THE HUMANISM OF DANTE.

Thesis presented for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Cape Town.

by John Leslie Bowers.

November 1960.

The copyright of this thesis is held by the University of Cape Town. Reproduction of the whole or any part may be made for study purposes only, and not for publication.
The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART ONE: THE EARLY HUMANISM OF DANTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Towards a Definition of Humanism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The &quot;Convivio&quot; as a Preliminary Outline of Humanism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Ideal of Rational Humanism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Noble Life in the &quot;Convivio&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Transition to the &quot;Divina Commedia&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Theme of the &quot;Divina Commedia&quot;.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART TWO: THE PHILOSOPHICAL HUMANISM OF DANTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Place of Virgil in the &quot;Divina Commedia&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dante's Defence of Poetry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Poetry and the Doctrine of Love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Philosophy, Science and Religion in the Ancient World.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Philosophy Re-affirmed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Rational and Mystical in the &quot;Divina Commedia&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Philosophical Tradition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART THREE: THE RELIGIOUS HUMANISM OF DANTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Pagan Cults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dante and the Greco-Roman Religions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Legend of Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Conclusion. The Elements of Dante's Humanism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE HUMANISM OF DANTE.

OUTLINE OF THESIS.

Humanism may be defined as the ethic of human nobility. As such, it is largely associated with the Renaissance, which discovered anew the civilization of Greece and Rome. Yet, Mediaeval culture was also deeply influenced by Classical ideals, and it is part of our task to make some distinction between the Mediaeval and Classical attitudes.

Dante's profound admiration for the ancient world is evident throughout his writings and goes far beyond anything which can be regarded as the general view of the Middle Ages. It is the task of this essay to examine the nature of this influence of the Classical past, to trace its development in poetry, in philosophy, in theology. This requires an investigation into the nature of the early Humanism of the "Convivio", which we have studied at some length because of its importance in the evolution of the poet's thought. The "Convivio" is philosophical in intention, rational in method, Aristotelian in sympathy. It is, however, coloured by Christian idealism, despite its Stoic and, indeed, Pelagian tendency.

In the second part of this essay, we attempt to show Dante's dissatisfaction with a purely rational discipline. The "Convivio" manifests certain Platonist and Neo-Platonist influences derived from St. Augustine and the mystical tradition of Christian theology. The contrast between the Four Treatises and the First Canto of the "Inferno", makes us aware of the
dramatic and violent change in the poet's attitude. The charming and optimistic Humanism of the earlier work gives place to the conviction of sin and the affirmation of the great Christian truths of salvation and judgment. The Humanism of Dante remains from henceforth first and foremost Christian. It is not merely contemplative and reflective. It is concerned with personal and social justice among men. In this, we see the importance of the Empire as the only means by which justice may be secured on earth. The development of Dante's political philosophy is always dependent upon religious and moral principles.

The glory of Rome is idealized in the poet's works. Virgil is its prophet, and, for that reason as well as for his admiration for the poetry of his great predecessor, Dante chooses him as his guide through the two realms of Hell and Purgatory. His concept of Rome leads him to make a defence of poetry as constituting a medium for rational knowledge as against the presuppositions of the Scholastic formalism. It is as a poet that he expresses the Platonic doctrine of love in a way reminiscent of the "Symposium". In this, Beatrice becomes the symbol of earthly love transfigured. The earthly leads to the heavenly, the finite to the eternal Beauty.

Dante returns, however, to a consideration of the place of philosophy in the Christian scheme. In the meadow of the Noble Castle, he reverts to the exclusive and aristocratic view of the "Convivio". Moreover, though philosophy is not enough of itself, it is necessary for the affirmations of theology. Hence, the Aristotelian psychology and metaphysic are everywhere assumed in the "Divina Commedia". The structure of the moral order, as expressed in the "Inferno", follows the definition of the Aristotelian psychology. Yet, the
Aristotelianism of the poet is everywhere subject to Neo-Platonic influences. Dante is at one with the Scholastic theologians in this.

Aware of the ideals which he owes to the ancient world, the poet is compelled to question the meaning of the pagan religions and myths. Long enquiry and deep reflection lead him to suppose that there exists a real connection between the pagan beliefs and the Christian Faith. The pagan religions had an imperfect light, but sufficient to enable them to discern a world of supernatural intelligences. Our third section examines Dante's conclusions and shows that he admits no element of discontinuity between the pagan and the Christian world.

Again, Dante finds himself obliged to develop a philosophy of history. This reveals wide divergences from the Augustinian view, which is discussed at some length. For the Florentine poet, the Empire was established under Divine Providence, and only with its conversion to the Christian Faith was its purpose fulfilled. The Universal Empire exists to preserve peace and justice, and to secure the temporal ends of mankind. In no way does the Catholic Church abrogate this mission. The restoration of the Empire is not only the task of Christian polity. It is required in any view of Christian Humanism.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that which is stated in the introductory chapter. Dante's Humanism is first and foremost Christian. It is composed of various elements, and Dante's veneration for the Roman Empire and for Roman achievement is apparent throughout. The myth of Rome and of its Trojan descent as commonly accepted by the Middle Ages is accepted by the poet without question. His Humanism emphasizes always the glory of Rome and its supreme importance as the foundation of the Christian civilization. The earthly
Rome is the image of that eternal city:

di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano.

If that is true, it is equally true that philosophy itself is transfigured in the "Paradiso". Reason is necessary for the clear understanding of the Faith. In the Beatific Vision, the poet implies that reason itself is reconciled with that Supreme Mind that sustains the Universe and is revealed as Love. Thus the Platonic doctrine of love as this was developed and elaborated by S. Augustine and the great contemplatives of the Middle Ages comes full circle.

It is significant that it is S. Bernard himself, the preacher of the divine love, who brings the poet to the fullness of knowledge. Christian Humanism as seen by Dante is, therefore, all-inclusive, since it reconciles in the vision of God the art, the philosophy, the poetry of Greece, the law and justice of Rome, as well as the learning of the Catholic doctors and the sanctity of the redeemed.

In developing this thesis, we claim to be making an original contribution to the subject. For while certain aspects, as, for example, Dante's theory of Rome and his political philosophy, have been fully dealt with by more recent English scholars, there has been no consistent study of the various elements of his Humanism. We have undertaken a careful study of the "Convivio" such as has not previously been done in English. We have also followed many distinguished French and Italian critics in their elucidation of Dante's attitude to the pagan religions and have further pursued our own line of enquiry.
PART ONE.

THE EARLY HUMANISM OF DANTE.
CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS THE DEFINITION OF HUMANISM.

I.

Our first task must be to enquire into what is meant by Humanism and to see in what sense the work of Dante may be described by this term. Humanism has generally been understood to mean the spirit of the Renaissance, that eager, triumphant spirit which produced the art of Michelangelo, the discussions of the Platonic Academy at Florence, the informed criticism of Lorenzo Valla, and above all the conception of the nobility of man as expressed in poetry, in painting, in philosophy and in science. In recent years, the tendency has been to push the beginnings of the Renaissance further back, considerably beyond the time of Petrarch. It is true, of course, that there is no arbitrary dividing line between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It is also true that the full and fruitful expression of this glory which men felt belonged to human nature and human achievement flowers in many-coloured brilliance in the Italian revival of the fifteenth century. It expressed itself previously, however, in many aspects of Mediaeval art and speculation.

Our problem will be to enquire into the relation which Dante's work exhibits towards this movement. The spirit of the Renaissance was responsible for a many-sided development - intellectual, moral, spiritual. Those are the characteristics by which it is marked. To define the Humanism of Dante, therefore, involves the effort to discover those relations, intellectual, moral and spiritual, which belong to this movement and which are luminous in his poetry and prose. In the course of our enquiry, we shall see that they are certainly not alien to Mediaeval culture. Indeed, if we take those great figures of the thirteenth century, Dante, S.Francis, S.Thomas Aquinas, S.Bonaventura, it is true to say that the spirit of Humanism is shared by all of them in varying degrees and in varying modes.

Humanism may be defined as an ethic of human nobility. It exalts the glory of human genius. Its essential meaning consists in the effort of the individual to develop within himself all the potentialities of his nature, to let nothing be ignored or neglected which might help to this end. As far as the Italian Renaissance defined its programme, Humanism directed itself to the study and revival of the ancient culture. It found in that culture the light which it was seeking. It attributed to the classical writings in which the thought of Greece and Rome find expression the power to make men more truly human as they came to know themselves better. Hence, the enthusiasm, the intoxication with which the learned men of that time engaged in the task of understanding more clearly the works of the ancient world. Whether it is Poliziano, with his ardour for the poetry of Homer and Catullus, the vigour and pace of his Latin, whether it is the pastoral verse of Sannazaro, whether it is the gorgeous colouring and classical inspiration of Titian, whether it is the devotion of some elderly scholar to Greek poetry and philosophy, the same characteristics emerge. Classical art, classical
literature expressed the ideals of an enlightened humanism. More than that. The Italian Renaissance believed that in establishing contact with the ancient world, which, they supposed, had been interrupted during the Middle Ages, they were advancing towards the understanding of the world and human nature. They were discovering those principles on which the great Hellenic civilization had founded its education of man both as an individual and as a citizen. They believed that, as a result of this, they could look for the intellectual and moral reform of Christianity. Nothing is more misleading than the assumption made in some quarters that the Renaissance proceeded from an arrogant and irreligious spirit. The early Renaissance certainly knows much of spiritual ideals. One has only to think of men like Vittorino da Feltre, striving to give expression to his lofty vision of classical and Christian nobility in his villa at Mantua, or of the great Pico della Mirandola, with his passionate love of Greek philosophy and deep interest in theological studies, to see how untrue this is. What the men of the Italian Renaissance were anxious to do was bring to living and palpable expression those ideas of the vanished generations of the past which, they assumed, had known the art of living and thinking better than the moderns. This was the great task which they set themselves. This also was what they accomplished in their magnificent writings, their lucid and exquisite Latin prose, their paintings, their art of wrought gold and silver, their passion for knowledge, their intoxication with the tongue of Homer and Plato.

In his famous study of the "Civilization of the Renaissance", Jacob Burckhardt has shown clearly that it was not the revival of antiquity alone which made the Renaissance, but its living and fertile association with the genius of the Italian people. No doubt, he exaggerates tendencies and sometimes emphasizes unduly the Italian element in that movement. His main thesis seems to be amply justified, however. His interpretation of the vigour and glory of the Renaissance as due in no small measure to the ardent vision of the Italian seems difficult to resist. Burckhardt, among many others, has pointed out the part played by the classical civilization since the fourteenth century in shaping the ideals of Italian culture. This civilization had long been exercising a strong and clearly-recognized influence on Western Europe generally. It went far beyond those territories.

ch'Italia chiude e suoi termini bagna.

The Carolingian revival must be regarded as a true Renaissance when contrasted with the barbarism of the seventh and eighth centuries. It was obscure: it was uncertain: but it was a genuine recovery of the spirit of humanism in a rough and uncoffin age. We may listen to Alcuin singing delightfully of the green boughs of Spring and of his beloved cuckoo:

"Desine plura, Hiems: rerum prodigus, atrox,
et veniat cuculus, pastorum dulcis amicus,
collibus in nostris crumpant germina laeta,
pascua sinit pecori, requies et dulcia in arvis.
et virides rami praestat umbracula fessis,
uboribus plenis veniant ad multera capellae,
et Lucres varia Phoebum sub voce salutent.

quapropter citius cuculus nunc ecce venitot,
tu iam dulcis amor,
cuncts gratissims hospes.
omnia te expectant, pelagus tellusque polusque.

salve, dulce decus, cuculus per saecula salve!"
Here is the freshness of observation of a charming and whimsical character, individual yet reminiscent of the grace of the Latin lyric. The Carolingian Renaissance was, in effect, the rediscovery of the Roman tradition. It was an experience, spiritual and illuminating, in which there was the effort to regain something which had been lost in the long years of bloodshed and struggle subsequent to the fall of the Roman Empire. In art, it followed the late Roman models of the fourth and fifth centuries and the Byzantine Christian tradition with its hieratic significance. Hence, the Romanesque church in Northern Europe employed many of the forms of ancient architecture. Not only did the monasteries engage in the task of illuminating and copying manuscripts, they also made use of the arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting together with those lesser but brilliant crafts of the goldsmith, the enamel-worker, and the silk-weaver. An immense number of manuscripts from Roman antiquity came into the possession of the religious houses, and were copied and illustrated in the scriptoria. Since the time that Cassiodorus had established a writing-room and library at Vivarium, the Benedictine monasteries had usually provided such places where the work of learning could be carried on. Thus the tradition of classical, or Latin, scholarship was continued and maintained. Moreover, from the days of Einhard onwards, we find the practice of a prose which discloses a conscious and clear imitation of the models of Latin oratory.

But this revival of antiquity attained to quite different expression in Italy. Elsewhere in Europe, men consciously and deliberately borrowed the various elements of classical civilization. In Italy, there was no such reflection; no such meditated and pondered derivation from an alien glory. All was spontaneous, natural, vigorous, flowering with as little effort as the hawthorn-bush on a May morning when the birds were singing and there was rumour of a crusade for the Holy Sepulchre. Ancient Rome for the Italian was merely the memory of his own past greatness. It was vivid and allusive, with all the bright colours that the Romantic imagination could supply. It was part of his own history and experience. The Latin language again presented no difficulty to the Italian, for his own tongue or dialect had evolved from its common forms and usages.

In poetry, too, as it was written during the Middle Ages, we find many analogies and similitudes with Latin verse of classical times. As expressing the varying moods of the Wandering Scholars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such verse is pagan in the same sense that the poetry of Keats conforms to that description. It is the music of a brief and glorious day, of flowers and sunsets exquisitely dying, of wine and love, of grief and joy, "the pulse of war and passion of wonder." It is full of the intoxication of Spring ... of that Spring which comes later in Northern lands but when it comes, it is with such sudden ecstasy of colour, such burgeoning of green leaves, and white blossom, such cries of wild birds over the woodland pool, as shakes the heart with beauty. The music sounds, lovely, passionate, delicate ... with all the joy of April in its words. Light has come back to the dark world.
is over and gone. Bright gold and fair colour glitter in the air. The young scholar turns his thoughts away from Aristotle's logic and science to imagine with desire a girl's pale, slender beauty. 9

"Salve ver optatum
amantibus gratum,
gaudiorum
fax multorum,
florum incrementum;
multitudo florum
et color colorum
salvetote,
et estote
iocorum augmentum!
Dulcis avium concentus
sonat, gaudant, iuventus.
Hiems seva transit,
nam lenis spirat ventus."

Tellus purpurata
floribus et prata
revirescunt
umbre crescent,
nemus redimitur,
lascivit natura
omnis creatura;
leto vultu,
claro cultu,
ardor investitur:
Venus subditos titillat,
dum nature nectar stillat.
sic ardor venereus
amantibus scintillat.10

It is difficult to exaggerate the freshness of the Mediaeval Latin lyric. But it is not something which has sprung up without tradition or precept. It looks back to Virgil, to Horace and Catullus — to the exquisite, the sonorous, the majestic Latin of the great artists. It expresses its own emotion, its own mood or feeling but it has all the background of ancient Rome, the pagan deities, Jupiter, Venus and Bacchus as the ever-present companions of the scholar's experiences. To the mediaeval scholar, the roystering blade, the poet, rhetorician or logician of the schools, Virgil and Cicero were not only familiar names. They were not only the exponents of a brilliant and lucid style. They were part of the inheritance which he shared. Mediaeval man, no doubt, possessed little sense of historical perspective. He painted angels and saints, Our Lady and the Holy Child, in a scene of Gothic spires and towers, of green meadows, and winding paths, of rivers and swaying bridges against a sky of pale golden light. He painted the characters of the sacred story in the costume of his own time, in scarlet and blue and green and gold, in silver and purple, as in the glittering profusion of Gentile's "Adoration". He saw all things as part of his own time and circumstance. It was the same in poetry. The Latin language, employed with such consummate art by Virgil, was the same medium of expression as he himself used. There was no definition or canon of Latin poetry. Indeed, until the seventeenth century, Latin will still remain the language of learned disquisition and argument. In that century, Milton will turn to it to write his "Elegies", and as late as the present century Giovanni Pascoli, the Italian scholar and poet,
will give the world those charming Latin verses of his, with their echoes of Virgilian music. A thirteenth century text-book can mention such varied names as Ovid, Cicero, Matthew of Vendôme, and Gautier de Châtillon with as little sense of incongruity as a modern work can describe the progress of English literature from Chaucer to Swinburne, and from Hopkins to T.S. Eliot.

In much of the mediaeval Latin verse there is evidence of a careful study of the poetry of Virgil, Ovid, Lucan and Statius. Here too is the striving, the ardour for perfection of phrase which we associate with the Latin scholarship of the Renaissance. Dido is one of the great heroines of the Middle Ages, her tragic story interpreted in many a lament and many a sorrowful meditation. Here we see how it is the Romantic qualities of Latin poetry which attracted the minds of that time, the secret wood with its violets and dark leaves, the grove, the thicket, and the hidden pool with the wild daffodils crowding its banks.

Lucus erat longo nunquam violatus ab aevō.

We must think too of those impassioned and zealous scholars of the early Middle Ages such as Abelard, with his magnificent, questing intellect, Thierry of Chartres, "the soul of Plato reincarnate", as he was once called, Baudri, Abbot of Bourgeuil, with his honey-sweet rhymes and talk of the nightingales singing in the valley of the Loire.

When, therefore, the scholars of the Renaissance in the fifteenth century defined their aims as the revival of the ancient culture, in one sense they were not proposing anything revolutionary or new. The love of Latin poetry and prose, the dim reflection of Greek philosophy, the vague and irresistible shadow of Helen of Troy passing by, had persisted throughout the Middle Ages. We must not read too much into Petrarch's boast about his own singular and individual understanding of the ancient world. The difference between the late Mediaeval learning and the Renaissance consists in a point of view. One is rational, logical, dialectical; the other, illumined by the brilliance of a common discovery of Greek, is able to engage in a clearer perception of that universe of the spirit than was possible before. In Italy, the Renaissance became an enthusiasm, a fervour, a passion for that ancient world whose forms still preserved the living colours of beauty. It was the attempt to recover the glory of the past in every sphere of knowledge: its wisdom, its philosophy, its science, its art, its poetry. This is how Machiavelli saw it in his native Florence when in tentative words he declared:

"perché questa provincia pare nata per risuscitare cose morte, come si è visto della poesia della pittura e della scultura."

12
Such an effort and ambition on the part of the men of the Italian Renaissance presuppose an act of faith in the power of the human spirit, and, moreover, a belief in the goodness and virtue of human nature. Such a view might seem to contradict the traditional pessimism of the Christian schools. For, certainly, at first sight, until we have reflected upon its implications, every Christian conception of the world of human endeavour appears to assert the condemnation of man as corrupt and ruined by sin. Charity is presented as the one thing necessary. This alone, the gift of supernatural grace, could resolve the problems suggested by the situation in which man finds himself. Nothing else matters. Knowledge is only vanity. Learning, unless it is directed to supernatural purposes and ends, is mere futility. Christian pessimism therefore confronts nature, its beauty, its glory, its order and the most magnificent of the productions of human genius, with a negation. The divine order is set over against the natural order. The former alone possesses reality and meaning. Thus Christian pessimism becomes the contradiction of humanism. And so the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, in their effort to discover and formulate Christian truth in what they regarded as its original purity, condemned the whole endeavour of Humanism as a return to paganism. For them, it implied the assertion of a purely pagan confidence in the capacity of reason and in the goodness of human nature. The spirit of the Renaissance, with which they were contemporary, had no other significance for them than the renaissance of pagan pride. Luther hurls anathemas at Italian humanism, which he regards as more dangerous, more insinuating, more subtle in the teaching of Erasmus who has the effrontery to regard himself as a Christian. It is true that Luther went into his monastery clutching to himself his Plautus and his Virgil. It is true that he had an appreciation of music and of the natural beauty of woods and trees and flowers and flowing rivers. This, however, does not alter the fact of his violent opposition to the whole Humanist movement. Every human effort towards goodness and truth is for Luther mere blindness, wretched and sinful. Human reason can be viewed under one aspect only. It conduces to error and pride. Thus, commenting on Romans ch. VIII v.2, Luther declares: "Philosophy stinks in our nostrils, as though reason always seeks the best things, and we chatter about the Law of Nature." 15

Indeed, human reason leads man to damnation. Human society provokes God to just vengeance. So great, so dark, so terrible is the condition of man since the Fall that he finds in himself "not only the privation of light in the intellect and of strength in the memory" but also "the loss of all uprightness and powers of all our faculties, whether of the body or the soul, of the whole inward and outward man." He goes on to say that: "It is ready for evil, nauseated by good, a disgust at light and wisdom, a delight in error and in darkness, a running away from, and abomination of, good works, a running towards evil .... For God not only
hates this privation and imputes it ... but also all this concupiscence."

In this extremity of need, there is only one way of salvation open to Christians. It is to reject all human operations, to despise the counsels of reason, and to base all hope on humble faith in the redemptive work of Christ. Here, of course, it may be admitted Luther expresses some of his most wonderful intuitions and thoughts, deeply influenced as he was by Tauler and the whole mystical tradition of the "Theologica Germanica". The Passion and Death of the Son of God alone can avail to procure forgiveness to the fallen and corrupt creature. Like Augustine he preaches the lesson of humility. "Nemo per fidem justificatur nisi prius per humilitatem se iniustum confiteatur. Haec autem est humilitas". "Humilitas sola salvet". "Perfecta enim cognitio sui ipsius humilitas est, perfecta autem humilitas perfecta sapientia est, perfecta sapientia perfecta spiritualitas est."17

In Luther's doctrine therefore, salvation is through the faith which embraces the promises of Christ. These promises are to be discovered in the Gospel, "the treasure of the Church", and in the writings of the Apostle, St. Paul, who more than any other expounds the great realities of Sin and Redemption. Calvin himself, with his more lucid and logical mind, exhibits a similar point of view. His early work, the "Commentary on Seneca's 'De Clementia'" certainly shows some evidence of humanist leanings, with its quotations from Greek and Latin authors and its admirably clear and elegant Latin. In his developed theological position, however, it cannot be denied that he has no use for the principles and doctrines of Humanism. "The whole man from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot," writes Calvin, "is so deluged, as it were, that no part remains exempt from sin." Moreover, "abominable impiety seized upon the very citadel of the mind and pride penetrated to his inmost heart".18 Thus the great French Reformer states his doctrine of man. There are indeed certain notes of hesitation from time to time in what he has to say about the work of the intellect, and he preserves a respect for the memory of Erasmus. In the main, however, his denunciation of human pride is no less fierce and resentful than what may be found in the earlier theologian of Protestantism. The Puritans of England and Scotland, admirable as their fervour for the Gospel may have been, express the same contempt for all human works. There is again no difference between this attitude and that of the Jansenists of Port Royal. Even the great Pascal, with his generous and noble nature, is perhaps not inaptly described by the Abbé Brémond as obsessed by the idea of original sin.19 "La foi chrétienne," he declares in a sentence which is characteristic of the "Pensées", "ne va principalement qu'à établir ces deux choses, la corruption de la nature et la rédemption de Jésus Christ."20
This pessimism, expressed by the leaders of the Reformation, does not really reflect the philosophy of the Christian Church throughout the ages. S. Paul condemns the vices and pride of the pagans in the darkest colours. The long diatribe in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans leaves no doubt as to the horror with which the devout Jew regarded the sensual practices of his pagan neighbours. In spite of this, however, he declares that by the exercise of reason they should have been able to draw the conclusion that God exists, and that He is eternal. They have not been deprived of that natural knowledge of the moral law which should have enabled them to understand and to practise virtue. This is a principle from which the Fathers of the Church drew many inferences.

It follows that all capacities of the human mind and spirit can be consecrated to the Christian Religion. S. Justin Martyr, for example, claims every noble ideal, every noble aspiration and thought for Christ, no matter from what quarter it may come. S. Ambrose, quoted in this respect several times by S. Thomas, declares emphatically: "Omne verum a quocumque dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offenditis." These two statements are characteristic of the broader view of Orthodox Christianity. They are in themselves sufficient to provide justification for the spirit of Humanism and serve to bring it under the dominion of God. Erasmus, leader of the Humanist movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, takes up this same point of view when, in his "Enchiridion militis christianii", he affirms: "Christi autem esse puta, quicquid unquam verae offe...
9.

S.Vitale in Ravenna or in the dramatic light and colour of Giotto. It is the spirit of Humanism which underlies the efforts of the Patristic writers to pursue the enquiry begun by the ancients (by the light of reason alone) to the mystery of the Universe and human destiny. In vain Tertullian exclaimed: "What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem?" "What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?" "Our instruction comes from the Porch of Solomon who taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with all attempts to produce a confused Christianity of Stoic, Platonic and dialectic composition."

Tertullian practised his career as a writer and teacher of a dissenting sect. His vigorous and thunderous Latin expresses the point of view of the North African Church, stern, uncompromising and denunciatory. Yet the apocalyptic ideas of the Church of Carthage did not prevail. While Tertullian might inveigh against the association of Jerusalem with Athens, nevertheless the philosophy of Plato, the concepts of the Stoics, the order and dignity of Roman government, provided models for Christian writers which they were not slow to emulate. A reconciliation was made. We find its results in Augustine, in S.John Chrysostom, whose homilies still preserve the golden notes of Athenian eloquence, in S.Ambrose, whose reverence for the Classics is as great as that of any Renaissance scholar, in S.Basil and S.Gregory Nazianzen, both students of the University of Athens and intent on creating a prose which should be both Christian and Classical. This is the tradition which has shaped and moulded European civilization and which we discover in the Middle Ages. It is a Christian humanism which provided the foundation for the mystical theology of S.Bernard.

A humanism equally brilliant sustains the thought of his great opponent, Peter Abé!ard. In Richard of S.Victor, humanism blends strangely yet clearly with mysticism. In the twelfth century, Humanism triumphs in the school of Chartres. It inspires the homage which John of Salisbury feels bound to yield to the ancients, whom he acclaims as the indispensable masters of every human discipline. "We are only dwarfs on the shoulders of giants," he declares, comparing contemporary and ancient learning.

The triumph of Christian Humanism seemed in the thirteenth century to experience a sudden movement of arrest. Peter Damian wanted to reduce all culture to the study of the Bible. He invoked curses and denunciations on Greece and its devilish work. Again, certain influences in Arab thought combined to reduce the authority of the old classical culture. Averroists discovered in Aristotle an rational account of the Universe. Scornful of the ancient philosophy, neglectful of the ancient literature, heedless of the ideals of classical Greece, they devoted themselves entirely to science and dialectic. The rising Franciscanism exalted humility, rejecting as a luxury opposed to Christian poverty, the culture of the mind. This would not be its last word, however. We shall soon find the Franciscan movement in the full tide of humanist endeavour. Perhaps
Giotto and Dante may serve as examples of those who were inspired by the little, poor man of Assisi while S. Bonaventura may stand as the representative of that Franciscan philosophy which is first Augustinian and by way of derivation Platonist. However, in the poems of Jacopone da Todi, that impassioned genius of mystical poetry, one can detect the opposition of the spirit of Assisi to that of Paris. The visionaries who, pursuing the theme of the eternal Gospel, elaborated an apocalypse of divine vengeance, rejected equally the Rome of the Caesars and the Rome of the Popes.31 Political prophecies expressed by Joachim of Flora spoke in enigmatic and eccentric words of an approaching doom and were eagerly repeated by the spiritual Franciscans.32 Rome they regarded as having returned to paganism and to be worthy of the righteous punishment of God.

It was left to S. Thomas to construct an Aristotelianism at once humanist and Christian in contrast to that type of Averroist interpretation which may be termed anti-Christian and anti-humanist. The influence exerted by the Angelic Doctor on Dante is a large subject and it would be irrelevant to consider it here. But it may be said that S. Thomas, perhaps through the work of S. Albert the Great as also through his own investigations, came to a deep appreciation of the metaphysic of Aristotle. In his capacity as a humanist as also as a Catholic theologian, he writes a commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, a work which, from the time of the "Convivio" of Dante onwards, was destined to become one of the great humanist books of the Renaissance. Deeply versed in the long tradition of Patristic learning, S. Thomas, with the brilliance of genius, manages to combine this with Greek thought and Greek subtlety. The West has always professed an interest in the theological thought of the Orthodox East. It may be said that intellectual and spiritual elements from Byzantine Christianity fertilized Latin culture and produced flowers of many-coloured and strange, exotic splendour. The Scholastic Movement owes much to the works made available by the Latin translators of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Not only was this philosophical and scientific, as is evidenced by the interest in Aristotle and Arabic speculation generally. There were many works of Greek theology which were translated at the time and which exercised an immediate and powerful influence on Western theology. Most important of all, the great treatise of S. John of Damascus, "De Fide Orthodoxa" (the third part of his learned theological Summa, "The Source of Knowledge"), became familiar to Western scholars. This work may be considered in the light of an exposition in principle of the Greek theology. Translated into Latin by Burgundio of Pisa in the middle of the twelfth century, it proved immensely popular in scholastic circles.33 It provided a model for Peter Lombard's famous work, "The Book of the Sentences". Indeed, it might even be said to suggest the scholastic mode of thought and procedure. So important did this work appear to be, that in the thirteenth century Robert Grosseteste made another translation of it. We find frequent quotations from the book in the commentaries and treatises of the Scholastics. It is obvious how deeply it came to influence and
and colour the thought of S. Thomas. Of course, it was not only this work from the Greek tradition which was known. An influence of the greatest importance and of the most profound mysticism is to be discovered in the celebrated apophatic theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius and the Commentary of S. Maximus.

The effect of this sudden blaze of light from the Byzantine theology may be seen in the restatement of the Augustinian doctrine of grace as this is presented in the writings of S. Thomas and S. Bonaventura. This reveals the study and reflection on the Greek theology, as it had come to be known and understood in the West. Byzantine Christianity assumes an importance in that it modifies and illumines the Augustinian doctrines. The spiritual order exhibits a more ontological character. Augustine's view of grace is primarily that it constitutes an act of divine power exerted to move the human will. In S. Thomas, however, we shall find a more sensitive theory defined and illustrated. Grace becomes a new spiritual principle which effects the transformation of human nature by participation in the divine life. This, of course, is that "deification" which is such a common term in the writings of the Greek Fathers. The justification for this will no doubt be found in the words of II Peter 1:4 where the Vulgate reads: "per quern maxima et pretiosa nobis promissa donavit, ut per haec efficiamini divinae consortes naturae." The actual significance of such a change of thought is that grace is much more than a power which directs and moves the will. It is a light which illuminates the mind and guides the spirit by its own consoling and compassionate operation. It may be said that one of the most important achievements of Scholastic theology in its Golden Age is this union of Augustinian wisdom with the brilliant, Platonist tradition of Greek Christianity. It was this doctrine which was repudiated most firmly and most frequently by the leaders of the Protestant Reform.

S. Thomas is the great instigator of this synthesis. He reconciles and brings together the world of nature and the world of grace. In his view, certainly, nature has not been irretrievably corrupted and ruined by the Fall. Grace does not abolish Nature but consummates it in glory and beauty. This affirmation discloses an attitude which is essentially optimistic and which the Council of Trent was later to develop when faced by the pessimism of the Reformed Theology.

While the Thomistic philosophy does justice to the greatness of human nature, like all true humanism, it looks forward to its full development and to the realization of that fundamental nobility which it possesses. It is a reconciliation of reason with revelation, of intellect with faith.

It was the Aristotelian philosophy which brought to the realization of S. Thomas not only the scope but also the limitations of human reason. Those qualities of discretion and prudence which figure so conspicuously in the discussions in the "Nicomachean Ethics" confine man's endeavours
to what can be achieved in the domain of reason. But the humanism of S. Thomas greatly extends and widens this view. According to the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor, man can surpass the finite and temporal but only by the light of revelation which assures him of those truths which lie beyond the capacity of the human understanding to discover. All those ethical and metaphysical truths which are founded upon reason, S. Thomas retained. His underlying assumption is that whatever can be affirmed as true by natural reason must be accepted by Christian humanism. What is needed further is that the supernatural should illuminate and sanctify the natural. But God is not only the God of the supernatural, of visions and contemplation, of revelation and prophecy, but also the God of nature, as Friedrich von Hügel was never tired of pointing out. In other words, there is only one truth: whether it is a truth established by the discursive reason or whether it a truth communicated to man by God, it belongs to the same order of reality established by the Eternal Wisdom.

It might be argued therefore that after the uncertainties and perplexities of the early part of the thirteenth century, the humanism of S. Thomas marks the beginning of a philosophical Renaissance which had already burst forth sporadically and brilliantly several times already. For it exhibits a real confidence in the ability of reason to ascertain the truth. It does not rest satisfied with this, indeed, for, as a Christian, and as a theologian, the Angelic Doctor is at all times conscious of the necessity of grace, and of the co-operation which must exist between the two orders of the terrestrial and the celestial, of nature and of grace. He demonstrates clearly and effectively the true humanism of the spirit. This is discovered in a knowledge which makes possible all the light and colour of classical humanism, all its flowers, its leaves and blossoms flourishing in the warm rays of the Christian Revelation. In this consists the answer to all those weary and pessimistic schools of Christian theology which affirm the total corruption and immitigable darkness of mankind. This means not only Luther, Calvin and the Jansenists, the traditional exponents of such a view, but also the earlier Tertullian and the renowned S. Peter Damian, whom Dante will acclaim in the glory of the Heaven of Saturn among the great contemplatives.

IV

In whatever terms Thomism may be described, it will be generally agreed that it is not mystical in tendency. Not even the great Hymns to the Blessed Sacrament, the "Laude, Sion", the "Pange, lingua" or "Verbum supernum, prodiens", eloquent as they are, can be regarded as showing such an affinity. However, the speculative mystics of the fourteenth century may also be regarded as humanists, in so far as they recognize the nobility of man. Eckhart, contemporary of Dante, most daring of all mystics though apparently more of a Scholastic in his theological derivation than was once supposed, expresses admiration of the human soul as containing
within itself that uncreated principle which may be spoken of as the "divine spark". It is Eckhart again who glorifies the Platonic revelation. E 6 He exalts the power of reason with greater clarity and conviction than any writer since Erigena. "Rational knowledge is eternal life" he declares. "How can any external revelation help me unless it be verified by inner experience? The last appeal must always be to the deepest part of my own being, and that is my reason." 37 The great Dominican preacher, Tauler, gathers the lessons of the Neo-Platonists and follows their methods of contemplation. He speaks familiarly of "great masters like Proclus and Plato" as having a clear perception of that interior light of contemplation. In the mystics, therefore, it is true to say that we find an attitude which refuses to despise human nature or to belittle its powers. On the contrary, the mystical tradition of the Middle Ages exalts and celebrates with impassioned zeal the capacities of the soul, not only its spirituality but also its understanding.

The Abbé Brémond relates the story of the devout Humanism of the sixteenth century. 38 In his charming and inimitable way, he demonstrates the debt which this movement owes to the optimism of the Renaissance, with its brilliance, its genius, its art, its philosophy, its poetry, as also to the tradition of the mystics. The former has been remarked upon frequently. The latter is a less familiar observation. By way of digression, however, we may point out the exalted manner in which S. Teresa describes the soul in a state of grace. "I began to think of the soul," says this great saint, "as if it were a castle made of a single diamond or of a very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in heaven there are many mansions. Now if we think carefully over this, sisters, the soul of the righteous man is nothing but a paradise in which, as God tells us, He takes His delight. ... I can find nothing with which to compare the great beauty of a soul and its great capacity. In fact, however acute our intellects may be, they will no more be able to attain to a comprehension of this than to an understanding of God; for, as He Himself says, He has created us in His own image and likeness." 39 Again, S. John of the Cross, poet among mystics, in his own beautiful Castilian describes the union of the soul with God. 40

The French spiritual writers of the first half of the seventeenth century were not slow in learning this lesson of the nobility and worth of human nature. Brémond finds no difficulty in accumulating quotations from members of the most austere and rigorous orders of the Church, those who were engaged in all the ardours of the contemplative life, in which they exalt in the loftiest terms the greatness of man. All this is completely alien to the dark and gloomy thoughts of Jansenism. The mystical and contemplative tradition is carried on. It is not only a thing of fervour and glory, but also of struggle and pain and discipline. Yet its real attitude on this question of humanism is well expressed...
by the Spanish divine, Francisco de Osuna, the friend of S.Teresa, who declares: "Quo major est creatura, eo amplius eget Deo." It is this which expresses itself with such sweetness and clarity in S.Francis de Sales. In this saint, with his eloquent and lucid prose, the spirit of Christian Humanism may be said to find its most charming and accomplished protagonist. "0 mon ame tu es capable de Dieu: malheur à toi si tu contentes de moins que de Dieu." For Brémond this constitutes the greatness of Humanism and by this expression he must be taken as meaning that true humanism which unites the humanist culture with all its magnificent achievements with the noblest and most austere Christian spirituality.

Perhaps we may seem to have wandered a long way from the subject of Dante and the great themes expounded in the "Divina Commedia". We have not really done so, however, for in this discussion may be found some light for the interpretation of Humanism in the great Florentine poet. What Brémond has said about Christian Humanism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may not inaptly apply to Dante. The attitude which we may discover in the "Divina Commedia", with its illustrations, images, reminiscences of classical antiquity and its moral fervour, surely reveals itself to be in the long tradition of Christian Humanism. It is really the work of a Christian spirituality, intense, zealous, cultivated, sensitive and free, which illuminates and transforms the whole endeavour of Humanism, which endows it with a new beauty and brings it to fulfilment in all those lights and colours and music of glory in the Heaven of the poet's vision.

The masters of the great Mediaeval Schools were always conscious of themselves as guardians of the ancient culture and civilization. Those who took a purely ascetic view were rare. There were, of course, a few men like S.Peter Damian, who considered that the Bible should be sufficient for all knowledge and who regarded everything that came from ancient Greece with peculiar horror, since pagan society seemed to them obviously the work of the devil. Indeed, S.Peter Damian went a good deal further than this. Not only did he reject the necessity of dialectic in the exposition of Christian Faith and philosophy. Not only did he repudiate ancient learning and poetry. He condemned every natural impulse as insatiated. Yet, in spite of this extreme attitude, it is instructive to see how Dante meets him in the Heaven of Saturn among the great contemplatives moving luminously in that place of joy, and how he effects the reconciliation of his attitude with that of S.Thomas Aquinas.

"In quel loco fu'io Pietro Damian, e Pietro Peccator fu' nella casa di Nostra Donna in sul lito adriano."

..................................................

A questa voce vid'i io piü fiammelle di grado in grado scendere e girarsi, e ogni giro le facea piü belle. 43

Such extremes as this (and it may be said that S.Bernard in certain moods occasionally gives expression to it) are really outside the main
Christian tradition. Luther found his sole spiritual and intellectual nourishment in the Bible. The prophets, the Psalter, the law-books and the Pauline Epistles became his comfort and consolation. Calvin recalls to mind that S. Paul had issued the stern warning that if any man wanted to be a Christian he should make himself a fool in respect to the things of this world so that he might understand the Wisdom of God. Many English Puritans followed this austere counsel of moral perfection. John Milton is a notable exception, however, and with all his curious theology, his name must be counted among those who practised a Christian Humanism, even if it is not that of Catholic tradition. Deeply versed in the literature of Greece and Rome, a scholar whose Latin verse remains to show us what music could be elicited by a stranger from that sonorous instrument, he was always a passionate lover of knowledge. His profound admiration for Dante and Petrarch, is well-known, as also his love of all the splendour and magnificence of the Italian Renaissance.

"Not that faire field
Of Emma where Proserpin gathering flours
Herself a fairer Floure by gloomie Dis
Was gatherd, which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world: nor that sweet Grove
Of Daphne by Orontes, and th'inspir'd
Castalían Spring might with this Paradise
Of Eden strive; nor that Nysian Ile
Girl with the River Triton, where old Cham,
Whom Gentiles Ammon call and Lybian Jove,
Hid Amalthea and her Florid Son
Young Bacchus from his Stepdame Rhea's eye;" 44

The authentic note of Humanism is here: the love of all Pagan allusion, the enthusiasm for the poetry of Greece and Rome, the delight in language, the ardour of expression. S. Thomas was a student of Aristotle and of Greek science. Dante himself was a student of S. Thomas and of the scholastic theologians, but he was also familiar with the works of the mystics. It is again Christian Humanism which illumines the pages of the Fathers of the Church in their more Platonist moments and which inspires their noblest speculations and their sublimest visions.

It was Burckhardt who discovered in Dante all the characteristics which he recognized as denoting a man of the Renaissance. 46 Yet it is nevertheless true that in the "Divina Commedia", the "Convivio" and the "De Monarchia" we possess what can claim to be a synthesis of Mediaeval thought. This is the problem. An investigation of the Humanism of Dante is really an enquiry into the whole problem of Mediaeval Humanism in all its relationships and complex meanings. It is indeed to see it in its significance for the beginnings of the Renaissance and to trace, as far as may be possible in the compass of this essay, the classical and pagan influences which find their place in works which represent the loftiest achievement, intellectual, spiritual, and artistic, of the Middle Ages.
Notes to Chapter One: Towards the Definition of Humanism.


3. ibid. p. 93.
   Garin observes truly: "altro senso, e altro coraggio, nel richiamo, cosi ricco, alla virtù umana, alla virtù che vince fortuna, che muta il dato della sorte e costruisce il suo mondo, che alle cose dà un volto nuovo, con quell'arte umana che congiunge scienza e poesia. Ed è, questo, l'umanesimo civile fiorentino del 400, e Leo Battista Alberti, e Pico con la sua trasposizione dell'umanesimo filologico e retorico sul piano di una metafisica dell'uomo creatore. Che è io credo, la parola più profonda di tutti il Rinascimento."


5. Inferno IX: 114.
   "which bounds Italy and bathes its confines."


   Glorye and honour, Virgil Mantoan,
   Be to thy name! and I shal, as I can,
   Folwe thy lanterne, as thou gost byforn,
   How Eneas to Dido was forsworn.
   In Naso and Eneydos wol I take
   The tenor and the grete effectes make.


12. Lucan.


17. ibid. p. 149.


22. Romans I vv. 20-22. Invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspicientur: ita ut sint inexcusabiles quia, cum cognovissent Deum, non sicut Deum glorificaverunt, aut gratias egerunt. sqq.


25. Tertullian. De Praescriptione. VII.

26. In this respect M. Gilson's remark is apposite: "it would appear impossible to separate Athens from Jerusalem without breaking with Rome."


30. cf. Rocco Montano. Dante e il Rinascimento.


35. M. Gilson, in his illuminating exposition of the "Christian Philosophy of S. Thomas Aquinas" (English trans: L.K. Shook; C.S.B., London, 1957) declares: "The examination of his teaching, in all its historical significance, compared with the Augustinian tradition, most illustriously represented by S. Bonaventura, reveals what profound recasting, what incredibly bold transformations he was willing to carry out on his own responsibility to meet the demands of philosophical truth whenever in his judgment they were justified by right reason." p.23.


37. On the divine spark in the human soul Inge quotes Eckhart's words, "Diesse Fünkelein das ist Gott" but he does not, apparently, accept the interpretation which sees this as an uncreated principle existing in the soul. M. Louis Massignon says wisely "The vocabulary of the mystics is not ontological but affective, individual rather than personal" (quoted in Jacques Maritain, "The Degrees of Knowledge," translated by Gerald B.Phelan. London, 1959. p. 336). This may explain some perplexing statements in Eckhart but not all.


40. cf. The Spiritual Canticle.

As illustrating the value which S.John of the Cross attaches to the soul the following words may be quoted which are characteristic.

"In this tranquillity the understanding sees itself raised up in a new and strange way, above all natural understanding, to the Divine light, much as one who after a long sleep opens his eyes to the light which he was not expecting." "Complete Works of St.John of the Cross, translated and edited by E.Allison Peers." (London: 1943). vol:2. p.271.

41. II.Bremond. "L'humanisme dévot." pp.9-12.

42. S.Francois de Sales. Introduction à la vie dévote:V:X.


"In that place I was Peter Damian, and I was Peter the Sinner in the House of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore ........... At his voice I saw more little flames descend from step to step, wheeling, and every turn made them more beautiful."

44. Paradise Lost. Bk.IV. 268-79.

CHAPTER TWO.

THE "CONVIVIO" AS A PRELIMINARY OUTLINE OF HUMANISM.

I.

In the "Convivio" we discover a preliminary sketch of that Humanism, coloured by religious feeling, which is developed and elaborated in the "Divina Commedia". Here it is that Dante declares explicitly, almost in the manner of the Florentine Platonists of the fifteenth century, the nobility and excellence of all philosophical endeavour. It is noteworthy that, in this work, he assigns the first place to Ethics, not to Metaphysics. To the science of Ethics belongs the foundation of order and harmony both in the human soul as well as in the city. To it, all other sciences are subordinated. If man engages in the effort to understand himself and the world in which he lives, it is only that he may deduce from such knowledge the rule by which his conduct should be framed. Aristotle had maintained the primacy of Metaphysics. Spinoza, three centuries after Dante, founded his own ethical system on the metaphysic of substance. But Dante's anxious concern for the practical in moral and social life led him to stress the importance of ethics. It was because he was a man, raved by bitter and violent passions, proud and deeply wounded by the events which had befallen him, that he felt compelled to seek those principles on which alone he could construct the edifice of law and peace. Signor Nardi has maintained, however, that Dante does not really deny the primacy of Metaphysics, for he states explicitly that Metaphysics constitutes in a way the true end of Philosophy and is therefore called "first Philosophy". Nardi contends that the poet assigns to Moral Philosophy a position above all the other disciplines for the reason that it orders us in respect of the other sciences... "essa ordina noi a l'altre scienze." This may be regarded as the Aristotelian and Thomistic sense in which Moral Philosophy co-ordinates and illuminates all other sciences. Speculation about the truth constitutes for Dante the highest operation of the human spirit and this is what is meant by Metaphysics. But the task of moving the intellect to the understanding of the speculative sciences belongs to the sphere of Ethics. Therefore, Ethics in general and Politics in particular enjoy the primacy over all the other sciences and arts, in so far as they direct such efforts to the true ends which they should pursue. Professor Nardi's view is plausible but it does not seem to have taken sufficiently into account the comparison which Dante makes between Moral Philosophy
and the Crystalline Heaven, the Primum Mobile. In this connection, it is worth noting that though the poet does not follow Aristotle in the classification of the sciences, he may be said to remain faithful to the spirit of Aristotelianism. After all, it is with the aid of Aristotle that he tries to construct an Ethic, both for himself and for all men, which (as in the Aristotelian system) will embrace a philosophical humanism. We may observe, however, that he does not ignore the inadequacy of an Ethic which is purely and entirely Aristotelian. From the point of view of Aristotle, however liberal and however humanistic, this inadequacy becomes immediately evident. It is only necessary to contrast its polite and well-ordered conventions, its singular common-sense, its lack of all knowledge of the heights and depths of human experience to recognize this. Contrast the "Nicomachean Ethics" with the fiery denunciations and moral ardour of the prophets of the Old Testament, or with the passionate love of righteousness which is the very spirit of the Gospel, or the agonies and glories of the Pauline Epistles, and one realizes this at once. Dante knows with all the fervour of his great soul that a humanism which is purely anthropocentric can only produce a limited and transient order. Since his return to Beatrice ... quella gloriosa Beatrice ... whom he commemorates in the "Convivio" in tender thought serenely cold words, he knows himself as a citizen of that eternal City which he will celebrate in the "Divina Commedia" in the figure of the unfolding of the petals of the white rose of sempiternal beauty.

The emphasis on the city is natural and just. It is that perfect association of men in the purposes for which they were created. It is when man becomes a citizen of that Rome of which Christ himself is Roman (cive di quella Roma onde Cristo è Romano) that he knows the felicity for which his nature was divinely constituted. Dante knows, therefore, that the moral ideals which he propounds must be capable of defining order and law in their proper relation to human life as it is lived in society. Christian Humanism, in whatever form it takes, is always driven to affirm the divine image in the depths of the soul. Whatever propositions it affirms, whatever enterprise it undertakes, whatever action it initiates must conform to a pattern which it regards as supernatural. Such a pattern it declares to be necessary to the perfection and plenitude of human nature. It is for this reason that Dante, in his capacity as a Christian humanist, - though at this stage very imperfectly, - perceives that philosophical speculation is not enough, for it constitutes a purely human form of knowledge. There can be no eternal pattern, no model
or similitude of divine things in such a conception. The poet finds himself obliged, though perhaps even reluctantly, to go beyond the purely human and philosophical and to introduce theology in its character as transcendent and revealed knowledge. It is for this reason, also, that the classification of the sciences which Dante employs must reach to the supernatural in the luminous hierarchy of the heavens. Higher than the planetary heavens, higher than the heaven of the fixed stars, higher even than the crystalline heaven, stands the Empyrean, the heaven of pure fire or rather of light, the love that is peace and perfect contemplation, the tranquillity of order and consummation of joy.

Dante's incursions into the science of Astronomy are interesting and seem to have caused him some satisfaction. In the main he follows Ptolemy or perhaps it would be more exact to say his Arabic commentator, the celebrated Alfraganus, whose "Elementa astronomica" was well-known in the Latin world. It is noteworthy that here he rejects the views of Aristotle and chooses to follow the main tradition of Ptolemy. Mediaeval astronomers postulated the existence of nine heavens, seven corresponding to each of the visible planets, then the Firmament, belonging to the fixed stars, and finally the Crystalline Heaven, the Primum Mobile, which imparted motion to the whole process. S.Thomas and certain other theologians also spoke of another Heaven, which they called the "Empyrean", but astronomers repudiated such a concept which was purely a priori and could not obviously be deduced from observation or mathematical calculation. The Empyrean is therefore a theological idea. It was conceived as something created at the beginning in a state of glory. Its name is derived from the Greek word for "fire" but is more properly meant to describe the quality of light which it must be supposed to possess. It has no close relation with the other heavens. S.Basil defines it as "extra mundum": it is indeed "quietis domicilium", a place of repose. While it is itself incapable of motion, S.Thomas thought that it must exercise the attraction of desire on other bodies. Dante follows this doctrine. He declares that above the Crystalline Heaven, there exists an Empyrean, a Heaven of fire or light, for it is the luminosity which is its characteristic as a manifestation of glory. It is repose, - almost one might say "unmoved movement", - yet it is the cause of those immensely swift movements executed by the Primum Mobile. Each part of the Crystalline Heaven immediately below the Empyrean exhibits such burning desire for the luminous and transcendent glory of this divine heaven.
that it revolves with a speed that almost surpasses the capacity of human intelligence.\textsuperscript{11}

In this way, therefore, Dante establishes symbolically the predominance of Theology. It corresponds to that Heaven of glory and repose, the Empyrean, which therefore conveys to us the significance of that perfect understanding and peace which is founded upon revelation, "per la eccellentissima certezza del suo subietto, lo quale à Dio."\textsuperscript{12}

Thus to a Humanism which may be described as purely Hellenic, Aristotelian and rationalist, Dante adds a Humanism which is clearly mystical in aspiration. Both aspects of Humanism remain in uneasy association in the earlier work. Indeed, such views as he propounds in the "Convivio" could only reach their necessary and logical conclusion in the "Divina Commedia". The author is a humanist by every instinct and affinity of genius. He is also a pupil of the Scholastic Theology, and conducts an exposition which remains essentially Aristotelian. Sublime as was the place which he attributed to the science of Theology, in common with the Mediaeval view, both Christian and Moslem, the poet had no wish that Philosophy should be completely subordinated to it. He employs that strange illustration from the "Song of Songs",\textsuperscript{13} typical of the subtlety of Mediaeval interpretation, when he declares of this science that "Solomon has said of it: 'There are threescore queens and fourscore concubines and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one.'"(Song of Songs, VI:8-9).\textsuperscript{14} Obviously this passage was chosen by the poet because it could be conveniently employed to demonstrate that, although theology may be likened to the immaculate dove, yet the other sciences are queens. In this, as Gilson has clearly shown, Dante amends and corrects the Thomistic conception even to the extent of substituting another passage of Scripture in place of the quotation given in the article in the "Summa Theologica".\textsuperscript{15}

Here S.Thomas had cited Proverbs IX:3, "Misit ancill\ae suas vocarent ad arcem", the inference being, obviously, that Theology, the Divine Science, as a Queen sends forth handmaids, the other sciences, to do her bidding.

The poet will admit only that a free collaboration exists between Philosophy and Theology. We might perhaps speak of this as a natural and pre-established harmony. In the spirit of Christian Humanism, he refuses to tolerate any opposition between reason and revelation, between the formal knowledge of the intellect and divine truths, between nature and the supernatural. For him, nature is penetrated by the supernatural, the human soul by the spiritual. Moreover, the existence of reason in the human intellect must be assigned to the supernatural order.
It follows, therefore, that reason no less than revelation must be regarded as a divine element present in all human knowledge. This position is reminiscent of the Augustinian doctrine of illumination, according to which all knowledge constitutes an active participation in the light of divine truth. One might perhaps expect to find in the "Convivio" the fervour and enthusiasm of Neo-Platonism, together with its lofty speculation and clearly-developed system. Sometimes, it is true, we become conscious in this work of a certain magnificence of language, an amplitude and grandeur of phrase, but suddenly it becomes inconclusive ... and the author reverts to his rationalism. He remains an Aristotelian at heart. His metaphysical ideas are expressed with the characteristic prudence and sobriety of Aristotle. He knows exactly the limits beyond which philosophical speculation cannot go. Yet, this is a position, narrow, defined, limited, with which he is never entirely satisfied.

He asserts that the human reason is capable of demonstrating the immortality of the soul in a manner sufficiently evident to confute the arguments of the Epicurean philosophy. S. Thomas has declared, earlier, that the human reason is able to demonstrate not only the existence of God but also the existence of spiritual intelligences. Only the divine essence remains outside the scope of the rational intellect. In the "Convivio", it is noteworthy that the poet can speak of God in the language of honorific felicitation as First Cause, Supreme Intelligence, Source of all Justice, End of all human desires. He associates Philosophy with the Divine Wisdom: compares God to the beneficent activity of the sun, in which of course he can plead good Platonic authority: and speaks of that intellectual light which God sheds forth upon the celestial and other intelligences. Dante preserves a certain reticence however, and in this he does not depart from the careful analysis and reservations of the Thomistic philosophy. He apparently accepts the Thomistic theory of knowledge in principle, and therefore assumes that human reason in constructing a theory about the Universe can only draw its conclusions from what is given in sense-perception. In this life, God has not willed to concede to man that clear and brilliant light which will disclose to him all truth and all knowledge. For S. Thomas (as presumably for Dante also) we can know nothing without the production of a mental image or species of what is known. An image is something which is defined and limited. By consequence, therefore, no such image or form of the Infinite can exist. If we make any image or form to represent the divine essence it must necessarily delude or falsify: it will
not reveal in any way that which it seeks to portray. Only the beatific vision in heaven by the light of glory can disclose to us the knowledge of God, and this cannot be comprehensive, for the infinite and eternal must always remain beyond the complete understanding of the finite.  

It is admitted by S. Thomas that in this life we can possess an inadequate, indistinct and vague knowledge of created spirits, that is of the angels. This non-quidditative knowledge, however, does not suffice to enable us to distinguish one angel from another. Between man and the angels there is at least the common term of created substance. Between man and God, however, there exists no tertium quid by which we may institute comparisons and proceed to logical deductions. By definition God cannot belong to any class or category of finite existence. Nor can He be imagined or conceived by any operation of the human mind.

It is as well to set down the main principles of the Thomist philosophy because while Dante has his own opinions and does not hesitate to correct S. Thomas when he disagrees with him, his theory of knowledge does not depart from these principles of Western tradition. There is a reticence, a reserve, a certain element of negation in what can be said about the Godhead. That divine science which the poet describes as not permitting "any controversy or sophistical arguments on account of the excellent certainty of its subject-matter, which is God" is of course an ideal which is relegated to the Empyrean of pure light. Such hesitation as Dante experiences may indeed serve to demonstrate his sympathy with Siger de Brabant, whom in the "Paradiso" through the mouth of S. Thomas himself he was to proclaim as one who declared importunate truths in his syllogisms:

"la luce eterna di Sigieri che, leggendo nel vico de li strami, sillogizzo invidiosi veri."  

It may be that Dante never followed the Averroists as far as those matters in which their strict Aristotelianism came into contradiction with the Catholic Faith. In any case, he has not expressed anything else of their propositions, except in the theory of knowledge. He has nowhere been found to admit their doctrine of the eternity of the world. Nor does he maintain anywhere Averoes' characteristic teaching of the unity of the possible intellect as constituted for the whole human race. This doctrine was taught by the Arab philosopher in his commentary on the "De Anima" of Aristotle and there is a discussion on the meaning of the "possible intellect" in the "Monarchia" of Dante. In this, however, Dante has transformed the argument of Averoes which affirms the impersonality of reason and man's contingent participation in it during his earthly existence.
In the theory which is enunciated in the "De Monarchia", the possible intellect takes on a new significance. It denotes all the members of the human race living at a particular time on the earth and so constituting a collective entity in which each man has his part as realizing the ideal of knowledge possible at any given time. There is therefore a light and shade, a difference in interpretation which is obvious when we come to study Dante. While Averroes regards the possible intellect as a rational substance independent of the body, a kind of impersonal light in which man shares fitfully and partially by the exercise of the active intellect, Dante regards it as the universal community of intellects. There is a profound difference between these two conceptions. The poet speaks with respect of Averroes.

One wonders whether it was partly due to the influence of Guido Cavalcanti, his great friend ("primo amico") that he learned to discover such manifold truths in the illustrious Arab thinker. Certainly, Scholastic theology was conscious of its debt to him. Dante himself during the period that he was writing the "Convivio" would seem to have assented to the main proposition of Averroes that philosophical truth consists entirely in the philosophy of Aristotle. However, like the Averroists, Dante imposes a measure upon what can be ascertained by metaphysical enquiry. He himself knows, and so does the humblest Christian, truths of which Aristotle was ignorant. He does not suppose that the restraint which must exist for the speculations of the human intellect in any way lessens its significance. This can no more be the case than can the transcendency and excellency of theology diminish the importance of philosophy in its proper sphere and operation. The recognition of such limits in the attainment of rational knowledge, as well as the predominance of Theology, merely demonstrate more clearly what ought to be the object of our investigation.

What, we may ask, is that object? The answer is Man. Man, as we may study him in the reality of his moral and material life, individual and social: man as we find his actions manifested in the sciences of ethics and politics. And so the object of philosophy ... as thus understood ... appears to be the culture and progress of society: and this we may call "Humanism". That is not all, however. Philosophical enquiry, while it is humanist in its direction, nevertheless is a divine work, since its object is divine. Man, by the mere fact of his rational nature, in spite of the obscurity of material circumstances and the darkness of sin, still possesses the divine light in his soul. As S.Bernard expresses it, he may be called "celsa creatura in capacitate majestatis." In the "Divina Commedia"
S. Bernard, with his mystical ardour, has his part to play in the poet's ascent to that ineffable light, in which the Eternal God is contemplated in all His glory and beauty.

II.

It may therefore be said that the Christian Humanism of Dante recognizes not only the dignity of human nature but also the worth of such tasks and enterprises as are imposed upon man in his capacity as a citizen. The active life is accorded a high place though at the same time there is no denial of the primacy of contemplation, - a platitude of the Mediaeval Schools. Dante as a man of action was engaged in a fierce political conflict for the reform of the Florentine Republic and, indeed, for the Church itself. He finds himself compelled by the very circumstances of the struggle to attach the greatest importance to the virtues manifested by the citizen. And so, not content with invoking the authority of Aristotle in the tenth Book of the "Nicomachean Ethics" for the exposition of the political virtues, he finds it necessary to appeal to the words of Christ. As a Christian thinker, he must find a text on which to make his homily. He finds this, somewhat strangely it might seem, in the story of Martha and Mary at Bethany.

"Veramente è da sapere che noi potemo avere in questa vita due felicitati, secondo due diversi cammini, buono e ottimo, che ciò ne menano: l'una è la vita attiva, e l'altra la contemplativa; la quale, avvegna che per l'attiva si pervegna, come detto è, a buona felicitade, ne mena ad ottima felicitade e beatitudine, secondo che pruova lo Filosofo nel decimo de l'Etica. E Cristo l'affermà con la sua bocca, nel Vangelo di Luca, parlando a Marta, e rispondendo a quella: 'Marta, Marta, sollicita se' e turbati intorno a molte cose: certamente una cosa è necessaria', cioè 'quello che fai'. E soggiunge: 'Maria ottima parte ha elefca la quale non le sara tolta'.................volse lo nostro Segnore in ciò mostrare che la contemplativa vita fosse ottima, tutto che buona fosse l'attiva:"

As a Christian thinker Dante cannot deny the primacy of the contemplative life; nor can he ignore the claims of the active life, the preoccupation with the concerns of Church and State, government, administration, justice and order. This primacy was as firmly maintained by classical Humanism as by the Christian tradition and, as is well known, is one of the cardinal principles of the Aristotelian rationalism. In Book X of the "Nicomachean Ethics", (on which Dante seems to have meditated much), Aristotle, now about to bring his great work to its conclusion, allows himself the expression of certain philosophical ideals. The greatest felicity, - shall we say the greatest joy (since it is not a word which finds a place in Aristotle's vocabulary), - to which man can attain is that which he experiences in brief moments in the exercise of contemplation. Happiness, he has
already told us, consists in that activity which conforms most to what is noblest in man, i.e. the intellect. Such an activity manifests itself in contemplation. With the eloquence of the scholar and thinker, Aristotle defines this activity as intellectual enjoyment. "Not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something in him which is divine." Here then we find clearly revealed the essential theme of ancient philosophical speculation, the deification of man by the light of the intellect. The history of the doctrine is varied and interesting. It will appear with a Christian colour and vesture, for the Church will not deny that man's greatest gift is reason. The very term "deification" will be employed, not indeed of the natural exercise of the intellect, but of that fullness of light in grace by which man seeks to attain to the goal of all knowledge.

"La gloria di colui che tutto move per l'universo penetra e risplende in una parte piú e meno altrove." In the "Convivio" Dante owes much to this doctrine: the almost lyrical expression which Aristotle gives to it shows how much it had become one of his most treasured experiences. "Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have a man's thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality;" Aristotle observes, "but we ought as far as possible to achieve immortality and do all that a man may do to live in accordance with the highest in him." Dante never disputed or called in question the hierarchies of dignity established by Aristotle and confirmed by the philosophical enquiry of S.Thomas. Speculation is nobler than action and the practical arts. The moral order as that refers to the actions of men and the technical order of creation remains subordinate to the theoretical order of knowledge. Contemplation is the supreme goal assigned by God to the human race. This is shown in the whole conception of the "Divina Commedia" and in the consummation of the soul in the Beatific Vision.

However, it must be emphasized that the poet insists on the importance of the life of practical endeavour, the moral task, the strife of political parties, the trumpet and the clarion, and such action as is directed towards the good of the State. These activities bring a man such happiness as he is capable of enjoying in the natural order. In this conclusion, the "Nicomachean Ethics" affirms the same interpretation as Dante gives to the passage about Martha and Mary in the Gospel. Part of his design in writing the "Convivio" seems to have been to show the need for an intellectual and moral
reform in the society of his own day. To write this book constituted in itself a work of practical efficacy. It was to achieve, to do, to bring something into effect. It was not to contemplate as an end in itself. Doubtless contemplation goes before action and the poet must obviously have contemplated and imagined before he began to compose his poems with their commentaries. Dante was not content merely to contemplate. He felt the moral impulse to undertake a certain work for the sake of the community and of his fellow-men.

Of course, contemplation still takes the first place in the scheme of things - the work of the speculative intellect - for Dante is still too much under the influence of Aristotle and of Mediaeval thought generally to have wished to deny such pre-eminence. It is worth remarking, however, that, in the Fourth Treatise of the "Convivio", he reserves contemplation for the last years of a life that has already been spent in the exercise of the more active virtues. In this he did not have the opportunity of following his own exhortation and counsel. For since the day that he wrote the first stanza of the "Divina Commedia" he founded the whole doctrine of his great poem, its passion, its tragedy, its heights, its aspirations, its desolation and magnificence upon that eternal law of justice which he himself contemplated in the world by the light of reason and of grace.

In concluding this preliminary survey, it may be said that the "Convivio" discloses only in part that earlier humanism which we have observed. In time, the poet turned away from his original idea of an encyclopaedia of things and of philosophical exposition which he had begun with such enthusiasm. Perhaps, he experienced a certain aversion to the work which he had undertaken. The idea of a series of treatises which should be commentaries upon the poems he had intended to write must have seemed too formal to engage his attention for long. Moreover, the work, though interesting and giving evidence of his genius, is not only unsatisfactory from the point of view of its artistic pattern. It is even more unsatisfactory from the point of view of its intellectual coherence. It does not, indeed, it cannot, achieve a real synthesis. What we find is that the Christian religion and the rational, enlightened humanism of Aristotle are always in uneasy proximity. They are sometimes conflated, like the Jahwist and Elohist sections of the Pentateuch. However, they never achieve any real unity of thought or expression. It is in the "Divina Commedia" that we find the perfect realization of this synthesis. The date of the composition of the "Convivio" may be assigned
to somewhere between the years 1306 and 1308. March 1306 is suggested as the terminus a quo since in IV:XIV:12 the poet refers to Gerardo da Camino recently dead, while the terminus ad quem is indicated by May 1st. 1308, for in IV:III:6 he mentions Albert Hapsburg, as last in succession to the imperial dignity. He does not allude to Henry of Luxemburg, elected King of the Romans on November 27th 1308, and therefore we must conclude that the composition of this work preceded the events of that reign. Bearing in mind the date when it must have been written, it looks as if Dante was extremely dissatisfied with the thought of the "Convivio". The work as it stands is rational, calm, unmoved, like the moon on a still night, untroubled by any cloud of obscurity. In such an endeavour of rational humanism, the poet seems to have found it impossible to express his meaning. He wanted something else. He wanted the depths and heights, the passion, the thunder, the indignation, the glory, the justice and terror of that real world of the spirit which he knew so profoundly and so intimately. In the "Inferno", he describes the vividness and horror of sin: in the "Purgatorio", its satisfaction and penance. In this impassioned drama of the soul, all this is necessary so that the true end and purpose of the rational soul in the Beatific Vision may be realized. What is the significance of all this? Surely, this. Man's destiny is indeed contemplation. For that he was created by the Supreme Good. But it is a contemplation in which every pulse, every agony, every thought of beauty and goodness, every circumstance of wonder are suffused in that heaven which is light and glory.

"luce intellelual piena d'amore;
amor di vero ben pien di letizia,
letizia che trascede ogni dolore." 38

Here then we discover the perfect fusion of those elements which had been so uncertainly and hesitatingly brought together in the "Convivio". This constitutes a humanism, which is no longer mere intellectual speculation but the Christian humanism which is perfect and entire in the range of its philosophy and in the magnificence and certainty of its expression.
Notes to Chapter Two.  The "Convivio" as a Preliminary Outline of Humanism.


2. "la Metafisica, la quale, perchè più necessariamente in quella termina la superbia con più fervore, (Prima) e sua Vis.
   Filosofia è chiamata." Convivio, III:XII:16.


4. ibid, 1094 b.

5. "lo Cielo cristallino, che per Primo Mobile dinanzi è contato, ha comparazione assai manifesta a la Morale Filosofia:
   chè Morale Filosofia, secondo che dice Tommaso sopra lo secondo de l'Etica, ordina noi a l' altre scienze." Convivio, II:XIV:14. The reference here seems to be to the statement of S.Thomas in his Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, where at the beginning of Book II he says:"Ratio ordinis est, quia virtutes morales sunt magis notae et per eas disponimur ad intellectuales." (lect: I).

6. "lo quale per quella gloriosa Beatrice tenea ancora la rocca de la mia mente." Convivio, II:II:3.
   "quella Beatrice beata che vive in cielo con li angeli e in terra con la mia anima." ibid, II:II:1.

   cf. Signore Paolo Arcari's essay on "La Roma di Dante" in "Studi su Dante VII" (Milan:1944).

8. "vide, inquit, omnia facito secundum exemplar quod tibi ostensum est in mente." Epistola ad Hebraeos:VII:5.


10. "lo Cielo empyreo per la sua pace simiglia la Divina Scienza,
    che piensa è di tutta pace, la quale non soffìra lìte alcuna
    d'opinioni o di sofistici argomenti, per la excellentissima

   "Et dicitur empyreum, quod est idem quod coelum igne
   sive ardore flagrans; non quod in eo sit ignis vel ardor
   materialis, sed spiritualis, qui est amor sanctus, sive
   caritas. (sqq.).
   On Dante's astronomy cf.
   Essay on the Astronomy of Dante.
   Also a more recent investigation by R.Piccoli, "Astrologia Dantessa."


13. ibid, II:IV:20.

14. ibid, II:IV:20.
   "Di costei dice Salomone:'Sessanta sono le regine, e ottanta
   l'amiche con cui si vive; e de le ancille adolecenti non
   è numero: una è la colomba mia e la perfetta mia."

15. S.Thomas. Summa Theologica Part I Qu: I art.5.


18. "Nullo sensibile in tutto lo mondo è più degno di farsi esempio di Dio che'l sole. Lo quale di sensibile luce sè prima e poi tutte le corpora celestiali e le elementali allumina: così Dio prima sè con luce intellettuale allumina, e poi le (creature) celestiali e l'altri intelligibili, e se alcuna ne corrompe, non è de la'intenzione de la cagione, ma è accidentale effetto: così Iddio tutte le cose vivifica in bontade...." Convivio, III:XII:7.

19. S.Thomas. Summa Theol: I:XII:rad. I. "ille qui melius unitur Deo in hac vita unitur ei sicut omnino ignoto..." quoting from Pseudo-Dionysius. ibid. I:XII:13. Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius. De Divinis Nominibus.I:iii. "The utmost achievement of which we are capable in this life in knowing God is the realization that He is beyond anything we can think and so the naming of God which is by way of denial (remotio) is supremely appropriate."


21. ibid, I:XXXVIII:I.


27. "Ma non è vero che la scienza sia vile per imperfezione; dunque, per la distruzione del conseguente, lo crescere desiderio non è cagione di vilitate a le ricchezze. Che sia perfetta, è manifestò per lo Filosofo nel sesto de l'Etica, che dice la scienza essere perfetta ragione di certe cose." Convivio, IV:XII:12.


29. Convivio, IV:XVII:10-11. "And Christ affirms this with his own mouth, in the Gospel of Luke, speaking to Martha and replying to her:"Martha, Martha, thou art troubled about many things: surely only one thing is necessary," that is, what thou art doing. And he adds:"Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her. And (she) sitting at the feet of Christ showed no anxiety in serving
in the house: but only listened to the words of the Saviour. And if we desire to expound this according to morals, our Saviour wished to show that the contemplative life is best, but (also) wholly good is the active (life)."

30. Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics, X:VII.


32. "The glory of Him Who moves all things penetrates the universe and shines in one part more and in another part less."


35. "light intellectual, full of love, love of true good, full of joy, joy that surpasses every sweetness."
Chapter Three.

THE IDEAL OF RATIONAL HUMANISM IN THE "CONVIVIO".

I.

The four treatises of the "Convivio" which we possess enable us to conjecture what would have been the character of the whole work had it been completed. They may be described, not inaptly, as the work of a philosopher, at once Aristotelian and Christian. Perhaps, one ought to add in parenthesis that the term "philosopher" is employed in what is a vague and general way. It is evident that the author ascribes the highest value to the human intellect and that the purpose of the book is to provide for its education by means of philosophy, as that attains to its true end in revelation. As we have already observed, Dante assigns an equally high value to the active life, as that is expressed in the life of the citizen and administrator. Yet, equally, he maintains the mediaeval tradition of the primacy of contemplation, which, as we have seen, is clearly and characteristically stated by Aristotle himself. For the poet, however, Ethics constitutes the principal science for the illumination of the mind, and this view is derived from his practical concern with justice in the commonwealth and in the Church. If we ask further: What is the reason for this insistence? The answer can only be that Dante has a problem which he recognizes and which he feels himself compelled to face. What is true nobility in men? How can it be secured and established?

The book gives evidence of careful planning and of ordered development. The first treatise begins with a discussion of the purpose which the writer has in mind. The second and third treatises are devoted to a definition of philosophy and to various questions arising from this subject. Hence we find a digression on the capacity of reason, its limitations, and the demarcation between philosophy and theology, reason and revelation. It is in this section of the work that we find a vivid account of cosmology: the poet is obviously fascinated by the speculations of astrology and allows himself an expansive mood of description of such ideas. The fourth treatise finds him undertaking an exposition of the humanist ethic, the ideal of the moral life as he sees it in all its nobility and truth, its graciousness and courtesy.

There are many influences to be found in this work, but beyond doubt the dominant pattern is that of the "Nicomachean Ethics" of Aristotle. From the text of the "Convivio" and from Dante's interpretation, it is clear that he read this
in the Latin version with the commentary of S.Thomas Aquinas. This is a fact which must receive due attention, for S.Thomas frequently modifies, adjusts, and skilfully adapts the text of the "Ethics". In other words, S.Thomas read the book in the light of the Christian revelation and philosophy. However, as Gilson points out, it is the "Nicomachean Ethics" which gives order and unity to the "Convivio". The poet does not enter into any details about the moral virtues, but is content with a large and luminous exposition. There are not wanting signs that he got bored and dissatisfied with the work on which he was engaged. It is not that the doctrinal character of the "Convivio" occasioned such feelings, for the short expository work "De Monarchia" was brought to completion though the "De Vulgari Eloquentia" was not. Sometimes, one detects an almost poetical quality about the "Convivio". Dante writes a prose which is charming, fluent, tremulous with music and light. Although composed in the vernacular (a fact which he is at great pains to explain and justify), the "Convivio" affords some evidence on the subject of the poet's Latin studies at the University of Bologna. Indeed, it clearly confirms what may be discovered in the little treatise, "De Vulgari Eloquentia" - that in the matter of style the poet was more indebted to the practice of Medieval than of Classical Latin. In shaping an Italian prose that should be both harmonious and learned, he sought to reproduce the rhythm and cursus of contemporary Latin rather than the elaborate constructions and cadences of the Classical language. No doubt, he was interested in the question of Italian prose: he has told us as much. No doubt, too, the doctrinal character of the work must at any rate have proved attractive. After all, the "Divina Commedia" may be called doctrinal or didactic: in whatever form the whole of that great work is architectonic, articulated and constructed on a definite theological and philosophical plan. What may be said, however, is that Dante found himself more and more fascinated by the spirit of poetry as manifested in the great epic of Virgil. Here particular doctrines and a particular philosophy are expressed in symbol and the image itself glows in a world of light and shadow, of life and movement, of action, and drama, of courage and achievement. It is a world of living that Virgil presents to the imagination. Dante turns to this in sympathy and affection in contrast to the Aristotelian exposition of clear and distinct ideas. Henceforth, many complex and fruitful influences arouse the poet's mind ... the scholasticism of S.Thomas (though never exclusively), the burning mysticism of S.Bernard, the fervour and joy of S.Francis, the contemplative vision of S.Bonaventura.
All these suggest the ideal of a Christian Humanism which can only attain to full and glorious flower in the "Divina Commedia".

At the moment, however, the humanism which we find expressed in the "Convivio" is deliberate, esoteric and aristocratic. Dante feels strongly that this lofty and exquisite culture of the spirit which he propounds is an exclusive possession and can, therefore, only belong to the few.

"The greater part of mankind," he observes, "live in conformity with sense, not with reason, after the manner of children: and such of these have no knowledge of things except merely of their outside, and the goodness of them which is adapted for its proper end, they do not perceive, because they keep shut the eye of reason, which penetrates to the discernment of such an end."5

This is an idea familiar to the ancient world and revived with force and ardour by Petrarch and his followers.6 It attains to emphatic expression and, indeed, becomes a platitude during the Renaissance. Hence, we get the idea of a civilization which is aristocratic, self-sufficient, and self-conscious in its profession of the virtues and which requires an education of a particular type in order to perpetuate its principles. Such an idea is strange to the Christian conscience though it has appeared from time to time in attempts at Gnosis, an illumination which is possible only for the learned and the spiritually advanced. This was the tradition of the great Alexandrian school of Christian theology with its two brilliant teachers, S.Clement and Origen. This too was an ideal revived by the Russian Christian philosopher, Nicholas Berdyaev, in many books of profound interest and existentialist tendency.7 Dante comes to recognize this notion later as a departure from Christian morals. In the first terrace of the "Purgatorio", he shows us those who suffer the punishment awarded to the proud and those who have exhibited an excessive desire for human excellence. One may recall the moving little portrait of Oderisi d'Agobbio, who excelled in the delicate art of illumination and who now recognizes the superior ability of his pupil, Franco of Bologna.

"Frate," diss'elli "più ridon le carte che pennelleggia Franco bolognese: l'onore è tutto or suo, e mio in parte. Ben non sare' io stato al cortese mentre ch'io vissi, per lo gran disio dell'eccellenza ove mio core intese."8

In this work, in the first flush and glow of an ardent Humanism, Dante takes up the attitude of the Greco-Roman world, that of an aristocratic and assured self-sufficiency. Perhaps, this is another reason why the poet wrote his treatises in
Italian rather than in Latin. By so doing, he was deliberately addressing not the learned who would have found little interest in such a theme as presented in Latin, but a wider and more sophisticated audience. He was inviting the attention of the noble and the aristocratic who seldom or never frequented the philosophical schools of the time. He was in other words appealing to that class of society which spoke the vernacular and occupied the leading positions among men. He sets out to instruct the princes, the barons, the knights and ladies of culture and breeding. He wants to inculcate that true nobility of spirit which can only be found among those who have leisure and opportunity for the highest intellectual pursuits, art, poetry, reflection. His task is therefore to instruct and lead this eclectic class of people, holding always before them the ideal of the greatness of human achievement and the dignity of human nature. Knowledge itself he defines as "the greatest perfection of the human soul in which is found our ultimate happiness." Many are, however, deprived of this noblest perfection through various reasons. It will be the poet's duty to set that right as far as he can. An aristocratic view of society must obviously lead to an aristocratic plan for education. It will be remembered how Petrarch sees the problem in much the same light and what assumptions he made. With Petrarch, of course, the appeal to the nobility is not expressed in the crabbed terms of the Latin of the Schools but in that exquisite and elegant Latin prose of the glory of Empire. Dante's solution is different. Never perhaps a master of the most lucid Latin, he seeks rather to employ the sweet Italian of the poets, the language of the market-place, of the street, of the brilliant many-coloured life of the towns, the courts, and the palaces. On this subject, Signor Michele Barbi has some pertinent remarks to make in his admirable introduction to the standard edition of the "Convivio" under the editorship of G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli. He points out the vigour and clarity of treatment of the doctrinal exposition as also the vividness, the warmth and colour of many pages in which Dante makes use of a prose always varied and full of harmony.

II.

If in this work Dante is anxious to teach a Humanism which is both aristocratic and exclusive, as we have maintained, where shall we discover his ideal? Surely in the person of Aristotle, the supreme philosopher (as it seemed to men of that age), the master of human thought and reasoning, whose doctrine was invested with a universal authority. Consider some of the terms which the poet applies to him, affectionately, reverently, soberly.
"Aristotle," he affirms, "is the master and leader of human reason." ("Aristotile è maestro e duca della ragione umana").

"The master of our life, Aristotle." ("lo maestro della nostra vita, Aristotile").

"Therefore when I demonstrated that Aristotle is most worthy of faith and obedience, it is evident that his words possess the greatest and highest authority." (Onde quand'io provi che Aristotile è dignissimo dà fede e d'obbedienza, manifesto è che le sue parole sono somma e altissima autoritate.")

"My master Aristotle." (il mio maestro Aristotile.)

One has only to look at the index of the Busnelli-Vandelli edition of the "Convivio" to see how many references to Aristotle are to be discovered in that work, eulogistic, expository, allusive. They are reminiscent of the attitude of the pupil in the artist's workshop learning from his master the art of mixing colours and of depicting an angel, a flower, or a tree on the canvas on which the great painter is working.

Or again, one may recall the well-known passage in the Fourth Canto of the Inferno:

vidi'l maestro di color che sanno
seder tra filosofica famiglia.

Tutti lo miran, tutti onor li fanno.

M. Gilson has pointed out that the position which Aristotle holds in moral science may be compared to that which is assigned to the Emperor himself in the rule and government of the nations. Not only is it a position of eminence, of distinction, of illustrious renown. It is a position of sovereign authority in matters of the intellect. In order to come to a decision on any question, it is sufficient to appeal to the opinion of Aristotle. Dante of course introduces other authorities who can claim reputation and fame for their learning and eloquence. He quotes Cicero, who writes with serenity and eloquence on ethical principles. He quotes the great name of Boethius, a Christian, who, in the last months of his life in prison with the certainty of an agonizing and painful death before him, sought consolation from philosophy, illumined by the light of revelation. Aristotle, however, is more than all others. He is the example of what a philosopher should be, for Aristotle is acquainted with all those branches of human knowledge that reason has been able to differentiate and investigate. According to Dante, the work of philosophy, instigated and pursued by the exercise of reason, is at the same time divine. The poet has no doubt that while reason constitutes an element in human nature, it is at the same time an endowment which surpasses mere human capacity. As we have already seen,
it is by reason that man participates in the light of the Divine Intellect, even though during the course of his earthly life, he is unable to comprehend supernatural realities. What he can understand, however, is that system of physical laws by which the universe is governed.

