The Divine Comedy Of Dante: A Hierarchical Study In Ethics

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THE DIVINE COMEDY OF DANTE:
A HIERARCHICAL STUDY IN ETHICS

by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Honors with the B. A. Degree in Philosophy

Carroll College
Helena, Montana
April 2, 1973
Commemorative monuments, which in the 19th century always took the form of statues, preferably to be set up in the middle of a piazza, in former times were very often paintings. "Right in Santa Maria del Fiore one finds the first commemoratie monument erected to Dante. It was put up on the second cenenary of his birth, and is a panel painted by Domenico di Michelino."

Bargellini, This is Florence p. 248.
PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to take a philosophical look at the Divine Comedy of Dante. Since Dante is sometimes referred to as the ethical poet, I will limit myself to studying his ethical system.

In the course of his epic, Dante travels down into the underworld, as Virgil's Aeneas did, then up the slopes of the mountain of Purgatory, and finally arrives at the Empyrean, where the Godhead dwells in Heaven. Virgil, the symbol of human reason, leads him through both the Inferno and the Purgatorio. At almost the summit of Purgatory, Beatrice, the symbol of divine revelation, relieves Virgil of his task and guides the poet the remainder of the way. In this paper I will deal with the parts where Virgil is involved, or to the parts where philosophy is stressed.

Since this is still a broad undertaking, I have further limited myself to Dante's threefold division of Hell, that of incontinence, violence, and treachery, as my major point of focus.

The medieval mind was intrigued and ruled by hierarchical structures. With this in mind, I find it necessary to supplement this threefold plan with a gradated scale of corresponding vices in order to form a cohesive whole.

Many Dante scholars and critics maintain that the key to understanding the Divine Comedy lies in the second part of his work, the Purgatorio. If this be true in particular cases, I shall use it as a critical comparison to the Inferno, in setting up a hierarchical structure of ethics. The use of the Purgatory will also point to a positive element of his ethics, rather than a series of negations

as presented in the *Inferno*.

Sources that I have found to be invaluable in my research are the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, the *Nichomachean Ethics* of Aristotle and Karl Vossler's *Medieval Culture: A Study of Dante and His Times*, the product of a lifetime of study and research.

With few exceptions, I will omit any incidental details and personages, which Dante mentions throughout the entirety of his poem. Also, I will exclude most of the punishments and rewards which Dante so beautifully allegorizes. All of these elements would seem to hinder the philosophical purpose in writing and categorizing the derived ethical system.

For the past two years, the study of the medieval period and its culture has intrigued me. I attribute this interest to the influences and words of encouragement of Mr. Joseph Munzenrider, Mrs. Shirley Aranzulla, and Mrs. Erica Bizzari. This thesis, under the guidance of Dr. Richard Lambert, stands as a tangible result of my fascination with Dante and his philosophy. I would especially like to thank Sister Miriam Clare Roesler, O.S.F., for assistance in organization.
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In the year 1265, Dante Alighieri was born. In this same year Thomas Aquinas undertook the writing of his great work, *The Summa Theologica*. Also in this decade that surrounded the poet's birth, other memorable events happened: the seventh and last Crusade of Tunis was organized; the second Council at Lyons was meeting; and Tuscany, particularly Florence, was politically divided between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. In the latter event, Dante's family was closely allied to the cause of the Guelfs: the championing of feudal rights and the support of the Holy Empire under the leadership of the pope.

During his life, Dante was politically active; thus, in 1300 he became Prior of the Florentine government. Florence, in the meantime, had become predominantly Guelf; but even this political faction soon found itself divided into two parties, Parte Bianca and Parte Neri, according to priorities. Dante supported the Parte Bianca or White Guelfs, who favored papal reform. The purpose of this camp was to curb the ambitious plans of Pope Boniface VIII, who aimed at becoming master of the whole region of Tuscany. Boniface, however, in order to facilitate his well laid out plans, summoned Charles of Valois, brother of Philip, the Beau Roi de France. Florence, in retaliation, supported Charles of Anjou, who at the time was trying to reconquer Sicily, fallen
after the death of Frederick II. Dante proceeded to Rome as ambassador of Florence in an attempt to make peace with the Holy Father. On All Saints' Day, 1301, while Dante was in Rome, Charles of Valois entered Florence as protector of the Black party, and stirred up the age old vendettas against the Parte Bianca. At this time the leading officials of the Whites were exiled or killed and their property divided among the opposition.

Dante, one of the exiled, placed himself under the protection of Can Grande della Scala, Lord of Verona, from 1304 to 1310. After that time, according to Boccaccio, he went to Paris, a great theological center of the time. In the same year, Emperor Henry VII arrived in Italy and was regarded by the Ghibellines to be their ultimate hope of restoring Italy to its great splendor, known as the Holy Roman Empire.

Dante returned to Verona in the year 1315 and remained until 1317. Enjoying the patronage of the Scala Family, he began his Divine Comedy. In 1318, he moved to Ravenna, where he was patronized by Guido Novello da Polenta. It was here that he finished his great project of writing an epic. Guido sent Dante as ambassador to Venice, at which time he contracted malaria and died in Ravenna on the thirteenth or fourteenth of September in the year 1321.

Dante called his major work simply the Comedy, but "his admires during the Italian Renaissance always spoke of it as the Divine Comedy, and that is the title which comes down to us."¹ Dante's great poem was

celebrated throughout Europe immediately after his death. Tradition holds that in Florence, public readings of the *Comedy* were given in testimony to its greatest poet. Since the fourteenth century, the epic poem has ranked next to those of Homer, Ovid, and Virgil as a truly great classic. T. S. Eliot describes the *Divine Comedy* as being the greatest philosophical poem in his experience, seconded only by the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

In order to ascertain the greatness of Dante's poem, it is important to look at his vision of writing or his ideal. In every century there have been those who, in being concerned more with form than content, have produced works of art which we categorize today as manneristic. This does not appear to be the case with Dante. There had to have been some emotional and intellectual reason to cause a man to respond in such a manner as to write the *Divine Comedy*. Of Milton, it has been said, that his epic, *Paradise Lost*, was written primarily to give England its first epic. The reason seems to be different for Dante. He had an ideal that had to be stated. Domenico Vittorini sees the poet's purpose in this light:

Dante was not nationalistic. He saw the whole world as a unity of an Empire, under the guidance of a non-Italian Emperor. In the sphere of this unity, the Pope would have had the direction of spiritual ends of the public. Faith in natural ethics and ethical aims of existence would have guided the individual conduct of the people and art would have exalted the spirituality of personal experience. This was the world dreamed by Dante. He did not see it in act, but left to us, long members of posterity, the faith in the possibility of universal peace which

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resulted in the ethical conduct of various states and of individuals that formed it. For this Dante is a universal poet. Through this type of interpretation a very positive goal can be noted; that of making the will of God or the divine plan of the universe known to man. In the same vein, Dante, in his tenth epistle to Can Grande, states that the subject is "man as by freedom of will, meriting and demeriting, is subject to Justice rewarding or punishing." Four levels of meaning are generally considered as basic plateaus on which the poem can be understood. Besides the literal plot, symbolic significance lies on, first, a moral plane, explaining the conduct of man's personal life in relation to a fixed ethics; further, on an allegorical plane, describing man's condition and solutions for his living in community; and, what Dante calls an anagogical plane, where the soul is shown as pure essence, moving towards God.

Dante emphasizes the allegorical level as a key for understanding this work, as he states, "Ye that are of good understanding, note the teaching that is hidden under the veil of the strange lines."

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Cf. Piero Bargellini, *This Is Florence* (Florence, 1968), Bargellini, on the other hand, sees Dante's purpose like this: "The masterpieces of Florence art ... were all created in provocation, if not revenge, as for example, was Dante's poem, the Decameron of Baccaccio, .... A history of Florentine art could be written tit for tat." p.25.


It is my purpose to interpret Dante on the moral plane, even while reading through the allegorical to derive a system of ethics. It might probably be considered an injustice to Dante to narrow his poem to a philosophical, ethical meaning. Burns says: "For it embraces a complete summation of medieval culture, a magnificent synthesis of the Scholastic philosophy, the sciences, the religion, and the economic and ethical ideals of the latter Middle Ages."^6 But it is necessary to delve into one aspect to gain a wider understanding of the Comedy. In a work of this nature, some aspects must be treated cursorily or altogether eliminated. For Dante is by no means, an original thinker, incorporating as he does, so much contemporary thought. Thus, he can be viewed as Roman culture is viewed today, as eclectic, a label that does not lessen his work in any way. He has incorporated Christian or ecclesiastical dogma with Hebrew piety and the flame of Christian charity, and with the asceticism proper to Sts. Francis and Dominic. He can be linked to the ethics of Aristotle and Aquinas, to the politics influenced by Augustine and the Franciscans, and to the rationalism and intellectualism of Averröes.

The problem surfaces: how to approach his ethics? It is most probable that he studied the Nichomachean Ethics indirectly in the light of St. Thomas. Etienne Gilson asserts, "The more one desires to make Dante simply a Thomist, the more necessary it is to think of Thomism in the widest sense."^7 T. S. Eliot reiterates this point.

^6Burns, p.385.

"We are not to take Dante for Aquinas or Aquinas for Dante. It would be a grave error in psychology. The belief attitude of a man reading the Summa must be different from that of a man reading Dante, even when it is the same man, and that man a Catholic." 8

On the other hand, Vossler claims that his ethics is Thomistic in its theological and psychological implications. 9 In this thesis, therefore, both Aquinas and Aristotle will be utilized for parallel confirmation. This will aid in the deduction of any type of ethical system in the Comedy.

Paul Tillich defines man as "the only creature with a moral sense and ... the only creature with a sense of anguish." 10 If this be true, then man will always create an ethical code by which to live. He will deem some acts as being virtuous and other acts as contrary to virtue. The question arises, if man is to conform to an ethical standard, is there something outside of himself which dictates the norm of action; and if there is something exterior to him, what is it. The Greeks, particularly Plato, explained man's adherence to ethical principles through an external form--the Good. The Christian Scholastic philosophers also use this same conception, but see the universal Good as God.

8 Eliot, p.44
Dante, in compliance with this idea, proclaims:

The Good Supreme, sole in itself delighting,
Created man good, and this goodly place
Gave him as hansom of eternal peace.

This idea of a "Good Supreme" is very important to the understanding of the medieval mind. The Good is as absolute for Dante as it had been for Plato. The whole of medieval thought was gauged according to this absolute. In ethics an action is either wrong or right. There is no relativity involved. The system of ethics is constructed first and then the isolated incidents are considered. This movement from theory to fact is called a priori. This is far different from the modern scientific a posteriori method. The medieval system works rigidly in accordance with the a priori method.

