

GILSON DANTE AND PHILOSOPHY



ETIENNE GILSON
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PHILOSOPHY

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Dante and *PHILOSOPHY*

by Etienne Gilson • Translated by David Moore



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to the philosophers, and in particular to the authors of philosophic Consolations, as the custodians of the only effective remedy for such afflictions. That is what the poet himself says: I sought to console myself, *cercava di consolarme*; I desired a remedy for my tears, *a le mie lagrime un remedio*.¹ Beyond doubt, and precisely because it was well chosen, the remedy was effective in the end; philosophy, or, as he defines it himself, amorous association with wisdom, in the end suppressed their cause. Let us add finally that even if it were true—and it is false: *Purg.*, XXX, 48—that Dante ever ceased to love Beatrice, it would not be true that Dante put forward his love of philosophy as having caused the death of his love for Beatrice. What he says, on the contrary, is that the persistence of his love for Beatrice has led him to the readings and studies from which his love for philosophy sprang. Thus are created the pseudo-facts charged with masking the joints which false hypotheses make necessary. We have, alas, not yet seen the last.

These deductions, which proceed implacably straight ahead, creating at every step the reality they pretend to discover, would in the end compel recognition merely by virtue of their internal coherence if, from time to time, they did not run into obstacles of such a sort that any unprejudiced mind must perceive them. Such is the case here. What the arguments of Father Mandonnet set out to prove is a very simple conclusion touching the hidden meaning of the *Vita Nuova*. He alleges that, under a veil of transparent symbols and poetic fictions which could only be taken literally by a somewhat obtuse mind, Dante's first book does not tell us the story of his love for a young Florentine girl, but of his desertion of theology, which was his first love, for human wisdom: "Dante is, then, a deserter from Theology who has gone over to Philosophy? Yes, and that is the *smarrimento*, as Dante says, addressing his soul, *nel quale se' caduta vilmente per questa donna che è apparita*" (*Conv.*, II, 10).²

Father Mandonnet's thesis not only has the instinct of self-preservation; it has all its creative fecundity. Here the expedient consists in not translating the word *smarrimento*, as if this unmysterious term were heavy with implications, then in commenting upon it with a passage in which the adverb *vilmente* is encountered. The impression is thereby created that this

¹ DANTE, *Convivio*, II, 12.

² P. MANDONNET, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

of facts. Bice Portinari, or any other real woman whom one may like to substitute for her, may well have been the woman loved by Dante; it remains none the less true that Beatrice was born of the genius of Dante, not of the marriage of Folco Portinari and Cilia Caponsacchi. The assertion of the right to argue from one to the other as if it were a question of one and the same person results from a confusion that is fatal to our studies. Bice Portinari is a historical personage whose shadow discreetly accompanies the eternally living Beatrice whom Dante alone has created. Of this shadow history knows practically nothing, and it speaks of it only because Dante has enriched the nature of that eminent reality which is Beatrice, the work of art created by him; but even if history were capable of telling us everything about Bice Portinari, the birth of Beatrice would be in no way explained thereby. Now the historians are here disarmed. There is no tomb to be violated, there are no drawers to be forced that the dead may be robbed of their secrets, no intimate joys or woes to be prostituted to the public for money. Bice Portinari has, thank God, no history, but if she had one it would only be the history of the young Florentine girl who was encountered by Dante, became the second wife of Simone dei Bardi, and died in the month of June, 1290. If Bice Portinari had left us any letters, memoirs or some intimate diary, we could write her history. If Dante had written a *Secretum*, as Petrarch was to do, we could divine, beneath the surface of the *Vita Nuova*, something of the reality which it treats poetically. In fact, we have nothing of all this. We do not even know if Dante had a *Secretum* to write, and there is nothing that authorizes us to suppose that his relations with Beatrice were more involved than he says. It is true that someone or other called Bice Portinari would have existed even if Dante had not sung of her, but that is precisely the reason why, even if we had the material with which to write it, her history would not be that of Beatrice. The interpreter of Dante need not therefore concern himself with it.

In contrast to the infra-Beatrices, the ultra-Beatrices obstinately solicit our attention. Instead of reducing an artistic creation to the dimensions of a historical personage, these latter transfigure it into mere symbols, as if the artistic value of Beatrice did not essentially imply that she is presented as a reality. All that we

usually prevented by their public duties, their family responsibilities or simply material circumstances from instructing themselves in these matters and extracting from them the benefits to which they are entitled. If what we shall say below of philosophy as conceived by Dante seems true, it will be understood how the actual idea of such a treatise is organically bound up with his idea of philosophy.

This science is in his eyes a laymen's science, without which they cannot attain the temporal aims which are their prerogative. It is indispensable to them in order that they may live happily after their way; it is therefore necessary that some at least among them should be acquainted with it, and since these laymen cannot conveniently go and learn it from the clerics who teach it, it is necessary that one of them should write for the others this "philosophic initiation" for worldly folk which is precisely what the *Banquet* is. Undoubtedly Dante has availed himself of the opportunity to express personal ideas, principally the one which I have just mentioned and which is by a very long way the most important; but for that very reason we must be careful always to interpret the chunks of doctrine which Dante utilizes, not according to what they contain or what they imply in the philosophies from which he borrows them, but according to the justification which they provide for the personal thesis which Dante wishes to uphold. In other words, if we wish to understand Dante in the *Convivio*, we must not install ourselves successively in each of the positions through which he passes, nor probe each of them to its depths or diverge from each of them in all the directions which, taken by itself, it suggests; we must pass through them in his company, with the same motion as that with which he passes through them, as if they were halting-places at which we may linger a moment to enjoy the scenery, none of them, however, being the goal.¹

To avoid these various dangers, the wisest course will be to

¹ With regard to Dante's general attitude in the *Banquet*, there is everything to be gained from reading the three wise remarks made by M. Barbi in his *Introduction* to the critical edition of G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli. It will also be profitable to consult the numerous philosophical and theological works cited in notes by these two editors; but such works may be utilized without danger only on condition that one discerns clearly, beneath their analogies or their verbal coincidences with the text of Dante, the profound differences of thought due to the clearly defined use which Dante makes of them. Dante did not envisage, or we are not sure that he envisaged, anything save what he says in his text, certainly not anything of what the other authors cited by way of comment say. This has sometimes been forgotten.

consent, I will simply say that, whether or not it has been added to the original text, the end of the *Vita Nuova* remains what it is and says what it says. Addition does not signify fabrication, still less falsehood, trickery or falsification. Dante has, then, assured us in the *Vita Nuova*, whatever the period of his life at which he may have said it, that he had a vision relating to the dead Beatrice, that this vision inspired him with the desire to celebrate her in a unique way, but that he would need a few years to realize this project. On the other hand, Dante asserts in the *Banquet* (II, 7) that he knew, through a gracious act of revelation on the part of Beatrice herself, that she was in heaven; that while thinking of heaven as he was able he used to go as it were into a rapture; that this thought, by its sweetness, inspired him with the desire to die so that he might go and join her there, but that another thought, opposed to the first, suggested to him that he should love another lady, and promised him her notice and her greeting. This lady Dante names a little further on: she is the wisdom of the philosophers. Being a chivalrous poet, Dante personifies her in the image of a Lady, the *donna gentile*, but this time it is no longer a question of anything but a poetic fiction, as he himself explicitly states when he intentionally repeats that she was born of his imagination: *E imaginava lei fatta come una donna gentile, e non la poteva imaginare in atto alcuno, se non misericordioso* (II, 12). Finally, Dante declares that we have already met this imaginary *donna gentile* in the *Vita Nuova*, where she had appeared to him with the same aspect and the same character: she is that merciful lady who, a little more than a year after the death of Beatrice, offered to console him. To assure ourselves that the *gentile donna*, who looks at him so piteously—*sì pietosamente*—in *Vita Nuova*, XXXV, is indeed already philosophy, we need only refer to the *Banquet*, II, 2: "I say, then, to begin with, that the star of Venus had completed two revolutions in that circle which would make it appear in the morning and in the evening, according to the different seasons, after the passing of that blest Beatrice who lives in heaven with the angels and on earth with my soul, when that gentle lady, of whom I made mention at the end of the *Vita Nuova*, appeared for the first time before my eyes, accompanied by love, and took a certain place (*prese luogo alcuno*) in my mind." What fascinated him about her, then, was the consolation which she offered to

Dimenticare does not merely signify in Italian that passive thing which we term forgetfulness: it connotes, at least in its root, the act of dismissing a certain memory from one's thoughts. What philosophy sets out to do in the *Vita Nuova* is to lead Dante to forget that he is bereft of Beatrice: *Ed ora pare che vogliate dimenticarlo per questa donna* (*Vita Nuova*, XXXVII). Nothing could be clearer in this connection than the sonnet in Chapter XXXVIII: "The soul says to the heart: 'Who is this who cometh to console our thoughts, and is his power so mighty that he letteth no other thought remain with us?'" The dilemma that the whole context creates is here clearly defined: Either philosophy, or Beatrice. At the end of this crisis we know that the *donna gentile* has not displaced Beatrice. What has been cast out is rather, indeed, the evil desire—opposed to the constancy of reason—to displace Beatrice. Dante will never forget this from now on.¹

The *Vita Nuova* does not say and does not ask that we should admit anything more. Under what conditions would other works by Dante contradict its testimony? It is not enough that when they are compared difficulties of chronology arise. As a poetic autobiography, the *Vita Nuova* may permit itself foreshortenings or extensions of perspective according to the poet's taste. We have no need to feel disturbed because what is there termed "a few days" may elsewhere be termed thirty months or more. The indications of duration in a work wherein the reckoning is manifestly symbolic cannot enter into the same system of calculation as the seemingly historical indications of duration in the *Banquet*. What matters here is the *nature* of the facts and their *sequence*. If another work by Dante is to contradict the *Vita Nuova* on this point it must either deny the reality of the so called philosophical crisis, or deny the ultimate triumph of Beatrice, or, finally, deny the sequence of these events as it *emerges* from the *Vita Nuova*: death of Beatrice, love of the heavenly Beatrice, temptation to substitute for her the love of philosophy, final return of Beatrice. The eulogies of philosophy which may be found elsewhere, exaggerated as they are, do not create any difficulty. As Signor M. Barbi very justly says, the question is not one of *philosophy*. Like the one in the *Banquet*,

¹ This point has been excellently expounded by F. ERCOLE, *Il pensiero politico di Dante*, Alpes, Milan, 1928; Vol. II, pp. 301-302.

literary make-up of the grammarian and the natural resources of his mind.¹ What happened, however, was this, that, seeking consolation for his grief, Dante found something quite different. The study of these works revealed to him the existence of a language that was new to him—the language of these authors, of these sciences and of these books. The Wisdom promised by the philosophers at once fascinated him and it was this that he imagined in the semblance of a *donna gentile*, of whom it is merely the poetic symbol (II, 12).

Hence the special function and the specific nature of philosophy in the *Banquet*. It is essentially a giver of human happiness and, as such, it tends there to be centred upon ethics. Everything conspires, moreover, to orientate the work in this direction—the public to whom it is addressed, since it is a question of inculcating a love of philosophy into a public of noblemen, politicians and men of action whose lives it is to guide; the primary aim pursued by Dante himself, since he asks it above all to console him and to save him. At the precise moment at which it enters his life Dante is beginning to love it for the promises of consolation which he reads in its face: *Lo mio secondo amore prese cominciamento de la misericordiosa sembianza d'una donna* (III, 1). In short, what this lady represents above all in his mind is philosophy in its function as a comforter.

Nothing could fulfil this function better than philosophy. One love drives out the other, and it happens, in fact, that the very definition of philosophy requires that this science should be a love: the love of wisdom.² In writing the *Banquet* Dante insists with satisfaction on the purity of such a love, and let

¹ See, on this point, M. BAUMGARTNER, *Dantes Stellung zur Philosophie*, pp. 49–51, and ROCCO MURARI, *Dante e Boezio. Contributo allo studio delle fonti dantesche*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1905 (especially Chaps. IV and IX).

The expression "l'arte di grammatica" should be understood here in the sense attributed to it in the Middle Ages, following QUINTILIAN, *Oratoriae Institutionis*, lib. I, cap. 4: "Haec igitur professio, quum brevissime in duas partes dividatur, recte loquendi scientiam et poetarum enarrationem, plus habet in recessu quam fronte promittit." In fact, it was Dante's literary taste that was first won over to philosophy, understood in the humanistic sense, by the music of Cicero. Moreover, Dante began the *Canzone* in *Convivio* II, with the well-known line: *Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete*, in which, as we shall see, the third heaven symbolizes Rhetoric, and the word *voi* designates the movers of that heaven, especially Boethius and Cicero: "Boezio e Tullio, li quali con la dolcezza di loro sermone inviarono me, come detto è sopra, ne lo amore, cioè ne lo studio, di questa donna gentilissima, Filosofia" (*Convivio*, II, 15).

² DANTE, *Convivio*, II, 15. Cf. III, 11, and especially III, 14: "Filosofia per subietto materiale qui ha la sapienza, e per forma ha amore, e per composto de l'uno e de l'altro, l'uto di speculazione."

Divine Comedy without Beatrice: she is the soul of those two works; but a *Banquet* without Beatrice was no more inconceivable than is the *Monarchy* without her. Dante is going to speak of the *donna gentile*, that is to say Philosophy; philosophy has not a great deal to say about the next world, and since Beatrice is dead, philosophy will have done for her almost all that it could do in proving that she is still alive in a world beyond about which, *qua* philosophy, it lacks precise information. The supreme homage paid by the *donna gentile* to Beatrice consisted in proving that she was immortal. She rendered it to her, after which she ceased to speak of her. But she only rendered it to her because Dante was expressly bent on rendering it to her. The whole narrative of the Second Treatise which we have analysed has the immediate object of placing the entire work under the patronage of Beatrice and, as it were, invoking her protection for it. Perhaps the truth is that in effect, in a treatise on philosophy as Dante understands it, the place due to theology lies above that science, entirely above it even, but just as clearly outside it. Let us see, then, if this is not also the reason why Beatrice, having received from the *donna gentile* the preliminary homage to which she is entitled, defers to the counsels to which her eminent dignity gives her access and, leaving Philosophy mistress in its own house, goes her way.

The *donna gentile* is not long, moreover, in taking cognizance of her departure. Proceeding like the philosopher she is, she first busies herself with putting her house in order, assigning to each of the sciences the definite place that is its due. An excellent opportunity to specify that which is due also to theology, and we shall shortly see that Dante very well knew in what way he intended to obtain from it the privileges but for which philosophy could not have rendered him the definite services that he expected of it.

Dante has, *ex professo*, treated the problem of the classification of the sciences by way of commentary on the line in the poem on which is constructed the whole of the Second Treatise of the *Banquet*: *Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete*. In order to explain what the third heaven is, we must first explain the meaning of the word "heaven" in the poem in which Dante has just employed it. *Heaven* there signifies *science*; the various heavens, then, are the various sciences. Just as, in fact, each heaven revolves around

its centre, each science revolves around its subject, as around a motionless centre. Furthermore, just as each heaven illuminates visible things, each science illuminates intelligible things. Finally, just as, in the opinion of all the philosophers, the stars influence material things when the latter are suitably disposed, conferring upon them the degrees of perfection which they are capable of receiving, so also the sciences confer upon us the various degrees of perfection which enable us to contemplate truth, that is to say our ultimate perfection, as Aristotle says in the passage in the *Ethics*, VI, where he says that truth is the good of the intellect.¹

No problem is raised by this general comparison, but two arise as soon as we try to identify each particular science with a particular heaven. By adding together the sciences of the trivium and those of the quadrivium, we obtain seven sciences; by adding to these physics and metaphysics, ethics and theology, we arrive at a total of eleven. On the other hand, by adding together the heavens of the seven planets, the two moving heavens that surround them and the motionless heaven that envelops the whole, we obtain the number ten. There is therefore one science too many, and we shall of necessity have to assign two distinct sciences to a single heaven. Furthermore, the problem arises as to what is the ascending order in which the sciences will be classified. Since the highest heavens are those whose influence is most universal, they are at the same time the noblest; to classify the sciences by relating them to the various heavens is therefore tantamount to grading them according to a hierarchy. Not only has Dante not avoided these difficulties, but he has provoked them—a sure sign that he had something

¹ DANTE, *Convivio*, II, 13. I have not found this passage in ARISTOTLE, *Ethic. Nic.*, VI. On the other hand, St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *In X libros Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nichomachum expositio* (ed. A. M. Pirotta, Turin, Marietti, 1934), says: "Et hujus rationem assignat [Aristoteles], quia omnia consonant vero. Et hujus ratio est, quia, ut dicitur in sexto hujus, verum est bonum intellectus" (*ed. cit.*, lib. I, lect. 12, No. 139). In fact, we read in lib. VI, lect. 3-4, No. 1143: "Quamvis enim per ista duo quandoque verum dicatur tamen contingit quod eis quandoque dicitur falsum, quod est malum intellectus, sicut verum est bonum intellectus." As this formula, which occurs twice in St. Thomas's commentary, is not in the text of Aristotle, it seems that Dante is here quoting Aristotle according to that commentary. It may even be conjectured that his reference is borrowed from the former of the two passages from the commentary that we have just reproduced: *in sexto hujus*. Dante has understood *hujus libri*; hence the formula that he uses: "la veritate . . . che è l'ultima perfezione nostra, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel sesto de l'*Etica*, quando dice che 'l vero è lo bene de lo intelletto" (*loc. cit.*). Dante thought St. Thomas said that Aristotle had said it; he therefore confidently asserted that Aristotle had said it.

for the latter, as St. Thomas says in his commentary on the Second Book of the *Ethics*, moves and guides us towards the other sciences.¹ Nay more, Aristotle himself says, in Book V of the *Ethics*, that "legal justice ordains the study of the sciences, and that, lest the latter be abandoned, it commands that they be learned and taught".² Similarly, the Crystalline heaven, or *Primum Mobile*, ordains by its motion the daily revolution of all the other heavens, a revolution that enables them to receive and transmit to the earth each day the efficacy of all their parts. If the revolution of the *Primum Mobile* ceased to make the other heavens go round, we should see but a faint part of them on earth and we should feel their influence but slightly. There would no longer be in the world any reproduction of living animals and plants, or any distinction of day or night; there would be no weeks, or months, or years, but the whole universe would be in disorder and the motion of the other heavens would be in vain: "And likewise, if moral philosophy ceased to be, the other sciences would for a while be eclipsed, there would be no survival of felicity, nor would life hold any happiness, and these sciences would have been formulated and discovered of old in vain. Whence it is very clear that this heaven is connected with moral philosophy" (II, 14).

The thesis which Dante here maintains is quite extraordinary for the Middle Ages. Taken literally, it amounts to the maintenance of the primacy of ethics over metaphysics, a doctrine which at any rate could not claim the authority of Aristotle and perhaps still less that of St. Thomas Aquinas. It is impossible to

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II^m lib. Ethic.*, lect. I, ed. Pirotta, No. 245: "Et ratio ordinis est, quia virtutes morales sunt magis notae, et per eas disponimur ad intellectuales." I confess that I do not see the necessity here for the hypothesis propounded with reference to this passage by A. GILBERT, *Dante's Conception of Justice*, Durham, North Carolina, 1925, p. 183, and adopted again by G. BUSNELLI and G. VANDELLI, *ed. cit.*, p. 223, note 5.

² I have been unable to find this passage in *Ethic.*, V. But we find the same idea summarily indicated in *Ethic.*, I, 1, 1093 a 27-1093 b 2, and commented upon by St. Thomas with a distinction to safeguard the primacy of the speculative sciences, in *In X libros Ethic.*, lib. I, lect. 2, ed. Pirotta, Nos. 26-28. This passage is reproduced in full by G. BUSNELLI and G. VANDELLI, *ed. cit.*, p. 224, note 1. Dante's formula may also be compared to the following passage in Averroes: "Videtur autem esse potissima artium, et maxime principantis: et hujusmodi quidem est ars gubernandi civitates. Etenim haec ars principatur omnibus artibus, cum determinet quas artes et scientias oportet esse in civitatibus, in quas artes et scientias oportet exercere quosdam hominum, et usque ad quem finem oportet discipulos pervenire in discendo artes. Cum igitur haec ars taliter se habeat ad reliquas artium, est principalior earum" (AVERROES, *In Moral. Nicom.*, lib. I, cap. 2, in *Aristotelis Stagiritae libri moralem totam philosophiam complectentes*, Venetiis, apud Juntas, 1550; vol. III, fol. 1, v. 2).

doubt that to these two philosophers the supreme, chief and architectonic science is metaphysics, a theoretical, purely speculative science, which knows only the ultimate cause of everything, that is to say what is best in the whole of nature, the cause of causes: God.¹ St. Thomas is as steadfast on this point as is Dante in the inverse sense: "All the sciences and all the arts aim at one thing alone, the perfection of man, which is his beatitude. It is therefore necessary that one of them should govern all the others—that one which with good reason arrogates to itself the name of wisdom", for, since it deals with the most universal principles, it is also the most intellectual of all and, as a final consequence, it is their governor: *est aliarum regulatrix*.²

It is difficult to believe that Dante can have been unaware, if not of these passages, at any rate of the absolutely fundamental thesis to which they point. It may even be because he knew them in an admirable degree that he found in them the means to adapt them to the personal aims which he was pursuing. Such, indeed, is the exaltation of metaphysics in Aristotle that one ultimately finds it a little disturbing. Properly speaking, metaphysical wisdom is a contemplation of the pure intelligibles, positing a life entirely free from the needs of the body and the constraints of social life. It is not the life of a man, but rather that of a god. Aristotle concludes that man has no right to be master of such a science and, without agreeing with the poet Simonides that God alone seems worthy of such an honour, he at all events thinks that it is the noblest of all the sciences, because, being the most divine, it is also the one that deserves most respect. More divine than any of the others, metaphysics is so for two reasons: it is the science of which God is master, and it deals with divine things. It is therefore the goddess of the sciences—*dea scientiarum*—which is tantamount to saying *quod non sit humana* (that it is not human), because knowledge of it is not, strictly speaking, *humana possessio* (within the competence of man).³

In Dante's view, that is certainly the root of the question. In order to understand his attitude on this point we must remember

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Metaphysicam Aristotelis Commentaria*, ed. M.-R. Cathala, Turin, P. Marietti, 1915; lib. I, lect. 2, Nos. 50-51.

² *Op. cit.*, Prooemium.

³ ARISTOTLE, *Metaph.*, I, 2, 982-983. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *op. cit.*, lib. I, lect. 2, Nos. 60 and 64. That the supreme science must be speculative, not active, is demonstrated in No. 53.

the starting-point of his treatise. The *Banquet* is, in fact, based entirely on the principle, or, if one prefers, on the hope, that man is able, thanks to philosophy, to find consolation for his miseries in the beatitude of the sage. The question whether, *in itself*, metaphysics is or is not a superior science to theology seems from this point of view almost purely academic. What does the perfection of this science matter to us? If it is the science of God, one imagines that it may constitute His beatitude, but, for that very reason, it cannot constitute ours on earth. Why, then, instead of classifying the sciences according to the order of their absolute perfection, should we not classify them according to their increasing capacity for beatifying us? To do so means committing ourselves to place at the summit of the hierarchy not the most divine of all sciences, but the most human of all sciences: not metaphysics, but ethics.

There are numerous indications—and they are extremely precise—which urge us to think that Dante has followed this line of reasoning. The *Banquet* derives the materials of which it is composed from manifold and even somewhat heterogeneous origins, but if there is one source from which it has drawn more than from any other, and whose influence, by its continuity and abundance, has imposed upon it a real unity, it is assuredly Aristotle's *Ethica ad Nicomachum*. It is true that Dante read this work, not only in the Latin text which was then in use, but in conjunction with the commentary furnished by St. Thomas Aquinas. The fact is not unimportant, for St. Thomas's commentary, objective as it is in general, is not innocent of modifying the compass, balance and relative values of the text that it explains, with the object of facilitating the insertion of Aristotelianism in the doctrinal synthesis which its author endeavours to elaborate. In the case under review, Aristotle can place above ethics and physics only a rude natural theology, reduced exclusively to its own resources and cruelly inadequate to its purpose. The Greek metaphysician of the Aristotelian brand has lost his Platonic illusions: he knows that all his knowledge is of sensible origin and that, even if there were a world of Ideas, access to it would be denied him; but he has not yet conceived the Christian hope; no divine Revelation is present, either to bolster up his tottering metaphysic, or to supplement it with a faith which, without merging with it, infinitely increases its compass. That is why,

in a hierarchy of the sciences like that of St. Thomas, in which natural theology is subordinated to a theology of Revelation, but profits by this very subordination, the speculative value and the practical efficacy of metaphysics as a science that beatifies man in this life are far superior to those of Aristotle's metaphysic. This truth, which St. Thomas says is the good of the intellect, is still of the same kind as Aristotle's, but it is rife in Thomism, in which it multiplies itself in the doctrine of the divine ideas, divine providence, the divine will, divine love, the justice of God and the power of God, the equivalent of which would be looked for in vain in the metaphysic of Aristotle. In spite of its inherent deficiency in the science of intelligible things, the Thomistic metaphysic is quite different in scope from the Aristotelian metaphysic; it is therefore much more fitted to beatify the metaphysician in this life.

Let us, on the contrary, take a man who has been restored by a preponderance of reading and contemplation of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum* to Aristotle's point of view. What attitude will be forced upon him by the influence of this work? Like Aristotle himself, he will inflexibly maintain the absolute superiority of the goddess of the sciences, which is also the science appertaining to God, but, being unable to depend for his beatification in this life on a science which in this life is not his to comprehend, he will transfer his reliance from what he lacks to what he has, from what he cannot properly do to what he can do well. In short, he will seek beatitude in this life in the order of activities which best suits man as he is in this life; no longer, therefore, in metaphysics—the diffused glimmer of that Milky Way whose stars no man can see, the invisible pole of a world of which physics is the visible pole, the sidereal revolution that is almost imperceptible in comparison with the diurnal revolution which can be seen by all—but rather in ethics, and even, since man is a social animal, in a political philosophy moulded by ethics.

The reasons for thus descending once more from the Thomistic plane to the Aristotelian plane are as numerous in Dante's thought as they are strong. He is a man who suffers and seeks in philosophy the means to console himself; he is an author who addresses himself to men of action in order to teach them to mould through philosophy lives that are essentially practical and hardly in any way speculative; he is a citizen of Florence, in one of the most

disturbed periods in the history of a town that has known so much disturbance in the past, and no one will make Dante believe that man can be happy contemplating intelligible things at a time when the plunder of his possessions is impending, when his life in society is being moulded by hatred and violence, and when he has awaiting him the exile that will drive him from his native land, far from the domestic hearth, beside which his wife and children will live without him in misery. To such a man, what an inspiration it must have been to discover those *Ethica ad Nicomachum* whose author had known so well the miseries of civil discord that he had died in exile at Chalcis, whither he had fled from Athens so as not to let the Athenians "sin twice against philosophy"! Every book and almost every chapter of the *Ethics* is a eulogy of "political" virtue, an appeal to the civic virtue *par excellence*—that creator of order and human happiness which is Justice. For justice is not simply an individual virtue among the rest; properly speaking, it is virtue in its entirety. If he had not read Aristotle, Dante's political passions would have been neither less compelling nor less violent, but they would have lacked what they needed in order to found themselves in reason, to define themselves in doctrine and above all to discover the remedy for the evils which had been their cause. Dante knew this, and that is why the *Banquet* places at the summit of the heaven of the sciences that appertain to man *qua* man the saving science of men as they are in this life, that science which, like the Crystalline, is the *Primum Mobile* whose supreme influence moulds, orders and renders fruitful the workings of all the other sciences: Ethics. The author of the *Divine Comedy* was not the man to neglect his chance of finding God, and we shall see that even the author of the *Banquet* avowedly cherished it, but, in the meantime, Dante talks like a man who is conversing about human life with men: here on earth, it is better to be a perfect man than an inadequate god.

As soon as he opened the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*, suggestions with this bias came crowding into Dante's mind in profusion. In his book, as its very subject requires, Aristotle reasons always from the point of view of the conditions of the moral life. When he defines the ultimate purpose of man, what he means is the purpose of moral activities, and when he grades the sciences according to a hierarchy, it is from this point of view that he

classifies them. Now from this clearly defined point of view the supreme and architectonic science is that which he calls *πολιτική*, and which the Latin translation and the commentary of St. Thomas call *scientia politica* or *scientia civilis*. Not only does it govern human life, but it even governs the use of the sciences, since it prescribes what sciences must be learned, in what towns they must be taught, who should learn them and up to what point everyone should pursue the study of them.¹ Now the purpose after which this virtue strives in thus ordering all the sciences and all the arts—military, economic, rhetorical and others—is the purpose which contains the individual purposes of all those arts and all those sciences: the good of man, *τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν*, the *humanum bonum* of the Latin translation, upon which St. Thomas comments with great precision when he says that “the purpose of politics is human good, that is to say the best purpose in human affairs”.² In short, the particular subject of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum* is, to be precise, the nature of that supreme virtue which is called *πολιτική*.³

Such, too, is the particular subject of the *Banquet*, in so far, at least, as this work speaks of the virtues and classifies them. Unless he specifically indicates the contrary, Dante's attitude here is that of the philosopher speaking of human good and of the human virtues as such. Now these human virtues are essentially the moral virtues, because the latter call for the simultaneous exercise of the two parts of the human synthesis, the soul and the body. The metaphysic of a philosopher is the better in proportion to the degree in which he transcends his body, and is

¹ ARISTOTLE, *Ethic. Nic.*, I, 1, 1094 a 27–1094 b 2.

² ARISTOTLE, *Ethic. Nic.*, I, 1, 1094 b 7. Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In X lib. Ethic.*, lib. I, lect. 2; ed. Pirrotta, No. 28. I would not wish to appear to twist the relevant passages to suit my interpretation, for I am truly anxious not to do so. I shall not be doing so, however, if I make this statement: By way of commentary upon the three lines in which Aristotle asserts that, in the moral order of human good, the supreme and architectonic science is ethics, St. Thomas has written two paragraphs with the object of specifying clearly, first that ethics is only entitled to govern the use of the sciences, not their substance (*ed. cit.*, No. 27), then that Aristotle calls “politics the supreme science, not absolutely, but in the *genre* of active sciences, which deal with human affairs, of which politics conceives the ultimate purpose. For if it is a question of the ultimate purpose of the whole universe, it is the divine science that conceives it, the science that is supreme in comparison with all the others. If Aristotle says that it is the concern of politics to conceive the ultimate purpose of human life as he defines it in this book, that is because the doctrine of the book contains the primary elements of political science” (*ed. cit.*, No. 31). The commentator's insistence on specifying a distinction which nothing in the text suggests is quite easily explained: Aristotle was not versed in theology and had no beatific vision to safeguard.

³ ARISTOTLE, *Ethic. Nic.*, I, 3, 1094 b 11.

thereby more of a god and less of a man; but the ethics and the politics of a moralist are the better in proportion as they are more in harmony with the special nature of the human being as such. Dante is so profoundly convinced of this that he has not scrupled to put Aristotle into verse in order to make him say it:

I say that every virtue, taken at its source,
comes from a single root:
that virtue, I mean, which makes man happy
in his activity.
And it is, as the *Ethics* has it,
a disposition firm in election,
which keeps solely to the golden mean,
and those are its words.¹

Now, commenting on the passage, in the dual capacity of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, Dante defines its meaning thus: This passage signifies two things, first that every virtue proceeds from a single source, then that by *every virtue* must be understood the moral virtues that are here in question, as is indicated, moreover, by the reference to the *Ethics*: “In which connection it should be known that the fruits which are eminently ours are the moral virtues, because in all respects they are in our power.” This formula—*però che da ogni canto sono in nostra potestate*—should be to us a ray of light which illuminates the fundamental nature of Dante's thought as distinguished from the thought of Aristotle and that of St. Thomas Aquinas.² For his personal attitude is that of neither; it is that of a man situated between the two, inclined by virtue of his political preoccupations to treat the good of the city as an ultimate purpose, just as Aristotle would desire, but inclined by virtue of his Christianity to safeguard what pertains to a transcendent and truly supreme purpose, just as St. Thomas Aquinas desires. To satisfy these two all-powerful inclinations, Dante has sought his middle way in a distinction between the two orders that is much more emphatic than it could be in Aristotle, in whom the religious plane is rather faintly marked, or than it was in St. Thomas, in whom distinction between these orders implies the subordination of one to the other and bases the jurisdiction of the superior

¹ DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, *Canzone*. Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Ethic. Nic.*, II, 6, 1106 a 15–29.

² DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 17.

on the inferior. Dante, on the contrary, has tried to distinguish the two orders in such a way that their mutual independence should be as complete as possible. That is why we find him here describing as eminently human the virtues which, *precisely because they are only human*, are in no sense outside the range of man's nature, govern the special function of man *qua* man, and assure him of the human happiness that is *humanum bonum* in the proper sense through the exercise of the human function par excellence: the correct voluntary choice of an intelligent being. Such is the meaning of this extraordinary classification of the sciences and of the primacy which it reserves for ethics. Undoubtedly—and Dante is well aware of it—there are nobler sciences than ethics, but these nobler sciences are also less our preserve than that science which is concerned with what man can do, by purely human means, for the happiness of man. In a human classification of the sciences, the most perfect of human intellectual attainments should occupy first place. And theology? it will be asked. To this question the answer is simple: The science that appertains to God certainly comes first in a divine classification of the sciences, but, as we shall now see, it cannot count in the general rating of our human sciences because, being supernatural in its origin, it hovers above them but does not mingle with them.

III. TRANSCENDENCY OF THEOLOGY

There remain to us now only one heaven and one science: the Empyrean and theology; we cannot, then, do other than pair them off. It may be said, moreover, that their very nature predestined them to be associated in Dante's thought. In using the word "heaven", we may intend to signify two things that are essentially distinct: either a heaven understood according to the concept of the astronomers and philosophers, or else a heaven understood according to the concept of the theologians.

The astronomers recognize nine heavens: the seven heavens corresponding to each of the seven planets that we can see, the Firmament or heaven of the fixed stars that we can also see, and finally the Crystalline, which we cannot see, but which we postulate as the only conceivable cause of visible effects. The

theologians recognize another, which is, in point of fact, the Empyrean. Not only do the astronomers not recognize it, but it cannot even be said that all theologians recognize it, since, according to St. Thomas, only Basil, Strabo and Bede have affirmed its existence.¹ As for St. Thomas himself, he does not think the reasons adduced to prove that this heaven exists are very convincing, but he proposes to take its existence for granted, if only on grounds of theological expediency. The Empyrean would then be conceived as something created in the very beginning in a state of glory, first-fruit of the future glorification of the body, just as, since the commencement of the world, the Angels have been in a state of glory, first-fruits of the future glorification of the soul. The name of this heaven is borrowed from that of fire, not that it has its heat, but because it has its light. Thus conceived, this heaven lacks any close connection with the others. As Basil says, it is *extra mundum* ("outside the world"); it is essentially a place of peace and repose: *quietis domicilium*. It is therefore understandable that some theologians, speaking of the Empyrean as the destination of those bodies which are in a state of glory, have maintained that it exerts no influence on the inferior bodies, which belong to another order, that of the natural course of things. However, St. Thomas himself is of a different opinion. It appears to him more likely that, although without motion, the Empyrean exerts an influence on those bodies which move. It must be added that this cannot be a positive action, whether exerted by direct motion, or resulting indirectly from some movement. As we have said, if this heaven exists it is without motion. But we might attribute to it a fixed, stable action, for instance a containing or causal property, or something of the same kind with an implication of dignity.²

Such was the constant attitude of St. Thomas on the question. Dante appears to have been a little more knowledgeable than he in this connection. Above the Crystalline heaven, he asserts, Catholics postulate the existence of the Empyrean heaven, that is, a heaven of fire, or else of light, and they postulate it as without motion, because it possesses in each of its parts what its substance

¹ Cf. BRUNO NARDI, *La dottrina dell'Empireo . . .*, in *Saggi di filosofia dantesca*, pp. 204-227.

² ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Sum. theol.*, Pars I, qu. 66, art. 3, Resp. and ad 2^m. Cf. ST. BONAVENTURE, *In II Sent.*, 14, 2, 1, 3, Concl., ed. Quaracchi, Vol. II, p. 356.

numerus: una est columba mea, perfecta mea ("There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled, is but one" (*Song of Songs*, VI, 8-9). Since he is made out to be so faithful and well informed a Thomist—and he was at any rate well informed—Dante undoubtedly did not prefer one Solomon to another without reason. The fact of the matter is that the symbolism of the passage chosen by St. Thomas makes the other sciences out to be so many handmaids of whom theology is queen, whereas the passage chosen by Dante makes theology out to be a pure dove, but not a queen, and the other sciences queens, and not handmaids. This passage from the *Song of Songs* therefore illustrates admirably Dante's idea on the point.

This idea is not, as some would like to make us believe, that "the sacred science, Theology, is above all the other sciences, which are its attendants and handmaids".¹ If Dante had wished to maintain, as St. Thomas does, that the other sciences are the handmaids of theology—*quod aliae scientiae dicuntur ancillae hujus*—he would not have failed to quote the same passage as St. Thomas had utilized. The one that he quotes says, in actual fact, something else, to wit, that theology is a dove, because it enables us to see perfectly the truth in which our souls find their rest. As for the other sciences, they are all queens, favourites and handmaids: *tutte scienze chiama regine e drude e ancille, e questa chiama colomba . . . e perfetta* (II, 14). If we reckon theology—*questa*—among the other sciences, we shall have to say that it is one of the queens, and the purest at that, but not their queen. If we reckon it separately from the other sciences, the "divine science" will be distinguished from them as a dove is distinguished from queens. In whatever way we interpret this passage, not only shall we not find there the Thomistic doctrine of the subordination of the sciences to theology, but we shall find rather the intention of avoiding it. Whether we say, according to our preferred interpretation of the passage, that there are sixty queens, of which one is theology, or that there are sixty queens

¹ The passage in which St. Thomas quotes the text of *Prov.*, IX, 3, occurs in *Sum. theol.*, Pars I, qu. 1, art. 5, *Sed contra*. On the alleged accord between Dante and St. Thomas on this matter see P. MANDONNET, *Dante le Théologien*, p. 50. G. BUSNELLI and G. VANDELLI, *ed. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 30, note 8, apropos of the word *ancille*, refer the reader to St. THOMAS AQUINAS, *loc. cit.*, without any comment, as if Dante were here only reproducing the doctrine of St. Thomas.

in addition to a dove which is theology, in either case we deny the theological monarchy of the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. Between St. Thomas's phrase—*aliae scientiae dicuntur ancillae hujus*—and Dante's—*tutte scienze chiama regine, drude e ancille*—it seems that a choice is imperative. If there is only one queen, there are not sixty; to maintain that Dante is here in accord with St. Thomas Aquinas, we must be satisfied with an accord based on a contradiction.

