When we try to compare Dante's *Commedia* and medieval preaching we must be really careful in defining the object we wish to compare with Dante's poetry and, as regards to this, in titling these reflections, I should probably have said, instead of “Preaching and Dante”, “Dante and late-medieval preaching”, especially considering that this is a seminar series devoted to the topic “Mendicant Orders and Literature” in medieval Italy. In fact, the practice of preaching changed quite a lot just with the rise, in the 13th century, of the Mendicant Orders, that is of religious Orders that assumed the task of educating the city masses by delivering sermons as a key point of their *regulae*. Such a centrality accorded to preaching entailed a complete renewal of the techniques adopted to write and deliver sermons and demanded the foundation of an entirely new preaching technique: the so-called *sermo modernus*. While, before the 13th century, sermons were based upon the exegesis of the whole gospel of the day, since then sermons gained a more complex structure greatly influenced by the rise of what we can call the subdividing mentality of the scholasticism. This didn't mean that the patristic way of composing sermons extinguished during the late Middle Ages (the Augustinians continued through all the 13th and 14th century to deliver sermon entirely based upon the passage from the gospel read during the mass), but that the most part of the

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1 This is the paper I have read on the 26th of October 2012 as it was. Since the other seminars of the series on 'Mendicant Orders and Literature in Italy (13th-14th Centuries)' are available as audio/visual recordings, and since this is intended to be a simple "written record", rather than a published paper, I decided neither to change anything nor to add any note. Where not otherwise stated, all translations from Latin are mine. Those from the *Commedia* are from Robin Kirkpatrick's translation (London, Penguin, 2006-07).
mendicant sermons, especially the ones delivered by Franciscans and Dominicans, have quite a different structure from the patristic sermon.

We can say that the *sermo modernus* works as a syllogistic machine used to take out of a very short biblical quotation its inner religious truth and, by using a metaphor provided by the mendicant themselves, that it was structured as a tree. The root was the *thema* (one or a few versets taken from the day's liturgy), which was divided and analyzed both by comparing its meaning to similar biblical passages and by explaining the meaning of each of its world (*divisio* and *distinctio*: the branches of the tree). By doing this the preacher obtained a very arid sermon, entirely devoted to the syllogistic analysis of the *thema*. In order to make this scholastic structure easily understandable also by non learned audience, they used to add to this kind of exegesis also some narrative elements, especially examples (*exempla*) and similies (*similitudines*) that can both better explain an hard theological concept and help the audience to memorize the exegesis of the *thema* and the moral instruction provided by the preacher. Due to its complex rhetorical structure, the rise of this new way of composing sermons entailed the production not only of manuals intended to instruct the preacher on how to write a sermon (*artes praedicandi*) and of collections of sermons composed just to give the preacher a concrete example of how should a sermon properly composed look like (the so-called “model sermons”), but also of a huge amount of instruments intended to provide the preacher a valid aid in composing his sermons, such as collection of biblical concordances or encyclopedias (*summae*) of *exempla* and *similitudines* already divided according to their usefulness in dealing with some of the major topics that should be discussed during preaching (vices and virtues, confession, fast and so on).

All together this oceanic mass of texts helps us to define the main features of the mendicant's omiletical culture, that, despite of many existing differences between each religious Order, can be considered hugely common both to the Franciscan and the Dominicans. Therefore, in considering the relationships between Dante's *Commedia* and late-medieval preaching we should not forget to take into account, together with the sermons actually delivered, also this huge omiletical litterature. Moreover, we should bear in mind that it can be quite useless to distinguish between a Franciscan and a Dominican way of preaching, since they both used to compose sermons with the same structure and, in doing so, to use almost the same aids.
If we now briefly turn to some kind of bibliographical survey, we have to admit that, although a systematic study on Dante and late-medieval preaching is still missing, anyway there's a small but significant scholarship that can offer a valid point of departure to anyone interested in developing such a strand. However, although it is possible to collect a quite huge amount of material from these scholarly tradition, what seems to still be missing is, together with an enlargement of the filings, a concrete reflection on the role of such a relationship within the Commedia as a whole. I mean: are these interconnection between Dante's poetical rhetoric and late-medieval preacher's omenetical one accidental and rare cases or is it possible to gain them a major role within the poetical project carried on by Dante in writing the Commedia?

