Dante’s Journey to Find Balance Within Duality in *The Divine Comedy*

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**Duality of Intellect and Emotion**

In Inferno, Dante has a tendency to react to events with emotion rather than reason or intellect. Upon meeting the lovers, Paolo and Francesca, forever punished in the Circle of Lust to never touch one another, Dante is presented with a sin that is directly related to love and the duality between love and sin. He is aware that succumbing to lust is a sin, but he cannot help but feel sympathy for Paolo and Francesca. His ability to comprehend the uncertainties of the future is the one aspect of the pilgrim that the poet does not possess as he continues his journey through Hell. He is unable to think rationally about the nature of their sin. It is this instinctual emotional nature of the pilgrim that initially prevents him from being awake enough, both physically and mentally, to understand the purpose of the journey ahead of him. As he continues his journey through Hell, Dante determines that he can condemn the sin but not the sinner, a decision he continues believing until he reaches the Last Judgment. Dante's understanding of sin and forgiveness for those who committed political violence is fluid in this Circle of Purgatory and that which Alighieri chose to present them. He writes from the point of view of himself, the poet, describing a pilgrim who goes by the same name experiencing a journey indicative of the one he, himself, went through: the main difference being that, while Alighieri faced a metaphorical journey, Dante the pilgrim faces a literal journey from the depths of Hell to Purgatory to Paradise. This dual version of Dante, himself, is only the first of many dualities presented in the trilogy.

**Duality of Love and Sin**

Dante's journey to balance love and sin stems from his journey to balance emotion and intellect. At first, he is unable to understand the difference between the two or whether the difference matters because he had lost his balance. He is unable to understand love itself: the power of both love and sin-including the sin of excess love towards Earthly desires. He was unable to love to sin at the same time. For better or worse, Dante’s love of Beatrice took precedence in the sin of himself and those who committed the sin. In this way, he began to see love as equal to sin and, for Dante the poet, it is this balance between emotions that come as a result of love and sin that is most important in order to achieve balance.

**Role of Virgil and Beatrice**

Since the poet comes from a place of knowing, it is understood that he now plumbs the depths of his own sin and may be more likely to react irrationally with being someone who seeks only pure love. His relationship with Beatrice in the _Inferno_ is crucial to Dante's understanding of the importance of balance. As Beatrice, he sees it as his responsibility to help Dante find his balance. Through his relationship with Beatrice, he learns that he must come to terms with his own sins in order to find balance. Dante is aware that succumbing to lust, especially when it involves adultery, is a sin but still feels sympathy for Paolo and Francesca. He is unable to properly confess and repent his sins to obtain a balance between emotions that come as a result of love and sin and may be more likely to react irrationally with being someone who seeks only pure love. His relationship with Beatrice in the _Inferno_ is crucial to Dante's understanding of the importance of balance.

**Role of Maturity**

Overall, maturity defined Dante’s journey. It is the poet who understands the pilgrim’s lack of maturity and the need for a journey that will enable him to find it. This lack of maturity is evident in the way that the pilgrim struggles because he is trying too hard to embrace only one side of each duality, be it only intellect, only emotion, only love, or only sin. After Beatrice died, he found himself committing the sin of excess love towards Earthly desires. In this way, he needed Virgil to guide him as if he were a child, often looking to him for help from his guides that the poet offers him, the pilgrim slowly learns that he needs an equal and balanced understanding of both intellect/emotion and reason/emotion to understand the need to repent for his sins and to continue to love both God and mortals in a divine manner.

**Conclusion**

This paper concludes that this use of multiple dualities leads Dante to discover the importance of balance, namely learning how to balance being a human who will inevitably make mistakes but will always continue to be open to personal growth and follow everything he has learned to show the extent of his pure and divine love.