

VOLUME III

THE DIVINE COMEDY OF DANTE ALIGHIERI

PARADISO



EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
ROBERT M. DURLING

Introduction by ROBERT M. DURLING

*Notes by RONALD L. MARTINEZ
and ROBERT M. DURLING*

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PREFACE

For the principles followed in the translation of the *Paradiso*, we refer the reader to the preface to our *Inferno* volume, and for the Italian text to the preface to our *Purgatorio* volume. As we write, a major advance in the textual criticism of the *Comedy* is taking place: the application to it of cladistic software (software developed to chart the relations among DNA strings, closely analogous with textual strings; see Shaw's *Monarchia* 2006 and her 2010 DVD *Commedia*). This approach has already demonstrated its usefulness in its critique of the unreliability of stemmas based on only small samples of variants and its demonstration of the superiority of Petrocchi's detailed analysis of all the variants in his chosen "vulgata" manuscripts; this software will eventually, as more and more manuscripts are compared by its means, lead to the possibility of a genuinely critical text. Petrocchi's text is still the most reliable guide, and we have again, in the main, followed it, including discussion of the passages where we have not done so in "Textual Variants," pp. 762–3.

In *Inter cantica* sections concluding the notes to the individual cantos of the *Purgatorio*, we provided detailed discussions of their allusions to the corresponding cantos (as well as to other cantos) of the *Inferno*, demonstrating, we hope, that such comparisons can be extremely illuminating: Dante's mode of composition involved holding the entire poem present to his awareness, with or without (more probably, with) detailed outlines. Such references, now involving two cantiche, become particularly dense and frequent in the *Paradiso*. For this reason, having offered the student a possible model for the exploration of the self-referentiality of the *Comedy* in the previous volume, we have here chosen a different method. The matter is necessarily treated to some extent in the body of the notes to each canto, but we have also included a number of Additional Notes discussing matters involving the entire poem, such as those on the figure of Beatrice, on the "threshold cantos," on Dante's Neoplatonism and his astrology, and on the *Paradiso* as the Alpha and Omega of the poem.

The procedures followed by the commentators in this volume differ from the two previous ones in another respect. Rather than the editor of the volume imposing his view of the appropriate uniformity among its parts (except in the signed Additional Notes), as previously, for this volume we have composed the notes individually, as indicated in the table of contents.

As before, translations of biblical passages are from the Douay version of the Latin Vulgate, except as noted, and, unless otherwise identified, nonbiblical translations are our own. And once again the four indexes have been prepared by R.M.D. And special thanks to Norman Rabkin for his invaluable help with the correction of the proofs.

*Paris
September 2010*

R.M.D.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ab urbe cond.</i>	Livy, <i>Ab urbe condita</i>
<i>Achill.</i>	Statius, <i>Achilleid</i>
<i>Acts</i>	Acts of the Apostles
<i>Aen.</i>	Vergil, <i>Aeneid</i>
<i>Apoc.</i>	Apocalypse of saint John
<i>CDH</i>	Anselm, <i>Cur Deus homo</i>
<i>CG</i>	Aquinas, <i>Summa contra gentiles</i>
<i>Chron.</i>	Chronicles
<i>Comm.</i>	Macrobius, <i>Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis</i>
<i>Confessions</i>	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i>
<i>Consol.</i>	Boethius, <i>Philosophiae Consolatio</i>
<i>Conv.</i>	Dante, <i>Convivio</i>
<i>Cor.</i>	Saint Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians
<i>De cael. hier.</i>	Pseudo-Dionysius, <i>De caelesti hierarchia</i>
<i>De civ. Dei</i>	Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i>
<i>De gen. et corr.</i>	Aristotle, <i>De generatione et corruptione</i>
<i>De nom. div.</i>	Pseudo-Dionysius, <i>De nominibus divinis</i>
<i>De serm. Dom.</i>	Augustine, <i>De sermone Domini in monte</i>
<i>Deut.</i>	Deuteronomy
<i>DTC</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
<i>DVE</i>	Dante, <i>De vulgari eloquentia</i>
<i>Eccles.</i>	Ecclesiastes
<i>Ecclius.</i>	Ecclesiasticus
<i>Ed.</i>	Vergil, <i>Eclogue(s)</i>
<i>ED</i>	<i>Encyclopedia dantesca</i>
<i>Eng.</i>	English

Ep.	Dante, <i>Epistle(s)</i>
Ep. <i>mor.</i>	Seneca, <i>Epistulae morales</i>
Eph.	Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
<i>Etym.</i>	Isidore of Seville, <i>Etymologies</i>
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Ex.	Exodus
Gal.	Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians
Gen.	Genesis
<i>Geor.</i>	Vergil, <i>Georgics</i>
Gr.	Greek
<i>GSLI</i>	<i>Giornale storico della letteratura italiana</i>
Heb.	Saint Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews
<i>Inf.</i>	<i>Inferno</i>
Is.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
John	Gospel according to saint John (with preceding numeral, Epistle of saint John)
Jos.	Joshua
Jud.	Judges
Lam.	Lamentations of Jeremiah

Lat.	Latin
LDS	<i>Lectura Dantis Scaligera</i>
LDT	<i>Lectura Dantis Turicensis</i>
LDV	<i>Lectura Dantis Virginiana</i>
<i>Legenda</i>	Bonaventura, <i>Legenda maior</i>
Luke	Gospel according to saint Luke
Mal.	Malachi
Mark	Gospel according to saint Mark
Matt.	Gospel according to saint Matthew
<i>Met.</i>	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>Mon.</i>	Dante, <i>Monarchia</i>
NLD	<i>Nuove letture dantesche</i>
NT	New Testament
Num.	Numbers
<i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
OF	Old French
OT	Old Testament
<i>Par.</i>	<i>Paradiso</i>
Peter	Saint Peter's Epistles
<i>Phar.</i>	Lucan, <i>Pharsalia</i>
<i>PL</i>	Migne, <i>Patrologia... Latina</i>
Prov.	Proverbs
Ps.	Psalm(s)

<i>Purg.</i>	<i>Purgatorio</i>
<i>Quaest.</i>	Dante, <i>Quaestio de aqua et terra</i>
<i>Raptus</i>	Claudian, <i>De raptu Proserpinæ</i>
<i>Rationale</i>	Durandus, <i>Rationale divinorum officiorum</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans
<i>RR</i>	Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, <i>Roman de la rose</i>
<i>Sat.</i>	Macrobius, <i>Saturnalia</i>
<i>Servius</i>	<i>Servii grammatici... in Vergili carmina commentarii</i>
<i>SS</i>	Cicero, <i>Somnium Scipionis</i>
<i>ST</i>	Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i>
<i>Theb.</i>	Statius, <i>Thebaid</i>
<i>Thess.</i>	Saint Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians
<i>Tim.</i>	Saint Paul's Epistles to Timothy
<i>Tob.</i>	The Book of Tobias
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
<i>VN</i>	Dante, <i>Vita nova</i>
<i>Wisdom</i>	Wisdom of Solomon

Authors' names appearing in the notes without dates (e.g., "Singleton") refer to commentaries, listed in the bibliography under "Editions and Commentaries on the *Divine Comedy*"; authors' names followed by dates (e.g., "Singleton 1966") refer to items listed in the bibliography under "Modern Works." Primary sources are for the most part cited by author or abbreviated title (as above); references are to editions listed under "Works by Dante" and "Primary Texts."

Psalms are cited by the numbers of the Latin Vulgate, used by Dante; they differ from the numbers of the Hebrew Bible: Vulgate Psalm 9 is Hebrew Psalms 9 and 10; Vulgate Psalms 10–112 correspond to Hebrew Psalms 11–113; Vulgate Psalm 113 is Hebrew Psalms 114–15; Vulgate Psalms 114–15 are Hebrew Psalm 116; Vulgate Psalms 116–45 are Hebrew Psalms 117–46; Vulgate Psalms 146 and 147 are Hebrew Psalm 147; for Psalms 1–8 and 148–50 the numbers coincide.

THE DIVINE COMEDY
OF DANTE ALIGHIERI

INTRODUCTION

The first two canticle of the *Comedy* are, for the most part, intuitively direct in their modes of representation, however these modes may be qualified; but this last cantica is far from being direct. Even the problem of dating the *Paradiso* is different, for although there is a general consensus that Dante allowed the *Inferno* to circulate by about 1314, and that the *Purgatorio* was completed soon afterwards (mostly because its topical references do not extend beyond 1315; see the introduction to our *Purgatorio* volume), the dating of the *Paradiso* is quite uncertain. Its topical allusions give no help: the latest of them are to the death of Philip the Fair in 1314 and possibly to the battle of Montecatini in 1315 (see the notes to 6.106–8 and 19.120); these are much the same limits as in the *Purgatorio*. Complicating factors are the mentions of the *Paradiso* in other late works by Dante (*Eclogue* 2 ("Vidimus in nigris"), *Monarchia*, and Epistle 13; though they are late, the dating of all three is disputed. Both of Dante's eclogues were probably written during the last eighteen months of his life, and it is striking that the first of them mentions the publication of the *Paradiso* as belonging to an indefinite future (lines 48–49); in their literary context, the lines are a clear indication that the *Paradiso* was still unfinished. The only definite certainty seems to be that Dante must have completed the *Paradiso* before his death in September 1321. However, there is a growing body of evidence that Dante released the *Paradiso* in stages, perhaps in groups of cantos, perhaps as single cantos (Veglia 2003); as our knowledge grows it may be possible to refine these conclusions.

In our view, this difficulty of dating probably reflects the fact that Dante was constantly working on the *Paradiso*—thinking about it and planning it, perhaps, even actively drafting it—while he was drafting both *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, a view that also helps account for the intensive self-referentiality of the entire poem. For both of the first two parts of the *Comedy* include large numbers of references to the *Paradiso*, from the first announcement of the scope of the pilgrim's journey (*Inf.* 1.120–23), to the account of the three ladies in Heaven who sponsor it (*Inf.* 2.70–126), to the references to the meeting with Beatrice and the constant references in the *Purgatorio* to the anxious yearning for Heaven of all the souls. The goal of the vision of God, the culmination of the *Paradiso*, is continually being referred to and is always assumed in the earlier canticle, whether as what the damned have lost or as what the saved hope for. It is obvious that the planning of the *Comedy* included some kind of outline of the *Paradiso* from the beginning: the idea of the pilgrim's journey to Heaven and his vision of God must have been part of the original kernel that eventually grew into the poem. In a real sense, the *Paradiso* should be seen as the Alpha and Omega of the entire *Comedy* (see the general introduction in the *Inferno* volume, p. 20, and below, Additional Note 14).

The *Paradiso* takes the pilgrim—accompanied and instructed by Beatrice—on a vividly imagined ascent through the transparent celestial spheres of the medieval cosmos, meeting souls in each planet; in the heaven of the fixed stars, as the pilgrim draws closer and closer to the origin of all causality and reaches his own natal sign of Gemini, he is examined on the three

theological virtues by the three chief Apostles (saints Peter, James, and John, founders of the Church) and meets Adam, the first father of all humankind. In the swiftness of the outermost celestial sphere, the undifferentiated *primum mobile* [first moveable], a vision of the nine orders of angels, rulers of the spheres, rises above material causality to its spiritual source, and the pilgrim's passage beyond space and time into the Empyrean takes place with overwhelmingly vivid imaginings. There he sees the places prepared for all the blessed of all time—most of them occupied, for not much time remains—and finally, encouraged by the spirit of saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the famous Cistercian mystic, he raises his eyes to the supreme vision of the godhead.

The *Paradiso* is paradoxically both the most medieval and the most modern of the three cantica of Dante's masterpiece. It is the most medieval in setting forth—albeit with matchless imaginative sweep, clarity, and poetic eloquence—a philosophical-religious ascent based on a cosmology and scientific explanation of natural causality that have been left behind by hundreds of years of empirical scientific progress. The entire poetic enterprise of the *Paradiso* rests upon treating an already outdated version of the scientific and religious doctrines of Neoplatonic-Aristotelian Scholasticism (often hotly debated in the schools) as truths guaranteed by divine authority: by Beatrice, who is if only in part a kind of personification of divine revelation itself. But the *Paradiso* is also the most modern cantica of the *Comedy* in its unprecedented intellectual and linguistic freedom. The thoroughness and imaginativeness of Dante's synthesis of an entire cosmos of thought and feeling was possible only because of his uncanny ability to detach himself from it.

But how is this journey to be read? Does it relate a mystical experience? Is it a form of science fiction? It is remarkable how many differing positions on this question have turned up over the course of the centuries. A convenient, really an unavoidable, point of departure presents itself: Dante's Epistle 13 (to Can Grande); its authenticity has been challenged, either as a whole or in part, by a number of scholars, but the weight of the evidence, much of which has only recently come to light, points toward its authenticity (see Hollander 1993, Azzetta 2003, Bellomo 2004).

The epistle seems to have been written in 1316 or 1317, on the occasion of Dante's leaving Verona, where for a number of years he and two of his sons had enjoyed the generous hospitality of Can Grande della Scala, the leader of the Italian Ghibellines, and where Dante seems to have reached the midpoint of the composition of the *Paradiso* (including the tribute to the Scaligeri in *Paradiso* 17; on the whole question, see Petrocchi 1984). Epistle 13, which must have accompanied a copy of the first canto of the cantica, dedicates the entire *Paradiso*, proleptically, to Can Grande. After the expression of deep friendship and admiration as the motive of the dedication, the epistle has two main parts: a general introduction to the *Comedy* as a whole (§§4–41), and a detailed exposition of its "prologue" (i.e., of Canto 1, lines 1–36, in §§42–88; this second part of the epistle is discussed in our notes on Canto 1), followed by a brief description (§§89–90) of the plan for the rest of the cantica.

In his general introduction, Dante explains in detail the traditional topics of the medieval *accessus* [lit. "approach"—introductory description of a work] as they apply to the *Comedy* as a whole and then to the *Paradiso*. These traditional topics are: the work's subject, agent, form,

purpose, and branch of philosophy; in the *Comedy* the agent is the writer; the form is double: (1) *forma tractatus* [form of the treatise; what we would call its physical form]: the poem is divided into cantos, cantos, and terzine; and (2) *forma tractandi* [what we would call its expository procedure]: this is, Dante says, "poetic, fictive, descriptive, digressive, transumptive [i.e., metaphorical], as well as defining, dividing, proving, disproving, and positing of examples." Finally, the purpose of the poem, Dante says, is to lead its readers from a state of misery to one of happiness; and its philosophical category is ethics.

So far, in spite of Dante's medieval terminology, the meaning is clear. It is Dante's statement of the *subject* of the poem that has puzzled critics. He begins by stating that the poem is "polysemous" [having plural meanings]—in fact that it is allegorical. Dante implicitly refers to his discussion in Book 2 of the *Convivio*, where he distinguishes between theological and poetical allegoresis. Theological allegoresis (what has become known as the "allegory of theologians," though Dante does not use the expression) recognized the famous "four senses" of biblical allegory: the literal sense, relating the historical events (biblical accounts being taken, of course, to be true), and three allegorical senses giving the meanings behind the historical events. The chief difference between the two kinds of allegory consists in the fact that what is now called the "allegory of poets" rests on a fictitious literal sense and the figural allegory of theologians on a literally true *historical* sense, of which the events, not the words, carry the meaning. In the Epistle Dante exemplifies "allegorical" by the four senses of biblical exegesis, seeming to exclude from the poem, by omission, the "allegory of the poets" (the passage is quoted at some length in the Introduction to our *Purgatorio*, p. 12, as part of our discussion of Dante's figuralism). According to the Epistle, then, the subject of the entire poem, at the literal level, is "the state of souls after death," and, at the allegorical level, "man as by doing well or ill using his free will he justly merits punishment or reward" (§8; §11 specifies the double subject of the *Paradiso* in repetitious terms: "the state of blessed souls after death" and "man as by doing well using his free will he justly merits reward").

Two principal controversies have arisen because of Dante's definitions. First, a number of scholars who accepted the authenticity of the Epistle have interpreted its definition of the allegory to *exclude* the allegory of the poets (that is, allegory based on a fictitious literal sense); we will return to this question later. Second, many readers have been left dissatisfied by this description of the poem as coming from Dante: it seems to leave out so much. Bruno Nardi, perhaps the most distinguished *dantista* of the twentieth century, took the most extreme position of any: he went so far as to deny the authenticity of the exegetical portion of the Epistle (though not the introductory portion dedicating the poem to Can Grande), primarily because of his dissatisfaction with its definition of the literal sense of the poem, as well as with the claim that the poem is allegorical:

In reality the literal sense of the poem as a whole is another; that is, the "fatale andare" of Dante, lost, through Hell and Purgatory, up to the ancient wood of the Earthly Paradise, guided by Virgil; and then the ascent through the celestial spheres, in the wake of saint Paul, guided by Beatrice. And in this journey and ascent Dante carries with him his "stato civile," with all the richness of his humanity, all his aspirations—personal, literary, political, moral, religious—so that the personal pronoun / resounds throughout

the poem, from the second line to the third from the last ... and is ever present, at every stage, in every episode, at every moment. This is the literal sense of the poem from beginning to end. (1966a)

Nardi certainly put his finger on a vital aspect of the poem, so important an aspect that it must have had for Dante a theoretical status. It is also one that immediately engages the fascinated attention of every reader: the first-person narrator, which the Epistle seems to leave out of account, as it seems intentionally blurring the distinction between the author and his character. Nardi was so strongly persuaded that Dante spoke as a divinely inspired prophet that he argued that the epistle traduces the poem's prophetic status that (to oversimplify) since Nardi essentially denied that the poem is allegorical, for him the exegetical part of the Epistle cannot be by Dante.

How can this issue be resolved? Let us take Dante's authorship as the most probable hypothesis and approach the Epistle carefully. It states plainly that the subject of the poem must be literally true (as an instance of the allegory of theologians), and, as Dante and his readers knew and modern readers know, this could not be true of the pilgrim's "literal" journey; therefore Nardi's identification of the literal subject must be mistaken. But if the Epistle is by Dante, why did he not refer in it to what Nardi calls the "literal sense"? In our view he does (see below), but he insists (throughout the Epistle, not merely in §§7–8) on the theological meanings of the poem because they really are its central subject: that is, the theological truths set forth in the poem are to be taken literally, are its true literal sense; but they are not the first-person narrative.

If we take the Epistle at face value, the literal subject of the *Paradiso* exclusively concerns the souls the pilgrim meets in the various planets, those he sees in the Empyrean, and perhaps the extent to which the pilgrim's own experiences in the Empyrean are represented as typical of the souls who arrive there after death. The allegorical sense—obviously, God's justice as revealed in the state of the souls—includes the complexity of God's providential governing of the sublunar through the agency of the angelic movers and the astrological influence of the planets, as well as God's weighing of individual merits and his imparting of grace beyond merit. It is clear at once, then, that Beatrice's statements of moral distinctions and philosophical, cosmological, and theological truths are literal expositions of aspects of God's justice; in other words, they overlap what the Epistle defines as the allegorical sense. She explains the order of the universe and the role of secondary causes in Cantos 1 and 2; the structure of vows and their casuistry in Cantos 4 and 5; the rationale of the Atonement in Canto 7; the true place of souls and the metaphysics of the cantica in Canto 4. She ceremoniously mediates the pilgrim's examination in the three theological virtues and announces the certainty of his salvation in Cantos 23–26; directs his view downward to the smallness of earth in Cantos 22 and 27; and elucidates the vision of God and the angels, including the instantaneous creation of the universe in Cantos 28–29, as well as her denunciation of frivolous preaching.

Such passages clearly exemplify the second half of the description of the *forma tractandi*: they *define, divide, prove, disprove, and posit examples*. The same is true of the frequent (and, again, literally stated) commentaries provided by the souls of the blessed encountered on the

journey (Piccarda and Justinian on beatitude; Carlo Martello on planetary influences versus heredity; Justinian on God's fostering of Rome; Aquinas and Bonaventura on the historical function of Francis of Assisi and Dominic of Calaruega; Aquinas on God's inscrutability and Solomon's wisdom; Solomon on the structure of beatitude and the glorified body; Cacciaguida on the decadence of Florence and the poet's mission; the heavenly eagle on God's absolute but inscrutable justice; Peter Damiani on the corruption of monasticism; saint Peter on the corruption of the papacy, and so forth).

Here we can distinguish between the *doctrinal content* of what Beatrice and the blessed souls say, which we can identify as intended to be accepted by the reader as literally true, and the means by which the pilgrim is represented as coming to understand these truths (the journey and the various discourses of the *dramatis personae*), means that are obviously fictitious and/or metaphorical (for the figure of Beatrice, see Additional Note 1).

In this context Dante's description of what he calls the *forma tractandi* [mode of exposition] of the poem is particularly interesting; as we have seen, in §9 the Epistle characterizes it as "poetic, fictive, descriptive, digressive, transumptive, as well as defining, dividing, proving, disproving, and positing of examples." If we take this list of procedures seriously, we find that the terms that head the list—*poetic, fictive, descriptive*, and *transumptive* (i.e., metaphorical)—actually provide for the full development of a fictitious, metaphorical narrative in the service of representing the subject, "the state of souls after death" (in this respect our position agrees substantially with Cecchini 1997). We may note in passing that Psalm 113 itself is not really a narrative of the Exodus; it is a rapturous hymn of rejoicing at the event. One should keep in mind that only the event itself is technically subject to theological allegoresis, not the poetic, fictive, and transumptive poem about it. Dante's very choice of this psalm as his example in the Epistle and in the *Convivio* may carry more meaning than critics have noticed.

Medieval exegetes acknowledged the frequency of biblical metaphor, exemplified by Beatrice in 4.40–45 (one notes that for them the literal sense of such an expression as "the *hand* of God" is not what today is called the "vehicle" of the metaphor (*hand*), but its "tenor": i.e., God's *influence* or *power*). The most extreme type of such metaphorical exegesis was that regularly practised on the Canticle of Canticles: although modern readers take the literal sense of these marriage songs as referring to earthly lovers and the religious references as an allegorical sense, the monastic exegetes, such as saint Bernard of Clairvaux (Bernard of Clairvaux 1998, 1.2–4), explicitly excluded such a view; for them the book was metaphorical but not allegorical; it was an elaborate tissue of metaphors whose literal sense (i.e., whose tenor) referred exclusively to the love between the soul (or the Church, or the Virgin Mary) and God. For Bernard, to see these metaphors in any way as references to human sexuality would be blasphemous, and for this reason monastic novices were not allowed to read the Canticle of Canticles until they were fully trained in exegesis (such strict severity is of course foreign to the metaphorics of secular lyric in both Latin and the vernacular). Dante was aware of all these traditions and expected his readers to be familiar with them as well, but he utilized them freely and was the prisoner of none of them.

The pilgrim's journey is to be thought of, then, as a metaphorical fiction (*poeticus, fictivus, transumptivus*, narrated by the poet-narrator); it is a system of metaphors for the process by

which a living man, on earth, comes to understand the nature of the cosmos and the state of souls after death. For instance, the repeated description of instantaneous translation from one planet to the next (as in *Par.* 5.91–93, 8.14–15, 10.28–36) is, as the last passage suggests, a spatial metaphor for instantaneous intellectual understanding (see also our note on 2.25–36). All this amounts to saying that the fictitious literal narrative (what Nardi was describing), with its metaphorical senses, which Nardi denied, is, *pace* Nardi, an instance of the “allegory of the poets,” as announced in the Epistle’s term *fictivus*. From this point of view the poem can be seen as a combination of the allegory of the poets as described in the *Convivio* (a metaphorical narrative sense), serving an allegory of the theologians (a true ultimate literal or historical/theological sense, all metaphors stripped away). The matter becomes urgent in the *Paradiso*, for the idea that Dante thought that his account of spatial ascent up through the heavenly spheres to the Empyrean was literally true is not only wildly mistaken, it distracts attention from the depth and complexity of Dante’s achievement.

As we pointed out in our introduction to the *Purgatorio* (p. 12), it is erroneous to assert, as Singleton repeatedly did, that only figural allegory, in which the literal sense was historically true, was capable of possessing allegorical (in the narrow sense), tropological, and anagogical meanings. It was clearly recognized in the Middle Ages that Christ’s parables, though fictitious, had allegorical meanings (Wailes 1987). Nor should one forget that Dante is a master at evading rigid, restrictive categories. The angelic boat in *Purgatorio* 2, in which the souls sing Dante’s exemplary Psalm 113, is a good example: it foregrounds the figuralism of the poem, but it is transparently a poetic invention included in the fictitious narrative, and it thus emphasizes the poet’s freedom to interweave all the various modes of signification at his disposal.

It may be worthwhile to devote a few pages to the question of how closely the double subject announced in the Epistle to Can Grande is related to the entire thematic sweep of the *Paradiso*. The astrological theme is a good point of departure. That Dante treats the souls of the blessed according to the planets where the pilgrim meets them is no mere convenient classifying device: in each of the seven planets, he encounters souls whose lives have typified the nature of the planet’s influence; they are, according to the virtually universal medieval belief, the “children” of their respective planets. We need not go into individual cases here; it will suffice to mention the obvious facts that the preachers we meet in the sun were equipped for their calling—that of illuminating the faithful—by the influence of their planet (always remembering that the intellect itself is directly infused by God), and that the Crusaders were physically and temperamentally equipped to fight for the faith by their planet, Mars, and so forth (for further discussion, see Additional Note 14). This theme is an integral part of the theme of God’s justice as revealed in the state of the blessed. Dante sets forth an elaborate theory of the interaction of astrological influences with the souls’ freedom of choice, on which their fate depends (a theme broached with a major statement by Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio* 16). The astrological theme explores the extent to which one is not responsible for one’s basic gifts and inclinations; one’s place in the afterlife depends upon the degree to which one becomes self-directed under God’s guidance—the extent to which one achieves true freedom of action and fulfills one’s higher potential. Thus the astrological theme also confronts the limits on human freedom and the determining part played by God’s grace and

his inscrutable choosing of individuals for special roles and special status.

Even more, Dante has Charles Martel, in *Paradiso* 8, explain that the astrological influences on the embryo in the womb are ordained by God in order to overrule heredity, to prevent children from being mere copies of their parents, because otherwise the diversity of talents necessary to the division of labor in organized society would not be fully realized. In other words, the fundamental structure of the cosmos is designed to serve the needs of human society, which in turn fosters, or should foster, the full development of each individual (an important theme also in the *Monarchia*).

The centrality of the astrological theme (only slowly is its omnipresence and fundamental importance being recognized by Dante scholars) leads inescapably to—and is in fact virtually coterminous with—the cosmological theme, whose elaborate statement begins in the very first canto, where another major theme emerges, closely related to those mentioned so far: the knowledge of God that is attained through contemplation of the universe, his creation. How did God create the universe, and why? How does he maintain relation with it? What is the nature of the causes that govern the universe? Thus the theme of “the state of souls after death,” explored fully, leads to the theology of Creation and to theodicy (the theory of God’s justice in his dealings with man). And, of course, part of the joy of the blessed, who see all things in God, is that they more fully contemplate the universe and all history as revealing him. At this level the evolution of the pilgrim intersects the theme of the state of the souls of the blessed. For, as the pilgrim rises higher and higher through the spheres, he more and more becomes an example of experiences all the blessed pass through, and this is especially perceptible in the last cantos, those that take place in the *primum mobile* and Empyrean: the welcoming of the soul by the Church Triumphant (cf. *Conv.* 4.28.5), the entrance into the transfigured vision of Glory (Beatrice points out in 30.52–54 that all the blessed encounter these “shadowy prefaces,” as lines 76–78 call them), the contemplation of all the other blessed souls in their orders and degrees, and above all, the direct vision of God. What the pilgrim experiences is an anticipation of the experience the blessed have already enjoyed to an even fuller extent. But the literal sense of the pilgrim’s narrative is fictitious and allegorical.

Thus the universe as radiating from God; his power reflected by the angels governing the spheres; astrological influences as the instruments of God’s Providence, with the corresponding limitations on and assertion of difficult human freedom; the contemplation of God in his creation as essential to beatitude; the deeper and deeper understanding of causality and history; the transfiguration of all modes of experience in the experience of the blessed—all these interrelated themes are implied in the extraordinarily condensed statement of the double subject of the poem in the Epistle to Can Grande. Once the poem and the epistle are juxtaposed in this way, the terseness of the epistle takes on quite a different and very suggestive aspect: the themes of the poem are expansions of what the Epistle tersely sets forth, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the early phases of Dante’s planning of the poem as a whole must have involved representations and formulae of a comparable terseness, of which the epistle may well retain traces.

It is often said that the uniqueness of the *Paradiso* lies in its imaginative undertaking to express visions that transcend mere human experience. Such a view is potentially very

misleading. It is true that the *Paradiso* repeatedly appeals to the so-called "inexpressibility *topos*" to describe the intense *feelings* the intellectual ascent and the associated increasing beauty of Beatrice instill in the pilgrim. But there is no vagueness or superhuman transcendence in the doctrinal content of the poem, in what the pilgrim learns about the nature of the cosmos or about God and his justice; even the grandiose, highly imaginative light shows in the sun and the upper planets are clearly and rationally devised. And the intellectual content of the final imagined vision of God is dictated by Dante's rational theological concepts; such matters as the metaphysical nature of the cosmos, the relation of the Persons of the Trinity, the presence of the incarnate Christ, and the principle of the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ are traditional, plainly designated, and founded in rational theology, although the actual *content* of these illuminations, the grasp of their truth, is said to transcend the pilgrim's memory. In other words, accepting a mainly orthodox, Neoplatonic-Aristotelian, Trinitarian theology, Dante imagines an intellectual ascent that directly experiences its true and as productive of immeasurable joy.

