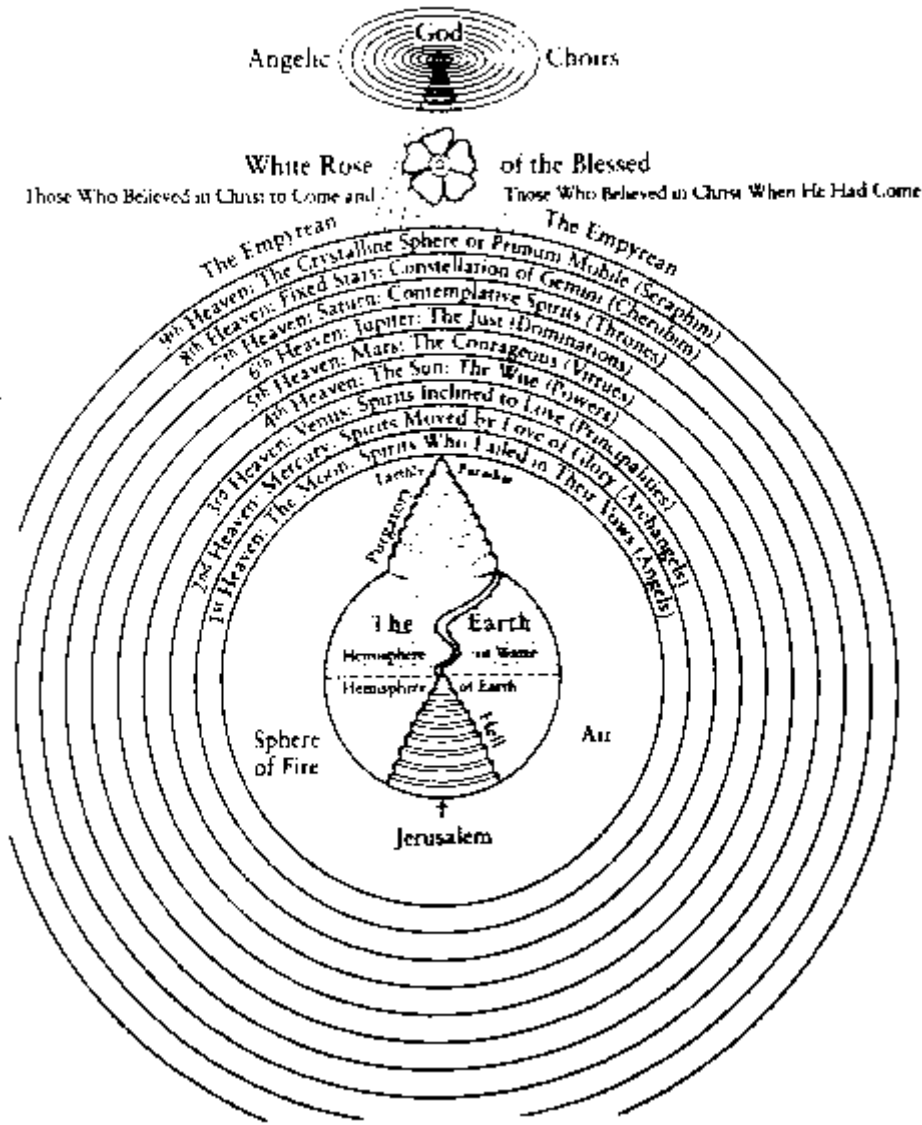


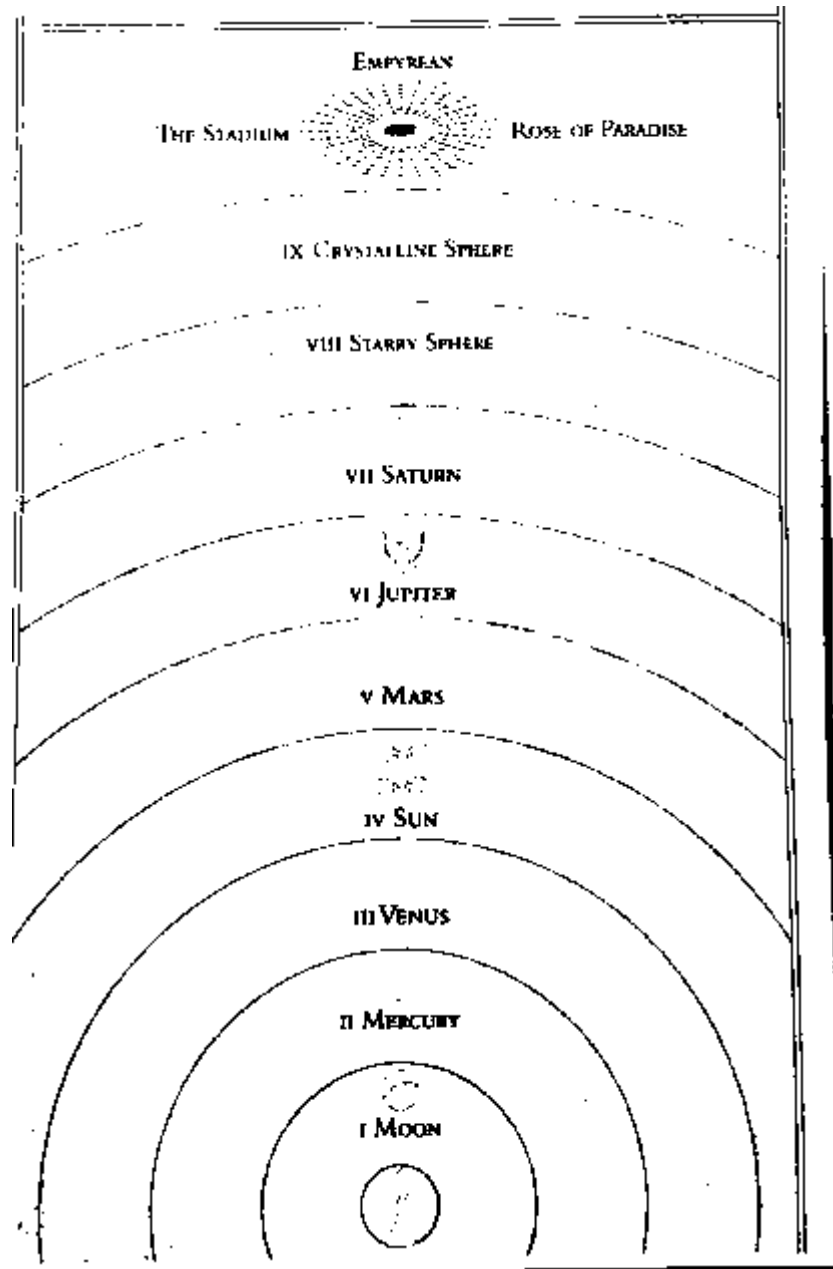


Dante's *Paradiso*

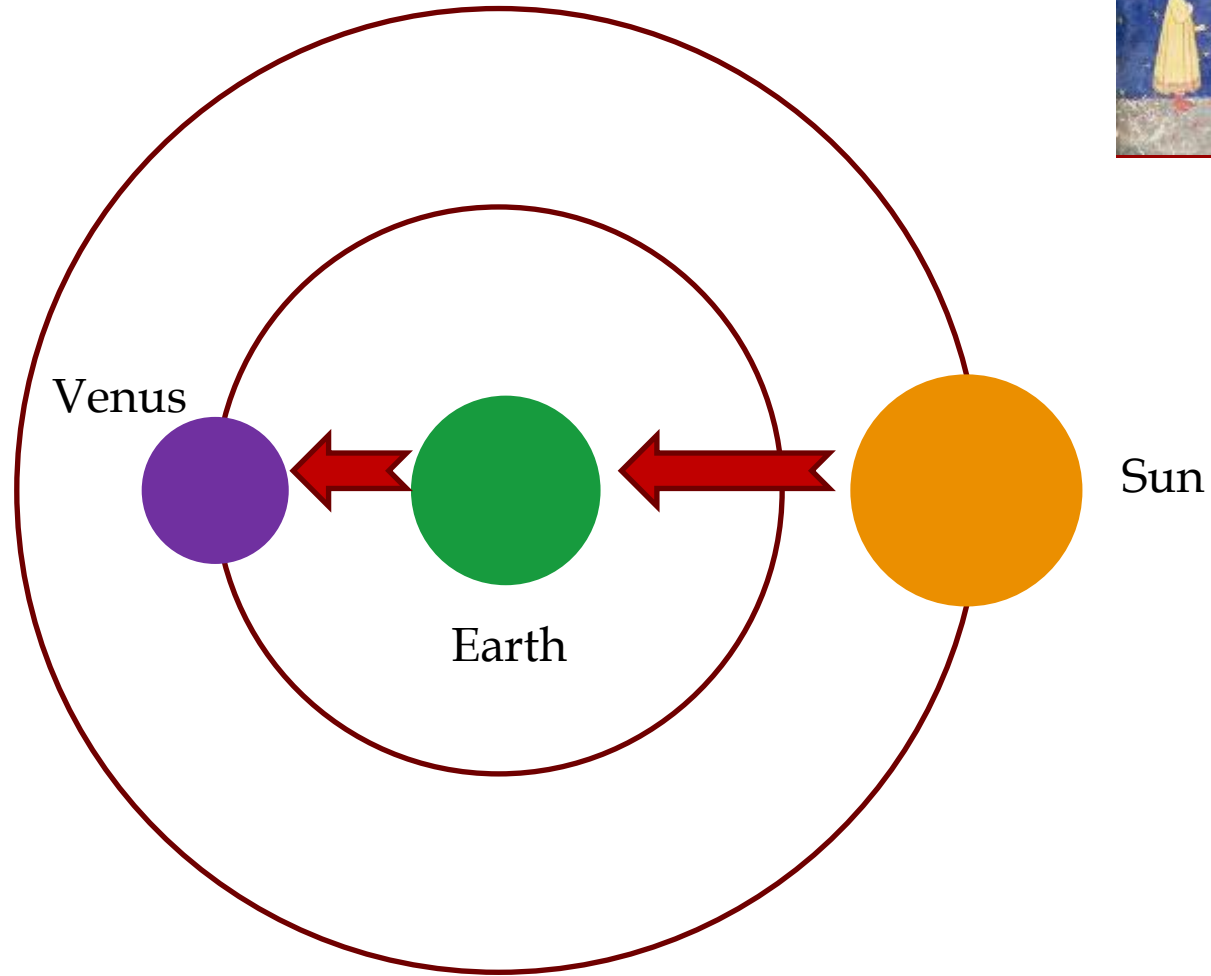
Th. Curran ~ All Saints, November 1st, 2017

Plan of Paradise





Shadow of the Earth





Boccaccio (1313-1375): “Life of Dante”

“... a son ... they called by name Dante [the Giver]; and rightly so, because ... most perfectly consonant with this name... This was that Dante granted by the special grace of God to our age. This was that Dante who was first to open the way for the return of the Muses, banished from Italy. ‘Twas he that revealed the glory of the Florentine idiom... ‘Twas he who may be truly said to have brought back dead poesy to life. The which things, when duly considered, will show that he could not rightly have borne any other name but Dante.”



Paradiso 55-57 (Ciardi):

