DANTE

Exilic Discourse as Self-Constitution

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is grounded in philosophy and in literature. It is concerned with the recognized human need for self-affirmation and with the consequences of its denial caused by exile. For the victim this means the loss of social interaction and public moral agency within his natural community through which self-affirmation can be actualized.

In certain types of exilic literature constructive reactions were found to counteract this loss of freedom of choice of action and place, which entails potential annihilation of the exile's personal integrity.

In the exilic text of Dante as my chosen case study, I investigate the use of philosophical and literary means admitting of various kinds of self-referential expressions and of similacra of moral agency as substitutes for self-affirmation by public acts. Stimulated by these means, an intellectual and moral 'self-portrait' of the poet eventually emerges in the reader's consciousness. This 'portrait' is no static image of a pre-existent character, but a dynamic presence of an evolving human person of intellectual and moral integrity, as a reflection of the poet's self-perception.

By sample analyses and comparisons, my exposition substantiates the claim that Dante's text exemplifies the distinct and identifiable literary mode to which I refer as 'Exilic Discourse'.

RESUME

Cette thèse s'insère de la philosophie qui, en littérature, traite du besoin ontologique qu'éprouve tout être humain de s'affirmer suivant sa propre perception de ce qu'il est. J'ai choisi de faire porter mon attention sur des textes nés de l'exil, plus spécifiquement nés de l'état d'exilé considéré comme agent d'annihilation de l'intégrité de l'être humain, pour autant qu'il retire à celui-ci la liberté de répondre au besoin de s'affirmer à travers des actes moraux accomplis ouvertement dans son milieu naturel.

C'est par l'œuvre de Dante Alighieri que j'illustre cette thèse. Je fais ici l'inventaire des votes philosophiques et poétiques d'exil qui tentent d'y remplacer une intervention divine. À ma connaissance, aucune recherche littéraire ne s'est associée de cette direction. On en arrive ainsi à l'autoportrait d'exilé non pas d'un personnage bien établi, mais d'un élan poétique, d'un engagement philosophique et moral conforme à la perception que cette présence dynamique peut avoir d'elle-même.

Cette étude prend acte de l'existence d'un genre littéraire distinct que l'on pourrait appeler *discours de l'exil*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Endnotes follow each segment

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

The concept of exile as reflected in Religion, in Philosophy and in Literature

The first concern of this thesis is with the traditional meaning of the concept of 'exile' in the medieval consciousness. Apart from the contemporary practice of banishment into exile as an instrument of power politics, there is a strong revival in the late medieval period of Roman history and law, and with it the awareness of the tradition of exilium as a privilege of escape, as well as of involuntary forms of banishment into exile.

Exilic literature shows that there are three representative models in which the medieval conception of the phenomenon is grounded: the prophetic literature of the Bible; Aristotle's discussion of the political expedient of ostracism in his practical philosophy; and the widely read philosophical poem De Consolatio Philosophiae by Boethius, written in his prison cell in Pavia.

1. The biblical model: Exile as a measure of mass-retribution in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament illustrates some universal characteristics of human reactions to the exilic condition. It is a widely confirmed observation that it greatly stimulates literary and prophetic activity. In the specific case of the'biblical model' this activity is clearly directed toward moral restitution of the exiled masses. My examples are from the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. (This research paper is appended to my thesis).

2. The classical Greek model: Aristotle discusses the problems of banishment into exile as ostracism or ostrakismos by decree of public assembly. His questions concern exile of exceptional individuals qua political expediency for safeguarding the balance of equality among the citizens in relation to the injustice rendered to the ostracized individual. I examine Aristotle's arguments from Book III of the Politics on 'Citizenship and Constitutions' in juxtaposition with Book V of the Nicomachean Ethics concerning 'Justice'. (This research paper is appended to my thesis).

3. Both exile de jure and arbitrary banishment of individuals into temporary or into radical exile, were neither new to history nor to literature in imperial Rome before Boethius. Cicero used the Roman 'privilege' of escaping into exilium

with deminutio capitis twice in order to escape severer sentencing. After his first exile he was recalled, the second exile he never reached, being overtaken by his enemies and put to death. In a sense, Vergil's Aeneid could be thought of as an exilic epic, at least for the first six books of Aeneas's wanderings on the Homeric pattern. But Vergil had not been an exile himself. Yet Ovid who was an exile (banished for mysterious reasons by Emperor Augustus to Tomi on the Black Sea) never produced a restitutive discourse, only lamentations and appeals for clemency, as in his Tristia and in his Epistulae ex Ponto. Yet, De Consolatio Philosophiae by Boethius, composed during his radical exile in a prison in Pavia, is a model of 'self-constitutive exilic discourse' par excellence. This work introduced Dante to philosophy, when he was twenty-five and mourning the death of Beatrice. The question whether it became Dante's model for his own exilic text, begun some fourteen years hence, will be raised in several parts of this thesis. (My study of the Boethian Consolation is integrated into the thesis for comparative purposes).

Considered together, the above documents deal with a remarkable number of phases and aspects of exile: the collective and the individual, the forms of ostrakismos, of deportatio and of relegatio. They explain exile in terms of God's punishment, and in terms of democratic safeguards for society by doing injustice to the individual. They exemplify it as internal and external, and they illuminate it from the active and the passive points of view.

As statesmen who could perpetrate exile themselves and as victims of exile upon whom it was inflicted, Boethius as well as Dante knew both sides of the most dangerous exilic coin - the one of arbitrium by potestas without recourse to law and impartial judgement.

A medieval exile remains aware of his potentiality as a moral agent and a social being, even though exile destroys the teleological dimension of his pre-exilic existence. What is to replace the purposeful life, if the capacities of the moral agent to maintain it are strangled? To the creative person, at least the power of speech is left to take over the teleological thrust. In Dante's discourse three distinct phases of this thrust are observable.

1. The restitutive phase is grounded in the affective space of hope in which exilic writing is purpose oriented, and in which social action still seems possible. The purpose in this phase is actual restitution and return to active life. The

alienation through exile is experienced as incompatible with the agent's conception of the Self as a moral agent (The Convivio).

2. The utopistic phase is connected to the restitutive phase by attitudes, but shows a greater sense of urgency concerning the need for political and restitutive action. Judgements become harsher, the tone more insistent and aggressive. (The Epistole). A certain awkward grandiloquence sets in in these letters and an overestimation of the impact of the exile's own opinions. The most extreme expressions of this phase are morally incompatible with the exile's self-perception. On the other hand, political theories become consolidated and the lucid political treatise De Monarchia results, in the ideas of which some scholars find unique political vision of far-reaching scope.

3. The last phase is a phase of resignation, and of a gathering of similacra of reality. It is a turning inward in which the text centers on the experiencing subject. In Dante's Divine Comedy, the Self emerges from confrontations of good and evil in history, in the judgements of which the poet becomes objectified. The text puts before us a portrait of Dante as experienced by Dante, whom we experience as ideal medieval man. Thought, no longer circling lost reality, is pervaded by a sense of liberation. Disconnectedness from public moral agency, no longer attributed to privation exile, now becomes a freedom of its own - a citizenship of the world (The Divine Comedy). 'Self-constitution in exilic discourse' is now accomplished.

Rationale

Forced exile and its related forms of expulsion of groups or of individuals from their natural communities have caused widespread aberrations of personal and collective lifestyles during the twentieth century. Literature is one of our main sources of understanding the exilic condition.

Since many exceptional poets and thinkers of past periods spent parts of their productive lives in exile, exilic literature is important not only for being an expression of dissident individuals in conflict with their respective societies, but also for including some of the finest monuments of philosophical thought in literature. Certain exilic texts of past periods are thus of particular interest to us today.

One generally observed characteristic of exilic literature of all times is its latent tendency toward the autobiographical. From ancient sources we find collective versions in the prophetic literature of the Bible; from the Romans we have the Epistulae ex Ponto and the Tristia by Ovid; from the Renaissance we have Machiavelli's Il Principe; in modern exilic literature we find the autobiographical tendency in exilic works from Conrad to Kundera.

The concern in this thesis is with the philosophical and literary aspects of exilic texts composed under the most extreme conditions of banishment or radical and involuntary political exile. My case study involves the integral exilic text of Dante Alighieri. For comparison I introduce certain characteristic aspects of the exilic poem, The Consolation of Philosophy, by Boethius.

It is a remarkable feature of this category of exilic writing that it is self-referential without becoming autobiography, and that the author's presence in his text does not turn it into pure discourse. In order to distinguish it from other forms of exilic literature I refer to this phenomenon as 'self-constitution in exilic discourse'. To arrive at a substantiated understanding of the philosophical and literary aspects of this phenomenon is the object of this thesis.

No modern theory of discourse appears entirely applicable to the peculiar self-referential discourse I study. Antony Easthope, author of

a documentary work on the various contributions by linguists and literary theorists to the modern theory of discourse, proposes the reading of 'poetry as discourse' (under the same title) "because it can explain the author as product and effect of the text, whereas conventional criticism accepts the notion of the author as unquestionable and pre-given in order to be able to define how the text should be read".

It becomes evident in this thesis that neither the reduction of the author to a quasi unintended 'product and effect', nor the author as 'pre-given' correspond to the state of affairs of my case study, and its earlier model. The former does not apply because in 'exilic discourse' the author deliberately contributes to his 'self-constitution'. The latter cannot be assumed, because in self-constitutive discourse the character of the poet is not portrayed as a static entity, but rather as an emerging Self in a dynamic process of transformations. This emergent Self becomes objectified in the poet's several guises as a personal presence in the text, to which the reader is a perceiving and experiencing witness.

As long as the ontic fact of exile is considered a mere interlude in a poet's life, or, on a more instrumental view, as a 'non-native locus of production', a categorical distinction of 'exilic discourse' would not seem logical. But this logic ceases to be compelling when the characteristics become elucidated by which 'exilic discourse' as such is distinct from 'texts about exile' or simply 'works written in exile'.

My attention to the significance of exile in literature was first stimulated by the study of the Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius, which led me to explore some of the intrinsic means and extrinsic functions of exilic writing per se. In some works I observed a sense of personal assertiveness, a fictionally disguised or explicit and discoursive presence of the author in his text. Certain exilic works appeared to exude over-confidence to the point of grandiosity and grandiloquence. Who could forget Machiavelli's Il Principe with its unsolicited admonitions to the uninterested young Medici prince who never as much as looked at Machiavelli's hopeful gift from his exile from Florence to his vineyard in Chianti - decreed by the Medici!

Some works written in or about exile are written in conventional genres, and without reflection on the state of being in exile and what this entails. The type of text I explore is intrinsically reflective, written in attentive awareness of exile as a dynamic process of exposure, passion and adaptation.

In this kind of text the poet remains identifiable by design, cast into the pivotal center of his text, the design of which is at least in part restitutive.

To the extent to which poetic strategy renders communicable an author's coherent and integral self-perception in 'exilic discourse', it defeats the purpose of extreme exile, which is the annihilation of the exile's status as a moral agent and public person in his community. By such affirmative literature, the literary portrait of the exile as victim and moral agent, now replaces the oral transmission of his exilic reputation and some archival records of expulsion and planned oblivion thereafter.

The exilic poem by Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, might be considered as a self-contained model of such a 'self-constitution' in literature. In the affective dimension it admirably fulfils the function of restoring the imprisoned statesman and philosopher from his original state of self-pity and shattered confidence, to full personal integrity and serene self-possession.

The Boethian transformation is accomplished entirely within a philosophical 'dialogue' between the dejected prisoner and his allegorical 'visitor', 'Lady Philosophy', speaking with the voice of his alter ego. Although the fiction is transparent, the consistency of the dialectic creates a dimension of authenticity. Within the deliberate poetic strategy of his process, the prisoner becomes constituted in the reader's consciousness as a righteous public figure and human person, unjustly condemned to the indignities of exile. In philosophical terms we experience Boethius as a lucid logician, as an intellectual mystic, and as a moralist by whose visionary and persuasive powers exile and death itself become transcended.

Richard Green, translator of a critical Latin edition of The Consolation, remarks that the poetic quality of the Boethian work "which

most influenced later medieval poetry ... was the author's use of the fictional vision as a frame for philosophical speculation and moral persuasion".[2]

The 'dream-vision' as a poetic mode for the presentation of philosophical ideas was endorsed in the fourth century in an influential Commentary on Cicero's Dream of Scipio by the Neoplatonist Macrobius, which Richard Green describes as a work of primary authority and pervasive influence throughout the Middle Ages.[3]

On Dante, this influence was not lost. In my case study of his exilic text, I seek to identify various forms and functions of self-references and of some of the supporting thematic structures within which they occur. My experience of the text is based on integral reading, affording the vantage point of an overview position, from which concurrent or synchronous observations are possible of certain self-referential patterns or transmutations in the poet's attitude toward the exilic condition.

The concept of justice for example, is ubiquitously present in the discourse and becomes illuminated from every possible angle. It furnishes one of the most effective structures for self-reference.

A brief example will show that such a concept can be treated on a number of levels. The reader may come upon it most directly in the didactic introduction of an Aristotelian argument from the Politics in Dante's Convivio, or he may be alerted to it by the form of a negative attribute to the poet himself in the opening lines of some of the Epistles, such as "...l'umile italiano Dante Alighieri, fiorentino ed esule senza colpa, prega pace..." Such is Dante's introduction of himself as a 'florentine and exile without guilt'.

Or, the reader may recognize self-reference within the poet's conception of justice in his demonstrable lack of sympathy with some sufferer of what must be the most horrible and grotesque practice of retributive justice, he witnesses as pilgrim to the other world, in the bowels of the Inferno. Since the human vices are topographically ordered by subterranean terraces which they inhabit, the 'pilgrim's' individual attitudes toward the encountered souls of old friends and enemies among the notorious criminals of the world, give him the

opportunity to show himself as the 'poet of rectitude' in a number of nuances.[4]

In the Commedia, self-references are mostly imbedded in dynamic structures, perceivable as 'acts' rather than as descriptions. Hence they become effective similacra of moral agency. The subject's idea of the 'self' is thus not postulated as a pre-existent entity. Rather, the image of the 'pilgrim' as person is produced by dynamic interaction, much as in real life.

When Dante formally introduced his monumental poem, he called it a Comedy, but he did not call it a 'heavenly one'. The epithet 'divina' was added after his time. In his introduction the poet refers to "a comedy of Dante Alighieri, florentine by birth but not by character". Thus, even his title is doubly self-referential, associative and dissociative at the same time. Dante explains why he calls his poem a 'comedy' by the traditional view that comedies start badly and have a happy ending. Thus his Commedia which starts in calamity in the 'dark forest' of his mid-life, ends in beatitude in the presence of God in paradise.

By a syllabus-like exposition in the Convivio, in which he presents practically all the topics of his future works, the poet also anticipates the text's characteristics as 'exilic discourse'. The reader is introduced to his polysemous code and explained how to interpret by it by the poet's sample self-exegeses. Dante often admonishes the reader to follow his instructions. He introduces us to his personal philosophy as Ethics or Moral Philosophy, to which he attributes the highest hierarchical order in all Philosophy, including Metaphysics.

Finally, the poet anticipates most of the difficulties and perplexities awaiting the reader of his text, and he shows perpetual concern for its communicability. And one could list more. Should we not follow these most scrupulously conceived lessons in Dante scholarship, so readily dispensed?

It is my intention to respect the text and accept the poet's guidelines as closely as the scope of this thesis permits.

Methodology

The choice of approach is widely considered to be one of the major difficulties in Dante scholarship. Although this project cannot claim to be performing its task under that aegis, the problems of compatibility, relevancy and appropriate choice of a frame of reference and supporting theories are encountered in all its considerations.

To a non-medievalist, wide-ranging research is a sine qua non to adequate pre-understanding of the medieval mode and its cultural groundings, in order to grasp the encoded expressions and their referential and contextual meaning. For their essential significance to my project, certain results of this research inform the working notions by which I introduce the expository section of this thesis. Others form the basis of my observations and commentaries, whereas two grounding research papers are presented as appendices to the thesis.

My methodology is influenced by the nature of the text and by the poet's ubiquitous concern with communicability. I avoid imposing any pre-determined extrinsic interpretive philosophical methods, hostile to the medieval paradigm and consequently without provisions to deal with the peculiarities of the text. Thus my terms of reference for both, the philosophical and the literary level of this bi-polar project, are chosen on the basis of ideology-neutral and universally applicable theories, as shown in the Frame of Reference, included in the Appendices.

The guiding criterion of my methodology is simply 'appropriateness', intended in the etymological sense of krinein understood as selection by division and judgement of means and methods, aiming to satisfy the three interrelated considerations:

Relevancy to my thesis
Compatibility with the text
Communicability of my understanding and my findings.

Since my first consideration is with the intrinsic nature of the text, and my main attention is focused on the poet's personal presence in his discourse, I respect the authority of the poet as much as the autonomy of the text, focusing my understanding on the accord between

the two.

Basically, I share the attitude of those contemporary Dantists who look back to the fourteenth century commentators who had "no axe to grind on the point of ideology", and who "interpreted Dante's poetry by methods that were in harmony with its spirit". Natalino Sapegno comments on this attitude in an essay published in the Anthology of Dante Criticism, The Mind of Dante.[5] Sapegno writes:

> Today we approach the evaluation of the medieval heritage without bias. This is possible for two reasons. On the one hand we have repudiated all polemical attitudes derived from Humanism, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment or even from Romanticism. On the other hand we now have a thoroughly mature historical sense. The historical point of view has become almost second nature to us, enabling us to approach each and every phase of human history with a complete lack of prejudice, and entire freedom from inhibitions, a readiness simply to understand.[6]

In practical terms, the quoted and exposed passages of the text are chosen to exemplify some particular self-constitutive forms of the 'exilic discourse'. These passages are individually analyzed and interpreted. The poet's major moral themes and some typical self-referential structures attached to these themes are identified. Together with certain individual self-referential events, significant for advancing the poet's self-constitution in the discourse, these structures are examined for their individual and cumulative functions, informing the reader's experience of the text.

In the concluding section, a composite sketch of the poet's self-portrait according to his deliberate self-identifications and his most original thought transcending the 'medieval model' is proposed. A brief theoretical definition of 'self-constitution in exilic discourse' resulting from the individual findings, concludes my thesis.

ENDNOTES - INTRODUCTION

1. Antony Easthope. Poetry as Discourse. Methuen, London, New York, 1983, p. 7.

2. Boethius. The Consolation of Philosophy. Translation with introduction and notes by Richard Green, Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, Indianapolis, 1962. Introduction xxi.

3. Ibid., xxii.

4. Dante gives himself this epithet in the De Vulgari Eloquentia, liber secundus: "...Circa que sola, si bene ricolimus, illustres viros invenimus vulgariter poetasse, scilicet Bertramum de Bornio arma, Arnaldum Danielem amorem, Gerardum de Bornello rectitudinem; Cynum Pistoriensem amorem, amicum eius rectitudinem."

Evidence that the 'amicum eius' is Dante is found in the subsequent example in which this 'amicus eius' is represented by Dante's own poem Doglia mi reca ne lo core ardire. In the Dante Opere, Mario Pazzaglia annotates the passage: "Doglia...ardire: È la canzone dantesca della liberalità, di contenuto dottrinale, ma avvivata da una nobile passione etica." Dante Opere, pp. 1272-1274.

5. Natalino Sapegno. Genesis and Structure in The Mind of Dante, editor U. Limentani, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 7.

6. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

SECTION TWO: EXPOSITION

Working Notions Relating the Project to the Text

Together with the Frame of Reference (see appended research papers), and some theoretical terms borrowed from theories of language and from philosophical semantics, my own composite notions are intended to delimit the design of this thesis, as well as to minimize the need for digressive explications within the exemplifying analyses, commentaries and descriptions of this paper.

As far as I can be aware, the working terms are my own, although their elements may be variously employed in philosophy and in literary criticism.

On the historical or textual level, Aristotelian and Thomistic, as well as other scholastic and syncretist concepts, are exposed according to their occurrence in the passages under scrutiny. As such they may continue to serve in referential expressions in my commentaries on the text.

Some of the most pertinent medieval notions, however, are pre-established as 'grounding concepts' in the following expositions:

a) The Human Subject as Self and as Soul

The term self as prefix in the constructs: 'self-perception', 'self-reference' and 'self-constitution', serves as an indicator of the reflexive mode in which the terms 'perception', 'reference' and 'constitution' are used in this thesis.

Considered in relation to these compounded notions, as for example in 'self-perception', the 'subject' is the logical referent of the referential expression. Evidently, this applies to all three of the above notions as well as to potential other constructs on the same principle. What is often less evident, is the meaning of the reference. In Dante, the 'self-references' might be encoded in mythical and historical analogies, scriptural metaphors or cosmological allegories, in short, in polysemies of all kinds, by the meanings of which we could no longer express our own 'self-perceptions'.

My use of the above notions is further clarified and supported by an analogous application of the prefix 'self' in Bernard F. Lonergan's study of human understanding under the title Insight.

> Since our study has been of cognitional process, the judgement we are best prepared to make is the self-affirmation of an instance of such a process as cognitional. By the 'self' is meant a concrete and intelligible unity-identity whole. By self-affirmation is meant that the self both affirms and is affirmed. By self-affirmation of the knower is meant that the self-affirmed is characterized by such occurrences as sensing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned, and affirming.[1]

At the same time as showing the analogy, the above definition of the term the 'self' as such, will be its understood meaning in this thesis, since it fits both contexts of this bi-polar project: the functions attributed to the notion of 'subjective consciousness' in modern Phenomenology, as well as the medieval identification of the human subject with the capacities and functions of the soul. Whereas the 'self' or the 'I' could clearly be considered from the positions of the Cartesian ego or the Freudian model of the ego-structure, these would not be as relevant or compatible with my project.

On the level of the text's own sphere of comprehension, the 'self' and the 'soul' may share their referential meaning with the 'subject' for both partake in the substantiality of the human subject in an intrinsic way. If the soul is its form, as Aristotle's hylemorphic model of the human substance shows, then the self could be seen as the 'intelligible unity-identity whole' (Lonergan), by which the potential powers of the soul are consistently actualized.

Thus, the soul will be considered in the poet's own understanding based on Aristotle's Psychology and/or on Thomas Aquinas's exposition of the former, depending from what viewpoint Dante discusses some property of the soul. Typically, Dante may suddenly use Plato's expression of 'seeing with the eyes of the soul', or he may adapt it to some idiosyncratic variation. When he discusses the 'soul's immortality' for example, he introduces the expressions 'seeing with the eyes of faith' and 'seeing with the eyes of reason'. The poet tells us that he

fervently believes in the 'soul's immortality' when he considers it "with the eyes of faith".[2] But when he considers it "with the eyes of reason, we see it shadowed in obscurity, something which results from mixing of what is mortal, with what is immortal".[3]

The Aristotelian-Christian vision of the soul provides numerous structures suitable to 'self-affirmation', through its powers of the mind: the 'agent intellect' by which we actually understand, and the 'potential intellect' which is our capacity for knowledge.