Signor Michele Barbi maintains that the glowing words and eloquent expressions applied to philosophy in this work are not meant to refer to mere human wisdom. He cites the famous words which Dante takes from the Book of Wisdom - the "brightness of eternal light and spotless mirror of the majesty of God."\(^{19}\) Such words, he says, must be meant to denote wisdom in its widest sense, embracing the human and the divine, philosophy and theology also.\(^{20}\) Signor Pietrobono refutes this thesis, however. He does not deny the respect which is given to Albertus Magnus and S. Thomas, reminiscences of whose works are sufficiently apparent in the "Convivio". He affirms that Sg. Barbi's contention comes into difficulties when we consider the admiration and glorification which the poet accords to Aristotle. In almost every chapter of his book, he declares that Aristotle is the master of human reason and his own master. Aristotle is above all, the philosopher. If this is so, it would be difficult to apply the words about Wisdom as "the brightness of eternal light" to the divine Wisdom, which is by definition revelation and the science of theology.\(^{21}\)

It is true to say that Dante sets before his readers the ideals of philosophy as those of a rational and enlightened knowledge. That he recognizes the limitations of such a knowledge, and such a method, we have already seen. Like the Latin Averroists, like Siger of Brabant, like Aristotle himself, he is conscious of what is possible to the human intellect and what conclusions it may legitimately draw. He proceeds with a prudence and moderation, a manifestation of that dry light of reason truly Aristotelian. There is, however, an occasional flame which contradicts such presuppositions. The principle of the transcendence of theology is carefully maintained. This means that the poet does not exclude theology as a mode of knowledge by which men are enlightened with love and ardour for the mysteries of the supernatural order. However, only the philosophers may be said to belong to the highest type of human genius, only those who combine scientific investigation with dialectic in a luminous mysticism of the spirit.
The third treatise begins with the poem: "Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona," and the commentary which expounds this contains an interesting discussion on the nature of the intellect. According to Dante, the intellect constitutes the noblest part of the soul. He follows Aristotle in the analysis which he offers, but he is apparently not satisfied with the exaltation of human excellence and human capacity which he finds in his great philosophical master. Here, once more, his ideas attain to a mystical glow, for he maintains that reason itself in its proper operation is divine.

In this, Dante seems to be nearer to the view of pagan scholars of antiquity than to Christian mysticism generally, nearer to Plato and Cicero with their serene and lucid convictions about the supreme value of the soul, regarded as an intellectual substance. Christian mystics speak rather differently, for they describe the process of infused contemplation following upon prayer and ascetic practices by which the soul comes to realize the Divine presence. S. Francis de Sales, for example, refers to the "fine point" of the soul, in which, he maintains, there is an intuition of God, a light, a presence, a radiance, which the soul knows confusedly and in fragmentary fashion. On the other hand, Dante in this earlier work considers reason itself as divine.

What we discover therefore is an illumined rationalism, graceful, charming, accomplished. The poet employs the customary term "grace" for those sudden intuitions, lights, or glimpses of truth which were familiar to classical antiquity. Such experiences he describes from the point of view of rationalism, informed, clear, humanistic. He writes as a student of Aristotle for the most part, sometimes as an admirer of the elegant philosophical prose of Cicero. Signor Nardi refuses to allow this interpretation of the point of view expressed in the "Convivio". He asserts that Dante's presuppositions about human knowledge are directly opposed to the rationalist conception. Dante's assumptions are, he says, mystical in tendency. A merely human philosophy cannot satisfy the natural desire for knowledge. Only revelation in this life and the Beatific Vision in the life to come are sufficient to lead the human spirit to that perfection to which it aspires.

It may be admitted that there are glimpses and foreshadowings of this idea in the earlier work, but they are most fitful. For the most part, the reader is conscious of the philosophical ideals which are expressed, of the light of reason as in itself a sufficient guide to the ends which man ought to pursue. In fact, it may be said that Dante maintains the thesis that man
is able to attain moral virtue by his own efforts. For Dante at this period in his life, reason is manifest as a principle, as a light to the will enabling man to realize that degree of perfection for which his Creator intended him. He speaks with all the ardour of youthful enthusiasm about the work of Philosophy. He employs the conventional image of the admired lady, the Donna Gentile, as representing all the charm, the winsomeness and beauty of this Wisdom which he now follows so passionately.

"I say and affirm," he tells us, "that the lady with whom I fell in love after my first love was the most beautiful and virtuous daughter of the Emperor of the Universe, to whom Pythagoras gave the name Philosophy."27

Thus Philosophy takes on the lineaments and colours of a courtly conception, the lady of elegance, in her scarlet and vair, her gold and jewels, to whom the poet offers praise and adulation. The book sounds the note of exaltation in many ways and in many phrases, like the tunes of an accomplished player on the lute in which there is always a certain sameness in the modulations of the strings. Philosophy it is which reveals to the poet the secrets of the spheres, the fascinating and beautiful speculations of the Ptolemaic system. Philosophy, like true friendship, is an eternal possession. Philosophy brings a man to that happiness which is consequent upon the contemplation of truth. Philosophy is indeed the pure love of Wisdom, by means of right appetite and right reason.28 The praises of Philosophy receive many different explanations and distinctions in this work. Generally speaking, Philosophy may be taken to mean rational and scientific enquiry. Yet, from time to time, we become aware of certain theological implications. There is an obvious connection with that Divine Wisdom which is spoken about in such glowing terms in Holy Scripture.29 But the identification of Philosophy and Theology is never made. In science, Aristotle is his master and author in much the same way as later Virgil became in the art of poetry and in the magnificence of disquisition. What philosophy, one may ask, could Aristotle have taught him, if not to make that distinction which we still preserve today, and which was made in Dante's own day, between revelation and dogma and the scope of rational enquiry? While the poet tells us of his love and delight in the Donna Gentile to which he was led by the writings of Cicero and Boethius, we must add the elucidation that philosophy as understood by both these writers consists in knowledge pure and simple, in which no theological presuppositions may be found.30 In many passages, Dante shows so little desire to regard Philosophy and Theology as the same that on the contrary Wisdom is part of Philosophy.31 Again, in Chapter XXI of the
Fourth Treatise, after a digression on human goodness which he conducts according to the method and procedure of Philosophy, he goes on to consider it in the light of the science of Theology... "per via theologica si può dire." It seems obvious, therefore, that the poet recognizes two different modes of thought which must be distinguished carefully from each other, the philosophical and the theological. Previous to this conclusion, he had availed himself entirely of the philosophical method of investigation. Only in a particular argument did he allow himself to have recourse to the principles enunciated by theology.

It is interesting to compare what is said in the "Convivio" with the rich and sonorous phrases of the "Paradiso". Here we find the eloquent and sublime expression of the Beatific Vision granted to the poet at the request of S. Bernard. The light and glory of contemplation as here present to the poet's mind follow the pattern of that work of mystical and ascetical theology, so well known during the Middle Ages, the "Itinerarium mentis ad Deum" of S. Bonaventura.

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

Here there is a complete change of outlook from the self-sufficient serenity of the earlier work. When Dante wrote the "Convivio", he seems to have had little knowledge of either mystical or dogmatic theology. His one desire was to be a philosopher. He speaks as a young man, carried away by an ardent and naïve enthusiasm. Yet there is more in it than that. No doubt, he has found real encouragement and consolation from the austere discipline of metaphysics and ethics. There is in this work a kind of Platonic mysticism, strongly felt and clearly expressed. Signor Bruno Nardi has pointed out that the Platonic and mystical influences which we discover in the poet may be dated from the death of Beatrice. In particular, one may instance the fact that the ascent of the soul towards that luminous world of truth conforms to the dialectic of the "Symposium" of Plato in which the soul advances from the various modes of earthly beauty to that "absolute beauty in its clearness, its pureness, its unmixed essence."

Again, in the "Convivio" the theme of love receives many embellishments and adornments. This conception is the same as that which we find in Plato; it is lofty, clear, serene, suffused with the pale colours of imagination. In this sense, love seems to have no relevance to the passion of the flesh with its desires and agonies. It is all ethereal spirit, moved by the swift and transient sight of beauty.
The Second Treatise of this work concerns this same subject. It is intended as an exposition of the poem: "Voi che'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete."

In this Dante addresses those spiritual intelligences which guide the heaven of Venus and from whence are showered down upon men the sweet influences of delight and desire. It is a poem which reveals the same exquisite and delicate fantasy that we associate with the "Vita Nuova", that tenuous and tremulous beauty as of the pale green and gold of a day in early Spring, with the towers and castles and flowered meadows of a mediaeval city in the background. It is a poem of Romantic love moving through all the phrases of courteous and elegant expression.

"Tu non se' morta, ma se' ismarrita, anima nostra, che sti lamenti," dice uno spiritel d'amor gentile; "ch'è quella bella donna che tu senti, ha transmutata in tanto la sua vita, che n'hai paura, st se' fatta vile! Mira quant'ell'è pietosa e unile, saggia e cortese ne la sua grandezza, e pensa di chiamarla donna, omal."38

The poet himself reminds us of the earlier work of his youth with its reminiscences of the art of painting. Indeed, the "Vita Nuova" might almost serve to recall the exquisite altar panel with its gold and blue and lilies in which Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi depict the Annunciation, a picture now in the Uffizi Palace at Florence. Dante connects the "Convivio" with the earlier work of his youth when he alludes to "that blessed Beatrice who lives in heaven with the angels and on earth with my soul."39

The theme of love is taken up again in the Third Treatise which comments upon the poem: "Amor che ne la menta mi agiona," and in the poem: "Le dolci rime d'amor ch'io solia", which it is the task of the Fourth Treatise to explain and elaborate.40

We must postpone any discussion of the subject of love in its wider aspect in the work of Dante until later. It is a subject which comes to embrace the whole of his philosophy and which acquires a richness and plenitude of expression characteristic of the height of his genius. What we say now must be merely in the nature of a preliminary outline which cannot indeed be avoided in any examination of the various themes suggested by the "Convivio".

It is to be noted that the poems on which he offers his commentaries and expositions represent love under the aspect of philosophical beauty and grace. It is not the living woman of flesh and blood whom Dante celebrates, but a pale abstraction, a symbol moving among the dark shadows of some far-off world.
of cloudy, golden trees in which all moods are drained of precision or excess. Surely, here one may call to mind the Platonic wisdom as expressed in Spenser’s "Four Hymns of Heavenly Beauty."

Of course, all this amorous language, this fantasy of love’s delight, of faint and elusive desire, is part of the poet’s plan to represent philosophy under the image of the Donna Gentile. The adored or charming lady, (however we care to translate), appears always as a creature of heavenly grace, of luminous courtesy, of elegant negations. She is typical of that "sweet new style" which had won such renown at the time. Whether she is to be regarded as an abstract symbol, constructed by formal intellection, or whether the poet has taken the face and figure of some genuine experience of love and later made her the image of philosophy, it is difficult to say. It is however quite incredible .... if anybody has ever believed such a proposition .... that all the poems written after the death of Beatrice, including those addressed to the so-called Donna Pietrosa, were inspired only by the love of wisdom or by certain allegorical or moral designs. Some were obviously inspired by sensual passion. Some perhaps were evoked by the delight of beauty. It is in any case a true observation on the part of Signor Nardi which sees in some of the prose passages of the "Convivio" an enthusiasm for reasoning and a sudden fervour more than in all the poems on which the author commentates. The figure of love in this early phase belongs to those abstract but delightful symbols, like the legendary figures seen as it were behind clouded glass in the "Vita Nuova". It is only in the "Divina Commedia" that the author will come to that full knowledge of the glory and power of love which comprehends all things and gathers them into its embrace.

"Nè creator nè creatura mai,"
cominciò el, "figliuol, fu senza amore,
o naturale o d’animo: e’tu’l sai."

However, the theme of love in the "Convivio" is not confined to Beatrice and the Donna Gentile. Already the poet’s conception shows signs of a wider range and a more impassioned and universal scope. He speaks of the City: for him, that Florence to which he was devoted by upbringing and circumstance, and by all the claims of its beauty among the Tuscan hills. "La bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenze .......... nel quale nato e nutrito fui in fino al colmo de la vita mia, e nel quale, con buona pace di quello desidero con tutto lo cuore di riposare l’animo stancato e terminare lo tempo che m’è dato."

The passage goes on to speak of the sufferings and humiliations of exile, begging his bread and against his will "displaying
the wound of fortune." "Truly," he adds in some bitterness, "I have been like a ship without sails and without a rudder carried to different harbours and places and shores by the dry wind which blows from my miserable poverty." It is again with similar words that the poet confesses to a wider and deeper loyalty, the lofty conception which gave rise to the political ideas of the "Monarchia" and to the love of Italy itself as a nation and country, successor to the imperial glory of old Rome. "We to whom the world is our native country, just as the sea is to the fish, though we drink of the Arno before our teeth appeared and though we love Florence so dearly that for the love we bore her we are wrongfully suffering exile .... we rest the shoulders of our judgement on reason rather than on feeling." It is not idle to remember in this connection the "Città dolorosa" of the Inferno, with its blazing mosques and buildings, and company of the damned, the frustrated, treasonable, broken city of disparate aims: and the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem of the poet's sublime vision, in which the peace and ardour of fulfilment are realized in the contemplation of the Eternal Wisdom.

As we shall have occasion to observe later, we may discern in this exaltation of love a real dialectic of the spirit which leads the soul to illumination by the light of the divine glory. Yet, strangely enough, this enlightenment may be described as the reward of that beauty and virtue possessed by the soul. This is a notion which excites in the poet's mind an enthusiasm at once humanist and rational. No doubt, this view does not cease to be Christian on account of this particular perspective. After all, Dante was always a Christian. His whole mind moves to the mystery and drama of the Catholic Liturgy: the lamentation of Passiontide, the joy of Easter, the glory of Corpus Christi, the winsomeness and compassion of the Christmas story. However, this idea of a virtue which is attained by man and which receives the gift of divine illumination is surely more akin to Platonism than to Christianity. Dante has much in common with the Florentine scholars and dreamers at the time of Lorenzo the Magnificent whose learned discourses at the Platonic Academy are admirably represented by the discourses of Ludovico. Certainly the spirit of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola is in no way alien to the tradition and teaching of the "Convivio".
This impassioned desire for a form of knowledge which surpasses the scope of reason does not find its consummation in the "Convivio". The Fourth Treatise of this work is devoted to a discussion of problems of ethics. For whatever Dante may desire, whatever he may conjecture, the inspiration which carries him beyond Aristotle, remains at the same time subject to the sober critique of knowledge to be discovered in that philosopher's works. And it is a fact that to enable the author of the "Convivio" to rise from the purely rational to the ideal of a mystical knowledge, he is obliged to appear more of a Thomist than he actually is. Thomism may, indeed, be used to establish a kind of mysticism, implicit rather than explicit. It maintains, as truths of philosophy, certain affirmations of the Christian Religion, as, for example, the existence of an infinite number of spiritual intelligences interposed in a hierarchy between the Creator and mankind. Dante determines clearly and rigidly what is the sphere of metaphysical demonstration. It may be that, like Siger of Brabant, he would reckon among the truths of faith various metaphysical statements which S.Thomas assigns to the category of truths of the rational intellect, that is, of philosophy. It is evident that from time to time the "Convivio" takes on a strange, mystical colouring. However, the method of Aristotelian rationalism which he pursues confuses him, even making him uncertain of his own particular genius and vocation.

We have already observed in what glowing terms he speaks of Philosophy. He exalts the celestial Athens where the various metaphysical schools find reconciliation in the light of eternal truth. Yet, at the same time, the poet is aware of an intellectual conflict. It might almost be said that at times this seems to occasion him almost anguish of mind. The problem is this. The highest form of knowledge ought to bring men the fruition of happiness, rich, certain, glorious, indisputable. But if such knowledge never attains to the fullness of truth, if man's primary desire for knowledge never gets satisfied, what is the use of human happiness? Why should we discuss it? Why should we entertain such a conception? This is a question of which Aristotle was cognisant. S.Thomas himself affords some testimony on the question of the possibility of its realization. It is the question which is raised by the confusion and even conflict and pain experienced by some of the profoundest intellects of the ancient world when they saw shut before them the gates of that horizon which human reason by itself was incapable of opening. Aristotelian intellectualism discovers here certain elements of consolation. In the "Convivio", however, Dante's view is that Nature, (which may be regarded in
this instance as exhibiting the will of God) demands that man's
desire should be regulated according to the measure of that light
which he has received. If he tries to go beyond that, he transgresses
such limits as have been imposed by Divine Law. In the following
passage, the author is conscious of the determination of the human
mind. He knows what it can and cannot ascertain. He is fully
aware of its capacity and of the limits of its finitude.

"Our intellect," he declares, "for lack of that virtue by
which it draws to itself what it perceives (I mean an organic virtue,
namely imagination) cannot rise to certain things because the
imagination cannot help it, as it has not wherewithal. Such,
for example, are substances separate from matter, which although
we may to some extent speculate about them we cannot understand
or apprehend perfectly. And for this a man is not to be blamed,
for he was not the author of this defect; rather it was universal
nature that so ordained, that is God, Who willed to deprive us
of this light during the present life: and why He so ordained,
it would be presumptuous to discuss................. Furthermore,
a limit is set to our ability in all its operations not by ourselves
but by universal nature, and therefore, we must know that the bounds
of our capacity give wider range for thought than for speech,
and wider range for speech than for the language of signs."48

This puts the position beyond doubt. The poet goes on to
say that God has assigned to spiritual intelligences a certain
share in the knowledge of His glory. He has indeed given to the
blessed their particular participation in the Beatific Vision.
Both angels and saints rejoice in their own portion.49 It is
impossible for human beings to understand by metaphysical argument
or rational enquiry what God is in Himself or, indeed, how the
spiritual intelligences are constituted. But what philosophy
and human reason cannot do, revelation has done. For revelation,
which is nothing less than the First Truth revealing Himself to
men, not by a series of logical propositions, but in the flesh,
has instructed the humblest Christian in that knowledge which
is spirit and life.

However, it looks as if the argument which S.Thomas constructs
in continuation of the Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy was not
entirely satisfactory to the poet. He declares that the end
of philosophy, its aim and purpose consistently pursued, is that
peace which comes to the soul when the will is reconciled.50
The intellectual conflict will remains. It discloses itself
more frequently in certain passages of the "Divina Commedia".
We are conscious of it in the person of the Latin Averroist, Siger
of Brabant, - in the anguish and torment of soul which he experiences,
the intolerable and fiery desire to know with certainty the truth which is above all things. In the first circle of the Sun he appears among those glowing and luminous lights of contemplation who are the glory of the Church Catholic. For he too has his place among the just, among the ardent and faithful souls who have kept their watch on earth and have now entered into an eternal reward.

"Questi onde a me ritorna il tuo riguardo, e'l lume d'uno spirito che'n pensieri gravi a morir li parve venir tardo."\(^{51}\)

The mystical aspiration never remains for long unexpressed in Dante .... its colour; its tone, its harmony, its aspiration, its longing for God. It is implicit in the "Convivio", where in spite of the ideal of a rational method, an intellectual light by which truth becomes clear and apparent, he shows his awareness of the limitations of such aims. As a result of his own harsh experiences, the misery of exile, the ignominy of his condemnation as well as his own intellectual labours, the love of the eternal verities is the only thing that does not mislead the human soul with illusion and vainglory. Of course, the ideal of the book is still that of a rational humanism. It is coloured by a certain Romantic lyricism, for Dante is primarily a poet and seldom rests content with the exposition of logical and metaphysical concepts by the Scholastic procedure. This feeling, this element of the imagination, which sometimes partakes in the mystical, moves near the heaven of theology. It aspires to that Empyrean of luminous and transcendent truth which can never be expressed adequately in words. Indeed, there are passages which recall Dante's experience in the "Paradiso" where he finds himself suddenly transported to the sphere of the moon, coloured as the lustrous pearl..... "lucida, spessa, solida e pulita".\(^{52}\) To the poet's rapt vision, Beatrice and himself discover themselves among such translucencies "as when water receives a ray of light and yet remains unbroken."

"Per entro sè l'eterna margarita ne rigiavette, com'acqua recepe raggio di luce permanendo unita".\(^{53}\)

This no doubt is that sense which the author describes as "anagogic". He explains the four meanings which are to be attributed to the record of history: the literal, the allegorical, the moral and the anagogic. The classical passage for this exposition is to be found in the Letter to Can Grande,\(^{54}\) which may be regarded as the preface to the "Divina Commedia". There is a similar explanation in the "Convivio", however. Of the more advanced and recondite sense he affirms: "The fourth sense is called anagogic, that is, above sense; and this is when a writing is expounded spiritually which, even in its literal sense, by the matters signified
sets forth the high things of glory everlasting; as may be seen in that Song of the Prophet which says that in the coming out of the people of Israel from Egypt, Judah was made holy and free. Which although it is plainly true according to the letter, is not less true as understood spiritually: that is, the Soul in coming out from sin, is made holy and free."

Thus here we find a certain impatience with the purely rational categories of knowledge. Reason, as we have already observed, is always thought of as a divine endowment, an illumination and power of the soul. Dante therefore can admit no real opposition between the two orders of reason and revelation. Since both are the work of God they cannot ultimately come into conflict. There is, however, a dissatisfaction, a refusal to accept the purely rational and purely intellectual as sufficient to provide that knowledge which the aspiring soul of man must ever seek. In other words, in the "Convivio" we find the ideal of rational humanism presented to us. It is to some extent transcended, for the ideas and concepts expressed in this book come to no certain conclusion. Such a completion and consummation as the poet desires can, indeed, only be attained by the rich and varied themes, the manifold experiences, the utterance, sometimes impassioned, sometimes prophetic or didactic, of the "Divina Commedia."
Notes to Chapter Three: The Ideal of Rational Humanism in the "Convivio";


2. Convivio: IV:XVI.


4. Convivio: I:X and XII.

5. ibid: I:IV:3.

La maggiore parte de li uomini vivono secondo sensó e non secondo ragione, a guisa di pargoli; e questi cotali non conoscono le cose se non semplicemente di fuori, e la loro bontade, la quale a debito fine è ordinata, non veggiono, per chi che hanno chiusi li occhi de la ragione, li quali passano a veder quello.


Rime: XXVIII.

0 aspettata in ciel beata e bella anima, che di nostra umanitade vestita vai, non come l'altre carca... sqq., with its wealth of classical allusions.


"Brother," he said, "the pages smile brighter from the brush of Franco of Bologna; he has now all the honour, of which part is mine. Truly, I should not have been so courteous while I lived, for the great desire to excel on which my heart was set."

9. la scienza è ultima perfezione de la nostra anima, ne la quale sta la nostra ultima felicitade........... Convivio:I:I:1.


11. ibid; I:IX:2.


"Ma la novità del 'Convivio' non è solo in questo: è anche nello spirito che viene ad animare l'erudizione filosofica appresa nelle scuole e dai libri ai fini della perfezione umana e del benessere civile. Opere più dotte se ne hanno in gran numero nel Medioevo, ma non opere in cui vibri tanto sentimento e riluca un così, alto ideale umano. Accanto quindi alle parti puramente dottrinali, anch'esse notevoli per chiarezza e vigore di trattazione, si hanno pagine vive, calde, colorite, in una prosa sempre varia e armoniosa, che sa evitare colla le contorsioni dello scrivere latineggiante come quel che di troppo idiomatico che è proprio dello scrivere popolare."


I saw the master of them that know sitting amid a philosophic family, all of them regarding him and all showing him honour.


Per che è manifesto che per mente s'intende questa ultima e nobilissima parte de l'anima.


l'anima umana, la quale con la nobilitate dà la potenza ultima, cioè ragione, participa de la divina natura a guisa di sempiterna intelligenzia.


cf. Phaedo 82 E: 83 D-E.


"We have shown that the soul is indivisible, incorporeal, unextended; and it is consequently incorruptible......Changes, decay and dissolutions....... cannot possibly affect an active, simple, uncompounded substance."

25. Dice adunque che Dio solo porge questa grazia a l'anima di quelli cui vede stare perfettamente ne la sua persona, accconcio a questo divino atto ricevere. Che, secondo dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de l'Anima."

Da siffatta premessa antirazionalistica e perfettamente mistica, la conclusione che Dante avrebbe potuto e dovuto trarre a fil di logica, era questa: la filosofia umana non basta a quietare il naturale desiderio di sapere, e soltanto la rivelazione in questa vita e la visione beatifica di Dio nell'altra possono condurre lo spirito umano a quella perfezione cui aspira. Così appunto fa san Tommaso, d'accordo in questo con la tradizione agostiniana.

... dico e affermo che la donna di cu'io innamorai appresso lo primo amore fu la bellisima e onestissima figlia de lo Imperadore de lo universo, a la quale Pittagora pose nome Filosofia.

ossia tende alla vera felicità che per contemplazione della verità s'acquista.

One'è scritto nel libro di Sapienza: "Amate lo lume di sapienza, voi che siete dinanzi a li populi": e lume di sapienza è essa veritade. ibid: IV:XVI:1.

30. ibid: II:XII:5.
giudicava bene che la filosofia, che era donna di questi autori, di queste scienze e di questi libri, fosse somma cosa.

filosofia è uno amoroso uso di sapienza lo quale massimamente è in Dio, perché che in lui è sommo amore e sommo atto... sqq.

32. ibid: IV:XXI:11.

33. cf. Luigi Pietrobono. Nuovi Saggi Danteschi: Filosofia e Teologia nel 'Convivio' e nella 'Commedia'.

0 Light Eternal, that alone abidest in Thyself, alone knowest Thyself, and known to Thyself and knowing, lovest and smilest on Thyself.

35. Signor Nardi's statement is relevant here: "Dalla morte di Beatrice nasceranno il Platonismo e il misticismo di Dante."
"Dante e la cultura medievale." p. 47 sqq.
36. Plato: Symposium. 211 E.


38. Convivio. II.

quella Beatrice beata che vive in cielo con li angeli e in terra con la mia anima.

40. Convivio: IV
Canzone Terza.

"Ora la donna gentile delle canzoni allegoriche è un puro simbolo astratto, cerebrale, costruito colla ragione sìlogizzante, non colla fantasia fremente di passione. Sebbene essa rida, il suo riso, lungi dall'essere quella 'corruscazione della dilettazione dell'anima' che Dante vorrebbe, è freddo e non vale il divino sorriso degli occhi di Beatrice. In fondo in fondo, c'è più poesia in certi mirabili squarci della prosa del 'Convivio', ove tu avverti un ragionare concitato e il prorompere della passione, che non nelle conzoni tolte a commentare."


43. Purgatorio: 91-3.
"Neither Creator nor creature, my son, was ever without love, either natural or of the mind," he began, "and this thou knowest."


Vera mente io sonostato legno senza vela e senza governo, portato a diversi porti e foci e liti dal vento secco che vapora la dolorosa povertade;
53.

46. De Vulgari Eloquentia: I:VI.

Nos autem cui mundus est patria, velut piscibus aequor,
quamquam Sarnum biberimus ante dentes, et Florentiam adeo

diligamus ut, quia dileximus, exilium patiamur iniuste,

rationiimagis quam sensui spatulas nostri iudicii podiamus.

Is there possibly here a reminiscence of the words of
Brunetto Latini in "Li Livres dou Trésor" (ed: Chabouille)
p.393?

"Toutes terres sont pais gu preudome, aussi comme la mer
as poissons."

cf. Paul Renucci: "Dante, disciple et juge du monde
Gréco-Latin." p.32.


Quelle Atene celestiali dove li Stoici e Peripatetici e
Epicuri, per la luce della veritate eterna, in uno volere
concordevolmente concorrono.

cf. An interesting interpretation is given in the
following work: André Pézard: "Le Convivio de Dante, sa
lettre, son esprit." (Annales de l'Université de Lyon).
(Paris: 1940).


Dante's view should be compared with that of S.Thomas, as for
example, the following passage from his "Commentary on the
'Metaphysics' of Aristotle." I:2 lect: I n. 282:

"Sunt maxime cognoscibilia secundum naturam suam quae sunt
maxime in actu, scilicet entia immaterialia et immobilia,
qua tamen sunt maxime nobis ignota. Unde manifestum est
quod difficultas accidit in cognitione veritatis maxime
propter defectus intellectus nostri."

cf. also: Michele Barbi: "Vita Nuova". (edizione nazionale)
p. 160.

49. cf. The speech of Piccarda Donati in the sphere of the moon:
especially lines 78-80.

Anzi è formale ad esto beato esse
tenersi dentro alla divina voglia
per ch'una fangi nostre voglie stesse:

(Nay, it is the very quality of the blessed state that we keep
ourselves within the divine will, so that our wills are
themselves made one.)

See also: Busnelli-Vandelli edition of the "Convivio": for an
illuminating essay: Appendix IX: vol.2. I limiti della

This one from whom thy look returns to me is the light of a spirit to whom, in his grave thoughts, death seemed slow in coming.
"Im irdischen Leben war der Aquinate Sigers Gegner gewesen, in dem allen irdischen Widerstreit ausgleichenden himmlischen Gottesfrieden findet er sich zu ihm in der engsten Gemeinschaft eines seligen Reigens." p. 865.

52. Paradiso: II:32.

53. ibid: II:34-36.


CHAPTER FOUR.

THE NOBLE LIFE IN THE "CONVIVIO".

I.

For Dante, the philosopher represents what may be called a superior type of humanity. He corresponds to an ideal exalted, illustrious, aloof in the cultivation of his own soul, and of all his own intellectual capacities. As the author was not able to finish the vast work which, in a mood of enthusiasm, he had planned, we do not know how he would have classified the other forms of human activity. We know in what relation and aspect he had imagined theology and philosophy, but we do not know in what relationship he conceived the practitioners of these two arts, the theologian and philosopher. In the "Convivio", he throws no light upon the character of the legislator, who was for Machiavelli the principal figure in the Renaissance State. Nor does he analyze nor discuss those virtues of the soldier and citizen which for Machiavelli, with his jaded Republican idealism, are so important in the affairs of the community. Had he done so, we might have seen a pendant to the Renaissance portrait of Cesare Borgia. We might have expected the image and similitude of the just, wise, austere, and merciful prince, the servant of God, in contrast to the cynical, ruthless violence of the sixteenth century despot. Indeed, such ideas as Dante entertained on the subject of the Empire have little connection with historical institutions. The Emperor, Henry VII, on whom he placed such confidence, is not a real person of flesh and blood but an apocalyptic figure of lightnings and thunders. He is, indeed, the enigmatic DVX of the concluding cantos of the "Purgatorio". But the prince who was to come in no way corresponded to this dream of the exalted imagination. He was, indeed, the prince described by Machiavelli, a lineal descendant of the great men in whom Dante had reposed so much trust, "the most magnificent and victorious lord, Can Grande de la Scala", and the Ghibelline leader, Castruccio.

It is possible that in the treatises which he had planned on the subject of liberality and magnificence, he would have found it necessary to paint the portrait of the ideal prince in all the glowing colours of imagination. Certainly, we may
feel, the treatise which he meant to devote to Justice would have included a description of the Magistracy, with its background of the Republican commune of the fourteenth century. It is true that in the beginning of the Fourth Treatise, he briefly defines the office of the Emperor who, among the Christian states, exercises the duty of maintaining and preserving the Eternal Law. The first mention of the notion of the Universal Empire in Dante occurs here, written as it was at a time when the Imperial throne was vacant, (if, with Professor d'Entrèves, we accept 1307 as the date of this book). The question of the authority of the Emperor is strictly subservient to the definition of the meaning of nobility. Dante attributes to Frederick II the statement that nobility is merely "ancient riches and fine manners." Later, in the "De Monarchia", he corrects his mistake and derives these words from Aristotle. The assumption seems justified that at the time of writing the "Convivio", Dante had not read the "Politics" of Aristotle and that the problems of authority and government forced this work upon his attention at a somewhat later date. The identification of the imperial authority with law is important. In explaining his conception, he gives us one of his vivid and dramatic images, that of the rider and the horse, lo cavalatore de la umana volontade. He presents us with a moving description of the desolation and misery of a country deprived of the imperial authority. It is indeed a picture of that warring, violent, picturesque, quarrelsome Italy of the fourteenth century, "which has been left to govern itself without any intermediary." In this, the idea of the Prince is borrowed from the juridical concept of Justinian's recension, in which the Emperor is constituted as the ultimate source of law in the State. It is perhaps significant that Dante does not employ the Aristotelian argument of man's social nature as the explanation of the principle of imperial authority. As Professor d'Entrèves has shown, he seems to be influenced at this point by the Augustinian notion that the power exercised by the State is required on account of the disputatiousness of human nature, the libido dominandi which finds such dark and sinister expression in the pages of the "De Civitate Dei." To the question: How can we secure justice and ordain peace?, the poet gives the answer: Only by a single, universal Monarchy. To this intent, the Emperor commands, and in virtue of his office, which is ordained by Divine Providence, men ought to obey his admonitions and instructions.
However, the author has not forgotten the Aristotelian rationalism. The Emperor has a duty to preserve and establish the principles of Law. As Dante interprets it, this means governing according to reason, and particularly in a manner congruous with those rational principles enunciated by Aristotle. Thus, the idea of the imperial authority is not itself derived from the Aristotelian view of man and of society. Dante, of course, states the principle that man is naturally social by character and temperament. The universal monarchy is not to be understood as emerging from this desire. But the significance of law which is vested in the person of the sovereign ruler must be construed according to that concept of reason which we find in "the Philosopher". There is here, the mediaeval notion of hierarchy ordered to certain definite ends. The sword-maker, the bridle-maker, the armourer exercise their various trades according to the needs and under the direction of the knight. This leads to a consideration of that philosophical goal of human life which the author wishes to establish.

"And because all human activities require a single end, namely, the end of human life for which man is ordained so far as he is man, the master and artificer who shows us this end and devotes himself to it ought to be most of all obeyed and trusted, and this master is Aristotle." Thus the question of authority comes round full circle. The Emperor has the right to obedience in such matters as concern the imperial and sovereign direction of the Christian State and in the formulation of Law. Law must be interpreted according to reason. If we wish to know what is meant by reason we must turn to the writings of Aristotle. What authority does he possess? The authority of "the Philosopher", the "master and artificer" who in matters of the intellect exercises that sovereign rule which may be compared to the dominion of the Emperor over the temporal affairs of his subjects.

It may be said that here we encounter what is the chief interest of Humanism - the discovery of Man. It is strangely interwoven with the renown accorded to Aristotle, as the philosopher who concerned himself most with the object and purpose of human life. The "Nicomachean Ethics" and the "Politics" constitute, according to their author's purpose, one work, in which the practical attainments and object of human life are surveyed. M. Gilson has spoken admirably and pertinently about the appeal which the "Ethics" must have made to the Florentine poet.
For it is a book penetrated with the conviction that justice is the "political virtue", which prescribes the moral activities of man and the end of the State. To one who had suffered so much from the implacable hatred and passions of men, it must have brought consolation to discover the "Nicomachean Ethics", written by one who had himself experienced all the turmoil of dissension and who had been driven into exile at Chalcis.

As Dante expounds his point of view, he breaks away for a time from the Scholastic method, with its abstract categories, its denotations and concepts. We get a glimpse of pageantry of the Middle Ages, the heraldic blazon of arms: argent and or, azure, gules, and sable. The philosophical doctrine of the purpose of man quickly merges into the illustration of the knight, and the arts and crafts which are subject to his needs. We almost see the bright sword, with its blade of Damascus steel, the polished leather and silver of the harness, the horse-trappers of red velvet with the gold embroidery. Dante's art is essentially dramatic. It is true that he can rise to such heights of lyrical poetry as have seldom been surpassed. He can even produce a philosophical argument of distinction, if not of brilliance. He can sometimes attain to real dialectical skill. In the main, however, his genius is essentially dramatic. An obvious example of this springs to mind in the representation of the "Noble Castle" of the great pagans in the Limbo of Canto IV of the "Inferno." What we may remark here is how certain propositions, theological or metaphysical, assume a clear form, a definite shape, an outline and colour. The argument as it is advanced in this Canto is not substantially different from that of the Fourth Treatise of the "Convivio". What is under investigation in both cases is the nature of Nobility. The castle surrounded by the seven walls and with its seven gates (representing the seven virtues and the seven sciences of the trivium and the quadrivium) has obvious analogies with the "Convivio". For in this latter work we discover the sky of fixed stars which encompasses the seven heavens of the planets. There are many points of similarity. Again, we get a good example of Dante's method of introducing an illustration, vivid, allusive and brilliant in order to explain his meaning. He breaks loose from the rigid Scholastic procedure in order to heighten and enhance what he wants to say. Dante's images are always worth careful consideration. Not only in the "Divina Commedia" are they important, but also in the "Convivio", and particularly in the astronomical theories which, as we have
already seen, he explains with the elaboration and delight of the artist. Theories, perhaps we must call them, though in the description which he gives they are analogies, images, and symbols of wandering and eternal brightness. In the meadow before the Noble Castle we find the ideal of the noble life, of philosophical Humanism suggested in the description of the great pagans:

Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,  
di grande autorità ne' lor sembianzi:  
parlavan rado, con voci soavi.

II.

It is in the "Monarchia" that the poet's political philosophy comes to fruition. The Papacy is noticeably absent from his thought and deliberation. It is not until we come to the "Divina Commedia" that the question of the primatial see of Christendom occupies his attention. In the great poem, evil pastors are treated with contempt and invective, yet as we see from the words spoken of the outrage done to the person of the sovereign Pontiff at Anagni the institution of the Papacy is held in esteem.

Veggiolo un'altra volta esser deriso;  
veggio rinovellar l'aceto e'l fele,  
e tra vivi ladroni esser anciso.

The blazing anger of the poetry is all the more remarkable when we consider that Boniface VIII was Dante's most dangerous and bitter enemy. What we may discover in this work implies a certain doctrine and prophecy inspired by Franciscan ideals. It is indeed the conception of the "Angelica Papacy", the burden of many a wandering voice of prediction and enthusiasm at that time. The "Convivio" discloses no such influences, however. On this point, it seems that no problem of ecclesiastical authority confronted the poet. While he is intent on maintaining the divine mission of Rome itself and its sacred and providential foundation, he has no word to say about the Papacy.

The work is left incomplete. It was soon to be laid aside, with what emotions we do not know, but presumably with some feelings of disinclination to continue a book which was not in harmony with the dramatic and lyrical genius of its author.
The four treatises which were finished, do not enable us to conjecture what Dante would have said about human values in their true order and perspective. In this book, he has devoted himself only to the character of the philosopher. The greater part of the Fourth Treatise resolves itself into a discussion and illustration of the significance of true Nobility. Hence, it may be said to concern itself with the fundamental problem of Humanism.

In the XVth and XVIth Cantos of the "Paradiso", Dante will disclose in the narrative of his ancestor Cacciaguida the pride which he felt in being able to claim gentle birth. It is a pride which he modestly confesses, an interest which is gently, courteously, though smilingly rebuked by Beatrice, yet a very natural veneration for his father's house:

Io comminciai: 'Voi siete il padre mio; 
voi mi date a parlar tutta baldezza;
voi mi levate sì, ch'io son piú ch'io.

Ditemi dunque, cara mia primizia, 
quai fuer li vostri antichi, e quai fuer li anni 
che si segnaro in vostra puerizia; 
ditemi dell'ovil di San Giovanni 
quanto era allora, e chi eran le genti 
tra esso degne di piú alti scanni.'

If he speaks in the manner of the Roman "voi", indicating the respect due to one's elders, that is merely part of the high courtesy of heaven. Yet, he rejects any idea that nobility can be founded merely on the pretensions of family, or on riches. What he has in mind is an ideal. It is that Nobility which consists in intellectual achievement and in the practice of the moral virtues. This agrees with the tradition of Aristotle and of the Stoics. The writer demonstrates that certain persons show themselves more apt than others in realising this ideal. They do so because they have received a divine endowment. They have the natural temperament and instinct for Nobility. Here, in order to describe and illustrate the meaning of such a gift, Dante finds himself obliged to employ a theological term. It is the word "grace", perhaps used in its original meaning of "gratia" in the Latin, and as far as possible imptied of theological connotation. What he understands by "grace" is more or less derived from classical sources. It is the notion of divine favour or bounty which is manifested towards certain individuals. It is a tradition that we may discover in Greek poetry; in Homer, and in the tragic dramatists, in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Dante regards it as the
task of this aristocracy of the spirit to cultivate the intellectual and moral virtues propounded by Aristotle. In this way, they will attain to that ideal which may fittingly be called divine illumination.21

Of course, this conception is not that of the strict orthodoxy of the Schools. What the author says is that the Holy Spirit rewards with His gifts and endowments the soul which, by its own efforts, has reached the heights of human excellence.

"By the way of theological explanation, it may be said that after Supreme Deity, that is, God, beholds His creature ready to receive, of His kindness, He bestows it on her with a bounty proportionate to her readiness to receive it. And since these gifts proceed from ineffable Love and Divine Charity is inseparable from the Holy Spirit, they are called the gifts of the Holy Spirit."22

Here, when the poet is proceeding by the method of Theology, grace is given something of its Christian connotation: how else indeed could it be regarded? Grace, in Catholic teaching, is that supernatural gift which makes a man acceptable to God: it remains inexplicable, mysterious, elusive, prevenient. It is hidden within the Divine Counsel and can, therefore, never be a matter for purely rational explanation. Dante, however, in his mood of rational enquiry and illumined mysticism of the intellect, looks upon grace as the due reward of merit. It crowns the excellence of human endeavour .... it does not produce nor does it apparently assist in that endeavour. In spite of the eloquence of his quotations from the Scriptures, the passages from the Wisdom books of the Old Testament with their moral reflections, and from S. Paul, Dante remains in this work the follower of Aristotle rather than of the Patristic tradition.

Thus it is that he illustrates what ought to be the education of an elect minority, who are meant to achieve the true nobility of soul. In the conduct of the argument, he introduces the notion which we have already encountered that, while the contemplative life is more excellent, the active life exercises the effectual leadership in society. The latter receives the prize, since dominion belongs to it. As long as the soul is darkened by the shadow of mortality, it can never attain to that perfect contemplation which is light and joy ineffable. The voluptuousness of the body, the colours and appearances of existence, the illusions of perception, hinder its true aim. It is bound by the temporal and the finite.23
In this life, we cannot know the vision of God, Who is Supreme Intelligence, Pure Act. When the three holy women went to the tomb, the angel told them to go to Galilee where Jesus had gone before them. Thus, God always precedes those who seek Him in contemplation, a remark which is reminiscent of one of S. Bernard's sermons on the Canticles.24 "Do you wake?" said S. Bernard to his monks. "Well, He too is awake. If you arise in the night time, if you anticipate to the utmost your earliest awaking, you will find Him waking .... you will never anticipate His own awakenss. In such an intercourse you will always be rash if you attribute any priority, any predominant share to yourself; for He loves both more than you love, and before you love at all."25

Stage by stage of its development, the poet shows the gradual progress of a soul towards the attainment of that moral and intellectual pre-eminence which constitutes "nobility". To each age of human life some particular virtue corresponds, and in support of this opinion he adduces the authority of Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca. Adolescence is a period which extends as far as a man's twenty fifth year. It is the time of wandering and peril in the dark forest of human errors. Hence, submissiveness, that ready acceptance of example and moral authority, is a necessary disposition of mind. To this we may add the virtue of affection which Aristotle defined as the basis of all true friendship.26 It is that love which is tractable, teachable, gentle and courteous in manner. It implies a sensitiveness of mind which is responsive to all those influences of life which may be termed good and beautiful. Dante would also have the young disciple in this school of courtesy possessed of that shamedfacedness which shuns what is sordid and evil and which perceives, as a light burning in a dark place, what is honourable and of good report. It is this modesty which conducts itself always with generous enthusiasm, which is eager and alert to every semblance and significance of good.27 This we may believe to be an ideal suggested by the frescoes of Cimabue and Giotto, with their fresh, glowing colours and tenderness of feeling. One becomes aware in such painting of all the innocence of green grass and flowers, white and yellow, growing by the water's edge, and of the human figure in all its grace and comeliness. In this delightful account, there is suggested something of the beauty of the body, the colour of the flesh, the nobility and poise, the gentleness and courtesy which we associate with Giotto's compositions.
It is sufficient to remember the figure of S. Francis, stooping and beckoning towards the birds as he preaches to them, or of the tender and exquisite loveliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary as depicted at Padua against the infinite blue depth of space. This is the world of the "Convivio": this is its association and memory, the bent tree, the angels, the towers of a distant castle and the figures against the translucency of blue of Giotto's "Flight into Egypt". It is a world of broken lights of jewels when the sunlight glitters; Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro. 28

It might be said that Dante shows himself moved by the comeliness and grace of youth, so that adolescence means for him the strength and passion, the ardour and agility of the body.

The second age discussed by the poet is "Youth", and this is made to extend to the forty fifth year of a man's life. It is at this period that one attains to the fullness of his powers, yet temperance, and self-control, must be added to that physical strength which is the characteristic of maturity. This is the age when a man comes to the deepest experience of love, both human and divine. 29 It is the time of that full flowering of the human spirit, disclosing itself in society in courtesy and loyalty. One seems to see here the pattern of the knightly virtues and once more the background of war when the trumpets sound and the armour flashes. But there is more in it than that. In the great poem of Virgil, the poet discovers the perfect example of manliness in the resolute Aeneas, fugitive from Troy and founder of imperial Rome. For Aeneas is the brave and fearless warrior, generous, strong, disciplined, the model of kingship and ruling:

In giovinezza, temperata e forte,
piena d'amore e di cortese lode,
e solo in lealtà far si diletta.30

To the twenty years constituting Age (Senetta) other virtues are assigned which Dante describes with many illustrations and allusions from Cicero. These are the altruistic virtues. During the two earlier periods of life the soul is regarded as having achieved its own perfection. Now another aspect and form of virtue is required. The duty is enjoined upon it of giving counsel and direction to others, of drawing upon that wisdom which it has acquired during the various and manifold
experiences of life.

"It is," declares the poet, "also meet at this age to be just, so that a man's judgments and his authority should be a light and a law to others."31

This is the age when a man is expected to exhibit all those virtues which illuminate and adorn the deliberations of society. Dante writes a poet's prose when he comes to describe this period. He delights in comparing the public manifestation of the nobility of a man's nature to the unfolding of a rose whose petals cannot remain shut within the tight green bud but must open and scatter all their perfume.32 Perhaps in this he was thinking of the charming simile in "Ecclesiasticus", quasi flos rosarum in diebus vernis,33 though it is evident that the image of the rose slowly unfolding its petals in the sunlight is a commonplace of poetry throughout the ages.

At the age of 65 begins the last period of life, Old Age, (Senio), when the soul makes ready to return to God, as to the harbour from which the ship set out on its hazardous voyage. In contemplating the end which God proposes for it, the peace and serenity, the light, the fulfilment of eternal joy, the soul finds cause for blessing and satisfaction:

contemplando la fine che l'aspetta, e benedice li tempi passati34

This, of course, is certainly a Christian idea and moreover it is stated with all that emotional warmth derived from Catholic theology. But it is at the same time an idea which finds expression in many Latin writers of pagan times. What is significant is that Dante prefers to quote from the "De Senectute" of Cicero in support of his opinion rather than from any Christian author. There are, of course, various Christian examples which are advanced. The illustrious names of S.Benedict, S.Augustine, S.Francis and S.Dominic occur. However, the passage as a whole discloses a pre-occupation and a delight in purely Humanistic studies. This account taken as a whole brings to mind the student of the University of Bologna, with the well-worn examples of the sooty lamp and the dragging pen, Cato and Marcia. The poet sets forth the idea of the soul returning to God under the image of a ship coming into harbour with sails furled: Ed è così; (ché), come lo buono marinaio, come esso appricka al porto, cala
le sue vele, e soavemente, con debile condumento, entra in quel: cosl noi dovemo calarle vele de le nostre mondane operazioni e tornare a Dio con tutto nostro intendimento e cuore, sì che a quello porto si vegna con tutta soavitade e con tutta pace.\textsuperscript{35}

This is a metaphor which he employs again in the "Inferno" concerning Guido da Montefeltro, who is extolled in the pages of the earlier work as "nobilissimo nostro latino\textsuperscript{36}" Dante seems to have changed his mind however, for in the "Inferno" he appears among the false counsellors for having yielded to the persuasions of Boniface VIII, ("lo principe de' novi Farisei"), in compassing the downfall of the Colonna family. Guido da Montefeltro, great nobleman, great soldier, and crafty statesman, tells of his intentions in taking the Franciscan habit and in doing so makes use of the same expression about taking down the sails:

"Quando mi vidi giunto in quella parte di mia etade ove ciascun dovrebbe calar le vele e raccoglier le sarte, ciò che pria mi piacea, allor m'increbbe, e pentuto e confessedi mi rendei, ahì miser lasso! e giovato sarebbe.\textsuperscript{37}

We must take down the sails of our worldly pre-occupations and return to God as to a harbour which we approach with all gentleness, the poet tells us, and peace of mind; What must be observed is how sharply Dante's attitude differs from this in the pages of the "Divina Commedia". Here, in the "Convivio", death is represented as a serene and tranquil experience. It is the return of the soul to God; Who is its origin and source, or to use the poet's own illustration, to the harbour from which it set out over the stormy seas. The idea is presented in the sober colours of Classical Humanism, the waning light and shadow, the silver-grey trees, and gathering darkness of the evening. The poet evokes nothing of the fires and anguish of the damned in the "Inferno" nor of those punishments willingly and gladly accepted by those who are being redeemed in "Purgatory". In this earlier period of his life, when he was so much under the influence of Classical Antiquity, he has no mind for any doctrine of purification. And though indeed there is much in Plato about remedial suffering and about the pains of Tartarus, as for example in the great myth of Er in the Xth book of the "Republic", Dante, in common with his contemporaries, would know nothing of such teaching.\textsuperscript{38} Yet he must have known the great
sixth book of the "Aeneid" with its solemn and grave music, where Virgil describes the descent into the underworld:

Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram
perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna.39

Here is the flaming river of Phlegethon and here the chastisement of Rhadamanthus. Here are the sufferings of the damned and here the scourge of the demoniacal Tisiphone; here the monstrous and terrible Hydra, and the sinister gloom of Tartarus.40 At the time that he planned the "Convivio" it would seem that he had not sufficiently meditated the great epic of Rome; its image and instruction had not yet influenced his mind with the glory of great poetry.

What we discover in the "Convivio" is an idealized version of that Humanism which is so gracious, so charming, so suffused with melancholy in the writings of Cicero and Seneca. For the soul that has devoted itself to the practice of the moral and intellectual virtues, death comes as the end of a long and happy day. The poet neither affirms nor in any way suggests any idea of the judgment seat of God. There is no conception of irrevocable sentence and of eternal doom. What Dante shows us is rather the peace and serenity of the "Phaedo", where Socrates argues so eloquently and with such ardour and faith for the immortality of the soul. There is of course in that work the sorrow of the death of Socrates, the brooding melancholy of that last day on earth of Plato's master. All through the arguments, the disquisitions, the digressions about the soul there is the sense of anguish. There is, of course, nothing of that in this description in the "Convivio".

Further, if we find an absence of the traditional language of judgment, the flame of punishment, the pain of loss and the pain of the senses in Hell, we find no mention of the glories of Heaven either. One day, S.Bernard will reveal to the poet the mysteries of the Beatific Vision in all the burning accents of knowledge and experience. At this stage, the poet has some vague notion of the Elysian fields, the shadowy meadows of Virgil or of Cicero in the "Somnium Scipionis", the faint colours as of some swaying, wavering plant undersea, the tremulous brightness of that land of perpetual peace. He imagines the traveller arriving at his destination after a long journey and receiving a welcome from the inhabitants of the eternal city.41 Such a soul is indeed prepared for a greeting from the grave and noble spirits of philosophical learning. It has put aside all the
cares and concerns of this mortal state and awaits the serenity of an immortal and unfading existence. Not even the notes of the pious and learned G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli in their edition of the "Convivio" can reconcile this view with that of Catholic orthodoxy. Their quotations from the "Apocalypse" and from the Commendation of the Dying in the Roman Ritual only serve to make clearer what is essentially the view of Classical Humanism.

It is true, of course, that Dante's conception assumes a Christian colour. The poet discusses those who towards the end of their days have put on the religious habit in order to practice a suitable austerity and devotion in preparation for death. As we have already seen, he cites the example of Guido da Montefeltro, who in 1296 at the end of a life of fierce and warlike enterprise became a Franciscan.

Yet, even in the "Convivio" there is a note of detachment and something of the idealism of the reformer. But not yet do we become conscious of the burning passion for sanctity and for political integrity which the great poem expresses. In the XIth and XIIth cantos of the "Paradiso", the poet voices the praise of the two great founders of religious orders, S. Francis and S. Dominic. At the same time, he does not hesitate to condemn, and to expose to execration and contempt, the vices of the Simoniacal Popes. 42 In the present work, the poet declares that it is not necessary to have assumed the religious habit in order to practise the precepts of the Gospel. He quotes S. Paul in support of the proposition that true religion consists not in exterior observances, but in the devotion of the heart and mind. 45 In this connection, we may discover similarities in the attitude of Dante in the Fourth Treatise of the "Convivio" with that of Erasmus at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The poet declares, as Erasmus was to do later, that the Religious Life is not necessary for Christian perfection.

To sum up the whole position, it is true to say that in this work, the poet sketches the ideal of the noble life. It is an ideal of classical Humanism touched with the soft colours of an enthusiasm which is ardent and lyrical and subdued to the Christian affirmation. For, in spite of his devotion to the Latin classics, to the poetry of Virgil and the prose of Cicero, to the exquisite cadences and glory of that brilliant world of the past, despite his exaltation of the philosophy of Aristotle, from time to time there breaks forth the strong and vigorous language of Christian mysticism. Sg. Apollonio, in his massive and erudite work,
asserts that, if the "Convivio" on a cursory reading, appears to conform to the intellectualism of Petrarch rather than to the dramatic realism of the "Divina Commedia", it is a useful exercise to go through it historically, noting carefully the various connections which link it with the "Vita Nuova" on the one hand and with the great poem on the other. For the "Convivio" marks the transition from the earthly Beatrice of pale and elegant beauty, the child clad in the subdued and modest crimson, from the girl who, clad in white among her companions, greeted the poet with charming and tender courtesy, to that heavenly Beatrice, transformed and beautiful in the white rose of celestial unfolding.

However, the "Convivio" reveals all that delight and love of learning which we associate with the Renaissance, its fervour, its sensuousness; its passion for magnificence, for the immensity of horizons, its desire to know. It is worth noticing how often the author, in the course of his argument, suggests a picture to the imagination rather than the ordered lucidity of logical demonstration. An example of this is to be found in the episode of the Resurrection where there is an almost liturgical representation of the sacred drama of redemption. The account of the three Marys at the tomb may serve to remind us of Duccio's brilliant picture at Siena in which we see the lightning breaking over rocks and the three Marys in sudden and shuddering reluctance before the glory of the white-robed angel. "On earth it is Easter Day," writes Bernard Berenson in his "Italian Painters of the Renaissance," and as the light is breaking over the jagged rocks the three Marys approach the tomb and stand back as they behold its lid swing open and upon it a white-stoled angel, radiant and glorious. To the drama of expression and gesture, Duccio adds the drama of light with its transfiguring magic. This is a description which might almost be said to apply to the picture which Dante gives us; the Angel, which represents that nobility with which God endows the human soul, the three women, representing three philosophical schools, the Epicureans, the Stoics, the Peripatetics, the lightning and the raiment, white as snow. To permit oneself a digression, this passage allows us to see what methods Dante followed in etymology. It is no disparagement of his scholarship to say that he shares in the curious ideas of his own time. Following the "Magnae Derivationes" of Uguicciorno of Pisa, he charmingly derives Galilee from the Greek,
for it means the same as whiteness, "and whiteness is a colour more charged with material light than any other". The moral is therefore obvious: "contemplation is more charged with spiritual light than anything here below."

The presence of the Epicureans at the tomb of Christ in this symbolic and dramatic picture may seem strange. In the tenth Canto of the "Inferno", Epicurus and his followers are among the heretics as having denied the immortality of the soul:

Suo cimitero da questa parte hanno
con Epicuro tutti' i seguaci,
che l'anima col corpo morta fanno.49

At this phase of the poet's thought, however, with his rationalism he retains a respect for the Epicurean philosophy. No doubt, it was his youthful enthusiasm which led to this opinion. What is equally strange is the Christian colouring that he imparts: the image of the three philosophical schools at the tomb of Christ already has certain elements which come later to be identified with the "Divina Commedia". It may be, as Signor Apollonio has suggested, that Dante is anxious to abolish the distinction between poetry and philosophy.50 Certainly, in this work, there is a lyrical charm, and a delicacy which suggests the liturgical turns of phrase of the prose narrative of the "Vita Nuova".
Notes to Chapter Four: The Noble Life in the "Convivio".


   Non sarà tutto tempo senza reda
   l'èquila che lasciò le penne al carro,
   per che divenne monstro e poscia preda;
   (not for all time shall the eagle be without heir that left
   its feathers on the car so that it became monster and then
   prey).
   ibid. 43.
   nel quale un cinquecento diec e cinque
   (DVX)


   dov'è da sapere che Federigo di Soave, ultimo imperadore de
   li Romani — ultimo dico per rispetto al tempo presente,
   non ostante che Ridolfo e Andolfo e Alberto poi eletti
   siano, appresso la sua morte e de li suoi discendenti ——,
   domandato che fosse gentilizza, rispose ch'era antica
   ricchezza e belli costumi.
   See Note p.26 vol: 2. Busnelli-Vandelli ed:
   Cf. De Monarchia: II:III.
   "Est enim nobilitas virtus et divitie: antique" iuxta
   Phylosophum in Politicis.


   Lo quale cavallo come vada senza lo cavalcatore per lo
   campo assai è manifesto, e specialmente ne la misera Italia,
   che senza mezzo alcuno a la sua governazione è rimasa!

   Il perché, a queste guerre e le loro cagioni torre via,
   conviene di necessitate tutta la terra, e quanto a l'umana
   generazione a possedere è dato, essere Monarchia, cioè uno
   solo principato, e uno prencipe aver....
   Cf. A.Solmi: "Il pensiero politico di Dante", (Florence: 1922)
Cf. Giovanni Soranzo: "La 'Monarchia' e i problemi politici di Dante." p.38 sqq: Studi su Dante VII.
Dunque l'impero ha una missione temporale, assicurare la pace ai popoli, che è scala alla celeste. Questo ultimo fine è enunciato, come possibile conseguenza, ma non è posto come oggetto diretto, o come oggetto, a cui detta missione sia subordinata. In sè e per sè Dante non considera che il compito temporale dell'Impero, sia pure altissimo, la pace tra i popoli. L'imperatore, secondo la formula sancita dalla tradizione cattolica, era in primo luogo l'adiutor e il defensor della Chiesa.

E però dice lo Filosofo che l'uomo naturalmente è compagno animale.

10. ibid: IV:VI:8
11. For an admirably clear exposition of the authority of "the Philosopher" see: E. Gilson: "Dante, the Philosopher". pp. 142-151.
Venimmo al pie d'un nobile castello,
sette volte cerchiato d'alte mura,
difeso intorno d'un bel fiumicello.
Questo passammo come terra dura;
per sette porte intrai con questi savi:
giunemmo in prato di fresca verdura.

We came to the foot of a noble castle, encircled seven times with high walls and defended round about by a fair stream; this we passed over as on solid ground and through seven gateways I entered with these sages.

Whether the walls represent the seven virtues or the seven arts does not greatly matter. The critical edition of the Società Dantesca Italiana interprets the seven walls as the symbols of the seven virtues and of the seven parts of philosophy. The seven gates are here taken to represent the seven liberal arts. Cf. p.33 Note on Il Castello del Limbo. This interpretation is generally though not universally accepted.

14. Convivio: II:III.
There were people with grave, slow eyes with looks of great authority: they spoke seldom, with gentle voices.
I see the fleur-de-lis enter Anagni and in His Vicar Christ made captive; I see renewed the vinegar and gall and Him slain between living thieves;...

Tell me then, dear stock from which I spring, what were your ancestors and what years were chronicled in your boyhood; tell me of the sheepfold of S. John, how large it was then and what families in it were worthy of its chief seats.

19. On Dante's feeling for his family and its honour, cf. the following words by Carducci:

   Il poeta è un grande artiere
   Nella fucina ardente
   Gli elementi
   Dell'amore e del pensiero
   Egli gitta e le memorie
   E le glorie
   Dei suoi padri e di sua gente,
   Il passato e l'avvenire.

"Poesie di G. Carducci": (Bologna: XIV edizione)
(Rime Nuove: Congedò) pp. 774-775.

20. It is sufficient to note the various usages of the word χάρις in the Greek poets as enumerated in the article under that title in Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon.

Cf. Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics: VII:

   ὡσπερ Ὄμηρος
   .... ὡστε εἰ, καθάπερ φασίν, ἦξ ἄνθρωπων
   ζηνοτοι θεοὶ δὲ ἀρετῆς ὑπερβολὴν,

See the long note in the Busnelli-Vandelli edition of the "Convivio", pp.260-3, for a learned and resolute attempt to reconcile Dante's view with that of S. Thomas.


E dice: 'Elli precederà'; e non dice: 'Elli sarà con voi': a dare a intendere che ne la nostra contemplazione Dio sempre precede, né mai lui giungere potemo qui, lo quale è nostra beatitudine somma. E dice: 'Quivi lo vedrete, sì come disse': ciò che quivi avrete de la sua dolcezza, ciò che de la felicitade, sì come a voi è promesso qui; ciò che sì come stabilito è che voi avere possiate. E così appare che nostra beatitudine (questa felicitade di cui si parla) prima trovare potemo quasi imperfetta ne la vita attiva, cioè ne le operazioni de le morali virtùdi, e poi perfetta quasi ne le operazioni de le intellettuali. Le quali due operazioni sono vie espedite e dirittissime a menare a la somma beatitudine, la quale qui non si puote avere, come appare pur per quello che detto è.

Non solamente questa anima e natura buona in adolescenza è obbediente, ma eziandio soave: la quale cosa è l'altra ch'è necessaria in questa etade a bene intrare ne la porta de la gioventute. Necessaria è, poi che noi non potemo perfetta vita avere senza amici, sì come ne l'ottavo de l'Etica vuole Aristotile: e la maggiore parte de l'amistà si paiono seminare in questa etade prima, perché che in essa comincia l'uomo ad essere grazioso, o vero lo contrario: la quale grazia s'acquista per soavi reggimenti, che sono dolce e cortesemente parlare, dolce e cortesemente servire e operare. 

Anche è necessaria a questa etade la passione de la vergogna; e però la buona e nobile natura in questa etade la mostra, sì come lo testo dice. E però che la vergogna è apertissimo segno in adolescenza di nobilitade, perché quivi è massimamente necessaria al buono fondamento de la nostra vita, a lo quale la nobile natura intende sqq:

30. ibid: IV: Canzone Terza, 129-131, and Commentary on this: IV:XXVI.
è convieni aprire l'uomo quasi com'una rosa che più chiusa stare non puote, e l'odore che dentro generato è spandere;

Cf. Commentary IV:XXVIII.
36. ibid: XXVIII:8.
40. ibid: 548-625.

E sì come a colui che viene di lungo cammino, anzi ch'entri
ne la porta de la sua cittade, li si fanno incontro li
cittadini di quella, così a la nobile anima si fanno
incontro, e deono fare, quelli cittadini de la eterna vita;
e così fanno per le sue buone operazioni e contemplazioni;...


"Non fu la sposa di Cristo allevata
del sangue mio, di Lin, di quel di Cleto,
per essere ad acquisto d'oro usata;

.................................
nè ch'io fossi figura di sigillo
a privilegi venduti e mendaci,
don'io sovente arrosso e disfavello.
In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci
si veggion di qua su per tutti i paschi;
o difesa di Dio, perchè pur giaci?"

"The Bride of Christ was not nurtured with my blood and that
of Linus and of Cletus to be used for gain of gold:........
..... nor that I should be a figure on a seal for gold and
lying favours, for which I often redden and flash with fire.
Ravening wolves in shepherd's clothing are seen from here
above through all the pastures. O God of our defence, why
sleepest Thou still?"

45. Paradiso: XXXI: 70-3.

Sansa ràsponder, li occhi su levai,
e vidi lei che si facea corona
e reflettendo da sè li eterni rai.

Without answering, I lifted up my eyes and saw her where she
made for herself a crown, reflecting from her the eternal
beams.

p. 111. (Fontana ed: London: 1960)
Cf. J.A.Stewart: "The Myths of Plato". p.237, where he speaks
of Dante's beautiful allegorization of the story of the three
Marys at the sepulchre.
48. Uguccione. Magnae Derivationes:
Gala, graecæ, latine dicitur lac...... item a gala, hec
Galilea.......id est regio Palestine sic dicta quia gignat
candidiores homines quam alia regio Palestine....
In this he follows Isidore of Seville: (Etymologiae: I:14:c.
3 n. 23), quoted in the Busnelli-Vandelli edition of the
(London: 1902).

In this part Epicurua and all his followers, who make the
soul die with the body, have their burial place.

Chapter Five.

THE TRANSITION TO THE "DIVINA COMMEDIA".

I.

Nothing is more certain than the fact that the "Convivio" expresses Dante's views during the bitter years of struggle, of vain expectation and hope deferred, of patient study and intellectual labour. His earlier poetry is the crown of the courtly tradition in its most accomplished and exquisite form. Even in the "Divina Commedia", we are still reminded of the lyrical grace and ecstasy of the poets of Provence and Italy who shaped their measure to the ritual of courts, Arnaut Daniel and Guido Guinizelli. As Dante's genius develops, so he learns to surpass that tradition, its elegancies, its charm, its lucid colours, as of a woven tapestry from the looms of Arras, its languor as of some far-off music. With the deepening of thought, and the intensification of passion, his poetry attains to a Christian eloquence, strong and vigorous. It might almost seem that the mysterious "Donna Gentile" of the "Convivio", and the Beatrice of the "Vita Nuova", are figures wandering in that strange, shadowy land of intellectualist abstractions, in which various metaphysical principles assume the colour and guise of the characters of Provençal love-poetry. The "Convivio" is full of these half-luminous, half-concealed fantasies. When Dante returns from this world of categories, it is with an eye which is ready to notice the play of character, the movement of living things, the life of cities. He presents his observations in clear, bold images, and striking allusions, like the miniatures in some illuminated Missal in blue and gold, green and red, the colours in which nature is prolific. In a way he returns to the world of his youth, to the Beatrice whom he had loved, but it is a deeper, stranger, more troubled world. The Beatrice of the "Divina Commedia" is the same Beatrice as we find in the pages of the "Vita Nuova", but beautiful, glorious, enigmatic with the mystery of Heaven, and, above all, feminine. This plainly shows a change of intention. The poet has abandoned the Romantic world of pale, bright faces of love and joy, that exotic world half-Moslem, half-Christian, where the strains of the lute drown the voice of the "lauzenger" or "lusingatore", the traditional slanderer of Arabic love-poetry. What he now expresses is the great tradition of Christian Humanism. The old, formal, courtly love of the
troubadours becomes the ardent philosophy of love that we find in S. Augustine. The "Divina Commedia" holds within itself all those elements of Mediaeval culture which are most vivid and brilliant, the science and philosophy of the great Arabic scholars, the Scholastic theology, the classical influence and mysterious affinity with Virgil, the mysticism of S. Bernard, the Franciscan spirituality, the astronomical speculations of Ptolemy, the flame of Italian nationalism, the dream of Christian universalism ... all meet in the drama of man's salvation. All are represented in the shifting colours and scenes of the poet's journey. Our task is, as far as possible, to show how these various influences make up that Christian Humanism which is the spirit and impulse of Dante's masterpiece.

In the "Divina Commedia" he comes to represent Beatrice under the form and significance of Theology. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that such a description exhausts the meaning of the image which he uses. Beatrice always remains the Beatrice, whom he had loved on earth and whose pale beauty haunted him ever since her death. She is herself: yet she represents a particular aspect of reality. If we say that she represents Theology, that does not mean that she is a mere symbol. In this poem, symbol and image turn incontrovertibly into living persons, and living persons represent the virtues and vices with which they were identified on earth, and are yet themselves.

S. Bernard must be taken to be Contemplation. It is appropriate that the author of the "De Consideratione" and the "De Diligendo Deo" should be marked as the pattern of the Contemplative life. But what we hear in the "Paradiso" is the authentic voice of Bernard, his burning love of God, his deep devotion to Mary, the sweetness of his words. There is no simple identification therefore. Beatrice is not merely Theology, neither is Virgil merely natural Reason. Both are themselves, with all the characteristics, the temperament, the disposition, the living mind that made them what they were on earth.

It is almost inevitable that one should quote M. Gilson's remarks on the Symbolism of the "Divina Commedia". "The 'Divine Comedy'," he says, "contains as great a wealth of figurative meanings as the 'Roman de la Rose', but it expresses them differently. Instead of employing a system of frigid allegories and presenting us with personified abstractions, as Greed, Justice, Faith, Theology and Philosophy would have been, Dante employs a system of symbols, i.e. representative characters: Beatrice, Thomas Aquinas; Siger of Brabant, Bernard of Clairvaux."
It was a prodigious artistic invention, a sheer stroke of genius, to personify the poem in this way with a crowd of living beings, each having a spiritual signification as concrete and alive as the character that personifies it.\(^3\)

The meaning of the symbolism becomes profound, opening up depths and heights of understanding. The character of Beatrice might almost be compared with a landscape in which the eye discovers light and shadow, detail and significance in even the smallest stroke of the artist's brush. It was not difficult for Mr. Charles Williams to discover a new and impassioned mysticism in the person of Beatrice.\(^4\)

In the "Convivio", Dante declares that Theology is the perfect science, "because it makes us perfectly to behold the truth wherein our soul has rest."\(^5\) It is therefore to be compared with that luminous and perfect glory which is the Empyrean. The poet has no intention of disputing that primacy which Mediaeval thought attached to the Divine Science. Yet, at this period of his life, it is obvious that he had no acquaintance with it as a system of knowledge. His inclination and ardour were all for Philosophy. Even S. Thomas, "the worthy brother Thomas of Aquino", as he calls him,\(^6\) is for him primarily a philosopher, exercising an easy mastery over the various subsidiary sciences of psychology, logic and metaphysics.\(^7\)

"And just as virtue is the efficient cause of true friendship, so truth is the efficient cause of philosophy," he affirms. Truth takes on the clarity of the morning light on a Summer's day. What the poet required of the Angelic Doctor at this stage of his intellectual development was an understanding of the works of Aristotle. In him is to be found the true meaning of Philosophy, its definition and purpose which is "that most excellent delight which does not suffer from any interruption or defect, that is to say, true happiness which is attained by the contemplation of truth."\(^9\) Aristotle is the supreme master. His works are mentioned in the same breath as the books of the Scriptures. Thus Dante can pass without contradiction from a consideration of a text in "Proverbs" to a quotation from the "Nicomachean Ethics". It was, however, in S. Thomas that he found what he was looking for. This was an exposition, at once Christian and Humanist, of the Latin translation of the "Nicomachean Ethics". It is obvious from the most casual reading of the "Convivio" what a profound influence this had on the shaping and expression of his ideas. Aristotle is everywhere. His thought, his ideals, his view of the moral and intellectual virtues, heightened and
illuminated by the Christian philosophy of S. Thomas, his view of happiness as the light and fruition of intellectual contemplation. At the same time, the Aristotelian metaphysic attracts him, yet leaves him dissatisfied. Dante does not actually employ the principles of a strict Aristotelianism. It is a rationalism coloured always by Neo-Platonic and Platonic influences. Such an influence was, as we know, continued and carried on by the Franciscan theologians, with their tradition of S. Augustine. We may discover it in the works of S. Bonaventura and of the Victorines.¹⁰

II.

While there exists in Dante this aspect of Platonism, the poet seems to have known little of Plato's philosophy at first hand. Apparently, he regarded him as an example of human perfection. In this respect, he goes so far as to institute a comparison of Christ with him. There is that curious passage in the "Convivio" in which he declares that, if Christ had reached the fullness of age in this earthly life, he would have lived to be 80. The reason given for this proposition is that Plato attained this perfection of age, and with it the wisdom of maturity. It therefore serves as a model of what Christ would have been, has He desired to live so long in this present world.¹¹ However, there is no trace of that allegiance, that ardent enthusiasm and obedience which he gave so willingly to Aristotle. In spite of Ozanam's contention, Dante never hesitates to contradict boldly and on occasion with forthrightness certain of the theories of Plato.¹² How many cultivated minds, from Marsilio Ficino to Ozanam himself,¹³ have been persuaded that the author of the "Convivio" was an exponent and disciple of the Platonic philosophy. Such a view could find few supporters today. This is not to deny the influence of ideas, allusions and images of the Platonic mysticism. After all, the Christian religion for at least eleven hundred years had absorbed much of Plato's teaching. Nor was the revived Aristotelianism of the Scholastic theology without the influence of the Academy and of Plotinus. We must, however, allow for the transmission of ideas in a vague and general way. It is not necessary to suppose with Ozanam, that Dante derived his views about the
movement of the heavens not only from "Timaeus" but also from the Tenth Book of the "Republic", from a passage in the "Parmenides" and an allusion in the "Phaedo". Such references are more likely to mislead than enlighten the poet's readers. It might, of course, be expected or inferred that Dante was familiar with the Latin translation of the "Timaeus" made by Chalcidius. Such a view was maintained by Edward Moore, with some plausibility. More recently, however, it has been difficult to maintain this opinion owing to the penetrating critical investigation of Signor Capelli, who denied Dante's familiarity with the text. It is always fascinating to speculate about the various influences which may be discovered in the work of a great poet. With none is this more tempting than with Dante, and with none is such conjecture apt to prove more misleading. We must disabuse our minds of the suggestion that the title of this work owes anything to the "Symposium" of Plato. Whether it was derived from Biblical or Classical sources, its origin is certainly elsewhere.

The esteem which the poet entertained for Plato was apparently of the same kind as that which he had for Homer. It was founded upon his confidence in the opinion of others whose knowledge was entitled to respect. What he sees in Plato is the moral excellence of the man, rather than the genius of the philosopher. It is the ardour in the pursuit of truth which he perceives rather than the attainment of it, even though Plato had himself developed the doctrine of the Mean which is so significant in the "Nicomachean Ethics". For him, Plato was deceived by many circumstances, subject to those illusions and ambiguities subsequently exposed by the dialectic of Aristotle. Aristotle remains the master of all philosophical truths, the demonstrator of logic, the propounder of metaphysical speculation, the observer and collector of scientific facts —— the universal genius. There could be no rival to him. To entertain doubts as to his pre-eminence was to question the very notion of authority itself. As we have already seen, whatever authority may be attributed to the Emperor in the sphere of government, belongs also to Aristotle in the sphere of the human reason. Plato, therefore, cannot be praised for his insight into truth, nor for his philosophical brilliance, nor for the dramatic power and vivid characterization which he displays in the dialogues. The only eulogy that can be spoken of him is that he possessed outstanding moral virtue. It is, therefore, idle to talk of the "Symposium", the "Republic", the "Parmenides" or the "Phaedrus".
which the imaginative Platonists of later times have discerned as influences on the work of the great Florentine poet. It is, indeed, doubtful whether these books were there to enable him to correct his prejudices, and enlighten his mind. Whatever opinions he had about the earlier philosophers of Greece, he got out of Aristotle. And what is true of Socrates and the Pre-Socratics, is true also of Plato himself. Of course, there was a wide diffusion of that vague and general form of the Platonic philosophy, which owed more to Plotinus than to the Academy. This was undoubtedly familiar to Dante and receives clear and reiterated expression in his works. Indeed, it had long been the dominant if not the only philosophical tradition of Christianity. In its Augustinian form it was an illumination and an interpretation of the Faith. But Aristotelianism came with the impact of the new thought. It was something brilliant and distinctive when it burst into the European sky of the thirteenth century in a blaze of light. To the poet as to his contemporaries, Aristotle was the master who ordered the various sciences in a logical and intelligible unity.

The tradition of Socrates-Plato-Aristotle postulates a dynamic principle by which the whole universe can be understood. Under this impulse the various aspects of human experience are defined and made clear. Philosophy broadens out like a full-flowing river when it leaves the mountain-slopes into metaphysics, logic, psychology, the descriptive sciences of physics, biology, medicine, and the humanities, history, ethics and politics. All these were under the domination of metaphysics. They followed its interpretation: they were explained by its categories. "The apotheosis of philosophy as the all-embracing doctrine of human knowledge was the system of Aristotle," declares Dr. William S. Haas in his interesting study of the intellectual traditions of East and West. It was this sense of the architectonic, it was this application of a principle which should explain all aspects of human knowledge and experience, which fascinated the Mediaeval mind. For while it is something which is to be discovered in the philosophy of Plato, it is in Aristotle that it attains to full development and expression. It is this which Dante discerns in the Aristotelian system, with its clarity, its order, its teleological conviction. That is why Aristotle can be called the "master of philosophers". In him everything is lucid, balanced, distinct under one sovereign principle of interpretation. With the memory of S. Thomas in his mind Dante
asserts: "This school at the present day holds the sceptre of the world in teaching everywhere, and their doctrine may almost be called 'Catholic opinion'. Thus it may be seen that Aristotle was the guide and conductor of the world to this goal." The synthesis of S.Thomas had by this time achieved a brilliant success. Aristotle is understood by Dante in the sense proposed by the Angelic Doctor, that is, with the illumination and modifications of the whole Platonic tradition as it had been received by Christian theology.

III.

Little by little in the "Convivio", undertaken as it was with a genuine passion and enthusiasm for philosophy, emerges the figure of Dante, the Humanist. It is Dante, nourished on the thought of the Classical writers, on Greek rationalism, on Latin poetry, and on the Aristotelian ethic. Accepting as he does the dogmas of the Catholic Religion, he evades the necessity of expressing his own most intimate and profound beliefs. He is content to leave matters like that. He will not discuss them, still less dispute or argue. His religion finds room for an Aristotelian rationalism which it completes in the notion of the fullness of the Christian Revelation.

As represented in this work, the religion of Dante takes particular cognizance of the creation of the Universe and of its system of relationships. The Person of Christ is considered under the aspect of the Logos, the active agent in Creation. "Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est."22 This is the Johannine and Pauline conception of Christ as the Word and Wisdom of God. There is nothing here of the tender and compassionate Jesus of S.Bernard, the insistence on the joys and sorrows of Our Lord's earthly life. What Dante chooses is the Platonic and mystical expression of the Word made flesh: the theology of the glory veiled in the humanity which we find in S.Athanasius and the Alexandrian school. There is here a luminous intellectualism which debates First and Final causes, and is concerned rather with the vast sweep of cosmological speculation. Dante approaches the doctrine of the Incarnation from the standpoint of the philosopher. There is no mention of Christ as Redeemer. The whole of that impassioned devotion to the Humanity of Jesus, so characteristic of Cistercian and Franciscan spirituality, is ignored. There is nothing to tell us of the
sorrowful mysteries of the Passion, and of the incidents of the Crucifixion and Death of the Saviour. It would perhaps be truer to say that these events do not come within the compass of the poet's exalted contemplation. The only mention which we discover of the mystery of the Passion occurs in a passing remark in the Fourth Treatise where he speaks of the Son of God descending upon earth to bring about a reconciliation for man's transgression. The statement is, of course, purely theological, and we can draw no conclusion from it. It may be that Dante was one of those rare souls who find their way to the contemplation of the divine glory rather than to the meditation on the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth, in its poverty and obscurity. Such a religion has something of an affinity with that of the Fourth Gospel, with its great themes of light, life and love and its presentation of the glory of the Godhead shining through the manhood of Christ. It is a religion which finds its own sweetness and delectation in the high mystery of the Trinity. From that sublime imagination, it passes to the events in time and history.
Notes to Chapter Five: The Transition to the "Divina Commedia".


   In this passage S.Bernard speaks of the doctrine of deification with clear and evident care.
   "Quomodo in omnibus erit Deus, si in homine de homine quicquam supererit? Manebit substantia sed in alia forma."

3. E. Gilson; "Dante the Philosopher?" p. 267 sqq.


   e questa chiama perfetta perché perfettamente ne fa il vero vedere nel quale si cheta l'anima nostra.

   Here Dante speaks of "esta canzone, tolto per esempio del buono frate Tommaso d'Aquino."

7. ibid. II:XII.
   The whole of this chapter defines the meaning of Philosophy.

   E si come la vera amistade, astratta de l'animo, solo in sè considerata, ha per subietto la conoscenza de l'operazione buona, e per formo uno quasi divino amore a lo'intelletto. E si come de la vera amistade è cagione efficiente la vertude, così de la filosofia è cagione efficiente la veritate.

   quella eccellentissima dilezione che non pate alcuna intermissione o vero difetto, cioè vera felicitade che per contemplazione de la veritate s'acquista.

Onde avemo di Platone, del quale ottimamente si può dire che fosse naturato e per la sua perfezione che di lui prese Socrate quando prima lo vide, che esso vivette ottantuno anno, secondo che testimona Tullio in quello "De Senectute". E io credo che se Cristo fosse stato non crucifisso, e fosse vissuto lo spazio che la sua vita poteva secondo natura trapassare, elli sarebbe a li ottantuno anno di mortale corpo transmutato.

"s'il (Dante) le combat c'est après de respectueux préliminaires, s'il le condamne il s'empresse d'ajouter une justification possible."
It is difficult to find anything to justify this remark!

Cf. The comment by Bruno Nardi: "Dante e la Cultura Medievale." p.95.

For the contrary point of view, consult an article by Paul Renucci entitled "Dante et le mythe de Marsyas" (Annales du centre universitaire mediterranéen: 1946-8: vol.2, p.187 sqq.) in which he discredits those experts on the Renaissance who profess to regard Dante as a Platonist.


On the influence of Platonism generally in Christian thought, Dean Inge put the whole matter very succinctly when he spoke of "the Christian Church which had already assimilated the spiritual philosophy of Platonism, as well as the moral discipline which the later Platonists had taken over from the Stoics." Cf. W. R. Inge: "Confessio. Fidei," p.45, also W. R. Inge: "The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought." p. 33.
Scriptura divina convivium sapientiae est: singuli libri singula sunt ferrula.  
Cf. note in the Busnelli-Vandelli edition of the "Convivio" vol. I p.8. The usual explanation of the title "Convivio" for this work is that it is intended to be a banquet or feast of wisdom.  
e quelli e questi prendano la mia vivanda col pane, che la farà loro e gustare e patire. La vivanda di questo convivio sarà di quattordici maniere ordinata, cioè quattordici canzoni si d'amor come di vertù materiate, le quali senza lo presente pane aveano d'alcuna oscurità ombra, si che a molti loro bellezza più che loro bontade era in grado.

Politicus: 284a-d.  
Philebus: 25b.  
Ch. XIX. The Mean and the Idea of Good as "Summum Bonum". pp. 442-455.  
With reference to the doctrine of the "just right mean";  
Taylor observes: "From the use made of it in the 'Ethics' it has come to be spoken of familiarly as the Aristotelian principle of the Mean. In justice both to Aristotle and to Plato, it is necessary to point out that the whole doctrine is Platonian, and that Aristotle never makes claim to its authorship, though he is careful to call attention, throughout the 'Ethics', to the points on which he believes himself to be correcting Plato and the Academy."

v'è nel terzo trattato del 'Convivio' una fondamentale posizione mistica che salta agli occhi: l'amore della Sapienza è acceso e alimentato nell'uomo dalla luce divina che raggia di continuo sulla mente umana e coopera con questa all'atto umano dell'intendere. Di questo misticismo platonico e plotiniano il maggiore rappresentante cristiano è S. Agostino, all'influenza del cui pensiero nessuno, fra i pensatori cristiani del medio evo, sfuggì, nemmeno lo stesso S. Tommaso. E del resto mistico, cioè platonico, era in fondo anche la dottrina d'Aristotele, per il quale la sapienza umana è una partecipazione della Sapienza divina, e qualcosa di divino è l'intelletto umano, che entra in noi dal di fuori: 'Relinguitur autem intellectum solum de foris advenire, et divinum esse solum.'


