

Article

Dante and the Canonists: Adhesions and Deviations on the Dialectic between Heresy and Schism

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Abstract: In this article, I will highlight how Dante's clear separation between heretics and schismatics is radical compared to contemporary thought and can, therefore, tell us a great deal about his conception of these two sins and about the nature of the characters condemned in Cantos X and XXVIII. In fact, the heresy of disobedience, a political weapon created ad hoc to favor the imposition of the hierocratic model, tended, in the reflection of jurists, to bring together these two sins so well-separated by Dante. The proposal of a new interpretation of these concepts that is more adherent to their historicity, with a specific and radical meaning, can open up interesting reflections on Dante's possible desire to affect this historical process. It also brings new interpretations to questions that still lack a convincing answer, such as the silence on the numerous heretical movements that had characterized the decades preceding the writing of the *Commedia*, the presence of Dolcino among the schismatics, and the selection of Epicurus as an exemplum of heresy.

Keywords: Dante; *Comedy*; heresy; schism; Enrico da Susa; Ostiense; *summa aurea*; canonist; Dolcino; Muhammad

1. Introduction

Dante's *Paradiso* is characterized by a conspicuous presence of theological dialogues aimed at unveiling to the pilgrim the concepts and precepts of the doctrinal dogmas. In a more rhapsodic and less structural manner, this also occurs in *Purgatorio* and *Inferno*, although it is in the first cantica with even less regularity. A paradigmatic case is in the cantos devoted to heresy—at least the triptych IX–XI, but also XXVIII—where the theme is not addressed thoroughly, and the exact nature of the sin is omitted in favor of the portrayal of individual sinners. Thus, instead of a definition of the boundary that separates and sanctions what is orthodox and what is not, the cantos focus on Farinata, Cavalcante, and Pope Anastasius, as well as Muhammad and fra' Dolcino. However, the heretical theme reoccurs in Dante's work. First at the summit of the *paradiso terrestre* in the figure of biblical memory of the fox, again in paradise, in the St. Dominic athlete of the faith who *ne li sterpi eretici percosse/l' impeto suo* (*Par.* XII 100–1), and in the claim of the Christian and non-heretical nature of the complexity of understanding divine justice (*Par.* IV 67–69).

It is perhaps due to this apparent lack of a heretical component of the infernal Canto that scholars have paid insufficient attention to the theme of heresy, which, nonetheless, must have been «chiaro nella sua [of Dante] mente per la distinzione, ben netta, che egli pone appunto tra eresia e scisma». Indeed, scholars have (partly, rightly so) mostly focused on Farinata's and Cavalcante's presence and their political and meta-poetic discourses.¹ Obviously, since we are dealing with Dante's work, the topic of heresy is not completely unexplored. However, I claim that for a better understanding of the subject, it is necessary to proceed with a systematic analysis of individual cases and a profound historicization of the theme. Only then can we truly assess the possible evolution of the concept in Alighieri's thought, on the one hand, and its radicality, on the other.²

The purpose of this contribution is, therefore, to attempt an evaluation of Dante's division between heresy and schism by relating it to the works of the canonists at the time



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on the definition of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.³ In fact, for Manselli, such a distinction represented the overt act of a clear Dantean concept of heresy, and so placing Dante's thought in his cultural system will allow us to do more than avoid harmful anachronisms. Above all, it will also enable us to make an initial assessment of the relationship between the poet and such a process of defining and his willingness to influence it by adopting more or less radical positions with respect to the models of his time.⁴

2. Results

2.1. *Shaping Heresy: Historical Evolution and Practical Applications of a Concept*

It should be noted that it is not possible to find a univocal definition of the concept of heresy in the Middle Ages.⁵ In fact, the attempts that were made clearly reflect the eschatological reflections and political pressures that characterized the process of definition. When analyzing this process from a diachronic perspective, it becomes clear how the efforts were aimed not at defining a doctrinal or theological concept—which certainly had a much less marked abstract component than it appears to us today—but at factually circumscribing the body of the Church. It was a normative act, which thus implied the identification of what was ethically accepted as socially suitable for the pursuit of the common good and the legal sanction of those who stood outside of it. In short, the urgency required defining not heresy but the heretic, making him a disruptor of society who, by not accepting Roman directives, stood outside of Christianity. A heretic who, therefore, increasingly resembled a schismatic.⁶

Establishing the boundaries of orthodoxy was a primary necessity from the first definition of Christendom.⁷ However, while in the first centuries, the reflection on heresy concerned its etymological nature of erroneous election and choice (namely a different interpretation of sacred texts than that established by the Church),⁸ by the late Middle Ages, the attempt to affirm the temporal nature of papal rule substantially changed the elaboration of the concept of heresy. From a theological point of view, we are now dealing with an ecclesiological concept. Henceforth, having lost any kind of dialogical component, heretics are defined and persecuted by the Church through a process of criminalization and social exclusion.

Historians agree in identifying the 11th-century ecclesiastical reform as one of the first fundamental steps in this development.⁹ The verticalization of internal relations within the Ecclesia that this entailed gave a new meaning to the papal figure and the Roman Curia. This reform gave to the hierarchical structure that would characterize it in the following centuries. Axiom XXVI of the *Dictatus papae* proclaims «Quod catholicus non habeatur, qui non concordat Romane ecclesie».¹⁰ Thus, anyone who does not agree with the Church cannot be called Catholic and is, therefore, a heretic and excluded from the *boni cives*.¹¹ It is a crucial turning point: the right opinion, the correct doctrine no longer coincides, or rather not only coincides, with what is expressed by the Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. Rather, it is what is decided by Rome.¹²

New interventions and increasingly radical reforms followed. The canon *Sicut ait beatus Leo* of the III Lateran Council established the comparison between those who would fight heretics with arms and those fighting for the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre; the Veronese meeting between Emperor Frederick I and Lucius III, with the decretal *Ad abolendam*, directed the efforts of civil powers towards the persecution of heretics while leaving them in a position of subservience to religious ones.¹³ The final sanction of this process came with the interventions of Innocent III and the decisions of the IV Lateran Council. Convened in 1213 with the explicit will «ad exstirpanda vitia et plantandas virtutes, corrigendos excessus et mores, eliminandas haereses et roborandam fidem» was the sounding board and final approval of the pontiff's expressed wishes.¹⁴ In fact, the *Vergentis in senium* of 1199 had already taken the last necessary step to de-theologize the concept of heresy and connote it with a strictly political meaning by promoting its coincidence with the *crimen lesae maiestatis*.¹⁵

Thus, a concept of heresy is outlined as a label capable of grouping together a heterogeneous set of possible opponents, a tool in the hands of the ecclesiastical institution aimed at asserting the supremacy of the papacy. Those who oppose centralized rule are now heretics. The defense of orthodoxy coincides with that of the ecclesiastical institution: the inquisitorial action, in its form of judgment, is a manifestation of the power that defines itself in contraposition with its enemy. The unity of the *respublica fidelium* would be guaranteed by loyalty and obedience to the Apostolic See and by papal infallibility. The *fides catholica*, derived from and nourished by the *divina pagina*, thus came to overlap with the *lex ecclesiastica* and, at the same time, to be subject to it. In fact, the latter, with its decretals, became the sole source and, together, the last appeal of orthodoxy. In short, the concept of heresy as a *mala interpretatio* of the salvific message, its doctrinal character, increasingly loses its central role and slips into an auxiliary function. It will not be abandoned, but it can no longer be considered exclusive. Indeed, it will increasingly be related to ecclesiological and, thus, socio-political references, qualifying the crime of disobedience to papal authority.¹⁶ Absolute alignment is now required in the ecclesiological and theocratic spheres, even before internalization of the precepts of the Holy Scriptures.¹⁷ At stake, there was a hegemonic vision that sought to constitute an orthodox world in which there was no room for any form of otherness.¹⁸

