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Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 16, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct., 1921), pp. 265-280

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713919>

Accessed: 21-12-2015 16:57 UTC

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THE ETHICAL SYSTEM OF THE 'INFERNO'.¹

IN the eleventh Canto of the *Inferno* (lines 22—90) two distinct statements are put upon the lips of Virgil in reference to the Ethical System of Hell. A considerable literature has gathered round the question of their relation to each other, but, though opinions still differ, I cannot help hoping that a fuller statement and coordination of the evidence than, so far as I know, has yet been furnished, may secure a unanimous verdict.

I believe it can be shewn that an elaborate and uniform numerical scheme underlies the classification in all the three Cantiche. It consists in a three-fold division, yielding, by subdivision of its first and third members, seven main divisions of souls; to which two more, on a somewhat different plane, must be added, $7 + 2 = 9$; while yet another mansion, distinct from the nine thus appropriated gives us $9 + 1$, and so yields the mystic number 10. But in the matter of topography and classification the first Cantica is far more complicated than either of the other two, and for that reason it will be well to preface our examination of the *Inferno* by a brief account of the simpler schemes of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*.

On the Mount of Purgatory there are seven terraces. They correspond to the seven Capital Vices, from the stains of which souls must be cleansed before they can ascend to the Earthly Paradise. But this seven-fold classification is explained by Virgil (in *Purgatorio* XVII) as rising out of a three-fold division that underlies it. Our affections, he says, are perfectly regulated when we love, or rejoice in, the right things in the right measure—God and goodness supremely, and all else in relation and in subordination to that highest love. When we go wrong, we either love what we ought not to love at all, or we love the supreme too little or that which is not supreme too much. Thus perverse love, inadequate love, and excessive love, include, amongst them, every kind of passion or affection that needs purgation on the Mount, and they underlie all the seven capital vices.

¹ The quotations from the *Inferno* given in this essay are taken from Mr George Musgrave's translation. It was in connection with a hoped for reissue of that work that it was first drafted.

If, in Pride, we desire another's defeat or humiliation as ministering to our own exaltation, if, in Envy, we grudge another's success or rejoice in his ill-fortune, or if, in Anger, we seek assuagement in another's hurt, then we take joy in that for which we ought to feel sorrow and our love is perverse. If, in Sloth, we neglect the means of learning what we may of the Supreme Good, or pursue it, when known, with languid affection then our love is defective. If, in Avarice, in Gluttony, or in Carnality, we pursue the things of the world and the flesh too eagerly, then our love is excessive.

Thus the arrangement of the repentant souls in seven classes (occupying seven distinct terraces) reveals itself as an elaboration of a more fundamental three-fold division. Or, if we take it the other way round, we may say that we find the first and third members of the fundamental Triad each falling into three sections, while the central member remains undivided; so that we have $3 + 1 + 3 = 7$. Reading from below upwards, in the order of Dante's ascent, then, we have

3 Excessive love	{ Carnality	3
	{ Gluttony	2
	{ Avarice	1
2 Defective love	Sloth	1
1 Perverse love	{ Anger	3
	{ Envy	2
	{ Pride	1
		<hr/> 3 + 1 + 3 = 7

But, in addition to the occupants of the seven terraces, there are the Excommunicated on the island-base of the Mount, and the Late Repentant on its lower slopes, constituting two other classes not strictly coordinate with the seven; and giving us $7 + 2 = 9$. There remains the Garden of Eden at the summit, which is not a part of Purgatory at all, but is the goal to which it leads. And so $9 + 1 = 10$ completes the scheme.

Turning to the *Paradiso* we find a closely but not monotonously parallel system. There is indeed no direct emphasis laid on a three-fold division, but the central position and significance of the Sun is repeatedly impressed upon us directly and by implication; and if we take first, the three 'inferior' planets, the Moon, Mercury and Venus, all of which are within the range of the earth's shadow; second, the Sun himself; and third, the three 'superior' planets, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, we have an easily recognisable scheme of $3 + 1 + 3 = 7$.

And again, we have two other regions—far more conspicuous and important than in the parallel case of the *Purgatorio*—clearly differentiated from the seven spheres of the earlier part of the poem. In these two regions no special class of souls appears to the poet, but the whole

host of the Redeemed in the one, and all the Angels in the other. These are the sphere of the fixed Stars and the sphere of the Primum Mobile, and they give us $7 + 2 = 9$. And finally, beyond all the nine revolving spheres, there is the Empyrean—spaceless, timeless, and subject to no change. So here too we close with $9 + 1 = 10$.

