



# INFERNO 1

DANTE ALIGHIERI

1265-1321

Sandro Botticelli, 1495





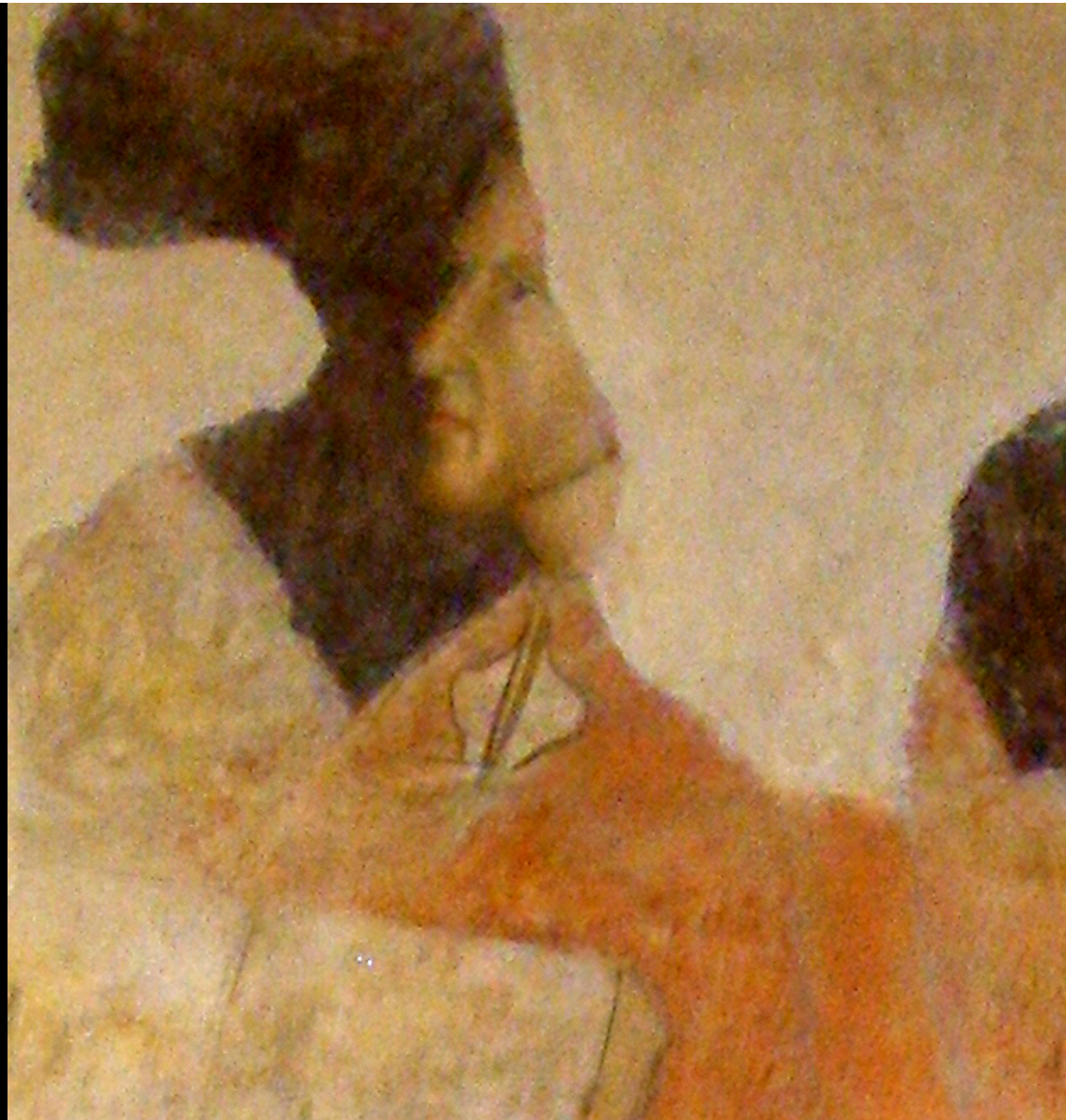
Enrico Pazzi, 1865



Giotto di Bondone, 1337



Unknown, ca. 1350







## DANTE'S LIFE

- Born Florence, 1265; middle-class, highly educated, apothecary
- falls in love at age 9, married at 12. Different girls. Never mentions wife. Beatrice: courtly love.
- Medieval world of guilds, city-states, frequent local wars
- White Guelph (anti-Pope). Exiled 1302, dies in Ravenna. Exile rescinded by Florence, 2008.
- Writes in what today we call Italian: quite readable, mostly Tuscan, other dialects, Latin



Simeon Solomon,  
c. 1860







Slow down on the wine there, kid.





Henry Holliday, 1883





Shameless hussy; wants to be an "influencer"; your mom warned you





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Beatrice; couldn't care if Dante lived or died. Obviously he should pursue her forever





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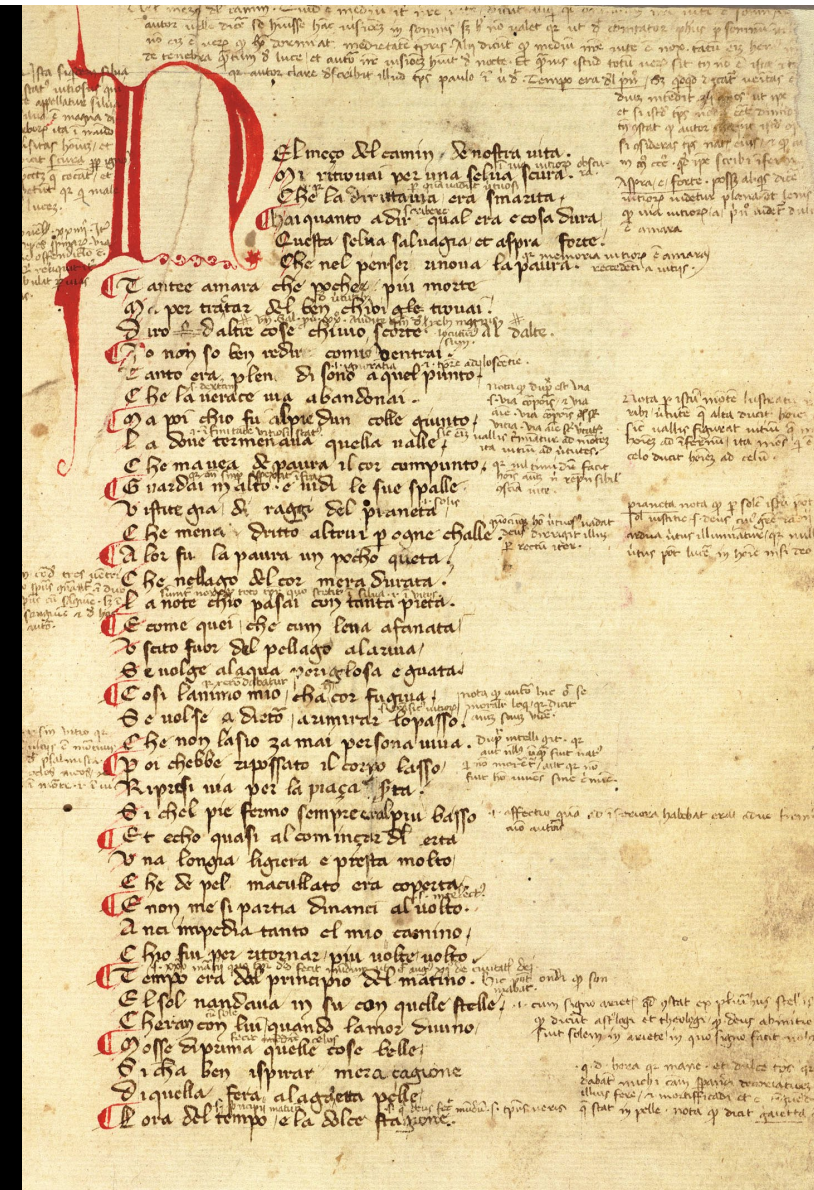
Nice girl, hopelessly in love. Dante never saw her. History has forgotten her name

