

THE FEDELI D'AMORE

WRITINGS OF THE UR GROUP



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BOOKS



Each notebook of the Ur Group collects, in an organic and concise form, what has emerged in the forum of the same name in relation to a specific topic. It therefore contains both quotations from the authors studied and comments. The notebooks are to be considered continuously updated, since the emergence of new material on the topic covered may make a new edition appropriate.



This Notebook is obviously not exhaustive of the immense subject matter relating to the Fedeli d'Amore. Through the examples provided, **we have sought above all to bring out the anagogical meaning of their writings**. This notebook does not include passages which, although they concern the Fedeli d'Amore, form an integral part of other notebooks: for example, that of our Ekatos, which demonstrates that Dante was aware of the falsity of the so-called 'Donation of Constantine' (see the notebook 'On the Papacy'). In the second edition, an analysis of the song 'Donne Ch' avete' has been added and some printing errors have been corrected. In the third edition, the dialogue on 'Maometto e Ali all'Inferno' has been expanded.

This notebook is therefore divided into the following sections:

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1) INTRODUCTION

by Ida La Regina

The term **Fedeli d'Amore** generally refers to the members of an initiatory brotherhood that existed in the 13th century in Italy, France (particularly in Provence) and Belgium. They worshipped the One Woman (or Lady), a symbolic figure similar to the Gnostic Pistis Sophia, of whom Dante's Beatrice is probably the best-known example. Symbolically akin to the Black Virgin Mary and Isis, who adorns many European cathedrals (such as the Black Madonna of Loreto or that of Czestochowa), she is described by Guido Cavalcanti as 'a young woman from Toulouse', a city that cannot fail to bring to mind connections with the Cathars and Albigensians.

From: 'Rime' by Guido Cavalcanti
XXIX - **A young woman from Toulouse**
(sonnet)

A young woman from Toulouse,
beautiful and kind, of honest
grace, is so upright and similar
in her sweet eyes, to my lady,

that she has made my soul desirous
within my heart, so that it strays from
him and goes to her; but she is so
fearful that she does not tell him
which woman it is.

She sees her in her sweet gaze, in
which Love rejoices because his
beloved is there;

then she returns, full of sighs, to her
heart, mortally wounded by a sharp
dart that this woman throws at her as
she leaves.

Another of the Fedeli d'Amore, Francesco da Barberino (who had the same teacher as Dante, namely Brunetto Latini), in his work "**Del Reggimento e de' Costumi delle Donne**" (On the Government and Customs of Women), describes her with these verses:

She is she who has as her companion the
Son of the Most High God and his Mother
with him: She is she who sits with many in
heaven, She is she who has few with her on
earth.

The initiatory value of the symbol of the Woman is confirmed by the fact that Beatrice, in the Divine Comedy, has the function of leading Dante to Paradise, while he is alive and not dead.

The Fedeli d'Amore expressed themselves in a **secret language**, the 'parlar cruz', designed not to be understood by others, the 'gente grossa'. Part of their name, 'Amor', conceals

probably the compound term "A-mor(s)" (= without death), meaning that their initiatory practice helps them not to die spiritually. Dante himself explicitly states that the true meaning of his words is hidden, sometimes more, sometimes less. For example, in Purgatory, VIII, 19-21, he says:

Sharpen your eyes here, reader, to see
the truth, for the veil is now so thin that it
is easy to pass through.

It is no coincidence that in a 15th-century Tuscan sonnet attributed to Boccaccio (e.g. by Francesco De Sanctis in Storia della Letteratura Italiana), Dante is compared to a '**dark Minerva**', whose works require 'temporal and spiritual reading'.

I am Dante Alighieri, dark Minerva of
intelligence and art, in whose genius
maternal elegance added to the sign,
which is considered a great miracle of
nature.

My lofty imagination, ready and sure,
passed through the Tartarus and then
the heavenly kingdom, and I made my
noble volume worthy
of temporal and spiritual reading.

Glorious Florence was my mother,
or rather my stepmother to me, her
pitiful son, through the fault of
wicked and thieving tongues.

Ravenna was the home of my exile; and she
has the body, and the soul the supreme Father,
where envy does not overcome counsel.



2) Edited by P. Negri

TWO EARLIER ESSAYS BY ARTURO REGHINI

Before the essay "Il Linguaggio Segreto dei Fedeli d'Amore" (The Secret Language of the Faithful of Love), published in Ur as Pietro Negri, Arturo Reghini had written other essays on the subject. The first of the two we propose was published in the magazine Nuovo Patto in September-November 1921. Unlike the Ur monograph, Luigi Valli is never mentioned. Although he had already made a name for himself in 1906 with a "Lectura Dantis" dedicated to Canto XIX of Paradise, he only began to be truly known after 1922, when his first more wide-ranging works began to appear, such as: Il Segreto della Croce e dell'Aquila nella Divina Commedia (The Secret of the Cross and the Eagle in the Divine Comedy) and Il Simbolo Centrale della Divina Commedia: La Croce e L'Aquila (The Central Symbol of the Divine Comedy: The Cross and the Eagle). These were followed in 1925 by La Chiave della Divina Comedia (The Key to the Divine Comedy) and, in 1928, Il Linguaggio Segreto di Dante e dei Fedeli d'Amore (The Secret Language of Dante and the Faithful Lovers).

2a) ARTURO REGHINI THE ESOTERIC

ALLEGORY IN DANTE

Beneath the literary meaning of the Comedy, that is, beneath Dante's journey through the three realms of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, there is undoubtedly an allegory. There is no need for explicit statements by Dante on the subject to be certain of this. This allegory is not simple, but multifaceted, and commentators usually recognise two aspects, the moral and the political. **The moral**, or philosophical-moral, **interpretation** sees the Comedy as an allegorical representation of the path that man must follow to overcome sin and attain virtue in order to escape Hell and Purgatory and earn Paradise through moral perfection.

This allegory, like the literal meaning of the sacred poem, undeniably has a distinctly Christian aspect, even though it abounds in pagan elements; and, following Aristotle, St. Thomas and scholasticism, it has been deeply penetrated by commentators.

The political allegory is based on the struggle between the empire and the papacy, and also features extensively the persecution of the Templars by Philip the Fair and Clement V. Naturally, there are passages that are open to moral interpretation alone, others that are cloaked in political symbolism alone, and still others that involve a dual moral and political interpretation.

The political allegory is almost always very transparent, and Dante often dispenses with any veil altogether, making his vision clear and leaving no room for doubt. The moral allegory has such a Christian appearance that it authorises all Christians and all those who are quick to conclude to attribute Catholic orthodoxy to Dante, while political allegory reveals with certainty a Dante who was a partisan of the empire and a bitter enemy of the Church, an open defender of the Order of the Templars, condemned and fiercely persecuted for heresy by the Church, a Dante who exalts Caesar, the Roman Empire, classical civilisation, and who elects the Pythagorean and imperialist Virgil as his guide, teacher and lord.

The reasons that led Dante to use allegory are therefore not political in nature, inherent in his position in the struggle between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, because in that case it would be natural to find the veil thicker in the passages dealing with politics, whereas instead the veil becomes thicker in the passages dealing with topics of morality, philosophy, religion, and metaphysics; and sometimes, no matter how hard commentators strain their eyes, they cannot clarify the meaning, or each of them ends up understanding it differently from the others.

What, then, is the reason that led Dante to use allegory, even at the cost of not being easily understood? Poetic imagination? A passion for riddles? Certainly not, because we know that a doctrine is hidden beneath the veil of strange verses. And if the appearance is Christian, could the choice differ from the appearance? Could the doctrine so jealously hidden be heterodox, very heterodox? So Dante would reek of heresy and be an enemy of the Church on religious grounds as well as political ones?

His repeated professions of Christian faith are not enough to dispel doubt. If he was in fact a heretic or pagan and did not want to end up roasted, he was forced to profess himself a Christian. And especially if he wanted to indulge in his love of extolling Virgil, Caesar, Rome, the good old world, Latin noble blood, and emperors who had a noble, i.e. pagan, appearance, he had to somehow allay suspicions by also defending Christianity. It should be remembered that in those days Christian charity could indulge itself at will; the numerous followers of St Dominic, who beat the heretics in the bushes, animated by the most holy zeal to save souls (as well as the endangered Church), went about their business, and Dante himself had already seen human bodies set alight. What was the point of ending up like Cecco d'Ascoli, when it was possible to devote one's life and enormous talent and wisdom to a grandiose political and religious project? Despite his professions of Catholic faith, Dante had friends who went

seeking to prove that God did not exist, and he calmly placed heretics of the mould of Sigieri in paradise, while populating hell with popes. Dante himself was accused of heresy, according to ancient documents and his earliest commentators. Dante's pagan heresy was supported by **Foscolo**, then by **Rossetti** with a wealth of arguments, and finally by the Catholic priest **Aroux**. A Jesuit who wanted to criticise Rossetti's works received such an exhaustive reply from him that he said no more.

No one considers that even in appearance Dante does not always follow St Thomas slavishly; he openly differs from him on very important issues, e.g., in eschatological doctrine (Purg. XXV 88-102), adopting a theory of the shadows of the dead that is in perfect agreement with the pagan conception. From the outset, he was inspired by Virgil, from whom he took only the beautiful style that brought him honour. His poem is nothing more than a comedy; and however the word is understood, in the modern sense or in the Dionysian sense, it always leads us far from the apparent Christian meaning. In broad terms, the Comedy is a development of the sixth canto of the Aeneid, and Dante repeats what Virgil has Aeneas do. Aeneas descends alive into Hades, finds the myrtle branch of the initiates in the forest, and learns first-hand the truth of the Orphic-Pythagorean mysteries about man and conditional immortality. And Dante, still corruptible, follows the same path with the same purpose and using the same symbolism. The fundamental purpose, as is now known and proven, of the Orphic, Pythagorean, Eleusinian and Isiac mysteries was to confer on the initiate true knowledge of the principles of life (Cicero - De Lege II, 14), bliss and privileged immortality. This was achieved through initiation, which consisted of preliminary cathartic practices, symbolic ceremonies and actual ecstasy, as Plutarch, Apuleius and other ancient writers tell us and as is now recognised by modern scholars (see, for example, Macchiolo-Zagreus). In this way, man was regenerated and after death the Elysian Fields awaited him.

The subject of the Comedy is man, or rather the **regeneration of man**, his metamorphosis into an angelic butterfly, Apuleius' Psyche. It is therefore the same subject as the mysteries.

It is not only moral qualities that change; Dante purifies himself step by step, passing through various and numerous crises and states of consciousness, falling like a dead body, fainting, reviving, falling asleep, reviving in Eunoë, his mind leaving itself, becoming illusory, becoming india, becoming internalised, becoming future, becoming seed, passing from the human to the divine, from time to eternity; and finally frees his soul from every cloud of mortality. This is not moral perfection, it is a true palingenesis of the whole being that takes place in the symbolic journey. The veil hides not only moral disquisitions on sins and virtues, but also the exposition of inner changes in the pilgrim's conscience.

The two rivers of the earthly paradise are clearly borrowed from the Orphic-Pythagorean mysteries. Recent archaeological discoveries have unearthed the so-called golden laminettes of Turii, which were buried together with the Orphic deceased, to serve as viaticum when he arrived in Hades. There he encountered two springs, that of Lethe and that of Mnemosyne, i.e. that of oblivion and that of memory. Drinking the water of Lethe, the deceased lost all memory and ended up as a miserable, unconscious larva in the mud. Drinking from the fresh spring of Mnemosyne, he was saved and went among the immortals in the Elysian Fields. The formula contained in the Orphic laminette stated: 'I am the son of the earth and the starry sky. Let me quench my thirst at the fresh spring of Mnemosyne, so that I may be a divine god and no longer mortal'. This is the meaning of the Orphic invocation formula; and this Orphic-Pythagorean conception is analogous to the eschatological conception of the Eleusinian mysteries, and is developed in Plato's theory of souls and knowledge. Dante, in order to better affirm the pagan character of the catharsis of purgatory, from which one emerges pure and ready to ascend to the stars, introduces at the end of the canticle not only the Lethe, but also the less familiar Eunoë (Purg. XXVIII, 131; XXXIII, 127-145), as he calls it, which 'revives his stunned virtue', that is, which gives those who have died resurrection, a second birth.

Dante would like to sing in part of the sweet good that would never satisfy him; but it so happens that he no longer has space, all the pages devoted to this second canto are full; and above all, the reins of art no longer allow him to continue. Forward, Pedro, with judgement. We are in the midst of pagan mystery. And anyone who considers who Dante's guide was understands that he had to lead him there. Dante, lost in the wild and harsh forest of Christian prejudice and ignorance, encounters

Virgil, the personification of esoteric wisdom, this voice that for a long silence (ten centuries of the vulgar era) seemed faint; and Virgil immediately presents himself in his capacity as an initiate who has transcended human nature:

"Not a man, I was once a man"; and that is why Dante takes him as his duke, master and lord who initiates him and makes him immortal.

Now, the pagan conception did not grant human souls true survival; they led a life of unconscious larvae in Hades; and only the initiates, the heroes and those whom Jupiter kidnapped to the highest council were immortal. And Christianity prevailed over the mysteries because it democratically placed salvation and immortality à la portée de tout le monde.

It was enough to be baptised and believe that Jesus had risen from the dead to be saved. A real bonanza for all the poor in spirit and for all the criminals to whom the mysteries closed the door. Arnobius, for example, bluntly states that he became a Christian because Christianity, unlike the mysteries, guaranteed immortality for all.

Did Dante, who takes Virgil as his guide and treats the whole question of palingenesis in a pagan manner, also think that not all men could attain eternity? That Christian beliefs were not sufficient for this purpose? That the mad sheep and the proud Christians had no right of citizenship in the eternal city and had to end up among the lost people? It would seem so, given that it was not from priests but from Brunetto Latini that he learned 'how man becomes eternal'. Examining Dante's work without preconceptions or bias, one comes to recognise spiritual rebirth through the metamorphosis brought about by initiation as the fundamental subject of the Comedy, the doctrine hidden beneath the veil of strange verses.

Dante's allegory therefore has a very important mystical, metaphysical, **truly esoteric aspect**. This aspect has not yet been recognised. It **also escapes Rossetti and Aroux, who**, while referring to classical mysteries for the interpretation of allegory, **always refer to the ceremonial part** of them. This is natural, because in order to notice and understand conventional or allegorical allusions and references, it is necessary to know the object of the allusion or allegory; and in this case, it is necessary to know the mystical experiences through which the mystery and the epopta of true initiation pass.

For those who have some experience of this kind, there is no doubt about the existence in the Comedy and the Aeneid of a metaphysical-esoteric allegory, which veils and exposes the successive stages through which the consciousness of the initiate passes in order to become immortal. The symbolism most frequently used by Dante is that of navigation, of pilgrimage. He is a pilgrim on the deserted shore, through the narrow pass, through the harsh desert, he takes water that never flowed there, he is a navigator on the sea of being. Especially the symbolism of the sea, the ship, and the sail is always used to deal with inner facts.

It is this veil that he raises to sail better waters; and as he himself says, it is under this veil that doctrine is hidden.

It is an archaic, Mediterranean, pagan symbol, already used by Virgil and Ovid. It is also used by Christians who speak of ships and naves in their temples, referring to St. Peter's ship. But this ship is the result of one of the many appropriations made by the followers of the Asian prophet; it is nothing more than the ship of Janus, a purely Roman god, husband of Venilla, the goddess of the sea and springs, and inventor of shipbuilding. We can see what Ulysses's undertaking becomes in the Comedy. Ulysses, the navigator par excellence, has such a passion for becoming an expert on the world, human vices and valour that he is not overcome by the sweetness of his son, the pity of his old father, and the debt of love owed to Penelope; and so he sets out on the high seas; and after sailing so far that he becomes old and slow, he finally comes to that narrow mouth, where Hercules marked his respects so that man would not go any further. But Ulysses and his companions do not turn back because of this; rather, they remember that they were not made to live like brutes but to follow virtue and knowledge; and so they venture with mad flight into the high pass to gain the experience of the world without people, behind the sun; that is, that condition in which **consciousness lives an entirely interior life**, beyond and outside of any celebration due to the human senses, and in which there are neither people nor sun.

But this is very dangerous water, and not everyone can reach the shore and turn to look at the pass that has never let a living person through, and which can only be crossed by those who die a mystical death

. It is a mad passage (Parad. XXVII), a very arduous undertaking, not to be attempted in a small boat (Parad. XXIII), and one is bound to be overwhelmed and submerged by the sea of being that closes in on the reckless. This is what Dante says, after having stated: (Inf. XXVI, 21) 'I restrain my ingenuity more than I usually do'.

But Dante does not go on an adventure like Ulysses; he is guided by Virgil, wiser than he realises, and by a hidden path he comes to see the stars again. To sail better waters, he raises the sail of his intellect; and after the various practices and ceremonies he undergoes in purgatory, he ritually purifies himself and is revived in the fountain of Eunoë, emerging renewed with new foliage, pure and ready to ascend to the stars (Purg. XXXIII). After that, it is appropriate to invoke the good Apollo for the final work (Parad. I). At the sight of Beatrice, he 'becomes such within himself', as Glaucus did when he tasted the herb that made him the consort of the other gods in the sea (Parad. I, 69-70), that is, he feels himself dying and becoming immortal like Glaucus, the Glaucus who says of himself: *Ante tamen mortalis eram, sed scilicet altis deditur aequoribus* (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*). Dante cannot say anything else and apologises, saying: 'Trasumanar significar per verba Non si poria; però l'esempio basti a cui esperienza grazia serba' (Paradiso I, 70-72). It cannot be done with words, but it can be done with grass.

He no longer has the illusion of the material world, he has another sense of reality: 'tu non se' in terra, si come tu credi' (you are not on earth, as you believe), but you sit in your own place; for, as he says in Conv. IV, 28: 'la nobile anima ritorna a Dio, siccome a quello posto, ond'ella si parti a quando venne a entrare nel mare di questa vita' (the noble soul returns to God, as to that place from whence it departed when it came to enter the sea of this life).

What happens to non-noble souls is not stated.

And now that he feels himself removed from the mortal world (Par. II), he feels capable of guiding not those who are in small boats, but those few who raise their necks in time to the bread of angels, the ambrosia that makes them immortal like the herb of Glaucus. It is true that the water he takes never flowed, but he has all the pagan wisdom to assist him: 'Minerva breathes, and Apollo leads me, and nine muses show me the Bears', and Dante encourages these few navigators to calmly set sail, keeping their course before the water that returns unchanged; and promises them wonders equal to those seen by those glorious Argonauts who followed that other daring navigator who conquered the Golden Fleece (Parad. II, 1-18). And in fact, having reached the end of his voyage, and having attained infinite value (Parad. XXXII), he comes to see that **deep within himself, bound with love in a volume, is what is scattered throughout the universe**. He believes he has seen the universal form of this knot, and is as amazed by it as Neptune was when he saw the shadow of Argo, the ship that first sailed the seas. The few who have followed his path to the end thus see that Dante keeps the promise he made to them in Canto 11.

This explains this passage, which is one of the most obscure in the entire poem. But, let us be clear, a true explanation can only be given to those who go through similar experiences, for this is a mystery that 'cannot be understood by those who do not experience it'; and I can only repeat the words of Apuleius after the initiation: "Ecce tibi rettuli, quae, quamvis audita, ignores tamen necesse est" (Apuleius - *Metam.* XI, 23).

Another essay by Arturo Reghini on Dante, published before the one that appeared in Ur, is "**Il Veltro**", which appeared in the newspaper Impero on 24th April 1923. There are several references to that Pagan Imperialism, which Reghini had already theorised in 1914 ("**Imperialismo Pagano**" in *Salamandra*, January-February 1914) and which, for a certain period, he dreamed could be implemented by fascism. In 1928, Evola provided his own variation on the theme in a work with the same title (*Imperialismo pagano*, Atanor, Todi-Rome), which was the main cause of the regrettable dispute between the two figures. This disagreement was historically pointless, given the 1929 Concordat between the State and the Church, which made the short-term realisation of that idea utopian, although Reghini never abandoned it. This essay is also useful for reflecting on the traditional concept of 'prophecy', which was never conceived as a prediction of an inevitable event (which would take away even the slightest freedom from men), but as a perception of a favourable 'trend' towards certain events, which it is still up to men to implement or oppose.

2b) ARTURO REGHINI

The VELTRO

There are four classics of Imperialism, philosophers, politicians and prophets: Virgil, Dante, Machiavelli and Mazzini, all Italians. Those who most consciously put the Idea into practice were two: Caesar and Napoleon, also Italians. Virgil, the bard of origins, the creator of perfect verses, believed he saw around him the precursory signs of the last age predicted by the Sibylline Books, and prophesied the descent from heaven of a child who would establish the Golden Age.

The prophecy seemed to come true with the birth of Jesus, and the pagan poet appeared to shake hands with the Hebrew prophet, 'teste Davide cum Sybilla'.

We say 'seemed', because if Virgil's prophecy were to be applied to Jesus, we would have to admit that it has not yet been fully realised, for it is true that Jesus was born (and also died), but the Golden Age is yet to come. It is true that we must not be impatient!

But any doubt seems to disappear when we remember that Virgil was a Pythagorean, and that the fulfilment of this prophecy must have seemed certain and imminent to a Pythagorean at that time. In fact, Pythagorean philosophy, which reduces and sums everything up in the universal Monad, leads directly to the monarchical conception; the unity of the Monad corresponds to the unity of power, the monarchy; and the founder of the Italic School implemented, as best he could, the concept of social unity in his Sodality of Croton. Now, when Virgil was writing, political unity had been implemented over most of the known world by that immense genius Caesar, who knew how to take the risk and, at the right time, march on Rome. The Pythagorean conception, the ancient prophecy of the Sibyl and the fullness of time said it was natural and therefore inevitable that a divine progeny should descend from heaven to earth to crown the work. This is Virgil's Veltro.

Dante, for whom Virgil is duke, master and lord, seems to be similarly inspired when, on several occasions, he prophesies and invokes the coming of the Greyhound, to make the she-wolf die of grief, and in the meantime to cause commentators much pain.

The imperialist political conception has the same Pythagorean approach in both of these great poets. Centuries and centuries of Italian and European history revolve around this central idea.

Dante's Greyhound is not specifically Emperor Arrigo, nor any other specific character; **the Greyhound is the divine man who**, given the constitution of the world, **must inevitably manifest himself** sooner or later. Dante waits for the sun with ardent affection, waiting intently for dawn to break; his heart beats rapidly, hastening and invoking its coming, but his mind knows that this is how it is written. His faith in the fateful advent of a true Emperor rests on his prodigious metaphysical, social and scientific knowledge. Like Virgil, he is a Vate in the classical sense of the word.

This awareness of political change is coupled with a full and certain awareness of the Roman people's natural right to hold the Empire.

Virgil affirms that it is up to the Roman people to 'regere imperio populos'; Dante repeats this; Mazzini will later repeat it with both of them. Romanity was still so alive in the world that even if he had been a German, like Albert, the Emperor would always have been Roman. But Dante wants Rome to be the seat of the Empire and to draw its prestige from Rome, because Rome, and only Rome, possesses, almost magically, a universal and eternal character. And this natural predestination for the Empire, this virtue of the Roman people, powerfully felt by Mazzini, an exile and a poor man, fuelled his tenacity and faith in the destiny of the third Italy, when the Holy Roman Empire seemed to have been acquired forever by the House of Habsburg.

The Roman virtues, the indigenous ones, have the necessary requirements for an imperial office. First, strength, the virtue of the warrior, the steadfast temperament of a people that does not bow to adversity, today and then as at Cannae; then the virtue of moderation, of balance; the political prudence of

government, justice, social virtue of the citizen, temperance, the virtue of man in private conduct. Innate, healthy virtues, independent of beliefs and extra-social sanctions. Virtues of all and for all, and not of the few, such as faith, hope and charity, virtues of saints and for saints, intended for ultra-human, if not inhuman, purposes. These are the foundations of the natural law of the Roman people; these are the virtues it needs to have. The Emperor, the one hoped for by Dante, the Greyhound, will not feed on earth or pewter, but on Wisdom, Love and Virtue. Human virtues, and not even the ordinary virtues of saints, are not enough. Direct divine inspiration is needed; **like the divine Julius, he must identify with Jupiter**, with that Emperor who reigns above. The supreme earthly power must feel its unity with the Monad. He must rule by divine will and divine right. Yes, gentlemen, by divine right, O inconsolable courtiers of the sovereign people! 'Vox populi non est vox Dei'. That imperial power must derive and does derive directly from God is not only a corollary of Pythagorean philosophy; it is also affirmed by the dominant religion through the mouth of the Apostle Paul: 'Omnis potestas a deo est'. And no doubt this thought inspired Napoleon when, on the day of his coronation as King of Italy, he removed the intermediaries and placed the crown on his own head. And he did well, because if, as Manzoni asserts, God imprinted on him a broader imprint of his creative spirit, he was raised up and predestined by God himself. The Greyhound is therefore perfectly at home at the top of the hierarchy.

When the hierarchy does not exist, the social order collapses. When the Emperor indulges in personal feelings or claims to turn the Empire to the benefit of a non-predestined people, Fate, to which the Gods are subject, falls upon him and his work. Charles V loses his mind, an incredible stubbornness determines Waterloo, miracles are counted on the Marne and the Piave.

Today, Italy is recovering. Ancient virtues are resurfacing. The sacred soil of the Fatherland expresses the superb legions that Augustus loved, and the masses are cleansing themselves of the Asian disease. 'Roma locuta est'; and the peoples are already listening to the words of reason, already fixing their gaze on the precursors of the new dawn. And truly, the people will know how to live austere and virtuously if the Duce has Roman faith and reverence for the gods of the Fatherland; let us, on the birthday of Rome, read the signs according to the custom of the Fathers and declare the omens to be auspicious.



3) ERCOLE QUADRELLI

THE 'FEDELI D'AMORE'

The following is an essay by Ercole Quadrelli on the Fedeli d'Amore, taken from 'Il progresso religioso' No. 2, a bimonthly magazine of the contemporary movement, Città di Castello, 1929. It is a very important essay for several reasons:

- It dates back to 1929 and is therefore contemporary with the magazine Krur. It follows Pietro Negri's essay "Il Linguaggio Segreto dei Fedeli d'Amore" (The Secret Language of the Faithful of Love), published in the second year of Ur, to which Quadrelli makes a very brief final reference.

- It shows Quadrelli's true literary style (he habitually uses the accent at the beginning of words instead of the letter h, for example) and therefore confirms that the writings signed by Abraxa were indeed teachings given orally by Quadrelli, based on Kremmerz's Corpus Philosophorum Totius Magiae (*), but transcribed by Evola in his own style.

- Finally, it puts into perspective certain claims made by Guenon in the field of Dante studies and, above all, some of Guenon's criticisms of L. Valli.

(*) The authentic one and not the one often distorted already in the title (transformed by some into Corpus Philosophicum Totius Magiae).

The ineffable First Being – so difficult to conceive without immediately risking blasphemously confusing Him with Nothingness – He, so full, with Nothingness so empty – what moved Him, and moves Him, from eternity and for eternity, to perpetually emerge from His simplest unity, to break into innumerable densities? Mystery, for which no adequate name can be devised; ineffable activity of an ineffable Agent; free necessity, superabundant nakedness, coherence of division, immobility of propulsion, impetus of the one towards the different, impetus of Reality to also appear what She already is. Love? Mystery. Love of exuberance, if anything: overflowing fullness, effusion of magnificence: gift. Loves of need - of invocation, of dedication - afterwards: from the different that breathes back into unity, from the small that craves expansion, from the twilight that begs for more light: more warmth, more strength, more life. And so the Ineffable goes, of Substance, perpetually making himself a conduit of which he himself is the seat and the wayfarer; of Energy, making himself a heartbeat of which he himself is the rhythm and the musician; of Light, a mantle of which He Himself is the contained containment, the univocal vibration, the visible and invisible flame, the immaterial oil, the occult Igniter; of Life, an innumerable bursting forth of individual affirmations and voracious absorptions, through which He Himself is the devoured and the devouring, the sacrificer and the victim. Triangle, which, in the Solomonic hexagram, descends, immerses itself, envelops itself: through nebulousity, fluidity, liquidity, colloid, solid, compact: to the indivisible ion, sixteen times, they say, denser than platinum: and, therefore, sixteen times more complicated, more divisible, more inaccessible, to infinity: in the infmito within: within all that is nothing else but Him, except exteriority. He descends and envelops himself: and, naturally, He who is never outside of himself, wherever and however, is neither lost nor impoverished nor altered: in whom everything dying is born and being born dies and living disappears, in Him who persists in everything that emerges from Him or is submerged in Him. He is not lost, He is not altered: there is no being that can act to impoverish itself, except through incapacity or constraint. And, as from the nebula to the sun - to the planet, to the fluid, to the flint, to the metal - He becomes more and more immaterial, so from the mud to the mucilage to the amoeba, to the vegetable to the animal to man, He goes - a triangle, which, in the Solomonic hexagram, ascends again - liberating, revolving, re-uniting. Between man and Him, how many other forms of beings? And around man, among animals and trees - in the earth, in the water, in the air - is there nothing else alive? Nothing in the seas more real than jellyfish? Nothing in the air more subtle and vast than clouds? And are the endless spaces of the ether uninhabited? Are there not as many or more forms than those of gases? And the enormous range of vibrations known to science - unknown to our senses - is there really no being that perceives them? How many questions that neither Shakespeare nor his Hamlet would have smiled at; that for millennia, human races have not smiled at or will not smile at. Even before that - and even if this were a conventional priority of nothing more than nature - even before expressing itself in plasmas of matter - mechanical energies, it would have expressed itself in forms of substance-powers. And, curious about experiences even below, many, many of these would also have attempted the sphinx of descent - this, the original sin? of each of us? of an Adamic universal soul? - nor did they ask themselves too much whether the ascent would then be just as easy. Pythagorean-Platonic whispers, traceable in all the great civilisations, and about which Dante did not want to tell us what he really thought, or had sometimes thought, or was sometimes still tempted to think (Par. IV, 49-63). Whispers, not of despair: the ascent was difficult, but not impossible; indeed, for this reason, there existed a special technique, patiently studied by priestly colleges, through centuries of peaceful domination, in the inner sanctums of certain famous temples. They even abused it; what was given for the redemption of humanity, they turned into an instrument of privilege, of caste domination; nor would punishment be long in coming.

It was Christ who wanted to extend this privilege to all those who are simple at heart. It was Paul who, with an even simpler heart, wanted to seek it above all where carnality was greatest. And all

Indistinctly, the Apostles and the first Disciples did not simply give words of edification: they laid their hands on people and transmitted the Spirit: a spirit that was not immaterial and imperceptible, but fluidic, felt, transforming even physical features, straightening organic deformities, and often phenomenally perceptible to all those present: believers who became believers, unbelievers who remained unbelievers, or even those who imagined it to be diabolical. There are many texts in which all this is clearly stated, and it matters little if no one has yet thought about it: clearly stated, as if it were, in short, for much nobler reasons, on a much larger and more intensive scale, and with much more lasting effects than that prodigious phenomenology, which metapsychics finally awaits with scientific intent. But it was not without reason that the Master warned, **'Do not throw pearls before swine'**. In mass propaganda, it became as difficult to sift out the good grain as it had been easy in the long disciplines of the temples. In fact, one of the first arduous tasks of the bishops was precisely to curb the anarchic visionaryism of the overly simple, the apocalyptic glossolalia of uncontrolled pythonesses. And the transmissions of the Spirit were once again restricted to the clergy, and, among them, to the ruling elites: the many Gnostic schools, against which Plotinus would have railed, did not do them much harm; but against which the enormous mass of Christians themselves - first admitted and now excluded - railed more and more, which led to disaster. Disaster - as far as this is conceivable and possible - for the Holy Spirit itself. For, now set on a path of unconfessable mistrust, the ruling official Church pricked up its ears, ready and threatening, at every whispered echo of Pnuma, Spirit, Paraclete. And without an official temple or recognised altar, the Holy Spirit remained for centuries and centuries; and when Abelard, around 1123 - the future, unexpected refuge of light for his Heloise - dared to name a semi-deserted little oratory of vainly pursued peace 'Paraclete', he still had to defend himself against theologians with theological arguments. And, in Abelard, there were many hints of multiple heresies, but - to avoid possible misunderstandings a little further on - no hint, however slight, of initiatory traditions. However, the same ineffable Trinity would have to wait another two centuries for its special feast to be officially sanctioned (1333) by John XXII (1). Meanwhile, with the transmitters of the Spirit banished from leadership, all that remained to make up the Church were dialectical disputes over doctrine and the consolidation of external hierarchies: two forces that were still enormous, the former drawn from Greece and the latter from Rome. To tell the truth, the rites also remained: almost all the most important rites. Reduced to predominantly symbolic values, but even so explaining the vitality of the Catholic Church in the face of those who, while appealing to a more abstract spirituality, increasingly renounced those last practical connections with the ancient Living Church. Which, they say, never completely perished; and they are still searching for its thread, through the history of Christian heresies. And if it never completely perished, we must recognise that, for several centuries, it had to live rather poorly: even esoterically. Contaminations from the most varied traditions - Chaldean-Egyptian, Syro-Phoenician, Manichean-Mithraic, Hellenic-Celtic, Neoplatonic-Gnostic, Hebrew-Arabic - meant that no heretical-initiatory manifestation could be traced back to a given undisputed source. In those that were temporarily triumphant (Albigensians), the brute weight of the greedy masses suffocated the inner spiritual flame. In others, powerfully organised (the Templars), the conquest of the means - wealth - made people forget the nobility and holiness of the goal. We must turn to the Lullists, the Rosicrucians, the line of Benedictine Hermeticists, the flourishing mystical-Platonic, Pythagorean-Kabbalistic, alchemical-therapeutic traditions in Italy and Europe to find something whose outward forms also appear worthy of reconnection to the purest ancient mysteries.

(1) See ABELARD and HELOISE, Letters; Rome, Formiggini. 1927; pp. 46-50, and especially p. 48. [n.d.u.: First Italian translation from the Latin text by Ercole Quadrelli. Preface by Antonio Bruers]

And yet, according to one of our most brilliant scholars (2), here is an unexpected revival of

these, even in the school of **the Fedeli d'Amore**. Unexpected to a certain extent: forgotten and neglected, rather, by the last generation of positivist writers; something almost identical was in fact already supported by the forgotten Gabriele Rossetti; something very similar by Foscolo and Pascoli; and it is precisely to these three that the book, which will be a milestone, is dedicated. Something not so distant was said, for the chivalric novels, by Aroux; for the Vita Nova, by Perez; for Cavalcanti, by Salvadori; for the Acerba dell' Ascolano, by Crespi; a little by everyone, for Guinizelli's Donna, or for Dante's Beatrice; absolutely by everyone, for

the amorous Madonna Intelligenza.

by Dino Gompagni, undisputed and indisputable woman not of flesh and blood. And it must be said that this is unexpected only to a certain extent, given the widespread consensus among critics: especially among poets and philologists, who are the most competent in this case (3). The dissent comes solely from those who are hostile for reasons that are anything but critical or historical: sentimental femininity, crystallised quietism, pseudo-orthodox concerns, jealousy of schools and churches. A most pitiful manifestation of all this is the review in the *Giornale storico della Letteratura Italiana* (no. 271-72). For a subject of such literary-philological and religious-civil-political importance, a more extensive discussion, a more documented approval or opposition, in short, a more diligent discrimination, should have come from there. Instead, a small council of illustrious editors seems to have gathered and entrusted Bertoni with the task of washing their hands of it. He got away with a page of 'I see you (my dear) and I don't see you; but yes, how could it be otherwise? However, who knows?', with trivialities culminating in the insinuation that *ancidere* also means other things besides killing. These other things (asserted in the encyclopaedia of the worthy Scartazzini, who, after all, was not obliged to know much about Italian) would even contradict Dante, in his commentary on sonnet VII of Vita Nova; but if Bertoni had known anything about it himself - and had deigned to tell us - there would have been, in his little ejaculation, at least one protozoan worthy of... a microscope. Of course, this did not go unnoticed by the humble (but not so humble) undersigned. Fifteen years ago, suspecting that in our ancient rhymes the future hendecasyllable was (and, in popular poetry, remained) a highly variable double verse, sometimes hexa-hexatonic and sometimes hexa-tetratonic - varying therefore from 10 to 14 syllables - and normalised not by a metre but by a paused musical rhythm within which it could be laid - I searched for evidence of this in all the relevant ancient codices, and I found it. But I noticed strange returns of forms or formulas from secret conventions: from such so-called Masonic jargon (1913), strangely ahead of its time. Alongside my rhythmic-metrical extracts, I even noticed, at times, some questions in this regard; but I believed it to be a rare and exceptional singularity, nor did I suspect it would be possible to find the key to it. I knew the high regard in which they were held - as wise men, our professors had reduced us to *literati*; but even my heart did not protest against their disempowerment: what interested me about them was precisely that they had also been sometimes brilliant idlers; in harmonious fanfares, sometimes even elevated ones. - Most of the time, however... But, in the vast majority of cases, alas... How come so many people had taken it upon themselves to pass on to us so much - at a rough guess - nonsense?

And the key - or the main key - was to be found by **Valli**: the supposed idlers were, even in rhyme, fighters; and even the nonsense was, in fact, strategic documents. Hail to the sedentary armchair dwellers, who were not moved by it; to the effeminate men in breeches and beards, more or less trembling, who felt their castrated hearts swelling with rage; but, being sedate little people, did not dare to express it in public; to a university professor in Florence - yes, I say! - forbids his (hopefully disobedient) pupils from reading and discussing the book; but in short, perhaps this is the only disgusting, slimy case of its kind; I have forgotten the name of the university professor, and I certainly do not want to ask for it again. Or is it that in Florence (as the philologist has already thought) there is not even a university?

(2) VALLI LUIGI, *Il linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei «Fedeli d'Amore»* (The Secret Language of Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore'); Rome, Biblioteca di Filosofia e Scienza, no. 10, pp. 454, in 4°, 1928.

(3) Without wishing to offend anyone - and based on my own information and impressions - allow me to

mention, honoris causa, Mazzoni, Cesareo, Panzini, Orvieto, Bruers, and a large majority of the most talented young people.

But **what a wide-open door it is now**, and one that no one will ever close again; a great door beyond which future scholars, especially Italian ones, will hopefully rush in droves, following a literary initiative that is finally Italian. All those ancient songbooks, to be republished: scrupulously respecting their rhythms, even in the oldest editions. All those groups to be studied anew, not so much in terms of rhymes as in terms of intentions (4). So many obscure figures to be brought to light as men of faith and action who fought for an idea - and, for better or worse, tried their hand at rhyming, as this was the agreed means of communicating news, warnings, encouragement - and even reprimands - without risking too much in the way of excommunication or burning at the stake. And scholars will naturally discover a heroic age; then an age of relaxation, of formulae, of inflation, of fashion; and revivals, declines, resurrections, disappearances: as in every human movement of souls. All the high ecclesiastical hierarchies were intent on safeguarding their privileges, their comforts, their idleness, so rarely scholarly. All closed, monasticism, in its splendid isolation, generally fat and often immoral: an old and enduring target for all neo-Latin and, episodically, Anglo-Saxon fiction. The lower clergy, poor and ignorant like their sheep, were few and unheeded. And now even the Pope had gone into exile, there in Avignon: no more concerned with the Italian garden in turmoil than was necessary to prevent a pseudo-Roman emperor from establishing himself there. So was the Church truly dead and petrified? So was it still and still vacant,

in the presence of the Son of God,

Pietro's essay? But since the Church is immortal, where among men is the hidden living Ecclesia? And since the Seat must not remain vacant any longer, who will install a legitimate successor? And who, in Italy, armed against itself from city to city, from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, from tower to tower, or from palace to palace, will restore peace and unity? L'Aquila will place the Cross on the altar, Valli had already said that Dante had said (5); and this, in essence, he repeats here that the most illustrious among the Fedeli d'Amore had said. Romano Giure, for Christian Hope. Therefore, a group of select spirits gathered around those who, of that Giure, still at least maintained a conspicuous and armed appearance. A group, therefore, of official heretics, because they believed the visible papacy to be nothing more than adultery. Indeed, it is not clear where the legitimate imperial authority would have drawn its legitimate foundation, if not from the sense of the legitimate Church: that is, the same Church of the Fedeli d'Amore. Would any ecclesiastical dignitaries have been part of it, by chance? In Petrarch's time, certainly yes: a **Cardinal Colonna**; and this Church extended as far as Petrarch's travels took him, from the bighellone appearances to the Petrarchists dearest to him. This does not seem to have been the case in Dante's time, however, nor could Dante have found anyone more suitable than himself (and in fact, to tell the truth...). So the legitimate explanation of 'Cinquecento Dieci e Cinque = DXV' risks being the one that seemed the most abnormal: '**Dantes Xristi** Vèrtragus' (Veltro), or, according to others, 'Vicarius'. These explanations are now ancient, and in any case not Valli's, who has always wisely refrained from drawing such particular conclusions. On the other hand, there is nothing unorthodox this time, nor even anything new, for Dante. If his Arrigo VII had really succeeded in crowning and mitring him on earth, as St Peter had done in heaven above him - above his lay status - and if excommunications had then been issued between Rome and Avignon - and the definitive historical triumph had remained in Rome - a different external chapter, that's all, would have been written by the ecclesiastical Historia, which knows many others.

(4) See EGIDI FRANCESCO, in *La Scuola Superiore*, Year 111, 3-4; pp. 48-52, at the end. And let us duly point out this philologist - one who was not 'al ver timido amico' (a timid friend); he was not afraid to compromise his seriousness.

(5) Dante's Allegory, According to Pascoli; Bologna Zanichelli, 1922 - The Secret of the Cross and

the Eagle; idem, idem, - The Key to the Divine Comedy; idem, 1926. - Notes on Dante's secret...; in *Giorn. dant.*, Series I, XXVI, 4; II, XXVII, 1; III, XXXIII, 3; IV, XXIX, 4. - For the Cross and the Eagle; in *Logos*, 1924; and in some *Lectura Dantis*.

But were all the Fedeli d'Amore of this opinion? Did any other layman dare, as long as he remained a layman

- and of Folchetto alone I remember an ecclesiastical assumption, even if it was not a conversion - to think the same for themselves? And how is it that **Cavalcanti, Dante's initiator**, abandoned the game at a certain point, and the two close friends became, in essence, enemies? And how broad was the concrete meaning of the word 'initiator'? How deep was it rooted in the tradition of initiation? A constant cornerstone of this tradition in the West - from Egyptian-Greek to Arab-European alchemy - is that there are three human psychic substances: the lunar-sensitive, the mercurial-rational, and the solar-angelic. The second is clouded and misled by the first; the third is enveloped and generally forgotten by the other two. Initiation was admission to practices of liberation from lesser and greater imprisonment. Tritemian dissolution of the one into three, recomposition of the three into a new one, where the angelic now predominates: the least remote from the supreme Deity itself. Whether the physical body is taken into account below, and a universal Quintessence above; or whether the lunar and mercurial souls are made into a single psyche, it will be clear how much the Alchemists have been able to complicate a fairly simple mystery with various and apparently contradictory numberings. But if, coming to us, I patiently re-examine the language of all these Faithful mentioned by Valli, I find no sure reflections of this, except in Cavalcanti (pp. 34 and 224).

What happened to me when I was in her
presence, I cannot express with words:
I see such a beautiful woman emerge
from her lips that the mind
cannot comprehend: for immediately another
is born of new beauty;
from which, it seems, a star moves and
says: "Your health has appeared".