Dante's ethics has retained at least one ethical idea that can be traced back to Plato. His world is conceived of in an ethico-political sense. Salvation can be regarded, then, as a communal type of perfection where man helps man in the process of perfection or ethical unity, although salvation is private.

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11 Dante, II. p.369, xxviii.91-6.
Cf. George Santayana, Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante and Goethe (Cambridge, 1910). "The value of the notion of the Ideal to a poet or a philosopher does not lie in what it contains positively, but in the attitude which it causes him to assume towards real experience." p.98.

12 Cf. Vossler. "The ethical criteria was confused with the political, so that neither an ethics nor a political science was developed that could be accepted at the present day." I.p.176.
Cf. ibid. "For the Stoics ethical good is wholly bound up in what is politically expedient." I.p.177.
The next problem that arises is, if the world is regarded in the Platonic sense of being derived from the Good, how do we account for the evil that exists. This must be explained in the Scholastic manner of distinguishing good and evil in themselves and the role of free will with them. Ozanam explains the dichotomy in this way: "Evil is not simply the absence of good, it is the deprivation of good. Good is perfection. Absolute perfection is being, carried to its highest power—that is, God."¹³ Evil in other words, is the willful aversion from the Good.

The main distinction between Dante and Plato is that for Plato, man's duty is to recognize the eternal form of Good, and in doing so, escape the world, using the intellect as the instrument of liberation. Plato's world is an imperfect illusion of the eternal. For Dante, however, it is man's duty to see the eternal essence of God as Love and in some manner transform the world to make it become more like Him. Man cannot escape the world but must change it into a closer unity with God. Dante, in the Comedy, escapes the physical for three days only to return and proclaim to mankind what he must do in conjunction with the eternal plan. Love is the power of the intellect which effects the changing of the universe. It is the original unity of everything within the universe. Within it lies salvation. Love, though, is not merely synonymous with knowledge. "An intensity of knowledge is love; a less intense love is knowledge."¹⁴ An aversion to this love, therefore, is a type of ignorance. Dante uses this notion of ignorance in determining what constitutes sin.

The aversion from the Good, in Dante's conception, is a willful choice. "Aristotle shows that unless man is altogether free he cannot be said to act justly or unjustly at all."\(^{15}\) Dante comes into full agreement with Aristotle concerning the role of the will as he states, "If free choice would be destroyed in you, then there would be no justice in happiness for well doing and misery for evil."\(^{16}\) Dante again declares more emphatically,

The greatest gift that God in His bounty made in creation, the most conformable to His goodness and the one He accounts the most precious, was the freedom of the will, with which the creatures with intelligence, all and only these, were and are endowed.\(^{17}\)

It is through freedom of the will that the reality of the moral life appears, and rewards and punishments are possible. Because of this idea of man reaping what he himself has sown, the concept of divine justice is possible. Without this freedom which implies the use of the intellect, man is on the level of Scholastic animality or brutes.

Freedom of will directs Dante to another Aristotelian concept— that of activity. Although Dante was influenced by contemplatives, like Bonaventure and Peter Damian, this notion of freedom issues an imperative that the thought or meditation is not merely enough for salvation. It is said of Aristotelian ethics, that the identification of activity with happiness is his most important discovery.\(^{18}\) Dante adopts this principle

\(^{15}\) Allan H. Gilbert, *Dante's Conception of Justice* (Durham, N. C., 1925), p.50.

\(^{16}\) Dante, II. p.213, xvi.70-2.


\(^{18}\) Vossler, I. p.183.

Cf. Santayana, "Plato says with his whole school: Discover the right principle of action, and you will have discovered the ruling force in the universe." p.76.
but he places it into a critical dialectic with contemplation. He allegorizes upon this subject in this manner: "Two things belong to the essence of this sacrifice; the one is that of which it is made, the other is the compact itself." Action and motivation complement each other.

Aristotle saw practical virtues as the rational mean between two extremes. Sin takes the form of excess or defect in the realm of human conduct. A virtue is a mean, but not in regard to the action but in relation to love as excessive, deficient or defective. Again the action or deed determines the sin; but the motivation, love, determines the gravity or inordinateness of the sin.

Dante and Aquinas seem to be in agreement on the two elements of sin: that of conversion to a perishable good, the material element of sin; and that of aversion from the imperishable good, the formal and completing element of sin. This is an extremely important point upon which much of this thesis is based. The Inferno and more particularly, the Purgatorio, will employ this principle frequently with regard to the process of damnation and purgation.

It is the formal element that condemns man, through divine justice, to Hell. Man, because of his free will, chooses the perishable good and averts himself from the imperishable good—God. If he repents, salvation

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19 Dante, III. p.77, v.43-5.

20 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (New York, 1947) "While there are two things in sin, viz. the act itself and its inordinateness, in so far as sin is a departure from the order of reason and the divine law, the species of sin is gathered, not from its inordinateness, which is outside the sinner's intention, ... but ... intention is directed." Bk. I, question 72, article 8, corpus. (Hereafter cited as Aquinas, S.T., I, q., a., c.) Dante seems to stand in total disagreement with Aquinas, on this point.
is at hand; but since the formal element is truly the cause of his damnation, the chances that he will repent are slim. "[Dante] is declaring that man is not condemned by God for any number of evil deeds, but only for a character in which evil wholly rules."\(^{21}\)

One factor in this self-damnation is despair. Virgil, at one point, warns Dante, "Turn they back and keep thine eyes shut, for should the Gorgon [symbol of despair] show herself and thou see her, there would be no returning above."\(^{22}\) Dante points to figures in the ante-chamber of Purgatory, who by his standards led the vilest of lives. Their salvation was attained in not despairing and turning their eyes upward to the Supreme Good. Traditionally this sin has been attributed to Judas, the apostle. For the medieval mind, there was a natural link between despair and betrayal in the figure of the disciple who forsook Christ.

Dante relies on the Thomistic principle of the two elements of sin and the concept of divine justice in making his distinction between damnation and purgation. Aquinas, commenting on divine justice and punishment, stated:

Now ... it is just: he who has sinned against God in his own eternity [that] should be punished in God's eternity. A man is said to have sinned in his own eternity, not only as regards continual sinning throughout his whole life, but also because

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\(^{21}\) Gilbert, p.119.

Cf. Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, tr. Stewart (New York, 1926). "But their greatest bondage is when, giving themselves to vice they lose possession of their own reason." p.57.

Cf. P. H. Wicksteed, Dante and Aquinas (London, 1913). "It is not that their repentance is unavailing, but that they do not repent." p.198.

\(^{22}\) Dante, I. p.123, ix.55-7.

Cf. Gardner. St. Isidore says, "A guilty deed is the death of the soul but to despair is to go down into hell." p.95.
of the very fact that he fixes his end in the sin, he has the will
to sin everlasting. Wherefore Gregory says: that the wicked
would wish to live without end, that they might abide in their
sins forever.

For this reason, Dante, in his *Inferno*, allegorically punishes the souls,
not for the formal element of their sin, but because they have chosen
to avert themselves from the immutable good. Their punishment is grounded
in the material element which they will eternally continue to do. This
material element is the social aspect of sin. Dante uses the Aristotelian
concept of *contrapasso* or retribution. Dante makes reference to this
device of justice in the *Inferno*: "Così s'osserva in me lo *contrapasso*." Dante seems to use this notion in conjunction with Aquinas' distinction
between commutative and distributive justice. Dante is not only con-
cerned with what the injustice is, but against whom it is afflicted.

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23 Aquinas, *S.T.*, I-II, q.87, a.3, c.. Also see Appendix II.

24 *Contrapasso* was the opinion of the Pythagoreans that each man
should suffer according to what he had done. Briefly, it is tit for
tat.

Cf. Gilbert. "Aristotle and Aquinas explain that this is often
insufficient, for the circumstances may require a heavier penalty.
A man who injures the person of a prince should receive not merely
equal personal injury, but something further, in that he has injured
the state over which the prince rules. Counterpassion must take into
account not merely the injury inflicted on the person, but the nature
of the action." p.76.

25 Dante, I. p.353, xxviii.139-42. Tr., "Thus is observed in me
the retribution."

26 Aquinas, *S.T.*, II-II, q.61, a.4, c.
The *Inferno* deals with punishing the sins that have become manifest in human society, often as acts of injustice, whereas, *The Purgatorio* purges the roots of sin rather than sins' effects on the social order. Hell punishes the material element while Purgatory purges the formal element. "Consequently, the *Purgatorio* deals directly with the seven capital sins which lie at bottom of all acts of sin and are potential in every heart, though they may never come to the surface." Hell, then, is the perpetuation of the sinful act throughout eternity, while Purgatory is the opposition to the sin itself.

Dante again points to disordered love as the formal cause of sin. Gardner states that since every agent acts from some love, then it is man's first business to set love in order. The whole moral basis of Dante's Purgatory rests upon a line ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi: "Set love in order, thou that lovest me." In the final analysis, the theme of repentance and purgation is predominant in the *Purgatorio*. "What has to be purged (not punished) is what Witte calls sinful propensities." Another constantly recurring theme throughout the *Comedy* is pride, a vice about which Dante's and Aquinas' ideas parallel each other. "Pride is said to be the beginning of every sin, in the order of the end .... Wherefore, pride, like a universal vice, is not counted along with the others, but is recognized as queen of them all." Dante admits

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27 Gilbert, p.114.
28 Gardner, p.107. Tr. from "Ordina quest'Amore, O tu che mi ami."
30 Aquinas, *S.T.* I, q.84. a.. . a..
to Virgil in the course of their three day journey, that if there is any sin of which he must repent and be purged, it is this one.

This sin has traditionally been linked to the personage of Satan, "the first proud spirit, who was the highest of creatures, who [fell] unripe through not waiting for light."\textsuperscript{31} Satan, the highest of the seraphs, became envious of God, and because of his pride was cast into the infernal pit.

With this foundation of ethical concepts laid, the hierarchical system of ethics can be formulated. Since Virgil, the symbol of human reason, leads Dante through Hell and into Purgatory, this thesis will be limited to those two volumes. Throughout the main body of the text, the terms listed above will be freely used without re-definition.

\textsuperscript{31}Dante, III. p.273, xix.46-8.
CHAPTER II: THE INFERNO

In the opening canto, Dante finds himself in a dark wood. Dante is not merely Dante Alighieri of Florence; he is Everyman. The dark wood connotes a losing of the self in search of salvation or the lethargy experienced by the ignorant and sinful. Dante attempts to climb the hill with the morning sunshine on it, representative of hopeful aspirations of a better life, gained by the consolation of philosophy.

