

## SOME REMARKS ON COLUCCIO SALUTATI'S *DE FATO ET FORTUNA*

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Coluccio Salutati's *De fato et fortuna*, or *De fato, fortuna et casu* as some manuscripts have it<sup>1</sup>, was written between 1396 and 1399, that is while he was Chancellor in Florence<sup>2</sup>. It consists of five *tractatus*: the first is *De ordine causarum*, the second *De fato*, the third *De fortuna*, the fourth *De casu*, and the fifth *Unde clades Perusine prouenerint*. - We know from Salutati's letters<sup>3</sup> that Salutati did not work out the treatises in the same order as they were arranged in the final version. Firstly he wrote the treatise on fate - which circulated for a while as a separate work - then the one on fortune, then the one on the order of causes and the one on chance. Lastly he wrote the fifth treatise (which has more likeness with a homily or a letter than with an actual treatise) and the preface<sup>4</sup>. This is reflected in the single treatises: whereas the two treatises on fate and fortune cover more than eighty per cent of the whole work, the treatises on the order of causes and on chance only contain some rather summary remarks on a few folios.

It is essential for the understanding of the work to see it in its

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- 1) For a recent bibliography on Salutati and his work, see A. Petrucci, *Coluccio Salutati*, Rome 1972, pp.118-132. For the *De fato et fortuna*, see esp. L.Gasparetti, 'Il "De fato, fortuna et casu" di Coluccio Salutati', in: *La Rinascita*, IV, 1941, pp.555-582; W.Rüegg, 'Entstehung, Quellen und Ziel von Salutatis "De fato et fortuna"', in: *Rinascimento*, V, 1954, pp.143-190; and C.Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, vol. I, London 1970, pp.76-102. - Since we are still waiting for Rüegg's edition of Salutati's text, I use the manuscript preserved in Bibl.Marciana and corrected by Salutati himself, ms.lat.vi,109 (=2852), quoted as V below.
  - 2) Cf. Rüegg, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
  - 3) Edited by F. Novati in: *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, vols. I-IV, Rome 1891-1911. For corrections and additions to Novati's edition, see B.L. Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, second edition with additions and corrections, Rome 1973 (=Storia e Letteratura, 51) ch. IX (pp. 197-237) and ch. XIV (pp. 283-304).
  - 4) Cf. Rüegg, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 150sq.

proper tradition. The catholic church never established a consensus, a standard attitude towards fate and fortune, and already in antiquity there was great confusion about the true meaning of fate and fortune as concepts<sup>5</sup>. Lewis and Short define *fatum* as "that which is ordained, destiny, fate", and give the following synonyms: fortuna, fors, sors, casus; whereas *fortuna* is defined as "chance, hap, luck, fate, fortune", with the following synonyms: casus, fors, fatum, providentia. The fathers of the church, e.g. Lactantius, St. Jerome and St. Augustine, had a hostile attitude towards using fate and fortune as elements in an explanation of the world and its phenomena<sup>6</sup>. But it was equally significant that Boethius gave new importance to fate and fortune in a philosophico-theological context in his *Consolation of Philosophy* which had an immense effect on the later discussions.

The scholastics too concerned themselves with the problems of fate and fortune. So both Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura have long passages on fate, fortune and chance in various places; for instance in commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics*, where the Philosophus speaks about chance and fortune as *causae per accidens*<sup>7</sup>. On the one hand they work out theories of chance-events as necessary in God's plans for the world. But on the other hand they admit that a Christian should not use terms such as fate and fortune because of their ancient, pagan connotations<sup>8</sup>. Thus not even the scholastics created a commonly acceptable attitude to fate and fortune.