Let us seek the most varied interpretations possible of these 'strange verses'; the most immediately convincing will now be this one: that the lunar soul is released from the physical body, and from this the mercurial soul: from which the angelic star cavalcà ntea will finally burst forth, very similar to Dante's 'angelic butterfly'. There are indeed many reflections of an initiatory nature, which can also be found in our great poet: especially in his *Fiore* (6), in *Vita Nova*, in *Convivio* and in some of the *Epistolae*, as well as perhaps in the *Eclogae*. However, there is never any definite allusion to any of those characteristic concrete phenomena, unmistakably striking to the eye, even when they are extremely rare and unexpected, as for example in *Don Quixote*. Or rather, there is one such allusion in Dante, but only in the *Fiore*, and never again, concerning something immediately recognisable to anyone who has begun to attempt the Great Work. Then there is the very strange fact that there is almost no stucco in the Pythagorean Basilica of *Porta Maggiore* (7) that cannot be commented on with some verse from the *Divine Comedy*; the coincidence that almost in the centre of this is a Dantean rape of *Ganymede* is astonishing, as, in the middle of the central ceiling of that, the stucco of that rape has been rediscovered. But in short, here and almost everywhere, there is nothing but doctrinal reflections: evidently drawn from a good source, but never inlaid with any concreteness of personal experience; symbolism, plenty; specific realities, almost never any. An enormously passionate temperament, he perhaps ended up being dismayed even by the disconcerting phenomena, which most likely gave rise to the release of the lunar soul, and of which the less chastened part of *Il Fiore* could be a reflection. A very proud spirit, he perhaps became even more impatient and irritated by the excessive duration of incessant alternatives; and he considered it wiser to renounce his first *Beatrice* in favour of the philosophical *Donna Gentile*. And when he returned to *Beatrice*, he had remoulded her in his own way: he had

orthodoxly theologised and Catholicised her, taking sides with himself even in this; and he undoubtedly did something personally beautiful. But? But, here it is:

Look at us well! Well, I am Beatrice.

A very strange verse, which would never have crossed his mind during those divine moments, if some doubts about his real identity had not sometimes troubled him too. Then, almost stupidly, he hated the lecture she immediately gave him, if he had not been pressed to justify himself and re-authenticate himself to third parties, who still did not all believe him, despite everything. To what extent did Boccaccio and Petrarch believe him? Regarding these two, Valli's few references are almost more impressive than most of the rest, but there is still much more to be explored from both of them: especially from the *Filòcolo* and *Bucolicon* of the former, as well as from the *Secretum* and *Epistolae* of the latter. Among those who did not want to believe Dante was Ascolano himself who, like a reborn Bruno, preferred to reach the papacy of the stake for his Lady. For him (p. 257), Dante never deified his body (never made it the dwelling place and instrument of a liberated angelic soul), nor was he ever in Paradise with his Beatrice; he was, yes, down in Hell and Purgatory; but,

planting his feet - in the lower centre,
there he led him - his faith was weak,
and I know that for us - he never returned.

It is a beautiful thing that even Dante travelled through an initiatory hell and purgatory; it is a terrible thing that, precisely because of his weak faith, he had to seek paradise elsewhere. But, if this is the case, what can we do? Nothing to boast about more than is right, and nothing to regret more than is necessary; truth to be investigated with precise objective coldness, without preconceptions of any kind. And, without preconceptions of any kind, the revived and innovated thesis that all the *Fedeli d'Amore* were therefore a secret philosophical-religious-political brotherhood is clearly demonstrated: certainly mystical in nature, but not always or everywhere initiatory. It was simply the Initiatory Tradition that drew, even from among themselves, those most promising in terms of ardent hearts, strong nerves and mental balance. Who would have thought that Dante would retreat before the protean Guardian of the Threshold, where Cavalcanti had instead passed? But even these details do not interest Valli. His reinterpretations of the movement, in the Persian mystical tradition, seem to me to be relevant only in terms of superficial details. Nor do the comparisons that a learned ecclesiastical historian would have preferred, with Gioachino da Fiore, seem strictly relevant to me. Fiore, yes, indeed, he too; and 'gifted with a prophetic spirit'. But it seems that, for those Joachimites, it was the pure and simple monk who had to take an ascetic - but complete, absolute, exclusive - direction of Humanity.

, in all areas of power: from papal to imperial, and from doctrinal to economic. Therefore, coincidences in terminology are not enough, nor are similarities in some generic programme, which we will mention last. The *Fedeli d'Amore* were, I believe, all a little too cheerful to dream of such universal melancholy, among their bright roses and colourful flowers, their green laurels and fresh myrtles: perhaps wild at times, but never far from clear waters and mysterious fountains, not only in Poliziani, but also in Marsilii Ficini. And what was Valli's most personal and most meritorious philological endeavour? That of an excellent inductive statistical method: seeking what meaning, for certain recurring words, satisfied not in this or that passage, but in a whole block of extracts from the most varied authors. And, for example, he thus found that if by Love of the Madonna we mean that of Holy Wisdom, everything that so often seemed metaphorical and artificial, cold and emphatic, becomes appropriate and natural, warm and moving. It is obvious, on the other hand, that Love and Madonna also sometimes meant the same secret brotherhood, either local or total. That, in addition to the death of error and sin with the ruling church as a harlot, there was a mystical death in those rhymes: the one that passed from the ancient Mysteries to Paul (8) and Augustine, and gradually in others and others, up to Richard of Saint Victor: that which is rebirth in *excessu mentis*, and the beginning of a superior life; the death of the sensitive and rational Rachel, through the appearance of an angelic Beatrice, intuitive and unifying; no wonder, then, that

Dante does not want to talk about it (Vita Nova, XXVIII), also because 'it would be fitting for me to praise myself'. That women with an understanding of Love were, therefore, nothing more than the same occult fellow students of Holy Wisdom; it is not certain that the real women of that time generally had a greater understanding of Love than their strange Faithful shortly before or shortly after them. And so on, for many, many new interpretations, up to the one that crying meant compulsion to simulate; that greeting alluded to promotion in rank; that stone, rock, marble was the Church, promiscuously now corrupt and now holy, and often imprisoning and imprisoned as in a tomb; hence an almost always convincing light on the many rhymes, now stony, now anti-stony, and now both at once.

(6) I agree with Valli - and with many others - on this attribution, but I cannot agree with them on the chronology. If not very young, it was certainly the Fiore, the very first somewhat extensive work of the future great Muse; a work from when the future creator of the Italian language had simply taken on the task of ennobling his Florentine dialect with the forms of an illustrious language, French, as Guinizelli had done with his Bolognese dialect. But to verify this, one must refer to the text of *Il Fiore* as it is in the manuscript and, for Guinizelli, to the oldest editions, not to those that were gradually Tuscanised and Italianised by his immediate successors.

(7) See CARCOPINO JEROME, *La basilique pythagoricienne de la Porte-Majeure*; Paris, 1926. Carcopino, however, did not consider Dante's references.

(8) See text and references by GUIGNEBERT CH. *Quelques remarques sur... le Mystère paulinien* (Rev. d'hist. et de philos. relig.; Sept-Oct. 1928). But 'réalisant la vérité dans d'Amour' (p. 424) [- ??? (IV, IS) -] are expressions to be taken in all the force of the very felicitous new translation, if one wishes to penetrate the hidden link between Wisdom and love in any kind of Fedeli d'Amore. Among the references, see especially MACCHIORO VITTORIO, *Orfismo e Paolinismo*; Montevarchi, Cultura Moderna, 1922; pp. 311.

What resistance is still possible? That of the presumptuous and lazy experts: those who believe themselves to be the only wise ones and assume that it is possible for an author of a new thesis not to have gone through the difficulties, doubts and objections that immediately arise for anyone, on unchecked generalities or isolated details. And then there is the resistance of those who are first and foremost aesthetes - that is, sensualists: some more, some less - who cannot bear certain sweet pieces of music dedicated to abstractions, such as 'Tanto gentile'; or certain warm scenes, such as 'Guido, vorrei'; or certain realistic outbursts, such as 'Cosi nel mio parlar' (pp. 351-55). And in fact, I too would sometimes have liked to exclude from allegory such outbursts and frenzies of power. But **who forbids**, first of all, **the introduction of episodic reflections of real and realistic life into the overall allegory?** Even today, are not works of pure invention created, materialised here and there with lived and observed life? And what does our modern mentality - scientific and sceptical - know about the ranges of charity and hatred in medieval passions of faith, thought and politics as a whole? Or who would deny that someone who sees his flight over Geryon as very real has the ability to imagine a living and present enemy, a hated caste looming menacingly everywhere and from everywhere? And then, don't you see?

"I would take revenge on him more than a thousand times over."

Who, then, was

"this deadly and barking bitch"?

This traitor to more than a thousand lovers? Some old harlot? And in fact, yes: a prostitute and murderer, more and more so, for a millennium now: from "Ahi, Costantin". And to these observations, at least I, no longer knew how to respond. Not even Valli managed to find "sufficient evidence" for "a definitive solution" to that powerful enigma of the "Three

women around the heart' (395-65). How many times have I, too, tired myself with my insatiable curiosity! And, just as many times, I have recognised the unbreakable nature of that superb prohibition:

Song, let no man lay hands on your clothes.

And indeed, right now, some exalted good angel of mine should have laid his hand on it, for simple, utterly fitting, unique is the explanation that has suddenly dawned on me here. The most sublime of Dante's sublime songs is nothing more than a more sublime transposition of the fable of the Three Rings. Sister to the now omnipresent Wisdom that is the mother of Love, Righteousness is the Mosaic Law, given directly by God. On the mystical source of the mystical Nile, it then generated the Christian religion, which in turn procreated Muslim metaphysics. This is how it was specified, as any man of thought would have done in Dante's time, and I will neither oppose nor consent to those who, specifying further, would like to think of the three esoteric contents: pre-kabbalistic, Gnostic, and alchemical. For such things - all of them indistinctly - seem to me to be nothing more than transitory masks of the Initiatic Tradition, essentially experience first and knowledge afterwards; then, once again, I do not believe that even the pure and simple external unionism remained faithful to the mature and definitive Dante. But that the identification of Righteousness is beyond doubt is also evident from the strange behaviour of Love: even he is more interested in the other two, and, with her, pitying, yes, but also cruel, since 'because of her torn skirt' (she is the most tattered of the three, and the furthest, for many reasons, from the third),

he saw her in a way that silence is beautiful.

Fellony that seemed a little trivial, and which becomes simply objective and realistic, as it alludes to circumcision. And, once one is identified, the others follow spontaneously. And since the three great spiritual aggregates - which, as children of the same God, should have been one - were instead nothing less than hostile, it was truly impossible to hear in the world,

... in divine speech, to console and grieve. so
high dispersed.

And so it was the three churches that even the Fedeli d'Amore hoped to reconcile into a single wise Church of Love. Had not the three civilisations met at the court of their Frederick? And even Brother Elias had taken refuge there one day. Hence, here, yes, they could - in this practical programme - truly ally themselves and converge in the most varied directions: both heretical and orthodox tendencies, both ascetic and active programmes, both Greek and Latin rites, both monastic and lay organisations, and, perhaps first among all, the Franciscans in general and the Joachimites in particular - hence, further back, an aside not included in my first draft -; but, almost at the centre of all of them, not so much for its specific inner life as for its episodic programme of occasional beneficence, yes, the Initiatic Tradition. There is no need to go as far as Pico, Reuklin, or Kunrath; Raimundo Lullo - that tireless and unfading athlete of so many and such varied battles - is enough for everyone, for in those very years and for that union (9), he travelled and moved across lands and seas; but he was unable to move either one pope or another or yet another, until, for his single-minded Catholic dream, he found, at the age of eighty-three, the challenged and re-challenged martyrdom.

All things, it seems to me, that definitively cut off the head of the bull, even if some cervical vertebrae could still resist, in that exhausted bull of anti-Vallian opposition. Exhausted or not, certain initiatory reviews, such as the recent one by Voile d'Isis, would be poor allies in the battle. In it, **René Guénon** immediately recognises Valli's volume as 'une documentation formidable' (109), but just as immediately reproaches Valli for 'de n'avoir pas la mentalité initiatique qui convient' (110). For which reason, Valli is said to have made many mistakes: - 1st, not realising that Guénon's Esotérisme de Dante (I have not yet read it) has a 'properly initiatory' scope (111); - 2° believing Rossetti to belong to the Rosicrucians, who had in fact long since disappeared from the Western world... yes, that's right: 'du monde occidental' (111). As if the golden Initiatory Rings did not bind

now no longer the whole Earth, perhaps extending to the entire planetary-solar cosmos: for those who, even so, are content with it; - 3rd, not having understood the true meanings of traditional (for what is today the traditional interpretation of Dante among us), nor of heart in general and kind heart in particular (110-11); - 4th, having believed authoritative authors such as Mead, Saunier, and Taxil (all lumped together) and having quoted second-hand from a secret Recueil that could not be quoted first-hand (111-12); - 5° having, in conclusion, mixed up 'l'ésotérique et l'exotérique' (112), confused the initiatic and mystical points of view, and assimilated initiatic things 'à une doctrine religieuse' (113). Fortunately, Guénon immediately goes on to assert that 'une tradition vraiment initiatique ne peut pas être hétérodoxe'. A most consoling event. Guénon reconfirms himself, that is, as one of those highly respectable, distinctly French occultists who, not content with monopolising a true initiaticism of their own, also fabricate a true orthodoxy for the orthodox, only to then triumphantly conclude the orthodoxies mentioned above. And it is useless to pursue the distinguished critic along these lines, behind notes, little notes and tiny notes, made with clearly sympathetic intentions. Valli does not need me to tell him not to be impressed by these intrusive little lessons. He should continue, in a second edition, with what he did so well in the first. Perhaps he should reduce even further the already discreet and always dignified polemic, and then continue to work solely as a pure critic, a pure historian, a pure exegete. How far the heretical intentions went, and where the initiatory connections came from, are things that must blossom, little by little, on their own. And when a K, which among other initials on a medal most likely meant Catholicus, is made to read Kadosch (119), he reserves the right to ask, not for the original diploma, but for any reason that eliminates the anachronisms. This does not mean at all that Guénon is not an initiate and perhaps an Adept - yet another confusion reproached (112) - but that he could simply refrain from taking every opportunity to reiterate that he is an initiate, but that other Westerners in general, and certain enemies of his in particular - to avoid misunderstandings, I am not at all aware that they are my friends - are, poor things! are not; so, 'pour une fois' or for once, against these hated néognostiques, even 'la critique (the profane one) a raison' (117, note). Couldn't we, among us outsiders, on the threshold, halfway across the threshold, stop glaring at each other once and for all? And believe, instead, that even in the initiatory world there is room for all good will? That all roads proverbially lead here to Rome? Rome and Amor, yes (113-14), but also (Vergilius) Maro, and also Orma (10) -? And let each of us, on our own behalf, take those many steps forward that never hurt - nor are ever too many - even if no one else does. And to the others, let us wish that they may surpass us - and even if many do surpass us - for their own greater good, and for the good of all.

It is therefore a relief to be able to revisit a similar, now outdated review with perhaps similar ideas, but with a completely different tone (11). This review is Italian and reflects a very broad, very Western culture, without major tones on minor notes. It is sometimes based on those doctrinal comparisons to which I regret not being able to give equal importance, but it also insists, more often, on useful details that can almost always be documented.

(9) See Dr. LUCIEN - GRAUX, *Le Docteur Illuminé*; Paris, Fayard, 1927; a well-informed and overall very cautious work,

(10) A FOOTPRINT in which I am certain that 'O' does not mean either West or East - neither large nor small - but for whose 'R' I have a vague suspicion of reference to those Rosicrucians whom Guénon believes to have taken refuge in ...the East.

(11) **PIETRO NEGRI**, *Il linguaggio segreto..*; in the Roman magazine UR, year II (1928), fasc. 3-4, pp. 71-80.



4) Edited by P. Negri

Luigi Valli and the Ur Group

Luigi Valli was an attentive reader of the magazine Ur. In vol. I of his main work, *Il Linguaggio Segreto di Dante e dei Fedeli d'Amore* (The Secret Language of Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore), chapter 9, he cites, for example, the essay "Un codice alchemico italiano" (An Italian Alchemical Code) by Pietro Negri (Ur I/9). The essay we reproduce here, entitled "Testimonianze di Studiosi delle Tradizioni" (Testimonies of Scholars of Traditions), can be found in volume II of the same work. In addition to contributions on his work by Pietro Negri, Ercole Quadrelli and Renè Guenon, it also considers those by Antonio Bruers and Sebastiano Arturo Luciani.

Antonio Bruers (Bologna 1887-Rome 1957), secretary to Gabriele d'Annunzio, held the positions of vice-chancellor of the Accademia d'Italia and then of the Accademia dei Lincei. He was editor-in-chief from 1908 and then director (1931-1939) of the psychic research magazine *Luce e Ombra*, where he met Emilio Servadio, among others. In addition to many works on D'Annunzio and Italian and foreign literature, he wrote works on Vico, Croce, Beethoven, Mozart and Vivaldi. He was particularly interested in Tommaso Campanella: he was the editor of the work *Del senso delle cose e della magia* (On the Meaning of Things and Magic), Laterza 1925, and author of the essays *Per il monumento a Tommaso Campanella in Stilo* (For the Monument to Tommaso Campanella in Stilo), Roma S.A.P.I. 1922, and *Roma nel pensiero di Tommaso Campanella* (Rome in the Thought of Tommaso Campanella), Istituto di studi romani 1940. He frequented Ercole Quadrelli. He was part of the Gruppo dei Romanisti, a true community of 'Vestals' of the memory of Rome, which has kept the flame alive from 1940 to the present day. Among other initiatives, it is customary during the ceremony held on 21 April at the Campidoglio to celebrate the birthday of Rome to present the Mayor with the first copy of the yearbook "Strenna dei Romanisti", a volume, new every year, of writings on Rome, relating to its history, its art and its personalities.

In response to Vittorio Fincati (message no. 190 in this forum), we would say that it is this 'Christmas', which falls under the sign of Aries, and not the Christmas we are accustomed to, that Ekatlos refers to in his essay published in 1929 in Krur.

Sebastiano Arturo Luciani (Acquaviva 1884-1959), son of physicist Michele Luciani, lived mainly in Rome, where he devoted himself to art, literature and philosophy, writing several hundred books and articles published in newspapers and magazines. He is probably considered the first Italian film critic. He was one of the signatories of one of the manifestos of Futurism, 'Le sintesi visive della musica' (The Visual Syntheses of Music, 1924). An expert musicologist, he aroused particular interest with his 1913 note 'Una nuova interpretazione del fenomeno degli armonici' (A New Interpretation of the Phenomenon of Harmonics), 'in which, for the first time, assonance is considered the natural basis of all harmony and ancient and modern musical technique' (A. De Angelis). He studied and practised falconry, producing writings such as "Dante falconiere" (Dante the Falconer), "Il trattato di falconeria dell'imperatore Federico II" (The Treatise on Falconry of Emperor Frederick II) and "La caccia col falcone" (Hunting with the Falcon). He also wrote "Leggere Dante" (Reading Dante) and "Saggi sulla Divina Commedia" (Essays on the Divine Comedy) about Dante Alighieri.

4a) LUIGI VALLI

TESTIMONIES FROM SCHOLARS OF TRADITIONS

Many other testimonies came naturally to me from those who, while dealing with literature, did not systematically despise, as is customary in schools, the deeper layers of thought that literature often conceals.

First among these I place **Antonio Bruers** (*Dolce stil nuovo*, *Il Lavoro d'Italia*, 30 December 1927).

He is among those who have given my thesis the support of their very warm and authoritative approval. What is more, he recalls in his article that after the publication of my book *Il segreto della Croce e dell'Aquila nella Divina Commedia* (The Secret of the Cross and the Eagle in the Divine Comedy), he hoped that I would study Rossetti's works in greater depth, which he, unlike the vast majority of our literary figures, had read. I owe it to him that I approached Rossetti, and I am pleased to reconfirm my gratitude to him here for his valuable advice. Bruers expresses doubts about the excessiveness of my symbolic thesis and writes: 'Valli, gripped and almost enraptured by his admirable discovery, tends to exclude, to an extent that seems excessive to me, the poetic values of the Fedeli d'Amore, values which, in my opinion, are identified in the female and natural figures'. I readily acknowledge that the question of how much of real womanhood, or rather of real amorous and earthly impressions, remains in the poetry of the Fedeli d'Amore is not easy to resolve with absolute precision. In my opinion (as in Perez's), when Dante says in *Vita Nuova* that poets must rhyme on amorous subjects, this 'subject' is contrasted with 'form' in the scholastic sense. The amorous subject (i.e. memories, impressions, words of love) constituted, we might say, the material to which the initiatory idea gave form, with which it constructed true poetry. Now, I have never denied (*Il Linguaggio Segreto*, p. 417 ff.) that these people were in love, which means that they drew their love themes from direct, personal experience as well as from literary memories and imitation of others. But when was it personal experience and when was it literary memory and imitation? It is difficult to say and must be judged on a case-by-case basis. It is certain that Dante, in his sonnet

'Guido vorrei' expressed a secret idea (as demonstrated by Guido's response and the moment when the sonnets are exchanged), but it is equally certain that the idea came to him from a real sigh he must have made one day while dreaming of a boat trip with friends and lovely women, as, as far as he hinted at the ritual greeting (sung by the other poets of the *dolce sti1 nuovo* and by them alone) in the sonnet 'Tanto gentile', the sonnet was born, as I have already written, from a true impression of adoration for a beautiful woman passing by in the street amid the moved admiration of all.

I do not therefore exclude the presence of real women, nor do I exclude that in some cases the inspiration came from immediate realistic impressions, impressions of love which were then informed by mystical convention or secret thought. But not only did direct inspiration undergo the elaboration of conventional thought, but in most cases the presence of this direct inspiration does not appear in the slightest, and the evident conventionalism testifies to the elaboration of literary elements.

Another of the few who are not completely new to this subject is **S. A. Luciani** (*Dolce stil nuovo*, *Tribuna*, 22 February 1928). His knowledge of the precedents naturally leads him to find my thesis very obvious. After summarising my ideas, he writes: "From what has just been mentioned, it is easy to argue the literary, philosophical and historical importance of Valli's 'Linguaggio', a brilliant and evocative book, which may be the beginning of a new and more accurate evaluation of all medieval art". He makes two reservations, one on the possibility that *Pietra* is a real woman (but he gives no argument for this), the other on the possibility that there may be poems that were originally erotic but were later reduced to a mystical meaning, something I am far from denying absolutely: for the famous sonnet 'Tanto gentile', my thesis is very similar to his. Luciani's summary formula seems to me to be important and very lucid, according to which "here, as in all medieval art, it is a question of the incarnation of an idea, not the idealisation of a reality". He concludes by hinting at possible mitigations of my thesis: 'Valli has in fact given too abrupt a turn to the rudder of official criticism, so that it should not capsize. It is inevitable, however, that this ship will change course once and for all'.

Pietro Negri ('Ur' March 1928) is a profound connoisseur of traditions. He considers my book to be a piece of jelly thrown into the midst of the usual ideas of the school and points out to me, as new arguments, some fairly important, albeit little-known, connections between facts and ideas of the initiatory world. Certainly, with regard to Rossetti's connection between medieval platonic love and the ancient *nüsteri*, it is very important that in Apuleius' book on initiatory edification, it is also the Rose that must save the beastly man and that it is precisely the goal of all his adventurous quest, which unquestionably represents the

spiritual regeneration crowned by initiation. Negri agrees with me that Rossetti was led to his interpretation by his knowledge of ancient traditions. Rossetti's 'The Mystery of Platonic Love' is not dedicated, as I seem to recall, to B. L., who would be Bulwer Lytton, a scholar of esoterism, but to S... K... This is Seymour Kirkup, who was also a scholar of esoterism (I). I also consider the many comparisons he makes between the symbolism of the Fedeli d'Amore and that which was widespread in other initiatory movements, especially alchemy, to be extremely important. I will return to the importance of the comparison between the figure of the alchemical 'rebis' he resurrected and the figure of 'wife and husband' by Francesco da Barberino.

(I) From Rossetti's unpublished correspondence, it can be seen that while Hookam Freer, who had provided the money for the printing of 'The Mystery of Platonic Love', then asked for it to be destroyed, Rossetti asked Seymour Kirkup to prevent this disaster. For several years, the book was kept in Rossetti's house and not distributed. After Rossetti and his two friends died, others persuaded Rossetti's widow to destroy it.

Ercole Quadrelli (Progresso Religioso, March 1929) not only welcomed my interpretation with great fervour, but also vigorously argued against some of my opponents from the scholastic tradition and against Guenon, whom he reproaches for fabricating an artificial initiatory orthodoxy on his own behalf. However, I would like to focus above all on an amendment he proposed to one of my interpretations, which I think is excellent.

Cecco d'Ascoli, in his sonnet to Dante, writes:

Use caution and repeat it often,
and know how to show yourself to be
Francesco and Rodico. Go, as you should,
straight and clodico. You will succeed, like
those who succeed well. . .

It is clear that the advice here is to use double language or conduct for prudence. Given the struggle between the 'Franceschi' (of Philip the Fair) and the Templars, I had imagined that Rodico might allude to Rhodes instead of nearby Cyprus, the seat of the Templars. Quadrelli points out to me that Rodico could very well be linked to 'ròdon' (Rose) and therefore simply mean 'follower of the Rose'. This interpretation is much clearer and more reasonable than mine and certainly deserves to replace it.

R. Guenon, a well-known scholar of initiatory traditions, devoted a long article to my book in the magazine *Le Voile d'Isis* (February 1929). He is the author of the booklet 'L'esoterismo di Dante' (Paris 1925). It is natural that he agrees with me because for a long time initiatory traditions had claimed Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore for themselves. I have even expressed the doubt that Rossetti, who first conceived ideas about the secret content of Dante's work in Malta, where he had come into contact with a group of Rosicrucians, had learned about these secret contents from them and then searched for them more or less haphazardly through critical analysis. Guenon finds that my argument is based on precise texts that constitute its entire value and, recognising the soundness of my method and the importance of my demonstration, he courteously presents me with some objections and some confirmations. The objections boil down to this: that I speak an inaccurate language when I refer to initiatory traditions because I do not know them.

This is very true. I have never had any contact with initiatory traditions of any kind. My spiritual and mental training is distinctly critical, and until Pascoli and Rossetti opened my eyes, the scholastic tradition had succeeded in imposing its interpretations on me. But I must declare that I insist on sticking to my critical and historical method. My phrase 'making history for history's sake', which Guenon dislikes, is simply the banner of a positive critical method, and the fact that the great minds of the Middle Ages with whom I am concerned acted differently, as he reminds me, does not affect me precisely because they were men of the Middle Ages and I am a man of the 20th century.

It may well be, as he says, that Rossetti could not have been a Rosicrucian 'because the true Rosicrucians had disappeared from the Western world long before', but everyone understands that

These internal problems of initiatory traditions, who are the true Rosicrucians and who are the false ones, represent for me secondary and almost insoluble problems. I fully recognise that the cooperation of those who follow these traditions will be extremely useful in clarifying the whole problem I have raised; however, if, before quoting one or another historian of occult traditions, I had to wait for some authority to provide me with a list of accepted and unaccepted, orthodox and unorthodox historians, I believe that my work would never progress. I know for certain that there are people who call themselves Rosicrucians even today. Even those who know very little about initiatory circles know that in them each group attributes to itself the title of orthodox and true and sole legitimate heir to the ancient tradition. That is why we disagree on the use of the word orthodox, which for me naturally means the doctrine of the Church of Rome and for Guenon means something else. These are those "mèprises que les profanes manquent rarement de commettre" (misunderstandings that the profane rarely fail to commit), as he says, and I recognise that, being profane, I obviously speak a different language from his; but where I cannot agree is when he says that I confuse the mystical point of view with the 'initiatory' point of view. I do not know from which of my words this misunderstanding may have arisen. The confusion would certainly have been serious, because everyone knows how much mysticism that is not at all initiatory has pervaded Christianity and Catholicism.

But Guénon mentions many facts that support my argument, some of which are not without importance, for example, that not only in the title of *Rosa Mystica* but also in other respects, the Virgin has been likened to the figure of Wisdom and confused with her. Another important note: regarding Boccaccio's third novella, in which Melchizedek states with the parable of the three rings that between Judaism, Christianity and Islam 'no one knows which is the true faith', he tells me that according to initiatory tradition, Melchizedek is precisely the representative of the unique tradition hidden beneath all these external forms. He reminds me, with regard to the probable relationship between the Fedeli d'Amore and the Templars, that the Templars' battle cry was 'Vive Dieu Saint Amour!'.

Of course, I cannot but agree with Guenon when he mentions the many points in my discussion that would need much further development.

I will conclude. The convergence of my findings with those of some initiatory traditions is a meeting of two orders of thought that come from different paths, with different intentions, and perhaps with very different assessments of the historical facts at hand. I am pleased with the concordance on the facts, I explain the discrepancies in terms and judgements, I am very happy to learn new facts, and I continue with my method and my intention, which is purely historical. So when Guenon, referring also to my discovery of the symmetries of the Cross and the Eagle and to this coming to light of Dante's secret after six centuries, says that this happened 'parce qu'il était prévu que le secret devait être gardé pendant six siècles (le Naros chaldéen)', I, for my part, continue to believe that the matter is only becoming clear today because we have studied it without preconceptions, with much more material available and with a good method.



5) For a Determination of the Anagogical Meaning

Tullio Quasimodo: I believe that one of the issues to be resolved regarding the doctrine of the Fedeli d'Amore is **to decide what exactly the anagogical** and therefore initiatory **meaning** of their works **refers to**. It seems to me that various scholars, with regard to this higher level of meaning (and therefore not considering other lower-level meanings such as ethical-political meaning), have essentially suggested the following solutions:

a) the 'amorous' language of the Fedeli d'Amore conceals esoteric practices that are generically

conceived and therefore not necessarily based on the initiatory use of love.

b) the 'loving' language indicates precisely the initiatory use of love, but understood as 'platonic love', i.e. without physical contact. To be clear, these would be practices similar to those indicated in the first of the two essays by Abraxa, dedicated to 'two-vessel operations'.

c) The language of love indicates the initiatory use of love requiring physical contact, as in the practices described in the second essay by Abraxa.

d) The language of love has several initiatory meanings among those mentioned, e.g. b) and c) or even a),

b) and c).

EA: I think there is no difficulty in accepting all three suggested anagogical meanings (i.e. the solution $d=a+b+c$). Regarding the first, it can be noted that esoteric practice has common aspects, whatever the methodology used, aspects that are therefore always found in any esoteric writing. However, the choice of a language of love as jargon cannot be accidental. In fact, other languages traditionally used (and therefore proven) in expressing esoteric content were available, e.g. epic and mythological language. Therefore, the use of amorous language can be explained by the need to use expressions that are not too different from the methodology actually used (otherwise the meaning would be excessively vague). With regard to the latter, all esoteric traditions indicate that, from the point of view of inner experience, there is no substantial difference between practices with or without physical contact, so that the relevant texts (not only those of the Fedeli d'Amore) are applicable to both. However, given the historical period (dominated by exoteric and sex-phobic Catholicism) and the political vicissitudes to which various representatives of this current (starting with Dante) were subjected, I do not consider systematic practices with physical contact **to have been** easy, and therefore **I believe that those without physical contact were prevalent**.

Frater Petrus: Why is it that despite the numerous studies on Dante and the many 'keys to the Divine Comedy' proposed by distinguished commentators, Dante's main work still remains an enigma for many scholars?

The most esoteric of the great commentators, **Gabriele Rossetti** (1), had as his main objective to show sceptics how Dante's work was clearly influenced by initiatory circles. He succeeded fully in this, and the confirmations that came later from other authors, such as R. Guénon himself, add nothing to Rossetti's arguments, nor are their pamphlets remotely comparable to Rossetti's monumental works. However, Rossetti did not want, or perhaps did not have time, to address the most intimate meaning of the Comedy directly.

Luigi Valli, for his part, following in the footsteps of Rossetti, but also of Giovanni Pascoli, illustrated important symmetries, but these were more suited to revealing the political and religious implications of the work than its esoteric aspects proper. Valli, in fact, although brilliant in his insights and meticulous in his studies, had a more religious than esoteric 'view'.

A rather overlooked author who deserves greater attention is **Pietro Magistretti**, one of the first members of the Lombard Historical Society, who identified the symbols of 'Fire' and 'Light' as an essential aspect of the Comedy, since, as he himself says in the preface to his main work (2), "if light and heat were removed from the Divine Comedy, it would die, so to speak, like a tree from which these elements transmitted by the air were removed".

(1) Gabriele Rossetti [Vasto (Chieti), 28 February 1783 - London, 26 April 1854] should not be confused with his son Dante Gabriel Rossetti (London 1828 - Birchington 1882), founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

(2) P. Magistretti, *Il Fuoco e La Luce nella Divina Commedia* (Fire and Light in the Divine Comedy), Milan - Dumolard, 1888.

EA: In relation to studies on the Fedeli d'Amore, and to somewhat forgotten scholars, D. di Mambro, whom I greet, rightly reminded me of the name of **Carlo Vecchione**, whose works are also cited by Gabriele Rossetti. Currently, one of them, *Della Sapienza Riposta Della Letteratura Antica Seguita Da Dante* (The Hidden Wisdom of Ancient Literature Followed by Dante), Naples 1850, is being published gradually by chapters, with an introductory note by G.Lo Monaco, at the address <http://it.geocities.com/tidelar/Introduzioner.htm>

While Pietro Magistretti highlighted the importance of "Fire and Light in the Divine Comedy",

Guglielmo Bilancioni emphasised the corresponding importance of sound in his study "A Good Singer, A Good Citarist", Formigini, Rome, 1932.

Sagittario: With specific regard to the **Divine Comedy**, it can also be said, similarly to what has already been said in this forum about the Apocalypse, that it is a **magical book, a vehicle of a dual magic**: if we consider the episodes narrated as situated in 'sacred time', it is the description of an inner journey. If, on the other hand, we consider them to be set in Dante's time, then the apparent prophecies are spells, designed to restore a certain type of tradition. Spells that Dante scholars, consciously or unconsciously, feed and renew, like a veritable unbroken chain of magicians, operating from Alighieri's time to the present day.

[n.d.u.: This theme has been explored in depth by Sipex in his 'Quadro Generale della Commedia' (General Overview of the Comedy): see section 7 in this same notebook.

Quirino Spqr: All the authors we have reread together so far simply affirm or confirm the existence of a generic anagogical meaning in the works of the Fedeli d'Amore. The first author to go a step further is probably **J. Evola**, who **linked the anagogical meaning to practices inherent in the Metaphysics of Sex**. From his work of the same name, I transcribe the following passage. It was somewhat perplexed by the sentence "The meaning of nine is to be the first power of three; that of eighty-one is to be its perfect power (3^3)". I think this is a typographical error and that the sentence can be corrected (by removing the parentheses) to 'The meaning of nine is to be the first power of three; that of eighty-one is to be its perfect power'.

5a) J. EVOLA

From Metaphysics of Sex:

"On the initiatory experiences of the FAITHFUL of LOVE"

"...**The emergence of the initiatory woman through the real one** is clearly expressed in some rhymes by Guido Cavalcanti, who seems to have been one of the main leaders of the organisation: "I seem to see from her lips emerge - a woman so beautiful that the mind cannot comprehend her; that immediately - another of new beauty is born - from which it seems that a star moves - and says: your greeting has appeared". Both Cavalcanti, Dante and Cino da Pistoia say that it is "through the virtue given to them by my imagination", that is, through the evocative fact mentioned above, that Love takes control of the soul of his faithful. It should also be noted that the semantic ambiguity of the terms salute and saluto is found in almost all Stil Novo poetry. The greeting of the mysterious woman, indicated as the end of love, is always such as to also confer health on those who receive it; that is, it brings about an experience and provokes a crisis from which health in the spiritual sense can proceed, through its power that tests the strength of those who obtain it and often even exceeds it. Dante says precisely: 'What suffering it is to see her - it will become a noble thing, or one will die - and when one finds someone worthy - to see her, that one proves virtue; - that which gives health happens to him'. The vision in which Love appears in unusual, far from archaic and sentimental features, as a Lord of frightening appearance, can be referred to the same context. In his arms, says Dante, 'I seemed to see a person sleeping naked, except that she seemed to be wrapped in a light blood-red cloth; looking at her... I knew that she was the woman of health, who had deigned to greet me the day before'. To activate through love this woman seen naked and sleeping, that is, latent - she is what the hermetic texts call 'our hidden Eve' - means to allow a power capable of killing, of causing initiatory death, to act upon oneself. The recurring theme, to the point of monotony, throughout this literature is that when the woman appears in the mind, the heart is dead. Upon seeing the woman and receiving her greeting, Lapo Gianni says, 'Then I strengthened myself so as not to fall - my heart, which was alive, became dead'. Guido Guinizelli speaks of a greeting

and a deadly gaze, comparing himself to the one who "saw his death. - It passes through the eyes, like thunder, striking through the window of the tower, - and whatever it finds inside, it breaks or splits." Love warns those who want to see the woman, saying, "Flee, if perishing is a bother to you." In such an experience, therefore, one must not fear death; a profound inner fracture may in fact be the consequence. A song, perhaps by Cavalcanti himself, speaks of a 'new passion – such that I was filled with fear; that all my virtues were curbed - suddenly, so that I fell to the ground - by a light that struck my heart, and if I am not mistaken, my spirit trembled so strongly that it seemed that death had come to him in this world". Dante describes this experience of being struck by lightning in similar terms: upon perceiving the sudden proximity of the woman of the miracle, the force of Love destroys all his spirits, leaving only those of sight, but detached from his physical organs, as in an ecstatic rapture. Thus Dante seems to fall to the ground and says, 'I kept my feet in that part of life beyond which one cannot go with the intention of returning'. Further on, he speaks of a transfiguration; in another passage, he returns to the motif of destruction wrought by love. Moreover, in Kabbalism there was talk of mors osculi, death by kiss, and similar expressions are also found among the poets of Persian Sufism.

Considering the writings of the Fedeli d'Amore as a whole, it appears that these effects are sometimes produced by the direct action of women (their appearance), and sometimes by their indirect action: their image, their greeting, their idea brings Love **from power to action**, in terms of a force that arouses terror and kills initially. Cavalcanti also speaks of an action on the 'possible intellect', a term taken from Averroist Aristotelianism, where it describes the *voûs*, the intellectual principle in its transcendent aspect, which in ordinary men exists only as a possibility. According to the path followed by the true Fedele d'Amore, it is therefore through the woman-life that this possibility comes to fruition, that is, that it becomes reality in his consciousness, transforming him. Cavalcanti writes, 'You who pass through my heart with your eyes - and awaken my sleeping mind', and adds that love 'takes place and dwells in the possible intellect as a subject'. Guinzelli indicates the 'heart' as the seat of 'nobility' that comes into being through the effect of the woman. In the development of the experience, the emotional-traumatic moment therefore seems to pass into pure intellect (the 'rebirth in the mind' referred to in the *Corpus Hermeticum*). The 'nobilitate' often referred to in this regard (indicating Love as the 'Signore de la nobilitate'), brought about by the woman in the ecstasy she provoked, is an ontological perfection not unrelated to this awakening of the intellectual essence; in all things, says Dante, quoting Aristotle, nobilitate is the perfection of their nature, and in this regard there is also talk of denudation, using once again the symbolism of nudity: Love is a power capable of bringing the spirit out of its 'abode' and making it fly 'naked, without a shell'.

In general, the recurring theme is **a crisis followed by the beginning of a new or transformed life**, for which there are sometimes explicit references to the mystery of androgyny. Da Barberino has Love say, 'The blows are of such a nature that whoever believes himself to be dead then finds himself in greater life'. In a table, he orders the degrees of experience in question into a kind of hierarchy. In this illustration, we see symmetrical male and female figures which, as is quite evident and as Valli had already noted, are to be taken in pairs. Men and women are struck by Cupid's arrows, to varying degrees; at first they fall to the ground, but as they approach a central figure, they stand up and hold roses, symbols of initiatory rebirth. After the last pair, which bears the caption 'From this death shall follow life', there are no longer separate men and women, but a single androgynous figure, above which Love, holding roses himself, takes flight on a white horse. The androgynous figure has a caption with the words 'Love, you have made two into one, with supernal virtue through marriage'. The key meanings could not be clearer: after the crisis, which even in its early stages wounds, knocks down and kills, union with woman and supreme virtue through marriage lead to androgyny (which in the illustration is depicted exactly as the hermetic *Rebis*), a state beyond which Love will develop upwards, in flight or rapture, in a transcendent direction, the experience. And in fact, another Follower of Love, Nicolò de' Rossi, discussing the 'degrees and

virtues of true love', considers the culmination of all of them to be ecstasy 'quale dicitur excessus mentis' (it is added: sicut fuit raptus Paulus), which means the opening of the spirit to super-individual and super-rational states of being.

It is particularly interesting that Dante also refers to **the action of Love as a binding and subjugation of the vital spirit**, that is, the naturalistic part, or yin part, of being, which makes it exclaim 'Ecce Deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi'. It is as if, through the awakening of a higher principle (the possible intellect passed into action, the nobilitate – in Hindu terms: the luminous principle Shiva), a new hierarchy is established among the various powers of the human being. In the Convivio, although a more allegorical-wisdom interpretation predominates over an analogical and initiatory one (it is the former that Dante explicitly says to stop at), the 'miraculous woman of virtue' is said to arouse the 'right appetite', which 'undoes and destroys its opposite'; she emanates a fire 'that breaks innate, that is, natural vices', having 'power in regained nature in those who look at her, which is a miraculous thing'. The health achieved through awakening and this new inner situation of the powers of being ensures participation in initiatory immortality. We have already mentioned the agreed etymology, which a Provençal exponent of the same current, Giacomo di Baisieux, uses to identify love with 'without death', with the destruction of death, for which he speaks of lovers as 'those who do not die' and who will live 'in another century of joy and glory'. In any case, the Fedeli d'Amore firmly hold on to the concept of the woman to whom one is united as the possible beginning of a higher life, so that when she detaches herself, the shadow of death reappears. Cecco d'Ascoli says precisely, 'I am transformed in the third heaven - in this Woman, whom I do not know who I was. - For which I feel ever more blessed. My intellect forms her, showing me health in her eyes, gazing at virtue in her presence. Therefore, I am She: and if she leaves me, then I will feel the shadow of death.

Regarding the Fedeli d'Amore, we will conclude by mentioning two more points. The first concerns **numerical symbolism**. We know the role that the number three and its multiples play in both Dante's main work and in Vita Nova. In the latter, it is especially the first power, or square, of three, namely nine, that stands out. In the first encounter, the woman is nine years old (which, given the traumatic effects produced by the vision of her, should already rule out the realistic interpretation of Beatrice as a little girl of that age). It is at the ninth hour that the greeting takes place, as well as one of the most significant visions narrated by the poet. The woman's name, says Dante, 'suffers no other number than nine'. The number reappears as the duration of a certain painful illness of Dante. As an explanation, Dante merely says that 'the number three is the root of nine, because, without any other number, it makes nine by itself'. As for the number three, referring to the Christian Trinity, he calls it 'the factor of miracles in itself' and concludes by saying, 'This woman was accompanied by the number nine, to imply that she was a nine, that is, a miracle, whose root, that is, the miracle, is only the wonderful Trinity'. This is, in essence, a half-truth, while in the circles to which Dante belonged, a more precise and universal aspect of the symbolism of the number three and its powers was certainly known. We have already mentioned how three is the number of yang and how it also signifies what is born from the addition of the One to the feminine number, the Two, to bring it back, beyond it, to unity. In ancient Egypt, three was the number of lightning, but also that of the life force and the invisible life entity enclosed within the body, the kha. Moreover, the number nine and, finally, eighty-one were also associated with yang, so much so that the latter number has a curious role, which we will mention, even in a detail of Taoist sexual techniques. **The meaning of nine is to be the first power of three; that of eighty-one is to be its perfect power (3³)**. The latter number leads, in a certain way, beyond the very experience of the 'woman of the miracle' - and it is not without significance that Dante himself, in Convivio, speaks of it as the age of a perfect and fulfilled life; he also recalls that this was the age of Plato and goes so far as to say that Christ would have reached this age had he not been killed. But this symbolic age also appears in other traditions - no different age, incidentally, was attributed to Lao-Tze. Overall, these are cycles of fulfilment of the One who finds himself through the Dyad, the Two, the feminine, developing as the act, the power of himself

itself until it is identical to this very power of itself, establishing itself in 'nobilitate'. Now, Dante, who has Beatrice die on the 9th day of June, also notes that in Syria June is the ninth month and, finally, he adds that this death occurred when 'the perfect number nine was completed', that is, in 81 of the 13th century.

