

Further Discussion on the “Two Suns Theory” and the *Monarchia* of Dante*

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The *De Monarchia* can be considered the *summa* of Dante’s political thought, of which we can also find some starting points in the *Convivio*, in the *Epistles* and in the *Divine Comedy*. Here, in *Purgatorio* XVI, Marco Lombardo, after stating that the misrule of the popes led the world to the sin, articulates Dante’s view of the Empire and Papacy as separate authorities and cites the instance of Rome at the pagan Age, when Rome used to possess two autonomous institutions to drive mankind both towards the material happiness and the spiritual one (vv. 106 ff. “soleva Roma, che ‘l buon mondo feo/ due soli aver, che l’una e l’altra strada/ facean vedere, e del mondo e di Dio”). The image of “two suns” also returns in the III Book of *De Monarchia* by Dante. Here Dante, inquiring into the relationship between “the two greatest luminaries”, that is the Roman Pontiff and the Roman Prince, wonders if the authority of the Roman ruler descends directly from God or from someone of His ministers. For Dante the Emperor, whose authority is given to him directly by God, does not depend on the Pope, but the Emperor is absolutely independent of the Pope.

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Dante’s *Monarchia*¹, probably completed in the last years of his life², can be considered the *summa* of his political thought³. Some further reference to his political ideas can be found as well in the *Convivio*, *Epistles* (5, 6, 7, 11), and *Divine Comedy*.

Dante projects a serious interest in the main theme of medieval political philosophy, that is, in the relationship between Church and State. According to the Florentine poet, this relationship had to be defined and framed according to a strict schema consisting of two basic and necessary elements, namely, the existence of a universal Empire—as an irreplaceable guide for humanity—as well as the absolute mutual independence of both the temporal and spiritual powers.

At the beginning of the *Monarchia* Dante raises three main questions, which he then attempts to answer: *primo nanque dubitatur et queritur an ad bene esse mundi necessaria sit; secundo an romanus populus de iure Monarche offitium sibi asciverit; et tertio an auctoritas Monarche dependeat a Deo immediate vel ab alio, Dei*

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¹ Because of its content the Church first committed the *Monarchia* to the flames in Bologna in 1329, and then subsequently, banned it. In 1554 the *Monarchia* was inserted in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* of Venice, later on in the *Index Romanus* of Pope Paul IV and lastly in the *Index Tridentinus*. Only after more than three centuries was the *Monarchia* rehabilitated thanks to the order of Pope Leo XIII. See Vallone 1979, 173 ff.; Carletti 2007, 55 n. 1.

² Concerning the open *questio* of the *Monarchia*’s date, see Gaia 1986, 489 ff.; Dolcini 2007, 145 ff.

³ For a brief summary of the political thought of Dante, see Capitani 1965, 722 ff.

*ministro seu vicario*⁴ (1.2.3).

The problem of the need for a universal Empire will be discussed and resolved in the first book, where Dante comes to the conclusion that a universal Empire is the best possible form of government since it is the only one capable of maintaining universal peace, an essential condition for achievement of the specific task of humanity: *actuare semper totam potentiam intellectus possibilis* (1.4.1).

In the second book, which is devoted to the question whether the Roman people could assume universal dominion by right, Dante upholds the thesis that the Romans deserved to have the pre-eminence over other peoples and to assume hegemony over the world, because this was God’s will, which coincides with the right: *et cum voluntas et volitum in deo sit idem, sequitur ulterius quod divina voluntas sit ipsum ius* (2.2.4).

In the third book, Dante states that he is prepared to enter the field (3.1.3 *gignasium presens ingredi*) and to join in the discussion of the problem of the relationship between Papacy and Empire, in particular by arguing whether the Emperor’s authority comes directly from God or through the Pope.

