



## "The Baptism of Fire" Reflections on the concept of Transformation in the process of psychological-analytical individuation

Antonio Grassi and Sandra Berivi

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Corresponding author:

Grassi Antonio., Berivi Sandra

*Abstract:* The authors propose an articulated and in-depth analysis of the Jungian concept of transformation as the final stage of the individuation process. After a short introduction of the first three phases of the psychological development of psychotherapy - Confession, Elucidation, Education, the authors take a look at the fourth phase, the Transformation, in light of its two symbolic representations, which are firstly, Vision of Frate Zosimos cited by Jung and secondly, the crossing of the "Wall of Fire" highlighted by Dante in the Divine Comedy. Therefore, they define Transformation as "The Baptism of Fire", a psychological event of synthesis and dissolution of the opposites, preluding the "inner peace" of liberating oneself from transference-countertransference polarities that are typical of the psychotherapeutic relationship.

### Introduction

**O**n the psychological path outlined by Jung, the concept of *individuation* is perhaps one of the most peculiar in the panorama of depth psychology. This concept refers to the existential path that every man and every woman undertakes in their life, which is something more than just individual and psychological fulfillment. Indeed it involves the *human person* in its most articulated definition. It is precisely the path of psychological development that the analyst, not just the patient, has to travel in order to achieve two goals: his recovery from symptoms and his fulfillment as a human being. It is no coincidence that the Swiss psychologist was among the first psychoanalysts, besides Freud (1910), to request a preventive personal analysis from a therapist (Jung, 1913)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In a more courageous and honest way than anyone else, Jung stated that the analyst could bring the patient only to the point where the therapist himself arrived.



Jung identifies four stages in the identification process: Confession, Elucidation, Education and lastly Transformation (Jung, 1958, p. 31 et seq). The first three phases are easily accessible to general understanding, while the fourth, Transformation, requires a greater commitment that not everyone is ready to face and carry out. In our contribution, we briefly examine the first three phases which is necessary to understand the path required by the patient to reach the solution of his symptoms, but at the same time also to acquire that level of maturation indispensable for the great leap in the process of Transformation. Then we will turn our attention precisely to Transformation itself.

Describing the characteristics and the final outcome of individuation falls within the scope of a reflection of meta-theoretical nature, since Transformation still belongs to the anthropological level of the individual, and represents a destination that characterizes *healing*<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, however, we believe that it also represents a starting point for further progress towards the realization of spiritual stages that are of purely religious relevance. The ambiguous concept of the Self, as formulated by Jung, risks being accused of its religiosity very often, and hence of having betrayed the scientific nature of psychological exploration in a therapeutic sense. However, we believe that our contribution, attempting to clarify Transformation, could help the reader differentiate the psychological and spiritual aspects, and therefore to draw a line between the anthropological sphere of psychology and the spiritual one of religiosity, as well as their integration.

In particular, we were inspired by Dante's *The Divine Comedy*<sup>3</sup> where we find a disconcerting and incredible analogy between the Sommo Poeta's passage through the wall of fire in Purgatory – a phase of his journey that leads to psychological and spiritual realization, and a phase in the Jungian concept of transformation, described in a specific vision of a friar, the divine Zosimos, contained in a treatise called the "Treatise of Friar Zosimos on art" (Jung, 1988). Since *Baptism of Fire* appears as a phase of Transformation, it would manifest within the personality also as a pattern of our interiority, which allows us refer to this inner experience as an archetype, the archetype of the "Baptism of Fire"<sup>4</sup>.

### **Carl Gustav Jung: the individuation process and analytic psychotherapy**

Jung's cultural reference for his concept of psychological transformation is especially Alchemy, to which he dedicated many of his works.

"The alchemist", Jung writes, "undergoes, so to speak, on the moral level, the same torment and purification in the fire. [...] In Paracelsus's conception, what has been purified by fire is connected with iron [...] without ferrugins" (cit: 177). This means that the product of Transformation is of the same nature as iron which can never again be attached by rust; that is, it will be perennially stainless. This assertion informs us precisely of the fact that, once the Transformation has been achieved, even on the symbolic level, there can never again be a relapse into the dynamics of opposites, which in the psychoanalytic field manifests as a relapse into the transference-countertransference dynamic. Through the alchemical "distillation", the spirit is produced by being extracted as a "volatile" substance from the imperfect or impure body, which, in this way, ends up joining the *maior homo*, that is the inner spiritual man. The fire used for this purpose is symbolic in nature and its distillation starts from the midpoint of the center.

<sup>2</sup> For the concept of healing see "Jung - Complete Works -V 16-p. 31 onwards".

<sup>3</sup> *La Divina Commedia*, a cura di Jacomuzzi s, Dughera a.,Ioli G.,Jacomuzzi V.,2012

<sup>4</sup> See the article in this journal "The Fire and the Light in Dante's Divine Comedy and in Jung's Analytical Psychology".



The Swiss analytic psychologist mentions various authors that we cite. The center, according to Cristianos, is symbolized by the Terrestrial Paradise with its four rivers [...]. Michael Meier argues that the indivisible *punctum* is allocated in the center, which cannot be further divided, which lasts forever. Benedictus Figulus defines this center as *Domus Ignis*, that is, the house of fire; in fact the median point is precisely the focus (cit: 190). Jung writes: "for Paracelsus it is not at all the awakening or the grafting of the inner man in the Christian sense, but rather a union of the "natural man" with the spiritual one operated in a "scientific" way and based on arcane techniques of a medical nature. [...] The impression [is] that this "mysterium" is in a certain sense opposite to the ecclesial one" (cit: 195). It has never been taken seriously that, according to the scientist of the Middle Ages, the redemption of the world by the Son of God and the transubstantiation of the Eucharist did not have the last word, or rather they did not represent the ultimate answer to the many enigmas of the man and his soul (cit: 197). And hidden in the darkness of nature, a small light was found, a spark whose "sleep of death" could not even be overcome by the Revelation of the Son of God (cit: 198). With this passage, Jung demonstrates that he scotomizes the event of Christ's descent into hell for three days, after his death and before his resurrection. In fact, affirming that the "sleep of death" could not even be overcome by the Revelation of the Son of God, he ignores precisely the victory over death achieved by the son of God with his resurrection. "Didn't Christ, in his descent into hell, recover precisely that divine spark hidden in the darkness which is the light of darkness itself, a light that transforms black into clear and "burns" all the superfluous? ... ". Within Jung, the dilemma of Evil included in the divine nature, represented by Dante's infernal darkness and the underworld into which Christ descends, is determined precisely by the immanentistic vision inherent in alchemy supported by the author with the concept of *Anima Mundi*. This dilemma can be solved with the Catholic-Christian conception of Transcendence. From this perspective, the Universe, created and independent from God, rejects itself according to the logic of opposites, which do not coincide with God (this is a specific problem of the immanentistic conception). However, these opposites are extinguished in the passage from the sphere of creation to the Unitary Transcendent Reality of the uncreated, which therefore can claim to be good, in the sense of creation and not specifically in the ethical sense, which already belongs to creation. Divine intervention in creation takes place only by grace requested and received, since in addition to being transcendent, through Christ, God is also a person. Then God can burn with divine love (page 243), Mercury can be designated as a hermaphrodite (page 249), God no! All of Jung's cultural references for the elaboration of his concept of transformation are linked to an immanentistic vision of life, ethics, philosophy and religiosity. Instead, we propose a psychological vision based on transcendence, as we consider it more relevant to the truth of life.

