

# Dante as Philosopher: Christian Aristotelianism

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Dante Alighieri, who dwelt in the house of philosophy, had drunk the honied waters at that fount which was lost many centuries ago. We see also that he reached it, not by the path that the ancients had followed, but by certain byways entirely unknown to our ancestors, seeking it not without anxious effort; and then, exalted to the stars, he ascended the mountain and arrived at the place where this fount began.

Giovanni Boccaccio<sup>1</sup>

To speak of Dante the poet is to speak of Dante the philosopher. His is not that unreflective poetry—at third remove from the throne of truth—which Plato would have banished from the commonwealth of the soul; his are not those harlot literary muses which Lady Philosophy would exorcise from the mind of a sick Boethius; his poetry is rather, like that of Plato's myths, or that of Lady Philosophy herself, the fruit and expression of a vision profoundly philosophical, achieved "not without anxious effort." In the *Comedy*, that vision becomes poetry; and the purpose of that poetry is finally no less didactic than the prose of the *Convivio* or *De Monarchia*. The aim of the *Comedy*, says Dante, is to lead men from misery to bliss; its business, he tells us, is moral philosophy.<sup>2</sup> To interpret the images is to encounter the philosophy; to understand Dante, the poet, is to understand Dante, the philosopher.

The study of the philosophy of Dante presents, however, many difficulties and enigmas. Some of the problems have to do with unresolved questions of literary history, and *lacunae* in the intellectual biography of Dante. For instance, many critics would still agree with Boccaccio in associating the *De Monarchia* with the expedition of the young emperor, Henry VII, to

1. G. Boccaccio, *Lettre edite ed inedite di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Corsini (Florence, 1877), trans. J. B. Ross and M. M. McLauchlin, *The Portable Renaissance Reader* (New York, 1953), 124.

2. *Epistola XIII*, 16: "Genus vero phylosophie sub qui hic in toto et parta proceditur, est morale negotium, sive ethica . . ." The authenticity of this letter to Cangrande, introducing the *Pavadio*, sometimes questioned, may now be taken as demonstrated; cf. G. Petrocci, *Il Purgatorio di Dante* (Milan, 1978), 52. All references to the text of Dante, in this and subsequent notes, are to the text established by the Società Dantesca Italiana, 2nd ed. (Florence, 1960), as printed in L. Blasucci, ed., *Dante Alighieri, Tutti le opere* (Florence, 1981).

Italy, and would see in the political doctrine of that work an explanation for Dante's abandoning the incomplete *Convivio*. Other scholars would argue, however, with considerable evidence, that the *De Monarchia* must be later; that it must be associated rather with the election of Pope John XXII, in 1316, and that it must, therefore, be contemporary with the *Paradiso*. A decision on that point would obviously have important implications for the interpretation of both works, and for the whole of our reconstruction of Dante's intellectual biography.<sup>3</sup>

Other questions arise about Dante's philosophical sources, and about his interpretation of those sources. We know from the *Convivio* that his first philosophical mentors were Boethius and Cicero, and that the *Consolatio* of Boethius, and the *De amicitia*, along with other works of Cicero, had an enduring influence upon him. Those studies moved him, he tells us, to attend "the schools of the religious and the disputations of the philosophers."<sup>4</sup> By "schools of the religious," he means, presumably, those of the Florentine Dominicans at Santa Maria Novella, the Franciscans at Santa Croce, and perhaps the Hermits of St. Augustine at Santo Spirito.<sup>5</sup> In those schools he would have encountered some of the most sharply divergent currents of late-thirteenth-century philosophy; at Santa Croce, both Pier Giovanni Olivi and Ubertino da Casale, prominent leaders of the "Spiritual" or "Joachimite" faction of the Franciscan order, had very recently been teachers; while at Santa Maria Novella, the dominant master, during Dante's time, and long thereafter, was the stalwart Thomist, Remigio Girolami.<sup>6</sup> Through his studies at the University of Bologna, and his close friendship with Guido

3. Cf. G. Petrocci, *Vita di Dante*, 2nd ed. (Rome-Bari, 1984), 192: "Il problema della composizione del trattato politico è complesso oltre grado: si oscilla tra il 1308 circa, secondo il Nardi, e il 1317 'o di poco posteriore,' secondo il Ricci, il quale fa leva sull'autocitazione *sicut in Paradiso Comedie iam dixi* (I, XII, 6), giustamente reabilitata come autentica, e dall'infittirsi delle diatribe della pubblicistica contemporanea sulla giurisdizione imperiale all'indomani dell'elezione di Giovanni XXII (7 agosto 1316)." Thus, F. Sanguineti, in his "Introduzione" to his edition of *De Monarchia* (Milan, 1985), interprets it "come conclusione ideologica della *Commedia* ... una sorta di appendice alla *Commedia* ...." xvi, xxii.

4. *Convivio*, II, 12: "... io, che cercava di consolarme, trovai non solamente a le mie lagrime rimedio, ma vocabuli d'autori e di scienze e di libri; li quali considerando, giudicava bene che la filosofia, che era donna di questi autori, di queste scienze e di queste libri, fosse somma cosa .... cominciavi ad andare là dov'ella si dimostrava veracemente, cioè ne le scuole de li religiosi e a le disputazioni de li filosofanti."

5. On the Franciscan and Dominican schools in Florence in Dante's time, see U. Cosmo, *Vita di Dante*, New edition, ed. B. Maier (Florence, 1965), 38, 50-53; and Petrocci, *Vita* (op. cit.), 32-33.