The poet is greatly inspired by the aspects of the soul's reflection of its divine origin by way of being 'individually infused' by the Maker into the developing human embryo. In Dante's time, the accepted concept of the soul was described in the exposition of Aristotle's De Anima or Psychology by Thomas Aquinas as "that by which a living thing is alive".

> It is understood therefore, as existing in a subject ... Since, then, there are three sorts of substances: the compound, matter, and form; and since the soul is neither the compound - the living body itself; nor its matter - the body as the subject that receives life; we have no choice but to say that the soul is a substance in the manner of form that determines or characterizes a particular sort of body, i.e., a physical body potentially alive.[4]

Through the divine infusion of its powers, the soul is believed to owe its inherent capacities to the "primal intelligence", the "primal goodness", and the "primal love". Possessed by his own love of knowledge and wisdom, the poet offers insights into what is sometimes called his theory of knowledge. But the reader only has to turn to Book Lambda of Aristotle's Metaphysics to find Dante along with St. Thomas following the model of their master. All is there: The soul's knowledge and choice of nobility; the supreme beauty of the Soul's awareness of its knowledge of itself - as approximation of 'the mind of the prime mover that throughout eternity knows itself'; the 'rationality of choice intending the good' and 'love's desire to unite with knowledge as its object of love - as the divine aspect of being human'.

> Hence the possession of knowledge rather than the capacity for knowledge is the divine aspect of the mind, and it is the activity of intellectual vision that is most pleasant and best. If the divine, then it is always in that good state in which we are at times, this is wonderful; and if it is in a still better state this is ground for still more wonder. Now, it is in this better state that the divine has its being and its life, and the divine is that activity.[5]

For the poet, the 'divine' always remains present in the soul's powers. Those who hold that in the Convivio 'religion is abandoned for philosophy' are mistaken, for philosophy itself is declared to be the most divine knowledge, or 'God's own way of knowing'. To the poet's 'self-perception' the powers of the soul in act - are vitally important structures to which to relate his manifold judgements and potential choices 'guided by reason, virtue and freedom of preference if not of execution'. If one considers that potentiality is admitted to the status of 'being', even the moral choice that cannot be actualized may confer credit upon the agent whose freedom is impaired.

Dante's declared didactic intentions for his text, his similacra of righteous acts, his praise of love, justice and true nobility as the highest virtues, his apprehension of truths - all these are the dominion of the powers of the soul and of the will. The desire firing all these motions of the will is to achieve the Christian and the eudaimonic ideals of happiness through virtuous living - the purpose of human existence in the teleological universe.

It is central to Dante's 'self-constitution' to at least symbolically enact the achievement of the two levels of beatitude of the soul. The first is reached at the summit of Mount Purgatorio, representing 'earthly paradise'; the second is reached by the admission into Paradiso proper and finally into the presence of God. The former symbolizes the virtuous active life, the latter a life of contemplative thought and nobility of the soul.

Since the 'poet of rectitude' cannot achieve justice and restitution in the active phase of his exile, he finally transcends it by resignation and achieves recognition, dignity and love in the beatific vision of his imaginary pilgrimage to the world beyond.

b) Self-Perception

References to all such constructs that involve 'self-awareness' and 'self-understanding' invariably concern the medieval mode of being in the world. This also means being part of the 'medieval model' which C.S. Lewis (The Discarded Image) explains as a 'construct of answered questions' - and for which 'an original thinker would be looking for new answers'.

How does Dante define himself as part of the 'medieval model'? The overview gained from integral reading reveals that the poet perceives himself in various modes. These correspond to the multiple levels of his thought and to the purpose of his expressions.

Thus we see the poet emphatically identifying himself with Aristotle's theory of knowledge, based on love and desire. Love seeks to be united with the object of knowledge it desires, and the dynamic power of desire accomplishes this unification. The point is that we may see a theory such as this discussed as a means to 'self-reference', rather than in terms of its own end. This is what happens: In the poet's self-exegesis of his philosophical canzone in the Convivio we see him proclaiming his love for philosophy. But the immediate purpose of doing this, is shown to be a deep social need which only his declared self-perception as a moral agent can fill. We learn that because his canzone of praise (for his new-found love, 'Lady Philosophy' on the Boethian model) are being interpreted as "expressions of a passion so great that it is dominating his life", the poet "must show", by way of self-defense, that he is "acting from virtue" (of loving knowledge) and "not from vice".

Pointing out these 'self-referential' needs of the exile is not intended to suggest that the poet does not perceive himself as a disciple of Aristotle's theory of knowledge. But it may be useful to realize that it cannot always be inferred from the argument the poet employs, what kind of values it is designed to disclose, confirm or assert as a 'constitutive facet of self-perception'.

This is one aspect of the much-observed heteronomous quality of Dante's style: almost any theory, myth, doctrine, dictum, label or belief, be it of Greek or Roman origin, Pythagorean or Platonic, Stoic,

Aristotelian or Biblical - anyone of these might serve to illustrate or confirm an idea or act by which the poet affirms some values that in turn express his 'self-perception'.

Yet, it must also be remarked that the values themselves remain consistent with the poet's own archetype reflecting this 'self-perception', best expressed in his self-bestowed epithet poeta rettitudine - poet of rectitude. (Probably inspired by Cicero's extolling of the 'beauty of rectitude' in his essay On the Offices).

In Dante's time, the furore over the rediscovered Aristotelian philosophy had calmed down. The more moderate translations by Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas had taken firm root and were partly integrated with Christian doctrine. But outside of it, the more radical interpretations of a century earlier by Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes - the Commentator, still circulated among the intellectuals. Those who were persuaded along with Averroes by the Aristotelian system of a rational universe and could no longer unconditionally accept the revealed truth of the Creation ex nihilo, were called the Latin Averroists and were not tolerated by the Church.

Wisely, the poet does not wish to become enmeshed in metaphysical speculation. He specifically declares his works not to be 'for speculation, but for 'practical purpose' in the Convivio and retrospectively of the Divine Comedy in the Epistle to Can Grande.[6]

Explicitly Dante never claims to be a philosopher. Charles Singleton in his work Dante's Commedia, Elements of Structure, draws some incisive distinctions regarding the poet's relationship to philosophy. He sees Dante as a mythmaker in search of truth, a poet of whom Plato would have approved. But whereas Plato, himself a mythmaker, could "turn from the mythmaker to the philosopher, and ask the latter why he indulged in myths at all", for Dante this would not have been possible, since

> Dante is no philosopher and quite readily admitted as much. And while in his critical works there are passages which give us his way of reflecting on poetry (which he does not ever call myth), these do not constitute a philosophy. We quite properly call him a philosophical poet. Only, of course, it is not his philosophy as Plato's is Plato's. With Dante the philosophy is also faith; is first of all

> faith, well buttressed with authority and one shared by most of the Western world of his time.[1]

Nevertheless, the poet does perceive himself to be a judge of virtue and vice, of good and evil, true and false nobility. He perceives himself as a representative of his 'chosen science' - Ethics or Moral Philosophy, and as a mouthpiece of Aristotle, his chosen master.

Dante may not be claiming that he is a philosopher in the sense of Plato. But if he dissociates himself from speculative philosophy and is free of such hubris as ranging himself with the master of the Academy, does this necessarily mean that he does not consider himself to be a moral philosopher?

In the poet's text no reported or described act remains unexamined, unjudged and placed within its hierarchical order. Preferences and choices are announced and duly expounded. Didactic intentions are proclaimed at every opportunity and their specific aims are divulged. All these are natural reflections of his 'self-perception', offering effective vehicles for 'self-reference'. But the answer to the question whether or not Dante might like to be considered a philosopher is best left to the poet himself:

> It is a precept of moral philosophers who have spoken on how to bring benefit to others that in so doing we ought to put thought and care into ensuring that what we offer is as helpful as possible to the recipient. I wish to obey this instruction. ...[2]

This is no overt claim. But as my underscoring indicates, the 'self-perception' is transparent in the 'non-ostensive self-reference' which is imbedded in the progressive identification with "the moral philosophers" qua moral philosopher. Claims which the poet 'never makes' thus become intrinsic facets of his 'self-constitution'.

c) Self-Reference

Basically, the term 'self-reference' is self-explanatory. In the great variety of forms in which 'self-references' occur in Dante's text, especially in the Convivio and in the Commedia, they are best explained by example and exposition.

The expressions in which self-references are couched vary in proportion from single sentences as smallest units of meaning in discourse, to expanded textual events in the form of the dramatic scenes in the Divine Comedy, or of an entire canzoni both in the Convivio and in the Commedia. Relatively few self-references are constructed in the grammatical mode of first person singular. One reason for this reticence is that the literary convention of the period is generally unfavourable to writers speaking of or for themselves. The text makes this perfectly clear in some passages of the Convivio. The fashion is to follow and champion a chosen master in the sense in which Dante champions Aristotle,[9] Vergil, or 'brother Thomas'.

The term 'ostensive self-reference' used interchangeably with 'overt' or 'explicit self-reference', is intended in the sense of 'obvious' or 'demonstrable' or 'showing forth'. In semantic terms the prefix 'self' indicates that the speaking subject is the referent with whom a relationship is established or about whom something is predicated.[10]

The term 'non-ostensive self-reference' used interchangeably with 'indirect', 'covert', or 'opaque self-reference', on the other hand, suggests that the expression in which it occurs, neither has an identifiable referent nor a direct substitute in the form of some predicable epithet, such as for example 'the Commentator' to substitute for Averroes.

Among the poet's simpler indirect devices of self-reference are pronominal forms which refer to his person by way of relation between himself and one of his characters. For example, a fellow poet is named in De Vulgarie Eloquentia X, with whom the author associates himself in the phrase "Cynus Pistoiensis et amicus eius", Cino da Pistoia and his friend. In this particular case it is only the context of praise for the vernacular language that reveals 'the friend' of its practitioner Cino as none other than Dante himself. (Ironically, the work in which this occurs is written in Latin).

In more complicated cases, the context may suggest only some vague probability that the subject might be the intended referent. But since most of the self-referential events are deliberately encoded, as numerous authorial remarks confirm, pertinent clues are frequently given

about possible referential relations below the surface meanings. For good measure, sometimes even the poetic device, the strategy and the purpose of such an encoded 'self-reference' are explained by the author.

Self-references of both kinds as vehicles of 'constitutive meaning' are the sine qua non of 'exilic discourse'. The reader discovers these within manifold structures and under many guises: in narrative, dialogue, reported speech, dramatic passages, social situations, allegory, symbolic acts and imagery, described gestures, mime and other semiotic events, as well as in dreams, visions, and prophecies.

When relations of this kind are established within significant contexts of the poet's moral themes, such as love, justice, truth or true nobility of character, I identify these contexts as 'self-referential structures'.

By way of summing up, I draw attention to a fact which concerns the condition of communicability of my understanding in contemporary terms: it is to affirm that the principle of my compounded notion of 'self-reference' is ruled by the semantic definition of reference.[11] By this ruling I do not take the term 'reference' to identify the concept which mediates between the expression and the referent. Instead it is intended to stand for the relationship which holds between the expression or event and - in the case of this investigation - the subject qua referent.

Such potential relationships can be discovered to obtain under any of the guises under which the author inhabits his text: as narrator, commentator, exiled statesman, pilgrim protagonist, or self-interpreting poet.

The foregoing analysis of my 'working notions' is intended as a composite anatomy of the concept of 'self-constitution'. It is inspired by the poet's self-referential style which contains manifold indirect or non-ostensive forms of self-reference, covering every aspect of his 'self-perception'. In the reader's consciousness the phenomena experienced in these textual events are perceived as judgements, choices and acts revealing personal qualities and values that constitute the poet's character. Thus it is the text that suggests the subjective part of the composite notion of 'exilic discourse as self-constitution'.

The Text as Exilic Discourse

In the previous section Dante's text has been described as 'exilic discourse' in the sense in which exile is 'the very condition of the text'. This term is introduced by Giuseppe Mazzotta in his book Dante: Poet of the Desert.[12] It was also described as 'self-referential' in the sense of its constitutive function by which the grammatical subject becomes objectified in the reader's experience as the historical person of the author.

In this section the three phases of Dante's 'exilic discourse' are exemplified. As described in the Introduction, these are: the restitutive phase, the utopistic phase and the constitutive phase.

Representative philosophical and literary characteristics of 'exilic discourse' are exposed for each of the three phases without shifting the main emphasis from the aspect of the text as 'exilic discourse' to the 'host artifacts' as such. Both structure and thought are exemplified and discussed for their respective roles in 'self-constitution'. Examples of self-referential structures are exposed for their consistent archetypal role, others for their hierarchical orders in helping to mark the pilgrim's progress; others still, as the poet's constant moral themes.

Combined, these 'concerns' or 'themes' create the substratum for the entire exilic project, sustaining the 'poet of rectitude' at its pivotal centre. They shelter, orient and interconnect the poet with the individual works, and they assure the consistency of the whole. Some refer to the introduction of the thematic concerns in the Convivio as a 'quasi syllabus' of Dante's 'late period', Others refer to it by stating that 'nothing occurs in the Commedia which has not been anticipated in the Convivio'. Here, the Convivio is considered to be the main work of the restitutive phase.

As understood in this thesis, the term 'discourse' is relatively new to literary theory. Whereas it originally applied mainly to a treatise and a dissertation, its current use extends into all domains of literature. The linguist Emile Benveniste explains the basic principle of this extension: "...with the sentence we leave the domain of

language as a system of signs and enter into another universe whose expression is discourse".[13]

According to contemporary theory, an essential distinction of 'discours' from the impersonal mode of 'histoire' where the narrator is only implicit, is the personal mode of the subject's presence in the text.[14]

RESTITUTIVE PHASE

Before entering any other context, I propose to dwell on the question of how the poet transposes the reality of his exilic condition into 'exilic discourse'.

Early in the Convivio Dante writes: "The established canons of rhetoric forbid anyone to speak of himself except for some compelling reasons". In his disquisition on 'speaking about oneself', some general statements are pregnant with personal meanings:

> To disparage oneself is of its very nature blameworthy, since one ought to point out a friend's shortcomings to him alone; and no one has a friend closer than his own self. Consequently, it is only in the privacy of one's own thoughts that one ought to admonish oneself and lament one's faults, never publicly...[15]

It is typical for Dante's observation of consistency that he will remain true to the above resolution throughout his discourse. In particular, the reader is reminded of the poet's maxim in Canto XI of the Purgatorio, in his admission to the 'sin of pride'. But already the implicit sense of privation is perceptible, suggesting a lack of friendship and trust, and a feeling of isolation. Many such statements in which implicit personal meanings are encoded in various degrees of transparency are found throughout the exilic works, as elements of the personal context of the discourse. Nor is it necessarily the most explicit ones that are the most significant, as can be seen in a prophecy made by Dante's venerated ancestor Cacciaguida who foretells the 'pilgrim's' exile, when the poet-pilgrim encounters the ancestor's soul in Paradise, ending with the striking pronouncement: "....so that it shall be to thine honour to have made a party by thyself".[16]

What follows here, is Dante's twofold justification of his 'breach' of the 'established canons'"

> However,...I maintain that to speak of oneself is permitted when there are compelling reasons, of which two in particular stand out. The first obtains when to speak of oneself is the only way that some grave disgrace or danger can be obviated....It was necessity of this kind that moved Boethius to speak of himself: since no one else rose to his defense, he sought, under the pretext of finding

> consolation, to defend himself against the everlasting disgrace of exile by showing that it was unjust...[11]

Of the many references to Boethius in the Convivio, the above most clearly exemplifies Dante's awareness of the self-constitutive function of the Boethian Consolation.

Two kinds of self-reference are featured in this passage. The first is determined by the use of the subjective pronoun 'I', marking the author's presence and the expression of his viewpoint as 'ostensive' or explicitly self-referential. The second is a 'non-ostensive' or indirect self reference which comes about by implied analogy as explained below.

The description of the 'necessity that moved Boethius to speak of himself: since no one else rose to his defense...' is an obvious parallel to Dante's own predicament. The Boethian "pretext of finding consolation" evokes Dante's introduction of the purpose of the Convivio as a 'banquet of knowledge' during which he would 'liberally share with those less privileged...' The analogy is inescapable: the 'banquet of knowledge' is clearly Dante's own pretext 'to speak in his own defence - since no one else rises to this task'. In this analogy is the foundation upon which the poet justifies the self-referential mode of the entire Convivio.

Ominously, the word 'disgrace' appears twice in the short citation. In both cases it is amplified by a qualifying adjective. In his general reference to calamity the poet speaks of 'some grave disgrace'; in the specific reference to the calamity of exile, the 'disgrace' becomes 'everlasting'. By the 'self-defense' in the general statement, the danger of the 'grave disgrace' could still be 'obviated'; but in the particular case of exile, all that self-defense against the 'everlasting disgrace of exile' can accomplish is limited to 'showing it had been unjust'.

Throughout his discourse Dante will be seen extolling philosophy in allegorical and scholastic terms. By 'allegorical' I imply that he borrows the idea of allegorizing philosophy from the Boethian 'Lady Philosophy', transposing it into his own object of love and praise. By 'scholastic' I intend the medieval synthesis of theology with every

other domain of human thought and endeavor as can be seen in the following:

> ..God, therefore, sees this (philosophy), the most noble of all things, existing in its purest form, in that He sees it existing in its most perfect form in Himself and His essence. For...Philosophy is a loving exercise of wisdom, which is found supremely in God - since in Him are found wisdom and love and activity at their most sublime - and which cannot exist elsewhere except insofar as it proceeds from Him.[18]

As the above example is intended as illustration only, I do not digress to comment on it beyond suggesting that it offers a characteristic glimpse of the poet's relationship to philosophy. But rather than speaking philosophically from within the discipline, the poet often describes and praises it from without.

Dante's view of the Boethian Consolation as a 'pretext' to show that his 'exile had been unjust' appears connected to that extrinsic relation to philosophy which Charles Singleton characterizes in the quotation on p. 17. For the poet, the example of Boethius seems to be more representative of his theme of justice and of the possibilities of the imaginative mode of self-constitution as effective instrument of showing one's innocence, than of gaining insight into the Boethian philosophy as such.

Nevertheless, the example of Boethius is for Dante a most felicitous choice. With the stroke of the philosopher's name, the poet endows the figure of the exiled Roman senator with a nimbus of his own design, making him a model of all the human qualities most extolled in the Convivio with which Dante wishes to be identified.

Within the analogical tenet of medieval thought, identifying with a model author, acclaiming 'the virtuous and the good, and associating oneself with the highest ideals of the hierarchical scale of values is not outside of the literary tradition. This offers a welcome shelter to Dante's most daring self-referential structures.

The second of the 'compelling reasons' by which speaking of oneself (explicitly) is permitted, Dante writes in the Convivio

> ...obtains when a person's speaking about himself is so instructive as to be of the greatest help to others. This

> was Augustine's motive for speaking about himself in the Confessions, for in the development of his life, which progressed from the not good to good, from good to better, and from better to best, he gives us example and instruction which no account by a mere witness, however faithful, could have supplied....[9]

In this quotation the poet does not specify in what the improvement of St. Augustine's life consists, by which speaking of himself becomes 'of the greatest help to others'. It is interesting to discover that the most obvious correlative of Dante's two justifications, the Boethian and the Augustinian, is their concern with 'reputation'.

His reputation happens to be Dante's own preoccupation in the early part of his discourse. But the poet's political reputation is left in abeyance. Instead, Dante reveals a menace to his moral reputation, based on misrepresentations of his canzoni, accusing him of "a passion so great that it ruled his life". An excursus on the making of good and bad reputations then precedes the author's self-exegesis of the canzone in question, designed to convince the reader that his allegories could not be understood by anyone without his own explanations, and that his motives were not guided by vice but by virtue, essentially the virtue of loving philosophy.

By saying of his exegetic explanations that these are 'instructions no one else could supply', the poet distinctly relates the self-exegesis of his canzone to the 'example and instructions' of St. Augustine. But Dante's parallel is incommensurate. Altogether, the rich source of Augustinian philosophy in the Confessions is never tapped in any direct sense. Why?

As a parallel to the case of St. Augustine, i.e., 'to be so instructive as to be of the greatest help to others', the poet proposes his own contributions to knowledge along with his admission of fear of disgrace, as his 'compelling reasons' for breaking the convention against speaking of himself.

> ...I am moved to speak by both the fear of disgrace and the desire to give instruction which no one else is in the position to give. I fear the disgrace of being thought to have given myself over to a passion so great that it ruled

> my life, which is how the canzoni mentioned above are understood. This disgrace is entirely removed by what I say of myself here, for this shows that my actions have been ruled not by passion but by virtue. I also intend to make clear the meaning of those canzoni, which no one can know unless I explain what it is, because it is hidden under the allegorical imagery. My doing this will bring not only delight pleasing to the ear but also suitable instruction concerning the use of this method both in expressing oneself and in interpreting the writing of others.[20]

With its sense of extreme urgency, the emotive charge of this passage leaves one almost bewildered. There is still no mention of the poet's exile. The association between 'disgrace' and exile experienced by Boethius now seems remote, transferred to a fear of 'the disgrace of being thought to have given myself over to a passion so great that it ruled my life...' The examples and the poet's own 'compelling reasons' are again incommensurable. The 'virtue', 'the hidden meaning no one can know', 'the delight pleasing to the ear', and 'the instruction' - all of this offered in addition to the 'entire removal of the disgrace' somehow fails to win the reader's complicity for which it appears to be designed.

But in a less determined way, the above passage still carries some important persuasion, for the last thought expressed in the ostensively self-relating mode opens on the prospect of looking 'beyond' or 'beneath' its surface meaning. Dante's reference is to the exegetic code which some medieval poets borrowed from the early scriptural exegetes or interpreters for their own ends. The poet describes this code as the 'fourfold method', and the multiple meanings it is designed to investigate as 'my polysemy'.

In the present context the following distinction may be of interest: when the method was used by the biblical interpreters to decode an ancient scriptural document according to its literal, its allegorical, its moral, and its anagogical or spiritual spheres of meaning, it was believed to be decoding God's own language as recorded by the prophets. But when the 'fourfold method' is introduced into literature, it is not primarily used in the more passive sense of decoding or finding a key to multiple meanings. It is then, as Dante

puts it, primarily 'a method in expressing oneself' which means that the method is used in its active sense of encoding meaning at the pleasure and for the need of the medieval poet. In due course there will be occasion to dwell on more specific aspects of Dante's polysemy.

As a final response to the above excerpt one might try distancing oneself from its foreground bravado and consider seeing it as a potion of hubris used against despair. In the end, the awareness might prevail of a desperate attempt by the poet to affirm his personal being against the status of 'non-being' associated with exile - making up for the lack of public response to his moral acts, by which a community confirms the being of a human 'social animal'.

