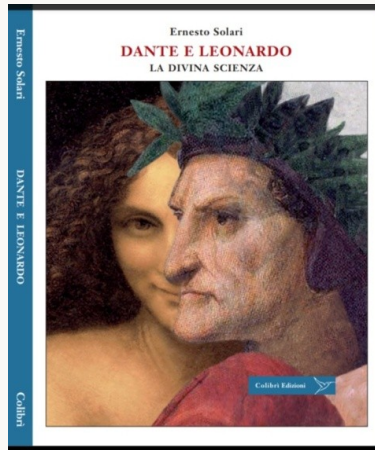


2021- YEAR OF DANTE ALIGHIERI 700th Anniversary of his Death

Book Presentation



ERNESTO SOLARI "DANTE AND LEONARDO, THE DIVINE SCIENCE" Published by Colibrì

It is absolutely not true that Leonardo, in his treatise on painting, demolished Dante's work. Criticizing or having different opinions does not necessarily mean condemnation. The conventional narrative of Leonardo's repudiation of the Divine Comedy overlooks a close tie between the Genius of Vinci and Dante's masterpiece. This work presents fresh new ideas that suggest a deeper ideological and philosophical bond between Leonardo's art and the "Supreme Poet".

The link between Dante and Leonardo is to be found in the reading of Canto II of Paradise in the Divine Comedy, the most important and complex of the third canticle. The book analyzes the verses that have had an impact on Da Vinci's ideological, philosophical, mystical, historical and cultural beliefs, casting new light on the bond between Leonardo and Dante.

Leonardo, who had read the "Comento sopra la Comedia" by Cristoforo Landino (Master of Poliziano and Marsilio Ficino) in 1481, made good use of the teachings of the Supreme Poet whom he comes to consider as a sort of his alter ego.

Leonardo studied Dante not only from the historical and political perspective that has been much discussed and highlighted in many texts published for this anniversary, but he also contemplated the mystical-philosophical component that is typical of the great initiate. Leonardo preferred to enjoy this dimension in a sort of arcane symbiosis with the poet rather than in any official ways.

Dante's mystical dimension according to Ernesto Solari, is reflected in the writings, thoughts and works of Leonardo and this book sets a second important milestone in the discovery journey of Da Vinci's own mysticism: the first one was the investigation of the influence of Neoplatonism on Leonardo and on his links with the school of Chartres, where Plato's Timaeus and the Hebrew Kabala were studied ("Leonardo Neoplatonico", Colibrì editions, 2019).

Dante seems to identify himself with St. John the Baptist, who announces the coming of Christ. It can be argued in parallel that in Leonardo Da Vinci's "St John the Baptist", the Renaissance master wants to pay homage to the poet who is opening the way to knowledge and redemption. Throughout his journey to Paradise Dante always keeps an eye on the earthly world. Similarly, Leonardo's Baptist, with his darkness, reminds us that sin brings us back to our primordiality. Through Leonardo's reading of the Comedy we can also get a better understanding of little-known aspects of Dante and other characters, such as Joachim of Fiore (Solari makes reference to Benedict XVI's studies on Fiore), who is very important both in the Divine Comedy and in the universal masterpiece of the Last Supper.

Now more than ever, our age needs two beacons such as Dante Alighieri and Leonardo da Vinci, universally recognized as geniuses of humanity. Their light can contribute significantly to the achievement of a state of peace and unity between peoples of different cultures and religious faiths. Jewish and Islamic sources can be considered fundamental for Dante's inspiration and their influence on the Divine Comedy is indisputable (Avraham Abulafia and Ibn Arabi).

As Solari already argued in his previous book "*Leonardo Neoplatonico, gli Arcani occultati*" ("Neoplatonic Leonardo, the hidden Arcana"), there are many hints in his works that lead to think of a profound link with the kabbalistic symbology and in particular with its two main texts: the Zohar and the Sefer Yezi, which, although not clearly visible in the documents Leonardo signed (many of his manuscripts have gone missing), emerges from the use of encrypted letters or signs. What is evident is his operating method, attributable to some laws of the Kabbalistic mysticism. In the Divine Comedy and in other works by Dante these elements are certainly present.

The book of creation and its mechanisms, useful for achieving creative perfection, could not go unnoticed to the eyes of Leonardo, who saw the opportunity to embark on the path to attain absolute knowledge. The whole of Heaven is centered on the history of light. Beatrice's beauty translates into a light that grows from heaven to heaven till it reaches its jubilation in the eighth heaven, the triumph of Christ and Mary, and then in the mystical rose. In this choice of the theme of light Dante finds support in mystical readings but also in the Medieval artistic tradition, which attributed the greatest importance to gold backgrounds in sacred art, relying upon the symbolic concept that the Sun represented the image of God. Leonardo interprets this concept in an exemplary way in the Last Supper, with the Christ-Sun at the center of the cosmos and its 12 constellations, but also in works such as the Saint Anne, the culmination of his studies on light which are already present in the earlier work, the Holy Family of Lipomo.