Beatrice; couldn't care if Dante lived or died. Obviously he should pursue her forever



# DANTE'S WORKS

- *La vita nuova* (The New Life); mix of prose and poetry in Italian, recounting love for Beatrice, ecstatic vision
- *La divina commedia* (The Divine Comedy)
- *Convivio*: long poems with explanatory commentary, super dull
- *De monarchia*: Latin treatise on his political views (TL;DR: he wants secular government)
- *De vulgari eloquentiae* (On the Eloquence of the Vulgar Tongue): Latin, about language



# THE COMEDY

- 3 parts, called *cantiche* (songs): *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso*
- Each part in 33 cantos (*canti*), plus 1 introductory canto in *Inferno* (100 total!); variable lengths. The #3 is important.
- Written in *terza rima*, a complex, “braided” rhyme scheme (ABA CBC DCD EDE...) in which each rhyme occurs three times
- A comedy? Ancient definition: what begins badly, but ends happily. “Divine” applied later, not chosen by Dante





# THE COMEDY

- Along with Shakespeare and Homer, easily the most widely read and influential work in Western literature. Known by first name.
- An encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, yet speaks powerfully to modern audiences
- Dante's style: detailed, realistic, a range of language from high Latin to the lowest vulgarities (Cf. Petrarca); Italian not Latin
- Passionate mind with a mania for order, structure, theory, understanding the world – what today would be science

## THE DIVINE COMEDY



## DANTE

CANTO 1  
INFERNO



Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita  
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura  
ché la diritta via era smarrita.

Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura  
esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte  
che nel pensier rinova la paura!

Tant'è amara che poco è più morte;  
ma per trattar del ben ch'i' vi trovai,  
dirò de l'altre cose ch'i' v'ho scorte.

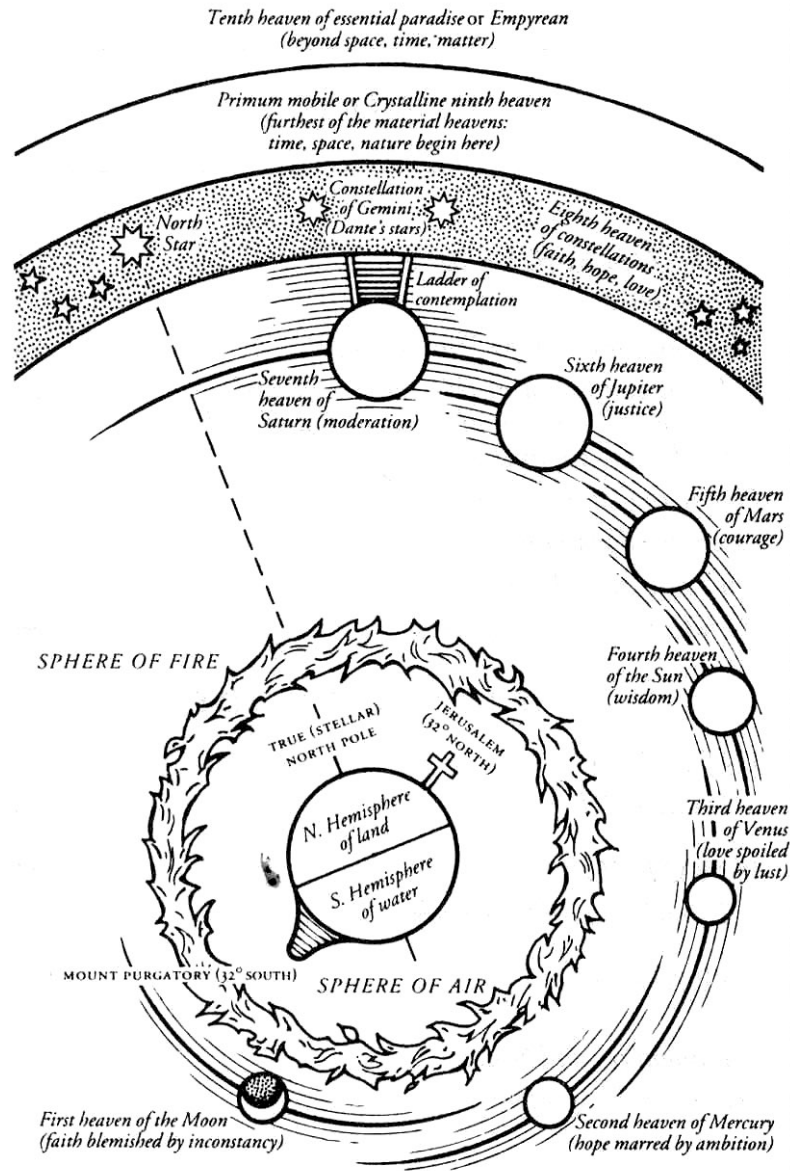
Io non so ben ridir com'i' v'intrai,  
tant'era pien di sonno a quel punto  
che la verace via abbandonai.