The second point we wanted to make concerns the **death** of the **woman**, Beatrice. Already in Perez, then in Valli, this death has been linked to that of the biblical Rachel, recalling how Augustine and Richard of St. Victor took Rachel's death as a symbol of ecstasy, of *excessus mentis*. Valli believes that in the *Vita Nova*, too, the death of the woman is 'a representation of the mind transcending itself in the act of pure contemplation: a mystical representation of the mind losing itself in God'. However, we find this interpretation somewhat inadequate; not only does it focus solely on the mystical plane, which is not that of the *Fedeli d'Amore*, but, in our opinion, it actually reverses the situation in question. Certainly, the woman's death marks the final stage of the experience that begins with the greeting to her, and in this regard, enigmatic expressions are found in chapter XXVII of the *Vita Nuova*. After reporting Beatrice's death, Dante adds the mysterious words: 'It is not fitting for me to discuss this event, because in doing so I would be praising myself', as if the event, Beatrice's death, were to his glory. Valli's mystical interpretation does not fit, because if it had been the death of the mind ('the killing of the mental', of the *manas*, according to Hindu yogic terminology), it would simply have been one of the effects of the woman and Love on the lover; not to mention that dying, interpreted as a mystical shipwreck, would then concern not the woman, but the Faithful of Love: while the opposite is said, it is the woman who dies, to the glory of the Faithful of Love... the opposite idea does not seem too risky to us, namely that the ultimate term of the experience is represented by the overcoming of the woman in the completely accomplished reintegration. This is what in Hermeticism corresponds to the 'Red Work' after the 'White Work' (preceded by the 'Black Work', 'death' or 'dissolution'), that is, a condition of restored virility beyond ecstatic openness; a final state for which, again in Hermeticism, there was sometimes talk of killing the one who had killed but also 'generated' (regenerated) them. And, as we have seen, in addition to nine, Dante brings in eighty-one for the death of the woman.

This interpretation is also supported by a point that, in our opinion, has never been sufficiently emphasised, namely that while in Christian mysticism the soul acts as the 'bride' of the heavenly bridegroom, in all this literature, but also in the variety of female symbolism previously mentioned in sagas and myths, the roles are generally reversed, because **it is the subject of the experience that has the masculine quality**. Nor could anything else be expected, if the *Fedeli d'Amore* were an initiatory and not a mystical organisation. One last detail that is not without significance: in an apparent anomaly, Guido Cavalcanti, who, as mentioned above, must have been one of the leaders of that organisation, states that Love derives and dwells not in the heaven of Venus but in that of Mars - 'which comes from Mars and dwells there'; and Dante, tacitly, seems to have shared this view. This is a point whose significance will not escape anyone.

We have dwelled at length on the *Fedeli d'Amore* because they establish a connection between some of the main themes we have highlighted in the course of this study, including in the field of profane eros. In this field, Knut Hamsun was able to speak of love as 'a power to destroy man and then raise him up again and mark him with its burning brand'. Stendhal reports the following expressions for a real case of the so-called *coup-de-forude*: 'A superior force that I fear has taken me away from myself and my reason'. Feeling Lotte's breath, Werther says: 'I feel as if I am falling, as if struck by lightning'. It must be assumed that among the *Fedeli d'Amore*, similar experiences, mediated by women, were developed and integrated, beyond all that is literature and hyperbole. In their compositions, the same theme is precise and recurrent, just as other themes are recurrent and clearly evident, which we have sporadically collected while studying the phenomena of transcendence in profane love:

rapture and death, the profound meaning of the heart, **trauma in the heart considered as a hidden place** (Dante's 'secret chamber of the heart') **and a place to be purified** ('the gentle heart') because in it the dazzling mystery of the Three will begin as a result of the miracle woman and the 'Lord of Nobility'.

In conclusion, with regard to the Fedeli d'Amore, **both aesthetic and realistic interpretations that refer everything to real women and experiences of simple human love transposed, sublimated and hyperbolised by the poet, and purely symbolic interpretations that bring into play mere abstractions of wisdom** or even personifications of Gnosis (the "Holy Wisdom") as an illuminating power, but without any actual relation to the power of femininity. The second was the point of view followed by the exegesis not only of Valli, but also of Guenon and Reghini; while it may be acceptable in the case of mystical circles of more or less Neoplatonic derivation (including Bruno), and also of Arab-Persian poetry flourishing between the 9th and 14th centuries, in our opinion it is incomplete in the case of the Fedeli d'Amore. If we refer to them, the alternative must be overcome, and as an essential basis we must consider the possibility of evocations and contacts for initiatory purposes with the occult principle of femininity in a liminal, immaterial region, beyond which there are only the forms of sexual magic proper as the extreme development of the possibilities of eros on the non-profane plane. This is the domain that we will still have to deal with after mentioning the third of the solutions listed at the beginning, that of ascetic and yogic transmutations of the forces of sex.

That aside, **in the whole of what is evocation and participation, two paths can be distinguished which, respectively, are in the sign of the two fundamental female archetypes: Demeter and Durga**. The first path is based on the feminine-maternal principle considered as the source of the sacred, and leads to immortality, peace and light almost along the same lines as what, in the same profane and human sphere, can come to those who take refuge with the maternal woman; in this context, Pythagoreanism recognised a particular sacredness in women and even spoke of the mother as initiator. The orientation of this current, given here as an example, is clear from the fact that Pythagoras' house was transformed into a shrine to Demeter after his death. The same female figure is enhanced in myth in terms of the celestial Virgin and the divine Mother mediator. The other path, on the other hand, passes through Durga, the abyssal aphrodisiac feminine, and can be both a path of perdition and a path of overcoming the Mother in the sign of what we have called the Great Mysteries in the proper sense.

EA: Let us dwell on the sentence from Evola's text: 'The meaning of nine is to be the first power of three; that of eighty-one is to be its perfect power (3^3)'.

Taken in a literal and mathematical sense, the sentence contains two errors:

- nine is not the first power of three, but the second; the first power is in fact three itself;
- eighty-one is not the third power of three (which is twenty-seven), but the fourth power.

If, as Quirino suggested, the 3^3 in brackets were removed, the first error would still remain.

However, the sentence is correct if interpreted 'ad sensum'. Evola meant to say: 'The meaning of nine is to be the square of three; that of eighty-one is to be, in turn, the square of nine.' In fact, Seneca, referring to the perfection of eighty-one, wrote: 'perfectum numerum quem novem novies multiplicata componiunt'.

Frater Petrus: I also believe that Evola wanted to express the fact that in nine, three was multiplied only once by itself, while in eighty-one it was multiplied three times by itself. **He simply used the term 'power' incorrectly**. The fact that perfection is indicated by three to the fourth power (eighty-one) rather than three to the third power (twenty-seven) ties in with what Massimo said about the greater perfection symbolised by the tetraskele compared to the

triskele. If we place a three on each arm of these two symbols and then multiply them together, in the case of the triskele the product will be twenty-seven, which (given the overall meaning of the triskele) may express a certain degree of perfection, but which does not go beyond the limits of Nature. In the case of the tetraskete, the four threes will give a product of eighty-one, which will therefore indicate the supernatural (the perfect act of the Spirit) that is added to natural perfection. As Evola says in the continuation of the passage proposed by Quirino, it is the fulfilment of the Spirit, which finds itself in its relationship with Nature; but it finds itself (it is worth emphasising) 'empowered'. In other words, it is not a question of the Spirit detaching itself from Nature in order to simply return to itself; such disidentification can only serve as a preliminary step. Then the Spirit must, so to speak, 'marry' Nature (alchemical marriage) and finally turn to dominate it. The Western symbolism of the 'powers' of the Three (i.e. Spirit=One added to Nature=Two) has its equivalent in the well-known phrase from Shivaite Tantrism that 'the Spirit (symbolised by Shiva) is like a corpse (shava) without its Power (Shakti)'.

EA: If we bear in mind what has already been said in the Notebook dedicated to the Magic Door of Rome, the meaning of the powers of Three in relation to the Opus alchimum becomes clear. In the common man, who, due to his overwhelming dependence on Nature, can be called "Natural Man", the union between Spirit and Nature has endowed the Spirit (Sun) with three bodies of manifestation in Nature (Mercury, Moon and Saturn), which together with the Spirit itself constitute the "four bodies" of Hermeticism. The three qualities of Nature (Prakriti), namely albedo (sattva), rubedo (rajas) and nigredo (tamas), are never isolated, but always mixed in varying proportions: albedo prevails in Mercury, rubedo in the Moon, and nigredo in Saturn. This is the **first Three**, the 'basis' of all subsequent 'powers'. If man remains at this stage, even though he is perfect (triune) as a man, at his death the Spirit returns to itself, abandoning the three bodies of manifestation, which follow destinies inherent in their respective qualities, so that nothing remains in Nature that can be said (except with little justification and limited to the mercurial body) to belong to that individual.

The first step of the opus consists in assuming dominion over the mercurial body (transformation of mercury into gold). Albedo predominates in Mercury, but to varying degrees in its three main aspects. In the upper lunula of the symbol of mercury (receptive intellect), albedo clearly prevails. In the circle with the central point (Egoity and Mind as common Sensory), rubedo, although secondary to albedo, is in high proportion. In the cross below (Elemental Elements or Subtle Elements), nigredo is secondary to albedo.

The domain of these three mercurial mixtures constitutes the **second Three**, which multiplied by the first (the "base") produces Nine, symbolising, in this context, the first and simplest nucleus of individuality, capable of surviving death. In reincarnation or, more generally, in transmigration, this nucleus (sun-mercury) will still depend on the services of Nature, which will have to provide it, through the usual means, with the lunar and Saturnian bodies, which it is not yet able to provide for itself.

The second step consists in assuming dominion over the lunar body (transformation of silver into gold). Rubedo predominates in the Moon but, even in this case, in different proportions, depending on the cycles to which vitality is subject. The waxing Moon is a symbol of phases in which albedo grows progressively, while remaining secondary to rubedo. The waning moon is a symbol of phases in which nigredo grows, while remaining secondary to rubedo. The full moon and the black moon are symbols of moments of 'transit' in the cycles of vitality, in which rubedo, which is always dominant, inhibits the quality that was growing, stimulating the regrowth of the other that was diminishing. The dominance of growth, decline and transition of antagonistic vital aspects constitutes the **third Three** which, multiplied by the previous Nine, produces Twenty-Seven. This second degree of realisation is still 'within the limits of Nature', in that the practitioner is not yet capable of giving himself a gross body of manifestation (but only a 'subtle' one, i.e. sun+mercury+moon), so that, in order to assume one, he must still take it from among those normally produced by Nature.

The third step consists precisely in assuming dominion over the Saturnian body (transformation of lead into gold). In Saturn, nigredo prevails, again in different proportions. At this gross level, the mixtures of the three qualities are called, by Tradition, 'Humours'. In

In the West, the humours are called: Phlegm, Bile and Blood; in India they are called Phlegm, Bile and Air. Air and Blood correspond symbolically, suffice it to say that the latter is the vehicle of the former. The three humours should not be confused with the concept that contemporary secular medicine has of them. For example, 'Air', symbolising everything that has a vibratory nature, also includes electromagnetic oscillations and nerve transmissions. However, we cannot dwell here on the sub-modalities of these humours; we will simply note that, here in the West, one of the best known distinctions is between 'yellow bile' and 'black bile'. More importantly, it should be noted that nigredo clearly prevails in phlegm; in bile, rubedo is second to nigredo; in 'blood-air', albedo is second to nigredo. The domain of these three humours constitutes the **fourth Three** which, multiplied by the previous Twenty-seven, produces Eighty-one. The adept, having reached this point, is 'beyond Nature'; not in the sense that he is detached from it, but in the sense that in order to manifest himself in any of his 'bodies', he is no longer subject to the automatisms of Nature.



6) DANTE AND PYTHAGORAS

by Paolo Vinassa De Regny

Fabritalp: If you want to explore the use of Pythagorean symbolism in Dante's work, it might be useful to read or reread some passages from 'Dante e il simbolismo pitagorico' (Dante and Pythagorean Symbolism) by Paolo Vinassa De Regny, F.lli Melita Editori, Milan, 1988.

EA: Very well, I will help you with the transcription. This is the latest edition of the work: Paolo Vinassa de Regny- Dante e Pitagora - Gioacchino Albano, Milan, 1956. On this author, I would like to point out the following note by A. Boni, "**Ricordo di Paolo Vinassa De Regny**" (Memories of Paolo Vinassa De Regny), in "Bollettino Società Geologica Italiana" (Bulletin of the Italian Geological Society), LXXVII (1958), fasc.1, pp. 237 - 240.

Paolo Emilio Vinassa De Regny was born in Florence in 1871. He studied Natural Sciences at the University of Pisa, where he was a student of Canavari, and was attracted to the study of geology and palaeontology. In 1902, he became an extraordinary professor of Mineralogy and Geology at the Agricultural College of Perugia; he was then in Catania from 1908 to 1911 and in Parma from 1911 to 1924. A volcanologist during the eruption of Mount Etna in 1910 and a volunteer in the Alpine troops during the First World War, he moved to Pavia in 1924, taking up the same chair that had been held by Abbot Antonio Stoppani (1824 - 1891) and Torquato Taramelli (1845-1922), one of the founders of the Italian Geological Society. De Regny remained in Pavia from 1941. He was rector of the University of Pavia, a member of the Accademia dei Lincei, the Accademia d'Italia and other important scientific associations; he was also a senator of the Kingdom. But De Regny was above all a geologist, stratigrapher and tectonist. He worked in Montenegro, Libya and Dancalia, a region for which he drew up the first geological map. His work as a palaeontologist was so fundamental that he was also sought after abroad to study the fossil fauna of Timor and Karakorum. He wrote a palaeontology textbook (published by Hoepli) which has been studied by generations of students. From 1897 to 1941, he also edited the Rivista Italiana di Paleontologia (Italian Journal of Palaeontology). In the field of geology, he devoted himself to geochemistry, developing a theory on the relationship between atomic structures and the frequency and distribution of elements. He is remembered by the many geologists who were his students as a great populariser. He died in Cavi di Lavagna in 1957.

Excerpts from
VINASSA DE REGNY PAOLO
"Dante and Pythagoras"

1. - The Number

Numeris quos in Scripturis
esse sacratissimos
et mysteriorum plenissimos
dignissime credimus.

AGOSTINO - Quæst. in Genesim - I, CIII

The concept of numbers is fundamental to humans, even the least evolved. The simplest numerical idea is that of perceiving a change in the quantity of objects that fall within our senses. It seems that even some animals, such as certain birds in relation to the quantity of eggs, have a vague concept of numbers as quantities when these are changed. But the ability to count is unique to humans. The first method of counting was certainly based on the limbs, especially the hands, which led to ten, the basis of the decimal system. If humans had six fingers on each hand, the duodecimal number system would certainly have prevailed, which, incidentally, would have been much more convenient. The duodecimal numbering system has remained in the concept of a dozen. Some peoples, such as the Eskimos, are said to have also introduced their toes into counting, thus arriving at a vigesimal numbering system. Traces of this numbering system have also remained in French. This makes expressing numbers unnecessarily complicated; for example, 92 in French involves multiplication and addition: it is in fact *quatrevingtdeuze*, i.e. $4 \times 20 + 12$. When writing was discovered and introduced, numbers, which were previously indicated by simple signs, were then identified with letters of the alphabet; this is well known to have been done by the Romans, for example. In fact, Roman numerals persisted until the 15th century, although shortly after 1200, the Pisan merchant Fibonacci, who was also a talented mathematician, brought Indian numerals, improperly called Arabic, from the East. The science of numbers, which may have originated in Greece, passed to India and from India to the Arabs. The Arabs had great mathematicians and gave their name to algebra, a word whose derivation from Arabic (art. al) is very clear. It was this numbering system that made it possible to develop arithmetic in an extraordinary way. In fact, with Roman numerals, even basic operations were extremely difficult. There is a well-known anecdote about a Dutch merchant in the Middle Ages who wanted his son to study and asked the scholars of the time for advice.

'If you want your son to learn addition and subtraction,' he was told, 'you can send him to a German university; but if you want him to know how to do multiplication and division as well, you must send him to an Italian university'.

This anecdote shows not only the high regard in which Italian universities were held in the Middle Ages, but also the great difficulty presented by the latter two operations, which our children now learn in the early years of primary school (1).

In ancient times, therefore, arithmetic, which is very easy for us today, was a lofty and abstruse science, so much so that it remained the preserve of a few superior minds and, in particular, the priestly caste.

In India, which was perhaps the heir to Italo-Greek arithmetic, the Brahmin priests held the mysteries of numbers. We will soon see that the same thing happened in Egypt.

As a legacy often exclusive to the priesthood, numbers took on a sacred, divine meaning from the very beginning, and numbers and their symbols were thus given a mystical content.

As mentioned, the so-called Arabic numerals, whose introduction into Europe is attributed to Fibonacci, took a long time to be adopted by the public. And even for this numbering system, the mystery persisted. The modern arithmetic system, known as the positional system, originated from the discovery, perhaps by an unknown Indian, who made all operations easier by introducing the symbol of **zero**. This was one of humanity's greatest discoveries. The zero, which has various meanings in arithmetic, represents nothingness for the general public. However, this is not the case at all. The zero was initially intended to mark a void. It was the sign that indicated that a certain row was empty on the abacus (one of the oldest calculating instruments, still used today by Eastern peoples). Let's take an example. If the abacus showed the digits 8, 3, 5 on five rows, it was not clear how to write them in order to convey their position. It could be 83005, or 80305, or even 80035. The indication, by means of a line or a small circle, of the empty rows on the abacus marked the **position** of the various digits on it, and therefore the different value of the number obtained. This gave rise to what is known as positional arithmetic, thanks to which operations that were extremely complicated with numerical letters became accessible to everyone.

This zero brought, as has been said, a revolution in arithmetic and thus appeared as something miraculous. From this mystical concept arose a number of expressions that have remained in the language, and which refer to something secret and mysterious. The Arabs called zero siphir, which in Latin became zephir (hence zero); in other languages, 'siphir' became 'cifra'. The fact that the new numbering system, which facilitated arithmetic operations, was something mysterious can be seen from the expressions derived from siphir, namely: in cifra, decifrare, etc., all of which indicate something secret. This is all the more so because, as we have seen, Arabic numerals were opposed by misoneists and traditionalists and even prohibited by the Church. It was at a Council of Cardinals in 1299 that the use of Arabic numerals was expressly prohibited. Even the *maggioredei* merchants of Calimala in same year issued a similar measure. But it is certain that many merchants used the new system in secret. These prohibitions contributed to increasing the mystery surrounding the number. Dante, a traditionalist like all the scholars of his century, although some had already been following the new numbering system for some time, was perhaps unaware of it; he certainly never took it into account, remaining constantly faithful to Roman numerals.

A brief digression is necessary regarding this numbering system. In the beginning, numerical indications were almost certainly made with symbols rather than letters. It is natural that the symbol for one was represented by a more or less vertical line. After one came ten, which was marked with two crossed lines. Even today, illiterate farmers mark sacks and barrels in this way. One hundred was indicated with three angular marks and one thousand with four zigzag marks. The numbering did not go beyond one thousand. The marks were therefore those shown in figure 1:



fig. 1

If we look at these marks, we can clearly see that one is similar to the letter I, ten to X, one hundred, rounded, to the letter C, and one thousand to M. There are therefore four basic numerical letters. But everyone knows that there are also the letters V, L, and D, for 5, 50, and 500, which are

half of ten, one hundred and one thousand. These letters are also derived from the previous signs. In fact, by mechanically dividing the sign for ten with a horizontal line, we get a V, which is half of X; and by cutting an angular one hundred, C, we get an L. Cutting the sign for thousands vertically produces a kind of hook, which, when rounded, can be identified as a D.

It therefore appears that there are only four true numerical letters, since the others are mechanical halves of them. Now these four letters, I, X, C and M, occupy a position in the alphabet that has a sacred, mystical numerical value. I is the ninth letter of the alphabet. And since one is, as we shall see, the logos, the non-number but origin of all numbers, since it is that which, when multiplied or divided by itself or raised to any power, always remains one, it is the symbol of God. There are many cases that confirm this idea. Valli (2) cites a figure by Francesco da Barberino, who is depicted kneeling in front of the initial letter of one of his chapters, which is precisely an I. And Dante tells us that: 'I was called the Supreme Good on earth'. This is in contrast to what he wrote in 'De Vulgari Eloquentia', where the name of God is indicated with EI. But EI is the Hebrew Eli, while the language used by Adam has disappeared. The choice of I for the **nomen Domini** is due to the fact that this letter, as mentioned, is also the One, that is, God. Ubertino da Casale states that I is rightly the nomen Domini because it is the median of the vowels and therefore symbolises the Word between the Father and the Spirit. Nor should we forget that I forms the Triunus, III, which, according to Augustine, symbolises the One and Triune God. It may be interesting to note that Laotseu, 600 years before Christ, also attached great importance to 1.

X is the twenty-first letter of the alphabet, i.e. three times the mysterious seven. Precisely because seven is the mystery, in mathematics the unknown was indicated by x. The hundred has C as its third letter, and finally the last, M, occupies the twelfth place, and we shall see how much 12 is a mystical number.

Dante used these letters in his calculations and gave them great importance. When discussing Dante's numerology, we must always bear in mind the Roman numeral system and not our Arabic one, which Dante did not know, or perhaps did not want to know.

(1) Here is an example. If we were to multiply 1001 by 288 (i.e. MI by CCLXXXVIII in Roman numerals) or divide one by the other, we would find ourselves faced with a problem that is, if not absolutely, certainly difficult to solve today.

(2) Valli, *Il linguaggio segreto dei Fedeli d'Amore*. Added notes, p. 121.

2. - Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans

One of the highest philosophical and scientific manifestations was established six hundred years before Christ in Crotona thanks to Pythagoras. In fact, the philosophy of the number-idea, the pride of the sunny, harmonious Mediterranean civilisation, prevailed at that time. For the Pythagoreans, it was not a matter of obscure and convoluted kabbalistic meanings. It was Pythagoras' glory to elevate numbers to the status of a religion.

Pythagoras, the somewhat mythical philosopher-scientist, whom his followers considered a demigod, is famous for himself and, more than anything else, for his school, which continued long after his death and was mystical, initiatory, governed by the oath of the sacred tetractis, the quaternity. The Pythagoreans worshipped this divine **tetrad**, consisting of 1, 2, 3, 4, whose sum was 10. I quote from Dantzig (3) the Pythagoreans' prayer to the Tetractis: 'Bless us, O divine number, from whom gods and men derive. O holy, holy Tetrad, you who contain the root, the source of the eternal flow of creation. The divine number begins with pure and profound unity and reaches the sacred four; then it produces the matrix of everything, that which encompasses everything, that which connects everything; the firstborn, that which never deviates, that which never tires, the sacred ten, which has within itself the

key to all things'.

In addition to philosophical speculations on numbers, the Pythagoreans are credited with founding the experimental method, two thousand years before Galileo; and also the concept of mathematical physics, the idea of the infinitesimal, the theorem known as Pythagoras' theorem, and, in the theory of proportions, the golden ratio, the basis of architecture and the figurative arts until at least Leonardo. It was certainly not today. It was a Pythagorean, Parmenides, who proved that the Earth was spherical. Another Pythagorean, Philolaus, taught that the Earth was not at the centre of the universe. Aristarchus followed him in 300 BC. But this accurate opinion of the great Pythagoreans was overwhelmed by Ptolemy's geocentric doctrine. It took the genius of Copernicus and Galileo to revive it.

Pythagoras was therefore a truly great scientist for his time, but he was also the philosopher who applied numbers to the universe. In Pythagoreanism, numbers are not abstract quantities but an intrinsic and active virtue of the Supreme One, God, the source of universal harmony. For the Pythagoreans, numbers were therefore the essence of things, since numbers are everywhere. The universe exists by virtue of numbers; the Cosmos (a name proposed by Pythagoras) is not only mathematical order (4) but also beauty and harmony, since harmony and order are inseparable.

The Pythagorean school also brought harmony of sounds to the heavens. For the Pythagoreans, the planets are separated by the same proportional interval that the Pythagorean school had experimentally demonstrated existed between musical notes. The celestial spheres therefore resounded with perfect harmony. Dante agreed with the Pythagorean idea. As soon as he began his ascent to the heavens, he was astonished not only by the enormous light but also by the magical musical harmony due to the One who moves everything. And throughout Paradise there will always be light, song, sound and harmony beyond the human realm.

Pythagoras left no treatise: in fact, his school was based solely on oral teaching to initiates. It was Philolaus, a disciple of Pythagoras, who first revealed at least part of his master's teachings in his writings. Philolaus states that harmony and number do not tolerate or involve errors. We owe the concept of concordia discors to Philolaus, who asserted that harmony is the unity of the multiple, the agreement of the discordant, our musical counterpoint. The same author writes that 'all things that are known to us have a number, for it is impossible for anything to be known or imagined without number'.

For the Pythagoreans, everything physical is decadic, since, as Theon of Smyrna says, the decade encompasses *pasan fūsin*; every physical property and essence. We will talk about this again. And Temistio asserts that the ten numbers were *eideitikoī*, formative. According to Porphyry, it was man's duty to always fight *ametron*, the lack of symmetry in things.

The Pythagorean school also has another claim to fame: that of having identified arithmetic and geometry by equating **unity**, the origin of all numbers, with **the point**, the origin of all figures. Hence the importance of the first four numbers and corresponding points, from which all figures could be constructed, and whose sum gave the perfect ten.

The Pythagoreans, who had experimentally discovered the relationship between sounds, also found that geometric figures subject to touch and sight were numerical perfection. Circles, spheres and regular polygonal figures, all constructible with a set square and compass, were the elements with which the Supreme God had harmoniously constructed the Universe (5).

The Pythagoreans' concept of numbers signifying ideas is therefore grandiose. It was they who came up with the concept of number-idea, a concept that is also Plato's. These concepts are the true greatness of the Pythagorean school, for, as Chaignet says, conceiving the properties of numbers is mathematics, but discerning the relationship between number and being is profound philosophy. Another admirer of the Pythagoreans, Barthelémy Saint Hilaire (6), calls the Pythagorean idea that physical nature can be reduced to geometric figures and these to numbers, discovering

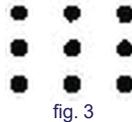
in all the harmonies of Nature the musical harmonies, whose relationships are resolved with proportional numbers.

In Italy, for a long time, almost no importance was given to Pythagoras, this giant of our Mediterranean thought, as we were all busy chasing after the nebulous Nordic philosophers. Fortunately, today we are returning to him. This is attested to by Alessio's volume and, more importantly, by a powerful study by Capparelli, the first volume of which appeared not long ago; both are listed in the bibliography.

But let us now return to the topic that interests us most, namely the numerical one relating to the Tetractys. Given the Pythagorean concept of the one-point, the Tetractys was also represented by a perfect triangle, as shown in Figure 2. From each corner, we ascend from 1 to 4; the sum of the points is 10, a number that encompasses everything.



The indication of numbers with dots has also remained in our mathematical language with the terms we use for square, cube, etc. Thus, 3^2 is equal to 9; but marked with dots, it is precisely a square, as shown in figure 3. The same can be said of the cube. However, the square also had another name: dūnemics, or power, a name that has also remained in our arithmetic nomenclature.



As for the value of the components of the tetractys, we can observe that **one** is not a number; it is the principle of everything; **en archà pòinton** has everything in itself and is still one: it is the immaterial normal, the idea, the logos. But at the same time, it is also the point, the origin and beginning of all flat and solid figures. The Creator is foreshadowed in the One and in the Point. Severinus Boethius says (*Ars geometrica*, p. 397): **Primus autem numerus est binarius; unitas enim... numerus non est, sed fons et origo numerorum.**

A verse by Dante (*Par. XV, 57*) might seem trivial: it says, 'raia da l'un, se si conosce, il cinque e il sei' ('from the one, if you know it, the five and the six radiate'). It seems like a pointless statement, but it is Pythagorean: every number derives, radiates, from the one, if you consider it carefully, if you know it well. These are almost the words of Boethius. But this idea is widespread. We also find it in the ancient Chinese philosophers, several centuries before Christ. For Hoi-nan-tseu, the one is the root of all things; for Wei-kiao, it is the substance of reason; while for Lao-tseu, it is reason that produces the one. For many other Chinese philosophers, the one is the monad that produces everything.

Two is therefore the true first number: from it, whether by its sum $2+2$, by its multiplication 2×2 , or by its power 2^2 , the perfect 4 is always generated. But at the same time, 2 is generated from these ($4-2=4:2=\text{root of } 4=2$). Two is length, it is the line terminated by two opposite points; it is therefore the origin of antinomies, of opposites of the same type: good and evil, hot and cold, etc.

Three is the first odd number (since, as we have seen, one is not a true number). But three is

also the simplest closed surface in an area, the triangle with three points at its vertices. Now the triangle is the origin of flat figures, which can all be resolved into many triangles; in them we have length and width. And it is also the face of the first and simplest solid figure, the tetrahedron, connected to four.

The **number four**, generated by the number two and generator of the number two itself, is the product of two equal factors (2×2), that is, the isos isachis; geometrically, it gives us the tetrahedron (Dante's tetragono) with three points on a plane and the fourth outside. The tetrahedron is the simplest geometric figure that encloses three-dimensional space. Formed by four triangles, it is the origin of all solid figures, which can all be resolved into tetrahedrons. In it we have the three dimensions of our physical world: height, length and width. Figure 4 gives an idea of these facts:

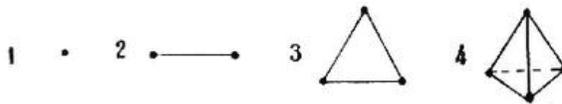


fig. 4

The sum of one, two, three and four gives ten, the perfect decade, which encompasses the physical universe. This is the sacred tetractys on which the Pythagoreans swore, and which was not four, as some have supposed, but the sum of the first four numbers, which included the point, the line, the triangle and the tetrahedron, that is, from the immaterial point to bodies with height, width and thickness: pasan fúsin.

In the Pythagorean oath, this perfect tetractys, which added up to ten, is called "source of inexhaustible nature". And in Jeroele's commentary on the golden verses (Ed. Carabba, p. 47), it is said that "quaternity is the source of the eternal order of things". It should also be remembered that for the Pythagoreans, the decade was not made up of ten consecutive numbers like our ten, but was the sum of the unit with the three fundamental numbers, and was itself **a unit**. Every number greater than ten was made up of several decades on their own; in fact, for the Pythagoreans, as a unit of measurement, they did not go beyond ten, the tetractis. In the aforementioned commentary by Jeroele (p. 122), it is said that 'the finite interval of the number is the decade...; but the value, the virtue of the decade is its quaternity'.

Dante also agrees with this idea of ten, since he says in Convivio (2, XIV, 3) that from ten upwards one cannot go without altering (in the Latin sense) the other nine and itself.

But this is not the end of Pythagorean numerology. Pythagoras, in fact, brought back another geometric principle from his probable trip to Egypt, which is what made him famous even to the moderately educated public. It is the well-known right-angled triangle, which bears his name and was considered mystical and sacred. However, this triangle with special sides was not his discovery. The Assyro-Babylonians, two thousand years before Christ, and especially the Egyptians, already knew about it. In fact, there was a priestly caste in Egypt, the **Arpedonapts**, whose job was to draw perpendicular lines and exact geometric contours for buildings and properties. From the history of mathematics, we know how they managed to draw an exact right-angled triangle. A string was divided into twelve equal parts and its two ends were secured to a peg. A second peg was then placed at division 3, and then a third at division 7 so that the string was taut. The triangle thus formed was perfectly right-angled.

If Pythagoras knew this Egyptian procedure, as he certainly did, it seems to have been exclusively his work to have noticed that the three consecutive numbers 3, 4 and 5 of the two cathetus and the hypotenuse were the only ones that existed in such consecutive order. His is also the observation of the relationship: $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$. That is, the well-known theorem known as Pythagoras' theorem,

which states that the sum of the areas of the two squares constructed on the legs is equal to the area of the square constructed on the hypotenuse. The geometric proof, which illustrates the numerical relationship, seems to be due to Euclid. Now, from this relationship it also follows that a right-angled triangle with one side (leg) 3 units long and the other leg 4 units long must necessarily have a third side (hypotenuse) 5 units long. This triangle with sides 3, 4 and 5 is a special, sacred triangle, and Plato made it the emblem of his Republic. Plutarch, also a Pythagorean (7), says (*De Iside et Osiride*) that the Egyptian Trinity was represented by this triangle. The side 4 was the base, Osiris, the vertical side, 3, was Isis, and the hypotenuse, 5, was Gold (8). In another passage, Plutarch himself called this triangle 'the most beautiful of all'. It is also true that there is no other series of consecutive numbers for the lengths of the sides of a right-angled triangle other than this series 3, 4 and 5. Therefore, there cannot be series such as 4, 5, 6 or 5, 6, 7, etc. (9). Hence the mystical philosophical essence of these three numbers, whose sum, 12, is, like the 10 of the Tetractys, a number of high perfection (10).

For the discovery of this relationship between the three numbers 3, 4, 5 and their properties, Pythagoras expressed his gratitude to the Divinity, who had revealed this extraordinary truth to him, by sacrificing, according to Apollodorus, a hecatomb. But since Pythagoras was a vegetarian, the legend does not hold up. Porphyry's statement that the sacrifice was symbolic, involving a figure of an ox made of spelt flour, is therefore more credible. The Pythagorean influence can also be seen in Latin numerals. Two is numerus binarius; three is ternarius; then there is quaternarius... denarius, etc. But for the number one, we have unitas and not unarius. This confirms, with the eminent evidence of language, that one was considered an entity in itself and different from the rest of the numbers.

The numbers of the sacred triangle have meaning not only in their sequence and total sum, but also when added two by two. Thus, 3 + 4 equals 7. Seven is the hebdomad, the numerus virginalis, that is, that which is not generated and does not generate. It has no mother because it is a prime number, indivisible. It does not generate, it is virginal, because when multiplied by the smallest possible number, 2, it gives 14, which is beyond the decade, that is, the decade plus four. The same property of not generating is also possessed by 6, which multiplied by 2 gives 12, beyond the decade; but 6 is generated by 2 and 3; it is therefore not without a mother and is not as mysterious as 7, which has always been considered mysterious in many religions, including our own.

Adding 3 and 5 gives 8. Now 8 is double the perfect 4, it is also the first possible cubic number ($2^3=8$); that is, it is the first number that expresses power of power. But it is also the union of the origin of numbers, one, with the virgin number, seven. It is therefore a sacred number, and we will see how Catholic numerologists, such as St. Ambrose, used it.

Finally, adding 4 and 5 gives us the perfect nine, which is the dynamis, the power of the already perfect three.

Thus, since ancient times, we have had a set of numbers with a special mystical meaning, accepted by numerous followers, which have continued down to the present day. And I can say down to the present day, because even D'Annunzio was sometimes a numerologist. This is proven by the drafting of the *Laus Vitæ*, where the mysterious seven predominates. There are in fact 8400 verses (7×1200) distributed in 21 (3×7) cantos and 400 stanzas of 21 verses each. But let us return to the ancients.

(3) Dantzig, *Le nombre*. Payot, Paris 1931, p. 127.

(4) Eustace says (*Ad Iliad.*, I, 16): *Kosmos gar e taxis*: the world is order.

(5) The fact that the Pythagorean school was initiatory and secret meant that over time a number of sects arose, which continued for centuries and also established themselves in Rome, as evidenced by the Basilica of Prima Porta. They then ended with the Masonic epigones, followers only formally of the mystical numbers, the square, the compass, as well as the great architect. Given the period that this mysticism brought with it, the Catholic Church has always been opposed to it.

to these hidden sects, traditional rather than Pythagorean in essence. This opposition was particularly strong at the time of the rhyming poets, such as the 'Fedeli d'Amore' (Faithful of Love), of which Dante was a member, but then 'separated himself'. For more information on the Fedeli, their work and their language, consult Valli's masterful work and Ricolfi's recent and well-documented works, published especially in the Biblioteca della Nuova Rivista storica.

(6)Phytagore et la philosophie pythagoricienne, Paris, 1875.

(7)Even today, a physicist could not express a more perfect definition of the monad, the elementary physical constituent element, than that given by the Pythagoreans. This monad, this integral quid, is the 'immaterial point placed in a specific position'. One could certainly say: the situated point. And from this it can also be seen that it was Pythagoras who established the discontinuity of matter.

(8)It should be remembered that the Pythagorean universe, governed by whole numbers, is the sensible universe, that of the daily life of our senses, of common reality. Irrational quantities, according to the Pythagoreans, belong to the world of the Infinite.

(9)Plutarch, Moral Essays. Isis and Osiris. Trans. Adriani, VI, 310, Florence, Piatti, 1821. (10) Boethius notes other interesting numbers for these sides, such as: 6, 8, 10; 15, 20, 25; but they all fall within the general expression: n^3, n^4, n^5 , i.e. multiples of 3, 4, 5. It is interesting to note that even in certain churches this number 12 divided into $3+4+5$ has been retained, although perhaps its original meaning has been forgotten. The dawn is sounded with twelve chimes, sometimes separated into the three sacred numbers. Thus, in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, in Rome, the dawn is sounded with three, then four, then five chimes of the bell.

3.-Virgil and the Latins

The fundamental principles of Pythagoreanism mentioned above are clear in Plato (11), whose profound dialogue Timaeus is permeated with them. But there is no need to discuss this further, lest we make a useless display of erudition. Among the Pythagoreans, as already mentioned, we recall the name of Plutarch, who, in his moral pamphlets, is purely numeric. Among the Latins imbued with Pythagoreanism, we remember Cicero. The eclectic philosopher was a Pythagorean, perhaps as a result of his period as governor in Tarsus, since everything related to Eastern mysticism converged in Tarsus. Ovid was a numeric Pythagorean, often highlighting the number three and, in his Fasti, pointing out the number ten and its multiples as auspicious for Rome. Apuleius was a numeric who said of **the number seven**: *Eum numerum praecipue religionibus optissimum divinus ille Pythagoras prodidit. Ausonius' idyll revolves entirely around **the number three**, and Horace (Odes III; 19) also sings: *Tribus aut novem miscentur cyathis pocula commodis*. And Seneca, referring to the number 81, wrote: **perfectum numerum quem novem novies multiplicata componiunt**. Book VI of the Aeneid would suffice to reveal all of Virgil's Pythagoreanism, but he was also the most perfect numeric among the Latins. The number seven, often divided into three and four, appears in a special way in Virgil. The *terque quaterque beati* (Aeneid, 1, 94) is well known. But a similar expression is also found in the Georgics (1, 410) with *ter gutture voce aut quater ingeminat*, and again in the Aeneid (IV, 587) we read: "*Terque quaterque manu pectus percussa*". This division of 3 and 4 remained in the Middle Ages in the Trivium and Quadrivium of culture.*

I am not aware of anyone having specifically addressed numerology in Virgil, although it is evident. I will mention it briefly. Twelve, a sacred number, is the number of books in the poem. Twelve vultures are seen by Romulus. The number 3 and its multiples predominate in the text: three times three, three times four, three times five, three times ten, three times one hundred. The number 30 is indicated by the number of piglets that Aeneas sees where Rome will be built. The number four is rarer, both as such and as four plus four. But the number of mystery, seven, is often repeated; indeed, it is the first to appear in the poem. From the first book onwards, we are presented with 'seven and seven graceful and beautiful nymphs

'. Aeneas takes refuge with his seven surviving companions, fights the adversaries of the seven ships and lays all seven of them low. The refugees wander, according to the prophecy, for seven years. At Anchises' funeral, the snake, a symbolic and mystical animal, wraps itself around the mound seven times and in seven circles. There are seven 'indomitable bulls'. In the ninth book, the seven branches of the Nile appear; there are seven and seven Rutuli, distinguished captains. In the tenth book, we find the seven sons of

Forco and seven are the poisoned darts. Then, in the twelfth book, the reinforced shield is pierced in its seven layers. Thus, the Aeneid begins with seven and ends with seven.

But this week returns as predominant in the famous fourth Eclogue, about which so much has been written, and of which Carcopino's work (12) is perhaps the best illustration. This Eclogue is an echo of the 'Great Year' of the Pythagorean and Sibylline tradition. Christians, on the other hand, interpreted that Eclogue as a messianic song; because of it, Virgil was considered a prophet in the Middle Ages.

The Eclogue is clearly structured around the week, and it also includes a division into trivium and quadrivium. The beautiful poem begins with **three** verses, followed by two stanzas of **seven** verses each, then a group of another twenty-eight (4x7) verses. Then come **four** verses, which together with the first three (terque quaterque) form another **seven**, and finally the poem closes with two more stanzas of **seven** verses each. In total, there are 63 verses. Now, 63 is **nine** times **seven**. It is a mystical number, which had its own special adjective. This adjective, although it has lost its mystical numerical meaning, still survives today in our language: it is the adjective **climacteric**. Applied to human life, 63, the climacteric year (13), was a mystical year that had to be overcome in order to have a long life. Augustus, writing to his nephew, rejoices in having overcome the climacteric year. We can therefore see how much influence Pythagoreanism had in the Roman world and how Virgil was one of its main representatives.

Dante recognises Virgil as his teacher and author and says that he took from him 'the beautiful style' that brought him honour. Much has been written and discussed about this 'beautiful style', with rather poor results. The question can also be considered from a new numerological point of view. The analogy between Virgil and Dante in their hermetic, numeric expression could lead one to believe that 'the beautiful style' can be traced back to this way of expressing oneself. But this observation is perhaps too subtle.

All commentators have racked their brains to find a way to reconcile the styles of Virgil and Dante, which could hardly be more different, if by style we mean the manner of expression in writing.

Some, such as Scartazzini, assert that Dante is alluding to his work *Monarchia* with these words; others, and they are the majority, after recalling the words of *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, want 'the beautiful style' to be the tragic style that Dante used in his songs.

Let us first see which of Dante's works brought him honour, naturally before the *Comedy*. It seems to me that the political treatise *Monarchia* can be ruled out entirely. In any case, I would rather consider it to be the *Vita nova* with its songs, which earned him more than honourable and flattering responses from the rhyming poets and the 'Fedeli d'Amore', and which Bonagiunta also praises in *Purgatorio*. Therefore, Dante's 'lo bello stilo' (beautiful style), which did him honour, if we are talking about his writing style, could be his closed, subtle way of speaking, or rather, his way of expressing himself in a mystical, numeric, hermetic language. Although numerism and subtle speech are not as complete and perfect in Dante's other works as they are in the *Comedy*, they are undeniable in the prose of *Vita nova*, which is entirely inspired, mystical and hermetic, and also in the songs, especially those that gave rise to the 'stil novo'.

Let us consider, for example, how the compositions are arranged in the mysterious booklet *Vita nova*. First there are ten sonnets and short ballads, then a song, then another four sonnets, and finally a song of great importance; this is followed symmetrically by another four sonnets, then another song and finally, to conclude, another series of 10 sonnets or short compositions. The sequence is therefore 10+1+4+1+10, which is completely symmetrical. I do not believe that anyone would want to say that this is a coincidence. Nor do I believe that it can be attributed to chance that there are precisely seven

visions of Vita nova are precisely **seven**. Therefore, the hypothesis of relating the expression 'bello stilo' to the hermetic way of expressing oneself that we mentioned could be confirmed. But I do not believe at all that with 'bello stilo' Dante wanted to allude only to literary style. In our language (and also in French), **style** is also a **way of life**, a way of behaving. Now, as an adult, Dante followed a lifestyle similar to that of Virgil. Honest, dignified, austere and, above all, alien to vulgarity: shunning honours, both poets recognised only one political superiority, that of the Empire. Like Virgil, Dante was also tremendously lonely, isolated not so much in his way of thinking but also in his way of behaving. Like Virgil, Dante also had a very high concept of morality in life. It was Virgil who, with his teaching and example, distanced Dante from certain forms of vulgarity, such as the dispute with Forese, and led him on a new path, making him adopt a style more suited to austerity and elegance in life.

(11) On Platonic ideas in this regard, see: Robin, *La théorie platonicienne des idées et des nombres*. Paris, Alcan, 1918.

(12) Carcopino, *Virgile et le mystère de la IV élogue*. Paris, Artisan du livre, 1930.

(13) There was also another climacteric of lesser importance, namely the first climacteric, 35, which is given by 5×7 , and which also appears in Dante.