Thus the whole of the third book develops into a pressing indictment of the Church’s ambitions and pretensions. However, Dante suggests the notion that the two orders, *ecclesia* and *imperium*, represent two distinct and separate institutions performing different, but equally important roles while maintaining their own absolute autonomy and supremacy. At the end of the first chapter, Dante introduces the metaphor of the *duo magna luminaria* in reference to the relationship between the Roman Pontiff and the Roman Prince, and explicitly sets out the terms of the issue⁵: *quaestio igitur presens ... inter duo luminaria magna versatur, Romanum scilicet Pontificem et Romanum Principem; et queritur utrum auctoritas Monarche romani, qui de iure Monarcha mundi est, ut in secundo libro probatum est, immediate a Deo dependeat an ab aliquo Dei vicario vel ministro, quem Petri successorem intelligo, qui vere claviger est regni celorum* (§ 5). It becomes essential to consider, therefore, the relationship between the Pope and Emperor, and to make an attempt at solving a fundamental issue, that is, to ascertain on whom it is that the Emperor’s authority depends. As Gilson⁶ showed, the term *immediate* is meaningful in that, although the Emperor’s authority undoubtedly comes from God, it is not entirely obvious whether God transmits the authority to the Emperor directly or through the mediation of another minister or vicar of God as a successor of St. Peter, namely, the Pope. As already mentioned, the image of the *duo magna luminaria*⁷, which circulated very widely during the Middle Ages before Dante⁸, appears here for the first time, but it will be developed and articulated further on in the text. Suffice it to recall Pope Boniface VIII’s solemn address, his famous *Allegacio*, written on the occasion of the consistory of the 30th April 1303. In this address the Pontiff appealed to the two astronomical symbols, arguing that, as the moon does not shine with its own light but only with reflected light received from the sun, so the Emperor’s authority comes from that of the Pope. The metaphor of the sun, as a symbol of the leader of the Roman Catholic Church reveals the ambitions and pretensions of the Roman Curia to assume an increasingly definitive supremacy over the temporal power⁹, so making the Pope into the *verus imperator*¹⁰.

In another important passage of his *Monarchia*, Dante singles out the bishop of Rome and the other

⁴ I quote according to the edition of Shaw 2009.

⁵ For a general overview on the subject, see Hageneder 2000; Cassell 2001, 1 ff.

⁶ Gilson 1985, 167.

⁷ With reference to the ecclesiological metaphor of the *duo luminaria*, see Quagliani 2004, 395 ff.

⁸ See De Mattei 1935, 305 ff.; Vinay 1950, 210 n. 2; Gaia 1986, 704 n. 4.

⁹ For further details on the process of the papacy’s imperialization, see Schramm 1947, 403 ff.

¹⁰ Kantorowicz 1995, 101.

prelates as his opponents, since their zeal for the Church threatens to confound the truth. Hence Dante adds: *Summus nanque Pontifex, domini nostri Iesu Christi vicarius et Petri successor, cui non quicquid Cristo sed quicquid Petro debemus, zelo fortasse clavium, necnon alii gregum cristianorum pastores, et alii quos credo zelo solo matris Ecclesie promoveri, veritati quam ostensurus sum de zelo forsitan - ut dixi - non de superbia contradicunt* (3.3.7). Dante acknowledges the allegiance which is due to the Pope but defines the limits of that Papal allegiance and frames it within well-prescribed boundaries¹¹. In fact, as we can observe, the statement *cui non quicquid Cristo sed quicquid Petro debemus* is contained between two syntactical *isocola* and is emphasized by the anaphora of *quidquid* and by the anticipation of the negative, according to which we do not owe to the Pope what we owe to Christ but we owe to the Pope that which we owe to St. Peter. Here the above-mentioned assertion assumes a strong semantic potency. These words indicate that some of Christ's prerogatives have not been inherited by either St. Peter or his successors, implicitly suggesting that neither St. Peter nor his successors have inherited from Christ that temporal supremacy to which they aspired as their due. To better understand Dante's thesis it is useful to compare it with that of St. Thomas, who states as follows: *summo sacerdoti, successori Petri, Christi vicario, Romano Pontifici, cui omnes reges populi christiani oportet esse subditos, sicut ipsi Domino nostro Iesu Christo* (*De regno* 1.14). Together with Gilson we have to point out that St. Thomas' statement is in “almost literal opposition” to the text of Dante, who, despite this fact, likely bore the St. Thomas' version in mind, just for purposes of refuting it¹². Although both Dante and St. Thomas agree on admitting the supreme authority of Christ as over the temporal power, their concerns are clearly divergent. According to Dante, in fact, the temporal sovereignty of Christ would not have been conveyed to the Pontiffs but would have returned to heaven with Christ himself. According to St. Thomas, on the other hand, the spiritual and temporal supremacy of Christ would have been inherited by St. Peter and his successors, to whom all the kings of the Christian people must be subjected as well as to Jesus Christ himself. In compliance with this thesis, St. Thomas' position coincides with the opinions of his time and, in particular is in agreement with the opinions closest to the Pope's ecclesiastical circle¹³. In a passage of the commentary on the *Sentences* of Petrus Lombardus, St. Thomas not only shares the Biblical maxim “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's” (Matth. 22:21) but also adds that in spiritual things people must obey the bishops rather than the princes. However, St. Thomas adds that people must always submit to the princes' authority in temporal things, except when the two supreme authorities are united in the same person, as in the case of the Pope, whose position is higher than both the temporal and spiritual powers¹⁴.

