CHAPTER 1

Dante's Ethical Agenda
Vital Nourishment

This chapter sets out – in overview – what I consider to be Dante's ethical agenda: his approach to the gradations of good and evil, to questions of happiness, and to the relationship between different pagan and Christian moral criteria. In the context of thirteenth-century debates about the relationship between reason and revelation, nature and grace, and moral and divine law, I maintain that Dante's approach is characterised by distinction and separation rather than by integration and subordination (the approach of Aquinas). I situate Dante's moral system in relation to those systems familiar to his medieval contemporaries, and underline those aspects which are particularly novel and, in some cases, surprising. I also argue that Dante employs different moral criteria for the three canticles, in contrast to the approach of scholars such as Cogan and Moevs, who seek one overarching moral rationale for the poem as a whole.[1] The moral structure of *Inferno* is highly complex and has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate and controversy. I argue that Virgil's rationale is coherent, effectively demarcating Hell's four principal categories of incontinence, violence, simple fraud, and treacherous fraud, even though it is also incomplete, leaving out the 'neutrals', the Limbo dwellers, and the heretics. These omissions are, I maintain, exceptions that prove the rule, reinforcing (rather than undermining) Dante's Aristotelian taxonomy. While the structure of Purgatory according to the seven capital vices might appear more straightforward, Virgil's lecture in Purgatory (as in Hell) leaves out the most theologically original parts of the canticle: the five groups of souls in Ante-Purgatory, and the Earthly Paradise. I analyse the rationale behind the moral regions of *Purgatorio*, as well as emphasising key differences between Infernal and Purgatorial suffering. In his vision of Paradise, instead of presenting a detailed rationale (as in the other two canticles), Dante places a more overarching emphasis, I suggest, on moral

[1] See Cogan, *The Design in the Wax*; Moevs, 'Triform Love', pp. 11–46.

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asceticism and mystic union with God, in opposition to the avarice and worldly corruption that the poet considered had infected Church and State. After a short consideration of the moral topography of Dante's afterlife as a whole, this chapter thus analyses the moral structure of *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* in turn.

The Moral Topography of Dante's Afterlife

Dante projects the three realms of the medieval afterlife – Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise – onto the contemporary geocentric worldview (the Earth as the centre of the cosmos), thereby joining his moral vision to the macro history of salvation. He imagines that when Satan fell from Heaven, the Earth in the northern hemisphere recoiled in horror, creating the spiralling funnel of Hell.[2] This displaced mass of Earth then formed the conical mountain of Purgatory in the southern hemisphere. In this way, Dante shows how God even out of evil – Satan's rebellion and subsequent temptation of man – brings about good: the mountain provides sinful man with a way back to God. As the pilgrim descends into Hell, he encounters increasingly grave human evils until he reaches Satan at the Earth's exact centre. As he ascends the mountain of Purgatory, the sins he encounters decrease in gravity as he gets ever further from Satan and ever closer to God. Likewise, as he ascends through the nine heavenly spheres on his way to the Empyrean, he encounters blessed souls characterised by ever greater virtues and ever greater holiness. In short, Dante's poem follows a simple, moral-geographical law: to rise up is good; to sink down is bad.

Dante's moral vision is especially innovative in terms of its detailed and systematic ordering of saints and sinners. At a fundamental level, the number symbolism of three (the Trinity) and nine (Creation) seems to underpin the poem's moral structure. There are nine circles of Hell and, with the notable exceptions of circles 1 and 6, there are three main categories of evil: incontinence (circles 2–5), violence (circle 7), and fraud (circles 8 and 9). There are nine principle areas of Purgatory: the seven terraces that purge the seven capital vices (pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust) are framed by the two regions of Ante-Purgatory and the Earthly Paradise. And there are nine heavens of Paradise, which are governed by the nine orders of angels. Although the

[2] Alison Morgan mistakenly situates Dante's mountain of Purgatory in the northern hemisphere (Morgan, *Dante*, p. 144).

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moral structure is less explicit in Paradise, Dante does seem to allude to the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) and the four cardinal virtues (prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance) in the first seven planetary spheres. Furthermore, Dante-character is examined on the three theological virtues in the eighth heaven of the fixed stars.

Topographical markers are further delineators of moral structure. These are particularly clear in Purgatory (the seven terraces of the mountain) and in Paradise (the planetary heavens). Due to the moral complexity of Hell, Dante divides up its multiple regions and sub-regions through a variety of topographical elements, drawing upon a great variety of sources – ranging from classical texts, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* and Statius's *Thebaid*, to Christian voyage and vision literature and preaching manuals of his time. Upper Hell (circles 1–5) is entered through a gateway; Lower Hell (circles 6–9) resides within the city of Dis. A steep cliff divides the sins of violence (circle 7) from the ten 'evil ditches' (malebolge) of simple fraud (circle 8), while a central well sets apart the treacherous (circle 9). Differing landscapes are used to subdivide regions. For example, a bloody river, a thorny wood, and a fiery desert segment the seventh circle of violence into violence against another, against self, and against God. Dante draws especially on Virgil's depiction of the pagan underworld (Hades) in *Aeneid* VI, transforming this material in ingenious ways. Thus he borrows four rivers to delineate groups of sinners: Acheron divides the anomalous 'neutrals' from the rest of the damned sinners (*Inf.* III); Styx contains the wrathful and the sullen (*Inf.* VII), Phlegethon the violent against others (*Inf.* XII), the icy lake of Cocytus the treacherous. Similarly, Dante transforms a host of mythological monsters to describe or nuance moral structure. For example, Dante gives Virgil's infernal judge Minos a monstrous tail that he grotesquely wraps around himself one to nine times depending on the circle of Hell allotted to a sinner's damnation (*Inf.* V, 4–12), and he transforms Geryon, with the face of a just man and the body of a serpent, into 'that foul image of fraud' ('quella sozza imagine di froda'; *Inf.* XVII, 7).

Dante's use of moral topography at the macro level of Hell's funnel or at the micro level of a ditch or river strongly suggests that he channelled his ethical agenda through his eschatological vision. Notably, however, Dante does not provide his reader with a map of the detailed moral schema that underpins his poem. Dante could have started his poem, after all, with a 'table of contents' outlining the moral structure of each of the three canticles, but he chose not to, deliberately withholding the kind of bird's-eye view provided by later commentators, especially in the

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Renaissance, and by introductory visual diagrams in modern editions of the poem. It is only one third of the way through Hell (*Inf.* XI), halfway through Purgatory (*Purg.* XVII), and two thirds of the way through Paradise (*Par.* XXII) that we find any gloss at all on the regions' moral structures. In life, we do not have the luxury of learning all the moral answers before we begin our own ethical journeys and we learn, more often than not, through our painful mistakes. Likewise, Dante's poem starts not with a neatly organised solution, but *in media res* with a moral crisis: 'Miserere di me' [Have pity on me] (*Inf.* I, 65). The reader, like Dante-character (Dante's depiction of himself as a character in the poem), must plunge into the darkness of evil, with only the shadowy presence of Virgil to act as a guide. In this way, Dante emphasises the messy process of moral life rather than a set of prescribed rules and he challenges us, as readers, to find our own ethical bearings. As Ezra Pound memorably remarked: 'Dante wrote his poems to MAKE PEOPLE THINK.'[3]

Given that this chapter will take perforce a bird's-eye view of the poem's moral structure, and draw out the ethical theory interspersed in the text, it is especially necessary to foreground that this is not, in fact, the reader's experience. We should be sensitive, in other words, to the way in which Dante progressively builds a moral structure into his poem, and to its narrative effects. So with this one important caveat in mind, let us turn to the moral structure of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise.

Pagan Moral Authorities in Hell: Aristotle and Virgil

One of many interpretations of the three beasts that Dante-character encounters at the beginning of his journey – the leopard, the lion, and the she-wolf (*Inf.* I, 31–60) – is that they represent the basic tripartite moral structure of Dante's Hell: incontinence, violence, and fraud.[4] However, such symbolism is allusive at best, and the actual moral classification

[3] Ezra Pound, 'Hell', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 204.

[4] In his summary of the various interpretations in the critical tradition, Cassell identifies four basic groupings: 'the first holds that the creatures represent the major lusts, desires, or temptations of men as identified in I John 2:16–17; the second that they symbolize corrupt and corrupting political entities in the society and times in which Dante lived; the third that they represent the sins most besetting the Florence of the time, pride, envy and lust, according to the censures of Brunetto Latini and Ciacco in *Inferno* VI, 74, and XV, 68; and the fourth that they represent internal besetting sins common to the wayfarer and all men, sins related to the dispositions or gradations of man's fall into sin, chiastically ordered to the three divisions of hell.' See Anthony K. Cassell, *Lectura Dantis Americana: Inferno I* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 45–76 (p. 45).

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of the sins in Hell occurs only after Dante-character has left Upper Hell and entered the city of Dis. Without the benefit of scholarly diagrams and maps, the first readers of Dante's poem would have been initially bewildered and disoriented as surprise builds upon surprise: Dante's first moral guide is not an authoritative Christian saint, but rather the pagan poet Virgil (*Inf.* II, 61–136); the first group of sinners encountered (the 'neutrals') are unknown to medieval theology and entirely Dante's own invention (*Inf.* III, 21–69); and the first circle of Hell (Limbo) is radically revised by Dante to include the presence of virtuous pagans (*Inf.* IV, 67–151). Given that the second circle is devoted to lust (*Inf.* V), the third to gluttony (*Inf.* VI), the fourth to avarice and prodigality (*Inf.* VII), and the fifth to wrath (*Inf.* VII–VIII), the reader might naturally suppose that the seven deadly sins (or capital vices) is an ordering principle. Dante sets up this expectation only to frustrate it, however, for the system of the seven deadly sins then decisively breaks down. Sloth may be implicitly condemned as a counterpart to wrath (*Inf.* VII, 115–26).[5] But there is no circle dedicated to either envy or pride, despite these two remaining deadly sins being referenced alongside avarice in *Inferno* VI, 74.[6] Boccaccio first claimed that the opening of *Inferno* VIII – 'io dico seguitando' [Continuing, I have to tell] – represents Dante's return to writing after a decisive break, and some critics still suggest that Dante changed his mind about the moral structure of Hell in the process of writing.[7] It has been argued, for example, that Dante originally intended to embody envy in Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti and pride in Farinata, and only later salvaged the material in his

[5] As Dorigatti observes, Bonaventure connects sloth to wrath in this way in his *Compendium theologicae veritatis*: 'Ira, cum non potest se vindicare, tristatur, et ideo ex ea nascitur acidia' [When anger cannot avenge itself it turns to sadness, and in the process acedia is born]. In a nuanced treatment, however, Dorigatti argues that 'acedia' is described here only as an effect of wrath and not as cause: the 'accidioso fummo' derives from wrath's second aspect, of 'those whose anger boils inside them without finding any outlet'. See Marco Dorigatti, 'The Acid Test of Faith: Dante and the Capital Sin of Accidia (Sloth)', in Barnes and O'Connell (eds.), *Dante*, pp. 151–78 (p. 157 and pp. 160–66). However, for a strong argument in favour of identifying *acedia* here, as well as a bibliography on the *crux*, see also Jennifer Rushworth, 'Mourning and Acedia in Dante', in Jennifer Rushworth, *Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch, and Proust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 18–53 (especially pp. 20–24).

