

Article on the "Letter to Marcella" by Porphyry

Post by "Cassius" of January 31, 2020 at 7:28 PM

Good catch Mike. I don't want to put too much pressure on a single word and maybe there is a translation issue, but yes, climbing a mountain toward virtue being at the summit seems to be a standard Stoic theme.

I recall Lucian using it to describe the Stoic figure in Hermotimus:

Her. Alas, Lycinus, I am only just beginning to get an inkling of the right way. Very far off dwells Virtue, as Hesiod says, and long and steep and rough is the way thither, and travellers must bedew it with sweat.

Ly. And you have not yet sweated and travelled enough?

Her. Surely not; else should I have been on the summit, with nothing left between me and bliss; but I am only starting yet, Lycinus.

Ly. Ah, but Hesiod, your own authority, tells us, Well begun is half done; so we may safely call you half-way by this time.

Her. Not even there yet; that would indeed have been much.

Ly. Where *shall* we put you, then?

Her. Still on the lower slopes, just making an effort to get on; but it is slippery and rough, and needs a helping hand.

Ly. Well, your master can give you that; from his station on the summit, like Zeus in Homer with his golden cord, he can let you down his discourse, and therewith haul and heave you up to himself and to the Virtue which he has himself attained this long time.