The scheme of the *Inferno* is more elaborate and complicated. We may note, however, at the outset, that the Vestibule containing the Trimmers and the Neutral Angels is associated with Hell but is not a part of it; and furthermore that Hell itself contains nine circles and nine classes of damned souls. So we can already recognise the $9 + 1 = 10$ with which we are familiar in the other Cantiche. With this preface we may turn to the eleventh Canto of the *Inferno*, where the classification of sins is expressly set forth by Virgil.

When we reach this eleventh Canto, the poets have already passed through six of the Infernal Circles, those namely of the Virtuous Heathen (I), of the Carnal (II), of the Gluttons (III), of the Avaricious and Prodigal (IV), of the Angry (V), and of the Heretics (VI); and now, as they pause on the verge of the deepening and narrowing abyss, Dante's guide explains to him the nature and meaning of the three circles (VII, VIII, IX) that remain, placing them expressly in line with those previously traversed. All *malizia*, he explains, which earns hatred in heaven, aims at inflicting injury, and it works by the two weapons of *forza* (practised by the *violenti*) and *frode*. The more heinous of these is *frode*, because it is an abuse of the specifically human faculty of reason. It is *dell' uom proprio male*. And so: 'The fraudulent are lower, in suffering more intense.'

But the fraudulent themselves constitute two classes rather than one, inasmuch as Traitors, who have fraudulently wronged those who had special claims on their fidelity, are differentiated from the common cheats, who have only traded on the ordinary confidence that one man has in the integrity and good-will of another. Thus the Traitors are punished with Satan in the lowest circle of all (IX), whereas those guilty only of common fraud,

which breaks
Only the bond of love which nature makes,

occupy circle VIII.

Thus, the three circles yet to be explored contain the *violenti* (VII), the (simply) *frodolenti* (VIII), and the Traitors, or treacherously *frodolenti* (IX). Of these three circles VII is subdivided into three, VIII into ten, and IX into four compartments. But these subdivisions do not affect our present enquiry.

When Virgil has finished his account of the three circles (VIII—IX) which the pilgrims have yet to visit, Dante, after complimenting him on his luminous exposition, proceeds to question him about four (but four *only*) of the six circles they have already seen. Why, he asks, were (1) the Carnal, (2) the Gluttonous, (3) the Avaricious and Prodigal, and (4) the Angry, not included in the treatment of 'all *maliziä* that earns hatred in heaven,' if they have offended God? And, if they have not, why are they punished? On this Virgil displays a quite unwonted irritation, caused (as it is easy for any teacher to surmise!) not by the unintelligence of the question itself, but by its coming on the top of the pupil's assertion that he had perfectly understood the exposition. Had he really understood it (and it was not hard), a passage in Aristotle with which he was particularly familiar, a tacit reference to which had run through Virgil's whole discourse, would have furnished him of itself with the answer to his question. 'What!,' the teacher rejoins, 'Does not Aristotle tell us that there are three kinds of reprehensible conduct, *incontinenza*, *malizia*, and *bestialitade*? And does he not add that of these three *incontinenza* is the least blameworthy?' Had not the questioner's wits been wool-gathering, or his usual intelligence thrown out of gear, he would have had this passage in his mind, and would have seen, without asking, why the sinners in the said four circles (all of whom had manifestly sinned through incontinence) were broadly distinguished from the fell souls punished in the Nether Hell.

This remarkable dialogue incidentally resolves our nine circles of Hell into the 7 + 2 for which we are prepared. For both Dante in his question and Virgil in his answer tacitly omit circle I, of Unbelievers, and circle VI, of Misbelievers, as though they lay outside the system under examination, as indeed they do. Thus the three lower circles yet to be visited (VII, VIII, IX), and the four upper circles of the Incontinent already traversed (II, III, IV, V) form a scheme of seven, outside which the two others (I, VI) stand on a distinct footing, 7 + 2 = 9.

And further, by now making a single class of Incontinence (1) in the Upper Hell, coordinate with the two classes of *forza* (2) and *frode* (3) in the Nether Hell, Virgil has given us the three-fold division that we expect on the analogy of the other two Cantiche. The seven-fold division we have already recognised is now found to spring out of this Triad by the subdivision of its first member, *incontinenza*, into four and of its last,

¹ It has been observed that Aristotle nowhere makes this statement in set terms. But the objection is captious, for it is implied, and quite obviously assumed, throughout his whole discussion of the three reprehensible kinds of conduct.

frode, into two. This gives us a $4 + 1 + 2 = 7$, which is easily recognisable as analogous to the more symmetrical $3 + 1 + 3 = 7$ of the other *Cantiche*.

The $7 + 2 = 9$, and the $9 + 1 = 10$ of the others we have already found in the *Inferno* also.

