

Dante, Duality, and the Function of Allegory

D. M. BLACK

WHEN I SAID to friends that I had decided to translate Dante's *Purgatorio*, several responded: Why? Is another translation necessary? To which the answer was undoubtedly no. There are already many excellent translations.

But I wanted to find a way to get close to the texture of Dante's thinking. Dante writes, usually though not always, with extreme concision, and it's easy to read him quickly, to be moved, intrigued, or bored by his allegorical inventions, but to miss the continual play of *thinking* that guides the movement of the story. Allegory tends to have a bad press nowadays, as if it were old-fashioned, rigidly moralizing, and decidedly primitive compared with today's rational and scientific thought. But at its best, and certainly in Dante's hands, allegory is an extremely sophisticated instrument.

And from a psychological point of view (my own training is as a psychoanalyst), it has the advantage over the objective language of science in that it speaks the subjective language of dream. That is to say, where science perceives a world of objects, to be understood by an abstract single subject, the thinking mind, giving what Thomas Nagel has called the "view from nowhere," allegory presents a world of subjects who each have their own point of view, comparable to "mine," but always other and always, in some way, to be learned from. In dreams we see the spontaneous occurrence of such a language; Dante's allegory is a conscious and deliberate use of it.

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The curiosity that took me to *Purgatorio* had been triggered first by a well-known fact about the *Divine Comedy*, that in it Dante

chooses two very different people to be his guides, the Roman poet Virgil and his Florentine neighbor Beatrice. The more I thought about it, the more surprising this pairing seemed: Virgil, the supreme epic poet of Augustan Rome, who lived in the century before Christ and devoted his work to praising the Roman Empire; and Beatrice Portinari, an upper-class girl whose family went to the same church as Dante's, and with whom he fell in love, as he tells the story, when they were both aged eight.

As he tells the story, he barely ever spoke to her, though he was a close friend of her brother. Both were put into arranged marriages to other people, Beatrice at fifteen, Dante at eighteen, and in 1290, aged twenty-five, she died. Five years later Dante published a little book entitled *La vita nuova* (*The New Life*), in which he told the story of his intense and idealizing love for her, illustrating it with sonnets and other poems he had written for her, many with a wonderful clarity of emotion and formal beauty. At the end of *La vita nuova* he broke off, saying he was not yet ready to write of Beatrice as she deserved, but he hoped in the future to write of her "that which has never been written of any other lady" (Mark Musa's translation).

Rather astonishingly, a few years later, he kept that extravagant promise. He began to write the *Comedy*, perhaps in 1301—the action is nominally set in 1300, when he was thirty-five, "*nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*" (in the middle of our life's path). In 1302 he was banished from Florence for political reasons; thereafter he lived in exile, under sentence of death if he ever tried to return, in the frightening chaos of chronic civil war among the city-states and feudal lords of the Italian peninsula. He wrote almost the whole of the *Comedy* (he never called it "divine") in exile, completing the final cantos of *Paradiso* a few months before he died in Ravenna in 1321.

The story of the *Comedy* is well known: it describes a journey through the three realms of the afterlife, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Dante is initially lost in a dark wood ("even to think of it renews my terror"), and Beatrice puts in an early appearance in the story as she descends from heaven to ask Virgil to go to Dante's assistance. Virgil does so, and he becomes Dante's guide through Hell and

then right up to the top of the Mountain of Purgatory. There he disappears, and his role is taken over by Beatrice herself; she becomes his guide through the highest realm, the spiritual Paradise.

Dante is sometimes said to represent Christian orthodoxy. He was of course a child of the intensely Christian Middle Ages/early Renaissance, born a generation after Saint Francis and Saint Thomas Aquinas, and a contemporary of Giotto. His thought is saturated in that of Aquinas and other theologians, and the intensely coherent and meaningful world he portrays is the world of medieval systematic theology. But the medieval world was also in close dialogue with classical (that is, non-Christian) philosophy. Aquinas himself was hugely influenced by Aristotle, whose work—it's a fascinating story—having been preserved in Arabic translation by Muslim scholars had only recently been translated back out of Arabic into Latin and therefore become accessible to Christian thinkers.

