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The Boundaries of “Free Will”

Many modern day countries grant their citizens free will over their decisions, actions and ideas. At this point in time, it is very rare for people to not experience having freedom. It was not always like this however, as history has shown us many people died to grant freedoms. From ancient times, to the 18th century, to modern times, people sought to be free, to be able to express and practice their views and beliefs. Throughout history people have shown that having freedom, the ability to evaluate information and make choices, is a human instinct and we seek it. Freedom is the ability to control your life through consequences of actions. Some may be good, others bad. It all depends on the action and we as humans get to choose which consequences we experience. Dante’s *Inferno* matches this idea well, people are given a chance to choose a defined right or wrong, and depending on that choice, controls where they end up.

By definition having freedom is the ability to take information and make a choice. That being true and said, there is so much more to freedom. It is a powerful tool, capable of shaping your fate and destiny. It is the controller of the consequence to your action, a murder will land you in prison for life, 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 light, obvious, or obscure. In *Inferno,* Dante brutally depicts the ultimate consequence of human evil through the trapped sous who are being tormented in hell.

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 concept of free will is simple in writing; think and choose, however there is much more than meets the eye. 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 we are given a choice between the two. We know that we will be punished for wrong and potentially rewarded for right. This is the concept of humanity’s most powerful tool, and humanity will do with it, what they please.

Works Cited

Dolling, Lisa and Edward Foster, et al., eds. *Knowledge, Nature, Culture: An Introduction to the Humanities and Social Sciences.* 2nd ed. Hoboken Talisman, 2014. Print.

Dante. *Inferno*. Dolling: 57-67.