

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

Post by "Cassius" of May 25, 2021 at 4:27 PM



## The Epicurean Notion of *Epibole*

Prof. Voula Tsouna  
UC Santa Barbara  
May 27, 2021

Starts in New York 12:00 p.m. / Cambridge 5:00 p.m. / Budapest 8:00 p.m. / Athens 7:00 p.m.

[View Registration](#)

The surviving writings of Epicurus and his followers contain several references to *epibole* – a puzzling notion that does not receive discussion in the extant Epicurean texts, even though it is known to have been debated within the Garden. While the grammatical components of *epibole* (*epi* + *bolē*) have commonly been taken to indicate that the term refers to projection or attention, there is no consensus about what *epibole* is, what it is of, and what it operates on. Even more importantly, the epistemological status and role of that notion is unclear. On the one hand, Diogenes Laertius attests that some Epicureans treated the *probable* *epibole* its *disclosure* *representational* *epibole* of the mind as criteria of truth. On the other, Epicurus explicitly states that the criteria of truth are precisely sensations, preconceptions, and feelings. Since overt disagreement with the Founder is not permissible in the context of the Garden, it is important to examine whether Epicurus' surviving writings might permit or suggest that *epibole* too has criterial status. This and other related questions are crucial for the ethical theory as well as the epistemology and scientific methodology of the Garden. For the criteria are supposed to ensure both access to truths and solid grounds for action.

Links:

[https://zoom.us/meeting/regist...laoMkHQ0m\\_AbJUe](https://zoom.us/meeting/regist...laoMkHQ0m_AbJUe)

<https://www.forumhellenisticum.com/support>

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Post by "Cassius" of May 25, 2021 at 5:22 PM

Sounds to me like Ms. Tsouna is promoting heresy -- the "fourth leg" of the canon! - but past experience indicates her research is going to be worth listening to regardless of the conclusion



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Post by "Don" of May 25, 2021 at 5:34 PM

I wonder if it will be recorded and registrants will have access to the recording? I'm tempted to sign up but I can't attend at noon.

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2032-voula-tsouna-zoom-presentation-this-thursday-may-27-at-12-noon-edt/>

**Post by “Eikadistes” of May 25, 2021 at 6:02 PM**

Same here - I'd like to watch it, but Weekdays are busy.

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**Post by “Don” of May 25, 2021 at 6:59 PM**

okay. I registered. We'll see what happens.

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**Post by “Godfrey” of May 25, 2021 at 7:23 PM**

I just registered and the confirmation email includes a link to a handout of excerpts of the relevant texts, fwiw.

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**Post by “Don” of May 25, 2021 at 7:38 PM**

The two Philodemus excerpts are nice to have.

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**Post by “Cassius” of May 25, 2021 at 8:06 PM**

I think I've mentioned before that I had the opportunity some years ago to hear her give a lecture live. She's definitely one of the leading scholars on Epicurus alive today and if I remember her presentation was very interesting, so should be worth it.

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**Post by “Cassius” of May 25, 2021 at 8:16 PM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2032-voula-tsouna-zoom-presentation-this-thursday-may-27-at-12-noon-edt/>

Thanks for mentioning the downloadable handout - you're right it's very interesting.

And this makes it doubly interesting to me to hear what she has to say, because I can see clearly - I have a good GRASP - FOCUS - UNDERSTANDING - that this is a word that demands to be translated into English, and should not be left untranslated, lest we give in once again to the idea that Epicurean philosophy is somehow beyond the grasp of mere mortals like us.

We'll have to compare notes when this is over as to what we think is the best English term. But I guarantee even before we hear the first word that we're going to hear a description of an active thought process that cannot and does not exclude "opinion" from its functioning, and thus we're going to get confirmation as to why Epicurus did not consider this to be one of the canonical faculties. As important as grasping things might be, grasping isn't something that the brain does "automatically" in the same way that ears, eyes, noses and the rest function.

Now we'll see how many of those words I have to eat later this week! 😊

EDIT: Ha, I will already start with the caveats - since I am largely a follower of DeWitt's "intuition" line of thought, I am perfectly prepared to think that some people can grasp some things faster and more intuitively than others. So there is some room for automatic functioning. But you know what there's NO ROOM in Cassius' world for?

There's NO ROOM for untranslated Greek words! 😊 **If something is worth discussing, it's worth discussing in one's native language - whatever that is.**

Edit 2 - and just to be clear this is not a slam on Don's or Joshua's (or MY) interest in studying the Latin or Greek words. But the purpose of scrutinizing those words is to come up with the best possible translation with which WE, and our friends, can grasp the issue. The idea of doing all that study and then leaving them untranslated, as if they CAN'T be, is just in my mind the ultimate kind of academic power trip that I can't think anything good to say about!

