



**ZINE CREATED BY
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Imagno. Dante. 1754, Hulton Archive

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LOST STARS

Canto 26 TED Talk

In Canto 26 we hear from Ulysses, well technically Virgil, about the fate of Ulysses after returning home from the Trojan war. Rather than live out his remaining time in Ithaca with his family, he ventures back out to sea. The thought of exploration and forging new paths is considered more significant than what was stored for him at home. So Ulysses set out to go explore, discover, and learn, and after traveling for months he sees his goal, what he has been searching after, but his ship is stuck in a storm and he along with all of his men perish. While this may not be the traditional story of Ulysses that we would now

see in the Odyssey, Dante portrays a man who is so stuck and convinced on a goal that he leaves his wife and children behind, and ultimately causes the death of both him along with the men he is responsible for. This is not what Ulysses is in hell for, Dante states that his sin was being one of "those whose cunning wrought the Trojan horse" (Dante, Inferno Canto XXVI line 59), yet this story of Ulysses shows how people's priorities can be misplaced, and also how leaders stuck on a particular goal can put the lives of the men that they are supposed to be responsible for in danger.



Stickel, Gary. Odysseus' Ship. 2008.

HOLD CLEAR IN THOUGHT YOUR SEED AND ORIGIN YOU WERE NOT MADE TO LIVE AS MINDLESS BRUTES

I am part of the NROTC program at USD so of course this canto which dealt so much with the morality of warfare, sailing to unknown lands, and leadership spoke to me, and Dante's writings of Ulysses describes a man who has misplaced his goals in life. Sending Ulysses to hell for the Trojan horse is interesting in itself, as it shows that Dante expects a certain degree of honor in warfare, and that Ulysses had cheated, and broken a moral code that human beings are expected to follow. I wonder how many great Admirals and Generals Dante would send to hell for deceiving the enemy in wartime.

But Ulysses does not speak to the pilgrim about the Trojan war, instead his first words to the pilgrim were "Once I'd set my course from Circe no tenderness for son, no duty owed to ageing fatherhood, no love that should have bought my wife Penelope delight, could overcome in me my long desire, burning to understand how this world works, and know of human vices, worth and valour" (lines 90-99). And burn he did. I will preface that the more I think about this section the more confused I get. Dante, the poet, is writing about when Dante, the pilgrim, was told a story by Ulysses which was translated to him by Virgil, and then all that was finally translated into English by Kirkpatrick.

But despite the 5 man telephone game, the point remains that Ulysses would rather learn, explore, and understand the world than be present to his Wife and child. All of us can understand the desire to travel and explore, and especially the pain when we cannot, but to me Ulysses' priorities appear misplaced. He had been fighting a war far away from those he loved and rather than return to them, he chose to continue to explore. It is not until later in the Canto that Dante brings up the stars of Ulysses' journey. Stars which are of course integral to the age of navigation that Ulysses was in, are also frequently used to describe some sort of divine compass, believed to lead people to their destinies. "Now every star around the alien pole I saw by night. Our own star sank so low it never rose above the ocean floor"(lines 127-129). The literal meaning of this line is that the ship had crossed the equator and so they could no longer see the northern star, but Dante, who uses stars so frequently as a tool of moral direction, likely also means that Ulysses has lost his way in the world, that he should have stayed with his family.

This still is not Ulysses' only moral failure, for as Ulysses is about to finally get to where he thinks he is destined to go, "a wind was born from that new land. Twisting, it struck at our forward timbers. The waves and keel three times it swirled around. The afterdeck rose up, the prow went down, as pleased Another's will, until once more the sea closed over us." (lines 137-142) Ulysses had led his men to their graves. As part of a leadership course we have to take in NROTC we learn the 6 cornerstones of naval tactics, the first of which is that people matter most. Before this point Ulysses would have appeared to be a great leader. He had embarked on a seemingly noble journey, inspired his men, and had his final goal in sight. Ulysses even called these men his brothers in a speech that was so moving it caused his men to row their boat into 'crazy flight' (line 125). But Ulysses would have rather made it to that new land with a dead crew than to keep his men safe and not achieve his goal. This is the mark of a leader who puts his own best interest above those of his crew, which anybody can see is in a way evil. While Dante, the pilgrim, believed that Ulysses is in inferno for the fraud of the Trojan horse, I wonder if the real fraud was Ulysses calling the men he was prepared to sacrifice his brothers.



Dante and Virgil meet Ulysses and Diomedes.

