Dante Study: Week 29 Paradiso, Cantos XVI-XVIII

Canto XVI:

\sim	, •
()	uestions:
v	ucsuons.

esti	ons:
•	The sequence in the heaven of Mars forms the center of <i>Paradiso</i> . These cantos focus very tightly on Florence's politics and culture. What might Dante devote such an important part of his "spiritual" journey in <i>Paradiso</i> to such particular historical concerns? How is Dante helping his readers see the connections between divine eternity and historical reality?
•	Why does Dante have Cacciaguida look back to Florence's golden age? Why focus on the dissolution of the great Florentine families? What vice(s) destroy great families and great cities? What relationship does Dante see between political and moral failing? What might Dante's presentation of Florence's decline tell us about our own political and moral contexts?
•	In light of the Florentine "fall narrative" of this canto, why do you think Dante opens the canto by mocking (his own) misplaced pride in nobility (16.1-9)? In what, by way of contrast, does true nobility consist? Where do we see this true nobility at play in the <i>Comedy</i> (and indeed in our own world)?
•	Cacciaguida frames his own birth with a reference to Christ's incarnation in the womb of Mary (16.34-36). What does this brief statement reveal about the nature of Cacciaguida's identity? Does this challenge your way of conceiving of personhood and identity?

Canto XVII:

Questions:

•	Dante asks Cacciaguide to explain the prophecies about his future that he heard in <i>Inferno</i> and <i>Purgatorio</i> . Now it is time for Dante to learn of his impending exile. Why is it fitting for Cacciaguida to be the one to inform Dante of his future rather than Beatrice or Virgil?
•	Who is responsible for Dante's exile (17.49-51)? How will Dante experience the pains of exile (17.57-72)?
•	(g) Why does Cacciaguida warn Dante against being envious of his enemies in Florence (17.97)? Why would envy be so spiritually dangerous for Dante in a time of personal suffering? How does envy threaten the spiritual good that we often face in life? Based on your reading of the <i>Comedy</i> so far, has Dante been successful in his "foreswearing all envy" of his enemies?
•	How is Dante to use his exile both to the glory of God and for the salvation of his enemies (112-142)?

•	The episode with Cacciaguida ends on something of a comment on the purpose of Dante's pilgrimage. Why has Dante been entrusted with this journey through the afterlife beyond his own spiritual benefit? Why has he been shown so many famous figures in the course of his pilgrimage so far? What effect will Dante's words (i.e. the <i>Comedy</i>) have on its readers?
Questio	XVIII: ons: How does Dante understand Beatrice's eyes in relation to the beauty of paradise (18.13-21)? Why does Beatrice insist that Dante witness Paradise outside of her eyes?
•	How can someone tell that they are growing in virtue (58-60)?
•	How do the souls at Jupiter arrange themselves (18.88-99)? What virtue is represented in this heaven? Why does Dante depict this virtue with an eagle (18.106ff)?
•	LOVE JUSTICE YOU WHO GOVERN THE EARTH (18.91-93). Why do you think that the love of justice is so important for proper governing?

•	What does Dante mean when he says "Now wars are fought withholding here and there the bread our loving Father keeps from none" (18.128-129)? How might this be related to justice?