Yet, it seems possible to make some observations as regards this point. Let's start from the passage from the Commedia that better defines one of the major purposes that Dante wants to achieve by writing this poem. In the heaven of Mars Cacciaguida prophetizes to Dante his exile and, since the latter has been told that during the exile he would be helped by some powerful people, he asks Cacciagiuda whether it is convenient to disclose, once he'll be back in the world, all the bad informations about them he acquired during his otherworldly journey. Cacciaguida answers not only telling Dante that is God himself that wish that he reveals his vision, but also defining the high moral aims of this revelation:

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only those whose fame is widely known,  
since those who hear your speak will never pause  
or give belief to any instances  
whose family roots are hidden or unknown,  
nor demonstrations that remain obscure».

(Paradiso, XVII, 124-42)

Dante uses here an expression («esempio»-«instance» in line 140) that clearly refers to a rhetorical strategy that, as we have seen, is particularly important also for the Mendicant's omiletical style (the exemplum). Moreover, here he seems to stress a specific function of the exemplum which is the same stressed by the rhetorical theories of preaching provided by the Mendicants: its capacity to move the listener's soul through a process of moral education or, to use Dante's word, its capacity to act a rhetorical feature perfectly suitable for giving his audience a, of course moral, «vital nodrimento»-«life-giving nutriment». In fact, while for the ancient and medieval rhetoric the exemplum could be used just to assure the discourse a higher stylistic tone, to make a sentence more clear, to make it more plausible (as we read in the Rhetorica ad Erennium composed in the 1st century a.C), or just to broaden the boundaries of the discourse (as states a late-medieval theorist of rhetoric: Goffreoy de Vinsauf), the preacher's exemplum seems more related to the theory and practice of it as it appears in the Dialogue by Gregory the Great, where he states that «sunt nonnulli quos ad amorem patriae caelestis plus exempla quam praeedicamenta succedunt»-«There are men who are more inspired in loving their heavenly home by exempla than by discourses» (prologus, 9. My translation).

Both for Dante and for late-medieval preachers the exemplum has to be considered as a main rhetorical instrument of a discourse devoted to provide the listener a moral help to gain the otherworldly salvation. This similarity in the use of exemplum relies, we can argue, in the fact that both Dante and Mendicant preachers intended their work as made, to use an expression used by Dante himself in another canto, «in pro del mondo che mal vive»-«to aid the world that lives all wrong» (Purg. XXXII, 103). This is, even before the recognition of the fact that both Dante and late-medieval preachers used the same rhetorical devices (the exemplum, precisely), a crucial point, because once we recognize that in writing the Commedia Dante's willingness was pretty much the same of a late-medieval preacher's one,
the presence in the poem of omiletical images, styles, themes and so on can't no longer be considered occasional or accidental, but has to be considered as the most natural consequence of such a substantial agreement of aims.

As regards this point, we shall bear in mind that, in trying to educate his readers by representing the otherworldly condition of the sinners and of the virtuous («Però ti son mostrate in queste rote, / nel monte e ne la valle dolorosa / […] l'anime»—«For you've been shown in these circling wheels, / among the mountain, in the sorrowing vale, / […] those souls», Par. XVII, 136-38), Dante seems to be quite close to the definition of the assignment given to the preachers by Francis from Assisi in the Regula bullata (1223), where he states that they are supposed to deliver their sermons «ad utilitatem et aedificationem populi, annuntiando eis vitia et virtutes, poenam et gloriam»—«to educate and edify the masses, telling them about vices and virtues and about the punishment and the glory» (chapter 9). Here we can find almost the same achievement that Dante in the above mentioned dialogue with Cacciaguida states he is willing to raise in writing the Commedia. That's why I strongly believe that this passage from the franciscan rule rises wide and complex question to anyone interested in the exegesis of Dante's poem, about which I will devote more than an half of the book I am currently writing about Dante and late-medieval preaching. Therefore, today I will focus just on one of these suggestion, that is to one of the subjects recomended to the preachers in Francis' rule: the nuntatio vitiis to use his wold or, to use Dante's one, the act of striking sinners with words («Questo tuo grido farà come vento, / che le più alte cime più percuote»—«The words you shout will be like blasts of wind / that strikes the very summit of the trees», Par. XVII, 133-34).