Salutati knew many of these writings, ancient and scholastic. Thanks to B.L. Ullman, whose *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati*<sup>9</sup> must be considered

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- 5) For the literature on fate, fortune and chance, see i.a. P.F. Arpe, *Theatrum Fati, sive notitia scriptorum de providentia, fortuna et fato*, Rotterdam 1716. H.R. Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Roman Literature and in the Transitional Period*. Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, vol. III, no. 3, 1922; *idem*: *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Philosophy and Literature*. SCSML, vol. III, no. 4, 1922. V. Cioffari, *Fortune and Fate from Democritus to St. Thomas Aquinas*, New York, 1935; *idem*, art. 'Fortune, Fate and Chance' in: *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol. II, New York 1973, pp. 225-236.
- 6) Cf. H.R. Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Philosophy and Literature*, pp. 180-183.
- 7) Arist., *Phys.* II, 4-6.
- 8) Cf. H.R. Patch, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-187 and 197-200. - It should be noted that there are variations and disagreements concerning fate and fortune among the scholastics themselves.
- 9) Padova 1963 (=Medioevo e Umanesimo, 4).

the main work in Salutatian scholarship, we know quite a lot about his knowledge of ancient and medieval writings. Ullman identified some 111 manuscripts once in Salutati's possession, and these show a very broad range of interest. At the same time Ullman collected what was available from Salutati's other writings, primarily from his letters, about other works known to Salutati. But these results should be treated with some caution. Nothing is known for sure about the number of titles in Salutati's library; to me (as to Ullman) Poggio's estimate of some 800 volumes seems reasonable<sup>10</sup>, and more books must have been available through friends in Florence. - Like Petrarch, Salutati makes notes in some of the manuscripts, but mostly they are insignificant. Sadly enough, Ullman does not pay much attention to Salutati's *De fato et fortuna* in his book - one wonders if he did not consider this work part of Salutati's humanism? This is, however, not true; *De fato et fortuna* is very much a 'humanistic' work, both in method and scope. Quite a substantial part of it deals with opinions held by earlier thinkers. Thus we find chapters on fate and fortune in poetical literature, as well as chapters on them as they occur in philosophical and theological literature<sup>11</sup>. In many cases Salutati is not doing much more than simply referring to these earlier opinions; he does not attempt to systematize, say, the poetical use of the words fate and fortune. This, by the way, is a rather general problem when dealing with Renaissance philosophers - they tended to be very well informed on the sources, but at the same time they were not very systematical. This was only one of the great losses in philosophical exactness when the humanists abandoned the scholastic *quaestio*.

Seen in the context of the traditional confusion about the concepts of fate and fortune, it is interesting to see what starting point Salutati took. In the preface he quotes an important passage from St. Augustine's *City of God*, where the saint says: "Quae (sc. regna humana) si propterea quisquam fato tribuit, quia ipsam Dei uoluntatem uel potestatem fati nomine appellat, sententiam teneat, linquam corrigit"<sup>12</sup>. - Since it is well known that Salutati was deeply influenced by St. Augustine, it is surprising

10) Ullman, *op. cit.*, pp. 129 and 259.

11) Tract. II, cap. 5: "Quod fatum tam a philosophis quam poetis varie et multipliciter assum[m]atur" (V, ff. 10v-14r). Tract. III, cap. 4: "Quod multis modis de fortuna sermo sit, et apud philosophos et apud poetas ac comuniter apud homines" (V, ff. 46v-50r).

12) *De civ. Dei* V, 1.

that Salutati turns this around and in his work calls by the name of fate what would normally be ascribed to Divine Will and Omnipotence<sup>13</sup>.

The first treatise of *De fato et fortuna*, on the order of causes, is a very short one, only covering a few pages in the manuscripts<sup>14</sup>. But already in this introductory treatise Salutati outlines the framework in which his whole work should be seen. All secondary causes are subservient to the prime cause, i. e. God, who in His Omnipotence and Providence foresaw all that would ever be and happen in the world. Also fate, fortune and chance are conceived of as causes subservient to the prime cause. Already at this point it should be noted that Salutati does not work with any absolute concepts of fate, fortune and chance. Fatal events like chance-events are both subordinated to Divine Providence. Only in relation to human understanding - which is limited - does it seem that they have an absolute character.

