

Dante Alighieri's Convivio - Book IV
The Third Canzone (English Translation)

Those sweet rhymes of love I must forsake,
Those I used to seek within my thoughts,
Not because I lose all hope
Of turning to them once again,
But because the proud disdainful manner
That my lady now bears towards me
Has closed the path
Of customary speech.

And since this time seems one of waiting,
I will set aside the sweet style,
That I used for poems of love;
And speak of worth
That makes one truly noble,
In harsh and subtle rhymes;
Refuting the false and base belief
Of those who contest that wealth
Is the source of true Nobility.
And, firstly, **I call upon that lord**
Who lives within my lady's eyes,
Such that **of herself she is enamored.**

A certain ruler thought nobility,
For so it seemed to him,
Lay in ancestral wealth
And perfect manners;
Another, of inferior cast,
Reworked this saying,
Ignored the latter phrase,
Perhaps lacking that perfection!
Behind them came all those
Who think a man noble if his race
Has long been accustomed to great riches;
And now this false opinion
Has so endured among us,
One calls another noble
If he can simply say he is the son,
Or grandson, of some man of note,
Though he himself is nothing.
Yet he's the worst of all, in truth,
Who, shown the road, still goes astray,
And like a dead man walks the earth!
He who says: 'Man is living timber',
Tells an untruth,
And, in what's false, leaves Much unsaid;
Though he may see no deeper.

The ruler of the Empire erred likewise
In his definition,
Since its first phrase is false,
And then what follows is defective;
For riches, despite what is believed,
Neither deny nor grant nobility,

For of its very nature wealth is base;
Whoever tries to draw a Form
Cannot, if he cannot conceive it,
Nor can an upright tower
Be undermined by a distant river.

It's clear that riches are imperfect,
And are base, for however great
They bring no peace, but rather care;
And so the true and upright mind
Is never troubled by losing them.
Nor will men grant the base-born worth,
Nor grant that one whose father was
Low-born could every qualify as noble;
Or so they claim;
Yet their reasoning seems self-defeating,
Inasmuch as it asserts
That time is needed for nobility,
And thus defines it so.
For, it follows from what was said,
That all are noble or forever base,
Or else that Man had no beginning.
But to this I cannot consent,
Nor should they if they are Christians!
So it is clear to *all* sound minds
That what they say of this is idle,
And thus I say their words are false,
And dissociate myself from them;
And will now, in speaking as I think,
Of what nobility is, and of its source,
Reveal the mark of the noble man.

I say that all virtue *at inception*
Rises from a single source
Virtue, I mean, that makes men happy
In every one of their actions.
As stated in the Ethics, virtue is
An elected habit,
Which resides only in the mean,
And those are the very words.

I say, nobility, by definition,
Always implies good in its subject,
As baseness always implies the bad;
And virtue, as defined,
Always manifests itself as good;
So that in themselves
The two agree, having one effect.
One then must arise from the other,
Or both from a third;

Yet if the one contains the other's worth
And more besides, it must be the source.

What I have stated here accept as proven.

Thus, where there's virtue there's nobility,

But nobility is not merely virtue,
As where there is a star there is sky [];*
Though the converse is not true.
 And in women and the young,
 We perceive this noble state,
 Insofar as they *show modesty,*
Which is itself distinct from virtue.
And just as perse derives from ~~Birth~~,
So must virtue flow from nobility,
Or rather the set of virtues, as I said.
Let no one boast then, saying:
'To birth I owe my nobility,'
For almost godlike are they
Who, free of vice, possess such grace;
 Since God alone grants it to those spirits
 Which he sees in themselves
 Truly grounded: and as some know,
It is the seed of happiness infused
By God into the well-disposed soul.
And the soul this good - ness Adorns
Does not keep its goodness hidden,
But from the time she is wed to the body
She displays it, until the hour of death.
 Obedient she is, sweet and modest
 In life's early years,
She adorns her body with Beauty,
 With all her parts in *Harmony*;
In maturity, is firm and temperate,
Full of love and courteous praise,
And solely in honesty takes delight;
Then in old age she's just,
And prudent, and praised as generous,
And is, herself, gratified
To hear and speak of others' worth;
 Finally in life's fourth phase
 She is wedded once more to God,
 Contemplating the awaited end,
While blessing the years that have passed.

