CHAUCER AND DANTE’S CONVIVIO

In 1891 Koeppel suggested, on the basis of Chaucer’s use of the phrase “old richesse,” both in the Wife of Bath’s Tale and in the balade on Gentilesse, that the Convivio had a place in Chaucer’s library. But he adduced no further evidence than the striking correspondence, in passages having a common theme, of “old richesse” and antica ricchezza.¹ Eighteen years later Paget Toynbee, in his Dante in English Literature, quoted the passage on “gentillesse” from the Wife of Bath’s Tale, and appended the following note:

This discussion as to the true nature of nobility, though partly based on a passage in the De consolatione philosophiae (iii, pr. 6, met. 6) of Boethius, . . . . almost undoubtedly owes much to Dante’s canzone on the subject prefixed to the fourth book of the Convivio; as does also the Balade of Gentilesse. . . . . There is evidence to show that this canzone of Dante was the subject of discussion, in respect of his opinions as to what constitutes nobility, at a very early date. See for instance the account given by Lapo da Castiglionchio (ca. 1310–81) in the second part of the letter to his son Bernardo (ed. Mehus, Bologna, 1753, pp. 11 ff.) of the examination of Dante’s arguments by the famous jurist, Bartolo da Sassoferrato (ca. 1313–56).²

Inasmuch as Koeppel bases his conclusion on a single phrase, and since the plan of Toynbee’s work precluded the detailed statement of his evidence, there seems still to be a place for a fuller presentation than has hitherto been made of the grounds for believing that Chaucer knew and used the Convivio.

The canzone prefixed to the fourth Tractate of the Convivio deals with the nature of Gentilezza. Excluding the Preface and the tornata, it falls into two parts. The first is negative, and is devoted to the refutation of the view that Gentilezza depends on ancestral riches or on descent. The second is positive, and traces Gentilezza (or Nobilitate) to its ultimate and only source in God. The Tractate that follows is a detailed commentary on the canzone, and poem and

¹ See Anglia, XIII, 184–85.
² Dante in English Literature, I, 14, n. 1. Koeppel’s suggestion had long been known to me; Toynbee’s note I read only after the present study was practically completed.
comment alike are suffused with Dante's singular nobility and loftiness of thought. And the twofold emphasis of the canzone is maintained throughout the commentary; "gentilless" does not derive from ancestral riches or ancestral stock; it does derive from God.

Jean de Meun had also discussed gentillessè at great length. Like Dante he recognized that true nobility does not depend on birth. But his treatment of its relation to wealth is incidental, and its source in God is not within his ken. That Chaucer drew on Jean de Meun's treatment, there can be no doubt. But no one can read the two passages, I think, without feeling that in this case Jean de Meun's oat has been taken up into a strain of higher mood. The lines which Chaucer quotes from the Purgatorio give a clue to the heightening, but not the full solution. It is the spirit of the Convivio with which the whole treatment is pervaded. In other words, Chaucer seems to have done in this passage what in his maturer performance he does repeatedly. He has drawn upon all the sources of his inspiration, and has fused them—not dovetailed them, as in his earlier work—into a product that bears his own peculiar stamp. And in the present instance the fine democracy of Jean de Meun's conception of true nobility has been merged with Dante's loftier idealism, and both have been tempered by Chaucer's own broad humanity. That this is true, it is the task of this brief article to show.

The key to Dante's negative treatment of the subject lies in the phrase of the emperor Frederick of Suabia, antica ricchezza. The phrase itself does not appear in the canzone, but it occurs six times in the body of the Tractate. It is used, as is well known, three times by Chaucer—twice in the Wife of Bath's Tale, once in the balade. But that is not all. Dante makes much of the implications of antica, in a characteristic discussion of time (in its relation to descent) as a supposed cause of nobility. His argument on this point reappears in Chaucer. His positive doctrine that God is the sole source of Gentilezza is fundamental and explicit in Chaucer's treatment too. And finally there are verbal parallels as well. I shall take up these points seriatim.