Heretics were thus isolated in order to try, in the first instance, to bring them back into the body of the Church or, if this was not possible, to destroy them. Identified as a disruptor and placed outside the *societas christianorum*, the heretic thus became the object of all kinds of sanctions and repressive measures. They moved from confrontation to criminalization and demonization, from persuasion to coercion,¹⁹ also through careful propaganda that transformed the image commonly used to identify heretics: from zoomorphic and faunal biblical figures (Mt. 7:15; Mt. 13:24–30; Song of Songs 2:15; Judges 15:4–5) to social and demonic fields.²⁰

Defining and Enforcing: Papal Action and the Reflection of Canonists

The reception and diffusion of such programmatic dictates among the various strata of medieval society probably occurred in several ways, and not only through forced imposition. Certainly, the *universitates*, and the schools in general, made their contribution by simultaneously performing the dual function of producing and developing (and controlling) ideas and ideologies and of training specialists to support and spread them. The training of clergy soon intertwined with the heretical question as well since the clergy had too often proved to be *illiteratus* and incapable of countering heterodox arguments, which had important consequences on their duty to care for the souls of the faithful. The two issues were made even more interdependent as the Church contracted out both teaching and anti-heretical preaching to the new mendicant orders, which represents one of those happy integrations of movements that could also have ended in condemnation. The rapid success of this teaching proposal was due to the quality of the conventual teaching centers, characterized by theological reflection, which soon led to a natural rapprochement between these *scholae* and the lay centers of theology faculties, whose teaching they often took over.

The attempt of the Church of Rome to control the cultural centers, and especially theological teaching, was not only limited to this. It also extended to the fruitful attempt to influence the secular educational offer, with the aim of creating centers of theological teaching adhering to the correct Christian thought.²¹ Just two cases. In 1215, Robert of Courçon, essentially confirming the conciliar decisions, forbade the academic reading of some of Aristotle's works in the Parisian university. Fourteen years later, Pope Gregory IX instead granted the *ius ubique docendi* to the Toulouse study, allowing the entire body of Aristotle's works (alongside those of other philosophers still banned in Paris) to be read in the university born at the end of the anti-Albigensian crusade in 1229.²² It is therefore appropriate to speak of a university policy of the Church.²³

As the conventual schools became more structured, there came the demand to equalize them with the centers of university teaching. The controversies raised by this demand were

solved by the papacy in favor of the mendicant orders, thus completing the progressive overlap and dependence of the secular centers on the *studia* conventual. This way, the Apostolic See ensured its vigilance over theological teachings and thus its control over orthodoxy, not only within the university—already partially possible through the heretical condemnation of propositions, of which the 1277 event by Bishop Tempier against Sigieri of Brabant represents one of the best-known manifestations—but also as an effective instrument for resolving disagreements in matters of faith and for imposing religious and intellectual orthodoxy.²⁴

Law schools also played an equally important role, and perhaps even more so. In fact, the law now took on a new value and, with it, changed the condition of the jurists who taught it in the universities. This is clearly exemplified by Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum*, whose organization of legal material served to regulate the internal life of the Church and to establish its position in the world.²⁵ In the following *summae* and glosses, which constituted the jurisprudence in the form of sentences, the concept of heresy was explored and extended,²⁶ and the characteristics of the heretic were established.²⁷

To bring here an example as close as possible to Dante, it might be worth analyzing what was stated by Enrico da Susa.²⁸ Known as the Ostiense, and mentioned in this way by the poet, Enrico da Susa was a protagonist of this ecclesiastical propaganda of a legislation *per lo mondo* (Par. XII 82).²⁹ His *Rubrica* dedicated to heretics is a long catalog that establishes who should be identified as such. Among these instructions, we find «qui falsam opinionem de fide vel gignit, [...] vel sequitur, nam quilibet apostatando a fide in Spiritum sanctum peccare videtur», which introduces the broadest definition of the heretic: «Multis tamen modis dicitur haereticus largo sumpto vocabulo». ³⁰ Any doubt about the articles of faith leads to infidelity—*dubius enim in fide haereticus dicitur, et infidelis*; the reference to the simonics is predictable here—*Et simoniacus omnis maximè qui sacramenta pervertit, [...] sed licet unde et hoc nomen simoniacus pro haereticis ponitur*.³¹ A new identifying series follows which connects the heretic with the Roman Curia. Everyone who is excommunicated is obviously a heretic—*item excommunicatus nam qui non est membrum ecclesiae*³² *haereticus iudicatur*—since not complying with the apostolic see—*omnes qui non sunt membrum [sic] sanctae et Apostolicae ecclesiae*. The contrast between the heretic and Rome is then increasingly made explicit. Denying the privilege of the Holy See is heretical: «Dicitur etiam haereticus qui privilegium Romanae ecclesiae ab ipso summo ecclesiarum capite traditum conatur auferre», as well as not seeking for communion with it—*qui communionem catholicae ecclesiae non recipit*—, transgress his commands—*Et qui transgreditur praecepta sedis Apostolicae*—, and contravening its decrees—*Et qui vult contravenire decreta Epistolis Apostolicis*.³³ It is therefore not surprising that a heretic is narrowly defined as anyone who perceives the articles of faith differently from what is established by the Church of Rome: «stricto modo dicitur haereticus qui aliter sentit de articulis fidei quam Romana Ecclesia». ³⁴ It is interesting to note how the etymological meaning of the term heretic is found in its divisive action and not in its elective option: «Dicitur autem haereticus ab haerescor haeresceris id est divido dividis». This leads to assimilate the heretic to the hermit who divides himself from others and to superimpose heresy on schism: «Inde et eremita quasi divisus ab aliis; ita et haeresis dicitur divisio, id est separatio a fide catholica secundum Azonem,³⁵ haeretico igitur vel schismatico». The *Rubrica* ends with a part entitled «Annotationes: Sunt et alii modi, quibus quis dici potest haereticus», first among these «qui se ab unitate ecclesiae separat», which highlights an equivalence between schismatics and heretics.³⁶

