George Corbett, 'The Christian Ethics of Dante's Purgatory'

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It might appear straightforward, on a first reading, that Dante's Purgatory represents a penitential journey guided by Christian ethics to God. For most of the poem's history, indeed, Purgatory has been read broadly in this way. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, a parallel interpretation emerged. Influenced by Dante's dualistic theory of man's two ethical goals (one temporal and one eternal), many scholars have argued that Purgatory represents a secular journey guided by philosophical principles to a temporal happiness. This article presents three major counterarguments to the secular reading of Purgatory, a reading proposed most powerfully in recent scholarship by John A. Scott's monograph *Dante's Political Purgatory*.[1] First, it proposes a new way to read the poem as informed by Dante's dualistic theory which does not entail a forced reading of Purgatory in overly political terms. Secondly, it demonstrates how Dante forged his vision of Purgatory through two areas of distinctively Christian theory and practice which had risen to particular prominence in the thirteenth century: the newly crystallised doctrine of Purgatory and the tradition of the seven capital vices (or deadly sins) in penitential ethics.[2] Thirdly, it argues that the region embodies an explicit re-orientation from natural to supernatural ethics, from pagan to Christian *exempla*, and from this world to the heavenly city. Where Scott has argued for a 'political Purgatory', an ethical journey guided by 'justice and the teachings of philosophy' towards a secular goal, this article presents afresh, therefore, a 'theological Purgatory', a moral pilgrimage guided by distinctively Christian ethics towards God and the *beatitudo vitae aeternae*.[3]

READING THE *COMMEDIA* IN DUALISTIC TERMS

According to Dante's dualistic theory – elucidated most explicitly in his Latin prose work the *Monarchia* – man has two ethical journeys in this life: a journey to a secular happiness achievable through following the teachings of the philosophers and the natural virtues (the domain of the Holy Roman Empire and temporal power); and a journey to an eternal beatitude achievable through following the teachings of divine revelation and the theological virtues (the domain of the Church and spiritual power).[4] Dante's distinction between the *lex naturalis* and the *lex divina*, although not ubiquitous in thirteenth-century thought, is a feature of those scholastic authors committed to the recuperation of neo-Aristotelian philosophy.[5] But whereas St Thomas Aquinas, for example, integrates and subordinates the order of nature to the order of grace, Dante's strategy of two

autonomous ethical goals emphasises distinction and separation rather than integration.[6] This leads to three problematic ethical implications: it potentially relegates the function of Christianity solely to man's eternal destiny in the next life; the intrinsic perfectibility of human nature appears to render 'healing grace' (*gratia sanans*) redundant, with the implication that only 'elevating grace' (*gratia elevans*) is theoretically necessary for man; and it establishes a dichotomy and tension between man's pursuit of an earthly goal and his, apparently competing, pursuit of an eternal goal.[7] The political ramifications are correspondingly problematic. Where other Christian-Aristotelian authors advocated a progressive *via media* which mediated between temporal and spiritual power, Dante takes the distinction between *homo naturalis* and *homo Christianus* to an extreme.[8] He thereby justifies the autonomy of empire and Church which, in his view, independently derive their authority directly from God. Dante's radical dualism, particularly given the extreme theocratic pretensions of the contemporary papacy, could not but suffer rebuke.[9] Only six years after Dante's death, the *Monarchia* suffered a rebuttal by the Dominican Guido Vernani; two years later, in 1329, it was publicly burned by the Pope's representative in northern Italy, and it was subsequently placed, in 1554, on the Vatican index of prohibited books, only to be removed in 1881.[10]

It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that a dualistic reading of Dante's *Commedia* is a relatively recent phenomenon. The early commentators and readers, right up to the twentieth century, show little regard for the *Monarchia* (with only limited reading of the *Convivio*) – and little attention to Dante's dualism – in their interpretation of the poem's moral structure. Leaving aside the restricted early readership of the *Monarchia* and the *Convivio*, it is understandable that the early Dante enthusiasts who commented on his poem, the first of whom included his sons Pietro and Jacopo d'Alighieri, shied away from reading the *Commedia* in light of this extreme dualism.[11] But even much of twentieth-century Dante scholarship, with scarce need to protect Dante's poem in this way, sought nonetheless to limit this dualism to Dante's Latin and vernacular prose works (marginalised as chronologically earlier 'minor works'). Thus Bruno Nardi, a dominant scholar in this tradition, claimed that 'In the *Commedia* there is no more trace of the "two final ends" of the *Monarchia*.'[12] Kenelm Foster and Etienne Gilson, acute readers of philosophical heterodoxy in Dante's prose works, were still keen to emphasise that 'the *Comedy* is quite another matter', and that its subject 'is theological – the final aims of man (*ultima regna*)'.[13] The compositional chronology underlining this view – that Dante's *Monarchia* represents a dualistic stage in his intellectual trajectory that the poet left behind when he began writing the *Commedia* – has, however, been systematically refuted by modern philological evidence which dates the *Monarchia*

to the last few years of his life when the greater part of the *Commedia* was already written. Prue Shaw has argued convincingly that 'there seems no good reason to doubt' the authenticity of 'the cross-reference in Book I to the *Paradiso*' and, therefore, that the *Monarchia* was written 'certainly no earlier than 1314 and possibly [during] the very last years of its author's life'.[14] Further recent historical and contextual arguments have corroborated Shaw's thesis. They have narrowed the dating of the *Monarchia* to after 1316 and, most probably, to the years 1317-1318.[15]

This new evidence has encouraged a dualistic reappraisal of the poem and, also, a revision of the dominant critical approach which tended to view the relationship between Dante's prose works and the *Commedia* in terms of authorial palinode.[16] At this important interpretative juncture, however, I believe that Dante criticism has taken a wrong turn. Scholars who have tried to read the *Commedia* in light of Dante's dualism have simply equated the secular happiness – the *paradisus terrestris* delineated in the *Monarchia* – with the Earthly Paradise at the summit of mount Purgatory. Thus John A. Scott correctly observes that 'all too often, Dante's poem has been regarded exclusively as a spiritual ascent to God, thus ignoring the totality of the poet's message, which is bent on leading humanity to both its goals, the one set firmly in this world (Virgil/Emperor → Earthly Paradise) and the other providing salvation and eternal beatitude'.[17] However he jumps to what is, in my view, the wrong conclusion: 'the answers, obvious as they are, need to be stated: yes, the Earthly Paradise is indeed to be found there, situated above Purgatory proper, and it is Virgil, the Aristotelianized poet of imperial Rome, who guides Dante there'.[18] On this reading, the summit of Dante's Purgatory represents not spiritual beatitude but rather secular, earthly happiness: 'that very same Earthly Paradise, which for Dante reflected the happiness attainable through Justice and the teachings of philosophy'.[19]

As Nicola Fosca points out, a reading which equates the secular goal of Dante's *Monarchia* with the Earthly Paradise at the summit of Purgatory is held by 'molti dantisti' and sustained by the authoritative Bosco-Reggio and Chiavacci Leonardi commentaries. She concludes not unreasonably that the *Monarchia* has had, thus far, a negative influence on the exegesis of the *Commedia*.[20] Scott's own argument draws, in particular, on the thesis of Charles S. Singleton, an influential earlier twentieth-century proponent of a similar dualistic reading. Like Scott, Singleton argues that Dante-character on reaching the summit of mount Purgatory attains only the 'rule of reason over the lower parts of the soul, of which Aristotle and Plato spoke'.[21] Singleton also similarly maps the scheme of the *Monarchia* onto the Mount of Purgatory: 'For in the poem is not Eden the first goal, and does Virgil not guide to Eden by the natural light of the philosophers? [...] is not the celestial paradise the end to which Beatrice leads, as the light of grace and revelation [...]? So that here too,

in respect to the second goal, treatise and poem would seem to agree.'[22] Nonetheless Singleton recognises a flaw in such simple mapping: in the poem, unlike in the treatise, the first path is clearly subordinated to the second and leads to Beatrice.[23] Singleton is thereby constrained to present two Edens: in the Earthly Paradise, Leah and Rachel initially represent the active and contemplative aspects of a happiness attainable through natural philosophy (and the guidance of Virgil); they are then transfigured on the arrival of Beatrice: 'Virgil leads to a justice which the philosophers had discerned and he leads no further. Then beyond the stream, with Beatrice, come the four virtues which are the true perfection of the active life, that is, true justice. A Leah who is a *perfected* Leah thus comes with Beatrice. And so it must be with contemplation.'[24] Awkward interpretative complications thereby appear in what – at first – might seem an 'obvious' reading.

