



Vertical Readings
in Dante's *Comedy*

Volume 3

EDITED BY
GEORGE CORBETT AND
HEATHER WEBB

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29. Truth, Untruth and the Moment of Indwelling

John Took

In what follows I shall come as quickly as I can to the notion of verticality as a way of reading the *Commedia* and of discerning and celebrating the symmetry at work within it — something which, in the case of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* xxix, can be done by way of stressing the nature and function of each alike as a moment of reconfigured consciousness preliminary to the soul's entry into the immediate presence of God, and in that of *Inferno* xxix by way of precisely the opposite, of the soul's captivity to the alternative project. But I have to confess that what really interests me about Dante and verticality is not so much the opportunity it affords for reading one canto in the light of another as its usefulness as a way of confirming, with Dante himself, the now essentially layered structure of his mature spirituality. For Dante was nothing if not an enthusiast, each successive encounter — be it Beatrician, Aristotelian or Virgilian — tending for a while at least to take over his existence lock, stock and barrel as a means both of world-interpretation and of self-interpretation. Each successive encounter, in other words, in taking him over, took him over entirely, a situation making not so much for their mutual inherence as for their successionality, for their organization on the plane, so to say, of the horizontal: first nature then grace, first philosophy then theology, first reason then revelation, these things tending within the economy of the whole to relate one with the other by way less of their *height and depth* than of their *before and after*, of their either *preceding* or *following on* as orders of concern.

This situation — this surrendering on Dante's part lock, stock and barrel to the successive encounter and thus a sense of human experience as but a matter of its successive moments — is readily verifiable from the text, especially from the *Convivio* and the *Monarchia* where it is a question, precisely, of the periodization of human experience for the purposes of resolving high-level issues in the areas respectively of moral and political philosophy. So, then, in the case of the *Convivio*, where it is a question of defining the ways and means of properly human happiness for the benefit of 'those many men and women in this language of ours burdened by domestic and civic care',¹ Dante's commitment to an order of activity both moral and intellectual in kind and sufficient to its own ends, accomplishable here and now, is subject to the unqualified supervision of Aristotle, who is, before ever we reach the *Commedia*, the 'master of those who know'. As far as the *Monarchia* is concerned, it is a question of separating out papal and imperial jurisdiction this side of death, Dante's commitment to the notion of 'two ends' ('duo ultima') again presupposing the sharpest possible distinction between the ways and means of properly human happiness here and hereafter, in this life and the next. Now Dante, it is true, both in the *Convivio* and in the *Monarchia* has some doubt about all this, all men, in the *Convivio*, desiring here and now to seek out their maker as the final cause of all desiring, and human happiness here and now, in the *Monarchia*, being in some sense ('quodammodo') ordered to human happiness hereafter.² But

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- 1 *Conv.*, I. i. 4 and I. ix. 5. For Dante's sense of ethics — theology apart — as pre-eminent among the human sciences, *Conv.*, II. xiv. 14–18; for his sense of our wishing to know here and now only what we *can* know here and now, III. xv. 7–10; for Aristotle as, if not the founder, then the finisher of moral philosophy and the guide to human happiness here and now, IV. vi. 6–16; and as exemplary in its sense of man's turning to God as a matter of what comes next, IV. xxviii. 3: 'It should therefore be understood here that, as Cicero says in his book *On Old Age*, a natural death is for us like reaching a port after a long journey and coming finally to rest. And that indeed is right, for just as a good sailor, on approaching port, lowers his sails, and, gently steering his ship, slips in gently, so ought we to lower the sails of our worldly affairs and turn to God with our whole heart and mind so that we too might come to that port with the utmost gentleness and calm'. For Aristotle as the 'master of those who know', *Inf.*, iv. 130–32, and, as the 'glorious philosopher to whom nature has most completely revealed her secrets', *Conv.*, III. v. 7.
- 2 *Mon.*, III. xv. 17–18: 'But the truth concerning this last question should not be taken so literally as to mean that the Roman Prince is not in some sense subject to the Roman Pontiff, since this earthly happiness is in some sense ordered towards immortal happiness. Let Caesar therefore show that reverence towards Peter which a firstborn son should show his father, so that, illumined by the light of paternal grace, he may the more effectively light up the world, over which he has been placed by Him alone who is ruler over all things spiritual and temporal'. For the *Convivio*, III. ii. 7 and IV. xii. 14: 'And since most natural to God is the will to be (for as we read in the aforesaid text "first