The following section is dedicated to schismatics: «De Schismaticis: Schisma quid sit. Et unde dicatur». ³⁷ The sequence is immediately explained: «sed quia interdum schisma inducit haeresim: quia omne schisma intendit sibi constituere ecclesiam et universalem ecclesiam impugnare». It is worth noting how, for the Ostiense, it is schism that can lead to heresy and not vice versa. From this, we can deduce two things: first, that heresy is not necessary for a schism to arise; second, that heresy appears as a more serious sin than schism. The *Summa*, when defining *Quid sit schisma*, states «schisma est illicita divisio per

inobedientiam ab universitate ecclesiae facta», a division also moved by an error of faith: «Ideoque schismatici volentes Dei ecclesiam discindere, peccant in fide, quo ad articulum illum, Credo in Spiritum Sanctum et unam sanctam ecclesiam catholicam». The Greek etymology of the term tends to unite the two crimes, which highlights their divisive action: «Et certe hoc nomen schisma graecum, et dicitur a scissura». The unity of the Church is then compared to the indivisibility of Christ's tunic: «si quis ab hac unitate recedat divisus est et sic schismaticus vestimentum enim domini, ideo schissum non fuit, sed de eo sortiti sunt, quia ecclesia scindi non debet, sed tota in unitate consistit, ut [...] sicut domini vestimentum». Finally, the most relevant point for the difference between heresy and schism: «Differt autem ab haeresi in principio nam haeresis in sui principii habet perversum dogma, quod non habet schisma». However, persevering in the schism leads to heresy—*Sed si perdurat cadit in haeresim: quia fingit se ab ecclesia recte recessisse et ideo censetur haereticus*—since the relationship between the two sins is such that «est inter haec duo talis differentia qualis inter genus et speciem quia omnis haereticus est schismaticus, sed non convertitur».³⁸

In the following subsection, regarding «Qua poena schismatici feriantur»—written *ut sciant homines quam grave et quam detestabile sit hoc crimen [...] unde nec dubitandum est sceleratius esse delictum, quod est gravius vindicatum*—there is again a comparison with the crime of heresy: «alibi dicitur haeresim esse maius inter crimina eo, quod primum locum tenet in poenis [...], tamen ex quo schisma iudicatum et confirmatum fuerit, idem est crimen, et utrique est poena eadem infligenda».³⁹ Lastly, it is interesting to note the reference to Frederick II, who is identified as a schismatic: «contra dominum Gregorius 9 [schisma movit] et tandem per Innocenti IV depositus fuit concilio Lugduniensis, debet ergo quilibet schismaticus timere et animadvertere quod licet aliquando naviculam Petri fluctuet, submergi tamen non potest».⁴⁰

In Ostiense's work, we clearly see the insistence on pitting the heretic against the Church of Rome, thus tending to unite, or at least to link, the crime of heresy with that of schism. This overlap, however, only works in one direction since it is the crime of heresy that is used to aggravate the condition of the schismatics, who, by separating themselves from the Church, also offend God. The *Häresie des Ungehorsams* shifts the focus from the concept of heresy to that of heretic, and in the formulation of the *contemptus clavium* (i.e., the possibility of *serrare e diserrare*), the pope claims a power that Christ granted to Peter and that no one can oppose.⁴¹

Thus, we see how the canonists, on the basis of a historical tradition derived from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, built up a concept of heresy that was remarkably centered around the offense to papal primacy.⁴² Indeed, it was precisely the incorporation of the *ius romanum* into legal speculation that allowed them to almost empty the concept of the heresy of its theological implications and hence to reduce it to a socio-political tool for controlling dissent.⁴³

This, then, was the historical, doctrinal context in which the poet was formed: a context connoted by a weakly theological and strongly juridical-disciplinary concept of heresy.⁴⁴ Therefore, to properly assess the meaning of Dante's operation, which clearly separates heresy from schism, it is necessary to relate it to what has been exposed so far and to highlight the differences between the poet's structuring of the infernal afterworld and the juridical-cultural arrangement made by the holders of orthodoxy.

3. Discussion

Heresy and Schism in Dante

If we recall the guilt expressed by Dante, *l'anima col corpo morta fanno*, we can say that the heretics sin is a misinterpretation of Scripture, the election of their own reading against that sanctioned by the Fathers of the Church moved by the Holy Spirit (*Mon. III 3 11–13*).⁴⁵ An interpretation that also finds support in the presence of Pope Anastasius, a presumed Monophysite, and which has been explained by Andrea Lancia as follows:

Heretici sono e furo coloro li quali, pensando perverse dottrine a loro arbitrio, si partirono dalla catolica ecclesia. A noi non è licito alcuna cosa inducere né eleggere a nostro arbitrio. Di questa cosa avemo autori li apostoli di Dio, li quali né etiamdio elli medesimi nulla cosa dal suo arbitrio indussoro o elessoro, ma la disciplina presa da Cristo fedelmente alle nationi anuntiarono.⁴⁶

As it is well known, the classification of the sin of heresy is a matter of debate. In fact, it does not seem to fit into the structural division made by Virgil in *Inferno* XI, in a narrative context that, therefore, sees the two pilgrims still pausing right in the circle of heretics. Furthermore, its position seems to place this circle in an intermediate zone between the sinners punished outside of Dite and those enclosed within the city walls, among whom, almost at the bottom of the infernal funnel, are the schismatics. This separation and the distance between the two sins mark the radicality of Dante's thought in relation to that of his contemporaries.

According to Lancia:

Una questione si muove qui: quale è maggiore peccato, o la infidelitate, della quale è trattato di sopra canto X, o la scisma, della quale si tratta nel presente canto. Et secondo l'ordine di questo libro pare maggiore la scisma, poi ch'è dannata più al fondo de l'inferno e seguitando il detto d'Aristotile, il quale arguisce così nel primo de l'Ethica: « Il bene della moltitudine si è il maggiore bene e divino », et ne l'viii dice: « Al maggiore male è contrario e opposto il maggiore bene ». Dunque la scisma che è male della moltitudine è opposto al maggiore bene che è divino e santo, però che la scisma corrompe la moltitudine, la infidelitate corrompe pur quello in che ella è. Conchiude dunque: la scisma è maggiore peccato. In contrario s'argomenta così: quello è maggiore peccato che è opposto al maggior buono; Dio è sommo buono, lo quale è obiecto della fede, dunque la infidelitate è opposta e contraria a Dio, et la scisma è contraria de l'unione delli huomini; minore bene è l'unione delle genti che Dio, dunque è maggiore peccato la infidelitate che la scisma. La maggioritate del peccato si considera in due modi: l'uno secondo la spetia del peccato, l'altro secondo le sue circumstantie. Lo peccato riceve sua spetie secondo suo obietto; l'obietto della fede, come è detto, si è Idio, l'obietto della scisma si è l'unione della Chiesa. Sotto la spetie del peccato pecca lo infidele, ch'è il primo modo; sotto il secondo modo, ch'è secondo le sue circumstantie, pecca il scismatico. Aristotile non conobbe la cattolica fede e l'autore poetiza secondo Aristotile.⁴⁷

Lancia seems perplexed by this division but limits himself to justify it with a blunt reference to Aristotle.⁴⁸

The structuring of Dante's hell thus seems to support the hypothesis that the official construction of heretics was considered artificial by the contemporaries, although lost in later criticism.⁴⁹ Even the choice of Epicurus as the *exemplum* of this sin, as well as the silence about the multiple heretical movements that characterized the decades preceding the writing of the *Commedia*, seems to point in this direction.⁵⁰ Indeed, Dante seems to bring the concept of heresy back to a purely intellectual plan, completely disconnected from temporal relations with the Church. The very peculiar position of the heresy within the infernal structure seems to confirm this: immediately after the entrance into Dite, but close to the walls and immediately before *d'un'alta ripa* (*Inf.* XI 1).⁵¹ A sin that would thus be placed in an intermediate position between incontinence and malice since it is inherent in man's natural desire for knowledge but does not surrender to the limits imposed on him by God, the dogmas.⁵²

Certainly, as Manselli pointed out, the separation of heretics from the schismatics allows us to evaluate how Dante was well aware of the propagandist approach that had been implemented at least in the previous century and was still in force during his lifetime.⁵³ By depoliticizing the concept of heresy,⁵⁴ he would be in open conflict with what was then commonly stated in canon laws and would deprive the Church of one of the instruments that had hitherto characterized its policy action.⁵⁵

The sin of schism, now separated from the heretical one, takes on an exceptional gravity in the poet's formulation because it is contrary to Dante's ideal of unity and peace in the *societas christianorum*. Thus, Dante relegates the disintegrating action of the schismatics to the depths of hell, as they are averse to the development of a society founded on such principles, which are the only possibility for mankind to obtain the *maximum* human happiness in life. In fact, it is important to note that for Dante, the perversion of a single individual is always a manifestation of a sin that is less dangerous than those that act and affect society as a whole. In his view, society is more capable of influencing individual behavior than the individual society (*Conv.* IV 4 2–4).