The dialogue between Christianity and classical thought is central to the formation of Dante, as it was of Aquinas, and this dialogue is represented by the two guides, both of whom are treated by Dante with the utmost respect, and neither of whom is ever repudiated. And once one has this clue to a duality in Dante's value system, one discovers it repeatedly: classical thought and Christianity, Virgil and Beatrice, emperor and pope (whom Dante describes as the "two suns" that together guided Rome when it "made the good world" [*Purgatorio* 16: 106–114], but which are now damagingly entangled because of the temporal power of the papacy), and most strikingly of all, perhaps, in the structure of the Mountain of Purgatory itself, where the Earthly Paradise is reached by way of the penitential terraces.

This duality also informs Dante's central psychological insight. It enables him to bring an extremely sophisticated understanding to the place of religion, which remains a puzzle to many people in our supposedly rational and scientific epoch. To the psychoanalyst, aware of the power but also the inadequacy of Freud's dismissal of religion as "illusion"—"the fairytales of religion," as he referred to it in his central 1927 text, *The Future of an Illusion*—this is where Dante's thought opens up territory that still awaits deeper exploration.

He demonstrates his position—shows but not tells—by having Virgil, representing the power of classical thought without benefit of Christian revelation, escort Dante right up to the top of the seven terraces on the Mountain of Purgatory. Virgil explains the structure in canto 17. All human motives, he says, are variants on love. There is no innate wickedness, and no equivalent of Freud’s “death drive.” Love is quite simply “natural”:

The natural is always without error,
but the heart can err by choosing a wrong object,
or by excessive or too little ardor.

(17: 94–96)

The most severe sins are repented on the lowest three terraces; they are examples of love that chooses a “wrong object”: pride, envy, wrath. The three upper terraces are examples of love for something good in itself, but loved excessively: avarice, gluttony, lust. And in between, the fourth, is the terrace of “too little ardor,” usually, though not very adequately, translated “sloth.” These seven sins are all within Virgil’s understanding, and though psychologists no longer use the language of sin, are still all entirely recognizable as sources of “problems for self or other” (as they might put it). In Purgatory, they all give rise to penitence, that is to say, conflict between the motive of the sin, on the one hand, and the recognition of divine love on the other, by which their deformity and obstructive power can be perceived. All the souls in Purgatory suffer their penance in graphic and distinctive ways, expressive of the nature of the sin they have to repent.

What is especially remarkable, however, and original to Dante, is that this process of purgation is not the whole story. The conventional view of Purgatory is that it’s the place where you repent, for however long, and then, like a prisoner who has done his time, you are free to go upward to heaven; and sometimes Dante speaks as if this is the case. More often he makes it clear that “repentance” involves psychological work, analogous to psychoanalytic “working through”: the “will” is being trained by its purgation and is required to change radically. In canto 21, Statius explains that the Mountain quakes in

celebration whenever a soul completes this task and its “free-will becomes free” to ascend to Paradise. But Dante is about to show us that there is a further step.

When the pilgrims emerge from the final terrace, that of the lustful, Virgil tells Dante that this is as far as he can guide him:

I have brought you here by thoughtfulness and skill:
henceforth let your own pleasure be your guide [. . .]

No longer look to me for word or signal!
Your will is straight now, vigorous, and free—
it would be sin to act against its wisdom.

You over yourself I therefore crown and miter.
(27: 130–131; 139–142)

The coronation of a Holy Roman emperor involved both crown and miter, so Virgil is not here going beyond his remit. But he is saying that Dante can now trust his own judgment. His will has been “straight[ened]” on the terraces of Purgatory, and he is freed from the legacy of Adam’s sin. This is by no means compatible with orthodox Christian teaching, whereby, though Adam’s sin has been redeemed by Christ’s crucifixion, there can never again be Paradise on earth. But for Dante, here it is! And in the poem he now moves on into the Earthly Paradise, beautifully described, full of forests and blossoming trees and singing birds. Here he finds Beatrice.

What Dante (the poet, rather than the protagonist) appears to be telling us is that classical thought, with its rationality and its excellent Aristotelian values, can understand and recognize what in Christian terms are the great sins that have to be repented before one can be “saved.” To say that Virgil “has guided him as far as he can” means that this is as far as classical rational or philosophical thought can take us. And for a moment it seems that there’s no need for anything further.

But finding Beatrice, in this new world, is not at once the ecstatic experience one might expect. Dante, as so often in the past (he has told us so in *La vita nuova*), is overwhelmed by the sight of her. He

is disturbed by “the power of former love.” He turns to the faithful Virgil for support—but Virgil has vanished (“Virgil my sweetest father, Virgil / to whom I gave myself for my salvation” [30: 50–51]); Dante breaks down in tears. Beatrice shows no sign of sympathy. She tells Dante not to weep yet; he’s going to have something else to cry about.