[6] Even so, many scholars have attempted to fit the scheme of the seven capital vices onto the overall moral structure of the *Inferno*. For some clear arguments against this approach, see Edward Moore, 'The Classification of Sins in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*', in Edward Moore, *Studies in Dante: Second Series* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899; repr. 1968), pp. 152–209 (pp. 152–82).

[7] Almost all scholars now discount as a fable Boccaccio's claim that the first seven cantos were written before Dante's exile (1302). Nonetheless, Boccaccio's sense that Dante changed his mind about the ordering and structuring of the poem (which the fable may illustrate) is plausible if not – for me, at least – convincing.

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masterly creation of the canto of the Epicureans (*Inf.* x).[8] Dante, of course, ultimately deploys the scheme of the seven vices to structure Purgatory. Whether or not he originally intended to apply this scheme to Upper Hell, its suggestion there remains strong, providing interesting points of parallel and contrast with its later development in the second canticle.

The delayed classification of moral evil is presented after Dante and Virgil have left Upper Hell and entered the city of Dis.[9] Unable to descend further because of the horrible stench cast up by the abyss of Lower Hell, Dante and Virgil are forced to wait while they become accustomed to it. Virgil takes advantage of the time by finally explaining Hell's moral structure (*Inf.* xi, 16–66). Virgil makes a threefold distinction: first, between incontinence (Upper Hell) and malice (Lower Hell); second, between malice through violence (circle 7) and malice through fraud (circles 8 and 9); and third, between simple fraud like counterfeiting, which deceives a stranger who has no particular reason to trust us (circle 8), and treacherous fraud like betraying one's own mother or father, which deceives someone who has a special reason to trust us, thereby breaking a special bond of love (circle 9).

Many scholars have posited an inconsistency in Virgil's rationale that apparently derives from Dante's fusion of two sources. Where Cicero's *De officiis* i, 13 subdivides malice into violence and fraud (*Inf.* xi, 22–24), Aristotle's *Ethics*, vi, 1–6 distinguishes between incontinence, malice, and mad bestiality (*Inf.* xi, 79–84).[10] However, Virgil's rationale is arguably consistent.[11] On such an interpretation, the Ciceronian and Aristotelian

[8] See, most recently, Raffaele Pinto, 'Indizi del disegno primitivo dell'*Inferno* (e della *Commedia*): *Inf.* vii–ix?', *Tenzone. Revista de la Asociación Complutense de Dantología*, 12 (2011), 105–52. On Pinto's reading, Dante originally intended the *Inferno* to be just eleven cantos long, with the ninth canto devoted to envy, the tenth to pride, and the eleventh to treachery.

[9] In the literary conceit running through this canticle, Dante's *Inferno* follows Virgil's *Aeneid* just as Dante-character follows Virgil-character into Hell. The Sibyl digresses on the moral order of Tartarus in like manner (see *Aeneid* vi, 535–627).

[10] Cicero, *De officiis,* i. xiii, 41: 'Cum autem duobus modis, id est aut vi aut fraude, fiat iniuria.' Notably, Dante also makes the distinction between violence and fraud at *Conv.* iv, xi, 11: 'e quale buono uomo mai per forza o per fraude procaccerà?'; Aristotle, *Ethics*, vii, 1.1: 'Post haec autem dicendum aliud facientes principium, quoniam circa mores fugiendorum tres sunt species, malitia, incontinentia, et bestialitas.'

[11] Zygmunt G. Barański, by contrast, reacts against a tendency in the scholarship to iron out what he sees as the blatant deficiencies of Virgil's lecture. See Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Canto xi', in *Lectura Dantis Turicensis: Inferno*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2003), pp. 151–63. Barański argues that, through Virgil's inconsistent and incomplete account, Dante deliberately exposes the limitations of not only reason but also faith to understand the complexity of evil and, thereby, implicitly critiques a form of Christian Aristotelianism confident in its rational, scientific presentation of truth (p. 159). See also Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Segni e struttura Canto XI', in Barański, *Dante e i segni*, pp. 127–46.

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usages of the term 'malice' (22 and 82) both map onto the region of Lower Hell as a whole; the Ciceronian subdivision between 'violence and fraud' differentiates circles 7 and 8; the Aristotelian 'mad bestiality' serves as a subcategory of the genus 'malice' to indicate extreme cruelty, thereby differentiating circles 8 and 9.[12] In this way, Virgil's rationale effectively demarcates the four main regions of Hell: the four circles of incontinence (circles 2–5) and the three 'rings' (*gironi*) of violence (circle 7) which make up the first half of Hell; the ten concentric Evil-pockets (*Malebolge*) of simple fraud (circle 8) and the pit of Cocytus consisting of four sub-circles of treacherous fraud (circle 9) which constitute the second half of Hell.[13]

The circles of incontinence follow the principle of 'counter-punishment' (contrapasso; *Inf.* XXVIII, 142) explicitly referenced by the Occitan poet Bertran de Born, according to which infernal suffering reflects the nature of the sin being punished. For Dante, human beings are rational animals: as incontinent sinners subject their reason to their desire (they know what the right moral action is but, despite this, do evil because of an overwhelming passion), they become – *in act* – like a beast or even like vegetative or inanimate matter: 'è morto [uomo], e rimaso bestia' (*Conv.* IV, vii, 14).[14] For the lustful sinners stripped of reason, the sensual pleasure of

Barański argues, moreover, that Virgil fails to identify the seven capital vices as influencing the moral structure of Upper Hell, and that this represents further evidence of his incapacity to appreciate the importance of Christian beliefs (Barański, 'Canto XI', p. 159).

[12] For this reading, I follow, in particular, Steno Vazzana, 'Dov'è la "matta bestialitade" (Ancora sulla struttura aristotelica dell'*Inferno*)', *L'Alighieri. Rassegna bibliografica dantesca*, 38 (1997), 95–108. Vazzana provides a helpful recension of opposing critical views, and emphasises that his own interpretation not only builds on the studies of Francesco Mazzoni and Cesare Vasoli, but also aligns with all the early commentators excepting Boccaccio. Vazzana's citation of Aquinas's commentary on the *Ethics* puts the case especially well: 'Bestialitas differt a malitia ... per quendam excessum circa eandem materiam et ideo ad idem genus reduci potest' [Bestiality differs from malice through some kind of excess with regard to the same matter and, therefore, is reducible to the same genus] (p. 102). Cogan's insistence on equating circles 2–5 with the concupiscent appetite, circles 6 and 7 with the irascible appetite, and circles 8 and 9 with the rational will leads him to align 'mad bestiality' with the violent and the heretics. Cogan recognises, however, that he can 'find no support in Aristotle's text [and] must accept it as a purely Dantean usage of the term *bestiality*' (Cogan, *The Design in the Wax*, pp. 293–94).

[13] Dante seems to consciously mark this binary division of the narrative of hell. *Inferno* XVIII begins: 'Luogo è in inferno detto Malebolge.'

[14] Pietro d'Alighieri cites Aquinas's commentary on the *Ethics*: 'Et sic, ut dicit ibi Commentator, incontinentia est dispositio praeter rectam rationem, et sic incontinens est qui scit se prava agere, sed propter passionem non consistit in ratione' (Pietro Alighieri [2], gloss to *Inf.* XI, 76–84). Drawing explicitly upon Aristotle's *De anima*, Dante employs the analogy of the three natures – vegetative, sensitive, and rational – being like a triangle within a square within a pentagon. If one takes away a side of a pentagon, it leaves only a square. Analogously, if one takes away reason, the soul is only sensitive: that is a brute animal (*Conv.* IV, vii, 14–16). See also Aquinas, *Sententia Ethic.*, VII. 1.1. n. 3: 'Si quidem igitur sit perversitas ex parte appetitus ut ratio practica remaneat recta, erit incontinentia, quae scilicet est, quando aliquis rectam aestimationem habet de eo quod est

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touch, shared by all animals, becomes their overpowering desire; in Hell, in keeping with medieval bestiary lore, they are consequently compared to birds buffeted by the wind (*Inf.* v).[15] For the gluttons, bodily nourishment necessary also to plant life becomes their overriding desire. In Hell, they appear human but in reality they have become indistinguishable from beasts and wallow in their own filth like dogs and pigs (*Inf.* vi).[16] The avaricious make material goods – the level of inanimate matter – their goal and become in Hell little better than the boulders they must endlessly push around (*Inf.* vii). Finally, according to the extent of their wrath, the sinners in the fifth circle are submerged by degrees in a river of blood (*Inf.* viii).

As Virgil clarifies (*Inf.* xi, 28–33), the seventh circle of violence is divided into three rings: violence against one's neighbour (*Inf.* xii), against oneself (*Inf.* xiii), and against God (*Inf.* xiv–xvii). Although modern commentators typically trace this triple division to Aquinas, Dante construes these categories in a markedly different way. For example, the classification 'sins against the self' includes, for Aquinas, the intemperate sins of gluttony and lust; in contrast, for Dante, it is restricted to wilful self-destruction (suicide or a squandering of one's own possessions). More convincing, in my view, is that these three victims of man's violence (neighbour, self, and God) are connected to the parallel victims of man's hatred in Virgil's corresponding lecture on the moral structure of Purgatory (*Purg.* xvii, 104–14). Virgil explains there that one cannot hate God directly because God is the necessary cause of our existence. One can rebel against God indirectly, however, insofar as our disordered will hates God's effects such as His supremacy or His prohibition of sins. In this way,

faciendum vel vitandum, sed propter passionem appetitus in contrarium trahit.' See also Pietro d'Alighieri [3], gloss to *Inf.* xi, 76–90.

[15] As with the case of Francesca and Paolo – murdered by Gianciotto Malatesta (her husband and his brother, respectively) – it can also lead to disastrous personal and social consequences. Indeed, as Iannuci emphasises, adulterous love is presented as a root metaphor of cosmic discord in this canto. See Amilcare A. Iannucci, 'Forbidden Love: Metaphor and History (Inferno 5)', in *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Amilcare A. Iannuci (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 94–112: 'Paolo and Francesca's last trembling kiss, inspired by their reading of the romance of *Lancelot du Lac*, repeats at the level of chronicle a pattern inherent not only in literature but in history itself – a pattern whereby passion overwhelms reason and leads to self-destruction and social upheaval' (pp. 106–7).

[16] The glutton Ciacco similarly embodies the human tragedy of incontinent sin. The putrid infernal discharge raining down upon the gluttons in hell represents, in Boccaccio's reading, an amalgamation of vomit and scatological excretion (the undigested mixture of luxurious and excessive foods). Boccaccio, gloss to *Inf.* vi, 94–96. Through intemperance, the souls fail, therefore, to realise their potential as human beings and are subsumed into ever-lower forms of natural life.