1 Roman de la Rose, ll. 19540-828 (ed. Michel).
2 See ll. 19760 ff.
3 Cf., for example, D 1121-23 and RR, 19561-63; D 1150-51 and RR, 19818-21; etc. See further Fansler, Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose (1914), p. 221.
The first division of the canzone opens with the following lines:

Tale imperò che Gentilezza volse,
Secondo 'l suo parere,
*Che fosse antica possession d' avere,*¹
Con reggimenti belli.
Ed altri fu di più lieve sapere,
Che tal detto rivolse,
E l'ultima particola ne tolse,
Chè non l'avea fors' elli.
Di dietro da costui van tutti quelli
*Che fan gentile per ischiatta altrui,*
*Che lungamente in gran ricchezza è stata:*²
Ed è tanto durata
La così falsa opinion tra nui,
Che l'uom chiama colui
Uomo gentil, che può dicere: I' fui
Nepote o figlio di cotal valente,
Benchè sia da niente.³

With this may at once be compared the opening of Chaucer's exposition:

But for ye speken of *svich gentillesse*
As is descended out of *old richesse,*
*That therefore sholden ye be gentil men,*
Swich arrogance is nat worth an hen.⁴

The general parallel is obvious enough, and the similarity of expression is scarcely less striking, even apart from the "old richesse," which is wanting in the canzone.⁵ Of this phrase Chaucer's repetitions are as follows:

*Crist wol, we clayme of him our gentillesse,*
*Nat of our eldres for hir old richesse.*⁶

*Vyce may wel be heir to old richesse.*⁷

¹ Cf.:
Heer may ye see wel, how that *genterye*  
*Is not annexed to possessioun* [D 1146–47].

² Cf. D 1109–11, below.

³ *Il Convivio, Trattato Quarto, Canzone Terza,* vss. 21–37. I use throughout Moore's text (Tutte le Opere di Dante Alighieri, Oxford, 1904). With the last lines quoted above cf. D 1132–35:

And he that wol han prys of his gentrye  
For he was boren of a gentil hous,  
And hadde hise eldres noble and vertuous,  
And nil him-selven do no gentil dedis, etc.

See also below, p. 26.

⁴ D 1109–12.

⁵ Except as it appears in "*antica possession*" and "*gran ricchezza.*"

⁶ D 1117–18.

⁷ Gentilesse, l. 15.
Its salient position in the Tractate may easily be made clear. Dante’s exposition of the first words quoted from the canzone (Tale imperò) is as follows. When Frederick of Suabia was asked “che fosse Gentilezza,” he replied:

... ch’ era, “antica ricchezza,” e be’ costumi. E dico che “altri fu di più lieve sapere,” che, pensando e rivolgendona questa definizione in ogni parte, levò via l’ultima particola, cioè i “belli costumi,” e tennesi alla prima, cioè all’ “antica ricchezza”; e secondoché ‘l testo par dubitare, “forse per non avere i belli costumi,” non volendo perdere il nome di Gentilezza, difinì quella secondochè per lui facea, cioè “possessione d’antica ricchezza.”

The next six chapters of the Convivio constitute a digression upon the imperial authority; in chap. x Dante returns to his main theme. The Emperor’s opinion regarding belli costumi he does not deem worthy of refutation. It is Frederick’s first phrase on which, throughout his whole negative argument, he dwells. He begins with a statement to which we shall have to return.

L’altra particola, che da natura di Nobiltà è del tutto diversa, s’intende riprovar; la quale due cose par dire, quando dice antica ricchezza, cioè tempo e divizie, le quali da Nobiltà sono del tutto diverse, com’ è detto, e come di sotto si mostrerà.

A few lines farther on he reverts to the phrase:

Poi dico “similmente lui errare,” ch’ è pose della Nobiltà falso suggetto, cioè antica ricchezza.

And finally, in the fourteenth chapter, he treats it under the aspect already foreshadowed in the tenth:

Riprovato l’altrui errore, quanto è in quella parte che alle ricchezze s’appoggiava, ... in quella parte che tempo diceva essere cagione di Nobiltà, dicendo antica ricchezza; e questa riprovazione si fa in questa parte che comincia: “Nè voglion che vil uom gentil divena.”