for all that, there is here a species of horizontality answering to something deeply rooted in Dante's nature; at every point there is a desire to give each and every cultural encounter its head before turning to how, precisely, it might be integrated within the economy of the whole. It is, then, only in the context of the *Commedia* and of the greater philosophical and theological maturity thereof that the *horizontality* of human experience, its unfolding sequentially or in terms of the *before and after* of its key components, is resolved in terms of its verticality, of the *height and depth* of that experience, of its layered substance and dimensionality. It is, in other words, only in the context of the *Commedia* and of all it represents by way of a spiritual coming of age that we have a developed sense of the theological as but the encompassing of the philosophical, of grace as operative from out of the depths, and of the ἔσχατος as but the *innermost* as distinct from the *aftermost* truth of this or that instance of specifically human being.³ And it is this sense of the revised geometry of human being under the conditions of time and space that brings us to our three cantos, to *Purgatorio* xxix and *Paradiso* xxix as each, in its way, pausing in a moment of stillness to contemplate the kind of mutual indwelling of the human and the divine into which the pilgrim poet is called as the final cause of his every significant striving of the spirit, and to *Inferno* xxix as, whatever else it is, an essay in denial, in self as, despise self, ranged over against self in respect of its high calling.

But to get back now to verticality in the sense of a vertical reading of the text, and taking first the twenty-ninth canto of the *Inferno*, we are now in the last *bolgia* or ditch of the fraudulent — not as yet of those guilty of breaking or of reneging on a relationship of mutual trust (for these are still further down in the pit) but of the counterfeiters and impersonators, of those falsifying the customary means of exchange or else assuming a false identity. The spectacle is indeed forlorn, any number of scabrous souls

of all comes being, prior to which there is nothing") the human soul too wishes above all things to be. And since its being depends on God and is preserved by him, it naturally desires and wills to be united with him for the purposes of strengthening its own being [...] and since, further, God is the first cause of our souls and fashions them after his own likeness, the soul desires first and foremost to return to him'.

- 3 Eloquent and I think exact in respect of Dante's theological coming of age in the *Commedia*, Kenelm Foster in *The Two Dantes* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977) at p. 246: 'Theologically speaking, this brilliant work [the *Convivio*] is immature. And if it a sign of growing maturity that a man takes stock of the tensions and contradictions latent in himself then certainly the *Comedy* marks a great advance, in this respect on the *Convivio*'. Fundamental still, Etienne Gilson, *Dante and Philosophy*, trans. David Moore (New York and Evanston, IL and London: Harper Row, 1963; originally *Dante et la philosophie*, Paris: Vrin, 1939).

picking away at scales as big as those of a fish and confirming as they do so their unrecognizability as creatures of orderly seeing, understanding and doing. The sick of the Valdichiana and of the Maremma, Dante says — malarial wastes neither of them very far from Florence — have nothing on this, the bleak imagery of it all confirming the notion, and with it the truth, of spiritual decay and lovelessness. Coming down, then, into the last cloister of the *Malebolge* (the terminology, incidentally, is Dante's own),⁴ he and Virgil are able at last to see and smell through the darkling air something of the wretchedness of it all, whereupon Virgil enquires of two souls propped up one against the other whether or not there be here a Latin spirit, both, as it turns out, being precisely that — a Griffolino and a Capocchio each burnt alive, the one in Arezzo and the other in Siena, for wizardry and alchemy respectively. The matter, clearly, is grave, but as the canto goes on the tone becomes more and more burlesque and the style more and more comic, Griffolino for his part offering a spirited account of how he exacted large sums of money from the bishop's son by teaching him how to fly, and of how the good bishop, smelling a rat, had him hunted down and put to the stake. Capocchio, who had in his time cultivated something of a reputation as, as he himself puts it, an 'ape of nature' (possibly a mimic or caricaturist of some kind), then gives a no less lively account of the goings on in what appears to have been something approaching the Drones Club of Siena, remarkable only for its cultivation of every kind of fatuous pastime. And it is with this that a canto notable only for its account of the systematic dismantling in human experience of every kind of trust and concern (and indeed for its severing the bond of love or 'vinco d'amore' ideally binding one man to another within the domestic and civic context generally) comes to rest, its gradual shading off into something close to buffoonery registering, as the *stilus comicus* usually does in Dante, the fundamental indignity of it all.⁵

4 *Inf.*, xxix. 40–45: 'Quando noi fummo sor l'ultima chiostra / di Malebolge, sì che i suoi conversi / potean parere a la veduta nostra, / lamenti saettaron me diversi / che di pietà ferrati avean li strali; / ond' io li orecchi con le man copersi'. [When we were above the last of the *Malebolge* so that the fresh brethren were plainly in view, diverse wailing, the shafts thereof barbed by pain, assailed me, whence I put my hands to my ears].