Volendo la 'mmensurabile bontà divina l'umana creatura a sè riconformare, che per lo peccato de la prevaricazione del primo uomo da Dio era partita e disformata, eletto fu in quello altissimo e congiuntissimo consistorio de la Trinitade, che'l Figliuolo di Dio in terra discendesse a fare questa concordia.
Chapter Six.

THE THEME OF THE "DIVINA COMMEDIA".

I.

We cannot but feel the contrast between the clear serenity of the "Convivio" and the sad and sombre music of the First Canto of the "Inferno". There is a great distance between the tranquil and golden Humanism of the former, with its almost Pelagian atmosphere, and the note of doom which is struck at the beginning of the latter. Even in the first lines we become aware of the great themes of sin and punishment, death and judgment, as later we shall discover the drama unfolding in purgation, and finally, in its consummation of love and joy. Not only do we perceive a new and deeper view, but also a style which is at once different, more profound and varied in its music, and capable of evoking every suggestion, every allusion, every movement of light and darkness, of gloom and fantasy, of shadow and mood, as it pursues its vast theme. It would seem that the poet had grown weary of the attempt to compose a merely philosophical work. The great topics of evil and redemption which engaged his mind — no doubt influenced by his own sufferings — demanded another method. It is sufficient to remember the gulf which exists between the "Convivio" and the "Divina Commedia" to refute the argument, sometimes advanced, which would place the beginning of the "Inferno" before the exile, that is, at some period previous to 1302, and consequently before the composition of the "Convivio". The First Canto of the "Inferno", with its solemn and mournful tones, introduces most of the complex and manifold themes of the "Divina Commedia". It is obvious that such poetry, such a dramatic intensity of expression; such a view of the universe, could not belong to the same period as that in which the author was engaged in the philosophical disquisition of the "Convivio". We can attach little importance to the fact that the poet assigns the date of his journey to the other world to Holy Week, 1300. This is a date which is plainly symbolical, being the year of the Jubilee instituted by Boniface VIII. Even in Dante's reckoning, it is the date of his great experience of the eternal verities, not of the date when he recorded them. Moreover, the "Convivio", with its purely
classical Humanism, its tranquillity and easy optimism about human nature, does not exist in the same category of thought as the "Divina Commedia", with its moral fervour and profound vision of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven as dimensions of the soul. The one is conceived in the self-sufficiency of the Aristotelian ethic, suffused indeed by the warmer colour of Christian idealism, but predominatly Classical in point of view. The other reveals those richer, fuller perspectives of a Humanism, which while it does not disavow the ancient glories of Greece and Rome, interpenetrates them with the significance of a specifically Christian feeling.

In the latter work, the Catholic religion in its sublime vision of the hereafter, its convictions about the soul of man, its theology and ethic, is accepted as the starting point of the poem. There are, of course, many connections, many associations, many similitudes which recall the earlier work. The poet can obviously acknowledge it: but his whole experience, both intellectual and moral, has changed. It no longer represents his meaning. The sombre and tragic loneliness of exile, the poverty, the bitterness and sense of dependency on others, the shame of extrusion from his own city under circumstances of such dishonour, had shaped his mind to those deeper values of the spirit. If, in his earlier mood, he was hopeful of a change in his fortunes and in the fortunes of Italy which should enable him to return in triumph to Florence, now he entertains little real confidence in such an outcome.

"To lasceri ogni cosa diletta
più cara; e questo è quello strale
che l'arco dello esilio pria saetta.
To proverai sì come sa di sale
lo pane altrui, e come è duro calle
lo scendere e'l salir per l'altrui scale.
E quel che più ti graverà le spalle,
sara la compagnia malvagia e scempia
con la qual tu cadrai in questa valle;
che tutta ingrata, tutta matta ed empia
si farà contra te; ma, poco appresso,
ella, non tu, n'avrà Rossa la tempia."

Indeed, the "Convivio" must have seemed immature and tentative to the impassioned soul of the great poet, who had looked into the affairs of the world and found malice, vindictiveness, greed, lust and folly. Its newly-acquired learning, its erudite discussions of astronomy, metaphysics, and ethics, its ingenious meditation on Nobility, must have seemed to him a
wholly inadequate and much too facile presentation of philosophy. He found it necessary, not only to turn aside from this banquet of Wisdom, which he had prepared with such evident delight, but (to continue his own metaphor) to scatter the meat and wine, and the barley bread which he had got ready for the guests. Now he has a different purpose in writing. The theme is darker, more sombre, more tragic, though it is a "Comedy" that he writes, and though there are sudden lights, illuminations, and flashes of glory, and ineffable visions. "Scio hominem in Christo," Dante read in his Vulgate, "... (sive extra corpus, nescio, Deus scit) raptum hujusmodi usque ad tertium caelum. Et scio hujusmodi hominem (sive in corpore, sive extra corpus, nescio) quoniam raptus est in Paradisum, et audivit arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui."\(^5\) This, in its concluding phase, was a similar experience, ineffable, perhaps, but the poet will try to describe it. He will do so, in the full assurance and knowledge, not only of his genius, but of the gift of prophecy which, as we shall see later, he did not hesitate to claim.

Now we become aware in the solemn tones of the first lines of the "Inferno" of the whole drama of human evil, the long and bloody record of human history, the pains and punishments, the sufferings, the martyrdoms, the anguish of men, their execution and their doom. Yet there is another aspect to all this. Dante, by means of theology, is able to complete and bring to consummation the Aristotelian metaphysic and the Aristotelian view of the world. With the aid of the Christian Faith he corrects, modifies and deepens the ethic of Aristotle and Cicero. In the "Convivio", Beatrice makes her brief appearance. She is little else than a memory and a name of glory, almost half-forgotten, and yielding place to the "Donna Gentile", the symbol of Philosophy. But in the "Divina Commedia", it is Beatrice, not only the Person of Theology, but the woman herself, beloved and dear, sometimes charming, sometimes provocative, sometimes didactic, sometimes smiling with the joy of that perfect delight which is Heaven, but always human, who dominates the poem from beginning to end.\(^6\) Dante can only tell us the full meaning of this revelation of beauty in the glory of the Empyrean, the river of light, glittering and deep among the flowers of the celestial Spring.

"La bellezza ch'ic vidi si trasmoda
non pur di là da noi, ma certo io credo
che solo il suo fattor tutta la goda.

............................

Dal primo giorno ch'i'vidi il suo viso
in questa vita, infino a questa vista,
non m'è il seguire al mio cantar preciso;
ma or convien che mio seguir desista
più dietro a sua bellezza, poetando,
coms all'ultimo suo ciascuno artista. 7

II

In considering the theme of the "Divina Commedia", we must
remind ourselves of the beginning of the Prologue.

"Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
ché la diritta via era smarrita." 8

The contrast to the "Convivio" is immediately apparent. For
here the poet who had formerly found cause to marvel at the
spectacle of human excellence, suddenly becomes conscious of
the fact of sin. It is not merely the condition of man or
of other men. It is his own particular condition also.
He discovers himself lost in the dark wood, without light
and without any indication of a road. He cannot describe
how long he has been in that plight or what vicissitudes
have caused him to wander so far from the ordered path, now
irretrievably forsaken.

"Io non so ben ridir com'io v'entrai,
tant'era pieno di sonno a quel punto
che la verace via abbandonai." 9

The Prologue is full of echoes of the language of the
Old Testament prophets, evocations, allusions, similarities.
Not only are there reminiscences of Isaiah, but also of Ezekiel,
Jeremiah, and occasionally of the great New Testament prophecy,
the Apocalypse. The first words of the Prologue bring back
to mind the complaint of Hezekiah in the 38th Chapter of Isaiah:

"Ego dixi: In dimidio dierum meorum
vadam ad portas inferi.
Quaesivi residuum annorum meorum.
Dixi: Non videbo Dominum Deum
in terra viventium;
non aspiciam hominem ultra,
et habitatorem quietis." 10

The image of the wood occurs often enough in English
literature. It is romantic, strange, mysterious, elusive.
We may think of the enchanted wood of Shakespeare's imagination
or of the lyrical and seductive paths that run through Milton's
wood in the Masque of "Comus". There are wanderings, fantasies,
lovers, poets, a duke and his friends, the singing of birds, sudden gusts of music, and exquisite inventions: there are, indeed, rumours and tales of

"...beauty like the fair Hesperian tree Laden with blooming gold."11

This is another wood, however, shadowy and awe-inspiring like those dark places mentioned in the "Convivio": "valleys facing towards the North, or underground caves, into which the light of the sun never descends."12

Indeed, just as the Mountain affords an image of Purgatory, and the Sun that of the White Rose unfolding its beauty in Paradise, so the wood in all its horror of darkness and despair may be regarded as the similitude of Hell.13 All the circumstances are there - the overwhelming sleep, the beguilement of reason under the influence of those soft and amorphous dreams of illusion, and error. Beyond the forest and the melancholy valley, with its thickets, its shadows and chasms, suddenly looms up the hill. Its green slopes are lit by the sunlight.

Ma poi ch'i'fui al piè d'un colle giunto, là dove terminava quella valle che m'avea di paura il cor compunto, guardai in alto, e vidi le sue spalle vestite già de' raggi del pianeta che mena dritti altrui per ogni calle.14

The time is the dawn of a Spring morning with all the scents and blossom of that season. At last, after the long sojourn in the wood, the poet tries to make the steep ascent toward the light, toward salvation. This is the experience described by S. Augustine in his "Confessions" when in anguished and tremulous words he exclaimed "... inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis."15

Already we find plainly declared, in language sufficiently clear for its symbolic purpose, the great theme of the "Divina Commedia". What the poet proposes to describe through all the images and characters, through all scenes of this drama, is the sudden realization of shame and sin, the awakening of the soul and its endeavour to gain the light which is God Himself, the slow and painful ascent towards the Supreme Good. This is denoted by the three divisions of the poem. Hell corresponds to the Valley of the shadow of death, the sadness and futility of the lost: Purgatory to the hill with the sunlight glinting on it and revealing green grass and flowers and trees, its rocks and paths, its steep ledges and springs of clear water: while Heaven, with all its joy and triumph, is represented by the sun which gives warmth and comfort and light to all creatures.
Signor Apollonio has pointed out with what consummate art Dante contrives the various themes with which he is dealing. What matters most in the beginning, is the point of arrival, the man, the wayfarer, the traveller, predestined to follow a certain path and thereby to attain to salvation. And we may note, in passing, the even flow of the narrative, the almost inevitable pace and resolution of the verse, the various incidents, allegorically conceived but yet as fresh and clear as events of the historical order. However, the path of the traveller is beset with dangers. Before him rises up the symbol of his own particular sin, and all the evil for which sin is responsible in human society. Suddenly, the poet finds himself confronted by a leopard, an attractive, fierce, swift creature with spotted skin:

"Ed ecco, quasi al cominciare dell'erta, una lonza leggiera e presta molto, che di pel maculato era coverta;"17

The poet is making an allegory and his account follows the rules of all symbolic narrative. The sense is suggested, evoked rather than defined, by the imagery of the poem. We shall see this if we examine the text more carefully. The poet comes out of a forest – he must in some sense take his departure from this world, yet he is a living man and must therefore according to the allegory touch or impinge upon that other world which lies removed from the ordinary perception. Hence, the choice of this vague, lonely and indeterminate place, full of strange shapes and shadows, of little noises and half-heard sounds. The very configuration suggests the approach to Hell. With a dramatic power which is completely suited to its purpose, the poet sets there a traveller who has lost his way, three wild beasts who harass him, a shadow, thin and tremulous in that place of leaves and subdued and sinister whisperings. The wood allows him to evoke all the circumstances of fear and horror, of momentary expectation and hope, of anguish and terror.... indeed, the state of his own soul.18

The leopard refuses to let him pass and so hinders him that he thinks of going back. The symbolism of the three beasts has been variously explained. There would seem to be general agreement, however, that we have here an image of incontinence, which expresses itself in various forms: sensuality, lust, greed, avarice, extravagance, wantonness and anger. It constitutes the most attractive of the temptations of youth in the eagerness of sensuality: the passion of extravagant delight, the desire of the flesh. It is what S. John describes as
"concupiscendia carnis, et concupiscendia oculorum et superbia vitae, quae non est ex Patre, sed ex mundo est."19

Dante encounters his own sin which from time to time seems to gather enough strength to drive him back to the dark wood of evil. Again, we may discover here an interpretation in socio-political terms. For the good in human society meets not only the impediment of its own particular and individual fault. It meets also the hatred of those social and political forces in which may often be found the visible expression of evil and malice. Such was Florence at the time of Dante. Its restlessness, its confusion, its cupidity and its forgetfulness of Justice made it like the swift, fierce leopard. For Florence was attractive. It had its charm, like the gay appearance of the leopard. It was full of enterprise. It was a city in which beauty was manifest in rich, new buildings and churches, in works of art, in gold and beaten silver, and which also

\[
\text{produce e spande il maladetto fiore c'ha disviate le pecore e li agni.} \quad 20
\]

It would not be enough for Dante to overcome his own sensuality. He must assail and fight against this vice as it disclosed itself in his own people and in his own city.

The prospects of success seemed bright, for the sun rising in a clear sky reminded the poet that God had created the world at the beginning of the year. Suddenly however, the lion made his appearance, a creature from the mediaeval bestiaries and illuminated Missals:

\[
\text{con la testa alta e con rabbiosa fame, sl che parea che l'aere ne temesse;} \quad 21
\]

Again in front of the poet arises the fierceness and terror of his own sin, pride, which is more difficult to eradicate than lust.22 The lion seems to be a figure suggested by the prophecy of Jeremiah,23 though indeed, it is worth noting that the three fierce beasts are described in the prophet's vision. In his rage and hunger, the lion confronts him. In this, Dante conveys the suggestion of certain social and political forces which were at bitter enmity with him. We may observe how the shudder of fear is communicated to the air itself. Again, it is curious to discover how the play of alliteration \ldots\ldOTS

The poet entertained
a special antipathy to Philip the Fair and his brother, Charles of Valois. For him, the French monarchy constituted an alien and lawless sovereignty founded on force, which usurped the legitimate authority of the Holy Roman Emperor over all Christians. Hugh Capet, who is encountered in the fifth circle of “Purgatory” among the avaricious, is made to declare the transgressions committed by his House:

Io fui radice della mala pianta che la terra cristiana tutta aduòa. 24

Again, in the allusive sixth Canto of the "Paradiso", we may observe Dante's lament over the ruin of the imperial cause. The Pope, Clement V., had betrayed that authority which is both Christian and Roman, by putting himself under the protection of Philip instead of the Emperor. It is, the poet affirms, a time of faction and disorder, when Justice is despised and iniquity is triumphant.

L'uno al pubblico segno i gigli gialli oppone, e l'altro appropria quello a parte, sì ch'è forte a veder chi più si fallì. 25

It is not enough for Dante to humble his own pride: any Christian is obliged to do that. He must of necessity engage in the struggle and conflict in the world of men. He must oppose the irresponsible use of power and the violence which conspires to destroy the right.

More persistent, however, more astute and therefore more dangerous is the assault of the she-wolf, lean, insatiable, ravening. In this creature, the last to appear, we may discern the symbolism of the last and most terrible region of Hell, the Judecca of the traitors. In the she-wolf seem to be gathered together the fascination exercised by the leopard, and the ferocity of the lion. The creature advances against him, little by little, and drives him back, until, overcome by fear and despair, he retreats towards the wood "where the sun is silent."

tal mi fece la bestia sanza pace, che, venendomi incontro, a poco a poco mi r epigneva là dove'l sol tace. 26

It is easiest to understand the symbolism of the she-wolf as attachment to worldly goods, an attachment which is blind and grasping in its compulsion and which constitutes the torment and misery of men. In this Dante depicted what must have been one of his own greatest temptations. It was the temptation which must often have presented itself to him wandering round the courts of Italy, an exile from his own city and a stranger
to his own family, the temptation to take the easy, comfortable
way and to make peace with his enemies even at the cost of his
own honour and renown.

The noble and dignified reply to a friend who had communicated
to him the conditions under which he might be reconciled to the
authorities of his native city shows the force of this temptation
and the poet's sense of honour:

"I have had your letter - you will know with what reverence
and affection I have received it - and I am indeed grateful to
see, from very careful reading, how much my repatriation means
to you. You put me under the deepest obligation; it rarely
happens that exiles are able to find friends. I proceed to
answer it: and if the answer is not what certain cowards
might wish, I beg of you, in all affection, to consider it
carefully before you come to an opinion of it.

"I understand from the letters of your nephew and mine
and of a number of friends, that a decree recently passed
in Florence on this matter of the pardoning of the exiles
declares that if I choose to pay a certain amount of money,
and go through the ceremonies of submission, I may be reconciled
and return immediately. These two things, Father, are as
ludicrous as they are ill-considered, I mean, ill-considered
on the part of those who wrote to me about them, for your
own letter, which was much more cautiously and thoughtfully
phrased, said nothing about them.

"This, then, is the gracious recall by which Dante Alighieri
may be brought back to his native land, after enduring almost
fifteen years of exile! This is what an innocence of which
everyone knows has deserved! This is what the sweat and
labour of unceasing study has deserved! Is a man somewhat
familiar with philosophy likely to abandon himself to such
humiliation? as any Cioli or other infamous creature might
do, allowing himself to be bound and presented as an offering.
Shall a preacher of justice, a victim of injustice, pay money
to those who have injured him, exactly as if they had been his
benefactors?

"That, Father, is not the way to return to my country.
But if any other way can be found, by you or (after you)
by anyone, which will not be derogatory to Dante's reputation
and honour, I shall not be slow to accept it. If I cannot
enter Florence by such a path, I will not enter Florence.
What then? Cannot I look everywhere on the mirror of the
sun and the stars? Can I not everywhere under heaven mirror
the sweetest truths, without first returning to my city, making
myself inglorious and ignominious in the sight of the people
of Florence? I shall not want for bread."
This is one interpretation. Since the images that he employs are manifold, however, and their meanings shade into various allusions and references, it is possible to understand this in another way. We may see here an image of the Roman court, in its pomp and glory and worldly magnificence. This is what it had become since the foolish and illicit donation of Constantine.²⁸ It had substituted worldly domination for the spiritual rule and authority which rightly appertained to it. For the counsels of the Gospel it had preferred a policy of power and wealth. Rome had supported the French monarchy to the grave disadvantage of the Empire. In so doing, it had destroyed the Christian order which was meant to prevail among men. Soon the exile of the Holy See at Avignon would demonstrate clearly to the Christian nations its subservience to the House of Capet. This presumably is why the lion and the she-wolf make their appearance at the same time in the Prologue.

From personal experience, the poet knew the result of such a conspiracy and of such a policy. For, at Florence, the victory of that political faction which received the support of the Pope and of the Capetian princes deprived him of his native country, of his wife and children, of his possessions, of his career, and, indeed, of all that he loved most among earthly things. It was evident to Dante that the Christian must strive not only against the unjust pretensions of the Capetian monarchy but even more against the Papacy which had lost its earlier spiritual zeal, and had now become a cause of moral degeneration among Christians.

In concluding our brief survey of the Prologue, it is enough to draw attention to the way in which every theme, every image, every motive is clear and definite and yet changing in the vast horizon of the "Divina Commedia". The she-wolf seems to remain as a persistent and terrible memory, now perhaps less distinct in the canine gestures of the demoniacal creatures of the "Inferno", now in metaphorical terms, as in the wild and furious hunt in Count Ugolino's dream:

Con cagne magre, studiose e conte
Gualandi con Sismondi e con Lanfranchi
s'avea messi dinanzi dalla fronte.
In picciol corso mi parlano stanchi
lo padre e'figli, e con l'agute scane
mi parea lor veder fender li fianchi.²⁹
Like dogs the guardian demons of the barrators rush out
against Virgil,\(^{30}\) like a dog barks Bocca degli Abati in the
frozen circle of the traitors,\(^{31}\) like the sharp, pinched
faces of dogs shiver the features of the traitors in their
frozen pools:

Poscia vid'io mille visi cagnazzi
fatti per freddo; onde mi vien riprezzo,
e verrà sempre, de'gelati guazzi.\(^{32}\)

In these and many other passages there are reminiscences
of the vindictiveness, the blazing fury, the snarling hate,
and low cunning, of the she-wolf:

ed una lupa, che di tutte brame
semeiva carca nella sua magrezza.\(^{33}\)
Notes to Chapter Six. The Theme of the "Divina Commedia."

1. Cf. G. Ferretti: "I due tempi della redazione della 'Divina Commedia'" (Bologna: 1932), in which the view criticized in the text is advocated.


   N. Zingarelli. op. cit. vol.2. pp. 769-808.

   Thou shalt leave everything loved most dearly, and this is the shaft which the bow of exile shoots first. Thou shalt prove how salt is the taste of another man's bread and how hard is the way up and down another man's stairs. And that which shall weigh heaviest on thy shoulders is the wicked and senseless company with which thou shalt fall into that valley, which shall become wholly ungrateful, quite mad and furious against thee; but before long they, not thou, shall have the brows red for this."


   Beatrice Beata.
   A. d'Ancona: "Beatrice". (Pisa: 1889).

   If all that is said of her were gathered in one meed of praise, it would be little to serve this turn; the beauty I saw not only surpasses our measures, but I surely believe that only its Maker has all the joy of it.
   ibid. 28-33.
   From the first day I saw her face in this life until this sight the pursuit in my song has not been cut off; but now must my pursuit cease from following longer after her beauty in my verse, as with every artist at his limit.

   In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost.
   Cf. Horace: Sat. II (iii). 11.48-50
   velut silvis, ubi passim
   palantis error certo de tramite pellit,
   ille sinistrorsum, hic dextrorsum abit,...

   I cannot rightly tell how I entered there, I was so full of sleep when I left the right way.

10. Isaiah: XXXVIII. vv: 10 and 11.

   valli volte ad aquilone, o vero spelunche sotterranee,
   dove la luce del sole mai non discende,...
   but when I had reached the foot of a hill at the end of
   that valley which had pierced my heart with fear I looked
   up and saw its shoulders already clothed with the beams
   of a planet that leads men straight on every road.
15. S.Augustine: Confessions: VII:X.
   And lo, almost at the beginning of the steep, a leopard
   light and very swift covered with a spotted hide;...
18. Cf. Yvonne Batard: "Dante, Minerve et Apollon. Les
   On this, Boccaccio's comment is worth quoting:
   "in questo nostro poeta trovà amplissimo luogo la lussuria."
   Trattello in laude di Dante.
   Brings forth and scatters the accursed flower that has
   led astray the sheep and the lambs.
   holding its head high and furious with hunger so that the
   air seemed in dread of it.
22. On the symbolism of the three beasts, see the following
   excellent piece of exegesis:
   G. Busnelli: "Il simbolo delle tre fiere dantesche."
   (Rome:1909).
   Ascendit leo de cubili suo et praedo gentium se levavit.
   ibid: V:6.
   Idcirco percussit eos leo de silva, lupus ad vesperam
   vastavit eos: pardus vigilans super civitates eorum.
   ibid: XXV:38.
   Dereliquit quasi leo umbraculum suum.
   ibid: XLIX:19 and L:44.
   Ecce quasi leo ascendet de superbia Jordanis ad pulchritudinem
   robustam.
I was the root of the tree which overshadows all Christendom so that good fruit is rarely gathered there.

The one opposes to the public standard the yellow lilies, and the other claims it for a party, so that it is hard to see which offends the more.

coming against me and driving me back step by step to where the sun is silent.

27. Epistola IX.
The last part of the original text (4) deserves to be quoted as an example of Dante's Latin style at its most vigorous and eloquent:

Non est haec via redeundi ad patriam, Pater mi; sed si alia per vos antecedenter, deinde per alios invenietur, quae fame Dantisque honori non deroget, illam non lentis passibus acceptabo. Quod si per nullam talem Florentiam introiturus, mungum Florentiam introibo. Quidni? . . . . .
Nonne dulcissimas veritates potero speculari ubique sub coelo, ni prius inglorium, immo ignominiosum, populo Florentino, civitati me reddam? Quippe nec panis deficiet.


With hounds lean, trained and eager he had sent the Gualandi, the Sismondi and the Lanfranchi to the front before him, and after a short run the father and the sons seemed to be spent and with the sharp fangs I seemed to see their flanks torn open.

Cf. The well-known exposition of the incident of Count Ugolino:

With the fury and uproar of dogs that rush out on a mendicant who suddenly begs where he stops, these rushed out from under the bridge.

latrando lui con li occhi in giù raccolti. he barking and with eyes held down.

After that I saw a thousand faces made dog-like with the cold, so that shuddering comes over me, and always will, at frozen pools.
and a she-wolf which appeared in its leanness to be charged with all cravings.

Cf. M. Apollonio. op.cit. vol.1, p. 559 sqq.
PART TWO.

THE PHILOSOPHIC HUMANISM OF DANTE.
I.

As we have seen, the Prologue presents the great theme of the "Divina Commedia" in solemn and dramatic form. That theme is the struggle against evil, whether in the individual or in the society of the time. Such a conflict assumes various and divergent forms, vague yet recognizable. In its simplest terms, it involves the common experiences of sensuality, pride and avarice as these come to be known in the temptations which are addressed to a particular man. In its social aspect, it takes the form of the effort to establish and maintain justice in the government of Florence. This leads to many results. It means hostility to the Capetian monarchy in all its ambitions, and to the Holy See itself in so far as it is allied to the French king. It leads also to those wider implications which emerge in the great poem. Nothing less than the political reform of the Christian world is demanded and this must include not only the restoration of the Empire, but also the return of the Papacy to the precepts of the Gospel. It appears, therefore, that the salvation of that particular man whom we name Dante Alighieri is inevitably bound up with certain responsibilities, certain duties, and certain tasks which he must regard as imposed upon him. All these are manifestations of the one theme, and logical conclusions which derive from the concept of
justice. Justice for the poet must mean the complete reform, intellectual, moral and political, of the Christian civilization of the West. This feeling, which is ardent throughout the whole of the "Divina Commedia", makes the "Convivio" seem almost dilettante, a delicate pastel in rose and grey beside Michelangelo's fresco of the "Last Judgment" in the Sistine Chapel. The tragic and terrible themes suggested by the First Cante of the "Inferno" seem to bear little relationship to the Aristotelian ideal of the noble soul, with its perfect poise, its harmony and culture. Nor does the Heavenly City, with its light, its joy and colour gathered into the petals of the White Rose, seem to have any connection with the earthly city of the earlier work. There, it will be remembered, the Emperor, by the exercise of reason, imposes upon his subjects the principles so luminously delineated in the "Nicomachean Ethics." At first sight, it looks as if Dante has wandered far away from the wisdom of the ancients and the clear light of Classical Humanism. The Prologue suggests this, with its allegorical figures, its gloom and shadow, its atmosphere of fear and horror, as of incalculable evil. Soon, however, we discover that we are mistaken in this belief. We perceive that the Classical Humanism of the earlier period has returned in triumph. It is classical, indeed, with all fervour that mediaeval tradition attached to the ancient thought and literature. It is also concerned with the poet's theological preoccupation.

Dante would have been able to overcome sensuality in himself, if he had not at the same time been obliged to fight against pride. He would have been able to vanquish the malevolence of Florence, if he had not encountered the collusion between the Holy See and the French monarchy, i.e. of pride and avarice. He draws back: he hesitates:
he is reluctant to make any effort against such formidable adversaries. His courage and resolution fail so that for very fear:

"...io perdei la speranza dell'altezza. (2)

He allows himself to be driven far into the shadows of that forest which is so dark, so wild, so ominous... là dove il sol tace. Here in the solitude of the wood, he encounters Virgil... perhaps we had better say the shadow of Virgil... for whatever may happen later, it is in this way that the Roman poet rises from the obscurity of dark leaves and the gloom of those threatening, fantastic shapes of trees. It is doubtful whether in the whole of Literature there can be found another example of an appearance so impressive, so strange, so mysterious. Not even the appearance of the ghost in "Hamlet" strikes a note so weird and so arresting. The Romantic movement produced many instances of the sombre and spectral, but such inventions are usually the result of the study of Dante.

It is sufficient at this point to say that the poet of the "Aeneid" has been sent by Beatrice, who has herself been charged with a mission to help by S. Lucy, the symbol of illuminating grace. This compassionate zeal has been actuated by the Holy Virgin herself. Here, the poetry takes on the accents, the lyrical grace, the charm of that "sweet, new style" of which Dante was so accomplished a master. The story of the heavenly solicitude is told almost in the tone of a Romantic poem of love and aspiration:

Donna è gentil nel ciel che si compiange
di questo impedimento ov'io ti mando,
si che duro giudizio là su frange.
Questa chiese Lucia in suo dimando e disse: 'Or ha bisogno il tuo fedele di te, ed io a te lo raccomando.'

Lucia, nimica di ciascun crudele, si mosse, e venne al loco dov'è, che mi sedea con l'antica Rachele.

Disse: 'Beatrice, leda di Dio vera, ch'è non soccorri quei che 'l amo tanto, ch'uscì per te della volgare schiera?

Non odi tu la pieta del suo pianto? non vedi tu la morte che 'l combatte su la fiumana ove 'l mar non ha vanto?'

That is the beginning of the famous ambassage and the way of salvation for Dante himself. Virgil is to conduct him through the place of torments, and through Purgatory to Beatrice herself who will be his guide to the glories of Heaven. The incident is related in a manner which recalls the poet of the "Vita Nuova", with its atmosphere of a Spring day in which cloud and sunlight alternate and the young green of the leaves mingle with white blossom on the trees. In the "Convivio", no active participation is given to Virgil, though his renown is evident. He is mentioned as the greatest of the Italian poets... while Aeneas is singled out as the most illustrious example of courtesy, nobility and loyalty.

There are several allusions to the "Aeneid" itself and Dante employs it almost like the text of Holy Scripture to establish various propositions. In the "Divina Commedia", Virgil is the means by which an association with the earlier work is preserved. There he occupies the place, formerly assigned to Aristotle, of guardian,
companion and master. No doubt, there might seem something illogical about this. It might, perhaps, have appeared natural that Dante, wandering far from the contemplation and felicity which are the consummation of philosophy, should turn to Aristotle for help. After all, the poet has assured us many times and in almost impassioned words of his devotion to so great a master. References to him are so frequent that they occur in nearly every chapter. We have already examined these ascriptions of fame. In chapter VI of the Fourth Treatise of the "Convivio", he extols the eminence of Aristotle in such terms that even the greatest admirer of that philosopher begins to feel some compunction.\footnote{7}

However, it is not to Aristotle that the poet confides himself on his journey through the three realms, not even to an Aristotle supposed to have received the illumination of the Christian Faith. Graf, in his learned work on Rome in the Middle Ages, speaks of a poem of the twelfth century which represents Aristotle as instructing Alexander the Great in the rudiments of the Christian Faith.\footnote{8} No doubt, such a work represents pious legend and edifying belief and is not merely an isolated fiction. The part played by Aristotle in the great poem is important, but it is not dramatic. Indeed, the "Philosopher" of Dante's earlier admiration is passive, rather a source of information than a voice of Wisdom. While it is true to say, that the teaching of the "Nicomachean Ethics" (as interpreted by S. Thomas) exists as a form and light in the poet's mind, Aristotle himself is not one of the great characters of the poem. He is merely the wise and discreet figure sitting in the green meadow and receiving the adulation of his philosophical family. Limbo holds him in its Elysian light. That desire to contemplate the truth itself, to attain the good of the intellect, is for ever disappointed in him. With Virgil, in the forgotten place, of dreams and desires:
E se furon dinanzi al cristianesimo,
non adorar debitamente a Dio:
e di questi cotai sono io medesmo. (9)

There were, of course, many reasons for this exclusion of the "master of them that know" and there were many reasons to justify the place which is assigned to Virgil in the great enterprise. Difficulties of what may be called a literary order existed. The person and character of Aristotle were not at all known in those times. He was regarded as a man of learning, somewhat futile, if not foolish, a scientist and philosopher, a man of books whose only delight consisted in study and in intellectual conversation. That was the kindest opinion entertained of him. Mediaeval legend abounded in stories which did not reflect any credit upon him. Some represented him as a learned clerk who in spite of all his cleverness was not exempt from the common frailties of our human nature. Often he was depicted as a pedant, a ludicrous and shambling figure of contempt. For love of a woman who deceived him he was said to have allowed himself to be saddled like a donkey and to have trotted round on all fours. In this respect, he served as an illustration in pulpit oratory of the weakness of human wisdom apart from religion.

Virgil on the other hand was extolled and magnified by legend and common tradition. He was raised above the ordinary level of mankind. He was superstitiously regarded as a magician and prophet. He had, in the eloquent words of the Fourth Eclogue, foretold the coming of Christ and of the golden age of the kingdom, so it was almost universally believed. And certainly, whoever read the words:
Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas;
magnus ab integro saecolorum nascitur ordo.
iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;
iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto. (11)

whoever thought about them with the Christian pre-
suppositions and without knowing the historical back-
ground might be forgiven for comparing them with the pro-
phecies in the Book of Isaiah which have for so long 
received a Christian interpretation. Comparetti has 
shown in his brilliant study how a poetry grave, solemn, 
and hieratic had gathered round his name. (12) It was, 
therefore, a stroke of genius...certainly a brilliant 
literary invention...to make the great Latin poet the 
guide through the mysterious regions of the kingdoms 
of the otherworld. But there were other reasons for 
Dante's choice and these were more cogent, more compelling. 
For his salvation, possessing as he did the soul of a 
poet, with all its sensitiveness, and imagination, deeply 
wounded, humiliated by adversity, and resentful of injust-
ice, there was need of a companion who should himself 
know the meaning of compassion. Where should he find this 
but in Virgil, the author of so many exquisite lines in 
which the warmth of human emotion and the sadness of 
human destiny are never far from the surface? Moreover, 
he discovered in Virgil that generous and noble love of 
Italy which was so vehement in his own blood. The scene 
in which Aeneas describes the first glimpse of the far-
off Italian hills is enough to reveal this deep passion:

"iamque rubescbat stellis Aurora fugatis,
cum procul obscures cellis humilemque videmus 
Italiam. Italiam primus conclamat Achates, 
Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant." (13)
Renaudet has demonstrated that to bring back, not only Dante, but others to the knowledge of the good and the true, the poem required one of those truly great human souls. Such a soul is Virgil, sympathetic, indeed, profoundly touched by the sorrows of mankind, moved by their evil deeds, affected by their griefs, stirred by their joys. Moreover, it needed one, not only as a philosopher but even more as a poet, who should combine an intellectual eagerness with a serene hope in the midst of all the restlessness and dissatisfaction of the times. Virgil could claim to be very near to the Florentine poet both in spirit and in aptitude. Throughout the Middle Ages his reputation was considerable, not only as a poet but also as a philosopher. John of Salisbury regards him as one who can express the truths of philosophy under the images of poetry. If the Aristotelian logic and the Aristotelian metaphysic had persuaded his mind by the very brilliance of their intellectual power, much more the beauty of Virgil's poetry had moved his heart with its strange and compassionate sadness. Virgil was nearer to the minds and imaginations of men. His generous and beautiful soul spoke to them in that language of consolation which meant so much more than the dry light of Aristotelian philosophy. Virgil becomes and remains for all eternity Dante's master and friend. The words: tu duca, tu signore, tu maestro are uttered with a fervour and deliberation impossible to mistake. We are not concerned with an elaborate enquiry into the place occupied by Virgil in the scheme of the "Divina Commedia". All that we require is a general survey. In this connection, it will readily be conceded that first of all the poet of the "Aeneid" represented human reason just as in the "Convivio" Dante had identified Aristotle with that same principle.
of Wisdom. In the earlier works, we have noticed that the wisdom which is ascribed to the Peripatetic philosopher means the morality and principle described in the "Nicomachean Ethics". Sometimes, in the course of the great poem, Virgil will recall to the mind of his pupil a passage from the "Physics" or "Ethics" in order to elucidate his meaning.\(^{(18)}\)

Non ti rimembra di quelle parole
con le quali la tua Etica pertratta
le tre disposizioni che il ciel non vole,
incontinenza, malizia e la matta
bestialità?

Again, in a way, it is true that, like Aristotle in the "Convivio", Virgil assumes an encyclopaedic character. He is a repository of learning: he explains, discourses and digresses on the various questions which perplex the mind of the younger poet. His instruction is clear, plain and definite. It is not confined to any particular topic. It ranges far and wide over the domain of human knowledge.\(^{(19)}\)

What he says is preparatory to that higher and more ethereal learning of Beatrice, that noblest of all sciences which is contemplation. Dante starts with the ideal of reason. He admires its clarity, its integrity, its careful analysis, its lucid observation. It is this which he apparently wished to cultivate in the earlier work. In this, he follows Aristotle, who must ever remain the model of that perspicuity which he desired to emulate. Yet, soon, in that work, we discover other aspects of philosophy, other interests and other ideals. We perceive first of all the poet's concern with language, the impassioned defence which he makes of the use of the vernacular in the prose
treatises, the varied modulations of the Italian, its sweetness, its colour, its fire. Soon we are introduced to certain forms of thought which are specifically religious. These are expressed, not in the sober and careful language of the Schools nor in the mode of dialectic, but as confused speculations. In other words, they exist as objects of desire rather than of cognition.

For example, in the Second Treatise, we have an image of Theology in the Empyrean, we discover a passage on the various orders of the Angels, and a digression on the proofs of the immortality of the soul. These are questions of theology. They are not discussed with the distinctions and propositions proper to that science, however. They are obviously coloured by the emotion of religion, and the sentiment of faith.

In the "Divina Commedia", Virgil is the poet's instructor. He accomplishes his task with far more warmth and enthusiasm than may be found in the recollections of Aristotelian teaching as seen through the spectacles of S. Albert the Great and S. Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, we find the Roman poet leading his pupil towards the sublimity of a religious speculation which goes far beyond the Peripatetic view. What we cannot fail to observe here is the character and concept of Neo-Platonism. If it be maintained that Dante had never read Plato or Plotinus or Proclus, that is a point which must be conceded, as we have already said. It is equally true, however, that Platonism in its various forms was widely diffused. It is expressed in the theology of S. Augustine, and the writings of S. Thomas contain much that is derived from Platonic sources. However, if he had been at any time a pupil of the Franciscans, as perhaps he was for a time at the Studium of Santa Croce at Florence, or even if he had been acquainted with their teaching (as seems quite certain) he could not fail to perceive the strong Platonist
drift of their thought. Virgil, therefore, will lead the poet beyond the rational humanism of the "Four Treatises" to that rich and complex philosophy of the "Divina Commedia". This too is Humanism, in which, as in a stained glass window of some great Mediaeval church, all the colours and forms and symbols of the Catholic Religion blaze out in gold and blue, purple and green and crimson.
II.

It would, however, be a mistake to regard Virgil merely as a guide in these matters of religion and speculative philosophy which exercised the mind of the author of the "Divina Commedia". That would limit the Latin poet to one particular task. It is true that, whatever other descriptions may be found to apply to him, he represents the highest nobility of which Humanism itself is capable. In this respect, we may compare his office with that of Aristotle in the "Convivio." A Roman rather than a Greek was better suited to demonstrate the ideal of human culture. Aristotle was the philosopher of a Greece which was later brought into subjection and no longer possessed any importance in the political designs of sovereign states. Virgil, however, is the poet of the Roman Empire. All the glory, all the majesty, all the grandeur of Rome clothe the "Aeneid" with light and flame. Virgil had been contemporary with that extension of imperial power which took place in the reign of Augustine:

Nacqui sub Julio, ancor che fosse tardi,
e vissi a Roma sotto'l buono Augusto.(24)

He was the poet who predicted an empire which knew neither limits of time nor space.

Romulus excipiet gentem et Mavortia condet
moenia Romanosque suo de nomine dicet.
his ego nec metas rerum nec temporā pono;
imperium sine fine dedi.(25)

Destiny, fortune, historical circumstance had assigned
this renown to the Roman name and Roman genius, but, Dante says in effect, we must recognize it as the work of Divine Providence. The poet of the "Aeneid" expresses a philosophy which in every way surpasses the teaching of Aristotle. What Dante takes to be the object of his work is not only the salvation of the sinner. It is nothing less than the root and branch reform of the Christian religion, intellectual, moral, political and religious. This reformation is, of course, entirely Catholic in its ideals. It admits of no compromise with the spirit of opportunism or of worldly prudence. It has no tolerance of heresy. In the scheme of things, Virgil represents the most perfect order that reason can impose on human society. This consists in that system created by Rome which we call Jurisprudence, the concept of Law as it had been realized in the practice of generations.

It had been developed in the mandates of the Roman Republic. Later, the imperial lawyers had elaborated and perfected it in the days when Roman dominions stretched from sea to sea. It expressed not only the ideal of peace and concord among men but also those philosophical principles by which society must be rationally ordered.\(^{(26)}\) It brought to consummation the Aristotelian ethic. It constituted the highest expression of the human spirit until the day that Revelation enlightened men with the hope from on high. In this respect, it is easy to see why Dante could learn from his great predecessor. Professor Nardi has spoken of the impassioned interpretation that Dante had discovered in the history of Rome, as revealed in the "Aeneid", and which he quotes with the same faith and conviction as the Bible itself.\(^{(27)}\) In the "Convivio" in order to establish the divine mission
of the Empire, he cites the well-known Virgilian prophecy mentioned above. He commends the gentleness of the Roman People in the exercise of power, their determination in preserving it and their skill in its acquisition, as qualities which deserved the reward of the imperial glory. Again, in the "De Monarchia", he employs a quotation from the "Aeneid" in order to support the same argument. Virgil is therefore the prophet of the empire. He has received a vocation from God to celebrate the glory of the imperial city and its people who descended from the noble Trojan blood.

Both poets have many things in common. For both, the monarchy was universal, acknowledging no earthly confines to its authority. For both, Italy was the centre: it was indeed the forsaken and deserted "giardin dello imperio". With this view, Virgil concurred. Both share the same ardent love of their native country. Both are aware of the tension which exists between Rome itself and the rest of Italy. Virgil seems to have come from the Cisalpina and to have had some Etruscan blood. He paints a glowing picture at the end of the second "Georgic" of the life of the farmer, with his flock and his herds, his wine and corn, and the simple country junketings round the blazing fire. The famous section beginning:

Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musae

which most of us can remember from our school days affords a delightful glimpse of the old-fashioned farmer, with his labour, his care, his laughter and contentment. Such a life is contrasted with the meretricious exploits of the rich: the Tyrian purple, the gold cup set with jewels, the clamour of battle, the miser brooding over his buried treasure, the eloquence of the public assembly,
the popular acclaimation, the harshness and rapacity of the successful and the wealthy. Virgil praises the old customs, the old ideals, the old simple loyalties of a happier age.

"...\textit{sic fortis Etruria crevit scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma, sequestaque una sibi muro circundedit arces. ante etiam sceptrum Dictaei regis et ante impia quam caesis gens est epulata iuvencis, aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat; necdum etiam audierant in\textit{Hari} classic\textit{a}, necdum impositos duris crepitare incudibus ensis.} (34)"

There is much here to remind us of the Cantos in the "Paradise" in which Cacciaguida describes the simplicity and charm of Florence in the old days, with its narrow streets, its women working at the loom or at the spinning wheel, while the mother bent over her child to whisper the sweet Tuscan words of endearment. The scene is different, of course. Virgil describes the country, with its soft grass, its trees, its rivers, its flowers of white and purple that star the meadow, the yellow bees among the cassia and wild thyme, the occupations of the farmer and his men throughout the year. It is idyllic in the same sense as Dante's picture of ancient Florence. For then:

Fiorenza dentro dalla cerchia antica, ond'ella toglie ancora e terza e nona, si stava in pace, sobria e pudica. (35)

Both poets are describing a golden age: both are filled with a melancholy when they contemplate the concord and simple virtues of the past.

In one sense it is certainly true that the "Divina Commedia" is the dialectic and lyrical expression of all
It is right, therefore, that so eminent a place should be assigned to Virgil. The great Roman poet can never be satisfactorily defined in allegorical terms in that work. When we have said that he is the symbol of Human Reason or of Wisdom, no doubt we have said something. No doubt, he is intended to fulfil such a part. He is, however, so much more than that. Dante regards him with the most obvious affection. He is the great poet, master of the noble line, the exquisite phrase, prophet and teacher. The "Aeneid" was the poem which provided Dante with so many of his themes. In it he found recorded the glory of the Empire, the blazing up of that torch kindled at the fires of Troy. What he says and thinks of Virgil goes far beyond the usual Mediaeval reverence for so great and mysterious a name. There is, of course, a familiarity with the tradition which had come to be associated with the Latin poet. We may even discern some recollection of the legends which represented Virgil as a magician, in the account of his first descent into Hell to bring back a soul from the Judecca at the command of the witch Eriton. Generally speaking, Dante has put his own interpretation and understanding on his great predecessor. We may trace his growing appreciation of Virgil from the casual reference in the "Vita Nuova" in which he discusses the use of metaphorical language in poetry. In the "Convivio" he refers to him as "lo maggiore nostro poeta", mentioning the story of Dido and the descent of Aeneas into the underworld. Further, in the "De Monarchia" he employs various titles of renown, "divinus poeta noster", "poeta noster", "noster Vates" in order to indicate the regard which he entertains for so illustrious a name. It is in the "Divina Commedia", however, that we become conscious of that profound and generous admiration which glows through its pages. If Virgil is a guide and teacher...
through the first two kingdoms of the dead, he is a presence in the "Paradise" itself. In the great poem he is called by many titles. He is "l'altissimo poeta" to whom the four great shades give their veneration:

'Onorate l'altissimo poeta:

l'ombra sua torna, ch'era dipartita.' (41)

He is "gloria de' Latin" (Purgatorio: VII:16), "mar di tutto'1 senno" (Inferno: VIII:7), "virtù somma" (Inferno: X:4); more than this, he is addressed as "Virgilio, dolcissimo patre" (Purgatorio: XXX:50). Nor in the characteristic attitudes and gestures of the poet can there be any doubt as to the love which Dante feels towards him. Thus on the appearance of Beatrice in the earthly Paradise, he turns towards his companion with all the eagerness with which a child runs to his mother when in distress:

voisimi alla sinistra col rispetto
co1 quale il fantolin corre alla mamma
quando ha paura or quando ellii è afflitto

per dicere a Virgilio: 'Men che dramma
di sangue m'è rimaso che non tremi;
conosco i segni dell'antica fiamma';

ma Virgilio n'avea lasciati scemi
di sè, Virgilio dolcissimo patre,
Virgilio a cui per mia salute die'mi;

nè quantunque perdeo l'antica matre
va1se alle guance nette di rugiada,
che, lacrimando, non tornasser atre.(42)

It is Virgil who at the request of Beatrice has delivered him from the terror of the Dark Wood, the obscure and shadowy wilderness, the dense and driven thicket;
It is Virgil who brings him to that other wood with its wandering streams of clear water, its trees shaken by the soft winds, like the pine-grove at Chiassi, near Ravenna, its red and yellow flowers growing in the thick meadow-grass, its birds singing for joy. This is the wood of high romance, the wood of the Arthurian legend, the wood of the lovers, the wood that has been dreamed about and described in many a poet's vision. It is the Garden of Eden: innocence, peace, concord, happiness. To this place of leaves and shadows, Virgil has brought the poet. It is the last of his tasks. It is salvation itself. Without Virgil, the Florentine poet would, it seems, never have attained to that salvation.
 Besides all this, however, Virgil in the person of his magnimous hero, Aeneas, expresses the ideal of nobility described in such glowing terms in the Fourth Treatise of the "Convivo". This follows from the conception of the "Aeneid" as the record of the divine purpose for the Empire and the task given to its hero to bring in the chosen seed of Troy. Aeneas has, therefore, not only received a vocation but also the grace to perform such actions as are commanded him in establishing the dominion of Rome. Yet, in him we see only that perfection which properly belongs to nature and reason. It is true, of course, that his journey to the underworld was a marvel and a portent. It must be admitted that it exceeds those bounds which the rational imposes:

Tu dici che di Silvio il parente,
corruttibile ancora, ad immortale secolo andò, e fu sensibilmente.

Pero, se l'avversario d'ogni male
cortese i fu, pensando l'alto effetto
ch'uscir dovea di lui e 'l quale,
non pare indegno ad omo d'intelletto;
ch'il fu dell' alma Roma e di suo impero
nell'empireo ciel per padre eletto..."(46)

Yet this was for a special purpose and Virgil, in describing it, has given us a revelation of that particular glory to which the Roman people were called. In this, therefore, Dante must ascribe something more than earthly wisdom to his predecessor. He must have believed
that he possessed that divine spark of fire which could only be communicated from above. This was that wisdom blown into a flame by the spirit of prophecy: that is tantamount to saying that God conveyed through him the truths which are expressed in images. What he could not have received was the Christian revelation. If we talk in the language of symbols, we shall say that Dante here intends the insufficiency of Reason without Revelation, or of Philosophy without Theology. That no doubt would be true. We can also say that as Virgil lived at a time when there could be no Christian instruction he could not be expected to practice the true worship of God.

Yet, as Comparetti has pointed out, Virgil shows a varied knowledge and can allude to God by the Trinitarian formula as "una sustanza in tre persone" besides being able to quote "Genesis" with some fluency.

In the "Divina Commedia", Dante wishes to exemplify the ideal of human virtue in its perfection, that is, as it finds its consummation by revelation. In this, Virgil surpasses Aristotle. Aeneas, the courteous and generous hero, transcends the conception of the great-souled man, who is extolled in the Fourth Book of the "Nicomachean Ethics." As Dante sees the problem, the perfection of nature and the perfection of grace must meet in one and the same person. In a way, Virgil might be said to realize this. The Florentine poet, in common with all the men of the Middle Ages, believed that the opening lines of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue declared in veiled words the mystery of Redemption. The Latin poet, however, never entered into
the truth himself. His task was merely to proclaim. The part assigned to him was that of carrying behind him the light which will guide others while himself walking in darkness. As Statius affirms in the "Purgatorio:"

Facesti come quei che va di notte,
che porta il lume dietro e sè non giova,
ma dopo sè fa le persone dotte,
quando dicesti: "Secol si rinova;
torna giustizia e primo tempo umano,
e progenie scende da ciel novv."

Though he is the bearer of the light, he receives no profit from it himself. He remains subject to the errors and superstitions of the pagan religion—going on in the darkness—al tempo delli dei falsi e bugiardi. In other words, the wisdom of Virgil, though it surpassed that of Aristotle, attained only to that perfection which is according to nature. It was a humanism which may be described as rational, sympathetic, generous, and courteous. It could never go beyond the natural capacity and natural intellect because it was deficient in that illumination which came from grace. However, the instruction of Virgil is meant to come to fruition and glory. Virgil carries the lantern: others get the benefit of the light. The poet of the "Divina Commedia" does not neglect to make this clear to his readers. He will come to salvation himself. Everything in the poem assures us of this with a lucidity and force which cannot be mistaken. The words addressed to him by his old friend, and teacher, Brunetto Latini, have surely a concealed allusion to this:

Ed elli a me: 'Se tu segui tua stella
non puoi fallire a glorioso porto,
He must take another way than the one that he proposed, however. Virgil tells him this definitely:

A te convien tenere altro viaggio. (Inferno: 1:91.)

How shall we understand this statement? Perhaps, in this way. Neither the Aristotelian ethic nor the enthusiasm for a purely rational and enlightened humanism which we discover in the "Convivio" are enough. Nor, indeed, is the spiritual fervour, the glory of the Empire, and the inspired prophecy which may be discerned in Virgil enough for this perfection. They are natural: temporal: limited: finite: even though they know something of the light from above. They are experiences which must be realized and transcended in the doctrine of the Word made flesh. Despite all his aspirations towards purity, Dante remains a sinner who must work out his salvation with fear and trembling. He must follow patiently and arduously the three stages of the spiritual life, the Purgative way, the Illuminative Way, the Unitive Way. Only in this manner can he attain to his true end. And so, liberated from sin, restored in the exercise of his free-will, detached from material desires and worldly ambitions, he will come to know the truth. Finally, he will be united in the Beatific Vision to God Himself. So much is promised, so much is declared in the poem. This surely is how Dante represents the consummation of the Christian life. In himself—and ideally in Heaven in the state of redemption—he will realize what is the vocation of every Christian soul. For the ideal consists in that perfection which is both spiritual and rational, supernatural and natural. In this way, all
man's powers and capacities come to fulfilment. This is nothing less than that doctrine of the deification of man of which the Platonic tradition in Greek theology is full, and of which there are some fleeting suggestions in the New Testament. This way alone, will Dante be able to cooperate with the triumph of Christian truth and in the establishment of Christian order and justice in the world. In this way alone will he be able to help with the efforts of that mysterious and obscure figure, "il Veltro", the Hound who is the promised reformer of the Church and of the temporal kingdom:

Questi non ciberà terra nè peltro,  
ma sapienza, amore e virtute,  
e sua nazion sarà tra Feltro e Feltro.

Di quella umile Italia fia salute  
per cui morì la vergine Cammilla,  
Euriale e Turno e Niso di ferute. (53)

We see in this lofty conception how the Aristotelian idea of man's highest act as contemplation is transformed and deepened. Heaven is contemplation: the Beatific Vision by the light of glory. It is fruitful, endless, eternal, joyous, and, as Aristotle said, it was an activity which is divine. Thus the ideal of ancient philosophy attains to its true significance, for this is nothing less than the deification of the human soul by the light of Wisdom. At the end of the journey, the poet perceives that his own will has become entirely one with the Divine Will:

l'amor che move il sole e l'altra stelle.  
(Paradiso: XXXIII:145.)
In this respect, therefore, the statement of Brémond appears to be justified—that the Christian humanism reaches its perfection in the mystical experience.\(^{(54)}\)

For the three stages of the spiritual journey three guides are necessary. Virgil is the appointed guide for the first: this is the Purgative way as represented by Hell, with its fires and marshes, its violence and fury. The great Roman poet will accompany his faltering steps, console his fear, encourage his hopes, strengthen his resolution. He it is who will impress upon him the baseness of sin which destroys that nobility innate in man by reason of his creation in the image of God. He it is who, in the steep ascent of Purgatory, will lead him to experience that penitence which restores to man his original nobility. At the same time, Virgil, who has become acquainted with the truths of Revelation, instructs our poet in the principles of divine justice. Some of these agree with the precepts established by Aristotle: others, mysterious and profound, elude the human understanding. They are such as must be revealed. They cannot be ascertained by cogitation nor by rational enquiry, as in the "Nicomachean Ethics." It is perhaps singular that these secret decrees appear to be known to Virgil, even though he is excluded from Heaven because of his ignorance of the truths of the Gospel. Indeed, his loss of eternal felicity is an example of that justice which is contrary to all human ideas of its nature and operation. Once, Dante has been set free from sin, enlightened with the knowledge of righteousness, the task of the great Latin poet is done. There is nothing else that he can impart to his pupil. There is no light that he is able to perceive. He cannot accompany his companion to that glory which is supernatural and only to be discerned by a supernatural gift. In the "Convivio", the author had declared, following the Aristotelian philosophy, "although every virtue is lovely in
man, that is loveliest in him which is most distinctively human, and such is justice, which exists only in the rational or intellectual part of a man, that is, in his will". (55) Some aspects of this may still be true for Dante's experience. He will not concur with the view that justice is always completely intelligible, however, nor that its principles may always be precisely defined, so far as they concern the Divine government of the world. Thus, though he does not reject the Aristotelian view of justice, he makes it more profound, more mysterious, more solemn in its reference to the omnipotence of God. It is Virgil who instructs him in this, alluding to the heights and depths of judgement which man cannot expect to comprehend.

State contenti, umana gente, al quia;
ché se possuto aveste veder tutto,
meatier non era parturir Maria; (56)

Virgil is the herald of the Empire: he proclaims it, asserts its authority, declares its renown. Yet, he is far more than this for the Florentine poet. Just as Statius owes to him his gift of poetry and his conversion, so in the enlightenment of Dante he exerts an influence which is beyond the capacity of reason in itself. As Professor d'Entreves says, he is "the messenger, the announcer of the Lady of Grace." (57) When his task is done, he must disappear from the scene, leaving the instruction of the poet to Beatrice and those spirits in heaven who are capable of bringing him to the plenitude of knowledge. Virgil is the pagan poet and sage.

However, he must also be regarded as the chronicler of the historical and the miraculous, since he has related in its details the journey of Aeneas in search of Anchises. For this reason, he is given the task of guiding Dante
through the regions of Hell and Purgatory. The Florentine poet treats the "Aeneid" with veneration not only because it declares the glory of the Roman Empire, but also because it records the vision of Aeneas. Professor Nardi rightly describes the epic of Virgil as almost in the position of a sacred book and in effect as "the Bible of the Empire". Dante puts the vision of Aeneas almost on the same level as the vision of S. Paul.

Per questa andata onde li dai tu vanto,
intese cose che furon cagione
di sua vittoria e del papale ammanto.

Andovvi poi lo Vas d'elezione,
per recarne conforto a quella fede
ch'è principio alla via di salvazione.

Ma io perché venirvi? o chi'l concede?
Io non Enea, io non Paulo sono:
me degno a ciò nè io nè altri crede.(59)

It is quite obvious from this and other passages in the "Divina Commedia" that Virgil is regarded as having received an inspiration and an illumination. He is able to recount an experience of such significance that it may even be compared with the mystical vision of S. Paul. Whatever symbolic meaning Dante may have attached to Virgil...and we are not denying that he did so...we must insist again that the Roman poet is first and foremost individual and personal. He is the poet greatly loved, the man whom Dante admired, later he becomes the friend, companion and guide.

In Heaven, however, it is Beatrice who undertakes to act as his guide in this last and most mysterious part
of his journey. She it is who explains the mysteries of election and of grace, and who furthermore elucidates certain problems of cosmology. By her side, in the Earthly Paradise on the top of the Mount of Purgatory, the poet is a spectator of the allegorical procession which instructs him in the meaning of Christian history from the foundation of the Church until the time of the Babylonian Captivity. This strange piece of symbolism, with its reminiscences of Old Testament prophecy, bears some resemblance to the stone figures of angels, saints, dwarfs, grotesques and lilies carved in some Mediaeval Cathedral.

Beatrice it is who will conduct the poet from one state of beatitude to another, from the sphere of the moon coloured like a pearl to that clear river of light, glittering like the fire-struck crystal, which is the Empyrean. Here the poet suggests a transcendent experience by the image of the white rose, with the angels like bees, with wings of gold and faces of living flame, communicating to the redeemed that peace and love which they had received from the Godhead. Here, in the midst of all that beauty, that music, that vision of glory, is the true City. It is significant of the philosophy of Dante that at such a moment he should be reminded of that other City by the Arno, so greatly loved, so full of injustice, tyranny and discord:

Io, che al divino dall'umano,
all'eterno dal tempo era venuto,
e di Firenze in popol giusto e sano,
di che stupor dovea esser compiutó!
Certo tra esso e'l gaudio mi facea
libito non udire e starmi muto.
In order that Dante may come to that Beatific Vision, that contemplation which is the end for which man was created, even Beatrice does not suffice. Her proper domain, as far as it may be reckoned symbolically, extends to all that may rightly be regarded as Theology. Something more is needed, however, before this ultimate experience of Being. It is the glowing ardour, the impassioned love of God, the mystical genius of S. Bernard, whose exquisite Latin rehearses not only the praises but also the joys and sorrows of the life of Jesus. Bernard it is who addresses the prayer to the Virgin Mary. Bernard it is who brings the poet to the accomplishment of his enterprise and the consummation of the mystical experience.

To digress once more, it is not difficult to see how Virgil completes the part of Aristotle. In this sense, it might be said that the "Divina Commedia" continues the theme of the "Convivio". From the fact, that Virgil gives place to Beatrice, may be seen how the great poem differs from the earlier work in its lyrical and graceful rationalism. In the "Convivio", Beatrice has little if anything to do with the philosophical discussions pursued by the author with such fervour and with such felicity of expression. The "Paradiso" shows us Beatrice explaining, discoursing, arguing in the manner of the Scholastic theology. It might almost be permitted to think that she would have been an apt pupil of the famous Fra. Remigio Gerolami at the Dominican house of Studies at Santa Maria Novella at Florence. The "Convivio" carries on the sentiment of the "Vita Nuova", with its atmosphere of dreams and shadows, of colours and shapes seen through vague distances. Beatrice illuminates it as a presence and heavenly influence, though she is —so to speak—absent from the experience which is there
related. These three works must, therefore, always be associated together, for in the "Divina Commedia" Dante fulfils the promise which he made with such audacity in the concluding words of the "Vita Nuova":

"Sicche' piacere sarà di Colui, per cui tutte le cose vivono, che la mia vita per alquanti anni perseveri, spero di dire di lei quello che mai non fu detto d'alcuno. E poi piaccia a Colui, che' sire della cortesia, che la mia anima se ne possa gire a vedere la gloria della sua donna, cioè di quella benedetta Beatrice, che gloriamente mira nella faccia di Colui, qui est per omnia saecula benedictus.\(^6\)\(^{l}\)

In his final work, Dante leaves behind him the world of sweet serenity, of light and tranquillity which he has depicted with such charm in the "Convivio". We enter another world altogether in the "Divina Commedia", in which sin and evil are discovered in all their horror and in which the emotions of anguish and terror, pity and loathing, exultation and joy are so strangely mingled. All the great realities of the spiritual life are seen in vivid and dramatic form, not as the figures in some allegory of abstract virtues and vices with long cloaks and painted faces. Here we discover men and women in all the experiences of life: sinning, rebelling, wenching, drinking, swaggering, suffering. We discover them too in all their emotions of good or evil: defiant, proud, petulant, compassionate, courageous, penitent, absolved. They are characters drawn to the life and revealed in all their rich and varied humanity.

Finally, at the conclusion of this journey to the other world, we find the type and example of the ideal Christian in the contemplation that Aristotle had previously described as the most divine exercise possible for man.
It is that figure which Dante, in his capacity as a Christian Humanist, and which S. Bernard and the other Fathers of the Church, conceived and saw. The ideal Christian is suggested by the figures of the White Rose slowly unfolding its petals in the light of the eternal glory. It is a picture of the life of the Christian soul in grace. This is the image which Dante proposes as a model to himself and other men. It is not one particular type or one particular individual, for sanctity includes within itself all gifts and all talents, all dispositions and all tempers, like the prism which breaks the white light into the various colours of which it is constituted. This is the way in which man must attain to his true end and in which the poet himself must realize a particular vocation for the reformation of Christendom.

There is a profound significance in the literary fiction which assigns the date of Dante's journey to Holy Week in the year 1300. The fact that this experience is represented as taking place before the Priors, before the Civic conflict and exile, before the efforts of the exiled poet to establish at Florence and in the Church a just government, emphasizes the prophetic nature of the poem. The political and theological elements of Dante's teaching are inextricably woven together in a rich pattern of colour. Throughout the whole of the "Divina Commedia", the temporal and historical is illumined by grace. It is never long absent from the mind of the poet even in the most exalted moments of Contemplation. Even in the glory of heaven the poet can find an illustration from common, everyday experience to describe his emotions on seeing the radiant figure of S. Bernard:

Qual è colui che forse di Croazia
viene a veder la Veronica nostra,
che per l'antica fame non sen sazia,
It is again worth recording that in the procession described in Canto XXX of the Purgatorio those gathered round the Gryphon greet the Saviour with the words "Benedictus qui venis!" and add the lines "Manibus, o date lilium plenis!" The words of Anchises' lament for Marcellus lend a note of compassion and pathos to Virgil's departure. Virgil was the poet and prophet of the pagan city which was established on human law. He knew only the reason which becomes luminous in the interpretation of Aristotle. Yet he looked forward to that city which he could not inherit, and to that glory which the Christian Empire should consummate, to Rome the eternal, "the secure and joyful kingdom":

Quando sicuro e gaudioso regno,
frequente in gente antica ed in novella,
viso e amore avea ad un segno. (63)
Notes to Chapter Seven. The Place of Virgil in the "Divina Commedia".


2. Inferno: I: 54.

   There is a gentle lady in Heaven who is so moved with pity of that hindrance for which I send thee that she breaks the stern judgment there on high; she called Lucy and gave her her behest: "Thy faithful one is now in need of thee and I commend him to thee." Lucy, enemy of all cruelty, rose and came to the place where I was seated beside the ancient Rachel and said: "Beatrice, true praise of God, why dost thou not succour him who so loved thee that for thy sake he left the vulgar herd? Hearst thou not his pitiful weeping? Seest thou not the death which combats him on the flood that is not less terrible than the sea?"

   "Ma già nel prime canto le parole rivolte da Dante a Virgilio tremano di commozione, a quel vedersi innanzi e udir discorrere l'antico poeta che era da lungo tempo si gran parte della sua vita interiore, maestro di sapienza, maestro di 'belle stili', così lentano nel tempio, così vicine a tutti i suoi pensieri. E il secondo canto, dove pure l'intento informativo ha luogo, e ha qualche luogo d'oscillazione allegorica, risplende di felicissimi tratti.

   Dante sums up his argument in these words:
   "Per che è manifesto che a questa età lealtade, cortesia, amore, forza e temperanza siano necessarie, si come dice lo testo che al presente è ragionato; e però la nobile anima tutte le dimastra. (15)

   A good example of Dante's use of the "Aeneid" as a text almost on the level of Holy Scripture is to be found here:
   E queste amore mostra che avesse Enea lo nomato poeta nel quinte libre sopra dette, quando lasciò li vecchi Troiani in Cilicia raccomandati ad Aceste, e partilli da le fatiche; e quando ammaestrò in queste luege Ascanie, suo figliele, con li altri adlescentuli armeggiande. Per che appare a questa età necessarie essere amore, come lo testo dice."
Aristotle è maestro e duca de la ragione umana.  
ibid: IV:VI:17.  
Per che, tutte ricogliende, è manifesto le principale intente, cioè che l'autoritate del filosofo somme di cui s'intende sia piena di tutte vigore.

The work referred to is a poem by Pierre de Vernois entitled "Enseignements d'Aristote".

And if they were before Christianity they did not worship God aright, and of these I am one.


P. Schweiger: "Der Zauberer Virgil." (Berlin:1897).  


"Virgilius, in libro in que tetius philosophiae rimantur archana......poeta Mantuanus, qui sub imagine favularum tetius philosophiae exprimit veritatem."  
Cited by Renucci. op. cit. p. 120.


p.73.  
Rememberest thou not the words with which "Ethics" expounds the three dispositions which are against the will of heaven, incontinence, malice and mad brutishness. Other instances of this reference to Aristotle may be found in the following passages:—
Paradise: VIII: 118-120.

"In the 'Divine Comedy' Virgil is an intellectual and moral guide who clears the mind and strengthens the will. He answers Dante's questions with the competence of the scholar and the simplicity of the teacher, dectus and docter, preparing him for the higher learning of Beatrice."

"le scrivere in istile litterate e vulgare non ha a fare al fatto, né altra differenza è se ne scrivere in grece or in latine. Ciascuna lingua ha sua perfezione e sue suone, e sue parlare limitate e scientifica."
Cf. Brune Nardi: "Dante e la cultura medievale."
Il Linguaggio pp. 216-247.


23. ibid: II:VIII:13 sqq.

I was born sub Julio though late in his time, and I lived at Rome under the good Augustus.


Professor Nardi's words are worth quoting:

"l'appassionata interpretazione che il poeta fiorentino ha tracciato della storia romana, ispirandosi al poema virgiliano, citato da Dante colla stessa commossa riverenza con la quale è citata la Bibbia; quasi direi con la stessa fede."


E in ciò s'accorda Virgilio nel primo de lo Eneida; quando disse, in persona di Dio parlando: 'A costoro - cioè a li Romani - nè termine di cose nè di tempo pongo; a loro ho datfo imperio senza fine."

Quoting Aenid I: 278-279.


Moore points out that the various passages from the "Aeneid" "are quoted like a Scripture text as a direct proof of God's purpose for the universal empire of Rome."


quelle popolo santo nel quale l'alto sangue troiano era mischiato.


est locus,Hesperiam Graü cognomine dicunt, terra antiqua, potens armis atque ubere glebe. Oenotri coluere viri; nunc fama minores Yitaliam dixisse ducia de nomine gentem; hec nobis proprie sedes, hinc Dardanus ortus.


34. ibid: 533-40.


"Florence within her ancient circle from which she still takes tierce and nones, abode in peace, sober and chaste."

congiurato da quella Erites cruda
che richiamava l'ombre a'corpi sui. (23-24)

38. Vita Nuova XXV.


40. De Monarchia: II:III.

Honour the lofty poet! His shade returns that left us.
Cf. Bruno Nardi: "Nel mondo di Dante; Dante e la filosofia;" pp.209-245.

42. Purgatorio: XXX: 43-54.
I turned to the left with the confidence of a little child
that runs to his mother when he is afraid or in distress,
to say to Virgil: 'Not a drop of blood is left in me that
does not tremble: I know the marks of the ancient flame.'
But Virgil had left us bereft of him, Virgil sweetest:
father, Virgil to whom I gave myself for my salvation,
nor did all the ancient mother lost avail my cheeks washed
with dew that they should not be stained again with tears.


44. Purgatorio: XXVII: 1-41.


Thou tellest of the father of Sylvius that he went, still
subject to corruption, to the eternal world and was there
in the flesh. But if the Adversary of all evil showed
him this favour, taking account of the high consequence
and who and what he was that should spring from him, it
does not seem unfitting to one that understands; for in
the heaven of the Empyrean he was chosen to be father of
glorious Rome and of her Empire."

47. Inferno: IV:40-41.
For such defects and not for any guilt, we are lost and
only so far afflicted that without hope we live in desire.

48. 
la infinita via
che tiene una sustanza in tre persone.


se tu rechi a mente
lo Genesi dal principio.


Thou didst like him that goes by night and carries the
light behind him and does not help himself but makes
wise those that follow, when thou saidst:"The age turns
new again: justice comes back and the primal years of
men, and a new race descends from heaven."


And he said to me:"If thou follow thy star thou canst
not fail of a glorious haven, if I discerned rightly
in the fair life."

He shall not feed on land or pelf but on wisdom and love
and valour, and his country shall be between Feltre and
Feltro; he shall be salvation to that low-lying Italy
for which the virgin Camilla and Euryalus and Turnus and
Nius died of their wounds.

On Humanism generally and on the significance of Christian
Humanism see the valuable discussion in:
Frederico Chabod: "Machiavelli and the Renaissance."
(Translated by David Moore.) (London:1958). ch.IV,
"The Concept of the Renaissance." p.149 sqq.


Rest content, race of men, with the "quia": for if
you had been able to see all there was no need for Mary
to give birth.

57. A. P. D'Entrèves: "Dante as a Political Thinker." p.68.

"il poema Virgiliano è considerato quasi un libro sacro,
la Bibbia dell'impero, e la visione d'Enea è messa quasi
sullo stesso piano della visione di san Paolo."

Later the Chosen Vessel went there, that he might bring
thence confirmation of the faith which is the beginning
of the way of salvation. But I, why should I go there,
and who grants it? I am not Aeneas; I am not Paul.
Neither I nor any man thinks me fit for this.

60. Paradiso XXXI: 37-42.
I who had come to the divine from the human, to the eternal
from time and from Florence to a people just and sane, with
what amazement must I have been filled. Truly between
that and the joy I was content to remain silent.
61. Vita Nuova: XLIII.
   So that if it be the pleasure of him, by whom all things live, that my life continue for some few years, I hope to write of her what has never been written of any woman. And then may it please him, who is the Lord of grace, that my soul may have leave to go and behold the glory of its lady, namely, of that blessed Beatrice, who gazeth in glory on the face of him qui est per omnia saecula benedictus.

   Like one that comes from Croatia to see our Veronica and whose old hunger is never satisfied, but he says within himself, as long as it is shown: "My Lord Jesus Christ, very God, was this then your true semblance?"

   This secure and joyful kingdom, thronged with people of old times and new, had sight and love all on one mark.
It is significant that to uphold Rome and the glory of the Empire Dante is compelled to defend himself as a poet. This is the proposition which does not become evident until we have examined what views were maintained about poetry in the time of our author and what meaning he himself attached to the art which he practised with such genius. Whatever view his contemporaries held, Dante was obviously of the opinion that it constituted a valid form of knowledge just as much as philosophy. Further, that it conveyed these truths which he wished to express in a manner which the discourse of logic failed to do. We must, therefore, enquire into the general ideas current about this subject at the time. Afterwards, we must consider the defence which he offers for using a literary form which proceeds by image and illustration rather than by proposition. It will be remembered that the Florentine poet had already employed the method of philosophical treatise in the "Convivio" and the "De Vulgari Eloquentia", while the "De Monarchia" may most probably be assigned to the period when he had begun writing the "Inferno". The "Vita Nuova" is scarcely a work of ordered argument in this sense.

In the early Middle Ages, Italian poets had spoken proudly of their art and celebrated its renown in history, its achievements and its triumphs. Dante was always conscious of the greatness of poetry and of his own particular vocation. In the description of the welcome
given to Virgil on his return to Limbo in the Fourth Canto of the "Inferno", Dante has no compunction in claiming a place among his illustrious predecessors:

\[ e \text{ più d'onore ancora assai mi fenno,} \]
\[ ch'ei' sì mi fecer della lore schiera,} \]
\[ sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senne. \]

Not only is he conscious of his eminence as a poet, he knows too his own vocation. He is quite clear about this: he has no doubts: it is something which has been committed to him and which admits of no argument. The account of the sending of Virgil in the Second Canto of the "Inferno" is as definite as the report which the prophets of the Old Testament give of themselves. The three blessed Ladies in Heaven are determined upon a certain course for the salvation of this man Dante Alighieri. During the poem, we see how this is accomplished. Dante presents to us a conviction and a faith which never waver. The prophetic element in his work is obvious and must be regarded as of the utmost importance. The vehicle which he employs for this purpose is poetry. In the praise which he offers to poetry as an art, and in the exalted view which he entertains of it as a means of communication and of knowledge, he repudiates most contemporary opinions.

It may be said that the decay of Roman culture after the Fall of the Empire had been followed by a negligence, an ignorance and forgetfulness of poetry. Despite his early enthusiasm and delight in the Virgilian music, S.Augustine in the "De Civitate Dei" is found condemning poetry and adducing the reasons given by Plato in a famous passage of the "Republic." (4) To him the poets are merely the theologians of the pagan gods and of the pagan mysteries. We can only say that the blazing vision of God's glory which he had received must have
blinded his eyes to all other beauty. The Platonism of the Alexandrian School which achieved such brilliance in the work of S. Clement and of Origen, the work of the Apologists, all of these were forgotten or ignored. Of course, Augustine did not escape the influence of Platonism in his theology. He is indeed the main instrument of transmission of the Platonic inheritance to the Christian West. His opinion, however, is clearly stated. Classical poetry is bound up with the stories and legends of the old pagan mythology and this can neither be justified nor explained in terms of the Christian revelation.\(^{(5)}\)

In Book II of the "De Civitate Dei", there are many fierce denunciations of the old religion, of its superstitions, its ignominous and shameful rites, its futility. Above all, Augustine declaims against the lack of any moral precepts or concern with virtue in the pagan cults. Nor can it be said that the opinions of the philosophers have any divine authority by which they may be commended. Up to a certain point, indeed, they were inspired by God, but their human limitations and preconceptions led them into error.\(^{(6)}\) They had not that spirit of humility by which alone man may learn the deep truths of God. Gone, indeed, was S. Augustine's old ardour for poetry. When he wrote his great work on the Christian philosophy of history, he had long forgotten the days at Cassiciacum, the villa near Milan, where he meditated and pondered on the Catholic Religion and where he read Virgil every day with his charming young friends. It was in those days that he had written, with enthusiasm and delight, his book "De Ordine", in which may be discovered a theory of the origin of poetry—the rational soul in its first endeavour to attain the spiritual order which lies beyond the finite and changing.\(^{(7)}\) We know how he lived to lament these days, his brilliant and sensual youth, with its joys and passions, his love of beauty (which fortunately lights
up his Christian writings too), his delight in poetry. In those far-off days, he had wept when he read the tragic story of the death of Dido. It had now come to him by the illumination from on high that the truth of the Christian faith must be considered as more beautiful than Helen of Troy herself. "Incomparabiliter enim pulchrior est veritas Christianorum quam Helena Graecorum. Pro ista enim fortius nostri martyres adveraus hanc Sodomam, quam pro illa illi heroes adveraus Trojan dimicaverunt".

He writes the words sententiously, rejecting the ancient story and the bright splendour of its glory. Yet, Augustine could never quite put aside his love of language. He writes a Latin which is clear, simple, eloquent and occasionally sublime. Reminiscence of Cicero, perhaps of Virgil, are still there. But the grandeur of the revelations has overshadowed like a mountain the woodlands, and meadows, the lakes and dark-flowing rivers of Classical Humanism. The Latin text of his "Confessions" is full of luminous phrases in which the old literary discipline manifests itself. Nobody will easily forget the soliloquies, similitudes, and introspections of that great work, nor the amplitude of imagination with which it is conceived. Nobody again will fail to discover a moral earnestness which breaks through its meditative words. It is a prose which moves always through the vicissitudes of light and darkness, with its own peculiar power, its own richness and variety of expression:

"et intrem in cubile meum, et cantem tibi amat oria, gemens inenarrabiles gemitus in peregrinatione mea, et recordans Hierusalem, patriam meam extente in eam sursum corde, Hierusalem, patriam meam, Hierusalem, matrem meam, teque super eam regnatorem, inlustratorem, patrem, tutorem, mar itum, castas et fortes delicias, et solidum gaudium, et
omnia bona ineffablia, simul omnia; quia unum sumum et verum bonum:(10)

For Jerusalem he had given up Athens and Rome, the philosophy, the poetry, the drama, the tragic sense of life, and the old renown. But it may be said that these were influences and continuing presences in his thought. Like the symbols of dreams, they were rejected in the conscious but returned to manifest themselves in the images and colours of dreams.

It was inevitable that the views of S. Augustine should determine the opinions of Churchmen for several centuries. The myths and legends related by the old poets were dangerous. They were, moreover, illusions, deceits and pretensions which the Christian had better avoid. Boethius in his famous book, "De Consolatione Philosophiae", intersperses poems between the prose discourses of his meditation. However, the manner in which the Muses of poetry are introduced is not reassuring. Philosophy addresses the following remarks to these unfortunate maidens: "Who" saith she "hath permitted these theological harlots to have access to this sick man, which will not only comfort his grief with wholesome remedies but also nourish them with sugared poison? For these be they which with the fruitless thorns of affections do kill the fruit of reason, and do accustom men's minds to sickness instead of curing them".(11) This accusation does not seem to deter the Muses, for we find that verse and prose alternate until the end of the book. Poetry continued to be despised, a meretricious art, false, foolish, and vain. In the thirteenth century, the strong Aristotelian influence of the time added the weight of its logical pretension to this view.(12) Poetry is declared to be the lowest form of
rational philosophy. S. Thomas writes with a certain amount of condescension, though it is at any rate easy to understand his point of view as a theologian and metaphysician. "Poetry", he affirms, "makes use of metaphors to produce a picture, for it is natural for man to be pleased with pictures." (13) In answer to the objection, he says that poetry appertains to such things as because of their lack of truth cannot be apprehended by reason. Therefore, similitudes have to be employed in order to create an illusion. Theology, which treats of such matters as are above reason, must also make use of the method of symbol and image, but from a different motive.

S. Bonaventura, representing the older Augustinian tradition, is no less discouraging. For him the fables of the poets are "neither true nor likely." Indeed, they constitute a sinful waste of time. The general opinion of theologians was that poetry could not by its very nature constitute a proper medium for the expression of the truths of reason. Supernatural truth was, of course, revealed in Holy Scripture, and this could only be understood as the Church interpreted it by the Councils and the Fathers.

The attitude which we discover among philosophers of the thirteenth century is only what might be expected in an age dedicated to the exaltation of reason. Everything must defer to the claims of the rational intellect or divine revelation as this was demonstrated by the methods of logic and metaphysics. As the men of that age saw the problem, the intellect in its characteristic operation of critical analysis, had little connection with poetry. What they sought was that system of clear ideas lucidly expounded by which the claims of reason were justified. In this, there was certainty, assurance, knowledge. The propositions of logic seemed to them to possess a finality which could not be controverted.
In contrast with this ideal, the method of poetry was mere confusion. For it proceeded by image and illustration. It was cloudy and obscure where scholars were demanding an intellectual landscape in which the light made everything stand out in clear outline. Of course, the brilliant flowering of philosophy and theology is one of the great achievements of that age, but it had its limitations. The enthusiasm for the Aristotelian logic in the twelfth century had led Abelard into various extravagances. Logic, being the only science which was properly known and taught in those days, had seemed to provide an understanding of the mysteries of the universe. It is useful in the pursuit of other studies, but, as John of Salisbury perceived from the example of his old friends, in itself barren and futile. Its final end must be scepticism if it is expected to furnish the answers to all questions of philosophy and religion.