1 IV, iii, 44–55. 2 Chaps. x–xv. 3 IV, x, 12–18.
4 See IV, x, 1–12. 5 See below, p. 23. 6 IV, x, 48–50.
7 IV, xiv, 1–8. It is interesting to observe that Dante also uses the same phrase in his De monarchia: “Sed constat quod merito virtutis nobiliantur homines; virtutis videlicet propriae vel maiorum. Est enim nobilitas virtus et divitiae antiquae, juxta Philosophum in Politicis, et juxta Juvenalem:

‘Nobilitas animi sola est atque unica virtus.’

Quae duae sententiae ad duas nobilitates dantur: proprium scilicet, et maiorum” (II, iii, 12–20).

It is true (though it does not seem to have been noticed) that the words also occur in Jean de Meun:

22
The emphatic recurrence in both writers of a striking phrase in a context of identical import has, as Koeppel felt, considerable weight. And I have already shown that the connection is much closer than Koeppel pointed out. It is, however, even more organic than has thus far been indicated.

Besides the fallacy involved in ricchezza (namely the assumption of divizie as the source of Gentilezza) stands in Dante's argument the fallacy inherent in antica—the error, that is, of assuming that time (tempo), or the continuance of a single condition (questo processo d'una condizione), is the cause of nobility. And upon this idea, which does not appear at all in Jean de Meun, Dante lays, in his fourteenth and fifteenth chapters, unusual stress.

Se Nobilità non si genera di nuovo, siccome più volte è detto che la loro opinione vuole, non generandola di vile uomo in lui medesimo, nè di vile padre in figlio, sempre è l'uomo tale quale nasce; e tale nasce quale il padre: e così questo processo d'una condizione è venuto infino dal primo parente; perchè tale quale fu il primo generante, cioè Adamo, conviene essere tutta la umana generazione, ch'è da lui alli moderni non si può trovare per quella ragione alcuna trasmutanza. Dunque, se esso Adamo fu nobile, tutti siamo nobili; e se esso fu vile, tutti siamo vili; che non è altro, che torre via la distinzione di queste condizioni, e così è torre via quelle. E questo dice che di quello ch'è messo dinanzi seguito, "che siam tutti gentili ovver villani."2

and so on through all the elements (ll. 21244 ff.). But the context is totally different—the account, namely, of what one sees in the Garden of Mirth—and the passage can scarcely have any bearing on the present case.

1 See IV, x, 12–18 (quoted above, p. 22), and add the immediately succeeding lines: "E però riprovando si fanno due parti; prima si riprovano le divizie, poi si riprova il tempo essere cagione di Nobilità. La seconda parte comincia: 'Nè voglion che vil um genitil divegna." (IV, x, 18–23).

2 IV, xv, 19–38. Cf. the following, from the preceding chapter: "Dico adunque: 'Nè voglion che vil um gentil divegna.' Dov'è da sapere che opinione di questi erranti è, che uomo prima villano, mai gentile uomo dicer non si possa; e uomo che figlio sia di villano, similmente mai dicer non si possa gentile. E ciò rompe la loro sentenza medesima quando dicono che tempo si richiede a Nobilità, ponendo questo vocabolo antico; peroché' è impossibile per processo di tempo venire alla generazione di Nobilità per questa loro ragione che detta è, la qual toglie via che villano uomo mai possa essere gentile per opera che faccia, o per alcuno accidente: e toglie via la mutazione di villan padre in gentil figlio; chè, se 'l figlio del villano è pur villano, e 'l figlio suo fia pur figlio di villano, e così fia anche villano il suo figlio; e così sempre mai non sarà a trovare là dove Nobilità per processo di tempo si cominci" (IV, xiv, 18–39).
We have already seen that Chaucer follows Dante in his emphasis on the error regarding "old richesse." He follows him no less closely in this peculiarly characteristic treatment of the processo d'una condizione, implicit in antica. For in a striking paragraph he too declares that if "gentillesse" were a matter of direct descent, a stock once gentle could never cease to be what it first was.

