

"THE DANTE SOLUTION: Fratellanza and Deep Ecology". *Forum Italicum*, v. 38, no. 1, Spring 2004, pp. 301-304.

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"Fratellanza", brotherly feeling, kinship: the ideal embodied by Saint Francis of Assisi. Dante applied the Franciscan ideal to his political theory, prescribing fratellanza (community in the broadest sense of the word) as the antidote to the societal disharmony he saw around him. We see this application in the *Commedia* in a four-stage progression of the Franciscan ideal: as exemplified by Francis on earth, as prefigured in the Garden before the fall, as fully realized in the Celestial Rose-garden, and as yet to be attained on earth. The forward movement of this progression constitutes Dante's prescription for an improved society. It takes the reader from the renewal of Christianity exemplified by Saint Francis to the anticipation of a longed-for socio-political renewal. All of Dante's life, as the *Commedia* attests, relates to the renewal of Christianity exemplified by the Franciscan model.

The organizing theme of this progression is the *motus ad Deum*¹, the impetus which propels the human condition in its striving toward the divine. The directional energy of the poem is an expression of the soul's natural tendency to return to its Maker. This impulse runs throughout the *Commedia* and is a driving force. On a secondary level, insofar as the progression leads to Dante's prescription for an improved society, I suggest that it is in keeping with "deep ecology", that aspect of modern ecological thought which is nourished by positive hope in the face of the overwhelming problems of our age.

Ecological thought is, of course, a modern product, and "deep ecology" a contemporary term. Still, there are a number of affinities between Dante's thought and the pattern of thinking that has become known as the deep ecological perspective.² Among them are the pervasive spiritual or mystical overtones, a deep-seated reverence for all forms of life, the idea of balance and harmony among individuals, communities and nature, the organic wholeness of the vision, the idea of living in moderation, the goal of transforming people and society, and the notion of "working on ourselves" by continually asking searching questions. When we read the *Commedia* we get a sense of life as a great web in which everything links up. We feel the unity and beauty of creation. There is an awareness of the interconnectedness of nature, a nature which is all-inclusive and contains God. Dante's entire journey is a form of deep questioning, of working on himself, and his poem describes a path toward wholeness. While there is always the risk of irrelevance in applying an a priori set of principles to a writer who has never heard of them, I believe that Dante's attitude toward nature can be better understood within the framework of the pattern of thinking called deep ecology.

Dante's "ecotopia", a word I use to connote this affinity, may be seen most clearly in his goal of transforming individuals and society. This transformational aspiration of Dante's utopian ecosystem³ involves his prescription for spiritual renewal through *imitatio*. Dante longed for a solution to the discrepancy between nature and community as it should be, and the reality of the world he lived in. His political and moral ideals stand apart from the corruption of his day and point the way to spiritual renewal through "imitation" of the poverty of Francis, which was in turn an imitation of Christ. The Christian renewal exemplified by Saint Francis and his early followers informs Dante's own political and spiritual expectations and is an essential part of the socio-historic fabric of which his poem is woven. The *Commedia* can only be understood in the light of this anticipated renewal.

Dante believed that the harmony exemplified by Francis should be realized on earth, not just in heaven. On a descriptive plane, he depicts the lack of harmony and fratellanza in the society of his time and decries it. On a prescriptive level, he yearns for a renewal of human society, and calls for harmony to replace cupiditas through *imitatio*. I propose the deep ecological perspective as an alternate lens through which the poem may be read and understood. A reading of Dante's poem within this context can give us a different perspective on modern concerns with the place of human beings in the natural world. A century has ended and a new one begun, and we are still searching for reason and balance, still striving after the harmony of fratellanza. In this context, Dante's prescription has much to commend it.

1. The Franciscan Spirit in the Commedia: the Franciscan ideal exemplified by Francis on earth

The first stage of Dante's ecotopia reflects the influence of the Franciscan spirit on Dante's thought and represents an ideal or utopian system, nature as it should be, in which harmony and fratellanza prevail. There are many scenes in Dante's poem from the afterlife or from life which vibrate with the sentiment of fratellanza and community. Bathed in the light of the beauty of creation, which is the mirror of the beauty and perfection of the Creator, all living beings are seen as fellow citizens of the one true heavenly city: "My brother, each of us is citizen/of one true city" (Purg. xiii, 94-95). This idea of creation as the mirror of the perfection of the Creator is the primary medieval view of nature⁴ whereby all creatures participate harmoniously in an ordered universe:

...All things, among themselves,
possess an order; and this order is
the form that makes the universe like God
Par. i, 103-1055

Saint Francis enchantingly illustrates the way in which all of the elements of the universe are united in the creative power of God by becoming the brother of ("affratellandosi a") "brother" sun, wind, fire, and "sister" moon, water, stars.⁶ By so doing he acknowledges his kinship with the elements of nature, as well as the common origin and equality of all creatures together with man. This concept is taken up by Dante in Paradiso xxvi where God is the beginning and end of all creation which in turn is a direct reflection of its Creator:

The good with which this court is satisfied
is Alpha and Omega of all writing
that Love has - loud or low - read out to me.
Par. xxvi, 16-18

Much has been written about the Franciscan influence in the Commedia.⁷ While it is unclear whether Dante himself was a member of the order,⁸ it is certain that he could not have helped but be influenced by the Franciscan spirit which was so diffuse at that time. Dante's entire life, as the Commedia shows us, is concerned with the restoration of that form of Christianity that the Franciscan model epitomizes. If Dante did not actually wear the Franciscan "cordiglio," he certainly carried it in his heart.⁹ The spiritual or inner kinship between Dante and Francis derives from certain commonalities which link these two figures, and which are contained in the motifs of the journey, the "vita nuova," a life of poverty, and devotion to the Divine. These themes reflect a certain psychological consonance while at the same time revealing differences in philosophy and temper.

The theme of the journey unfolds in several dimensions: real, metaphoric and mystical. In a historical sense, both Francis and Dante travelled a great deal during their lifetimes, the former voluntarily, the latter as an exile. On a metaphorical level, each represents the journey of the soul in search of perfection, the seeking after God or motus ad Deum. The journey denotes the spiritual development of each of them. This is contained in the metaphor of the path which is lost and then regained, the confusion and bewilderment of being lost ("for I had lost the path that does not stray," Inf. i, 3), and the paradigm of the descent and ascent. In terms of the mystic journey, Francis' whole life was an imitation of Christ. Dante's journey is also an imitatio Christi, an imitation of the pattern of the universal journey "from Garden to Garden through a Wasteland" which the life of Christ typifies.¹⁰

The exchanging of one's old life for a "vita nuova", a spiritual "mid-life crisis", is another theme common to both figures. Dante entered the dark wood at mid-life ("when I had journeyed half of our life's way," Inf. i, 1) and Francis renounced his old life in 1206 at the age of 24. In Saint Paul's words, both sought to "put off...the old man,...and be renewed."¹¹ Adam the sinner is the "old man," Christ the Redeemer is the "new man." While for Francis the renunciation of the old life was final and complete, both Adam and Christ are fused in the person of Dante the sinner-pilgrim who is reborn on the top of the Mount through the operation

of divine grace.

The theme of poverty is also common to Francis and Dante, though each experienced it with a difference. For Francis it was something he voluntarily chose. When he renounced his old life and took a vow of poverty, he elected to live a life of "voluntary simplicity" consistent with the deep ecological perspective.¹² Dante depicts him as the bridegroom of Lady Poverty in *Paradiso xi*. This is consistent with the equations "Assisi-Orient" or "Francis-Sun" or "Francis-alter Christus." The motif of *imitatio Christi* is replayed in the mystical union of Francis and Lady Poverty, the latter having first been the bride of Christ. Dante, unlike Francis, did not voluntarily choose poverty. He was poor as a result of his exile, and it was bitter to him to have to eat the bread of others and share their homes:

...You are to know the bitter taste
of others' bread, how salt it is, and know
how hard a path it is for one who goes
descending and ascending others' stairs.
Par. xvii, 57-60

Dante became a beggar, but not with the "perfect joy" which characterized Francis' choice. There was another difference in the way Francis experienced poverty. In addition to renouncing all material goods and living a life of voluntary simplicity, Francis lived in the mode of spiritual poverty. The detachment of the soul toward material goods was repeated in the stripping away of all traces of egoism or human pride. This was Francis' particular brand of asceticism: self-effacement or the total renouncement of self. Here too, Dante's way of being in the world was very different from that of Francis. Where Francis was seraphic, totally absorbed in the interior life of a soul in love with its Creator, Dante remained vitally attached to life. It has been said of Francis that he had a single-minded focus: that nothing came before the Divine and that he had burned through all else.¹³ Unlike Francis, Dante had not succeeded in transforming his own nature and we see at times in the *Commedia* a man capable of all too human emotion.¹⁴ Finally, both Dante and Francis are united in their devotion to the Divine, for which they are ultimately rewarded by the celestial vision which consoles. Although the goal for each was to achieve union with God, the path on which each set out to do so was not the same. For one thing, Francis did not think about instructing or teaching others. He practiced his own form of mysticism and furnished others with a spontaneous example of it. But for all his turning inward, Francis did not renounce the world and go and hide in a monastery.¹⁵ The knight of Christ stayed in the world and did his work there, furnishing those who followed him with a living example of "values in action".¹⁶ Dante instead was committed to instructing with precepts and theories, even through his poetry. It has been said that the entire *Commedia* is informed by Dante's conviction that an individual should seek immortality by his worthy actions on earth as well as by preparing to merit reward in the hereafter.¹⁷ Dante never shut himself off from the world, dedicating himself at first to political action for the good of the commune, and later to the moral elevation of humanity through his poetry and other writings.¹⁸

Whatever their psychological and spiritual consonance was, we can see in the paths chosen by both men the spirit of the deep ecological perspective described above. The idea of living in moderation is reflected in their lifestyles, the goal of transforming individuals and society is embodied in their quest for the renewal of Christianity through *imitatio*, and the notion of "working on ourselves" is exemplified by their journeys toward an ecotopia or ideal community in which harmony and *fratellanza* take precedence over competition and greed.