Dante, for his part, points out that he wants to argue with those who are unacquainted with the truth but show a certain zeal for the Church. While Dante seems to be as reverent towards them as a pious son must be to his father and mother, the Florentine poet does not fail to state that he would have the same attitude even towards Christ, the Church, the Pastor and all those who profess the Christian religion¹⁵. For a better

¹¹ Nardi 1960, 173.

¹² Gilson 1985, 170.

¹³ Tabacco 2010, 165 f.

¹⁴ Sent. II, d. 44, q. 2 a. 3. *nisi forte potestati spirituali etiam saecularis potestas coniungatur sicut in papa, qui utriusque potestatis apicem tenet, scilicet spiritualis et saecularis.*

¹⁵ Mon. 3.3.18 *Quapropter cum solis concertatio restat qui, aliquali zelo erga matrem Ecclesiam ducti, ipsam que queritur veritatem ignorant: cum quibus illa reverentia fretus quam pius filius debet patri, quam pius filius matri, pius in Christum, pius in Ecclesiam, pius in pastorem, pius in omnes cristianam religionem profitentes, pro salute veritatis in hoc libro certamen incipio.* Concerning the interpretation of Dante's declaration of reverence, that Dante says he wishes to use towards his interlocutors, see Ferrara 2002, 34 f.

understanding of this point in particular, it is necessary to analyse the hierocratic arguments based on the *duo magna luminaria* theory as inferred from the Book of *Genesis*¹⁶, and consequently the very influential: *Dicunt enim primo, secundum scripturam Geneseos, quod Deus fecit duo magna luminaria - luminare maius et luminare minus - ut alterum preesset diei et alterum preesset nocti: que allegorice dicta esse intelligebant ista duo regimina: scilicet spirituale et temporale. Deinde arguunt quod, quemadmodum luna, que est luminare minus, non habet lucem nisi prout recipit a sole, sic nec regnum temporale auctoritatem habet nisi prout recipit a spirituali regimine* (3.4.2-3). Here, the perennially effective though often over-used¹⁷ spiritual interpretation of the image of the *duo magna luminaria* is replaced in Dante’s thought by a naturalizing interpretation, perhaps with “l’intenzione di rispondere all’uso spregiudicato dell’*Almagesto* da parte dell’Ostiense nella sua affermazione della supremazia della giurisdizione ecclesiastica sul potere temporale”¹⁸. According to this interpretation, Dante refutes the idea that the *duo luminaria* refer allegorically to the spiritual and temporal powers¹⁹, and momentarily allows his opponents to tolerate the false allegory of the two stars. Dante clearly denies the thesis that the moon has no light beyond that which it receives from the sun, and so, by the same hypothesis, denies that the temporal power has no authority except that which it receives from the spiritual power: *dico ergo quod licet luna non habeat lucem habundanter nisi ut a sole recipit, non propter hoc sequitur quod ipsa luna sit a sole. Unde sciendum quod aliud est esse ipsius lune, aliud virtus eius, et aliud operari. Quantum est ad esse, nullo modo luna dependet a sole, nec etiam quantum ad virtutem, nec quantum ad operationem simpliciter; quia motus eius est a motore proprio, influentia sua est a propriis eius radiis: habet enim aliquam lucem ex se, ut in eius eclipsi manifestum est. Sed quantum ad melius et virtuosius operandum, recipit aliquid a sole, quia lucem habundantem: qua recepta, virtuosius operatur* (3.4.18-19). In fact, the moon is not only independent of the sun as regards its *esse*, *virtus*, and *operari*, but it has its own light as well, as we can see during the lunar eclipse²⁰. However, the moon does receive a significant amount of light from the sun, with which it can function more virtuously. Similarly, the temporal power receives nothing from the spiritual power, if not the light of grace, which God infuses from the sky and the Pope from the Earth, in order that it may act the more effectively²¹. By this reasoning we can for the moment conclude that the sun and the moon are two absolutely separate and autonomous stars and by parity of reasoning, that the two powers symbolized

¹⁶ Gen. 1:16 *fecitque deus duo luminaria magna: luminare maius, ut praeesset diei: et luminare minus, ut praeesset nocti.*