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## **Post by “Don” of May 25, 2021 at 9:19 PM**

For the most basic, starting point of references, here's the LSJ entry for επιβολή:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...3De%29pibolh%2F>

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## **Post by “Cassius” of May 26, 2021 at 6:17 AM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2032-voula-tsouna-zoom-presentation-this-thursday-may-27-at-12-noon-edt/>

As of today, Don, what do you think is the best single word english equivalent?

I think if i had to choose right now it would probably be "grasp" as that's what we use in colloquial terms as "having a good *grasp* of the subject."

I was watching a video of a state supreme court proceeding yesterday and there were a couple of attorneys who argued first, who did reasonably good jobs, but with a lot of "tentativeness."

Then a fourth attorney got up to address the court, and quickly it became clear that he had a fluency and command of the subject that raised his performance head and shoulders about the others, to the extent that the judges starting asking questions and getting engaged in a way that was palpably almost "electric" in that they sensed that this person knew what he was talking about and was worth listening to.

That's the kind of effect that i get the impression may be what was intended to be referenced here, a clear command and fluency in and about a subject in every aspect from start to finish.

it can't be anything superhuman (due to basic premises of the philosophy) but it also would seem to involve intelligence which would seem to be something much more than "automatic"

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### **Post by “Don” of May 26, 2021 at 6:50 AM**

Good question. Going back to the etymology, it's a throwing upon or laying upon of the mind on a subject. I get the image of a blanket thrown on something then immediately the blanket takes the shape of the thing. It's automatic, so your "grasp" isn't a bad start.

That's why I'm still not convinced - although Tsouna may clarify - that this faculty doesn't in some way clarify the prolepses. It's not a fourth leg of the Canon but simply a refining of one of the three already there. I need to go back and read DeWitt's article on this term.

I see LSJ gives intuition as a definition. I could see that. You just "feel" something about an event or topic. This is maybe that "I can't put my finger on it, but this doesn't (does) feel right."

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### **Post by “Don” of May 26, 2021 at 7:16 AM**

I should add: that feeling isn't enough to prove the veracity or truthfulness of something. You need to observe with your senses. This is why I've harped on "the truth doesn't care about your

feelings." It can be valuable to get that intuition feeling but without further confirmation it can lead you astray.

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## Post by "Cassius" of May 26, 2021 at 7:18 AM

### [Quote from Don](#)

I see LSJ gives intuition as a definition. I could see that. You just "feel" something about an event or topic.

Or also, someone who has such a command even of an action, like a virtuoso piano or other musical instrument player who can make something seem effortless. I suppose playing the piano is itself a very mental thing too, but I presume that someone could have a purely mental command of a subject that is so complete that this person has the equivalent grasp of a subject, in the same way that a Beethoven or whoever can manipulate a piano.

### [Quote from Don](#)

That's why I'm still not convinced - although Tsouna may clarify - that this faculty doesn't in some way clarify the prolepses. It's not a fourth leg of the Canon but simply a refining of one of the three already there.

Yep that's where I am on the subject. "Clarify" or "refine" or "manipulate" or simply "use" -- all words that we would employ if we're trying to describe how the conscious mind processes data from all sources it receives. Obviously this is a hugely important process - it's basically the process of 'thinking.' I continue to think that the source of the issue is the tendency that people have to combine "the act of thinking" with "testing the accuracy of the result of the thinking." Seems to me Epicurus was saying, in response to skepticism, that the act of thinking can't include its own test of accuracy. A test or criteria or canon, in order to be useful, must be something external to the thought process, like a "ruler" which provides the external objective reference point that our mind itself has not produced. The eyes and ears and the rest can fulfill that role because they function automatically without injection of opinion. Most definitions of this alleged "fourth leg" seem to me to be full of things which are shot through with 'opinion.'

Can there be some mental process which is so automatic in its function (intuition?) that it deserves status as a criteria of "truth" for that individual? I don't rule that out entirely, and maybe I even agree with it to some degree in terms of personality or similar issues, but I would not put that in the same category of significance as the classic five senses which are so basic to most forms of higher life.

Unless you want to go down the road of saying that inbred genetic dispositions / intuitions / instincts (the dam-buiding beavers we discussed), or the different personality traits of cats, dogs, most animal species, etc. qualify **to them** as criteria of "truth."

I would say it's possible that Epicurus did indeed go there, but i think he would have seen that as outside the task of dealing with human skepticism, and something that he would have worked very hard to prevent creating the "feedback loop" that ought to be a huge concern. If you start thinking that the results of your deliberations are themselves 'standards of truth' equal to what you see and hear and touch, and you think that you can't go behind your thoughts and just need to accept them as primaries -- that seems to me to be a position Epicurus would not have taken.