Dualistic readings which equate the Earthly Paradise of Purgatory with the secular happiness delineated in the *Monarchia*, furthermore, have led to some interpretations entirely at odds with the commentary and critical traditions. Thus Peter Armour's re-interpretation of the griffin (traditionally identified as a figure for Christ) as the 'supreme temporal guide of mankind on earth [...] the Empire alone, the Empire of Rome' is underpinned by his conviction that the Earthly Paradise in Purgatory depicts 'the first of mankind's two God-given goals – that happiness in this life which, as every reader of Dante knows, is not in his opinion in any way within the sphere of competence of the Church'.[25] John A. Scott, in similar vein, berates the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* which 'still reports that "*All the commentators, both ancient and modern, are agreed in recognizing Jesus Christ in the griffin*"'.[26] But Scott's motive for a different interpretation is similarly underpinned by his identification of the Earthly Paradise at the summit of Purgatory with Dante's secular goal: 'It would surely have been strange if, in that very same Earthly Paradise, which for Dante reflected the happiness attainable through Justice and the teachings of philosophy, the poet had placed no signifier of the imperial office and its divinely appointed mission to guide the human race, *humana civitas*, to the *beatitudo huius vitae*.'[27] For it is not at all strange if the Earthly Paradise at the summit of *Purgatory* is *not* the 'very same Earthly Paradise' depicted in the *Monarchia*. Far from being obvious, Scott's dualistic reading requires an interpretation at odds both with the wider medieval context and with the commentary tradition of the *Purgatorio*.[28]

There is nonetheless another way to read the poem in dualistic terms which does not entail such revision of traditional interpretations of Purgatory. I would argue that Dante's *Commedia* is indeed underpinned by his dualistic theory but that Dante represents man's secular goal not in the Earthly Paradise at the summit of Purgatory but rather in his theologically original limbo of the virtuous pagans (*Inferno*, iv.67-151). In the *Monarchia*, Dante depicts man's path to his temporal

goal as directed by philosophical teachings which are to be put into practice through the moral and intellectual virtues ('per phylosophica documenta venimus, dummodo illa sequamur secundum virtutes morales et intellectuales operando' (*Mon*., III.xv.8)). The early commentators of *Inferno* IV unanimously interpret the seven walls encircling the noble castle of Dante's limbo to allegorically represent philosophical teaching (most commonly the seven liberal arts) by which the rational soul liberates itself from the sensual appetite.[29] Dante-character then encounters, within a beautiful landscape which directly alludes to Virgil's Elysian fields, exemplars of the moral and intellectual virtues. The first noble pagan named is Electra, the mythical founder of Troy and the root of the Trojan and Roman race which, for Dante, historically instantiates the true flower of moral virtue.[30] Amongst the 'spiriti magni' of the 'filosofica familia', Aristotle – *the* philosopher and the exemplar of human intellectual perfection – holds reign: 'il maestro di color che sanno' (*Inferno*, iv. 119-32). Dante thereby represents the happiness of this life ('beatitudinem scilicet huius vite') which consists in man's natural perfection in its active and contemplative aspects, the operation of the moral and intellectual virtues ('virtutes morales et intellectuales operando').[31]

Scholars heretofore have tended to start from the *Commedia* and then either, like Nardi, fail to see any trace of the dualism of the *Monarchia* or, like Scott, project Dante's dualistic theory of two ethical goals on to the – apparently obvious – two end-points of Dante-character's journey: the Earthly Paradise at the summit of Purgatory, and Paradise itself. However if, by contrast, we consider Dante-poet – fully committed to a dualistic vision of man's two ethical goals (as the later dating of the *Monarchia* confirms) – setting out to write the *Commedia*, we can easily imagine him confronted with a stark problem and paradox: how to represent a secular, this-worldly goal in a poem which depicts an other-worldly afterlife? In this light, Dante's innovative creation of the region of the virtuous pagans becomes clearly understandable. Regardless of their literal destiny and apparently unjustified deprivation of beatitude (the undeniably important focus of most scholarly work on this area of limbo), the virtuous pagans serve, for Dante, a far more urgent allegorical purpose because they respond precisely to this critical exigency. That is, Dante uses the historical figure of the virtuous pagan – to whom the spiritual goal, divine revelation, and the institutional Church were of course unavailable – to figuratively represent secular human flourishing in a poem which literally depicts the afterlife.

Political readings of Purgatory in terms of philosophical principles have been motivated, at least in part, by the attempt to map Dante's dualistic theory onto the eschatology of the *Commedia*. Even on their own terms, such dualistic readings – where the secular goal of Dante's *Monarchia* is equated with the Earthly Paradise at the summit of Purgatory – seem forced into internal

contradictions and to yield some rather peculiar, or at the least untraditional, interpretations. By contrast, I have presented an alternative dualistic reading in which Dante's limbo of the virtuous pagans figuratively embodies this-worldly, ethical flourishing (the temporal goal of the *Monarchia*). This interpretation has two distinct advantages: first it enables us to read the poem as informed by Dante's dualistic vision. Particularly in light of the recent philological evidence, the thesis of a radical shift in Dante's intellectual trajectory away from a dualistic ethical outlook seems now unsustainable. It does, therefore, appear necessary to account in some way for the doctrine of two ethical goals (so prominent in the *Monarchia*) in the *Commedia*. The second advantage of this alternative dualistic interpretation is that it nonetheless defends more traditional readings of Purgatory. The interpretation of Dante's limbo of the virtuous pagans, at the rim of Hell, as depicting Dante's this-worldly goal frees Purgatory and the Earthly Paradise from a forced, overly secular interpretation.

The first stage of the argument thereby removes one key obstacle to reading Purgatory in terms of Christian ethics: by providing an alternative location (the limbo of the virtuous pagans) for Dante's this-worldly goal, it shows how one can read the poem as informed by Dante's dualistic theory without reading the ethics of Purgatory as narrowly philosophical. The second stage of the argument takes a different tack: a reexamination of the immediate context of and inspiration for the genesis of Dante's Purgatory. In this way, I show how the moral and doctrinal context of the region's ethics is distinctively Christian and cannot be viewed within the frame of philosophical principles.

THE GENESIS OF DANTE'S PURGATORY

An overemphasis on the originality of Dante's vision of Purgatory may initially obscure an interpretation of its moral structure. After all, were we to imagine that Dante invented his depiction of Purgatory in isolation, his structuring it according to philosophical principles could be understood as consistent with the region's audacious novelty as a whole. There is, of course, clear evidence of originality. Before Dante, the doctrine of Purgatory was not only relatively new but, in Jeffrey Schnapp's words, 'little more than a theologian's abstraction'.[32] By contrast, Dante gave Purgatory a precise geographical location – in the southern hemisphere at the antipodes of Jerusalem. Moreover, he drew a completely new image of what this eschatological region of Purgatory might be like: not simply a monochrome corporeal fire but a mountain divided into different regions with different punishments.[33] However, there is also much content which *per se* is

not original at all. If we were to recast the moral framework and much of the doctrinal material of Dante's Purgatory into another medieval genre – not as a vision of the afterlife realm of Purgatory but as a treatise on Christian ethics, a homiletic handbook or an allegorical moral journey set in this life – it would appear much more familiar. That is, there are clearly discernible contexts which Dante uses in constructing the moral and doctrinal structure of Purgatory. I shall examine two of these contexts in turn: first, the newly crystallised doctrine of Purgatory and, secondly, the well-established resources of the tradition of the seven capital vices in medieval Christian ethics.

Although the Church had only given an official stamp to the doctrine of Purgatory at the Council of Lyon in 1274, the existence of an intermediate realm, between Hell and Paradise, was well established by Dante's lifetime.[34] At a practical level, the *suffragia mortuorum* ('masses, prayers, alms and pious works by which the living assisted the souls of the dead from purgatorial pains') were integral to medieval religious life.[35] At a theoretical level, medieval theologians – citing passages from Scripture stating that sins would be tested, punished, or cancelled by fire on the day of judgment – had put the flesh and blood on the doctrine of Purgatory. Outside vision literature, however, theological description of the region remained distinctively unimaginative: a purgatorial fire. Aquinas, for example, gives a clear rationale for Purgatory. Mortal sin turns man away from God as his ultimate end. Through repentance, sinners are 'brought back to the state of charity, whereby they cleave to God as their last end' and, freed from the eternal punishment of Hell, they merit 'eternal life'.[36] Through venial sin man does not turn away from his ultimate end but does err with regard to the means leading him to God. Although venial sin may be expiated by the fervent divine love of particularly holy souls, the general rule is that venial sin, like mortal sin, retains the debt of temporal punishment even after due repentance.[37] The primary purpose of penance, therefore, is to repay this debt. In addition, however, penance has a curative purpose: the sinner must be cured from vice and made virtuous and holy. What, then, of a person who dies before being able to complete his or her penance? And what of those, all bar the most exceptional saints, who die before becoming holy and virtuous if, as Aquinas states, 'no one is admitted to the possession of eternal life unless he is free from all sin and imperfection'?[38] The afterlife region of Purgatory responds, as a theological necessity, to both these questions: it completes the debt of sin and it cleanses the soul of imperfection. Where the intensity of purgatorial punishment corresponds to the debt (the sinner's guilt), the length corresponds to the soul's imperfection (the 'firmness with which sin has taken root in its subject').[39] The twofold pain of Purgatory – the delay of the divine vision (*poena damni*) and the corporeal fire (*poena sensus*) – is thus spiritually necessary.