# INFERNO 1

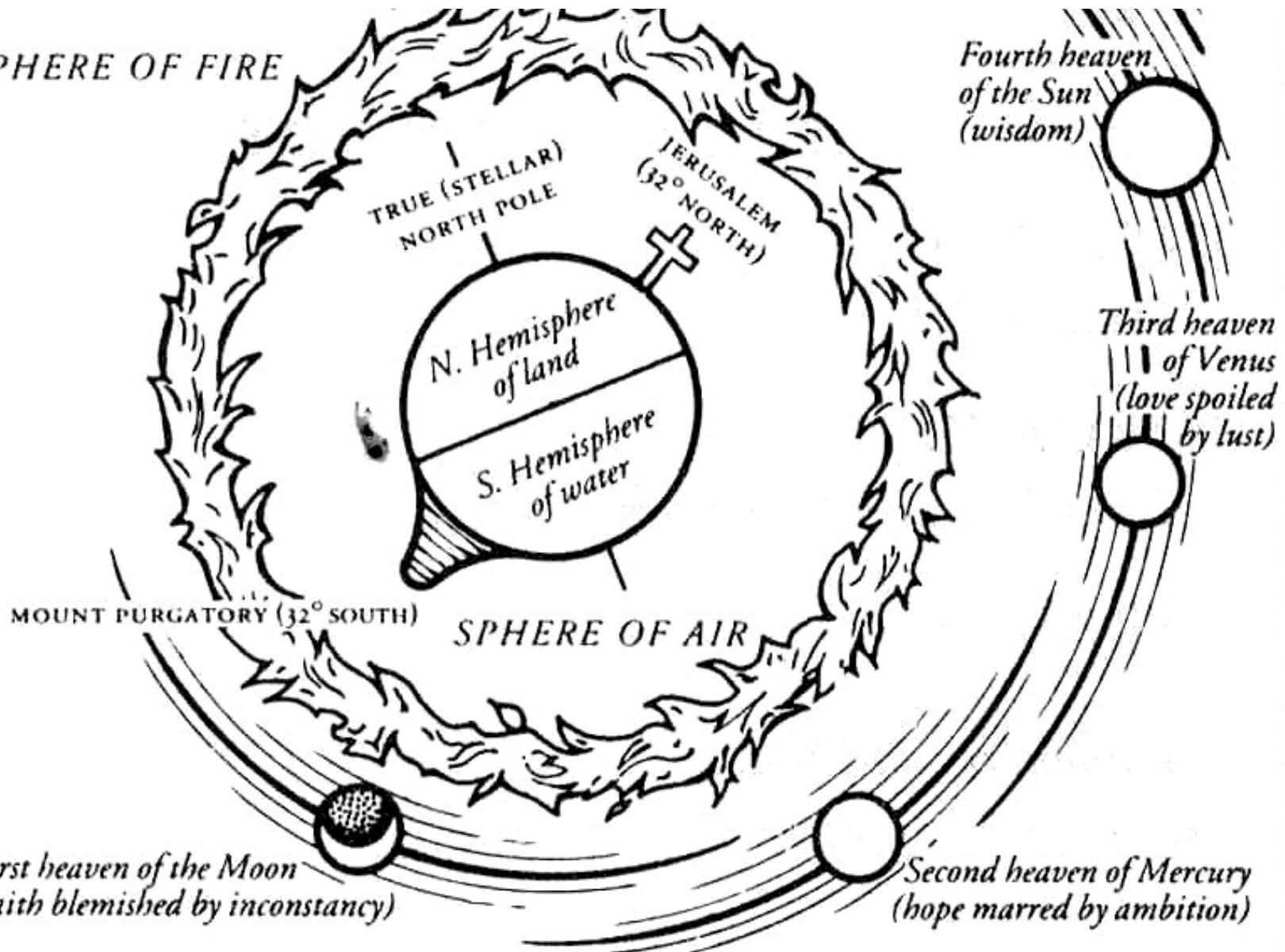
- April 8, 1300: Easter weekend
- Allegory: life is a journey; it has a destination; Dante is lost and risks arriving at the wrong end
- No short cuts to the mountain; blocked by wild animals, unrestrained appetites
- Encounters a ghost, Virgil, who explains there is a way for Dante: he must go through all three realms of the afterlife (also an allegory)