¹⁷ For instance, Augustinus Triumphus, also known as Augustinus of Ancona, peremptorily states that the sun/Pope is greater than the moon/Emperor, and as the moon the Emperor depends on the sun as regards the formation and derivation of light, so the Emperor depends on the Pontiff as regards dignity, formation and derivation of authority: *fecit deus duo luminaria, quia duas instituit dignitates: quae sunt Pontificalis auctoritas et Regalis potestas. Sed illa, quae praeest diebus, puta spiritualibus, maior est: quae vero carnalibus minus est. Ut, quanta est inter Lunam, et Solem; tanta inter Pontifices et Reges differentia cognoscatur. Planum est autem, quod Luna derivatur a Sole, quantum ad eius formationem: quae ex illa luce, quae facta describitur in Genesi prima die: quarta die postmodum formatus est sol primo, deinde luna ac aliae stellae. Et quantum ad eius lucis receptionem, quia luna a sole suam lucem recipit... sic dominium Imperiale, vel Regale derivatur a Dominio Papali, vel sacerdotali quantum ad eius formationem, vel quantum ad eius dignitatis, vel auctoritatis receptionem* (*Summa de potestate ecclesiastica*, 36).

¹⁸ Quaglioni 2004, 402.

¹⁹ See De Angelis 1965, 132; Vallone 1971, 199 ff.

²⁰ On the theory that the moon has its own light, Vinay (1950, 220 n. 14) quotes a passage of Albert of Saxony, *Quaestiones super quattuor libros Aristotelis de celo et mundo*, II, q. 22, where Albert of Saxony says that *luna habet suum lumen ex se*, although *debile et remissum*. Also John of Paris, *De potestate regia et papali*, XV, refutes the argument of the two luminaries, and talks about the moon’s own *virtus*, that is not the light at all: *luna habet virtutem propriam a Deo sibi datam quam a sole non habet, ut quod infrigidet et umectet*; see Gaia 1986, 715 n. 22.

²¹ *Mon.* 3.4.20 *sic ergo dico quod regnum temporale non recipit esse a spirituali, nec virtutem que est eius auctoritas, nec etiam operationem simpliciter; sed bene ab eo recipit ut virtuosius operetur per lucem gratie quam in celo et in terra benedictio summi Pontificis infundit illi.* See Vinay 1962, 20 f.

by the sun and the moon are independent insofar as neither of them is entitled to supremacy over the other.

Apart from the fact that the use of astronomical symbols is not always consistent with the identification of the sun with the Pope and of the moon with the Emperor²², it is interesting to observe that after having established the equal dignity of Church and Empire, Dante himself abandons the metaphor of the sun and the moon. In the Canto 16 of the Purgatory, Dante meets Marco Lombardo, a courteous and eloquent interlocutor who talks to him about the relationship between celestial influences and human responsibility and the balance of power between religious and political institutions. Marco Lombardo states that the Popes' historical misrule has led the world into sin, and quotes the example of pagan Rome, which once had two separate authorities, to propel mankind to both material and spiritual happiness²³ (106-112):

soleva Roma, che 'l buon mondo feo,
due soli aver, che l'una e l'altra strada
facean vedere, e del mondo e di Deo.
L'un l'altro ha spento; ed è giunta la spada
col pastorale, e l'un con l'altro insieme
per viva forza mal convien che vada;
però che, giunti, l'un l'altro non teme.

Here, according to Marco Lombardo, the two Biblical stars evolve into two suns. In opposition to all of natural law, one star has eclipsed the other instead of illuminating it, and that with an obvious allusion to the Papal authority which had overcome and replaced the Imperial one. Marco Lombardo's words reflect a strong longing for the distant and almost mythical past in which the “two suns” jointly illuminated the path of humanity²⁴. For Dante, therefore, the two powers have equal dignity, are complementary²⁵, and work by mutual consent, but with different goals for leading humanity along the path of earthly and heavenly grace, respectively²⁶. The explicit allusion to the city of Rome as capital of the Empire and seat of the Pope, where the “two suns” shone together with the task of guiding the human race throughout the earthly life, becomes both an ideal paradigm by means of which the poet is inspired, and a model to which mankind should directly conform. Only the co-operation and balance of powers²⁷, as in fact had already occurred in the past, could allow for the building of that “good world” to which Marco Lombardo alluded. Through the striking metaphor of the “two suns” Dante evidently aims to counter the previous astral symbology of the sun and moon. In fact, this symbolism recognized the supremacy of the Pope over the Emperor with reference to both the political and theological sphere. The Latin writers knew the symbolism of the sun and moon very well, and medieval thought no doubt drew on them as well. As De Mattei²⁸ pointed out, Cicero already resorts to the image of the

²² About this topic, see De Mattei 1935, 307 ff.; Carletti 2007, 58 f.