When the poet's exilic condition finally becomes addressed as a personal calamity, it is done so with prudence and delicacy contrasting the tenor of his previous apology of the right to self-defense.

> From the time when the citizens of Rome's most beautiful and famous daughter, Florence, saw fit to cast me away from her sweet bosom - where I was born and nourished until my full maturity, and where, with her gracious consent, I desire with all my heart to rest my weary mind and complete my allotted span - I have made my way through almost all the regions to which this language extends, a homeless wanderer, reduced almost to beggary, and showing against my will the wound inflicted by fortune, which is very often imputed unjustly to the one afflicted...[21]

The affective dimension of this passage shows clear signs of the poet's hope of return. The tone remains careful, almost 'diplomatic', even when the lament is explicit and the accusations are at least implied. One is led to assume that these signs are expressions of some active efforts to return to Florence, which it would be unwise to reveal. On the surface, the above passage appears to be a fairly simple emotive account of the state of affairs of the exile's lot. If examined in isolation, the mention of Rome, for example, has no apparent function in the description of the exile's fate. But we become conscious of it precisely because we see no contextual necessity for its being there. If we recall that Dante insists on the primacy of fact over rhetoric and of thought over decorum, we can rule out the possibility that Florence as "Rome's most beautiful and famous daughter" might be a mere

rhetorical ornament.

What then could Dante's insertion of the word 'Rome' in the above passage mean? The only clear impression we have is that the author does not use his poetic epithet in a negative sense. By examining the 'horizon' of the concept of 'Rome' in relation to the poet's time, place and predicament, the referent of his positive expression cannot be the Rome of his own day - the 'Eternal City' under the reign of Boniface VIII, one of the most autocratic Popes in Church history. This is the Pope who issued the famous Papal Bull 'Unam Sanctam' and proclaimed "I am Pope, I am Caesar". Boniface also extended his territorial claims and his secular powers far beyond the bounds of the Vatican and of Rome itself.

When the Pope intended to intervene in the conflict between the Florentine political factions of the Papal 'Black' Guelfish party and the 'White' not so Papal Guelfs who headed the legitimate government at the time, the Prior in Council who had the misfortune of placing his signature beneath the motion of non-compliance with the Papal intervention, happened to be Dante Alighieri. The consequences belong to the murkier parts of the Papal and Florentine histories.

But when we probe the 'horizon' of the phenomenon of ancient Rome in the poet's consciousness (as evident in Book IV of the Convivio, in the De Monarchia and in the second and third canticles of the Commedia) we come upon manifold signs of a revival of ancient Roman ideals and of Dante's passionate commitment to these. Thus we realise that when Dante establishes his archetypal notion of 'Rome' in a positive association, it is in the sense of an idealized memory of Rome's one-time greatness, associated with justice, law and order, and models of 'true nobility' in many of its outstanding citizens.[22] The poet attributes to Rome even a 'divine calling', associating the Augustean era with the birth of Christ as 'God's chosen moment'.

From his sources we know that Dante is a reader of Titus Livius.[23] The historian's lesson drawn from the deed of Cincinnatus is echoed in Dante's theme of 'true nobility' of which the archetype of 'Rome' is a constitutive part. (As a farmer of a small tract of land, Cincinnatus was called upon to serve as 'dictator' when the Roman

Republic was in peril. His task accomplished, Cincinnatus returned to his plow and his frugal life). The expression of the profounder meaning of this legendary event told by Titus Livius, is typical for the poet's precepts in the make-up of his archetypal notion of 'Rome' and the theme of 'true nobility'.

> After this, let men not listen to those who prefer riches to everything else in the world, and who think that there is neither honor nor virtue where wealth does not flow.[4]

Thus, the seemingly tentative occurrence of Rome's name in the expression "...the citizens of Rome's most beautiful and famous daughter, Florence..." could well be a purposeful association, framing a covert challenge to Dante's native city to act in accordance with the old Roman virtues of order, justice and true nobility, and to recall its banished statesman, who sought to defend his city's autonomy in the service of its legitimate government.

For Dante the archetype or 'associative cluster' symbolized by the name of 'Rome' means the virtues of Cincinnatus as well as the glory of Augustus; it is represented by Cato as well as by Dante's most emulated model, Vergil, Publius Vergilius Maro, native of Mantua and Roman by choice. His legendary epos, the Aeneid, written on commission from Augustus, makes the Romans descendants and heirs to the grandeur of ancient Troy. In Dante's Commedia, Vergil becomes the archetypal figure of virtue, nobility and wisdom who accompanies Dante on his perilous pilgrimage through the Inferno, and who will be the Pilgrim's wise companion and teacher on his ascent to Mount Purgatorio, symbolic summit of the achievement of human worth and accomplishment of happiness by virtuous living.

Dante's precept encapsuled in the archetypal notion of 'Rome' centers on the moral status of 'true nobility' to which he devotes the entire last book of his unfinished Convivio. In relating nobility to 'his' philosophy which is Ethics, Dante erects a unique self-referential structure to which he will keep referring throughout his entire text.

The poet's fourth book of commentaries is prefaced by his 'Aristotelian' canzone opening with the words

> I must abandon the sweet poems of love...because the disdainful and hard bearing that has appeared in my lady has barred my path to voice my customary theme...Instead I shall treat of human worth, the quality by which man is truly noble in rhyme that is harsh and subtle, and in so doing refute the false and base opinion of those who maintain that wealth is the ground of nobility. And at the outset I invoke that lord who dwells in my lady's eyes, drawing her to love her very self...[25]

In Book three, the identity of Dante's mysterious and eulogized 'lady' has been revealed as "the lady of intellect, who is called Philosophy". Now, in Book four, the poet explains: "When I say at the outset that I invoke the lord, I invoke the aid of truth. He is the lord who dwells in the eyes of Lady Philosophy".[26]

Since the beginning of the 'exilic discourse', which opens on the Aristotelian theme of knowledge, a sense of urgency and fervour is perceived in Dante's account of his discovery of Philosophy. But Dante's 'Lady Philosophy' is perceived as an 'animated idea' rather than as allegorical figure in the sense in which the 'Lady Philosophy' is introduced by Boethius in the 'exilic discourse' of his Consolation of Philosophy. Dante adopts and adapts the Boethian model to his own style and purpose. But anthropomorphic attributes alone, even such as 'eyes' and 'soul' - in the words of Aquinas as 'that by which a living thing is alive' - cannot make Dante's 'animated idea' as compelling as the Boethian allegorical personage who speaks with the voice of the author's alter ego, engaging him in a Neoplatonic dialectic of self-persuasion.

The Boethian discourse is fully sustained by its fictional mythos, rendering plausible the dramatic dialogue between the allegorical 'Lady Philosophy' and the dejected prisoner, once her hopeful and promising pupil. The Consolation also remains consistently philosophical, without losing its genuinely poetic quality. Even today, the Boethian Consolation might serve as a timeless model of 'philosophy as literature', or as self-constitutive 'exilic discourse'.

In Dante's Convivio, on the other hand, the 'fiction of the banquet of knowledge' cannot be upheld, remaining a mere pretext serving Dante's didactic purpose. The poet's praise of his idolon of philosophy is sometimes too close for comfort to the tone of his love-poetry turned

into poetry of praise. It may be one of the main reasons why Dante's 'Lady Philosophy' cannot match the stringent and commanding presence of her fully allegorical Boethian model. True to his calling, Boethius questions his Neoplatonic philosophy, whereas Dante makes much of the one single instance of disagreement with Aristotle when the philosopher says that "What most people judge to be true cannot be wholly false".[27]

In my own perception, it is the exilic syndrome which dominates the foreground of Dante's conscious striving. The greatest need seems to be to affirm his existence as a person of integrity who despite his banishment is no faceless exile, remaining a poet and an emergent thinker. In the Convivio he demands attention to his 'willingness and generosity to share his superior knowledge'. His declared philosophy is Ethics or practical philosophy, and his declared aim is to help others distinguish between right and wrong in order to achieve happiness through virtue and 'true nobility'.

In his discourse Dante takes great pains to show who he is rather than stating who he is not. Only generalities or fragments about his banishment are mentioned, and his case never becomes tableau. Thus the Convivio is neither a 'confession' nor an 'apology'. But why would a poet be thus hypnotized by practical philosophy?

Why would someone who could become captivated by the mystical dialectics of the Boethian Consolation attempt to apply practical philosophy to his own poetic purpose? But is his purpose poetic? In fact, the poet himself claims he does not write for speculation but for practical purposes at the beginning and at the very end of his 'exilic discourse'; in the Convivio and in Epistle to Can Grande. And what is the poet's practical purpose? 'To lead people out of their misery and to show them how they can attain happiness by just and virtuous living'. But to 'lead and to show' requires acts and models, and the poet must provide both.

Today, Moral Philosophy may be seen by some as one of philosophy's 'lost causes'. But would not the opposite be true in the experience of a deposed and isolated 'social and political animal' in Dante's time and condition, with a society near chaos and no public authority in sight?

In the desert of exile, would it not seem desirable to fall back on a well-endorsed and communicable cause on behalf of order and justice on earth and 'beatitude in heaven', a cause one could legitimately make one's own? In Dante's commitment to expose corruption, injustice and false nobility along with his efforts and battles to achieve restitution, he needs both the strongest and the most legitimate allies, thus he needs both, reason and faith.

Even though the privilege of poetic speech is left to him, its persuasive power is undermined by the stigma of exile - and somehow he must rise above it. If the freedom of public moral acts is denied him, his invention of their similacra in literature cannot be taken away.

Nevertheless, innumerable textual events testify that Dante's attachment to philosophy is not a 'marriage of convenience'. There is a sense of genuine exaltation in Dante's vision of Aristotle's rational order of the world, which endures. The poet candidly shares in the delight of the medieval model's teleology and its eudemonist view of a purposeful universe and human happiness attainable by moral action. In Book four for example, Dante extols the moral virtues as "the fruits which are in the fullest sense ours, since producing them is something that lies totally within our power".

As happens even in the best translations, somehow the ring of forceful affirmation seems lost in the above by comparison to the original "Dove è da sapere che propiissimi nostri frutti sono le morali vertudi, però che da ogni canto sono da nostra podestade".[28] The notes by Porena and Pazzaglia in the Dante Opere suggest that the full meaning of this quotation includes the reason why these fruits lie entirely within our power - namely by the power of our free will. And free will, liberty, freedom of choice of place and action are, of course, specifically exilic themes.

Qua poet, however, Dante is seduced by both moral and aesthetic beauty, reminiscent of the ancients' *kalokagathia* where goodness and delight combine, or where "beauty is truth, truth beauty", as in John Keats's Ode to a Grecian Urn. Dante's expressions on this level anticipate the Commedia, especially the canticle of the Paradiso, where his mysticism will be discovered 'alive and well', although it is not a

mysticism of the inward experience, such as St. Augustine's. or that of Master Eckhart or of Angelus Silesius. Sight does turn into vision in Dante's Paradiso, but it mostly retains its aesthetic character. Even the ineffable only rarely withdraws from sense perception, remaining some 'blinding flame' or a 'deep glow' as 'focus of relationship' in Dante's light-symbolism.[29]

Here, then, is a significant expression from Dante's commentary on his third and last canzone in the Convivio.

> I go on to say: *Drawing her to love her very self*, ...a loving experience of wisdom, turns her gaze back on herself when she catches sight of the beauty of her lord's eyes. What this means is that the soul, when philosophising, not only contemplates the truth itself; she also contemplates her own contemplation and its particular beauty, consciously reflecting on herself and loving herself on account of the beauty of her first gaze.[30]

At the beginning of his prose commentary of this Book, Dante says that when he became "the friend of this lady" (Philosophy) he began to love and to hate "in accordance with her love and hate". Then he goes on to say:

> No one is more intent on...eliminating the evil in things, which is what is hateful in them, than my most excellent lady, for she is full perfection of reason, and the source of all justice. I who follow her in action as well as in feeling to the best of my ability, criticized and inveighed against errors widely held among mankind, in order to discredit and bring into disrepute not those who were in error but the errors themselves...[31]

In the above it is clearly seen how individual self-references are being attached to larger self-referential structures. Here, the larger structure is anchored in the essential being of philosophy as love of *wisdom, truth* and *justice.* To serve him as medium of relation or *tertium quid*, the poet chooses love and hate. In the case in point, these affective terms of approbation and disapprobation also happen to symbolize rectitude in so far as right choice reflects on the essential being of moral philosophy. Thus, when the poet follows 'his lady' 'in action as well as in feeling' he is necessarily identified as *being a moral agent on behalf of truth and justice.*

Dante's theme of the division of powers which will eventually

develop into his proposal to separate the powers of church and state, turns on the question of leadership and competence, announcing itself in the Convivio.

The question is first addressed in the third canzone, and the commentaries upon it are subsequently spread across the thirty chapters of the Convivio's fourth Book, centering on the theme of 'true and false nobility'.

To maintain the view that wealth is the ground of nobility is a false and base opinion, says the poet, that must be refuted. An emperor's claim that 'age-old wealth and pleasing manners' are its source, is also rejected. "Riches can neither confer nor take away nobility; a person of upright and truthful mind is not shattered by their loss", writes Dante in the canzone, repeating almost verbatim 'Lady Philosophy's' remarks to Boethius in his Consolation. Neither do grandsons of worthy persons have a legitimate claim to call themselves noble, for family lineage cannot ennoble its base descendants.

In a more original, almost modern vein, Dante also repudiates the view and takes distance from those who hold it, according to which 'base men or descendants of a base father can never become noble'. On his 'own view', rooted in the Aristotelian Ethics, "wherever virtue is present, so, too, is nobility". In the poet's opinion,

> God alone bestows it on that soul which He sees subsisting perfectly in its body. It is clear, then, to some, that nobility is the seed of happiness infused by God into the soul that is well placed...[32]

At first glance, this opinion appears to share in the same divine arbitrariness, as does the Augustinian doctrine of Grace. How does this tally with Dante's exuberance over the 'fruit of the virtues being entirely in our own power', and with his statement that 'wherever virtue is present, so, too, is nobility?'

The significance of God's 'seed of happiness' is easily overlooked here, since the author had accustomed us to think in terms of the potential powers of the Aristotelian soul. Thus the Augustinian rationes seminales, or 'seminal reasons' are not immediately recognized in the 'seed of happiness' as the God-given potential for human

development. Boethius would have asked: to what avail then is human striving? But for Dante, these are answered questions accepted on fiat.

As soon as the text establishes a certain givenness, the poet begins developing his ramified exemplifications of the consequences; in the present case the consequences of the presence and the lack of nobility. At the same time as this is one of Dante's important didactic projects against false values, it is a perfect self-referential structure within which the poet qua 'champion of rectitude and true nobility' becomes quite logically identified with the virtuous, the just, and the truly noble.

In the tornata, the short concluding stanza addressed to the canzone itself - which Dante adapted from the Proveçal convention of dedicatory endings - the poet can now say:

> My poem against-the-erring, you must be off! And when you come to wherever our lady dwells, do not keep your mission hidden from her. You can say to her with confidence: "My theme is your friend".

As earlier described, the show of disagreement with Aristotle whom Dante nevertheless calls 'the master and guide of human reason' and 'the most worthy of being trusted and obeyed', is as important to Dante as his disagreement with the emperor on the point of hereditary nobility. For, the judgement of moral values is not a province of the emperor's competence - as the 'poet of rectitude to be' (by self-designation in the De Vulgari Eloquentia) - feels competent to judge.

This act of self-assertion does not, however, detract from Dante's commitment to both, the philosopher and the emperor, albeit no longer unconditionally! And here is the most explicit anticipation of Dante's De Monarchia. It shows that the poet's political thought is not new and opportunistic, as some suggest, associating it with the occasion of Henry of Luxemburg's arrival in Italy. It also shows that Dante's Monarchia, or at least its substantial political thought was long in maturing, which contradicts the learned speculation according to which the Monarchia may have 'simply' been a 'treatise of occasion', on the coming of the emperor.

In the following passage is the nucleus of Dante's separatists

politics, which ostensively omit to mention the Pope in his consideration of practical philosophy in secular affairs.

> My principal aim has been achieved, which was to show that the authority of the greatest philosopher... entirely merits our ascent. Furthermore, his authority does not detract from that of the emperor; rather the latter authority without the former is dangerous, and the former without the latter is rendered weak, not because of anything intrinsic to it, but because people tend to act irrationally So when the two operate in unison each is at its most beneficial and carries its fullest weight...[33]

By comparing the brief examples from Book one and from Book four, presented under this heading, the poet's rebound sense of confidence, and his earnest claim to moral respect, can be clearly perceived. Although the statesman's aspired restitution to his native city will never be forthcoming, the sense of human dignity is restored to him even in the writing of the unfinished and to him, obviously unsatisfactory Convivio.

In the end, the fact that Dante abandons this treatise, may have been triggered by his own divided sense of spheres of experience, as will be remembered from his distinction between 'seeing with the eyes of faith' and 'seeing with the eyes of reason'. This may be the closest he ever comes to speaking in terms of the Averroist notion of the twofold approach to truth, the one by faith, the other by reason. It is clear from the text that Dante rejects other prominent Averroist doctrines, notably the negation of the individuality and immortality of the human soul. Nevertheless, Dante does not hide the fact that he admires the wisdom of Averroes, the Commentator of Aristotle. As poet he might have been particularly struck by the philosopher's suggestion that those who cannot reach truth by way of the intellect, might be reaching it or be reached by it, by way of the imagination.

Did this thought intrigue and animate the poet, to whom the freedom of poetry and fiction would have been a more natural and attractive way of revealing himself in 'self-constitution'? The reasons we shall never know, the results become obvious in the constitutive phase of the Commedia.

In the meantime, Dante's mission for peace and justice will yet

require his most stringent thought and all the audacity he can muster. In its conflict with reality, the next phase of the 'exilic discourse' will show that the exile's desire for restitution prevails. The banished statesman is under the illusion that his intellectual achievements and his moral stance will necessarily bring about a new convergence of the personal and public spheres. Might any acts he could perform be instrumental in realizing his dream?

Dante, who knows Aristotle's Politics and who has made his Nicomachean Ethics his own, could not have missed the philosopher's conflicting ideas on the benefits and liabilities of ostracism. Might Aristotle's ultimate solution of what to do with the most outstanding man of the polis - if he be not kept banished for life - by chance be on Dante's mind during the utopistic phase of his own political thought?

ENDNOTES

WORKING NOTIONS; EXILIC DISCOURSE; RESTITUTIVE PHASE

1. Bernard F. Lonergan, Insight, Harper and Row, New York, 1978, p. 319.

2. Convivio, II, viii, 15. English translation: Dante, The Banquet, translated with introduction and notes by Christopher Ryan, Standford University, Anma Libri, 1989.

3. Ibid.

4. The Pocket Aquinas, Edited and General Introduction by Vernon J. Bourke, Washington Square Press, 1960, p. 101.

5. Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book Lambda. Translation by Richard Hope, The University of Michigan Press, 1952, 7/1072b, 20-30.

6. Epistola X, 16. English translation: Letters of Dante. Translation and commentary by Paget Toynbee, Torchbooks, London, 1902.

7. Charles Singleton, Dante's Commedia, Elements of Structure. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, pp. 65-66

8. Convivio, IV, xxii, 1.

9. This aspect of medieval literature is discussed in: C.S. Lewis, The Discarded Image, Cambridge University Press, 1964, pp. 210-211.

10. The definitions used in this passage are based on the philosophical semantics in: John Lyons, Semantics 1, Cambridge University Press, 1977, Section 7.2 on Reference.

11. Ibid., Lyons.

12. Giuseppe Mazzotta, Dante: Poet of the Desert. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New York, 1979.

13. Emile Beneveniste, Problems in General Linguistics, Miami, University of Miami Press, 1971, pp. 109-110.

14. Antony Easthope. Poetry as Discourse, Methuen & Co., London, 1983, p. 46.

15. Convivio, I/ii/5.

16. Paradiso., xvii/69.

17. Convivio, I/ii, 12-13.

18. Ibid., III, xii, 12-13.

19. Ibid, I, ii, 14-15.

20. Ibid., 15-17.

21. Ibid, iii, 4.

22. Ibid., IV, Canzone III.

23. Ibid., V, 15.

24. Titus Livius, Discoursi, Book III, Chap. XXV. Op. Cit. Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince and the Discourses (on the first ten books of Titus Livius): The modern Library, Random House, New York, 1950, p. 486.

25. Convivio, Book IV, Canzone III.

26. Ibid., 17/18.

27. Ibid., viii, 6.

28. Ibid., xvii, 2.

29. The term 'focus of relationship', designating symbolic function, is suggested by George Walley in his book Poetic Process. Seminar Notes.

30. Convivio, IV/ii, 18.

31. Ibid., IV, i, 4-5.

32. Ibid., III.

33. Ibid., IV, vi, 17.

UTOPISTIC PHASE

In its utopistic phase, Dante's 'exilic discourse' is marked by two distinct bodies of text: one is composed of ten Epistole or letters, the other is his political testament, the accomplished treatise De Monarchia.

On the eidetic view of this phase, the letters represent a 'personal utopia' by way of variation of the meaning from 'no topos' or 'no place' to 'assuming a place' to which the claimant has not been appointed. For in his letters the poet assumes a position of unbounded self-confidence and of superior authority expressed by oscillating between the roles of 'thundering prophet' and 'wise leader'.

Dante's first completed treatise, De Monarchia, on the other hand, is a political utopia in the sense of proposing an ideal option to a real world without means or political will to actualize it.

In secondary literature, the Epistole are usually not included in the poet's literary corpus. They are, however, contained in the official editions of the complete works, and they have been translated and annotated by such scholars as Paget Toynbee, from whose English translation of the Latin originals I excerpt my examples. The condition of not being considered literary artifacts is no impediment to including the Epistole in the reading of the entire text as one 'exilic discourse', of which they are significant expressions.

During this phase, Dante's discourse reaches the apex of its prose style, comparable to the *dolce stil nuovo* of the poetry. As far as analogical thinking and literary convention permit, all is now in the open. The poet's presence as mythmaker still dominates the prose when reason does not supply arguments adequate to the intended purpose. But the purpose of self-constitution by all kinds of poetic means, as known from the Convivio and refined in the Commedia, is not the purpose here. As far as self-assurance is concerned this phase is closer to the attitude of the latter canzoni of the Purgatorio. By their assertiveness, their moral substance and their authoritative style, the Epistole are *ipso facto* self-constitutive. The 'didactic intentions' announced in the Convivio are here transformed into self-evident zeal,

suggesting the status of a moral reformer and a prophet of justice or doom, lest his admonitions be heeded.

Implied in these letters is the assumption that the author's voice would be accepted as a voice of moral authority, compelling to all to whom they are addressed, be it by persuasion or by intimidation. But beyond the poet's reference to "unceasing sweat and toil in study" in his letter to a Florentine friend, dated as late as May 15, 1315, we do not know the grounding of Dante's authoritative stance.