Jung identified four phases in the psychotherapeutic and individuation path: Confession, Elucidation, Education and, lastly, Transformation (Jung, 1981, p.61 et seq.). The first phase, Confession, is characterized by a painful but indispensable delivery of all the conflicts present in the patient's conscience into the symbolic arms of the therapist. This phase of self-disclosure, moved and agitated by feelings of guilt and/or shame, in itself recalls a first symbolic image of fire: in our experience many patients, on the couch, report feeling like *burning on a grill*, which is equivalent to say that the wounds left on the skin of their emotional life are "burning", to the point of making this first phase of the psychotherapeutic path difficult from the beginning. In fact, the well-known mechanisms of resistance and defense come into play which protect against pain on one hand, and feed the flames on the other hand, because they offer no authentic solution to the conflict.



This phase of self-disclosure is followed by Elucidation, self-awareness based on cognition reached by the patient through the analyst's gaze on the inner world of his conflicts. To carry out the Elucidation of the unconscious aspect of the patient's conflicts, the analyst makes use of associations, dreams, slips, missed acts, acting-out and acting-in, physiological and pathological language of the body - as it happens in conversion or psychosomatic syndromes - produced by the patient in a sequence of meanings. Up to this moment of the process, however fraught with thorns, we can proceed, once an atmosphere of collaboration has been slowly and progressively established, starting from an initial *compliance* which can then lead to a real working alliance, an *adherence*<sup>5</sup> to the treatment. In the Elucidation phase, the patient, through the analysis of transference, can become aware of being possessed by the dynamics of psychic opposites, stirring in his unconscious interiority. For example, he is forced to acknowledge that in him, not only the victim exists, but in every circumstance, the persecutor is also in action. The betrayed is forced to discover that, at the same time, he is also the traitor, as it happens in many intimate relationships between a man and a woman, and vice versa. Once the opposites are no longer acted unconsciously in interpersonal relationships, in work, in affections, in social relationships, they continually require of the patient, as happens to all of us, a purifying bath that is not free from guilt and from the feeling of shame. This is the ritual aspect of the Baptism of Water<sup>6</sup>, which represents washing away all the faults that characterize the human being, synthetically symbolized by the original sin, understood as an original and primary predatory drive of appropriation placed at the origin of mankind's history. The patient lives the experience of *amaritudo maris*, in which the water and its saline content do the work, thanks to the bitterness that leaves in the mouth the awareness of our sin and others'. The salty waters of the great unconscious mother are manifested through the salty tears of ego pain. It is a real purification ritual, which, however, one is forced to repeat continuously, given the fallacy of the very much embryonic stage of psychological maturation. The relationship with the unconscious changes. In the first phase, defined elsewhere by Jung as *nigredo*, the patient is forced to show the therapist, precisely in the confession, his unconscious dark face, defined by Jung as the Shadow, the archetype of evil (Jung, 1982). In it, unconfessable and unpleasant desires and impulses are stirred up for the conscience, especially for the image of itself that it tends to offer. In fact, the patient is forced to confess his envy, his jealousies, his greed, his unbridled competitiveness, his desire for domination and possession, his murderous impulses. The relationship with the unconscious is therefore one of self-disclosure. The inner recognition of this infernal world to which he belongs, however, forces him to withdraw from the projections on the world and to assume his responsibilities. In the second phase, the relationship with the unconscious becomes one of awareness and development of self-awareness. Consequently, those projections and their affective knots that animate them - contained in the only still represented by the psychotherapeutic frame first, and then by one's own inner psychic space - in a more advanced phase towards the next phase, Education.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to make a distinction between compliance, which implies to follow the indications of the medical doctor, and adherence, which implies an active and participated collaboration to the treatment, or a working alliance.

<sup>6</sup> I quattro Vangeli a confronto, sinossi diacronica e commento, Angelico Poppi, Editore EMP, 2010.



If the psychotherapeutic process during the phase of confession and recognition is already considered difficult, the phase of Education is even more challenging. Even for some, it is even enormous and insurmountable. We can consider firstly the semantic value of the term Education by extracting its meaning from its Latin root *e-ducare*, that is, drawing the patient's authentic personality out of an undifferentiated matrix. According to the current definition, this concept of education tends to emphasize a process that does not have a vertical descending direction of modulating the personality that is being formed according to the canons, values and laws of the society where it belongs. Instead, it operates a differentiation of the pupil's personality according to his individual characteristics, pre-configured in his psychic DNA. In the first two phases it is the ego that actively, with great inner effort, faces darkness, ghosts and the primitive instinctual forces by which it is possessed. For this phase Jung speaks about the unconscious as the devouring mouth of the Great negative Mother. In this third phase of Education, although this process may seem actively pursued by the ego, paradoxically it requires the ego to surrender unconditionally to the new way of relating with the unconscious. It is the phase of relativizing the egoistic consciousness in favor of a devotional relationship with the unconscious that acquires the traits of a great teacher, as it is well represented by the figure of Dante's Virgil, "teacher of life" by the order of Beatrice.

