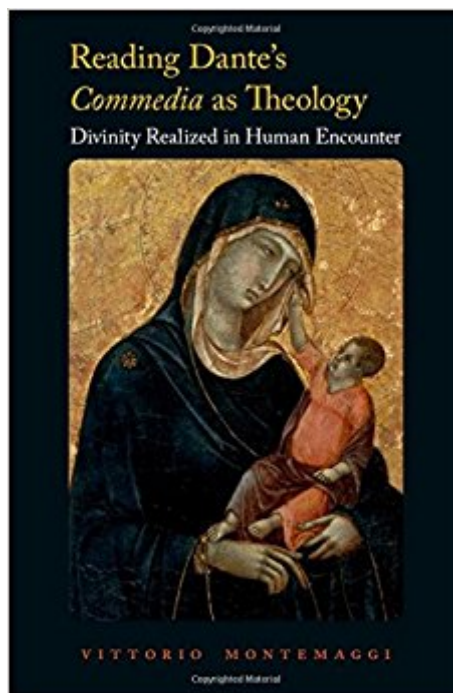




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Reading Dante's *Commedia* As Theology: Divinity Realized In Human Encounter



Synopsis

Dante's *Commedia* compels readers to confront the mystery of their existence, to seek understanding of their relationship to the living conscious reality from which all possible experience arises. By pursuing these lines of inquiry, says Vittorio Montemaggi, readers can reach an ultimate reality that Dante calls love. Montemaggi offers a detailed theological reading of the *Commedia*, examining the theme of human interaction, both as it is represented in the poem-the narrator Dante's interaction with other characters-and by the relationship between author and reader. In doing so, he locates a Dante we may not be used to imagining, a man aware both of the spiritual power of his work, and of his profound, essential vulnerability and moral failing. Montemaggi shows that, for this Dante, truth emerges only through human limitation and failure, and not in spite of it. Applying this interpretive framework to a reflection on the methodology of scholarship itself, Montemaggi offers a vision of what the academy could be-not individual scholars in competition with others, but a community that seeks to foster the understanding that can arise through interaction, vulnerability, and love. His vision constitutes a benign challenge to some of the ethos and practices of the modern academy, while simultaneously reflecting on the dynamics of one of the most inspiring and influential texts ever written about the relationship between humanity and divinity.

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