The whole scheme of the *Inferno*, then, may be thus presented :

			1 Trimmers	
			1 Heathen	
1 Incontinence	{	1 Carnality 2 Gluttony 3 Avarice 4 Anger		
			2 Heretics	
2 Force		1 Force		
3 Fraud	{	1 Simple Fraud 2 Treacherous Fraud		
3		4 + 1 + 2 = 7	+ 2 = 9	+ 1 = 10

Thus, by the aid of the Aristotelian reference, we have been enabled to disentangle the full numerical scheme so plainly set out in the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* from the intricacies by which it is crossed in the *Inferno*. But here the reader may demand, not without some impatience, how he can be asked to suppose that Dante the poet was at all these pains to lay traps for Dante the pilgrim, and at the same time to conceal his numerical scheme almost past finding out. The natural progress of our investigations will bring us an answer ; and meanwhile—calling, for convenience, the triad *incontinenza*, *forza*, *frode* the ‘Virgilian,’ and the triad *incontinenza*, *bestialitade*, *malizia*¹ the ‘Aristotelian’—we may note that when Virgil has developed the two last terms of his own triad he implies that Dante himself ought to have been able to supply the first term, on the analogy of the Aristotelian triad, by including circles I—IV, in their collectivity, under *incontinenza*. The presumption then is strong that the analogy holds all through and that we are to take *bestialitade* = *forza* (*violenti*), and *malizia* = *frode*. The alternative is to regard the Aristotelian triad as introduced *merely* for the sake of embracing the four upper circles under the least heinous category of offences. In this case the introduction of *bestialitade* and *malizia* would be purely incidental, and therefore, for purposes of classification, irrelevant.

¹ The order of enumeration in *Inf.* xi, 82 sq. is

Incontinenza, malizia e la matta
Bestialitade.

In Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* vii, 1, 1) it is : *malitia*, *incontinentia*, *bestialitas*. But the order of gradation, with which alone we are concerned, is identical in both.

Let us then set aside the *incontinenza*, as to which there is no dispute, and examine the relation, or want of relation, between the two other pairs of terms (throwing the Aristotelian words into their Latin form):

I	II
malizia { <i>forza</i> <i>frode</i>	<i>bestialitas</i> <i>malitia</i> .

It will be convenient here to note that the terms *forza* and *frode* are taken from Cicero: *Cum autem duobus modis, id est, aut vi aut fraude fiat injuria; fraus quasi vulpeculae, vis leonis videtur* (*De Off.* i, 13, sec. 10). The influence of this passage may be traced in *Inf.* xxvii, 75, but what chiefly interests us in the present context is that (while incidentally explaining the introduction in Virgil's discourse of *ingiuria*, as the link between *malizia* and *forza* and *frode*) it fully explains why those who practise *forza* (*vis*) are uniformly described as the *violenti*.

The terms of comparison then are the Ciceronian and the Aristotelian terminology; and there would be nothing at all surprising in Dante's finding, or attempting to establish, a harmony between them. Considerable sections of the 2^a 2^{ae} of the *Sum. Theol.* are devoted to similar adjustments and harmonisings between the terms, or systems, of different authorities. But in this instance scholars who work on the Greek text of Aristotle have found irreconcilable divergencies between his classification and Cicero's. Aristotle's own terms are ἀκρασία, θηριότης, and κακία; so that, setting aside ἀκρασία, as to which there is no dispute, we have to study (1) the relation of θηριότης (represented in the Latin translation used by Dante by *bestialitas*) and *forza*; and (2) that of κακία (*malitia*) and *frode*. We will begin with (1).

Now Aristotle expressly states that θηριότης is different in kind from κακία. It is ἕτερόν τι γένος κακίας (*Eth. Nic.* vii, 1, 1), whereas *forza*, in the *Inferno*, is but a certain species of *malizia* itself. If then we identify *bestialitas* with *forza*, we make it at once a species of *malizia* and something different from it in kind. When we turn to the Latin translation; however, the case is completely changed; for the translator, by a not unpardonable error, understands Aristotle in the exact opposite sense, and makes him say that *bestialitas* is *quoddam genus malitiae*—a certain kind of *malizia*, just as *forza* is in the other scheme. Moreover Aristotle himself, while sharply distinguishing θηριότης from κακία, regards them both as forms of μοχθηρία, κακία being μοχθηρία κατ' ἀνθρώπου, and θηριότης a barbarous or exorbitant μοχθηρία, more revolting than κακία but not really so mischievous, because a bad man, under the direction of his intelligence, 'can work a thousand-fold more

harm than a brute!'. Now the Latin version translates *μοχθηρία* by the very same word, *malitia*, that it has already used for *κακία*. Thus I and II in Italian and Latin become

I	II
<i>malizia</i> { <i>forza</i> <i>frode</i>	<i>malitia</i> { <i>bestialitas</i> <i>malitia</i> .