5 For Dante and the 'comic style', Alfredo Schiaffini, 'A proposito dello stile comico di Dante', in *Momenti di storia della lingua italiana* (Rome: Studium, 1953), pp. 47–51; Zygmunt G. Barański (ed.), "'Libri poetarum in quattuor species dividuntur". Essays on Dante and "Genre"', *The Italianist* 15 (1995), and, more recently, 'Language as Sin and Salvation: A *Lectura* of *Inferno* XVIII' (Binghamton, NY: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014). More generally, C. S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*

Looked at in the round, the *Purgatorio* — the beautiful *Purgatorio* — has to do with the struggle, by way of a commingling of nature and grace at the still centre of personality, to affirm one way of loving over another. Having, in other words, taken into self the guilt of self and embarked on the way of sorrowing (on what Bernard of Clairvaux used to call the way of assiduous tears: *'assiduitas lacrymarum'*), the soul sets about bringing home the kind of love generated by the sights and sounds of the world round about to the kind of love given with the act itself of existence, to the kind of connatural loving whereby the soul seeks out, so to speak, from beforehand, before it ever thinks about it, communion with the One who *is* as of the essence.⁶ At the summit of Mount Purgatory, situated for Dante in the southern seas at the antipodes of Jerusalem, is the Earthly Paradise, the place of man's first disobedience in Adam. Both for the penitent spirits of Purgatory proper and for Dante himself as one merely passing through, this is a moment of clear-sightedness, a moment in which, having lived out the agony of self-confrontation and of self-reconfiguration on the plane of loving, the soul sees and understands as never before the course both of its own history and of world history. This clarity of seeing and understanding constitutes both the necessary condition and the point of departure for everything coming next by way of its proper ecstasy, of its knowing itself in the kind of spiritual self-transcendence proper to it as the most immanent of its immanent possibilities. It is, then, at this point, in canto xxix of the *Purgatorio*, that, having come forth from the upward way and rejoicing now in the sylvan freshness and fragrance of the Earthly Paradise, Dante sees unfolded before him, in a magnificent pageant, the entire course of God's self-revelation in scripture, a procession consisting of the poets, prophets and chroniclers of the Old Dispensation and of the evangelists, preachers

(Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959; originally 1928); Franz Quadlbauer, *Die antike Theorie der 'Genera dicendi' im lateinischen Mittelalter* (Vienna: Herman Böhlau, 1962). For the 'vinco d'amor' motif, *Inf.*, xi, 55–57.

6 For the bringing home of one kind of love to another and the role in this respect of free will as the power to significant choice, see cantos xvi–xviii generally of the *Purgatorio*. Otello Ciacci, 'La teoria dell'amore: Canto XVII del *Purgatorio*', in *Nuove interpretazioni dantesche* (Perugia: Volumina, 1974), pp. 75–95; Italo Borzi, 'L'analisi dell'anima: amore e libertà (*Purgatorio* XVII)', in *Verso l'ultima salute. Saggi danteschi* (Milan: Rusconi, 1985), pp. 139–76; Giuseppe Frasso, '*Purgatorio* XVI–XVIII: una proposta di lettura', in *Contesti della Commedia. Lectura Dantis Fridericiana 2002–2003*, ed. Francesco Tateo and Daniele Maria Pegorari (Bari: Palomar, 2004), pp. 65–79. For Bernard on an assiduity of tears, *In festo omnium sanctorum* I. x (PL 183, 458A): 'Equum indomitum flagella domant; animam immitem contritio spiritus et assiduitas lacrymarum' [Just as a whip tames a wild horse, so also does a contrite spirit and an assiduity of tears tame a restive soul].

and pastors of the New Dispensation, a cloud of witnesses testifying between them to the substance and continuity of God's purposes in history. Glimpsing in the distance the golden candelabra of the Book of Revelation ('And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks [...] and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God'),⁷ he then sees, following in its wake, the twenty-four elders of the Old Testament clothed, as again the Book of Revelation has it, in white raiment and with crowns of white lilies — the colour of faith. Next come four living creatures, each with a crown of green leaves (the colour of hope) and with six wings apiece (Ezekiel at this point, Dante notes, has but four wings apiece but John, he says, 'is with me on this').⁸ These, evidently, are the four evangelists, one at each corner of something truly spectacular, namely a chariot more resplendent than that of the sun itself and drawn along by a creature half-lion and half-eagle — to wit, by a griffin — the whole representing the Church as led by the Christ in his own twofold nature as man and God.⁹ On the right-hand of the chariot, and treading