Not that this particular age was without its supreme achievements of the imagination. It is sufficient to mention the names of Cimabue, Cavallini and Giotto in art, and in poetry the varied music of Dante's predecessors and contemporaries, and in spirituality the life of St. Francis, for this too was a work of imaginative sympathy. It is singular, however, that none of the great Scholastic theologians shows the slightest feeling for poetry, nor has any knowledge of what it is capable of expressing. Yet, one hundred years previously, John of Salisbury had revealed an ardent love and appreciation for classical literature. The cadence of its prose, the eloquence of its poetry, the brilliance of its phrases are always in his ears. Indeed, it is only at the Renaissance that we discover a Latin prose as elegant and polished as that which he writes. Nor do we encounter such an exquisite
taste, such delicacy of perception, as are to be found in the pages of his two principal works, the "Policraticus" and the "Metalogicus." (17) He quotes Latin authors at first hand and seems to have had some ideas about Greece. In the twelfth century, ancient poetry came to exercise an attraction which was both strange and fascinating. The Schoolmen, however, had no interest in poetry and no curiosity about the significance of literature. They were interested only in rational knowledge. The work of the scientific intellect was their constant pursuit. Aristotle presented them with the ideal of philosophical enquiry, but it was, of course, Aristotle illuminated by the Neo-platonic tradition. How strong that ideal could prove we have already discovered in the "Convivio" of Dante. If the Florentine poet could experience such an enthusiasm for the philosophical method of Aristotle, it is small wonder that the professed scholars and metaphysicians of the time should have been equally attracted by it. Clearness, perspicuity, exactness of definition are, of course, desirable qualities in any work that claims to be philosophical or scientific. Aristotle's influence in shaping the European mind has been considerable. It is not surprising, however, that the Renaissance turned with delight to the dialogues of Plato and that the new scientific movement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was Platonic in direction rather than Aristotelian. Petrarch would however criticize his authority when, in 1367, he wrote in words that most have caused the greatest annoyance to his learned contemporaries: "We bid fair to be no longer philosophers, lovers of the truth, but Aristotelians, or rather Pythagoreans, reviving the absurd custom which permits us to ask no questions except whether he said it......I believe, indeed, that Aristotle was a great man and that he knew much: yet he was but a
man, and therefore, something, nay, many things may have escaped him. And although he has said much of happiness, both at the beginning and the end of his "Ethics", I dare assert, let my critics exclaim what they will, that the opinions upon this matter of any pious old women, or devout fisherman, shepherd or farmer, would, if not so fine spun, be more to the point than his." (18)
We must now glance briefly at what had been achieved in poetry since the decline of the Classical tradition. By the tenth century, religious poetry had relinquished the exacting classical metres and had discovered new and varied forms for the expression of the great Christian themes. Such verse attained occasionally to beauty and sublimity. One may instance here the great hymns of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the productions of Adam of S. Victor, of Abelard and Thomas of Celano in the sonorous and magnificent lines of the "Dies Irae." It is sufficient to think of the simplicity and tenderness of Abelard's poem about Rachel lamenting for her children (19) or of the impassioned words in which he expresses the soul's desire for the consolations of the Heavenly City:

\begin{verbatim}
Vere Jerusalem est illa civitas,
cujus pax jugis est, summa jucunditas,
ubi non praevenit rem desiderium,
nec desiderio minus est praemium.(20)
\end{verbatim}

We knew, of course, that Abelard was an accomplished poet and that he set his verses to music, for Heloise tells us this. We know also that his love songs in honour of Heloise were listened to and repeated almost everywhere in France. It is natural, therefore, that his religious poetry should reveal the talent which expressed itself so fluently in this more lyrical vein. The emotion which he utters is deep and tender, compassionate and true.

The longer poems of the twelfth century often exhibit a strange blending of the Christian and Classical impulses. Here we may note the influence of Boethius whose well-known book, "De Consolatione Philosophiae," written in prison under the expectation of death, had
such a great vogue during the Middle Ages. The work is a skilful interweaving of prose and verse, which was widely studied during this period. His translations of Porphyry and Aristotle were well known and his commentaries on the "Categories" and the "De Interpretatione" of Aristotle were important in the transmission of the Peripatetic philosophy. For all this, Boethius is fundamentally a Platonist in outlook. He mentions the name of Plato with reverence, quotes his doctrine with approval and writes his charming verses about the contemplation of the Forms, serene, undisturbed, lucid:

Felix quipotuit boni
Pentem visere lucidum,
Felix qui potuit gravis
Terrae solvere vincula. (21)

Dante himself has told us what an impression this book made upon his mind and the references to it which are to be found in the "Convivio" are sufficient to demonstrate this. (22) Again, the intermingling of prose and verse may also have suggested this practice to Dante in that work. This is not quite in the manner of Dante, however, who prefers to make the poem the subject of a lengthy exposition in verse in the "Convivio."

We discover in the twelfth century a revival of interest in the Classical tradition in some circles. The two poems by Hildebert, Bishop of Tours (died:1133 or1134) disclose an unmistakable fervour for the ancient world, its brilliance, its achievements. The Bishop had been much impressed by a visit to Rome which he made in 1116 and he records his experiences in the manner of a learned humanist. What he says is strangely reminiscent of the emotions and sentiments expressed by Joachim du Bellay some three hundred and fifty years later in his
"Antiquités de Rome." (23) Hildebert is an interesting figure. He writes a charming and beautiful Latin, imbued with emotions and ideas of the Stoic philosophy. His letters are models of clear and sensitive prose. His "Elegies" are so permeated with the feelings and sentiments of the Classical tradition, his mind moves so easily in that atmosphere of pagan antiquity, that for long they were believed to be the work of some ancient poet. (24) Later, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, longer poems tend to become didactic and allegorical. We may instance here the Anti-Claudianus of Alain de Lille, a work which describes the Seven Liberal Arts and Virtues in their task of vanquishing Vices. But the most famous of all Mediaeval allegories, which must receive mention here, is of course the "Roman de la Rose," begun by Guillaume de Lorris about 1235 and completed later in the century by Jean de Meung. The first part is a courtly poem of love, with the charming but rather faded imagery of such invention. The author died before finishing his poem, and in the hands of Jean de Meung it became a very different composition. No longer do we find the pale and graceful abstraction of Love as the Rosebud among the fair flowers of the garden, nor allegorical figures, like the embroidered shapes of some rich tapestry. Love has now become physical desire, without which the propagation of the race could not go on. The inspiration is now satirical, rational, critical. The evaluation of love contains many cynical observations about women. There are various characters in that richly varied and complex human scene—doctors, priests, knights, lawyers, monks and friars. All are judged and castigated by the author. In these pages, we may discover a whole philosophy of life: cynical, worldly, clever and informed.
The work achieved great popularity, particularly in Italy. No doubt, this was due not only to its literary competence, and the very real talent which it exhibited, but also to the lively satire of which it is so outstanding an example. (24a)

Amongst other works, we may instance "Aucassin et Nicolette", which may be described as a dramatic romance, written partly in prose and partly in verse. The author calls his work a "chant-fable", that is a story rehearsed in prose but adorned by songs which appear in no set order that can be ascertained. The prose is rough: the verse more subtle and interesting, with its lyrical colour, its music of love and sorrow. It looks as if the songs were written first and the prose added later in order to give some kind of formal unity to the collection. Simple as the story is, it evokes many emotions: Aucassin, the only son of Count Garins of Beaucaire, falls in love with Nicolette, a beautiful girl who has been bought from the Saracens. His father will not allow him to marry the girl whom he so passionately desires. The young lovers endure many vicissitudes, and many adventures before they are at last united. The charm of the book lies in its unusual and fantastic glimpses of beauty. There is the Arab and the Provençal strangeness about it. One remembers the delightful descriptions, the painted chamber where Nicolette is imprisoned, the cool marble, the full blown roses, white and red, the pale, delicate flesh of the girl who has the knowledge of the healing arts. There is a charming sense of humour in the book, love, romance, chivalry; Aucassin is the ideal "dansellon" of the Provençal love poetry, with his curled yellow hair, his fortitude--riding all day through the thorn-bushes that tear his flesh so that he might have been discovered by the blood which
fell upon the tall, green grass:

Aucassin, li biax, li blons,
Li gentix, li amorous:

Walter Pater has written delightfully of this work, in which he professes to find an anticipation of the Renaissance itself; indeed, as he declares, "A Renaissance within the limits of the middle age: itself—a brilliant but in part abortive effort to do for human life and the human mind what was afterwards done in the fifteenth." (25) The roughness of what was a crude and violent time turns to sweetness: sorrow becomes joy: compassion blossoms out of the earth, like the daisies which Nicolette treads down when she makes her escape from prison on that night of May when the nightingales are singing in the garden and the moon shines clear and full. There is a link, tenuous and faint, between this work of sensuous love and the lyrical romanticism of Dante's "Vita Nuova".

It is not the purpose of this essay to enter into a long digression on the subject of Mediaeval poetry. It is sufficient to mention the Goliardic verse. In the most famous and interesting collection which remains of it, the "Carmina Burana" manuscript, we discover two main elements. They are conflicting aspects of human nature; one is the pagan desire for sensual love and enjoyment; the other is the struggle for moral reform, the attitude of bitter satire and invective in face of the abuses of the Church. The patron saint of these singers was the mythical "Bishop Golias," from whom they adopted their name. He is represented as the image and symbol of iniquity, the arch-Philistine (Goliath). They apparently took the epithet "Goliardi", as a mark of self-esteem after it had been used as a term of censure and contempt. (26)

Of course, it is true to say that poetry of many
varieties and of diverse accomplishment was produced. Some was emotional, lyrical, charming, fanciful as the white clouds on a Spring morning; some was of the nature of moral exhortation, information and precept. Such philosophical poems as were written in the twelfth century, however, were pedestrian and dull. Verse was employed merely as a mnemonic device. There was no real attempt to write poetry in these clumsy examples of didacticism. Theology was the dominant science. It was regarded as a necessary discipline in the formulation of doctrinal and political speculations. Literature was a form of pleasure which could be cultivated for itself, but was not often so used. There was an obvious separation between poetry and the logical form of knowledge.

Yet, as we have already seen, when Dante was writing his poems in honour of the exquisite and lovely Beatrice Portinari, there was apparent a new fervour, a new joy, a new delight in the verse which was then being written in Italy. Young men, brilliant, clever, and cultivated were carried away by the vision of beauty which they saw. They were impatient of the outworn conventions of courtly poetry. They dreamed of fair colours, of music, of love and of poetry as an art and an accomplishment. These were the poets of the "new style" (il dolce stil nuovo)—Guido Guinizelli, Lapo Gianni, Cino da Pistoia, Dino Frescobaldi, and above all, that poet of strange and sombre genius, whom Dante names as his closest friend, (quegli, cui io chiamo primo de' miei amici), Guido Cavalcanti.(27) This was one of the many movements which were in evidence at the time. At Padua, famous for its humanistic learning, a new devotion and a new appreciation of classical poetry were to be discovered. As we have observed, this was an age of rationalism,
secure in its opinion of the value of the intellect, unshaken in its belief in the capacity of reason to provide answers to all the questions which might be asked in the sphere of natural knowledge. It began by despising poetry as an inferior discipline which proceeded by image and metaphor and which was therefore incapable of conveying the deliverance of the speculative and critical reason. It ended with the poet-historian, Mussato, who professed an unmeasured enthusiasm for the ancients. Mussate displays a knowledge, rare in his time, of their literature and a vivid and eager delight in it. It is this same attitude which later receives the name of Humanism. It is interesting too that Petrarch, whose father shared with Dante the sufferings of exile, should come to be considered the father of Humanism. An admiration for classical themes and classical poetry does not in itself constitute the point of view of the Renaissance. Such an attitude is far older than that movement and certainly older than Petrarch. Indeed, we may trace this love of classical learning throughout the Middle Ages. Today we are less sure that there exists a line of demarcation between the Mediaeval spirit and that of the Renaissance. If it does exist, it does not consist explicitly in the knowledge and appreciation of the ancient world.

However, let us look for a moment at Mussate's defence of poetry. He entered into controversy with a certain Dominican friar Giovannino of Mantua, who, following the usual practice, condemned poetry in order to exalt his own science of theology. Two letters which he wrote in answer to this challenge expressed the view that the poet may rightly be called a "Chosen Vessel." "Quisquis erat vates, vas erat ille Dei." (28)
As Signor Eugenio Garin has pointed out, the view which he seeks to maintain is that poetry in its loftiest flight constitutes a true and proper revelation. What the writer is anxious to prove is that poetry and theology stand on an equality; both may claim to be a revelation and an illumination from God. His argument is based upon Aristotle's statement in the "Metaphysics" (which the Scholastics employed in the opposite sense) that the poets who sang about the gods were the first theologians. If it were so then, it must be so now. "We must therefore", he adds, "contemplate poetry, which in times past was another theology."(29) What beliefs the ancient poets entertained were beside the point. It was sufficient that they had in their own day been regarded as theologians, to whom a mystery had been declared. Mussato did not find any difficulty in demonstrating that the forms and rhythms of poetry were employed in various parts of the Scriptures. Addressing his remarks to Brother Giovannini, he asked: "If you scan well what the author of the Apocalypse writes, it is all poetry in various forms". (30) The Schoolmen were well aware of this, and in the passage which we have already quoted from S. Thomas (note 13) there is a clear expression of the symbolic method as common both to poetry and theology.

Dante was unable to refute the Scholastic opinion of poetry in this manner. For one thing, Mussato held an established and honoured position as the official poet of Padua. At Florence, Dante held no such pre-eminence. Nor was he in any sense to be regarded as the poet of Italy, though he has often been called the singer of Italian glory and the propounder of nationalism.(31) He could not claim to speak in any representative capacity as Petrarch was able
to do when he addressed such burning and impassioned words to the Italian princess:

Italia mia, ben che'l parlar sia indarne
A le piaghe mortali tuo
Che nel bel corpo si spesse veggio,
Piacemi almen che'miei sospir sian quali
Spera'il Tevero e l'Arno,
E'il Po, dove doglioso e grave or seggio. (32)

Nor on the other hand could Dante be content to number himself among the poets of love and romance, the troubadours, who diverted themselves with lute and rose. Nor would he reckon himself with his companions who practised the "sweet new style" and who had brought the Italian language to a perfection of music which it had not possessed before. There was only one poet with whom he was willing to compare himself, Virgil. To Virgil alone could he address such words of fervour and of praise as these:-

Tu se' lo mio maestro e'l mio autore;
to se' solo colui da cu'io tolsi
lo bello stilo che m'ha fatto onore. (33)

We are not here concerned with the interpretation of the perplexing statement "you alone are he from whom I took the style whose beauty has brought me honour." There was nothing which could claim to be particularly Virgilian in the sonnets and canzoni, in the prose of the "Vita Nuova" or in the philosophical treatises which he had by this time composed. As Professor Whitfield has pointed out, Virgilian echoes, epithets, similes, images and phrases do not necessarily constitute the manner of the "Aeneid". (34)

At the time when the poetry of Virgil was well-known, they are not sufficiently distinctive to explain the words. Nor even according to Dr. Moore's computation are the
allusions and reminiscences of Virgil so numerous as all that. (35) What does Dante mean, then, by his statement? As we have already observed, it is as the poet of the Roman Empire that he claims to be on an equality with Virgil. The latter had extolled its virtues, prophesied its renown, and declared the oracle committed to him. The poet's office was magnified in that of the prophet. Hence in his first appearance to Dante, he explains, with weak and faltering voice, who he is and what his achievement has been among men:

Poeta fui,e cantai di quel giusto
figliuol d'Anchise che venne da Troia,
poi che'il superbo Iliòn fu combusto. (36)

Dante saw himself in the same light. He was a prophet as well as a poet, indeed this is his interpretation of the sublime heights of that art. To him it was given to proclaim the divine mission of the Empire, and of the temporal order which could be discovered by its constitution. Justice could only be secured in this way, and from justice flowed all those consequences of peace and tranquility which the Empire exists to maintain. In a sense, the Florentine poet seems to have considered himself as possessing an office more exalted than that of Virgil. For it is the Empire in all the plenitude of glory as the sphere of Christian government that he must declare. In this respect, he is obliged to assert the claims of poetry on the principles of theology. If poetry were, indeed, capable of attaining to all the ardour of prophetic inspiration... and any man reading his Bible could perceive that this was so... then it could express the noblest truths disclosed to man. Furthermore, in order to
establish his thesis, Dante found it necessary to extend his definition to include not only Pagan poets but also the poets of the Christian era. Mussato had said all that might be said about the former, with a fine rapture of admiration for the achievements of that brilliant world of the past. Dante was obliged to provide philosophical and theological reasons for the justification of his claims. Since Professor Bruno Nardi wrote his admirable and penetrating essay on Dante as a prophet, it is almost superfluous and here it would be unnecessary to review the evidence that he has so carefully gathered together in support of his view. It is enough to say that Dante conceived of poetry as the highest form of knowledge. Neither the theologian nor the philosopher received the direct enlightenment of God. The poet, however, was conscious of such a grace, and in the art which he exercised, he was able to convey this to men.
III.

Dante's theory of poetry, therefore, has varied associations and varied implications. What he is anxious to establish is that the art which he practised was certainly the equal of Philosophy in its capacity to express truth. Poetry, also, was for him the pursuit of Wisdom, just as much as Metaphysics. The poet, however, received moments of inspiration which were denied to the philosopher. The latter had no such special illumination, no such gift from God. He was obliged to work laboriously by the discursive method in the expectation of discovering some aspect of truth and value. On the other hand, the poet was conscious of an intuition which enabled him to grasp, in the words of Plato, "all time and all existence."

This theory of inspiration is obviously derived from Dante's own experience of his work as a poet. It is again closely connected with his philosophy of love. He repudiates the theory, advanced by Plato and Democritus and restated by Cicero, that the poet in his moments of genius is possessed by a strange and inexplicable "furor poeticus." For this he substitutes his own notion. This is really Plato's great doctrine of intellectual love transformed and adapted to his own Christian conception. The "furor poeticus" is a frenzy, a fever or rage. It has nothing to do with the deliverances of the intellect as such. It is a kind of blind possession: an ecstatic experience: a fury. For Dante, however, the poet in his moments of apprehension is a true lover who is given a vision of eternal realities. There is, indeed, an element of "rapture"- a sense of being taken out of oneself so that to this degree the
theory of the "furor poeticus" is not entirely mistaken—and the poet writes under the impulse of that Divine Love, which is the Holy Spirit. Poetry is a revelation inspired by that true love which is evoked by the spectacle of beauty. It is illuminated by that wisdom which is virtue. It is, therefore, in every way different from the dark, sensual, violent love which sent Paolo and Francesca whirling round like the chattering starlings in the evil wind:

Di qua, di là, di giù, di su lì mena:(39)

As a lover, the poet manifests the four types of romantic and mystical enthusiasm which Plato had described in the "Phaedrus"—the ardour of the poet, of the religious hierophant, of the prophet, and of the true lover in his devotion who alone can be called a philosopher. Love makes the poet the true philosopher, and the inspiration which he has received leads him back to God the First Cause. The well-known words of Plato in the "Phaedrus" will immediately come to mind. Socrates says:

"And the inspired we divided in four parts, and distributing them among four heavenly powers, we set down the madness of prophecy to the inspiration of Apollo; of mysteries to the inspiration of Dionysus; to the Muses again we ascribed the madness of poetry; and the fourth to Aphrodite and Eros. And this last, the madness of love, we said was the best of all four:" (40)

This association of love and poetry was, therefore, nothing new. In Dante's time, love was the general and ordinary theme of the poet,—the green branches of the trees, the flight of the bird wheeling over the hill, the flowers of white and red, the beauty of his mistress. It was a memory of pale and elegant delight sung to the music of the lute on the hot Summer days when the lizards flickered like darting flames and the honey-bees drowsed
heavily in the lilies. Before the time of Dante, the Emperor Frederick IIInd., himself wrote verse and gave great encouragement of the members of his court to cultivate so delightful a pastime. Frederick's amazing genius made him familiar with the culture of Western Europe as also of the East. He obviously knew the charming songs of the Provençal troubadours. He was acquainted with the Arthurian legend. Unlike the courts of the nobles of Northern Italy, such as Saluzzo and Montferrat, where Provençal was used, here the dialect of Sicily was employed for poetry. No doubt, there had been predecessors who wrote and debated in the Sicilian language, such as the obscure figure of Alkimio.

A literary tradition does not suddenly come into existence. It is, however, a matter of common knowledge that the history of Italian literature begins with the court of Frederick IIInd., and that even in the time of Dante such poetry as was written in Italian was called "Sicilian." In the "De Vulgari Eloquentia", the Florentine poet adverts to this as an established fact....

"Nam videtur Sicilianum vulgare sibi famam praee aliis asciscere; eo quod quidquid postantur Itali Sicilianum vocatur." (I4)

At the imperial court, poetry became an accomplished art which proved capable of uniting the Emperor, the nobility and the citizens in the pursuit of an exquisite and subtle delight. We read of the Castel del Monte near Barletta, one of Frederick's favourite palaces, with its floors of variegated mosaic in blue and gold, its walls of white and red marble, its delicate columns, its atmosphere of half-Oriental luxury and magnificence. It is against such a background that we must read the poems of Rinaldo
d'Aquino and other members of that circle of young noblemen who wrote their poems of love and desire.

Ormai quando fiore, e mostrano verdura le prata e la rivera, li ausi fanse isbaldore, dentro de la frondura cantando in lor manera, infra la primavera, che vene presente frescamente, si frondita ciasuno invita d'aver gioja intera. (43)

The Jurists joined in this amusing game, notably the Chancellor, the distinguished Piero della Vigna, whom we find in the wood of the suicides in the 'Inferno', (44) and a notary of the Imperial Court, Giacomo da Lentine, well known (if for no other reason) from Dante's conversation with Bonagiunta da Lucca. (45)

The troubadours of Provence, who delighted to compose their strange, fascinating and monotonous love songs, wandered over the border into rich Italian cities of the North during the Albigensian persecution. (46) Their influence was very considerable. It is, however, among the poets of the "sweet, new style" that we encounter a new and exalted conception of love. Here there is an emotion, a mood, a music of Platonic rapture. The girl who inspires their poems is represented not only as pale and aloof but as the mirror of moral perfection. Karl Vossler, in his admirable study of this school, has shown that this group of poets were much influenced by the philosophical theories of Averroes. (47) It will be remembered that the Arab thinker maintained the existence of a "possible intellect" in which humanity participated in common. This is the faculty of acquiring various forms of knowledge by the operation of the "active intellect." (48) Together with this view, there went a certain Romantic and
mystical element which emphasized the work of divine grace in the illumination of the intellect. Hence, the girl whom they celebrated in their poems was regarded as one who was endowed with the knowledge of love. They must sing her praises, extol her virtues, declare her beauty and by their art diffuse this same spirit of love. This is what Dante tells us in his Canzone, quoted in the "Purgatorio" as an example of what is meant by the "sweet, new style:"

Donne, ch'avete intelletto d'amore,
Io vo' con voi della donna mia dire;
Non perch'io creda sue laude finire,
Per isferar Ma ragionar la mente.
Io dico che, pensando il sue valore,
Amor si dolce mi fa sentire,
Che, s'io allora non perdessi ardire,
Farei parlando innamorar la gente. (50)

This may be taken as the early and Romantic notion which pervades the "Vita Nuova," with its tenuous and luminous sentiment. In the "Convivio," however, there is a change of emphasis and of tone. The concept of love and knowledge is elucidated in the Platonic terms which were common at the time and which were to be discovered not only in the Arabic but also in the mystical tradition. (51) In the "Convivio," as in the "Symposium" of Plato, love is regarded as that natural power by which man is constrained to seek the "Ens Perfectissimum," that Supreme Good, which manifests itself in the varying degrees of created goodness. In the "Divina Commedia," this theory of love is greatly developed, expanded and enriched. It becomes nothing less than the itinerarium mentis ad Deum of the Christian poet. It is the ascent by means of the appearances, of the colours, and values of the created universe to the fullness of contemplation of the Eternal
Goodness. Dante commonly speaks of God under the aspect of the Good. It is obvious, however, from what he writes that the concept of goodness includes also the aspect of beauty. Indeed, quite apart from the imagery, the similitude and phrase which evoke the idea of beauty in all its appearances, nobody who knew S. Augustine as Dante must have done, could fail to understand in that writer the identification of the moral with the aesthetic. We may say without fear of contradiction that Dante was as well acquainted with the doctrine of the Scala Amoris as Ficino and the Florentine Platonists who propounded it with such eagerness and clarity.
Notes to Chapter Eight: Dante's Theory of Poetry.


2. Questions of date are notoriously difficult to decide in the writings of Dante, and we do not propose to enter into any controversy here. On the whole, it seems most probable that the "Divina Commedia" was begun after the death of the Emperor Henry VII. in 1313.
Cf. Umberto Cosmo: "Guida a Dante." p. 149.
Professor Vinay very convincingly assigns the "De Monarchia" to 1312-1313. His excellent edition of this work with its illuminating discussion entitled "La Cronologia del Trattato" should be consulted.

and then they showed me still greater honour, for they made me one of their number so that I was the sixth among those high intelligences.

On the expulsion of the poets, Augustine writes:
An forte Graeco Platonis potius palma danda est, qui cum ratione formaret qualis esse civitas debeat, quamquam adversarios veritatis poetas censuit urbe pellendos? Iste vero et deorum injurias indigne tulit et fucari corrumpique figmentis animos civium noluit. Confer nunc Platonis humanitatem a civibus decipiendis poetas urbe pellentem cum deorum divinitate honori suo ludos scenicos expetente. (II:14).

Hinc est quod de vita et moribus civitatum atque populorum a quibus colebantur illa numina non curarunt, ut tam horrendis eos et detestabilibus malis non in agro et vitibus, non in domo atque pecunia, non denique in ipso corpore, quod menti subditur, sed in ipsa mente, in ipso rectore carnis animo, eos impleri ac pessimos fieri sine ulla sua terribili prohibitione permetterent.

Et quidam eorum quaedam magna, quantum divinitus adiuti sunt, invenerunt; quantum autem humanitas impediti sunt, erraverunt, maxime cum eorum superbiae iustae providentia divina resisteret, ut viam pietatis ab humilitate in superna surgentem eliam istorum comparatione monstraret;...

    Quid enim miserius misero non miserante se ipsum, et
    flente Didonis mortem, quae fiebat amando Aeneam, non
    flente autem mortem suam, quae fiebat non amando te,
    Deus, lumen cordis mei.

    Epistola XL:4.


    The point is stated with some force in the words addressed
    to the poetical Muses:
    "Sed abite potius Sirenes usque in exitium dulces meisque
    sum Musis curandum sanandumque relinquite." (ibid).


    Poetica scientia est de his quae propter defectum veritatis
    non possunt a ratione capi: unde oportet quod quasi
    quibusdam similitudinibus ratio seducatur: theologia
    autem est de his quae sunt supra rationem: et ideo
    modus symbolicus communis est, cum neutra.


    latina vol. 199 col: 869).
    Quoted in Gilson: "Unity of Philosophical Experience."
    p. 30.

17. Paul Renucci: "L'aventure de l'humanisme européen au moyen
    âge." p.70.

18. Petrarch: De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia.
    Translated in J. H. Robinson and H. W. Rolfe: "Petrarch,
    the First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters." (New York
19. The following is a good illustration of the simplicity and power of Abélard's verse:

Est in Rama
Vox Audita
Rachel flentis
Super natos
Interfectos
Eiulantis.

Quoted by N. Lenkeith: "Dante and the Legend of Rome." p.37.

20. Peter Abélard.

O quanta qualia sunt illa sabbata.


Cf. C. Ottaviano: "Le poesie ritmiche di Pietro Abelardo."
(Rivista di Cultura: Ott.-Novem: 1930).


Cf. The following remark by Eugenio Garin, in "Medioevo e Rinascimento." p.56.

E questa è appunto la Musa di Platone, che è tutta come un immemore ricordo (immemor recordatur) — quando, come dirà un assai tardo platonico, si passa dalla passione dell'intelligibile, che è verace e libera attività.


Par tibi, Roma, nihil cum sis prope tota ruina quam magna fueris integra, fracta doceas.
Longa tuos fastus actas destruxit et arces Caesaris et superum tempa palude jacent.

Cf. Joachim du Bellay: Antiquités de Rome: XXVII.

Toy qui de Rome emerveillé contemples
L'antique orgueil, qui menassoit les cieux,
Ces vieux palais, ces monts audacieux,
Ces murs, ces arz, ces thermes, et ces temples,

Juge, en voyant ces ruines si amples,
Ce qu'a rongé les temps injurieux,
Puis qu'aux ouvriers les plus industriux
Ces vieux fragmens encor servent d'exemplers.


ch. iii, "The Romance of the Rose." p.112 sqq.
Two Early French Stories. p.1 sqq.  

The verses in the selection pp. 184-272 give an excellent idea of the "Carmina Burana."  

27. Vita Nuova: III.  
A questo sonetto fu risposto da molti e di diverse sentenze, tra li quali fu risponditore quegli, cui io chiamo primo de' miei amici; e disse allora un sonetto lo quale comincia: "Vedesti al mio paren ogni valore:" E questo fu quasi il principio del l'amistà tra lui e me, quando egli seppe ch'io era quegli che gli avea ciò mandato.  


Illa igitur nobis stat contemplanda Poèsis altera quae quondam Theologia fuit.  

30. Mussato: Epist: IV.  
Si bene dospicias quod scripsit apocalista, per varias formas tota Poesis erat.  

31. As in Leopardi's poem "Sopra il monumento di Dante", where the theme of Italy and Dante are inextricably interwoven:  
O glorioso spirto,  
Dimmi: d'Italia tua morto è l'amore?  
Di': quella fiamma che t'accese, è spenta?  
Di': né più mai riverdîrà quel mirto  
Ch'alleggiò per gran tempo il nostro male?  
Canti.  

32. Petrarch: Rime: CXXVIII.  

Thou art my master and my author. Thou art he from whom I took the style whose beauty has brought me honour.  


I was a poet and sang of that just son of Anchises who came from Troy after proud Ilium was burned.

Saepe audivi poetam bonum neminem, id quod a Democrito et Platone inscriptis relictum esse dicunt, sine inflammatione animorum existere posse, et sine quodam affluatu quasi furoris.
De Divinatione. I: 38,80.
negat enim sine furore Democritus quemquam poetam magnum esse posse, quod idem dicit Plato.
Cf. Plato: Laws: 719 C.
The following quotation from Bergson is interesting as illustrating his point of view on the subject of poetry and drama:

"Poetry always expresses inward states. But among these states some arise mainly by contact with our fellow-men. They are the most intense as well as the most violent. Were man to give way under the impulse of his natural feelings, were there neither social nor moral law, these outbursts of violent feeling would be the ordinary rule in life. But utility demands that these outbursts should be foreseen and averted. Under this dual influence has perforce been formed an outward layer of feelings and ideas which cover, when they are not strong enough to extinguish it, the inner fire of individual passions. But volcanic eruptions occur........ And if the earth were a living being, as mythology has feigned, most likely when in repose it would take delight in dreaming of these sudden explosions whereby it suddenly resumes possession of its innermost nature. Such is the kind of pleasure that is afforded by drama ..........it also seems as if an appeal had been made to certain ancestral memories belonging to a faraway past."


40. Phaedrus 265 b.
Τεταρτάρων θεῶν τέταρτα μέσα διελόμεναι, μαντικήν μίν ἑπίπτον θρόλλων θέντρητοι, Διονύσου δὲ τελεστικήν, Νεώστου δὲ ποιητικήν, τεταρτήν δὲ Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Ἐρωτος, ἀφικναί


42. De Vulgari Eloquentia: I:XII.
43. Rinaldo d'Aquino.
p. 27. Penguin Book of Italian Verse, edited by George
Now when meadow and bank show flowers and greenery, the
birds make merry among the leaves, singing in their
different ways, while Spring that comes here freshly,
so leafy, invites each one to have joy entire.

44. Inferno: XIII: 58-76.
Cf. the famous lines:
Io son colui che tenni ambo le chiavi
del cor di Federigo, e che le volsi,
serrando e diserrando, si sonai,
che dal secreto suo quasi ogn'uom tolsi:
fede portai al glorioso officio,
tanto ch' i' me perdé' li sonni e' polsi.
(58-63).

'O frate, issa veggi'io'diss'elli 'il nodo
che'l Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne
di qua dal dolce stil novo ch'i'odo.'
'O brother,' he said, 'now I see the knot that held
back the Notary and Guittone and me short of the sweet
new style that I hear.'


47. Karl Vossler: "Der philosophischen Grundlegen zum 'süssen
neuen Stil'." (Heidelberg: 1904.)


Ma dì s'i'veggio qui colui che fore
frasse le nove rime, cominciando
"Donna ch'avete intelletto d'amore".
But tell me if I see here him that brought forth the
new rhymes beginning with "Ladies that have intelligence
of love."

50. Vita Nuova: XIX.
On Dante's conception of love in this work see:
Charles S. Singleton: "An Essay on the Vita Nuova."

pp. 148-158.
Dante propounds a definite and articulated doctrine, clearly expressed and with all its consequences considered. Man's soul, he affirms, is born of the Divine Love itself. God loves it even before it comes into existence in this temporal world. In its exile and separation from the Creator, the soul retains the memory, it has a recollection, vague and indistinct no doubt, but certain, of beauty and glory. It still remembers its former state. This remembrance continues to exercise so great a fascination that it is constrained to go back step by step to the original and primal Love, from Whom it derives its existence, and Whom among the shadows and images of this life it has half-forgotten. This it is which constitutes its quest, its adventure. Various objects of beauty recall to mind that perfect beauty of which they are but imperfect and transient copies. A toy, shining and coloured, a horse, a pretty woman, all of these are objects of delight. When man uses them for enjoyment or pleasure he is unconsciously looking for God, the Supreme Good, the Infinite and Eternal Beauty. What drives him on, what urges him, what impels him is the emotion of love. Thus, it may be said, that the whole of creation bears witness to its divine origin in the varying degrees of perfection which each element of it exhibits. The human soul may use any creature, any created object, the flower, the crystal, the woman, or any object of human workmanship, as for
example, a lute, a silver mirror, an emerald graven and polished, gold and silver wrought into strange and exquisite forms, a poem, a piece of music, a painting in the glowing colours of Giotto or Cimabue. Each particular thing will be capable of furthering a man's progress to his true end, which is beauty itself. This is what man by his very nature desires above all things. This is, of course, the familiar Platonic argument as we know it from the speech of Socrates in which he recalls the words of Diotima in the "Symposium". Dante follows the argument sufficiently closely to suggest that he actually knew the dialogue and was repeating the great Platonic doctrine of love. "Whenever, then, anyone beginning from things here below", says Socrates repeating the words of the prophetess "through a right practice of love begins to discern that other beauty, he will almost have reached his end. For this in truth is the right method of proceeding towards the doctrine of love, or of being conducted therein by another--beginning then from those beautiful objects here below ever to be going up higher, with that other beauty in view: using them as steps of a ladder......till he passes from degrees of knowledge to that knowledge which is the knowledge of nothing save the absolute Beauty itself, and knows it at length as in itself it really is." (1)

Dante's theory is almost the same as this, though his words may be different. His doctrine is astonishingly Platonic; of course, it is the doctrine of Plato himself as it had come to the Florentine poet through the Christian mystical tradition and notably through the works of S. Augustine and of Boethius. All these stages on the way to God are meant as steps of a ladder. They constitute that "scala amoris" by which man ascends to his true end
the Supreme Good. When the soul comes to regard any one of these stages as an end in itself, then it goes astray. In the Fourth Treatise of the "Convivio", we discover a careful analysis and description of this ascent to God through the visible and tangible beauty of earthly things, of which the beauty of a woman affords the highest example. (2)

This doctrine of the Scala Amoris is explained and elucidated in a well-known passage in the "Convivio." "Love", writes Dante in the manner of the impassioned philosopher, "if we truly apprehend and nicely consider, is nothing else than the spiritual union of the soul with the object loved, to which union the soul of its own nature hastens quicker or slower according as it is free or obstructed. Wherefore inasmuch as every effect retains something of the nature of its cause (as Alpetragius says when he affirms that whatever is caused by a circular body has to some extent circular being) so each form has to some extent the being of the divine nature, not that the divine nature is divided and imparted, but that it is shared by them somewhat in the same way as the nature of the sun is shared by other stars. And the nobler the form the more of this nature it contains. Wherefore the human soul, which is the noblest of all the forms that are generated, receives more of the divine nature than is imparted to any other form. (3)

The whole passage is too long to quote but its argument must be reproduced. Because he is created in the image of God, man wants to be, to exist, since God is Existence itself, ipsum esse subsistens. Man is therefore constrained to draw near to God, the Fire and Light of all Being. In His transcendence and glory, God cannot be approached, for "He only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto". (qui solus habet immortalitatem et lucem inhabitat inaccessibilem.) (4) The soul has ascent, gradually and slowly, through all the varying degrees and
appearances of beauty. For this purpose, it employs the creatures of God. All these imperfect symbols, they are images, representations of the Divine Goodness. They mirror the eternal and absolute, as a woodland pool mirrors the light of the sun. In these objects of finite existence we may discover the various degrees of perfection. Yet in none of them do we find that final and lasting satisfaction: only in God himself may that be found. The way to God is through the things which he has created, that is, it is from the imperfect, from the finite, the transitory to the perfect. There is no other way. Dante subscribes entirely to the metaphysical principle declared by S. Thomas: "nihil in intellectu nisi prins fuerit in sensu." The way through created things may itself not inaptly be called "love". Dante regards it as a natural impulse innate in the human intellect and yet dependent upon the right direction of the will. It is an idea which appears from time to time in the "Divina Commedia". The vehemence and force with which it is stated show that it is one of those beliefs which the poet held most tenaciously and which he proceeded to explain with care and lucidity. It receives clear and distinct expression in the lines in the "Purgatorio" since made more memorable for our generation by T. S. Eliot's poem, "Animula", ("Issues from the hand of God the simple soul")

Esce di mano a lui che la vagheggia
prima che sia, a guisa di fanciulla
che piangendo e ridendo paragoleggia,
l'anima semplicetta che sa nulla,
salvo che, mossà da lieto fattore,
volentier torna a ciò che la trastulla.
Di picciol bene in pria sente sapore:
quivi s'inganna, e dietro ad esso corre,
se guida o fren non torce suo amore.

Here it is that we find the Platonic doctrine declared in all its power and beauty. The theory of recollection here assumes a Christian form as the memory of its original love and delight. Thus the soul acquires knowledge, thus it acquires felicity and true consummation. As Dante puts it in the "Convivio": "because her knowledge is at first imperfect through inexperience and lack of instruction, small goods appear great to her, and therefore her desires are first directed to those." (6) First the toy with which the little child delights to play, then the horse which the man finds noble, then the beautiful woman, the sensual joy of the delicate flesh, then her spirit which possesses a beauty even greater. This is pure Platonism, of course. The poet does not, however, admit the Augustinian idea that the soul must reject completely the illusions and deceits presented by the senses and turn to meditation as the only true way to God. (7) What he tells us is the doctrine of the "Symposium", in all the beauty of visible form and colour. He is content to regard material things as significant in themselves, and as having an importance in man's earthly life which cannot be repudiated. They are not merely things which point beyond themselves to the true and eternal glory, signs, images and symbols. They represent a real stage in the ascent of the soul to God. They are imperfect, because finite. They are at the same time true aspects of goodness, beauty, love and knowledge.

According to this view, therefore, all earthly loves are derived from that love for the infinite and the absolute.
Dante's love for Beatrice has its roots in that natural love which his soul must entertain for God, his Creator, Who is Being itself. Her beauty was intended to awaken in him that love which was innate in his soul when he was born into this world.

Mai non t'appresentò natura o arte
placer, quanto le belle membra in ch'io
rinchiusa fui, (8)

Beatrice declares that it was for this purpose that she died-in order to lead him to the eternal and heavenly Beauty. We find mention of the curiously Platonic reason that, when the most beautiful of earthly creatures was manifested as subject to death and corruption, and therefore, not in herself the end of his impassioned love, he should have realized that there was a higher spiritual beauty to which he was being summoned.

In the "Vita Nuova", Beatrice is presented in a series of pictures. The comparison is inevitable and we have made it before, but one cannot help thinking of the delicate and charming art of Giotto, the gold and crimson, the intense blue of the sky, the pallor of the eager face, as of smooth ivory. The opening words of the book suggest a picture, exquisite, tender, compassionate.

"Ella apparve vestita di nobilissimo colore umile ed onesto sanguigno, cinta ed ornata alla guisa che alla sua giovanissima etade si convenia." (9)

The languorous, elegant and ceremonious prose becomes almost liturgical in the repetitive phrases with which it presents the events and emotions which the author
describes. Not only is the book an essay in psychology ... the psychology of a young man, artist and lover, dreamer and introvert. As Signor Raffaele Resta has pointed out, not only does it take on an ethical and philosophical colour, it has also some of those darker tones which may be called astrological and cabalistic. The "Vita Nuova" conveys an impression, vague yet recognizable, of a young girl, half-revealed, yet half-concealed, in all the occasions and transformations, the encounters and evaluations of life in that thirteenth century. Seen through all its digressions, we catch a glimpse of Florence, with its buildings of white and yellow marble, the glitter of sunlight on polished metal, the soft colours of silk and velvet, the cool interiors of its churches, with the smell of incense seeping through the white walls, the bright faces of women. There are mysterious presences, abjurations, images: the Lady of the Salutation, the Lord of terrible aspect, the Lady of the Screen, the Lady of the Window, compassionate and charming, above all the Wondrous Lady, who is Beatrice herself even now associated with the praise of the Queen of Glory. There are ecstasies, lamentations, marvels and visions. The pale beauty of this glorious Beatrice clad in the scarlet dress in which he first saw her seems to haunt the poet. The music varies little. It is as monotonous and graceful as an air by Rameau. There is in the book a diffused melancholy. Yet the grief of the young poet is experienced in retrospect. His passionate complaints and deep sorrow are recalled, yet generally speaking muted, the exigencies of his art. It is a world of symbol and allegory, yet it would be a mistake to regard it as composed entirely of abstraction. There is a living and vivid experience ...
in all that Dante describes. He writes in the manner of contemplation, perceiving connections and meanings in incidents which are reviewed. So, for example, he speaks of Giovanna as being commonly known as Primavera on account of her beauty. The poet had to explain this circumstance in an allegorical manner. The simple and obvious meaning which associates her loveliness with the Spring will not do. Dante has to discover an interior and mystical significance.

"And the name of this lady was Giovanna, save that for her beauty, as folk believe, the name Primavera was given to her: and even so was she called. And looking beyond her I beheld the wondrous Beatrice coming. These ladies passed near me, thus, one after the other, and methought love spoke within my heart and said: The first is named Primavera solely for this coming today; for I moved the giver of the name to call her 'Primavera' which is to say 'prima verra' (she will come first) on the day that Beatrice shall reveal herself after her liege's vision."

The book is full of such reflections: it is almost like a devotional treatise, as Croce has said, composed with a clear and definite intention. It is dedicated to the glory of "that most gentle Beatrice" as its simple and graceful sentences assure us again and again. Its Romantic lyricism, its tender emotion, its subdued joy, its serene and compassionate love rising now and again almost to the accents of tragedy, its mood of sorrow,—all these make it what it is. It remains the greatest achievement of the "sweet new style". Nobody who reads the refrain, "Morta è la donna tua ch'eta si belle", nobody who recalls the exquisite verses "O voi, che per la via d'Amor passate": "Tutti li miei pensier parlan d'Amore": and the charming and delightful lines:
"Io mi son pargoletta bella e nuova,"-which are among the early Canzoniere, but not included in the "Vita Nuova," can doubt the genius of Dante as a lyrical poet, nor his accomplishment in expressing the emotions of love and sorrow. Professor Karl Vossler has thought that it was impossible to detect the influence of Giraut in the "Vita Nuova". Without going into so technical a question, it is clear that it has a character as of the Provengal poetry. Moreover, the interweaving of prose and verse follows a pattern which is sometimes adapted by the troubadours and which may have been suggested to him by a reading of their works. It was Vossler who has stated that the idea of the beloved as a living human being, a woman with thoughts, passions and emotions of her own, proved somewhat perplexing to the elaborate and symbolical representations of the poets of the "sweet, new style". For this reason, he declares, they made much of her death, for this made it possible to think of her in the luminous images of abstraction. He draws attention to the fact that three of the most important poets of the Middle Ages, Dante, Cino da Pistoia and Petrarch, saw the death of their loves and celebrated them with all the sombre music of lamentation and sorrow. Because of death, Beatrice, Selvaggia and Laura became deeply ecstatically beloved. They acquired the ideal personality which could be surrounded by emotion and delight. They had ceased to be merely human and had taken on the character of the romantic and strange. There is much in the mystical contemplation of the "Vita Nuova" which might support this view. It is, however, true to say that Dante's sorrows take on a much deeper and stronger accent than what we discover in the work of the other two poets. One may compare the well-
known poem of Cino da Pistoia, with its subdued longing and grief... "Io fui'n su'l alto e'n su beato monte." There are here similarities with some of the verses written by Dante, but an absence of that note of anguish which makes itself felt in the more solemn moments of recollection. (One may instance the refrain taken from the Church's liturgy for Holy Week from the Book of "Lamentations": "Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! facta est quasi vidua domina gentium," (14) or the Canzone which begins,"Gli occhi dolenti per pietà del core") (15) Here is the poem of Cino da Pistoia: it is full of reminiscence of past joys and has its own rather exquisitely melancholy.

Io fui'n su'l alto e'n sul beato monte,
ch'io'adorai, baciando il santo sasso;
e caddi 'n su di quella pietra, lasso,
ove l'Onestà pose la sua fronte,
e che là chiese d'ogni vertù'l fonte
quel giorno che di morte acerbo passo
face la donna de lo mio cor, lasso,
già piena tutta d'adornezze conte.

Quivi chiamai a questa guisa Amore:
--Dolce mio vedio fa' che qui mi traggia
la morte a sè, chè qui giace'l mio core--.
Ma poi che non m'intese'l mio Signore,
mi dipartii, pur chiamando Selvaggia:
l'alpe passai con voce di dolore. (16)

In this early work, it is the earthly Beatrice who is celebrated as idealized figure in white or crimson whom the poet makes known to many who were accomplished poets at that time, (i quali erano famosi trovatori in quel tempo).
It is the contention of Signor Pietrobono that the book was subject to the author's considered revision and given a different ending from the one which it originally possessed. (17) With these arguments, which by the way have failed to convince most students of Dante, we are not concerned. What is certain, however, is that the conclusion is entirely in agreement with the poet's developed theory of love and forms the prelude to that richer, more varied and complex music of the "Divina Commedia". It looks forward to the great poem; it anticipates the glory of Beatrice in heaven: it sets forth what must constitute the eternal blessedness of that vision "a vedere la gloria della sua donna, cioè di quella benedetta Beatrice, che gloriosamente mira nella faccia di Colui, qui est per omnia saecula benedictus." (18)
All that Dante knew of Beatrice in her earthly life—her beauty, coloured like the pearl, her tricks of speech and manner, her provocativeness, her rebukes—all these are recaptured and evoked in the last cantos of the "Purgatorio" and in the "Paradiso." This was a stage in the journey. The love of Beatrice in the flesh, her charm, her purity, her speech, should have led the poet to the ineffable Beauty, "l'ultimo desiderabile, che è Dio." (19) However, on the death of Beatrice, he followed other loves, the Donna Gentile, the Noble Lady who represents abstract Philosophy in her most exciting and alluring aspect as the giver of Wisdom, the Lady of the Window, of pallid hue and compassionate face, (si facea d'una vista pietosa e d'un color pallido, quasi come d'amore...Dante tells us), (20) to whom he addressed a group of sonnets including the charming "Color d'amore, e di pietà sembianti," which leaves us in no doubt as to his passion for her, and the Donna Pietrosa of the brilliant Sestina."Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d'ombra" (21) and other poems. The poems in which he speaks of the "Donna Pietra" are full of sensual ardour. They are the verse of a young man in whom the blood runs with vigour and lust. They express an emotion altogether different from the delicate, faint sentiment, the elegance, and somewhat cold radiance, of the verses in which he alludes to Beatrice.

Amor, tu vedi ben, che questa donna
la tua virtù non cura in alcun tempo,
che suel dell' altre belle farsi donna.
E poi s'accorse ch'ell' era mia donna,
There is no mistaking the accent of desire, of voluptuousness, of impassioned wooing in these poems in which he speaks of the "Donna Pietrofa". Not only are they among his greatest achievements as a young poet in the technical skill which they display, they also convey an emotion with power and resource. Some critics have supposed that Dante never wandered away from the world of symbol and allegory and that the women whom he so variously describes are all fantasies of the poetic imagination. It is sufficient to quote Carducci's contemptuous remarks about such writers:... "quando gli espositori delle allegorie dantesche, che credono la giov' donna essere stata Filosofia, avranno dimostrato come e perché essa riguardi i giovani dalle finestre.........allora mi darò per vinto". (23)

Whatever may be the facts, however, they may be explained, the poet confesses that he had committed faults which needed repentence, and which receive the cleansing of fire and water in Purgatory. Nor can this be denied, for it is part of the form and conception of the poem. The "Divina Commedia" opens with the scene of Dante in the dark wood--the primeval, obscure and shadowy wood of anguish. We cannot but believe that he attaches a serious meaning to this image of human sin and transgression. The poet finds himself there, unable to escape, unable to discover the right way until Virgil, the messenger of Heaven, comes to his aid. Moreover, the words with which
Beatrice rebukes Dante's infidelity before the angels are plain enough:

questi si tolse a me, e diessi altrui.

Quando di carne a spirto era salita

e bellezza e virtu cresciuta m'era,

fu'io a lui men cara e men gradita; (24)

These words would be quite ludicrous and out of place if they applied merely to the poet's philosophical studies and to the Donna Gentile as a symbol of passionless, calm Wisdom. There is a note almost of jealousy in the tone with which Beatrice speaks......indeed, had they been spoken on earth, one might have said, of disdainful jealousy that another woman should be preferred to her. That the charming "Lady of the Window" who exhibited so much compassion and interest in the poet was an allegorical figure seems quite incredible. That she was for a time passionately desired and loved, as a woman of flesh and blood, is surely not even a point of argument in view of the severe admonition which Dante receives in the Earthly Paradise. Such words as Beatrice speaks are entirely in keeping with the womanly character which she reveals in the "Divina Commedia". They are pointless if they are regarded as a petulant outburst at the thought of Dante's intellectual philanderings with abstract allegories and projections of the unconscious. (25)

If we express this in terms of philosophy, we must say that the poet had allowed himself to be deceived by illusions and images of this world. In the Prologue, he has shown us the attraction of sensuality in the figure of the leopard, swift and beautiful, which appears in the
clear light of the early morning. It is a Spring day; one
may imagine April in the Tuscan hills, with the violets
of white and purple in the grass and the tall, dark
shapes of the cypress trees.....surely a picture of
youth; l'ora del tempo e la dolce stagione;
He acknowledges his faults: against one so perfectly informed
about all his doings he has no opportunity for subter-
fuge or excuse.

Piangendo dissi: 'Le presenti cose
col falso lor piacer volser miei passi,
tosto che' l vostro viso si nascose.' (27)

Whatever may have been Dante's offence, he had mis-
taken the finite and the transitory for the infinite
and eternal, the mutable for the unchangeable good.
Earthly beauty cannot provide that satisfaction which
the soul of man desires. Even Beatrice, in all the
charm and loveliness of her girlhood, could not afford
him that felicity which is perfect satisfaction and
perfect joy.

Ben ti dovevi, per lo primo strale
delle cose fallaci, levar suso
di retro a me che non era più tale.

Non ti dovea gravar le penne in giuso,
ad aspettar più colpi, o pargoletta
o' altra vanità con sì breve uso. (28)

This discourse savours of the rarefied atmosphere of the
Earthly Paradise, where the conversation does not leave
the consideration of high philosophical themes. The
poet had failed to learn the lesson which the death of
Beatrice was intended to communicate to his sorrowing
heart.
In the midst of the journey of life, he found himself—
his crune (mi ritrovai...he writes) in the
dark forest of foreboding and gloom. Here, but for the
compassion of God and the love of Beatrice, he would
have been lost, among those dark chasms and ravines,
those bloated, pendulous trees and thorn bushes like
the wood of the Suicides in the thirteenth canto of
the "Inferno". Beatrice explains his condition:

Tanto giù cadde, che tutti argomenti
alla salute sua eran giù corti,
fuor che mostrarli le perdute genti.

Per queste visitai l'uscio de'morti,
e a colui che l'ha qua su condotto,
li preghi mi, piangendo, furon porti. (29)

The poet is obliged to "essay the steep ascent", to
climb the mountain with the help of Virgil who is the mes-
senger of Beatrice and, therefore, indirectly an emissary
of the Holy Virgin herself.....Here on the Mount of Purg-
atory he is cleansed and restored: he undergoes the fierce
burning of the flame of contrition and the healing of the
water of Lethe. Once more, he is allowed to continue the
ascent, this time through the heavenly spheres, of increas-
ing brightness, spirituality and manifestation of joy,
until he attains to the Supreme Good. It is character-
istic of Dante's thought that God is represented as that
love which is consummated in delight. It is a thought
which is familiar to S. Augustine and which he expresses
many times with eloquence and fervour: Vacabimus, et
Videbimus: videbimus et amabimus; amabimus et laudabimus. (30)

On the first appearance of Beatrice on the summit
of the Mount of Purgatory, Dante fails to recognize her
in her dazzling beauty. It is almost in a mystical vision that she comes to him, in a cloud of flowers, wearing a green mantle over the colour of living flame:

così dentro una nuvola di fiori
che dalle mani angeliche saliva
e ricadeva in giù dentro e di fori,
sovra candido vel cinta d'uliva
donna m'apparve, sotto verde manto
vestita di color di fiamma viva.(31)

Here the very phrases, allusions and images of the "Vita Nuova" are echoed. The poet reminds us of that day when he first saw her as a child of nine...vestita d'un nobilissimo colore umile ed onesto, sanguigno.(32)

On that occasion, unexpectedly, strangely as in the vague events of a dream, she appeared to him...ella apparve. On that occasion, unexpectedly, strangely as in the vague events of a dream, she appeared to him...ella apparve.

Again, in the second meeting which he records, nine years after this first encounter, he employs the same expression: "questa mirabile donna apparve a me".(33) "Donna m'apparve" writes the poet in the similitude of that work of delicate imagination and courtesy. In the "Vita Nuova" it is the coming of one who was to inspire so much devotion and whose love was as it were by predetermination. In the "Purgatorio", it is the fulfilment of the promise, the actualization of all the dreams and visions of that early book. The confused image becomes clear. Significance is made plain. Surely we discover here the assertion of what Charles Williams called "Romantic Theology", that theology which sees the temporal as a mirror of the eternal, the flesh as the veil of the spirit, the finite as the incarnation of the infinite.(34) Dante, though he is, at first,
on Mount Purgatory, unable to recollect who she is, for grace transfigures her, yet soon finds meaning...the girl whom he loved in Florence, with whom he talked, whose least look made him tremble...this is she. The very passion of the blood declares itself. He knows who it is. He turns to Virgil with the Virgilian words, so dramatic, so expressive of that conviction, that emotion entirely his own:

'Men che dramma
di sangue m'è rimaso che non tremi:
conosco i segni dell'antica fiamma'; (35)

Signor Momigliano has expressed the relationship between the early work of Dante and the "Divina Commedia" clearly and concisely in his statement:

"La materia... della 'Vita Nuova' era, più o meno, reale; quella del poema è fantastica: ma la realtà della 'Vita Nuova' ha l'evanescenta di una visione, e la visione del poema ha la saldezza di una realtà". (36)

This is the place to which all those dreams of youth have led him. This is the consummation of joy: delight that discovers itself in love: beauty that once shook the heart with ecstasy now known once more and perfectly realized in the white Rose of the celestial vision, of the "Paradiso". Yet it is as the result of his experiences, of the desolation and terror of Hell, the cleansing by water and fire in Purgatory, that he is able to recognize that beauty which is glorified and spiritual. In this scene, Beatrice stands before him contemplating the heraldic and allegorical gryphon, type of Christ in His dual nature as God and Man. She stands before him clad in the colours of green and white and red—the bright, vivid colours of Nature's
meadows and waters, symbolic of the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity. His old love returns with all its romantic ardour rekindled, yet in a way different in the presence of that beauty which is so greatly enhanced by grace. Dante explains this in his usual careful manner:

Sotto'l suo velo e oltre la rivera
vince parlemi più se stessa antica,
vince che l'altre qui, quand'ella c'era. (37)

While she was on earth, Beatrice was fulfilling her appointed task in leading the poet on that way which is the Scala Amoris. Her death was intended to bring him to that glory which is the Supreme Good, that Beauty which is realized perfectly in the divine perfections.

It was only after her death that the poet learned from sorrow and love and compassion "a new intelligence". His sighs made their way "beyond the sphere that circleth widest". (38) On Purgatory, however, he has reflected and has come to understand the meaning of all his experience of passion and grief. Beatrice, the beloved object of his devotion, is able to effect his transformation so that with her he may ascend from sphere to sphere to the Empyrean itself, beyond the River of Light, beyond the impassioned glories, to the Truth itself. It is Beatrice who has changed his nature. At the beginning of the mystic vision of Heaven, he declares this in the classical imagery that never forsakes him even at the most solemn moment:

Nel suo aspetto tal dentro mi fei,
qual si fè Glauco nel gustar dell'erba
che'l fè consorte in mar delli altri Dei. (39)

The way which the poet was predestined to follow has become that "itinerarium mentis ad Deum" to which
S. Bonaventura alludes in his spiritual treatise of that name. For in this little work, suffused as it is with the Christian Platonist philosophy of the Franciscan school, we discover those ideas which Dante expressed in the "Paradiso." The early Humanism of the "Convivio", with its charm and graciousness, has become the profound Christian Humanism of the great poem. The illumination of the mind of which S. Bonaventura speaks with such fervour comes at last to that contemplation of Being and the revelation of glory. It is the end of that process which the poet has described in its various stages when we have learned to put "the whole sensible world before us as a mirror by which ladder we shall mount up to God, the Supreme Creator........For by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen." (40)
It follows from what we have said that Dante is not to be confused with the ancient poets to whom an initiatory vision was conceded but no more. The perfection of love has brought him to the ineffable Goodness itself, to that high rapture which is the crown and joy of Christian wisdom. This is really a description of the doctrine of grace and of the infused virtues. For grace is consummated in glory, as S. Thomas affirms. The idea which Dante so sublimely represents in an ascending degree throughout the "Paradiso" is the familiar idea of deification. It is derived from the Platonizing tradition of the Church and it possesses an illustrious history in Christian philosophy. Deification is that illumination by the Divine Wisdom by which a man is enabled to understand the deep things of God. It is signified by Beatrice: it is shown forth by the glow of her face, the joy of her eyes: by what she signified and what she demonstrates to the poet. For it is she who conducts him to the living light of the Christ, the Eternal Word.

Quale ne' plenilunii sereni
Trivìa ride tra le ninfe eterne
che dipingon lo ciel per tutti i seni,
vedi sopra migliaia di lucerne
un sol che tutte quante l'accendea,
come fa il nostro le viste superne;
e per la viva luce traspare
la lucente sostanza tanto chiara
nel viso mio, che non la sostenesse. (41)

It is this manifestation of glory transcendent that draws from the poet the exclamation:
Oh Beatrice dolce guida e cara!

for it is the office of Beatrice to bring him to that consummation of all desire, that satisfaction of the intellect, that incorruptible light which never changes nor admits of distinction.

Already in the "Vita Nuova" Beatrice is represented by the number nine, which in the allegorizing, mystical language of the age is explained "inasmuch as Ptolemy and Christian verity nine are the heavens that move." (42)

According to Dante, this obviously contains an allusion to the wondrous Trinity. (43) Not only is she endowed with a divine mission, she possesses an origin which may fittingly be spoken of as divine. In this respect, she may be regarded as the instrument of the Holy Spirit, and it is through her that the poet receives that participation in the gifts of the Spirit and especially the gift of wisdom by which he becomes illuminated by divine grace. The mystical love which Dante entertains for her allows Virgil to explain that Beatrice shall be for him in his own vivid phrase—"the light between truth and the intellect"—that is, the light by which the mind attains to the knowledge of truth:

Veramente a così alto sospetto
non ti fermar, se quella nol ti dice
che lume fia tra'l vero ex lo'intelletto:
non so se'ngitendi; io dico di Beatrice. (44)

What is set forth here is the relationship between love and knowledge, and this is the possession of all poets who may legitimately claim inspiration. Dante enlarges, emphasizes and defines the great Christian truth that not only can there be no salvation but also that there can be no understanding of the Christian revelation without love.
He insists upon this with a fervour and passion reminiscent of S. Bernard, his guide and teacher in the glory of Heaven itself. (45)

To the poet, love brings the vision of truth which is the secret of his inspiration. This it is which enables him to speak with fire and conviction. S. Bonaventura expressed this in the more specific terms of religion when at the conclusion of his mystical treatise he wrote: "This fire is God and the furnace of this fire leadeth to Jerusalem, and Christ the man kindles it in the fervour of His burning Passion." (46) This is the way in which the Christian mystic declares the doctrine of love in the terms of spiritual devotion and ascetic practice. Dante explains the matter in his own way by image and symbol, drama and action. It is evident from what he says how seriously he regards his vocation as a poet. Not only is he the great artist, the disciple of that Virgil whose exquisite verse has taught him so much, the singer of imperial Rome whose glory he too would proclaim. What has summoned him to this high mission is love. If we ask what is meant by love, in what must seem such a dubious connection here, then the answer must be that we understand it to mean that emotion and principle of life itself which includes the romantic love of Dante's youth. It gathers into itself all the tremulous brightness, the emotion of sorrow and joy, the passionate enthusiasm, the eager looking for the beloved face that we commonly associate with the doctrine of Eros. All this is but a single expression of that creative love which founded the universe and established it in beauty and order. Thus in the Prologue to the "Divina Commedia", the encounter with the three beasts and the subsequent meeting with Virgil, the poet's deliverer, takes place on a Spring morning. This is the decisive action which leads
to the pilgrimage through the three realms. The Spring morning in its light and brilliance reminds Dante of the creation of the world by the Divine Love, the "sweet season" of rejoicing in which earth remembers the primal rapture of her birth.

Temp'era dal principio del mattino,
e'l sol montava in su con quelle stelle
ch'eran con lui quando l'amor divino
mosse di prima quelle cose belle;\(^{(47)}\)

In the "Purgatorio", when Bonagiunta recognizes him as the accomplished poet of the "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore"-- of that "sweet new style" which had won for him such renown--Dante replies a little self-consciously:

'I'mi son un che, quando
Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo
ch'e'ditta dentro vo significando.\(^{(48)}\)

Here we may claim to find a clear and succinct description of the poet's work, his mission and vocation. It may be summarized in three words--inspiration: reflection: expression. The idea is expressed in the mind when reflected upon. It is comprehended and gets outward expression when it is set forth in words. In verse (or verses), therefore, the writer declares a meaning in objective reality, for words belong to that order and associate the idea with the world of sensible experience. The agent of this process, however, is not the intellect as conceived in the Aristotelian logic. According to Dante, the concept is not something which is evoked by the poet in his own mind and expressed with whatever lucidity of phrase he may be able to command. It is something which is given and which he, therefore, receives and it is dictated by the love which
inspires him to undertake the work of the poet. This is, of course, a mystical doctrine of poetic inspiration.

What distinguishes poetic truth from logical truth, the truth of image and symbol from the truth of formal propositions, is to be discovered in this first moment of inspiration. It is abundantly clear that this is not evolved from the initial act of the human intellect in making judgements but is given by God himself.

There is an obvious audacity in such a theory of inspiration as applied to poetry. For it borrows from the Church's doctrine which confines inspiration to the Canonical Books of the Old Testament and excludes all other works from a like degree of authority. This becomes evident when we consider that S. Augustine in his allusions to Scripture (as also to the Vulgate of S. Jerome) frequently adds: "thus dictates the Holy Spirit." (49) It may be remembered that the same term "dictate" is employed by Dante when speaking of his own inspiration as a poet and artist. Similarly, it is worth while recalling that S. Thomas, in his treatise "De Veritate", describes inspiration as the touch of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the prophet. It is this doctrine of inspiration hitherto confined to Revelation itself that Dante has taken over and adopted in order to present the view that the poet also receives the oracles of God, and interprets them to men.

However, it would not be true to say that he believes that love can make any man a poet. It is required first of all that the poet should possess and should exercise a natural talent for verse. Not only love, but also the star must be propitious to him. Moreover, he must resort to prayer in order to seek that divine aid without which all his efforts will be futile. Dante's nature was predisposed to poetry by the stars. He was born when the sun was in
Gemini, the astrological house of Mercury, who turns a favourable ear to authors and scholars, especially when conjoined with the Sun, regarded as the source and origin of all natural truth: (rather in the manner of Plato's description of the sun as the cause of vision and which man may attain in this world of appearances). Without this natural endowment afforded by the necessary conjunction of the stars, Dante could not aspire to be a poet. It is for this reason that when at last he finds himself in the sphere of the fixed stars at the Sign of Gemini, he extols that constellation in words that might seem extravagant if we were not aware of his doctrine:

O glorioso stelle, o lume pregno
di gran virtù, al quale io riconosco
tutto, qual che si sia, il mio ingegno,
con voi nasceva e s'ascondeva vosco
quelli ch'è padre d'ogni mortal vita,
quand'io senti' di prima l'aere tosco; (51)

Yet none of these influences can be called sufficient in itself, neither natural talent, nor the favourable conjunction of the planets. The ability to write poetry demands that unremitting care, that assiduous practice and cultivation, that constant study which will make him able to express the highest themes. Dante implies that learning is a necessary acquisition to the poet. Without that, he would also fail in the high purpose to which he is called. Before describing the great pageant of revelation in the Earthly Paradise, the poet invokes Urania:

Or convien che Elicona per me versi,
e Urania m'aiuti col suo coro
forti cose a pensar mettere in versi. (52)
Without a proper scholarship, without zeal in study, the poet will be unable to put into verse such truths of philosophy and theology as the mind conceives. This is what is expressed with such lucidity and explicitness in the "De Vulgari Eloquentia", where we are told that the poet "should first drink of the waters of Helicon and, with his strings attuned, confidently strike the lyre. But", he adds, "no doubt with some reminiscence of his own laborious studies; "it is necessary to have circumspection and discernment, a matter of experience and toil, to be gained only by strength of spirit, assiduous study and the pursuit of knowledge." (53) All these things are necessary. The natural gift, the propitious stars, the midnight lamp: none of them may be omitted or neglected. Yet above all the poet needs to pray for grace: for neither talent, nor genius, nor aptitude for literature, nor opportunity nor leisure, nor ardour, are sufficient of themselves. This is the introduction to the "Divina Commedia"...

"poets have need of invocation in large measure", (54) What they seek is nothing less than a divine gift. Poetry at its highest is a special grace and illumination which is vouchsafed from the Divine Wisdom. It cannot be produced merely by the intellectual labour of study and the pursuit of versification. In the poetry of Virgil, in all the music, the glory, the compassion of the great epic, the Florentine poet has felt the flame of inspiration. For this reason, therefore, Dante begins each canticle of the "Divina Commedia" with an invocation to the Muses and to Helicon. At the beginning of the "Paradiso", however, we discover an eloquent and somewhat longer address to Apollo and to that other peak of Parnassus which is regarded as the possession of the god, Cyrrha.
O buono Apollo, all'ultimo lavoro
fammi del tuo valor si fatto vaso,
come dimandi a dar l'amato alloro.

Infino a qui l'un giogo di Parnaso
assai mi fu; ma or con amendue
m'è uopo intrar nell'aringo rimaso.

Both here and in the invocation to the Muses at the beginning of the "Purgatorio" there is an allusion to the punishment inflicted upon those who challenged the Muses and provoked the god of poetry. Both the Pierides and Marsyas have provoked the powers of song and have suffered the punishment of their audacity. Dante has no mind to enter into arrogant competition with Apollo. He prays for the succour and help of the god in this his supreme flight of song. It may be asked: why does the poet resort to these various legends, these myths, and stories of the pagan world? As a Christian he cannot accept them as what they purport to be. He cannot believe that they are divinities exercising an influence over the forces of nature and over the destiny of mankind. Yet, it is impossible to ignore the fervour and sincerity with which these invocations are made. It may be argued that the poet accepts the ordinary medieval explanation, adapting it to his own purpose and shaping such legends to his own intention. We certainly cannot dismiss these phrases as mere rhetoric, for he has himself warned us that it is the poet's duty to disclose meanings and demonstrate the relevancy of symbol and image. Mediaeval manuals describe Parnassus from a Christian point of view as signifying the special endowment of the poet, the talent, the aesthetic perception, and power of expression which must belong to him and which we commonly associate with his work. One such manual is the "Mythologicon" of Fulgentius. In this book various attributes are assigned
to the Muses. Clio is identified with the desire for learning or fame: Euterpe is called the Muse of pleasure: Melpomene presides over meditation: Thalia is the capacity for understanding: Polyhymnia is associated with the memory: Erato, facetiously enough, is the discoverer of similitudes: Terpsichore is the Muse of appreciation: Urania is given the task of assisting in the due selection of material: but above all, there is Calliope to whom belongs that most consummate art, beauty of expression. (57) Such embellishments and lavish explanations are a commonplace. We find commentators of the fourteenth century employing such knowledge in order to elucidate the reason for Dante's preoccupation with the ancient deities. It was a problem to explain the language of the "Divina Commedia" in this respect, just as it is today. For example, Boccaccio, in his comment on an incident in the "Purgatorio" (58) where Statius records his debt of gratitude to Virgil, is content to translate Fulgentius's account (59) of the nature of poetic talent almost word for word. Mediaeval writers generally recognized that the twin peaks of Parnassus denoted two different kinds of knowledge. There was that lower, and purely, human, knowledge which is called, "Scientia": on the other hand there was the supernatural knowledge, "Sapientia," which forms a category on its own. It is significant that Dante prays for supernatural knowledge only at the beginning of the "Paradiso." Elsewhere, in the other two canticles of his poem, it is sufficient for him to ask for the gift of that human knowledge, which is acquired by study and application. In addressing the gods of Parnassus, he refers to them as denoting superior powers. In one sense they are allegorical abstractions,
pale shadows, vague, wandering lights of truth. Yet, when he comes to invoke Apollo, the great god of Delphi, the god of poetry and music, the god of light and of prophecy, his words take on a more serious tone. It is that Phoebus Apollo whom invoked with solemn prayer and propitiatory rites in the sixth book of the "Aeneid":

"Phoebe, gravis Troiae semper miserate labores!"

For Dante, Apollo takes on the lofty semblance and features of truth according to the explanation that S. Augustine had offered in the "De Ordine". Apollo is a symbol of Wisdom, of Truth. As such he was invoked by the ancients. As such he is invoked by Dante with all those associations of the laurel of poetry and the oracle of prophecy, which the Cumaean Sybil declared in the cave at Delphi to the expectant Aeneas. In this last and most difficult exploit, the ascent to heaven itself, he will not emulate the example of Marsyas in asserting himself against divine powers. The image of Apollo enables him to express this humility. If there is any Christian precedent it must be that of the Apostle Paul, that "chosen vessel of election." However, it is in the Empyrean, the sphere of pure love and pure intelligence, that the significance of these various invocations is made clear. Here, the poet, puts aside all that pagan symbolism, the colour, the imagery, the charm of the old stories which he had learned from Ovid and Virgil. Now, in the absolute truth of the vision of glory, he can address a direct appeal to the Creator.

O isplendor di Dio, per cu'io vidi
l'alto triunfo del regno verace,
dammi virtù a dir com'io vidi!

What is the significance of this prayer which he makes to God?
Surely this! It is more than the gift of love which the poet needs: this, indeed, is necessary since it is the grace that transforms his nature and thus brings him close to the truth itself. He needs more even than that inspiration by which he knows and perceives the theme which he must develop. At this point, where the very state of beatitude is to be described in human words, the poet needs that divine possession by which his lips are touched with fire, as were the lips of Isaiah in the Temple, and the Godhead makes of him an instrument, as the flute becomes the instrument by which man is enabled to make music. Why did the pagan poets employ such invocations in their works? According to Christian teaching, they had received no revelation. They had no faith in the true God, nor had they heard of the Gospel since they lived before it was proclaimed:

al tempo delli dei falsi e bugiardi. (64)

As Dante knew, however, their poems contain petitions addressed to the various tutelary deities. To these they prayed for the gift of inspiration. The question obviously suggests itself in what sense this was possible? Dante's answer is quite simple. He regards their prayers and invocations as evidence of a certain intuition of truth.... vague, obscure, and expressed in all the colours of the imagination. They recognized that the talent of the poet was a sacred endowment given from heaven. Further, they perceived that the poet needed that help which could only come from above. In their fashion, they represented this as the Muses who dwelt on Mount Parnassus with Apollo, the god of music and poetry. They it was who must be invoked, implored, resorted to with supplications. The poets themselves must pray for the success of their work:
Even this was not enough, for the poet must cultivate and practise his art with zeal. It is only when he has spent years in the pursuit of so great an art, that he may presume to invoke the gods. It is only when Dante is almost at the end of his great task, when he has devoted years to the pursuit of poetry, to the perfection of his art, and the high endeavour of its demands, that he makes his prayer to God in the light of glory. He had hoped that the renown of his achievement and the years of labour which it had cost him might even move the hard hearts of his fellow citizens to grant him the laurel-crown in the Baptistery at Florence.

This is not granted, however. When he makes his final prayer to God in His revealed glory, (His "splendour", which is the reflection of His Divine attributes,) he has worn himself lean with years of work. He has, however, gained the right to make this invocation to the Supreme Goodness.

Dante entertains the highest opinion of poetry, of its power to move, to console, to elevate, to manifest the truth. He believes that the ancient poets, and particularly Virgil, possessed the plenitude of knowledge.
This consisted in a limited revelation, which as such was no mere conjecture or intellectual construction, but given them from a divine source. Thus they had a vision of the world in its uncorrupt state. The description of the age of gold under Saturn corresponds to that age of primitive innocence which is revealed in Holy Scripture. Among the pagans only the poets, who in this respect fulfilled a prophetic function, had seen the Garden of Eden, which constitutes the highest point of this sublunary world beyond which man cannot in his natural powers advance. This the philosophers had sought. They had debated endlessly and discussed that perfect condition which is the consummation of all man's longings and desires. But the human intellect is limited. It is confined to such knowledge as the natural world affords. The philosophers were therefore unable to understand this primitive state by the unaided light of reason. What they could not do, however, the poets were able to achieve. Their dreams and visions, showed them these profound truths which they expressed with burning eloquence. This is the reason why Dante quotes from the ancient poets even when he is treating of the problems of theology. They had an intuition of the truth. They manifested forth what they knew. In this sense, they were kindled by the fire of prophecy:

Quelli ch'anticamente poetarono
l'età dell'oro e suo stato felice,
forse in Parnaso esto loco sognarono.

Qui fu innocente l'umana radice;
qui primavera sempre ed ogni frutto;
nettare è questo di che ciascun dice.
What Dante himself claims is that he has received the divine inspiration. He is meant to reveal to men the way of salvation...that mystical "itinerarium mentis ad Deum" which makes use of the Scala Amoris of the created Universe, in all its beauty, and which advances by the three theological virtues to the contemplation of Being itself. What Dante is meant to do is to make clear the truths of God to men. In this he is a prophet. In this also it is possible for him to assert the claim, strong and fervent in its simplicity, that poetry at its greatest is prophecy. Certainly it follows from all that he has told us in the "Divina Commedia", from the Prologue in which he announces the coming of a Deliverer, from the lofty conception of the Christian Empire, and the Kingdom of justice, impassioned love of Wisdom and truth, from the burning sincerity of his words, that he regards himself as a prophet. Hence in the last prayer which he directs to God for the gift of that inspiration which possessed the prophets of old and which the poets themselves must receive, he says:

*e fa la lingua mia tanto possente,*
*ch'una favilla sol della tua gloria*
*possa lasciare alla futura gente*; (68)

The "Divina Commedia" in its entirety must remain the witness and the justification of the claim which it asserts, as it must also declare the mystery of the *Trinita* Godhead, "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars". (l'Amor che move il sol e l'altre Stelle).
Notes to Chapter Nine. Poetry and the Doctrine of Love.

   Especially 211 E:
   τί δὴ τα, ἡφη, οὕτως ἐστι, εἰ τῷ γένοιτο αὐτῷ τὸ καλὸν ἐδείν εἰληφόντες, καὶ ἔμφως, ἕμετρον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀναπλέων
   σαρκάν τε ἀνθρώπων καὶ χρυσάτων καὶ ἀλλὰς
   πελλής φλυαρίας θνητῆς, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλὸν δύναι το μονοιδεῖς κατ' ἰδίων;

   Cf. Raffaele Resta:
   "Dante e la Filosofia dell'Amore." (Bologna: 1935)
   pp. 158-166.
   The following passage is particularly relevant:
   "Certo che, a differenza della dottrina peripatetica,
   egli conobbe la platonica in modo lacunoso, (per esempio,
   nel discutere il problema dell'immortalità non si trova
   riferimento al 'Menone', al 'Fedone' alla 'Repubblica'),
   per il tramite di Aristotele, di Cicerone, di Proclo,
   del 'Liber de Causis' e delle disputazioni dei filosofanti,
   ibid p. 158.

   Onde vedemo li parvuli desiderare massimamente un pomo;
   e poi, πιὰ procedendo, desiderare uno augellino; e
   poi, πιὰ oltre, desiderare bel vestimento; e poi lo
   cavallino; e poi una donna; e poi ricchezza non grande,
   e poi grande, e poi πιὰ.


4. I Timothy IV:16.

   From His hand who regards it fondly before it is, comes
   forth, like a child that sports tearful and smiling,
   the little simple soul that knows nothing, but moved
   by a joyful Maker turns eagerly to what it delights in.
   At first it tastes the savour of a trifling good; it
   is beguiled there and runs after it, if guide or curb
   do not divert its love.

   E perché la sua conoscenza prima è imperfetta, per non
   essere esperta nè dottrinata, piccoli beni le paiono
   grandi, e però da quelli comincia prima a desiderare.

7. S.Augustine: De Vera Religione III. (Migne: Patrologia
   Latina: 34, col: 123 sqq.)

   Never did nature or art set before thee beauty so great
   as the fair members in which I was enclosed.

In this passage Signor Resta makes the following observation:

"La 'Vita Nuova' è un saggio di psicologia autobiografica, ma spesso ha un colorito, non solo etico e filosofico, ma anche astrologico e cabalistico."

Vita Nuova: XL.

ch'è mi parea vedere questa gloriosa Beatrice con quelle vestimenta sanguigne, e paremi giovane in simile etade a quella, in che prima la vidi.


Beatrice beata, pp. 31983.

Vita Nuova: XXIV.


In realtà, la 'Vita Nuova' è scritta al modo di un libretto di devozione, con chiaro intento pio e con procedimenti conformi: Dante lo ha composto in memoria e onore di una santa a lui particolare, della donna-angelo, della Beatrice, che egli aveva cantata, e il cui pensiero - pensiero di Paradiso - doveva essergli guida tra le vicende e i travagli della vita terrena.


Vita Nuova: XXIX.

Cf. Lamentations I:1.

Vita Nuova: XXXII.

Cf. Lamentations I:1.


I was upon the high and blessed mountain, which I worshipped, kissing the holy stone; and fell upon that headstone, weary, where Honesty laid her forehead, and which shut off the fountainhead of every virtue that day when the woman of my heart went through death's bitter pass, alas! she who was once full of every brighter charm.

There I called on Love in this manner: 'My sweet god, let death take me here since my heart lies here.' But when my Lord did not hear me, I left calling on Selvaggia: I passed over the mountain with the voice of grief.


Realtà e idealtà nella 'Vita Nuova'. pp. 1-35.

Vita Nuova: XLIII.
20. Vita Nuova: XXXVII.

   (Oxford: 1924).

22. Sestina II.
   Oxford edition as above. p. 163.

   Essay: Delle Rime di Dante Alighieri.

   he took himself from me and gave himself to another.
   When I had risen from flesh to spirit and beauty and
   virtue had increased in me I was less dear to him and
   less welcome.

   (Milan: 1957).


   weeping I said: 'Present things with their false pleasure
   turned my steps as soon as your face was hid.'

   Truly thou oughtest at the first shaft of deceptive
   things, to have risen up after me who was such no longer.
   No young girl or other vanity of such brief worth should
   have bent thy wings downward to await more shots.

   He fell so low that all means for his salvation now
   came short except to show him the lost people: for
   this I visited the threshold of the dead and to him
   who has brought him up here my prayers were offered
   with tears.

30. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: XXII ad finem.
   Cf. Sermo CCLIV.
   Videbimus, amabimus, laudabimus: nec quod videbimus
deficiet, nec quod laudabimus tacebit: sempiternum
totum erit, sine fine erti.
   p. 87. S. Aurelii Augustini.
   Sermones Selecti Duodeviginti.

32. Vita Nuova: II.
33. Vita Nuova: III.

   questa mirabile donna apparve a me vestita
di colore bianchissimo, in mezzo di due gentili donne,
le quali erano di più lunga etade;....
34. Cf. Charles Williams: "The Figure of Beatrice." (London: 1943) p. 188.


Not a drop of blood is left in me that does not tremble:
I know the signs of the ancient flame.

Agnosco veteris vestigia flammae.

It is characteristic of Dante that in this passage he adapts the words with which Dido acknowledges to her sister, Anna, that she entertains the same feelings towards Aeneas that she once experienced for Sicheus.

gravi iamdudum saucia cura
volnus alit venia et caeco carpitur igni.


37. Purgatorio: XXXI: 82-84.

Beneath her veil and beyond the stream she seemed to me to surpass her former self more than she surpassed the others here when she was with us.

38. Vita Nuova: XLII.

Oltre la spera, che più larga gira,
passa il sospiro ch'esco del mio core:
intelligenza nuova, che l'Amore
piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira.


At her aspect I was changed within, as was Glaucus when he tasted of the herb that made him one among the other gods in the sea.


As in clear nights of full moon Trivia smiles among the eternal nymphs that deck the sky through all its depths, I saw, above thousands of lamps, a Sun which kindled each one of them as ours does the sights we see above, and through the living light the shining substance showed so bright in my eyes that they could not bear it.

42. Vita Nuova: XXX.

concio@ia@cosaché, secondo Tolomeo e secondo la cristiana verità, nove siano li cieli che si muovono, e secondo comune opinione astrologica li detti cieli adoperino quaggiù secondo la loro abitudine insieme;...
43. ibid.
   cioè un miracolo; la cui radice è solamente la mirabile
   Trinitate.

44. Purgatorio: VI: 43-46.

   Nevertheless in so deep a question do not take thy stand
   unless she tell thee of it who shall be light between
   the truth and the intellect, - I know not if thou under-
   standest, I speak of Beatrice;...

45. Dante insists upon the Christian doctrine of love in
   words reminiscent of S. Augustine in his most exalted
   moments. The following passage affords a good example
   of this teaching:

   S. Augustine: In Jo: Evad: Tr. 96.4.

   sed potius in caritate proficite, quae diffunditur in
   cordibus vestris per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est
   vobis; ut spiritu ferventes et spiritualia diligentes,
   spiritualis, lucem spiritualis vocem........interiore
   conspectu et auditu nosse possitis. Non enim diligitur
   quod penitus ignoratur. Sed cum diligitur quod ex
   quantulacumque parte cognoscitur, ipsa efficitur dilectione
   ut melius et plenius cognoscatur.