And in both cases the second form of *malitia* is declared to be specifically human (*dell' uom proprio male* in I, and *malitia secundum hominem* in II) and at the same time is said to be more pernicious or blameworthy than the other. In both schemes, too, the first form of *malitia* is specifically differentiated from the other by its monstrous and unhuman nature. Aquinas in his commentary calls it *bestialis malitia*².

Nor will anyone deny that the general character of the offences included by Aristotle under *θηριότης* corresponds to the crimes of the *violenti* punished in Dante's circle of *forza*.

In a later chapter (*Eth. Nic.* vii, 5) Aristotle develops his conception of passions that are *θηριώδεις*, and associates with them such as are *νοσηματώδεις*, or unnaturally morbid. All are treated together and are said to arise from diseased physical conditions or mutilations, from evil habits early instilled, or from an abnormally depraved disposition. Their general characteristic is that they find attraction in things that are naturally repulsive. They are therefore monstrous and contrary to human nature.

It is exactly this idea, systematically worked out by Dante, *more suo*, that underlies the arrangement of circle VII. It is a commonplace alike with Dante and Aquinas that there are three objects of affection natural to man (cf. *Conv.* I, 1, 54 sqq., *Purg.* XVII, 106—111). It is natural to us to feel good-will to our kind if no interest or passion of our own is enlisted against them. For instance, it would be unnatural not to help a man who had fallen down to get up again, even if he were a stranger. It is still more obviously natural for every man to desire his own good. And most of all is it natural to man to love God, apart from whom there can be no existence, no good, and therefore nothing to love at all. The sins of circle VII do violence, or force, to all these

¹ Vide *Inf.* xxxi, 49 sqq. (in reference to Nature having discretely ceased to produce giants, though still producing whales and elephants). Cf. *Purg.* v, 112 sq. where the conjunction of pure malevolence with intelligence in a devil is noted.

² The equivocal use of the term *malitia* in II, as the name both of the genus and of one of the species it embraces, presents no difficulty. Dante himself makes Fraud (generic) include Fraud and Treachery as species. Aristotle makes Incontinence (generic) include Incontinence proper and Incontinence in desire for gain, in temper or in ambition (cf. p. 278). The *Ethics* teems with analogous instances.

natural affections. The *violenti*, instead of taking pleasure in doing kind offices to their neighbours, take a disinterested delight in torturing them (cf. Aquinas on Arist. *Eth. Nic.* vii, 5, 3, [Phalaris] *in ipsis cruciatibus hominum delectabatur*) or in devastating their possessions. Or sometimes the perversion may strike a deeper stratum where the 'violent' hates his own life or makes a wild onslaught on his own property. But they are most unnatural and 'violent' of all who hate God himself and the Nature 'which is his art.' (Cf. *De Mon.* I, iii, 18; II, ii, 37, and *Inf.* XI, 100, after Mr Musgrave's certain restoration of *ed è sua arte*.) The influence of the Aristotelian phraseology, too, may be seen in the 'bestial,' that is unhuman, form of the guardians of the seventh circle, the Minotaur, the Centaurs, the Harpies, and the Black Bitches. Note too that Aristotle mentions the trick of biting the nails or plucking at the hair as allied to *θηριότης*, and Dante's Minotaur gnaws his own flesh.

It is abundantly evident, then, that the *bestiales* of the Aristotelian reference correspond in principle to the *violenti* of Virgil's first discourse; but, more than that, I think it can be shewn that, in this connection, the terms *bestiales* and *violenti* themselves would be regarded by Dante as synonyms; for we have seen, that *bestialitas* is a breaking out against nature; and all through his Physical treatises Aristotle habitually uses *violentus* (*βίαιος*) as equivalent to *contra naturam*. Look, for example, at *Phys.* v, vi, 5, or *De Caelo*, III, ii, 1, where it is expressly said that 'to be moved "by violence" or "against nature" is one and the same thing.' It is true that the context in which Aristotle uses *βίαιος* in this sense is very generally concerned with physical movements. But this is not always so. He applies the term to monstrous births, for instance; and he says that taking interest is the most 'unnatural' of all ways of making money, and again that the man who wants to make money for its own sake *βίαιός τις ἐστίν*. *Pol.* I, iii [x] fin., *Eth. Nic.* I, v, 8 (1258^b 7 sq., 1096^a 6). Aquinas too explains that the *violentum* is *excisio quaedam ejus quod est secundum naturam*, and again, that it is *quaedam exorbitas ab eo quod est secundum naturam* (*Com. in De Caelo*, II, xxiii, 4, i, 9); and he applies the term to forced flowers and to contortions of the body. In the light of these passages (which could be indefinitely multiplied) it becomes clear that the term 'violent' could be naturally applied in the *Inferno* not only to acts of reckless slaughter or devastation, but to every sort of perverse and unnatural wickedness or depraved habit that involves the 'elimination' of the natural affections, or the 'exorbitant' play of animal impulses not specifically human, and, gener-

