

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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RONALD L. MARTINEZ
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Illustrations by
ROBERT TURNER

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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

R.M.D.

September 2010

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The text of the *Paradiso* is reprinted (with qualifications, like the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*) from *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, edited by Giorgio Petrocchi (sponsored by the Società Dantesca Italiana; copyright 1994, Casa Editrice Le Lettere), with the kind permission of both sponsor and publisher. Portions of earlier versions of several of the Additional Notes have appeared in *The Dante Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 2000); we are grateful for permission to utilize them.

Sixteen years have gone by since we embarked on this project. They have been endlessly fascinating and enjoyable, have immeasurably deepened our appreciation and admiration of our author, and have brought us many precious friendships and cherished memories.

Berkeley

R.M.D.

Providence

R.L.M.

May 2010

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ab urbe cond.</i>	Livy, <i>Ab urbe condita</i>
<i>Achill.</i>	Statius, <i>Achilleid</i>
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
<i>Aen.</i>	Vergil, <i>Aeneid</i>
Apoc.	Apocalypse of saint John
CDH	Anselm, <i>Cur Deus homo</i>
CG	Aquinas, <i>Summa contra gentiles</i>
Chron.	Chronicles
Comm.	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>
Cor.	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>
Deut.	Deuteronomy
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
DVE	Dante, <i>De vulgari eloquentia</i>
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes
Ecclus.	Ecclesiasticus
<i>Ecl.</i>	Vergil, <i>Eclogue(s)</i>
ED	<i>Enciclopedia dantesca</i>
Eng.	English
<i>Ep.</i>	Dante, <i>Epistle(s)</i>
<i>Ep. 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
Geor.	Vergil, <i>Georgics</i>
Gr.	Greek
GSLI	<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

Abbreviations

Lat.	Latin
LDS	<i>Lectura Dantis Scaligera</i>
LDT	<i>Lectura Dantis Turicensis</i>
LDV	<i>Lectura Dantis Virginiana</i>
Legenda	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
Met.	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
Mon.	Dante, <i>Monarchia</i>
NLD	<i>Nuove letture dantesche</i>
NT	New Testament
Num.	Numbers
Od.	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
OF	Old French
OT	Old Testament
Par.	<i>Paradiso</i>
Peter	Saint Peter's Epistles
Phar.	Lucan, <i>Pharsalia</i>
PL	Migne, <i>Patrologia... Latina</i>
Prov.	Proverbs
Ps.	Psalms(s)
Purg.	<i>Purgatorio</i>
Quaest.	Dante, <i>Quaestio de aqua et terra</i>
Raptus	Claudian, <i>De raptu Proserpinae</i>
Rationale	Durandus, <i>Rationale divinarum officiorum</i>
Rom.	Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans
RR	Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, <i>Roman de la rose</i>
Sat.	Macrobius, <i>Saturnalia</i>
Servius	<i>Servii grammatici... in Vergilii carmina commentarii</i>
SS	Cicero, <i>Somnium Scipionis</i>
ST	Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i>
Theb.	Statius, <i>Thebaid</i>
Thess.	Saint Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians
Tim.	Saint Paul's Epistles to Timothy
Tob.	The Book of Tobias
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
VN	Dante, <i>Vita nova</i>
Wisdom	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

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INTRODUCTION

The first two cantiche 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 cantiche, 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 cantiche 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 cantiche, 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 *I* 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 metaphors 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 discoursings 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 Cantic 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 Cantic of Canticles until they were fully trained in exegesis (such strict severity is of course foreign to the metaphors 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 it as 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 topoi.

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-scatological 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 earthy 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. Emerson 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 consorto in mar de li altri dèi.
(1.67–69)

[Gazing at her I became *within* what Glaucus
became tasting the herb that made him a con-
sort 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,	58
che dopo 'l sogno la passione impressa	
rimane, e l'altro a la mente non riede:	
cotal son io, ché quasi tutta cessa	61
mia visione, e ancor mi distilla	
nel core il dolce che nacque da essa.	
[As is one who sees in dream,	58
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	61
has ceased, but still there trickles	
into my heart the sweetness born of it.]	

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 ever-more compelling meditation on the power of the poetic imagination.