In the psychotherapeutic relationship, it is precisely the unconscious that, by producing dreams and associations, continually indicates to the patient two divergent directions by meaning: the opposites. This time, however, it is not a question of the opposites of which Jungian antinomic thought is fed even today. Instead, it refers to the two directions that the patient faces: the path of the *good* or the path of the *evil*<sup>7</sup>. In fact, it is precisely the emotional unconscious, defined by Jung as the archetype of the Soul (Jung, 1934-1954), by Langs (1998) as *emotional mind* or *deep unconscious of wisdom*, by Bion (1970) instead by the *reverie*, by Wilma Bucci (1997a) as *referential activity*, lastly by Porges (2017) as *neuroception*, using a neurocognitive language rooted in the body, in order to assume the role of perception, cognition, verification, evaluation and ethical decision regarding life's prospects. The language of Langs' derivatives, described above, provides the consciousness of the ego with the authentic meaning of its behaviors and the purposes they pursue. It is precisely an analysis of the motivations and objectives that the patient unwittingly intends to achieve. The bifurcation is between the choice and the unconditional surrender to one's own Shadow, or a path that is certainly more arduous but at the same time more beneficial – a path of light and joy/well-being. In fact, the emotional unconscious always offers a close look not only on the authentic meaning of the motivations that the patient unknowingly pursues with his ideas, feelings and behaviors, but, on an ethical level, also on the alternatives offered to him. These alternatives are to pursue the unconscious pathological motivations that would lead him to resume his psychopathological behaviors, or alternatively, to propose ideas, feelings and behaviors that are opposed to his "psychopathological" destiny. At this point the patient's ego activity regains value. It is an *opus contra naturam*, that is, an effort of the ego aimed at the realization of its most authentic personality, tearing it away (*e-ducating* it) from the tentacles of the unconscious conflict in which it was enveloped. In this regard, we propose, precisely

<sup>7</sup> In this case, the concepts of good and evil do not have a moral or moralistic connotation, but, according to us, they refer in the first meaning to the constructivity, as an attitude to find functional solutions towards themselves or other people, and in the second one as destructivity, or, on the contrary, making actions with dysfunctional results.



for this phase, the expression *"ethics of images"*. While psychopathology, with its defense mechanisms and its now standardized drives, makes anyone a unit, indistinguishable from the shapeless mass that governs all those who are affected; instead the path to health means that the person involved not only can assume his own individual form, but is also forced to make choices. This operation may or may not obey the principles of ethics contained in the images proposed by the symbolic language of the unconscious. Each choice produces a decision and in the Education phase, we identify the implementation of the Baptism of Water as a decision. Water is a symbol of the continuous "washing" that the patient, like each of us, is forced to undergo because:

- 1) he "knows" the two possible alternatives that arise in every circumstance of life, through the coded messages that the unconscious, as a teacher of life, transmits to the conscience;
- 2) he generally "falls" into the hands of one's own psychopathological destiny. The diabolical teacher of the destructive unconscious (the Shadow);
- 3) he "feels" the sense of guilt or shame for the "so-called" wrong choice;
- 4) he "repents" and forces himself to cleanse himself of the destructive deposits of his own behavior through the Baptism of Water.

Although from the temporal point of view, this process can be understood as a moment of life, therefore a moment of the therapeutic process, in reality it reveals itself as a position, a trait, a structure. This structure generally anchors one's personality to a behavioral pattern which, enriched by an imaginal approach, turns out to be an archetype. Therefore we would call it the archetype of "Water Baptism", which therefore uses the world of emotions according to the water-emotion equivalence to do the work. The world of emotions comes alive for the most part in the anthropological dimension; sometimes as a symbol, it can also draw from the heights of the theological dimension. In fact, from the Jungian perspective, on a narrative level, the Education phase opens the door to the Monte del Purgatorio by Dante. The water, crystallized in satanic ice, that is, in the freezing of the whole world of emotions, returns to its liquid state of washing in Purgatory and in the crags of its Mount. We want to emphasize that reaching the level of "Water Baptism" is already for most of us psychoanalysts a coveted goal, rather difficult to achieve. Yet, on the other hand, it represents the expression of a rather unstable psychic balance. If we compare the liquidity of water, according to Jung, to the energetic liquidity of the unconscious, in the concrete of life and in the psychotherapeutic field this translates into a continuous instability of the results achieved. Psychological healing, understood according to the criteria mentioning the water-emotion phase, will in fact be characterized precisely by this continuous oscillation between falling into suffering and relief in repentance.

Finally, there is the phase of Transformation. It is described, according to the Jungian perspective, as the final phase of the *individuation* process. The phase after which, according to Dante, it is no longer possible to go back to the continuous oscillation previously described between fall and relief. The Transformation phase, as we understood, culminates precisely in the crossing of the "Wall of Fire" as the result of uniting the polarities of all opposites, to reach a higher level that dissolves them in their concreteness, contains them and finally surpasses them in a new order, the *symbolic order of the visionary dimension*<sup>8</sup>. Only in this way will the individual be able to ascend to higher levels of spiritual development towards an identifying existential goal, no longer specifically related to the

<sup>8</sup> On the concept of vision, we recommend the reader to refer to the following parts of this script about this topic.



psychotherapeutic path, even if he can begin with it. It is in fact a process of *mystical/asceticism* which, according to Bion (1970), should also concern an analytic psychotherapist. Be careful though! We are not referring to a hierarchical vision that envisages only enlightened therapists and not others, or inferior ones, who become only less neurotic. We would just refer to a vision of psychotherapy and analysts as implementers of a human path, which can be chosen or not. This path also sees conscience and spirituality as illuminating beacons of a world less based on the egoistic goals like profit and exploitation, and more on personal ethical and spiritual fulfillment. Of course, this is an ideal vision that has less place nowadays due to the mechanization of statistical research and the dismemberment of the holistic attitude of the individual in his various psychological functions.

### **The Baptism of Fire or the Transformation**

As stated in the introduction, we would now like to investigate the concept of Transformation, in light of the psychic events of the psychotherapeutic path, events that are similar to those described by Dante in the *Divine Comedy*, in particular by comparing the vision of Friar Zosimos<sup>9</sup> in Jung (1938/1954) and Dante's vision of the crossing of the *wall of fire*<sup>10</sup>.