Before moving on to Catholic numerist writers, let us recall those who were Pythagoreans in the past: Marsilio Ficino and, even more so, Pico della Mirandola, to whom we owe the definition of unity as the infinite point of all numbers and the completion of everything. Cardinal Cusa (*De docta ignorantia*, I, 5) also asserts: **non potest autem unitas esse numerus; sed est principium omnis numeri**. By saying One God (say Ambrose and Thomas, *Summa*, I, 30, 3), we do not mean to express a quantitative value but an absolutely qualitative value. Campanella, who was fiercely anti-Aristotelian, and Giordano Bruno, who was a staunch numerist and demonstrated the perfection of the decade, based on the consideration that the sum of successive extremes of numbers always resulted in 10 ($9+1=10$; $8+2=10$, etc.), were also Pythagoreans. He also recalls the perfection of six. The Neoplatonists were therefore Pythagoreans, which is natural since Plato was a Pythagorean. Galileo, Copernicus and Leonardo, an admirer and practitioner of the 'golden ratio', were Pythagoreans. It was Leonardo who wrote: 'The true work of art results from the harmony of certain elements that form a divine symmetry'.

4. - The Fathers of the Church

The mystery of the number seven is connected to the founding of the Carthusian Order. Puteus (*Vita S. Brunonis*, 41) recounts that the holy bishop of Grenoble, Hugh, dreamed of seven stars that led him to the deserted land of Chartreuse. The next morning, Bruno arrived with six companions, who asked him for a remote place to found their monastery. For this reason, the Carthusian coat of arms features seven stars surrounding the Cross and the Globe. Alexander VIII had a medal minted with the effigy of St. Bruno and seven stars. The mystical Pythagorean number 8 became, in Christianity, the number of the Beatitudes, as St. Ambrose suggests in this sentence: 'Quatuor tantum beatitudines sanctus Lucas dominicas posuit, octo vero sanctus Mathæus... Ille in illis octo mysticum numerum reseravit'. To all these fathers, whom Dante knew very well, we must add another author admired by Dante: Severinus Boethius. One could even say that he took from Boethius one of his own deep convictions: that is, to reconcile the two philosophies, Aristotelian scholasticism and Pythagorean mysticism. In fact, Boethius seeks and finds this reconciliation in his writings. But Boethius' preferences in the scientific field are for the Pythagoreans. We have already seen how he considers unity in the same way as the Pythagoreans. Although he does not engage in excessive numerical mysticism, his short treatise on arithmetic is permeated with a general sense of harmony, depth and the intimate essence of numbers, in which he almost always senses something divine. In one of his treatises (*Institutiones arithmeticae*), for example, there are phrases such as this: 'Omnia quaecumque... natura constructa sunt numerorum videndum ratione formata' (p. 12); he then states (p. 41) that perfect numbers perfect have idea virtue virtue, and in number finds a that of admirable

profundissimumque (p. 52). His treatise on music is exquisitely Pythagorean. Nor could it be otherwise, when we remember that Pythagoras and his school experimentally established the numerical scale of sounds. Everything that has been written on acoustics and sound intervals to date is nothing more than an extension and refinement of Pythagorean discoveries. Other mystical Christian numbers include XXX, three times the perfect X, and XXXIII, which contains three times the perfect ten and three times the perfect one and also symbolises Christ-Man in his years of mortal life, as accepted after Bacon's *Opus majus*. Then there are C, the power of the perfect X, and M, given by multiplying the number one hundred, the power of ten, by ten. The Pythagorean idea of numbers as divine harmony was fully embraced by Catholic numerists, who, however, modified the concept of numbers as ideas according to orthodox belief. Of the Church Fathers, the greatest numerist was Augustine (an admirer of Plato), from whom the Doctor Seraphicus Bonaventure, Dante's teacher of Franciscan mysticism, derived directly. The great, albeit somewhat neglected, Bonaventure was a profound scholar of the Bishop of Hippo. His admiration for Augustine is demonstrated by the fact that he refers to him very frequently. Father Faccin, a devoted researcher of the life of the seraphic saint, has patiently counted that he quotes Augustine no less than 2,625 times. Admirers of the sunny harmonic theories of Pythagoras, these great Christian philosophers could not fail to be followers of number as the supreme harmony of the divine order. Nor should it be forgotten that Augustine also arrives at God through number and harmony. The first collegium with cenobitic rules was founded by the great saint, who wanted to renew the Pythagorean meetings. Augustine is so imbued with Pythagoreanism that he defines beauty as unity, order and harmony. In fact, he says *Omnis pulchritudinis forma unitas est*. He attaches so much importance to numbers that he considers them the essence of things. For Augustine, **being is being one**, and everything that tends to be tends towards order, towards numbers. A tree is a tree because it is a tree; man is man insofar as he is a man. I will quote just a few of the most interesting passages from the great Hippo (14). In *De libero arbitrio*, number is considered in all its excellence, and the psalms that refer to the perfection of number are also quoted. Thus (p. 278) he affirms the *in corruptibilis numeri veritas*. And from Psalm 146 he quotes: *Sapientiae conjunctus est numerus*. From Psalm 176 he quotes the verse: *Circuivi cor meum ut scirem est considerarem et quererem sapientiam et numerum*. Furthermore, chapter XI of Book II is entirely in praise of Wisdom and Number. In *De Ordine* (II, 146) he says again: **Pulchra numero placent. Ratio sentit nihil aliud sibi placere quam numerus**. And he continues: 'Everything in nature wants to achieve number and unity, which is the number par excellence... If man is superior to brute, it is because he knows and produces numbers; because the soul is full of **forms** (ideas!), that is, numbers; form and number are the same thing. Above the sensible and changing numbers are the spiritual, eternal, intelligible and unchanging numbers, which the perfect and absolute Unity dominates'. And in *De quantitate animæ* (p. 252), he highlights the excellence of the geometric point; as in the pamphlet *De musica* (p. 133), he warns that all order lies in numbers. Bonaventure, in turn, is eminently faithful to the mystical concept of numerism; it can be said that there is no work by the Seraphic Doctor that does not contain some reference to the sanctity of numbers. In developing his usual themes, he prefers the number three, and he uses the same number for divisions; even for hierarchies, he always has a tripartite division and counts nine in total. In the admirable *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (II), he says: 'Since all beauty and delight cannot exist without proportion, and proportion lies mainly in numbers, everything must be according to numbers, and therefore numbers are the primary example of the Creator's soul and, in things, the main vestige for leading them to wisdom'. Just as the Pythagoreans had given philosophical importance to certain numbers, so too did Christian numerists highlight others: but, as is only natural, they attached a Christian meaning to these numbers. These are the numbers that Augustine called spiritual, eternal, intelligible and invariable, dominated by Unity.

. Naturally, the greatest importance is given to 1 and 3. Augustine writes (*De musica*, 138, 2):

'Ternarius primus est et totus impar'. But he then continues more explicitly: 'Quare in ternario numero quadam esse perfectionem video; quia totus est, habet enim principium, medium et finem'. We must remember once again that these are Roman numerals, and that therefore three must be written III. It therefore has a beginning, middle and end, all equal to each other, and each is the unit

. Three is both three and one; the symbol of the Trinity-Unity is therefore clearly manifested in it. For Augustine, ten is also a perfect number. He says (*De musica*, p. 138): 'In denario

numero præfinitum est ». And 12 is also perfect: «Numerus duodenarius magnum continet sacramentum ». In fact, as has been said, it is the sum of the sacred numbers 3+4+5. The concept of the sum of Platonic numerists is quite widespread. Philo of Alexandria ("De vita contemplativa") says that 50 is the most sacred and natural of numbers because it is the sum of the powers of the sacred triangle: $3^2+4^2+5^2=50$. Bonaventure also attaches great importance to the powers of numbers. All his work, as has been said, is based on 3, but also on its square 9. In particular, the Seraphic Doctor deals with the value of numbers in his Hexaëmeron. He says of 9: 'Secundum hunc numerum (9) habent illuminationes Trinitatis esse'. (Hexaëmeron, XXI, 1). And immediately afterwards, for 10, he observes: 'Novenarium completur et perficitur per additionem unitatis'. The number 7 is often cited by Bonaventure as the number of mystery: the week is always mysterious. He quotes St. Gregory, who says: 'Septenarius, secundum Gregorium, est numerus universitatis in majori mundo et in minori et in Deo' (Hexaëmeron, XVI, 5). And shortly afterwards he adds: 'Septenarius autem magnum mysterium habet

'. And he immediately confirms and reinforces this: 'Iste numerus... est mysterialis'. Of course, multiples of 7 (2×7 ; 5×7) also have value. For Bonaventure, powers are especially those of three. In fact, he says (Psalterium David, 88):

"Sunt tria, ter tria novem, ter novem
vigintiseptem, ter vigintiseptem octuagintaunum" (15). Only in Sermo XV of his Hexaëmeron, after speaking of the perfection of 12, he also speaks of its dynamis, its power: $12^2=144$. It

is interesting to note that Confucius also gave great importance to the number 81, the power of the power of the mystical 3. A number that Christians have focused their attention on is six. Augustine considers it a geometric perfection. In fact, with 6, a hexagon is formed inscribed in a circle, whose sides are equal to the radius. St. Bede (Hexaëmeron, II, 1) says: "Senarium numerum constat esse perfectum, quia primus suis partibus expletur, sexta videlicet, quod est unus, et tertia quæ sunt duo, et dimidia quæ sunt tria. Unum enim et duo et tria faciunt sex". Bonaventure considers the number 6 to be highly worthy, basing himself as usual on the authority of Augustine. He says (Psalterium David, 128): 'Tanta est dignitatis huius numeri (senarii) quod, dicit Augustinus, opera perfecta sunt, quæ facta sunt sub senario. Inde dicitur perfectus numerus senarius'. Nicomachus, too, in his Theologia arithmetica, gives

great value to the number 6. The idea of the perfection of 6 has also remained in our language: we say **assestare**, mettere in **sesto** (to settle, to put in order) to put things in order; and we also give the name **seste** to the compass. **Six** is therefore a mystical number, relating especially to man; it thus became a symbol of the perfection of human life, that is, of justice. This concept was so widespread that cities were divided into sestieri (six districts); Villani, in fact, says in his Cronaca (III, 2): 'the city ... was divided into six sestieri as a perfect number'. Outside of life, the number of the perfect Man for Augustine is the mysterious 7; in fact, the seventh period of life is death, a great mystery; and the seventh period of world history is the mysterious eternal Sabbath.

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Catholic numerology continued for centuries after Bonaventure. It was St. Bernardino who always divided the topics of his practices according to numbers. More recently, this is attested to by the work of Father Athanasius Kircher, *Arithmologia, sive de abditis numerorum mysteriis*, printed in 1665, whose title alone clearly indicates its mystical content. Kircher speaks of numbers according to Pythagorean ideas; he then reports, word for word, certain indications of Augustine, whom he does not cite at all. For the learned Jesuit, too, the tetractys is found in all things. He says that the number three is the numerus triunus, and for him, too, the number seven is mysterious. In fact, he says (p. 272): 'Septenarius numerus arcana continet mysteria'. We can therefore see that until almost the beginning of the 1700s, ideas about the mysticism of numbers still prevailed, even among the clergy, although they had been modified and, I would say, Christianised by medieval Catholic numerists. Dante based his mysticism of numbers, which appears in all his works but especially in the *Comedy* (16), on these authors familiar to him.

(14) I have used the 1576 Plantin edition of Antwerp. Opera D. A. Augustini hippo. episcopi per theologos lovanienses repurgata.

(15) With regard to this number 81, it should be noted that Dante (*Convivio*, 4, XXIV, 6), speaking of the periods of human life, gives it great Christian significance: "I believe that if Christ had not been crucified and had lived out the span of life that nature intended for him, he would have reached the age of 81 when his mortal body was transformed into eternity." This is a clear refutation of all those who assert that, according to Dante, natural human life is 70 years.

(16) Bossuet (*Apocalypse*, 14, 4) also says, with regard to the 144,000 marked (12x12): "We must understand a certain mystical reason in the numbers of the *Apocalypse*, to which the spirit wants us to pay attention."

EA: The chapter we are now presenting from "Dante and Pythagorean Symbolism" is of fundamental importance for understanding the spiritual attitude of **Vinassa de Regny**. He, not without similarities to Papini after his "conversion", **is a sort of "Catholic Pythagorean"**. **While recognising that there is a Pythagorean influence in Dante, he denies that Dante was an esotericist**, since his Pythagoreanism was perfectly 'orthodox', being accepted and conveyed by the 'Fathers' of the Church themselves. De Regny's attitude is symptomatic of what was happening in certain circles in Florence from the 1920s onwards, but which ended up influencing non-Florentine personalities as well, such as Girolamo Comi and Guido de Giorgio (see the *Quaderno "Papini e il Gruppo di Ur"* on this subject).

5. - Numbers in Dante

The purpose of the *Comedy* is to reach, or rather, to lead humanity from the forest of sin and political chaos to the One and Triune Catholic God, in whom, as we shall see, the supreme arithmetic and geometric question that had troubled humanity for centuries is also summed up: the squaring of the circle. This harmonious, numeric, geometric structure of all Dante's works, but especially of the *Comedy*, was called, by those who understood little about Dante and his times, a Kabbalah; and in doing so, they demonstrated their ignorance of the difference between the bizarre Jewish Kabbalah and the admirable Pythagorean harmony of numbers. Those who speak of Pythagorean Kabbalah are guilty of a contradiction in terms.

D'Ancona's words (17) are sufficient to demonstrate the absolute ignorance of the value of numerological beliefs in the Middle Ages and in Dante. In fact, this author states: 'Dante was obedient to the scientific doctrine of his age, even in its most **vacuous** and **superstitious** aspects... The poet's **fantasies** about the number nine also belong to the doctrine of the time... There is a clear reminiscence of Pythagorean and Neoplatonic doctrines on the one hand, and mystical and Kabbalistic doctrines on the other, and something that comes to him through superstition and vulgar tradition.' So Dante in *Vita nova* (and even more so in the *Comedy*) had in his head reminiscences, empty and superstitious fantasies, and vulgar traditions accepted without criticism. The Poet is well served by some of his most illustrious commentators! Carducci said quite differently: 'This cabala was the brake on the art that made the formal execution of the immense epic so proportionate, harmonious, I would almost say mathematical'. Carducci, a Tuscan and an Etruscan (the Etruscans were Pythagoreans), understood and judged this admirable form much better, which, like a concept of perfection, obeys number, supreme harmony.

In the previous chapter, we saw how Dante lived in an environment where the mysticism of numbers, transmitted from Pythagoras to Bonaventure, was widespread among lay people and religious figures; therefore, it is not permissible to speak of superstitious fantasies or empty and vulgar traditions.

Dante does not limit himself to accepting the well-known three and nine that is accepted by all commentators, but uses many other numbers with a specific meaning. He often speaks of the 'subtle' way of interpreting numbers in relation to things. In *Convivio* (8, V, 5-7), after talking about the division of Angels into three hierarchies, each of which is divided into three orders, he adds: 'And the number in which the hierarchies are divided and the number in which the orders are divided is a very powerful reason for their speculation. Shortly afterwards (7-9), he observes that 'the Trinity is in three Persons, and each Person can be considered threefold'. And, again in the *Convivio* (XIII, 17), he says: 'There are three principles of natural things... Not only all together but also in each one there is number... which is why Pythagoras placed the principles of natural things as even and odd, considering all things to be number'. Finally, we recall his observations (*Convivio*, 2, XIV, 2, 3) on the stars of the Milky Way, which he counted as 1022, that is, 2, 20 and 1000, as Dante himself says, and on the subtle deductions that can be made about this number, to which we will return.

Dante is therefore a numerist and indeed follows the Pythagorean numbers, which were subtly Christianised by the Fathers of the Church, by Ambrose, Augustine and, more than others, by Bonaventure: all of whom were his great teachers. However, Dante does not follow all Christian numerology. Augustine, for example, cites many other mystical numbers, but Dante does not consider them, limiting himself to the Christianised Pythagorean ones.

It has been said and continues to be said that Dante is a Thomist. This statement, in the sense of believing that Dante is a pure scholastic, is inaccurate. He is also a Thomist, but when necessary he departs from Aquinas. To confirm this, it suffices to recall Purgatory, where everything proceeds according to Franciscan doctrine, and more specifically Bonaventurian doctrine, which contrasts with what Aquinas affirms.

Furthermore, scholasticism does not attach any importance to the mysticism of numbers. In fact, the mystical aspect of numerology does not appear in the great Doctor Angelicus. Instead, it is prevalent in Bonaventure, the Doctor Seraphicus. Righi, a profound connoisseur of Bonaventure, repeats what Ozanam had said long ago. Ozanam had observed that Bonaventure 'converted into doctrine what was narrated by Francis' ecstasy and raptures'. Righi, in turn, says that Bonaventure's exegesis is predominantly mystical in nature: 'In his theological writings, he seeks the Truth, but more than anything else, he inculcates Goodness, illuminating everything with divine Light, while always remaining close to the guidance and light of Revelation. Hence the source of his mysticism, which appears whenever the opportunity arises'.

Legend has it that Thomas asked his great friend and antagonist Bonaventure what his library was. And the Seraphic replied by showing him the Crucifix. The legend, like all Franciscan legends, is beautiful; and it has a grain of truth, like all legends. Bonaventure would not have had his own library, as the Franciscan rule forbade him from owning any property whatsoever. Everything came to him from his love of the Cross, but Bonaventure had read everything related to the theology and philosophy of his time. The report that he copied the entire Bible twice by his own hand seems accurate; his readings of the Holy Fathers were certainly complete and numerous. As already mentioned, Augustine appears to be his favourite author, and this preference is easy to understand given the similarity between the two great men in their sentiments.

their sentiments. Bonaventure was right to refer to the Crucified One as his inspiration. In the Seraphic Father, we find a wonderful combination of profound dogmatic doctrine and the warmth of Franciscan mysticism, derived from love for God, the passion of Jesus, and the Virgin Mother.

"While (says Righi, p. 84) his commentaries on the book of Sentences earn him one of the foremost places among Christian thinkers and make him one of the princes of scholasticism," Leo XIII was also right to say, in his address to the General of the Friars Minor on 11 November 1890: "After climbing the heights of the highest speculation, he speaks with such perfection of mysticism that, without exaggeration, he can be considered one of the foremost masters of mysticism."

Dante was therefore, more than a Thomist, a Bonaventurian; that is, both scholastic and mystical, as was Augustine. Ozanam rightly says that alongside the mysticism of Hippo, one must also seek his dogmatism. Just as Augustine was eclectic, so was Dante. He too knocked on the door of Aristotle as much as on that of Pythagoras and Plato. However, one cannot deny Dante's preference for mystics.

In this regard, some interesting facts can be noted. When he speaks of Francis in Paradise, he calls him seraphic, while Dominic is cherubic. Now, in the angelic hierarchy, Seraphim are superior to Cherubim. Furthermore, Dominic is mentioned in the well-known cantos X and XII of Paradise, but Dante never encounters him again. In the Empyrean, on the other hand, we are presented with some saints who are close to God: Dante mentions only three: 'Francis, Benedict and Augustine'. They are three mystics: Dominic is missing and Francis is first among them. There may also be an unintentional omission in the list, but in Dante nothing is left to chance, and we must therefore admit that Dante's mention of the three saints indicates a preference and superiority for mystics. Furthermore, the only saint mentioned, in paraphrase, in the Comedy is Clare, the mystical sister of Francis (18).

It has been said that Dante was a Franciscan or at least wanted to become one in his youth; there is no documentary evidence of this, but it is certain that he felt strongly about Franciscan mysticism. His soul, often exacerbated and indignant, was certainly not as meek, simple, naive and enthusiastic as that of Francis. Dante's mysticism is therefore that of Bonaventure, which, as we know, is the scientific development of Franciscan mysticism. Dante, therefore, as has been said, is as much a Thomist as he is a Bonaventurian.

The great poet is eclectic, as Augustine was, and this would seem impossible given what we know of his seemingly intransigent personality. He is a perfectly conciliatory genius. Intolerant, almost partisan on certain issues, he nevertheless seeks agreement on major religious and political questions. His is the dream of reconciliation between the two great powers, religious and political, in the unity of the purified, renewed Church and the Empire reconstituted into nations (*Imperium et Nationes*, the saying of Frederick of Swabia); his is the demonstration that one can be both a Franciscan mystic and a Thomist scholastic. And he proves it, as we shall see, in the last canto of the poem, where both doctrines reign supreme.

Nor should we forget that he was Italian, Tuscan, Mediterranean. In his blood, in his way of feeling and thinking, the millennial Etruscan civilisation had been transfused, which wove everything according to number and harmony. Another example shows us Dante's predilection for Pythagorean harmonic regularity. Among sculptors, he mentions only Polykleitos (*Purg.*, X, 32): Now, Polykleitos was known as the author of a treatise (the *Regulus*) on the proportions of the human body as a prototype of harmony according to number, and in the Middle Ages he was considered a master of measurement, that is, a perfect Pythagorean.

The followers of numerism were and still are the Freemasons. For this reason, some, foremost among them Rossetti and Aroux, wanted to see Dante as a sectarian, an enlightened man, almost a Protestant, and in any case an anti-Catholic. None of this is true. Dante was, on the contrary, a perfect Catholic, not only from a dogmatic point of view, but also as a believer and practising Catholic. He is truly, as St Peter calls him, a 'good Christian'. A brief digression is necessary on this subject. Tradition has it that Dante was tried for heresy, but this legend has never been confirmed. Only one thing is certain: he was very unpopular with the inquisitors of the time, and we will return to this later. Given the political circumstances of those turbulent times, his treatise, *Monarchia*, was condemned and publicly burned. But times changed. A great Pope, Leo XIII, had *Monarchia* removed from the Index of Prohibited Books. But there is more. Another Pope, whose piety and high intellect, Benedict XV,

proclaimed the Divine Comedy the **fifth Gospel** and, on the centenary of Dante's birth, on 30 April 1921, published a short speech which, after that of Leo XII for Christopher Columbus (19), was the second example of a papal speech in the world, not to clarify truth, but to highlight the glory, including Catholic glory, of a man who, if not a saint worthy of the altar, was certainly a providential man, sent by God and inspired by His Love.

How can we explain this reversal of positions whereby a suspicious man and a work believed to be heretical become, respectively, a providential messenger and a fifth Gospel?

Dante, so deeply orthodox, was certainly a fierce enemy of certain popes. But this fact can be attributed to his fervent Christian soul, which would have liked to see the Church return to its primitive splendour, also through the virtue of its priests. This opinion was very widespread among the faithful of the time. But the priests of that time did not think so. It took Luther for Trent to come about!

Those fearful souls who were scandalised by Dante's fiery words against the popes and clergy of his time, and who would therefore like to portray Dante as a heretic, a Freemason, an excommunicated person, should reflect on what was written at the time on the subject, not by lay people like him, but by popes and saints. Let us leave aside St. Peter Damian, in comparison to whom Dante's attacks on the Curia may pass for compliments. Suffice it to recall that this great saint clearly states that the Church had become Simon's shop. But the popes themselves intervened.

In 1254, Pope Innocent IV published a bull in which we read these serious words: 'Meanwhile, our men of the Church, having become men of law, riding proud steeds, dressed in purple, covered with jewels, gold and silk, reflecting the rays of the sun, scandalised by their attire, make a proud display of themselves everywhere; and in their persons, in place of the Vicar of Christ, they make themselves known as heirs of Lucifer, and excite the wrath of the people, not only against themselves, but against the sacred authority they unworthily represent. Sarah is therefore a slave and Hagar has made herself mistress.' And the same Pontiff had proclaimed: "The corruption of the people comes mainly from the corruption of the clergy."

But it was not only the popes; the saints also spoke in the same way. A terrible speech against the clergy at the Council of Reims is attributed to St. Bernard. Mabillon, editor of the writings of the great mystic of Clairvaux, places it in Vol. II of the *suppositicia* works; but with all his prudence, he cannot honestly refrain from observing that, even if it is not a genuine work, it is certainly a collection of phrases taken from other works by St. Bernard. In this fierce diatribe against the clergy and especially against the bishops, it says, among other things: 'Dicimini pastores dum sitis raptores. Paucos habemus pastores, multos excommunicatores. Quare, Domine Jesu, elegisti diabolum episcopum? Plus nitent calaria quam altaria. Non sunt pastores sed traditores'. He goes on to call them arrogant, nepotistic, enemies of the poor, worse than Judas who was content with little, while they demand much. Bernard is also credited with attacks on the popes that make Dante's seem like compliments. The great saint says that Rome is Babylon and the pope is the Antichrist. Addressing the Pope directly, he exclaims: 'This is Peter, who is known to have been sent around adorned with gems and silk, covered in gold, carried on a white palfrey, followed by a crowd of soldiers and surrounded by ministers; yet without all this, he believed he could fulfil the salutary commandment: If you love me, feed my sheep. In this, you, shepherd, succeeded Peter, not Constantine.'

St Anthony, too, in one of his sermons, exclaimed: 'Avarice gnaws at some priests, or rather merchants. They climb this Mount Tabor, which is the altar, and cast their nets to catch gold; and they turn the Sacrament of Health into manure of greed'.

But let us hear what a saint, the great Catherine of Siena, would later say: 'Inflated pride reigns in the bride of Christ... the prelates seek nothing but the delight of great riches... they have become wolves and resellers of Divine Grace'.

The pious friar Cavalca, in his *Specchio di vera penitenza* (Mirror of True Penance), says of prelates that "it is not the prelate who gives of his own who can be called a saint, but the one who does not steal from others".

There is therefore no reason to accuse Dante of irreligiosity; he wrote no more and perhaps less than what popes and saints wrote and preached. But he kept the contingency of political condemnations clearly distinct from religious, dogmatic, undisputed and indisputable facts.

Dante is a politician who despises cowards, such as Pope Caorsino, but when he finds characters

worthy of him, he honours them with his disapproval. This is what he does for the great Boniface, whom he condemns to Hell even before his death. But Dante, a Catholic, rails against the attacker of Anagni, against the slapper of Boniface himself. Here, in fact, it is not a question of the hostile Pope but of the high pontifical dignity. Boniface, for Dante, is worthy of Hell, but he is still the Supreme Pontiff, the successor of the great Peter.

This distinction between the political Curia and the religious Papacy, which has caused so much anger in the recent past and still angers the intransigent today, therefore has, as we can see, an ancient and illustrious origin. Let us now look a little more closely at the religious figure of the great Florentine. There can be no doubt about his doctrinal orthodoxy. His teachers and authors are the great Catholic Doctors of the Church. But Dante is not only a theologian, he is not only a master of the Scriptures and their exact and orthodox interpreter; he is not only a scholar who knows and can answer Peter on the truths of the Faith and be approved; Dante is also a good Christian, as the apostle himself calls him; he is a Catholic by sentiment, a convinced and learned believer, and also a pious worshipper with the prayers of the humble: the Ave Maria, the Pater noster. This must be said in order to fully understand Dante's personality. Today, unfortunately, religious culture is often confused with religion and faith, and this is wrong; because, while culture is necessary for a Christian, religion must not be limited to an intellectual, philosophical belief. As Papini rightly says, one must not have a theological God within oneself; one needs a true, personal, felt God. Religious culture is necessary, but true religion is a childlike state of the heart, hence the truth: 'Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven'. Now Dante was a highly educated theologian, but he was also a humble believer in his own personal God. Carducci was able to compare him to Petrarch, saying admirably that the singer of Laura was a **devotee** while Dante was a **believer**. In the Comedy, there is no shortage, indeed there is an abundance, of references to simple religion, humble belief, and abandonment to God, as the simplest and most 'childlike' of Christians might do. Dante is the one who asks the overly wise: 'Who are you that you want to sit on the throne' and judge divine things with your human eyes?

He is the one who advises us to be 'content with the here and now', indicating that the Scriptures and the shepherd of the Church who guides us are sufficient for our salvation.

Dante's behaviour towards two great sinners, Francesca and Cunizza, is also strictly religious and orthodox. How much pity for Francesca! But she died in flagrant mortal sin without the possibility of repentance; she is damned. It seems, and indeed it is so, that Dante the man is deeply moved and saddened when singing about her; but, as a strict Catholic believer, he must condemn her. Cunizza was certainly a sinner, but she had the opportunity to repent and end her life in virtue. However grave the sins committed, divine goodness welcomes penitents when repentance is total and sincere; repentance is enough to redeem sin.

But there is another example that has given commentators much to think about. Capeto, at a remarkable point in the history of France, rails against that flawed Charles, whom we nevertheless found safe in the pleasant Valletta. There is no contradiction. Charles, on his deathbed, sincerely repented of his misdeeds; he is therefore forgiven. His sins were horrible, like those of Manfredi, but divine goodness welcomes anyone who turns to it. One cannot be more orthodox, I would say almost catechistic, than that.

And in this regard, we recall that Dante saved Rifeo, a pagan. Why then did he not want to do the same for his master, Virgil, for whom he allows only a hidden hope, not of eternal salvation but of mitigation of punishment? I believe that an explanation for this must be found. According to legend, St Paul lamented that he had not arrived in time to save the Latin poet. There is a well-known hymn that was part of the liturgy of the Mass of St Paul, which seems to have continued to be sung until the end of the 15th century. In this hymn, it is said that the Apostle, standing before Virgil's mausoleum, wept and said:

Quem te, inquit, reddissem, si
te vivum invenissem, poetarum
maxime!

Where St Paul had failed, Dante could not take his place! He could therefore afford

(in perfect orthodoxy!) to save Rifeo, but as a devout Catholic he could not go against St Paul and substitute his own judgement for that of the Apostle.

Dante's religiosity is profound when, in Canto XIV of Paradise, he speaks of the resurrection of the flesh. There is a deep yearning for the future life, for the Poet sings that one should neither weep nor fear death, knowing that up there one lives and enjoys the refreshment of the blessed eternal rain. And affectionate is the thought that the resurrection of the flesh may be a joy for mothers and fathers; and here the word 'mother' (a subtle rhyme) makes the concept of the resurrection of the body affectionately human.

Indeed, when Beatrice asks Peter to question her faithful follower about Catholic truths, she observes that there is no need, since the saint certainly sees into Dante's heart. And it is perhaps for this reason, because of Peter's knowledge of him and his simple faith, that he invites him to himself with the paternal words 'good Christian' (20).

Dante, with his numerology, was therefore not a heretic or a rebel, nor should his numerology be confused with that of heterodox sects. He had, I would say, an almost instinctive numerical and harmonious mentality. This, moreover, is found to a greater or lesser extent in all of us. It is enough to investigate the writing style of many authors, even very modern ones, to see how widespread, for example, the ternary expression is, even when repeated.

Alfredo O'Rahilly, member of the Irish Parliament, in his bibliography of Father William Doyle (21), a military chaplain who died in Flanders in 1917, recalls how this Jesuit kept a record and counted exactly, day by day and month by month, the aspirations to God that he used to make. So this desire and this unconscious attraction to numbers is widespread. And Dante always kept this numerism, this harmony, in mind in the structure of each canto and each canticle, a preordained structure which, as the poet himself says, the restraint of art did not allow him to transgress.

As Giusti astutely observes in his essay on Parini's works, great minds, while extremely bold in breaking the chains imposed by others, are then extremely harsh in imposing new and terrible ones on themselves.

Dante's numerology therefore has no hermetic, initiatory or, to use an expressive but somewhat inaccurate word, anti-Catholic purpose. On this particular point of Dante's possible heterodox hermeticism, I therefore disagree with Valli. He believed, for example, that Dante wanted to hide the Croce-Aquila symmetry, as if it were a dangerous secret to reveal, given the fear, as Giusti put it, 'of being roasted'. The admirable symmetry between the Cross and the Eagle noted by Pascoli and masterfully highlighted by Valli says nothing more, however hidden it may be from the 'common people', than what Dante always repeated very clearly: that justice and peace could only be achieved through agreement between religious and civil authority, which for Dante could only be imperial authority. The Inquisition certainly could not burn the Comedy and its author for this reason. Certainly, Monarchia was condemned, but it was a contingent condemnation, related to the times and the special conditions of the Church at that time, much as it was for the condemnation of Galileo. However, since Monarchia did not contain any dogmatic errors, it was removed from the Index of Prohibited Books, as was Copernicus' work, which, however, was only removed from the Index in 1758. Beatrice appeared to be much more dangerous, as she could be too similar to the 'women' of heretics such as Cecco d'Ascoli, who was linked to the 'woman' of the Orphics. Therefore, as we shall see, Dante makes it very clear that 'his woman' is very different from that of other believers.

Dante, therefore, in using the number, had no intention of hiding anything less than orthodox in it. On the contrary, he, who was everything, even a scientist, loved, like all the scholars of his time, to write for 'subtle' people. Those who were 'in a small boat

' could not understand him: the 'coarse' people, those who, as Boccaccio says, understood 'alla melanese', were excluded from the possibility of entering into the deliberately hidden, but not unorthodox, meaning of Dante's words. This habit of scientists continued for a long time: they wrote for the learned, indeed for the most learned. When the astronomer Huygens, after Galileo, wanted to communicate his discovery about the shape of Saturn's ring to his colleagues, he used an anagram, which he then had to decipher himself. Leonardo wrote backwards and often anagrammed the most important and secret words. In the world of

craftsmen (and by this I also mean artists) had secret rules, like those of architects (22), who were also followers of the mystery of numbers; rules that the master revealed only to his most highly regarded disciples. Dante, therefore, does not want to speak clearly, but wraps his ideas in riddles and subtle concepts so that only the learned can understand him: *Odi profanum vulgus*. The profane masses are contrasted, as something sacred and initiatory, with the world of the wise.

Dante was eminently geometric, because he remembered that 'the Divinity always geometris' and composed the entire poem according to an admirable geometry. Indeed, he clearly states:

all things
They have order among themselves, and this is form
(idea!) that makes the Universe similar to God.

Now, number is order, it is harmony; and therefore the Poet uses number, which is perfection. Dante uses only the sacred mystical numbers also used by the Fathers of the Church: he merely gives great importance to the Pythagorean group 3, 4, 5, on which the Fathers placed less emphasis; and then he creates his own special number, to which we will return when discussing the last canto. In conclusion, Dante is not a numerist. God is the numerist: and Dante devoutly follows him.

There are some who do not want to accept the results of these new studies on numbers in Dante, objecting that it would be an artifice unworthy of the great Poet. We need to understand this word 'artifice'. The official Dante scholars, those who belong to the *hortus conclusus*, validly guarded against intruders, those who have been reproducing the same phonographic records for years, do not seem to have an exact concept of artifice. The cloying artifices are those of certain modest rhymesters of the time, the artifice of certain rhymes by Petrarch, the seventeenth-century poets, the Arcadians, uninspired people who indulged in a thousand playful games. The artifice in these cases is obvious, and artifice negates poetry. Now, in Dante, the tightly bound tercet, the prevailing ternary structure, the hundred cantos consisting of 1+33+33+33 etc. are not considered artifice; and should it be considered artifice not to use the same rhyme in the same canto and, even more so, to make the harmonious Pythagorean law prevail, as we shall see, even in rhyme? And can we call this admirable practice of Dante's, subject to countless artistic constraints, which is only being discovered today, artifice? The artifice is immediately apparent. For example, everyone sees the artifice of the acrostic in Canto XII of Purgatory, with the tercets all beginning with: *Vedea, O, Mostrava*. But where nothing appears at first glance, and where it took six centuries to discover it, it is no longer a matter of artifice but of supreme art.

When one accepts the ternary structure, 3, 33, 10, 100, then, as Petrocchi rightly says, it is illogical not to take the complete step and also accept the other numbers, which clearly appear when one carefully analyses the text of the Comedy. Dante built his admirable cathedral to the Triune God according to the dictates of harmony, that is, of number and geometry. Number, harmony and geometry were inherent in Dante's great mind, just as verse, tercets and regular rhyme were inherent. Let us admit, as we must, that the restraint of Dante's art does not refer only to the tercet, to the rhyme never repeated in the same canto, the ternary structure of the entire poem, but also to numbers that are perfection and harmony, and we will have a Dante who towers a thousand cubits above the others, for having subjected the numerical structure of his epic to the 'restraint of art' as well. However, we must not believe that Dante wrote according to his own numerical **handbook**. Harmony, symmetry and numbers were inherent in him. When a people creates a language and a great writer codifies it, grammar does not yet exist. Grammarians come later and seek retrospectively the laws of the language they study. This is what we do when we search Dante's practice for the laws of numbers, which Dante possessed in his soul.

Those who cannot deny certain facts relating to numbers resort to the convenient concept of 'chance'. Chance is the loophole of the lazy and the presumptuous. Lazy people who do not want to take on the effort of more in-depth research; presumptuous because they do not want to acknowledge their own inferiority. For Dante, there is never any question of 'chance'. And, moreover, a simple calculation of probabilities is enough to eliminate this erroneous idea.

I take as an example for such a calculation one of the most admirable things in the rhymes of the Comedy. As we have seen, the three consecutive numbers 3, 4, 5 of the Pythagorean triangle are sacred, divine. Now, the rhyme Dio (God) appears three times in Hell, four times in Purgatory and five times in Paradise (23). Indeed, in order not to alter this admirable pattern, Dante uses the Latinism Deo, certainly not because of any deficiency in the rhyme! To say this about Dante, who has such an enormous wealth of rhymes, would truly be heresy.

If we resort to probability calculations with appropriate numerical references, we arrive at the expression

1/70,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000.

An expression that means nothing to our small minds. We need to resort to comparisons.

Light, travelling a distance expressed by a number of metres equal to the denominator of this fraction (which represents the number of possible cases among which the **case** would have chosen the only favourable one given by the numerator), would take 75 million centuries. To come down to a more prosaic comparison, we can say that the probability of chance alone acting is equivalent to winning 150 quintillion times a four-number combination in the lottery.

As I said, I am giving this example only so as not to fill this volume with formulas. However, I assure those who are unfamiliar with these calculations that for any other numerical example we will mention later, the calculations can be repeated; and all, I say all, exclude the possibility of chance.

(17) La Vita nuova, 2nd ed., Pisa, Nistri, 1884, p. 205.

(18) Some may be surprised by this assertion and will cite verse 38 of Canto XXI of Inferno, where Saint Zita is mentioned in full. But this name is mentioned in scorn of the almost idolatrous Lucchesi, who had made Zita a saint on their own initiative. She was not canonised until more than three centuries after Dante!

(19) Speaking of Columbus, we recall that he too was a mystic. He set out full of faith rather than scientific knowledge; therefore, he was able to write: 'God granted me the keys to the Ocean and the power to break the chains of the sea, which were tightly locked'. Mysticism is not uncommon among scientists. Newton set out to study the Apocalypse. Kepler sought his laws in divine harmony and believed himself destined by God to reveal the truths of celestial mechanics to mankind.

(20) Dante and Christian philosophy. Loc. cit., p. 172.

(21) Tip. Baravalle, Turin, 1924.

(22) The Comacine masters were perhaps, in this sense, a congregation of Pythagorean initiates.

(23) In Inferno, in cantos: III, 122; IV, 38 and XII, 119. In Purgatorio, in cantos: VII, 5; XI, 88;

XXVII, 24 and XXXII, 59. In Paradise in cantos: VIII, 90; X, 56; XXIV, 130; XXVI, 56 and XXVIII, 128.

Of course, they are not rhymes such as Dio, Uccel di Dio, Figliuol di Dio, etc., which have a different meaning from Dio, as Dante himself says in Convivio with regard to rhyme, which we will have occasion to discuss.

6. - Dante's Gematria

Before getting to the heart of Dante's numerology, it is necessary to say a few words about a chapter of Jewish Kabbalah, Gematria. Dante uses it very few times, and he does so to imitate another of his great masters, John, in the Apocalypse, which is a work entirely interwoven with numerology.

Gematria is, so to speak, a science that seeks the symbolic numerical interpretation of individual letters, entire words, and the first three letters of each word. This science was widely cultivated by Rabbinitism. It is said that there were rabbis who knew the gematric value of almost every word in the Bible. Even the Greeks indulged in this fashion (24).

One of the best known and most famous examples of gematria is found, as mentioned above, in the Apocalypse of John, where the terrible monster is referred to only by the number 666. There is an entire library dedicated to this number and its interpretation. Dante also wrote his own Apocalypse and, like John, he indicated with a number, not a monster but a Greyhound, God's Messenger, a Saviour.

its interpretation. Dante also wrote his own Apocalypse and, like John, he indicated with a number, not a monster but a Greyhound, God's Messenger, a Saviour. It is the well-known 'five hundred and ten five' of the XXXIII of Purgatory. This number should be written DXV and not, as commentators arbitrarily changed it, DVX. It is the gematric number 515, the meaning of which is also the subject of another library to match that of St John's 666. The only thing that is certain is the difference between the two symbols. For the Evangelist, 666 is the satanic beast sent out of the abyss; for Dante, 515 is a heavenly envoy who will drive the she-wolf back into Hell. The former is pessimistic, the imperial Florentine is optimistic

However, Dante has a second example of gematria. In the sky of Mars, the flames of the glorious souls are arranged in 'five times seven' (the number of the minor climacteric!) vowels and consonants to compose the verse: **Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram**. Of these 35 letters, Dante emphasises, according to the rules of gematria, only the first three, D, I, L, of DXV. This fact allows us to deduce that the number 515 is a number of great importance to Dante; and this confirms Benini's (25) acute investigations into this number and 666 in the Comedy. Finally, it can be observed that the gematria DIL is found in the heaven of the righteous and in the verse that imposes justice on rulers. And DXV, the Messenger of God, the Greyhound, is the one who will come to establish justice in the world.

To highlight the importance that Dante wanted to give to this 5. 1. 5., we can note, as Benini has done acutely and logically, that he proclaimed himself **sixth** among the imperial poets in the very 515th verse of the poem.

The figuration and interpretation of the M ingigliata, the last letter 'of the fifth word', i.e. terram, of the above verse, can also be traced back to Gematria. There has been recent controversy over this M and its derivation following the publication by Mgr. Tondelli of a Liber figurarum attributed to Joachim of Fiore. I will leave aside the question of whether Liber figurarum is the work of Joachim. Francesco Foberti (26), one of his most knowledgeable experts and one of the most fervent defenders of his orthodoxy, believes that this book too should be attributed to Joachimite literature, but not to Joachim himself. I fully agree with Foberti's opinion. One must indeed consider the enormous volume of works that originated from the misrepresented ideas of the Florentine abbot. The idea of a new age of the Spirit, of the end of the world, of the millennium and no more, continued in all the more or less orthodox works of religious figures for several decades. But there is no need to dwell on this subject, which goes beyond my thesis, which can be summarised as follows: where did Dante get the idea of that movement of flaming souls, which after various evolutions stop to form a flowered M and then an eagle? But, even more importantly, what does that M mean?

First of all, let us return to and summarise Dante's vision of the cantos that interest us, and begin to consider what Dante tells us about the sky of Mars. The bright lights of the blessed form various letters that combine to create an inscription that is not continuous. First a D, then an I, then an L; then the whole verse, which is the beginning of the Liber Sapientiae, inviting the powerful to love Justice. The letters then disappear, except for the last letter of terram, which is a luminous golden M. And on this M, the Poet saw other lights descend on its peak and settle there, singing.

The M therefore has a peak: that is, it is rounded; it is not our angular M, it is the Gothic M, curved at the top.

Then numerous other sparks, other lights, more than a thousand, at different heights form the head and neck of an eagle. And the blessed souls, who are 'ingigliate all'm', with little movement also take part in forming the figure of the eagle. How was that luminous image formed, that eagle reached by a modification of the M?

And here we come to the crux of the matter, namely that verb created by Dante: ingigliare, which seems to me to be very important in clarifying the model that may have served him for this figuration.

Gaetani, a brilliant scholar of Dante, was the first to point out that Dante's M must have been the Gothic M. And he gives a figure of it, which is then ingigliata. But this M has a lily on its crest, while Dante says that lights rest on its crest to form the neck and head of the eagle. Furthermore, in order to have the eagle, the M must be completely dissolved. But Dante does not mention this dissolution at all (27).

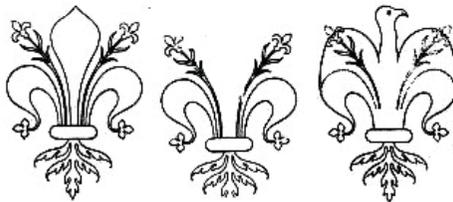
It is therefore necessary to resort to another type of embellished M. There is indeed another figure that

resembles the M, which has a stylised eagle's tail base, a stem on which the neck and head of the eagle can be formed, which is lily-shaped above the M, and which does not need to be broken up. This figure is the Florentine coat of arms, the lily, worthy of being in heaven, when it is formed, as in Paradise, by the righteous and is not the 'cursed flower' of the coin.



