Introduction

The *Epistle to Cangrande* classifies Dante's *Commedia* as 'a work of ethics' (*morale negotium, sive ethica*): its stated purpose is to lead people from the misery of sin and direct them to the beatitude of Heaven.[1] If the epistle was written by Dante, as the balance of scholarship would currently suggest, to read the poem ethically is to read it as Dante originally intended. If this part of the epistle was not written by him, as some scholars still argue, the fact remains that an important early glossator of the poem thought it natural and appropriate to classify the poem in this way.[2] In the narrative itself, the poem's ethical goal is unambiguous: Beatrice commands Dante-character to write 'for the good of the world which lives badly' ('in pro del mondo che mal vive'; *Purg.* XXXII, 103). Moreover, as is conventional in ethical treatises, the *Commedia* is described

[1] *Epist.* XIII, 16: 'Genus vero phylosophie sub quo hic in toto et parte proceditur, est morale negotium, sive ethica; quia non ad speculandum, sed ad opus inventum est totum et pars'; XIII, 15: 'finis totius et partis est removere viventes in hac vita de statu miserie et perducere ad statum felicitatis.' Brunetto Latini, author of *Il Tesoretto* (a clear precursor to his more illustrious student's *Commedia*), similarly classifies poetry, following Cicero, as a branch of 'civil science' ('la civile scienza'), with a clear ethical purpose to teach citizens the path of good action ('per dare alla gente insegnamento e via di ben fare'). See Brunetto Latini, *La rettorica*, ed. by Francesco Maggini (Florence: Le Monnier, 1968), p. 49. In the *Commedia*, Brunetto commends his protégé Dante for his own good actions ('tuo ben far'; *Inf.* XI, 28–33).

[2] See Dante Alighieri, *Epistola a Cangrande*, ed. by Enzo Cecchini (Florence: Giunti, 1995), XIII. 8. The authenticity of the *Cangrande* epistle (or sections of the epistle) is disputed. Cecchini argues that the evidence balances in favour of authenticity (see *Epistola*, pp. viii–xxv), as does Robert Hollander in his important study, *Dante's Epistle to Cangrande* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 1–101. This view is also sustained by Luca Azzetta, 'Le chiose alla *Commedia* di Andrea Lancia, *L'Epistola a Can Grande* e altre questioni danteschi', *L'Alighieri*, 21 (2003), 5–76. As Robert Durling notes, this philological discussion has been inflected by varying opinions about the status of Dante's journey (thus, for example, those in favour of the 'divinely inspired prophet' view, such as Nardi, have tended to deny the authenticity of the epistle). Durling concludes that 'the weight of evidence, much of which has only recently come to light points towards its authenticity'. See Robert M. Durling, 'Introduction', in *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, Vol. 3: Paradiso*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling with notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3–19 (p. 5).

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in medicinal terms: Cacciaguida inspires his descendent with the courage to 'make plain all your vision . . . For if your voice is grievous at first taste, it will afterwards leave vital nourishment when it is digested' ('tutta tua visïon fa manifesta . . . Ché se la voce tua sarà molesta / nel primo gusto, vital nodrimento / lascerà poi, quando sarà digesto'; *Par.* XVII, 128, 130–32). Dante's poem is 'vital' (life-giving) nourishment because it may save its reader from damnation, the second death. Indeed, by depicting the state of souls in the afterlife, the *Commedia* shows how a person – through the use of his or her free will – may merit eternal happiness in Paradise, warrant eternal damnation in Hell, or require temporary expiation for sin in Purgatory.[3]

Thus, Dante presents his eschatological imagination as at the service of a very immediate practical purpose: the salvation of souls in the here and now. Dante's primary aim, in other words, was neither to produce an innovative depiction of the three realms of the Christian afterlife nor to write a poetic masterpiece for Christendom to rival the epics of Classical antiquity (although he is justly celebrated for achieving both these goals). Rather, Dante's imaginative vision and poetic genius served more important ethical and, I would argue, political goals: to transform people's moral lives and to reform the institutions that governed them.[4] If we avoid the poem's ethical content, we potentially jeopardize not only the poem's status as a work of ethics and its function (to lead humankind to salvation) but even its genre as a 'Comedy': as the *Epistle to Cangrande* emphasises, the poem is called a comedy at least in part because – at a narrative level – it begins badly (in Hell) but ends well (in Paradise) and – at a moral level – it aims to effect the same felicitous outcome for its readers.[5] It is my contention, moreover, that a rebalancing in favour of the ethical actually serves to accentuate our appreciation of Dante's eschatological originality and literary brilliance.