As regards the vision of friar Zosimos, in particular we look at the third vision<sup>11</sup>:

*I.3 of the "Treatise of the divine Zosimos on art": "[...] And while I was saying this, I fell asleep and saw a priest standing before me, standing on an altar in the shape of a flattened cup, which was accessed through 15 steps. I heard a voice saying to me from above: "I have finished descending the 15 steps of darkness and I have finished climbing the steps of light. And he who renews me is the priest, since he has disposed of the density of the body and of necessity I am consecrated priest and I am now in perfection as a spirit. And I heard the voice of him who stood on the cup-shaped altar, and I asked who he was ... and he answered me .... "I am Ion, the priest of the sanctuaries that are hidden within... For such a man has come ... he tore me to pieces ... he burned everything on the fire, until I realized that my body was transformed and became a spirit. ... He vomited all his own flesh and I saw who was transformed into its opposite, into a mutilated homunculus. ... I fell asleep again and went back to seeing the same cup-shaped altar, which in the upper part overflowed with boiling water and inside contained an infinite multitude of people.... I saw a gray-haired homunculus-barber who said to me "what are you looking at? I replied: "I am filled with amazement at the boiling water and the people who cook in it, while remaining alive." He replied: "The vision you are aiming for is the entrance, the exit and the transformation."*

*Again I asked him: "What transformation?" And he replied: "the place where the so-called embalming is practiced. Since those who want to become partakers of "the art" (editor's note: of "moral*

<sup>9</sup> Zosimos's vision is expounded by Jung in the book dedicated to Alchemy. Zosimos of Panopolis is an important Gnostic alchemist of the 3rd century AD. He wrote the "Treatise of the divine Zosimos on art" in which he deals with natural processes, which, by the voice of the alchemist, represent the "... simple and polychrome system [on which] the complex and infinitely varied investigation of the Whole is based" (Jung, 1938/1954: 79).

<sup>10</sup> As it happens many times, we can find in Zosimos's vision traces of the Ancient and New Testament, and in Dante traces of the alchemist's script. In fact, Zosimos writes: "... I lost my way again" and further on "I am here because I have lost my way and now I am completely lost". And again: "Show me the right way" (cit: 82). As for the Bible: "you immediately get to work and build a temple. This temple must be made up of a single stone, shining like white lead (Christ: you are Peter and on this stone I will build my church) (cit: 81).

<sup>11</sup> Actually, according to Jung there is only one vision, repeated in different forms (cit:85).



perfection") enter it and become spirits, escaping the body ". Then I asked him: "Are you a spirit too?" And he replied: "I am a spirit and a keeper of spirits ..." As they entertained each other in this way and as the water boiled and the people groaned, I saw a man of bronze, holding in hand a lead tablet to write. He spoke to me in a thunderous voice, while I was looking at his tablet: "I command all those who are under sentence to sleep, and each must take a tablet of lead, write with his hand and raise his eyes to heaven, and you must open your mouths until your uvula swells. (Jung V.XIII °, page 81, n10): this contraction must be understood in the sense of a suffocation movement, which represents the expulsion of internal contents, [...] He then continued: "the bronze man you saw it is the priest, who sacrifices and is sacrificed, and who vomits his own flesh. He is given power over this water and those who are chastised here. "... I said to myself," what is the cause of this vision? "... And all things are woven together, and all separated again, and all things are mixed together...; The intertwining and separation of all things and every bond in general cannot occur without method. Again he says: "... The construction of this temple must have neither a beginning nor an end: inside it must be a source of pure water and a light, radiant like the sun, must emanate from it. Look carefully from which side you reach the entrance to the temple, take a sword and thus look for the entrance. Since the place that gives access to the door of the temple is narrow and cramped (editor's note: we must go through a claustrophobic anguish). Next to the door lies a dragon: the guardian of the temple. Try first of all to be right of him and kill him; then skin him, take his flesh along with the bones; break his limbs; collect piece by piece (the flesh of the limbs) together with the bones at the entrance to the temple; build yourself a step in this way, so you can climb on it and enter, and there you will find what you are looking for: the priest, the man of bronze, whom you will see in the source composing the thing ... "... How did we come to a place closer to the one where the pains were suffered, then I saw my guide, the homunculus-barber, fall into the place of the pains and I saw how his whole body was devoured by the fire.

... "Among the difficulties I had come to desire to climb the seven steps (note: the seven deadly sins of Mount Purgatory) and to see the seven types of punishment and how things proceed during a single day; then I walked the way to make the ascent. ... I recognized that that homunculus-barber was the same bronze man, only dressed in a red suit, and I exclaimed: "... He must first of all be thrown into the place where punishments are served" ... But my soul was yearning to climb the third step as well ... I lost myself once again ... And I found myself in complete despair. And again, similarly to before, I saw a white-washed old man, who was very white, to the point that the intensity of his whiteness dazzled the gaze. ... I urged him: "show me the right way." ... Following him, I finally reached the altar... And as I was on the altar, I saw the white-washed old man throw himself into the place of torments. The flame inevitably turned it into a pillar of fire ... Now look: here there was a cup-shaped altar, and a spirit of fire hovered over the altar. I asked: "I am very surprised by the bubbling of the water, the gurgling of the boil, and the fact that the individuals who are burned there continue to stay alive." And he replied to me with these words: "that boil... that you see is the place of exercise, of the so-called embalming: those who want to become participants in the art enter it, get rid of their bodies and become pure spirits. The exercise (of art) is in turn explained starting from here, from exercising. Because what gets rid of the density of the body becomes spirit".



Jung, interpreting Zosimos' vision, tends to highlight at first that it is an important lived experience and not an allegorical vision, thus underlining the psychic reality of the event. It also proposes that in this vision all the unconscious contents that are able to access the process of projection come to light. This is to say that everything represented by the vision is nothing more than the precipitate of unconscious contents of the dreamer. In addition, Jung interprets the central image of the vision as a sacrificial act, undertaken with the aim of obtaining an "alchemical" transformation, the main characteristic of which is the fact that the "priest is both sacrificing and sacrificed" (Jung, 1988). Furthermore, it clarifies that alchemists consider the concepts of water, fire and spirit as religious concepts (cit: 93).

The most striking element of the vision is the altar in the shape of an open cup [...], the miraculous vessel in which baptism transforms man into a spiritual creature and in which, as a cooking vessel, many individuals are boiled and burned<sup>12</sup>. Elsewhere, Jung always emphasizes that water "sends steam when boiling and communicates the first profound impression of metempsychosis, that is, the transformation of the corporeal element into the incorporeal one, into the spiritus or pneuma" (cit: 93), and goes on to indicate that the 'homunculus' "... vomits his own flesh [...] His dismemberment corresponds to the later idea of the decomposition of chaos into the four elements (see the division of water into four parts in the *Benedictio fontis*)". (cit: 102). The salient element is, in our opinion, that Zosimos, for the Swiss psychologist, contrasts the body, in the sense of flesh, with the spiritual man and that the latter is precisely characterized by his search for knowledge of the Self and, at the same time, the knowledge of God. "The Lapis can therefore be understood in a certain sense as a symbol of the "inner" Christ, of the God present in man" (cit: 113). Hence, this is like the crowning glory of the work of redemption. He ends up approaching the Self with the transcendent totality when he writes: "... the Lapis represents the idea of a transcendent totality, coinciding with what "complex psychology" defines as "Self" (cit: 119). In other words, Jung places transcendence within man, effectively carrying out an assimilation between it and man.