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violence against God is possible. Similarly, we cannot hate ourselves directly but we can do violence to ourselves. Thus, for example, we may misjudge as good something that is, in fact, evil, as when the suicide kills himself as a means to end misery and suffering.[17] From Virgil's lecture in Purgatory, therefore, we may understand why violence against self (our very existence) and violence against God (the origin of that existence) are – for Dante – not only possible but progressively more grave than violence against one's neighbour (who is outside our existence).

Virgil's threefold division of violence against God into blasphemy (*Inf.* XIV), sodomy (*Inf.* XV–XVI), and usury (*Inf.* XVII) in the third ring of violence (a sterile desert battered by a rain of fire) provokes Dante-character's puzzlement, however, and requires further comment (*Inf.* XI, 94–96). Citing Aristotle's *Physics* and, for further confirmation, the theological authority of Genesis, Virgil argues that Nature takes its course from the Divine Intellect, whereas human work takes its course from Nature. Where blasphemy scorns God directly, the sexual act of sodomy disdains the principle of fertility in Nature and, consequently, indirectly scorns God. Usury – the lending of money on interest – scorns Nature because, as Aristotle argued, it is unnatural that money should beget money (*Politics* 1.10).[18] It also derides man's work because the creditor does not add value, but instead receives something (the interest) for nothing (the original sum of money is returned risk free).[19]

[17] The examples of blasphemy and suicide are not, then, counter-examples to the rationale in Purgatory (as Hollander suggests). See Hollander, gloss to *Purg.* XVII, 106–11: 'The first consequence of this doctrine is to remove two possible motivations from consideration: hatred of self or hatred of God, both of which are declared to be impossible. Singleton (comment on vv. 109–11) points out that sinners like Capaneus (*Inf.* XIV) and Vanni Fucci (*Inf.* XXV) indeed do demonstrate a hatred for God, a feeling possible only in hell, but not in this life on Earth. The sins of suicide and blasphemy, however, surely seem to contradict this theoretical notion.'

[18] See Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.10.1258b, where usury is described as absolutely contrary to nature ('maxime praeter naturam'; cited in *DE*, p. 848). See also Aquinas's commentary to the *Physics* (*Exp. Polit.* 1.8.134): 'For this reason the acquisition of money is especially contrary to Nature, because it is in accordance with nature that money should increase from natural goods and not from money itself' (cited in *DE*, p. 848). See also Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Inf.* XI, 94–111: 'offendit enim primo naturam in eo quod non est naturae ut denarius pareat et generet alium denarium sine corruptione sui, cum ipsa natura, ut ait Phylosophus, velit quod corruptio unius sit generatio alterius.'

[19] See Aquinas, *De malo*, q. 13, a. 4, co. In practising usury, the creditor, according to Aquinas, either sells nothing or sells the same thing twice: the very money whose use consists in its consumption. It is like, in Aquinas's analogy, selling a bottle of wine *and* selling the use of the bottle of wine, as if these were two different things. With a house, it is natural that someone might own it but another pay to use it (through rent); conversely, it is not conceivable for someone to own a bottle of wine and another simultaneously to use it (through its use, the wine is consumed, and ceases to exist and be possessed by the owner).

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Of the three forms of violence against God, Dante devotes the most space – two cantos (*Inf.* XV–XVI) – to sodomy, a sin which scholars of this episode have typically equated with homosexuality.[20] There are, however, problems with this characterisation.[21] Male–male sodomy in Dante's Florentine context appears to have been predominantly pederastic, and defined in terms of active (elder male) and passive (young male) partners, rather than in terms of sexual orientation or mutual reciprocity.[22] According to contemporary penitentials, moreover, men could sin in different ways, and with women as well as with other men, 'against nature'.[23] Pietro d'Alighieri's commentary on the third rung of sodomy, for example, draws extensively on Peraldus's treatment of the *peccatum contra naturam*.[24] Peraldus emphasises that the sin against nature can be according to the substance (*ad substantiam*) or according to the position (*ad modum*).[25] Anal or oral sex is against nature *ad substantiam* because semen is not ejaculated into the appropriate place.[26] Peraldus considers anal or oral sex between a man and a woman worse even than incest, and

[20] Dante scholars commonly use the terms 'sodomy' and 'homosexuality' interchangeably (see, for recent examples, the commentaries by Hollander, Durling-Martinez, Barolini, and Fosca). Indeed, this is the case even with those scholars who have argued – wrongly, in my view – that Brunetto's sin is not sodomy at all but his alleged denial of the mother tongue (see André Pézard, *Dante sous la pluie de feu* [Paris: Vrin, 1950]) or his Republicanism (see Richard Kay, *Dante's Swift and Strong: Essays in 'Inferno'* XV [Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978]; Richard Kay, 'The Sin(s) of Brunetto Latini', *Dante Studies*, 112 [1994], 63–75).

[21] See Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 7–8: 'most [scholars] would agree that to label anyone in the past who had sex with someone of the same sex as "a homosexual" would be to impose a modern category . . . medieval people did not draw the line between gay and straight, but between reproductive and non-reproductive sex.' Over the last thirty years, there has been a significant increase in scholarship on medieval sexuality. For the implications of this research for our understanding of the *peccatum contra naturam*, see pp. 157–95 in Karras's book; for an introduction to the burgeoning field of scholarship in this area, see 'Further Reading' in the same book, pp. 206–25.

[22] The early commentators refer anecdotally to male sodomy as pederastic. Although there is no extant legal evidence for early fourteenth-century Florence, the Florentine Office of the Night (1432–) records 83 per cent of passive partners as between thirteen and eighteen years of age, and only 3 per cent as older than age twenty (Karras, *Sexuality*, p. 179). According to Karras: 'While mutuality may not be the reality in many sexual relationships today, it is taken by many as the ideal, and sex is commonly thought of as something done by a couple, not as something done by one person to another (although indeed this is not the case in all contemporary subcultures). The line between active and passive partner in the Middle Ages was very sharp, and closely related to gender roles. To be active was to be masculine, regardless of the gender of one's partner, and to be passive was to be feminine. This does not mean, however, that all medieval sexuality was "heterosexualised": the pattern of active/masculine and passive/feminine was a matter of role, not of object choice' (p. 27).

[23] See Karras, *Sexuality*, especially pp. 20, 92, 172–73.

[24] See Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Inf.* XV–XVI.

[25] Peraldus, *de vitiis*, t.iii, pa. 2, ch. 2, p. 20a.

[26] Ibid.: 'est contra naturam ad substantiam, ut cum quis procurat vel consentit, ut semen alibi quam in loco ad hoc deputato effundatur'.

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most hateful in a wife ('in uxore').[27] Vaginal sex is against nature *ad modum* if a woman is on top of the man ('ut cum mulier supergreditur') or if a man enters, like a beast, from behind ('vel cum sit bestiali modo illud opus').[28] There are arguably, then, two groups of sodomites in this ring of Hell: male–male (*Inf.* XV) and male–female (*Inf.* XVI). The first group comprise 'cherchi / e litterati grandi' [clerks and great men of letters] (XV, 106–7), most notably Brunetto Latini, and commentators have speculated that Dante may be reflecting – in this episode – on having been the object, in his youth, of the elder Brunetto's sexual advances.[29] There is only a single and allusive one-line reference to the sin of sodomy in *Inferno* XVI: 'la fiera moglie più ch'altro mi nuoce' [my fierce wife harms me more than anything else] (45). It seems plausible that Dante may be playing here, in the tradition of *nomen significans rei*, with the Latin etymology of the man and woman in question: Iacopo Rusticucci ('Iacopo Rusticucci fui') really was 'rusticus' [rustic, rural] with his 'fera uxor' [bestial, savage wife].[30] We should not be surprised, moreover, that Dante's references to such sins against nature are allusive, both because

[27] Ibid., ch. 3, p. 20b: 'Sed omnium horum pessimum est quod contra naturam sit: ut si vir membro mulieris non ad hoc concesso utatur. Hoc execrabiliter sit in meritrice, sed execrabilius in uxore.'

[28] Ibid. In both positions, nonetheless, semen is ejaculated, in Peraldus's words, into the appropriate vessel ('tamen in vase debito').

[29] See, for example, Durling, *Inferno*, p. 245: 'If we interpret the episode as a veiled account of the relation between Dante and Brunetto, its implication would seem to be: Dante and Brunetto met going in opposite directions both on the arc of life and in relation to salvation: Brunetto was sexually attracted to Dante, and Dante perhaps to him (line 23 . . .); Dante rejected Brunetto's advances, however.' See also 'Dante and Homosexuality' (pp. 559–60). Early commentators note that pederastic practices were rife in the school room (see, for example, Benvenuto, gloss to *Inf.* XV, 110–14), underlying Dante's particular association of sodomitic practices with clerics and literary men. Boswell argues that the sodomites in Hell 'were probably associated in Dante's imagination with the seduction of minors or those in their care: they were teachers of grammar, scholars, clerics. (Perhaps Dante himself had been the object of Latini's affections?)' See John E. Boswell, 'Dante and the Sodomites', *Dante Studies*, 112 (1994), 63–76 (p. 71).

[30] Peraldus notes that women, in a frenzy, abused men by mounting them' (Peraldus, *de vitiis*, t.iii, pa. 2, ch. 3, p. 20b: 'quod mulieres in vesaniam versae supergressae viris abutebantur'). Maramauro, for example, glosses 'la fiera moglie' (45) in this sense of sodomy *ad modum* (Maramauro, gloss to *Inf.* XVI, 40–45: 'la sua dona luxuriosa; la quale ultra el modo licito volea che so marito usasse con lei: e però dice "La fiera"'). The other early commentators typically interpret this to mean either that Iacopo Rusticucci was led to sodomy with young men by his wife, or that she led him to sodomy *ad substantiam* with her. For the male–male interpretation, see, for example, Guido da Pisa, gloss to *Inf.* XVI, 43–45, and Jacopo della Lana, gloss to *Inf.* XVI, 43–45. For the male–female interpretation, see, for example, Pietro Alighieri [1], gloss to *Inf.* XVI, 34–45; and Graziolo Bambaglioli, gloss to *Inf.* XVI, 37–45. The codice cassinese divides the sinners against nature into: male–male, human–beast, and male–female (sodomy *ad substantiam*). See Codice cassinese, gloss to *Inf.* XVI, 1. For a further division of the sodomites into four different groups – male–male, female–female, male–female, and human–beast – see Boccaccio, gloss to *Inf.* XV, 115–18.