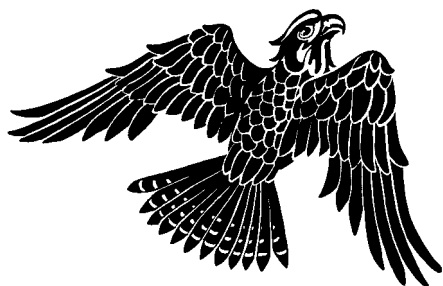
Many dimensions of the *Paradiso* are not mentioned here because of limitations of space. Perhaps the most important is the question of the degree to which Dante’s stirring expression of religious faith in God’s justice gives expression to his experience of the incomprehensible injustices, as he saw 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.
- Roemer, Paul 1993. *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

PARADISO





CANTO 1

La gloria di Colui che tutto move per l'universo penetra e risplende in una parte più e meno altrove.	I
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: entra nel petto mio, e spira tue sì come quando Marsia traesti de la vagina de le membra sue.	16 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 per triünfare o cesare o poeta— colpa e vergogna de l'umane voglie—	28

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
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
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—

che parturir letizia in su la lieta delfica deità dovria la fronda peneia, quando alcun di sé asseta.	31
Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda: forse di retro a me con miglior voci si pregherà perché Cirra risponda.	34
Surge ai mortali per diverse foci la lucerna del mondo, ma da quella che quattro cerchi giugne con tre croci con miglior corso e con migliore stella esce congiunta, e la mondana cera più a suo modo tempera e suggella.	37 40
Fatto avea di là mane e di qua sera tal foce quasi, e tutto era là bianco quello emisferio, e l'altra parte nera, quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco vidi rivolta e riguardar nel sole: aquila sì non li s'affisse unquanco.	43 46
E sì come secondo raggio suole uscir del primo e risalire in suso, pur come pellegrin che tornar vuole: così de l'atto suo, per li occhi infuso ne l'immagine mia, il mio si fece, e fissi li occhi al sole oltre nostr' uso.	49 52
Molto è licito là che qui non lece a le nostre virtù, mercé del loco, fatto per proprio de l'umana spece.	55
Io nol soffersi molto, né sì poco 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.	58 61
Beatrice tutta ne l'etterne rote fissa con li occhi stava, e io in lei le luci fissi, di là sù remote.	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

- 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.

Trasumanar significar <i>per verba</i> non si poria; però l'esempio basti a cui esperienza grazia serba.	70
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	76 79
de la fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume lago non fece alcun tanto disteso.	
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 quïetarmi l'animo commosso, pria ch'io a dimandar, la bocca aprio e cominciò: "Tu stesso ti fai grosso	85 88
col falso imaginar, sì che non vedi ciò che vedresti se l'avessi scosso.	
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, e dissi: "Già contento <i>requïevi</i>	94 97
di grande ammirazion, ma ora ammiro com' io trascenda questi corpi levi."	
Ond' ella, appresso d'un pio sospiro, li occhi drizzò ver' me con quel semblante che madre fa sovra figlio deliro,	100
e cominciò: "Le cose tutte quante hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante.	103
Qui veggion l'alte creature l'orma de l'eterno valore, il qual è fine al quale è fatta la toccata norma.	106

- 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 sempiternal, 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.

Ne l'ordine che dico sono accline	109
tutte nature per diverse sorti,	
più al principio loro e men vicine;	
onde si muovono a diversi porti	112
per lo gran mar de l'essere, e ciascuna	
con istinto a lei dato che la porti.	
Questi ne porta il foco inver' la luna,	115
questi ne' cor mortali è permotore,	
questi la terra in sé stringe e aduna;	
né pur le creature che son fore	118
d'intelligenza quest' arco saetta,	
ma quelle c'hanno intelletto e amore.	
La provedenza che cotanto assetta	121
del suo lume fa 'l ciel sempre quiëto	
nel qual si volge quel c'ha maggior fretta;	
e ora lì, come a sito decreto,	124
cen porta la virtù di quella corda	
che ciò che scocca drizza in segno lieto.	
Vero è che, come forma non s'accorda	127
molte fiata a l'intenzion de l'arte,	
perch' a risponder la materia è sorda,	
così da questo corso si diparte	130
talor la creatura ch'ha podere	
di piegar, sì pinta, in altra parte;	
e sì come veder si può cadere	133
foco di nube, sì l'impeto primo	
l'atterra torto da falso piacere.	
Non dei più ammirar, se bene stimo,	136
lo tuo salir, se non come d'un rivo	
se d'alto monte scende giuso ad imo.	
Maraviglia sarebbe in te se, privo	139
d'impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso,	
com' a terra quiëte in foco vivo."	
Quinci rivolse inver' lo cielo il viso.	142

- 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.



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, Eccclus. 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 blessedness 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...Cyrreha 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 [*detrahis*] 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...Cyrreia 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...Cyrreia 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 Cyrreia (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 $23\frac{1}{2}$ 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 immensi 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 *epistrophè* 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 *requiëvi* [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. Wherefore 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.