Jung continues his commentary on the vision of Zosimos, speaking about the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception<sup>13</sup> and, subsequently, that of the Assumption into Heaven of the Virgin Mary<sup>14</sup>, which in fact expanded the male trinity, "... which includes a fourth element of feminine nature. Therefore a quaternity derives from it, which constitutes a real, and not merely

<sup>12</sup> This is an allegorical vision of what we would trivially call "boiling in their own broth", to indicate the necessity for the individual to live his own experience until the end, at all cost.

<sup>13</sup> The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed on December 8, 1854 by Pope Pius IX with the bull "Ineffabilis Deus" in which he writes: "The blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception, for a grace and a singular privilege of almighty God, in anticipation of the merits of Jesus Christ Savior of mankind, it has been preserved intact from every stain of original sin". It should be emphasized that the Pontiff decided to declare the dogma during his forced exile in Gaeta, in which he had made a vow, in response to an interior call, that if he had received the grace to return to Rome and be able to reconstitute the Christian order in Europe, he would be committed to the promulgation of dogma. The beautiful painting of the adolescent Virgin Mary that inspired him still exists in the church where it is said he made this decision.

<sup>14</sup> "The Immaculate Virgin Mary, once finished the course of her terrestrial life, was assumed to the celestial glory in her soul and her body". This is what pope Pius XII wrote in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* ad November 1 1950, when, during the Holy Year, he proclaimed the dogma of Assumption. The bull by the Pope Pacelli has been celebrated every 15th of August.



*postulated, symbol of divinity. "(cit: 113-114). Finally, the author concludes: "The drama shows how the divine process manifests itself within our human capacity for understanding and how man experiences divine transmutation that is in terms of pain, torment, death and transformation. [...] the mystical side of alchemy is essentially a psychological problem. Apparently, this is the concretized (ie projected) symbolism of the individuation process..." (cit: 122,123).*

For our part, precisely for the purposes of this contribution, we are rather interested in emphasizing the role of fire and some of its roles in Zosimos' vision. First of all, fire seems to assume the function of transforming tangible elements, water and bodies, into intangible, spiritual elements, through a process of boiling/sublimation. The bodies that cook appear very clearly in their psychological reality, that is, as psychic elements. With regard to these bodies, the fire takes on the task of burning the concrete aspect, the flesh and the organs, in order to transform them. This, in our opinion, alludes precisely to the fact that fire is a fundamental element for the extinction of the whole animalistic and instinctual dimension of man in favor of a transfiguration of the libido contained in it in a spiritual form. The reason plunging into boiling water of all the important characters of the vision, namely the homunculus-barber, the bronze man, the priest, the white-washed old man, represents precisely the transformation of these psychological figures and personifications into spiritual instances. Even their narrative succession indicates that in reality it is a question of the same spiritual function (what Jung describes as the *Mana* personality), which can be personified by several images, but in an order of increasing value, that goes from the homunculus to the man of bronze, then to the priest and finally from the priest to the graying old man. As if this same function of the human mind were gradually transformed into forms of ever greater psychic value, first producing the effects of its own competence, as far as they pertain to the hierarchical ascended level of psychic energy (*libido*), and then undergo the same process of transformation/sublimation of the other elements of the author's personality. It is evident that Zosimos has a representation of the body and its animal sphere in the form of flesh, as well as its redemption from the flesh as a transformation operated by fire. The seven steps that the ascetic wants to climb, representing the seven deadly sins, find a close and significant analogy with the seven cliffs and the related seven deadly sins that Dante encounters in his ascent along the mountain of Purgatory. In our opinion, the vision of Friar Zosimos is therefore in harmony with Jung's thought, which symbolically represents the Transformation, as we would like to propose.

Returning to Dante, we have envisaged the wall of fire as the symbolic manifestation in the Divine Comedy of the psychological transformation, that is, the final phase of the individuation process that Jung deals with. We therefore focus on a more articulated and detailed analysis of a passage from the poem where Dante depicts Purgatory as a mountain to climb, the "sacred mountain" (Purgatory, XIX, 38), the path of redemption from the bottom to the top, that is, from the earth to the sky, since the mountain is placed on the earth, but its top touches the sky. The top is truncated because there is Eden, that is, the Terrestrial Paradise. The mountain, on the other hand, is surrounded by a beach and located on an island. The mountain is obviously an ascetic symbol of ascendance, fatigue and pain. These are the three factors that give rise to the spiritual process that elevates man above other men: *per aspera ad astra*. In it, three narrative and topical dimensions can be identified: the Antipurgatory, the actual Purgatory and the Terrestrial Paradise. The moral regions of this mountain are nine, the first coincides with the Antipurgatory and the ninth with the Terrestrial Paradise. The other seven are made up of the cliffs of the mountain, one for each capital sin. The entrance and exit



from Purgatory are guarded by angels (AD: IX, 78 and XXVII, 55): The Angel of Mercy at the entrance and the Angel of Chastity at the exit, when passing through the wall of Fire. The Angel of Mercy testifies to the love of God that welcomes and supports the penitent's desire for purification, the Angel of Chastity monitors that access to the earthly paradise that takes place following the complete purification of the repentant from his worldly attachments. Each passage from one frame to another is marked by examples of the virtue contrary to the vice that is purified in that specific flounce. Purgatory is animated by a relaxed atmosphere and an intense atmosphere of friendship, fire as torment dominates only in the setting of the lustful and extends into the wall of fire that surrounds the Terrestrial Paradise. The wall of fire in the Divine Comedy is located on the summit of Mount Purgatory, and surrounds the Terrestrial Paradise, protecting it.

We would now like to analyze, as anticipated, the characteristics and meanings of crossing of the wall of fire that we propose here as the *Baptism of Fire*, a fundamental element of the specific Transformation of the Jungian identification process, in order to reinforce our position that attempts to overcome the limits of Jung's. Let's go into details.