Francis' Testament¹⁹ exalts charity and poverty as the twin beacons by which to guide the journey to God or *motus ad Deum*. As we will see further on, both figure prominently in the *Commedia's* plan for spiritual renewal, charity ("*l'amore fraterno*") as the remedy against competitiveness and greed which work against community (*fratellanza*), and poverty as the cure against the materialism of the Church. Francis' "*carita`*," his love and concern for the welfare of all living beings, was held in the context of the divine.²⁰ It is an ecological context in which nonhuman life has its own dignity, and is seen to exist in its own right, for its own ends and purposes. This is similar to Dante's "ecological" perspective, the result of a process of synthesis by which the traditional Judeo-Christian viewpoint was tempered by Franciscan ideals of harmony

and community (fratellanza). While the Judeo-Christian tradition set man above nature by virtue of his intellect and moral capacities,²¹ it can be argued that Dante's attitude toward nature went beyond this anthropocentric view to embrace all creatures in nature, since all are reflections of the Creator and part of His design.²² Dante participated in an ecological context dominant in the Middle Ages, in which a close relationship was held to exist between God, the earth, and man.²³

To understand Dante's view of nature one must remember that it represents the convergence of two different lines of thought or historical tendencies: Franciscan mysticism and Aristotelian naturalism.²⁴ Aristotelian naturalism represents the rationalistic view that virtue is humanly possible and that man can attain moral self-sufficiency. Franciscan mysticism, on the other hand, is posited on the theological concept of grace. Because of the insufficiency of human intelligence with respect to the divine, only grace can save man and elevate him to god-like perfection.²⁵ Francis, too, is raised up to heaven by virtue of divine grace, but for Francis, God, though He is to be imitated, remains "apart" from man.²⁶ The recurring theme of the subjugation of the body in Francis reflects the "apartness" of man from God and the duality of Christian asceticism which rejected the human body and all material things while at the same time embracing the ideal of simplicity and harmony with nature.²⁷

In Dante, this dichotomy is resolved. Man is brought to his encounter with the Divine not in the sense of a leap between two antithetical poles - earth and heaven, body and spirit, human intelligence and divine grace - but in the sense of achieving the end result of the *motus ad Deum*, that union which binds together in love the Creator and His creation. In the *Commedia*, no irreconcilable distance separates the "old" and "new" man. Both Adam and Christ are present in Dante the sinner-seeker who is reborn on the top of the Mount of Purgatory, even though the rebirth occurs through the operation of divine grace.²⁸ Although the concept of grace is based on the "otherness" or "apartness" of God from man, the emphasis in the *Commedia* is more on union than on "otherness." In Dante's poem, grace is not only the remedy against sin (*gratia sanans*) but also the force which raises man's nature toward God (*gratia elevans*) and results in divine union.²⁹ Dante was able to arrive at a harmonious fusion of mysticism and rationality, asceticism and naturalism.³⁰ Like Francis' charity, Dante's was also *caritas* in the fullest sense of the term, encompassing the love of God and of all God's creatures.³¹ Thanks to Francis' example, Dante had come to understand that salvation lies in love, "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars" (*Par. xxxiii, 145*), the love which inspires and compels all creatures to return to their Creator.³²

2. Why Does Matelda Smile? the Franciscan ideal prefigured in the Garden before the fall

The second stage of Dante's ecotopia is represented by paradise lost, a setting in which nature, harmony, and fratellanza appear as they were before the Fall. To some extent, this may be seen as another version of the Franciscan ideal. It is a progression, though perhaps one which moves backward and forward at the same time,³³ from the ideal exemplified by Francis on earth to that same ideal prefigured in the garden before the Fall. The Terrestrial Paradise foreshadows both the ideal which Francis sought to inspire on earth, as well as a return to what might have been.

When Dante enters the garden, he hears the gentle breeze singing among the leaves of the trees in accompaniment to the happy song of birds:

A gentle breeze, which did not seem to vary
within itself, was striking at my brow
but with no greater force than a kind wind's,
a wind that made the trembling boughs - they all
bent eagerly - incline in the direction
of morning shadows from the holy mountain;
but they were not deflected with such force
as to disturb the little birds upon
the branches in the practice of their arts.
Purg xxviii, 7-15

The little birds ("li augelletti"), singing, greet the first hours of the morning with full gladness ("con piena letizia"). It is a scene reminiscent of the legend of Saint Francis and the birds. Even the words which Dante uses, "piena letizia," recall Francis' "perfect joy."

If the spirit of Saint Francis can be said to have caressed the hand of Dante as he penned his verses,³⁴ the smile of Matelda is no less pivotal for an understanding of the ecological context of the *Commedia*. Dante first sees Matelda singing among the flowers in Purgatorio xxviii. She appears in a madrigal-like setting strongly reminiscent of the locus amoenus or "charming place" found in classical verse. Dante has been walking along the stream and gazing at the abundant variety of ever-flowering boughs, when he suddenly sees "una donna soletta":

I saw a solitary woman moving,
singing, and gathering up flower on flower -
the flowers that colored all of her pathway.
Purg xxviii, 40-42

It is a natural setting³⁵ in which Matelda is symbolic of the ambiance which seems to emanate from her. Like Persephone, of whom she reminds Dante, she is the embodiment of the concept of eternal spring, a type of earth-mother or nature goddess, representing the very font of life in its most instinctive, pure and elemental form.³⁶

Dante is surprised to see Matelda laughing in a setting which evokes the memory of the original sin and the consequent Fall of mankind. She explains to him that her laughter is caused by her exultation in contemplating the wonders of God's creation:

You are new here and may - because I smile
in this place, chosen to be mankind's nest -
wonder, perplexed, unable to detect
the cause; but light to clear your intellect
is in the psalm beginning 'Delectasti.'
Purg xxviii, 77-81

Her joy is an expression of appreciation of the Creator's work and derives from a profound spirituality. The reference to the psalm *Delectasti* does indeed shed light ("luce rende"): "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work."³⁷

The Terrestrial Paradise in Dante's poem is a metaphor for the state of grace before the Fall, and has ecological implications in that it represents all creatures living in harmony (*fratellanza*) in contrast to the separation of nature and humanity which ensued following the expulsion from the Garden. To the extent that Eden represents the beginning of time and history as well as the starting point of man's alienation from God, it is also a projection into the future, and contains a utopian promise. It represents nature and community as it should be, not as Dante saw it in the society of his day. In Dante's poetic vision, the garden of the Biblical Eden is transformed into a "forest - dense, alive with green, divine" (Purg. xxviii, 2).³⁸ Again, as with the harmony that Dante is able to achieve between rationality and mysticism, a spirit of fusion and individualism prevails rather than orthodoxy. Dante lends originality and freshness to his Terrestrial Paradise, making it a selective composite of various elements associated with the paradise myth, both pagan and Christian.³⁹ Dante enters the Terrestrial Paradise at dawn, the hour of hope and aspiration. He had entered the Inferno at nightfall, the hour of despair and disappointed hope. Just as the "selva oscura" signified the life of sin, the hour of dawn and the Terrestrial Paradise itself evoke a springtime of the soul and connote spiritual rebirth. In that it refers to a state of being prior to the Fall from grace, the sacred wood represents an innocent and uncorrupt state of nature, the condition of the God-creature relationship which existed prior to the God-sinner relationship.⁴⁰ The object of Purgatory is the reversal of the Fall and the regaining of Eden. Dante's sacred wood can be said to represent the provisional nature of temporal bliss. In the context of his ecological vision, it takes on further meaning, representing a utopian period prior to the disharmony and

alienation which resulted from the separation of man from the Garden (nature). The alienated condition in which man found himself after the Fall⁴¹ is in contrast to the principle of *fratellanza* in which all creation is united in the love of the Creator. A number of writers have noted the distinct break which occurs between humanity and nature and humanity and God in the late Middle Ages, in contrast to the idea, dominant in the early medieval period, that an inseparable relationship existed between God, the earth, and man.⁴² The tendency to separate man from nature can be seen in the ecology movement itself. The use of the term "environment," for example, implies a dichotomy in that it expresses the idea that the natural environment is here for man to work on. In Dante's ecological world view, it is not a question of man dealing with nature, but of man being "of nature."⁴³ Viewed in this context, Dante's Terrestrial Paradise, in addition to representing the transitional nature of earthly happiness in the Garden, signifies a return to the time prior to the separation of man and nature in which harmony rather than alienation prevailed. Berry refers to this when he describes Dante's experience at the end of the Purgatorio when Beatrice appears "within a cloud of flowers" (Purg. xxx, 28): "The 'ancient flame' was lit again in the depths of his being. In that meeting, Dante is describing not only a personal experience, but the experience of the entire human community at the moment of reconciliation with the divine after the long period of alienation and human wandering away from the true center."⁴⁴ The harmony which results, the harmony between sense and spirit, is the very essence of Dante's Terrestrial Paradise.

The cantos dealing with the Terrestrial Paradise constitute the very nucleus of Dante's poem. In addition to looking backward at the story of the Fall, Dante's Eden is imbued with the promise of future grace and regeneration. Many commentators have observed the twofold direction of Dante's Terrestrial Paradise.⁴⁵ The myth of "paradise lost" through man's imperfection is counteracted by the promise of "paradise regained" as a result of virtue. This was the Christian adaptation in which the Terrestrial Paradise refers back to Eden before the Fall, while at the same time pointing forward to a time of renewed grace and harmony in the reign of the Redeemer.⁴⁶ The twofold direction of Dante's Terrestrial Paradise, its way of looking backward and forward at the same time, lends itself to an interpretation "per figuram" in which the "figura" is both anticipational and imitational. Figural anticipation, or the use of the past to foreshadow and illuminate the present, forms the core of Auerbach's studies on the *Commedia*⁴⁷ and his work is useful for establishing a terminology. The "figura" is a concrete, historical fact which is "fulfilled" by another concrete, historical fact. Another way of putting it is that the figure has a significance which is at first hidden and later revealed.⁴⁸

Viewed in the context of figural interpretation, Matelda may be seen as an example of a "figura" which is both anticipational and imitational. On the one hand, she represents humanity before the Fall from grace, earthly life in a state of harmony and perfection. On the other hand, she prefigures Beatrice, and thus anticipates "paradise regained," the return to the garden. In the figural interpretation of Matelda as the image of humanity unfallen as well as of humanity restored to grace, we sense again the backward and forward movement of Dante's Terrestrial Paradise, and the centrality of these scenes with respect to the entire structure of the *Commedia* becomes plain. The movement of the poem from darkness to light and from Wasteland to Garden follows the expectation-fulfillment pattern characteristic of Scripture.⁴⁹ The forward movement is characteristic of Christian eschatology in which all history is seen as a constant forward motion directed horizontally into the future.⁵⁰ It also mirrors the soul's teleological motion toward its highest good, the *motus ad Deum*. The dynamic structure of the Purgatorio, culminating in the Terrestrial Paradise, conveys this feeling of progression. We sense the energy of ascension, the "moto spiritale" which hastens the soul toward union with the Creator. Matelda's laughter as she sings the wonders of God's creation provides us with a way of understanding Dante's Terrestrial Paradise within the context of deep ecological harmony (*fratellanza*) and the seeking after God (*motus ad Deum*).

