

Dante and the divine comedy inferno



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In today's society, technology is so prevalent that if you were to go back 15 years in time, you'd probably think to yourself There is no way I could survive living in this time. When I say this, I say this because technology assists us in so many ways that it has become a part of our everyday lifestyle. When we wish to contact a loved one, or when we need quick and on the spot information from google, we instantly direct ourselves to some form of technology to cure us of our instant gratification.

We even use technology to literally keep us alive. We forget that we are indeed primal creatures. We also forget that no matter what we do, we'll always have human tendencies that cannot be replaced or thrown out such as a mothers natural tendencies towards her children, or our fight and flight response, or how we automatically get sad when a loved one dies. Our human traits such as envy towards a person, being prideful, being gluttonous age all the way back to even Adam and Eve when Eve ate the apple when she had everything and more to eat. Our traits will never leave us. This is where I fasten the story of Dante and one of his most prominent works: Inferno.

Dante and the Divine Comedy Inferno is a literature masterpiece made by Dante Alighieri and is considered to be one of the greatest works of world literature and Italian literature. What this prominent piece is about Dante and his travels through Hell and Purgatory to reach Heaven. In this hellish poem, Dante takes his readers through the depths of Hell and uncovers what scum and evils lie within. It is a spiritual journey expounding the evils of sin through the first-person narration of the aptly named main character, Dante the Pilgrim. In this first section, Dante ventures through multiple circles of

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Hell, specifically 9 layers of Hell that representing a gradual increase in wickedness, and being at the center of the earth where Satan is held captive after being thrown out of The Kingdom Of Heaven. The sinners, or people being held there in Hell for punishment are punished there for eternity in ways that fit their crimes, or sins. Dante is guided by the Roman poet Virgil through Hell and Purgatory; Beatrice, Dante's ideal woman, guides him through Heaven. His journey is meant to impress upon readers the consequences of sin and the glories of Heaven. The Divine Comedy is also an allegory, a work in which characters, objects, and events have figurative as well as literal meanings. The composition is extremely religious, with its whole point being that individuals have committed wrongdoing going by what is just according to God. I will only be discussing Inferno.

I am arguing that Dante and the Inferno looks down upon our natural human tendencies in the wrong way. What I mean by this is that in the Inferno the sins committed by individuals are obviously looked down upon but do not take into account that most of the sins are simply human nature. This matters because we forget that no matter what we do, as stated above, we will always have human innate traits that we can not get rid of and should not be punished. Don't get me wrong, even to this day we still condemn gluttony and lust because these traits, in excess, are not something that is desirable amongst mankind. But even though excess of such things are still prevalent today, we do not punish those who commit these acts with eternal jousting of the greedy or the eternal entrapment in flaming tombs. We usually teach people to not do things in excess even though it is apart of genetic code to want something in excess. Not getting off track, the Inferno

tells the journey of Dante through Hell, guided by the ancient Roman poet Virgil. In the poem, Hell is depicted as nine circles of torment located within the Earth; it is the “ realm ... of those who have rejected spiritual values by yielding to bestial appetites or violence, or by perverting their human intellect to fraud or malice against their fellow men.” What I am arguing is that Inferno condemns what we are naturally predisposed to, our innate traits such as gluttony, violence, lust, and things of this nature. This is significant because Inferno veers us away from such things and condemns them as if they are supposed to be looked down upon.

