

uprightness, a Warrior and a Martyr that allude to the realization of the Wizard which actually is not the one seen through the eyes of the Orphan (namely as a shaman, a witch, a preparer of magic potions that can heal or make someone die, make them win or lose a war) but is simply ourselves.

The Wizard stops struggling and learning for the empowerment of the self to reach the worldly aims. He does not act selfishly. The initiation of the Wizard makes us discover that the Universe is not static but is a constant performance and everyone is involved in this magic.

Let us now return to the original Unity, to the dissolution of the dualism between I and World. Let us return to the child, before the differentiation of I-Object and after we have completed the mindful task to go through all previous stages.

Thus we can finally approach the natural and universal meaning of our being in the world and into the world and especially for the world and we can overwhelm every kind of separation from our deep, authentic and wonderful human nature.

In conclusion, the pursuit of the father, which is a living matter as well as an old and archetypal one, highlights that if the father becomes more and more abstracted, “either as human being or as principle that enables his son to become a father as well”, there will be a strong and urgent need to find him and to model oneself after one’s father. We like Telemachus, want to know who our real father is, who has chosen us and not simply brought us into being, and as the master Thich Nhat Hanh says: “The son needs the father in order to gain access to his origins and the father needs the son in order to gain access to the future and thus to the infinite.”

So if we are fathers, we must learn how to draw the bow so that Ulysses can return.

---

Stefano Pelli

## WHEN GOING TO HELL DOES NOT FRIGHTEN

### Working in Groups on the Divine Comedy

The project of a psychosynthetic reading of the Divine Comedy originated from Roberto Assagioli’s suggestion.

He saw Dante’s poem as an ideal path overcoming one’s limitations and weaknesses, and as an opening to goals of spirituality and eternity.

He recommended the Divine Comedy exercise as a useful stimulus to retrace the steps of one’s life and inner journey, thanks to the universal value of Dante’s path, symbolically representing that of the whole humanity.

Assagioli said that in this work Dante used symbolism with full awareness.

The centre of its symbolic meaning is a comprehensive

picture of a complete psychosynthesis.

The first part - the pilgrimage through Hell - shows the exploration of the lower unconscious.

The second part - the ascent to the Mount of Purgatory - refers to the process of moral purification and of gradual awakening of consciousness through the use of active techniques.

The third part - the rise in the varied heavens of Paradise – paints in an unsurpassed way the stages of superconscious realization, until the final vision of the Universal Spirit, of God, in which Love and Will are merged.

This is the essential meaning, but there is also a wealth of special symbols.

The main theme or leitmotif of the Comedy is that at first there is a descent, and then a double Ascent. (1)

Inspired by this vision of the poem, Assagioli examined the second canto of Hell underlining and highlighting the symbolic elements of the story and deepening its moral and spiritual aspects. (2)

About the exercise on the Divine Comedy, he wrote that it “should be used only with subjects that have a sufficient level of culture and a spiritual aspiration. They are asked to read the poem carefully in the light of its four meanings and of its symbolism, trying to identify themselves with Dante. This exercise can be used as a group exercise...” (3)

It is clear that for Assagioli the main reason of interest in the Divine Comedy lies in its symbolic meaning, explicitly mentioned by Dante himself in the poem, in the Convivio and the Epistle to Cangrande.

From this point of view we can understand Assagioli’s polemic against Croce, who gives an essentially aesthetic assessment of the Divine Comedy as a “theological novel” with an unpoetical structure, in which episodes of high poetry are inserted like vegetation covering a ruined castle. Croce’s distinction between poetry and non-poetry applied to the Divine Comedy saves and exalts its lyric parts and considers indifferent for an artistic evaluation the religious content of the text and its moral edification. (4)

These two antithetical visions give an example of the different possible readings of the text according to the attitudes and interests of those who approach it; in our case passion for the transpersonal and spiritual research

on the one hand and rigorous assertion of art's autonomy on the other.

