *Form* (derived from Mind), *Soul* (self-aware and self-moving), and *Body* (moved by soul).

13. to move all things: Plato's definition of soul as the principle of self-moving, criticized and rejected by Aristotle in *De anima* Book 1.

14. You attach Soul ... adapted members: Soul is incarnate in the world. *Consona membra* [properly formed, or harmonious, members] refers primarily to the all-containing, spherical and thus perfect shape of the world (*Tim.* 32b-33b).

15–17. And Soul, cut ... to like pattern: A very concise reference to *Tim.* 36b-c, which has the demiurge forge, like a smith, two circles—those of the Same and the Other—both made of Being, Identity, and Difference (basic intellectual categories); these circles he attaches together, the Other within and contained by the Same, at an angle like that of the Greek letter *chi* [c], and decrees that they should move in opposite directions, the Same toward the right, the Other (subdivided into seven concentric parts) toward the left.

These intellectual/spiritual motions of the World Soul returning on itself, circling about Mind, are visible in the world's body, the image of the World Soul: the motion of the Same as the unchanging diurnal motion of the heavens, from east to west; the subdivided Other as the motion of the seven planets in their orbits from west to east, according to the circles of equator and ecliptic.

16. goes forth to return into itself: This line is the source of Dante's "sé in sé rigira" [turns itself back to itself] (*Purg.* 25.75) on the self-reflexive nature of the rational soul. The circular activity of the World Soul expresses its self-knowledge.

17. curves the heavens to like pattern: The “pattern” is also the Form of perfection seen in Mind. See *Par.* 2.127–41, with notes.

18–21. With similar causes ... by ascending fire: Based on *Tim.* 41c–42d, where the demiurge fashions myriad human souls in the same form as the World Soul but with less pure ingredients, and “sows” them in the stars and the earth, leaving to the planetary deities the task of providing bodies for them. Boethius does not mention the power of the stars.

According to Cornford 1937 on *Tim.* 41e, Plato’s “chariots” most probably refer to the soul’s life in the star-chariots of *Phaedrus* 247–49, after which the sowing of souls on earth in incarnation takes place; Boethius does not mention the human bodies as distinct from the *currus* [chariots], and he seems to use the term to refer to human bodies, but the possibilities are left open. As Freccero 1968 observes, Guillaume de Conches in his commentary on these lines gave them the same allegorical interpretation as he did to *Timaeus* 41–42 (see our note on 4.58–60.)

19. sublime creatures: “Creatures” is added for clarity, Boethius having only *sublimes*, apparently a reference to the Platonic-Neoplatonic doctrine of the essential divinity of the soul.

20–21. by a kindly law ... ascending fire: According to the *Timaeus*, souls who live justly will be rewarded by a happy life in the star of their sowing. Boethius here conflates the Neoplatonic return with Christian conversion, the soul returning to God (cf. 4.22–63, with notes).

21. make them return by ascending fire: “Reduci igne” means literally by “fire returning” (i.e., to its source or proper place); since the return is also an ascent (explicit in line 22), this compressed expression can also mean “return, driven by fiery desire” (soul was associated with fire, as in *Tim.* 40a, 45b). Boethius’ use of the analogy may well have contributed to Beatrice’s account of the pigrim’s ascent in *Par.* 1.109–41.

22–26. Grant, Father ... with your splendor: The petitions here fall into two parts: the prayer for the ascent and vision itself (lines 22–24), and that for the elimination of the chief obstacle, the heavy material body (lines 25–26).

22. Father: Renewed apostrophe, emphatic in introducing into the poem, for the first time after many pronouns, a noun naming God, the most intimate noun used to address God in pagan, Jewish, and Christian tradition (cf. *Purg.* 11.1–24, with notes).

22–24. Grant, Father ... sight in You: A carefully modulated sequence, approaching the idea of the direct vision of God, “in te defigere visus” [to fix the sight deep in You], through three attributive nouns (*throne, fount, light*), reinforced by the anaphoric repetition of “grant” [*da*] (the figure of *climax* governs the entire series and is explicit in line 23).

22. ascend to your august throne: Liturgical and prophetic undertones here, cf. *Is.* 6.1–4.

The force of the prefix *con-* in *conscendere* implies *complete* ascent.

23. circle the fount of Good: Lat. *lustro, lustrare* is rich in untranslatable connotations, it can refer to ritual purification and procession; it can mean “to search intensively” here (and could be so translated); and Cicero uses it in the first sense in his (fragmentary) translation of the *Timaeus* (probably known to Boethius but not to Dante) to refer to the circling of the stars. The mind is both seeking the fount and beginning to imitate the activity of the World Soul. The “fount of Good” conflates Plato’s sunlike Form of the Good (see the note on lines 4–6) and Plotinus’ idea of emanation as an overflowing. That all objects of desire are desired as good because to some extent they participate in the Form of the Good is basic to the Platonic tradition (see *Purg.* 17.127–35, 18.55–60, with notes).

23. finding the Light: God as the principle of illumination (cf. 1 John 1.5, *Confessions* 7.17), also reinforcing the reference to the *Republic* (see previous note).

24. fix its sharpened sight deep in You: Finally the vision itself is explicitly reached, although it is presupposed in the entire series. We derive “deep” in the translation from the intensive prefix *de-* in *defigere*. Dante cites this phrase in the Epistle to Can Grande; for the suggestions that Dante seems to have found here for his own description of the vision of God, see the notes to 33.52–145.

25–26. Dispel ... the clear sky: The mention of clouds and the weight of the body already implies the existence of the clear sky beyond them (Lat. *serenum* applies properly to cloudlessness; *serene* meaning “untroubled” was originally figurative).

26–28. for You are ... the End, the Same: As Klingner pointed out, although until line 26 the poem follows the traditional three-part structure of pagan hymns (invocations [*epikléseis*], cf. lines 1–6; enumeration of the deity’s deeds [*aretalogía*], cf. lines 6–21; petitions [*euchaia*], cf. lines 22–26), there is no pagan counterpart to the conclusion, which derives instead from Judaeo-Christian tradition, as in the conclusion of the Gloria of the Mass (“Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus dominus, tu solus altissimus” [For you alone are holy, you alone are lord, you alone are most high]), or the traditional, non-scriptural coda of the Lord’s Prayer, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.”

27–28. You are the peaceful ... the End, the Same: The poem ends with a series of names for God: *requies* [rest], *finis* [end, goal], *principium* [beginning], *vector* [mover], *dux* [leader, guide], *semita* [path], *terminus* [terminus, end], *idem* [the same]. As Klingner observed, the terms form a circle: they go from God as unmoved, and then as the beginning, to God as end, recapitulating the poem as a whole (note especially the references to lines 1–7). The very last line, ending with the masculine nominative *idem* (the long / is imposed by the meter), forms a complete sentence with an (implied) copula: “The beginning, mover, guide, path, goal [are/is] the Same [the One].” God is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (Apoc. 22.6), and he is “all in all” (1 Cor. 15.28).

Like its first and last lines, the poem as a whole enacts the circle of procession and return;

not only in theme, in structure, too, it is a little model of the cosmos. Its first section treats God as origin of the world, the second, Soul as holding the world stable by its conversion about Mind, and the third, God as the goal of return. Soul is at the center of the world, between the principles of Mind and matter; its mediation enables them to be joined. Soul, then, holds the world together at the center by virtue of its combining the two motions of the Same and the Other; it occupies the center of the poem (lines 13–17) as well; it holds the poem together and moves the poem: it is named as the principle of motion and the poem expresses the poet's desire for return. The division of Soul into its two motions occurs in line 15, the central line of the five on Soul. And the *last* line of the poem begins with *principium* (beginning, i.e., *alpha*), immediately preceded by *finis* [end, *omega*], as the *first* line begins with long *O* (*omega*), also a literal instance of circularity.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. The Figure of Beatrice

(*After Canto 2*)

Dante's Beatrice is perhaps the most celebrated female character in western medieval literature. Although lyric sequences featuring ladies courted by vernacular poets existed before Dante, those sequences did not shape a consistent persona for the lady; in this respect, models for Dante's treatment of Beatrice as a literary character are more easily found in Old French narrative (e.g., Guinevere of the prose *Lancelot*) than in lyric poetry. Still, Dante's naming of Beatrice in an early canzone, "I perish for the one who has the name Beatrice," testifies to the poet's continuity with troubadour poets whose ladies stimulated them to virtue and poetic excellence (Arnaut Daniel is an example; see *Purg.* 26.115–48 and notes). The Provençal habit of identifying the lady by a code name [*senhal*] guides Dante's emphasis throughout his works on the semantic force of the name *Beatrice* [she who makes blessed].

In the *Comedy* Dante enriches the image and character of Beatrice by drawing on biblical and classical traditions. The *Sapientia* of the Wisdom books of the Bible (especially as she speaks in Prov. 8.27–31, affirming her presence at the creation) and the bride (*sponsa*) of Canticles, figures associated in the Middle Ages with the Virgin Mary and with female saints, are fundamental (see *Purg.* 30.11 and note). Also influential was the Latin tradition of feminine-gendered personifications of abstract ideas: allegories of the virtues and vices in late antique Latin works such as Prudentius's *Psychomachia* are the ancestors of the speaking characters Reason and Nature in the Old French *Roman de la Rose* (finished about 1275). By far the most significant of these personifications for Dante is one that assimilated both scriptural and classical traditions: Boethius's Lady Philosophy. As will appear in what follows, she informs Beatrice's relation to the pilgrim at every turn: as a teacher, as a nurturing and consoling mother, and, in Dante's reception of Boethius's text, as a soul-friend or *amica* (see *Conv.* 2.15.12, 3.11.5–8, 12.14, 15.16–17), a sublimated intellectual lady love.

In the history of commentary on the poem, the list of abstractions Beatrice personifies has steadily grown. For commentators early and late, she almost always personifies Theology and sometimes also the pure early Church; in Charles Singleton's influential account of the "three lights" that lead the pilgrim to God (Singleton 1958), she stands for the "second light," that of illuminating grace, the light of Revelation that comes to the pilgrim between Virgil's natural light of reason and the light of Glory from God (see 30.97–123 and note); through her the pilgrim exceeds his human limitations. But although Beatrice comes to personify a host of abstractions, she retains in the *Comedy* the humanity Dante established for her in the *Vita nova*.

Written by 1294, the *Vita nova* is Dante's account, in verse and prose, of his juvenile glimpses of Beatrice and of the crises that mark the narrator's relationship to her. On several of these occasions the protagonist produces major poetic statements: for example, the canzone after he loses Beatrice's greeting, "Donne ch'avete," inaugurates a new "style of praise" [*stile della loda*]. At the center of the book, the canzone "Donna pietosa" and its attendant prose narrate a vision of Beatrice's death and ascension to Heaven, acclaimed with the words *Osanna in excelsis*, that frames her life in scriptural terms. Subsequently she is declared analogous to the One heralded by John the Baptist, making it clear that she is a figure of Christ; at the same time, her name is declared synonymous with Love (*VN* 24.4–5). Her name is underlined throughout the work: in the first chapter, those unaware of her name refer to her spontaneously as *beatrice*; in the last, her name is the sole recoverable datum following sight of her in glory (*VN* 41.13). When, in the prose account of her death, the protagonist wakes from his delirium crying out "blessed Beatrice" [*benedetta Beatrice*] in the presence of others, he risks violating the courtly-love taboo against divulging the beloved's name (*VN* 23.13; see Martinez 1997), but establishes an alliterative formula that follows her through the *Comedy*.

Virtually all students of Dante now accept the historical existence of Beatrice. In his biography of Dante, Giovanni Boccaccio identifies her with Beatrice Portinari, the daughter of Folco Portinari and (possibly) wife of the banker Simone de' Bardi. By consulting Arabic and Syrian calendars that begin the new day at sunset and the new year in the autumn, Dante accommodates to the number nine—known in the book as Beatrice's "friendly number"—the date of her death on 8 June 1290; thus the eve of 8 June becomes 9 June, and June becomes a ninth month (*VN* 29.1; see Singleton 1949, Vitanova 1996). Moore (1896–1917, Vol. 2) saw the emphasis on an awkward date as verification of Beatrice's existence; in any case, Dante affirms that she "lived and died" in the city described in the book (*VN* 39.1–2). Other passages (e.g., *VN* 19.18; and cf. *Purg.* 30.127, 31.48–51) assure the reader that Beatrice possessed a body (Baldelli 1994), but Dante omits other details of her life, and never directly addresses, in relation to his devotion to her, the fact of her marriage—or, for that matter, of his own, to Gemma Donati. Indeed, one of the stated purposes of the *Convivio*, written about a decade after the *Vita nova*, is to explain Dante's apparent fickleness in shifting his devotion from Beatrice to a "donna gentile" [noble lady] in *VN* 35–38. That this noble lady is Lady Philosophy, allegorically presented, and not a human rival to Beatrice's memory, is the poet's explicit justification for his apostasy.

By adopting in *Convivio* the figure of Lady Philosophy, Dante reflects a profound debt to Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae*, a work about loss and exile that tackles the problem of injustice in God's universe. In the second book of *Convivio*, Dante explains the canzone "Amor che nella mente mi ragiona" (see *Purg.* 2.112 and note) as an allegory of the struggle between his memory of Beatrice and his enthusiasm for philosophy, which he explains he took up, inspired by both Cicero and Boethius, to console himself after Beatrice's death. Although the role of philosophy in *Convivio* as a distraction from Beatrice has led to considerable debate on the status of philosophy in the *Comedy* (see Scott 1990, 1995), it is fair to say that, although it is apparently antithetical in the *Convivio*, Ladies Beatrice and Philosophy become fully realigned within—indeed as—the Beatrice of the *Comedy*. Yet it is worth recalling that even in *Convivio* Dante has his memory of Beatrice and his love for philosophy claim *distinct*, rather

than *opposed*, parts of his being: Beatrice his soul, where settled convictions dwell; Philosophy his spirit, under the influence of the heaven of Venus, inculcating the new love (*Conv.* 2.6.9).

In the *Comedy*, Beatrice first appears to the pilgrim through the words of Virgil, who relates how she had descended to Limbo to urge his rescue of the pilgrim. In Virgil's words Beatrice is addressed by Lucia in heaven as "true praise of God" [*loda di dio vera*], which introduces the "style of praise" [*stile della loda*] of VN to the *Comedy* as well. By Virgil's account, the rescue mission for the pilgrim originates with the Virgin Mary and is delegated to Lucia and Beatrice, the "three such blessed ladies" [*tre donne benedette*] (*Inf.* 2.124, reviving the epithet used for Beatrice in the *Vita nova*). After Beatrice's first intervention through Virgil, subsequent descents of ladies on the pilgrim's behalf extend her agency: Lucia takes the pilgrim up from the valley of negligent princes to the gate of Purgatory (9.55–58), and a "lady holy and quick" helps rescue the pilgrim from the siren in the second dream (see *Purg.* 19.25–33 and notes). Even Bernard, the pilgrim's final guide, acknowledges he was sent by Beatrice (31.64–69; see note).

Beatrice's descent to Hell on behalf of her devotee [*fedele*] is remarked upon once in each cantica, a significant pattern: Virgil asks her (*Inf.* 2.82–84) why she is willing to come down to sorrowful Limbo; she herself, when chastising the pilgrim in the Earthly Paradise, points to her descent to "the threshold of the dead" as proof of her care (30.139); and her exploit is recalled a third time when she leaves the pilgrim, and he thanks her for leaving her "footprints in Hell" for his salvation (*Par.* 31.80–81). The recurring emphasis on her descent to a place of suffering follows Boethius, who on first seeing Lady Philosophy bursts out:

"Teacher of all the virtues [*omnium magistra virtutum*], why," I asked, "have you come gliding down from the pole of heaven to visit me in the solitude of my exile?" (*Consol.* 1.3.3).

These words directly inspire Virgil in Limbo (*Inf.* 2.76–84 and note): "O lady of power [*donna di virtù*] ... tell me the reason why you do not shrink from coming down here, into this center," and point to Beatrice as the lady through whom human beings transcend fortune, a key role for Philosophy in the *Consolatio* (see Singleton 1958).

Though alluded to several times (*Inf.* 9.8, 12.88, 15.88–90; see notes), Beatrice is not further named in *Inferno*, although the omission of her name is significant in that it resembles how Christ in Hell is usually referred to indirectly (see *Inferno* Additional Note 16). In *Purgatorio*, after her name is used to get past Cato, the guardian of Purgatory (with recall of her descent to Limbo, as *Purg.* 1.52–54 echoes *Inf.* 2.82–84; see notes there), Beatrice is invoked as "the light between truth and the intellect" (*Purg.* 6.43–48 and note), meaning both the "second light," of grace, and Wisdom, *Sapientia*. The various mentions of Beatrice stimulate the pilgrim's desire to climb the mountain (*Purg.* 15.77; 18.48, 73), and the ascent culminates with his passage through the fire on the circle of the lustful, driven by Virgil's mention of her name (27.36, 56). After further anticipations of her in the forms of Leah and Rachel, who represent the active and contemplative lives (see *Purg.* 28.34–148 and note) and her reception in Eden as the triumphant Christ of Palm Sunday ("Benedictus qui venis," recalling her reception in VN 23.7), Beatrice finally appears, in 30.22–39, as a rising sun wreathed in clouds, hailed with

"*benedicta* are you among the daughters of Adam" (29.82–83), said of the Jewish heroine Judith and of the Virgin Mary, but also reminiscent of the *benedetta Beatrice* of VN 23.13.

In the climactic moment of *Purgatorio*, after addressing the pilgrim by name, Beatrice names herself, with the royal plural *guardaci* and with characteristic alliteration: "Look at us well! Truly I am, truly I am Beatrice" [*ben son, ben son Beatrice*]. Thus *Purgatorio* leads stepwise to Beatrice's second advent in the pilgrim's life, and her censorious treatment of him confirms the analogy of her coming to the Second Advent of Christ, in judgment. The midmost (ninth and tenth out of seventeen) mentions of her name in *Purgatorio* frame how her eyes reflect the enigmatic Christ-Gryphon for the pilgrim, foreshadowing the final scene of the poem. Thenceforth Beatrice's roles multiply: in the pageants and visions of Cantos 30–32 she is the admiral of the ship of the Church; later she leads the lamentation for the removal from Rome of the Church by Clement V (33.1–3); and at *Purg.* 33.10–12 (see note) she resumes her analogy with Christ, speaking in Latin the words *modicum et non videbitis me* [A little while, and now you shall not see me] from John 16.16 and the Ascension liturgy (see Holmes 2008).

The return of Beatrice also completes the interrupted biography of the *Vita nova*. Beatrice's chastisement of the pilgrim in Cantos 30 and 31, using the phrase *vita nova* for the pilgrim's youth, unmistakably evokes that episode. Dante enlists deep-seated mythic echoes when he identifies Matelda, another of Beatrice's forerunners, with Proserpina, the daughter of Ceres lost to the underworld (*Purg.* 28.49–51; and cf. 1.7–12 and notes). In the most striking scene of the cantica, the pilgrim's adaptation to the renewed sight of Beatrice of Dido's words on seeing Aeneas, "I acknowledge the traces of the ancient flame" [*agnosco veteris vestigia flammae*], tropes Dido's inconstancy to her former husband Sichaeus as the pilgrim's constancy to Beatrice (cf. VN 39.2, cited above, and *Purg.* 30.139 and note). Although the pilgrim's loss of Virgil is presented as a new loss of Eden, in the larger terms of the poem, the return of Beatrice is analogous to the restoration of Eden to the human race: she is the pilgrim's earthly happiness, a Proserpina regained, and she will be his avenue to felicity in Heaven; not for nothing does her name rhyme with *felice* [happy] (see *Par.* 7.18, 25.139; *Purg.* 6.48, 30.75).

In *Paradiso* Beatrice's most consistent function is to draw the pilgrim upward with her gaze, as if Heaven were to be found in her eyes (Beatrice jokes about the pilgrim's exaggerated gazing at her in 18.21). Beatrice's eyes and smile grow brighter with the ascent, until she must suppress her smile in Saturn or incinerate her devotee (see Additional Note 7). This pattern tropes the bracing effect of the lady's glances in courtly lyric and romance, but in a deeper sense, her propellant effect renders literal Virgil's first praise of her as the one through whom mankind exceeds a sublunar place in the cosmos (*trasumanar*; *Par.* 1.76–78; see below), and continues the effect of the pilgrim's glimpse of the two natures of Christ in the Gryphon (*Purg.* 32.118–26).

Paradiso displays a wide range of behavior on Beatrice's part, usually based on previous appearances. It is often overlooked that she continues to appear as the pilgrim's beloved in the terms of the *Vita nova*, especially at 3.1–3, 5.1–15, 9.13–24, 23.49–54, 30.16–21 (see notes); but she more often acts like Lady Philosophy, "discoursing on knowledge of things human and divine" (*Consol.* 1.pr.4.4). In the center of *Paradiso*, in Mars, where the pilgrim rejoices in his family connections, Beatrice is credited by Cacciaguida—whose career Dante presents in the

same terms as Boethius's (see 15.145–48 and note)—with giving the pilgrim wings "for his high flight" (see 15.52 and note), thus making him an *alager*, a "wing bearer," which is what Lady Philosophy does for Boethius: "I shall equip your mind with wings to enable it to soar upward" (*Consol.* 4.pr.1.8–9). Dante thus associates Beatrice with Lady Philosophy as promoter of the soul's return to its origin (see also note to 15.71–72, and *Inf.* 1.30 and note), a theme announced at the beginning of the cantica, where Beatrice draws frequently on Boethius's "O qui perpetua" (cf. 2.130–32, 133–35, 133–48 and notes; see also 1.1 and note). Reliance on Boethius also appears in Beatrice's reference to Plato's account of how souls "return" to the stars from which they were born (see 4.52–54, 112–14 and notes), reflecting of course how "O qui perpetua" digests the *Timaeus* (cited by Beatrice at 4.49; see notes to "O qui perpetua," *passim*).