46. This is the "seraphic" vision described by S. Bonaventura
   in the last chapter of his "Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum"
   VII:6 p. 45. ed. of Boas op. cit.


   The time was the beginning of the morning and the sun
   was mounting with those stars which were with it when
   Divine Love first set in motion those fair things.


   "I am one who, when love breathes in me, take note,
   and in that manner which he dictates within go on to
   set it forth."

49. Cf. S. Augustine:

   The following examples illustrate S. Augustine's method
   of quotation.

   De Civitate Dei: XVIII: 50.

   et aptaverat verbo et accenderat Spiritu sancto.

   Dixerat enim eis: Nolite timere eos, qui corpus occidunt,
   animam autem non possunt occidere.


   unde Veritas dicit: Si vos Filius liberavit, tunc vere
   liberi eritis.

   ibid: XIX: 5.

   Propter quod etiam divina vox illa: Et inimici hominis
   domestici ejus.

   In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus: I: I: (Migne: P.L.
   35 col: 1379).

   dictante Spiritu sancto.
50. Plato: Republic: 508-509 B.


O glorious stars! Light pregnant with divine Virtue, which I in recognition thank For whatsoever genius is mine,

With you he mounted and with you he sank, The father to whom mortal life is owed, When first the air of Tuscany I drank.

(Laurence Binyon's translation).


52. Purgatorio: XXIX: 40-42.

now must Helicon pour forth for me and Urania help me with her choir to put in verse things hard for thought.

53. De Vulgari Eloquentia: II:IV:66

prius Helicone potatus, tensis fidibus adsumptum secure plectrum tum moreve incipient. Sed cautionem atque discretionem hanc acciper, sicut decet, hoc opus et labor est; quoniam munquam sine strenuitate ingenii et artis assiduitate scientiarum habitu fieri potest.

54. Epistola X:18.

et hoc est conveniens, quia multa invocatione opus est eis, quum aliquid contra communem modum hominum a superioribus substantiis petendum sit, quasi divinum quoddam munus.


O good Apollo, for the last labour make me such a vessel of thy power as thou requirest for the gift of thy loved laurel. Thus far the one peak of Parnassus has sufficed me but now I have need of both, entering on the arena that remains.


58. Purgatorio: XXII:1-123.


   Apollo....Veritas, cuius vates sunt quicumque possunt esse sapientes.


   0 splendour of God by which I saw the high triumph of the true kingdom, give me power to tell of what I saw there.

64. Inferno: I:72.


   If it ever come to pass that the sacred poem to which both heaven and earth have set their hand so that it has made me lean for many years should overcome the cruelty that bars me from the fair sheepfold where I slept as a lamb, an enemy to the wolves that made war on it, with another voice now and other fleece I shall return a poet and at the font of my baptism take the laurel crown.

67. Purgatorio: XXVIII: 139-144.
   Those who in old times sang of the age of gold and of its happy state perhaps dreamed on Parnassus of this place; here the human root was innocent, here was lasting spring and every fruit, this is the nectar of which each tells.

68. Paradiso: XXXIII: 70-72.
   and give my tongue such power that it may leave but a gleam of thy glory to the people yet to come:....
CHAPTER TEN.

PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND RELIGION
IN THE ANCIENT WORLD.

I.

It is obvious that in the "Divina Commedia" the predominant part belongs to theology and the chief authority is no longer philosophy but Holy Scripture. This is true also of the "De Monarchia", which in many respects provides a commentary on that work. However, neither in imagination nor in sympathy does Dante disavow the ancient world of classical literature, of learning and religion. It would be futile at this point to catalogue in detail or with any logical method the reminiscences, allusions, echoes, references and memories of classical literature which extend throughout the one hundred cantos of the great poem. They are many and various. Virgil, Ovid, Statius, Lucan, Cicero, Seneca, all these furnish the poet with illustrations of one kind or another. Sometimes they are in the form of a verse or a line remembered: sometimes they are borrowings: sometimes they are images employed from their works, or deliberate imitations: sometimes they are chance phrases, characters, human or superhuman, heroes or monsters. All this constitutes an immense and varied erudition. Not only is Dante acquainted with a great deal of the pagan world. Not only is he familiar with its clear light, its bright colours, its brilliance and artistic achievement. Not only have these things entered into his spirit, moulding and transforming his verse into new harmonies. He is
also familiar with Christian writers since the twelfth century.\(^{(1)}\) The question which concerns us in this essay is simply--: What was Dante's attitude to the Greco-Roman culture? Arising from this there is another and subsidiary question--: What element does the ancient world contribute to that ethic of human nobility and of Christian reconciliation which the poet advanced with such vigour and imaginative profundity?

It may be said that every political doctrine derives from reflection on history. In this respect, Dante is as much a political writer as Machiavelli. Like the author of "The Prince", he too read and pondered over the events of the past and compared them with the present.\(^{(2)}\) The "Life of Castruccio" is as good an example of this as any other of his writings, for in this account of a notable soldier of fortune of former times, Machiavelli preaches a political sermon for his own age. As a Christian, the works which Dante appears to have consulted most frequently and with earnest application are the "De Civitate Dei" of S. Augustine,----that immense, impassioned and fiery apocalypse----and the work so well-known to mediaeval scholars as one of the foundation documents of the science of historiography, the "Historiae adversum Paganos" of Orosius;\(^{(3)}\) Above all, he had read and meditated upon the literature of classical antiquity with that love and appreciation which only a poet could be expected to feel. In the "Aeneid", he had experienced the living breath and emotion of those former generations of men that came from Troy to establish a new empire and a new heroism in Italy. Ovid and Virgil had taught him legend, story and
myth--some beautiful and picturesque as the token of
the Golden Bough--others obscure and barbarous. Lucan
had instructed him in those events which constituted the
last stages of decadence of the Roman Republic, while its
virtues and glories appeared in the works of Livy. Before
his eyes, rose the history of our humanity, which from his
reading of the Bible as from personal experience he knew
to be great, tragic and calamitous. Like Giovambattista
Vico, Dante, illuminated by the Christian faith, was
able to recognize the essential elements of human society.
He was able to discover the laws and institutions by
which its purposes were furthered. Like Vico, he studied
the drama of history as it expressed itself vehemently and
passionately in the minds and hearts of men. For him
it was almost entirely the history of the spirit, of its
constructions and achievements in art, philosophy, religion
and politics. In this too the rich and varied elements
of the imagination find their place--myths and fantasies,
apocalyptic dreams, visions and prophecies. Linked to-
gether in indissoluble light and gloom, darkness and
brilliance are the founding of Rome and its ancient
glory, the eternal empire, both Christian and Roman, and
the heavenly city revealed to S. John on the island of
Patmos in all the beauty of holiness:
"civitatem sanctam Hierusalem novam vidi descendentem de
caelo a Deo, paratam sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo."(5)

Thus, of so many diverse and richly coloured
strands Dante weaves together a tapestry of humanism
that is peculiarly his own. It consists not only in
the gold and silver threads of that classical poetry
which was to be the delight and study of the Renaissance,
but also of the purple colour of Christian idealism which
gives to the "Divina Commedia" its high seriousness and moral purpose. It is varied, changing with the mood and intention of the author as he presents to us the characters, the virtues and vices of men. It is also combined together in a unity which is informed by the creative imagination of the great poet.
II.

No study of the place accorded to philosophy in the "Divina Commedia" could fail to begin with Aristotle. As we have already had occasion to observe, he is the animating presence in the pages of the "Convivio". His philosophy makes luminous the concepts and ideas employed by Dante in this earlier work. It is true to say that it was Aristotle who inspired Dante's general theory of human knowledge and also his conception of what is meant by human nobility. He it was who helped the poet to conduct his enquiry according to the principles of logic, and who was responsible for that ideal of a rational humanism which at that time he found so attractive. The poet borrowed much from his encyclopaedia of knowledge and from the conclusions which he propounded. In the thirteenth century and for long afterwards, these conclusions came to be regarded as the assured results of an impartial scientific investigation. In the "Divina Commedia", Aristotle holds a place of only relative importance. He is a subdued figure, always there in some demonstration or other or as a light and form in the mind. He is occasionally to be invoked with due solemnity, but he has been deposed from his office as the great lawgiver of reason which he occupied in the Four Treatises. Virgil, in the world of sin and contrition, Beatrice, in the world of spiritual illumination, S. Bernard, in the world of mystical theology, henceforth guide the poet's intellect to that consummation which was promised in the prologue.

qui vi è la sua città e l'alto seggio:  
oh felice colui cu'ivi elegge! (6)
We must admit at once that the art which is required to compose a great poem of drama and prophecy, of sin and redemption, as complex as life itself, is altogether different from that which is required for such a discussion on moral philosophy as we discover in the "Convivio". The "Divina Commedia" does not, of course, reject or in any way neglect the abstruse problems of philosophy and theology. But while in the earlier work philosophical arguments are introduced with the apparent desire to show the author's acquaintance with the methods of the schools and the practice of ordered, logical discourse, in the latter everything conforms to a general plan. Everything is in due sequence. Everything has its place in the architectonic unity of the whole. There is plenty of abstract digression and explanation with the souls in Purgatory and with the blessed in Paradise. Indeed, some of them show an astonishing interest in the speculations of the learned. However, no longer does the poet, as in the "Convivio", pursue the aims and objects of a strictly metaphysical enquiry. Now he exchanges philosophy for theology. S. Thomas Aquinas, who in the earlier work appeared in his capacity as philosopher and commentator on the works of Aristotle, the "good Brother Thomas d'Aquino" of the "Contra Gentiles", now returns as the great theologian. The poet discerns that S. Thomas is unable to afford him help beyond a theology that is strictly and dispassionately rational in method. He knows that in this writer, great as his achievements, are, magnificent as the order and range of his thought, there is above all the dry light of Aristotelian intellectualism. And, therefore, he has recourse to S Bonaventura, who as a Franciscan continues that Platonic and Augustinian tradition so long predominant in Western Christendom.
One of the characteristic doctrines of this school is that of the illumination of the human intellect by God in the act of knowledge.\(^8\) Bonaventura is, of course, one of the great masters of mystical theology, and in the doctrine which he expounds he points the way to that union of the soul with God which S. Bernard declares in accents so ardent and eloquent in the concluding cantos of the Paradise. However, the figure of Aristotle appears in the Fourth Canto of the Inferno, among those whom divine Justice has relegated to the vague and ambiguous region of Limbo.

The question of Limbo poses many difficulties and gives rise to many problems which admit of no easy solution. The name itself was unknown to Peter Lombard when he wrote his famous "Libri Quattuor Sententiarum" in the twelfth century. It appears, however, in the theological vocabulary of the thirteenth century. The various statements, definitions and views advanced by theologians of that time rather add to the confusion than in any way diminish or illuminate it. S. Thomas is content to affirm that there is a Limbo which he defines as a place of natural felicity reserved for children who die without the Sacrament of Baptism.\(^9\) In effect, Dante recognises this for there are children in the place of unsatisfied and tremulous desire.

Ciò avvenia di duoi sansa marti
ch'avean le turbe, ch'eran molto grandi,
d'infanti e di femmine e di viri.\(^{10}\)

With this controversy about the eternal destiny of unbaptized children was bound up the question of the fate of the virtuous pagans. There had long existed a more compassionate and humanistic tradition which claimed the
authority of S. Gregory the Great and the illustrious Alexandrian theologians, S. Clement and Origen. This view maintained that the virtuous pagans would be exempt from all punishment though they never hope to attain to that beatitude in the intellectual vision of God which is promised in the Gospel. Origen of course went a good deal further than this. For his doctrine of universalism maintained the ultimate redemption and reconciliation of every soul ever created after suffering a process of purification. Origen's view which was associated with a belief in the transmigration of the soul was subsequently condemned as heretical and is not likely to have exercised much influence on orthodox speculation on these matters. S. Augustine and the more severe Fathers of the Church repudiated any such notion. Christian charity was unable to rest content with this austere negation, however. There was speculation of one kind or another, and such souls came to be assigned a place in Limbo or some such analogous place where they were allowed to enjoy that degree of natural felicity which was granted to the souls of unbaptized children. Thus, the idea of a "Limbus Patrum" came to be developed by S. Thomas. In this, he defines the state of the virtuous pagans as the enjoyment of a certain tranquillity owing to the absence of pain but not that pacification which is the result of the satisfaction of desire...His exact words deserve to be quoted: ........"quietem per immunitatem poenae, sed non habebant quietem desiderii, per consecutionem finis."

In this general conception, Dante has followed S. Thomas though it is noteworthy that he has significantly refused to follow the Angelic Doctor in his statement that the pagans performed good deeds not for the love
of virtue but out of vain glory. This, of course, is S. Augustine's view and it was bound to exercise great influence on Christian eschatological opinion. In the shadowy landscape of Limbo with its pale disconsolate air, a whole mass of humanity lifts a sigh of grief and insatiable longing. These are the souls of those who are spared the exigencies of punishment and are yet excluded from contrition and reconciliation. They are condemned to the misery of desires that can never be quenched or satisfied, and of regrets that can never be appeased.

A purely human ethic would, however, have judged some of the souls detained in Limbo to be holy and righteous. In the seventh circle of Purgatory, the poet is informed by Virgil that though they were not clothed with the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (which are the spiritual endowments of Baptism), nevertheless the other virtues they had known and practised. In this passage, Virgil describes his own condition. His words are suffused with that faint melancholy which invests this idea of the love of the good which fails to achieve its object eternally.

Quivi sto io coi pargoli innocenti
dai denti morsì della morte avante
che fosser dall'umana colpa essenti;

quivi sto io con quæi che le tre sante
virtù non si vestiro, e senza vizio
conobber l'altrè e seguir tutte quante.(12)

Dante's explanation is that the righteousness of God pronounced this sentence which is inconceivable by any
merely human standards of justice. They were deprived of beatitude because they had not received the Sacrament of Baptism nor worshipped God according to those ordinances which had been revealed.\textsuperscript{(13)} The poet does not concern himself with the fate of the unbaptized infants. But he confesses his deep distress......and this is more than a passing reflection but obviously a problem which seriously disturbs his moral consciousness....at the thought of so many souls who, though they were of such eminence in their several generations, are yet irretrievably lost.\textsuperscript{(14)} These were the souls of the great philosophers whom he had but recently extolled as founders of that intellectual Athens which was for ever a pattern and example of light:

"quelle Atene celestiali, dove gli Stoici e Peripatetici e Epicurii, per la luce de la veritate eterna, in uno volere concordeomente concorrono." \textsuperscript{(15)}

Here then are the souls of those noble Romans whom Cato the elder in the Ciceronian dialogue had declared himself so eager to see again. It will be remembered how Cicero describes that world of philosophical serenity, of clear light and diffused of Virgilian charm.\textsuperscript{(16)}

But though he was compelled by the rigour of Catholic theology to assent to the exclusion of the virtuous pagans from heaven, Dante still remained the author of the "Convivio". He still preserved his ideals of Humanism, even though these were transformed and coloured by Christian mysticism and scholastic theology. In the Limbo, which he describes as constituting the first circle of the Inferno, the earlier phase of Humanism seems to return. We discover here the Elysium of Virgil and the eternal Athens of the spirit of which he had spoken with such delight and admiration in the "Convivio". It is, however, an aristocr-
cratic and exclusive humanism which Dante propounds, entirely in character with the earlier work. For in confused shadow and twilight he leaves the great mass of those obscure souls who have been relegated to this place of sighs. It is to the illustrious spirits of the ancient world that he assigns a place of privilege. Here, we find an open space where light breaks through the insufferable darkness of the valley. (17) This is where those souls of the virtuous pagans who are worthy of honour are allowed to sojourn. Thus, the idea of human nobility which had received such considered treatment in the "Convivio" is here given a new expression and a new significance. Dante is fully conscious that the Divine Wisdom recognizes human nobility, exercising a certain regard for such persons even though they were ignorant of the true Faith. He understands at once that this place belongs to those who are considered illustrious. God who consented to their perdition would not wish to subject them to ignominy. Their nobility is recognized: their worth asserted: their honour secured. Yet, the poet cannot get rid of his forebodings. He is assailed by perplexity and doubt and his anxiety reveals itself plainly in the question which he puts to Virgil:

'O tu onori scienzia ed arte,
questi chi son che hanno cotanta onranza,
che dal modo delli altri li diparte?" (18)

In answer to this, the Roman poet hastens to assure him that the brilliance and splendour of their fame have acquired for them this special grace. God must take account of their eminence and regard them with favour.
E quelli a me: 'L'onrata nominanza
che di lor suona su nella tua vita,
grazia acquista nel ciel ch’è li avanza.' (19)

In these lines may be discovered the deliberate repetition of such terms as denote human nobility and renown...we are once more in the atmosphere of the Fourth Treatise of the "Convivio" with its exaltation of Aeneas, and its praise of the Roman glory and name. Suddenly, there rises the acclamation of Virgil: a voice declares his honour in words that suggest the highest virtue and the loftiest achievement in the world of men.

Intanto voce fu per me udita:
"Onorate l'altissimo poeta:
l'ombra sua torna, ch'era dipartita." (20)

It looks as if the Aristotelian humanism of his earlier years had been allowed to revise and modify his theology in this passage. For in the "Convivio", Dante had affirmed that God Himself loves philosophy, because it is the masterpiece of reason and constitutes the highest attainment of the human spirit. (21) Moreover, God contemplates with joy the noble soul, recognizing in it the fairest of his works. "We may reasonably believe that God loves the best of human beings more than all the rest." (22)
In pursuing their way through Limbo, Dante and his companion encounter that group of famous poets of the ancient world so often recalled to mind and evoked in imagination in the pages of the *Four Treatises*—Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucan. They come forth to greet Virgil on his return. On their faces, are neither joy nor sorrow. They welcome the Florentine poet and receive him into their number, discoursing to him of such things as he has not seen fit to record. Guided by that blaze of light which shines even brighter in contrast to the surrounding darkness, the six poets arrive at the castle. This is the shelter and home of that nobility which is entirely humanistic and which has been the subject of such adulation in the "Convivio". The "noble castle" conforms to all the principles of mediaeval symbolism. It does not matter much what distinctions we draw. The seven walls represent either the seven liberal arts of the curriculum, grammar, rhetoric and dialectic forming the Trivium, while arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy constitute the Quadriumph. On this interpretation, the seven gates would symbolize the moral and intellectual virtues. Or the order may be the opposite to this as the critical edition of the Società Dantesca Italiana understands it, in which case the seven gates are the seven liberal arts and the seven walls the cardinal virtues. The river flowing by so slowly and delightfully—which the poets are able to cross as if they were treading on firm ground—has also a symbolic reference. It may perhaps allude to a disposition affirmed by Aristotle as necessary to the reception of the knowledge.
of the truth. It may have another meaning. It adds to the picturesqueness of the scene and corresponds to the Virgilian stream which Dante must have recalled.

There is an elegiac note in all this: the meadow, with its vivid green grass—the grave and reverend faces—the slow, gentle voices never raised in emotion or argument—the open space, luminous and high....in luogo aperto, luminoso e alto. (25) We find ourselves reminded irresistibly of the last chapters of the "Convivio" in which Dante is conducted to those Elysian fields which Virgil had described with such exquisite sensitiveness in the sixth book of the "Aeneid." Without doubt, the Florentine poet must have thought often of that tranquillity...the shady groves, the cool, clear light, the slow, meandering streams. Above all, Virgil had evoked a picture of that multitude of inhabitants, their repose, their serenity, their calm.

hunc circum innumerae gentes populique volabant;
ac veluti in pratis ubi apes aestate serena
floribus insidunt variis et candida circum
lilia funduntur, strepit omnis murmure campus. (26)

If we compare Dante's description it is apparent how much of the detail of this scene, its light and colour, its serene yet vague melancholy, are derived from his Latin predecessor. It is, however, a cooler, graver light, a clearer perspective which are visible over the meadows of Limbo. Virgil speaks of the shining depths of air which clothe the Elysian fields with all the soft, diffusive colours of light:
largior hic campos, et lumine vestit
purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt. (27)

Dante is obliged to introduce into the serenity and peace of the Virgilian Elysium this idea of the melancholy of an eternal grief. Theological reasons constrain him to represent by symbol and allegory the condition of an unsatisfied desire, a longing for the Supreme Good which can never be satisfied. Therefore, the scene must be grave, solemn, austere: joy only comes from the fulfilment of desire. Here there is no fulfilment, nor can there ever be consummation, the attainment of that eternal object of man's striving and endeavour.

These righteous men whom the poet describes...men noble in their lives, to employ the language of the "Convivio",...are those whom Cato in the 28th. chapter of the Fourth Treatise of that work desired ardently to see once more on the other side of the grave. (28) More than this, they are the souls whom Virgil enumerates with the music of his verse in the sixth book of the "Aeneid".....warriors who died in defence of their country, priests dedicated to the life of asceticism, poets who inspired veneration for sacred things and for the traditions of the past, wise men and artists who have adorned human life with objects of beauty in polished metal, in graven jewels, and wrought silver and gold. (29) All these whom men still love to recall as honoured in their generation and worthy of renown.

Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,
di grande autorità lor sembianti;
aplavan rado, con voci soavi. (30)
They exhibit that same tranquillity, that same calm resignation that we encounter among the pastoral delights of Virgil's Elysium. The divine judgement has been declared and it has deprived them of all expectation of eternal felicity. At least, however, they remain faithful to those ideals of nobility, of dignity and reason which animated them upon earth. These they have preserved in the forgetfulness and among the illusions of their exile from God. But since God is the source of all true and abiding satisfaction and of all joy, such experience forever eludes them.

Dante contemplates them by the side of the much-admired and patient Virgil... l'altissimo poeta.... in that clear light which gives precision to each face. From the slope of the hill the Roman poet points out to him souls of such eminence and virtue that Dante finds cause for exultation of spirit in that sight.

Colà diritto, sopra'l verde smalto, 
mi fur mostrati spiriti magni, 
che del vedere in me stesso n'essalto.(31)

It may be noted that it is the enthusiasm of a humanist which the Florentine poet feels. Perhaps it is not unfair to compare this with the eagerness with which Petrarch some thirty-seven years later gazed on the ruins of ancient Rome. He alludes to his visits with Giovanni Colonna to the vaults of the baths of Diocletian and in that clear and brilliant light of the Italian day and in the immense silence, they conversed on history and philosophy.(32) A common origin seems to have prompted the emotion of both poets. It was the spirit of humanism which made them wonder at the grandeur of classical achievement--
the glory of artists, of poets, thinkers, statesmen and heroes, the eloquence of Latin oratory, the magnificence of government and the march of armies. No doubt, the ruins of Rome have always suggested much to the imagination of cultivated men. Goethe's "Roman Elegies" will immediately spring to mind as an example of this abiding impression. It will be remembered that as a result of his pilgrimage to Rome in 1300 and the spectacle of its ruins, Giàvanni Villani was moved with the impulse to write the history of his native city, Florence.\(^{(33)}\)

In the "Convivio", Dante speaks of the walls of Rome and the very soil itself as worthy of reverence......

"Le pietre che ne le mura sue stanno siano degne di reverenzia, e lo suolo dov'ella siede sia degno oltre quello che per li uomini è predicato e approvato."\(^{(34)}\)

The Jubilee of 1300 brought enormous numbers of people from Western Europe to the mother city of their civilization. Great must have been their emotion, their rapture, and enthusiasm as they approached that Rome, hallowed by the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul, and the seat of the Papacy itself, singing the noble hymn:

\[
O \text{Roma nobilis, orbis et domina,} \\
\text{cunctarum urbium excellentissima,} \\
\text{roseo martyrnum sanguine rubea,} \\
\text{albis et virginum lilliis candida,} \\
\text{salutem dicimus tibi per omnia,} \\
\text{te benedicimus: salve per saecula.}\]
\(^{(35)}\)

For in the person of the Holy Father were gathered the imperial and the ecclesiastical dignities.

It is therefore easy to understand this sentiment
of the poet. Here once more the ethic of the "Convivio" reveals itself, that ethic of Humanism which reaches its perfection and logical conclusion in Dante's conception of Limbo. It might be said that the most fitting commentary on this is to be found in the Fourth Treatise of that work.

It is significant that among the heroes of Greece and Rome, the poet placed the illustrious Saladin. Though a Moslem, this renowned prince serves as the model of chivalry, wherever the science of arms receives honour. In the "Convivio" he had been mentioned as an example of generous and soldierly munificence..." of courtesy and kindness. (36) Not far away are the masters of learning and among them the two most brilliant philosophers of Islam, Averroes and Avicenna. In the first group mentioned by the poet, with the exception of the Arab prince who stands apart, all are Roman, for Electra was the mother of Dardanus.

The names which are introduced at this point and in the particular order in which they occur seem to indicate the dramatic moments of Roman history as established by the eternal counsel. Saladin makes his appearance because the poet takes up once more the theme of human nobility and among so many heroic warriors he has his high and enduring fame.

As the type of this ideal of human nobility, Aristotle is
seated in the midst of the philosophical family. In the "Convivio", as we have already seen, he has been honoured by many epithets of adulation and enthusiasm. Now he is the object of admiration and contemplation of the other philosophers who surround him, regarding him as "the master of those who know" (il maestro di color che sanno).\(^{28}\) In this passage at any rate, there is complete agreement with the view which was expressed in the earlier work which celebrated the achievements of Aristotle in so many different phrases. Among those pupils whose opinions he helped to form, among those thinkers whose teaching from the time of the Ionian speculations prepared the way for his own philosophy, among those also who perfected and continued his work, Aristotle still occupies that place as "the master of human reason" which was assigned to him in the "Convivio." If Socrates and Plato are conceded a proximity to him which the others do not enjoy, it is because they are the predecessors of one to whom nature has most clearly revealed her secrets.\(^{39}\)

Around these three great men, we discover—in some confusion—the heads of the various philosophical schools, according to the enumeration of the verse.

Democrito, che'l mondo a caso pone,
Diogenès, Anassagora e Tale,
Empedoclès, Eraclito e Zenone;

e vidi il buono accoglitore del quale,
Dioscoride dico; e vidi Orfeo,
Tullio e Lino e Seneca morale; \(^{39A}\)

After Dioscorides, famous for his medical treatise on
the virtues of plants, appears the enigmatic figure of Orpheus. As a student of Ovid, Dante in the Second Treatise of the "Convivio" seems to have recognized him as the symbol of moral and didactic verse. In this work, he had paid a tribute to Cicero as the writer, who, by his lucid and varied prose, and by his noble sentiments, had in the "De Amicitia" inspired him with the love of philosophy. Next in succession comes Linus, the poet-musician, son of Apollo and personification of the dirge, whom Virgil recalls in the Eclogues.

There follows many illustrious names among which we may note Ptolemy, astronomer, mathematician and geographer, who in the second century of the Christian era elaborated that cosmological system which was current during the Middle Ages. It is obvious from his writings that Dante possessed an extensive knowledge of this scheme and that he employed it with imaginative as well as with scientific insight. His profound interest in astronomical speculation is apparent everywhere. It is, therefore, not surprising that he has found a place for Ptolemy among the wise, the noble and the learned. We may observe too how the medical art is represented—is this an instance of professional interest or was Dante's membership of the Guild of Doctors and Druggists at Florence merely nominal? Hippocrates is here in his capacity as the founder of Greek Medicine, as also Avicenna (Ibn, Sina) venerated by the Mediaeval Schools for his commentaries on Aristotle, in which there exists a strong Platonist influence. In the domain of science, Avicenna was equally famous for his great compendium of medical knowledge, the "Canon", which became the general textbook of medical practice in Western Europe during the later Middle Ages.
It will be remembered that the poet had referred to his opinion with respect several times in the "Convivio". Galen also is named, whose "Ars Medica" or "Tegni" receives mention in the earlier work. The name of Avicenna serves to introduce another brilliant Arab scholar, Ibn Roschd, the Averroes of the Scholastics, constantly quoted, constantly cited as an authority, constantly on the lips of all professional theologians and philosophers for the breadth of his learning and the perspicuity of his understanding. He was a physician as well as a philosopher, but chiefly famous as the author of the "Great Commentary" in which he explains and elucidates the text of Aristotle. Every University in the Middle Ages was familiar with his name, and he exerted a considerable influence upon the great Scholastic theologians. S. Albert, The Great, valued his teaching, though he seems to have interpreted his doctrine of the "Intellectus agens" in the light of the Augustinian theory of knowledge. Dante has accorded to him a solemn commemoration and dedication in the words:

Averoís, che'il gran comento feco.

The poet, ignores the fact that the Latin Averroists have torn from their context the two doctrines of the eternity of the world and the unity of the active intellect. In their strict meaning, both these doctrines must be considered irreconcilable with Christian ideas about the creation of the world and the immortality of the individual soul. It may be that the tolerance, if not indulgence, which Dante shows towards contemporary Averroism, was derived from his association with Guido Cavalcanti, as M. Renucci suggests.
professed those doctrines of Averroes which came under the condemnation of the Church. In this passage, Dante is concerned only with the brilliant and learned commentator on Aristotle. Averroes is brought on the scene last of all, perhaps as indicating that his labours represent the modern and enlightened interpretation of the Peripatetic teaching.
The enumeration of distinguished names follows Mediaeval convention. It further demonstrates that in the "Divina Commedia", as in the expressly rationalistic "Convivio", Aristotle retains his place as head of the family of philosophers. "It is therefore not enough," writes M. Etienne Gilson,"to say: 'To Dante as to almost all the thinkers of his time, Aristotle is the highest philosophical authority': it is necessary with him to regard that authority as a right to the exercise of a command." (46) From Thales to Socrates and Plato, the philosophers of Ionia and Grecia are merely the forerunners of the truth. They look forward through the obscure shadows of their faltering vision to the clear light of Aristotelian science. Nor have those who came after Aristotle any greater claim to knowledge. With the exception of the Stoics, they have made no contribution to Ethics and Philosophy. For all their nobility of sentiment, their moral rectitude, Cicero and Seneca were eloquent interpreters of the Greek philosophical schools and no more. They have only a borrowed light which they direct upon the path. Soon, of course, Petrarch will take the contrary view, maintaining the superiority of the Latin to the Greek genius. No doubt, this was partly due to his almost entire ignorance of Greek, partly again to his cultivation and love of the Latin tongue. Certainly, his emulation of Virgil in the "Africa" and in the slow, sweet music of the "Carmen Bucolicum" are sufficient to explain his admiration for the literature of ancient Rome. Few men outside classical times have achieved a more eloquent Latin and Petrarch's achievement is never a mere "imitatio Veterum." (47) Not one single line of Italian prose by this author has survived.
His letters, delightful, lucid, vivid and descriptive are really Latin essays, sometimes reminiscent of Cicero, sometimes of Augustine in the rhythm which they reproduce, sometimes of Seneca in philosophical mood. His love of solitude, his delight in the changing colours of jewels, in gold and silver and marbles of yellow and rose, are familiar aspects of his genius. In books he finds his satisfaction and peace.\["medullitus delectant...et viva quadam nobis arguta familiaritate iunguntur."\][48]

According to Dante, there can be no hesitation in ascribing to Euclid, Galen and Ptolemy new discoveries in their various fields of knowledge. When all this has been said, however, it must be admitted that their specific doctrines as well as their methods of investigation continue the work which was begun by Aristotle. They thus merely gather the fruits of his genius.

The philosophical family here described includes all the sciences and thus appears to correspond to the encyclopaedic character of Aristotle's achievement. As we have already observed, we encounter legendary poets like Orpheus and Linus, who were inspired by the gods and who disclosed certain esoteric doctrines about the origin of the world.\[49\] In so far as the Aristotelian philosophy is encyclopaedic, it must take account of all forms of human thought and speculation, omitting nothing from its enquiry. In the "Metaphysics", the Stagirite declares that a rational philosophy must consider carefully the images, ideas and myths which belong to religion.\[50\] The scientific spirit, he affirms, in its primitive efforts to understand the universe, expresses itself in this way and is coloured and shaped by religious concepts. Thales, Empedocles and Heracleitus
are there. By empirical observations, by induction and generalization they have constructed their theories of nature which are sometimes imaginative, sometimes capricious but often illuminating. Democritus has tried to establish a scientific explanation of the world in the theory of atoms which he elaborated and developed from Leucippus. The poet was well aware that Democritus excluded from his cosmology any notion of final cause, or of a supreme intelligence ordering all things to the realization of purpose. He sums up this philosophy accurately enough:

Democrito che il mondo a caso pone.

Yet the poet was unwilling to allow a name so illustrious to be lost among the blasphemers and to be numbered among the enemies of religion. He knew by tradition something of Democritus' passion for the truth and fiery quest for knowledge. In the "Convivio", he had written with veneration of "the most eminent philosophers" who "treated all other things save wisdom with indifference," and among these he had included Democritus. Alone among the ancient philosophers, on account of his resolute denial of the immortality of the human soul, Epicurus is condemned to eternal punishment. In the sixth circle of Hell, Dante will see him with his modern disciples imprisoned in the burning sepulchres of the Città Dolorosa.

Suo cimitero da questa parte hanno
con Epicuro tutt'ì suoi seguaci,
che l'anima col corpo morta fanno.

There is a completely different point of view in the "Convivio", however. Here, Dante had spoken of the Epicureans as dwelling with the Stoics and Peripatetics in the celestial Athens in the light of eternal truth.

How shall we explain this change of opinion? Perhaps
it is because the poet has come to regard the Epicureans as the Sophists from whom the modern heretics in Italy (and in Florence in particular) derived their perverse doctrines. These men were the enemies of the Roman Church and the supporters of the Ghibelline faction.

To deny eternal life and divine judgment comes to seem an almost blasphemous offence against the righteousness of God. It is for Dante a repudiation of any idea of the moral order of the universe. On the other hand, he will concede a place to those early philosophers with their speculations about the physical constitution of the world. Aristotle's theory of knowledge implies a method, a definite mode of procedure, an art of investigation, careful, patient, logical. Moreover, Aristotle founded his encyclopaedia of the sciences on the labours of those who had already studied various phenomena of nature and constructed their own tentative theories.

In the "Convivio", the poet had declared that the philosopher must first of all possess a knowledge of all the sciences. He must make himself the pupil of the most eminent teachers in each branch of study. The Aristotelian synthesis has been made out of the work of mathematicians, astronomers, natural philosophers and physicians. Without their efforts, Aristotelianism as an ordered system of knowledge could have no existence at all.
Notes to Chapter Ten: Philosophy in the Ancient World.

   Umberto Cosmo: "L'ultima ascesa. Introduzione allo studio
del Paradiso." (Bari: 1936).
   L. Cicchitto: "Postille bonaventuriane-dantesche."
   (Rome: 1940).

   "Nicolaus Machavellus ad magnificum Laurentium Medicum......
   una lunga esperienza delle cose moderne e una continua
   lezione delle antiche."

   Essay on Dante's Obligations to the "Ormista". pp. 121-136.

   Croce writes explaining his formula: "il racconto..........  
   ......cerca sempre il vero moto negli intelletti e nei 
   cuori."


   There is His city and His lofty seat.  O happy the man
   he chooses to be there!:

   On the question of the Thomism of Dante consult:
   E. Gilson: "Dante the Philosopher". Part IV: Philosophy in
   Bruno Nardi: "Nel Mondo di Dante. Il tomismo di Dante

   Haec lux est inaccessibilis, et tamen proxima animae etiam
   plus quam ipsa sibi. Est tamen inalligabilis et tamen summe
   intima.

   art I sqq: art 6.
   For a general commentary on this canto see:
These came from grief without torments that was borne by the crowds, which were vast, of men and women and little children.


There I abide with little innocents seized by the fangs of death before they were cleared of human guilt, there I abide with those who were not clothed with the three holy virtues but without sin knew the others and followed them every one.

Per t'ai difetti, non per altro rio,
semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi,
che senza spera vivemo in disio.

For such defects and not for any guilt, we are lost and only so far afflicted that without hope we live in desire.


Gran duol mi prese al cor quando lo'ntesi,
perb che gente di molto valore
conobbi che'n quel limbo eran sospesi.

Great grief seized me at heart when I heard this, for I knew people of much worth who were suspended in that Limbo.

see note in Busnelli-Vandelli edition.


Quid? quod sapientissimus quisque aequissimo animo
moritur, stultissimus iniquissimo? Nonne vobis videtur
is animus, qui plus cernat et longius, videre se ad meliora
proficiisci, ille autem, cuius obtusior sit acies, non
videre? Equidem efforor studio patres vestros, quos
colui et dilexi, videndi, neque vero eos solos convenire
aveo quos ipse cognovi, sed illos etiam de quibus audivi
et ipse conscripsi.

Non era lunga ancor la nostra via
di qua dal sonno, quand'io vidi un foco
ch 'emisperio di tenebre vincia.

Di lungi v'eravamo ancora un poco,
ma non sl, ch'io non discernessi in parte
ch'orveol gente possedea quel loco.

We had not gone far from where I slept when I saw a blaze of light which was enclosed in a hemisphere of darkness.

We were still a short distance from it, yet not so far but that I partly made out that an honourable company occupied that place.

0 thou who honourest both science and art, who are these who have such honour that it sets them apart from the conditions of the rest?
And he said to me: 'Their honourable fame, which resounds in thy life above, gains favour in Heaven which thus advances them.'

At that moment I heard a voice: 'Honour the lofty poet! His shade returns that left us.'
Cf. Luigi Pietrobono: op. cit. pp. 298-308.


Thus we went on as far as the light, talking of things which were fitting for that place and of which it is well now to be silent.


There were people with grave, low eyes and with looks of great authority: they spoke seldom, with gentle voices.
31. Inferno: IV:118-120.
There before me on the enamelled green were shown to me the great spirits by the sight of whom I am uplifted in myself.
Cf. the very interesting interpretation of Luigi Pietrobono:
Nella figurazione degli spiriti magni del Limbo Dante intese correggere quel che di eccessivo gli parve di aver loro attribuito nel 'Convivio'. La filosofia, dice ora, ove creda di bastare a se stessa, si apparta in un mondo nè triato nè lieto e rimane sospesa tra il desiderio e la nessuna speranza di giungere alla felicità che sola è vera. Se vuole ornarsi di quel riso, che pure è capace di avere, non pretenda di diventar la rivale che trionfa, ma l'ancella che serve a Beatrice liberamente e gioiosamente, tanto da mostrare nel suo aspetto le primezze dell'eterno piacere. Dal 'verde smalto' su cui posano gli spiriti magni, ascenda al 'sommo smalto' del Purgatorio, dove passeggia e danza e canta Matelda, la vera sapienza, a cui il conoscere è ugualmente in cura, ma 'tanto che basti'; dal 'cerchio superno' dell'Inferno, ossia dal suo 'primo grado', salga al 'grado superno' della santa montagna, e ritroverà se stessa, ma talmente mutata da sè che quasi non si riconosce. La sua somiglianza con Matelda non la faccia cadere in errore. Da sola, essa non conduce ad adorar debitamente Dio. Inizia bensì l'ascensione dell'intelletto umano, ma non la compie; rende l'immagine della sapienza, ma così come il 'verde smalto' del nobile castello può paragonarsi alla divina 'foresta spessa e viva' del paradiso terrestre.


33. Giovanni Villani: Cronica VIII: 36.

Cf. Goethe: Römische Elegien. (i).
Saget, Steine, mir an, o spricht, ihr hohen Paläste!
Strassen, redet ein Wort! Genius, regst du dich nicht?
Ja, es ist alles beseelt in deinen heiligen Mauern,
Ewige Roma! nur mir schweigt noch alles so still.
Oh, wer flüstert mir zu, an welchem Fenster erblick' ich
Einst das holde Geschöpf, das mir versengend erquickt?
Esule anch'io, pensoso di te, di te sempre pensoso,
Roma, non fra gli intensi barbari Ovidio sono:

sqq.

Cui non è ancora lo buono re di Castella, o il Saladino, o il buono Marchese di Monferrato, o il buono Conte di Tolosa; o Beltramo dal Bornio, o Galasso di Montefeltro? Quando de le loro messioni si fa menzione, certo non solamente quelli che ciò farebbero volentieri, ma quelli prima morire vorrebbero che ciò fare, amore hanno a la memoria di costoro.

36 A. U. Foscolo: I Sepolcri. 239.

e solo in parte vidi 'l Saladino.

Ipocrate, Avicenna e Galieno,
Averola, che'l gran compimento feo.


quivi vidi 'Io Socrate e Platone,
che 'nnanzi alli altri più presso li stanno;

Ovidio che
sì come quando dice, Orfeo facea con la cetera mansuetè le fiere, e li arbori e le pietre a se muoverè; che vuol dire che lo savio uomo con lo strumento de la sua voce fa(r)ia mansuescere e umiliare li crudeli cuori, e fa(r)ia muovere a la sua volontade coloro che non hanno vita di scienza e d'arte:


Carmine dum tali silvas animosque ferarum
Threicius vates et saga sequentia ductit.


Iste Orpheus primo induxit homines ad habitandum simul et fuit pulcherrimus concionator, ita quod homines bestiales et solitarios reducere ad civilitatem. Et propter hoc dicitur de eo quod fuit optimus citharaeus, intantum quod fecti vel faceret lapides saltare, idest ita fuit pulchre concionator, quod homines lapideos emollivit.
41. Convivio: II:XII:3.


44. Inferno: IV:144.


As an example of Petrarch's Latin verse, perhaps the famous description of the storm at Valchiusa will serve as well as any other passage:

Video pereuntis tempora mundi
praecipiti transire fuga, moventia circum
agmina conspicio iuvenumque senumque: nec usquam
tuta statio, non toto portus in orbe
patet, optatae non spes patet ulla salutis.
Funera crebra quidem, quocumque paventia flecto
lumina, conturbant aciem; perplexa feretris
templo gemunt, passimque simul sine honore cadaver
nobile plebeiumque iacet. Subit ultima vitae
hora animum: casusque mei meminisse coactus,
heu! caros abiisse greges, et amica retracto
colloquia, et dulces subito vanescere vultus,
telluremque sacram assiduis non deesse sepulcris."


52. Aristotle. Metaphysics: 985 b:5-20 and C.
   De Anima: A.2. 405a:8.
   S. Thomas refers to Democritus in his "Commentary on the Sentences" (In Senten: 3:1:2) and also in his
   "Commentary on the Metaphysics" (I Metaph: 7:112), both of which would have been known to Dante.
Per che li filosofi eccellentissimi ne li loro atti apertamente lo ne dimostrarò, per li quali sapemo essi tutte l'altre cose, fuori che la sapienza, averle messe a non calere. Onde Democrito, de la propria persona non curando, nè barba nè capelli nè unghie si togliea.

In this part Epicurus and all his followers who make the soul die with the body have their burial place:


ibid: III:X:8 - XII:5.

Per quest'agione, in ciascuna arte e in ciascuno mestiere li artefici e li discendenti sono, ed esser deono, subietti al principe e al maestro di quelle, in quelli mestiere ed in quella arte;
CHAPTER ELEVEN.

PHILOSOPHY REAFFIRMED.

I.

Thus according to Dante, in the green shadows of the meadow by the "noble castle", the great souls of the ancient world find an eternal but fruitless repose. The castle affords shelter and protection to those eloquent schools of learning so famous throughout the centuries, so brilliant in their achievement. Throughout the "Divina Commedia", we get echoes and reminiscences of the enthusiastic humanism of the "Convivio". This work, as we have seen, with its glorification of human nobility, discovered its perfect example of the universal intelligence in Aristotle. But the blaze of light(1) which illuminates these chosen spirits has nothing in common with that light which transfigures with love and knowledge, and suffuses with warmth and compassion, the souls of the blessed in Heaven. The eternal Athens presented for our contemplation in Limbo is a place of sadness and melancholy. It is a place of infinite though restrained sorrow. Yet it can be called serene and even tranquil. Its real nature is determined by the fact that it is a place of suspense in which the virtuous must remain for ever unsatisfied. It is no longer, therefore, that same Athens which in a moment of spiritual exaltation the author of the "Convivio" described, where the three philosophical schools, Stoics, Peripatetics, Epicureans, pursued, by the light of reason, the task of a common enquiry into the truth. An insurmountable barrier now interposes itself between their desire and its fulfillment. A wall of eternal darkness surrounds that narrow,
circumscribed region of light in which a humanism, purely secular, celebrates its sad and futile triumphs.

The poet now speaks with the accents of the Christian theologian. And in the question of the salvation of the pagans, he professes a doctrine, more severe, more uncompromising, than that of S. Thomas. He declares that those who have not received Baptism can never attain to the Beatific Vision. It is Virgil himself who recalls this teaching to the mind of the poet:

Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che piü andi,
ch'ei non peccaro; e s'elli hanno mercedi,
non basta, perché non ebber battesmo,
ch'è porta della fede che tu credi.(2)

Certainly Plato and Aristotle, Virgil and Cicero have had some intimation of the truth. They have been able to recognize the existence of Divine Providence and Divine Justice. In the view of S. Thomas, this may have implied some presumption of their salvation. In affirming this, of course, we must also take into account the opinion of the Angelic Doctor that the pagans performed their good deeds, not from love of virtue, but from vain-glory. Dante repudiates any such idea. Theirs is a real virtue, a true morality. It is however worth noting that according to common Mediaeval tradition Virgil, in the Fourth Eclogue, had been divinely inspired to proclaim the coming of the Saviour. Dante, however, deserts the tradition of S. Thomas, in not allowing that the virtuous pagans are capable of enjoying eternal felicity. Yet, he cannot evade the problem of God's justice. He returns to it again and again, always with an obvious perplexity, an evident doubt. It is a question which seems to cause
him anxiety. In the sphere of Jupiter, the imperial eagle, symbol of eternal Justice, conjectures the poet's disquietude:

ch'è tu dicevi: 'Un uom nasce alla riva dell'Indo, e quivi non è che ragioni' di Cristo nè chi legga nè chi scriva;
e tutti suoi voleri e atti boni sono, quanto ragione umana vede, sanza peccato in vita od in sermoni.

Muore non battezzato e sanza fede:
ov'è questa giustizia che'l condanna? ov'è la colpa sua, se ei non crede?'(3)

However, the Eagle replies in the same manner and with the same appeal to the inscrutable nature of the Supreme Wisdom, which we find in the book of Job, in which God answers his servant with lofty eloquence out of the whirlwind.(4) In a way, this recalls the stern rebuke which, in the "Convivio", Dante administered to those who repudiated any idea of the Roman Empire as divinely elected to exercise rule and dominion. (5)

Or tu chi se' che vuo' sedere a scranna,
per giudicardi lunghi mille miglia con la veduta corta d'una spanna?

..............................

Oh terreni animali! oh menti grosse!
La prima volontà, ch'è da sè bona,
da sè, ch'è sommo ben, mai non si mosse.
Cotanto è giusto quanto a lei consona:
nullo creato bene a sè la tira,
ma essa, radiando lui cagiona.\textsuperscript{(6)}

And with a fierce movement of its wings, the Eagle continues in words of derision if not of contempt:

Roteando cantava, e dicea: 'Quali son le mie note a te, ch'non le'ntendi, 
tal è il giudicio eterno a voi mortali'.\textsuperscript{(7)}

Obviously this is no proper answer but merely a confession that we do not know and cannot understand. It merely serves to emphasize Dante's concern for the souls of the virtuous pagans. He cannot explain why they are deprived of the joy of Heaven. There is no rational explanation. He can only take refuge in the idea of the Divine Wisdom which preserves its inscrutable secrets. There are heights and depths in the knowledge of God which are not to be discovered by man. "\textit{O altitudo divitiarum sapientias, et scientiae Dei: quam incomprehensibilia sunt judicia ejus et investigabiles viae ejus.}\textsuperscript{(8)}"

Through the words spoken by Virgil he expresses all that sorrow, both intellectual and moral, which the souls in Limbo are compelled to endure in their separation from God, the fountain of goodness, and the object of all their desires. To this anxiety, this despondency, to this insatiable craving for the Good, we find an added burden in the knowledge that reason is limited and fallible in its conclusions. It cannot reach that certitude for which it longs. Dante maintains that the endeavour of the wise and noble among the ancients could not succeed. It was bound to fail, to end in that overwhelming sadness of the vast silence.
"The senses cannot penetrate into intellectual truth; neither they nor the natural reason can search into the things that are of the Spirit of God; the Spirit of God knows them, but no creature of himself". (9) So S. Thomas affirms in words which are characteristic of his whole philosophy. This it is which Dante explains in the familiar words:

Matto è chi sperà che nostra ragione possa trascorrer la infinita mia che tiene una sustanza in tre persone. (10)

It is easy to see what a change of attitude is shown here from the fervent humanism of the "Convivio". Dante defines, in terms, which are new and distinctive, the part played by ancient philosophy in the history of the human spirit. He is careful to limit the sphere which belongs to reason and philosophy. It is true, of course, that sometimes we discover a certain restraint and reticence in the "Convivio" where he speaks of what may or may not be accomplished by metaphysical enquiry. This is thoroughly Aristotelian in manner. In many instances, Dante declares, like Siger de Brabant, the need of appealing to faith as a way of arriving at philosophical certainty in controverted or doubtful issues. (11) Yet, on reading the "Convivio", one might well get the impression that the poet had no hesitation in suggesting a metaphysical definition of God. Moreover, it would seem that the God who is thus affirmed and described differs little from the God as conceived by the philosopher. We may remind ourselves of the terms which are here employed: most universal of all causes...sometimes identified with the order of Nature and sometimes constituting Nature itself: spiritual and intelligible sun:
supremely intelligible and most simple of all substances. All these may serve to remind us of the conception of the Prime Mover in Aristotle, or of the immanent Reason of the Stoics, or of the complex and many-coloured strands in the Platonic notion of the Good. It is only in the "Divina Commedia" that God of the Bible makes His appearance, under the theological aspect of One Substance in three Persons. In such a conception, there is a clear opposition if not contradiction to all purely philosophical interpretations. God, in this polarity of thought, escapes all those images and analogies which the human intellect can devise. He is a Being Whose nature can only be known by revelation. When Dante affirms this, he means the text of Scripture as that has been received and made known by the infallible authority of the Catholic and Roman Church. And, in the same way, the actions of such a God are incomprehensible in themselves and expressive of His sovereign will and purpose. They can, therefore, never become the object of a rational enquiry, nor are they capable of rational justification. It is evident that here we have something of Otto's sense of the numinous, that "mysterium tremendum et fascinosum", which is adduced as the origin of religious experience. (12)

It is not suggested that the Catholic conception of the Godhead finds no place in the "Convivio". After all, Dante is a Christian thinker and a loyal son of the Holy Roman Church. But it is certainly true to say that such an idea does not enter into, penetrate and illumine the book as it does the "Divina Commedia". It is alien to the spirit of Classical Humanism which we discover there. One employs the term "classical humanism" advisedly, for that is the proper description
of the character of the earlier work, despite its faint colour of Christian faith which in no way alters features and lineaments. If we take the "Convivio" as a whole, its aim and principle is founded upon the experience and operation of reason. In this, as we have already demonstrated, Dante pursues the ideals of the Aristotelian method and investigation. The "Divina Commedia" is committed to a different presupposition altogether.

It declares with vehemence and passion that faith transcends all those categories which may be called rational. It cannot be conformed to them. It cannot be interpreted by such purely human and limited modes of understanding. This point of view is expressed many times. It is implicit as well as explicit. It is profound and subtle in its statement, and it is the assumption which underlies all the drama, the sorrow, the agony, the pain, the joy, and reconciliation of the Comedy. Such a point of view is in direct contradiction to the philosophical ideals of the "Convivio". There the poet proposes the model of rational argument and conclusion, the careful and logical examination of propositions, the lucidity of what is evident to experience and thought. Revelation is, it is true, accorded some place in this scheme, but it is merely to furnish instruction. In the discussion on the immortality of the soul, the poet introduces various arguments which purport to be rational and objective considerations. Finally, however, he speaks of the teaching of Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Light: "the Way because by it we enter without hindrance into the happiness of immortality: the Truth because it is not liable to any error: the Light because it illumines us in the darkness of worldly ignorance." Revelation gives certainty to what would otherwise not be completely
certain: it is an additional light by which we may see clearly in this life in which we are aware of the shadow of darkness "owing to the mixture of mortal and immortal". (14) In other words, the doctrine of Christ is a light when reason is not perfectly clear, and when the intellect moves in obscurity. Such an understanding of revelation in no way brings in the incomprehensible, the "mysterium tremendum et fascinosum" of the original and primitive religious consciousness. Revelation remains subject to the categories of rational proof. For Dante, at this stage of his thought, grace implies no opposition to nature—-in this, of course, there is nothing unorthodox since S. Thomas himself said the same—and revelation must necessarily agree with the deliverances of the human intellect. This must be so since both Faith and Reason proceed from the one principle of truth. There is again nothing to which the most rigid conception of Catholic theology could take exception here. The emphasis which is laid upon philosophy in this work, however, has by some been held to point to the position of the Latin Averroists. Signor Nardi affirms that with some audacity, Dante has introduced various elements of purely Averroistic philosophy into his writings without falling into heresy. (15) This view has encountered the powerful opposition of M. Etienne Gilson. Nevertheless, it has something to commend it. For Averroes, Philosophy constitutes the ideal of knowledge. Theology he regards as an inferior kind of speculation because it is neither wholly reason nor wholly faith but a mixture of both. In the "Convivio", we discover a similar regard for Philosophy as the ideal of knowledge whose end is defined as "true happiness which is attained by the contemplation of the truth". (cost fine de la Filosofía è quella
eccellentissima dilezione che non pate alcuna intermissione o vero difetto, cioè vera felicitade che per contemplazione de la veritate s'acquista.)

Dante does not, of course, follow Averroes in the opinion which he entertains of Theology which, as we have observed, is for him the most pre-eminent and luminous of the sciences. What is true is that in the Four Treatises, one becomes conscious of various irreconcileable elements of thought, various tendencies and doctrines which are never completely fused together, but are like the colours and texture of an imperfect piece of glass. Signor Nardi has called attention to this aspect of Dante's culture, in which he discerns fragmentary recollections of philosophy and theology which are opposed to each other and which lead to the position taken in the "De Monarchia", where there is distinct separation of rational Philosophy from revealed Theology. (17) In the "Convivio", philosophy presents itself as the ideal, the light, the perfection of knowledge. It would seem that in this work the poet is unwilling to concede any break in the spiritual development of mankind by the divine intervention. Aristotelian rationalism blends with strange Platonic mysticism. Nowhere is the order of reason superseded or invalidated.

On the other hand, in the "Divina Commedia", the Incarnation causes a complete break in the whole of human history. It establishes a line of demarcation beyond which the claims of reason may not advance. Beyond this, too, all philosophical speculation becomes mere conjecture and idle illusion. There is no path by which the science of Metaphysics may be conducted to the truth of Revelation. However, sublime the Aristotelian concept of God as Prime Mover may be, however luminous the Idea of the Good, however removed from mere appearance
and the Immanent Reason of the Universe, none of these ideas come near the truth of the living God of the Bible. In all this, Dante follows the theological opinion of the Schools. He admits of no intellectual or moral impediment to the use of reason in its efforts to discover the existence of God and what can be known of Him in the phenomena of nature. Philosophy, therefore, in this view...which is the traditional Scholastic approach...becomes a preparatory study for theology. Its business is to demonstrate, to establish the existence of God by rational argument. S. Thomas expresses this view on many occasions, laying down the principles which determine the method of the Scholastic system:

"Christian theology", he affirms in a characteristic statement, "issues from the light of faith, philosophical truth from the natural light of reason. Philosophical truths cannot be opposed to the truths of faith, they fall short, indeed, yet they also admit common analogies: and some moreover are foreshadowings, for nature is the preface to grace." (18)

This is merely the application of a principle implicitly affirmed in S. Paul's well-known passage to the Romans in which he rebukes the pagans for not having been able to draw the conclusion from their perception of the creation that God exists. Reason gave them sufficient light to see, yet they did not or would not consider what were the logical and metaphysical consequences of what they saw. (19)

If man had been permitted to gather the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam in his natural curiosity would not have sinned. There
would then have been no need for the Word to have become flesh for the redemption of His creature. Man, having the light, divine knowledge in the intellect, would in this earthly life have come to be like God. This is what the poet declares in the seventh canto of the "Paradiso" in which, with glowing words and sweep and range of imagination, he sets forth the whole story of man's redemption. Here we find the true centre of the "Divina Commedia". The drama of salvation is represented with that magnificence that we remember in the art of Michelangelo. By it men are justified, doomed, punished and sanctified.

ché più largo fu Dio a dar sè stesso
per far l'uom sufficiente a rilevarsi,
che s'elli avesse sol da sè dimesso;

e tutti li altri modi erano scarsi
alla giustizia, se'l Figliuol di Dio
non fosse umiliato ad incarnarsi.(20)
II.

Here then in Limbo Dante would seem to assert the vain endeavour of the ancient philosophers to comprehend the fullness of truth. Here, it is that we encounter the emotion of Virgil in the sad and lonely place. Here, the melancholy of those great men, Plato and Aristotle, is apparent in the brilliant green of the meadow. On earth they desired ardently to know the source of all goodness and the principle of all being. They now know with Virgil that the god of the philosophers is but a dim and obscure image beside the burning righteousness of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They realize that the most sublime doctrines advanced by the Platonists and Stoics could not really prepare the human mind for the idea of a God incarnate and suffering for the redemption of mankind. By the mere sentence of condemnation they have learned the principles of divine Justice. But they can never receive that grace, that endowment of the light of glory by which Dante Alighieri the Christian will contemplate the Beatific Vision on that fourteenth day of April in the year 1300, being the Feast of Easter. As he writes in the concluding paragraph of the Letter to Can Grande della Scala:

\[ \text{Inde est quod ad ostendendum gloriae beatitudinis in illis animabus, ab eis, tanquam videntibus omnem veritatem, multa quaerentur quae magnam habent utilitatem et delectationem. Et quia, invento principio seu primo, videlicet Deo, nihil est quod ulterius quaeratur, quum sit Alpha et O, idest principium et finis, ut visio \text{\textsuperscript{lofianis designat}, benedictus in saecula saeculorum.} \]

(21)

In writing the Four Treatises, the poet did not altogether ignore the problem of the salvation of the
virtuous pagans of the ancient world. He knew that it had been the subject of prolonged reflection and controversy. Without any regard for ecclesiastical disputes, he had represented them as dwelling, with Cato the elder, in a Ciceronian realm of light and serene contemplation. In this phase of his thought he finds a purely humanistic delight in reconciling the Christian mystery with the ideals of the Greco-Latin world, its poetry, its philosophy, its art, its civilization. The "Divina Commedia" breaks away from all this, however. It restores the primacy of revelation. Probably Dante wished to make some amends for the enthusiasm which he had previously shown for the intellectual and moral qualities of the ancients. This may be the reason why the Castle of that Human Learning, which he had formerly celebrated in the "Convivio" with all the felicitous phrases of the Canzoni and the prose-commentaries, stands surrounded by the seven walls and the seven gates. Either the walls or the gates symbolize the seven cardinal virtues described by Aristotle in the "Nicomachean Ethics". Human knowledge is no longer a thing of glory and renown. It cannot regard its achievements with any feeling of satisfaction or of complacency. Rather, it is a noble failure, since it never attains to that wisdom which is perfection, joy and consolation. It never reaches that "contemplation of the truth" which in the "Convivio" the poet had propounded as the end of Philosophy and which alone can afford true happiness. It must be remarked again however, that it is the mood of Humanism which induces Dante, to assure to the virtuous pagans a place of repose in meadows of Virgilian delight and of grave, sweet tranquillity. The theological austerity which is manifest
throughout the "Divina Commedia" seems to be put aside for a short time. Dante resumes for a moment the character of the young and eager poet of the "Convivio", the philosopher, the lover of language, the admirer of all artistic excellence. As we have seen, S. Thomas himself, moved as he must have been by his enthusiasm for the brilliance of Aristotle, had hoped for the salvation of the great men of the past. He had expressed such a hope and indeed regarded it as probable. There existed, however, a strong and determined opposition to this view, and an insistence that such souls were irretrievably under sentence of damnation. It is not until the time of the great Jesuit theologian, Cardinal Juan de Lugo, in the seventeenth century, that more moderate counsels prevail. According to this view, those outside the communion of the Church, whether Moslems, Jews, or Pagans, are capable of attaining to salvation in so far as they use what elements of good are to be discovered in their own religions. 

Dante is obviously reaching out for this interpretation of the Faith but it evades him, since it had not received formulation among the theologians of his own time. It is only after the Council of Trent, with the dissolution of the Western Church and the schism of the Protestants, that the question forces itself upon the minds of religious men.

Even in the twelfth century Peter Damian had, in the name of Christian truth, hurled anathemas at the poets of Greece and Rome. In the sphere of Saturn, however, Dante, who recognized in him one of the great spiritual reformers of the Church and a master of the contemplative life, celebrated the joy of his eternal triumph. In spite
of this, however, and in spite of his regard for pre-eminent sanctity, the poet maintains against him the view of a Christian Humanism which preserves above all things its illuminism and sense of compassion.

Even up to the time of the Renaissance and beyond there were those who refused to be convinced by Dante. There were many who, in spite of the melancholy and sorrow of the Fourth Canto of the "Inferno" professed their conviction that none outside the communion of the Catholic Church could be saved, however righteous and holy their lives may seem to have been. It is enough to recall to mind that in 1405, thirty one years after the death of Petrarch, Fra Giovanni Dominici, of the Order of Preachers, who held the distinguished office of Professor of Theology at the Studium of his Order at Santa Maria Novella in Florence, condemned the study of ancient philosophy. For him the ethic of the philosophical schools of Greece and Rome does not constitute a true ethic. Nor, indeed, would he allow that their speculations ought properly to be called "philosophy" as that term is understood by Christians. His book "Lucula Noctis" sets forth this extreme position, excluding completely the philosophy of the ancient world from the consideration of theology or of any relation to the truth as that may be known by the human intellect. This is, of course, quite contrary to the position which Dante had affirmed in the "Convivio", with such eagerness, such charm, and such evident admiration. Fra Giovanni further alluded to the words of the ancient philosophers as mere, idle shadows. Their thoughts were useless in the acquisition of virtue or knowledge. Further, they were dangerous because they insidiously conducted men to the way of error. They were better avoided, therefore. Indeed, truth demanded that they be ignored if not rejected.
This is the dour and gloomy attitude of the ascetic, which sees no light, no beauty or goodness except within the narrow compass of the Scriptures and the commentaries of the Fathers. Again in the middle of the fifteenth century, with the flame of the Renaissance already beginning to blaze, we find the same anti-Humanist attitude maintained in his censure of this same canto:

"Verum in hoc videtur errasse non parum", he writes in the portentous manner of the ecclesiastic, "quia antiquos sapientes, philosophos, poetas, rhetores, infideles... descriptit esse in campis Elysiis, ubi et si non in gloria, tamen sine poena existant...................

Et in loco summi cruciatus sancti antiqui doctores, Hieronymus, Augustinus et alii, asserunt esse illos seculi sapientes propter errorem elationem et infidelitatem, quos Dantes ponit in campis Elysiis." (25)

Dante could never have accepted the rigorous doctrines of the narrowest school of conservative theology, with its sombre and severe speculation. He could never have brought himself to acknowledge, (as S. Thomas on occasion supposed, in spite of his humanism) that the ancients performed good works from vanity. The logic of his doctrine compels him to deny to such souls the joy of the Beatific Vision. Nevertheless, Dante has no desire in any way to detract from the true grandeur and nobility of such men. In the "Convivio" they are proposed as the models of an ethic which claims to be both humanist and Christian, rational and mystic. The general position which the poet maintains in the "Divina Commedia" is, as we have observed, different. It is founded upon the concept of Revelation and the precepts of the Gospel. Nevertheless, he reverts once
more to something of his old position in this canto. There is a natural felicity permitted to the souls in Limbo but, because man is created in the image of God and seeks and desires a supernatural end, they are conscious of having of the sorrow of failing in that endeavour.
III.

An examination of the Fourth Canto of the "Inferno" enables us to see exactly what part is assigned to Aristotle in the doctrine of Dante as that is informed and illuminated by Christian theology. As in the "Convivio," the poet still regards him as the Master of Human Knowledge, as philosopher, scientist, psychologist, as a universal genius, endowed with a passion for truth. What this amounts to is that in the realm of pure knowledge, of that which may be discovered by effort of human reason, Dante still continues to attribute the chief part to that humanism of the Greeks which Aristotle represents in so large a measure. For him, the scientific enquiry of Aristotle, his orderly and intelligible method, clearly defines the ideals of Greek philosophy. On the other hand, the poet finds it necessary to consider the problem which he had only suggested in the "Convivio"—the final end and destiny of the Christian soul. Now he comes to affirm the inadequacy of the Aristotelian science. By this he means the deficiency of reason, its inability to find any answer to those ultimate questions of human value and human significance. Thus Dante, in the light of Christian principles, adopts a somewhat constrained attitude towards that brilliant enterprise of scientific and rational enquiry which had been initiated by the Greeks. Such an attitude can only mean that he had come to regard the old classical Humanism as insufficient. This must include a great deal more than the Greco-Roman intellectual endeavour in itself. His attitude was determined by certain theological insights. It denotes his repudiation as an end in itself of the whole of that "modern knowledge", of that scientific investigation which throughout the centuries has continued the work of the
Greek genius. As a Christian humanist, the poet is no longer satisfied with that Humanism which he had himself propounded so ardently and with such felicitous phrases in the Four Treatises. In order to complete the work of Aristotle, to regenerate the humanism which he so consciously and deliberately expresses, to bring to consummation that transient vision of man as a being illuminated by the Divine when he is engaged in contemplation, Dante found it necessary to introduce the notion of revelation. (27) It is true that theology is not altogether excluded from the pages of the "Convivio". There, however, it exists rather in the manner of some wandering voice of prophecy and exhortation. In contrast to this work, with its reflections on human nobility and philosophical self-sufficiency, the "Divina Commedia" acknowledges only that humanism which is penetrated and informed by theology. Thus it is that the dominion of Aristotle is superseded by that of Virgil (not only the symbol of human reason but of poetry and indeed a personal companion and choice), while Virgil gives place to Beatrice in her character as Theology, and Beatrice again to S. Bernard, the type of that illumined and mystical theology which is supreme wisdom. The contemplation so zealously described by Aristotle, therefore, attains to completion in the mystical vision which is the end of man's search and the source of all happiness.

It might have been thought that Dante would have entrusted to one whom he called the Philosopher the task of expressing those truths which belong to his own method and theory. After all, the person of S. Thomas dominates three cantos of the "Paradiso". (28) He explains, elucidates, demonstrates. He it is who extols the life of S. Francis moving among those flaming and glowing lights which are the sanctities of Heaven. Here we are made aware of the distinction
of Aquinas as a Christian thinker. It might have been thought that similarly Aristotle, whose work sums up the whole of the philosophical and rational endeavour of the ancient world, would have been given the opportunity of declaring in the Elysian meadows the fame and disappointment of his own achievement. But there is a certain confusion of thought in what Dante says. We become conscious of those prosaic passages in the earlier cantos of the "Inferno" and suspect the poet of a mood of indecision. Moreover, in the great poem it was to Virgil that he had committed the expression of the purely rational and human point of view. Conscious of himself as a modest disciple, Dante does not venture to question Aristotle, even though in the earlier work he had referred to him as "my master" and employed many flattering phrases to describe his pre-eminence in learning. From afar, he had seen the philosopher, from that place which is "luminous and high", the hill from which all could be seen in the green meadow. Here Aristotle is apparently engaged in conversation with the philosophers who surround him. Yet Dante does not attempt to listen, nor does he presume to draw nearer to this brilliant assembly. It may be that he wished to show respect to the melancholy of that desire which there exhibited itself as without hope and without consummation. It may be that, despite his pretensions to be a philosopher, he recognized that his place was among the poets who greeted him with such signal honour.

However, there are certain passages in the "Divina Commedia" as in the earlier work which suggest the poet's implicit belief that the effort of human knowledge is aided by the light of the Aristotelian doctrine. In spite of his theology, he is so much under the influence of the Peripatetic philosophy that we sometimes discover verses which recall the atmosphere of the "Convivio". An example
of this occurs in the third circle of the "Inferno", where the rain falls pitilessly, relentlessly, cold and squalid; eterna, maladetta, fredda e greve.\(^{30}\) Dante turns to the Roman to ask whether the torments which he sees the gluttonous enduring will be increased after the Last Judgement. Virgil answers him clearly, in the manner of the Scholastics of the time, telling him to remember that according to the perfection of a creature so it experiences more both of pleasure and of pain.

\[\text{Ed elli a me: 'Ritorna a tua scienza,}\]
\[\text{che vuol, quanto la cosa è più perfetta,}\]
\[\text{più senta il bene, e così la doglienza.}^{31}\]

This is an obvious allusion to the Thomistic-Aristotelian view. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body which is here affirmed is of course part of Christian teaching and as such is expressed by S. Thomas. But the belief that the greater the degree of perfection which a creature manifests the greater is its capacity for joy or sorrow is a piece of Aristotelian psychology.

Again, in the Xth. canto of the "Inferno", Virgil himself in order to explain what sins are punished in the various circles of Hell, is constrained to quote Aristotle. Our poet has asked the question why different sinners are made to suffer different kinds of punishment--the storms, the wind, the dark, abject misery of rain and snow and hail, the fiery sepulchre. He asks why they are not all gathered together into the city of Dis; with its burning pinnacles, its mosques glowing red against the storms of nether Hell, its imperious and contemptuous garrison in mockery of the proud city of Florence.\(^{32}\) Virgil's reply to this is to quote, in the manner of Dante himself in the "Convivio", the substance of a chapter from the "Nicomachean Ethics".\(^{33}\) This we must consider a little more carefully.
IV.

1. ὑπεράχθην χρ' εἰς καὶ non volo,

It will not be remembered, that the psychology of

Aristotle had discerned in the human soul three evil

dispositions:

In conformity with this view and with his own view
1. intemperance
2. malice
3. bestiality.

various regions of hell. To the intemperate, he assigns
In this system, intemperance consists in the inordinate
the access to the fifth circle, those guilty of malice
pursuit and following of the pleasures of the flesh. It
bestiality are confined to the burning city of Dis,
can, however, exist in more complex form. It can be present
with its cc' le plen, fui Leuts, cum pavor. These
in these activities which are in themselves permissible
famous acts of violence against themselves, but which in this vice get carried to excess. Thus the
conversations are divided out to the seventh, the dark
emotion of anger may be just. It may constitute a nec-
ness state in certain circumstances, but it may also
burning sand, the river of blood, the rocky
be evoked on trivial occasions and for the wrong reason
principio. In the eighth circle are the fraudulent,
and become vehement and dangerous. Malice may be defined
while the ninth circle is reserved for those who have com-
as the impulse to violate the principle of reason. In the
the most despicable form of fraud,
view which he takes of this vice, however, Dante is in-
tention. Dante's view of sins is, as an observer, influenced
fluenced or confused by the moral teaching of Cicero and
by the bitterness of personal experience. He was engaged
comes to identify malice with the practice of fraud—the
in a desperate and protracted struggle to establish justice
in against justice. Bestiality includes all those
the Christian society itself and in the secular govern-
ofences which are committed against the dignity of man,
ment of the State, that polity of Western Europe which
as, for example, cruelty and sins against nature. Dante
constituted the Holy Roman Empire. From this point of
maintains this three-fold distinction in verses which
view, bestiality might appear less destructive of human
recall the more didactic and hortatory passages of the
values, less subversive, less contemptible than fraud and
Third Cantos of the "Convivio", (Le dolci rime d'amor
Third circle, malice, The heretics, therefore, receive their
ch'io sola mi servir ne' mai penser!),
malice in the burning toms of the sixth circle, which
Virgil's are the lips which expound the teaching of the
sovereign a blazing monument of retribution in that absolute
Nicomachean Ethics", but the view is of course proper to
of evil.
the Florentine poet. (37)

Si come ad Arli, ovo Rodano storno,
Non ti rimemba di quelle parole
chi era Poni, presso del Cerrano
con le quali la tua Etica portretra
è l'Italia chiuso o suoi torrini bagnar,
Notes to Chapter Eleven: Philosophy Re-affirmed.

   io vidi un foco
   ch' e misperio di tenebre vincia.


   For thou saidst: 'A man is born on the banks of the Indus, and none is there to speak, or read, or write of Christ, and all his desires and doings are good, so far as human reason sees, without sin in life or speech. He dies unbaptized and without faith. Where is this justice that condemns him? Where is his fault if he does not believe?'

4. Job XXXVIII. 1 and 2 sqq.
   Respondens autem Dominus Job de turbine, dixit:
   Quis est iste involvens sententias
   sermonibus imperitis?
   ibid: XLI: 24 and 25.
   Non est super terram potestas quae comparetur ei,
   qui factus est ut nullum timeret.
   Omne sublime videt:
   ipse est rex super universos filios superbiae.

   E oh stoltissime e vilissime bestiuole che a guisa
d'uomo voi pascete, che presumete contra nostra fede
parliare e volete sapere, filando e zappando, ciò che
Iddio, che con tanta prudenza hae ordinato! Maladetti
siete voi, e la vostra presunzione, e chi a voi crede!

   Now who art thou that wouldst sit upon the bench and
judge a thousand miles away with sight short of a
span?
   ibid: 85-90.
   O earthly creatures, gross minds! The Primal Will,
which in itself is good, from itself, the Supreme
Good, never was moved; whatever accords with it is
in that measure just; no created good draws it to
itself, but it, raying forth, creates that good.

   Wheeling, it sang, then spoke: "As are my notes to
thee who canst not follow them, such is the Eternal
Judgment to you mortals."


Foolish is he who hopes that our reason can trace the infinite ways taken by one Substance in three Persons.

Ancora, n'accerta la dottrina veracissima di Cristo; la quale è via, verità luce: via, perché per essa senza impedimento andiamo a la felicitade di quella immortalitate: verità, perché non soffera alcuno errore; luce, perché allumina noi ne la tenebra de la ignaranza mondana.

14. It may be pointed out that the immortality of the soul is not a truth of revealed religion for S. Thomas but inherently a truth which can be demonstrated by philosophy, since it is included in the definition of the soul as a spiritual substance. For Dante, however, while there are strong philosophical arguments in favour of this doctrine, it is not absolutely clear and certain by the principles of logical and metaphysical proof. Faith makes it intelligible; indeed, faith makes evident what would otherwise be obscure. The Latin Averroists said that the weight of philosophical argument was against the idea of the immortality of the soul, but in this matter faith possessed superior claims to authority. Dante's position has been compared to that which was later maintained by Ockham and Duns Scotus, who declare that on rational grounds the immortality of the soul is more probable than the contrary, but is only rendered certain by faith. It would be dangerous to press this resemblance too far.

"Questo disidio tra due affermazioni, una apertamente mistica, l'altra tendenzialmente razionalistica, disidio che rifletta il carattere della cultura dantista nel 'Convivio', formata di elementi filosofici frammisti a elementi teologici, non ancora ben fusi tra loro, anzi spesso discordanti gli uni dagli altri, ucciderà la donna gentile, come simbolo unitario della Filosofia, e condurrà, nella 'Monarchia', a una netta separazione della filosofia umana dalla dottrina rivelata."

Summa contra Gentiles: Lib: I Cap: IV: (p. 4 of Leonine ed.).
Ad cognitionem enim eorum quae de Deo rationinvestigare potest, multa praecognoscere oportet: cum fere totius philosophiae consideratio ad Dei cognitionem ordinetur: propter quod metaphysica, quae circa divina versatur, inter philosophiae partes ultima remanet addiscenda. Sic ergo non nisi cum magno labore studii ad praedictae veritatis inquisitionem perveniri potest.


For God was more bounteous in giving Himself so as to make man able to make himself again than if, simply of Himself, he had pardoned: and all other means came short of justice save that the Son of God should humble Himself to become flesh.


See especially chps. XXI-XXIII.

26. That S. Thomas is pre-eminently a humanist in sympathy may be seen not least in his ethical system.


"And just as he does not despise his own worth, neither does the magnanimous man despise the goods of fortune. The matter of the soul's greatness is honour; its end is the doing of something great. Now wealth attracts the crowd, itself sometimes a useful force, and wealth is a powerful means of action, at least in a certain order and for the attainment of certain ends. This eulogy of self-confidence, of love of honour and glory, does not come from the fifteenth century court of some prince of the Italian Renaissance but from a thirteenth century monk with vows of poverty and obedience."


28. Paradise: X:XI and XII.


32. Inferno: VIII:70-75.

E io: 'Maestro, già le sue meschite là entro certe nella valle cerno, vermiglie come se di foco uscite fossero.' Ed ei mi disse: 'Il foco eterno ch'entro l'affoca le dimostra rosse, come tu vedi in questo basso inferno.'


ferreique Eumenidum thalami et Discordia demens, viperecum crinem vittis immaxacruentis.

Περὶ τὰς τοιὰτας δὴ ἡ ἡδονᾶς ἡ εὐφροσύνη καὶ ἡ ἀκολούθη ἢστιν ὃν καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἓτα κοινωνεῖ, ὃθεν ἀνδραποδίδεις καὶ θηριώδεις φαινονται.


Quum autem duobus modis aut vi aut fraude fit iniuria, fraus quasi vulpeculae, vis leonis videtur; utrumque homini alienissimum, sed fraus odio digna maiore.

37. For an interesting exposition of the doctrine of the Eleventh Canto of the "Inferno", the following work may be consulted:


Rememberest thou not the words with which thy Ethics expounds the three dispositions which are against the will of heaven, incontinence, malice and mad brutishness, and how incontinence offends God less and incurs less blame?


Bestialitas differt a malitia quae humanae virtuti opponitur, per quendam excessum circa eamdem materiam, et ideo ad idem genus reduci potest.


Essay on "The Ethical System of the Inferno and Purgatorio."

Just as at Arles where the Rhone makes a swamp, and at Pola near Quarnero which bounds Italy and bathes its confines, the graves make the whole place uneven, so they did here on every side, except for their more grievous nature here.

Zingarelli draws attention to the significance of the tombs in the symbolism of heresy.

Cf. N.Zingarelli: "La vita, i tempi e le opere di Dante." vol.II: p.926.

Notava il D'Ovidio i sepolcri esser tante conventicole, chiesuole, conciliaboli, ciascuno col suo eresiarca; ma il Poeta nel gran numero delle tombe, nell'incredibile quantità dei sepolti vede una tal diffusione e tanta varietà di eresie che ora ci riesce quasi nuova, pur sapendo della lor diffusione in Europa tra la fine del sec.XII e il seguente, in Lombardia e in Firenze stessa, centro assai importante..........Egli pone in questi sepolcri gli eretici che non portarono scismi e divisioni, non si organizzarono in azioni rivoluzionarie; ma nutrirono e seguirono opinioni contrarie alla diritta fede, rimanendo più o meno chiusi.
CHAPTER TWELVE

THE RATIONAL AND THE MYSTICAL IN THE 'DIVINA COMMEDIA'.

I.

If divine Justice in the "Inferno" establishes itself upon the principles of the Aristotelian ethic, the order observed by human societies in their constitution and laws must also conform to it. In the sphere of Venus which the poet describes in the Eighth Canto of the "Paradiso", he sees the souls of those who, having known sensual passion, have repented and found the divine mercy itself. He converses with the son of Charles IIInd, King of Naples, the charming and courteous young man designated King of Hungary, who died in 1295, at the age of twenty four. The poet speaks of him with warm affection, obviously in recollection of that gay and splendid time when, with his retinue of two hundred knights, he came to Florence and stayed three weeks in the city. It must have been an incident of great brilliance, of pageantry, of laughter, of amusement, with the golden lilies fluttering in the breeze, with the rose and silver, silk and gold of the pennants of chivalry. Writing some twenty years after the event, Dante must have remembered vividly the expectation and promise of that day. He was himself distinguished among that group of young poets who had lent such lustre to the name of Florence... already famous, confident, and eager. If we may judge from what is related in the "Paradiso", Charles Martel himself, handsome and accomplished, must have been drawn to Dante by every bond of sympathy and affection:

Assai m'amasti, e avesti ben onde;
ché s'io fossi già stato, io ti mostrerei
di mio amor più oltre che le fronde. 1

The young prince enters into a lengthy discussion on the subject of the government of states, explaining how it is that families degenerate from their former competence and vigour, and how divine Providence guides the societies of men by those natural laws which can be ascertained by the light of reason. He goes on to ask the
question:

'Or di: sarebbe il peggio
per l'uomo in terra, se non fosse cive?'
'Sì!' rispos'io; 'e qui ragion non mi cheggio.' 3/

However, Charles continues with his exposition, in which he follows the Aristotelian doctrine, assigning a division of labour in the organization of society.

'E può eüi esser, se già non si vive
diversamente per diversi offici?
Non, se'l maestro vostro ben vi scrive.' 4/

He declares that the social life of mankind calls for a variety and harmony of talents in the pursuit of a common end. Nature has provided for this in the prodigality, in the diversity, in the variegation of the types that she has produced. This, Aristotle had explained, as due to the influence of the whole process of generation, according to which the characteristics of a species tend to perpetuate themselves in the temporal order. This infinite repetition of an individual pattern is an imitation of that eternity which belongs to God, the Prime Mover. There is, however, a further explanation to be discovered in the heavenly bodies which communicate to men the various temperaments, dispositions and aptitudes which they possess. It may be pointed out that the details of this philosophical digression, in so far as they involve that astronomical science in which Dante was so interested, cease to be Aristotelian. 5 We become aware of what may be called the sociology of Dante. This must be taken to mean the poet's view that the happiness of a society depends upon the contrast and variety of human types and the division of labour in the common tasks which the city exists to perform. This is the principle of harmony in the state. It will be remembered that such a view is strongly emphasized by the Greek genius and finds clear expression in the writings of Aristotle. 6

In his capacity as a philosopher as well as a Christian theologian, Dante does not hesitate to amend, to enlarge and criticize the views of Aristotle where they conflict with his own. Where he does this, he does so always in the light of the Christian revelation. In the eighth sphere, the poet under the guidance of Beatrice appears before the three leaders of the Apostles. S. Peter questions him about faith, S. James about hope, and S. John, about that mystical and yet commonplace virtue of charity.
The "disciple whom Jesus loved" shines with so brilliant a glory that the shape of Beatrice seems almost to vanish. In this way, the poet represents how rational and doctrinal theology are made dim by the brightness of that mystical theology which is derived from the Fourth Gospel. So too the order of the rational and intelligible pales into oblivion before the light which is charity. In reply to the demands of S. John, the poet makes answer in the catechism of love:

Mentr'io dubbiava per lo viso spento,
della fulgida fiamma che lo spense
uscl un spirò che mi fece attento,
dicendo: 'Intanto che tu risense
della vista che hai in me consunta,
ben è che ragionando la compense.