3. The Celestial Rose and the Divine Light: the Franciscan ideal fully realized in the Celestial Rose

In the third stage of the *Commedia's* ecotopia, Dante's Paradise, the Celestial (Rose) Garden, represents the realization of the ideal or what might be. It is a further progression from the Franciscan ideal exemplified on earth which we have seen prefigured in the garden before the Fall, to the realization of that ideal in paradise.

The celestial rose-garden is a "future, redeemed garden"⁵¹ where the reconciliation between man and God is complete and where utopia has been realized. If the *Commedia* can be said to represent the human condition in its striving toward the divine (*motus ad Deum*), and if the structure of the poem tends toward epiphany, the culmination and synthesis occur in the final major image of the Celestial Rose which expresses the reciprocal relationship between the Creator (light) and his creation (rose), as well as the possibility of union, through love, between man and God. Here the themes of *fratellanza* and *motus ad Deum* converge in the image of the heavenly community united in *caritas*, the end result of the universal journey of all creatures toward the Creator, and a model for society in an ideal world. The garden figures prominently in this progression. The Celestial Garden ("candida rosa") of the *Paradiso* is the ultimate fulfillment of the Terrestrial Garden of the *Purgatorio*, which in turn is the antitype of the "selva oscura" of the *Inferno*. It has already been said that the directional energy of the poem is an expression of the soul's natural tendency to return to its Creator. Once having succeeded in returning to Paradise Lost, it is but a short distance to the final resting place, the Rose-Garden of the Celestial Eden. The *Paradiso* fulfills the promise of a return to the Celestial Garden. It may be regarded as the prolongation or sequential narrative of what is revealed to Dante in the single moment of unbroken communication in which he sees the Griffin reflected in Beatrice's radiant eyes:

Just like the sun within a mirror, so
the double-natured creature gleamed within,
now showing one, and now the other guise.
Purg xxxi, 121-123

The journey to the Celestial Rose represents the soul's instinctive flight toward the Creator.⁵² It is the primal impulse of the creature to return to God ("l'impeto primo," Par. i, 134) which motivates Dante's flight, a natural movement or impetus, similar to that of a stream which rushes to the valley from the mountain top (Par. i, 137-138) but in reverse. The upward thrust of the journey is evident throughout the *Paradiso* in imagery which emphasizes the speed and directness of the ascent. In *Paradiso* v, for example, the flight to the second heaven, the sphere of Mercury, is described by the image of the arrow:

and even as an arrow that has struck
the mark before the bow-cord comes to rest,
so did we race to reach the second realm.
Par. v, 91-93

Elsewhere the movement is circular, but just as rapid. In the ascent to the sixth heaven, the sphere of Jupiter, Dante becomes aware of "revolving with heaven" and "turning, saw: the red of Mars/was gone" (Par. xviii, 61 ff.). The image recalls the passage in Aristotle in which the soul returns to the spiritual sphere via a circular motion.⁵³

The culminating image of the Rose begins in the thirtieth canto of the *Paradiso* when a flash of brilliant, living light ("luce viva") dazzles the pilgrim newly arrived in the Empyrean. When Dante's vision clears, he sees that the brilliance has been channeled into the shape of a river: "and I saw light that took a river's form" (Par. xxx, 61). Because his sight is still imperfect, however, he sees only shadowy forecasts ("umbriferi prefazi") of the essences of things. It is only when his eyes have been bathed in the river of radiance that the light appears to change form and become circular:⁵⁴

But as my eyelids' eaves drank of that wave, it seemed
to me that it had changed its shape:
no longer straight, that flow now formed a round.
Par. xxx, 89-90

At this point Dante sees the blessed and the angels, the two courts of heaven. The souls in glory are displayed in the form of a luminous white rose, comprised of more than a thousand rows:

so, in a thousand tiers that towered above
the light, encircling it, I saw, mirrored,
all of us who have won return above.

Par. xxx, 112-114

Beatrice draws Dante into the "yellow" heart of the eternal rose and bids him behold the "council of white robes" (Par. xxx, 129). The "convento de le bianche stole" is another image of fratellanza and union, representing the community of blessed souls whose white mantles are a reflection of their purity. The tiers of this fellowship are arranged in ever-widening, ascending rows, which form a series of concentric circles. The concentricity depends on the idea of the mystic Center which is the Eternal Light itself.⁵⁵ In this sense, the Celestial Rose is related to the symbolism of the mandala, a geometric pattern incorporating the concept of the mystic Center which expresses the synthesis by which disorder is transformed and the diversity of the material world is resolved into unity and harmony.⁵⁶

Upon seeing Beatrice unveiled in the Terrestrial Paradise, Dante exclaims "O splendor of eternal living light" (Purg. xxxi, 139), expressing the ineffability of his vision which is a promise of the final visio Dei. The word "splendor" is used to indicate that Beatrice is a reflection or "umbra" of the ultimate Eternal Light ("luce eterna") which is God and which will be revealed to him in Paradise (Par. xxxiii, 124). The Paradiso opens with a reference to the divine light which is reflected in different intensities throughout Dante's Paradise:

The glory of the One who moves all things
permeates the universe and glows
in one part more and in another less.

Par. i, 1-3

It is this Light which lifts Dante up to heaven: "it was Your light that raised me" (Par. i, 75). Elsewhere in the Paradiso, God is referred to as a point which sends forth light (Par. xxviii, 16), and as a pure spark ("favilla pura," Par. xxviii, 38). Throughout the poem, the Sun is a "figure" of God and the relation of the universe to God is one of emanation. We see this clearly in the image of the angels' Sun ("il Sol de li angeli") in Paradiso x:

...Give thanks, give thanks
to Him, the angels' Sun, who, through His grace,
has lifted you to this embodied sun.

Par. x, 52-54

The words "downpouring" or "raying" ("raggiare," for example, in Par. vii, 74) are frequently used to express the relationship between the created universe and the First Source. The order of the universe is such that the divine goodness which has its foundation in the Primum Mobile, "the heaven of the godly peace," is dispersed through the next heaven, "the sphere that follows," and pours down to the various planetary spheres (Par. ii, 112 ff.).

According to Seward,⁵⁷ the symbol of a rose vitalized by an omnipotent Sun, which reaches its expressive culmination in Dante's Paradiso, constitutes one of the earliest attempts of man to comprehend the universe around him in its most basic terms. The relationship of the Celestial Rose to the rose windows ("rosoni") of the Middle Ages reinforces this idea. The rose windows represented the universe regulated by the Divine Sun.⁵⁸ Dante's Celestial Rose relates to the pattern of the rose window in that it is characterized by radial symmetry (the rays issuing from the Divine Source and reflected upwards by the convex surface of the Primum Mobile) and by concentricity (the interlying, circular tiers of the blessed). Far from being the intermediary between the souls and God as has been suggested by some commentators,⁵⁹ the rose is the souls, the intermediary between them and God being the host of angels who, "like a swarm of bees...descended into that vast flower...then again rose up to that eternal dwelling of its love" (Par. xxxi, 7-

12). The resulting relationship between the Rose and the Eternal Light is a harmonious vitalization, and is symbolic of the universe flowering under the rays of the Divine Sun. It signifies the possibility of union, through love, between humanity and its Creator.⁶⁰

Perhaps nowhere in the *Commedia* is the concept of *fratellanza* more evident than in the image of the heavenly community united in the Celestial Rose.⁶¹ This fellowship is prefigured in the *Purgatorio*, where the use of the word "frate," which is not found in the *Inferno*, becomes significant. Its frequent occurrence underscores the fact that in a spiritual sense all creatures are brothers, united in fellowship through love of the Creator.⁶² What unites the community of the souls is charity (*caritas*), the love which is reflected in the heaven of pure light:⁶³

we now have reached the heaven of pure light,
light of the intellect, light filled with love,
love of true good, love filled with happiness,
a happiness surpassing every sweetness.

Par. xxx, 39-42

But it is in the *Paradiso*, and specifically in the image of the Celestial Rose, that *fratellanza* becomes complete absorption in God. At first the souls of the blessed present themselves to Dante's mortal eye as residing in the various heavenly spheres. The spheres are the manifestation of Paradise in space and time, a "speculation" or mirroring of the Primal Light. But the distribution of the blessed among the spheres is merely an accommodation for the voyager.⁶⁴ The souls manifest themselves in the universe of space and time, the spheres, while actually residing in the *Empyrean*.⁶⁵ Once in the *Empyrean*, all of Paradise presents itself to Dante as an immense rose. As soon as the spheres have been traversed, all reality is grasped in a single flash and there is but one Paradise omnipresent for all.⁶⁶ The concepts of *fratellanza* and *motus ad Deum* have coalesced in the representation of the fellowship of the blessed stoles united in eternal *caritas*. Viewed in the context of the deep ecological perspective, there is no longer any separation between man and nature, and between man and God. The Celestial Rose is a vision of organic wholeness, the realization of balance and harmony among individuals, communities and nature, and the promise of a utopian transformation of man and society.

4. Spiritual Renewal Through *Imitatio*: the Franciscan ideal yet to be attained on earth

The final stage of Dante's *ecotopia* is concerned with his longed-for solution to the discrepancy between nature and community as it should be, and the reality of the world he lived in. It is part of the progression from the Franciscan ideal on earth, prefigured in the garden before the fall, realized in the celestial rose-garden, and yet to be attained on earth. While the Celestial Rose represents an eternal, utopian environment removed from the violence and strife of time and history, we are not there yet. The institutions in society (Church and Empire) are temporary constructs meant to guide man on the path to the divine⁶⁷ and the utopian ideal has not yet been achieved on earth. Dante believed that the harmony embodied by Francis should be realized on earth, not merely in paradise. His poem is about hope for the future. A future which is our present. On a descriptive level, he portrayed the lack of harmony and *fratellanza* in the society of his era and condemned it. On a prescriptive level, he longed for a renewed humanity, a restored society, in which harmony might replace *cupiditas* through *imitatio*. For Dante, spiritual renewal through *imitatio* is the remedy against the she-wolf ("la cupidigia"), the creature that is the very antithesis of *fratellanza*.⁶⁸ This renewal is how you bring about the utopia on earth. Within the ecological context of the *Commedia*, Dante's she-wolf may be seen as a perversion of the principle of *fratellanza*. The she-wolf as a metaphor for greed in all of its many forms is a corruption of the ideal of fellowship among living beings. The symbolism represents a reversal of the unity and consonance implicit in the concept of *fratellanza* and a distortion of the natural order insofar as it obstructs the *motus ad Deum*.