Dante also brings in two more significant roles for Beatrice in the midmost sphere of Heaven: compared to the Lady of Malehault, a former lover of Lancelot who espies Guinevere's transgression in the Lancelot romance (see *Inf.* 5.127 and note, *Par.* 16.13–15 and note), Beatrice again fulfills her role as a courtly lady who supervises the pilgrim's affective life. Compared to Clymene, mother to Phaethon, child of the sun god Apollo, she assumes an explicitly maternal role in relation to the filial role the pilgrim assumes early in the cantica (cf. *Par.* 1.28, and see Additional Note 7). Thus Beatrice's three salient roles are expressed in the heaven where the pilgrim learns of his genealogy, of his destiny as an exile, and of his duty as poet; a similar triple role for Beatrice recurs as an achieved synthesis elsewhere in *Paradiso* (23.1–15, see notes; cf. 12.58–69 and note).

On the heels of Justinian's narrative of the Roman eagle, Dante entrusts to Beatrice in Canto 7 her longest continuous discourse, in which she describes God's rescue of mankind from the penalty of Adam with the Incarnation of Christ. Beatrice speaks on this subject because she, like Christ, has "descended from heaven" on a salvific mission (see *Purg.* 31.106–8, *Par.* 7.29 and notes); but this role too was prepared in the *Vita nova*, where the protagonist's vision of her dead body emphasizes a degree of humility that evokes Christ's "humiliation" in the Incarnation (*VN* 23.27; see 7.119–20 and note).

If Beatrice is a theologian in Mercury, she begins as a moral philosopher and experimental natural scientist in the moon, the first sphere of *Paradiso*. Her distinction of the absolute from the conditioned will of nuns removed from their cloister entails a discussion of the freedom of the will as God's greatest gift to man (cf. 5.19–24 and note), which follows from Virgil's qualification of her as an examiner on free will at *Purg.* 18.73; and it is to her words that Dante refers in *Monarchia* 1.12.6, as if he wished to associate a uniquely emphatic self-commentary with her (see Additional Note 2). It is also in character that Beatrice should implicitly promote the constancy that Piccarda lacked (see 3.31–130, 118–20 and notes), for the victorious return of Beatrice's image to the pilgrim at *VN* 39.1–2, dispelling the threat of the "gentle lady," was just such an affirmation of the "constancy of Reason" [*la costanza della Ragione*] represented by Beatrice. Nor is a Boethian context for Beatrice's discourse on free will far to seek, since Lady Philosophy, in order to settle Boethius's questions, introduces the freedom of the will as a chief subject in the last two books of the *Consolatio* (see 4.pr.6.4).

Beatrice is silent in Jupiter, but the pilgrim's entry into the sphere of the stars returns

Beatrice to a prominence we might expect given her account in the heaven of the moon of the entire system of spheres, a discourse that begins with, and privileges, the *primum mobile* and the fixed stars (2.112–17 and notes). This role is also prepared by earlier works. At *VN* 1.2 the very slow movement of the fixed stars is used to calculate Beatrice's age—8 and 2/3 years—when first seen by the protagonist, while at her death her relation to the number nine is derived from the presumably ideal arrangement of the nine spheres when she was created; in this sense she sums up the cosmos in herself (*VN* 29.2).

Beatrice's identification with the heavens authorizes her to direct the pilgrim's gaze downward in a retrospective of the planets that excites his scorn for the strife-ridden world he leaves behind (see *Par.* 22.124–54, 27.76–87, and especially 22.106–54 and note); on both occasions his survey returns to Beatrice's eyes, the force behind his transcendence of the earth. Of course for Dante it is Boethius "who proves the world deceptive" (10.125; see note to 10.121–29), and Beatrice's instruction of the pilgrim echoes how, in the *Consolatio*, Philosophy teaches her pupil Boethius the narrow scope and transience of fame by adapting Cicero's account of Scipio's looks back at the earth in the *Somnium Scipionis* (*Consol.* 2.pr.7, 4.m.1.4).

The same competence stands behind Beatrice's explanation to the pilgrim of the slow motion of the starry sphere as he enters the *primum mobile* at *Par.* 27.142–48, while her role in detailing the nine angelic hierarchies in Cantos 28–29 is based both on her kinship with the nine spheres and her association with the angels in both *VN* 34.1 and *Conv.* 2.9.1–2, where she is an *angela* (Carroll). Again, her expertise as a cosmologist is a competence shared with Lady Philosophy: Dante's image for the angelic hierarchies around the divine point at 28.16–36 is surely influenced by Philosophy's comparison to concentric circles of the degrees of proximity to the divine center (*Consol.* 4.pr.6.15).

The last sonnet of the *VN* imagines the protagonist going "beyond the widest-turning sphere," to glimpse Beatrice in Heaven, after which he expresses his hope for the renewed sight of her in glory (*VN* 42.3). This hope is realized with the pilgrim's last sight of her in the *Comedy*. When Dante addresses her for the last time, it is not with the honorific *voi* he had used for her in the last cantos of *Purgatorio* and the early cantos of *Paradiso* (see note to 31.79–90), but some dozen times in twelve lines in the familiar form (five verbs, four possessive adjectives, a few pronouns). Proper for addressing the saints, the familiar forms are also plausibly those of an intimacy achieved only in the course of the poem itself, in the poet's imagination. This relationship is sealed at Beatrice's departure with her smiling glance back at him [*sorride e riguardommi*] (31.92), as it had begun when she first "turned her eyes to him" in the *Vita nova* [*volse li occhi*] (*VN* 3.1). Thus with the one gesture begins, and all but ends, the journey of the poet's *salute*, his salvation, set on its path by Beatrice's *salute*, her greeting—a homonymy elsewhere reserved by Dante for describing how Christ, "man's salvation" rendered his salutation [*salus hominum salutabat*] (*Mon.* 1.4.4). Even in his first youth, his *vita nova*, the poet had seen in her greeting "the entirety of my blessedness" (*VN* 3.1).

R.L.M.

2. The *Paradiso* and the *Monarchia*

(After Canto 6)

Dante's treatise *Monarchia* sets forth a theory of world government. Using syllogisms, and deriving arguments from first principles commonly held (which Aristotle thought necessary for valid debate), Dante argues in the first book that a universal political order with a single head—a monarchy—is necessary to the well-being of the world because only a monarch can establish the universal peace required for the realization of all human potential; in the second book of *Monarchia*, Dante argues that this monarchy is the Roman Empire, whose election by God for universal rule is manifest in Rome's acquisition of world empire through conquest (which Dante describes as trial by combat); and, finally, in the third book, he argues that the authority of the Roman emperor descends directly from God, independently of the authority of the pope. This last book, which some readers have likened to the conclusion of a syllogism deduced from the premises in the first two, refutes the hierocratic arguments current in the early fourteenth century that subordinated the authority of the emperor to that of the pope.

The exact date of composition and immediate context of *Monarchia* remain difficult to determine exactly, although it was possibly written as late as 1318 in order to buttress the role of Can Grande della Scala as imperial vicar after his excommunication by Pope John XXII a few years previously (see notes to 17.76–93 and 17.88, *Monarchia* 1995 and 1998, and Cassell 2004). The close relation of *Monarchia* to the *Paradiso*, and the strongest evidence for the late dating of the treatise, is found at *Mon.* 1.12.6, where Dante, affirming that the power to act freely is God's greatest gift to mankind, adds: "as I have already said in *Paradiso* of the *Comedy*" [*sicut in Paradiso Comedie iam dixi*]. Besides passages found in the self-glosses of *Ep.* 13, this reference to Beatrice's discussion in the heaven of the moon (*Par.* 5.19–24; see note) is the only self-citation of the *Comedy* in Dante's works, and it should remind us that Beatrice was established by Virgil in *Purgatorio* as an examiner on the topic of free will at the conclusion of a series of discussions of the subject at the center of the poem (see *Purg.* 16.67–115, 18.73–75 and notes). Implicit in all these discussions is Dante's argument, fundamental to both *Comedy* and the treatise, that the human will is only truly free, that is, unswayed by passions or vices deriving from the influence of the stars, when it follows the direction of the intellect (see *Paradiso* Additional Note 3). In the terms of *Monarchia*, this freedom is possible for mankind if an emperor disciplines the human will with the "teachings of philosophy" (*Mon.* 3.16.9–12), so making mankind happy on earth (*Mon.* 1.12.6), while in Dante's heaven of the sun, a single secular ruler, Solomon, who exemplifies the practical reason, or "regal prudence," suited to the monarch (see *Par.* 13.91–96 and note, *Mon.* 1.3.10), explains the relation of intellect to will that characterizes the joy of the blessed (see 14.37–60, and note to 47–61). Given that this self-citation implies Dante's entire political doctrine, and indeed much of the content of *Paradiso*, it is reasonable to treat it both as the poet's signature and as an invitation to carefully consider the relation of the poem to the treatise.

Certain similarities in the two works might appear at first sight to be casual, such as the reference to the geometer's failure to square the circle (*Mon.* 3.3.2), which the poet uses to express his inability to grasp how divine and human natures inhere in Christ (*Par.* 33.133–35). But when, at *Mon.* 3.16.11, Dante speaks of the world as an *areola*, or "threshing-floor," using the Latin term that corresponds to Italian *aiuola*, used in the poem for the place "that makes us

so fierce" (*Par.* 22.151 and 27.86; see notes), it is clear that both passages reflect Dante's view that human conflict is driven by greed. Much the same goes for the condemnation in both works of those who steal the tithes of "Christ's poor" (*Mon.* 2.10.1; *Par.* 12.93 and note), as it does for use of a learned word like *archimandrita* [chief herdsman] for the pope at *Mon.* 3.9.17, and in *Par.* 11.99 to describe Francis of Assisi—implying that the first shepherd of the Church should be poor like Francis himself. Beatrice's image for the waters of cupidity where humankind drowns, though conventional enough (see *Par.* 27.121–26 and notes) appears on cue at *Mon.* 3.16.11 ("waves of seductive greed") as the obstacle to the just rule of the Roman prince.

The impressive, often ostentatious display of logic in Dante's argumentation in *Monarchia* is also reflected in *Paradiso*. Both works quote the principle of paired contradictories as a way of expressing certainty, in *Par.* 6.19–21 of Justinian's remark that his understanding of Christ's two natures became as clear as that logical axiom (see note there), and in *Mon.* 2.10.4 and 2.11.1–3 for the key argument that Rome's acquisition of world empire was necessary if the punishment of Adam was to be just. The multiple syllogisms in *Monarchia* find their counterparts in the *Comedy* in Dante's concatenated syllogisms proving how limited is the human grasp of divine decrees (*Par.* 19.40–63; see note), while Dante's attacks in the poem on the defective syllogisms that mislead humankind at 11.1–3 (see note), on the failure to make proper distinctions (*Par.* 13.115–20; see note to 124–26), and on the tendentious biblical exegesis of heretics (13.124–29; see note to 128–29), are like those meted out to his hierocratic adversaries in *Mon.* 3.4–12. In *Monarchia* Dante adds the authority of the Bible and Aristotle to purely logical propositions, and points out that when the two forms of proof agree, the argument must be compelling (*Mon.* 2.1.7–8). In the *Comedy* the pilgrim follows a similar method in demonstrating, in the heaven of fixed stars, that he possesses the theological virtues, quoting scripture but also "syllogizing" from basic principles (see 24.61–81 and 91–96, with note to 76–78; 26.25–27 and note).

Whatever the value of comparing the three books of *Monarchia* to a formal syllogism, the format of the treatise is closely related to the three-cantica format of the major poem—the aesthetic principles laid out in *Ep.* 13.26 regarding the *forma tractatus* of the *Comedy* appear valid for the treatise as well. Readers count thirty-four principal arguments (thirty-three plus one) in the whole work, a number that recalls the cantos in each cantica of the *Comedy*. According to the best manuscripts, the chapters of the three books are symmetrically arranged (16, 11, 16; see *Monarchia* 1995) and add up to seven ($16 + 11 + 16 = 43 \rightarrow 4 + 3 = 7$; see Singleton 1965). In the third book, the nine antiherocratic arguments are distributed according to the authorities discussed, drawn from the Old Testament (three), the New Testament (three), and from history and reason (three in all). Significant numbers structure even smaller units; nine citations prove the nobility of Aeneas (2.3.6–17)—three illustrating his virtues, three his lineage, and three the nobility of his wives Creusa, Dido, and Lavinia. Shaw notes that "in structuring his book so carefully Dante is imitating the world he lives in, which in turn mirrors its creator" (*Monarchia* 1995; see *Wisdom* 11.10 and *Rom.* 1.20, cited in Additional Note 14).

The structural intricacy of *Monarchia*, like that of the *Comedy*, is closely related to one of the principal arguments in the treatise: that the world (including its governing structures and its history) reveals the will of God. If Rome rules the world, this is one of the "vestiges" or

"imprints" of God's design, working through the art that is Nature. The *Paradiso* in turn sets forth more than once that the heavenly spheres are Nature's tools, its "hammers," and that the world mirrors the Creator as a wax seal displays the image of the ring that made it (see *Par.* 2.127–32, 7.67–75, 8.127–35, 13.67–78, and 29.22–36 and notes). Analogous figurative language is used in *Monarchia* (1.8.2, 1.9.1, 2.2.2–8, 2.6.3–8). In the heaven of Venus, the arguments from the economy and teleology of Nature, which always aims at a goal and does "nothing in vain" (*Par.* 8.100–111) are like those used in the treatise to claim the "natural" rightness of Roman monarchy (*Mon.* 1.3.3, 1.10.1, 1.16.1–3; *Par.* 8.115–26; see note).

Not by accident, Dante places this crucial idea at the midpoint of the first two books of the treatise: *Mon.* 1.8 refers to how God imparts his likeness through the creation, and *Mon.* 2.6 quotes Virgil's *Aeneid* 6.847–53 to the effect that Rome's peculiar "art" is imperial rule: "Your arts shall be: to impose the ways of peace" (in Book 3 the middle chapters limit the powers of the pope, who can neither create *ex nihilo* nor abrogate natural laws). But most fundamental for the relation of *Paradiso* and *Monarchia* is Dante's specification, at the exact central point (*Mon.* 2.6.6), that achieving the ends of Providence requires the cooperation of all humanity under the influence of the heavens in different geographical locations. This recapitulates the initial argument of *Monarchia* (1.3.4), as well as the idea that animates the second book, the definition of the common good as what is right (2.5.2–5), but it also summarizes the great theme of astrological influence that governs *Paradiso* (see Introduction, p. 10–13, and Additional Notes 12–14). For example, in Venus Charles Martel draws from Aristotle's idea of man as a social animal to reaffirm that political well-being requires a varied citizenry exercising different functions, and that this diversity results from the influence of the heavens (see 8.97–136 and note).

In its claim for the world-wide domain of the empire (cf. *Mon.* 2.3.17, 3.15.6), the treatise also parallels the geographic scope of the last cantica, manifest in the several looks down at, and references to, what Dante knew as the inhabited world (*Par.* 6.34–96, 9.82–93, 22.151, and 27.82–84, with notes). The detailed relation of *Monarchia* to *Paradiso* is equally panoramic; virtually every sphere exhibits at least an allusion. Since monarchy concerns "things measured in time" (*Mon.* 1.2.1), its domain is circumscribed by the *primum mobile*, in which "time ... has its roots" (27.118–19); and Dante quotes at *Mon.* 1.11.1 Vergil's fourth Eclogue, on "Saturn's reign" during the Golden Age, an era also remembered in Saturn's sphere (*Par.* 21.26–27). But the greatest density of reference to *Monarchia* is found in the lower spheres of Dante's Heaven. How *Monarchia* figures in the moon, Venus, and the sun we have already seen. In Mars there is reference to a historical emperor, Conrad II "the Swabian," and to Can Grande himself, the possible beneficiary of Dante's treatise, whose power to alter human destinies makes him an agent of Fortune or Providence, like the emperor himself (see 17.88–90, *Inf.* 7.73–96 and notes). More striking is the fact that the account in *Mon.* 2.3 of the bloodlines and wives of Aeneas, father of the Romans, appears to be echoed in Cacciaguida's relation of his family history and Paduan wife (15.137–38 and note), enriching the concept that governs the whole episode: the parallel between Aeneas's family and Dante's (see notes to *Par.* 15.25 and 25–27).

In Mercury, Justinian's canto-length speech is inspired by the emblem of "living justice" (6.82, 88), the "consecrated sign" (6.32) which was the eagle standard borne by Rome's legions and which, according to *Mon.* 2.10.7, inspired Augustus Caesar as well. Justinian details how

under the eagle Roman heroes, including Julius Caesar, fostered Rome's glory and expanded its power through trial by combat (6.34–91; *Mon.* 2.7.9; 2.8.1–2, 15; 2.9.21). Where the treatise depicts how Roman conquest achieves the Augustan peace that prepares the birth of Christ, and guarantees, through Rome's universal authority, that Adam's sin was lawfully punished in Christ (*Mon.* 1.16, 2.10–11), the cantos in Mercury, narrating the same events, juxtapose the Roman eagle's flight through space and time (6.61–96) with the descent of Christ to the world (7.19–21). Indeed Justinian's entire account of the eagle illustrates Dante's argument at *Mon.* 2.7.8–9 that God makes known his will through signs, which include the events of history itself.

The great collective eagle of Jupiter fulfills repeated mention in Mercury of the eagle as a sign (6.32, 82, 100; cf. 19.101–2, 20.86). The "just and pious" eagle (19.13; see note) displays the basis of polity in the concord of wills (*Mon.* 1.3.8, 2.6.6–8; *Par.* 19.1–12 and notes) most vividly in its speech, which expresses with the grammatical singular a conceptual plurality ("both *I* and *mine* ... *we* and *ours*"). This speech flows from the sacred fount of justice (*Par.* 20.19–21, with note), an idea that may be compared with *Mon.* 2.5.5, "the Roman empire is born of the fountainhead of piety" (see also 3.16.15). But it is Rhipeus's salvation (*Par.* 19.70–78; 20.67–70, 118–29 and notes), the most dramatic instance of the unfathomable ways of divine justice, that most closely reflects the treatise in its illustration of the problem of the salvation of pagans (*Mon.* 2.7.3–6). If Mercury illustrates how God's will unfolds in history, the eagle's words draw out the truths of predestination—such as Rhipeus's salvation—from the lair of the divine will (*latèbra*; see note to 19.67–70), where "they are hidden" (20.90; see also 20.130–32), for God's creation includes both "hidden and manifest" (19.42; see note).

But it is not only God's work that requires explication. Dante's forceful proposal, as he begins *Monarchia* (1.1.5), to draw the truth regarding temporal monarchy from its hiding place [*de suis enucleare latibulis*], is uniform with the disclosure of "living justice" through the discourses of the eagle. This helps explain why the revelations of God's will and the special discursive status of the eagle, at once "written" by a collectivity of just souls and the voice of the concordant just—in some sense the voice of empire itself—should follow hard upon Cacciaguida's urging to the pilgrim that he take aim at the mighty with "this cry of yours" [*tuo grido*] (17.133–34), and "make manifest" the entirety of his vision (17.128). The poet's judgments of European sovereigns in *Par.* 19.113–14 and 115–41 (see notes there) are the first fruits of Cacciaguida's encouragements of the pilgrim. And just as the writing of *Diligite iustitiam*, the charge that the heaven of justice places on the world's rulers, pauses on the M that represents the synonymy of monarchy and world, *monarchia* and *mondo*, the first dozen chapters of *Monarchia* conclude with alliterative, assonant formulations of Dante's thesis: "The well being of the world requires that there be a monarchy" [*ad bene esse mundi necesse est Monarchiam esse*] (*Mon.* 1.5.10, 1.14.11)—as if Dante's flourishes penning the treatise had been transposed to the skywriting of Jupiter (or vice versa).

The close interrelation of the polemical assertions in *Monarchia* and *Paradiso* helps to decipher the mood of Dante's reference to Emperor Henry VII in the Empyrean—for even there the subject of empire interests the poet—as one who would come to set Italy upright before it was disposed to be so improved (30.133–38). Many readers (e.g., Peters 1972) take the final reference to Henry as evidence that after his death in 1313 Dante had despaired of seeing the imperial ideal realized. But the late date of the work, its possible role in an active polemic

regarding Can Grande, and most of all the pose of a combatant that Dante himself assumes in arguing his views (*Mon.* 1.1.5, 3.1.3)—as if he were one of the duelists for the Roman empire—support the view that even late in life Dante kept faith with the political idea of empire, and hoped to see it reestablished at a more auspicious historical moment. In the poem, this stance might be seen as being echoed in the pilgrim's "knighting" by Cacciaguida (see 17.124–42 and note), and especially by the poet's intention, beginning *Paradiso*, to "enter ... upon the field [*aringo*]" (1.18; see note). The poet and the polemicist remained committed to a political regime that might bring "happiness in this life" (*Mon.* 3.16.7) or, as Wordsworth framed it five centuries later, in "the very world, which is the world / of all of us."

R.L.M.