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- 7 Revelation 1:12 and 4:5. Dino Bigongiari, 'The Pageant on the Top of Purgatory; Virgil's Departure; the Appearance of Beatrice', in *Readings in the Divine Comedy: A Series of Lectures*, ed. by Anne Paolucci (Dover, DE: Griffon House, 2006), pp. 312–25; Peter Armour, 'Canto XXIX. Dante's Processional Vision', in *Lectura Dantis. Purgatorio*, ed. by Allen Mandelbaum *et al.* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 329–40; Aldo Coppa, 'La mirabile processione', in *L'Eden di Dante*, ed. by Anonio d'Elia (Cosenza: Giordano, 2012), pp. 109–66; Sergio Cristaldi, 'Simboli in processione', in *Lectura Dantis Romana. Cento canti per cento anni. II. Purgatorio*, vol. 2, ed. by Enrico Malato and Andra Mazzucchi (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2014), pp. 867–97. More generally on the Earthly Paradise, Peter Dronke, 'The Phantasmagoria in the Earthly Paradiso', in *Dante and the Medieval Tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 55–81; Richard Lansing, 'Narrative Design in Dante's Earthly Paradise', *Dante Studies* 112 (1994), 101–13; Lino Pertile, *La puttana e il gigante. Dal Cantico dei Cantici al Paradiso Terrestre di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1998).
- 8 *Purg.*, xxix. 105: 'Giovanni è meco e da lui si diparte' [John, departing from him, is with me]. Peter Hawkins, 'John is with me', in *Dante's Testaments. Essays in Scriptural Imagination* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 54–71. Ezekiel 1:5–6 and Revelation 4:6–8.
- 9 Decisive historically for an interpretation of the griffin image are the further allusions of canto xxxi with its account both of the dual nature of the animal (the 'ch'è sola una persona in due nature' moment of line 81) and of its twofold and constantly shifting aspect (the 'doppia fiera dentro vi raggiava, / or con altri, or con altri reggimenti' of lines 122–23), though for an alternative interpretation, taking its cue now from Dante's particular brand of moral and political dualism, see Peter Armour, *Dante's Griffin and the History of the World. A Study in the Earthly Paradise* (*Purgatorio, cantos XXIX–XXXIII*) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989). See too John A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), especially pp. 185–89. Representative of a now increasingly sophisticated literature in the area of Dantean Christology, Claudio Gigante, "'Adam sive Christus"; creazione, incarnazione, redenzione nel canto VII del

between them in an exquisite *pas de trois*, are three maidens representing the theological virtues, themselves arrayed in red, green and white, while to the left are the four cardinal virtues indispensable to good order on earth, and, inasmuch as good order on earth means for Dante good *imperial* order on earth, suitably attired in purple. Then, following on from the evangelists, comes the beloved physician of *Acts* together with the sword-bearer of the Pauline epistles, ‘sword-bearer’, doubtless, in respect of Paul’s exhortation to put on the whole armour of God including the ‘gladium spiritus quod est verbum Dei’ [the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God] (Ephesians 6:17). And then, finally, there are four more figures of humble mien, the authors of the catholic epistles, together with an elderly gentleman, solitary and at first sight somnambulant, his countenance, however, lit up and more than ever radiant by way of the vision and of the rapture to which he is party. The seven of them, Dante says, — Luke, Paul, Peter, John, James, Jude and John of the Apocalypse — wear crowns of red roses and other blossoms, red being the colour of love as, following on from faith and hope, but the greatest of these. With a thunderous roar — confirmation from on high with respect to the twofold truth and magnificence of it all — the procession comes to a halt, the next part of the pageant bearing on what in Dante’s view of it amounts to the latter-day prostitution of the Church by those to whom it has been most signally entrusted. But just for the moment it is a question of God’s original plan, of the chariot of the Church in its pristine state with Christ at its head:

Lo spazio dentro a lor quattro contenne
 un carro, in su due rote, trüinfale,
 ch’al collo d’un grifon tirato venne.
 Esso tendeva in sù l’una e l’altra ale
 tra la mezzana e le tre e tre liste,
 sì ch’a nulla, fendendo, facea male.
 Tanto salivan che non eran viste;
 le membra d’oro avea quant’ era uccello,
 e bianche l’altre, di vermiglio miste.

Paradiso, *Rivista di studi danteschi* 8.2 (2008), 241–68; Oliver Davies, ‘Dante’s *Commedia* and the Body of Christ’, in *Dante’s Commedia. Theology as Poetry*, ed. by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pp. 161–79; Antonio d’Elia, *La cristologia dantesca logos-veritas-caritas: il codice poetico-teologico del pellegrino* (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2012); Paolo Fedrigotti, “La verità che non sofferà alcuno errore e la luce che allumina noi ne la tenebra”. L’intonazione anagogica della *Divina Commedia* ed il suo fondamento cristico’, *Divus Thomas* 115.3 (2012), 17–44.

Non che Roma di carro così bello
 rallegrasse Affricano, o vero Augusto,
 ma quel del Sol saria pover con ello. (*Purg.*, xxix. 106–17)

[The space between these four contained a triumphal chariot upon two wheels, which came drawn along by the neck of a griffin. And he stretched up the one and the other of his wings between the midmost stripe, and the three and three others, so that he did harm to no one of them by cleaving it. So high they rose that they were lost to sight. His members were of gold so far as he was bird, and the rest were white mixed with crimson. Not Africanus, or indeed Augustus, gladdened Rome with so beautiful a chariot, but even that of the Sun would be poor beside it.]