Eek every wight wot this as wel as I,
If gentillesse were planted naturally
Un-to a certeyn linage, doun the lyne,
Privee ne apert, than wolde they never fyne
To doon of gentillesse the faire offyce;
They mighte do no vileinye or vycce.2

Chaucer has, to be sure, reversed the emphasis of Dante's exposition from "once base, always base" to "once gentle, always gentle"—a change which grows out of the requirements of his Tale.3 But the argument is Dante's argument.4

In a word, Dante's negative treatment of the source of Gentilezza involves the implications not only of ricchezza, but also of antica. The bearing of the first is fairly obvious; that of the second is characterized by Dante's own intellectual subtlety. And both reappear in Chaucer—the first with the repetition of Dante's very phrase; the second, with a masterly compression of the essence of two long chapters into a passage of six lines.5

1 Cf. IV, i, 47-49: "Questo è l'errore dell' umana bontà, in quanto in noi è dalla natura seminata, e che Nobiltade chiamar si dee."
2 D 1133-38.
3 It is perhaps due in part, as well, to the fact that the apt figure from Boethius' discussion of dignitate, of which he makes such consummately effective (and organic) use, suggested itself to him at just this point.
4 The reference to Adam and Eve in a discussion of "gentillesse" is of course a commonplace. See the Parson's Tale, I, 490; Confessio Amantis, IV, 2222 ff.; Wyclif (ed. Arnold), III, 125; etc. But the turn which Dante (and after him Chaucer) gives to the familiar argument is Dante's own.
5 Fansler calls attention (Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose, p. 105) to Koeppel's derivation of Chaucer's use of "nacion" (D 1068) from Jean de Meun's "Par noblesse de nacion" (RR, 19545), and, with his usual admirable caution, expresses doubt of any necessary connection. It is at least worth noting that nacion, in precisely Chaucer's sense, occurs in l. 63 of the canzone: "Nè di vil padre scenda Nasion, che per gentil giannai s'intenda." But as in the case of Jean de Meun, so here the parallel is without real significance. Nasion occurs in Baudouin de Condé's Li Contes de Gentilleche (a poem which I am strongly inclined to think Chaucer knew), l. 11: "Qui gentius est de nassion." See also Jean de Condé's Li Die de Gentillesse, l. 148: "Erent gentill de nacion." My only reason for referring to the word here is to point out that its use by Jean de Meun has no bearing on the case.
The correspondence in the positive phase of the discussion is no less striking. The conclusion of the canzone is explicit:

Però nessun si vanti
Dicendo: Per ischiatta io son con lei;
Ch’elli son quasi Dei
Que’ c’ han tal grazia fuor di tutti rei:
Chè solo Iddio all’ anima la dona,
Che vede in sua persona
Perfettamente star; sicchè ad alquantì
Lo seme di felicità s’accosta,
Messo da Dio nell’ anima ben posta.¹

And the comment merely elaborates what the canzone states:

Poi quando dice: “Chè solo Iddio all’ anima la dona”; ragione è del suscettivo, cioè del suggetto, dove questo divino dono discende, ch’ è bene divino dono, secondo la parola dell’ Apostolo: “Ogni ottimo dato e ogni dono perfetto di suso viene, discendendo dal Padre de’ lumi.” Dice adunque che Iddio solo porge questa grazia all’ anima di quello, cui vede stare perfettamente nella sua persona acconcio e disposto a questo divino atto ricevere.²

Precisely so in Chaucer:

Thy gentillesse cometh fro god allone;
Than comth our verray⁴ gentillesse of grace."⁴

Dante’s entire argument, accordingly, both negative and positive, is resumed in Chaucer’s lines—not formally, but with a complete assimilation of its content and with an untrammeled adaptation of it to the more flexible structural outlines of the Tale.⁵

¹ Ll. 112–19.
² IV, xx, 47–57. Cf. IV, xx, 24–28: “E rende incontanente ragione, dicendo, che quelli che hanno questa grazia, cioè questa divina cosa, sono quasi come Dei, senza macola di vizio. E ciò dare non può, se non Iddio solo.” The whole of the nineteenth and twentieth chapters should be read.
³ The last words of the preceding chapter (which sum up its theme) are: “ch’ è allora frutto di vera nobiltà” (IV, xix, 97–98).
⁵ The context in the Purgatorio of the lines which Chaucer quotes (D 1125–30) embodies once more the doctrine of the Convivio as regards descent, and that it should have suggested itself to Chaucer is far more natural than the three lines indicate, when taken by themselves. Dante, at the close of the seventh canto of the Purgatorio, is speaking of Peter of Aragon and of his son Alphonso, as contrasted with his other two sons, James and Frederick. Peter, he says,