[3] *Epist.* XIII, 11: 'Nam si totius operis litteraliter sumpti sic est subiectum, status animarum post mortem . . . Et si totius operis allegorice sumpti subiectum est homo prout merendo et demerendo per arbitrii libertatem est iustitie premiandi et puniendi obnoxious.'

[4] The lectura Dantis tradition in Florence was inaugurated by Boccaccio with a similarly ethical mandate: to help the poem's audience understand fully its moral content and, thereby, 'aspire to virtue, shun vice, and cultivate eloquence'. See Simon Gilson, 'Modes of Reading in Boccaccio's *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia*', in *Interpreting Dante: Essays on the Traditions of Dante Commentary*, ed. by Paola Nasti and Claudia Rossignoli (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), pp. 250–82 (p. 253).

[5] *Epist.* XIII, 10: 'Et per hoc patet quod Comedia dicitur presens opus. Nam si ad materiam respiciamus, a principio horribilis et fetida est, quia Infernus, in fine prospera, desiderabilis et grata, quia Paradisus . . .'

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A deeply influential tradition of Dante scholarship, nonetheless, has excluded or downplayed ethical considerations.[6] Arguably, this tendency may have been exaggerated because of the disciplinary preoccupations and emphases of the fields in which the poem has most commonly been researched and taught in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such as Italian Studies and Comparative Literature.[7] Although there have been significant studies over the last two decades that address Dante's ethics, most of these emphasise some other aspect or theme of his work. For example, Holmes, Williams, and Lombardi focus on the relationship between ethics and eros; Keen and Honess on the relationship between ethics and politics; Steinberg on the relationship between ethics and law; and Webb on the relationship between ethics and personhood.[8] Only two recent studies in English have specifically focused on Dante's ethics: Cogan's *The*

[6] Benedetto Croce is customarily taken as a reference point for those who seek to select, or salvage, the 'poetic' from the 'doctrinal' or 'ethical'. As Patrick Boyde remarks, 'Benedetto Croce did manage to persuade a whole generation of critics in Italy that the ideological framework and content of the *Comedy* had proved an obstacle to the free expression of Dante's poetic genius'. See Patrick Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 1–2. John Freccero also explicitly confronts the Crocean paradigm of separating the 'aesthetic' from the 'theological', and his readings seek to re-integrate them. See John Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. and with an introduction by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986). Noticeably absent from Freccero's collection of essays, however, is a treatment of Purgatory. There is extensive study of *Inferno* (pp. 1–185), a couple of essays on Ante-Purgatory (pp. 186–208), and three essays on *Paradiso* (pp. 209–57). I would suggest that Purgatory, of all the regions of Dante's afterlife, most fully enacts Dante's poetics of conversion.

[7] Patrick Boyde registers a tendency of some literary critics to 'seem curiously little interested in *what* Dante is saying or *why*' (Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, pp. 1–2). Even within literary studies, Dante scholars have been slow to respond to a renewed attention to the relationship between ethics and literature. See Robin Kirkpatrick and George Corbett, '"E lascia pur grattar. . ." Language, Narrative and Ethics in the *Commedia*', in *Dante the Lyric and Ethical Poet*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Martin McLaughlin (Oxford: Legenda, 2010), pp. 56–71. Although the interdiscipline of ethics and literature has more recently been 'the subject of extended discussion . . . Dante has rarely entered into these considerations. Nor has the discussion often concerned itself with matters of directly ethical practice' (p. 56).