Again, not veering away from the point of Inferno which is someone’s journey on their way to heaven there is a message to be gained from Inferno. Ezra Pound, who was an expatriate American poet and critic, and a major figure in the early modernist poetry movement critiqued the work. Ezra also wrote about the Comedy as a critic and engaged with it as a poet. Pound writes that Dante conceived the real Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise as states, and not places and recommends that readers regard Dante’s descriptions of the actions and conditions of the shades as descriptions of men’s mental states in life . . . that is to say, men’s inner selves stand visibly before the eyes of Dante’s intellect. If you read closely the interpretation is that Dante’s descriptions of Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise as states and not places. A state of mind and not a state of physicality. Ezra continues and recommends that readers regard Dante’s descriptions of the actions and conditions of the shades as descriptions of men’s mental states in life . . . that is to say, men’s inner selves stand visibly before the eyes of Dante’s intellect. For Pound, then, the theology of the Comedy is of little importance;

Dante's poem is an example of how poetry can engage with the living world of history by turning the reader's mind toward his or her own moral flaws. Moral flaws that can be traced back as traits that we try so hard to suppress. Don't get me wrong, there is a saying that goes Too much of anything is a bad thing. The good thing isn't what is wrong but too much of that specific thing can be wrong. Inferno kind of agrees with this in the fact that when Dante ventures through each circle, he sees that the sins committed were of those in excess.

For example, in the poem, Dante and Virgil encounter fortune-tellers who must walk forward with their heads on backwards unable to see what is ahead because while they were on earth, they attempted to see the future by means of which are forbidden by God. Then there is another example in which Dante and Virgil stumble upon those who are suicidal and are punished by being turned into trees that Harpies feed upon. What I'm saying is what if someone was born with the ability to look forward in time? How are they able to know that what they are doing is wrong and sinful against God? With the case of those who have committed suicide, what if they were trying to escape a very harsh situation in which death was better than whatever they were going through? Why is Inferno denying the things that could be just but are denied because God sees this as wrong? Did He not create everything human in His image? Why is He punishing those in which He Himself flawed when He created them? In Inferno, there are vast amounts of allusions. An allusion is an implied reference to a person, or thing that is a part of another text. Most allusions are based on the presumption that the author and reader both share a mutual understanding of the content and will

understand the author's referent. In Inferno, you can see that Dante is a way of expression for Alighieri's own opinion about his life and times. Sarah Landas's analysis on Dante's Inferno and the allusions therein are that most of the allusions found in the Inferno were used to present a representation of different stereotypes associated with behaviors and attitudes that Dante felt were injurious to Italian society, as well as to the rest of the world.

Each different allusion represents some aspect of political, social, or religious life that badly needed reform in Dante's time in his opinion so of course Dante would maneuver the poem to fit what he thought needed reform..

With this analysis in mind we come to the question of whether or not this was an actual discovery and journey towards the Heavens or just an opinion?

Landas' analysis shows us that stereotypes exist in Dante which means that people have always had actions considered ordinary in the medieval times.

What this also means is that Dante also wished to express his personal opinions about certain events of his time, and he wished to expose the political beliefs of his party without the risk of personal persecution that might have arisen if he had used some other means of expression. So maybe Inferno isn't even about a journey to the Heavens but about slight shade and a couple of shots at the Italian heads of his time. This also means that this isn't only about God and his condemnation of human tendencies but also about Dante and his obsession with the flaws of those above him. This still does not take away from the fact that our human tendencies are looked down upon and punished without mercy. We simply know now that it is also Dante who, in a way, is jealous of those above him and searches for a way to

reveal the political viewpoints of his party without the risk of persecution that could have happened if he had used some other means of expression.

Dante himself, without himself acknowledging it, was a hypocrite. His supposed reason of writing *Inferno* was to show the story of a man who has strayed from the straight and narrow path to God, he has to be shown the consequences of his actions. Although the reason for him being in Hell is to show how bad things are if you don't follow the right path, the fact that he is there means he has sinned to some extent. So for him to look down on another sinner shows hypocrisy because there is a verse in The Bible that addresses this with John 8: 7 saying ...He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. No one was able to cast a stone because everyone is sinner.