Yet this is still only a first indication, certainly valuable as a means of putting us on the right road in the interpretation of Dante's thought, but insufficient to enable us to define it. Happily, and although he does not neglect to be prudent in the expression of his personal thought, Dante seldom forgoes the pleasure of expressing it in full. When he is speaking of questions that are near his heart, he even gives proof of a remarkable continuity of purpose. Now the decision which we have seen him take placed him in a difficult position, from which he had to escape at all costs. On the one hand, Dante evidently desired a theology which, like the peace of Christ, should not be of this world: that is why he is so very anxious that it should not mingle with the sciences, even for the purpose of ruling them. On the other hand, he was not ignorant of the doctrine of St. Thomas, which makes the sciences the *ancillae* (handmaids) of theology. That Dante profoundly admired and loved St. Thomas cannot be doubted, not only on account of the glorious part that he is to make him play in the *Divine Comedy*, but because, even in the *Banquet*, where he will have for him one of those terms of familiarity and affection which have the ring of sincerity,¹ Dante's work is based as much on the commentary of St. Thomas as on this passage from Aristotle. How, then, are we to fit in the desire not to make the sciences, in other words philosophy, handmaids of theology, without denying that philosophy can render theology the services which the latter expects of it? Dante set himself this thorny problem, and the most remarkable thing is that he found what he needed to settle it in the very root from which, so far as he was concerned, the question sprang.

With a riposte no less brilliant than his scriptural parry to the passage from Solomon, Dante simply replied that, to aid

¹ See below, p. 158.

time to aid faith, in other words to give the support of her testimony to that science which is above all others conducive to the salvation of the human race—theology, which saves man from eternal death and endows him with eternal life. And how can she here aid Revelation? By the fact that, because she is herself “something visibly miraculous, of which men’s eyes may daily have experience, and because she makes other miracles credible to us, it is manifest that this lady aids our faith by her wonderful aspect” (III, 7). Indeed, philosophy was eternally destined, in the mind of God, to testify in favour of faith before the men of to-day. And philosophy thus bears witness to faith not only through the light with which it illuminates the intellect, but also through the moral beauty with which it ennobles the soul. By this means God gives us to understand that the splendour of wisdom “has the power to revive the nature of those who contemplate it, which is a miraculous thing. And this confirms what was said above in the previous chapter, in the passage where I say that it is an aid to our faith” (III, 8).

There is not the barest allusion in all this to any sort of collaboration on the part of philosophy in the evolution of a theological science as St. Thomas Aquinas understood it. Nor do we find there a single word about the subordination of philosophy to theology of which the basis, in the *Summa theologica*, was furnished by the text of *Prov.*, IX, 3: *Misit ancillas suas vocare ad arcem* (“She hath sent her maids to invite to the tower”). Philosophy appears in Dante as a collaborator far prouder and far more independent. It is through its splendour and magnificence, as a daughter of God, *by virtue of the miracle of its own existence and of the effects which it produces on man through its special quality*, that philosophy, a miracle to be seen every day, helps us to deem possible the miracles of Christ which we did not see. No one will deny that this aid can indeed benefit Christian faith with its efficacy, but it will undoubtedly be recognized that it does not conform to the canon of Thomistic apologetics. To suggest that the miracles of Christ in the Gospel become *possibili* when one sees how divinely miraculous are the splendour of philosophical knowledge and the efficacy of the philosophical ethic, is to make the credibility of the miracle dependent on the beauty of the natural order, itself conceived as a miracle. Whatever the doctrine from which

Dante may here be drawing his inspiration, it is certainly not that of St. Thomas Aquinas.¹

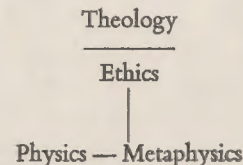
In fact, and if we try to define Dante's position with regard to the nature and function of theology, we find ourselves faced with the following facts: It is a supernatural science situated above, but outside, the order of the natural sciences, as the Empyrean is a supernatural heaven, situated above, but outside, the order of the natural heavens; just as the Empyrean does not exert on the world of nature any positive action, but moves the *Primum Mobile* through the love with which it inspires it, we may think that, although he does not say it,² Dante admits that theology, without exerting any direct action on philosophy, may be a sort of call summoning it to the heights; finally, Dante has nowhere said or suggested that the philosophical sciences are in any way subordinate to this supposed queen, theology, but he has said, on the contrary, that there are at least sixty queenly sciences, not counting favourites and handmaids. Everything, then, tempts one to think that Dante regards theology as being exalted beyond the limits of the world by virtue of its very perfection and separated from nature through its supernatural dignity.

¹ In their commentary on these passages G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli have naturally had no difficulty in finding passages in St. Thomas calculated to confirm that miracles—supernatural acts—are the principal grounds of our belief in a Revelation that is itself supernatural (*op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 342, note 7), that God has chosen to create our reason inferior to His power (*loc. cit.*, note 9), and that the saints perform their miracles in the name of Christ (*loc. cit.*, note 10); but, according to their note on the words *e questa donna sia una cosa visibilmente miracolosa* (*op. cit.*, p. 343, note 3), they have failed, and with good reason, to find any passage to quote in which St. Thomas has said that philosophy is something "miraculous" to the extent that it *faccia a noi possibili li altri*. The passages in St. Thomas which the two commentators quote to elucidate this passage say first that the purpose of visible miracles is to confirm our faith, then that it is of the essence of the miracle that it should excite our wonder, because it seems to us, when a miracle occurs, that what happens is the contrary of what ought to happen. Now St. Thomas greatly admired philosophy, but he certainly did not regard the intellectual and moral effects of this natural knowledge as contrary to the habitual order of nature. When it produces such effects on man, what happens is exactly what naturally should happen.

² I permit myself to ask the reader to be good enough to check this point by referring to *Conv.*, II, 14: "Ancora lo Cielo empireo . . ." I think, however, that Dante would not deny that theology has a practical influence on philosophy, with the proviso that it is not a positive influence, but one like that which he attributes to the Empyrean: causing motion by the mere fact of being loved. The identification of theology with this heaven as it is described by Dante at any rate tempts one to imagine so.

IV. LIMITS OF METAPHYSICS

As it emerges from the preceding analyses, the head of the table of the sciences according to the Dantesque classification assumes the following aspect:



Theology here seems to hover in a sort of splendid isolation, to which we shall find, however, that there are limits; with ethics, which corresponds to the *Primum Mobile*, begins, on the contrary, the order of motive influences and direct positive actions which pervade the entire order of natural sciences, down to the modest but indispensable science of grammar. All taken together form Wisdom, and because ethics summons and prescribes them, and directs them towards their goal, it is ethics that endows them with harmony and beauty: *La moralitade è bellezza de la sapienza* (III, 15).

If we reflect on this doctrine, we see clearly enough *why* Dante came to prefer it, but we do not see *how* he was able to make up his mind to uphold it. All external influences conspired to deter him: Aristotle on the one hand, who never hesitated to keep metaphysics at the summit of the hierarchy of the sciences; St. Thomas on the other, who insisted on this even more strongly than Aristotle had done, because he had to vindicate the claims of another and even higher speculative theology, that of Revelation. We cannot, then, imagine how Dante was able thus to relegate metaphysics from the first place, which belonged to it traditionally, to the second place, which he assigns to it, without modifying the conception of it in order to make it conform to the new part which it is desired to make it play. Not only did Dante do this, but in the process he expended a wealth of ingenuity, and an ingenuity of the highest quality, because it is in the service of an idea that is very precise but hard to express.

At the risk of slightly stretching Dante's thought, but with the object of bringing out what seems to me the idea which a great number of passages suggest, I am going to say, in definitely stating that the formula is not his, that metaphysics as conceived by Dante remains *in itself* the loftiest and most perfect of the sciences, but that it is not so *as far as we are concerned*. Hence the two groups of passages, all authentic, which confront each other and join battle in book after book and in commentary after commentary, each one of those which take up their position being perfectly sure of the justice of its cause, and with reason, but forgetful that its adversaries are likewise so, and with no less reason. There was nothing contradictory in maintaining that, by its very superiority, metaphysics passes our understanding, so that though it is in itself the noblest of the sciences naturally accessible to man our mastery of it is too incomplete for it to be the noblest of *our sciences*, that is to say of those whose subjects we dominate instead of feeling dominated by them. The noblest of our sciences is that of man's happiness qua man: ethics; as for metaphysics, we should certainly place it first if our mastery of it were equal to our mastery of ethics. Its only fault is that it is a little too much for us.

This conviction appears to me to make itself felt in the majority of the passages in which Dante compares the respective teachings of philosophy and theology on a single problem. The result of these comparisons is that in the long run the conclusions of metaphysics always agree with those of theology, but that, concerning each of the points treated by human wisdom, divine wisdom knows much more and knows it much better. Dante's exaltation of theology therefore seems to have had the primary effect of giving him a keener sense of the inherent shortcomings of our metaphysic, as if the latter could only strive more or less successfully towards what is, in fact, the special goal of theology and, straining towards a goal that lies beyond its reach, were often condemned to remain a sort of inadequate theology.¹

¹ Dante's attitude to these questions sometimes resembles that which has lately been ascribed to Siger of Brabant by F. VAN STEENBERGHEM, in *Les oeuvres et la doctrine de Siger de Brabant*, Brussels, Palais des Académies, 1938. See especially the excellent pages 174-175. Formulas like Siger's—"Non tamen videtur quod possit ad plenum satisfieri intellectui humano" and "Homo de separatis errat faciliter et ideo decipitur" (*op. cit.*, p. 175)—have an entirely Dantesque ring. On the other hand I do not know a single equivalent in Dante of the numerous passages in which Siger propounds a certain thesis as philosophically irrefutable, although the contrary is true in the light of faith:

In certain cases however, even when thrown back upon its own resources, metaphysics emerges with great credit. That is what happens in connection with the immortality of the soul, a problem which was forced on Dante's thought by the ever living memory of Beatrice. It is true that philosophy is here satisfied at small cost: "Of all follies (*bestialitati*) the most stupid, the basest and the most pernicious is the belief that there is no other life after death; in point of fact, if we refer to all books, those of the philosophers as well as those of the other sages who have written on the subject, all agree on this point, that there is some part of us which is immortal." In support of which assertion Dante cites Aristotle, *De anima*; all the Stoics; Cicero, *De Senectute*; all the pagan poets; all the religious laws, those of the Jews, the Saracens, the Tartars and that which is common to all men in whatever part of the world they live. If all had deluded themselves the result would be an impossible situation of which the mere mention provokes a shudder. This impossible situation would consist in the fact that, although man is the most perfect of beings here below, he would die like all the other animals, in spite of the hope of another life with which he is buoyed up; now if he were deluded in this natural hope, man, that is to say the most perfect of creatures, would be at the same time the most imperfect, which is the more impossible as in that case it would be reason, the highest perfection of man, that was the cause of his imperfection (II, 8).¹

For these reasons, and for others too, Dante is therefore quite certain of the immortality of the soul. None the less he adds this one: "Moreover, the infallible doctrine of Christ assures us of it, that doctrine which is the way, the truth and the light

"Et istae rationes sunt Commentatoris, quasi indissolubiles; tamen oppositum verum est per fidem" (*op. cit.*, p. 174). To Dante, reason may often be out of its depth in philosophy, but its necessary conclusions are never the opposite of the teaching of faith. Even on a point such as the inability of the most virtuous heathen to be saved without faith, Dante does not say that it is unjust from the viewpoint of reason, but just from that of faith, that a man who has never heard of Christ should be reproved for not having believed in Him, but that, aided by faith, reason may see that that is just: "Quaedam enim iudicia Dei sunt, ad quae etsi humana ratio ex propriis pertingere nequit, elevatur tamen ad illa cum adiutorio fidei eorum quae in Sacris Litteris nobis dicta sunt, sicut ad hoc, quod nemo, quantumcumque moralibus et intellectualibus virtutibus et secundum habitum et secundum operationem perfectus, absque fide salvari potest, dato quod numquam aliquid de Christo audiverit. Nam hoc ratio humana per se iustum intueri non potest, fide tamen adjuta potest" (*De Monarchia*, II, 7).

¹ Regarding these arguments, consult BRUNO NARDI, *Note critiche di filosofia dantesca*, Florence, L. S. Olschki, 1938-XVI, pp. 28-42.

His answer to this question is embodied in the following points: (1) The immortality of the soul is a rational certainty universally accepted; (2) we cannot deny it, moreover, without acknowledging a monstrous inconsistency in nature in general and in the nature of man in particular; (3) yet we do not see our immortality perfectly through reason alone; (4) we do, however, see it perfectly through faith. There is no trace, however slight, of incoherence in this series of propositions. A universal feeling of certainty is a powerful indication of truth, yet it is not conclusive, for men feel their immortality, but they do not *see* it. Similarly, the argument based on the natural desire for immortality may well make the contrary thesis incredible to us, but such a demonstration is not based on the actual nature of the soul, and so it does not enable us to *see* its immortality. As St. Thomas says, it is a *sign* that we are immortal,¹ not a proof. Thus, Dante formally teaches that we have no perfect rational knowledge of the immortality of the soul, but that faith makes us perfectly sure of it.

How are we to classify this doctrine? To be sure, St. Thomas laid it down as a rule that, if we judge certainties from the point of view of their causes, certainty based on faith is the supreme certainty. Indeed, the cause of certainty based on wisdom, science and even intellection is of a human order, whereas the cause of certainty based on faith is the authority of God. He added, however, that if we classify certainties according to what the informed individual can understand of them, those based on faith are less absolute than those based on the intellect,

knowledge of the essence of the soul, but he adds that it may be proved that it is an immaterial substance and that, when this has been proved, its immortality becomes obvious merely by virtue of the principle of contradiction: "Impossibile est autem quod forma separetur a seipsa, unde impossibile est, quod forma subsistens desinat esse" (*Sum. theol.*, Pars I, qu. 75, art. 6, Resp.). In short, the philosopher, in St. Thomas's view, sees the immortality of the soul as one of those *communes animi conceptiones* the contrary of which is philosophically unthinkable: ". . . communis animi conceptio dicitur illa cuius oppositum contradictionem includit, sicut: Omne totum est majus sua parte, quia non esse majus sua parte est contra rationem totius. Sic autem animam rationalem non esse, non est communis animi conceptio, ut ex dictis patet; sed naturam animae rationalis non esse corruptibilem, haec est communis animi conceptio" (*De Potentia*, quaest. disput. V, art. 4, ad 7^m). Thus, to St. Thomas the immortality of the soul is a rationally obvious fact; when, therefore, Dante says that it is only imperfectly seen in this life through reason, he shows either that he is ignorant of St. Thomas's thesis, or that he knows it, but rejects it. In either case Signor Bruno Nardi is fundamentally right: Dante here is not in agreement with St. Thomas.

¹ St. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Sum. theol.*, Pars. I, qu. 75, art. 6, Resp.: "Potest etiam hujus rei accipi signum ex hoc . . ."

His attitude has been compared, with a greater semblance of truth, to those of Duns Scotus and Ockham, who consider the immortality of the soul more probable on rational grounds than the contrary thesis, but fully certain only on grounds of faith. Yet here again it is advisable to use discretion, for Dante's attitude in no way implies his adherence to what is implied by the corresponding attitudes of Duns Scotus or Ockham in the doctrines, otherwise so different, of those two thinkers. Even if he says something similar, his words have not the significance of the same formula in Duns Scotus any more than that formula signifies in Duns Scotus what it does in Ockham. It is more vital to understand Dante than to classify him. Now what he says here is simple enough, if, at least, we confine ourselves to what we are certain he did say: the universal reason of men, including the philosophers, is unshakably convinced of the immortality of the soul, but it does not see it with perfect clearness, whereas we see it perfectly through faith.

This, moreover, is not the only case of the kind that is to be met with in the *Banquet*. It is not very unusual for Dante to stress the inadequacy of the resources at the disposal of metaphysics for the attainment of its loftiest objectives. Why should he have refrained from doing so? Does not Aristotle himself say that our intellect can know nothing beyond what we can perceive through the senses and picture by means of the imagination? Now, as a matter of fact it happens that none of the supreme objectives of metaphysics—the pure Intelligences, the pure Intelligibles, and God—can be either perceived through our senses or conceived by our imagination. Whereupon it will undoubtedly be asked why God wills that these objectives should escape the grasp of our intellect and why He is pleased to impose such a rigorous limitation on our knowledge. If we knew, the question would no longer have any *raison d'être*, for such a limitation would itself not exist. It is therefore this limitation that gives rise to the question and prohibits us from seeking the answer to it: "I say that owing to the inadequacy of the faculty from which it derives its images—an organic faculty,

Part II, p. 164). Dante, on the contrary, is convinced that Aristotle preached the immortality of the soul: "E questa massimamente par volere Aristotile in quello [sc. libro] de l'Anima . . ." (*Convivio*, I, 8). To him, then, what is involved is a thesis that is philosophically certain (in this he differs from the Averroists), but not perfectly intelligible (in this he differs from St. Thomas Aquinas).

namely the imagination—there are some things to which our intellect cannot rise (because the imagination cannot aid it, not having the means to do so), such as substances that are independent of matter; for although we may have some knowledge of them, we cannot understand or comprehend them perfectly. And for that man is not to be blamed, for this reason, I say: that *he* is not the cause of the defect; the responsibility for that lies with the universal nature, in other words God, Who has chosen to deprive us of that light in this life. As to the question why God has done this, it would be presumptuous to discuss it" (III, 4). A very interesting passage, and one that sheds light on the preceding problem.

What, in fact, did Dante say of the darkness that clouds our vision of the immortality of the soul? That its cause lies in the union, and, as it were, the mingling, of our soul and body in this life. Now this is precisely the reason which he has just assigned here to our inability to understand perfectly the nature of independent substances. But to conceive of the soul as immortal is exactly the same as to conceive of it as an independent substance; and so there is nothing surprising in the fact that we are incapable of it. Dante's attitude seems in consequence to amount to this: Knowing, on the authority of Aristotle himself, that metaphysics has too limited a range to apprehend fully its loftiest objectives, he establishes in addition that on these same objectives theology sheds a light complementary to that shed by metaphysics. He therefore finds himself almost in the position of an Aristotle who, acquainted with the Christian Revelation, establishes the extent to which he has been justified in noting the inherent limitation imposed on our metaphysics by the sensible origin of our knowledge.

Hence the extreme reserve of which Dante gives proof each time he finds himself faced with one of these objectives whose nature so radically transcends our own: independent substances, primary matter, God.¹ It is these very things that constitute "the bread of the angels", for "angel" here means nothing else than "independent Intelligence", and the intellect of the metaphysician is that of a man compounded of body and soul who

¹ "Ondè e da sapere che di tutte quelle cose che lo 'ntelletto nostro vñcono, sì che non può vedere quello che sono, convenevolissimo trattare è per li loro effetti: onde di Dio, e delle sustanze separate, e de la prima materia, così trattando, potemo avere alcuna conoscenza" (*Convivio*, III, 8).

claims to understand the nature of independent intelligible objectives, created for independent intelligences. In fact, when we try to attain such objectives, our aim is too high for our shafts. The philosophers seek, for example, to discover the cause of the Firmament's revolution from east to west. They wonder whether this movement should be attributed to a motive Intelligence or to the love felt by this sphere for the Prime Mover. An excellent question, to be sure, but only God knows the answer to it: *Dio lo sa, che a me pare presuntuoso a giudicare* (II, 5). This conviction, deeply rooted in Dante's heart, that our philosophic wisdom has great shortcomings when it is pitted against pure intelligibles, explains how he was able to justify in his own eyes the destitution which his hierarchy of the sciences brought upon metaphysics and the primacy which it attributed to ethics. We shall, however, shortly see how dangerous it is to presume to systematize Dante's position merely on the basis of one of his principles, and how much more flexible, and also more complex, is the doctrinal equilibrium which he himself sought than those which are commonly ascribed to him by his historians.

V. PRIMACY OF CONTEMPLATION

When, after placing ethics above metaphysics in the hierarchy of the sciences, a thinker tackles the problem of the relation of action to contemplation, we naturally expect him to affirm the primacy of the active life over the contemplative life. Now Dante does exactly the opposite, whence his interpreters for the most part conclude that, in one or the other of the two cases, Dante does not really believe what he says. I think this is a mistake, the fatal mistake that all will commit who try to interpret Dante's thought by identifying it simply with one of the doctrinal positions taken up by other philosophers and already familiar to us. In fact, after what we have seen it is impossible to doubt that Dante did in truth place ethics at the summit of the hierarchy of the sciences; but we shall shortly see that he no less certainly affirmed the superiority of the contemplative life to the active life. To understand the meaning of his doctrine we must therefore find a position of which each of the two theses necessarily forms part, the one balancing and complementing

the other. We must above all make sure that this position was in fact his. That is perhaps not easy, but it is certainly the goal at which we must aim.

For reasons which we shall later have to elucidate, Dante chose to remain faithful, in this particular as in so many others, to the teaching of the authorities competent to speak on the matter. Here, in point of fact, they are all in agreement. Theology teaches us that the only perfect beatitude to which man should aspire is the vision of God face to face in eternity. This vision is by the nature of the term a form of contemplation. The ultimate triumph of the contemplative life over the active life is therefore certain, and this alone would be enough to establish the inferiority of action in comparison with contemplation. But that which faith ordains that we should believe is also in the teaching of philosophy. Aristotle explicitly says, in Book X of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*, that the highest felicity to which man may aspire is that which is sometimes experienced, even if only for brief moments, in the practice of the contemplative life.¹ Finally, Jesus Christ Himself teaches, in St. Luke's Gospel, that the better part has been chosen not by Martha, the symbol of the active life, but by Mary, the symbol of the contemplative life. Dante therefore concludes without hesitation: "In truth, we must know that we may obtain in this life two kinds of felicity, by following the two roads, one being good, the other excellent, which lead to them: one is the active life, the other the contemplative. Now although we obtain a good kind of felicity through the active life, as has been said,² the contemplative life leads us to a felicity and a beatitude that are excellent, as the Philosopher proves in the Tenth Book of the *Ethics*. And this is affirmed from the lips of Christ Himself, in Luke's Gospel, when He is speaking to Martha and answering her: 'Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: of a surety one thing is needful', that is to say, what thou doest. But He adds: 'Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her.' Now Mary (as is written before these words in the Gospel), seated at Christ's feet, showed no interest

¹ ARISTOTLE, *Eth. Nic.*, X, 7, 1177 a 12-18.

² Cf. DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 17: "E queste [vertudi] sono quelle che fanno l'uomo beato, o vero felice, ne la loro operazione, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel primo de l'Etica quando diffinisce la Felicitade, dicendo che: Felicitade è operazione secondo vertude in vita perfetta." Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Eth. Nic.*, I, 6, 1098 a 15-18.

in the service of the house, but listened only to the words of the Saviour. If we wish to explain this in the moral sense, Our Lord intended to show by it that, good though the active life is, the contemplative life is excellent. That is evident to any who will ponder well the words of the Gospel."¹ Nothing, it is clear, could be more in accordance with tradition than this conclusion.

It is true that we may wonder—and Dante himself raises the objection—how what he maintains here, in the Fourth Treatise of the *Banquet*, accords with what he has said earlier about the pre-eminence of the moral virtues. In other words, why, then, did he begin by promising as the aim and the fruit of wisdom that felicity which the active life offers? To which Dante replies without hesitation: "In all teaching it is necessary to take into account the capacity of the pupil, in order to lead him along the path that is easiest for him. Now the moral virtues appear to be, and indeed are, more prevalent, better known, more sought after than the others, and more useful from the outward point of view; it was therefore more advantageous and more convenient to follow this road rather than the other. All the same, one would come more surely to know bees by their fruit if one started from the honey than if one started from the wax, although each comes from them" (IV, 17). Thus Dante has thought first of the honest folk engaged in the active life whom the *Banquet* was to win over to philosophy. He has therefore suggested to them as an aim their beatitude, in other words the kind of felicity which may normally reward the kind of life they lead. Dante has no need to take back what he has said, for if Mary's part is better, Martha's is good; but, conversely, the fact that such people are lawfully engaged in the active life and are entitled to expect from it the special happiness that crowns it does not authorize them to believe that their part is the better. Who knows even whether they may aspire to the other? We shall see that there are reasons for doubting it.

Whatever the truth on this point, it is impossible to suppose that Dante does not here cleave with the utmost sincerity to the thesis which he propounds. Moreover, he returns to it later on with a wealth of detail that leaves no room for any doubt.

¹ DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 17. Cf. ST. LUKE, X, 38 seq. The passages from St. Thomas and the Fathers assembled at this point by G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli (*op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 219, note 3) are entirely appropriate and excellently chosen.

Nothing could be more conventional or more intelligible than this table, but the premises that justify it, if they are equally intelligible, are not always as conventional. It has doubtless been noticed how, in contrasting the ideal of the active life with that of the contemplative life, Dante has ranged on one side, as representing the former, the Epicureans, the Stoics and Aristotle, whereas the latter is represented solely by the Saviour, Who is God. If we remember what we have said of the limits imposed by Dante on metaphysics, we shall see everything beginning to grow clearer. There are indeed three kinds of beatitude: two belong to this life and the other to the future one. Of the two kinds of beatitude that belong to this life, however, only one is peculiar to it and capable of reaching its height in it. This is the beatitude of the active life. As to that of the contemplative life, it is present only as the beginning of a line of which the end is in the beyond. To put Aristotle, philosophy and the active life on one side, and the Saviour and the contemplative life on the other, is to indicate clearly enough that contemplative beatitude depends less on philosophy than on theology. The felicity of the active life is quasi-imperfect, that is to say it is perfect so far as we are concerned, because it is the felicity to which man may aspire in this life, merely through the natural resources of philosophy, but it appears imperfect if we compare it to other sorts which, though less accessible to us, are superior to it in themselves. The felicity of the contemplative life is on earth quasi-perfect, that is to say it is perfect in itself, since, like supreme felicity, it is a form of contemplation, but so far as we are concerned it is only quasi-perfect, because it lies in the contemplation of objects which, on earth, elude our grasp. As to the felicity of eternal life, it is perfect and superior, since it consists in the contemplation of its object finally encountered face to face.

Thus the intrinsic and essential superiority of the contemplative life is in no way disputed by Dante. On the contrary, he affirms it in so many words. Nor can it be doubted that Dante admits the possibility of a beginning of speculative beatitude in this life: quite the contrary, he has spoken often, and with enthusiasm, of the joys awaiting the reader of the *De consolatione philosophiae* of Boëthius, whose contemplative Platonism served his purpose admirably; or again the *Liber*

de causis,¹ and the *De Intellectu* of Albertus Magnus, a book crammed with examples of the neo-Platonic and Arabic influences, the philosophical doctrine of which is animated with the most intense religious feeling. But such contemplation never seemed to him to find its limit in itself. To him it was not the contemplation of a man, but rather that of an angel. The man who gives himself up to it, he says explicitly, is *di sì alta condizione, che quasi non sia altro che angelo . . . E questi cotali chiama Aristotile, nel settimo de l'Etica, divini*.² We may therefore rise above ethics, and we are already doing so if we rise to metaphysics, but we only do so if we rise above man. Thus, far from refuting the primacy of ethics, the transcendency of contemplation establishes it, for we do not regard ethics, for its part, as transcendent. When Dante writes *ogni virtù*, he is thinking first of the moral virtues referred to in the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*,³ because, he says in a dictum to which

¹ See in this connection B. NARDI, *Saggi di filosofia dantesca: V. Le citazioni dantesche del Liber de Causis*, Milan, Società anonima editrice Dante Alighieri, 1939-VIII, pp. 91-119; and M. BAUMGARTNER, *Dantes Stellung zur Philosophie*, pp. 64-67, with bibliographical indications, p. 64, note 3.

² DANTE, *Convivio*, III, 7. Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1, 1145 a 23-25. Aristotle does indeed refer in this passage to a virtue that is "above us" (1145 a 9), a "heroic and divine" virtue (1145 a 20), so that, through excess of this very virtue, those who possess it "change from men to gods" (1145 a 23).

³ The ethics of the *Convivio* are visibly inspired by the fundamental ideas of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*. In Aristotle's eyes, the objective of the city is to ensure the felicity of the citizens. This felicity, or sovereign good, is an absolutely ultimate aim (*Eth.*, I, 7, 1907 a 33); Dante was therefore only repeating Aristotle's dictum when he made happiness in this life an *ultimum*. Moreover, according to Aristotle, there are two classes of men, capable of pursuing a single aim in two different ways, *viz.* by means of moral virtue or intellectual virtue (*Eth.*, I, 13, 1103 a 3-10). In the sphere of action, the perfect moral virtue is Justice (*Eth.*, V, 1, 1129 b 31), because he who possesses it can exercise virtue not only towards himself, but towards his neighbour (1129 b 32-33). In this sense Justice is not a part of virtue: it is actually co-extensive with virtue (1130 a 9). The state of perfection to which the virtuous man of action rises is prudence (*φρόνησις*), that is to say practical wisdom, or, as Aristotle often says, *πολιτική* (*Eth.*, I, 1, 1094 a 27). In effect, prudence and *political* virtue are precisely the same virtue, viewed in the light of whether it governs religiously the practical activity of the individual or that of the city (*Eth.*, VI, 8, 1141 b 23-30). Above the felicity which is conferred on man by prudence and the practical wisdom resulting from it is the felicity of the contemplative life. We obtain it through the exercise of the intellect, which is our most divine attribute. This, says Aristotle, is where we find perfect happiness, *ἡ τελεία εὐδαιμονία* (*Eth.*, X, 7, 1177 a 17)—an expression which (as we have seen) Dante, in order to vindicate the claims of the beatific vision, watered down to *beatitudine quasi perfetta* (see above, p. 210). The happiness of the contemplative man is therefore different in kind from that of the statesman (*Eth.*, X, 7, 1177 b 14-15) and far exceeds it because it is the happiness of the divine element in man. In fact, it is a superhuman and literally divine form of happiness (1177 b 24-28). The happiness of the moral life, which is essentially a human form of life, will therefore be placed in the second rank (*Eth.*, X, 8, 1178 a 9-14). The philosophers, then, are versed in the rules that guide men to the two forms of human beatitude, but as men are a prey to their passions, the Legislator must force them through civil law to observe the moral laws (*Eth.*, X, 9, 1180 a 5-12). It is evident that what is here presented to us is the entire ideological framework of Dante's doctrine: affirmation

we are constantly obliged to return, "it should be known that the fruits by which above all we are known are the moral virtues, because in all respects they are within our reach" (IV, 17).

This fundamental point, on which Dante has displayed such firmness, was inevitably destined to become one of those on which the aptitude of certain of his commentators for "agreeing" him with St. Thomas would be exercised with special partiality. In spite of the passages which they accumulate in their notes, these interpreters are absolutely compelled to recognize that, so far as St. Thomas Aquinas is concerned, the intellectual virtues are no less the prerogative of man than are the moral virtues.¹ Now if Dante does not agree on this point with St. Thomas Aquinas he agrees entirely with Aristotle, and even with the interpretation of Aristotle offered by St. Thomas in his commentary on the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*. According to Aristotle, says St. Thomas, "both moral virtue and prudence are related to the compound: the virtues of the compound are the peculiarly human virtues in so far as man is compounded of a soul and a body. That is why life lived in accordance with these virtues is human, and this is what is called the active life. And consequently the felicity that consists in this life is human felicity. But speculative life and felicity, which are the prerogative of the intellect, are divine".²

Dante's attitude to this question is therefore identical with that of Aristotle, both as he is and as St. Thomas interprets him. But precisely because it is the attitude of Aristotle, and although he reproduces the identical terms, it is perhaps not quite that of St. Thomas. St. Thomas's commentary rests in effect on the hypothesis, which is certainly tenable and has even been maintained by many modern expositors, though it has not been proved, that Aristotle's "active intellect", although in a sense divine, and independent of the body in its activities, is a part of

of a temporal beatitude postulated as the final aim of man; distinction between the two forms of beatitude—active or political, contemplative or intellectual; superiority of the second; natural divinization of man through intellectual contemplation; invocation of the Chief of State in order to ensure, with the aid of the civil laws, respect for morality. One need only admit that Dante has taken the doctrine of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum* literally in order to explain the general position of the *Convivio* with regard to philosophy.

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Sum. theol.*, Pars Ia Ilae, qu. 58, art. 3, Resp. Cf. G. BUSNELLI and G. VANDELLI, *ed. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 206, note on p. 205.

² ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In X libros Ethic. Nic.*, lib. X, lect. 12, ed. Pirotta, No. 2115.

never inferred this consequence from it. In his eyes, to live as a man—τὸ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι—means in fact to practise the moral virtues in social life;¹ as to contemplative beatitude, not only is it inaccessible to man in a perfect form, but even if man partakes of it “he will live on such a plane not as man, but in so far as he has within him something divine. For such a life differs as much from that of the compound as its functioning differs from that of the other virtues. If, therefore, the intellect is something divine when related to man, life lived under the sway of the intellect is a divine form of life when related to human life”.² Such is the authentic thought of Aristotle, and it is very difficult to read into it, with St. Thomas, that pure intellectual knowledge is *maxime propria homini* (“above all things the property of man”).

To place Dante in his proper relationship to St. Thomas one need only compare what he says with what the Angelic Doctor had written, in the *Summa theologica*, about the classification of the various forms of beatitude: “The ultimate and perfect [*perfecta*; Dante says *somma*] beatitude anticipated in the future life consists entirely in contemplation as in its principle; as to imperfect beatitude [Dante says *perfecta quasi*], in the form in which it may be enjoyed on earth, it consists, in truth, primarily and principally in contemplation, but secondarily in the activity of the practical intellect as a regulator of actions and passions, as is stated in Book X of the *Ethics*, Chapters 7 and 8.”³ The stamp of Aristotle is here impressed on the most authentically Thomistic of creeds, just as, in the *Banquet*, it is impressed on the creed of Dante, which is not exactly that of either Aristotle or St. Thomas Aquinas.

With St. Thomas, and like the good Christian that he is, Dante admits a third scale in which the different forms of beatitude are considered according to their absolute hierarchical order, with the beatitude of the active life at the foot, that of the contemplative life in this world above, and that of the beatific vision at the top. On the other hand, and this time in opposition to St. Thomas, Dante maintains with the authentic Aristotle, whose text served his ends far better than did the Thomistic commentary,

¹ ARISTOTLE, *Eth. Nic.*, X, 8, 1178 b 5-7.

² ARISTOTLE, *Eth. Nic.*, X, 7, 1177 b 26-31.

³ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Sum. theol.*, Pars Ia IIae, qu. 3, art. 5, Resp.

that the only one of these three forms of beatitude that is strictly the prerogative of man *qua* man is also the lowest of all—namely that of the active life of the human compound, activity that accords with virtue. The reason for this return on Dante's part to the real Aristotle is not, however, that he has accepted the Averroistic interpretation which makes the active intellect a single and independent substance. Like St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante is convinced that, according to Aristotle and in fact, every human being possesses his own personal active intellect, which is a part of his soul and similarly immortal;¹ but he also thinks that, without the help of Christian Revelation, the speculative intellect attains its special end only very imperfectly, whereas our practical intellect has no need of Revelation in order to attain its end. It may therefore be said that, in Dante as in Aristotle, what goes beyond the plane of the moral order also goes beyond the plane of the human order to reach that of the divine order; but, in Aristotle, the divine order which transcends the moral order is that of contemplation, because the intellect that actually contemplates does not belong to man *qua* man, and anything that contemplates, in so far as it contemplates, is a god; in Dante, on the contrary, the intellect of the contemplative man is indeed his intellect, but it is an intellect too feeble to attain its object without the divine light of a Revelation that transcends it. That is why, in Dante as in Aristotle, the contemplative life is less human than divine, but for a reason quite different from that which forms the basis of Aristotle's thesis. What "super-humanizes" the contemplative life in Dante is not the fact that the intellect which guides it is not our own; it is the fact that, even for the very precarious success that it may hope for in this life, our speculative intellect requires a divine Revelation, so that in the long run the success of this intellect, which is wholly ours, is not itself wholly ours. On the other hand, intrinsically inferior though it is to that of metaphysical contemplation, faith and the beatific vision, or rather by very reason of its inferiority, the practical department of the moral life enjoys complete self-sufficiency, since it consists in pursuing, by those purely natural and human means which are the moral virtues, that purely natural and human end which is happiness in this life

¹ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Tract. de Unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, ed. L. W. Keeler, Rome, 1936, cap. I, 15, pp. 11-12; and DANTE, *Purg.*, XXV, 62-66.

in a society regulated by the most human of the virtues—justice.¹

We are now coming to what was undoubtedly the most personal of Dante's thoughts—I would gladly say "the most secret" if this term did not suggest that he wished to conceal the thing which, on the contrary, he never ceases to tell us, but which we do not always desire to hear because this thought makes him unclassifiable and, as historians, we all have a desire to classify him. Dante has, however, expressed it in a passage from the *Banquet* which leaves no room for doubt, because the thesis is there presented in what is at once its extreme and its purest form, based on the very principle which we have just assigned to it: the natural incompleteness of a knowledge of the intelligible possessed by an intellect whose human character compels it to feed on sensible notions.

After postulating the existence of the Empyrean as required and taught by faith, Dante tackles the problem of the pure Intelligences, which the people call the angels—*le quali la volgare gente chiamano angeli*—but which Plato called Ideas, and which the heathen worshipped under the names of Vulcan, Juno, Pallas and Ceres, as if they were so many gods or goddesses. Dante undertakes to prove that their number far exceeds anything that we can imagine. Indeed, we only know of their existence by the effects which they produce. Now the only Intelligences that produce effects perceptible by our senses are those charged with governing the world, that is to say pure Intelligences engaged in the active life; but since even men may lead two distinct lives and thereby attain two distinct forms of beatitude—active and contemplative—it is quite certain that in addition to the active Intelligences of whose existence we know by their effects, there are contemplative Intelligences whose existence escapes our notice because they exercise no influence here below. That is an obvious fact which no one doubts, be he a philosopher, heathen, Jew, Christian or an adherent of any religion whatever. The number of these pure Intelligences is therefore incalculable.

Thus the whole of Dante's proof rests on the principle that an active pure Intelligence cannot at the same time be contemplative

¹ DANTE, *Convivio*, I, 12: "E quanto ella è più propria, tanto ancora è più amabile; onde, avvegna che ciascuna virtù sia amabile ne l'uomo, quella è più amabile in esso che è più umana, è questa è la giustizia, la quale è solamente ne la parte razionale o vero intellettuale, cioè ne la volontade."

—otherwise there would be no guarantee that in addition to those which act, and of which we may know by their effects, there are others which contemplate and which, because they do not act, escape our observation. This is indeed what Dante explicitly affirms when he bases his thesis on the absolute principle that one cannot enjoy two distinct forms of beatitude at once: *come quella [Intelligenza] che ha la beatitudine del governare non possa l'altra avere*; whence it follows that, while certain Intelligences govern the world, there must be others, *fuori di questo ministerio, che solamente vivano speculando* (II, 4).