Furthermore, as with earthly penance, this satisfaction is desired by the souls as their means to restore friendship with God.[40]

Dante thereby inherited some key doctrinal points about Purgatory but, for its description, he inherited only a generic condition: the corporeal fire. This left him with considerable imaginative freedom to describe and structure his own depiction of Purgatory. Why, then, did he choose the tradition of the seven capital vices? It seems at first glance an odd choice, as we might reasonably expect the seven vices to structure Dante's Hell.[41] But Dante does *not* structure Hell according to the vices: the vices of pride, envy and sloth are not mentioned explicitly at all in the *Inferno*, and the other four vices (lust, gluttony, avarice, and anger) are categorised, ostensibly in line with Aristotle's *Ethics*, as sins of incontinence, occupying just one part of Hell (and only five of thirty-four cantos).[42] One principal reason for Dante's choice is that the tradition of the seven capital vices had come to play a dominant role in thirteenth-century Christian ethics, homilies, and confessional practices.[43] In response to the renewed emphasis on confession at the fourth Lateran Council (1215-16), preachers found in the theory of the seven capital vices a popular and psychologically productive approach to moral evil.[44] The scheme is both simple for a beginner and immensely rich in terms of psychological depth and complexity. The focus is not only on sins committed but, crucially, on character traits or tendencies which need to be corrected in the Christian's moral journey in this life.[45] It is natural to suppose that many Christians (Dante included) may have structured their own confessions through this morally transformative scheme.[46] Dante could draw on direct literary precedents such as Brunetto Latini's *Il Tesoretto* which, like the *Commedia*, begins in the wood of sin and closes with the author confessing the seven capital sins in causal order and admonishing his reader to do the same.[47] There were also widely diffused treatises on the vices such as those by Aquinas and, arguably most significantly, William Peraldus.[48] Moreover, the vices (and corresponding sets of virtues) were central to the popular Christianity of Dante's immediate cultural context, as is clear from model sermons of the time or the ethical use of the vices in visual culture.[49] For example, Alain de Lille's outline of the appropriate content (faith and morals), audience (public), and material (the use of authorities) in preaching, his emphasis on the use of examples (which make doctrine more familiar and, thereby, more efficacious), and his chapters on each of the vices and corresponding virtues in the overarching context of Christian confession and penitence provide a telling parallel with Dante's approach in the Purgatory.[50]

In light of this wider context, we can readily understand why the penitential tradition on the vices appealed to Dante as he envisaged the terraces of Purgatory and not when he organised the circles of Hell. For penance makes sense of three key doctrinal purposes of Purgatory: first, it

realigns the soul from a disordered pursuit of earthly goods to God as its ultimate end; secondly, it repays the debt for sin; thirdly, it frees the soul from all vice and imperfection. These purposes are equally true of the Purgatorial afterlife as of Christian penance in this life (for which there was an extensive literature).[51] Dante, therefore, projects the familiar ethical material on the seven capital vices onto the entirely unfamiliar context of Purgatory. The result is, at a literal level, the vivid depiction of an otherwise uncharted eschatological region – Purgatory – and, at an allegorical level, the representation of Dante's Christian ethics: the very guidance on an individual's journey to spiritual salvation which Dante felt the institutional Church of his time, misdirected by its grasp of temporal power, was failing to administer.

The principal moral context underlying Dante's vision of Purgatory is, therefore, Christian penance. Purgatory literally depicts the purging of those dead souls who merit salvation, but it also allegorically depicts the penitential journey which every Christian should undergo in this life. This Christian context strongly suggests that Dante's Purgatory is anything but a philosophically-guided journey to a temporal happiness 'of which Aristotle and Plato spoke'. The third and final stage of the argument, then, addresses Dante's description of the moral order underpinning Purgatory in the poem itself. I show that Purgatory's moral order is explicitly governed by Christian teachings which entirely surpass the natural law; it is thus inconceivable in terms of narrowly philosophical principles.

THE MORAL ORDER OF DANTE'S PURGATORY

Dante-poet saves his doctrinal explanation of Purgatory for the arrival of Dante-character and Virgil at the terrace of sloth at nightfall. As the region cannot be climbed without the light of the sun (allegorically without the grace of God), dusk necessitates a pause in their journey. The moral lesson thereby occurs at the central terrace of Purgatory and at the centre of the poem as a whole. The very fact that the speaker is Virgil, rather than Beatrice, has led many Dante scholars to conclude that the moral doctrine he espouses is philosophical.[52] Such a view had previously been strengthened by the lack of a direct source for Dante's apparently original organisation of the vices. Siegfried Wenzel convincingly showed, however, that Pietro d'Alighieri's commentary – elucidating this passage of the poem – quotes, almost word for word, the innovative treatise by the Domincan Peraldus on the vices which employs the exact same organising principle.[53] Despite Wenzel's intervention, which locates the discourse within the context of penitential Christian ethics,

the view nonetheless persists that the doctrine espoused by Virgil is within the bounds of pagan thought.[54] Leaving aside the issue of the speaker (Virgil), let us contest this view on the basis of the discourse itself.

Dante sets the entire discourse on the vices within the overarching context of the relationship of love between the creator and his creation, between God ('l fattore') and man ('sua fattura'). The ethical principle is that each soul, created by God, has an inbuilt desire to return to Him, a principle epitomised by the opening of Augustine's *Confessions*: 'fecisti nos, Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te' [God, you made us for you, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you].[55] As Dante highlights through the voice of Marco Lombardo in the previous canto, however, each soul is created in simplicity and ignorance and is thereby easily led astray by lesser goods from God (its chief good):

> 'Esce di mano a lui che la vagheggia
> prima che sia, a guisa di fanciulla
> che piangendo e ridendo pargoleggia,
> l'anima semplicetta, che sa nulla,
> salvo che, mossa da lieto fattore,
> volontier 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.' (*Purgatorio*, xvi.85-93)
>
> [From the hand of him who desires it before it
> exists, like a little girl who weeps and laughs childishly,
> the simple little soul comes forth, knowing nothing except that,
> set in motion by a happy Maker, it gladly turns to what amuses it
> Of some lesser good it first tastes the flavour; there it is deceived
> and runs after it, if a guide or rein does not turn away its love.]

Dante states that the soul's love can be disordered in two main ways: the love of an evil ('per male obietto') or the unmeasured love of a good ('o per troppo o per poco di vigore').[56] Having established that the evil loved cannot be directed against oneself or against God, Dante concludes that it must be directed against one's neighbour. Pride, envy and anger are thus understood as three ways by which we come to love the evil of, which is to hate, our neighbour. Dante locates the origin of the other four capital vices in the second kind of disordered love whereby the soul does not love its neighbour's evil but, rather, seeks the chief good in a defective manner (with too much or too little vigour). Sloth is not laziness *per se*, therefore, but the distinctive failure to sufficiently love

God: it is unmeasured love by deficiency. The final three vices – avarice, gluttony and lust – are forms of excessive love for lesser goods none of which can fulfil man's deepest desire for God.