It is precisely the presence of Dolcino in this group that can shed light on Dante's thoughts on the heretical movements of his time, which, at their extremes, were no longer legitimate criticisms aimed at a corrupt Church but unjustified acts of violence.⁵⁶ Moreover, it is a fact that in Dante's text, there is no mention whatsoever of what we might call the heretical component of the schismatics.⁵⁷ This is a crucial point. Indeed, the conception of heresy as expressed in Dante's time—a political crime condemned because of the laceration it sought to provoke in the body of the Church—is central in this episode, even though we are among the schismatics. In fact, Dante's concept of heresy implies arguments that might be said contrary to faith, not to hierocracy.

Dolcinus can be compared to Muhammad precisely because of the belligerent component they share; no heretical component is mentioned here.⁵⁸ In fact, in just six verses imbued with a warlike lexicon—*armi*, *vittoria* (military), *acquistar* (to conquer)—not even a whiff of doctrine rises from the text, which seems to rule out the possibility that there could be any heresy in it, in Dante's sense.⁵⁹ Muhammad himself «risulta impersonare prima di ogni altra cosa la figura del condottiero militare e del lottatore per la fede». ⁶⁰ An image decidedly much more appropriate to the narrative context from which it emerges. In fact, the Canto XXVIII, already in its incipit, has a clear physical and not at all intellectual dimension, in which the unspeakable nature of the violence, of the blood and the physical torments characterize the *bolgia*: «Chi poria mai con parole sciolte/dicer del sangue e de le piaghe a pieno/ch'ì vidi, per narrar più volta?» (XXVIII 1–3). Indeed, even if all the people who died in bitter and hard battles were gathered together *e qual forato suo membro e quel mozzo/mostrasse, d'aequar sarebbe nulla/il modo de la nono bolgia sozzo* (18–21).⁶¹

An obvious reference for the Canto—which could represent the heretical component underlying the narrative—is the episode of the *inconsutile* tunic, a metaphor for the Church of Rome. Tearing the tunic apart, which was impossible even for the soldiers under the cross (Jn. 19, 23–24), is now a mad act attempted by the schismatic of Canto XXVIII. In this perspective, I believe, lies the fundamental difference that separates heretics from schismatics: an error of election due to the will to knowledge inherent in every human being cannot be compared to an attitude that undermines the unity of human society. It is precisely this warlike aspect that is the most overt manifestation of the desire for scission typical of certain heretical movements of the poet's time. Therefore, while Dante, in his criticism of the secular Church, shares many aspects of the claims made by some of these movements, he cannot tolerate, and in fact harshly condemns, the attempt to create a division within the unity of the Ecclesia—which, even in the decadence in which it now finds itself, is still the one founded by Christ.

This is an otherworldly construction that marks the great distance between Dante and his contemporaries. There is no heresy in Dante's Dolcino because there is no theological error. There is only schism, which, in Dante's system of sins, coincides in part or in its entirety with the crime of heresy of the late medieval centuries.⁶² On the other hand, this is the impression we receive from a reading of the Dolcinian parable, regardless of Dante's verses. Dolcino led a heretical movement devoid of any criticism of the theological-doctrinal construction of the Church but engaged in aggressions against ecclesiastical structures, perceived as corrupted and totally incapable of fulfilling their role of guiding souls.⁶³

4. Conclusions

Then, if already in the first centuries «la posizione dell’eretico è evidentemente assimilata a quella del nemico» and that a certain military terminology «ha influito molto presto sia nell’elaborazione degli istituti canonistici che sulla posizione giuridica dell’eretico», Dante seems to intervene in this process of defining, which was intensified by the centennial definition of the Church as a secular institution. Thus, Dante associates the warlike terminology with the schismatics while returning the heretics, guilty of an intellectual sin, to the botanical (*sterpi*, *Par.* XII 100) and faunal (*volpe Purg.* XXXII 119) domain—perhaps to emphasize both their perverse nature and their relative danger, which can be overcome by the *argomenti/di fede* (*Par.* IV 68–19).⁶⁴

Therefore, Dante’s relationship with one of the most important canonists of his time seems to confirm the enormous distance that separates in his thought the divine truths from the excessive speculation of the human sciences, as well as a certain critical and anti-academic attitude. It remains to be clarified how Dante acquired this knowledge and what materials he actually had at his disposal,⁶⁵ thus marking the transition from the context to the effective relationship with the *scole*.⁶⁶ What is certain, however, is that the position he adopts on the issue concerning heresy and schism and their relationship stands in an antithetical direction to that established by the canonists and makes the poet’s doctrinal positions autonomous and controversial.⁶⁷ Continuing the attempt to define the concepts of heresy and schism would be a fruitful operation, which will also help to improve our understanding of the relationship between Dante and the Islamic religion and resolve two *cruces* in Dante’s work: the *cui* of v. 63 of Canto X of the *Inferno* and the structural division operated by Virgil in the XI.

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Notes

- ¹ Manselli (1970). Marco Veglia and Lorenzo Paolini complained about the modesty of the bibliography on the topic, highlighting how the exegesis of the Canto has concentrated «di norma su questioni politiche, filosofiche, letterarie, senza considerare ciò che fu l’eresia al tempo di Dante». Luca Lombardo echoed and expanded on this complaint, stating that the «studi rivolti al problema dell’eresia in Dante delineano una bibliografia relativamente modesta per proporzioni». Veglia and Paolini (2013, p. IX); Lombardo (2018, p. 39).
- ² Agresti (1890, pp. 225–31; 1891, pp. 282–89, 305–14); Fraccaroli (1894); Proto (1897, pp. 337–61); Moore (1916, pp. 152–245); De Salvio (1920, pp. 239–73); Lattanzi (1937, pp. 183–96); Mazzeo (1958, pp. 106–20); Guibertean (1962, pp. 460–89). More recent are those of Abrams (1986, vol. 27, pp. 5–19); Pecoraro (1988, pp. 29–50); Guerci (1999, pp. 47–62); Barolini (2006a, pp. 102–21); Santagata (2011, pp. 309–15); Azzetta (2013, pp. 311–42); Burr (2015, pp. 106–18); Falzone (2018, pp. 41–72); Villa (2020, pp. 356–74). Essential are the miscellaneous volumes edited by Veglia et al. (2013) and Ardizzone (2014), as well as the monographs of Tocco (1899) and De Salvio (1936).
- ³ It is the path indicated by Bruno Nardi (1966), to try to «intendere il pensiero del Poeta in rapporto alle varie dottrine del tempo alle quali egli ora consente, ora invece contrasta» (p. V).
- ⁴ «lack of historicizing has been an abiding feature of Dante exegesis». Barolini (2009, p. 37).
- ⁵ «La definizione di eresia nel Medioevo, che ci dovrebbe consentire un riferimento semplice e diretto per procedere con la massima chiarezza, è in realtà introvabile nella letteratura teologica medievale con formula sintetica ed univoca». Paolini (2013, p. 20).
- ⁶ «Il rifiuto di tale impostazione ecclesiologica nei quotidiani atti di governo pontificio viene tradotto con la formula “disprezzo del potere delle chiavi”, ed innesca un processo di identificazione fra scismatici ed eretici in cui interviene il criterio dell’obbedienza al papa come immediato e imprescindibile carattere di ortodossia. Di qui muove la graduale assimilazione della ribellione al papa all’eresia». *Ivi*, p. 25.
- ⁷ In fact, in the transition of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire, the emperors saw the possibility of using the faith as an instrument of stability in the various territories, but such an operation required the *credo* to be defined and unified. Constantine announced the Council of Nicaea, attended its sessions, and guaranteed the maintenance of the faith as it had been established. The peace of the church was to reflect that of the empire. Prior to Nicaea was the Council of Alexandria (261), in which the theories of Sabellius were condemned, remembered, along with Arius, by Dante in *Par.* XIII 127–29. The Platonic theory of