Everything, then, accords with the supposition that, as soon as he came to the Empyrean, Dante enforced in the world of the Angels a distinction between contemplation and action, in other words between theology and the Empire. He who contemplates does not govern, he who governs does not contemplate. To each his beatitude. Now—let us note—the whole of this proof is an *a fortiori* argument, based on the supposition that what is already true of man must be even truer of the Angels. It is because, on earth, “humanity enjoys not merely one form of beatitude, but two, namely that of civil life and that of the contemplative life”,¹ that it would be contrary to reason to think anything else of the Angels. Thus the two forms of beatitude are not merely distinct, they are mutually exclusive. Nowhere is the Dantesque breach of the classic relationship between the hierarchies of dignity and the hierarchies of authority more apparent than here, for Dante clearly affirms that the contemplative Intelligences are more divine and more beloved of God than the active Intelligences, but precisely because they are higher, they do not govern. Thus, and as an immediate consequence, the active Intelligences are not subject in their action to Intelligences whose contemplative beatitude, like that of the unblemished dove Theology, is too pure to condescend to disturb its repose by stooping to govern. It is typical of Dante to base the autonomy of an inferior order on its very inferiority in this way, and I would say that we shall encounter the same principle at work again when the question arises of assuring the independence of the Empire in relation to the Church, if this were not

¹ “Onde, con ciò sia cosa ch'è quella che e qui l'umana natura non pur una beatitudine abbia, ma due, sì come è quella della vita civile, e quella de la contemplativa . . .” (DANTE, *Convivio*, II, 4).

precisely the function that it had just discharged here before our eyes. In contrast to that of St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante's universe is of such a kind that the hierarchy of dignities never gives rise to any jurisdictional hierarchy within it, but rather to their mutual independence.

Dante has elaborated this cardinal point of his whole doctrine with such thoroughness that he has clearly discerned the most formidable objection by which its balance is threatened. It is, in fact, not enough, in order to make man seek and find happiness in the practice of the moral and political virtues, to say that the characteristically human beatitude is not that of the contemplative life. For after all, Aristotle has indeed taught that man finds his beatitude on earth in wisdom. Now, how can wisdom make man happy, if he is obliged to content himself with the active life precisely because he knows that knowledge in its loftiest form eludes his grasp? A practical felicity of this kind would strongly resemble a last resort—not so much beatitude as resignation. Dante has found an answer to the objection: “One may reply clearly to this by saying that in everything natural desire is proportioned to the capacity of the thing that desires; otherwise this desire would be divided against itself, which is impossible, and Nature would have created it in vain, which is equally impossible. It would be divided against itself since, desiring its perfection, it would desire its imperfection, in this respect at least, that it would desire to desire always without ever satisfying its desire. . . . And Nature would have created it in vain, since it would not be directed towards any goal. Therefore human desire is proportioned in this life to the knowledge which it is possible to acquire on earth and it only extends beyond that point in consequence of an error which is foreign to Nature's intention. . . . That is why, since it is naturally impossible for us to know the essential nature of God or of other such things, we naturally do not desire to know it. And this is the answer to the objection” (III, 15. Cf. IV, 13).

As may be seen, Dante dismisses the problem, so much debated to-day, of the “natural desire for God” in a manner as radical as it is unexpected. But let us not ascribe to him any such ambitious theological designs. Dante has simply been caught in an impasse from which it is absolutely essential for him to escape, and he escapes from it by the shortest route. The personal idea

to which he desires to bring us back is that very one which animates the whole of the *Convivio*: philosophic reason suffices to give us the almost perfect beatitude to which our human nature is susceptible. Dante knows that it is not the supreme beatitude, but it is ours; it is therefore also that with which he occupies himself in this work. And so, following the logical line of his argument, which was to celebrate philosophy in the image of the merciful *donna gentile*, he began by placing ethics at the highest point of the scale of wisdom; but as soon as he remembered the superiority of contemplation to action, Dante felt that if man is to find complete happiness in the active life he must be delivered from the misfortune which the desire for a knowledge and a contemplative beatitude situated beyond his grasp would entail for him. He therefore simply and solely laid down that man should not desire to know on earth what he is in fact incapable of knowing there. Once cut off from every unrealizable contemplative ambition, man no longer desires to know anything save what he can know and, without any lurking thought, can enjoy the beatitude of action. So he is satisfied, and what is the satisfaction of every desire if not beatitude? The *donna gentile* whom God Himself has charged with ensuring our temporal happiness is therefore equal to her task, which it was required to prove.

VI. THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE EMPEROR

In the Fourth Treatise of the *Banquet*, Dante approaches the supremely delicate problem of the origin, nature and extent of the Imperial authority. The problem that he here engages to discuss is therefore, in fact, the very one to which his *Monarchy* will be devoted. However, he does not yet approach it for its own sake, nor does he do so directly. The starting-point of his discussion is in fact the problem of nobility and of its true definition; but it happens that the Emperor Frederick II of Swabia, questioned as to the nature of nobility (*nobilitate* or *gentilezza*), has not been afraid to dismiss the question with the reply that nobility resides in the long standing of prosperity and in fine manners: *antica ricchezza e belli costumi* (IV, 3). At first sight this definition is wholly innocuous; but Dante thinks

otherwise, first of all because to the majority of men nobility is even less: for them wealth is enough without manners—and Aristotle teaches that the opinion of the greatest number cannot be entirely wrong; then because we here find ourselves faced with this extraordinary phenomenon: an Emperor who arrogates to himself the authority of the philosopher. It is this second point especially that is serious, for the Emperor is a very high authority, but is he so in the matter of philosophy? That is the question.

In order to elucidate it we must delve to the root of the Imperial authority. Man is an animal which lives in society, because his nature is such that, if he lived in isolation, he could not meet his needs or attain his complete development. The aim of political society is therefore to ensure the happiness of men. Unfortunately, the human soul is such that it does not know how to limit its desires. The man who possesses a certain amount of land is eager to have more—hence the spreading of war and strife from kingdom to kingdom, the seeds of disturbances in cities, then in villages, later in families and finally among individuals, whose happiness is thereby compromised. Accordingly, in order that this cause of disturbance may be eliminated, it is necessary that there should be a single monarch, in other words that one prince, one authority, should reign over the whole earth. Since he possesses everything, this universal monarch can desire nothing more; he will therefore be able to keep kings within the frontiers of their kingdoms, in other words to ensure peace between states, concord in towns, love in the bosom of families and that satisfaction of his needs which confers on man the happiness for which he has been born. In fact, wherever there is a head, there is order; in a word, the command of the Empire is the highest of all commands; the Emperor is he who commands all those who command, prescribes their laws and, being obeyed by all, confers on all other sovereignties vigour and authority (IV, 4). Let the Emperor be elected in accordance with the counsel of God, as God Himself once elected the people of Rome to that office, and it will be clear to all that God is the ultimate root of the Imperial authority. But who possesses the philosophic authority? And what is its root?

The word "authority", says Dante, signifies "act of an author", and the word "author" itself comes from the Greek root *aútentin*,

which means "act of faith and obedience";¹ therefore Aristotle, whose words are so worthy of faith and obedience, is a man whose words possess a very high, a supreme authority. There follows the proof, which, to be sure, adds nothing to our knowledge of the Middle Ages, though its tone and gradations do not fail to provide some interest. In the first place, the actual terms of the thesis to be proved give forth an unwonted sound: *che Aristotile sia dignissimo di fede e d'obediensa*. That Aristotle was among philosophers the worthiest of faith very few in the Middle Ages would have disputed, but that we owe him obedience is an arbitrary rule far more rarely formulated. To tell the truth, if there are other instances of it before Dante, I have not come across them. Dante does not hesitate on this point: All human activities have one aim, consisting in human life, to which man is destined in so far as he is man; if there is a master and an expert capable of knowing and demonstrating what appertains to this aim, he is eminently entitled to our faith and our obedience. Now this master is Aristotle—*questi è Aristotile: dunque esso è dignissimo di fede e d'obediensa*. Dante's intention is therefore clear: Aristotle is a master who, by virtue of his learning, is a guide: *Aristotile è maestro e duca de la ragione umana, in quanto intende a la sua finale operazione*. Most certainly, there were other philosophers, e.g. Zeno, Cato, Epicurus, Socrates, Plato, Speusippus; but by reason "of the superior and almost divine genius that nature had implanted in Aristotle" it was he who brought ethics to its perfection: *la perfezione di questa moralitate per Aristotile terminata fue*. So we see that his disciples, the Peripatetics, to-day dominate the world of learning: *tiene questa gente oggi lo reggimento del mondo in dottrina per tutte parti, e puotesi appellare quasi cattolica opinione*. From this it may be seen that Aristotle is the guide and leader of the human race towards its human goal.²

From such expressions it is easy to perceive the nature of

¹ Cf. ". . . auctor, quando ἀδελφύνην significat, commune est . . ." (PRISCIAN, *Institutionum Grammaticarum*, lib. XVIII, lib. V, 20; ed. M. Hertz, Leipzig, Teubner, 1855, Vol. I, p. 154). This etymology is also found in various grammarians, e.g. Pierre Hélie (twelfth century), in the *Doctrinale* of Alexandre de Villedieu and in the *Grecismus* of Evrard de Béthune (thirteenth century). See on this point C. THUROT, *Notices et extraits de divers manuscrits latins pour servir à l'histoire grammaticale du moyen âge*, Paris, 1868, p. 103, note 2. Cf. G. BUSNELLI and G. VANDELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 59, note 2.

² *Convivio*, IV, 6. Cf. "lo maestro de l'umana ragione . . .", IV, 2; "lo maestro de la nostra vita, Aristotile . . .", IV, 23.

Dante's Aristotle: the moralist who holds in the philosophical order the same rank as does the Emperor in the political order. The one, like the other, is alone in his rank. He is a monarch obeyed by numerous princes, and reigns with no superior over a clearly defined section of the human order. This is the very precise sense in which the great shade that holds sway in Limbo is entitled to the homage of all, even of Socrates and Plato, who are merely closer to him than the rest:

Vidi il maestro di color che sanno
seder tra filosofica famiglia.
Tutti lo miran; tutti onor gli fanno.
(*Inf.*, IV, 131-133.)

It is therefore not enough to say: To Dante, as to almost all the thinkers of his time, Aristotle is the highest philosophical authority: it is necessary, with him, to regard that authority as a right to the exercise of a command. God and nature have subjected ethics to Aristotle as they have the Empire to the Emperor.¹ The authority of this supreme philosopher is *piena di tutto vigore*, so much so that before reconciling the authority of the Emperor with that of the Pope, it is necessary to reconcile the authority of the Emperor with that of Aristotle. Happily, this is easy, for these two authorities stand in need of each other. Without the authority of the Philosopher that of the Emperor is in danger of aberration; without the authority of the Emperor that of the Philosopher is almost powerless. And let us take careful note of this "almost", for Dante is so afraid of letting it be thought that the powerlessness from which in fact philosophy was at the time suffering derogates in any way from the perfect autonomy of Aristotle's Empire that he immediately comments: *E' quasi debile, non per se, ma per la disordinanza de la gente*. Consequently, far from opposing each other, the authority of Aristotle and that of the Emperor should unite. Moreover, what do we

¹ Dante seems convinced that in many cases it would be possible to reduce the apparently divergent opinions of the philosophers to a certain unity, but as this unity would be obtained by making them coincide with the doctrine of Aristotle, the simplest course is to adopt the latter straight away. Thus, as a means to determine the origin of the hierarchy of souls we have at our disposal the various opinions of Pythagoras, Plato, Algazel and Avicenna, "and if each of them were there to defend his opinion, it would perhaps be seen that the truth is present in them all; but as, at first sight, they seem to diverge slightly from the truth, we must conform not to these opinions, but to that of Aristotle and the Peripatetics" (*Convivio*, IV, 21).

read in the *Book of Wisdom*? "Love the light of Wisdom, all ye who hold sway over the peoples" (*Wisdom*, VI, 23)—in other words, let the philosophical authority unite with the Imperial. Unhappy are the kings of this age, and unhappier still their subjects, when, for the government of their peoples, princes do not draw their inspiration from Aristotle either by studying his works or by following his counsel! And here is the motif: I say unto you, King Charles and King Frederick, and unto you other tyrants and princes, *meglio sarebbe a voi come rondinè volare basso, che come nibbio altissime rote fare sopra le cose vilissime*.¹

Let us now picture what could and should have been Dante's attitude towards an Aristotle whom he himself had dressed in this supreme authority. Unless he openly contradicted himself, Dante was debarred from according himself the right to dispute a single one of Aristotle's theses in the field of philosophy, any more than to dispute a single one of the Emperor's laws in the field of politics. This, moreover, is what he himself suggests again and again when he protests at one and the same time, in the same sentence, his obedience to the Philosopher and to the Emperor: *Per che io volendo, con tutta reverenza e a lo Principe e al Filosofo portando . . . ; nè contra l'imperiale maiestade nè contra lo Filosofo si ragiona inreverentemente. . . . E prima mostrerò me non presummere contra l'autorità del Filosofo; poi mostrerò me non presummere contra la maiestade imperiale*.² From this we see first of what assistance the great poets—those visionaries of reality—may be to history. We said without hesitation that the Middle Ages are personified by the Pope and the Emperor; prompted by Dante, let us say henceforth "by the Pope, the Emperor and Aristotle". But that is not all, for this tripartite division of mediaeval reality suggests a conclusion whose importance will soon become quite evident—namely, that these three Monarchs represent three principles of authority whose independence is complete in the particular sphere in which each is supreme. To confine ourselves to the case under discussion, it is clear that if a philosopher is not entitled as such to exercise any authority in the political field,

¹ ". . . it were better for you to fly low like the swallows than, like the kite, to wheel in the sky above what is most vile" (DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 6).

² "That is why I wish, in all reverence towards both the Prince and the Philosopher . . . ; men do not talk disrespectfully about either the majesty of the Emperor or Philosophy. . . . And first I shall show that I do not defy the authority of the Philosopher, then I shall show that I do not defy the majesty of the Emperor" (DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 8).

the Emperor is not entitled as such to exercise any philosophical authority. The authority of the Emperor affects everything that ensures the perfection of human life; it therefore extends to every branch of our *voluntary activities*; it governs them through the law and controls them so completely that it may be said of him that he is "the rider of the human will";¹ but this authority cannot go outside its own sphere in order to govern philosophy, by which it should, on the contrary, govern its own policy. On that point Dante is as firm as may be desired: *Per tanto oltre quanto le nostre operazioni si stendono, tanto la maiestade imperiale ha giurisdizione, e fuori di quelli termini non si sciampia*.² All those activities which, because they depend on the human will, may be good or bad, just or unjust, and which are defined and prescribed by the written law, are therefore subject to the authority of the Emperor; it is he who determines that formulated reason which is the law and ensures respect for it, but he has no say outside the clearly defined sphere within which his jurisdiction is exercised: *A questa [ragione scritta] scrivere, mostrare e comandare, è questo ufficiale posto di cui si parla, cioè lo Imperadore, al quale tanto quanto le nostre operazioni proprie . . . si stendono, siamo subietti; e più oltre no*.³

It follows, then, from the passages that have just been analysed (1) that the *Convivio* does not propound the problem of the relationship between Pope and Emperor; (2) that it propounds, in a general way, the problem of the justification of *authority*; (3) that the forms of authority whose justification it examines are two in number: Aristotle's and the Emperor's; (4) that the justification of the Imperial authority is in God, Whose boundless wisdom has entrusted the Empire to the Roman Emperor; (5) that the justification of Aristotle's authority comes from the fact, recognized by all scholars, that he is the only person to have indicated the true goal of human life, which the other sages have sought in vain; (6) that each of these two forms of authority is unique and sovereign in its own sphere: Aristotle's in Philosophy, the Emperor's in the political life of the peoples; (7) that

¹ DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 9.

² "As far as our activities extend, thus far extends the jurisdiction of the Emperor's majesty, and it does not extend beyond these limits."

³ "It is with a view to the formulation of this written law, its promulgation and its enactment that this dignitary of whom I speak is installed—namely the Emperor, to whom, as far as our individual activities extend . . . , we are subject; but farther than that we are not" (DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 9).

neither of these forms of authority is competent outside its own sphere; (8) that nevertheless, far from obstructing each other, they need each other, Philosophy needing the Empire in order that it may modify manners effectively, the Empire needing Philosophy in order that it may know how to modify manners in accordance with truth and justice.

If this summary is accurate, it cannot be said that the *Convivio* has examined for their own sake the relations of Church and Empire, but it should be said that it has determined in advance the doctrine which the *De Monarchia* was to expound on this subject. Unless he repudiated his own principles, Dante now was no longer free to say anything but what he was going to say, so much so that we may regard it as practically certain that the author of the *Banquet* already believed what the author of the *De Monarchia* was to write. Indeed, if we arrange the elements which constitute the thesis of the *Banquet*, the thesis of the *De Monarchia* seems to occupy automatically the empty place whose outline the dialectic of the *Banquet* has already traced. There are two authorities, Aristotle and the Emperor, radically distinct in their functions, radically independent but closely associated for the purpose of leading the peoples to the natural goal of man. Nowhere does the *Convivio* say or suggest that either of these two authorities is not fully independent in its own sphere. On the contrary, everything in it excludes such a hypothesis. The reason owes fidelity and obedience to Aristotle only in Philosophy, but, in this sphere, in which he is supreme, it owes them only to him—the *sommo Filosofo*. The will owes fidelity and obedience to the Emperor only in the political sphere, but, in this sphere, the Emperor—that “rider of the human will”—is totally independent.¹ Above each, in his respective sphere, there is only God, the supreme Emperor, Whose daughter is Philosophy, directly subject to His power, as the Pope and the Emperor are subject to it, sovereign though each and all are in their own province.²

Thus, there is nothing which authorizes us to suppose that the author of the *Banquet* thought for a single moment of subordinating the Philosopher and the Emperor to another ruler who,

¹ “Sì che quasi dire si può de lo Imperadore, volendo lo suo officio figurare con una imagine, che elli sia lo cavalcatore de la umana volontade” (DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 9).

² With regard to the theory of the Empire in *Convivio*, IV, consult F. ERCOLE, *Il pensiero politico di Dante*, Vol. II, pp. 303-310.

deriving his authority from God, would control and restrict their own. On the contrary, in that work Dante strongly insists on this fact, that God, Who has imposed a limit on His own power, has imposed on the human will the limit which the Emperor prescribes to it: Sì come ciascuna arte e officio umano da lo imperiale è a certi termini limitato, così questo da Dio a certo termine è finito. As to this authority which God has relinquished to the Emperor's advantage, how can we suppose that He wishes to regain possession of it through the agency of the Pope? Since God, Who has subjected the realm of nature to laws, has chosen, by inserting within it the realm of the human will, to subject that will to the Emperor, He has certainly not meant that it should afterwards be taken over by someone else, even in His name: *Dunque la giurisdizione de la natura universale è a certo termine finita, e per conseguente la particolare; e anche di costei è limitatore Colui che da nullo è limitato, cioè la prima bontade, che è Dio, che solo con la infinita capacitate infinito comprende.*¹

If we ask ourselves how far the immediate jurisdiction of the Pope extends in this composition, the positive elements are lacking for the formulation of a confident reply. All that we know amounts to this: *Quello che è di Dio sia renduto a Dio.*² Yet although Dante does not explicitly fix the bounds of the Pontifical authority,

¹ “Just as every art and every human function is seen to be restricted within fixed limits by those of the Emperor, so those of the Emperor are restricted by God within a fixed limit. . . . Therefore the jurisdiction of universal nature is restricted within a fixed limit, and in consequence this particular jurisdiction is likewise so restricted; and it too is restricted by Him Who knows no restriction, namely the first Goodness, which is God, Who alone understands the infinite through His infinite comprehension” (DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 9). The Emperor therefore has no authority over theology, the sciences or handicrafts, for although it depends on our will whether we apply ourselves to them or not, their actual make-up is independent of our will. We cannot make bodies rise naturally in defiance of the force of gravity, nor can we make a syllogism whose premises are false yield a true conclusion. On the contrary, it depends on us “whether we help others or harm them, whether we stand fast or shun combat, whether we are chaste or lewd, and all these activities are subject to our will; it is therefore they which determine whether we are called good or culpable, because they are peculiarly and wholly ours, since the potential range of our will constitutes the range of our activities. Now, as in all these voluntary activities there is a certain equity to be preserved and a certain iniquity to be shunned, and as that equity may be lost for two reasons, either because we do not know in what it consists, or because we do not wish to conform to it, man has invented the written Law (*ragione scritta*), with the object both of promulgating it and of compelling its observance” (DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 9). No mention is here made of the possible rôle of grace, because grace comes to the aid of ethics in order to promote supernatural felicity, and for no other reason. The written law, formulated, promulgated and enforced by the Emperor, comes to the aid of ethics in order to promote the natural felicity of the political animal that is man, and for no other reason.

² “Let what is God's be rendered unto God” (DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 9). Cf. *Matt.*, XXII, 21.

we know that there are two domains to which it does not extend. And we know it with complete certainty, because the supreme authority in these domains has already been entrusted by God to others than the Sovereign Pontiff. I refer to the domain of natural reason, which He has subjected to Aristotle, and to that of the human will, which He has subjected to the Emperor. Now taken together, Philosophy and the Empire govern the entirety of human life in the realm of nature, and against them there is no appeal. Within this sphere nothing evades their suzerainty, since Aristotle shows men what is their natural aim, while the Emperor subjects their wills to it. Once the principles which the *Banquet* propounds have been admitted, there remains no element of the natural life of man over which the Pope can claim any authority. After writing this work, Dante could no longer help confining the authority of the Pope within the realm of the supernatural life or declaring it invalid. Not for a single moment did he envisage the second reply; it is hard to see how he can have written the *Trattato Quarto* of the *Banquet* without thinking of the first one, for all that he there says makes this reply inevitable and seems to be elicited by it as by one of those final causes which operate without revealing themselves.

It is commonly admitted that the *Banquet* was drafted between 1300 and 1308. The four Treatises to which it is limited represent only a little more than a quarter of the work which Dante had conceived, since he intended to speak of justice in the Fourteenth Treatise, which was to be the last but one of his book. We therefore cannot know if he proposed to speak of the spiritual power in one of the subsequent books, and it is even dangerous to attempt to expound a "philosophy of Dante" on the evidence of a work that is so far from being complete. At least it may be said with certainty that it supposes a clearly defined idea of the nature of philosophical knowledge in general. Wisdom is presented throughout as a possession of natural man using his natural resources, and the whole treatise seems to turn upon the following fundamental ideas: The natural aim of man is the happiness which he can secure on earth through the exercise of the moral and political virtues as defined by Aristotle in the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*. Therefore, if it is a question of knowing what these virtues are and how man must live in order to be happy, it is Aristotle who possesses the supreme authority to

decide. But men's wickedness is such that they will not live in accordance with virtue unless they are obliged to do so. If it is a question of knowing what laws must govern the peoples in order that ethics may command their respect, and who has the authority necessary to impose on all human wills a respect for justice, it is to the Emperor that we should turn. As to metaphysics, although it may give us a foretaste of contemplative beatitude, it cannot fully achieve its end in this life. Although higher and more perfect in itself, the felicity that it gives is less complete. Only theology can finally lead us to perfect contemplative beatitude, but it cannot do so in this life. This is also the reason why, holding as it already does undivided sway in the Empyrean of souls, the truth of this science is not of this world. Only in the next will it lead us to that vision of God face to face of which it is the instrument.

VII. THE SPIRIT OF THE BANQUET

The general position taken up by Dante in the *Banquet* is therefore composed of multiple elements, all of them traditional, though he has modified and improved them with the object of balancing them in a manner that is his alone.

That is why all efforts to classify his doctrine by identifying it with any one of the attitudes already known to and described by historians was destined inevitably to end in failure. Scholars have referred to the "rationalism" of Dante in the *Banquet*, but, as Signor Michele Barbi has justly pointed out, this is a label whose exact signification can never be known.¹ Thus, reference is made to the "Christian rationalism" of St. Anselm, but it is equally easy to demonstrate that, if his rationalism is Christian, it is not a form of rationalism, or that, if it really is a form of rationalism, it cannot be Christian. It has also been said that Dante, reversing the Anselmian formula *credo ut intelligam* ("I believe that I may understand"), had replaced it with *intelligo ut credam* ("I understand that I may believe").² We should thus have an Anselmian Beatrice and a rationalist *donna gentile*. This

¹ M. BARBI, *Razionalismo e misticismo in Dante*, pp. 20-21.

² *Vita Nuova*, with a commentary by T. Casini; 3rd ed., revised by L. Pietrobono, pp. 149-150.

is a picturesque contrast; but is it a historical fact? Not only—and none disputes the fact—has Dante never referred to a formula *intelligo ut credam*, but he has definitely affirmed that, if he believes, he does so precisely where he does not quite succeed in understanding. It is not because he perceives the immortality of the soul perfectly clearly that he believes in it; he believes in it, on the contrary, because he does not perceive it perfectly clearly. Let us, for example, refer to the famous passage in the *Banquet*, Treatise IV, 21, where Dante confronts himself with the intricate problem of the origin of the soul—a problem to which St. Augustine, who never ceased to ponder it all his life, finally confessed that he did not know the solution: *Nec tunc sciebam, nec adhuc scio*. (“I did not know then, nor do I know even yet”).¹ What does Dante think? He too thinks that he knows nothing. That is precisely the reason why we find him announcing that he will first proceed *per modo naturale, e poi per modo teologico, cioè divino e spirituale*. Taking the first point of view, that of natural knowledge, we discover a variety of opinions regarding the origin of the soul; probably they are reconcilable; but why give oneself the trouble of reconciling them, since we have only to follow Aristotle? So here we have him following Aristotle, that is to say what he takes to be Aristotle’s doctrine, after which he observes: “Let no man be astonished if the manner in which I speak seems hard to understand; for I myself think it astonishing that one should be able to see and to infer the existence of a creation of this kind through the intellect . . .”² Whereupon, passing a little farther along the theological road, Dante confines himself strictly to considerations of a supernatural order, none of which, whether viewed closely or from a distance, could be justified by the resources of reason. Dante’s attitude in the *Banquet* is therefore not a form of rationalism which, supposing

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE, *Retractationes*, lib. I, cap. 1, no. 3; Pat. lat., Vol. 32, col. 687.

² DANTE, *Convivio*, IV, 21. There is in Dante’s eyes a twofold difficulty: that of speaking of these things in the vulgar tongue, and that of speaking of a subject which is so difficult in itself. The only thing in this passage that we are bearing in mind at this point is the observation regarding the inadequacy of philosophy in such a matter, a sentiment that is so well expressed by its conclusion: “E quasi questo è tutto ciò che per via naturale dicere si puote.” With regard to the problem, which does not arise directly from our study, of whether Dante faithfully follows St. Thomas (*Cont. Gent.*, II, 89) on the question of the infusion of the soul, or whether he rather draws his inspiration from another doctrine, the reader should refer to the commentary of Busnelli and Vandelli, in their edition of the *Convivio*, *ad loc.*, and the objections of Bruno Nardi in *Note critiche di filosofia dantesca*, Florence, L. S. Olschki, 1938—XVI, pp. 15—28.

More than this, Dante does not like to contradict Aristotle in the matter of philosophy and I know of no instance in which he has done so with full knowledge of the case, but he has no scruples at all about contradicting him in the matter of astronomy, because if Aristotle is the Philosopher, the Astronomer is Ptolemy. Moreover, that is what Aristotle himself did, for he recognized, in Book XII of his *Metaphysics*, "that he had simply followed the opinion of another where he had had to speak of astronomy" (II, 3). If, on the contrary, it is a question of the number of the independent Intelligences, philosophers and theologians are not in agreement, but it is certainly the theologians who are right, because in these matters the philosophers are no more than partially competent. The Ancients erred on this point, with which natural reason declares itself incapable of dealing, *per difetto d'ammaestramento*—for want of instruction by the proper authority. The Jewish people were better informed in the matter. Because Angels were involved, and because on that subject their Prophets were capable of enlightening them at least in part, Israel was *in parte da li suoi profeti ammaestrato*. As for us, as Christians we are in this matter the pupils of Christ, sons of the Emperor of the world, Who is God: *Noi semo di cid ammaestrati da colui che venne da quello, da colui che le fece, da colui che le conserva, cioè de lo Imperadore de l'Universo, che è Cristo* (II, 5). He Who created the Angels and preserves them probably knows how many of them there are. Now it is He Who instructs us as to their number; consequently, we are completely enlightened on this subject.

This constant need of an ammaestramento received each time from the most competent authority is one of the most characteristic traits of Dante's thought. It is this same trait which will later imbue him with the desire to provide himself with guides and will advise him in the remarkably judicious choice of them that he will make: Virgil as far as the Earthly Paradise, then Beatrice, finally St. Bernard of Clairvaux. For each separate order, a separate competency; for each separate competency, a separate authority. In Limbo the philosophers spontaneously group themselves around Aristotle even as the poets do honour to Virgil; St. Thomas Aquinas presides over speculative theology as St. Bonaventure does over affective theology, each in his turn speaking as a master where he really is the master and exercising

authority where he really has authority. And where, it will be said, are those who wish to exercise it where they do not have it? They are in Hell. And it may indeed be said that they alone have put themselves there by their violation of the holy law of divine Justice which is not only the supreme creator of the constitutive orders of nature and supernature, but also the inexorable protector of the authorities which it has wisely placed at their head. There is no greater crime than to betray the divine order, and it is betraying it to refuse to follow Aristotle in the matter of philosophy, because philosophy is the daughter of God and it was God Himself Who desired that it should be taught to us by Aristotle. But it is no less a crime for a Franciscan to betray St. Francis, for a Dominican to betray St. Dominic, for a subject to betray the Emperor, for a Christian to betray the Gospel, and the worst crime of all, the one which in this world gives rise to disorders, abuses, wars and miseries without number, is to betray all forms of authority at once through a desire to install one of them, which is competent in its sphere, in the place of those which are equally so in theirs, for each form of authority is master in its own house and even the humblest of all is directly responsible to God alone.

Hence the indignation that we have witnessed when Dante came to define *gentilezza*, that is to say, practically, personal nobility. For this is a philosophical question, and yet here we have Frederick of Swabia taking a hand in its solution. The Emperor wishes to legislate in matters of philosophy! An extremely grave difficulty, and the very prototype of what may be called the *Aporia Dantesca*, because it expresses a conflict between different forms of jurisdiction and authority. Here, the whole question turns upon this point: *l'autoritate de la diffinitione de lo imperadore* (IV, 3). Once the question has been propounded, Dante cannot but settle it completely: origin of human society, its nature, its aim; origin of the Empire, nature of the Empire, aim of the Empire—until at last the conclusion leaps to the eye: The philosophical authority of the Emperor, *qua* Emperor, is non-existent. Aristotle is the Emperor in matters of philosophy, and if the masters of this world submitted as completely as they should to his authority, their government of the Empire would only be the better for it! "It is therefore manifest that to define *gentilezza* is not a function of the art of governing the Empire;

carried the Thomistic distinction between theology and philosophy to the point of separation in order to pave the way for a second distinction—between the Priesthood and the Empire—it becomes extremely difficult to qualify his position with the epithet "Thomistic". Clearly, in this field Dante is engaged in a wholly personal enterprise, and there is nothing in the work of St. Thomas that can have suggested it to him. We may even wonder if Dante's readiness to concede to the theologians the whole essence of their theology and to leave them in peace with the philosophy which they claimed to be the true one does not betray the secret hope that, once assured of possessing what they had set their hearts on, theologians and philosophers would more readily consent to withdraw to their respective domains. When one has all that one wished to have, what more can one desire?

It will perhaps be objected that it was quite futile to claim for philosophy an independence of which it was to make no use. But that is equivalent to returning once more to the position of a professional theologian or philosopher. When an Averroist proclaims the independence of philosophy, he does so in order to protect his own against a theology with which he knows it to be at variance. When a theologian declares that theology "treats the other sciences as inferiors and servants", the truth is that he is according theology the right to control the other sciences and to regard as false everything about them that contradicts it.¹ Having asserted once and for all that philosophy and theology are in harmony, Dante has neither a personal philosophy to protect nor a personal theology to defend, but he needs to ensure the independence of philosophy if he is to ensure that of the Empire. Now Dante clearly saw—and we may say that the certainty of the fact never ceased to haunt him—that these three forms of independence are inextricably linked and that the existence of each is bound up with that of the other two. The purity of each of the orders involved is therefore the necessary condition both of their common independence and of their

requires to be autonomous in its end as in its means, because the Christian God wills it so. A philosophy that is separate because it is Christian is certainly not the usual type of Christian philosophy.

¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Sum. theol.*, Pars I, qu. 1, art. 5, ad 2m: "Non enim accipit [sacra doctrina] sua principia ab aliis scientiis, sed immediate a Deo per revelationem. Et ideo non accipit ab aliis scientiis tanquam a superioribus, sed utitur eis tanquam inferioribus et ancillis: sicut architectonicae utuntur administrantibus ut civilis militari."

individual adequacy. His personal discovery of the merciful *donna gentile* and the profound sense of gratitude which he harbours towards her for having saved him from despair certainly lie at the root of the *Banquet*, but if he is there defending a personal thesis, it is that of the adequacy of philosophy to confer beatitude on men. The temporal happiness of the individual through human wisdom—this, then, is the lesson that the *Banquet* teaches. The temporal salvation of humanity through the Empire—such will be the conclusion of the *Monarchy*. The eternal salvation of men through the Church—this will be the ultimate teaching of the *Divine Comedy*. But since this three-fold work is knit together in all its parts, Dante was never able to uphold one of these theses without preparing, formulating or even defending the other two. That is why, just as we have seen him vindicate the claims of the Empire and maintain the transcendency of theology in the *Banquet*, we shall now see him affirm the autonomy of philosophy and that of theology in the *Monarchy*, pending the supreme appeal to the *Veltro* launched in the *Divine Comedy* and the solemn beatification of the pure philosopher in the person of Siger of Brabant.

III

Philosophy in the *Monarchy*

WHATEVER his reason for interrupting his work, the author of the *Banquet* was certainly not sustained by the lasting philosophic enthusiasm which alone would have led him to finish it. The author of the *De Monarchia*, of which the exact date is unknown,¹ though it is certainly later than the *Banquet*, was sustained to the last by his solemn passion for the Empire, the sole guarantee that he could imagine of justice, peace and felicity for the whole of mankind. The importance of the work which this passion inspired in Dante is quite different from that which would have probably been attached to the work that he left unfinished, even in its complete form. He himself was conscious of this, and a simple observation of the difference in tone at the beginning of the two treatises leaves no doubt on the matter.²

¹ With regard to the probable date of the treatise see C. FOLIGNO, *The Date of the "De Monarchia,"* in *Dante. Essays in Commemoration*, London, University Press, 1921. The author decides in favour of the approximate date of 1313 (*op. cit.*, p. 150). But many other dates have been suggested. Witte puts it before 1300; Steiner between 1300 and 1303; Traversi as late as 1306; others, reverting to Boccaccio's belief, link its composition with the descent of Henry VII, and consequently with the year 1313 or thereabouts. The most recent study on this question is that of E. J. J. KOCKEN, *Ter Dateering van Dante's Monarchia*, included among the publications of the *Instituut voor Middeleeuwische Geschiedenis der Keizer Karel Universiteit te Nijmegen*, No. 1, 1927.

² With regard to the general lines of the doctrine contained in the treatise and the current controversies on the matter see specially F. ERCOLE, *Sulla filosofia politica di Dante* and *Le tre fasi del pensiero politico di Dante*, in *Il pensiero politico di Dante*, Vol. II, pp. 231-407; there is a copious bibliography in Vol. I, pp. 38-40. For an examination of these disquisitions see B. NARDI, *Il concetto dell'Impero nello svolgimento del pensiero dantesco*, and *Tre pretese fasi del pensiero politico di Dante*, in *Saggi di filosofia dantesca*, pp. 241-305 and pp. 309-345. I am in full agreement with the dualistic interpretation offered by Signor B. Nardi. It seems to me only necessary to define a little more accurately what is called the "Averroism" of Dante; here it remains to make some distinctions. In addition, it is regrettable that such an excellent historian had allowed himself to be induced by Signor G. Gentile to make some hazardous generalizations. Where does it become evident to him that the audacity of the *De Monarchia* cuts across the mediaeval plan of the *Divine Comedy* (*op. cit.*, p. 285)? If one of these plans is mediaeval, so is the other, for they are the same. In the eyes of Signor B. Nardi they are different because, as G. Gentile had written in a seemingly admirable formula, "the Virgil of the *Monarchy* does not expect any Beatrice" (*op. cit.*, p. 304). How should he do so, seeing that there is no Virgil in the *Monarchy*? Besides, even in the *Comedy*, it is not Virgil who expects Beatrice, but Dante. Such a formula is literally devoid of meaning. It is true that

Nothing remains in the *Monarchy* of the timidities, characteristic of the apprentice philosopher and almost of the amateur, that find expression at the commencement of the *Banquet*. Here Dante no longer presents himself as the poor man sitting at the feet of the princes of wisdom to gather the crumbs that fall from their table. This time he speaks as a creator who knows himself to be such: "I desire to bear fruit and to show forth truths yet unessayed by others." What would be the good of once more proving some theorem of Euclid? Who would want to waste his time in rediscovering the nature of happiness, which Aristotle has already discovered, or in vindicating old age, which Cicero has so well defended? Nothing can result from that but tediousness. What Dante condemns in these terms so closely resembles what the *Banquet* had proposed to do that one cannot but wonder if his chief reason for not completing this work was not that he found it tedious. The question is, after all, of little importance, for what Dante immediately adds is much more deserving of our attention. In fact, we there see his passion for the cause of the Empire nourished by the personal ambition of a thinker and author—an ambition of which he makes no secret. Among all the truths, still hidden but useful, which remain to be discovered, that which is at once the most safely hidden and the most useful is the truth about monarchy. The obscurity of the question, the few immediate benefits that may be expected from the study of it, sufficiently explain the fact that no one has yet broached it. The question, Dante states explicitly, remains ab omnibus intemptata ("unapproached by any man"); he therefore aspires to the glory of carrying off this palm and even to

Signor B. Nardi, still following G. Gentile, concludes that the *Monarchy* is the first act of rebellion against "scholastic transcendency" (*op. cit.*, p. 284). In doing so he forgets that the independence attributed by Dante to the Empire results exclusively from the Emperor's direct responsibility to a transcendent God. The reason why the Emperor does not derive his power from the Pope is that he is directly subject to this God. Signor B. Nardi does not seem to suspect that as a historian he is far superior to G. Gentile, whose immanentism is the scourge of this contemporary Italian scholarship with its abundance of learning and ingenuity.

With regard to the text, see C. WITTE, *Dantis Alighieri De Monarchia lib. III*, 2nd ed., Braumüller, Vindobonae, 1874. French translation of the treatise: B. LANDRY, *Dante. De la Monarchie*, F. Alcan, Paris, 1933. On the historical background of the treatise consult M. BARBI, *L'ordinamento della Repubblica fiorentina e la vita politica di Dante*, in *Problemi di Critica dantesca*, 1st Series, Sansoni, Florence, 1934-XII, pp. 141-155; and B. BARBADORO, *La condanna di Dante e le fazioni politiche del suo tempo*, in *Studi Danteschi*, Vol. II (1920), pp. 5-74. We shall cite the *De Monarchia* in the edition of R. Allulli, C. Signorelli, Milan, 1926.

that of being the first to win it: *Ut palmam tanti bravii primus in meam gloriam adipiscar* (I, 1).

