

# Cicero's Criticism of Stoicism's Doctrine of "Preferreds"

**Post by "Cassius" of September 24, 2016 at 3:24 PM**

Sarcasm alert! Cicero's commentary on the Stoics' terminology of some things as "preferred":  
"As I understand, [the Stoics] will accuse the ancients of certain grave errors in other matters, which that ardent seeker after truth [Zeno] found himself quite unable to tolerate. What, [Zeno] asked, could have been more insufferably foolish and perverse than to take good health, freedom from all pain, or soundness of eyesight and of the other senses, and class them as goods, instead of saying that there was nothing whatever to choose between these things and their opposites? According to [Zeno], all these things which the ancients called good, were not good, but 'preferred'; and so also with bodily excellences, it was foolish of the ancients to call them 'desirable for their own sakes'; they were not 'desirable' but 'worth taking'; and in short, speaking generally, a life bountifully supplied with all the other things in accordance with nature, in addition to virtue, was not 'more desirable,' but only 'more worth taking' than a life of virtue and virtue alone; and although virtue of itself can render life as happy as it is possible for it to be, yet there are some things that Wise Men lack at the very moment of supreme happiness; and accordingly they do their best to protect themselves from pain, disease and infirmity."

What acuteness of intellect! What a satisfactory reason for the creation of a new philosophy!"  
Cicero, On Ends, Book 4