This is the moment when we begin to perceive that there is an altogether different world of values from that of Virgil. Beatrice is concerned for something else entirely. She asks two challenging questions:

How did you deign to approach the Mountain?
 Did no one tell you that here man is happy?
 (30: 74–75)

These are very surprising questions. It’s as if her picture of Dante is of someone too proud to surrender his unhappiness and sense of grievance. This is very different from the self-portrait Dante has so far shown us, of himself as frightened, longing to be comforted, eager to learn, and profoundly grateful to Virgil for his support. But to the psychoanalyst it is very suggestive, because the changed picture is also a recognizable one: we know that those who have suffered trauma they have not been able to verbalize, perhaps in infancy, or perhaps, like some Holocaust survivors, too terrible to be remembered explicitly, are often unable to surrender their sense of sadness and grievance, even though they have no way, consciously, to know what it’s about or to tell any adequate story to account for it.

Such people very often, consciously, pine for love, but may then be unable to respond to love when they meet the opportunity. David Aberbach, in his 1989 book *Surviving Trauma*, has shown how often people who are exceptionally creative have suffered trauma of this sort. He discusses Dante in particular, whose mother died when he was a child (we don’t know at what age, but certainly when he was still very young, perhaps four or five). Aberbach suggests that Dante’s

“overwhelmed” reactions of disturbance at meeting Beatrice in person—becoming faint, becoming confused, having disturbing visions, and on at least one occasion becoming unable to eat, so that his friends worried about his health—were the product of an unbearable conflict between his conscious feeling of love and delight, on the one hand, and on the other, an unconscious terror of repeating some terrible, unbearable grief process, including bewilderment and desperate fear and rage at abandonment. He suggests that as this grief reaction (chaotic response to traumatic and incomprehensible loss) was not available in explicit (episodic) memory, it couldn’t be worked through, but could only be enacted repeatedly in the form of recurrent, bewildering symptomatic behavior. (Freud would have spoken at this point of “repetition compulsion”; the story of an unconscious, implicit memory of trauma, perhaps now built into the brain’s neuronal structure, makes the repetition understandable.)

However, the poem is being written not by Beatrice, but by Dante. Her questions therefore represent a moment of at least partial insight on his part—not into the part played (perhaps) by his mother’s death, but at least into the character of his own reactions. And his response to Beatrice’s questions is now not guilt, the response to sin throughout the terraces of Purgatory, but *shame*:

Ashamed, I dropped my gaze to the clear water,
 but seeing myself reflected there removed it
 to the grass, so painfully my shame weighed on me.
 (30: 76–78)

It’s a wonderfully convincing description of shame, and conveys a sense of Dante’s absolute acceptance of the truth of Beatrice’s reproach. But what is Beatrice reproaching him for?

This is the beginning of a sustained passage, continuing directly across two cantos, in which Beatrice retells Dante’s history from her point of view, that is to say, from the viewpoint of her distinctive sort of love. Beatrice represents the love for *being*; Virgil represented the love for *doing*. It is often a latent question for a child: Am I loved for what I *do* (when I’m good), or am I loved for who I *am* (am I

loved simply for the person I am, even though I make mistakes, even though I'm bad)? It corresponds to a profoundly important difference, even if in human reality the two sorts of love may never be met entirely separate from each other. The "trainings" of Purgatory have been trainings of Dante's will: he is now a "man of good character" in Aristotle's sense. But Beatrice represents the second sort of love, also allegorized by Dante as "divine love."

She explains that while she was alive she guided him on the true path by her beauty, but when she died he became unfaithful to her:

But then when I was on the threshold of
my second age, and entered a new life,
all at once he abandoned me and chose another.

And when I rose from flesh to spirit, and
beauty and virtue both increased in me,
I was to him less dear and less delighted-in.

(30: 124–129)

We know from another of Dante's writings, the *Convivio*, that after Beatrice's death he turned to study, both classical philosophy and Christian theology—and he spoke of this as turning to the "Lady Philosophy"—so perhaps this is the infidelity she is talking about. Or perhaps he really turned to another woman, as *La vita nuova* seems to suggest. At all events (since Dante is writing the poem), he has come in middle age to see this event, whatever it was, as a betrayal of his deepest love, to Beatrice, and therefore as something that put his ultimate salvation at risk.