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this sin was seen as unspeakable and because, in nonetheless speaking of it, one might give others the occasion to sin.[31]

Virgil allots only a single *terzina* to the ten species of simple fraud (circle 8): 'hypocrisy, flattery, divining, impersonators, theft and simony, panders, barrators, and like filth' (ipocresia, lusinghe e chi affatura, / falsità, ladroneccio e simonia, / ruffian, baratti e simile lordura; *Inf.* XI, 58–60).[32] Virgil's list is in no apparent order, and it omits two sins altogether.[33] Is this accidental? Is it just for convenience of versification and rhyme? Does Dante, at this point of writing, not have a clear plan of how he will structure *Malebolge*? Whatever the reason, there is a clear narrative effect: the reader must discover those sins unnamed by Virgil – the counsellors of fraud (eighth *bolgia*) and the sowers of scandal and schism (ninth *bolgia*) – as well as the respective gravity of the sins enumerated.[34] Moreover, perhaps Dante seeks to stress the generic effect of simple fraud, which offends against the natural bond of love between human beings, rather than its degrees (notably, no more detailed rationale is given).[35] In this light, it is striking that half of Dante's *Inferno* (cantos XVIII–XXXIV) is concerned

[31] Peraldus, *de vitiis*, t.iii, pa. 2, ch. 2, p. 20a: 'De quo vitio cum magna cautela loquendum est in praedicando, et interrogationes in confessionibus faciendo, ut nihil hominibus reveletur quod illis praestet occasionem peccandi'; Ibid., ch. 3, p. 21b: 'quod ineffabile est et non debet homo loqui de peccato isto'. See also Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Inf.* XV, 101–14: 'nam dicit Simmacus quod "De hoc scelere fornicationis contra naturam homo non debet loqui", unde etiam Ieronimus dicit quod "Sodoma interpretatur muta"'.

[32] The early commentators gloss 'falsità' as falsifiers of things or words. For example, see Benvenuto, gloss to *Inf.* XI, 55–60: 'falsità, idest falsatores metallorum, mercium et aliarum rerum'; Anonimo Selmiano, gloss to *Inf.* XI, 58–60: 'La prima parte di frode dividi in nove parti: l'una parte sono lusinghieri, e ingannatori di femine, e ruffiani con false parole: la seconda parte si è simonia; la terza si è indovinatori; la quarta si è baratteria; la quinta si è ipocresia; la sesta si è ladronia; la settima si è scherani frodolenti; l'ottava si è commettitori di scandali; la nona si è falsatori di parole e di moneta.' Giovan Battista Gelli, gloss to *Inf.* XI, 55–60, by contrast, sees the 'falsi' as referring to the false counsellors, and therefore asserts that the 'falsitori' and 'seminatori di scandoli' are omitted: 'Delle quali dieci specie ei ne nomina nel testo otto per i loro nomi proprii, e questi sono gl'ippocriti, lusinghieri, maliardi, falsi consiglieri, ladri, simoniaci, ruffiani e barattieri; e due sotto questo nome generale *e simile lordura*, cioè bruttezza e scelerità, e questi sono i seminatori di scandoli e i falsatori.' See also Jacopo della Lana, gloss to *Inf.* XI, 58–60, for glossing 'lusinghe' as 'ingannatori'.

[33] See also the list in *Conv.* I, xii, 10: 'tradimento, ingratitudine, falsitade, furto, rapina, inganno e loro simili. Li quali sono . . . inumani peccati'.

[34] See, for example, Alessandro Vellutello, gloss to *Inf.* XI, 52–60: 'i falsi consiglieri, et i seminatori de' scandali, che non nomina: ma di tutti vedremo ne' propri luoghi.'

[35] See P. Gioachino Berthier, gloss to *Inf.* XI, 56–60. This is the 'universale religione dell'umana specie' (*Conv.* IV, iv, 6): the 'naturale amistà, per la quale tutti a tutti semo amici' (*Conv.* III, xi, 7), because 'ciascun uomo a ciascun uomo è naturalmente amico' (*Conv.* I, i, 8). See also Giacomo Poletto, gloss to *Inf.* XI, 55–60. Theodore J. Cachey suggested the moral 'flatness' of the *Malebolge* in a Cambridge–Leeds–Notre Dame (USA)–Rome video conference on *Inferno* XXII (12 February 2015). He gives a helpful analysis of the structure of the *Malebolge*, in Theodore J. Cachey, 'Cartographic Dante', *Italica*, 87 (2010), 3, pp. 325–54.

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with the sin of fraud, whether simple (circle 8) or treacherous (circle 9). The moral weighting of *Inferno* arguably reflects Dante's profound concern with the way in which fraud perverts human reason, and its expression through language.[36] Furthermore, all the sins of fraud undermine the very foundations of civil society, as Pietro d'Alighieri's gloss to *Inferno* XI, 52–60 highlights with its references to Aristotle's *Politics* and to Justinian's code (the *Corpus Juris Civilis*).[37] In the last pocket of *Malebolge*, this is emphasised by the punishment of the falsifiers. For their corruption of the 'body politic' through alchemy, impersonation, counterfeiting (especially of coinage), and lying, they must suffer eternally four horrific diseases – leprosy, insanity, dropsy, and a raging fever – in their own individual bodies. The social–political dimension of Dante's moral structure is reinforced in the pit of Cocytus (circle 9), where treachery is punished in four sub-circles: Caina (treachery to kin), Antenora (treachery to country), Ptolomea (treachery to guests), and Judecca (treachery to lords and benefactors). Dante considered it worse, in other words, to betray one's lord than to betray members of one's own family.

Although Virgil's rationale for the moral structure of Hell delineates the four principal regions of Hell that take up thirty of *Inferno*'s thirty-four cantos, it strikingly leaves out Hell's first section, where the 'neutrals' reside, and which lies inside the infernal gate but outside the circles of Upper Hell (*Inf.* III); Virgil's own eternal resting place, the Limbo of the virtuous pagans within the first circle (*Inf.* IV); and the very area in which Virgil gives his lecture, the sixth circle of heresy (*Inf.* X–XI).[38] In a literal sense, these three categories are theological rather than philosophical, they do not concern moral evil as such, and they are not intelligible in pagan or purely rational terms. In an allegorical sense, however, these daringly original regions of Dante's Hell are the exceptions that prove the rule, and arguably reinforce the Aristotelian taxonomy underpinning the moral structure of Hell as a whole.

The neutrals, who pursued neither good nor evil, may correspond to Aristotle's category of the pusillanimous 'who omit to do what they could': the river Acheron, on this reading, divides sins of omission (*Inf.* III)

[36] As Barański has demonstrated, Dante succeeds in integrating nineteen out of twenty-four of the 'sins of the tongue' listed in Peraldus's preaching manual *De vitiis* in *Malebolge*. Zygmunt G. Barański, *Language as Sin and Salvation: A Lectura of 'Inferno' 18* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, 2014), pp. 36–37, n. 46.

[37] Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Inf.* XI, 52–60.

[38] Ludovico Castelvetro, gloss to *Inf.* XI, 22–66, is extremely critical of the moral structure of Dante's Hell, particularly with regard to his classification of sodomy and usury as 'arti contro natura'.

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from sins of commission (*Inf.* IV–XXXIV).[39] Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics* makes the general distinction between, on the one hand, those who turn away from the good (*retrahunt a bene agendo*) and do not try to achieve good deeds (*absque conatu ad bonas operationes*) and, on the other hand, those inclined to evil doing (*inclinatur ad male agendum*). The first are the pusillanimous 'who omit to do what they could'. The second are evildoers in two ways: the incontinent (*incontinentes*) are enslaved to the senses and do harm to themselves (*in propriam deordinationem*), while the unjust (*injusti*) do evil to others (*mala faciunt aliis*).[40] Thus Dante's 'neutrals' correspond to Aristotle's pusillanimous: they are not evil doers ('male-factores'), as they sin through omission. For this reason, even in this figurative sense, the pusillanimous do not fit into Virgil's lecture, which divides sins of commission into incontinent sin and injustice or malice (with its subspecies 'mad bestiality'). In essence, this more generic schema accounts for the sins of omission punished on the near side of the river of Acheron and reaffirms the binary division of sins of commission into incontinent sin (punished in upper Hell beyond the river) and injustice (punished in the City of Dis).[41]

Although the pusillanimous make sense in terms of Aristotelian ethics, they certainly do not in terms of orthodox theology. Indeed, Dante's invention of the neutral souls who pursued neither evil nor good and are grouped with a third order of angels that followed neither God nor Satan sorely disturbed the early commentators.[42] But through this peculiar category, Dante emphasises figuratively the precious gift of free will: he affirms the imperative to actively seek and do good, rather than sitting on

[39] See *Ethics,* III, 1. 12, and 1. 13 (cited in Giovanni Busnelli, *L'Etica Nicomachea e l'ordinamento morale dell'Inferno di Dante* [Bologna: Zanichelli, 1907], p. 14).

[40] Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum,* III. 1. 12 n. 4.

[41] As Kenelm Foster notes, *malizia* [malice] – punished in Lower Hell – 'is virtually injustice in the widest sense of the term'. See Kenelm Foster, *The Two Dantes, and Other Studies* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 5. See also Busnelli, *L'Etica Nicomachea*, pp. 14–16.

[42] Guido da Pisa notes that, although this is against the Catholic faith – because Christ in the Gospel says, 'Who is not with me, is against me' – the poet should not be condemned because he is speaking poetically and not theologically in this section ('Et quamvis hoc sit contra fidem catholicam, quia Christus in Evangelio ait: "Qui non est mecum, contra me est", sustinendus est iste poeta et non damnandus, quia poetice et non theologice loquitur in hac parte'; Guido da Pisa, gloss to *Inf.* III, 34–42). Foster notes that Dante's 'very characteristic contempt for the neutrals, for the inert "who never were alive", . . . led to three lines (37–9) of rather queer theology' (Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 4). Maritain suggests that '[Dante's] poetry was able freely to play even with its tenets, and to fancy, without deceiving anybody, that condition of the "neither rebellious nor faithful" rejected both by heaven and by hell, which theology does not know' (Jacques Maritain, 'The Three Epiphanies of Creative Intuition', in Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1953], pp. 354–405 [p. 380]).

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the fence like the apathetic neutrals who 'never really lived' (*Inf.* III, 64) and die despised alike by God and the Devil. Thus, for Dante, Celestine – whose sin of omission was to give up the Papal mantle ('il gran rifiuto') – does not even deserve to be named (58–60). In contrast, his successor Boniface, still alive at the fictional date of the poem, will be memorably named (*Inf.* XIX, 53) – though, ironically, mistaken for Dante – for his many sins of commission in that office. Celestine's 'viltade', moreover, recalls Dante's 'viltade' (*Inf.* II, 45), which, Virgil says, holds him back from the honourable endeavour ('onrata impresa') of his journey and, at a figurative level, of writing the *Commedia* itself.[43]

The neutral souls who had a choice but did not use it also throw into relief the tragic predicament of the limbo dwellers. The unbaptised infants and virtuous pagans are not morally evil (they contract original sin but commit no personal sin) but, from a theological perspective, they are damned (denied the beatific vision) because, through no apparent fault of their own, they did not have access to the fruits of the Incarnation. As with the neutrals, Dante's purpose is, I would suggest, primarily figurative: the virtuous pagans represent in the afterlife a secular human happiness attainable through natural (rather than distinctively Christian) ethics. In the first circle of Hell, the exceptional virtue of the pagans (*Inf.* IV) may inversely parallel the exceptional degree of vice of the treacherous souls in the ninth circle (the pit of Cocytus). Indeed, Aristotle counterpoises incontinence with continence, malice with virtue, and extreme malice (or bestiality) with a rare superhuman level of virtue; Aristotle's example of the latter is Hector, who is also named by Dante alongside Aeneas in Limbo (*Inf.* IV, 122).[44]

Furthermore, where heresy (*Inf.* X–XI) is, conventionally at least, a specifically Christian sin, Dante singles out for special treatment the 'Epicureans' (*Inf.* X): remarkable for their political and intellectual prowess, they are punished for denying the immortality of the soul rather than for

[43] See Aquinas, *Com. Eth.*, Iv. 1. 11; II–II, q. 133, a.1. See also *Conv.* I, ii (cited in Busnelli, *L'Etica Nicomachea*, p. 20).

