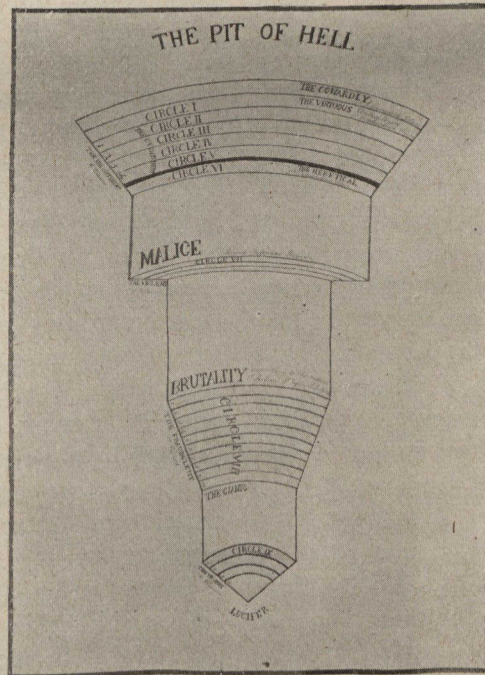


forms the antichamber of Paradise. Through these realms Dante was permitted to wander. Let us rapidly follow the course he took. In the mid-way of life, as he tells us, he found himself in a dark wood, representing perhaps, moral as well as political confusion, more especially of Italy. He sees a sunlit mountain before him, probably moral and political order.

and so on. Here Dante is met by Virgil (Human Science) who declares himself to be sent through the intervention of Beatrice (Theological Science) by the mouth of Lucia, (Enlightening Grace) to bring him back to the light and virtue from which he has wandered. Together they enter the antichamber of Hell, over whose portal are inscribed the words:



Seeking to gain the summit, he finds himself opposed by three wild beasts, the panther of Florence, the lion of France, and the wolf of Rome. This is perhaps the most generally received interpretation of the allegory in the political sense, but I must warn you that there are many views, and if you choose to regard the allegory in a religious sense, the wild beasts may stand for envy, pride and avarice, the dark wood for the soul sunk in vice,

“Through me you pass into the city
of woe,
Through me you pass into eternal
pain,
Through me among the people lost
for aye
Justice the founder of my fabric
moved.
To rear me was the task of power
divine,
Supremest wisdom and eternal
love,