3. The Primacy of the Intellect, the Sun, and the Circling Theologians

(*After Canto 14*)

It has been generally recognized that the cantos of the sun present one of the most complex and ambitious subsystems of the *Paradiso*. Their 655 verses (a number greater than is given to any other single planet) occupy a position that is close to being central among the other planets (1,116 verses on the moon, Mercury, and Venus precede them, and 1,175 verses on Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn follow them), no doubt an expression of the importance of the sun and its central position as the heart of the cosmos. The elaborate parallelism centering on the chiastically placed biographies of saint Francis and saint Dominic, with the solar symbolism associating saint Francis with the rising sun, saint Dominic with the setting one, has been fairly thoroughly explored (see Stabile 1970b, Martinez in Durling/Martinez 1990, Costa 2002). Furthermore, of the four and a half cantos devoted to the sun, three and a half feature Aquinas and Solomon, from the first circle, as speakers, and a principal subject of the other canto is saint Dominic.

The extent to which this entire system of four and a half cantos is designed to place in relief the great theme of the primacy of intellect over will has not been adequately realized. The new intellectualism of the Dominicans had met with much resistance from the Franciscans, true to Augustinian voluntarism, from the 1270s on; the Franciscans were then spurred to new forms of voluntarism, led by John Duns Scotus (1265–1308), the most radical exponent of the primacy of will, and William of Ockham; Bonaventura himself had been more moderate (for the background and details of this controversy, see Raymond 1924, Gillon 1946, Gilson 1969, Wéber 1974).

The primacy of the intellect has been a major theme of the *Comedy* since the very first canto of the *Inferno*, which emphasizes the distinction between the clarity with which the pilgrim perceives the goal of his efforts, "the delightful mountain that is origin and cause of every joy" (*Inf.* 1.77–78), and the imperfection of his will, which cannot move smoothly toward it; his left foot, representing his will, drags behind him (see Freccero 1959 for a full discussion, including many observations germane to this note). The primacy of the intellect determines the entire structure of Hell, in which fraud is punished more severely than murderous violence,

because the abuse of intellect, the very essence of the human soul (see *Purg.* 25.70–75, Wéber 1974), is more serious than simple malice (failure of love).

When, at the center of the *Purgatorio*, Virgil explains the nature of love, his analysis of the psychology of human action depends in the first place on the intellect: desire of an object follows upon cognition of it:

Your power of apprehension takes from some
real thing an intention and unfolds it within you,
so that it causes the mind to turn toward it;
and if, having turned, the mind bends toward it,
that bending is love, that is nature which by
pleasure is first bound in you.

(Purg. 18.22–27)

Dante's term *animo*, which we translate as "mind" above, refers to the soul as including both intellect and will (for the terminology, see our note on the passage); it is closely related to Aquinas, *STq. 1 a. 2*). Indeed, although Dante rejects Aquinas's positions on many questions, his close adherence to Aquinas's positions on intellect is perhaps his most conspicuous and important debt to him. Hence, as our notes on Purgatory proper (including *Purgatorio* Additional Notes 6 and 7) emphasize, the training of reason (what Aristotle called the acquisition of the "right rule") is integral to the reforming of the will.

Dante's intellectualism is particularly central to the *Paradiso*. The split in the pilgrim's nature represented as the dragging of his left foot has been cured in Purgatory; his will no longer resists his intellect. Rather, it is his intellect that is being trained, "informed" [reshaped, reformed], as Beatrice says in 2.109–10, by the sunlike rays of her instruction. Such dangers as are mentioned in 4.16–27 are intellectual errors, one of which might lead him away from the true faith, dangers whose relative importance the pilgrim does not yet entirely grasp. When, in the sphere of the fixed stars, the pilgrim undergoes examination in the three theological virtues, a main emphasis is on his intellectual grasp of their essence, for clear understanding is integral to their possession. What modern terminology would naturally term the *content* of the pilgrim's belief is called by the pilgrim its *form* (24.127–28; see our notes on the passage). Everything prepares the reader for a description of the vision of God as primarily intellectual, its affective component deriving from the higher intellect.

These principles govern the entire episode in the sun, the climax and key to which is their clear, insistent assertion in Solomon's speech on the relation that will obtain among intellectual vision, fruition of the will, and the radiance of the glorified body (14.37–60). He repeatedly states that the inner, determining kernel of beatitude is the intellectual vision granted to the soul; the love and joy felt by the will are the result of the vision; and the happiness of the soul will account for the radiance of the glorified body. Everything derives from intellectual vision (see our notes on the passage). As Solomon ends his speech, a third circle gradually appears (14.67–78), surrounding the two inner ones (the number of souls it holds and its size are not specified), expressing the joyous hope of all the blessed for that ultimate fulfillment. It is clear that the idea of the will following—indeed echoing—the

intellect underlies the entire plan of the cantos of the sun, and that the three circles that one after another surround the pilgrim and Beatrice correspond to Solomon's three principles (vision, affect, and glorified body).

When, at the beginning of Canto 12, the second circle of theologians surrounds the circle led by Thomas Aquinas, it is introduced by a comparison with a double rainbow, according to which an outer rainbow (compared to Echo) is "born" from an inner one (12.9–15). The question of the relation of these similes to the two circles of theologians has not been adequately explained by the commentators, except for Buti, who clearly and correctly identifies the second circle as a reflection or result of the first circle, and thus as subordinate to it (he explains both the rainbow image and the reference to Echo in this way); the center of both rainbows is of course the sun (God), and the inner rainbow is closer to the center, like the higher orders of angels in Canto 28. Buti draws on the accepted explanation of double rainbows as reflections of the primary ones, and he is one of the very few commentators who remark on the reversal of the colors in the second bow (which we refer to the issue of primacy: in the inner rainbow, the inmost and most intense color is blue; in the outer one, the reversal of colors makes red, the color of love, inmost; this phenomenon was given its correct geometric explanation by Theodoric of Freiberg, d. 1310, but there is no evidence that Dante or Buti knew it). The second circle is said to "take "motion from its [the first's] motion," which can only mean that it moves in the same direction at the same speed. It is sometimes said that the trope calling both circles "mole" [mill wheels] indicates reverse motion, as if there were ever more than one moving wheel in an earthly mill; we believe the anomaly is intended to be recognized and questioned, especially since the second wheel is situated at the perimeter of the first.

A number of modern commentators, including Sapegno and, most recently, Chiavacci Leonardi, have adopted the view that the circles later revolve in opposite directions (Mattalia is a conspicuous exception). The idea appears to result, in the Ottimo, Benvenuto, and other early commentators, from the emphasis given in 10.7–21 to the movements of the Same (the diurnal revolution of the heavens) and the Other (the movements of the sun and planets along the ecliptic), which are indeed opposed, and the natural enough assumption that the case must be the same here. They accepted the variant "al primo" (retained by Petrocchi), which with "al poi" they understood adjectivally, as referring to the two circles. Buti also read "al primo" adjectivally but gave the opposite interpretation, as we have seen. The first to associate 13.17–18 with *Conv. 4.2* and *Physics 4.10–11* seems to have been Tommaseo (1837, 1854, 1865, 2004), who quotes "Aristotle:" *Prima* and *poi* are first in space," and other passages from Book 4, from which, however, he himself does not argue for the opposed motion; his collaborator G. Antonelli asserts the difference exclusively on the basis of terminology (i.e., that in current usage *prius* and *poi* as a pair supposedly mean "forward" and "backward").

In fact, the argument rests almost entirely on the interpretation of 13.17–18:

e amendue girarsi per maniera
che l'uno andasse al prima e l'altro al poi
[both revolving in such a way that one
goes first and the other next]

It is claimed, for instance by Chiavacci Leonardi, that Dante uses the terms to mean "forward and backward" in *Conv. 4.2.6*. Here is the passage (part of Dante's commentary on "Le dolci rime d'amor ch'i solia," line 9 ("tempo mi par d'aspettare" [it seems to me a time for waiting]):

Time, as Aristotle says in the fourth book of the Physics, is "the number of motion, according to first and next," and "the number of celestial movement which disposes sublunar things to receive formative influence differently [at one time and at another, as exemplified by the seasons].... And so also [do] our minds, insofar as they are founded on the complexion of our bodies, which are differently disposed at one time and at another in their following of the circular motion of the heavens.

Dante then goes on to develop the theme of the appropriateness of different types of poetic expression to different successive circumstances. Thus this passage is entirely about time as the "number" of sequence, of succession, as the Vasoli and De Robertis commentary (in *Opere minori; vol. 2. t. 1*; 1988) quite correctly points out. It is entirely innocent of attributing to *prima* and *poi* the meanings "forward" and "backward," as opposed to "first" and "next" or "later." (According to Vignuzzi's *ED* article "Prima," in fact, there is no instance in Dante's works where *prima* means anything but "first," adverbially, and Vignuzzi himself takes *Conv. 4.2.6* to be an exception only in being a substantive.)

In Aristotle's own discussion of time (*Physics 4.10–14*) there is no exception to the terminology of time involving "before" and "after" (but on Averroës see below). His point is that time goes only in one direction. It is, he says, the number of the unchanging motion of the "first moved," the daily revolution of the heavens, by which all other motions are caused and measured (Dante refers to this passage in his second quotation from Aristotle; above). Place, says Aristotle, determines time, because the outer limit of the universe provides the local space within which the "first moved" has its motion. There is no mention in Book 4 of terms referring to directions of movement; the circular motion of the first moved never changes; in fact, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that Aristotle thought of the circular movements of all the heavenly spheres (he supposed there were thirty-seven of them) as beginning from the right, with different poles and velocities, but in the same direction (again, see Freccero 1959). Chiavacci Leonardi's note on 13.18 misrepresents both the *Convivio* passage and *Physics 4.10–14*.

There is, moreover, an extremely common use of this pair of terms to indicate logical or ontological priority and dependency: for instance, the original or causal is *prius*, the derivative or caused is *posterior* (or *post*, in William of Moerbeke's translations). This is in fact by far the most frequent use of the pair in medieval intellectual texts. A good example is Aquinas's *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* q. 1 a. 2, where truth is said to be *prius* in the intellect but only *posterior* in things, independently of chronology. In connection with *Physics 4.10–11*, the following passage is significant, expanding on Aristotle, from Averroës' *Commentary*, §128:

But you are to know that time, although it is the number of every [sort of motion], is not so in the same way but *secundum prius et posterior* [according to *prior* and *secondary*]. For it is the number of every type of motion besides movement in space because it is the number of movement in space. And if movement in space did not take place, time would

not exist.... And if, among the various modes of movement in space, the circular movement did not take place, and, of circular movement the circular movement that is most swift, that is, the daily revolution [of the heavens], time would not exist. Thus, although time is the number of any motion whatsoever, nevertheless it applies to them as primary [*prius*: the motion of the first moved] or derivative [*posterius*: other motions] (quoted by Mansion 1934).

This seems to us the most reasonable way to understand 13.17–18: namely that the relative movements of the two circles of theologians express the primacy of intellect (*prius*), which the will now follows immediately and spontaneously (*post*).

The Italian critics who assert the difference in motion (even Sapegno and Chiavacci Leonardi) have been content to echo the readings of *Physics* 4 and *Convivio* 4.2 without making an effort to establish a coherent view of all the cantos of the sun. To my knowledge the only modern interpretation of these cantos that attempts to integrate all their details is the impressive one set forth by John Freccero in 1968 with a great wealth of suggestive documentation, particularly concerning solar/zodiacal imagery involving Christ and his Apostles); it deserves more attention.

Freccero sees the two circles of theologians as imitating the two cosmic motions described in 10.1–12, whose identification with intellect and will goes back to Plato's *Timaeus* and is echoed in virtually every medieval cosmological discussion (for instance Sacrobosco and Michael Scott; see Thorndike 1949); he sees the "motion of the Same" as parallel with the Logos, or eternal mind, and that of "the Other" as parallel with the principle of love, and thus with the Holy Spirit. Freccero argues that in both 10.1–12 and 10.21 Dante is drawing on the idea that the motions of the cosmos and of the two circles of theologians are imitative of the inner relations of the Persons of the Trinity as mentioned in 10.49–51; in other words, that the "motion of the Same" is parallel with the begetting of the Logos by the Father ("come figlia" [how he begets]) and the "motion of the Other" with the breathing of the Holy Spirit between Father and Son ("come spira" [how he breathes]).

There are several problems with this impressive analysis. First, it seems to us perilous to suppose that Dante would attribute motions (indeed, opposing motions) to the second and third Persons of the Trinity. The doctrines concerning the Father's begetting of the Son and the breathing of the Holy Spirit between Father and Son were identified by the theologians as mysteries that can be named but which utterly transcend human understanding; the blessed in Dante's sun are said to understand these matters, but the poet/pilgrim is not.

A second problem lies in the fact that if 13.17–18 signals that the two circles move in opposite directions, that constitutes a change from their movements in 12.4–6, a change requiring explanation (but to our knowledge no commentator even attempts an explanation). This problem is deepened by the fact that, as we have seen, the entire context of Cantos 10–13 suggests that there is only one direction of revolution of the two circles (Dante repeatedly insists on the parallel with fixed stars, indeed, circumpolar ones; he compares the simultaneous motion of the two circles with the coordinated movements of human eyes; he asserts that the second circle is a reflection of the first; and he compares it with Echo; these are all strong indications of a single direction of motion).

Freccero does not discuss the possibility of a single motion; he takes for granted a double motion and disregards the implication of a change. However, once it is seen that Dante intends the reader to distinguish between the imitation of the cosmos and the more direct imitation of God (as by the angels), many of Freccero's other observations retain their validity (for one point of difference, however, see our note on 4.28–36).

As stated above, the circle led by the Dominicans represents the primacy of intellect, that led by the Franciscans represents the will as obeying intellect. As Dante says, the two cosmic motions are a great sign of the delicate art of the Creator. But things can be expected to be different in Paradise, where it would be entirely anomalous for the will to move counter to intellect; the needs of the contingent world (cf. 10.18) are left behind. There are no contradictions in the Trinity; God is utterly unchanging, and, as we see in Canto 28, the very angels circle about him in order to become more like him, imitating but not equaling him. In fact, in this reading the two circles of theologians have a close resemblance to the angels as represented in Canto 28, circling about God. In each case the inner circle is *prius*, closer to the center and seeing more deeply. As Beatrice explains once again:

and you are to know that they all feel delight
according to the depth their sight reaches
in the Truth where every intellect finds peace.

From this you can see how beatitude is founded
on the act of sight, not on that of love, which follows
after (28.103–8)

In the representation of the circling of the angels in Cantos 28–29 there are differences of velocity but no indication of any differences of direction (in spite of the association of the lower orders of angels with the planets, see the note on 28.127–29). The last event in the sun—Solomon's explanation (echoed in the passage just quoted) of the structure of beatitude after the resurrection of the glorified body—brings a third circle of rejoicing souls to surround the theologians momentarily (14.67–68): forming a triad of circles that offers an interesting parallel with the angelic triads (for the association of souls with the orders of angels, see 8.26–27, with note).

In any case, in Heaven those who argued for the primacy of the will now know better (for their idea had only a relative truth and only applied, intermittently, to those *in via*, not to those *in patria*): now the will spontaneously and harmoniously takes its cue from the intellect; the inner circle is more intense because it is closer to the center; it moves first, and the outer circle echoes it and moves with it (12.14–15 and 21), not the other way around. This is the symbolism in all the cantos of the sun.

R.M.D.

4. Dante and the Liturgy

(After Canto 15)

The liturgy Dante knew embraced a broad range of human experience. Liturgy was conspicuous at the beginning of life in the sacrament of baptism and at its end the Office of the Dead. Feast-day processions marked high points in the year (e.g., the Candlemas, Palm Sunday, and Rogation Days processions before the Ascension of Christ). Special liturgies served for benedictions, coronations, and the dubbing of knights. Liturgy specified the positions of the body in personal devotion, as in genuflection and the striking of the breast in the *Confiteor*; its celebration required specific vestments as well as Church furniture, not to mention the church building itself. Liturgy could appeal to the eye and even to the sense of smell (see *Purg* 10.55–69 and note); in the case of the Eucharist, touch and taste were also involved. But the principal object of the liturgy is the praise and glorification of God by the congregation, and especially the symbolic reenactment of Christ's life on earth in the *circulum anni*, the yearly round of the temporal of the office from Advent and Nativity to Pentecost. Commemorated daily in the Mass is the last supper on Thursday of Holy Week, the center of all exercises, varying in its content according to the liturgical season; in this sense, the life of Christ is the vital principle, or "form" of the Church and its liturgy (*Mon.* 3.15.3).

The story of Christ's life reaches its climax in the death on the Cross and the Resurrection, which consummate the victory over Hell and death, a heroic exploit sometimes referred to as the *gesta salvatoris* [deeds of the savior]. The content of Dante's major poem broadly imitates the liturgy as a narrative that follows Christ's *gesta* in the pilgrim's descent to Hell and subsequent ascent to the stars. What Dante calls the "form of what is treated" [*forma tractatus*, *Ep.* 13.26]—the poem's division into three canticle, with thirty-three cantos in each (plus a prologue in one), fashioned out of rhymes in *terza rima*—may also be said to have liturgical form or rhythm. If it is correct to assign Trinitarian meaning to the *forma tractatus*, Dante's inspiration may have come from the triple addresses in the liturgy: the Kyrie and Agnus Dei from the Canon of the Mass, for example, but especially the *tersanctus* (*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*) of the Mass Preface, always understood as referring to the Trinity.

Reference to liturgy has a prominent role in all three parts of the *Comedy*. The very first line of the poem, "In the middle of the journey of our life" (*Inf.* 1.1), was recognized by early commentators as an echo of King Hezekiah's sorrow over his imminent death and descent to the gates of Hell (Is. 38.10; see *Par.* 20.49–54 and note). The lament was familiar to Dante's readers because it was used as a canticle at lauds of the office of the dead and in liturgical commemoration of Christ's descent into Hell during matins and lauds on Holy Saturday. The first line of *Inferno* thus anticipates the journey the pilgrim is about to begin in the wake of Christ's death and Resurrection. The first line of the last canto of *Inferno*, in turn, "The standards of the king of Hell go forth toward us" [*Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni*] (see *Inf.* 34.1–2 and note), describing Satan's wings, derives from a Good Friday vespers hymn also sung during the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September). Bound since the dawn of time (see *Inf.* 34.61–67, 106–26 and notes), Dante's Satan testifies to Christ's victory precisely in his mimicry of the Crucifixion (see *Inf.* 34.70–96 and *Inferno* Additional Note 16).

Christ's victory over Hell is also frequently recalled in the text of *Inferno* through the various descents mentioned—the original one, that of Christ (echoed at 4.52–63, 8.124–26, 12.31–45; see notes there), but also that of Beatrice to Limbo (*Inf.* 2.82–84; see Additional Note 1), and most elaborately, the pilgrim's own penetration of lower Hell, assisted by the heavenly

messenger (see *Inf.* 9.81–85 and notes). The citation of *Vexilla regis* thus concludes the narrative of Christ's victory that makes the pilgrim's descent possible, and for this reason marks the turning-point for Virgil and the pilgrim, from which they begin their ascent out of Hell (see *Inf.* 34.70–93 and note).

In *Purgatorio*, where the consequences of sin are removed, the drama of Adam's transgression and redemption informs liturgical citation and adaptation. There are liturgical borrowings throughout the cantica: the Litany of Saints and Agnus Dei (see *Purg.* 13.51, 16.19 and notes); the hymn *Summae deus clementiae* from the Saturday night office, sung by the lustful in a markedly liturgical manner (see 26.121, 127–35 and notes), and episodes from the life of the Virgin typically recalled during Advent, Nativity, and Epiphany seasons (see also *Purgatorio* Additional Note 12). As a narrative, the cantica itself depends on ritual performances during the course of the day, especially at dawn and in the evening, like some offices of the Church. Dante's most elaborate adaptation of a known liturgy is the inclusion in the last cantos of Ante-Purgatory of elements from the compline office, the last of the liturgical day (see *Purgatorio* Additional Note 8). The reference to "this vale of tears" in the Marian antiphon *Salve regina* sung by the neglectful Princes resonates with its setting in a shadowy valley at evening (see *Purg.* 7.82 and note). Also sung is the hymn *Te lucis ante terminum*, which asks for protection against nocturnal sexual pollution (*Purg.* 8.13–19 and note); the liturgical text is drawn into, and helps to represent, the mystery play [*sacra rappresentazione*] that reenacts Eve's temptation by the serpent, and prepares the pilgrim's dream in the next canto, with its unsettling ambiguities (see *Purg.* 9.13–18, 31–33, 52–63 and notes).

The melancholy and anxiety that take hold as the first day on the mountain turns into night is followed by the reenactment, through the account of Statius's completion of his purgation, of Christ's birth (*Purg.* 20.145–51 and note), Crucifixion (*Purg.* 20.127–29 and note), and Resurrection (*Purg.* 20.133–41 and note), marked by the singing of the *Gloria in excelsis deo* (sung to dramatic effect at midnight Mass on Easter, after being mostly suspended during Lent). The triumph of the Resurrection is then commemorated in the procession of the Earthly Paradise, representing the history of the Church militant in time (see *Purgatorio* Additional Note 12), with its focus on the acclamations *Benedictus qui venis* and *Hosanna* sung in honor of Beatrice and the Gryphon (that is, Christ). The acclamations are denotative of the processional liturgy of Palm Sunday—the episode in Christ's life that for liturgical exegetes most fully summarizes the entire *gesta* of Christ, from his Incarnation to his Ascension (implications Dante was clearly aware of in his treatment of Beatrice's assumption into heaven at *VN* 23; see *Rationale* 6.2.1–2, 6.67.9–11, and Additional Note 1; also Martinez 1997). Like the placement of liturgical elements at both the beginning and end of *Inferno*, we find significant liturgical allusions near the beginning of the second cantica, with the singing of Psalm 113 (*Purg.* 2.46–48 and note), celebrating the arrival of souls in the promised land (Dante's anagogical meaning, as in *Conv.* 2.1.6–7 and *Ep.* 13.21; see our introduction to *Purgatorio*, pp. 12–16), and at the beginning of the last canto, when the virtues around Beatrice sing the first line of Psalm 78, *Deus venerunt gentes* [God, the heathen have come], which was part of the special late medieval liturgy for the liberation of Jerusalem from Islamic control (Linder 2003), but which Dante instead employs to lament the loss of the papacy to

Avignon (see *Purg.* 33.1–3 and note). Thus the joyous liberation of the individual soul at the beginning of the cantica is contrasted with the lamentable captivity of the Roman Church at its conclusion. As we shall see, Psalm 113 also inaugurates an important liturgical pattern completed in *Paradiso*.