He encounters three beasts, the leopard, the lion, and the she-wolf. Vossler thinks that these are representative of "our proneness to ambition and covetousness as the fundamental obstacles to moral and potential action."1 Allegorically, it does not matter if they be identified with violence, greed, and sensuality, or with pride, envy, and avarice, because they carry with them a higher sort of imagery: that of being representative of impediments to human reason, which controls the individual and the state.

Next, Virgil meets Dante, in order to guide him through the underworld by means of human reason or philosophy. At this point, Dante sets up the Scholastic distinction between faith and reason. Reason attains its validity in only temporal affairs. In matters of the supra-natural, faith is needed. William Barrett on this subject states, "Reason, in short, guides us to faith, and faith takes over where reason leaves off--

1 Vossler, p.180.
such is the happy and harmonious lot of man in the red, crystalline cosmos of Dante.²

Both Hell and Purgatory, in Dante's concept, are part of the world and part of our own earth; Paradise is not physical - all. This further illustrates the distinction between reason and revelation. In the Platonic sense, man must use philosophy to gain a certain perspective of the cosmos; but in the realm of the eternal, a higher form of intellect is required.

For both Plato and Dante, the soul is part rational and part irrational. "If it is set in harmonious order, the rational power must rule over the irrational forces of the soul, that is, over its spirited ardour and over its sensuous desires."³ Man is regarded as unity only when the sensuous appetites and spirited will are subject to reason. In this context, ethics is truly human and rational. We can be understood on the plane of philosophy, but virtue needs a matrix of revelation, if it is to be understood by man.

Truth, then, takes on a twofold nature: "that which is attainable by reason, and that which, though not attainable by reason, is not inconsistent with it."⁴ For this reason, The Inferno seems to be totally based on the rational, while The Paradiso needs the supra-rational if it is to be understood. Purgatory, being the intermediary, is a combination of the two.

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³ Vossler, p.179.
⁴ Wicksteed, p.100. He is referring to Aquinas' Contra Gentiles, I. 7.
The first class of damned that Dante meets in the Inferno is the Neutrals or uncommitted. He refers to them as "the wretched souls of those who lived without disgrace and without praise." This is an original and most characteristic invention of Dante. In his opinion, these souls were unfit for Heaven and barely admitted to Hell. As they were the outcasts of Hell. They are not cited as being dead, probably because in Dante's eyes, they were never really alive. The offense that the Neutrals share most in common is cowardice (viltà) or pusillanimity, which caused these figures to miss their calling and their mark. The opposite of this is the great soul (magnanimo). Even in Hell proper, there are some who truly have this great spirit, but who have chosen to use it towards evil. Dante harbors a special contempt for the Neutrals. If there is any segment of the Comedy which deals at all with the Aristotelian principle of activity, it is this circle of Hell. Merit or demerit with regard to each man's salvation implies the notion of activity. No action at all, Dante's opinion, deserves this scornful position in the ante-chamber of Hell.

In canto XI, Virgil expounds to Dante the plan of Hell proper. As was mentioned previously, an understanding of Dante is only possible in

5 Dante, I. p.49, iii.34-6.

6 Cf. Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics from Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York, 1941). Hereafter cited as Aristotle, Nich. Eth. "The incontinent man is unable to act .... And thus the incontinent man is like a city which passes all the right decrees and has good laws, but is like a city which passes all the right decrees and has good laws, but makes no use of them ...." VII, 10, 1152a, 8-22. Dante seems to have equated this definition of incontinence with neutrality. Nevertheless, he rejects the idea that the Neutrals are guilty of incontinence. With regard to this passage, it would serve our purpose best to substitute the word 'neutral' for 'incontinent'.

the eclectic sense. Dante, in ordering his \textit{Inferno} into three parts relies upon both Aristotle and Cicero. With regard to Aristotle, he asserts,

\begin{quote}
Rememberest thou not the words with which thy Ethics expound the three dispositions which are against the will of Heaven, incontinence, malice and mad brutishness, and how incontinence offends God less and incurs less blame.
\end{quote}

Aristotle in the seventh book of his \textit{Ethics}, differs slightly from Dante. He states that there are "moral states to be avoided. There are three kinds--vice, incontinence, and brutishness."\textsuperscript{8} The contraries of the first two are virtue and continence, and the opposite of the third type is a kind of super human virtue, a heroic and divine kind of nature.

The incontinent man, for Aristotle, is governed by excessive or bad appetites or passions. Ignorance, according to Socrates, is the cause of incontinence. The opposite virtue, continence, is attained through a Practical Wisdom.

Vice, for Aristotle, is a sin of self-indulgence. The cause of vice is not ignorance. On the contrary, it is willed more directly, but more unconsciously. Aristotle on this subject states, "The self-indulgent man ... is not apt to repent; for he stands by choice; but any incontinent man is likely to repent .... The former is a permanent [badness], the latter an intermittent badness."\textsuperscript{9}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[7] Dante, I. p.149, xi.78-84.
\item[8] Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, VII, 1, 1145a, 16.
\item[9] Ibid., VII, 8, 1150b, 29-35.
\end{footnotes}
Brutishness, Aristotle thought, was a vice personified and very rarely found in men, for the same reason that men of divine virtue are difficult to find. If heroic people are somewhat superhuman, then brutish people are considered to be inhuman. The intermittent evil of the incontinent is less grave than the permanent badness of the vicious persons; both of these should be considered as less odious than brutishness.

Dante retains Aristotle's category of incontinence but he alters the other two with the aid of Cicero. Aristotle's 'vice' becomes Cicero's 'violence' or 'force', and his 'brutishness' becomes Cicero's 'fraud'. This is especially noteworthy, because with the adoption of Cicero's terms, sin takes on more of a social element.

In the final analysis, Dante's threefold division is comprised of Aristotle's concept of incontinence in total in the upper division; the lower section of Hell proper consists of the two Ciceronian terms, violence and fraud, adapted from Aristotle's vice and brutishness. With regard to brutishness, Vossler says,

We shall seek in vain, however, either in Aristotle or Dante, any especial provision for bestiality—unless we wish to include under it, the extremest cases and examples either of intemperance or malice. But in that case this savagery would be dispersed through all the circles of Hell, and would still have no class of its own. This is true of Aristotle, but Dante makes a special provision for brutishness with regard to fraudulence. He divides the lowest region of Hell, that of fraudulence, into two subdivisions, that of simple fraud and treason. In this last circle lie the real brutes of Aristotle.

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10 Ibid., VII, 1, 1145a, 27-30.
11 Vossler, p.188.
Dante and Virgil now enter into the first section of Hell where the sinners of incontinence are maintained. Here Dante distinguishes between five types of incontinence. In a descending scale, they are lust, gluttony, avarice, and its opposite prodigality, anger, and heresy.

St. Thomas makes the distinction between carnal and spiritual sins. A carnal sin, usually linked to the sins of incontinence, is one where a passion is involved. Both Aristotle and Aquinas use the word 'appetite', whereby referring to incontinence proper as a sensitive appetite that cannot draw or move the will directly. It moves the will indirectly as a type of distraction and springs from the irrational part of the soul. The question surfaces, what is the relationship of the will to this kind of vice. Gilbert explains this polemic in this manner. "The incontinent man does things injurious to himself because of the will. Through himself he has desire for good, but through concupiscence is dragged toward the evil."13

This does not seem to give enough answer to the problem stated. Dante appears to draw from Aristotle on the will's relation to sins of incontinence: "Everything that is done by reason of ignorance is not voluntary."14 Therefore, men always desire the good, but because of this passion, are stupified or made ignorant; and this is the cause of this willful choice to sin. Of all the sins, those of incontinence are the least odious and are outside Hell proper in Dante's Inferno.

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12Cf. Aquinas, "Those sins which consist in spiritual pleasures, are called spiritual sins; while those which consist in carnal pleasures, are called carnal sins." S.T. I-II, q.72, a.2, c.

13Gilbert, p.52. Also see Appendix III.

The Stoics, still influencing some Christian sects of Dante's time and regarded as heretics, believed that all sins are of equal guilt and are subject to the same penalty. Both Dante and Aquinas explicitly refute this idea, drawing upon the idea of sins of weakness, which are on the outskirts of Hell; and sins of will, which are in the infernal city of Dis, Hell proper, closest to Satan.

The first two violations of continence are lust and gluttony. These sins subject reason to appetites of the flesh. Lust is the less odious of the two. It is regarded as the purely physical act of sex. The distinction drawn between love and lust is that love dreams of more than mere possession. Love believes itself to be a sharing of ideas and events between two lovers. A notion of public fulfillment is involved with love, whereas lust never progresses into this public fulfillment. It remains at the possessive stage and is merely the desire for self-gratifying love.

The formal element of sin in lust is its aversion from the immutable good of chastity. In hell the material element, the conversion to the perishable good of sensual pleasure, is punished by allowing these sinners to continue as they had in life. They are held in loathsome embraces of non-conjugal love for eternity.

Gluttony, the second of the sins of the flesh, is the conversion of the will to the mutable objects, food and drink. Gluttony is viewed as

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15 Cf. Aquinas, "Spiritual sins are of greater guilt than carnal sins: yet this does not mean that each spiritual sin is of greater guilt than each carnal sin; but that, considering the sole difference between spiritual and carnal, spiritual sins are more grievous than carnal sins, other things being equal." S.T., I-II, q.73, a.5, c. Dante seems to employ this Thomistic view in refuting the Stoic heresy.
more grave than lasciviousness because it is a yielding of the soul to the flesh without any fleshly motivations. It is more beastly than lust, and so its position in Hell is lower. The formal element of this sin is that it opposes the virtue of temperance.

Dante rejects the medieval device of punishing the gluttons with loathsome food. Instead he exposes them to an "eternal, accursed rain, cold and heavy," and the stench of the earth that recalls their sin. Thus, the material element of their sin is continued to effect their punishment.

Dante employs a principle of Aristotle and Aquinas in damming these souls. All those who suffer in Hell are suffering less now than they will at the Last Judgment, when the body is rejoined to the soul, because this reunion will increase their capacity for suffering. This is a reversal of their earthly experience where the belly was their god.

In the third round of Hell, Dante and Virgil encounter the sinners of avarice and prodigality. This sin is the result of an unregulated use of temporal goods. Dante employs the Aristotelian observation that avarice and extravagance are opposite forms of the same sin; both are an excessive concern with earthly possessions. The Aristotelian principle used is that of the Golden Mean. A virtue for Aristotle lies between two opposing vices. Courage, for example, is the mean between cowardice and rashness, and temperance is the mean between gluttony and insensibility. Or as Veatch says, "In a moral or ethical

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16 Dante, I. p.87, vi.8.