Canto xxix of the *Paradiso* takes its cue from, and stands to be interpreted in the light of, the dramatic substance of canto xxviii where, in anticipation of his coming into the presence of God as but a simple light, a 'semplice lume' perfectly undifferentiated and therefore perfectly irreducible to anything more fundamental than itself, Dante proposes a fresh model of the universe, an alternative way of seeing and understanding it. Where, then, up to now it has been a question of God as the *encompassing*, as *containing* everything proceeding from him in consequence of the original *let it be*, now, by contrast, it is a question of his subsisting at the centre of the universe as but the infinitesimal focal point of all being whatever. And it is from this infinitesimal point, a point having about it neither space nor time nor polarity nor material referentiality of any kind, that, in Dante's account of it, everything that *is* in the universe came forth in an instant, including pure form, pure matter and the amalgamation of these things in the starry Heavens, together with the intelligences whereby those Heavens are moved. This coming forth, however, leaves the Godhead, impatient as it is either of addition or of subtraction, just as it always was, is and ever will be. The key passage here, as rapt in expression as it is exact in conception, runs as follows:

Non per aver a sé di bene acquisto,
 ch'esser non può, ma perché suo splendore
 potesse, risplendendo, dir '*Subsisto*',
 in sua eternità di tempo fore,
 fuor d'ogne altro comprender, come i piacque,
 s'aperse in nuovi amor l'eterno amore.

Né prima quasi torpente si giacque;
ché né prima né poscia procedette
lo discorrer di Dio sovra quest' acque.

Forma e materia, congiunte e purette,
usciro ad esser che non avia fallo,
come d'arco tricordo tre saette.

E come in vetro, in ambra o in cristallo
raggio resplende sì, che dal venire
a l'esser tutto non è intervallo,
così 'l triforme effetto del suo sire
ne l'esser suo raggiò insieme tutto
sanza distinzione in essordire.

Concreato fu ordine e costruito
a le sustanze; e quelle furon cima
nel mondo in che puro atto fu prodotto;
pura potenza tenne la parte ima;
nel mezzo strinse potenza con atto
tal vime, che già mai non si divima. (*Par.*, xxix. 13–36)

[Not for the gaining of good unto himself, which cannot be, but that his splendour might, in its resplendence, say '*Subsisto*', in his eternity, outside of time and of every other limit, as it pleased him, the eternal love opened out in new loves. Nor before, as though inert, did he lie, for neither before nor after did the moving of God upon these waters proceed. Form and matter, conjoined and simple, came forth flawless into being which had no defect, as three arrows from a three-stringed bow; and as in glass, in amber, or in crystal a ray shines so that there is no interval between its coming and its being complete, so did this threefold effect ray forth from its Lord into its being all at once, without discrimination at the point of origin. Concreate was order and structure in all things, with pure form at the summit of the world, pure potentiality in its lowest part, and, between them, these things bound up one with the other in such a way as never to be separated.]¹⁰

10 For the now revised geometry of the universe (the simple light at the centre model), Christian Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's 'Comedy'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), especially p. 161ff. For Dante on creation and cosmic order, Attilio Mellone, *La dottrina di Dante Alighieri sulla prima creazione* (Nocera: Convento di Santa Maria degli Angeli, 1950); *idem*, 'Emanatismo neoplatonico di Dante per le citazioni del *Liber de causis*', *Divus Thomas* 54 (1951), 205–12; *idem*, 'Il concorso delle creature nella produzione delle cose secondo Dante', *Divus Thomas* 56 (1953), 273–86; Marc Cogan, *The Design in the Wax* (Notre Dame, IN and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999); Piero Boitani, 'La creazione nel *Paradiso*', *Filologia e critica* 33.1 (2008), 3–34; Bruno Basile, 'Canto II. La luna e l'ordine del cosmo', in *Lectura Dantis Romana. Cento canti per cento anni*, ed. by Enrico Malato and Andrea Mazzucchi, vol. 3 (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2015), pp. 61–84.

For the Dante, then, of *Paradiso* xxix it is a question of God's opening out in ever fresh channels of love to fashion pure actuality (the separate substances or pure Intelligences responsible in turn for informing things here below), pure potentiality (the as yet undetermined matter upon which the separate substances get to work) and the fusion of these things in the perfect stability and unchangeability of the starry Heavens. Alas, he goes on (in the person of Beatrice), you could not count to twenty before a not insignificant part of creation thus conceived rebelled, Lucifer the light-bringer now living on in the darkest reaches of the pit where life, light and love are forever stilled — all this prefiguring the fall of man himself as similarly unwilling to bear the yoke of his creatureliness. True, the greater part of the heavenly host, Dante maintains, remained faithful to its maker and was accordingly rewarded with an ever deeper insight into his essential nature, a position which allows him to register the notion that grace may in a certain sense be said to be merited by those disposed in love to seek it out: 'e non voglio che dubbi, ma sia certo, / che ricever la grazia è meritorio / secondo che l'affetto l'è aperto' [and I'd have you not doubt, but rather be assured, that in the degree to which the heart is open to it, there is merit in the receiving of grace].¹¹ But this, overflowing as it is with implications for Dante's theology both of grace and of salvation, at once gives way in this twenty-ninth canto of the *Paradiso* to an indictment of those preachers and philosophers who, indifferent to the majesty of creation as but a matter of the love-extrinsication or overflowing of the Godhead, are content to feed the flock with mere silly stories and tittle-tattle. Happy to settle for a laugh ('e pur che ben si rida'), they are, in truth, no better than impostors, nay blasphemers and traducers of the gospel to a man:

'Voi non andate giù per un sentiero
 filosofando: tanto vi trasporta
 l'amor de l'apparenza e 'l suo pensiero!