Before I continue, I would like to describe how there are displays of hypocrisy in *Inferno*. What I mean by this is that there are times in which Dante displays some of the sins that are condemned in Hell against the inhabitants of Hell. Is not this poem a religious one with Christian tendencies? Is there not a verse in the Book of Matthew that talks about treating others as you would like to be treated. The verse goes So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7: 12). In some ways Dante also throws up a front to display his empathy and sadness towards to inhabitants of Hell. Don't get me wrong, a lot of his acts are genuine because Dante does not know all of the stories of the individuals who are in Hell, he only see their punishment which can be quite considering what they have to go through. In *Inferno*, Dante can be seen crying and showing pity to the damned multiple times throughout. This <https://assignbuster.com/dante-and-the-divine-comedy-inferno/>

is a hint of Dante's Humanity. Dante's most known cry comes from when he hears the tragic story of Paolo and Francesca and comments ...Francesca, your afflictions move me to tears of sorrow and of pity (v, 116-117), a statement promptly followed by Dante's fainting. But we cannot look past this hypocrisy. Looking more into Inferno we can see Dante's rage and rants. Here is a discussion between Dante and one of the sinners known as Filippo Argenti, Dante to Filippo Argenti: I've come, but I don't star; but who are you, who have become so ugly? Filippo answers: You can see-I'm one who weeps. Dante then replies saying harshly In weeping and in grieving, accursed spirit, may you long remain; though you're disguised by filth, I know your name. And when Filippo tries to stretch his hands towards the boat in which they were in Virgil tells Filippo Be off there with the other dogs! and then proceeds to kiss Dante's face proclaiming Indignant soul, blessed is she who bore you in her womb!" (Inf. VIII, 34-42) Virgil is celebrating Dante's rage against Filippo. I thought being Christian and being of God was all about doing to others what you want done to you regardless of what the sinner has done. Does Dante want to be treated harshly as he does the same to others? Did not Jesus Himself sit at the table with sinners? Who is Dante to treat others harshly? This just goes to show that Dante himself has those innate traits that the poem tries so hard to condemn; hatred, rage, and anger. In Inferno you can see that Dante does not even stop here. You can also read Dante arguing with Farinata, ranting against Pope Nicholas III, threatening Bocca with violence, and even breaking a promise to Fra Alberigo. After each round of righteous indignation, Virgil claps Dante on the back and congratulates him for putting yet another sinner in his place. What kind of hypocrisy is this?

The big revelation is that Dante is human, not some holier-than-thou spirit. He, too, is capable of sin. When worked up, Dante can lose it with the most wrathful of the Wrathful and mess with words' meanings just like those filthy falsifiers. The only difference is that Dante is doing it for the love of God, against people already judged as evil. The hero Dante is supposed to be is now Dante the punisher. Unfortunately, Dante's hasty pity shows a weakness of judgment and later, Dante's damning rhetoric is kind of hypocritical. My next point is Inferno even biblically accurate? If not this can mean that everything therein isn't accurate and can be used as an excuse that the innate traits we possess are not damnation-worthy. What I mean by this is that if Hell is not an accurate description that can be traced back to the actual creation that God may have built, then how do we know for that the sins described in Inferno are actually punished in Hell? Dante presents different levels of suffering in hell. For Dante, examples of punishment range from walking endlessly in circles to extremes such as being immersed in boiling blood. However hell ultimately works, the Bible is clear that it is a place of great torment for all and does not make such distinctions of punishment. Aside from the blatantly obvious fact that Purgatory is an unbiblical doctrine, the idea that sinners have another shot at salvation after death is in direct contradiction to the Bible. In the Bible it is clear that we must seek the Lord while He may be found (Isaiah 55: 6) and that once we die, we are destined to judgment (Hebrews 9: 27). In addition to this, the idea that a sinner can mend his ways before or after death is also contradictory to that of the Bible because the bible says that only Christ can overcome the sin nature and impart to believers a completely new nature (2 Corinthians 5: 17). What could this mean? This could mean everything that

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Inferno could be completely wrong. This could also mean that God actually knows that we have the traits that are condemned in Inferno and is willing to forgive those because He knows us because He created us. Dante's depiction of hell involved penalties such as people wallowing in mire, immersed in boiling blood, having heads on backwards, and chasing