Stated in terms of the deep ecological perspective, there are certain imperatives inherent in that approach which greed works against, for example, a deep-seated reverence for all forms of life, the idea of balance and

harmony among individuals, communities and nature, and the idea of living in moderation. If one views Dante's cosmos as an ecosystem in which man is both dependent upon and has a responsibility toward the rest of creation, cupidity represents a breach of the trust which that interrelationship implies. Greed connotes exploitation and dominion as opposed to community and fellowship. It results in strife and competition instead of unity and harmony. Cupidity is a distortion of the natural harmony expressed in Francis' "Cantico delle creature" in that living beings cannot live harmoniously on the earth as long as the she-wolf roams. The wolf is contrary to both the natural order and to the Franciscan ideal of harmony and fratellanza since the latter is posited on love and moderation, not on greed and competitiveness.

Dante's she-wolf is one of three beasts which threaten him as he begins his journey. (Inf. i) and along with the leopard and the lion is related to a literary tradition of beasts which stand between man and the "right way."⁶⁹ These beasts represent sin and the consequent loss of the true way ("la diritta via smarrita").

Traditionally associated with exteriorized sins, they have in modern times acquired a more psychological interpretation as manifestations of the interior soul of the sinner wherein sin originates.⁷⁰ As a perversion of virtue, an adulteration of the principle of Good, they stand in contrast to the ideal of fratellanza and the unity of creation. Perhaps the most well known example of the tradition of the beast who bars the "right way" is the wolf of Gubbio who was ultimately rendered docile by Saint Francis. As recounted in the Fioretti, this wolf was terrible and fierce, and he devoured animals and men alike. Francis tames him by addressing him as brother ("frate lupo") and by telling him that he wants to bring about peace between the animal and the people of Gubbio. The refrain "frate lupo" is repeated over and over in the tale, emphasizing that the remedy against the influence of evil lies in brotherhood. The way to tame the beasts is to make them part of the family of creation, to make them our brothers ("affratellarsi"). The wolf of Gubbio prior to his taming and Dante's ever restless she-wolf are a travesty of that spirit of fratellanza that is expressed in the "Cantico delle creature." As representatives of the force of evil in the world, they are the wolf-as-brother-to-man diverted to a wrong purpose.⁷¹ The wolf is therefore human desire gone astray, or free will turned toward evil ends.

Greed or cupidity is the root of all evil according to the New Testament, and there are several signs that point to poverty as the prescription for redemption in the *Commedia*.⁷² In both the first Canto of the *Inferno* and in *Purgatorio* xx, 10-12, the image of the wolf gives rise to impatience for a redeemer: "when will he come -/the one whose works will drive that wolf away?" (*Purg.* xx, 14-15). While examples of the longed-for savior include the *Veltro*⁷³ and the *Dux*, the foremost paradigm may be a Francis-like figure. This is evident in the way in which Dante presents Francis in *Purg.* xi, choosing to emphasize poverty as the central focus of the Franciscan legend rather than the love of one's fellow creatures ("l'amore fraterno"), to which Francis himself had accorded primary importance in his Testament of 1226.⁷⁴ Francis, though he had been dead for many years, offered the possibility of influencing future action through the memory of his example and his word, and through the exemplary lives of his early followers.⁷⁵ Dante saw Francis as destined to revive that form of poverty practiced by Christ. It was Christ who was the first bridegroom of Poverty ("She was bereft of her first husband," *Par.* xi, 64) and Christ with whom she mounted the cross ("suffered with Christ upon the cross," *Par.* xi, 72). This theme is developed through Dante's figural representation of Francis with its implicit promise of spiritual renewal (both individual and societal) through imitatio of Francis himself, as well as of Christ.⁷⁶

As the second bridegroom of Poverty, Francis imitates Christ's way of being in the world. To use Auerbach's terminology, Francis is a "figura capovolta," an overturned figure, in that he does not prefigure Christ. Rather he is an imitative figure that repeats certain events characteristic of the life of Christ. In this respect, it is interesting to note the placement of Francis with respect to Saint John the Baptist in the *Celestial Rose*. Francis, the imitator of Christ, is located just beneath John, the Forerunner of Christ. The "figura imitativa" comes after the "figura anticipatrice."⁷⁷

The spiritual renewal of the Church which is identified with Saint Francis in the *Commedia* is aligned with those imperatives of the deep ecological perspective referred to earlier. Cupidity works against the principles of community and fellowship which are the cornerstones of Dante's "ecotopia." Greed signifies an inability or unwillingness to live within limits and is therefore contrary to moderation (*modestia*). Living within limits, or living moderately, reflects a non-exploitative attitude toward the rest of creation, a certain humility,⁷⁸ which is more in consonance with ecological concepts of charity, stewardship, and fratellanza. The remedy against envy and competition is *caritas* and compassion:

And my good master said: 'The sin of envy
is scourged within this circle; thus, the cords
that form the scourging lash are plied by love.'
Purg. xiii, 37-39

Charity is directly related to community and fratellanza as well as to the motus ad Deum in that it is the driving force, the "moto spiritale," which partakes of the Divine Goodness and leads to union with the Divine. If charity is the remedy against the competitiveness which destroys community, poverty is the cure against the materialism of the Church which Dante saw as having corrupted society by its example. In the *Commedia*, both of these virtues culminate in the figure of Saint Francis who, aflame with divine love ("all seraphic in his ardor," Par. xi, 37), weds Lady Poverty.⁷⁹

In Dante's enduring battle against the wolf, no one better than Francis, born the son of a wealthy merchant, could point the way to moral renewal.⁸⁰ In his condemnation of ambitious politicians and clerics greedy for gain, we read Dante's conviction that spiritual renewal was essential for a universe in which all creatures might exist harmoniously and pursue their natural tendency toward the divine Creator. Francis is held up as a model in contrast to the clerics who have corrupted Christianity by their example and who have failed in their obligation to guide humanity along the path of virtue and salvation.⁸¹ Dante's political and moral ideals are at variance with the corruption of his time in that they indicate the path to spiritual renewal through imitatio, namely, emulation of the poverty practiced by Francis which was an imitation of Christ.

The relevance of the *Commedia* today is striking. Many of the issues found in Dante's poem still haunt us. The she-wolf is still at large in our world. The new century is still seeking reason and balance, and we are still struggling to attain harmony and fratellanza. It is here that a reading of Dante's poem within the context of deep ecology can be helpful. Insofar as deep ecology posits that both the individual and society should live in a balanced and harmonious way with the natural world, and offers the foundation for an environmental perspective that accepts a program of social change, it is in tune with Dante's goal of transforming individuals and society. Indeed, in his prescription for spiritual renewal through imitatio, Dante furnished us with a classic example of the idea of "working on ourselves." It is through the process of personal and societal transformation that the transition between "becoming and future redeemed gardens"⁸², that is, between the imperfect community on earth and the ecotopian celestial garden, can be attained. Dante was concerned with the proper conduct and function of man on earth even as he pursued the journey toward union with the Divine. To live "humanly" (*Convivio*, IV, vii, 11-15) for him was to live rationally (according to reason) and moderately (making the right choices between extremes). As a paradigm of perfection, the *Commedia* provides a path toward wholeness and harmony. In our effort to achieve rational conduct, Dante's poem has much to recommend it.

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NOTES

1 One of the major structural principles of Dante's poem is the microcosmic-macrocosmic relation between the poet-narrator and the cosmos, wherein there exists a system of correspondence between humanity, the ladder of creation, the forces of nature and the Creator. The organizing theme is the *motus ad Deum* or "*moto spiritale*," which is defined in the *Purgatorio* as love: "a motion of the spirit, never resting/till the beloved thing has made it joyous" (*Purg.* xviii, 32-33). [Note: All English translations of passages from the *Divine Comedy* are from the verse translation by Allen Mandelbaum published by the University of California Press, Berkeley, vol. I (1980), vol. II (1982) and vol. III (1984). English translations of other Italian sources are my own.]

This movement of the soul toward its Creator is the driving force of all human activity. Dante's concept of love as a natural tendency reflects the Thomistic doctrine that love is the universal and innate force that impels every creature to pursue the goal which is divinely ordained. The passage, from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, is cited in Edmund G. Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968) 21. In the *Convivio*, Dante had described love as the spiritual union of the soul and the thing loved, toward which union the soul hastens: "*Amore ... non è altro che unimento spirituale de l'anima e de la cosa amata; nel quale unimento di propria sua natura l'anima corre...*" (*Convivio*, iii, 2).

See also Thomas Werge, "The Race to Death and the Race for Salvation in Dante's *Commedia*," *Dante Studies* xcvi (1979) 1-21. Werge speaks of the "race for salvation" as the soul's teleological motion toward its highest good. The outcome of this "race" is determined by "the absence or presence of grace, faith, and hope, and the cupiditas or caritas of the soul's (the runner's) intent" (p. 2). Just as the mind in love never rests until it has obtained the object of its desire, so too the soul cannot rest until it has achieved union with its divine Creator.

According to Kenelm Foster, "The Mind in Love: Dante's Philosophy," *Dante: A Collection of Critical Essays*, John Freccero, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965) 54: the traditional doctrine defined unity as both the effect of love and the cause of love. He points out that Dante's emphasis falls on unity as the cause of love (love viewed as the response to some affinity in an object) and cites from the *Convivio* iii, 2, 3: "Love is spiritual union, 'unimento spirituale.'" Fernando Salsano, "Dante e le creature," *Dante e il francescanesimo*, *Lectura Dantis Metelliana*, Attilio Mellone, ed. (Cava dei Tirreni: Avagliano Editore, 1987) 198, describes it as the universal journey of all creatures toward the love of the divine Father: "*l'universale itinerario delle creature verso l'amore del Padre.*" He positions Dante's ascent within the setting of the universal tendency toward the divine, the *motus ad Deum*, and sees the journey as the ascent of one creature among others motivated by the same impulse: "*l'ascesa di Dante ... si colloca in questo universale moto ad Deum, un'ascesa di creatura tra creature*".