²³ Also in the *Monarchia* Dante explicitly speaks about the need of a dual guidance for mankind, the Pope and the Emperor, to address the human race to eternal life and temporal happiness respectively: *opus fuit homini duplici directivo secundum duplicem finem: scilicet summo Pontifice, qui secundum revelata humanum genus perduceret ad vitam eternam, et Imperatore, qui secundum philosophica documenta genus humanum ad temporalem felicitatem dirigere* (3.16.10).

²⁴ De Angelis 1965, 184 f.

²⁵ Nardi 1967², 289 ff.

²⁶ Gilson 1985, 204 f.; Kantorowicz 1995, 86 f.

²⁷ De Mattei (1935, 310 f.) believes that with the new image of the “two suns” Dante can find a concrete reference to the first centuries of the Roman pontificate, especially in Theodosius time, when there was really a period of “happy harmony” between the two powers. The memory of this agreement and collaborative approach between the Pope and the Emperor, even if it did not last long, was emphasized by the writers of that time, who might have inspired Dante with the idea of the presence of “two suns” in Rome.

²⁸ De Mattei 1935, 311 ff.

“two suns” in his *De Republica* (1.19): After Tiberius Gracchus’ death, the Roman people were torn by two parties, the nobles and the plebeians. The “two suns” represented these opposing factions and their respective leaders, Scipio and Tiberius Gracchus²⁹. Of course, Dante did not draw directly on the *De Republica*, because this work of Cicero remained unknown until 1820, when the ancient palimpsest was uncovered by the Cardinal Angelo Mai in the Vatican Library. However, the Florentine poet could have read Cicero’s comparison from another source, or would have himself referred to the astronomical phenomenon of the “two suns” according to the political thought of the time after becoming acquainted with it through Cicero³⁰ himself, or other Latin writers such as Pliny the Elder³¹, Seneca³² or Statius³³, or maybe the Fathers of the Church, in particular St. Augustine³⁴. We should not overlook, however, the possible influence of Byzantine culture³⁵, where the bi-solar metaphor is widespread and especially used in the works of rhetoric and poetry. In these works, Byzantine thinkers and writers propagated the idea that the light of the world is shed by the “two suns”, the divine and the natural one, and affirm the concept of “solar sovereignty”, which considered the sovereign as a “new sun”.

Returning to the Marco Lombardo’s words and the metaphor of the “two suns”, it seems most likely that this metaphor is not the extempore result of the poet’s imagination, but the confirmation of a claim “to an ancestral right for the figure of the Emperor”³⁶, an argument that will be discussed with the requisite precision in the *Monarchia*. Here, Dante refutes the hierocratic theory and states that the moon, or temporal power, has got its own light, which does not derive wholly from the sun, or spiritual power. In consequence of this, the *esse*, *virtus* and *auctoritas* of the temporal power do not come from the spiritual power. However, the abundance of light which the moon receives from the sun helps to make the action carried out by the temporal power more effective. In this sense, we can see that Dante resorts to the symbolism of the “two suns” for purposes of emphasizing in particular the ontological equal dignity of the two powers, and this fact gains all its importance in the light of Marco Lombardo’s words.

Moreover, Marco Lombardo adds that concentrating on the two powers in the sole person of the Pope reduces the deterrent of mutual fear: that fear which is instilled by the alternative model of two separate powers of equal dignity, as in the case of the notion of the “two suns”. Unhappily Marco Lombardo bitterly concludes that the prevarication of the Church against Empire and the ensuing confusion of the two powers have, in fact, been detrimental to both³⁷ (*Purg.* 16.127-29):

Dì oggimai che la Chiesa di Roma,
per confondere in sé due reggimenti,

²⁹ According to Ciaceri’s opinion (1918, 307), it sounds likely. In fact, according to Ciaceri, Cicero might have kept in mind the duumvirate of Caesar and Pompey. Moreover, immediately afterwards, Lelio adds that the issue between the “two suns” could be settled according to the Manilius’ instructions, namely that both were masters of the sky at the same time: *immo vero te audiamus, nisi forte Manilius interdictum aliquod inter duos soles putat esse componendum, ut ita caelum possideant, ut uterque possederit* (1.20), just as Caesar and Pompey, who reached an agreement to jointly rule the Roman state.