D’ogni valor portò cinta la corda;
E se re dopo lui fosse rimaso
Lo giovinetto che retro a lui siede,
Bene andava il valor di vaso in vaso;
To the verbal parallels already indicated above may be added at least one more. Lines 1152–58 in Chaucer are as follows:

   And he that wol han prys of his gentrye
   For he was boren of a gentil hous,
   And hadde hise eldres noble and vertuous,
   And nil him-selven do no gentil dedis,
   Ne folwe his gentil auncestre that deed is,
   He nis nat gentil, be he duk or erl;
   For vileyns sinful dedes make a cherl.

The general correspondence of these lines with ll. 34–37 of the canzone has been already pointed out. The parallel with the phrasing of the commentary is closer still:

   E così quelli che dal padre o da alcuno suo maggiore di schiatta è nobilitato, e non persevera in quella, non solamente è vile, ma vilissimo, e degno d’ogni dispetto e vituperio più che altro villano.1

And finally, it is worth noting that the Loathly Lady’s discussion of poverty stands in close relation to Dante’s exposition of riches as cagione di male. For Dante too quotes Juvenal’s lines, and in an almost identical context:

   Verray povert, it singeth properly;
   Juvenal seith of povert merily:
   "The povere man, whan he goth by the weye,
   Bifore the theves he may singe and pleye."2

Ben lo sanno li miserì mercatanti che per lo mondo vanno, che le foglie, che ’l vento fa dimenare, li fan tremare, quando seco ricchezze portano; e quando senza esse sono, pieni di sicurtà cantando e ragionando fanno lor cammino più brieve. E però dice il Savio: "se vòto camminatore entrasse nel cammino, dinanzi a’ ladroni canterebbe."3

   Che non si puote dir dell’ altre rede;
   Jacomo e Federico hanno i reami;
   Del retaggio miglior nessun possiede.

Then come the lines which Chaucer quotes:

   Rade volte rieurge per li rami
   L’umana probitate: e questo vuole
   Quoi che la dà, perché da lui si chiaml [Purg., VII, 114–23].

The relation to the theme of the Convivio is obvious, and the turn which Chaucer gives the passage from valor and probitate to gentilezza makes it clear that the association was in his mind.

1 IV, vii, 87–92. The same general idea appears in Jean de Meun, ll. 19788–801. But a comparison will leave little question of Chaucer’s immediate source.
2 D 1191-94.
3 IV, xiii, 101–10. Poverty also appears in the conventional discussions of “gentillesse.” See, for example, the passage in Gower referred to above (p. 24, n. 4). But once more Chaucer and Dante elaborate the convention in the same way.

26  JOHN LIVINGSTON LOWES
That the balade on Gentilesse is Chaucer's elaboration of Dante's positive argument in the canzone, under the ever-present influence of Jean de Meun as well, it is now not difficult to see. The negative element appears, of course, in the "old richesse" of line 15. But that the canzone was very definitely in Chaucer's mind appears unmistakably from the fifth and sixth lines:

\[\text{For unto vertu longeth dignitee,} \\
\text{And noght the revers, saufly dar I deme.}\]

\[\text{È Gentilezza dovunque è virtute,} \\
\text{Ma non virtute ov' ella;} \\
\text{Siccome è 'l cielo dovunque è la stella,} \\
\text{Ma ciò non e converso.}\]

In Chaucer's treatment of "gentilesse," then, there is a characteristic mingling of all the springs of his inspiration. As in the Fortune balade, Jean de Meun, Boethius, and Dante\(^2\) are all present—the heart of their teaching grasped and assimilated in Chaucer's own thought, and fused in a new and individual expression by his ripened art. There is here no question of originality. Few passages in Chaucer—unless it be the Fortune balade itself—show with greater clearness his consummate gift of gathering together and embodying in a new unity the \textit{disjecta membra} of the dominant beliefs and opinions of his day. To overlook that in any study of external influences on Chaucer is to take the chaff and leave the corn.\(^3\)

If the \textit{Convivio} was known to Chaucer, the question at once arises: Was his use of it confined to the great exposition of Gentilezza? I think it was not. I shall make no attempt to adduce all the possible parallels. Two passages in the \textit{House of Fame}, however, seem to be reasonably clear.