the pre-existence of the soul prior to earthly life was condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 540 (*Par.* IV 22–24). The establishment of the official creed also included the definition of those who rejected it: the heretics.

8 See Kettel and Friedrich (1977, pp. 486–98) and Grundmann (1977).

9 «Le temps de Grégoire VII et de ses collaborateurs est devenu l’aurore de le papauté». Mitrofanov (2015, p. 215). «La costruzione della monarchia papale all’interno del cattolicesimo, sommariamente prevista nelle grandi enunciazioni di Gregorio VII, aveva ormai conferito alla chiesa di Roma mezzi di azione di tale estensione e rilievo, da consentirle l’assunzione di responsabilità supreme in tutte le forme di inquadramento—culturale, religioso e politico—della cristianità occidentale». Tabacco (1978, p. 9); in the same volume Merlo (1978, p. 19). This phase of ecclesiologization was studied in particular by Ovidio Capitani. See the introduction to the volume he edited and the important contributions therein, starting from Capitani (1976, 1977a, 1977b, 2002). On the historiographical investigation of heresy, see the miscellaneous volume edited by Lourdaux and Verhelst (1983); Paolini (2013); Hageneder (2000). On heresy and inquisition in Dante’s Florence, see Parmeggiani (2018); on the politicization of the heresy trial even beyond Dante’s chronological boundaries: Parent (2014). Very useful Prosperi (2010a).

10 Compare with the epistle sent by the pontiff on 8 May 1080 to abbot William of Hirsau: «Ereticum esse constat, qui Romane ecclesie non concordat». Caspar (1923, pp. 504–5). On this see Hageneder (2000, pp. 82–92).

11 The «eccessivo uso del termine “eretici” nella pubblicistica gregoriana sarebbe espressione di [...] una variazione semantica profonda del termine eretico. La spiegazione consiste forse nell’impiego dell’arma ideologica più efficace [...] in funzione principalmente ecclesiologica, e per necessità. Di qui l’alterazione, proprio perché il problema dell’eresia si intreccia e si complica con quello, assai grave ed urgente, dell’unità della Chiesa». Paolini (2013, p. 26). On the Reform, or it would be better to say Revolution, see N. D’Acunto (2020), which takes into account the developments in historiography of the last twenty years.

12 Manselli (1971). In most cases we do not have heretical theological constructions opposed to orthodoxy, and it is difficult to determine if and to what extent they existed. This can be read either as a sign of the willingness of the movements to act within Christianity, pushing for a simple renewal of customs, or as an excessive and exploited persecution carried out by the dominant structure. For the complex question of the Cathars and their existence or not as an organized faith, cfr. Lansing (1998); and Krumm et al. (2023).

13 «La componente e la dimensione politica della lotta antieretica, già presenti nella costituzione *Sicut ait beatus Leo* del III concilio Lateranense del 1179, si facevano sempre più evidenti». Merlo (2000a). The III Lateran Council formalized «la ‘crociata’ antieretica nel quadro di concezioni politico-istituzionali secondo cui qualsiasi cosa che sconvolgesse l’ordinamento religioso e civile diveniva o poteva divenire eresia. E l’eresia venne percepita e definita come attentato alla “pace di Dio”, cioè quella ‘pace’ che deve regolare la convivenza tra gli individui». Merlo (2000b), p. 367.

14 Alberigo et al. (1973, p. 227). For a very brief introduction to the council see Merlo (2000c, p. 368); Arnaldi (2005).

15 With this decretal there was «un effettivo e completo uso dell’idea politica e giuridica di maestà nell’ambito ecclesiastico». The equivalence between heresy and *lèse majesté* «viene ufficialmente introdotta nel diritto canonico da Innocenzo III per disporre di un duttile strumento repressivo nel quadro del rafforzamento politico e organizzativo della Chiesa», a procedure in which the pontifical legislation «sopravanza la dottrina, e, impadronendosi del concetto, lo usa per i propri scopi politici, rendendo, in larga misura, vano lo sforzo di sistemazione teorica operato dai canonisti anteriori». An action perhaps more due to the desire «di giustificazione teorica di una potenza politica temporale» than to an actual endangerment of the «monopolio ideologico della Chiesa» by heresies; a hypothesis that seems to be justified «nell’utilizzazione estensiva del concetto» of all the popes, starting from Innocent III. Piergiovanni (1972, pp. 56, 88). According to Hageneder, the *Vergentis* accentuated «il carattere di separazione del delitto di eresia». Hageneder (2000, p. 121).

16 «Ciò che ai nostri occhi appare come meramente politico, inerente all’esercizio di potere monarchico del papa, è assunto nel corso del Duecento come parte costitutiva del concetto rinnovato di eresia». Paolini (2013, p. 26).

17 Adriano Prosperi, after describing the persecution of those heretics guilty of a «ribellione politica» that undermined the unity of Christian society, distinguishes the case of the heretic «colpevole di reati di pensiero», who «poteva risolvere il suo caso nel colloquio con l’inquisitore che lo interrogava nel foro della coscienza, cercava di persuaderlo e gli impartiva pene spirituali». A difference that shows how the first concern was the suppression of political dissent rather than theoretical dissent. Prosperi (2010b, p. 371). The suggestion of a distinction between popular and doctrinal heresy is widespread Da Milano (1983, pp. 17–18); Grundmann (1968); Manselli (1974, pp. 8–9) and is certainly understandable. But if the intellectual heresies hardly had a direct impact on several layers of society and against them it was possible to continue using the already existing instruments of contrast—the condemnation of the propositions, the attempted refutation and excommunication—for the “popular” ones specific repressive methods were developed to prevent their spread in society and to prevent them from invalidating the imposition of the hierocratic model. As an example of control over intellectual production, we could also cite the case of Dante’s *Monarchia*: burned in 1324 and confuted in 1330 by Guido Vernani with his *De reprobatione Monarchie*, whose dedication to Graziolo de’ Bambaglioli has been read as *atta* to claim the cultural control over specific *milieus*, the laical one *in primis*. Lambertini (2013, p. 367).