ally, anything that runs counter to nature—just such sins, in fact, as we find in Dante's seventh circle or under the heading of *θηριότης* in Aristotle's *Ethics*.

As to the *frodolenti* of circles VIII and IX as compared with Aristotle's *malitia*, in the narrower sense, it is enough to note that both classes include all the sins that do not come under the head of incontinence or of brutish violence, and that both are characterised by the turning of the specific human faculty of intelligence to evil ends.

We can now understand why, when Dante told Virgil that he completely understood his exposition of *forza* (*violenti*) and *frode*, and then by his question shewed plainly that he had not so much as noted that the elaborately described 'violence' was unhuman brutishness, and had so missed the running parallel with the Aristotelian division, the teacher felt some irritation. For it is an interesting fact, which we happen to know, that Dante himself, the Poet, had been particularly familiar with this three-fold Aristotelian division of reprehensible dispositions from early days, and never seems to have had it long out of his mind. It is worth while to set forth the proof of this.

In the prose framework in which Dante set the poems of the *Vita Nuova* (written, say, in 1292) he tells us (§ II) that, after meeting Beatrice as a little girl, in her ninth year, he closely observed her ways 'and found her so noble and praiseworthy that verily of her might have been said those words of the poet Homer: "She seemed not to be the daughter of a mortal man, but of God."' Now Dante had no first-hand acquaintance with Homer, and his actual quotations from him are all taken from Aristotle or Horace. This particular one occurs in the very passage of the *Ethics* which we are now considering. 'To bestiality one might reasonably oppose some heroic and divine excellence that transcends the range of our human virtue, even as Homer makes Priam say of Hector, because of his supreme excellence, "nor did he seem to be the child of a mortal man, but of God."' We see then that at this early period of his studies Dante was already familiar with the opening of the seventh book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

We may go further. It is clear that this section of the *Ethics* had specially impressed him, and moreover that he had studied the commentary of Aquinas upon it; for he incorporates a remarkable passage from this commentary in the third book of the *Convivio*, written, we may suppose, in 1308 or a little earlier. In reference to the contrast between heroic or divine excellence and bestiality, Aquinas says: 'In

evidence of which we must consider that the human soul stands midway between the higher and divine beings with whom it shares intelligence, and the brute beasts with whom it shares the faculties of sense. As then the sensitive parts of the soul are sometimes corrupted in man even to the similitude of the beasts—which is called bestiality as exceeding the limits of human vice and incontinence—so likewise the rational part is sometimes perfected and informed in man beyond the common measure of human perfection, even as it were to the similitude of the Immaterial Beings, and this is called divine virtue as beyond the human and common virtue. For the order of things is such that the mean touches either extreme on this side or that. Hence in human nature too there is that which touches the higher, that which is united with the lower, and that which is of intermediate habit between them.' Compare Dante's 'And because in the intellectual order of the universe ascent and descent is by almost continuous gradations, there is no intermediate step from the lowest form to the highest, and from the highest to the lowest (as we see is the case in the sensible order); and because between the Angelic nature, which is an intellectual existence, and the human soul, there is no intermediate step, but the one is as it were continuous with the other in the order of gradation; and because between the human soul and the most perfect soul of the brute animals there is also no intermediary, and because we see many men so vile and of such base condition as scarce to seem other than beasts, so also we are to lay it down and firmly to believe that there be some so noble and of so lofty condition as to be scarce other than angels. Otherwise the human species would not be continued in either direction, which may not be. Such as these Aristotle, in the Seventh of the *Ethics*, calls divine¹. And again in the Fourth Treatise² he recurs to the contrast between the *vilissimi e bestiali* and the *nobilissimi e divini* amongst men, and he once more refers us directly to the seventh book of the *Ethics* and the quotation from Homer. And yet again, in the *De Monarchia*³ Dante returns to the Homeric passage concerning Hector, and again refers directly to Aristotle 'in iis quae de moribus fugiendis ad Nicomachum,' i.e. 'in that section of the *Nicomachean Ethics* which treats of reprehensible conduct.'

