

Memoria and the Immortal Soul in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputation 1*

Is death an evil, or merely the means by which the human soul begins a new existential journey? In the course of following a line of logic in *Tusculan Disputation 1*, Cicero reasons the soul persists beyond the fleshly body. One of the most prominent evidentiary points for Cicero emerges from his usage of *memoria*, a nebulous term encompassing a broad range of possible meanings.

However, as I shall argue in this paper, a proper understanding of Cicero's use of *memoria* will lead the reader to conclude: 1) the possession of *memoria* of the past and present is essential for the immortality of the human soul, 2) the possession of *memoria* properly maintained may in and of itself indicate the presence of an immortal soul, and 3) an entity like the Roman Republic, insofar as it possesses *memoria*, has itself a kind of collective, immortal soul.

While elaborating on the meaning of *memoria* to Cicero's argument about the personal and collective soul, three separate themes of this term will be helpful: *memoria* as a function of history, *memoria* as it affects the concept of legacy, and *memoria* as proof of a divine element in the soul.

By explicating the beliefs of such past philosophical giants as Plato and Pythagoras, Cicero sets historical precedent as evidence for the validity of his claims. But why is this important? What really does history have to do with the soul, both in the personal and collective sense? This section will seek to connect *historia* and *memoria* together as harmonious companion concepts that guide the reader's understanding of the context of Cicero's position as one of the last standing Republican voices in Rome.

Another important contextual clue is found in Cicero's connection of *memoria* to legacy. By attacking the puzzle of how *memoria* affects the past, present, and future legacy of both an individual and a state, the reader will gain a greater appreciation for the historical and societal elements of Cicero's case for the immortal soul.

The final element of Cicero's use of the word *memoria* offers even greater insight into the dialogue's philosophical point. After Cicero's logical pattern drives the reader to admit that the very definition of memory places the nature of the soul as otherworldly and divine, a whole new complex issue is added to the already thorny issue of an immortal soul. If all souls possess some kind of divine attribute, what indeed is the difference between men and the gods? And, if the state possesses some kind of collective soul, and all souls possess a divine quality, is the state's soul itself a kind of deity? By naming the composition of every soul as divine, serious ramifications are set into motion for the existing spiritual, political, and societal framework of Rome.

Works Cited

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