Just like a surveyor, Dante and Leonardo want to see: "*how the image to the circle Conformed itself, and how it there finds place*". Convenience is the ratio of the circle. In this metaphor appears the greatest problem: the squaring of the circle. Dante seems to indicate in God the solution of the great problem; this is the path that Leonardo also follows and that his symbolic Vitruvian Man is there to remind us. In this context, Joachim of Fiore's apocalyptic theses become for the two Florentines a reason for profound reflection and consideration.

Leonardo studied the Comedy when he was a teenager. Later on he may have come into possession of a printed copy of the book. In 1471, in Foligno, the printing of the Editio Princeps of the Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri by Johann Neumeister began. The latter arrived in the Umbrian city from Mainz around 1463, to give life to the first printing house in Foligno together with the Orfini brothers.

In what is considered to be the first known drawing by Leonardo (kept in the Uffizi and dated August, 5 1473), some recognize the Arno Valley while others have argued that the landscape

corresponds to the Umbrian territory of the Marmore Falls. The latter hypothesis could be proven by the profound link between Leonardo and the Divine Comedy and in particular the XX Canto of Paradise where we find a significant triplet that alludes to Dante's knowledge of these places: *"I seemed to hear the murmur of a torrent that, limpid, falls from rock to rock, whose flow shows the abundance of its mountain source"*.

The recent news of the discovery in the Library of the Ghislieri College of Pavia of some ancient parchments (dating back to around 1350) that were inside a rare edition of Plato's Timaeus, could suggest a connection with Leonardo. In fact these fragments, coming from the Visconti-Sforza Library of the Pavia Castle, reproduce some triplets relating to Canti II, III, X and XI of Dante's Paradise. The thesis of this book is that we can see in these Canti elements that can be traced back to some of the most significant works by Leonardo Da Vinci, in particular to the Allegory of navigation (Divine science / II Canto), to the Mona Lisa (III Canto), to the Last Supper (X Canto) and to the two beacons of Christian mysticism, Saint Francis and Saint Thomas (XI Canto). These references make it legitimate to argue that these documents may have been studied or even belonged to Leonardo who, in the same Library, studied the original manuscript of the Apocalypse of Joachim of Fiore in which we find the same subdivision of the apostles adopted by Leonardo in his Last Supper.

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Contacts

Prof. Ernesto Solari

Tel. +393392984261

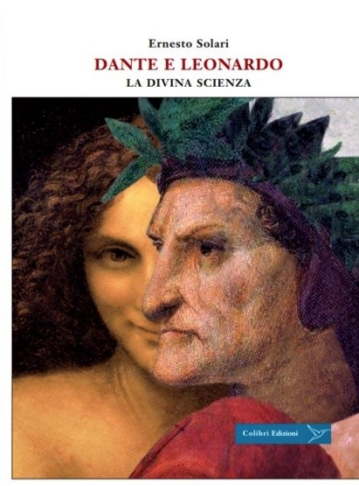
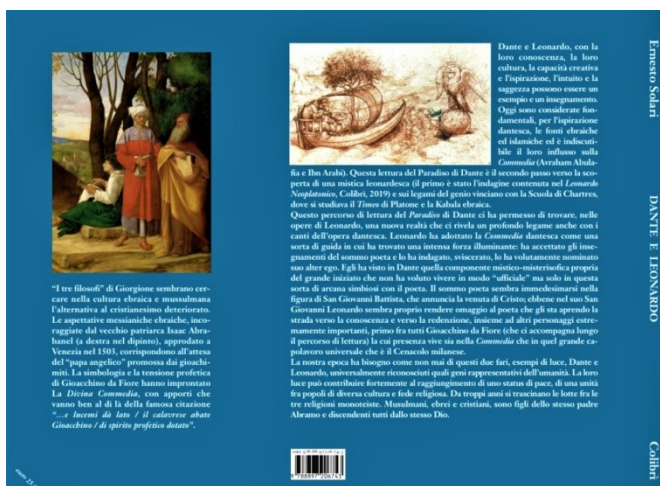
e-mail: solariernesto76@gmail.com

For more info, see website: www.museosolari.net

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Ernesto Solari, Leonardo's expert, has released his latest book: "Dante and Leonardo, the Divine Science", where he denies the thesis that Leonardo was against Dante, demonstrating instead how important the Divine Comedy was to him and helps us understand the 3rd Canticale, thanks to the study of the Divine Science (including Pythagoras, Plato, Joachim of Fiore and the Kabbalists).

(Press release)

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