

Voula Tsouna Zoom Presentation This Thursday, May 27, at 12 Noon EDT

Post by "Cassius" of May 27, 2021 at 4:05 PM

Quote

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'And because of an attachment to life, not due to the fact that they (sc. foolish old men) live pleasantly but resulting from their terror of death, they appear to push away even the epibolai focusing on it (tas epibolas tas ep'auton). Then, when the sight of it becomes clearly evident (enargês theôria), it strikes them as something paradoxical. For this reason, unable to bring themselves even to the point of writing a will, they are overtaken and surrounded and, as Democritus says, are forced to bear a double misfortune. Sensible men, on the other hand, [even if for] some compelling reason they did not suspect that the paragraph and limit of their life was already approaching, when it comes into actual view, after they have surveyed in their thought systematically and with the greatest clarity, in a way that cannot be explained to the ignorant, their perfect enjoyment of every thing and the utter unconsciousness that will come over them, they breathe their last as calmly as if they never had lost their epibolê even for an instant' (De mort. XXXIX.6-25).

I am really impressed by this excerpt, which I don't think I have seen before. To me the thrust of this sentiment seems to go along with considering the whole issue of epibole to be summarized in English as "grasp." I read this as saying that we need a grasp of the big picture of what life is all about, along with a grasp of the details as we live minute by minute, and we need a command of the subject that allows us to move back and forth between the big picture and the details to allow us to see how both fit together. If we get lost either in the big picture, or in the details, we equally "get lost" and fail to have a command over what is necessary in life to live as happily as possible. If we keep that command, then even as we age and approach death, and actually die, we keep with us to the end the best possible experience of living, which ought always to be our goal. Nothing mystical or mysterious about any of this and all perfectly translatable into ordinary English.