It does indeed seem that Dante has spoken the truth,¹ not only because no one before him had attempted the theoretical justification of a universal Empire of mankind united and pacified under the authority of a single individual, but because in effect the very way in which he justified such an Empire for the first time set up, above the Christian ideal of a universal Church, the human ideal of a single universal temporal order with the Emperor playing the part which the Pope fills in the Church. What Dante calls the "universal community of the human race" (*universalis civilitas humani generis*), or simply "the human community" (*humana civilitas*), was bound to enter into competition with the ideal of the Church, as would a universal community ruled by a single head with another universal community likewise ruled by a single head.² Moreover, the state of mind of Dante himself while he was composing this work was not quite the same as that of the author of the *Banquet*. In the *Banquet* Dante was trying to persuade the Emperor not to meddle in philosophy, unless his intention was to submit to the authority of Aristotle, and he hoped to convince the philosophers themselves that their special mission was to teach mankind moral virtue, itself the foundation of political virtue, without which there can be no justice, peace or felicity on earth. In spite of the philosophical pretensions of Frederick II, it might be hoped

¹ See the just remarks of F. ERCOLE, *Il pensiero politico di Dante*, Vol. II, pp. 25-30, and especially pp. 289-292.

² Dante was the first to offer a philosophical justification of the Empire so conceived; but there were at the time other justifications of an Empire differently conceived. It would be interesting to know whether or not the *Monarchy* is of an earlier date than the treatise of Engelbert (elected Abbot of Admont in 1297): ENGELBERTI . . . ADMONTENSIS, *De ortu et fine Romani imperii liber*, Basileae. Joannes Operinus, 1553. Engelbert teaches "omnia regna et omnes reges subesse uni imperio et imperatori christiano" (*op. cit.*, cap. XVIII, p. 98), but to him it is rather a question of a Christendom united by faith than a humanity united by reason, and that is why his Emperor seems to be first and foremost the soldier of the Church. There is only one divine right, only one faith, "et per consequens, una sola republica totius populi Christiani. Ergo de necessitate erit et unus solus princeps et rex illius Reipublicae, statutus et stabilitus ad ipsius fidei et populi christiani dilatationem et defensionem" (*op. cit.*, cap. XV, p. 78). Here, in short, the Empire derives its firm basis "ab unitate corporis Ecclesiae et totius christianae reipublicae" (*op. cit.*, cap. XVIII, p. 99), which fact makes it possible to ensure the unified command in case of war of "tota Christianitas contra totum paganismum" (cap. XVIII, p. 101). This Emperor who is under the wing of the Church ("cum . . . extra Ecclesiam non sit nec possit esse imperium", cap. XXIII, p. 131), and whose goal is subordinated to that of the Church, accords less with Dante's ideal than with Roger Bacon's. We find the same analogy and the same difference between Dante's version of the doctrine of two-fold beatitude and that of Engelbert of Admont (see below, p. 193, note 1).

that few Emperors would wish to assail the authority of the Philosopher, and Dante was too much convinced of the limitations of our metaphysic not to hope that the philosophers would one day consent to come to an understanding with the theologians. Theologians like "the good friar Thomas" were, moreover, there to facilitate the understanding. Where, then, does Thomas Aquinas find philosophy, if not in the works of Aristotle? He reads it, studies it, comments on it and explains it to others, as we see him do in that admirable exposition of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum* which Dante studied with such care. All the philosophical concessions demanded of the theologians have already been made to him by St. Thomas. It is understandable, then, that Dante loves him and that he expects to be able to come to an understanding with theology on ground so well prepared. There is no sacrifice which he himself has to consent to in the matter. We do not know what he may have thought at the time of the philosophical crisis which he seems to have experienced, but it is now over and I do not believe that it is possible to find in his works a single definite Averroistic thesis of which he undoubtedly maintained the truth. So far as he is concerned philosophy is Aristotle, and as his Aristotle is, in the main, the Aristotle of Albertus Magnus and of St. Thomas Aquinas, the understanding between philosophers and theologians seems to him easy to bring about. In fact, thanks to these great theologians themselves, it exists, and even those who shut their eyes to it will certainly accept it in the end. But to establish a concordat between the Emperors and the Popes was quite another matter, and anyone who tried to base it on the previous accord between the theologians and the philosophers ran a great risk of aggravating the situation in both domains. Yet that is what Dante tried to do. He had at his disposal only the philosophical ideal defined in the *Banquet* for the foundation of his "universal community of the human race", comparable to a natural church of moralists in face of the supernatural church of the theologians. How is one to persuade the theologians that, for the very reason that makes them abandon philosophy to Aristotle, they should abandon the Empire to the Emperor? Such is the problem whose solution Dante's *Monarchy* offered to the world.

The idea of this universal temporal community, so new in his age—he seems, indeed, to have been its first advocate—took

shape in Dante's mind in a very curious way. The only universal community of which the idea existed at the time was a community essentially supernatural and religious: the Church, or, if one prefers, Christendom. Not only had the Church never thought that there should or could exist a Humanity unified for the purpose of pursuing a temporal happiness regarded as its special goal, but it had, since Augustine's *City of God*, discountenanced the ideal of a unification of all mankind through the common acceptance of the Christian faith and under the supreme government of the Pope. In order, then, to conceive of the possibility of a universal temporal community, it was necessary to borrow from the Church its ideal of a universal Christendom and to secularize it. On the other hand, it was impossible to secularize this ideal without establishing philosophy as the basis of the universal community of all mankind, subject to the same monarch and pursuing the same form of happiness in obedience to the same laws. The man who advised the Emperor Alexander to treat the Greeks as free men and the barbarians as slaves assuredly had not thought that all mankind was capable of seeking, through the same channels, one and the same goal. In order, then, to justify his idea Dante had to seek in the philosophy of Aristotle a certain natural aim whose complete realization—although Aristotle himself had never dreamed of such a thing—demanded the collaboration of a completely unified human race.

I. THE GOAL OF THE HUMAN RACE

For the solution of this problem Dante has made very skilful use of the genuinely Aristotelian and Thomistic principle that, if man is a social animal, it is because the life of the city, with the co-operation which it permits, is absolutely essential if he is to be able to attain his full development. Dante's starting-point was all the better chosen in that St. Thomas, having strongly insisted on the obligation incumbent on every man to place the resources of his individual reason at the disposal of the community, had come to the conclusion that the best political régime is government by a single person. St. Thomas was nevertheless so far from thinking of a universal monarchy that he ended his exposition

thus: "It follows from what precedes that the king is he who governs the people of a city or of a province with a view to the common good; hence the saying of Solomon in *Eccl.*, V, 9: *Universae terrae rex imperat servienti* ("The king of all the earth governs him who is his subject").¹ Even if the words *universa terra* ("all the earth") merely bring to St. Thomas's mind the whole territory of a city or province, the fact remains that the collaboration of reason of which he is thinking in this passage has the primary object—and the context proves it—of providing men with the material comfort of which they stand in need. Dante goes much further than these *necessaria vitae* ("essentials of life"),² which, in his time at all events, did not demand the universal co-operation of the modern mechanical arts, which are themselves based on the universality of the sciences. To find in Aristotle a demand for universality he had to turn to the sphere of the human intellect.

A universal human community does indeed appear necessary if it is absolutely essential in order that man may attain his ultimate goal. Now man is distinguished from all other creatures by the fact that he is endowed with *reason*, in other words with that discursive faculty which enables him to acquire new forms of intelligible knowledge beginning from the intellection of the first principles of knowledge. Man possesses what is called a "possible" intellect, which is the faculty of progressively acquiring forms of intelligible knowledge by the light of the active intellect. In other words, man is neither a pure active intellect, like the angels, nor a mere animal sensibility, like the beasts, but he is distinguished from the beasts by this possible intellect which raises him to the plane of rational knowledge, and he is distinguished from the angels by this same possible intellect without which he could not acquire it. If it may be said that man's possible intellect raises him above the beasts and places him below the angels, it is assuredly this same faculty which distinguishes man as a reasonable animal and circumscribes him within his own species, between the unreasoning animals and the angelic Intelligences.

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *De regimine principum*, I, 1, end.

² "Ex quo manifeste ostenditur quod de ratione regis est quod sit unus qui praesit, et quod sit pastor commune multitudinis bonum et non suum commodum quaerens. Cum autem homini competat in multitudine vivere, quia sibi non sufficit ad necessaria vitae, si solitarius maneat, oportet quod tanto sit perfectior multitudinis societas, quanto magis per se sufficiens erit ad necessaria vitae" (ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *op. cit.*, I, 1).

Granting this, let us picture these human individuals, each endowed with his possible intellect. Each of them endeavours to acquire a certain amount of knowledge by the use of his reason, but what he can acquire in the way of intelligible knowledge represents but a minute part of the total intelligible knowledge which is accessible to the human species. This total knowledge cannot be realized all at once by any individual, or even by any particular group of human beings. Only the human species taken in its entirety is entitled to lay claim to it, but it may aspire to such an achievement only on condition that it exists as a universal community, endowed with a kind of existence of its own, and having this as its special function: *propria operatio humanae universitatis, ad quam ipsa universitas hominum in tanta multitudine ordinatur*.¹ The specific goal of this function of the human race taken as a whole is such that no individual, family, commune, city or kingdom can attain it, for it is a question of organizing things in such a way that at every moment of its existence the human race, thanks to the great number of the individual intellects of which it is made up, is continually realizing the total power of the possible intellect: *proprium opus humani generis totaliter accepti est actuare semper totam potentiam intellectus possibilis*.²

As early as the fourteenth century the Dominican Guido Vernani thought he could accuse Dante of upholding here an Averroistic thesis. Even if he was mistaken, it must be acknowledged that everything encouraged him to do so, and I am not sure, moreover, that Guido Vernani did not give proof of real sagacity on this delicate point. In the first place, Dante himself incited him to make the error by openly quoting Averroes as his authority on this point: *Et huic sententiae concordat Averrois in Commento super hiis quae de Anima* ("And with this opinion Averroes agrees in his commentary on what has been written *de Anima*"). Taken literally, this sentence would mean that Dante is in agreement on this point with the doctrine of the unity of the possible intellect, in other words with the doctrine that recognizes but a single possible intellect for the entire human race, as taught by Averroes in his commentary on the *De Anima*. This is exactly how Vernani understood Dante's sentence, and it may indeed be said that he did not seek to understand it otherwise, but not that he made it say anything other than what,

¹ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 3.

² DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 4.

ut littera sonat, it actually does say: "If one speaks in this way, it manifestly follows that there is but a single intellect in all mankind; now to say and to think this is the gravest error, and its author and inventor is that Averroes whom he cites."¹

We must go further besides. Dante would not quote Averroes in support of his thesis if he were not thinking of him at the very moment of writing and if the idea which he was then expounding were in no way connected with the Averroistic doctrine of the possible intellect.² It is, indeed, connected with it so closely that one cannot visualize any other doctrine by which it may have been suggested. Averroes conceived the possible intellect as a single entity, an intellectual substance wholly independent of the body—in short, what Christians call an angel—and he taught that, to an individual man, knowing means simply sharing in some part or other of the knowledge possessed by this intellect. Thus conceived, then, the possible intellect of Averroes presented Dante with a kind of individual human race whose unity would always be realized in a concrete way, while at every moment of its duration it would actualize the whole of the knowledge accessible to man. If to know is man's goal, it may be said that in this independent possible intellect the human race would have its goal eternally and permanently within its grasp. In order, then, to construct his own doctrine, Dante has transposed the thesis of Averroes by taking the human race, in other words the individuals existing at all times on earth regarded collectively, as an equivalent of the single possible intellect of Averroes. If he here refers us to Averroes, the reason is that in fact he finds his starting-point in Averroism, but this does not mean that he has adopted it.

Let us note, indeed, that the two theses are essentially different. What Averroes desires in order to realize the possible intellect completely is a being; what Dante requires in order to obtain

¹ GUIDO VERNANI, *De reprobatione Monarchiae*, ed. Jarro (G. Piccini), Florence, Bemporad, 1906, pp. 4 and 6, and pp. 8 and 10.

² The works of Averroes are not very easy to find, but extensive and well chosen fragments may be read in G. THÉRY, *Autour du décret de 1270, II: Alexandre d'Aphrodise* (Bibl. thomiste, VII), Paris, J. Vrin, 1926, pp. 58-61. As regards Dante himself and the meaning of the passage in question, see B. NARDI, *Saggi di filosofia dantesca*, pp. 261-264. Here the reader will find the passages from Averroes to which Dante refers him. I have not thought it my duty to reproduce this admirably executed analysis, the precision of which is such that one cannot summarize it without doing it less than justice. Its conclusions seem to me beyond discussion and all I am doing here is merely to confirm them with an argument actually derived from the philosophical essence of the theses in question.

the same result is a community, that universal community of all individual possible intellects which is constituted by the human race. If Dante had accepted Averroism in this particular his own doctrine would have had no justification, since, with or without a universal community, the goal of humanity would be everlastingly attained in the permanence of the independent possible intellect. When Dante speaks of realizing the intellectual potentialities of the whole of humanity (*potentia totius humanitatis*), it is certainly those of all mankind (*universitas hominum*) which must be understood. In short, to him what is involved is a multitudo, that very multitude of individuals which the universal human community will render capable of attaining its goal by imposing on it the unity which is essential to the independent possible intellect of Averroes, though humanity as conceived by Dante does not yet possess it and will, moreover, enjoy it only if it accepts the unifying hegemony of the Emperor.

It is therefore quite impossible to maintain, as has been done, that Dante is here clinging to the doctrine of Averroes, but it is still true that Dante transposes it with an originality that is, incidentally, striking and truly creative. He does not, like Averroes, speak as a metaphysician taking note of a *de facto* unity based on the actual structure of the universe; he speaks as a political and social reformer, as the herald of a community which has to be created and which he conceives as a temporal duplicate of that universal religious community which is the Church. It is through this human community that humanity will be able to attain its special goal. Dante asserts as much at the beginning of his work; he propounds this fundamental idea as the key which unlocks its meaning: "From the things which have just been explained there emerges clearly the means by which the human race may better, or rather best, accomplish its special task. That is why this very thing has seemed to be the most direct means to the attainment of that purpose to whose fulfillment all our activities are directed as to their final goal, to wit, universal peace, which will therefore be regarded as the principle of the arguments that follow." This is what Dante propounds as his starting-point. No universal human community, no peace; no peace, no opportunity for man to develop to the highest pitch his aptitude for discovering truth or, consequently, to attain his goal. That is the fixed point, the cardinal fact to

which all that Dante proves in the *Monarchy* amounts and on which it is based.¹ Here his philosophy will be essentially that of a reformer: "Since, therefore, the matter under discussion is political, or rather the source and principle of all correct politics, and since everything political is subject to our power, it is evident that the matter under discussion is not concerned in the first place with speculation, but with action."²

It would therefore be an error—one that is invariably committed in interpreting Dante—to seize on a philosophical attitude which is with him a passing phase, and which he takes up in order to go beyond it, as if he were really adopting it as his own. Most certainly he does owe something here to the philosophy of Averroes. To be precise, he owes to him the idea, which is, moreover, a splendid one, of a unity of the human race in which the whole of humanity would at all times realize its special aim, namely to possess the entire intellectual knowledge which it is capable of assimilating. But we need not go back from this idea to what it implies in Averroes; rather must we look from it towards what it betokens in Dante: a community that man must create that he may secure a peace which does not yet exist, with a view to attaining an object which humanity has not yet secured, because before it can be secured it must first exist. Dante is to be identified with the authorities he invokes only to the extent to which they suggest, fashion or confirm his own doctrine regarding the best way to ensure that universal peace without which the human race cannot attain its goal.

II. NECESSITY OF THE MONARCHY

If we admit that such is indeed the goal of the human race, it remains for us to seek the means to attain it. This is one of the questions on which Dante is most readily compared to St. Thomas Aquinas. Nevertheless, the first fact to be noted—and

¹ "Ex hiis ergo quae declarata sunt patet per quod melius, immo per quod optime genus humanum pertingit ad opus proprium; et per consequens visum est propinquissimum medium per quod itur in illud ad quod, velut in ultimum finem, omnia nostra opera ordinantur, quod est pax universalis, quae pro principio rationum subsequentium supponatur. Quod erat necessarium, ut dictum fuit, velut signum praefixum in quod quidquid probandum est resolvatur, tanquam in manifestam veritatem" (DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 4).

² DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 2.

it is probably not without some significance—is that St. Thomas never propounded the problem of the relationship of the Empire to the Papacy. So far as I know, he never once went so far as to write the word *imperator*. This theologian, then, views everything as if the Emperor did not exist. Those of whom he always speaks in his writings are the “princes”, that is to say chiefs of States, varying in extent, men who themselves hold different titles—kings, dukes, princes, etc.—the sole qualification being that they should possess supreme temporal authority in their respective countries. The fact is accounted for by two things of which the historians tell us. First, the majority of theologians defend the supreme authority of the Pope in temporal matters against the Emperor; they are therefore the natural allies of the local temporal powers over which the Emperor claims to have authority.¹ Consequently, it was not in the interest of the theologians to attribute to the Emperor a theoretical importance greater than his real importance. A sole spiritual head could more easily exercise his rights over a sprinkling of petty States and petty princes than over a sole universal Empire which set up in opposition to the Pope a temporal sovereign having a jurisdiction co-extensive with his own. Even if there were an Emperor it would be better to act as if there were none. In fact—and this is the second reason—we may say that in practice there was none. “The humiliation of the Empire is so profound,” wrote H. Pirenne of these times, “that for a moment after 1250 it may have seemed on the point of disappearing.”² Moreover, this is the very thing that makes Dante’s attitude such a great one. Writing in an age when there is no longer an Emperor of any kind, he does not fight for a man, but for an idea. One understands the fact that St. Thomas did not think it his duty to galvanize this corpse or to join battle with a phantom authority when it was in the Church’s interest that it should remain so.

In examining St. Thomas’s doctrine we must therefore confine ourselves to what he says of the relations between the prince of a specific country and the Pope who presides over the universal Church. Now Dante differs from him here in the emphasis of his demonstration that the existence of a universal monarch,

¹ See the remarks of H. Pirenne, in L. HALPHEN and P. SAGNAC, *La fin du moyen âge* (*Peuples et Civilisations*, Vol. VII, 1), Paris, F. Alcan, 1931, pp. 6–7.

² H. PIRENNE, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

supreme temporal sovereign of all mankind, is absolutely essential in the name of philosophical principles which are themselves universal and necessary. As it is here a question of Dante’s most original personal contribution to the history of political philosophy, this primary difference cannot be regarded as negligible. Moreover, one gravely suspects that it will have consequences. St. Thomas, who cannot imagine a Church without a Pope, makes do admirably with a world without an Emperor, but Dante can no more accept a world without an Emperor than a Church without a Pope, precisely because he desires that, when a Pope takes a hand in the affairs of Florence,¹ he should find himself faced with someone to whom he may speak. Florence alone against the Pope faces defeat, but Florence represented by a universal Emperor against the Pope finds the chances once more in her favour. It was with the object of assuring all States of this protector and supreme temporal arbiter that Dante invoked all the principles of Aristotle and produced from them this universal monarchy which even the tutor of Alexander of Macedon certainly never dreamed of.

In this matter, therefore, Dante’s achievement consisted in reviving the principal arguments which St. Thomas and Aristotle had used, in order to prove that a single head is required in every political community, these arguments being applied, however, to that universal political community for the existence of which he craved—a human fellowship. Since there exists a *propria operatio humanae universitatis* (“an activity characteristic of all humanity”), this universal community must also exist for the purpose of leading men to that goal. Now let us note carefully that here Dante is thinking particularly of the question of ensuring the complete actualization of the human intellect in the sphere of action. Not that he regards the practical function of reason as superior to its speculative function. As I have said, Dante never called in question the hierarchies of dignity established by Aristotle and confirmed by St. Thomas. Speculation is nobler than action and the practical arts, the moral order of action and the technical order of creation are subordinate to the theoretical

¹ It is impossible to explain Dante in terms of the history of Florence, for many other Florentines have lived that history, and yet there is only one Dante; but the events of which he was a witness were certainly the origin of the course which he adopted and of which his doctrine is professedly a universally valid justification. Cf. F. ERCOLE, *Il pensiero politico di Dante*, Vol. II, pp. 274–296.

order of knowledge, and contemplation remains the supreme goal assigned by the supreme Good to the human race. That is even the reason, notes Dante in this connection, why Aristotle says in his *Politics* "that those who prevail by virtue of understanding naturally have authority over others".¹ Only, ethics and politics, though mere concomitants of contemplation, are its essential concomitants. No peace, no philosophy. Therefore universal peace, if not our beatitude, is at any rate the loftiest of its concomitants. In other words it is supreme and transcendent in the sphere of ways and means. That is why we should regard this universal peace, which was heralded by the Angels on the birth of Christ, as the best means whereby the human race may accomplish its special task. Looked upon in this way, universal peace should therefore be regarded as the first essential for the attainment of the goal assigned by God to humanity.² Now if there is no universal monarch there will be no peace. Therefore a universal monarch is necessary for the existence, order and peace of a politically organized human race.

However interesting they may be in themselves, the arguments which Dante uses to justify his thesis concern rather the content of his philosophy than his general attitude towards philosophy. Let us, then, merely recall that, supported by the "venerable authority" of Aristotle as voiced in his *Politics*, Dante lays down as a principle that "when several things are directed towards a single goal, it is imperative for one of them to control or rule, and for the others to be controlled and ruled".³ Not only does the authority of Aristotle prescribe this law, but inductive reasoning establishes it. In the individual, everything must be subject to the intellect if he desires to be happy. In a family, everything must be subject to the father of the family if it is desired that its members should attain the object of family life, which is readiness to live a good life. Similarly, in a village, a city, a kingdom, there must be a single head if it is not desired that the word of the Infallible Truth should prove correct: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (*Matt.*, XII, 25). If, then, the entire human race is directed

¹ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 3, end. Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Pol.*, I, 2, 1252 a 31-32; but Dante is inclined to follow ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In XII lib. Metaph. Aristot.*, Prooemium.

² DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 4.

³ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 5. Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Pol.*, I, 5, 1254 a 28-32; or better ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In XII libros Metaph. Aristot.*, Incipit.

towards a single goal, it is essential to the well-being of the world that there should exist a Monarchy, in other words a sole command—that of the Emperor.¹

Of the numerous arguments of this kind which Dante piles up seemingly at random in order to establish his thesis, there is one which should be examined with particular attention, for it is bound up with what is deepest and most personal in the poet's thought—his ideal of justice. Wishing to praise the era which he saw taking shape in his day, Virgil had already sung in his *Bucolics*: *Iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna*. ("Already too the Virgin returns, and the days of Saturn's dominion.")²

By the word *Virgo* ("Virgin") we must understand Justice; by *Saturnia regna* (Saturn's dominion") Virgil signified that age of excellence which was also called the "golden age". But the world is in its most perfect state only when justice reigns, and justice reigns without question only under the authority of a single Monarch; thus the world can only be in its most perfect state under a Monarchy or Empire. What is justice in fact? Considered in itself and with respect to its special character, it is a certain rectitude, or standard, which rules out everything that deviates from righteousness. It is analogous to those forms which, according to Gilbert de la Porrée, consist of simple and unvarying essences—abstract whiteness, for instance—and which, being in themselves incapable of increase or decrease, grow or diminish only in terms of the entities that embody them. Thus, considered in itself, justice is an absolute, but there may be varying degrees of it in the world, and it is when the minimum of injustice

¹ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 6. Dante next proves that the unity of command which obtains in the parts of the human race should, *a fortiori*, obtain in the human race as a whole (I, 6); that, as the parts of which it is the whole are joined to it by single heads, the human race should be joined by a single head to the whole of which it forms part, viz. the universe, of which God is the Monarch (I, 7); that the human race, of which God is the cause, should tend to become assimilated in the highest degree possible to its cause: it should therefore be one, as God is one (I, 8); that the son should follow in his father's footsteps; now the human race traces its origin, partially at least, to heaven, which is moved by a single Monarch (I, 9); that wherever conflict is possible there should be a judge; now there may be conflict among princes; consequently there should be an Emperor to decide between them (I, 10). It is at this point in his argumentation that Dante comes to his decisive proof, which is derived from the idea of justice.

² VIRGIL, *Buc.*, IV, 6. The reader will notice in the passage one of those frequently recurring indications which enable us to understand in what sense Dante was able to regard Virgil as a "sage". It was no slight praise, especially coming from Dante, to represent him as the prophet of Justice in a world pacified by the Emperor Augustus. With regard to the mediaeval conceptions of Virgil, see D. COMPARETTI, *Virgilio nel Medio Evo*, La Nuova Italia, Florence, 1937-XV; as to the idea which Dante himself formed of him, see in particular two excellent pages, Chap. XV, pp. 274-275.

goes to its making and its mode of operation that the maximum of justice is to be found in the world. When it shines forth in the world, we may indeed say, with the Philosopher, that "neither in Hesperus nor in Lucifer is there anything so admirable".¹ What prevents men's wills from being imbued with a sense of justice is "greed", which is its antithesis; what prevents the just will from acting in accordance with justice is lack of power, or of strength: what is the use of wishing to assign to every man his due, if one cannot do so? "The more powerful the just man is, the more amply will his justice be able to express itself in deeds." In order, therefore, that the world's state may be of the best, justice must reside in it in a supremely active and supremely powerful will. There is none that can be more so than that of a single monarch; it is only, then, if justice resides in such a monarch, or Emperor, that it will reach its highest point in the world and the world will be supremely well ordered (I, 11).

The most important point in this proof is undoubtedly the definition which Dante offers of the antithesis of justice: "Where the will is not free from all greed, even if justice is in it, it is nevertheless not present in the full splendour of its purity: it is, in fact, present in an entity which, however little, in some measure resists it" (I, 11). This *cupiditas* ("greed"), of which the She-wolf of the *Divine Comedy* is most certainly a symbol,² does not at first appear in Dante as a religious and Christian notion. He borrows it from the Philosopher, or at any rate the Philosopher suggests it to him: *Justitiae maxime contrariatur cupiditas, ut innuit Aristoteles in quinto ad Nicomachum*. ("The greatest enemy of justice is greed, as Aristotle indicates in the fifth book of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*."³ Eliminate greed, and there remains nothing in opposition to justice. Now it happens that the only

¹ ARISTOTLE, *Eth. Nic.*, V, 3, 1129 b 28-29. Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In X lib. Ethic.*, lib. V., lect. 2, ed. Pirotta, No. 906.

² Cf. M. BARBI, *Nuovi problemi di critica dantesca*, in *Studi Danteschi*, 1938-XVII, p. 29.

³ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 11. Aristotle in fact distinguishes legal justice, which is not a particular virtue, but virtue in its entirety, and of which the antithesis is injustice (*Eth. Nic.*, V, 3, 1130 a 9-10), from justice regarded as a particular virtue, the antithesis of which is that particular form of injustice which is called "avarice". (Regarding *πλεονεξία*, see V, 2, 1129 b 9.) The notions of greed and avarice are, moreover, closely related; but Dante seems to have preferred that of greed, because, as is clearly indicated by what is to follow, the evil of which he is thinking is specifically the active avarice of princes who covet for themselves the territories of others. Let us note, moreover, that *cupiditas* translates better than *avaritia* the fundamental meaning of *πλεονεξία*:

way to procure a man free from all greed is to install in power one who, possessing all, can no longer covet anything.

Such, to be exact, would be the single Monarch of Dante's dreams: a sovereign whose jurisdiction ends only at the edge of the ocean, that is to say—since in Dante's time fleets count for hardly anything—a sovereign whose jurisdiction is limitless. The universal Monarch exercises an authority that knows no frontiers: there is therefore no frontier for him to violate. The universal Monarch can have no feeling of greed: he therefore has feelings only of love and charity. Now just as the slightest trace of greed is enough to obscure justice, so too charity, that is to say integrity in love (*recta dilectio*), refines and clarifies justice. It is therefore certain that under a Monarch free from all greed justice must reign without constraint. Expressing himself with rare vigour, Dante notes that greed consists essentially of scorn for the unique dignity of each man and covets everything else, whereas charity scorns everything else, seeking only God and man, and consequently the good of man. Now the most precious good within the reach of all men is to live in peace. Justice alone can enable them to enjoy it, and the charity, unmarred by covetousness, which a universal Monarch alone can reveal for all men is the necessary condition of the reign of justice. The world therefore needs a single Emperor, who shall stand in relation to the entire universe as a kind of universal cause. The nearer such a cause approaches to universality, the more truly will it be a cause, and the more truly it is a cause, the more pregnant will it be with love. That such a Monarch would be eminently disposed to act in accordance with justice who can doubt, unless he is ignorant of the meaning of the word "monarch"? If he is truly Monarch, he can have no enemies (I, 12).

Having reached this point, Dante will now hurl himself into the thick of the fray, for the moment has come for him to reveal

the desire to have more than others, avidity, greedy desire, the tendency to usurp. Cf. in this connection the work of ALLAN H. GILBERT, *Dante's Conception of Justice*, Duke University Press, Durham (North Carolina), 1925. This book has the merit not only of dealing with what is truly a fundamental point in Dante's doctrine, but also of having, by an obligatory reference to St. Thomas's commentary on the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*, shed light on the exact meaning of the notions of justice and avarice (or greed) in the works of Dante. Even if, as is natural, we do not regard as justified all the parallels between the *Banquet* and St. Thomas's commentary which the author suggests, enough of them remain established for the thesis of Mr. A. H. Gilbert to be considered proven. Consult especially Chap. I, *The Materials for Dante's Treatise on Justice: St. Thomas' Commentary on Ethics V*, 1-9, pp. 3-66.

not to think — to judge —

to the world the very foundation of that freedom to which greed of any kind is a menace. Men say that this foundation is free will and that free will is free judgment as to what one should desire. And what they say is true; but, adds Dante, people repeat these formulas without understanding what they are saying any more than do our logicians when they cram their logic with mathematical examples—for instance, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. What it is important to understand here is that a judgment is free in so far as it comes near to being purely rational, i.e. in so far as it approaches complete emancipation from the appetite and the desires. Freedom is the possession of the rational judgment which actuates the appetite and which is in no way actuated by it. Now this capacity for making up our minds through reason is the greatest good with which God has endowed human nature, since it alone enables us to be happy on earth as men and to be so as gods in the after-life. Only the Monarch of the human race can desire the good of the human race—namely, that all men, existing each for his own sake, should be as good as it is possible for them to be. Such is not the goal that single States have in view. Whether democracies, oligarchies, or tyrannies are involved, each pursues some particular interest to which it subjects men, although this goal is not theirs. That, moreover, is why Aristotle in his *Politics* says that “in a perverted community the honest man is a bad citizen, whereas, in a righteous community, the honest man and the good citizen are one and the same”. Thus, good communities are those which understand freedom aright, that is to say those which desire that men should exist for their own sakes, not for that of the State of which they form part. The authority of a single Monarch is therefore absolutely essential if it is desired that men should be governed with a view to their own good instead of being exploited for particular ends which are not their own.¹

These are only a few of the philosophical arguments accumulated by Dante, with a vigour and a richness of invention that are remarkable, to justify the necessity of a universal monarchy, and we cannot even consider the historical and juridical arguments of which Book II of the *Monarchy* is entirely composed.

¹ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 12. Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Pol.*, III, 2, 1276 b 40–1277 a 1, or better ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In X lib. Ethic. Aristotelis*, lib. V, lect. 3, ed. Pirotta, No. 926.

The essential thing is, indeed, for us to notice the profound gulf that separates the actual nature of the problem propounded by Dante from the apparently similar problem in St. Thomas Aquinas to which it is often compared. Sometimes, indeed, scholars argue as if the Thomistic question of the relationship between princes and Popes were identical with the Dantesque question of the relationship between the Emperor and the Pope. It is not entirely so. Not only does St. Thomas never speak of an Emperor of any kind, but, even if he did, the head of the Romano-Germanic Empire of whom he might be thinking would only be in a general sense comparable to this supreme master of the human race for whom Dante clamours. By a curious paradox, Dante was able to raise up a universal Monarch vis-à-vis to the universal Pope only by imagining this Monarch himself as a kind of Pope.¹ To be sure, a temporal Pope, but nevertheless the head of a kind of natural Catholic community deriving its dogma from the ethics of Aristotle and guided towards its specific goal by the authority of a single pastor. If the *genus humanum* (“human race”) of Dante is really the first known expression of the modern idea of Humanity, we may say that the conception of Humanity first presented itself to the European consciousness merely as a secularized imitation of the religious notion of a Church. This, moreover, is why Dante portrays his Monarch as a temporal father compelled by his position and his functions to practise charity and justice no less absolutely than the Pope, the spiritual father of mankind, is compelled by his function and his position—if, that is, he respects them—to practise spiritual fatherhood and sanctity. Like the head of an immense religious community, Dante’s Monarch, precisely because he is responsible for subjecting others to the laws which

¹ So true is this that theologians were able to accept Dante’s attitude without any modification, provided only that the Pope was substituted for the Emperor. That is what was done by the Franciscan François de Mayronnes in the writings in which he dealt exclusively with this problem, especially in his *Tractatus de Principatu Temporalis*, Bib. Nat., Fonds latin, 3655 and 14195. It is true to say that François de Mayronnes, like Dante, believed that “in universo nostro est dare unum monarcham qui ita praesit omnibus temporaliter, quod nulli in temporalibus sit subjectus” (*op. cit.*, MS. 3655, fol. 44 vo.), although in his eyes this universal temporal Monarch is the Pope; if it is insisted that he should be the Emperor, it is better to do without him: “In universo, secundum optimam dispositionem sui, non est dare, secundum rectam rationem, aliquem monarcham sui principem, videlicet in temporalibus, quando ille subsit temporaliter et etiam in temporalibus principe spirituali, ut puta Papae” (*op. cit.*, Explicit). An edition of this treatise and of the chief passages in François de Mayronnes dealing with this problem has just been prepared by M. Pierre de Lapparent.

lead them to their goal, is in reality merely their servant: *Monarcha, qui minister omnium habendus est* ("The Monarch, who must be regarded as the servant of all") (I, 12). This Emperor is therefore a minister, almost as St. Bonaventure had been a minister of the Franciscan Order, and this indeed is what will shortly invest the problem with an entirely new urgency, a scope quite different from that which it had in the *De regimine principum* of St. Thomas Aquinas, not only because of the formidable power that this leader of Humanity will wield in the presence of the leader of Christendom, but especially because of the right that he too will henceforth have to speak as one invested with supreme moral authority in his sphere and charged with leading to a clearly defined goal the entirety of mankind, which God has entrusted to him. In thus investing temporal society with all the attributes of the Church Dante was transposing the classic controversy between the Priesthood and the Empire into a new key. Any comparison between Dante's doctrine and those of his predecessors or contemporaries must necessarily take this fact into account; otherwise it is bound to fall into errors of perspective which themselves suggest doctrinal pseudo-similarities and misinterpretations.

III. INDEPENDENCE OF THE EMPIRE

It follows from Book II of the *Monarchy* that the Roman Empire, in the form in which it survives in the Middle Ages, is a lawful power, the existence of which is desired by God with a view to the happiness of mankind. Now the Papacy likewise claims to be a universal authority of divine origin. The question, consequently, is how to reconcile the authority of "those two great luminaries, the Roman Pontiff and the Roman Prince". And first of all "we ask whether the authority of the Roman Monarch, who is by right the Monarch of the world, as the Second Book has proved, is directly subject to God's will or whether it is subject to that of some vicar or minister of God, by which I mean the successor of Peter, who is in truth the key-bearer of the Kingdom of Heaven".¹ It is, I think,

¹ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, III, 1. Several other equivalent formulas occur in the same treatise: "Isti vero ad quos erit tota disputatio sequens, asserentes auctoritatem Imperii ab auctoritate Ecclesiae dependere, velut artifex inferior dependet ab architecto . . ." (III, 4). Cf. "Quod autem auctoritas Ecclesiae . . ." (III, 13).

unnecessary to stress the word directly. That the authority of the Emperor of the world is in the long run subject to the will of God goes without saying; the only question is whether it is subject to it directly or through the Pope, but it is a very important question.

In approaching the matter, it is of some interest to note that the Third Book of the *Monarchy* begins with a quotation from the Scriptures, with which Dante in a sense covers himself as with a shield, because it places him under the protection of justice: *Conclisit ora leonum, et non nocuerunt mihi; quia coram eo justitia inventum est in me* ("My God . . . hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him justice was found in me") (*Dan.*, VI, 22). If collected, the sentences in which Dante stresses this virtue would form a very long list, but they would lose their meaning. In his work justice resembles, indeed, a kind of theme, or *leit-motiv*, which is never long in reappearing, sometimes in the least expected forms. If he wishes to base his argument on natural reason, Dante has recourse to the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*, Book V, where the two kinds of justice, legal and personal, receive such unreserved homage. If he is thinking of that definite form of human justice whose reign is associated with the supremacy of the Roman Empire, Dante has recourse to Virgil, the prophet of the golden age in which felicity will reign in peace under the authority of Rome;¹ if only as the singer of Roman justice realized in the triumph of law, Virgil would already have amply deserved the honour of suggesting, as a theme of Dante's thought, the glory of the sage in addition to that of the poet. But if he wishes to reveal the religious, sacred and truly divine character of the virtue of justice, Dante turns to the Scriptures, and not only to its text, but to its heroes and sages. As a counter to the presumptuous Popes, Dante disposes in paradise of an ally whose holiness renders him immune to their attacks and whose justice judges them: the most wise King Solomon, in whose behalf David had entreated God: "Give to the king thy judgments, and thy justice unto the king's son."² Every form of justice—

¹ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, II, 3; note that King Aeneas is here mentioned as the father of the sovereign people on account of his justice: "Quo justior alter nec pietate fuit . . ." Cf. *op. cit.*, II, 6, for Rome's natural capacity for government: "Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento", and II, 8: "Certe hinc Romanos olim volventibus annis hinc fore ductores . . ." Cf. *Epist.* to the Emperor Henry, on the justice of Augustus.

² DANTE, *De Monarchia*, I, 13, quoting Psalm LXXI, 1-3: "Deus judicium tuum regi da, et justitiam tuam filio regis;—judicare populum tuum in justitia, et pauperes

the philosophical, the poetic and the Christian—is here brought into operation in the service of the Emperor.

The fundamental principle propounded by Dante as the basis of all his reasoning is that God does not desire that which contradicts the intention of nature (III, 2); for it was God Himself Who desired the existence of nature; if, then, God, desiring the existence of nature, did not desire that which is necessarily desired by nature, one would have to say that God does not desire that which He does desire. Furthermore, Dante does not think there is any real uncertainty as to the correct answer to be given to this question. At heart all know what they should think; if there is any argument on the point, ignorance is not the cause of it, but rather it is the cause of ignorance. Passions and feelings of all kinds here come between truth and the light of reason, inciting against it three main adversaries:

1. The Sovereign Pontiff, vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ and successor of Peter, to whom we owe, not all that is due to Christ, but all that is due to Peter, and who perhaps allows himself to be led astray by his zeal for the power of the keys. Let us place in the same category certain Christian pastors who do not gainsay the truth out of pride, but only out of zeal for the Church.

2. There are others, on the contrary, in whom an inveterate greed has extinguished the light of reason; true sons of the devil, these self-styled sons of the Church do not content themselves with sowing on earth universal discord; to such a degree do they abhor even the thrice sacred name of the Imperial Principate that they do not hesitate shamelessly to deny the very principles on which it rests.

3. Last come the Decretalists, folk whose ignorance of theology, as of philosophy, is complete; these know nothing but their famous Decretals. To be sure, no one denies that the latter are venerable, but they count on their ultimate victory and take their stand on them in order to belittle the Empire.

