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Answering Prompt Four

Implications of Virgil's discussion of love

Why do we suffer? The question is probably best answered by Dante in his second book of the Divine Comedy, Purgatory. Dante insinuates that people suffer because they deserve to suffer. Before delving deeper into the book, it is better to get the meaning of purgatory beforehand. Purgatory, as meant by the Roman Church, means a place where the saved go after death to get them rid of their residual sin (McCormick & George 64). Therefore, it is purgatory where we meet Virgil who fades through the journey until the seventh sin is purged of Dante.

However, several revelations come out of Virgil as he gets to interact with Dante through Purgatory. He is described as a realist and not led by the Holy Spirit in his decisions which casts doubts of his ascension to Paradise (McCormick & George 66). Also, Virgil describes to Dante the importance of love in the constitution of Purgatory. He also discusses the issue of love and free will and admits that he will explain love as much as his reason will allow. Thus, this article aims at addressing the implications of love as said by Virgil to Dante in Purgatory.

First, it is so that Virgil discussions about love are made clear. Dante believes that love originates from God. Thus, McCormick and George (68) say Dante finds that God is the infinite love and by extension instills it in his each of his creatures. Dante, on the other hand, believes

that being a loving God, God divides the love into freewill which he divides into mental and natural. It is however here where Virgil departs from Dante where Virgil believes that as men, people have spiritual love which directs them to the things that attract them. Virgil, therefore, explains that we are drawn to the things that appeal to our eyes, and we are tailored to get attracted and love things that are worthy.

Interestingly, in the hereafter, people who have been led by the desires (love for things that are only worthy) are punished. The purgatory, therefore, presents to us the pervasions that are caused by love and of course their respective punishments according to Virgil (McCormick & George 65). That is why, in the seventh sin, there is a presentation of Beatrice, a girl that Dante was so much attracted to and was in his mind for so long. Introduction of Beatrice in the Purgatory could prove to be a sledgehammer to Dante which could otherwise constrict him to eternal hell, was he Virgil. Therefore, in this predisposition, Virgil explanation of love is that it is that mental attraction to all things that are pleasant to the eye. The pleasantries, therefore, form mental pictures and are likely to be followed by human beings.

There is another cunning description of love as Virgil introduces Dante to the story of Beatrice. Virgil tells Dante that Beatrice is in heaven and is watching over and is sorry for Dante being in hell. It should be born in mind that Dante was so much in love with Beatrice which is why this information about her watching over him and wanting the best for in (ascension to paradise) by sending a guide (Virgil) caught him (McCormick & George 64). In this regard, therefore, it the implication of this love of Beatrice to Dante is that love is always caring and concerned about the welfare of the loved ones. It also implies that love is undying in that after the death of Beatrice and the path through hell, purgatory and finally to paradise, her passion (attraction for Dante) is still unwavering. Besides, the description of Beatrice and her fineness

implies that she is attractive and mentally stimulating. This is most probably the reason why Virgil wanted to use Beatrice to extend mentally instigated love to keep him attuned to the desires that he believes comes with love which could have left Dante in eternal hell.

There is also an insinuation that Virgil's perceptions about love are earthly. That is why when Beatrice appears in the entry to paradise (exit from the purgatory), which is the immediately after the sixth terrace. Here is where Dante has to choose either the poets he revered and Beatrice or the Godly paradise. Why does Virgil disappear here? Being convinced that he does not make it to the seventh terrace alone; he leaves Dante to be lured by the sight of Guido Guinicelli and Arnaut Daniel (McCormick & George 62). It, therefore, leaves us to understand that earthly love, which loves that appeals to the eyes and the human brain/mind is luring. Thus, Virgil's version of love is that it is tempting and attracting and if one is not strong enough, he can fall to the allures of that love.

In the seventh terrace, we are introduced to the punishment of the lustful. This is the terrace where Dante questions why souls can grow so lean if they do not eat food (McCormick & George 70). What then follows is an observation of the punishment of the penitents which Virgil, Dante, and Statius witness. The penitents are blown back and forth by strong winds which prevent them from finding peace. Here, it is blatant that love is lustful and there are apparent repercussions. There is punishment for sensual love which is propagated by Virgil. Also, the blowing wind means that the lustful are not guided properly by their reason that why they are unable to make decisions that last. They, therefore, keep on shifting their attention from one object to other that they find eye-catching and worthy of their attention/love.

Another implication of love as explained by Virgil is that it is greedy and gluttonous.

Here, overindulgence in food, drink and other pleasures of the earth represent gluttony. Most gluttonous people can overlook others who are in dire need when you have plenty to consume is a form of greed as explained in Virgil's perception of love (McCormick & George 71).

Therefore, the earthly passion that is propagated by Virgil is both selfish and dangerous as it destroys an individual and does not lead them to the eternal paradise, which many souls aspire to live.

Virgil also brings out love as both fraudulent. Love for things that are decent and pleasant leads to fraud according to Virgil. It is understandable that the Roman Catholic Church was the most precious institution at the time the Divine Comedy was being set. Therefore, church leaders found themselves at the center of fraud as they sold church items. Thus, the sale of ecclesiastical goods by leaders is a form of love according to Virgil is fraudulent. That is why in purgatory, many of those leaders who are guilty of this form of love are suffering.

Succinctly, love is that strong feeling that attracts people to what they see and value. Virgil explains this as an attraction to what is worthy of attention and value to them. Thus, this love culminates into various motivations which mostly are earthly and has several ramifications. One of the consequences of the love that Virgil propagates is constriction into earthly heaven which means that all the earthly desires (lust and material things) will be achieved. On the contrary, the second condemnation of earthly love is eternal punishment in the purgatory as one cannot purge themselves of sins that come with earthly love.

Work Cited

McCormick, John, and George Core. "The Divine Comedy as a Bridge across Time." *Sallies of the Mind*. Routledge, 2018. 61-72.

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PAGE 5
