

Preface to the new English Edition

In October, 2005 Adriana Mazzarella, one of her daughters, Paola and I travelled to Oxford, England for one of the numerous seminars Adriana held on Dante in various parts of the world. The day had been organized by our Chilean-American friend and colleague, Carmen Reynal, in the very charming village of Upper Slaughter in Gloucestershire, nestled among the beautiful Cotswolds. My job was to translate into English Adriana's presentation as well as the questions and answers during the discussion hour. I was also to read Dante's verses which were inserted at various points in her presentation, from the English version of the Divine Comedy which Adriana had so painstakingly chosen.

I had also been given another responsibility: since I was somewhat familiar with that part of England, I was to accompany Adriana and Paola, by train, from Oxford where we had spent the night, to the small country railway station near Upper Slaughter where Carmen was to collect us by car. In the end however, due to a slip up on my part, we missed our stop and were obliged to get off the train at the next station. Here we found ourselves in the midst of the lush English countryside without so much as a house, a station or even a petrol pump! And none of us had Carmen's phone number.

Now the gentle rolling English countryside is not exactly "the dark wood" where Dante gets lost in the opening verses of his great poem, but nevertheless we were lost and somewhat disoriented. I had shown myself to be a distracted and somewhat untrustworthy guide – hardly the sort of Virgil whose services Dante had availed himself of. With great calm and composure, and without so much as uttering a word, Adriana simply sat down upon her small suitcase and waited for help to arrive!

Fortunately our hostess, Carmen Reynal, is gifted with remarkable intuition for she immediately guessed what had happened and make the rounds of all the nearby stations in an attempt to find us. In the end, we arrived at the seminar hall in plenty of time and there, waiting to greet us, was a lively and curious group of colleagues from various schools of psychology and therapeutic approaches. They had managed to obtain copies of Adriana Mazzarella's *In Search of Beatrice* and were anxious to hear her explanations of the passages which were somewhat difficult for an audience far more familiar with Chaucer, Milton or Shakespeare than with Dante Alighieri.

During that seminar, as in so many other seminars I had heard her present over the years in various cities both in Italy and in Switzerland, Adriana proceeded with enviable flare and enormous enthusiasm. The intensity of what she had written in her in-depth psychological study of the Divine Comedy created a powerful atmosphere of meditation and reflection among the participants. This was no simple seminar, but a genuine event that touched the hearts and souls of everyone who was present.

Dante's initiatory journey, which is so carefully described and interpreted in this book, contains a message of fundamental importance for modern men and women. The psychological process of differentiation and synthesis which C.G. Jung has called individuation becomes more and more of a necessity as we try to establish and maintain a sense of balance and openness in ourselves and in our culture as a whole.

Over the last few years, various authors have dealt with the journey described by Dante: Donald Kalsched, Frances Hawxwell and Edward Edinger have seen, in the descent and ascent carried out by Dante, important analogies to the various phases of suffering and recovery that can be seen in various pathologies. These works are profoundly interesting and useful. Some 40 years ago, the Anglo-american analyst Helen Luke penned a beautiful work on the Divine Comedy which has remained a classic. But Adriana Mazzarella offers us, for the very first time, a systematic, methodologically solid psychological interpretation of each and every character and of all of the passages which Dante lives through as he describes them in this extraordinary work. From the archetypal point of view, Adriana's book leaves the reader enlightened as to a series of fundamental and timeless human experiences; from the clinical point of view, the therapist cannot help but gain

insight into the suffering experienced by those in his or her charge, and inspiration so as to face these challenges with ever greater empathy.

The recent publication of Jung's Red Book has brought the importance of working with and on the images that fill our psychic lives to our attention in a dramatic and convincing manner. "Psyche is image" wrote Jung in his very last essay. Our heroic and egoic consciousness has cultivated for far too long the illusory idea that it can somehow colonize and control that vast expanse of imagination in us known as the unconscious, just as our Western civilization has colonized and tried to control areas to the south and east of our cultural and political world. The powerful experiences that Jung lived through and described in his Red Book can help us learn a new approach to the psyche, far different from the reductive approach that seeks to reduce every manifestation of psyche to its minimal dimensions, thus eliminating the precious complexity of psychic life. Jung would encourage us to establish and maintain a dialogue with the images that are the self-representations of the forces and dynamics that we experience as psychic life. By following this path, we can begin to see the life of the psyche not as a pyramid in which a vigilant ego controls the "lower" strata of the personality, but rather as an continuous exchange that fosters a lively and loving sense of relationship.

Dante's journey, as it is described and explained by Adriana Mazzarella, brings us, in the end, to a fuller appreciation of the true complexity not only of our own personal psychic lives, but of the archetypal, universal and transpersonal psyche. The images that he meets and interacts with, in the company of Virgil, Beatrice and Bernard, are the self-representations of the passions and peccadillos, of the joys and pains, of the moments of desperation and of exaltation that are part of the psychic life of every individual and of the human race as a whole. The care, caution and courage which Dante exhibits as he moves along and across the many lines and levels of human existence can be of enormous help to each of us as individuals but also to our culture as it attempts to deal with shocking upheavals, terrifying risks but also great opportunities.

This new edition of Adriana Mazzarella's book has come out at a moment in history in which reports of dramatic international changes and disruptions fill our newspapers and news broadcasts almost daily and risk leaving us disoriented and frightened. Dante's journey, along with the encounters he makes and the magnificent final synthesis in the mystical rose, can be read as a sort of road map for us. The psychologist and the layman, colleagues who follow Jung and therapists who have differing visions of the psyche can all find, in this valuable book by our dear friend Adriana, pearls of wisdom coming straight from the ancient world which have been carefully interpreted in the light of modern depth psychology. These pearls will prove useful and perhaps essential to each of us as we move through the various passages which comprise human existence; they will be equally valuable to our culture as a whole which is called, as never before in history, to interact and dialogue with the challenging foreign cultures that surround us.

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