17 Cf. Dante, "Go back to thy science, which requires that in the measure of a creature's perfection it feels more both of pleasure and of pain. Although these people who are accursed never come to true perfection, they look to be completer then than now." I.p.93, vi.106-11.
situation, the thing to do is simply what the good man or the man of sense and practical wisdom would do."\(^{18}\)

As was stated before, the gravity of these sins of incontinence lies in the fact of what was desired. The more carnal a sin, the less odious it is. The sins of avarice and prodigality are more grave than lust or gluttony, because the object is more material and earthly and less carnal.

Dante, however, draws a fine distinction between these vices. He places the hoarders on the left, a place of more indignity than the prodigals, for their sin is more definitely antisocial and inhuman.

The souls of this circle in Hell are more deformed and unrecognizable than those in the other preceding circles, because they are more inhuman. Aquinas lends to Dante this explanation which aided him in this particular punishment:

\[\text{The degrees of sin may be considered on the part of the good to which the human appetite is inordinately subjected; and then the lesser the good, the more deformed is the sin: for it is more shameful to be subject to a lower than to a higher good. Now the good of external things is the lowest of human goods: since it is less than the good of the body, and this is less than the good of the soul, which is less than the Divine good. From this point of view the sin of covetousness, whereby the human appetite is subjected even to external things, has in a way a greater deformity.}^{19}\]

These souls are allegorically punished by rolling a huge rock back and forth in a perpetual tug-of-war. The material element, the conversion to earthly goods, is symbolized by the very boulder they roll. As these


\(^{19}\) Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.118, a.5, c.
two types were opposed to each other in life, so they are in death. The continuation of acting for a mutable good in this round is highly significant, in Dante's eyes, of the monotony involved in sin.

The fourth circle of Hell is inhabited by the angry. The material element of this sin is that these souls are filled with a "sullen indolence." The injustice of anger does not seem to lie in the act itself, but in the duration of this wrath. In many cases the angered person is not at fault, but the provoker of it is. In actions where anger is involved, the angry man thinks that he is unjustly treated; but the provoker who makes an evil plan has no such belief, for he knows who is injured. The one who inflicts the injury is the one who does an injustice.

Anger is considered a sin of incontinence because a passion usually provokes this anger. With regard to the duration of anger as being the vicious element, Aquinas writes, "the cause of anger, to wit, the inflicted injury, remains too long in a man's memory, the result being that it gives rise to a lasting displeasure, wherefore he is grievous and sullen to himself."21

Aristotle thought that anger was a less serious type of incontinence than the others, because it was not conquered by the sensual appetites and it listened somewhat to rational argument.22 Dante, on the other hand, felt that anger is more odious because the material element of

21 Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.158, a.5, c.
22 See Appendix IV.
this sin is both carnal and spiritual. It is carnal in that the passions incite it; but it is spiritual in the sense that a prolonged anger can very easily turn into violence, a full-fledged spiritual sin. The punishment is submersion in the classical river of Styx, where the souls vent their anger on each other. Thus damnation is the continuation of the material element of sin.

In the last round of incontinence, Dante encounters the heretics. This is strictly a medieval sin, as Aristotle obviously was not concerned with it. It is similar to anger in that it arises out of an appetite. The passion seems to be for the truth, but the truth has become perverted in the search. This is the carnal element of the sin. It is also like anger because it is a partially spiritual sin. The spiritual aspect of anger is the breaking of the bond which unites man to man. Heresy is a spiritual sin because it destroys the bond between man and God. For this reason it is ranked lower in Hell than anger. Both anger and heresy are sins of weakness, the carnal aspect of sin; and sins of the will, the spiritual aspect of sin.

The material element of the sin which is punished in the heretics, is the willful refusal of the divine truth. Their sin is the involuntary and voluntary lack of faith, or in Scholastic terminology 'negative' and 'positive' unbelief.

Heresy is a transitional sin for Dante and lies between the circles of incontinence and Dis, where the sins of violence and fraud are punished. Dante, throughout all the circles of incontinence, had been conscious of his hierarchical plan. From the sins of simple incontinence, which arise directly from a natural passion, he moves to those sins which
originate from a more material appetite. For the poet, a natural passion is one which sustains or procreates life; such as, eating and copulation. A purely material appetite is a passion for a material good, which indirectly sustains life. In his judgment, a material good is less carnal than a life sustaining good, and an abuse of the material good is a graver sin. With anger and heresy, he has found a natural transition from the carnal sins to the spiritual sins, because of their dual nature. He now passes into Hell proper, where the truly willful sinners are held.

Violence is the first of the truly spiritual sins and is seen as an outgrowth of anger. St. Thomas on this subject stated, "Anger is compared to hatred as the mote to the beam; for Augustine says in his Rule (Ep. ccxi): "Lest anger grow into hatred and a mote becomes a beam: Therefore anger is not the most grievous sin." The notions of habitualness and duration are employed here to demonstrate how sins of incontinence can move to a more odious type of vice.

Dante distinguishes among three kinds of violence. It is an injustice inflicted "against God, against oneself, and against a neighbor--in themselves, that is, or in things that are theirs." The least of these sins of violence is violence against neighbor. Thus these violent are in the topmost round of this circle. Dante makes casual reference to this subdivision of violence. He mentions the violence of the baron lords and condottieri, the leaders of paid mercenary armies, common to the thirteenth century. Their punishment is submersion in the Phlegethon, the classical river of blood.

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23 Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.185, a.4, c.

24 Dante, I, p.147, xi.31-2.
The formal element of this sin is the aversion from God's love and forgiveness. Dante concurs with Aquinas on this point.

It is clear that it is specifically the same act whereby we love God, and whereby we love our neighbor. Consequently, the habit of charity extends not only to the love of God, but also to the love of our neighbor.  

The material element of sin for which they are punished is their conversion to violence for its own sake. In relation to the violence of feudal lords, Dante seems to employ the Scholastic distinction of commutative and distributive justice. Therefore, if a serf inflicts injury on his lord, this is considered to be a sin of treason and is punished in the deepest circle of Hell. But if a lord does an injustice to his subject, it is merely a sin of violence. This hierarchical distinction of sin seems to be in compliance with the hierarchy of social classes existing at the time of Dante.

In the next round are the violent against themselves. This sin is manifested in two ways: suicide and spendthrift. The material element of suicide is the conversion to despair. The suicides have surrendered in the spiritual contest which is faith. Their sin is the violent separation of their bodies from their souls; their punishment is the eternal separation of these.

25 Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.25, a.1, c.

26 See page 11.

27 On its face this is impossible; for Aristotle, Nich. Eth., V, 11, 1138a, 9-13 (see Appendix V), held that a man could not willingly suffer injustice and positively states that the suicide does not treat himself unjustly.

Cf. Gilbert, "Aquinas says, that the irascible faculty, may in causing suicide, act unjustly against the rational part of the mind." p.63.
Spendthriftness is the second class of violence practiced against oneself. This sin arises from the sin of avarice, but it is different from incontinence. Avarice develops from the sensual appetities and is a carnal sin, but spendthriftness is the deliberate and ostentatious ruining of oneself which is in itself a kind of suicide. This sin is one of the will, not weakness, and for that reason it is more odious. The material element is the same as that of avarice in that they both deal with the conversion of the soul to the purely material, mutable good. The formal element of avarice arose from a passion, but this sin formally stems from the will.

The violent against God are situated in the last round of the circle of violence. This sin is manifested in three ways: blasphemy, a violence directed at God; sodomy, a violence which violates nature, God's child; and usury, a violence directed against art or industry, God's grandchild. "Violence," says Dante, "may be done to the Godhead by denying and blaspheming Him in the heart and by despising nature and her bounty, and therefore, the smallest round stamps with its seal both Sodom and Cahors and him that speaks despitefully in his heart against God." Two parallel relations can be drawn here. Simple violence is the outgrowth of intemperate anger, violence against God is an outgrowth of heresy. As heresy was more odious than anger because of the object towards which it was directed, so too, violence against God is regarded as a graver sin than simple violence.

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28 Dante, I. p.147, xi.46-51.
Pride and envy seem to be intimately bound up with the formal element of this sin, which is turning from God's love. Dante makes direct reference to this with regards to Capaneus, the mythical figure who defied Jove: "His chief punishment is that his pride is not abated; indeed no suffering save his own madness could be proportionate to his fury."\(^{29}\) Every sinner is in death as he had been in life, and his wickedness is its own penalty.

Sodomy, for Dante, seems to be the outgrowth of lust. It is a graver sin than lust because it is the willful choice to fly against nature. This is the distinction between its spirituality, rather than its carnality. "Nature was a compound of ideal purposes and inert matter. Life was a conflict between sin and grace."\(^{30}\) To pervert nature, for Dante, is a more grievous sin that to be merely distracted by it. Dante seems to draw from the following notion of St. Thomas:

> In matters of action it is most grave and shameful to act against things as determined by nature .... The order of nature is from God Himself. Wherefore in sins contrary to nature, whereby the very order of nature is violated, an injury is done to God, the Author of nature.\(^{31}\)

Usury, the last sin of violence, is directed towards nature's art. Usury, in brief, is breeding money from money. The only explanation for Dante's admonition of this sin, is that at the end of the thirteenth century, Florence had begun its Renaissance in an economic and commercial sense. Dante, representative of the universal order, medieval

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\(^{29}\) Ibid., I. p.183, xiv.64-5.

\(^{30}\) Santayana, p.77.

\(^{31}\) Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.154, a.12, c.
idealism, and aristocracy, loathed the advance of the merchant middle class. Usury had been discussed by Aristotle and Aquinas but never had it been given such a harsh treatment as Dante gave it. The following summarizes Aristotle's opinion:

Since man is constituted from things which are in accord with nature, other existing things furnish him food. Hence there is in all men a natural pecuniative instinct, that is, an instinct to acquire food, or money for food, from natural things, as fruits and animals. But that man should acquire wealth not from natural things, but from money only, is not according to nature.

In order to justify his position on usury with respect to nature, and nature in relation to God, Dante states, "Philosophy, for one who understands, ... notes, not in one place only; how nature takes her course from the divine mind and its art." Usury, like spendthriftness, finds its counterpart in the sin of avarice. Like avarice, it is the conversion to the mutable good, money, and like spendthriftness, it has a spiritual nature; but it differs from both because it has a more spiritual nature, in that it flies in the face of God, whereas the other two cause an injustice to humanity only.

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32 Cf. Ferdinand Shevill, Medieval and Renaissance Florence (New York, 1961). "In Dante's solemn conception of our earth as the proving-ground of souls, there was little, if any, place for the travel, commerce, experimentation, and other activities of a mundane kind which had transformed his native Florence from a nameless, sleepy hamlet to a lively metropolis with material and intellectual interests covering the whole world." p.192.