18 «Non vi è dubbio che per una compiuta collocazione storica dell’eresia fra XIII e XIV secolo sia necessaria una riflessione sulla dialettica che allora si esprime fra l’esperienza religiosa e l’esperienza giuridica in genere e politica in particolare». Tabacco (1978, p. 9).

- 19 Among the preeminent figures of this movement was Anselmo da Lucca. In his *Collectio canonica* he states that without communion with the Church there can be no orthodoxy: «Quod Romana Ecclesia mater sit omnium Ecclesiarum, et nunquam erraverit» (I, 35); and even more explicitly: «Quod non est vera fides quae cum Romana Ecclesia non convenit» (XII, 48); denying the possibility of salvation outside the Church: «Quod separatus ab Ecclesia quantumcunque laudabiliter vivat, non tamen habedit vitam aeternam» (XII, 58). It is also interesting to note the distinction between heretics and schismatics: «Quod haeresis perversum dogma, schisma vero discessionem habeat» (XII, 49). I read the chapters in Migne's edition in P.L. 149, coll. 485Ass. On Anselm see Mitrofanov (2015, pp. 69–75, 111–216); and Violante (1961). For a study of the juridical status of the heretic up to the decades preceding Dante, see Maceratini (1994).
- 20 Paolini (2013, pp. 28–32). For a quick overview see also Trivellone (2009, pp. 403–12).
- 21 On the topic see: Rosso (2018, pp. 228–37).
- 22 The initial exclusivity reserved to the University of Paris in assigning the title of *licentia ubique docendi* moved precisely in the direction of being able to have a single «centro di irradiazione di 'profonda e unitaria' cristianizzazione». Sileo (1996, p. 527).
- 23 It is undeniable that the «istituzione universitaria, almeno nei primi due secoli della sua storia, si sia comportata come organo ad un tempo recettore e propulsore, tanto da essere stata oggetto di un interessato e convergente controllo 'politico'—in particolare del papato», which has carried out «un diretto magistero di appoggio, vigilanza e controllo» over the university bodies. Ivi, pp. 473, 476.
- 24 Rosso (2018, p. 251). On the sentence, see Piron (2011); and Bianchi (1999).
- 25 Hageneder (2000, pp. 69–70).
- 26 In the *Glossa ordinaria* to *Liber Sextus* (*Liber Sextus Decretalium D. Bonifacii Papae VIII, Clementis Papae V Constitutiones Extravagantes tum viginti, D. Ioannis Papae XXII tum communes, Venetiis, Apud Iuntas*, 1615, pp. 415–16, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, FILIP.D.24) (Bonifacius et al. 1615), in the second title of the fifth book, the one dedicated to heretics, we read that the crime of heresy is the worst of all sins, even compared to that of lèse majesté itself, as it pertains to the field of the divine: «verum qui inter crimina crimen haeresis est maius, qui per ipsum offenditur divinae maiestas [. . .]. Nam istud crimen est gravius crimen, quam sit crimen laesae maiestatis, quia gravius est laedere divinam maiestatem, quam humanam». In the Goffredo de Trano *Summa in titulos decretalium* (*Summa Goffredi de Trano in titulos decretalium*, Venetiis, tipi Christophorum de Zanettis, Salodiensem, 1570, c. 199v, Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III, Napoli, XIV C 20) (Goffredo da Trani n.d.) there is a list of multiple possible definitions for the heretic: «Nunc dicendum est de haereticis qui deviantes a via fidei in Deum multipliciter peccant. [. . .] Haereticus dicitur sex modis. Haereticus dicitur, qui falsam de fide opinionem vel gignit ut haeresiarcha [. . .], vel sequitur, vel qui haeresiarcham imitatur [. . .]. Secundo modo potest haereticus appellari quicumque aliter scripturam intelligit, quam sensus Spiritus Sancti flagitat, a quo scripta est, licet ab ecclesia non recesserit [. . .]. Tertio modo dicitur haereticus, qui a sacramentis ecclesiae et communione fidelium est divisus [. . .]. Quarto modo dicitur haereticus sacramentorum perversor, ut simoniacus, qui emit et vendit sacramenta ecclesiastica [. . .]. Quinto modo dicitur haereticus dubius in fide [. . .]. Nam firmiter debemus credere, ut supra de Summa trinitate et fide catholica [. . .]. Unde levi argumento a fide deviare haereticus censetur [. . .]. Sexto modo dicitur haereticus, qui Romanae ecclesiae privilegium ab ipso summo ecclesiarum capite traditum auferre conatur». This is followed by a discussion dedicated to schismatics which opens by illustrating the reason for this succession: «Dictus est supra de haereticis; sed quia schisma inducit haeresim, qui omne schisma intendit sibi constituere ecclesiam et universalem ecclesiam impugnare». It then continues to c. 201r to highlight the differences and relationships between these two sins: «Differt schisma ab haeresi: quia haeresis in principio sui habet perversum dogma, quod non habet schisma; sed in fine contingit a liquam haeresim, ut recte videatur ab ecclesia recessisse [. . .]. Vel est talis differentia inter haeresim et schisma, qualis est inter genus et speciem, quia omnis haereticus est schismaticus, sed non convertitur nisi si schisma duraverit, nam tunc in haeresim incidit, sicut dictum est». A list very similar to this one is in the aforementioned *Glossa ordinaria* in which we read that a heretic is «qui scindit se ab unitate ecclesiae»; an identical formula also in the *Glossa Palatina* to the *Decretum* of Lorenzo Ispano: «Qui abscidit se ab unitate ecclesie». Cfr Hageneder (2000, pp. 72–73, 76). What seems most interesting to highlight here is how the crime of heresy is equated with that of schism. We also note the *Summa decretorum* of (Sicardo da Cremona n.d.), who differentiates heresy and schism by relating them respectively to Catholic truth and peace: «Videndum est, quid sit heresis, unde dicatur, que differentia inter scisma et heresim. Quod sint genera hereticorum et unde denominentur. Heresis est dogma perversum fidei Christianae contrarium. Dicitur ab herendo, ed est dubitandum, vel ab eligendo vel a grego 'her', quod ist virtus. Dicitur enim ab errando. Heresis est perversio catholicae veritatis. Schisma est perversio catholicae pacis». See ms. Clm 8013, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, c. 77r, Sigihardi Cremonensis episcopi *summa Decretorum*.
- 27 The canonistic approach to the question of heresy «sembra contenere in sé l'inevitabile interesse giuridico e giudiziario per il soggetto ereticale piuttosto che l'interesse teologico e religioso per l'oggetto eterodosso». Merlo (2000d, p. XXI).
- 28 Even as an ecclesiastic, he was among the most important and prolific decretalists of his time. His works had an immense impact, especially the *Summa super titulis Decretalium*, a text used in schools and that remained the standard reference for canon law until the beginning of the modern age. Pennington (1993).
- 29 (Enrico da Susa n.d.) is also mentioned in Dante's polemic in the Lettera ai Cardinali italiani (*Ep.* XI). Here, as in *Mon.* III 39–16, Dante deplores the centrality of the Decretals over the Doctors of the Church.