6. On the influence of Remigio Girolami as Dante's teacher, see M. Grabmann, "Die italienische Thomistenschule des XIII, und beginnenden XIV. Jahrhunderts," in *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben I* (Munich, 1926), 332-91, part 5: "Remigio de' Girolami. Der Schüler des heiligen

Cavalcante, his "primo amico,"<sup>7</sup> he would have become familiar with Latin Averroist interpretation of Aristotle.<sup>8</sup>

Among the many authors, pagan and Christian, ancient and medieval, mentioned in the *Convivio*, it is undoubtedly Aristotle who predominates, and it is clear that the *Nicomachean Ethics* was then, and remained for Dante, a fundamental source. In the *Convivio*, Aristotle is "lo maestro de la nostra vita";<sup>9</sup> in the *Inferno*, he is still the philosopher *par excellence*, "il maestro di color che sanno,"<sup>10</sup> and in the *Paradiso*, he remains, "colui che me dimostra il primo amore Di tutte le sustanze sempiterno."<sup>11</sup> Throughout Dante's works, beginning with the *Vita Nuova*, but particularly evident from the *Convivio* onwards, the influence of Aristotle's *Physics*, *De Anima*, and *Metaphysics*, and other Aristotelian texts, as well as the all-important *Ethics*, is abundantly evident.

It is clear, from the *Convivio* especially, that Dante studied the works of Aristotle with close attention, sometimes comparing one translation with another;<sup>12</sup> and it is certain that he read them with commentaries. Along with frequent references to many works of Aristotle, there is one reference to

Thomas und Lehrer Dantes," 361-69; L. Minio-Paluello, "Remigio Girolami's *De bono communi*: Florence at the time of Dante's Banishment and the Philosopher's Answer to the Crisis," *Italian Studies* II (1956): 56; J. Ferrante, *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984), 16-19.

7. *Vita Nuova*, XXIV, XXV, XXX, XXXII.

8. On Dante's studies in Bologna, see Cosmo, (*op. cit.*), 15-18; on Aristotelian interpretation there, M. Grabmann, "Das Aristotelesstudium in Italien zur Zeit Dantes," in *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben* III (Munich, 1956), 197-212: "Bei den 'disputazioni de li filosofanti' wird man in erster Linie an die Artistenfakultät in Bologna denken müssen, wo Dante sich nach dem Zeugnis von Giovanni Villani, Boccaccio und Leonardo Bruni längere Zeit aufgehalten hat," 212. On the Averroism of Guido Cavalcante, see B. Nardi, "L'Averroismo del 'primo amico' di Dante," *Studi danteschi* XXV (1940): 43-49, repr. in B. Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Rome-Bari, 1985), 81-107; and on the literature of recent controversy about this point, see T. Barolini, *Dante's Poets* (Princeton, 1984), 144-45. On the Averroism of Guido's father, Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, see the analysis of *Inferno*. X, 31-130, by J.G. Demary, *Dante and the Book of Cosmos*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 75, Pr. 5 (Philadelphia, 1987): 37, n. 43. On the likelihood and possible significance of Dante's visit to the schools of Paris (1309-10), see Cosmo, (*op. cit.*), 169-80: "Tra i sapienti della Sorbona," and Petrocci, *Vita*, (*op. cit.*), 103.

9. *Convivio*, IV, 23.

10. *Inferno*, IV, 131.

11. *Paradiso*, XXVI, 38-39.

12. Cf. *Convivio*, II, 14; in the *Convivio*, I, 10, Dante mentions also the thirteenth-century Italian translation of the *Ethics* by Taddeo d'Alderotto, professor of medicine at Bologna. E. Moore argues that Dante's preferred Latin translation of the *Ethics* corresponds with that version which accompanies Thomas' commentary: *Studies in Dante*, First Series (Oxford, 1896), 312-18.

"The Commentator" (Averroes) "nel terzo de l'Anima,"<sup>13</sup> two references to St. Thomas on the *Ethics*,<sup>14</sup> and references also to opinions of Avicenna,<sup>15</sup> Algazali,<sup>16</sup> and Albertus Magnus.<sup>17</sup> There is no reference to any "Latin Averroist" text in the *Convivio*, nor is there any reference to any such text anywhere else in Dante's works, apart from the much discussed reference to the "*invidiosi veri*" of Siger of Brabant in the *Paradiso*.<sup>18</sup>

But to count the references to Aristotle and Aristotelian commentators is not to determine the character of the philosophy of Dante. As Bruno Nardi, especially, argued, during his long campaign against the *mania tomistizzante* of Neoscholastic interpreters,<sup>19</sup> a secure interpretation would depend upon explicating Dante's own works, with the aid of history, not of just one current of thought, but of the whole complex of scholastic philosophy.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Nardi insisted upon the fundamental importance of the Platonism and Neoplatonism of the thirteenth century, known both directly from such sources as the *Timaeus* and the *liber de causis*, and indirectly through the mediation of Augustinian, Albertine and Averroist authors; and thus he sought to bring to light, in the *Convivio* and in the *Comedy*, a precise and extensive Neoplatonic influence, which would direct the philosophy of Dante towards conclusions not only foreign to, but opposed to Thomism.<sup>21</sup>

According to Nardi, the Averroist Aristotelianism of the *Convivio*, which finds human perfection in the perfection of contemplative reason, already in this life, becomes the basis, in *De Monarchia*, of the clear separation of Church and Empire, of philosophy and theology, of *documenta philosophica* and *documenta spiritualia*. That position is modified, but not renounced, in Nardi's view, by the argument of the *Comedy*, which would make Virgil the herald of Beatrice, and philosophy the handmaiden of theology<sup>22</sup>—a position which

13. *Convivio*, IV, 13.

14. *Convivio*, II, 14, 8. As B. Nardi remarks, "Di S. Tommaso Dante ha certamente conosciuto il commento all'*Etica nichomachea* e ne fa grande uso": *Dal "Convivio" all'"Commedia"* (*Sei saggi danteschi*) (Rome, 1960), 228.

15. *Convivio*, II, 13; III, 14; IV, 21.

16. *Convivio*, II, 13; IV, 21.

17. *Convivio*, II, 13; III, 5; IV, 13.

18. *Paradiso*, X, 138.