Although Assagioli considers Croce insensitive to poetry and in particular to Dante's poetry, I find very valuable Croce's comments on the *Divine Comedy*, in particular, incontrovertible, that Dante's poem is still alive not for its ideas and its structure, but for its poetic beauty. (5)

Another very pertinent observation is that the object of Dante's poetic interest is not afterlife, but the earthly world with its richness and its variety of feelings and passions, with nature scenes so powerfully represented. Even in Paradise, which romantic critics considered far away from the full-bodied plastic force of Hell, there are frequent references to daily life and the constant reminder, in similes, to very concrete aspects of reality.

"The sacred poem / at which heaven and earth worked" is not just an edifying book with a high moral content. The beauty of the text, especially for Italians, who can read it without mediation, gives a width and depth that make alive the most different human experiences.

It brings us closer to something higher, not only by rational argumentations and explanations, which are not lacking, and perhaps, as Croce says, are more for admiration than for participation, but by the power of inspiration.

I raised the problem of reading in a lively and stimulating way this great Author, too often relegated to the Olympus of the classics and reluctantly studied at school.

For different reasons, I felt that a reading focused mainly on the research and deepening of Dante's symbolism or a reading only meant to enhance his artistic value were not suitable for a work by individuals who simply loved the book, but were not experts or scholars.

I felt that a reading centred on the precise definition of the words used by the poet was not useful as well. Such work must not precede, but rather follow, the approach to the text.

Of course there is a problem of understanding exactly every hint and every verbal expression, but giving too much importance to the literal meaning, to the detriment of global understanding and appreciation of the text, can obscure the beauty of poetry for the unwary readers. Often, then, the most loved and known cantos would be the most difficult to "translate" faithfully in modern languages, for example the fifth canto of the Hell.

I thought that listening to poetry and trying to capture the resonance and the emotions it excites in us was the best way to approach Dante. While reading, we tried to make Dante our contemporary, avoiding to actualize him arbitrarily, on the contrary ignoring many aspects of his thought and his outmoded conceptions of the world, but giving particular attention to his greatness as a poet, that is to what makes us feel close to Francesca or Ugolino.

On the other hand, topics such as passionate longing for justice, moral indignation, commitment in the pursuit of

truth, participation to the feelings of a humanity represented in various aspects, but always in relation to the task of its existence, do not need explanations, but are clear and present even in today's readers, who find in the *Divine Comedy* a rich variety of situations and experiences that resemble their inner experiences.

In addition to the endless possibilities of comparison and resonance with spiritual, moral, passionate, emotional contents, a careful reading can focus on many fundamental themes of the poem, those that address the key questions for every man willing to live consciously, the base of each personal and transpersonal psychosynthesis.

Some of them are:

- The theme of movement, of the journey, of the pilgrim (where am I now? Where do I go? What does prevent me from proceeding? Am I in an impasse and or on second thoughts? Do I need some time to reflect and meditate, or a break? etc).
- Awareness (do we listen to our Virgil - that is the mind that looks at itself and becomes conscious of inner and outer world - or do we prefer, perhaps out of laziness, to follow almost automatically paths already beaten?).
- The need to get involved in reality, even when unpleasant or painful, in order to be fully human. We can not climb "the delectable mountain / which is source and cause of every joy" without going consciously through the difficulties, the obstacles and without facing the evil and suffering in ourselves and in the world in which we live.
- The need to express our humanity at its best and to go beyond our limits ("You were not born to live like brutes, / but to follow virtue and knowledge").
- The aspiration to some higher reality, goal and fulfilment of our individual path in the infinite reality of God ("And his will is our peace / it is that sea to which everything moves / what he creates and what nature makes").

In Ancona Centre the work on the *Divine Comedy* was divided into eight seminars lasting three and a half hours each, for the most part once every fortnight, on Sunday morning.

We listened to three cantos each time, to avoid losing the perception of continuity of the story because of an excessive fragmentation; the reading took about half an hour.