The water marks, through the Acheron, the first great caesura and the first great passage of Dante from the world of the hereafter of daily life to the world of the afterlife in its essential significance of ethical-religious negation, Hell. A clear stream, the Elysium, forms an area within the circle formed by the antinferno where the righteous of the pagan world are housed in a luminous castle. Still the water marks, in Hell, a further clear break: the Styx where the angry and slothful are punished. After the ascent along the crags of Mount Purgatory, Dante and Virgil encounter the second great caesura, that is, a huge wall of burning flames, which divides them from the top of the mountain, on which the earthly Paradise, the kingdom of peace, is located. Romano Guardini interprets this passage as "... a passage of purified penitents through the wall of fire" (Guardini, 2012, p. 207/209). We call it, in line with the theologian, the Baptism of Fire. This passage enables the penitents to remember the past without remorse and to look without envy at the supreme bliss of superior souls (note: the absence of envy is an example of chastity). "*They are completely converted to good*" (Guardini, cit).

Guardini enlightens us on the sense of the spiritual soul which is not separated from the body but, essentially, is the soul of a corporeality, though the fact remains that it still represents an immaterial reality, therefore independent in its existence from this corporeality itself. This combined and differentiated vision of soul and body represents the foundation of the "coexistence of immanence and transcendence" of the individual towards himself. Human corporeality is semantically and completely different from that of the animal, as a *spiritually determined body* (in this passage Guardini has the visionary gift of intuiting a reality that is demonstrated by current neuroscientific research (Gazzaniga, 2012). The opposition between spirit and body disappears more and more where the interiority manifests itself in the body in a direct way, thus assuming a strictly symbolic meaning. That point of interiority is present in the body, as Oreste Tolone writes in his introduction to Guardini's book on the Divine Comedy, that openness to transcendence, capable of placing man in a perspective of overcoming his own body. We propose for this openness a priori form, a topos inscribed in man's body and in his brain, which can be defined as the *Archetype of Transcendence*.

We have already seen that Purgatory appears in the Divine Comedy as a mountain on a lonely island. From a psychological point of view, the process of inner purification that will lead to the wall of fire



is therefore a process that must be done in isolation (solitude), therefore it is the a priori condition for an inner asceticism. Only at the end, with the landing at the Terrestrial Paradise, the purification will allow Dante to meet Beatrice. The Transformation acquired in Dante's Terrestrial Paradise evokes that primeval being naked without shame of our ancestors Adam and Eve in the story of Genesis. In fact, Dante writes:

*"Even as from polished or transparent glasses,  
or waters clear and still, but not so deep,  
that wholly lost to vision is their bed,  
the features of our faces are returned".*  
(Paradiso, III, 10-13)

In this passage, in crossing the wall of fire, we witness the recovery of the transparency that characterized the relationship between Adam and Eve: they did not need to cover themselves to each other, they could get naked with each other. At the same time, in the Earthly Paradise, Guardini writes, *"the soul is subjected to a mysterious event. It is first immersed in the waters of the river of that heavenly, Lethe, which erase even the memory of guilt, so that its "soul" can enter the pure presence of heaven, which is holiness. Subsequently it is immersed (nda: and drinks) in the waters of the Eunoè river"* (Guardini, cit: 180).

Dante drinks the waters of this river. In our opinion this is a quite a particular detailed that is not very thoroughly dissected in its deep psychological implications. It is common knowledge to know the washing nature of the waters of the rivers mentioned by Dante, but the poet himself is keen to emphasize that he drinks the waters of the Eunoè. By washing, water does not enter the body's metabolism, but flows over the body. With drinking, however, water enters the body, it becomes part of it as part of its metabolism. This represents a fundamental and substantial difference, because the water of Eunoè modifies something very specific in the symbolic body of Dante.

In fact, at noon, the poet enters to bathe and drink in the Eunoè, from which he then leaves "Pure and willing to rise to the stars" (Alighieri, p. 647, v. 145). In fact, the Eunoè, a term coined by Dante himself, according to some interpretations, is considered to indicate the river whose waters only allow the memory of the past good, of the individual experiences of the good already achieved. According to other interpretations, the water of the aforementioned river predisposes to knowledge of the good only. In the first case, the term *noeo* is used in the sense of memory, in the second case of circumscribed knowledge. We propose a more functional interpretation, that is, the acquisition of a way of knowing, and not concrete, one that is limited to specific objects of knowledge with the scotomization of others. In our perspective, the term Eunoè is understood as "knowing well", a function that is not limited, but rather characterized by the absence of borders. However, we understand it as the predisposition to a "well-structured" knowledge, that is, free from the influence of the dynamics of opposites (which has so far characterized Dante's landscape) and aimed at truth, that is, the Vision, as described by Guardini. Visionary capacity is precisely given by the water drunk and assimilated. It is a water capable of dissolving the polarity of opposites and overcoming them in the synthesis of a higher, symbolic dimension: Vision.

Let's see how the drama of crossing the Wall of Fire develops, as described by Dante:



*"when God's glad Messenger appeared to us.  
Outside the flames upon the bank he stood,  
... "No further may ye go, ye holy souls,  
until the fire have burned you; enter it,  
and be not deaf unto the song beyond!"*  
(Purgatorio, XXVII, 6-12)

Here we find Dante's first anguished anxiety: in our opinion it is a persecutory anxiety, because the poet uses the term "bites", fire bites one's own flesh. We know from Langs that the psychotherapeutic journey at the beginning, but also later, appears repeatedly marked, in moments of transition, by the onset of the so-called paranoid anxiety, whose emotional strength can be devouring.

*"he told us next, when we were near to him;  
hence I, on hearing him, became like one  
who in the grave is laid."*  
(Purgatorio, XXVII, 13-15)

Here are Dante's further anxieties: claustrophobic anxiety and death anxiety. Even these anxieties, according to Langs, are stimulated by the definition of the safe framework for a psychotherapeutic path. Dante himself therefore, without any knowledge of psychoanalysis, describes what Langs would later identify as a set of anxieties that characterizes especially the initial phases of a psychotherapeutic path.

*"Clasping my hands  
together, over them I bowed, and watched  
the fire, while vivid images I formed  
of human bodies I had once seen burned"*  
(Purgatorio, XXVII, 16-18)

Dante manages not to escape the death anxiety and crosses it, as is required of the patient when he has to face a catastrophic change (Bion, 1967). He thus succeeds in having a vision of what can and must happen to him. Faced with this vision he stiffens out of fear and only Virgil's reassurance and the prospect of meeting Beatrice, with all the meanings connected to this female figure, convince him to enter the wall of fire.