*SPHERE OF FIRE*



*Fourth heaven  
of the Sun  
(wisdom)*

*Third heaven  
of Venus  
(love spoiled  
by lust)*

*First heaven of the Moon  
(faith blemished by inconstancy)*

*Second heaven of Mercury  
(hope marred by ambition)*

*TRUE (STELLAR)  
NORTH POLE*

*JERUSALEM  
(32° NORTH)*

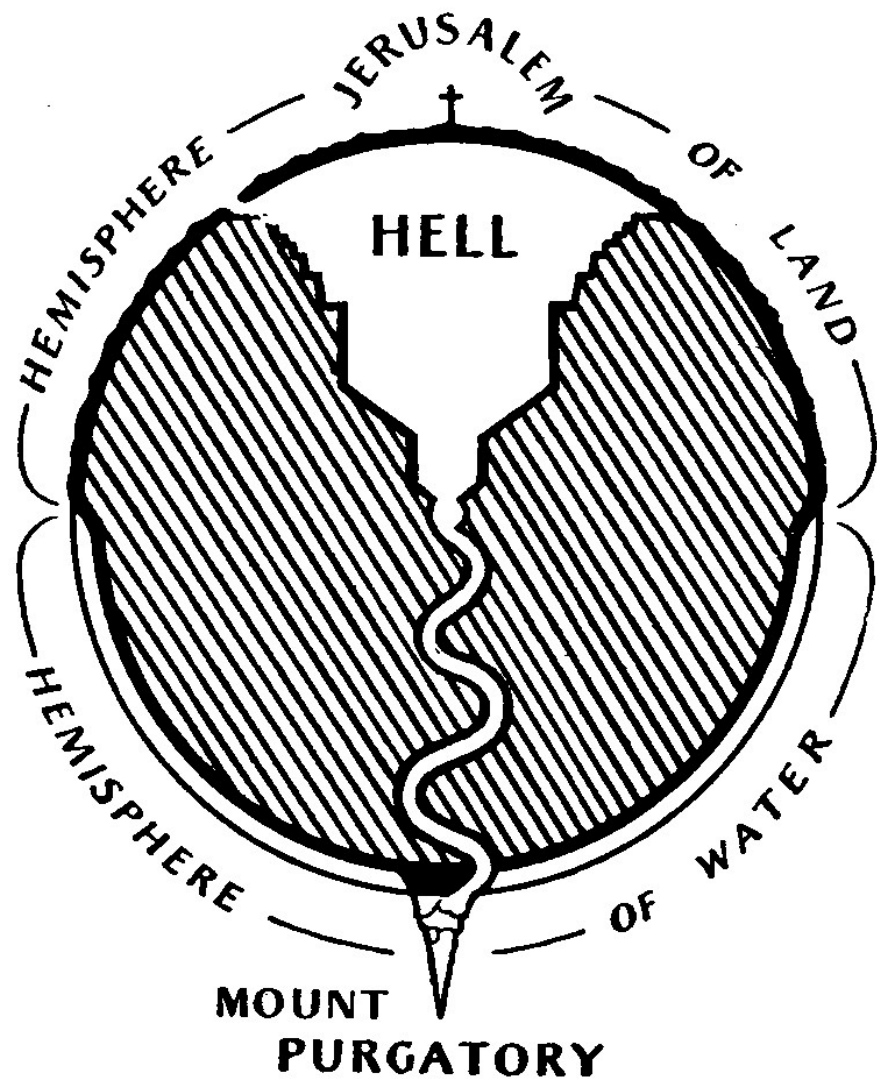
*N. Hemisphere  
of land*

*S. Hemisphere  
of water*

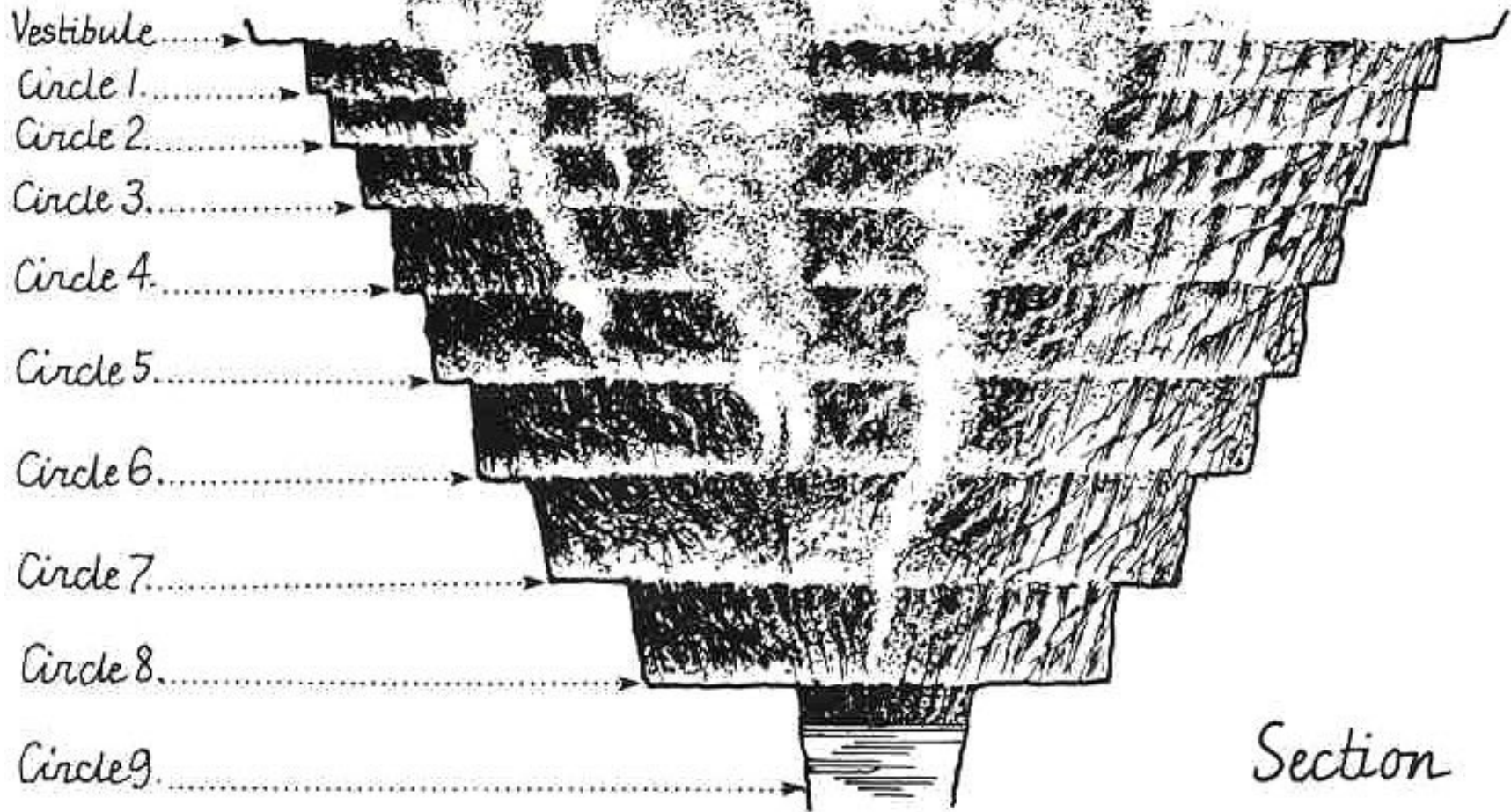
*MOUNT PURGATORY (32° SOUTH)*

*SPHERE OF AIR*





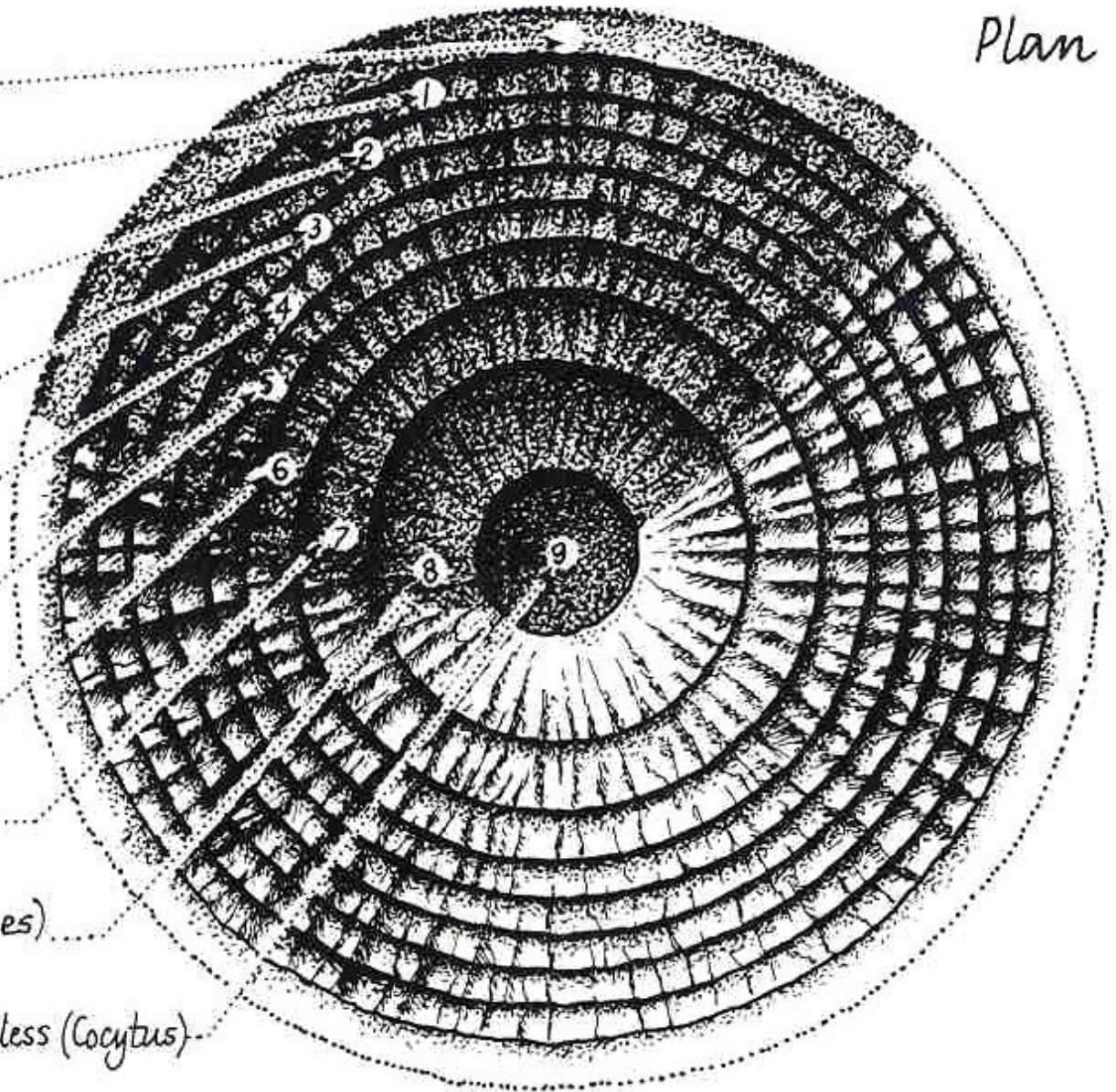
Descent





Plan

- Vestibule: The Opportunists
- 1: The Virtuous Pagans
- 2: The Carnal
- 3: The Gluttonous
- 4: The Hoarders & Wasters
- 5: The Wrathful & Sullen
- 6: The Heretics
- 7: The Violent & Bestial
- 8: The Fraudulent (Evil Ditches)
- 9: The Frozen Lake of The Loveless (Cocytus)





# CIRCLES OF HELL IN DANTE'S INFERNO



Unbaptized and Virtuous Pagans

Struck with grief from a lack of God's presence

Gluttons and gourmand

Bombarded with rain, hail and black snow

LIMBO

LUST

Lustful

Contorted and blown about by violent and endless wind, soul strikes underworld rock





In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself, in a dark wood...