We argue, then, that the Epistle to Can Grande accounts for much more of the poem than at first sight appears. But it is true that, except for the highly condensed description of the *forma tractandi*, the epistle has little to say about the narrator, whose journey Nardi thought the literal sense of the poem. It should be clear by now that in our view there is nothing of actual "mystical" experience in the *Paradiso*. Every doctrine and virtually every imagined experience it represents can be shown to derive from Dante's meditation on his voluminous reading, and this is nowhere more evident than in his description of his imagined direct vision of God. Like the rest of the *Comedy*, the *Paradiso* is a literary creation, impassioned and matchlessly imaginative, but *linguistic*, not *supralinguistic*. In every line, the reader feels Dante's firm, purposive artistic planning and control and his conscious linguistic mastery.

Indeed, the *Paradiso* constitutes one of the most remarkable struggles with the limits of language in world literature, constantly pushing against them in the interest of greater and greater exaltation. A considerable arsenal of means is brought into play, of which we attempt to take account in our commentary: daring metaphors; neologisms (mostly verbs); periphrases; Grecisms, Hebraisms, and Latinisms (mostly from the Latin liturgy and from scholastic philosophical vocabulary); mythological allusions; elaborate and difficult rhetorical figures such as *hysteron proteron*, *annominatio*, *catachresis*, *gradatio*; elaborate syntactical inversions and other patterns; special effects with rhyme; systematic, recurrent but extremely varied exploitation of basic metaphors involving light and mirrors, archery, the book, astronomical and meteorological phenomena, agriculture (especially the idea of harvest), circles, spheres, and wheels—all held together by his unsurpassed craftsmanship and his extremely varied use of the inexpressibility *topos*.

Like the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, however, this third cantica of the *Comedy* lives up to the comedic stylistic norm of including all levels of style (cf. the Epistle to Can Grande, §§30–32), not merely the high style we have catalogued in the foregoing paragraph: from familiar, colloquial patterns of speech to the scornful, quasi-scatalogical diatribes against corrupt prelates and monks of saint Peter, Peter Damiani, and others, which continually measure the decadence and corruption of life on earth against the purity of heavenly standards, achieving a highly original inclusiveness and balance. Nothing remotely resembling it will appear until

Joyce.

The theme of the status of the pilgrim's body in his journey through the heavens, which has been rather hastily oversimplified by a number of recent commentators (Sapegno, Picone in *LDT 3*, Chiavacci Leonardi), provides a good example of the care with which Dante treats the fictitiousness of his narrative. In *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, the presence of the pilgrim's body is insisted on in a variety of ways (see especially *Inf.* 1.28–30, 5.142, 12.29–30 and 80–96; *Purg.* 3.16–45, 9.10–42, 19.1–39, 27.14–17 and 91–114: all these cases involve weight, shadow, and sleep, associated with the element earth, along with the detailed and emphatic *Purg.* 26.58–60). In the *Paradiso*, however, once we leave the earth, there is a striking difference: the closest approaches to a bodily reference, as opposed to visual or auditory representations, occur in 3.6 and 25.34, where the pilgrim "raised [his] head to speak," and in 30.55–96, where the pilgrim bathes "the eaves of [his] eyes" in the river of light. Like the many other references to speech and to the two "highest" senses, sight and hearing, these passages avoid naming any part of the body other than the head, except for 22.128–29: "see how much world I have already placed under your feet" ["vedi quanto mondo / sotto i piedi già esser ti fei"] (on the background of this passage, see our notes). Although such a passage as 27.64–65, "and you, my son, ... because of your mortal weight will go back down again" (spoken by saint Peter), may seem to imply the literal presence of the pilgrim's body in the heavens, its real import is the continuing pull of the body still on earth: all visionary experience is limited by the earthly body (cf. below, on 32.139–41, and our notes). Indeed, the references to the pilgrim's body are carefully problematized by Dante (see the notes on 3.10–24), and he treats the dividing line between allegory and metaphor with great fluidity and freedom.

This is because the entire journey through the heavens in Dante's conception takes place in the pilgrim's head, that is, in his imagination. After the pilgrim and Beatrice have met the souls of inconstant nuns in the moon, Beatrice explains that the souls were not "really" in the moon; that they were mere staged appearances, their "actual" location being the Empyrean (4.28–60). But when we arrive beyond place and time in the Empyrean itself (where, the pilgrim is told, he will see saint Benedict of Nursia's face openly—22.58–63), what do we find? The pilgrim will not see the souls as they are, but as they *will be* after the Last Judgment (30.43–45). In other words, the souls are *shown* to the pilgrim's imagination. As saint John says (25.122–29), only Christ and the Virgin are in Heaven in the body, but the text makes no distinction between the Virgin's bodily appearance and that of all the other souls, and the final vision does not make the "painting" of "our effigy" (33.131) seem like an actual human body.

These seeming contradictions have all been provided for by Beatrice's initial explanation (4.40–42), a major key to the representations of the poem: "It is necessary to speak thus [i.e., with images] to your [human] understanding, for it takes from sense perception alone what later it makes worthy of intellection." This statement, like saint John's in 25.122–29, applies *a fortiori* to the pilgrim himself: he *imagines* his voyage to the other world. And as Aristotle had observed (*De anima* 3), fantasies of sense perception, images, are always present in even the most abstract human thought. The poem itself provides a theory of imaginative "vision" on the terrace of anger in *Purg.* 15.85–114 and 17.19–45, where the pilgrim has two series of "ecstatic visions" (explicitly associated in the latter passage with sleep and dream):

O imaginativa, che ne rube
talvolta sì di fuor ch'om non s'accorge
perché dintorno suonin mille tube,
chi move te, se 'l senso non ti porge?
moveti lume che nel ciel s'informa,
per sé o per voler che giù lo scorge.

(*Purg.* 17.13–18)

[O imagination, that sometimes so steal us from
the world outside that we do not hear though a
thousand trumpets sound around us,
who moves you, if sense offers you nothing? A
light moves you that is formed in the heavens, by
itself or by a will that guides it downward.]

To an observer, the visionary taken up so completely by the vision will seem asleep, as Virgil observes of the pilgrim in *Purg.* 15.121–23. The chief example in the poem, other than the pilgrim himself, is saint John the Evangelist, who is seen in the procession in the Earthly Paradise as “un vecchio solo / venir dormendo, con la faccia arguta” [an old man walking alone, asleep, with alert face] (*Purg.* 29.142–45). The commentary tradition on the Apocalypse allowed for the possibility of the saint's vision taking place during sleep (manuscript illuminations often represented him asleep, see Schiller 1991, vol. 5, part 2, plates 10, 12, 20, 23, 25, 43, 46, 67, 68; cf. Emmerson and McGinn 1992; Grosjean, Christe, and James 1981).

As the pilgrim begins his ascent, the narrating poet exclaims: “If I was solely that part of me which you created last [i.e., only the soul; cf. *Purg.* 25.67–75], O Love who govern the heavens, you know” (1.73–75); in other words, he claims not to know. Dante's model here is saint Paul's protestation that he does not know whether he was rapt to the third heaven in the body or not, God knows (2 Cor. 5.2: “sive in corpore nescio, sive extra corpore nescio, Deus scit”). This statement of the narrator should be taken as a characterization of the intensity of the pilgrim's imaginings; it is deeply misleading to suppose that Dante would claim, even in his fiction, a status superior to saint Paul's. “If I was a body” in 2.36–39 is equivalent: the reader is being challenged to exercise his wit as well as his imagination (see below, p. 17), and Beatrice's long explanation of the pilgrim's motion in Canto 1 (lines 97–141), with its analogy with lightning, is meaningful only insofar as it is understood to refer to the pilgrim's mind and imagination: the pilgrim's physical body, being predominantly composed of the elements water and earth, is only partly fire; his spirit is fire (metaphorically), however, especially if illuminated by the Holy Spirit. One should consider carefully Dante's statement of the nature of *trasumanar*:

Nel suo aspetto tal *dentro* mi fei
qual si fé Glauco nel gustar de l'erba
che 'l fe consorts in mar de li altri dèi.

[Gazing at her I became *within* what Glaucus
became tasting the herb that made him a consort
of the other gods in the sea.] (Italics added.)

The pilgrim's experience in the *Paradiso* is inward: as Benvenuto glosses, "dentro, that is in his intellect, since his body is not changed."

Thus the poem qualifies its own representations, and we know that alert readers among the poet's contemporaries were able to put his hints together. Benvenuto da Imola grasped Dante's meaning clearly: the pilgrim does not ascend to the "essential paradise" (the Empyrean itself), but to its intellectual, spiritual, and moral significance: "Our poet, though on earth, was in Heaven in his contemplation" (Benvenuto da Imola 1887, 4:318–19), or, as we would say, in his mind and imagination. And when the reader reflects on the way the *Paradiso* has indicated the subtlety of its *forma tractandi*, he will grasp the essential point that it has been equipping us to rethink the earlier parts of the poem as well. Dante expects careful reading from his public, and the indirection of his metaphorical narrative is no doubt one of the principal interpretive traps he warns against in the address to his readers in 2.1–18 (for Dante's setting of interpretive traps, see Durling 2001a and 2003).

Almost at the end of the poem, Dante puts in the mouth of his last guide, saint Bernard of Clairvaux, a reason for abbreviating the list of the blessed presented to the pilgrim's view: "But because the time is fleeting that holds you asleep ["il tempo fugge che t'assonna"], here we will make an end, like a good tailor who makes the garment according to the cloth he has; and we will direct our eyes to the first Love" (32.139–42). It is noteworthy not only that the saint appeals to the activity of an artisan for the limits of the length of the poem (the reference is to the bounds established by the poet's craftsmanship; cf. the similar passage in *Purg.* 33.136–41), but also that he clearly states that the pilgrim is held asleep.

Saint Bernard's words in fact show that the entire poem can be understood under the category of dream, an idea that is introduced, albeit understatedly, at the beginning of the *Inferno*, when the pilgrim comes to himself after having been "full of sleep" (*Inf.* 1.1–12): from the *Romance of the Rose* onward, the genre of dream-vision regularly begins the dream with an awakening; it may be referred to again in the heaven of Mars, when Dante has his ancestor Cacciaguida say, "make manifest all your vision" (17.128). Prophetic dreams figure largely in the *Purgatorio* (Cantos 9, 19, and 27), and we are reminded of the idea of dream-vision at the end of the *Purgatorio* (30.133–35) and in the very last canto of the poem, where the pilgrim is explicitly compared to a dreamer:

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 visione, e ancor mi distilla

nel core il dolce che nacque da essa.

[As is one who sees in dream,
and after the dream the passion impressed
remains, but the rest does not return to the mind:
so am I, for almost all my vision
has ceased, but still there trickles
into my heart the sweetness born of it.]

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In fact Benvenuto's comment on this passage is: "And here note how this elaborate simile of the dreamer in its literal significance declares the intention of the author in this final canto, that he had his entire vision in a dream, as he testified in the first canto of the entire work."

Although, as we have said, Dante is a past master at evading restrictive categories (including that of dream), the affinities of the *Comedy* with dream-vision are significant. A principal advantage of dream-vision as a literary genre was that it allowed for an extremely flexible mixture of realistic representation, suspension of physical law, and allegorical techniques, all with the acknowledged presence of the author's conscious meditation and verbal craftsmanship. In many parts of the poem, such as the rapid progress of the pilgrim through Purgatory, the category of dream helps lessen the scandalous unreality; and the question of two bodies occupying the same space—2.37–39—once it is raised, is probably best explained as referring to dream. The affinities occurred to contemporaries: a number of the earliest illuminations of *Inferno* 1 represent—often in the same frame—both the poet asleep and his dream-imago confronting the beasts in the dark wood, a style that recalls the iconography of the Apocalypse (see Brieger, Meiss, and Singleton 1969, plates 6b, 7, II; Battaglia Ricci 1996).

As is well known, Dante studied Vergil's *Aeneid* with great care. In this connection it would not have escaped him that Vergil both represents Aeneas's visit to the Other World as taking place in the body (in *Aen.* 6.413–14 the hero's great weight makes Charon's bark sink in the water, a passage echoed by Dante in *Inf.* 8.26–27) and also suggests that the visit is to be thought of as dream or imagined vision, for it is through the ivory gate of false dreams that Aeneas and the Sibyl return to the upper world (6.897–98). When questioning his worthiness for the journey, the pilgrim mentions that Aeneas "ad immortale secolo andò, e fu sensibilmente" [went to the immortal realm and was there with his senses] (*Inf.* 2.14–15); the term "sensibilmente" may well mean that Aeneas was in the other world not "in the body" but "through imaginary sense experience." Indeed, Dante seems to attribute to the *Aeneid* his own representational code as set forth in *Paradiso* 4. Like Vergil, Dante does not insist on the dream-vision possibility, but he plainly advances it for the benefit of his more observant readers (for the sixteenth-century controversy over the *Comedy* as dream, see Weinberg 1961 and Hathaway 1962).

The *Paradiso*, then, relates the imaginative and intellectual journey of progressively higher insight into the complex of problems represented in the epistle's "double subject": the state of

the blessed and its basis in God's justice. This "forma tractandi" is extremely flexible, as befits the combination of the two types of allegory: everything is represented as it appears to the poet's imagination; intellectual understanding is treated as inseparable from sensory imaginings. The figure of Beatrice, whose growing beauty lifts the pilgrim higher and higher through the heavens, in an instantaneous flash of understanding at each successive level, also expresses the joy every man (for the pilgrim is also an Everyman) can attain, with God's grace, in his journey toward God. Read in this way, the *Paradiso* is an enduring monument to an extraordinary moment in European cultural and religious history and an evermore compelling meditation on the power of the poetic imagination.

Many dimensions of the *Paradiso* are not mentioned here because of limitations of space. Perhaps the most important is the question of the degree to which Dante's stirring expression of religious faith in God's justice gives expression to his experience of the incomprehensible injustices, as he saw them, of actual human life. Confronted by widespread venality and corruption, by the power-hungry dynastic politics of the emerging nation-state wearing the mask of religious orthodoxy and zeal, by virtually universal hypocrisy and fraud in the service of greed and materialism, especially in the cynical papacy, not to speak of the thwarting of his hopes for the restoration of the Holy Roman Empire by the resistance of the popes and the death of Henry of Luxembourg, God's anointed, Dante often seems unable to imagine a future of true christianity and justice except in terms of the direct intervention of God, of which he hoped his great poem was the beginning.

Suggested Introductory Readings on the *Paradiso*

(See also pp. 23–24 in our *Inferno*.)

- Carroll, John S. 1971. *In Patria: An Exposition of Dante's Paradiso*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat.
- McMahon, Robert. 2006. *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent: Augustine, Anselm, Boethius, and Dante*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
- Rorem, Paul 1993. *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

PARADISO





CANTO 1

*Proposition and invocation—noon in the Earthly Paradise—view
of the sun—ascent—the sphere of fire—the order of the
universe and the principle of motion*

- 1 The glory of Him who moves all things
16 highlighter -----
penetrates through the universe and shines
forth in one place more and less elsewhere.
- 4 In the heaven that receives most of his light
have I been, and I have seen things that 
one who comes down from there cannot
remember and cannot utter,
- 7 for as it draws near to its desire, our intellect goes
16 highlighter -----
so deep that the memory cannot follow it.
- 10 Nevertheless, as much of the holy kingdom
as I was able to treasure up in my mind will
now become the matter of my song.
- 13 O good Apollo, for this last labor make me
such a vessel of your power as you require to
bestow the beloved laurel.
- 16 Until now one peak of Parnassus has been
enough for me, but now with both of them
I must enter upon what of the field remains:
- 19 come into my breast and breathe there, as when you

- drew Marsyas forth from the sheath of his members.
- 22 O divine power, if you lend so much of yourself to
me that I may make manifest the shadow of the blessed
kingdom that is stamped within my head,
- 25 you will see me come to the foot of your beloved
tree, and crown myself with the leaves of which the
subject and you will make me worthy.
- 28 So seldom, Father, are they gathered for
the triumph of emperor or poet—such is the
guilt and shame of human desires—
- 31 that the Peneian leaf should give birth to
gladness in the happy Delphic deity, when it
makes any one thirst for it.
- 34 A tiny spark can result in a great flame:
perhaps, following after me, with better
voices, others will pray so that Cyrrha will reply.
- 37 The lantern of the world rises to mortals
through divers outlets, but from the one that
joins four circles with three crosses
- 40 it comes forth with better course and joined
to better stars, and it tempers and seals the
waxy world more to its manner.
- 43 Such an outlet, or one near it, had made
morning there, and evening here, and there
the hemisphere was all white, and this one black,
- 46 when I saw Beatrice turned to her left and
looking into the sun: eagle never fixed its
sight there so.
- 49 And as a second ray will spring forth from a
first, mounting upward like a pilgrim that

wishes to return home:

- 52 so my act patterned itself on hers, infused
 through my eyes into my imagination, and
 I fixed my eyes on the sun beyond our wont.
- 55 Much is permitted there that is not permitted
 to our faculties here, thanks to the
 place, created to be the home of the human race.
- 58 I did not endure it long, nor yet so little that
 I did not see it emitting sparks all around, like
 iron come forth boiling from the fire,
- 61 and suddenly day seemed to be added to
 day, as if the Almighty had adorned the sky
 with another sun.
- 64 Beatrice was all fixed on the eternal wheels
 with her eyes, and I fixed my eyes on her,
 removing them from the heights.
- 67 Gazing at her I became within what
 Glaucus became tasting the herb that made
 him a consort of the other gods in the sea.
- 70 To signify transhumanizing *per verba* is
 impossible; therefore let the comparison
 suffice for those to whom grace reserves the experience.
- 73 If I was solely that part of me which you
 created last, O Love who govern the heavens,
 you know, for you raised me up with your light.
- 76 When the wheeling that you make semipiternal, by
 being desired, drew my attention with the harmony
 that you temper and distinguish,
- 79 so much of the sky seemed to be on fire
 with the flame of the sun then, that rain or

- river never made so extended a lake.
- 82 The wonder of the sound and the great
light kindled a desire in me to know their
cause, never before felt with such sharpness.
- 85 Therefore she, who saw me as I do myself,
in order to quiet my laboring spirit, before I
could ask opened her lips
- 88 and began: "You are making yourself swell
with false imagining, so that you do not see
what shaking it off would show.
- 91 You are not on earth as you believe, but
lightning, fleeing its proper place, never sped
so fast as you, going back to yours."
- 94 If I was divested of my first doubt by her
smiling brief words, I was tangled even more
in a new one,
- 97 and I said: "Satisfied just now, *requievi*
from great wonder, but now I marvel how I
can rise up through these light bodies."
- 100 Wherefore she, after a pitying sigh,
directed her eyes at me with the expression
that a mother has over a delirious child,
- 103 and began: "All things whatsoever have
order among themselves, and this is a form
that makes the universe resemble God.
- 106 Here the high creatures see the footprint of
the eternal Worth, the end to which is created
the order just touched upon.
- 109 In the order of which I speak, all natures
incline in their divers lots, closer to their origin

- or more distant from it;
- 112 thus they move toward different ports over
the great sea of being, each with an instinct
given it to carry it.
- 115 This carries fire on up toward the moon,
this is the driving force in mortal hearts, this
compresses and unites the earth;
- 118 nor does this bow propel only the creatures
deprived of intelligence, but also those that
have intelligence and love.
- 121 The Providence that sets all this in order
ever stills with its light the heaven where that
other revolves that has the greatest haste;
- 124 and now thither, as to a decreed goal, we are
carried by the power of that bowstring which
aims toward a happy target all that it looses.
- 127 It is true that, just as form often does not
accord with the intention of art, because the
material is deaf to respond,
- 130 so at times from this course the creature
departs that has the power to swerve, so
driven, in some other direction;
- 133 and, just as one can see fire fall downward
from a cloud, so the creature's first impetus
drives it to earth, if deflected by false pleasure.
- 136 You should not wonder at your ascent, if I
judge well, otherwise than at a stream when
from a high mountain it descends to the base.
- 139 It would be a marvel in you if, free from
impediment, you had remained below, as if,

on earth, living fire should be motionless."

142

Then she turned her eyes back toward the heavens.



CANTO 1

La gloria di Colui che tutto move
per l'universo penetra e risplende
in una parte più e meno altrove.

1

Nel ciel che più de la sua luce prende
fu' io, e vidi cose che ridire
né sa né può chi di là sù discende,
perché appressando sé al suo disire
nostro intelletto si profonda tanto
che dietro la memoria non può ire.

4

7

Veramente quant' io del regno santo
ne la mia mente potei far tesoro,
sarà ora materia del mio canto.

10

O buono Appollo, a l'ultimo lavoro
fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso
come dimandi a dar l'amato alloro.

13

Infino a qui l'un giogo di Parnaso
assai mi fu, ma or con amendue
m'è uopo intrar ne l'aringo rimaso:

16

entra nel petto mio, e spira tue
sì come quando Marsia traesti
de la vagina de le membra sue.

19

O divina virtù, se mi ti presti
tanto che l'ombra del beato regno
segnata nel mio capo io manifesti,
vedra'mi al piè del tuo diletto legno
venire e coronarmi de le foglie
che la materia e tu mi farai degno.

22

25

- Sì rade volte, padre, se ne coglie 28
per triunfare o cesare o poeta—
colpa e vergogna de l'umane voglie—
che parturir letizia in su la lieta 31
delfica deïtà dovria la fronda
peneia, quando alcun di sé asseta.
- Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda: 34
forse di retro a me con miglior voci
si pregherà perché Cirra risponda.
- Surge ai mortali per diverse foci 37
la lucerna del mondo, ma da quella
che quattro cerchi giugne con tre croci
con miglior corso e con migliore stella 40
esce congiunta, e la mondana cera
più a suo modo tempera e suggella.
- Fatto avea di là mane e di qua sera 43
tal foce quasi, e tutto era là bianco
quello emisperio, e l'altra parte nera,
quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco 46
vidi rivolta e riguardar nel sole:
aquila sì non li s'affisse unquanco.
- E sì come secondo raggio suole 49
uscir del primo e risalire in suso,
pur come pellegrin che tornar vuole:
così de l'atto suo, per li occhi infuso 52
ne l'agine mia, il mio si fece,
e fissi li occhi al sole oltre nostr' uso.
- Molto è licito là che qui non lece 55
a le nostre virtù, mercé del loco,
fatto per proprio de l'umana specie.

- Io nol soffersi molto, né sì poco 58
ch'io nol vedessi sfavillar dintorno
com' ferro che bogliente esce del foco,
e di sùbito parve giorno a giorno
essere aggiunto, come quei che puote
avesse il ciel d'un altro sole addorno.
61
- Beatrice tutta ne l'etterne rote
fissa con li occhi stava, e io in lei
le luci fissi, di là sù rimote.
64
- Nel suo aspetto tal dentro mi fei
qual si fé Glauco nel gustar de l'erba
che 'l fé consorto in mar de li altri dèi.
67
- Trasumanar significar *per verba* 70
non si poria; però l'esempio basti
a cui esperienza grazia serba.
- S' i' era sol di me quel che creasti
novellamente, Amor che 'l cielo governi,
tu 'l sai, che col tuo lume mi levasti.
73
- Quando la rota che tu sempiterni,
desiderato, a sé mi fece atteso
con l'armonia che temperi e discerni,
parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso
de la fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume
lago non fece alcun tanto disteso.
76
79
- La novità del suono e 'l grande lume
di lor cagion m'accesero un disio
mai non sentito di cotanto acume.
82
- Ond' ella, che vedea me sì com' io,
a quietarmi l'animo commosso,
pria ch'io a dimandar, la bocca aprio
85

e cominciò: "Tu stesso ti fai grosso
col falso imaginar, sì che non vedi
ciò che vedresti se l'avessi scosso.

88

Tu non se' in terra, sì come tu credi,
ma folgore, fuggendo il proprio sito,
non corse come tu ch'ad esso riedi."

91

S' io fui del primo dubbio disvestito
per le sorrise parolette brevi,
dentro ad un nuovo più fu' inretito,

94

e dissi: "Già contento *requievi*
di grande ammirazion, ma ora ammiro
com' io trascenda questi corpi levi."

97

Ond' ella, appresso d'un pio sospiro,
li occhi drizzò ver' me con quel sembiante
che madre fa sovra figlio deliro,
e cominciò: "Le cose tutte quante
hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma
che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante.

100

Qui veggion l'alte creature l'orma
de l'eterno valore, il qual è fine
al quale è fatta la toccata norma.

103

Ne l'ordine che dico sono acclive
tutte nature per diverse sorti,
più al principio loro e men vicine;

106

onde si muovono a diversi porti
per lo gran mar de l'essere, e ciascuna
con istinto a lei dato che la porti.

112

Questi ne porta il foco inver' la luna,
questi ne' cor mortali è permotore,
questi la terra in sé stringe e aduna;

115

né pur le creature che son fore
d'intelligenza quest' arco saetta,
ma quelle c'hanno intelletto e amore.

118

La provedenza che cotanto assetta
del suo lume fa 'l ciel sempre quieto
nel qual si volge quel c'ha maggior fretta;

121

e ora lì, come a sito decreto,
cen porta la virtù di quella corda
che ciò che scocca drizza in segno lieto.

124

Vero è che, come forma non s'accorda
molte fiate a l'intenzion de l'arte,
perch' a risponder la materia è sorda,

127

così da questo corso si diparte
talor la creatura ch'ha podere
di piegar, sì pinta, in altra parte;
e sì come veder si può cadere
foco di nube, sì l'impeto primo
l'atterra torto da falso piacere.

130

Non dei più ammirar, se bene stimo,
lo tuo salir, se non come d'un rivo
se d'alto monte scende giuso ad imo.

133

Maraviglia sarebbe in te se, privo
d'impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso,
com' a terra quiete in foco vivo."

136

Quinci rivolse inver' lo cielo il viso.

142

e cominciò: "Tu stesso ti fai grosso
col falso imaginar, sì che non vedi
ciò che vedresti se l'avessi scosso.

88

Tu non se' in terra, sì come tu credi,
ma folgore, fuggendo il proprio sito,
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lo tuo salir, se non come d'un rivo
se d'alto monte scende giuso ad imo.

133

Maraviglia sarebbe in te se, privo
d'impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso,
com' a terra quiete in foco vivo."

136

Quinci rivolse inver' lo cielo il viso.

142

NOTES

1–142. The glory of Him ... toward the heavens: The first canto of *Paradiso* reflects a synthesis of biblical theological traditions with the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophical ideas absorbed by the intellectual culture of the thirteenth century (see Additional Notes 10 and 11). Introduced with topics of exordium drawn from classical epic, and endowed with a breadth of vision characteristic of the medieval *summae* of all knowledge, the journey of Dante's pilgrim recalls the rapture of Paul the Apostle to Heaven recorded in Christian Scripture, but is also conceived as an act of participation in the cycle of procession and the return of all beings to the source of their existence. Recognizing the mental effort and personal sacrifice necessary for so bold and ambitious a work, the poet begins by invoking divine assistance for a craft that is itself an expression of the art through which Nature, and ultimately God, fashions and guides the cosmos.

1–36. The glory of Him ... Cyrrha will reply: An exordium or prologue (lines 1–12), is followed by an invocation (lines 13–35). The "executive" portion of the work—all the rest of *Paradiso*—begins at line 37. For Ep. 13, attributed to Dante, which comments on these lines, see Introduction, pp. 5–13, and notes below.

1–12. The glory of Him ... the matter of my song: Ep. 13.49–52 draws from Cicero's *De inventione* to describe the task of the prologue: to render readers benevolent, by noting the poem's usefulness in relating the joys of Paradise; attentive, because of its admirable account of the celestial realm; and receptive, because it shows that if the poet was in Heaven, others may go there too.

1–3. The glory of Him ... more and less elsewhere: Ep. 13.62–63 lists biblical passages on God's glory: Jer. 23.24, Ps. 138.7–9, Eccl. 42.16, and Wisdom 1.7 ("the spirit of the Lord filled the whole world"), plus one from the Roman poet Lucan (*Phar.* 9.580): "Jupiter is whatever you see, wherever you go." Ps. 18.1, "The heavens declare the glory of God," is cited by commentators (cf. *Conv.* 2.5.12).

1. who moves all things: God is the "unmoved mover," an Aristotelian concept (*Metaphysics* 12.7) taken up by the scholastics (ST 1a q. 2 a. 3, q. 9. a. 1); compare *Purg.* 25.16–39, 70 ("first motor") and notes. That God's love moves all things is a refrain in the poem (see *Inf.* 1.39–40, 2.72 and notes). The echo of Boethius's "O qui perpetua," line 3 ("you ... give motion to all else" [*das cuncta moveri*]), is the first of many in *Paradiso*; see notes to lines 74, 97, 105, 115–17, 142; also 2.130–32, 133–48, 133–35 and notes.

2–3. penetrates through ... less elsewhere: Ep. 13.64–65 comments: "The divine ray or divine glory penetrates and reglows through the universe. It penetrates as to essence; it reglows as to being"; and: "We see that one thing has its being in a more exalted grade, and

another in a lower." *Ep.* 13.60–61 draws on the Neoplatonic *Liber de causis* (cited in *Conv.* 3.7.2) to explain how God's essence, insofar as he is the first and universal cause, is transmitted to secondary causes (the angels, who move the heavenly spheres) and to the other creatures; cf. *Conv.* 3.9.14). All beings reflect God's light, more and less intensely according to their places in the hierarchy of creation (see *Conv.* 3.7.2; *Par.* 13.52–87, 29.13–48; and 2.112–48 and 7.124–71 and notes). "More and less" is reiterated in line 111, and illustrated in lines 103–20. See also *Conv.* 3.7.3–9, 3.14.4; and Additional Notes 11, 12, and 13.