[8] Olivia Holmes, *Dante's Two Beloveds: Ethics and Erotics in the 'Divine Comedy'* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Pamela Williams, *Through Human Love to God: Essays on Dante and Petrarch* (Leicester, UK: Troubador Publishing, 2007); Elena Lombardi, *The Syntax of Desire: Language and Love in Augustine, the Modistae, Dante* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), and Elena Lombardi, *The Wings of the Doves: Love and Desire in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2012). Although my own approach is different from that of these three scholars, I pick up a number of their concerns (for example, with regard to Williams's emphasis on acedia in *Through Human Love*, pp. 19–34). With regard to ethics and politics, see Catherine Keen, *Dante and the City* (Stroud, UK: Tempus, 2003), and Claire Honess, *From Florence to the Heavenly City: The Poetry of Citizenship in Dante* (Oxford: Legenda, 2006). For the treatment of ethics and law, see Justin Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); and for a study of contemporary and medieval conceptualisations of personhood, and their implications for reading the *Commedia,* see Heather Webb, *Dante's Persons: An Ethics of the Transhuman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

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Design in the Wax: The Structure of the 'Divine Comedy' and Its Meaning and Boyde's *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's 'Comedy'*.[9] This sparsity persists despite a growing scholarly interest in Dante's ethics.[10] The time seems ripe, therefore, for re-addressing the question of Dante's ethics in a more rounded treatment. Where Cogan uses Aquinas as the predominant theoretical framework, Boyde draws principally on philosophical and Classical sources.[11] In this book, I explore, in addition, the influence of broader Christian contexts on Dante's ethical vision.[12]

[9] Marc Cogan, *The Design in the Wax: The Structure of the 'Divine Comedy' and Its Meaning* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999); Patrick Boyde, *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's 'Comedy'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Patrick Boyde, *Perception and Passion in Dante's 'Comedy'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially 'Part IV: Combined Operations', pp. 215–301. There are, of course, other less scholarly, but nonetheless valuable studies intended for a broader audience; see, for example, Raymond Angelo Bellioti, *Dante's Deadly Sins: Moral Philosophy in Hell* (Chichester: Wiley, 2011). More localised studies of aspects of Dante's ethics include Ruth Chester, 'Virtue in Dante', in *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, ed. by Claire Honess and Matthew Treherne, 2 vols. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), II, pp. 211–52. Finally, there are studies of ethics in relation to individual canticles, sections, or cantos of the poem. Chapter 3 of my book, for example, presents a counter-argument to Scott's reading of Dante's Purgatory in terms of philosophical principles: see John A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

[10] See, for example, the essay collections *Etica e teologia nella Commedia di Dante: Atti del Seminario Internazionale, Torino, 5–6 Ottobre 2006*, ed. by Erminia Ardissino (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2009); *Dante the Lyric and Ethical Poet*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Martin McLaughlin (Oxford: Legenda, 2010); and *Dante and the Seven Deadly Sins: Twelve Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. by John C. Barnes and Daragh O'Connell (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2017).

[11] For Cogan's justification of his overall strategy, see 'Dante and Aquinas', in *Design in the Wax,* pp. xxiii–xxiv. Boyde seems most interested in philosophical and Classical sources, a tendency registered even in his title *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's 'Comedy'*, with its calque of Ulysses' speech in *Inferno* XXVI. Even when considering the sin of pride, for example, Boyde relies predominantly on Classical treatments, with no reference to preaching and penitential literature ('Chapter 8: Pride', in *Human Vices*, pp. 174–97; see also *Perception and Passion*, p. 209); my own reading in Chapter 5 thus offers a complementary, albeit very different perspective on this terrace by drawing principally on the Christian and theological contexts.