Unbaptized and Virtuous Pagans  
Struck with grief from a lack of God's presence

LIMBO

Gluttons and gourmands  
Bombarded with rain, hail and black snow

LUST

Lustful  
Contorted and blown about by violent and endless wind, soul strikes underworld rock

Hoarders and spenders  
Forced to push boulders; souls, facing each other, enter into a fierce battle

GLUTTONY

GREED

Wrathful, Sullen, Lazy  
Engaged in eternal combat with one another on the surface of the River Styx, where bodies of sullen are the bottom





with one another on the surface of the River Styx, where bodies of sullen are the bottom

Heretics and false teachers  
Locked in burning stone coffins

Tyrants and robbers  
Forced to swim in a boiling stream of blood

Suicides  
They are trees that are ripped apart by Harpies

Gamblers  
They are chased by hounds

Pimps and seducers  
Whipped by demons while marching

Flatters  
Immersed in human excrement

Simoniacs  
Places in holes head first with their legs exposed and burned

Diviners  
Contorted until their heads are half backward

Corrupt Politicians  
Immersed in pool of boiling pitch

Betrayers of Kin, Betrayers of Country,  
Betrayers of Guests, Betrayers of Benefactors  
Lodged head up in blocks of ice, heads faced down

ANGER

HERESY

VIOLENCE

FRAUD

TREACHERY

Sodomites  
Usurers  
Blasphemers } Condemned to a desert of blazing sand with a constant rain of fire

False Counselors  
Soul burns, wrapped in individual columns of flame

Word falsifiers  
Suffer from fever and headache

Coin falsifiers  
Disfigured by dropsy and exhausted by thirst

Alchemists  
Relaxed, compelled to scratch their itching skin

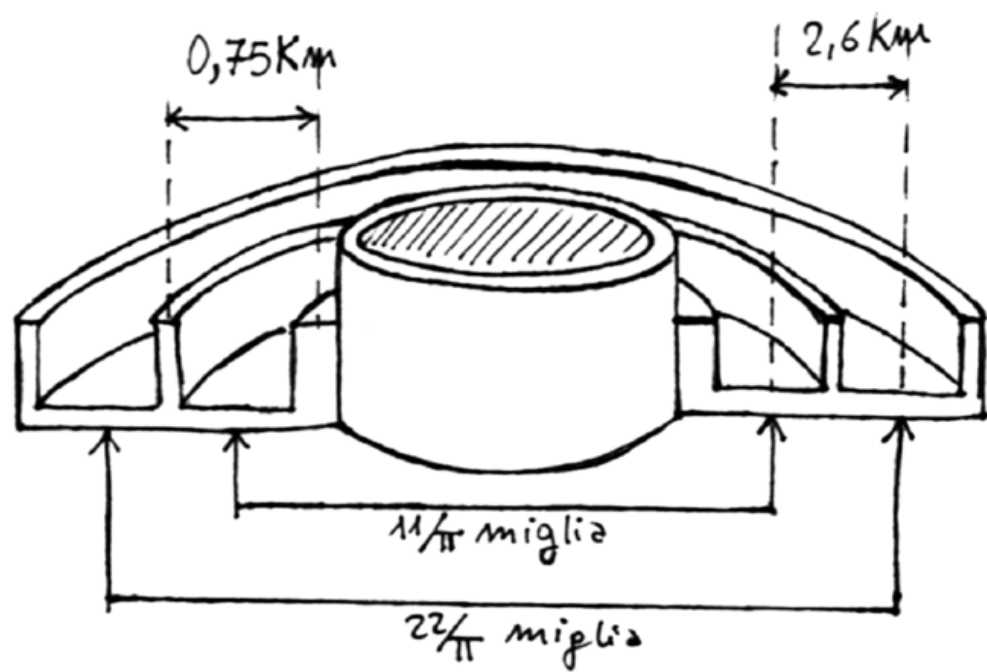
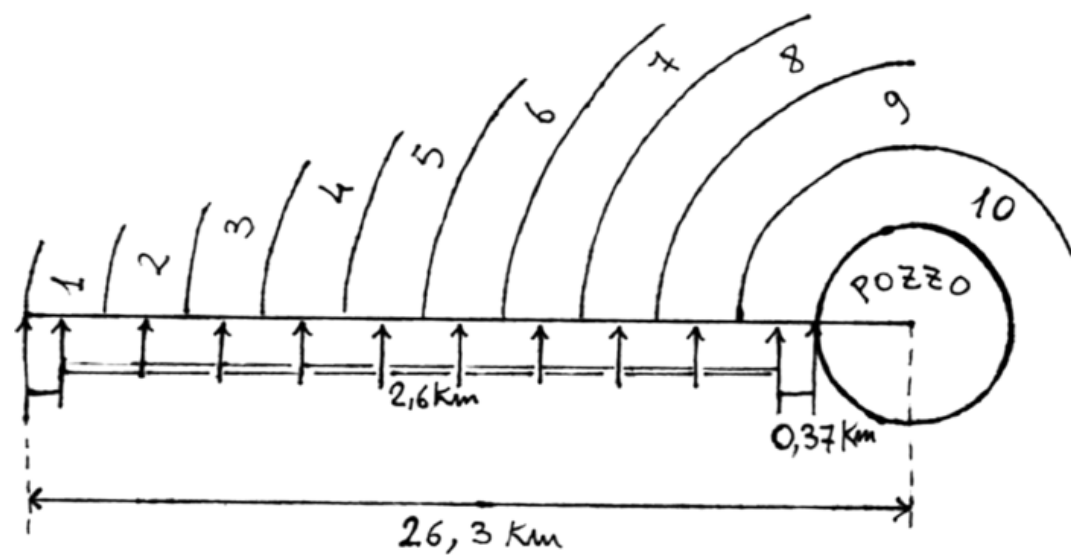
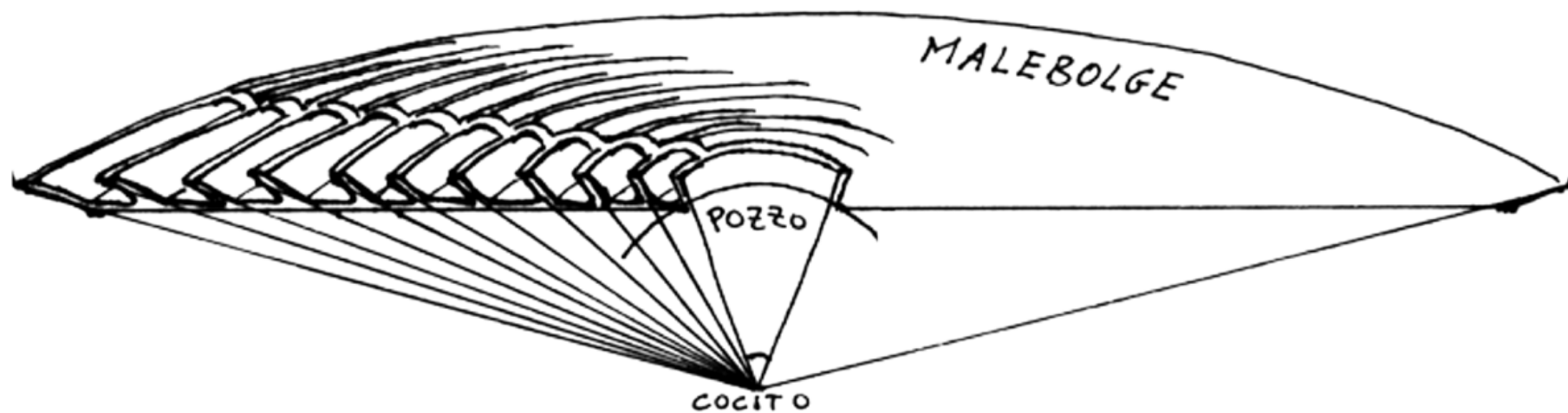
People falsifier  
Running around in a rage and biting counter