- 30 *Henrici cardinalis Hostiensis summa aurea*, Venetiis, Salamandra, 1570, Augsburg, Staats und Stadtbibliothek, 2 KR 108, all quotations are transcribed by c. 397v. The fifth book begins on c. 377r and ends together with the volume. Among the topics covered here we find *De simonia*, cc. 386v–394v; *De Iudeis, et Sarracenis et eorum servis*, cc. 394v–397r; *De haereticis* (ms. *Haereticis*) cc. 397r–401r; *De schismaticis*, cc. 401r–402r; *De Apostatis, et iterantibus baptisma*, cc. 402r–403r.
- 31 On the disappearance of simony from the heart of theological discourse, but not from the canonical one, and on the methods of investigation to be followed, see [Ciccopiedi \(2021\)](#), pp. 345–54).
- 32 In the ms. *ecclesiae*.
- 33 Come after: «peccatum paganis est Apostolicis praeceptis contravenire».
- 34 Thus, statements such as «[*Ereticus est*] omnis qui male interpretat sacram scripturam, id est qui ipsam aliter intelligit quam Spiritus sanctus efflagitat a quo scriptura est, licet ab ecclesia non recessit», and «qui novam opinionem invenit» are in direct correlation with what Rome has ruled on the matter.
- 35 The cross reference is to Azzone da Bologna, well-known jurist and author of the *Summa Codicis*, see [Fiorelli \(1962\)](#).
- 36 The *Annotationes* are at c. 401r.
- 37 While four *carte* are dedicated to the treatment of heretics (397v–401r), just one is dedicated to that of schismatics (401r–402r).
- 38 For the text of the quotations, see c. 401r.
- 39 c. 401r. Come after at c. 401v: «Et dicitur proprie schismaticus qui non recognoscit potestatem Romanae ecclesiae, sic enim efficitur ovis extranea ab ovili».
- 40 For the text of the quotations, see c. 401v. Federicus Imperator iste 3 [=tertius]. However, the reference to Gregory IX and the preceding context leave no doubt about the identification.
- 41 About *contemptus clavium* see [Hageneder \(2000\)](#), pp. 11–31).
- 42 ([Ugucione da Pisa n.d.](#)) wrote in his *summa*: «qui contumaciter negat Romanam ecclesiam esse caput omnium ecclesiarum et habere auctoritatem disponendi de omnibus ecclesiis vel condendi canones, qui canones ab ea factos tamquam inobediens contempnit et eos non esse observanda asserit et publice predicat: talis heresim sapit et ipso iure dampnatus censetur hereticus et schismaticus». [Hageneder \(2000\)](#), p. 93). There is a critical edition of the first twenty *distinctions* of the *Summa*, the one cited is number twenty-two. The main manuscript of the critical edition., Clm 10247, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (*Hugutio, Summa decretorum*), it is digitized and freely accessible. For the critical edition see [Prerovský \(2006\)](#). Cfr [Hageneder \(2000\)](#), p. 93).
- 43 «Il concetto di eresia canonistico ha ottenuto una nuova accentuazione secondo il diritto romano». [Hageneder \(2000\)](#), p. 120).
- 44 «un concetto di eresia debolmente teologico e fortemente giuridico-disciplinare». [Merlo \(2011\)](#), p. 8).
- 45 I cannot dwell on the analysis of the specifics of the concept of heresy in Dante, which is the subject of my doctoral dissertation. To date, the most complete discussion of how to understand the concept of heresy in Dante is undoubtedly that of Paolo Falzone, who states «Pare lecito concluderne che per Dante, che sul punto segue i maestri della scolastica, l’eresia muove regolarmente da un errore di natura intellettuale». [Falzone \(2018\)](#), p. 62). Already pointed out by Veglia-Paolini, «Certo, si ha la sensazione che Dante avverta il pericolo maggiore delle eresie dotte (dualismo “manicheo”, averroismo), in cui l’errore e il dubbio possono allontanare dalla fede cristiana, piuttosto che delle esperienze religiose motivate dall’escatologia», [Veglia and Paolini \(2013\)](#), p. XII); and Alberto Forni: «Per Dante, come per Tommaso d’Aquino (*Summa theologiae* II/2, qu. 11, a. 2), l’eresia consiste in un’errata interpretazione della Scrittura» [Forni \(2013\)](#), p. 324).
- 46 [Azzetta and Lancia \(2012\)](#), pp. 230–31). The editor informs us that the quoted text is a «periodo aggiunto in un secondo momento, vergato con ductus meno posato rispetto alla prima parte della chiosa».
- 47 *Ivi*, pp. 422–23. At page 423, see also note n. 15 on Azzetta’s cross reference to Lana and Ottimo comments.
- 48 The author of the Codice cassinese equates the sin of schism against spiritual things with heresy: «Et quia hoc peccatum scismatis committitur interdum circa spiritualia ut puta circa ea que sunt ad catholicam fidem que proprie heresis dicitur».
- 49 If the critical analysis of the characters of Farinata and Cavalcante illuminates the artistic level, it often does not examine the origins of the Canto, which must also be studied in relation to the structure that subtends the circle and the type of damned it contains. The political nature of the dialogue with Farinata and the metapoetic nature of Guido’s absent presence must be traced and analyzed from the perspective of the Epicurean heresy, not abstracted as lyrical moments extraneous to the context and structure. A tendency that has certainly favored the development of the criticism around la bellezza of the Canto, but to the detriment of part of the bontade (*Conv.* II 11 4–5). Landino, for example, constructs the glosses of his commentary on this Canto by interweaving them with reflections on heresy, both where this is clear in the text of the *Commedia*, and with allegorical interpretations of passages that seem to refer to something else. Examples of this are the verses of *Inf.* X 49–51: «“S’ei furon cacciati, ei tornar d’ogne parte”, /rispuos’io lui, “l’una e l’altra fiata; /ma i vostri non appreser ben quell’arte”». Verses in which Landino refers to the contrast between heretics and Catholics. In fact, if the latter are able to return even when initially expelled, heretics, on the other hand, *non appreser ben quell’arte*, therefore, once cast out, they are unable to do so. See note ad locum. All references to ancient commentaries are to the Dartmouth Dante Project (<https://dante.dartmouth.edu/>) (accessed on 14 December 2023).
- 50 [Corbett \(2013\)](#); [Robert \(2021\)](#); [Villa \(2021\)](#) and the other articles already cited.
- 51 Edward Moore pointed out how the heretics are «physically as well as logically separated from all other sins or classes of sinners in the system of Dante’s *Inferno*». [Moore \(1916\)](#), p. 180). By emphasizing the height of the bank where the two pilgrims stopped

and the greater cruelty that this *stipa*, Dante evokes in the reader an immediate sense of change and detachment with what he has just experienced. In fact, *l'orribile soperchio / del puzzo che 'l profondo abisso gitta* not only prevents them from continuing the journey quickly, but it even forces Dante and Virgil to stop and get used to the *tristo fiato*. Interrupting the crossing of passing through hell is an extraordinary event—at times is not even conceded to talk to the damned—that can be counterposed to the insistence with which the Latin poet urges the Florentine not to stop and continue on his own path. Moreover, only in this case, it seems to me, the waiting is dictated by the need to prepare for what awaits them below. Obviously, this interruption is also configured as a narrative device useful for the *auctor* to introduce the structural explanation of his work, but its symbolic nature should not be underestimated for this reason. From now on, in fact, the descents from one circle to another will require the help of infernal creatures to allow the two pilgrims to carry out a descent—a descent, not a crossing, like Caronte and Flegiàs—otherwise physically impossible for human forces. Thus, the *alto burrato* of *Inf.* XIV 114, which separates the VII from the VIII circle, repeats the same adjective used in *Inferno* XI, and just as there the intervention of Geryon will be necessary, so between the VIII and IX circles the help of the giant Antaeus will be required. Therefore, while Dante, with the narrative development of his katabasis, gives a form to the infernal underworld that he passes through, he feels the need to establish the rules of this form, of his «sacra dottrina spazializzata», in order to make the reader aware of it. Cristaldi (2013, p. 398).