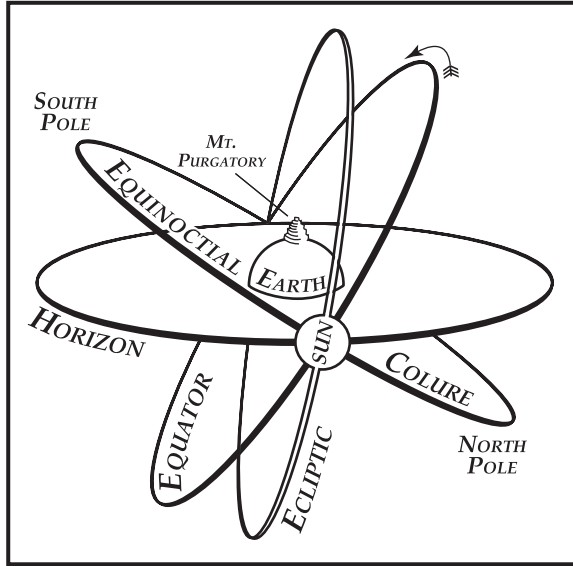


Figure 1. "Four circles make three crosses"

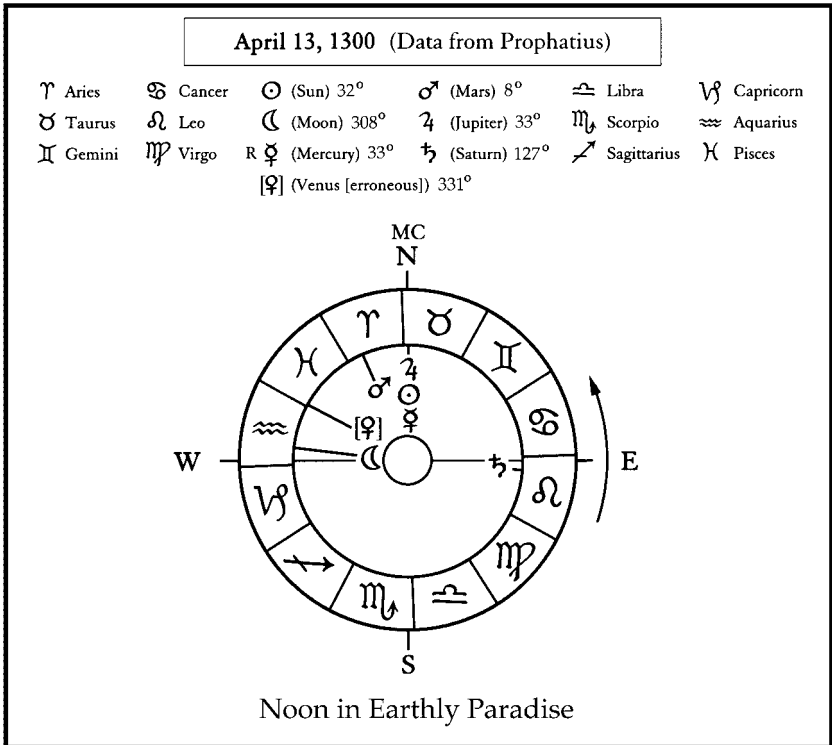


Figure 2. Horoscope for April 13, 1300, noon in the Earthly Paradise



CANTO 2

O voi che siete in piccioletta barca, desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti dietro al mio legno, che cantando varca:	I
tornate a riveder li vostri liti,	4
non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse, perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti;	
l'acqua ch' io prendo già mai non si corse;	7
Minerva spira, e conducemi Appollo, e nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse.	
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	13
vostro navigio, servando mio solco dinanzi a l'acqua che ritorna eguale;	
que' glorïosi che passaro al Colco	16
non s'ammiraron come voi farete, quando Iasón vider fatto bifolco.	
La concreata e perpetüa sete del deïforme regno cen portava veloci quasi come 'l ciel vedete.	19
Beatrice in suso e io in lei guardava,	22
e forse in tanto in quanto un quadrel posa e vola e da la noce si dischiava,	
giunto mi vidi ove mirabil cosa	25
mi torse il viso a sé, e però quella cui non potea mia cura essere ascosa,	
volta ver' me, sì lieta come bella:	28
"Drizza la mente in Dio grata," mi disse, "che n'ha congiunti con la prima stella."	

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*

I 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.”