The ethical scheme of Purgatory is emphatically not, therefore, according to the teachings of philosophy ('phylosophica documenta').[57] Rather, the end is love of God and neighbour (the two commandments by which Jesus sums up the Divine Law), and the souls are directed from the earthly to the heavenly city.[58] Indeed, as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount counterpoises our earthly life with God's kingdom, so, on Mount Purgatory, the beatitudes provide spiritual nourishment for the penitent souls and direct them to the eternal happiness in the life to come.[59] As the philosopher Ralph McInerny, commenting on Dante's use of the beatitudes, affirms: 'Jesus begins his sermon with the beatitudes. One cannot think of a more dramatic way of showing that the New Law is not the Old Law, nor is it simply a repetition of the teaching of philosophers. The beatitudes fly in the face of our natural assumptions about human life [...] Far from being a distillation of natural moral wisdom, the Sermon on the Mount seems to stand natural wisdom on its head.'[60] McInerny highlights the 'enormous difference' between 'morality or ethics – philosophical or natural accounts of how life should be led' and 'Christian revelation', between the broadly philosophical organisation of Dante's *Inferno* and the distinctively Christian ethics of the Purgatory.[61]

This ethical reorientation from the secular to the spiritual is evident from the first two terraces which purge the gravest vices of pride and envy:

> 'È chi, per esser suo vicin soppresso,
> spera eccellenza, e sol per questo brama
> ch'el sia di sua grandezza in basso messo;
> è chi podere, grazia, onore e fama
> teme di perder perch'altri sormonti,
> onde s'attrista sì che 'l contrario ama.' (*Purgatorio*, xvii.115-20)
>
> [There are those who hope for supremacy through their neighbour's being kept down, and only on this account desire that his greatness be brought low;
> there are those who fear to lose power, favour, honour, or fame because another mounts higher, and thus are so aggrieved that they love the contrary.]

The proud pursue excellence not to magnify God like Mary but, rather, to exalt themselves and to put down their neighbour: the 'superbus' literally wants to walk above others ('nam superbire non est aliud, quam super alios velle ire').[62] The envious are saddened by the excellence of others lest it diminish their own and, instead of desiring good for their neighbour (as Mary desires that there be more wine at the Marriage of Cana), they take pleasure (spite) in their neighbour's failures and

misfortune. In both cases, the end is hatred of one's neighbour. Crucially, the root of pride and envy is the competitive pursuit of temporal goods and status. Indeed, Dante links pride and envy by listing four kinds of earthly things – power, favour or fortune, honour, and fame – by which people may measure themselves against others. As such temporal goods are finite, our own pursuit of them implies that our neighbour will have less (which may lead to pride: the desire to put down one's neighbour) while our neighbour's pursuit of them implies that we will have less (which may lead to envy: the sadness at one's neighbour's good). As Guido del Duca exclaims in the terrace of envy, 'O gente umana perché poni 'l core / là 'v è mestier di consorte divieto?' [O human race, why do you set your heart where sharing must be forbidden?].[63] By contrast, spiritual goods multiply the more they are shared. Thus truth, goodness, or love do not become less in being shared but, like a ray of light in a mirror, increase in each person.[64]

Freedom from these twin vices is only possible, therefore, when the soul is directed away from the competitive pursuit of secular attainments and, instead, towards God as its ultimate end. Having witnessed the proud souls punished bent over double by massive boulders, Dante exclaims:

> 'O superbi cristian, miseri lassi
> che, de la vista de la mente infermi,
> fidanza avete ne' retrosi passi,
> non v'accorgete voi che noi siam vermi
> nati a formar l'angelica farfalla
> che vola a la giustizia sanza schermi?
> Di che l'animo vostro in alto galla,
> poi siete quasi antomata in difetto,
> sì come vermo in cui formazion falla?' (*Purgatorio*, x.121-29)
>
> [O proud Christians, weary wretches, who, weak in mental
> vision, put your faith in backward steps,
> do you not perceive that we are worms born to form the
> angelic butterfly that flies to justice without a shield?
> Why is it that your spirit floats on high, since you are like
> defective insects, like worms in whom formation is lacking?]

Dante encounters Omberto Aldobrandesco who took pride in the *past* (his noble ancestors); Provenan Salvanti who took pride in the *present* (his political dominance of Siena) and Oderisi who took pride in the *future* (his artistic glory). All this pride is short-sighted – the proud are 'weak in mental vision' – because beyond the corruptible world in time (subject to past, present, and future) is the eternal perfection of the heavenly city. As Sapia reminds Dante in the terrace of envy, she was only a pilgrim in Italy because everyone is a citizen of the true city: 'ciascuna è cittadina / d'una

vera città'.[65] Christians, therefore, must not place their hope in earthly prowess and happiness (their 'backward steps').[66] Nothing by which a person may puff himself up in this life will avail the immortal soul (the butterfly) which must leave its corruptible body (the chrysalis) at death and return to its creator for judgment. Men, pilgrims in this life, should thus fix their sight on their immortal destiny and fly to God, rather than remain defective in the pride of the flesh ('like worms in whom formation is lacking').[67]

The early commentators emphasise that Dante's invective against the 'proud Christians' underscores the fact that the realm of Purgatory (and the Christian pilgrimage of penitence in this life) is explicitly unavailable to pagans.[68] This ethical direction, furthermore, would be completely alien and irrational from a pagan perspective as its demands surpass, and contradict, the requirements of the natural law. When it comes to the disordered love of lesser goods (avarice, gluttony and lust), the souls in Purgatory are not directed to a virtuous mean as in natural ethics but to the supernatural ethical goals of poverty, abstinence and chastity. Furthermore, the souls' ultimate goal is not intellectual contemplation of the truth (the speculative perfection of Aristotelian ethics) but, through embracing the cross and suffering of Christ, the union of the soul (intellect and will) with God in the beatific vision.

Notably, Virgil's doctrinal speech at the centre of the canticle does not give a specific explanation of the quiddity of the three vices of excess ostensibly because it is good for Dante-character, countering sloth, to discover it for himself.[69] But this delay also allows Dante-poet, with typically caustic irony, to save the explanation of avarice for Pope Adrian V (Pope between 12th July and his death on 18th August 1276). The medieval papacy's avaricious assumption of temporal power was, for Dante, the principal institutional cause of moral evil in the society of his own day, and it undermined his firm conviction that temporal and spiritual power should be divided between empire and Church. That a pope – whose exclusive duty, according to Dante, was to lead mankind to God (his spiritual goal) – should therefore be the mouthpiece for this most-worldly vice plays into his contemporary dualistic polemic. But it also serves an important moral purpose. For Adrian V, in Dante's account, converted from unrelenting avarice to God only on assuming the papal throne! Only, that is, on reaching the highest possible station attainable in the medieval world (the earthly city) does Adrian V recognise the vanity of temporal goods (that they cannot satisfy his desire) and begin to love the heavenly city:

> 'La mia conversïone, omè! fu tarda;
> ma, come fatto fui roman pastore,
> così scopersi la vita bugiarda.

Vidi che lì non s'acquetava il core,
né più salir potiesi in quella vita
per che di questa in me s'accese amore.
Fino a quel punto misera e partita
da Dio anima fui, del tutto avara;
or, come vedi, qui ne son punita.' (*Purgatorio*, xix.106-14)

[My conversion, alas! was late, but, when I became
the Roman shepherd, then I discovered life to be deceptive.
I saw that my heart was not quieted there, nor could I rise
any higher in that life: thus was kindled in me the love of this one.
Until that point I was a wretched soul separated from God,
entirely greedy; now, as you see, I am punished for it here.]

The message for the ordinary Christian is clear: even the highest power, wealth, and prestige (as achieved by a corrupt medieval pope) will not fulfil your desire.[70] Rather, such temporal acquisitiveness will separate you from God (the true object of human desire) and lead to wretchedness. The further key point, equally for the institutional Church as for the individual Christian, is that the way to God – the corresponding virtue to avarice – is not the prudent or just distribution of temporal goods (appropriate to the secular sphere of conduct) but, rather, radical temporal poverty. The souls are directed to the extreme poverty of Mary: 'Povera fosti tanto / quanto veder si può per quello ospizio / dove sponesti il tuo portato santo.' [How very poor you were we can see by the shelter where you laid down your holy burden.][71] Poverty, to be spurned according to natural ethics, must be actively desired by those seeking the kingdom of Heaven. Pope Adrian V explains that avarice had extinguished his love for every good: his soul, fixed down on earthly things ('le cose terrene'), had been unable to taste heavenly things ('in alto').[72] By contrast, St Francis took Lady Poverty as his bride opening up an ever increasing divine love: he was, as Dante states in *Paradiso*, seraphic in love ('serafico in ardore').[73]

The overarching Christian ethical re-direction from natural to supernatural ethics is further emphasised in the ensuing description of gluttony. In Hell, the blind intemperance of gluttony (the failure of reason to moderate the appetite to the food necessary for a person's health) is eternally punished. In Purgatory, however, the souls are directed to a completely different moral order. The goal here is not bodily health (as a constituent of human flourishing) but, rather, holiness ('qui si rifà santa').[74] The weeping souls sing the verse 'Labïa mëa, Domine' of the penitential psalm *Miserere* – their lips are directed from the satisfaction of sensual appetite to the praise of God ('et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam'). The souls in Purgatory endure an enforced fast: they circle a tree whose fruits, unreachable, nonetheless let off a powerful scent intensifying their hunger and

thirst. Their faces are so dark, hollow and wasted that the skin is shaped by their bones; their eye-sockets are like rings without gems and, framing an emaciated nose, clearly spell 'omo' [man].[75] This is hardly re-adjusting to the Aristotelian virtuous mean with regard to eating and drinking![76] Rather this extreme bodily fasting leads the souls – entirely over and above the order of natural ethics – to spiritual union with Christ:

> 'E non pur una volta, questo spazzo
> girando, si rinfresca nostra pena:
> io dico pena e dovria dir solazzo,
> ché quella voglia a li alberi ci mena
> che menò Cristo lieto a dire "*Elì*,"
> quando ne liberò con la sua vena.' (*Purgatorio*, xxiii.70-75)
>
> [And not just once, as we circle this space, is our pain renewed:
> I say pain, and I should say solace,
> for that desire leads us to the tree that led Christ to say "*Eli*" gladly,
> when he freed us with the blood of his veins.]