**NO TENDERNESS FOR SON, NO
DUTY OWED TO AGEING
FATHERHOOD, NO LOVE THAT
SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT MY WIFE
PENLOPE DELIGHT, COULD
OVERCOME ME IN MY LONG
DESIRE, BURNING TO UNDERSTAND
HOW THIS WORLD WORKS AND
KNOW OF HUMAN VICES, WORTH,
AND VALOUR.**



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Raphael. *Parnassus*. 1511, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City.



Armusik, Eric. *Canto 4: Dante and Virgil Visit the Great Poets of Antiquity*. 2017.

LECTURA DANTISTE CANTO IV

DANTE AND VIRGIL'S PRETENTIOUS PILGRIMMAGE

One of the most interesting and historically significant canti in the *Inferno* is Canto IV, limbo. This Canto begins with Dante awakening after his initial shock put him to rest in Canto III, then following Virgil into the first circle of hell. This first circle is dark, and quiet, with the only audible sound being sighs of sorrow. Virgil then explains to the pilgrim that the spirits in this circle have committed no sin at all, and some were even great people, but they had not been baptized nor followed the way of God; mostly because they are either infants, or people born before the time of Christ. Dante now meets some of his greatest heroes, poets of antiquity which include Homer, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, and of course they are accompanied by Virgil. Dante and his new found compatriots travel through limbo and arrive at a noble fort which contains some more of history's greatest figures, including political leaders, philosophers, mathematicians, and classic heroes. Eventually Virgil leads Dante out of the noble fort and they continue their pilgrimage through the *Inferno*.

Dante's writing of limbo is used both as a preface for the significance that religion will play later on in the *Commedia*, along with being a tool that gives legitimacy to the insane journey readers are about to try and follow. The Pagans found in limbo are some of history's greatest figures yet Dante is already proclaiming them to be not good enough for salvation in the fourth chapter of his poem. While most of the *Inferno* is so focused on the sinners, and the contrapasso that they have received as punishment, Canto IV remains an anchor to the religious nature of the text. The men and women in limbo have not sinned, and yet are not welcomed into the kingdom of God because, as Virgil says "merit falls far short. None was baptized. None passed the gate, in your belief, to faith... For such deficiencies, no other crime, we all are lost yet only suffer harm through living in desire, but hopelessly" (Dante, *Inferno* Canto IV lines 35-42) Limbo contains no tangible punishment, no fire, no swamp like conditions, no eternity of being consumed, but rather their contrapasso is to never be

one with God in the way that those who are followers of Christ can. Limbo is not necessarily a bad place to be, until you compare it to Paradiso, to pure light, to being one with God. Dante's guide, who is from limbo, says when entering it "let us descend and enter this blind world" (lines 12-13) Dante describes limbo as a blind world, just as he would imagine Earth prior to Christ as being blind to the beauty of Christianity. Canto IV acts as the religious anchor of Inferno and as a reminder that the root of sin is not being evil to fellow man, but rather being blind to the way of the Lord.



Flandrin, Hippolyte. Dante in Hell. 1835,

Canto IV also acts as the center of legitimacy in the poem, with Dante proclaiming to be one of history's greatest; placing himself in the company of known great people. While this move is pretentious, Dante likely saw it necessary in order to undertake the endeavour of writing a poem about divine judgement and the afterlife. The entirety of the *Commedia* relies on its readers being able to believe that Dante knows what he is talking about, and to do that Dante writes himself in the likes of great poets, political leaders, philosophers, mathematicians, and classic heroes. Writing about his time with Homer, Horace, Ovid, Luca, and Virgil "they summoned me to join them in their ranks. I came and walked as sixth among such wisdom." (lines 101&102) These are men that Dante and his contemporaries would have admired, and these great poets likely inspired much of Dante's writings (Dante History). This seal of approval from the greats is likely what Dante, the poet, saw as necessary in order to even be allowed to write a text of this nature, but also arrogantly places himself among the greats without the input of others, and the tests of histories. Honestly it bothers me that Dante turned out to be right. After meeting his greatest heroes, the rest of Dante's time in limbo legitimizes Dante's right to speak on such significant topics as politics, philosophy, leadership, and morality. A podcast from Dante History states that the seven curtain walls that Dante and the poets travel through could signify the liberal arts of medieval education: logic, grammar, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Dante once again declaring that he has the proper education and training to undertake the writing of the *Commedia*. The poet continues this trend, citing leaders such as Caesar, and Saladin, philosophers like Socrates and Plato, along with Euclid, the inventor of Geometry. So many great people that Dante says he cannot draw portraits of them all (line 144). The conclusion is that the reader is convinced that the journey they are about to follow is rooted in a combination of great philosophy, political understanding, and of course poetry. Just as Bill and Ted needed Socrates, Napoleon, and Lincoln to achieve an A in their history report, Dante needed great poets, philosophers, and political leaders to provide legitimacy to his colossal epic.