In liturgical terms, the bliss of *Paradiso* is represented by the wedding feast of the lamb (Apoc. 19.7–9), where the “bread of angels” (Ps. 77.25, alluded to at 2.10–12; see note) will be shared with the blessed. This feast of wisdom, the celestial counterpart of the Eucharistic meal, fulfills Christ’s promise during the Last Supper not to drink again of the vine until reunited with his disciples in heaven (Matt. 26.29). Because it is a *wedding* feast of the Lamb, the nuptial metaphor, too, is a persisting image for heavenly joys. The metaphor is implicit in the first sphere, that of the moon, where as nuns Piccarda and Costanza were brides of Christ (and see 3.100–102 and Additional Note 5), and in 30.135 it appears to anticipate the pilgrim’s future attendance “at these nuptials.” In the all-important heaven of the sun, the marriage metaphor characterizes Francis’s relation to the Church and to Poverty, and defines the act of worship itself.

In the proem to Canto 10 of *Paradiso*, the first in the sun, characterization of the opening apostrophe as a foretaste [*preliba*, 10.23] echoes the “bread of angels” of 2.10–12 and sets the table, so to speak, for what follows. At the end of the same canto, in a remarkable passage, Dante characterizes the song and gesture of *Paradiso* in relation to the liturgy using the nuptial metaphor for Christ’s relation to the Church and to the soul. Describing the rotation of the circle of the theologians in the heaven of the sun, Dante compares it to the movements of a mechanical clock, and, with respect to the singing of the teachers, to the sounding of a bell:

Then, like a clock that calls us in the hour when
the bride of God rises [*surge*] to sing a dawn song to the
Bridegroom, that he may love her,
whose one part pulls and the other pushes,
sounding *tin tin* with so sweet a note that a well-
disposed spirit swells with love,
so I saw that glorious wheel turning, voice
answering voice, with tempering and sweetness
that cannot be known
except there, where rejoicing forevers itself.
(10.139–48; see note)

The nocturnal rising to worship follows the recommendation of Benedict’s Rule (Chapter 16), which draws from Psalm 118.62 in establishing that the office ought to be sung both day and night: “I rose at midnight [*media nocte surgebam*] to give praise to Thee.” In light of the nuptial metaphor, we are justified in recalling Canticle of Canticles 3.1–2, where the voice is that of the Bride rising from her bed to search for the Bridegroom: “In my bed at night, I sought him whom my soul loveth ... I will rise [*surgam*], and will go about the city.” Dante’s phrasing makes the singing of the Office of Lauds—known as *laudes matutinis*, the matinal

office that ushers in the light of the new day, but better thought of as a synecdoche for all the hours of the Office, possibly for the entire liturgy—an expression of desire for Christ's embrace: for his embrace of the collective bride, the Church, and of his individual brides, human souls, according to allegories standard in the Middle Ages (see Introduction, p. 9). The text implies that longing for the embrace of the spouse is what motivates the celebration of the liturgy, indeed, all worship.

The language and placement of the passage—ten lines concluding Canto 10, in the heaven of the sun, fourth and thus central of seven planets—associates the desire of the incorporate Church, that is, all the faithful, to a cosmic appetency. Rhymes on *nota* and *rota* link the passage to others in *Purgatorio* and especially in *Paradiso* (cf. 13.10–27, 14.19–33, 28.9) where the wheeling of the heavens and the singing of the blessed and of the angels is coordinated. A relation of microcosm to macrocosm inheres in the resemblance of the bell mechanism, which is pulled and pushed [*tira e urge*], to the power that attracts the nine orders along their hierarchy, so that "all are drawn, and all draw" [*tutti tirati son, e tutti tirano*] (28.128–29; see Moevs 1999). The use of "that calls us" [*che ne chiami*] of the bell as stimulant echoes the same verb used at the beginning of the canto when the poet explains that the planets are distributed along the ecliptic orbit of the sun "so as to satisfy the world that calls for them" [*che li chiama*] (10.14–15). Implicitly compared are the desire expressed in singing the office and the relation of the heavenly spheres to the earth. If Christ is the form of the Church, it follows that the Church desires Christ as the earth yearns to be formed by the cosmic order, a yearning that was fulfilled in history when the heavens prepared the earth both for the creation of Adam and the birth of Christ (see 13.49–84 and notes, and *Mon.* 1.16, 2.10–11).

As a guest invited to the feast of the Lamb, the pilgrim's salvation is assured, as is foretold at numerous junctures (*Par.* 10.86, 15.28–30, 24.1, 25.57, 30.135 and notes). The pilgrim is met in successive spheres both by personal acquaintances and historical figures: his childhood friend Piccarda, the emperor Justinian, Charles Martel, Cunizza, Bishop Folquet, Thomas Aquinas, his great-great-grandfather, and so on. The scheme of a rising pilgrim received by the descending blessed is explicit among the contemplatives of Saturn when Peter Damiani announces that he has come "down along the degrees of the holy stairway" (21.64–65) to welcome the pilgrim. Not by accident, the next sphere, that of the fixed stars, where the poet invokes the aid of his natal constellation (22.112–23), is where the pilgrim is received by all the blessed, including Christ and Mary.

As anticipated earlier, the process of reception actually begins in *Purgatorio*, announced by the fact that the souls sing *In exitu Israël de Aegypto* as they approach the island, conveyed by the angelic boatman. The psalm was sung when bearing the bodies of the deceased to church for the office of the dead, but its text is a joyous one, and the rubrics of the last rites for the dying, which speak of the soul's approaching departure [*exitus*] from the body, reflect the idea of the soul's liberation from the corruption of earthly life as specified in Dante's exegesis of the psalm (see our introduction to *Purgatorio*, pp. 11–15). The purgatorial terraces that follow distribute a serialized reception of the souls and of the pilgrim with nine angelic invitations, both to enter [*intrate, intrar:* 2.99, 3.101, 9.131, 15.35, 27.11] and to come forward [*venite:* 12.91–92, 18.43, 33.135]. The series conflates the invitation to the good servant ("enter thou [*intra*] into the joy of thy Lord," Matt. 25.21) with Christ's invitation to those who have done

works of mercy for himself in others (Matt. 25.34–36): *Venite benedicti patris mei* [come ye blessed of my father]. The invitations radiate down the terraces from the angelic invitation to pass into Eden, using those same words (27.58). In *Paradiso* there are further paraphrases and allusions to Ps. 113 (see 22.94–96, 25.55–57, 31.37–39 and notes), culminating with the pilgrim's leave taking of Beatrice, when he thanks her for having drawn him from slavery to freedom (31.85; see note), and anticipating his dying day: thus all but completing the pilgrim's reception in heaven (see Additional Note 1).

This vast pattern, which embraces much of the poem, originates in the liturgy, as the funeral use of the *In exitu* psalm suggests. The welcoming of the pilgrim in *Purgatorio* and the spheres of *Paradiso* illustrates the idea, most explicit during the prayers said over the dying (the *Ordo commendationis animae*), that the souls of the blessed are met by the hosts of heaven as they rise. In the *Convivio* Dante paraphrases these commendation prayers when he imagines a virtuous soul entering Heaven after the long journey of life: "As one who comes from a long road is met by the citizens of his city before he enters the gate" (*Conv.* 4.28.5; see 5.100–108 and note). With its emphasis on the triumphant entry of the virtuous soul, the *Convivio* also echoes accounts of Christ's Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem; as Gordon Kipling observes (1999), "Each saint [is] a king who enters the celestial city in triumph to be crowned in glory." The correlation of the two moments, already explicit in the assumption of Beatrice in the *Vita nova*, making her "one of the citizens of eternal life" (see *VN* 23.7, 34.1), remains a constant of Dante's imagination.

Christ's victory, which alone makes possible entrance into Heaven and a place at the feast of the Lamb (cf. 7.46–48 and note), is also a constant referent for liturgical meaning in *Paradiso*. Justinian's singing in 7.1–3, one of three passages in the poem where an entire (or nearly entire) terzina is in Latin (cf. *Purg.* 33.10–12, *Par.* 15.28–30; see notes), most immediately celebrates the fame of soldiers in God's army such as Romeo. The text is largely a pastiche of words from the *Sanctus*, normally sung to end the Mass preface before the celebration of the Eucharist; thus in one sense the terzina prepares Beatrice's explanation in Canto 7 of how mankind was saved through the Incarnation and Atonement of Christ. The triple acclamation *Sanctus*, originating in the text of Is. 6.4, where the Seraphim cry to one another (and from Apoc. 4.8, where it is the song of the evangelists in the presence of God), was taken as honoring the three persons of the Trinity; *Hosanna*, in turn, is identified with the reception of Christ on earth as son of David as he enters Jerusalem (*Hosanna filio David*, Matt. 21.8–9). Dante's use of both *Hosanna* and *Sanctus deus sabaoth* joins angelic to human praise of God, appropriate because it is Christ, the god-man, who appears directly to angels in heaven and in the form of the Eucharist on earth, who is being acclaimed; and it is the "God of hosts" [*deus sabaoth*] because the army on earth, the Church, is matched by the legions of angels in heaven (*Rationale* 4.34.5). The same Incarnational mystery, with the same triumphant associations, is implicit in the allusion, through *Benedictus qui venis* (part of the Mass *Sanctus*) to the Palm Sunday entry of Christ into Jerusalem, which signifies liturgically how Christ comes in the form of humble flesh, and also how he comes to take up the cross and obtain the victory of the Resurrection and prepare his future coming in judgment (*Rationale* 4.33.7; and see references above).

Sanctus and *Osanna* recur in *Paradiso*, carrying the praise of God's glory and triumph

through the cantica: *Osanna* as the acclamation for both an earthly ruler, Charles Martel (8.29) and for the praise of God by the angels and the blessed (see 28.94, 119; 32.135 and notes), and the *Sanctus*, in full triple repetition, and also in the vernacular, appears after the pilgrim's success in his last exam, on Love (see notes to *Par.* 26.67–69). Justinian's use of both Latin (*Sanctus, deus superillustrans, felices ignes*) and Hebrew (*Osanna, sabaoth, mamlacoth*) is illuminated by Durandus's gloss on the *Sanctus*, which recalls the origin of liturgy itself at the hands of David and Solomon: Dante of course knew that key terms in the liturgical *Sanctus* (including *Osanna*, and the acclamation already used at *Purg.* 30.19, *Benedictus qui venis*) derived from Psalm 117, traditionally attributed to David. The mixing of Hebrew and Latin in Justinian's words thus reflects the distribution of salvation history over the OT and NT epochs, a distinction that proves crucial for Dante's conception of the *Paradiso* (see 19.103–5, 100–111; 20.103–5; 32.19–39 and notes).

R.L.M.

5. The Religious Orders in the *Paradiso*

(*After Canto 23*)

Despite Dante's many attacks on the papacy, it is scarcely surprising that the contemplative and ascetic ideals in various forms of organized religious life in the Middle Ages should play a significant role in the conception of the final cantica, which concludes with the imagined contemplation of God. The importance of the religious orders is confirmed in the Empyrean, which might be taken as the "head" or summit of the heavens (see 32.4–18 and note), when Dante balances his row of Hebrew matriarchs (along with Mary, Anna, and Beatrice) with one of patriarchs who founded or wrote rules for orders of friars, monks, and canons. Pointed out to the pilgrim by Bernard of Clairvaux, and ranked under John the Baptist, the NT archetype of the ascetic life, are Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscans; Benedict of Nursia, founder of the most successful monastic order in the West, the Benedictines; and Augustine of Hippo, whose rule for a convent of nuns, set forth in his letters, was widely adopted by new orders in the later Middle Ages after new rules were prohibited in 1215 (it also furnished the basis for the Augustinian Canons, as at Saint Victor in Paris, and later for the Dominicans). Bernard of Clairvaux, who led a great expansion of the Cistercian order in the early twelfth century, would likely have been placed in the same row (see 32.34–35 and note).

Early monastic foundations in both the East and West had drawn inspiration from the example of Anthony the Great of Egypt (251–356), whose biography by Athanasius (295–373) had helped to inspire Augustine's conversion (*Confessions* 8.12). Anthony left no rule; his example was adapted for both semi-eremitical (anchoritic) and communal (cenobitic) ways of religious life by fourth- and fifth-century monastic founders such as the desert fathers Pachomius (ca. 292–348), Macarius (ca. 300–391), and John Cassian (ca. 360–435), as well as by Augustine himself. It was, however, Benedict's *Rule* (an adaptation of the lengthier *Rule of the Master* written for communities in and near Rome), that outlined the form of monastic life that dominated in the West: a stable, autonomous community within abbey walls, observing strict but humane prescriptions that reflected both the paternal responsibility before God of the

abbot (Lat. *abbas*, from Aramaic *abba* [father]) for the spiritual welfare of his monks, and their filial duty to obey him (*Rule* 2, 5).

The pattern established by saint Benedict (480–527; see *Par.* 22.31–96, with notes) spread from the abbey of Monte Cassino, near Naples, and swept across Europe, though the cenobitic pattern was often combined with communities of anchorites, such as Camaldoli in the Tuscan Apennines and Fonte Avellana, where Peter Damiani resided by preference (see 21.106–35, with notes). Success and expansion in time brought relaxation, and monastic ideals were undermined by the frequency of rich pious bequests with their administrative responsibilities and their incomes. One of the richest abbeys, in Cluny in France, became the birthplace of a reform movement that subjected all its foundations, governed by priors, to the authority of the one abbot of Cluny; Cluny itself later became the wealthiest abbey in Europe, with the largest church in Christendom, its monks well clad and well fed (see *Inf.* 23.61–63 and note).

Soon more radical reform movements arose, typically centralized in organization, in the attempt to restore the clear and simple ideas of Benedict's Rule. Peter Damiani himself (d. 1072) struck out against widespread clerical and monastic concubinage and homosexuality. A powerful and fast-spreading return to the austerity of Benedict's Rule began with Robert of Molesme's (1028–1111) foundation at Cîteaux, ca. 1075 (see the notes to 31.94–111). These reformed Benedictines, subsequently known as Cistercians, were exempted from all physical work in favor strict mystical asceticism; they multiplied dramatically under the tenure of Bernard as abbot of Clairvaux. Subsequent chroniclers, such as Dominic's biographer, Jordan of Saxony, regarded the Cistercians as divinely appointed forerunners of Francis and Dominic, whose orders (founded in 1209 and 1216, respectively) enlisted vast numbers of young men to an uncloistered life centered in urban communities. Dominic adopted a preexisting rule, but Francis wrote his own, based on the love of poverty; his will was declared invalid by the papacy, and the call to poverty became controversial and divisive (see notes to 12.124, 126, 127–29); he also approved the order of nuns founded by saint Clare about 1212 (see 3.97–102, with note), as well as a tertiary or lay order (1221), which also prospered. Francis's exaltation of poverty struck a deep chord in Dante, who suffered poverty during his exile and saw in Francis's example and teaching a remedy for the vice of cupidity, rampant in an urban society increasingly under the sway of nascent capitalism (see our introduction to *Inferno*, Manselli 1970, Havely 2004).

Along with these major orders, Dante includes individuals representing other groups, such as Romuald (ca. 950–1027), founder of hermitages, monasteries, and the Camaldulensian order (22.49), Peter Lombard and Richard, canons of Saint Victor in Paris (10.106–8, 12.133 and notes). He also mentions the Hospitaller friars of saint Anthony, established in France ca. 1095 in order to care for the indigent. Prosperous preachers, they were widely thought to have diverted alms to the keeping of concubines; Dante perhaps targets their concubinage in his "fattening the pigs of saint Anthony" (29.124). Theirs is the one order Dante viewed in an exclusively negative light; like her final statement about the papacy (30.145–51; see note), Beatrice's last reference to a religious order is trenchant.

The distribution of religious orders in the *Paradiso* dramatizes Dante's emphases. The two circles of theologians of Cantos 10–14, in the sun, the fourth and central of the planets,

include early followers of Francis, as well as Bonaventura (1221–74), the most influential General of the order, and the illustrious Dominicans Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great; included also are the influential Benedictines Bede and Gratian, the Victorines Peter Lombard and Richard; Siger of Brabant, a cleric in minor orders; and Joachim of Flora, a Cistercian who founded an even more austere order (1198) that spread out from the mother house in Calabria (see 12.139–40 and note). Thus Dante includes in the sun monks, friars, hermits, and canons, as well as a cleric and the founder of a recently established order.

The most important figures mentioned in the sun, both for Dante and in an absolute historical sense, are Francis and Dominic, the subjects of symmetrically intertwined biographies and instances of a “solar” intellect that teaches and illuminates all Christendom. They are identified as the leaders of Dante’s ideal program of reform, an idea shared by others who promoted the legacy especially of Francis, from the Joachites and “spiritual” Franciscans to adherents of the Empire who saw in their radical ideas a counterweight to the expanding powers of the papacy (see 12.139–40, 141 and notes).

At the planetary extremes, flanking Francis and Dominic and their followers in the sun, are the Poor Clares, Piccarda and Constance, in the moon, the first planet, and Peter Damiani and Benedict in the seventh and last, Saturn. Inspired by Francis, the Clares in the moon (astrologically cold and aqueous) represent in a way the female, lunar reflection of the Franciscans celebrated in the sun. At the other extreme, in a planet also thought astrologically cold (see Durling/Martinez 1990, Chapter 2), but associated with the Golden Age, the pilgrim meets the Camaldulensian Peter Damiani and Benedict of Nursia himself; to Benedict falls the task (as similar ones fall to Thomas and Bonaventura in the sun) of fulminating against the decline of the vast movement that sprang from him.

It is with respect to Benedict that Dante articulates a typology of the monastic vocation, first by invoking the visual figure for the ascetic approach to God, Jacob’s ladder; Dante conceives of Saturn as representing an eminence from which the ladder of contemplative ascent rises out of the pilgrim’s sight toward the Empyrean. This nuance reflects the fact, narrated by both Peter Damiani and Benedict, that both their monastic houses were built on high places (Mount Catria and Monte Cassino, respectively; see 21.109, 22.37 and notes), from which their cloisters “yielded” the fruits of souls reaching Heaven. Cloisters (from Lat. *claustrum* [enclosure]), thought of as the vestibules of Heaven, typify the space where the monk resides and from which he is to begin his ascent to Heaven on Jacob’s ladder. But, as Dante’s Benedict observes (22.73–78);

now no one lifts his feet from earth to climb
it, and my Rule has become a waste of paper.

The walls that used to be abbeys have become
caverns, and the monks’ cowls are sacks full of evil flour.

These verses encapsulate the restraints of monastic life, each of which can be thought of as a kind of container: the abbey walls (including the cloister) that cenobitic monks were forbidden to leave (except for necessity and with the abbot’s permission), according to the vow of *stabilitas* (*Rule* 1; also 51, 66–67; cf. *Par.* 22.49–51 and note); the monastic habit, symbolizing

the new life and body of the monk, taken on after shedding his former one, and marking the passage into a life under rule (*Rule* 58); and the Rule itself, whose exhortations and prohibitions were to guide the monk at every stage of his life (*Rule* 73).

Stability and enclosure are emphasized again when Benedict speaks of Saturn itself as an ultimate cloister (22.49–52): “Here is Macarius, here is Romuald, … who fixed their feet within the cloisters and kept their hearts firm.” In a sense, then, Dante thinks of the enclosed and enclosing planetary heavens (bounded by the *primum mobile* and the Empyrean) as similar to the cloister and the monastic life; similar language can be found in the moon, regarding the desire of nuns to remain inside “the sweet cloister” (3.107), enclosed in the habit (3.104), and under “the shadow of the sacred veil” (3.114). Piccarda’s acceptance of her status in the heavenly hierarchy (3.70–87; see note) in a way expresses her reacquired *stabilitas* in Heaven.

The same association of the heavenly spheres with the containing structures of monastic life governs Dante’s distribution of his religious in the first, fourth, and seventh heavens. Subordinate instances flank the fourth heaven: Folquet (a Cistercian abbot) is in Venus, the third heaven, and in Mars, the fifth, we find Florence governed by the bells of the Badia, the Benedictine abbey of Santa Maria (see 15.97–102 and note).

Not only is the Empyrean marked by monastic legislators, it recapitulates in its rising rows [*soglie, scanni, banchi*], the Jacob’s ladder symbolizing the ascetic ascent, connected with the idea of the descent and return of divine power through the creation, the fundamental idea of Dante’s cosmology (see *Paradiso* Additional Notes 3, 11, and 14). Use of Jacob’s ladder as the primary symbol of monastic life goes back to Benedict’s Rule (*Rule* 7) and permeates monastic literature. Both Bernard of Clairvaux, in his treatise *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*, and Bonaventura, in his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (see 12.127–29 and note), provide widely influential developments of the idea. Dante’s choice of Bernard as the pilgrim’s guide to the rising ranks of the heavenly rose (see 32.4–84, 21 and notes) may in part be due to his authorship of the *De gradibus*.