Despite the extreme agony and the humiliation of the cross (according to his human nature), Christ joyfully cries 'Eli' (Father) and submits to the divine will because of his love for mankind (redeemed through his sacrifice). Likewise, the penitent souls intensely desire to come to the heavenly city and, as the pain (their cross) is the means to their eternal salvation, it is now – for them – solace.[77] In Dante's geographical symbolism, the penitents join themselves to Christ's cross in Purgatory at the exact antipodes of Jerusalem, the place of Christ's crucifixion. It is Christ, therefore, who provides the moral order of Purgatory. The souls, inspired by the promise of the beatitudes and embracing their penitential suffering, are made ready for the kingdom of God. And these souls in Purgatory are explicitly compared to pilgrims ('i peregrin pensosi') who, in this life, must do penance of abstinence and fasting for the sake of the heavenly kingdom.[78]

The ethical scheme of Dante's Purgatory is, therefore, distinctively Christian. The new law of the beatitudes which governs Purgatory stands natural ethics on its head. The souls in Purgatory are explicitly directed away from secular, this-worldly goods or aspirations. Instead, the souls are exhorted to embrace the higher demands of Christ's law which may involve practices, such as extreme poverty or fasting, which completely surpass the philosophical rule of the virtuous mean.

I have argued that the interpretation of a 'Political Purgatory' in terms of philosophical principles represents a false turning in twentieth-century Dante scholarship. The motivation for such a reading,

at least in part, is the desire to interpret the poem through Dante's dualistic theory. Scholars who equate the secular, this-worldly goal described in the *Monarchia* with the earthly paradise at the summit of Purgatory naturally seek to equate the philosophical guidance described in the *Monarchia* with the ethics of the Purgatory. The first step in my argument, therefore, has been to dispute such a dualistic reading. In itself, this is not particularly new. After all, many scholars have considered that such a parallel is mistaken. But, in contrast to them, I have not thereby concluded that there is no evidence of Dante's dualistic theory in the *Commedia*, a conclusion that is all but untenable if, as the modern philological evidence suggests, there was no radical shift in Dante's intellectual trajectory away from this theory by the time he wrote the *Commedia*. Rather, I have presented an alternative way to read the poem in dualistic terms. I have argued that Dante, with characteristic ingenuity, surmounts the apparent impossibility of representing a this-worldly goal in a poem that depicts an other-worldly afterlife by using the virtuous pagan to figuratively represent secular human flourishing. The theologically original limbo of the virtuous pagans represents the journey by philosophical teaching to moral and intellectual flourishing in this life. By contrast, Purgatory represents the spiritual journey to an eternal beatitude (*beatitudo vitae aeternae*). The immediate Christian context of Dante's depiction of Purgatory re-enforces this reading. The use of the moral structure of the seven capital vices in thirteenth-century penitential practice served perfectly the literal and moral purpose of Dante's Purgatory: it literally describes the temporal punishment and purification of saved souls after death, and it allegorically represents the spiritual penance which must be undergone by all Christians on their pilgrimage to God in this life. The moral order of Dante's Purgatory is distinctively Christian and outside the purview of philosophical principles and, thereby, further confirms this interpretation. The souls in Purgatory are directed from the secular goal of natural ethics to the supernatural goal of the heavenly city; from the virtuous mean to the demands of supernatural law. A revised dualistic interpretation of the poem as a whole, an examination of the immediate contexts of Dante's vision of Purgatory, and a re-reading of its moral order, therefore, not only serve to counter an interpretation of the Purgatory in terms of philosophical principles, but also provide powerful arguments for upholding the traditional interpretation of the region in terms of Christian ethics.

NOTES

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Zygmunt G. Barański for their meticulous comments, bibliographical suggestions, and advice on re-structuring the article.

[1] John A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996). Scott provides an invaluable account of the political background to Dante's Purgatory and, also, many interpretative insights on specific passages of the *Purgatorio* (although, interestingly in this regard, he devotes as many chapters to Ante-Purgatory as to Purgatory-proper itself). Nonetheless, this article seeks to refute Scott's central contention and overarching argument that the summit of Dante's Purgatory represents 'that very same Earthly Paradise, which for Dante reflected the happiness attainable through Justice and the teachings of philosophy' (*Ibid*., p. 189). As Nicola Fosca highlights, in her recent commentary on the *Commedia* (2003-2006), such a secular reading has become increasingly dominant and widespread. See Nicola Fosca, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xxvii.103-08, *Dartmouth Dante Project* <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/> [accessed 01 October 2013].

[2] For a caveat to the more familiar phrase, however, see Patrick Boyde, *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 151: 'the Seven Capital Vices [...] their popular appellation – the Seven Deadly Sins – is wrong in everything but the number!'

[3] Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 189. My purpose in presenting afresh a 'theological Purgatory' is not, of course, to negate the importance of politics or philosophical teaching in Dante's Purgatory but, rather, to argue that the moral structure of the region is, nonetheless, distinctively Christian.

[4] Dante, *Monarchia*, III.xvi.7-9. All quotations from and references to Dante's works are taken from the following editions: *Convivio*, ed. by Franca Brambilla Ageno, 3 vols (Florence: Le Lettere, 1995); *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi, 4 vols (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1966-67); *Monarchia*, ed. by Prue Shaw (Florence: Le Lettere, 2009). English translations of the *Commedia* are adapted from the literal translation by Robert M. Durling: *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling; introduction and notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996-2011).

[5] Kenelm Foster's scholarship, which carefully distinguishes Dante's approach to the relationship between the order of nature and the order of grace from the approaches of his immediate contemporaries and predecessors (and, in particular, from the approach of Aquinas), remains foundational. For two recent monographs which explicitly build on Foster's seminal work on this subject, see John Took, *Conversations with Kenelm: Essays on the Theology of the Commedia* (London: University College London Arts & Humanities Publications and Ubiquity Press, 2013); and Christopher Ryan, *Dante and Aquinas: A Study of Nature and Grace in the Comedy* (London: University College London Arts & Humanities Publications and Ubiquity Press, 2013).

[6] See Kenelm Foster, *The Two Dantes, and Other Studies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977). In Aquinas' synthesis, the moral virtues are endowed with 'an entirely new setting and direction' as they become 'organs of grace': the moral virtues are 'offered to God as a way – as *the* way – of cooperating with his grace' (Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 254). See also Etienne Gilson, *Dante the Philosopher*, trans. by David Moore (London: Sheed and Ward, 1949; Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968). Gilson argues that Dante writes his *Monarchia* as an anti-thesis to Aquinas' *De regimine Principum* (Gilson, *Dante the Philosopher*, pp. 191-201).

[7] Foster, *The Two Dantes*, pp. 238-39: 'It was much less easy to find Christianity a place, *consonant with the philosophical model*, within the course of human life on earth; for here philosophy seemed already to provide all the required concepts [...] the influence of divine grace in the human soul and body in the present life – a central issue for Christian ethics – is entirely ignored' [the italics are Foster's]. Dante conceptualises human nature as a limit which 'had to be crossed – transcended and left behind – in the hero's quest for God' (*Ibid*., p. 157); 'the idea of human perfectibility to be realised before death and within the limits of human nature; this being distinguished with a quite new precision, from the "new man" of Christian teaching, from our nature as transformed by divine grace' (*Ibid*., p. 220).

[8] See, for example, Bernardo Bayona Aznar, 'Marsílio di Pádua frente a los planteamientos dualistas de Juan de Paris y Dante favorables a la autonomia de poder temporal, in Princípios: Revista de Filosofia', DUAJ Open Access Journals (2005), <http://www.principios.cchla.ufrn.br/17-18P-57-75.pdf> [accessed 01 October 2013], 57-75.