11 *Par.*, xxix. 64–66 (cf. Thomas, in much the same spirit on the greater part, at least, of his fellow Dominican preachers at xi. 124–39). Marina Marietti, 'I moderni pastori fiorentini (*Paradiso* XXIX 103–26). La parola di Beatrice nel Primo Mobile', *Letteratura italiana antica* 7 (2006), 249–55; Giuseppe Ciavarella, 'La creazione, gli angeli e i "moderni pastori" (*Paradiso* XXIX)', *Letteratura italiana antica* 13 (2012), 181–207. For Dante on nature and grace, see A. C. Mastrobuono, *Dante's Journey of Sanctification* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990); Norberto Cacciaglia, "'Per fede e per opere" (una lettura del tema della salvezza nella *Divina Commedia*)', *Critica Letteraria* 30.2–3 (2002), 265–74 (also in *Annali dell'Università per Stranieri di Perugia* 29 (2002), 123–31); Christopher Ryan, *Dante and Aquinas. A Study of Nature and Grace in the Comedy* (London: UCL Arts and Humanities Publications, 2013).

E ancor questo qua sù si comporta
 con men disdegno che quando è posposta
 la divina Scrittura o quando è torta.

Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa
 seminarla nel mondo e quanto piace
 chi umilmente con essa s'accosta.

Per apparer ciascun s'ingegna e face
 sue invenzioni; e quelle son trascorse
 da' predicanti e l' Vangelio si tace.

[...]

Non ha Fiorenza tanti Lapi e Bindi
 quante s' fatte favole per anno
 in pergamo si gridan quinci e quindi:

sì che le pecorelle, che non sanno,
 tornan del pasco pasciute di vento,
 e non le scusa non veder lo danno.

Non disse Cristo al suo primo convento:
 "Andate, e predicate al mondo ciance";
 ma diede lor verace fondamento;

e quel tanto sonò ne le sue guance,
 sì ch' a pugnar per accender la fede
 de l' Evangelio fero scudo e lance.

Ora si va con motti e con iscede
 a predicare, e pur che ben si rida,
 gonfia il cappuccio e più non si richiede'. (*Par.*, xxix. 85–96 and 103–17)

[‘You there below — so much does the love of show and indeed the very thought of it carry you away — do not follow a strict path in your philosophizing, though even this, here above, is borne with less anger than when divine scripture is neglected or perverted. Not the least thought is given among you to the blood it cost to sow the world with it or how prized is the one drawing nigh to it in humility. Everyone instead is out for appearance and his own fabrications, this, the gospel now silent, being the stuff of preachers [...] There aren’t in Florence so many Lapos and Bindos as tales such as this proclaimed on this hand and that, day in day out throughout the year, from the pulpit, the poor benighted sheep coming in from the pasture being fed on nothing but wind (their having no sense of their loss by no means excusing them). For Christ did not say to those first gathered around him: “Be away and preach idle tales to the world”, but furnished, rather, a sure foundation. That alone, then, sounded on their lips, they, in their struggle to kindle the faith, making of the gospel their shield and spear. But now they preach with but jests and gibes, seeking no more than a good laugh to inflate their cowls’.]

