

## LP<sup>2</sup> STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

### ***Divine Comedy, Part II: Purgatorio***

**Coordinator:** Richard Zuckerman

We continue our journey into *Purgatorio*, the second volume of the *Commedia*. Dante and his guide, the ancient Roman poet Virgil, have emerged from the suffering and anguish of Hell onto the island of Mount Purgatory, where the tone is serene and peaceful. *Purgatorio* is a place of spiritual awakening, renunciation and redemption. The pilgrim ascends the holy mountain, progressing level by level in a process of purification that will prepare him to enter the Earthly Paradise at the mountain's top, where he will reunite with the inspiration of his youth, Beatrice. *Purgatorio* is, in part, a lesson on Love and an exposition on the limits of human reason. With its mood of tenderness and an emphasis on personal psychological struggle, *Purgatorio* is perhaps the most beautiful and humanly accessible part of the *Commedia*. We read passages aloud in both English and Italian to focus our discussions.

**Note:** This study group is open to all members who have read the first volume, *Inferno*. Prior participation in *Divine Comedy, Part I* is not a prerequisite.

**Richard** is a former labor lawyer who has coordinated study groups in literature and philosophy, including *Divine Comedy, Part I*.

**Type of Study Group:** Discussion

#### **Readings and other Materials/Online Services**

**Participants are urged to use the edition indicated:**

*The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri, translated by C. H. Sisson (Oxford World's Classics Edition, ISBN: 978-0-19-953564-4, \$10 and up).

Readings approximate 15 pages per week.

**\*\*\*\*\* SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS \*\*\*\*\***

#### **WEEK 1**

**TOPIC:** *Purgatorio*

**READING:**

Cantos I, II

**QUESTIONS:**

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What is the significance of the pilgrim's invocation to Calliope, the Muse of Epic Poetry? What do the "four stars" signify? Why is Cato, a pagan suicide, deemed worthy of guarding the shores of Purgatory? What is the significance of the pilgrim's first purification ritual? What is the quote from Psalm 113 intended to represent?

### WEEK 2

**TOPIC:** *Purgatorio*

**READING:**

Cantos III, IV, V

**QUESTIONS:**

What is the meaning of the opening tercet in Canto III? Why must some souls wait in Ante-Purgatory before they may begin their purification? Why does Dante refute the doctrine of multiple souls?

### WEEK 3

**TOPIC:** *Purgatorio*

**READING:**

Cantos VI, VII, VIII

**QUESTIONS:**

What is the relation between Dante's Sordello and the Sordello of history? What does the sun's light symbolize in Canto VII? What is the narrative purpose of the apostrophe to the reader in Canto VIII, verses 19-21? What is the main subject in this part of the *Purgatorio*?

**WEEK 4 to WEEK 12:** *Purgatorio*