Not surprisingly, when seen on this background, Salutati's main interest in fate, which is the topic of the second treatise, is the concept of necessity. Fate is, according to Salutati's definition, a "necessitas a Dei providentia fluens, cuncta dirigens et gubernans que sub celo sunt et efficiuntur"<sup>15</sup>. Necessity is divided into two kinds, one of which is the absolute necessity of God; Salutati writes: "Est igitur necessarium non solum quod impossibile est aliter se habere, sed quod impossibile est non esse"<sup>16</sup>. The other kind is the relative necessity, caused, of course, by the supreme cause, i.e. God. Salutati lists a whole range of different aspects of this necessity, such as the necessity of certain conditions, the necessity of logic, the necessity of death, etc.<sup>17</sup>. The human will has to act under these conditions and necessities, but still it remains essential that the will cannot be necessitated. God endowed man with a free will; as Salutati in a characteristically paradoxical way expresses himself: "fatale quidem et necessarium est uoluntatem que de sui essentia libera est nichil agere nisi libere -"<sup>18</sup>.

This leaves open the classic question about the origin of sin; if God created the world out of His own Omnipotence, and if He knew all the acts

13) Prohemium (V, f. 2r).

14) V, ff. 3r-7v.

15) Tract II, cap. 1 (V, f. 8r).

16) *ibid.*, cap. 6 (V, f. 16v).

17) *ibid.*, (V, ff. 16v sqq.).

18) *ibid.*, (V, f. 17v).

of all human beings, how, then, could man be damned for his use of the free will, which God gave him and knew all about from eternity? Although Salutati does try to answer this question, I find his arguments poor and unsatisfactory. He actually goes back to the Augustinian concept of sin as a non-entity, a defect in man, 'created' by man himself<sup>19</sup>. But at the same time Salutati maintains the distinction between *predestinati per gratiam* (that is, the blessed) and the *presciti per iustitiam* (that is, the accursed), and he admits that nobody is saved by good deeds<sup>20</sup>. Thus Salutati seems to insist on God's Grace being greater than His Justice; this is, of course, an orthodox position, but not quite consonant with Salutati's emphatic insistence on human free will.

Salutati's concept of fortune is consistent with his idea of fate. He quotes Boethius' definition of chance: "Licet igitur definire casum esse inopinatum ex confluentibus causis in his, quae ob aliquid geruntur, eventum"<sup>21</sup>. This definition he applies also to fortune, so that the distinction between chance and fortune becomes that a chance-event is an unexpected event in inanimate things, whereas an event by fortune demands an intention; in other words fortune can only exercise its influence in connection with human will. Yet again fortune is not an absolute concept in Salutati; fortune has its role and function in the divinely created universe and the divinely arranged order of causes. This idea is very much influenced by Dante, a fact that becomes clear in two almost apologetic chapters in the treatise on fortune<sup>22</sup>. The primary (and outspoken) target of Salutati in these chapters is Cecco d'Ascoli, the famous, if not great, astrologer, who was burnt as a heretic in 1327. Cecco had criticized Dante for being too 'fatalistic' in his treatment of fortune in the seventh canto of *Inferno*; since this passage from the *Divine Comedy* is very important for the discussion of fate and fortune, I shall quote it *in extenso*:

19) Salutati speaks about "actuum deformitas": "defectus est, non effectus, nec efficientem causam habet sed deficientem, quoniam illa deformitas nullum est ens, quoniam bonum esset, sed pura privatio bonitatis." Tract. II, cap. 9 (V, f. 25r).

20) Tract. II, cap. 10 (V, ff. 28v-32r).

21) *Phil. Cons.* V, pr. 1; quoted tract. III, cap. 6 (V, f. 51v).

22) Tract. III, cap. 11: "De variis fortune determinationibus, et qualiter de ea quidam locuti sunt, et quod aliqua dea non sit. Et quid Dantes eam esse voluerit." (V, ff. 62r-65r). *Ibid.*, cap. 12: "Qualiter et quibus rationibus contra Dantem loquitur Ceccus Esculanus et quomodo Dantis sententia defendatur." (V, ff. 65r-69r).