[12] In examining Dante's treatment of ethics, it may be tempting to concentrate too exclusively on easily available sources in Classical literature and philosophy (like Boyde) or scholastic theology (like Cogan). However, it is evident that Dante was also drawing from his immediate Christian literary and oral culture – from sermons, liturgy, compilations, and confessional manuals. For example, Carlo Delcorno has emphasised the influence of the homiletic tradition on Dante's literary style, while Martinez has highlighted the need to draw further attention to the liturgy in Dante's poem. See Carlo Delcorno, 'Dante e l'exemplum medievale', *Lettere Italiane* 25: 1 (1983), 3–28; and Ronald Martinez, 'Dante and the Poem of the Liturgy', in Honess and Treherne (eds.), *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, II, pp. 89–156. More recently, Zane D. R. Mackin has demonstrated that 'Dante's poem was influential to preachers … because the poem had already incorporated the form and content of sermons into its own textuality' (Zane D. R. Mackin, *Dante Praedicator: Sermons and Preaching Culture in the* Commedia [doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 2013], p. 6). Nevertheless, Mackin does not draw out the implications of this approach for a reading of *Purgatorio*. See also Nicolò Maldina, *In pro del mondo: Dante, la predicazione e i generi della letteratura religiosa medievale* (Rome: Salerno, 2017). In medieval studies as a whole, there has been a huge increase in scholarship on the virtues and vices. For example, as Newhauser pointed out

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I also seek to make a distinct contribution to three wider currents in contemporary Dante scholarship: the reappraisal of Dante's theology, the re-examination of his intellectual formation, and the renewed investigation of the *Commedia*'s narrative structure. In considering Dante as Christian sinner and moralist, this book forms part of an increasing cluster of work on Dante's status as *poeta theologus* and on the nature of his poem as theology.[13] In terms of Dante's intellectual formation, I open up new contexts – in preaching and penitential sources – for Dante's Christian ethics, thereby contributing to a shift of scholarly attention away from more bookish 'high' Aristotelian philosophy and rationalistic theology and towards the popular visceral contexts of practical Christianity in Dante's time.[14] With regard to narrative structure, the research for this book coincided with *Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'*, a collaborative project which systematically explored vertical correspondences between same-numbered cantos across the three canticles.[15] Many interpretations of the poem have emerged through the canto-by-canto readings customary

in 2012, Bloomsfield's (1952) seminal study on the seven deadly sins opened the floodgates to evermore detailed examinations of the vices in such varied contexts as medieval Christian psychology, anthropology, academic theology, literary and artistic endeavour, homiletic literature, and penitential practice. See Richard Newhauser, 'Introduction', in *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins*, ed. by Richard Newhauser and Susan J. Ridyard (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2012), pp. 1–16.

[13] For the wider scholarly reappraisal of Dante's theology, see, for example, Robin Kirkpatrick's translation and theological commentary on the *Commedia* (published by Penguin in 2006, 2007, and 2008); edited volumes such as *Dante's Commedia: Theology as Poetry*, ed. by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, ed. by Claire E. Honess and Matthew Treherne, 2 vols. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013); *Le teologie di Dante*, ed. by Giuseppe Ledda (Ravenna: Angelo Longo, 2015); and *Dante and Late Medieval Florence: Theology in Poetry, Practice and Society*, ed. by Simon Gilson, Claire Honess, and Matthew Treherne (Leeds: Peter Lang, forthcoming); and single-author studies such as John Took, *Conversations with Kenelm: Essays on the Theology of the 'Commedia'* (London: Ubiquity Press, 2013); and Vittorio Montemaggi, *Reading Dante's 'Commedia' as Theology: Divinity Realized in Human Encounter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[14] In this respect, my research was influenced, in particular, by Barański's call to investigate Dante's intellectual formation. See Zygmunt G. Barański, *Dante e I segni: Saggi per una storia intellettuale di Dante* (Naples: Liguori, 2000); Zygmunt G. Barański, 'The Temptations of a Heterodox Dante', in *Dante and Heterodoxy: The Temptations of 13th Century Radical Thought*, ed. by Maria Luisa Ardizzone (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 164–96; Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Dante and Doctrine (and Theology)', in Honess and Treherne (eds.), *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, I, pp. 9–64; and Zygmunt G. Barański, '(Un)orthodox Dante', in Honess and Treherne (eds.), *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, II, pp. 253–330. See also *Dante in Context*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Lino Pertile (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and *The Cambridge Companion to Dante's 'Commedia'*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Simon Gilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[15] The lectures were published in revised form as chapters in *Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'*, ed. by George Corbett and Heather Webb, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015, 2016, 2017).

