

Episode One Hundred Thirty-Seven - The Letter to Menoecus 04 - On Death (Part Two)

Post by “Joshua” of August 28, 2022 at 12:21 PM

Show Notes:

Stephen Greenblatt' mother:

Quote

The young Greenblatt didn't fear his own death, but he was instilled with a deep fear of his mother's death, thanks to his mother, who possessed “an absolute certainty that she was destined for an early grave”. Greenblatt writes: “My life was full of extended, operatic scenes of farewell...even when I simply left the house for school, she clung to me tightly, speaking of her fragility and of the distinct possibility that I would never see her again.”

Mrs Greenblatt's fears turned out to be unfounded - she lived until she was almost 90 - but Stephen was very struck by how the fear of death could make life unliveable.

Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow*:

Quote

We are going to die, and that makes us the lucky ones. Most people are never going to die because they are never going to be born. The potential people who could have been here in my place but who will in fact never see the light of day outnumber the sand grains of Arabia. Certainly those unborn ghosts include greater poets than Keats, scientists greater than Newton. We know this because the set of possible people allowed by our DNA so massively exceeds the set of actual people. In the teeth of these stupefying odds it is you and I, in our ordinariness, that are here. We privileged few, who won the lottery of birth against all odds, how dare we whine at our inevitable return to that prior state from which the vast majority have never stirred?

John Augustus Shedd

Quote

A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.

Michel de Montaigne

Quote

I want death to find me planting my cabbages, but careless of death, and still more of my unfinished garden.”

XKCD

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Friar Laurence, *Romeo and Juliet*:

Quote

...Hence from Verona art thou banished:

Be patient, for the world is broad and wide...

I'll give thee armour to keep off that word:

Adversity's sweet milk, philosophy,

To comfort thee, though thou art banished....

Why rail'st thou on thy birth?

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Sophocles

Quote

Never to have been born is best.

Everyone knows that, and a close second,

once you have appeared in this life, is a quick

return, as soon as you can, to where you came from.

In our light-headed youth we carry

blithe ideas, not knowing what blows await,

what hardships are bearing down, closer and closer.

Murder, hatred, strife, resentment, and

envy are lurking, and then, behind them, bitter old age,
powerless, friendless, with evils our only neighbors.

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Ecclesiastes

Quote

But better than both is the one who has never been born, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.