"Maestro mio," diss'io, "or mi dī anche:  
 questa fortuna di che tu mi tocche,  
 che è, che i ben del mondo ha sī tra branche?"  
 E quelli a me: "Oh creature sciocche,  
 quanta ignoranza è quella che v'offende!  
 Or vo' che tu mia sentenza ne 'mbocche.  
 Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende,  
 fece li cieli e diè lor chi conduce  
 sī, ch'ogne parte ad ogne parte splende.  
 distribuendo igualmente la luce.  
 Similemente a li splendor mondani  
 ordinò general ministra e duce  
 che permutasse a tempo li ben vani  
 di gente in gente e d'uno in altro sangue,  
 oltre la difension d'i senni umani;  
 per ch'una gente impera e l'altra langue,  
 seguendo lo giudicio di costei,  
 che è occulto come in erba l'angue.  
 Vostro saver non ha contasto a lei:  
 questa provvede, giudica, e persegue  
 suo regno come il loro li altri dēi.  
 Le sue permutazion non hanno triegue.  
 necessitā la fa esser veloce;  
 sī spesso vien chi vicenda consegue.  
 Quest' è colei ch'è tanto posta in croce  
 pur da color che le dovrien dar lode,  
 dandole biasmo a torto e mala voce;  
 ma ella s'è beata e ciō non ode:  
 con l'altre prime creature lieta  
 volve sua spera e beata si gode.<sup>23</sup>

Cecco was certainly not the only person to have his doubts about this highly sophisticated piece of literature. I shall show this in connection with some Dante-commentaries of the XIVth Century later; but first it must be pointed out that Dante's conception of fortune fitted very well into Salutati's thought; in fact, I believe that Dante had an important and positive influence on Salutati's attitude. In Salutati's interpretation both the fortuitous and the determined is saved in Dante's conception of fortune: she is the minister of God, exercising His Will by fulfilling the order of the universe. In Dante the Wheel of Fortune has yet another function and dimension, that of a sphere in the heavenly order of the universe. The passage has a very strong metaphorical appeal, it seems to me, but it must be pointed out that Salutati's interpretation is a very

23) *Inferno* VII, ll. 67-96. I quote from C.S. Singleton's edition, vol. I, London 1971, pp. 72-74. The lines 73-96 were translated into latin in hexameters by Salutati in tract. III, cap. 11 (V, f. 64v), later printed in L. Mehus, *Ambrosii Traversarii.... Latinae Epistolae*, Tom. I, Florence 1759, p. 309.

realistic one. Basing his arguments primarily on St. Augustine (who speaks about fortuitous causes as hidden causes and attributes them to "uel Dei ueri uel quorumlibet spirituum uoluntati"<sup>24</sup>, Salutati accepts Dante's idea of fortune as an angelic intelligence, although he in one case seems to have some doubts and admits that Dante may be speaking "more poetico"<sup>25</sup> - which is, by the way, Boccaccio's solution<sup>26</sup>. In any case, the idea of fortune as an instrument of Divine Will and Justice is fully accepted by Salutati. I have allowed myself to call the chapters on Dante's fortune 'apologetic'; I shall explain this a bit more by showing that Salutati's work on fate and fortune was meant to some extent as an introduction to the many problems that Dante's concept of fortune had aroused.

What prompted Salutati to write his work on fate and fortune? There seem to have been several reasons. From his letters we know that Salutati was deeply involved in some discussions about fleeing from the plague in Florence, in which he took the firm stand that it would be futile - and immoral as well - to try to flee from such evils; for, if God had decided that a man must die, he would die wherever he was in this world<sup>27</sup>. These discussions took place in 1383 (and later), and seem to have been important forerunners to Salutati's work. Salutati himself says in the preface to the work that he had been asked by many people to take up the task of explaining what fate and fortune were. Furthermore he tells us that Abbot Felix (to whom the work is dedicated) had asked him about these things as well<sup>28</sup>, but since we know that the preface and the fifth treatise, in which we hear about Abbot Felix, are later "additions", that is, from a

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24) *De civ. Dei* V, 9.

25) Tract. III, cap. 11 (V, f. 65r).

26) *Comento alla "Divina Commedia"*, ed. D. Guerri, vol. II, Bari 1918 (=Scrittori d'Italia, 85), p. 215: "E, in questa parte, l'autore, quanto più può, secondo il costume poetico parla, li quali spesse volte fanno le cose insensate, non altrimenti che le sensate, parlare e adoperare, ed alle cose spirituali danno forma corporale, e, che è ancora più, alle passioni nostre appropriano deità, e danno forma come se veramente cosa umana e corporea fossero".

