

The role of desire beauty in dante and augustine??????s journey into god assignm...

[History](#)



The Role of Desire/Beauty in Dante and Augustine's Journey Into God BY
cfl???? 100 The Role of Desire/Beauty in Dante and Augustine's Journey Into
God In both Confessions and The Divine Comedy, Augustine and Dante are
depicted as very creative and intelligent men. Both of them have a love for
the beauty in life. These beautiful things that are put in front of them cause
both men to yield sinful desires. Augustine and Dante both know that certain
desires, when not recognized as being created by God, can lead to their own
damnation.

Dante and Augustine come o realize that, despite being human and having
desires, they must be fully dependent on God's grace and love to make the
Journey to him. From a very young age Augustine presents as a person who
loves beauty. In Confessions, the reader is exposed to Augustine's love for
physical beauty during his adolescent years. He is distracted from a young
age by the physical beauty of women and seems to be constantly thinking
about them, which keeps him from his studies. He alludes to this in Book 3
when he says and more sweet still when I was able to enjoy the body of my
lover" (Augustine, 1. 2). Augustine has a love for the beauty in knowledge as
well as the beauty of women, but as a young boy and young man, his desire
for the love of knowledge and language takes a back seat to his desires
involving women (his desire for women precede his desire for love of
knowledge and language). This is exhibited throughout Confessions when
Augustine acquires a mistress. This mistress is taken from him and he misses
her greatly, yet not enough so that he abstains from relations with other
women and remains faithful to her.

Augustine takes more mistresses throughout Confessions and even when converted, he struggles with his ongoing physical desire for beautiful women. He struggles both consciously and unconsciously to keep from thinking about them, but fails when he has sexual flashbacks during his days and erotic dreams during his nights. He writes, "These images, have such an effect on my soul, my flesh, that false images in my sleep obtain from me what true visions cannot when I am awake" (Augustine, 10. 0. 237). Augustine knows that both his love for these beautiful women and his desires for them are misguided. Augustine's soul is heavy with these desires and they bring him farther and farther away from the grace of God. He is so caught up in the beauty of these women that, even when converted, his mind turns to them constantly. His whole being longs for them so gravely that even while he lies dreaming, the women come to him and guide his unconscious mind away from God.

Augustine is lost in a sea of desire and is struggling to figure out how he is supposed to live a life that is dependent on God's grace and His love, while still appreciating the beauty that God has put in front of him in the form of women. Augustine comes to realize that not all physical beauty is necessarily sinful. He understands that God created beautiful things because beauty in itself is goodness. He looks at the world around him and says, "The eyes love beautiful shapes of all kinds, glowing and delightful colors. These things must not take hold of my soul; that is for God to do.

Certainly God made these things very good, but it is He Himself, not these things, who is my good" (Augustine, 10. 34. 243). Thus, Augustine decides

that all of his love should be for God, and anything that is beautiful has to be loved with connection to God. He goes on about his theory in Confessions when he discusses how to love all things cohesively with God. He says “ If bodies please you, praise God for them and turn your love back from them to their maker, lest you displease Him in being pleased by them” (Augustine, Book 4, Chapter 12, 81).

He means that if you are to fall into your desires of beautiful women, you must thank God and love God for creating that beautiful women or else you are just pleasing your desires and displeasing God. This illustrates the concept of idolatry, which is essentially worshipping a physical image and not the idea behind it. Like Augustine, Dante is depicted as a lover of physical beauty in The Divine Comedy. Dante, like Augustine, is human, and is prone to the same desire of women and their physical beauty.

Beatrice is mentioned throughout The Divine Comedy and is meant to represent all that Dante believes to be beautiful and desirable. Though Dante's soul desires the love of Beatrice, it does not stop him from seeing and appreciating other women and their beauty. Dante sees and desires these beauties that have been placed in front of him by God. In Inferno, Dante is exposed to others who have wrongly expressed their love of beauty in the Second Circle, where the Lustful are eternally punished for their “ misdirected love”.

The souls that are trapped there are blown back and forth by terrific winds of a violent storm, which represent how powerful lust, can be. And how it can just violently and aimlessly take you from here to there whenever it pleases.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-desirebeauty-in-dante-and-augustines-journey-into-god-assignment/>

In the Second Circle, Dante meets the couple Francesca and Paolo.

Francesca tells Dante the story of how they came to be in the Second Circle of Hell. She tells Dante their story in a very seductive manner, which can sway the reader from what she is actually saying: "Love, that can quickly seize the gentle heart, took hold of him because of the fair body taken from me," (Dante, *Inferno*, 5. 00-107). She tells the tale in such a romantic way that Dante feels immense pity for the couple that he faints after hearing their story. He did not realize initially that though it all sounds beautiful and romantic, Francesca really told a story of love that stemmed from nothing but physical attraction. She clearly says that Paolo's love for her is only because of "the fair body/taken from me" (Dante, 01-102). Also, her love for Paolo was only formed "through his beauty" (Dante, 104).

Clearly these two people did not have love for each other's souls and for God, but were merely treating each other as two pleasurable objects, not connecting themselves with God. Like Augustine, Dante realizes that though their story may be pitiful, they are rightfully in the Second Circle because they have offended God by not loving each other on a deeper theological level???? they must love and depend on God to really love each other. What Francesca and Paolo essentially did was put themselves and their desires before the one who created them.

For them, their desires overshadowed their appreciation and love for God; they took advantage of the beauty that God put in front of them (each other) and did not love Him for creating said beauties. Dante explains that Francesca and Paolo were indulgent in their desires for one another, and he

says, “ In the moment each of the lovers had delight in the image of the other, and both of them had a mutual delight in their love. But lussuria cannot stop there; the mutual indulgence is bound too soon to become two separate single indulgences” (Dante, 119).

Dante means that although Paulo and Francesca did love each other, their love was only based upon the physical beauty of the other, therefore their love was deemed sinful. So by saying this, Dante rightfully places them in the Second Circle of Hell. In both Augustine and Dante’s Journey into God, they were faced with multiple struggles. A main struggle was the understanding of beauty and all of the desires that come along with it. For both men, finding the balance between appreciating the beauties of the world, including women, and their desires for these beauties was necessary in their Journey into God.

Through Confessions and The Divine Comedy, Augustine and Dante come to realize that beauty is not a sin in itself, and God made beautiful things and beautiful people to represent His goodness. They come to the conclusion that in order to appreciate the beauties set in front of them, they must be fully dependent on God’s grace and His love. If they did not love the creator of these beautiful things, how could they love the things at all? They would be damned if they ignored the creator, they would be lost in their own desires and stray far away from their path of their Journey into God.