*"When once inside, I would have thrown myself,  
that I might cool me, into boiling glass,  
so without measure was the burning there"*  
(Purgatorio XXVII, 49-51)

This is how Dante describes his experience of the wall of fire. The bite of the fire is devouring and burning his identity as it has been up to now. It is a true process of disintegration of the whole mental system that has characterized Dante so far, dominated by the polarity of opposites (Hell and Purgatory). The catastrophic change concerns precisely the union and dissolution of opposites to access a higher dimension of the Vision as described by Guardini.



### Considerations on the psychological transformation in Jung's sense

Through the interpretation of Zosimos' vision, Jung takes the opportunity to emphasize that man can experience divine transmutation as an expression of the psychological transformation of the human being. In this interpretation, it is easy to grasp the immanent position of the Swiss author. God is within us, God is within humanity, God is within the visible and tangible universe. It is on the basis of this philosophical position that Jung gives us both a psychological and a spiritual conceptualization of Transformation. Selbst for Jung belongs to the collective unconscious, but the collective unconscious is a psycho-anthropological dimension. It is the psico-spiritual fabric of the specific universe of man, hence always exclusively relevant to the anthropological dimension. We have previously underlined how Christ is compared by Jung to Selbst. This is in contrast to a metaphysical position which always and in any case sees a God beyond creation, beyond his creature. Specifically, the Christian God is transcendent, not immanent, since the human figure of Christ is, yes, a historical figure, not a symbolic one, of a man who lived in the history of the Jewish people, but his specific human face is however inserted in the Trinitarian representation of Paradise. It is therefore humanity that has risen in transcendence and not vice versa. This substantial difference between Jung's immanentistic and Dante's transcendent poetic perspectives determines, in our opinion, a substantial difference between a philosophically oriented psychology in an immanentistic sense and a metaphysically oriented psychology in a transcendent sense. Following the first, Jung always ends up talking about the coincidence of opposites, the *coniunctio* of opposites, but never about the fusion and dissolution of opposites for the ascent to a higher dimension. He mentions the *tertium* as a point of synthesis of the opposites but then reinserted in a new dynamic of the opposites. In fact, his thought is defined as antinomic (Aversa, 1996). In fact, it is precisely the analytic psychologist who writes: "... I also understand how on an aesthetic level it would be much more satisfying if, instead of the paradox of several contradictory explanations, we could reduce the psychic process to some instinctual basis, the simplest possible, in this, or if we could attribute a metaphysical goal of liberation by calming ourselves in this hope. But whatever we try to probe with our intellect will result in paradox and relativism, as long as it is honest work and not a convenient petition of principle. That the intellectual understanding of the psychic process must lead to paradox and relativism is certain" (Jung, 1969, p. 500).

This at first might seem a kind of manifesto of analytical psychology. However it demonstrates a strange contradictory nature of the author, who on one hand places thinking as one and not the only one of the four functions of the mind, but then implicitly identifies, in thought, the only tool for approaching the theory of analytical psychology: a tool that in fact has its limits since it leads to paradox and relativism. In fact, in these statements by Jung, it is also noted how the aesthetic plane is versus the metaphysical plane. Moreover, if "the genesis of psychic pathology lies in the very constitutive essence of the psyche, that is, in its antinomicity" (Aversa ed., 1996), when the antinomies, becoming conscious in their conflictuality, find a composition and a superior synthesis through the symbolic capacity, according to the supporters of antinomic thought, this would cause a stagnation and weakening of the libidinal/energetic flow of consciousness, which, by investing one of the complexes involved in the conflict, would lead to the pathogenesis of psychic disorders (cit: 67-75). Unfortunately, not only does the antinomic thought remain a prisoner of the ambivalence that is



typical of the polarity of opposites, but it also produces the effects of the relativism of truth, ambivalence in relationships and promiscuity in all vital sectors of contemporary civil society. In our opinion, the synthesis of opposites does not lead to a loss of psychic energy, an implicit loss in the antinomic thought that does not see "beyond" the coincidence of the opposites as there is nothing else that can be proposed prospectively. On the contrary, this resolute synthesis of opposites leads to a recovery of psychic energy that can be used for a further development of the personality along the path of transcendence as outlined by Dante in *Paradise*. In fact, in the Vision, new and unexplored identifying perspectives open up, and not the downward relapse into the activation of a complex with the consequent production of psychopathological symptoms.

### **Vision as the cause and effect of Transformation**

As an overcoming of the antinomy of Jungian thought we believe it is appropriate to resort to the concept of Vision, as formulated by Guardini, because in the Vision there is the true symbolic union between all the cognitive experiential functions of the personality: thought, feeling, sensoriality and intuition. These experiential functions not only converge in a synthesis, but also in their dissolution for access to a higher dimension, the Vision, which no longer belongs to ambivalence, but to monovalence, specific to the transcendent dimension. So much so that in transcendence the lights of truth, of good, of just, of beauty find their metaphysical origin in the unitary divine light. The vision acts as a link between the bipolar world of Hell and Purgatory and the unitary world of heavenly paradise, placing itself as a psychological and spiritual reality in the intermediate sphere of earthly paradise. To access this visionary dimension, however, the bite of fire is indispensable, which burns a whole previous structure and balance based on the antinomy of opposites.

From Guardini's point of view, to which we agree, the vision is that *tertium* that is reached when the synthesis of opposites and their consequent dissolution occur, the latter determined by overcoming the psychological level in which the opposites find their concrete field of action.

In order to reach the level of knowledge represented by the Vision, according to Guardini, it is essential to adopt a self-discipline, a renunciation of explaining reality only in light of one's own nature, that is, as Dante would say: *ognun dal proprio cuor l'altrui misura* (each from one's own heart measures the other). In fact, even one's own nature, or their psychological typology, as Jung would say, continues to orient itself in the world in a concrete way and in the expressive form typical of the dynamics of opposites. Many analysts have explained staying in this stage through an antinomic view of the dialectic of opposites. In other words, man would behave in different ways to allow himself to be inhabited by one of the opposites and, alternatively, by the other. This psychological way of life, passed off as symbolic, actually has its infernal side that is the alternation of dark and light, of constructiveness and destructiveness. The vision, on the other hand, has its own peculiarity: being able to "see with a single glance the totality of opposites, their meaning, the latent meaning in the light of which everything acquires its own (author's note: effective) value. Man, putting himself aside, is invited to merge into Totality and this is not for a personal creative act, but as a contemplative response to the power of the signification of being. ... It is not the subjectivity at the basis of seeing, but seeing is the answer to the fact that there is a reality that wants to be seen as it is" (Guardini, cit: note: 21). The knowledge of the contrast between opposites precisely determines a knowledge suitable for the multiform complexity of life, because it is outside the specific expectations of the attitude of