**AND GREATER HONOUR STILL THEY PAID ME NOW: THEY
SUMMONED ME TO JOIN THEM IN THEIR RANKS. I CAME AND
WALKED AS SIXTH AMONG SUCH WISDOM**

Coppa di Testa Ruggieri

A RECIPE FOR A HEAD CHEESE THAT TASTES
OF ETERNAL VENGEANCE FOR THE PERSON
THAT FORCED THE STARVATION OF YOU AND
YOUR CHILDREN



A cuisine that can be found around the world, Coppa di Testa, or head cheese is generally made with boar head, but in special circumstances can be made with the head of an archbishop who starved you and your children. I would recommend to first gnaw at the parts of the head with fat, as a lean head makes for the best Coppa di Testa. Place the head in the largest pot you have available, and then simmer in water for 3-4 hours, or until the meat becomes tender. Begin to pick the meat off the bones, but try to focus on the parts of the meat that look best, the rest can be thrown out or used in a future stock.

Take the meat you picked, and chop it into various irregular shapes, this will create multiple textures in the final product. Now with the stock that you poached the head in, add celery sticks, carrots, and onions, and simmer until the stock has boiled down to about half of its starting point. Place the chopped meat into your desired container, then cover the meat with the reduced stock. The last step is to let the meat in stock cool, which if you are in the freezing levels of hell you should be able to just place the container right next to you and let rest until it has become a solid mass, then slice and enjoy

For variations of this recipe we recommend using different vegetables, using casing to make a sort of head sausage, or using the heads of your children for a tasty final supper.

