Four Arguments For The Immortality Of The Human Soul Presented By Plato In The Phaedo. Essay, Research Paper

In Plato s Phaedo, he argues that the soul will continue to exist, and that it will go on to a better place. The argument begins on the day of his execution with the question of whether it is good or bad to die. In other words, he is arguing that the soul is immortal and indestructible. This argument is contrary to Cebes and Simmias who argue that even the soul is long lasting, it is not immortal and it is destroyed when the body dies. This paper focuses on Plato s four arguments for immortality of the human soul and his counter arguments to Cebes and Simmias arguments.

The first argument for the immortality of the soul can be seen in the argument of souls from opposites (70b-72d). He argues that all things which come to be and which have an opposite must necessarily come to be from their opposite and nowhere else. If opposite come to be from their opposites then there must be two processes of coming to be. For example, fast come from slow and the process of becoming fast is speeding up . The process of going from living to being dead is dying ; the process of going from being dead to being alive is called coming to life . In this case, the souls of the living come from the dead and thus the souls of men who have died must exist in the underworld.

Whether the souls of men are immortal or destructible can also be argued in the following manner. Before that, we have to understand the definition of Death . According to Plato, Death is the separation of the soul from the body. (64c) The soul is a fundamental form of Life and the opposite form of Life is the form of Death . So, it is not possible for the soul to be in the form of Death and hence the soul cannot die. Therefore, we can say that the soul is immortal or indestructible and continues to exist.

The second argument for the immortality of the soul can be seen in the argument from recollection (72e-76e). Plato assumes that learning is recollection and that the soul exists even before birth. We all know the Equal and when we experience two equal things such as two equal stones, we know that the stones are not the Equal itself. Thus, the knowledge of Equal is something that we did not learn, but recollected. If knowledge of Equal is recollection, then the soul must have existed before its embodiment.

The third argument for the immortality of the soul can be seen in the argument of soul from scattering. (78b-84b) The soul is similar to other forms that do no scatter. It is like the divine, in a form on non-composite matters and has the natural property of not scattering. If the soul is not likely to be scattered, then it will definitely survive death. The soul resembles the divine, and the body resembles the mortal so it is expected that the soul is everlasting. (80b) Even the body, which is obviously destructible, survives death so it is likely that the eternal soul is indestructible. The survival of the body proves the survival of the soul.

The fourth and final argument for the immortality of the soul can be seen in the argument of soul from admitting death. (102a-107b) Socrates argues that opposite forms do not allow each other to approach as they would either perish or withdraw when this happens. As we know, the soul brings the body to life , that is why the soul does not admit death because life and death is the opposite of one another. The soul can never admit death, for then it would not be soul as it is necessary for life. So as death approaches for the body, the soul withdraws from the body and enters the underworld.