Cf. Aquinas. "To take usury for money lent is unjust in itself, because this is to sell what does not exist, and this evidently leads to inequality which is contrary to justice." S.T., II-II, q.78, a.1, c.

34 Dante, I. p.149, xi.97-100.
For Dante, usury is almost fraudulent. This is the reason for his placement of these souls on the edge of the very abyss which separates violence from fraudulence. Dante had used heresy as the transitional sin from incontinence to violence; now he uses this vice as the natural transition from violence to fraudulence.

The whole circle of violence, with the exception of violence against neighbor, seems to be very much out of line with the Aristotelian idea of malice. For, if we human beings can commit a wrong against our own reason, against God, and against nature, then all these are capable of wronging us. I do not think that Dante realized the full impact of these implications. To create his ethical system, he has depended upon the idea of an inherent justice in God, nature, and self. Sinning violently against these three creates a tension of injustice, if justice rests upon civic equality and reciprocity. Perhaps Dante had forgotten his ethics in justifying his own personal vendettas against his violent contemporaries.

In setting up his system of rank in this circle, Dante points out the difference between carnal and spiritual sins. He draws fine distinctions between the sins of incontinence and the corresponding vices to which they have degenerated.

Next he and Virgil cross the broad expanse of space which separates the violent from the fraudulent. Symbolically, this represents the greater degeneration of virtue in the sins of fraudulence. Fraud for Dante is that "which always stings the conscience, in that a man may practice on one who confides in him or in one who does not so place his confidence; it is evident that this latter way destroys simply the
bond of love, which nature makes."\(^{35}\)

Fraud, as compared with violence, is a sin peculiar to man in the sense that he specifically employs his reason for inhuman ends. A necessary requisite of fraud is a bond, general as in humanity, or specific, as in those whose confidence is due to closer bonds of relationship, nationality, benefaction or legal subordination. In the latter conditions of closer bonds, fraud has reached its worst from, that of treachery. Sinclair states that "fraud is the deliberate use of the distinctively human powers for inhuman ends."\(^{36}\) All the sins of fraudulence are punished according to the measure in which they are anti-social.

The circle of simple fraud is called Malebolgia or evil pouches. It consists of ten valleys in which each type of sin is assigned a special form of punishment representing its crime. They all observe the principle of contrapasso. In a descending hierarchical scale, these sins are pandering and seducing, flattery, simony, divining, barratry, hypocrisy, thievery, evil counseling, schism, and falsifying. All of these sins are considered types of fraud because of their social consequences. Many deal with fraud directed mainly at Church and State. The reader of Dante must realize that the divine order of perfection for the medieval poet is only realized when the Church and the State come into total harmony. This harmony is a social salvation, which considers "man in relations with his fellows."\(^{37}\)

\(^{35}\) Ibid., I. p.147, xi.52-6.


\(^{37}\) Gilbert, p.181.
It appears that the circle of fraud is a type of hierarchical micro-

ocosm of the entire ethical system. Very briefly, there are two
classes of simple fraud, and only one genus of proper fraud or treason.
The first class includes those sins which have their roots in incontinence
or induce others to sin against incontinence. The second class of simple
fraud includes those sins which have a broader connection to the sins
of violence. The third subdivision is treason. These sins are fraud-
ulent for their own sake. All the sins of fraud have a public tenor.
All the sins in the upper regions of Hell are more private in their
offense and thus their punishment is more private; whereas the sins of
fraudulence involve the provoking of another person to sin. Aquinas,
in accordance with Dante, stated that fraud "is contrary to the love of
God, against whose justice he speaks and contrary to the love of his
neighbor, whom he encourages to sin."\(^{38}\)

Of the first class of simple fraud, pandering and seduction are
the first sins treated. Their counterpart in the realm of incontinence
is lust. As lust giving into a sexual appetite, this vice is a "be-
trayal of innocence to lust."\(^{39}\)

Flattery, the next type of fraud, corresponds to the incontinent
sin of avarice. Aristotle describes this sinner as one "who contributes
pleasure, in order that he may get some advantage in the direction of
money or the things that money buys"\(^{40}\) As avarice is more odious than

\(^{38}\) Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.115, a.2, c.

\(^{39}\) Sinclair, p.243.

\(^{40}\) Aristotle, Nich. Eth., IV, 6, 1127a, 10.
lust and gluttony in the first part of Hell, so too this degenerate form is more odious than seduction in deepest Hell.

Both simony and barratry correspond to the one sin of avarice. The relationship here is to Church and State respectively. Because of their intemperate use of material goods, these sins oppose the divine unity and harmony, which only these two institutions can effect. These sins more openly oppose the divine order than any of the preceding vices; thus, these sins are more odious. It seems strange that Dante ranks the offenses against the State as graver. This fact truly represents his White Guelf or neo-Ghibelline attitude. The Church is merely representative of the divine order, whereas the state is truly representative of the public order. Frauds inflicted upon the State have more of an anti-social nature than fraud directed towards the Church. Dante seems to draw upon the Stoic distinction of law, natural and civil. Seneca in his essay De Otio aut Secessu Sapientis, stated, "Our life is spent in two states. The one is the great and truly public state .... The other is the little state, to which we belong because of particular conditions of our birth."[^41] Lex naturalis seems to be synonymous with lex divina, because the natural civil law emanates from the divine law. Dante adopts this interpretation to demonstrate that when a person violates civil law, he is going against both Church and State.

Of the second class of fraudulent sins which arise from the sins of violence, divination is ranked first. It is linked to simony, Simon Magus of Samaria being regarded as the founder of both sins. Simon was

[^41]: Vossler, p.190.
the person who offered money to the Apostles for their spiritual powers. In Dante's eyes, simony is not his greatest sin. He is primarily a diviner as his name Magus or magician implies. For this sin, Dante scorns him. Divining evolves from a sin of violence against God, in that it is blasphemy. "They are called diviners, as though they were full of God. For they pretend to be filled with the Godhead, and by a deceitful fraud they forecast the future to men." Secondly, it is a sin against man because it excites man to blaspheme against God. The real element of sin lies in this beguilement. It is a truly willful sin aimed at destroying both social and spiritual bonds. Both St. Thomas and Dante, almost alone, lifted their voices against the superstitiousness of astrology. Their battle seemed to be a losing one, since every major university and monarchy of the time employed the services of astrologers. Even medical men were not recognized to be qualified who were not at the same time astrologers.

Hypocrisy is the next sin of fraud. It seems to emanate from the vice of violence against neighbor, and it can be directed towards both Church and State. Its gravity lies in the fact that it is a breach of trust. The beguilement involved is far more pungent than in the other sins of fraud, noted above.

In the next ditch lie the thieves. The peculiarity of the sin of thievery is the conversion of high human powers of reason into brutal means for mere material possession. Indirectly it is an outgrowth of the sin of avarice, but more directly it is derived from usury in the

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43 Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.95, a.1, c.
circle of violence against God. This, of all the sins of fraud, corresponds with the Aristotelian idea of brutishness. The material element of this sin is the conversion to the material good and to fraud for its own sake. The formal element of the sin is its aversion to charity. St. Thomas writes,

Theft is a means of doing harm to our neighbor and his belongings; and if men were to rob one another habitually, human society would be undone. Therefore theft, as being opposed to charity is a mortal sin.

Therefore, since theft undermines in a more deliberate way, the foundation on which human society is constructed, Dante feels that it is more serious than the preceding sins.

Evil counseling and schism are the next vices. These arise from violence against God, neighbor and self. With regard to God, these vices oppose the divine unity. In relation to neighbor, these type of sinners use their great mental powers to divide mankind within itself. "The main thought is that great mental powers are a great trust and that the expending of them on ends which are not God's is treason." In relation to self, these vices divide the sinner himself "from the unity which is the effect of charity."

Schism is the greater sin of the two because it employs open rebellion and draws more souls to its sinful ways. The material element of both sins is the conversion to temporal power. The formal element is envy because they oppose charity. The great difference between the two

\[\text{\cite{Ibid., S.T., II-II, q.66, a.6, c.}}\]

\[\text{\cite{Sinclair, p.329.}}\]

\[\text{\cite{Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.39, a.1, c.}}\]
is that the total effect on society is greater in schism than in false counseling.

The last of the sins of simple fraud is falsifying. It is similar to the sins of theft and divining in that it arises from usury. The peculiarity of this vice lies in the total deception which is effected. A form that this sin takes is alchemy. The material element is somewhat carnal in that these sinners desire material goods. The formal element is pride because these sinners desire to take part in the act of creation which is proper to God. This vice has a tendency to undermine both the State and the Church in that it breaks the "bond of love which nature makes." 47

This section of Hell, that of simple fraud, is the most problematic part of The Comedy to reconcile into the hierarchical ladder. Dante is very methodical in his dealings with the first class of fraud. The vices are arranged according to the sins of incontinence from which they spring. With regard to the class of fraudulence which arises from violence, Dante seems to have lumped all the sins of violence into a general pool from which he draws. He also seems to be regarding the total social effect of the sins, rather than the material elements of sin. All the sins of simple fraud have envy as the formal element, yet the arrangement of these vices in Malebolgia seems somewhat non-methodical by the criteria used thus far.

As usury had been a transitional sin between violence and fraud, falsifying is also an intermediary vice between simple fraud and treachery, the greatest sins in all of Hell.

47 Dante, I. p.174, xi.61.
In a descending scale, treachery can be regarded as manifested in four ways. Treachery is the willful injury of family, country, guests, and rightful lords and benefactors. In this circle of Hell dwells Lucifer. All four types share in his great sin, pride. The sinners here are not merely vile in themselves, but they are guilty of dragging down all human nature "by sinning against the public order, in which alone human virtue can reach its perfection." The use of the highly sophisticated intellect adds to the gravity of their sin, "for where the equipment of the mind is joined to evil will and to power men can make no defense against it."

Treachery, for Dante, is more than a dissolving of the bond of unitive love by ingratitude. It opposes all human obligations, making this sin most inhuman. The Aristotelian 'social animal' is regarded as such because of obligations which men make among themselves. Treachery directly violates justice in that it destroys the social life of man.

The greatest gift from God to man is Free Will. The willful misuse of it constitutes the greatest sins.

The principles of human acts are the intellect, and the appetite, both rational and sensitive. Therefore even as sin occurs in human acts, sometimes through a defect of the intellect, ... so too does occur through a disorder consisting in a disorder of the will.