Emperor Justinian to Dante:

“Then as that age dawned in which Heaven planned,
the whole world to its harmony, Caesar came,
and by the will of Rome, took it in hand.”

(Hollander):

“Then, as the time approached when Heaven willed
to bring the world to its own state of peace,
Caesar, by the will of Rome, laid hold on it.”

Dante's *Vita Nuova* xxix



- §1
- Let me begin by saying that if one counts in the Arabian way, her most noble soul departed this life during the first hour of the ninth day of the month, and if one counts the way they do in Syria, she departed in the ninth month of the year... And, according to our way of reckoning, she departed in that year ... in which the perfect number had been completed nine times in that century in which she had been placed in in this world... the Thirteenth Century.

The New Life

Tr. by Mark Musa (1973)



- §2
- ... according to Ptolemy ... there are nine heavens that move ... this number was in harmony with her to make it understood that at her birth all nine of the moving heavens were in perfect relationship to one another.

Dante's *Vita Nuova* xxix



- §3
- ... If anyone thinks more subtly and according to infallible truth, it will be clear that this number was she herself — **that is, by analogy**. What I mean to say is this: the number three is the root of nine for, without any other number, multiplied by itself, it gives nine: it is quite clear that three times three is nine... Three in One, then this lady was accompanied by the number nine so that it might be understood that she was a nine, or a miracle, whose root, namely that of the miracle, is the miraculous Trinity itself.