The lines that introduce the eagle's demonstration of the way in which all sounds at last arrive inevitably at the \textit{House of Fame}\(^4\) have

\(^1\) Li. 101-4.
\(^2\) In that case Deschamps too! In a volume on the \textit{French Influences on Chaucer}, now in preparation, I shall have occasion to deal more fully with the merging, especially in Chaucer's later borrowings, of many sources. The instance under discussion is absolutely typical.
\(^3\) I have discussed certain other matters connected with the Wife of Bath's discourse on "gentillesse" in an examination of Professor Tupper's doctrine regarding Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins, which will shortly appear in the \textit{Publications of the Modern Language Association of America}.
\(^4\) \textit{HF}, II. 729-45.
been variously fathered. Rambeau's ascription of them to the influence of Paradiso, I, 109-17, can scarcely be accepted. That Boethius and perhaps Jean de Meun are again involved is pretty clear. But there are indications also of Chaucer's reading of the Convivio. The eagle's exposition begins thus:

```
Geffrey, thou wost right wel this,
That every kindly thing that is,
Hath a kindly stede ther he
May best in hit conserved be;
Unto which place every thing,
Through his kindly enclynyng,
Moveth for to come to,
When that hit is awey therfro;
As thus; etc.3
```

Fansler observes regarding these lines: "In the Convito, Treatise III, chap. 3, we find this same idea expressed by Dante, who was doubtless following Boethius, as was Chaucer." Of that there can be no question. But was Chaucer not following Dante too? One striking detail in the eagle's elucidation is the constant repetition of "kindly stede" or its equivalent:

```
Thus every thing, by this resoun,
Hath his propre mansioun.5
And that the mansioun, y-wis,
That every thing enclynyng to is,
Hath his kindeliche stede:
Than sheweth hit, withouten drede,
That kindely the mansioun
Of every speche, of every soun . . . .
Hath his kinde place in air.6
Hit seweth, every soun, pardee,
Moveth kindely to pace
Al up into his kindely place.7
```

2 With Chaucer's "Light thing up, and dounward charge" (l. 746) cf. Boethius: "sursum levitas . . . deorsum pondus" (Lib. III, Pros. 11), which appears in Jean de Meun (ll. 17700-701) as "Les légibres en haut volèrent. Les pesans en centre avalerent" (see Koeppel, Anglia, XIV, 246).
3 HF, ll. 729-37.
4 Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose, p. 216.
5 LL. 753-54.
6 LL. 827-34.
7 LL. 840-42.
In Boethius this appears merely as *loca* (without repetition) in the phrase: "nisi quod haec singulis *loca* motionesque conveniunt"; in Jean de Meun (again without repetition), as "leus convenabiles." I shall quote a few sentences from the beginning of the third chapter of the third Tractate of the *Convivio*:

Onde è da sapere che *ciascuna cosa*, siccome è detto di sopra, per la ragione di sopra mostrata, ha 'l suo speziale amore, come le corpora semplici hanno *amore naturato in sè* al loro *loco proprio*, e però la terra sempre discende al centro, il fuoco alla circonferenza di sopra lungo 'l cielo della luna, e però sempre sale a quello. Le corpora composte prima, siccome sono le miniere, hanno amore *al loco*, *dove la loro generazione è ordinata*. . . . Le piante, che sono prima animate, hanno amore *a certo loco* più manifestamente . . . le quali, se si trasmutano, o muoiono del tutto o vivono quasi triste, siccome cose disgiunte *dal loco amico*. Gli animali bruti hanno più manifesto amore non solamente *al loco*, ma l'uno l'altro vedemo amare.¹

Chaucer's striking emphasis, which is also Dante's, is found in neither of his other sources, and it seems reasonable to suppose, in the light of independent evidence of his knowledge of the *Convivio*, that its influence is present here. The discussion in the *Convivio* starts from precisely the passage in Boethius from which Chaucer took his cue.² It passes beyond it into subtleties with which Chaucer for the moment was not concerned. But its insistent phraseology seems to have stuck in his mind:

There is still another passage in the *House of Fame* which seems to betray the same source.