4–12. In the heaven ... the matter of my song: The subject of the *Paradiso* is broached by naming the pilgrim's goal. The challenge to find adequate words, not new to Dante (see *VN* 41.7 and *Conv.* 3.4–5) recurs throughout *Paradiso* (e.g., 10.40–48, 14.103–18, 18.7–12, 23.55–63, etc.); cf. *Ep.* 13.83: "He [the author] has no knowledge, because he has forgotten; and he has not power, because if he remembered and retained the matter, nevertheless language fails." Plato's use of metaphors for what the intellect sees but cannot express is recalled in the same passage (see note to lines 64–75; for Dante's treatment of Plato's myths, see 4.49–50 and notes; also *Conv.* 2.4.4–5, and Additional Note 10). Aquinas allowed the use of metaphor in the attempt to describe God (*ST* 1a q. 1 a. 9).

4–6. In the heaven ... and cannot utter: As an instance of how memory fails the intellect when this faculty, which man shares with the angels, descends from an exalted vision, *Ep.* 13.79 identifies the reference here to Paul "caught up" to the "third heaven" (adapting 2 Cor. 12.3–4):

where he [Paul] says, "I know such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I know not, God knows), who was caught up [*raptus*] into Paradise and saw the hidden things of God [*vidit arcana Dei*], which it is not lawful for a man to utter [*qui non licet hominum loqui*]."

Epistle 13 makes Paul's experience a visual one; the Vulgate has it that he "heard secret words" [*audivit arcana verba*]. For Dante's view of the primacy of the intellect in approaching God, see 4.124–32, 5.4–7 and notes, and Additional Note 3.

The comparison of the pilgrim's journey to the rapture of Paul established at *Inf.* 2.32 recurs in *Paradiso* (see lines 14 and 73–74 below; also 2.37–38, 15.29–30, 26.10–12, and 30.49–51 and notes). See also Additional Note 7.

4. In the heaven that receives most of his light: Named only once in the poem (*Inf.* 2.21 and note), and here by circumlocution, this is the Empyrean, the last, or tenth, heaven, also the "first heaven" (*Purg.* 30.1) and "the supreme edifice of the world ... in which the whole world is enclosed." (*Conv.* 2.3.11). *Ep.* 13.67–72 defines it as the sphere containing all the others, contained by none, remaining still while the others, moving within it, receive its formative power (see *Par.* 1.122, 2.111–14 and notes; also *Conv.* 2.3.9–11); this embracing stillness, which means it lacks nothing, justifies that it receives "most" of God's light. The Empyrean is emphasized in the *Epistle* and in *Paradiso* (see 2.112, 4.31–32, 22.61–66, 23.108,

27.110, 30.39, etc.) because it is the pilgrim's goal (lines 121–26), and the final cause of the poet's life and his poem. See Additional Note 14.

7–9. for as it draws near ... memory cannot follow it: The goal of human desire is the sight of God, "face to face" (1 Cor. 13.12–13; see line 72 and note). *Ep.* 13.89 states of the souls in Heaven:

their true blessednesss consists in the apprehension of Him who is the beginning of truth, as appears from what John says: "this is eternal life, to know you are the true God" [John 17.3] and from what Boethius says in his third book *On Consolation*: "To behold you is the end" ["O qui perpetua," line 27].

11. treasure up in my mind: For "mind" as "memory," see *Inf.* 2.8–9 and note; the idea of memory as a storehouse or treasure chest goes back to antiquity; *Trésor* [treasure] was the title of Brunetto Latini's encyclopedia (see *Inf.* 15.119–20 and note). See also Matt. 19.21 and *Par.* 23.133.

13–36. O good Apollo ... Cyrrha will reply: Dante invokes the god Apollo for assistance in the labor of poetic elaboration (lines 22–24). Known also as the sun-god Phoebus (Ovid, *Met.* 2.36), Apollo traditionally dwelt on Mount Parnassus in Phocis, in Greece, along with the nine Muses (*Met.* 5.294–678). He was the god of prophecy, delivered by his oracle at Delphi, near Parnassus (line 30; and cf. *Aen.* 3.356–452). He punished the satyr Marsyas after defeating him in a musical competition (lines 19–21; cf. *Purg.* 1.7–12 and note), and he is the patron of those who strive for the laurels of victory (lines 25–27).

This appeal (but see 2.8–9 and note) is the fifth and longest of the poet's nine requests for assistance and power [*virtù*]. It does not mention the Muses, but five other requests do: two in *Inferno* (2.7–9, 32.10–12), two in *Purgatorio* (1.7–12, 29.37–42), and one in *Paradiso* (18.82–87); the poet also calls on his stars (*Par.* 22.112–22), and on God's light (*Par.* 30.97–99, 33.67–75).

13–14. O good Apollo ... vessel of your power: Invoked for inspiration (lines 14, 19), Apollo stands for the triune Christian God (see lines 22, 28; cf. *Inf.* 3.1–9 and note), with implicit emphasis on the second person, the Son, or Wisdom, long associated with Apollo in Christian mythography; the sun is identified in *Conv.* 3.12.7–8 as the most fitting symbol of God. For the sun as a guide on the pilgrim's journey, see *Inf.* 1.17–18, *Purg.* 13.25–27, and cf. 2.7–9 and notes.

Dante's appeal to a pagan god in a sacred poem is consistent with previous instances (e.g., *Purg.* 6.118, addressed to "highest Jove," that is, to God's justice and omnipotence; see also 13.25–27 and note). Though classical topics of exordia are well attested in medieval Christian poetry, Dante's use of the originally pagan terminology is doubly bold: in its vindication of the dignity of classical forms and in its implicit claim that the pagan deity, rightly understood, is Christ.

13. last labor: See Vergil's first line for his last *Eclogue* (10.1): "O Arethusa, grant me this

final labor [*extremum ... laborem*]"; Aeneas, in founding Rome, was "compelled to ... meet so many trials [*labores*]" (*Aen.* 1.10–11).

14. make me such a vessel of your power: Another reference to Paul (see lines 4–6, 74–75), who was God's "chosen vessel" [*vas electionis*] for evangelizing the Gentiles (see *Inf.* 2.28, echoing Acts 9.15).

15. the beloved laurel: Apollo instituted the laurel crown as a prize for victory after his failed pursuit of Daphne, the daughter of the river Peneus. Just before being caught by the god, she is transformed by her father into a laurel tree, which Apollo adopts as his device, wearing it in his hair, on his lyre, and on his quiver (Ovid, *Met.* 1.452–567; see *Met.* 1.557–58: "As you cannot be joined to me, you shall be my tree").

16–18. Until now one peak ... what of the field remains: Antiquity divided the peaks of Parnassus, Nissa, and Cyrrha (Ovid, *Met.* 1.316–17) between Bacchus and Apollo. See Lucan, *Phar.* 5.72–73:

With twin peaks Parnassus soars to heaven.
The mountain is sacred to Phoebus and to Bromios [Bacchus].

Dante calls on both peaks to aid him in a task more ambitious than *Purgatorio*, where he relied on the Muse Calliope (*Purg.* 1.8–9 and note). What the peaks stand for is disputed; for Pietro di Dante, Nissa is knowledge of temporal things (*scientia*), and Cyrrha wisdom about the eternal (*sapientia*); De Angelis 1993 argues for eloquence (Nissa, Bacchus) and wisdom (Cyrrha, Apollo).

18. I must enter upon what of the field remains: *Aringo*, Dante's word for field, means the arena marked out for a contest, as in trial by combat; compare *Mon.* 3.1.3 ("I shall cast out the wicked and the lying from the ring"), as Dante prepares his defense of the Roman Empire against the temporal claims of the Church (see 5.19–24, with note, and Additional Note 2). Passages denouncing aspects of the contemporary Church appear in all but two of Dante's ten heavens (Carroll). For "field" [*campo*], see also *Purg.* 11.94–95, *Par.* 25.84 and notes.

19–21. come into my breast ... the sheath of his members: Apollo, playing his lyre, defeats the flute-playing satyr Marsyas and punishes the satyr's presumption by having him flayed (Ovid, *Met.* 6.382–400). Renaissance mythographers, steeped in Neoplatonism, viewed the story as a fable of the soul's release from matter (Wind 1964); Dante portrays the satyr's torture as a violent but uplifting possession of the poet by the deity.

19. come into my breast and breathe there: Ovid is a key source for the myths exploited in this canto. See *Met.* 1.2–3: "You gods, who have yourselves wrought every change, inspire the beginning of my undertaking." Cf. *Purg.* 24.54–56 (see note). See also *Aen.* 6.46–51.

21. drawn forth from the sheath of his members: Dante follows Ovid on Marsyas's agony (*Met.* 6.385): "Why do you tear me [*detrassis*] from myself?" Dante describes the

emergence of an "inner" self (the mind or spirit) from a shell of fleshliness (see Rigo 1994 and *Purg.* 2.121–23 and note).

22–27. O divine power ... will make me worthy: The crowning of poets with laurel, ivy, or myrtle was known in antiquity (see *Purg.* 21.85–90 and note, and cf. Statius, *Theb.* 1.32–33, and *Achill.* 1.15–16). Dante states his desire to be crowned in his epistolary exchange of 1319 with Giovanni del Virgilio, a professor of rhetoric at Bologna (see *Eclogues* 1.34–44, 2.84–87; *Par.* 25.1–12 and notes), perhaps to rival Albertino Mussato, the poet crowned in Padua in 1315 (see 9.46–48 and notes).

24. stamped within my head: Aquinas comments that although Paul could neither retain nor express all of his vision, he could recall it in part through images remaining in his mind, as the impression of an object remains after it is withdrawn (*ST* 2a 2ae q. 175 a. 4; cf. 33.100 and note, and *VN* 41.7). "Stamped" [*segnata*] should be seen in relation to lines 106–7 and 127–29 (see notes).

25–27. you will see me come ... will make me worthy: The poet's imagined movement toward the laurel tree and his self-crowning reenacts Apollo's pursuit of Daphne (*Met.* 1.564–65). Having first identified with Marsyas, the poet now identifies with the god. At DVE 2.4.10 Dante invokes *Aen.* 6.128–31 on poets raised to Heaven as "sons of the gods"; see *Par.* 5.122–23 and note.

28–36. So seldom Father ... Cyrrha will reply: Ovid's Apollo makes the laurel the reward for military success (*Met.* 1.560–561), while Statius, *Achill.* 1.15–16 suits it to both poets and chieftains [*duces*]. Dante laments both the neglect of poetic effort (see *Eclogue* 1.36–37) and the lack of imperial authority: no Holy Roman emperor was crowned in Rome between Frederick II in 1221 and Henry VII in 1312.

28. So seldom Father: Compare Phaethon's address of his father, the sun (*Met.* 2.36: "Phoebe, pater"; see 22.115–17 and note, as well as Additional Note 7). This address begins a return to father figures in *Paradiso* (see 17.1–6, 22.58–60, 26.91–93, and 31.63 and notes). The poet's kinship to Orpheus, son of Apollo and the Muse Calliope (allegorically, wisdom and eloquence), and a model for the poet at *Conv.* 2.1.3, is also suggested by commentators. See *Par.* 2.3 and note).

31–33. that the Peneian leaf ... thirst for it: The rare desire for the laurel ("Peneian leaf") delights the deity. The poet's address of the god (line 28) shifts to an indirect address (lines 31–32) chastising the shortcomings of the age.

34–36. A tiny spark ... Cyrrha will reply: As the *Aeneid* inspired Statius (*Purg.* 21.94–99 and note), Dante's example will spark a revival of letters, thus future petitions to and responses from the oracle at Cyrrha (see Lucan, *Phar.* 5.95–96; Statius, *Theb.* 3.474–76). Petrarch and Boccaccio did in fact follow in Dante's wake.

34. A tiny spark can result in a great flame: A proverbial formula that also echoes James 3.6 ("behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood"), previously drawn on by Dante to describe Ulysses's dangerous eloquence (see *Inf.* 26.85–90 and note); a positive instance of communicated fire is cited in the previous note.

37–72. The lantern of the world ... reserves the experience: The poem proper begins with the sun's appearance and its effects on the world (37–45). Beatrice gazes at the sun, and the pilgrim, strengthened by Eden, can now imitate her (46–63); looking back at her, he is transformed (64–72). Mentioned first at line 37 and used four more times in the canto (not including references to Apollo), the sun remains the principal active subject until line 44, and is then the principal object of sight in lines 46–63. See 11.49–57, 23.1–9, 31.124–29 and notes.

37–42. The lantern of the world ... more to its manner: When rising at or near the spring equinox, the sun's apparent rising point [*foce*] may be imagined as defined by the intersection of four celestial circles: the first two are the celestial equator and the ecliptic (the imaginary track, tilted at 23½ degrees to the equator, traced by the sun in its annual journey through the zodiac; see 10.8–9 and *Conv.* 3.5, especially 13–19). Their intersections define the two equinoctial points traversed by the sun at the equinoxes (conventionally, March 21 and September 21). The third circle is the equinoctial colure, also traversing the equinoctial points, but passing through the north and south celestial poles. The last circle is the visual horizon, which varies for different observers on the globe; "rises to mortals" confirms the inclusion of this subjective circle. Other explanations (e.g., Baldacci 1965, Cornish 2000) blunt Dante's emphasis by not clustering *all* the intersections at the point where the sun emerges. See figure 1.

37. The lantern of the world: Cf. Ovid, *Met.* 2.35: "O universal light of the great world" [*O lux inmensi publica mundi*]. See Additional Note 7.

39. that joins four circles with three crosses: Benvenuto sees in the implicit number seven here the Sum of the Cardinal and theological Virtues (see *Purg.* 1.22–24, 8.88–93, 29.121–32, 31.103–8 and notes).

40–42. it comes forth ... more to its manner: When rising near the vernal equinox, the astronomical beginning of spring, the sun's invigorating effects are enhanced by the stars in Aries, and its path in the ecliptic most vigorously fosters life on earth (see 10.7–21 and note). Dante describes these effects with the metaphor of the wax seal (see 8.127–29, 13.67–81 and notes). The sun both prepares ("tempers") the wax, the *matter* of the world (that is, it influences the mixing of the four material elements of earth, water, air, and fire) and imposes on that matter its determining *form* (the seal) by producing specific substances (see 13.70–72 and notes, and 7.124–41). "More to its manner" means that the substances formed resemble the solar nature, because effects resemble their causes (see note to line 4, and Additional Notes 2, 10, and 13). Other references to the vivifying equinoctial sun are at *Inf.* 1.38–40; *Par.* 5.87, and, implicitly, at 10.7–21.

41–42. tempers and seals the waxy world: See *Met.* 1.770: "The sun, who governs [*temperat*] all the world"; and compare line 24 ("stamped"). Since the sphere of the head and that of the cosmos are related as microcosm to macrocosm (*Timaeus* 44d), the sun's effect on the world is echoed in the poet's shaping, with the help of the sun god Apollo, the "matter" of his poem (see lines 13, 22–24; also 127–29). See Additional Notes 8 and 14.

43–44. such an outlet ... and evening here: "Near it" [*quasi*], as the journey takes place 8–14 April 1300, after the March 21 equinox, and the sun rises from a different outlet each day (see *Conv.* 3.5.13–19). "Here" is Italy, in the northern hemisphere, where the poet writes, and it is nightfall; "there" is Purgatory.

44–45. there the hemisphere ... and this one black: The pluperfect "had made morning" refers to the sun's previous rising; as Beatrice and the pilgrim prepare to ascend, the sun reaches the meridian: it is noon (see *Purg.* 33.104), the hour that symbolizes the consummation of time in eternity.

46–48. when I saw Beatrice ... fixed its sight there so: In medieval bestiaries the mother eagle forces her eaglets to look into the sun (*Trésor* 1.145.2); only the truebred offspring tolerate the sight. See 23.1–12 and note; also *Purg.* 9.21, 32.109–17 and notes.

49–54. And as a second ray ... beyond our wont: The pilgrim's imitation of Beatrice's gaze at the sun (he does not look into her eyes until line 66) is like a ray of light reflected from a polished surface (cf. *Purg.* 15.16–24, 22–23 and notes). Line 1 is acted out: Beatrice's presence and gesture reflect divine glory to the pilgrim, whose upward glance is the splendor of returning light ("mounting upward"), the *epistrophe* or *reditus*. See line 142 and Additional Note 10.

51. like a pilgrim that wishes to return home: Cf. the "new" and the returning pilgrim of *Purgatorio* (8.1–6, 27.110–11 and notes). A comparison with the peregrine falcon may be intended; cf. *Purg.* 14.148–50, 19.61–69 and notes.

55–63. Much is permitted there ... with another sun: *Conv.* 3.3.1–8 explains why mixed elemental bodies and other creatures enjoy enhanced vigor in their places of origin. Since Eden is the home of the human race, the pilgrim's power of sight is now strong enough for him to stare directly at the sun.

64–75: Beatrice was fixed ... with your light: Dante fashions a complex transition at the center of the canto in order to describe the effect of gazing on Beatrice: the pilgrim is first transformed within himself [*dentro*, line 67], like the fisherman Glaucus in Ovid's tale, then becomes like Paul (alluded to in lines 73–75) in his removal upward to Heaven. See Brownlee 1991.

64–69. Beatrice was fixed ... other gods in the sea: In Eden, the pilgrim saw the two natures of Christ in the form of the gryphon, each nature separately reflected in Beatrice's eyes

(*Purg.* 31.118–26 and note, and see 2.37–42 and note). That sight, compared to eating (*Purg.* 31.128, and see 2.10–12 and note), is a precedent for how the pilgrim's experience of gazing at Beatrice is analogous to Glaucus's "tasting" and transformation. See Additional Note 1.

67–69: Gazing at her ... other gods in the sea: Ovid tells how the Boeotian fisherman Glaucus (*Met.* 13.904–59), seeing fish revive when laid on grass near the shore, chews some of the same grass: "Suddenly I felt my heartstrings tremble within me, and my breast was rapt with desire for another nature" (13.944–46). Diving into the water, Glaucus is transformed into a sea god: "When my sense returned to me, I was all different in my body from what I was before, nor was my mind the same" (13.958–59). Pseudo-Dionysius, cited by Aquinas, may explain Dante's surprising choice of fable: "It is more suitable to transmit the divine things in Scripture under the figure of base bodies than under noble ones" (*ST* 1a q. 1 a. 9 ad 3); see 10.115–17 and note, and Additional Note 10.

68. what Glaucus became tasting the herb: Ovid's Glaucus tastes the magic herbs in his throat [*guttura*], *Met.* 13.942–43. Like Glaucus, the pilgrim tastes in order to see, synesthesia being known to Dante from Ps. 33.9: "O taste and see" [*gustate et videte*]; see 3.37–39, 30.111, and *Purg.* 31.128 and notes. Compare Dante's account of Adam's sin as "the tasting [*gustar*] of the tree" in defiance of God's prohibition (Gen. 3.5; see *Par.* 26.115; also 32.123 and notes). With Beatrice to lead him, the pilgrim lawfully renews Adam's quest for knowledge. See also 10.6, 18.1–3 and notes.

69. that made him a consort of the other gods in the sea: The commentators refer to Jesus' words at John 10.34: "Is it not written in your law [Ps. 81.6]: 'I said you are gods'?" [*dii estis*]; also *Consol.* 3.pr.10.25: "Every happy man is a god, though by nature God is one only; but nothing prevents there being many by participation." See *Conv.* 4.21.10 and *Mon.* 1.12.6, cited at note to 5.19–24. For "consort" Rigo 1994 cites 2 Peter 1.4: "By these [Christ's promises] you may be made partakers [*consortes*] of the divine nature."

70–72. To signify transhumanizing ... reserves the experience: Like the memory of Heaven as a "shadow" (line 23), the Glaucus story fails to render the pilgrim's experience (see *Conv.* 3.4.9–11), but stands for it as a sign or "example" (see also *VN* 41.13). The bold coinage *trasumanar* also attests to the poet's effort at representation, and has suggested to commentators an ascent culminating in the pilgrim's vision at the end of the poem; to what extent the present passage anticipates the process referred to by some critics as deification [*deificari*] is debated (see Botterill 1994). See notes to lines 25–27, 58–60, and 31.100–102 and note.

70. To signify transhumanizing *per verba* [in words] is impossible: The line echoes part of Dante's poetic credo ("I go signifying," *Purg.* 24.50–52), while *trasumanar* itself recalls that Glaucus's example is a *transumptio* [metaphor].

72. those to whom grace reserves the experience: That is, those who will enjoy the beatific vision after death. For Augustine and Aquinas, only Moses and Paul saw God in his

essence, or "face to face," in this life (*ST* 2a 2ae q. 175 a. 3), though Dante appears to claim the privilege (see 30.96 and note). "Experience" recalls Dante's Ulysses, who commends it (*Inf.* 26.116); cf. *Purg.* 1.130–32, *Par.* 27.82–83 and notes; see also *Inferno* Additional Note 11.

73–142. If I was solely ... toward the heavens: The second half of the canto has the pilgrim rise to hear the music of the spheres and see the cosmos filled by light (lines 76–81), exciting his curiosity (85–93). How can he, if he has a body, rise through spheres that are material (lines 94–99)? Beatrice explains that since places are ordered for all things (100–126), the pilgrim, whose mind is fiery, will naturally rise (91–93, 136–42), unless pulled down by misconception or misplaced love (127–35). For the crucial problem implicit in lines 94–99, see note to lines 73–74.

73–75. If I was solely ... with your light: Paul's "third heaven" (2 Cor. 12.2) was taken to mean the Empyrean (see *ST* 2a 2ae q. 175 a. 3 ad 4).

73–74. If I was solely ... you know: God infuses the soul last, when Nature's fashioning of the brain is complete (see *Purg.* 25.67–75, with notes). Evoked again is the visit to the "third heaven" reported by Paul, whose ignorance of whether he was in the body or out of it ("I know not ... God knows" [*nescio ... deus scit*]), echoed in lines 4–6, is echoed by Glaucus's ignorance of how he was changed ("my mind does not retain the rest" [*nec mens mea cetera sensit*], *Met.* 13.957). Whether the pilgrim rises with his body is left unanswered; Aquinas insisted Paul himself never knew (*ST* 2a 2ae q. 175 a. 6); but see 2.37–42, with note.

74. O Love who governs the heavens: The apostrophe adapts "O qui perpetua mundum ratione *gubernas*" [O you who with perpetual reason govern the world] (see also *Par.* 1.1, 115–16). See also *Consol.* 2.m.8.28–30, cited in *Mon.* 1.9.3.

76–81. When the wheeling ... so extended a lake: Departing from Aristotle and most scholastics, Dante accepts the Pythagorean idea of the "music of the spheres" (Plato's version is at *Republic* 616b–617c). At Cicero's *SS* 5.1 (see 15.26 and note), Scipio the younger is instructed by his adoptive grandfather Scipio the elder:

"That," replied my grandfather, "is a concord of tones separated [*distinctis*] by unequal but nevertheless carefully proportioned intervals, caused by the rapid motion of the spheres themselves. The high and low tones blended together [*temperans*] produce different harmonies."

That this is Dante's source is indicated by "temper and distinguish" in line 78. See Additional Note 8.

76–77. When the wheeling ... by being desired: In *Conv.* 2.14.13 (and implicitly at *Inf.* 10.107—see note). Dante holds that celestial motion, which measures time, would cease at the Last Judgment (cf. Aquinas, *CG* 4.97). Here the turning of the spheres [*rota*] by the angelic intelligences, which began with the creation (see *Conv.* 2.3.9), is termed "sempiternal,"

meaning it will never cease. Bemrose 1983 treats the contradiction as unresolved by the poet.

82–84. The wonder of the sound ... with such sharpness: That the motions and beauty of the luminaries and stars lure human contemplation, a Platonic commonplace, was mentioned at *Purg.* 14.148–50 and 19.61–63 (see notes). See line 142 and note, and the introduction to Durling/Martinez 1990.

85–141. Therefore she ... should be motionless. The nineteen terzinas are a textual microcosm: three terzinas establish the pilgrim's *rising* motion (lines 85–93), compared to the *descending* fire of lightning; these balance the final terzinas (lines 133–41), which reaffirm that the pilgrim *rises* like fire, parallel to how water flows *downward*, and in contrast to erring creatures, which *fall* like lightning, violently. Similar criteria, and the metaphor of providential teleology, organize the rest.

82–93. The wonder of the sound ... you going back to yours: Beatrice's answer appeals to the natural motion of the elements toward places allotted them by their "weight," which is also their desire (see Augustine, *Confessions* 13.9.10; *Inf.* 5.39 and note). The pilgrim's curiosity is an instance of the "laboring spirit" driving him toward God, the first cause; see also lines 97, 122, 141.

85. who saw me as I do myself: The pilgrim is transparent to Beatrice, as he will be to all the souls in heaven, who know in God; but not all read his mind (see 9.73–81 and note), and he is often told to speak audibly (see 15.64–69 and note).

88–99. and began ... these light bodies: The pilgrim's mistake is supposing himself still on earth. His error makes him swollen [*grosso*] and heavy; once he understands, he shrugs off the burden as if a garment (line 94), or false pregnancy. These lines are linked by commentators to lines 19–21 and to Marsyas's skin as the sign of fallen Adamic fleshliness (Eph. 4.22–23, Colossians 3.1–2, 9–10); cf. Adam's "garments of skin" (Gen. 3.21) and *Purg.* 2.122 and note.

97. and I said Satisfied just now *requievi* [I rested]: The redundancy (satisfaction and repose are virtual synonyms) and the Latin underscore the concept (see also lines 122 and 141): to rest in gratified desire for God is the goal of the journey. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1.2: "Our heart is restless [*inquietum*] until it rests [*requiescat*] in you" and Boethius' hymn "O qui perpetua," line 27: "You are the peaceful rest [*requies*] of the just." See also line 85.

100–126. Wherfore she ... all that it looses: The ranking of created beings in a hierarchy is one way the universe resembles its creator (lines 100–108), an idea emphasized by Pseudo-Dionysius (*De cael. hier.* 3; see 10.115–17 and note). This order moves creatures to return to their creator (lines 109–20), and drives the pilgrim toward his goal (lines 124–26). The pilgrim's question leads Beatrice to unfolding cosmic order more generally; see 2.112–48 and notes.

105. a form that makes the universe resemble God: Cf. "O qui perpetua," lines 7–8: "You carry in Mind the beauteous world, form it to like pattern."

106–7. Here the high creatures ... the eternal Worth: The angels, the first creatures, contemplate the divine plan. It was a commonplace that God left his trace as Creator as an "image" in mankind and a "likeness" in the rest of creation, after Gen. 1.26, Ps. 18.2, and Rom. 1.20; see *Mon.* 1.8.2, cited at 5.11 (with note).

109–20. In the order ... that have intelligence and love: Providence "sorts" different natures, whether elemental bodies (lines 115, 117) or mortal beings (line 116), as well as men and angels (lines 106, 118–20), so that each moves toward its satisfaction and rest. Commentators claim line 116 does not refer to human beings; but as souls in bodies, humans share intellection with the angels as well as the inclinations of lower creatures including the elements (*Conv.* 3.3.2–11), thus making the predicament of lines 127–41 possible.

112. different ports: In *Convivio* 2.1.1 sailing toward port suggests both the task of writing and the journey of life (*Conv.* 4.28.2); here, both the pilgrim and the poet participate in the metaphor. See *Mon.* 3.16.10–11; *Par.* 2.1–18, 27.146–48 and notes.

118–26. nor does this bow ... all that it looses: Adopting Aristotle's idea that the operations of Nature are ordained to the best possible end, Dante conceives of Providence, directing all things back to God, as an archer aiming at a target (cf. 29.22–24 and note).

120. those that have intelligence and love: That is, human beings and angels. The line echoes the first line of Dante's canzone "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore" [Ladies who have intelligence of love] (see *Purg.* 24.49–51 and note), with rich implications for *Paradiso*; see Durling/Martinez 1990, Chapters 1 and 6.

121–26. the Providence ... all that it looses: The goal of Beatrice and the pilgrim is the Empyrean (see lines 4–6), which contains the *primum mobile*, the fastest-moving sphere.

127–41. It is true that ... should be motionless: The designs of Providence can miscue, and creatures swerve from their natural inclination: fire can "fall" in the form of lightning (lines 133–35). The pilgrim's fiery spirit naturally rises; remaining below would make him like fire that failed to rise (line 140). For the lightning metaphor, cf. *Purg.* 9.28–30, 12.25–27, 32.109–17 and notes.

127–29. It is true that ... deaf to respond: Providence is like a skilled artisan imposing form on matter, which can be ill disposed to receive it (see Chapters 3–4 of Durling/Martinez 1990). For God's Providence compared to human art, implied in lines 40–42, see 2.127–48 and notes, and cf. *Mon.* 2.2.2–4, citing "O qui perpetua," lines 4–5; see also Additional Notes 2 and 13.

142. Then she turned her eyes back toward the heavens: See note to lines 49–54.
Line 1 of the canto proclaims God as flowing into the universe; the last line follows the current of human returning to him.