It is evident then that Aristotle's three-fold division was familiarly present to Dante's mind all through his life as a student and a writer; and the words he puts upon the lips of Virgil shew that he had read

¹ *Convivio* III, vii, 69—90.

² xx, 30 sqq.

³ II, iii, 53—57.

the whole Aristotelian doctrine into Cicero's phrases¹. Had Dante, the student, actually heard a teacher deliver Virgil's discourse to a pupil, he would at once have recognised it as a luminous commentary on the Aristotelian *locus de moribus fugiendis*, and would never have asked the inept question that drew Virgil's rebuke. But Dante, the poet, is not so sure of his reader; and he thinks it quite possible that, even after all the hints that have been given him, the said reader may need an express reference to Aristotle's actual words and phrases—though he ought to be ashamed of himself if he does! Only it is a gracious practice of Dante's, dictated by his subtle sense of sympathy with his reader, to represent *himself* as bewildered and as receiving enlightenment from his guides, whenever he has a difficult point to expound. This practice is of course essential to the texture of the Comedy, as a dramatic narrative, and it is due to the consummate sincerity with which this attitude is maintained that the reader finds himself perpetually under the illusion that he is really being instructed *with* Dante and not *by* him. It is this that makes the Comedy (the most frankly didactic of all great poems) so entirely free from the offensive tone of superiority with which didactic writings are often taxed. But this is not a mere artifice. It represents the proud Dante's deep humility before the face of his great teachers. Whether or not, in any special instance, Dante is actually recording his own former perplexities and taxing himself with obtuseness in so long failing to see the obvious solution that lay within his grasp, we may be sure that the general impression we receive of Dante the pilgrim truly represents what Dante the man thought of himself. It was his sincere conviction that, when his gifts and his opportunities were weighed, the wonder was not that he saw so much but that he had been so slow to see it.

It would perhaps be enquiring too curiously to ask whether, in this special instance, reminiscences are embedded of Dante's own slowness to connect a somewhat detached passage in Cicero's *De Officiis* with the opening of Aristotle's seventh book, and the light he ultimately gained from bringing them together; but in any case the passage so understood

¹ It is equally obvious, of course, that Cicero himself did not mean all that Dante read into him. In the first place, he uses the substantive *vis* but not the adjective *violentus* so significantly introduced by Dante. And in the second place, even if he had used it, it could not, in his day, have borne the technical meaning it acquired as a translation of Aristotle's *Staios*. The nearest approach to such a use that I have found cited from a classical author is where Seneca's Hecuba laments that she should have been left alive when Astyanax and Polyxena were murdered:

Sola mors, votum meum,
Infantibus violenta, virginibus venis,
Ubique properas, saeva: me solam times.—(*Troades*, 1171 sqq.)

would well illustrate that humility with which Dante is seldom credited—deep and beautiful as it is—because, while he parades his pride, he does not parade his humility.

As we stand at the close of this long investigation, the question may well arise whether the whole of the *Inferno* was really composed with the scheme in view which is expanded in the eleventh Canto. There is much to suggest that in the earlier Cantos the design had been drawn to a smaller scale. In ten Cantos we have traversed six out of the nine circles of Hell, and (apart from the Heathen and the Heretic) we seem to be following quite simply the succession of the well known seven Capital Vices. It looks as if this earlier portion of the Poem had been ultimately set in a larger framework for which it was not originally designed.

If this were so, we should suppose that when the Poet determined to amplify the later parts of the *Inferno* and found it convenient to desert the simple method of treating successively the seven Capital Vices, his mind had already conceived the grandiose architecture and elaborated the number scheme that now dominates the whole Poem; and that he found in the Aristotelian three-fold division of 'reprehensible actions' a scheme that would admit the part of his now deserted plan that he had already executed, and yet would give him the larger canvas that he required for the new one. The symmetry of the $3 + 1 + 3 = 7$ was indeed to some extent irretrievably compromised, but the most essential element in it might yet be preserved, by dividing Fraud into two degrees and getting a $4 + 1 + 2 = 7$. The rest of the scheme would fit in reasonably well.

That something like this must have happened, and is the reason why the ethical and topographical features of the *Inferno* never seem to justify themselves by any such self-evident consistency as marks the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*, is apparent from other considerations. The contrast has often been remarked between the simplicity, the swift-ness, and the comparative absence of topographical precision¹ that characterise the Cantos that tell of the Poet's progress through the earlier circles of Hell, and the unexpected expansion, the harder tone, and the rigidly defined topography that we find further on. Such considerations have given more credit than it would otherwise have received to the well authenticated tradition preserved by Boccaccio that

¹ The symmetrical diagrams of the journey of poets through Hell that are current in most of the editions and diagrams are unauthorised by the text in many of their details so far as the early circles are concerned, and depend for their general character upon a note in *Inf.* xiv, 126 which may well be an afterthought of Dante's.