And in the following canto he meets "the point of her sword." She asks him directly: Does he agree with what she has just said? Dante breaks down in painful tears. He confesses she is right: following her death, he succumbed to the lure of "things present / and their false pleasures" (31: 34–35).

This confession is the pivotal moment in the long and subtle account of self-insight that this conversation with Beatrice represents. She responds by congratulating him on his truthfulness: this honest

admission, she says, is what allows the whetstone's wheel to start turning the other way, to blunt and not to sharpen the sword of reproach. And shortly afterward he says that "the nettle of repentance" so stung him that "whatever else once drew / me into love now seemed repulsive to me" (31: 85–87).

Thinking of this psychoanalytically, what is happening has ceased to be primarily guilt, or even shame, and has become grief, the mourning for what had not been possible because of the damage done to his capacity to love and to receive love straightforwardly and with gratitude. This is what the self-insight represented by Beatrice's questions has led to: a recognition of loss, the irretrievable loss of life time and experience, and of the development that life experience makes possible, and a recognition, too, that the other things that "drew him into love," whatever their merits in themselves, were substitutes for her and therefore not for him the equal of what he had been unable to live directly. This is why the sword of reproach now becomes blunter: the reproaches and self-criticism of guilt have now changed into the less noisy but no less painful emotions of grief.

Soon afterward, something altogether new happens: the angels surrounding Beatrice start to sing, not of Dante's infidelity to Beatrice, but of his fidelity to her in spite of everything:

"Turn, Beatrice, turn your holy eyes," they sang,
 "to this man who has been so faithful to you,
 who has taken so many steps to come to see you."
 (31: 133–135)

Dante is becoming able to forgive himself. The angels now represent a new way to think about his history, and also a new and more ordinary way to think about Beatrice, not so much as the representative of an overpowering beauty, goodness, and perfection, but as someone who is friendly to him and appreciative of his love. The journey has much further to go, but from this point on Dante and Beatrice can have (in general) a mutually trusting relationship.

In terms of the topic of this essay, the working of allegory and of the dual value systems in Dante's thought, the crucial point has now

been made: what Beatrice represents is the more profound (is “necessary for salvation”), but what Virgil represents (practical good sense, courage, justice, wisdom, friendship—the sum of the virtues required for Aristotelian *eudaimonia* or flourishing) can take you a very long way, and is essential for coping in a world that contains the sinful motives on display in Hell and Purgatory. Virgil and Beatrice are “two suns”—two independent sources of illumination—but each should be in harmony with the other, symbolized by the fact that at the outset it is Beatrice who asks Virgil to assist Dante (and Virgil responds without hesitation), and at all points, though he never addresses her again, Virgil speaks of Beatrice with the greatest respect.

Using a quite different vocabulary, a modern student of child development like Colwyn Trevarthen offers a parallel insight: that the baby and small child needs most profoundly to be loved and related to for what he or she is, regardless of achievement; but to live a fulfilling life will require practical, social, and political skills as well—“emotional intelligence.” The two levels are distinct; but the second can never be adequate unless the first can be contacted.



Dante has made his point: living necessitates a duality of ethical value systems, the one practical, to deal with the unpredictable realities of a complex world, the other transcendent, to provide the ultimate compass bearing that guides the whole project. Now, to show the radical nature of this truth, he needs to make the same point in theological terms. He does so again by the use of his allegorical method.

When he meets Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise, she is part of an extended pageant. This is allegory of the sort that often seems artificial and rather alienating to the modern reader. A gryphon, representing Christ, draws a chariot (the Church), with three ladies dancing at the right wheel (the theological virtues: faith, hope, and love) and four ladies dancing at the left wheel (the classical virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, courage)—and so it goes on; other figures represent the four evangelists, the different books of the Bible, and so

forth. But Dante makes something remarkable of this highly artificial and conventional construction.

The gryphon is a composite mythological beast, with the head and breast of an eagle and the body of a lion; it therefore represents the dual nature of Christ, both god and man. At first Dante can't see Beatrice clearly, but when he does, she is looking not at him but at the gryphon. As he looks into her eyes, he sees the gryphon reflected:

And there within them, like the sun reflected
in a mirror, shone that double animal,
revealing now the one, now the other nature.

Imagine, reader, how I marveled, seeing
that thing that in itself remained unchanging,
yet, where it was reflected, changed continually!
(31: 121–126)

What Dante is describing is the central mystery of Christianity, the Incarnation: Christ is both god and man, and yet one person. This is a double truth that the human mind cannot fully conceive as it reflects: it can only oscillate between its perceptions of the two natures.

