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“Free” Will

We are not animals. We do not act by instinct. We are Human, we make conscious decisions based upon gathered intelligence and prior knowledge. This is the primitive basic definition of our free will. Humans have always sought freedom, throughout ancient times, all the way up to present day, humans have been fighting for their freedom to think and choose for themselves, as they wish. Having freedom grants one control of their life through the consequences of one’s actions. Some may be good, others bad. It all depends on the action and we as gifted humans get to choose which consequences we experience. Dante’s *Inferno* matches this idea well, for people are given a chance to choose a defined right or wrong, and depending on that choice they control where they end up.

By definition having freedom is the ability to take information and make a choice. That being true and said, freedom is a much more complicated gift. It is a powerful tool, capable of shaping your fate and destiny, through it, one may control they consequence of action one will experience. For example, a choice to commit murder will land you in prison for life, while the choice of jumping out of the way of a moving car will prolong your life, or learning to drive a car will enable you to travel by car. Consequences can be serious or trivial, obvious, or obscure. While not all consequences of actions are bad, in *Inferno,* Dante brutally depicts the ultimate negative consequences of human evil through the trapped souls who are being tormented in hell and the circle of hell in which they end up.

An extremely important aspect of humanity’s free will is that it is not completely unbound. Dante presents us with the theme of God. We see that God’s will supersedes man’s free will as those who oppose God’s will are punished in hell as told by Dante, “all beings who die in the wrath of God swarm here from every land” (63). The punishment and circle of Hell depends on how great the opposition. The idea of God’s will actually defines the types of consequences that are received due to actions of free will. God’s will defines that a stealing is bad and sharing is caring and so on. Because man’s free will is not infinite and through God’s will, man is able to understand the consequences of the actions chosen. In *Inferno,* the trapped souls know why they are in Hell, Dante asks a poor soul for her story, “How and in what way did love acquaint you with your dubious desires?” (67). Humanity is given the ability to think and choose freely, with boundaries, that if crossed, will result in punishment.

The freedom we experience is the freedom to obey. It is the freedom to do good and resist evil. Through this power, humans can shape their course through consequence and influence future situations. I believe that *Inferno* presented us with this concept through its theme and my own understanding of the concept of free will matches with *Inferno’s* theme well. There is right and wrong and, bounded by the will of God, we are given a rule book and a choice between the two. We know that we will be punished for wrong and potentially rewarded for right and we understand where our actions will lead us to. This is the concept of humanity’s most powerful tool, and humanity will do with it, what they please.

Works Cited

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