He, who in the Convivio demonstrated great concern for the propriety of respectful disagreement, making it possible to disagree even with 'the philosopher' and with an emperor, now, without flinching, calls to task the entire College of the Italian Cardinals, heaps contempt on the 'iniquitous' Florentines, and scolds 'his Imperial Majesty'. Why does he 'linger' and 'tarry' in Milan, neglecting Tuscani and sparing Florence, instead of swooping down to punish the scheming Florentines for undermining the imperial cause!

In one part of his letter to Henry VII of Luxemburg, on his way to receive the crown of the Roman Empire, the poet likens his coming to the 'rising of the long awaited sun', only to continue with the reproach:

> But because our Sun (whether it be the fervour of our longing or the appearance of truth suggesting it) is believed to be tarrying, or is suspected to be turning back...We are constrained in our uncertainty to doubt, and to break forth in the words of the forerunner: 'Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?'[1]

Then Dante reminds the emperor of how he, Dante, had rushed to meet Henry when he came to Milan for his coronation there, and how he paid tribute to him as it 'beseems Imperial Majesty'. But in the next paragraph, the reminder of his devotion turns into the challenge:

> But we marvel what sluggishness holds thee so long, in that, long since victor in the valley of the Po thou dost abandon, pass by, and neglect Tuscany, not otherwise than as if thou didst suppose the imperial rights entrusted to thy guardianship to be limited by the boundaries of Liguria; forgetting in sooth, as we apprehend, that the glorious dominion of the Romans is confined neither by the frontiers of Italy, nor by the coast-line of three-cornered Europe...[2]

If the tone of the poet's address to the Emperor is found to be bold and challenging, it is in the sense of calling upon the ruler to keep given promises and to fulfill justified expectations of imperial duty. In the Letter to the Italian Cardinals, another kind of phenomenon is perceived, putting what was called 'personal utopia' into a different light. In the following, Dante justifies his impudent action:

> Perchance in indignant rebuke you will ask: 'And who is this man who, not fearing the sudden punishment of Uzzah, who sets himself up to protect the Ark, tottering though it may be?' Verily I am one of the least of the sheep of the pasture of Jesus Christ; verily I abuse no pastoral authority, seeing that I possess no riches. By the Grace, therefore, not of riches, but of God, I am what I am, and the zeal of His house has eaten me up...These are the justifications of my boldness. And besides these I have the authority of the Philosopher, who in his system of morals taught that truth is to be preferred even before friendship.[3]

It becomes apparent in the course of this letter, that the poet considers it his natural responsibility to speak up on behalf of the Roman Church, fallen into disarray since the attack on Pope Boniface VIII at Agnani by a French and Italian conspiracy, and since the vote for a French pope who never came to Rome, setting up his papal court at Avignon instead. But there are in this letter also impassioned calls for national pride, that are new to the period. The reason is the bereavement of Rome of both its 'luminaries', the pope and the emperor, causing the 'loss of all public authority' as Dante states elsewhere, which concerns the political thinker, beyond his own predicament. To the cardinals he calls out:

> For although it is the duty of all Italians to love the capital of Italy as common source of their civility, yet it is justly held to be your part most especially to reverence it, since for you it is the source also of your very being.[4]

How are we, from a temporal and cultural distance of nearly seven hundred years, to view these new moral phenomena in the utopistic phase of Dante's 'exilic discourse', of which the full vehemence still remains to be exposed? Can we be blind to the dignity of his indignation and his efforts? Or, can we, on the other hand, overlook the fact that he

endows himself with authority with which he has not been invested, and that under the pretext of this authority he also aspires his own restitution? A still greater difficulty is yet to arise in which the question will have to be asked in other terms. Here I wish to add another three excerpts for a fuller illustration of the poet's moral fervor:

> Now I am constrained to lift up my voice; ye have constrained me. Be ye therefore ashamed to receive rebuke and admonishment from so lowly a source, and not from Heaven, which may pardon you...(VIII/9)

> ...I have kindled the blush of confusion in you and in others, chief priests in name only...since among so many who usurp the office of the shepherd, among so many sheep ... left unattended...one voice alone of filial piety, and that of a private individual, is heard at the obsequies as it were of the Mother Church (VIII/6)

> And what wonder? Each has taken avarice to wife, even as you yourselves have done; avarice, the mother never of piety and righteousness, but ever of impiety and unrighteousness... (VIII/7)

In the end, the poet urges the cardinals to bring home to Rome 'for our Italy' the chair of the Holy See, "...and that the reproach of the Gascons, who burning with abominable lust, strive to usurp for themselves the glory of the Italians, may be an example to posterity for all ages to come" (VIII/12).

Learned opinion holds that Dante's (undated) treatise De Monarchia attributed to this period, contains the poet's most remarkable and original political thought.[5] But De Monarchia (written in Latin) did not fare well at the time, missing to produce the aspired effect of promoting the imperial cause and of achieving its author's return to his native city which was still foremost on Dante's mind. Yet Henry's descent to Italy ended in tragedy. His Roman coronation did nothing to pacify the Italian lands. Florence organized a successful campaign of resistance among the cities of the Guelfish League, and itself refused to surrender when the imperial army laid siege to its ramparts. Not long after its withdrawal, news reached Tuscani of the young Emperor's sudden death on his way to Naples, and the Florentines received it with

jubilation.

This, in brief was the scenario which left Dante a broken man, hopelessly compromised by his aggressive efforts on behalf of the imperial cause, twice barred from general amnesty offered fellow exiles of the 'White' Guelfish faction. The second time, the poet mistakenly assumed that he was included, writes Paget Toynbee in his commentary in the Dante Letters, but declined to 'accept' because of the shameful conditions attached. In his famous letter of refusal addressed to a Florentine friend, Dante writes:

> Is this the generous recall of Dante Alighieri to his native city, after the miseries of nearly fifteen years of exile? Is this the reward of innocence manifest to all the world, of unceasing sweat and toil in study? Far be it from the friend of philosophy, so senseless a degradation, befitting only a soul of clay, as to submit himself to be paraded like a prisoner, as some infamous wretches have done! Far be it from the advocate of justice after being wronged, to pay tribute to them that wronged him, as though they had deserved well of him! No! this is not the way for me to return to my country. If another can be found which does not derogate from the fame and honour of Dante, that will I take without lagging steps. But if by no such way Florence may be entered, then I will enter Florence never.[6]

Contained in this most overt document of confident self-appraisal is the key to a fuller understanding of Dante's poetic attempts in the Purgatorio, to distinguish non-ostensively between 'pride as vice' and 'pride as expression of accomplishment and dignity' by which the reader is meant to discover that the poet's pride is just. The concluding paragraph of this passage from the letter of a Florentine friend, expresses the poet's resignation to perpetual exile. But at the same time, this resignation becomes the first step toward its transcendence, and serenity will thus be restored to the last phase of the 'exilic discourse'.

> What! can I not everywhere gaze upon the sun and the stars? can I not under any sky meditate on the most precious truths, without first rendering myself inglorious, nay ignominious, in the eyes of the people and the city of Florence" Nay, bread will not fail me![7]

If the hope of restitution must now be abandoned, self-constitution will enter its most successful stage in the Commedia,

finally accomplishing the self-portrait of the 'poet of rectitude'. But will it be the self-portrait of the moral agent he now finds in the mirror of his personal utopia? Or will it be the portrait of a dreamer and mythmaker who can glide over painful truths with the 'belle menzogne' of his allegories? Yes, he will hear Beatrice's stern call of his name at the top of Mount Purgatorio: "Dante, because Vergil leaves thee weep not, weep not yet, for thou must weep for another sword".[8] Yes, he will show contrition but render account he will not.

This brings back the question of how one is to interpret these undisguised, saliently crafted Epistole in the context of the 'exilic discourse'. In these letters everything that characterized the former appears to be dispensed with: expressions of attitude are unguarded, the speech becomes direct, propositions no longer engage analogical proxy, assertions are apodictic, disguises fall, similacra become superfluous.

Could it be said that any one general principle obtains for these letters qua text, by distinction from the rest of the discourse? The obvious negative distinction might be that they are not intended as works of literature. But a positive distinction by kind and degree suggests itself as well. By way of depending on judgement, choice, will and execution, and by way of their intended function as instruments of persuasion addressed to collectives and to individuals in order that they may actualize these, are the letters not acts *sui generis* that are both public and moral?

There is no doubt that literature can only tell 'the story of Dante' in terms of his literary artifacts, whether or not the critical reader perceives their self-constitutive dimension beyond the overt level. But when the attention is focused on the moral dimension within which both, the Convivio and the Purgatorio are conceived, the encounter of the Epistole is an unsettling experience. Are we to take these blunt letters as the 'moment of truth', explain them away psychologically, or interpret 'the story of Dante as moral agent' separately from 'the story of Dante as poet of self-constitution'. Before attempting to consider these questions in terms of the virtues of practical philosophy, to which the poet has formally dedicated his discourse, a brief look at two

of Dante's most indicting letters is required to suggest the moral proportion of the problem.

Epistola VI is addressed by "Dante Alighieri, a Florentine undeservedly in exile, to the most iniquitous Florentines within the city". Dante first introduces the concept of the Holy Roman Empire as designated by the Will of God to govern human affairs "to the end that mankind might repose in peace of so powerful a protection, and everywhere as nature demands, might live as citizens of an ordered world".[9] Encapsulating the idea of his Monarchia, the poet warns that "when the throne of Augustus is vacant, the whole world goes out of course, the helmsmen and rowers slumber in the ship of St. Peter", (the Papacy), and unhappy Italy is forsaken and abandoned to private control, and bereft of all public guidance...". "All who in mad presumption have risen up against this manifest will of God ..." are threatened with divine punishment.

It is of interest from the present perspective that the letter is not addressed on the exile's personal behalf. But without stating so, both the appraisal of the blessings of the empire and the long passages of condemnation of the resisting Florentines are necessarily his personal opinions, and the act of making them public in his collective letter is necessarily a moral act.

Dante's presupposition is typically idealistic and scholastic in the sense that the 'Roman Empire' (even in its extension under the Germanic rulers) is God-given and that the 'prescriptive right' under which the Florentines refuse the 'duty of submission to him' (the emperor) 'is a choice of madness and rebellion'. "Have you to learn, senseless and perverse as you are, that public right can be subject to no reckoning by prescription, but must endure so long as time itself endures?" he asks.

Although the incisive level of the poet's contemptuous insults seem excessive, the more serious problem arises from the threats of punishment when "terrible in gold the eagle" - as image symbol of the empire and the emperor - "shall swoop down upon you..."[10] It should be remarked, however, that rather than singly, it is the combination with the incitement to martial action against Florence, appealing for

punishment and reprisals against the 'Florentine rebels' in Dante's subsequent letter to Emperor Henry, that puts the epithet of the 'poet of rectitude' in question.

The following five examples of Dante's indictments, incitements against his native city will show why further counsel from contemporary thought on the teleological tradition of virtues is especially appropriate at this point.

In Epistola VIII, after lecturing Henry in the sense of his political treatise, De Monarchia, on Christ's choice to become man under the aegis of the most just Emperor Augustus and by this subjecting himself to the edict of the Roman Empire, by which the empire is forever committed to God, the poet launches his challenge:

> Let him then for whom the whole world is looking be ashamed to be entangled so long in such a narrow corner of the world; and let it not escape the consideration of Augustus that the tyrant of Tuscany is encouraged by the assurance that he is delaying, and daily by appealing to the pride of the evil doers gathers fresh strength, heaping daring upon daring.[11]
>
> What dost thou, the sole ruler of the world, imagine thou wilt have accomplished when thou hast set thy foot upon the neck of rebellious Cremona?[12]
>
> Dost thou not know, most excellent Prince, and canst thou not descry from the watch-tower of thine exalted Highness where that stinking vixen has her lair, undisturbed by the hunters? Verily, the culprit drinks neither of headlong Po, nor of thine own Tiber, but her jaws pollute e'en now the rushing stream of Arno, and Florence - canst thou be unaware? - Florence is the name of this baleful pest...[13]
>
> Up then! Make an end of delay ...and overthrow this Goliath with the sling of thy wisdom and with the stone of thy strength...[14]
>
> Then, our heritage which was taken away, and for which we lament without ceasing, shall be restored to us whole again. But even as now, remembering the most holy Jerusalem, we mourn as exiles in Babylon so then as citizens, and breathing in peace, we shall think with joy on the miseries of Confusion.[15]

Clearly, this is not a personal plea of an individual, begging for

protection on his own behalf, in the sense in which Niccolò Machiavelli will be sending petitions to the Medici Pope, Leo X, two hundred years hence. But then, who might be the community from whom 'our heritage was taken away, and for which we lament without ceasing'? He, who accused his own exiled faction, the 'Bianchi', of corruption, and from whom he withdrew all support, would hardly be speaking on their behalf. But would he mean the imperialist Ghibellines, in Florence as good as non-existent, to whom he apparently never pledged allegiance? Or does he speak on behalf of the 'good Florentines' at large who have managed to escape the 'damnable corruption' of Dante's foes?

The De Monarchia is not a work 'by as well as of' Dante Alighieri as is the Commedia. It does not specifically invite exploration as 'exilic discourse', although the very first self-reference is of a kind that cannot be overlooked.

This is not to say, that Dante withholds his personal opinions and ideas. It is important to him to state at the beginning of his three-part treatise that he considers it a duty to enrich posterity in the sense in which it was fulfilled by Aristotle and Cicero. From the particular viewpoint of this thesis, the choice of this example is in itself a significant hierarchical self-reference by the habit of select associations. Dante follows this up by saying that his chosen contribution is to write on the much neglected subject of the '*monarchia*', or the empire. To the exile it seems to have become a seal of authenticity to introduce himself by lofty associations and by so doing, non-ostensively show his self-perception.

Here in the De Monarchia, the themes of 'temporal justice' and 'personal liberty' are more consistently attended to than in his other works, even though they are still supported by the poet's own myth-making and by the causal dependence of the natural world on supernatural powers and events.

A good example would be the argument according to which God chose the moment of global peace under the rightful government and the just reign of the Emperor Augustus to allow the birth of Christ, His only begotten Son. At its highest level of integration, Dante's thought never stops beneath the teleological purpose for the whole of 'humanity'

or of 'mankind' - terms particularly important to him, who, according to Etienne Gilson, is the first political thinker to use these terms in their universal application.[16]

Since justice is recognized as the most encompassing of the cardinal virtues it is personified by the highest temporal authority of humankind, namely the Emperor, its most powerful representative on earth. Dante's preoccupation with 'true nobility' was noted in the Convivio; now, in the De Monarchia he projects the notion onto the public sphere. Here, the utopistic zeal entirely denies the 'critical realist' as Dante is classified by some who consider him a philosophical thinker.[17]

In the second of the treatise's three books, the poet expands the idea of nobility to embrace the 'rightful' existence of the Roman Empire. His efforts to legitimize it, include the 'documentation' of its legendary Troyan origins, according to the Vergilian Aeneid, composed to enhance the glory of Emperor Augustus.

But does the 'poet of rectitude' consider the dangers to liberty from that very same 'highest temporal office' of humankind, his ideal monarchy, if it comes under the sway of a tyrant or an autocrat? If this office seems as ideally suited to tolerance as he suggests, is it not equally well suited to the practice of its denial?

The statesman proposes his own original version of 'checks and balances' for the protection of the individual from the state. He, who saw it failing in the complex communal system of the medieval city-states, (a system that originated as a protective idea during the long post-Carolingian anarchy) firmly believes that liberty is God's greatest gift to humankind, and thus conceives of a subtle separation of the two highest positions of human government, the spiritual and the temporal, the church and the state.

In the Monarchia the 'theme of liberty' is as important as the theme of 'true nobility' is in the Convivio. The poet's exultation of its meaning is reminiscent of his enthusiasm over the nature of the moral virtues of which he claims that 'their fruit are truly ours, because they entirely depend on powers that are our very own'. His claim for liberty is practically identical: for it says that we 'need

not depend on anyone else but ourselves'. In a most exilic vein Dante compares dependency with a dead-end-street, thus a denial of free choice of place as well as of action.

In Book II, Dante develops his argument for monarchy on the basis of the 'perfection' of the Augustean era, but ties it in, even more closely, with God's will and God's own perfection. Aristotle's notion of nobility becomes expounded in favour of the empire. Without direct attack on the papacy, but more forcefully than before, Dante rejects the so-called 'Constantinian donation', according to which Constantine the Great left all the imperial possessions to the Church when he moved his residence to Byzantium. The poet argues his case with zest and imagination against all who defend the donation theory as 'just', most of all the popes. Ironically, what Dante did not know at the time, is that this 'donation' during the period of Pope Sylvester, was later found to be a forgery!

From this argument springs Dante's famous 'myth of the two luminaries'. Based on the Book of Genesis, the traditional symbolism considered the sun as symbol of the spiritual power of the church represented by the pope, and the moon, as the smaller luminary, receiving its light from the sun, as symbol of the temporal power vested in a king or an emperor. But no longer! Dante puts two equal luminaries into the sky, declaring that neither must be subordinated to the other. Somewhat surprisingly in this context, philosophy, too, is to come into its own.

No longer would philosophy remain Brother Thomas's handmaid, ancillary to theology. Rather, it should be the supreme domain of rational reason, representing what is best in the human animal and the most God-like.

In Book III, the poet uses scriptural arguments to dispute papal authority over temporal matters of the secular powers of the state. If the 'exilic discourse' comes anywhere near to being an apology of Dante Alighieri, the Prior in Council of the Commune of Florence whose signature endorsed the motion against papal interference in the secular affairs of his city, it is in the De Monarchia.

In his book on Dante, Francis Fergusson says that in the De

Monarchia Dante puts his contention in the boldest terms, when he claims that the effect of the divine Incarnation is not to supersede human reason, but rather to confirm its authority in its own sphere, that of nature, the empire and of the classical world.[18]

As ever, learned opinions are divided about the significance of the 'utopistic phase' of Dante's 'exilic discourse'. But these are not designations used outside this thesis. Some commentators of this work appear to see it as a 'Ghibelline ploy' or something of a vengeful answer to the papal bull 'Unam Sanctam' issued by Boniface VIII a short time before Dante's banishment. If I understand it correctly, this is the view of G.A. Scartazzini in his Companion to Dante, at least of Book III.[19]

A more enlightened view is taken by the medievalist, Etienne Gilson, who declares that Dante's political thought is unique. In his work Dante and Philosophy, Gilson writes:

> ...The simplest course would be to regard Dante's attitude not as a particular case of Latin Averroism (the 'twofold truth') but as an effort to base his political separatism on the Moral Philosophy of Aristotle, (suggested by the ubiquity of the Ethica ad Nicomachum in Dante's writings.... 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 sponteneity of their individual action, has no parallel in the Middle Ages, or for that matter, in any other epoch of history...[20]

The nature of Dante's proposition is unique because it protects the emperor (and his subjects) from papal interference in secular affairs, as much as it protects the pope (and his flock) from subjugation and meddling in spiritual concerns of the Church by a power-struck emperor.

Gilson considers Dante's choice of independence of the three orders by virtue of their incompatibility, rather than by subordination, as the most promising option by which to insure "that they should enjoy an independence arising from their accord". "That is why the notion of Justice is the mainspring of his work", concludes Etienne Gilson, "...and so we see his desire for Justice unceasingly accompanied by a

boundless exaltation of Freedom".[2]

My own observations of this least self-referential, yet most revealing 'utopistic phase' of Dante's 'exilic discourse' are intended for the Conclusion of this thesis.

ENDNOTES - UTOPISTIC PHASE

1. Epistola VII, 2.

2. Ibid., p. 3.

3. Ibid., VIII, 5.

4. Ibid., 10.

5. Etienne Gilson, Dante and Philosophy. Harper and Row, New York and London, 1949, p. 222.

6. Epistola, IX, 3-4.

7. Ibid

8. Purgatorio, XXX, 57.

9. Epistola VI, 1.

10. Ibid., 3.

11. Ibid., VII, 4.

12. Ibid., 6.

13. Ibid., 7.

14. Ibid., 8.

15. Ibid.

16. Etienne Gilson, Dante and Philosophy. Harper & Row, New York and London, 1949. Quoted in seminar notes on Dante.

17. Alois Dempf, Selbstkritik der Philosophie. Herder Verlag, Wien, 1947. Chronological tables by philosophical orientation, pp. 324-331. Here Dante is listed as the first 'critical realist' of the Renaissance period. Among his predecessors are Aristotle, Seneca, Boethius, Avicenna, Maimonides, Peter Lombard, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. Among his successors are listed Pico de la Mirandola, Paracelsus, Melanchton, Francis Bacon, Grecian, Vico, Grotius, Newton, Leibniz, and Herder.

18. Francis Fergusson, Dante, Drama of the Mind, The MacMillan Comp., 1966, p. 79.

19. G.A. Scartazzini, Companion to Dante, London, 1983. Op. Cit. Aurelia Henry, The Monarchia of Dante Alighieri, Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, 1904, Introduction XXX, viii.

20. Etienne Gilson, Dante and Philosophy. Harper and Row, New York and London, 1949, p. 222.

21. Ibid.

CONSTITUTIVE PHASE

By its concerns with moral conduct in active life, the Purgatorio relates more closely to the Convivio than do the other two canticles of the Commedia. In a sense, the Purgatorio is also the Convivio's counterpart since it rectifies the latter's weaknesses by being one of Dante's most effective compositions, as both, a definitive part of the encyclopaedic poem, and a substantiating part of his 'exilic discourse'.

How the Pilgrim and his guide, Vergil came from the Inferno's cavernous exit to the fair mountain island of Purgatorio, the literally-minded shall never know. Lyrically, the bridge between the two canticles offers smooth passage:

> ...The Leader and I entered on that hidden road to return into the bright world, and without caring to have any rest we climbed up, he first and I second, so far that I saw through the round opening some of the fair things that Heaven bears; and thence we came forth to see again the stars.[1]

Then, in the opening tercets of the Purgatorio, akin to a wink in the reader's direction, Dante concedes that he is inviting us to embark with him on a journey of his imagination.

> To course over better waters the little bark of my wit now lifts her sails, leaving behind her so cruel a sea, and I will sing of that second kingdom where the human spirit is purged and becomes fit to ascend to Heaven. But here let poetry rise again from the dead, O holy Muses, since I am yours...[2]

In the Inferno the poetry had been stifling, apart from some memorable events, such as for example the encounter of the virtuous Heathen in Limbo; or moving, such as the meeting with the poet's old teacher Brunetto Latini, or the telling of the love story of Paolo and Francesca. No music was heard, no consolation given; the poet of the *dolce stil nuovo* did not come into his own.

From the first stanzas on, the Purgatorio promises poetic sustenance and it never allows our attentions to wander or to wane. What structures and what thoughts advance the self-constitutive aspects of this canticle?

Its structural system is exceedingly complex, controlling the interconnected patterns of the plot. These are advanced by spatial and temporal orders or by sequences of events whose sensible imagery supports the scenario and lends consistency to the flux of the imaginary happenings.