[9] Giles of Rome's *De ecclesiastica potestate* (1302) and Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam* of the same year advocate the direct subordination of the temporal to the spiritual power. See Giles of Rome, *De ecclesiastica potestate*, ed. and trans. by Arthur P. Monahan (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990) and Giles of Rome, *De renunciatione pape,* ed. and trans. into German by John R. Eastman (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

[10] For the wider historical and intellectual context of the *Monarchia* and an introduction to its reception, see Anthony K. Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy: An Historical Study with Accompanying Translations of Dante Alighieri's 'Monarchia', Guido Vernani's 'Refutation of the "Monarchia" Composed by Dante', and Pope John XXII's Bull 'Si fratrum'* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 3-107. For the reception and censorship of the *Monarchia* in the sixteenth century, see Davide Dalmas, *Dante nella crisi religiosa del Cinquecento italiano* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2005): 'Dopo esser stato esaltato nel *Catalogus Testium Veritatis* (1556), perché "probavit Papam non esse supra Imperatorem, nec habere aliquod jus in Imperium", il trattato dantesco è stampato per la prima volta a Basilea nel 1559 presso Oporinus, in una raccolta di scritti politici – aperta dal *De formula Romani Imperij* di Andrea Alciato – concordi nell'elevare l'autorità imperiale rispetto a quella papale' (pp. 12-13).

[11] The most recent treatment of the reception of the *Convivio* is Simon A. Gilson, 'Reading the *Convivio* from Trecento Florence to Dante's Cinquecento Commentators', in *Italian Studies*, 64, no. 2 (2009), 266-95. Gilson finds no positive evidence to suggest that Dante circulated the treatise during his lifetime, although he notes Claudia Villa as, most recently, sustaining the minority view (note. 4, p. 268). The three thirteenth century commentators who do make use of the *Convivio* in their commentaries on the *Commedia* (Dante's son Pietro, Andrea Lancia, and the writer of the *Ottimo Commento*) either knew Dante directly or were active in Florence (p. 269). This suggests a limited dissemination of the text in the immediate period after Dante's death. Indeed, as Gilson shows, the work only attained wide circulation beyond Tuscany with the *editio princeps* in 1490.

[12] Bruno Nardi, *Dal 'Convivio' alla 'Commedia'*, ed. with a new introduction by Ovidio Capitani (Rome: Muratori, 1992), p. 311: 'Nella *Commedia* non v'è più traccia dei "duo ultima" della *Monarchia*.'

[13] Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 160; Gilson, *Dante the Philosopher*, pp. 277-78.

[14] Dante, *Monarchy*, trans. and ed. by Prue Shaw, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. xxxiii.

[15] See Dante's *Monarchia*, trans. and commentary by Richard Kay (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), pp. xx-xxxi; and Anthony K. Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy*, pp. 3-49.

[16] Albert Russell Ascoli has sought to challenge this dominant 'evolutionary interpretation of Dante's literary career and intellectual biography, usually with the *Commedia* as ideal telos' and to prepare for a reading of the poem 'beyond the palinode'. See Albert Russell Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 276; p. 274.

[17] John A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 9.

[18] *Ibid*., p. 64.

[19] *Ibid*., p. 189.

[20] See Nicola Fosca, gloss to *Purgatorio*, xxvii.103-08: 'Pare proprio che il trattato politico abbia esercitato un'influenza negativa sugli esegeti della Commedia'.

[21] Charles S. Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 65-66.

[22] *Ibid*., pp. 265-66.

[23] See also, however, Scott's nuancing of Singleton's position, in Scott, *Dante's Political Poetry*, n. 10, p. 257.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 134.

[25] Peter Armour, *Dante's Griffin and the History of the World: A Study of the Earthly Paradise (Purgatorio, cantos xxix-xxxiii)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 69-70; p. 67.

[26] Scott, *Dante's Political* Purgatory, pp. 188-89.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 189.

[28] With regard to the medieval context, Scott revealingly claims that 'no one before Dante had thought of setting up a figural link between the happiness attainable through good government [...] and the Earthly Paradise lost through original sin [...] Dante does not hesitate to subvert the myth of Eden [which was] seized upon and transformed by Dante's political vision [...] it became a "political" goal accessible in this life to the whole of humanity' (Scott, *Dante's Political Poetry*, pp. 66-67). With regard to the commentary tradition on Dante's Earthly Paradise in Purgatory, Scott observes that 'All too often, the pageant described in *Purgatorio* XXIX has been seen solely as a representation of Holy Writ and a static vision of the ideal church' (*Ibid*., p. 187).

[29] See Jacopo Alighieri, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, iv.106-08, *Dartmouth Dante Project*: 'le sette mura le sette liberali arti significano, le quali di necessità essere convengono circostante al filosofo e poetico intelletto'. See also Graziolo Bambaglioli, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, iv. 106-07, *Dartmouth Dante Project*: 'pro castro illo intelligit ipsam scientiam et genus scientiae, per istos VII muros, intelligit VII artes scientias liberales'. Although later commentators have suggested other readings, the consensus view of his first readers is that Dante allegorically represents the pathway of philosophy.

[30] See Virgil, *Aeneid*, viii.134-37, in *Virgil*, ed. and trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, 2 vols (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), II, 2-367 (p. 68), and *Monarchia*, II.iii.11-17. See also Benvenuto da Imola, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, iv.121: 'ipsa [Electra] fuit radix nobilissimae plantae, scilicet trojani et romani generis; ideo autor, volens commendare nobilitatem utriusque gentis, incipit ab ista tamquam ab antiquo principio nobilitatis'.

[31] *Monarchia*, III.xv.7. Although it might initially seem peculiar that Dante should locate in Hell an image of secular happiness, one should remember first that the virtuous pagans occupy a luminous, open and verdant plain at Hell's summit ('in prato di fresca verdura' (*La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, iv.111)) and, secondly, that their only suffering, the loss of union with God, is also shared by unbelievers in this life who may like them attain a limited secular felicity. For a full development of the argument equating the secular happiness delineated in the *Monarchia* with the figure of the virtuous pagan in the *Commedia*, see 'Chapter 5: The Virtuous Pagans', in George Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), pp. 122-46.

[32] Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'Introduction to *Purgatorio*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 92.

[33] Alessandro Scafi's study, *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth* (London: The British Library, 2006), gives an excellent account of the geography and cartography of Purgatory before and after Dante. Even with regard to his eschatological landscaping, Scafi notably emphasises that Dante's originality lies more in the manner of his material's elaboration than in the material itself: 'the poem voiced the geographical and cosmographical knowledge of his age, even though Dante elaborated it in a strikingly original manner' (*Ibid*., p. 182).

[34] See, for a short introduction to the theology of Purgatory, Robert Ombres, *Theology of Purgatory* (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1978). In the book's second part, Ombres appeals to Dante's *Commedia* because it provides 'some actual, successful examples of the kind of poetic and symbolic realisations the doctrine of Purgatory can sustain' (*Ibid*., p. 51). See also, for a brief overview, Peter Armour, 'Purgatory', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 728-31.

[35] Armour, 'Purgatory', p. 728.

[36] Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae*, 181, in *Corpus Thomisticum* [accessed 01 October 2013]: 'cum per poenitentiam ad statum caritatis sint reductae, per quam Deo sicut ultimo fini adhaeserunt, per quod vitam aeternam meruerunt.'

[37] See Aquinas, *De malo*, 7, a. 11, co., in *Corpus Thomisticum*.

[38] Aquinas, *Compendium Theologiae*, 182, 'In aliis autem oportet per aliquam poenam huiusmodi peccata purgari, quia ad vitam aeternam consequendam non perducitur nisi qui ab omni peccato et defectu fuerit immunis.'

[39] *Quaestio de Purgatorio,* 8, p. 521b, in Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 5 vols, ed. by Institutum Studiorum Medievalium Ottaviensis (Ottawa: Commissio Piana, 1945), V, *Supplementum tertiae partis*: 'dicendum quod acerbitas poenae proprie respondet quantitati culpae; sed diuturnitas respondet radicationi culpae in subiecto.' It is therefore misleading to maintain that, in the traditional view, 'the idea of moral discipline is inapplicable to the afterlife'. See the *Purgatorio*, ed. by Durling and Martinez (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 10. The author of the of *Supplementum* explicitly leaves scope not only for the 'temporal punishment' but for curative moral discipline so that the stain and root of vice are removed. To describe this purgatorial punishment, Aquinas nonetheless resorts to the customary 'corporeal fire', a punishment which is doubly painful: at an intellectual level because the spiritual soul recognises itself to be imprisoned within an inferior substance; at a physical level because – through God's mysterious power – the spiritual soul, although incorporeal, actually experiences the corporeal pain of the fire. (*Compendium Theologiae*, 180: 'Et hoc ipsum considerandum a spirituali substantia, quod scilicet creaturae infimae quodammodo subditur, ei est afflictivum'; 'Inquantum vero ignis cui alligatur, corporeus est, sic verificatur quod dicitur a Gregorio, quod anima non solum videndo, sed etiam experiendo ignem patitur.')