27) Thus, in a letter to Domenico di Bandino, Salutati writes about his sons: "ipsi tamen, preter Philippum, Stignani sunt et valetudine prospera per Dei gratiam potiuntur, quando et ubi Deus decrevit infallibiliter morituri. nec valent quoniam absunt, sed quoniam sic vult divina bonitas"; Novati, *Epistolario*, vol. III, p. 397. Cf. also Rüegg, *op. cit.* p. 146.

28) Prohemium (V, f. 2v).

period after the treatises on fate and fortune had been composed, it seems unlikely that Abbot Felix should have had any important role in the original conception. - Another factor may have been Salutati's wish to 'save the ancients'; fate and fortune were extremely popular subjects in ancient writings, and to take a thoroughly orthodox stand, that is, to deny the reality of fate and fortune and not use the words, would mean to sacrifice quite a lot of ancient literature, not only philosophy but also poetry; for example, and not the least important, Vergil, who was, after Dante, the poet held in the highest esteem by Salutati. So, instead of leaving the ancients behind, Salutati applied an *interpretatio christiana* to ancient fate and fortune.

But I consider of far greater importance for the genesis of *De fato et fortuna* the discussion of Dante in the XIVth Century<sup>29</sup>. Salutati never thought of himself as a great theologian, let alone philosopher, and although he is able to argue in proper syllogisms, it would be incorrect to praise him for his skills in philosophy. But where Dante is concerned, things are different. Salutati had a lifelong passion for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the problems he found in the poem had a deeper and much more direct appeal to Salutati than the problems he was able to find, say, in the great scholastics. Dante had spoken about fortune in the VIIth canto of *Inferno*, significantly, through the mouth of Vergil. This famous passage puzzled most Dante-commentators in the XIVth Century, and brought to the surface all kinds of reactions, from direct opposition to full appreciation of Dante's genius.

Pietro Alighieri, Dante's son, wrote a commentary on the *Divine Comedy* about 1340<sup>30</sup>. It is outstanding, not least for its philosophical material, as well as for its rather systematic treatment of Dante's poem. In Pietro's commentary the VIIth canto of *Inferno* has been divided into three parts, the second of which deals with fortune. In a preliminary remark Pietro admits that questions about fortune are very difficult, for as he writes,

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29) For further references, see B. Basile, art. 'Commedia', § 10: 'La critica dantesca', in: *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, vol. II, Rome 1970, pp. 100-113; and *Dante nel pensiero e nella esegesi dei secoli XIV e XV. Atti del Convegno di Studi realizzato dal Comune di Melfi....27 Settembre - 2 Ottobre 1970*, Florence 1975.

30) Petri Allegherii *Super Dantis ipsius genitoris comoediam commentarium*, ed. V. Nannucci, Florence 1845.



"talī materia est ut, una dubitatione succisa, aliae innumerabiles, velut hydrae capita, succrescant"<sup>31</sup>. Before he goes on to the actual exegetical treatment of the passage, he has a general introduction to the problems of fortune. He writes: "Quare advertas circa hunc subtilem passum ad quattuor. Nam prius est considerare ipsam divinam providentiam.... Secundum est considerare fatum.... Et intentio manifestantium fatum fuit significare id quod futuris necessitatem imponit. Et hoc quia nesciebant solvere qualiter liberum arbitrium cum divina providentia posset stare, eo quod videtur necessitatem rebus imponere; sed libertas arbitrii et providentia taliter sunt quod negari non possunt. Tertio est considerare fortunam.... Quarto est considerare casum qui differt a fortuna. Nam fortuna tantum est in agentibus secundum propositum...."<sup>32</sup>. This is, as will be remembered, exactly the same order of treatment as that found in Salutati's work. Pietro gives the brief definitions of these four concepts, and outlines the main connections and interrelations between them. In so doing he strictly follows Boethius, whom he believes is the source for Dante's passage on fortune. Thus he evades the question about Dante's idea of fortune as an angelic intelligence completely, and instead speaks about fortune as an abstract concept, defining fortune as "rerum temporalium conditio secundum divinam dispositionem procedens"<sup>33</sup>.