Schismatics  
Split from chin to groin by sword

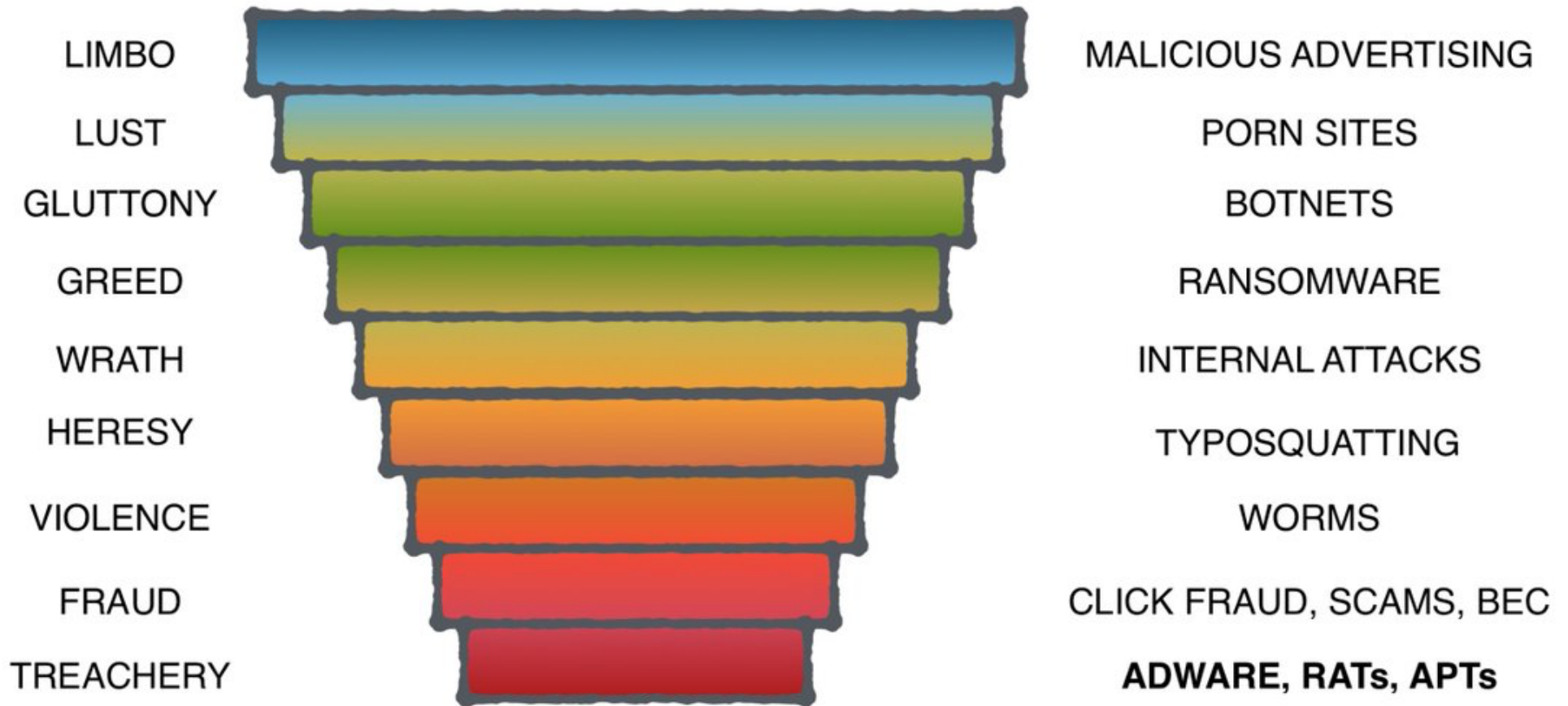
Thieves  
Chased and bitten by reptiles, interconversion with them

Hypocrites  
Forced to wear cloaks of lead





# The 9 Circles of Evil





# INFERNO II

- Dante delays... again
  - "I am not Aeneas, not Paul"
  - Note: pagan + Christian
- Story within story (49-120): highly mediated: Mary speaks to Lucia who speaks to Beatrice who speaks to Virgil who...
- Beatrice: she speaks, she commands, she has no fear
- "a single will fills both of us" (lack of unity is mended, the will is healed through heaven)



And just as he who unwills what he wills  
and shifts what he intends to seek new ends  
so that he's drawn from what he had begun,

so was I in the midst of that dark land,  
because, with all my thinking, I annulled  
the task I had so quickly undertaken.

"If I have understood what you have said,"  
replied the shade of that great-hearted one,  
"your soul has been assailed by cowardice."



"Go now; with your persuasive word, with all  
that is required to see that he escapes,  
bring help to him, that I may be consoled.

For I am Beatrice who send you on;  
I come from where I most long to return;  
Love prompted me, that Love which makes me speak."

# INFERNO III

- gates of hell (1-9)
- pedagogy
- sound and touch (22-27)
- *contrapasso* (52)
- Charon, Acheron: classical antiquity placed within Christian theology
- Dante falls unconscious





PER ME SI VA NE LA CITTÀ DOLENTE,  
PER ME SI VA NE L'ETTERNO DOLORE,  
PER ME SI VA TRA LA PERDVTA GENTE.

GIVSTIZIA MOSSE IL MIO ALTO FATTORE;  
FECEMI LA DIVINA PODESTATE,  
LA SOMMA SAPIENZA E 'L PRIMO AMORE.

DINANZI A ME NON FVOR COSE CREATE  
SE NON ETTERNE, E IO ETTERNO DVRO.  
LASCIATE OGNE SPERANZA, VOI CH'INTRATE

THIS WAY INTO THE SUFFERING CITY,  
THIS WAY TO ETERNAL PAIN,  
THIS WAY TO RUN AMONG THE LOST.

JUSTICE URGED ON MY HIGH ARTIFICER;  
MY MAKER WAS DIVINE AUTHORITY,  
THE HIGHEST WISDOM, AND THE PRIMAL LOVE.

BEFORE ME NOTHING BUT ETERNAL THINGS  
WERE MADE, AND I ENDURE ETERNALLY.  
ABANDON EVERY HOPE, WHO ENTER HERE





PER ME SI VA NELLA CITTÀ DOLENTE.  
PER ME SI VA NE L' ETERNO DOLORE.  
PER ME SI VA TRA LA PERDUTA GENTE.  
GIUSTIZIA MOSSE L' MIO. CALTO FATTORE  
FECEMI LA DIVINA POTESATE,  
LA SOMMA SAPIENZA, E' L' PRIMO AMORE.  
DINANZI A ME NON FVR COSE CREATE  
SE NON ETERNE, ED IO ETERNO DURO:  
LASCIATE OGNI SPERANZA OVCI CHE NTRATE.

Here sighs and lamentations and loud cries  
were echoing across the starless air,  
so that, as soon as I set out, I wept.