Coppa di Testa *Ruggieri*

Serves: Only you for eternity Prep time: 30 minutes Cook time: 3 hours

INGREDIENTS

Head of Archbishop Ruggieri

2 onions

4 celery stalks

1 cup of chopped parsely

2 carrots

3 tbs salt

1 tbs black pepper

DIRECTIONS

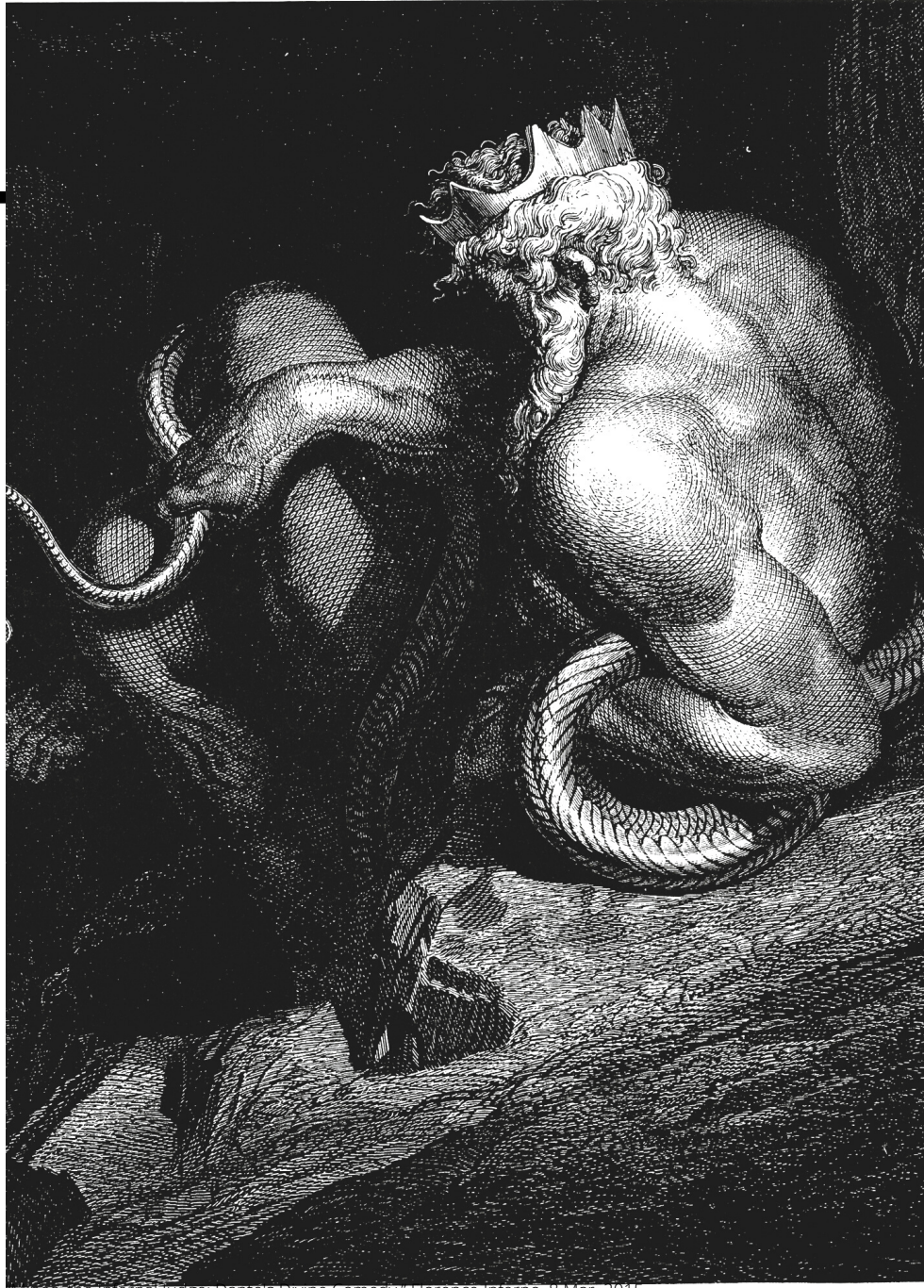
1. Rinse and clean the head under cold water, then put them in the largest pot you own. Move the pot off-center to the burner a little. Cover with cold water and bring to a boil. Skim the froth off the top. Since you put the pot off-center, the froth should all be on one side of the pot. Once the froth is all off, move the pot back to the center of the burner. Turn the heat down to a simmer, add all the other ingredients, stir to combine and simmer for at least 3 hours.
2. Remove the meats from the pot and set in a bowl.
3. Strain the stock well and return it to a clean pot. Bring it to a boil off-center — like you did at the start — and get it at a rolling boil.
4. Pick the meats off the bone, peel and chop the tongue roughly, and chop fine some of the skin from the pig's trotter. Chop everything in different sizes
5. When the stock has boiled down by a little more than half, add enough salt to make it taste salty — a little saltier than you think it ought to be. This is because cold meats need more salt than warm ones; it's how we perceive it when eating. Turn the stock off the heat and pour enough to cover the meats. Let cool overnight in the freezing pits of hell

This recipe was largely inspired by Hank Shaw from honest-food.net

MIKNOWS WHERE YOU BELONG

WATCH AS YOU
ENTER
AND IN WHOM YOU
TRUST

The first guardian in *Inferno*, besides a door, is the greatly disappointing Minos, or as I like to call him Judy, get it, like the judge. Dante writes about Minos "Minos stands there - horribly there - and barking. He, on the threshold, checks degrees of guilt, then judges and dispatches with his twirling tail" (Dante, *Inferno* Canto V lines 4-6) When going into *Inferno*, a reader might imagine that the one who decides the fate of the eternally damned to be imposing and great, making their decision with harsh clarity, but instead Dante describes Minos as horrible and barking. Dante's words evoke the image of a grotesque animal, who sends people to their level of hell with a lackadaisical twirl of his tail. Minos' root is in both history and mythology. Historically he is believed to have been two people, one a wise and judicious king of Crete, the other, Minos' grandson who was also named Minos was known for enacting harsh punishments upon the Athenians. Mythologically, Minos has been written most famously by Homer and Virgil, and was seen as a favorite of the gods, which earned him the role of being the supreme judge of the underworld. (Minos: Circle 2, *Inferno* 5). In the *Commedia* Minos is known for being the judge of *Inferno*, the creature who makes the final decision on where the eternally damned will reside in hell. He is described by Dante as a sort of demon, which Tozer claims is due to the fact that Minos is a heathen god,



Minos, the Infernal Judge: Dante's Divine Comedy. Florence Inferno, 8 Mar. 2015,

and is shown yelling at the pilgrim and his guide, to which Virgil quickly puts the heathen god in his place. My favorite fun fact about Minos is that he, in this case the evil grandson, was the king who would send sacrifice Athenians to the minotaur, until Theseus killed the beast with the help of Minos' daughter Ariadne (Greekmythology.com), and Ariadne is the name of the ship in the original ship of Theseus paradox, which is my favorite paradox. (Britannica)