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48 Gilbert, p.86.  
50 Aquinas, S.T., I-II, q.78, a.1, c.  
Cf. ibid., S.A sin committed through malice is more grievous than a sin committed through passion .... It is one thing to sin while choosing, and another to sin through choosing. For he that sins through passion, sins while choosing, but not through choosing because his choosing is not for him the first principle of his sin." S.T., I-II, q.78, a.4, ad.3.
In conjunction with this, both Aquinas and Dante agree that the latter type is the most grievous.

On the subject of unity and obligation, Dante points to the formal element of this sin of treason. "That love which nature makes is forgotten" by these sinners; they could not have sinned so terribly except for their violation of a "special trust." In his concept, not every human being can sin by treason because not everyone is capable of building a relationship on such intimate trust. But for those who are capable of this type of relationship, both the possibilities of the highest gain or the lowest demerit in afterlife exist. Treachery then is the deliberate and contrived severing of the closest human ties. The powers of the mind are prostituted for the cruelest ends imaginable. Treachery is the most anti-social of sins and for this reason it is the most damnable.

In the first of the four concentric zones of the Cocytus, the classical river of treason, lie the treacherous to family. For Dante, this is the least offensive form of treachery because of the lack of a choice in deciding the bond of love.

Treachery to country or cause is lower in Hell because the public interest is more sacred than the private. A correlation exists between this vice and treachery to the family. As a person is born into a family, so too he is born into the state and neither of the bonds of love are his free choice. For this reason, both these sins are less odious than sins which violate a willful bond.

51 Dante, I. p.147, xi.61-3.
Still lower in Hell is treachery to guests. In this sin the bond of trust is purely a chosen relationship. In its effect, it has less of a public nature than treason to state, but in relation to its long range effect on society, this vice has a greater anti-social repercussion.

In the deepest zone of Cocytus are the traitors to rightful lords and benefactors; for this is essentially open rebellion against the "ultimate, divine order of the universe." This is truly a public sin and a sin of the will which violates the relationship between master and subject. Dante approaches treason to lord with his own prejudice. Dante symbolizes the world order of feudalism at the end of the thirteenth century, although this system was on the wane. The Alighieri family was, to a certain degree, aristocratic, and treason of this kind was probably judged a personal threat.

Symbolically, this last type of treachery is against the authority and grace which are the divine order of the world. Satan is the grand figure of rebellion; his primary sin was that of pride, a sin which underlies the entire Comedy. Satan is regarded more as the embodiment of all evil rather than as a personal sinner.

From the circles of sin which originate from a carnal appetite, to the circle of willful sins, which originate in the intellect, Dante has been concerned with showing the hierarchy and the interrelatedness of sin. At one point, he encounters Fucci, the bastard son of a Pistoian noble, who was a violent leader of the Parte Neri. The sin that he is damned for is theft; but in reality, he has earned a place in all three parts of Hell for his intemperance of spirit and mad brutishness. Both

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52 Sinclair, p.418.
pride and envy lie at the base of his evil life.

As Dante and Virgil pass through the core of the earth where Satan remains, they are drawn by a kind of gravity back to the infernal monster. Dante alludes three times to this force which pulls him back to the "center at which all gravity converges." He seems to be pointing out the downward drag of every kind of sin. For Dante, the sinful soul becomes bound to the earth. The soul loses its liberty and becomes enslaved to the earth, whether it be through carnal or spiritual sins. Satan encased in ice at the very core of the earth takes hold of these souls damned by sin and makes the damned remain bound to this earth, never able to transcend it, never able to behold the spiritual. This notion seems to be the result of the influences received by Dante from the Christian ascetics and contemplatives of his time. For Dante, the magnanimous soul lives in the world but is not of the world.

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52 Dante, I. p.425, xxxiv.80.
CHAPTER III: THE PURGATORIO

Dante's conceptions of Hell and Heaven are traditional ones. His Purgatory is an original invention. The contemporary Church thought of it as a type of Limbo or temporary Hell where souls were detained for a set period of time until they were accepted into Heaven. Their Purgatory was like Hell in that it was also located in the bowels of the earth. Dante departs from this traditional conception and imagines it as a great mountain rising out of the sea in the Southern Hemisphere. Physically, it consists of seven ascending terraces which at the top are crowned by the Garden of Eden.

His Inferno is a picture of the soul's defeat and incarceration, but his Purgatorio marks the soul's liberation from, and victory over, sin. In Hell Dante is a mere observer who is in no way identified with the damned souls, but in Purgatory he is a penitent among penitents. Here he shares in the toils of expiating his sins; he participates in every way with the souls placed there. "The Mount of Purgatory is an image-symbol of ascent from sin through contrition and penance to absolution."¹ Dante has as much need for the gradual attainment of mercy and absolution as any soul there. The ultimate absolution results in the soul's liberation. This liberty which he seeks is synonymous with virtue; "public liberty and liberty of the soul are ultimately one."²

²Sinclair, p.29.
Purgatory, then, is the opportunity given to us "to unlive the life we have lived." It is symbolic of the whole life of man. Man here is no longer sunk in ignorance, as those souls in the Inferno were, he has not quite risen to the level of the contemplative found in Heaven. He is seen as still struggling "against the difficulties and temptations, making amends for misuse of Free Will, conforming with the practices of the Church, and obeying the imperial authority," just as man on the earth is.

The soul here is caught in the dualism between flesh and spirit. The flesh is symbolic of philosophy, which imposes its own standards of reality on the soul, while the spirit is representative of a higher order of reality revealed in God's Word. "It is a dualism which is not to be resolved in theory, only in experience." It is this dialectic which forms his transition from Hell to Heaven, which explains the mystery of life and death, and which distinguishes vice from virtue.

Dante always loved philosophy and in his work, the Convito, he endears it as Boethius did in Consolation of Philosophy. Dante, however, did believe in the Scholastic distinction between faith and reason, and openly admits that life is more than mere speculation. The soul is endangered if it forgets the function of reason, because reason cannot comprehend the idea of redemption found through God's love.

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3 Wicksteed, p.232.
4 Gardner, p.102.
5 Sinclair, p.53.
Dante distinguishes between two kinds of love. There is natural love given by God, which cannot err; and there is love d'animo, which encompasses Free Will. Because of this interaction with Free Will, error is possible in three ways: misdirected love, insufficient love, and excessive love. Upon these three erroneous loves, he builds his Purgatory.

Natural love, "which by pleasure is bound on you afresh,"... "is always without error" because it is instinctive and innocent. It is confirmed by the attainment of any by pleasure in, the thing loved.

The love d'animo "may err through a wrong object or through excess or defect of vigour." It is this love which produces the seven deadly vices. Misdirected love is the cause of Pride, Envy and Anger; Sloth is the result of deficient love; and Avarice, Gluttony and Luxury are regarded as excessive love. "Love is the golden net, whereby God draws back to Himself all creatures that He has made." Because of God's Eternal Law, everything has inclinations to seek the end for which it is ordered. Only man has Free Will, which gives him the choice for good or evil loves. These loves gain or lose salvation in Heaven for him because of divine justice. "Love's tendency to good is the precious material upon which Free Will acts like the craftsman's hand to fashion a satyr mask or crucifix."

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6 Bergin, p.260.
7 Dante, II. p.233, xviii.25.
8 Ibid., II. p.225, xvii.94.
9 Ibid., II. p.225, xvii.95-6.
10 Gardner, p.110.
11 Ibid., p.110.
The seven deadly sins were formalized by Gregory the Great to correspond with the Augustinian seven virtues: love, hope, faith, prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance. The first three are considered religious virtues and go back to St. Paul, while the last four are named worldly virtues and originate with Plato.\(^\text{12}\) It would seem that Dante forced this system into the structure of the Purgatorio to correspond with the order of the Inferno and Paradiso, in conjunction with the set order of the Catholic Church.

Love then is the motivation of any action in the universe, good or evil. Dante asserts this in his statement, "Neither Creator nor creature, my son, was ever without love, either natural or of the mind."\(^\text{13}\) Love then is the ordering of the universe; God, from whom this love emanates is the divine judge of all man's actions.

In the Inferno, the material element is punished; but in Dante's Purgatory, the formal element of sin, the aversion from the immutable good, is purged. This process is an active purgation, whereby the soul becomes conscious of his repented sin because of the powers of grace. In the Inferno, the sin is considered in its manifold effects, but the Purgatorio regards the causes of sin. Since every person acts from some love, it is necessary for the repentant souls to heed the words of St. Francis, "Set love in order, if they are to attain release from

\(^{12}\) Vossler, p.246.
\(^{13}\) Cf. ibid., "Of the seven deadly sins, Gregory characterizes the first five ... as \textit{vitia spiritualia}, the last two ... as \textit{vitia carnalia}.
\(^{\text{p.246.}}\) Dante chose to divide them into groups of four and three for structural reasons.
\(^{\text{Cf. Aquinas in Appendix VI.}}\)
\(^{\text{\text{13}}}\) Dante, II. p.225, xvii.90-1.
Purgatory. The task of the penitent is to return to the immutable good. The Dante reader is reminded, though, that "souls do not save themselves, they are saved by grace."\(^{14}\) Edmund Gardner sees the process of purgation as twofold, involving "both pain of loss of time and punishment of sense."\(^{15}\)

The Inferno, where sinners are eternally punished, is a negative concept; but Purgatory takes on the attitude of a positive process, leading ultimately to union with God because of a correctly ordered love. In Dante's words, Purgatory is "the mount that doth straighten, whom the world made crooked."\(^{16}\)

The poet creates an ante-chamber in Purgatory similar to the ante-chamber in Hell which housed the Neutrals. The souls here are the late repentants. Consistently enough, both of their sins are the same--non-commitment or commitment to a wrong cause which has effected their excommunication. Because of a last minute repentance, these souls have been spared the pains of Hell. In Hell this type of sinner is punished for the Material element of his sin; it continues to do in death as it had done in life. The purgation process is different for this type of sinner, since Purgatory deals with the formal element. It must wait for God's mercy as God had to wait for their commitment. Because of an enlightenment which has lifted it from ignorance, it must wait "down below, where time is made good by time."\(^{17}\)

\(^{14}\)Sinclair, p.41.

\(^{15}\)Gardner, p.107.

\(^{16}\)Dante, II. p.303, xxiii.125-6.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., II. p.301, xxiii.83-4.
The first major region that Dante enters is that of the souls with misdirected love. This perversion of love is directed towards neighbors; "since love can never turn its face from the welfare of its subject, therefore all things are secure from self-hatred, and since no being can be conceived as severed from the First One and self-existing every creature is cut off from hatred of Him."\(^{18}\) This concept is very much in agreement with the Aristotelian idea that no one can be unjust to self or to nature. Dante takes Aristotle's nature to be a part of God; and since man exists in the Godhead, he cannot hate God.