R.L.M.

6. The Threshold Cantos in the *Comedy*

(*After Canto 30*)

The world described in Dante’s poem is one of graduated hierarchies of being stretching from the material elements of earth, water, air, and fire to the pinnacles of spiritual creation, the angels. The pilgrim journeys through Hell to the Empyrean along this articulated continuum, with stages for measuring progress all along the way: circles in Hell, terraces in Purgatory, and spheres in Heaven, into each of which there is typically an acknowledged transition. In this sense, the entire poem is a series of thresholds (see our introduction to *Inferno*, pp. 18–20).

Yet this effect is variously emphasized in the poem. Major transitions are found at or near the tenth canto of each cantica: in Hell, as the wayfarers approach and enter the gate of Dis (*Inf.* 9.106); in Purgatory, with admission through the gate of Peter (*Purg.* 9.73–145); and in *Paradiso*, in the ascent from the subsolar planets to the sun (cantos 9–10). Important transitions are also found near each thirtieth canto: descending from Malebolge to frozen

Cocytus in Hell (*Inf.* 31.142); entering Eden and meeting Beatrice (*Purg.* 28–30); and, in *Paradiso*, passing into the Empyrean (30.46–112, discussed below).

The major transitions are prepared by treating the first nine cantos of each cantica as extended liminal zones. In Hell, this is the area outside the walls of Dis where the sins punished are of incontinence, not malice (cf. *Inf.* 11.16–111, 70–75 and notes). These first nine cantos are further marked as preliminary by including false starts: the pilgrim sets out, but pulls up in the second canto, until he is reassured by Virgil; a gate is entered at the beginning of the next canto (*Inf.* 3.1–9), but it leads into the anomalous zone of the neutrals; Limbo, too, which follows, is exceptional. Only with the next three cantos, distributed among the cardinal sins of lust, gluttony, and avarice, do we seem properly in Hell; but arrival at the river Styx begins another lengthy transition that concludes with the contested passage of the gate of Dis. *Purgatorio* exhibits similar deferrals: until the eighth canto, the pilgrim meets souls held back from reform of their vices because they delayed their repentance when alive; the pilgrim's entrance to Purgatory proper does not occur until the ninth canto, while the preceding three describe a slow transition from day into night. The first nine cantos of *Paradiso* are also set off: the souls that appear to the pilgrim in the subsolar spheres of the moon, Mercury, and Venus are within an area reached by the shadow of the earth when those planets are in opposition to the sun, a circumstance Dante uses to signify that when they were alive the virtue of the souls that appears in those planets was weakened by earthly frailty or attachment (see *Par.* 3.29–30, 9.32–33 and notes).

Similar patterns are detectable before the transitions in Cantos 30 of each cantica, though in subtler form. In Purgatory, the Earthly Paradise, not reached until Canto 28, “descends” to the wayfarers in the form of the fruit trees—slips of Edenic stock—that chastise the gluttonous (*Purg.* 24.115–18 and note). The assembly of all the saved in *Paradiso* seen in Canto 23 anticipates the congregation of the blessed in the Empyrean rose, and the ladder extending upward from Saturn (21.28–33, 22.70–75; see notes) also foreshadows the ranked orders of the rose. The ladder in fact makes visible the principle of graduated transition itself (see Additional Note 5, and *Purgatorio* Additional Notes 9 and 15).

The thresholds in or near the three tenth cantos are further marked by reference to Christ, himself a liminal figure in that his redemptive act divides history into before and after (see Additional Note 4); in each case, such allusion is seconded by the poet's increase in artistic effort as he faces the challenges offered by the more exalted (or, in *Inferno*, more terrible) reality of the subsequent phase of the journey. Christ is mentioned explicitly in *Paradiso* 10.1, while the two motions of the heavens form an (imaginary) decussated figure that suggests the Roman numeral X and the Greek letter c (both associated in the Middle Ages with Christ); upon concluding his address to the reader opening the canto, the poet turns his attention to his task (10.25–27). Glancing back at the previous cantica, we find parallels: in Hell, Farinata and Cavalcante rise up in their tomb, in parodic imitation of the resurrections of Christ and Adam (see *Inf.* 10.8–9, 33, 35–36 and notes), while mention of the pilgrim's “high genius” by Cavalcante (10.59) introduces the note of artistic challenge. In *Purgatorio*, the first example of humility on the terrace of Pride, and thus the first and fundamental virtue of Purgatory proper, is Mary's compliance with the divine decree, which unlocks redemption through Christ. The pilgrim's entrance into Purgatory proper is announced with a doubling of the poet's skill and

effort (*Purg.* 9.70–72; see note).

In *Paradiso*, the conical shadow of earth is mentioned only at 9.118–19, where it comes to a point and disappears. Such a threshold is suited to the last cantica because it results from planetary order and the privation of light: it is an optical border, the celestial equivalent of the masonry gates that define the entrance to Hell, or the gate of Peter in *Purgatorio*, leading to purgation. But the striking idea of a shadowed area that vanishes in the full brilliance of the sun (richly exploited by Dante's treatment of Charles Martel, who is placed, in Venus, on the cusp of that shift; see note to 9.8), is also a suggestive metaphor for several previous patterns in the poem. In *Purgatorio*, for example, shadows lengthen and finally cover the mountain, leaving the souls in the valley in darkness as they recite parts of the compline office, including the hymn *The lucis ante terminum* [to you, before the end of day] (see Additional Note 4). While on the mountain, the pilgrim is covered by the cone of the earth's shadow during part of every day, and the loss of the sun's light (see *Inf.* 1.17–18 and note) makes his upward progress impossible (*Purg.* 7.49–59, 17.61–84 and notes; also 6.22–36). But in Purgatory nocturnal darkness is followed by the return of the sun, which is prominent in the imagery of the cantica, from the first sunrise at 2.1–9, especially dramatic after the darkness of Hell, to those implicit after the next two days (9.43–45, 10.37–39, and 27.109–14). The pilgrim, who rises lethargically on the first two days, precedes the sun on the last: he has achieved conformity with the solar schedule.

There are no sunrises in Hell, though Virgil can see the stars in his "mind's eye" (*Inf.* 7.98). On the other hand, we do find a "cone of darkness" (the phrase is Antonio Gramsci's). Though the prevailing condition of Hell is that of the loss of light (*Inf.* 4.151, 5.28), what is emphasized on entering lower Hell is a diminishing cone of light. As Farinata explains, at the end of time "the door of the future will be closed" (*Inf.* 10.107; see note), and the damned will lose their prescience. Since the present is always closed to them, all knowledge except that of their own suffering will be lost. As elsewhere in the poem, perception and knowledge are described as light: Farinata says "so much the highest leader still shines [*splende*] for us," 10.101–2) in reference to what he still knows, while Cavalcante asks whether "the sweet light" [*il dolce lume*] still strikes the eyes of his son. That one emphasizes the light remaining, the other the light that fails, profiles each character concisely.

Darkness, followed by light—or, in Hell, light that fails, leaving total darkness—thus forms a significant scheme in the poem. In a general sense, the darkness endured by the souls in Limbo before their rescue by Christ and suffered by the negligent in Purgatory as they await the next day's sunrise, and the periodically enshadowed subsolar planets in Heaven, are different illustrations of the condition of humanity awaiting the Advent of Christ, as prophesied, according to Christian exegesis, in Isaiah 9.2: "The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light; to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen." Is. 9.2 is used in the Gospel of Nicodemus, where Christ comes to those in the darkness of Limbo (see *Inf.* 4.52–63; 9.64–72, 81–85 and notes), and is adopted in the Advent and Christmas liturgies (in the O Antiphons, for example, sung on December 17–23), as well as being incorporated into the *Benedictus* canticle of Zechariah, at lauds, in anticipation of the imminent return of the day—all uses that emphasize Christ as the light that dispels all shadows. Even the rising sun of Dante's Francis was presented in the prologue to Bonaventura's mid-thirteenth-century

biography of the saint in Isaiah's words: "Francis shone like the day-star amid the clouds, and by the brilliance which radiated from him he guided those who live in darkness, in the shadow of death, to the light" (see *Par.* 11.49–54 and notes). The text of Isaiah helps to explain Dante's references to Christ, and to the light, at or near each transition to a tenth canto. The sunrises in Purgatory, and the appearance of Beatrice, first like the cloud-veiled sun but later unveiled when she mediates the sight of the two natures of Christ to the pilgrim (see 31.76–145 and note) derive from it, as does the pilgrim's passage into the full sun of *Paradiso* after the subsolar planets periodically veiled by earth's shadow, as well as the scene of Beatrice's expectation of a "sunrise" in *Paradiso* 23.1–21 (see note).

As befits passage beyond physical reality into the Empyrean, which has only "love and light" as its outer boundary, Canto 30 of *Paradiso* offers the most highly wrought continuous transition in the poem (only the entrance to Dis, in the *Inferno*, spanning two cantos, is more elaborate). The great shift registered, from the pilgrim's sight of a river of light to one of a rose of souls, entails Dante's final statement of the pattern of procession and return by which light pours from God and is reflected back to him through his creatures (cf. 1.1–3); this is rendered in both the river and in the rose by the to-and-fro action of the angels as they minister to the souls of the blessed (30.61–69 and note, 30.114). And there is poetic "return" as well: as we saw, the pilgrim's sight of the Empyrean is proposed at the outset of the poem as his goal (1.4–12 and note), and the transition into the plenitude of intellectual light accordingly recalls the beginning of the cantica, regarding the ineffability of the experience (1.7–9; 30.46, 55–60, with notes), the poet's self-comparison to Paul (1.4–7, 30.49–51 and notes), and the combined metaphors of tasting and immersion that signify plumbing the depths of Heaven (1.67–69; 30.68, 85–87 and notes).

The spectacle of the river of light draws on biblical sources and on the background of Neoplatonizing accounts of God's light pouring through the universe (see 30.61, 61–63 and notes, and Additional Notes 10–11), as well as on the pilgrim's draughts from the streams of Eden and the traditional imagery of poets nursed by the milk of the Muses (23.55–57; see also 30.82–87). To describe the pilgrim's drinking with his eyes, Dante devises one of his boldest metaphors, treating the rims of the eyelids or eyelashes as the sloping eaves [*gronde*] that channel rain from a roof (*DVE* 1.10.4 uses the metaphor in another context). The homely term that replaces the standard words for eyelids or eyelashes [*ciglio, cigli*] (an instance of *tapinosis*, or humble word choice; cf. 23.78 and 32.138), though held unworthy of Dante by some commentators, in fact anchors the poet's sublimely humble style at the summit of Heaven.

The drink itself tropes how the poet's imagination and tongue—in a sense, his poetic voice—are informed by the streams flowing from previous poetry: first of all Virgil, the poet hailed by the pilgrim as "so broad a river of speech" (*Inf.* 1.79–80 and note), since the "wondrous torrent" [*miro gurge*] of the river evokes several *gurgites* in Virgil's poetry (see 30.58 and note). But other antecedents are evoked as well, such as a poem by Guinizelli (30.54 and note), and the scene in the *Roman de la rose* where the dreamer stares into the pool of Narcissus (30.85–87 and note). To these confluent streams of poetic origin Dante adds ostentatious poetic artifice, like the "climax" of lines 39–41 (see note) and the triple identical rhyme *vidi* in lines 95–99, as well as the metaphorical *gronda* itself, used by Dante's vernacular predecessors (including Giacomo da Lentini; see *Purg.* 24.55–63 and note) to describe the channeling outward of the

lover's tears so as to relieve his heart. The poet-lover is both a recipient of inspiration and himself a source (cf. the pilgrim's "internal fount" from which he draws to define his faith, at 24.57).

In sum, as the pilgrim-poet reaches his destination in the third cantica, the poet's own faculties cooperate with that of the descending "light of glory" to fashion the vision of the rose. Along with other suggestions in Dante's text (cf. 30.43–45 and note), the great transition of Canto 30 suggests the poetic artificiality of the Empyrean.

R.L.M.

7. The Fate of Phaethon in the *Comedy*

(*After Canto 30*)

As in the case of Ulysses, mentioned in all three cantiche (see *Inf.* 26.112–20, *Purg.* 19.2–23, *Par.* 27.82–83 and notes, and *Inferno* Additional Note 11), Dante's interest in Ovid's Phaethon, the ill-starred child of the sun, spans all three realms of the *Comedy*, and is equally complex in implication, if more scantily treated in the literature (see Brownlee 1984, Picone 1994). Both classical narratives use the chariot/ship analogy to express the challenges of governance, an analogy ultimately based on the Platonic myth in *Phaedrus* about steering the chariot of the soul. In Dante's accounts of Ulysses and Phaethon (and of Palinurus, too; see *Purgatorio* Additional Note 4), control of the ship of state or of the Church depends on following the path set by authoritative guides; in moral terms, the "straight way" lost and sought again by the pilgrim (see *Inf.* 1.3 and note); in cosmic terms, the track of the sun along the ecliptic (with moral implications as well, of course; cf. *Inf.* 1.18, "the planet that leads us straight on every path").

Treated by Dante in *Conv.* 3.12.7 as the sensible image of God, the sun is addressed by the poet as his guide and father at *Par.* 1.28, a gesture that prepares the identification in *Paradiso* of both poet and pilgrim with Phaethon. In a sense every man is a child of the sun, as Dante remarks, citing Aristotle's *Physics* 2.2, at *Mon.* 1.9.1: "Mankind is the son of Heaven, which is quite perfect in all its workings: for man and the sun generate man." Dante echoes this tradition in the poem when he addresses his natal stars of Gemini in the heaven of the fixed stars and calls the sun "the father of every mortal life" (24.116).

Cosmic imagery, expressing how right governance entails the personal and institutional discipline of the passions, characterizes Dante's treatment of Phaethon, both *in bono* and *in malo*. In *Inferno*, when the pilgrim mounts Geryon, the monster of fraud, he imagines the doomed fliers Icarus and Phaethon, a reflection of his fear that the journey, because it might seem madly overreaching [*folle*], could end in disaster (see *Inf.* 2.35, 8.90–91, 26.125 and notes). In that episode Virgil, when instructing Geryon on the correct path of descent, takes the role of Phaethon's father, the sun god, who in Ovid's poem attempts to teach his son the safe middle course across the heavens (*Met.* 2.129–37); Virgil's right path proves homologous with that of the sun itself (see *Inferno* Additional Note 6).

Purgatorio continues the expression of moralizing and cosmological themes through allusion to Phaethon. In his letter to the Italian cardinals, written in 1314 at about the time the

Purgatorio was nearing completion, Dante parallels the ship of the Church with Phaethon's chariot (see *Ep.* 11.5, "You have left the track like the false charioteer Phaethon" [*non aliter quam falsus auriga Pheton exorbitastis*]) in order to describe how corrupt prelates have turned the ship of the Church "aside into byways" [*per abvia distrahentes*, *Ep.* 11.12] echoing *Met.* 2.205, "The horses snatch the chariot into byways" [*rapiunt per avia currum*]. The passage in the letter is comparable to *Purg.* 32.158–59, where the Ark of the Church, disconnected from the tree of knowledge, is dragged into the woods to signify its separation from its rightful seat by Clement V and the Avignon papacy. But this outcome had been anticipated a few cantos earlier by Dante's comparison of the car of the Church to Phaethon's chariot, which Zeus/God destroyed in order to save the earth:

that of the Sun, which when it strayed [*sviando*] was
burned up at the prayer of the humble earth,
when Jove was mysteriously just. (*Purg.* 29.118–21).

The lines suggest that a future correction of the straying Church will reenact the primordial defeat of Lucifer (and cf. *Par.* 27.25–27, 30.145–48 and notes); like the author of the Old French *Ovide moralisé* (3.731–93; Boer 1915–38), Dante reads Phaethon's destruction as an allegorical parallel to the fall of Satan (cf. *Inf.* 34.121–26, *Purg.* 12.25–27 and notes).

Dante's use of Ovid's narrative as a fable of the soul's direction emerges early in *Purgatorio* in the contrast drawn between the pilgrim's fatigue (*Purg.* 4.43, 106, and Additional Note 3) and the soaring "chariot of the sun" (4.59) which, as it traverses the constellation of Gemini, approaches its northernmost point in the sky at the summer solstice (*Purg.* 4.61–66 and note), "as long as it did not abandon its old path" (4.66). The allusion is made explicit with subsequent reference to the ecliptic as "the road along which Phaethon could not drive the chariot" (4.71–72; see note). The contrast between the pilgrim's lethargy and Phaethon's flight are part of an ambiguous presentation of the unfortunate boy, who aspires to fulfill his destiny as a child of the sun "born from heavenly stock" [*caelesti stirpe creatus*] (*Met.* 1.760). Despite his rashness, Phaethon is thus an exemplum for the struggle to transcend human limits undertaken by the pilgrim; accordingly, Virgil's explanation of the solar orbit, *Purg.* 4.61–75 (with note), meant to stimulate the pilgrim's upward movement on the mountain, again recalls Apollo instructing his son how to drive up the steep fields of heaven (*Met.* 2.129–37).

But the myth of Phaethon is principally used in the central cantos of *Purgatorio* to exemplify unruly human desire and its necessary political restraint. Dante deploys the principal terms used elsewhere in the poem to describe the error of Phaethon, but never names him: "gone astray" [*sviando, disvia*] (29.118, *Purg.* 16.82); "bridle" [*freno*] (*Inf.* 17.107, *Purg.* 16.94); "paths" [*strade*] (*Inf.* 16.107, *Purg.* 18.78–81); "abandons" [*abbandonare*] (*Inf.* 17.107, *Purg.* 17.136; see *Inter cantica* to *Purgatorio* 17). These terms inform Marco Lombardo's speech at the center of *Purgatorio* on the authorities of Church and Empire, the two suns that make visible "the two paths of the world and of God" (16.106–8; see note), but which have failed in their guidance. Such echoes suggest Dante's view of Phaethon's disaster as the result of personal transgression ("if the present world has gone astray [*disvia*], in you in the cause"), but enabled by the lack of authority that might restrain impulses, so that individuals are seduced

by false goods "if a guide or rein [*freno*] does not turn away its love" (16.92). As an example of unruly desire, Ovid's Phaethon is a mythical parallel to Marco's "simple soul" running after what it wants (16.91–93 and note) or like "the love that abandons itself" [*s'abbandona*] to lesser goods" (*Purg.* 17.136).

In *Paradiso* Dante must confront the disorder brought about by the abuses of the Church and the defective state of the Empire. As in *Purgatorio* 29, the deviance of Phaethon adumbrates the derailment of the Church; the language of the Phaethon myth is used to emphasize how the reforming orders of Dominicans and Franciscans have strayed from the right path (see 12.112–14, with note). In *Paradiso*, however, positive adaptations of the myth outweigh negative ones. Dante's appeal at the outset of the cantica to Christ-Apollo as "father" (*Par.* 1.28) echoes how Phaethon addresses the sun as "father Phoebus" (*Met.* 2.36). The sun is the "lamp of the world" [*lucerna del mondo*] after Phaethon's address of his father as "O great creation's universal light" [*O lux inmensi publica mundi*] (*Met.* 2.35). From the outset, too, the poet's art is taken to be a microcosm of the "art" of the sun, which "tempers and seals" [*tempera e suggella*] the waxy world (see *Par.* 1.42 and note, and *Met.* 1.770, "qui *temperat orbem*"). Phaethon's right course, taught to him by the Sun at *Met.* 2.129–37, is the same ecliptic track that is proclaimed as the basis of cosmic order in Dante's poem (*Par.* 10.1–10 and note), a passage in which Dante also draws on the language of "O qui perpetua" (see pp. 686–87).

Phaethon's explicit resemblance to the pilgrim emerges in the central canto of *Paradiso*. In *Par.* 17.1–3 Dante recalls how Phaethon, in the face of challenges to his legitimacy, questions his mother Clymene regarding his birth; that interrogation is then compared to the pilgrim's questions of Cacciaguida regarding the prophecies of exile heard during the pilgrim's journey (summed up in 17.19–24; see note). Phaethon's grim fate persists in the background: the disastrous career of Phaethon is foretold upon entry in Mars when Cacciaguida's meteoric motion toward his descendant echoes Ovid's depiction of Phaethon falling after being struck by Jove's lightning (see 15.13–18 and note), and Dante introduces Phaethon with mention of the fatal indulgence shown him by his father in swearing an inviolable oath to grant any gift (*Par.* 17.1–3). Cacciaguida compares the pilgrim's future exile to that of Hippolytus, who like Phaethon was flung from his chariot and killed (the two accounts share terminology concerning the breakup of the chariots; see *Met.* 2.315–18 and 15.518–32; for Dante's cognizance of Ovid's *Virbius*, the "resurrected" Hippolytus, see Chiarenza 1966 and 1983).

Dante's adaptation of Ovid's myth to represent his own career is consistent with his treatment of his exile as a trial that he is destined to transcend (see 17.55–60, 94–99 and notes, and our introduction to *Inferno*, p. 19). Indeed both Phaethon's audacity—possibly inspired by Ovid's mention of Phaethon's epitaph, acknowledging his lofty ambition (*Met.* 2.326–28)—and his disaster are digested into the account, spoken by Cacciaguida, of the poet-pilgrim's election to a noble task that will require extreme self-sacrifice.