Dante's *Vita Nuova* xxix



- §4
- Perhaps someone more subtle than I could find a still more subtle explanation, but this is the one which I see and which pleases me the most.



Scholastic Tag

- “Distinguish in order to unite.”

Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (1957)

- “Like the High Scholastic *Summa*, the High Gothic cathedral aimed, first of all, at ‘totality’ ... In its imagery, the High Gothic cathedral sought to embody the whole of Christian knowledge, theological, moral, natural, and historical, with everything in its place... In structural design, it similarly sought to synthesize all major motifs handed down by separate channels...”





Inferno ix. 58-60:

- [You] “of sound intellect and probity,
/ weigh with good understanding what lies
hidden / behind the veil of my strange
allegory!”
- Durling: “gaze on the teaching that is hidden
beneath the veil of the strange verses.”
- [*la dottrina che s’asconde...*]



Paradiso xxv, 55-57 (Ciardi):

“It was for that he was allowed to come
from Egypt to behold Jerusalem
before his warring years had reached their sum.”

cf. *Paradiso v, 115-117 (Hollander):*

Emperor Justinian to Dante:

“O spirit born for bliss, whom grace allows
to see the thrones of the eternal triumph
before you leave the battlefield...”



Paradiso Canto i:

- St Paul 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians 12
- I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. **2** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. **3** And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – **4** and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.



Paradiso xvii, 55-60:

1302: Dante sentenced to death in absentia:
beginning of his (permanent) exile from
Florence

[cf. the prophecy in *Paradiso xvii.55-60*: “You
will leave everything you love most dearly...
You will learn how salt is the taste of other
people’s bread, and how hard the way going
up and down other people’s stairs.” —



Purgatorio xviii, 105 (Esolen):

“Zeal in well-doing makes grace green again.”

Epistola XIII to: Cangrande della Scala



(§16) that “the branch of philosophy to which the work” belongs, “in whole and as in the part, is that of morals or ethics; inasmuch as the whole as well as the part was conceived, not for **speculation**, but for a practical purpose”; viz. “it may be stated briefly that the aim of the whole and of the part is to remove those living in this life from a state of misery” (§15,), in other words, the *Comedy* belongs to that branch of philosophy called ethics, since its purpose is practical, not speculative — and that is to move the reader from a state of misery to a state of bliss **in this life**.



Augustine, Epistle

- "We are confident that we have not lost those of ours who have departed, but have sent them on already where they will be dearer to us to the extent that they will be better known and where they will be loveable without any fear of losing them."
- (Letter to a Grieving Widow; Ron Haflidson)

Giovanni Reale, *A
History of Ancient
Philosophy*
Vol 4:
*The Schools of the
Imperial Age*
trans. by John R.
Catan (1990)





Reale, p. 384:

Plotinus, in sum, judged that true wisdom was not simply to live the life of an *upright man*, but the life of the Gods. He explicitly writes:

...but our concern is not merely to be “sinless”, but to be God. [*Ennead* I. 2. 6]

Reale, p. 384:



The “civic virtues” ... on which Plato himself had based his *Republic*, are for Plotinus simply a point of departure and not of arrival. Justice, wisdom, fortitude, and temperance understood ... in a “civic” sense, they are capacities only of assigning limits and measure to the desires and of eliminating false opinions... They are a *condition* for becoming like the Gods, but assimilation to God is something higher [than they are; I. 2. 1]



Reale, p. 384:

Higher than “civic virtues” are the virtues understood as “purifications”. In fact, while civic virtues are limited to moderating the passions, the virtues in sense of purification *liberate us from them* and, consequently, permit the soul to unite itself to [that which] it is akin [*Nous*] ...

Plotinus: *Enneads* V. 1. 1.

Tr. by A.H. Armstrong

- “What is it, then, which has made the souls forget their father, God, and be ignorant of themselves and him, even though they are parts which come from his higher world and altogether belong to it?”





Ennead V. 1. 6.

- “... how from the One, if it is such as we say it is, anything else, whether a multiplicity or a dyad or a number, came into existence, and why it did not on the contrary remain by itself, but such a great multiplicity flowed from it as that which is seen to exist in beings, but which we think it right to refer back to the One. Let us speak of it in this way, first invoking God himself, not in spoken words, but stretching ourselves out with our soul into prayer to him, able in this way to pray alone to him alone.”