Erich Auerbach, *Studi su Dante* (Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 1963) 64, also speaks of Dante's aspiration toward union, describing it through the image of the bride who moves toward her beloved: "*la sua aspirazione all'unità universale.*" And p. 227: "*per Dante tutta la storia universale successiva a Cristo è racchiusa nell'immagine della sposa che va verso l'amato.*"

See also Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967) 212. Glacken cites Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought, St. Augustine to Ockham* (Baltimore:

Penguin Books, 1958, 1962) 69: "Because all creatures both derive from God as principle, and move towards Him as end, the whole of nature is a movement powered by love of God."

2 By ecological thought I mean a way of considering an individual's perception of his/her relationship to the natural realm, to other individuals, and to the divine or supernatural. By deep ecology I mean the view which holds that the individual and society should live in a balanced and harmonious way with the natural world, and which offers the foundation for an environmental perspective that accepts a program of social change. The term Deep Ecology was coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in a 1972 article: "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement," *Inquiry* 16 (1972): 95-100. It describes a perspective which views human beings as co-equals with other species integrated within functioning ecosystems, rather than superior or in a controlling position. The resulting world view is ecocentric rather than anthropocentric.

See Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism* (Acton, California: Shambala Press, 1990). See also Theodore Roszak, *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), and Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., 1985).

According to Roszak, "Deep Ecology was from the outset the academic and political expression of nature mysticism... It found the root cause of our environmental ills in our inveterate belief that human beings stand apart from nature and above it, whether as master or steward" (p. 232).

As used by Devall and Sessions, the term advocates a shift in world view based upon ecological interconnectedness, and implies a certain humility in regard to nature, the opposite of the Judeo-Christian tradition of dominance. Deep ecology seeks to replace the current world view, based on materialism, economic growth, and consumerism, with a new agenda founded on "elegantly simple" material needs or "doing with enough."

Related to the deep ecological perspective is the notion of "voluntary simplicity," which first appeared in a 1936 book of the same name by Richard Gregg: *The Value of Voluntary Simplicity* (Wallingford, Pa., Pendle Hill, 1936). This concept bears a particular affinity to the Franciscan ideal of poverty

3 By ecosystem I mean an ecological community together with its environment considered as a unit. By ecotopia I mean an ecosystem which has utopian overtones, an ideal community in which harmony and fratellanza take precedence over competition and greed.

See Brenda Deen Schildgen, "Dante's Utopian Landscape: The Garden of God," *The Medieval World of Nature: A Book of Essays*, Joyce E. Salisbury, ed. (New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993) 201-219. Schildgen sees Dante's gardens as constituting a "metaphorical topography" in which allegory supersedes concrete description. His utopian vision is one of an orderly universe in which transgression is weeded out and salutary action rewarded. The Terrestrial Paradise is the memory of an idyllic utopia, while the Church and the Empire are temporary gardens or utopias existing in time and therefore subject to corruption and degeneration. The eternal timeless garden is the 'singular' utopian garden existing out of time where God is the gardener, in the poet's vision, standing in opposition to the personal and public forms of violence, desire, and betrayal that characterize history.

4 See Victor Ferkiss, *Nature, Technology, and Society: Cultural Roots of the Current Environmental Crisis* (New York: New York University Press, 1993) 19.

5 According to Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988) 129, traditional cosmology viewed the world as "an ordered complex of beings that are ontologically related as an image of the divine." He continues: "The human mind ascends to the contemplation of the divine by rising through the various grades of being, from the physical forms of existence in the earth, with its mountains and seas, to the various forms of living things, and so to the human mode of consciousness, then to the soul, and from the inner life of the soul to God...So, too, the journey of Dante through the various spheres of reality up to the divine vision in itself...The mysteries of Christianity were integral with this cosmology."

6 See Mario De Rosa, *Dante e il padre ideale* (Naples: Casa Editrice Federico e Ardia, 1990) 35.

The newness of Francis' vision, the personal element which characterizes his "Cantico delle creature," is the explicit declaration of the bond of brotherhood (*fratellanza*) which unites all creatures of the universe in whom is mirrored the divine goodness. See Salsano, pp. 191 ff.

This concept of nature as the family of creation is expressed in the *Commedia* as well, where creation is seen as the mirror of the beauty and perfection of the Creator. Matelda's smile in *Purg.* xxviii reflects this concept, her laughter being a celebration of her joy in contemplating the wonders of God's creation.

7 The theme of the 1987 *Lectura Dantis Metelliana*, Attilio Mellone, ed. was, in fact, *Dante e il francescanesimo* (Cava dei Tirreni: Avagliano Editore, 1987).

8 The old question of whether Dante was a Franciscan has been debated many times. Some have even advanced the hypothesis that Dante was a member of the Tertiary order of the Franciscans or that he had been a novice of the Order in his youth.

9 See Salsano, p. 194.

There are specific references to the "cordiglio" in the *Commedia* itself. In the *Paradiso*, for example, the lowly cord ("umile capestro") is specifically related to Franciscan values, binding Francis and his followers together in a fellowship of poverty and humility:

Then Francis - father, master - goes his way
with both his lady and his family,
the lowly cord already round their waists.

Par. xi, 85-87

In the *Inferno*, Dante wears the cord with which he had once hoped to seize the leopard with the spotted skin: "Around my waist I had a cord as girdle,/and with it once I thought I should be able/to catch the leopard with the painted hide" (*Inf.* xvi, 106-108). Some commentators have interpreted this to be a reference to the Franciscan cord, representing the vows of the Order which Dante may have joined and the external discipline with which he had sought to purify himself of the temptations of the flesh symbolized by the "lonza". The fact that it is taken away from him by Virgil and thrown into the abyss may signify that he has now reached a state of purity in which he has no need for such an outward sign of protection to ward off temptation. In the *Purgatorio*, there is a reference to Peter of Aragon wearing the cord, in which the "cordiglio" is seen as a composite of virtue: "[he] wore the cord of every virtue" (*Purg.* vii, 114).

Mario Tobino, in a recent biography of Dante, *Biondo era e bello* (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), agrees with Salsano and other commentators that Dante was internally ("dentro le cose") a "soldier" of Francis: "Dante è dentro le cose, soldato di San Francesco." Cited in Rossana Esposito Di Mambro, "Tre biografie novecentesche su Dante e S. Francesco," in *Dante e il francescanesimo*, Attilio Mellone, ed., *Lectura Dantis Metelliana* (Cava dei Tirreni: Avagliano Editore, 1987) 155.

10 Frederick W. Locke, *The Quest for the Holy Grail* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1960) 78. For a discussion of the classic pattern of the journey, see Anne M. Appel, *Dante: Poet of the Grail: A Study in the Relationship between the Commedia and the Queste del Saint Graal* (New Brunswick, N.J.: unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1970) 89.

11 Paul, *Ephesians IV: 22-24*: "put off ... the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

12 The term "voluntary simplicity" is used in the above-referenced book by Richard Gregg. It is cited by Duane Elgin, *Voluntary Simplicity: An Ecological Lifestyle that Promotes Personal and Social Renewal* (New York: William Morrow, 1981, Bantam Books edition, 1982). The term refers to a certain singleness of purpose which is reflected in the avoidance of exterior clutter, that is, of many possessions irrelevant to the chief purpose of life. We see this concept in action in the life chosen by St. Francis, and it becomes part of Dante's prescription for spiritual renewal.

13 Arthur Giacalone, "The Spirit of St. Francis and Deep Ecology," Values in Action Conference, Association for Transpersonal Psychology (Pacific Grove, California: 28-30 August 1992).
Pompeo Giannantonio, "Dante, S. Francesco e la tradizione francescana," Dante e il francescanesimo, Attilio Mellone, ed., *Lectura Dantis Metelliana* (Cava dei Tirreni: Avagliano Editore, 1987) 217, describes Francis as purified by seraphic coal and inflamed with celestial love: "purificato col carbone serafico e infiammato d'ardore celeste." Cited from "L'Albero della vita," *Fonti Francescane* (Assisi, 1978) 2046.

14 Dante himself was aware of this. There are three terraces in the Purgatorio in which he deliberately depicts himself as a penitent: in the first terrace, he walks bowed down like the Proud; in the third, he finds himself within the black smoke together with the Wrathful; in the seventh, he must enter the purifying fire with the Lascivious.

15 Perhaps for both Francis and Dante, being religious did not mean giving up life in the world, but changing one's heart. See Dante's words in the *Convivio*, iv, 28: "Dio non volse religioso di noi se non lo cuore."

Martha Heyneman, *The Breathing Cathedral: Feeling Our Way into a Living Cosmos* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1993) 10, expresses Dante's purpose this way: "The goal [of the *Commedia*] was holiness, or wholeness - not to leave anything behind but to complete (heal, make whole) your psyche until it mirrored the...harmony of the cosmos, balanced upon, and revolving around,...God, and motivated by 'the Love that moves the sun and the other stars'."

16 Giacalone, A.

17 See John Ciardi, *Introduction to The Inferno* (New York: Mentor Books, 1954) xv.

18 See De Rosa, p. 75.

19 The Testament was composed by Francis in 1226. By charity Francis meant the love of one's fellow creatures or *fratellanza*.

It is well to record that there is a difference between Dante's Francis and the historical Francis. Attilio Mellone, "Il S. Francesco di Dante e il S. Francesco della storia," *Dante e il francescanesimo*, pp. 11-73, notes that contrary to the figure presented in *Paradiso xi*, Francis himself did not place poverty at the apex of his spiritual pyramid. Mellone cites the Testament composed in Siena in 1226, in which Francis placed poverty in second place, and the love of one's fellow creatures ("amore fraterno") at the top of his list of virtues. The second *Life of Francis* written by Celano between 1246-1247 began to talk about Francis' marriage to Lady Poverty, and it was at this point that the historical Francis began to be transformed into the Francis of Dante's *Commedia*.

Ferruccio Ulivi, "Il 'magnanimo' S. Francesco di Dante.," *Dante e il francescanesimo*, *Lectura Dantis Metelliana*, Attilio Mellone, ed. (Cava dei Tirreni: Avagliano Editore, 1987) 75-94, develops the view that the Francis of the *Commedia* is an entirely different figure from that of either the narrative tradition represented by the *Fioretti* or the early biographies such as the *Lives of Tommaso da Celano*. Ulivi looks beyond the allegory of Lady Poverty in *Paradiso xi* to find a representation of Francis which transcends emotionality. He finds that there is no sentimentality in the *Commedia*, no intent to popularize the image of the saint of Assisi. After summing up those aspects of the historical and legendary Francis which were omitted by Dante (for example, his mysticism, his saintliness, his seraphic ardor, the severe austerity of his life, his humility, his love of his fellow creatures), Ulivi settles on magnanimity ("la magnanimita") as the key element in Dante's portrayal. It is the heroic aspect of Francis, the "magnanimo" Francis, that comes to light in the *Commedia*. His was not the magnanimity of the chivalric gesture or valorous deed, but an inner magnanimity which was forged to maturity in the flame of spiritual ardor.