JUDGEMENT IN TIME

A CONVERSATION WITH DANTE IN OUR TIME

One of the questions I've been asking most recently in relation to sin and judgement, is how the time in which someone was born affects their eternal judgement. Humanity has had many changes since the time in which Dante wrote the *Commedia*, and many of these changes are in relation to our perceptions of morality, and what we believe is sinful. In *Inferno* Dante never shied away from writing about people from vastly different eras of human history, and interestingly he did not discriminate or sympathize with those who were born in different time periods. Great poets and philosophers, including his guide Virgil, are starved of salvation because they simply were born before the era of Christianity, and thus they are stuck in limbo which is much better than the rest of *Inferno* but these people did nothing wrong, by all accounts they acted virtuously (Dante, *Inferno* Canto IV). I do not think many contemporary Christians would disagree with Dante's decision about the pagans, but as we look at more nuanced beliefs on sin the lines begin to blur.

Suicide is an example of something that Dante considered to be sinful, but contemporary Christians have an understanding of the role that mental illness can play in suicide, and believe those who commit suicide can still reach eternal salvation. This begs the question, if our understanding of sin changes over time, does how we are judged also change? Canto 13 of *Inferno* describes Pier della Vigna and another unnamed Florentine who had killed themselves, both of which are in the seventh layer of hell for damaging

Godly possessions, in this case their bodies. At the time Dante was writing *Inferno*, and the time at which these men had killed themselves suicide was considered to be sinful, so they knowingly went against what they knew to be the way of the Lord. A person who kills themselves today is not considered to be eternally damned by the church, instead the catholic church says "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives." (Respect for the Human Life) This switch in ideology, while being something that I think almost everybody nowadays agrees with, creates a problem for how we look at sin and judgement, and an even larger problem for Dante's text.

One case is that the way God judges us changes as our own morals and values change, what we consider to be sinful is what sin is, and that is how we are judged. By this standard Pier and all those who killed themselves prior to the Church changing their views would be in *Inferno* because for their time period they had sinned. This makes the text much easier to understand as an explanation of *Inferno* for its time period, while still being able to hold on to contemporary ideas of what is right and wrong in the eyes of God.

The other case is that God has his definition and understanding of sin that is not at all dependent on what people on Earth believe. This causes problems with our understanding because let's say Dante was wrong and Pier actually would have been able to reach salvation in the way that modern Catholicism believes; Pier, who has by his definition betrayed the Lord by damaging a Godly possession and is unremorseful in doing so, goes to Purgatorio or Paradiso despite the fact that he went against the way of the Lord for his time period. This also calls into question all the decisions Dante has made in the novel as potentially not being representative of Divine intent. To Dante, Ugolino was a traitor to Pisa and was punished for betraying his nation, but perhaps to God Ugolino did the right thing for his nation in trying to avoid conflict with neighboring states and thus would be sent to Paradiso. By this standard, where God does not judge based on contemporary principles but rather just based on

His own unchanging values, any human interpretation of sin and judgement will inevitably be flawed. I cannot tell you which of these two theories on eternal judgement is correct, but which one we choose to read the text with does change the text's overall purpose. One can be used as a text to support religious beliefs of any time period, if you sin and disobey the contemporary religious ideas, you will be punished accordingly. The other, and to me more interesting, can be used to show how flawed the human understanding of morality is, and how impossible it is for human beings to judge one another without having an omnipotent perspective. Dante likely wrote the *Commedia* with the former in mind, seeing that he spends the entire story judging others. But by looking at the story with the latter in mind one can more easily look at the *Commedia* as a historical text and an understanding of how Dante, and likely much of medieval Italy, perceived sin.



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**WE SHOULD NOT
DESPAIR OF THE
ETERNAL SALVATION
OF PERSONS WHO
HAVE TAKEN THEIR
OWN LIVES. BY WAYS
KNOWN TO HIM
ALONE, GOD CAN
PROVIDE THE
OPPORTUNITY FOR
SALUTARY
REPENTANCE. THE
CHURCH PRAYS FOR
PERSONS WHO HAVE
TAKEN THEIR OWN
LIVES.
-CATECHISM OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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[Le Dante, conduit par Virgile, offre des consolations aux âmes des Envieux.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hippolyte_Flandrin_-_Le_Dante,_conduit_par_Virgile,_offre_des_consolations_aux_âmes_des_Envieux.jpg)

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