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in the commentary and *lectura Dantis* traditions. My reading of three terraces of Dante's Purgatory 'horizontally' – as narrative structural units and as moral regions – opens up new perspectives on individual cantos, as well as on particular interpretative *cruces* within them, thereby complementing the 'vertical approach'.[16]

The book's argument is organised into three principal parts. In Part I, I present the poem as an ethical and political manifesto: Chapter 1 analyses the complex moral ordering of Dante's afterlife as a whole, while Chapter 2 reveals the dualistic political argument underpinning the surprising number of classical pagans and contemporary popes that we find there. In Part II, I reframe Dante's Purgatory in terms of distinctively Christian ethics: whereas Chapter 3 shows how Dante's Purgatory represents a process of Christian penance, satisfaction, and purification, Chapter 4 distinguishes Dante's own approach to moral theology from Aquinas's innovative reforms. The reframing of Dante's Christian ethics in Part II informs my detailed interpretation of three particularly significant vices and the three terraces of Purgatory devoted to them – pride (Chapter 5), sloth (Chapter 6), and avarice (Chapter 7) – in Part III.

Where some scholars, such as Cogan and Moevs, have tried to set out an overarching moral rationale for the *Commedia*, I argue, in Chapter 1, that Dante incorporates diverse ethical criteria for the three regions of the afterlife.[17] I analyse the complex moral structure of Hell, and argue that a broadly Aristotelian taxonomy of good and evil underpins even its seemingly anomalous, and theologically unorthodox, regions. I emphasise, then, a distinction between this philosophical account of ethics in Hell, and the pastorally oriented account of Christian ethics in Purgatory. Dante structures the seven terraces of Purgatory according to the scheme of the seven capital vices, a standard moral framework for medieval Christian

[16] Two recent *lecturae* series have highlighted the 'horizontal' dimension of the poem's narrative structure across canto units. The ongoing *Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana* (2009–) typically presents four lectures on four successive cantos in the course of a morning and an afternoon; see *Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana*, http://lecturadantisandreapolitana.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk. By comparison, *Esperimenti Danteschi* invited lecturers to consider narrative episodes across the poem; see *Esperimenti Danteschi: Inferno 2008*, ed. by Simone Invernizzi (Genova: Marietti, 2009); *Esperimenti Danteschi: Purgatorio 2009*, ed. by Benedetta Quadrio (Genova: Marietti, 2010); and *Esperimenti Danteschi: Paradiso 2010*, ed. by Tomasso Montorfano (Genova: Marietti, 2010). Neither project, however, considers moral structure as the determining narrative unit; thus, in *Esperimenti Danteschi*, the only lecture which coincides with a terrace of Purgatory is Giuseppe Polimeni, 'La "gloria della lingua": considerazioni di poetica nello snodo di *Purgatorio* x, xii, xii', in *Purgatorio 2009*, ed. by Benedetta Quadrio, pp. 105–33.

[17] See Cogan, *The Design in the Wax*; Christian Moevs, 'Triform Love: The Seven Deadly Sins and the Structure of the *Commedia*', in Barnes and O'Connell (eds.), *Dante*, pp. 11–46.

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confession. His invention of an antechamber to Purgatory, where souls who delayed their penance are temporarily deprived of the purifying pain of sense (*poena sensus*), further underlines the fact that Purgatory continues a process that should have begun in this life. The overarching moral theme of Paradise is Christian asceticism, and Dante overlaps a scientific belief in astral influence on human personality with the scheme of the four cardinal and three theological virtues.