Comincia dunque,
l' anima tua, e fa ragion che sia
la vista in te omarrata e non defunta;

The vision of love in all its glory has blinded the eyes of Dante so that he is hidden in the divine darkness which is yet excess of light. In similar language, the author had spoken in the "Convivio" of that element of the soul which participates in the divine nature by reason. The intellect is so completely divested of anything material that the light from God flows into it as into an angel, with that swiftness, that glow, that luminous comprehension which find no hindrance. (E quella anima ......................

participa de la divina natura a guisa di sempiterna intel­ligenza; però che l' anima è tanto in quella sovrana potenza nobilitata e dimandata da materia, che la divina luce, come in angelo, raggià in quella; e però è l'uomo divino animale da li filosofi chiamato.) So in this passage in the "Paradiso", the divine light bursts upon the soul of the poet causing him to go momentarily blind with its brilliance and splendour. It may be recalled how in the seventeenth century, S. Francis de Sales and the French spiritual writers expressed a similar idea concerning an element of the human spirit which is in communion with God and which they designated the "fine point of the soul."

In the examination which he undergoes from S. John, Dante goes on to say that all his desire is directed towards the attainment of the Supreme Good.

Lo ben che fa contenta questa corte,
Alfa ed O è di quanta scrittura
mi legge amore o lievemente o forte.
With this statement may be compared the words of the Second Canzone:

Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona
de la mia donna disiosamente,
move cose di lei meco sovente,
che lo'ntelletto sovr'esse disvia.
Lo suo parlar si dolcemente sona,
che l'anima ch'ascolta e che lo sente
dice: "Oh me lassa! ch'io non son possente,
di dir quel ch'odo de la donna mia!" 11.

As in these verses and as in the reply which he makes to Bonagiunta in the "Purgatorio" and as we may gather from other passages, it is no longer a question of that profane and romantic love to which he was at one time so passionately inclined. It is the infinite, omnipotent, eternal love upon which he now dilates, the love which has God for its object and no other, and which comprehends within itself all those lesser and mutable loves of the human spirit. 12.

It is the love "which moves the sun and the other stars", and which diffuses itself so that all things may acquire that divine goodness in which they are meant to participate. Thus they become the mirrors of His glory. 13.

Thus they show forth the excellence of their Creator. They represent His goodness, His beauty, His perfection. In the order of creation, their last end is the acquisition of the divine likeness. Dante knows the teaching of S. Thomas. He repeats the lesson of the divine love in his own way and with all the ardour of great poetry. He has his own accent, his own emphasis, his own lesson to convey in all the glowing similitudes, the light, the colour, the immensity and music of the celestial spheres. What he says is not substantially different from the teaching of S. Augustine. In one respect it might be said that the whole of the "Divina Commedia" is a commentary on the famous text of Augustine in the "Confessions": "Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, soro te amavi! et ecco intus eram et ego foris, et ibi te quaerebam, et in ista fomosa, quae fecisti, deformis inruebam. mecum eras, et tuncum non eram. ea me tenebant longe a te, quae si in te non essent, non essent. vocasti et clamasti et rupisti surditatem meam: coruscasti, splendisti et fugasti caecitatem meam: fragrasti, et duxi spiritum, et anhelo tibi, gustavi et esurio et siti, tetigiisti me, et exaristi in pacem tuam." 14.

When the Apostle continues the examination, demanding the
reasons and motives for this love which the poet professes, Dante once more falls back on the Aristotelian philosophy. We need not wonder at this. Aristotle's influence was great not only in the medieval but in the ancient world. In matters of scientific theory, even Plotinus follows his doctrine and observation. In his interpretation of the beautiful myth of Eros, the Earthly Love is no rival and competitor with the Heavenly, but rather its ineffectual and irresolute imitator. It is not surprising therefore that the influence of the Peripatetic metaphysic asserts itself again even in the most exalted moments of the poet's contemplation. The rational enquiry and scientific investigation so faithfully pursued by Aristotle have their necessary place in the glory of Heaven. They are the necessary preparation for the revelation which makes perfect and which illuminates the darkness of this world. There is, of course, much truth in what Dante is trying to express. One has only to consider the affection of friendship or "Philia" so intimately and carefully described in the "Nicomechane Ethics" to discover an emotion which is alien neither from the New Testament nor from the Old. It is there revealed not merely as the friendship which binds two people together, as David and Jonathan in their heroic and impassioned devotion. It may be said that behind it stands the conception of the covenant between Israel and God. This represents an aspect of that "philia" which Aristotle recognized and which he regarded as constituting such an important part of human personality. In the New Testament it leads on to that richer, more complex emotion which we discover in the great discourses in S. John's Gospel. Dante develops his argument in the logical terms of the Schools, expounding a metaphysic which is clear and definite, which is founded not only upon the revelation of the Scriptures but also upon the philosophy of Aristotle coloured by that neo-Platonism which was so widespread in the Middle Ages:

E io: 'Per filosofici argomenti
e per autorità che quàsci scende
ottaie amor convien che in me s'imprenti.

Ch'è il bene, in quanto ben, come s'intende,
occi accende amore, e tanto maggior
quanto più di bontate in sè comprende.

Dunque all'essenza ov'è tanto avvantaggio,
che ciascun ben che fuor di lei si trova
altro non è ch'un lume di suo raggio,
In explanation of this passage, most commentators refer to the "Liber de Causis", in which the author declares that God is the Supreme Cause, of all existences, to whom all spiritual beings are directed as constituting also their Final End. This is in virtue of the law which enjoins that all such entities endeavour to reunite themselves with their First Principle. This interesting work is described as an Arabic recension of Proclus' "Elementatio Theologica". It consists in 32 propositions, expressing in the main the Neo-Platonic doctrine of emanationism. The Arabic origin of this book is referred to by S. Thomas in his commentary on it. He was equally well aware of its derivation from Proclus, having instigated its translation by William of Moerbecke.

In the Third Treatise of the "Convivio", Dante had written an exposition of this doctrine of spiritual attraction, citing a quotation which he attributed to the "Liber de Causis", but which was actually derived from S. Thomas's commentary on that work.

During the Middle Ages, the book was generally considered to have been composed by Aristotle. There is some justification for this mistaken opinion since, despite its Neo-Platonic colouring, it reverts in certain places to the Aristotelian metaphysic. Dante himself appears to regard it in the light of those Christian and Aristotelian principles which he had learned from S. Thomas Aquinas and S. Albert the Great.

After the philosophical arguments which he propounds, the poet clearly rests his authority upon the witness of the Old and New Testaments for the belief that the divine love, caritas, is alone truly deserving of the name. All other loves look to that one supreme love which is light and truth and goodness, just as every flame may be said to be kindled by the sun. The Apostle himself declares that, in the definition of charity, the Christian revelation must agree with the conclusions of reason.
Thus the Aristotelian metaphysic transformed and shaped by Platonism is able to provide the Christian mystic with a rational system in explanation of his beliefs. In this process, it becomes illuminated and coloured by the mystical ardour of the poet. Nevertheless, it remains one of the constituent elements in his philosophy. It must always be remembered, however, that it is an Aristotelianism which is seen in the light of the commentaries of S. Thomas, in which there are various modifications, adjustments and alterations in order to reconcile it with those truths which belong to the revealed order. It is worth noticing, also, that in spite of the theological exclusiveness of the Fourth Canto of the "Inferno", Dante returns at times to the humanistic spirit of the Four Treatises. The calmness and serenity of that luminous rationalism of his earlier days makes itself felt in those passages descriptive of the great men of the past.

In the "Inferno" Virgil enters upon an explanation of religious aesthetic, suggesting that it may be established upon the principles of Aristotle. Of this it may be said, that such an aesthetic is capable of apprehending those values which are clearly seen because they are seen in God. The Roman poet, in the course of a long philosophical digression, refers to those texts of the Aristotelian corpus which support his views:

'Filosofia', mi disse, 'a chi la'ntende, nota non pur in una sola parte, come natura lo suo corso prende
Da divino intelletto e da sua arte; e se tu ben la tua Fisica note, tu troverai, non dopo molte carte, che l'arte vostra quella, quanto pote, segue, come'l maestro fa il discente; si che vostra arte a Dio quasi nepote. 21.

There is nothing in this to cause any surprise. What we discover here is the mood of the "Convivio", transformed and deepened perhaps, but representing what is essentially the point of view of that classical Humanism which the poet then professed. Even at that time, in the Third Treatise, Dante had asserted that Philosophy as the creation of the divine intellect may be spoken of as the daughter of God. 22. Art is the endeavour to reproduce some aspect or truth of nature. It rests upon a certain philosophy of Nature, and indeed presupposes it. It is incapable of
reflecting upon its own ideals and significance apart from a philosophy, a point of view, a contemplation of Nature. In that respect, therefore, it is proper to attribute to it an affiliation to Nature, which remains itself the creation of God. The origin of art, in all its manifold achievements, as also of the human understanding, is God, who is disclosed in the process of aesthetic activity. What is significant about this statement is that it is God Who is perceived as the originator and Prime Mover of those sublime creations of the Greek and Latin genius. The words of Horace fitly describe the poet's art, and Dante would not have disagreed with the invocation to Apollo in symbolic allusion:

spiritum Phoebus mihi, Phoebus artem
carminis nomenque dedit poetae.
virginum primae puerique claris patribus orti,

In Christian art, however, what had formerly remained hidden, confused and obscure becomes clear and explicit. For in this, with all its beauty and glory, its music, its colour, its poetry, its philosophy, and in the Liturgy, which may be regarded as the sacred art, the human intellect comes to recognize the divine law itself. It is the expression of that supernatural world which the artist knows by intuition and vision.
II.

In the "Convivio", Dante seems to affirm that the first task is to restore the method and procedure of Aristotle in his enquiry. With this intention, the science of Ethics must acquire a proper order and form, a psychology and philosophy of human nature. It must, therefore, be established upon the principles of Aristotle which in a changing world we may regard as permanent and which are the result of observation and reflection. In this way, we are able to pursue the ideal which we have set before ourselves, which is nothing less than the realization of the highest and noblest type of humanity. As we have already remarked, the poet does not ignore the limits which must be set to rational knowledge. He endeavours to overcome such difficulties by means of an Averroism which is implied rather than stated and which consists in a doctrine of knowledge adapted from the theory of the passive intellect advanced by that scholar. Dante, of course, never employs the position of the Latin Averroists despite his admiration for their illustrious master. Later, however, in the "Divina Commedia", he can no longer be satisfied with a Humanism which is purely Aristotelian in inspiration and spirit. He is not a creature whose life is circumscribed by the inevitable extinction of all his hopes and fears in death. In the earlier work, following S. Thomas, he had written that the soul as a substantial form is the direct creation of God. He had in impassioned accent affirmed the Christian and philosophical belief in the immortality of the soul. He knows by revelation and also by meditation of S. Augustine's profound and luminous doctrine of the soul that man is made for God. However, he in no way rejects the classical Humanism which for him includes all that glory of art, and the spirit of philosophical enquiry. We have observed how, in his description of Limbo, he feels compelled to assume an attitude in some respects stricter than that of S. Thomas. In spite of this, his thought, as a Christian philosopher and theologian, discloses the influence of those whom he has by the canons of an inflexible orthodoxy condemned. In the Heaven of the fixed stars, in the presence of the three great Apostles themselves, he appeals to the propositions of Aristotelian rationalism. S. John conducts the examination on charity very much in the manner of a Mediaeval Master in the schools. He recognizes that the human
intellect, in its reasoning, is able to arrive at such conclusions as Revelation affirms in perceiving the necessity of divine love.

Again, we may recall, that with the aid of the Aristotelian philosophy in the "De Monarchia", (presumably contemporary with the earlier part of the "Divina Commedia"), the poet defines and establishes the ideal order of Christian society. In the course of this discussion, he sustains a lively argument against certain theologians and canonists who were insistent that the Bible and the Fathers were sufficient of themselves for all purposes of exposition. Thus, the principles of Aristotelianism still give light and form to his thought. He finds himself compelled to employ them in order to explain and elucidate the great Christian doctrines and to justify them to the critical intellect.

Curiously enough, he had discovered certain unexpected similarities between the Neo-Platonic work, the "Liber de Causis", and the Apocalypse of the Christian prophet. In the "Convivio" there are certain tremulous and hesitant tendencies in the direction of the irrationalism of the mystics. In the "Divina Commedia", for all the mystical theology of its concluding cantos, a certain clarity of intellectual perception is evident. It is moreover in the Empyrean, the place where we should least expect to find it, that this becomes most conspicuous. Here, the poet under the guidance of the great contemplative, S. Bernard, is enlightened with the revelation of the high mystery of the Christian Faith.

The mystical intuition reaches its culmination in the thirty third canto of the "Paradiso" and brings to fulfilment the endeavour of the mind to attain to the Supreme Intelligence. Here it is also that Dante's philosophy of love comes to fruition. It is usual to refer to S. Augustine, S. Anselm and S. Thomas as the authorities for this theory in all its plenitude. The influence of S. Francis would seem to be no less strong, however. But maintained with some plausibility that the poet was a Franciscan tertiary and this view was taken up and elaborated by P. A. Martini. Without going into this question, it is not difficult to show the similarity of doctrine which exists between S. Francis and the poet. In the "Canticle of the Creatures", the little poor man of Assisi exalts the principle of love as constituting a law of concord by which all things are joined to their creator.
Here S. Francis expresses in simple and artless terms, what the poet describes in philosophical phraseology. Dante alludes to the heart of the mystic rose as a kingdom that rests in such love and delight that desire can seek for no more ........

\[
\text{questo regno pausa in tanto amore ed in tanto diletto, che nulla volontà è di più ausa,} \quad 33.\/
\]

In this felicity, in this triumph, love reaches its consummation. Throughout the "Paradiso" this note of ecstatic joy in the divine love is clear. But Dante's religion is founded upon the knowledge of God: it is not a sentiment and emotion. The mysticism which he evinces becomes intellectual, ordered, directed. It is far removed from any idea of strange experiences and irrational impulses. As it is expressed in his mature thought, it is the apprehension of the mystery of the divine omnipotence. Hence, it is represented as the perception of that light which shines throughout the universe before which the poet, dazzled, knows the ultimate secret of Being.

\[
\text{Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna, legato con amore in un volume, cib che per l'universo si squaderna: sustanze e accidenti e lor costume, quasi conflati insieme, per tale modo che cib ch'i' dico è un semplice lume. La forma universal di questo nodo credo ch'i'vidi, perché più di largo, dicendo questo, mi sento ch'i'godo.} \quad 34.\/
\]

The world which is revealed to Dante, however, - its laws, its order, its complexity of relations - is always that which is described by Aristotle in his scientific treatises. The whole mystery, bewildering in its vastness, comprising stars, sun, moon, celestial bodies, earth, may be reduced to the interdependence of cause and effect. As may be noticed from the above quotation,
even the activity of divine love is conceived in terms which conform to the rigid definitions of the Aristotelian metaphysic, the conjunction of form and matter, substance and accident. 35/

If we reflect upon the conclusions which the poet advances, it might have seemed that there was no need for him to go beyond those limits which reason imposes on the intelligible. No doubt, the effort to understand it would mean arduous intellectual labour, but nothing which is beyond the capacity of reason to determine nor indeed beyond the scientific theories of Aristotle. This, after all, is only another way of saying that such an endeavour does not, in the last resort, exceed the powers of the human spirit. This is the point of view of the "Convivio", this is its inherent rationalism. It assigns a glory to the human mind, a perfection, a dignity, an exaltation of that genius which was later to manifest itself in all its intensity in the work of Leonardo da Vinci.

We have spoken a great deal of Aristotle, and it will be admitted that in the major works of the poet, his influence is considerable. But whether we speak of Aristotle, or S. Thomas or S. Bonaventura, we should do well to heed the warning of Francesco Orestano who declares that in discussing such doctrines as they:

in the work of Dante the poet employs and adapts them with the independence of genius.

It is significant that the divine essence which, in the third canto of the "Purgatorio", Dante had affirmed to be unknowable to the human intellect, is suddenly revealed to him in Heaven. 37/ In that luminous First Substance, which disposes and sustains the universal order, three circles appear, three-fold in colour, equal in circumference. The first is reflected by the second, while the third receives its light from the other two as the light of the rainbow and as the fire issuing from it. Within the second circle appears the image of a human face "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His substance". In this vision, the Blessed Trinity is represented in a symbolism which seems to owe something to the prophet Ezekiel and the Christian seer of the Apocalypse. The Son proceeds from the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Furthermore the Eternal Word becomes incarnate in the manhood of Jesus Christ, born of Mary

\[36/\text{la rose in che il verbo divino carne si fece;}\]
No doubt, this is the simple affirmation of the Catholic Creeds and of the doctrinal formularies of the Church. However simple it may be in statement, its intellectual apprehension is by no means easy. What cannot be expressed by the propositions of logic, can nevertheless be suggested by the colours and symbols of the artistic imagination. Dante therefore combines the mathematical with the prophetic in his strange representation of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity:

Nella profonda e chiara sussistenza
dell'alto lume parvermi tre giri
di tre colori e d'una contenenza;
a l'un dall'altro come iri da iri
parea reflesso, e l' terzo parea foco
che quinci e quindi igualmente si spiri.

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

Quella circulazion che a concetta
pareva in te come lume reflesso,
dalli occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,
dentro da sé, del suo colore 
mi parve pinta della nostra effige;

Nobody has ever been able to express so vividly the truths of the spiritual life in poetry and image. In the Second Treatise of the "Convivio", Dante had affirmed that certain experiences must be relegated to the category of the ineffable as being beyond description. Like Henri Bergson, he knows that we cannot think at all except by means of the concept of space and that we are obliged to express relationships and meanings through the medium of words. Dante makes the attempt, of course, and it is his task as a poet to do so. If he is not completely clear in the description which he gives us, that is because he has deliberately left certain details vague and obscure. It would have been a mistake to try to define with logical precision what in the nature of the case must transcend all human experience. The Neo-Platonic element in his theology and in the speculation of the Middle Ages generally would have taught him that God must surpass all the categories of human knowledge. That he has learned much from the teaching of S. Thomas is not disputed, though few would be prepared to concede that he finds himself in complete agreement with the Angelic Doctor. It might be said with some truth that the
theology of S. Thomas consists in the Platonist doctrine of S. Augustine shaped and coloured by a modified Aristotelianism. What is intuition and vision in Augustine attains to metaphysical consistency and order in S. Thomas. Thus, in considering the various philosophical and theological influences which enter into the poet's thought, we must stress these ideas which he derives from Platonism. It may be remembered how S. Augustine came to the knowledge of God as the unchanging Light of eternal truth. 

\[ \text{...} \]

It came to the culmination of the Platonic ascent of the soul from the lower to the higher, from the exterior colours, shapes, appearances to that interior light. The well-known arguments proceed in their accustomed manner. All judgements of value imply an absolute standard of judgment. The human reason which does not in itself constitute an absolute or changeless power yet attributes a higher value to the rational than to the irrational, to life rather than to the lifeless, to the eternal and unchanging rather than to those things which are subject to change. It must therefore enjoy communion with that which is itself unchanging and eternal and this must furnish it with an absolute or ideal standard of value. This argument, which is to be discovered in Plotinus \[ ^{42} \] one which Augustine is never tired of expressing. In the Third Meditation, Descartes constructs a similar proof which may have been suggested to him by the great African doctor. It is sufficient to say that S. Augustine was confident not only of the truth of this demonstration but also of his own experience of the transient but unmistakeable glimpse of the eternal Light. From the frequency of his allusions to a momentary insight or vision we may infer that this was an experience by no means isolated in his contemplation of God. \[ ^{43} \] This in some ways resembles the intuition described by Plotinus .... the contact, the vision, for, says that philosopher: "We may know that we have had the vision when the Soul has suddenly taken light. The light is from the Supreme and is the Supreme; we may believe in the Presence when, like the other God on the call of a certain man, He comes bringing light; the light is the proof of the advent. Thus the soul unlit remains without that vision: lit, it possesses what it sought .......... for that which illuminates the soul is that which it is to see just as it is by the sun's own light that we see the sun." \[ ^{44} \]

This is the lux incommunicabilis which illumined the soul of
Augustine. It is a moral and religious experience for in it the mystic becomes aware of his own sin.

It will be evident how deeply this tradition had penetrated the thought of Dante. The "Paradiso" refers constantly to light as the vehicle or medium of the divine manifestation. In the passage descriptive of the Blessed Trinity which we have quoted above, there is nothing in the least strange in the image which the poet evokes, nothing which can be called alien to the mode of thinking ...... the three-fold circle, the fire insphered, the fading colours as of the rainbow. We may call it a vision but it is not unintelligible. It employs not only images drawn from the Bible but also certain scientific notions with which Dante was acquainted.

We discover here an aspect of the intellectualism of the poet disclosing itself in the geometrical figures which are projected on to the canvas. The circle, constituting the most perfect shape that the Euclidean geometry could conceive, provides a symbol of the three divine Persons of the Christian Trinity. Here, therefore, the revelation of that mystery which must ever remain the most incomprehensible to the human mind is described in terms of that science which claims to be the most lucid and assured in its conclusions.

Mathematics propounds theorems and states propositions which are true even in the most distant orbit of the stellar universe. They are true, simply because the science of which they form part is founded upon reason. Perhaps Dante recalled to mind that Plato, the master of Aristotle, had demanded of his pupils an exact study of geometry as an aid to the contemplation of the abstract and unchangeable. Perhaps Dante himself had affirmed, in the Four Treatises, that geometry is the most certain of all the sciences, being free from those imperfections which confuse the investigations of other forms of knowledge. Apparently, he felt the attraction of this science because of the certitude which attached to its results. He points out further that the development of its theorems rests upon two conceptions, those of the point and the circle. For, as Euclid declares, the point is the beginning of Geometry and the circle, as the most perfect figure in that science, may be considered as constituting its end.

Geometry may, therefore, be represented metaphorically as moving between the point and the circle as between its beginning and its end. These two things might appear to be antagonistic
to its certainty. A point does not admit of being measured since it is by definition indivisible. Similarly it is impossible to square the circle since it is curved and therefore incapable of measurement. As a science, geometry operates with these concepts, the point and the circle, which, in the language of Kant, may be termed analytical propositions. Because of this, they remain eternally true. Thus for Dante it would seem that the logical deduction of truths in Geometry proceeds from certain symbols which do not constitute objects of human experience and are not capable of empirical verification. It is presumably for this reason that Geometry commends itself to him as a way of representing that mystery which, while it does not contradict the deliverances of human reason, may be said to surpass if not to confound them. What is important to understand in this lengthy exposition is that, even when he is expressing the Catholic doctrine of the Godhead, Dante is not content to affirm the purely mystical element of that experience. Plotinus speaks of ecstasy, of being suddenly swept away by the crest of the wave and of the merging of Intellect and object of Intellection. Dante, however, even in the supreme moment of his poem when he confronts the glory of the eternal Godhead, does not in any way repudiate Aristotle or Euclid. For the truths which they express must ultimately be reconciled with that divine Reason, which is the unchanging Light of the soul and the Life of the whole visible and sentient Universe.
Notes to Chapter Twelve: The Rational and the Mystical in the "Divina Commedia."


Giovanni Villani: Cronica: VIII:13:(5).

"duecento cavalieri a sproni d'oro, franceschi e provenzali e del Regno, vestiti col re di una partita di scarlatto e verde bruno, e tutti con selle d'una assisa a palafreno rilevate d'argento e d'oro, coll'arme a quartieri a gigli ad oro e accerchiata rosso e d'argento, cioè l'arme d'Ungheria, che pare la più nobile e ricca compagnia che anche avesse uno giovane re con seco. E in Firenze stette più di venti di attendendo il re sua padre e i fratelli, e da'fiorentini gli fu fatto grande onore, ed egli mostrò grande amore a' fiorentini, che'ebbe molta la grazia di tutti."


Thou didst love me much, and hadst good cause; for had I been below I would have shown thee much more of my love than the leaves.


No, truly, for I see that it would be impossible that nature should fail in what is needful.

4. Paradiso: VIII:118-120.

And can he be unless men below live in diverse ways for diverse tasks? Not if your master writes well of this.


Ah quanto nella mente mi commossi,
quando mi volai per veder Beatrice,
per non poter veder, ben che io fossi
presso di lei, e nel mondo felice!
Ah, how troubled in mind I was when I turned to see
Beatrice, not to be able to see her, though I was by
her side and in the happy world.

While my extinguished sight perplexed me yet,
A breath came forth that held me, hearkening
Out of the effulgence that extinguished it,
Saying: "Until thou hast again the sense
Of sight which on me was discomfited,
"Tis well that converse be thy recompense.
Begin then; say whereto thy soul is wed.
Consider, and be assured that sight suppressed
In thee is but confounded and not dead."

( Laurence Binyon's translation).

Caritas illa visio, illa similitudo est.


The good that satisfies this court is alpha and omega
of all the scripture that love reads to me in tones
loud or low.

Veritatem et vitam omnis homo cupit: sed viam non
omnis homo invenit. Deum esse quandom vitam aeternam,
immutabilem ....... nonnulli etiam huius saeculi philosophi
viderunt. Veritatem fixam, stabilem, indeclinabilem,
ubi sunt omnes rationes rerum omium creaturarum viderunt
quidem, sed de longino: viderunt sed in errore positi,
et idcirco ad eam tan magnam at ineffabilem et beatificam
possessionem, qua via perveniretur, non invenerunt.


With reference to these lines Signor Resta says:
"Semplicemente, senza contorsione di commento, questa
lapidaria terzina, significa che Dio 'lo Ben che fa
contenta questa corte' è alfa e omega d'ogni mio amore
e d'ogni amore ch'è nell' universo, cioè, 'di quanta scrittura mi legge amore'. Il Bene, sempre bene per se stesso, come viene capito e sentito, così accende di sè amore in noi e, tanto più, quanto più di bontade in sè comprende. Ma Dio è essenza prima e suprema d'ogni bene e conviene che sia l'amore più grande, perfetto dell'animo nostro, come prima di Aristotele dimostra Platone per il quale Dio nel 'Timeo' e nel 'Convito' è il Primo Amore di tutte le sostanze sempiterne."


"Eum amant quaecumque amant, sive sciant quia amant sive nesciant, hoc est, sive motu intelligibili rationalive amant, ducente gratia, sive simplici appetitu naturae.
Riassumendo, ogni bene deriva e si definisce dal Sommo Bene, dall'Et@rno Bene, da Dio: in modo inerente, ogni Bene in quanto tale, accende, deve accendere, di sè amore; scala dei valori, che deve essere scala dei valor dell'amore, onde il Sommo Bene è il Sommo Amore. sqq:

Adhuc. Deus est simul ultimus rerum finis, et primum agens, ut ostensa est (cap. praec.). Finis atem per actionem agentis constitutus, non potest esse primum agens, sed est magis effectus agentis. Non potest igitur Deus sic esse finis rerum quasi aliquid constitutum, sed solum quasi aliquid praeexistens obtinentum.
The phrase which we find so often in S.Thomas - "omne agens agit sibi simile" - appears to be derived from the Neo-Platonic philosophy.


16. **Paradiso: XXVI:25-42.**

And it "By philosophic arguments and by authority that descends from here, such love must needs imprint itself on me; for the good, by virtue of its goodness, kindles love as soon as it is known, and so much the more, the more of good it contains in itself. To that Essence, then, in which is such pre-eminence that every good found outside of it is nothing but a light from its radiance, must be moved with love, more than to aught else, the mind of everyone who discerns the truth on which this reasoning rests. This truth he sets forth to my understanding who established for me the primal love of all the eternal beings; the voice of the truthful Author sets it forth where speaking of Himself, He says to Moses: 'I will make thee see all goodness.'"


18. **Convivio: III:II:4-7.**

Ciascuna forma sustanziale procede de la sua prima cagione, la quale è Iddio, si come nel libro Di Cagioni è scritto, e non ricevono diversitade per quella, che è simplicissima, ma per le secondarie cagioni e per la materia in che discende. Onde nel medesimo libro si scrive trattando de la infusione de la bomba divina: 'E fanno (si) diverse le bontadi e li doni per lo concorrimento de la cosa che riceve.'


En: in Ps. XXXI:iii:8.

"Omnis boni bonum, unde omne bonum, bonus cui non additur quid sit ipsum bonum. Dicitur enim bonus homo, et bonus ager, et bona domus......adiunxisti, quoties dixisti, bonum ex quo cuncta sunt bona."

It is to be observed that the concept of God in Augustine is that of the bonum omnis boni: while in Plotinus the notion of God is that of the "Beyond-Good" (Beyond-Good), Who is "not to be identified with the good of which it is the source", but is "good in the unique mode of being the Good above all that is good." (Enn: VI:IX:6 tr. Mackenna).


And I heard: "On the ground of human reason and of the authorities in harmony with it, the highest of all thy love looks to God;..."


"Philosophy, for one who understands," he said to me, "notes, not in one place only, how nature takes her course from the divine mind and its art; and if thou note well thy 'Physics' thou wilt find, not many pages on, that your art, as far as it can, follows nature as the pupil the master, so that your art is to God, as it were a grandchild."

The reference is to Bk: II: ch.II of the "Physics" of Aristotle.


In Deo sapientia quidem oportet dici ex eo quod seipsum cognoscit. Sed quia non cognoscit se per aliquam speciem nisi per essentiam, quiniam et ipsum eius intelligere est eius essentia, sapientia Dei habitus ipsa Dei essentia.


"in molta parte della letteratura teologica e filosofica del Medio-evo virtà ed arte sono sinonimi; però, Roberto Grossatesta, nelle sue traduzioni delle opere dello Pseudo-Areopagita distingue il significato dei due termini. Dante usa la parola 'virtà' anche nell'ampio significato che Platone le dà e Dante riferisce questo concetto di Platone:............E la citazione si riferisce, come si vede, a Platone, non ad Aristotele, come è stato detto: ma è concetto che è pure in Aristotele e lo rileva Dante in un passo seguente: ' Questa perfezione intende lo filosofo nel settimo de la Fisica quando dice..........'


Sciendum est igitur quod, quemadmodum ars in triplici gradu inventur, in mente scilicet artificia in organo et in materia formata per artem, sic et naturam in triplici gradu possemus intueri. Est enim natura in mente primi mentoris qui Deus est deinde in celo tanquam in organo quo mediante similitudo bonitatis eternae in fluitantem materiam explicatur. Et quemadmodum, perfecto existente artifice atque optime organo se habente, si contingat peccatum in forma artis materie tantum imputandum est sic, cum Deus ultimum perfectionis patiatur defectuum ut ex hiis patet que de celo phylotepbamur, restat quod quicquid in rebus inferioribus est peccatum ex parte materie subiacentis peccatum sit et preter intentionem Dei naturantis et celi, et quod quicquid est in rebus inferioribus bonum, cum ab ipsa materia esse non possit sola potentia existente, per prius ab artifice Deo sit et secundario a celo quod organum est artis divine quam naturam committere appellant.


differt autem ars a natura quia ars est principium agendi in alio, natura autem est principium actionis et motus in eo in quo est.


l'anima umana, che è forma nobilissima di queste che sotto lo cielo sono generate, più riceve de la natura divina che alcun'altra.


IV:XXII:5.

IV:XXIII:3.


Augustine expresses the doctrine that the mind or rational soul has been endowed by God with the capacity to perceive the truth by its own light... in quadam luce sui generis incorporea.

28. While allowing for the influence of Aristotle, it is well to remember the warning contained in an article by Herbert Grundmann which appeared in "*Studi Danteschi*" (ed. by M.Barbi) vol: 18 p. 277:

"Questa idea di una verità universale egli (Dante) non la vede incorporata in nessun singolo pensatore e in nessun sistema determinato, ma l'ha rispecchiata e l'ha fatto dispiegare nella armonia degli spiriti dei grandi dotti nel cielo del Sole."

Quoted by Raffaele Resta: op. cit: p. 201.

30. One may legitimately speak of irrationalism as surpassing or dispensing with the discursive methods of reason, as for example in certain of the poems of the great 16th century mystic S. John of the Cross. e.g.

Oh llama de amor viva,
Que tiernamente hieres
De mi alma en el más profundo centro!
Pues ya no eres esquiva,
Acaba ya si quieres,
Rompe la tela deste dulce encuentro.

aqq:


In its depth I saw that it contained, bound by love in one volume, that which is scattered in leaves through the universe, substances and accidents and their relations as it were fused together in such a way that what I tell of is a simple light. I think I saw the universal form of this complex, because in telling it I feel my joy expand.


35. It is interesting to compare Dante's philosophy of love with that of Hegel as a young man. In contrast to the metaphysical idea of law in Kant, Hegel in his "Spirit of Christianity" elaborates the theory of the law of love as a universal principle of harmony. It may be said that, under the influence of Schiller, and of his unfortunate friend, Hûlderlin, Hegel is the systematizer of the doctrine of love in the history of the Romantic movement.


"Non ci troviamo più né con S. Tommaso né con Bonaventura, me con Dante solo, solo con Dante, il quale rifà le apprese dottrine a modo suo, con l'independenza del genio."


In the profound and clear ground of the lofty light appeared to me three circles of three colours and of the same extent, and the one seemed reflected by the other as rainbow by rainbow, and the third seemed fire breathed forth equally from the one and the other. 

...... O Light Eternal, that alone abidest in Thyself, alone knowest Thyself and known to Thyself and knowing, lovest and smilest on Thyself. That circling which, thus begotten, appeared in Thee as reflected light, when my eyes dwelt on it for a time, seemed to me, within it and in its own colour, painted with our likeness;....

40. Cf. Convivio: II:IV:16

che perché medisimamente dovemo ammirare loro eccellenza — la quale soverchia gli occhi de la mente umana, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel secondo de la Metafisica —, e affermar loro essere. Poiché non avendo di loro alcun senso (dal quale comincia la nostra conoscenza), pure risplende nel nostro intelletto alcun lume de la vivacissima loro essenza,........sì come afferma chi ha li occhi chiusi l'aere essere luminoso, per un poco di splendore, o vero raggio come passa per le pupille del vispistrello;....


Nous nous exprimons nécessairement par des mots, et nous pensons le plus souvent dans l'espace...


Concepts, in fact, are outside each other, like objects in space: and they have the same stability as such objects, on which they have been modelled.

42. Plotinus.

As an example of this argument of an absolute standard


43. S. Augustine.

Of many such usages the following may serve to illustrate the point:

En: in Ps: XVI:10.

ut emque nebulis diffugatis......ad hunc sonum pervenerimus interdum ut aliquid de illa domo Dei nitendo capiamus; onere tamen quodam infirmitatis nostrae ad consuetudine recidimus......Ecce acie mentis aliquid incommutabile, etsi perstrictim et raptim, perspicere potuimus.

De Trinitate: VIII:3. XII:23.

In Jo: Ev: Tr: 18:11.

45. Apoc: IV:3.
   et iris erat in circuitu sedis, similis visioni smaragdinae.
   Prophetia Ezekielis XI.
   Et vidi: et ecce, in firmamento quod erat super cherubim,
   quasi lapis sapphirus, quasi species similitudinis solii,
   apparuit super ea.

   sì come dice Euclide, lo punto è principio di quella,
   e, secondo che dice, lo cerchio è perfettissima figura
   in quella, che conviene però avere ragione di fine.


   E lo cielo di Giove si può comparare a la Geometria......
   ibid: II:XIII:27.
   E ancora la Geometria è bianchissima, in quanto è senza
   macula d'errore e certissima per sè e per la sua ancella,
   che si chiama Perspettiva.

   lo punto, per la sua indivisibilitate è immensurabile,e
   lo cerchio per lo suo arco è impossibile a quadrare
   perfettamente, e però è impossibile a misurare a punto.

   The following passage is relevant:

   "Geometry is, as far as we see at present, in exactly the
   same position as a science which should take as its
   fundamental axiom or assumption the proposition 'Unicorns
   are one-horned horses'. From this we might deduce the
   theorems 'Unicorns have four legs', 'unicorns are mammals',
   'unicorns have two eyes', and the like. Such a science,
   if called true at all, must be called universally and
   necessarily true. For the axiom on which it depends
   is a definition or analytic proposition, and all the
   theorems deduced from the axiom are equally analytic
   propositions. But what such a science could not from
   its own resources tell us would be whether there are
   in the actual world any unicorns. To answer that
   question we must have recourse to empirical observation."
As we have tried to maintain, the thought of Aristotle not only illuminates the doctrinal discussions of the "Convivio", but also contributes largely to the philosophy, implicit and explicit, in the "Divina Commedia". The point of view adopted by the poet in psychology, in ethics, in metaphysics rests substantially upon the work of Aristotle. When we say this, we mean that it is dependent upon a version of the Peripatetic philosophy interpreted and understood in terms of S. Thomas Aquinas. Nor do we deny an occasional sympathetic glance at the principles of Averroism, nor an occasional repudiation of certain Thomistic views. The Aristotelian influence, however, is everywhere. It is present even in those sublime flights of song in which the poet celebrates the glories and felicities of the mystic vision. Such experiences as he there describes are really a transformation of the metaphysical ideas which he has previously asserted - a prolongation and conclusion rather than an abrupt rejection of them. In the "Divina Commedia", the masters of Greek wisdom appear only fitfully and in the manner of transient, fleeting figures. They are there to illustrate, to indicate, to give point rather than to inform. Dante recalls the tradition of the Seven Sages in the "Convivio", though not without committing some mistakes. 1/ Of these, two only are conceded mention in the sacred poem. Thales is regarded as a member of the philosophical court of Aristotle, the ruler of that domain which may be compared to the territories of the Christian Emperor. 2/ There is a brief reference to Solon as the ideal legislator, in his resistance to tyranny. 3/

We may observe that the primitive schools of Greek philosophy are only alluded to by way of reminiscence. Thus Thales exists only as a vague and abstract figure. Empedocles also constitutes one of the associates of Aristotle as he holds court in the Elysian meadow. His name seems to be more familiar to the poet. When Virgil describes the earthquake which at the crucifixion shook the earth even to the infernal abyss of night and its gloomy caverns, he recalls to Dante the doctrine of Empedocles. This is
the theory that the equilibrium of the universe is maintained by the discord of those elements out of which it is made and constituted.\textsuperscript{4} Heracleitus is another of those illustrious men who is recognized as belonging to "la filosofica famiglia". Others to whom allusion is made elsewhere in the poem are:

\begin{quote}
Parmenide, Melisso, e Eriso, e molti, li quali andavano e non sapean dove.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

What is significant here is that Dante censures those philosophers who have constructed their theories without resorting to that exact method of observation and induction which is the foundation of all science and which is expressed in the logical form of the syllogism. When he speaks of the old physicists who were eager to propound a grandiose and impressive metaphysic evolved by the imagination, he employs all the severities of the Aristotelian criticism.\textsuperscript{6} And it is noteworthy that, just as in the sphere of the sun, he contrives to reconcile Siger of Brabant and S. Thomas, Joachim of Flora and S. Bonaventura, so in Limbo he composes those divergences which exist between the earliest philosophers of the Greek world, with their dreams and visions, and the Master of the critical and scientific method. "Wherefore, as the Philosopher says, in the first book of the Physics, Nature wills that in our attainment of knowledge, progress should be made with order, that is, by going on from that which we know better, to that which we know less well." \textsuperscript{7}

Democritus only makes his appearance for a moment. The exponent of the Atomic theory had declared that he had no interest in the eternal silence of the Gods. But Dante does not disavow him on that account. In this mood of Humanism, he is prepared to reckon only with his enthusiasm for science, his contempt for worldly opinion, and his asceticism.\textsuperscript{8} The reference to Anaxagoras is equally brief, equally transitory, though, in the Four Treatises, his theory of the Milky Way receives mention.\textsuperscript{9}

Pythagoras, however, appears to have been one of those illustrious names which impressed the poet, for there are frequent allusions to him in the "Convivio", where he is credited with the invention of the name "philosophy".\textsuperscript{10} Again, Dante is conscious of the part that number plays in the Pythagorean theory of cosmological origins. It is, therefore, all the more strange that he does not figure in the "Divina Commedia" under any aspect.
Dante is content to exhibit Socrates and Plato as among the most intimate of the family circle of the wise and learned in Limbo. In the Four Treatises, he does, indeed, record the fact that Socrates despised his life in the service of truth. Yet, Socrates remains a mere name to which no definition nor illustration can be attributed. Again, as we have already seen, the admiration which Dante seems to have felt for Plato is confined to the earlier work. There, it is a respect for the brilliance of his intellect, his love of truth, his theory of ideas, and his conception of human ends which inspires his description. Nowhere can we discover any proof that Dante had any first-hand acquaintance even with such limited portions of the Platonic writings as were available at the time. No doubt, in the "Divina Commedia", the whole conception of Christian truth and of a Christian philosophy expressed in terms which are predominantly Thomistic, if not Aristotelian, imposed a certain reticence on the poet. Like Virgil and Aristotle, however near Plato may have come to the Revelation of God in Christ, he will experience throughout eternity the same insatiable desire to possess and enjoy the Supreme Good. Dante who, in the "Convivio", invokes the magnificence of his name, with many pious expressions, only alludes to him on two occasions in the great poem. When he does so, it is only to refute some particular teaching associated with his philosophy.

First, he repudiates the Platonic theory that the human being has three distinctive souls:

\[
\text{quello error che crede ch'\'un anima s\'\'altra in noi s'accenda.}^{13}\]

He declares that, from the moment the Prime Lover bestows life on the human embryo, the soul possesses all its faculties:

\[
\text{e fassi un'\'alma sola, che vive e sente e se in s\'\'rigira.}^{14}
\]

In much the same way, he refutes the idea expressed in the "Timaeus" which suggests in Plato's dramatic and vivid fashion that souls originate in the stars and return there. This is a myth with which he is acquainted from the pages of S. Augustine and S. Thomas.\(^{15}\) He could, of course, have read the cosmological dialogue or exposition, the "Timaeus", in the Latin translation of Chalcidius, but it must remain doubtful whether he had actually
done so. We have already discussed this question and it would be superfluous to consider again such arguments as exist on either side. When Dante sees appearing in the heaven of the moon, - coloured as the lustrous pearl, - the less perfect souls of the blessed, he naturally concludes that this is their eternal dwelling-place. Further, he assumes that the holier souls, the more contemplative, the more virtuous, the more heroic, as for example, S. Thomas, S. Bonaventura, S. Bernard, are assigned to spheres which are more elevated and glorious. However, Beatrice warns him that such a supposition is false. He must not accept Plato's view.

Ancor di dubitar ti dà cagione
parer tornarsi l'anime alle stelle, 16./
secondo la sentenza di Platone.

But here the exigencies of artistic order and of literary composition have dissuaded the poet from representing the whole company of the redeemed in one single vision, as in the famous altar-piece of the Lamb by the brothers van Eyck. He is compelled by the needs of dramatic form to give an element of successiveness to the various personages whom he depicts in all the aspects and similitudes of light. There is symbolism in this and Dante employs every device of art to make clear the significance of his representation. Moreover, the doctrinal conception of the work must imply a discrimination of reward, a difference of station. "One star" says the Apostle "differeth from another star in glory": 17/ there must, therefore, be divergencies in holiness, in attribute, in disposition. The only way to represent this in poetry is to show the various persons in the "Paradiso" as occupying different spheres of light, as diffusing different manifestations of glory, as moving to a particular music. In no other manner can he give expression to his underlying belief than by describing the various heavens in their varying degrees of clarity: the Moon, with its pale, cloudy light: the Crystalline and the Empyrean, with their brilliance and intensity.

The poet, therefore, must disclose to his readers the plan which he intends to follow. He does this through the lips of Beatrice who emphatically repudiates the Platonic doctrine.
Quel che Timeo dell'anime argomenta
non è simile a ciò che qui si vede,
però che, come dice, par che senta.
Dice che l'alma alla sua stella riede,
credendo quella quindi esser decisa,
quando natura per forma la diede;

However, Beatrice goes on to suggest an ingenious interpretation of this passage in the "Timaeus" which reconciles it with the Aristotelian teaching.

e forse sua sentenza è d'altra guisa
che la voce non suona, ed esser potete
con intenzion da non esser derisa.
S'elli intende tornare a queste ruote
l'onor della influenza e'l biasmo, forse
in alcun vero suo arco percuote.

Here, she propounds an opinion about the influence which the heavenly bodies exert on human beings. If the interpretation which she gives were accepted, it would mean that, after death, the forces, whether good or bad, beneficent or malevolent, (which had determined the actions of individual men) would return to those spheres from which they had originated. That such influences exist, is for Dante a matter of certainty. There can be no dispute about it since the evidence from all sides seems to him so strong, and learned men generally agree that it constitutes a scientific and metaphysical truth. Indeed, as far as there is a rational system of the universe, such influences must be recognized. Further, they must be the objects of empirical science. Beatrice herself assumes the correctness of this point of view and attempts to interpret the myths of Plato by means of the Aristotelian method. Though the effort may seem to us pedantic and illusory, it is employed by the poet in the interests of what he believes to be a rational and philosophical interpretation.
II.

We have space only for a brief review of those passages in the "Divina Commedia" which relate to the doctrines of the other philosophical schools. Diogenes, the Cynic, makes his appearance momentarily in the retinue of Aristotle in the Elysian fields of Limbo. In the "Convivio", the Stoics occupy a place of some prominence. Zeno, their founder, is obviously regarded by the poet with veneration as the promulgator and prophet of a lofty and austere morality. He is described as counselling above all things the pursuit of justice and truth. Furthermore, with him is associated that passionless state in which is neither joy nor sorrow, delight nor grief, but only the inflexible resolution of the moral life. The Stoic philosophy seems to have exercised a great attraction for Dante in the days of his sorrow and exile. It was an inspiration, a light and example to him. Certainly the "Convivio" discloses this particular ethic in its high seriousness, its luminous purpose and rationalism. It is what brought him to read the books of Cicero and Boethius, for their grave and solemn purpose is in itself a consolation. It is, of course, true that Boethius was a Christian; but that makes no difference to the moral attitude which he takes up in the "De Consolatione Philosophiae", which is austere, resigned, reticent. Cicero's more philosophical writings are, of course, coloured and shaped by Stoic conceptions. The Stoic note is sounded in the Canzone:

Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute;

Ed io, che ascolte nel parlare divino
consolarsi e dolersi
così alti dispersi,
l'asilo m'è dato, onor mi tegno:
ché, se giudizio o forza di destino,
vuol pur che il mondo versi
i bianchì fiori in persai,
cader co' buoni è pur di lode degno.
E non che degli occhi mis'1 bel segno
per lontananza m'è tolto dal viso,
che m'have in fuoco miso,
lieve mi conterei ciò che m'è grave.

Vossler has pointed out, with some justification, that Dante's mood of Stoicism was more an innate disposition of the mind than a philosophy which he acquired from books. Indeed, his acquaintance with the writings of this school was not by any means
considerable. Seneca he knows "Seneca morali" though he has nothing to say about the work of its pre-eminent thinkers Cleanthes and Chrysippus. His knowledge of Stoic doctrine is generally speaking derived from Cicero who, of course, represents other elements of thought which modify that teaching. Perhaps it is not unfair to add the name of Boethius, who represents a philosophy at once Christian and Patristic, and a morality which is touched with the Stoic ideal of submission. In so far as Dante is Latin and Roman in outlook, he finds the Stoic ethic congenial. We should observe, however, that in spite of the grandeur of his philosophy, in spite of the encouragement of his teaching, in spite of the influence which his school at all times exercised upon the poet, Zeno himself is relegated to comparative obscurity in the meadow of the Castle of Learning. He is a name which fills the line and supplies the rhyme: "Empedocles, Heraclitus, Zenone." 25.

In the green meadows of this Elysium, two Mathematicians are assigned that place which belongs to them on account of their intellectual distinction. The poet refers: "Euclide geometra e Tolomeo." 26.

Euclid, who in the "Convivio" is remembered as propounding the two insoluble problems at the end of his geometric studies, is here, like most of the other eminent members of his company, a name, a wandering voice. Ptolemy, however, though he too receives only casual mention, is everywhere present. He is the luminous and exemplary teacher to whom the poet owes the plan of the nine heavens through which Beatrice will conduct him before he attains to the sphere of living fire, the Empyrean, the heaven of perfect light. The latter, as we have seen, is postulated by Christian theology and by the realities of the spiritual life. In the person of Ptolemy, it may be said that Greek Science accompanies, guides, enlightens Dante as far as the Primum Mobile, that is, as far as the supernatural world of the direct vision of God. 27.

Dante's profound knowledge of the science of Astronomy, as it was understood and practised in his own day, is evident on every page of the "Divina Commedia". In the Four Treatises, however, representing a mood of youthful enthusiasm for a newly acquired science, he discourses with erudition and with a sensitive grace of prose on the Ten Heavens. The "Divina Commedia" discovers him with the
same profound interest in Astronomy, but with a mature understanding and employment of its esoteric theories. He is obviously fascinated, compelled, attracted by its singularly aesthetic demonstrations. It is one of the sciences which he regards as of the greatest importance in its significance for human life. The movements of the planets, the alternation of the light, the astrological interpretations, ... all these engage his attention and enquiry.

There is only the most cursory reference to Medicine and to what may be called the Science of Nature in the poem. Dioscorides, Hippocrates and Galen are among those mentioned in Limbo - rather in the manner of the less distinguished guests at an ambassadorial reception. Dioscorides is extolled for his investigation into cause and effect. He is the learned empiricist who in his five treatises on the use of the various herbs in Medicine has defined with exactitude and care their properties as far as these may be of use in therapeutics. Galen exists only as a name; Hippocrates receives only a passing allusion. However, towards the end of the "Purgatorio", Dante does recall to mind the founder of Greek Medicine. In the mysterious and (one might add) extravagant procession which winds its way through the Earthly Paradise are various personages of allegorical significance. Among these, S. Luke appears dressed as a doctor, in conformity with the tradition which is derived from S. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians:

L'un si mostrava alcun de' famigliari
di quel nome: Hipocrate che natura
all'animali fe ch'ell' ha più cari;

In Dante's time, doctors were no more free than they are today from the accusation of looking for lucrative rewards in the exercise of their profession. In the "Convivio", the poet classifies them among those who study, not for the sake of knowledge as an end in itself, but merely for the sake of acquiring riches. They are unworthy of the name of philosopher, for the true philosopher is a lover of wisdom without thought of earthly advantage. But the art of healing, as practised by a Hippocrates, may be termed a divine art, and it is for that reason that the poet evokes the memory of S. Luke the physician. He wants the art of Medicine to bring men to participation in those gifts which God bestows through nature. Furthermore, he wants the practitioners of so lofty and
noble an art to renounce the love of money, which defeats the true purposes of their calling.

In the "Convivio", we discover those Latin writers who adapted Greek philosophy to the needs of a less sophisticated audience. Cicero appears in the Second Treatise as the writer who first roused that faint and tremulous interest in philosophy to which he confesses. It was, as he tells us, in the darkness and bitterness of sorrow, in the desperation of grief after the death of Beatrice that, almost as a last resort, he took up the books of Cicero and Boethius. He read the "De Consolatione Philosophiae" of Boethius, with its calm and patient confidence, its ethic so strangely blended of Stoicism and Christianity, its Platonism, and the "De Amicitia" of Cicero.

"And hearing besides," he declares, with candour and modesty, "that Tully had written another book, in which when discoursing "On Friendship", he had introduced words of consolation for Laelius, a most excellent man, on the death of his friend Scipio, I set myself to read that. And although it was hard for me at first to enter into their meaning, yet finally I entered into it, as far as the knowledge of Latin which I possessed, and such slight ability as I had, enabled me to do, by which ability I already perceived many things in a dream as may be seen in the 'New Life'." 

It may be, as Scherillo has suggested with some plausibility, that Brunetto Latini, Dante's old master and friend, had introduced him to these two works. It is anyhow a likely conjecture that the latter would be well acquainted with the works of Cicero, since the section of his "Tresor" which discusses rhetoric is based on the "De Inventiones" of the great Latin orator.

We can say, without contradiction, however, that the influence which Cicero exercised on the poet's mind, was considerable. The Four Treatises contain many allusions and quotations from his philosophical writings .... one has only to consult the index of the Busnelli-Vandelli edition to realize how many and how various they are! Moreover, the ideal of human nobility which Dante proposes with such solicitude in the Fourth Treatise owes much to Aristotle and Cicero. In this respect, it may be said that the "De Senectute", the "De Officiis" and the "Tusculan Orations" are in fundamental agreement with the teaching of the "Nicomachean Ethics". As we have already had occasion to observe, in the "De Senectute", the poet discovered an exquisite and charming
picture of an old age which was made more serene by the approach of death. With evident admiration, he evokes the memory of Seneca, the famous Stoic writer and at one time Tutor and afterwards Minister in the service of the Emperor Nero. Here, we become conscious of the sad, sweet music of sunset ...... "The springing music, and its wasting breath."

But the author of the "Divina Commedia", no longer exhibits any eagerness for the moral fervour and clear serenity of Cicero, nor for the eloquence of Seneca. He views all things now from another perspective. He sees everything in the light of the mystic and theologian. Neither Cicero nor Seneca can be anything but writers of a past age whose glory has departed and whose brightness is tarnished and worn. He finds the ethic of Cicero inadequate, incomplete, unfruitful. It denotes a humanism which is entirely satisfied with human nature as it is, and which attributes to it a nobility which is proclaimed with easy tolerance and never properly explained. On the other hand, the Stoics, with all their noble idealism, their austerity, love of truth and justice never seem to have been touched with that sense of compassion which is the heart of the Gospel. Though they were aware of the misery and grandeur of human existence, though they knew something of its tragedy, they were ignorant of the Saving Charity which is Christ's coming in the flesh, and His Most Blessed Passion and Resurrection.
E dinanzi a costui erano chiamati li seguitatori di scienza non filosofi ma sapienti, sì come furono quelli sette savi antichissimi, che la gente ancora nomina per fama: lo primo de li quali ebbe nome Solon, lo secondo Chilon, lo terzo Periandro, lo quarto Cleobulo, lo quinto Lindio, lo sesto Biante, e lo settimo Prieneo.

2. Inferno: IV:137.
D'Iogenès, Anassagora e Tale,

per ch'un nasce Solone e altro Serse,


Et quia error potest esse in materia et in forma argumenti, dupliciter peccare contingit: aut scilicet assumendo falsum aut non sillogizando; que duo Philosophus obicibat contra Parmenidem et Melissum dicens: 'quia falsa recipiunt et non sillogizantes sunt'. Et accipio hic largo modo 'falsum' etiam pro inoppinabili, quod in materia probabilis habet naturam falsi. Si vero in forma sit peccatum, conclusio: interimenda est ab illo qui solvere vult, ostendendo formam sillogisticam non esse servatem. Si vero peccatum sit in materia, aut est quia simpliciter falsum assumptum est, aut falsum secundum quid; si simpliciter, per interemptionem assumpti solvendum est, si secundum quid, per distinctionem.
Onde, al come dice lo Filosofo nel primo de la Fisica, la natura vuole che ordinatamente si proceda ne la nostra conoscenza, cioè procedendo da quello da quello che conosciamo meglio in quello che conosciamo non così bene; dico che la natura vuole, in quanto questa via di conoscere è in noi naturalmente innata.

Democrito, che'l mondo a caso pone,
Per che li filosofi eccellentissimi ne li loro atti apertamente lo ne dimostraro, per li quali Sapemo essi tutte l'altre cose, fuori che la sapienza, avere messe e non calere. Onde Democrito, de la propria persona non curando, nè barba nè capelli nè unghie si togliea:


10. ibid: III:XV:5.
Questo Pittagora, domandato se egli si riputava sapiente, negò a sè questo vocabulo, e disse sè essere non sapiente, ma amatore di sapienza..................Da questo nasce lo vocabolo del suo proprio atto, Filosofia, sì come de lo amico nasce lo vocabolo del suo proprio atto, cioè Amicizia.


quivi vid'io Socrate e Platone,
che' manzi alli altri più presso li stanno;

the error that maintains that one soul is kindled above another in us;
Cf. Aristotle: De Anima:III.

and becomes a single soul that lives and feels and itself revolves upon itself.


Also, it gives thee perplexity that the souls seem to return to the stars, in agreement with Plato's teaching.


Stella enim a stella differt in claritate.


What of the souls Timaeus has to tell
Is not like that which is apparent here;
For what he says it seems he thinks as well.

He says the soul returns to its own star,
Himself believing it was severed thence
When Nature made it form for flesh to wear.

(Laurence Binyon's translation).


Haply his opinion is of other sense
Than his words sound, and may-be has in it
Import of no derisory pretence.

If to these spheres he means the souls remit
The honour of their influence and the blame,
Perhaps his bow upon some truth may hit.

(Binyon's translation).


Furono dunque filosofi molto antichi, de li quali primo e prencipe fu Zenone, che videro e credettero questo fine de la vita umana essere solamente la rigidaonestade; ciòè rigidamente, senza rispetto alcuno, la verità e la giustizia seguire, di nulla mostrare dolore, di nulla mostrare allegrezza, di nulla passione avere sentore.


22. Canzone XX.


   ibid: IV:XII:11.


   Cf. E. Moore: "Studies in Dante. First Series." p. 126 sqq:
   P. Toynbee: "Dante Studies and Researches." p. 50 sqq.
   The great work on astronomical speculation is of course
   by P. Duhem: "Le système du monde: histoire des théories
   cosmologiques de Platon & Copernic." (Paris:1913-17:
   5 vols: unfinished).
   Cf. also L. O. Wedel: "Mediaeval Attitude towards Astrology."
   (New Haven: 1920).
   M. A. Orr Evershed: "Dante and the Early Astronomers."
   (London:1913).

   Et civitas non eget sole, neque luna, ut luceat in ea; nam claritas Dei illuminavit eam, et lucerna ejus est Agnus.
   ibid: XXI:23.
   Et nox ultra non erit, et non egebunt lumine lucernae, neque lumine solis, quoniam Dominus Deus illuminabit illos, et regnabunt in saecula saeculorum.

   Ipocrate, Avicenna e Galieno,
   ibid: 139-140.
   e vidi il buono accoglitore del quale,
   Dioscoride dico;
   Cf. C. Singer: "Greek Biology and Greek Medicine."
   (Oxford:1922).

   Salutat vos Lucas, medicus charissimus.

   the one showed himself of the household of that great
   Hippocrates whom nature made for the creatures she
   holds dearest;...

   Nè si dee chiamare vero filosofo colui che è amico
di sapienza per utilitade, al come sono li legisti,
il medi e quasi tutti li religiosi, che non per
sapere studiano ma per acquistare moneta o dignita;...

PART THREE.

THE RELIGIOUS HUMANISM OF DANTE.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE PAGAN CULTS

I.

It will be evident what a prominent place the pagan deities occupy in the "Divina Commedia", for on almost every page we meet some allusion, some reference or some metaphor implying their existence. As a Catholic, Dante's belief is that the ancients were prevented by error and falsehood from recognizing the truth of that divine revelation which was manifested to the Jews. They constituted a race which was deceived by various superstitions and which must be described as maliciously disposed towards the truth:

la gente ingannata e mal disposta. (1)

Virgil himself recognizes the illusions and deceits practised by the pagan gods for, at his first meeting with the poet in the Dark Wood, he declares that he was born:

al tempo delli dei falsi e bugiardi. (2)

The problem for Dante was to discover the origin of these false beliefs which had obscured the light of the truth from those who should have been able to perceive it. For this, he sought, with impassioned longing, for some clear and rational explanation. In his works, there is no evidence anywhere nor any suggestion that he ever entertained that curiously perverse idea that the pagan gods are the demons of Hell anxious to allure and inveigle men with their sensuality. Such a view is, however, to be found in S. Augustine expressed occasionally with some hesitation and in tentative form. (3) Later, in the stern ascetic, S. Peter Damian, it attains to explicit definition and resolute denunciation. It may be pointed out that such a theory, extreme in its identification of the pagan cults with the principle of evil, finds some support in the Vulgate version of a verse in Psalm 95: "Quod omnes dii gentium daemonia," and in the New Testament, in such passages as S. Paul's famous argument: "Quid ergo? dico quod idolis immolatum sit aliquid, aut quod idolum sit aliquid? Sed quae immolant gentes, daemoniis immolant et non Deo." (4)
opinion Dante obviously rejected with vigour. No man could have
written as he has written, no man could have used so many of the
myths and legends of the ancient world, no man could have intro-
duced the old gods in so many circumstances and in so many colours
of the imagination without a conviction that there were aspects of
truth and of beauty which were suggested by such beliefs. Here
again the poet maintains the attitude of the Humanist, the scholar,
the poet, the artist with his delight in the glory and achievement
of the classical civilization.

Again, there is no trace of the rationalizing theory in Dante.
This idea, popular since the days of Alexander, held that the
Olympian gods are really the heroes of the human race who have
been elevated to divine honours by general esteem. They are the
kings, the legislators, warriors, poets, inventors of arts and
crafts of all kinds. While Aeschylus himself professes no such
interpretation yet nevertheless the figure of Prometheus in his
great play might be regarded as a symbol and image of the gods as
benefactors of the human race. Obviously, Zeus himself in the
ferocity of his dominion represents no such compassion. Promes-
theus, however, is a saviour, the bringer of fire, the teacher of
all arts who in the hollow fennel stalk hid the secret flame, the
source of all inventions, and brought it to men. (5) He represents
the work of enlightenment which the gods ought rightly to under-
take. Presumably we shall never know how Aeschylus reconciled
Prometheus to the father of gods and men in the two lost plays of
the trilogy, but one may recollect the prediction which assures
us of this when Zeus, mild of mood, shall make peace with his
victim. (6)

The rationalizing theory was advanced by the old Roman poet
Ennius who translated into Latin the book written by Euhemerus in
which it finds expression. It is stated by Varro and elaborated
with all the subtility of genius by Cicero in his philosophical
work, "De Natura Deorum". However, Dante does not seem to have
considered it worthy of attention. He was aware that Saturn was
the first king of Crete and that his reign constituted a golden
age in which all the virtues flourished. (7) But from that tradition,
he drew no inference nor conclusion about the deification of fa-
mous men. For him, the legend in the form in which he had first
heard it, was sufficient. Saturn, therefore, remains a god who
was driven out of heaven by a stranger and more resolute rival,
and who, for the love of men, came down to ordain laws and customs. We may say that the doctrine of Euhemerism finds strong support in the ancient Egyptian practice of regarding the gods as kings of long ago.

Pagan thinkers had also sought for an explanation of the origin of religion in an allegorical interpretation of the various myths. In the Second Treatise of the "Convivio", Dante maintains this view, attempting to define the significance of allegory in its various employments. Legends, he assures us, conceal a certain truth hidden beneath the form of a charming dissimulation. Thus, the story of Orpheus, who with the sweetness of his music, tamed the wild beasts, and made even trees and stones to move, possesses a symbolic meaning. For, surely, it must denote a spiritual and moral truth, namely, that he was a wise man who, by his words, persuaded the hard hearts of men to gentleness and taught them humility. Moreover, he bent to his will men who had no acquaintance with art and science, and who, alien to the promptings of reason, were as stones in their uncouthness. The poet announces his intention of developing this theme in a later treatise of the book. This should have been the Fourteenth Treatise, which was intended to contain an exposition of the nature of Justice. As we know, it was never actually written, so that we cannot say how the author would have elaborated his argument, with allusion and image, and, one may suppose, with lucid definition. It is, however, not difficult to imagine how Dante would have passed from a philosophical and abstract discussion on Justice to the theory that certain types of myth had been invented by the legislator in the commonwealth in order to assure his subjects of the triumph of virtue. This, of course, was a well-worn and familiar theme among certain classical writers. It is intellectualist, reflective, expository. We find it in the pages of Cicero and Plutarch, and, later, it receives impression in various forms and in various degrees of eloquence by those Fathers of the Church whose sympathy is engaged by the old Greek culture. These are the writers and thinkers who remain true to the philosophical traditions of Athens, men like S. Clement of Alexandria, who can still speak of philosophy as "the clear image of truth, the gift of God from the Greeks". It may be said, at this point, that the allegorical interpretation of the myths was as commonplace to the Greeks as the form of the myths themselves. It is a practice...
which becomes clearly apparent in the writings of Homer (as they have come down to us in their present text and no doubt as they were composed by the author), in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and in the impassioned sincerity of Euripides, combining the critical and romantic elements of tragedy. It is, of course, more evident in the work of the philosophers, in Plato, in the Stoics, and in the later schools of Neo-Platonism. It is a poetic expedient of colour and image in Virgil and Ovid. In later writers, both pagan and Christian, it is a theory which assumes a certain extravagance, as, for example, in Apuleius, Macrobius and Lactantius. Most obviously, among these exponents of such a method, Cassiodorus employs it self-consciously, while Fulgentius makes of it a reconcile and fantastic invention.

This is a view which is expressed by S. Augustine, with his accustomed vigour and lucidity, in the "De Civitate Dei". From thence, it flows like a river, now broad, now deep, now shallow, now winding a devious way through the writers of the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century. It is propounded by Machiavelli in his "Discorsi sopra la prima deoa di Tito Livio", who finds in it the means by which Numa imposed upon the Romans beliefs which he knew were false in order to teach them the duty of public concord and the arts of peace. Such a theory, one may well suppose, might have been developed by Dante in the Fourteenth Treatise of the "Convivio" and conducted to speculation and example. In the Second Treatise of that work, however, the author is content to make only passing allusion to his intention. That he never realized it, is, of course, due to his dissatisfaction not only with the form but also with the philosophy which it was meant to express. We have, therefore, no logical and formal exposition of his ideas on this subject.

Like all Mediaeval writers, with their rationalism and scholastic interpretation, Dante was unable to conceive of the creative and imaginative power of primitive peoples. Indeed, it was not until the eighteenth century that such a notion was brought to light. This corresponds to the initiation and development of the historical method with Vico and Herder. It is Herder who speaks in such vivid and glowing language of the poetry of ancient peoples. For him, history is intuition, imagination, insight. It consists in that quality of "Innigkeit", which he is never tired of expounding and which he regards as the real and living
way of understanding the past. He claims to know by blood and instinct and to enter into communion with the strange and powerful forces which shaped the myths and legends of ancient peoples. In the present century, the work of C. G. Jung in psychology has revealed many interesting phases of experience in the mythological symbols and images of the "race unconscious". This is, of course, another study and another discipline altogether but it supports some of the conclusions advanced by Herder in his own brilliant and ebullient fashion.

Dante, however, in spite of a mind which was by nature sensitive and alert to every spiritual impulse, attempts to explain primitive myth by a theory which excludes every religious and imaginative motive. A doctrine such as his which tries to interpret the myths of religion as the inventions of wise and prudent legislators stands condemned at the outset as artificial. Nor could any Mediaeval Christian writer apply it uniformly to all the stories, legends and narratives of religion. By his own theological presuppositions, he was precluded from employing it to explain the more primitive elements of the Bible. For if the Scriptures are indeed the oracles of God, then they must be regarded as providing an infallible revelation in which no such human imperfections could be admitted. Mediaeval scholars were aware of the difficulties of interpretation, and the allegorical and symbolical method furnished them with a means of evading some of the more obvious problems of exegesis. It was not until the rise of the critical method in the eighteenth century that the literature of the Bible came to take on a new significance, a new colour, and a profound imaginative and psychological pattern. We find this approach in Herder's famous "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry", in which he employed a critical and rational judgment allied to that intuitive sympathy which is the mark of his genius. This work may claim to be the forerunner of the informed critical study of the Old Testament in the nineteenth century.

There is, however, throughout the whole of the "Divina Commedia", no evidence of this formal and artificial theory of myth. It may be presumed that since an earlier statement in the philosophical work which he composed, the poet has reflected upon it and dismissed it as unsatisfactory. As a matter of fact, two explanations are advanced by him in order to account for the origin
of the ancient religious cults with which he is acquainted. The first may be called rational and logical. It is sketched in vaguely and with not very much illumination in the Second Treatise of the "Convivio". This view does not appear ever to have been repudiated by the poet. In this passage, he recalls to mind Plato's doctrine of the Forms, clear, luminous, eternal and unchanging. Unable to comprehend such abstraction and incapable of metaphysical reasoning, men were, however, aware of certain universal principles in the world. These they erected into deities of various kinds and of common employments, making gods and goddesses whom they could clearly recognize and worship. Thus to the Fire and the Corn, there is assigned a protecting and guardian deity: while Wisdom receives its own bright and glorious spirit. In this very interesting passage, Dante declares: "There were others (i.e. philosophers), like Plato, a most eminent man, who assumed not only that there are as many Intelligences as there are movements of the Heaven, but also as there are species of things, just as there is one species for all men, and another for all gold, and another for all riches, and so on: and they would have it that as the Intelligences of the heavens are producers of these movements, each with one of its own, so these other Intelligences are producers of everything else, and exemplars each one of its own species; and Plato called them 'ideas', which is equivalent to calling them universal forms and natures. The Gentiles call them Gods and Goddesses, although they do not think of them as philosophically as Plato; and they adored their images and made for them splendid temples, as for Juno whom they called Goddess of Power, or of Vulcan whom they called God of Fire, or of Pallas or Minerva whom they called Goddess of Wisdom, and for Ceres whom they called Goddess of Corn."

According to this interpretation, therefore, the pagan deities are images, symbols, and similitudes of the Forms. They are shaped and moulded by the minds of men to give visible expression to those philosophical principles by which the universe is ordered.

A critical examination of this theory must reveal a certain confusion between categories of the psychological and the ideological. On the one hand, we discover Juno, the embodiment of power and jealousy, and Pallas, the figure of benevolent Wisdom. On the other hand, there are such deities as Vulcan and Ceres, who serve as characterizations and distinctions of the powers of
Nature. Vulcan, under the aspect of fire, and Ceres, under the aspect of the corn, must be taken to represent those necessities which pertain to human existence. One feels that Dante's explanation was hastily contrived, and that such confusion as we find in the details of the theory were due to the obscurity in which he found himself in explaining such phenomena. It is obvious that he had not been able to make up his mind on the problem. What does he really say? The pagan deities are the shadow of certain ideal abstractions. By them, we grasp certain universal principles or forms which otherwise would elude our intellectual perception. They are also symbols of certain psychological states which we recognize in ourselves. Again, they may be regarded as images of the processes and provision of Nature. This is all far from clear and would need a great deal of careful exposition in order to present a logical argument and conclusion. In this passage, we seem to get reminiscences of the doctrine of St. Augustine as that is presented in his vast, turbulent, many-coloured philosophy of history. It is the great African doctor who writes:

"Vulcanum volupt ignem mundi, Neptunum aquas mundi, Ditem patrem, hoc est Orcum, terranam et infimam partem mundi. Liberum et Cererem praepomunt seminibus ...... Et hoc utique totum refertur ad mundum, id est ad Iovem, qui propter eas dictus est progenitor genetrixque, quod omnia semina ex se emitteret et in se recuperet. Quando quidem etiam Matrem Magnam eamdem Ceterem volunt, quam nihil aliud dici esse quam terram, siveque perhibent et Iunonem, et idea ei secundas causas rerum tribuunt, cum tamen Iovi sit dictum progenitor genetrixque deum, quis secundum eos totus ipse et mundus est Iovis." sqq! (15)

From the various references and expressions of this view in the "De Civitate Dei", it would seem therefore that Dante derived such suggestions from St. Augustine. He confuses this theory even further by introducing the notion of those mysterious and universal powers by whose operation all things are maintained and preserved in existence. What he implies is that, by the unaided light of reason, the ancients were able to recognize the various spiritual intelligences which only the Christian revelation could explain. (16) On this showing, therefore, the pagan religions would seem to have originated from an intuitive perception of Christian angelology. While this was inadequate, fragmentary, distorted, as in some broken mirror, it was not necessarily false in all the
particulars which it represented.

The poet adds to this another explanation derived from astrology. According to this, the ancients had been able to arrive at the perception of certain truths but these were confused with error and illusion. They were not, therefore, efficacious truths but merely wandering lights. They could not lead to the knowledge or practice of true religion. This is a theory which Dante expounds in a manner which is avowedly scientific and which for this reason constitutes what he must have regarded as a serious argument.

In his essay on the "Mediaeval Attitude towards Astrology", Professor Theodore Wedel attributes the origins of astrological belief in the Hellenic civilization to the work of Aristotle.

The notion of the fixed stars, according to the Peripatetic view, is introduced as an explanation for the changes and mutations of corruptible things in the sublunary world. The stars themselves depend upon the Prime Mover, God, who imparts to them their motion. This theory, beautiful in its simplicity and magnificent in its contemplation of phenomena, was known throughout the West in translations from the Arabic. The first three books of the "Meteores" of Aristotle were put into Latin by the indefatigable translator, Gerard of Cremona, while the fourth book of that work was translated by Aristippus of Palermo.

There is also reason to suppose that Gerard of Cremona was the translator of Aristotle's "De Generatione et Corruptione". Between 1134 and his death in 1187, he is known to have translated about seventy works from the Arabic and was among the most accomplished of the Toledo group of scholars who were responsible for so many versions from Islamic sources. Of course, we cannot say whether Dante was familiar with these treatises in Latin. They were available, however, and, in a man of his scholarly temperament, there is the antecedent probability that he was. Beyond this statement, we cannot go.

Nor is it any part of the task of this essay to determine the precise degree of influence exercised by different works but rather to demonstrate what general elements of classical erudition entered into his mind. It is also worth recording that this same astrological theory is expressed by Cicero in his well-known work, "De Divinatione". Whether this was a treatise with which he was acquainted must also remain a matter of conjecture. It is sufficient to say that such speculations were to be found in the pages of Cicero. Dante was certainly an admirer of the more
philosophical writings of the great Latin orator. This we know from what he tells us in the "Convivio" of how his interest in philosophy began from the endeavour to seek consolation from sorrow after the death of Beatrice. Moreover, there are allusions to various works of Cicero in the "De Monarchia".

Dr. Edward Moore, in his "Studies in Dante" maintained that the poet derived this opinion from S. Augustine. There can be little doubt that he knew this passage and that it provided additional testimony. It has been suggested more recently, however, that he could have encountered such an explanation in words more clear and explicit in two works of Apuleius, "De Deo Socratis", and the "De Dogmate Platonis". These were both familiar at the time and might well have been known to the poet. Once more, we have no direct evidence that Dante knew either of these two works. We have adequate proof from his own words and citations that he was an ardent student of S. Augustine's "De Civitate Dei". Moreover, there were certain words in Holy Scripture which might seem to support such a view. "Qui numerat multitudinem stellae- rum, et omnibus eis nomina vocat. Magnus Dominus noster, et magna virtus ejus: et sapientiae ejus non est numerus." The words are allusive even if they cannot establish any definite theory of astrological philosophy.
II.

The astrological theory which Dante maintains assumes as its background those cosmological speculations which had been advanced by Aristotle, Ptolemy and the Arabs. It is outlined, brilliantly and clearly, in the "Convivio", and becomes fully articulated in the great poem of human destiny. As a philosopher and observer of human nature—and Dante always claimed to speak in this character—the poet was aware that the ancients had recorded and confirmed the planetary influences which they believed to control the actions of men and nations. In the mystical treatises of Dionysius the Areopagite(25) he discovered what may be called an astral angelology. "The Celestial Hierarchy" of this writer was translated into Latin by the eminent John Scotus Eriugena, the most original mind of his time. It was commented on by Hugh of S. Victor in the twelfth century, and by Robert Grosseteste and S. Albert the Great in the thirteenth century. The subject was one which continued to excite the fascination and contemplation of the Mediaeval mind. Indeed, the Scholastics took this work as seriously as William Butler Yeats took the myths and images of the later Neo-Platonic philosophy.(26) Through Dionysius the strong influence of this philosophy found unquestioning acceptance among the great theologians of the Middle Ages. Again, in the great intellectual construction of S. Thomas Aquinas the poet discovered the names of those great spiritual intelligences who have received from God the power of guiding the planets and of employing the mysterious attraction which emanates from them for the good or evil of mankind.(27)

Dante was obliged to maintain that, in the absence of any specific revelation, the ancients attributed to their own pagan deities those influences which they could not ignore and which they must regard as of celestial origin. They were conscious—or shall we say they had an intuition—of the truth that the cosmic spaces are not mere void, terrifying and luminous in their vastness. They are the habitations of certain spiritual beings, which act always in conformity to that Divine Will whose ministers and servants they remain. To them, they assigned the names of their gods, Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Venus. This is the explanation which Beatrice discloses to the poet during his sojourn on the sphere of the moon, that cloudy pearl of light which constitutes the lesser effulgence of glory:
329

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

By way of digression, these speculations by which the Roman and Olympian gods assume the character of stellar deities appear much earlier than classical times. We know with what precision and ardour the starry heavens were investigated by the Babylonians. They divided the year into months. Their conclusions are astonishingly accurate when we remember their lack of scientific instruments of measurement and observation. The twelve constellations in the Zodiac as recognized today are substantially those which were defined so brilliantly by the Chaldeans. Moreover, the Zodiacal system which they invented was an attempt to delineate the circular movements of the heavenly bodies in the mysterious influence exerted over events on earth. They plotted the course of the moon and the planets with reference to the sun's eliptic. The five planets received the names of the high gods of the Babylonian cult who were most closely associated with the fortunes of men. These were Ishtar, Nabu, Nergal, Marduk, and Ninib. Later, they came to acquire the names of their Roman counterparts—Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The chief constellations recognized by the Greeks were apparently derived from the Mesopotamian astrology.

It may seem strange that the stellar deities of the Babylonians were thus transformed into the figures of a Greco-Roman pantheon. Greek religion, on a superficial view, appears to be entirely anthropomorphic. It apparently has little connection with the austere sublimities of the star cult. Perhaps we are in danger of forgetting the origin of the Greco-Roman deities when we observe such a presumed disparity of sentiment. It is probable that the Indo-European homeland lies between the Oxnus and the Danube. There, the gods of the storm and sky, the gods of the sun and the wind constituted the tutelary powers. When the Aryans founded their settlements in North-West India, their chief god, Varuna, was identified with the broad, sheltering heaven. The Sanskrit name is the parallel of the Greek ὕδας meaning "Heaven". Together with his twin brother Mitra, the solar god, he was worshipped as an aspect and image of the Eternal Light. Indra, the god of thunder, and god of battles, was said to dwell in
the atmosphere, that lucid space between earth and sky. Agni, the god of fire, was subtle and pervasive, as the wind itself. The High God, (in Fr. Schmidt's sense, was the venerable figure of Dyaus Pitar, corresponding to the Greek Zeus and the Latin Jupiter. Dyaus Pitar in his character as the sky-god was regarded as the source of the fruitful rain and of the thunder. In the Rig Veda, however, we discover that he has become merely a name to which certain vague and confused ideas are attached. The nature deities have acquired an importance and significance as being more familiar and more often invoked by men. In Persia, a similar development seems to have taken place. There, Varuna, the god of the heavens, assumes the position of the supreme deity. He is then worshipped as lord of the universe, the Creator, the controller of the actions of men. Under this aspect, as Ahura-Mazda, the god of wisdom and god of light, he is represented in the Avesta. (31)

When the Indo-European peoples in the course of their wanderings towards the West settled in the broad lands of Thessaly they brought with them their gods and their language. Their chief god, the Lord of Heaven, they venerated under many aspects and under many names, all derived from the root "to shine". Finally, they gave him the name "Zeus", originally written Ζής, with its obvious affinity to the Sanskrit word Dyaus meaning "sky". On the cloudy heights of Mount Olympus, he was associated with the rain and lightning and thunder. (32) In this capacity, he exercised a beneficent function as the bringer of rain to the thirsty crops, hence as the giver of fertility and fruitfulness. What we find in the Homeric poems is that Zeus has become the king of the gods. He rules among them in much the same way as Agamemnon over his princes and warriors. (33) Religious ideas develop. They are subject to the deliverances of the rational and moral consciousness in its gradual enlightenment. Greek poetry and philosophy constitute a valid criticism of the religious ideas associated with the Olympian deities. (34) If Zeus still continues to be regarded as the cloud-gatherer, the thunderer, the giver of rain, later he comes to take on the features of father of gods and men. This idea assumes the meaning of the moral government of the world. In the great prayer to Zeus which Aeschylus gives us in the "Suppliants", we may perceive how the criticism of Xenophanes has entered into the poet's conception of the Supreme God. Here it is plainly declared that
Zeus achieves his ends by the power of his will. His acts must be said to possess a moral as well as a cosmic significance.

If Apollo, under the name of Helios, guides the golden chariot of the sun, he is also the god of music, and of poetry, the god of prophecy and dark sayings who has revealed his mysteries to men. As is well-known, the Pythagoreans were closely associated with the cult of Apollo. This was no accident: there was an intimate connection between the science and philosophy of the school and those aspects of the worship of Apollo which were expressed in the mystical doctrine of numbers.

It will be remembered that in the "Phaedrus", Plato brings together the four kinds of divine madness, associating them with four different deities. The "Cratylus", however, offers a somewhat different account, referring to madness in all its forms as due to the influence of Apollo and the Muses.(36) As the god of prophecy, he is Aplous, (Ἀπλοῦς) the speaker of truth. As the god who bestows purification of soul by means of lustrations
and mantic fumigations (καθηστικός), who heals the body by means of medicines, (καθηστικός) he may be called the divinity who washes away (ἀφαίρεσις) and delivers (ἀφέλω) from evil.

He it is who makes the heavens to move together in harmony (ἐνθρόνισε, πολεμίζει) like rhythm and measure in poetry. From what Plato says in this passage, it is evident that he associates music with astronomy. Further, he introduces the interesting idea of that harmony which is preserved by the heavens (πολεμίζει).

The love of wisdom is another aspect of the inspiration of Apollo, and the word "Muse" is shown to have originated from μουσή, which is taken to designate "enquiry and philosophy". There is an obvious employment of Pythagorean ideas in the association of music and astronomy. Not only was Apollo the god to whom the Pythagoreans had a special devotion. Plato dedicated his Academy to the Muses and to Apollo whose birthday in Thargelion was also observed as the philosopher’s own special festival.

What is significant for us to notice here is the relationship between Apollo and the science of astronomy, the illumination brought by the god and the music, which constitutes the secret and inalienable harmony of the heavens.