³⁰ Cic. *div.* 1.97 *nam et cum duo visi soles sunt et cum tres lunae et cum faces*; also Livio talks about the prodigious appearance of two suns (29.14.3).

³¹ Plin. *nat.* 2.99 *et rursus soles plures simul cernuntur*.

³² Sen. *nat.* 1.11.1 *Historici soles vocant et binos ternosque apparuisse memoriae tradunt*.

³³ Stat. *Theb.* 7.114 *si geminos soles ruituraque suadeat astra*; also Claudian speaks about *gemini soles* in his poem *In Eutropium* 1.7.

³⁴ Aug. *Epist.* 199, *De fine saeculi* 10.34 *sed, ut multa omitam quae persequi longum est, duos soles quando nos vidimus?*

³⁵ As regards this aspect, see the detailed analysis of Kantorowicz 1995, 87 ff., with numerous quotations of Byzantine authors.

³⁶ Kantorowicz 1995, 103.

³⁷ Brezzi 1965, 110.

cade nel fango, e sé brutta e la soma.

In the *Monarchia* Dante states that the two separate powers play a fundamental task from which they draw their “raison d’être” for the salvation of mankind: *sunt ergo huiusmodi regimina remedia contra infirmitatem peccati* (3.4.14). Therefore, both the Empire and the Church should serve as a “remedy” against faults originating in sin.

But which sin does Dante have in mind? According to most critics³⁸, although there is no consensual agreement³⁹, Dante alludes to the Original Sin, which corrupted the whole of the human race. The statement which claims that the spiritual and temporal powers serve as *remedia contra infirmitatem peccati* should not be taken as referring to Original Sin (probably being the logical conclusion from the intense discussion led by Dante to prove that the Church and Empire arose after the creation of mankind). In fact, both powers, *directiva in quosdam fines* (3.4.14), provide the necessary guidelines required by people to achieve their purposes without committing sin. As the author has pointed out⁴⁰, Dante has no intention of referring to the past or the origins of mankind, and the expression *infirmitatem peccati* is meant to be linked to the present, to allude to the current sins of humanity and not Original Sin. Certainly, the current sins of humanity are the consequence of the Original Sin, which has to be considered the mother of all sins and an inescapable reference point in any case. However, the point which the poet really has in mind is, not the restoration of an original innocence, but rather the possibility of enabling the human race to attain earthly happiness (1.4.1 *proprium opus humani generis totaliter accepti est actuare semper totam potentiam intellectus possibilis*).

In accordance with the notion discussed above, we can observe that the image of the Empire, which co-operates with the Church for the redemption of mankind, occasions perplexity to such an extent that Dante never returns to this matter again, either in the *Monarchia* or in his other works. But this particular idea of the Empire that contributes to the redemption of mankind appears difficult to accept, insofar as it is opposed to the theological doctrine which ascribes the redemption of the human race to Christ alone. However, we cannot accept even the thesis of Vinay⁴¹, according to whom Dante has a lay and at the same time sacral conception of the Empire: these two aspects of the same conception look incompatible from the philosophical point of view, but they are humanly compatible in that dramatic unity which is the real soul of the poet.

Following this argument, Dante adds that if mankind had maintained its state of innocence, then it would have had no need of Empire or Church: *si homo stetisset in statu innocentie in quo a deo factus est, talibus directivis non indiguisset* (3.4.14). In fact, after the original sin the Empire and the Church had become inherent to mankind and were already seen as God’s means to oppose the negative effects referred to⁴².

However, a human being is made of body and soul, has a duplex finis, which, uniquely among living beings, consists of an incorruptible as well as corruptible part, and is consequently destined *in duo ultima* (*Mon.* 3.16.6). Therefore, in conformity with the dictates of Providence, a human being must engage in attaining two aims, the first being *beatitudinem scilicet huius vitae*, which consists in the expression of his own specific powers and is represented by worldly joys, while the second aim, *beatitudinem vitae aeternae*, consists in the

³⁸ Pascoli (1952, 1141) was the first one to say: *l'imperatore è un nuovo Cristo che libera il genere umano dalla miseria del peccato originale*; see Valli 1922, 49; Passerin D’Entrèves 1955, 777 ff.; Nardi 1967², 283.

³⁹ See, for instance, Ercole 1924, 133; Solari 1923, 414 ff.

⁴⁰ Barbi 1938, 26; Carletti 2007, 64.

⁴¹ Vinay 1962, 64.