In the following I introduce the Purgatorio's structural orders of space and time, within which important self-referential structures and individual self-references receive their more particular definitions. It will be seen that:

1. in the universe of the discourse these common structural orders have their own phenomenology;

2. the order of angelic appearances is connected to the structures of space and time, marking the Pilgrim's progress toward moral 'self-constitution';

3. the relationship between the Pilgrim and his archetypal guide, Vergil, is the central self-referential structure of the Purgatorio as discourse;

4. it is the role of Statius to bring about a transmutation in the Pilgrim's dependence and eventual emancipation from Vergil;

5. the triad Vergil-Pilgrim-Statius is a symbolic configuration, the ultimate meaning of which - from the position of this thesis - are the three phases of Dante's own psyche without which self-constitution would not be complete.

The spatial symbolism of the Purgatorio is embodied in the geological position of the mountain island surrounded by the sea 'covering all of the southern hemisphere'. The skeleton structure for the symbolic upward movement of the unfolding character is provided by the topographical configuration of Mount Purgatorio, with its 'irregular lower slopes' and its seven terraces encircling the mountain's rocky ledges of its steep part closer to the summit's 'Earthly Paradise'.

By the hierarchical turn of medieval thought, the scale of forms between low and high is inevitably understood as analogy of value. The scaling of a steep mountain is thus an ideal scene by which to symbolize stages of progression, the logical outcome of which is necessarily the

overcoming of obstacles and the reaching of a lofty goal.

Another kind of spatial order is interpersonal, to which self-referential structures are connected. It is animated by gestures and relative proximity or distance for the expression of personal relations, not unlike the meaning modern semantics attaches to its labels of 'proxemics' and 'kinesics'.[3] The changing degrees of the Pilgrim's psychological dependency on his guide and master, the Augustean poet Vergil, are most eloquently expressed through these semiotic devices.[4]

Most importantly, there is the soul's 'inner space' where all objects of experience have their hierarchical scale of value. As shown in my Working Notions, 'the soul', 'the mind', and 'the self' are thought of as one phenomenon of many dimensions, similar to what modern Metaphysics intends by postulating that "human consciousness is polymorphic", as Bernard Lonergan explains in his Insight.[5]

Within the 'just soul' dwell the human concerns not only for its own well-being, but also for the well-being of others, since justice is the only virtue which by its very nature, desires the good for all. Throughout the 'exilic discourse' Dante's foremost preoccupation is with justice. It is grounded in various referential structures. Entire cantos are devoted to it, in which condemnation of injustice and the unjust are juxtaposed with lauds of Divine Justice and praise of those who make it their cause.

The poet's very demonstration of concern and his identification with the cause of justice make these examples reflexive in a general way and a natural background for particular self-referential events.[6]

Time as the other great ordering principle is also employed in multiple phases in the Purgatorio. The occurrence of cosmic phenomena in cyclical time may serve as image-symbols or as poetic myths from Dante's own imagination. In a more mystical way, the poet uses the timing of the entire three day pilgrimage to the other world, i.e., the 'universe of the discourse', in the symbolic sense in which it coincides with the three days of Easter, from the time of Christ's death to the time of his resurrection.

The poet's near death in the 'dark wood' of his mid-life, in the opening of the Inferno and his pilgrimage to seek salvation while still

living, might be seen as a bold analogy by which to advance one's self-constitution. But the poet never spells it out qua analogy in the enunciations of which he is the subject. Seen in the sense in which redemption and salvation of the human soul stand for moral achievement and a potential mode of *being*, makes its poetic use as thematic symbol for the entire Commedia of Dante perfectly acceptable.

Without the poetic possibilities in the dimension of the supernatural, Dante's discourse, such as begun in the Convivio, could not have transcended the exilic condition. His sober critical realism would not have permitted him the flight into ideality, equal to the achievement of 'self-constitution' by Boethius through the dialectic of intellectual mysticism.

In the context of this study of the Purgatorio the concern with time is less with astronomical time or with philosophies of time, such as for example, St. Augustine's which is exposed in the Confessions. Rather, the interest here is with the way in which Dante as poet and as moralist uses the temporal dimension within the 'universe of the text' as poetic fiction and as 'exilic discourse'.

The temporal aspect of the phenomenon of speed, for example, plays a most prominent part in the Purgatorio, although this phenomenon is passed by, unexamined by the secondary literature of my acquaintance. The first manifestation of the importance of speed is the arrival of the ship of souls, sailing on the wings of the pilot angel. The Pilgrim is spellbound as he perceives "a light coming so swiftly over the sea that no flight could match its speed..."[7]

Another example is found in the encounter with Cato, cast in the role of guardian of the mountain island, who does not permit the shades to linger. When the Pilgrim, his guide, and some people around them, stand rapt, attentive to the notes of Casella's song, Cato interrupts:

> What is this, laggart spirits? What negligence, what delay is this? Haste to the mountain to strip you the slough that allows not God to be manifest in you.[8]

Vergil, too, frequently reprimands his charge for lingering, prodding him on, to which the Pilgrim's obediently reacts, noting: "...and on we went swiftly". Once, the poet, so immune to humour, even

leads us to suspect him of mock exasperation of a petulant child: "I was well accustomed to his admonitions never to lose time, so that in that matter his speech could not be dark to me".[9]

In Canto V some 'shades' notice that the light does not pass through the Pilgrim's body as it does through theirs and they say, "he seems to bear himself as one alive". When Dante turns his eyes "at the sound of these words", Vergil intercedes:

> Why is thy mind so entangled, said the Master that thou slackenest thy pace? What is it to thee that they whisper there? Come after me and let the people talk. Stand like a firm tower that never shakes its top for blast of wind; for always the man in whom thought springs up over thought sets his mark farther off, for the one thought saps the force of the other.[10]

Still on the topic of speed, in Canto IX Vergil reports to the Pilgrim that while he had fallen asleep, one of his protectresses in Heaven, St. Lucy (who in Christian symbology represents sight or vision) appeared to him and said: "I am Lucy. Let me take this man that is sleeping, so I shall speed him on his way"... Here she laid thy down; but first her fair eyes showed me that open entrance, then she and sleep together went away.[11]

A hiatus in the continuity of time such as is experienced here, is mostly announcing some mysterious progression without perceivable cause. Yet, every time the poet himself somehow suggests the desired interpretation. Given the symbolic attributes of his protectress and by Dante's manifest preference for the sense of sight, being 'taken and sped on his way' during sleep by Lucy must necessarily mean the significant progression from mundane sight to spiritual vision.

> ....Like one who is in doubt is reassured and whose fear is turned to confidence when the truth is revealed to him, so I was changed, and as soon as my leader saw me free from care he moved up the rampart, and I behind him, toward the light.[12]

But in his ubiquitous concern for communicability, the poet is still not satisfied that we grasp the importance of the moment. His address to the reader makes this explicit:

> Thou seest well, reader, that I rise to a higher theme; do not wonder, therefore, if I sustain it with greater art.[13]

As a measure of progression toward beatitude, time is also an inner dimension of the soul, marking the 'before' and the 'after' of insightful moments of the present. It is a measure of the will, as in the Augustinian inner struggle between the *velle* and the *nolle*. It designates the terminal point in the movement of this struggle toward choice. It is the trajectory of Aristotle's *entelechia* of the human person as well as of the soul's Christian pilgrimage to salvation, and in both these senses, inner time appears as linear. As such, it is the dynamic and directional element of the soul, infused by God which does not come to rest until the 'realization of its final cause', being the soul's desired return to its Maker.

The order of the angels is Dante's unique poetic vehicle for the mirroring and keeping score of moral advancement toward purification: the pilot angel, guardian angels and messenger angels. By their fleeting and mysterious appearances as dispensers of beatitude when one of the seven deadly sins has been purged, the angelic visitations of the penitent souls are among the most lyrical moments of the Purgatorio. In order of their appearance, beyond the guardian of the gate (IX), are: the angel of humility (XI); the angel of mercy (XV); the angel of peace (XVII); the angel of zeal (XIX); the angel of temperance (XXIV); and the angel of chastity (XXVII). Here, the introduction to Dante's 'angelology' must be limited to a few typical encounters. Ironically, it is Vergil, the honorable pagan, who 'introduces' the Pilgrim to the angelic phenomenon. Dante first sees "a light coming so swiftly over the sea that no flight could match its speed..."

> ...My master did not say a word until it appeared as wings, then when he clearly discerned the pilot he cried: Bend, bend thy knees, behold the angel of God, clasp thy hands, such ministers shalt thou see henceforth.[14]

At the foot of Mount Purgatorio's steep rise to the higher regions, a vigilant angel is seen seated across three symbolical steps at the gate to the mountain. When he grants the Pilgrim permission to enter, he traces seven P's on the poet's brow with the tip of his sword and says: "When thou art within, see thou wash away these wounds!"[15]

Thus branded a sinner by the seven-fold symbol of *peccati* or sins,

the Pilgrim and his companion enter the gate to the faint sound of the *Te Deum Laudamus* from the distance. Now they must climb the steep, rock-hewn stairs from terrace to terrace, named after the deadly sin which is being purged on its level. On each new level the Pilgrim encounters penitent sinners, as well as examples of virtue contrary to their particular vice.

On the terrace of pride examples of humility are carved into a sculptural wall which impresses the poet as being "such that not only Polycletus but nature would be put to shame there".[16] It is typical for Dante's attitude, which today might be called 'pluralist', that the three examples of humility on which he dwells are taken from the Old Testament, the New Testament and from Roman history of the 'good emperors'. The former are David's bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, and the act of annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel; the latter is the scene of an act of mercy and justice by Trajan, which 'so moved Pope Gregory that his prayers assured the emperor's salvation'.

The ambiguous manner in which Dante admits his own proud disposition, is of great interest to the central question of this thesis. When the time comes to speak of the consequences of the sin of pride, the poet does not miss impressing upon the reader how the proud are brought low. Some of the ground the penitents are walking on, on this terrace, is paved with portraits of the proud from myths and history, cut into stone slabs similar to the memorial plaques on the floors in medieval cathedrals.[17] Examples of pride and of humility are ample but somewhat less vivid than those on other terraces. Why? And how do we learn about the poet's own 'case'? In his relations to his 'fellow penitents' he both seems to be and not to be one of them. But he is always 'persona grata', a model of concern and respect, his outer demeanour reinforcing the quality of his speech, as he variously reports on 'walking humbly, head bowed low'. But does he?

The Purgatorio is no Confessions, although some learned analogies suggest it that way. Unlike St. Augustine, even a repentant Dante does not reveal a tormented soul. His universe is a complete, 'construct of answered questions' as C.S. Lewis would put it.[18]

The poet is enamoured with the beauty and the harmony of the

medieval model and he wants everyone to abide by its moral codes, including the popes and the emperors. Under circumstances other than the poet's exilic condition, posterity might have named him a reformer. But in his predicament it appears that experiences of injustice and corruption turned him into the 'poet of rectitude', proud of his choice. Now it is this very pride which helps the poet regain his integrity and constitute himself according to his moral and intellectual ideals in order to dispel the 'everlasting disgrace of exile' which made him so anxious in the Convivio. As a relative and circumstantial notion, is not 'pride' in itself neither virtue nor vice until it becomes attached to some desire and act that qualify it by kind and degree, only thus admitting of its moral distinctions?

What is Dante's own understanding of the nature of pride? He will be seen recognizing his proud disposition, but finding no grounds on which to admit to its combination with arrogance and scorn, or with ambitions forgetful of the human dignity of others, and consequently of the 'self'.

Our modern approbation of 'just pride' as related to physical, moral or intellectual achievements, appears to be understood in the same sense as the poet's pride of his love of justice. As was seen before, he follows Aristotle in considering justice the most consequential of all virtues, because it is concerned with the good for all. But the *tertium quid* then and now is most certainly the affection of love, Dante's all-transcending theme, which is to come fully into its own in the Paradiso. The above is my essential understanding of the meaning of the first terrace of the Purgatorio. The reason I allow it to precede the exemplifications is that it may render these more readily intelligible in their necessarily rudimentary form of presentation, to which I now return.

One 'shade' in a group of the proud penitents, doubled up under the weight of their guilt, recognizes the Pilgrim. He

> twisted himself under the weight that encumbered him and saw me and knew me and called, laboriously keeping his eyes on me, who went quite bent along with them.[19]

By the confirming posture of 'going quite bent along with them'

the poet alludes to a sense of understanding and compassion. This seems to me to be a gesture of sympathy rather than an expression of identification with their sense of guilt, as John Sinclair proposes in his notes. Yet, so far we have not heard about the poet's personal experience concerning his own pride. But can he convince the reader that his pride is just? First, Dante wants us to take note of the name and the 'coincidental' symbolism of his dialogist's profession:

> Oh!, I said to him 'art thou not Oderisi, the honour of Gubbio and of that art which they call in Paris illuminating?'

Oderisi humbly replies that "the pages smile brighter from the brush of Francesco da Bologna (his student), who now has all the honour, of which part is mine...". Then he launches into a long discourse which contains one of Dante's covert self-references by reported speech:

> O empty glory of human powers, how briefly lasts the green on its top, unless it is followed by an age of dullness! In painting Cimabue thought to hold the field and now Giotto has the cry, so that the other's fame is dim; so has the one Guido taken from the other the glory of our tongue, and he, perhaps, is born that shall chase the one and the other from the nest.[20]

The identity of the two Guidos in this referential expression is immediately known to every serious Dante student. One is Dante's 'first friend' and mentor, the fellow Florentine poet-politician Guido Cavalcanti, from whom Dante later became estranged. The other is the *duecènto* poet Guido Guinicelli of Bologna, precursor of the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo* or sweet new style, to which both Dante and Cavalcanti were committed.[21] During Dante's youth, Cavalcanti was considered to be the successor of Guinicelli: "So has the one Guido taken from the other the glory of our tongue...". But who is the referent in the phrase of "he perhaps (is) born that shall chase the one and the other from the nest"?

Just as preceding hints occasionally anticipate future meanings, so delayed clues from time to time elucidate past ambiguities. A case in point is the connection between the two referential expressions of Oderisi: the one just discussed, the other following five tercets apart, yet belonging to the same referential structure.

> 'Of him who makes so little headway in front of me all Tuscany resounded, and now there is hardly a whisper of him in Siena, where he was Lord when the mad rabble of Florence was destroyed, at that time as proud as now it is prostitute. Your renown is the color of grass which comes and goes, and that whithers it by which it springs green from the ground'. And I to him: 'Thy true speech fills my heart with good humbleness and abates a great swelling in me...But who is he of whom you didst speak now?'[11]

The universal lament "O empty glory of human powers" still echoes in the 'Lord of Siena of whom all Tuscani resounded and of whom there is hardly a whisper now.' By the same token, the general expression "how briefly lasts the green at its top" is continued in "your renown is the color of grass..." These deductive analogies from the universal or the general to the particular are recurring patterns of the text, already noticed in the Convivio. They help sustain the wider self-referential connections, making individual self-references attached to them more plausible. But equivocations are often intended to remain. Does the divided expression: "How briefly lasts the green..." and "Your renown is the color of grass..." definitively identify the Pilgrim as the poet and referent of the expression? We may be assuming it by intuition, supported by extratextual knowledge, but by the text alone we cannot be absolutely certain. The possessive pronominal form "your renown" could be intended as second person plural, and even the definite singular article in the Italian original does not seem to make of "la vostra nominanza é color d'erba..." clearly a personal address.

To pursue the anatomy of this self-referential structure still further, a closer reading of Oderisi may be in order. The poet could have chosen any other historical figure or created a fictional one to his liking. Why did he choose Oderisi? One reason could be that his historical authenticity makes him more credible to the reader; another, that as a fellow artist of a certain renown he could easily be invested with qualities with which the poet can identify.

Close reading reveals that Oderisi's manner of speech, his philosophical bend of thought, his art of oracular expression, might all be Dante's own. At the end of Oderisi's long answer to the Pilgrim's question: "But who is he of whom thou didst speak now" (the Lord of

Siena) the painter of Gubbio even prophesizes Dante's exile: "I will not say more, and I know I speak darkly; but little time will pass till thy townsmen will act so that thou canst make thy comment on it".

Another, quite easily overlooked detail in this parallel is the fact that Oderisi tells the Pilgrim that he had entered the stage of purgation earlier than he should have on account of "the great desire to excel on which my heart was set"- because "having the power to sin I turned to God". Did Dante not suffer his penance on earth for whatever 'unjust pride' he may have harboured in some darker period of his life? In short, is the encounter with Oderisi on the first terrace of the Purgatorio not perhaps Dante's experience of facing himself on the verge of a new level of insight? An insight, however, by which his moral pride is justified by the dignity of his achievement, and his desire to be recognized as *poeta rettitudine* - 'a poet of rectitude'.

What Dante means by this oft-mentioned epithet, assumed in the De Vulgari Eloquentia, is already anticipated in the Convivio. To recall it here will be a useful reminder of the fact that the poet does not give it up in the Commedia even if its 'allegory is that of the theologians' rather than 'that of the poets' as he explains in the Epistle to Can Grande.

> In the very remote past, then, there were some philosophers, among whom the first and most distinguised was Zeno, who came to the conclusion that the end proper to human life is unswerving rectitude....It consists in pursuing unswervingly truth and justice, without regard for anything else whatever....Rectitude they defined as whatever is recognized by reason as being praiseworthy by its very nature with no consideration given either to usefulness or profit.[23]

A glance at how the poet combines these maxims with Aristotle's moral virtues, will show that the interpretation of Dante's treatment of pride above is no mere speculation. For in the poet's annotated listing of the eleven moral virtues - fortitude, temperance, liberality, munificence, greatness of soul, proper pride, evenness of temper, affability, truthfulness, enjoyment, and justice - proper pride is described as 'moderating our desire for honours in this world, and giving us due respect for them'.[24]

If this reading is correct then all the questions concerning the

puzzling phenomenon of the poet's lightness in presenting himself as penitent on the terrace of pride are answered; if it is not, perception offers no other.[25]

Upon reflection, the entire phenomenon of my understanding this passage appears grounded in the figure of Oderisi, to whom all the significant referential expressions of which the poet is the referent, are in some way connected. In other words, the eidetic image of the larger self-referential structure is delineated by the Oderisi-Pilgrim relationship. It supports both kinds of self-reference: the covert-one composed of 'reported speech' and 'delayed clue'; and the overt-one in which the Pilgrim's 'heart is filled with good humbleness' that abates the 'great swelling' in him.

Having admirably fulfilled these self-referential functions, Oderisi is allowed to fade out of sight as unobtrusively as he was faded in. Not, however, without one final hint that this episode should, or, at least could be taken for the author's encounter with himself. It happens at the opening of Canto XII where the Pilgrim and Vergil will walk across the figured pavement:

> Side by side with that burdened soul, as oxen go in a yoke, I went on as long as the gentle schoolmaster allowed; but when he said: 'Leave them and pass on, for here it is well that with sail and oar and with all his force each drive his bark',...

Finally, in this Canto, the first beatitude is to be pronounced. After the Pilgrim's study of the stone-graved figures of the proud from the scriptures and classical myths, the voice of reason embodied in Vergil, admonishes once more: "Lift up thy head, there is no more time to go thus absorbed. See there an angel who hastens to meet us..."[26] Then follows the first memorable exchange of guilt for grace:

> Toward us came the fair creature, clothed in white, and in his face he seemed like a trembling star at dawn. He opened his arms, then spread his wings and said: 'Come; the steps are at hand here and henceforth the climb is easy. To this bidding they are very few that come. O race of men, born to fly upward, why do you fall back so for a little wind?' He brought us where the rock was cleft, there smote on my forehead with his wings, then promised me safe journeying...[27]

Dante's ingenious use of the 'angelic order' is a structure of several functions, of which scoring the Pilgrim's moral progress and dispursing beatitudes with constitutive effect is the central purpose.[28] This order also introduces the poet's light-symbolism as expression of anagogical or spiritual, some would say supernatural, experiences.

We have seen the light of the angelic boatman "coming so swiftly over the sea that no flight could match its speed", in Canto I/20. The angel of peace in Canto XVII "hides himself within his own light". "And never in furnace was glass or metal seen so glowing red..." as the appearance of the angel of temperance in Canto XXIV. In Canto XXVII finally, after the terrified Pilgrim had to pass through the fires of penitence, where the "burning was so beyond measure" that he would have cast himself "into boiling glass to cool me", and without which the ascent to the summit is barred to all, the three poets (Dante, Vergil and Statius) are guided "by a voice that sang beyond: '*Venite benedicti Patris mei*' which "sounded within a light that was there, such that it overcame me and I could not look at it..."

The dispensation of the beatitudes is directly or indirectly accompanied by the angels' erasure of the Pilgrim's wounds, all in the shape of the letter P on his forehead. Our somewhat obsolete expression 'to wipe the slate clean' comes to mind, when with the tip of the wing the angelic touch wipes off another letter P from the Pilgrim's temples to the accompaniment of some psalmodic incantation sung by angelic voices.

The following examples will illustrate the self-constitutive nature of these angelic encounters on the mere evidence of the expressive event. In Canto XV

> ...the blessed angel said with a glad voice: 'Enter here', at a stairway far less steep than the others. We were mounting, having already passed from there when *'Beati misericordes'* was sung behind us and 'Rejoice, thou that overcomest'.

The angel of peace shows the Pilgrim the stairway to the next terrace in Canto XVII/67:

> ...as I was on the first step I felt beside me as it were

> the motion of a wing fanning my face and I heard the words: *'Beati pacifici'* who are without sinful anger....

On the fifth terrace in Canto XIX/40-50, where avarice and prodigality are purged, the angel of zeal directs the Pilgrims to the proper passage,

> 'Come, here is the passage', spoken in such sweet and gracious tones as are not heard within these mortal bounds. With open wings which seemed a swan's he that spoke to us directed us upward between the two walls of flinty stone, than moved his feathers and fanned us, declaring *qui lugent* to be blessed, for they shall have their souls possessed of consolation.

The angel who had directed the Pilgrims to the sixth terrace was now left behind in the opening lines of Canto XXII:

> having erased a scar from my face and...declared to us that they whose desire is for righteousness are blessed...

At the end of Canto XXIV, a sudden voice is heard asking 'What are you thinking as you go, you three by yourselves? (The three poets). If you wish to mount above, here you must make the turn. This way he goes who would go for peace'. The conclusion of this Canto which is in the spirit of the Augustinian doctrine of illumination, adds as much self-constitution as it adds poetry to the encounter with the angel of temperance:

> ...And as the breeze of May, herald of the dawn, stirs and gives fragrance, being all impregnate with the grass and flowers, such a wind I felt strike full on my brow and I plainly felt the moving of his wing, which made me feel the odour of ambrosia, and I heard the words: 'Blessed are they whom so much grace illuminates that appetite does not fill their breast with the fumes of too great desire, hungering always so far as is just.'[29]

Spanning all other self-referential structures and events from the 'dark wood' of the Inferno to Vergil's departure near the summit of Mount Purgatorio, is the grand structure of the Pilgrim-Leader relationship - a model of human conduct and brotherly concern. To the reader it is also a lesson in psychology: at times personal, at times universal, and at times astonishingly modern.