Of these three kinds of adversary Dante begins by eliminating

tuos in iudicio.—Suscipiant montes pacem populo, et colles justitiam.” Solomon is again quoted in support of justice (with Daniel, David and St. Paul) in *De Monarchia*, III, pending the time when Dante will crown him in heaven, with detailed introductory notes of the greatest possible clarity on the symbolism assigned to him, in the *Divine Comedy*, Par., X, 109–114. With regard to the meaning and implication of this last passage, see below, Chap. IV, pp. 253–257.

the last, for it is not on the Decretals, but on the Scriptures, that he for his part intends to rely in order to find the truth of the Church. He likewise eliminates, as being impervious to persuasion, those who are blinded by greed. The only enemies remaining to him are therefore the Pope and those prelates who, led astray by their very zeal for our mother the Church, do not know the truth in question (III, 3). But even as Dante thus defines his adversary he dismisses his claims in advance. No doubt the reader has noticed the skilful formula which the poet uses in the passage in order to limit, even while he proclaims it, the extent of his obedience to the Pope: All that he owes not to Christ, but to Peter. To propound this article as something beyond discussion was equivalent to regarding the question as settled in advance, for it was an affirmation that there are privileges belonging to Christ which neither Peter nor his successors have inherited. More precisely still, it was tantamount to excluding privileges belonging to Christ which Peter and his successors have inherited—that very temporal primacy which Dante was making ready to refuse to them. The simplest way to convince oneself of the importance of the issue at stake is to collate the two formulas in which Dante and St. Thomas have expressed the essence of their positions:

DANTE

De Monarchia (III, 3)

“Summus namque Pontifex, Domini nostri Jesu Christi vicarius et Petri successor, cui non quicquid Christo sed quicquid Petro debemus.”

“For the Sovereign Pontiff, vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Peter’s successor, to whom we owe what is the due, not of Christ, but of Peter.”

THOMAS AQUINAS

De regimine principum (I, 14)

“ . . . summo Sacerdoti successor Petri, Christi vicario, Romano Pontifici, cui omnes reges populi christiani oportet esse subditos, sicut ipsi Domino nostro Jesu Christo.”

“ . . . the Sovereign Priest Peter’s successor, the Vicar of Christ, the Roman Pontiff, to whom all the kings of the Christian people owe submission, as to Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.”

The whole problem is there, concentrated in those two sentences, the almost word-for-word opposition between which is so striking that one cannot help wondering whether, when he wrote his, Dante was not recalling St. Thomas’s. Whatever the truth may be in this matter, the theses which these two

formulas define flagrantly contradict each other. Undoubtedly both admit without question the supremacy of the temporal power of Christ; but St. Thomas teaches that Christ bequeathed His twofold kingship, spiritual and temporal, to Peter and to all the successors of Peter, to whom all the kings of the Christian people should consequently be subject as to Jesus Christ Himself; in Dante's eyes, on the contrary, if Jesus Christ possessed, like God, a temporal sovereignty which, as it happens, He never used, that temporal authority returned to heaven with Him. The Popes have not inherited it. Between St. Thomas's Pope, *qui utriusque potestatis apicem tenet* ("who holds the supreme authority in either sphere"), and Dante's Pope, who is entirely without control of the temporal power, a choice must be made: they cannot be reconciled.¹

Dante's doctrine touching the relations between the Priesthood and the Empire has been interpreted in almost every conceivable way. Some conceive it as teaching the total isolation of the two powers: each is competent in its own sphere and owes absolutely nothing to the other. Others maintain that, whatever he may seem to say, Dante recognizes the subordination of the Emperor to the Pope. Others maintain, on the contrary, that Dante subordinates the Pope to the Emperor. Finally, some, disturbed

¹ With regard to the problem of the temporal power of the Popes, and that we may confine ourselves strictly to introductions to the study of it, see the mainly doctrinal work of CHARLES JOURNET, *La juridiction de l'Eglise sur la Cité*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1931 (especially two most excellent pages, pp. 117-118), and the mainly historical work of M. GRABMANN, *Studien über den Einfluss der aristotelischen Philosophie auf die mittelalterlichen Theorien über das Verhältnis von Kirche und Staat*, Munich, 1934. If I do not here undertake to interpret the Thomistic doctrine for its own sake, it is not that I disclaim interest in it; rather is it that, even if to St. Thomas it is only a question of an "indirect power", essentially spiritual, exercised by the Popes over temporal things, I think that Dante is at variance with him *on this point*. For the thesis here upheld to be affected by it, one of the following two propositions would have to be maintained: 1. that St. Thomas did not recognize any Papal authority, indirect or direct, in temporal things, whatever the pretext; 2. that Dante recognized some sort of temporal Papal authority direct or indirect, over the Emperor, whatever the pretext. No one, I think, would to-day uphold the first of these two theses; the second still has its champions, but we shall see that it is difficult to uphold it in the precise sense of a jurisdiction which, whatever its nature and its cause, implies some kind of limitation of the universal, exclusive and absolute temporal authority that belongs by divine right to the Emperor. If I have made a mistake, it concerns this last point, and if I have made it, the reason is that I do not see how one can agree with St. Thomas while denying the Pope a temporal authority that one concedes to Jesus Christ. St. Thomas's doctrine rests in fact on this principle—that Peter and his successors have inherited the whole power of Christ. See the passage in the *Contra errores Graecorum* (in *Opuscula*, ed. P. Mandouret, Vol. III, p. 324) where St. Thomas bases this thesis on the authority of the Pseudo-Cyril, quoting his *Liber Thesaurorum*: "Cui [sc. Petro] omnes jure divino caput inclinant et primates mundi tanquam ipsi domino Jesu obediunt."

at all these contradictions, come to the conclusion that the historians would agree more wholeheartedly if *Dante* had not contradicted himself.¹ Before resigning ourselves to this despairing solution, we must ascertain the exact nature of the apparently discordant theses which it is sought to reconcile.

In fact, Dante has several times asserted that the Emperor is subject to the influence of the Pope and even that he needs to come under it because of the beneficial effects that it produces on him. The care which Dante exercises in stressing this point as clearly as possible whenever he seems to force the contrary viewpoint to its extreme limit is a very sure guarantee that the co-existence of these two apparently contradictory theses does not result from any negligence on his part. It is because he wishes to uphold them as being simultaneously valid that Dante simultaneously affirms them. For instance, when in the *Monarchy* he discusses the classic comparison of the two powers with the two great luminaries created by God on the fourth day (*Gen.*, I, 15-16), Dante does not deny that one may, in a certain sense, liken the Empire to the moon and the Papacy to the sun; he therefore does not deny either that, in a certain sense, the Empire benefits by the action exerted on it by the Papacy, as the moon profits by the illuminative action of the sun. On the contrary, Dante expressly affirms it: "The moon receives from the sun the means to function better and more strongly (*virtuosius*), to wit, an abundant light through which it functions with greater intensity after receiving it; so, too, the temporal government . . . receives from the spiritual the means to function more strongly, through the light of grace which God, in heaven, and, on earth, the blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff, infuse into it" (*III*, 4). This, moreover, is the sense in which we must interpret the famous final article of the *Monarchy*, which scholars have already discussed at such great length without reaching agreement: "The truth with regard to this last question should not be taken in the strict sense that the Roman Prince is not subject in any respect to the Roman Pontiff, since this mortal felicity is somehow designed as a means to immortal felicity. Let Caesar therefore show for Peter that reverence which a first-born shows for his father, in order that, illuminated by the light of paternal

¹ HANS KELSEN, *Die Staatslehre des Dante Alighieri* (Wiener Staatswissenschaftliche Studien, VI Bd., 3 Heft), Vienna and Leipzig, F. Deuticke, 1905, Chap. VIII, pp. 97-98.

grace, he may shine forth more strongly (*virtuosius*) upon the terrestrial orb, of which he has been appointed ruler by Him alone Who orders all things, both spiritual and temporal" (III, 16, end).

This last sentence shows us at the same time the other aspect of Dante's thought. In the first place, God is absolutely without peer as sovereign both of the spiritual and of the temporal worlds; we may therefore be sure that neither the Emperor nor the Pope may aspire to the exercise of this twofold authority. Furthermore, Dante is careful to make it clear, in this final sentence of his work, and at the very moment when he is recalling Caesar to a feeling of filial respect for Peter, that the Emperor derives his universal authority from God alone: *Orbem terrae . . . , cui ab Illo solo praeffectus est, qui est omnium spiritualium et temporalium gubernator* ("The earth . . . , of which he has been put in command by Him alone, Who is the Lord of all things, both spiritual and temporal") (III, 16, end). If we go back from this to the first of the two sentences which have just been quoted, we shall see that together they form a perfect whole.

Indeed, even if we leave aside the skilful exegesis with which Dante disposes of the Biblical argument of the two "great luminaries" created by God on the fourth day, we should note that he argues at the end as if this allegorical reasoning were valid. Now, even if we admit that it is so, the thesis that Dante wishes to prove remains unaffected. In the first place, the moon does not owe its existence to the sun: *Quantum est ad esse, nullo modo luna dependet a sole*. ("As regards its existence, the moon is in no wise dependent on the sun"). It follows clearly from this that the Imperial power likewise does not owe its existence to the Pope, but to God alone, Who created these two powers unaided, as He created the moon unaided to be an accompaniment to the sun. Moreover, speaking generally, the moon is likewise independent of the sun so far as its own energy and functioning are concerned: it owes its movement to its own driving force (which is not the sun's), and the influence which it exerts proceeds from its own rays (not from the solar rays), for it possesses a certain luminosity of its own, as may be seen whenever it is in eclipse: *Habet enim aliquam lucem ex se* (III, 4). Dante's intention is therefore clear: he desires an Imperial authority which owes its existence directly to God, not to the Pope; which wields a

power whose course is in itself, not in the authority of the Pope, and which, finally, is capable of moving and acting of itself, by itself, of its own volition, without borrowing from the Pontifical authority the mainspring of its resolutions. In short—and this is the decisive point—the influence exerted by the Pope over the Emperor is analogous to that of a blessing, i.e. of a form of grace: *Lucem gratiae, quam in coelo Deus et in terra benedictio summi Pontificis infundit illi* ("The light of grace, which in heaven God, and on earth the blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff, shed upon him") (III, 4).

There are, then, two errors to be avoided in interpreting Dante's doctrine. One might at first think that, if the Pope's influence over the Emperor extends no further, it amounts to very little. This would be a grave error. Dante's Christianity was certainly somewhat personal; this son of the Church liked to reason with his mother about the conditions of his obedience, but he was not an indifferent Christian any more than our own Charles Péguy. Such men desire to know the exact nature of that to which they bow the knee, but, the decision once taken, their genuflexions are complete. For a Pope who is faithful to his office and who acts only as the spiritual father of mankind Dante's respect and love are boundless. The proof is that, unyielding though he is in these matters, he made a point of explicitly pardoning those among them whom "zeal of the keys", not greed, so unfortunately led astray. And not only them, but those of their fellow crusaders against the temporal power whom the same zeal had deluded: the "good friar Thomas" seems indeed to have profited by this indulgence in Dante's heart, and Dante must have loved him greatly to have forgiven him on this point. But this is not all. By reducing the problem of the two powers to a particular case of the general problem of nature and grace Dante was, incontestably, locating it in its true sphere. He knew, having derived the notion from St. Thomas, whose fundamental thesis it is, that the peculiar effect of grace is not to vindicate nature or to suppress it, but to perfect it. He knew also that in the eyes of that same St. Thomas the temporal order exists as a natural order created by God as such, endowed with special powers for the purpose of attaining its special goal, and that the Church is not there to destroy it by taking its place, but to give it new vigour and consolation, and to guide it to its

ultimate supernatural goal through grace. In imagining that the work of grace thus conceived was in Dante's eyes a superfluous work we cannot be attributing to him his true conception of it. To walk in Dante's world as a pagan is to walk as a stranger. Conversely, to live in it as a Thomist is, if not to live as a stranger, at all events to propagate a misapprehension, for the special achievement of Dante's thought is to have eliminated the hierarchical gradations essential to Thomism and replaced them merely with a system of equal authorities. In St. Thomas, the actual distinction between the orders justifies and necessitates their gradation; in Dante, it excludes it. Here, then, we are faced not with a Christian world and a pagan world, but with two different dispositions of the Christian world and even with two dispositions which clash only by virtue of an identical principle: Grace presupposes nature; hence, without rendering itself purposeless, it cannot suppress nature.

In order to understand the structure of the Christian world as Dante understood it, we must return once more to his doctrine whereby the world is divided into three orders, unequal in dignity but mutually independent in their respective spheres—namely, the human order, the political order, the order of the Church. Dante and the hierocrats are agreed as to the absolute validity of the fundamental principle implicit in the philosophy of Aristotle, viz. that everything which falls within a given genus is reduced to a single term, the measure of everything which falls within that genus: *Omnia quae sunt unius generis reducuntur ad unum, quod est mensura omnium quae sub illo genere sunt.* The antagonism between Dante and the hierocrats arises from the fact that they do not agree as to the number and nature of the genera which should be thus reduced to uniformity.

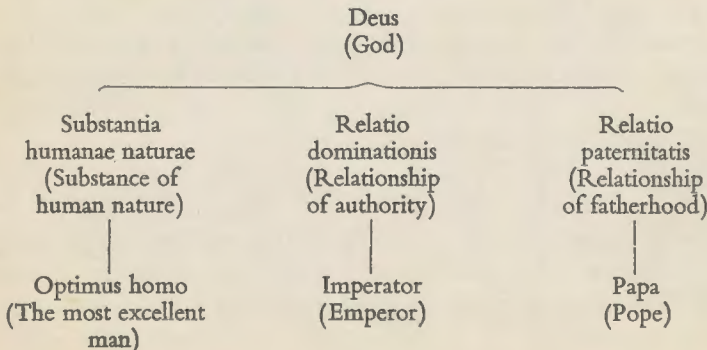
Whenever Dante has to settle a conflict of authorities, his first care is to define the *genus* of the authorities in question. Indeed, in his eyes the independence and the autonomy of the genera constitute an invariable rule. Let us, for instance, suppose we are seeking that which possesses authority over man; we shall have to propound the question in terms of man *qua* man, and in no other sense. Man is what he is *qua* man by virtue of his substantial form, which places him in a genus (animal), in a species of that genus (reasonable), and makes him a substance. He who has authority in the genus "man" is therefore the unit of measure

by which the worth of those substances which we call men is estimated. For all men fall within one and the same genus; they are therefore reduced to a single term which is their measure. What is this term? It is the perfect man, the Idea of man, if one may so put it; in other words, it is the pattern of the virtuous man as described in the final books of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*. If, therefore, we wish to know who has authority to say how man should live *qua* man, it is fitting that we should turn to him who most perfectly realizes in himself human nature, the substance "man". The rule has no exceptions and applies to every man, including Popes and Emperors: *Nam, prout sunt homines, habent reduci ad optimum hominem, qui est mensura omnium aliorum et ydea, ut dicam, quisquis ille sit, ad existentem maxime unum in genere suo: ut haberi potest ex ultimis Ethica ad Nicomachum* ("For, in so far as they are men, their standard must be the most excellent man (whoever he may be) who is the measure and ideal of all others, so to say—he who is in the highest degree one in his own kind, as may be inferred from the end of the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*") (III, 12).

It inevitably follows from this that if, *qua* men, the Pope and the Emperor ought to be reduced to uniformity, both are amenable to a principle and a measure other than the Papacy and the Empire. Both should in that case be judged by the norm of Aristotle's virtuous man, whose human perfection measures and judges their degree of human excellence. It is quite another matter in the case of the two distinct genera which they themselves represent. To be Emperor, or to be Pope, is not the same as to be a man. To be an Emperor, *as such*, is to be a master; to be a Pope, *as such*, is to be a spiritual father. Now, just as a man is a man by virtue of the substantial form which causes him to be such, he is a master, or he is a father, by virtue of the incidental forms which cause a specific human being to be also a master or a father. In other words, one is a man and is judged as such in the category of substance, but one is a master, or a father, and is judged as such, in the category of relationship. Thus, the Pope regarded as a Pope is such by virtue of the incidental form of Papacy, which confers on him the relationship, incidental to the human substance, of spiritual fatherhood. The Emperor, regarded as an Emperor, is such by virtue of the incidental form of the Imperial authority (*imperium*), which

confers on him the relationship, incidental to the substance "man", of sovereign lordship of men's wills. If, therefore, one wishes to reduce the two genera to uniformity, it is useless to seek a measure common to them both, for it does not exist; one can hope to find a principle of uniformity and of measure only in each of these two orders of relationship taken separately: *Altera sub ambitu paternitatis et altera sub ambitu dominationis* ("The one in the sphere of fatherhood and the other in the sphere of authority") (III, 12). Hence three distinct orders, whose independence is in Dante such that one can never generalize from one to another: All men are governed and measured by the ideal man of Aristotle; all spiritual sons are governed and measured by the supreme father, who is the Pope; all subordinates are governed and measured by the supreme sovereign, who is the Emperor. The fatal error which it is important not to commit would be to wish to subordinate one of these principles to another, as if it were possible for them to fall within a single genus or a single species. Dante is categorical on this point, for his whole doctrine is bound up with it: *Non potest dici quod alterum subalternetur alteri* ("It cannot be said that the one is subordinate to the other") (III, 12). Thus, just as the Pope has no superior qua Pope, the Emperor has no superior qua Emperor, nor the wise man qua man.

None—let us be clear—in this world. For God is the measure and the supreme authority that governs, measures and judges all substances and all relationships. If we assemble these notions, we obtain the following scheme, which summarizes the disposition of the authorities in the Dantesque universe:



and another final goal in so far as he comprises an immortal soul, which amounts to saying that man has two final goals, the one to be attained in this life before death, the other to be attained in the future life after death.¹

These *duo ultima*, which correspond in the fullest sense to the *duo beatitudinis* of the *Banquet*,² have a strange sound to ears accustomed to the language of St. Thomas Aquinas. One of the principal theses of the latter's *De regimine principum* is, on the contrary, that man has but one final goal: the eternal beatitude to which he is summoned by God and which he can attain only through that Church without which there is no salvation. That precisely is the reason why the princes of this world are subject to the Pope, as to Jesus Christ Himself, Whose vicar he is. The connection between the two pairs of theses is here fully apparent, as is the irreducible character of their opposition. Dante maintains that man has two final goals; if both are final, neither can be subordinate to the other; if they cannot be graduated, neither can the two authorities that preside over each of these two orders. St. Thomas certainly does not deny that natural man has a natural

¹ Dante here uses a formula which was transparent in his time, but which may mislead his modern readers: "Nam homo, si consideratur secundum utramque partem essentialiam, scilicet animam et corpus, corruptibilis est si consideretur tantum secundum unam, scilicet corpus; si vero secundum alteram, scilicet animam, incorruptibilis est" (*De Monarchia*, III, 16). This mode of expression, which is wholly classical, consists actually in contrasting the "human compound", including the soul, as the animating force of the body, with the soul considered by itself and in its own substantiality. It is even possible that Dante was here recalling a famous passage: "Duae quippe vitae sunt: una terrena, altera coelestis; altera corporea, altera spiritualis. Una qua corpus vivit ex anima, altera qua anima vivit ex Deo. Utraque bonum suum habet quo vegetatur et nutritur ut possit subsistere. Vita terrena bonis terrenis alitur, vita spiritualis bonis spiritualibus nutritur. Ad vitam terrenam pertinent omnia quae terrena sunt. Ad vitam spirituales quae spiritualia sunt bona omnia. . . . Propterea in utroque populo secundum utramque vitam distributo, potestates sunt constitutae. In laicis . . . potestas est terrena. In clericis autem . . . potestas est divina. Illa igitur potestas saecularis dicitur, ista spiritualis nominatur. . . . Terrena potestas caput habet regem. Spiritualis potestas habet summum pontificem. Ad potestatem regis pertinent quae terrena sunt, et ad terrenam vitam facta omnia. Ad potestatem summi pontificis pertinent quae spiritualia sunt, et vitae spirituali attributa universa" (HUGH OF SAINT VICTOR, *De Sacramentis*, Lib. II, P. 2, cap. 4; Pat. lat., Vol. 176, col. 417-418). The parallelism of the two doctrines is evident, but their meaning is different. Not only does Hugh of Saint Victor say nothing of the universal Monarch who is actually the subject of Dante's treatise, but he imagines these two tribes as the two walls of the Church (*loc. cit.*, cap. 3, col. 417B), in the unity of which the whole temporal order is thus included. It is therefore natural that Hugh not only affirmed the superiority of the pontifical dignity to the royal dignity, which Dante himself will not dispute, but attributed to the Sovereign Pontiff the power of conferring the kingship (*loc. cit.*, cap. 4, col. 418D), which Dante categorically denies him (*De Monarchia*, III, 6). Regarding this part of Dante's reasoning, consult B. NARDI, *Saggi di filosofia dantesca*, pp. 272-284.

² See above, Chap. II, pp. 129-142.

goal to seek and attain in this life. Rather ought it to be said that, of all the theologians of the Middle Ages, none did more than he to establish this thesis. It is inseparable from his differentiation between nature and grace, which pervades his work like a principle infinitely productive of unity in the sphere of life. On the other hand, differentiation between the orders is accompanied by unity in the Thomistic doctrine only because here differentiation between the orders entails their gradation. Consequently St. Thomas never admitted that man's natural goal in this life was man's final goal in this life, for man experiences this life only with a view to the after-life, and his goal in this life is to be sought only with a view to the goal of the after-life. With an utter inflexibility that excludes in advance Dante's thesis considered in its proper form, St. Thomas declares that the final goal of the body of society is not to live in accordance with virtue, but, through a virtuous life, to come to the enjoyment of God: *Non est ergo ultimus finis multitudinis congregatae vivere secundum virtutem, sed per virtuosam vitam pervenire ad fruitionem divinam*. Once the goals have been thus graduated, those who are charged with leading men to them are inevitably graduated as well, for those who are charged with the care of the preliminary goals must be subject to whoever is in charge of the final goal, and must be guided by his orders: *Sic enim ei ad quem finis ultimi cura pertinet, subdi debent illi ad quos pertinet cura antecedentium finium et ejus imperio dirigi*.

Hence, there is in genuine Thomism a supreme head, who controls all other heads, for the simple reason that "he who is in charge of the final goal always finds himself in command of [imperare] those who labour at the means prescribed for the attainment of the final goal".¹ Such, in St. Thomas's eyes, is the Roman Pontiff, mankind's supreme guide to the beatific vision, the sole end of man, beyond which there is no other and in comparison with which all the rest are only a means. Since he conceded to St. Thomas, and in the first place to Aristotle, that the head is he who prescribes the means with a view to the end, Dante could only avoid St. Thomas's conclusion if he refused to subordinate the end envisaged by the Emperor to the

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *De regimine principum*, I, 14. It will be profitable to compare the analogous doctrine of twofold beatitude, in ENGELBERTI . . . ADMONTENSIS, *De ortu et fine Romani Imperii*, Basileae, J. Oporinus, 1553, cap. XVII, pp. 92-98.

end envisaged by the Pope. That is why, as we have just seen, he exalted the goal of political life to the dignity of a final goal, thus making of the Imperial power a supreme authority in its own sphere, an authority "in charge of a final goal", like the Roman Pontiff.

We do not know if Dante had in mind the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas when he wrote these pages, but it is a fact that the *De Monarchia*, III, 16 is in such direct opposition to the *De regimine principum*, I, 13 that it could not have been more so if Dante had written his chapter with the intention of refuting that of St. Thomas. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, as he here opposes St. Thomas, he elsewhere opposes his continuator Tolomeo di Lucca, with such frequency that it can scarcely be doubted that he had before his eyes the *De regimine principum* as completed by Tolomeo, that is to say as we know it to-day. This fact does not constitute a proof, for there are many arguments which are employed by all defenders of the subordination of the State to the Church, but the analogies between the two treatises seem too numerous to be attributed to mere chance.¹ Whatever the truth of the matter, the doctrinal opposition between Dante and St. Thomas remains a fact in itself, and one that certainly seems undeniable.²

¹ See THEODORE SILVERSTEIN, *On the Genesis of "De Monarchia, II, 5"*, in *Speculum*, July, 1938 (Vol. XIII, No. 3), pp. 326-349. The object of this work is to establish that, as regards the passage in question, the *De Monarchia* draws its inspiration from, what time it opposes, the *Determinatio compendiosa de Iurisdictione imperii*, ascribed to Tolomeo di Lucca (ed. Marius Krammer, Hanover and Leipzig, Hahn, 1909), and the *De regimine principum*, Tolomeo's continuation.

² It is quite true that St. Thomas regards the determination of man's natural goal as the task of natural reason (cf. G. MANACORDA, *Storicismo attualista: seconda puntata*, in *Sofia*, Vol. II, January-June, 1934-XII, p. 153). It should even be conceded to this author that St. Thomas proves by reason alone that man's final goal is the sight of God (*Sum. theol.*, I^a II^{ae}, qu. II, art. 8, and qu. III, art. 1 and 8). What we have not succeeded in finding in St. Thomas is that man has another *ultimum* besides the beatific vision. The question here is not whether reason alone is equal to discovering what this *ultimum* is, but whether, in the Thomistic doctrine, man has one *ultimum*, or two *ultima*. Now not only—so far as we know—did St. Thomas never speak of *duo ultima*, nor, in this sense, of *duplex finis*, but his doctrine excludes even the possibility of their existence. When he speaks of Aristotle, a pure philosopher, St. Thomas tells us "quod opinio Aristotelis fuit quod ultima felicitas quam homo in vita ista acquirere potest, sit cognitio de rebus divinis qualis per scientias speculativas haberi potest" (*Cont. Gent.*, III, 44, *sub fin.*); but instead of deducing from this that Christians have two final goals, St. Thomas comes to the conclusion "quod ultima hominis felicitas non sit in hac vita" (*Cont. Gent.*, III, 48). And here it is certainly a question of the final goal naturally desired by man: "Felicitas autem est ultimus finis, quem homo naturaliter desiderat. Est igitur hominis desiderium naturale ad hoc quod in felicitate stabilietur. . . . In vita autem ista non est aliqua certa stabilitas. . . . Non est igitur possibile in hac vita esse ultimum hominis felicitatem" (*loc. cit.*). If there is any natural felicity in this life, far from constituting a

Starting from this point, indeed, Dante will now make the principle of finality yield consequences quite contrary to those which St. Thomas Aquinas had inferred from it. Providence, we said, has offered man two final goals: happiness in this life, which consists in the practice of characteristically human virtue, and the happiness of eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of the sight of God and which man cannot attain through his natural powers unaided by grace. Now, points out Dante, just as we must have different middle terms in order to reach different conclusions, we must use different means to attain different ends. We shall therefore reach our natural final goal by following the teachings of the philosophers, that is to say by regulating our actions in accordance with the law of the intellectual and moral virtues. We shall reach our supernatural final goal thanks to spiritual teachings, which transcend human reason, provided that we obey them by acting in accordance with the theological virtues—faith, hope and charity (III, 16).

This is the exact point at which Dante will epitomize his whole doctrine in a wonderfully compact sentence in which every word tells and every member assigns its special function to each of the three authorities which share control of the Dantesque universe: "Although these conclusions and means have been shown to us, some by human reason, which has been explained to us in its entirety¹ by the philosophers, others thanks to the

goal distinct from the final goal, it is merely a stepping-stone to it. Such, says St. Thomas, seems to have been the thought of Aristotle (*loc. cit.*, *Potest autem aliquis . . .*), who, unaware that the beatific vision was possible, "posuit hominem non consequi felicitatem perfectam, sed suo modo" (*ibid.*, *Propter has autem . . .*). It therefore seems wrong to put into St. Thomas's mouth, in order to bring Dante closer to him, such expressions as "la salute puramente terrena" (G. MANACORDA, *op. cit.*, p. 153), not only because St. Thomas does not make use of them, but because all his energies are bent on proving that man's final goal, as conceived by natural reason, is prescribed as a stepping-stone, and is subordinate, to that goal of whose attainment Revelation shows us the possibility. Dante's dualism, and the *temporal final goal* which it implies, are excluded in advance by St. Thomas. B. Nardi, with great shrewdness, has seen and pointed out that there is disagreement here between Dante and St. Thomas, and that this difference implies another, regarding the nature of philosophy itself (*Saggi di filosofia dantesca*, p. 282 and pp. 304-305). I am convinced that he is entirely right on this point, and even that what he says is an incontestable and obvious historical fact. On the other hand, the reflections with which he accompanies his conclusions (pp. 282-283) seem to me of most doubtful quality. There are feelings at work behind the writings of Dante, as there are behind those of St. Thomas, but the two compositions are governed by a perfect logic, which unfolds its consequences starting from different principles.

¹ Dante here uses some very strong expressions: "Has igitur conclusiones et media, licet ostensa sint nobis, haec ab humana ratione quae per philosophos *tota* nobis innouit . . ." (*De Monarchia*, III, 16). In the *Defensor pacis*, even the Averroists Marsilius of Padua and Jean de Jandun will not dare to go so far ("Has etenim [disciplinas] quasi

Holy Spirit which has revealed to us the supernatural truth essential to man through the Prophets, the sacred writers, the co-eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, and His disciples, human greed would none the less turn its back on them if men, like horses which in their brutishness run wild, were not curbed by the bridle and the bit" (III, 16). Nothing could be clearer than the distinction between these three authorities: philosophy, which teaches us the *whole* truth about the natural goal of man; theology, which alone leads us to our supernatural goal; finally, political power, which, holding human greed in check, constrains men, by the force of the law, to respect the natural truth of the philosophers and the supernatural truth of the theologians.

If, then, we arrange these ideas, we obtain the following scheme (shown on opposite page), in which the two forms of beatitude are seen to be as distinct from and as independent of each other as are the means to their attainment and the two supreme authorities by which men are led to them.

If this is correct, the special function of the Priesthood and the Empire stands clearly revealed, and the radical distinction between their goals is the most complete guarantee of their independence that could be desired. On the one hand, the Pope, who leads the human race to eternal life through revelation; on the other hand, the Emperor, who leads the human race to temporal happiness through philosophy. Thus is newly affirmed the alliance between Philosophy and the Empire already proclaimed in the *Banquet: Propter quod opus fuit homini duplici directivo secundum duplicem finem: scilicet summo Pontifice, qui secundum revelata humanum genus perduceret ad vitam eternam, et Imperatore, qui*

omnes habemus ex traditione admirabilis Philosophi et reliquorum gloriosorum virorum. . ."—*Defensor pacis*, I, 6, 9, ed. Previtè-Orton, Cambridge U.P., 1928, p. 25). It seems, however, that it would be a waste of time to try to extract from this passage an answer to the question: Is Dante a complete rationalist? His words are important only for the problem they propound. Dante is certainly thinking here of Aristotle and his *Ethica ad Nicomachum*; what he means to say is that natural human reason, alone and unaided by faith, is equal to discovering all the moral truth necessary for the good management of the Empire. The rest does not interest him here. When, like L. Pietrobono, one tries to make him say more, one provokes a reply that makes him say less, like that of M. Barbi (*Razionalismo e misticismo . . .*, IV, in *Studi Danteschi*, Vol. XVII (1933), pp. 5-44, especially pp. 29-31). In both cases he is made to say something different from what he did say. Dante explicitly taught that faith surpasses reason in all that concerns heavenly things, such as the independent Intelligences or God Himself. That is why he repeats that our intellect does not attain perfection in this life; but Dante never said that our intellect was not fully equal to leading us to the natural final goal of earthly life. He even says the opposite in the passage from the *De Monarchia*, III, 16, which we are commenting upon here and in those from the *Convivio* which we have already studied (pp. 105-112).

whence all forms of authority are derived. Most certainly, as Dante opportunely recalls in the last lines of his treatise, the happiness of this mortal life is prescribed, in a certain way—in a way which he does not, as it happens, specify—with a view to immortal beatitude. The Roman Emperor is therefore subject to the Pope in something—something which this time he will specify: the supremacy of the Pope is the supremacy of Fatherhood: "Let Caesar therefore show for Peter that respect which an eldest son should show for his father. Thus, lightened by paternal *grace*, he will the more efficaciously lighten this terrestrial orb, of which he has been appointed ruler by *Him alone* Who orders all things, both temporal and spiritual."¹

Some have tried to find in these last lines a belated repudiation of the entire treatise.² To do so is to misread them badly, for their last words would then be a repudiation of the repudiation

¹ "Quae quidem veritas ultimae quaestionis non sic stricte recipienda est, ut Romanus Princeps in aliquo Romano Pontifici non subjaceat, cum mortalitas ista felicitas quodam modo ad immortalem felicitatem ordinetur. Illa igitur reverentia Caesar utatur ad Petrum qua primogenitus filius debet uti ad patrem: ut luce paternae gratiae illustratus virtuosius orbem terrae irradiet, cui ab Illo solo praefectus est, qui est omnium spiritualium et temporalium gubernator" (DANTE, *De Monarchia*, III, 16). The expression *quodam modo* is vague. It is therefore dangerous to try to define its meaning. Nevertheless, the comparison between earthly felicity and the Earthly Paradise on the one hand, and heavenly felicity and the Heavenly Paradise on the other (*De Monarchia*, III, 16), suggests a possible interpretation. If earthly felicity is to heavenly felicity as the Earthly Paradise is to the Heavenly Paradise, we may say that it is designed with a view to it in the same way as a prefiguration is designed with a view to that which it prefigures. I give this interpretation, however, merely as a hypothesis; there is no passage in Dante that warrants it. It is possible, as B. NARDI would have it (*Saggi di filosofia dantesca*, p. 285), that this conclusion is an addition made by Dante after the completion of the treatise. Yet this is by no means certain, for in it Dante retracts nothing of what he has said. On the other hand, the sentence certainly betrays his desire to conclude on as conciliatory a note as possible, by going as far to meet his opponents as his doctrine permits him to go.

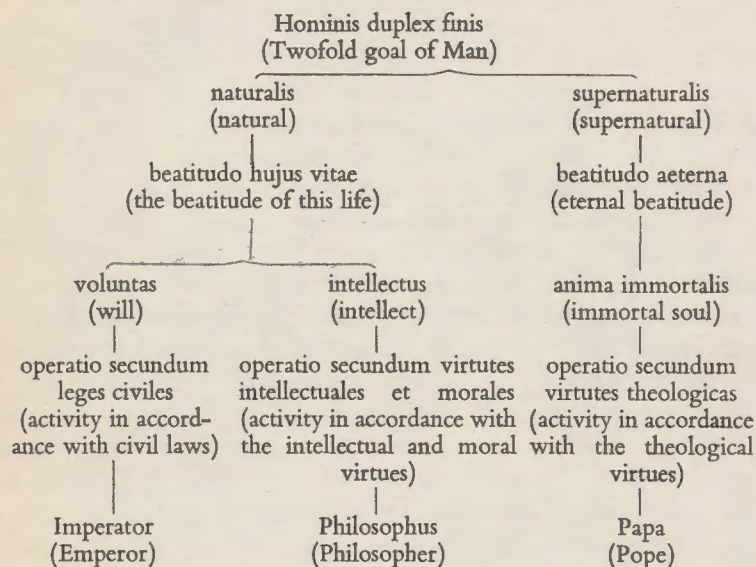
² The conclusion of the *De Monarchia* is the chief argument of those who seek to make Dante conform to the absolute authority of the Church on this point. Thus, among many others, J. RIVIÈRE, *Le problème de l'Eglise et de l'Etat au temps de Philippe le Bel*, Paris, 1926, p. 338. Bellarmin is largely responsible for this movement of reconciliation (cf. P. RONZY, *Bellarmin et Dante*, in *Mélanges sur Dante*, ed. P. Mignon, *Nouvelle Revue d'Italie*, Rome, 1931, pp. 93-108; especially pp. 106-107). More recently, G. MANACORDA has returned to this passage in opposition to G. Gentile (G. MANACORDA, *Storicismo attualista: seconda puntata*, in *Sofia*, Vol. II, January-June, 1934-XII, p. 152). In doing so he forgets that if the Emperor receives from the Pope the grace which enables him the better to exercise his authority, he by no means receives that authority from him. To G. Gentile, who opposes to the orthodox doctrine the Dantesque idea of a "purely human State", G. Manacorda retorts: "And where, then, is the purely human State, if the State derives its authority from God?" If it comes to that, how can nature exist, if it is created by God? In Dante's eyes, the Emperor does not derive his authority from the Pope for the very reason that he derives it from God. On the other hand, some entirely objective conclusions will be found in F. KERN, *Humana civilitas*, p. 27, note 1, and in N. ZINGARELLI, *La vita, i tempi e le opere di Dante*, Vallardi, Milan, 1931, Parte IIa, p. 701.

itself—*cui ab Illo solo praefectus est* ("of which he has been put in command by Him alone"), says Dante explicitly. To the end, therefore, the Emperor remains independent of the Pope in the field of the Imperial authority. From him he only receives grace; he therefore owes him only the son's respect for a father whose goal is nobler than that which falls within his own competence, *but on whom he is dependent only in the specifically separate field of spiritual fatherhood*. Let us, moreover, remember who are Dante's chief opponents throughout this Third Book: *Isti vero ad quos erit tota disputatio sequens, asserentes auctoritatem Imperii ab auctoritate Ecclesiae dependere velut artifex inferior dependet ab architecto . . .* ("Now those to whom the whole of the following disputation will be directed, inasmuch as they assert that the authority of the Empire is subordinate to the authority of the Church just as the junior artisan is subordinate to the architect . . .") (III, 4). Whether he knows it or not, what he is rejecting is certainly St. Thomas's thesis. If we are to find in these last lines a repudiation of the entire work, which would in itself be rather strange, we must once more forget that the graduation of the orders in the matter of *absolute dignity* does not confer on the superior orders any *authority* over the inferior ones. In Dante, the orders of jurisdiction are closed systems, which meet only in God.

The *De Monarchia*, then, is a perfect complement to the *Banquet*, each work settling the specific problem with which it deals, and dovetailing into the other. Henceforth we see Dante's world as a system of relationships of authority and obedience. In this world philosophy rules over reason, but the wills of philosophers owe obedience to the Emperor and their faith owes allegiance to the Pope. The Emperor rules alone over men's wills, but his reason owes obedience to the Philosopher and his faith to the Pope. The Pope rules without peer over men's souls, but his reason owes obedience to the Philosopher and his will to the Emperor. All three, however, owe obedience and the tribute of faith to Him from Whom each immediately derives the supreme authority which he exercises in his own sphere—to God, the sovereign Emperor of the terrestrial world as well as of the celestial world, in Whose unity all irreconcilables meet.

In order, therefore, to obtain a comprehensive scheme of the human *ultima* and of the authorities that preside over them we

should have to place at the top God, as being the sovereign Love and the supreme Mover Who draws the universal human fellowship to Himself through the following twofold *ultimum*:¹



To convince oneself of the gulf that here separates Dante from St. Thomas, it is enough to refer to the passage in which the Dominican Guido Vernani takes his stand against the thesis of "twofold beatitude" propounded in the *Monarchy*. "This man," says Vernani of Dante, "did not need to discern a twofold beatitude resulting from a twofold nature, corruptible and incorruptible, for in corruptible nature there can, strictly speaking, be neither virtue nor beatitude. He says, moreover, that man is predestined to these two goals by God. Whereupon I say that man is not predestined by God to temporal beatitude as to a final goal, because such beatitude has never been capable of ending

¹ This scheme deals with the different forms of jurisdiction, not with those of dignity. The noblest goal is the Pope's, then the Philosopher's, finally the Emperor's, but this does not mean that the Pope as such has any authority over the Philosopher or over the Emperor as such. That is why, in Dante, one order may be designed with a view to another as if the latter were its goal without, however, being subordinate to it in the matter of authority. Thus, it is true to say that the goal of political peace is to make possible the contemplative life (cf. F. KERN, *Humana civilitas*, pp. 17-22 and pp. 127 seq.), but it in no way follows from this—nor, for that matter, does Kern maintain that it does—that political authority is dependent on the authority of the philosopher or on that of the theologian.

and satisfying man's hunger. Even philosophically speaking, the action of such virtues [*sc.* the moral virtues] is designed with a view to the contemplative life, in order that through those virtues man, all his passions having been quelled, may more calmly and freely contemplate eternal things. . . . Man is therefore predestined to eternal felicity as to his final goal, and should organize and employ all his assets—natural, moral and supernatural—with a view to securing it."¹ There is not one original word in this criticism of Dante, but that is the very reason why it interests us. Guido Vernani's firm opposition to Dante is nothing but the opposition of the Thomistic universe to one of the gravest dangers that have ever threatened it.