utilitarianism inherent in each polarity of opposites. To reach the Vision, according to Guardini, one must overcome oneself and the opposites, through a rigorous self-discipline. Man, only by clearing his inner field, will be able to flow into totality and thus respond with a contemplative vision to the power of reality to express meanings. The gaze, which has become clear, can “see” how things really are, in their deepest substantiality. Everything becomes an expression of wholeness and wholeness is there as “a priori” and not as something that arises when all the parts have been learned. Only a priori pre-understanding, archetypal in Jung’s language, allows us to extract from things, as they appear individually, their true meaning. The vision of the world, therefore, being a cognitive attitude completely different, despite having the same objects as the scientific, or philosophical, or aesthetic, or theological one, requires that man have distanced himself from the “world” in its exterior and can thus embrace it completely. This type of gaze, the Vision, allows us to grasp the unitary sense of multiplicity and according to Guardini, is typical of the artist, due to his ability to “make himself an organ to get in touch with the essence of things (intuition) and responding to them (thought) with a singular intensity (feeling).

Guardini also distinguishes three basic oppositions, which he defines transempirical opposites:

1) creation of the new-disposition of the already given

2) originality-rules.

3) Inhabiting, that is, being within oneself - being above oneself; immanence-transcendence. Possessing an internal center means having the place of self-possession of life and allows the birth of a contemplative attitude (con-templum), even if it exposes man to the risk of his “paralysis” (the danger feared by supporters of antinomy regarding the synthesis of opposites, i.e. the loss of energy and the consequent stall condition).

The celestial spheres, in Paradise, are luminous because they each have their own spiritual principle, what Guardini defines as “intelligence”. And if God, despite being a simple point of light in a very distant sidereal space, making one think of a very small star, he has the power with his own light to obscure everything. For Guardini the concept of light as well as of fire is inextricably connected with that of God. At this point, however, the meaning of the two concepts differs: the luminous spirit (light) is that of the mind, while the fiery spirit (fire) is that of the heart, dedicated to the perception of values, whose interest is directed to the nature of individual relationships and, specifically, of love. But even the heart, according to Guardini, ascends to that level that allows man to be “touched by the holy love that radiates from God”. Even for love, Guardini therefore uses the meaning of light, which “radiates” from the absolute.

And so Dante reaches the dimension of the Holy Trinity, of which he intends to offer us a sensitive vision, that is, accessible to the senses, using precisely the solar phenomenon:

*“Within the Lofty Light’s profound and clear  
subsistence there appeared to me three Rings,  
of threefold color and of one content;  
and one, as Rainbow is by Rainbow, seemed  
reflected by the other, while the third  
seemed like a Fire breathed equally from both”.*  
(Paradiso, XXXIII, v. 115-120)



*In this vision the face of Christ occupies the second circle, but it is not a symbolic face, it is the human face of a specific man, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth. His human body is placed in the Trinitarian light of divine transcendence.*

*Furthermore, in the Vision, every single thought is transformed into an image that takes shape and color and thus becomes visible. We quote, as proof of our thesis, Jung's design of the title page of a book "which depicts a sage absorbed in contemplation, with his head surrounded by tongues of fire, from which five human figures are generated, which divide themselves time in 25 smaller figures" (Jung, O., v. 13, p. 39).*

*In this wonderful image, we witness a marvelous synthetic vision of the four Jungian typological functions translated into a single figure: the image makes us think, Ricoeur writes, but also arouses a feeling in us, shows itself as an expression of beauty and offers us the intuition of what an identifying event is. Jung argues that the quadripartite psychological typology is an ordering principle of psychic processes. It is therefore the archetype that exorcised being recaptured from identifications, and prompted Schopenhauer to give "a fourfold root" to the "Axiom of the Cause"<sup>15</sup>; therefore enlightenment means broadening the consciousness.*

*In our opinion, this conception of broadening the consciousness alone expresses an interpretation that is too reductive and limited to the anthropological level of the meaning of Vision as Illumination.*

## **Conclusions**

*Returning to our topic, we can therefore support our conception of Transformation with Zosimos' and Dante's visions of the wall of fire. It appears as a radical, non-reversible passage of the entire personality of the human being. The so-called "sin" can no longer manages to contaminate the identity of the subject. In psychological-analytical terms we can say that the therapist and the patient who manage to make this transition, can no longer be recaptured by the identifications with opposites necessary for the transference-countertransference dynamic. He has landed in the Garden of Eden, and consequently to that state of inner peace for which he can only proceed upward, that is, towards further levels of spiritual realization. In Zosimos this hierarchical asceticism passes through four images: the homunculus-barber, the man of bronze, the priest, the white-washed old man. These are four anthropological representations of the path of spiritual realization: from the material factivity of the first to the dimension of wisdom represented by the last figure. Man instead is called to go through the intermediate state of the man of bronze, that is, of strength and material power, and then move on to that of the priest, a symbol of religious devotion and chastity.*

*At the entrance to the Earthly Paradise, there is in fact he Angel of Chastity, whom Dante meets. In psychological terms, chastity evokes Freud's concept of analytical neutrality and the aptitude for sublimation, a concept coined by the author himself, even beyond his conscious beliefs about*

<sup>15</sup> The Axiom of the Cause: Schopenhauer establishes the necessity to distinguish between the reasons (Grund) as a logical principle, from the cause (Ursache) as a physical principle. On this basis, the being of one thing has nothing left in common with his existence: the crystal of Spinoza, to use a known metaphor, breaks into pieces because the logical order does not correspond to the material one.



*the subject he is dealing with. Chastity is presented as a state of purity reached and achieved with the passage on one hand through the wall of fire and on the other hand, with immersing in the waters of Lethe and drinking the water of Eunoë. Thus Dante, but also the analyst and/or his patient, enter into a relationship with the unconscious, no longer according to the power dynamics of opposites, but according to the order of love in which the sense of limit and the relationship with the Other represent the pillars on which inner peace is built. In our opinion, this passage can therefore be symbolically represented by the “Baptism of Fire”, which requires a process of ascetic death of the previous conflictual identity and rebirth of a “convivial” identity, in which the “rule” of “your life/vita mea” is in force. The analyst’s Chastity translates into being zero, in the transformation of K into 0 (Bion, 1970). However this transformation is a catastrophic change that subverts all orders of ordinary existence to establish, at the center of the life of the human, that one transcendent point, identified, glimpsed, crossed and finally represented by Dante’s vision.*



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