Two exemplary self-references stand as posts at each end of the

major structure, upholding its span. The first is anchored in Canto IV of the Inferno, after the Pilgrim had entrusted himself into Vergil's guidance, arranged for by intercession of Beatrice in Heaven.

The event takes place in Limbo which, scholars say, is Dante's own addition to the Christian Underworld. This is the abode of the virtuous heathen who subsist in desire of Paradise, but without hope of ever attaining it. Here, Vergil introduces the Pilgrim to a company of ancient poets. Typically, it is Dante's own question to Vergil that immediately determines their hierarchical standing:

> O thou who honourest both science and art, who are these who have such honour that it sets them apart from the condition of the rest?[30]

Then, a voice is heard calling attention to Vergil's presence: "Honour the lofty poet! His shade returns that has left us". When the 'good Master' takes over, the introduction begins:

> Mark him there with a sword in hand who comes before the three as their lord; he is Homer, the sovereign poet. He that comes next is Horace the moralist, Ovid is the third, and the last is Lucan...[31]

> Thus I saw assemble the noble school of that lord of loftiest song who flies like an eagle above the rest. After they had talked together for a time they turned to me with a sign of greeting, and my Master smiled at this; and then they showed me still greater honour, for they made me one of their number so that I was the sixth among those high intelligences. Thus we went on as far as the light, talking of things which were fitting for the place and of which it is well now to be silent...[32]

Is this an act of hubris? Or is it a poet's release from bondage and failure in a heinous reality into the full freedom granted to desire by the imagination? The Inferno is, of course, no land of free choice, and neither is Limbo. But the Pilgrim's descent to these places of judgement is for Dante a necessity: psychologically, poetically, and strategically.

The contrast to the Pilgrim's filial relationship to Vergil, the physical and mental torments of those condemned to the Inferno and his lack of sympathy for their fate, stand out in relief. Both, the descriptions of their acts in life and the suffering of their

punishments draw revulsion. The nuances of the Pilgrim's reactions function as constitutive elements, graded by the distinctions between his moral judgements. Dante's attitudes to these events are as symbolic of the corruption in the real world as the concept of the Inferno itself. Only here the tables are turned: it is the accused who now conducts the proceedings in which even popes and emperors cannot escape the true stories of their lives. But will the poet face his own?

A very Dantean indicator renders perceptible the Pilgrim's progressive emancipation. It is expressed by verbal and gestural interaction, but also by what I would call a 'tonal scale of address'. The examples will immediately clarify what is intended. That there can be no doubt about the intended self-referential function of this poetic device becomes obvious by the circumstances of Vergil's final departure. Here now are the examples from the Inferno:

"Poet who guidest me..."

"Thou hast so disposed my heart with desire for the journey by thy words that I have returned to my first intent. Now go, for but one will is in us both, thou leader, thou lord and master..." (II).

"Master...Master...'My son' said the courteous Master..." (III)

"Tell me, my Master, tell me, sir..." (IV)

"The good master began..."

"The company of six (the group of the poets in Limbo) falls off to two, and my wise Leader brings me by another way..."(IV)

"And I turned to the 'sea of all wisdom'..." (VIII)

"O my dear Leader, who seven times and more hast restored my confidence and drawn me from great peril..." (VIII)

"He goes away and leaves me there, the gentle Father, and I remain in doubt..." (VIII)

The boldest scene of judgement occurs in Canto XIX, in which Dante lets fly an embittered denunciation of the avaricious and authoritarian popes. Standing above an infernal pit which holds the 'shade' of Pope Nicholas III, stuck, head first, in the glacial rock of the third level

of the 'Malebolge' or caverns of hell, the Pilgrim has to muster great courage and needs powerful protection from the 'loftiest virtue' of his 'truthful Leader', symbolizing moral justification. The semiotic aspect of this example is particularly interesting, as a perfect illustration of the modern notion of '<u>proxemics</u>'.[33]

When the Pilgrim asks Vergil who it is "that writhes in his torment more than any of his fellows and is licked by redder flame", Vergil answers: "If thou wilt have me carry the down there by that more sloping bank, thou shalt know for himself of him and his misdeeds". And the Pilgrim's acceptance: "All is well for me that is thy pleasure. Thou art my lord and knowest that I depart not from thy will; thou knowest, too, what I do not speak".

By this speech, Dante tells us that he is fully protected, for he acts on behalf of justice in the name of virtue and reason. At the beginning of his inquisition into the pope's misdeeds, the poet aims a vicious if indirect stab at Pope Boniface VIII, still alive at the time when Dante's pilgrimage is supposed to have taken place. When the Pilgrim calls into the precipice: "...whoever thou art, unhappy soul...if thou art able speak", Pope Nicholas who cannot see the caller cries: "Standest thou there already, standest thou there already, Boniface?"

When a long speech the Pilgrim launches against the simony of the Church is finally over, his Leader is so pleased with his charge that "he took me therefore in both his arms and when he had me right up on his breast remounted, not tired of holding me close to him". Then, at the summit, the Pilgrim is "gently let down". No judge could have pronounced a more scathing verdict than Dante's tirade against the papal misdeeds. The 'poet of righteousness' considers it his mission to spare no one, and he wants posterity to know it.[34]

Another, most spectacular level of self-referring which comes into its own in these speeches is the power of Dante's vernacular language, his <u>volgare illustre</u> or <u>vulgaris illustris</u>, as he calls it in that other unfinished treatise, the <u>De Vulgari Eloquentia</u>, in which Italian scholars still make linguistic discoveries today. Dante's claim of 'nobility of the vernacular' includes a medieval argument that comes

close to a modern innateness theory.

In his essay on Dante's Views on Language J. Cremona dwells on the originality of Dante's theory of language, by which Adam received from God not only the power of language, but also the actual 'forms', its basic structure, created by God together with his first soul.[35]

Among the various self-referential aspects of Dante's thought and use of language, the one I wish to relate to the above passage is singled out by Thomas Bergin in his study An Approach to Dante. What does Dante mean by the term 'illustrious vernacular'?

> ...something which shines forth illuminating and being illuminated. Men are called illustrious, who, illuminated by power illuminate others by justice and charity, or who, having been excellently trained, give excellent training, like Seneca and Numa Pompilius... As to explanation by training we can see how it has been purified from the rough elements of dialect to the "noble, clear, perfect and refined character" it displays in the canzoni of Cino da Pistoia "and his friend". His friend being Dante Alighieri.[36]

It is by this unlimited power of language that the constitutive phase of the 'exilic discourse' succeeds with its project of 'self-constitution' as if it were non-ostensive, undeliberated, subliminal.

To conclude the exposition of the Vergilian structure and its scale of appellations, I now show the transition from the Pilgrim's dependence, to equality and to emancipation, ending with the unequaled self-reference in the reported speech of Vergil's departure.

In the early Purgatorio Vergil's epithets from the Inferno do not show considerable change, although there is variation. At first it is: 'My Leader'; 'Master'; 'lofty Teacher'; 'my true father'; 'my sweet father'. Then in his last reference to Vergil, the Pilgrim refers to his escort as 'my more than father'.

These signs of devoted admiration nourish the general puzzlement over why Dante will permit Vergil to return to Limbo rather than be made admissible for salvation. After all, the cases of Cato and Trajan among the pagans, and the case of Siger of Brabant among the heretic Christians are important precedents. So why not Vergil? It speaks for Dante's art of persuasion, that seasoned Dantists still pose this

question. It is exactly what the poet intends: his faithful Vergilio must have all our sympathy, for Dante must rise beyond Vergil's capacity to follow. Wisely, it is always Vergil himself who is made to speak about his limitations.

In Canto XXI a clear warning is sounded, by way of introduction of yet another self-referential structure, to promote the process of the Pilgrim's emancipation. Unnoticed by him and Vergil, a shade of a penitent who had just completed his penance and who is following the pair, utters the greeting: "O my brothers, God give you peace!"

> We turned quickly and Vergil answered him with the sign suited to his greeting, then began: 'May the faithful court which holds me in eternal exile bring thee in peace to the assembly of the blest'.
>
> 'How', he said, and meanwhile went on speedily, 'if you are shades which God above does not count worthy, who has brought you so far on His stairway'?
>
> And my Teacher said: 'If you look at the marks which this man bears and which are traced by the angel, thou shalt see plainly that he must reign with the righteous...' (XXI/15-28).

What are we to make of Vergil's stance? The fearful phrase 'eternal exile' still resonates from the Convivio. A tension is created between the plural in the greeting and the subsequent question by Statius, and the two separate answers from Vergil in singular, one on his own behalf, the other on behalf of the Pilgrim. The harmony is disturbed, introducing a sense of distancing. Polysemy is ubiquitous now, inhabiting every structure, nothing is what it seems.

The shade who greets the Pilgrim and his companion introduces himself as Statius, Toulousian by birth, Roman poet by calling, admirer and emulator of Vergil and his Aeneid. He speaks in glowing terms of his idol, unaware that it is Vergil himself he is addressing. When Statius learns his identity, he joins the pair of Pilgrims and the three continue together.

This triadic constellation - the symbolism of all Dantean compositions - will now carry much of the deep meaning. Again we must be careful not to think of the historical Statius on whose biography I shall not dwell here, because it is important that it be forgotten.

Dante invents his outstanding erudition and his clandestine Christianisation inspired by Vergil's messianic fourth Eclogue. Now Statius can substitute for Dante, speak for him and tactfully answer his questions intended to distinguish them from Vergil, the 'virtuous heathen'. The generative and the structural sense of looking at poetry are equally engaged here by the perfect balance of means and meaning.

The discourse now becomes carried by Statius who, notwithstanding the anachronism, speaks in an Aristotelian vein in scholastic terms, much as Dante himself might do. As his importance grows and he more and more resembles the Pilgrim, perception suggests that the phenomenon of Statius might stand for one of the gemini of Dante's own constellation. What then of Vergil, what with the triadic symbolism? Should we not read all three figures as the poet's own 'trinity' according to his utopistic harmony between a universal monarchy; a universal philosophy and a universal faith?

> The Empire, represented by Dante-Vergilio
> Philosophy, represented by Dante-Statius
> Theology to be represented in the Paradiso by Dante - the Pilgrim giving testimony of his three Christian virtues to the heavenly court under the guidance of Beatrice...

Such, at least, is my own reading of the constitutive phase, of which Paradiso becomes a supreme reward and confirmation. But this is beyond showing the actual achievement of 'self-constitution', which has been the project of this thesis. In the following it will be seen how the poet brings his own constitutive project to a momentous closure.

When the Pilgrim must pass through the fire of purification, without which no one may continue the ascent to the 'Earthly Paradise', it is still Vergil who is at his side once more:

> As soon as I was in it I would have cast myself into boiling glass to cool me, so beyond measure was the burning there, and my sweet Father, to comfort me, kept talking of Beatrice as he went, saying: 'I seem to see her eyes already'...[37]

When he awakens the next morning at dawn, signs of Dante's freedom can be found in words and gestures in the Pilgrim's first naming of his guide as 'Vergil', when the "great masters (...) had risen already".

> 'That sweet fruit which the care of mortals goes to seek on so many boughs shall today give peace to thy cravings'. Such were Vergil's words to me, and never was there boon to give such pleasure as these. So greatly desire upon desire came to me to be above, that with every step I felt then my feathers grow for flight...(XXVII/118).

Here the Vergilian structure spanning across fifty eight cantos is anchored to its most crucial support. In terms of the moral virtues 'the fruit of which are entirely ours', 'self-constitution' is achieved. The liberating self-reference by reported address is the most bold and all-encompassing humanist goal of the Commedia.

> Vergil fixed his eyes on me and said: 'The temporal fire and the eternal thou hast seen, my son, and art come to a part where of myself I discern no further. I have brought thee here with understanding and with skill. Take henceforth thy pleasure for guide. Thou hast come forth from the steep and the narrow ways. See the sun that shines on thy brow; see the grass, the flowers and the trees which the ground here brings forth of itself alone; till the fair eyes come rejoicing which weeping made me come to thee, thou mayst sit or go among them. No longer expect word or sign from me.
>
> Free, upright and whole is thy will and it were a fault not to act on its bidding; therefore over thyself I crown and mitre thee'. (XXVII/130)

ENDNOTES - CONSTITUTIVE PHASE

1. Inferno, XXXIV. 33-39.

2. Purgatorio, I, 1-9.

3. John Lyons, Semantics I. Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 67.

4. In English texts the name is mostly spelled Virgil. The version Vergil is recommended by Oskar Seyfert, author of the Dictionary of Classical Antiquities, The Meridian Books, New York, 1956, on the basis of the poet's Latin name: Publius Vergilius Maro.

5. J.F. Lonergan, Insight. A Study of Human Understanding. Harper and Row, New York, 1978, p. 385. On the polymorphic human consciousness: "...The pattern in which it flows may be biological, aesthetic, artistic, dramatic, practical, intellectual or mystical. These patterns alternate; they blend or mix; they can interfere, conflict, lose their way, break down. The intellectual pattern of our experience is supposed and expressed by our account of self-affirmation, of being, and of objectivity...".

6. Exemplary cantos concerning justice are: Inferno, XIX; Purgatorio, VI, VIII, IX, XX, XXX; Paradiso, XIX, XX.

7. Purgatorio, I/20. This encounter is quoted more fully in the introduction of the 'angelic orders' on pp. 68-69.

8. Casella was a Florentine musician and friend of the poet, who sang Dante's Canzone 'Love that discourses to me in my mind', II/120.

9. Purgatorio, XII, 86.

10. Ibid., V, 10-18.

11. Ibid., IX, 55-63.

12. Ibid., IX, 64-70.

13. Ibid., 70-73.

14. Ibid., II, 20-30.

15. Ibid., IX, 13-15.

16. Ibid., X, 34.

17. Ibid., XII, 30-70.

18. C.S. Lewis, The Discarded Image. Cambridge University Press, 1964, p. 18. The author calls the medieval model a 'set of answered questions'.

19. Purgatorio, XI, 76-80.

20. Ibid., XI, 92-100.

21. Guido Calvalcanti does not appear in the Commedia, but the 'shade' of his sorrowing father, Cavalcante Cavalcanti is met by the Pilgrim in Inferno X/53-73. A memorable encounter between the Pilgrim and Guido Guinicelli, who died when Dante was eleven, takes place in Purgatorio, XXVI.

22. Purgatorio., XI, 110-122.

23. Convivio, IV/vi/9-10. It seems likely that Dante is combining his memory of Zenon, the Eleate whom Aristotle held for the inventor of the dialectics, and Zenon of Cyprus, founder of the Stoa.

24. Ibid., xvii/4-6.

25. John Sinclair's emphases on the poet's show of identification with the penitents are contrary to mine. Whereas he sees general empathy on account of shared guilt, I sense distinctions in kind and degree between the guilt of the other penitents and Oderisi's and the poet's 'great desire to excel'.

26. Purgatorio., XII, 78-81.

27. Ibid., XII, 89-101.

28. The originator of the 'angelic order' is considered to be the neo-Platonist pseudo-Dionysius whom the Church Fathers mistakenly held for a disciple of St. Paul. His writings were translated by Johannes Scotus and had great influence in the Middle Ages.

29. Sinclair notes. "An adaptation of the beatitude, 'Blessed are they which hunger....after righteousness (Matt. v.6) completing the beatitude of the fifth terrace (Purgatario, XXIII).

30. Inferno, IV, 74.

31. Ibid., 86.

32. Ibid., 95.

33. John Lyons, Semantics I, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 67.

34. Inferno, XIX, 124-130..

35. J. Cremona, Dante's View of Language in The Mind of Dante, edited by U. Limentani, Cambridge, at the University Press, 1965, p. 71, refers to De Vulgarie Eloquentia I, vi, 4.

36. Thomas Bergin, An Approach to Dante, The Bodley Head, London, 1965, p. 162.

37. Purgatorio, XXVII, 50.

SECTION THREE: CONCLUSION

As a first consideration, I should like to emphasize the secondary character of my reading of Dante's text as 'exilic discourse'. For in no way does this reading question any other possible interpretation, extant or potential. What it was intended to show is that there exists a deliberately and ingeniously wrought dimension in the multiple meanings of the text which accounts for what learned consensus refers to as the text's 'essentially autobiographical quality', but of which no systematic analysis could be found in my research. First and foremost, Dante's works, especially the monumental Divine Comedy, are usually interpreted qua works of literary art.

By having said this, I do not, however, mean to withdraw from the view that the works produced between Dante's banishment from Florence in 1302 A.D. and his death in Ravenna in 1321 A.D. are composed in such ways that they admit of being read as one discourse. One might consider the former the 'objective level', and the latter the 'subjective level'. Yet in all of the artifacts, except the De Vulgari Eloquentia and the De Monarchia, the subject as protagonist is central to the mythos and the ethos of the works. The evident subjective achievement in these works is the protagonist's intellectual and moral affirmation. There is, I hope, sufficient textual evidence in my expositions to sustain this observation.

But if this observation is sustainable, it confirms the existence of a distinct and viable literary mode which I identify as the generative condition of 'exilic discourse' such as discussed in this thesis. By this term I intend the creative impulse to substitute by literary means for the loss of freedoms through exile, especially the freedom of public moral agency, and thus public responsibility.

This notion does not repose solely on the experiences of my case study. Rather, these are added to a wider horizon of acquaintance with the literary phenomenon I describe. It is constituted in the exilic and prophetic literature of the Bible, as my aperçu of the first appendix shows; it is present in the Boethian Consolation with which I compare Dante's 'exilic discourse'; and it is also found as impulse or tendency

in many modern exilic works even though it may not attain its full self-constitutive potential.

If it is accepted that the Dantean text as prototype of 'exilic discourse' achieves moral 'self-constitution', the question might be asked whether such a 'self-constitution' would be possible under any other system of Moral Philosophy than the eudaimonic, based on moral virtues, or its prescriptive version of the Aquinian synthesis.

It is seen in Boethius, that by his syncretist philosophy, in which Stoic, Christian and Neoplatonic elements prevail, a more interiorized and mystical 'self-constitution' is achieved. From this one might conclude that *mystical realism* is more conducive to intellectual and spiritual, rather than to moral 'self-constitution', since this latter depends on public conduct and personal interaction. But no philosophical claim can be made unconditionally without considering the poetic praxis, for it is by poetic genius that a fitting generative inspiration is found.

The difficulty the poet of practical philosophy must face in his praxis of philosophical poetry is that his generative idea for an effective 'exilic discourse' must include action, giving the protagonist an opportunity to evolve or emerge from the ethos as a credible moral agent, rather than being 'portrayed' as pre-existent character or philosophising narrator.

As Dante found out in the Convivio, this means that by distinction from interiorized mysticism by which 'interaction' between ideas takes place in the mind, practical philosophy can only be realized in acts. This explains why the Convivio could not achieve 'self-constitution', whereas the Commedia, despite its incredible complexity, succeeds. In the exposition of the *constitutive phase*, the examples from the Purgatorio were intended to show the most essential literary complement to Moral Philosophy in literature: dramatic action. The dramatic concept and the cosmic scenario of the Commedia with its Pilgrim-protagonist interacting with his archetypal figures and, literally, hundreds of minor characters, makes Dante's 'sacro poema' an ideal field in which to 'enact' practical philosophy.

In Boethius, all that admits of being lost is dismissed as

'mutable' and thus worthless, whereas the key to the highest 'good' is the 'immutable truth'. In one of Lady Philosophy's poems in Book III of the Consolation, the poet's alter ego says: "The man who searches deeply for the truth, and wishes to avoid being deceived by false leads, must turn the light of his inner vision upon himself". 'Self-sufficiency' is one of the important keys to human happiness.

But practical philosophy is not for solitary Stoics. It is for the 'social and political animal'. Yet where there is moral need, there, too, is moral responsibility. And for a medieval poet there is the responsibility before God for the acts of one's entire life. If the 'poet of rectitude' wishes to uphold his maxim: 'never to speak of his failings in public', as he avows in the Convivio, his resort must needs be to the mystical dimension of faith and fiction, the belle menzogne, as he will say of his Commedia. For the moralist, after the utopistic phase of his discourse, the only alternative would have been to plead his case and try to show that his stance of the Epistole was defensible.

Yet, in the poetic fiction of the Commedia, after the departure of Vergil, the poet can bathe in the river Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. When Beatrice, his love and faith, comes riding in a magnificent pageant, symbolising the Church, scolds him for being untrue to her and for 'following that other school', he can shed tears and he can repent and marvel at the new symbolism of light he has created for the great event of his entry into 'Earthly Paradise'. Then, a no longer stern Beatrice will read his mind: "...so when she had taken me by the hand, the fair lady moved and with womanly courtesy said to Statius: 'Come with him'....But a confession we hear not.

Although the poet's silence over his own moral responsibilities could be a profound issue for Moral Philosophy, it has not been an essential concern of my study. His love of philosophy and its central position in Dante's 'self-constitution', however, ought to have had more exposure in this thesis. Yet it seemed vital to my project, which may have been too ambitious for the scope allotted to this thesis, to limit the philosophy as much as possible to those passages in which it could be exposed in combination with the self-referential structures or with some constitutive events, by which the nature of 'self-constitution' in

'exilic discourse' could be made most evident.

And how does the poet present himself to posterity? Formally, Dante takes care of guiding our comprehension of his literary legacy in the Epistle to Can Grande, a letter dedicating the last canticle of his Commedia, the Paradiso, to his benefactor in Verona. It offers insights into Dante's own poetics, which he had called directio voluntatis in the De Vulgari Eloquentia, and which Charles Singleton understands in the sense of 'righting of the will'. It brings forth his Augustinian heritage by which he feels connected to Plato and even to Pythagoras. This is the key to his philosophical poetry in which philosophy and myth, personal vision and faith most happily coexist.

But the directio voluntatis also includes the reader whose complicity is of great importance to the self-constitutive design of Dante's 'exilic discourse'. The poet as lover of knowledge reveals himself in the first line of the Convivio by the quote from Aristotle "...all men naturally desire to posesss knowledge..." which Dante continues in the Aristotelian vein: "Since knowledge is the highest perfection of our soul, in which our supreme happiness is found..."

By ever renewed strategies to draw us into complicity, we are invited to trace the poet's intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution: from knowledge to wisdom (De Monarchia); from the need of justice to the liberty of judging as 'poet of rectitude' (the Inferno); from extolling the moral and intellectual virtues to 'pure virtue' regained (the Purgatorio); and from here to the attainment of *heavenly beatitude* and confirmation in the theological virtues, dominated by love, binding and transcending all, even exile (the Paradiso).