According to Ulivi, the literary tradition surrounding Saint Francis consisted of two distinct lines at the time that Dante wrote his poem. There was the Francis of the biographies (e.g. the *Lives* written by Tommaso da

Celano) and the Francis of the Fioretti. The former was characterized by saintliness, mystic ecstasies and visions, seraphic ardour, austerity and chasteness, and sacrificial overtones. His was a life marked by tension, asceticism and conformity to the life of Christ. The Francis of the Fioretti was an entirely different figure, characterized by affective cadences, a gentle naiveté, an edifying joyfulness, and a compassionate empathy for all forms of nature. This is a more popular, charismatic figure, whose humility and love of all creatures became enlarged in fable.

It is a theme common to the entire body of work on the life of Francis that he always appears amiable and kind, and never somber or sullen. Karl Vossler, *Mediaeval Culture: An Introduction to Dante and His Times* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1929, 1970) vol. I, 69, points out that however austere Francis' asceticism, his was essentially a cheerful renunciation. Beneath the robe of austerity, the courtier invariably shines forth. Ulivi's "magnanimity" sums up Francis' constant concern to create and sustain in himself an atmosphere of serenity and kindness, nourished by Christian charity. He drew comfort from this effort, and considered it almost an anticipation of the reward he could expect in heaven in return for his sufferings on earth. Francis himself is said to have expressed it this way in a sermon he gave at the castle of Montefeltro: "Such is the reward that I await, that every pain is a delight to me." Cited in Mario De Marzi, *L'ecologia e Francesco D'Assisi* (Rome: Edizioni Boria, n.d. 1988?) 189: "Tanto e` quel bene ch'io aspetto, che ogni pena m'e` diletto". His was a serenity of spirit resulting from a purity of conscience and an internal equilibrium, which not even the eventual blows of fate were to change.

20 Berry, p. 3, speaks of a "mutual presence," the sharing of one's existence and becoming intimate with the larger community, noting that in Western tradition, this "mutual presence" is found in Francis of Assisi. Glacken, p. 214, points out that with Francis the emphasis is on "communion with nature, the humanization of nonhuman life."

21 Different authors have expressed a variety of opinion regarding the Judeo-Christian tradition of dominance, ranging from a relationship of benevolent stewardship to one of arrogant despotism. Robin Attfield, *The Ethics of Environmental Concern* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 20 ff., for example, challenges the view put forth by Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155.37 (10 March 1967): 1203-1207, namely, that according to Christianity man is intended to regard nature as raw material for his own ends; and that of J. Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* (New York: Scribner, 1974), which holds man as despot toward nature. Attfield, instead, interprets man's dominion over nature as being more of a trust or mandate rather than despotism.

22 In his introductory essay to part two of *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, "The Christian Middle Ages", Glacken refers to the Middle Ages as a period of extensive environmental change in which man assisted God in the improvement of nature. Nature study was a part of the general study of God's design and led to a greater understanding of God: "It was part...of the proof of the existence of God, of God's plan for a designed world..."

23 In Chapter 6, "Environmental Influences Within a Divinely Created World," Glacken expresses it this way: "The elements of the creation, existing in order and harmony, limited and controlled by God, are adapted to one another, even on an earth which may have suffered a disarrangement after the fall of man."

24 See Salsano, p. 195.

25 For a discussion of the foregoing, see Ricardo J. Quinones, "The Two Dantes," *Dante Studies* xcvi (1979): 157-165. The title refers to Kenelm Foster, *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1977).

26 The title of Ulivi's recent biography of Francis, *Le mura del cielo* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1981), suggests the "otherness" or "apartness" of God. Di Mambro interprets the walls of the title to be the visual symbol of

Francis' struggle. In the end Christ's "knight", Francis, succeeds in breaching the walls, but it is not so much that he overcomes the fortress of heaven through his own powers, but that heaven lifts him up and takes possession of him. (Ulivi's biography is cited in Di Mambro, p. 158.)

An example of how Francis considered God "apart" from man may be seen in the account of his retreat to a deserted island on Lake Perugia where he devoted himself to meditation and to an especially rigid Lenten fast, bringing with him only two small loaves of bread. At the end of the stay, when the boatman returned to the island as arranged to take him away, only one of the loaves had been touched and was only half eaten. The conclusion of Ugolino who narrates the tale: "And so with that half a loaf of bread he drove away the poison of vainglory, and following the example of Christ fasted forty days and forty nights." Francis had discontinued the debilitating fast although he could easily have continued it to its end without harm. Instead, by eating half of one of the loaves, he wanted to prevent any possibility of being tempted by the secret satisfaction of having approximated, even if only "una tantum," the Divine Model. (The incident is recounted in De Marzi, pp. 194-195).

27 For example, Francis disparagingly referred to his human body as Brother Donkey.

Aristotelian naturalism, on the other hand, aimed at re-establishing balance and harmony between man and nature. This harmony, which had been the hallmark of the great classic works of the Greeks and Romans, had been compromised during the Medieval period both by the Christian condemnation of paganism, as well as by that brand of mysticism which sought to elevate the spirit to such a point of transcendence that it went against nature. See Salsano, p. 197. The duality of Christian asceticism illustrates this point. In its negative aspects it embodied the renunciation of the body and its sexuality, self-mortification, and the rejection of the material world. On the positive side it exemplified a return to modest, simple living in harmony with other creatures, and an egalitarianism based on the common origin of all living beings.

28 Beatrice's reference to Dante's "vita nova" when she appears in the Terrestrial Paradise (Purg. xxx, 111-116) refers to the grace of God as the reason for Dante's great potential.

29 Dante is transported into Paradise through his unbroken communication with Beatrice. As he fixes his gaze on Beatrice who is steadily watching the sun, "in watching her, within me I was changed" (Par. i, 67). He calls the experience "passing beyond the human" ("trasumanar"), an experience which has no words (Par. i, 70-71).

30 Quinones, Dante Alighieri (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979) 157, points out that Dante was the "brightest light of an integrated culture" and that his poem is a "fully-executed vision." His affirmation is made in contrast to the dualistic tendency which he notes in other critics (Vico, De Sanctis, Croce).

According to Heyneman, for centuries we have had no "communal image of the whole of things and our place and function within it" such as that provided by Dante's *Commedia*. Indeed, the poetic synthesis which we see at work in the *Commedia* is the result of the influence of "the great synthesizer Aquinas" who acted as mediator between Dante and the medieval tradition. (See Quinones, "The Two Dantes", 158-159.)

Thomistic doctrine synthesized Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology, rational naturalism with intuitive, experiential mysticism. It stands in contrast to the dualism found in Augustine, affirming that grace does not work against nature, but rather perfects it (Ferkiss, p. 20).

For Gardner, p. 3, the distinction between scholasticism and mysticism which later ages have been tempted to draw hardly exists: "They are but the two roads, of science and experience, along which the soul travels towards the same goal."

31 See Salsano, p. 200.

The comprehensiveness of Dante's vision can be described by the words Heyneman uses in reference to the ecological perspective: "the courage to believe in the richness of the whole symphony..." (Heyneman, p. 34).

32 The Franciscan spirit in the *Commedia* may also be seen in the sensitivity and vividness with which Dante depicts birds and animals and plants in his poem. These similes provide a direct tie to the Franciscan

legend and to the spirit of fratellanza. Salsano points out that in passages such as that of the shepherd and his "pecorelle" in the *Inferno*, we see evidence of the Franciscan concept of nature as a family of creation:

In that part of the young year when the sun
begins to warm its locks beneath Aquarius
and nights grow shorter, equaling the days,
when hoarfrost mimes the image of his white
sister upon the ground - but not for long,
because the pen he uses is not sharp
the farmer who is short of fodder rises
and looks and sees the fields all white, at which
he slaps his thigh, turns back into the house,
and here and there complains like some poor wretch
who doesn't know what can be done, and then
goes out again and gathers up new hope
on seeing that the world has changed its face
in so few hours, and he takes his staff
and hurries out his flock of sheep to pasture.

Inf. xxiv, 1-15

We feel the poet's sympathy and compassion for these creatures, and we sense the existential harmony among them: the shepherd, the sheep, the stars, the snow, all share the bond of fratellanza. The snow, in fact, is said to be the "sorella bianca" of the hoarfrost which copies her likeness on the ground. The technique of ascribing human characteristics to natural phenomena (personification) reinforces this idea of the family of creation. Salsano calls it a "paesaggio umanizzato".

There are numerous examples of the representation of nature in the *Commedia* which reflect the feeling of fratellanza among living creatures. Thomas G. Bergin, *Dante* (New York: Orion Press, 1965) 284-287, comments on the fact that Dante in the *Commedia* offers "an enormous range" of similes, the nature of which is to make you see what he saw or feel what he feels. "Everything is there," says Auerbach (cited by Bergin), "croaking frogs in the evening, a lizard darting across the path, sheep crowding out of their enclosure, a wasp withdrawing its sting, a dog scratching; fishes, falcons, doves, storks..."

33 See the discussion which follows concerning the twofold direction of Dante's Terrestrial Paradise and "figural" interpretation.

34 Salsano, p. 208: "accarezzo` la mano del poeta".

35 It should be noted that despite the fresh and vivid colors of the scene and the naturalistic touches of the opening lines, we are later told that the gentle breezes, the waters of the stream, and the other seemingly natural elements are not natural phenomena (*Purg.* xxviii, 85 ff.). Since there are no atmospheric perturbations in Purgatory as Stazio had earlier affirmed (*Purg.* xxi, 43 ff.), the sounds of the forest are the result of the revolution of the spheres. The entire wood is the direct result of the will of God ("voler di Dio," *Purg.* xxviii, 125).

36 *Purg.* xxviii, 49-51. The reference to Persephone also recalls her mother, Demeter (Ceres in Roman mythology), goddess of the harvest and fertility.

Joseph Chierici, *Il grifo dantesco* (Rome: Ist. Graf. Tiberino, 1967) 23, takes it a step further by stating that Matelda is the personification of the early season of humanity: "Matelda is the incarnation of the feeling of the place, almost its protective spirit; the personification of the spring time of the human race".