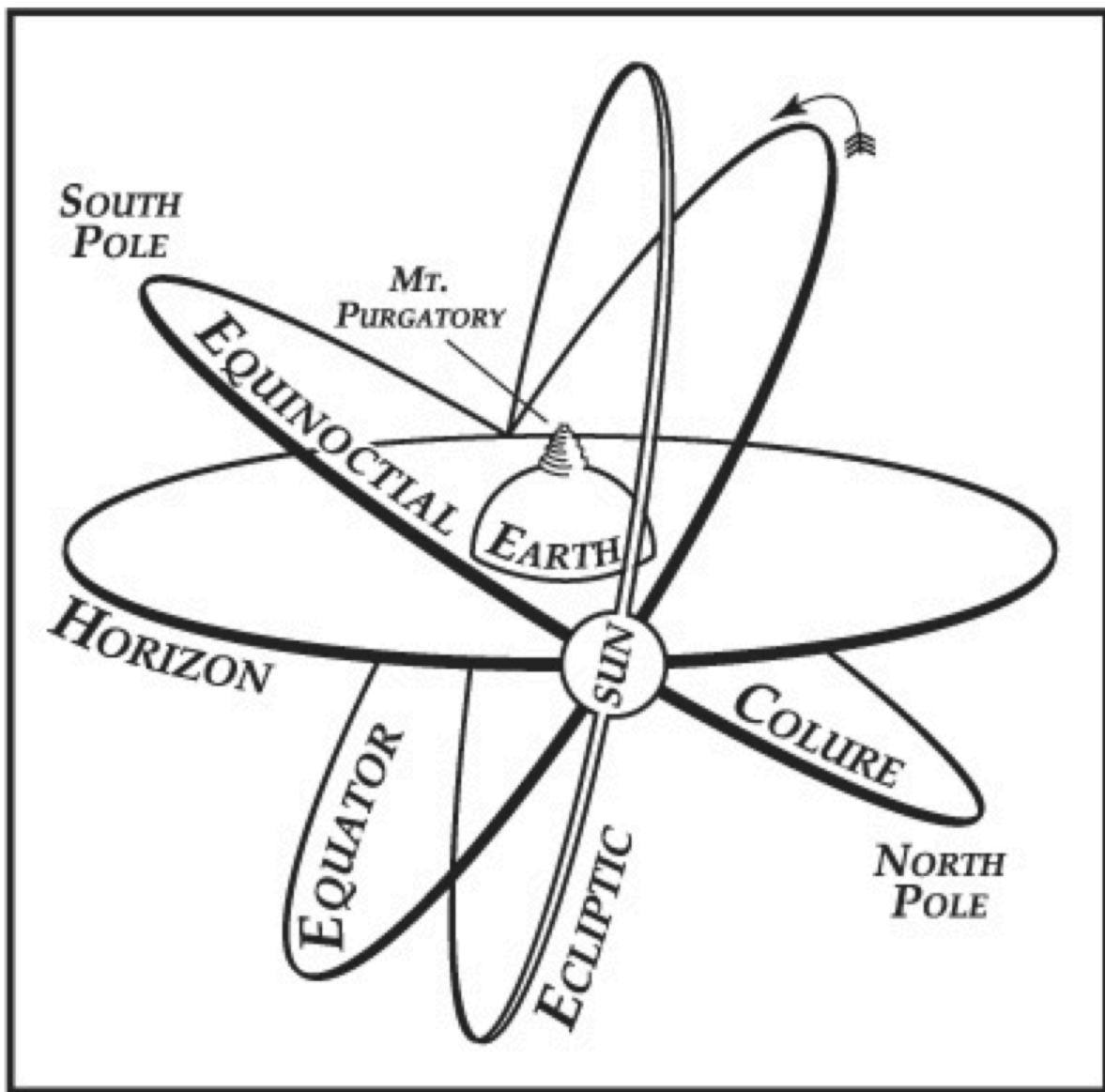
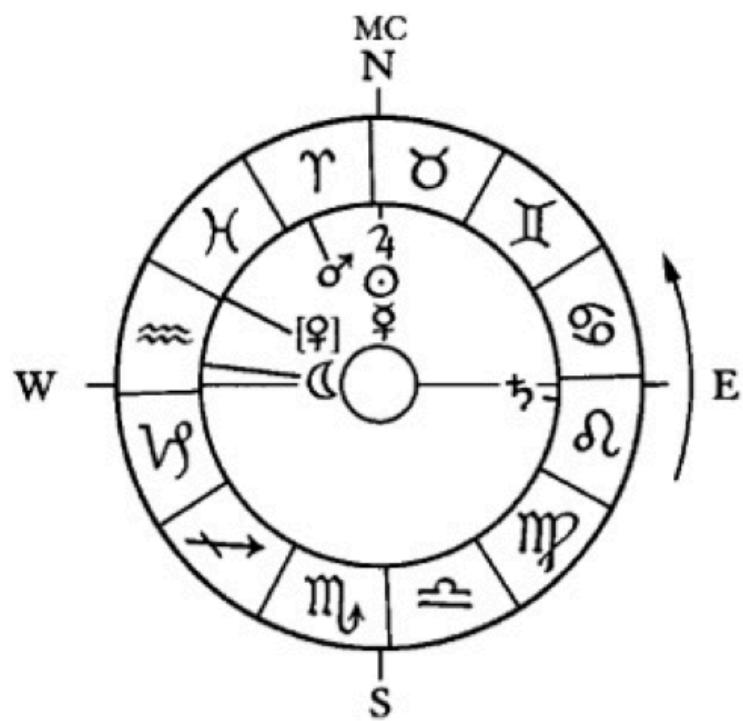


Figure 1. "Four circles make three crosses"

April 13, 1300 (Data from Prophatius)

♈ Aries	♋ Cancer	\odot (Sun) 32°	♂ (Mars) 8°	♎ Libra	♑ Capricorn
♉ Taurus	♌ Leo	☾ (Moon) 308°	♃ (Jupiter) 33°	♏ Scorpio	♒ Aquarius
♊ Gemini	♍ Virgo	R ☿ (Mercury) 33°	♄ (Saturn) 127°	♐ Sagittarius	♓ Pisces
		[♀] (Venus [erroneous]) 331°			



Noon in Earthly Paradise

Figure 2. Horoscope for April 13, 1300, noon in the Earthly Paradise



CANTO 2

Warning to readers—Moon: the spots on the moon—an experiment with mirrors—the nature of the universe—the role of the heavenly spheres—of the angels—formal principles

- 1 O you who in little barks, desirous of listening,
 have followed after my ship that sails onward
 singing:
- 4 turn back to see your shores again, do not put
 out on the deep sea, for perhaps, losing me, you
 would be lost;
- 7 the waters that I enter have never before been
 crossed; Minerva inspires and Apollo leads me,
 and nine Muses point out to me the Bears.
- 10 You other few, who stretched out your
 necks early on for the bread of the angels,
 which one lives on here though never sated by it:
- 13 you can well set your course over the salt
 deep, staying within my wake before the water
 returns level again;
- 16 those glorious ones who sailed to Colchos did
 not so marvel as you will do, when they saw
 Jason become a plowman.
- 19 The innate and perpetual thirst for the deiform

- realm was carrying us up as swiftly, almost, as
you see the sky move.
- 22 Beatrice was gazing upward and I at her,
and perhaps in the time in which a crossbow
bolt comes to rest, and flies, and leaves the nut,
- 25 I saw I had reached a place where marvelous
things drew my sight, and therefore she from
whom my care could not be hidden,
- 28 turning toward me, joyous as she was beautiful:
"Direct your mind to God in gratitude," she told
me, "who has conjoined us with the first star."
- 31 It seemed to me that a cloud covered us,
shining, dense, solid, clear, like a diamond struck
by the sun.
- 34 Within itself the eternal pearl received us, as
water receives a ray of light while still remaining
whole.
- 37 If I was a body—and down here it cannot be
conceived how one dimension could accept an
other, as must occur, if body coincide with body—
- 40 it should kindle within us more desire to see
that Essence where is seen how our nature and
God became one.
- 43 There we shall see that which we hold by
faith, and not by demonstration, but it will be
self-evident, like the first truth one believes.
- 46 I replied, "My lady, as devoutly as I can I
thank him who has removed me from the mortal
world.
- 49 But tell me: what are the dark marks in this

- body, that make people down there on earth tell fables about Cain?"
- 52 She smiled a little and then: "If," she said, "the opinion of mortals errs where no key of sense unlocks,
- 55 surely the arrows of wonder ought not to pierce you now, since you see that reason has short wings even when following the senses.
- 58 But tell me what you think of it yourself." And I: "What looks different to us up here is caused, I think, by bodies rare and dense."
- 61 And she: "Certainly you will find your belief much submerged in error, if you listen carefully to the argument I shall make against it.
- 64 The eighth sphere displays to you many lights, which both in quality and size can be seen to have different faces.
- 67 If rare and dense alone caused that, one sole power would be in all of them, distributed into more and less, and sometimes equally.
- 70 Different powers must necessarily be the fruit of formal principles, and these, except for one, would according to your thinking be destroyed.
- 73 Again, if rare matter were the cause of the darkness you inquire about, either the rare matter would go entirely through, where there are spots
- 76 in this planet, or, as a living body alternates fat and lean, so it would change pages through its volume.

- 79 The first case would be manifested in
eclipses of the sun, for the light would shine
through, as it does through any other rare matter.
- 82 This is not so: therefore let us look to the
other possibility, and if I break that down, too,
your opinion will be shown to be false.
- 85 If the rare matter is not continuous, there
must be a limit where its contrary blocks passage,
- 88 and from there, rays of light must bound back,
just as color returns through glass that has lead
hidden behind it.
- 91 Now you will say that the ray appears darker
there than elsewhere because it is reflected
from further back.
- 94 From this objection an experiment can free
you, if you ever try it, for from experience derive
the streams of all your arts.
- 97 Take three mirrors, and place two of them at
the same distance from you, and let your eyes find
the third more distant and between the first two.
- 100 Facing toward them, have a light from behind
you shine on the three mirrors and return to you
reflected from all three.
- 103 Even though the more distant image is not as
extended in size, you will see that it is equally
bright there.
- 106 Now, as under the blows of the warm rays of
the sun the subject of snow remains naked of its
former color and chill,
- 109 just so, you, who have become such in intellect,

- I wish to inform with light so lively it will tremble
when you see it.
- 112 Within the Heaven of God's peace there
 turns a body under whose power lies the being
 of all that it contains.
- 115 The next heaven, which has so many sights,
 divides that being into different essences, separated
 by it, yet contained by it.
- 118 The other spheres through various
 differences dispose the distinctions held within
 them to their ends and to their sowings.
- 121 These organs of the world thus descend, as
 you can see, by degrees, for they take from
 above and fashion below.
- 124 Now pay attention to how I go from here to
 the truth that you desire, so that later you will be
 able to hold to the ford alone.
- 127 The motion and the power of the holy spheres
 necessarily must breathe from the blessed movers,
 as the art of the hammer does from the smith,
- 130 and the heaven made beautiful by so many
 lights takes the image from the profound mind
 turning it and acts as its seal.
- 133 And just as the soul within your dust resolves
 itself through different members conformed to
 different faculties,
- 136 so the Intelligence unfolds its goodness, diversi fied
 through the stars, turning itself about its unity.
- 139 Each different power makes a different alloy
 with the precious body it vivifies, in which, like

life in you, it binds itself.

- 142 Because of the happy nature from which it
 derives the mixed power shines through the body
 like gladness through the pupil of a living eye.
- 145 From that nature comes what seems different
 from light to light, not from dense and rare: it is
 a formal principle that produces,
- 148 conformably with its goodness, the dark and
 the bright."



CANTO 2

O voi che siete in picioletta barca,
desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti
dietro al mio legno, che cantando varca:

1

tornate a riveder li vostri liti,
non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,
perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti;
l'acqua ch' io prendo già mai non si corse;
Minerva spira, e conducemi Appollo,
e nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse.

4

7

Voi altri pochi che drizzaste il collo
per tempo al pan de li angeli, del quale
vivesi qui ma non sen vien satollo:

10

metter potete ben per l'alto sale
vostro navigio, servando mio solco
dinanzi a l'acqua che ritorna equale;

13

que' gloriosi che passaro al Colco
non s'ammiraron come voi farete,
quando lasón vider fatto bifolco.

16

La concreata e perpetüa sete
del deiforme regno cen portava
veloci quasi come 'l ciel vedete.

19

Beatrice in suso e io in lei guardava,
e forse in tanto in quanto un quadrel posa
e vola e da la noce si dischiava,

22

giunto mi vidi ove mirabil cosa
mi torse il viso a sé, e però quella
cui non potea mia cura essere ascosa,

25

volta ver' me, sì lieta come bella:
"Drizza la mente in Dio grata," mi disse,
"che n'ha congiunti con la prima stella."

28

Parev' a me che nube ne coprisse
lucida, spessa, solida e pulita,
quasi adamante che lo sol ferisse.

31

Per entro sé l'eterna margarita
ne ricevette, com' acqua recepe
raggio di luce, permanendo unita.

34

S'io era corpo—e qui non si concepe
com' una dimensione altra patio,
ch' esser convien se corpo in corpo repe—
accender ne dovria più il disio
di veder quella essenza in che si vede
come nostra natura e Dio s'unìo.

37

Lì si vedrà ciò che tenem per fede,
non dimostrato, ma fia per sé noto
a guisa del ver primo che l'uom crede.

43

Io rispuosi: "Madonna, sì devoto
com' esser posso più, ringrazio lui
lo qual dal mortal mondo m'ha remoto.

46

Ma ditemi: che son li segni bui
di questo corpo, che là giuso in terra
fan di Cain favoleggiare altrui?"

49

Ella sorrise alquanto, e poi: "S'elli erra
l'oppin'on," mi disse, "d'i mortali
dove chiave di senso non diserra,
certo non ti dovrien punger li strali
d'ammirazione omai, poi dietro ai sensi
vedi che la ragione ha corte l'ali.

52

55

Ma dimmi quel che tu da te ne pensi."
E io: "Ciò che n'appar qua sù diverso
credo che fanno i corpi rari e densi."

58

Ed ella: "Certo assai vedrai sommerso
nel falso il creder tuo, se bene ascolti
l'argomentar ch'io li farò avverso.

61

La spera ottava vi dimostra molti
lumi, li quali e nel quale e nel quanto
notar si posson di diversi volti.

64

Se raro e denso ciò facesser tanto,
una sola virtù sarebbe in tutti,
più e men distributa e altrettanto.

67

Virtù diverse esser convegnon frutti
di principi formali, e quei, for ch'uno,
seguiterieno a tua ragion distrutti.

70

Ancor, se raro fosse di quel bruno
cagion che tu dimandi, o d'oltre in parte
fora di sua matera sì digiuno

73

esto pianeto, o, sì come com parte
lo grasso e 'l magro un corpo, così questo
nel suo volume cangerebbe carte.

76

Se 'l primo fosse, fora manifesto
ne l'eclissi del sol, per trasparere
lo lume come in altro raro ingestio.

79

Questo non è: però è da vedere
de l'altro, e s'elli avvien ch'io l'altro cassi,
falsificato fia lo tuo parere.

82

S'elli è che questo raro non trapassi,
esser conviene un termine da onde
lo suo contrario più passar non lassi,

85

e indi l'altrui raggio si rifonde
così come color torna per vetro
lo qual di retro a sé piombo nasconde.

88

Or dirai tu ch'el si dimostra tetro
ivi lo raggio più che in altre parti
per esser lì refratto più a retro.

91

Da questa instanza può deliberarti
esperienza, se già mai la provi,
ch' esser suol fonte ai rivi di vostr' arti.

94

Tre specchi prenderai, e i due rimovi
da te d'un modo, e l'altro più rimosso
tr' ambo li primi li occhi tuoi ritrovi.

97

Rivolto ad essi, fa che dopo il dosso
ti stea un lume che i tre specchi accenda
e torni a te da tutti ripercosso.

100

Ben che nel quanto tanto non si stenda
la vista più lontana, lì vedrai
come convien ch'igualmente risplenda.

103

Or, come ai colpi de li caldi rai
de la neve riman nudo il suggetto
e dal colore e dal freddo primai,

106

così rimaso te ne l'intelletto
voglio informar di luce sì vivace
che ti tremolerà nel suo aspetto.

109

Dentro dal cielo de la divina pace
si gira un corpo ne la cui virtute
l'esser di tutto suo contento giace.

112

Lo ciel seguente, c' ha tante vedute,
quell' esser parte per diverse essenze,
da lui distratte e da lui contenute.

115

Li altri giron per varie differenze
le distinzion che dentro da sé hanno
dispongono a lor fini e lor semenze.

118

Questi organi del mondo così vanno,
come tu vedi omai, di grado in grado,
che di sù prendono e di sotto fanno.

121

Riguarda bene omai sì com' io vado
per questo loco al vero che disiri,
sì che poi sappi sol tener lo guado.

124

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.

127

E come l'alma dentro a vostra polve
per differenti membra e conformate
a diverse potenze si risolve,

130

così l'intelligenza sua bontate
multiplicata per le stelle spiega,
girando sé sovra sua unitate.

133

Virtù diversa fa diversa lega
col prezioso corpo ch'ella avviva,
nel qual, sì come vita in voi, si lega.

136

Per la natura lieta onde deriva,
la virtù mista per lo corpo luce
come letizia per pupilla viva.

139

Da essa vien ciò che da luce a luce
par differente, non da denso e raro:
essa è formal principio che produce,

142

145

conforme a sua bontà, lo turbo e 'l chiaro."

148

NOTES

1–18. O you who ... become a plowman: This passage is unique in the *Comedy* in explicitly distinguishing two groups of readers with differing levels of competence (this was in part anticipated in *Inf.* 9.61–63) and in counseling the less qualified to read no further: only readers who acquired early training in philosophy and theology are encouraged to continue, and they are cautioned to pay close attention (to sail close behind the poet's vessel). Both apostrophes (1–9 and 10–18) are formulated in terms of the traditional trope of the composition of poetry as a sea voyage (see *Purg.* 1.1–3, with note), here developed to an unprecedented degree: the daring of the poet's undertaking is compared to that of the Argonauts, the heroes who sailed from the Aegean the entire length of the Black Sea to acquire the Golden Fleece: according to the myth, the Argo was the very first ship, constructed under the supervision of Minerva (in Latin the story is told in *Met.* 7.1–158, in *Heroides* 12, and in Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*, which Dante seems not to have known). The analogy with Argo recurs at the climactic end of the poem, in 33.95–96 (cf. 25.7), and this proem is echoed in 23.67–68 (cf. the grandiose sea image in 1.109–12). One should note the underlying parallel with the "folle volo" [mad flight] of Ulysses (*Inf.* 26.90–142, with notes), in which a leader urges his followers to sail out upon the deep, where they perish. The best discussions of Dante's use of the myth of Argo are Curtius 1950 and Hollander 1969.

With the long proposition (statement of subject) and invocation of 1.1–36, these two addresses to readers, the first in the cantica, provide an introduction to the *Paradiso* that is much more elaborate than those to the first two cantiche (*Inf.* 1.1–9 and 2.1–9; *Purg.* 1.1–12). (The other addresses to the reader in the *Paradiso* are: 5.109–14, 10.7–27, 13.1–21, 22.106–11, 23.64–69—a total of seven if one counts 2.1–9 and 10–18 as two.)

1–9. O you who ... point out to me the Bears: Addressed to the first group of readers, those not trained in philosophy and theology, and therefore not equipped to follow the poet: if they lose his meaning they will be lost at sea; cf. 13.121–23: "Whoever fishes for the truth and lacks the art fares much worse than in vain when he leaves the shore, for he does not return the same as before." The idea that "losing me, you would be lost" refers to damnation (Hollander) is implausible: misunderstanding a poem, even Dante's, may disqualify one as a literary critic but is hardly a mortal sin; but cf. the doctrinal care expressed in 4.61–66. (For the possible relation of this passage to the indirection of the poem's modes of exposition, see Introduction, pp. 17–18.)

The apparent elitism of this discouragement of unprepared readers may well be intended as a challenge, as well as a notice to all readers that this cantica will be a good deal more difficult than the first two. One should recall that the *Convivio* (cf. the note to lines 10–12) was conceived as an introduction to philosophy for those who knew no Latin, just as the *Comedy* itself was consciously intended as a blow against the hegemony of Latin learning. But Dante's ambivalence toward these two large categories of his readers was very deep (see Durling

1992).

The passage is a distant relative of Horace's famous "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo" [I hate the unsanctified mob and exclude it], *Odes* 3.1.1), and Benvenuto cites the scornful reference to the slow-witted in the proem to Boethius' *De Trinitate*: "Thus I contract my style into brevity, and the meanings I draw from the depths of philosophical disciplines I veil with new words ... so that those unable to understand it will be seen to be unworthy of reading it."

1–3. little barks ... my ship: The Italian *barca* [bark] is singular here, but its sense is distributive: each little "bark" is an individual (unprepared) reader, while the poet is a large ship [*legno*]. As line 14 makes clear, both groups of readers are thought of as sailing in small boats.

3. my ship that sails onward singing: The poet progresses singing his theme. The commentators have missed the reference to Argo in the idea of the singing ship: in some versions the Argo proceeds smoothly and swiftly because Orpheus is singing, giving the rowers the beat (e.g. *Theb.* 5.340–45); in others the wooden figurehead, provided by Minerva, sings oracles, as in Claudian 26.15–19.

8–9. Minerva inspires ... point out to me the Bears: As the commentators observe, Minerva, goddess of wisdom, provides the (motivating) wind; Apollo is helmsman; the nine Muses (*nove* can also mean *new*—thus Christian as opposed to pagan, as Benvenuto says) point out the constellations Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, traditional guides to navigation (cf. *Purg.* 30.1–7). For the difficulty of sailing uncharted waters as overcome by mythic/supernatural help, see the previous note and the notes to lines 16–18.

10–18. You other few ... become a plowman: The apostrophe of the readers the poet claims to desire for his poem.

10–12. You other few ... sated by it: The "bread of the angels" here is theological (cf. Ps. 77.24–25) as well as philosophical doctrine; cf. *Conv.* 1.6–7:

Few are those who acquire this habit of mind desired by all, and innumerable those prevented from acquiring it who live always hungry for this food. Oh happy those few who sit at the table where the food of the angels is eaten!

How far the conception of philosophy set forth in the *Comedy* diverges from that in the *Convivio* has been hotly debated.

10. stretched forth your necks: The image is that of newly hatched birds, probably young eagles (cf. *DVE* 2.4.9).

13–14. you can well ... the salt deep: We translate Dante's term *navigio* as "course," in spite of the fact that the commentary tradition takes it to mean "a ship," in contrast to the "little barks" of the less well prepared. The problem is that the term *legno*, used for the poet's ship, is generic in connotation, while *navigio* as ship (particularly since its occupants would be plural—*voi altri*), connotes a ship larger than a mere *legno*. But the passage clearly suggests

that the poet's ship is by far the largest, leaving a large wake in which smaller vessels can comfortably sail (a similar emphasis on the smallness of "barks" and the greatness of the poet's ship occurs in 23.67–69). Therefore it seems best to understand *navigio* as referring to the action of sailing (on the model of Latin *imperium* or *dominium* [rule], which can be either abstract or concrete).

16–18. those glorious ones ... Jason become a plowman: The second explicit mention in the *Comedy* of Jason and the Argonauts, in a very different tonality from that in *Inf.* 18.83–96, where he is damned for his deception and sexual exploitation of Hysipyle and Medea. Here the emphasis is on spectacular heroism; in order to acquire the Golden Fleece, Jason harnessed two brass-hooved, iron-horned, fire-breathing bulls to plow a field and sow the teeth of the dragon slain by Cadmus, which again gave a crop of armed men. Jason succeeded in these tasks with the help of the king's daughter Medea, who gave him a protective ointment and then helped him drug the dragon guarding the Fleece. Benvenuto rightly took the parallel here and elsewhere to be between the entire enterprise of the Golden Fleece and the *Paradiso* as a whole.

17. did not so marvel: The phrase echoes *Met.* 7.120: "Mirantur Colchi, Minyae clamoribus augent" [The Colchians are amazed, the Greeks applaud with shouts]. One notes Dante's transfer of the amazement to the Argonauts, appropriate because "you others" (line 10) have now implicitly become the poet's fellow voyagers. Jason's feat was marvelous because of the fierceness and fiery breath of the bulls; Dante's feat is marvelous and unprecedented in coupling the two peaks of Parnassus and bringing Heaven to earth (1.10–24, and cf. 25.1–2; for the insistence on doubleness, see the discussion of Gemini in Chapter 2 of Durling / Martinez 1990).

18. Jason become a plowman: Italian *bifolco* [plowman], from Lat. *bubulcus* (etymology uncertain), is clearly connected in Dante's mind with the number 2 (see previous note). The term *solco* [wake, furrow] in line 14 has itself prepared this line; it implies the traditional parallel between sailing and plowing, and of both with writing: pens are also metaphorically plows that leave furrows on the page (as in Martial 4.86.11). As a plowman, the poet is of course preparing for quite a different harvest from Jason's; there is a submerged reference here, the first of many in the *Paradiso*, to the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13.3–9, 18–23), with its parallel between preaching and sowing seed, in which the Last Judgment is the harvest (see the notes to 22.151–54, and 23.20–21 and 130–32). In his curiously undeveloped lament for the death of Dante, Cino da Pistoia refers to him as an "anima [soul] bivolca [sower?]," probably referring to *Par.* 23.130–32, on which see our note.

19–30. The innate ... with the first star: The narrative resumes where it had left off at the end of Canto 1; the moment is parallel to the beginning of narration in 1.37–54, especially lines 46–51.

19–20. The innate ... carrying us up: For the "deiform realm," see 1.103–5, with notes.

22–30. Beatrice was gazing ... the first star: The almost instantaneous ascent from the sphere of fire (1.76–81) to the moon itself.

23–24. perhaps in the time ... leaves the nut: The most famous example of *hysteron proteron* (the rhetorical figure placing the last before the first) in the poem. For the importance of this figure for the *Paradiso* as a whole, see Additional Note 14. For arrow imagery as a major vehicle of Dante's teleological discourse, see the note to 1.126 and Durling / Martinez 1990.

25–26. I saw ... drew my sight: Even more insistently than in the previous canticle, in the *Paradiso* transitions are signalized by *visual* events.

31–36. It seemed to me ... still remaining whole: In each heaven, the pilgrim and Beatrice enter the body of the planet itself. The imagined penetration is a vivid concretizing of the traditional metaphor for intellectual understanding, which sees *deeply* into its object (Dante is sharply aware of the correlation between the metaphors of penetrating and of grasping—i.e., surrounding, as in the term *comprehend*, It. *capiere, comprendere*—for intellection; cf. the note on lines 35–36).

32–36. a cloud ... remaining whole: In addition to the powerfully imagined sensory vividness, two traditional ideas are at work here: (1) the ancient, universal association of the moon with water (it was known to govern tides and women's menstrual cycles and was thought to rule the growth of all plants and animals; cf. the note on line 34); (2) according to Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals* 2.2.11, the transparency of certain stones is "caused by the large amount of Air and Water hardened and compacted within them": hence the associations of cloud, water, and diamond in line 32. Note that line 33 and lines 35–36 describe essentially the same phenomenon. See also the note to lines 143–45.

34. the eternal pearl: More than the vivid image is involved here, too: medieval writers never tired of repeating Pliny's account of the formation of pearls (9.54): that oysters and other shellfish rose to the surface of the waters at night and opened to receive drops of dew, which by gestation became pearls. Isidore of Seville (*Etymologies*, Book 16) adds that the entire life of sea creatures is naturally governed by the moon and that shellfish swell and diminish with its phases. Dante may also be remembering that the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem are pearls (Apoc. 21.21). Cf. the note to 3.10–15.

35–36. as water ... remaining whole: As Palgen 1949 observes, with the ray of light (as well as the idea of conjunction, line 30), Dante is referring to astrological conceptions, light being the medium of all celestial influence on the sublunar. The analogy of sunlight penetrating water without disturbing its substance was traditionally used for the conception of Jesus, which did not affect the Virgin's virginity.

37–45. If I was a body ... truth one believes: Dante echoes saint Paul's account of his vision (2 Cor. 12.2). This passage does not assert the physical presence of the pilgrim's body in the celestial ascent, as is often carelessly asserted (see Introduction, p. 16, and the note to

1.73–75); it raises the question in order to challenge the reader's reflectiveness and to subordinate the question to the doctrine of the union of the human and divine natures in Christ, to which this is the first of many references in the *Paradiso* (cf., e.g., 6.13–21, 7.103–20). Each cantica of the *Comedy* closes in relation to it: *Inferno* with its parody in Satan (see *Inf.* 34.28–67, with notes); *Purgatorio* with its presence in the incomprehensible union of lion and eagle in the Christ-Gryphon (see especially the notes to *Purg.* 29.108–14, 31.118–26).

43–45. There we shall see ... truth one believes: In the beatific vision we shall intuit the principle of the union of two natures in the way we intuit the "first truth" (see the discussion in the note to *Purg.* 18.55–60): the flash in which the pilgrim reaches this intuition is the culmination of his vision in Canto 33 (see especially lines 127–45, with notes), to which this passage directly alludes.



Figure 3. The Argo and the Argonauts

46–148. I replied ... the dark and the bright: Two thirds of the canto are now devoted to the nature of the spots on the moon; this apparently trivial question turns out to involve the fundamental structure of the entire universe. After the pilgrim has raised the question and stated his own mechanistic view (Dante is correcting his own earlier opinion; see the note to lines 59–60), Beatrice immediately identifies it as erroneous (lines 58–63); she develops an elaborate *refutation* (lines 64–109), followed by *confirmation* (proof of the correct view); it is in fact a complete cosmology, both parts of which, clearly demarcated, enact microcosmically the cycle of procession and return.