First of all, we have to say that it is possibile to reconstruct beyond Francis' statment a strong and long tradition, that renew its importance in the years around the Fourth Council of the Lateran, when, together with the institutionalization of the Mendicant Orders, is defined also the sense and the perspectives of their new pastoral. In fact, theologician such as Peter the Chantre, Alain de Lille or Thomas of Chobham and the same popes Honorius and Innocentius the third agreed to develop from some biblical passages (the beginning of Jeremiah's book, where it's said that God had send him «ut evellas et destruas et disperdas et dissipes et aedifices et plantes»—«to dig up and pull down, to destroy and demolish, to build and plant», 1, 9-10, or the passage from the first letters by saint Paul to the Corinthians where
he states that «qui prophetat loquitur ad aedificationem et exhortationem et consolationem»—«Those who prophesy speak to people, building them up, and giving them encouragement and comfort», 14, 1-4), the idea that one of the main aims of preaching should be detected in extirpating the vices by delivering sermons about them, that is to preach mainly «de extirpatione vitiorum» as it's said in the Summa de arte praedicatoria written by Thomas of Chobham.

It is not a case, then, that, regardin his activity as a preacher, one of the virtues detected by the early biographers of Francis of Assisi was precisely his capacity to strike the vices: «Nesciebat aliquorum culpas palpare sed pungere, nec vitiam fovere peccantium sed aspera increpatione percutere»—«incapable of showing favor to the lives of sinners, he could smite them with sharp reproof» (Thomas of Celano, Vita Beati Francisci, XV). I don't think it is a case that here Tommaso uses the same word used by Dante in referring to the moral effects of his poem («pertuote»—«percutere»), especially if we consider that this is the same word used, again by Dante, to define saint Dominic as a preacher in Paradiso XII: «si mosse / quasi torrente ch’alta vena preme; /e ne li sterpi eretici perecosse / l’impeto suo»—«he moved […] / like some fierce torrent surging down a hill. / and at the thicket of the heretics / he struck with all his impetus» (vv. 97-102). Then, to come full circle, we have to notice that in the lexicon of the Commedia saint Dominic's preaching and Dante's poetry are described in the same terms: a natural force (a river or the wind) meant to strike a vegetable element (the top of the threes or the thicket) in order to correct it (or, out of metaphor, him) by reprehending his behaviour.

At this point, the question is: is this unanimity of purposes in Dante's poem and in late-medieval preaching mirrored in an uniformity of rhetorical strategies used to achieve them? Today we'll try to answer this question focusing on the handling of one specific vice both in the Commedia and in the Mendicant's omiletical culture: the pride. We will focus, then, on the 10th, 11th and 12th canto of the Purgatorio.

It is well known that, in the central section of the Purgatorio, Dante introduces and concludes every group of cantos devoted to the same sin with a sequence of exempla taken both from the ancient and biblical mythology and history referring, respectively, to the sin punished there and to the opposite virtue. As regard pride the exempla of the vice are, in Purgatorio 12th, Lucifer, Briareos, the giants, Nimrod, Niobe, Saul, Arachne, Rehobam,
Eriphyle, Sennacherib, Thamyris, Holofernes, and the city of Troy; the *exempla* of the opposite virtue (humility) are, in *Purgatorio* 10th, Mary, Oza, David and Trajan. First of all we have to notice non only that it was typical of the omiletical culture of the Mendicants to deal, in delivering a sermon about a certain vice, with the opposite virtue, but also that the *exempla* here mentioned by Dante are precisely the one widely recommended in the *summae exemplorum* to preachers in charge of preaching about pride. In fact, if we turn to the chapters about pride and humility in the *Summa de vitis et virtutibus* written in the 13th century by the dominican Guillaume Perrault, we can find, among many other, not just the reference to the same biblical and classical personages mentioned in the *Commedia*, but also a specific focus on the same point of their life that Dante assumes in the poem to clarify what is pride and what is humility. For instance, both Dante and Perrault assume Mary as an immage of humility because of her role in the Incarnation, they both regard David as a suitable *exemplum* of humility because of his dance in front of the Ark of the Covenant, they both use the building of the Tower of Babel to inlustrate the vice of pride, and so forth.