It is interesting that already in Pietro's commentary we find an indication of what were considered the essential problems of the fortuna-passage in the early Dante tradition. Pietro's division of the problems of fortune into divine providence, fate, fortune and chance was admittedly caused by the many doubts about fortune, so that he felt it necessary to deal with the problem in its whole context. Another point that must have caused much debate in the early Dante tradition is Dante's line "necessità la fa esser veloce". Pietro writes: "multi mirantur de hoc verbo, scilicet *necessitate*, et non intelligentes calumniant textum"<sup>34</sup>. Pietro himself does not go into deeper discussion of the verse, but merely states: "Fatum, seu Fortuna, quadam necessitate rotatur et volvitur, ut sol et alii planetæ in suo cursu, nostro arbitrio salvo manente, si volumus"<sup>35</sup>. It is

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31) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

32) *Ibid.*, pp. 100-102.

33) *Ibid.*, p. 102.

34) *Ibid.*, p. 105.

35) *Ibid.*

characteristic for Pietro that he does not always distinguish sharply between fate and fortune, but that may very well be due to Dante himself, whose description of fortune certainly bears much similarity to fate. Pietro ends his treatment of fortune in Dante with a repetition of the role of free will in connection with fortune. He uses the image of Fortune's Wheel: those people who adhere to terrestrial goods are placed on the rim of the wheel; those who adhere to God, but still remain attached to the terrestrial, are placed at the spokes; finally, the religious and spiritual who reject the terrestrial are placed in the hub of the wheel<sup>36</sup>; Pietro concludes: "et hoc est quod dicit quod necessitas facit eam velocem super talibus rebus terrenis; subaudi, non super nostris voluntatibus et arbitrio"<sup>37</sup>. Thus, in spite of its brevity, Pietro's commentary touches upon the main theological, philosophical and moral issues involved in Dante's treatment of fortune, reflecting his own interest in the passage, but also in part reflecting the interest of early Dantescan criticism<sup>38</sup>.

Benvenuto da Imola, Salutati's friend and correspondent, wrote another commentary on Dante's great poem in ca. 1380<sup>39</sup>. From one of Salutati's letters we know that he read (at least part of) it as early as 1383, and with great respect for his friend's work<sup>40</sup>. Benvenuto has a long discussion of the fortuna-passage, and like Pietro he tries to interpret it in a broader framework. He obviously has some problems with the passage; twice in the first few lines he emphasizes the incidental character of

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36) *Ibid.*, p. 106.

37) *Ibid.*, p. 107.

38) Nannucci based his edition of Pietro's commentary on a XVth Century ms. in the Bibl. Riccardiana in Florence. He also knew three other florentine mss., plus two in the Vatican. His edition cannot be considered a standard edition; for there are many faults and misunderstandings in it. We now know of more mss., and, even more important, we know that the Nannucci-edition only represents one version out of at least three from Pietro's own hand. There are drastic differences between these versions, as can also be seen in the chapters on fortune. I believe that I can use the other two versions to detect further steps in the discussion of fortune and fate in the XIVth Century - they are both later than the 1340-version, one of them as late as 1358. None of the two "new" versions has been published yet; they exist in two good mss., one in Florence (Bibl. Laurenziana, Ashburnh. 841), another in the Vatican Library (Ottob. Lat. 2867).

39) Benevenuti de Rambaldis de Imola *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, ed. J.P. Lacaita, vols. I-V, Florence 1887.

40) Novati, *Epistolario*, vol. II. pp. 76-80.

the passage in its context; and in the interpretation he consistently speaks about the *influentia coelorum* instead of fortune, so that the fortuitous is an effect of the influence of the heavens, not of fortune. Thus he writes: "et breviter vult dicere quod sicut Deus omnia coelestia regit et gubernat per angelos moventes, ita per influentiam coelorum regit et gubernat ista temporalia -"<sup>41</sup>. On Dante's line "ordinò general ministra e duce" - where Dante is clearly speaking about fortune - Benvenuto's comment is: "et ista est generalis influentia coeli, quia omnes coeli operantur circa ista fortuita dando, auferendo, mutando"<sup>42</sup>. Benvenuto is quite consistent in this interpretation; he even goes as far as to openly admit that human ignorance brought the name of fortune into existence - a neat reference to Lactantius and Cicero<sup>43</sup>. And a bit further on he asks the reader to be aware of the fact "quod non solum theologi christiani, sed et multi philosophi et poetae pagani negant fortunam"<sup>44</sup>. - Benvenuto is aware of the problematical aspects of Dante's conception of fortune; even if it were defined as the *influentia coelorum*, there would still be the problem of free will: if everything in the sublunar world is governed by the influence of the heavens, there seems to be no space for free human actions. Benvenuto refers to a discussion about this, but solves the problem himself by limiting the power of "fortune" (i. e. the influence of the heavens) to the temporal goods, whereas free will has nothing to do with those, basically<sup>45</sup>.

