

# Teaching with Eyes on the Sun

How Dante's *Paradiso* is the  
Best Model of Classical Pedagogy





**The glory of Him Who moves everything  
penetrates the universe and shines forth  
in one part more, while in another less.**

***Paradiso 1.1-3***





***Paradiso* 1.43-57**

**Almost this point had made it morning there,  
and here, evening; and all that hemisphere  
was white, while the other region was black,**

**when I saw Beatrice turn to her left  
and look once again straight into the sun;  
never did eagle so fix itself there.**

**And as a second ray is accustomed  
to leave the first and once more rise above,  
like a pilgrim who wishes to return,**

**so by her posture, pouring through my eyes  
on my imagination, was mine made:  
beyond wont, I fixed my eyes on the sun.**

**Much is granted there that to our powers  
here is not allowed, a gift of that place  
fittingly fashioned for the human race.**





***Paradiso* 1.58-69**

**Not long I endured, yet not so briefly  
I did not see it sparkle all around,  
like iron taken molten from the fire;**

**and all of a sudden it seemed that day  
to day was added, as though that Power  
had adorned heaven with another sun.**

**Beatrice remained with her eyes wholly  
fixed on the eternal wheels; and I fixed  
my lights on her, withdrawn from up above.**

**As I thus gazed on her I was transformed  
within, as when Glaucus tasted the grass  
that made him friend to the gods of the sea.**





***Paradiso* 10.1-12**

**Gazing on His Son with the Love the One  
and the Other eternally breathe forth,  
the Primal and ineffable Power**

**with such order made all things wheel round  
through mind and space, he who stands in wonder  
cannot do so without a taste of Him.**

**Therefore, reader, raise with me your vision  
to the high wheels, directly to that part  
where the one and the other motion strike;**

**and there begin to lovingly admire  
the Master's art: He loves it, in Himself,  
such that from it He never takes His eye.**





***Paradiso* 10.52-60**

**And Beatrice began, “Give thanks, give thanks  
to the Sun of angels Who to this sphere  
of perceiving has raised you by His grace.”**

**Heart of mortal was never so disposed  
to devotion, to give itself to God  
so swiftly with all its grateful assent,**

**as I then made my own at her urging;  
and all my love so fixed itself on Him  
that Beatrice was eclipsed, and forgot.**





***Paradiso 23.25-39***

**As in tranquil skies, when the moon is full,  
Trivia smiles among eternal nymphs  
who paint the heavens in every region,**

**I saw, above many thousands of lamps,  
a Sun that kindled every one of them,  
as ours kindles the stars we see above;**

**and from within that living Light appeared  
His shining substance, so bright in my eyes  
that they could no longer sustain the sight.**

**O Beatrice! O sweet and precious guide!  
She said to me, “That which overcomes you  
is the Virtue from Whom no one can hide.**

**Here is the Wisdom, here is the Power  
that cleared the road between Heaven and Earth  
for which there has been such a long desire.”**





**[We bear the image of God not] because the mind remembers itself and understands and loves itself; but because it can also remember, understand, and love Him by whom it was made. And in so doing it is made wise itself. But if it does not do so, even when it remembers, understands, and loves itself, then it is foolish. Let it then remember its God, after whose image it is made, and let it understand and love Him. Or to say the same thing more briefly, let it worship God, who is not made...wherefore it is written, “Behold, the worship of God, that is wisdom.” And then it will be wise, not by its own light, but by participation of that supreme Light.**

**— Augustine, *De Trinitate***





**The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**

**The chief end of education is to equip students to fulfill their chief end.**

**Put another way, the goal of education is worship:**

- to remember, understand, and love Him by Whom we are made;**
- to be made wise in the “fear-of-the-Lord-is-the-beginning-of-wisdom” sense;**
- to know that “goodness whereunto they are moved” by the lessons you as poet/maker/teacher are creating;**
- to “lovingly admire the Master’s art...”**
- to be steeped in gratitude and devotion.**





**Education is an act of worship, of submission, of spiritual and intellectual formation.**

**Education is an act of praise and doxology, a recognition of and delight in the glory of Him Who moves everything, a glory which penetrates the universe.**

**The classroom is a sanctuary, wherein either the Triune God of Scripture or the god of self will be remembered, understood, and loved at the altar of learning.**

**The classroom is a *living* room where both the intellect and the affections of students are being fed, shaped, and directed.**





**You are Beatrice.**

**Where are your eyes in the classroom?**

**What posture will your students  
imitate?**

**How does your affection for Jesus  
shape the atmosphere of your  
classroom?**

**How will your treatment of your subject  
encourage your students to love Jesus  
more?**





**So, what might this look like?**

**— Prayer/Scripture/Music/Art**

**— Put your delights on display**

**— Circle the Chairs**

**— Depth over Breadth**

**— Let the rabbit trails prevail!**

**— Bring them into your home for a meal**

**— Beautiful, homelike atmosphere; the classroom should smell like fresh baked bread.**

