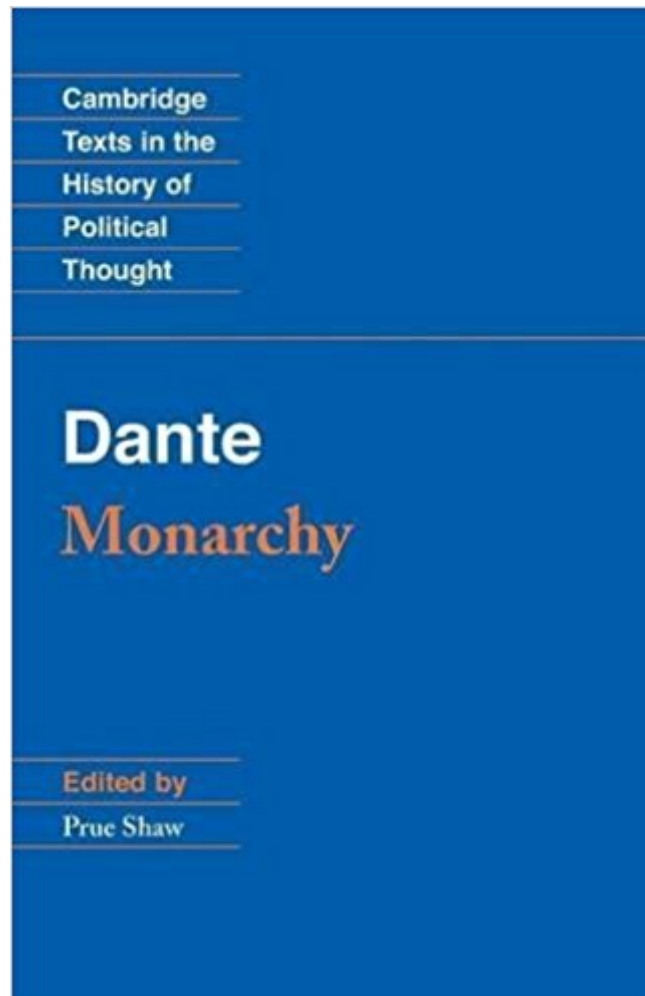




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Dante: Monarchy (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought)



Synopsis

This is the first new translation for forty years of a fascinating work of political theory, until now only available in academic libraries. Dante's *Monarchy* addresses the fundamental question of what form of political organization best suits human nature; it embodies a political vision of startling originality and power, and illuminates the intellectual interests and achievements of one of the world's great poets. Prue Shaw's translation is accompanied by a full introduction and notes, which provide a complete guide to the text, and places *Monarchy* in the context of Dante's life and work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'All English-speaking students of Dante will be immensely grateful to Prue Shaw for her splendid edition and translation of Dante's Latin treatise on world government. This is by far the best English translation of the *Monarchia* ...' *Italian Studies*

Only available in academic libraries until now, this work embodies a political vision of startling originality and power. Illuminating the intellectual interests and achievements of one of the world's great poets, the translation is accompanied by a full introduction and notes.

Prue Shaw's translation and commentary of Dante's '*Monarchy*' combines a masterful grasp of her subject with an ability to convey her erudition clearly.

Great price!

This book argued against the Vatican having secular wealth, which contributed to Dante's notoriety. It remains an interesting and relevant work of Political Philosophy because its consideration of the Roman Catholic order of that era resembles our need for global (monolithic?) order to end global warming, nuclear threats and media confusion.

This short but mind-numbing book deals with Church and State in Italy, political science in Italy's Medieval period, Italian politics and government in the 13th and 14th century, but chiefly deals with theoretical arguments of where the authority of the Church comes from. I originally read this in an older translation as *On World Government*, translated by Herbert W. Schneider (Library of Liberal Arts Press). This entirely new translation by Prue Shaw is far more complete and has the academic structure (extensive footnotes, lengthy introduction, citations of original sources given in separate tables, lengthy index, bibliographical references throughout text). Dante wanted an Emperor separate and independent of the Pope, and he spends many paragraphs in Book 3 of his treatise refuting the papal apologists. Dante was attempting to argue logically for an ordered political state that would sweep away the corruption, self-interest, avarice, and worldliness, that society had suffered in his time. He wanted to separate the temporal from the spiritual roles of the Church. He did want a Holy Roman Emperor who would be an absolute monarch with great power, but neutral from corruption, temptation, and would have focus. Dante wanted perfect justice. However what he wanted was not then, nor ever was, achievable. Power in itself is corrupting. The book was banned soon after his death, because he refuted the papal apologists in great detail over several chapters in Book 3. The introduction by Prue Shaw goes into great detail into each section of the treatise. Shaw calls him a genius. I call him insane. Others have called hopelessly out of touch, hopelessly backward, hopelessly unrealistic. His historical determinism -- that all that happened in history is God's immortal plan is suspect and delusional. For that denies free will. I can readily imagine Thomas Paine burning this book, for it is anti-democratic in every way. I object especially to Book 2, where he tries to justify the ancient Roman Empire as foreordained by God, even though it was pagan, it did not rule the whole world (as Dante incorrectly asserts many times), and his account seems to deliberately contradict the history of Rome as told by St. Augustine in his *City of God*--which Dante did read. Also he quotes Aristotle a great deal, but Shaw suspect he never read Aristotle's *Politics*, only a summary written by someone else. Dante spends most of the treatise

using Aristotle's method of logical proof, the syllogism, which makes for painful reading. The Schneider translation had been assigned to a class on the history of Renaissance Florence, though it is clearly Medieval in outlook and time time written. On the whole, the book is a fantasy written to be perfectly logical. It is anti-democratic, based on fictitious or forged earlier texts -- the Donation of Constantine (of which Dante complains about) was a forgery. It is based on Virgil's Aeneid -- a fantasy -- and much of The Holy Bible -- much of that is also not true either. The only people who would want to read this are scholars fascinated with Medieval literature and Church politics of the late Medieval Period. Not recommended for the general reader.

All law is from God. Just acts are judged by the criterion of conformance to the law of God. Re-stating Aquinas, Dante affirms: "The whole community of the universe is governed by Divine Reason." Law has absolutely no relation or participation of influence with our modern "EKWALITEE". Law is inseparably interconnected with ORDER. Dante clearly expounds law is anterior to human social and governmental existence. Sort of odd for a "reactionary totalitarian", yeah? The Emperor of the ideal state is the prince of "officials", and Dante teaches the Emperor must dispassionately enforce the natural law and its claims against iniquity. The Emperor constrains feeble human nature and feebler creatures to observe the law as "RIDER OF THE HUMAN WILL." Loyal citizens united in upholding and uplifting the commonwealth shall live in empyrean peace, but transgressors and traitors shall be punished - and postmortem punishment of grave breakers of the "LEX NATURALIS" of God culminates their own voluntary self-immolation. Mere human positivist customary law Dante pays scant regard to, as the lowest reasonably justifiable species of ordinate legality; yet it has its limited place, and as a conservative of aristocratic counter-revolution, Dante advises legal amendments and juridical reformulations of ancient ways. No inorganic disharmonious and unaccustomed innovation is rationally or practically desirable. Dante thus obviously perceived instability of the polity following from extreme, numerous and ill-advised changes in the juridical sphere. The essence of the state, for Dante, is not merely territorial and administrative but the unifying and perfecting of the divisions of totality of mankind into the transcendental oneness. (I shall continue shortly...)

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