

THE ACT OF WILL IN THE “DIVINE COMEDY”

I think the most depressing memories of our school days are a bit all related to reading of Dante and the “Promessi Sposi.” Personally, having suffered enough at the time, when I climbed on a chair I am made a point of honor to make these frequentings as pleasant as possible: and , I must say , with good results: not only the boys worked , but someone told me - years later - he had spontaneously reread texts, for pleasure and personal satisfaction.

I do not think I did anything special , but I think instead of having tried to highlight in the two works what in the universal can speak to every reader of any age: now then, having dedicated myself full time to psychosynthesis , I can take a step forward, and detect how much of psychosynthetic there is in these texts. I would like then to introduce the “ Comedy” as a glorification of the act of will, of course only pausing on a couple of points, since we cannot do a full exegesis .

First of all , it seems appropriate to recall how the work has been considered by many critics as a *itinerarium mentis in Deum* , in the words of St. Augustine. Then it is the description of a spiritual path that must lead to moral perfection, the perfect knowledge of God. But to do this, you have to go through a long and hard work of self-analysis, which leads us to know our sub-personalities (including the less pleasant or creditable) and, subsequently, to enhance our positive capacities, up to the perfection of the transpersonal, to the experience to the peaks. From hell to paradise.

It seems essential the first cantos of the Hell: at the beginning Dante comes at a time of moral vacuum, in a moment of suspension of his vital faculties, just as it happens to those who - although maybe came to the realization of some dreams of his own life -suddenly realizes not to feel satisfied, to feel a sense of inner emptiness that upsets him and makes him take notice of an unpleasant feeling of “absence of a route to follow”. But

when the individual becomes aware of this own situation of confusion, fatigues even to figure out how he got there: *I do not know how to tell how I came there, / so full of sleep in on that point / that the true way I left off*. He realizes he left his faculties to sleep, but is not well aware of when and how this could be happened. But there is still something alive in him , there is still the ability to realize it, so much so that manages to look up, to see that “behind” the hill, the sun is shining: there is, but he has to reach it, because that is the guide that *leads others right by every street* .

There is a desire to walk in that direction, but, *almost at the beginning of the alert*, you have the three wild beasts, lust, violence and greed: he has not yet begun the climb well, that already sees three inner obstacles that promise to make him fail. The most common and most obvious sub-personalities, the ones most likely prevent us from improving, stop the walker before it can begin a real job on himself.

And here’s a first foothold: *before his eyes did one present himself / who about for a long silence seemed faint*. Critics have unanimously identified Virgil in reason, but they were excited in front of the adjective “faint”. How could Dante know that Virgil was faint, had poor voice over a long silence? Psychosynthesis does not arise such matters: Dante knows that his reason, his ability more human, has been silent for a long time, and yet is still present: to it he may seek first aid, which is given immediately, with the suggestion to make another path: an inner journey of self-analysis that will help him to examine his own sins, his own sub-personalities more harmful (harmful because badly governed: they then took over and dragged him in the wrong direction). The reason is enough to give a direction, and the first act of will that Dante does is just to listen at it, to approve the project and ask for free help to take the path to the end: *Poet , I thee entreat / ... / that you lead me there where thou hast said*. The first step is just the will to act, wanting to do something positive for his own salvation .

Dante wants. However, it is not easy to persevere in the act of will, the difficulties are obvious, and the

weakness disguises with very valid excuses: I have always said that we are geniuses in searching the most valid excuses for our weaknesses, and Dante is no less human of us: thinking about what awaits him, he uses the excuse of humility: I am not an important person, why should I do this trip? I'm just an ordinary person ... *I fear the coming may be insane*. The will must be continually strengthened, and the reason/Virgil avoids roundabout expressions: *your soul attained is with cowardice*. Clarified the main point, he strengthens the will of Dante and incentives to persevere with the vision of what awaits him: *Among those who are suspended am I*: he refers to the period when the rational faculties of the poet were - so to speak - in sleep, and were not used by him; in order they start an intervention is required to Beatrice, sent by Mary and Lucy: the desire to Dante strengthens and brings him back to the first purpose.

But what I think as central is the third song, because here Dante enters the underworld and meets immediately, in the anti-hell, the souls of sloth persons: they are *the sad souls of those / who lived without infamy and without praise*. In short, the nothing: this is for Dante the greater blame, that is, never having wanted to commit an act of will, neither for good nor bad. Neither the rebellious angels, nor those faithful to God. A host of Don Abbondius, well ... their condemnation is established according to the law of retaliation: first, *they have no hope of death*: join two words like "hope" and "death" is a strident oxymoron for a careless reader, yet for the sloth persons death would be a liberation: instead, but not having lived but only vegetated, they are also excluded from death too, which is reserved to a human being worthy of the name. Dante deems them not worthy even of hell and purgatory: *mercy and justice disdain them :/ not speak of them , but look, and pass over*. This last verse is now a proverb, and is a concentration of moral convictions. *These wretches ... never were alive*. I do not think there can be a more severe judgment.

Throughout his journey, Dante has several moments of uncertainty, perplexity, fear itself: but he is always heartened and returns to his initial decision, the will - to quote Assagioli - must be strong, good and wise: the

Dante's will is certainly good, because his aim is the attainment of self-knowledge; wisdom, can be defined because he has guides that lead him to the right path, but in this way, the force is certainly indispensable, because in front of certain sub-personalities who try to take control of our lives and to move away from the search for the Self, it takes a lot of strength not to retrace our steps and forget every rise, exhausting and frightening.

But that is the road to get to the knowledge of the Self, and Dante in the Divine Comedy runs through punctiliously: first by examining the mismanaged sub-personalities and highlighting the consequences of this weakness ;in purgatory then shows how to purify and turn to a better use, for achieve moral perfection with ascent, and finally we arrive in paradise to the triumph of transpersonal: first the Ego, then the other, then the cosmic: the final song of paradise, centered on the vision of the divinity, is the experience of peaks mentioned by Assagioli: and even here the will is central, *but already was turning my desire and will,/ even as a wheel in equal measure moved,/ the love that moves the sun and the other stars*. The desire and the will, because we have a goal to aim for and we want to achieve it precisely with the strength of our will: and this pressure is given by the love for the divine, from the transpersonal feeling that drives like a wheel that moves a uniform motion, because regularity and uniformity are characteristic of equilibrium, which must base itself everything that concerns us. It is the excess, to represent the problem: we could call the *aurea mediocritas* of Horace, the right half that we should all strive for.

The whole work could be examined in more detail from this point of view, but I think it is more right just limit ourselves to these points, because of the centrality that in the work of Assagioli covers the act of will: and the third song of the hell makes it a real excitement for antithesis.