With the development of philosophy went also the development of religious cult which was transformed by various astrological conceptions. Franz Cumont has pointed out conclusively how various Oriental influences entered into the speculations and shaped and coloured them to new and divergent patterns. We can find an example of this interest in the stars in the "Epinomis" which forms a sort of sequel to the "Laws" of Plato. This curious and interesting work has been attributed with some probability to Philip of Opus, Plato's secretary and assistant, who edited his posthumous treatise "The Laws". It establishes the science of astronomy as the foundation for the more speculative disciplines of metaphysics and theology. The "Epinomis" is about the "visible gods" - those spirits which are the living souls of the stars. What is expounded here is really only the logical conclusion from the Platonic belief that all motion must have its origin in the operations of a "soul". The moon, the sun, the planets, and other celestial bodies do not perfectly express such an order, for the visible and temporal belong to the world of phenomena. Yet they move in accordance with certain mathematical laws and thus exhibit a particular pattern. In other words, they
manifest order, imperfect perhaps as subject to change, but nevertheless recognizable. Order implies intelligence. Intelligence can only exist where there is an animating soul. It follows, therefore, that the planets are the glittering and fantastic shapes of the various divinities. They are to be regarded as living things which reveal the presence of mind. In this dialogue, therefore, we are conscious of an astral mysticism, fascinating and strange in its explanation of the starry heavens. 

It is significant that the author of this treatise repudiates the common Greek view that the knowledge of things divine must for ever remain outside the reach of the human intellect. "Let none of the Greeks", he declares, "fear that it is not right for mortal men ever to busy themselves with matters divine: they must be told entirely the opposite view." The discovery that the celestial bodies moved in accordance with certain definite laws which could be formulated led, as we have seen, to the conclusion that there were stellar gods. They were responsible for such manifestations of order and intelligence as were perceived by the calculations of the astronomers. At the Academy, the science of astronomy was pursued with enthusiasm and diligence. The reason for this was, of course, that it seemed to offer a knowledge of the "visible gods" and to make possible the construction of an intelligent and informed theology.

Further, it must always be remembered that Aristotle grew up and taught in this atmosphere of astronomical speculation. Historically, the theory of the Unmoved Mover and its application to the problem of the motion of the stars was stated by Aristotle and belongs to his metaphysical system. We shall never be certain, however, that he was the first to propound it. We know that the studies undertaken at the Academy were regarded as a common enterprise in which various members participated. It is therefore impossible to assign responsibility for any particular theory or scientific project. Dr. Werner Jaeger has shown how thoroughly Platonic the idea of the Unmoved Mover is. Aristotle's contribution seems to have been that he established it as the supreme principle. It is separate from the world, yet it moves itself as desired (κατὰ τὸ ἅπαντα), while the stars revolve by the action of those animating intelligences which are the "visible gods".
From the fourth century B.C., the planets began to be called by the names of the principal gods in the Pantheon. The Hellenization of the East which followed the conquests of Alexander the Great brought with it also an effect that was contrary to the extension of Greek rationalism. This was the profound influence of the astral theology of the Chaldeans on the legends and mythology of the Greeks. Franz Cumont's well-known phrase, "astral mysticism", denotes this attitude of religious contemplation in the observation of the stars. It was widely diffused in the later Hellenic culture. "I know that I am mortal and the creature of a day," says Ptolemy, "but when I track by my mind the winding courses of the stars, I no longer tread the earth but am with Zeus himself, and take my fill of ambrosia, the food of the gods."

It was in the kingdom of the Seleucids that these divergent traditions appeared to blend together in strange, many-coloured brilliance. The Stoics played an important part in this movement, which must be designated as theological as well as philosophical. Seneca, in describing the felicity of the soul after death, mentions as one of its principal joys the contemplation of the stars and the beauty and harmony of their revolutions. Moreover, the great classic of Stoicism, the "Meditations" of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, with its faint melancholy, its austere and noble ethic, discloses a fatalism which is characteristic of the movement. It is not perhaps altogether absurd to see in this a determination which may have been derived from the view that the stars control human destiny. Babylonian astral philosophy was not without its influence on Stoicism, particularly in its strongly held conviction that the actions of men are predetermined in accordance with the stars in their courses.

Again, we find many mystical tendencies in the Neo-Pythagoreanism which flourished with vigour from about 100 B.C. onwards. This movement, as is common knowledge, exercised a considerable influence in many directions. It combined asceticism with the practices of thaumaturgy and magic. It cultivated the science of mathematics and entered into various astrological speculations. In this, the movement may be said to have anticipated the Platonism of the second century A.D. with its syncretism, and also of the more esoteric Neo-Platonism. Stoicism also became modified and coloured by the views of a predominant Platonism. What we discover is that Egyptian and Greek elements are fused together,


gods of different cults are invoked indiscriminately, and religious practices and ideas borrowed without compunction. Not only was this the custom of the ordinary man in the street. It was also the habit of those who sought a more philosophical and enlightened way of life. We get a good example of this in the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius, that brilliant evocation of the religion and philosophy of the second century A.D. Here we find magic, romance, illuminism, the rites of Isis and Sarapis, eroticism, humour, adventure, mystical prayer, and meditation combined together in a pattern of changing colours. The hero, Lucius, is required to put away the pleasure of his extravagant and wine-flown youth, his loves and passions, his delight in the delicate flesh. For such things, the old priest who counsels him has only words of rebuke. Nowhere else are the mysteries of initiation described so vividly and so fully. We observe here that the experience of the mystic death constitutes a dramatic and memorable element of the proceedings. Lucius sees a vision of the goddess herself, he beholds the fiery heavens, the revolutions of the planets, the dazzling, mysterious apocalypse of fulfilment. Not only is there a syncretism which is ecstatically caught. There is also a moral purpose which is shown forth in the mystery religion there revealed. In this work, too, we may notice the element of speculation about the stars and planets and their significance in human destiny.

Associated with the astral mysticism of the time, is the so-called Hermetic literature, i.e. works on various subjects combining in Cumont's phrase "the religious and scientific traditions of Egypt at one and the same time with the astrology which came from Babylon and with Greek philosophy." These writings professed to express the opinions and philosophy of Hermes Trismegistus, the Greek name for the Egyptian god Thoth. It seems to be the considered view of scholars who are competent to judge that these works originated in Egypt in the second and third centuries A.D. and were composed in Greek. Most of the writings in this collection are in the form of dialogues in which the protagonists are Hermes Trismegistus and his son Tat and Asclepius. The views which are expounded in the various books are not the same. Nevertheless, there is an underlying unity. They are in the main a curious blend of astrology, Stoicism and Platonism .... a seeking for a religion and mystical experience. They are inspired and
illumined by many noble ideas. And so it was that during the first few centuries of the Christian era, paganism itself was deeply moved, was indeed profoundly influenced and penetrated, by Greco-Babylonian astrological speculations. Paganism is no doubt an amorphous term to describe that welter and conglomeration of religious ideas, of aspirations, of philosophical theories, of symbolism and practice. It was not without its moral strivings and precepts. It came to develop a theology and a mysticism at once strange, and thaumaturgic.
Notes to Chapter Fourteen: The Pagan Cults.


This phrase may have been suggested by S. Augustine's phrase in the "De Civitate Dei", II:XXIX.
Noli deos falsos fallacisque require: abice potius atque conterre in veram emicans libertatem. Non sunt dii, maligni sunt spiritus, quibus aeterna tua felicitas poena est.

ibid. III:X.

Sed maligni spiritus, quos isti deos putant, etiam flagitia quae non admiserunt, de se dici volunt, dum tamen humanas mentes his opinionibus velut retibus indant et ad praedestinatum supplicium secum trahant, sive homines ista commiserint, quos deos haberet gaudent, pro quibus se etiam colendos mille nocendi fallendique artibus interponunt; sive etiam non ullorum hominum illa crimina vera sint, quae tamen de numinis fingi libenter accipiant fallacissimi spiritus, ut ad scelista ac turpia perpetranda velut ab ipso caelo traduci in terras sitis idonea videatur auctoritas.

4. a. Psalm: XCV:V.


δι πρωτα μεν βλέποντες ἐβλέπον μάτην. 

κλύοντες οὐκ ἢκούον, ἀλλ' ὄνειρατων 

ἐλέγηκεν μορφαστὶ τῶν μακρὸν βίων 

ἐφυρον εἰκὴ πάντα, κοῦτε πληνεφέε 

δόμους προσείλουσ πόνον, οὐ δυλουργύων.

κατωρχὲς δὲναλαον ἵσταάησορον 

μύρμηκες ἄντρων ἐν μυχοῖς ἄνηλίοις.

ἡς δ' ὠδον袖 αὐτούσ οὐτὲ ἔστιν ἐκεῖνος τείμαρ 

οὐτ' ἀνθρεμόδους ἐρο ὀὐτε ηπτάμου 

θέους βέβακον ἀλλ' ἄτερ γνώμης το πᾶν ἐλθασον. 

ἐστε δ' ἄφεν ἄντολας ἔγων 

ἀντρών ἐδειξα τὰς τε δυσκρίτους δύσεις.
It is perhaps worth while recalling Boccaccio's interesting suggestion with respect to the classical mythology that Prometheus had once been an illustrious teacher of mankind who imparted to the rude Assyrians the knowledge of astrology and meteorology.


sotto'l cui rege fu già il mondo casto.


L'altro si chiamà allegorico, e questo è quello che si nasconde sotto'l mantile di queste favole, ed è una veritate ascosa sotto bella menzogna: al come quando dice Ovidio che Orfeo facea con la cetera mansuete le fiere, e li arbori e li pietre a sè muovere; che vuol dire che lo savio uomo con lo strumento de la sua voce faria mansuescere e umiliare li crudeli cuori, e faria muovere a la sua volontade coloro che non hanno vita di scienza e d'arte: e coloro che non hanno vita ragionevole alcuna sono quasi come pietre.


E perché questo nascondimento fosse trovato per li savi, nel penultimo trattato si mostrà. Veramente li teologi questo senso prendono altrimenti che li poeti; ma però che mia intenzione è qui lo modo de li poeti seguitare, prendo lo senso allegorico secondo che per li poeti è usato.
Cf. C. Bigg: "Christian Platonists of Alexandria."  
p. 123 sqq;  

Ipse est Deus, quem Varro doctissimus Romanorum Iovem putat, quamvis nesciens quid loquitur; quod tamen ideo commemorandum putavi, quoniam vir tantae scientiae nec nullum istum Deum potuit existimare nec vilem.  
Hunc enim eum esse credidit, quem summum putavit deum.  
Postremo ipse est Deus, quem doctissimus philosophorum, quamvis Christianorum acerrimus inimicus, etiam per eorum oracula, quos deos putat, deum magnum Porphyrius confitetur.  
This may serve as an example of the allegorical interpretation in Augustine.  

Il quale trovando un popolo ferocissimo e volendo ridurre nelle obbedienze civili con le arti della pace, si volse alla religione some casa al tutto necessaria a volere mantenere una civiltà.  

This brilliant and uneven work has exercised a profound influence not least on Hegel, whose "Philosophy of History" discloses an obvious indebtedness to its fundamental concepts.  


15. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: VII:16. (as quoted)  
See also ibid: VII:28.  
Dicit enim (Varro) se ibi multis indicis collegisse in simulacris aliiud significare coelum, aliiud terram, aliiud exempla rerum, quas Plato appellat ideas: coelum Iovem, terram Iononem, ideas Minervam vult intelligi; coelum a quo fiat aliquid, terram de qua fit, exemplum secundum quod fiat. Qua in re emitto dicere quod Plato illas ideas tantam vim habere dicit, ut secundum eas non coelum aliquid fecerit sed etiam coelum factum sit.
ch'è pur per ragione veder si può in molto maggiore numero esser le creature sopra dette, che non sono li effetti che da li uomini si possono intendere. E l'una ragione à questa. Nessuno dubita, nè filosofo nè giudeo nè cristiano nè alcuna setta, ch'èl'è non siano piene di tutta beatitudine, o tutta o la maggior parte, e che quelle beate non siano in perfettissimo stato.


De Generatione et Corruptione: 2:10.


23. This suggestion has been made by Professor Charles Osgood in his edition in translation entitled: "Boccaccio on Poetry." (Princeton: 1956). p. XXI.


25. The works of Dionysius the Areopagite will be found in Migne's "Patrologia Graeca", vols: 3 and 4.

This study contains an exposition of the mystical and neo-Platonic ideas of the poet.

An important but incomplete work on this subject.

This principle, ill-understood, once misled almost the whole world, so that it went astray, naming them Jupiter and Mercury and Mars.


35. Aeschylus: Suppliants: 96-111.

It is not irrelevant to recall the famous statue of Olympian Zeus which had been wrought in gold and ivory by Pheidias. Of this work of art Quintilian declares: "The majesty of Zeus so rises to the level of its subject that its beauty may be thought to have added something to the traditional religion." (Inst. Orat: XII: 10, 9).

In his description of this same masterpiece, Dio Chrysostom uses even more glowing terms. "His power and kingship," he observes, "are displayed by the strength and majesty of the whole image, his fatherly care for men by the gentleness and lovingkindness of his face, and the solemn austerity of the work marks the God of the city and the law." There is, of course, in the representations of art a mode of knowledge which is intuitive rather than logical and which may claim to be as valid as the conclusions of metaphysical speculation.


37. a. Cf. Strabo: Geography: X: 3: 10

μουσικήν ἐκάλεσεν ὁ Πλάτως, καὶ ἔτι πρὸ τερον ὑπὸ Πυθαγόρειον, τὴν

Φιλοσοφίαν.
It has been suggested by Professor Arnold Toynbee that Zeno, the founder of the Stoic School, took his doctrine of Determinism from Babylonian astral philosophy rather than from the speculations of Democritus. (Cf. "A Study of History" vol. V; Schism in the Soul). Of course, Burnet in his "Early Greek Philosophy" (p. 24) had already pointed out that the Stoics and especially Poseidonios had introduced the science of astrology into Greece and that in its elaborated form as promulgated in later times it was founded on the Stoic theory of ειμι ὅρμην.


divinos tuos vultus numenque sanctissimum intra pectoris mei secreta conditum perpetuo imaginabor....

Here some kind of mental prayer, as we should call it, seems to be implied.

Apuleius: ibid: XI: 15.

ipsam traditionem ad instar voluntariae celebrari mortis.


Hermetism claimed to constitute a form of gnosis.


Also by A. J. Festugière: "Revelation d’Hermes Trismegiste."
vol: I, "L’Astrologie et les sciences occultes."


Thus in the Poimandres we discover the following noble sentiments expressed:

(C.H. I: 32) πιστεύω καὶ μαρτυρῶ εἰς ἴων καὶ
φῶς χαιρῶ. εὐλογητός εἰς πάτερ.


ζυνῶς ἁμα, φωτισθεὶς ἀπὸ σοῦ, διὰ σοῦ
τὸ νοητὸν φῶς ὤμων, χαιρῶ ἐν χαρᾷ νου.

..... σώζε ἴων. φωτίζε φῶς.
We must now consider what part this view of the stars plays in the philosophical theory of Dante. There is no doubt at all that this astral mysticism constitutes an important element in the humanism which he professes. In the state of learning in Mediaeval times, the poet could not know nor could he be expected to know what was derived from Greco-Roman and what from Oriental sources. What he does understand, however, is that system of religion, Hellenistic and Latin which Christianity encountered in its early history and expansion. For the most part, the Catholic Church was engaged in an active and bitter conflict with the pagan cults. Some part of that great heritage of metaphysical and moral teaching it was able to accept with various modifications. Many of the ideas of the Stoics and Platonists were thus adopted into the Christian system. Indeed, it might almost be said — if the statement does not suggest direct borrowing from pagan sources — that in Europe Christianity itself became the mystery religion. Historical Christianity has always preserved and carefully guarded its sacraments of Baptism, and the Eucharist, the sacred drama of redemption. The parallel with the mystery religions and their rites of initiation and of the drama of the death and resurrection of the cult-god is striking, though not exact. No doubt some of the terminology of the mystery cults was introduced into Christianity by converts from these faiths. In later times, when contact with Hellenistic thought had become closer and more vivid, Baptism was described as "illumination", (φωτισμός), "sealing" (ςφαιρίζον), ρητήριαν ἔνθαμον, all of which are expressions derived from the pagan rites of initiation. It is wise, however, to exercise a certain amount of careful discrimination here. The terminology from the mystery cults was applied to a religious concept and rite which had already assumed a definite form. There may have been, — there probably was — a certain Hellenistic influence in this development. It was not such as to transform and mould the Jewish lineaments of the Christian sacraments. The practice of attributing Christian ideas to
the "mysteries" by such writers as Loisy and Frazer and then demonstrating their supposed derivation is certainly not scientific. More scholarship has refuted this idealized picture of mystery religions in general and shown that such a universal cult "never actually existed least of all in Paul's day", in the words of Dr. Schweitzer. Cicero's charming picture of men coming to Eleusis from all parts of the Hellenistic world to receive the light of initiation does not suggest any particular moral or theological doctrine. What instruction was given beforehand was probably concerned with the due performance of the ceremonies. Synesius ascribes to Aristotle the observation that the purpose of the initiation was that the worshippers should experience a certain kind of emotion. This is, of course, a digression on the theme of Paganism and the Christian mysteries which finds no mediaeval counterpart. Indeed, the very notion of common ideas of salvation and rebirth and the shaping of the sacred story to a predetermined general pattern is part of the Form Critism of the present century.

To return discussion, Dante finds no embarrassment in a synthesis which is made up of so many disparate elements. In the manner in which they are related in the "Divina Commedia", the myths about the pagan gods disclose a certain ambiguity. Some are of Hellenic origin and are thus to be seen as anthropomorphic legends about the natural powers of sun and moon, stars and clouds, trees, and springs, rivers and caves, and all the wonder of earth. In this respect, they were developed and idealized in the light of imagination by the poets or interpreted in rational terms by the philosophers. It is well known, what beauty and vividness they exhibit under this form. We have only to remind ourselves of some of the choruses in Sophocles and Euripides to understand with what lyrical passion the poets were able to clothe these images of religion. It would be superfluous to mention the great myths of Plato, with their dramatic power, and brilliant symbolism, as illustrating how Orphic legend and Greek tradition are made to take on a moral earnestness by the philosophical genius of the author.

Others of the myths which Dante is acquainted with are the products of that astrology which came originally from the East. As such, they have been subjected to a process of Hellenization. They have been steeped in the colours of that creative imagination.
which gave them a beauty and a significance which they did not formerly possess. As in what may be termed Greco-Roman theology, the various elements reveal themselves in the "Divina Commedia" in uneasy proximity. They exist side by side. They are not fused together in the fires and splendours of a Christian philosophy nor, indeed, could they assume such a complete unity of thought.

For the poet, however, the astrology of the ancient world, with its strong religious and philosophical implications, rested upon certain truths of observation and deduction. These, at any rate, could not be disputed. What was false was the interpretation which adapted them to a particular system of knowledge. In one respect only could it be said that the ancients were not entirely deluded. While they were ready and, indeed, anxious to ascribe divine powers to various abstract notions, they succeeded in getting a glimpse of the celestial. They discerned dimly that luminous world of spiritual essences which Plato expressed in his doctrine of the Forms. But they did not understand the nature of this discovery. What they saw was really the host of supernatural intelligences which maintained the stars in their orbit according to the divine laws. Their knowledge was deficient, however, and no revelation had been conceded to them. For these reasons, therefore, they were incapable of giving an exact description of their observations. They could not rise to the notion of spiritual powers subordinate to the Omnipotent Will. Sometimes, their philosophers had come near to the idea of the One, true God, the Lord of the whole earth. The religion of the city presented them with certain principles essential for the construction of a cosmology. On the one hand, they had the idea of a supreme Spirit who orders the whole world to its appointed end. The teleological argument was, therefore, given some recognition by their thinkers. On the other hand, they were able to reach the conclusion that there is an indwelling power which sustains all existences. Perhaps this might be described as a version of the argument a contingentia mundi.

Beyond this, the ancients were never able to go. They were never able to progress to the idea of that God who declared Himself in the great theophany at the burning bush to his servant Moses: "Ego sum qui sum. Ait: Sic dices filiis Israel: Qui est, misit me ad vos."(6) In other words, they never attained to the
knowledge of God as transcendent and immanent, the Creator of all things, the sustainer and life of the whole universe. All that they were able to do was to discern, under false names and under an illusion, some of those spiritual essences which inhabit the world. To these, they attributed properties and qualities which were fallacious. By the sheer brilliance of their genius, Plato and Aristotle were able to discover certain of those laws by which universe is conducted to its purposes. They never came to the knowledge of the true God, however. The gods of legend, seen through a golden haze of imagination, become the gods of metaphysics. The light is more critical but, as we ourselves may point out from various passages from the works of Aristotle, there is no repudiation of the principles of polytheism. In discussing the Prime Mover, the philosopher does not exclude a system of subordinate intelligences which move the spheres and which may also be regarded as divine. (7)

It may, therefore, be said, with Dante, that the ancients never penetrated to the knowledge of the God of the Bible, Who revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and Who is that Trinity of Persons recognized dimly by the prophets and fathers and manifested in glory to the Apostles. Their failure to recognize the One Holy God, the Lord of the whole earth, was not entirely due to the weakness of human reason. Only the most laborious and painful effort, the most anxious and careful endeavour could have brought them to this knowledge. The human intellect, considered in abstraction, might be able to form this conclusion at the end of a long process of syllogizing. But, of course, it would never advance from this proposition to the truth of the Blessed Trinity. The unaided light of reason was insufficient for such a task, only revelation could convey such supernatural truth to men. (8) The truth of the divine nature was bound to elude the most learned and profound speculations of philosophers. There is something in Dante of the recognition of the burning light of Pascal's vision of the God of the Bible as implied in his own experience some three hundred and fifty years earlier. (9) Only Christians could know the name of the All-Holy as love. Yet, the pagan philosophers were sometimes able to conceive the love of God for His work, as, for example, Plato in the "Timaeus". Without the grace of revelation, however, they could not imagine that compassion which manifested itself in the
Incarnation and the death upon the Cross.

Dante's theory is, therefore, at once ideological and astro­logical. It is not sufficient of itself to explain all the myths associated with the ancient religions. Nor can it offer any explanation of the adventures and exploits of the gods, as presented in the poets. We have only to turn to the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid to discover, in charming and accomplished verse, the record of the loves, the hates, the quarrels, the absurdities, the follies and injustices committed by the gods. Together with these, as the occasion serves, are such delightfully told incidents as the Rape of Proserpine - bright as the colours of some picture by Fra Filippo Lippi. The poet has not developed any theory by which such stories admit of interpretation. There is no evidence anywhere that he shared the Euhemerism expressed by Varro and Cicero. Most often, as an artist, he has felt the beauty and delight of such legends as seemed to him to have been created by the genius of the classical poets. In the same spirit; Ariosto was constrained to relate charming stories merely because they pleased him and he wanted to write them down. The poet has not developed any theory by which such stories admit of interpretation. There is no evidence anywhere that he shared the Euhemerism expressed by Varro and Cicero. Most often, as an artist, he has felt the beauty and delight of such legends as seemed to him to have been created by the genius of the classical poets. In the same spirit; Ariosto was constrained to relate charming stories merely because they pleased him and he wanted to write them down. 

Dante whose mind dwells upon symbols and images, upon the expressive language of myth and story reflects upon the ancient legends. He finds brightness and obscurity, darkness and light, grossness and delicacy, lust and love in their various forms and intutions. In them, he comes to recognize a genuine effort to apprehend through the mists of error, the work of the One true God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth.
II.

However, it is Dante's contention that the pagan religions were incapable of offering a true and holy worship. Their prayers were idle; their petitions vain; their sacrifices mere shadows. It is for this reason that Virgil affirms, in almost the first words that he addresses to the Florentine, that he had lived "under the good Augustus in the time of false and lying gods". Not only were the pagans unable to recognize and know the true God and to follow the true philosophy. They were also deficient in the understanding of what constitutes the moral order. In this respect, the poet takes up a theme which the early Christian apologists had expounded and elucidated with all the vigour of conviction. Dante contents himself with a moderate and restrained criticism of the ancient cults. He is aware that human victims had sometimes been offered in sacrifice in their performance. To the immolation of Iphigenia by her father Agamemnon, he makes only a brief allusion. The rash vow of Jephtha excites in him a feeling of revulsion.

Again, he also condemns such orgiastic rites as were associated with certain other cults. He recollects the wild and frenzied songs of the Corybantes, priests of Cybele. In the sphere of the sun, when S. Bonaventura has delivered his glowing panegyric of the life and doctrine of S. Dominic, those great teachers who by their intellectual labours have advanced the truth, join in a sacred hymn. Like the colours of the rainbow that appear in two circles in the clouds, like the flame and the rose wreathed and garlanded, they begin their slow, grave movement of adoration before the Franciscan makes his courteous praise of the founder of the other great mendicant order.

cosi di quelle sempiterne rose
volgessi circa noi le due ghirlande,
e al l'estrema all'intima riapose.

Poi che'l tripudio e l'altra festa grande
sì del cantare e sì del fiammeggiarsi
luce con luce' gaudiosse e blande
insieme a punto e a voler quietarsi, (15)

After this discourse, the gravity and beauty of the motion of these saints, wheeling like stars in their orbit consort with the
hymn which they sing to the Divine Majesty. This is contrasted
strangely enough considering the place of their worship
with the tumultuous sounds which are associated with
the festivals of Bacchus or Apollo:

Lì si canto non Bacco, non Peana,
ma tre persone in divina natura,
ed in una persona essa e l'umana. (16)

In the same way, the poet describes how the Thebans, during
the celebrations held in honour of Bacchus, rushed wildly along
the banks of the Ismenus and Asopus, invoking the god with shouts
of ecstatic fervour.

E quale Ismeno già vide ed Asopo
lungo di sè di notte furia e calca,
pur che i Teban di Bacco avesser uopo, (17)

As an admirer of the Latin poet, Statius, Dante is here recalling
a passage in the "Thebaid" where Ismenus, the god of those sacred
waters, is addressed with the clamour and deprecation of his wor­
shippers. (18)

It is on the fourth terrace of Purgatory, that Dante and
Virgil encounter the ardent company of souls, eager to atone for
the tardiness and negligence of their former state on earth.
They rouse each other to further effort and endeavour by various
examples. It will be remembered how at this point the poet com­
pares them to the frantic crowds of adherents on the banks of the
Ismenus and Asopus; (as we have already seen). This little
band of worshippers, however, is consumed by a holy zeal. They
incite each other to a new ardour that "grace may grow green again":

Tosto fur sovra noi, perchè correndo
si movea tutta quella turba magna;
e due dinanzi grissavan piangendo;
'Maria corse con fretta alla montagna;
e Cesare, per soggiogare Ilerda,
punse Marsilia e poi corse in Ispagna,' (19)

Of course, we know that the cult of Apollo had nothing in it
of the orgiastic worship of Dionysus. In the light of modern
scholarship, it is clear that, to the Greeks of the classical age,
Dionysus was not solely or even mainly the god of wine. The
evidence of Plutarch and the various cult titles by which the god
was invoked support this view. He is designated as Αἴγος or εὐερέσ, the Power in the tree. Again, he is Ἀγρός, the blossom-bringer, Καψίως, the fruit-bringer; and more generally, Πλεύς or Φλεύς, which may be translated as "abundance or vigour of life". His realm consists in what Plutarch calls that broad θυρὸς ζωῆς — not only the juice of the grape, but the sap coursing through the young tree in stem and bough and leaf, the blood running tumultuously in the veins of a young animal, in fact, all the mysterious, violent, quickening forces in the life of Nature. Nowhere in Homer do we find any allusion to Dionysus as the wine-god. It is the Romans and the Alexandrinians who tamed the turbulent and passionate energy of Dionysus and made of him the "jolly Bacchus" that we know from the English poets. By them he is represented with his attendant nympha and satyrs whose only purpose is to promote that hilarity and good-fellowship which flows from the strong, red wine. As such, the great painters of the Renaissance portray him as a benevolent and florid figure, crowned with wine-leaves and garlands. But the pictures of Titian and Rubens, with their glowing colours, their golden light, and wandering flowers, their spilt wine and sensual movement lead us to forget one essential fact. This is that the Greek word θυρὸς means not orgies in our sense but specific acts of religious devotion. The verb βακχίζεται has nothing to do with pleasure and revellings. It denotes a strange and dramatic form of religious experience, in other words, that ecstatic communion with the god, which converted his human worshippers into something else, a βακχα or βακχά. (23)

Dante, of course, is familiar only with the Latin view of the god, in which all this wild, vehement, primitive violence has been carefully ignored. Euripides wrote his great play, the "Bacchae", to describe the introduction into Greece of this powerful and ecstatic religion. In it, he reveals profound truths of religious psychology. He shows that such rites as were associated with Dionysus could not be called native to Greece. (24) They were regarded by the Greek poet as originating in the mountains of Lydia and Phrygia. (25) Dionysus expresses those tensions and contradictions with which we are all familiar in human life — joy and pain, intuition and madness, passion and innocence, vitality and cruelty, violence and spirituality. (26)

Not to digress further, it may be said that Dante accepts, as
one would expect, the Mediaeval view of the pagan deities as that was derived from the Latin poets and prose-writers. He knows that the "paean" was celebrated as a song of exultation and thanksgiving at banquets. Originally, as we are aware today, the "paean" (Παιανή) seems to have been a magical ceremony, an incantation or purification - what later came to be denoted by the term θησαυρός. Homer refers to the god of healing, Paion, who received from these familiar practices. The charm which was employed contained an element of praise which was addressed to the god, and thus, eventually, became a song of thanksgiving. When, in later times, the art of healing was consigned to Apollo, the paean naturally came to be associated with his name and cult. Dante, however, confuses the paean with the frenzied songs of the Bacchic worshippers and regards it with the same aversion.
It is with equal conviction and fervour that the poet condemns the practice of divination. In the "Convivio", he had recounted from Statius the mysterious answer which the oracle of Apollo gave to a certain king of Argos. As yet, however, he had pronounced no judgment on the subject of oracles. In the same way, he had made no distinction between astrology and astronomy, considering the two sciences as confused together under the name of the former. He maintains that it is a fact which is capable of scientific observation and logical verification that the planets exercise an influence over the lives of men. In this, of course, he shares the common opinion of his contemporaries. Nobody would have denied such a proposition at that particular time.

We find, however, that in the "Divina Commedia", the poet scarcely refers to the oracles except to recall the ambiguous nature of the responses which they gave. For Dante, Delphi was the centre of that cult which is concerned with art and poetry and music. They were the pursuits and endowments of Apollo Lukesios, if we disregard the older and more sinister aspect of that title. He shows a respect for the science and practical art exercised by the astrologer. Yet, curiously enough, in the fourth Bolgia of the Eighth Circle of Hell, he sees with horror the sufferings inflicted upon the soothsayers and diviners. It is pertinent to ask why the poet makes this arrangement. What is the reason why such men are regarded as fit only for the punishments of the damned?

Surely it is because they were not learned in the true sense of the word and as such versed in that natural philosophy which is an acquisition to the human soul. Unlike the astrologers, their art did not rest upon the study and investigation of the laws of nature. As such, therefore, it could not be called a true art. And in conformity with that rule which determines that the punishment shall reflect the character of the offence, these imposters are forced to endure the pain of contortion. They have boasted that they could foretell the future, they had deceived and lied. Their punishment then is that they must carry their heads twisted the wrong way round, and walk backwards.

Dante's attitude in respect to such practices is worthy of
being called enlightened and critical. At a time when the practice of predicting the future was general, and the foretelling of events by various magical rites regarded as an honourable occupation, he shares with S. Thomas Aquinas the distinction of having condemned such a recourse to superstition. The punishment of those who in this life peep and shuffle and mutter is that they see everything the wrong way round. They do not see things as they really are. They walk at the "pace of the litanies", that is, with slow, deliberate steps. Magic, necromancy, spells, the attempt to prognosticate with all the solemnity of some ecclesiastical ceremony - all these make for the debasement of religion. They constitute a parody, a mockery, a futile imitation of what should have been a holy thing. As we have seen, in common with every philosopher and theologian of his age, the poet acknowledged the influence of the stars on human disposition and character.

With S. Thomas, however, he considers such an effort merely subordinate. What shapes the destinies of men, what brings them to glory, to honour or infamy, what moves their wills is the inscrutable Wisdom of God. Dante holds firmly to the intuition of the moral consciousness that the will is self-determined. There is no sense in which the conjunction of the planets, or the movements of the stars constrain men to perform actions, initiate undertakings, or pursue enterprises. All these belong to the impulse of the will.

In this crowd of diviners whom the poet represents as condemned forever to walk backwards in ludicrous justice are many distinguished names. He cannot refrain from weeping at their suffering and thereby incurs the rebuke of Virgil.

'Anco se ' tu delli altri sciocchi?
Qui vive la pietà quand'hè ben morta;
chi è più scalcerato che colui
ché al giudicio divin passion porta? (35)

Here are Amphiaras, one of the seven kings who fought against Thebes, though foreseeing clearly the fatal consequences of his action and was swallowed up by the earth. Here is Tiresias, the Theban prophet whom Dante certainly did not know from the 11th book of the Odyssey where he makes his appearance from Erebus in the manner of an ancient king, and with the voice of solemn authority. On the contrary, the poet's information is derived from the puerile stories which Ovid relates in such elegant and
accomplished verse in the third book of the "Metamorphoses". He recognizes Calchas and Eurypilus, the two soothsayers of the Greek army at the siege of Troy, as he supposes. (37) Manto, the daughter of Tiresias, is there concerning whom Virgil recounts, as also Ovid and Statius, how in the marshes of the River Mincio, among reeds and winding streams, she practised her sinister arts and established the town which still recalls her name. (38)

This passage is one of the most significant in the "Inferno" for the impression which it conveys of what is strange and mysterious. It gives us a picture of a desolate landscape of sluggish, wandering rivers, and lonely water-meadows, of choked pools, with their tall rushes, and trailing green weeds, of bloated water-flowers of blue and yellow, ..... the melancholy of the fens. Any kind of scientific interest in the details of geography is subordinated to the poetic illusion which describes the course of the river as it flows on, now through lush, green pastures, (e fassi fiume giu per verdi paschi) now as a tributary of the river Po, to squander its clear waters in the shallows and reaches of the lowland plain.

Non molto ha corso, che'l trova una lama;
ella quale si distende e la'mpaluda; (40)
e suol di state talor esser grama.

The account which is here given of the founding of the city of Mantua is different from that which we find in the "Aeneid". In that poem, it will be remembered that Virgil ascribes the establishment of Mantua to a son of the prophetess, Manto. (41) But this was another Manto and not the daughter of Tiresias. Here, the setting up of the city owes nothing to supernatural arts or sinister magic. It is due entirely to the situation which affords security and protection from attack. All that Manto, the sorceress, provides is her dead bones with no other augury.

Fer la città sovrà quell'ossa morte;
e per colei che'l luogo prima elesse, (42)
Mantua l'appellar sans'altra sorte.

There is no casting of spells, no employment of magical rites, no strange, dark ceremonies. Thus, in the account which he relates through the lips of Virgil, Dante is careful to repudiate with energy and decision any idea of superstitious practices. Men
must trust entirely to reason and the moral conscience .........

Dante seems to imply ......... and in the great poem Virgil is
made the spokesman of this solicitude.

Later in the "Purgatorio", Virgil declares to the poet
Statius that the daughter of Tiresias is one of those detained in
Limbo, among the heroines of pagan antiquity.(43) Dante must surely
have forgotten that he had already put Manto among the diviners
and magicians of the Fourth Bolgia in Hell. Most probably, at
the time that he wrote the famous lines about the founding of
Mantua, he had a vivid recollection of the passage in which Statius
addressed a supplication to the priestess of a fierce and bloody
rite.(44) Such mysteries as the Latin poet here describes may be re­
garded as the preliminaries to the Etruscan and Roman practice of
haruspication ......... divining by inspection of the entrails and
liver of a sacrificial victim.(45) Dante has not forgotten this as­
pect of prediction in the Fourth Bolgia of Hell. There, he calls
to mind an incident recorded by Lucan in the "Pharsalia". This
is the description of the Etruscan seer, Aruns .... Arruns inco­
luit desertae moenia Lunae, as Lucan writers.(46) Aruns it is, who
in the solitude of the mountains of Luni, dwelt in a cave among
the smooth-gleaming white marbles of that fantastic
region. From this recess, he was able to observe the sea, the
moon, the stars and the flight of birds and from such phenomena to make his prog­
nostications. He is said to have prophesied the Civil War and in
somewhat obscure and ambiguous terms, as must inevitably be expec­
ted in such oracular predictions, to have foretold the victory of
Caesar. With these events, he was, of course, contemporary and
obtained a reputation for his skill in this mysterious and esote­
eric art.(47)

Aronunt è quei ch'al ventre li a's'tergera,
che ne' monti di Luni, dove ronca
lo Carrarese che di sotto alberga,
ebbe tra' bianchi marmi la gelonca
per sua dimora onde a guardar le stelle
e'l mar non li era la veduta tronca. (48)

This, it will be agreed, is a charming little picture in
which we are conscious of no shadow or disapproval of the practice
of divination. Indeed, we may even discern a certain fascination
with which this art is invested in the mind of the poet. Dante
is concerned only with the scene itself - the clear light as it
breaks on the sea, the dwindling stars in the darkness of the sky as it pales towards morning, the glimmer of broken, white marble hewn out of the mountains of Carrara. One is reminded of that scene which he must have known so well the way leading from Vallombrosa hill upon hill into the delightful, green valley where the Arno flows with a glint of silver and gold as it catches the Spring sunlight beyond Pontassieve and then the long, steep climb up beyond the marble mountains of Carrara. This is another example of the manner in which the landscape represented in the "Divina Commedia" reflects each change of mood, each aspect of grief or pain, of sorrow or joy. Here, the poet allows himself to be carried away by the mysteriousness and attraction of his subject. Much as he disapproves of the practice of divination, he cannot withhold a certain feeling of awe. Or is it perhaps the scene itself which fascinates him, the loneliness, the cave, the solitude of the poet surrounded by those strange mountains by the sea?
In his review of the practices of the ancient world, Dante also takes cognisance of the sorceries and incantations of Thessaly which are described with such admirable effect by Apuleius in the "Golden Ass". He recalls a Mediaeval legend that, soon after his death, Virgil was compelled by the sinister enchantments of Erichtho to descend to the deepest pit of Hell to bring back a spirit from the dead. This provides another example of the landscape suggesting the very character of the event depicted.

In that brilliant world of the ancient civilization, there existed many practices of divination, of prophecy and of magic of which the poet reveals no acquaintance at all. What he knows, he knows through the Latin authors. They, of course, write with lucidity and restraint. Excess and extravagance formed no part of the Roman genius. All things are seen in their ordered and rational dispositions. There is nowhere any hint, or suggestion of the dark Dionysian passion, the tumult, the fervour, the ecstasy and violence of the blood which the Greeks knew so well. The Latin mind has subjected all things to the discipline of a logical method and a clear exposition. It is this presentation of the myths and stories, the ritual and mythology of the ancient world that Dante is familiar. From this, all his ideas about the pagan cults were taken. On this too he forms his judgment and frames his conclusions.

When he comes to consider the pagan religions and their place in the development of human institutions, he is aware of their deficiency and imperfection. But his humanism never allows him to forget that man's endeavour in any sphere of knowledge can never be entirely in vain. There must exist some spiritual insight, some intuition even in these forms of religious expression. They must represent some faint aspects and phases of knowledge. So Dante can say that in spite of various errors, there yet remained those symbols with which Plato and Pythagoras tried to construct a theology. In this enterprise, they did not succeed since the apprehension of divine things, of the nature of the spiritual reality must depend upon the act of revelation. They were ardent lovers of wisdom, however. What it was possible to discover by
the natural light of reason, they perceived obscurely no doubt but in some mode of truth...... per speculum in aenigmate. It is significant that, although in the interests of Aristotelian rationalism, the poet confutes them both, he acknowledges their enthusiasm in the pursuit of truth. Their love of wisdom was wholly admirable, noble and worthy. In so far as a man may call himself a "philosopher" at all, he must be a lover of wisdom. (E quinci nacque poi, ciascuno studioso in sapienza che fossé 'amatore di sapienza' chiamato cioè 'filosofo';) (52)

Dante finds that the ethics of the pagan religions are mixed and confused. On one hand, he is conscious of certain moral ideals of nobility and glory, and here no doubt he is thinking more of the philosophical interpretation with which he is acquainted in Cicero and Aristotle. On the other hand, in the stories of their gods and their roystering, wenching and drinking, he cannot but condemn the sensuality which there presents itself. He is obliged to conclude, therefore, that in such religions the moral conscience manifests itself as inadequate, unenlightened, vague. What can be said with justice is that certain truths were inculcated, in however distorted a form, by which men were able to understand the order of the universe. In this, they could ascertain that eternal law which expresses itself in the harmony of things. Miss Nancy Lenkeith in her study of "Dante and the legend of Rome", has emphasized the influence of the Stoic philosophy in the Florentine poet. (54) She has further shown how this is connected with the universalism which attains to such eloquent expression in his writings. The idea of the moral percepts as a constituent part of that order of Nature is, of course, Stoic in inspiration.

Moreover, the poet has something to say about the spiritual perception which discovered itself in the ancient religions. They taught men that there exists a world of spirits throughout the infinity of space. In this respect, he demonstrates an affinity between the old beliefs and the faith of Christ, which is the fulfillment of the hopes of mankind, and the perfect light of truth. On such an understanding, it was by no means incredible that there might exist a harmony, a congruity between certain of the Greek myths and the Jewish-Christian tradition. Such similarities were no doubt, on this reasoning, providential, intentional, deliberate. They were in fact illuminations of the One, True Light, expressions
of that truth which is the participation of the Eternal Word .......
"lux vera quae illuminat ommem hominem venientem in hunc mundum".

On such a theory, the myths of the Gentiles could be represented as the attempts of the human intellect to comprehend the laws of the divine justice. We have already seen how the Noble Castle of Canto IV of the "Inferno" shows quite clearly and unequivocally with what admiration Dante regarded the achievement of the ancient world. He refuses to admit that the thinkers of Greece and Rome were merely clever rhetoricians, or practitioners of the arts of illusion and deceit. If he contemplates, with melancholy and resignation, their existence in Limbo, with its frustration of the strongest desire of the human spirit, he concedes much to them. He recognizes that, by the dialectic of their enquiry, they have attained to such truths as may be known by the natural reason. The conclusion is obvious, therefore. It is that the pagan religions have brought to their worshippers some image, some similitude and foreshadowing of the truth.

This attitude is characteristic of the Humanism of Dante. In spite of the austerity which is apparent in the first and fourth cantos of the "Inferno", in spite of the severity of the Christian conscience which is everywhere apparent in the "Divina Commedia", the poet always affirms those principles which are consistent with Humanism. In no way, does he repudiate the view that the human reason in its effort to discover the truth follows a way which is continuous. It is a way which stretches from the first stirrings of the religious consciousness to the developed reflection upon the Christian mystery which constitutes the philosophical and theological enquiry of the great Scholastics.

It may be said, therefore, that no deep and tragic cleavage separates the ancient world of pagan religion and philosophy from the modern world which lives under the grace of the Christian dispensation. It is for this reason that the gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon are so conspicuous in the pages of the "Divina Commedia". As we may already observed in a previous chapter, that is why the sacred poem invokes the Muses at the beginning of each of its great themes and on the threshold of heaven addresses a prayer to Apollo himself, the god of music, of light, of poetry, and of prophecy. Dante aspires to be more than a philosopher, more even than a poet. He invests himself with the office of a
prophet and in that capacity as well as in his genius as a poet turns to the god of illumination and revelation in that ancient world:

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

Infino a qui l'un giogo di Parnaso
assai mi fu; ma or con amendue
m'è uopo intrar nell'aringo rimaso. (57)
J. L. BOWERS

Ph. D. Thesis.

The Humanism of DANTÉ.

Three copies of
Brief Outline
Pounds

December 2nd, 1960.
Notes to Chapter Fifteen: Dante and the Greco-Roman Religions.


Eleusina sanctam illam et augustam, Ubi initiatur gentes orarum ultimae.


4. As an example of this, one may quote the beautiful lines in the celebrated chorus in "Oedipus at Colonus." (668-680):

5. Everybody will recall the profound and moving myth of Er, the Son of Armenius: Republic: 614 sqq.
   (English translation by A. H. C. Downes.) (London: 1950)
   pp. 46 sqq.

   Metaphysics: 1073 a 26 - b 1.

8. Of course, the well-known words of S. Paul in Romans I:
   vv. 19-20 establish the concept of a Natural Theology
   and were so expounded by S. Thomas.
   Est autem in his quae de Deo confitemur duplex veritatis
   modus. Quaedam namque vera sunt de Deo quae omnes
   facultatem humanae rationis excedunt, ut Deum esse
   trinum et unum. Quaedam vero sunt ad quae etiam
   rationem naturalis pertingere potest, sic ut Deum
   esse, Deum esse unum, et alia huiusmodi; quae etiam
   philosophi demonstrative de Deo probaverunt, ducti
   naturalis lumine rationis.

   (Paris: 1934).
   Pensées 3. 233. p. 436. (Brunschvicg ed. as above.)
   ibid: 7. 543. p. 570.

10. As an example the following lines will illustrate the
    point:
    Ludovico Ariosto.
    Oh quanti sono incantatrici, oh quanti
    Incantor tra noi, che non si sanno.
    Che con lor arti uomini e donne amanti
    Di sì, cambiando i visi loro, fatto hanno,
    Non con spiriti constretti tali incanti,
    Né con osservazioni di stelle fanno:
    Ma con simulazioni, menzogne e frodi
    Legano i cor d’indissolubil nodi:


    e cosi stolto
    ritrovar puoi il gran duca de’ Greci,
    onde pianse Ifigenia il suo bel volto,
    e fè piangere di sì i folli e i savi
    ch’udir parlar di cosi fatto colto.

and thou canst find the same folly in the great leader
of the Greeks, because of which Iphigenia lamented her
own fair face and both wise and simple made lament for
her who heard the tale of such a rite.
Non prendan li mortali il voto a ciancia:
siate fedeli, e a ciò far non bieci,
come Ieptì alla sua prima mancia;
cui più si convenia dicerc "Mal feci",
che, servando, far peglio;
Let not mortals take vows lightly. Be faithful and
with that be not perverse, like Jephthah in his first
offering, who ought rather to have said "I did ill"
than, keeping faith, to do worse;

e per celarlo meglio,
quando piangea, vi facea far le grida.
and to conceal him better when he cried, she made them
raise an uproar.

thus the two wreaths of those eternal roses circled
round us, and thus the farther answered to the nearer.
When the dance and the great festival of both song
and flames, light with light joyful and gracious,
stopped together at one moment and with one consent......

There they sang, not Bacchus and no Paean, but three
Persons in the divine nature, and in one Person that
nature and the human.
pp. 130-131.
Hymn to Apollo. (Homeric Hymn XXI: 1-4).

17. Purgatorio: XVIII:91-93.
and as Ismenus and Asopus saw of old a tumult and throng
on their banks at night whenever the Thebans had need
of Bacchus

Ille ego clamatur sanctis ululatibus amnis
qui molles tyrso sacchina cornua puro
foute lavare ferorer......
Soon they were upon us, for all that great crowd kept running, and two in front cried out with tears: "Mary went into the hill-country with haste," and "Caesar to subdue Lerida, thrust at Marsilles and then made speed in Spain."


22. The standard work on this is still:
Erwin Rohde: "Psyche".
chs. 4-7.


24. Herodotus calls them: νέωστι ἡγήμενα.


Cf. also the essay on "The Bacchae of Euripides in relation to certain currents of thought in the fifth century," in the same author's "Essays and Addresses." pp. 56 sqq:

"ιθρός δὲ ἐκαστὸς ἐπιστάμενος ἀνθρώπων. η Ἐσπ αἰανήνος ἐνοι γενεθλίος.

p 130 sqq:

29. Perhaps the confusion might almost suggest some kind of intuition on the part of Dante when we consider the association of Dionysus and Apollo at Delphi, where they shared the same shrine. It is, of course, a fact that the Apollonian institutionalism proved able to control the powerful irrational and emotional character of the worship of the new god. During the three Winter months the dithyramb of Dionysus was celebrated and Apollo's paeon of joy and thanksgiving was not allowed to be heard. In the Spring, however, Apollo returned to the possession of his sanctuary. Cf. Martin P. Nilsson: op. cit. pp. 208-9.


E però dice Stazio, lo dolce poeta, nel primo de la Tebana Istoria, che quando Adrasto, rege de li Argi, vide Eblincus coşerto d'un cuoio di leone, e vide Tideo coșerto d'un cuoio di porco selvatico, e ricordossi del risponso che Apollo dato avea per le sue figlie, che esse divenne stupido; e però piú reverente e piú disideroso di sapere.


Cui Phoebus generos (monstrum exitiable dictu Mox adaperta fides) aeo ducente, canebat, Saeligerumque auem et fulvum adventare leonem.


e vidi gente per lo vallon tondo
venir, tacendo e lagrimando, al passo
che fanno le letane in questo mondo.

Come 'l viso mi acese in lor piú basso,
mirabil-mente apparve esser travolto
ciascun tra 'l mento e 'l principio del casso;
chè dalle reni era tornato il volto,
ed in dietro venir li convenla,
perché 'l veder dinanzi era lor tolto.

and I saw people along the great circular valley coming, silent and weeping, at the pace made by the litanies in this world. As my sight went lower on them, each seemed to be strangely twisted between the chin and the beginning of the chest, for the face was turned towards the loins and they had to come backwards, since seeing forward was denied them.
32. This punishment was, no doubt, suggested by the words which the poet found written in the prophecy of Isaiah:

(Isaiah: XLIV: 25):

irrita faciens signa divinorum,  
et ariolos in furorem vertens;  
convertens sapientes retrorsum,  
et scientiam eorum stultam faciens;


Cum igitur homo sit ordinatus secundum corpus sub corporibus caelestibus; secundum intellectum vero sub angelis; secundum voluntatem autem sub Deo: potest contingere aliquid praeter intentionem hominis quod tamen est secundum ordinem caelestium corporum, vel dispositionem angelorum, vel etiam Dei. Quodvis autem Deus solus directe ad electionem hominis, per modum persuasionis; actio vero corporis caelestis per modum disponentia, inquantum corporales impressiones caelestium corporum in corpora nostra disponunt ad aliquas electiones.

.................................................................Nam impressiones corporum caelestium in corpora nostra causant in nobis naturales corporum dispositiones. Et ideo ex dispositione relicta ex corpore caelesti in corpore nostro dicitur aliquid non solum bene fortunatus aut male, sed etiam bene naturatus vel male: secundum quem modum Philosophus dicit, in Magnis Moralibus (1. c., n. 8; 1207 a), quod bene fortunatum est esse bene naturatum. sqq;

Also ibid: cap. XCIII.


"Art thou too as witless as the rest? Here emptiness lives when it is quite dead. Who is more guilty than he who makes the divine counsel subject to his will?"


"Ἡλθε δ’ ἐπ’ ψυχή Ῥηβαίου τερασίας  
Χρύσεων οἰκήπτρον ἔχων, ἔμε  
δ’ ἔχων καὶ προσέστεν.

fu, quando Grecia fu di maschi voto
sì ch'a pena rimaser per le cune,
augure, e diede 'l punto con Calchas
in Aulide a tagliar la prima fune.

Euripilo ebbe nome, e così 'l canta
l'alta mia tragedia in alcun loco:

(He).......was augur when Greece was left so empty
of males that scarcely any remained for the cradles,
and with Calchas he gave the moment for cutting the
first cable in Aulis. Eurypylus was his name, and
thus my high tragedy sings of him in a certain passage:

This is a reference to the Aeneid II:113 sqq: —
a passage which Dante appears to have misread. What
Sinon falsely and deceitfully pretends is merely that
the Greeks, hindered, by contrary winds, from leaving
the plain of Ilion and returning home, send Eurypylus
to enquire of the oracle of Apollo;

suspensi Eurypylum scitantem oracula Phoebi
mittimus, isque adytis haec tristia dicta reportat:
sqq:

Perhaps the attribution of divination to Eurypylus
comes from one of the many versions of the tale of
Troy current in the Middle Ages.

38. Inferno: XX:91-93.

Fer la città sovra quell'ossa morte;
e per colui che 'l luogo prima elesse,
Mantua l'appellar sanz'altra sorte.

They built the city over those dead bones, and from
her who first chose the place they called it Mantua,
without other augury.


After a short course it comes to a level where it
spreads and makes a marsh that is sometimes noisome
in Summer.


Ille etiam patriis agmen ciet Ocnus ab oris,
fatidicae Mantus et Tusci filius amnis,
qui muros matrisque dedit tibi, Mantua, nomen,
Mantua, dives avis, sed non genus omnibus unum:

42. Inferno: XX:90-92.

It is true that Tiresias is supposed to have had two other daughters, but Dante appears only to have known of one. Moreover, the words "la figlia" imply the existence of Manto only.


Exceptum pateris praelibat sanguinem et omnes ter circump acta pyras, sancti de more parentis seminices fibras et adhuc spirantia reddit viscere.


The practice of consulting the gods by the inspection of the liver and entrails of sacrificial victims was widely used in Babylon and Assyria. Various forms of divination were employed, including the observation of the heavens, the flight of birds, and the more general method of oracles, visions and dreams. From Babylon and Assyria the art of Hepatoscopy seems to have been introduced to the Etruscan diviners who were designated "haruspices", and from them made its way into the Greco-Roman world.


Cf. La Divina Commedia, commentato da Attilio Momigliano. Vol. I, Inferno: p. 150 note:

In questa descrizione non c'è ombra di disprezzo; Dante qui dimentica la colpa dell'indovino e non vede che la sua poetica vita di solitario; lo attrae il paesaggio biancheggianti di marmi e quel suo silenzio che si stende dalle cime al mare e alle stelle. Si direbbe veramente, per la sensazione estatica che vi è racchiuse, che Dante si riportasse con la mente ad un paesaggio contemplato di fresco. Ma anche qui, come nei versi dedicati ad Anfiarao contribuisce all'effetto il fascino ch'esonera su Dante quell'arte che pure egli condanna; un'aria solenne di mistero circonda la dimora dell'augure etrusco.


He who backs up to the other's belly is Aruns who in the hills of Luni, where the Carrarese that live below till the ground, had a cave among the white marbles for his dwelling; looking from it at the stars and the sea his prospect was without bound.

Vero è ch'altra fiata qua giò fui,
congiurato da quella Eritòn cruda
che richiamava l'ombra a' corpi sui.

Di poco era di me la carne nuda,
ch'ella mi fece intrar dentr'a quel muro,
per trarne un spirto del cerchio di Giuda.

It is true that once before I was down here, conjured
by that fell spirit Erichtho who recalled shades to
their bodies. My flesh was not long naked of me when
she made me enter within that wall to draw forth a spirit
from the circle of Judas.

On the mediaeval legends about Virgil's see:
Domenico Comparetti: "Virgilio nel Medio Evo."
(Nuova edizione a cura di Giorgio Pasquale.) 2 vols.

Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen."


In this work, the author attempts to show that the
significance which the Renaissance attached to the
classical deities may be regarded as a development
of Mediaeval didacticism.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

THE LEGEND OF ROME.

I.

It is pertinent to ask the question whether Dante had a vision of history, provided we define that ambiguous phrase more carefully. It is at once clear that he did not profess to be a historian nor to look at things from the point of view of a dispassionate observer. His characters are imaginatively conceived, intuitively presented, psychologically understood. This, however, is an aspect which belongs rather to the genius of the dramatic poet than to the perception of the historian. We do not attribute the insight revealed in Browning's "Ring and the Book" to the historical capacities of the author, but rather to the apprehension of the poet. Dante records the virtues of the Roman empire-builders, their nobility, their prescience, their valour in war. He represents Trajan as the spokesman of Roman justice, while at the same time exhibiting Brutus and Cassius as the exponents of a calculated and infamous treason. There is, in such instances, obviously no attempt to determine what actually took place in the cold light of a detached investigation. That may be the ideal method of the historian, though there have been eminent practitioners of this art of whom such a statement would not be true. It certainly would not be true of the illustrious Gibbon, nor indeed of J. A. Froude. Dante most certainly makes no attempt at such a method or such an enquiry.

Yet the Florentine poet possesses a genuine historical vision which derives from his aesthetic and moral sensitiveness.
It owes nothing to a particular theory of history which he may be assumed to maintain. Nor again does he distinguish between the accounts which he discovers in the poets and those which are represented in the pages of the historians. Both possess the same validity, the same significance. Both apparently possess the same claim to truth. In the Second book of the "De Monarchia", he relates the story of the diffusion of the Roman Empire, citing as authorities, with indiscriminate zeal, the names of Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, Livy, Lucan, Boethius and S. Luke. Among these, Virgil seems to be regarded as holding the pre-eminence. There is evidently no distinction in the mind of Dante between the accounts which he finds in the poets and those of the historians. Both are on the same level of authenticity. Here, the poet follows the general custom of Mediaeval times in the assessment which he makes of these diverse kinds of representation. It may be remembered that Boccaccio, in a work written much later, alludes to the intimate connection between poetry, philosophy and history. He affirms that Dante was familiar with this, perceiving that "poetical works" are "no vain or foolish fables, but hiding places for the sweetest fruits of historical and philosophical truth." Elsewhere, in the long account in Books XIV and XV of the "Genealogia Deorum Gentilium", Boccaccio makes clear what distinction he conceives to be possible between these three arts. His main argument is that poetry constitutes a dramatic and vivid expression in which truth is shown in more direct form. Villani again, in his famous chronicle, refers to Virgil and Lucan as among those who may be regarded as "maestri d'istorie".

Many important passages in the works of Dante illustrate
the dramatic and symbolic conception of history which he came to hold. He could recognize in the writings of Virgil and Livy the desire to point a moral or to elucidate some precept. He knew the eloquent and stately music of the "Aeneid", the perorations and rhetorical magnificence on the subject of Rome. Indeed, what we may call the "poetry of glory" no doubt shaped his own views about the city and the state. The legend of Troy, in all its tragedy and heroism, still remained an inspiration in the Italian cities. Descent from its progeny was taken literally in the Middle Ages and held to establish a connection with the Roman imperial achievement. Paris, Cologne, Padua were proud to claim such a descent, while there were many Italian cities, notably Florence itself, which advanced such pretensions. Where such ideas exist, they must be taken to express symbolically the enthusiasm with which the Roman and Trojan names were regarded. Dante was familiar with all this. In no way does he question the myth of Roman descent and the participation in the glory of Troy. Virgil had expressed it before him, with all the fervour of genius and the magnificence of imagination.

It is significant, also, that the justice of the Roman cause is implicitly affirmed by Dante. In a famous scene in the "Aeneid", Apollo is represented as enlightening Ascanius about the nature of those future conquests which were conceded to the Roman arms:

"macte nova virtute, puer, sic itur ad astra, dis genite et geniture deos. iure omnia bella gente sub Assaraci fato ventura resident, nec te Troia capit." (5)

It is this many-coloured, changing pattern of events which Dante celebrates. As Professor Vinay has pointed out, (6) history is for him something like a great epic poem. There are lights and shadows, thunders and tempests, movement and passion. The various peoples conduct their warfare rather in the manner of the heroes of the Greek tragedies under the divine foreknowledge. Hence, we discover in the fourth treatise of the "Convivio"
examples of Roman courage and nobility collected together in order to explain and illustrate the general theme. It is a strange passage, almost like a solemn organ music, in which there are occasional deep notes of compassion blending with the more lyrical notes of adulation. In reading these words, one becomes conscious of the moral fervour of the poet in establishing such comparisons. The sacred history of Israel and the history of Rome are brought together as instituting an equal renown and an equal purpose of revelation. Moreover, in this passage Dante emphasizes his point with great clarity and conviction. He leaves us in no doubt as to his opinion and perspective in the discussion.

"Thus the divine choice of the Roman empire," he declares, "is sufficiently proved by the birth of the holy city which was contemporaneous with the root of the family of Mary. Nor ever was the world, nor ever will it be, so perfectly ordered as at the time when it was ordered in obedience to the voice of one single prince and commander of the Roman people, as Luke the Evangelist testifies." (8)

Those who oppose this resolute view are referred to in terms of reprobation and contempt. They are "stupid and vile beasts" who inveigh against the "inexpressible and incomprehensible wisdom of God." (9) This is a very interesting statement. If we did not already know from what the writer tells us in the pages of the "De Monarchia," (10) we might have guessed from the hectoring tone of his remarks that he himself had formerly held the contrary opinion. Such a view is familiar to us in the works of S. Augustine, a view which is expressed repeatedly, with profundity, with conviction, and with that fiery eloquence peculiar to the great African doctor. It may be said that the whole Mediaeval conception of history and theology is derived from Augustine. The presuppositions on which this view depended are simple and clear. Augustine maintained that there
could be no true justice without the knowledge of the Christian and Catholic religion. Without this, kingdoms and cities, states and empires could only be described as "magna latrocinia", great exploits of brigandage. At an early period in his life, Dante apparently accepted this assumption. It came to him with all the authority and prestige of one of the most illustrious names in the Christian West. During the writing of the fourth Treatise of the "Convivio", however, he would seem to have changed his mind. From criticism he changed to admiration, from repudiation to whole-hearted enthusiasm. Henceforth, he became the prophet and historian of Roman nobility, the proclaimer of the Latin genius, the poet of that divine mission which he recognised as having been entrusted to the Roman empire.

Why did Dante so singularly and so decisively change his mind on this subject? What reflection led him to dismiss with contumely the view which he had formerly held?

Such an enquiry must start with the well-known passage in exposition of the theme of nobility in the fourth treatise of the "Convivio" to which we have already alluded. There, it may be recalled, we find a gallery of famous men of the Roman State, heroic episodes are introduced, the dramatic, the vivid, the valiant.

"And it ought to be manifest that these most eminent men," he adds with sober force, "were the instruments by which divine providence wrought in the Roman Empire, wherein oft-times the arm of God appeared to be present.............Wherefore we ought not to demand further proof in order to perceive that the birth and growth of that holy city were specially purposed and ordained by God. And I certainly have a firm belief that the stones of her walls are worthy of reverence, and that the soil on which she is seated is worthy beyond all that men have proclaimed or proved."
These are significant words, strong and vigorous in their affirmation of the greatness and moral virtue of the ancients. Indeed, what we have here is nothing less than a saga of Roman greatness. Where, we may ask, did the poet discover all these stories and legends? Apparently, from his favourite writers, Virgil, Cicero and Lucan, as also from Orosius, and a summary of Livy’s histories. Yet, as a matter of fact, most of the examples given here, as also in the second book of the "De Monarchia", seem to have been taken out of the "De Civitate Dei" of S. Augustine, the great work of reference for the Mediaeval scholar and historiographer. In this latter work, the African Doctor set out, particularly in his celebrated chapter 18 of Book V, not with the avowed intention of praising the Romans, but, on the contrary, of showing with what enthusiasm and self-sacrifice they were prepared to pursue the ambition of earthly glory. His purpose was to point a moral, and emphasize a didactic principle. He would urge his Christian readers to seek the true riches of the heavenly glory with an equal fervour and an equal detachment. This was the whole drift of his argument. He could extol the Roman character for its admirable qualities of strength and inflexibility. But it was spoiled by a merely temporal and material aim. In other words, the impulse of the Roman achievement was directed entirely towards the acquisition of glory. Whatever apparent virtues might result from this, whatever apparent nobility, whatever courage and magnanimity, could not rightly be called virtues. They were, he pointed out in a well-known definition, nothing more than the pressing down of many vices in order to make room for the one great vice of pride. God had given them dominion over the world. In this imperial heritage, however, they were the successors of those who had gone before them – the Assyrians, the Persians, and that first Rome which was designated Babylon, and which was the meretricious and splendid example of earthly pomp.
II.

It must be admitted, however, that this represents only one aspect of Augustine's thought, which is woven of many colours, of many strands, and indeed of various contradictions. Considering the circumstances under which the "City of God" came to be written and the length of time occupied in its desultory composition, there is nothing very surprising in this. Nor must we forget the heavy responsibility which S. Augustine bore as a diocesan bishop in times of great danger and trial. Moreover, it was he who was obliged to deal with the Donatist schism and the more serious and disturbing Pelagian heresy. These are things which account for a certain amount of incoherence and confusion in the argument advanced in the book. What the great African doctor is trying to express is this. Whatever rulers might exercise authority in the pagan state can be of no real concern to the Christian. As a Christian, he has no duty or interest in building a city in this world. Nor should he allow himself to be perturbed or involved in those temporal affairs which engage so much of his neighbours' activity. Indeed, S. Augustine concludes, with a magnificent sweep of rhetoric, that it does not matter under what kind of government the faithful are living so long as they are not actually constrained to commit evil actions. (15)

Such an attitude would, of course, commit the Christian to the position of a passive spectator in the affairs and government of this world. But it is not by any means all that Augustine has to say on the question of organized society. What he affirms in this respect is of the nature of a judgment and opinion on the pagan commonwealth. When the State became Christian, however, an event of signal importance took place. Not only did the
Church receive the fruits of that conversion - honour and glory and privilege. The earthly society itself derived great advantage from the compact thus established. If the State showed itself willing to listen to the moral precepts of the Gospel, then it could expect to be confirmed in righteousness and truth. It could look forward to an aid more propitious than anything which the most illustrious heroes of ancient history had been able to accomplish. In such a condition, there was no need for Christians to cease from the performance of the customary tasks and duties of society. They must continue to be husbands, wives, householders, soldiers, judges, merchants. In other words, they must pursue the occupation which they had taken up as a means of getting a living and as their contribution to the ordered whole of the earthly society. The Christian Faith which they professed and which they committed to following in the practice of the moral virtues, would increase their value to the commonwealth. (15)

In this view, more reasoned and balanced, Augustine veers round to what is in fact Christian optimism. He sets forth the ideal of the just ruler - the Christian prince whose righteousness in his great office assists the work of salvation among those committed to his charge. The picture of such a ruler is depicted in warm and glowing tones. All the simplicity, the clarity of the Gospel images is employed in order to illustrate what he means. The ruler, he says, should be not merely the sovereign to govern and command. He should be also, the father of his people. Looking back down the long vistas of Christian history, we see how this ideal has been realized in the person of Alfred the Great of England, of S. Louis of France, of S. Vladimir of Russia, of S. Wenceslas of Bohemia.

It appears, therefore, from such an exposition, that while
the temporal order must not be allowed to constitute an end in itself, it has its place as the appointed means to the attainment of man's true purpose. The Christian ruler was meant to assist in this process. He should manifest that paternal concern for his people which finds its true analogue in the Fatherhood of God. He must be the symbol of that fatherly authority and, as such, it could be said that his dominion was founded on love. Thus, the great theme of love, caritas, once more becomes central in Augustine's philosophy. It is this which is the subject of all his preaching, of his exhortation, of his theology, of his letters, of his commentaries on Holy Scripture. Such an ethic implies the opposite of that vast empire maintained and extended by force which pagan Rome had once possessed.

According to S. Augustine, no special mission, no high prerogative, no particular distinction belonged to Rome. Whatever value belonged to the empire was exactly the same as that of any other political organization. Doubtless, it possessed a certain usefulness in the terrestrial order. One thing it lacked, however, and that was justice, for this virtue was impossible of acquisition without the love of God. Without justice, there could be neither law nor people. Where, indeed, could you expect to find justice in a society which practised the worship of malevolent demons? If we apply a lower standard, however, perhaps there is a sense in which we could denote Rome as a "gathering together of some sort of rational multitude, joined in fellowship by a common love of the same things." This was not really the definition proposed by Cicero. In his more sombre mood of denunciation, the African doctor judges Rome by those same standards as apply to Athens, and the other Greek city-states, to Egypt or the sensual Assyrian Babylon, predecessor of the greater and more powerful Babylon of the West. None of these societies
possessed any claim to be anything else but expressions of the earthly city. "To put the matter in general form," he concludes with some disparagement, "a city of wicked men in which God's command to offer no sacrifice but to Himself is not obeyed, nor His command which follows upon the other, that the mind should exercise proper and constant rule over the body and the reason over evil desires... such a city is without the truth of righteousness." ("caret iustitiae veritate").

It follows, therefore, that without the love of God, without that righteousness which proceeds from the Father of lights, there can be no idea of justice. Rome was devoted to the worship of many gods. Yet this very number and diversity of religions served only to demonstrate the confusion in the souls of men. Rome sought after one thing only, the love of self. This she encouraged. This she pursued. This she practised. But so far from obtaining peace, she found only division and civil strife, contention, and wars of aggrandizement.

Augustine refused to be impressed by the conquests of the Roman army and the triumphant march of the imperial renown. Indeed, the greater and more powerful the State became, the greater were her transgressions. We may ask what were these crimes? They may be summed up briefly and clearly. They consisted in the iniquities committed by her kings, the ingratitude manifested by the people towards heroes like Camillus and Scipio, the murderous cupidity of Marius and Sulla, the conflicts and passions, the violence and disastrous wars which broke out before the birth of Christ, the murder of Cicero.... a crime which won not only the connivance but also the approbation of the great Octavian himself.\(^{22}\) Roman law which might, indeed, appear to be a brilliant achievement when contrasted with the systems of other nations, was imposed upon the conquered by the exercise of military power. The glory of victory rested entirely upon the
shedding of innocent blood, and the ruthlessness manifested in
the will to sovereignty. The long survey of Roman history is
dark and bitter, revealing something of that impassioned protest
never completely submerged in the North African territories.
No-one can forget the smouldering resentment which expressed
itself in the eloquence of Tertullian, and the fanatical movements,
bound up as they were with the fiery Apocalyptic visions of
judgment against the Empire. While the old Lybio-Phoenician
population had become merged in the pattern of Latin culture,
it was still conscious of itself. During the later empire, it
began to assert its point of view vigorously and persistently. (23)
Something of this spirit of Carthaginian independence may be
discovered in the refutation which Augustine addresses to those
who see only the nobility of Rome.

"An respondent, quod nisi assiduis sibique continuo
succeedentibus bellis Romanum imperium tam longe lateque non
possit augeri et tam grandi gloria diffamari? Idonea vero
causa! Ut magnum esset imperium, cur esse deberet inquietum?
Nonne in corporisibus hominum satius est medicam staturam cum
sanitate habere quam ad molem aliquam giganteam perpetuis
afflictionibus pervenire, nec cum perveneris requiescere,
sed quanto grandioribus membris, tanto maioribus agitari
malis?" (24)

What, asks Augustine, was the significance of that
distinction which some Romans made between the desire for glory —
estimable, honourable and admirable — and the lust for wealth
and power? If we consider the noble Cato, it is evident that
whatever virtues might be attributed to him were egotistic. (25)
His life ended in suicide at Utica. Again, if we turn to the
triumphs and successes of the past, they must appear to be
illusory, "like a painted picture", to use an illustration of
Cicero in his lament for the disappearance of old traditions,
ideals and customs. (26) By his time, Cicero declared, the picture had faded, so that its colours and figures could no longer be recognized. One might ask—Augustine adds pertinently—when was it ever vivid? What was the truth about all those suppositions, dreams and ideas of a noble and glorious past?

"Viderint laudatores eius etiam illis antiquis viris et moribus qualis fuerit, utrum in ea viguerit vera iustitia an forte nec tunc fuerit viva moribus, sed picta coloribus; quod et ipse Cicero nesciens, cum eam praefertas, expressit." (27)

Yet, with all his denunciation of the empire and of the pride of achievement, he was not unmindful of the glory which belonged to the ancient name. He could admire the heroism and patriotism of Regulus. He was ready to acknowledge the integrity of the old Roman Republic, with its austerity and simplicity of manners. This he employs as an illustration admonishing Christians to cultivate those virtues which shall make them members of the heavenly Respublica. (28) Obviously, he must have known all that sense of magnificence, all the renown, the pomp, the glitter, the brilliance of the imperial city. Yet, it was a feeling for which he reproached himself.

At the same time, there are many expressions of violent and dramatic protest, of execration and condemnation, mingled with this more temperate note of appreciation. When he describes the desire for glory which possessed so many of the Romans, he cannot help referring to their "splendid vices", as he calls them. Vices they were, since they must be regarded as the expression of pride, but splendid they must seem, as exhibiting the spirit of a determined and fiery emulation. One might compare such a high-flown insolence of daring with Marlowe's "Tamburlaine the Great", the violence, the brilliance, the blood and colour of high achievement as seen by the poets of the Renaissance.

Yet, it must not be supposed that Augustine dismissed the
Roman empire as nothing else than the false and wayward Babylon of the "Apocalypse." When he comes to discuss morals, he often employs that image. No doubt, during those last days of anguish and desolation when the power of Rome was broken and her glory departed, he must often have remembered the lamentation over the Fall of Babylon which the Christian prophet appended to his predictions of imminent doom.

"Vae, vae civitas illa magna Babylon, civitas illa fortis, quoniam una hora venit judicium tuum!

Vae, vae civitas illa magna, quae amicta erat bysso, et purpura, et cocco, et deaurata erat auro, et lapide pretioso et margaritis; quoniam una hora destitutae sunt tantae divitiae!

No doubt, also, the image of Babylon, false, perjured and bloody, must have recalled to Augustine's mind the pagan city and empire. But — and it is an important exception — this is not all that the African doctor has to say about the Roman Empire. It must be allowed a place under the providence of God. It exists to fulfil a definite purpose. Indeed, the whole of human history, the kingdoms, the glories of men, are subject to the Divine Wisdom. If this is so, we must ask what purpose can be discovered in the existence of the Empire? What reasons may we give for its establishment and prosperity?

In answer to this, Augustine adduces three main reasons which explain the continuity and preservation of the Roman power.

First of all, it was intended to maintain peace among men. It was meant to subjugate the passions of anarchy, conflict and barbarism. The Empire could claim to exist by divine sanction because the Romans gave evidence of that strength and resolution of character which God saw fit to reward. The mind and ambition of the citizen was inspired by the idea of the glory of Rome: the splendour of the Roman achievement, the
concept of Roman law, the power of Roman arms, the lucidity of
Roman literature, the passion of eloquence and the deliberation
of leadership. (32) "Glory was their supreme passion; for this
they wished to live, for this they did not hesitate to die,"
declared Augustine in a memorable phrase which records his
half-concealed admiration for the virtues of the imperial age. (33)

Secondly, it could be said that Providence established the
Roman Empire in order to manifest that eternal righteousness
which assigns to every man the reward of his deeds. With some
irony, however, the African doctor goes on to demonstrate that
the reward is given according to the motive which inspires such
actions. What then was the motive which animated the Romans
in the fortitude and self-sacrifice which they displayed?
Augustine has a short reply to this question. It was merely the
praise of men. They achieved what they set out to do, glory and
dominion, praise and adulation. They have given gifts to men,
in the words of the psalmist, in bringing to them the great
civilization which they inherited from the Hellenic tradition.
They have received their reward, as Divine Providence appointed,
and that reward is just, for it consists in what they sought. (34)
Yet, Augustine is ready to concede that the moral virtues, even if
they do not issue from the highest motives, may be used as an
example to others. They may thus attain to a richer and more
varied excellence. Christians are meant to learn such lessons
as the Roman Empire taught and to profit by this instruction.
The glory of Rome inspired her citizens with resolution and
ardour. The same spirit should impel Christians to pursue the
cause of the Heavenly City to which they belong.

".....considerramus quanta contemptserint, quae pertulerint,
quas cupiditates subegerint pro humana gloria, qui eam tamquam
mercedem talium virtutum accipere meruerunt, et valent nobis
etiam hoc ad opprimendum superbiam, ut, cum illa civitas, in qua nobis regnare promissum est, tantum ab hac distet, quantum distat caelum a terra, a temporali laetitia vita aeterna, ab inanibus laudibus solida gloria, a societate mortalium societas angelorum, a lumine solis et lunae lumen eius qui solem fecit et lunam, nihil sibi magnum fecisse videantur tantae patriae cives, si pro illa adipiscenda fecerint boni operis aliquid vel mala aliqua sustinuerint, cum illi pro hac terrena iam adepta tanta fecerint, tanta perpessi sint............. (35)

Thirdly, it may be said that the Roman Empire was called into existence to provide an instruction and precept for the members of the City of God. The moral ideals, the moral endeavour, the moral fervour of those who are ignorant of the true Faith are not lacking in significance. (36) For S. Augustine history reveals the divine will and the divine purpose in operation among men and nations. If we approach the study of events with this in mind, we shall discover the truth of our assumptions in all those circumstances of which we are spectators. In other words, we shall see that our faith is justified. For this reason, S. Augustine includes, in Books XV - XVIII, a long and desultory account of the progress of Roman history. While, on the one hand, he condemns the Empire, he cannot resist an admiration for its magnificence. According to him, its greatest achievement was to extend the privileges of citizenship to the provinces. In this way, the citizen of Rome and the inhabitant of some obscure town in far-off Cilicia were on an equality. They both shared in the imperial benefits of order and administration.

Augustine's fiercest denunciation is that the richest provinces of the Empire were acquired by war. He does not deny that Rome brought to the peoples a participation in its heritage of law and civilization, thus acquainting them with the ideals of an ordered society. Yet, when he reviews the
cost of these achievements, he finds himself overwhelmed by dark and bitter reflections:

"At enim opera data est, ut imperiosa civitas non solum iugum, verum etiam lingua suam domitis gentibus per pacem societatis imponeret, per quam non deesset, immo et abundaret etiam interpretum copia. Verum est; sed hoc quam multis et quam grandibus bellis, quanta strage hominum, quanta effusione humani sanguinis comparatum est? Quibus transactis, non est tamen eorum malorum finita miseria....." (37)

Such results were only accomplished by campaigns of ruthless cruelty and indiscriminate bloodshed. The truth about the Roman character he finds expressed in the familiar words of Sallust: "laudis avidi, pecuniae liberales erant, gloriam ingentem, divitias honestas volebant." (38)

III.

The paradox, or perhaps we should say, "confusion", of Augustine's attitude is disclosed in the opinion which he expresses about the poetry of Virgil. As we have already observed, he was familiar with the works of the great Latin poet. He knew all the music, the cadence, the romance and tenderness of the epic of Rome. In his youth, he tells us, he had shed tears for Dido. Later, he confesses that he felt ashamed of such an emotion. So vivid, so dramatic, so cogent were the images employed by Virgil, that he was constrained to repudiate some of them. The sombre and fiery background of Tartarus, the powers of Rhadamanthus, (39) and the many incidents recorded about Aeneas's journey to the underworld, seemed to him so credible that he warned his readers against them. He quotes
from Virgil with obvious familiarity, in pointing a moral or stating a conclusion. The well-known lines:

\[ \text{Deterior donec paulatim ac decolor aetas et belli rabies et amor successit habendi!} \]

express clearly enough his own considered opinion and could, therefore, be employed to denounce the madness of war and the lust of gain. Virgil had attributed all evil to the flesh. This was, of course, Augustine affirms, a mistaken view, but at any rate implied an acknowledgement of the existence of evil. Moreover, in the Latin poet, he discovered a sense of compassion, a sympathy and understanding for the sufferings of men, which endeared him even more to the lover of poetry. Indeed, this might almost be thought to constitute a Christian virtue in the affinity which it shows to the motive of love.

What Augustine could not share, however, was Virgil's belief in the eternity of Roman power and administration. The Romans associated themselves with their city, with its greatness, its size, its magnificence, its vistas of gold and marble, its palaces and rose-gardens, its marching armies and heroic past. According to Augustine, however, they had merely invested themselves with something that was transitory, brief, and ready to decay. It was inevitable that Rome should participate in the fate of all human institutions. It was bound to fall. He maintained that Virgil was conscious of this, even though in his great poem he had dissembled such a belief.

Nowhere is the divergence of thought more marked than in this view of the empire which commends itself to Dante but is denied by Augustine. Yet Dante derived much from Augustine and shared with him a passionate love of the poetry of Virgil. Moreover, all that eloquence, that sense of the grandeur of Rome, that impression of its order, that admiration for its law and institutions are readily apparent in the writings of the great
Latin doctor in spite of his declamations. The record of history upon which he reflects with such conviction, the recollections of Virgil – odd lines scattered here and there throughout his books which could suggest other meanings and interpretations – the accounts of Roman leaders, the digressions on Cicero and Varro, all these could not fail to influence the mind of Dante. His debt to Augustine is obvious not only in the historical perspective which he adopts but also in the theological views which he advances in explanation of the course of human history.

The poet was also to some extent under the influence of Orosius, who may be regarded as the founder of the mediaeval study of historiography. At the suggestion of S. Augustine, he had undertaken a long and desultory narrative of the history of the world. It will be remembered how in the "Divina Commedia", Dante refers to him almost casually, in fact, in what might almost be called a tone of banter:

Nell'altra piccioletta luce ride
quello avvocato de' tempi cristiani(42)
del cui latino Augustin si provide.

It looks as if the poet was well aware that Orosius had darkened the picture and heightened the colours in the description which he gives of the state of the world in pagan times. During the Christian dispensation, Orosius maintained that the afflictions which were loosed upon the human race were far less terrible than those which had been encountered in previous ages. The "Historiae adversum Paganos" remains a work of allegorical parallelism, to use Vossler's phrase. Orosius wrote it in order to complete the historical account contained in the "De Civitate Dei" of S. Augustine. This was a necessary labour since the record which is there given is fragmentary and the events of Roman history are only related as far as the Civil War which occurred after the death of Julius Caesar.
Orosius appears to have displayed all the energy and passion for theory of the cyclical historians of the present day. He describes the four great empires, Babylon, Carthage, Macedonia and Rome, and finds symbol and mystical allusion in the events which are there exhibited with such metaphysical significance. Christianity, he declared, had greatly changed earthly conditions. There existed a great resemblance between Rome and Babylon: they were both brilliant and magnificent, sinful and perverse. What had enabled the Roman Empire to survive, however, was not the inherent merit or virtue of its citizens but the influence of the Christian religion.

The view which Orosius presents on the subject of historical events is thus essentially didactic and accommodated to certain theological assumptions. He can never resist the opportunity to indulge in moral reflection. This, indeed, is part of his general intention in delineating cause and effect as manifested in the historical process which he observed with such a variety of improving instruction. His opinion is less shaped and coloured by idealism than the philosophical digressions of Cicero. Certainly, he differs very much from Dante in the attitude which he preserves towards Rome. Thus, he is not afraid to express, in a few terse and convincing words, his condemnation and horror at the sufferings inflicted by the Romans.