Let us look at this typical and historic Florentine lily (28): the two side petals are the two legs of the rounded M, on which the branches then descend to form the neck and head of an eagle. The two side lilies, 'ingigliati all'm', with little movement, shifting slightly, complete the upper contour of the wings. An eagle has been formed from the lily. I do not think it is necessary to look for other models when we have one so well known to Dante, which 'with little movement' gives us the figure of the eagle, deriving it from an ingigliata M, without breaking it up.

In this regard, we must not forget that, in the previous canto of Cacciaguida, Dante expressly recalls the Florentine lily. It is therefore reasonable to think that he had in mind the lily, the coat of arms of his city. It could perhaps be observed that Dante, florentinus natione non moribus, had it in for Florence and therefore should not have placed its lily in the sky.



But we must remember that Dante is a passionate lover of the things dear to him, mainly his faith and his homeland. Like all uncompromising lovers, he wants the thing he loves to be perfect. That is why he rails against the popes, who are not shepherds but wolves, against the Church, which is corrupt in its customs, while holding the revealed Truth, in which Dante believes with all his strength and with the deepest humility. This is why he is so harsh towards his hometown, which he nevertheless loves with the immense affection of a son. It is therefore natural that in his vision of future justice he sees the lily of his city united with the eagle of the righteous Empire.

I therefore believe that Dante's lily undoubtedly derives from the Florentine lily.

However, this could be considered a matter of little importance. Rather, it is important to see what Dante meant by this M ingigliata, which then takes the form of an eagle.

I believe that if you asked the first person you met what the M ingigliata represents, they would intuitively and without hesitation reply that it can only be the Virgin Mary.

And so I immediately thought the same, believing that the interpretation was clear. But I was mistaken. What common sense suggests to us laymen is not the opinion of many professional Dante scholars. In fact, the most highly regarded commentators do not mention Mary. The old Buti says, and it is not clear on what basis, that in that M Dante wanted to indicate the World and that the Eagle would be born from the World. A more recent and one of the most valiant commentators, Parodi, asserts that that M should be read as Monarchy. And the lily with which the Monarchy is adorned would be the House of France. From this lily of France, we would then move on to the Imperial Eagle. According to Parodi, therefore, with this figuration Dante wanted to hint at his hope that the House of France would submit to the Empire. I believe that anything is possible, except that Dante could not even remotely have dreamed of such a submission. The House of France and its lily are banished by the Poet, precisely because they are opponents and enemies

of the Empire.

Trucchi, who recently published an explanation of the Comedy and who very often has excellent insights, strangely enough does not attach any importance to this M, which for him too could be World or Monarchy. Trucchi, however, tends to consider it a sign of Monarchy. But he does not recognise any special value in this view. Yet Dante **explicitly** warns of the importance of this and draws our attention to its profound meaning, because before talking about it, he addresses all the Muses, invoking the source from which they drink, the Diva Pegasea, who makes geniuses glorious and long-lived.

Laurenti interpreted the M as Mary in his pamphlet *Ermetica ed ermeneutica dantesca* (Hermeticism and Dante's Hermeneutics) (p. 188 ff.). With this interpretation, we enter fully into the religious realm, and indeed the one preferred by Dante for his veneration of the Virgin. Isaiah's prophecy speaks of this sublime creature, the flower of humanity, sanctified by the Divine Spirit, Mary. Let us reread it: 'Et egredietur virgo de radice Jesse, et flos de radice eius ascendet'. A virgin will sprout from the root of Jesse, and a flower will rise from his root. This explains Dante's words: **surgono, resurgir, salir**, which represent Isaiah's ascendet, and it also explains the *ingigliarsi all'm*, with the flower sprouting from the root.

But, Laurenti observes, there is more. Isaiah continues: 'Judicabit in justitia pauperes'. Here comes the concept of judgement and justice, that is, the words marked by the divine facelle: 'Love justice, you who judge the Earth'.

It seems to reproduce Dante's vision. The Florentine lily, which, lacking a central petal, is an M adorned with two side flowers: the divine lights that fall on the top of the M to form the neck and beak of the eagle, the small flames that, with little movement, are arranged to finish the outline of the wings.

It would be wonderful if the eagle could be recognised as a symbol of the Spirit. But in all Catholic iconography, the Spirit is not depicted as an eagle.

We must therefore seek some other subtle meaning that could explain this special representation of the M of Mary with the eagle. We find it in a curious passage from *Convivio* (3, V, 2) which, it seems to me, has not been given sufficient attention. In this page, Dante, explaining the verse 'The Sun does not see that the whole world revolves' from the song *Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*, gives us an explanation of the rotation of the Sun around the immobile Earth. In this explanation, the Poet wants to account for the antipodes and supposes two cities to be located there, symmetrically. But, strangely enough, it is their names. One is called **Maria** and the other **Lucia**! The transparency of these two fictitious names is clear, and the symbol is also very clear when the poet says: "The citizens of Maria hold their plants **against** the plants of those of Lucia". However, to show even more clearly that Maria personifies the Cross, the name Maria is repeated exactly **nine** times, while for Lucia, the Empire, Justice (symbolised by the number six), her name is repeated **six** times. Thus, according to Dante's dominant idea, the Cross and the Empire are, on Earth, at opposite ends of the spectrum; and from this comes the evil of Humanity, placed in the dark forest without hope.

But in the heaven of Justice, where human perfection is hoped for with the agreement of the two powers, the M with the crown, Mary, is no longer at the antipodes but intimately linked to the Eagle, Lucia. The absolute, diametric opposition of the *Convivio* is thus changed into the hoped-for union of the Cross with the Empire. And this is how Kabbalistic gematria is brought back to Catholic beliefs and to Dante's great religious and imperial dream.

(24) Straton, in an epigram that needs no translation, says that proctos and chsisos are equivalent in gematria.

(25) Dante in the beauty of his solved enigmas: *passim*.

(26) Dantean questions and Franciscan history. *Misc. francesc. XXXIX*, Gioacchino da Fiore, Padua, Cedam, 1942.

(27) *Exposition of the Divine Comedy, Paradise*, p. 296.

(28) The above image was kindly provided to me by the Art Office of the Municipality of Florence as the official coat of arms, registered with the Heraldry Office, and is taken from very old examples existing in the Archives and dating back to 1200. It is therefore certainly Dante's Lily.

Fabritalp: I would like to conclude with a brief excerpt from Part Three (**The number in the text**):

Chapter I. - The one and the three

[...] In the Comedy there are one hundred cantos; a most perfect number, because it is the power of the perfect ten, in which unity and trinity are contained in its power. And the one hundred cantos are divided into three canticles of thirty-three cantos each, since the first canto is not a supernumerary canto of Hell, but is the introductory canto to the whole poem. One more canto could not fit in Purgatory. It could perhaps fit in Paradise, as a summary canto: but then the One, the beginning of everything as the Pythagoreans believe, would have been at the end and not at the beginning as it should be, and the admirable sequence would have been impossible: $1 + 33 + 33 + 33$. [...]

6a) THE LIFE CYCLE OF MAN ACCORDING TO DANTE

by Frater Petrus

Vinassa de Regny writes: 'With regard to this 81, it should be noted that Dante (Convivio, 4, XXIV, 6), speaking of the periods of human life, gives it great Christian importance: 'I believe that if Christ had not been crucified and had lived out the span of life that nature intended for him, he would have reached the age of 81 when his mortal body was transformed into eternity'. And this is a clear refutation of all those who assert that, according to Dante, the natural human life span is 70 years".

How can this be reconciled with Dante's previous statement in Convivio, 4, XXIII 6-10: 'all earthly lives (...) should be almost like the image of an arc (...) the highest point of this arc (...) I believe that in perfectly natural beings it is in the thirty-fifth year'?

I believe that the best thing to do is to reread the two chapters in question in full, and then draw the possible conclusions.

Dante Alighieri

Convivio - TREATISE IV

Chapter XXIII Now that the definition of nobility and its parts has been sufficiently demonstrated, as far as possible, and explained, so that we can now see what a noble man is, we can proceed to the part of the text that begins: *The soul adorned with this goodness*; in which are shown the signs by which we can recognise the noble man mentioned above. This part is divided into two: in the first, it is stated that this nobility shines and glows throughout the life of the noble person, manifestly; in the second, it is demonstrated specifically in its splendours, and this second part begins: *Obedient, gentle and modest*.

Regarding the first, it should be known that this divine seed, mentioned above, immediately sprouts in our soul, spreading and diversifying through each power of the soul, according to the needs of that power. It therefore sprouts through the vegetative, the sensitive and the rational powers; and it branches out through the virtues of all of them, directing them all to their perfections, and sustaining itself in them until the point where, with that part of our soul that never dies, it returns to the most high and glorious sower in heaven. And this is what it says about the first one mentioned. Then, when it begins: *Obedient, gentle and shy*, it shows us how we can recognise a noble man by the apparent signs that are the workings of this divine goodness; and this part is divided into four, according to how it works differently in four stages, namely adolescence, youth, middle age and old age. The second part begins: *In youth, temperate and strong*; the third begins: *And in*

his middle age; the fourth begins: *Then in the fourth part of life*. In this is the general judgement of this part. Around which it is necessary to know that each effect, insofar as it is an effect, receives the similarity of its cause, as much as it is possible to retain. Hence, since our life, as has been said, and indeed that of every living thing here below, is caused by heaven, and heaven reveals itself to all these effects, not in a complete circle, but in part, and so it is fitting that its movement be above them like an arc, [and] all [earthly] lives (and I say [earthly], both of [men] and of other living beings), [rising] and turning, must be almost like the image of an arc. Returning, therefore, to our own, which alone is understood at present, I say that it proceeds in the image of this arc, rising and descending.

And it should be known that this arc [below, like the arc] above would be equal, if the matter of our seminal composition did not impede the rule of human nature. But because the radical moisture [is] less and more, and of better quality [and less good], and lasts longer [in one] than in another effect - which is subject to and nourished by heat, which is our life - it happens that the arc of one man's life is shorter and longer than that of another. And some deaths are violent, or hastened by accidental infertility; but only that which is natural is called such by the common people, and that is the end of which the Psalmist says: 'Thou hast set a limit which cannot be passed'. And because Aristotle, the master of our life, realised this arc of which we now speak, he seemed to want our life to be nothing more than an ascent and a descent: therefore, in his treatise on Youth and Old Age, he says that youth is nothing more than an increase of that. Where the highest point of this arc lies, given the inequality mentioned above, is difficult to know; but I believe it to be between the thirtieth and fortieth years, and I believe that in those who are perfectly formed, it is in the thirty-fifth year. And this reasoning moves me: that our saviour Christ was of excellent nature, who chose to die in the thirty-fourth year of his age; for it was not fitting for the divinity to remain in a state of decline, nor is it credible that he did not wish to remain in this life of ours at its peak, since he had been in the low state of childhood. This is evident from the hour of the day of his death, for he wished it to resemble his life; hence Luke says that it was about the sixth hour when he died, that is to say, the height of the day. From this we can understand from the word 'about' that the thirty-fifth year of Christ's life was the height of his age.

In truth, this arc is not distinguished from the scriptures by means of a middle ground; but, following the four combinations of opposing qualities that are in our composition, to which it seems appropriate, I say to each, a part of our age, it is divided into four parts, and they are called four ages. The first is Adolescence, which is appropriate to heat and humidity; the second is Youth, which is appropriate to heat and dryness; the third is Middle Age, which is appropriate to cold and dryness; the fourth is Old Age, which is appropriate to cold and humidity, according to what Albert writes in the fourth part of the *Metaura*. And these parts are similarly divided in the year, in spring, summer, autumn and winter; and in the day, that is, up to the third, and then up to the ninth (leaving the sixth, in the middle of this part, for the reason that can be discerned), and then up to vespers and from vespers onwards. And therefore the gentiles, that is, the pagans, said that the chariot of the sun had four horses: the first they called Eoo, the second Pirroi, the third Eton, the fourth Flegon, according to what Ovid writes in the second part of *Metamorphoseos*. Regarding the parts of the day, it should be briefly noted that, as mentioned above in the sixth part of the third treatise, the Church uses, in the distinction of the hours, the temporal hours of the day, which are twelve in each day, either large or small, according to the quantity of sunlight; and since the sixth hour, that is, the middle of the day, is the most noble of the whole day and the most virtuous, its offices are brought together there from all sides, that is, from before and after, as much as possible. And therefore the office of the first part of the day, that is, the third, is said at the end of that part; and that of the third part and the fourth is said at the beginning. And therefore it is called half third, before it sounds for that part; and half ninth, after it has sounded for that part; and so half vespers. And therefore let everyone know that, in the right ninth, it must always sound at the beginning of the seventh hour of the day: and this suffices for the present digression.

Chapter XXIV Returning to the subject, I say that human life is divided into four stages. The first is called Adolescence, that is, 'growth of life'; the second is called Youth, that is, 'the age that can benefit', that is, give perfection, and thus it is understood to be perfect - for no one can

give anything but what he has -; the third is called Middle Age; the fourth is called Old Age, as mentioned above.

No one doubts the first, but every wise man agrees that it lasts until the twenty-fifth year; and because until that time our soul is intent on the growth and beautification of the body, whereby many and great changes take place in the person, it cannot perfectly discern the rational part. Therefore, reason dictates that before that age, man cannot do certain things without the guidance of someone of perfect age.

As for the second, which is truly the peak of our life, the time is taken differently by many. But, leaving aside what philosophers and physicians write about it, and returning to reason itself, I say that for most people, in whom one can and must take every natural judgement, that age is twenty years. And the reason I give for this is that, if the peak of our arc is at thirty-five, this age must have as much descent as it has ascent; and that ascent and descent is almost like holding a bow, in which little flexion can be discerned. We therefore have that youth is completed in the forty-fifth year. And just as adolescence is at twenty-five years of age, preceding youth, so the descent, that is, old age, is in the same amount of time that follows youth; and thus old age ends at seventy years of age. But since adolescence does not begin at the beginning of life, taking it in the manner described, but at about eight years after that; and since our nature strives to ascend and restrains itself from descending, because natural heat is diminished and has little power, and moisture is increased (not in quantity, but in quality, so that it is less vapourous and consumable), it happens that beyond old age there remains perhaps ten years of our life, or a little more or a little less: and this time is called senility. Hence we have Plato, of whom it can be said that he was gifted both by nature and by the physiognomy that Socrates took from him when he first saw him, that he lived eighty-one years, as Tullio testifies in his *De Senectute*. And I believe that if Christ had not been crucified, and had lived the span of life that nature intended for him, he would have been transformed from his mortal body into an eternal one at the age of eighty-one.

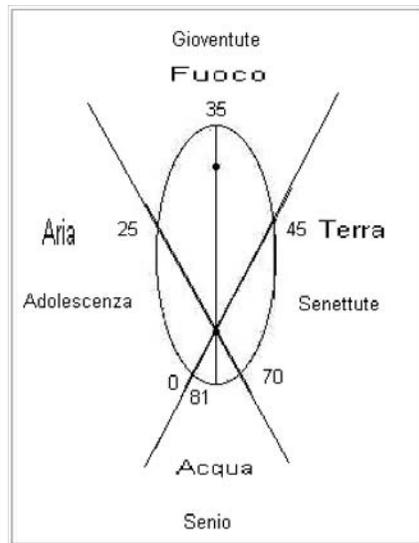
Truly, as mentioned above, these stages may be longer or shorter depending on our constitution and composition; but, as they are in this proportion, as mentioned, it seems to me that we should all follow this rule, that is, to make the stages longer or shorter according to the integrity of the entire natural lifespan. Throughout all these stages, this nobility, of which we speak, shows its effects differently in the ennobled soul; and this is what this part, on which we are currently writing, intends to demonstrate. Where it is to be known that our good and upright nature proceeds reasonably in us, just as we see the nature of plants proceeding in them; and therefore other customs and other behaviours are reasonable for one age more than another, in which the ennobled soul proceeds orderly along a simple path, using its acts in their times and ages as they are ordered to its ultimate fruit. And Tullio agrees with this in *De Senectute*. And leaving aside the figurative representation that Virgil gives of this different process of the ages in the *Aeneid*, and leaving aside what Egidio the hermit says about it in the first part of *Reggimento de' Principi*, and leaving aside what Tullio touches on in *De li Offici*, and following only what reason itself can see, I say that this first age is the gateway and path through which we enter our good life. And this entrance must necessarily have certain things, which good nature, which does not fail in necessary things, provides; just as we see that it gives the vine leaves to protect its fruit, and the vines with which it defends and binds its weakness, so that it can bear the weight of its fruit.

Good nature therefore gives this age four things that are necessary for entering the city of good living. The first is obedience; the second is gentleness; the third is modesty; the fourth is physical adornment, as the text says in the first clause. It should therefore be known that just as someone who has never been to a city would not know how to walk the streets without the guidance of someone who has used them, so the adolescent who enters the erroneous forest of this life would not know how to walk the right path if it were not shown to him by his elders. Nor would showing them be of any use if they were not obedient to their commands; and therefore obedience was necessary at this age. Some might well say: can therefore those who believe in evil commands be called obedient, as those who believe in good ones? I reply that they do not have that obedience, but transgression: for if the king commands one way and the

servant commands another, the servant is not to be obeyed; for that would be disobeying the king, and thus it would be transgression. And therefore Solomon says, when he intends to correct his son (and this is his first commandment): "Hear, my son, the instruction of your father." And then he immediately removes him from the evil counsel and teaching of others, saying: "Let not sinners entice you with flattery and pleasure, that you go with them." Therefore, just as a child, once born, quickly learns from its mother's breast, so as soon as some light of understanding appears in it, it must turn to its father's correction, and the father must teach it. And be careful not to give him an example in your actions that is contrary to the words of correction, for we naturally see that every child looks more to the footsteps of his father than to those of others. And therefore the Law says and commands that the father's person must always appear holy and honest to his children; and thus it appears that obedience was necessary at this age. And therefore Solomon writes in Proverbs that those who humbly and obediently accept their corrector's rebukes "shall be glorious"; and he says "shall be", to imply that he is speaking to the adolescent, who cannot be so in the present age. And if anyone should slander, "What is said is only of the father and no one else," I say that all other obedience must be reduced to the father. Hence the Apostle says to the Colossians, "Children, obey your fathers in all things, for this is what God wants." And if the father is not alive, obedience must be given to those whom the father has designated as his last will and testament; and if the father dies intestate, obedience must be given to the one to whom reason commits his governance. And then teachers and elders must be obeyed, to whom in some way it seems to have been entrusted by the father, or by those who hold the father's place. But since this chapter has been long because of the useful digressions it contains, other things are to be discussed in the next chapter.

Comment

The image of the human life cycle, which Dante probably had in mind when writing these two chapters of *Convivio*, is a vertically arranged ellipse, whose perimeter is divided into four parts by two straight lines intersecting at the lower of the two foci. With such a construction, only the left (from 0 to 25 years) and right (from 45 to 70 years) parts of the cycle are equal to each other.



As can be seen, the age of thirty-five is effectively at the apex of the major diameter and in this sense it is the 'midpoint of our life's journey', which has a perfect duration if it is 81 years (= 3^4).

Dante attributes moisture and warmth to the first part of life, i.e. *adolescence* (up to 25 years of age) (it is therefore analogous to the element that has the same qualities: air); he attributes warmth and dryness to *youth* (up to 45 years of age) (analogous to fire); to *old age* (up to 70 years) Dante attributes dryness and cold (analogous to earth); to senility (up to a theoretical 81 years) he attributes cold and dampness (analogous to water). As clearly indicated by what is said about the body of Christ (if he had not died on the cross), with reference to inner alchemy, the fourth age (*senio*) corresponds to the realisation of the 'eternal body'. This is experienced by the alchemist as a 'melting away' of the constraints to which the mortal body was subject: it is therefore symbolically of the nature of water.



7) GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE COMEDY

by Sipex



Domenico di Michelino (1417 – 1491) - The Comedy illuminates Florence - in Santa Maria del Fiore.

The following is a summary of the Divine Comedy, intended to provide an initial overview of the issues for those approaching it from an esoteric point of view. At Ea's suggestion, I have rewritten the 'summary' I initially provided. In fact, it was simply a starting point, which did not contain much more than the notions commonly accepted by most scholars. Taking into account both my subsequent writings and, more generally, what has emerged in this Forum, this time **I have**

highlighted a 'magical' level in the structure of the Comedy, which determines the other, increasingly concrete levels: doctrinal, cosmological and formal.

Original **title**: Comedia - Poem in three canticles (Inferno - Purgatorio - Paradiso) by Dante Alighieri.

Genesis and Early History

The true genesis of this work is to be found, as we shall see below, in the magical dimension in which the author and the Confraternity of the Fedeli d'Amore lived. The discussion regarding previous works that may have served as models for the Divine Comedy is very complex and would probably require a separate treatment. However, for practical purposes, the references we will make to the main ones among them, when discussing the doctrinal structure of the three canticles, may suffice.

The **dating** of the work is still problematic today. The objective data we have available are:

- Inferno contains no references to events after 1309. The first mention of manuscript copies of this canto dates back to 1313. However, there is a quotation from Inf. V 103-105 (the episode of Paolo and Francesca) on a cover dated 1404 in the State Archives of Bologna.

- Purgatory contains no references to events after 1313 and was published separately in the following two years.

- Paradiso was completed in the last years of the poet's life. If we consider the 13th epistle, the one to Cangrande della Scala, to be authentic, whose composition can be dated, according to Mazzoni, 'between 1315 and December 1317', at that time the first two canticles had already been published and Dante had begun Paradiso, but he was not yet able to send part of it to Scaligero, to whom the third canticle was dedicated.

Also in the 13th epistle, Dante explains to Cangrande the reason for the title 'Comedia'. The **reason for the title** is rhetorical and connected to the theme dealt with and the linguistic level: the work begins with a frightening situation and ends happily (in contrast, a tragedy may have a pleasant beginning but a terrible ending), and the linguistic level (the vernacular) is modest and humble in order to facilitate communication. The adjective '**divine**', used by Boccaccio in his biography of Dante, Trattatello in laude di Dante, was only introduced in a printed edition in 1555.

Structure

The comedy recounts a journey through the three realms of the afterlife undertaken by Dante (an exemplary 'symbol' of man), who relies on various successive 'guides', the main ones being Virgil (reason), Beatrice (faith) and St. Bernard (mystical impulse). During the journey, they encounter numerous characters from the past, whose various existential situations are the consequence of the good and evil they pursued in the earthly world.

According to Dante himself (Treatise II of Convivio), the poem has four **main levels of meaning**:

- **Literal**: Dante's journey through the three otherworldly realms covers a period of seven days, with clear reference to the biblical seven days of the creation of the world.

- **Allegorical**: comparison is the tool with which the poet portrays reality, through a web of various observations.

- **Moral**: redemption of the poet's soul after a period of straying (dark forest) and political redemption of humanity which, with the guidance of reason (Virgil) and the empire and a rediscovered morality of the Church, achieves natural happiness (Earthly Paradise = justice and peace).

- **Anagogical**: what is assumed by most esotericists could be summarised as follows: the guidance of reason and then of faith (Beatrice), which moves mountains (Magic), applied to inner development (St. Bernard, Theurgy) leads to the supernatural condition (Empyrean, Theosis).

These four levels of meaning correspond, in reverse order, to four structural levels of the Comedy:

- a) magical structure
- b) doctrinal structure
- c) cosmological structure
- d) formal structure

a) Magical Structure

All scholars who accept the existence of esotericism have sought the 'details' of the anagogical meaning that we have summarised, but... they have not found them. Why?

In general, **esotericism gives rise to two main types of products** (oral or written-graphic, it does not matter here):

- 1) accounts of experiences or procedures to follow in order to experience or relive them (**Rites**);
- 2) formulas, or more or less complex sets of symbols, which express a magical will of one's own or of a group (**spells**).

The first thing that scholars of esotericism must **ask themselves is what type of product the Comedy is**. Most of them have not done so, assuming that the outward appearance of an 'initiatory journey' must necessarily correspond to a product of the first type, i.e. an account of an inner experience or ritual. Nothing could be more wrong, as it essentially means confusing the literal meaning with the anagogical one. **It is in fact the 'letter' of the work that speaks of an initiatory journey** that culminates, already in life, with union with God; **therefore, the anagogical meaning must be something else!** No wonder, then, that all those scholars were unable to find what they were looking for. They did not take into account the warning of Johannes Schröder, shared by other alchemists, who even in the 17th century admonished: 'When philosophers speak without deception, I distrust their words; when they explain themselves in riddles, I reflect'.

Therefore, **the Comedy can only be** a product of the second type: **a 'living' book** (just as certain paintings, statues, buildings and musical compositions are also living), **a complex magic formula** which, even if it can offer food for thought of the first kind, has a **single purpose: to remain intact over the centuries and to be repeated and thus regenerated by as many beings as possible**.

So, are we saying that Dante did not create works of the first type? Not at all, he certainly did! In exactly the same way...as his contemporaries, the Fedeli d'Amore, with songs, ballads, sonnets and various rhymes, i.e. with shorter poetic compositions written in the 'language of love' (which is essentially absent from the Comedy) and sometimes accompanied by a narrative (Vita Nova) or doctrinal (Convivio) commentary. Would they also have been suitable as magic formulas? Yes, but much less so. Certainly, Dante's shorter compositions are read and studied, like those of Guinizelli, Cavalcanti and all the others, but the Comedy... there are even those who know it all by heart! **On a magical level, it is what, on a religious level, is the Christian Creed**, that is, the will that is linked to it is strengthened every time it is read or studied or repeated from memory. What is this will? I will limit myself to saying that some magical effects were already apparent a few decades later, e.g. when the model of the Mystical Rose, described by Dante in the last cantos of Paradise, took shape on a human level with the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Prophecy? Precognition? No, this is stuff for contemplatives: magicians only believe... in magic!

So the magical structure of the Comedy is simply the magical will that Dante bound to it (binding of destinies, spell). It is the Fire of art (radiant will) which, in order to materialise in a first effect that can be shared by all, i.e. the written work, must coagulate, gradually transforming itself into Air, Water and Earth.

b) Doctrinal structure

The first phase of concretisation of the magical structure (= Fire) occurs in the determination of the doctrinal structure (= Air, motion of ideas), that is, in the choice of the theological-philosophical and esoteric framework most suited to arousing readers' interest in the work. The complexity of the schemes adopted by the poet requires that the subject be treated separately, in specific sections providing further details. Therefore, the reader will find the following chapters in the text:

- [Structure of Inferno](#)
- [Structure of Purgatory](#)
- [Structure of Paradise](#)

c) Cosmological structure

The doctrinal structure (=Air) is further concretised in the choice of an organised environment, a 'cosmos' where what is narrated will acquire meaning and coherence. As a result of Dante's doctrinal choices, the cosmological structure (=Water, cohesion of content, determined by the chosen environment) of the Comedy coincides for the most part with the most widespread cosmological representation in the medieval imagination.

The journey to Hell and Mount Purgatory represents the crossing of the entire planet, from its depths to its highest regions, while Paradise is a symbolic-visual representation of a Christianised Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmos.

In Dante's time, Hell was represented as a conical cavity inside the Earth, which was then conceived as divided into two hemispheres, one of land and the other of water. The infernal cave was created by the retreat of the lands horrified by contact with the cursed body of Lucifer and his hosts, who fell from heaven after rebelling against God. The entrance to the infernal abyss was located exactly beneath Jerusalem, at a 90° angle to the 180° semicircle formed by the land masses. The marine half of the Earth extended across the entire hemisphere opposite the Eurasian continent. At the antipodes of Jerusalem, and therefore at 90° of the watery hemisphere, stood the mountainous island of Purgatory, composed precisely of the lands that had spilled out from the heart of the world at the time of the angels' rebellion. At the top of Purgatory, which was a recent creation of Christian imagination linked to the need to justify the doctrine of indulgences, Dante placed the earthly Paradise of the biblical story, the place on earth closest to heaven.

Paradise is structured according to the Aristotelian cosmological representation, revisited in the Hellenistic period by Ptolemy, and further rearranged by Christian theologians according to the needs of the new religion. In his heavenly rapture behind the soul of Beatrice, Dante thus traverses the nine heavens of the astronomical-theological cosmos, above which stretches the metaphysically infinite Empyrean, home to the **Rose of the Blessed**, who enjoy the direct vision of God. The nine heavens correspond in the Empyrean to the nine angelic choirs which, with their circular movement around the image of God, cause the relative rotary movement of the heaven to which each of them is assigned - this as a consequence of the doctrine of the Pure Act and the First Mobile Heaven, derived from Aristotle's Metaphysics.

The cosmological structure of the Comedy is therefore closely connected to the doctrinal structure of the poem, so that the location of the three realms, and within them the order of souls - that is, of punishments and graces - corresponds to precise moral and theological intentions.

In particular, the **topography of Hell** includes the following places:

- A large vestibule or Antinferno, where those whom neither God nor the devil wants are punished: the slothful. - The river Acheron, which separates the vestibule from hell itself.
- A first section consisting of Limbo, immersed in perpetual darkness.
- A series of less steep circles where incontinent sinners suffer.

- The **circle of Dis**, whose walls surround the final abyss.
- The circle of the violent, through which flows the bloody river Phlegethon.
- A steep ravine, which leads **to the eighth circle**, called Malebolge: the circle of the fraudulent.
- The Well of the Giants.
- The frozen lake of Cocytus, where traitors are immersed. The **topography of Purgatory** is structured as follows:
 - An Ante-Purgatory, consisting of a beach where souls are ferried by the angel boatman who picks them up at the mouth of the Tiber. Mirroring Hell, it is here that the negligent, those who were slow to repent, undergo their purification.
 - At the foot of the mountain, still part of the Ante-Purgatory, there is a flowery valley where negligent princes atone for their sins.
 - Purgatory itself is a steep mountain, formed by wide cliffs and rocky circles, each of which is guarded by an angel.
 - At the top of the mountain is the Earthly Paradise, which looks like a lush forest populated by allegorical figures.

Topography of Paradise:

Paradise is located beyond the 'sphere of air' and the 'sphere of fire' and is divided into the following heavens:

- The first heaven or moon: spirits who failed in their vows (motor intelligences: Angels)
- The second heaven or heaven of Mercury: spirits who did good but out of a desire for earthly glory (driving intelligences: Archangels)
- Third heaven or Venus: loving spirits (driving intelligences: Principalities)
- IV heaven or of the sun: wise spirits (driving intelligences: Powers)
- V heaven or Mars: spirits of those who died for their faith (driving intelligences: Virtues)
- VI heaven or Jupiter: righteous princes (driving intelligences: Dominations)
- VII heaven or Saturn: contemplative spirits (motive intelligences: Thrones)
- Eighth heaven or fixed stars: triumphant spirits (motive intelligences: Cherubim)
- IX heaven or the first mobile: angelic choirs (motive intelligences: Seraphim)
- Tenth heaven or empyrean: the "white rose", nine angelic circles, God.

d) Formal structure

Based on the cosmological structure (= Water), **the formal structure** (= Earth, the tangible form of the poem) **is determined, i.e. the manifest content of the work** in its particular organisational and linguistic-expressive form. From this point of view, the Comedy presents itself as a didactic poem, which takes the prologue and invocation for each of the three canticles from the epic poem. It is composed of hendecasyllabic verses, distributed in 100 cantos, which are grouped into three canticles of 33 cantos each plus an introductory canto (1+33+33+33 = 100).

The number 3 also recurs in the metrical form, which is the *terzina* or 'terza rima', i.e. stanzas of three hendecasyllables with chained rhymes (ABA\BCB\CDC). More generally, numbers link the numerous formal correspondences in the text (e.g., the sixth cantos of the three canticles are political in theme), tying the episodes together in an intricate web of doctrinal and symbolic values.

Although the linguistic level of a comedy must be, as Dante himself says, modest and humble, it is easy to notice a different style in the three canticles. The theoretical norm of 'convenientia' requires that the style conform to the subject matter, so the style becomes increasingly elevated from the first to the third canto, with an intensification of metaphorical language. However, in general, Dante favours concise expression, evoking visual images and acoustic sensations whenever they can profitably replace simple logical connections. The syntactic juxtaposition (short successive elements with breaks and caesuras) inherited from medieval Latin literature sometimes makes his language seem less fluid to us modern readers (accustomed to a more connected mode of expression).

Doctrinal structure of Inferno

In the first canto, Dante uses Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (as Virgil explicitly states in Canto XI of Inferno) and Rhetoric, with their medieval commentaries, to classify sins and distribute the damned, but at the same time he draws on St Thomas for the circle of heretics, Fulgenzio Planciade's Mythologiarum Libri and Cicero's De Officiis for the divisions of malice and fraud.

The sinners "closest" to God and to the light, placed in the first, largest circles, are the incontinent, that is, those who made the least use of reason in sinning. **Sins of incontinence**, in fact, are committed mainly out of weakness or inability to control oneself and are therefore attributable more to a lack of will to resist evil and do good than to reason. Lower down are those who have committed **sins of malice**, that is, actions linked to the misuse of reason, put at the service of evil. They, in turn, can be divided into sinners of 'heresy', sinners who have acted with 'force' (violent) and sinners who have acted with 'fraud'. Heresy is the least serious sin, as it is the result of self-deception of reason. Next come the sins of the violent, who have acted blinded by passion, yet at a higher level of intelligence than the incontinent and heretics. Fraudsters and traitors are the most evil sinners because they knowingly wanted and carried out evil. One can defraud those who do not trust or those who trust: deceiving those who trust (betrayal), i.e. those who are bound to us by particular ties (kinship, hospitality, common homeland), is certainly more serious.

Hell descends in concentric circles. There are nine of them, plus a vestibule (Antinferno) where souls wait to learn their fate and where the slothful, or 'those who lived without infamy and without praise', find their permanent home. The first five circles include Limbo (where the righteous who did not know revelation or children who were not baptised sigh for God) and the four circles of the incontinent: the lustful, the gluttonous, the avaricious and prodigal, the wrathful and the slothful.

The next four circles are enclosed within the walls of the city of Dis, to indicate the gravity of the sins. In the sixth circle, heretics are punished; the seventh is the circle of the violent, divided into three groups: in the first are those who are violent towards others - murderers - in the second, those who are violent towards themselves and their own possessions - suicides and squanderers - in the third, those who are violent towards God (sodomites, blasphemers, usurers). The eighth circle, where those who have used fraud against those who do not trust them are punished, is divided into ten pits: those of pimps and seducers, flatterers, simoniacs, fortune tellers, usurers, hypocrites, thieves, fraudulent advisers, sowers of discord, and counterfeiters. The ninth circle, where traitors are punished, i.e. those who have used fraud against those who trust them, is divided into four zones: Caina [traitors to relatives], Antenora [to the homeland], Tolomea [to guests], Giudecca [to benefactors]). Lucifer, in the form of an immense monster with three heads and bat wings, is located at the bottom of hell, which coincides with the centre of the earth. He constantly moves his wings to keep the river Cocytus frozen and tears apart Brutus, Cassius (traitors and murderers of Caesar) and Judas (traitor of Christ) in his three mouths.

The passage from Hell to Purgatory

In Canto XXXIV of Inferno, Dante encounters Lucifer. He has three faces: the front one is red, the right one is white and yellow, and the left one is black. Under each face are two featherless wings, blackish and similar to those of bats, so gigantic that their movement generates three winds.

The three qualities of Nature, **albedo**, **rubedo** and **nigredo**, are therefore expressed in both God and Lucifer, but in opposite ways. The three persons of the Trinity, defined by Dante (Canto III, verses 5-6) on the basis of theological teachings as Potestate, Sapienza and Amore, correspond in order to rubedo, albedo and nigredo. In particular, with regard to the latter quality, it should be noted that, in the Trinity, it obviously also has a positive meaning. Its 'descending' tendency takes on the value of love for all beings. The three colours are named in the same order in the case of Lucifer's faces. The red of the front face symbolises, in

this case, unsatisfied desire (impotence). The white, not pure but yellowish, of the right face indicates ignorance. The black face indicates hatred. It is worth noting that desire, ignorance and aversion are considered by initiates of all ages to be the three main obstacles to meditation. They are the source of all erroneous intellectual 'dualism' (each face sets two wings in motion) and generate three subtle disharmonious currents (the three winds), which 'freeze' man in his suffering condition.

Doctrinal structure of Purgatory

Dante passes from Hell to Purgatory, guided by Virgil along the body of Lucifer, which is fixed at the centre of the earth, with his head facing the northern hemisphere and his feet facing the southern hemisphere. The mountain of Purgatory rises on an island that remained solitary in the southern hemisphere after Lucifer's fall. Meanwhile, the other lands retreated to the northern hemisphere.

Three elements converge in Dante's representation of Lucifer's fall (Inferno XXXIV verses 121-126 and Paradiso canto XXIX, verses 49-51):

1) the biblical text of Isaiah (XIV, 12-17), supplemented by passages from Revelation (XII, 7-16), Luke (X, 18) and Matthew (XXV, 41);

2) Aristotelian cosmology and cosmography, which, for Dante, constituted the description of the 'environment' in which the biblical drama unfolded;

3) the theological-cosmological considerations necessary to adapt the drama of Lucifer's fall to the aforementioned environment.

The fall of Lucifer is presented as follows in **Isaiah**: 'How you have fallen from heaven, Lucifer, morning star! ... You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven... I will sit on the mount of the covenant, on the farthest side of the north; I will ascend above the clouds, I will be like the Most High." But you will be dragged down to hell, to the depths of the lake'. The lake, identified by Dante with the river of tears mentioned by Virgil in Book VI of the Aeneid, is, in the Comedy, the pond of Cocytus.

Aristotle, in Book II of De Caelo, states that the most noble part of the world is that from which the diurnal movement of the sun begins, that is, the East. And since in man the right is more noble than the left, the East must be considered symbolically as the right of the world. If the figure of a man seen from the front is inscribed in a circle representing the world, so that his right is in the East, his head must coincide with the South Pole and his feet with the North Pole. Therefore, the South Pole is symbolically the head of the world, while the North Pole represents its lower extremities. The Antarctic sky must therefore contain those constellations that originally sent their most beneficial and healthy influences to the earth and which the earth itself attracted to itself, like a magnet attracts iron, causing it to emerge from the waters with their virtue (or power).

Dante, accepting this cosmological vision, attributes to the fall of Lucifer the geological cataclysm that caused the transfer of the lands emerged and inhabited by man to the northern hemisphere, and the simultaneous formation of the mountain of purgatory, surmounted by the earthly paradise (Caput Mundi) in the southern hemisphere.

While the damned souls enter hell after crossing the Acheron on the boat of the demon Charon, the expiating souls reach the mountain of purgatory from the mouth of the Tiber on a vessel moved by the wings of the angel helmsman. The plain of the island and the first part of the mountain constitute the Antipurgatory. The upper part of the mountain is Purgatory proper. The doctrinal structure of Purgatory follows the **Thomistic classification of vices** connected with misdirected love. In fact, the sins of the expiating souls originate from three fundamental causes:

- love directed towards evil (pride, envy, anger),
- too weak love for God (sloth) ,
- love too strong for earthly goods (avarice and prodigality, gluttony, lust).

Therefore, purgatory is divided into seven circles (delimited on the inside by the wall perpendicular to the mountain and on the outside by the void), in each of which one of the seven deadly sins is expiated, in the order already mentioned. Since Purgatory is constructed as a mirror image of Hell (the mountain is the mirror image of the abyss), the order of sins is also reversed: Dante's journey is in fact from the most serious sin (pride) to the least serious (lust). Entrance to Purgatory is only permitted by the guardian angel, who opens a heavy door with two keys, according to a ritual that alludes to a certain level of initiation. Each frame has an angelic guardian, the angel of the virtue opposed to sin, namely the angels of humility, mercy, peace, solicitude, justice, abstinence and chastity. Disposed to forgiveness, each of them erases one of the seven Ps engraved on Dante's forehead by the guardian angel of the gate of Purgatory.

Expiation involves not only physical punishment in accordance with the law of retribution (which is designed to affect the spiritual and intellectual nature of individuals rather than their bodies) but also moments of reflection and repentance, a necessary step towards the end of expiation and the attainment of the ecstasy of Paradise. For this reason, souls hear voices or see scenes reminiscent of episodes of rewarded virtue or punished guilt. Unlike the damned, who remain fixed for eternity in the place where they must pay for their sins, the expiants pass through all the circles of Purgatory, stopping in each one according to the intensity of their sins.

Taking into account the Antipurgatory at the base of the mountain and the Earthly Paradise at the summit, the initiatory number nine (the same as the circles of Hell) is repeated in the division of Purgatory and will be found a third time in Paradise.

In Antipurgatory, the negligent walk sadly, that is, those who, out of laziness, waited until the last moment of their lives to repent. They are divided into four groups:

- The excommunicated, who must remain in the Ante-Purgatory for thirty times the duration of their excommunication;
- The lazy;
- Those who died a violent death;
- Lovers of earthly glory.

The last three groups will remain in limbo for as many years as they lived.

The summit of the mountain (which rises towards the sky, beyond the sphere of fire) consists of the plateau of **the Earthly Paradise**, where purified souls converge before entering Paradise. The Earthly Paradise is a lush forest, the antithesis of the Dark Forest. Two rivers flow through it, Lethe and Eunoë: the former has the function of erasing the memory of evil, the latter that of rekindling the memory of good. Having reached the threshold of the Earthly Paradise, Virgil must abandon the Poet; Dante is guided by the Latin poet Statius (whom Dante imagines to have secretly converted), who will lead him to the heavenly garden, where he will be welcomed by Matelda. This, in turn, is a foreshadowing of the appearance of Beatrice, who descends from heaven for him, cloaked in the three theological virtues. At this point, the cathartic rite of the poet's personal confession and purification is completed, and he thus becomes 'pure and ready to ascend to the stars'. Furthermore, in the last cantos of Purgatory, Dante is entrusted with his task as a writer, which is to bear witness to other men of the truth as he has learned it.

The passage from Purgatory to Paradise

I would like to dwell (as I did on the transition from Hell to Purgatory) on **the transition from Purgatory** (and specifically from the Earthly Paradise) **to Paradise**. In Eden, Dante bathes in the Lethe and thus forgets the evil he has done, then immerses himself in the Eunoë to remember all the good he has done, of which he is no longer aware, and finally finds himself 'pure and ready to ascend to the stars'. The explanations concerning the two rivers are found in two cantos of Purgatory.

In canto XXVIII, Matelda explains to Dante:

"The water you see does not spring from a pool fed by water vapour converted into rain by the cold, like a river (ground) which increases and decreases its flow; but it comes from a constant and inexhaustible source, which, by God's will, draws as much water as it

it pours into the two rivers flowing in opposite directions. In the river on this side, the water flows with a power that removes the memory of sin from those who drink it; in the river on the other side, the water restores the memory of good deeds. On this side, the river is called Lethe; on the other side, it is called Eunoë, and the water does not have its effect unless it is first drunk from both streams."

In Canto XXX, Dante says: 'My eyes fell on the clear water of Lethe; but seeing my confusion reflected in it, I turned them to the grass, so great was the weight of shame that made me lower my forehead'.

In the same canto, Beatrice concludes:

"A supreme decree of God would be violated if one were to cross the Lethe and taste the sweetness of its waters without paying the price with such deep repentance as to shed tears."

Self-remembrance (1) goes hand in hand with the 'melting away' of ego attachment and has two aspects, which are in fact the result of the same practice. Presence to oneself not only leads to disidentification from the egoic feelings that appear in the mind, but also from past events and the shame we feel for some of them. That shame often appeared to us, but it made us suffer, so we relegated it to the subconscious for as long as possible. Mindfulness looks that shame in the eye: the clarity of vision momentarily makes the suffering stronger than it has ever been. But mindfulness continues its action: that same suffering becomes distant, vanishing along with the ego that erred and suffered and is now no different from mindfulness itself. This not only purifies us of our mistakes, but also brings back the memory of everything we have done, big or small, for our own spiritual ascension or that of others. It does not matter if those attempts were more confused than effective: they were sincere. With sin vanished along with the ego that committed it, and the true meaning of everything we have done restored to us, we know what purity is. The laborious 'Opus mulierum' is over, and the agile 'Ludus puerorum' is about to begin.

(1) Which perhaps would be better called simply Remembrance, with a capital letter.