Strange utterances, horrible pronouncements,  
accents of anger, words of suffering,  
and voices shrill and faint, and beating hands—

all went to make a tumult that will whirl  
forever through that turbid, timeless air,  
like sand that eddies when a whirlwind swirls.



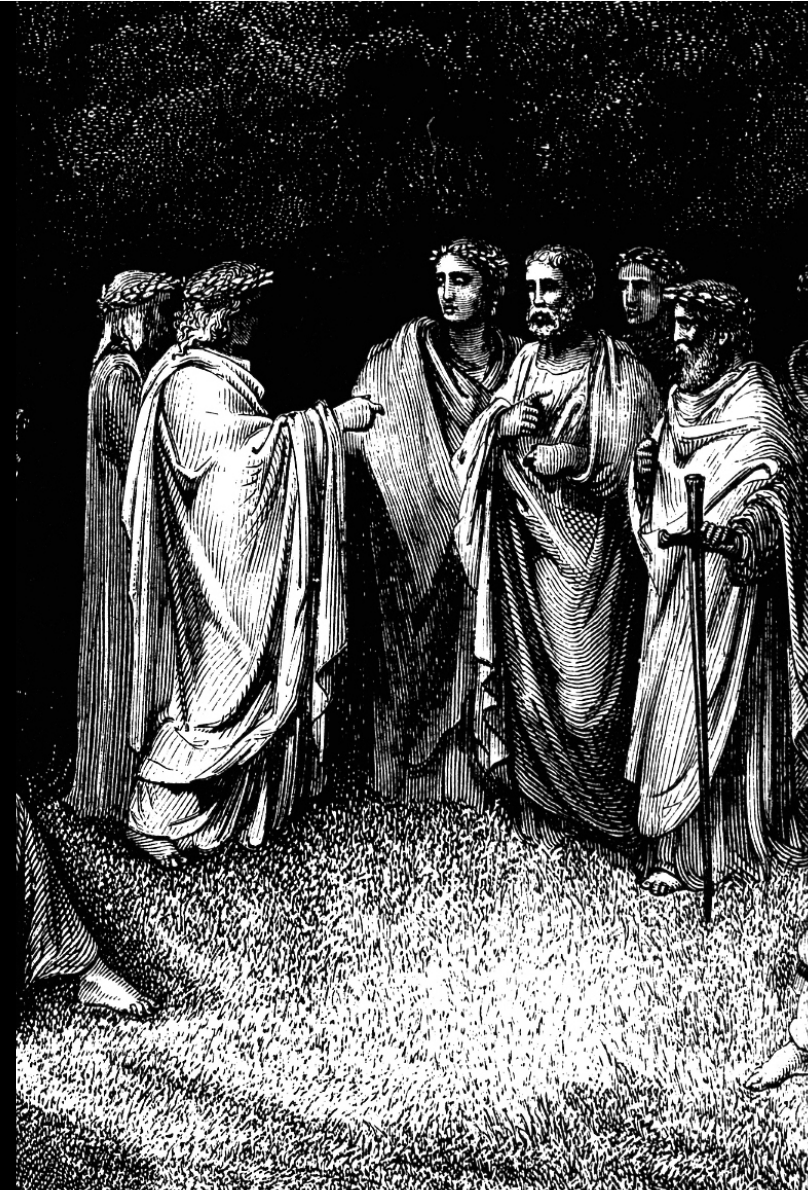


Amos Nattini, c. 1930



## INFERNO IV

- limbo defined (31-42)
- harrowing (52-63)
- honor = poetry (70-81); is Dante the most arrogant poet ever? (101-02) "they invited me to join their ranks—I was the sixth among such intellects"
- the greats of antiquity (121-144)
- the texture of Hell (150-51): "the quiet, trembling air"





The kindly master said: "Do you not ask  
who are these spirits whom you see before you?  
I'd have you know, before you go ahead,  
they did not sin; and yet, though they have merits,  
that's not enough, because they lacked baptism,  
the portal of the faith that you embrace.

And if they lived before Christianity,  
they did not worship God in fitting ways;  
and of such spirits I myself am one.

For these defects, and for no other evil,  
we now are lost and punished just with this:  
we have no hope and yet we live in longing."

“I was new-entered on this state  
when I beheld a Great Lord enter here;  
the crown he wore, a sign of victory.

He carried off the shade of our first father,  
of his son Abel, and the shade of Noah,  
of Moses, the obedient legislator,

of father Abraham, David the king,  
of Israel, his father, and his sons,  
and Rachel, she for whom he worked so long,

and many others—and He made them blessed;  
and I should have you know that, before them,  
there were no human souls that had been saved.”



















## INFERNO V

- Minos and obedience (9-12)
- sound and touch (25-27, 35)
- **analogy:** birds (40-49, 82-87)
- courtly love (100-108)
- reading (127-37)
- pedagogy
- Dante faints