A moment later, in response to the angels, Beatrice turns her eyes to Dante; then she also removes the veil that conceals her mouth. (The eyes represent her truthfulness, the mouth, her smile, represents her kindness: truthfulness and kindness are yet another important duality.) Dante, no longer overwhelmed and now articulate, exclaims:

O splendor of eternal, living light!
Who has grown so pallid in Parnassus' shadow,
or drunk so deeply its abounding springs,

as not to seem to have a clumsy mind
if he attempts to tell how you appeared
when, shadowed only by the loving sky,

you let yourself be seen in open air?
(31: 139–145)

By saying “you” to mean both the eternal light and Beatrice, Dante is declaring that he too now sees a double nature. Beatrice at this moment comes close to being, or perhaps actually becomes, a gryphon in her own right, a Christ-like revelation of the twofold nature of reality.

It is tempting to say that Dante is suggesting here that the doctrine of the Incarnation, understood in its fullness, implies that to the eyes of love, every human being may give access to the divine, may be both god and man, and yet one person. But it’s equally possible that he is saying that Beatrice is so special that she uniquely displays this Christ-like attribute. Either way, his fidelity to his own perception is again taking Dante beyond orthodox Christian teaching. Without resolving the ambiguity, we can see that in Dante’s hands the ultimate nature of what we call religious language is allegorical: it’s an attempt to say certain things that can’t be said simply, in our univocal ordinary language, and can only be pointed to by using the equivocal or double-natured language of allegory. “God us keep,” said William Blake, “from single vision and Newton’s sleep.” Blake meant—and Dante would have agreed—that a “single vision,” the univocal language that describes material reality, creates a limitation in our capacity for understanding if we want to go deeper into the nature of being, consciousness, and relationship.

Mainstream Christianity has caused a great deal of confusion by its insistence on “belief,” and by presenting a creed in which allegorical and historical statements stand side by side (“suffered under Pontius Pilate” alongside “sitting at the right hand of God the Father”), as if they were the same sort of thing and should be believed in the same way. Other religions, Buddhism for example, or mysticisms such as the thought of Meister Eckhart or Jacob Boehme, recognize quite explicitly that their religious objects are “mental constructions,” necessary way stations for the imagination, which can’t be regarded as “ultimately” true, but which open up deeper perspectives of meaning and, because of the limitations of the human mind, can never be gone beyond entirely, or not for long.

It is this conceptually difficult territory that Dante is illuminating with his enormous and subtle poem. In the process, with his notion of a dual system of values (represented by Virgil and Beatrice), he also makes a contribution to ethical thinking that philosophy has yet to take fully on board. (Perhaps, in modern times, Emmanuel Levinas has come closest to it.) It affirms an ideal ethic of love, an everyday practical ethic of justice, kindness, and the recognition of social reality, and the necessity for both if we are to achieve our two goals of living responsibly in the world and also of attaining salvation. Salvation perhaps means being able to die feeling we have lived without betraying what we have loved most.



In some ways, Dante's thinking marked a culmination; European history then went off on another road into nominalism, a sort of theology in which God and nature were opposed, very different from Aquinas's integrated picture in which "grace does not contradict nature but perfects it." Nominalism in turn led to Protestantism, and then to the rise of science in the seventeenth century, in which God and nature had ever less to do with each other. Dante's poem became a monument, but his thinking did not become a foundation stone. Allegory came to be thought of as a mere literary device, and not as a mode of thinking in its own right (one which, recognized as such, enables religion and science not to be in conflict). Today's scientific thinkers typically have little useful to say about religion except, like Freud and Richard Dawkins, that it is illusory. (The concern with illusion is understandable, of course, as a response to the insistence on belief.)

I'd like to end this essay by suggesting that Dante, thinking through the implications of his emotional response to Beatrice in such detail with a vocabulary derived from Christian theology, shows us the way to a psychological understanding of religion that is less concerned with whether it is or isn't illusory, but instead helps us to understand the strength and importance developed religions can have

as ethical instruments to think with. And, despite the clamor of orthodoxy, we should not imagine that a developed religion is a static and collective thing. Anyone, like Dante, who attempts to live its truth through his or her own experience necessarily modifies and extends it. The role of Beatrice in Dante's poem, as he foresaw in *La vita nuova*, goes beyond that of any precursor, although it echoes that of the Virgin Mary in a hymn such as the "Salve Regina." And Beatrice, because in addition to being an allegorical figure she was also an ordinary Florentine girl, whom Dante saw across the aisle when he went to church with his family, also becomes an instrument to think with about the nature of incarnation.