In Chapter 2, I turn to the political dimension of Dante's ethical thought. Whereas critics have tended to emphasise 'the fundamental difference' between the ethical–political theories expounded in the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia*, I demonstrate their fundamental unity. Dante's theoretical insistence on the two ethical goals of humankind, the two political structures (Empire and Church) necessary for their pursuit, and the exclusive temporal power of the Empire and material poverty of the Church, lie behind – I argue – two of the most startling surprises in his depiction of the otherworld, in relation to previous traditions both popular and learned about the afterlife. First, of the approximately 300 characters in Dante's otherworld, 84 are pagans; 51 of these are located in a region entirely of Dante's own invention – the limbo of the virtuous pagans. Second, Dante depicts at least four contemporary popes in Hell.[18] No less than his Latin prose treatise in three books, Dante's vernacular poem in three canticles served as potent propaganda for the Imperial faction in Italy, and as a controversial manifesto for the radical reform of the Roman Church.

Especially in light of recent philological evidence that dates the *Monarchia* to circa 1317–1318 when most of the *Commedia* was already written, it is no longer sustainable to argue that the Latin prose treatise represents a formative stage in Dante's political theology, one intended to be left behind when he commenced work on his poetic masterpiece.[19] Nonetheless, those Dante scholars who have sought to read the *Commedia*

[18] See Alison Morgan, *Dante and the Medieval Other World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 78.

[19] According to Prue Shaw, the date of the *Monarchia* is certainly no earlier than 1314; further contextual and historical arguments provided by Kay and Cassell imply a dating after 1316 and, most probably, 1317–1318. See Dante, *Monarchy*, trans. and ed. by Prue Shaw, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Dante, *Monarchia*, trans. with commentary by Richard Kay (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), pp. xx–xxxi; Anthony K. Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy: An Historical Study with Accompanying Translations of Dante Alighieri's 'Monarchia', Guido Vernani's 'Refutation of the "Monarchia" Composed by Dante', and Pope John XXII's Bull 'Si fratrum'* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 3–49.

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as informed by the dualistic theory of the *Monarchia* have taken a wrong turn, as I argue in Chapter 3. In *Dante's Political Purgatory*, for example, John A. Scott claims that Dante's Purgatory represents an ethical journey guided by 'justice and the teachings of philosophy' towards the '*beatitudo huius vitae*'.[20] By contrast, I offer a way to read Dante's poem as informed by his dualistic theory without being drawn into a forced reading of Purgatory in overly political terms. I then show how Dante forged his vision of Purgatory through two areas of Christian theory and practice that had risen to particular prominence in the thirteenth century: the newly crystallised doctrine of Purgatory and the tradition of the seven capital vices (or deadly sins) in penitential ethics. Thus, Chapter 3 presents afresh a 'theological Purgatory' – a region that embodies an explicit re-orientation from natural to supernatural ethics, from pagan to Christian *exempla*, and from this world to the heavenly city. Dante's Purgatory represents, then, the Christian moral pilgrimage towards the *beatitudo vitae aeternae*. In considering Dante's Christian ethics, therefore, it is appropriate to focus our lens on the seven terraces of Purgatory.

In Chapter 4, I argue that even those scholars who have interpreted the ethics of Purgatory as distinctively Christian have typically turned to the wrong tradition of moral theology in order to do so. Almost without exception, scholars and commentators gloss Dante's approach to the seven capital vices through Aquinas (and especially the Aquinas of the *Summa theologiae*). However, Aquinas's reforms in moral theology were not, in fact, particularly influential in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. More influential, instead, was an older tradition of the vices represented by Aquinas's Dominican predecessor Peraldus (c. 1200–71). It is to this older tradition that Dante turns in constructing the seven terraces of Purgatory. While Siegfried Wenzel demonstrated the influence of Peraldus's rationale on the moral order of Purgatory, Dante scholars have not explored the implications of this important connection between Dante and Peraldus for a reading of the ethics of Purgatory as a whole.[21]

[20] Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 189. As Nicola Fosca highlights, in his recent commentary on the *Commedia* (2003–6), such a secular reading has become increasingly dominant and widespread. See Fosca, gloss to *Purg.* XXVII, 103–8.