Moreover, we need to add to this double series of *exempla*, according to the above mentioned Cacciaguida's statement in *Paradiso* 17th, also the sinner's souls encoutered in *Purgatorio* 11th. In this regard, we can be sure that the intention of the prooud's souls mean to present themselfs as *exempla* of pride by considering the way they introduce themselfs to Dante. For instance, Omberto di Santafiora adresses Dante clearly declaring his sin and establishing a relationship between it and his otherwordly punishment: «Io sono Omberto; e non pur a me danno / superbia fa, ché tutti miei consorti / ha ella tratti seco nel malanno. // E qui convien ch'io questo peso porti / per lei, tanto che a Dio si sodisfaccia, / poi ch'io nol fe' tra' vivi, qui tra' morti»-«I am Omberto, and my arrogance / did harm to me, but not to me alone, / for al my peers were victims of that bane. // Because of this, till God is satisfied, / I need must bear this weight among the dead / since I did not while still with those who live» (*Purg.* XI, 67-72). Also Oderisi da Gubbio does something similar in stating, while he is speaking about his sin, that «di tal superbia qui si paga il fio»-«For arrogance like this one pays a fee» (v. 88). It is precisely this attitude to tighten up a connection between their moral behaviour in life and their condition in the otherworld that makes their presentations an *exemplum* of how the pride can affect humans. We can then recognize that Cacciaguida's statment is correct in saying that the souls encoutered during Dante's journey acts like *exempla* of vices and virtues or, more precisely, that they carry out the same function carried
out by the «tombe terragne»-«earthly graves» mentioned in Purgatorio 12\textsuperscript{th}, line 16-18:
«Come, perché di lor memoria sia, / sopra i sepolti le tombe terrangne / portan segnato quel ch'elli eran pria [...]-«Compare: to serve as some memorial / for those entombed beneath, our earthly graves / bear signs of what they had been when alive [...]]». While we wait for Professor Lina Bolzoni's talk to hear more about the problem of memory in the Commedia, that raise quite clearly from these verses, I will just point out that the simile of the «tombe terragne» is meant to introduce the exempla of pride and that this assures further on about the fact that in Dante's intentions the pride's souls and the exempla of pride and humility are intended to carry out the same function.

Hence, we have three series of exempla, each for every canto devoted to the vice of pride. However, this extensive use of such a rhetorical device doesn't necessarily mean that, in doing so, Dante intended to introduce within the Commedia an omiletical style, even if, as we have said, the exemples he adduces are the same recommended to preachers or if the three series of exempla gain together both examples taken from the ancient culture (biblical and classic: the exempla of pride and humility) and from the contemporary (to Dante, of course) history (such as the proud's souls: Omberto di Santafiora, Oderisi da Gubbio e Provenzan Salvani), as it was usual for mendicant preachers.

In my opinion, what really makes the use of exempla in these cantos close to the preachers' one is the rhetorical context in which the are presented. In fact, it is noteworthy that each series of exempla is followed by almost the same kind of discourse, a reprehension of the vice they are intended to represent. So, the first sequence, the exempla of humility in Purgatorio X, is followed immediately by the presentation of the group of sinners or, according to what we have said above, a second sequence of exempla. In introducing the reader this group of souls, Dante addresses him with both an advice on how to react to their sight and a tirade against the vice they have committed:

\begin{tabular}{|p{0.4\textwidth}|p{0.4\textwidth}|}
\hline
Non vo’ però, lettor, che tu ti smaghi
di buon proponimento per udire
come Dio vuol che ’l debito si paghi.

Non attendere la forma del martire:
pensa la successione, pensa ch’al peggio
oltre la gran sentenza non può ire.
\hline
Yet, reader, I’d not have your minds bewitched,
hearing how God would have the debt repaid,
or drawn away from your best purposes.