49–51. But tell me ... fables about Cain: Lines 31–33 have made it clear that the moon spots are not visible from the supposed vantage point of the pilgrim and Beatrice within the moon (according to 22.139–41, the spots are visible only from below); the explanation to be given by Beatrice is already implied. Note that in line 49 the pilgrim addresses Beatrice with the respectful *voi*-form of the verb [*dite*], as throughout (cf. the note on 31.79–90).

51. fables about Cain: A striking metonymy names the moon as "Cain and his thorns" (*Inf.* 20.126), in the circle of the soothsayers. The notion that Cain, or sometimes Judas, was condemned to dwell on the moon, often carrying a bundle of thorns, was widespread in medieval folklore and thought to be associated with magic. This is the first of many allusions to Hell in the *Paradiso*.

52–57. If, she said, the opinion ... following the senses: Beatrice is assuming, with Aristotle and Aquinas, that all human knowledge is based on sensory perception (cf. 4.40–42); "the key of sense" refers to sensory error sometimes being correctible by closer or fuller perception. But even when full sensory perception is available, reason is imperfect ("has short wings").

59–60. What looks different ... bodies rare and dense: This mechanical explanation was widely accepted in Dante's time, supported by Averroes' authority (in his commentary on Aristotle's *De coelo*, Averroes maintained that all the heavenly bodies were identical in species, differing only in relative density and rarity); a famous passage in *RR* 16809–64 adopted his theory; as did Dante in *Conv.* 2.13.9: "The shadows in [the moon] ... are nothing but the rarity of its body, in which the rays of the sun cannot be intercepted and reflected back, as they are in its other parts." With 26.124–32, this is one of Dante's most striking self-corrections.

61–105. Certainly you will find ... equally bright there: Beatrice's refutation has two main parts, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the pilgrim's view (lines 64–72), and an appeal to supposed experimental evidence, inductive in structure (lines 73–105).

61–62. much submerged in error: Note that Beatrice's metaphor identifies error as related in some way to water and connects it with the power of the moon (cf. the note to lines 106–11).

64–72. The eighth sphere ... thinking be destroyed: Beatrice's *reductio ad absurdum*

is deductive in several ways; it proceeds from a general proposition to a particular conclusion, showing that the implications of the pilgrim's view conflict with a known truth; and it mimics astrological causality, which descends (is deduced, brought down) from the celestial (in this case the highest diversified sphere, that of the fixed stars) to the sublunar, as do lines 112–48.

64–66. The eighth sphere ... different faces: The many stars in the sphere of the fixed stars can be seen to differ in quality ("have different faces [*volti*]"; the term already implies *specific* difference). The astrological tradition consistently referred to the planets' "faces" and thought of them as regarding each other from various angles, called "aspects." See below, lines 133–45, with notes, and cf. *Quaestio 21.71–72*.

67–69. If rare and dense ... sometimes equally: Differences in the single quality of density would produce only greater or lesser intensity of a single kind of influence ("one sole power"), which would thus be shared (distributed) among all the stars.

70–72. Different powers ... be destroyed: Beatrice here states only one major assumption among the many she takes for granted (see lines 112–48, with notes): that the diversity of the influence exerted by the stars requires them to have formal differences, that is, to differ in their essences, to belong to different species; this is very close to the positions argued by Albert and Thomas (see Litt 1963).

73–105. Again, if rare matter ... equally bright there: The second part of Beatrice's refutation. She now assumes the pilgrim's view as possible and subject to experimental verification, dividing it into two variants: the rare portions of the moon, the dark spots, go either entirely through it, parallel to the rays of the sun (lines 74–75) or only partially through (lines 76–78). This division is probably the result of Dante's meditation on *RR 16809–64*, which uses the analogy of the mirror but seems only to envisage the first of these variants.

76–78. as a living body ... through its volume: That is, the rare portions would extend traversely to the rays of the sun, bounded by denser matter. Two analogies operate here: that of a book with pages of different materials, and that of a living body; both will be picked up again in the confirmation.

79–82. The first case ... This is not so: Empirical refutation of the first possible case of the pilgrim's idea: if the rarified portion of the moon extended all the way from one side to the other, parallel to the rays of the sun, the fact would be perceptible during solar eclipses, but it is not.

85–105. If the rare matter ... equally bright there: The second possibility: the rare portions extend only partway through the moon, in which case the sunlight would strike a dense portion that would reflect it. To the possible objection that the brightness of the reflection would be diminished by the distance, Beatrice replies by an appeal to an experiment. It should be understood that the experiment Beatrice suggests is to take place on earth, not, as some recent critics suppose, in the moon.

89–90. just as color returns ... hidden behind it: Color being, in the Aristotelian theory of vision, the visible as such. Lead was the normal backing for mirrors.

94–105. From this objection ... equally bright there: The imagined experiment with three mirrors, which seems to be Dante's invention, has recently been attacked as physically impossible, since the light behind the experimenter would be blocked. The objection is trivial, since adjustments in the height of the light and the angles of the mirrors would easily eliminate the difficulty. Experiments with mirrors had been known since Antiquity, and in the Middle Ages the learned were familiar with Plato's discussion of mirrors in *Timaeus* 46 and Calcidius's commentary on it (§241), which explains the necessity of adjusting mirrors obliquely in experiments. But if it had ever actually been tried, the expectations of the experimenter would certainly have determined his or her observations (on this tendency, prevalent well into the seventeenth century, see Butterfield 1950); only the development of exact concepts and precise instrumentation would eventually make a reliable result possible (it would refute Beatrice's argument: the farther mirror would provide fewer *lumina* than the nearer ones). In his note on this passage, Hollander gives useful bibliography (Hollander and Hollander 2007).

106–48. Now, as under the blows ... the dark and the bright: Beatrice's exposition of the true cause of the moon spots, one of the most magnificent passages in the poem, with an elaborate introduction (lines 106–11) and emphatic inner transition (lines 124–26), presents a complete astrological cosmology. God's creative power is *transmitted downward*, increasingly diversified, through the heavenly spheres governed by the angelic intelligences (the "movers"). The passage is thus itself a little model of the cosmos. In the microcosmic *Paradiso*, the pilgrim and Beatrice are of course ascending (like reflected beams of light, 1.49–54), and the *ascent* involves increasing understanding of the *descent* of causality (see Additional Note 13).

Boethius' "O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas" (see text, translation, and notes, pp. 686–94), an important influence on Dante's conception of poetic form, as well as on his cosmological thinking from the *Vita nova* onward, suggested many details here.

106–11. Now, as under the blows ... when you see it: The dissipation of the pilgrim's error is compared to the melting of snow in the rays of the sun—Beatrice's words bring *light*; the "subject of snow" is, of course, water (its "subject," what underlies it: cf. the note to lines 61–62: moon versus sun); for error as rigidified water, cf. *Purg.* 33.67–68, with note (the image also recurs in *Par.* 33.64 for the loss of the content of the final vision). The Aristotelian notion of change as involving the destruction of an earlier form and the imposition of a new one is involved here: note the strong sense of "*in* form," line 110: this is the terminology of the influence of the heavenly bodies, the model for Dante of all forms of causality; in its effect on the pilgrim, Beatrice's explanation is an analogue of creation (Additional Note 13). Note the parallel of Beatrice's reference to the "blows" of the sun with the reference to the heavenly spheres as like the smith's "hammer" (lines 127–29). The cycle of the metamorphoses of water is the basis of the microcosmic *petrosa* "Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna"; see the note to lines 143–45 below.

112–48. Within the Heaven ... the dark and the bright: Beatrice's explanation has

two clearly demarcated parts: a first part (lines 112–23) that gives a general view of the relation among the various celestial spheres, in descending order; and a second part (lines 127–48) that expounds the subordination of the physical spheres to the angelic intelligences and attributes the moon spots to the formal causality of the intelligence governing the moon. The passage introduces two important analogies with human life, not without ambiguities that have puzzled commentators. (For the relation of this and other passages to Neoplatonic emanationism, whose terminology Dante often echoes, see Additional Note 11.)

112–23. Within the Heaven ... fashion below: The heavenly spheres, regarded as the direct cause of sublunar change.

112–14. Within the Heaven ... all that it contains: The “Heaven of God’s peace” is the Empyrean (entered in Canto 30), beyond space and time, identified by Beatrice as located in “the mind of God” (27.109–11). Within it, the eight concentric spheres of the stars and the planets, contained within the outer *primum mobile* [first moveable thing], revolve about the stationary earth.

113. under whose power ... it contains: If 29.10–36 is taken as governing the sense of this passage, these lines do not state that the *primum mobile* brings the celestial spheres within it into existence; that would be the Proclan or Avicennan emanationist position. The strict meaning can apply only to the sublunar formation of elemented things (and thus not to human souls); but it would have a determining influence over the effects produced by the other spheres.

115–17. The next heaven ... contained by it: Next is the sphere of the fixed stars (the “so many sights”), by which God’s undifferentiated creative power, transmitted by the *primum mobile*, is diversified. The “different essences” (line 116) are those of the several stars. In Albertus Magnus’s and Aquinas’s adaptation of Neoplatonic ideas, the generic nature of visible light having been created on the first day (Gen. 1.3), the firmament and the luminaries later (Gen. 1.6–19), they must have different essences (cf. the note to lines 56–60 and Litt 1963).

117. separated ... yet contained by it: This idea goes back to Plotinus’s analysis of the stages of the emergence of multiplicity from the transcendent One: the first stage is that of Mind (*noûs*), whose unity contains the Ideas of all existing things.

118–20. The other spheres ... to their sowings: There has been some confusion among the commentators as to whether “the distinctions held within them” originate in the individual spheres or are received from above; on the basis of 29.10–36 we understand the former. The “differences” of line 118 are probably to be taken as referring to the changing relative positions of the planets. Another source of confusion has been the referent of “their” (used twice in line 120): is the antecedent the *spheres* or the *distinctions*? We hold the latter view: the various effects on the sublunar of each sphere are *sown* in such a way as to reach intended goals (*ends*).

121–23. These organs ... fashion below: A summary of the previous nine lines. Dante's use of the term *organs* (referring to the celestial spheres) would seem to imply the analogy with the human body (explicit in lines 133–44); many commentators limit its meaning to that of its etymon, Gr. *órganon* [instrument]; see the notes to lines 127–48, 133–38.

124–26. Now pay attention ... ford alone: An emphatic transition to the most important idea to which the entire passage has led (parallel to lines 106–11, the general introduction to the *confirmatio*).

126. to hold to the ford alone: The text gives literally "to hold the ford alone." The commentators agree that the idea here is "to complete the proof yourself," but they do not explain his mode of expression; we believe that his meaning is "to keep to the shallow water," where crossing is possible. *To hold the ford*, however, is capable of other meanings, including military ones, for instance, "to defend this truth against opponents."

127–48. The motion ... and the bright: Beginning once again with the most general metaphysical principle and the highest visible heavenly bodies (the fixed stars), Beatrice introduces the angelic intelligences, in a passage that, like the metaphor of *organs* (line 121), describes the relation of the angels to their spheres as analogous to that of soul to body in human beings. These are very deep waters: both ideas were included in 1277 by Etienne Templier, the bishop of Paris, in his list of condemned doctrines (numbers 102 and 189): "That the [angelic] intelligence is the soul of its heaven and that the heavenly spheres are not the instruments of the intelligences but their organs, as the ear and the eye are organs of the sensory faculty"; and "That since the [angelic] intelligence is full of forms it imprints those forms on [sublunar] matter through the heavenly bodies as if by its instruments" (quoted in Denifle and Châtelain 1889–97). How seriously Dante intended these analogies to be taken is not clear (see 19.10–36, with notes); they are, however, deeply embedded in his metaphysics.

127–32. The motion ... acts as its seal: The analogy between God's art (Nature, acting through the spheres and the intelligences) and human art (cf. *Inf.* 11.97–111) was widespread in the Middle Ages and is fundamental to Dante's poetry from the *Vita nova* and the *rime petrose* onward.

127–29. The motion ... from the smith: In these lines the heavenly sphere, whose power is governed and applied to the sublunar by the angelic intelligence, is like a hammer in the hands of a smith who possesses the knowledge and acquired skill of his art. One should note that a hammer, as a shaped object, is itself, like each heavenly sphere (see 29.35–36), a unity of form and matter.

130–32. and the heaven ... acts as its seal: The "profound mind" of the sphere of the fixed stars ("so many sights") is the angelic mind governing it; from the angelic intelligence comes the form [image] imprinted, as if by a seal, in sublunar matter by the influence of the sphere (see the note to lines 127–48). As has often been noted, like lines 133–38, these lines closely echo Boethius' "O qui perpetua" (see the note to lines 106–48, above, and the notes to

"O qui perpetua" lines 13–17).

133–48. And just as the soul ... and the bright: The analogy with the human body, derived from Boethius, is adapted by Dante to the angels and their heavens, rather than to the World Soul. Lines 133–41 state it in general terms, while lines 142–48 apply the analogy to the moon spots. Except for Nardi 1967a, the commentators tend to minimize Dante's daring here.

133–35. And just as the soul ... different faculties: Compare Boethius' "O qui perpetua," lines 13–14: "Conectens animam per consona membra risolvis" [you [God] attach Soul and resolve it through adapted members," echoed in "per ... membra ... conformate / ... si risolve" [resolves itself through members conformed] (lines 134–35; note the parallel of "consona" and "conformate"). In both Boethius and Dante, the *resolving* of the soul refers to the differentiation of its powers through the various members.

136–38. so the Intelligence ... about its unity: The diversification of the power of the Intelligence does not undermine its unity but implies its self-contemplation, as in the definition of the rational soul, which "sé in sé rigira" [turns back into itself] (*Purg.* 25.75), essentially the same idea; cf. Boethius: "In semet redditura meat, mentemque ... circuit" [(Soul) goes forth to return into itself, circles about Mind]. Note Dante's use of the term *si dispiega* [unfolds itself] in both passages (line 136 and *Purg.* 25.58).

139–41. Each different power ... it binds itself: Each angelic Intelligence being unique in species (essence), like each heavenly body, the nature of the union is different in each case. Whether Dante intends a metallurgical analogy in the use of the term *lega* (it can also mean *alliance*, *league*; cf. *Inf.* 30.73–74, with note) is open to question. The striking and daring idea, however, is that the angel is "bound" to its sphere as the soul is implicated in the body. How this could be a metaphor is unclear.

142–48. Because of the happy ... and the bright: The diversity of the angelic natures and of their degrees of beatitude accounts for the different appearance of the heavenly bodies, including the spots on the moon. The explanation does not explain why there should be any shadow in the light of the moon.

143–45. the mixed power ... the pupil of a living eye: This vivid analogy is the high point of the entire passage. See *Conv.* 3.8.11: "And what is a smile except a flashing of the delight of the soul, that is, a light appearing externally as it exists within?" For the close relation of this canto with the third *petrosa*, elaborately microcosmic and centered on the analogy between the human eye and the heavenly spheres, as well as on the mutations of water, see Chapter 4 of Durling/Martinez 1990, and Martinez's "Oculus Mundi" in that volume, pp. 224–32.

145–48. From that nature ... and the bright: "That nature" refers to "the happy nature" of line 142 (the angel), and in calling it a "formal principle," Dante comes very close to asserting that the angels are the *forms* of the heavenly bodies (as in Boethius: "Simili convertit

"imagine caelum" [curves the heavens to like pattern], but seems excluded here by 29.10–36—see the notes to lines 113 and 127–48 above). Chiavacci Leonardi sees the ambiguities of the Neoplatonic ideas here but attempts to resolve them as merely metaphors; Nardi 1967a takes them quite seriously.



CANTO 3

*Moon, continued: souls fallen short of vows—Piccarda
Donati—no discontent in Heaven—the empress Constance*

- 1 That sun which first set my breast on fire with
 love had uncovered for me, proving and
 refuting, the sweet face of lovely truth,
4 and I, in order to confess myself corrected
 and certain, raised my head to speak, as much
 as was fitting.
- 7 But a vision appeared that so tightly
 held me to see it, that I did not remember
 my confession.
- 10 As through clear and polished glass, or else
 through waters pure and tranquil and not so
 deep that their bottom is hidden,
- 13 the tracings of our faces return so weakly that
 a pearl on a white forehead is no fainter to our
 sight:
- 16 so I saw many faces eager to speak, and I fell
 into the error contrary to the one that kindled
 love between the man and the fountain.
- 19 As soon as I perceived them, thinking them to
 be mirrored images, I turned my eyes to see

whose they might be,

22 and, seeing nothing, I looked ahead again,
 straight into the eyes of my sweet guide, who
 smiled with holy ardor in her eyes.

25 "Do not marvel that I smile," she told me, "at
 your childish notion, since it does not yet trust
 its footing upon the truth,

28 but turns you about, as usual, uselessly:
 these are true substances that you see,
 relegated here because of vows not fulfilled.

31 Therefore speak with them and hear and believe,
 for the true Light that fulfills them does
 not let their feet twist away from itself."

34 And I turned to the shade that seemed most
 eager to speak, and I began, almost like one
 hampered by too much desire:

37 >O happily created spirit, who in the rays of
 eternal life experience the sweetness that
 unless tasted is never understood,

40 it will be a grace to me if you will content me
 with your name and your lot." Then the shade,
 readily and with laughing eyes:

43 "Our charity does not lock its doors to a just
 desire, but follows his love who wishes all his
 court to be like himself.

46 In the world I was a virgin sister, and if your
 memory searches well within, my being more
 beautiful will not hide me from you,

49 but you will recognize that I am Piccarda,
 who, placed here with these other blessed ones,

- am blessed in the slowest sphere.
- 52 Our affections, enflamed solely by the delight
 of the Holy Spirit, rejoice to be formed by its
 ordering,
- 55 and this lot, which seems so humble, is given
 to us because our vows were neglected and in
 some respect unfulfilled."
- 58 And I to her: "In your radiant faces there
 shines I know not what of divine, that
 transmutes you from what we knew of you before.
- 61 Therefore I was not quick to remember, but
 now what you say helps me, so that making out
 your features comes more easily.
- 64 But tell me: you souls who are happy here, do
 you desire a higher place so as to see more and
 to share more love?"
- 67 With those other shades she smiled a little
 first; then she replied, so joyous that she
 seemed to burn in the first fire of love:
- 70 "Brother, our will is quieted by the power of
 charity, which causes us to desire only what we
 have and does not make us thirst for anything else.
- 73 If we desired to be higher up, our desires
 would be discordant with the will of him who
 assigns us here,
- 76 which you will see is contradictory to these
 spheres, if to be in charity is here *necessus*, and
 if you consider well its nature.
- 79 Indeed, it is constitutive of this blessed *esse*
 to stay within God's will, and thus our very wills

- become one,
- 82 so that how we are arranged from level to level
 through this kingdom, delights the entire king-dom,
 as well as the King who enamors us of his will.
- 85 And in his will is our peace: he is that sea to
 which all moves that his will creates or Nature
 makes."
- 88 It became clear to me then how every *where* in
 Heaven is Paradise, *etsi* the grace of the highest
 Good does not rain there in a single measure.
- 91 But as it happens, if one food satisfies but
 hunger for another still remains, that we ask for
 the one and give thanks for the other:
- 94 so did I, with act and word, to learn from her
 what was the weave through which she did not
 draw the shuttle to the end.
- 97 "Perfect life and high merit enheaven a lady
 further up," she said, "according to whose rule, down
 in your world, women dress and veil themselves
- 100 so that until death they may watch and sleep
 with that Bridegroom who accepts every vow
 conformed by charity to his pleasure.
- 103 To follow her, I fled the world when a girl, and
 enclosed myself in her habit, and promised to
 follow the path of her sect.
- 106 Later, men more used to evil than to good
 tore me out of the sweet cloister: God alone
 knows what my life was after that.
- 109 And this other splendor who appears to you at
 my right side and who is burning with all the light

- of our sphere,
- 112 what I say of myself she understands of
 herself: she was a sister, and in the same way the
 shade of the holy fillets was torn from her head.
- 115 But still, after she had been turned back to the
 world against her liking and against good custom,
 she was never loosed from the veil upon her heart.
- 118 This is the light of the great Constance who
 by the second wind of Swabia generated its third
 and last power."
- 121 Thus she spoke to me, and then she began
 singing "*Ave Maria*," and singing she vanished,
 like a heavy thing into deep water.
- 124 My sight, which followed her as long as
 possible, when it lost her turned to the target of
 greater desire,
- 127 turned altogether to Beatrice; but she flashed
 so brightly in my gaze that at first my eyes could
 not endure it,
- 130 and that made me slower to ask.



CANTO 3

Quel sol che pria d'amor mi scaldò 'l petto
di bella verità m'avea scoverto,
provando e riprovando, il dolce aspetto,
e io, per confessar corretto e certo
me stesso, tanto quanto si convenne
leva' il capo a proferer più erto.

Ma visione apparve che ritenne
a sé me tanto stretto, per vedersi,
che di mia confession non mi sovvenne.

Quali per vetri trasparenti e tersi
o ver per acque nitide e tranquille,
non sì profonde che i fondi sien persi,
tornan d'i nostri visi le postille
debili sì che perla in bianca fronte
non vien men forte a le nostre pupille:
tali vid' io più facce a parlar pronte,
per ch' io dentro a l'error contrario corsi
a quel ch' accese amor tra l'omo e 'l fonte.

Sùbito sì com' io di lor m'accorsi,
quelle stimando specchiati sembianti,
per veder di cui fosser li occhi torsi;
e nulla vidi, e ritorsili avanti
dritti nel lume de la dolce guida,
che sorridendo ardea ne li occhi santi.

"Non ti maravigliar perch' io sorrida,"
mi disse, "apresso il tuo pueril coto,
poi sopra 'l vero ancor lo piè non fida

1

4

7

10

13

16

19

22

25

ma te rivolve, come suole, a vòto:
vere sustanze son ciò che tu vedi,
qui rilegate per manco di voto.

28

Però parla con esse e odi e credi,
ché la verace luce che le appaga
da sé non lascia lor torcer li piedi."

31

E io a l'ombra che parea più vaga
di ragionar drizza'mi, e cominciai
quasi com' uom cui troppa voglia smaga:

34

"O ben creato spirito, che a' rai
di vita eterna la dolcezza senti
che non gustata non s'intende mai,
grazioso mi fia se mi contenti
del nome tuo e de la vostra sorte."

37

Ond' ella, pronta e con occhi ridenti:
"La nostra carità non serra porte
a giusta voglia, se non come quella
che vuol simile a sé tutta sua corte.

40

I' fui nel mondo vergine sorella,
e, se la mente tua ben sé riguarda,
non mi ti celerà l'esser più bella,
ma riconoscerai ch' i' son Piccarda,
che, posta qui con questi altri beati,
beata sono in la spera più tarda.

43

46

Li nostri affetti, che solo infiammati
son nel piacer de lo Spirito Santo,
letizian del suo ordine formati,
e questa sorte, che par giù cotanto,
però n'è data perché fuor negletti
li nostri voti e vòti in alcun canto."

49

52

55

Ond' io a lei: "Ne' mirabili aspetti
vostri risplende non so che divino,
che vi trasmuta da' primi concetti.

58

Però non fui a rimembrar festino,
ma or m'aiuta ciò che tu mi dici,
sì che raffigurar m'è più latino.

61

Ma dimmi: voi che siete qui felici,
disiderate voi più alto loco
per più vedere e per più farvi amici?"

64

Con quelle altr' ombre pria sorrise un poco;
da indi mi rispuose tanto lieta
ch'arder parea d'amor nel primo foco:

67

"Frate, la nostra volontà qu'èta
virtù di carità, che fa volerne
sol quel ch'avemo e d'altro non ci asseta.

70

Se disiassimo esser più superne,
foran discordi li nostri disiri
dal voler di colui che qui ne cerne,
che vedrai non capere in questi giri
s' essere in carità è qui *necesse*,
e se la sua natura ben rimiri.

73

Anzi è formale ad esto beato *esse*

76

tenersi dentro a la divina voglia,
per ch' una fansi nostre voglie stesse,

sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia
per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace,
com' a lo re che 'n suo voler ne 'nvoglia.

82

E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace:
ell' è quel mare al qual tutto si move
ciò ch'ella cria o che natura face."

85

Chiaro mi fu allor come ogne dove
in Cielo è Paradiso, *etsi* la grazia
del sommo ben d'un modo non vi piove.

88

Ma sì com' ell'i avvien, s' un cibo sazia
e d'un altro rimane ancor la gola,
che quel si chere e di quel si ringrazia:

91

così fec' io con atto e con parola,
per apprender da lei qual fu la tela
onde non trasse infino a co la spuola.

94

"Perfetta vita e alto merto inciela
donna più sù," mi disse, "a la cui norma
nel vostro mondo giù si veste e vela

97

perché fino al morir si vegghi e dorma
con quello sposo ch'ogne voto accetta
che caritate a suo piacer conforma.

100

Del mondo, per seguirla, giovinetta
fuggi'mi e nel suo abito mi chiusi,
e promisi la via de la sua setta.

103

Uomini poi, a mal più ch' a bene usi,
fuor mi rapiron de la dolce chiostra:
Iddio si sa qual poi mia vita fusi.

106

E quest' altro splendor che ti si mostra
da la mia destra parte e che s'accende
di tutto il lume de la spera nostra,

109

ciò ch' io dico di me, di sé intende:
sorella fu, e così le fu tolta
di capo l'ombra de le sacre bende.

112

Ma poi che pur al mondo fu rivolta
contra suo grado e contra buona usanza,
non fu dal vel del cor già mai disciolta.

115

Quest' è la luce de la gran Costanza
che del secondo vento di Soave
generò 'l terzo e l'ultima possanza."

118

Così parlommi, e poi cominciò "Ave
Maria" cantando, e cantando vanio
come per acqua cupa cosa grave.

121

La vista mia, che tanto lei seguio
quanto possibil fu, poi che la perse
volsesi al segno di maggior disio,

124

e a Beatrice tutta si converse;
ma quella folgorò nel mio sguardo
sì che da prima il viso non sofferse,
e ciò mi fece a dimandar più tardo.

127

130

NOTES

1–3. That sun ... lovely truth: This recalls the effect of Beatrice's words at 2.106–11 and evokes Dante's youthful love for Beatrice and its characteristic *stilnovo* imagery (cf. *VN* 1.2). For Beatrice as a sun, see *Purg.* 30.75 and note.

2. proving and refuting: The two parts of the exposition in the previous canto; recalled in inverse order (*hysteron proteron*), a persisting rhetorical figure in *Paradiso* (cf. 2.106–8, 5.91–92, 7.12–14 and notes). See lines 7–31, 121–23, with notes.

5. raised my head to speak: As do those who receive the "bread of the angels" at 2.10 (see note); in the following exchange Beatrice again personifies Wisdom. The gesture might suggest the pilgrim is in the body, but see the note to 2.37–45.

7–31. But a vision ... away from itself: The pilgrim's first sight of souls in the heaven of the moon adopts the language of optical reflection already seen in the previous canto, this time with allusion to a tale by Ovid (lines 7–18). The "but" that registers the interruption of the pilgrim (the first of seven: see lines 28, 49, 64, 91, 115, 128; on this see Stierle in *LDT*) begins a progress through qualification that reflects the pilgrim's own fretful inconstancy (see below), but also his productive doubt (see 4.1–18 with note); this movement begins and ends with repose in the sight of Beatrice (see note to line 127).

10–24. As through clear ... in her eyes: What Beatrice calls substances the pilgrim reads as "mirrored images," mistaking what is in front for what is behind ("turns you about"; cf. 2.121–23); this is the disorientation of the undiscerning (see *DVE* 1.1.1, *Conv.* 1.11.3–8). In this instance of *hysteron proteron*, the pilgrim's error prepares Beatrice's account of the structure of Heaven in 4.28–48 (see note).

10–15. As through clear ... to our sight: The simile, representing the faint contrast of the souls against the nacreous background of the "divine pearl" (see 2.33–34, with note), itself evokes the pale visage of the moon (but see 2.31–33, with note) and may hint at the "pearl" of virginity, for this is the sphere of nuns, brides of Christ (the *pudicitiae margarita* is mentioned in the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae*, Chapter 5). The next sphere is also a "pearl," however (6.127).

10–11. As through clear ... through waters: If the water were deeper, the reflections would be more vivid. Implicit is a cosmic model that posits the heavens as diaphanous (transparent, like glass) and, according to the Bible, as the "waters ... above the firmament" (Gen. 1.7). That Dante speaks of water (which both reflects and refracts light), clear glass (which refracts it), and polished glass (which primarily reflects it) indicates that he is considering modes for the transmission of light, which manifest the diffusion of divine power through the universe; see *Purg.* 15.22–23, with notes; Durling/Martinez 1990; Freccero 1998.

13–15. the tracings ... no fainter to our sight: Dante's word, literally "postils" [*postille*], was used for marginal notes or glosses. The word implies that glosses are subsequent [*post*] to the text itself, their cause: thus the pilgrim thinks he sees not the text (the soul), but its gloss or reflection (often written in different ink).