- Parev' a me che nube ne coprisse 31
lucida, spessa, solida e pulita,
quasi adamante che lo sol ferisse.
- Per entro sé l'eterna margarita 34
ne ricevette, com' acqua recepe
raggio di luce, permanendo unita.
- S'io era corpo—e qui non si concepe 37
com' una dimensione altra patio,
ch' esser convien se corpo in corpo repe—
- accender ne dovria più il disio 40
di veder quella essenza in che si vede
come nostra natura e Dio s'unìo.
- Lì si vedrà ciò che tenem per fede, 43
non dimostrato, ma fia per sé noto
a guisa del ver primo che l'uom crede.
- Io rispuosi: "Madonna, sì devoto 46
com' esser posso più, ringrazio lui
lo qual dal mortal mondo m'ha remoto.
- Ma ditemi: che son li segni bui 49
di questo corpo, che là giuso in terra
fan di Cain favoleggiare altrui?"
- Ella sorrise alquanto, e poi: "S'elli erra 52
l'oppinïon," mi disse, "d'i mortali
dove chiave di senso non diserra,
- certo non ti dovrien punger li strali 55
d'ammirazione omai, poi dietro ai sensi
vedi che la ragione ha corte l'ali.
- Ma dimmi quel che tu da te ne pensi." 58
E io: "Ciò che n'appar qua sù diverso
credo che fanno i corpi rari e densi."
- Ed ella: "Certo assai vedrai sommerso 61
nel falso il creder tuo, se bene ascolti
l'argomentar ch'io li farò avverso.
- La spera ottava vi dimostra molti 64
lumi, li quali e nel quale e nel quanto
notar si posson di diversi volti.
- Se raro e denso ciò facesser tanto, 67
una sola virtù sarebbe in tutti,
più e men distributa e altrettanto.

- 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.

Virtù diverse esser convegnon frutti di princìpi 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 materia sì digiuno	73
esto pianeta, o, sì come comparte 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 ingesto.	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 istanza 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 soggetto e dal colore e dal freddo primai,	106

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,

così rimaso te ne l'intelletto	109
voglio informar di luce sì vivace che ti tremolerà nel suo aspetto.	
Dentro dal cielo de la divina pace	112
si gira un corpo ne la cui virtute l'esser di tutto suo contento giace.	
Lo ciel seguente, c' ha tante vedute,	115
quell' esser parte per diverse essenze, da lui distratte e da lui contenute.	
Li altri giron per varie differenze	118
le distinzion che dentro da sé hanno dispongono a lor fini e lor semenze.	
Questi organi del mondo così vanno,	121
come tu vedi omai, di grado in grado, che di sù prendono e di sotto fanno.	
Riguarda bene omai sì com' io vado	124
per questo loco al vero che disiri, sì che poi sappi sol tener lo guado.	
Lo moto e la virtù d'i santi giri,	127
come dal fabbro l'arte del martello, da' beati motor convien che spiri,	
e 'l ciel cui tanti lumi fanno bello	130
de la mente profonda che lui volve prende l'image e fassene suggello.	
E come l'alma dentro a vostra polve	133
per differenti membra e conformate a diverse potenze si risolve,	
così l'intelligenza sua bontate	136
moltiplicata per le stelle spiega, girando sé sovra sua unitate.	
Virtù diversa fa diversa lega	139
col prezioso corpo ch'ella avviva, nel qual, sì come vita in voi, si lega.	
Per la natura lieta onde deriva,	142
la virtù mista per lo corpo luce come letizia per pupilla viva.	
Da essa vien ciò che da luce a luce	145
par differente, non da denso e raro: essa è formal principio che produce, conforme a sua bontà, lo turbo e 'l chiaro."	148

- 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."

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 cantiche, in the *Paradiso* transitions are signaled 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. *capire*, *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 sub-lunar. 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.