[44] Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle's 'super-excellent virtue' is particularly interesting as a point of comparison with Dante. Like Dante, Aquinas follows Aristotle in seeing bestiality as directly opposed not to clemency but to a super-excellent virtue and in noting that the Philosopher called this super-excellent virtue 'heroic or divine'. But Aquinas goes further than Dante's limbo of the virtuous pagans would allow: he interprets this 'heroic and divine' level of virtue in Christian terms as a gift of the Holy Spirit and, more specifically, as the gift of piety. See Aquinas, *STh.*, IIaIIae, q. 159, a. 2, ad. 1: 'Saevitia vel feritas continetur sub bestialitate: unde non directe opponitur clementiae, sed superexcellentiori virtuti, quam Philosophus vocat heroicam vel divinam, quae secundum nos videtur pertinere ad dona Spiritus Sancti. Unde potest dici quod saevitia directe opponitur dono pietatis.'

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any strictly moral fault.[45] Moreover, the 'spiriti magni' of limbo (IV. 117) arguably find a counterpart in Farinata, who is given the Aristotelian epithet 'magnanimo' (a great-souled one).[46] The distinctive aspects of the three theological regions omitted from Virgil's account are further evidence, therefore, of the Aristotelian ethical framework of Hell overall: the neutrals may embody pusillanimity; the virtuous pagans, heroic virtue; and the Epicureans, a human secular virtue without faith.

Ordering Disordered Love in Purgatory: Augustine and Peraldus

Where visual depictions of the sufferings of Hell and the rewards of Paradise saturated the medieval imagination, Dante's poetic depiction of the afterlife places Purgatory as its literary and topographical centre. Dante gives equal weight to Purgatory, dedicating a canticle to *Purgatorio* (33 cantos) as well as to *Inferno* (34 cantos) and *Paradiso* (33 cantos). Moreover, he transports the region of Purgatory from its traditional location as an ante-chamber of Hell to its own, independent location in the southern hemisphere. Dante's Purgatory is given equal structural weight as well: the nine regions of Purgatory balance the nine circles of Hell and the nine heavens of Paradise. In addition, the three main partitions of Purgatory – Ante-Purgatory, the seven terraces of Purgatory (purging the seven capital sins), and the Earthly Paradise – are structural counterweights to the three main categories of moral evil in Dante's Hell: incontinence (circles 2–5), violence (circle 7), and fraud (circles 8 and 9).

There are, however, four key differences between Infernal and Purgatorial suffering. First, whereas Hell punishes sins or evil actions, Purgatory purges vices or evil habits. The seven capital vices are 'seven springs' from which 'all the deadly corruptions of souls emanate'.[47] Second, whereas corporeal suffering is unredemptive in Hell, it has a twofold purpose in Purgatory: according to its intensity, it punishes a sinner's guilt and, according to its duration, it corrects a sinner's vicious dispositions. Third, although all souls not in Paradise experience a lack of the divine vision (*poena damni*), this deprivation is perpetual in Hell but

[45] On the problems of classing Epicurus, and Epicureanism, as a heresy, see George Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), pp. 85–86, n. 1.

[46] For Aristotle on magnanimity, see Fiorenzo Forti, 'Il limbo dantesco e i megalopsichoi dell'Etica nicomachea', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 138 (1961), 329–30. See also John A. Scott, *Dante magnanimo: studi sulla Commedia* (Florence: Olschki, 1977).

[47] Peter Lombard, II *Sent.*, d. 42, c. 6, in Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, trans. by Giulio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2008), p. 210.

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only temporary in Purgatory. Fourth, whereas evil is punished principally in accordance with natural ethics in Hell, the completely different moral order of Christian holiness emerges in Purgatory: 'qui si rifà santa' [here they make themselves holy again] (*Purg.* XXIII, 66). Dante's treatment of wrath, avarice, gluttony, and lust is essentially different, therefore, in Hell and in Purgatory. For example, gluttony is punished in Hell as the failure of reason to moderate the appetite. By contrast, on the mountain of Purgatory (at the exact antipodes of Jerusalem, the place of Christ's crucifixion), the gluttonous souls' extreme fasting – their faces become dark, hollow, and wasted, and their eye sockets like rings without gems (22–33) – leads to spiritual union with Christ (70–75).

The moral structure of Purgatory is only articulated in its central (fourth) terrace (*Purg.* XVII), and at the centre of the poem as a whole. Dante-character and Virgil arrive at the terrace of sloth at nightfall. As the mountain cannot be climbed without the light of the sun (symbolically without the grace of God), they are forced to wait. As in the corresponding episode in *Inferno* XI, Virgil makes the time profitable by explaining the region's moral structure. Its foundation is the universal relationship of love between the Creator and His creation: 'Né creator né creatura mai ... figliuol, fu sanza amore' [neither Creator nor creature ..., my son, was ever without love] (*Purg.* XVII, 91–92). Virgil distinguishes between two principal kinds of love: natural love and love of the mind ('naturale o d'animo'; 93). Natural love is shared throughout the order of creation: it is the love that makes any material body fall to the earth, fire to ascend, a plant to grow, or an animal to move towards food. As it is predetermined, this natural love is always without error. By contrast, rational love ('d'animo'), which specifies humans as 'rational animals', is subject to free will. As an elective force, this rational love may err, and such disorder is vice. For this reason, love is the seed not only of every human virtue, but also of every human action that deserves punishment (*Purg.* XVIII, 103–5). The function of Christian ethics, then, is the reordering of human love. As Augustine emphasises, 'a brief and true definition of virtue is "rightly ordered love". That is why, in the holy Song of Songs, Christ's bride, the City of God, sings, "Set charity in order in me"' (*De civ. Dei*, XV, 22).[48] Everything must be loved, including the self, insofar as it is ordered to God.

[48] Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, ed. by Bernardus Dombart and Alphonsus Kalb (Turnholt: Brepols [Corpus Christianorum Series Latina], 1955), XV, xvii, 29–35, p. 488: 'Creator autem si veraciter ametur, hoc est si ipse, non aliud pro illo quod non est ipse, ametur, male amari non potest. Nam et

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To describe this disordered love in terms of the seven capital vices, Dante adopts the moral framework provided by the Dominican friar William Peraldus (c. 1200–71) in his treatise on the vices (*De vitiis*).[49] Dante divides disordered love into two main categories: love of an evil and perverted love of a good through excess or deficiency (*Purg.* XVII, 94–96). The evil loved must be directed against one's neighbour (106–14), as humans necessarily love their own existence and God as the cause of that existence. Dante defines pride, envy, and anger, therefore, as different ways by which we may hate our neighbour. The proud hope for excellence through the humiliation of others (115–17). The envious fear to lose their power, honour, or fame through the success of others, so they desire that others be brought low (118–20). The angry, because of some injury, are desirous of revenge and are ready to harm their neighbour (121–23). What, then, about the disordered love of the good? The unmeasured love by deficiency ('per poco di vigore'; 96) is the quiddity of sloth: the distinctive failure sufficiently to love God, the greatest good. Unmeasured love by excess ('per troppo . . . di vigore'; 96) is the genus of the three final vices of avarice, gluttony, and lust (136–39). Peraldus's schema thereby enables Dante to adopt both an Augustinian theory of sin as disordered love *and* the popular moral framework of the seven capital sins.[50]

Dante uses the noun 'Purgatory' (*Purgatorio; Purg.* VII, 39; IX, 49) only to refer to the seven terraces of the mountain (*Purg.* X–XXVII), and Virgil's

amor ipse ordinate amandus est, quo bene amatur quod amandum est, ut sit in nobis virtus qua vivitur bene. Unde mihi videtur, quod definitio brevis et vera virtutis ordo est amoris; propter quod in sancto cantico canticorum cantat sponsa Christi, civitas Dei: *Ordinate in me caritatem*.'

[49] Siegfried Wenzel convincingly demonstrates the influence of William Peraldus's *Summa de vitiis* on Dante's rationale for the seven deadly sins; see Wenzel, 'Dante's Rationale', 529–33. Prior to Wenzel's study, no source had been found for Dante's rationale (which was deemed his own innovation). Wenzel shows that Dante's rationale is found in Peraldus, and that Dante's son Pietro unmistakeably draws on Peraldus's rationale in his first commentary to the apposite passsage (*Purg.* XVII, 91–138). Although Dante may have come across Peraldus's treatment second-hand ('the material which Peraldus had collected was soon used and propagated by authors of Latin and vernacular manuals on the sins and on confession'), it seems that Peraldus's treatise was well diffused in Florence: it was one of the 'two wellsprings . . . of Dominican practical or moral theology' (p. 532). One might reasonably object that Dante does not at any point in his writings identify Peraldus as a source. There are two good, albeit provisional, responses to this argument. First, Pietro d'Alighieri similarly never refers to Peraldus by name; and yet, as established by Wenzel and as I demonstrate with further substantial evidence in Chapters 4–7 especially, he *must* be using Peraldus's treatise. Second, one can highlight that Peraldus's works did not circulate under his name, for Peraldus referred to himself as 'I, the smallest one of the order of the preaching friars'.

[50] Although Dante adopts Augustine's theory of love and its disorder, he takes a very different approach to Augustine's two cities. Where, for Augustine, the earthly city is created by love of self, extending even to contempt of God (*De civ. Dei.* XIV, XXVIII, 1–4), Dante has a much more positive view of the earthly city – in the form of the Holy Roman Empire – as divinely ordained and, in principle, good.

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lecture just explains the moral structure of this region. As with his corresponding lecture on Hell, Virgil leaves out perhaps the most theologically original parts of the canticle in terms of moral structure: an antechamber conventionally named Ante-Purgatory, which stretches from the shore up a rock face to Purgatory's gateway (*Purg.* I–VIII), and the Earthly Paradise at the summit of the mountain (*Purg.* XXVIII–XXXIII). Dante condemns five groups of souls to Ante-Purgatory: the spiritually tardy, who must wait at the mouth of the river Tiber for their ferry crossing to the shores of Ante-Purgatory; the excommunicates (*Purg.* III); the lazy who delayed repentance (*Purg.* IV); those who repented at the last minute, even at point of death (*Purg.* V–VI); and the negligent rulers (*Purg.* VII–VIII). According to a novel kind of *contrapasso*, the souls in Ante-Purgatory – deprived temporarily of the purifying pain of sense (*poena sensus*) – are forced to experience exclusively the lack of the divine vision (*poena damni*).