19. Nardi's numerous contributions to that debate, from 1911 to 1968, are reviewed by T. Gregory, in his introduction to the new edition of Nardi's *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Rome-Bari, 1985), vii-xliv.

20. *Ibid.*, 142.

21. *Ibid.*, 59.

22. Thus, Nardi describes "I tre momenti dello svolgimento filosofico di Dante: la Filosofia secondo il 'Convivio'; l'autonomia della ragione della fede proclamata nella 'Monarchia'; la 'philosophia ancilla theologiae' nella 'Commedia,'" *Ibid.*, 162; cf. T. Gregory's note, *Ibid.*, xxiv, n. 32. Cf. Nardi's comments on "L'errore del 'Convivio' e il ritorno di Beatrice," *Ibid.*, 57-64.

belongs, in Nardi's view, not peculiarly to St. Thomas, but to the whole of medieval Christian tradition. For Nardi, the *Comedy*, far from being a Thomistic work, is often in opposition to Thomas, and is finally dominated by Albertine and Joachimite ideas of dreams and prophecies, and concludes with a scene of mystical intuition.<sup>23</sup> In Nardi's opinion, "la leggenda del tomismo di Dante" was founded upon an imprecise knowledge of scholastic philosophy, together with the apologetic and polemical interests of the "neotomisti."<sup>24</sup>

Although it was the most persistent and sustained, Nardi's was by no means the only voice raised against the "myth" of the Thomist Dante. M. Baumgartner, for instance, in an essay on Dante's philosophical position, came to the conclusion that, while certain elements of Dante's teaching might also be found in Aquinas, the general position was much closer to the "neuplatonische-arabische Metaphysik und Kosmologie" of Albertus Magnus, with strong Augustinian influence in epistemology and the theory of matter. It seemed to Baumgartner that Dante either had not known, or had not understood the Thomistic philosophy.<sup>25</sup> É. Gilson, in his very influential work on *Dante et la philosophie*, in general sympathy with Nardi's anti-Thomist campaign, found it impossible to identify any philosophical system in Dante: "L'oeuvre de Dante n'est pas un système, mais l'expression dialectique et lyrique de toutes ses loyautés"; "Il est vain de prétendre découvrir le maître unique dont il eût été le disciple."<sup>26</sup>

But if the case for the "pure" (i.e., Neoscholastic) Thomism of Dante was fatally wounded by these arguments, the debate about Dante's Thomism (in a broader sense) was by no means closed. In the course of twentieth-century study of scholastic philosophy, the myth of the "Thomism" of St. Thomas himself was largely dissipated, as historians increasingly emphasized the Neoplatonic sources and aspects of his philosophy and theology.<sup>27</sup> In that new perspective, it would no longer be possible to draw simple contrasts

23. Cf. 'Dante Profeta,' *Ibid.*, 265-326.

24. B. Nardi, *Dal "Convivio" all "Commedia"* (op. cit.), 27.

25. M. Baumgartner, "Dantes Stellung zur Philosophie," *Zweite Vereinschrift der Görresgesellschaft* (1921), 48-71: "... Dante die thomistische philosophie in ihrer Eigenart nicht gekannt oder nicht erkannt hat; denn sonst hätte er nicht seine eigene Strahlungstheorie und Schöpfungslehre Thomas in den Mund legen können (*Parad.* XIII, 52-66)," 69.

26. É. Gilson, *Dante et la philosophie* (Paris, 1939), 279, 278. In a review of Nardi's *Dal Convivio alla Commedia*, in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 138 (1961): 562-73, Gilson was more outspoken against "un mythe religieuse et national," which "a exercé d'incroyables ravages dans l'interprétation historique des oeuvres de Dante .... Je n'arrive pas à trouver un sens à la thèse si répandue de Dante-thomiste," 565-66.

27. See, e.g., K. Kremer, *Die neuplatonische Seinsphilosophie und ihre Wirkung auf Thomas von Aquin* (Leiden, 1966), together with the review by W. Beierwaltes, in *Philosophisch Rundschau*

between Augustinianism, Neoplatonism (pagan, Arabic and Christian), on the one hand, and Thomistic Aristotelianism on the other; rather, all those traditions must be seen as contributing significant dimensions to the Aristotelianism of St. Thomas, and the whole question of Dante's relation to Thomas would have to be reassessed in that light. From that new standpoint, the objections of Nardi and others seemed largely irrelevant, and it was possible once again to think of Dante as a Thomist.<sup>28</sup>

Central to the question of Dante's Thomism, at every stage of the argument, was the difficulty of explaining the eulogy accorded by Thomas to Siger of Brabant, Thomas' most notorious opponent, in the circle of the speculative doctors, in the Heaven of the Sun, where Siger is said to have argued "invidiosi veri."<sup>29</sup> Does Dante mean that Thomas, now in heaven, acknowledges at last the truth of the "Latin Averroism" he so adamantly opposed on earth? Or does Dante think of Siger as finally reconciled to Thomistic doctrine? Or do Thomas and Siger, and the other ten doctors in the circle, simply represent a diversity of speculative positions, all of which Dante eclectically embraces? Or might one conclude that Siger's position as the final figure in the circle means that he represents for Dante the culmination of the argument, and that Dante, therefore, must be regarded as an Averroist, and not a Thomist? Or might one rather conclude that, as Thomas is choragus of this circle, Dante sees the positions of all the doctors, including Siger, as somehow comprehended in the doctrine of St. Thomas?<sup>30</sup>

16 (1969): 141–1522; J. Moreau, "Le platonisme dans la 'Summa théologique,'" in *Tommaso d'Aquino nella storia del pensiero* (Rome-Naples, 1976), I:238–47; R. Padellaro de Angelis, *L'influenza del pensiero neoplatonico sulla metafisica di S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Rome, 1981); W. Hankey, *God in Himself* (Oxford, 1987), esp. "Introduction," 1–7.