V. DANTE'S PLACE IN HISTORY

The most laborious, but the surest and most profitable, way to estimate correctly the meaning and importance of Dante's political philosophy, particularly as regards the idea of philosophy implicit in it, is to place it in its proper historical and doctrinal perspective. It would be something of merely local importance, were it possible to conceive of a political philosophy which did not depend on any general philosophy. Such is not the case, and we shall shortly see that Dante's attitude to these problems involved him in a certain number of other questions, the exact determination of which is important for the understanding of his work.

It may be postulated as a historically verifiable philosophical law that *the manner in which one conceives the relationship of the State to the Church, that in which one conceives the relationship of philosophy to theology and that in which one conceives the relationship of nature to grace, are necessarily correlated*. Considered from this point of view, the political doctrines of the Middle Ages may be divided, roughly at least, into three main types. There can be no question of identifying any one of them with one of these types: the facts of history do not in their diversity permit themselves to be identified with pure doctrinal essences any more

¹ GUIDO VERNANI, *De reprobatione Monarchiae*, ed. Jarro (G. Piccini), Bemporad, Florence, 1906, pp. 42 and 45. As regards this treatise and its author's writings, see M. GRABMANN, *Studien über den Einfluss der aristotelischen Philosophie auf die mittelalterlichen Theorien über das Verhältnis von Kirche und Staat*, Munich, 1934, pp. 76-100.

than individuals permit themselves to be identified with the essential type of their species. One may, however, relate particular doctrines to certain types, of which they are distinct individual realizations, and classify them according as the resemblance which they bear to one or another of them is more or less striking.

The first of these types is characterized by a dominating tendency to integrate the order of nature with the order of grace in the highest degree possible. Doctrines of this type may be recognized by the fact that in them the distinction between grace and nature tends to merge into the distinction between good and evil. The reason for this is obvious. These are essentially religious doctrines. Centring on the problem of healing fallen nature, these doctrines take into account only that part of nature which needs to be healed through grace, that is to say the wounds that have been inflicted on it by sin—in short, its corruption. If one is to appraise this attitude correctly, it is essential not to transform it into a philosophical doctrine. To do so would be tantamount to making those who adopt it say that nature is essentially evil. As Christians, they know, on the contrary, that all that is, in so far as it is, is good. When they speak of nature, they do so not as philosophers whose purpose is to define its essence, but as doctors who regard it as a patient to be cured, or rather as priests who regard it as a creature to be saved. The *opus creationis* ("work of creation") interests the philosopher directly, but the *opus recreationis* ("work of re-creation") is the direct concern of the priest. The attitude to nature which we are describing is essentially a "priestly" attitude. As such, it is characterized by three features, whose permanence in history is remarkable: it tends to integrate the order of nature with the order of grace in the highest degree possible, to integrate the order of reason with that of faith in the highest degree possible, and to integrate the order of the State with that of the Church in the highest degree possible.

Since it is this third aspect of the problem that particularly engages our attention here, it will be enough to go back as far as St. Augustine to find its prototype. If there is anything that corresponds to the formula "political Augustinism", it should be said that, when it penetrates into political problems, Augustinism tends to integrate the State with the Church, by virtue of

an internal logic which nothing in it can keep from reaching its conclusion. The two communities which Augustine took a special delight in describing and which include all others are the City of God and the Earthly City. Now both are supernatural and religious cities, designated by two "mystic" names, of which one, Jerusalem, designates the community of all the elect, past, present and future, while the other, Babylon, designates the community formed by all the damned, past, present and future. Strictly speaking, no earthly community can be identified with one or the other of these mystic cities; indeed, it cannot be said that the Church harbours only the elect, or even that it harbours all the elect; yet the Church is the most exact approximation on earth to the City of God, because it is the city of God's intention; as for Babylon, it is the worldly city and the prototype of all pagan States, in so far as, in accordance with Pagan laws, their organization has in view ends that are not God's ends.¹

In the form in which he left it, Augustine's doctrine contained an idea of capital importance: that of a universal religious city; but it said nothing of a universal temporal community of which, on the morrow of the sack of Rome by the Barbarians, the condition of the Roman Empire scarcely invited him to think. Augustine cannot, then, be represented as having absorbed the Empire into the Church. Undoubtedly he considers that a Christian Emperor can and should serve the Church, but the State itself, regarded as such, is in his eyes simply a variable quantity. If the State is essentially pagan, as had been the case with the old Roman Empire, it is essentially evil and may in fact be identified with Babylon, as the Church may be with Jerusalem. If the State is not exclusively pagan, but tolerates Christian citizens, or is even governed by a Christian ruler, its members will be divided between the two mystic cities to which they owe allegiance: "Just as there is only one holy city—Jerusalem—so there is only one city of iniquity—Babylon. All the wicked belong to Babylon just as all the godly belong to Jerusalem."² As for the States themselves, they are no longer

¹ For the sake of greater brevity, I venture at this point to refer the reader to my *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1929, Chap. IV, §II: *La société chrétienne*, pp. 220-238.

² ST. AUGUSTINE, *Enarr. in Ps. 86, 6*; Pat. lat., Vol. 37, col. 1106. H. SCHOLZ (*Glaube und Unglaube in der Weltgeschichte. Ein Kommentar zu Augustins De Civitate Dei . . .*, Leipzig, J. C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1921, p. 102) says that Augustine passed on

in either camp, for they can no longer be identified with Babylon and they have not yet become one with Jerusalem.

As soon as there was a Holy Roman Empire, its integration with the Church became, on the contrary, inevitable by virtue of the very principles which Augustine had laid down. If, in practice, a pagan State may be automatically identified with Babylon, a Christian State may be automatically identified with Jerusalem. After the reign of Charlemagne, during that of Louis the Pious, the integration of the State with the Church is an accomplished fact. Beginning from this time, indeed, we encounter with growing frequency examples of those distinctive formulas in which the definition of the Church includes the State. This is a new fact and one big with consequences. To tell the truth, from the very day that theologians and canonists first gave currency to a conception of the Church in which the temporal order was included as a matter of course, a reaction such as Dante's became inevitable. "The body of the Holy Church of God in its entirety divides to form principally two eminent persons," it was said as early as the ninth century, "the priestly and the royal." Likewise Jonas of Orleans: "All the faithful should know that the universal Church is the body of Christ, its head is this same Christ, and in it (*in ea*) we find, principally, two persons, to wit, the priestly and the royal, and the predominance of the priestly over the other is the greater inasmuch as it will have to render an account to God even of kings."¹

temporal society "ein reguläres Todesurteil". In reality Augustine condemns the earthly, city, but not necessarily temporal society. In his eyes, what is evil is not temporality, but the "world". Conversely, the mediaeval conception of a universal theocracy has been called "political Augustinism" (H. X. ARQUILLIÈRE, *Sur la formation de la "Théocratie pontificale"*, in *Mélanges Ferdinand Lot*, Paris, E. Champion, 1925, and the same author's *L'Augustinisme politique*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1934). The formula has the advantage of emphasizing the part played by the thought of Augustine in the doctrinal justification of mediaeval theocracy; its drawback, very clearly seen and indicated by its author, is that it fosters the belief that St. Augustine himself thought of it. If he prepared it, he did so, in the words of H. X. Arquillière, "in spite of the fact that he was far from suspecting it". The formula is, in any case, of little importance; the essential thing is to remember that nothing like a "Pontifical theocracy" was ever advocated or even, apparently, imagined by St. Augustine.

¹ The first passage is taken from a Letter addressed by the bishops of the Empire in 829 (Council of Paris) to the Emperor Louis the Pious; see *Mon. Germ. historica*, Leg., sect. II, Vol. II, No. 196, quoted by R. W. CARLYLE in *A History of Mediaeval Political Theory in the West*, London, 1903, Vol. I, p. 254: "Principaliter itaque totius sanctae Dei ecclesiae corpus in duas eximias personas, in sacerdotalem videlicet et regalem, sicut a sanctis patribus traditum accepimus, divisum esse novimus, de qua re Gelasius Romanae sedis venerabilis episcopus . . ." etc. It is true that Gelasius, Pope from 492 to 496, had

Beginning from the moment when the temporal order itself was thus integrated with the Church, there remained, to be sure, a Church to represent the City of God, but there no longer remained a pagan Empire to represent the Earthly City. Thus, as a consequence at once surprising and inevitable, Jerusalem alone remained and Babylon disappeared. This is what Otto of Freising explicitly says in his celebrated *De duabus civitatibus*. Finding himself further from events than Augustine, Otto dates the disappearance of Babylon from the accession of Constantine. "In view of the fact that not only all men, but even the Emperors, with a few exceptions, were Catholics, it seems to me that, beginning from this time, I have written the history, not of two cities, but, so to speak, of only one, which I call the Church. For although the elect and the damned occupy a single dwelling, I can no longer call these cities two, as I have done above: I ought to say that they are really only one, although it is composite, for in it the grain is mixed with the tares."¹

Thus, through identifying the City of God with the Church and the Earthly City with the State, men have gradually come to integrate the State with the Church, whose universality will henceforth embrace the temporal and spiritual domains alike. It is this same fundamental attitude that recurs in the thirteenth century—but this time enhanced and enriched by all the contributions made to it by contemporary philosophy and theology—in the doctrinal synthesis of Roger Bacon. Never has the priestly conception of the world been more clearly or more completely expressed than in the work of this Franciscan,² who may be said to be in this matter the arch-adversary of Dante. The

made a clear distinction between the two orders, but he did not regard them both as being inherent in the unity of the Church (see the passages quoted and analysed in CARLYLE, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 190-191. Cf. ROBERT HULL, *Mediaeval Theories of Papacy*, London, 1934, pp. 13-28). For the passage from JONAS OF ORLEANS, *De Instit. regia*, cap. I, see CARLYLE, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 254, and J. REVIRON, *Les idées politico-religieuses d'un évêque du IX^e siècle. Jonas d'Orléans et son "De institutione regia"*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1930, p. 134.

¹ OTTO OF FREISING, *Chronicon*, lib. V, Prol.; lib. VII, Prol.; lib. VIII, Prol.; in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scriptorum, Vol. XX, pp. 214, 247 and 248. On the work of Otto, see J. SPÖRL, *Grundformen hochmittelalterlichen Geschichtsanschauung*, Munich, 1935, Chap. II, pp. 32-50, and the excellent Introduction by CHARLES CHRISTOPHER MIEROW to his translation of Otto, *The Two Cities. A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D.* by Otto Bishop of Freising, New York, Columbia University Press, 1928 (Introduction, pp. 1-79; Bibliography, pp. 81-84).

² Consult on this point the penetrating work by R. CARTON, *La synthèse doctrinale de Roger Bacon*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1924, Chap. III, *Le Savoir et la Cité Chrétienne*, pp. 82-106.

Baconian universe presupposes a dovetailing of the orders, wherein that which we call nature, or natural, finds sustenance and justification only through being integrated with the supernatural and the religious. All wisdom is contained in the Holy Scriptures as the open hand is contained in the closed fist. What is called Philosophy, or Law, is merely an explanation, and, as it were, the development of what is implicit in the Scriptures. In other words, all that is valid and cogent in Philosophy or Law is virtually what may be gleaned from the Bible. Thus understood Christian Revelation is Wisdom itself, and it is this Wisdom, proclaimed, dispensed and applied by the Pope, that ensures the unity of the Church, governs the community of faithful peoples, ensures the conversion of infidel peoples and the destruction of those which cannot be converted.¹ In short, since the treasure of Revelation, the law of the world, is in the Pope's power, so also is the world: *Habetis ecclesiam Dei in potestate vestra, et mundum totum habetis dirigere* ("You have the Church of God in your power, and you have the task of governing the entire world").²

We are therefore faced here with a unitary system of Wisdom, in which each science derives its principles from the science above it, while all alike derive their principles from Revelation, which contains them. In a corresponding, or rather an identical sense, we are faced with a unitary system as regards the social order, in which all Christian temporal communities, which together form the *respublica fidelium* ("republic of the faithful"), are included in the spiritual community that is the Church, just as the sciences are included in the Wisdom to which the Pope, custodian of the treasure of Revelation, holds the key. One Wisdom, one world, one goal.

Let us now imagine a doctrine like that of St. Thomas, in which the order of nature is really distinct from that of grace,

¹ ROGER BACON, *Opus Tertium*, cap. XXIV, ed. Brewer, p. 81. Reference to this passage will serve to establish the cardinal fact that the only Law that is in Bacon's eyes completely valid is not Civil Law, but Canon Law. This single fact, which entails the complete subordination of the State to the Church, is enough to place his doctrine at the opposite extreme to Dante's. As Bacon says elsewhere (*Compendium studii theologiae*, cap. IV, ed. Brewer, p. 418), the abuse of Civil Law "non solum destruit studium sapientiae [since wisdom is the Bible, the foundation of Canon Law], sed ecclesiam Dei et omnia regna".

² ROGER BACON, *Opus Tertium*, cap. XXIV, ed. Brewer, p. 87. Cf.: ". . . quoniam ejus potentia coelos penetrat, purgatorium solvit, inferna conculcat, mundum comprimit universum" (*op. cit.*, cap. I, p. 8).

but subordinate to it. In such a doctrine we ought to expect to find, together with a real distinction between natural wisdom and revealed wisdom, a real distinction between the temporal order and the spiritual order, between the State and the Church. However, since we have a hierarchical system entailing the subordination of nature to grace, there will certainly have to be also a hierarchical system entailing the subordination of the temporal domain to the spiritual and of the State to the Church. Containing distinctions of a far more flexible kind and enjoying opportunities of agreement denied to that of Bacon, the Thomistic doctrine will not on that account be any the less antagonistic, in its ultimate conclusions, to that of Dante. Instead of the dovetailing and, so to speak, the telescoping of all the natural orders into the religious order, we shall have in St. Thomas's doctrine a linear hierarchy of the orders, based on a linear hierarchy of the *ultima*, which are all subordinate to the final goal of man. Now since this goal is the beatific vision, it is essentially religious. In Thomism, therefore, the Church will necessarily have direct authority over the State.

The tendency to-day, however, is to admit that St. Thomas, if he did not preach the doctrine of the "indirect" subordination of the temporal power to the spiritual, at any rate laid its foundations.¹ It is easy to see why this expression has finally gained currency. Certain mediaeval theologians did in fact attribute to the Pope an absolute and universal power, which he, according to their theory, freely delegates to princes, and which the latter, since they derive it from him, only exercise under his supervision and by virtue of his authority.² In such doctrines, therefore, the Pope, as a temporal sovereign, has direct temporal authority

¹ See especially the valuable and suggestive work by M. GRABMANN, *Studien über den Einfluss der aristotelischen Philosophie auf die mittelalterlichen Theorien über das Verhältnis von Kirche und Staat*. Munich, 1934, pp. 8-18. See also C. JOURNET, *La juridiction de l'Eglise sur la Cité*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1933, pp. 138 seq.

² Mgr. Grabmann (*op. cit.*, pp. 72-76) quotes, as being typical of this attitude, a number of passages from Dominicus de Sancto Severino (fifteenth century). They are, indeed, very interesting. Their conclusions are as follows: 1. That which is the cause and fountain-head of spiritual things is also the cause and fountain-head of temporal things; 2. The vicar of Christ, Peter's successor, is the cause and fountain-head of spiritual things, and therefore of temporal things; 3. If we refuse to identify the temporal authority of princes with that of the Pope, we shall have to admit either (a) that the temporal power of the Popes and that of princes do not form any design, which is impossible, since all God's works are part of a design, or (b) that the Pope has only spiritual power and the prince only temporal power, which is virtually the misapprehension of Mani, who maintained that the Church militant has two fountain-heads; 4. That the prince is the ruler of the

over all other temporal sovereigns. Now that is certainly not the teaching of St. Thomas, in whose eyes even the temporal authority of the Popes is essentially spiritual in origin as in purpose. Indeed, the Pope's duty and right of intervention in temporal matters is always bound up with a spiritual purpose, and is due to the fact that that purpose falls within his competence. The expression "indirect power" is therefore justified in so far as it indicates the important fact that, even in temporal matters, the Pope remains a spiritual sovereign. King and priest, it is because he is a priest that he is a king.

This expression has, however, the disadvantage of fostering the belief that, because the temporal power of the Popes over princes is essentially spiritual, it is merely an advisory or corrective power, exercising no direct influence over the temporal authority of the prince as such—a power whose scope is strictly delimited by the celebrated formula *ratione peccati*.¹ In order to

temporal world, but a subordinate ruler: *Erit caput sub capite*; 5. That, consequently, not only is the temporal power of princes derived (*derivari*) from that of the vicar of Christ, but even their laws and statutes are valid only in so far as they are approved and confirmed by the Pope. It seems clear that, in its general tone and its actual principles, such a doctrine differs from that of St. Thomas Aquinas.

¹ This tendency to minimize the temporal authority of the Pope in St. Thomas's teaching makes itself felt even in the historical interpretation of his works. Indeed, scholars always quote the following passages: 1. St. Thomas said that "in his autem quae ad bonum civile pertinent, est magis obediendum potestati saeculari quam spirituali, secundum illud Matth. XVII, 21: *Reddite quae sunt Caesaris Caesari*." But they often forget to add the sequel, save when the Pope is involved: "Nisi forte potestati spirituali etiam saecularis potestas conjungatur, sicut in papa, qui utriusque potestatis apicem tenet, scilicet spiritualis et saecularis, hoc illo disponente qui est sacerdos et rex: sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech, rex regum et dominus dominantium, cujus potestas non auferetur et regnum non corrumpetur in saecula saeculorum. Amen" (*In II^m Sent.*, dist. 44, expos. text, ad 4^m, last sentence of Book II). Thus the Pope is the supreme custodian *utriusque potestatis* and, even in temporal matters, must be obeyed rather than the secular power; 2. Scholars also quote the famous sentence: "Jus autem divinum, quod est ex gratia, non tollit jus humanum, quod est ex naturali ratione." But St. Thomas employs it when answering the question: *Utrum infideles possunt habere praelationem vel dominium supra fideles?* And this answer is that an unbeliever should not be permitted to establish his authority over believers; that believers already under the authority of an unbeliever have no right to evade it on their own initiative—this by virtue of the principle defined in the formula quoted; but that, not being himself subject to any prince, the Pope has the right to deprive this pagan prince of the authority which he exercises over Christians. This right the Pope may use or not as he deems expedient, just as Christ once chose to pay Caesar a tribute which he did not owe him: *ad scandalum vitandum* (*Sum. theol.*, II^a II^{ae}, qu. 10, art. 10, Resp.). Any affirmation of the autonomy of the temporal world in St. Thomas's teaching therefore confirms the Pope's supremacy, for the simple reason that, as the successor and vicar of Christ, the Pope is the supreme custodian of the two powers, the temporal and the spiritual alike. The distinction between the "direct" power and the "indirect" power is theoretically important; in practice, his deposition by the Pope is always the same thing so far as the prince is concerned: whether deposed directly or indirectly, he is none the less deposed.

If this is correct, the doctrinal gulf that divides the champions of the Pope's temporal supremacy and their opponents is not fixed between Roger Bacon and Thomas Aquinas, but between Thomas Aquinas and Dante. Under the pressure of Dante's political passion, the unity of mediaeval Christendom, with its subservience to the Popes, has now been abruptly and utterly shattered. The emperor may henceforth pursue his special aim without looking to the head of the Church for anything but his blessing. Everywhere expelled from the temporal order, the authority of the Roman Pontiff finds itself confined exclusively to the order of grace. This Dantesque Pope who no longer deposes princes is therefore very different from the Pope of St. Thomas Aquinas.¹ The most remarkable thing about Dante's attitude, however, is that he understood, with a profundity of thought for which he must be commended, that one cannot entirely withdraw the temporal world from the jurisdiction of the spiritual world without entirely withdrawing philosophy from the jurisdiction of theology. It is because he clearly saw this fact and plainly indicated it that Dante occupies a cardinal position in the history of mediaeval political philosophy. For after all, if philosophic reason, by which the Emperor is guided,² were

¹ By the very fact that he restricts the authority of the Church to the purely spiritual domain Dante is seen to be naturally in sympathy with all who have in any sense striven to detemporalize the Church—as, for example, St. Bernard (see the excellent study by E. JORDAN, *Dante et saint Bernard*, in the *Bulletin du Comité français catholique pour la célébration du sixième centenaire de la mort de Dante Alighieri*, Oct., 1921, No. 4, pp. 267-330). Yet his attitude need not be identical with theirs, for the Spiritualists are concerned above all with the purity of the Church, whereas Dante is concerned at least as much with the independence of the Empire. To bring these two attitudes into line one would have to establish that St. Bernard refused Pope Eugenius III all right of intervention in temporal affairs, which, so far as I am aware, he never did. That is why it will not readily be conceded that Dante contented himself with repeating more or less what had already been said by St. Bernard (E. JORDAN, *Dante et l'idée de "Virtu"*, in *Mélanges sur Dante*, ed. P. Mignon, Rome, *Nouvelle Revue d'Italie*, 1931, p. 92), or, especially, that Dante forgot "the distinction between the natural and the supernatural" (*op. cit.*, p. 91). On the contrary, he speaks of nothing else. On the other hand, it will be conceded to P. FOURNIER (*Le De Monarchia de Dante et l'opinion française*, in the *Bulletin du Comité français catholique . . .*, No. 3, July, 1921, pp. 155-158), that the absolutism of Boniface VIII and of certain hierocrats partly explains Dante's reaction. Yet this movement does not entirely explain it: in his eyes, any power which the Pope may have over the temporal world is excessive by its very nature. For it is true, as E. Jordan says in the article quoted above (p. 316, note 10), that Dante's doctrine does, after all, advocate a "theocracy", but it excludes any trace of "presbyterocracy", thereby differing not only from doctrines that proclaim the absolute temporal power of the Popes, but even from that of St. Thomas Aquinas.

² It has been said that Dante here was unwittingly returning to the famous utopia of Plato: the State governed by the philosophers (FRITZ KERN, *Humana Civilitas. Staat Kirche und Kultur; eine Dante-Untersuchung*, Kochler, Leipzig, 1913, p. 5). That is not

to remain in the smallest degree subject to the authority of the theologians, the Pope would through their agency recover the authority over the Emperor which it is desired to take from him. By the very fact that he controlled reason, he would control the will that is guided by reason. Thus, the separation of Church and Empire necessarily presupposes the separation of theology and philosophy, and that is why, just as he split mediaeval Christendom into two camps, Dante also completely shatters the unity of Christian wisdom, the unifying principle and the bond of Christendom. In each of these vital matters this alleged Thomist struck a mortal blow at the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas.¹

Faced with these indisputable facts, one appreciates why some interpreters of Dante have resolutely taxed him with Averroism.² And we are this time nearer the mark—but what is the Averroism in question? Is it that of Averroes himself? A primary reason for doubting it is that the principal passages in Averroes dealing with the place of religion in the State seem to have remained unknown to Dante and his contemporaries, owing to the fact that they had not been translated from the Arabic into Latin. Moreover, it is only necessary to refer to his treatise on the *Reconciliation of Religion and Philosophy* or to that part of the *Destructio destructionum* which deals with these problems to find oneself transported to a universe as different from Dante's as was his from those of Roger Bacon and St. Thomas Aquinas. It is a known fact that Averroes recognized no absolute truth apart from pure philo-

quite accurate. Dante expressly declares that the philosophers are incapable of governing the State; this, moreover, is the reason why he calls for an Emperor who shall rule all men—even the philosophers. The fact that Dante urges the Emperor to rule philosophically does not mean that the philosophers are the rulers. Essentially, Dante's attitude, which a sort of traditional conspiracy persists invariably in identifying with some other one, denies the Imperial authority as such access to philosophy and excludes the philosopher as such from the government of the State. Even when a philosopher-Emperor rules philosophically, he derives his authority over the human wills that are subject to him not from his wisdom, but from God alone.

¹ Considerable importance would attach to the publication of the text of Guido Vernani's unpublished commentary on the *Ethica ad Nicomachum* (in *Cod. Vat. lat. 1172*, fol. 1 r-90 r; referred to by Mgr. M. GRABMANN, *Studien über den Einfluss . . .*, p. 79), in which Guido seems to have put his finger on the sensitive spot with some shrewdness. In Lib. I, dist. 2, cap. 3, he does indeed speak *De opinione loquentium moraliter de felicitate*, but, in dist. 4, he speaks *De felicitate secundum veritatem*. Indeed, political doctrines agree or differ with regard to the Priesthood and the Empire in so far as they agree or differ with regard to this moral distinction.

² "A philosopher imbued with Averroism as deeply as a Christian can be—such is what Dante appears to be in his *De Monarchia* (B. LANDRY, *Dante: De la Monarchie*, Paris, F. Alcan, undated, p. 52).

sophical truth, discovered by means of the irrefutable demonstrations of reason. Below the extremely limited class of the philosophers, who alone are capable of aspiring to knowledge of this kind, Averroes placed the more numerous class of the theologians, folk who seize eagerly upon the probabilities indicated by dialectics, but are as incapable of irrefutable demonstrations as they are disinclined to aspire to them. Lower still comes the host of ordinary people, as blind to dialectical probability as to rational certainty, susceptible only to the persuasion of rhetoric and the artifices of orators with the ability to excite their imaginations and passions.¹ In a doctrine of this kind, which has with reason been termed "the most profound commentary that has ever been forthcoming on that celebrated formula: *The people must have a religion*", there can be no question for one moment of in any sense subordinating philosophy to religion. On the contrary, it is rather, indeed, religion that is subordinated to philosophy.² The special rôle which then devolves upon religion—and in which there is no possible substitute for it, not even philosophy—consists in teaching the people myths capable of inducing them, by their implications of punishments or pleasures in store, to live orderly and virtuous lives. An example is the doctrine of the future life, with its chastisements or its rewards—a doctrine whose prevalence among so many different religious sects must have a profound significance. That significance is as follows. The philosophers may indeed prove by reason the necessity for men to live virtuous lives, but what effect will their proofs have on the immense host of people who cannot even understand them? Only religion can perform the miracle of teaching the mass of mankind just as much as they can understand of truth, and in the exact form required in order that they may be convinced of it. Accordingly, let the people be given full knowledge of the resurrection of the body, the pains and chastisements of the life to come, prayers, sacrifices and all

¹ On this question consult first L. GAUTHIER, *Accord de la religion et de la philosophie. Traité d'Ibn Rochd (Averroès)*, P. Fontana, Algiers, 1905, and AVERROES, *Destructio destructionum*, *Disputatio Quarta*, in ARISTOTELIS, *Opera omnia*, Venetiis, apud Juntas, 1550, Vol. IX, fol. 63. By far the most complete and most happily balanced study on the question is that of L. GAUTHIER, *La théorie d'Ibn Rochd (Averroès) sur le rapport de la religion et de la philosophie*, Paris, Leroux, 1909. For a more concise introduction see E. GILSON, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, C. Scribner's, New York, 1938, Chap. II, pp. 38-53.

² For these formulas, see L. GAUTHIER, *La théorie d'Ibn Rochd . . .*, p. 11.

that will be deemed necessary for their moral education,¹ for that is the special function of religious doctrines—to enable the State to be well ordered by spreading enlightenment among its citizens.

That such a doctrine is completely unacceptable to a Christian is obvious, and that is why, even if he had been or was acquainted with it, Dante could not have accepted it. All his convictions rebelled against it—even his separatism. Nothing was capable of more deeply wounding his passionate feeling of respect for the complete independence of the orders than this Averroistic doctrine whereby the religious order was subordinated to the philosophical order and subjected to moral or political aims. Dante does not for one moment doubt that the noblest of human aims is to enjoy the beatific vision in a blessed eternity, or that the Church, whose sole head is the Pope, exists to lead us to it. No more than the author of the *Divine Comedy* does the author of the *Monarchy* regard the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, Hell and Paradise as so many myths that help to further the ends pursued by politics and ethics. In short, there is in Dante's eyes a distinct supernatural order, existing in its own right, and all men, philosophers included, are equally bound by its special conditions, which are a means to its special end.

If there is any Averroism in Dante, and if it is not the Averroism of Averroes himself, is it not an attitude imitated from that of the Latin Averroists of the thirteenth century, such as Boethius of Dacia or Siger of Brabant? It is extremely difficult to answer "Yes" or "No" to the question so put, for the simple reason that, if Dante preached some sort of political Averroism, his *Monarchy* must be regarded, in the present state of our knowledge, as the first and perhaps the most perfect evidence of the existence of such a movement. No treatise on politics written by an Averroist and at present known to us is of earlier date than the *Monarchy*. This fact assuredly does not prove that Dante does not here draw his inspiration from Averroism. In the first place, it may be that Averroistic political writings of earlier date than his work will one day be discovered. Nor is it impossible that conversations, or even a teaching-campaign of which no written traces survive, may have exerted on Dante an influence of which

¹ AVERROES, *Destructio destructionum*, loc. cit.

Priesthood and the Empire is a second-hand answer. Now it is quite true that Aristotle could in no way help the author of the *Monarchy* to solve a problem which could not arise in a Greek civilization. Even if Dante read Aristotle's *Politics*, which is not certain,¹ it cannot have dictated his answer to the problem he set himself. The same observation would, moreover, apply to the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*, which to our certain knowledge Dante read and meditated, together with the commentary provided by St. Thomas Aquinas. Yet the enthusiasm with which his reading of this work filled him is probably responsible for Dante's conception of his ideal of a temporal order independent of the Church and seeking its own final goal under the guidance of reason alone. Since Aristotle envisaged the possibility of temporal felicity secured through the natural virtue of justice, why should not this final goal of the Greek city still be, even in the fourteenth century, that of the Empire?

Now Dante was not only acquainted with the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*, but he treasured it.² He was himself so conscious of this predilection that in the *Divine Comedy* he made Virgil say to him: *la tua Etica* (*Inf.*, XI, 80). If, as all his work attests, Dante was animated by an ardent desire for justice and peace in the temporal sphere, it is understandable that this altogether admirable book, in which, even through St. Thomas's commentary with its Christian inspiration, the ideal of human temporal felicity secured entirely through the practice of the natural virtues was so clearly visible, was to him in a sense the Bible of the Lawgiver. What promises did Dante not hear echoing in the pregnant phrases in which St. Thomas summarized the authentic thought of Aristotle! *Finis politicae est humanum bonum, idest optimus in rebus humanis*;³ . . . *unde ad ipsam [artem civilem]*

¹ Cf. A. H. GILBERT, *Had Dante Read the "Politics" Of Aristotle?* (in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. XLIII, No. 3 (Sept., 1928), pp. 602-613). The author does not, incidentally, claim to establish that Dante did not read the *Politics*, but that his quotations from it may be explained away as excerpts from Egidio Colonna and Thomas Aquinas. Though I do not wish to make light of the problem, and am even inclined to agree with the conclusion of this very useful work, I would point out that the author did not find all Dante's quotations from the *Politics* in the sources which he regards as possible (*op. cit.*, pp. 610-611). The question therefore remains open pending further inquiry. Quotations from the *Politics* occur in the following passages of the *Monarchy*: I, 3, 5, 12; II, 3, 7, 8; the *Ethics* is cited in I, 3, 11, 13, 14, 15; II, 2, 3, 8, 12; III, 10, 12.

² See above, Chap. II, p. 134, note 3.

³ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Ethic. Nic.*, lect. II, ed. Pirota, No. 29.

*maxime pertinet considerare finem ultimum humanae vitae, tanquam ad principalissimam.*¹ ("The goal of politics is the good of humanity, in other words it is the loftiest goal in the realm of human affairs; . . . hence, the supreme function of this same [civic art], as the chief of all arts, is the consideration of the final goal of human life"). Is this not precisely that "final goal of human life", final although temporal, whose realization the *Monarchy* appeals to politics to ensure? Now what science lays the foundations of politics, if not ethics? And in what book do we find ethics, if not in the *Ethica ad Nicomachum*? Aristotle's thought is so clear that even the Christian amendments of St. Thomas never prevent it from emerging: "But we must know that Aristotle calls politics the very first of the sciences, not in an absolute sense, but in the category of the active sciences, dealing with human affairs, of which politics considers the final goal. For if the final goal of the whole universe is in question, it is the divine science that considers it, and *this* is the very first of all the sciences. But he says that it is the concern of politics to consider the final goal of human life, and if he defines the nature of that goal in this book [*on ethics*], the truth is that the teaching of this book contains the primary elements of political science."²

St. Thomas's conscientiousness is admirable, for, while his duty as a theologian compels him to recall in good time that the supreme science can only be that of the supreme Goal, and hence theology, he nevertheless does not forget to conclude, like the objective commentator he is: *Dicit autem ad politicam pertinere considerationem ultimi finis humanae vitae* ("Moreover, he says that the function of politics is the consideration of the final goal of human life"). Dante needed nothing more for the composition of his work. The rights of theology could wait their turn, in the certainty that they would be respected, so long as it was granted that of attributing to human life a final goal accessible by means of natural ethics and politics alone. Did St. Thomas's remarkable discretion as a commentator on Aristotle lead Dante to believe that even the Angel of the Schools acknowledged the existence of a "final goal" to human life attainable in this world through political and moral justice? Psychologically it is not impossible, but we shall never know. If we were to accept the theory, Dante's admiration for a St. Thomas thus

¹ *Op. cit.*, lib. I, lect. II, No. 30.

² *Op. cit.*, lib. I, lect. II, No. 31.

Kingdom of Heaven. Even in this world the Pope's authority is no longer of this world: he dominates it without playing an active part in it.

Thus conceived, Dante's doctrine has the uniform flow of original thought, and we feel the presence of a personal initiative behind each of the theses of which it is composed. That, indeed, is why, properly speaking, it cannot be classified. The ideal of a universal monarchy, a universal philosophy and a universal faith, all three completely independent in their respective spheres, yet exhibiting perfect concord solely through the spontaneity of their individual action, has no parallel in the Middle Ages, or, for that matter, in any other epoch of history. It would be easy to find advocates to plead that there is concord among these three orders in the subordination of two of them to the third, but Dante desires that there should be a concord among them arising from their independence. One could also easily find subscribers to the belief that the three orders enjoy independence by virtue of the incompatibility of their conclusions and even of their principles, but Dante desires that they should enjoy an independence arising from their concord. That is why the notion of justice is, as it were, the mainspring of his work, for such a social organization cannot survive for one moment unless each of the interested parties is firmly resolved to show scrupulous respect for the various forms of authority by which its own authority is restricted. Hence, what characterizes Dante's ideal is his deep faith that the works of God will harmonize provided that they remain true to their nature. And so we see his desire for justice unceasingly accompanied by a boundless exaltation of freedom. In his eyes freedom is essentially the right of every being to act in accordance with his own nature, under the aegis of the beneficent authorities which protect him and enable him to attain his goal. For our will must be subject to that of the Emperor in order to be free from tyrants and Popes, just as our faith must be subject to the authority of the Pope in order to be free from that of tyrants and Emperors.

The singular character of Dante's doctrine is well indicated by the paradoxical interpretation that he has offered of the famous passage in *Genesis*, I, 16: *Fecitque Deus duo luminaria magna, luminare majus, ut praeesset diei; et luminare minus, ut praeesset nocti* ("And God made two great lights: the greater

light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night"). None could doubt that the reference there was to the sun and the moon, and there might well have been discussion aimed at discovering who was the sun—the Pope or the Emperor; but no one had ever thought of saying that God had created two suns—one to lighten the way of this world, the other to show us the way of God. Yet this is what the justly famous lines in *Purg.*, XVI, 106-108 say:

Soleva Roma, che il buon mondo feo,
due Soli aver, che l'una e l'altra strada
facean vedere, e del mondo e di Deo.

These lines, which summarize exactly the separatism preached by Dante in the *Monarchy*,¹ admirably express his doctrine's divergences from the recognized standpoints. The distinction between the road of the world and the road of God, each lightened by its own sun, is a faithful reflection of the distinction between the two final goals to which the Pope and the Emperor lead humanity in the *Monarchy*. We cannot, then, accuse Guido Vernani of having made a mistake about the doctrinal implications of the work when, at the end of his *De reprobatione Monarchiae*, he denounced its peculiar character. With a clumsiness that is only too noticeable, but with a proper sense of the crucial features of the doctrine, Guido accused Dante of assigning a separate form of beatitude to corruptible man, who can have neither virtue nor beatitude properly so called; with regarding man, in consequence, as being destined by God for this beatitude, conceived as a final goal distinct from heavenly beatitude; and with inferring that the Empire is not subject to the Papacy from the fact that both are directly subject to the will of God.² It is surprising that such theses, of which the last two at any rate are so obviously antagonistic to Thomism, can to-day be regarded as hardly different from those which St. Thomas propounded. Not only did the Dominican Guido Vernani and the Franciscan Guglielmo di Sarzana judge of them otherwise, but Pope John XXII condemned the *De Monarchia* to the flames in 1329 and the

¹ The audacity of this deliberate modification of a commonly accepted Scriptural symbol has been well indicated by ALESSANDRO D'ANCONA, *Scritti Danteschi*, G. C. Sansoni, Florence (undated), pp. 325-326.

² GUIDO VERNANI, *De reprobatione Monarchiae*, ed. Jarro, passage quoted above, pp. 200-201.

✦ book was put on the Index in 1554. Although it was withdrawn during the course of the nineteenth century,¹ it is hard to believe that the character of its doctrine changed between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Undoubtedly it was simply considered that political conditions had altered sufficiently for the doctrine to have lost much of its virulence, but it does not need a great effort of imagination to conceive of conditions under which it might recover it.

✦ Yet however antagonistic Dante's political philosophy may be to Thomism, it does not seem to have been marshalled against it from abstract motives, whether religious or metaphysical. To seek the inspiration of the *Monarchy* along these lines is probably to steer clear of the one quarter in which one has any chance of finding it. Indeed, Dante here is rather carrying out his special mission as a political reformer and a righter of wrongs.² ✦ What he desires first and foremost is to abolish that monstrous injustice which in his eyes is constituted by the Papacy's usurpation of the Empire. ✦ Already, in the "covetous" and the Decretalists attacked in the *Monarchy*, we have those whom the *Divine Comedy* is presently to situate in Hell, for these men betray not only the authority on which they encroach, but even that which they represent. ✦ Like the tyrant who puts power to a personal use, the cleric who puts Revelation to a temporal use commits a crime; he even commits the supreme crime—the betrayal of the Holy Spirit: *O summum facinus, etiamsi contingat in somniis, aeterni Spiritus intentione abuti!* ("O most heinous of crimes (even if it be committed in dreams)—abuse of the eternal Spirit's intentions!")³ ✦ Dante's conception of the nature and rôle of philosophy was such a personal one precisely because it was required for the solution of the essentially personal problem that he set himself in the *Monarchy*. It should therefore be interpreted not in terms of Averroes' or St. Thomas's doctrine, but in terms of his ideal of a universal Empire.