[21] Siegfried Wenzel, 'Dante's Rationale for the Seven Deadly Sins (*Purgatorio* XVII)', *Modern Language Review* 60 (1965), 529–33. For partial studies of Dante and Peraldus, see Franco Mancini, 'Un *auctoritas* di Dante', *Studi danteschi*, 45 (1968), 95–119 (pp. 101–2); Carlo Delcorno, 'Dante e Peraldo', in *Exemplum e letteratura tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989), pp. 195–227; Luca Azzetta, 'Vizi e virtù nella Firenze del Trecento (con un nuovo autografo del Lancia e una postilla sull' "Ottimo Commento")', *Rivista di Studi Danteschi* 8: 1 (2008), 101–42. The relative lack of critical attention to Peraldus may be due in part to the lack of a

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I demonstrate the major differences between Aquinas's and Peraldus's approaches. This comparative critique highlights the characteristics, including the weaknesses, of Dante's poetic treatment (which clearly follows Peraldus's treatise). I argue, moreover, that there is a compelling parallel between Peraldus's *De vitiis et virtutibus* and Dante's Purgatory and Paradise in terms of not only ethical content but also ethical form.

The third and fourth chapters lay the foundation, therefore, for Chapters 5–7, which draw significantly on Peraldus's treatise as a gloss for the Christian ethics of Dante's Purgatory. In Chapter 5, I reappraise Dante's relationship with his reader in *Purgatorio* through the interpretative paradigm of medieval preaching against vice. The terrace of pride is particularly interesting in this context, as the medieval church provides its implicit backdrop. The terrace's centrepiece is Dante-character's encounter with three prideful souls (*Purg.* XI, 37–142), and this encounter is framed by the three examples of humility (*Purg.* X, 34–93) and the twelve examples of pride (*Purg.* XII, 25–63). I interpret the three groups together as a triptych, arguing that Dante models a spiritual exercise of conversion from pride to humility in this terrace. As sinner and preacher, he invites his reader to reflect upon the three prideful souls identified (Omberto, Oderisi, and Salvani), and upon the three groups of prideful examples (delineated by the acrostic 'VOM') in counter-position with the three exempla of humility (Mary, King David, and Trajan). Dante's choice of exempla (which has puzzled critics) becomes understandable when, and only when, we interpret them in relation to each other in terms of his moral purpose for the terrace as a whole.[22]

Scholars have typically failed to appreciate the importance of the vice of sloth in Dante's biography, as well as its pervasive presence in his Christian moral vision. In Chapter 6, I demonstrate that Peraldus's treatise

critical edition (a semi-critical edition of the text in three volumes is currently under way; see the Peraldus Project: www.public.asu.edu/~rnewhaus/peraldus/). As there is currently no critical edition, my references to Peraldus's *De vitiis* are to William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum ac vitiorum*, ed. by Rodolpus Clutius (Paris, 1629), 2 vols., which is conveniently available online via Google Books. In this edition, the treatise on the virtues is printed first (as volume 1) and the treatise on the vices second (as volume 2); in contrast, in thirteenth-century manuscripts, the order is the reverse. I refer simply to Peraldus, *De vitiis*, and page references will be to the second volume of the Clutius edition. For ease of reference to other editions, I give references to the treatise [t.], part [pa.], and, where applicable, chapter [c.] of *De vitiis*, as well as to the pagination in this edition.

[22] For a summary of the various scholarly approaches to this venerable *crux*, see Fiorenzo Forti, 'Pusillanimi e superbi', in *Magnanimitade* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1977), pp. 207–26 (pp. 222–25). For a more up-to-date survey, see Fosca, gloss to *Purg.* XII, 61–63.