The material principle common to misdirected love, is that "the evil that is loved is a neighbor's, and this love springs up in three ways in your clay"\(^{19}\)--pride, envy and anger.

The most serious and farthest from the divine light is the spiritual sin of Pride. The proud man's sin is that he "hopes to excel by the abasement of his neighbor and for that sole reason longs that from his greatness he may be brought low."\(^{20}\) On this first terrace of essential Purgatory, Dante distinguishes between three types of Pride: arrogance of birth, vainglory of artistry, and presumption of power.

This vice is seen as the root of all evil. The beginning of pride is when man departs from God and tries to exalt himself against Him and his neighbors. The material element is search for knowledge. On this subject St. Thomas says:

Knowledge of truth is twofold. One is purely speculative, and pride hinders this indirectly by removing its cause. For the

\[^{18}\text{Ibid.}, \text{II. p.225, xvii.106-11.}\]

\[^{19}\text{Ibid.}, \text{II. p.225, xvii.113-4.}\]

\[^{20}\text{Ibid.}, \text{II. p.227, xvii.115-7.}\]
proud man subjects not his intellect to God, that he may receive the knowledge of truth from Him ....
The other knowledge of truth is affective, and this is directly hindered by pride, because the proud, through delighting in their own excellence, disdain the excellence of truth .... Hence it is written (Prov. xi.2): Where humility is there also is wisdom." 21

Therefore the formal element of the sin of Pride is aversion from the immutable good found in humility. Purgation occurs when Pride is abated as the soul accepts humility.

Since this is the most odious vice, and it is purged away, the other sins become more healable and the ascent become easier.

There seems to be a correlation between Pride in Purgatory and the circle of the treacherous in the Inferno. The several types of treason are the embodiments of the sin itself. Dante omits any categorizing of the vices in Purgatory, because only the formal element is being dealt with. The emphasis lies on the reconversion to the virtue of humility. St. Gregory glorified this virtue as the most desirable of all the virtues. Humility is the truly Christian basis of morality. Karl Vossler states:

To suffer violence, even to die, for his convictions, is no evil, but a privilege .... Humiliation, the contempt of man, and agony have been glorified to Heaven by the example of Jesus' Passion. 22

On the second terrace dwell the envious, those "that fear to lose power, favor, honour, and fame because another surpasses, by which they are so aggrieved that they love the contrary." 23

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21 Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.162, a.3, ad.1.
   Cf. ibid., "The opinion of Socrates was that knowledge can never be overcome by passion; wherefore he held every virtue to be a kind of knowledge, and every sin a kind of ignorance." S.T., I-II, q.72, a.2, c.

22 Vossler, p.209.

The material element of this sin can be seen in the circle of the fraudulent in the *Inferno*. It is embodied in the sins of theft, simony, falsifying, etc.... In Purgatory the formal element is aversion from Charity. The virtue suggests love in its generosity of spirit. When the material goods are shared, the vice envy diminishes while charity, whose object is the eternal good, is increased. Dante states this idea like this:

It is because your desires are fixed where the part is lessened by sharing that envy blows the bellows to your sighs; but if the love of the highest sphere bent upward your longing that fear would not be in your breast. For there, the more of good does each possess and the more of charity burns in that cloister.  

Charity restores the fellowship of men that pride and envy, the two most anti-social sins, have destroyed.

The wrathful inhabit the third terrace. They are guilty of one kind of anger, that of enmity. Their sin is that they felt themselves "so disgraced by insult that [they] became greedy of vengeance, and such a one must needs contrive another's harm." Aquinas distinguishes between two types as follows:

Anger may stand in a twofold relation to reason. First, antecedently; in this way it withdraws reason from its rectitude, and has therefore the character of evil. Secondly, consequently, inasmuch as the movement of the sensitive appetite is directed against vice and in accordance with reason, this anger is good, and is called zealous anger.

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24 Ibid., II. p.199, xv.49-57.
25 Ibid., II. p.227, xvii.121-3.
26 Aquinas, *S.T.*, II-II, q.158, a.1, ad.2.
Dante can justify the latter form but not the former, because it is resentful and undisciplined. Free Will is not applied directly as in envy and pride, but is subordinated to the passion. Reason bridles this passion and qualifies the vice in the light of divine justice.

Anger is considered with the sins of misdirected love because of its destructive influence on human order. It is the last of the three spiritual sins because it is a direct willing of evil for others. The material element of the sin lies in desiring the evil of another, "not for its own sake but for the sake of revenge, towards which his appetite turns as a mutable good." The formal element is the aversion from divine peace. "What thou sawest was shown thee that thou mightest not refuse to open thy heart to the waters of peace which are poured from the eternal fountain."

The violent in Hell are punished for the embodiment of the material element which vents itself in anger towards self, neighbor and God. Purgatory expiates the formal element of anger and restores the soul to peace.

The second major division of Purgatory is the terrace of insufficient love. Here reside those whose sin was that they "confusedly apprehended a good in which the mind may be at rest and desires it, so that each strives to reach it, and if the love is sluggish that draws you to see it or gain it." Insufficient love is embodied in the sin of sloth. In relation to the love of the good, this sin "comes short in its duty";

27 Ibid., S.T., II-II, q.158. a.2, ad.2.
28 Dante, II. p.203, xv.130-8.
29 Ibid., II. p.227, xvii.126-32.
30 Ibid., II. p.225, xvii.85.
so it is defined as a spiritual sloth. For this reason it is partly a sin of the spirit and a sin of the flesh. The word used is accidia; it means, originally, unconcern. "It expresses an idea primarily associated with the life of the monastery and connotes spiritual ennui."\(^{31}\)

Dante expands this concept to connote 'lukewarmness.' The material element of sloth is conversion to sorrow. Sloth "sometimes arises from sorrow in two ways: first, that the man shuns whatever causes sorrow; secondly, that he passes to other things that give him pleasure: thus those who find no joy in spiritual pleasures, have recourse to pleasures of the body."\(^{32}\) This is what determines the spiritual-carnal element of the vice.

In Hell the material element is punished, and the slothful are found in the circle of the Neutrals in the ante-chamber of the Inferno. The formal element "is not an aversion of the mind from any spiritual good, but from the divine good, to which the mind is obliged to adhere."\(^{33}\) It is necessary, then, in Purgatory, for a reconversion to this divine good found in the virtue of zeal.

The last division of the Purgatorio purges the sins of the flesh, the intemperate love of earthly good. This sin is excessive love of secondary goods. Dante states, "Other good there is which does not make men happy; it is not happiness, it is not the Good Essence, the fruit and root of every good."\(^{34}\)

\(^{31}\)Sinclair, p.243.

\(^{32}\)Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.35, a.4, ad.2.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., S.T., II-II, q.35, a.3, ad.2.

\(^{34}\)Dante, II. p.227, xvii.133-5.
These sins correspond with the sins of incontinence found in the first five circles of upper Hell. They are strictly carnal, the material element lying in the conversion to the mutable goods of bodily passion, food, and money. In this section there is an enlightenment higher than reason itself, of the eternal good. This is the transition from reason to revelation. "The true upper Purgatory is beyond earthly conditions and subject only to spiritual forces." 35

On the first terrace in the region of excessive love lies the vice of avarice. The material element of this sin is conversion to material objects. Dante does not mention prodigality as such, as he did in the Inferno, but it can probably be assumed that these repentant souls are here also, since both vices involve an excess. Avarice is the excess of retaining; prodigality is the excess of giving. 36

The formal element of this vice is that it opposes justice. St. Thomas said,

Now among all the moral virtues it is justice wherein the use of right reason appears chiefly, for justice is the rational appetite. Hence the undue use of reason appears chiefly in the vices opposed to justice, the chief of which is covetousness. 37

In this round, Dante points out that Purgatory is not a place of ease and joy, but one of suffering which makes justice and hope less hard." 38 This is a deviation on Dante's part from the traditional view of Purgatory, which was seen as a state of passive waiting and limited joy.

35 Sinclair, p.280.
37 Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.55, a.8, c.
38 Dante, II. p.249, xix.77.
The next terrace is that of the gluttonous. Passion for food and drink, the material element of their sin, is punished in Hell. The true material element lies in the pleasures of food rather than in food itself. The formal element is intemperance in food. It is a lesser vice than avarice, because the body has need for nourishment, but the same need cannot be expressed towards material possessions. Gluttony, inordinate concupiscence in eating, can be measured in various ways—the type of food that is taken, and the amount eaten. St. Thomas calls these sumptuousness, and hasty and greedy consumption. 39

When this carnal sin is expiated with the aid of grace, temperance replaces its opposing vice, and the soul can continue on its way to the last terrace of Purgatory, that of the lustful. Dante distinguishes between two types of sexual sinners. The less guilty are those who have sinned by excess of natural passion, and the very worst are those who have sinned against nature itself. Dante placed the latter type in the circle of the violent in his consideration of them in Hell. There seems to be a discrepancy here, but for the medieval mind the Inferno was seen as a punishment enacted by allowing the sinner to do in death as he did in life. The sinner against nature will eternally damn himself because he lacks repentance. His sin is an eternal violation against nature. In Purgatory, it is assumed that he has repented. Only the formal element of sin requires restitution. The sodomist has turned back the mutable good, and is only in need of being reconfirmed to the

39 Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.148, a.4, c.
immutable good found in the virute of chastity. Chastity, here, cannot be mistaken for a false asceticism, for the souls are made to cry out "of wives and husbands who were chaste as virtuous wedlock requires of us."\(^\text{40}\)

The upper terraces of Purgatory are concerned only with the purgation of the sins of the flesh. This raises a question as to the relation of man's spiritual nature to his body with all its needs. Dante relies on the contemporary Scholastic teachings in accordance with Aristotle. The soul is viewed as no mere accompaniment of the body. It is a direct creation of God, and for that reason it possesses the body. It absorbs the bodily faculties into itself. After death the soul continues to possess these same faculties with the faculties proper to itself, such as, reason. After death the lower faculties proper to the body must find new organs. This last principle is Dante's own invention. He employed it to show the increased suffering of the soul at the time of the Last Judgment, when the body and soul are again united. This principle can be seen more clearly in the Inferno because the soul is sometimes manifested into inanimate objects, such as, trees and shades.

The entire process of purgation restores man to complete self-mastery and freedom. Since sin is regarded as an effect of ignorance; purgation restores natural wisdom to man. The natural state of man, which is his fellowship to his neighbor, is again resolved and the unity he felt with God when in the state of innocence, is again effected. The passions or elements, found in their perverted form in the circles of the incontinent, are brought back to their natural state; and the free

\(^{40}\text{Dante, II. p.331, xxv.133-5.}\)
will inordinately used for perverse ends, as found in the circles of mis-directed love and malice, is united with the divine will.