¹ Regarding these facts considered as a whole, consult N. ZINGARELLI, *La vita, i tempi e le opere di Dante*, Chap. XXV, Vol. II, pp. 680-681. As to the part played by Italian Protestants in the dissemination of the work, see PIERO CHIMINELLI, *La fortuna di Dante nella Cristianità reformata*, Bilychnis, Rome, 1921, pp. 62-73.

² It is this judicial function that unifies the multifarious elements of which Dante's thought is composed, and prevents it from being divided against itself. The complexity of Dante's position, apart from his principle of unity, is strongly emphasized by B. LANDRY, *L'idée de chrétienté chez les scolastiques du XIII^e siècle*, F. Alcan, Paris, 1929, pp. 193-195.

³ DANTE, *De Monarchia*, III, 4.

IV

Philosophy in the *Divine Comedy*

✦ THE STUDY of Dante's attitude towards philosophy in the *Divine Comedy* inevitably brings one up against the problem that is raised by the presence in Paradise of the Averroistic philosopher Siger of Brabant. ✦ One might easily devote a large volume to a critical examination of the answers already suggested. It would take a very gifted writer, however, to make such a book readable; while it requires considerable temerity to re-open a question that has been debated so often, and with so little profit.

Indeed, strictly speaking, the problem does not admit of solution. Its principal data are two unknowns, and historians spend their time reproaching one another with arbitrarily determining the value of one in terms of the supposed value which they ascribe to the other. In other words, if we were sure, on the one hand of Dante's thought, on the other of Siger of Brabant's, it would be easy enough to discover what Dante may have thought of Siger. But we are not. It may therefore be proved with equal ease either that Dante was an Averroist, since he put a notorious Averroist in Paradise, or that Siger was no longer an Averroist when Dante put him in Paradise, since Dante was not an Averroist and yet put him there. Thus every historian will accuse his neighbour either of choosing the Siger he needs to justify his Dante, or of inventing the Dante he needs to justify his Siger. By itself this would still mean nothing. Every historian will undertake to prove that all his opponents make that mistake which he alone has avoided. In that case, it will be said, why refer again to a question which cannot even be formulated? And my answer will be: Because it is unfortunately inevitable once we seek to define Dante's attitude towards philosophy, which we *must* do if we wish to ascribe a precise meaning to the *Monarchy* and the *Banquet*. That is why, having defined the mistakes made by the majority of my predecessors, I am about to offer you my own.

of *Par.*, XI and completely fills the whole of that Canto, which ends designedly with a repetition of the line: *U' ben s'impingua, se non si vaneggia*. The general sense of the explanation is very clear, the whole of Canto XI leading up to this conclusion: The Dominicans betray their founder's ideal precisely in so far as they turn aside from the pursuit of spiritual ends so as to engage in temporal affairs, whatever form they take. †

This theme is proclaimed in the first twelve lines of Canto XI. Still moved by his meeting with the distinguished Doctors whom Thomas Aquinas has just pointed out to him at the end of Canto X, Dante exclaims: "Mortals, with your senseless cares, how faulty are the judgments which make you fly so low! While one devoted himself to the Law, another to Medicine, and others yet forced their way into the priesthood, seeking to gain the upper hand by force or trickery, to steal, to succeed in commerce, plunging to the point of exhaustion into the pleasures of the flesh or giving themselves up to idleness, I, freed from all these things, received with Beatrice this glorious welcome in heaven above" (*Par.*, XI, 1-12). So we have been forewarned; Dante is going to speak henceforth as one who judges everything from the viewpoint of the Fourth Heaven: he intends to demand peremptorily absolute purity in the spiritual sphere.

So intent is Dante on this purpose that he immediately makes Thomas Aquinas say to him: I know what you are thinking at this moment. You have two doubts. First, you are wondering what I meant by these words: *U' ben s'impingua se non si vaneggia*; then, you would like to know how I could say of King Solomon that there was never another as great as he: *A veder tanto non surse il secondo* (*Par.*, XI, 19-27). So Thomas Aquinas will now clear up this twofold difficulty for Dante.

The Church is the mystical bride of Christ. To ensure the union of the Church with her divine bridegroom, God has sent her two guides—the one, St. Francis, burning with love like a seraph; the other, St. Dominic, shining with the light of wisdom like a cherub (*Par.*, XI, 37-39). Thomas will now undertake to recount the life of St. Francis, just as Bonaventure, in Canto XII, will recount that of St. Dominic. Moreover, observes Thomas, whichever of the two we praise, we praise the other (*Par.*, XI, 40-42). The observation is important, for it explains

begins to speak: it is that of Bonaventure, whom the divine love induces to speak in his turn *dell'altro duca*, in other words St. Dominic (*Par.*, XII, 32-33). In order to indicate his purpose more clearly, Dante now makes Bonaventure repeat what he has already made Thomas Aquinas say: "It is seemly that, when one is introduced, the other should be introduced also, in order that, just as they fought side by side (*sì che com' elli ad una militaro*), so they may shine together in glory" (*Par.*, XII, 34-36). It would be impossible to indicate more clearly that the two Orders are united in a common cause and that there is every justification for judging one from the point of view of the other: what is more, this is tantamount to judging it from one's own point of view, since they share one and the same ideal.

In point of fact, Bonaventure begins his eulogy of St. Dominic by recalling that, in order to save His tottering Church, God sent to the aid of His bride two champions who, by their deeds (*al cui fare* — St. Francis) and by their words (*al cui dire* — St. Dominic), were destined to rally an erring people (*Par.*, XII, 37-45). Then begins the eulogy of St. Dominic—a eulogy sprinkled with so many guide-marks that there is hardly any excuse for failure to recognize its meaning. The eulogy of St. Francis had exalted his love of poverty; that of St. Dominic exalts *his spirit of faith*. For us the question is not how some modern Dominican historian conceives the "doctrinal vocation" of his Order. What is important to us for our understanding of Dante is to know how he himself conceived the Dominican ideal. Now, in his eyes St. Dominic was above everything the ardent lover of the Christian Faith: *l'amoroso drudo della Fede cristiana* (*Par.*, XII, 55-56). From the day he was born the soul of this saintly athlete—tender to his own and harsh towards his enemies—was so filled with living faith that the mother who carried him in her womb prophesied the future. Just as St. Francis espoused Poverty, St. Dominic espoused Faith on the baptismal font, that virtue offering itself to him in order to save him, he offering himself to it in order to defend it (*Par.*, XII, 61-63). Born to till the field of the Lord, the child was prophetically named Dominic. In fact, the first love that he revealed was for the first counsel given by Christ. Many a time and oft, silent and wakeful, he was found by his nurse on the ground, as if he had said: "It is for this that I am come" (*Par.*, XII, 73-78).

The first counsel of Christ (*Matt.*, XIX, 21) is that men should seek poverty. Dante is visibly anxious to emphasize here, as strongly as possible that this champion of Faith was also the lover of poverty. That the two Orders share the same ideal is therefore firmly maintained by Dante in full view of the least attentive reader.

Nevertheless, it is still true to say that St. Francis and St. Dominic each had his own way of serving this ideal: Francis through love, Dominic through wisdom. Dante had already proclaimed the fact in Canto XI, in the justly famous lines:

L'un fu tutto serafico in ardore;
l'altro per sapienza in terra fue
di cherubica luce uno splendore
(ll. 37-39.)

From now on we know that this light of Wisdom which St. Dominic radiates is that of Faith. In order, therefore, to fulfil the mission with which he is entrusted by Dante, and which, moreover, suits him admirably,¹ Bonaventure will now render to the Dominicans the same service as Thomas Aquinas has just rendered to the Franciscans: that of inspiring them with a new respect for their own ideal. The sons of St. Dominic are proud, then, of their father's Wisdom? They have good reason to be! But it was not with an eye to the goods of that world which men serve to-day, nor by following in the footsteps of the canonist Henry of Susa,² but through his love of the heavenly manna that he became a great doctor in so short a time (*Par.*, XII, 82-85). The eulogy of St. Dominic therefore interweaves the two themes of his indifference to temporal things and of a Wisdom derived from the well-head of Faith alone: *Poi con dottrina e con volere, insieme, con l'officio apostolico si mosse* (*Par.*, XII, 97-98). It is in the name of this ideal that Bonaventure will now in his turn censure the Franciscans who, in quitting the footsteps of St. Francis, at the same time abandon those of St. Dominic. So,

¹ Regarding this point, see E. GILSON, *La philosophie de saint Bonaventure*, J. Vrin, Paris, 1924 (Chap. II: *La critique de la philosophie naturelle*).

² Dante says: "Non . . . dietro ad Ostiense ed a Taddeo" (*Par.*, XII, 83). Ostiense is the canonist Henry of Susa. As regards *Taddeo*, the commentators hesitate between identifying him with a Bolognese jurist and a Florentine doctor (see *La Divina Commedia*, Scartazzini's commentary, *ad loc.*). Whatever the facts, these two names symbolize the pursuit of worldly sciences with an eye to temporal possessions.

unhappily, do the Spiritualists and the disciples of Matteo d'Acquasparta, the former interpreting the Rule more strictly, while the latter put it out of mind. As for me, concludes the speaker, "I am the spirit of Bonaventure of Bagnorea; when I held great offices; I always made temporal preoccupations take second place" (*Par.*, XII, 127-129). There follows the presentation of the Doctors by whom he is surrounded, including Joachim of Fiori whose place in this band corresponds to that occupied by Siger of Brabant among the companions of Thomas Aquinas.

If they are taken as they stand, Cantos XI and XII of the *Paradiso* form in their symmetrical construction a single entity and are open to the same interpretation. The thesis in vindication of which Dante wrote them was not the primacy of spiritual things—that would have been trivial—but *the exclusively spiritual vocation of the Mendicant Orders, charged by God with reminding the Church of the exclusively spiritual character of its mission*. Not only was there nothing trivial in this second thesis, but it was associated in Dante's mind with his deepest interests and his liveliest passion. The general meaning it confers on the passages which the reader has just seen in the process of analysis explains its tenor. The two Great Orders should, indeed, both abstain completely from the pursuit of temporal ends—so much their common ideal requires; nevertheless, the type of apostolate entrusted by God to each of them entails special duties. For that reason Dante cites St. Francis when he makes a Dominican recall *in particular* the spirit of poverty in the pursuit of heavenly goods, and St. Dominic when he makes a Franciscan recall *in particular* the spirit of Wisdom in the pursuit of the truth that is revealed by Faith.

Once his writings have been made to yield what certainly seems to be their true meaning, Dante's presentation of the problem of Siger of Brabant is evidently quite different from Father Mandonnet's. The latter's preoccupation is to prove that the introduction of Siger into Paradise does not constitute "a satire on the Dominicans, or anything resembling it".¹ In order to establish this point he wished to demonstrate that Dante could not have desired to misrepresent an Order towards which, in fact, he

¹ P. MANDONNET, *Siger de Brabant*, Vol. I, p. 300. He is here arguing against the first thesis of Gaston Paris.

showed himself "very sympathetic". What greater honour could he do it than to identify the voice of St. Thomas with that of Beatrice? It is true that Dante seems to accuse the Order of forsaking revealed Wisdom in order to cultivate the profane sciences, but in that he is only contradicting himself, and this small inconsistency in no way lessens his admiration for the Dominicans. It is therefore not with the object of being objectionable to their Order that he makes Thomas Aquinas eulogize Siger of Brabant. And that is what had to be demonstrated.

It might have been demonstrated at less cost, for Dante would most certainly not have assumed such a responsibility for so paltry a reason. Yet this is not the gravest flaw in Father Mandonnet's reasoning. Rather is it his tacit admission that Dante cannot have entertained any hostile feeling towards the Dominicans apart from a desire to satirize them. Now the whole of the passage which has just been analysed clearly proves that the accusation which he had to bring against them was as grave as it was definite—namely, that they had betrayed the spiritual order by coveting worldly goods, and especially that they had betrayed the Wisdom of faith and devoted themselves to juridical studies.¹ Now we know to what use Dante accused them of putting Canon Law; he would not forgive them for occupying their time in proving by canonical arguments the Pope's superiority to the Emperor. Let these monks, then, busy themselves with their own affairs! Let them return to the doctrine of faith, for that is their business! That, and that alone, concerns them, and it concerns only them.

The assumption to which this leads us is that, in the whole of this controversy, Dante was concerned above everything with ensuring the complete independence of the temporal order in face of the encroachments of the spiritual. We have looked upon Cantos X–XIII of the *Paradiso* as forming a single entity, but this united whole itself has a Preface, of which we have said nothing, consisting in the conclusion of Canto IX. It is only necessary to read it in the light of the foregoing analysis to grasp its signifi-

¹ These, moreover, are the two main adversaries that Dante had had in mind in the *Monarchy*. Once those who may be deluded by a misguided zeal for the Church have been disposed of, there remain: 1. "Quidam alii quorum obstinata cupiditas lumen rationis extinxit"; 2. "Tertii, quos Decretalistas vocant, qui theologiae ac philosophiae cujusdam inscii . . . Imperio derogant" (*De Monarchia*, III, 3). Hence, the present discussion concerns neither philosophy nor theology—not even if they be false.

whom Jesus Christ was to spring: "I therefore applaud your opinion that human nature never was and never will be what it was in those two persons" (*Par.*, XIII, 85-87).

It will be said that such a minor point did not merit this wealth of explanation. That is true. Moreover, it cannot be denied, *a priori*, that Dante may have written this theological exposition, which takes up fifty lines, merely for the pleasure of it. There is an element of byplay in all poetry, and Dante's is full of it. But he never forgets his subject, and we now see him return to it. If, continues Thomas, I were to add nothing to what I have just said, you might with good reason ask me: "How, then, can Solomon have been without peer?" He forestalls this question, which he expects, and answers it in advance: "In order that what seems to you obscure may become clear, consider who Solomon was, and what motive led him, when God said to him 'Ask', to ask for what he did" (*Par.*, XIII, 91-93). Interrupting our analysis for a moment, let us refer to the Biblical scene which these lines evoke: "In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people" (*II Para.*, I, 7-10).

Perhaps we are beginning to discern the objective to which Dante is leading us. It may aptly be said that in this case the thorn is hidden beneath the flowers. What Dante urges us to notice in the Biblical passage is these words: "Wisdom . . . that I may go out and come in before this people." In other words, he praises Solomon less for having asked for wisdom than for the fact that, like the king he was, he asked only for kingly wisdom. This is what Dante himself explains: "My words were not so obscure that you could not see clearly that it was a king who asked for wisdom so that he might be a king capable of governing" (*Par.*, XIII, 94-96). Does Dante then consider renunciation of philosophy to be as great a merit in a king as in a Pope? It certainly seems so to judge from what we read next. For Solomon did not ask for wisdom "in order that

he might know the number of the celestial Movers, or whether a necessary premise and a contingent premise ever yield a necessary conclusion, or *si est dare primum motum esse* [‘whether we must concede that motion has an origin’], or whether it is possible to inscribe in a semicircle a triangle that does not contain a right angle. If, therefore, you mark what I said earlier and what I have just said, you will see that this peerless knowledge at which the shaft of my intention is aimed is kingly prudence. Lastly, if you cast a searching glance at the word *surse* [*non surse il secondo*], you will see that it concerned only kings (who are above their subjects), and they are many, but good kings are rare” (*Par.*, XIII, 94-108).

It seems clear, as Scartazzini’s commentary points out, that Dante “is here praising Solomon because he asked for understanding so that he might judge and govern his people well, instead of asking for long life, or riches, or victory over his enemies. Dante praises him because he did not ask for the capacity to solve the problems arising from metaphysics, dialectics and geometry that were, in his time, the paradise of the schoolmen”. Having said this, we are left to wonder why Dante thought fit to explain all this to us. For after all, to him Solomon is obviously only a symbol—a symbol of the truth that he desires to instil into us. And does not that truth simply amount to this: Just as I have asked monks to turn their minds to the wisdom of faith, I ask kings to rest content, in the matter of wisdom, with the kingly prudence which they need in order to govern their peoples well? In short, after asking the monks to leave the Empire to the Emperor and to busy themselves with theology, Dante urges the Emperor to leave learning to scholars and to content himself with the administration of justice. For Solomon had already been in Dante’s mind in the *De Monarchia*, I, 13, where he praised him for addressing to God this prayer: *Deus, iudicium tuum regi da et justitiam tuam filio regis* (“O God, give unto the king Thy judgment, and unto the king’s son thy justice”).

This conclusion is already inclining us towards a definite interpretation of the presence in Paradise of Siger of Brabant. Let us not, indeed, forget that he is included among those whom Thomas Aquinas there introduces to Dante. Of this little band, Thomas himself, Dionysius the Areopagite, Isidore of Seville,

Boëthius, Bede, Peter Lombard, Richard of St. Victor and Albertus Magnus symbolize Theology—not, to be sure, a Theology denuded of all learning, but one that is not subordinate to any temporal aim. A canonist, Gratian, is there as well, but there is reason for that, since, instead of wrongfully using Canon Law for the exploitation of the temporal order, “he came to the aid of both Codes” (*Par.*, X, 104-105). Hence, the author of the *Decretum* is in Paradise as a symbol of respect for Civil Law and Canon Law, expressed in differentiation between their spheres of action. There too is to be found the fifth light, that of Solomon, which Dante does not hesitate to describe as the most beautiful of all: *La quinta luce, ch’è tra noi più bella* (*Par.*, X, 109). By this time we know why. Now, after these doctors whose only goal is spiritual wisdom, this canonist who does not use Canon Law for temporal purposes, this wise king who confines himself strictly to his royal calling, there finally appears before us—easily last, but he is in heaven none the less, and on the same footing as the others—the enigmatical figure of Siger of Brabant, that philosopher who chose to confine himself exclusively to his philosophical calling. Will it be thought that Dante put him there by chance? And how can we help believing that he too is there so that he may symbolize the independence of a definite portion of the temporal order, that portion which we call *philosophy*? It is clear, at all events, that the whole of the context suggests as much, but before we accept this solution to the problem we must make sure that no other answer fits the known facts, either better or as well.

IV. THE SYMBOLISM OF SIGER OF BRABANT

The problem created by Dante’s introduction of Siger of Brabant into Paradise and by the eulogy of him which he puts into the mouth of St. Thomas arises in the fourth heaven, or Heaven of the Sun, the abode of those who knew that they were wise with the wisdom their offices demanded. Thomas Aquinas is there; after telling Dante the names of the blessed beings who surround him, beginning with Albertus Magnus, who is on his right, he comes to the last, who is immediately to his left: “This figure, which your eyes encounter as they return towards me,

is the light of a spirit who, wrapt in grave thoughts, found death slow in coming. This is the eternal light of Siger, who, when he taught in the Street of Straw, established unwelcome truths" (Par., X, 133-138).¹

The last line—*Sillogizzò invidiosi veri*—cannot be literally translated. Of the three words of which it is made up the only one whose meaning is clear is *veri*. "Siger taught truths"—*sillogizzò*—signifies that these truths were based on reasoning; they were consequently rational truths. *Invidiosi* has here retained one of the meanings which attached to the Latin *invidiosus*. *Dux invidiosus erat* means "the leader was unpopular, he was an object of hatred". I have chosen *unwelcome* because this word makes it possible to render *invidiosi* without periphrasis, but it must be understood in the sense that the truths which Siger taught were viewed with disfavour and drew upon him the hostility of his contemporaries. It matters little, however, which literal translation enlists our support, for the meaning of the phrase is obvious. Scartazzini and Vandelli have brought out its general meaning clearly in their commentary: "*Sillogizzò*: argued, established by his syllogisms *invidiosi veri*, i.e. odious truths which earned him envy and hatred." This interpretation will suffice us as a basis for discussion.

It would be tedious to examine the numerous explanations already offered of Siger's presence in heaven. Of the oldest it may be said without injustice that they belong to Dantesque archaeology. A summary and some very apposite criticisms of several of them will be found in Father Mandonnet's book. It is all the more unnecessary to resume this critical examination after him as the problem has presented itself in a somewhat different light since the publication of his book on Siger of Brabant. Thanks to him, indeed, we can now form a pretty accurate idea of this personage. If it is admitted that Dante in his mind must have ascribed a philosophical significance to the introduction of this philosopher into Paradise, the problem presents itself in a new light now that we can read certain writings

¹ P. MANDONNET, *Siger de Brabant*, Vol. I, pp. 289-295. To the earlier works by G. A. Scartazzini, C. Cipolla and C. Baeumker to which Father Mandonnet refers his readers must be added the more recent work by B. NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante nella Divina Commedia e le fonti della Filosofia di Dante*, published by the author, Spianate (Pescia), 1912 (from the *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica*, April and October, 1911, February and April, 1912). An account will there be found (pp. 1-9) of several interpretations of Dante's two tercets on Siger of Brabant.

from the pen of Siger of Brabant. It is these writings, rather than the conclusions of historians who have never read them, that should henceforth be taken as a starting-point.

Leaving aside the work that has recently been published under his name, but of which it is not certain that Siger was the author,¹ to us the most interesting of his definitely authentic writings are his questions *De Anima*. A cursory examination of these is enough to assure one that Siger of Brabant belongs to the group called "Latin Averroists" and that he was probably one of its most intelligent representatives. In these Questions, in which he reveals remarkable gifts as a philosopher, Siger professes to discuss and solve the problems with which he deals from the standpoint of reason alone. There is nothing of the extremist in Siger. He is not a rationalist in revolt against faith. He is not even a man who takes a delight in noting a dissension between his reason and his faith. He does not seek conflicts, he resigns himself to them. A Master of Arts in Paris University, he teaches philosophy and nothing else. When the conclusions to which he is led by the philosophy of Aristotle contradict the teaching of faith, Siger contents himself with propounding them *qua* the

¹ Cf. *Quaestiones in Libros Aristotelis de Anima*, in F. VAN STEENBERGHEN, *Siger de Brabant d'après ses oeuvres inédites*, Vol. I, Louvain, Institut supérieur de Philosophie, 1931 (pp. 121-156). This treatise settles the crucial problem of the unity of the intellect to the disadvantage of Averroes. The ascription of this treatise to Siger has been called in question by B. NARDI, *Il preteso tomismo di Sigieri di Brabante*, in *Giornale critico di Filosofia Italiana*, Vol. XVII (1936), pp. 26-35 and Vol. XVIII (1937), pp. 160-164. A new approach to the problem has since been made by F. VAN STEENBERGHEN in *Les oeuvres et la doctrine de Siger de Brabant*, Brussels, Palais des Académies, 1938. It would be premature to pretend to compose this dispute out of hand, for it turns on a question of fact and should be settled on its own merits, regardless of any other consideration. Consequently I can only wonder what becomes of my own conclusions according as B. Nardi's or F. Van Steenberghen's are regarded as correct. If B. Nardi is right, Siger of Brabant remains the Averroist described by Father Mandonnet and the Dante-Siger problem continues to present itself in the terms in which we have discussed it. If F. Van Steenberghen is right, Siger of Brabant finally abandoned the Averroistic thesis of the unity of the active intellect and, in the questions *De Anima* whose authenticity is at issue, came very close to the position of St. Thomas Aquinas (*op. cit.*, pp. 154-160). It is clear that, if this hypothesis were adopted, the entire Dante-Siger problem would present itself in a new light and the conclusions of my own work would be subject to reconsideration. The wisest course, therefore, is to await the end of the dispute and, meanwhile, to borrow F. Van Steenberghen's sage observation about the conclusions of history—to wit, that they are "provisional and subject to correction" (*op. cit.*, p. 40). It will, therefore, I hope, occasion no surprise that, after reading F. Van Steenberghen's latest book on Siger, we have in no way modified an interpretation which is wholly based on the assumption that the vexed questions *De Anima* are not authentic. As a matter of fact, all concede the authenticity of the passages on which our discussion rests; B. Nardi denies the authenticity of the questions that we do not take into account, and even F. Van Steenberghen, though he finds them convincing, does not regard their authenticity as absolutely certain. Cf. below, *Eclaircissement V*, pp. 317-327.

conclusions of philosophy, but he maintains at the same time that the teachings of faith are the true ones.¹

Siger, then, does not pretend to discover in philosophy the last word on the nature of man or of God. He simply desires to try and find the relevant teaching of the philosophy of Aristotle,² i.e. of natural reason, it being clearly understood in advance that reason must often have erred when dealing with problems that are outside its scope, and that in the event of conflict between philosophy and Revelation the truth is that which God Himself has revealed to men. However, Siger's private intentions were one thing, and what they inevitably seemed to be from his opponents' point of view was another. Philosophers or theologians whose rational conclusions were in harmony with the teachings of faith could not but disapprove of his attitude. There was no conflict in *their* minds, and to them the idea that rational conclusions might be at once necessary and false was incomprehensible. The *Prologue* to the list of propositions condemned by Etienne Tempier in 1277 explicitly declares that, *in fact*, the professors who represented their conclusions as being those of natural reason in the field of philosophy, accordingly represented them in their teaching as being correct. In adding that the conclusions of natural reason are not necessarily correct, they fell out of the frying-pan into the fire, for the necessary conclusions of reason are necessarily correct. From the point of view of his opponents, therefore, Siger's position obliged him,

¹ "Hoc dicimus sensisse Philosophum de unione animae intellectivae ad corpus; sententiam tamen sanctae fidei catholicae, si contraria huic sit sententia Philosophi, praeferre volentes, sicut et in aliis quibuscumque" (*Quaest. de Anima Intellectiva*, III; P. MANDONNET, *Siger de Brabant*, Vol. II, pp. 156-157). Let us note, moreover, that Siger is of a very thoughtful turn of mind. So far as he is concerned the question "What was the teaching of Aristotle?" is not always identical with the other question, "What was the teaching of Averroes?" Cf. qu. VI, p. 162: "Dicendum est secundum expositionem Commentatoris et forte intentionem Aristotelis . . ."

² "Dicendum, sicut et a principio dictum est, quod nostra intentio principalis non est inquirere qualiter se habeat veritas de anima, sed quae fuit opinio Philosophi de ea" (*Quaest. de Anima*, VI; *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 163. Cf. *Prologus*: ". . . quid circa praedicta sentiendum sit, secundum documenta philosophorum probatorum, non aliquid ex nobis asserentes . . ." (Vol. II, p. 145). ". . . utrum anima intellectiva multiplicetur multiplicatione corporum humanorum diligenter considerandum est, quantum pertinet ad philosophum, et ut ratione humana et experientia comprehendi potest, quaerendo intentionem philosophorum in hoc magis quam veritatem, cum philosophice procedamus. Certum est enim secundum veritatem quae mentiri non potest, quod animae intellectivae multiplicentur multiplicatione corporum humanorum" (Qu. VII; Vol. II, p. 164. Cf. qu. III, Vol. II, pp. 153-154: "Quaerimus enim hic solum . . ."). Siger's formula, "secundum veritatem, quae mentiri non potest," may be compared with Dante's, "secondo che la santa Chiesa vuole, che non può dire menzogna" (*Convivio*, II, 4).

whether he liked it or not, to maintain that there are two contrary truths, that of reason and that of faith; *Dicunt enim ea esse vera secundum philosophiam sed non secundum fidem catholicam, quasi sint duae contrariae veritates* ("For they say that those things are true in the light of philosophy but not in the light of the Catholic faith, as if there were two contrary truths").¹

Such is the origin of the so-called doctrine of "twofold truth", which, although commonly attributed to the Averroists, was not taught by them but was forced upon them by their opponents.² Whatever the truth in this matter, the important thing to us here is the fact that Siger of Brabant certainly passed in the eyes of all for an exponent of that doctrine which St. Thomas Aquinas abhorred. Hence the problem as to how and why Dante could compel St. Thomas to repudiate an essential element in his own doctrine by assigning him the task of glorifying Siger of Brabant. It is understandable that this problem has arrested the attention of Dantologists, for it involves the ultimate meaning of Dante's work.

When Father Mandonnet approached this difficulty in his turn, he did so with his mind already made up on two points, which in his eyes were to remain for the future the basic facts of the problem. On the one hand, he had himself been the first to prove that "Siger professed a pure, philosophical form of Averroism"; on the other hand, he regarded it as certain that "Dante condemned Averroism outright", so much so that "the whole of Dante's philosophy is the very antithesis of that of Averroes".³ If, as we are entitled to do, we designate as "pure Averroism" that of the Latin Averroists (not that of Averroes), the first thesis is indisputably correct. The second, on the contrary, raises many difficulties. We shall examine them later. For the moment let us simply note that, in accepting these two theses, Father Mandonnet was engaging to explain how a poet

¹ *Chartul. Univ. Paris.*, Vol. I, p. 543. Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas Parisienses*, the whole of the concluding part of the treatise, from *Est etiam majori admiratione . . .* (in *Opuscula omnia*, ed. P. Mandonnet, Vol. I, pp. 68-69).

² This conclusion has been simultaneously upheld by B. NARDI, *Intorno alle dottrine filosofiche di Pietro d'Abano* (from the *Nuova Rivista Storica*, V, 2-3, Milan, Albright Segati, 1921, pp. 34-35) and by myself in *La doctrine de la double vérité* (E. GILSON, *Etudes de philosophie médiévale*, Strasbourg, 1921, pp. 51-75). Cf. F. SASSEN, *Siger de Brabant et la doctrine de la double vérité*, in *Revue Néo-Scholastique de Philosophie*, Vol. XXXIII (1931), pp. 170-179. As regards Siger's own position, see the subtly contrasted reflections in *op. cit.*, pp. 173-175.

³ P. MANDONNET, *Siger de Brabant*, Vol. I, pp. 301-302.

philosophy in Paris; we may still read several of his works; he was one of the philosophers against whom the condemnations of 1270 and 1277 were directed; he was summoned to appear before the tribunal of the Inquisitor of France, Simon du Val, on October 23rd, 1277,¹ and although by this time he had probably taken to flight, this summons would alone be enough to justify Dante's use of the word *invidiosi* in speaking of the *veri* taught by Siger. Whatever form the subsequent life and the death of this teacher may have taken, it is a fact that his university career was ruined by the condemnation of 1277. What Dante tells us about Siger is therefore historically accurate. To defend Father Mandonnet's thesis one is obliged to maintain that Dante, knowing that Siger was a philosopher and that this philosopher had been sentenced for certain of his philosophical opinions, has made himself responsible for the declaration that these condemned opinions reflected the truth without even knowing their content.²

Such a theory is improbable. And yet Father Mandonnet's historical accuracy led him to take up a position that is more improbable still. Dante's intention in writing the passage was so obviously to suggest that Siger occupies his seat as a philosopher that even Father Mandonnet could not fail to notice it. Since he saw it, his perfect honesty obliged him to point it out, and his eminent scholarship did not permit him to do so with anything but perfect clarity. But as he insisted that Dante was not acquainted with Siger's doctrine, Father Mandonnet found himself driven to maintain that Dante had put Siger in heaven because Siger was a philosopher, although Dante did not know precisely what the content of his philosophy was.³

S. REINACH, *L'énigme de Siger*, in *Revue historique*, Vol. 151 (1926) (passage on pp. 9-14). If scholars were agreed in regarding Dante as the author of the poem *Il Fiore*, the passage it contains on Siger's death would be of capital importance to us (*Il Fiore*, XCII, in DANTE, *Tutte le opere . . .*, ed. cit., p. 200); but, since the authorship of the poem remains uncertain, we will not admit it as evidence.

¹ The text of the summons is reproduced in P. MANDONNET, *Siger de Brabant*, Vol. I, p. 255, note 1.

² This objection has already been raised against Father Mandonnet's thesis, and in such a way that there is nothing to add to it, by B. NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante nella Divina Commedia e le fonti della filosofia di Dante*, in *Riv. di Filosofia neo-scolastica*, February-April, 1912 (pp. 65-66 printed separately).

³ E. Gebhardt, on the other hand, thought of the right explanation, but rejected it as being improbable: "The explanation which is in that case held to account for Siger's presence, namely that his thought as a philosopher differed from his thought as a Christian, is not merely particularly absurd where a mediaeval conscience is involved, but would add further to these difficulties" (*L'Italie mystique*, Hachette, Paris, 5e édit., 1906, p. 328). Consequently, "there remains but one solution to the problem: the doctor's expiation,

Here the thesis is no longer merely improbable; it is contradictory. For if Dante has chosen Siger to represent philosophy, he has certainly done so, as Father Mandonnet himself shrewdly says, because he wants to place at the side of Thomas, the personification of learned theology, "a representative of the contemporary profane science, Aristotelism. That is why Dante puts Siger on the left hand of Thomas Aquinas, while Albert of Cologne, the latter's teacher and elementary instructor, stands on his right. In reality Siger is here as it were the vicar of Aristotle, who could not himself enter Paradise. It is so obvious that Dante wants to put a representative of the profane science near St. Thomas that he is careful to outline Siger's character clearly, lest it be thought that he is a theologian".¹

Dante therefore knew at least this much about Siger—that he was one of the very few contemporary teachers who could be chosen to symbolize pure philosophy, that is to say an Aristotelianism undisturbed by any theological preoccupations. In other words, it is an essential article of Father Mandonnet's thesis, which here gives way to the facts revealed in our sources, that Siger symbolized a philosophical attitude which the theologian-philosopher Thomas Aquinas could not symbolize. Now such a distinction between theology and philosophy, here symbolized by Siger of Brabant, is at the very root of the indiscretions for which that philosopher had been sentenced in 1277. Accordingly we cannot, like Father Mandonnet, say that in exalting Siger Dante intended to glorify profane philosophy as distinct from theology, without tacitly admitting that Dante was acquainted with the philosophical-theological separatism which Siger taught. Hence, it seems that only one conclusion can be drawn. In any case, what Dante may not have known of Siger's philosophy cannot explain the fact that he introduced him into Paradise. The reason for his choice cannot have been something that he did not know about him; it must have been something that he did know about him. Now we are told, quite rightly, that Dante intended to make

that profound misery, attested by the *Fiore*, in which he had languished within the walls of bleak Orvieto, perhaps even the tortures or the acts of violence which cut short his life" (*op. cit.*, p. 328). The question of Siger's death is not part of our problem, since it is bound up with the interpretation of the text of the *Fiore*, to which others have now been added. Consult in this connection P. MANDONNET, *Siger de Brabant*, Vol. I, pp. 263-264 and 280-286, and S. REINACH, *L'énigme de Siger*, in *Revue historique*, Vol. 151 (1926) (passage on pp. 11-13).

¹ P. MANDONNET, *Siger de Brabant*, Vol. I, p. 307.

him represent a philosophy uncoloured by theology. The least, therefore, that Dante can have known about Siger is that that teacher had maintained a rigorous distinction between the philosophical and the theological orders; what he had said on that subject amounted to so many truths (*veri*); it was because he had upheld them that he had suffered (*invidiosi*);¹ but Dante at all events was anxious to glorify him for having maintained this radical distinction between the two orders, and it is because he had upheld it that he introduces Siger into Paradise.

Solutions which appear the most obvious to the mind that conceives them lose some of their weight as soon as they are formulated. Accordingly this one may in its turn be only one more false solution to be added to the long list which scholars have already offered to this problem. It has at any rate three merits: 1. It gives a positive reason for Dante's glorification of Siger; 2. It identifies that reason with Siger's symbolical function in the Dantesque Paradise; 3. It deduces the nature of that function from what Dante himself tells us of it. Surely no solution could go much further towards obtaining from Dante himself the answer to a question with which his work confronts us, and that is what appears to me to authorize this one.

In that case we may ask ourselves how it is that it has not yet been noticed. But the question is not fair, for, in fact, Father

¹ It is appropriate to note here that, contrary to the opinion of the Abbé F. Van Steenberghen (*Les oeuvres et la doctrine de Siger de Brabant*, p. 182), the hypothesis that Siger of Brabant was finally won over to Thomism would not readily explain St. Thomas's eulogy of him in this passage. If the fresh questions *De anima* which it is desired to ascribe to him are authentic the Dante-Siger problem will merely present itself in a new form, with the following as its main points: 1. Siger of Brabant, originally an adherent of Averroism, finally abjures that doctrine and, between 1275 and 1277, adopts the general attitude of St. Thomas, of whom he becomes an "admirer and even a disciple" (*op. cit.*, pp. 78-79 and p. 183); 2. Having abjured Averroism between 1275 and 1277, he is nevertheless sentenced for Averroism in 1277; 3. Summoned to appear before Simon du Val, Inquisitor of France, on November 23rd, 1277, Siger takes to flight instead of presenting himself and producing the authentic *Quaestiones* which prove conclusively that he rejects the doctrine of Averroes; 4. Sentenced in 1277 for his Averroism—though he has already renounced it—Siger of Brabant none the less ceases to write as from this time (*op. cit.*, p. 79): the silence of Siger of Brabant dates from the moment when he adopts an orthodox attitude and can freely say what he thinks; 5. Sentenced in 1277 for upholding doctrines which at this time he himself deemed false, Siger is praised in the Dantesque Paradise as a man who has formerly suffered for upholding doctrines which St. Thomas himself declares to be true (*invidiosi veri*). Thus, it is alleged that while the Siger of history was converted to Thomism, St. Thomas is converted in Dante's poem to the Averroism from which he himself had formerly alienated Siger of Brabant. I would not like to say that the problem put in this form is insoluble; I merely say that those who believe in Siger's conversion to Thomism will still have a few difficulties to surmount before they solve the problem, which they regard, a little prematurely, as solved already.

Mandonnet noticed it. What we must ask ourselves, therefore, is rather why, having noticed it, he did not accept it. The reason is probably to be found in the simplistic notion that is often formed of Dante's symbolism. The *Divine Comedy* contains as great a wealth of figurative meanings as the *Roman de la Rose*, but it expresses them differently. Instead of employing a system of frigid allegories and presenting us with personified abstractions, as Greed, Justice, Faith, Theology and Philosophy would have been, Dante employs a system of symbols, i.e. representative characters: Beatrice, Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant, Bernard of Clairvaux. It was a prodigious artistic invention, a sheer stroke of genius, to people the poem in this way with a crowd of living beings, each having a spiritual signification as concrete and alive as the character that personifies it. The wonderful poetical triumph that is the *Divine Comedy* fully justifies this technique, and if it has often misled interpreters of Dante, he himself cannot be held responsible, since he did not write his work for future historians of Italian literature, but for the pleasure and instruction of his readers.