Aristotle *Politics* II ii

[tr. by Sinclair/Saunders] :

I am referring to the assumption made by Socrates, “It is best that the whole state should be as much of a unity as possible.”

[*Republic* 422b/c: “The state should, I think... be allowed to grow so long as growth is compatible with unity, but no further.” 462c: “What is more, such a state most nearly resembles an individual.”]

But obviously a state which become progressively more and more of a unity will cease will cease to be a state at all. Plurality of numbers is natural in a state; and the farther it moves away from plurality towards unity, the less a state it becomes and the more a household... So, even if it were possible to make such a unification, it ought not to be done...

The state [*polis*] consists not merely of a plurality of men, but of different *kinds* of men; you cannot make a state out of men who are all alike... Hence, as I have already stated in my *Ethics*, it is reciprocal equivalence that keeps a state in being.

... excessive striving for unification is a bad thing in a state...



Monarchia
[*On World-
Government*]
tr. by H.W.
Schneider (1957):



de Monarchia: III. xvi. 3ff.

... man alone of all beings occupies a midway [*medium*] between the corruptible and incorruptible. Hence he has been rightly likened by philosophers to the horizon, which is between two hemispheres... Accordingly, if man is a kind of mean between the corruptible and incorruptible, like every mean, he partakes of the nature of the extremes. And since every nature is arranged to seek its proper and final goal, it follows that man exists for a dual purpose...

Twofold, therefore, are the ends which unerring Providence has ordained for man: the bliss of this life, which consists in the functioning of his own powers, and which is typified by the earthly Paradise; and the bliss of eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of that divine vision to which he cannot attain by his own powers, except they be aided by the divine light, and this state is made intelligible by the celestial Paradise... we come to the first as we follow the philosophical teachings... and we come to the second as we follow the spiritual teachings which transcend human reason according to our theological capacities, faith, hope and charity.

de Monarchia: II. xi.



And Tiberius Caesar, whom Pilate represented, could not have had jurisdiction over the whole of mankind had not the Roman Empire existed *de jure*.

Convivio IV: “And what man on earth was more worthy to signify God than Cato?”



St Augustine
Confessions,
tr. Henry Chadwick,
Oxford UP, 1991



Augustine *Confessions* I. i. (1):

- “You stir mankind to take pleasure in praising you, because you made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

Augustine *Confessions*

VII. xxi. (27)

- “It is one thing from a wooded summit to catch a glimpse of the homeland of peace and not to find the way to it...”



Augustine *Confessions*

VII. xiii (19):



“I no longer wished individual things to be better, because I considered the totality. Superior things are self-evidently better than inferior. Yet with a sounder judgement I held that all things taken together are better than superior things by themselves.”

No longer was I hankering for any elements to be better than they were, because I was now keeping the totality in view; and though I certainly esteemed the higher creatures above the lower, a more wholesome judgment [*iudicio saniore*] showed me that the totality was better than the higher things on their own would have been.



Augustine *Confessions*

IX. X. (24): Ostia:

“Our minds were lifted up by an ardent affection towards eternal being itself. Step by step we climbed beyond all corporeal objects and the heaven itself, where sun, moon, and stars shed light on the earth. We ascended even further by internal reflection and dialogue and wonder at your works, and we entered into our own minds. We moved up beyond them so as to attain to the region of inexhaustible abundance... There life is the wisdom by which all creatures come into being, both things which were and which will be... in this wisdom there is no past and future, but only being, since it is eternal.”



St. Thomas Aquinas

“Since therefore grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.....”

Article 1, Q8, Reply to Objection 2



Paradiso i:

“To signify man’s soaring beyond man
words will not do...”

Paradiso, i, 70-71

“And when the vast
wheel you have made eternal by desire
held me intent to hear the harmony
You tune in all its parts...”

Paradiso i, 76-79



Paradiso i: Trasumanar

- Apollo invoked in line 13
- Another singing contest invoked, just as at the beginning of Purgatorio
- L.68: Glaucus: “I felt begin *within me...*”
- l. 70: How speak trans-human change to human sense? An internal change: I became *within* what Glaucus became tasting the herb...
- Mandelbaum: “Passing beyond the human...” [Participle]
- Durling: “To signify transhumanizing *per verba...* while *trasumanar* itself recalls that Glaucus’ example is a *transumptio* [metaphor].