How, then, might these cantos be said to come together as part of one and the same meditation? How might we set up a 'vertical' reading designed to identify a common core of concern? In terms, I think, of their status as preliminary in respect of what Dante himself refers to as the soul's movement into God (the 'indiarsi' of *Par.*, iv. 28) and of all this entails by way of a constant redrawing both of the perimeters and of the parameters of consciousness, both of the boundaries and of the substance of spiritual awareness. More exactly, it stands to be set up by way of what in the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* Twenty-Nines amounts to a fresh contemplation of those moments when the maker and the made, the creator and the creature, were indeed but one, of the *cosmic* moment in which the Godhead opened out in ever fresh channels of creative concern and of the *Christic* moment in which it contracted by way of the Son to take on the flesh for the purposes of making man sufficient for his own uplifting. All this serves to prepare the spiritual wayfarer for a re-enactment of this situation, this mutual indwelling of the creator and the created as but the first and final cause of his own spiritual striving. Now this, as a way of seeing and understanding what is going on here, requires careful statement, for to speak in this way of a constant redrawing of the perimeters and of the parameters of historical selfhood as the soul draws nigh (the 'E io ch'al fine di tutt' i disii / appropinquava [...] of *Paradiso* xxxiii) is by no means to suggest an abandoning of the properties of personality, a leaving behind of everything that confirms the individual in the uniqueness of his or her presence in the world; for nothing, in Paradise, is left behind by way of the particularity of self, Paradise for Dante being in this sense no more than the sum total of its parts, the elect, so to speak, in the aggregate. But for all that, it is a question of transfiguration, of 'transhumanization' (the 'trasumanar' of *Paradiso* i), of, inasmuch as the soul is party now to the very life of the Godhead, its living out on its own account something of the *always and everywhere* thereof, of its knowing itself in a manner transcending every material and indeed every spiritual contingency of its being. Here, then, as I see it, lies the deep meaning of these two cantos and their function within the economy of the poem as a whole, each alike busying itself about the substance and psychology of ultimate *inyouing* and *inmeing*, ultimate in the sense that it is a question now of the *inyouing* and *inmeing* not of man and man but of man and God.¹² First, then, in *Purgatorio* xxix, comes the kind of

12 The terminology is decisive for any account of the sociology of the *Paradiso* and indeed for the fundamentally Trinitarian substance of that sociology: the 'O luce eterna che sola in te sidi, / sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta / e intendente te ami e arridi!' [O light eternal,

mutual indwelling accomplished and confirmed in the person of the Son, a species of indwelling into which every man and every woman as but the adopted sons and daughters of the Most High are in turn summoned. Never mind then, Dante says, the illustrious cloud of witnesses preceding it or even the evangelists themselves with their six wings apiece one at each corner of the chariot of the church, for what matters here, he insists, is the chariot itself and the Christ by which it is drawn:

A descriver lor forme più non spargo
rime, lettor; ch'altra spesa mi strigne,
tanto ch'a questa non posso esser largo;
[...]
Lo spazio dentro a lor quattro contenne
un carro, in su due rote, triunfale,
ch'al collo d'un grifon tirato venne. (*Purg.*, xxix. 97–99 and 106–08)

[For the purposes of describing how they were, dear reader, I have no more rhymes to spare, for other commitments constrain me such that I cannot here be more open-handed [...] The space between these four contained a triumphal chariot upon two wheels, which came drawn along by the neck of a griffin.]

alone seated in yourself, alone knowing yourself, and, known and knowing, alone loves and smiles upon yourself] (*Par.*, xxxiii. 124–26). It is once again Dante's own, the key passage here being *Par.*, ix. 73–81, neologism, here as throughout, being the way of philosophical and theological intensification: "Dio vede tutto, e tuo veder s'inluia", / diss'io, "beato spirito, sì che nulla / voglia di sé a te puot' esser fuia. / Dunque la voce tua, che l'ciel trastulla / sempre col canto di quei fuochi pii / che di sei ali facen la coculla, / perché non satisface a' miei disii? / Già non attendere' io tua dimanda, / s'io m'intuassi, come tu t'inmii". ['God sees all', I said, 'and you see in him, blessed spirit, such that no wish may from you be hidden. Why, then, does your voice, which ever delights in Heaven with the song of those devout fires that made their cowl of six wings, not satisfy my desires? I would not, were I in you as you are in me, await your question'.] To the fore here, both notionally and expressively, the farewell discourses of John's gospel: 'Ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu, Pater, in me, et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sunt' [that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, that in us they may be one]. For the 's'aperse in nuovi amori' moment of the argument, see Andrea Romano, "S'aperse in nuovi amori l'eterno amore". Appunti sull'idea di Dio in Dante', *La Panarie. Rivista Friulana di Cultura* 152 (2007), 55–58, while for the 'per far l'uom sufficiente a rilevarsi' moment of *Paradiso* vii, see Alessandro Ghisalberti, 'Paradiso, canto VII. Dante risponde alla domanda: perché un Dio uomo', in *Lectura Dantis Scaligera 2009–2015*, ed. by Ennio Sandal (Rome and Padua: Antenore, 2016), pp. 141–58 as well as my own 'The Twin Peaks of Dante's Theology in the *Paradiso*', in *Conversations with Kenelm. Essays on the Theology of the Paradiso* (London: UCL Arts and Humanities Publications, 2013), pp. 49–79. For the 'trasumanar' moment of *Paradiso* I, see Steven Botterill, 'From *deificari* to *trasumanar*? Dante's *Paradiso* and Bernard's *De diligendo Deo*', in *Dante and the Mystical Tradition. Bernard of Clairvaux in the Commedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 194–241.