[40] *Ibid*., 3, p. 517a: 'Dicendum quod in purgatorio erit duplex poena: una damni, inquantum scilicet retardantur a divina visione; alia sensus, secundum quod ab igne corporali punientur.' This also explains the difference in kind between infernal punishment (poena exterminantis) and purgatorial punishment (poena corrigentis). Where as the punishment in Hell 'has no cleansing force' because the souls 'lack charity', the souls in Purgatory 'are adorned with charity, by which their wills are conformed to the divine will; it is owing to this charity that the punishments they suffer avail them for cleansing' (*Compendium Theologiae*, 182: 'ex cuius caritatis virtute poenae quas patiuntur, eis ad purgationem prosunt: unde in iis qui sine caritate sunt, sicut in damnatis, poenae non purgant, sed semper imperfectio peccati remanet, et ideo semper poena durat.' See also *De malo*, q. 7, a. 11, co.)

[41] This certainly seems to have been the assumption governing the abstract of the recent Oxford University Press series on the seven deadly sins (2003-2006), which misleadingly states that 'Dante populated the circles of Hell with them.'

[42] This has not hindered, however, ingenious attempts to fit the scheme of the seven capital vices onto the moral structure of the *Inferno.* For a survey of a number of these attempts, and some clear arguments against this approach, see Edward Moore, 'The Classification of Sins in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*', in *Studies in Dante. Second Series* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899; repr. 1968), pp. 152-209 (pp. 152-82).

[43] There has been a marked increase in scholarship on the tradition of the seven capital vices in medieval thought and practice since the seminal study of Morton Bloomsfield in 1952. Sixty years on, Richard G. Newhauser, at the vanguard of this scholarly renewal, was able to illustrate how Bloomfield's work had opened the floodgates to ever-more detailed examinations of the vices in such varied contexts as medieval Christian anthropology, academic theology, homiletic literature, and penitential practice. See Richard G. Newhauser, Introduction, in *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins*, ed. by Richard G. Newhauser and Susan J. Ridyard (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2012), pp. 1-16.

[44] Canon 21 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215/16), 'Omnis utriusque sexus' commands every Christian to confess his or her sins at least once a year. See Siegfried Wenzel, 'Preaching the Seven Deadly Sins', in *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard. G. Newhauser (Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), p. 150.

[45] To cure the vices was to cure the very roots of all sinful actions and thoughts because vice is to sin as habit to act. See, for example, Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*,Ia 2ae 71, 2 ad 4: 'peccatum comparatur ad vitium sicut actus ad habitum.'

[46] For a recent introduction to the development of confession, see Robert Rusconi, *L'ordine dei peccati: la confessione tra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002).

[47] Brunetto Latini, *Il Tesoretto*, ed. and trans. by Julia Bolton Holloway (New York: Garland, 1981): 'Ond'io tutto a scoverto / Al frate mi converto / Che m'a penitentiato; / E poi ch'i son mutato, / Ragion è che tu muti'. Interestingly, in the *Tresor*, Brunetto substitutes 'mescreance' [disbelief] for sloth, and orders the vices and their various offshoots differently. See also Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, ed. and trans. by Pietro G. Beltrami, Paolo Squillacioti, Plinio Torri and Sergio Vatteroni (Turin: Einaudi, 2007), II.131, pp. 628-30.

[48] Aquinas discusses the vices individually in *De Malo* and in the *Summa theologiae* (where they are absorbed as part of his overarching Christian-Aristotelian synthesis). See Eileen C. Sweeney, 'Aquinas on the Seven Deadly Sins: Tradition and Innovation', in *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Newhauser, pp. 85-106. The influence of William Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis et de virtutibus* on Dante's Purgatory was convincingly demonstrated by Siegfried Wenzel. See Siegfried Wenzel, 'Dante's Rationale for the Seven Deadly Sins' in *Modern Language Review*, 60 (1965), 529-33. Although it is possible that Dante came across Peraldus' treatment second-hand ('the material which Peraldus had collected was soon used and propagated by authors of Latin and vernacular manuals on the sins and on confession'), it seems that Peraldus' treatise was well diffused in Florence: it was one of the 'two wellsprings [...] of Dominican practical or moral theology'. Dante may even 'have seen the Summa during his contacts with Dominican friars at Santa Maria Novella' (*Ibid*., p. 532). However the implications of this important connection have yet to be more systematically explored by Dante scholars. This may be, in part, due to the lack of a critical edition (a semi-critical edition of the text in three volumes is currently underway. See the Peraldus Project: «http://www.public.asu.edu/~rnewhaus/peraldus/»). There have, however, been some preliminary responses to Wenzel's study: see Franco Mancini, 'Un *auctoritas* di Dante', in *Studi danteschi*, 45 (1968), 95-119 (pp. 101-02); Carlo Delcorno, 'Dante e Peraldo', in *Exemplum e letteratura tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989), pp. 195-227; Luca Azzetta, 'Vizi e virtù nella Firenze del Trecento (con un nuovo autografo del Lancia e una postilla sull' "Ottimo Commento")', in *Rivista di Studi Danteschi* 8: 1 (2008), 101-42.

[49] Thus, for example, Alain de Lille gives model sermon material on each of the seven vices and on corresponding virtues in his 'Summa de arte praedicatoria', in Alanus de Insulis *Opere*, in Migne: *PL*, CCX, pp. 111-198. Alain de Lille then uses the seven vices and corresponding virtues as the basic structure in his sermon material on confession and penitence: 'Septem ergo principalibus vitiis, eptem principales virtutes sunt opponendae. Contra superbiam, humilitas; contra invidia, charitas; contra iram, patientiae longanimitas; contra acediam, mentis hilaritas; contra avaritiam, largitas; contra crapulam, sobrietas; contra luxuriam, castitas' (p. 174. B [99]). The influence of de Lille on Dante has tended to focus, tantalisingly, on *Anticlaudianus* and *De planctu naturae.* See, for example, the entry and bibliography in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, I, pp. 89-91: 'sono appunto questi scritti [il *De planctu naturae* e *L'Anticlaudianus*] che hanno maggiore interesse per gli studiosi di questioni dantesche' (p. 90). However, the influence of de Lille's work on the virtues and vices could be, for a reading of Dante's Purgatory, of similar interest (although such scholarship is held back by the fact that de Lille's treatise of that name, *De virtutibus et vitiis*, as yet remains unpublished).

[50] See Alanus de Insulis, 'Summa de arte praedicatoria', in *Opere*, in Migne, *PL*, CCX, p. 111.c. [53] - p. 114.c [55]: 'Praedicatio est, manifesta et publica instructio morum et fidei, informationi hominum deserviens, ex rationum semita, et auctoritatum fonte proveniens [...] Infine vero, debet uti exemplis, ad probandum quod intendit, quia familiaris est doctrina exemplari.'

[51] Alain de Lille explicitly compares the suffering of earthly penitence to Purgatory as two kinds of purgatorial fire: 'Est autem duplex ignis purgatorium, unus in via scilicet poenitentia, alius post vitam scilicet purgatoria poena' (Alain de Lille, 'Summa de arte praedicatoria', p. 174 d [100]). Alain exhorts the sinner to the first fire (in this life) because its pain will be but a shadow of the pain otherwise experienced in the second fire of Purgatory: 'Primus enim purgatorius, quasi umbra est et pictura secundi; quia, sicut umbra et pictura materialis ignis nullum infert dolorem sed ipse ignis materialis cruciatum vel adorem infert; sic ignis poenitentiae nihil habet amaritudinis juxta secundi purgatorii comparationem. Quia, ut dicit Augustinus, poena purgatorii multo gravior est qualibet temporali' (p. 175. B [100]).