Doctrinal Structure of Paradise

From a doctrinal point of view, in writing *Paradiso*, Dante drew on **Aristotle's conception of the heavens, as it had evolved over the centuries** and been accepted in the Christian world. He himself describes it thus in *Convivio*: 'Aristotle believed... that there were eight heavens, of which the outermost, containing everything, was that where the fixed stars are, that is, the eighth sphere' (II, 3, 3); Ptolemy, realising that the eighth sphere moved in several ways, ... placed another heaven outside the Starry Heaven, which made this revolution from east to west... (II,3,5) Indeed, outside all these, Catholics place the Empyrean heaven, which is to say the heaven of flame or true light; and they place it as immobile... (II, 3, 8). The latter is the heaven of the blessed - This place is of blessed spirits, according to what the Holy Church wants, which cannot tell a lie (II,3,10)".

If the heavens move, the question arises as to who moves them. Again in *Convivio*, Dante says that their movement is associated with 'substances separated from matter, that is, Intelligences, which the common people call Angels' (II,4,2). Dante believes that the truth on this matter is difficult to see for two reasons, "due to a lack of reason and a lack of education" (II,4,8). He later returns to this concept, explaining: "It is said that due to a lack of instruction, the ancients did not see the truth about spiritual creatures" (II,5,1); the people of Israel partly attained it through the work of their prophets. Finally, Christians, "instructed by the one who came from the one who made them, the one who preserves them, that is, the Emperor of

universe, who is Christ," had complete knowledge of this truth.

The structure of Paradise is therefore built on the basis of a geocentric cosmology, which places the Earth at the centre of a series of nine concentric spheres, representing the heavens of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Zodiac or Fixed Stars, and the First Mobile or Crystalline. The latter, which 'has no place other than the divine mind' (XXVII, 109-110), encompasses the sensible universe and, at the same time, is outside it. Beyond the First Mobile is the Empyrean heaven, depicted as a symmetrical series of nine decreasing concentric spheres, which are the seats of Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim, and whose centre is a point of dazzling light symbolising God (XXVIII, 16-18). **The universe** described by Dante is therefore **composed of two distinct series of spheres, one sensible and the other 'celestial'** (invisible to the senses, *coelum* comes from *coelare* = to hide), **whose centres are respectively the Earth and God**. Dante (XXVIII, 46-57) is troubled by the apparent lack of symmetry: the spheres of the sensible universe are all the more perfect the further they are from the Earth, while those of the celestial universe become all the more perfect the closer they are to the divine centre. According to the explanation he puts into Beatrice's mouth (XXVIII, 61-78), the inverse order of the spiritual spheres is only apparent, and the divine centre is in reality the largest sphere. Therefore, God appears 'enclosed by that which he encloses' (XXX, 12).

Among the nine heavens, there is therefore a hierarchy of perfection, from the moon (closest to the earth and therefore furthest from God, smaller, slower) to the Prime Mobile (closest to God, larger, faster). During his ascent, Dante will encounter the souls of the blessed according to an order of greater perfection and bliss, but also in a precise symbolic-astrological correspondence between the quality of each planet and the type of spiritual experience accomplished by the character described. And so, in the Heaven of the Moon appear the spirits who failed in their vows; in the Heaven of Mercury, the active spirits; in the Heaven of Venus, the loving spirits; in the Heaven of the Sun, the wise spirits; in the Heaven of Mars, the warrior spirits; in the Heaven of Jupiter, the righteous spirits; in the Heaven of Saturn, the contemplative spirits; in the Heaven of the fixed stars, the triumphant spirits; in the First Mobile, the angelic hierarchies. However, the placement of the souls of the blessed is temporary; they have 'descended' into the celestial spheres only to help Dante understand the internal hierarchies of the blessed, but their true 'place' is the Mystical Rose in the Empyrean, the spiritual amphitheatre from which they directly contemplate God.

The Empyrean, the tenth sphere, incorporeal, immobile, **which groups all the others together, is the true seat of God**, even though He is in all things ('Immanent Transcendence'), as already clarified in the opening lines of the first canto of Paradise:

The glory of him who moves all
things penetrates the universe and
shines more in one part and less in
another. (Par I, 1-3)

All other heavens rotate faster the higher they are. God imparts motion to the Prime Mover. This motion is gradually passed on to the other heavens, which are presided over by angelic intelligences. The downward motion is closely related to a symmetrical upward motion: that of creatures who tend to return to God. All this is once again in harmony with Aristotle's doctrine. In accordance with Book XII of *Metaphysics*, in Book VIII of *Physics*, argues that **the divinity moves the world while remaining still, that is, it causes the motion of the universe as the final cause** (if it were the efficient cause, it would itself be in motion), since the "first heaven" tends towards it - like the lover towards the beloved object - which, however, for Aristotle, unlike Ptolemy and Dante, was the Heaven of Fixed Stars.

The movement of the heavens is transmitted not directly but as a consequence of the act of the angelic Intelligences, who preside over each heaven:

The motion and virtue of the holy
circles, like the art of the hammer
from the blacksmith, must be inspired
by the blessed movers (Par II 127-
129).

The blessed movers are precisely the angelic Intelligences who, in presiding over the heaven assigned to them by divine design, are the efficient cause of the movement of the celestial spheres, which are only instrumental causes of the effects produced (celestial music, astral influences, etc.), in the same way that the hammer is only the instrument, while the efficient cause is the blacksmith. This example is borrowed from Aristotle and is also used in *the Convivio* (I, XI 11), albeit in a negative sense, because there, blaming the hammer is a false excuse for a bad blacksmith: "*Just as the bad blacksmith blames the iron presented to him, and the bad zither player blames the zither, believing that the fault for the bad knife and the bad sound lies with the iron and the zither, and removing it from himself.*"

At one point, **Dante** certainly **departs from Aristotle: in making his own the Pythagorean doctrine of the Harmony of the Spheres:**

When the wheel that you have
always desired brought me to itself
with the harmony that you temper and
discern, it seemed to me then as if the
sky were lit
by the flame of the sun, that no rain or river or
lake had ever spread so far.
The novelty of the sound and the great
light of their cause kindled in me a
desire never before felt for such
acumen. (Paradiso, canto I, vv.76-81)

"*The harmony that tempers and discerns*" is a technical and musical expression: *tempering* here refers to the act of tuning, typical above all of a stringed instrument such as the lyre: "*the sacred strings/ that the right hand of heaven loosens and pulls*" (Par XV, 5-6), while the expression *discerns* refers to the discreteness of numbers through which, according to Pythagorean theory, the mathematical relationships that organise sound space are established (1) .

(1) See: Nino Pirrotta, 'Dante *musicus*: gothicism, scholasticism, and music' in: *Speculum. A journal of Mediaeval studies*, vol. XLIII, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1968, pp. 245-257.

The origin, at least in the Western world, of the theory known as the harmony of the spheres is commonly attributed to the Pythagorean school or to Pythagoras himself, who, according to the testimony of Iamblichus (*The Life of Pythagoras*, 65-67), could hear cosmic music.

Aristotle refuted this theory in De Caelo. He himself reports the justification, attributed to the Pythagoreans, for why we do not hear celestial harmony: because a sound or noise is only perceived in contrast to its opposite, silence or rather the absence of sound itself; since the sound produced by the rotation of the planetary spheres is one that has been present to us since birth, it is not possible to recognise it, as we lack the perception of its opposite. A saturation due to habituation, similar to that experienced by blacksmiths who appear indifferent to the noise caused by their daily work.

Instead, Aristotle, when asked why we do not hear the music of the spheres, replies that it is simply because there is no music. If there were a sound produced by the rotation of the stars, it would be so loud and intense that it would destroy life on earth, which it does not. Therefore, there is no music of the spheres. And why does it not exist? Because the stars move in the medium of their own sphere, and therefore no friction is produced.

The obstacle of Aristotle's refutation was circumvented by an Aristotelian, **Simplicio** (who lived in the 6th century AD), whose Greek commentary on *De Caelo* was translated into Latin by William of Moerbeke in the second half of the 13th century. Simplicius shifts the focus of the argument from the audibility of music itself to the receptive state in which the listener must be:

"Forte igitur, secundum virorum philosophiam, solvendam instantiam, dicendo quod non omnia sunt invicem commensurata, neque omne omni est sensibile neque apud nos. Insinuant autem

canes odorantes animalia de longe, quod homines non odorant. Quanto itaque magis, intantum natura distantibus, quantum incorruptibilia a corruptibilibus et caelestia a terrenis, verum est dicere quod divinorum corporum sonus terrenis auribus non est audibilis! But if anyone has this earthly body separated and self-idealised, and a heavenly seat, and those whom he has purified in himself, whether through good fortune, or through the goodness of life, or even through priestly perfection, he will surely see what is invisible to others and hear what others do not hear, as Pythagoras is said to have been. As for divine and immaterial bodies, if indeed any sound is made, it is neither percussive nor perceptive, but excites the virtues and operations of generative sounds and perfects the cognate sense. And it does indeed have a certain proportion to the sound that accompanies the motion of earthly bodies. There is a certain operation of the motion of those impassible sounds, which occurs among us because of the sonorous nature of the air. If, therefore, the air there is not passive, it is certain that there will be no sound. But it seems that Pythagoras said that he heard that harmony as if he understood harmonic proportions in numbers, and that what was audible in them, he called harmony. But surely someone would doubt why the stars themselves are visible to our senses, but their sound is not heard by our ears. And it must be said that we do not see the stars themselves. For we do not see their size or shapes or their excellent beauty, nor the motion by which sound is produced, but we see a kind of illumination of them, as we see the light of the sun around the earth and not the sun itself. Perhaps it is not surprising that the visual sense, which is more immaterial and exists more according to action than according to passion, and which is superior to the other senses in many ways, should be honoured with the brightness and splendour of the heavens. As for the other senses, since there are no other causes that are more probable, let them be regarded as friends and not as enemies" (2).

As can be seen, Simplicio makes explicit reference to Pythagoras and the beliefs that the philosopher heard celestial harmony, being in a state of 'priestly perfection', and explicitly cites the recognisability of proportions and numbers within the perceived harmony. For Simplicio, the music of the spheres is therefore not so much a vibration propagating through the air and affecting human hearing, but rather an intellectual act, through which man knows the harmonic relationships that govern the orderly structure of the universe.

Thomas Aquinas disagreed with Simplicio's reasoning, returning to Aristotle's purely physical-acoustic principles of investigation. But he certainly could not convince Dante, who believed *that 'behind the senses/you see that reason has clipped its wings'* (Par II, 56-57) and who agreed wholeheartedly with Cicero on the imperfection of earthly senses, according to whom *'tum multo puriora et dilucidiora cernentur, cum, quo natura fert, liber animus pervenerit'* (Tusculane, 1, XX, 46). It is no coincidence that **it is precisely in *Somnium Scipionis*, an episode from Cicero's dialogue *De re publica*, that we find a description of the harmony of the spheres, which was perhaps the model for Dante's**: Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus recounts how his grandfather, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, appeared to him in a dream and, in describing the Milky Way, home to men who served and loved their country, spoke to him, among other things, of the wonderful music produced by the movement of the celestial spheres. 'The sound,' explains Scipio, 'due to the whirling rotation of the entire universe, is so loud that human ears are unable to hear it, just as you cannot stare at the sun because your visual perception is overwhelmed by its rays'.

(2) "Simplicii, *Commentaria in quatuor libros de Coelo Aristotelis*", ff.24v-25r (II, ad t.c.37), reported in Bruno Nardi, "La novità del suono e 'l grande lume" (The novelty of sound and the great light), in *Saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Essays on Dante's philosophy) (4. Philosophical thought), Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1967, pp.73-80.

In marking the stages of the heavenly journey, **Dante kept in mind the outline of the work "Itinerarium mentis in Deum" by St Bonaventure** of Bagnoregio, a mystical theologian (Augustinian and Neoplatonic), which envisaged three degrees of learning: the first is 'Extra nos', i.e. sensory knowledge, which culminates in Dante with the experience of the sensible heavens (the first eight); the second is 'Intra nos', which 'has as its object the spirit, turned in on itself and to itself' and which corresponds in Dante to the experience of the Primum Mobile; the third is 'Supra nos', which 'has as its object the mind, which rises spiritually above itself' and corresponds in Dante to the experience of the Empyrean.

In this last phase of Dante's journey, Beatrice gives way to St. Bernard, who in life 'contemplating, tasted that peace' (Par XXXI, 111), because in order to rise to the supreme vision of the Divinity, theological science built on faith is no longer sufficient, but "contemplative ardour" and the help of grace are required, to be obtained through the intercession of the Virgin. Once again, **it is no coincidence that the theory of the harmony of the spheres is also found in the works of St. Bernard:**

"As soon as [the three monks] were inside [the gate of Paradise], they heard the sound of the wheel of heaven turning; this sound was so sweet and pleasant and delightful that they almost forgot where they were, and sat down inside the gate, so happy and delighted were they by the sound of the wheel of heaven!".

(Legend of the Earthly Paradise, in The Seven Penitential Works of St. Bernard, Venice, Mongelli, 1846)



8) DATING OF DANTE'S JOURNEY

by Aphrodite Urania and Frater Petrus

Afrodite Urania: Below I have collected the **verses on which the main attempts to date Dante's journey are based.**

1) Inferno, I, 1

"In the middle of the journey of our life".

2) Inferno, I, 37-43

"It was early in the morning, and the sun
was rising with those stars that were with
it when divine love first moved those
beautiful things;
so that I had reason to hope for good
from that beast with the cheerful skin.
the hour of time and the sweet season;".

3) Inferno, XX, 127-129

"... and already last night the moon was
full: remember well, for it did you no harm
in the deep forest."

4) Inferno, XXI, 112-114

"Yesterday, more than five hours ago,
one thousand two hundred and sixty-six
years since the road was broken here."

5) Purgatory, I, 19-21

"The beautiful planet that comforts
love made the whole east smile,
veiling the Fish that were in its escort."

6) Purgatory, II, 94-102

"And he said to me: 'No one has done me
wrong, except those who take away when
and as they please, who have denied me this
passage many times; for they did what was
right in their own eyes: truly, for three months
they have taken away
whoever wished to enter, in peace.
So I, who was now facing the sea
where the waters of the Tiber flow
into it, was kindly welcomed by him."

7) Paradiso, IX, 37-42

"Of this luculent and dear joy of our
heaven, which is closest to me, great
fame remained; and before I die,
this hundredth year is still unfulfilled: see if
the excellent ornament should be made,
so that another life may replace the first."

8) Paradiso, XXI, 13-15

"We have risen to the seventh
splendour, which shines beneath the
chest of the fiery Lion, mixed with his
valour."

Frater Petrus: According to the testimony of **Ser Piero** di Messer Giardino da Ravenna, collected by Boccaccio, Dante, close to death (September 1321), indicated his age as 56 years and 4 months. Based on this indication, his date of birth was in May 1265.

A further indication comes from **Canto XXII of Paradise:**

22.106 If I ever return, reader, to that devout

22.107 triumph for which I often weep

22.108 and beat my breast,

22.109 you would not have in such a short time

22.110 in the fire, for I saw the sign

22.111 that follows Taurus and was inside it.

22.112 O glorious stars, O light full

22.113 of great virtue, from which I recognise

22.114 all, whatever it may be, my genius,

22.115 was born with you and hid with you.

22.116 He who is the father of all mortal life,

22.117 when I first felt the Tuscan air;

Dante ascends to the eighth heaven, that of the fixed stars, in which the constellation of Gemini is found

Gemini, which follows that of Taurus in the Zodiac. He states that he was born during the period when the sun is in conjunction with the constellation of Gemini and therefore between 21 May and 21 June. Putting the two previous indications together, we obtain a date of birth between 21 and 31 May 1265.

According to *Inferno* I/1, his journey begins 'in the middle of the journey of our life', which, considering the average lifespan of 70 years at the time, would be at the age of 35. However, this information is rather ambiguous, because it is not clear whether Dante meant the 35th year of his life (i.e. when he was 34 years old) or whether he meant that he had already turned 35, or finally whether he meant the exact moment when he turned 35. On its own, this first indication by the poet is therefore very vague, because it only allows us to place the beginning of his initiatory journey in the rather broad period (two years) between 21-31 May 1299 and 21-31 May 1301.

Let us now consider the second indication that Dante provides us with, namely ***Inferno* I/37-43**:

1. 37 It was early morning,
1. 38 and the sun was rising with those stars
1. 39 that were with him when divine love

1. 40 first moved those beautiful things;
1. 41 so that I had reason to hope for good
1. 42 for that fierce beast with its cheerful skin
1. 43 the hour of the day and the sweet season;

The night was over and the sun rose in conjunction with the sign of Aries, just as when God, at the spring equinox, set the firmament in motion for the first time. The zodiac of the 'Signs', unlike that of the 'Constellations', has the enormous advantage of being able to disregard the phenomenon of equinoctial precession and is therefore always the one to refer to, unless Dante explicitly indicates otherwise.

The day that was dawning was not necessarily the day after the beginning of the poem, because it is quite possible that the journey through the forest began at midnight.

This second piece of information that the poet gives us about his journey allows us to rule out that it began on his birthday, which, as we have seen, fell under the sign of Gemini. Instead, the period when the sun is in Aries is clearly indicated. However, it is still unclear

- 1) whether it is 1300 or 1301;
- 2) whether the poet intends to indicate an exact day: e.g. the spring equinox (21 March), when, according to the tradition followed by Dante, the current firmament was set in motion (i.e. the second day of Genesis, when the firmament was created) or the day of Adam's birth (25 March = sixth day of Genesis); or whether he means to indicate generically the period when the Sun is in Aries (21 March - 20 April). In any case, the uncertainty about the period to be considered for the start of the journey has been reduced by a factor of twelve compared to the initial information (from two years to only two months), as the start is definitely between 21 March and 20 April 1300 or between 21 March and 20 April 1301.

Let us continue reading *Inferno*, in search of temporal indications. Canto II

2. 1 The day was drawing to a close, and the air was dark
2. 2 took away the animals that are on the earth
2. 3 from their labours; and I alone...

We have now reached sunset. Canto

VII.

7. 97 Now let us descend with greater pity;
7. 98 already every star that rose is falling
7. 99 when I set out, and it is forbidden to stay too long.

The fact that the stars begin their descent indicates that midnight has passed.

Canto XI

- 11.112 But follow me now, for I like to wander;
11.113 for the Pisces leap up on the horizon,
11.114 and the Chariot lies above the Choir,
11.115 and the leap beyond it is dismantled.

The Pisces are on the horizon and, since they precede Aries, the sign in which, as we have already seen, the sun is located, this means that dawn is about to break.
The Great Bear is in the direction of the Chorus or Mistral, a wind that blows from the north-west.

XV

15. 49 'Up there, in the serene life',
15. 50 I replied, "I lost my way in a valley,
15. 51 before my age was full.

15. 52 Even yesterday morning I turned my back on her:
15. 53 he appeared to me, as I returned to that place,
15. 54 and brought me back to this place.

"Before my age was full" is to be considered an expression equivalent to "In the middle of the journey of our life". "Yesterday morning" confirms that the entire narrative from 1/37 to 15/54 is to be considered to have taken place in little more than a day.

And so we come to the very important information in **Canto XX**:

- 20.124 But come now, for it already holds the boundary
20.125 of both hemispheres and touches the waves
20.126 under Sobilia Caino and the thorns;

20.127 and already last night the moon was full:
20.128 you must remember well, for it did you no harm
20.129 once upon a time in the deep forest

According to an ancient popular belief, the image of Cain, oppressed by a bundle of thorns, is visible on the surface of the moon. The moon touches the sea below Seville and is now on the border between the two hemispheres (northern and southern), i.e. it is setting. The previous night was a full moon, which was useful to Dante several times in the dark forest.

This information is of great importance because it reduces the possible start of Dante's journey from two months to just two days: in fact, it can only be
1) the full moon before Easter 1300, that is, the night of Tuesday 5 April: therefore, those who place its beginning on 7 or 8 April are certainly mistaken.

those who place the start of the journey on 7 or 8 April are certainly mistaken;
2) or the full moon of 25 March 1301, i.e. 25 March which, as we have already mentioned, is traditionally considered to be the day of Adam's birth.

The next piece of information about the time is found in **Canto XXI of Inferno**:

21.112 Yesterday, more than five hours after this octave,
21.113 one thousand two hundred and sixty-six
21.114 years since the road was broken here.

Yesterday, five hours ago, marked 1266 years since this road was interrupted. The earthquake that caused the interruptions (cf. *Inferno* XII, 37-45) occurred at the death of Christ. In interpreting these verses, some literary critics have used the date of Christ's death (which is uncertain) provided by historians, scientists or theologians. This would only make sense if Dante had not clearly expressed his opinion on the matter. Since, however, he did so, only his dating (whether correct or incorrect) should be used in interpreting his verses.

The poet addresses the issue of Christ's death in Convivio (IV, XXIII, 10-11):

"10. And this reason moves me: that our saviour Christ was of excellent nature, who wanted to die in the thirty-fourth year of his age; for it was not fitting for the divinity to remain [in] such a state of decline, nor is it believable that he did not want to remain in this life of ours at the highest level, since he had been in the lowly state of childhood.

11. And this is evident from the hour of the day of his death, for he wished it to be similar to his life; hence Luke says that it was about the sixth hour when he died, which is to say the height of the day. Hence we can understand from that 'about' that the thirty-fifth year of Christ was the height of his age.

As we already know, Dante considered the average lifespan of a man to be 70 years. Therefore, symbolising the duration of life with an arc, the ascending part of life culminates at the age of 35. Then the descending part of the arc begins, leading to old age and death. Dante states that it was not fitting for the divinity to live through the descending phase, thus experiencing the degeneration of the body ('for it was not fitting for the divinity to remain [in] something in decline') and that this is why Christ died in his 34th year. But in what month and on what day? Dante adds that, although he did not want to live the descending arc of life, we should not believe that he did not want to reach the summit of the arc either ("nè da credere è ch'elli non volesse dimorare in questa nostra vita al sommo"). This means that, according to Dante, Christ died just before reaching the age of 35, that is, at the moment of reaching the summit of the arc. This also applied to the hour of his death. Dante, quoting the Gospel of Luke, says that "it was almost the sixth hour when he died, that is to say, the height of the day", i.e. just before noon. At this point, it should be remembered that during the Middle Ages it was not customary to start counting the days of the year from the first day of January, as we do today. The most common dating criteria were '**a nativitate Domini**', i.e. starting from 25 December, and '**ab incarnatione**', i.e. starting from 25 March (nine months before the birth). In the 13th and 14th centuries, the municipality of Florence preferred the latter criterion, placing the beginning of the Christian era on 25 March of the year I AD. Which criterion did Dante follow in his poem? Certainly not 'a nativitate', because, as we know, his journey did not take place at the end of December, but in spring. Therefore, according to Dante, Christ died just before reaching the age of 35, calculated 'ab incarnatione'. If we add the 1266 years indicated in the verses of Canto XXI to these 35 years, we obtain the date of **25 March 1301**, which is one of the only two full moon dates that we previously identified as possible for the beginning of his journey. This date is, as can be seen, symbolically very important, as it is:

1) **The date on which Christ was incarnated** and therefore the day of the Annunciation of the Angel to the Virgin Mary.

2) The date (according to Dante) **on which Christ died**.

3) The date **on which Adam was created** in the Garden of Eden.

The Angel's Hail to the Virgin Mary is a well-known symbol of initiation. The death of Christ is a symbol of initiatory death. The birth of Adam is the symbol of the creation (by virtue of initiation) of the new man, who finds himself in an inner condition comparable to that of the Garden of Eden.



9) Muhammad and Ali in Hell

"While I was gazing at him, he looked at me
and opened his chest with his hands, saying:

'Now see how I am torn apart!
See how crippled Muhammad is!
Before me goes Ali, weeping, his face
split from chin to tuft.

And all the others you see here,
sowers of scandal and schism when
alive, are thus split in two."

(Inferno, Canto XXVIII, lines 28-36)

Tarquino Prisco: These are some of the verses from Inferno that Dante dedicates to Mohammed and his son-in-law Ali, founder of the Shiite sect. **Both are among the sowers of discord**, that is, among those who caused political, religious or family divisions during their lifetime. Mohammed's body is torn from his chin to his lower abdomen. Ali has an additional punishment, his face being split open from his chin to his hair. Both are punished in the parts of the body that have sinned the most: Ali in the brain, Muhammad in the throat, heart and belly.

Arab scholars have generally been scandalised and, in their translations dating back to 1930, have omitted verses 22 to 63 in various ways. But they do not stop there, claiming that Dante owes much to Arab culture and in particular to the Book of the Ladder, which they say has several similarities with Inferno. Therefore, according to them, **not only was Dante wrong about Muhammad, but he was also ungrateful**, given his alleged debts to Islam. That Muslims say such things is understandable; what is less understandable is that some Europeans and Italians seem to want to please them.

EA: There is one recent and **commendable exception** among studies from the Islamic world: **the translation by Kadhim Jihad**, an Iraqi poet and teacher of Arabic. In an interview with the daily newspaper La Stampa on 11 December 2003, we read:

- Kadhim Jihad has translated the Divine Comedy into Arabic. All of it. And so he did not save Muhammad from Hell, Canto XXVIII, where the prophet appears among the 'sowers of scandal and schism', 'broken from the chin to the navel'. Slashed from his face to his lower abdomen. Tortured, humiliated. No Arab among the (partial) translators or popularisers of Dante had dared to do so until now. Khadim did it and now, he tells us with a smile, he is absolutely 'at peace'.

But aren't you afraid of a 'fatwa', a condemnation by bearded imams, like the one that struck Salman

Rushdie for his 'Satanic Verses'? 'No,' replies Khadim. 'I am only the translator. If anything, the fatwa would fall on Dante... But I'm sure he would emerge triumphant.' ... According to Kadhim, **Dante is not anti-Islam, as proven by the fact that he places two Muslims, the philosopher Averroes (rationality) and the leader Saladin, an adversary but not an enemy, in that "free zone" he calls Limbo, alongside Virgil and Homer.** -

Tarquinio Prisco: In fact, Kadhim Jihad is a commendable and rare exception, because Islamic scholars have said some truly outrageous things, often based on a rather approximate knowledge of Dante's work.

Proof? On 30 October 1989, at the Italian Consulate General in Casablanca, during the celebrations for the centenary of the birth of the 'Società Dante Alighieri', **Mahmoud Salem Elsheikh** gave a speech (which is quite well known and can be found on the Internet) in which **he claimed to 'psychoanalyse' Dante, attributing to him, as an affliction, 'debtor syndrome'**. In other words, Dante, indebted to Islamic culture, hated his creditor to the point of putting Muhammad and Ali in Hell. To confirm this, he stated that:

"Dante, however, does not spare anyone who has approached Arab-Islamic culture from his Hell; suffice it to recall the fate of Michele Scotto (Michael Scott), the Scottish philosopher and scientist famous for his translations from Arabic into Latin of several books by Aristotle and an Aristotelian compendium by Avicenna, and for his studies in alchemy, condemned to the fourth bolgia of Hell, that of fortune tellers, where the damned have their heads upside down and walk backwards with slow and laborious steps:

That other one who is so small at the hips,
was Michele Scotto, who truly knew
the tricks of magic. Inf. XX, 115-17

Not even Pope Sylvester II (Gerbert of Aquitaine), guilty of having frequented Arab culture, "the source of all evil", escapes Dante's harsh judgement, who even remembers him as an advisor of fraud:

But as Constantine asked Sylvester
from within Siratti to cure him of leprosy
... Inf. XXVII, 94-95"

Mahmoud Salem Elsheikh makes two errors in this passage. First, as Kadhim Jihad clearly pointed out, citing the examples of Averroes and Saladin, it is not at all true that Dante placed all figures belonging to or close to Arab-Islamic culture in Hell. Secondly, **it is truly outrageous to confuse Pope Sylvester I**, who according to legend cured Emperor Constantine's leprosy, **with Pope Sylvester II** (Gerbert of Aurillac). Any scholar of Dante, even a mediocre one, knows that in those verses the poet makes a witty comparison between Constantine's leprosy and Boniface VIII's fever for power ('but as Constantine asked Sylvester from within Siratti to cure him of leprosy, so he asked me as his teacher to cure him of his proud fever').

Abraxa: The image of Muhammad being punished in hell by ferocious demons will have a certain following in medieval art. Rather well known is the detail of the fresco by Giovanni da Modena (c. 1410) in the Bolognini Chapel of the church of San Petronio in Bologna, which is the subject of controversy on the part of the Islamic community of the Emilian capital.

It may therefore be useful to investigate the reason for Dante's placement of Muhammad. Let us say straight away that we reject the hypothesis put forward by those critics and scholars of the Comedy who claim that Dante had in mind a legend widespread in the Middle Ages, according to which Muhammad himself or his spiritual master had belonged to the Christian Church and - according to some versions of the legend - had even aspired in vain to be elected Pope. Failing to do so, he founded a new religion.

Similarly, other scholars believe that Dante assimilated the judgement on Muhammad expressed by John of Damascus, according to whom, starting from the Old and New Testaments and influenced by the doctrine of Arius, he created his own heresy; or the judgement of

Thomas Aquinas, who considered Muhammad a teacher of truths mixed with extremely false things - followed by beastly men, inhabitants of the desert - who, with their help and the use of weapons, forced others to obey his law (1).

(1) W. E. Phipps, *Muhammad and Jesus*, 1996, Italian translation, *Maometto e Gesù*, by A. Audisio, Mondadori, Milan 2002, p. 15.

The influence of Judaism and Christianity on Islam should certainly not be underestimated, but it is highly unlikely that Dante drew on such beliefs, for at least two reasons:

- The first is historical: the 100 years between 632, the year of Muhammad's death, and 1265, the year of Dante's birth, were characterised by a strong political separation between the West and the Islamic world, but also by an enormous increase in European knowledge of Islam. This period, which began in 1066 and ended in 1291, was obviously that of the Crusades, during which the Knights Templar not only found confirmation in the East of their 'Secretvm Templi' concerning true primitive Christianity, but also brought back to the West - together with the other Crusaders - first-hand news about Islam, so that it is impossible that Dante did not know that Muhammad, from a Christian point of view, did not create a schism, because he did not convert Christians, but pagans. Therefore, Dante - following John of Damascus and Thomas Aquinas - could at most have placed Muhammad among the heretics, but not among the schismatics.

- The second is of a literary nature: **Dante is completely silent about the schism that Muhammad allegedly caused. This is a clear sign that he cannot speak openly about it. Why? Because the same schism, in the sphere of human religiosity, is caused by all those religions - including that fake Christianity propitiated by Constantine's successors - that claim to be the only possible cult, dividing humanity ipso facto into believers and infidels.** Therefore, Dante should have included the Catholic popes among the schismatics, which he does in fact do with a wonderful allegory. Mohammed asks Dante to take a recommendation to Fra Dolcino when he returns to the world of the living. Paraphrasing, he says: 'Tell Fra Dolcino to arm himself with provisions if he does not want to join me soon, because he will be stuck in the snow. If he does not do so, he will offer the bishop of Novara an easy victory, which otherwise would be anything but easy'.

There is no reason why Muhammad should have been concerned about a heretic from northern Italy, especially since there were other Western figures in the same bolgia who could have uttered those same words with greater historical or ideological connection to Fra Dolcino. It is clear that, with this oddity, Dante is inviting the reader to dwell particularly on the allegorical meaning. Fra Dolcino (who was burned alive in June 1307 with his companion Margherita da Trento) was a follower of Gherardo Segarelli (Ozzano Taro, Collecchio (PR), c. 1240 - Parma, 18 July 1300), who founded the heretical sect known as the 'Apostles'. When Segarelli died at the stake, Fra Dolcino proclaimed himself the new leader of the sect. Dante did not like Dolcino because he had added a pseudo-Ghibelline ideology to Segarelli's mysticism - no less sectarian than the Catholicism he fought against - which condoned theft and banditry, thus damaging the image of true Ghibellinism. In 1306, the episode that Muhammad prophesied to Dante took place: Fra Dolcino left the Novara area where he was staying and headed for the snow-covered mountains, arriving on 10 March in the Vercelli area near Trivero and settling near Mount Zebello (known from then on as Rebello or Rubello, because it was occupied by rebels). Dolcino - just as Dante puts it in Muhammad's mouth - needed provisions; not having them, he resorted to robbery and crimes of all kinds, thus alienating the sympathy of the population. The military campaign organised by the bishop of Vercelli to defeat and capture the heretic and his followers was thus easily successful.

So much for the literal meaning of Dante's verses. But what is the allegorical meaning? **Fra Dolcino arbitrarily made himself Gherardo's successor and 'Head of the Apostles', thus allegorically representing those popes who arbitrarily proclaimed themselves successors of Jesus and who, to a far greater extent than Dolcino, created a schism in human religiosity**

that previous paganism, but also early Christianity - very different from that described by Catholics - had instead avoided. Therefore, from an allegorical point of view, Muhammad is saying to the popes: 'This bolgia of schismatics - unless you change course - is not only my inevitable destiny, but also yours'.

Sipex: The term "Apostles" or "Apostolic" referred to a lifestyle based on that of the early church and to the constant travelling undertaken to spread their ideas. The trial against Gherardo Segarelli took place in Modena in 1299. There were no concrete grounds for bringing charges of heresy. For Segarelli, the only authority was the Gospel, but he did not propose a particular reading or interpretation of it. Instead, he proposed to his followers the absolute poverty of the first Franciscan Rule and, like the "spiritual Franciscans", he rejected all civil and ecclesiastical authority. It was probably this social attitude that caused much annoyance and, as there was nothing else to charge him with, he was accused of the sexual freedom professed by the "Apostles".

For example, an excerpt from the trial transcript reads: 'When asked whether a man can touch a woman who is not his wife, and a woman can touch a man who is not her husband, and touch each other in the private parts while naked, and whether this can be done without a shadow of sin...he replied that a man and a woman, even if not united in marriage, and a man with a man and a woman with a woman can touch and fondle each other in the private parts. He said that this can be done without sin, provided that the intention is to achieve perfection...He did not consider such immodest and carnal touching to be sinful; on the contrary, according to him, it could be done without sin by a perfect man.

This doctrine of Segarelli seems to be a popular form of the same doctrine professed, at a more erudite level, by the Fedeli d'Amore. In particular, it is linked to those variants which, as in Niccolò de Rossi, provided for carnal contact.



10) Nicolò De Rossi and Guido Cavalcanti

by FRATER PETRUS

A neglected Fedele d'Amore: Nicolò de Rossi

It is understandable that secular literary criticism, in dealing with the Fedeli d'Amore, has long snubbed Nicolò de Rossi. In fact, it generally takes into consideration only the external poetic form and, at most, its allegorical and ethical-political meanings, neglecting any esoteric meanings.

However, scholars who deal with the esoteric aspect of the Fedeli d'Amore should concern themselves not only with the great poets and writers who belonged to this initiatory movement, but also with those who, although not considered outstanding from a literary point of view, exploited

their particular political circumstances to express the esoteric aspect more freely. One of these is the poet Nicolò de' Rossi (c. 1290 - c. 1348), whose Canzoniere is preserved in MSS: 7.1.32 of the Colombina Chapter Library in Seville and 3953 Vatican Barberini Latin. **From the point of view of poetic form alone, N. de Rossi is certainly not among the major representatives of the Fedeli d'Amore, but the situation changes when it comes to the esoteric aspects of his poetry.** L. Valli noticed this, quoting this author ten times in 'Il linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei fedeli d'amore' (The Secret Language of Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore).

N. de Rossi lived in a Guelph environment. His city, Treviso, was, at the time, threatened by Can Grande della Scala, and the protection of the pope against this adversary was greatly desired. It is in this political context that his poetic work must be framed, and certain of his poems addressed to the pope become understandable. In fact, to invoke help for his Treviso, he also wrote sonnets in praise of John XXII. **Therefore, not being in the Church's sights in the slightest, he was able to express himself more freely, precisely in relation to that fourth level of meaning, which Dante calls 'anagogical',** and on which the other Fedeli d'Amore had to remain essentially silent. We will try to give some indication of this below.

The most interesting composition by Nicolò (or Niccolò) De Rossi is probably the song "Color di perla" (Colour of Pearl). Commonly considered a **"response" to Guido Cavalcanti's "Donna me prega"** (Woman, Pray for Me), it is followed by a commentary, an expositio in Latin, written by De Rossi himself. To better understand "Color di perla", it is therefore probably useful to first examine the song by Cavalcanti, one of the greatest of the Fedeli d'Amore, also for his poetic expression.

Guido Cavalcanti

DONNA ME PREGA

Paraphrase and Commentary on the First Stanza

Verses	Paraphrase
<p>Donna me prega, - for I want to tell you of an accident - which is often - fierce and so haughty - that it is called love: yes, may those who deny it - hear the truth!</p> <p>And now - knowing - I ask, 05 because I do not hope that a man of low heart can understand such a reason: for without natural proof I have no talent for wanting to prove where it lies, and who creates it, 10 and what its virtue and power are, its essence - then and each of its movements, and the pleasure - that makes it say it loves, and if we can see it, we can show it.</p>	<p>A woman invites me, so I speak of a contingent phenomenon (accident), which is often wild and so noble that it is called love: whoever denies that this is so may experience the real thing!</p> <p>And now I demand a person gifted with knowledge, for I do not expect those who are vile of heart to understand such a subject: in fact, without a demonstration based on natural philosophy, I cannot prove where [love] resides and who produces it, what its faculty and power are, then its essence, and all its motions and the pleasure that makes it say 'love', and whether a man can show it visibly.</p>

Comment: As Luigi Valli pointed out in "Il linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei Fedeli d'Amore" (The Secret Language of Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore), in this language the "women" are the Fedeli d'Amore themselves. So it is one of them who

invites Guido Cavalcanti to speak. The first stanza indicates the subject of the song: love. **Defining it as a contingent phenomenon (accident) is not at all reductive**, as some commentators claim. An initiate looks at reality as it is (he does not substantialise it by attaching himself to it) and experience shows that love is sometimes present in our soul and sometimes not. Therefore, the soul exists whether love is present or not. Love is therefore to be considered a feeling that is not necessary, but rather contingent. The adjectives used by the poet show that he does not want to diminish it at all: wild (fero) and therefore alchemically akin to 'raw material', as well as noble. Those who deny these characteristics can experience true love, which is neither the overwhelming love of the profane (which is not 'noble') nor the love of God of the mystics (which is not 'wild'), but that practised by the Fedeli d'Amore. It is in fact a Fedele d'Amore or potentially such (a person endowed with knowledge) that the poet requires as his audience. The term "di basso core" indicates a person unsuitable for experiencing the kind of love in question. The poet therefore warns the reader that he will use terms taken from Aristotle's "natural philosophy", including De Anima, as symbols to indicate the characteristics of this special love.

Paraphrase and Commentary on the Second Stanza

Verses	Paraphrase
In that part - where memory lies takes its form, - thus formed, - as if from light, - from a darkness which comes from Mars - and lingers; it is created - and has a sensible - name, of the soul's disposition - and of the heart's will.20 From sight comes form that is understood, which takes - in the possible intellect, as in subject, - place and dwelling.	Love manifests itself in that part of the soul where memory resides - having taken form, like a body transparent with light, from a darkness that proceeds from Mars - and there it remains; love is created and named according to sensation, it is the habitual disposition of the soul and the will of the heart.
In that part it never has weight because it does not descend from quality: 25 it shines - in itself perpetual effect; it has no delight - but consideration; so that it cannot spread similarity.	It starts from the vision of a figure that is perceived, which takes up permanent residence in the possible intellect, as well as in the subject. In the possible intellect, love has no power, since it does not derive from the four elementary qualities: eternal intellect shines in it, it does not welcome pleasure but contemplates it, so that it cannot assimilate it.

Comment: What begins in this stanza is not at all a short treatise in verse on love conceived in general terms: rather, it begins the description of the love used by the Fedeli d'Amore. **This love is 'kindled' in the sensitive soul** (which, according to Aristotelian doctrine, is the part of the soul where memory resides). But what is the state of mind from which to start? The quality of a transparent body appears thanks to the presence of light: on the contrary, the condition for this love to be kindled is the absence (darkening) of the opposite passion, that is, repulsion and anger (of Mars). **Once ignited, it must be made continuous** (and it takes time). This love is therefore not spontaneous, but created and named according to inner feeling. The various degrees of love and how they are classified according to inner feeling are precisely the subject of Niccolò de Rossi's 'response' song to Cavalcanti. This love must become a habit of the soul (d'alma costume) **and at the same time be under the control of the will**. Using similar terminology, A. Crowley said: 'Love is the law, love under will'.

We begin by looking at and internalising a figure, which takes up permanent residence in the possible intellect and in the subject (i.e. in the receptive intellect and in the ego) thanks to the repetition of the vision or memory. The fact that everything remains under the control of the will is guaranteed by the fact that amorous passion has no real power over the mental presence (separating control) of the receptive intellect. This intellect, in fact, although belonging to the 'nature' pole of the human being, does not possess the 'qualities' of the elements, neither subtle nor gross [in the symbol of

mercury, both the moon of the possible intellect and the solar circle (ego) with the point at the centre (common sense) dominate the cross of the elements]. It should be remembered that the four elementary qualities are: dry and wet , hot and cold. Excluding ether or quintessence, the other four elements each possess two qualities: air is hot and wet, fire is hot and dry, water is wet and cold, and earth is cold and dry. **The possible intellect** is the eternal mirror of the light of the active intellect (the 'supernatural' pole in man). **It is not he who experiences pleasure: he simply contemplates it**, so much so that it is impossible for him to assimilate it into himself. This disidentification from pleasure has to do with the rectification of the upper moon, which is found in the symbol of Hermes. In his work "Techniques of Inner Concentration", Massimo Scaligero explains the 39th meditation as follows: Sexual coupling concerns exclusively the etheric-physical bodies [i.e. lunar and Saturnian], which are incapable of desire in themselves. Desire arises solely from the astral body [i.e. mercurial], which, as the body of desire, kama rupa, is alien to the cosmic reasons for such coupling. In reality, the essential astral body, or higher astral [i.e. the possible intellect], immune to desire, participates in coupling as pure metaphysical power. In this sense, it is the pure force of the couple's Love, unrelated to sex." He then adds: "This meditation contains within itself the seed of liberation of the psyche from the bondage to the current that alters and destroys Life from within."

Paraphrase and Commentary on Stanza III

Verses	Paraphrase
<p>It is not virtue, - but from that vein which is perfection - (for it is placed - as such), 30 not rational, - but that feels, I say; for health - judging maintains, that intention - for reason - is valid: discerns evil - in which is friendly vice. Of its power often follows death, 35 if strong - virtue were impeded, which aids - the opposite way: not because it is opposed to nature; but inasmuch as it is wrong to be good and perfect by fate, - no one who has life can say, 40 because established - it has no dominion. Similarly, it can be valid when one forgets it.</p>	<p>I affirm that love is not a virtue, but comes from that perfection (because it makes itself such) which is not rational but sensitive; it makes judgement insane, because intention takes the place of rationality: those who are bound to passion discern evil. Death often derives from the power of love, when the vital force is strongly hindered: not because it is unnatural, but because the more it is diverted from perfect good by destiny, the less one can say that man truly lives, since he has no firm dominion over himself. The same happens when man forgets it.</p>

Comment: The author is not referring to virtuous **love** (Christian charity), but rather to that which **comes from attained perfection** (which "presents itself as such"), not of reason, but **of feeling**. On the attainment of such perfection, see Agarda's essay "Notes on Action in the Passions" in Volume III of Introduction to Magic.

The feeling, used by the Fedeli d'Amore, acts by putting discernment out of play and **thus allowing the certainty of magical will** (the 'ntenzione') **to replace simple reasoning**: that this 'putting out of play' is possible can be inferred by observing how, even in ordinary man, passion contrasts with discernment.

Initiatory death often derives from the power of love, if that attachment to life which prevents the overcoming of the ordinary condition is exhausted: not because it is unnatural, but because, removed from the perfect good, one does not truly live. Contrary to what non-esoteric literary critics think, who refer this last sentence to love, it refers instead to the banal life of the common man, who has no firm

control over himself. **The same result can be achieved when the initiate cuts off judgement by forgetting it:** the author draws a parallel here with the results obtained through mental concentration, because with it, as well as with love, mental chatter can be put out of action. Agarda's essay highlights how certain situations of war can also lead to the same result.