16–18. so I saw ... the man and the fountain. In referring to the pilgrim's misprision as an "error contrary" (line 17), Dante refers to Ovid's Narcissus, who, having spurned the nymph Echo and earned her curse (see *Par.* 12.13–15), falls in love with his own reflection in the water of a pure spring. Once aware of his impracticable self-love, he wastes away to a flower, though his soul remains fixated on his reflection in the infernal river Styx (*Met.* 3.349–510).

Dante's text follows Ovid's with respect to the heat of Narcissus's love (3.426: "With love he kindles [*accendet*] and burns," see line 18) but imitates most closely the idea of confusing reflection and reality (3.417: "He loves a bodiless hope, takes to be a body what is but water"). Narcissus inverts the pilgrim's error:

Simple boy, why vainly try to seize a fleeting image?
What you see is nowhere; what you love (turn away!) you lose!
This reflected image [*repercussae ... imaginis*] that you see
is but a shadow [*umbra*] ... (*Met.* 3.432–34).

Dante alludes frequently to Narcissus, but he is named only at *Inf.* 30.128 (see note and Durling 1981a); see also *Purg.* 9.94–96, with note; 29.67–69 and 30.76–99, with notes (and see Picone 1977, Brownlee 1978, Shoaf 1983).

17. error: This is Ovid's term for Narcissus's mistake (*Met.* 3.431: "the one deceived incites the mistake [*error*]"; see also 3.447). Medieval moralized versions of the myth view Narcissus as deceived by transitory beauty ("the false mirror of this world," *Ovide Moralisé* 3.1909), and similar moralizing attends the myth in courtly lyric and narrative, where Narcissus's obsession with an image is taken as the lover's capture by desire for the dangerous and elusive but socially highly valued courtly lady. See *RR* 1609 and Goldin 1967.

19–24. As soon as I perceived ... holy ardor in her eyes. The pilgrim's turning of his eyes echoes the warning in Ovid's text (see 3.433, cited in note to lines 16–18), but inverts its outcome: Narcissus sees his own eyes as a pair of stars (3.420); the pilgrim, looking back from the nullity of his error, sees Beatrice's eyes. In *Purgatorio* Beatrice's eyes were emeralds, reflecting the gryphon, an image of the two natures in Christ, whose contemplation is the goal of the journey (see *Purg.* 31.115–23, with notes). Since in *Paradiso* looking into Beatrice's eyes triggers ascent to the next level (14.79–84, 18.52–69, 21.1–3, 22.154, etc.), the heavens are in a sense entered through Beatrice's eyes, and contained in them (compare *RR* 1520–1620); see Additional Note 1.

20. mirrored images. Use of the mirror for mythic and metaphysical purposes in this canto takes up implications of the physical mirrors postulated in 2.97–99, which are themselves a

cosmological model (see 2.115–17, 2.130–32 and notes, and Miller 1977). The relation of mirrors to the heavenly spheres is implicit: Italian lyric poets refer to Narcissus's watery mirror as a *spera*, a "sphere," because most mirrors were round, as is of course the sun, called *spera* at *Purg.* 15.2 (optical glasses were spherical or lenticular).

The emphasis of love poetry on optics and mirrors, found in the *Roman de la rose* (subtitled *Miroer aus amoreus*, "a mirror for lovers"), and in early Romance lyric, are based on a Platonic-Augustinian interpretation of the mirror (a reflecting medium) or the glass (a transmitting medium), as metaphors for the various approaches to God: approached through the senses through the mirror of creatures (*extra*); by self-knowledge through the mirror of the mind (*intra*); and by contemplative ascent to gaze on the mirror of God himself (*supra*, see 4.10–12, with note; see Miller 1977). That the heavens, and the angelic intelligences that move them, are a chain of mirrors is a key Neoplatonic metaphor for the divine resemblance transmitted through the material world (Macrobius, *Comm.* 1.14).

Mirrors and glasses are evoked at *Purg.* 31.115–23 (see previous note) and at *Par.* 13.58–50, 18.2, 21.16–18, 26.106–8, 28.4–12; 29.143–45 (see note above), 30.85–87 and 109, and 33.115–32.

25–30. Do not marvel ... vows not fulfilled: Beatrice's adjective *pueril* [childish] in line 26 recalls that Narcissus is a boy [*puer*] (*Met.* 3.413).

The pilgrim's "childish thought" and his pointless turning echoes Narcissus's desire for an illusion (Dante's expression is a *voto*, playing on the word for a vow, *voto*). In this case, Beatrice claims, the image is a "true substance": but this appears misleading in light of her words at 4.28–36 (see note); given that the souls are "truly present" only in the Empyrean, their images here might well be described as "mirror images." For the interpretive trap here, see Introduction, p. 17, and note to 28.4–10.

28. as usual: Beatrice's reproach seems to nullify the pilgrim's progress to this point. Compare *Purg.* 33.67–75. See *Par.* 5.4–6 and 7.19–21, with notes; he is also representing typical human limitations, however.

29–30. relegated here because of vows not fulfilled: Failure to maintain a vow of chastity or obedience is a species of infidelity (see *ST* 2a 2ae q. 88 a. 3, citing Eccl. 5.3–4; see 5.67–69 and note). Dante places some souls who, because in life they were inconstant (moon), overattached to earthly fame (Mercury), or overfond of sexual love (Venus), (see Carroll) in the first three planets traversed by the pilgrim. See also 7.146, 9.32–33 and notes.

31–130. Therefore speak ... slower to ask: The remainder of the canto is devoted to the interview with Piccarda Donati, not named until line 49, in life a nun in the order of Poor Clares. With another nun introduced later, she represents souls in the lowest and "slowest sphere" (51), the place for those who did not maintain vows to adhere to the religious life (lines 55–57). After declaring she was a nun (46–49), Piccarda explains her placement in the moon (64–90), and alludes to the vicissitudes of her earthly lot (103–8), after which she introduces her companion (109–20). Shakespeare referred to "th' inconstant moon" because of

its rapid alterations of phase; astrologers understood the moon to influence those inclined to the religious life, including founders of orders, as well as those weak of will (Bonatti in Kay 1994; see 4.79–87, with notes). For examples of constancy of will, see 4.83–84, with note.

34–63. And I turned ... comes more easily: Piccarda Donati was sister to Forese Donati, the close friend Dante speaks with among the gluttonous in *Purg.* 23–24, and to Corso Donati, leader of the Florentine Black Guelphs, the enemies of Dante's party. Corso's conspiracy with Boniface VIII and Charles of Valois led directly to Dante's exile in 1302 (see *Purg.* 24.82–87 and note). The Donati lived next door to the Alighieri in the parish of San Martino del Vescovo in Florence, and Dante's wife, Gemma Donati, came from a branch of the same family.

37–39. O happily created spirit ... never understood: Dante's address of Piccarda recalls Francesca's reception of the pilgrim in *Inferno* Canto 5 and the language of *stilnovo* poetry (for line 39 compare Dante's sonnet "Tanto gentile," line 11: "Non l'intende chi non la prova" [he does not understand who does not experience it]), which in turn derives from scriptural and liturgical language (cf. Ps. 33.9, "O taste and see"; Apoc. 2.17, "No man knoweth, but he that receiveth it") (Chiavacci Leonardi).

41. your lot: The pilgrim uses the plural here, asking about all those in the sphere of the moon; Piccarda will continue to generalize about all the souls in the moon (52–57) and all those in Heaven (70–87).

43–45. Our charity ... to be like himself: Note the reference to divine exemplarity and resemblance, also implicit in the Narcissus episode. The image of a locked door suits a cloistered nun, but there is an underlying reference to virginity, rendered moot by the ardor of spiritual love (for the erotic implications in opening a door, see *Par.* 11.59–60 and note).

45. all his court: All the blessed; the treatment of Heaven as a court is inevitable in feudal cultures, but is also suited to echoes of *stilnovo* poetic language in the canto; at DVE 1.18–19 Dante argues that the Italian "court" exists only in the works of the poets who write in the illustrious vernacular (Guinizelli and Dante chief among them; see *Purg.* 26.112–14, with note); see also 7.91 and 115, with notes.

48. my being more beautiful will not hide me from you: Piccarda's facial features are fully visible to the pilgrim; in the next sphere, discernible features begin to be hidden (see 5.124–26); thereafter, features are no longer visible, until the Empyrean is entered (see notes to 4.28–39, 30.43–45).

51. slowest sphere: In reference *not* to the moon's rapid proper motion in the zodiac, which returns it to its original phase in twenty-eight days, but to the moon's daily revolution with the celestial sphere; since the moon's orbit is nearest the earth, it has the smallest circumference, thus the moon covers the least distance in twenty-four hours and is the slowest of the planets. The speed at which the spheres turn is correlated to the rank of the angelic intelligences governing them; see 2.121–23, 28.16–45, with notes.

52–54. Our affections ... formed by its ordering: Piccarda's language unites the subjective experience of charity with the objective "form" of cosmic order; joy results from the concord of the two; see note to 64–90 below.

56–57. because our vows ... in some respect unfulfilled: Though taken from the cloister through violence, Piccarda fell short of her vow because she did not risk harm or death to return; see 4.73–90, with note. Dante's Italian includes a pun on religious vows [*voti*], which, if unfulfilled, are "empty" [*vuoti*, here *vòti*]; see note to lines 25–30, where the pun is in the rhyme words, and 4.26–26, with note.

The emphasis on vows, or acts that bind the will, informs the four cantos in the heaven of the moon. Aquinas asserted that every vow [*votum*] entails an act of will [*voluntas*] (see *ST* 2a 2ae q. 88 a. 2), and there are nine references to the will or willing in this canto alone (lines 36, 44, 73, 80, 81, twice in 84, 85, and 126; and see 4.45–26, 82–88). Developing themes from this canto, Cantos 6 and 7 take up the voluntary acts of God and mankind.

58–63. And I to her ... comes more easily: The pilgrim's slow recognition of Piccarda and her appeal to his memory recall how her brother Forese was unrecognizable to the pilgrim because of his fasting (*Purg.* 23.40–48, with notes), but identifiable because of his voice.

64–90. But tell me ... in a single measure: Piccarda states that the souls in the moon wish no higher place because their location conforms to God's judgment regarding their deserts; dissent from his will would be a dissonance in the harmony of Paradise, a concord that is itself the form or essential nature of Heaven, charity. See especially lines 43–45, 52–54, and 85–87, and cf. *Mon.* 2.2.4–6. This is the doctrinal heart of the canto; as in 2.112–48, the enlightenment of the pilgrim requires an explanation of the logic governing all Heaven.

67–69. With those other shades ... first fire of love: Piccarda's joyful response emerges from a chorus of delight as all the spirits smile; most commentators take it to mean that she glows with the reflected charity of the Empyrean, or of God; but in the context of sublimated *stilnovo* eroticism, an evocation of first love would not be out of place (see also lines 39, 48, and 52, with notes).

67. shades: Only here and at 5.107 are souls in Heaven referred to as "shades" [*ombre*]; for a possible explanation, see 9.118–19 and note.

70. Brother: This address was first used in *Purgatorio* to address the wayfarer (*Purg.* 4.127, 11.82, 13.94), where it established his status as a fellow pilgrim, and by Beatrice in *Purg.* 33.23, suggesting his spiritual maturation at the end of Purgatory, where it includes an element of correction (Havely 2004).

73–81. If we desired ... our very wills become one: For Piccarda, any deviation from charity would be a contradiction of the order of the planets themselves. The force of Dante's use of the verb "to fit" [*capere*], etymologically "to be contained by," at line 76, is that the physical order of creation, the concord of wills *within* God's will (line 80; note the spatial

meaning of the preposition), and the diffusion of charity (the action of the Holy Spirit; see lines 52–54), are facets of one reality. This is one key to Dante's conception of his heavens, consistent with the expositions of 1.100–26 (especially 103–5) and 2.64–148 (see notes). For the importance of containment to Piccarda's history and destiny, see notes to lines 103–8, 114, 115–17, and Additional Note 5.

77, 79: *necesse, esse*: Latin *Necesse* means logical necessity, and *esse* designates being; note also *etsi* [although] in line 89; cf. *Mon.* 1.14.11. The fusion of a "sweet" lyrical poetic style with the philosophical terminology of the schools was one of the successes of Dante's *stilnovo* phase (see *Purg.* 26.91–132, with notes, and note to 5.1–9), and remains in force in *Paradiso*.

85. And in his will is our peace: Cf. Eph. 2.14, "He himself is our peace" [*ipse enim est pax nostra*], and Luke 2.14 ("Peace to men of good will"). Desire is satisfied only when the individual will is conformed to God's; see again Augustine's formula, implicit in lines 70–71 (also 1.109–14 and 2.19, with notes). Five words pertinent to the will are used within a few terzinas of line 85 (lines 80–81, 84, 85), which voices a rule valid for all Heaven (see note to lines 56–57).

86–87. he is that sea ... Nature makes: At 1.113, creatures are envisioned crossing the sea of being to reach their rest; here God himself is the sea toward which all things naturally move. Cf. *Inf.* 5.97–99, *Purg.* 5.109–23 and notes, and also *Par.* 9.46–48, 82–84, with notes. The metaphor attenuates the importance of distinctions of rank, preparing the assertion of the next two lines.

88–90. It became clear ... in a single measure: God does not shed his grace equally on all, but the law of charity, by erasing all repining, makes of Heaven a community united in conformity to a single will. See *STS Suppl.* q. 93 a. 2, on the "many mansions" of Heaven. Cf. 19.7–12, with note; also *Mon.* 1.15.5, 1.16.5.

91–108. But as it happens ... after that: Piccarda relates how she vowed obedience to the rule of the Poor Clares and left the world, but, as contemporary sources recount, was compelled by her brother Corso to marry Rossellino della Tosa, a leader of the Black Guelphs and a bitter enemy of Dante's party; how Rossellino and Corso plotted the Black Guelph coup d'état of 1301–2 is related in the Florentine history of Dino Compagni (*Cronica* 3.2, 8). If Piccarda was forced into marriage when Corso was *podestà* of Bologna, it would have occurred between 1283 and 1293 (Sapegno 1958).

91–96. But as it happens ... shuttle to the end: The pilgrim, launched on another question with another "but" (see line 64), is compared to a fickle eater, while Piccarda's account of her inconstancy is formulated in terms of weaving, typical female work in Florentine families of all classes; see *Par.* 15.115–26 and note.

97–102. Perfect life ... to his pleasure: Piccarda refers to Clare Scifi (1194–1253) who founded the Poor Clares in 1212 in her zeal to imitate the poverty and humility of Francis of

Assisi (see 11.76–84 and notes). According to the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae* attributed to Thomas of Celano (see 11.43–117 and note), Clare fled from her aristocratic household to receive the tonsure from Francis himself (Chapters 7–9). Facing down threats of violence from her family, she persuaded her sister Agnes to join her new order, exemplifying the strength of will that nuns here in the moon lacked in life (Chapters 24–25). Dante's account of the nun's connubial life with Christ is also consistent with the language of the Canticle of Canticles used in the biography to describe Clare's relationship to Christ (Chapter 6), continuing the theme of sacred desire pervading the canto, and indeed much of *Paradiso* (see 10.139–44, 11.58–75, with notes, and Additional Note 4).

103–8. To follow her ... after that: As in her references to the habit of her order (lines 99, 114, 117), Piccarda treats her habit as an enclosure, like the cloister (see line 43). Piccarda speaks of Clare as "enheavened" [*incielata*] by her merits, a bold coinage related to *imparadise*, used of Beatrice (*Par.* 28.3, 4.28, and 9.73–81, with notes); such uses make the cosmos a kind of conventional enclosure. See notes to lines 73–81, 114, 115–17, and Additional Note 5.

106–8. Later men more used to evil ... after that: Piccarda veils the sorrows of her married life, as did Francesca (*Inf.* 5.138, with note) and la Pia (cf. *Purg.* 5.133–36, with note). The three women bear comparison with one another; all three are *mal mariées* (Stefanini 1992a), their lives marred by male violence, and vows of marriage, secular or spiritual, are at stake in each case (see notes to lines 37–38, 86–87, 91–108, and 121–23).

109–30. And this other splendor ... slower to ask: Piccarda introduces her companion, Constance of Hauteville (1154–98), daughter to Roger II, king of Naples and Sicily. When Constance's uncle, King William the Good, died without offspring, she became the sole legitimate heir of the Norman royal house of Hauteville. At Frederick Barbarossa's instigation, she was contracted in marriage in 1185 to his son, Henry of Hohenstaufen, in order to unite the Norman inheritance with the Holy Roman Empire, and to counter the claims of her nephew, the bastard Tancred of Lecce, whom Pope Clement III favored in order to save the Church from encirclement by a unified Ghibelline power. Constance gave birth in 1195 to Frederick, the future Frederick II (*Inf.* 10.119, with note). According to Guelph accounts, Constance was over fifty years old when she was taken from the cloister, and thus had borne Frederick when past childbearing age, a feat judged demonic. Dante accepts the legend but inverts its defamatory thrust (for a similar revision of a slandered reputation, compare Manfred, Constance's grandson, *Purg.* 3.112–17, with notes). Constance was in fact never a nun and was married to Henry at age 31, an advanced age for the day; she gave birth to Frederick at age 41. After Henry VI died in 1196, Constance was empress regent until her death.

111. burning with all the light of our sphere: Piccarda indicates that Constance holds a higher place within the sphere of the moon, and implies there are differentiations of rank within each of the spheres; see 9.118–25 and note.

112. what I say of myself she understands of herself: An instance of mutual transparency among the blessed, or perhaps the social leveling prescribed among religious,

here sharpened by the shared condition of the two women, both nuns forced from the cloister.

114. the shade of the holy fillets: The wimple (headband) enclosed the head, and identified the nun as a bride of Christ (secular married women wore white wimples rather than black; see *Purg.* 8.73–75, with notes).

115–17. But still ... the veil upon her heart: Costance's vow never ceased to bind her will, and Piccarda implies this is also her own condition (line 112). A veiled heart is of course enclosed. The indirectness of Piccarda's assertion may render Dante's impression of the reticence of nuns in general.

118–20. This is the light ... third and last power: Leaving Clare unnamed (although lines 109–11 hint at her name, whose relation to *claritas* [illustriousness] is emphasized in her biography), Piccarda names Constance, whose name is clearly significant in this canto of the inconstant, as it was when mentioned by Manfred in *Purg.* 3.113; a late commentary alleges Piccarda's name as a nun was also Constance. Henry VI, Constance's husband, and her son, the future Frederick II, are evoked by the periphrastic "wind of Swabia," referring to Hohenstaufen feudal holdings; "wind" suggests the strong, but sporadic force of their imperial authority in Italian politics (the first such "wind" was Frederick Barbarossa, the father of Henry VI). See note to 17.133–42, and compare the arrival of the *messo* at *Inf.* 9.64–72, with note.

121–23. Thus she spoke ... heavy thing into deep water: Piccarda seems to sink into the watery body of the moon. The metrical stresses in line 123 recall those of *Inf.* 5.145, where the pilgrim falls "as a dead body falls."

122. Ave Maria [Hail, Mary]: Based on the Annunciation (Luke 1.28–30), this is one of the prayers medieval Catholics were required to know by heart (see 23.94–111 and 32.94–96, with notes; also *Purg.* 10.40 and note). As he had done with Beatrice at *VN* 28.1 and 34.7, Dante enlists a virtuous woman under the banner of Mary. Since Piccarda returns to the Empyrean (see 4.28–39 and note), she reenters Mary's presence, and her *ave* is a real greeting. Piccarda says hello, but Echo's last word to the dying Narcissus is the opposed-in-meaning but assonant *vale* ("goodbye").

127. turned altogether to Beatrice: The repeated turn back from "emptiness" in lines 25–28 makes the whole canto a series of turns away from and back to Beatrice—another pattern for *Paradiso* as a whole (or nearly; cf. 31.79–90 and note).



CANTO 4

Moon, continued: the pilgrim's doubts—Beatrice's answers: souls merely appear here; form and matter in vows; conditioned and absolute will

- 1 Between two foods, equally distant and
attractive, a free man would die of hunger
before he brought either to his teeth;
- 4 so a lamb would stand between two hungers
of fierce wolves, fearing both equally, so a
hound between two does:
- 7 therefore if I was silent, urged in equal measure
by my two doubts, I do not reproach myself,
since it was necessary, nor do I commend myself.
- 10 I was silent, but my desire was depicted on
my face and my questions with it, much more
warmly than if articulated in speech.
- 13 Beatrice did as Daniel did, when
he soothed Nebuchadnezzar's unjustly
cruel anger,
- 16 and said: "I see well how each of your two
desires draws you, so that your concern binds
itself and does not speak.
- 19 You argue: 'If my good will persists, by what
accounting does another's violence lessen the

- measure of my deserving?"
- 22 Another cause of doubt for you is that the souls seem to have returned to the stars, in accord with Plato's opinion.
- 25 These are the questions that weigh equally in your *velle*; and therefore I will treat first the one that contains more poison.
- 28 That one among the Seraphim that most engods itself, Moses, Samuel, and whichever John you choose, all—even Mary, I say—
- 31 have their thrones in no different heaven from these spirits who have just appeared to you, nor have they more or fewer years to their being,
- 34 but all adorn the first sphere and differently have blessed life, in that they feel more and less of the eternal Spirit.
- 37 They have shown themselves here, not because this sphere is allotted to them, but to signify the celestial one that is least exalted.
- 40 To speak thus to your understanding is necessary, for it takes from sense perception alone what later it makes worthy of intellection.
- 43 For this reason Scripture condescends to your faculties, attributing feet and hands to God and meaning something different,
- 46 and holy Church represents Gabriel and Michael to you with human shape, and the other one who made Tobias whole.
- 49 What Timaeus argues about souls is not similar to what is seen here, since what he says

- does seem to be his meaning.
- 52 He says that the soul returns to its star,
 believing that it had fallen down from there
 when Nature gave it to be a form.
- 55 And perhaps his opinion is different from
 what the words seem to express, and it may
 have a meaning that is not to be scorned:
- 58 if he means that honor and blame for their
 influence returns to these wheels, perhaps his
 bow strikes some truth.
- 61 This principle, ill understood, led almost the
 whole world astray, so that it erred in naming
 planets Jove, Mercury, and Mars.
- 64 The other doubt that troubles you has less
 venom, because its malice could not draw you
 away from me:
- 67 that our justice seems unjust to the eyes of
 mortals is argument of faith and not of wicked
 heresy.
- 70 But since your understanding can
 penetrate to this truth, as you desire I shall
 content you.
- 73 If violence is when the one that undergoes it
 contributes nothing to what does the forcing,
 these souls were not excused by it:
- 76 for the will, if it does not will, cannot be
 extinguished but does as Nature does in fire,
 though violence thwart it a thousand times.
- 79 Therefore, if the will bends much or little, it
 seconds the force, and so did these souls, though

- able to flee again to the holy refuge.
- 82 If their will had been entire, like what held
Laurence on the grill or made Mucius harsh
toward his hand,
- 85 it would have driven them back up the path
they had been forced to go down, as soon as they
were loosed; but so firm a will is all too rare.
- 88 And by these words, if you have received
them as you should, that argument is invalidated
which would have harmed you many times.
- 91 But now another obstacle confronts your
eyes, so great that by yourself you would not get
free of it: you would tire first.
- 94 I have planted in your mind as a certainty that
a blessed soul could never lie, because it is
always close to the first Truth,
- 97 but yet you heard Piccarda say that
Constance kept her love of the veil, so that she
seems to contradict me here.
- 100 Many times has it happened, brother, that in
order to flee danger people have done what
they should not, against their preference:
- 103 like Alcmaeon, who, begged by his father,
killed his own mother and, so as not to fail in
piety, became impious.
- 106 On this point I wish you to consider that force
can become mixed with the will, so that the offences
cannot be excused.
- 109 Absolute will does not consent to the harm,
but conditional will consents in so far as it fears,

- if it draws back, to fall into worse trouble.
- 112 Therefore when Piccarda speaks thus, she
refers to the absolute will and I to the other; so
that we both speak truly."
- 115 Such was the overflowing of the holy stream
that issued from the Fount whence every truth
derives, thus she brought peace to both of my desires.
- 118 "O beloved of the first Lover, O divine one," I
said then, "whose speech washes over me and
warms me, giving ever greater life,
- 121 my power of feeling is not deep enough to
return you equal grace for grace, but let him
who sees and has the power answer for it.
- 124 I see well how our intellect is never satisfied
unless illumined by that Truth outside of which
no truth can range;
- 127 there it rests, like a beast in its lair, as soon
as it has reached it; and it can reach it: if not,
every desire would be *frustra*.
- 130 Thus doubt is born like a burgeoning at the
foot of truth, and it is our nature that drives us
toward the summit from peak to peak.
- 133 This invites me, this gives me assurance,
lady, to ask you with reverence about another
truth that is obscure to me.
- 136 I would know if one can so satisfy unfulfilled
vows with other goods that they will not be slight
in your scales."
- 139 Beatrice gazed at me with eyes so divine and
full of sparks of love that, overcome, my powers

turned in flight,
142 and I almost lost myself, with eyes cast down.



CANTO 4

Intra due cibi, distanti e moventi
d'un modo, prima si morria di fame
che liber' omo l'un recasse ai denti;

sì si starebbe un agno intra due brame
di fieri lupi, igualmente temendo,
sì si starebbe un cane intra due dame:
per che, s' i' mi tacea, me non riprendo,
da li miei dubbi d'un modo sospinto,
poi ch' era necessario, né commendo.

Io mi tacea, ma 'l mio disir dipinto
m'era nel viso e 'l dimandar con ello,
più caldo assai che per parlar distinto.

Fé sì Beatrice qual fé Daniello,
Nabuccodonosor levando d'ira
che l'avea fatto ingiustamente fello,
e disse: "Io veggio ben come ti tira
uno e altro disio sì che tua cura
sé stessa lega sì che fuor non spira.

Tu argomenti: 'Se 'l buon voler dura,
la violenza altrui per qual ragione
di meritar mi scema la misura?'

Ancor di dubitar ti dà cagione
parer tornarsi l'anime a le stelle,
secondo la sentenza di Platone.

Queste son le question che nel tuo *velle*
pontano igualmente; e però pria
tratterò quella che più ha di felle.

1

4

7

10

13

16

19

22

25

- D'i Serafin colui che più s'india,28
Moïsè, Samuel, e quel Giovanni
che prender vuoli, io dico, non Maria,
non hanno in altro cielo i loro scanni31
che questi spiriti che mo t'appariro,
né hanno a l'esser lor più o meno anni,
ma tutti fanno bello il primo giro,34
e differentemente han dolce vita
per sentir più e men l'eterno Spiro.
- Qui si mostraro, non perché sortita37
sia questa spera lor, ma per far segno
de la celestïal c' ha men salita.
- osì parlar conviens al vostro ingegno,40
però che solo da sensato apprende
ciò che fa poscia d'intelletto degno.
- Per questo la Scrittura condescende43
a vostra facultate, e piedi e mano
attribuisce a Dio, e altro intende,
e santa Chiesa con aspetto umano46
Gabrïel e Michel vi rappresenta,
e l'altro che Tobia rifece sano.
- Quel che Timeo de l'anime argomenta49
non è simile a ciò che qui si vede,
però che come dice par che senta.
- Dice che l'alma a la sua stella riede,52
credendo quella quindi esser decisa
quando Natura per forma la diede.
- E forse sua sentenza è d'altra guisa55
che la voce non suona, ed esser puote
con intenzion da non esser derisa:

s' ellì intende tornare a queste ruote
l'onor de la influenza e 'l biasmo, forse
in alcun vero suo arco percuote.

58

Questo principio, male inteso, torse
già tutto il mondo quasi, sì che Giove,
Mercurio e Marte a nominar trascorse.

61

L'altra dubitazion che ti commove
ha men velen, però che sua malizia
non ti poria menar da me altrove:

64

parere ingiusta la nostra giustizia
ne li occhi d'i mortali è argomento
di fede e non d'eretica nequizia.

67

Ma perché puote vostro accorgimento
ben penetrare a questa veritate,
come disiri, ti farò contento.

70

Se violenza è quando quel che pate
niente conferisce a quel che sforza,
non fuor quest' alme per essa scusate:

73

che volontà, se non vuol, non s'ammorra,
ma fa come natura face in foco,
se mille volte violenza il torza.

76

Per che, s'ella si piega assai o poco,
segue la forza, e così queste fero,
possendo rifuggir nel santo loco.

79

Se fosse stato lor volere intero,
come tenne Lorenzo in su la grada
e fece Muzio a la sua man severo,
così l'avria ripinte per la strada
ond' eran tratte, come fuoro sciolte;
ma così salda voglia è troppo rada.

82

85

- E per queste parole, se ricolte 88
l'hai come dei, è l'argomento casso
che t'avria fatto noia ancor più volte.
- Ma or ti s'attraversa un altro passo 91
dinanzi a li occhi, tal che per te stesso
non usciresti: pria saresti lasso.
- Io t'ho per certo ne la mente messo 94
ch' alma beata non poria mentire,
però ch' è sempre al primo Vero appresso,
e poi potesti da Piccarda udire 97
che l'affezion del vel Costanza tenne,
sì ch' ella par qui meco contradire.
- Molte fiate già, frate, addivenne 100
che, per fuggir periglio, contra grato
si fé di quel che far non si convenne:
come Almeone, che, di ciò pregato 103
dal padre suo, la propria madre spense,
per non perder pietà si fé spietato.
- A questo punto voglio che tu pense 106
che la forza al voler si mischia, e fanno
sì che scusar non si posson l'offense.
- Voglia assoluta non consente al danno, 109
ma consentevi in tanto in quanto teme,
se si ritrae, cadere in più affanno.
- Però quando Piccarda quello spreme, 112
de la voglia assoluta intende, e io
de l'altra, sì che ver diciamo insieme."
- Cotal fu l'ondeggiar del santo rio 115
ch' uscì del fonte ond' ogne ver deriva,
tal puose in pace uno e altro disio.