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'De acedia' profoundly influenced Dante's poetic representation of sloth. Peraldus opens up the depth and breadth of contemporary understandings of *acedia* enabling us to understand sloth as truly a scholar's and a poet's vice. There are, I suggest, two key narrative dramas in the terrace of sloth: the acute fervour of the penitent slothful and, framing this, Dante-character's intellectual zeal for knowledge. Virgil's three doctrinal lectures (XVII, 73–XVIII, 87) – on the moral structure of Purgatory, the nature of love, and free will and moral responsibility – are not parenthetical, therefore, to the terrace's drama. Furthermore, I argue that Virgil's doctrine is represented symbolically by the dream of the Siren at the close of the terrace (XVIII, 130–45 and XIX, 1–69). Using Peraldus as a gloss, I identify Dante's first sin in *Inferno* I as tepidity (the genus of sloth) and, even more precisely, as its subspecies of ignavia. It is particularly significant, then, that 'tepidity' (*Purg*. XXII, 92) is the post-conversion vice of Statius, Dante's poetic cypher.

In Chapter 7, I demonstrate the significance of avarice in Dante's Christian ethics, and in his own moral biography. As Peraldus's treatise 'De avaritia' demonstrates, the vice of avarice may include a disordered love of power and knowledge as well as of wealth, and its opposing vice of prodigality. In particular, *amor filiorum* [the love of children] is highlighted as a perilous occasion to avarice. I argue that *amor filiorum* is the interpretative key to Dante's terrace of avarice, which is structured chiastically around the figure of Hugh Capet (*Purg*. XX, 40–96). Scholars have typically interpreted Hugh Capet as simply a vehicle for Dante's political polemic, and have overlooked the profound spiritual dimension of the episode. From a theological perspective, however, Hugh Capet's confession at the heart of the canto is directly penitential. The examples of poverty (16–33) and avarice (97–123) all concern the impact of poverty on family dependents; the she-wolf (4–15) and the poor shepherds (124–41) emphasise the failure of the Church's pastors to protect their flock from avarice; the prologue (1–3) and the epilogue (142–51) concern the avaricious desire for knowledge. Hugh Capet's genealogy of ancestral line (*Purg*. XX) is, in turn, framed by the avaricious Ottobono dei Fieschi's genealogy of popes (*Purg*. XIX) and the prodigal Statius's genealogy of ethical poets (*Purg*. XXI–XXII). Through his carefully choreographed representation of Statius, Dante also implies that avarice (in its subspecies, and opposing vice, of prodigality) was his own vice, and the cause of his overthrow by the she-wolf in *Inferno* I.

While I provide an overview of all seven capital vices in Chapters 1 and 3, there are at least five good reasons for focusing in detail on pride, sloth,

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and avarice.[23] First, I seek to show the benefits of interpreting Dante's Purgatory through the narrative units of its moral structure, and providing such close readings required selection. Second, Dante gives special emphasis to these three vices in Purgatory. Pride and avarice are both 'root vices' (from which the other vices may spring), and Dante allots considerable space – three and three and a half cantos, respectively – to the two terraces devoted to them (*Purg*. x–xii; *Purg*. xix, 70–xxii, 114). The terrace of sloth, although shorter (*Purg*. xvii, 76–xix, 69), is structurally prominent as the mid-point of the poem, and the central terrace to which Dante assigns the exposition of the order of love upon which Purgatory is founded. Third, these three vices are representative of three different kinds of vice as categorised by human moral psychology: pride (with envy) is a vice of the intellect, sloth (with wrath) is a vice of the irascible appetite, and avarice (with gluttony and lust) is a vice of the concupiscible appetite. Fourth, Dante explicitly identifies pride as one of his own gravest vices (*Purg*. xiii, 133–38), while he implicitly identifies prodigality (the opposing vice of avarice) and sloth as key autobiographical vices through Statius, his poetic cypher. Finally, sloth and avarice are the twin vices that Dante associates especially with the moral corruption of the Church: in Dante's view, the spiritual sloth and worldly avarice of the clergy led to the confounding of the two swords of temporal and spiritual power, and to the consequent disorder of the world.

[23] Barnes and O'Connell's *Dante* provides illuminating chapters on each of the seven deadly sins in the *Commedia* as a whole, albeit from different methodological and scholarly perspectives. None of the chapters, however, provides a close reading of a particular terrace of Purgatory.

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