The emphasis in Ante-Purgatory on those who have delayed their penitence on Earth and, as a punishment for that delay, must wait for the purifying pain of sense (*poena corrigens*) highlights that Purgatory continues a moral process that should have started in this life. Ante-Purgatory is framed by the appearance of four stars symbolising the cardinal virtues and three stars symbolising the theological virtues which rise in their place (*Purg.* I, 22–27; *Purg.* VIII, 85–93). The region is characterised by a powerful nostalgia for the world left behind. Indeed, on his arrival to Purgatory, Dante-character is warned by the gatekeeper that 'whoever looks back must return outside' ('di fuor torna chi 'n dietro si guata'; *Purg.* IX, 131–32). In Augustinian terms, Christians must be in but not of this world: they are pilgrims (peregrin; *Purg.* II, 63) moving through a temporary dwelling place on their way to their true home, the celestial city (*De doctrina Christiana*, I, 4). In a thinly veiled allegory at the door of Purgatory (*Purg.* IX, 70–145), Dante-character undergoes the sacrament of penance and, on absolution, enters Purgatory to begin his satisfaction for his sins that are ritually marked as seven Ps (*peccata*) on his forehead. Through the seven terraces of Purgatory, Dante-character is purged of the seven vices alongside the souls he encounters, and the seven Ps are miraculously erased.

The first terrace is of pride, the worst of the seven vices in the order established by St Gregory the Great. Pride and envy are both vices associated with the intellect and are graver, and therefore lower on the mountain, than wrath and sloth (associated with the irascible appetite) and avarice, gluttony, and lust (associated with the concupiscible appetite).

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The seven vices are, moreover, causally connected: pride begets envy as, in seeking an empty renown, the soul feels envy towards someone able to obtain it; the last vice, lust, may be caused by gluttony as the inordinate consumption of food may dispose the soul to sexual wantonness. In keeping with popular tradition, Dante pairs each of the seven capital vices with one remedial virtue; that is, he links pride with humility (*Purg.* x–xii), envy with charity (xiii–xv), wrath with gentleness (xv–xvii), sloth with zeal (xvii–xix), avarice with poverty (xix–xxii), gluttony with abstinence (xxii–xxv), and lust with chastity (xxv–xvii). These abstract vices and virtues are embodied in the vicious and virtuous actions of particular individuals in episodes taken from the Bible, from pagan myth, and from history. The narrative *exempla* are presented in contrasting ways from sculptured reliefs (humility and pride) and ecstatic visions (gentleness and wrath) to disembodied voices (envy and charity). The Virgin Mary occupies the most important role as the model *par excellence* of the path to Christian virtue, and prayerful meditation upon her life is presented as a remedy for the wounds of sin. The souls in Purgatory are also orientated to God through passages of Scripture, the beatitudes, liturgy, and major Christian prayers (including an innovative vernacularisation of the Lord's Prayer).

Where the pains of Purgatory as a whole were conventionally depicted as a refining fire, Dante specifically reserves fire for the seventh terrace of Mount Purgatory, thereby effectively evoking the intense burning of sexual desire.[51] Some critics have been particularly struck that Dante should have included sodomites among those purging their lust in Purgatory. Barolini, for example, sees this as 'truly progressive and unconventional', and underlines the 'huge implications of allowing homosexuality to be classified as a form of lust'.[52] However, it was entirely conventional to treat sodomy as a lustful vice, and it is notable that Peraldus, in his treatise on

[51] Peraldus, for example, compares lust to a fire, also presenting – in the same passage – Mary as the perfect remedy to lust and lover of chastity. Peraldus *de vitiis*, t. iii, pa. 4, ch. 4: 'De aliis remediis contra Luxuriam', p. 43a: 'Et cum luxuria non sit qualiscunque ignis, scilicet ignis infernalis, summum remedium contra ipsam est oratio: unde sicut ille, qui patitur morbum illum, qui ignis infernalis dicitur, alicubi se facit referre ad Ecclesiam beatae Mariae virginis … Specialiter autem valet contra peccatum illud beata virgo Maria, quae sic amatrix est munditiae in se sicut in aliis.'

[52] Barolini seems to suggest that Dante was the first to allow for the salvation of sodomites: 'I know of no other treatment, written or visual, that opens itself to the idea and indeed the "reality" (in the fiction of the *Commedia*) of saved sodomites.' Nevertheless, it is clear, even just from the example of Peraldus's treatise, that sodomy was understood as a widely practised vice, requiring confession, pardon, and penance, but in no way debarring future salvation. See Teodolinda Barolini, 'Conclusion: Contemporaries Who Found Heterodoxy in Dante, Featuring (But Not Exclusively) Cecco d'Ascoli', in *Dante and Heterodoxy: The Temptations of 13th Century Radical*

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lust, treats first and extensively the *peccatum contra naturam*.[53] It is also unremarkable, in my view, that Dante chooses – on the terrace of lust – paradigmatic forms of a vice for his two *exempla*. The only penitents to circle Mount Purgatory from right to left (an allusion to their sin being 'against nature'), the sodomites are further identified by the reference to Caesar – who was called 'Regina' (queen) for having been the passive sexual partner of the King of Bithynia (*Purg*. XXVI, 76–78); by their cry of Sodom (79); and by their extreme shame (81). Circling from left to right (*Purg*. XXVI, 82–86), it seems, are the rest of the lustful penitents. Again, however, their identification with Pasiphaë, 'che s'imbestiò ne le 'mbestiate schegge' [who made herself a beast within the beast-shaped planks] (87), and their description as 'seguendo come bestie l'appetito' [following our appetites like beasts] (83), allude to the worst kinds of lustful sins outside sodomy: bestiality itself, as well as the two male–female sexual sins against nature *ad modum* delineated by Peraldus: – vaginal sex from behind ('vel cum sit bestiali modo illud opus') or with woman on top ('ut cum mulier supergreditur'), an 'unnatural' switching of gender roles also suggested by the term 'hermaphrodite' (82).[54] Just as the positive examples of Mary and Diana are incitements to chastity (*Purg*. XXV, 127–35) and remedies for the fire of lust (136–39), so the negative exempla of sodomy (King of Bithynia) and bestiality (Pasiphaë) serve as warnings of the grave dangers of sexual desire that does not follow human law (*Purg*. XXVI, 83).[55] The

Thought, ed. by Maria Luisa Ardizzone (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 259–75 (pp. 263–64).

[53] Peraldus, *de vitiis*, t.iii, pa. 2, ch. 3, pp. 20a–22a. In an introductory chapter, Peraldus distinguishes five kinds of lust as – in the most general sense – the disordered love of pleasure (*inordinatus amor delectionis*), as well as the five species of lust in its specific sense (sexual pleasure). In this taxonomy, the sin against nature is the fifth species of lust proper, but Peraldus turns to it first, as the gravest of lustful sins: 'Inter quas primo prosequemur de vitio contra naturam'. Brunetto Latini similarly classifies 'peché contre nature' [the sin against nature] as a species of lust (Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, ed. and trans. by Pietro G. Beltrami, Paolo Squillacioti, Plinio Torri, and Sergio Vatteroni [Turin: Einaudi, 2007], II, 131, p. 628); and, in *Il Tesoretto*, lists sodomy as the worst sin deriving from lust: 'Ma tra questi peccati / Son vie più condonnati / Que' che son soddomiti. / Deh, come son periti / Que' che contra natura / Brigan cotal lusura!' (Brunetto Latini, *Il Tesoretto*, ed. and trans. by Julia Bolton Holloway [New York: Garland, 1981], 2859–64). Dante, of course, judged Brunetto to have failed to live by his own precepts, and this disjuncture between word and action clearly underpins, in part, Dante-character's surprise in meeting him amongst the sodomites (*Inf*. XV, 22–30).

[54] Peraldus, *de vitiis*, t.iii, pa. 2, ch. 2. By contrast, Benvenuto da Imola suggests (Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg*. XXVI, proemio), that Dante treats natural lust ('de purgatione luxuriantium luxuria naturali') first (*Purg*. XXV, 109–39), and unnatural lust ('de purgatione luxuriantium luxuria innaturali') second (*Purg*. XXVI, 8–93). The two directions of the 'second group' reflect, as in Peraldus's taxonomy (and arguably in *Inf*. XV–XVI), the two ways: *ad substantiam* and *ad modum*.

[55] See, for example, Francesco da Buti, gloss to *Purg*. XXVI, 25–42. Barolini, by contrast, appears to interpret Dante's inclusion of sodomy as a paradigmatic example of lust as an implicit affirmation

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perceptions of a rupture in Dante's moral scheme here, and of his radically 'unconventional' treatment of lust in Purgatory, are not then, in my view, justified.[56]

By reserving the punishment of fire for the vice of lust, Dante also succeeds in bringing together the final suffering of Purgatory with 'the fiery revolving sword' which guarded Eden after the Fall (Gen. 3, 24). Dante's syncretism is even more daring, as he explicitly identifies Eden with 'the golden age and its happy state' dreamed of by the ancient (pagan) poets ('l'età de l'oro e suo stato felice'; *Purg.* XXVIII, 139–41). Strikingly, it is at this stage in the poem that Virgil nonetheless departs the scene. As is clear from the staged encounter with Statius (*Purg.* XXI–XXII), Dante conventionally believed that Virgil's fourth eclogue had prophesised Christ without the poet's awareness so that Virgil himself had not benefited from its miraculous intuition. Although Virgil crowns Dante-character at Purgatory's summit with a will which is free, upright, and healthy (*Purg.* XXVII, 124–42), his role of guide is overtaken in the Earthly Paradise first by Matelda and then, after a procession which allegorises God's revelation through the books of the Bible, by Beatrice. The moral climax of *Purgatorio* is, then, Dante-character's encounter with Beatrice, who is circled by handmaidens representing the three theological and four cardinal virtues. The pilgrim is forced to confess his sin in turning from her before having the memory of his sins washed away in the river Lethe and his good memories restored in the river Eünoè. In this way, Dante equates the restoration of grace in the Earthly Paradise after ritual purgation through the seven terraces of Purgatory

that 'limited and moderated homosexual behaviour is not sinful, just as limited and moderated heterosexual behaviour is not sinful' (Barolini, 'Conclusion', p. 265). This is a strange interpretation not least because, by the same logic, it would imply that Dante considered limited and moderated adulterous heterosexual behaviour, or limited and moderated sexual behaviour with beasts, as not sinful.

[56] See Barolini, 'Conclusion', p. 265. Barolini's own interpretations are influenced heavily, as she acknowledges, by the earlier studies of Joepeh Pequigney and John Boswell, both of whom begin with quite extravagant claims for the novelty of Dante's treatment of sodomy. See Joseph Pequigney, 'Sodomy in Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*', *Representations* 36 (Autumn 1991), 22–42: 'The representation of sodomy in the *Divine Comedy* is fuller, more complicated, less consistent, more heterodox, and more important than the commentary has yet made known' (p. 22); and John E. Boswell, 'Dante and the Sodomites', *Dante Studies*, 112 (1994), 63–75: 'Although references in the *Divine Comedy* to homosexuality are few in number and brief in length, for the historian, Dante's treatment of the subject is striking, one might even say revolutionary with regard to the theological climate of the early fourteenth century' (p. 63). By contrast, I would suggest that, especially when read alongside Peraldus's treatise on lust, there is nothing particularly unconventional about Dante's poetic treatment.