"O amanza del primo amante, o diva,"
diss' io appresso, "il cui parlar m'inonda
e scalda sì che più e più m'avviva,

118

non è l'affezion mia tanto profonda
che basti a render voi grazia per grazia,
ma quei che vede e puote a ciò risponda.

121

Io veggio ben che già mai non si sazia
nostro intelletto, se 'l ver non lo illustra
di fuor dal qual nessun vero si spazia;

124

posasi in esso, come fera in lustra,
tosto che giunto l'ha; e giugner puollo:
se non, ciascun disio sarebbe *frustra*.

127

Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo,
a piè del vero il dubbio, ed è natura
ch' al sommo pinga noi di collo in collo.

130

Questo m'invita, questo m'assicura
con reverenza, donna, a dimandarvi
d'un'altra verità che m'è oscura.

133

Io vo' saper se l'uom può sodisfarvi
ai voti manchi sì con altri beni
ch' a la vostra statera non sien parvi."

136

Beatrice mi guardò con li occhi pieni
di faville d'amor così divini
che, vinta, mia virtute diè le reni,
e quasi mi perdei con li occhi chini.

139

142

NOTES

1–18. Between two foods ... does not speak: The introduction to this canto of explanations represents the pilgrim as unable to choose which of his doubts to express first. It has occasioned much discussion, most of which has been concerned with the question of the degree of its Averroism (the idea that the will is incapable of choosing between rationally equivalent possibilities smacks of the Averroistic reading of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. 3.2.1–12; see Nardi 1944, Vanni Rovighi 1971, and Chiavacci Leonardi). But in *Mon.* 1.12.2–6, Dante sets forth the view that freedom of the will is only achieved when judgment alone, unswayed by appetite, determines choice (as in *Purg.* 18.16–75: even if all desires were astrologically caused, reason still has the power to discern and choose the better), and clearly reason would not choose starvation. Thus we believe this passage to be another of Dante's interpretive traps (see Durling 2001a and Durling 2003).

Little attention has been given to the relation of this beginning to the rest of the canto (an exception is Bárberi-Squarotti 1992). Dante's point seems to be that the pilgrim's two doubts are in fact *not* equally important, although he desires their clarification "equally": Beatrice says that one of them has "more venom" than the other (line 27), and could lead away from her (lines 65–67). Thus the canto repeats the process of Cantos 1 to 3, though with greater subtlety and at a higher level, all of which cantos feature the correction of dangerous misconceptions, and at its end the poet defends the heuristic value of doubt as such (lines 130–32; and cf. lines 67–69).

The clarification of the pilgrim's more dangerous doubt (lines 28–63) is also a major statement of a basic principle governing the entire poem (this has been recognized in connection with the narrow question of the location of souls, but not in relation to the poem's entire range of sensory representation; cf. the notes to 2.1–6 and Introduction, pp. 14–17). Warned against misreading in Canto 2, the reader is here being instructed in more than the relation of souls to planets, and the elaborate proem helps emphasize the importance of Beatrice's explanation.

1–9. Between two foods ... I commend myself: Later in the fourteenth century this problem became known as that of "Buridan's ass," unable to choose between identical and equidistant stacks of hay, named after the noted Parisian professor of logic, Jean Buridan. It is important to note that the pilgrim is caught between his equally strong desire for clarification of two doubts, i.e., intellectual confusions. That the poet neither blames nor commends his indecision is no doubt to be related to the imperfect state of his understanding at this moment (i.e., not at the time of writing): as well as to the view that doubts, misunderstandings, and even errors are morally neutral in themselves (cf. lines 124–32, with notes).

4–6. so a lamb ... two does: These antithetical examples seem to be Dante's inventions, although suggested by Ovid (Seneca's *Thyestes* 707–11, sometimes cited as a source, are also

derived from this Ovid passage):

tigris ut auditis diversa valle duorum
exstimulata fame mugitibus armentorum
nescit, utro potius ruat, et ruere ardet utroque (*Met.* 5.164–6)
[as a tiger, hearing in neighboring valleys,
when frantic with hunger, the lowing of two herds,
knows not which to attack first, and burns to attack both]

Dante's similes place the "free man" on the same level with the beasts that lack reason (lamb and hound) and with a murderous tyrant, associating the pilgrim with both the victims (the lamb and the does) and the predators (the hound and the wolves): all the threats are mortal, as in lines 13–15. The clearest parallel is with the lamb: the pilgrim misjudges the relative seriousness of his doubts, but both present dangers.

13–114. Beatrice did ... both speak truly: Reading the pilgrim's thoughts, Beatrice articulates his two doubts in ascending order of seriousness (lines 19–24) and answers them in descending order (lines 25–114). Lines 28–63, then, treat the relation of the blessed souls to the planets in which the pilgrim sees them, and lines 73–114 the question of the blame attached to yielding to violence; lines 25–27 and 64–72 are introductory comments on the relation of questioning and doubt to the possession of true faith; as Beatrice observes in lines 27 and 64–66, error concerning the "true" location of souls could undermine faith.

13–15. Beatrice did ... cruel anger: In Daniel 2, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, has a dream that disturbs him, but which he forgets; when his soothsayers can neither divine his dream nor, of course, interpret it, he furiously orders all his "wise men" to be put to death, including Daniel. Inspired by a divinely sent dream of his own, however, Daniel interprets the dream, saves many lives, and becomes the king's favorite. (The king's dream is the basis of the Old Man of Crete; see *Inf.* 14.94–120 and *Inferno* Additional Note 3; in *Epistle* 13.8 Dante cites it as an instance of prophetic vision granted to the unworthy). For the question of the *Comedy* as dream, see Introduction, pp. 17–18. The parallel with Nebuchadnezzar (cf. the note to lines 4–6) is disturbing (intellectual error can have serious consequences if not corrected), but the emphasis here is on its resolution.

21. the measure of my deserving: Beatrice is speaking of "merit" (*meritare* [deserving]) as quantifiable, a conception underlying the entire casuistry of vows and penitence, as well as the mainstream doctrine of Purgatory and indulgences (cf. our introduction to *Purgatorio*, pp. 9–10).

25–26. These are the questions ... in your *velle* [will]: The infinitive of Latin *volo*, *velle* [to will, wish], is used by Dante to denote the intellectually determined will (see the note to lines 1–18). This passage and 33.143–45 (see notes there) are the only ones in the poem that employ the term.

28–63. the Seraphim ... Mercury, and Mars: Beatrice sees that the pilgrim connects the souls met in the moon, said in 3.30 to be “relegated” there for not fulfilling their vows, with Plato’s account in *Timaeus* 41–42 (known directly or indirectly) of each soul’s preexistence in its star and its return to beatified existence there after living virtuously. The Platonic doctrine might deny the direct creation of human souls by God (see *Purgatorio* 25 and *Purgatorio* Additional Note 11), and it historically strengthened the pagan deification of the planets (lines 61–63). Beatrice’s explanation, then, has three parts: (1) the souls’ real dwelling, the Empyrean (lines 28–36); (2) the significance of their appearance in the moon (lines 37–48); and (3) the interpretation of Plato’s meaning (lines 49–63).

28–36. the Seraphim ... the eternal Spirit: The souls the pilgrim has just met merely *appeared* in the moon, for all the blessed—even the Seraphim (the highest order of angels) and the greatest prophets and saints, including saint John the Baptist, saint John the Evangelist, and even the Virgin—are enthroned in the “first heaven,” the Empyrean, and all equally share eternal life (the mention of “more or fewer years” may serve to dissociate the souls from the differing periods of revolution of the planets); the Empyrean, of course, is beyond both time and space (see the note to 2.112–14). The notion of some commentators that the souls are equally happy is of course mistaken, since souls feel the love and joy of the Holy Spirit in different degrees (lines 35–36; cf. 14.37–51, with notes).

Beatrice’s explanation of the appearance to the pilgrim’s imagination of the faces of Piccarda and Costanza in the moon as “showings” has far-reaching implications for the semiology of the “*alta fantasia*” [high imagining] (33.140) of the entire journey. All the sensory images in the poem, of Beatrice’s beauty, of souls in the planets or the Empyrean (they do not have bodies), of the planets themselves, of the vision of the godhead, are here acknowledged to be the poet’s means of “speaking to” the reader’s imagination, and it is the reader’s responsibility to make them “*d’intelletto degno*” [worthy of intellection] (line 42; see Introduction, pp. 8–10).

It is not, however, the case that Beatrice’s statement implies that the appearances of souls in planets do not “aim at any reality, even imaginary, beyond [themselves]” (Freccero 1968); as Beatrice observes, in the moon they “*signify* the celestial [level that is least exalted]” (lines 38–39; italics added), and, as she will imply in lines 58–60, both here and in other planets they also signify the importance of astrological influences.

28. That one ... that most engods itself: The Seraph whose vision penetrates most deeply into God (for the idea, see 21.92). This daring coinage of Dante’s, *indiarsi* [*in+dio+are*—the first conjugation is normally used for coined verbs—plus the reflexive pronoun: to engod oneself], which provides the model for many others, like *incielare* [to enheaven] (3.97), continues the series of coinages pushing at the limits of language.

37–48. They have shown ... made Tobias whole: The souls have appeared in the moon in order to signify their low rank among the blessed (but see the note to lines 58–60); this is a sensory representation of an abstract principle, thus an example of *accommodation*, which Beatrice now explains as the necessity of addressing the human imagination. For the

larger semiological implications of this passage, see below, note to lines 40–42.

40–48. To speak thus ... made Tobias whole: The idea that divine revelation must be adapted—"accommodated"—to human understanding (as Beatrice puts it, it must "condescend to your faculties") is implicit in the Old Testament and fundamental to the New Testament, though seldom stated or generalized. The Scholastics devoted much discussion to the importance of metaphor in the Bible (see the note to lines 44–45), but the topic became a major explicit focus of theology only in modern times (see Leipold Mueller-Schwefe 1978).

40–42. To speak thus ... worthy of intellection: The view that all human knowledge is ultimately based on sense perception, adopted by Dante also in *Conv. 2.4.17*, is Aristotle's (see *De sensu et sensato* 445b, *Metaphysics* 1.1–2, and *De anima* 3.4–7), developed in reaction against Plato's theory that all abstract understanding was a form of recollection of the forms or ideas, known before birth; for Aristotle and his followers, even the most abstract thought is accompanied by images. Aristotle's view was interpreted by Aquinas to mean that the human intellect is naturally most fitted to understanding the so-called *quidditas* [specific essence] of the objects of sense perception (see his commentary on *De anima* 3.4–7).

44–45. attributing feet ... something different: Many examples could be cited, among them Ps. 8.4 and Lam. 1.14 (hands) and 3.34 (foot); the idea was a commonplace: the commentators cite *ST 1a a.1 q. 9–10*.

46–48. Gabriel ... made Tobias whole: These three are the angels most frequently named in the Bible: Gabriel, the bearer of the Annunciation to Mary (see *Purg.* 10.34–45, with notes); Michael, who leads the angelic host against the rebel angels (*Apoc.* 12.7); and Raphael (Milton's "sociable angel," *Paradise Lost* 8), who in the Book of Tobias, included in the Vulgate and therefore canonical in Catholicism, instructs the younger Tobias how to restore his father's sight, as well as to prevent the devil from preventing his marriage. All three are archangels and are said in the Bible to take on human form (Gen. 18–19, Tob. 5.5); Beatrice's mention of the Church here may refer to frescoes and other visual arts.

49–63. What Timaeus argues .. Mercury, and Mars: Beatrice's discussion of Plato's *Timaeus* and its doctrine of the origin and destination of souls has two parts: the first (lines 49–54) distinguishes Plato's literal doctrine from what the pilgrim has just seen; the second (lines 55–60) proposes another, more acceptable interpretation of it (in fact a metaphorical or allegorical one that applies equally to the *Paradiso*).

49–54. What Timaeus argues ... to be a form: Beatrice first assumes that the literal meaning of the text of the *Timaeus* is Plato's doctrine (line 51).

49. What Timaeus argues: As Varanini 1984 observes, Dante's naming of Timaeus as the speaker of the cosmogony in the *Timaeus* would seem to be evidence of his having direct knowledge of Calcidius's translation; however, it is also a conventional way of citing the title of the dialogue.

52–54. He says ... to be a form: A summary of *Timaeus* 41d–42b. After fashioning the lesser souls out of the same materials as the World Soul, though less pure, the Demiurge “placed each soul in a star ... Now, whenever by necessity a soul would be implanted in a body ... [after death] he who had lived as he ought would return to the star in which he had been sown, to inhabit it and live a true and blessed life.”

On the Aristotelian/Scholastic (not Platonic) idea of the soul as the “form” of the body, see *Purgatorio* Additional Note 11. Dante’s mention of “Nature” also invokes a medieval concept very different from Plato’s “necessity” (see Gregory 1957). The question of Dante’s direct knowledge of the *Timaeus* has been much debated; we incline toward the positive view.

55–60. And perhaps his opinion ... some truth: Beatrice now suggests that Plato’s statement is a metaphorical expression of a truth, namely of the importance of the influence, both positive and negative, of the heavenly bodies on human personalities (see Additional Notes 12 and 14). Note the parallel between the more and less apparent meanings of both Plato’s and Dante’s texts, and with *Conv.* 4.21.2–3, where Dante suggests there is some truth in all the opinions of the philosophers about the origin of the soul when rightly understood (cf. *Conv.* 3.14.15, *Ecl.* 4.16–24).

58–60. if he means ... some truth: If Plato means that human beings share the praise or blame for their actions with the planets, to the extent that their native talents and temperaments are beyond their control (like the color of their hair; see 32.61–75, with notes) because they are determined by the heavenly bodies, then his meaning is acceptable. (Dante is not the originator of this view; Guillaume de Conches, the twelfth-century glossator of the *Timaeus*, seems to have been the first to state it; see Jeauneau 1965 and Jeauneau 1973; Guillaume gives the same interpretation; see our note on “O qui perpetua,” lines 18–21.) Beatrice’s remarks are *a fortiori* to be applied to the *Comedy*, and she here states one of its fundamental themes (cf. the notes to lines 1–18, 55–60).

61–63. This principle ... Mercury, and Mars: The power of the stars, although it determines many aspects of one’s life, is limited; wrongly understood, astronomical doctrine may seem to attribute the entire responsibility for human actions to the stars (cf. *Purg.* 16.67–72), as in the superstitious belief in astral determinism and judicial astrology; in antiquity it led to the planets being worshipped as gods (cf. 8.1–12, with notes).

64–72. The other doubt ... I shall content you: A transition to the second topic, the question of violence: since the pilgrim expects the judgments of Heaven to be just, his questioning them indicates the soundness of his faith (see lines 130–32).

67–69. that our justice ... wicked heresy: Sapegno points out that here *argumento di* can mean either “evidence of” or “incitement to.”

70–72. But since your understanding ... content you: God’s justice being by definition transcendent, human beings can penetrate it only in part (see Cantos 18–19); this, however, is an instance that human understanding can grasp (as Aristotle did).

73–114. If violence is ... both speak truly: The resolution of the pilgrim's first doubt (lines 19–21), again in two parts: (1) the apparent contradiction between Piccarda's and Beatrice's words (lines 91–114), another instance of careful interpretation. (Part 2 begins in line 91.)

73–90. If violence is ... harmed you many times: Dante attributes to Beatrice here a very conventional formulation, almost a translation of Aristotle's conclusion to his analysis of the question in *Nich. Eth.* 3.2.12: "It appears therefore that an act is compulsory when its origin is from outside, the person compelled contributing nothing to it" (the commentators also cite *ST* 1a 2ae q. 6 a. 4–6, which uses similar language). Noteworthy, however, is the emphasis on the intensity of will that can resist violence.

Fire imagery, closely associated with that of light, is systematically invoked by Dante (cf. 1.139–41 and *Purg.* 18.28–30, with notes); Ovid's tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, whose love burns all the more fiercely when forbidden, offers many suggestions (see *Purgatorio* Additional Note 13).

82–87. If their will ... all too rare: The divided will is a central issue in traditional Christian thought; its extreme form can only be healed by grace, as in Romans 7.7–12 and Augustine's account of his conversion in *Confessions* Book 8. Dante seems to indicate, in Piccarda's statement of the reason for her low rank in Heaven (3.56–57), that it is a punishment for her broken vows. But one must keep in mind that the sins of every soul in Heaven have been repented and forgiven and that the split in their wills has been healed in Purgatory. Is Dante inconsistent here?

The most probable answer to this question is that Dante regarded the weakness of will of these souls as beyond their control and due to the importance of the influence of the moon on their personalities (note the parallel with Justinian in Mercury, and Cunizza, Folquet, and Rahab in Venus). In 32.73–75 saint Bernard indicates that the basic determining factor of beatitude is the souls' "primo acume" [basic sharpness of intellect] (cf. 32.75 and 14.37–51). Dante seems to conceive of souls in Heaven as in a sense like containers: all are filled completely—even to overflowing—with vision, not equally, but according to their differing capacities. The dimness of the appearance of the moon children compared with "higher" souls' disappearance in the brightness of their joy would seem at least partly accounted for in this way.

83–84. like what held Laurence ... toward his hand: A Christian and a pagan example: Saint Laurence was a third-century martyr, first mentioned by saint Ambrose; he was roasted on a grill, which he was said to have joked about (*Legenda aurea*). Mucius Scaevola (mentioned, with other Romans, in both *Conv.* 4.5.3 and *Mon.* 2.5.4), when threatened with torture by the Etruscan king, Lars Porsenna, demonstrated the idleness of the threat by holding his right hand in a burning brazier (Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 2.12).

91–114. But now another ... both speak truly: The second part of Beatrice's answer on violence, introducing the distinction between absolute and conditioned will (discussed below).

91–93. But now another ... would tire first: A transition to the new topic: exactly why this issue would be inextricable for the pilgrim is not clear (Beatrice's explanation will repeat Aristotle's words almost verbatim).

94–99. I have planted ... contradict me here: The new topic is introduced as resolving the apparent contradiction between Piccarda's and Beatrice's words. Beatrice is remembering 3.31–33.

100–114. Many times has it ... both speak truly: The fear of violence leads to compromise with it, against one's preference, often leading to wrong actions. Beatrice presents a somewhat compressed version of *Nich. Eth.* 3.1.1–12; the terminology of absolute and conditioned will is Scholastic, derived from this passage (see *ST* 1a 2ae q. 6 a. 6).

103–5. like Alcmaeon, who ... became impious: In *Theb.* 2.265–305 and 4.187–212, to gain the necklace made by Vulcan for the goddess Harmonia, Eriphyle betrays the hiding place of her husband, the seer Amphiaraus (see the notes to *Inf.* 20.31–36 and 33), so that he must fight at Thebes, where he dies. Although Beatrice says that Amphiaraus asked Alcmaeon to avenge him, in *Thebaid* 7 it is to Apollo he entrusts the revenge, foreseeing his son's deeds. Aristotle mentions Euripides' version of the myth (of which only fragments survive) in *Nich. Eth.* 3.1.8, scoffing at it as ridiculously implausible. Dante mentions Alcmaeon's revenge as famous in *Purg.* 12.49–51. Since Alcmaeon is not threatened with violence, the example seems extraneous to the previous ones; but Beatrice has generalized the issue in lines 100–102.

105. so as not to fail ... became impious: The line echoes Ovid's reference to Alcmaeon in *Met.* 9.407–8: "ultusque parente parentem / natus erit facto pius et sceleratus eodem" [avenging one parent on the other, the son will become by one and the same deed both dutiful and wicked].

106–14. On this point ... both speak truly: The problem is resolved in terms of the distinction between absolute will (what the will desires independently of all circumstance) and conditioned will (specific determination to a particular action). The distinction underlies Virgil's elaborate discussion in *Purgatorio* 17–18 of the necessity of bringing the conditioned will into full conformity with the absolute will—the central theme of the *Purgatorio*. See especially our notes on *Purg.* 18.55–66 and 19.29–33.

106–8. On this point ... cannot be excused: In other words, the individual's compromise with the external compulsion is a contribution to or acceptance of it, in the terms of lines 73–74.

109–14. Absolute will ... both speak truly: Dante does not introduce the term *conditioned*, but it is clearly implied, especially in "the other" (line 114); it is included in the translation for clarity. In other words, although Constance gave in to the compulsion in order to avoid worse trouble (conditioned will), her fundamental desire for the veil was independent of circumstances (absolute will).

112–14. when Piccarda ... both speak truly: The refining of interpretation of Piccarda's words is parallel to Beatrice's finding a possible acceptable meaning in Plato's doctrine of the return of souls to the stars; both involve dealing with apparent contradictions.

115–42. Such was the overflowing ... with eyes cast down: A striking testimony to the enormous impression Aristotle's lucid analyses made on thinkers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; he was "the master of those who know" (*Inf.* 4.131), to such an extent that we find Dante treating certain clarifications of his as issuing from the fount of all wisdom, God himself. The kind of intense intellectual satisfaction that Dante expresses here (in his characteristic language: an overwhelming love of the principle of illumination personified by Beatrice) was a major factor in the optimistic reassessment of human reason brought about in the Scholastic period (see our introduction to the *Inferno*, pp. 15–17). (For the traditional *topos* of eloquence as a river, cf. *Inf.* 1.79–80, with note.)

121–23. my power of feeling ... answer for it: The pilgrim is able to recognize intellectually the profundity of his debt to Beatrice, as well as the fact that his human limitations prevent his even feeling it appropriately enough to repay her, and he calls on God ("he who has the power") to do so. For a similar formulation, see 15.79–84; for the *topos*, see *Aen.* 1.600–605. On the pilgrim's use of *voi*, see the note on line 138.

124–32. I see well ... from peak to peak: A particularly clear statement of the axiom supporting Dante's intellectualism (which he shares with the Dominicans; cf. 14.37–60, with notes): the deepest satisfaction possible is that of the contemplation of truth, and the earthly experience of it leads to the belief that the ultimate—the beatific—vision of God is the true and reachable goal.

127–28. there it rests, like a beast in its lair: Another striking image, expressing the highest intellectual satisfaction, which human beings share with the angels, in terms of the intense, even fierce, feeling of security—in fact, of being at home—felt, as Dante imagines, by wild animals (note the recurrence: lines 4–6, and compare Dante's use of the metaphor of hunting—for the truth—in *DVE* 1.16.1–4 and *Mon.* 2.7.1).

128–29. and it can ... would be *frustra* [in vain]: As Chiavacci Leonardi observes, this argument is also used by Aquinas (*ST* 1a q. 12 a. 1): "If the intellect of the rational creature cannot reach the First Cause, the desire of nature would be empty".

130–32. Thus doubt is born ... from peak to peak: Because of the faith in the attainability of ultimate truth ("thus" [*per quello*: literally, because of this]; cf. *Conv.* 3.15.7), doubt leads upwards (always assuming the motivation of the doubter); it springs up like a fountain or a burgeoning plant [*rampollo*] (the same term is used of the pilgrim's thoughts of Beatrice in *Purg.* 27.42). The "foot of the truth" in line 131 can be taken as a tree image, but it is replaced in line 132 by the image of a mountain or mountain range, inescapably recalling the mountain of Purgatory. The eager questioning of doubt, not satisfied with easy answers, expresses "our nature"—"All men naturally desire to know" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.1; cf. *Purg.*

21.1–3, with note)—which impels us to strive to ever higher insights until we reach “the summit,” the Highest. Thus the canto returns to the impasse presented at its beginning and resolves it; one notes the strong, if implicit, reference to the Neoplatonic concept of the intellectual ascent as *return* (cf. *De div. nom.* 981d).

This fervent passage clearly impressed Petrarch, who drew on it for the beginning of his great canzone “Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte” [From thought to thought, from peak to peak] (*Rime sparse* 129). His canzone does not, however, culminate in the vision of absolute Truth at the summit, but rather in the measurement of distance (“how much air separates me from her beloved face”).

133–42. This invites me ... with eyes cast down: The conclusion to the canto announces the topic of Canto 5, and it may surprise modern readers (especially ones unfamiliar with the traditions of Roman Catholicism) to realize that most of Cantos 2–5 are devoted to the technical casuistics of vows. In an age when all Christian denominations face an unprecedented and long-term crisis of recruitment, one tends to forget how universal and serious the concern with vows was in the Middle Ages—not only among the enormous numbers of religious of both sexes (vowed to chastity, poverty, and obedience whether in convents or, like the mendicant orders, in the cities), but also among countless lay persons of all ranks in society: out of spontaneous devotion or when sick or in danger, they made vows to practice abstinence, to perform penitence or devotions to a particular saint, to go on pilgrimages or crusades, to help finance religious causes, to give children as oblates to monasteries or to the priesthood, or to enter monasteries themselves. The clergy were often vigilant to see publicly made vows fulfilled, especially if made by rulers.

136–38. I would know ... your scales: The pilgrim’s question is: Can the content of vows be changed in a way that will not be found wanting? The term “other goods” [*altri beni*] already anticipates the distinction Beatrice will make between the form and the matter of vows (5.43–62).

138. in your scales: *Statera* [balance] is a classical and biblical term for the traditional form of scales: a pivoted cross-piece from which two platters are suspended, one for the objects to be weighed, the other for objects of known weight; it is the traditional attribute of Justice (the zodiacal sign Libra was associated with Virgo, traditionally identified as the goddess of justice; cf. *Met.* 1.149–50, *Aen.* 12.725–27). There are numerous biblical denunciations of unjust earthly *staterae*: Lev. 19.30, Hos. 12.7, Amos 8.5; Heaven’s weighings will of course be just (see the equivalent term *bilancia* [balance], referring to vows in 5.62 and to Christ’s full satisfaction of the law in 13.42).

138. your: *Vostre* [your] can be either singular (referring to Beatrice) or plural (referring to all the inhabitants of Heaven). Three times previously in the *Paradiso* (2.49, 4.122, and 4.134), the pilgrim has addressed Beatrice with the respectful verb or pronoun; he will not address her again—she will read his mind—until 31.80–90, a passage that will have great effect (see also *Purg.* 31.36; 33.30, 81, 91).

141–42. overcome, my powers ... eyes cast down: Note the parallel with the pilgrim's faint in *Inf.* 5.139–42.



CANTO 5

Moon, continued: Can the matter of a vow be changed?—People should be slow to vow—Mercury: souls of followers of glory

- 1 "If I flame toward you in the heat of love
 beyond the measure that is seen on earth, so
 that I overcome the power of your sight,
4 do not marvel, for it proceeds from perfect
 sight, which, as it apprehends, so moves its foot
 toward the apprehended good.
7 I see well how the eternal Light already
 shines in your intellect, the Light that, when
 seen, alone and always kindles love,
10 and if some other thing leads your love
 astray, it is only some vestige of the eternal
 Light, ill understood, that shines through it.
13 You wish to know if with some other service
 one can replace an unfulfilled vow with enough
 to secure the soul from accusation."
16 Thus Beatrice began this canto; and like one
 who does not interrupt his speech, she
 continued thus her holy discourse:
19 "The greatest gift that ever in his bountfulness
 God gave in creating, and the most conformed

- to his goodness, the one that is most prized,
- 22 was the freedom of the will, with which the
creatures with intelligence, all of them and only
they, were and are endowed.
- 25 Now you will see, if you argue from this premise,
the high worth a vow has, if it is such that
God consents when you consent,
- 28 for, when such a pact is made between God
and man, this treasure is sacrificed, precious as
it is, and this is done by its own act.
- 31 Therefore what can one give to replace it? If you
want to put to good use what you have offered
up, you are trying to do good with something stolen.
- 34 You are now assured of the central point, but because
holy Church grants dispensation in this
matter, which seems against the truth I have shown you,
- 37 you must sit a little longer at table, since the
tough food you have taken in still requires help
for its digestion.
- 40 Open your mind to what I reveal to you and fix
it there within, for there is no certain knowledge
in having understood without retaining.
- 43 Two things constitute the essence of this
sacrifice: one is the thing offered up; the other
is the agreement.
- 46 This latter can never be cancelled except by
being kept, and on this point my speech above
was so precise:
- 49 for this reason it was still necessary for the
Hebrews to make offerings, although things offered

- could at times be changed, as you must know.
- 52 The other, which you can see is matter to the form, can indeed be such that one does not err exchanging it with some other matter.
- 55 But let no one change the load upon his shoulders by his own decision, without the turning of both the white and the yellow key;
- 58 believe that any substitution is folly if the thing set aside is not included in the one taken up as four is included in six.
- 61 But whatever has so much value that it weighs down every scale, that cannot be replaced by any expense.
- 64 Let not mortals take vows as idle talk; be faithful, but not cross-eyed like Jephthah in his first gift,
- 67 who should have said: 'I did wrong' rather than, keeping the promise, doing worse. And you will find the great leader of the Greeks to have been a blockhead,
- 70 because of whom Iphigenia wept for her lovely face, and made both fools and wise men weep for her, when they heard of such religion.
- 73 O Christians, be slower to be moved: be not like a feather in every wind, and do not believe that every water will wash you.
- 76 You have the New and the Old Testament and the shepherd of the Church to guide you; let this suffice for your salvation.
- 79 If evil greed shouts some other word, be human beings, not brainless sheep, so that the

- Jew may not laugh at you in your midst.
- 82 Do not act like the lamb that leaves its
 mother's milk and, simple and wanton, fights
 against itself and its own pleasure!"
- 85 So Beatrice to me, as I write; then she turned
 back, all desirous, toward that direction where
 the world is most alive.
- 88 Her silence and her transmuted face imposed
 silence on my eager mind, which already had
 new questions before it,
- 91 and like an arrow that strikes the target
 before the bowstring has been stilled, so we
 sped into the second realm.
- 94 There I saw my lady so joyous, when she
 entered the light of that heaven, that the planet
 shone more brightly for it.
- 97 And if the planet changed and laughed, what
 did I become, who in my nature am
 transmutable in every respect!
- 100 As in a fishpond tranquil and pure the fish
 approach what comes from outside, if they
 deem it to be their food,
- 103 so I saw more than a thousand splendors
 drawing toward us, and from each we heard:
 "Behold one who will increase our loves!"
- 106 And as each one drew near, we could see
 the shade was full of gladness by the brightness
 that came forth from it.
- 109 Think, reader, how deprived you would feel,
 how anxious to know more, if what begins here

- did not proceed,
- 112 and you will see by your example how much I
desired to hear from them their condition, as
soon as they were manifest to my eyes.
- 115 "O well-born one, to whom grace grants to
see the thrones of the eternal triumph before
your warfare is abandoned,
- 118 we are aflame with the Light that ranges
through all Heaven; and therefore if you wish to
be illumined by us, drink your fill."
- 121 Thus did one of the holy spirits speak to me,
and Beatrice: "Speak, speak freely, and believe
them as gods."
- 124 "I see well how you nestle within your own
light, and that you shoot it forth from your eyes,
for it flashes when you laugh,
- 127 but I do not know who you are, nor why,
worthy soul, you occupy the sphere that veils
itself from mortals with another's rays."
- 130 This I addressed to the light that had first
spoken to me, whereat it became much brighter
than before.
- 133 Like the sun, which hides in its excess of light,
when the heat has worn away the tempering
of thick vapors:
- 136 so in its greater gladness that holy face
became hidden from me within its own rays, and
thus, all enclosed, it answered me
- 139 in the mode that the following canto sings.



