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Virtue and happiness: a philosophical inquiry

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Abstract

The position that holds that virtue, as a good, is sufficient for happiness has had illustrious exponents in the past. We will refer to this position as the sufficiency thesis. In recent times however this position has fallen into disfavour. This is largely due to the strong intuition that certain goods other than virtue are necessary for happiness. We will refer to this as the problem of external goods. The point of this paper is to respond to the problem of external goods by articulating an understanding of virtue as involving the ability to occupy a “distanced perspective” within which the virtuous agent becomes detached from external goods insofar as he comes to view them as indifferent. My articulation of this understanding of virtue will be based upon what I take to be the core of the Stoic description of virtue.