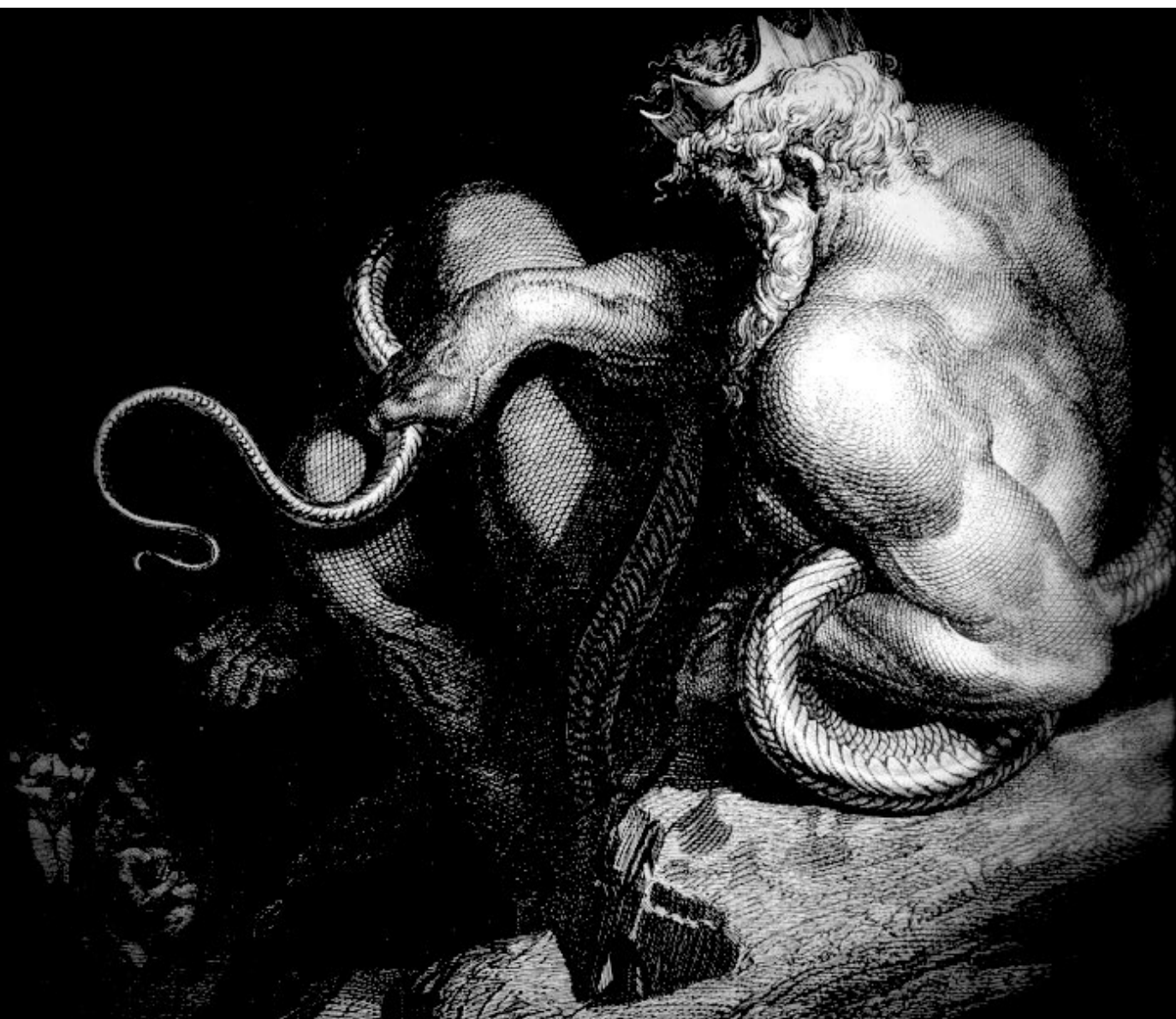


There dreadful Minos stands, gnashing his teeth:  
examining the sins of those who enter,  
he judges and assigns as his tail twines.

I mean that when the spirit born to evil  
appears before him, it confesses all;  
and he, the connoisseur of sin, can tell

the depth in Hell appropriate to it;  
as many times as Minos wraps his tail  
around himself, that marks the sinner's level.





Now notes of desperation have begun  
to overtake my hearing; now I come  
where mighty lamentation beats against me.

I reached a place where every light is muted,  
which bellows like the sea beneath a tempest,  
when it is battered by opposing winds.

When they come up against the ruined slope,  
then there are cries and wailing and lament,  
and there they curse the force of the divine.



And **just as** cranes in flight will chant their lays,  
arraying their long file across the air,  
so did the shades I saw approaching, borne  
by that assailing wind, lament and moan;  
**so** that I asked him: "Master, who are those  
who suffer punishment in this dark air?"

One day, to pass the time away, we read  
of Lancelot—how love had overcome him.  
We were alone, and we suspected nothing.

And time and time again that reading led  
our eyes to meet, and made our faces pale,  
and yet one point alone defeated us.

When we had read how the desired smile  
was kissed by one who was so true a lover,  
this one, who never shall be parted from me,  
while all his body trembled, kissed my mouth.  
A Gallehault indeed, that book and he  
who wrote it, too; that day we read no more.”



And while one spirit said these words to me,  
the other wept, so that—because of pity—  
I fainted, as if I had met my death.

And then I fell as a dead body falls.



Anonymous, 1803-04





Ingres, 1819





Ary Sheffer, 1835





Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1855





Mosé Bianchi, 1877



Gustave Doré, 1870?





Gustave Doré, 1870?





Gustave Doré, 1870?







Gustave Doré, 1870?

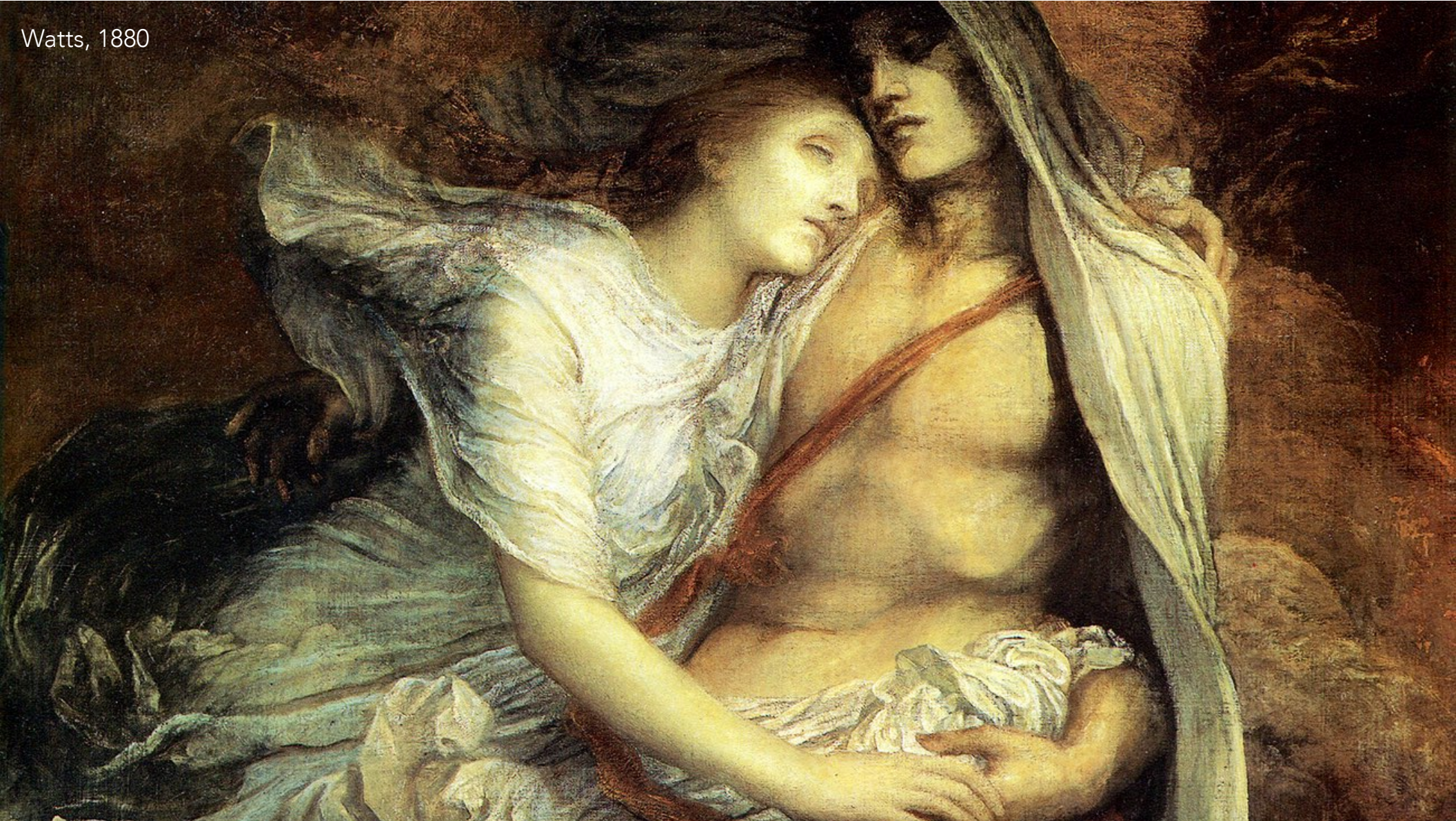


Cabanel, 1870





Watts, 1880





Previati, 1887





And while one spirit said these words to me,  
the other wept, so that—because of pity—  
I fainted, as if I had met my death.

And then I fell as a dead body falls.



And then I faint, so  
Vergil has to carry me  
bridal-style through the



DANTE! IT'S DINNERTIME.  
STOP WRITING YOUR  
FANFICS AND COME EAT

THEY'RE NOT  
FANFICS,  
MOTHER.



reparrishcomics