[52] For example, Nicola Fosca quotes Giuseppe Giacalone's view: 'La tecnica delle distinzioni è medievale, ma la sostanza del ragionamento e della dottrina morale è ancora aristotelica. Il Purgatorio è distinto secondo il *lumen naturale* di Virgilio' (Nicola Fosca, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xvii.97-102, *Dartmouth Dante Project*). But this is overly crude as Fosca, citing Luigi Pietrobono, emphasises: 'Per quanto concerne Virgilio, bisogna sempre tener presente che il vate latino "né accorre in aiuto di Dante di sua spontanea volontà, né adempie alla sua missione con le sue sole forze [...] Virgilio non muove, è mosso; non comanda, obbedisce".' (Nicola Fosca, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xxvii.103-08). That is, although Virgil tells Dante-pilgrim at the gateway to the Earthly Paradise that he has guided him though Purgatory by the power of his natural intellect ('ingegno') and his knowledge or art ('arte'), we must remember that Virgil also demonstrates clear knowledge of revealed truths including the mystery of the Incarnation (*La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, III. 34-45) and that reason responds to, and is led by, revelation in this canticle.

[53] Wenzel, 'Dante's Rationale', p. 532: 'Pietro's commentary is in perfect substantial agreement with Peraldus.'

[54] See Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 189; see also John A. Scott, 'The Moral order of *Purgatorio*', in *Understanding Dante* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2004), pp. 195-97.

[55] The language of Augustine is even more explicitly evoked in the first words of Dante-pilgrim in *Paradiso* I: 'Già contento, *requïevi*' (*La Divina Commedia: Paradiso*, i.97), a speech directly preceded by the latinism 'a quïetarmi' (*La Divina Commedia: Paradiso*, i. 86).

[56] *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xvii. 94-96.

[57] Dante, *Monarchia*, III.xvi.7-9.

[58] Matthew xxii. 36-40

[59] For analysis of Dante's use of the beatitudes see Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, 'Le beatitudini e la struttura poetica del *Purgatorio*', in *Giornale storico della letteratura Italiana* 101 (1984), 1-29; Sergio Cristaldi, 'Dalle beatitudini all'*Apocalisse*: il Nuovo Testamento nella *Commedia*', in *Lettere classensi* 17 (1988), 23-57; V.S. Benfell III, '"Blessed are they that hunger after justice": From Vice to Beatitude in Dante's *Purgatorio*', in *The Seven Deadly Sins: From Communities to Individuals*, ed. by Richard Newhauser (Leiden: Brill, 2007) pp. 185-206.

[60] McInerny, *Dante and the Blessed Virgin*, p. 49.

[61] *Ibid*., p. 48.

[62] Benvenuto da Imola, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xvii. 115-17, *Dartmouth Dante Project*.

[63] *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xiv. 86-87.

[64] As Virgil points out in Purgatory, the only limit to the soul's receiving of the spiritual good of God is in itself (*La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xv. 70-72).

[65] *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xiii. 94-96.

[66] L'Ottimo Commento, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, x.121-129, *Dartmouth Dante Project*: 'La quale [superbia] fa porre loro la speme nelle potenzie mondane'.

[67] Augustine, *In Evangelium Ioannis tractatus centum viginti quatuor*, I. 13: 'Omnes homines de carne nascentes, quid sunt nisi vermes? Et de vermibus [Deus] Angelos facit'.

[68] Jacopo della Lana, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, x.121-23, *Dartmouth Dante Project*: 'qui esclama contra la superbia, e dice in particolare *cristiani*, imperquello che d'altra legge non va in Purgatorio, con ciò sia che altra generazione non si può salvare'; Benvenuto da Imola, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, x.121-23, *Dartmouth Dante Project*: 'Unde dicit: *O superbi cristiani*, notanter dicit christiani, quia infideles ad purgatorium non veniunt'; Francesco da Buti, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, x.121-29, *Dartmouth Dante Project*: 'Dice così: *O superbi cristian*; ecco che dirissa lo parlare suo pure ai cristiani: imperò che a stato di penitenzia et al purgatorio non vanno se non li cristiani'.

[69] See also *Convivio*, III.v. 20: 'sì come omai, per quello che detto è, puote vedere chi ha nobile ingegno, al quale è bello un poco di fatica lasciare.'

[70] See McInerny, *Dante and the Blessed Virgin*, p. 78: 'Thomas Aquinas did hold [...] that the best argument against the belief that such goods as wealth, food, and pleasure are able to fulfil our heart's desire is to have had them.'

[71] *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xx.22-24.

[72] *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xiv.115-123

[73] *La Divina Commedia: Paradiso*, xi. 28-117 (37). While I was working on material for this article at the University of Notre Dame, Zygmunt G. Barański gave a seminar in which he emphasised the strangeness (often passed over by scholars) of Dante's claim that St Francis was the second (after Christ himself) to embrace poverty (*Par*., XI. 64-75). What about all the saints before him? I suggested that perhaps what, for Dante, set St Francis and his first community apart from, for example, the Benedictine order, was St Francis' emphasis not only on individual but also on communal poverty. St Francis' first congregation could not own material wealth (or its buildings) but was granted only the 'use' of it by the Church, a singular regulation nonetheless confirmed by Pope Nicholas III's bull *Exiit qui seminat* (1279). It was only after Dante's death that Pope John XXII's bull *Ad conditorem canonum* (1322) effectively nullified the arrangement. Could Dante have envisaged the original Franciscan arrangement as a model for ecclesial poverty such that the Holy Roman Emperor (holding all temporal land and power) would cede the use, but not possession, of wealth and buildings to the Church? This would seem to be the implication of the strange theory of the Emperor's universal ownership expounded in the *Monarchia*. In any case, given his intense advocacy of the Imperial cause in the Italian peninsula and his commitment to an ideal of Franciscan poverty, it is unsurprising that, shortly after his death, Dante's authoritative voice was used to support the alliance between the imperial cause and the spiritual Franciscans which led, in 1328, to the coronation of Ludwig IV of Bavaria as Holy Roman Emperor and the installation of the spiritual Franciscan Pietro Rainalducci as anti-pope Nicholas V. See Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy*, pp. 34-41 (p. 37): 'Just how deeply Dante's elegant, poetical, and theological *Monarchia*, commandeered by Ludwig's propagandists, influenced these historic charades we can only conjecture, but we do know how it suffered.'

[74] *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xxviii.66.

[75] *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xxiii.22-25: 'Ne li occhi era ciascuna oscura e cava, / palida ne la faccia e tanto scema / tanto scema che da l'ossa la pelle s'informava.'

[76] V.S. Benfell addresses the relationship between the Aristotelian mean and the extreme demands of the supernatural law in V.S. Benfell III, 'From Vice to Beatitude', p. 191: 'This "moderate virtue" (or "golden mean") seems to contradict the ethics taught by Christ in the New Testament, which in many cases seem to embrace extreme notions of virtue.' Benfell, somewhat strangely however, reads the Purgatory in terms of a reconciliation between the Aristotelian mean and the extreme demands of the supernatural law: 'The extreme of one vice (gluttony) is purged and balanced by forcing the gluttonous over to the other extreme of complete abstinence from food, hoping thereby to create a properly temperate disposition. In addition, it is possible to view the purgative processes of all the terraces of Mount Purgatory, with their respective actions that are aimed at correcting the will, as fundamentally Aristotelian in that they are directed towards the establishment of virtuous habits' (*Ibid*., p. 202). However, this implies that the Aristotelian mean is the goal, whereas, as Benfell concedes, famous ascetics 'are explicitly praised' (*Ibid*., p. 202). A more natural reading is simply that, in contrast to the emphasis on the virtuous mean with regard to the sins of incontinence in Hell (an explicitly Aristotelian scheme), Purgatory enacts the call to Christian holiness which surpasses the demands of the natural law.

[77] The agon embodied in Christ's cry is a paradigmatic site, theologically, for the perfect union in Christ of the human and the divine natures. For Christ's forty-day fast in the desert demonstrated that his appetite was always obedient to his reason, while his acceptance of the cross demonstrates the obedience of his human reason, which would naturally recoil from death and suffering, to the divine. See Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 3a.18.

[78] The early commentators, including Benvenuto, naturally compare such Purgatorial pain to the voluntary penance of those seeking to purge themselves form the vice of gluttony in this life. Benvenuto da Imola, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xxiii.70-75, *Dartmouth Dante Project*: 'et cum hoc vehementer desiderant ad patriam pervenire, et ad hoc auxilium optant ab aliis.' See also Pietro d'Alighieri, gloss to *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, xxviii. 25-75, *Darmouth Dante Project*: 'auctor [...] describendo penam quam dicit animas pati in Purgatorio propter peccatum gule in fame et siti, fingit se hic nunc vidisse has umbras ita macilentas et in occulis obscuras et cavas etiam, ut dicit textus, quod forte posset reduci allegorice etiam ad illos homines qui in hoc mundo viventes in satisfationem huius viti gule cum abstinentiis et ieiuniis, quasi se purgando simili modo extenuati apparent.'