CANTO 5

"S' io ti fiammeggi nel caldo d'amore
di là dal modo che 'n terra si vede,
sì che del viso tuo vinco il valore,
non ti maravigliar, ché ciò procede
da perfetto veder, che, come apprende,
così nel bene appreso move il piede.

Io veggio ben sì come già resplende
ne l'intelletto tuo l'eterna Luce
che, vista, sola e sempre amore accende,
e s' altra cosa vostro amor seduce,
non è se non di quella alcun vestigio
mal conosciuto che quivi traluce.

Tu vuo' saper se con altro servizio
per manco voto si può render tanto
che l'anima securi di letigio."

Sì cominciò Beatrice questo canto,
e sì com' uom che suo parlar non spezza
continuò così 'l processo santo:

"Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza
fesse creando, e a la sua bontate
più conformato, e quel che più s'apprezza,
fu de la volontà la libertate,
di che le creature intelligenti,
e tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate.

Or ti parrà, se tu quinci argomenti,
l'alto valor del voto, s' è sì fatto
che Dio consenta quando tu consenti,

1

4

7

10

13

16

19

22

25

ché, nel fermar tra Dio e l'omo il patto,
vittima fassi di questo tesoro,
tal quale io dico, e fassi col suo atto.

28

Dunque che render puossi per ristoro?

31

Se credi bene usar quel c' hai offerto,
di maltolletto vuo' far buon lavoro.

Tu se' omai del maggior punto certo,
ma perché santa Chiesa in ciò dispensa,
che par contra lo ver ch' i' t'ho scoperto,

34

convienti ancor sedere un poco a mensa,
però che 'l cibo rigido c' hai preso
richiede ancora aiuto a tua dispensa.

37

Apri la mente a quel ch'io ti paleso
e fermalvi entro, ché non fa scienza,
sanza lo ritenere, avere inteso.

40

Due cose si convegnono a l'essenza
di questo sacrificio: l'una è quella
di che si fa; l'altr' è la convenenza.

43

Quest' ultima già mai non si cancella
se non servata, e intorno di lei
sì preciso di sopra si favella:
però necessitato fu a li Ebrei
pur l'offerere, ancor ch' alcuna offerta
si permutasse, come saver dei.

46

49
L'altra, che per materia t'è aperta,
puote ben esser tal che non si falla
se con altra materia si converta.

52

Ma non trasmuti carco a la sua spalla
per suo arbitrio alcun, sanza la volta
e de la chiave bianca e de la gialla;

55

e ogne permutanza credi stolta
se la cosa dimessa in la sorpresa
come 'l quattro nel sei non è raccolta.

58

Però qualunque cosa tanto pesa
per suo valor che tragga ogne bilancia,
sodisfar non si può con altra spesa.

61

Non prendan li mortali il voto a ciancia;
siate fedeli, e a ciò far non bieci
come leptè a la sua prima mancia,

64

cui più si convenia dicer: 'Mal feci'
che, servando, far peggio. E così stolto
ritrovar puoi il gran duca de' Greci,
onde pianse Efigènia il suo bel volto,
e fé pianger di sé i folli e i savi
ch' udir parlar di così fatto cólto.

67

Siate, Cristiani, a muovervi più gravi:
non siate come penna ad ogne vento,
e non crediate ch' ogne acqua vi lavi.

70

Avete il novo e 'l vecchio Testamento
e 'l pastor de la Chiesa che vi guida:
questo vi basti a vostro salvamento.

73

Se mala cupidigia altro vi grida,
uomini siate e non pecore matte,
sì che 'l Giudeo di voi tra voi non rida.

76

Non fate com' agnel che lascia il latte
de la sua madre, e semplice e lascivo
seco medesmo a suo piacer combatte!"

82

Così Beatrice a me com' io scrivo;
poi si rivolse tutta disiante
a quella parte ove 'l mondo è più vivo.

85

Lo suo tacere e 'l trasmutar sembiante
puoser silenzio al mio cupido ingegno,
che già nuove questioni avea davante,
e sì come saetta che nel segno
percuote pria che sia la corda queta,
così corremmo nel secondo regno.
Quivi la donna mia vid' io sì lieta
come nel lume di quel ciel si mise,
che più lucente se ne fé 'l pianeta.

E se la stella si cambiò e rise,
qual mi fec' io, che pur da mia natura
trasmutabile son per tutte guise!

Come 'n peschiera ch' è tranquilla e pura
traggonsi i pesci a ciò che vien di fori
per modo che lo stimin lor pastura,
sì vid' io ben più di mille splendori
trarsi ver' noi, e in ciascun s'udia:
"Ecco chi crescerà li nostri amori."

E sì come ciascuno a noi venia
vedeasi l'ombra piena di letizia
nel folgor chiaro che di lei uscia.

Pensa, lettore, se quel che qui s'inizia
non procedesse, come tu avresti
di più savere angosciosa carizia,

e per te vederai come da questi
m'era in disio d'udir lor condizioni,
sì come a li occhi mi fur manifesti.

"O bene nato a cui veder li troni
del triunfo etternal concede grazia
prima che la milizia s'abbandoni,

88

91

94

97

100

103

106

109

112

115

del Lume che per tutto il Ciel si spazia
noi semo accesi; e però, se disii
di noi chiarirti, a tuo piacer ti sazia."

118

Così da un di quelli spiriti pii
detto mi fu, e da Beatrice: "Dì, dì
sicuramente, e credi come a dii."

121

"Io veggio ben sì come tu t'annidi
nel proprio lume, e che de li occhi il traggi,
perché corusca sì come tu ridi,

124

ma non so chi tu se' né perché aggi,
anima degna, il grado de la spera
che si vela a' mortai con altrui raggi."

127

Questo diss' io diritto a la lumera
che pria m'avea parlato, ond' ella fessi
lucente più assai di quel ch' ell' era.

130

Sì come il sol che si cela elli stessi
per troppa luce, come 'l caldo ha róse
le temperanze d'i vapori spessi:

133

per più letizia sì mi si nascose
dentro al suo raggio la figura santa,
e così chiusa chiusa mi rispuose
nel modo che 'l seguente canto canta.

136

139

NOTES

1–15. If I flame ... the soul from accusation: Beatrice explains her added brightness (see also 3.1–3, with note) and restates (lines 13–15) the pilgrim's question regarding the commutation by the Church of unfulfilled, or "empty," vows (4.136–38, 5.14). This introduction deploys key concepts for *Paradiso*.

4–6. do not marvel ... apprehended good: Explicit here is Dante's position, fundamental to the *Comedy*, that intellection and understanding (often expressed as vision, here "sight") are prior to the act of will, expressed as desire and love; cf. *Purg.* 18.22–33, with notes, and see 4.124–32, which prepares this passage; also 14.40–41, 15.73–84, 28.109–11, with notes, and Additional Note 3. Acts of will are prominent in Cantos 3–5.

4–5. for it proceeds from perfect sight: Most commentators take the "sight" to be that of Beatrice, in her role of imparting Wisdom, rather than the pilgrim's, as is sometimes suggested (but how then justify 3.25–30?). The point is that Beatrice exemplifies the proper ordering of understanding and choice, preparing subsequent discussion of the will.

5–6. as it apprehends so moves its foot: Completing the sequence of understanding followed by desire, the poet's shift from abstract to concrete discourse reflects how the poem is a journey of the mind to God in the guise of movement through space. For the "foot" of the will, see *Purg.* 18.44; for the pilgrim's foot, see *Purg.* 17.84, with note; and on the two feet of the soul see *Inf.* 1.30 and note.

7–12. I see well ... shines through it: Beatrice postulates the light of immutable truth shining within the mind of the pilgrim; once strengthened (through education; see *Purg.* 16.73–81 and notes), it is a reliable guide to right judgment.

9. when seen, alone and always kindles love: Compare Francesca (*Inf.* 5.103: "Love, that pardons no one beloved from loving") and Virgil: "Love, kindled by virtue, always kindles other love" (*Purg.* 22.10–11; see note there).

11–12. some vestige ... that shines through it: For "vestige," see 1.106–7 and note, and *Mon.* 1.8.2 ("the whole universe is simply an imprint [*vestigium*] of divine goodness"), where the "imprint" is the natural excellence of monarchical rule. For *Monarchia* and this canto, see note to lines 19–24, and Additional Note 2.

16–18. Thus Beatrice began ... holy discourse: Dante's attention to Beatrice's speech, along with related passages in lines 85–87, 109–14 (the second address to readers; cf. 2.1–18 and note), and line 139, point to the pilgrim's dependence on Beatrice's discourse—termed a "holy process" (line 18)—in guiding him through the heavens. Thus in this canto, the verb

proceeds (lines 4, 110) is to be taken as alluding to the procession of the *Verbum*, the Word, from God, mediated through Beatrice (see 7.112–14 and note, and Additional Note 1).

16. Thus Beatrice began this canto: Mentioning the formal unit of the canto with the inception of Beatrice's speech as a mediation of the Word, Dante suggests that she begins the song that is Dante's poem at its remote origin (see *VN* 42.2) and guarantees its truth at every stage of the way; see *Inf.* 2.103–8, *Purg.* 31.115–41, and *Par.* 31.79–90, with notes.

19–87. The greatest gift ... the world is most alive: Beatrice's last exposition in the moon sets out Dante's view of the vow as a pact between man and God, and of the powers, limitations, and abuses of ecclesiastical authority in the administration of these pacts.

19–63. The greatest gift ... by any expense: Religious vows (chastity and obedience, and sometimes poverty) involve a voluntary sacrifice that renders back to God his greatest gift to man, that of free will (lines 19–33). The sacrifice of free will is beyond any dispensation, as it is a treasure that cannot be replaced or augmented with anything greater. Beatrice explains that if the Church permits commutation of certain vows, this may be justifiable with respect to their matter (e.g. abstaining from wine rather than meat during Lent), but never with respect to the form, that is, the fact of the vow itself (34–63).

Aquinas also denies that a monastic vow of chastity can be dispensed, even by the pope (*ST* 3a q. 88. a. 10). Dante's views are much stricter than the views of, for example, Hostiensis (Henry of Susa), the commentator on the *Decretals*: for Hostiensis, the pope can release from any vow, even that of chastity, if greater good ensues (such as a dynastic marriage furthering peace, as in the case of Costanza, 3.109–30 and note). For Pastore Stocchi *NLD* Dante in this canto attacks the views of Hostiensis (see note below).

19–24. The greatest gift ... were and are endowed: With the exception of *Ep.* 13, this is the only quotation of the *Comedy* in any of Dante's other works (Dante's excerpts of his own poetry in the *DVE* are all lyric); it is cited at *Mon.* 1.12.6 in reference to the double goal of humanity, happiness on this earth, and happiness in Heaven:

This freedom (or this principle of all our freedom) is the greatest gift given by God to human nature—as I have already said in the *Paradiso* of the *Comedy*—since by virtue of it we become happy here as men, by virtue of it we become happy elsewhere as gods [translation by Prue Shaw].

See Additional Note 2.

19–22. The greatest gift ... was the freedom of the will: See *Purg.* 16.7–78, 18.64–74, and 27.140, with notes, passages that define the work of Purgatory as the recovery of the freedom of the will, and where Beatrice is indicated by Virgil as an examiner on freedom of the will (*Purg.* 18.73–75 and note). Aquinas touches on this view of the vow, but only incidentally (*ST* 3a q. 88 a. 4).

19–21. The greatest gift ... conformed to his goodness: For the generosity and goodness of the Creator, see 2.106–48, 130–32; 7.64–66 and notes.

23–24. creatures with intelligence ... are endowed: That is, men and angels, all of them, and they alone in the creation, both before and after the fall of the rebel angels and the fall of man; the present tense ("are") allows that new free souls are continuously created by God (see *Purg.* 25.61–75, with notes).

26–27. if it is such that God consents when you consent: The pact must be virtuous if it is to be admissible to God; for Aquinas, a vow is a promise made to God that He accepts (2a 2ae q. 88 a. 12). Dante's phraseology emphasizes that the pact is balanced and reciprocal (see Additional Note 8).

28–30. for when such a pact is made ... done by its own act: "Pact" [*patto*], "precious," and "by its own act," as well as "sacrificed" (line 44) suggest that Dante charges a vow sworn before God with the force of the scriptural covenants [*pactum, foedus*] between God and his people (e.g. Gen. 6.18, 9.9–17; Exod. 6.5), that is, with Noah, Abraham, and Israel (see *Par.* 12.17 and note), which are fulfilled in the voluntary sacrifice of Christ, the new covenant, offered up by God himself for man's salvation (cf. Heb. 9.11–22; Anselm, *CDH* 1.7). Thus the discussion of vows prepares the discussion of the Atonement in cantos 6–7; see notes to lines 61–62 and 63.

32–33. If you want to put to good use ... something stolen: Once sacrificed, the freedom of the will cannot be recovered; this would be like taking back a gift and reusing it for profit. Compare "something stolen" [*maltolletto*] with Dante's language for robbery (*Inf.* 11.36, "wrongful extortion" [*tollette dannose*]) and simony (*Inf.* 19.98, "ill-gotten coin" [*mal tolta moneta*]). "Good use" also alludes to usury, by which profit is obtained from money whose use is sold. Oliva 1991 takes the imagery of exchange, weights, and measures (see lines 55, 61–62) as satirical, alluding to the commutation of vows for money that was allowed by the canonists Dante abhorred.

34–63. You are now assured ... replaced by any expense: The apparent contradiction of the Church's commutation and dispensation of vows is now discussed. Pastore Stocchi *NLD* notes that Beatrice's argument follows the discursive formulas of scholastic reasoning (e.g. *sed contra* [but on the contrary]), but with a twist, since her conclusion is that some vows may *not* be dispensed, contradicting Hostiensis and much contemporary practice. Dante's disapproval of liberal dispensation parallels his attitude toward indulgences in *Purgatorio* (see *Purg.* 2.94–102, with notes, and Durling 2010).

34–42. You are now assured ... understood without retaining: Beatrice is the teacher of Wisdom (for Wisdom's banquet see Prov. 9.1–6, *Purg.* 13.27, with note). "Hard food" is the truth too difficult for neophytes, who need milk (see Heb. 5.12–14).

35–39. holy Church grants dispensation ... help for its digestion: Dante's

equivocal rhyme on *dispensa* [dispenses], that is, annuls or forgives, and *dispensa*, meaning digests or distributes (the third rhyme is *mensa* [table]), is found also in Aquinas's discussion of the dispensation of vows (*ST* 2a 2ae q. 88 a. 10).

40–42. Open your mind ... understood without retaining: Beatrice's proverbial phrasing, found in Seneca and Albertanus of Brescia, continues the implication that intellectual absorption is a metaphorical meal, a link that remains implicit in the idea of conserving what has been learned as food for the mind; see also line 124 and *Purg.* 25.34–45, with notes. For Dante's poem as nourishment, see Durling 1981a (and see 17.130–32 and note).

43–51. Two things constitute ... as you must know: The traditional distinction of matter and form, made explicit in line 52. Dante's use here of the scholastic language for the sacraments parallels Aquinas's use of the form/matter distinction in his discussion of vows (*ST* 2a 2ae q. 88 a. 5).

49–51. for this reason it was still necessary ... could at times be changed: Many Old Testament texts describe the devotion of gifts to God (see Exod. 23.19, 34.26; Leviticus 27.1–34, etc.). For several early commentators, the reference to changing the thing offered recalls the attempted sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham (traditionally seen as an Old Testament prefiguration of the sacrifice of Christ) only to have an angel furnish a substitute sacrificial animal; compare note to lines 64–72.

52–63. The other ... by any expense: The vow itself, the "agreement," may not be revoked, but the matter of the vow, "the thing offered up," may be replaced—only, however, if the new matter exceeds the old by a ratio of 6:4, or 3:2. This is more rigorous than Leviticus 27.30–31 (which adds a fifth part, 6:5 or 20 percent; see 6.138 and note).

55–57. But let no one change ... of both the white and the yellow key: The vow is a yoke that must be borne, but like the burden imposed by Christ, the "yoke is sweet" (Matt. 11.30). With an abrupt shift out of metaphor, Beatrice refers to the keys of ecclesiastical authority delegated through the pope to bishops and priests (see *Inf.* 27.103–4 and *Purg.* 9.117–27, with notes).

61–63. But whatever has so much ... by any expense: An imbalance arises when a human being negotiates a pact with God; this anticipates the discussion of the Atonement in Canto 7; for the term "replace" [*sodisfare*] used for Christ paying the debt of Adam's sin, see 7.40–45, 97–102, with notes, and the next note.

62. every scale: Dante's word here, *bilancia*, recalls its near-synonym at 4.136–38 (*statera*; see note), which poses the question of the commutability of vows. Like the yoke in line 55, both types of scales allude to the Cross, the balance Christ used to compensate for the sin of Adam. See 13.42, *Inf.* 23.100–103, 115–26, with notes, and Additional Note 8.

64–84. Let not mortals ... its own pleasure: Furnishing examples of foolish vows,

Beatrice warns against taking vows lightly. Christians should avoid dramatic avowals and look rather to the Scriptures and to the Church for their salvation. Reference to the faithful tempted by "evil cupidity" may imply an attack on the ecclesiastical practice of redeeming vows for money, which the old commentators associate with the friars of saint Anthony (see note to line 79).

64–72. Let not mortals ... heard of such religion: Facing a difficult campaign, Jephtha, a judge of Israel, promised to sacrifice to God in exchange for victory whatever first came to meet him on his return from battle (Judges 11.30–31). He was met by his daughter, and she asked that she might bewail her virginity for thirty days before submitting to the knife. When the Greeks sailing against Troy were becalmed in Aulis, Agamemnon, king of Argos and leader of the expedition, was told by the augur Calchas that the fleet could not sail without shedding virgin blood in honor of Diana; the king sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia (in Ovid's version a deer is miraculously substituted for the girl at the crucial moment). See Virgil, *Aen.* 2.116, Calchas speaking:

Sanguine placasti ventos et virgine caesa,
cum primum Iliacas, Danai, venistis ad oras
[with blood you calmed the winds, and a murdered girl,
when first you came to the Trojan shores, O Greeks.]

(Dante refers to this passage at *Inf.* 20.110–11; see note there). See also Ovid, *Met.* 12.27–34 and *Consol.* 4.m.7.4–8. Dante may have read, in line 101 of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, a verse similar to line 72 of this canto: "To such great evils could religion persuade" [*tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*].

65. be faithful, but not cross-eyed: Because it involves a promise, Aquinas defines a vow as an act of fidelity (*ST* 2a 2ae q. 88 a. 3).

Dante's word for "cross-eyed," *bieco*, implies resentment, envy, and mistrust, as at *Inf.* 6.91 (Ciacco); see also *Par.* 6.136 and notes. Here the meaning suggests being turned away from righteousness.

67–68. who should have said ... doing worse: Aquinas reports a comment by Jerome on Jephtha's vow: "In vowing he was foolish [*stultus*], through lack of discretion, and in keeping his vow he was wicked." (*ST* 2a 2ae q. 88 a. 2). Pietro di Dante cites Eccl. 5.3–5 ("An unfaithful and foolish [*stulta*] promise displeaseth Him").

68–69. And you will find ... a blockhead: "Blockhead" is our translation of *stolto* [Lat. *stultus*], used in comments on Jephtha (see note above), here used for Agamemnon (for other exchanges between the examples of Jephtha and Agamemnon, see next note); it echoes line 58 (*stolta*, also in rhyme, of the facile permutations of vows permitted by the Church); and see also 4.103, with note. In *De officiis* 3.95, Cicero judges Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia harshly: "Better not to have made such a promise than to have permitted so grim a crime."

70–72. Iphigenia wept ... heard of such religion: In the classical sources Iphigenia is not said to mourn her beauty; Dante, in a kind of chiasmus, transfers to the Greek princess the account of Jephtha's daughter: "She mourned her virginity in the mountain" (Jud. 11.38).

73–75. O Christians ... water may wash you: For the apostrophe, cf. 6.103–11. Line 75 is usually taken to mean that holy water (cf. *Purg.* 31.98) and reiterated absolutions will not cleanse sin if vows are careless, because the penitent is not well disposed (that is, prepared or inclined to repent). Baptism itself works only once—to remove original sin.

76–78: You have the New ... suffice for your salvation: Though professing respect for the institution and authority of the papacy ("the shepherd"), Dante reviled every pope who reigned during his adult life: Celestine V (possibly), Boniface VIII, and the Avignon popes Clement V and John XXII. At line 106 Dante turns to another figure, who will prove to be an emperor, representing the other chief form of authority during the poet's lifetime (cf. *Mon.* 3.16).

79. If evil greed shouts some other word: Taken by the old commentators as an allusion to the extortion practiced by the preaching friars of saint Anthony (more explicitly targeted at 29.103–26; see note there). Recent commentators prefer a general condemnation, but there seems to be no reason to blunt the specific thrust. For Virgil's "shout" against greed, see *Purg.* 22.40–41, with note.

80. be human beings, not brainless sheep: For the proverbial lack of discretion shown by sheep, see *Conv.* 1.11.9. See also 2 Peter 2.12, and see line 83, echoing Prov. 7.22, "As a lamb playing the wanton [*lasciviens*]."

81. so that the Jew in your midst may not laugh at you: Commentators cite Dante's *Ep.* 11.4, with reference to Christians mocked by heretics, infidels, and Jews. Dante uses "Jew" here where he had used "Hebrew" before (see *Purg.* 4.79–84 and note), keeping the anti-Semitic medieval distinction between Old Testament Jews, the chosen people of Israel, and Jews after the Incarnation, grouped with infidels and heretics. See Martinez 2003.

85. So Beatrice to me as I write: The recurring metaphor of the poet as a scribe (see *Purg.* 24.54 and note), here taking dictation from Beatrice, complements his role as listener (lines 5–10) and makes lines 5–87 into a unit.

87. toward that direction where the world is most alive: The commentators agree that this direction is toward the equinoctial point on the ecliptic, near which the sun is found during the pilgrim's journey; see 1.46–48 and note, *Conv.* 2.3.15, and *Inf.* 1.37–39, with notes. Note the relation of this liveliness to lines 94–99 and to 2.122–33 (with note).

88–139. Her silence ... the following canto sings: Rising to the next planet, the pilgrim asks the soul that meets him to reveal its identity and explain its presence in Mercury. The questions sketch a rationale for the pilgrim's visit to all the spheres: character traits derive

from the heavenly bodies; the blessed are "children of the planets." See Introduction, pp. 10–11, and Additional Note 13.

88. her silence and her transmuted face: Compare Beatrice's radiant appearance at the beginning of the canto. Terms with the prefix *trans-* are frequent in the early cantos of *Paradiso*, beginning with the instance at 1.70; see also 3.60, 5.55 and 5.88, and 6.111, with notes; at *Inf.* 25.101 and 143 similar terms mark a poetic tour de force.

91–93. and like an arrow ... the second realm: For the archery metaphor, here suggesting near-instantaneous displacement in space, see 2.22–24 and note. The spheres are contiguous, but the planets are not, and since in every case the pilgrim enters the planet itself, he traverses large distances between stops.

94–99. There I saw my lady ... in every respect: Each new sphere is moved by an angelic intelligence more powerful than the last, and also entails the increased beauty of Beatrice. The correlation of Beatrice with the angelic intelligences of the spheres is a recurring topic of Dante's poetry (see 8.37–39 and note, *VN* 30, and *Conv.* 2.2; see also 2.133–48, with note); see Additional Note 1.

97. And if the planet changed and laughed: This may be consistent with the animation of the spheres Dante seems to suggest at 2.133–44 (see note), as well as with astrological terminology (planets "rejoice" when in favorable signs). Cf. *Purg.* 1.19–20, with notes. All the heavenly bodies were supposed immutable (Aristotle, *De caelo* 1.2 279a18).

99. transmutable: The same word as in line 88, but see 2 Cor. 3.18 ("But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed [*transformamur*] into the same image from glory to glory ..."). As a mortal, the pilgrim is subject to change; see Dante's canzone "Voi ch'intendendo," lines 43–45, speaking of Lady Philosophy, "For the lady, that you perceive, has so greatly transmuted [*trasmutata*] your life."

100–108. As in a fishpond ... came forth from it: Continuing the pond imagery of 3.10–12 and 121–23 (see notes), Dante emphasizes the large group of souls that comes to receive the pilgrim. This is the first instance in *Paradiso* of the idea that souls entering Heaven are met by throngs of spirits (see 23.19–21 and note and *Conv.* 4.28.5); see *VN* 23.7, Additional Note 4, and Martinez 2004.

105. Behold one who will increase our loves: See Vergil, *Ecl.* 10.54, "so my love will grow" [*crescetis, amores*]. Most commentators understand this as a reference to how charity increases when exchanged between persons; others claim the souls recognize in the pilgrim one who will bring them fame (see 6.112–26 and note); or that the pilgrim, because a poet with Mercury as the house of his natal sign (Gemini) brings luster to the sphere itself (cf. 9.67–69 and note). See *Inf.* 9.81–85, 89; *Purg.* 15.45–57, with notes; and Durling/Martinez 1990.

109–14. Think reader ... manifest to my eyes: The second address of the reader in the

Paradiso, consistent with two other self-reflexive passages (lines 16–18, 85–87) and with the close of the canto.

115–20. O well-born one ... drink your fill: The first statement in *Paradiso* regarding the pilgrim's role as voyager through the eternal realm (see 17.13–142, with notes). "Well-born one" refers not to high social rank, but to the pilgrim's destiny among the blessed; see 3.37 (and cf. also *Inf.* 5.7) and Additional Note 4.

116–17. the thrones ... your warfare is abandoned: Before his death, the pilgrim will see the pageants of the Church Triumphant (see 23.19–20 and note). "Warfare" is both a reference to life as a struggle (Job 7.1, "The life of man upon earth is a warfare") and to Dante's travails as "a man preaching justice" (*Ep.* 12.7).

116. the thrones: Dante cannot mean that the angels guiding Mercury are Thrones, as these govern the third of the nine spheres in descending order (28.97–139 and note). Either "thrones" is generic here, part of the imagery of victory, or the heaven of the stars is a special destination of the pilgrim (22.112–23 and notes).

122–23. Speak, speak freely and believe them as gods: For the blessed as deities, see *Mon.* 1.12.6 and the note to 1.69; see also Additional Note 1.

124–39. I see well ... the following canto sings: The face of Piccarda was dimly discernible in the moon (see 3.47–48 and note); here, although the facial features of one of the blessed begin to be hidden by its soul's brightness, the pilgrim still identifies a smile and discerns that the source of light is the eyes (signifying that the brightness derives from the intensity of the soul's vision; cf. *Conv.* 3.6.11 and 14.37–42).

133–35. Like the sun ... tempering of thick vapors: The image echoes *Purg.* 30.22–27, Beatrice's advent as the rising sun. For the gradual approach to the sun, see 8.11–12; 9.7–9, 68–69, 118–19, with notes; and Additional Note 6.

136–37. that holy face ... within its own rays: Compare the disappearance into depth of Piccarda at 3.121–23; see also 8.52–54, with note.

138–39. and thus all enclosed ... the following canto sings. Repetition in the Italian of "enclosed" (*chiusa chiusa*) intensifies the word's meaning, and the canto itself ends with another nearly exact repetition, "the ... canto sings" [*canto canta*], juxtaposing song as effect with song as action, and closing out the canto with a metapoetic or self-reflexive moment, as it began (line 16). On the implications of enclosure, see Additional Note 5.