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with the recovery of Eden and the upright conscience of prelapsarian man. In the overall moral structure of the canticle, the Earthly Paradise is – in the terminology of Alan of Lille – 'the purity of conscience, the image of eternal life, and the preface to the heavenly kingdom'.[57] It is only after this moral purgation that, in the last line of *Purgatorio*, the pilgrim finally is 'pure and made ready to rise to the stars' (puro e disposto a salire a le stelle; *Purg.* XXXIII, 145).

Nature and Nurture in Paradise: Astral Influence and the Virtues

For the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, Dante combines moral schemes with invented topographies: the subterranean funnel of Hell in the northern hemisphere and the seven terraces of Mount Purgatory in the southern hemisphere. For the *Paradiso*, by contrast, Dante starts with the actual universe as perceived in early fourteenth-century Ptolemaic astronomy: the seven planetary spheres, the eighth sphere of the fixed starts, the *primum mobile*, and the Empyrean. Dante informs us, however, that the souls in Paradise actually reside only in the Empyrean, the highest of the ten regions described. The blessed souls appear in the other celestial spheres just for Dante-character's benefit – that is, to signify to him their different grades of beatitude (*Par.* IV, 28–39). The blessed souls' glorious lives illustrate, furthermore, particular aspects of virtue.[58] As Scripture condescends to human faculties in attributing feet and hands to God, but means otherwise, so the blessed souls thereby condescend to Dante-character's human mode of knowing: from sense perception to intellectual cognition (*Par.* IV, 40–48). Dante thereby makes a clear distinction between what Paradise is (the ontological status of the blessed souls in the Empyrean) and how Paradise is conveyed (the illustrative appearance of the blessed souls and the angels in the nine celestial spheres). This distinction seems particularly appropriate to *Paradiso*, with Dante's insistent emphases on the limits of the human mind to comprehend divine realities and the even more limited capacity of human language to express them.

[57] See Alan of Lille, 'Summa de arte praedicatoria', in *Opere*, in Migne, *PL*, CCX, pp. 111–98 (p. 139b [73]): 'Haec est paradisus deliciarum … Haec puritas conscientiae vitae aeternae est imago, et regni coelestis praefatio.'

[58] Morgan (*Dante*, p. 177) emphasises that there is 'no precedent in the popular tradition for this device'.

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The simultaneous unity and diversity of the blessed souls – sharing the beatific vision but in different degrees – does raise a pressing theological question: how are degrees of beatitude compatible with the perfection of Paradise? Notably, the blessed soul to whom Dante-character addresses this question is Piccarda Donati. In Purgatory, Dante-character had asked her brother, Forese, 'where is Piccarda?' ('dov'è Piccarda'), only to be informed that she 'triumphs joyous with her crown on high Olympus' ('trïumfa lieta / ne l'alto Olimpo già di sua corona'; *Purg*. XXIV, 10–15). In the same encounter, Forese had prophesied the death and damnation of their brother Corso, whom he foresees dragged 'towards the valley where guilt is never forgiven' ('inver' la valle ove mai non si scolpa'; *Purg*. XXIV, 84). The hierarchy of Paradise is thus related to the central issue of divine justice in Dante's moral vision as a whole. Infernal pain, Purgatorial suffering, and Paradisiacal bliss are of different degrees in the afterlife because human beings are not equal in merit or fault on Earth. But, as Piccarda explains, a lower degree of bliss in heaven does not imply a lack of perfection because God's favour is proportionate to a particular individual's capacity to receive it. Repeating the word 'more' ('più') thrice in two lines (*Par*. III, 65–66), Dante-character asks Piccarda, the 'least' of the blessed, if she desires a higher place in heaven. Smiling 'a little' ('un poco'; 67), Piccarda explains that, were she to desire 'more' ('più'; 73), her will would be discordant with God's will: to be in God's will *is* the peace of Paradise (64–87). From this reply, the pilgrim understands both that everywhere in Heaven is Paradise *and* that the grace of the highest good does not rain there in equal measure (88–90).

How, then, does Dante structure the celestial spheres to represent these different degrees of beatitude? In the *Convivio*, Dante had already used the Ptolemaic heavens to project his idea of the system of knowledge (*Conv*. II, xiii, 2–20), playfully connecting each discipline with a heaven by a shared characteristic. For example, the ninth sphere of the *primum mobile*, which sets the eight lower celestial spheres spinning in their diurnal rotation, is like ethics, which orders our learning of all the other branches of knowledge (14–18). For *Paradiso*, however, Dante rejects any straightforward analogy of this kind. Instead, alongside any symbolic significance, he insists upon the material effect of each of the heavenly spheres on the sublunar world. The discourses on free will at the centre of *Purgatorio* clarify that, for Dante, only the human intellect and will, as non material, are free from astral influence (*Purg*. XVI, 67–130; XVIII, 49–75). All the human bodily organs and faculties including imagination, judgement, personality, and artistic gifts are influenced by the seven planetary

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heavens – an influence Dante considered to be more powerful than heredity.[59] As Charles Martel (1271–95) highlights (*Par.* VIII, 94–148), it is through these astral influences that Providence brings about the diversity in natural gifts necessary for society. Thus, when ascending through the seven planetary heavens, Dante encounters groups of souls whose lives and missions were directly informed by the particular influences of the planetary sphere in which they appear. When we find lovers in the sphere of Venus, their presence reflects Dante's belief that the planet literally moved or disposed people under its influence to love.

It is equally true that the seven planetary heavens would have suggested to Dante the ethical schemes of the seven remedial virtues or the three theological and four cardinal virtues. As we have seen, the former scheme is adopted in the seven terraces of Purgatory, while the latter is anticipated by the stars in Ante-Purgatory and Beatrice's handmaidens in the Earthly Paradise. For his vision of Paradise, the poet overlaps the scheme of the cardinal and theological virtues with the idea of astral influence on personality. As the Sun is the fourth planet orbiting the Earth in geocentric astronomy, it was believed that the Earth's shadow partly obscured the first three planets. Dante uses this 'shadowed' aspect of the heavens of the Moon (*Par.* II–V), Mercury (*Par.* V–VII), and Venus (*Par.* VIII–IX) to represent the three theological virtues – faith, hope, and love – tainted by earthly concerns. The equation between faith and the inconstant in vows (Moon), between hope and the glorious in earthly fame (Mercury), and between charity and the earthly lovers (Venus) is, however, no more than implicit. In fact, some scholars have interpreted these spheres in terms of imperfect fortitude (Moon), justice (Mercury), and temperance (Venus).[60] Both interpretations are plausible. Piccarda was inconstant in her vow when seized from her cloister unlike, she says, St Clare of Assisi (1194–1253) who persisted in her pledge of consecration despite threats (*Par.* III, 98–99). Not holding to her vow even unto martyrdom, Piccarda thereby lacked both faith and fortitude. Justinian pursued justice on Earth and consequently is presented as the ideal of the emperor-ruler. Yet he was overly motivated by the hope of earthly fame rather than by a vision of eternal glory. Cunizza d'Este was compassionate in later life, yet infamous

[59] See, for example, Robert M. Durling, 'Dante's Astrology', in Durling and Martinez (eds.), *Paradiso*, III, pp. 749–50. For a full-length study, see Richard Kay, *Dante's Christian Astrology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

[60] See, for example, Ernesto G. Parodi, 'La costruzione e l'ordinamento del Paradiso dantesco', in *Poesia e storia nella "Divina Commedia"* (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1965), pp. 363–586.

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for her serial lovers and marriages. Her love was intemperate, thereby falling short of the perfect love of charity.

Where imperfect ('shadowed') faith and fortitude, hope and justice, love and temperance may implicitly underpin the spheres of the Moon, Mercury, and Venus, there is little doubt about the relationship between the next four planetary spheres and the four cardinal virtues. Prudence is clearly associated with the Christian intellectuals in the heaven of the Sun (*Par*. x–xiv), fortitude with the Christian crusader-martyrs in the heaven of Mars (*Par*. xiv–xvii), justice with the just in the heaven of Jupiter (*Par*. xviii–xx), and temperance with the contemplatives in the heaven of Saturn (*Par*. xxi–xxii). And yet, the scheme of the cardinal virtues is still subordinated to the primary consideration of astral influence. Thus, it might have been more natural for Dante to follow Aquinas in pairing prudence with temperance and justice with fortitude, as we need temperance to follow what prudence counsels, and fortitude to fulfil the social demands of justice. But Dante pairs prudence with fortitude and justice with temperance, because – in terms of planetary influence – the human disposition to temperance is associated with the cold planet Saturn while the virtue of fortitude is associated with the fiery planet Mars. Beyond the seven planetary spheres (*Par*. ii–xxii), the theological virtues reappear in the eighth heaven of the fixed stars, where saints Peter, James, and John become the shining *exempla* of faith, hope, and charity (*Par*. xxiii–xxvii), and Dante-character is examined by them on each of these virtues in turn.

Although it is possible to draw out the moral structure of Dante's Paradise in this way, there is no parallel in the canticle to Virgil's lessons on the moral order of Hell or of Purgatory. There is, however, a backward glance at the seven planetary spheres in *Paradiso* xxii, 133–53. This detached, contemplative perspective on the world (in the tradition of the *contemptus mundi*) is ethically significant, precisely because it is exactly what Dante believed was lacking in his own time, and particularly so in the Roman Church. Indeed, two overarching moral themes of Dante's *Paradiso* are Christian asceticism and the Church's true mission to lead people to God. Another notable feature of *Paradiso* is that Dante-character encounters female characters only in the first and third of the seven planetary spheres, both of which are feminine (the Moon and Venus) and both of which are 'shadowed by the Sun'. Women are presented 'in *caelum* still touched by *saeculum*', as Victoria Kirkham notes, and she infers that, for Dante, 'this is where, in the Great Chain of Being, woman belongs. As matter, flesh, sense, and sin, she is defined by

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opposition to man, whose better nature makes him an entity intellectual, rational and virtuous'.[61]

It is worth addressing this issue about gender in relation to the moral structure of *Paradiso* and, indeed, of the poem as a whole. Kirkham highlights Dante's association between women and the number five, a number which may denote symbolically the flesh, sensuality (the five senses), and our animal nature (animals were created on the fifth day of creation).[62] The fifth of five female souls to speak in the fifth canto of *Inferno* (the circle of lust), Francesca da Rimini, is, for Kirkham, 'the voice for all damned womanhood, cursed with a vice of carnal sexuality'.[63] The five women sinners (one in Hell, two in Purgatory, and two in Paradise) who converse with Dante-character in the *Commedia* are also all presented as weak-willed, or – in the tradition of *nomen rei significans* – as failing to live up to their names. Francesca should have tried to be more like the saint and holy lover 'Francesco' and his order of Poor Clares, than the Quinivere of French Romance.[64] In Purgatory, Pia and Sapia appear more pious and

[61] See Victoria Kirkham, 'A Canon of Women in Dante's *Commedia*', *Annali d'Italianistica* 7 (1989), 16–41 (p. 28). Anne Leone also addresses issues of gender in relation to the structure of the poem: see Anne Leone, '18. Women, War and Wisdom', in Corbett and Webb (eds.), *Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'*, II, pp. 151–71.