"Now," quod he tho, "cast up thyn yē;
See yonder, lo, the *Galaxyē*,
Which men clepeth the Milky Wey,
*For hit is whyt: and somme, parfrey,*
*Callen hit Watlinge Strete:*
*That ones was y-brent with hete,*
When the sonnes sone, the rede,
That highte *Pheton*, wolde lede
Algate his fader cart, and gye."³

¹ III, iii, 5–33.
² Cf. with the close of the first sentence quoted above from the *Convivio* the citations on p. 28, n. 2.
³ *HF*, ll. 935–43.

29
Rambeau referred this passage to the *Inferno*, where the connection between the galaxy and Phaeton’s journey is implied. But the galaxy is not specifically named and the allusion (though undoubted) is by no means obvious. In the fifteenth chapter of the second Tractate of the *Convivio*, however, Dante is dealing with the galaxy explicitly. I shall quote two passages from the beginning of the chapter:

. . . . e siccome la Galassia, cioè quello bianco cerchio, che *il vulgo chiama la Via di santo Jacopo*. . . . Perché è da sapere che di quella Galassia li filosofi hanno avuto diverse opinioni. Chè li Pittagorici dissero che l’sole *alcuna fiata* errò nella sua via, e, passando per altre parti non convenienti al suo fervore, arse il luogo, per lo quale passò; e rimasevi quell’apparenza *dell’ arsura*. E credo che si mossero dalla *favola di Fetonte*, la quale narra Ovidio nel principio del secondo di *Metamorfoseos*.

The substitution of the English “Watling Street” for Dante’s “Via di Santo Jacopo” (cf. “somme . . . . callen hit” with “il vulgo chiama”) is the obvious thing. And the explicit connection in both (even to verbal agreement) of the origin of the galaxy with the story of Phaeton—which Chaucer characteristically proceeds to summarize—is too striking to need comment. It is of course possible that Chaucer may have known the connection from some other source. No other, so far as I know, has been pointed out, and in view once more of independent evidence of his acquaintance with the *Convivio*, it seems highly probable that he recalled it here.

There is another passage—this time in an unexpected and even incongruous setting—which contains an unmistakable reminiscence of the *Convivio*. Two lines in the *Compleyn of Mars* I have long suspected, from their tone and phraseology, to be a borrowing from Dante, but no definite suggestion for them appears in the *Divine Comedy*. In point of fact, Chaucer is recalling the doctrine of the most intricate and baffling section of the *Convivio*, in which Dante explains and interprets the conflict between his two loves. The second Tractate opens with the canzone beginning: “Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete,” addressed to the Intelligences who move the third heaven. The passage in Chaucer, unequivocal

---

2 II, xv, 8–10.
3 Cf. Chaucer’s “ones.”
4 II, xv, 45–55.
as the reminiscence is, does not involve the more complex subtleties
of Dante's argument, and for our purpose these may happily be
disregarded. The lines, in their context, are these:

The firste tyme, alas! that I was wroght,
And for certeyn effectes hider broght
By him that lordeth ech intelligence,
I yaf my trewe servise and my thoght,
For evermore—how dere I have hit boght!—
To hir, that is of so gret excellence, etc.¹

In the fifth chapter of the second Tractate Dante discusses the
Intelligenze at length, and a few lines may be quoted:

Poich’ è mostrato nel precedente capitolo quale è questo terzo cielo e
come in sè medesimo è disposto, resta a dimostrare chi sono questi che 'l
muovono. È adunque da sapere primamente, che li movitori di quello sono
Sustanze separate da materia, cioè Intelligenze, le quali la volgare gente chia-
ma Angeli. . . . Altri furono, siccome Plato, uomo eccellentissimo, che
puosono non solamente tante Intelligenze, quanti sono li movimenti del cielo,
ma eziandio quante sono le spezie delle cose . . . . e vollero, che siccome le
Intelligenze de' cieli sono generatrici di quelli, ciascuna del suo, così queste
fossero generatrici dell' altre cose, ed esempi di ciascuna della sua spezie; e
chiamale Plato Idee, che tanto è a dire, quanto forme e nature universali.
Li Gentili le chiamavano Dei e Dee, etc.²