Paraphrase and Commentary on the Fourth Stanza

Verses	Paraphrase
Being is when - the desire is so great that it exceeds measure - of nature - it returns, then it is never adorned with rest. 45 It moves, changing - colour, laughter into tears, and the figure - with fear - turns away; He stays but briefly; yet you will see that he is among the most valiant of men.	The essence of love is a desire so intense that it exceeds natural limits and never allows rest. It transforms, changing the colour of the face, laughter into tears and makes the appearance shy with fear; it is fickle; you can see it more stable in people of value.
The new quality stirs sighs, 50 and wants man to gaze upon an unformed place, arousing anger that sends forth fire (man cannot imagine it unless he experiences it), nor move - since he is already drawn to it, and does not turn - to find amusement there: 55 nor does he have a mind that knows much or little.	This new quality of love causes sighs and demands that man aim where the image has not yet taken shape, arousing the anger that inflames (those who do not experience it cannot imagine it) and that (man) does not move despite being attracted and does not distract himself to find relief: nor does the mind derive great or little knowledge.

Comment: The essence of the Fedeli d'Amore's technique of love consists in such intense desire that it causes love to manifest itself in a way that transcends the natural limits of ordinary men and never allows itself to rest. This 'love under the will' is not something that must be held back internally; instead, its hypernormal intensity (which, if held back, could lead to psychosomatic problems) must be allowed to find free expression in the resulting facial and bodily expressions. In beginners, the results are inconsistent; they only become stable in the most talented among the Fedeli d'Amore. This superior quality of love causes a different way of breathing ("move sospiri") and allows the initiate to pay attention to the intervals of thought that exist between one image and another ("n non formato loco"). In those intervals, he may notice the awakening of a fire of an angry nature: a phenomenon that he could never imagine if he did not experience it. The stage of love described here by Cavalcanti is an advanced stage, in which the image of the beloved, after a voluntary beginning, continually reforms itself, so that the Fedele d'Amore, now free from the need to recreate it with effort himself, can also devote attention to the intervals, however minimal, between one image and another. In those intervals, he can grasp the same fire that the common man knows only when it is generated in him by anger. In fact, it forms whenever our being feels somehow enclosed in a restricted physical or mental space. This occurs mainly in two cases:

- 1) When a man is overcome with anger, it is because he feels oppressed by someone or something that restricts his field of action. This event has the power to sharpen his mental presence towards the object of his anger, to the point of focusing exclusively on it.
- 2) When the mind is voluntarily forced to dwell on the same subject for a short or long period of time and is therefore confined to a restricted mental space. This is what happens in any form of concentration, including that described by Cavalcanti about the beloved.

In other words, **the fire of 'furore' is nothing more than the egoic aspect in which the**

fire of concentration itself manifests itself.

While generic physical expressions such as laughter and crying are permitted, as we have seen, **specifically erotic expressions** ("nè mova") **are not allowed**, despite the attraction felt by the practitioner ("già però ch'a lui si tiri"), because it is believed that this would channel eros into the common channels of profane love (this **is the main difference**, as we shall see **with De Rossi's technique**). One must not be distracted in order to find relief and must renounce any abstract knowledge, great or small, because this would bring common reasoning back into play. A similar technique, but practised in pairs and therefore with a partner who is not imagined but perceived, is called 'pyromagic' by Kremmerz. In 'The Lovers', he refers to the precept of not moving: "Take care, nail your body to a chair and make sure that the other, she, is nailed to hers".

Paraphrase and Commentary on the Fifth Stanza and the Farewell

Verses	Paraphrase
De simil tragge - complexion gaze that makes it seem - pleasure - certain: it cannot be concealed - stay, when it has come. Not wild - beauty is a dart, 60 for such desire - to fear - is wise: it achieves merit - spirit that is pierced. And it cannot be known by the face: understood - white falls into such an object; and, those who hear well, - form is not seen: 65 except for what proceeds from it. For colour, being divided, seated - in the middle of darkness, light shines, For every fraud - I say, worthy in faith, that only from him does merit arise. 70	From the similarity of nature [between two beings], love generates the gaze, which promises pleasure: it cannot remain hidden when it has reached this point. Shy beauties are not arrows of love, because desire is made cautious by fear: those who are struck by it deserve it. And it cannot be recognised from the face: an impenetrable pallor (understood) is found in it; and, for those who understand correctly, the spiritual being ("form") is not an object of sensible apprehension; and even less so the love that proceeds from it. Colourless, divided in being, sitting in a dark place, it brings light to the earth. I sincerely affirm, worthy of trust, that only from such love does reward arise.
You can surely go, song, wherever you like, for I have adorned you so that your reason will be greatly praised by those who understand: you have no talent to stay with the others. 75	You, song, can go in complete safety, wherever you like, for I have crafted you in such a way that your argument will be praised by anyone competent in the matter: you have no desire to stay with those who are not.

Comment: For love to arise, there must be, on the one hand, a polarity between masculine and feminine, but on the other hand also a certain affinity of nature (similar constitution): this similarity, which exists even in the polarity of the sexes, is what is commonly called **complementarity**. In this case, the gaze of love can strike between the two. A shy girl, however, does not cast such glances, because she is fearful and cautious: it is precisely this type of woman who chooses the Faithful of Love ('consiegue merto spirito ch'è punto'). In fact, an 'unattainable' girl was normally chosen, because **the 'modus operandi'** of Cavalcanti and his direct followers **was purely 'platonic'** and a reciprocal response, in terms of profane love, on the part of the girl would only have been a hindrance. Unlike profane love, which cannot remain hidden ("non pò coverto star") because it is revealed by the gaze of love, the love of the Fedele d'Amore cannot be seen sensibly. No blush betrays it, the face remaining solemnly pale. Such love is therefore invisible, like the spirit from which it proceeds. The next passage describes the Fedele d'Amore himself, in the moment of action: pale-faced ('for di

colour"), implementing the separating control ("to be divided"), sitting in the dark ("seated in the dark"), brings light to manifestation ("scattered light"). The poet uses "radere" in the sense of "bringing something elevated down to earth" and thus bringing it within reach, that is, in this case, making it manifest to the inner eye. Only from love practised in this way does an initiatory benefit derive. In the farewell, the esoteric nature of the writing is reiterated, which is therefore not intended for the uninitiated.

Nicolò de Rossi

COLOR DI PERLA

After examining Guido Cavalcanti's "Donna me Prega", it is now time to examine **Nicolò de Rossi's** "response" in verse, namely the song "Color di Perla". This composition is accompanied by a commentary by De Rossi himself, written in Late Latin. The following is the **initial part of the commentary**, where the four degrees of love are enunciated: **liquefacio** (liquefatio, liquefactio), **languor** (languor), **celus** (zelus), **extasys**:

"Ad evidenciam dicendorum premitte quia caritas, dilectio et amor idem est. Dicitur enim caritas quasi cara unitas; dilectio, duorum ligatio; amor, suavis dulcedo. And **there are four degrees** of this true love: the first is **liquefacio**, which has two effects, namely the anxiety of seeing, and its sign, by which one can know the state of love, is impatience to be with the beloved; another effect is the desire to speak, and its sign is boldness in speaking. The second degree is **languor**, whose effect is the vision of the beloved through transparency, and its sign is the shedding of tears because of cogitation; another effect is dwelling in two places, and its sign is more delightful rest in the beloved than in oneself. The third degree is **celus**, whose effect is fear of displeasing, and its sign is delight in every action of the beloved; another effect is constancy in serving, and its sign is joy in that very virtue. The fourth degree is **extasys**, whose effect is quiet possession of the beloved thing, and its sign is the security of the thing itself; another effect is sweet tasting, whose sign is victory over adversaries. And this is what the whole song says.

In the song, the poet sets out to describe "the degrees and virtues of true love". The Fedeli d'Amore have often been compared to the tantric initiates of the East. This very song by Nicolò de' Rossi allows us to verify whether this comparison has any basis and to what extent. One of the clearest and therefore most easily comparable tantric texts on this subject is "The Life of Naropa", an exposition of **Tibetan Buddhist tantra**. According to this school, both in practice with an imaginary partner (jnana mudra: similar to that which, as we have already seen, Guido Cavalcanti indicated) and in practice with a human partner (karma mudra), four levels of bliss are experienced, called respectively:

- 'ananda' ('happiness'): a joyful excitement due to the gradual disappearance of the gross subject/object dichotomy.
- 'paramananda' ('supreme happiness'): an ecstatic pleasure brought about by the disappearance of the coarse idea of the personal self.
- 'vilaksana' ('absence of excitement'), consisting of a sense of well-being - sometimes also called 'special pleasure' - deriving from the experience that subject and object are as one (i.e., the idea of a partner disappears).
- "Sahajananda" ('simultaneous or co-emergent or innate or spontaneous happiness'), consisting of the direct understanding of the non-duality of bliss and emptiness.

The first three types of bliss have a definite character, while the last is indefinite and embraces the others with which it is always present, even if it is not noticed. Once we become aware of sahananda, we can remain in that awareness, both while experiencing the other three forms of bliss and while experiencing it in isolation: this brings the experience of the four blissful states to a higher value.

With this in mind, let us now examine the song Color di Perla:

Paraphrase and Commentary on the First Stanza

Verses	Paraphrase
<p>Colour of pearl, my sweet salvation, your comfort - wise - makes me, as far as my intellect can reach, that I may speak of the degrees and virtues of true love - that in the heart - it sends, 05 for which it shines - with noble effect: since it does not impose passion, but with reason - it falls from the senses, understood - from imaginary faith and of hope, which firmly believes in it. 10 The joyful soul composes it and gives it shelter - which keeps it burning, intense - then <la> natural death: this fate is special to him.</p>	<p>Pearl-coloured, my sweet salvation, your advice makes me capable, to the extent that my intellect can grasp, to describe the degrees and virtues of true love, which descends into the heart to shine with noble effect: since it does not sting like a passion, but together with reason falls outside the sphere of the senses, imbued with imaginative faith and the hope that believes in it firmly. The blessed soul joins it with itself and constitutes the cause that keeps it burning, intense after natural death: this way of being is peculiar to it.</p>

Comment: In the second stanza of 'Donna me prega', Guido Cavalcanti states that amorous passion has no real power over the receptive intellect. Nicolò de Rossi, in order to emphasise even more decisively that **the love practised by the Fedeli d'Amore** is not vulgar, completely denies its passionate nature. Instead, it is **a manifestation of caritas**, which is intertwined with the other two theological virtues: faith and hope. This type of love is characteristic of the blessed soul, which keeps it alive and intense even after natural death. It is therefore that love which is 'a-mors', without death, immortal.

Paraphrase and Commentary on the Second Stanza

Verses	Paraphrase
<p>First, the spirit liquefies: 15 from Mars moves - with Jupiter - prepared, because, tempered, - habilitate finds. By necessity, it pleases the simele; by accident - it does not feel it - ordered, coagulated - to years of true trial; 20 and tremulously - shows anxiety to take quality - cum veçuta, unde minuta - the sentence is sifted, when equal power contends. Still desires the will 25 most often, - being conceived, unknown - speaking broadly:</p>	<p>At the first degree [of love], the spirit "liquefies": it originates from Mars if it is prepared with Jupiter, because, being tempered, it acquires the capacity [to generate love]. One takes pleasure in what is similar in essence; what is similar only in some qualities is not felt to be complementary, nor as solid enough to [face] every real test; and trembling shows anxiety. to derive pleasure from seeing [the beloved], so that one feels less intense [love] when this sight is impeded by a force</p>

of a healthy breast does not believe it will fail.

contrary.

Furthermore, the will desires

most of the time, being conceived secretly, to manifest itself through words: with a good heart, it does not believe it will fail.

Comment: The first degree of love is **Liquefactio** (or 'liquefacio' in de Rossi's late Latin), so called because the rigidity of the ego seems to liquefy, weakening the dichotomy between subject and object. Cavalcanti says that the love practised by the Fedeli d'Amore originates 'from a darkness that comes from Mars'; De Rossi clarifies that Jupiter (symbol of 'sympathetic joy', hence the adjective 'jovial' referring to those who manifest this quality) can be used to 'obscure' or 'temper' Mars. It is good that the chosen partner is truly complementary. In this first degree, one depends greatly on the 'sight' of the beloved, otherwise love fades. In the Latin commentary, De Rossi states that this constitutes the flaw of this degree ("propterea iste gradus nondum est perfectus"). Furthermore, there is a strong desire to express one's love with words.

Paraphrase and Commentary on the Third Stanza

Verses	Paraphrase
In this way it comes that man languishes for fear of it - of pleasure - drawn, 30 if in the abstract - he rejects the object. Then the fervent blood boils over, the vile thought, distracted from the truth, is quickly crushed, the mind recoils: so that through transparency it now sees 35 and seized, - unaccustomed, the beloved thing - beyond that opaque body which, weeping, spreads tears; and it lingers in the very place which, compressed, keeps it animated; 40 glorified - it rests where it asks for merciful peace.	In this way, man languishes for fear of being deprived of pleasure, when the [beloved] object turns into a memory. Then the blood boils fervently, the vile thought, removed from the true one, is immediately destroyed, the mind rises again: so that now he sees, as if through transparency, far and near, not as he is accustomed, the beloved object beyond the [sensory] limits of that opaque body that spreads a lake of tears; and resides in the same place which, circumscribed, keeps it alive; full of glory, it rests more where it requires compassionate peace.

Comment: The one who loves passes from the first to the second degree of love, that is, to "**Languor**" which is, according to De Rossi's commentary, "obstupefactio de absentia amati per visum vel mentis excessum in animo iam formati".

With regard to obtaining the "**vision through transparency**" that is characteristic of this stage of love, we can only refer to Luce's excellent monograph, aptly titled *Il Diafano* (Introduction to Magic II v.), for its definition and details. The last four verses describe (two by two) the two places where the mind resides at this stage: within itself, but even more so within the beloved. Reiterating what he said at the beginning of the commentary, De Rossi quotes Augustine: "Moratur etiam amor penes amatum, unde Augustinus: anima verius est ubi amat quam ubi animat". In order for the reader to better understand the meaning of the localisation of the mind, De Rossi also expounds an interesting doctrine of the interaction between the faculties of the soul, the three parts of the brain, the heart and the activity of the limbs: "In celebros sunt tres celule: in prima parte anteriori viget fantasia et ymaginatio, que rem amandam representat; in medio virtus rationalis, que discernit verum a falso et illud diiudicat; in posteriori parte viget memoria que iam iudicata reponit: deinde sic repositum descendit ad cor, tamquam ad

conceptorem, and the heart then acts on the various functions of the limbs that have been conceived, so that in speech more concerning the lungs, in anger concerning the gall, in love concerning the heart, and this comotive; in speech the tongue speaks, in anger the whole body is moved, and so in love; and therefore love, like the soul, exercises its function in all things."

Paraphrase and Commentary on Stanza IV

Verses	Paraphrase
It lifts me up to bliss in heaven leap by leap - in the high - deep, pure and round, - in an ascending line. 45 Radiating like a starry sky its force - scorça - çascun pondo, according to - that which is decent to the beloved. Solicitous, he becomes too much of a guardian, and gives oppo - that pure friendship 50 for malice - of him does not fade. United and undivided, it always gnaws; only desire can break the bond that binds - to every vice the joy - that he deserves: 55 and in part he possesses it expertly.	Bliss gradually rises to zeal in the deep, pure and spherical, along an ascending line. Radiating like a starry sky thanks to its strength, it removes every obstacle, according to what is convenient for the beloved. It continually makes itself very solicitous and ensures that pure friendship is not compromised by him through wickedness. United and in harmony, it always feels delight; it brings all desires together into one. which creates an obstacle to any vice, the joy that virtue brings him: and partly experiences it.

Comment: We reach the third degree of bliss: **Zeal**. De Rossi clarifies that: 'non prout çelus est passio, sed prout est pars virtutis, quia ex intensione amoris procedit'. **Concern** is mainly due to the fear of displeasing the beloved: "Inter cetera que reddunt amantem sollicitum, est timor displicendi, ut hic et Ovidius: Res est solliciti plena timoris amor. Nam qui diligit timet et operatur in totum ne propter sui defectum amicitia sauciatur". At this stage, one takes **delight in any act of the beloved**: "Nota hic delectationem amantis uniuscuiusque rei facte per amatum. Nam adeo unitur amans cum amato, ut indisolubiliter et indivisse pro posse circa eius vultum versetur: in eo sitis et in suis actibus inebriatur. Unde Ovidius: denique quidquid agis, lumina nostra vivant." Another effect of this degree of love is the **constancy of service** accompanied by **delight in this virtue itself**: "Traditur hic quedam constancia serviendi. Amans autem nunc constans factus totum suum desiderium in amato recludit, non solum aborens eum offendere, set etiam propter factum tercii suspicans se posse ledi, semper resistit cuicumque rei nociture suo gaudio, quod meruisse contendit". The last verse expresses the fact that, at this point, since any dissonance with the beloved is now impossible, **faith in one's own love** inevitably (and one might say magically) **turns into reciprocity** and therefore into a first experience of love: "Hic ostenditur leticia virtutis constantie: nam reiectis dissonis ipsius amati virtute amantis experientia paulisper gaudet amans quod fide speravit. It can be noted that **De Rossi uses a mixed technique**: by exploiting the phase of falling in love and courtship, and therefore love without contact, the Fedele d'Amore can obtain Liquefactio, Languor and Zelus. The latter, if this has not already happened, magically brings about the reciprocation of the beloved. Therefore, in the degree of Zelus, there is already a first physical contact. As De Rossi will clarify in the next stanza, it is with full contact that the fourth degree of love or Ecstasy also manifests itself. The difference **with Cavalcanti's** purely **interior technique** finally **becomes clear**, and therefore the reason why a 'response' to what he expounds in 'Donna me prega' is necessary.

Paraphrase and Commentary on the Fifth Stanza and the Farewell

Verses	Paraphrase
<p>Thus the hierarchy is established: its praise - enjoys - above nature, which lasts - in seraphic ardour. In these, another life is forgotten; he contemplates rapt - and captivated - the figure, without resentment - feeling love. 'Perfect he stands at the summit of goodness; calm he keeps - doing no harm nor fears the dart - for which others tremble: so does the clear diadem make him secure, Sweet taste, hope abandoned, gl'adevene; - after the thistle has passed, it has no regard, - for the blessed soul shines, crowned with the palm of victory.</p>	<p>Thus the highest hierarchy is reached: it enjoys supernatural praise, as long as it remains in seraphic ardour. In ecstasy, it forgets all other life; he contemplates the figure, enraptured and captivated, free from suffering, fully possessing love. Perfect, he remains at the summit of goodness; it waits quietly, insensitive to any disturbance, nor does it fear the arrow that others fear: thus the luminous halo makes him secure, Sweet taste, hope put to rest, comes to him; after he has passed the summit, he has no fear, because the blessed soul shines, crowned with the palm of victory.</p>
<p>My song, blessed Madonna, who gave me the gift of speech, so that I may go to those who love you: among others, do not be ashamed.</p>	<p>My song, thank my lady, who gave me the gift of an elegant word, to then reach those to whom I expose you: among others, you will not be considered shameful.</p>

Comment: By increasing the intensity of Love, one finally reaches the supreme angelic hierarchy. De Rossi explains in his commentary: "To those who understand, it should be noted that the hierarchy is called the sacred principality, and there are three: ... The third hierarchy is served by the excellent orders, namely the seraphim, which is interpreted as loving or ardent; the cherubim, which is interpreted as knowing, and the thrones, which describe God sitting on the throne."

Thus we arrive at the fourth and final degree of Love: **Ecstasy**. De Rossi adds in his commentary that it is also called "excessus mentis" and distinguishes four modes of it. Love leads precisely to the fourth and supreme degree, during which one even forgets oneself: "**The first mode**, and commonly, although not very precisely, is called ecstasy **when one is abstracted**, not in terms of the act or use of the senses, but **only in terms of intention**, which is entirely devoted to the use of superiors or lovers; and this is common to all contemplatives. **The second mode** is properly called **when one** is abstracted from these and those and **introduced into an imaginary vision**, as is found in the Acts of the Apostles concerning Peter: and he was in ecstasy of mind, etc. **Thirdly**, it is said more properly **when someone** is abstracted from these and those and **introduced into an intellectual vision**, where he sees intellectual things not through the presence of things but **through revelation**, as is said of Adam when the Lord sent sleep upon him. **The fourth way** is taken most properly, and thus we say here by comparison, namely **when the mind** is intent on all the acts of the lower powers and nothing of nature interposed between itself and God, but **contemplates divine excellence through intellectual vision**, as was the case with Paul when he was rapt: and this is done both through the intellect and through the will, the principal author of which is love. Hence it is said here that **when the lover is rapt in such a degree, he forgets not only external things**, as Bernard says, **but himself**. For love is such that it does not allow itself to be loved, but to love.

For a comparison with Tantrism, we quote the Buddhist writer **C.M. Chen**: "When bliss reaches its peak ... the egoic existence incorporated in the eighth level of consciousness and accumulated from previous lives is forgotten, and with this absence comes identification with the great sunyata". (C.M. Chen Discrimination between Buddhist and Hindu Tantras, Kalimpong, 1969)

The choice of the term "palpating" is very important, indicating that **De Rossi is talking about a technique involving physical contact**. In fact, he says in his commentary that the beloved is not simply touched like air, but touched and palpated like wood and like the body of Christ: "Et ideo contemplando et intuendo amatum securus non tantum illum tangit, set etiam

palpat amorem et ipsum. Plus enim est palpare quam tangere: nam omne corpus etiam tangenti non resistibile, ut aer, tangitur set non palpatur; solum autem resistibile, ut lignum, tangitur et palpatur. Unde Christus: ipse ego sum: palpate et videte, quia spiritus carnem et ossa non habet sicut me videtis habere".

The effect of this ecstasy is the "quiet" possession of the beloved. Concentration renders one insensitive to any disturbance. De Rossi comments: "Atende hic quietam possessionem rei amate. Cum autem amans realiter illam palpet, perfecti boni appicibus gloriantur, tam quiete amorem inspiciens, quod ullius sentille molestiam nusquam sentit". And, for another comparison with Tantrism, we can quote **Chen again**: "Man's personal ego is absorbed in the object of attraction ... Nothing of the whole world remains in his mind. Nothing can disturb man's concentration on acts of love."

The Victory referred to is that over the Contrari, thus achieving the *Coincidentia Oppositorum*. De Rossi, who had already mentioned this in the initial part of his commentary, confirms it again with the words: "Postremo hic ostenditur victoria contrariorum. Anima enim sive intellectus, postquam intravit et excessit cardinem istius gradus, securam nichil timens, victoriosa lucet et plena deliciis exultat in numero beatorum".



10a) Dante's song *Donne ch'avete*

by Sipex

After the first edition of the notebook "Fedeli d'Amore" (Faithful to Love), some who welcomed my interpretation of the Divine Comedy, understood not as a simple initiatory journey (the literal meaning of the poem), but as an immense magical cosmogram (anagogical meaning), invited me to follow up on my statement that the initiatory journey proposed or undertaken by Dante is described in his other works. To this end, having examined Guido Cavalcanti's "Donna me prega" and Nicolò de Rossi's "Color di Perla", I will consider Dante's song, "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore". If Color di Perla is considered De Rossi's 'response' to Cavalcanti's Donna me prega, Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore is considered Dante's response. Dante himself 'suggests' the comparison in a passage from De Vulgari Eloquentia (II,12,3): 'Among these, the hendecasyllable, when we want to write poetry in the tragic style, absolutely deserves the privilege of prevailing in the texture, due to its excellence. There is, in fact, a stanza that enjoys being woven solely from hendecasyllables, such as that by Guido da Firenze:

Donna me prega, perch'io volgl[i]o dire;

and we too say:

Women who understand love.

That this is not a random association, concerning only the external form, and that this specific song is instead of fundamental importance, is confirmed by the fact that Dante (Purg., XXIV, 49-57) has Bonagiunta Urbicciani da Lucca say that he was the first to bring out "the nine rhymes", precisely with the composition *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*. Bonagiunta also defines Dante's new style of poetry as '**dolce stil novo**', in contrast to that of Giacomo da Lentini, Guittone d'Arezzo and Bonagiunta himself.

But say if I see here the one who first
brought forth the nine rhymes,
beginning with Donne ch'avete
intelletto d'amore. And I to him: "I am
one who, when Love inspires me,
notes, and in that way dictates within
me, meaning".
"O brother, now I see," he said, "the knot
that kept Notary and Guittone and me
from the sweet new style that I hear!".

As is well known, the song "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore" is part of Dante's **Vita Nova**. According to a nineteenth-century convention (commonly referred to as "vulgata"), the text of this work was divided into forty-two chapters, and this division was also maintained in the critical editions of 1907 and 1932. A more careful re-examination of ancient manuscripts has shown, however, that distant codices dating back to independent witnesses agree in dividing the work into thirty-one paragraphs.

The number of paragraphs is equal to the number of poetic compositions (twenty-five sonnets, one ballad and five songs); but there is no complete correspondence, since three paragraphs contain two poems (the current 3, 13 and 17, formerly VIII, XXII and XXVI of the vulgate) and three others contain none (16, 19, 31, formerly XXV, XXVIII-XXX and XLII).

The song 'Donne ch'avete', which was in chapter XIX of the vulgate, is part of paragraph 10, comprising chapters XVII-XIX of the vulgate.

It is therefore the first poetic text that follows immediately after the poet's 'conversion'. Denying any external or internal reciprocation of the poet's love, who suffers to the point of 'dying' in the presence of his lady, he decides on a **gratuitous love**, which is expressed externally in the exercise of **poetry of praise**.

It is therefore a 'love without contact', in line with G. Cavalcanti and therefore different from N. De Rossi. If at the beginning he uses a support from the external world (the beloved woman, appropriately chosen to be unattainable), he frees himself from it when he is strong enough to determine his initiatory death; that is, when the common man would have no choice but to become hopelessly melancholic or to turn away.

For fear of not being up to the task, Dante spends several days with the desire to speak and the fear of beginning. As A. Onofri (Nuovo Rinascimento come Arte dell'io) astutely noted, the new poetry, the dolce stil novo, is not entirely the product of the poet's will, even if it undoubtedly prepares him for it. The core of the inspiration comes as a **'grace' of Love**, which affects not only the mind but also the organ of speech: 'my tongue spoke almost as if moved by itself and said: Women who have understanding of love'. However, the complete composition of the text takes several days: 'thinking for several days'.

The song consists of five stanzas of rhyming hendecasyllables, according to the pattern ABBC, ABBC, CDD, CEE. Dante provides several clues to its understanding. In particular, he says:

"In order to make this song easier to understand, I will divide it more artificially than the other pieces above. And so I will first divide it into three parts. The first part is a prologue to the following words; the second is the main subject; the third is almost a service to the previous words. The second begins here: Angelo clama [v. 15]; the third here: Canzone, io so che [v. 57]".

Therefore, the first part or introduction consists of the first of the five stanzas. The second part consists of the three central stanzas. The third part or service consists of the last stanza.

Let us begin with the prologue:

Women, who have understanding of
love, I want to talk to you about my
lady, not because I believe I can finish
praising her, but to talk in order to
unburden my mind.

I say that, thinking of her worth, 5 Love
makes me feel so sweet,
that if I did not lose my courage, I would
make people fall in love by speaking.
And I do not want to speak so highly, 9
that I might become cowardly through
fear;
but I will speak lightly of her gentle
state with respect to her,
ladies and maidens in love, with you, 13
for it is not a matter to be discussed with
others.

The first part, says Dante, must be further subdivided:

The first part is divided into four: in the first, I say to whom I wish to speak of my lady, and why I wish to speak; in the second, I say what I think of myself when I consider her worth, and how I would speak if I did not lose my courage; in the third I say how I believe I will speak, so that I may not be hindered by cowardice; in the fourth, repeating what I intend to say, I give the reason why I am saying it to them. The second begins here: I say (v. 5); the third here: And I will not speak (v. 9); the fourth: Ladies and maidens (v. 13):".

Dante addresses directly the "women who understand love", the recipients of the song of praise for his beloved, not because he wants to deal exhaustively with this subject (v. 3) but to give vent to his thoughts (v. 4). Thinking of Beatrice's worth, Love makes itself felt so sweetly that, if the poet had the courage, speaking of love would spread among the people (v. 8). Precisely to avoid the fear of speaking, he renounces a lofty style and chooses a simpler yet respectful one (vv. 9-12). Finally, addressing the 'women' to whom the poem is addressed once again (v. 13), he specifies that it would make no sense to speak of it to others.

Similar to the case of G. Cavalcanti's 'Donna me prega', the recipients of the poem are particular 'women' who possess 'Intelletto d'Amore' (Intellect of Love). It is worth remembering that Luigi Valli, in "Il linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei Fedeli d'Amore" (The Secret Language of Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore), definitively demonstrated that, in this language, the Fedeli d'Amore themselves are called "women". In the case in question, this is very clear, because the entire Vita Nova is addressed by Dante to "my first friend to whom I write this" (par. 19, 10, formerly XXX 3), who is in love with Monna Giovanna or Primavera (par. 15, formerly XXIV), i.e. Guido Cavalcanti, who mentions his beloved by the latter name in the ballad "Fresca rosa novella".

If love is "without contact" as in G. Cavalcanti, however, an additional aspect immediately appears: **once ignited in the poet, it can, at the very moment of speaking about it in poetry, be radiated to other men**. This technique, on the one hand, recalls Kremmerz's recommendation to "pray" not only with the mind, but also with the mouth (attention to words spoken with passion determines the "silence of thought", i.e. it eliminates digressions). On the other hand, it recalls the "radiating love" already present in early Buddhism, which brings love to its full power, not limiting it to the initial subject-object.

The only difference is that in early Buddhism, the initial object of love is carefully chosen as non-erotic (excluding even a "gentle eros").

This poetry, as indicated by Dante, must be a simple '**isfogar la mente**' (letting the mind run free), without any rational concern for exhausting the subject, without any artificial doctoral styles. The only limit within which the 'sfogo' (outpouring) moves is the respectful praise of the beloved, visualised in a '**gentle state**'.

Having examined the prologue to the song, let us now examine its central part, which provides an example of the theorised praise.

Angelo clama il divino intelletto
and says: "Sire, in the world one sees
wonder in the act that proceeds
of a soul that shines here above."

Heaven, which has no other flaw
than having her, asks her Lord for her, and
every saint cries out for mercy.
Only pity defends our cause,
for God speaks, who understands Our Lady:
"My beloved ones, now suffer in peace,
let your hope be as I please there, where
there is someone who expects to lose her,
and who will say in hell: 'O wretched ones,
I saw the hope of the blessed'.

Our Lady is desired in the highest heaven: 29
Or I will let you know of her virtue.
I say: any gentle lady who wishes to
appear so should go with her; for when
she walks along the street, Love casts a
chill into the hearts of the rude,
freezing and destroying all their thoughts; and
whoever endured to look at her
would become noble, or die;
and when she finds someone worthy
of seeing her, she tests his virtue; for
what happens to him gives him health,
and humbles him so much that he
forgets every offence.
God has given her even greater grace,
that those who have spoken to her cannot
end badly.

Love says of her: 'A mortal thing 43
how can she be so adorned and so pure?"
Then he looks at her and swears to
himself that God intends to do something
new.
Her colour is almost like pearls, as befits a
woman, without measure; she is all that
nature can do well; her beauty is a proof
of this.
From her eyes, as she moves them, 51 spirits of
love come forth, inflamed,
which pierce the eyes of those who gaze upon
her, and pass through, striking each heart.
You see Love painted on her face, 55
where no one can gaze at her steadily.

As in the Proem, it is Dante himself, in the prose part of the Canzone, who indicates how the content of the stanzas should be divided:

"Then when I say, 'Angelo clama', I begin to speak of this woman; and this part is divided into two. In the first, I speak of her as understood in heaven; in the second, I speak of her as understood on earth, there: *Madonna è desiata* [v. 29]. This second part is divided into two: in the first I speak of her in terms of the nobility of her soul, narrating some of her virtues, which proceeded from her soul; in the second I speak of her in terms of the nobility of her body, narrating something of her beauty, here: Love speaks of her [v. 43]. This second part is divided into two: in the first I speak of some beauties that are common to the whole person; in the second I speak of some beauties that are common to a specific part of the person, here: Of her eyes [v. 51]. This second part is divided into two; for in the first I speak of the eyes, which are the beginning of Love; in the second I speak of the mouth, which is the end of Love. And so that any vicious thought may be removed, let the reader remember that it is written above that this woman's greeting, which was one of the operations of her mouth, was the end of

my desires, while I was able to receive it'.

As can be seen, this is a dichotomous division, in which it is always the second part that is further dichotomised. Dante admits that he could have indicated other divisions, but that he did not do so out of esoteric reserve:

'I say well that, in order to open up the meaning of this song more fully, it would be appropriate to use more minute divisions; but nevertheless, those who are not so ingenious as to understand it through these divisions that have been made, I do not mind if they leave it alone, for I certainly fear that I have communicated its meaning to too many, even through these divisions that have been made, if it happened that many were able to hear it'.

The three stanzas that make up the praise essentially follow the trimundial scheme: the second stanza is dedicated to heaven, where the 'Divine Intellect' resides, the third to the intermundial world where the 'powers' (virtues) manifest themselves, and the fourth finally to the physical world, the seat of natural beauty, or rather of that which 'appears'.

The second stanza therefore transports us to the divine plane. An angel, in his capacity as messenger, announces to the Divine Intellect the marvellous deeds of Beatrice, which proceed from her luminous soul, radiating as far as the Empyrean. Heaven and its saints request Beatrice's presence, but the divine judge has compassion on Dante and decides that Beatrice will remain on earth for now, to allow him, who 'awaits her loss', to say to the souls in Hell: 'O ill-begotten ones, I saw the hope of the blessed'.

If 'Madonna is desired in the highest heaven', it is natural to illustrate her virtues: this is what happens in the third stanza, which lists the virtues, or powers, that she has over human beings:

- she makes every woman who accompanies her 'gentle';
- as she passes by, Love casts a chill into the hearts of the rude, causing their thoughts to freeze and die;
- Those who suffer at the sight of it may become noble or die;
- those who are worthy of seeing it experience its virtue, its power, 'that which gives them health, and humbles them, so that they forget every offence'. Humiliation, exhaustion (the hermetic putrefactio) of man's limitations brings about the oblivion of those very limitations, which previously restricted his possibilities.
- But it is certain "that he who has spoken of it cannot end badly". This is an important clarification, because Dante, as the previous stanza says, will go to Hell, but not to remain there, since he has "spoken" with Beatrice and received her "salutation", that is, "health" and salvation. His descent into Hell is therefore temporary, like that of Christ and the Initiates.

In the fourth stanza, the personification of Love continues, wondering how something mortal can be so beautiful and pure. Dante then moves on to the first and only physical description of Beatrice. The following are highlighted:

- the 'colour of pearls', her fair complexion, which Nicolò De Rossi, as we know, even chooses as the name of his woman;
- her supreme beauty in the natural world, which makes her a model, an earthly archetype, because 'her beauty is proven by example';
- her eyes, from which 'spirits of love inflamed' emanate, striking anyone who looks at her and echoed in that 'light full of spirits of love' in Guido Cavalcanti's ballad 'Veggio negli occhi de la donna mia' (I see in the eyes of my lady);
- 'Amor pinto nel viso, là o' non pote alcun mirarla fiso' (Love painted on her face, where no one can look at her steadily), which Dante's indispensable prose commentary clarifies as being not her eyes, but her mouth, which utters the greeting. Love is therefore like Beatrice's 'lipstick'.

Let us conclude with an analysis of the farewell, that is, the last stanza of the song. Dante, in the prose section, says that "it is almost a servant to the previous words". He clarifies: 'Then when I say: Song, I know that you, I add a stanza almost like a servant to the others, in which I say what I desire of this song of mine. And because this last part is easy to understand, I do not trouble myself with further divisions'.

Song, I know that you went around talking

to many women, when I have advanced you;
Now I warn you, because I have raised you
as the daughter of young and gentle Love,
that wherever you arrive, you say, praying:
"Teach me to go, for I am sent to her
whose praise adorns me." And if you do
not want to go, as if you were vain, do
not stay where there are rude people:
try, if you can, to be seen only with
women or courteous men, who will
take you there by the quickest route.
You will find Love with her; commend
me to him as you should.

This farewell, seemingly simple to understand, is obviously held in low regard by common literary criticism, which ignores the fact that esotericists have often hidden profound intentions behind seemingly banal expressions. From a literal point of view, the farewell stanza is constructed in the form of an apostrophe to the song itself, which, avoiding all contact with 'vulgar people', must set out on its journey to reveal itself only to its intended recipients. We know from the beginning of the song that the recipients are women endowed with 'intellect of love'. In this stanza, Dante specifies that he is not referring only to members of the fair sex, because the song can be revealed not only 'to women' but also to 'courteous men' who will take it by the shortest route (*tostana*) to the ultimate recipient of the poem, namely Beatrice herself. This is the traditional 'envoi' or sending of the poetic message, typical of courtly lyric poetry. Initiatory practices, of high asceticism, often end with a '**dedication**' of the effects of the practice itself to a more or less vast group of recipients. In Buddhism, for example, the practice often ends with the wish that it may benefit all sentient beings. More reserved, Dante dedicates the song to all the *Fedeli d'Amore* (Faithful of Love), with the hope that they will bring the song to Beatrice, that is, through the song, they will achieve the same goal as the author. This is not simply 'altruism', but rather directing the overall force of the initiatory 'chain' towards the same goal. In Buddhism, the 'chain' is generally extended to all sentient beings.



11) BOCCACCIO'S FILOSTRATO

by Frater Petrus

Boccaccio (Florence? 1313 - Certaldo, 1375) dealt with the '**doctrine of love**' in practically all his works. However, the one that summarises it most effectively is probably the short poem in octaves (1), called **Filostrato**.

(1) The octave (or octave rhyme) is a stanza composed of eight hendecasyllables, the first six rhyming

alternating and the last two rhyming, according to the ABABABCC pattern.

As the author himself indicates at the beginning of the work, the title (formed by combining a Greek term, 'filos', and a Latin term, 'stratus') means **'man conquered and struck down by love'**.

From this point of view, love is ultimately an aspect of Zeus' thunderbolt which, according to myth, struck down the pride of the Titans. Love, when used in an initiatory way, has the ability to **transform egoic perception into perception of love**.

Thus Boccaccio expresses, in a stanza of his poem, the transmutation induced by Love in Troilus or Troilo, the youngest son of Priam, who fell in love with the beautiful Chryseis (the ancient Briseis), daughter of Calchas:

III, 93

And although he was of royal blood, and
could still do much,
he was kind and equal to all, as if no
one were above him. Thus did Love,
who is above all,
that he did so to please others; he had
pride, envy and avarice in anger, and
what everyone else has.

In the prologue in prose, Boccaccio addresses the problem of identifying **the aspect of Love that gives the lover the greatest bliss**. He considers three aspects:

- thinking of her in the secrecy of one's heart,
- talking about her with one's friends,
- being with the woman you love.

The first 'technique', purely imaginative, is what in the East is called the 'Seal of Knowledge' (Jnana Mudra) and involves the use of a purely internal or internalised partner.

The second technique is a variation of the first. 'Talking to friends' does not, of course, mean simply chatting, nor does it imply that friends are present at that moment; rather, it means singing one's love in poetry. **Added to the imagination of the first technique is the exaltation of the poetic state**, similar to that of someone reciting a hymn during a ritual:

72

Troilus was happy, and he led his life
in song and joy;

...

The third technique is that described by Abraxa in Ur and can be, as we know, **with or without physical contact**. Boccaccio states that, after having long believed, like many others, that the greatest bliss is achieved by thinking secretly of one's beloved (technique I), he now knows that the bliss of being with one's lover (technique III) far surpasses that obtainable in the other two situations. In the poem, he describes the state in which Love places the two lovers, in which material and imaginative knowledge are indistinguishably mixed:

III, 34

They did not leave each other's arms
all night, and holding each other in their
arms, they believed they had been
taken from each other,

or that it was not true that together in each
other's arms, as they were, they belonged
to each other,
but believed they were dreaming of being in
each other's arms; and one often asked
the other:
'Am I holding you in my arms, or am I dreaming, or are you really here?

Boccaccio **symbolises conscious love** (amor intellectualis) or, as others say, love under the will, **with the goddess Venus**. In the invocation dedicated to her, he expresses himself thus:

III, 89

I have no graces that would be fitting
for you from me, O beautiful eternal
light; therefore, I would rather remain
silent than fail to give them fully; you,
bright lamp, do not fail my desire,
prolong, conceal, correct and govern
my ardour and that of her to whom
I am devoted, and ensure that I am never devoted to another. -

Pandarus, the intermediary or messenger between Troilus (=Sun) and Chryseis (=Moon), is a symbol of Hermes. Kremmerz (Science of the Magi and Fascicoli della Miriam) and Ea spoke of the modus operandi of this initiatory evolution of Mercury in the notebook dedicated to the Magic Door of Rome.

But Troilus then suffers a sad disappointment, because Chryseis abandons him for the love of Diomedes. This is the **second sense in which love conquers and defeats man: by causing him suffering**. Regarding an initiatory use of suffering, actively assumed, see the chapter that Evola dedicates to suffering in Phenomenology of the Absolute Individual.

Griseida's fickleness leads the poet to pose a new problem: what is the **most suitable type of woman**? In the East, already in well-known texts such as the Kama Sutra, a distinction is usually made between various types of women (and men), but from a more initiatory point of view, two types are distinguished above all, called respectively 'Seal of Action' (Karma Mudra) and 'Seal of Vow' (Samaya Mudra). The latter type of partner, possessing all the necessary qualities, is equivalent to what, in certain schools of Western esotericism, is called **the 'Complementary Pair'**.

Boccaccio describes the perfect woman as follows:

VIII, 32

The perfect woman has a steadfast
desire to be loved, and delights in loving;
she discerns and sees what is to be
avoided, leaves and chooses wisely, and
waits for promises; these are to be
followed, but one should not choose
hastily, for not all are wise because they
are older, and those are worth less.

The first verses in particular verses are very reminiscent of a passage from the Tibetan text "The Life and Teachings of Naropa":
"The best type ... is endowed with the relevant signs of the three levels of behaviour in their manifest, hidden and mystical aspects... when intoxicated with sexual desire, she knows neither

shame nor restraint with her yogic partner."



12) BOCCACCIO'S FILOCOLO

Introduction

Frater Petrus: The *Filocolo* is a novel in seven books, which contains the love story of Florio and Biancifiore (or Biancofiore), two young people who, having grown up together and fallen in love with each other, are separated by the contrary will of Florio's parents. Florio embarks on a long journey to find his beloved. *Filocolo*, in Boccaccio's approximate Greek, is supposed to mean 'labour of love', and is the name Florio takes on when he sets out on his arduous search for Biancifiore. **The etymology** is presented by the author as follows (Book III, chapter 75):

'*Filocolo* is composed of two Greek names, 'philos' and 'colon'; and 'philos' in Greek means as much in our language as 'love' and 'colon' in Greek similarly means as much in our language as 'labour': so when joined together, one can say, transposing the parts, labour of love'.

However, in Greek, the best equivalent of 'fatigue' is 'ponos'. Therefore, in the Venetian edition of 1527, the Renaissance editor Tizzone Gaetano di Posi considered it useful to correct the title to "*Filopono*". This term (already used by scholars as the name of a Hellenistic commentator on Aristotle) means "Lover of Labour" and not "Labour of Love".

In 1530, Marco Guazzo proposed *Filocopo*, since "copos" in Greek means "suffering" and hypothesising that Boccaccio had confused it with "cholos" = "anger". Given the uncertainty, modern publishers generally prefer to retain Boccaccio's original title.

The anachronism that pervades this novel should immediately alert the reader. The legend of Florio and Biancifiore was widespread in Boccaccio's time, both through oral tradition and thanks to some popular written versions. From a temporal point of view, it could be placed, like legends in general, in that 'mythical or archetypal time', whose events can be re-enacted at any moment in history. And it is Boccaccio himself who re-enacts the legend of the two lovers, merging it with episodes, partly true and partly imaginary, from his own era.

Book I

Frater Petrus: In **the prologue** to Book I, which is partly **epic** and partly **autobiographical**, Juno, the ancient enemy of the Trojans, goes to the pope to urge him to overthrow the power of the Swabians, the last descendants of the Roman race, which in turn descended from Aeneas. Then the goddess descends into Hades to ask the fury Alecto for help against Manfredi, the new Aeneas. The pope turns to Charles of Anjou, who descends into Italy, defeats Manfredi and founds the kingdom of Naples.