[62] Kirkham, 'A Canon of Women', p. 25. [63] Ibid., p. 26.

[64] St Francis, 'serafico in ardore' [seraph-like in burning love], is described in *Paradiso* XI through the language of courtly love as incorporated into commentaries on the *Song of Songs*: 'che per tal donna giovinetto in guerra / del padre corse a cui, come a la morte, / la porta del piacer nessun diserra' [when, still a youth, he had to do battle with his father for a lady to whom, as if she were death, no one unlocks the gate of pleasure]. As Poggioli notes, 'the most typical Provençalism to be found in Francesca's speech is *piacer*, and Francesca whose name 'means nothing else but "French" ... translates into her own terms the idiom she had learned from such French literary sources as the romance of Lancelot'. See Renato Poggioli, 'Paolo and Francesca', in *Dante: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 61–77 (pp. 65, 67). Poggioli is right that Francesca does not manage even to sustain the register of courtly love – the literary 'riso' [smile] of Quinivere becoming her sensual 'bocca' [mouth], a 'descent from literature to life, from fiction to reality, from romanticism to realism; or more simply, from sentimental fancy to moral truth' (Ibid, p. 63). Nonetheless, Poggioli overlooks the key point that 'La bocca mi basciò tutto tremante' [he kissed my mouth all trembling] (*Inf.* v, 136) is a sensual reading *in malo* of the first line of the *Song of Songs* – 'osculetur me osculo oris sui' [Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth] – a text whose intended literal meaning, for medieval readers, was the love of God for the human soul, or of Christ for His Church, a divine love signified through the language of erotic love. See, for example, St Bernard, 'Sermon 31: The Various Ways of Seing God', in *Bernard of Clairvaux on the Song of Songs II*, trans. by Kllian J. Walsh (Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976) pp. 124–33: 'For the various desires of the soul it is essential that the taste of God's presence be varied too ... at one moment like a bashful bridegroom manoeuvering for the hidden embraces of his holy lover, for the bliss of her kisses' (pp. 130–31): 'Be careful, however, not to conclude that I see something corporeal or perceptible to the sense in this union between the Word and the soul ... I try to express with the most suitable words I can muster the ecstatic ascent of the purified mind to God, and the loving descent of God into the soul, submitting spiritual truths to spiritual men' (pp. 128–29). For a helpful introduction to St Bernard's commentary on the *Song of Songs*, see

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sapient than they were, it seems, in their life on Earth.[65] In Paradise, Piccarda (who allegedly took the name of her companion in Paradise, 'Costanza', on becoming a nun) should have been, of course, more constant.[66] Cunizza's 'Provençal name *Conissa* possibly alludes to sexual excess', as Ronald Martinez notes. In the words of one early commentator, Cunizza 'was so shamelessly inflamed by carnal love that she would not deny anyone her bed' ('amore procaci succensa nulli concubitum denegasset').[67]

If, for Dante, women's particular capacity to love may dispose them to carnal sensuality (and it is undeniable that Dante registers strongly this social anxiety in his poem), it also disposes them to a generosity and liberality in holy love. Indeed, this seems to be the implication of Cunizza's (and Dante's) celebration of the influence of Venus (*Par.* IX, 31–36).[68] It is important to register, moreover, that Dante's circle of the lustful does not, as Holly Hurlburt asserts, 'contain the largest group of women to be found in his Hell', for there are almost twice this number named in

M. Corneille Halflants, 'Introduction', in Killian J. Walsh, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971), pp. ix–xxx.

[65] The first female soul to speak in *Purgatorio*, Pia (*Purg.* V, 133–36), was apparently murdered by her husband for alleged adultery and clearly parallels Francesca, the first soul to speak in *Inferno* (*Inf.* V. 73–142). Piccarda's 'ricorditi di me' (*Purg.* V, 133), which echoes the penitent thief's words to Christ on the cross 'memento mei' [remember me], may or may not register her guilt along with her penitence (see also, for a vertical reading of the 5s, Robin Kirkpatrick, '5. Massacre, *Miserere* and Martyrdom', in Corbett and Webb (eds.), *Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'*, I, pp. 97–117). Sapia herself confesses that 'Savia non fui, avvegna che Sapìa / fossi chiamata' [I was not sapient, despite being called Sapia]; *Purg.* XIII, 109–10; her name is consequent on her not being, by antiphrasis, as Benvenuto points out ('suum nomen non fuit consequens rei, immo per antiphrasim … non fuit sapiens, immo insipiens et insana'; Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XIII, 109–111). Nonetheless, in Purgatory, Sapia is wise enough to correct Dante-character: 'O frate mio, ciascuna è cittadina / d'una vera città; ma tu vuo' dire / che vivesse in Italia peregrina' [O brother, everyone is a citizen of the true city; but you must have meant who lived in Italy as a pilgrim] (*Purg.* XIII, 94–96).

[66] Piccarda and Costanza exhibit a weakness in will, by assenting to the violence of the men, and thereby renouncing the chastity of their cloister (and their spousal relationship to God) for the marital duties of enforced wedlock. Even so, Dante emphasises that both Piccarda and Costanza remained constant in their hearts (*Par.* III, 109–17). For the claim that Piccarda took 'Costanza' as her cloister name, see Kirkham, p. 28. Dante's daughter would take the name 'Beatrice' as a nun.

[67] See Durling and Martinez (eds.), *Paradiso*, p. 199; Chiose ambrosiane, gloss to *Par.* IX, 32. See also Benvenuto, gloss to *Par.* IX, 31–36: 'Cunizza fui chiamata, nomen proprium est, quasi connunciens, id est, vocans'; and Pietro [1], gloss to *Par.* IX, 31–33: 'Quae Cunizza multum exarsit in amore carnali.'

[68] A modern-day counterpart to the Biblical prostitute Rahab, Cunizza, as the commentators register, follows the Biblical pattern of Mary Magdalene. In her later life, she is described as freeing her slaves, giving generously to the poor, and dedicating herself to religion. On this view, Cunizza's beatitude serves to emphasise the glory of God in drawing her to salvation. See, for example, Nicola Fosca, gloss to *Par.* IX, 31–42.

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limbo.[69] Although Dante's poem includes relatively few female characters (on Kirkham's estimate, the ratio of named women to men is 'roughly 1:10'), the proportion of women doubles for the limbo of the virtuous pagans (8 of 40, or 20 per cent), and almost half of the further virtuous pagan souls listed by Statius in Purgatory (8 of 18, or 44 per cent) are female.[70] Moreover, these numbers reverse, with named women actually outnumbering men, in the heaven of the rose (10 of 18, or 56 per cent).[71] Dante's positive portrayals of women – such as of Nella in *Purgatorio* (*Purg.* XXIII, 85–111) or of the 'fortunate' [fortunate women] of Cacciaguida's Florence in *Paradiso* (*Par.* XV, 118–26) – do invariably highlight their modesty, in contrast to prevailing sexual mores. But we should not infer from this, as does Hurlburt, that, for Dante, 'Modesty and chastity . . . defined a woman's moral existence'.[72] By including such a comparatively large proportion of named women in limbo (in total, the square of the cardinal virtues), Dante is emphasising – in his poem's moral structure – that women are capable of exceptional levels of all four cardinal virtues. Moreover, if we are to infer anything from the fact that women make up approximately 10 per cent of named characters in his afterlife as a whole, but 28 per cent of those in the limbo of the virtuous pagans and 56 per cent of those in the heaven of the rose, it is perhaps that Dante considered women more – rather than less – disposed to moral virtue and, especially, to Christian holiness than men.

Given the sophisticated organisation of evil in Hell, the school of ordered and disordered love in Purgatory, and the joyful celebration of human talents and virtues in Paradise, it is easy to lose sight of the binary division in Dante's moral universe. From a Christian point of view, this bifurcation is the one that ultimately matters – namely, the division between those who are able and freely will to submit themselves to God's infinite love and mercy and those who, wilfully or not, are closed to God's love. The first category includes all those in Paradise and in

[69] Holly Hurlburt, 'Men and Women', in Barański and Pertile (eds.), *Dante in Context*, pp. 71–82: 'That Dante's circle of the lustful contains the largest group of women to be found in his Hell is emblematic of contemporary concerns about women's alleged propensity to sexual sin' (p. 72).

[70] See Kirkham, 'A Canon of Women', p. 34: 'Although hard to estimate because the male souls have not been accurately counted, the ratio of women to men seems roughly 1:10.' There are sixteen female characters named as being in the first circle of limbo. Eight are named in *Inferno*: *Inf.* IV, 121 (Electra), 124 (Cammilla and Penthesilea), 126 (Lavinia), 128 (Lucretia, Julia, Marcia. and Cornelia). A further eight are named in *Purgatorio*: *Purg.* XXII, 110 (Antigone, Deiphile, and Argia), 111 (Ismene), 112 (Hypsipyle), 113 (Manto, the daughter of Tiresias, and Thetis), 114 (Deidamia).

[71] Ibid., p. 31. [72] Hurlburt, 'Men and Women', p. 73.

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Purgatory. The second category comprises all those in Hell. The primary condition of souls in Hell, after all, is not only a lack of the beatific vision (which they share with souls in Purgatory) but, crucially, a lack of any hope that they may ever attain it: in entering Hell's gate, they leave all hope behind (*Inf.* III, 9). In Purgatory, the souls are joyful – even in suffering – because of their living hope for the beatific vision. In Paradise, they enjoy this vision: 'intellectual light, full of love, love of the true good, full of joy, joy that surpasses every sweetness' ('luce intelletüal, piena d'amore; / amore di vero ben, pien di letizia; / letizia che trascende ogne dolzore'; *Par.* XXX, 40–42). This ultimate division between the damned and the saved strongly reaffirms the urgency of Dante's poem as a work of ethics, written 'for the good of the world that lives badly', for those who live and, while alive, still have hope. As Manfred beautifully articulates in Ante-Purgatory, 'none is so lost that the eternal love cannot return while hope keeps any of it green' ('non si perde / che non possa tornar l'etterno Amore, / mentre che la speranza ha fior del verde'; *Purg.* III, 133–35). The poem's most powerful moral message, then, is God's love for those who turn to Him. As Manfred, smiling, confesses: 'Horrible were my sins, but the infinite goodness has arms so wide that it receives whoever turns to it' ('Orribil furon li peccati miei; / ma la Bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia, / che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei'; 121–33). Union with God is the fulfilment of all human desires as Piccarda, the first soul encountered in Paradise, explains: 'And in His will is our peace. It is the sea to which all things move, both what it creates and what nature makes' ('E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace: / ell'è quel mare al qual tutto si move / ciò ch'ella crïa o che natura face'; *Par.* III, 85–87).

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