⁴² This argument would be obviously in contrast with what Dante says in the first chapters of the *Monarchia* about the natural origin of the Empire, because “man is by nature a social animal” (*Conv.* 4.4.1); see Gaia 1986, 711 n. 18.

enjoyment of God’s vision, which can be reached only through God’s help and represents the earthly Paradise (*Mon.* 3.16.7). Dante refers to both kinds of happiness—worldly joys and the earthly Paradise—with the single term *beatitudo*, probably to emphasize the intrinsic meaning of the two aims, that is, that they “sono appunto *duo ultima non subordinati un all’altro, ma coordinate*”⁴³. The poet then observes that these two beatitudes as well as their respective purposes must be attained by different means: Human beings can pursue worldly joys *per philosophica documenta*, that is, by the teaching of philosophy, while, by contrast, they can win the Earthly Paradise *per documenta spiritualia*, that is, by the teaching of theology (*Mon.* 3.16.8)⁴⁴. It follows that, if human beings have two different aims, they therefore require a twofold guide as well *propter quod opus fuit homini duplici directivo secundum duplicem finem: scilicet summo Pontifice, qui secundum revelata humanum genus perduceret ad vitam eternam, et Imperatore, qui secundum philosophica documenta genus humanum ad temporalem felicitatem dirigeret* (*Mon.* 3.16.10). Hence the functions of the Church and Empire appear quite distinct from one another: The Pope leads mankind to the eternal life through divine revelation, and the Emperor to earthly happiness through philosophy. Both the Pope and the Emperor play different parts and have different tasks, but, as men, both must return to a common origin such as that of the *optimus homo* (*Mon.* 3.12.7). As Pope and Emperor they have to unify these two roles, *vel ipse deus ... vel aliqua substantia Deo inferior* (*Mon.* 3.12.11), through the practice of their duties or *officia*. So, it is easy to see, then, that the Pope and Emperor can be reduced to two common denominators, the first one from the human, the other from the divine point of view. So this circumstance makes them absolutely equal, and removes any eventual cause of conflict for supremacy between the two powers⁴⁵.

Dante’s thesis concerning the equal dignity of the temporal and spiritual powers, therefore, finds its final consecration in the fact that both arise from and depend on God. Moreover, we may observe in this connection that in the last chapter of the *Monarchia* Dante uses the same noun *auctoritas* in referring to both the temporal and spiritual powers, while, by contrast, the temporal power had traditionally been referred to as a *potestas* and the spiritual power as an *auctoritas*, in compliance with a tradition dating back to the letter of Pope Gelasius I to Emperor Athanasius I⁴⁶.

It is unsurprising, then, that in approaching the end of his treatise Dante explicitly states that the Emperor’s authority comes directly from God *sine ullo medio* (*Mon.* 3.16.15), namely, without any need of mediation.

Shortly thereafter, however, Dante informs the reader that his words are not to be taken literally, that is, in the sense that the Emperor should not subjugate himself to the Pope, since earthly happiness ultimately evolves into heavenly happiness: *veritas ultime questionis non sic stricte recipienda est, ut romanus Princeps in aliquo*

⁴³ Sciuto 2002; see also Gilson 1985, 177 f.; Imbach 2003, 148.

⁴⁴ See Gilson 1985, 180.

⁴⁵ Kantorowicz 1995, 84 f.; Gilson 1985, 174 f.

⁴⁶ *Epist.* 12.2 *duo quippe sunt, imperator auguste, quibus principaliter mundus hic regitur: auctoritas sacrata pontificum, et regalis potestas.* This letter is very important because further on it affirms the mutual independence of the temporal and spiritual power: *In quibus tanto gravius est pondus sacerdotum, quanto etiam pro ipsis regibus hominum in divino reddituri sunt examine rationem. Nosti etenim, fili clementissime, quod licet praesideas humano generi dignitate, rerum tamen praesulibus divinarum devotus colla submittis, atque ab eis causas tuae salutis exspectas, inque sumendis coelestibus sacramentis eisque ut competit disponendis, subdi te debere cognoscis religionis ordine potius quam praeesse, itaque inter haec ex illorum te pendere iudicio, non illos ad tuam velle redigi voluntatem. Si enim, quantum ad ordinem pertinet publicae disciplinae, cognoscentes imperium tibi superna dispositione collatum, legibus tuis ipsi quoque parent religionis antistites, ne vel in rebus mundanis exclusae videantur obviare sententiae; quo, oro te, decet affectu eis obedire, qui praerogandis venerabilibus sunt attributi mysteriis?* (2 f.); see Ronzani 2011, 528 f.

romano Pontifici non subiaceat, cum mortalis ista felicitas quodammodo ad immortalem felicitatem ordinetur (*Mon.* 3.16.17). These words of Dante have raised doubts insofar as it proves difficult to confer a precise meaning upon the indeterminate expression *quodammodo*⁴⁷, positioned as it is in an especially emphatic position at the end of the treatise.