In these terms, burning in the charity of Heaven is a version of Phaethon's destiny, struck and combusted by God's fire. The assimilation of the pilgrim's destiny with Phaethon's is anticipated in *Purgatorio*: in the first dream, the eagle of Zeus "descended terrible as lightning" not to destroy, but to embrace the pilgrim and bear him to the fire (9.28–33; see notes). In

Paradiso, Phaethon's fate nearly becomes that of the pilgrim, who risks the fate of Semele, burned up by the glory of Zeus; should Beatrice flash her full smile at him, he "would be a branch shattered by a thunderbolt" (see *Par.* 21.4–12 and note; and see Brownlee 1986). From this perspective, Phaethon's death by fire might be compared to the immolation of Hercules, sometimes allegorized as an account of purification and deification analogous to Christ's human suffering in the Passion (see *Inf.* 9.98, *Purg.* 9.101–2 and notes).

If the pilgrim is fiery like Phaethon because of his lineage, desire, and courage, it is appropriate that he be drawn upward to the Empyrean, the place of divine fire, as his destination. This is one implication of the pilgrim's being compared to rising fire in the first canto (*Par.* 1.115, 139–41), where his kinship with lightning is also suggested (1.91–93 and note). Thus, too, in the last canto, the grace that grants the pilgrim sight of the mystery of the two natures of Christ is like a lightning bolt: "my mind was struck by a flash [*percossa da un fulgore*], in which my desire came" (33.140–41; see note). Both in terms of the harsh destiny prophesied for him, to be cast down in exile, and in his prospects for attaining an exalted vision at the summit of Heaven, the poet is bound to participate in Phaethon's fate, consumed by and assimilated to the "father of all mortal lives," Christ-Apollo.

R.L.M.

8. Circle—Cross—Eagle—Scales: Images in the *Paradiso*

Excluding the rose in the Empyrean, the nine heavens of Dante's *Paradiso* are symmetrically arranged: the lowest three spheres and their planets, periodically swept by the conical shadow of earth, are balanced by the highest three spheres, which are linked by the golden ladder that stretches from the fixed stars to the boundary of the Empyrean. The shadow rises from the earth toward the sun as it diminishes, and the ladder is used for souls shown both ascending and descending from heaven, which again suggests, albeit impressionistically, the pattern of procession and return that organizes the poem (see Additional Notes 4, 10, 11). Within these two extreme zones are three spheres. For each, Dante invents a suggestive visual emblem: two (and finally three) circles of souls in the sun, the cross of light for the soldiers of the faith in Mars, and, as the third and final stage of the skywriting display in Jupiter (with intermediate phases as the capital M and the lily), the eagle made up of souls notable for their justice (see Additional Note 2).

Since the images in the three central heavens include the blessed themselves, who are placed in the spheres "to signify" (4.38), the images should be viewed in light of the doctrine of accommodation that Beatrice expounds to the pilgrim at 4.37–48 (see note, and also note to 4.40–42): that is, as provisional theophanies for instructing the pilgrim, not physical structures existing in the heavens. As poetic inventions the images are richly suggestive. All include the blessed as luminous phenomena: sparks, candle flames, and precious stones in the sun, shining jewels and fires in Mars, and again precious gems and lights in Jupiter. More specifically, each image is conceived in terms derived from astronomical reality: in the sun, the blessed are "stars around firm poles" (10.78) and "burning suns" (10.76–77, with note); in Mars, they are ignited by the sun (15.76, 18.105), and compared to the stars of the Milky Way (14.97–102; see note) and to a shooting star (15.13–18; see note). In Jupiter they are likened to the stars that appear

in the sky after sunset (20.1–15 and note). In the case of the second circle of teachers, described in 13.1–24 (see note), derivation from astronomical reality is explicit: Dante invites the reader to imagine taking the brightest known stars and assembling them in imitation of the constellation of Ariadne's crown. As in the discussion of imagination in *Purg.* 17.13–18, which relates that faculty to the influence of the heavens (see Introduction, pp. 18–19), the passage reflects the poet's own crafting of his imagery. Dante's poetry is quite literally astronomical, poetry fashioned from the stars (see Martinez 1991a, Cornish 2000).

A striking feature of the three central images is their congruency. That is, the circles in the sun, compared both to airy rainbows and to heavy millstones, can be fitted to the *tondo*, the circle of the sphere within which the cross of Mars is subsequently inscribed ("the joinings of quadrants in a circle" [*tondo*], 14.102); these in turn can be fitted to the sphere of Jupiter, which has its focus in the round eye of the eagle (*tondo*, 20.68) but is embraced in the larger sense by the circles described by the Creator, the divine geometer ("He who revolved the compasses about the limit of the world" [*mondo*], 19.40; see note to 19.40–45).

This congruency of circles of course reflects Dante's emphasis on the circle throughout the poem; the Empyrean heaven, too, will appear round [*tonda*] at 30.90. But Dante pushes the congruencies much further: both cross and eagle leave traces in the other central spheres as well. The cosmic cross in Mars is prepared by the intersecting cosmic circles in 10.7–9, and by mention of the Cross in the canto of Francis (11.72). The arms of the cross then reappear in the outstretched wings of the eagle (19.1–3: "with open wings"; see note there, and cf. *Purg.* 3.122 and note), while the Cross as the division of the Old Law from the New is mentioned at 19.103–5 (see note there). Additional instances of the eagle are harder to discern; yet the eagle of Jupiter is clearly prepared, within Mars, by the imperial eagle surmounting Can Grande's coat of arms at 17.72; and given that Julius Caesar bears, and is even conflated with, the Roman eagle (see 6.55–63 and note), the periphrastic mention of Caesar's visit to Amyclas suggests a brief glimpse of the eagle in the sun (see 11.67–69 and note). The congruency of the three spheres is distinctly marked in verbal terms by the identical triple rhyme on *Cristo* found in each, and which in cantos 14 and 19 terminates like-numbered verses (104, 106, 108), enhancing the circularity of the *terza rima* (in that the *identical* rhyme word returns; see Freccero 1983).

It is not through visual, verbal, or conceptual imagery alone that Dante constructs congruencies between the three central spheres, however. Although music and singing are general to Dante's Heaven, references to music in the three central heavens are especially elaborate. Dante's ideas regarding the meaning of music in his heavens came down to him, perhaps through intermediaries, from Boethius's *Institutio musica*, the standard medieval textbook for music as a liberal art. Boethius accepted Platonic ideas of a mathematically based harmony of the spheres, of the elements, and of the seasons as the ideal form of music, which was to be imitated by the harmony of soul and body in the human being, and, at the lowest level, by instrumental music (see *Institutio musica* 1.2–5, Spitzer 1963, Heilbronn 1983; see also notes to 15.1–9 and 20.13–30). All three "musics" depend on the mixture, or "tempering," of high and low tones, or other kinds of extremes (such as hot and cold among material elements), to achieve harmony. Thus Dante's pilgrim hears the "tempered" and "distinct" tones of the spheres in 1.42, while the pilgrim "tempers" sweet with bitter news about his exile

(18.1–3), achieving equanimity before the challenges facing him; voices and instruments are also “tempered” (as in *DVE* 2.4.9, “with strings stretched taut” [*tensis fidibus ad supremum*]). Notions of equality and balance are also implicit in the musical formulations Dante knew: for Boethius, “harmony is the reduction to single concord of sounds dissimilar among themselves” [*Est enim consonantia dissimilium inter se vocum in unum redacta concordia*] (*Institutio musica* 1.3).

The central spheres contain instances of instrumental and “human” music, as well as playing a part in the “music of the spheres.” Instrumental music is found in the comparison of the songs of the whirling teachers in the sun to the *tin tin* of the bell that awakens the Church (10.143); this is then modified in the *tintinno* of the harp and lyre music of the Martian cross (14.118–23), which becomes in turn the pipe and lyre music compared to the eagle’s speech, where the onomatopoetic effect of the solar and Martian instances continues, but with the rhyming words *flailli, lapilli, squilli* [flutes, little gems, bells] (20.16–18). That this instrumental and vocal music is tempered is mentioned in the sun at 10.146, referring to the blend of voices as the souls turn [*voce a voce in tempra*], and in Mars, at 14.118–19, of the viol and harp “stretched and tuned” [*a tempra tesa*].

By means of the notion of “tempering,” all these sounds have both ethical resonance—they reflect *musica humana*—and share in the cosmic *musica mundana* as well. In the sun, *tin tin* stirs the zeal to worship. The contrast Dante draws in Mars between the imbalance of knowledge and affection in the pilgrim, who does not yet know his ancestor’s name, and Cacciaguida, who because of contemplating the “first Equality” within God has those powers in equilibrium (15.73–75), alludes to the moral tempering or balance within the soul, an emphasis that points to one of the chief themes of the cantica (see Additional Note 3). Finally, the planet Jupiter, which signifies (and encourages) just action, “tempers” hot Mars and cold Saturn (22.145). But this means it also participates in the cosmic *musica mundana* as the “temperate sixth star” [*temprata stella sesta*] (18.68). The sun, too, has a tempering effect on the whole cosmos, as Dante points out at the beginning of the cantica (1.42, “tempers and seals”); while Mars, being midmost among the nine spheres, displays the most beautiful proportion (1:2) and so represents the art of music in the universe (cf. *Conv.* 2.13.20–24).

Like the triple *Cristo* rhyme that seals the three central spheres, the musical references in the three planets are also linked to the idea of the Cross (see Hart 1990). Because they describe the Cross, the viol and harp “stretched and tuned” (14.118) are inevitably an instance of the traditional conception of the cross as a tempered instrument, so understood because Christ’s body was stretched out on it, like the strings of a lyre or a psaltery (see notes to 15.4–6, and Heilbronn 1978).

In the Cross, moreover, both a tempered musical instrument and the scales of justice intersect, so to speak. Although Dante illustrates the management of vows with mention of the scales at *Par.* 4.138 and 5.62 (using two different words, *bilancia* and *statera*), both instances look forward to 13.41–42, in the heaven of the sun, which describes Christ’s sacrifice and atonement, through which the guilt of Adam is counterbalanced: Christ “so satisfied the law that it outweighs all guilt upon the scales.”

Dante’s formulation depends on the traditional idea of the cross as a balance [*statera*]

Christi]. The topic is found in *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, the sixth-century hymn whose first line begins the last canto of *Inferno* (see *Inf.* 34.1 and note). Christ's body on the Cross weighs out the ransom for mankind (lines 21–24):

the Cross was made a balance for his body [*statera facta corporis*],
and seized the prey from Tartarus. [*predam tulitque Tartari*].

This image can be adapted to moral tempering as well; for the blessed, love and understanding "became of one weight for each of you" (15.75), that is, they are in perfect balance.

With emphases on the tempering of the pilgrim and the image of the cross, the scales figure prominently in the sun and in Mars; subsequent references in *Paradiso* describe the motions of the heavens with the image of a balance (see 29.1–9, 30.2–3 and notes). But does the idea of the balance play a role in Jupiter, dedicated as it is to Justice, whose emblem is traditionally the scales? Dante had read in Aristotle's *Ethics* descriptions of fairness and justice using the language of equality and mathematical proportion ("what is just is equal," *Nichomachean Ethics* 5.3; and see *Mon.* 1.11.3), and Dante had long associated the Roman empire, symbolized by the eagle, with both justice and the philosophical truth best expounded by Aristotle (see *Conv.* 4.4.1–5, 4.6.18; Additional Note 2; and Ascoli 2008).

The image of the scales is implicit in the account of the Last Judgment Dante gives when condemning bad monarchs, whose evil deeds outweigh their good ones a thousand to one (19.127–29 and note); this concept was widely illustrated in Christian iconography in the image of Michael the archangel weighing souls in a balance to determine their assignment to Heaven or Hell (the *psychostasis*). Perhaps the most poetic of these implicit images of balance is the writing in the planet itself, displaying the words in the imperative mood of Wisdom 1.1:

"*DILIGITE IUSTITIAM*" were the first
verb and noun of the whole depiction,
"*QUI IUDICATIS TERRAM*" were the last (18.91–93).

Dante was of course attentive to the number of syllables in his lines (see *DVE* 2.5.3). The two Latin phrases in the passage cited above are distributed among two lines of eleven syllables, with eight syllables of Latin in line 91 and seven in line 93. But line 91 has seventeen Latin letters, and line 93 has eighteen, establishing a chiastic equilibrium (8/17: 7/18). Both rhyming words have three syllables, and mean "first" [*prima*] and "last" [*sezza*], as in the divine name Alpha and Omega, balancing beginning with the end (see Additional Note 14), while the terms for verb [*verbo*] and noun [*nome*] in the first hemistich of line 92 suggest a syntactical equipoise. Finally, the Latin words related to justice, both nominal direct object [*iustitiam*] and conjugated verb [*iudicatis*], have four syllables and nine letters, with *iustitiam* further balanced by having a palindromic central ternary of letters. The writing finishes on the letter M, twelfth and midmost letter of the 23-letter Latin alphabet, and itself a balanced grapheme; it even resembles a pair of scales. Its numerical value as a Roman numeral (1,000) is offered at 19.29 as one of the weights in balancing the good and evil deeds of King Charles II, "the Lame": though in that case, it testifies to a gross disproportion. Dante's skywriting represents the balance of justice in the words that it flashes forth to the pilgrim and the world (for further

implications of this, see Additional Note 2). Only twenty years after Dante's death, Aristotle's formulas of equity would be made visible to the citizens of Siena in the Palazzo Pubblico frescoes of Justice with her scales surmounted by the text of Wisdom 1.1, a scene plausibly inspired by Dante's skywriting in the heaven of Jupiter (see Brugnolo 1995).

R.L.M.

9. The Final Image

A l'alta fantasia qui mancò possa,142
ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,
sì come rota ch' igualmente è mossa,
l'Amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.145

142 [Here my high imagining failed of power, but
already my desire and the velle were turned, like
a wheel being moved evenly,

145 by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.]

In an important article (see Dronke 1994, Pertile 1995a, and Hollander), John Freccero (1964) sets forth an unusual interpretation of these lines. He argues that a wheel can be considered to have two motions, that of its circumference when it rotates on its axis, and the forward or backward motion of its center and axis. The first of these motions would correspond to the soul's rotation about its own center (which of course is God), the second to the revolution of the soul, participating in the motion of "the sun and the other stars" (also circular) about the center of the cosmos (which of course, though physically the earth, is metaphysically, and thus more truly, God). In this view there would be two motions, harmonized and equal with each other, thus "like a wheel being moved evenly" One problem that is not fully settled in the traditional approach is the disposition in the simile of the two things said to be turned ("il mio desio e 'l velle" [my desire and the *velle*]), and Freccero's interpretation has the advantage of taking this duality more fully into account (though, like Dronke, we disagree with Freccero's identification of the referents of these two terms).

Freccero argues that the ultimate model for this conception would be *Timaeus* 40a–b, according to which the Demiurge

assigned to each [of the incarnate lesser gods] two motions: one uniform in the same place, as each always thinks the same thoughts about the same things; the other a forward motion as each is subjected to the revolution of the Same and uniform (tr. Cornford 1937).

(These are not the same two motions as are discussed in *Tim.* 36b–36d [10.1–27], and as Cornford observes in his commentary, the continuation of the passage makes it clear that they

are attributed to the planets as well as to the fixed stars.) Freccero adduces supporting passages also from Calcidius's translation, the Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas, and others.

Pertile summarizes Freccero's interpretation, which he rejects without offering a detailed refutation. His proposal is that there are indeed two motions, that of the soul and that of the cosmos, which the soul is imitating (he cites *Consolatio* 2.m.9—see our note on 33.145). This reading seems to us essentially the same as the traditional one, which cannot be said to disregard line 145. Dronke 1994, however, accepts Freccero's interpretation (except for his treatment of *desio* and *velle*). (Hollander mentions the article in relation with a subsidiary point; he does not discuss the central argument.)

To Freccero's interpretation it might be objected that there is no mention in the *Comedy* of the double motion attributed to the fixed stars and planets by the *Timaeus*: nowhere is there even a suggestion that the stars and planets revolve around their own centers (Dante does not mention the rotation of the moon, but his claim of the difference between the two sides of the moon—seen and unseen—implies it). In the *Paradiso* there are a number of instances of the souls of the blessed revolving about their own centers. The clearest case is probably 21.79–81 (and cf. lines 136–38): "Nor had I spoken the last word before the light made of its midst a center, whirling like a swift millwheel." We know, too, from 8.34–35, that the souls met in Venus revolve with a particular order of angels around God, the cosmic center (to be read with Canto 28, especially lines 98–102): "We revolve with the heavenly Principalities—in the same circle, with the same circling and the same thirst." The principle is readily applicable to all the blessed, each level in relation to a particular order of angels. Another important passage is 24.10–18; lines 10–12 seem clearly to indicate that the souls are whirling on their individual axes:

those happy souls became spheres spinning on fixed poles, flaming, as they turned, like comets

while lines 13–18 indicate that they combine their spinning with differing round dances:

And as the wheels in the mechanism of a clock turn so that, to one who watches, the first seems to be motionless and the last to fly:

so those carols, differently dancing, allowed me to judge their richness, being fast and slow.

These passages seem to offer some support for Freccero's view of 33.143–45, though they are perhaps not conclusive; on the other hand, it does not seem to us that it can be definitively excluded. In our view, the concluding lines of the poem are intentionally left ambiguous by Dante. As he says in line 142, the previous precision of his imaginings has ceased, and, according to 33.58–63, he can remember only the sweetness left by the vision. We are to understand the pilgrim to be completely integrated affectively into harmony with God and with the cosmos. It is a deeply satisfying conclusion to the poem, and the further questions are there to tease the reader out of thought.

R.M.D.

10. The Neoplatonic Background

The term Neoplatonism refers in the first instance to the philosophy of Plotinus (AD 204–70) and in the second to the countless pagan, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian thinkers influenced in turn—directly or indirectly—by Plotinus's thought (including, among Christians, virtually every patristic and medieval thinker of any importance). The distinction between Neoplatonism and other forms of Platonism (especially "Middle Platonism"—the term covering the period between Plato's immediate successors—the Old Academy—and Plotinus) can be hard to draw, particularly when it concerns widely shared doctrines. In addition to the pagan sources (the most widely read being Porphyry, Proclus, Macrobius, Martianus Capella, and Servius the Grammarian), one may distinguish at least three currents of Neoplatonic thought influencing Dante's period, all deriving ultimately from Plotinus, although influenced as well by Middle Platonism: the Latin current (including both Augustine and Boethius), the Greek current (mainly deriving from Proclus and the Pseudo-Dionysius), and the Arab current.

Plotinus postulated the emanation (the term refers to a flowing forth or radiation) of all things from the utterly transcendent, absolute One, beyond all essence or knowledge (and about which only negative statements can be made). This emanation resulted in three successive levels of being: absolute Mind (*noûs*), which contains the principles or essences of all possible things—the Platonic Ideas—by knowing them; Soul (*psyche*), a development of Plato's World Soul, capable of producing and animating bodies in space; and material things. Each successive principle adheres in love to the one just above it—Mind to the One, Soul to Mind—and radiates its own influence downward. Plotinus created a powerfully original simplification and systematizing of what in Plato was often confused or inconsistent, always insisting that he was merely the master's faithful interpreter. In cosmology the important text by Plato was the *Timaeus*, which fit readily into Plotinus's scheme asserting one spherical cosmos governed by planetary deities. For Plotinus the human soul is divine and immortal, participating in the nature of Soul, happy in the direct contemplation of Mind until falling of its own accord into bodily existence, from whose bondage it can gradually free itself by the ascetic discipline of philosophy, which leads it eventually to "enter the sanctuary" of mystical contemplation of the divine (here the most important Platonic texts were the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Republic*). From late antiquity on, however, the *Timaeus* was the only one of Plato's dialogues to circulate at all widely in the Latin West (in the incomplete translation and commentary by *Calcidius*), and Plotinus was directly known only in part; a critical understanding of Plato's own thought did not begin until the fifteenth century.

Plato's interest in elaborate myths as vehicles of philosophical ideas (such as the myths of the Cave—*Republic* 7, or the chariot of the soul—*Phaedrus*) helps account for the Neoplatonists' intense development of allegorical approaches to literary and philosophical texts. They were particularly drawn to the heuristic of microcosm-macrocosm correspondences; Porphyry, for instance, read the description of the Cave of the Nymphs in *Odyssey* 13 as a symbolic representation of the cosmos; Proclus applied the principle to the relation of part to whole in texts. The notion of man as microcosm, central to Plato's *Timaeus*, gained great currency through the Neoplatonists' adaptations.

Plotinus's Neoplatonism was itself heir to "Middle Platonism," whose most influential representatives included Cicero, Apuleius, and Philo of Alexandria. In the Old Testament, the Book of Wisdom, and in the New Testament, the Epistles of saint Paul (d. ca. 65) and the

Gospel of saint John (d. ca. 90) show the influence of Middle-Platonic ideas. Plotinus was possibly a fellow student of Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria with Origen, one of the greatest Platonic Christian theologians, and may have been influenced by him and other Christians. As Christianity spread among Greek-speaking intellectuals, its theology acquired an increasingly Platonic character. The emphasis in the Gospel of saint John on the divinity of the Word [*lógos*], "through [whom] all things were made," led inevitably to an adaptation of the Platonic theory of ideas that identified the second person of the Trinity with the Logos, the bearer of the ideas or essences of all things. Influenced by Plotinus's conception of Mind, made coequal by the Christians with God the Father, this identification of the Logos with the second Person of the Trinity was shared by virtually all patristic and medieval Christian thinkers.

Other philosophical issues entered Christian thought via the Platonic/Neoplatonic tradition. The question of the preexistence of the soul was seriously debated by both Origen and Augustine; both left the question open, though they argued strongly that the union of soul and body was a good, and not the result of any fall (least of all the Fall of Man). Other Neoplatonic Christians, like Gregory of Nyssa and Eriugena, regarded the physical body and the division of mankind into sexes negatively, as the proleptic result of the Fall, but the central tradition fought that view.