Paradiso i, 70



Paradiso iii (Piccarda):

“...and this lot, which seems to us humble, is given to us because our vows were neglected and in some respect unfulfilled.”

Paradiso i, 52



Paradiso iii:

“These are true substances you now perceive, /
bound here for failing to fulfil their vows.”

Paradiso iii, 29-30

“Then it was clear to me that everywhere / in
Heaven is Paradise, though the high Good / does
not rain down His grace on all souls there /
Equally.”

Paradiso iii, 88-91.



Paradiso v & vi:

“The greatest gift God made for any creature / by
His own bounty ... / gift He holds most dear, /
Was from the first the will at liberty...”

Paradiso v, 19-22

“This little star is ornamented by / all the brave
souls who live their lives that fame / and honour
might succeed them when they die...”

Paradiso vi, 112-114



Paradiso viii & ix:

“Can there be citizens unless men dwell / in various ways, with various offices? / Not if your Teacher has advised you well.”

Paradiso viii, 118-120

“But I am glad my fate has placed me so. / I pardon my old sin; though that might well / seem hard to fathom for your herd below.”

Paradiso ix, 34-36



Paradiso xiii & xx:

“People besides should never be too sure / of what they judge, like farmers in the corn / who count their crop before the ears mature.”

Paradiso xiii, 130-132

“... the other soul / Placed all his love in righteousness below; / for which, grace upon grace, God raised his eye / and showed him our redemption yet to come...”

Paradiso xx, 120-123



Paradiso x, 139-146 (Sayers):

Then, like the horloge, calling us to come

What time the Bride of God doth rise and sing,

Wooing His love, her matins to her Groom,

Where part with part will push and pull, and ring,

Ding-ding, upon the bell sweet notes that swell

With love the soul make apt for worshipping,

E'en so I saw it move, the glorious wheel,

And voice with voice harmonious change and chime ...



Paradiso xiii, 130-142 (Ciardi):

“Men should not be too smug in their own reason;
only a foolish man will walk his field
and count his ears too early in the season;

for I have seen a briar through winter’s snows
rattle its tough and menacing bare stems,
and then, in season, open its pale rose;

and I have seen a ship cross all the main,
true to its course and swift, and then go down
just as it entered its home port again.

Let Tom and Jane not think, because they see
one man is picking pockets and another
is offering all his goods to charity,

that they can judge their neighbours with God’s eyes:
for the pious man may fall, and the thief may rise.”



Paradiso xiii, 133-142 (Sayers):

For I have seen the briar a prickly thing
And tough the winter through, and on its tip
Bearing the very rose at close of spring;

And once I saw, her whole long ocean-trip
Safe done, a vessel wrecked upon the bar,
And done she went, that swift and stately ship.

Let Jack and Jill not think they see so far
That, seeing this man pious, that a thief,
They see them such as in God's sight they are,

For one may rise, the other come to grief.



Paradiso xx, 130ff. (Ciardi):

Predestination! Oh how deep your source
is rooted past the reach of every vision
that cannot plumb the whole of the First Cause!



Paradiso xx (Sayers):

“Predestination! What far depths conceal
From feeble sight, unable to detect
The First Cause whole, thy root of woe and weal!

And, mortals, keep your judgement straitly checked,
For here we see God face to face, and still
We know not all the roll of His elect;

Yet sweet to us appears our lack of skill,
Since this good doth our good the more refine,
That what God willeth, that we also will.”



Ciardi 145-147:

“... so, I recall, that as it spoke to me
These paradisaal words, the holy lights
of Trajan and Rhipeus in sweet harmony...

Aeneid ii, 425ff. (tr. by David West):

“Rhipeus also fell. Of all the Trojans he was the most righteous,
the greatest lover of justice. But the gods made their own
judgements.”

[Robert Fitzgerald:]

“A man uniquely just among the Trojans,
The soul of equity; but the gods would have it
Differently.”



Confessions XIII. ii. (3):

But “it is good for it always to cleave to you” (Psalm 72:28) lest, by turning away from you and slipping back into a life like the dark abyss [*in vitam tenbrosae abyssio similem*], it lose the light it obtained by turning to you. For we also, we are a spiritual creation in our souls, and have turned away from you our light.

[Chadwick footnote: Plotinus V.3.17.28ff. ... emphatic that the light by which the soul sees God is not other than the light of God...]