Bernard Stambler, *Dante's Other World: The Purgatorio as Guide to the Divine Comedy* (New York: New York University Press, 1957) 76-77, sees Matelda as "human nature perfected and in a state of felicity". He further observes that the substitution of only two letters turns "Matelda" into "Materna" (p. 249).

37 "Delectasti me, Domine, in factura tua, et in operibus anuumtuarum exultabo" (Ps. 92, 4). The psalm

expresses the idea of creation as the mirror of the perfection of the Creator, and recalls the Franciscan sentiment of fratellanza found in the "Cantico delle creature."

38 The green, fragrant wood echoes the color symbolism which is used throughout the *Commedia*. Green is the color of hope, associated with Beatrice as well as with rebirth and transformation. In the Valley of the Princes, for example, the garments of the angels are described as "green as newborn leaves" (*Purg.* viii, 28). Later, Dante emerges from the holy waters purged and fit for the ascent to heaven: "...remade, as new trees are/renewed when they bring forth new boughs, I was/pure and prepared to climb unto the stars" (*Purg.* xxxiii, 143-145).

39 The Terrestrial Paradise appears in the literature and traditions of many different peoples, and is one of the oldest myths of mankind. See Appel, *Dante: Poet of the Grail*, chapter 7, notes 4, 6 and 7. The word "paradise" itself derives from the Old Persian "pairidaeza" (from "pairi", round, and "diz", to mould or to form), meaning an enclosed park or garden. The basic meaning was later expanded in the Greek and Latin derivatives ("paradeisos" and "paradisus") to include two other concepts: the specific garden of Genesis II:8, and the celestial paradise. The most popular form of the myth of Eden concerns the Fall, "man's expulsion from an ideal enclave."

40 The terminology is taken from Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 213.

41 As a way of thinking about the separation between man and nature, Mary Catherine Bateson, *Our Own Metaphor: A Personal Account of a Conference on the Effects of Conscious Purpose on Human Adaptation* (New York: Knopf, 1972) 244 ff., considers the genre of landscape painting. A landscape by definition is something we stand back to view. Insofar as it represents the intellectualization of the natural, it involves alienation and detachment. The separation can be seen in Leonardo da Vinci's painting of "The Virgin and St. Anne" which is divided into two parts. There is a background composed of trees, mountains and streams, painted in an abstract, distant way, in contrast to the style of the foreground. The foreground consists of a human grouping (Mary, Jesus and St. Anne) painted so that a loving, human warmth comes through, as well as a sense of family or fratellanza. But the human grouping is depicted as separated from nature. It is as though these figures were on a stage with nature in the background. The painting is said to be found in the Louvre.

42 Vito Fumagalli, *L'uomo e l'ambiente nel Medioevo* (Rome: Laterza, 1992) ix-xi, discusses the transition, describing the different attitudes which man held in regard to nature and the environment during the medieval period. These ranged from a profound sense of fear toward all natural forces (plants, animals, the stars and planets, etc.) to an awareness of being a part of the natural force ("l'immedesimazione"). Because of these feelings, man was reluctant to modify nature. In subsequent centuries, this position evolved to the point where man felt that he could and should transform the environment. It was at this point that the separation between man and nature began to be emphasized. Fumagalli notes the transition from a time in which man felt himself to be a part of nature to a time in which he became separated from nature: "L'uomo occidentale ha cominciato a staccarsi dal mondo della natura ... nel pieno Medioevo, ...privilegiando... la componente 'razionale' del suo essere."

Joyce E. Salisbury, ed., in her *Introduction to The Medieval World of Nature*, describes the medieval perception of nature not as an abstract ideal, but as a view of the natural world of which man has always been a part. Prior to the 12th century, a mystical world view prevailed in which everything was seen as being linked through God. In the post 12th century period, the dominant viewpoint isolated nature as a rationally understood phenomenon.

Glacken addresses this same theme. Gordon Leff, cited in Glacken, p. 212, sees a distinct break in the 14th century: whereas the thirteenth century was a time of synthesis, the fourteenth is described as an age of separation or discontinuity between the divine and the created which is absent in the ordered cosmos of St. Thomas.

Clive Ponting, *A Green History of the World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), also discusses the

relationship between humans and the rest of nature in his chapter on "Ways of Thought" (chapter 8).

43 See Par. viii, 113-135, where the term "nature" includes two concepts: nature creating (*naturante*) which is God and nature created (*naturata*) which is the whole of creation.

44 Berry, p. 2.

45 Francis Fergusson, *Dante's Drama of the Mind* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953) 184-185, calls it an Eden "historically reconstituted by Redemption" in that it represents not primal innocence but "innocence regained."

Insofar as it contains the Redemption as well as the Fall, Dante's sacred wood represents a synthesis of the twin concepts of the Golden Age, that of the past, "paradise lost," and that of the future, "paradise regained." The Golden Age as a time of harmony, bliss, and simplicity is essentially the oldest myth of "paradise lost." Eventually, the concept of the Golden Age was extended to include not only a state of existence in the past, but also a time of future harmony. See Appel, *Dante: Poet of the Grail*, chap. 7, note 11.

46 Appel, *Dante: Poet of the Grail*, p. 277.

47 Auerbach, "Figura" and "Francesco d'Assisi nella Commedia," *Studi su Dante*, 174-221 and 221-235.

Auerbach's premise is that the *Commedia* is based on a figural view of things in that Dante's "Weltanschauung" perceives a direct relationship between each earthly phenomenon and the plan of God: "[Dante] does not view [history] ... merely as an earthly process, a pattern of earthly events, but in constant connection with God's plan, toward the goal of which all earthly happenings tend." (Auerbach, "Farinata and Cavalcante," *Mimesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1953) 169.

He defines the use of the "figura" in the Christian world as a prophetic technique used to preannounce or prefigure events which are to follow. He distinguishes between the "figura anticipatrice" or "futurorum," which prefigures the future event, and the "figura svelata o adimpliuta", that is, the figure unveiled and fulfilled by the future event. The figure itself is a real, historic fact or person which represents or announces some other event which is equally real and historical. Auerbach emphasizes this fact to differentiate between the figural technique and that of allegory. The difference between figure ("figura") and fulfillment ("adempimento") does not mean that the one is less real than the other.

48 Auerbach, "Figura," pp. 186-201. Auerbach points out that figural interpretation had a wide diffusion in the medieval period and beyond. According to him, an appreciation of "figura" is essential for an understanding of that mixture of reality and spirituality which characterizes the Middle Ages. In the *Commedia*, for example, the concept of "figura" determines the entire structure of the poem: "le forme figurali sono decisamente prevalenti e decisive per tutta la struttura del poema" (p. 212) and the work "è fondata in tutto e per tutto sulla concezione figurale" (p. 218).

Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum has indicated that in contemporary Italy this concept of looking backward and forward is called "remembering the future."

49 Appel, *Dante: Poet of the Grail*, p. 75. The classic pattern of the Journey, what Locke calls the movement "from Garden to Garden through a Wasteland," is repeated in Dante's mystical journey which is an imitation of the pattern of the Journey typified by the life of Christ. The *Commedia* is thus an *imitatio Christi* and Dante its protagonist a type of Christ, just as Beatrice and the Griffin are types of Christ in the poem. Viewed in this context, the *Commedia* repeats the pattern of Sacred Scripture which in turn is a "figura" of the *Commedia* in that it begins with man's Fall and expulsion from the Garden, and ends with the Redemption and the promise of a return to the Garden. (See Dante's Epistle to Can Grande della Scala and the definition of a "comedy" as something which begins unhappily and has a happy ending.)

50 See Auerbach, "Farinata and Cavalcante," p. 169: This forward motion is in addition to the direct connection perceived between each event and the plan of Providence "at all times [and] independently of all

forward motion."

In contrast to this forward motion, Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum has pointed out that contemporary Italians have a spiral, rather than linear, view of history. The "path" today is considered a labyrinth. The movement is not a straight line from darkness to light. Instead, light is attained after many downswings into darkness, if one succeeds in finding the way out of the labyrinth.

51 Schildgen uses the term.

52 According to Michele D'Andria, *Il volo cosmico di Dante e altri saggi per nuovo Commento della Divina Commedia* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985) 99, Dante's conception can be synthesized in the upward movement ("ascendismo") from the level of reality into unknown space. Citing the expansionist spirit of Christianity and the voyage of Marco Polo, D'Andria places the *Commedia* in the context of its historical environment. Dante's sacred poem, like the journey of his contemporary Marco Polo, was also launched to acquire knowledge of unknown mysteries, but his voyage reaches beyond the limits of earth, time and space.

53 Theol. Arist. XIII, 4: "Anima redit circulariter ad illum [orbem mundi spiritualis] ut attingens authorem suum suscipiat influxum verbi eius creantis."

54 According to John D. Sinclair, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri with Translation and Comment*, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), *Paradiso* 3:442, "the stream of time becomes eternity and grace becomes glory."

55 There is a long tradition behind the notion of God as Light. *Prima Lux* is not a metaphorical expression, but a literal predication. For example, in Albertus Magnus the first cause is pure light ("Causa enim prima lumen purum est") and the ladder of creation results from the downward radiation of the Primal Light.

56 See J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962) 192. The word "mandala" itself is a Hindu term for "circle." The pattern is always composed around a central point although this need not be portrayed visually.

57 Barbara Seward, *The Symbolic Rose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) 10.

58 As a variation on the theme of the circle, symbol of perfection, the rose windows are related to the Wheel of the Universe. There is a connection between the cosmic Wheel and the rose or lotus patterned after the mandala.

59 Ozanam and Ermini both call attention to this similarity of design but neither gives sufficient emphasis to the significance of the relationship between the Rose and the Light. Ermini sees the Rose as an intermediary between the souls and God. The analogy is not precise. Ozanam (1870) and Ermini (1922) are cited in Appel, "La forma general di paradiso," *L'Alighieri* IX:1 (1968): 24.

60 The same relationship can be seen in *Par. xxiii*, where the souls are described as flowers in a meadow illuminated by the sun's rays:

Under a ray of sun that, limpid, streams
down from a broken cloud, my eyes have seen,
while shade was shielding them, a flowered meadow;
so I saw many troops of splendors here
lit from above by burning rays of light,
but where those rays began was not in sight.

Par. xxiii, 79-84

In these passages, light and love become interchangeable.

61 Roszak, p. 199, points out that in Dante's vision of the great, glowing rose, individuality coalesces into collectivity, a fellowship which is non-hierarchical and inclusive. This is in keeping with the spirit of harmony implicit in the deep ecological perspective.