28. For a summary of this position, with bibliography, see A. di Giovanni, *La filosofia dell'amore nelle opere di Dante* (Rome, 1967), 269–83. Cf. U. Cosmo, (*op. cit.*), 174: "Ché se egli, Dante, si era orientato piú verso Tommaso che verso alcun altro, vera è anche che il sincretismo dell'Aquinate gli permetteva tutte le libertà di che provasse bisogno come costruttore di un mondo mai da altri prima tentato."

29. Dante, *Paradiso*, X, 133–38. a convenient account of the earlier debate about this passage is provided in M. Grabmann, "Siger von Brabant und Dante," *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben* II (Munich, 1936): 180–96. A recent presentation of the problem may be found in M. Bourbeau, "La 'doppia danza' du Paradis: Chants X-XIV du *Paradiso* de Dante," *Dionysius* 8 (1984): 105–30. It should be noted that the meaning of 'invidiosi' is not altogether clear. It may mean "odious," but the only other instance of the word in Dante is in *Epist.*, V, 2, where "invidiosa" must certainly mean "envious." R. Morghen, *Dante profeta tra la storia e l'eterno* (Milan, 1983), following a comment by Pietro di Dante, suggests that "i veri *sillogizzati* da Sigieri, cioè ridotti negli schemi rigidi del sillogismo scolastico, sono invidiosi e ciechi in quanto non vedono le verità eterne, poiché *invidia* viene da *in video*, uguale a *non vedo*. . .", 87; cf. also 149. On the death of Siger ("a gran dolore") see Sonnet XCII of the *Fiore*, 9–11; on the arguments for and against the attribution of the *Fiore* to Dante, see L. Blasucci's "Nota ai testi" (*ed. cit.*), 793.

30. The same question would, of course, apply (*mutatis mutandis*) to the second circle (the

James Doull addressed this problem in a paper on "Dante and Averroism" presented to the Fifth International Congress on Medieval Philosophy, in Madrid, in 1972. In an argument attentive both to the integrity of Dante's poetic images, and to a thoroughly philosophical interpretation of those images, he observes that

Himself at the centre with Beatrice, the poet has an advantage neither Thomas nor Siger enjoyed when they disputed in Paris. He is enlightened to see their differences as complementary. The image tells us at once not to think of a Siger become Thomist, or near it, but of an unrepentent Averroist.<sup>31</sup>

In order to show the complementary nature of the differences, he argues (as no other commentator has done) for a precise logic in the order of the doctors in the circle, in terms of the relation of human to angelic knowledge:

In Albert one may see the tension between Neoplatonic and Aristotelian directions from which begins the argument of the circle. For there follows at once Gratian and Peter Lombard in whom is expressed plainly enough the reasoning sciences of the practical and the theoretical intellect. In Solomon or the ideal monarch the lower reason both reaches its maximum independence and also reduces under one end the secular uses of the arts. From that point, with Dionysius, the argument turns back toward the angelic hierarchies. And Boethius, Isidore, and Bede show the human ascent to the divine through philosophy, the special arts, and the meditation of Scripture. In Richard of St. Victor the poet then sees the obliteration of a thinking divided from its object, in

doctors of theology as a practical, or affective, science), where Joachim of Fiore occupies the same position in relation to St. Bonaventure as Siger does to St. Thomas in the speculative circle.

31. J.A. Doull, "Dante on Averroism," *Actas del V congreso internacional de filosofía medieval* (Madrid, 1979), I:669-76, 669. The reference is evidently to the argument of F. Van Steenberghen and others, to the effect that after Thomas' tractate, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, and the condemnation of 1270, Siger's position was modified in the direction of Thomas' doctrine. In more recent years, the newly-discovered texts of Siger, upon which that hypothesis was founded, have been critically edited, more thoroughly studied, and their chronological order clarified, confirming the hypothesis; cf. B. Bazán, *Siger de Brabant, Quaestiones in tertium de anima. De anima intellectiva. De aeternitate mundi* (Louvain-Paris, 1972), 67\*-78\*; A. Marlasca, *Les Quaestiones super librum de causis de Siger de Brabant* (Louvain-Paris, 1972), 25-29; A. Zimmerman, "Dante hatte doch Recht. Neue Ergebnisse der Forschung über Siger von Brabant," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 75 (1967-68): 206-17; A. Marlasca Lopez, "De neuvo, Tomas de Aquino y Siger de Brabante," *Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo settimo centenario* (Rome-Naples, 1976), 92-101 (on Dante, 100-01). Still, Doull's essential point remains valid; in the latest of the psychological texts, Siger remains uncompromisingly opposed to Thomas' doctrine of the intellectual soul: "Dicendum est igitur secundum intentionem Philosophi, quod intellectiva in essendo est a corpora separata . . ." (*De anima intellectiva*, III, *ed. cit.*, 84). For the evidence that the *De anima intellectiva* is later than the (fragmentary) *De intellectu*, see Bazán, (*op. cit.*), 74\*-77\*.

Siger the Averroistic result that there is in truth only the divine self-knowledge. And of Thomas he must be taken to say that this result is present if abstraction is not made from the presence of the creative divine intellect.<sup>32</sup>

The direction of Dante's argument, according to Doull, "is to the substantial unity within which fall both the abstract intellect and the sensitive powers. The argument in short terminates in the Thomistic solution and arrives there through the more external solutions."<sup>33</sup> At the same time, he claims that Siger represents "an Averroism which he [Siger] and Dante suppose to have absorbed the Thomistic criticism";<sup>34</sup> and, finally, that "Dante finds his way from Averroism to a Christian Platonism."<sup>35</sup> But does the conclusion lie in Thomism, or an improved Averroism, or Christian Platonism, or somehow, in all of them at once?