Confessions XIII. ix. (10):

A body by its weight tends towards its proper place. The weight's movement is not necessarily downwards, but to its appropriate position: fire tends to move upwards, a stone downwards. They are acted on by their respective weights; they seek their own place. Oil poured under water is drawn up to the surface on top of the water. Water poured on top of oil sinks below the oil. They are acted on by their respective densities, they seek their own place. Things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest.

My weight is my love [*pondus meum amor meus*]. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift [*dono tuo*] we are set on fire and carried upwards: we grow red hot and ascend. We climb “the ascents in our heart” (Psalm 83:6), sing “the song of steps” (Psalm 119:1). Lit by your fire, your good fire, we grow red-hot and ascend, as we move upwards “to the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 121:6).

Confessions XIII. xi. (12):



I wish that human disputants would reflect upon the triad within their own selves... The three aspects I mean are being, knowing, willing. For I am and I know and I will...



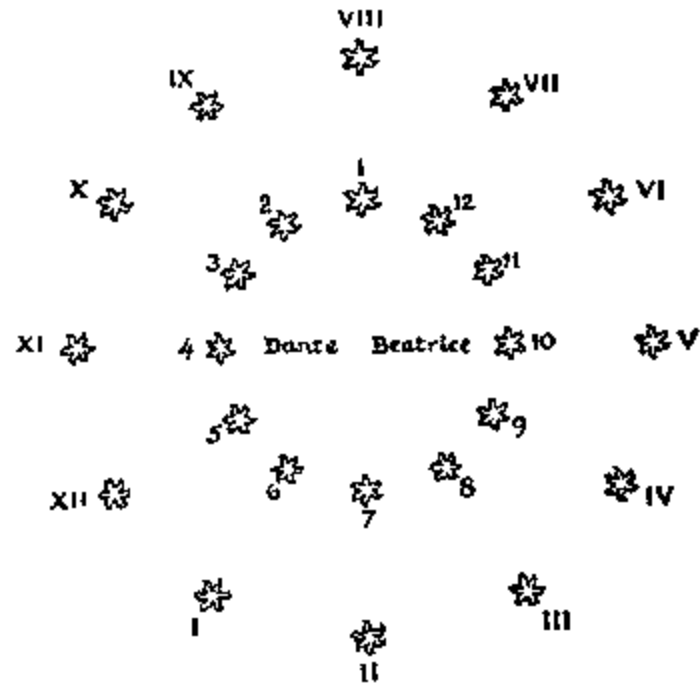
CANTO X]

Commentaries



1. St Thomas Aquinas
2. Albertus Magnus
3. Gratian
4. Peter Lombard
5. Solomon
6. Dionysius the Areopagite

7. Orosius
8. Boethius
9. Isidore of Seville
10. Bede
11. Richard of St Victor
12. Sigier of Brabant



The Double Circle of Souls

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. St Thomas Aquinas | 1. St Bonaventure |
| 2. Albertus Magnus | 11. Illuminato |
| 3. Gratian | 12. Fra Agostino |
| 4. Peter Lombard | IV. Hugh of St Victor |
| 5. Solomon | V. Petrus Cornetor |
| 6. Dionysius the Areopagite | VI. Peter of Spain |
| 7. Orosius | VII. Nathan |
| 8. Boethius | VIII. St Chrysostom |
| 9. St Isidore | IX. St Anselm |
| 10. Bede | X. Donatus |
| 11. Richard of St Victor | XI. Rabanus |
| 12. Sigier of Brabant | XII. Joachim of Flora |