To the Dante reader, the experience of his 'exilic discourse' suggests the troubling question: Do we still possess sufficient common ground in our fractured culture, to be able to achieve 'self-constitution' as knowable moral agents by identifying our values, our beliefs and our potential agency?

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Dante's Letters, about 10. All in Latin. The one to Guido da Polenta written in Italian is generally regarded to be a 17th Century forgery of an editor. English versions in the Temple Classics (Dante's Eleven Letters, Boston 1891).

De Monarchia, written in Latin prose, probably 1313, about 18,000 words. Three books: 1 = 5,000; 2 = 6,000; 3 = 7,000 eight manuscripts extant. Most recent authoritative and annotated edition is by Gustavo Vinay (Florence, 1950). English translations: Dean Church, London 1879; Philip Wicksteed, in the Temple Classics edition of Dante's Latin Works (London, 1904), Donald Nickoll, (New York, 1954).

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The Rime. Modern editors attribute 54 "rhymes" to Dante (aside from those of Vita Nuova and Convivio) with an additional 26 in the dubious category. They vary in form, tone, content, are composed at different times in Dante's life. A few may have preceded the Vita Nuova, and few, if any, were written after the Convivio. Perhaps the Giunta edition of 1527 (Florence) may be thought as the editio princeps. English Lorna de Lucchi, Oxford, 1926 and H.S. Vere-Hodge (Oxford, 1963).

FRAME OF REFERENCE (1)

Philosophical Level: Phenomenology of Experience

The condition of appropriateness requires from every facet of my approach some measure of tolerance of the 'medieval model', i.e., of its ontology, its notion of 'truth', its analogical thinking, and its unific, teleological and theocentric view of the universe.

Transcendental Phenomenology, developed by Edmund Husserl, heir to the ideas of Franz Brentano, suits this requirement, for its basic concepts are the ideology-neutral and universal notions of 'perception', 'consciousness', and 'experience'. In his Paris Lectures, Husserl expounds:

> ...Consciousness (which) is always the consciousness of something. The nature of consciousness includes as models of being, presentations, probabilities, and non-being, and also modes of appearances, goodness and value...[1]

Husserl no longer regards consciousness as 'some imprintable matrix' but as an active principle in the sense in which Aristotle thought of the active powers of the soul in his theory of knowledge. For Husserl, too, consciousness is active in the whole realm of the perceivable. It is dynamic and directional, its existence is its acts. "The essence of consciousness in which I live is the so-called 'intentionality'"...[2]

Consciousness must not remain limited to its object, or the phenomenon it is intending. Rather, it must branch out and embrace its potentiality to reach and explore what the philosopher calls its 'third dimension'. This is the important concept of 'horizon' which appears in every 'intentional cogito' and comprises "expectations of things other than referred to as immediate presentations".[3] In other words, without 'horizon' the experience is incomplete.

As opposed to Kant's notion of 'phenomena', being limited to sensible objects, modern Phenomenology considers that any object of consciousness presented to it on the evidence of experience constitutes a 'phenomenon'. It is this 'experience' which is the true object of

phenomenological investigation, analysis, reflection, synthesis, and 'constitution in the transcendental ego' and the Lebenswelt or 'lived-in world', and finally 'description'. "The totality of experiences of meaningful being then constitutes 'transcendental consciousness'".[4]

In its cognitive method Transcendental Phenomenology prescribes two steps of reduction of immediate experiences in an idealist vein. These steps are intended to 'bracket out' the particular and to 'suspend' the natural standpoint in order not to accept reality as 'self explained' by its objective existence, but to grasp experiences as phenomena in their 'essential principles'.

As it would not be practicable to perform these reductions in explicit procedures on every exemplifying experience of the text, I limit my inquiry of the 'essential principle' to the phenomenon I call 'self-constitution'.

In conclusion of this brief account of the pertinent notions of Phenomenology to be used as referential terms in this thesis, Husserl's idea of his '*Wesensschau*'(sic) or 'intuition of essences' is accounted for in a comment by Husserl's critical disciple and still his champion, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, excerpted here from his essay Phenomenology and the Science of Man. "In defending Husserl against the false interpretations that are so common" Merleau-Ponty explains the *Wesenschau* (correctly: Wesensschau) as "grasping of universal meanings in and through my contingent experience".

> Thanks to its dual character, at the same time universal and concrete, this *Wesenschau* (sic) is capable of renewing and of developing psychology. For anyone who considers them from outside, the experiences we live through ... can certainly be socially and physically determined. Nevertheless there is a way through which they acquire a meaning that is universal, intersubjective and absolute. But in pursuing this way, I must not limit myself to living through the experience; I must grasp its sense, and this is the function of 'eidetic intuition'.[5]

Dante treats of experiences, whether they be his own or those of his characters, with the same quest for their essential meanings. The great advantage of using phenomenological terms in the analyses and descriptions of this thesis is that by their universality they are as

applicable to the communication of my experiences of the text, as they are to the poet's original myth-making. They serve equally well in the accounting of events in time and space, as of visions in dreams. In other words we may apply them to physical or poetic reality.

The attention in this thesis is to a victim's conscious moral reactions to the indignities suffered through exposure to injustice and exile. This is not to deny other levels of consciousness. It merely suggests concentration upon the intentionality of conscious experiencing and upon the probing of the horizons of the experiences by which these become describable objects of knowledge, and as such potentially inter-subjective.

Even when the phenomena of our consciousness are as intangible as a poet's imaginary encounters with departed souls in his vision of another world, the ontological tolerance of Phenomenology admits these phenomena as objects of our conscious experience.

Thus my aim in resorting to phenomenological notions in my frame of reference is to render communicable the philosophical and literary phases of the phenomena of my experience of the text. The 'concrete' objects of my exploration, as 'horizons' of the phenomenal experience, are the self-referential structures and events of the text by which my experiences are brought about.

The end of this project is in the attempted persuasion that among the manifold other possible readings of Dante's exilic works, my reading of them as one 'self-constitutive exilic discourse' be accepted as possible and justifiable.

ENDNOTES - FRAME OF REFERENCE (1)

1. Edmund Husserl, Paris Lectures. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1970, p. 13.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

3. Ibid., Introduction p. xxxvi-ii.

4. Ibid., p. XLIX.

5. Maurice, Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception. Northwestern University Press, 1964, pp. 53-54.

FRAME OF REFERENCE (2)

Literary Level: From a Pluralist Viewpoint

In order to formulate my references and observations of the text in established literary terms of our own time, which might be equally relevant in relation to medieval literature, I opt for the pluralist literary theories put forward by Northrop Frye in his Anatomy of Criticism and The Critical Path.

Professor Frye avoids identifying with individual philosophies that "deal with aesthetic questions only as a set of analogies to their logical and metaphysical views".[1] Instead, the scholar sides with the Aristotelian assumption that poetics could be the organon of an independent discipline. "Consequently", Frye concludes, "a critic can use the Poetics without involving himself with Aristotelianism".[2]

Regardless of degree, basic affinities with Aristotelian thought, in which much of Dante's text is grounded, enhance the communicability of medieval phenomena in contemporary terms. Even though Dante himself is supposed to have been unaware of the Aristotelian Poetics, his own highly developed poetic theory is not incompatible with the Aristotelian model.

Another helpful aspect of Frye's theory is that it draws upon a vast field of interconnected and overlapping literary traditions within which analogies to Dante's text can be readily identified. Together, his works contain five major essays on 'modes', 'symbols', 'myths', 'genres', and 'social contexts' as well as corresponding critical approaches on 'historical', 'ethical', 'archetypal', 'rhetorical', and 'social' criticism.

Some of Professor Frye's observations are exceedingly relevant to the study of Dante's discourse. Such is the topic of the 'thematic modes'. If thematic concerns are not combined and counter-balanced by fiction, the author points out, "the writing could become direct address, or straight discoursive writing, and cease to be literature".[3]

By comparison with the Boethian Consolation of Philosophy it becomes clear why Dante's Convivio does not quite succeed as 'exilic

discourse'. Seen in relation to Frye's theory of thematic modes, one becomes aware that its fictional dimension is too unconvincing to make it a satisfactory work of literary art. For the poet it might have been the compelling reason for abandoning it unfinished.

In the scholar's introductory passage to the chapter on the Thematic Modes he addresses the very problem besetting the exilic author caught between the need to be present in his text, and the danger of its preponderance of its discoursive character.

> Besides the internal fiction of the hero and his society there is an external fiction which is a relation between the writer and the writer's society. Poetry may be as completely absorbed in its internal characters as it is in Shakespeare, or in Homer, where the poet himself simply points to his story and disappears, the second word of the Odyssey, moi, being all we get of him in that poem. But as soon as the poet's personality appears on the horizon, a relation with the reader is established which cuts across the story, and which may increase until there is no story at all apart from what the poet is conveying to his reader.[4]

Yet there is no doubt in Professor Frye's judgement of the status of Dante's Commedia as a superior work of literary art, although it had been put in doubt by Benedetto Croce at the beginning of the Century. Frye classifies the Commedia as "the definitive encyclopaedic poem in the mythical mode". "The encyclopaedic knowledge of such poems is regarded sacramentally, as a human analogy of divine knowledge... The fiction of the 'marvellous journey' is regarded as parable ....Poetry in this mode is an agent of catholicity, whether Hellenic in one age or Roman Christian in another".[5]

In these literary and historical observations, nothing even remotely suggests that the self-referential elements of the poem might be intended for an added constitutive function of a discourse parallel to the fictional plot of Dante's encyclopaedic poem. In Aristotelian terms one might think of the true character and thought of the protagonist emerging from the fictional events in the imaginary setting. But there are other suggestions in Frye, some not even referring to Dante in relation to which the notion of 'self-constitution' would not appear as an improbably proposition. The scholar notes that:

> In thematic literature the poet may write as an individual, emphasizing the separateness of his personality and the distinctness of his vision... Or the poet may devote himself to being the spokesman of his society which means, that a poetic knowledge and expressive power which is latent or needed in his society comes to articulation in him ....[5]

In another passage involving the Divine Comedy as an obvious model, Northrop Frye describes 'the poem of exile' in relation to the 'marvellous journey' as 'normally contrasting the world of memory and experience', and 'the poem of vision' as 'contrasting the worlds of experience and dream'

> The poem of revelation through female or divine grace contrasts the old dispensation with the vita nuova. In the opening lines of the Inferno the affinity of the great encyclopaedic poem of exile and the poem of vision is clearly marked.

The literary theories endorsed by Northrop Frye that could be interpreted as supportive of a reading of Dante's exilic text in the sense in which it is investigated in this thesis, appear to outnumber those that might be interpreted negatively.

In The Critical Path Frye discusses Mathew Arnold's notions of the 'master concern' and of the 'spontaneity of consciousness' in the latter's essay on Culture and Anarchy, in relation to their bolder manifestations in the twentieth Century. But rather than as conflict between the two roots of heritage, the biblical and the classical, as seen by Arnold, Frye interprets the phenomenon as a conflict between what he calls the 'myth of concern' and the 'myth of freedom'.

To the integralist reader, aware of Dante's political treatise De Monarchia, the poet's view of the dominant conflict of his own time is not a speculative question. On the view of the medievalist Etienne Gilson, Dante not only arrives at a salient analysis of the moral and political ills of society, but also proposes a unique solution. By reading the poet's text as 'exilic discourse' we see Dante's classical ideals directing the spontaneity of his consciousness - not toward anarchy, but toward the freedom of an equitable and thus superior global order. Certain sample expositions show the poet as 'mythmaker' who not only creates his personal 'myth of freedom' but proposes a freedom that

would curtail the power structures of the mightiest institutions of civilization.

In principle, Northrop Frye emphasizes the purely literary qualities of artifacts of literature, speaking out against "peripheral biographical and historical approaches", and rejecting any assumption "that the poet's life is the key to the deeper understanding of poetry". The scholar blames "pre critical understanding" and "striving to take in what is being presented to us" by reducing the poetic to the "intentional meaning", attending to what the work "explicitly says rather than what it is".[8]

According to its *Rationale*, this project does not pretend to be an exercise in literary criticism, but regards the works under scrutiny as 'host artifacts' of a deliberate, self-constitutive moral dimension carefully wrought by the author of an extraordinary text, created under extraordinary circumstances. I would thus claim exemption from the scholar's reproaches, if he himself were not providing it.

Since Northrop Frye stands above dogmatic consistency for its own sake, he tells us in The Critical Path that he is led to qualify the basic canons of his own literary theory.[9] Thus, my interpretation of the text's self-constitutive dimension which appeared jeopardized by the above, is being vindicated by what follows:

> ...And of course the most obvious literary context for a poem is the entire literary output of its author. Just as explication, by stressing the more objective aspect of rhetoric, had formed the corrective to the excesses of biographical criticism, so the study of a poet's whole work might form the basis of a kind of psychological criticism that would operate within literature, and so provide some balance for the kind that ends in the bosom of Freud. Poetry is, after all a technique of communication: it engages the conscious part of the mind as well as the murkier areas, and what the poet succeeds in communicating to others is at least as important as what he fails to resolve himself...[10]

As the final example of the pluralist view of literature adopted for the purpose of this thesis will show, the medieval and the modern needs of expression have more in common than might be commonly assumed. In his Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye reaffirms a long lost

principle of literature which was most important to Dante's way of expressing the complexities of the human experience and which is finding new recognition today.

> ...The conclusion that a work of literary art contains a variety or a sequence of meanings seems inescapable. It has seldom, however, been squarely faced in criticism since the Middle Ages, when a precise scheme of literal, allegorical, moral and anagogic meanings was taken over from theology and applied to literature.[1]

To the integralist reader of Dante's discourse this is known from both the Convivio and, more explicitly still, from the Epistle to Can Grande. Dante speaks of his scheme of multiple meaning as 'my polysemy' and introduces its code as the 'fourfold method'. In his contemporary comments on the literary principle of what was to become the hallmark of Dante's style, Northrop Frye does not omit mentioning the poet's name. It also happened to serve as central principle in Dante's accomplishment of his 'self-constitution in literature'.

> The principle of polysemous meaning, as Dante calls it, is not a theory any more, still less an exploded superstition, but an established fact. The thing that has established it is the simultaneous development of several different schools of modern criticism, each making a distinctive choice of symbols in its analysis. The modern student of critical theory is faced with a body of theoreticians who speak of texture and frontal assault, with critics using materials from psychology and anthropology, with Aristotelians, Coleridgians, Thomists, Freudians, Jungians, Marxists, with students of myths, rituals, archetypes, metaphors, ambiguities, and significant forms. The student must either admit the principle of polysemous meaning, or choose one of these groups and then try to prove that all the others are less legitimate. The former is the way to scholarship, and leads to advancement of learning; the latter is the way to pedantry....[2]

ENDNOTES - FRAME OF REFERENCE (2)

1. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 357, note 15/7.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 53.

4. Ibid., p. 52.

5. Ibid., p. 57.

6. Ibid., p. 54

7. Ibid., pp. [illegible]

8. Ibid., p. [illegible]

9. Northrop Frye, The Critical Path. An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism, Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 22-31.

10. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

11. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism. An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism, Princeton University Press, 1971, p. 72.

12. Ibid., p. 72.

APPENDIX ONE

A. The Biblical Model

> Exile as a measure of mass retribution in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament illustrates some universal characteristics of human reaction to the exilic condition. One widely confirmed observation is that it greatly stimulates literary and prophetic activity. In the specific case of the 'biblical model' this activity is clearly directed toward moral restitution of the exiled masses.

On scriptural evidence, the shifting meanings of the term 'exile' are observable on both, its conceptual and semantic, as well as on its existential levels.

In the exilic and post-exilic literature of the Old Testament references are mostly to the deportations into Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, whereas in pre-exilic literature, the references may be to forced migrations.

Translations between Aramaic and Hebrew and from the two to Greek and Latin along with the differences in culture and political conditions explain these transmutations and overlap classes found both in substantival and verbal forms of the term 'exile'. It may apply to the act or condition of banishment, of expulsion or of deportation; to the condition of captivity or dispersion; and it may refer to aliens, to prisoners of war, or to refugees.

In the context of my study, the point of interest in the biblical perception of exile is on another level of evidence. It is in the fact that exile stimulated a distinct type of prophetic and literary activity in Biblical History. There is consonance among the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah in their interpretations of the defeat and exile of Judah as 'divine retribution' and as 'God's judgement'. There is also agreement on the need of a 'new covenant with God' on the occasion of the freeing of the Jews from the Babylonian exile. It is based on the acceptance by faith of God's judgement in order to win His love and commitment forever.

First example Isaiah: 9-10

> I am now as I was in the days of Noah
> when I swore that Noah's waters
> should never flood the world again.
> So now I swear concerning my anger with you
> and the threats I made against you;
>
> for the mountains may depart
> the hills be shaken,
> but my love for you will never leave you
> and my covenant of peace with you will never be shaken
> says Yahweh who takes pity on you.

Second example. Jeremiah: 31: 2-3-4

> Yahweh says this:
> They have found pardon in the wilderness,
> those who have survived the sword.
> Israel is marching to his rest.
> Yahweh has appeared to him from afar:
> I have loved you with an everlasting love,
> So I am constant in my affection for you.
> I build you once more; you shall be rebuilt,
> virgin of Israel...

Third example: Ezekiel: 36: 24-29

> ...I am Yahweh - it is the Lord Yahweh who
> speaks - ...I shall cleanse you of all your
> defilement and all your idols. I shall give you
> a new heart, and put a new spirit in you, I
> shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies
> and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall
> put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws
> and sincerely respect my observances. You will
> live in the land which I gave your ancestors.
> You shall be my people and I will be your God.
> I shall rescue you from all your defilement...

Common to all three prophecies is the insistence that the Hebrew's suffering of exile was not a chance misfortune. Chance misfortune would have meant abandonment by an indifferent God. If they cannot tolerate the thought that God could leave his people unprotected against calamity, they must find reasons for his tolerance of their fate. Thus, their suffering of exile becomes God's testing of His people. But this must not be an arbitrary testing, for this, too, might lead the people into despair.

Thus, rather than letting God appear indifferent, arbitrary or unjust, the Prophets interpret the condemnation to exile as an act of God for which the victims themselves are responsible. This requires a drastic shift: if the exiles are not to feel abandoned, they themselves must assume responsibility for having caused God's displeasure. The people of Judah are accused of idolatry and defilement of the law. Their 'hearts of stone' bespeak lack of moral concern. This had angered their God, bringing on his judgement and his divine retribution: the calamity of their defeat and their deportation to Babylon.

But now, those who are still alive to hear the prophecies, hear the good tidings that surviving the battles and release from exile are a sign of God's pardon. From now on they must accept his judgement on faith in order to be worthy of a new covenant with him who promises his unending love and a share of his spirit in return for their obedience of his laws.

Based on the poetic conception and prophetic treatment of exile, it might be said that faith in the benevolence of God's power over man is an essential part in the psychology of restitution. Only Yahweh can help the Hebrews accomplish what without him proved impossible. Observance of his commandments alone can bring a new order into human affairs. Thus it is Yahweh who will reinstate into man a 'human heart;' Yahweh will rescue man from 'all defilement'; Yahweh takes pity; Yahweh will rebuild man and never forsake him. Man's hope must forever remain dependent on God's love and his judgement must never again be questioned.

The Israelites' natural restitution to their homeland after the Babylonian exile is confirmed by historical research, but as such it has no bearing on my thesis. What is of interest here is the exilic psychology of restitution and the prophetic claim of its dependence on the supernatural. It centers on the postulation that the physical homecoming must be accompanied by spiritual renewal, and that this could not be accomplished by man alone. God demands it, but only he can grant it. The dependence of man on God is to be total.

In the examples from scripture where the concern is with collective phenomena, the only individual agent catalyst is the Prophet

in whose vision the intercourse with the deity takes place. He knows that the natural act of collective homecoming from exile must be sustained by individual spiritual transcendence of the evil of which exile is declared a consequence. On the basis of this poetic and prophetic treatment of exile it is said that "exile is the very foundation and heart of the biblical understanding of divine judgement and revelation."[1]

Some scholars maintain that Dante wrote his Divine Comedy on the biblical model, while others suggest that he imitates 'God's own writing'. What do these comparisons intend? On the literary level the question could not be pursued without first establishing analogies within a bilateral context. However, the comparisons intend a generative rather than a formal level. If, as it is said, the collective biblical exile of 598 and 597 B.C. stimulated extraordinary literary and prophetic activity among the Hebrew people, might the individual exilic condition of a medieval poet-statesman not have similarly stimulated his poetic and visionary activity? And if it is characteristic of the biblical prophecies that they demand renewal of the spiritual life to accompany the restitution of the public moral agency of the Hebrew people, is one not led to accept the possibility of a similar impulse toward moral restitution in exilic or marginal man anywhere?

Since the medieval poet is denied actual reintegration into his native community and thus rehabilitation to full moral integrity, it seems only natural that he should aspire to substitute for the missing public moral agency by means of 'self-constitution' in a language of renewed spirituality. John D. Sinclair, translator and commentator of the Divine Comedy begins to answer this question by describing Dante's style as '*Spiritual Realism*'.[2] Even on a more reticent view one might say that despite their considerable differences, both exilic situations produce great visionary literature, the "very condition of which is exile."[3] Traditionally we speak about the Book of Prophets as 'exilic literature'. Thus I speak of Dante's works of the exilic period as his 'exilic discourse' and I defend the term in its appropriate context.

One more remarkable aspect shared by the biblical and medieval

exilic literature, beyond the common denominator of banishment from the native communities, and their prophetic character, is their moral optimism. Their similarities are not in desolation and lament but in structures of renewal. Thus Dante is utterly confident when he claims that the monumental poem of his imagined pilgrimage to the 'other world' is not a tragedy but a comedy, for it begins in calamity and ends in triumph. Yet the author of the Divine Comedy also claims that his three Canticles are the 'Comedy of Dante Alighieri', thus of a man who is never to see his native Florence again, and who will die in exile shortly after completing perhaps the most exhaustive 'self-constitution in exilic discourse' ever produced.

ENDNOTES - APPENDIX ONE

1. For the choice of my scriptural illustrations, and the above quote I am indebted to Wayne Ménard, contributor to a joint seminar on the significance of exile at the Lonergan University College for Interdisciplinary Studies of Concordia University in 1985/1986, later graduate student of Theology at McGill University.

2. John D. Sinclair, The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, (with translation and comment), Oxford University Press, New York, 1961.

3. "the very condition of which is exile" (without my analogy) is an expression coined by Giuseppe Mazzotta in reference to the Divine Comedy, appearing in his book Dante, Pilgrim of the Desert, Princeton University Press, 1979.

APPENDIX TWO

B. The Classical Greek Model

The problematic of the classical Greek model of exile comes to light in a juxtaposition in Aristotle's treatment of the Athenian convention of banishment or ostracism in Book III of the Politics dealing with citizenship and constitution, and passages of Book V of the Nicomachean Ethics concerning theories of justice.