"Quanti igitur pendenda est gutta haec laboriosae felicitatis, cui adscribitur unius urbis beatitudo in tanta mole infelicitatis, per quam agitur totius Orbis eversio?" (43)

As against the serenity, the lucidity, the sweet reasonableness which inspires Cicero's conception of the fatherly benevolence of the Roman rule over the provinces, he observes with some asperity: "Aut si ab aliquo dicitur tolerabiliares parentibus nostris Romanos hostes suisse, quam nobis Gothos esse,
audiat et intellegat, quanto aliter quam circa se ipsum agitur sibi esse videatur."(44)

There is nothing here of that golden haze of idealism with which the Florentine poet perceives the glory of the Empire and its destiny in the accomplishment of the divine purpose. Yet, it must be admitted, Dante derives a great deal of his information from the Spanish writer. For example, many details of geography, the portrayal of historical characters such as Alexander the Great, Semiramis and Domitian, and certain stories attributed to Livy, — all these are from the pages of Orosius. His indebtedness does not stop there, however. It is to be discovered even more clearly in the general notions which he employs as categories of interpretation.(45)

Among these may be mentioned the idea that the universal peace which prevailed at the time of Christ's birth was divinely ordained: the belief that it was of deliberate purpose that the Saviour was numbered in the census introduced by Augustus; and the conviction that the crucifixion was avenged by the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Titus.(46)

In the "De Monarchia", Dante propounds the theory that in the judgment of Christ Pilate was unconsciously punishing the transgression of Adam. From this, the poet draws the conclusion, strange enough in itself and even stranger when compared with the views of Orosius: "Et si Romanum imperium de iure non fuit, peccatum Adae in Christo non fuit punitum."(47)

What Dante means by this is that Jesus Christ, in His own Person, paid the penalty for sin which mankind had incurred. He could not have done so unless there existed an authority which could claim to possess universal jurisdiction. Pilate was the lawful representative of that universal jurisdiction with which the Roman Emperor was invested. In condemning Christ to be crucified, Pilate may be said to have acted justly.
According to Dante, if the Roman Empire had not possessed a valid title to jurisdiction, unless its authority had been founded on justice, and its dominion on right, it could have exercised no legitimate power over Christ. It follows, also, that if Pilate could pretend to no valid jurisdiction, then the death of Christ could not avail for the offence of Adam. All this is completely alien to the thought of Orosius, whose argument reduces itself to the simple proposition that Titus executed the will of God in punishing the Jews for the death of Christ.

Of course, it is important to remember these and other differences which separate the Spanish writer from Dante. Yet one thing they have in common, which becomes a luminous fact in the interpretation of events. S. Augustine repudiates any idea of the eternal and universal authority of Rome. For him, it is a fable, a legend, an illusion. Orosius maintains that the Christian religion has consecrated the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire, giving it a universal authority within the unity of the Catholic Faith. It might, therefore, be affirmed that the glory of Rome as set forth by the eloquence of Virgil and Cicero has been transformed rather than changed. Henceforth, all those ideas which receive such glowing expression in the great Latin poets and prose-writers are coloured by the religion of Christ. They become a true description of that Christian Empire which is universal in dominion.

For Augustine, on the other hand, Rome was no different from any other nation and must be judged by the same standards. The Spanish writer, however, discovers in the history of Rome a particular vocation and a particular destiny, a fore-shadowing of the light which shall one day illumine the earth. In his description of the historical events which mark the progress of the Roman name, he adduces miracles and portents
which point to the divine intervention. (49) Dante follows this example in ascribing a special activity of providence at various stages of the history of the imperial city. It is probable that he relates from Orosius the story of the hailstorm which was supposed to have been responsible for the defeat of Hannibal at the gates of Rome. Yet, though he recounts various legends from Virgil and others of the Latin poets, it is true to say that the philosophy of history which finds expression in his writings owes much to Orosius. It was this writer who so strongly insisted on the divine vocation which called the Empire into existence and maintained its authority. It was this writer, moreover, who provided so many dramatic stories of the element of the miraculous in the long history of the Latin people.

"sic placitum. veniet lustris labentibus aetas, cum domus Assaraci Phthiam clarasque Mycenas servitio premet ac victis dominabitur Argis. nascetur pulchra Troia nus origine Caesar, imperium Oceanu, famam qui terminet astra, Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo."(50)

Dante confines his account of such miracles to pagan times. He describes the shield which descended from heaven while Numa Pompilius was engaged in the act of sacrificing. He mentions the warning cry of the goose which averted the capture of Rome by the Gauls... He speaks of the escape of Clelia across the Tiber from the army of Porsenna, (51) an incident related by Virgil. The poet clearly employs Virgil's account of the goose that saved Rome, though S. Augustine had related the story with a certain irony. (52)

Another observation of Orosius which may have suggested itself to Dante is that universal peace consists in the harmony of wills. It is he, also, who alludes to the empire as a remedy for sin, and who discovers in the administration and government of Rome the means by which mankind may be instructed in the great
lessons of humility and endurance. Moreover, Orosius attributed to Rome the task of disseminating the true Faith, for, under the providence of God, the Incarnation took place at a time when all nations and peoples were under obedience to the one sovereign ruler.

IV.

Let us sum up Dante's theory of Rome.

It is an important element in his political philosophy to demonstrate the mission of the Roman Empire as divinely accredited. S. Augustine himself had been obliged to concede, not without a certain reluctance, that only by God's will of permission had the Romans been able to extend and maintain their dominions. Orosius, as we have seen, developed this theory to show that such expansion was intended as a preparation for the Christian Empire. In his turn, Dante heightens this view in characteristic manner. He presents us with his own picture, idealized, romantic, sublime. The colours become deeper, the light more glowing as he delineates a rule established by God Himself for the salvation of mankind and the preservation of society.

We have commented on Dante's view that the Empire was meant to furnish a universal government. This is a view which he proceeds to elaborate with that philosophical idealism which ignores the harsher realities of conquest so easily apparent to Augustine and Orosius. For him the Romans are an elect people, specially called and specially endowed for the task to which the Divine Wisdom appointed them. If to the Jews were
committed the oracles of God, no less to the Romans had been entrusted the government and jurisdiction over the whole world. Here it is that we see most clearly the divergence between Augustine's philosophy of history and that which Dante so vividly maintains. In the pursuit of this theme, the poet adduces many examples and illustrations. The Trojans, he declares, were brought into Italy, with many signs and wonders, in order that they might be known as the people designated to rule the world.

Once more, the capture and burning of Troy must be conceived as within the counsel and foreknowledge of God. Only in this way could Aeneas lead his faithful followers into Italy and establish the family into which, in due time, Augustus should be born. S. Augustine had compared the foundation of Rome with the wicked city set up by Cain. (56) He had stated the moral in dark and sombre terms: Holy Scripture affirms that Cain killed his brother Abel, who established the city of God on earth. Romulus killed his brother Remus and, therefore, was responsible for the same crime as that which Cain had committed. With the implications of such a theory, however, Dante will have nothing to do. We have already observed how, in his search for parallels with the sacred history of the Jews, he had declared that the landing of Aeneas in Italy was contemporaneous with the birth of King David. This affords sufficient proof of the divine election of the Roman empire. We have already seen, also, with what ardour and imagination he describes the miracles with which God revealed His will for the Roman people.

Moreover, the poet discovers many correspondences between the Jewish people as the elect nation and the Romans in their capacity as heirs of the universal kingdom. To the Jews had been given the promise of the Messiah, who was to inaugurate
the reign of peace and justice. When Christ came in the flesh, He fulfilled these promises. Yet, He was not merely the King of the Jews. He had declared before Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world." He had broken down the old particularism and exclusiveness of the Jews. Since they did not receive Him as Messiah and Lord, their place had been taken away from them and assigned to a people whom He had called. Thus, the Church came into existence. Yet, as Dante says with some audacity, the universal empire was not abrogated, nor in any way superseded by the Catholic Church. Christ merely consummated and brought to completion the jurisdiction vested in the person of the Emperor.

If we ask what proof there is of this contention, the poet has an answer. It is attested, he affirms, by the fact that the Roman people possess the virtue of Justice. This is a virtue which, in the "Pè Monarchia", Dante describes in words reminiscent of Aristotle and the commentaries of S. Thomas and S. Albert the Great. It is this which has enabled the Empire to extend its dominions and to preserve its authority even during the times of the Christian dispensation. Dante's whole political philosophy is concerned with Justice. Hence it is that, in the "Paradiso", the Eagle represents not only the divine and immutable Justice in Heaven, but also that Roman Justice which was so illustrious on earth in ancient times and which it was the task of men to restore in the dark and violent contentions of the fourteenth century.

"Per esser giusto e pio
son io essaltato a quella gloria
che non si lascia vincere a disio;
ed in terra lasciai la mia memoria
al fatta, che le genti li malvage ...
commendan lei, ma non seguon la storia."
Notes to Chapter Sixteen. The Legend of Rome.

   F. Sarri: Il concetto di storia in Dante.
   (pp. 269 sqq: of "Studi su Dante": vol: VII of series:
   Conferenze e Letture tenute a cura del comitato Milanese

   Passerini. 1917). p.16.

   The description of poetry is worth noting: "feror quidam
   exquisite inveniendi, atque dicendi, seu scribendi quod
   inveneris."

   4 vols. (Florence:1847).


   Vinay observes justly: "la storia è per lui un grande poema
   epico, in cui i popoli combattono come gli eroi della
   leggenda sotto il vigilo sguardo di Dio;"


   Oh ineffabile e incomprensibile sapienza di Dio che a una
   ora, per la tua venuta, in Siria suso e qua in Italia
   tanto dimanzi ti preparasti! E oh stoltissime e
   vilissime bestiule che a guisa d'uomo voi pascete, che
   presummete contra nostra fede parlare e volete sapere,
   filando e zappando, ciò che Iddio, che con tanta prudenza
   hae ordinato! Maladetti siate voi, e la vostra presunzione,
   e chi a voi crede!

   Admirabarium aliquando Romanum populum in orbe
   terrarum sine ulla resistentia fuisses prefectum cum,
   tantum superficialiter intuens, illum nullo iure sed
   armorum tantummodo violentia obtinuisses arbitrabar.

   Cf. Pietro Chioccioni: "L'Agostinismo nella 'Divina

13. It has been suggested that Dante had no first-hand knowledge of Livy but was dependent upon a compendium of some sort or other.

14. De Monarchia: II:V.

Quantum enim pertinet ad hanc vitam mortalium, quae paucis diebus ducit et finitur, quid interest sub culus imperio vivat homo moriturus, si illi qui imperant ad impia et iniqua non cogant?


18. The following passage, taken almost at random, illustrates the point:
Haec est vera dilectio, ut inhaerentes veritati iuste vivamus: et idea contemnamus omnia mortalia praec amore hominum quo eos volumus iuste vivere........
S. Augustine: De Trinitate: VIII:9 sqq.

Quae igitur iustitia est hominis, quae ipsum hominem Deo vero tollit et immundis daemonibus subdit?

Qualiscumque rationalis multitudinis coetus, rerum quas diligit concordi communione sociatus....

Quod autem de isto populo et de ista re publica dixi, hoc de Atheniensium vel quoruncumque Graecorum, hoc de Aegyptorurn, hoc de illa priore Babylone Assyriorum, quando in rebus publicis suis imperia vel parva vel magna tenuerunt, et de alia quacumque aliarum gentium intellegar dixisse atque sensisse.
22. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: III: chapters XIV, XX-XXXI: ibid: chapter XXX.

Nam et ipsae Augustus cum multis gessit bella civilia, et in eis etiam multi clarissimi viri perierunt inter quos et Cicero disertus ille artifex regendae rei publicae.......................... Huic adulescenti Caesari, ut eius potentia contra Antonium nutriraetur, Cicero favebat, sperans eum depulsa et oppressa Antonii dominatione instauraturum rei publicae libertatem, usque adeo caecus atque improvidus futurorum, ut ille ipse iuvenis, cuius dignitatem ac potestatem fovebat, et eundem Ciceronem occidendum Antonio quodam quasi concordiae pactione permetteret et ipsam libertatem rei publicae, pro qua multum ille clamaverat, dicioni propriae subiugaret.


Essay on "St. Augustine and His Age." pp. 198-258.


24. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: III:X.

25. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: III:XXIII.


Nostra vero aetas cum rem publicam sicut picturam accipisset egregiam, sed evanescens vetustate, non modo eam coloribus idem quibus fuerat renovare negligit, sed ne id quidem curavit, ut formam saetem eius et extrema tamen liniamenta servaret.

27. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: III:XXI.

Viderint laudatores eius etiam illis antiquis viris et moribus qualis fuerit, utrum in ea vigurerit vera iustitia an forte nec tunc fuerit viva moribus, sed picta coloribus; quod et ipsae Cicero nesciens, cum eam praefaret, expressit.


Deus enim sic ostendit in opulentissimo et praecario imperio Romanorum, quantum valerent civiles etiam sine vera religione virtutes, ut intellegeretur hac addita fieri homines cives alterius civitatis, cujus lex caritatis, cujus modus aeternitatis.

30. S. Augustinus: De Civitate Dei: V:XII.
nullo modo est credendus regna hominum eorumque dominationes et servitutae a suae providentiae legibus alienis esse voluisse.

31. S. Augustinus: De Civitate Dei: XIX:XXVI.
Diliget tamen etiam ipse quandam pacem suam non inprobandam, quam quidem non habebit in fine, quia non ea bene utitur ante finem. Hanc autem ut interim habeat in hac vita, etiam nostri interest; quoniam, quandoquidem sunt ambae civitates, utimur et nos pace Babylonis; ex qua ita per fidem populus Dei liberatur, ut apud hanc interdum peregrinetur. Propter quod et apostolus admonuit ecclesiam, ut oraret pro regibus eius atque sublimibus, addens et dicens: 'Ut quietam et tranquillam vitam aehamus cum omni pietate et caritate, et propheta Hieremias, cum populo Dei veteri praemuniantaret captivitatem et divinitus imperaret, ut oboedienter irent in Babyloniam Deo suo etiam ista patientia servientes, monuit et ipse ut oraretur pro illa dicens: 'Quia in eius est pace vestra,' utique interim temporale, quae bonus malisque communis est.

32. S. Augustinus: De Civitate Dei: V:XII.
qui causa honoris laudis et gloriae consulerunt patriae, in qua ipsam gloriarn requirebant, salutemque eius saluti suae praeponere non dubitabant, pro isto uno vitio, id est amore laudis, pecuniae cupiditatem et multa alia vitia comprimentes.......

33. S. Augustinus: De Civitate Dei: V:XII.
hanc ardentissime dilexerunt, propter hanc vivere voluerunt, pro hac emori non dubitaverunt; ceteras cupiditates huius unius ingenti cupiditate presserunt. Ipsam denique patriam suam, quoniam servire videbatur inglorium, dominari vero atque imperare gloriosum, prius omni studio liberam, deinde dominam esse concupiverunt....

34. S. Augustinus: De Civitate Dei: V:XVI.
Proinde non solum ut talis merces talibus hominibus redderetur Romanum imperium ad humanam gloriarn dilatatum est; verum etiam ut cives aeternae illius civitatis, quandoquidem per peregrinatur, diligenter et sobrie illa inuenatur exempla et videant quanta dilectio debetur supernae patriae propter vitam aeternam, si tantum a suis civibus terrena dilecta est propter hominum gloriam.

35. S. Augustinus: De Civitate Dei: V:XXVII.

36. S. Augustinus: De Civitate Dei: V:XIV.
Sed cum illi essent in civitate terrena, quibus propositus erat omnium pro illa officiorum finis incoluntias eius et regnum non in caelo, sed in terra; non in vita aeterna, sed in deceSSIONe mortis et Successione moriturorum: quid alium amarent quam gloriam, qua volebant etiam post mortem tamquam vivere in ore laudantium?
37. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: XIX:VII.
38. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: V:XII.
   Gnosius haec Rhadamanthus habet durissima regna
   castigatque auditque dolos subigitque fateri,
   quae quis apud superos, furto laetatus inani,
   distulit in seram commissa piacula mortem.
   Poeta illorum quidam induxit Jovem loquentem, et ait
   de Romanis,
   "His ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora ponis;
   imperium sine fine dedi."
   Non plane ita respondet veritas. Regnum hoc, quod
   sine fine dedisti, o qui nihil dedisti, in terra est,
   an in coelo? Utique in terra. Et si esset in coelo,
   "Coelum et terra transiunt." Transient quae fecit
   ipse Deus; quanto citius quod condidit Romulus?
   Forte si vellemus hinc exspectare Virgilium, et insultare,
   quae hoc dixerit: in parte tolleret nos, et dicaret
   nobis: "Et ego scio; sed quid fecerem qui Romanis
   verba vendebam, nisi hoc adulatione aliquid promitterem
   quod falsum erat? Et tamen et in hoc cautus fui,
   quando dixi: "Imperium sine fine dedi," Jovem ipsorum
   induxi, qui hoc diceret. Non ex persona mea dixi rem
   falsam, sed Jovi imposui falsitatis personam; sicut
   Deus falsus erat, ita mendax vates erat. Nam vultis
   nosse quia ista noveram? Alio loco, quando non Jovem
   lapidem induxer loquentem, sed ex persona mea locutus
   sum, dixi:
   "non res Romanae periturae regna."
   Videte quia dixi peritura regna. Dixi peritura regna,
   non tacui. Peritura, veritate non tacuit: semper
   mansura, adulatione promisit."
   The reference is to: Aeneid: I: 278-9; Geor: II:498
42. Paradiso: X:118-120.
   In the little light that is next smiles that defender of
   Christian times of whose treatise Augustine made use.
45. For a detailed account of the influence exerted by Orosius on Dante see the admirable essay: "Dante's Obligations to the Ormista" in the following work: Paget Toynbee: "Dante Studies and Researches." (London: 1902). pp. 133 sqq.

46. Two of these ideas are included in a passage quoted by Toynbee from Chapter 22 of the VIth Book of Orosius' work.

Nec dubium, quin omnium cognitioni fidei inspectionique patet, quia Dominus noster Jesus Christus hanc urbem (Romam) nutu suo auctam defensamque in hunc rerum apicem provexerit, cujus potissime voluit esse cum venit, dicendus utique civis Romanus census professione Romani. (Toynbee: p. 133).

Concerning this, Toynbee remarks that the poet pursues the same argument and among other passages quoted in support of this contention, adduces the following words from the "De Monarchia", II: XII.

"Si Romanum imperium de jure non fuit, Christus nascendo praesumpsit injustum......Sed Christus sub edicto Romanae auctoritatis nasci voluit de Virgine Matre, ut in illa singulari generis humani descriptione Filius Dei, homo factus, homo eonscriberetur......Ergo Christus Augusti Romanorum auctoritate fungentis edictum fore justum, opere persuasit.

Dr. Charles Till Harris, in his admirable study of "Dante and the Legend of Rome", disputes some of the implications perceived by Toynbee. (op: cit: p. 59).

Again, in the account of the capture of Jerusalem, Orosius writes:

Capta eversaque urbe Hierosolymorum......extinctisque Judaicis Titus, qui ad vindicandum Dominu Jesu Christi sanguinem judicio Dei fuerat ordinatus, victor triumphans cum Vespasiano patre Janum clausit. (VII: 3: 8).

In this, Dante is content to follow the Spanish writer very closely, for in the "Purgatorio" he affirms:

Il buon Tito con l'aiuto
del sommo Rege vendicò le fora,
ondusci il sanguè perse Giuda venduto.

(XXI: 82-84).

Again, in the "Paradiso", Dante refers to this incident in the following words:

Poscia con Tito a far vendetta corse
della vendetta del peccato antico.

(VI: 92-93).
46. (continued).

The similarity of ideas would be difficult to deny. Dr. C. T. Davis rightly points out, however, that it would be more true to say that here, as in other passages, Dante transforms Orosius. (op: cit: p. 60)

47. De Monarchia: II: XII.


49. Orosius: op: cit: VI: XVIII: 34.

IV: XVII: 5.


51. De Monarchia: II: IV.

Cumque Galli, reliqua urbe iam capta, noctis tenebris confisi Capitolium furtim subirent, quod solum restabat ad ultimum interitum Romani nominis, anserem ibi non ante visum ceccinisse Gallos adesse atque custodes ad defensandum Capitolium excitasse Livius et multi scriptores condicter contestantur. Nonne transitus Clelie mirabilis fuit cum mulier cumque captiva in obsidione Porsenne, abruptis vinculis, miro Dei auxilio adiuta transnavit Tiberim, sicut omnes fere scribere Romane rei ad gloriam ipsius commemorant?


virgo Cloelia admirabili transmeati fluminis audacia.


atque hic auratis volitans argenteus anser porticibus Gallos in limine adesse canebat;


VI: XVII.


in magnum silentio ac pace latissima inoffense et celeriter novi nominis gloria et adnuntiatae salutis velox fuma percurreret vel etiam ut discipulis eius per diversas gentes euntibus ulteroque per cunctos salutis dona offerentibus obeundi ac disserendi quippe Romanis civibus inter cives Romanos esset tuta libertas.
55. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: III:XXII.

Quae proelia commissa sunt, quid sanguinis fusum, ut omnes fere Italae gentes, quibus Romanum maxime praepollebat imperium, tamquam saeva barbariae domarentur? Iam ex pascuissimis, hoc est minus quam septuaginta, gladiatoribus quem ad modum bellum servile contractum sit, ad quantum numerum et quam acer feroenque pervenerit, quas ille numerus imperatores populi Romani superaverit, quas et quo modo civitates regionesque vastaverit, vix qui historiam conscripserunt satis explicare putuerunt...

56. S. Augustine: De Civitate Dei: XV:V.

Primus itaque fuit terrena civitatis conditor fratricida; nam suum fratrem civem civitatis aeternae in hac terra peregrinantem invidentia vicissus occidit. Unde mirandum non est, quod tanto post in ea civitate condenda, quae fuerat huius terrena civitatis, de qua loquimur, caput futura et tam multis gentibus regnatur, haec primo exemplo et, ut Graeci appellant, spes etiam sui generis imago respondit. Nam et ipsis, sicut ipse comminor et, ut Graeci appellant, spes etiam sui generis imago respondit. "Fraterno primi maduerunt sanguine muri".

57. De Monarchia: II:V.

Petet igitur quod quicunque bonum rei publice intendit finem iuris intendit. Si ergo Romani bonum rei publice interdixit, verum erit dicere finem iuris intendisse. Quod ait Romani populus bonus prefatum interdixit subiiciendo sibi orbe terrarum, est ex sua declarant, in quibus, omni cupiditate submota que rei publice semper adversa est, et universali pace cum libertate dilecta, populus ille sanctus et gloriosus propria commoda neglexisse videtur, ut publica pro salute humani generis procuraret. Unde recte illud scriptum est: "Romanum imperium de fonte nascitur pietatis..."

Cf. S. Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theol: Ia 2ae,q: 90, art. II.

Cum lex sit regula humanorum actum, quorum ultima finis est beatitudo et quidem communis, necessa est eas semper ad bonum commune ordinari.


57. (continued).

Francesco Ercole: "Il pensiero politico di Dante."
Cf. Monarchia. ed. Gustavo Vinay. Introduzione:
p. XVIII.

"Gli ispiratori di Dante in questo secondo libro sono stati Livio e Virgilio. Questi sono i suoi fratelli spirituali, le sole 'fonti', le sole guide che ci indichino la via per scendere nel fondo della sua anima. Releggiamo il sesto libro dell'Eneide e quei passi delle 'Storie' (richiamati a volte inesattamente) nei quali lo storico celebra gli eroi di Roma, e sentiremo un'intima inconfondibile consonanza. Il patriottismo di Livio e di Virgilio è il patriottismo di Dante, l'esaltazione della grandezza morale dei creatori dell'Impero è la sua, il loro 'fatum' è il suo 'fatum' ........ Il patriottismo romano si impregna in lui di un senso nuovo di universalità, Roma diventa umanità romana ............"


"For being just and merciful I am here exalted to that glory which desire cannot surpass, and on earth I left such a memory that the wicked people there commend it but do not continue its story!"
CONCLUSION.
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.

THE ELEMENTS OF DANTE'S HUMANISM.

I.

We are now perhaps in a position to understand what diverse elements are represented in the Humanism of Dante, and to define its meaning more clearly and precisely. In the first place, we must insist that it constitutes what is first and foremost a Christian Humanism. To the extent that it may be so described, it is established upon the labours of S. Thomas Aquinas and upon the mystical tradition of the Church, with its doctrine of the interior light and its belief in the value of the human soul and intellect. We have already, in our first chapter, shown the humanism implicit in the Western mystical tradition. Nobody can read such writings as those of Eckhart and Mother Julian without being conscious of that spirit which we have defined as the ethic of human nobility.

Yet, this ideal of Christian humanism which the poet expresses is made up of many different colours, of many different aspects, of many different expressions. From the ancient world of the Greco-Roman civilization, it derives that philosophical ideal of human nobility which had achieved such brilliance in poetry, in art, in dialectic. It is to be observed how the four cardinal virtues of Aristotle receive in the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity their consummation and
fulfilment. Again, it is significant that the ideal of human nobility which Dante delineates with such power and lucidity takes its origin from the idea of virtue as recognized in the ancient world. It is this same ideal, transfigured, which attains to those heights of sanctity which we encounter in the supernatural light of the "Paradiso". It conforms to that description of Christian Humanism with which the Abbé Brémond has made us familiar.

Yet, amid all the glory of heaven, we are never allowed to forget those social and political conflicts which rend and destroy the city on earth. These are the result of a Christianity which is increasingly subject to violence and lust, of a Papacy which is venal and corrupt, of an episcopate which is negligent of its true office and vocation.

If we consider the main elements which constitute the Humanism of the poet we shall regard the following as the conclusions of our investigation.

The "Convivio" may be taken as indicating its first phase. It is, of course, incomplete. We are necessarily reminded of this when we reflect upon the fact that of the fifteen treatises which the author had planned, only four were actually composed and put together. In its conception, in the process of exposition which it follows, in its expression, the work remains mediaeval. It is mediaeval in feeling and sympathy, and in the presuppositions which it makes. Yet, at the same time, it is wholly original in the elaboration of the music of an Italian prose never attempted before. By means of the fourfold method of exegesis common to the theological schools of the time, the poet constructs his interpretation of the three erudite and singularly abstract Canzoni which form part of the text.

The fourth treatise of this work is devoted to a discussion
of the fundamental problem of Humanism — what is the nature of
ture nobility? At this stage, it is to be noticed, Dante
professes to speak as a philosopher only. He recognizes
Aristotle as that master who has instructed him in the art
of the syllogism and in the practice of dialectic. He exalts
philosophy with many expressions of sublime and eloquent praise.
Philosophy it is which administers consolation to the sorrowful,
and which takes away grief from the lonely heart. Philosophy
it is which conduces to that state of detachment in which the
violent colours of life become soft and subdued. Moreover,
Dante imposes upon himself an Aristotelian restraint in matters
of metaphysical speculation. As a result of this, he adopts
an attitude not unlike that of Averroes, for whom there existed
philosophical truths capable of rational verification and
theological truths which could only be apprehended by the
exercise of faith. Yet, with all this, he sometimes seems
to affirm a belief in the mysterious and evanescent contact
of the soul with God. Such a doctrine shows obvious affinities
with the idea of the "fine point" of the soul to which we have
already referred in the teaching of S. Francis of Sales and the
French spiritual writers of the seventeenth century.

Dante acknowledges, also, his debt to Cicero and Boethius,
as those who first introduced him to the study of philosophy,
in which he found not only delight and satisfaction but also
consolation and encouragement in his grief at the death of
Beatrice. In this early work, his respect for the philosophical
schools of antiquity is expressed in clear and explicit terms.
He entertains the hope that, one day, they may all be reconciled
in that eternal Athens where the light of truth shines in its
perfection and significance. It is in this work, also, that
he outlines a theory of the Empire, whose mission, he suggests,
is that of preserving universal peace to the Christian people


committed to its charge. Such a government does not constitute an autocracy, for it must be founded upon those principles of reason enunciated by Aristotle and elaborated by the Christian conscience.

Even in the Four Treatises, we become aware of Virgil as a presence and an inspiration. Aeneas is represented as the illustrious example of human nobility. His person, his character, his generosity and courtesy are seen as the figure of that Romantic ideal of knighthood which the author presents to us with such fervour. Rome is already elevated to the position of a holy city, "gloriosa Roma, la santa cittade." (1) She is the ancient city, round whose name have gathered all the legends and stories, all the drama and colour, all the tragedy and high endeavour, the pomp and ceremony of so many centuries. She is the city of Camillus and Scipio, of the Republic, and of the pagan Empire.

Cesare armato con li occhi grifagni. (2)
She is the city of the Christian prince......

Cesare fui e son Giustiiano,
che, per voler del primo amor ch'i' sento,
d'entro le leggi trassi il troppo e'l vano. (3)

Thus speaks the great Christian Emperor who was responsible for the reformation and revision of the laws. Not less than Jerusalem, the imperial city manifests clearly the divine purpose and the divine election.

All this is not only implicit in the "Convivio", but clear and apparent in the adulation of the glory of Rome and of the mission assigned to its people: "Thus the divine choice of the Roman empire is sufficiently proved by the birth of the holy city which was contemporaneous with the root of the family of Mary." (4)
II.

It is in the first Canto of the "Inferno" — the prelude to the whole great drama of redemption — that we discover the sudden awakening of the Christian conscience. It is here that Dante reveals the urgent problems and anxieties of his own soul. Yet these are related to all those wider issues which affect society in general, the misery and confusion of war, conflict, injustice, chicanery, and self-aggrandisement. As the poet sees it, there exists in the community no law, no precept, no rule. A great deal of the "Divina Commedia" is therefore concerned with what one might be tempted to call political principles. Yet these are never merely political, but moral and philosophical.

It is in this perspective that we must place Dante's idea of the Empire. As he regards it, there is no break in its continuity from pagan times. Often the vision of imperial glory dazzles and bewilders him. It may confidently be said that the Rome which he presents to us combines the pagan and the Christian, the imperial and the papal, the classical and the romantic. Nor are we ever conscious of any division or separation between the apparently divergent ideas. Rome is the heir of the ages. Not only are its people sprung from the Trojan blood — of that fabulous city:

ond' usci de' Romani il gentil seme....

They are also the bearers of civilization to a world which would otherwise be lost in confusion and barbarism. Thus in the great poem of his maturity, Dante develops and elaborates the idea of Rome which he had previously outlined in the Four Treatises.
In his learned and brilliant work, "Roma nella memoriae nelle immaginazioni del medio evo", Arturo Graf has spoken of the many legends and fantasies which were associated with Rome in the mediaeval mind. It was not only that the ruins of the ancient city evoked an image of former grandeur. The very stories which were related about the city became part of the myth of Rome, a living tradition which continued to influence the thought and speculation of the age. There is that strange legend about the end of the age, derived in part from the "Apocalypse", which shows how the Christian intellect interpreted in dramatic form the old belief in the eternity of Rome. The sufferings and terrors of the last days were ascribed not only to the final assault of the Anti-Christ, but also to the doom and destruction of the city. It was said that the King of the Romans after his victory over the infidel in the cause of the Christian Faith would commit his crown to God either at Jerusalem, the holy city itself, or by hanging it upon the seer and leafless branches of the Dry Tree of the Desert. After this, however, would come the Fall of Rome, the looting and plundering of its riches, the devastation of its glory, and the Final Judgment. These catastrophic events were confidently expected. They are symbols and fantasies of that apocalyptic view of history with which Christian philosophy is so deeply involved.

Such legends illustrate a kind of mystical efflorescence about the significance of the ancient city which had now become the seat of these two luminaries of the world, the Pope and the Emperor. Moreover, such concepts became an element in the thought and philosophy of Dante. In the Roman unity - long prepared and profoundly meditated - he discovers the necessary condition for the coming of Christ. In the destruction of Troy, he sees their expiation for the arrogance and pride by which
the human race transgressed the justice of God. This could be maintained, for they were themselves descendants of the Trojans, whose city was ruthlessly given over to the flames and the despoilers. Did not Virgil himself declare:

"Postquam res Asiae Priamique evertere gentem immitteram visum superis, ceciditque superbum Ilium et omnis humo fumat Neptunia Troia, diversa exsilia et desertas quaeque terras auguris agimus divum...."? (6)

In the tragedy of the Fall of Troy, the Greeks were the agents of divine justice no less than Pilate in the judgment of Christ. Furthermore, they had also an appointed task as the exponents of a philosophy which should justify the political ambitions of Augustus and the theological affirmations of the Catholic revelation.

The imperial office as devised by the Romans may be said to have looked forward to the Christian times for its fulfilment. It was meant to secure peace and justice. This could only be accomplished, however, under the Christian dispensation, and with the aid of that rational philosophy elaborated by the genius of Aristotle. The conquests won by Roman arms, the victories of her generals, the brilliance of her organization, the splendour of her success, took place under the dominion of the Eagle:

nel segno che fè i Romani al mondo reverendi. (10)

Christianity has imposed no change upon the condition of the Empire. Just as the Jewish nation was necessary to the accomplishment of the divine purpose and to the promulgation of the divine revelation, so the Roman dominion was necessary in the eternal counsels of man's redemption. Dante, therefore, refuses to see any element of discontinuity in the acquisition of power by Julius Caesar, in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and in the defence of the Church by Charlemagne.

Such is the poet's feeling for the unity of the empire,
and its singular vocation, that he can mention in the same phrase the experiences of Aeneas and S. Paul in the spiritual realm. If S. Paul can be described as "Io Vab d'eletzone", no less honourable is the allusion which the poet makes to Aeneas, the founder of the dynasty and power of Rome. For Aeneas was:

dell'alma Roma e di suo impero
nell'empireo ciel per padre eletto:
la quale e'l quale, a voler dir lo vero,
fu stabilita per lo loco santo
u'siede il successor del maggior Piero.(12)

The connection of Aeneas with the Holy See seems curious, to say the least, suggesting that Aeneas' journey to the underworld was in some sense necessary for the establishment of the Papacy itself. There could surely be no better example of the Humanism of Dante, including, as it does, not only those elements of Christian culture which we should expect, but also the civilization of Rome and the saga of Troy.

It is, of course, against this background of the venerable and ancient city of the West, that the problem of government poses itself. Without the restoration of the imperial power there could be neither law nor justice. Law is necessary to restrain the cupidily of fallen human nature and to direct it to the practice of the moral virtues. Without the authority of the Emperor, however, there exists no law, for that authority is necessary to enforce and command the precepts of the State.

It is evident, therefore, that the problem of the "Divina Commedia" includes not only the personal salvation of the poet himself but also the reformation of Christendom. All aspects of polity are involved in this - intellectual, moral, religious and social. The poem begins and proceeds to its climax amid such considerations. In the composition of this work, philosophy gives place to theology. Philosophical rationalism takes on another complexion, and another appearance. It is seen in
that clear and burning light which the poet attributes to theology. No longer is Aristotle the authority to whom Dante looks on every occasion to furnish a lesson or prove an argument. That place is ceded to Virgil. If we refer to him as the symbol of human reason, that description in no way invalidates the personal affection which the poet feels towards his great predecessor. In this respect, by allegory and image, is conveyed to us the truth that the salvation of Dante depends upon his love of poetry......that aspect of the good and the true which in the midst of the dark wood he is still able to apprehend. It is this which draws him on, almost imperceptibly, to that Absolute Beauty which Plato had described in words of luminous transparency in the "Symposium", and which Christianity had also affirmed in its more Hellenic speculation. Dante sees in his predecessor, not only the great poet of Italy, but also the singer of imperial Rome, of that dominion which should be founded on justice and reason. Statius celebrates his debt to Virgil in words that make allusion to the Fourth Eclogue, as a prophecy of the coming of the Saviour:

Facesti come quei che va di notte,
che porta il lume dietro e sè non giova,
ma dopo sè fa le persone dotte,
quando dicesti:"Secol si rinova;
torna giustizia e primo tempo umano,
e progenie scende da ciel nova."
Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano;"(13)

There can be little doubt that, in this passage, Dante is expressing something of his own sense of obligation and affection for the greatest of Latin poets.(14) It has been suggested by some scholars that his motive for introducing Statius in the "Divina Commedia" was to make clear and evident his own understanding of Virgil.(15) Moreover, Virgil becomes the representative of that classical Humanism in all its richness and eloquence which the Florentine poet had depicted in the pages of the "Convivio". Yet, though the Latin poet had been given
some kind of intuition, some mysterious presentiment of the Incarnation, he had no opportunity of receiving the divine revelation in its fullness. He remained subject to all those errors and illusions of the pagan religion.

Again, as we have already seen, Virgil stands for the Empire. He acclaims it; he justifies it; he celebrates it in impassioned verse and with imaginative power. Inasmuch as the Empire was established in pagan times and can only come to fulfilment under the Christian dispensation, it corresponds to the evolution of that Humanism which reaches its consummation in the great Catholic synthesis of knowledge.

If we ask what significance may be ascribed to the political theories of Dante in the light of Humanism, the answer is obvious. It is that the Holy Roman Empire of the Christian ruler inherits all the culture of the Greek and Latin world. The poetry, the philosophy, the art, the intellectual speculation, the science of ancient times helped forward its own endeavour. Indeed, they provided the necessary motive and inspiration for its own civilization. In this respect, the Christian Empire kept burning the flame of that high culture which still shone brightly in the world. Christian Europe, Dante seems to say, was built on the foundation of the ancient Roman civilization. No historian will wish to gainsay his conclusions in this matter.

In one sense, we may affirm that the Empire is Augustus, the ruler and administrator. In another sense, however, it is Virgil; prophet, poet, and to that extent philosopher. The "Divina Commedia" presents him to us as the inheritor and exponent of all the work of the human spirit in the order of reason. Yet, the humanism of Virgil in all its charm, its vividness, its beauty, is not enough. It is incomplete, unfulfilled, since reason unassisted by the light of grace
is insufficient for man's true end. It is precisely this grace which Virgil does not possess, for he has not received the Sacrament of Baptism which illumines the soul with the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Yet, he does at any rate stand near to the Gospel and has even assisted in its promulgation. In the prophetic words of the Fourth Eclogue he has taken upon his lips a loftier, sweeter music than he knew, and his words have been fulfilled in mysterious fashion:

Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus.
non omnis arbusta iuvent humilesque myricae;
si canimus silvas, silvae sint console dignae. (16)

In common with all the men of the Middle Ages, Dante believed that this must refer to the coming of the Saviour. When Beatrice turns to Virgil in her meeting with him described in Canto II of the "Inferno", she makes the statement:

'Quando sarò dinanzi al signor mio di te mi loderò sovente a lui.' (17)

Surely the meaning of these words is obvious and admits of no dissension. We are left to imagine that, one day, perhaps, like Cato and Trajan, Virgil himself will be admitted to the glory of Heaven. All the dramatic development of the poem, the presence of Virgil in Purgatory, the cleansing in the flame, the ascent of the Mount, suggest this. Therefore the poet can say, with compassionate emotion, and reverence:

......Virgilio, dolcissimo patre,
Virgilio a cui per mia salute die' mi; (18)

Theology avails itself of that rational enquiry which we call philosophy. Dante seems to imply that reason itself in all aspects of its operation becomes transfigured and attains to its consummation in the glorious light of heaven. Reason itself is eternal, and includes within its definition not only the formal disciplines of logic and metaphysics, of science and
ethics, but also the speculations of the poets.

Yet the Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy expressed, sometimes obscurely, sometimes ambiguously, in the poetry of Virgil, can never constitute anything but an imperfect introduction to the revelation of the Gospel. That is why the Latin poet must efface himself before the coming of Beatrice, who is intended as the symbol of that divine science which, by the aid of faith, illuminates the human intellect. Only in this way can Dante, the Christian pilgrim, be instructed in the mysteries which belong to the Catholic religion. Virgil will have taught him much in all the discourse and elucidation of the first two parts of the "Divina Commedia". Beatrice will impart to him still more in all the subtleties and transpositions of light which make up the various spheres of Heaven. At last, Bernard will bring him face to face with that glory which is known only by contemplation. In all this, however, the work of the rational understanding is presupposed. As we have already seen, even in the midst of the petals of the white rose of sanctity, in the light of God's transcendence, there is no denial but rather an affirmation of the Scholastic theology and of the philosophical categories by which the reason draws its conclusions and makes its comparisons.
III.

In the "Divina Commedia", earthly science affords only an introduction to that supernatural knowledge which is communicated to the soul by the light of eternal truth. Yet, such science, however limited in scope, however uncertain in result, constitutes a necessary discipline. It can in no way be dispensed with, nor can it be neglected. Canto IV of the "Inferno" discloses to view the great souls of the ancient world in a kind of Dantesque Elysium — a region of illumination which is exclusive and aristocratic. Here the humanist makes a sharp differentiation between the ordinary souls in Limbo and the intellectually eminent.

The Florentine poet, like S. Thomas and like the Greek fathers of the Church, is well aware that the understanding of the Faith in all its relevance depends upon a knowledge of the ancient culture. And though, in the "De Monarchia" and the "Divina Commedia", the authority of the Catholic tradition and the testimony of Holy Scripture are dominant, we are never allowed to forget the achievements of the ancient learning. It is true to say, by way of a general statement, that all the essential elements of classical Humanism are inextricably woven with the philosophy and theology of the Christian religion. Hence, we discover, sometimes, it must be admitted to our consternation, the metaphysical and ethical doctrines of the schools, myths belonging to the pagan cults, myths of the heroes of antiquity, the glory of Rome, elements of Stoic teaching, the concept of law, the justification of the Empire, as the
expression and instrument of order. All these are mingled together and form an inalienable part of the Humanism of Dante.

Again, whatever criticism the poet may feel impelled to make, the beauty of the old pagan deities, the charm of the legends and stories told about them, (that is, of course, the more imaginative of these representations), the nobility of moral ideas, move him profoundly. His view is, of course, selective, dependent upon Mediaeval opinion as commonly received and derived from a familiarity with the Latin poets. He had obviously little knowledge of the dark and sinister aspect of Greek religion. He is sometimes able to discover in the Olympians certain features of the living and true God of the Bible, subsistent being itself, ipsum esse subsistens, as S. Thomas says. (19) Thus, the warfare of the Titans against Zeus presents a mysterious resemblance to the Biblical story of the revolt and fall of the Angels....

.............là dove Michele
fà la vendetta del superbo strupo. (20)

Again, the sculptures which adorn the first terrace of Purgatory provide examples of the sin of arrogance and pride derived both from the Old Testament and from classical mythology. (21)

If we encounter here the names of Saul, of Rehoboam, Holofernes and Sennacherib from the sacred story, we find, also, Niobe, Arachne, Alcmaeon and Tamyris in all their tragic doom.

Nor does it seem at all irrelevant, in this all-embracing Humanism, that the poet should add a lamentation over the ruins of Troy and the abandoned glory of its riches:

Vedea Troia in cener e in caverne:
o Ili'n, come te basso e vile
mostrava il segno che li si discerne. (22)

Once more, we have considered how, as far as he can, Dante transforms the ancient myths in the light of the Christian
revelation. The astral mysticism of the pagan world continues to exercise its fascination over him – the blaze of stars, the circuit of planets, the mysterious evocation of the ancient deities. Here, he applies the luminous interpretation of Dionysius, whose elaborate angelology had such a profound influence on the speculations of mediaeval theologians.

In the world of heroes, various legends engage the attention of the poet. In particular, the story of Ulysses acquires a new and strange significance. Although Ulysses is placed among the false counsellors in the Eighth Bolgia of Hell, as the man responsible for the capture of Troy by his clever deceit, he is nevertheless invested with all the characteristics of the Promethean hero on that last adventure to the end of the world. He it is who admonishes his few remaining companions with the brave words:

"O frati," dissi "che per cento milia periglì siete giunti all'occidente, a questa tanto piccola vigilia de' nostri sensi ch'è del rimanente, non vogliate negar l'esperienza, di retro al sol, del mondo sanza gente. Considerate la vostra semenza: fatti non foste a viver come bruti, ma per seguir virtute e conoscenza.

For all the condemnation in Dante's representation of Ulysses, there is also apparent the very spirit of the Renaissance and of that Humanism which is moved always by a new ardour of discovery. Yet, this desire for brilliant achievements, and for singular exploits, presents us also with the temptation of Lucifer.

For Lucifer was that high enquiring spirit who recognized no limits to creaturely power and no bounds to his imperious zeal. It is the temptation which must have proved so insidious and so attractive to the poet himself. One can imagine Dante as he has been depicted in the streets of Ravenna, with his sad, proud look, his aloofness, and passion for knowledge. The well-known bronze at the National Museum at Naples emphasizes
the tragic melancholy and proud severity of the man.

It is the world of heroes, however, that leads back to
the changing, many-coloured world of history. In common
with his contemporaries, Dante knows very little about Greek
history. But he does, at any rate, affirm that all knowledge
flows forth from the philosophy and speculation of Athens,
from its art, its poetry, its science. In the "Convivio",
as also in the "Divina Commedia", he follows sedulously the
historical development of Roman achievement. With ardent
conviction, he expounds lucidly and imaginatively the ideal
of the universal monarchy. He argues that natural justice
can only be secured by the political and social unity of
mankind.

For Dante, a diversity of states means a diversity of
conflicting interests. From this, arises dissension, a
constant turmoil, and eventually war. Only the universal
state can secure the peace and unity of mankind. Such a
conception seems to owe much to the Stoic ethic. Cicero,
in his famous definition of law, declares that "we must now
conceive of this whole universe as one commonwealth of which
both gods and men are members." (25) This view is shared by
Dante who is never weary of formulating such a conclusion
with all the eloquence and acuity of which he is capable.

In the "Convivio", the poet asserts that the earthly society
can never realize its true end, which is the maintenance of
peace, unless the natural law of justice and fraternal charity
includes all the relationships of men in a single order.
"Lo fondamento radicale de la imperiale maiestade, secondo lo
vero, è la necessità de la umana civilitade, che a uno fine è
ordinata, cioè a vita felice....." (26)

In the "De Monarchia", Dante employs the Stoic idea of
the universal state as the community of all rational beings. It is a view which he develops and elaborates to include the work of the human intellect in all its aspects, both speculative and practical. What is needed to secure this is universal peace, and this in its turn demands a universal government. The Humanism which we encounter is, therefore, political and moral, as well as aesthetic and philosophical. It is inclusive and universalistic.

It is interesting to note the influence of the Stoic thinkers in the theories which Dante advances. Not only is Cicero represented (and we know how greatly the poet admired his eloquence and philosophical humanism), but also those writers of the Empire, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius. "The universe," writes Marcus Aurelius, "is, as it were, a state."(27)

Yet, the universal monarchy is bound up with Rome and the Emperor can only claim the high prerogative of his office by virtue of that association with the venerable city of the West. Not only does Dante speak of

"...l'alta proverenza che con Scipio difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,"(28)

but he can also address to "German Albert" the appeal, impassioned in its sincerity and bitter in its invective:

Vieni a veder la tua Roma che piange vedova sola, e di e notte chiama:"Cesare mio, perché non m'accompagne?"(29)

Furthermore, the presence of Cato of Utica as guardian of the penitent souls in Purgatory can only mean the reconciliation of the Stoic ethic of Rome with the moral precepts of the Gospel. The four stars which illuminate the face of Cato are the four cardinal virtues as representing the natural moral goodness with which man was endowed in the state of primitive innocence. These virtues, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, are precisely those qualities praised so frequently
by the Roman Stoics. Cato is the guardian of Purgatory, yet he does not preside over that purification of human nature which must precede the fullness of the supernatural life in Heaven. Only those like Matelda can assist in the process of cleansing, who have themselves the gift of supernatural grace. That is denied to Cato, who has only natural goodness of disposition and yet receives final salvation. Thus the poet has represented the Stoic virtues as necessary to the state of salvation. For Cato has done what he can to fit himself for grace by the exercise of his free-will.

Le maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza fesse creando ed alla sua bontate più conformato e quel ch'e' più apprezza fu della volontà la libertate; di che le creature intelligenti, e tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate. (30)

Without this, there can be no question of illuminating grace, for the Roman moral qualities are also needed in the Christian life. Thus the Stoic ideals are introduced into the Christian scheme and find their fulfilment and glorification in those varying forms of sanctity which are exhibited to us in the "Paradiso".
IV.

It is in the "Paradiso" that the Humanism of Dante reaches its clearest and most distinctive expression. For it may be said that it is Humanism itself, in all its diversity and intellectual ardour, that reaches its consummation in the light of glory by which the Beatific Vision is perceived.

We observe the poet's progress through the celestial spheres which represent various aspects of heaven, rather than different places or commensurations of space. Gradually, the spiritual understanding of Dante grows under the instruction of Beatrice. What she inculcates is a theology which may be termed sober, but at the same time generous and rich in allusiveness, as in the ordered system of S. Thomas Aquinas.

In that lowest region which is the cloudy pearl of the moon, the poet encounters the souls of those who, after taking vows of religion, have been constrained by force to renounce them. Here, is the gentle, joyous soul of Piccarda, announcing herself in accents as clear and sweet as the rain water in a thirsty month:

"Ti fui nel mondo vergine sorella; e se la mente tua ben s'agniuarda, non mi ti celerà l'esser più bella, ma riconoscerai ch'io son Piccarda, che, posta qui con questi altri beati, beata sono in la sfera più tarda. (31)"

Higher in the scale of spiritual values, in the sphere of Mercury, are manifested those who have accomplished great things for the sake of glory. Such is the Emperor Justinian who established the laws of Rome as an eternal possession of the human race. Not only does the poet acknowledge the worth of human achievement, but also the motive which inspires it.
In the same way as Classical Humanism, he is prepared to
admire the ideal of worldly honour, of reputation and fame.
Dante himself gladly and courageously served this end in
his participation in the government of Florence as well as
during his long exile. It is a motive which he abjured
with difficulty, if he ever succeeded in doing so altogether.
Moreover, he represents God Himself as conceding honour and
glory upon the enterprise of the earthly city. No doubt,
the little picture which he gives of the faithful Romeo,
Seneschal and Chamberlain of Raymond Berengar IVth, Count
of Provence, reflects his own experiences and refers indirectly
to the bitterness of exile and the rancour of public infamy:

Indi partissi povero e vetusto;
e se'l mondo sapesse il cor ch'elli ebbe
mandicando sua vita a frusto a frusto,
assai la loda, e ribò lo loderebbe. (33)

Higher still, in the Heaven of Venus, are disclosed
to view those ardent souls who, having known human love in
the fullest measure, were able to escape from its turmoil
and consecrate to God all the passionate energies of their
nature. It is significant that here is no regret nor complaint
for the past, but only rejoicing in the plenitude of that light
which transposes all temporal and imperfect meanings. Cunizza
explains who she is, the notorious sister of Ezzelino, whose
love affairs had been the scandal of her times and who retired
to a quiet life of good works as the guest of the Cavalcante
family in Florence:

Cunizza fui chiamata, e qui refulgo
perch' mi vinse il lume d'esta stella;
ma lietamente a me medesma indulgo
la ragion di mia sorte, e non mi noia,
che parria forse forte al vostro vulgo.' (34)

In dramatic and vivid form, we seem, in this sphere,
to encounter the Platonic dialectic of love as Dante was
able to receive it from the philosophical writings of Cicero and the Augustinian tradition of the Western Church. It is a striving, a movement, an endeavour which finds its realization in the perfection of that love which is eternal and transcendent.

Di questa Juculenta e cara gioia del nostro cielo....

Significantly, in the sphere of the Sun, appear those intellectual luminaries who by their labours and meditations have served the cause of truth. Here are many great names, many illustrious examples of learning and diligence, many impassioned spirits who have desired wisdom above all things. Here, to mention but a few, are Isidore of Seville, Rabanus Maurus, commentator and historian, Peter of Spain the logician, Gratian, author of the celebrated "Decretum" or "Concordia discordantium Canonum", who may be said to have founded the science of Canon Law. Here too are the eminent philosophers and theologians who have vindicated the Catholic religion by the brilliance of their intellects and the sanctity of their lives......S.Albert the Great, S.Thomas Aquinas, S.Bonaventura. Here too we discover those illumined mystics, Hugh and Richard of S.Victor, in whom the teaching of Dionysius the Areopagite and S.Augustine comes to ecstatic experience and fruition - "Benjamin adolescens en excesu mentis."(38)

Here, also, in this canto, so full of intellectual and contemplative enthusiasm, are Boethius, and Chrysostom, most eloquent of Christian preachers, Anselm and Donatus. Here too, as illustrating the imaginative sweep and inclusiveness of Dante's humanism, stands the contentious figure of Siger of Brabant. He it was who, carried away by the acuity of the Averrooistic logic, doubted as philosophical propositions those dogmas which he desired so earnestly to receive by the light of faith.

Yet, it is to be observed, that this immense labour of learning, this work of the human intellect, is accomplished
under the guidance of the Church. Only in that way could it be accomplished, for, in Dante's view, communion with the Church is necessary for the perfection of knowledge. The task of Christian Humanism, therefore, emerges not only as criticism and speculation, but also as the reform of the ecclesiastical institution itself. For until that has been done there can be no true guidance of the intellect by the Catholic Church. It is only as a Holy Church, as the Mystical Body of Christ in deed as well as in profession, that the Christian conscience can receive that illumination which proceeds from the dedicated life.

"Non fu la spose di Cristo allevata del sangue mio, di Lin, di quel di Cleto, per essere ad acquisto d'oro usata:
me, per acquisto d'esto viver lieto,
e Sisto e Pio e Celisto e Urbano
sparsen lo sangue dopo molto fielo."

So S. Peter declares, with bitter and sustained invective, denouncing the French popes who trafficked in the patrimony of the Church. Moreover, upon the poet is laid the burden of making known this revelation of the Apostle's anger.

"Apri la bocca,
e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo." (40)

As Dante sees it, the reform of the Church according to Catholic order and Apostolic zeal becomes the main responsibility of an enlightened Humanism. It is evident that the Humanism of Dante is coloured by Christian philosophy and Christian idealism. It culminates in an Apocalyptic vision of the Garden of Eden in which all things are restored to their primal beauty and significance. (41) The city attains to its true order, serving that purpose for which it was intended, as Beatrice tells the poet:

"e sarai meco sanza fine eive
di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano." (42)

What we must insist on is that, in the "Divina Commedia", the Humanism of the poet is first and foremost religious and moral. The reform of the Church is not merely one of its aims,
it is its main endeavour. This is the reason why S. Thomas extols the work of S. Francis, who has shown the Christian people the true demands of the Gospel. And, if S. Bonaventura, himself one of the Friars Minor, glorifies and extols the labours of S. Dominic as the defender of orthodoxy against heretical pravity, it must not be forgotten that he extends the same approbation to Joachim of Flora. The latter is regarded as a prophet of the present tribulations and of the final vindication of the faithful in the coming age of the Holy Spirit:

By contrast with this Humanism of the enlightened intellect, we find in the sphere of Saturn the souls of the ascetics, who have devoted all their efforts to a single-minded response to the call of Christ to forsake all and follow Him. Here are S. Peter Damian, as also the founders of the more austere Orders of the Church, S. Benedict, the father of Western Monachism, S. Macarius of Alexandria, the great exponent of Eastern Monasticism, and S. Romualdus, who was responsible for the Camaldolese reformation within the Benedictine congregation. It is to be remarked that all these were strangers to any idea of Classical Humanism. Indeed, S. Peter Damian would have found any such notion repugnant to the practice of the Christian religion and repudiated it. It is part of Dante's Humanism, that in his efforts to transcend the limits assigned to human nature, he is able to include this complete and absolute renunciation of the world and its culture. This aspect is therefore a Humanism of transcendence.

However, the "Divina Commedia" culminates in the Beatific Vision itself, for it is in the glowing river of flame, and in the unfolding of the petals of the great white rose, that we encounter the consummation of his hopes and desires. The light that discovers itself there is the love and knowledge
which are eternal and which are the participation of man in the divine nature by grace. In the multitudinous appearance of the rose, S. Bernard describes the members of that celestial order:

\[ \text{la milizia santa} \]
\[ \text{che nel suo sangue Cristo fece sposa} \]

They are the "nobles of that just and merciful empire" of which the earthly empire of Rome was but an image and reflection. Thus, in the glory of Heaven, triumphs at last the imperial office and authority, which was the subject of so many scholastic arguments in the "De Monarchia" and of so much dissertation in the sphere of Jupiter.

The poet has pursued the ideal of human nobility with great ardour since the long discourse in the Fourth Treatise of the "Convivio". There his representation is that of courtesy and chivalry in the person of Aeneas. Now he finds that ideal perfectly realised in the Blessed Virgin. To her belongs that pale beauty which we see in the immensity of a blue sky and the gold light of Giotto's paintings. Here too we see glorified and transfigured that Franciscan virtue of humility which receives so many illustrations in the pages of the "Divina Commedia". This is the virtue which the poet regarded as providing the only means of reforming the Church. We have already shown how the Franciscan movement is related to the spirit of Humanism in its love of earthly beauty and its simple delight in Nature. All its symbolism, its imagery and meaning, come to glorious fruition in the Mother of God. And if this is true, it is also true that human nature in her attains to such nobility that it was worthy of being taken by the Eternal Word.

\[ \text{tu sei colei che l'umana natura nobilitasti si, che'l suo fattore non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura.} \]

Thus, we return to the argument outlined in our first chapter.
The Humanism of Dante is at once classical in its acceptance of the philosophy and culture of the ancient world. It is at the same time in its developed form in the "Divina Commedia" essentially Christian. It is coloured by that moral and religious motive which inspires the glories and agonies, the passion and tumult, the aspiration and reconciliation of the great poem. It is significant too that the mystical experience as described by Dante in the last few verses of the "Paradiso" corresponds very closely to the account given by S. Bonaventura in his guide to the contemplative life, the "Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum". It is a vision, which remains intellectual, rational, luminous to the explanations of human philosophy. Dante, in contemplating the divine glory, perceives those laws by which the universe is forever governed and maintained. In this, he recognizes an order which can be called rational according to the metaphysic and science of Aristotle. It is, therefore, an order which can be explained according to the principles of reason. Yet this reason, when it is fully understood and affirmed, turns out to be love. Thus, the reason, the mind that creates and sustains the whole vast universe, is the eternal Love. The image of the Blessed Trinity is revealed in abstract and mathematical form, yet in the midst is the light and colour of a human face in token of the Incarnation. Nor can the poet grasp the significance of this, until, in the final illumination of that vision, his mind and will become one with the primal love. This is the completion of his humanism, its fulfilment, and justification. For in the Beatific Vision all the strivings and endeavours of mankind are realized, the art and philosophy of Greece, the glory of Rome, the Law and Justice of the Empire. All are necessary in that order of civilization which God has prepared and which constitutes the
Catholic Church on earth. All too are perfectly fulfilled in that vision of God in which alone is peace and joy, satisfaction and felicity:

All' alta fantasia qui mancò possa;
ma già volgeva il mio disio e'l velle,
si come rota che igualmente è mossà,
l'amor che move il sole e l'altrè stelle. (47)
Notes to Chapter Seventeen: The Elements of Dante's Humanism.


2. Inferno:IV:123.

   I was Caesar and am Justinian, who, by will of the Primal Love which moves me, removed from the laws what was superfluous and vain.


   for in the heaven of the Empyrean he was chosen to be father of that glorious Rome and of her Empire, and both of these were established - if we would speak rightly of them - to be the holy place where sits the successor of the great Peter.

   Thou didst like him that goes by night and carries the light behind himself but makes wise those that follow, when thou saidst:"The age turns new again: justice comes back and the primal years of men, and a new race descends from heaven." Through thee I was poet, through thee Christian:...


   Cf. G. Garcopino: "Virgil et le Mystère de la IVe. Eglogue", in which the author explains the Pythagorean influence in the poem.

   "When I am before my Lord I will often speak to Him in praise of thee."


   "cum hoc ipsum quod Deus est, sit suum esse."


   I saw Troy in ashes and heaps: 0 Ilion, how abased and vile the design showed thee that we saw there.

23. Inferno: XXVI:112-120.
   "0 brothers," I said, "who through a hundred thousand perils have reached the west, to this so brief vigil of the senses that remains to us choose not to deny experience, in the sun's track, of the unpeopled world. Take thought of the seed from which you spring. You were not born to live as brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge."

"Nella follia d'Ulisse e dei suoi compagni v'è tutto l'orgoglio umano che spinse Adamo ed Eva al trapassar del segno gustando il frutto della scienza del bene e del male, per esser simili a Dio: v'è anzi lo stesso orgoglio di Lucifero, che disse: "Salirò al cielo, innalzerò il mio trono sopra gli astri di Dio, sederò sul monte ad aquilone, ascenderò sopra le nubi e sarò simile all'Altissimo". Nel folle volo d'Ulisse, Dante scorge una continuazione del peccato originale, anzi del peccato degli angeli ribelli.

p. 162. op. cit.


.....the high Providence which by Scipio saved for Rome the glory of the world .........


Come and see thy Rome, that weeps, widowed and solitary, and cries night and day: 'Caesar, my Lord, why dost thou deny me thy companionship?'


'The greatest gift that God in His bounty made in creation, the most conformable to His goodness and the one He accounts most precious, was the freedom of the will, with which the creatures with intelligence, all and only these, were and are endowed.'


'In the world I was a virgin sister and if thou search well thy memory my being more fair will not hide me from thee, and thou wilt know me: again:for:Piccarda, who am put here with these other blest in the slowest of the spheres.'

33. Paradiso: VI: 139-142.

'Thence he departed poor and old; and if the world knew the heart he had, begging his bread by morsels, much as it praises him it would praise him more.'


'Cunizza I was called and I shine here because the light of this star overcame me; but I gladly pardon in myself the reason of my lot, and it does not grieve me - which may seem strange, perhaps, to your crowd.......


36. For an analysis of this section of the Paradiso, see G. di Niscia: "Nel cielo del sole." (Caserto: 1923)


Vedi oltre fiammeggiar l'ardente spiro d'Isidoro, di Beda e di Riccardo, che a considerar fu pìù che viro.


Ibi Benjamin adolescentulus, in mentis excessu; principes Juda, duces eorum; principes Zabulon, principes Nephthali.

This was a favourite text with Richard of S.Victor, which he was fond of expounding as mystically signifying the contemplative state.


'The Bride of Christ was not nurtured with my blood and that of Linus and of Cletus to be used for gain of gold; but for gain of this happy life Sixtus and Pius and Calixtus and Urban shed their blood after many tears.......


'open thy mouth and do not hide what I hide not.......

41


'....and thou shalt be with me forever a citizen of that Rome of which Christ is Roman;.....'

43. Paradiso:XI:139-142.

44. Paradiso:XXXI:2-3.


'..........i gran patrici
di questo impero giustissimo e pio.'


'..........thou art she that didst so ennoble human nature that its Maker did not disdain to be made its making....'

47. Paradiso: XXXIII:142-145.

Here power failed the high fantasy; but now my desire and will, like a wheel that spins with even motion, were revolved by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.
The English translation of the "Divina Commedia", except where otherwise stated, is that of John D. Sinclair in his three volume edition of that work. The edition of the "Convivio" which has been used throughout is the critical edition of G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli with introduction by Michele Barbi, while the English translation is that of Dr. William Walrond Jackson. Where the "Vita Nuova" has been cited it is generally from the Temple edition.
BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. TEXTS AND COMMENTARIES.


Dante's CONVIVIO translated into English by William Walrond Jackson. (Oxford: 1909)

DE VULGARI ELOQUENTIA. ed. A. Marigo. (Florence: 1948)

EPISTOLAE. ed. Paget Toynbee. (Oxford: 1920)

DE MONARCHIA. a cura di G. Vinay. (Florence: 1950)

RIME.

Rime a cura di G. Contini. (Turin: 1946)

Rime della Vita Nuova e della giovanezza, a cura di M. Barbi e F. Maggini. (Florence: 1956)

LA VITA NUOVA. Edizione Critica della Soc. Dantesca Italiana per cura di M. Barbi. (1932)


LA DIVINA COMMEDIA.


La Divina Commenda. commentata da Attilio Momigliano. 3 vols. (Florence: 1955 and 1956)


Dante's Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso. With a translation into English Triple Rhyme by Laurence Binyon. (London: 1933; 1938; 1952)


2. WORKS CONSULTED.

ARISTOTLE.

Generation of Animals. Greek text with English translation by A. L. Peck. (Loeb ed.)


AESCHYLUS.


S. AMBROSE.

De Officiis. (Migne: Patrologia Latina)

APOLLONIO. Mario.

Dante, Storia della Commedia. 2 vols. (Milan:1951)

APULEIUS.


ARCARI. Paolo.

La Roma di Dante. Essay in Studi su Dante. (Milan:1944)

ARNOLD. E. V.

Roman Stoicism. (London:1911)

S. AUGUSTINE.

Patrologia Latina. (Migne) vols.32-47.


De Doctrina Christiana. (Bonn:1930)

De Vera Religione. (Florence:1935)
AYO. U.

Dante e Vergilio. (Pisa:1931)

BARBI. Michele

Razionalismo e misticismo in Dante. (Studi danteschi. vol.XXI)

Problemi di critica dantesca. 2 vols. (Florence: 1st series. 1934: 2nd series. 1941)

Con Dante e coi suoi interpreti. (Florence:1941)

BARONE. G.

Il dolore del Virgilio dantesco. (Rome:1899)

BERDYAEV. Nicolas


BERKELEY. George


S.BERNARD.

Patrologia Latina. (Migne) 182-185.

BERGSON. Henri

Laughter. (English translation by A. Mitchell) (London)

Creative Evolution. (E.T. by A. Mitchell) (London:1911)

BEVAN. E. R.

Stoics and Sceptics. (Oxford:1913)

BIGG. C.

Christian Platonists of Alexandria.

BLUM. O. J. (O.F.M.)

St;Peter Damian: His teaching on the Spiritual Life. (Washington:1947)

BOCCACCIO. Giovanni

Genealogie deorum gentilium libri. a cura di V. Romano. 2 vols: (Sari:1951)

S.BONAVENTURE.

S.Bonaventurae: Tria Opuscula. (Quaracchi: 3rd.Ed. 1911)
BOTTAGISIO. L.
Il limbo dantesco. (Padua:1898)

BRANDEIS. Irma.

BREZZI. Paolo.
Roma e l'impero medioevale. (774-1252) (Bologna:1947)

BRUNO. L.
La poesia del Paradiso di Dante. (Lecce:1953)

BUONAIUTI. Ernesto.
Il Cristianesimo nell'Africa Romana. (Bari:1928)
Dante come Profeta. (Modena:1936)

BUONOCORE. G.
Roma nella mente dell'Alighieri. (Naples:1937)

BURNABY. John.
Amor Dei. (London:1947)

BUSNELLI. G.
Il simbolo delle tre fiere dantesche. (Rome:1909)
L'Etica Nicomachea e l'ordinamento morale dell'Inferno di Dante. (Bologna:1907)
Il Concetto e l'ordine del paradiso dantesco. 2 vols. (Città di Castello: S.Lapi:1911:1912)

BERENSON. Bernard.
The Italian Painters of the Renaissance. (London:1960)

BATARD. Yvonne.
Dante, Minerve et Apollon. Les images de la 'Divine Comédie'. (Paris:1952)

BOYER. Charles.
Christianisme et néo-Platonisme dans la formation de Saint Augustin. (Paris:1920)

BOWSEY. William M.
Henry VII in Italy. The Conflict of Empire and State. (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, U.S.A:1960)

BREMOND. Henri.
Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France.
BURCKHARDT. Jacob.
The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy. Trans.

BUTTI. C.
La Mente di S. Agostino nella Città di Dio. (Firenze: 1930)

CALVIN. John.
Institutes of the Christian Religion. (A new translation

CAPELLI. L. N.
Il 'Timeo' nell' opera di Dante. (Giornale dantesco:
1895: XII)

CARDUCCI. G.
Poesie. (Bologna: XIVth edition)
Studi letterari.

CHABOD. Federico.
Machiavelli and the Renaissance. (London: 1958)

CHIOCCIONI. P. Pietro.
L' Agostinismo nella 'Divina Commedia'. (Florence: 1952)

COSMO. Umberto.
Con Madonna Povertà. Studi francescani. (Bari: 1940)
Guida a Dante. (Turin: 1947)
L' ultima ascesa. Introduzione allo studio del Paradiso.
(Bari: 1936)
Vita di Dante. (Bari: 1930)

CURTIUS. E. R.
European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages. (Translated
by W. R. Trask) (London: 1953)

CASSIRER. Ernst.

CAVALIERE. A.
Cento liriche provenzali. (Bologna: 1938)

CICERO.
(Loeb ed.)

CHARCOPINO. G.
Virgil et l' Hystère de la IVe Églogue.
The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.
CICERO (continued)


COCHRANE, C. N.

Christianity and Classical Culture. (Oxford:1940)

COMBES, Gustave.


COMPARETTI, Domenico.

Virgilio nel medio evo. Nuova edizione a cura di G. Pasquali. 2 vols. (Florence:1953)

CROCE: Benedetto.

La Poesia di Dante. (Bari:1956)

CAMILLI, A.

Le prime due canzoni del Convivio di Dante. ("Lettere italiane" IV:1952)

CORNFORD, E. M.

Principium Sapientiae. (Cambridge:1952)

CUMONT, Franz.

Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain. (Paris:1929)

DAVIS, Charles Till.


DAWSON, Christopher.

Enquiries. (London:no date)

DEMPF, H.

Sacrum imperium. La filosofia della storia e dello stato nel Medio Evo e nella Rinascenza politica. (Ital. trans. by C. Antoni). (Milan:Messina:1933)

D’ENTREVES, A. P.

Dante as a Political Thinker. (Oxford:1952)

Natural Law. (London:1952)

DIONISOTTI, C.

Discorso sull’umanesimo italiano. (Verona:1956)
DIONYSIUS. (Pseudo-)
Patrologia Graeca. vols. 3 and 4.

D’ANCONA. Allessandro.
Beatrice. (Pisa: 1889)
Scritti danteschi. (Florence: 1912)

DANIELOU. J.

DEL LUNGO. Isidoro.
Commento alla Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri. (Florence: 1924-26).
Dante nei tempi di Dante. (Bologna: 1888).
Da Bonifazio VIII a Arrigo VII: Pagine di storia fiorentina per la vita di Dante. (Milan: 1899)

DE REGNY. P. Vinassa.
Dante e Pitagora. (1956)

DE SANCTIS. Francesco.
Lezioni e saggi su Dante. (vol. 5 of Opere: Turin: 1955)
Storia della letteratura italiana. 2 vols. (Milan: 1956)

D’OVIDIO. Francesco.
Studi su Dante. (Palermo: 1901)
Nuovi studi danteschi: Il preludio del Purgatorio e discussioni varie. (Naples: 1932)

DUHEM. P.

DEBENEDETTI. S.
Dante e Seneca filosofo. (Studi danteschi: 1923: VI)

DI NISCIA: G.
Nel cielo del sole. (Caserto: 1923).
DE RUGGIERO. G.

Storia della filosofia. Pt.II. La filosofía del Cristianesimo. (Bari:1946)

DI PINO. G.

La figurazione della luce nella Divina Commedia. (Florence:1952)

ECKHART. Maître.


ERCOLE. Francesco.

Il pensiero politico di Dante. 2 vols. (Milan:1927)

EVERSHED. M. A. Orr.

Dante and the Early Astronomers. (London:1913)

FAKHRY. Majid.

Islamic Occasionalism. (London:1958)

FARAL. E.

Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle. (Paris:1924)

FERRETTI. G.

I due tempi della redazione della 'Divina Commedia'. (Bologna:1952)

FESTUGIÈRE. A. J.

Révélation d'Hermès Trismegiste.

S.FRANCIS DE SALES

Traité de l'amour de Dieu.

Introduction à la vie dévote.

FRIEDLANDER.


FERGUSSON. F.

Dante's Drama of the Mind: A Modern Reading of the Purgatorio. (Princeton:1953)

GALLARATI SCOTTI. Tommaso.

Vita di Dante. (Milan:1957: Rizzoli ed.)

GARIN. E.

Medioevo e rinascimento. (Bari:1954)
GILSON. Étienne.

L'humanisme de Saint Thomas. (Atti del Ve. Congresso internazionale di filosofia.)

La théologie mystique de Saint Bernard. (Paris:1934)

History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages. (London:1955)


Dante, the Philosopher. (English trans. by David Moore) (London:1948)


The Unity of Philosophical Experience. (London:1938)

Introduction à l'étude de Saint Augustin. (Paris:1928)

Carcopino. G. (see under C) Carcopino.

Virgil e le Mystère de la IVe Egglogue.

GARDNER. Edmund.


GORRA. E.

Il soggettismo di Dante.

GRAF. Arturo.

Romà: nella memoria e nelle immaginazioni del medio evo. (new ed:Turin:1923)

GUTHRIE. W. R. C.

Orpheus and the Greek Religion. (London:1935)

HAAS. William S.


HAUSER. Arnold.

The Social History of Art. 2 vols. (London:1951)

HAUVETTE. Henri.

Dante. Introduction à l'étude de la Divine Comédie. (Paris:1911)
HAUVETTE. Henri (continued)


HILDEBERT.

Patrologia Latina. (Migne) CXLXXI.

INGE. W. R.

The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought.

INTAGLIATA. A.

Il mistero di Beatrice. (Milan:1952)
Il mistero di Madonna Intelligenza nella lirica dei fedeli d'amore di Dante. (Messina:1953)

IOLIVET. R.

Dieu Soleil des Esprits. (Paris)

JACOB. E. F.

edited by Italian Renaissance Studies. (London:1960)

JAEGER. Werner.


JAMES. E. O.


S.JEROME.

Patrologia Latina. (Migne)

S.JOHN OF THE CROSS.


JOHN OF SALISBURY.


JUNG. C. G.

Symbols of Transformation. vol.5 of Collected Works. (London:1950)
Kantorowicz. Ernst.

Ker. W. P.
The Dark Ages. (London: 1958)

Kirk. Kenneth E.
The Vision of God. (London: 1946)

Li Livres dou Tresor. in Jeux et Sapience du Moyen Age. edited by Albert Paphil. (Bibliothèque de la Pleiade) (Paris: 1951)

Lenkeith. Nancy

Lewis. C. S.
The Allegory of Love. (Oxford: 1959)

Lodge. R. C.
Plato's Theory of Ethics. (London: 1950)

Lossky. Vladimir.
Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'église d'orient.

Lazzarini. R.
San Bonaventura, filosofo e mistico del Cristianismo. (Milan: 1946)

Machiavelli. Niccolò.
Tutte le opere, a cura di Francesco Flora e di Carlo Cordiè. (Milan: 1949)

Mackail. J. W.
The Italy of Dante and the Italy of Virgil. in "Dante: Essays in Commemoration: 1320-1921." (London: 1921)

Martin. P. A.
Dante franciscano. (Arezzo: 1924)

Montano. Rocco.
Dante, e il Rinascimento.

Moore. Edward.
MOORE. G. F.

A History of Religions. 3 vols.

MARTI. Mario.

Cultura e stile nei poeti giocosi del tempo di Dante. (Florence: 1953)

MELLINA. E.

Dante nella pineta de Classe e altri incontri. (Terni: 1954)

MORGHEN. Raffaello.

Medioevo Cristiano. (Bari: 1958)

MURRAY. Gilbert.

Euripides and His Age.
Essays and Addresses.

NARDI. Bruno.

Nel Mondo di Dante. (Rome: 1944).
Dante e la cultura medievale. (Bari: 1949)
Saggi di filosofia dantesca. (Milan - Rome: 1930)

NASSI. Giulio.

Letteratura italiana del medioevo. (Florence: 1955)

NEFF. Emery.

The Poetry of History. (New York: 1948)

NIETZSCHE. Friedrich.

Geburt der Tragödie.
Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen.

NILSSON. Martin P.


O'LEARY. De Lacy.

Arabic Thought and its Place in History. (London: 1922)

ORESTANO. Francesco.

OROSIUS. \( \text{altersum} \) 
Historiae adversus Paganos. ed. C. Zangemeister. 
(Leipzig:1889)

OTTAVIANO. C. 
Le poesie ritmiche di Pietro Abelardo. (Rivista di cultura: Ott.-Novem. 1930)

OTTO. Rudolf. 
The Idea of the Holy. (translated by John W. Harvey) 
(Oxford:1928)

OZANAM. Frédéric. 
Dante et la philosophie catholique. (Paris:1862)

OLSCHKI. L. 
Dante poeta veltro. (Florence:1953)

PASCAL. Blaise.  
Pensées.

PETRARCA. Francesco.  
Rime  
Ad Posteros.

PEZARD. André.  
Le Convivio de Dante, sa lettre, son esprit. (Paris: 1940)  
Dante sous la Pluie de Feu. (Paris:1950)

PICCOLI. R. 
Astrologia Dantesca.

PIETROBONO. Luigi. 
Saggi Danteschi. (Turin:1954)  
Nuovi saggi danteschi. (Turin:1954)  
Il poema sacro. 2 vols. (Bologna:1915)  
Dal centro al cerchio.

PLATO. 
Platonis opera. 5 vols. (Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca oxoniensis:1949)

PALGEN. R. 
La légende virgilienne dans la Divine Comédie. (Romania",LXXII: 1953)
PALMA ROCCHI, R. (editor)
Cronisti del trecento. (Milan:1935 - Rizzoli edition)

PATER. Walter.
The Renaissance. (London:1924)

PLOTINUS.
The Enneads. translated into English by S. Mackenna and B. S. Page. 1917-30.

PORENA. A.
Dante e Roma. in "Dante" (Milan:1921)

PRESTIGE. G. L.
God in Patristic Thought. (London:1952)

PROTO. E.
L'Apocalissi nella Divina Commedia. (Naples:1905)

PARODI. E. G.
Poesia e Storia nella Divina Commedia. (Naples:1920)

PATRONI. Giovanni.
Storia e Miti di Roma e di Grecia nella Commedia di Dante. (in Studi per Dante (Conferenze dantesche tenute a cura del comitato Milanese della Società Dantesca Italiana)). (Milan:1935)

RENAUDET. A.

Dante Humaniste. (Paris:1952)

RENAUDET. A. and S. A. CHIMENZ.
Il Canto IV. dell' Inferno. (Rome:1954)

RENOUARD. Y.
Les Hommes d'affaires Italiens et l'avènement de la Renaissance. (1949)

RENUCCI. Paul.
L'aventure de l'humanisme européen au moyen-âge. (Paris:1953)


RESTA. Raffaele.
Dante e la filosofia dell' Amore. (Bologna:1935)
RICCI. Corrado.
Roma nel pensiero di Dante. (Florence: 1921)

ROGER. M.
L'enseignement classique d'Ausone & Alcuin. (Paris: 1908)

RUFF. Gordon.
The Righteousness of God. Luther Studies. (London: 1953)

RABY. F. J.

READE. H. W. V.
The Moral System of Dante's Inferno.

ROBIN. L.

ROBINSON. J. H.,and H. W. Rolfe. (editors)
Petrarch, the First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters. (New York and London: 1898)

RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR.

ROHDE. Erwin.
Psyche.

ROSS. W. D.

RIVIERE. Jean.
Le Problème de l'Eglise et de l'Etat au temps de Philippe le Bel. (Louvain and Paris: 1926)

SALVEMINI. G.
Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1295. (Florence: 1959. new edition)

SCHWEIGER. P.
Der Zauberer Virgil. (Berlin: 1897)

SEZNEC. Jean.
SPARGO. J. W.

Virgil the Necromancer. (Cambridge: U.S.A: 1934)

SALVATORELLI. L.

L'Italia communale. (Milan: 1940)

SALVEMINI. G.


SCHIPA. M.

Carlo Marello, un principe napoletano, amico di Dante. (Naples: 1926)

SINGLETON. Charles S.


SOPHOCLES.

Fabulae ed. A. C. Pearson. (Scrip-torum Classicorum Bibliothetica Oxon. 1950)

STATIUS.


SWEETMAN. J. W.


SARRI. F.

Il concetto di storia in Dante. (in Studi su Dante vol. VII of Conferenze a cura del Comitato Milanese della Società dantesca italiana: Milan: 1944)

SCARTAZZINI. G. A.

Dantologia. Vita e opere de Dante Alighieri. (Milan: 1908)

SCHERILLO. M.

Alcuni capitoli della biografica di Dante. (Turin: 1896)

SHAW. James L.


The Lady "Philosophy" in the "Convivio". (London: 1938)

SHELDON. E. S., and A. G. WHITE.

Concordanza delle opere italiane in prosa e del canzoniere di Dante Alighieri. (Oxford: 1905)
VIRGIL.
P. Vergili Maronis opera. ed. F. A. Hirtzel. (Scrip torum
Classiorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis:1950)

VOSSLER. Karl.
Mediaeval Culture. English translation of Die Göttliche
Komödie, by William Cranston Lawton. 2 vols. (New
York: 1958)
Der Philosophischen Grundlegen zum 'süssen neuen Stil'.
(Heidelberg: 1904)

VALENSIN. A.
L'Ulysse dantesque et les limites de la raison. ("Etudes"
Febbr. 1954)

VALLONE. Alda.
La critica dantesca contemporanea. (Pisa: 1953)

VENTURA. T.
Il Pensiero umanistico di Dante. Dalla Vita Nuova
alla Divina Commedia. (Milan: 1953)

VOLFE. G. Movimento religiosi e sette ereticali nella
società medievale italiana. (Florence: 1926)

WADDELL. Helen. (editor)
Mediaeval Latin Lyrics. (London: 1946)

WEISS. R.
The Dawn of Humanism in Italy. (London: 1947) (Inaugural
Lecture at the University of London)
Il primo secolo dell'umanesimo. (Rome: 1949)

WHITFIELD. J. H.
Dante and Virgil. (Oxford: 1949)

WHITTAKER. T.
The Neo-Platonists. (Cambridge: 2nd ed: 1901)

WILLIAMS. Charles.
The Figure of Beatrice. (London: 1943)

WIND. Edgar.
WITTE, K.

Essays on Dante. (E.T. London: 1898)

WEDEL, L. O.

The Mediaeval Attitude towards Astrology. (New Haven: 1920) (Yale Studies in English)

WICKSTEED, Philip H.

Dante and Aquinas. (London: 1913)

ZABUGHIN, V.

Virgilio nel rinascimento italiano da Dante a Torquato Tasso. 2 vols. (Bologna: 1921-23)

ZINGARELLI, Nicola.

La vita, i tempi e le opere di Dante. 2 vols. (Milan: 1948)

Dante e Roma: Saggio. (Rome: 1895)