The dual nature of the characters in the *Divine Comedy* almost inevitably produces an optical illusion, against which interpreters of the work must be on their guard. Each is a historical personage chosen in view of the representative function which he or she is to perform. In order, therefore, to make a specific choice, Dante had first to take account of the part which the character in question had played in history. He could not allot symbolical meanings at random, and it is easy to see why the pagan Aristotle represents philosophy in Limbo while the Christian Siger represents it in Paradise, or why Thomas symbolizes speculative theology and Bernard of Clairvaux unitive mystical theology. In fact, Dante's choices are almost always justifiable historically; when they are not so historically, they can be justified on the basis of legend, and I do not remember coming across a single character whose presence did not accord with some definite plan. This said, the other aspect of the problem claims our attention no less urgently. A character in the *Divine Comedy* conserves only as much of its historical reality as the representative function that Dante assigns to it requires. Hence, to understand the poem properly we must remember that in it Virgil, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure and Bernard of Clairvaux each lead the particular

existence—and no other—which justifies their presence in Dante's poetical universe. Most certainly, these characters remain closely associated with the historical reality of the personages whose names they bear, but they retain only as much of that reality as they themselves signify. Hence this second rule of interpretation, which it will be well to remember: *The historical reality of Dante's characters may influence their interpretation only in so far as it is essential to the representative function which Dante himself assigns to them and in view of which he has chosen them.*

As soon as we consider the matter, the necessity of this rule for Dante's own purposes becomes obvious. If he had adopted any other method his work would have been impossible. Those whose praises he causes to be sung by St. Thomas or St. Bonaventure are not the spiritual heroes whom the Thomas or the Bonaventure of history would spontaneously have chosen to celebrate, but those whom the Thomas or the Bonaventure of the *Divine Comedy* were bound to celebrate, granted the specific function with which Dante himself had entrusted them. It is this that enables the poet to pursue his judicial task without fear and, in the name of divine justice, to re-establish in heaven the scale of values which passions or human ignorance have overthrown on earth. His spokesmen have no function but that of conveying to us his own words—so much so that when the need arises Dante does not scruple to rehearse them. As another poet would say, Thomas and Bonaventure dwell in Paradise in the characters finally imposed on them by eternity. Henceforth their words will no longer be determined by themselves as they once were, but by their poetical function alone.

It is impossible to view these problems in any other light without encountering numerous serious improbabilities. In heaven Bonaventure, like a prophet inspired by God, celebrates that same Joachim against whom he fought so vigorously on earth. If we express the problem in terms of the actual historical character alone, we are bound to admit either that Dante was completely ignorant of the situation of the parties within the Franciscan Order, or else that he was aware of it and desired to amuse himself at the expense of the earthly Bonaventure by causing him to be publicly disowned by his celestial double. Now Dante was perfectly well aware of the internal situation of the Order; he defines St. Bonaventure's position in it to a nicety

of the problem into account it is not enough to assume that Dante may have put Siger in Paradise despite what he had taught; we must go further, and say that he put him there *because he had taught certain truths which Dante held dear*. We are told that that would have been rather audacious, but it was also audacious to prepare a select place in hell for Pope Boniface VIII. And this audacity was not merely as great; it was identical. Boniface VIII has to appear in Dante's *Inferno* for the same reason as Siger has to appear in Dante's *Paradiso*, for the false belief that doomed the one to hell was the counterpart of the truth that the other represents in Paradise as by right. This was the belief that the spiritual order has power over the temporal order; the truth that theology, which is the spiritual wisdom of faith, has no authority over the temporal order through the medium of philosophy. Hence, of the truths which Dante praises Siger for having taught we know at least these two—that philosophy is a science of pure natural reason, and that theology, the wisdom of faith, has no authority over natural ethics or over politics, the foundations of which are laid by natural ethics. Being a martyr of pure philosophy, Siger of Brabant was in Dante's eyes qualified to represent it.

The objection will no doubt be raised that St. Thomas Aquinas would not have applauded the use which Siger had made of his philosophical independence.¹ That is true. Our analysis of the *Convivio* showed us that the use which Dante himself makes of

¹ It should be noted that, conversely, Siger would have felt no embarrassment at finding himself in the company of Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, whom he regarded as the best philosophers of his time—"praecipui viri in philosophia Albertus et Thomas" (*Quaest. de Anima*, in P. MANDONNET, *Siger de Brabant*, Vol. II, p. 152). Furthermore, Siger would have made no objection to the theology of St. Thomas, for he professed not to be a theologian and to accept the Christian faith as true without any reservation. Finally, even where his philosophy failed to accord with his faith, Siger was not always dogmatically certain of his philosophical conclusions. Thus, his conclusion on the capital problem of the unity of the possible intellect was as follows: "Et ideo dico propter difficultatem praemissorum et quorumdam aliorum, quod mihi dubium fuit a longo tempore, quid via rationis naturalis in praedicto problemate sit tenendum, et quid senserit Philosophus de dicta quaestione; et in tali dubio fidei adhaerendum est, quae omnem rationem superat" (*op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 169). The problem would accordingly become very involved if one wished to discuss all the possible hypotheses. If, like Father Mandonnet, we assume that in the *Divine Comedy* Dante is speaking as a theologian, the fact that he denies the unity of the possible intellect would alone prove nothing, since, beyond all doubt, Siger himself regarded this thesis as deserving of condemnation from the theologian's point of view. As to the position of Siger touching this question, see the excellent work by W. J. DWYER, *L'Opuscule de Siger de Brabant "De aeternitate mundi"*. *Introduction critique et texte*, Louvain, Editions de l'Institut supérieur de Philosophie, 1937. Cf.: "Haec autem dicimus secundum opinionem Philosophi, non ea asserendo tanquam vera", p. 42, II, 5, 6.

his independence as a philosopher is far less characteristic of Siger than of St. Thomas Aquinas. But an examination of the *De Monarchia* will show us also that at least once during his life, and in what was to him a vital matter, Dante had to carry the distinction between philosophy and theology further than St. Thomas Aquinas had done. Now is the time to recall the rules of interpretation that we suggested and to deal with the inhabitants of the Dantesque world in accordance with the special laws which govern it. For it is quite true that the Thomas Aquinas of history would never have undertaken to eulogize Siger in the way in which Dante makes him eulogize him, but in refusing to do so he would automatically have acknowledged the authority of theology over ethics and, since they are inseparable, would have justified in advance all encroachments of the spiritual order on the temporal order, including that of the Pope on the Empire. I do not for a moment question such an assessment of the Thomas Aquinas of history, but this was the part of his make-up which he had to leave at the gate of the *Paradiso* before he could enter. By refusing to carry the distinction between philosophy and theology to the point of upholding not the doctrine of the twofold truth, which even Siger never upheld, but the radical separatism that Dante had in mind, St. Thomas Aquinas would have forfeited the right to symbolize in the *Divine Comedy* the Dominican wisdom of faith, there would no longer have been any justification for his presence—in short, he would have been the cause of his own exclusion. This is not the only case in which Dante's symbolism is wholly out of keeping with the individual to whom it is applied. The closed world of the sacred poem is subject to internal compulsions which are not those of history; when the laws of these two worlds are in conflict it is the laws of history that have to give way.

If it is already not easy to appreciate exactly the relevance of a philosophical thesis, it is not even certain that a poem, though it be as full of ideas and theses of all kinds as the *Divine Comedy*, is intended to be understood philosophically. When the artist is labouring for a truth, he has his own way of serving it: he makes his appeal to feeling rather than to reason. When, therefore, we come to interpret the *Divine Comedy*, the artist's point of view has an indisputable priority over all others, not only

temporal and the spiritual orders, of the Church and the Empire, which he earnestly desired.

If such is indeed the case, we should be following an equally false trail if, as a means of deducing Dante's theoretical attitude towards philosophy, we assumed that he was a Thomist, or if, as a means of deducing his theoretical attitude towards theology, we assumed that he was an Averroist. Anyone who cares to glance through his work in the light of one of these hypotheses will encounter insuperable difficulties. The text of the *Divine Comedy* much rather suggests the idea that Dante is a moralist and reformer who arms himself with all the theses required for his work of reform and by his moral philosophy. We do not know who the *Veltro* was, and, if he was one destined to arise in the future, perhaps it is a little ingenuous to give a name to this Messiah. On the other hand we are certain, on the evidence of the text, that Dante heralds his coming at the very outset of his work, and we know the mission with which he entrusts him—the administration of justice. We even know for certain what his work of justice will be, viz. to put each of the human orders in its proper place by restoring temporal authority to the Empire and spiritual authority to the Church. The *Veltro*, the saviour of Italy, will be the destroyer of the She-Wolf, itself a symbol of the greed which is at the very root of injustice (*Inf.*, I, 100-111). When Dante reaches the heaven of Jupiter, which is the heaven of the wise and just princes, the formation which these blessed spirits adopt represents the sentence in the Scriptures: *Diligite justitiam, qui judicatis terram* ("Love justice, O ye who judge the earth") (*Wisdom*, I, 1). A little later, having first rearranged their ranks in the form of the letter M, which is the last letter of *terram*, they open out into a new formation, representing the Imperial Eagle, symbol of the Empire, which is to ensure the final triumph of justice (*Par.*, XVIII, 115-123). And over whom? Over greed and injustice. Again, over the greed and injustice of whom? Of that Pope John XXII who laid waste the vineyard of the Church, in whose cause the apostles Peter and Paul died (*Par.*, XVIII, 130-132). Let us make no mistake, the Imperial Eagle's discourse on Justice in this passage is an exact parallel to those that flowed from the lips of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure on the spirituality of the Church's aims (*Par.*, XIX, 40-99). To each his order and his function.

The representative *par excellence* on earth of divine Justice is none other than the Emperor.

This burning passion for temporal justice, realized through the Empire, must undoubtedly be the basis of our renewed reflections on the use that Dante has made of philosophy and theology. The adversary that haunts his thoughts is the clergy that betrays its sacred mission and usurps that of the Emperor:

Ahi, gente che dovresti esser devota
e lasciar seder Cesare in la sella,
se bene intendi ciò che Dio ti nota!
(*Purg.*, VI, 91-93.)

Priests, monks or Popes—Dante hunted this detested breed with an anger that knew no pity. Just as he enlists saints in aid of his cause, the poet does not hesitate to make God the executor of his exalted purpose. Himself animated by an ardent desire to serve,¹ this herald of justice does not for one moment countenance failure to serve the divine authorities as he means that they should be served. As the creator and supreme lawgiver of his own universe, Dante assigns to each his place with an authority against which there is no appeal. We do not find Siger of Brabant and Joachim of Fiori where St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure put them on earth, but where they ought to put them in accordance with the conception of justice which, since it is Dante's conception, is necessarily God's as well.

This is a sufficient reason to deter us from systematizing the sacred poem around any thesis—even this one. Being the work

¹ We can understand how Dante's passion for authority is in keeping with the passionate independence of his attitude towards those who betray it only if we remember that in his eyes the greatness of the sovereign consists entirely in service. These seemingly contradictory reactions therefore spring from one and the same basic sentiment. Dante believes that the highest good is the liberty which makes us happy as men in this world and as gods in the next. If he desires the installation of an Emperor, the reason is that "existens sub Monarcha est potissime liberum". The universal Emperor in effect frees the individual from servitude in all its specific forms (democracy, oligarchy or tyranny). The special function of the Emperor is therefore to ensure individual liberties through the constant arbitration that his supreme authority enables him to exercise. The Emperor is thus lord of the means that lead to this end, but it is his duty to serve this end and all those whom he is responsible for guiding to it: "Hinc etiam patet, quod quamvis consul sive rex respectu viae sint domini aliorum, respectu autem termini aliorum ministri sunt, et maxime Monarcha, qui minister omnium procul dubio habendus est" (*De Monarchia*, I, 12). Dante therefore has the right to demand for every sovereign the full authority to which his function entitles him, and to condemn him in the name of that same function, with a ruthlessness proportionate to its exalted character, if he turns out to be unworthy of it.

of a poet, the *Divine Comedy* is infinitely mightier and more splendid than the political passions of its author.¹ Taken as a whole, it is an exaltation of all divine rights: that of the Emperor, most certainly, but equally those of the Philosopher and the Pope, since all rights are interdependent as being expressions of the living justice of God. The *Divine Comedy* accordingly appears as the projection, on the artistic plane, of the vision of that ideal world which Dante dreamed of—a world in which majesty would always be honoured according to its rank and every act of treason chastised as it deserved.² In short, it is the final judgment passed on the mediaeval world by a God Who will consult Dante before making His adjudications.

To be sure, the ideological framework of the *Divine Comedy* explains neither its origination nor its beauty, but it is there, and it alone enables us to understand the poem's contents. Virgil holds sway in Limbo over the poets and Aristotle over the philosophers, but Boniface VIII has a place all prepared for him in Hell, while Manfred, who died excommunicate, waits patiently in Purgatory for his daughter's prayers to shorten the

¹ I do not say, or think, that, as some have maintained, the chief inspiration of the *Divine Comedy* is political. That is true only of the *De Monarchia*. The poet's chief intention was aesthetic—to write a poem; the subject of the poem is theological—the final aims of man (*ultima regna*); the object that he had in view in treating this subject was moral—to inspire men with a new respect for justice, the mother of liberty. Given the subject that he had chosen, it was Dante's duty to miss no opportunity of lashing the kind of injustice from which he had suffered most and in which he saw the cause of so many evils—namely, the encroachment of the spiritual order on the temporal! That is why, if it is not the poem's main thesis, Dante's political thought is everywhere prominent in the *Divine Comedy*. Every time it comes to the surface we perceive the warmth of a genuine human passion; then Dante's superb tirades and the unjust though beautiful passages with which his polemic abounds find free expression.

² We thus find, not merely without having looked for it but without even having thought of it, the interpretation of the *Divine Comedy* offered by Dante himself in the *Epistola XVII* to Can Grande della Scala. After being acknowledged by laymen, the authenticity of this letter has been disputed, then once more acknowledged. It rests with Dante scholars to pass a final judgment. To me at all events it seems to express admirably the spirit and, as it were, the essence of the *Divine Comedy*: "Est ergo subjectum totius operis, literaliter tantum accepti, status animarum post mortem simpliciter sumptus. Nam de illo et circa illum totius operis versatur processus. Si vero accipiatur opus allegorice, subjectum est: homo, prout merendo et demerendo per arbitrii libertatem Justitiæ praemiantur aut punientur obnoxius est" (*Epist. XVII*, 8). From the philosophical point of view, he adds in section 16 of the same letter, it is a moralistic work, aimed not at speculation, but at action. Let us remember this useful admonition not to look upon Dante more as a metaphysician or a physician than as a moralist. Apart from a few opinions which are not quite watertight, we may regard as almost perfect the picture of Dante's political attitude painted by G. PAPINI, *Dante vivant* (French translation by Juliette Bertrand, Grasset, Paris, 1934; Book IV, Chap. XXXVI, *Les deux Soleils*, pp. 191-197). As to the view that Dante was above everything a moralist, see the excellent opinions expressed by FATHER MANDONNET in *Dante le Théologien*, p. 138, and pp. 143-145.

years that still stand between him and the sight of God. The fact is, as Villani said, that this Manfred was "an enemy of Holy Church, of clerics and of monks, seizing the churches as his father did before him". His crimes and those of Boniface VIII have no common measure: the one relieved the Church of possessions to which it had no right, and so he could be exonerated; but the other had attempted to violate the majesty of the Empire: hence it was impossible to save him. The same laws of the same Dantesque universe explain Siger's proximity to Thomas Aquinas, or rather they demand it, since Dante's allocation of authority makes it necessary. Everything encourages us to attribute to him the fundamental convictions that we have mentioned, for they are the convictions that animate the whole of his work. The *Convivio* having restored in its entirety the moral authority of the Philosopher over the Emperor, the *Monarchy* having restored in its entirety the political authority of the Emperor over the Popes, the *Divine Comedy* provides a fresh reminder of the rights and duties of all, but here Dante is no longer content, as in his previous works, with founding them in law on the absolute notion of divine justice; by the magic of his art he actually shows the movements of this Justice—the eternal custodian of the laws of the world, which it preserves in the form in which it created it. For it is certainly this Justice that beatifies the just with its love, as it crushes the unjust beneath its wrath. If it is only too true that in the poem it does not always seem to us equitable in its judgments the reason is that this divine Justice is, after all, merely Dante's conception of justice, but we are concerned rather with understanding the work and its author than with judging them.

If the essence of these conclusions should by right be regarded as true, Dante's general attitude towards philosophy would be less that of a philosopher anxious to cultivate it for its own sake than that of a judge desirous of rendering it its due, so as to obtain from it the contribution which ethics and politics are entitled to expect it to make to the great cause of temporal human happiness. Here, therefore, as in all his speculative work, Dante adopts the attitude of a defender of the public weal. His special function is not to promote philosophy, nor to teach theology, nor to demonstrate the working of the Empire, but to inspire these fundamental authorities once more with the

writers, our pedagogy has appropriated modern writers in addition to the classics. Now that we teach Baudelaire and Verlaine, while Claudel and Valery await their turn, who will still have the courage to read them? Literature is now offered to us in a cup of which the lip is smeared with gall.

To avoid the distortions to which masterpieces are subjected by the professional outlook of so many historians and professors,¹ it would require the ability to draw one's inspiration from the psychology of the artist. Unfortunately, of all the parts of a most complex subject the psychology of the artist is not the least obscure. Few psychologists are artists, and artists who might be psychologists have better things to do than to analyse themselves. And yet we seem to discern here, in the cases of Dante and Petrarch, as it were a distinct variety of sentiment, in which love is identified with the creative activity of the artist to such a degree that it becomes scarcely possible to imagine the one without the other. Certainly the artist is a man. He can love as other men do, yield to the temptations of the most ordinary carnal desire, aspire to the order and peace that are lent to life by the mutual love of husband and wife, in short, be an artist and love as a man.² But he can also love as an artist, because he needs some sort of emotion or passion for the liberation of his creative power, and this kind of love is most certainly no more dissociated from the flesh than other kinds, but it does not always need to be accompanied by carnal satisfaction and its lasting properties are often enhanced if this is denied to it. Frau von Stein and Christiane Vulpius did not play the same part in the life of Goethe: she who was his Muse was not the woman he married. Heinrich Heine took Mathilde Mirat to wife, but Camille Selden, *The Fly*, inspired him with quite a different feeling. Richard Wagner certainly loved Minna Planer, and even more Cosima Liszt—each of whom he married—but not in quite the same way as he loved Mathilde Wesendonk, or even, perhaps, in a lesser degree, Judith Gautier. The perfect Muse gives to each of the men who love her what he expects of her:

¹ For an analogy in the field of the plastic arts and their technique, see the admirable pages in HENRI FOCILLON'S *La vie des formes*, Paris, E. Leroux, pp. 53-55.

² Let us remember, in order that we may understand what follows, that Dante's contemporaries always represented him as being passionate and even licentious. In this great poet, we are told, in addition to all his learning and courage, "trovò ampissimo luogo la lussuria, e non solamente ne' giovani anni, ma ancora ne' maturi" (BOCCACCIO, *Della origine . . .*, ed. cit., Chap. 22, p. 51).

to Wagner, *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*, and to Wesendonk a child.

Being closer in time to men who are readier to tell their stories, we know these artists a little less vaguely than their predecessors. It is probable that the great creative artists resemble one another closely enough, in spite of the centuries that separate them, for us to be able to generalize from particular cases. Now Richard Wagner was speaking in quite a broad sense when he made the following observation: "My poetical conceptions have always preceded my practical experiences, so much so that I must regard my moral development as being conditioned entirely by them." It could hardly be more clearly stated that, so far from its being possible to ascribe Wagner's works to the circumstances of his life, the reverse is the case. If one put the idea in a more positive form, as is inevitable, one would say that the artist imagined situations which seemed to offer material for possible works and that, the better to create those works, he actually put himself in such situations. In fact, things are not so simple. Wagner the revolutionary accounts for *Rienzi* just as much as *Rienzi* accounts for Wagner the revolutionary. In order to curse the Rhine gold Wagner had no need to go to the trouble of ruining himself, and a decent middle-class competency inherited at the right time would probably have modified the symbolism of the Tetralogy. None the less it is still true to say that, in its application to the sentiment we are speaking of, what Wagner says seems to be right, and that it may to all intents and purposes be confirmed by reference to the case of *Tristan*.

We do in fact know, from indisputable evidence, that the composer conceived the plan of *Tristan* before he met the Wesendonks, but he did not write it. How is it, then, that we find him later in a situation corresponding exactly to that which obtains in his opera, trapped between an Isolde who loves him and is loved by him, and a King Marke to whom he is bound by ties of gratitude so strong that he can no longer love without being guilty of betrayal? As he himself says at this period: "You can easily guess the strange and unusual position in which I now find myself with respect to *Tristan*. I say frankly that never was an idea so completely translated into experience." We need not try, moreover, to put the case any more explicitly, for the artist immediately adds: "The question of the degree in which

idea and experience are in the first place actuated reciprocally is so tricky and so complex that a superficial knowledge of it could only yield an incomplete and altogether distorted conception of it."¹ The very embarrassment to which the artist is subject in this matter seems to guarantee the truth of the words just quoted. In face of the inextricable bonds that unite his life as an artist and his life as a man, Wagner forgoes an analysis which in any case he would undoubtedly have found difficult to carry out successfully.

Moreover, the problem would become even more complicated if we were to supplement the study of the poet with that of his Muse. In this case the documentary evidence is even rarer. It is also more dangerous to handle, for Muses generally write their memoirs only when they have ceased to be Muses. They sincerely believe then that they have written *The Disenchanted* or *Wisdom and Destiny*. Vituperative Muses are terrible. And yet the meannesses of mediocre ones do not entitle us to disregard the part played by great ones—those who, joining in the game at the start, can not only fall in with it, without always giving themselves up to it, but can even control it, participating in it just enough to bring to fruition the work which the artist carries within him and of which only they can deliver him. Such, apparently, was that Mathilde Wesendonk of whom it has with perfect truth been said: "This shrewd woman knew that the continuance of their love would only be assured at the cost of her refusal—and that such, undoubtedly, must be the price of Tristan."² In fact, with the completion of *Tristan*, her love for Wagner resigned itself to extinction as if, in the full meaning of the term, it had itself attained its *end*.

It does not, then, seem idle to speak of a certain variety of the passion of love which the artist identifies with the creation of his work, and which, in respect to the conditions governing its duration, in its rhythm and its actual life, is not altogether comparable with what is ordinarily called love. Of the very few artists who have interested themselves in the problem we must

¹ These passages will be found collected under a single heading in *Wagner. Histoire d'un artiste*, by GUY DE POURTALES (Paris, Gallimard, 1932, p. 244). This excellent book fully justifies its title, for it is truly the story of Wagner the artist that its author has related, and this is what makes it so instructive in its application to the problem which we have propounded.

² GUY DE POURTALES, *Wagner*, p. 250.

place in the front rank Charles Morgan, whose *Sparkenbroke*, besides being a masterpiece, provides in this context ample matter for reflection. It has been said of *Sparkenbroke* that he was Byron and Shelley in one. Undoubtedly—but he is also Wagner, Charles Morgan and, broadly speaking, any artist who is conscious of the intimate relationship existing between art, love and death. Of these three forms of self-sacrifice death is the most complete and, as it were, the one which is adumbrated by the other two; it is even, beyond doubt, the richest and the most fruitful, but we see the result of the others more clearly and perhaps it is not so hard to understand why we so often find them associated in the artist's life. The Mary of Charles Morgan does not mean the same to George Hardy, whom she marries, as to *Sparkenbroke*, to whom she will never belong. Torn between the love that she bears her husband and the passion that unites her to *Sparkenbroke*, she feels herself to be an impostor, but she is above all a victim of the human misery experienced by those Muses who love and suffer in order that another may create. Is she not, moreover, protected from *Sparkenbroke* by the very genius of the man whom she inspires? If this inspiration is to flow, it is essential that she should be loved. As *Sparkenbroke's* wife, for how long would Mary liberate his creative inspiration? For a long time, no doubt; for ever, perhaps; but, more probably, for as long as was needed for Cosima Wagner to make way for Judith Gautier.

What does all this tell us about Dante and Beatrice? Absolutely nothing, I admit. Nothing, at any rate, which I can explain to those who cannot see it unaided. All the circumstances of these stories seemingly suggest that the measure of inspiration with which the princesses inspired the poets depended on their remoteness. One is inclined to say that, from the days of chivalrous love down to our own times, the creative instinct of poets has led them to choose inaccessible princesses in order to protect from themselves the sources of emotion that quicken their art. Most certainly, I do not think it is impossible for an artist's Muse to be purely the creature of his imagination.¹ Even when she

¹ An admirable exposition of this point of view will be found in MARIO CASELLA'S essay, *Poesia e Storia*, in *Archivio storico italiano*, Vol. II, dispensa 3a e 4a del 1938–XXVII. The author there discusses, zestfully and with sound judgment, the interpretations of the poetry of the Troubadours offered by philologists who pay too little heed to the essentially poetic character of the works which are the subject of their commentaries.

really exists it is still he who creates her in her character of a Muse. It is still true none the less that, at all times, and in particular, it seems, but not exclusively, among love-poets, there have been men who fostered, welcomed, cultivated the passions required for the origination of their work. Had they been less carnal these passions would have been less effectual; if satisfied, they would have subsided, and they have in effect subsided in cases in which the poet, having won his remote princess, has died. If, on the contrary, he has the good fortune, or the wisdom, to embrace only his emotion, the artist will engender his work, and also, if he has one, his Muse. Those who say that the world has never seen the like of Dante's Beatrice would be quite right if Dante and his work did not form part of the world, but that does not prove that the woman from whom Dante created Beatrice never existed. Those who say that a love like that of Dante for the heroine of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divine Comedy* is hard to credit are quite right, but the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divine Comedy* were no less hard to credit before Dante wrote them; and yet they exist. Dante's love for Beatrice should normally appear to us just as likely as it would be for us to write the two masterpieces of which it was the inspiration.

moral and analogical meanings,¹ commentators have thought themselves entitled to seek an allegorical meaning everywhere, to the extent of stifling the literal meaning beneath the mass of symbols with which it is desired to encumber it. That there is symbolism in Dante, and in great abundance too, is obvious, but we shall understand its peculiar character much better if we work from his actual text than if we make the rules of Tyconius our starting-point. It is one thing to define the rules that enable the various meanings of the Bible to be explained, as the exegete does, but it is another thing to use those rules, as Dante did, for the construction of a poem which others will have to explain.

It is certain that Dante in his work applied the basic principle of the interpreters of the Bible. In the *Divine Comedy*, as in the Scriptures, even *things* have a significance. They may be inanimate things, animals, or men. Now it seems that the symbolical explanation should not be of the same character in these various cases, because the very things that are used as symbols differ in character. In more precise terms, the human beings who people the sacred poem, and who are designated by proper names, appear to be essentially different in their symbolical value from all other realities to which any kind of spiritual significance is attached.² If this is true, we ought not to use the same methods in order to determine their significance.

Let us take a few examples. Although interpreters of Dante

¹ DANTE, *Convivio*, II, I. Cf. *Epistola XVII*, art. 7 (ed. cit., p. 437).

² Dante treats even the mythological beings—romantic or poetic in origin—whom he mentions as real people, and, in some cases, it is hard to know to what extent he himself regarded them as such. The fact that a personage is called Minos, for example, does not prevent Dante from regarding him as an ancient king of Crete who became a judge in the pagan hell and has remained so in the Christian hell. Here as elsewhere, however, I am speaking only of the personages whom Dante says he has known, personally or through their works, and I must here recall that, if Beatrice is merely a fiction, there may be a second case of a similar kind, that of Matelda. The student will find her identified with the Wisdom of the Old Testament by L. PIETROBONO (*Matelda*, in *Il Giornale dantesco*, Vol. XXXIX, nuova serie, IX. Annuario dantesco 1936. Florence, L. Olschki, 1938, pp. 91-124). I take the liberty of confessing that this most ingenious demonstration does not convince me, but not without adding at once that, since I myself have not studied the question, my opinion on this point is valueless. I cannot overcome the odd impression with which I am left by lists of Dante's guides like those suggested to us, in which all but two are real people. If, for example, Virgil, Beatrice, Matelda, Cato, Statius, St. Bernard and the Virgin Mary are named, I always ask myself: Why five real persons and two mythical ones, or only one, according to taste? Seeing that Dante represents them to us as being so many real persons, and nearly all of them are, we should need some very strong evidence to the contrary before we agreed that he regarded two of them as nothing but fictions. Once again, I only give my impression here for what it is worth.

to attach once and for all a certain significance. The forest and the She-wolf are poetical fancies; the poet represents them as such and asks us to accept them as such. To make things easier, let us assume that all symbols of this genus constitute a primary family. It will then be said that in Dante's writings symbolical fictions are generally possessed of a simple meaning, which no matter how varied the uses to which the poet may put it, remains univocal, and may consequently be indicated by a single word.

In a certain sense we may and should likewise regard the real people introduced by Dante into the *Divine Comedy* as being invested with a symbolical meaning. They are familiar types, signifying spiritual realities which often transcend their human character. And yet their case differs profoundly from the preceding one. Once it is understood that the Eagle symbolizes the Empire, this symbol can occasion no further surprise, for the simple reason that in its essence the eagle in question is virtually an image symbolizing the Empire. It is quite a different matter where Dante, Virgil and St. Bernard of Clairvaux are concerned. We are told that Dante symbolizes *homo viator*, man in his pilgrimage through human life. This is undoubtedly true, but he does so because, in reality, that is what he is. Behind the *Divine Comedy's* veil of poetical allegory we find a man telling his own story and his own human experience, which consists in his liberation from vice through divine grace:

Tu m'hai di servo tratto a libertate

(Par., XXXI, 85.)

Quinci su vo per non esser più cieco

(Purg., XXVI, 58.)

These lines, and countless others which we have quoted, or which might be added to them, point to the fundamental reality of the narrative and of the actors whom we meet in it. Now Virgil too behaves in the *Comedy* like a living man with whom Dante has established personal and concrete relations, and the same may be said of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Hence the symbolical value of these characters is necessarily complex, as are they themselves, and, above all, the word "symbol" cannot now be applied to them in the same sense as when it was a question of pure fictions. Not only does the She-wolf signify greed, but nothing is left of it save an image if it is stripped of

its symbolism. In such cases it is the meaning that creates the symbol. Where Virgil is concerned the contrary is true, so much so that we run a grave risk of misunderstanding the meaning of the *Divine Comedy* if we forget this point. For it is quite true that Dante chose Virgil and St. Bernard with the objective of making them representative types of spiritual realities, and the remark would apply quite as much to the cases of St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas, King Solomon, Gratian, Joachim of Fiori, Siger of Brabant and countless others; yet here it is not the meaning that creates the symbolical being, but the symbolical being that creates its own symbol. In short, they are all primarily symbolical of what they are.

We should therefore be in danger of committing some grave errors of construction if we first asked ourselves what Virgil symbolizes, interpreting the text according to the symbolism which we decided to attribute to him. This method is legitimate in the case of the She-wolf, to which we should at once attach the unequivocal label of "greed" every time we come across it. But it is not legitimate in the case of Virgil because in the *Divine Comedy* that personage plays a complex part analogous to the one that he really played in Dante's life, and his reactions have the resilient, varied, often unpredictable unity of those of a concrete, living being.

It is because they have forgotten this that interpreters of Dante have so often looked behind the figure of Virgil for a simple and univocal symbolism like that of the She-wolf, the Panther or the Eagle. What theory has not been invented? Scholars have wanted to regard him as representing the Imperial authority, human reason, philosophy, the order of nature without grace, etc. Nothing would be easier than to think of many other interpretations besides, but it would be a waste of time, because Virgil is no more capable than any other real person of being accounted for in terms of some mere abstract symbol. His civil status and his birth-certificate are against it. Far from being the expression of a symbolical meaning, he is the origin of it. If our interpretation of the *Divine Comedy* is not to be utterly wrong, we should always proceed from what Virgil says and does to what he symbolizes, and not *vice versa*. In the *Comedy*, then, he is the supreme poet, but not Poetry; a wise man, but not Wisdom; an illustrious representative of the

natural virtues and of moral prudence, but not Philosophy. If we seek to obtain a one-word answer, as we may expect to do when mere poetical fictions are involved, we find that the question "What does Virgil symbolize?" does not admit of any answer. We may therefore provide a score of answers, each of which will suggest itself as being the only one and as ruling out all the rest; but by that very fact they will be contradictory. Perhaps it would be wiser to forgo this sport, for Dante studies stand to lose more than they gain by it.

We ought especially to forgo it in so far as Beatrice is concerned. I have criticized, more severely, perhaps, than was necessary, several of the symbolical meanings that are attributed to her, without myself suggesting any other. No doubt it will be thought that this method is too simple. I am sorry, but no man is beholden to the impossible. Those who lay it down as a principle that Beatrice is merely a poetical fiction are right to propound the problem of her symbolical meaning as if her case were identical with that of the She-wolf or the Eagle. This, moreover, is what they do when they seek a simple and univocal connotation for her, as, for instance, Theology, Faith, Grace, Revelation, the Theological Virtues, the Contemplative Life in its pre-eminence over action, the Supernatural Life, etc. Even if we confine ourselves to those which are most likely, these symbolical meanings are numberless, but none of them accords with all the data of the problem, and that is why those who suggest them all hotly defend their own predilections, though none succeeds either in accepting or in eliminating those of his colleagues.

What must we do to get out of the difficulty? We must return to the golden rule laid down by Signor Michele Barbi: "The most important thing of all is to understand Dante's poetry." This rule has a natural corollary, *viz.*: "What lies outside the poet's consciousness cannot concern us." In the present case, what idea is in the poet's consciousness? This—that Beatrice is the blessed spirit of a woman whom once he loved. In Dante's eyes the immortality of the soul is an absolute certainty: the actual existence of Beatrice is therefore, in his eyes, beyond doubt. Nor is there any doubt in his mind that she is one of the blessed, and consequently possessed of all the privileges and all the spiritual virtues that befit her state. How can we be surprised that she exercises on Dante's behalf the manifold functions that

return to the position which the problem had reached in the Middle Ages, but the *Monarchy* at all events advanced beyond it. In this work, therefore, Dante revolted, in the words of G. Gentile, against "the transcendency of the schoolmen".

It seems clear, in the first place, that here Signor Bruno Nardi goes far beyond what his most lucid analysis of the works of Dante makes it possible to assert. I am deliberately leaving aside the question that he raises of a return on the part of the *Divine Comedy* to an earlier point than that reached in the *Monarchy*, for the answer is bound up with the following problem: Is the assertion that reason is independent of faith an implied revolt against the "transcendency of the schoolmen"? The answer to this is "Not necessarily", since one may acknowledge the complete independence of reason in relation to theology while acknowledging its complete dependence on God. Now this is precisely the doctrine of Dante. Hence, the conclusion reached by Signor G. Gentile and Signor B. Nardi does not follow.

Can it even be said that Dante comes to accept "a form of political Averroism"? Here again we must eliminate the wholly different problem as to whether this Averroism which Dante comes to accept is that from which the Averroism of Marsilius of Padua was to take its origin. I do not think it is, but that is another question.¹ Whatever the truth with regard to this last point, if it is a question of a "form" of Averroism, exactly what is the form of Averroism involved? With a shrewdness and an honesty that do him credit, Signor B. Nardi has noted that Dante, "adopting an unusually bold line of thought, had infused into his theological doctrine some purely Averroistic elements, without being guilty of heresy; in this way he was able to use the Averroistic theory to the advantage of his political thesis without needing to subscribe to the thesis of the unity of the intellect and the eternity of the human race".²

The position could not be more clearly stated, but it follows that the form of Averroism embraced by Dante is a flat contradiction of the two Averroistic theses *par excellence*—the eternity of the human race and the unity of the active intellect. What peculiarly Averroistic element, then, does Dante's attitude still incorporate? Is it the radical distinction between the twin aims of man? Perhaps, but even this calls for a more precise definition.

¹ See above, Chap. III, p. 217, note 1. ² B. NARDI, *Saggi di Filosofia Dantesca*, p. 266.

he does is to determine *functions* and *fields of jurisdiction*. When he speaks of philosophy Dante seeks far less to define its essence and its substance than to determine its object and its task. In his eyes its object and its task are to endow man with the earthly felicity which he is capable of enjoying in this life. The highest form of felicity is the felicity of the speculative life. In this particular, however, philosophy is not very successful. Too many problems—and they are precisely those which concern the loftiest subjects—transcend our reason for our natural desire for knowledge to be crowned with a wholly beatific success. True, faith comes to our aid wherever our reason fails us, but the privilege of believing is not the happiness of knowing. In short, reason can certainly endow us with an imperfect speculative felicity in this life, but not with a perfect speculative felicity.

It is quite a different matter in the practical sphere of life, and it is not hard to see why. If it is a question of organizing human life with a view to earthly happiness, reason does not come up against the insoluble problem of comprehending those pure intelligibles which consist in the soul, the Angelic Being and God; its only remaining concern is man—earthly man viewed against the background of his earthly life. Hence, since it is this time wholly adequate, it should be able to provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of the earthly felicity which man may find in the practical sphere of life. This, as we have seen, is what Dante in effect maintains. The essential postulate of his thesis, therefore, is simply this: that natural reason is perfectly competent to confer on man earthly felicity in the sphere of action. This sphere of action is the sphere of politics, together with its *sine qua non*, the sphere of ethics. I cannot see that Dante ever said anything else: he hardly stopped repeating this between the beginning of the *Banquet* and the *Divine Comedy*. Anything else that he is made to say, including what I myself make him say, is an interpretation of what he himself said. For Dante does not say that reason is "in revolt against transcendency", or that it is "distinct and indissoluble". What he does not say of reason he does not say of the Empire either. All these simple formulas are too restricted or too comprehensive to match his thought adequately. We should find agreement easier to secure if we honestly accepted this fact for a start. And if, in addition, we accepted this second fact—that even when he quotes Averroes

of objections which he leaves unanswered. But first of all he says that he has regarded the question as debatable *a longo tempore*; furthermore, even after the judgment of 1270 Siger does not, in the *Quaestiones* edited by Father Mandonnet, proclaim that the doctrine of the unity of the intellect is a philosophical error, or, consequently, that the plurality of intellects is philosophically certain. His hesitation, which is indisputable, leaves him still uncertain in this matter save as regards faith.

We ought therefore to concede to Father M. Chossat the point which, incidentally, constitutes the essence of his thesis, namely that the *Quaestiones* published by Father Mandonnet were written after, not before, the *De unitate intellectus* of St. Thomas Aquinas. We shall also recognize, as he does, that in this work Siger's Averroism proves to be more cautious and more hesitant than the formulas of Father Mandonnet, with their insufficiently subtle variations, might lead us to suppose.¹ These are important findings, and we are indebted for them to this excellent historian. And yet, just as he did not really take his stand against the doctrine of the unity of the active intellect, so Siger of Brabant did not represent his objections to it as "insuperable". He leaves them unanswered—that is a fact; he declares them to be *multum difficiles*—that is another fact; but that is all. A man who begins by expounding a doctrine for upholding which he has already been censured, and then formulates objections to it that are very hard to overcome, but does not overcome them, is certainly embarrassed, but he is not exactly faced with "insuperable" objections. If Siger had regarded them as insuperable he ought to have regarded his thesis as disproved, and he ought to have abandoned it; and yet, philosophically speaking, he did not do so. Let us once more recall the formula that he uses: *Et ideo dico propter difficultatem praemissorum et quorundam aliorum, quod mihi dubium fuit a longo tempore, quid via rationis naturalis in praedicto problemate sit tenendum, et quid senserit Philosophus de dicta quaestione; et in tali dubio fidei adhaerendum est, quae omnem rationem humanam superat* ("And therefore I say, on account of the complexity of the premises and of certain other matters, that I had long been doubtful as to what should be regarded as the way of natural reason in the afore-mentioned problem, and as to what the Philosopher

¹ M. CHOSSAT, *art cit.*, p. 39.

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