Again, in Benvenuto's commentary Dante's line "necessità la fa esser veloce" occurs as being troublesome, and a subject of much Dantescan discussion. Benvenuto writes: "Et hic nota lector quod circa literam istam est toto animo insistendum, quia istud dictum non videtur bene sanum; ideo multi multa dixerunt, alii pro autore, alii contra autorem, sicut Cechus de Esculo qui satis improvide damnat dictum autoris-"<sup>46</sup>. Benvenuto is referring to the first chapter of the second book of Cecco d'Ascoli's

41) Benvenuto da Imola, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 259sq.

42) *Ibid.*, p. 260.

43) *Ibid.*, p. 262: "Sic ergo patet quod ignorantia humana imposuit istud nomen fortuna, nam unum et idem appellatur fortuitum ab uno, quod non appellatur fortuitum ab alio." Cf. Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* III, 29, 18, who quotes Cicero, *Acad. post.*, I, 7, 29.

44) *Ibid.*, p. 262.

45) *Ibid.*, p. 263.

46) *Ibid.*, p. 264.

*L'Acerba*, a work that is largely written against (and as a counterpart to) Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Cecco's poem is by no means a very important work, but still, quite a lot of Dante-scholars of the XIVth Century concern themselves with Cecco's critique. The debate about fortune was concerned with Dante's introduction of necessity into the realm of fortune. Cecco writes, *i.a.*:

"In ciò peccasti florentin poeta,  
Ponendo che li ben de la fortuna  
Necessitati sono con lor meta.  
Non è fortuna che rason non venca"<sup>47</sup>.

Thus Cecco interprets Dante's use of necessity as being internally connected to fortune, whereas Benvenuto sees it as a logical expression: he believes that Dante is speaking about a "necessitas consequentiae" in the Boethian sense - if fortune exists, it must necessarily be mutable and swift<sup>48</sup>.

Benvenuto sums up his interpretation of Dante's line about fortune enjoying beatitude by referring to fortune as an *influentia coelorum*. To the line "con l'altre prime creature lieta", he writes: "idest cum intelligentiis, quia Angeli fuerunt creati simul cum coelis, quae habent movere et gubernare, et ita influentia coeli quae habet movere omnia inferiora: ergo fortuna fuit simul creata cum coelis et motoribus coelorum"<sup>49</sup>. - Again a soft interpretation of Dantescan fortune as a created intelligence, or angel, which Dante's own use of words in the passage so strongly suggests; thus Benvenuto evades the realism of Dante's conception.

When seen as part of the Dante tradition in the *trecento*, Salutati's *De fato et fortuna* makes somewhat more sense. Salutati had a deep interest in both theology and philosophy; but even more, he had a profound and lifelong admiration for Dante and for poetry. I am not trying to reduce his *De fato et fortuna* to a commentary on a controversial passage in *Inferno*, but I feel sure that this work owes a great deal to Dante and the tradition which had its origin in his poem. This tradition created the pattern and background of Salutati's work, because it had left some important questions about fate and fortune, man's free will and God's providence, open and unanswered. Of course, many other elements have

47) *L'Acerba*, lib. II, cap. 1, vv. 19-22, ed.P. Rosario, Lanciano 1926, p. 53.

48) Benvenuto da Imola, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 264.

49) *Ibid.*, p. 266.

their share in the genesis of a work of this kind. But Dante was in many respects a much more precise starting-point for a philosophical and theological debate than, say, Petrarch, since he (though not always adhering to orthodoxy) was quite clear in thought and expression. I think, by the way, that in general an approach to Renaissance philosophy which takes Dante more - and Petrarch less - into consideration would be quite fruitful.