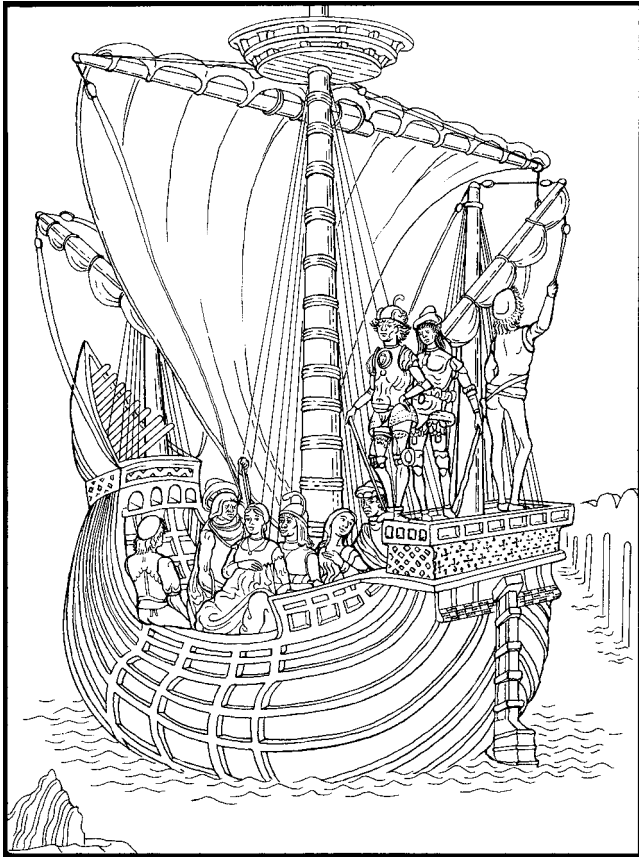


Figure 3. The Argo and the Argonauts

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 transversely 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 "*inform*," 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. *organon* [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 Tempier, 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 metaphors.

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 reditura 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

Quel sol che pria d'amor mi scaldò 'l petto I
di bella verità m'avea scoperto,
provando e riprovando, il dolce aspetto,
e io, per confessar corretto e certo 4
me stesso, tanto quanto si convenne
leva' il capo a proferer più erto.
Ma visione apparve che ritenne 7
a sé me tanto stretto, per vedersi,
che di mia confession non mi sovvenne.
Quali per vetri trasparenti e tersi 10
o ver per acque nitide e tranquille,
non sì profonde che i fondi sien persi,
tornan d'i nostri visi le postille 13
debili sì che perla in bianca fronte
non vien men forte a le nostre pupille:
tali vid' io più facce a parlar pronte, 16
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, 19
quelle stimando specchiati sembianti,
per veder di cui fosser li occhi torsi;
e nulla vidi, e ritorsili avanti 22
dritti nel lume de la dolce guida,
che sorridendo ardea ne li occhi santi.
"Non ti maravigliar perch' io sorrida," 25
mi disse, "apresso il tuo püeril coto,
poi sopra 'l vero ancor lo piè non fida
ma te rivolve, come suole, a vòto: 28
vere sustanze son ciò che tu vedi,
qui rilegate per manco di voto.

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.

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 pareva 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.	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
Ond’ io a lei: “Ne’ mirabili aspetti vostri risplende non so che divino, che vi trasmuta da’ primi concetti.	52
Però non fui a rimembrar festino, ma or m’aiuta ciò che tu mi dici, sì che raffigurar m’è più latino.	55
Ma dimmi: voi che siete qui felici, disiderate voi più alto loco per più vedere e per più farvi amici?”	58
Con quelle altr’ ombre pria sorrise un poco; da indi mi rispuose tanto lieta ch’arder pareva d’amor nel primo foco:	61
	64
	67

- 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:

“Frate, la nostra volontà quieta 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 <i>necesse</i> , e se la sua natura ben rimiri.	73
Anzi è formale ad esto beato esse 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.	79
E ’n la sua voluntade è nostra pace: ell’ è quel mare al qual tutto si move ciò ch’ella cria o che natura face.”	82
Chiaro mi fu allor come ogne dove in Cielo è Paradiso, <i>etsi</i> la grazia del sommo ben d’un modo non vi piove.	85
Ma sì com’ elli avvien, s’ un cibo sazia e d’un altro rimane ancor la gola, che quel si chere e di quel si ringrazia: così fec’ io con atto e con parola, per apprender da lei qual fu la tela onde non trasse infino a co la spuola.	88
“Perfetta vita e alto merto inciela donna più sù,” mi disse, “a la cui norma nel vostro mondo giù si veste e vela perché fino al morir si vegghi e dorma con quello sposo ch’ogne voto accetta che caritate a suo piacer conforma.	91
Del mondo, per seguirla, giovinetta fuggi’ mi e nel suo abito mi chiusi, e promisi la via de la sua setta.	94
Uomini poi, a mal più ch’ a bene usi, fuor mi rapiron de la dolce chiostra: Iddio si sa qual poi mia vita fusi.	97
	100
	103
	106

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 *necesse*, 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.

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, ciò ch' io dico di me, di sé intende: sorella fu, e così le fu tolta di capo l'ombra de le sacre bende.	109 112
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 parlammi, e poi cominciò " <i>Ave Maria</i> " 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, 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.	124 127 130

- 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.



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...imuginis*] 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 amorous*, "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 vòto*, playing on the word for a