52 The parallel between heresy and the desire for knowledge, exemplified by Ulysses, is also in Pasquini (2013); Canfora (2023, pp. 28–29). On the figure of Ulysses it is inevitable to refer to Barolini (1992).

53 The issue of the distinction between heresy and schism has recently been addressed, albeit very quickly, by Todorovic (2020).

54 The schismatic Frederick II and the Cathar Farinata, according to the condemnation of the Church, become Epicureans in Dante's construction. A re-semanticization that seems to want to delegitimize the previous condemnations, perhaps perceived by the poet as dependent on a concept of the heresy of disobedience too closely linked to the *gubernatio saeculi* and the hierocratic claims.

55 An operation in line with Dante's thought: the contemporary Church, which bases its work and dominion on the production and commentary of decretals and not on the Holy Scriptures (*Par.* IX 133–356, is thus in fact deprived of its main instrument of temporal competition. Obviously, in fact, still in Dante's time, with «l'esaltazione della *plenitudo potestatis*, il papa giurista [Bonifacio VIII] insiste sulla dimensione dell'eresia come disobbedienza, ossia come violazione disgregatrice dell'ordinamento». Benedetti (2010, p. 215).

56 Since that of the apostolics was the movement that organized itself more than others «in forza armata per l'abbattimento della gerarchia ecclesiastica», its choice as a model would not be surprising. Orioli (1977, p. 233).

57 The ancient comments highlight the dual nature of Dolcino, heretic and schismatic. Graziolo Bambaglioli and Jacopo della Lana, as well as Pietro Alighieri (third redaction) and the author of the Codice cassinese, define him as patarino. For Francesco da Buti the Canto deals with the «seminatori delle eresie e delle scisme», thus uniting the two sins, as does l'Ottimo³ (Amico dell'Ottimo), stating that Dolcino followed «la setta delli epicurii». For Guido of Pisa he was a great schismatic who «maximum scisma in Ecclesia voluit seminare», having structured his own ecclesia and made himself pope and «cardinales aliquos ordinavit». He demonization of the Novarese, which, as we have said, was a custom of the time, makes its way into his commentary when we read that the mountain to which the apostolics retired was protected by a «diabolica custodia», evoked «per artem magicam», so that it was only possible to conquer it «cum auxilio Dei», perhaps to be identified with the snowfall that helped the orthodox forces, as Pietro comments (third redaction). An accentuation of the criminal nature is in Benvenuto da Imola, who reports a theft committed against the priest who took care of him as a boy. See ad locum notes.

58 L'Ottimodeclares that Dolcino was an apostate, thus bringing him closer to the medieval legend which also claimed that Muhammad had previously been a Christian religious. In general, initially «i cattolici hanno considerato a lungo l'islamismo, più che un'altra religione, una eresia. E l'intolleranza si alimentava di fenomeni più che di ostilità religiosa, di quella politica». Manselli (1977, pp. 84–85).

59 In its rapid conquests, Islam almost never forcibly imposed the adoption of its creed on individuals, who were often free to profess their own cult, while also respecting the biblical text. The very recent Islamic reconquests in the lands of the East, Antioch, Tripoli and Acre (1268, '89, '91), and the Spanish ones in the West, must have sharpened the sense of a division much more armed than theological, also because in those same years Islamic culture had «esaurito ormai la sua originalità creatrice». Islam, in the years of Dante's life, was a «potenza puramente politica, sotto le vesti dell'avversa fede, che si contrappone nel Mediterraneo al mondo cristiano». Gabrieli (1970).

60 Ciccuto (2013, p. 257). The author then highlights how this image is consistent with that of the «versetti coranici opportunamente accolti dalle fonti correnti (ad es. *Cor.* 22, 39–40 o il cosiddetto 'versetto della spada' in *Cor.* 9, 5)» and that Muhammad is then introduced «come violento capobanda e guerrafondaio, preso nel giro di un'affermazione di sé che della guerra e dell'omicidio aveva fatto legge di comportamento». *Ibid.*, pp. 257–58.

61 «Nel canto XXVIII, infatti, non si condanna l'Islam in quanto eresia sorta dalla Chiesa latina; ma l'Islam, inteso come divisione del corpo dei credenti in Dio (*l'ecclesia*), e usato come esempio storico per condannare il principio stesso della divisione (*divisio*), opposto al suo polo positivo, cioè l'unità, l'integrità (*la unio*) dei corpi civili e religiosi». Tommasino (2019, p. 73).

62 According to Grado Merlo, in Dante's verses there is a fusion between «l'eretico e il condottiero» with an «accentuazione dell'aspetto guerresco su quello religioso». What for Merlo is a fusion, I would define as the absorption of the heretical component (historically understood) into the schismatic one (Danteanly understood). Merlo (2011, p. 130).

- ⁶³ «La prima osservazione che sorge spontanea allo studioso è che non ci troviamo affatto né con Dolcino né tanto meno con Gerardo Segarelli di fronte ad un'eresia che intende colpire i dogmi della fede. Sorta come ribellione di un individuo ad una situazione di disagio derivante dall'aver davanti agli occhi quello che a molti contemporanei doveva apparire un assurdo storico, cioè il fatto che l'insegnamento della dottrina di Cristo fosse monopolizzato da uomini la cui vita era spesso in contrasto con lo spirito evangelico». Orioli (1977, p. 233), see also p. 234.
- ⁶⁴ On this topic see Maceratini (1994, pp. 49, 50).
- ⁶⁵ On some of Dante's legal competences, see J. Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London, 2013. Teodolinda Barolini pointed out that «the language of judgment and justice» is «the language of the ideological structures that hold up the *Commedia*». Barolini (2006b, p. 139).
- ⁶⁶ «Nel XIII secolo furono fissate nell'attività legislativa dei papi le modalità con le quali chi si fosse ostinatamente opposto alle sentenze papali poteva essere giudicato eretico notorio. Per la formazione di queste concezioni giuridiche è decisiva la continua collaborazione con le scuole canonistiche». Hageneder (2000, pp. 98–99).
- ⁶⁷ Obviously, given the centrality of the subject in those years, it cannot be ruled out that Dante could have obtained certain references simply by living the everyday life of his time. On this Auerbach (2017, p. 74); Contini (1976, p. 170). More generally on the question of «direct sources» in medieval literature, see Gubbini (2020, p. 2). An interesting reading on the relationship between the reflection produced in the centers of higher education and its reverberation on other layers of society, with specific reference to the case of Epicurus, is in Robert (2021, pp. 17–18). Obviously, if the comparison with the sources, in terms of adherence and references, would be less profitable than one might have expected, marking a distance from the models, this very distance would mark the radicality of Dante's thought compared to that of his contemporaries. Barolini (2014).

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