Clearly, the aesthetic sense of Dante's image of the circle must move the reader towards the recognition of a Thomistic solution, albeit one in which all the distinct positions of the doctors, including Siger, are embraced in their distinctness ("come orologio": *Parad.* X, 139). Thomas is the speculative doctor, *par excellence*, who comprehends his circle, which begins and ends with him; the implication is that, as in clockwork ("che l'una parte l'altra tira e urge": X, 142), the oppositions are not obliterated, but represent essential elements in the harmony of a unified system ("voce a voce in tempera": X, 146), whose harmony is manifest, however, only on the level of heavenly knowledge ("ch'esser non pò nota se non colà dove gioir s'insempra": X, 148–49).

At the centre of the debate (historically) between Thomas and Siger about divine and human knowledge, as Doull rightly recognizes, is the question of the relation between the intellective and sensitive powers of the human soul: whether the intellective soul is essentially united to body, as *forma corporis*, or whether, remaining essentially separate, it is operationally united to body as mover to moved. For ancient and medieval Neoplatonists, it is the problem of reconciling Aristotelian and Platonic doctrines of the soul.<sup>36</sup> Siger

32. J.A. Doull, (*op. cit.*), 670–71. Cf. 671, n.8: "thomas, though he opposed such an extension of human knowledge, was perfectly aware on what it depended .... The Averroist position would be true did the human intellect have knowledge of itself directly through its essence; in selfknowledge there is a relation to divine knowledge, but for men this knowledge is mediated by knowledge of the sensible world."

33. *Ibid.*, 674.

34. *ibid.*, 674, n. 17.

35. *Ibid.*, 676.

36. Albertus makes this point clearly: "anima considerando secundum se, consentiemus Platoni; considerando autem eam secundum formam animationis quam dat corpora, consentiemus Aristoteli" (*Summa theol.*), II, 12, 49, 2, 2; *Opera omnia*, XXXIII, 16. For Proclus



clearly holds to the Neoplatonic solution, that the intellective soul is essentially separate from the body, but operationally united to it;<sup>37</sup> and he remains adamantly opposed to those "outstanding men in philosophy, Albertus and Thomas," who say that the substance of the intellective soul is united to the body, giving it being.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, the question is raised about the substantial unity and individuality of the human soul (intellective, sensitive, and vegetative), and variously answered in the thirteenth century schools: whether in an "Augustinian" way, in terms of a doctrine of "plurality of forms," or in one or other (more or less Neoplatonic) "Aristotelian" ways, according to which the soul is understood as the form of the body, uniting the powers either in one simple substance (Albertus and Thomas), or in one composite substance (Siger).<sup>39</sup>

Upon the solution of that problem depends the answer to a further question: that of the soul's knowledge of separate substances. Siger's answer is clear: the intellective soul, itself *essentially* separate, has natural knowledge both of its own essence, and of other separate substances, according to the Aristotelian principle that in those things which are without matter, the knower and the known are the same.<sup>40</sup> For Albertus, on the other hand, while man may have some knowledge of separate substances by divine revelation, such knowledge does not belong to man naturally, nor to philoso-

on this point, see E.R. Dodds, ed., *The Elements of Theology* (Oxford, 1933), 354: "soul is said to be present to the body as its providence while transcending it by its essence." For Thomas, on the doctrine of Plato, "et eius sequaces," see *Contra Gent.*, II, 57-59; *Q. de Anima*, a. 9.

37. Siger of Brabant, *De anima intellectiva*, III (ed. cit.), 84, 57-60: "... anima intellectiva in essendo est a corpore separata .... Anima tamen intellectiva corpori est unita in operando."

38. *Ibid.*, 81, 79-81. In his arguments against Albertus and Thomas on this point in *De anima intellectiva*, Siger has finally adopted Themistius, rather than Averroes, as his chief authority in the interpretation of Aristotle.

39. Although the manner of union is perhaps different for Albertus and Thomas (whether by assimilation of the lower forms, or by a replacement of them), the consequence is the same, as Siger recognizes: *De anima intellectiva*, III (ed. cit.), 81; *In tertium de anima*, I (ed. cit.), 2. For Siger's own position, cf. *Ibid.*, I, 3: "Unde cum intellectus simplex sit, cum advenit, tum in suo adventu unitur vegetivo et sensitivo, et sic ipsa unita non faciunt unam simplicem, sed compositam"; also *De anima intellectiva*, IX (ed. cit.), 111: "Nihil autem est quod arguit substantiam, cuius est operatio vegetandi et sentiendi, esse illam quae advenit ab extrinseco, immo, cum dictae operationes sint corporales, convincitur substantiam a qua sunt dictae operationes educi de potentia materiae." On Thomas' doctrine of the soul, in relation to Neoplatonism, see R. Heinzmann, "Anima unica forma corporis. Thomas von Aquin als Überwinder des Platonisch-neuplatonischen Dualismus," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 93 (1986): 236-59; B. Bazán, "La corporalité selon saint Thomas," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 81 (1983): 369-71.

40. *In tertium de anima*, Qq. 16, 17 (ed. cit.), 60-64.

phy.<sup>41</sup> Thomas holds a middle position: in this bodily life, man's natural knowledge of separate substances is very imperfect;<sup>42</sup> yet it will belong to man's separated soul, after death, to have natural cognition of its own essence, and of other separate substances.<sup>43</sup> Thus, from Thomas' standpoint, Siger speaks truly of the natural cognition of the separated soul and therefore Dante's Thomas speaks of Siger's anticipation of that separated condition ("a morir li parve venir tardo": X, 135).

In Dante's circle, the position of Albertus (on Thomas' right), and that of Siger (on his left), are complementary in their respective emphases upon earthly and heavenly forms of knowledge, and the two are united by Thomas. The other doctors in the circle represent various degrees and forms and combinations of these emphases (the spiritual and the temporal, divine and human law, sacred and secular history, theology and philosophy, the theoretical and the practical, etc.). But brightest among all these lights ("che tra noi più bella": X, 109) is not Albertus nor Siger, but King Solomon, celebrated for his great love ("spira di tale amor: X, 110), and a wisdom ("sì profondo saver fu messo": X, 112-13) unequalled among men.