See how many now are deceived!
Against-the-errant-ones, my song, go forth;
And when you are
In that place where our lady is,
Do not ~~hide~~ your motive from her,
You may say to her with certainty:
'I speak to you of a friend of yours.'

Sincerely,

Earl Warren

"It is the spirit and not the form of law that keeps justice alive."
 "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Annex A: Deconstructing Dante

Explicit Meaning¹: *The Accredited Investor Definition is Unconstitutional*

- “*Love has No Labels.*” – John Cena²

*It is the seed of happiness infused
By God into the well-disposed soul.
And the soul this good - ness Adorns
Does not keep its goodness hidden,
But from the time she is wed to the body
She displays it, until the hour of death.*

...
*She adorns her body with Beauty,
With all her parts in Harmony;
In maturity, is firm and temperate,
Full of love and courteous praise,
And solely in honesty takes delight;
Then in old age she's just,
And prudent, and praised as generous,
And is, herself, gratified
To hear and speak of others' worth;*

Analysis: Stylistic Refutation

- The poem is concerned with American honor and *stylistically* highlights the inconsistencies and unconstitutionality of the Accredited Investor Definition:

Those sweet rhymes of love I must forsake,

....
*And speak of worth
That makes one truly noble,
In harsh and subtle rhymes;*

- Although unconventional, the poem highlights the historic irony that *modern* definitions of “nobility” or “sophistication” are equivalent to 13th Century *feudal* conceptions.

*And, firstly, I call upon that lord
Who lives within my lady's eyes,
Such that of herself she is enamored.*

...
*“The ruler of the [Holy Roman] Empire erred likewise
In his definition,*

- This stylistic element further highlights the SEC’s farcical reasoning – that no amount of wealth or “Accredited” status will help someone comprehend, let alone deconstruct, Dante’s meaning - or mine.

*Whoever tries to draw a Form
Cannot, if he cannot conceive it,
Nor can an upright tower
Be undermined by a distant river.*

¹ I was asked to *explicitly* state what this poem means. (See Marco Santagata “Dante. The Story of His Life.”) Simply put, the definition is “arbitrary, capricious, and an abuse of discretion” or “otherwise not in accordance with [American and International] law.” See also **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Part 1, Article 1, Section 2** (“All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law.) See also **Part 2, Article 2, Section 2** (“Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, **property, birth or other status.**”)

² The Ad Council’s mission is to identify a select number of significant public issues and stimulate action through communications programs. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MdK8hBkR3s>

- This reasoning is hidden, in the form of an enthymeme, leaving much unsaid:

*Yet he's the worst of all, in truth,
Who, shown the road, still goes astray,
And like a dead man walks the earth!
He who says: 'Man is living timber',
Tells an untruth,
And, in what's false, leaves Much unsaid;
Though he may see no deeper.*

- The enthymeme hides a proud and disdainful regulatory conception of a fundamental concept:

*But because the proud disdainful manner
That my lady now bears towards me
Has closed the path
Of customary speech.*

- The SEC's reasoning is flawed:

*Since its first phrase is false,
And then what follows is defective;
For riches, despite what is believed,
Neither deny nor grant nobility.
For of its very nature wealth is base;
...
Thus, where there's virtue there's nobility,
But nobility is not merely virtue,
As where there is a star* there is sky [];
Though the converse is not true.*

- Because wealth is not the true source of sophistication:

*Refuting the false and base belief
Of those who contest that wealth
Is the source of true Nobility.*

*...
It's clear that riches are imperfect,
And are base, for however great
They bring no peace, but rather care;
And so the true and upright mind
Is never troubled by losing them.*

- Nor is rational or worthy of such praise:

Yet their reasoning seems self-defeating,

*...
So it is clear to all sound minds
That what they say of this is idle,
And thus I say their words are false,
And dissociate myself from them;*

*...
What I have stated here accept as proven.*

- So I wrote this to bring public attention to the issue:

*See how many now are deceived!
Against-the-errant-ones, my song, go forth;
And when you are
In that place where our lady is,
Do not ~~hide~~ your motive from her,
You may say to her with certainty:
'I speak to you of a friend of yours.'*