In this same chapter the effects (effetti) of the Intelligences are
referred to, but it is in the ninth chapter that this phase of the
subject is explicitly treated:

Potrebbe dire alcuno: conciossiacosachè amore sia effetto di queste Intel-
ligenze (a cui io parlo), e quello di prima fosse amore così come questo di poi,
perchè la loro virtù corrompe l’uno, e l’altro genera? . . . . A questa qui-
stione si può leggiermente rispondere, che lo effetto di costoro è amore, come
è detto. . . .³

The emphasis on “effect” is Dante’s own: “Dico effetto, in quanto,”
etc.⁴

In Chaucer’s lines, now, it must be remembered that it is Mars—
that is, one of the Intelligences themselves⁵—who is speaking, and

¹ Ll. 164–69.
² II, v, 1–8, 20–25, 28–35. Juno, Vulcan, Minerva, and Ceres are then mentioned.
⁴ II, ix, 43–44.
⁵ Cf. II, vi, 105 ff. Into Chaucer’s variation from Dante in his use of “the third
heaven” (l. 29) it is not here necessary to go. Mars is not, strictly speaking, one of the
as such he declares that he has been brought hither for "certeyn [i.e., fixed, determined] effectes." In other words, he was brought and set in his place for the effetti that belong to the Intelligences—"[e] lo effetto di costoro è amore." And the reference to "him that lordeth ech intelligence" is no less clear. The canzone is directly addressed, as we have seen, to the Intelligences, and in the address Dante names his "soave pensier," that went often "a' piè del vostro Sire." In the comment this line receives its explanation: "... questo pensiero che se ne gia spesse volte a' piè del Sire di costoro a cui io parlo, ch' è Iddio."

Chaucer's lines, accordingly, in the light of their source, are clear. Mars complains that as one of the Intelligences he was created by his lord—"the god that sit so hye" (l. 218)—to fulfil the very end of his existence, which end was love. He has loved—has given to his lady his true service and his thought, and his love has ended in "misaventure." The cause of his complaint, on which he lays such stress, lies therefore deep enough. The fact that Dante's whole doctrine of the Intelligences is implicit in two lines is evidence again of Chaucer's power of assimilation. And his ability to "reject what cannot clear him" is no less striking. For what he takes from the Convivio (as well as how he takes it) and what he leaves are equally significant.

There are other passages that Chaucer may have drawn from the Convivio, but there are equally possible sources elsewhere. The lines invoking the "firste moeving cruel firmament" in the Man of Law's Tale are in striking accord, in their phraseology, with certain statements of the Convivio. But in this case Chaucer and Dante may be,
and probably are, drawing on a common source. The “Etik” passage in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* finds an interesting parallel in the canzone upon which Chaucer drew for his account of “gentilesse.”

\[
\ldots \text{ for “vertu is the mene,”}
\]

As Etik saith.\(^2\)

\[
\textit{Virtute} intendo, che fa l’uom felice}
\]

\[
\text{In sua operazione.}
\]

\[
\text{Quest’ è (secondochè l’ Etica dice)}
\]

\[
\text{Un abito eligente,}
\]

\[
\textit{Lo qual dimora in mezzo solamente.}\(^3\)
\]

But, as I have pointed out elsewhere,\(^4\) there is a similar passage in John of Salisbury, and as between the two, honors seem easy.\(^5\) Such parallels as the two just cited, accordingly, are inconclusive, even though the list might easily be lengthened.

The correspondences, however, in the cases of the *Wife of Bath’s Tale*, the *Gentilesse balade*, the *House of Fame*, and the *Compleynt of Mars*, are of a different character, and they seem to establish beyond doubt the conclusion tentatively suggested by Koeppel and Paget Toynbee. And the addition of the *Convivio* to Chaucer’s library is an important one.

JOHN LIVINGSTON LOWES

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

2 Prologue, B-version, ll. 165–66.
3 IV, canzone, ll. 83–87. Cf. IV, xx, 8–10: “dunque ogni \textit{Virtute} \ldots \text{ciò \textit{l’abito elettivo consistente nel mezzo}.”
4 *Modern Language Notes*, XXV (March, 1910), 87–89.
5 The context in the *Convivio*, however, is closer than in the *Polycraticus* to the context in the *Legend*. 