



THE STOIC

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Judging life by its length



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In the 5,000 year old epic *Gilgamesh*, the King of Uruk, Gilgamesh sets out to find the secret of immortality. He undertakes an arduous journey and faces many dangers in his quest. In the end, he comes to the understanding that humans cannot be immortals. All we can do is to live our lives well here on this earth.

Yet, 5,000 years later we have not stopped or slowed down our quest for immortality. We complain our life is not long enough. Not so, says Seneca. Our problem is not that we have a short life, but that we squander what we have been given.

It is not that we have a short time to live, but we waste so much of it. - Seneca On the Shortness of Life.

He goes on to say,

Life is long if you know how to use it. But one man is grappled by insatiable greed, another by laborious dedication to useless tasks. One man is soaked in wine, another sluggish with idleness... Many pursue no fixed goal, but are tossed about in ever-changing designs by fickleness which is shifting, inconstant, never satisfied with itself.

Yet we want to go on living without ever realizing,

It is only a small part of our life we really live. Indeed all the rest is not life but merely time.

Yes, indeed. What we need to do is transform the time we are given into life. When we don't do this, no amount of time will lead us to a life

well lived.

In his article, Piotr Stankiewicz argues that we should be concerned with the quality of life and not the quantity of time. The quality life is not to be found in transient pleasures, but in living a life that is worth living - one that is rooted in Stoic wisdom as expressed in its virtues.

If death itself is neither 'good' nor 'bad', then 'good' and 'bad' can only come from how we consider death, how we talk about it, how we treat people who are dying, says Flora Bernard.

So what is important is not increasing the number of days we live but increasing the quality of those days, however few or many they may be.

Brittany Polat points out that when we focus on our responses to the world, rather than getting upset about what the world is doing, we begin to develop a steadiness of mind that eventually leads to long-lasting happiness.

How do we do that? The simplest way to do so is to sit down and make notes, on paper or digitally, at the end of the day, and to examine what we've done well, done less well, and left undone, writes Meredith Kunz.

Jonas Salzgeber writes that, while we are alive, we are made to cooperate with each other. He explains six ways we can do this that will lead us to a flourishing life.