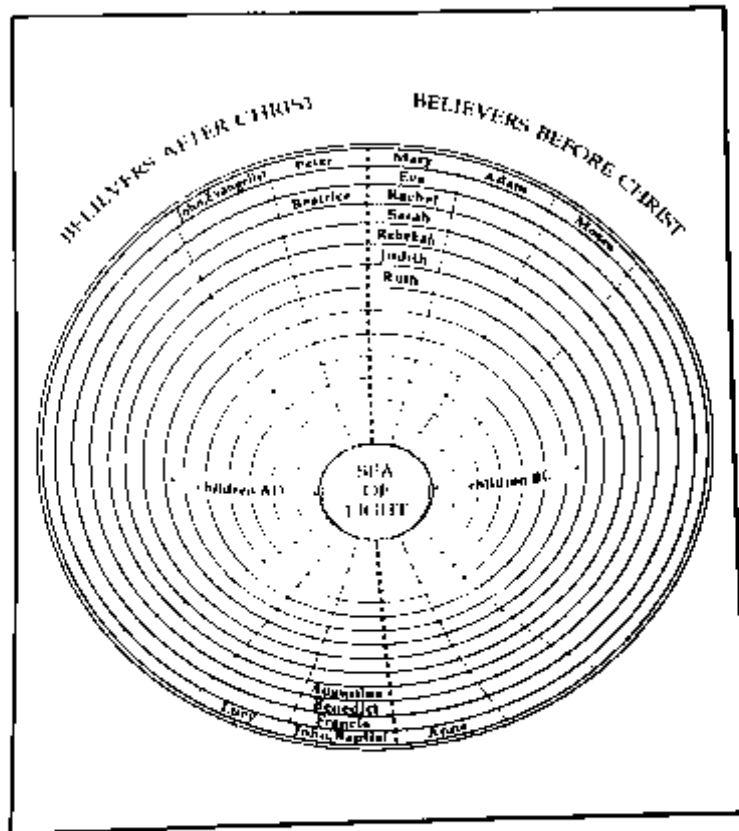


Figure 15. The searing in Dante's Empyrean

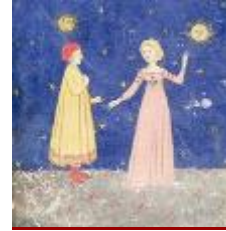


Inferno i, 22-5

“Just as a swimmer, who with last breath
flounders ashore from perilous seas, might turn ...”

Durling:

“And like one with labouring breath, come forth out of
the deep onto the shore, who turns back to the perilous
water and stares: so my spirit, still fleeing, turned back
to gaze again at the pass that has never left anyone
alive.”



Paradiso ii, 1-18 (tr. Esolen):

- “O all you in your shallops following / my furrows as I sail across the sea, / you who desire to listen as I sing,
- Don’t try the open ocean – turn and see / your own familiar shores, for you’d remain / forever lost, should you lose sight of me.
- I venture waters never sailed by man! / Apollo steers me, Pallas breathes the winds, / nine Muses point me to the Bears on high...
- Well may you set your ships of sturdy wood / upon the deep salt, keeping in my wake / before the splashes settle evenly.
- Never such wonder they who sailed to take / the golden fleece once felt as you shall feel, / not when they saw how Jason bore the yoke!”



T.S. Eliot: “Dante” (1929):

- “One can feel only awe at the power of the master who could thus at every moment realize the inapprehensible in visual images. And I do not know anywhere in poetry more authentic sign of greatness than the power or association which could in the last line, when the poet is speaking of the Divine vision, yet introduce the Argo passing over the head of wondering Neptune... It is the real right thing, the power of establishing relations between beauty of the most diverse sorts; it is the utmost power of the poet.”
- Mark Musa (1968): “... this image, which constitutes one of the most surrealistic tercets in the *Comedy*...”

Murder in the Cathedral (1935):



Act ii, line 620:

Te Deum:

“For all things only as seen by Thee, only as known by
Thee, all things exist / Only in Thy light ...”



Paradiso xxxiii, 94-96:

- Allen Mandelbaum (Paraphrase), That is:
- “I can recall so little of the moment of my overwhelming vision that the twenty-five centuries that have passed since Neptune saw with amazement from the ocean’s depth the shadow of the keel of the first ship, the *Argo*, on which Jason sailed with the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece, have not engendered more forgetfulness.”

Gothic Voices, founded 1980



[Christopher] Page's hope was to achieve a certain "kind of sound... to get away from the notion that medieval music is all about line and that you have to make the separate lines in a polyphonic work distinct, even doubling them with different instruments and so on. It's been my experience that, in fact, the reverse is true: the more homogenous the sound, the more you can hear the harmony and, paradoxically, the more subtle, yet more pronounced, the difference between the parts."

Christopher Page



Gramophone magazine [1989, p. 609] praised Gothic Voices for “this emphasis on harmony through homogeneity” which establishes “the elegance and the flow without any loss of individuality among the voices” [David Fallows, *Gramophone* 1990, p. 1259].