Dante does not immediately understand why those epithets are applied to Solomon; and, indeed, he is not in a position to understand them until after he has heard the voice of the second (Bonaventure's) circle, which manifests the practical, affective dimension of theology.<sup>44</sup> It is Thomas who pre-

41. Albertus, *Super Ethica commentum et quaestiones*, ed. W. Kübel, *Opera omnia*, XIV/I (Aschendorff, 1968), 72: "... anima separata nobiliorem habet operationem, quae nobis per philosophiam non potest esse nota ... philosophus nihil habet considerare de statu animae separatae, quia non potest accipi per sua principia"; cf. R. Crouse, "Philosophia ancilla theologiae: Some Texts from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the Interpretation of Albertus Magnus," in *Actas del V Congreso Internacional de Filosofía Medieval (op. cit.)*, I, 657-61.

42. *Summa theol.*, I, 88, 2, ad 1.

43. *De veritate*, 19, 1, resp.; *De anima*, a.17; *Summa theol.*, I, 89, 2, resp.: "de aliis animabus separatis perfectam cognitionem habet, de angelis autem imperfectam et deficientem, loquendo de cognitione naturali animae separatae. De cognitione autem gloriae est alia ratio" (Therefore, Dante, already elevated to heavenly knowledge of separated souls, must still drink of the *lumen gloriae* to attain to the vision of God: *Parad.*, canto XXX). On the knowability of "maxime intelligibilia" according to Averroes, Albertus, Thomas and Siger, see G. Darms, ed., *Averroes in Aristotelis Librum IIa Metaphysicorum* (Freiburg/S.:Paulus Verlag, 1966), 85-100.

44. Cf. *Bonaventure* (with reference to the *Praedicatorum* and the *Minores*): "Alii principaliter intendunt speculationi, a quo etiam nomen acceperunt, et postea unctio. Alii principaliter unctio et postea speculationi. Et utinam iste amor vel unctio non recedat a cherubim ... Multa enim scire et nihil gustare quid valet?": *In Hexaemeron*, XXII, 21 (*Opera omnia*, V, 440). *Thomas* makes a similar point: "Dicitur autem aliqui perfecti dupliciter: uno modo secundum intellectum; alio modo secundum voluntatum ... necesse est eum qui in doctrina fidei instruitur, non solum secundum intellectum bene disponi ad capiendum et credendum sed etiam secundum voluntatum et affectum bene disponi ad diligendum et operandum": *Super epist. S. Pauli lectura*, I, ad *Cor.*, II,1 (Marietti, ed., 1953), 248. Cf. B. McGinn, "The Influence of St. Francis

pares Dante to grasp the meaning of the second circle, explaining the distinctive emphases of St. Francis and St. Dominic, and suggesting that one is related to the others as Seraphic ardour is related to Cherubic wisdom (X, 37–39). Thus, the second circle will arise from the first (“nascendo di qual d’entro qual di fori” XII, 3), just as, according to Thomistic doctrine, love arises from vision (“sì l’estrema all’intima repose”: XII, 21). Just as in the first circle, Thomas was seen to reconcile the oppositions between earthly and heavenly forms of human knowledge, so in the second circle, Bonaventure is seen to reconcile (as Matthew of Aquasparta and Ubertino da Casale could not: XII, 124–26) earthly and heavenly forms of human love. And as in the first circle Siger was seen as anticipating the condition of heavenly knowledge, so here Joachim of Fiore, the notorious patron of the Franciscan “Spirituals,” is seen to anticipate, prophetically (“di spirito profetico dotato”: XII, 141), the condition of heavenly love.

The problem of this circle is essentially that of the coherence of the sensitive with the intellective appetite, and thus, although the question is treated specifically in terms of the “Franciscan” tension between earthly and heavenly loves,<sup>45</sup> the issue is by no means irrelevant to Dante’s resolution (doctrinal and poetic) of the dilemma inherent in the Averroist view which would define *amor* as simply a passion of the sensitive soul.<sup>46</sup> Upon the resolution of that problem of *amor* (in an essentially Thomistic way)<sup>47</sup> would depend the whole development of Dante’s “dolce stil nuovo,” and the very possibility of the coherence of the earthly with the heavenly Beatrice.

on the Theology of the High Middle Age. The Testimony of St. Bonaventure,” in F. Blanco, ed., *Bonaventuriana. Miscellanea in onore di Jacques Guy Bougerol ofin*, I (Rome: Edizioni Antonianum, 1988), 97–117.

45. A tension evident in such Franciscan poets as Jacopone da Todi and Ubertino da Casale, where there are present both a *contemptus mundi* theme, and what Karl Vossler calls a “graphic humanizing of the metaphysical”: *Medieval Culture. An Introduction to Dante and his Times* (tr. of *Die Göttliche Komödie*), II (New York, 1929), 87; cf., especially on Jacopone da Todi, R. Antonelli, ed., *La poesia del Duecento e Dante* (Florence, 1974), 73–77.

46. Cf. B. Nardi, “L’Averroismo del ‘primo amico’ di Dante,” in *Dante e la cultura medievale* (*op. cit.*), 81–107 (repr. from *Studi danteschi*, XXV, 1940, 43–79); on criticism of Nardi’s account of Cavalcante’s Averroism, see R. Antonelli (*op. cit.*), 172, 179. See also M. Corti, *La felicità mentale. Nuova prospettive per Cavalcanti e Dante* (Turin: Nardini, 1989), 7–41; F. Bottin, ed., *Ricerca della felicità e piaceri dell’intelletto* (Florence: Nardini, 1989), 7–41.

47. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In De anima*, I, X, 162: “Sciendum etiam, quod sicut in sensu invenitur vis appetitiva et apprehensiva, ita et intellectu invenitur vis appetitiva et apprehensiva. Et ideo haec: amor, odium, gaudium et huiusmodi, possunt intelligi, et prout sunt in appetitu sensitivo, et sic habent motum corporalem coniunctum; et prout sunt in intellectu et voluntate absque omni affectione sensitiva, et sic non possunt dici motus, quia non habent motum corporalem coniunctum. Et invenitur etiam in substantiis separatis . . .” *On operationes sensitivas* in beatitude, cf. *Summa theol.*, I–II, 3, *resp.*

Only after the second circle has been manifested does the voice of Thomas return once more (XIII, 31–140) to explain the significance of the terms (love and wisdom) in which Solomon has been celebrated; and, in doing so, to explain the meaning of the “doppia danza.” Among the doctors of the first circle, Solomon was singled out, says Thomas, as exemplifying the virtue of “kingly prudence” (“regal prudenza”: XIII, 104),<sup>48</sup> that intellectual virtue wherein practical reason is perfected in right judgement; which rightly counsels and directs towards the good end of the whole of human life.<sup>49</sup> Because prudence is an intellectual virtue (seated in the practical reason), Solomon belongs to the first circle; but because it is a virtue which orders the appetitive powers of the soul, Solomon represents also the connectedness of the intellective and the appetitive, and thus implies the second circle, and suggests the reciprocal activity of the two circles (“moto a moto e canto a canto”: XII, 6), as prudence governs love, and love moves prudence to its act.<sup>50</sup>

Finally (XIV, 37–60), Solomon himself is brought to speech, to explain how the soul, incomplete in its separated condition, will be made more gracious by being re clothed in “holy and glorious flesh” (“la carne gloriosa e santa”: XIV, 43) at the resurrection. The doctrine of the enhancement of beatitude by the restoration of the body<sup>51</sup> is also an assertion of the fruition of the soul’s speculative and affective powers in the unity of concrete, individual personality. Thus, the speech of Solomon concludes the argument of the Solar Heaven, and points beyond it. Dante begins to discern a new and higher sphere (“un giro”: XIV, 74) rising as a brightening horizon: it is the Heaven of Mars,<sup>52</sup> wherein the thought and will, the speculative and affective virtues of the doctors, will be translated into the strife and martyrdom of the soldiers of the Cross.

48. Cf. *Summa theol.*, II–II, 50, 1, *resp.*: “et ideo regi, ad quem pertinet regere civitatem vel regnum, prudentia competit secundum specialem et perfectissimam sui rationem. Et propter hoc regnativa ponitur species prudentiae.”

49. Cf. *Ibid.*, I–II, 57, 5 *resp.*: *De virtutibus in communi*, a.6, *resp.*: *Summa theol.*, II–II, 50, 1, *resp.*: “Tertia autem prudentia est et vera et perfecta, quae ad bonum finem totius vitae recte consiliatur, indicat et praecipit.”

50. Cf. *Ibid.*, II–II, 47, 1, *ad 1*: “Primus autem actus appetitivae virtutis est amor .... Sic igitur prudentia dicitur esse amor non quidem essentialiter, sed in quantum amor movet ad actum prudentiae.”

51. Cf. *Ibid.*, I–II, 3, 3, *resp.*: “... post resurrectionem ex ipsa beatitudine animae, ut Augustinus dicit ... fiet quaedam refluentia in corpus, et in sensos corporeos, ut in suis operationibus perficiantur ....”

52. There is some debate as to whether this new sphere is to be understood as a first glimmering of Mars, or as a third circle belonging to the Heaven of the Sun; cf. M. Bourbeau (*op. cit.*), “Annexe,” 127–30. J.A. Doull (*op. cit.*, 671) interprets it as a third circle of the Solar

That Dante considers the doctrine of the Solar Heaven to be essentially Thomistic is poetically affirmed by the appearance and re-appearance of Thomas as its interpreter; and, indeed, there is nothing in the argument (here or elsewhere in the *Comedy*) to suggest Dante's attachment to any Averroist position which he does not understand to be embraced as an element within Thomistic doctrine. It is true that the political doctrine of *De Monarchia* has often seemed a seductive invitation to think either of an Averroist "phase" or of a lingering Averroism in Dante's thought (depending on whether one assigns the work an earlier date or regards it as contemporary with the *Paradiso*). But while Dante's doctrine of imperial authority as deriving immediately from Divine Providence, without papal intervention, certainly differs from the political position advanced by Thomas, in *De regimine principum*, the conclusion of Dante's argument is certainly not Averroistic. Indeed, the argument that man's natural felicity is ordered towards immortal felicity in such a way that the Emperor must be related to the Pope by a reverence such as a son owes to his father, and that, so related, the Emperor, illumined by "paternal grace," may more effectively enlighten the world,<sup>53</sup> is surely an accurate political application of the principle which distinguishes and relates natural and revealed knowledge according to the doctrine of Thomas.<sup>54</sup> It is, in fact, an application of the fundamental Thomistic principle that "gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat."<sup>55</sup>

Heaven: "The first circle seeks to know the original unity of the Persons in the Father; the second, the Trinity as revealed in the Son; the third, the procession of the Holy Spirit." In view of Dante's identification of the two circles as reflecting cherubic knowledge and seraphic love, respectively, such a Trinitarian correlation is difficult. In this heaven, the Trinity is seen *per effectum* in the unity of the soul's powers of intellect and will (first and second circles); explicit vision of the Trinitarian Persons in unity must await the *lumen gloriae* at the conclusion of the *Paradiso* (XXX-XXXIII).

53. *De Monarchia*, III, 15: "Que quidem veritas ultime questionis non sic stricte recipienda est, ut romanus Princeps in aliquo romano Pontifici non subiaceret, cum mortalis ista felicitas quodammodo ad immortalem felicitatem ordinetur. Illa igitur reverentia Cesar utatur ad Petrum qua primogenitus filius debet uti ad patrem: ut luce paterne gratie illustratus virtuosius orbem terre irradiet, cui ab Illo solo prefectus est, qui omnium spiritualium et temporalium gubernator". The whole argument of the *Comedy* explicates the "quodammodo" of this text. Cf. J. Ferrante, *The Political Vision of The Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 4-7: "The political views of the *Comedy* are indeed consistent with those of the *Monarchy* ..." 7.