Don’t dwell upon the form their sufferings take.
think of what follows, and that, come the worst,
it can’t go on beyond the Judgment Day.
\hline
\end{tabular}
Firstly, even before having actually described their otherworldly condition, here Dante tells his reader to not «have their minds bewitched, / hearing how God would have the debt repaird» (vv. 106-07) and, therefore, to «think of what follows, and that, come the worst, / it can't go beyond the judgement Day» (vv. 110-11), that is a concrete instruction on how to properly approach the exempla in order to take out of them the best moral instruction they can give or, to use Dante's own word, to «Don't dwell upon the form their sufferings take» (v. 109) and to don't «drawn away from their best purposes» (v. 108). Secondly, Dante adresses the reader a tirade against pride and prouds. Here he uses an invocation to denigrate the prouds (vv. 121-23), a rhetorical question adressed to them asking why they don't recognize that men are nothing compared with their hevenly destiny (124-26) and another one to ironically ask them what is that makes them so proud (vv. 127-29). In a similar way, after the description of the exempla of pride in Purgatorio XII, Dante adresses again the prouds with an exclamation intended to denigrate their attitude to not consider their smalness and not realize that, behaving like this, they are doing something that is morlly wrong (vv. 70-72):
Dante, hence, uses the *exempla* not as an isolated rhetorical device, but in tight connection with other rhetorical figures (such as *exclamationes*, rhetorical questions, apostrophes and so on), intended to deprecate the vice the *exempla* themselfs represent in order to help the reader to correctly understand their significance, to avoid to commit that vice and to practice the opposite virtue.

In doing so, Dante is doing something very similar to what was recomended to preachers in charge of preaching about pride and humility. In fact, if we turn to the chapter *de humilitate* of Perrault's *Summa* we don't find just a collection of *exempla*, but as well a collection of subjects that can be used to inspire the men to be humble and some samples of sentences that can help the preacher in talking about these subjects. It is not a case, I think, that here we can easily find here both the topics dealt by Dante in the verses mentioned above and the rhetorical devices used in doing so. For instance, Perrault says that in speaking about pride a preacher should leverage on the *contemptus mundi et sui* (this is the sense of Dante's verses devoted to show the prouds they madness in believing they are big and important: «do you not recognize that you are worms / born to become angelic butterflies?», *Purg.* X, 124-25), on the consideration of their destiny in the otherworld (the proud's soul as *exempla* seem to work this way) in order to educate them on how to righteously behave (Dante say that the reader should not «drawn away from *his* best purposes») and to show he prouds how their believings are groudless (Dante says: «Why is that your thoughts float up so high? / You with your faults, are little more than grubs, / chrysalides (no more!) that lack full form», *Purg.* X, 128-30). Moreover, Perrault adds also a huge collection of biblical and patristic quotations related to such topics that can both be quoted by the preacher during his sermon or be useful for him as a stylistic model in composing it. What is significant is that their style is quite close to the one used by Dante in speaking about the pride: we have *exclamationes* («O perversitas, o abusio filorum Adam»-«O perversion o abuse made by Adam's sons»), sequences of rhetorical questions («quis igitur intumescit homo? O pellis morticina, quid tenderis?»-«why men are so proud? O dead skin, what are you looking for?»), apostrophes («O mira vanitas, o mira fatuitas cordis nostris»-«Look then to the vanity, to the emptiness of our hearts»), invitations to consider men's own condition within the creation («Considera opera Dei, quod nemo possit corrigere»-«Look at the creation that noone can correct» or, with the same dantean image of the men-worms, «Omnes homines de carne nascentes, quid sunt nisi vermes?»-«O men born in flesh what are you but worms?»), and so on.
If time hadn't already passed by, we should now consider that the same structure can be detected also in the discourse addressed to Dante by Oderisi da Gubbio in *Purgatorio* XI, where he presents some *exempla* of pride (himself, Cimabue and Guinizzelli) and refers to this vice leveraging on the same subjects (the transience of fame, men's insignificance, and so forth) and to the same rhetorical devices (*exclamatio*, rhetorical questions and so on). Anyway, we shall conclude noticing that it seems indisputable that also Dante, speaking in *Purgatorio* X and XII about pride and humility, seems not only to use the same arguments and rhetorica devices used by the soul of Oderisi, but also to reach the same achievement made by him with his discourse: to use the word used by Dante to answer to Oderisi, «Tuo vero dir m'incora / bona umiltà, e gran tumor m'appiani»—«Your words in truth give heart / to good humility, and puncture pride» (*Purg.* XI, 118-19), which is not too far from what we have said are preacher’s aims in delivering sermons about vices and virtues.