Dante had written the first seven Cantos before his exile, and resumed the work afterwards on recovering his manuscript.

But on the other hand the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, which was certainly written after Dante's exile, admits no art forms in Italian verse except the *Canzone*, the *Ballata*, and the *Sonetto*. All else is 'illegitimate and irregular.' It can hardly be supposed that when Dante wrote thus he had already composed seven Cantos of the *Inferno* in Italian. And again, I hope to shew elsewhere that Virgil and Beatrice could not have taken the places they already occupy in the first two Cantos of the *Inferno* until the author's set of mind revealed in the *Convivio* had yielded to that of the *De Monarchia*. Whatever earlier material was incorporated in the Comedy, its organism, of which the second and part of the first Cantos of the *Inferno* are an essential constituent, can scarcely have been articulated before the fall of Henry, in 1313.

Would not all the difficulties disappear if we might suppose that the pre-exilian manuscript was not written in Italian, but was the Latin poem which, according to Boccaccio, Dante began but afterwards abandoned in favour of Italian? If Dante had carried his Latin hexameters so far as to cover in a few hundred lines the first four of the Capital Vices, and on receiving his lost work again had thrown it into the Italian form, he might, perhaps years afterwards, have incorporated it in the wider scheme of which the first two Cantos of the Comedy as we now have it are the prologue. The lines that Boccaccio gives as the opening of the Latin poem quite lend themselves to such a hypothesis; but its highly speculative character forbids its being urged as any more than a tentative suggestion, though it is one that naturally arises out of a study of the 'Ethical system of the *Inferno*,' and may fitly close it.

APPENDIX.

I have thought it best to develop the positive exposition of *Inf.* xi on its own lines, with the minimum of controversial reference to divergent views. But a brief examination of some of the points on which, in my opinion, mistakes have been made, may naturally follow as a supplement.

The contention already noticed that the three-fold Aristotelian division of *incontinenza*, *bestialitade* and *malizia* is not intended to apply in its integrity to the main divisions of the *Inferno*, but is introduced merely with reference to Dante's perplexity as to four of the circles of the Upper Hell, seems to rest on the assumption that there is a closer and more easily recognisable correspondence between

the Incontinent of Aristotle's scheme and the denizens of circles II—IV of the *Inferno* than there is between Aristotle's *θηριώδεις* and the *violenti* of circle VII or between Aristotle's *κακία* and the *frodolenti* of circles VIII and IX, so that, when Virgil gives at full length the three Aristotelian categories of misconduct, Dante might naturally understand that two of them had nothing to do with the matter in hand but were only introduced because they happened to be in the context.

But the fact is that the correspondence between the Incontinent of Aristotle's *Ethics* and the Incontinent of Dante's Hell is far from complete. Aristotle carefully distinguishes between the 'incontinent' man who tries to control his unregulated appetites (because he knows that their indulgence is reprehensible) but sometimes fails, and the 'dissolute' man who has no scruples and who deliberately indulges his feeblest inclinations. Semiramis, according to this doctrine, would have been an ideal representative of Dissoluteness as distinct from Incontinence; and it must be confessed that the inclusion of such as her in the same circle with Dido and Francesca, or of Filippo Argenti in another circle of Incontinence rather than in circle VII, greatly weakens the application to Dante's Hell of Aristotle's plea for the comparatively venial character of Incontinence.

Again, Aristotle is very careful to limit incontinence, properly so called, to the sphere of the senses of taste and touch (with some further distinctions). Thus none but those unchaste or gluttonous offenders, who yield under the assault of strong temptation and are always sorry afterwards, should, according to Aristotle, be regarded as 'incontinent' in the proper sense. One hardly conceives of Ciacco's case as covered by this definition.

In a secondary sense, Aristotle allows us to speak of incontinence in the love of gain or of distinction, or in the matter of temper, but then we ought to add an expressly qualifying word to indicate this restricted use of the term. Yet more, Aristotle takes elaborate pains to shew that incontinence is less blameworthy in the matter of temper than in that of the appetites, because *inter alia* it is unpleasant to be angry, so that a man is not likely to court ill temper for the sake of indulging it; and also because, at the moment, an angry man generally thinks that he does well to be angry and may believe himself to be obeying the orders of reason, though, in reality, like a hasty servant, he has rushed to execute the order before he has rightly heard what it is. But all these points, so elaborately developed by Aristotle, are ignored or contradicted in the *Inferno*. Anger comes lower down than

sins of the appetites, no room at all is found for incontinence in pursuit of distinction, and no difference is recognised between incontinence proper and dissoluteness.