54. Cf. R. Crouse, "St. Thomas, St. Albert, Aristotle: Philosophia ancilla theologiae," in *Tommaso d'Aquino nella storia del pensiero*, Vol. I (Rome-Naples, 1975), 181-85. For an illuminating comparison of Dante's political doctrine with those of Thomas, and such Thomists as Giles of Rome, Ptolemy of Lucca, and Remigio Girolami, see J. Ferrante, *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy*, 3-43.

55. *Summa theol.*, I, 1, 8 ad 2.

But if one is to think of Dante as basically Thomistic in his philosophical and theological positions, one must also think of a Thomas who is (as Dante's Thomas in the Solar Heaven: XIII, 112–42) more “concordist” than the Thomas of the Neoscholastic “tomistizzanti” of the early twentieth century. One must think of a Thomas who patiently “fishes” for the truth amid a confusion of hasty and exaggerated (and thus in themselves heretical: XIII, 1222–129) affirmations and negations; a Thomas whose Aristotelianism is developed and extended in the light of many centuries of pagan, Arabic, Jewish and Christian Neoplatonic tradition. One must think of the Thomas who comments upon Boethius, Pseudo-Dionysius, the *Liber de causis*, and the Scriptures, as well as upon the texts of Aristotle, and forges a systematic synthesis of all those elements.

Dante certainly thinks of himself as an Aristotelian; yet Aristotle (along with Plato, Avicenna, Averroes, and others of the “filosofica familia”: *Inferno*, IV, 130–44) remains in Limbo. It is Thomas who elevates Aristotelian doctrine to the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*. It is the Thomistic interpretation of man's natural desire, as a thirst which can be satisfied only in the beatific vision, which defines the upward motion (the “moto spiritale”: *Purg.*, XVIII, 32) of the *Purgatorio*<sup>56</sup>; it is Thomas' relating of Aristotle's *amicitia* (*philia*) to *caritas* which defines the *benevolentia* of Beatrice, and the *concordia* of the spheres of Paradise<sup>57</sup>; and it is Thomas' working out of the relationship between the doctrine of the *Ethics* and the *Metaphysics*<sup>58</sup> which enables Dante to understand the love of Beatrice, the love of truth, and the love of good, as manifestations of that one love which binds all loves together as pages of one book (“legato con amore in un volume”: *Parad.*, XXXIII, 86), the love which moves the sun and the other stars.<sup>59</sup> It is that doctrine of

56. Cf. G. Petrocci, *Il Purgatorio di Dante* (*op. cit.*), 74: “Il fondamento dottrinario del viaggio ascetico nel secondo regno, e in genere tutta la concezione dantesca dell'ascesi, trova riscontro, e forse la fonte diretta, nel pensiero di s. Tommaso d'Aquino . . .” On the Thomistic interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of the virtues, see O. Lottin, “Aristote et la connexion des vertus,” in *Autour d'Aristote* (Mélanges A. Mansion, Louvain, 1955), 343–64.

57. On *amor*, *dilectio*, *caritas* and *amicitia*, “ad idem quodammodo pertinentia,” see *Summa theol.*, II–II, 26, 3 *resp.*; on the significance for Dante of Thomas' interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of *amicitia*, see A. di Giovanni (*op. cit.*), 286–87: “Principale e capitale ispiratore della sua dottrina filosofica in generale e dell'intera sua etica, Aristotele lo è anche per la filosofia di Dante sull'amore,” 286.

58. Cf. A. Thiry, “Saint Thomas et la morale d'Aristote,” in P. Moraux *et. al.*, *Aristote et saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain-Paris, 1957), 229–58.

59. *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 145: “l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.” The final stanza of the *Paradiso* may find some literary precedent in Boethius (*Consol. philos.*, II, m.8, 28–30), but the inspiration is evidently Aristotelian (*Metaphysics*, XII, 1072 b 3: “Movet ut amatum”), especially when taken in conjunction with the earlier quotation from the same passage (*Metaphysics*, XII, 1072 b 14: “Ex tali igitur principio dependet caelum et natura”) at *Paradiso*, XXVIII, 40–41: “Da quel punto dipende il cielo e tutta la natura”; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In XII libros Metaphysicorum expositio*, XII, 7, 2529–535.

transfigured and transfiguring *amor* which renders coherent the thought of Dante, from the romance of the *Vita nuova* to the theology of the *Paradiso*, and shows, at last, how Beatrice is truly "rooted in the Trinity."<sup>60</sup>

Aristotle remains, for Dante, "il maestro di colui che sanno"; but his Aristotle is the Aristotle of Thomas, and it is true for him, as for Pico della Mirandola, that "sine Toma, mutus esset Aristoteles."<sup>61</sup> The philosophy of Dante, in its fundamental lines, is a Christian Aristotelianism, strongly and increasingly guided throughout his life "per esemplo del buono frate Tommaso d'Aquino."<sup>62</sup>

The conclusion of Karl Vossler is judicious:

He doubtless appropriated all sorts of material, and by preference much that was picturesque and poetical, or even ethical and political, out of Averroist, Nominalist, Neo-Platonic, Augustinian, Victorine, and Franciscan writings, and in general from all the intellectualist and mystic trends of his age. Nevertheless, his logical basis and his intellectual training remain scholastic and Thomistic.<sup>63</sup>

60. *Vita nuova*, XXIX: "... la cui radice ... è solamente la mirabile Trinitade."

61. Cf. M. Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, II (Munich, 1936), 85.

62. *Convivio*, IV, 30, 3.

63. K. Vossler (*op. cit.*), Vol. I, 107.