

Episode 267 - Virtue Is Not Absolute Or An End In Itself - All Good And Evil Consists In Sensation.

Post by "Cassius" of January 26, 2025 at 8:27 AM

Using Deepseek here is a preliminary list. I doubt this is by any means the best, but it is a good list of names:

The Stoics, a school of Hellenistic philosophy, firmly believed that **virtue** (moral excellence) is the highest good and the key to a flourishing life. They argued that virtue is sufficient for happiness and that external things like wealth, fame, and pleasure are indifferent. Below are some of the most famous quotes from ancient Stoics in support of virtue being the highest good:

1. Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, emphasized the importance of virtue in his personal writings, *Meditations*.

Quote

"Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be. Be one."

— *Meditations*, Book 10

Quote

"The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts: therefore, guard accordingly, and take care that you entertain no notions unsuitable to virtue and reasonable nature."

— *Meditations*, Book 5

Quote

"Just that you do the right thing. The rest doesn't matter."

— *Meditations*, Book 12

2. Epictetus

Epictetus, a former slave turned Stoic teacher, focused on the importance of aligning one's will with virtue and reason.

Quote

"First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do."
— *Discourses*, Book 3

Quote

"Virtue is the only good. There is no other good, neither early nor late, neither great nor small, neither in the living nor in the dead."
— *Discourses*, Book 2

Quote

"Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants."
— *Discourses*, Book 2

3. Seneca

Seneca, the Roman Stoic philosopher and statesman, wrote extensively about the importance of virtue and the dangers of vice.

Quote

"Virtue is nothing else than right reason."
— *Letters to Lucilius*, Letter 66

Quote

"The greatest good is virtue; the next, liberty; the third and last, the necessities of life."
— *Letters to Lucilius*, Letter 74

Quote

"It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor."
— *Letters to Lucilius*, Letter 2

4. Zeno of Citium

Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism, laid the groundwork for the Stoic emphasis on virtue.

Quote

"Happiness is a good flow of life."
— Zeno (as reported by Diogenes Laërtius)

Quote

"The goal of life is living in agreement with nature, and virtue is the harmony between the will and nature."
— Zeno (paraphrased from Stoic teachings)

5. Cleanthes

Cleanthes, the second head of the Stoic school, reinforced the idea that virtue is the only true good.

Quote

"Lead me, Zeus, and you too, Destiny, to wherever your decrees have assigned me. I follow readily, but if I choose not, wretched as I will be, I must follow still."
— *Hymn to Zeus*

6. Musonius Rufus

Musonius Rufus, a Roman Stoic philosopher, emphasized the practical application of virtue in daily life.

Quote

"Virtue is not only an ability but also a disposition to act in accordance with reason."
— *Lectures*, Lecture 1

Quote

"The human being is born with an inclination toward virtue."
— *Lectures*, Lecture 2

Summary

The Stoics consistently taught that **virtue is the highest good** and the foundation of a good life. Virtue, for them, meant living in accordance with reason, nature, and moral excellence. External goods like wealth, health, and fame were considered "indifferents"—neither good nor bad in themselves, but only in how they are used.

If you'd like to explore these ideas further, I recommend reading:

- *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius
- *Discourses* and *Enchiridion* by Epictetus
- *Letters to Lucilius* by Seneca