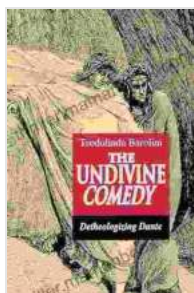


# The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante

Dante's *Divine Comedy* is one of the most famous and influential works of literature in the Western canon. It is a vast and complex poem that has been interpreted in many different ways over the centuries. Traditionally, the *Divine Comedy* has been read as a Christian allegory, in which Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise represents the soul's journey to God. However, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in reading the *Divine Comedy* as a secular text. This approach argues that the *Divine Comedy* is not simply a Christian allegory, but also a work of political philosophy, social criticism, and literary art.



## The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante

by Teodolinda Barolini

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

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Screen Reader : Supported

Print length : 373 pages



One of the most important proponents of this secular reading of the *Divine Comedy* is the Italian philosopher Umberto Eco. In his book *The Open Work*, Eco argues that the *Divine Comedy* is a "multivalent" text that can be interpreted in many different ways. Eco writes that the *Divine Comedy* is "a labyrinth of meanings" that can be endlessly explored and reinterpreted. He

argues that the poem's meaning is not fixed, but rather is constantly being created and recreated by its readers.

Eco's secular reading of the *Divine Comedy* has been influential in a number of recent studies of the poem. For example, in her book *Dante's Divine Comedy: A Secular Reading*, the American scholar Teodolinda Barolini argues that the *Divine Comedy* is a work of political philosophy that offers a critique of the corruption and violence of Dante's own time. Barolini writes that the *Divine Comedy* is "a poem about the dangers of power" and that it offers a warning against the dangers of tyranny and oppression.

Another important secular reading of the *Divine Comedy* is offered by the British scholar Peter Hainsworth. In his book *Dante's Comedy of Empire*, Hainsworth argues that the *Divine Comedy* is a work of social criticism that offers a critique of the social and economic conditions of Dante's own time. Hainsworth writes that the *Divine Comedy* is "a poem about the poor" and that it offers a powerful indictment of the poverty and inequality that existed in Dante's own society.

The secular reading of the *Divine Comedy* is a relatively new approach to the poem, but it has already gained a significant following among scholars and readers alike. This approach offers a new way of understanding the *Divine Comedy* and its relevance to our own time. By reading the *Divine Comedy* as a secular text, we can see it as a work that speaks to the human condition in all its complexity and diversity.

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