

Author's depiction of an afterlife essay sample



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The most obvious influence in *The Aeneid* and *The Inferno* are their author's depiction of an afterlife. Both seem to follow their main characters through an epic journey of enlightenment and their struggle with the concept of what happens once we die. The underworld or hell, is both a place for punishment and penance in varying degrees. In *The Aeneid* there were three areas, Tartarus, Elysium and The Morning Fields.

In *The Inferno* there are nine circles, Limbo, Gluttony, Lust, Greed, Anger, Heresy, Violence, Fraud and Treachery. Each area or circle are divided on levels for the severity of past sins that the individual perpetrated while they were alive. Virgil's depiction showed that the Underworld is a place to pay off the debt of sins you accumulated while alive, the amount of time spent as well as which area was dependent on how you lived your life prior to your death, though not longer than a thousand years. Dante on the other hand shows writes that if you have sinned and or do not repent before your death, then you are to suffer an eternity without any hope of ever leaving Hell.

Both authors attempt to encourage everyone to live a life free of sin, but if you chose not to, then there will be a price to pay for them. The intriguing part was Dante's interpretation, saddled with the understanding that no one can live a life without sinning, he writes that the worse the sin is, the worse the punishment would be. I believe he was trying to tell people that they should do their best to live a life free of sin and if they elected not to there would be a penalty for it.

While *The Aeneid's* view of salvation is tied to what happens after death, *Confessions* tends to more of a guide while still alive. In *Confessions*,

Augustine encourages maturity and a prolific sense of doing good deeds during your life. The Inferno eludes to what happens if you do not. Both writings break down good and evil to different hierarchies, Dante shows a metaphoric relationship between sin and punishment.

While Dante navigates through the different circles of Hell he manages to tie in and respond to the sinners without pity and on occasion with what seems to be pleasure. Augustine shows the challenges of living one's own life, with the final goal to be in the good graces of God, but if you have stumbled along the way you can confess and be forgiven before entering the afterlife. Both tend to make the connection that the joys of living an honorable life comes from God, and the punishment for sins are also part of the redemption emplaced by God.

During Augustine's and Dante's journeys the story reads as an almost self help guide towards Christian enlightenment. The main influence that shows is how Augustine interprets the severity of sin, Dante seem to pick up on that theme and expand or make a more definitive clarification of it. There are different levels for different sins, it does show Dante's mindset in the order he places each major sin with, in his assessment the worst being the deepest part of Hell.