



Dante's Paradiso and the Limitations of Modern Criticism: A Study of Style and Poetic Theory

Robin Kirkpatrick

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In this 1978 book, it is Dr Kirkpatrick's contention that critics have yet to present a satisfactory account of Dante's originality in the Paradiso. We shall best appreciate the Paradiso, he argues, if we recognise that poetry can not only dramatise thought, but also offer a thorough analysis of religious and philosophical belief. Considering Dante's own discussions of poetry and language in the Convivio and De Vulgari Eloquentia, Dr Kirkpatrick claims that, for Dante, direct and careful statement is itself a special responsibility of the poet. This attitude is shown in detail to conflict with a view that critics continue to derive from T. S. Eliot and from theoreticians such as Croce and Terracini, whereby poetic language is allowed only an expressive and imaginative function. Dr Kirkpatrick demonstrates how in practice Dante's adoption of analytical language influences the organisation of his poem and his handling of word and image.

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