Initially we thought to start with a preparatory exercise meant to move away from worries, thoughts, projects, and with a brief introduction that, under the appearance of a very short summary, explained passages that seemed difficult to understand.

Actually, these measures were needed very rarely, because the participants were very motivated, and they brought with themselves an annotated text to listen more carefully; a quick connection with the previous readings was enough.

After the reading, there followed a moment of elaboration of what we heard: impressions, ideas, memories, thoughts, sometimes expressed with shapes and colours, or with the construction of mandalas.

Then we would compare our inner experience with the main elements of the cantos we listened to, following, by means of free association, the resonances of each and of the group.

We read 21 of 34 cantos of Hell, and only in the final seminar we outlined Dante's path in the first part of his journey; path that we intend to continue next year with the reading of the Purgatory.

At the end of the eight seminars it was distributed a questionnaire composed of five multiple-choice questions with four structured answers and one free, plus a request for a global assessment of the whole work. The answers showed that all participants enjoyed the reading of Dante as a possibility for personal growth and an occasion for inner enrichment.

---

Laura Maninchedda

## THE DETACHEMENT DEBATE *(ABSTRACT)*

In his "Psychosynthesis for Life's Harmony", Assagioli quotes a great mystic and thinker who discusses Detachment: i.e., Meister Eckhart, the Dominican preacher who maintains that Detachment requires Man to face external events as a mountain blown by a breeze.

The soul's union to God - the existential experience of the Divine - starts from Detachment. For Eckhart, it either exists or it doesn't. On the contrary, Assagioli outlines a path, i.e. the psychosynthetic one, that can be accessed stepwise, from the personal to the transpersonal level.

The two thinkers clearly admit a transpersonal and mystic dimension, without which Man would be incomplete. Meister Eckhart derives this from his faith, Assagioli from his deep belief that Man also has a spiritual nature. The Dominican master considers Detachment the highest virtue through which Man can most closely join God since, through Detachment, no bond is preserved with anything that is finite, limited, and accidental.

If there is something else in Man's heart, God cannot operate.

Also in Psychosynthesis, Detachment is present in the topics of disidentification from the different contents of conscience, sub-personality, roles, emotions, wishes, thoughts.

The whole Psychosynthesis process can be seen as detachment from personality, for a higher identification in the ideal model or in the transpersonal Self.

Practicing detachment, and coming into contact with the Self or with God, are part of daily practice and of constant training.

Deeply understanding what conscience is, and what its contents are, as well as identifying ourselves with the former, lead us to a different way of living, enabling us to master our expectations, to unblind illusions, and capture what is essential. Only in Detachment can freedom and liberation lie.

Contents keep on existing, and Man cannot do without them: yet he masters them from a central viewpoint that remains steady and unchangeable.

According to Eckhart, two kinds of Detachment are to be practiced: the first towards things, the second towards oneself.

As long as Man doesn't renounce to himself, he remains far from God. In order for mystical union to be implemented, Man has to die to himself.

This is the great difference with Assagioli, to whom disidentification from contents leads first to the identification with the I, the heart of personality. Whilst in one case, Detachment leads to denying oneself as a will, in the other it leads to discovering oneself as will.

Human will can fully develop only by getting in touch with transpersonal will, the one called God's will by the Christian world. The two authors meet again, therefore, also in the themes of the meaning of suffering and in accepting a Higher Will, but in particular in promoting a spiritual path that leads to joy, beatitude, and peacefulness.

---

Ivan Ordiner

## IDEAS FOR A DIALOGUE

Every life is an encounter, a connection, a relation. We cannot be linked by close bonds if not through our entire being.

In order to achieve this goal we have to break any incomplete action.

In the opinion of the one who is able to love, people are neither good or bad, they simply exist.

Man who is filled with hate can only perceive another human being in an incomplete way. Nevertheless, thanks to his deep hate, he can easily establish a connection,