At the summit of Purgatory exists the little plateau of Earthly Paradise. Dante's view of the nature of the world has stressed its inherent pervertedness. To emphasize the evil that constitutes the world, he has placed Hell in its bowels. This small islet at the apex of Purgatory takes on a different symbolic value. Though it is a part of the world, at the same time it transcends the world. It represents purity, peace, and happiness. Only from here can the restored soul make the transition from evil to good, from the world to Heaven. Only here is the union of natural and divine existent; only here does Dante's ideal, the union of Church and State, find full expression. The Earthly Paradise, as the Paradiso, is non-rational; it is supra-rational. Explanations of it are rationally impossible for the poet. If The Divine Comedy can be considered an allegory of life, it is here that reason flows into faith.
CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY

Dante was a child of the Scholastics, learned and absorbed in their tremendous attempt to construct by an intellectual process a consistent scheme of the universe of seen and unseen realities. It was, broadly, a process of deducing the actual system of things from first principles, philosophical and theological, and from Scripture and Aristotle.1

From my first formal exposure to Dante a year ago, I have always felt this to be true. I have been intrigued with his abilities of integration. He possesses a wealth of knowledge because he draws from such polarities as classical antiquity and the fourteenth century, mythology and Scripture, and philosophy and theology. The more I read his works, the more comprehensive they become. Longfellow, prefacing his translation of *The Divine Comedy* with his famous Dante sonnets, expressed it thus:

O star of morning and of liberty!
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines
Above the darkness of the Apennines
Forerunner of the day that is to be!
The voices of the city and the sea,
The voices of the mountains and the pines,
Repeat thy song, till the famous lines
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy! ²

I can now understand why scholars, like Karl Vossler, devoted their entire lives to the study of Dante, for in his concepts lie a broad

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understanding of every aspect of the classical and medieval periods.

Thy flame is blown abroad from all the heights.
Through all the nations, and a sound is heard,
As of a mighty wind, and men devout,
Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,
In their own language hear thy wondrous word,
And many are amazed and many doubt.  

I had set before myself the task of deducing a system of ethics, encountered in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Many Dante critics have leveled the charge against him that he introduces two irreconcilable systems based upon Aristotle and Holy Scripture. Throughout my reading, I have made special note of how he can introduce figures, concepts, beliefs from paganism and Christianity and juxtapose them harmoniously. As Aquinas Christianized the pagan, Aristotle, Dante seems to have sacramentalized paganism, reconciling it, in a sense to Christianity. It is this synthesis that I find most rewarding.

Many ideas appear, at first glance, to be unrelated in the two systems exposed in Hell and Purgatory. Such questions, as where are the slothful in Hell, or where are the violent and heretics in Purgatory, seem to surface. I submit the following diagram as a means of reconciliation.

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3 Longfellow, p.79.
Obviously, most of the sins of Hell have a corresponding sin in Purgatory with the exceptions of sloth, anger, heresy, and neutrality.

In both Hell and Purgatory, Dante has created an ante-chamber which maintains souls who did not make a commitment or who were tardy in their commitment. The vice corresponding to neutrality is negligence. The heretics who repented at the last minute before death are similar to those who were merely negligent. The heretics of Hell, however, will remain in Hell proper, because they will never repent; so their punishment is eternal.
The reader of Dante must always remember that Hell is the punishment of the material element of sin, the conversion to a secondary good, while Purgatory is a purgation of the formal element of sin, the aversion from the eternal good. Sloth is justly placed in Purgatory because it opposes the virtue of zeal. In Hell, however, the material element is the conversion to that melancholy which Dante calls "sullen indolence." Dante does not clearly define sloth in Hell. Probably the reader can assume that the truly slothful are amidst the Neutrals, since the formal element is the same, non-commitment. Hell is not interested in rehabilitating lost souls; Purgatory is; in Hell these souls are completely converted to sin so there is no return possible for them.

Violence in Hell is juxtaposed by an allusion to anger in Purgatory. Dante points out that the anger of Hell found in the circle of incontinence is the vice from which the graver sin, violence, took root. Anger then is the real basis of this soul; in Purgatory the sin of anger is merely alluded to.

Regarding fraudulence, envy is the formal element of this sin. The material element can be noted in the ten manifestations of fraud. Purgatory deals merely with the rooting out of envy; Hell punishes the several forms in accordance with the law of restitution. In the deeper circle of Hell, treason is seen in its four manifestations, as an outgrowth of pride.

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It is necessary to look at the threefold divisions in conjunction to each other. Misdirected love corresponds nicely with the Aristotelian sense of vice, and excessive love complements the sins of incontinence. The major inconsistency lies in the relation of deficient love to particular divisions of Hell. Deficient love or apathy, in the poet's eyes, is regarded as a graver sin than excessive love; for too much love is merely a carnal sin, whereas deficient love is both a carnal and a spiritual offense. The relationship seems to lie between the section of deficient love and ante-hell. But why did the poet not include the slothful of Purgatory with the negligent or the excommunicated? The answer again seems to rest with the purgatorial purpose of the holy mountain. The formal element of the sin of sloth is opposition to the virtue of zeal. This is not the formal element of the sins in ante-purgatory. Although the manifestations of these sins are similar, they must be purged of the formal element of sin. Thus, the slothful of Purgatory are given a distinct section.

The effect of St. Francis' words concerning love are incalculable. The entire scheme of The Divine Comedy seems to be in accordance with Francis' command: "Set love in order." In Purgatory these souls are doing just that. In Hell, such words could never be heeded. Neither love nor order would be possible.

One must always remember the influences of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas on Dante. From Aristotle he derived his system of vice as found in the Inferno. From St. Thomas he draws the distinction of the seven capital vices and virtues, on which he bases his Purgatorio. Aquinas was always able to reconcile the great classic philosopher with
the theological views of the thirteenth century. So Dante is also able to reconcile the Aristotelian system of the Inferno and the more specifically Christian Purgatorio. The tool which aided both St. Thomas and Dante in these reconciliations is Holy Scripture.

The truly great feature of the poet-philosopher is his great ability to experience nature. The verification of his Divine Comedy was in its application to his soul and its faculties; this verification was derived from his personal experience. Dante was probably never concerned if his later critics would find anachronisms or fallacious logic. He could justify his writing by his personal experience, and only that was important.

Longfellow paid fitting tribute to Dante and his Divina Commedia in his sonnet.

Ah! from what agonies of the heart and brain,
What exaltations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This medieval miracle of song.⁵

⁵Longfellow, p.77.
APPENDIXES

I

Dante non fu nazionalista. Vide tutto il mondo unito dall'Impero, sotto la guida di un imperatore non italiano. Dentro l'ambito di questo unità il Papa avrebbe avuto la direzione dei fini spirituali dei cittadini di tutto il mondo. La fede nella natura etica e nei fini etici dell'esistenza avrebbe guidato la condotta individuale dei cittadini e l'arte avrebbe esaltato la spiritualità dell'esperienza personale. Questo era il mondo sognato da Dante. Egli non lo vide in atto, ma lascio a noi, lontani posteri, la fide nella possibilità della pace universale quale risultato della condotta etica dei vari stati e degli individui chi li formano. Per questo Dante è un poeta universale.

D. Vittorini, p.33.

II

The act of sin makes man deserving of punishment, in so far as he transgresses the order of Divine justice, to which he cannot return except he pay some sort of penal compensation, which restores him to the equality of justice; so that, according to the order of Divine justice, he who has been too indulgent to his will, by transgressing God's commandment, suffers, either willingly or unwillingly, something contrary to what he would wish. This restoration of the equality of justice by penal compensation is also to be observed in injuries done to one's fellow men. Consequently it is evident that when the sinful or injurious act has ceased there still remains the debt of the punishment.

But if we speak of the removal of sin as to the stain, it is evident that the stain cannot be removed from the soul, without the soul being united to God, since it was through being separated from Him that it suffers the loss of its brightness, in which the stain consists. Now man is united to God by his will. Wherefore the stain of sin cannot be removed from man, unless his will accept the order of Divine justice, that is to say, unless either of his own accord he take upon himself the punishment of his past sin, or bear patiently the punishment which God inflicts upon him; and in both ways punishment avails for satisfaction. Now when punishment is satisfactory, it loses somewhat of the nature of punishment; for the nature of punishment is to be against the will; and although satisfactory punishment, absolutely speaking, is against the will, nevertheless in this particular case and for this particular purpose, it is voluntary.

Aquinas, S.T., I-II, q.87, a.6, c.
III

Things are ascribed to their direct causes rather than to those which merely occasion them. Now that which is on the part of the body is merely an occasional cause of incontinence; since it is owing to a bodily disposition that vehement passions can arise in the sensitive appetite which is a power of the organic body. Yet these passions, however vehement they be, are not the sufficient cause of incontinence, but are merely the occasion thereof, since, so long as the rest of reason remains, man is always able to resist his passions.

Aquinas, S.T., II-II, q.156, a.1, c.

IV

That incontinence in respect of anger is less disgraceful than in respect of the appetites is what we will now proceed to see. (1) Anger seems to listen to argument to some extent, but to mishear it ... Appetite therefore is more disgraceful; for the man who is incontinent in respect of anger is in a sense conquered by argument, while the other incontinence simply is conquered by appetite and not by argument.


V

He who through anger voluntarily stabs himself does this contrary to the right rule of life, and this the law does not allow; therefore, he is acting unjustly. But towards whom? Surely towards the state, not towards himself. For he suffers voluntarily, but no one is voluntarily treated unjustly. This is also the reason why the state punishes; a certain loss of civil rights attaches to the man who destroys himself, on the ground that he is treating the state unjustly ... It is not possible to treat oneself unjustly.


VI

Obj. 1. It would seem that we ought not to reckon seven capital vices, viz. vainglory, envy, anger, sloth, covetousness, gluttony, lust ...
... there is a certain good of the soul, which derives its aspect of appetibility, merely through being apprehended, viz. the excellence of honor and praise, and this good is sought inordinately by vainglory. ... there is the good of the body, and this regards either the preservation of the individual ... which good is pursued inordinately by gluttony, or the preservation of the species ... which good sought inordinately by lust. ... There is external good, viz. riches, to which covetousness is referred ....

On the other hand, avoidance of good on account of an attendant evil occurs in two ways. For this happens either in respect of one's own good, and thus we have sloth, which is sadness about one's spiritual good, on account of the attendant bodily labor: or else it happens in respect of another's good, and this, if it be without recrimination, belongs to envy, which is sadness about another's good as being a hinderance to one's own excellence, while if it be with recrimination with a view to vengeance, it is anger.

Aquinas, S.T., I-II, q.84, a.7, ad.1.
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