The case of *θηριότης* is closely similar. Dante seizes the main idea and develops it in accordance with his own ethical principles. He emphasises the un-natural and particularly the un-human character of this class of sins, and so includes suicide, usury and (for the sake perhaps of symmetry) the mad assault which the habitual gambler makes upon his own property; and he drops out morbid timidity, which Aristotle (also perhaps for symmetry) includes among the exorbitant passions. But he adheres to the most striking examples, and he preserves the main conception in its integrity.

Incidentally he finds in the Ciceronian *vis*, understood in the Aristotelian sense, a term preferable in this connection to the Aristotelian *bestialitas*, inasmuch as this latter word had a considerable range of varied application in the Latin and Italian of Dante (vid. *infr.* p. 280), whereas *violentus* exactly defines the 'unnatural' character that is the special note of *θηριότης* and of circle VII.

In dealing with incontinence Dante simplified Aristotle (if indeed he was giving any direct thought to him when he *wrote* of the early circles). In dealing with *forza* = *bestialitas* he systematised him. But, so far from there being a closer correspondence in the former than in the latter case, it seems truer to say that a careful examination will raise more than a suspicion that, while the Aristotelian division suggested Dante's treatment of later classes of sin and dominates it throughout, it was *imposed upon* the earlier portion of the poem *post factum*, though not without success.

And, if Dante's (or rather Cicero's, as understood by Dante) *violenti* are a preciser and in some respects a better equivalent to Aristotle's *θηριώδεις*, something similar may be said, in a lesser degree, of *frode* with respect to *κακία*; for in truth, when Aristotle says (*Eth. Nic.* VII, 1) that *κακία* is the opposite of *ἀρετή*, he gives it, by implication, a wider signification than he wishes it to bear, and he somewhat blurs the distinction between it and *ἀκρασία*, whereas the Ciceronian *fraus* brings out very well the heinousness of turning the intelligence, which is the proper glory of man, to purposes of shame, and marks off such conduct quite clearly from mere incontinence.

Another divergent interpretation of the relation between Virgil's first discourse and his Aristotelian citation consists in equating Fraud with *bestialitas* and Violence with *malitia*, instead of vice versa. This

obviously mistaken conception apparently rests on no better foundation than the order in which *malitia* and *bestialitate* happen to appear in *Inf.* XI, 32 ff. and *Eth. Nic.* VII, 1, 1, and it would hardly have been necessary to mention it were it not that it has found hospitality in a once popular Italian edition that may still fall into the hands of a beginner.

And, lastly, there is a striking passage in the *Convivio* which impresses itself with singular vividness on the memory of the reader and has given rise to a vain but persistently recurrent attempt to identify the *bestiales*, not with the Violent, but with the Heretics of circle VII. The passage, which occurs in the ninth chapter of the second Book, should be read in its entirety; but the phrase with which we are immediately concerned runs as follows: 'Per proponimento dico, che intra tutte le bestialitadi quella è stoltissima, vilissima e dannosissima chi crede, dopo questa vita, altra vita non essere.' And since it so happens that the Epicureans, the only class of Heretics with whom Dante holds special converse in the sixth circle of Hell, were particularly identified with this supreme 'bestialitate,' many readers have fallen, and will probably continue to fall, into the temptation of making an isolated identification of the *bestiales* with the Heretics, though it is impossible to incorporate it into any organic system of interpretation whatever. The truth is that *bestialitas* and its Italian equivalent are used by Dante and the Schoolmen in a wide variety of meanings.

The underlying idea, when precise, is always the absence of something specifically human. Thus, since legal or sacramental marriage is a specifically human institution, Bonaventura declares that all unchastity is *bestialis*, and it is exactly in this sense that Dante himself uses the word in a much-worried passage in the twenty-sixth Canto of the *Purgatorio*. Now since Reason is generally regarded by medieval writers as the one supreme characteristic of Man, the popular use of *bestialitate* for 'stupidity' or 'folly'—always like the French *bêtise*, expressing serious irritation—was really a strictly scientific term. And it is in this sense that Dante himself uses the word, not only in the passage under consideration but in *Convivio* IV, xiv, 107, where, with reference to a peculiarly exasperating and inane argument to which he supposes his adversary might possibly descend, he exclaims 'risponder si vorrebbe non colle parole ma col coltello a tanta bestialità.' It is clear that in the passage about the immortality of the soul the word is used in this general sense of 'stupidity,' and that there is no intention whatever of giving Epicurean misbelievers such a monopoly of it that, under all circumstances and in every context, it is to be regarded as their hall-mark.

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