Here again, according to most interpretations, Dante contradicts himself or retracts his statements⁴⁸. It seems that, after rejecting and contradicting the hierocratic theory of the subordination of the temporal to the spiritual power, the poet resolves to mollify “l’asprezza dell’argomentazione”⁴⁹, thus, in a sense, closing the door on the controversy. At the same time, Dante points the way toward a possible reconciliation between his theory of the independence of the two powers, as both coming directly from God, and his theory of the hierarchical co-ordination of their respective aims. In an effort to do this, he mitigates the effects of the first theory with *non sic stricte* and in *aliquo*, and those of the second theory with *quodammodo*⁵⁰. In this way the autonomy of the temporal power to pursue its aim is in no way challenged, as the Emperor is subservient to the Pope only as a son to his father: *illa igitur reverentia Cesar utatur ad Petrum qua primogenitus filius debet uti ad patrem: ut luce paterne gratie illustratus virtuosius orbem terre irradiet, cui ab Illo solo prefectus est, qui est omnium spiritualium et temporalium gubernator* (3.16.18). However, this Imperial subservience is expressed by the noun *reverentia*, which neither means nor implies an unconditional form of subordination, but rather, *reverentia* is indicative of a feeling of deep respect, indeed, that of an eldest son towards his father⁵¹. Moreover, the noun *reverentia* is used by Dante in a foregoing chapter in the *Monarchia* (3.3.18) with the same meaning, as well as in the *Convivio*, where the Florentine poet explains that you can rightfully disagree with the imperial authority without being disrespectful: «per che, se io niego la reverenza dello Imperio, non sono inreverente, ma sono non reverente: che non è contro alla reverenza» (4.8.13), and in *The Divine Comedy*, where Dante concretely proves the validity of this assumption, when his vehement tirade against the simoniac Pope Nicholas III does not prevent him from maintaining «la reverenza delle somme chiavi» (*Inf.* 19.101), and «la debita subiezione» (*Conv.* 4.8.11).

It is noteworthy that the *reverentia* of the Emperor towards the Pope entails no supremacy of the latter vis-à-vis the former⁵². Thanks to the *reverentia*, however, the Emperor may benefit by the light of paternal grace for administering his power over the world⁵³ more effectively (*virtuosius*), since the Emperor enjoys power over the world only by the grace of God⁵⁴. In this sense, the two authorities, which are to be kept quite distinct from one another and to maintain sovereign rights over their respective fields, are without doubt complementary and should be mutually supportive.

From this perspective we well appreciate why Dante countered the image of the sun and the moon and its

⁴⁷ So we read in the edition previously referred to. However, I would like to point out that recently a new witness of the *Monarchia* has been discovered in the British Library of London, the Ms. Add. 6891, in which *quodammodo* does not exist. See Quaglioni 2011, 231 ff.; Shaw 2011, 223 ff.

⁴⁸ For a summary of the different positions of the critics, see Gaia 1986, 778 n. 23; Carletti 2007, 69.

⁴⁹ Sacerdoti 2002, 95.

⁵⁰ Gaia 1986, 778 n. 23.

⁵¹ Nardi 1960, 303; Vinay 1962, 37; Sciuto 2002, 9.

⁵² Carletti 2007, 70.

⁵³ Here Dante insists on a concept, already previously partly expressed, concerning the relationship between the *duo luminaria*, when he stated that the temporal power receives the blessing of God’s grace from the spiritual power: *ab eo recipit ut virtuosius operetur per lucem gratie quam in celo et in terra benedictio summi Pontificis infundit illi* (3.4.20).

⁵⁴ Gilson 1985, 183.

allegorical interpretation as developed by the hierocratic literature of the time⁵⁵. For this reason the poet replaces this metaphor of the sun and the moon with the alternative metaphor of “two suns”. In fact, Dante’s metaphor seems to be the only adequate, both in portraying a true representation of the relationship of independence between the two powers as well as in providing a symbolic expression of the essential political concept according to which the Emperor receives his *auctoritas* legitimately and directly from God *sine ullo medio*.

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⁵⁵ For a comprehensive view of the discussions between hierocratic and imperial literature, see Vasoli 1983, 367 ff.; Dolcini 1983; Lambertini 1999, 209 ff.

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