A major influence on all later Christian thinkers, including Dante, was the fifth- or sixth-century Pseudo-Dionysius (so called because his works circulated under the name of the Athenian judge converted by saint Paul in Acts 17.34, an attribution that lent them almost apostolic authority; they were actually written under the influence of the last great pagan Neoplatonist, Proclus [411–85]). Though strongly creationist, the Pseudo-Dionysius followed Origen and Proclus in making central to his thought the Procession of all things from God as a kind of radiation of light; their Return to him was of course through the mediation of Christ. This pattern also governed the literary structure of his *On the Divine Names* by determining the order and emphasis with which the various names of God (Being, Good, Life, Light, and so forth) are treated (Ivánka 1940). The Pseudo-Dionysius's works also strongly influenced the twelfth-century studies in optics and "light metaphysics," to which the new Gothic style of architecture owed so much; his influence is really incalculable; even the supposedly Aristotelian Aquinas patterned his great *Summa theologiae* on the Procession of the creatures from God and their Return to him; he cited the Pseudo-Dionysius some 1,600 times (for the emerging, more nuanced view of Aquinas's debt to Neoplatonism, see S. Gilson forthcoming).

Arab thought developed Neoplatonism to new levels of complexity, especially in the work of Alfarabi (d. 950), Avicenna (980–1037), and Averroës (1126–98), though Averroës consciously attempted to eliminate the Neoplatonic element in his interpretation of Aristotle. Avicenna's Plotinian-Proclan synthesis attributed the existence of the world to a radiation of the One into the successively lower hypostases and secondary causes in such a way that God was excluded from the direct fashioning of anything other than first (i.e., formless) matter; man's body and soul were left to the fashioning of the Intelligences (angels) governing the heavenly spheres. Avicenna's system became known in the West at about the same time as the influential *Liber de causis*, which for a long time was attributed to Aristotle, but is in fact, as Aquinas eventually realized, an Arabic epitome of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* (curiously, Aquinas never realized that the Pseudo-Dionysius derived from Proclus; he continued to attribute apostolic

authority to him); together with Averroës's version of Aristotle, which assigned an equally important role to the Intelligences, they occasioned much discussion. Arab and Western interest in astrology was considerably strengthened by the Arab philosophical tradition, which seemed to provide it with a scientific foundation.

One of the chief issues was the status of human intellection: according to the more radical Arab positions, intellection was possible exclusively through an illuminating angelic Intelligence and was thus unconnected with the individual human mind or personality (Averroës correctly understood the similar grounds on which Aristotle had denied the immortality of the soul, the "form," or actualizing principle of the body). Thinkers like Albert the Great, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus appealed to the Augustinian and Pseudo-Dionysian, strongly creationist, versions of Neoplatonism, against the emanationist theories of Proclus and Avicenna. They asserted the unity of the individual soul as including intellect.

Medieval European cosmology and metaphysics, both in their Augustinian and their more rationalistic versions, privileged the Platonic/Aristotelian categories of form and matter as keys to the basic structure of the universe. Within the basic consensus on the fundamental importance of celestial influences, there were many differences of detail. The most extreme Neoplatonic position (Witelo), based on the so-called "light metaphysics," held that the light of the heavenly bodies contained the forms that they imposed on sublunar matter; Albert the Great, on most matters a thoroughgoing Neoplatonist, held to the Augustinian conception of created matter as having built-in *incohationes formae* [tendencies to, or beginnings of, form] (a version of Augustine's *rationes seminales*); the most nuanced position was that of Aquinas and his followers, who limited the effect of the heavenly bodies to communicating a *motus ad formam* [motion toward form] to the sublunar (see Litt 1963), with the principle of form itself being regarded as indwelling in sublunar things (a version of Aristotle's concept of entelechy).

R.M.D.

11. Dante and Neoplatonism

Dante was deeply influenced by Neoplatonism as early as the *Vita nova*. In that work his Neoplatonic reading seems to have been restricted to Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (see *Conv.* 2.13), but both *Convivio* and *Comedy* reflect a much wider acquaintance, including the Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Liber de causis*, which Dante almost certainly read with Albertus Magnus's and Aquinas's commentaries, and Avicenna and Averroës (perhaps via Albertus's *De causis et processu universi*). In his long and complicated development, the effort to assimilate and adapt Neoplatonic ideas is a major thread; he was aware of the currents just enumerated and took a characteristically independent position on a number of the issues.

Like most other Christians, Dante accepted the Augustinian identification of Plotinus's principle of Mind with the Logos, the second Person of the Trinity. The intuition of the Logos as the principle that contains and creates all things by knowing them is the first level of the pilgrim's vision of the godhead: he first sees a "simple light" revealing the "universal forms" uniting "substances and accidents" (*Par.* 33.85–95). Dante's treatment of the intellectual ascent to God combines the Augustinian theme of human understanding as illumination by God, "the light above the mind" (*Confessions* 7.17), the Pseudo-Dionysius's light mysticism, especially the

idea of light—both sensible and intellectual—as the principal unifying factor in creation, and the conflation of logical categories and procedures (especially division, which descends from genera to species to individuals, and collection or classification, which reascends the ladder) with metaphysical ones, common to all forms of Neoplatonism, but which Dante seems to have studied most closely in Boethius.

The problem of deriving the multiplicity of things from the unified—or triunified—light of God's creative power informs all of the cosmological passages in the *Paradiso*, along with the classic Neoplatonic problem of the secondary causes. "Dentro dal cielo de la divina pace / si gira un corpo ne la cui virtute / l'esser di tutto suo contento giace" [Within the heaven of God's peace there turns a body under whose power lies the being of all that it contains] (*Par.* 2.112–14). Referring to the *primum mobile*, this means, quite literally, that it imparts both existence and power to everything within it. Strictly speaking, then, lines 113–14 express an emanationist conception of the relation of the successive heavens that is inconsistent with the idea that the heavens were directly created as formed (see below). It is true that the lines can be taken to mean that, once created, the universe is sustained in existence by this transfer of "being and power" downward through all the spheres; in either case the notion is Neoplatonic. "Lo ciel seguente, c'ha tante vedute, / quell' esser parte per diverse essenze, / da lui distratte e da lui contenute" [The next heaven, which has so many sights, divides that being into different essences, separated by it, yet contained by it] (*Par.* 2.115–17). The sphere of the fixed stars ("tante vedute" [so many sights]) is, then, the first step in the derivation of multiplicity from the "simple light" of God's power. In containing all the multiplicity of the universe virtually, the sphere of the fixed stars follows a pattern similar to that attributed to the Logos, but here there is a material embodiment of the power, which descends through the cosmos from high to low in the mediation characteristic of medieval Neoplatonism: "Li altri giron per varie differenze / le distinzion che dentro da sé hanno / dispongono a lor fini e lor semenze. / Questi organi del mondo così vanno, / come tu vedi omai, di grado in grado, / che di sù prendono e di sotto fanno" [The other spheres through various differences dispose the distinctions held within them to their ends and to their sowings. These organs of the world thus descend, as you can see, by degrees, for they take from above and fashion below] (*Par.* 2.118–23).

So far Beatrice's account has mentioned only the heavenly spheres and their contents. Now she brings in the angelic Movers of the spheres: "Lo moto e la virtù d'i santi giri, / come dal fabbro l'arte del martello, / da' beati motor convien che spiri; / e 'l ciel cui tanti lumi fanno bello / de la mente profonda che lui volve / prende l'image e fassene suggello" [The motion and the power of the holy spheres must necessarily breathe from the blessed movers, as the art of the hammer does from the smith; and the heaven that so many lights make beautiful takes the image from the profound mind turning it and acts as its seal], *Par.* 2.127–32).

In lines 127–29 the angelic Intelligences direct the motions of the heavens on the model of an artisan using an already formed tool; lines 130–32, however, assert that the heaven of the fixed stars takes form from the mind of its angelic Mover. This may be understood to mean that the form to be imposed below, derived from the mind of the Mover, is conveyed in the light of the fixed stars (cf. *Par.* 2.112–14), but it is very close to the Avicennan or Averroist view in which the spheres and planets take their forms from the Movers. Implied throughout the entire passage is the further idea that each fixed star and planet has a unique formal

principle, and that while all light shares a common generic nature, each source of light produces a formally unique species of light (explicit in line 147; cf. *ST* 1a, q. 70 a. 1). Although in lines 127–29 Dante seems to avoid the language used by such thinkers as Witelo who speak of the light of the heavenly bodies containing and carrying down the forms to be imposed on the sublunar, the idea is not far from the surface (cf. also 22.112–13, where the stars of Gemini are called “pregnant with great power”).

Unlike many medieval Christians (Boethius, Abelard, William of Conches, to name only a few), Dante did not accept the Platonic and Neoplatonic doctrine of the World Soul, except in a highly attenuated form. For him the nine orders of angels replace the unitary World Soul, but the language in which he writes of them derives from and verges on the Platonic idea of the incarnation of the World Soul (especially in Canto 2, on which see our notes), just as his cosmology is an uneasy combination of Christian creationism and Neoplatonic emanationism.

Beatrice comes close to the Neoplatonic idea of the World Soul in calling the heavens “organs of the world” (2.121), analogous to the organs produced by the human soul to carry out its functions: “E come l’alma dentro a vostra polve / per differenti membra e conformate / a diverse potenze si risolve, / così l’intelligenza sua bontate / moltiplicata per le stelle spiega, / girando sé sovra sua unitate. / Virtù diverse fa diversa lega / col prezioso corpo ch’ella avviva, / nel qual, sì come in voi, si lega” [And just as the soul within your dust resolves itself through different members conformed to different faculties, so the Intelligence unfolds its goodness, diversified through the stars, turning itself about its unity. Each different power makes a different alloy with the precious body it vivifies, in which, like life in you, it binds itself] (*Par.* 2.133–41).

The notion that the angels are united with the heavenly spheres they govern, and that the heavens are their “organs” rather than their “instruments” was one of the theses condemned as heretical in 1277 by the archbishop of Paris (Denifle/Chatelain 1889–97, 1:549). Modern critics such as Nardi, Sapegno, and Chiavacci Leonardi seek to minimize the heterodoxy of *Paradiso* 2, but at the very least Dante is skirting dangerous possibilities.

In such passages Dante’s struggle to synthesize creationist and emanationist views is evident. *Par.* 29.10–48 sets forth Dante’s adaptation—unique to Dante—of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the role in creation of secondary causes, i.e., the angelic Intelligences. The passage is creationist in attributing the creation to God’s desire to share the happiness of being with his creatures (lines 13–15; cf. *Timaeus* 29D–30A, *Consolatio* 3.m.9), but it limits God’s direct act of creation (apart from Adam and Eve) to “forma e materia, congiunte e purette” [form and matter, both joined and entirely pure] (line 22): i.e., the angels (pure form), first matter (pure matter, pure potentiality without form—what would become, under the shaping influence of the heavens, the earth and all sublunar things), and the heavens (shaped matter: form and matter combined). These three are described as radiating forth simultaneously, on the model of light (lines 25–30), reflecting back to the Creator his own brightness (lines 10–12; cf. *Par.* 1.1–9 and 13.52–66). Based in part on Augustine’s interpretation of Gen. 1.1, this conception assigns the entire process of shaping the sublunar to the influence of the heavenly bodies governed by the angelic Intelligences. Except for Adam’s and Eve’s bodies, which were fashioned directly by God (Gen. 2.7 and 21–22), it applies also to the fashioning of all other

human bodies (see also Additional Note 12).

These two cantos on the travelers' stay in the *primum mobile*, the totally undifferentiated outer shell of the universe (see 27.100–127), are sharply set off from those concerning the planets; in the *primum mobile* there are no souls to encounter with their individual histories and characters; matching the nature of the *primum mobile* itself, the pilgrim's vision of God and the angels there consists entirely of uniform rotation around the central point of light, a model of the true nature of the relation of God and the cosmos. Not only are the cantos sharply set off; along with the introduction into this sphere (27.97–120), Cantos 28 and 29 form a carefully planned unity. We might say that Canto 28 presents the cosmological model as existing and expressing the burning desire of the angels to approach as closely as possible their point of origin, and that in Canto 29 Beatrice explains the cosmogony implied by the model: God's creation of the cosmos as a radiating of his creative power as light. The two cantos are unified both thematically and structurally by their treatment of the Neoplatonic ideas of the procession of all things from God and their turning back and return to him.

This prolonged meditation is one of the sections of the poem that most clearly reveals the profound influence on Dante exercised by two major texts in the Christian Neoplatonic tradition: the great centerpiece to Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, the poem "O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas" (see pp. 686–87), as well as that of the Pseudo-Dionysius's treatise *On the Names of God*. For Dante the pilgrim's vision here is a major turning-point in the journey: the pilgrim's entire education in the nature of the cosmos is reaching its climax, and this vision is an unveiling of a fundamental structure of reality, one that since the beginning of the *Paradiso* Dante has been setting forth insistently: the visible world, though it allows the mind to rise to fundamental intellectual/metaphysical truth, is itself a mere phenomenon, an appearance governed by invisible beings acting according to metaphysical principles that are by no means obvious. The vision sets forth symbolically the true nature of the world: the vision turns the visible world inside out: the fundamental principle of the visible world is *extension* (in space and time; for Augustine's influential discussion of time as *distension*, see *Confessions* 11.14–24), and it is being replaced by *intension*, a principle of concentration; God is not extended, he is intense, a nonspatial, infinite point radiating power, being, knowledge, and love outward. The pilgrim's path through space until now has been outward from the earthly center (its smallness is emphasized in Cantos 22 and 27) into ever larger heavenly spheres, and he has now reached the outer limit/boundary of extension itself: now the journey turns inward toward the true center of things, the infinite intensity of God. The turning inside-out of the pilgrim's world is the explicit focus of the dialogue in Canto 28.

The great Neoplatonic theme of the Return of all things to God, especially that of the human soul, is of course fundamental to *Vita nova* and the *Comedy*, and recurrent in the Petrose poems and *Convivio*. Understanding the modes of Procession—the intellectual ascent—is a major aspect of Return. The turning-point of the *Vita nova*, the canzone "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore," is an elaborate experiment enacting in the details of the text both of these patterns, as its "division" leads us to discern (see Durling/Martinez 1990).

When beginning his ascent through the spheres, the pilgrim marvels at his "transcending

these light bodies" (*Par.* 1.99 ["com'io trascenda questi corpi lievi"]), and Beatrice gives an explanation (lines 103–42) that is overtly Aristotelian insofar as it draws on Aristotle's explanation of the motion of sublunar, elementated things as caused by the tendency of the elements each to return to its proper level (*Physics*, Book 5), the pilgrim's "proper place" being Heaven. But the Aristotelian terminology is put to the service of a conception entirely foreign to Aristotle, who denied the possibility of the separate existence of the soul, as well as its descent from or return to a spiritual realm (the crossing of the Neoplatonic ascent of the soul with Aristotle's terminology goes back to Augustine's *Confessions* 13.9; for the question of the pilgrim's body, see our Introduction, pp. 14–16). As so often in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts, the outward clothing of Aristotelian terminology masks the more fundamental allegiance to the Platonic/Neoplatonic tradition.

R.M.D.

12. Dante's Astrology

A. *Introduction*

In the Middle Ages, the terms astrology and astronomy were virtually synonymous. It was universally agreed that the sublunar world was governed by the heavenly bodies. The only aspect of human nature that was held by Christian thinkers to be exempt from the direct influence of the stars and planets was the intellect (one of the main foundations of this belief was the general acceptance of Aristotle's dictum that no physical organ was identifiable as housing the intellect). The organs of the human body, however, were fashioned in the womb under the influence of the heavens and remained under it day by day. Although the intellect itself was not thought to be bodily, many faculties closely related to it had bodily organs: memory, imagination, judgment, all determining personality, including artistic gifts (they included inventiveness, fertility of association, and other powers). It was well known that bodily ailments could interfere with the functioning of intellect and that general health, as well as body type, was vital to it (for general discussion see Durling/Martinez 1990, Introduction).

All these ideas belonged to the science of the stars, whether called astrology or astronomy. There was, however, sharp disagreement between the mainstream Christian intellectuals and the proponents of judicial or divinatory astrology with its basic assumption that everything sublunar was determined by the stars. In its extreme form (Ptolemy, the Arab astrologers, on whom see Additional Note 10), this amounted to a thoroughgoing determinism, excluding any possibility of freedom of the will. There was a considerable range of opinion on the extent of the influence of the stars, but the deterministic position was vigorously combated by the Church and its leading intellectuals. But the European professional astrologers (in the thirteenth century including such figures as Michael Scot and Guido Bonatti) were of course prominent on the social scene and prolific as writers, and their kind continued to be consulted by rulers and to have great influence well into the seventeenth century.

B. *Dante's early astrological conceptions*

Dante's interest in astrology is evident early in his career as a writer, emerging with particular force around the turn of the thirteenth century, particularly in the first three of the so-called *Rime petrose* [stony rhymes], in which the lover's very life is threatened by the configuration of the heavenly bodies (the night sky is dominated by Saturn and Mars, the beneficent planets being below the horizon). A precise, datable horoscope (for December 1296) is implied in the first poem and is treated as an inversion of his natal horoscope, in which the sun in Gemini is identified as the ascendant. Gemini is one of the houses of Mercury, and Dante either knew his actual horoscope or else made one up that was entirely appropriate for a learned poet. The *Petrose* represent a major step forward in Dante's development, one that anticipates the *Comedy*, for Dante treats the lover's problematic relation to the cosmos in poems whose stanza forms are themselves microcosmic imitations of the astrological cycles of nature (see Durling/Martinez 1990; for the importance in the *Comedy* of Dante's natal horoscope, see also Additional Note 14).

In the early years of the fourteenth century, the new exile began a major work, the *Convivio* [Banquet], an introduction to cosmology and philosophy for the unlearned, announced (at the beginning of Book 2) as a commentary on what were to be fourteen of his own canzoni. In this fragmentary work, not published in Dante's lifetime (what comes down to us consists of an introductory book followed by three others, each with a canzone plus elaborate commentary), there are important passages of astrological speculation.

The question of the part played by the secondary causes in the fashioning of human beings preoccupied Dante from the *Petrose* onward. He ultimately accepted the Dominicans' refutations of Averroës' central Aristotelian doctrines of the separateness of intellect and the mortality of the soul, but he rejected Aquinas's theory of the repeated miraculous discontinuities of fetal development in favor of a theory closer to Albertus Magnus's more naturalistic one (see *Purgatorio* Additional Note 11).

The passage in *Conv.* 4.21 on the production of the human soul documents an important moment in the evolution of Dante's thought, and it reveals very clearly its Neoplatonic origins. The development of the fetus, Dante says, is governed by three factors: the generative power in the seed, derived from the father; the power of the heavens; and the power of the elements assimilated into the fetus to form its complexion. The power of the heavens "produces the living soul" from "the potentiality of the seed." "The [soul] immediately receives from the Mover of the heaven the possible intellect, which brings with it potentially all the universal forms, according as they are in its Producer, and so much the less as [the Producer] is more distant from the first Intelligence." Although not fully spelled out, the idea is clear enough that the various angelic Movers of the spheres are more and less distant from the First Intelligence (whether the Mover of the *primum mobile*, as in *Paradiso* 29, or God himself) according to whether they govern lower or higher planetary heavens. The possible intellect received from the Mover of the sphere of the Moon would be less pure than that received from the Mover of Saturn, and consequently its possessor would have more difficulty in achieving the most abstract understanding.

The roots of this passage in the Avicennan/Averroist version of the emanation of the angels and the heavens and their power over human beings are clear. It is an unusually technical variant of the popular astrological doctrine of the children of the planets (see Hauber 1916),

according to which the planet that "rules" a nativity has a preponderant influence on the native, to the extent of determining the occupation(s) to which he or she will be drawn, as well as the temperament, a principle that Dante uses as a fundamental doctrine and chief organizing principle of the entire *Comedy*. Purg. 25.37–78, Stazio's account of human embryology, avoids specifying the role of the angelic Intelligence, although the entire process is governed by "nature" (cf. the three "powers" of Conv. 4.21) and must be understood in connection with the other passages we have discussed, as well as Par. 8.97–148. How far the *Comedy* has moved from the *Convivio* is not entirely clear. (For another important *Convivio* passage, see Additional Note 13.)

C. Astrology in the *Comedy*: *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*

There have been very few serious discussions of Dante's astrology, and most of them deal exclusively with the *Comedy*. Palgen 1949 and Kay 1994 are essentially monographic in scope, focusing on passages in the *Paradiso* related to the tradition of astrological manuals deriving from Claudius Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*; neither raises the general question of the function of such references in relation to the fundamental cosmological poetics of the *Comedy*. Kay has a very useful introduction on the distinction between divinatory astrology and other forms, but in general his work suffers from a presupposition that Dante attributes to the souls encountered in the *Paradiso* the personalities the tradition associates with the "children" of the various planets, including faults; he seems to forget that all of them have passed through Purgatory before reaching Heaven, thus ordering their desires, and at times he contradicts Dante's explicit statements. Nevertheless both Palgen and Kay have demonstrated that Dante knew the traditional manuals well and drew on them extensively (Kay includes a useful "Biobibliography" on the astrological writers who may have been known to Dante, and he is the first to confront seriously the thorny question of Dante's astrological sources). Cornish 2000, with many penetrating observations about the astronomy of the *Paradiso*, does not confront the astrological theme as such.