In this model, exile is not an arbitrary act of power politics, but a political measure taken by popular vote under the aegis of the deliberative assembly of government. The duration of exile is limited to ten years and both, citizenship and possessions are recuperable upon readmission to the city state.

From Dante's frequent references and quotations and, even more so, from the substance of his political thought, it is evident that the poet is familiar with Aristotle's practical philosophy. Potentially then, Dante might have undertaken the very same comparative reading on Aristotle's two deliberations, directly and indirectly concerning exile, as explored in this paper.

1. Exile as Political Instrument

In its constitutionally legitimized form, exile by ostracism appears as an expedient policy in the service of lawful governments. Yet, despite its constitutionality, Aristotle warns of its dangers, saying that as a tool in the service of political factions it may be turned into a dangerous weapon of power politics.

In thirteenth and fourteenth century Florence, exile is practised as such a weapon in factional disputes between the rival parties of the Papal Guelfs and the Imperial Ghibellines; and, when the Ghibellines were disbanded, between the two Guelfish factions, the Papal 'Blacks', and the more populist 'Whites', for which Dante served as a Prior in Council.

In Book III of the Politics Aristotle argues the legislative wisdom of exile. He considers ostracism mainly on the constitutional level of decreed banishment of influential citizen by popular vote in

assembly of the deliberative body of government, by probing its relation to justice and equity.

But in Book V of the Nicomachean Ethics where he treats of the various kinds of justice, Aristotle does not treat of exile.[1] By examining Aristotle's critical arguments on ostracism from the Politics in juxtaposition with some of the justice-, law-, and equity-related theories from the Ethics, some of Dante's indirect references to exile become more perceptible to the contemporary reader. Since Dante full, identifies with the Aristotelian Ethics, with emphasis on the primacy of justice above all other virtues, the understanding of his moral stance is greatly aided by a parallel reading of Aristotle's original text. Among the four spheres of meaning of Dante's well-defined polysemy of the 'fourfold method', his affinity with Aristotle, and our own familiarity with the Nicomachean Ethics thus suggest the choice of the moral sphere as the most accessible and approoriate level for our understanding of Dante today.

In one sense, parallel reading of Aristotle's two books holds little promise for a symmetrical comparison on the topic of exile. For Book III of the Politics centers on Aristotle's theory on citizenship and constitution, of which ostracism is but a species of constitutional measures under the aegis of the sovereign authority of the deliberative branch of government. Ostensively, it is known as a lawful prophylactic against potential sedition or usurpation of legal authority.

In practice, ostracism is shown to be a levelling process with the aim of maintaining a manageable balance of power or equality among the citizens. Under the principle of equality, any outstanding citizen of the polis, whether for reasons of superior character, political talent, or means and connections, becomes prone to preventive banishment.[2]

Viewed against the theories of justice and equity in Book V of the Ethics, this menace to talent and individuality makes ostracism emerge as a skandalon of constitutionality. Might this impression be generated by our individualist culture, in which human rights claim primacy over political expedients, or does the philosopher himself set us off on the critical path?

There can be no doubt that both Aristotle, the constitutionalist,

and Aristotle, the philosopher, attach to the problem of ostracism considerable gravity. Philosophically the evidence lies in the fact that Aristotle concerns himself with exile in his discussion on 'proper methods of establishing constitutions'. Constitutionally, the evidence is in its placement of exile among the political measures which can only be decreed by the deliberative body of government.

The deliberative body of government is sovereign on:

1) issues of war and peace, and making and breaking of alliances;

2) the enacting of laws;

3) cases where penalty of death, exile, and confiscation is involved;

4) the appointment of magistrates and the calling of them to account on the expiration of their office...[3]

Caution on interpreting the functions of the deliberative element of government is urged by Ernest Barker, translator and commentator of the Politics. In democratic constitutions the 'deliberative body' of government means the people in assembly, or ecclesia. Democratic governments also vest in the deliberative body some higher judicial functions and overriding powers over the executive body. Among several ambiguities, partly caused by inconsistencies of the text itself, two points must be considered: (a) that the three functions of government, the legislative, the executive, and the judicial of ancient Greece do not correspond to our modern conception of these functions; (b) that Aristotle rejected the overriding power of the deliberative assembly and regarded the passing of such decrees as override the law, as usurpation. In his defense of lawful government, Aristotle always demands sovereignty of the law and submission of the magistrates to its rule.[4]

It can be seen from the above that exile is listed on the same level as the 'enactment of laws'. Thus it is not itself a species of law, but rather a species of 'decrees of enactment by deliberative assembly', which gives it as much weight as law enactment itself, meaning that it is placed above enacted laws. If this fulfils the constitutionality of the procedure, does this include the constitutionality of the measure also, does it justify ostracism?

Speaking of democratic practices, Aristotle comments that:

> Such states are held to aim at equality above everything else, and with this aim in view they used to pass sentences of ostracism (banishment from the state of some fixed period) on those whom they regarded having too much influence owing to their wealth or the number of their connections or any other form of political strength...(Tyrants are also known to subscribe to the practice of ostracism, but -) It is not only tyrants who may derive some benefit from this policy; nor is it only tyrants who put it into practice. Oligarchies and democracies are both in the same position; and ostracism has in its way, the same effect of pulling down and banishing men of outstanding influence...[5]

Further on, however, Aristotle speaks about the beneficial effect of 'levelling', a notion which seems related to his principle of the 'mean' being preferable to extreme positions as in rich and poor. Thus he defends the soundness of the rule that no single individual should be permitted to stand out above all other citizens under any form of government. But it will be seen that Aristotle does not remain consistent on this point.

How might Dante have reacted to this proposition? His low opinion of both Guelfish factions, or the 'Blacks', led by the Papal banker Corso Donati, as well as of his own banished faction, the inept and quarrelsome 'Whites', becomes quite explicit in his discourse, and he does not hide his attitude of personal superiority. In the Convivio we see that he is capable of 'respectfully' disagreeing even with Aristotle and with the Emperor, and in the Purgatorio's Canto XII, he admits to the 'vice of pride'. But Dante never fully argues his own case of exile, nor does he deliberate on it in general theoretical terms.

2. Aspects of Justice - Nicomachean Ethics V

Aristotle's theories of justice and lawfulness greatly aid the reader's critical attention in observing the philosopher's reservations on the subject of exile in Book III of the Politics.

In the Ethics the just and the lawful are shown to be intrinsically identical: "the just is the lawful and the fair. The unjust is the unlawful and the unfair".[6] Thus "all lawful acts are in a sense just acts, for the acts laid down by the legislative art are

lawful, and each of these we say is just". But there is more than one kind of justice. "As a virtue, justice is thought to be the greatest", says Aristotle, for he suggests that justice may be regarded as every virtue comprehended. "Justice alone of the virtues is thought to be another's good". Justice is regarded to be a complete virtue because "he who possesses it can exercise his virtue not only on himself but toward his neighbour also."[8]

So far the definitions of justice are of a state of character, i.e., of justice qua complete virtue without qualifications. But since it is described as the justice that entails concern for one's neighbour, the just can be regarded as the lawful. And laws can be called 'just laws' when their enactment on all subjects aims at some common advantage. Aristotle suggests that "in one sense we can call those acts just that tend to produce and preserve happiness and its components for the political society".[9]

To one who must consider himself a victim of injustice, the meaning of justice takes on a very personal dimension. Dante's self-conferred epithet 'poet of rectitude' is a striking expression of his commitment to the Aristotelian concept of justice.

a) Main Kinds of Justice

Evidently not all kinds of justice depend on complete virtue without qualifications. Under distributive justice the just is thought of as the intermediate and equal measure, as for example "in distribution of honours or money, or other things that fall to be divided among those who have a share in the constitution".[10] But in the Politics no such 'intermediate and equal measures' are shown to obtain between 'being present' and 'being ostracised' from the polis, the law of the excluded middle prevails. In the rectificatory justice "the just is the equally distributed".[11] The unjust which is produced by inequality must be rectified before the judge, acting as mediator, says Aristotle. But there is no known convention of mediation mentioned in the Politics as a 'rectification of banishment'. Neither can 'justice by reciprocity' be invoked by the banished citizen; in the Politics Aristotle tells us of no such recourse against the enactment of

ostracism. And nothing is commensurable with exile under the criterion of proportion obtaining in reciprocity.

In the case of ostracism none of these kinds of justice can be said to obtain, for it properly falls under the legal domain of political justice. On this point, the interest of this exploration is not only in the status of ostracism within constitutionality, but more so in how Aristotle views it in relation to justice and equity as such.

b) Political Justice

Political justice differs from the other kinds in so far as it has two aspects, one natural, the other legal or conventional. The former is recognizable by anyone, having everywhere the same force; the latter is instituted under differing conventions. In Florence, banishment into exile appears to have been practised routinely by the political parties and factions against their vanquished opponents. Before the thirteenth century government reform which limited representation in government to active members of the guilds, the conflicts were often initiated by the rivalling clans of the landed nobility. As far as I can be aware, banishment was the customary fate of the vanquished, or of subjects of a coup d'état, without being regulated by law or established convention. As a matter of historical fact, which is not textually explicit, during Dante's priorship in council, the poet-statesman himself became instrumental in the banishment of both leaders of the feuding factions, their violent antagonism threatening to draw the community into fratricide. It is interesting to note that the leader of the 'Blacks' was Corso Donati, a clansman by marriage; and the leader of the 'Whites' was Dante's fellow poet and one-time mentor, Guido Cavalcanti. Whereas Cavalcanti died in exile, Donati and his powerful allies perpetrated the coup against Dante.

Aristotle maintains that on the whole political justice is "found among men who share their life with a view of self-sufficiency, men who are free and either proportionately or arithmetically equal, so that between those who do not fulfil this condition there is no political justice but justice in a special sense and by analogy. For justice exists only between men whose mutual relations are governed by law...[12]

Most importantly, political justice is tied to citizenship. for citizenship is neither hereditary, nor according to residency, but is subject to active participation in the conduct of civic affairs and the running of the state. "Justice or injustice of citizens is according to law, and between people naturally subject to law, and these...are people who have an equal share in ruling and being ruled".[13] In its own mode the "equal share in ruling and being ruled" does apply in the complex, office-rotating Florentine government of Dante's time.

In ancient Greece the relation of ostracism to political justice turns on constitutional convention, assuring the legality of the process. Thus, if ostracism is legal and all legal acts are just, then ostracism is just. In a tyranny what the tyrant decrees is legal. It is for protection against unjust and selfish action, says Aristotle, that "we do not allow one man to rule, but *rational principle*, because a man behaves (thus) in his own interest and becomes a tyrant. The magistrate on the other hand is the guardian of justice, and, if of justice, then on equality also".[14]

It is at this point that the prophylactic of exile by ostracism pronounced against good but outstanding citizens turns into injustice against the individual, and Aristotle, as will be presently seen, is far from unaware of it. Still under the rubric of natural and legal justice we read: "There is a difference between the act of injustice and what is unjust, and between the act of justice and what is just; for a thing is unjust by nature or by enactment; and this very thing when it has been done, is an act of injustice, but before it is done is not yet that but is unjust..."[15]

More closely approximating the problem of exile from the perspective of political justice is the 'state of character' which Aristotle introduces as *equity*. Generically equity does not differ from justice, but neither is it completely identical with it. For all things that are just are good, but if they are just and equitable they are superior. On this discussion of equity hinges the appreciation of the exilic problem in the Greek mode.

"The equitable is just, but not legally just but a correction of legal justice".[16] Errors arise in the application of universal law to

particular cases, for not all things can be covered by universal law.

> In those cases then, in which it is necessary to speak universally, but not possible to do so correctly, the law takes the usual case, though it is not ignorant of the possibility of error. And it is none the less correct; for the error is not in the law nor in the legislator but in the nature of the thing, since the matter of practical affairs is of this kind from the start... (it is) the nature of the equitable, a correction of law where it is defective owing to its universality. In fact this is the reason why all things are not determined by law, viz. that about some things it is impossible to lay down a law, so that a decree is needed...[1]

Exile by ostrakismos is by such a decree, since no law can specify the candidacy of a prophylactic or preventive measure. But does the procedure of procuring a decree makes the decree just, does it make the prophylactic of ostracism an equitable correction of this justice?

3. Aspects of Ostracism - Politics III

In our sense of 'theory' as systematic conception of principles, Aristotle's treatment of ostracism cannot be properly called a theory, but under the original etymology of '*theoria*' it could, indeed, be regarded as such.

Aristotle does not examine the subjective dimension of exile. His 'viewing' of ostracism is from the perpective of political wisdom as a problem of citizenship, constitution and justice. Dante, on the other hand, does not deal with exile on the objective level, nor does he give account of his own exilic experience in other than poetic terms. Under the practical aspects of *phronesis*, the properly moral domain which guides the choice of action, Aristotle simply expresses his preference for not letting the 'need' for banishment arise, since he sees its implementation as unfair. But the judgement of unfairness touches upon a deeper problem, as a closer look at Aristotle's arguments will reveal: Expecting of the exceptional citizen to merely take equal part in the responsibilities of governing and of being governed, along with the less qualified or less virtuous members of the citizenry or *politeuma* also means treating the outstanding citizen unfairly.

Aristotle shows a certain discomfort with some of the consequences

of the democratic ideal of the primacy of equality above all other political principles. A closer look at the philosopher's own arguments may now be in order:

a) If there is one person (or several persons) ...so pre-eminently superior in goodness that there can be no comparison between the goodness and political capacity he shows...and that is shown by the rest, such a person or such persons, can no longer be treated as part of the state...They will suffer injustice if they are treated as worthy only of an equal share...There can be no law which runs against men who are utterly superior to others. They are a law in themselves...[18]

b) Reasons of this nature will go to explain why democratic states institute the rule of ostracism. Such states are held to aim at equality above everything else...[19]

c) Oligarchies and democracies are both in the same position, and ostracism has, in a way, the same effect of pulling down and banishing men of outstanding influence.[20]

Aristotle does not deny the expediency of ostracism under certain critical circumstances. When one individual threatens the safety or well-being of all, he does not doubt its justification. He even concedes that from the point of view of governments who practice it, ostracism is 'just'. Whether or not Dante's admission of pride in Purgatorio XII is limited to the personal sphere, or intended to cover his public acts, we do not know. But would a Florentine Prior of the Guilds have attempted to resist the political will of the mightiest leader in the Western world, without fierce pride and the conviction that in the civic affairs of his city, his notion of what is right for Florence had to have precedence over the 'secular aspiration' of the pope?

But to Aristotle the problem of the exceptional citizen does not consist in the nature of the personal, intellectual, moral or material advantages. The real question rather is:

> What is to be done when we meet with a man of outstanding eminence and goodness? Nobody, we assume, should say that such a man ought to be banished and sent to exile. But neither would any man say that he ought to be subject to

> others...The only alternative left - and this would also appear to be the natural course - is for all others to pay willing obedience to the man of outstanding goodness. Such men will accordingly be the permanent kings in their states.[21]

If the reading of Dante's more covert self-references does not deceive, there is no trace of any such ambition in his 'exilic discourse'. Rather, there is ample evidence in the Epistolae and in the De Monarchia that the poet's utopistic hope is vested in the young Prince of Luxemburg who became Emperor Henry VII and descended to Italy to receive the Roman crown from the hands of a papal legate, since the popes had started their own 'exile in Avignon'. Dante expected that Henry would bring unity, peace and justice to the torn Italian lands. but Henry died and Dante's ban to enter Florence was renewed.

The relation of Aristotle's alternative to ostracism is by opposition rather than by difference of degree. Without escape from the dilemma, such as some 'equitable mean' between the inequality threatening the many and injustice awaiting the individual, the philosopher invariably arrives at the same conclusion. What is Aristotle telling us about the problem of exile by proposing kingship as its just alternative? Is it meant to entail the demise of the democratic constitution itself?

Apparently, Aristotle arrives at his alternative from four distinct but interdependent positions, two questions and two indictments. First the questions:

> a) Can ostracism be just? A case can be made for the aggregate quality of number, (such as in democratic rule) but a case may also be made in favour of single man of exceptional and outstanding goodness. Such a man must either be made king or sent into exile...The democratic policy means a choice of the latter alternative...On the other hand it cannot be just, in a good constitution to refuse the recognition which is due to a man of outstanding goodness; and such a man should not be banished, but should rather be made king.[22]
>
> b) Is banishment an appropriate solution? When a person is so outstanding that he surpasses all the rest it is only just that he should be vested with kingship and absolute sovereignty...But it is not only a question of what is just.

> Justice is a ground which is usually pleaded in the establishment of any form of constitution...Here the ground is what is proper...It would be surely improper to execute a man of outstanding superiority, or to banish him permanently, or to ostracise him for a period...[23]

If Aristotle holds that exile on these terms is improper, he also shows that it is absurd. The notion of scandalous abuse certainly appears to be inspired by the philosopher himself. How far might his indictments of ostracism confirm such an assumption?

The first indictment is addressed to 'perverted constitutions'. To the likely discomfort of some of today's proud heirs of the democratic idea, Aristotle considers at least some forms of democracy based on 'perverted' constitutions. Of the six main forms of government considered in Book III of the Politics, polity, aristocracy and kingship are designated 'good constitutions', whereas all three of their respective counterparts are what Aristotle calls 'bad' or 'perverted' kinds. What is his reasoning?

> Tyranny is the perversion of kingship; oligarchy of aristocracy; and democracy of polity. Tyranny is the government of a single person directed to the interest of that person; Oligarchy is directed to the interest of the well-to-do; Democracy is directed to the interest of the poorer classes. None of the three is directed to the advantage of the whole body of citizens.[24]

The above states the negation of Aristotle's criterion of good government, for political justice must be intended to the good of all. I shall return to the question on 'proper policy for a lawgiver' after identifying the second indictment.

The second indictment addresses all abusive enactment of ostracism by any government. Whereas the philosopher himself postulates that no government should allow disproportionate advancement of one individual above all other citizens, the regulation of this problem should neither be exercised by a single person, nor by a body of persons. "Rightly constituted law should be the sovereign". Only when matters cannot be lawfully resolved "due to the difficulty of framing general rules for all contingencies, to make an exact pronouncement" may enactment by the people be resorted to.[25]

Evidently, divergent interpretations seemed to coexist on the powers of the deliberative body of government, the ecclesia or the people in assembly. As Ernest Barker, translator of the Politics points out in his note on the subject, Aristotle regarded it as illegal when people in assembly passed "decrees of psephismata which had the force of law or overrode law". According to this view, such decrees represented a usurpation of the legislative power of the judicial commission, under its mandate from the judicial rather than the deliberative body of government.[1]

This then is the legal ground on which Aristotle launches his second indictment of governments abusively resorting to ostracism. He charges that they practise ostracism for the promotion of their own factional interest rather than for the advancement of the state as a whole.

"When then is the proper policy for a lawgiver who wishes to enact right laws to the best of his power?" asks Aristotle.

> Should he direct his legislation to the benefit of the better sort, or should he direct it to that of the majority? We reply (that neither should be considered exclusively); that what is 'right' should be understood as what is 'equally right'; and what is 'equally right' is what is for the benefit of the whole state and for the common good of all its citizens...[2]

Aristotle's belief that "*rightly constituted laws should be the final sovereign*" now leads him back to consider the lawgiver and to relate his own discourse still more explicitly to the Ethics. If the Ethics ever appeared as 'mere' prolegomena, they now emerge as the core and code of sound politics.

The moral judgements in Dante's first exilic work, the Convivio, are entirely drawn from and confirmed by Aristotle's Ethics. Although the work as such was left unfinished, confidence in himself and in his project is established in the process, to be carried on in the 'exilic discourse' integrated with his successive compositions.

Considering the question of the best constitution and the best way of life for the majority of states and men, the philosopher proposes the example of polity as an ideal solution. It is a constitution of mixed

form and a constitution of the middle classes, which Aristotle considers "free from the ambition of the rich and the pettiness of the poor: it is a natural link which helps to ensure political cohesion". Above all, polity is most likely to be free of factions, and therefore stable. The issue is to be decided "in the light of one body of fundamental principles":

> If we adopt as true the statement in the Ethics (1) that a truly happy life is a life of goodness lived in freedom from impediments, and (2) that goodness consists in a mean, it follows that the best way of life (for the majority of men) (sic) is one which consists in a mean of the kind attainable by every individual. Further, the same criteria which determine whether the citizen-body (i.e. all its members considered as individuals) (sic) have a good or bad way of life must also apply to the constitution; for a constitution is a way of life of a citizen body.[28]

Mirrored in his moral wisdom of justice, Aristotle's political wisdom of citizenship and constitutions has helped to render intelligible the Greek model of exile by ostracism and some of its related problems. It is intended to serve as background of Dante's self-constitution by Aristotelian standards. At the same time it will help identify certain parallels between the Greek and the medieval modes of exile. Above all, it will serve as a basis on which to appreciate Dante's position on both sides of exile: on the objective side of its enactment and on the subjective side of its passion.

Aristotle's warning against the abusive use of exile in the power struggle of political factions could be applied to late medieval Florence as much as to classical Athens.

As the author of his 'exilic discourse', Dante's self-designation is 'poet of rectitude'. His chosen philosophy is Moral Philosophy. His central concern is with justice and good government. In much of Dante's thought we recognize the model of the Stagirian. Contrary to popular assumption, Dante remains faithful to him throughout his 'exilic discourse', including the Divine Comedy as far as it concerns the rational and social human animal. On this level then, Aristotle himself remains our most dependable link to his medieval disciple.

ENDNOTES - APPENDIX TWO

1. In Book V of the Ethics Aristotle discusses (a) universal justice of 'complete virtue'; (b) distributive and rectificatory justice; (c) political justice with its natural and legal phases; and (d) equity qua 'corrective of legal justice'.

2. Banishment by ostracism could be obtained without specific accusation, and without appeal or defense. A motion to ostracise a fellow citizen could be proposed and put to the vote of the assembly simply to maintain equality, to keep popular participation in government affairs within a universally attainable common denominator. A count of 6,000 potsherds or ostraka bearing a candidate's name could procure the candidate's expulsion from the polis.

3. Aristotoe, The Politics. Translated with an introduction, notes and appendices by Ernest Barker, Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, New York 1946, IV, E-XIV, 3.

4. Ibid., Note Z, III/XI/19, pp. 127-128.

5. Ibid., III/XIII/15 & 18.

6. Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics. Translated with introduction by David Ross, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1925, V, 1.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 2.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 6.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 7.

16. Ibid., 10.

17. Ibid.

18. Politics, III/XIII, 13.

19. Ibid., 15.

20. Ibid., 19.

21. Ibid., III/XIII, 25.

22. Ibid., Thesis.

23. Ibid., XVII, 5.

24. Ibid., III/VII, 5.

25. Ibid., /XI, 19.

26. Ibid., /XI, 19, Note Z pp. 127-28.

27. Ibid., /XIII, 11-12.

28. Ibid., IV/XI, 3.