

“Cicero & Dante”
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Several works by Cicero have been a model for Dante while writing his poetical and philosophical works. Above all:

- the *Somnium Scipionis* as a model for Dante’s *Paradiso*.
- the *De amicitia*
- the *De senectute*

Several topics, concepts, images and ideas used by Cicero in these works have been followed by Dante, who has considered the Roman orator as a master in religious, moral and philosophical matters. In fact Cicero, contrary to the traditional pagan ideas, thought that the human soul is immortal and that there’s a future life, where virtuous men (that is, above all, the one who worked for the people of their homelands and who acted fairly) will receive a reward. According to Cicero, the heaven is the residence where the souls live, from where they’ve been chased away and where they yearn to go back. The eternal life after the death is the real life, the complete one.

Let’s see some brief extracts from Cicero’s works which shows these ideas (translations between square brackets):

- "Vestra vero, quae dicitur vita, mors est" (*Somnium Scipionis*, 14) [In reality, what you call life is your death]
- "Ego vestros patres [...] vivere arbitror et eam quidem vitam quae est sola vita nominanda" (*De senectute*, 21) [I judge that your fathers are still alive, and they’ve been living the only life worthy of being called life]
- "Est enim animus caelestis, ex altissimo domicilio depressus" (*De senectute*, 21) [In fact, the soul, of celestial origins, has been dropped from its very high residence]

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- "Animos hominum esse divinos iisque, cum ex corpore excessissent, reditum in caelum patere, optimoque et iustissimo cuique expeditissimum" (*De amicitia*, IV, 13) [Human soul is divine, and when it leaves the body, it can go back to the sky, the more easily the more it has been good and fair]
- "Omnibus qui patriam conservarint, adiuverint, auxerint, certum esse in caelo definitum locum, ubi beati aevo sempiterno fruuntur" (*Somnium Scipionis*, XII, 3) [There's in the sky a fixed and specific place, where everybody who has saved, helped, improved the homeland can spend an eternal life]
- "Sapientissimus quisque aequissimo animo moritur, stultissimus iniquissimo" (*De senectute*, 23) [The wiser you are, the better you'll die, and the stupider you are, the worse you'll die]
- "Et quasi poma ex arboribus, si cruda sunt, vi evelluntur, si matura et cocta decidunt, sic vitam adulescentibus vis aufert, senibus maturitas" (*De senectute*, 19) [The violence snatches the life from young people and the maturity takes it from old people, similarly to the fruits which are difficult to pick when they're unripe but they fall on their own when they're ripe]

Here are also some extracts from Dante's *Convivio* which shows Cicero's influence:

- "E qui è da sapere che, sì come dice Tullio in quello De senectute, la naturale morte è quasi a noi porto in lunga navigazione e riposo. Ed è così: come lo buono marinaio, come esso appropinqua al porto, cala le sue vele, e soavemente, con debile conducimento, entra in quello; così noi dovremo calare le vele de le nostre mondane operazioni e tornare a Dio con tutto nostro intendimento e cuore, sì che a quello porto si venga con tutta soavitate e con tutta pace. E in ciò avemo da la nostra propria natura grande ammaestramento di soavitate, che' in essa cotale morte non è

dolore né alcuna acerbitate, ma sì come uno pomo maturo leggermente e senza violenza si dispicca dal suo ramo, così la nostra anima senza doglia si parte dal corpo ove ella è stata" (*Convivio*, IV, 28)

- "Odi che dice Tullio in persona di Catone vecchio: ‘a me pare già vedere e levomi in grandissimo studio di vedere li vostri padri, che io amai, e non pur quelli che io stesso conobbi, ma eziandio quelli di cui udii parlare’. Rendesi dunque a Dio la nobile anima in questa etade, e attende la fine di questa vita con molto desiderio" (*Convivio*, IV, 28)

Moreover, as a mark of admiration to Cicero, Dante placed him in the limbo of the *Divina Commedia* among the souls of the greatest men of ancient times. He also placed together Christians and Pagans of great virtue in the Jupiter sky (i.e. the Emperor Constantinus and William II together with the Emperor Traianus and the Trojan Rhiphaeus).