But that is not all, for preceding and encompassing the co-presencing of Father and Son in the person of the Christ is the presence of all things to the Father before all ages, this sense of the referability to the Godhead of every material and spiritual contingency of existence here and now dominating absolutely the first half of *Paradiso* xxix: Beatrice's apprehending in an instant that same Godhead in the twofold aspatiality and atemporality thereof (l. 12);¹³ the subsistence of the One as impatient of all addition (ll. 13–15);¹⁴ God's knowing neither time nor any other species of material referentiality (ll. 17, 20);¹⁵ the instantaneity of it all, there being no gap between the coming forth and the completeness of things (ll. 25–27);¹⁶ the concreation or simultaneity of being and order (l. 31);¹⁷ with, at the very end of the canto, and more than ever sublime, these lines on the — for all its forever opening up in fresh channels of love — never less than perfect simplicity of the Godhead:

La prima luce, che tutta la raia,
per tanti modi in essa si recepe,
quanti son li splendori a chi s'appaia.
Onde, però che a l'atto che concepe
segue l'affetto, d'amar la dolcezza
diversamente in essa ferve e tepe.
Vedi l'eccelso omai e la larghezza
de l'eterno valor, poscia che tanti
speculi fatti s'ha in che si spezza,
uno manendo in sé come davanti. (*Par.*, xxix. 136–45)

[The primal light which irradiates it all is received in as many modes as are the splendours with which it twins. Wherefore, since love follows

13 *Par.*, xxix. 12: 'là 've s'appunta ogne *ubi* e ogne *quando*' [there where every *ubi* and every *quando* is centred].

14 *Par.*, xxix. 13–15: 'Non per aver a sé di bene acquisto, / [...], ma perché suo splendore / potesse, risplendendo, dir "*Subsisto*"' [Not for the sake of gaining good for himself, [...] but in order that his splendour, shining forth, might say '*I am*'].

15 *Par.*, xxix. 17: 'fuor d'ogne altro comprender' [beyond every other parameter]; l. 20: 'ché ne prima né poscia procedette' [for [until God's moving upon these waters] there was neither before nor after].

16 *Par.*, xxix. 25–27: 'E come in vetro, in ambra or in cristallo / raggio resplende sì che dal venire / a l'esser tutto non è intervallo [...]' [just as, in glass, amber or crystal a ray shines such that there is no gap between its coming and its completion [...]].

17 *Par.*, xxix. 31: 'concreato fu ordine e costruito' [concreate was order and being [among the Intelligences].

upon the act of understanding, then nature here [that of the separate substances] glows and warms each after its manner. Behold now, therefore, the infinite bounty of the Eternal Goodness, which fashioning as it does so many mirrors upon which it is divided, yet remains as before but one in itself.]

Throughout, then, the pattern is the same, for everywhere to the fore in these twenty-ninth cantos of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* (but especially here in the twenty-ninth of the *Paradiso*) it is a question of the resolution of the many and the one in the moment of ultimate homecoming. Everywhere — but again supremely here in the *Paradiso* — it is a question of the mutual immanence of creature and creator as the final cause of every integral striving of the spirit, an immanence, however, by no means abolishing the properties of personality, but, rather, confirming them in their now transfigured substance.

What, then, of the counterfeiters, the deceivers and the spinners of silly stories, no less prominent in the paradisaical than in the infernal phase of Dante's discourse in the *Commedia*? Well, here too there is continuity of a kind, for both in *Inferno* xxix and in *Paradiso* xxix it is a question of those who, alert if only hazily to the *what might be* of their existence and, in the case of the preachers, to their responsibility to the flock, nonetheless settle less for *in-Godding* than for *in-selfing* as a way of seeing, understanding and implementing their humanity, less for a movement of self into the One who *is* as of the essence than for an installation of self at the centre of its own universe. True, Dante's tone both in the *Inferno* and in the *Paradiso* shades off hereabouts into the clownish, the comic and the downright ludicrous, but — again as always in the *Commedia* — the clownish, the comic and the downright ludicrous contain a sense of the catastrophic and of the infinite sadness thereof; for when it comes to posturing and imposturing, to silly stories and strategies, it is a question of captivity to the merely ready-to-hand, to the self-consciously inauthentic project. For them, then, no opening out of self on the other and the greater than self, no seeing and understanding of self as but part of the love-economy of the whole, no *inyouing* and *inmeing* as, again, among the most radiant emphases of the *Paradiso* and of what, in Dante's view, it means for man as man *to be* as a creature 'capax Dei', 'capable of God'. Simply self in the narrow confines and unfreedom of self, the falsifiers of *Inferno* xxix, like the preachers and philosophers of *Purgatorio* xxix (happy one and all provided

only they can raise a laugh) being but far-wanderers, souls busy about wasting their substance in a far-off country. Continuity indeed, then, and a link of sorts between the twenty-ninth of Heaven and the twenty-ninth of Hell, but continuity making upon reflection (as continuity generally does in the *Commedia*) for an ever fresh sense of the matter to hand, for a sense now — certainly as far as the silly preachers with their jesting and gibing are concerned — of the effrontery of it all.

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