A more comprehensive approach was undertaken by Georg Rabuse (1958 and a series of articles collected in Rabuse 1976a), who argued that traditional astrology, integrated into a Neoplatonic cosmology based on Macrobius's *Commentarii*, underlies the parallel structures of the three canticle of the poem. Many of Rabuse's positions, both in detail and in general (particularly the excessive emphasis on Macrobius to the exclusion of other sources), now seem mistaken, but his grand attempt to achieve a comprehensive view (by and large ignored by "mainstream" Dante scholarship) is most suggestive and at times deeply illuminating. It deserves to be known and to stimulate further work. Particularly impressive is Rabuse's exploration of the close interrelation between the cantos in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* corresponding to the planet Mars.

That there is a parallelism among the three canticle of the poem has been recognized in a general way by many critics, but none before Rabuse attempted to establish its astrological basis. As Dante makes clear in *Purgatorio* 16, when he also explicitly rejects divinatory astrology, the individual must struggle to establish the freedom of the will from the body and from the influence of the heavens:

The heavens begin your motions: I do not say
all of them, but, supposing I say it, a light is given you
to know good and evil
and free will, which, if it last out the labor of its first
battles with the heavens, afterwards overcomes all things,
if nourished well (lines 73–78; cf. lines 79–81).

These lines clearly imply that giving way to one's temperament as shaped and influenced by the stars and planets can lead to sin and vice. In the *Inferno*, then, we may expect to find the negative reflection of planetary influences, and Rabuse was certainly correct in seeing in the circle of violence (Cantos 12 to 17) the malefic influence of Mars (cf. the explicit reference in 13.143–50). Hell is by definition Babel, or confusion, however, and such matters should not be expected to be simple: there seem to be at least two overlapping systems; it is clear that the trimmers in Canto 3 represent a degree of instability that must be associated with the moon, and that at the other extreme, the treacherous correspond to the planet Saturn, archpatron of traitors, dominant in winter and producing freezings and floodings (as Satan also refers to the mythological Saturn devouring his children). But Saturn, with the moon and Venus, is also a chief influence producing an inclination to lust, particularly associated with air and wind (tumescence was thought to be the result of air pressure—the idea goes back to Aristotle's famous *Problem 13*), and Saturn is unavoidably present in Canto 5. It is clear from *Paradiso* 10 that the heretics (*Inferno* 10–11) correspond to the sun, whose influence they specifically resisted (cf. *Inf.* 10.100–105, with Durling 1981b). It may be that the Noble Castle in *Inferno* 4 reflects a positive influence of the planet Mercury, a chief influence in all arts and sciences, but it is also clear that the Malebolge (Cantos 18–30) correspond to the negative influence of Mercury, patron of thieves and deceivers. There is clearly a break between the cantos of incontinence, where the negative influence of the four elements and four humors in the human body is central, and the circles of deliberate malice; nevertheless the sequence of sins represents a gradual descent into the elements of water and earth (Cantos 6–9), associated with Saturn; the sullen and the angry, in whom fire anticipates its role in lower Hell, seem to represent subforms of the negative influence of Mars.

There is thus a wealth of suggestion to be pursued in further investigation. One must beware of rigid formulae; however, that Dante thought the influence of the planets was discernible in the damned is strongly implied by Marco Lombardo, and, although their wills must have freely chosen to follow the negative side of planetary influence, Dante has clearly worked the theme out in some detail.

While the *Purgatorio* features the seven deadly vices on the seven terraces of its mountain, clearly related, in reverse order, to the cantos of incontinence in the *Inferno*, Purgatory is the realm where the work takes place of correcting whatever negative effects the heavenly bodies have had on the soul. Now out of the body, the penitents are no longer directly influenced by the stars, but the influence of Mars on their temperaments as part of what must be corrected is clearly involved on the terraces of envy and anger, and on the terrace of anger Dante has Marco Lombardo refute the idea of astrological determinism, being himself a Mars-influenced nature directing his anger against the errors of the superstitious. The cold of earth, moon, and

Saturn is explicitly a factor in the three vices avarice, gluttony, and lust in 19.1–6 and the subsequent dream. When we reach Eden and Matelda explains that the pagan myth of the Golden Age (when Saturn, in his good form, ruled on earth—*Purg.* 28. 139–44) was a dream of Eden, we are making the transition to the realm of the last cantica, where the influence of the planets on the souls we meet, with the exception of Piccarda and Costanza, will have been entirely beneficial.

The treatment of astrology in the *Paradiso* is discussed in Additional Note 14, for reasons that will become clear.

R.M.D.

13. The Heavens and the Sciences: *Convivio* 2

Convivio 2.12–14 draws an extended analogy between the nine celestial spheres and the seven liberal arts, in the traditional order: first the trivium—moon: grammar, Mercury: dialectic, Venus: rhetoric; then the quadrivium—sun: arithmetic, Mars: music, Jupiter: geometry, Saturn: astronomy; and then the other sciences—fixed stars: physics/metaphysics, *primum mobile*: ethics, and Empyrean: theology. All these Dante calls “sciences,” and in each case he finds two points of comparison between the sphere and the corresponding science. In the case of the moon and grammar, for instance, Dante associates the moon spots with the arbitrary (thus ultimately opaque) conventionality of words, and the moon’s cycle of phases with unceasing linguistic change, and for each of the heavens he lists what seem to most modern readers to be arbitrary similarities. It is a puzzling, tantalizing passage, most often considered a mere sudden, caprice of Dante’s wit, and most scholars do not believe it has any relevance to the *Paradiso* (with the possibly unique exception of Mazzotta 1993). But the passage has much to teach us. And, at least in the case of the moon, connections with the *Paradiso* fairly leap out at one: with the apparent arbitrariness of personal fate (the color of Esau’s and Jacob’s hair: see 32.61–72, the fact of Piccarda’s weakness), with the question of changeability, and so forth.

What exactly is the basis of the analogy? Why does Dante think there is an analogy between the heavens and the sciences at all? I quote the beginning of his discussion:

I say that by heaven I understand science ... because of three similarities that the heavens have with the sciences, especially because of the order and number in which they manifestly agree.... The first similarity is that both revolve around something that is unmoving. For each of the moving heavens turns about its center, which is not moved by that turning; just so, each science moves about its subject, and the subject does not move, since no science demonstrates its own subject but rather presupposes it. The second likeness is that both illuminate. for each heaven illuminates visible things, just as each science illuminates intelligible things. And the third similarity is the inducing of perfection in things properly disposed. As to the first perfection, that of substantial generation, all the philosophers agree that the heavens induce it....⁵ In a similar way, the sciences are the cause that induces the second perfection in us, for once we have acquired them as habit we can contemplate truth, according to the Philosopher, when, in the sixth book of the Ethics, he says that truth is the good of the intellect. Because of these

similarities, with many others besides, a science may be called a heaven.

The influence of the sciences, then, when they train the mind, inducing the “second perfection” of the habit of science, is exactly parallel to the influence of the heavens as they bring sublunar things into being. In other words, the influence of books on their readers is conceived on the model of the influence of the heavens. This becomes particularly clear when, turning at last to the third heaven of rhetoric and to the first line of his first canzone, “Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete” [You who by intellection move the third heaven], Dante explains:

By the similarities discussed above, one can see who these movers are who move the sphere, such as Boethius [in his *Consolatio*] and Cicero [in his *De amicitia*], who with the sweetness of their speech turned me to the love, that is the study, of this most noble Lady Philosophy, with the rays of their star, which is its written doctrine: for in each science the written doctrine is a star full of light that demonstrates the science.

In other words, the *Consolatio* and the *De amicitia*, moved by their authors—pure intelligences insofar as existing in their works—are like the planet Venus in its sphere, moved by the angelic Intelligences, inducing perfection below by means of its light. To put it in slightly different terms, if a book has the power to influence its readers, it is because this power is conveyed through the light the book radiates into the mind of the reader. Furthermore, as Beatrice teaches the pilgrim at the beginning of their ascent in the *Paradiso*, the differences among the heavenly bodies are due to formal causes—a version of the doctrine, held also by Aquinas and others, that each heavenly body radiates a unique species of light. So also does each human mind. And at the end of Book 1 of the *Convivio*, Dante explicitly claims that his book will have a similar power (1.13): “This book will be a new light, a new sun that will rise where the other will set, and it will give light to those who are in darkness and shadows because the usual sun does not shine for them.” The passionate seriousness of this passage (like the related ones on Henry VII in Epistles 8 and 11)—with the rich organ tones of the echo of Isaiah (the “great light” of Is. 9.2 is itself being interpreted as a sunrise)—is one of the signals of the seriousness with which the extended analogy is advanced.

We still say that books influence their readers, although we do not usually pause to consider that the very term *influence* is derived from the cosmology to which Dante is appealing. Dante’s conception goes back at least to Augustine, for whom the Church was a second creation, an analogue of the cosmos; Book 13 of the *Confessions* is devoted to an allegory of the account of the creation in Genesis 1: the Bible corresponds to the firmament, its authority spread above all mankind; the clergy to the heavenly bodies shaping all below; the laity to the sublunar. It is easy to see the relation between Dante’s and Augustine’s versions of the analogy.

For Dante the idea of celestial influence on the sublunar is the principal conceptual model of created causality as such. And the operation of the heavens on the sublunar is itself an analogue of God’s relation to the universe, both his initial act of creation, which in several important passages is described in terms of the instantaneous radiation of light, and his continuous imparting to it of light and energy.⁷ If the nature and importance to him of Dante’s views on the heavenly bodies is still only partly understood—and I include the question of his opinions about astrology more narrowly conceived—the same must be said for the numerous

analogues to the influence of the spheres that fill the *Paradiso*, and which are for the most part, I submit, seriously intended, not mere flights of fancy.

In the *Paradiso* most or all forms of human and social causality are conceived on the model of the influence of the heavens: the power of theologians in the Church and that of saint Francis and saint Dominic (Cantos 10–14); the power of kings and other rulers in society (Cantos 18ff.)—and we should recall Virgil's discussion of Fortune in *Inferno* 7, a version of the same idea: as “earthly splendors,” the powerful radiate their influence on their subjects; the conversion of the heathen by saint Benedict; and so on. In each heavenly sphere, the pilgrim undergoes the influence of the representatives, the children, of the planet, who are said to shine their light on him, to pour drink for him (cf. *influere*). At the very beginning of the ascent, when Beatrice corrects the pilgrim's error about the cause of the spots on the moon, her action is explicitly described as analogous with the operation of the heavenly bodies, specifically the sun (2.106–11). The modern languages have lost the intensity of cosmological and metaphysical significance that Dante attaches to the term *informare*. And Beatrice's mode of proof in *Paradiso* 1, 2, 4, and elsewhere itself imitates the action of causality in the cosmos, descending from first causes downward.

If a book or its writer may occupy a position corresponding to a heavenly body, that is of course also because the processes whereby the heavens shape the sublunar are traditionally conceived as analogous to the activity of human craftsmen. Dante's fullest exposition of this idea is in *Par.* 2.112–48, according to which the Intelligences governing the heavenly spheres take from above the form they impose on the sublunar; the spheres themselves correspond to the hammer of the smith, governed by conscious art. Conversely, the human art that shapes a poem—or any other work of art—is an analogue of the action of the spheres and their Intelligences, and must (1) revolve about the work; (2) shed light on it—the light of the craftsman's own understanding and vision; and (3) induce perfection in it, imparting the luminosity of form—“the newness that lights up [the] form” of the third *petrosa*, as its envoi says—the beauty which, among other things, will give it the power to shape its readers. This principle underlies the poetics of the *Paradiso*, and it can hardly be doubted that Dante hopes his poem will have an effect in the world along the lines of the solar imagery used of saint Francis and saint Dominic.

R.M.D.

14. The *Paradiso* as Alpha and Omega of the *Comedy*

I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

(Apoc. 22.13)

The *Paradiso* is the Alpha and Omega of the *Comedy* in a variety of ways. Most obviously, the goal of the journey is God, the origin of all things. Heaven is the initial cause of the journey, as we know from *Inferno* 2, and at the midpoint of the *Paradiso* (Cantos 18–20) we learn that the final cause is not merely the salvation of the pilgrim but his providential mission as a poet. Furthermore, the action of the *Paradiso* is the process of the pilgrim's coming to understand the causes that produced and govern the universe, including the destinies of peoples and

individuals: the *Paradiso* provides explanations of all we have seen earlier in the poem: it systematically presents the return to origins. It is no accident that the rhetorical figure of *hysteron proteron* (naming the last before the first) is so important in the *Paradiso*; indeed, the entire *Comedy*, viewed in this light, can be seen as an enormous instance of *hysteron proteron*: the last thing we reach is the origin of all; we ascend from the *posterior* to the *prior* (cf. Additional Note 3).

Thematically, the *Paradiso* presents astrological influences as the principal instruments of God's Providence. Almost at the end of the journey, at the very limit of the physical universe, in the *primum mobile* (Cantos 28–29), the pilgrim has his vision of the relation of God and the angels, the rulers of the heavenly spheres, and Beatrice sets forth the most explicit account in the poem of God's creation of the universe. As our notes point out, Dante's account takes a radical position on several major points: (a) sublunar matter was initially entirely without form (the Neoplatonic "first matter"); (b) the formation of sublunar entities (with the exception of the bodies of Adam and Eve) was entirely the work of the astrological influences governed by the angels; (c) astrological causality, operating through the various formally different lights radiated by the heavenly bodies (see the exposition in Canto 2, with our notes), is an analogue, a lower version, of the radiation of God's power that brought the cosmos into existence. (We may note in passing that the account of creation in Canto 28 completes a circle that began in the first canto of the poem: the pilgrim gazes upward in *Inf.* 1.16–18 and 37–40: passages in which the Alpha of the poem recalls the Alpha of the cosmos.) It is immediately apparent that in setting forth the astrological basis of human temperaments, the *Paradiso* provides a perspective on the souls in Hell and Purgatory that is required for the full understanding of Dante's view. But as Carlo Martello explains in Canto 8, the influence of the stars is stronger than heredity, and through it Providence ensures that children are different from their parents, so as to provide the great diversity of native gifts required by organized society, including both the State and the Church. Just as the influence of Mars supplies warlike natures (of which the highest application is fighting for the faith), that of Jupiter provides souls devoted to Justice (of whom the highest are the just kings), and Mercury public servants who assume fully their political responsibilities, the sun and Saturn provide, respectively, theologians who illuminate the faithful as to the true meaning of the faith and contemplatives whose inner life is the model of all spiritual ascent, the true goal of the religious life.

As he mounts higher and higher in the cosmos, the pilgrim encounters higher and higher levels of causality: higher both in power and in universality. In the heaven of the fixed stars, the heaven that first introduces diversity into the previously undifferentiated transmission of God's creative power, the pilgrim meets the Apostles—this is a variant of Augustine's correlation of the firmament with the Bible—and there he also meets Adam. This collocation joins the two origins, the two forms of filiation in human history: the descent or succession of all humanity from Adam, and the succession from the Apostles of all ecclesiastics—the personnel of the new creation, the sponsors of God's adoption of the converted (Rom. 8.15–17). Just as Adam and Eve were sent out to multiply and fill the world (Gen. 1.28), the Apostles were sent forth to preach to all people, to multiply and fill the earth with the saved (Matt. 28.19); in each case Dante is thinking of radiation into the sublunar receptacle. And of course the poet himself, at the midpoint of the cantica, is sent forth by Cacciaguida into the world to make known, to

propagate, his vision.

Naturally, in Dante's vision God's providential governing of the world is contested at each step by what he regards as human resistance to God's will and to the positive influence of the heavenly bodies (8.142–48); and although he has Carlo Martello assert, and the pilgrim agree, that the stars perform their functions perfectly (8.97–108), a higher authority, Thomas Aquinas, qualifies that view, saying (14.67–78) that the astrological influences ("nature") are like an artist who has "the habit of art" (this would refer to the angels) but "a hand that trembles" (this would refer to the stars themselves), and therefore their products are always less than perfect. The condemnations of earthly corruption pepper the entire cantica as far as Canto 30.

Thus in countless ways Dante works out the idea of the *Paradiso* as the thematic Alpha and Omega of the poem. But he also works out this idea on a metapoetic level: the *Paradiso* is also formally the Alpha and Omega of the entire poem. The thematic and the metapoetic levels intersect especially in two passages: in Canto 26.124–32 (where Adam explains the contingent nature of human language, a passage that is deeply connected with Dante's choice to write in the vernacular), and when the pilgrim/poet enters his natal sign, Gemini, where he stays from 22.112 to 27.98 and undergoes his examination in the three theological virtues (the basis of his salvation). Relating his arrival, the poet invokes the stars of Gemini, which first appear in Dante's poetry in the first of the *Rime petrose* in language that he is echoing in this passage; see also Additional Note 12:

112 O glorious stars, o light pregnant with great power, from
 which I acknowledge that all my talent comes, whatever it
 may be,

115 with you was being born and with you was setting he that
 is father of every mortal life, when I first felt the Tuscan air,

118 and then, when grace was extended to me to enter the hig
 wheel that turns you, your region was allotted me.

121 To you now my soul devoutly sighs, to acquire power
 for the difficult pass that draws me to itself.

That the poet states that he owes his entire "ingegno" [talent, including poetic talent] to the stars of Gemini indicates that he considers Mercury to be the "lord" of his natal horoscope (Gemini, named as the ascendant, is one of the "houses" of Mercury), and that he thinks of his poetic gifts not as residing in his intellect but rather in his body and his sensitive soul with its bodily organs, shaped by the influence of the stars: in his memory, imagination, power of association, linguistic facility, energy, and capacity for prolonged hard work. This is a metapoetic statement of a fundamental cause of Dante's entire output as a writer, and particularly of the *Comedy* (cf. *Inf.* 26.19–24, with note). And it states clearly that Dante thought of astrological influences as operative day by day, and that it somehow lies in the individual's power to increase his receptiveness to them: he has reached a particularly difficult

test of his poetic abilities, and to his natal sign his soul “now devoutly sighs, to acquire power.” It is a thematic moment entirely coherent with the general view of astrological influences, including their importance to society as governed by divine Providence, presented most explicitly in Canto 8. But it is metapoetic: in Cantos 18–22—within the poem—the poem explains its own origins.

Another important metapoetic aspect of the *Paradiso* is microcosmic. The sensory representations of the *Paradiso* are limited to sights and sounds; there are no experiences of smell, taste, or touch. Not only are sight and hearing traditionally the two highest senses, the least bound to the body and the least material, and thus the most susceptible to supernal influences; they are also located entirely in the head. As we have already repeatedly observed, the ascent through the cosmos takes place within the pilgrim’s head; central to Dante’s treatment of the celestial ascent is the traditional idea that the human head itself is an analogue of the heavens. According to Plato’s *Timaeus*, the rest of the body is a mere supplement to the essential head, dictated by mere physical necessity. Like the cosmos, the head is a sphere that houses the two revolutions of the soul, those of the Same and of the Other, which it shares with the World Soul, and its happiness requires the patterning of its internal life on the serene, unchanging harmony visible in the heavens, the expression in the body of the world of the perfect happiness of its soul.

Dante’s account of the imaginative ascent through the heavenly spheres draws on these ideas: the soul participates in the life of the cosmos, revolving with the heavenly spheres, and as it rises to the contemplation of higher and higher principles of causality, it approaches perfect assimilation to the two motions of the Soul. Like the angels, who circle the godhead in ecstatic contemplation and transmit downward God’s creative power and the intentions of his Providence, so the pilgrim’s vision culminates in the intuition, though he cannot remember it, of the principle of the union of the divine and the human natures of Christ, after which vision ceases and his affective state remains an ultimate version of the reconciliation of the motions of the Same and the Other within the self (for the interpretation of the concluding lines of the poem, see Additional Note 9).

This level of microcosmic thought/imagery illuminates what has preceded it in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Through the first two canticle, the parallels with the human body are insistent (see *Inferno* Additional Notes 2 and 13, *Purgatorio Inter cantica* to Canto 28). The Old Man of Crete (*Inferno* 14) is symbolic both diachronically (representing the history of mankind) and synchronically (representing the predicament of fallen humanity, still possessed of intellect almost equal to that of the angels—thus golden—but in the rest of its nature split and conflicted). The parallel with the structure of Purgatory is also important: its ascent represents the healing of the split in our nature and the regaining of Eden at the summit, the true Golden Age, parallel with the unharmed golden head of the Old Man (prefigured also by the hemisphere of light in the Limbo of Canto 4). If God’s creative power penetrates the universe and is administered by the angels governing the heavenly bodies, the human head controls and governs the rest of the body by a process that is analogous to the governing influence of the heavenly bodies on the sublunar. This entire system of analogy becomes fully articulated only in the *Paradiso*; it has long been recognized that the *Comedy* is a little model of the universe, but it has not been adequately recognized that it is also a model of the human body,

ascending through its powers and processes and in the *Paradiso* finally reaching the sovereign head.

Finally, the *Paradiso* is also the chronological Alpha and Omega of the *Comedy* itself: Dante must have begun planning with it, and it must have been the cantica that received the final touches. As we observed in the Introduction, Dante could not have progressed very far in the composition of either of the preceding cantiche without first developing a fairly detailed outline of the *Paradiso*. That the poem would end with the ultimate Alpha and Omega must have been decided very early, and if the pilgrim was to ascend in imagination up through the heavenly spheres, their order and the themes associated with them would have to have been considered very early. That the arrival in the sun would be a major turning point, preceded by the theme of the shadow of earth (perceptible as a governing category in the first nine cantos of the two earlier cantiche—deepening in the *Inferno*, gradually lifting in the *Purgatorio*) must also have been decided very early. The sun undergoes darkening in *Inferno* 10, and in *Purgatorio* 10–12 meditation on the examples of pride and humility, revealed in God's art and in the light of the sun, leads to crucial illuminations.

R.M.D.