In the days of Robert, descendant of the aforementioned Charles I, "one day, when Saturn had ruled the first hour, Phoebus having already reached the sixteenth degree of the celestial Ram with his horses, and on which the glorious departure of Jupiter's son from the despoiled kingdoms of Pluto was celebrated" (Easter), the author sees, in a small temple in Partenope (Naples), a young woman of admirable beauty, who immediately becomes the lady of his heart. A few days later, the author sees his woman again in the company of others, in a temple called "the prince of

celestial birds" (identified as the church of the monastery of Sant'Arcangelo in Baiano). She expresses her desire that the love story of Florio and Biancifiore should not be "left only in the fabulous tales of the ignorant" and that a libretto should be composed about it in the vernacular. Accepting the request as an imperative, the author sets to work.

Thus begins the **story itself**: Giulia Topazia and her husband Quinto Lelio Africano, a Roman nobleman descended from the Scipios, undertake a pilgrimage to the shrine of St James of Compostela in Galicia to ask for the grace of having a child. Having obtained it, they embark on a second journey of thanksgiving, but the devil, through deception, unleashes Felice, the pagan king of Spain, who also rules Marmorina, or Verona, so called because of its famous marble quarries (1), against the pilgrims participating in the journey. Only Giulia Topazia survives the ambush and is welcomed into Felice's court as compensation. However, she dies giving birth to a baby girl, Biancifiore. On the same day, the queen gives birth to Florio.

Floro or Florio, the male variant of Flora, means 'flower'. In alchemy, the 'flower' par excellence is that of **sulphur**, i.e. the purest sulphur from the first volcanic emission. Biancifiore or Biancofiore, on the other hand, is a symbol of equally pure **mercury**.

They have different origins: the first is of royal lineage to indicate its heavenly origin; the second, although noble, is of a lower nobility, indicating its entirely natural origin.

The name Topaz obviously indicates a 'substance' that has the properties of the corresponding '**stone**'. Therefore, it is transparent and colourless in itself but, due to the presence of metallic impurities, it can take on a wide variety of colours in nature. The colour can then change due to heating or irradiation. The descendant of Scipio Africanus is himself a valiant leader and indicates the 'hegemonikon' of the Stoics, the inner ruler, while still having all his human limitations. The pilgrimage to Compostela is the symbol of the path to follow to reach enlightenment. The pilgrimage is twofold, as the first serves to ask for and obtain **initiation**, the 'grace' that generates the 'immortal foetus'. The second pilgrimage indicates **the actual opus**, which begins with the first alchemical operation, death or putrefaction, which allows mercury to 'come to light'. The choice of Verona is also not accidental, as it was the seat of the Scaligera Signoria (= bearer of the ladder). It is therefore symbolically comparable to the town of Luz-Bethel, where Jacob dreamed of the famous **ladder** that allowed him to reach heaven.

Pietro Negri: The use of the quarries in the Verona area dates back to Roman times (probably to the 1st century BC) and continued until the 5th century AD. It was then interrupted due to the high costs involved in extracting marble from the quarries (or 'preare') and transporting it. It resumed with the advent of the Scaligera Signoria (from 1262 to 1387). The numerous architectural works in marble, built or restored, earned Verona the name of 'marble city' or 'city of marble'. The marble quarried in the Verona area is of various types: from the famous "Rosso Verona" to "Nembro Rosato" and "Giallo Reale". For several centuries, the stonemasons and stone cutters of this geographical area were very famous and in demand even abroad. They were authentic artists and "**Operative Freemasons**", now almost completely disappeared.

Sipex: A symbolically significant figure is undoubtedly the 'great king Felice, ruler of the kingdoms of Speria, nephew of Atalante, supporter of the heavens, who ruled a city called Marmorina near the Apennine hills'. (Book I, chapter X). Boccaccio deliberately makes him a historically impossible and anachronistic figure, so that the reader can intuit his symbolic meaning. Felice is a name of Latin origin (felix), meaning 'fertile, favoured by the gods'. For Christians, it is an auspicious name, meaning 'he who is spiritually **blessed**'. In India, the body of bliss (ananda maya kosha) is the highest of the five sheaths (kosha) that form the individual.

Hesperos meant 'West' to the Greeks, which is why they called both Italy and Spain Esperia, as both were located to the west of Greece. Wanting to distinguish one from the other, they called Spain Esperia ultima. As the story is set mainly in Italy, Boccaccio uses Speria, from a literal point of view, mainly in the sense of Spain, but, from a symbolic point of view, he uses the term to refer to **Western tradition**.

Atalante or Atlas was a mythological giant, son of the Titan Iapetus and Clymene. For fighting against the gods of Olympus, Zeus condemned him to hold the world on his shoulders for eternity.

Boccaccio emphasises that he is in particular the 'sustainer of the heavens', thus identifying him, in fact, with an attribute of the Hebrew-Christian God, who is not only the creator, but also the sustainer or preserver of what he has created. In Nehemiah 9:6, it is written:

You, you alone are the Lord, you have made the heavens, the heavens of heavens and all their hosts, the earth and everything on it, the seas and everything in them; you preserve all these things and the host of heaven worships you.

In India, this sustaining-preserving function of the deity is exercised in particular by the second person of the Trimurti, Vishnu, to whom periodic and direct manifestations in the created world (Avatara) are attributed. Christianity has also assigned this function above all to the second person of the Trinity, as is clearly indicated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 1:1-4:

[1] God, who had already spoken many times and in various ways to the fathers through the prophets in ancient times, has lately, [2] in these days, spoken to us through his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he also made the world. [3] This Son, who is the radiance of his glory and the imprint of his substance and sustains all things by the power of his word, after accomplishing the purification of sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, [4] and became so much superior to the angels as the name he inherited is more excellent than theirs.

There are therefore all the elements to identify King Felix, grandson of Atalanta, with that **Solar Body**, which constitutes the highest of the hermetic bodies. His spouse or 'power' is simply indicated (unlike all the other characters) not by a proper name, but simply by the appellation 'reina', to indicate that it is a power in a still undifferentiated state.

As Frater Petrus said, it is significant that the capital of Felice's kingdoms is Verona or Marmorina. The symbolism of **the five-rung ladder** in the Scaligeri coat of arms is linked to what Pietro Negri said about the presence of Operative Masonry in the Verona area. In this regard, Ea, in a previous message, indicated that there were five actual degrees ('inside the temple') of Operative Masonry. The first and seventh degrees were 'outside the temple'.

Afrodisia: Regarding the **double pilgrimage**, I would like to quote the following passages from Filocolo [Book I, chapter 5]:

As has been said, Rome resounds with the great fame of a most noble young man named Quinto Lelio Africano, descended from the noble blood of the first conqueror of Carthage in Africa. According to the new law of the Son of God, he had a young Roman woman

of the noble Julia family, named Julia Topazia, whom he had taken as his lawful wife, ... and yet he had been unable to have any children with her. ... One day, while Lelio was deeply pensive about this desire, he heard stories about that God who dwelt far away above the Sperian shores, and the marvellous things he had done. and after he had heard these things, he went to a holy temple, where the reverend image of the glorious saint was depicted, and in whose presence he said thus:

'O gracious God, who left your holy body on the western shores, your soul returned to the supreme Jupiter, ...

I am a young man of excellent reputation, descended from famous relatives, and in this city I am rich in wealth and relatives, accompanied by a most noble and beautiful young woman, with whom I have been so long that I see the sun beginning its sixth journey, and yet I have not been able to have a child by her, Wherefore I devoutly pray that in the

presence of the almighty Lord, , that He may grant me only one

If He grants me this, I promise and swear by my father's soul and

by the deity of the supreme Jupiter that I will personally visit your distant temples, and your altars of devout fires will be lit.

Two things seem particularly noteworthy to me:

- It would seem that the first of the two pilgrimages took place in a 'local' St James of Compostela, an Italian church, a 'substitute' for the original Spanish one, because the image of the saint was located there. But which one? The expression 'in this city' clearly indicates that it was a **church in Rome**, the central hub of pilgrimages from the Holy Land to Galicia and vice versa. However, it is impossible to identify it precisely, since the Turin Catalogue of Churches in Rome, dating back to the 14th century (Ms. Turin, University Library, cod. E. V. 17, cc. 1r-16v), lists seven churches and hospitals dedicated to St. James (or Jacobo).

- It is also interesting that Boccaccio gives the saint the title of 'God', evidence of that **Deificatio** Hominis (a higher stage than simple Santificatio), also pursued by Christian contemplative organisations present in the West at that time.

Frater Petrus: I find your interpretation of this passage from Filocolo excellent, since, in addition to being fully consistent with the "letter" of the text, it also clarifies the symbolic meaning. In fact, given that the first pilgrimage symbolically refers to initiation and the second to the subsequent opus of realisation, the greater brevity and effort of the first compared to the second corresponds well to the different difficulties between initiation and full realisation.

In the same passage, equally evident and significant is the identification of **Jupiter** with the Hebrew-Christian **Jehovah**, a probable sign of an integration, existing in certain circles of the time, between polytheistic and Christian esotericism.

Book II

Frater Petrus: One of the fundamental chapters of Book II of Filocolo, and of the entire work, is Chapter III. In it, Boccaccio significantly helps the reader to understand the anagogical meaning of Filocolo. The 'skillful means', as they would say in the East, that he uses is to narrate a **prophetic dream** given by Venus to King Felix. This dream, on the one hand, constitutes an allegory of the entire work and, on the other, provides the anagogical key to it. I quote the aforementioned chapter in its entirety because of its importance:

As soon as Love left his mother, she flew through the air in her lucid little cloud and arrived at the same roofs, and, silently taking the old king, she carried him to a chamber above a rich bed, where she put him into a sweet sleep. In this sleep, the king saw a marvellous vision: he seemed to be on a high **mountain**, where he had caught a beautiful **white doe**, which seemed very dear to him. Holding her in his arms, he saw a swift and lively **lion cub emerge from her body**, which he nursed together with the doe for some time without any quarrelling. But after a while, he saw a **spirit of graceful, shining light** descend from the sky, which opened the lion cub's chest with its own hands and **drew out a burning thing**, which the doe eagerly ate. And then it seemed to him that this spirit **did the same to the doe**, and having done so, it departed.

After this, fearing that the lion cub would eat the doe, he pushed her away from him, and it seemed that both of them were saddened by this. But shortly afterwards, a **wolf** appeared on the mountain, running towards the doe with a fierce hunger to destroy her, and the king stood in front of her to protect her. But the lion cub suddenly ran back to defend the doe, and with its own claws tore the wolf to pieces, killing it, leaving the frightened doe to him, who seemed sad to take her back, returning to his usual place. But not long after, he saw two **gyrfalcons** coming out of the nearby seas, carrying shiny, silent bells on their feet, which he found appealing; and when they came to him, he took the bells from their feet and gave them the doe, chasing them away. And these, having caught the doe, bound her with a golden chain and dragged her behind them over the salty waves to the East: and there they left her, thus bound, **to a very large greyhound**. But then, knowing this, the little lion roared and sought her out; and taking some animals, following the deer's tracks, they went to where she was; and there it seemed to him that the little lion, **hidden from the dog, joined with the deer lovingly**. But then, when the greyhound realised this, he seemed to want to devour them both with his own teeth. And suddenly his rage subsided, and he sent them back to where they had come from. But before they returned to the mountain, it seemed to him that **they dived into a clear fountain, from which the little lion**

emerged from it, seemed to have changed into the figure of a most noble and beautiful young man, and the doe similarly into a beautiful young woman. Then, returning to him, he welcomed them joyfully, and such was the joy he shared with them that his heart, overcome with too much passion, broke the sweet sleep. Amazed by what he had seen, he rose, marvelling greatly, and thought long and hard about it; but then, not caring about it, he came to the royal hall of his palace at the hour when Love had departed from his new subjects.

From a purely **allegorical** point of view, the correspondences of the elements of King Felix's dream are as follows:

Mountain = Marmorina, the capital that King Felix 'ruled near the Apennine hills'. (1) White deer = Biancifiore, raised at the court of King Felix.

Leoncello = Florio, son of King Felice.

Luminous spirit = Cupid, who makes Florio and Biancifiore fall in love with each other.

Wolf = The seneschal Massamutino, whom King Felice assigns the task of plotting to unjustly accuse and thus execute Biancifiore. However, he is killed in a 'trial by combat' by Florio, an undercover agent, who thus proves Biancifiore's innocence.

Girfalchi (2) = Eastern merchants from Alexandria in Egypt to whom King Felice sells Biancifiore, having tried unsuccessfully to separate her from Florio.

Veltro = The Admiral of Alexandria who holds Biancifiore prisoner in a tower. Florio, hidden in a basket of flowers, manages to get inside and spends a night of love with Biancifiore. Discovered by the Admiral, who wants to have them killed, they are saved thanks to divine and human intervention. The Admiral (who is Florio's mother's brother) discovers that Florio is his nephew, celebrates the wedding of the two young people himself and facilitates their return home.

Fountain = Baptismal font in Rome, where Florio, converted by Hilary, a member of the "order of God's knights (3)", is baptised together with his entourage by Pope Vigilius.

(1) Veronese Apennines.

(2) The gyrfalcon or gerfalcon is a bird of prey, the largest of the various species of falcons.

(3) This was the nickname given to the Templars, but the Order of the Temple was founded in 1118-1119 and suppressed in 1312, so it could not have existed at the time of Vigilius, who was pope from 537 to 555. That this is indeed the historical Vigilius and not a fictional character is confirmed by references to Justinian, who was emperor during the same period, and to Agapitus I, one of Vigilius' immediate predecessors. The term 'knights of God', as well as referring to the 'warrior monks' of the knightly orders, is also used for simple monks. In chapter 18 of 'The Little Flowers of St Francis', the term refers to the more than five thousand friars ('the army of God's knights') who attended a General Chapter at Santa Maria degli Angeli. But the Franciscan order was founded in 1210, so once again the dates do not match. Either Boccaccio is referring to one of the monastic orders that already existed at the time of Vigilio, or he is using, as in other parts of the Filocolo, an anachronism to emphasise the symbolic importance of the characters.

Anagogical Meaning of King Felix's Dream Natural

Environments

Frater Petrus: Let us now briefly examine the anagogical key provided by King Felix's dream, which will also highlight the difference between the allegorical level of interpretation (the second, according to Dante's *Convivio*) and the anagogical level (the fourth and highest).

Let us begin with the two natural environments that appear in the dream: the mountains and the sea. There is no point in discussing all the symbolic meanings that these two environments may have. Showing off one's erudition is useless in esotericism, where it is necessary to understand, by deducing from the context, but also from one's own inner experience, which of the possible meanings is correct

in the specific case under examination. We can see, for example, how in this dream the **mountain** does not have the meaning, frequent elsewhere, of a 'place of ascent'. Instead, it has the meaning of a **place of origin**, where the event narrated has its beginning, but also its end. The **sea**, on the other hand, is the place of **intermediate wandering**. Comparing this dream to the Odyssey, the Mountain has the same function as Ithaca.

The mountain, due to its relative immutability, is one of the symbols of **the Self**. If the Sun is a symbol of clear awareness of the Self, the Mountain is a symbol of its 'immutable', i.e. immortal, aspect. On the contrary, the Sea, due to its currents, is an obvious symbol of Nature and its **Becoming**. Spiritual asceticism can only originate from the Self, which, however, is not known in its true essence at the beginning, veiled as it is by the everyday ego. On the other hand, asceticism itself can only unfold temporarily in becoming (the sea). It is only by confronting becoming that spiritual asceticism can achieve true stability. Those who know how to meditate in a hermitage but are unable to remain in the 'natural state of mind' when they are in a crowd are still far from their goal. It is only when the true essence of becoming is understood that the true essence of the Self is also understood (the return to the mountain).

A famous speech by Master **Ch'ing yuan Wei-hsin** (Seigen I shin, in Japanese) of the T'ang dynasty offers us an excellent comparison: "Thirty years ago, before I began studying Zen, I said: 'Mountains are mountains, waters are waters'. After gaining an insight into the truth of Zen ..., I said: 'Mountains are not mountains, waters are not waters'. But now, having reached the abode of final rest [i.e., enlightenment], I say: 'Mountains are really mountains, waters are really waters'."

For those who have not yet practised, the Self is simply one's Ego, linked to the present existence, and Becoming coincides with the description of the world dictated by the collective common sense (the 'common sense') of one's era and environment. When one begins one's asceticism, it is inevitably influenced by the provisional descriptions of the Self and Becoming that the masters provide to the disciples' thirst for knowledge, in order to make them abandon their previous worldly description. If they fixate on these new descriptions, whether rational or symbolic (2), they will end up with a 'mannered' and artificial view of reality. For example, as often happened in India (3), the immutability of the Self may be mistakenly conceived as effectively similar to the immobility of a mountain, thus forgetting the active aspect of this 'immobility' (4). Going beyond mere speculation and imagination, cultivating direct, non-egoic experience of reality (Intuitio Intellectualis), one will finally have an effective vision of both poles of reality.

(1) In the case of Ithaca, it is the relatively immutable position of the island in relation to other lands that has a similar meaning.

(2) It has a mere indicative function, like that of 'the finger pointing at the moon'.

(3) This provokes, as a reaction, the opposite Buddhist doctrine of 'No-Self' (Anatta).

(4) Aristotle called it the "Unmoved Mover," while Far Eastern philosophers referred to it as "Acting without Acting."

Symbolic Animals The

Doe

Frater Petrus: In King Felix's dream, five animal species appear: the white doe, the young lion, the wolf, the two gyrfalcons and the greyhound. Let us begin by investigating the anagogical meaning of the white doe.

'As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God'.

Thus begins Psalm 42. The deer that longs for pure water sources is the symbol of that aspect of the human soul that longs for the Self, for the 'God within us'. But what aspect is this? Since the time of the Palaeolithic hunters of the far north, the deer has been revered as the main target of hunting rituals. Adriano Romualdi (1) wrote about the symbolism of the deer: "The bull - symbol of blind generative force, connected with the ideology of fertility, crudely depicted

together with the Naked Goddess in the most ancient European agricultural cultures - is contrasted with the deer, the animal of the hunters of the North, Seelentier des nordischen Menschen, and, according to Weisweiler, 'animal of Arctic civilisation'. The deer is significantly associated with the symbolism of the sun and light".

The deer, therefore, is not, like the bull, a symbol of the primal and unbridled force of chaos, but rather of life in a higher sense, centred, according to Romualdi, on the metaphysical conception of order, the Greek 'kosmos', the Roman-Italic 'ratio' and the Germanic 'orlog'. According to authors such as Weisweiler (2), it can be assumed that, in ancient times, two different cultural streams overlapped in central Europe, that of the Mediterranean bull and that of the Arctic deer. This would explain the symbolic overlaps between the two animals, albeit partial, which are still attested in Celtic and Roman times. This is particularly true of the well-known symbol of the circle surmounted by the crescent moon, a stylisation of the head of the bull-deer, but also the upper part of the alchemical symbol of Mercury. In this forum, speaking of the Hermetic Gate of Rome, Ea indicated that the crescent moon (3) of this symbol is equivalent to **the receptive intellect** (scr: buddhi), an aspect of the soul in which the quality of albedo (sattva) prevails and which therefore directly receives the light of the Active Intellect (Purusha). The receptive intellect, sometimes compared to 'an eye in the dark', yearns, as the psalm indicates, for the light of 'God within Us'.

In Greek prehistory, the Pelasgian religion had a main deity called the Great Mother or White Goddess or **Triple Goddess**, or simply "the Ineffable". Supreme ruler of all things, she manifested herself in the triune image of mother-nymph-virgin. On a cosmic level, in fact, the receptive Intellect has three aspects which, in patriarchal Hindu society, are represented by the corresponding Trimurti. In Greece, the Achaeans arrived and replaced the Great Mother with her son Zeus. The aspects of the Triple Goddess were assumed by his wife Hera, the beautiful Aphrodite and virgin goddesses such as Artemis and Athena. In the Hellenic religion, the doe (and often, by extension, the stag) was a constant attribute of Artemis and, in the Roman religion, of Diana, lunar deities ("white goddesses") and huntresses. The **hunt** for it was related to the night-time and the **search for wisdom**. This is also demonstrated by the myth of Heracles. Among his famous labours is the capture of the doe of Cerinea (a mountain between Arcadia and Achaea), which had golden horns and bronze hooves and was sacred to Artemis. For this reason, it had to be captured alive, and Heracles only succeeded after hunting it for a year, chasing it to the land of the Hyperboreans.

Prior to Boccaccio's Filocolo, it is worth mentioning '**Erec et Enide**', an Arthurian novel written in the second half of the 12th century by Chrétien de Troyes. In it, the 'adventure of the white doe' is apparently a courtly game with erotic content, alluding to the conquest of women, but in reality it has an initiatory meaning. After Boccaccio, similar symbolism was used in '**Cerva bianca**' (**The White Doe**), an allegorical poem in octaves, divided into seven cantos, first published in Milan in 1510, in which Fregoso recounts the story of the nymph Mirina, transformed by Diana into a doe, and the hunter Fileremo, who pursues her with his dogs Desio and Pensiero, in an attempt to restore her human form, through the kingdoms of Diana, Antero and Love.

(1) By Adriano Romualdi (1940-1973), see:

"Gli Indoeuropei. Origini e migrazioni" (The Indo-Europeans. Origins and Migrations), Edizioni di Ar, Padua 1978, and also

"Sul problema d'una Tradizione Europea" (On the Problem of a European Tradition), published by Vie della Tradizione, Palermo 1996.

(2) Weisweiler Josef: historian and archaeologist, author, in the 1940s and 1950s, of numerous essays in German on Indo-European prehistory and the Celts.

(3) Ea also indicated that the solar circle, below the crescent moon, is the common ego (scr: ahankara).

The Gyrfalcons

Fratr Petrus: Even in the case of this symbol, it is completely pointless to list the various meanings that the falcon has had since ancient times. Instead, we must indicate the specific meaning it takes on in King Felix's dream, bearing in mind that there are two falcons and that they are not just any falcons, but gyrfalcons. We must also bear in mind the relationship

they have with the white doe:

"But not long after, he saw two gyrfalcons coming out of the nearby seas, carrying shiny, silent bells on their feet, which he enticed them with; and when they came to him, he removed the bells from their feet and gave them the doe, chasing them away. And these, having caught the doe, bound her with a golden chain and dragged her behind them over the salty waves to the East: and there they left her, thus bound, to a very large greyhound."

We have already identified, in the waves of the sea, the flow of becoming and, in the Doe, the receptive Intellect (Buddhi), that is, the lunula that surmounts the symbol of mercury. Generically, the falcon is a symbol of the solar gods. Here, however, it is not the sun itself (Active Intellect, Purusha), but the sun below the lunula in the symbol of mercury, that is, the Ego or **dualistic mind** (Ahankara), which evaluates objects in relation to the interest of the presumed subject. Dualism is symbolically emphasised by the fact that there are two gyrfalcons and by the etymology of their name. In Italian, it can be called either gir(i)falco or gerfalco. There are several proposed **etymologies**, which shed light on each other. The most generic derives the prefixes 'gir' and 'ger' from the Greek '**hieros = sacred**'. According to this etymology, the gyrfalcon (scientific name: *falco rusticolus*) would therefore be a northern variant of the 'Sacred Falcon' of the Egyptians. In fact, the gyrfalcon resembles the Sacred Falcon in appearance, but is larger, with a length of about 60 cm and a wingspan of 1.30-1.40 m, making it the largest species of the genus Falco. From a symbolic point of view, this etymology simply confirms the fact that this falcon is an important sacred symbol.

A second etymology takes into account the fact that the use of falcons for hunting is mainly of Germanic origin and that, in that language, the corresponding terms are found: 'girfalc' or 'gërfalko' (Old German), 'girvalke' (Middle German), 'geierfalk' (Modern German). They probably derive from the noun which, in the same language, means '**greed, avarice**': Old German 'giri', Middle German 'gir' or 'gär', Modern German 'gier'. The supposed Indo-European root is "gar=to swallow", from which the Sanskrit "gara=to swallow", the Anglo-Saxon "garfalca=vulture" and the Latin, and also Italian, "grassare=to prey" are also derived. Symbolically, this etymology emphasises the greed typical of the egoic mind.

The third etymology derives the name from the Late Latin "gyrare", because this bird of prey pursues its prey with long turns and by spinning its tail. This third etymology emphasises the **wandering** of the egoic mind around its objects of desire, as well as its **vanity** (spinning its tail).

In nature, gyrfalcons often remain close to flocks of seabirds, which are among their favourite prey. They also lay their eggs in nests on cliff ledges. In King Felix's dream, they rise from the sea to emphasise the connection between the common vision of becoming (the sea) and the ego (the gyrfalcons), which is the main cause of this vision. **The ego drags the receptive intellect (the doe) into the waves of becoming.** This is connected with an erroneous view of the Self (or Active Intellect) and with the abandonment of the dwelling place of the 'middle seat', where the Self manifests itself through 'lights' and so-called '**inaudible sounds**' (symbolised by shining, silent bells).

In addition to Northern Europe, gyrfalcons arrived in Italy from the East, brought by the Arabs and the Crusaders.

In Il Milione, Marco Polo recalls the gyrfalcons of the islands of Northern Asia, used by the Great Khan. It was Frederick II who unified the two schools of Nordic and Eastern falconry. In King Felix's dream, the gyrfalcons drag the doe to the East, symbolising the rising sun which, as it rises, is also destined to set and disappear. It is no coincidence that the Egyptian god of the dead, Sokar or Sokaris, was represented with the head of a falcon. The East therefore represents, in our specific case, a further symbol of the transient ego. We mention the fact that the greyhound (1) to which the doe is firmly tied is the physical or Saturnian body, which limits its receptivity during earthly life. The chain with which the gyrfalcons drag the doe and tie it to the greyhound is made of gold to symbolise the attractive aspect that this bond has for the ego.

(1) We will discuss the greyhound in more detail below.

The Wolf

Frater Petrus: Like many other symbols, the wolf has at least two meanings. This is already evident in the fables of Aesop and Phaedrus, which present the wolf as an evil, ferocious and deceitful animal, but sometimes also as fair and respectful of its word. These are two possibilities inherent in those with a warrior nature, and therefore the wolf is symbolically associated with Ares-Mars. It is no coincidence that in the myth of the founding of Rome, Romulus and Remus, sons of Mars and Rhea Silvia, were raised by a she-wolf.

To better understand the specific analogical value that the wolf has in King Felix's dream, however, we need to examine two other myths. In Greek religion, the wolf is associated not only with Ares, but also with Apollo. He was born to Latona, who had taken on the appearance of a wolf, and for this reason he was called Apollo Liceo [Lykaios (Greek) or Lyceus (Latin), meaning 'wolf-like'] in Argos. In the form of a wolf, an animal etymologically connected with light (Lykos, the Greek word for wolf, has the same root as Lyke, light), swallows the bull, symbol of savage chaos, and his archetypal gesture is then repeated, with the appropriate variations, by many solar heroes who kill or capture bulls or bull-like beings: Heracles, Theseus, Mithras. If at this point we remember what has already been said about the symbolic overlap and substitution between the Deer and the Bull, which occurred at a certain period in European history, we immediately find ourselves in the same situation as in King Felix's dream, where a wolf 'ran with burning hunger upon the doe to destroy her'. We already know that the doe symbolises the Receptive Intellect (Buddhi) and the two gyrfalcons symbolise the dualistic Ego (Ahamkara). The wolf then symbolises the mind in its specific aspect of **Common Sensory** (Manas). It brings together the various sensory impressions and therefore, together with the light of the Active Intellect (Purusha), is a contributing cause of those processes of abstraction that take place in the Receptive Intellect. It therefore contributes to 'shedding light' on the Receptive Intellect (the doe), but at the same time 'devours' it. In fact, the Common Sensory is at the service of the Ego and therefore does not perform a neutral union of the various sensory impressions, but breaks them down into a part that is important for the Ego (the 'Figure') and a part that is much larger but less important for the Ego (the 'Background'). Since, in the common man, the Common Sensory cuts off most of the material and subtle impressions, it annihilates much of the immense perceptive possibilities of the Receptive Intellect.

In Norse mythology, Fenrir (or Fenris) was a giant wolf, son of Loki. When Fenrir opened his jaws, one touched the earth and the other the sky. The Common Sensory is in fact 'in contact' on the one hand with the material and subtle senses, and on the other with the intellectual whole of man. The myth tells that the god Tyr, in order to chain the evil animal permanently, challenged him to break a sacred and indestructible bond. Fenrir sensed the deception and said he would accept only if someone placed their hand between his jaws. The wolf failed to break the magical bond, but Tyr lost his limb. The chaining of the formidable energy of the Common Sensory, in order to put it at the service of the Ego, implies an impairment of our general abilities. Fenrir is destined to swallow the supreme god Odin on the day of Ragnarok. The latter, being a mythical time, does not coincide with a particular period of time. It occurs at any time, in any man in whom the light of the Active Intellect is devoured by a totally absorbing and materialistically oriented sensism.

The Lion

Frater Petrus: The lion is also a multifaceted symbol, as evidenced by the fact that in the Hellenic religion it was associated with disparate deities such as Artemis, Apollo, Hephaestus, Dionysus and Rhea, and in the Roman religion with Juno and Fortuna. So, once again, as there is no generic meaning, we need to identify the specific meaning that the lion takes on in King Felix's dream. Since the symbolic animals we have already seen are equivalent to aspects of the human being, we can expect this to be the case for the remaining ones as well. We have already indicated that the lion cub is equivalent to Florio as a character and that he in turn is related to the flowers of Sulphur. But what kind of sulphur is it? Chemists and alchemists know of at least two varieties. For example, in 'I Secreti della Signora Isabella Cortese' (The Secrets of Lady Isabella Cortese), an alchemical work from the 16th century (1), we read:

"And know that all metals are composed of mercury and sulphur, that is, of matter and form. Mercury is the matter and sulphur is the form, according to the purity and impurity of mercury and sulphur, through the influence they take. And for this reason, gold is generated from pure silver and red sulphur is pure through the Sun, and therefore it is the most perfect metal of all, and silver is made of mercury and white sulphur, through the influence of the Moon, and therefore it is more perfect than the other five, and we need only sulphur with the influence of the Sun or the Moon.

This sulphur is the form and soul of metals, and the rest is the coarse matter of quicksilver.

Similarly, in the anonymous Rosarium Philosophorum (2) we find:

"For it has been said that the Sulphur of the Philosophers is red in the Sun for greater digestion, and Sulphur is white in the Moon for lesser digestion."

The lion, associated with both Apollo and Artemis, lends itself well to representing both the solar **red sulphur** and the lunar **white sulphur**. It must therefore be an aspect of the human being based on a sun-moon polarity. We know this aspect to be the 'etheric' or vital body (forma corporis), acting precisely through the polarity inherent in the 'breath' or 'pneuma', which is that between the solar 'prana' and the lunar 'apana' (3). This explains why, in medieval folklore, it was believed that lion cubs were born lifeless and that their parent gave them life by breathing on them. Furthermore, although it was considered the king of animals, it was thought to be afraid of scorpions, snake venom and fires, all symbols of what destroys life.

(1) There are twelve Venetian editions of this text, printed between 1561 and 1677. There is also a German translation: *Verborgene heimliche Kunst und Wunderwerke in der Alchymie, Medicin und Chyrurgia* Hamburg 1592, 1596 and Frankfurt 1596.

(2) This is a 13th-century alchemical text attributed to Arnaldo da Villanova (1235-1315). The first printed publication of the Rosarium is probably the miscellany published in Frankfurt am Main in 1550, entitled 'Alchemia Opuscula complura veterum philosophorum...', of which it constituted the second part.

(3) For more details, see what Ea said in the notebook dedicated to the Hermetic Gate of Rome.

The Greyhound

Frater Petrus: And now we come to the symbol of the Greyhound (or greyhound), which is full of meaning for the Fedeli d'Amore. Scholars have focused mainly on its political significance in Dante, identifying it with a virtuous prince, perhaps an emperor, capable of restoring the Roman Empire and reforming the corrupt world. Some identify it with Cangrande della Scala. And even in King Felice's dream there is mention of a 'great greyhound' (i.e. a Big Dog). But we are concerned with the analogical level of meaning and therefore we must put aside all lower levels of interpretation. In the Third Dialogue of 'Lo spaccio della bestia trionfante' (The Triumph of the Beast), Giordano Bruno has Sofia say:

Leave the shadows and embrace the
truth. Do not exchange the present for
the future. You are the **greyhound**
that overflows in the river,
while the shadow desires what it has in its mouth.
It was never wise or shrewd to lose one good
thing in order to acquire another.
Why seek far away what is
divided if you find paradise within
yourself?
Indeed, those who lose one while in the world
should not hope for the other after death.
Why does heaven refuse to give a second chance

to those who did not cherish the first;
thus, believing you are rising, you sink;
and by depriving you of pleasures, you
condemn yourself to pain
; and with eternal deception, longing
for heaven, you remain in hell.

Therefore, the Greyhound indicates what makes man complete, more complete than he is in death, even if in paradise. This is a common theme throughout the initiatory tradition, which leads Pico della Mirandola (De Hominis Dignitate), for example, to affirm the superiority of man over the angels themselves, due to the presence in him of not only 'celestial' but also 'earthly' aspects. Finally, in the Emerald Tablet we read:

'The father of every telesma, of the whole world, is here. His strength is whole if it is converted into earth'.

We believe that nothing else is needed to identify the greyhound with the **physical or Saturnian body**, which makes man complete even on the earthly plane. In King Felix's dream, the greyhound is 'very large' both in the physical sense of 'very big' (= coarse) and in terms of its importance in the alchemical opus. In this regard, it is useful to review the chapter of Evola's The Hermetic Tradition entitled 'Saturn, Reverse Gold'.

In **the initiatory technique** indicated by the dream, the lion (= vital force, prana-apana) is used to 'free' the doe, that is, to restore the receptive intellect to its full power, making it a perfect mirror (no longer distorted by egoity) of the active intellect (purusha). But what does **the active intellect** symbolise in the dream? Obviously, as Sipex has already indicated, the one who, although physically immobile, subtly acts and, in the mental 'substance' (prakriti), causes the dream... King Felice.

Hoping to have clarified, as far as I am able, the anagogical key to the Filocolo, which Boccaccio himself provides us with, I leave it to the reader to make use of it in any study of the complete work.

12a) Appendix

Invented Dreams and Real Dreams

Luca Malagrida: Regarding symbolic animals in dreams, I would kindly ask someone to give me an **interpretation of a dream** that recently struck me.

Premise: I really liked a film called "Pulp Fiction", but I always had trouble remembering the title because the name "Deep Purple" always came to mind first. Later, I saw another film, Fight Club, in which the protagonist, during a group meditation session, was invited to enter his inner cave with his mind to discover his spirit animal (in this case, a penguin). While watching the scene, **I enjoyed thinking about what my (possible) spirit animal might be** and wondered how I could find out. I really liked the film and found some similarities with the other one I mentioned, so much so that I called it a 'pulp fiction' with an esoteric-psychoanalytical twist (and for

me, as I said, the name 'pulp fiction' is for some reason closely associated with another: 'deep purple'. The next morning at dawn, immersed in a state of semi-consciousness that lasted several minutes, I had a name in my mind that came and went almost pulsatingly: 'deep turtle', not 'deep purple', but 'deep turtle'; and along with the name, I seemed to see the head of a turtle with emerald scales and a gaze that truly seemed to come from unfathomable antiquity. I thought this was the answer to my question about what my spirit animal might be. I would very much like someone to tell me something about the 'linguistic' nature of this dream (and, incidentally, I don't remember ever dreaming in English before) and about the fact that I 'saw' a turtle.

Ea: It is said that a Zen master, to test a disciple, said to him one morning:

**'You know, I had a dream last night...'
"Oh yes?" replied the disciple, "then drink a cup of tea!" "Well done!"
concluded the master, "if you had answered me differently, I would have
chased you away!"**

Luca Malagrida: But I am not a Zen master, and I was not testing anyone. I thought that rather than limiting ourselves to the exegesis of absolutely everything that has been said, written and implied by a somewhat heterogeneous group of more or less recognised masters, it would be interesting to understand how to 'do' this research on ourselves (if you like, 'in corpore vili', since I am contradicting you); how to embark on this journey on the 'path' with one's own legs; and to do so, one obviously needs a guide who, precisely, 'guides' by making himself understood. Finally, I remember, smiling of course, that in a story from the book 'mu mon' (i.e. 'the door that is not a door'), a Zen master is sentenced to 500 reincarnations in the form of a mountain fox for giving a pupil a too curt answer.

Frater Petrus: To avoid any misunderstanding, I would like to point out (but I thought it was obvious) that **The Dream of King Felice is obviously a fictional creation by Boccaccio**, in which animals deliberately represent aspects of the inner structure of man, as conceived by medieval culture (influenced above all by Aristotelianism). I am therefore not attempting a psychoanalytical interpretation, which would be meaningless, as it is **a dream rationally created by the author and not born from the depths of the soul**, nor am I attempting any shamanic or new-age interpretations, which are completely foreign to the Italica Schola, both in Boccaccio's time and today. I would like to remind you that this is a forum dedicated to the Ur Group and aims to continue its studies. As for psychoanalysis, shamanism and new age, there are certainly more 'equipped' forums in these specialities to turn to (1).

I would add that, in magic, dream practice essentially has two phases:

a) **Dream awareness:** this has nothing to do with any kind of 'interpretation' of dreams. It is simply a matter of making the dream 'lucid'.

b) **Voluntary transformation of dreams** (now made lucid) into states of magical-meditative absorption. The Zen disciple (a discipline as solar as magic), referred to in the 'story' told by Ea, was perfectly aware of this, which is why he does not answer the master's question: 'What did you dream?'

The content being irrelevant to the lucidity to be maintained. The advice 'Have a cup of tea' is due to the fact that a master is expected to have reached the second stage of practice (the voluntary transformation of dreams) and therefore falling back into the first stage, still involuntary, indicated by the phrase 'You know, last night I had a dream...' can only be the result of a momentary disturbance of the master, which can be overcome (in the disciple's hope) with a common cup of tea. Nothing offensive on the part of either of them, therefore.

(1) [n.d.u.: It is rather strange that a person who practises a "path" that we certainly do not recommend should ask us for advice at the first sign of uncertainty. Shouldn't he ask the person who showed him that path? (In a private letter, Malagrida mentions a kind of initiation by a music lover)].

Deo_Ame: Fr. Petrus has clearly pointed out that work on dreams, which is characteristic of high magic, is based on lucidity and the subsequent possibility of control. This differentiates high magic from any traditional or modern science that advocates a technique based on interpretation, such as oneiromancy or psychoanalysis. The magician appreciates dreams as they are, considering them a spontaneous form of 'thought free from the senses', which only needs to be controlled in order to have a powerful operational tool at one's disposal, unhindered by the sensory impressions of the waking state. **Those who 'interpret' devalue dreams** somewhat, preferring to regard them as a kind of code that must be translated. This creates a host of problems:

1) **Whether it really is a code that transforms something else is only a suggestive hypothesis**, as far as we know, but **never really proven**. One might say that dream interpreters or Freud prove it. But the only possible proof would be to provide a code of interpretation that is always valid. Unfortunately, oneiromancers are often wrong, and Freud's proposed code was not even accepted by his direct disciples such as Jung or Adler, who proposed others. And even psychoanalysis, just like oneiromancy, can sometimes have a positive effect on the patient, but at other times it does not.

In both cases, success can be explained in different ways. If an oneiromant makes an accurate prediction, this may simply be due to their sensitivity or intuitive ability, and therefore the prediction may well not be contained in the dream at all. If a psychoanalyst has a positive effect on their patient, this may simply be due to their suggestive influence or their ability to dialogue, without the interpretation of the dream having anything to do with it. After all, the free associations of words provided by the patient based on elements of the dream will inevitably lead, sooner or later, to symbols that can be interpreted on the basis of libido (if the analyst is Freudian), the will to power (if Adlerian), or the need for inner harmony (if Jungian), etc. Therefore, working on dreams can only be an excuse to generate a chain of free associations (which would have been generated anyway from another dream or a simple stimulus word) and does not contain the meaning attributed to it in the slightest.

2) **Those who believe they must 'interpret' therefore run the risk of simply getting lost** in the maze of their own 'interpretations', which are far more illusory than the dream itself, which at least constitutes a subtle form of direct perception.

Some will say that methods based on interpretation are more mystical-contemplative in nature, since they seek a 'message' either from the unconscious or from something higher. I fear, however, that true mystics would disagree.

For example, St John of the Cross believes that **while dream images or images from other sources may come from God, they may also come from other sources, including the devil**. His method consists in not attaching oneself to them: in this way, there would be a double advantage: if the images come from the devil, by not attaching oneself to them, one eliminates the possible evil influence; if, on the other hand, they come from God, they will have a positive influence, especially if the mystic, by not worrying unnecessarily about them, keeps his mind calm. Even in high mysticism, therefore: no interpretation! (1)

High magic differs from high mysticism only in that the simple phase of lucidity (white work) is followed by an active phase of control (red work).

(1) St John of the Cross, Works, General Postulation of the Discalced Carmelites, Rome, 1975.



13) Faithful of Love and Way of Sacred Love

Venus Genitrix: In Eros and Spagyria (1), Massimo Scaligero writes: "**We have also noted how Sacred Love cannot be identified** with mystical eros, nor with bhakti, nor with the devotion of Philocalia, nor with Sufi emotionalism, nor **with the experience of the 'Faithful of Love'**, being the Absolutely New: the pure relationship of the Self, possible in the era of the Conscious Soul, the radical will rediscovered in self-awareness, as awareness of the being of the other: the foundation of pure thought realised in the encounter of the Self with the other." This statement, which also involves the Fedeli d'Amore, adds to the already difficult task of scholars to identify the doctrines and methods of this initiatory school, that of adapting its methods to modern man.

(1) The essay can be found in M. Scaligero, *Yoga, Meditazione, Magia, Teseo, Rome, 1971*.

Frater Petrus: It is my impression that Scaligero drew this conclusion from the fact that Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore, living at the end of the so-called fourth post-Atlantean epoch, used an initiatory method that cannot yet be defined as Rosicrucian. However, we must not forget that, especially from a temporal and ideological point of view, the "late" Fedeli d'Amore, such as Boccaccio, seem to have "passed the baton" to the Rosicrucians. We are therefore convinced that their initiatory techniques were already very close to those suitable for contemporary man. In this forum, we have tried to make a small contribution to unsealing these techniques and we have also pointed out, specifically, one of them which, revealed by Cavalcanti, is very similar to a meditation by Scaligero.

We are also aware of the absolute importance, in relation to the "two-vessel path", of the concise writings of Introduction to Magic, signed by Abraxa. These essays were the starting point for both Evola and Scaligero, who, however, proceeded in two different directions: Evola, in *Metaphysics of Sex*, used Abraxa's writings as a key (2) for a retrospective view of all the past magical-religious aspects of sexuality. Scaligero, on the other hand, started from those essays to point out a path of Sacred Love to future man. This statement should come as no surprise: Scaligero used to say that R. Steiner had never expressed himself directly on the path of Sacred Love, but that nevertheless his teachings contained all the tools necessary to outline it. Scaligero therefore started from Abraxa's concise exposition, examining it in all its details, thanks to the tools provided by Steiner. This is not the only field in which he proceeded in this way: for example, starting from Abraxa's 'Instructions for the Knowledge of Breath', he is the only writer who has been able to add important details to that opus, not least those relating to the experience of the 'Archangel of Air'. Perhaps it is not widely known that Scaligero was a member of Miriam before devoting himself to Steinerian asceticism (3). Some of his writings on the subject of Sacred Love, written during a period of collaboration with his brother-in-law Paolo Virio, have already been presented in this forum. Other writings await examination.

(1) M. Scaligero, "Forma Attuale della Conoscenza Metafisica" (Current Form of Metaphysical Knowledge), in *La Via della Volontà Solare (The Way of Solar Will)*, Tilopa, Rome, 1986.

(2) In the chapter "La Miriam e la Piromagia" (Miriam and Pyromagic), he states: "The two monographs mentioned above are perhaps those in which the secret teachings of sexual magic for initiatory purposes are revealed with a minimum of veils".

(3) In relation to the period immediately preceding the anthroposophical one, he expresses himself as follows in *From Yoga to Rosicrucianism* (Perseo, Rome, 1972): "Evola ... with cordial correctness directed me to Colazza and Bonabitacola: I already knew the latter from my previous membership of the Miriam. I would go to Colazza later. I reconnected with Giulio Parise, Arturo Reghini, and some valiant friends from Miriam such as Ciccio Modugno and Salvatore Mergè ..."

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