The theologian Raimon Panikkar, one of the preeminent twentieth-century believers in interreligious dialogue, used to say that different religions are like different languages: you can tell the truth in every language, he said, but the truths you can tell in any one language are always slightly different from those you can tell in the others. (Every translator knows the truth of the last part of that sentence!) Many people, including the Dalai Lama and the Catholic theologian Hans Küng, have pointed out how similar the ethical and human values are that the developed religions support. In a 2017 article in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, I described the emergence of Amidist religion in Japan, in which the figure of the Buddha Amitābha came to embody a value strikingly similar to the divine love of Christ or Mary. A similar value is undoubtedly present in Ramakrishna's Vedantic Hinduism, in Islamic Sufism, and in Martin Buber's and Emmanuel Levinas's Judaism. Buber, with his emphasis on the importance of relationship to a "Thou," the unique, second person singular, and Levinas, with his claim that ethics has priority over ontology, are especially helpful in coming to grips with the sort of psychology and ethical system that Dante's allegory presents us with.

This variety in developed religions, achieving a similar ethical outcome despite entirely different "allegorical" stories, is impossible to understand if the model for belief is that of the sciences, in which what is believed is the hypothesis best supported by empirical evidence. It becomes comprehensible, however, if the emphasis on belief

is dropped in favor of the more subtle recognition that the language of religion is the language of allegory. That is to say, that religious objects tell a story that conveys or discusses an ethical attitude. Levinas, a Jew who survived the Second World War in a German POW camp—other members of his family died in the Holocaust—knew that it is ethical response that is supremely important. To see “the face of the other,” in his phrase, is ultimately of “transcendent” importance, because it makes one aware of a dimension that is altogether new, namely that of obligation and responsibility, notions that can have no force in a purely ontological account of the world, such as that of the natural sciences.

I think that intuitively many people hold some such view, though often nowadays, particularly if they are highly educated, they have no vocabulary in which to express it or account for it. What allegory offers is such a vocabulary; it allows us to live in a world of subjects, not objects, with the possibility of discussing values from many different perspectives. What Dante emphasized in addition is duality, the recognition that the transcendent value represented by the religion is an ideal, in no way to be sidelined for that reason, but needing to be mediated realistically into the world of human events and history—forever at a new and unique moment for cultural and political (and, we may add, ecological) reasons—in accordance with practical knowledge and principles that can only be learned by experience. This need for a second deck of practical ethical values is what Dante symbolized by the figure of Virgil. When Dante spoke of pope and emperor, or Christianity and the classical world, as “two suns,” emphasizing that both transcendent ethical vision and practical wisdom are independent sources of illumination, he also made clear that they should closely support each other. Together they make up yet another version of the gryphon: two natures, with one ultimate purpose.

Dante described Aristotle as the “master of those that know,” the supreme philosopher. Virgil, as an allegorical figure, represents rational and realistic thinking, of which Aristotle’s *Ethics* remains an impressive example. Dante certainly had Aristotle’s thought in mind as part of the illumination provided by the classical sun. In a recent extension

of Aristotle's thinking, the philosopher Jonathan Lear, who is also a psychoanalyst, has suggested that, if we are to have adequate access to the conscious values and decision-making capacity that Aristotle in his account of human flourishing took for granted—and which we now know to be the outcome of a long history of emotional development—it will be necessary to include an account of psychoanalysis, the distinctive modern technique to help us discover and reflect on our fundamental motives. Aristotle said that the rational and nonrational parts of the soul needed to “speak with the same voice.” Lear agrees, but, he says, in the absence of psychoanalysis Aristotle could give no account of how this desirable outcome was to be achieved. In his 2017 collection of essays, *Wisdom Won from Illness*, Lear discusses how psychoanalysis can contribute to establishing the basic psychic conditions without which Aristotelian *eudaimonia* cannot be pursued.

Some such large picture of the relations between religion, philosophy, and psychoanalysis is necessary if we are to find a steady place to stand in the swirling tangles of theory that make up the modern and postmodern intellectual scene. Dante, like us, lived at a time of great danger and political confusion. It is not a coincidence that in such a context he felt compelled to work out in careful detail his extended but very clear vision of the deep structure of ethics and the two realms of value.