According to Howard Needler, *Saint Francis and Saint Dominic in the Divine Comedy* (Krefeld: Scherpe Verlag, 1969) 5, we are assured of the place of all creatures in a universal scheme of things by Dante's culminating vision: "Here, finally, the mysterious interrelationship of all things within the divine is affirmed, and it is within this vision of human society and its institutions 'sub specie aeternitatis' that Dante succeeds in giving them coherence."

62 Pope Adrian, for example, calls Dante "frate" (Purg. xix, 133), and Sapia tells him: "My brother, each of us is citizen/of one true city..." (Purg. xiii, 94-95). Later, the fratellanza which binds all souls together is referred to by Virgil who tells Statius that Dante's soul is the "sister" of their own souls: "his soul, the sister of your soul and mine" (Purg. xxi, 28).

63 Sinclair, , vol. 2, *Purgatorio*, p. 205, refers to it as "a fellowship with men which is fellowship with God":
for there, the more there are who would say 'ours',
so much the greater is the good possessed
by each - so much more love burns in that cloister.
Purg. xv, 55-57

64 Giuseppe Giacalone, *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri: commento e analisi critica*, 3 vols. (Rome: Angelo Signorelli Editore, 1969, 1992), puts forth another reason. Citing Montano, who had noted that Dante's brand of Christianity exalted human virtue and made it the basis for the ascent to salvation, Giacalone observes that in order to represent Paradise as a hierarchy of human values and virtues, Dante had to overturn the traditional concept of Paradise as the Mystic Rose in which all of the blessed are imagined in eternal and static contemplation of God, uncaring of temporal events. Dante's creative imagination resulted in the heaven of the spheres, to which the blessed hurry from their place in the Rose to talk to him, motivated by infinite charity: "Ma per realizzare narrativamente il Paradiso come gerarchia di valori e di virtù umane D. ha dovuto stravolgere la concezione tradizionale del Paradiso della Mistica Rosa, secondo cui i beati staticamente venivano immaginati in eterna contemplazione di Dio, incuranti ormai delle cose terrene; e ne ha fatto il Paradiso delle sfere, in cui i beati si presentano a lui, peregrino della terra che alla terra ritornerà, precipitandosi in fretta dalla Mistica Rosa per parlare con lui, spinti da infinita carità verso gli uomini erranti" (vol. 3: Paradiso, p. 45).

65 Beatrice had explained this earlier, affirming that all of the blessed "grace the Empyrean" ("tutti fanno bello il primo giro," Par. iv, 34). They reveal themselves in the different heavens for Dante's benefit: Such signs are suited to your mind, since from the senses only can it apprehend what then becomes fit for the intellect.
Par. iv, 40-42

66 Vossler, vol. II, pp. 345-386.

67 Schildgen refers to the Church and the Empire as momentary stopping places on the arduous journey to God's celestial garden. See earlier note.

68 Dante's she-wolf, which first appears at the outset of his journey (Inf. i, 49 ff.), reappears in the *Purgatorio*:

May you be damned, o ancient wolf, whose power
can claim more prey than all the other beasts -
your hungering is deep and never-ending!
Purg. xx, 10-12

Here, among the souls who are repenting the sin of avarice, Dante inveighs against the beast whose appetite is never satisfied and who therefore "can claim more prey", that is, ensnare more sinners, than all the other evil beasts.

69 Such animals can be found in the *Detto del gatto lopesco*, for example, and in the *Little Treasure* (*Tesoretto*) of Brunetto Latini. (Brunetto Latini appears in the *Inferno*, canto xv.)

Written in 1262, the *Tesoretto* is an allegorical poem in which the poet loses the "gran cammino," which some have identified with Dante's "diritta via," and enters a strange wood ("selva diversa"). Here he comes to a mountain and sees a great throng ("turba magna") of different animals. A personified Nature, who describes herself as a creature of the supreme Creator ("una fattura/de lo sovrano Fattore") gives him lessons on creation.

The *Detto del gatto lopesco* is a much shorter poem which at least one critic has taken to be a forerunner of the *Commedia*. Camillo Guerrieri Crocetti, cited in Gianfranco Contini, ed., *Poeti del Duecento*, vol. II (Milan, Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1960) 285, calls it an "antesignano del poema sacro." The *Gatto Lopesco*, looking for the right way ("la via scorta"), finds himself in a harsh desert ("diserto aspro e duro"). When he tries to approach the right way, he sees a crowd of beasts ("vidi bestie ragunate") who seem ready to devour whatever crosses their path.

70 See Sally Mussetter, "Dante's Three Beasts and the Imago Trinitatis," *Dante Studies* xcv (1977): 40. Mussetter cites John Freccero as an example of modern scholarship turning its attention inward and viewing the three beasts of the *Inferno* as visions of the evil disposition of the lower soul.

Berry, p. 3, sees the projection of man's evil qualities onto animals as a lack of true empathy with the living world and representative of an attitude of dominance: "Yet these movements toward intensive sharing with the natural world were constantly turned aside by a spiritual aversion...At best they [the animals] were drawn into a human context in some subservient way, often in a derogatory way, as when we projected our own vicious qualities onto such animals as the wolf, the rat, the snake..."

71 Mussetter, p. 46, interprets the wolf as a distorted reflection of the Holy Spirit which represents the free will of God expressed in charity: "Avarice and greed are ... visible evidence of the will's choice of 'cupiditas' over 'caritas'." Mussetter interprets the three beasts of *Inferno* 1 as a distortion of the Holy Trinity. Fumagalli, p. 26, points out that in earlier times animals were regarded with indulgence, but then they began to be a cause of fear. He cites the wolf as an example, noting its evolution from an animal which served as a guide to man to the terrible, fierce wolf of Gubbio: "Si pensi a quanta storia separa il buon lupo che guida, sul finire del secolo vi, l'antenato di Paolo Diacono attraverso immense foreste e, nel secolo xiii, il terribile irrealistico lupo di Gubbio, che questi cittadini non osano affrontare armati, ammansito soltanto da san Francesco." He links this transformation to a change in the environment: once the natural habitat of the wolf was damaged, the wolf had no choice but to turn on man.

72 See Ulivi, "Il 'magnanimo' S. Francesco di Dante", p. 91.

See also Needler, p. 24: "Greed, in all its forms, was the arch-enemy, and a startling and original way of defeating it was the voluntary assumption of poverty. It was the way preached and exemplified by Christ...That is why, in a work which attacks 'cupiditas' as a corruptor of Christian ideals, Saint Francis is a dominant figure."

73 In Leonardo Olschki, *Dante "Poeta Veltro"* (Firenze: Olschki, 1953), the antidote to "la bestia senza pace", the cause of Dante's ruination and that of the entire world, is represented by the *Velto* (Hound) who stands for the renouncing of worldly goods.

74 See discussion in section 1 above.

Giuseppe Santarelli, *S. Francesco in Dante: sintesi storico-critica* (Milan: Edizioni Francescane "Cammino," 1969) 27 and 38-41, notes that while Dante's theology came from St. Thomas, the ideal of a return to the purity of the Church came from Francis. Santarelli's historical-critical synthesis and bibliography on the

subject of the representation of Saint Francis in the *Commedia* are worth noting. After discussing some improbable theories regarding the sources Dante may have used for *Paradiso xi*, he lists what he considers to be the most likely ones, the major one being the *Legenda Maior* of Saint Bonaventure. For Dante, the renouncing of material wealth was crucial to the spiritual renewal of the Church and of mankind. As he saw it, the cupidity of the clergy, which had begun with the donation of Constantine, was responsible for the downfall of the Church and the degeneration of society. Dante was not a pessimist, however; from the very beginning of the *Commedia* and throughout we see his faith in a supernatural intervention which would straighten the course of history. Like modern ecological thinking, Dante's world view was born out of the fearful problems of his day and nourished by the hope that his prescription could solve them.

75 Mellone, p. 32.

76 Vossler, vol. I, p. 69, calls it "not imitation... but a unique reincarnation of the evangelical ideal." Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, 226, develops the theme of conformity with or imitation of Christ, noting that "the idea that the life and fate of Francis presented certain conformities with the life of Christ was always lovingly cultivated by the franciscan tradition." ("L'idea che la vita e la sorte di San Francesco d'Assisi presentassero certe concordanze con la vita di Cristo... fu sempre amorevolmente coltivata dalla tradizione francescana.") He points to three motifs in the *Commedia* which reinforce the relationship of "imitatio" (*Par. xi*, 49 ff.): "sun-Orient", the mystic marriage to Lady Poverty, and the stigmata, "the final seal." This imitation can best be seen in the marriage to Lady Poverty.

Auerbach's point of departure is a series of questions which have engaged commentators throughout the years. Given the fact that Francis was one of the most suggestive and fascinating figures of the Medieval period, why is it that Dante does not describe an encounter with him in Paradise, nor speak to him directly? Why is Francis not made to speak for himself? Why is it that the story narrated by Saint Thomas Aquinas (*Par. xi*) contains very few of those evocative, enchanting details which have been preserved for us by the Franciscan tradition? The reason is because Dante saw Francis as a "figura" and wanted to represent him in such a way that he would appear in his fullest significance. Although he retains his historical reality, the personal aspect of Francis is subordinated to the mission to which he was called, namely, the imitation of Christ. (pp. 221-235.)

Needler, pp. 8 and 16, makes reference to Auerbach's essay in discussing the way in which Francis and Dominic are presented by Dante: "No other form was so appropriate for the introduction of figures who were to be predominantly exemplary". The form is determined by the mission: "The mission is of central importance in Dante's treatment of Francis and Dominic, and gives the entire account its special form."

77 The observation is made by Santarelli, p. 17.

78 The thinking of Deep Ecology has as its reference point a certain humility in that it offers a new way of being in the world in contrast to the current world view. While the latter is based on materialism, unbridled economic growth, and consumerism, the new proposal is based on simplified material needs and "doing with enough."

79 The reference is to the seraphim who burn with divine love and who signify fiery and purifying passion. Francis' ardor is in contrast to Saint Dominic's cherubic wisdom or "sapienza," *Par. xi*, 38.

80 See De Rosa, pp. 72 ff.

81 Needler, p. 21, refers to the decadence and corruption of the orders founded by Francis and Dominic: "Dante, therefore, while he celebrates the tremendous impression made by the two great saints, centres his treatment of them in a lament that the flowering of a truly holy society, which might have remade the world, was arrested by what he saw as the limitless cupidity of men."

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