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### **Post by “Don” of May 26, 2021 at 8:15 AM**

It's important to remember what we're talking about when we say a criteria of "truth." We're not talking about capital-T guru-on-the-mountain meaning-of-Life TRUTH. The word used in Laertius is that the Canon components are κριτήρια τῆς ἀληθείας "criteria of truth." Αλήθεια "truth" is defined in LSJ as <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l...0:chapter=1&i=1> "reality as opposed to appearance." I see this as a criteria for what exists. The physical world exists. It's not a reflection of a higher plane of Forms. It's not a dream of a god. The Canon allows us to experience the cosmos as it is. It is a very practical mechanism for existing and acting in the world.

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### **Post by “Elli” of May 26, 2021 at 8:48 AM**

From LTH : <<and in particular with the immediate or present apprehensions (παρούσας επιβολάς [parousas epibolas]) whether of the mind or of any one of the instruments of judgment, and likewise in accord with the feelings existing in us, in order that we may have indications whereby we may judge both the problem of sense perception and the unseen>>.

As for the representational OR better as "the imaginational apprehensions of the mind"... Thanks mrs. Voula Tsouna! My representantional or imaginational apprehension of the mind - for to judge the unseen - is my insistent that Epicurus is painted in the fresco entitled : "School of Athens" by Raphael! Since, my desire that is connected with the feeling IS that I do not want my teacher to be insult anymore. And anyway, I'm waiting in a situation of ataraxia the

confirmation on this issue! 😊

From David Sedley we read:

As Cicero's Epicurean spokesman Velleius explains, Epicurus' godlike superiority lay above all in his powers of intellectual vision: For the same man who taught us everything else taught us also that the world was made by nature without the need for craftsmanship, and that this thing which you call impossible without divine creativity is in fact so easy that nature will make, is making and has made infinitely many worlds. Just because you [the Stoic Balbus] do not see how nature can do this without a mind, unable to develop your plot's dénouement you copy the tragic poets and resort to a god. You would not be demanding this god's handiwork if you saw the measureless magnitude of space, endless in all directions, into which the mind, projecting and concentrating itself (*in quam se iniciens animus et intendens*), travels far and wide, seeing as a result no boundary of its extremities at which it could call a halt. In this measureless stretch of widths, lengths and heights there flies an infinite mass of countless atoms, which despite the presence of void between them stick together and by taking hold of each other form a continuous whole. And from these are made those shapes and formations of things which you think are impossible without bellows and anvil. With this thought you have placed as a yoke upon our necks a permanent overlord, for us to fear day and night [...] Freed from these terrors by Epicurus, and delivered into freedom, we do not fear those whom we understand neither to bring trouble upon themselves nor to try and make trouble for others, and with holy reverence we worship their supremely fine nature (ND, I, 53-54, 56).

Velleius thus brings out what Epicureans can achieve for themselves if they follow Epicurus on his odyssey of the mind, and thus come to appreciate the inevitability that mere atomic accident, operating as it must do on an infinite scale, will produce worlds like our own, without the need for divine craftsmanship. That in its turn requires them to see, by mental projection, what the universe's infinity really means. A decade or so before Cicero wrote this, Lucretius had eulogised Epicurus in similar terms (I, 62-79) as the pioneering Greek thinker who burst through the visual barrier presented by the outermost heaven –the 'flaming walls of the world' –to travel in thought through boundless space and discover the scope and limits of physical possibility.

Lucretius goes on (III, 14-30) to describe how he has himself been enabled by Epicurus' lesson to make the same mental breakthrough, and to enjoy the intense pleasure of seeing the world as entirely unthreatening. The Epicurean thought experiments, arguments and mental exercises by which this vision can be achieved are set out at length by Lucretius towards the end of his first book (I, 951-1051). For example, we are invited to imagine going to some hypothetical boundary of the universe and throwing a spear past it (I, 968-983).<sup>13</sup> Velleius, in speaking of the mind 'projecting itself', *se iniciens*, into infinite space, is capturing in Latin Epicurus' technical term, *epibole tes dianois*. A possible subtext underlying Velleius' words is that the method of discovery which Epicurus pioneered was one which he thereby earned the privilege of naming. At any rate, elsewhere Velleius makes a similar claim about the term *prolepsis* (ND, I, 43-44): Epicurus was uniquely able to explain the universal human

'preconception' of god, having himself discovered and named this basic criterion of truth.

DAVID SEDLEY - EPICUREAN THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE FROM HERMARCHUS TO LUCRETIUS  
AND PHILODEMUS

First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the concepts attached to words, in order that we may be able to refer to them and so to judge the inferences of opinion or problems of investigation or reflection, so that we may not either leave everything uncertain and go on explaining to infinity or use words devoid of meaning. For this purpose it is essential that the first concept associated with each word should be regarded, and that there should be no need of explanation, if we are really to have a standard to which to refer a problem of investigation or reflection or a mental inference. And besides we must keep all our investigations in accord with our sensations, and in particular with the immediate apprehensions whether of the mind or of any one of the instruments of judgment, and likewise in accord with the feelings existing in us, in order that we may have indications whereby we may judge both the problem of sense perception and the unseen.



Πρώτα λοιπόν, Ηρόδοτε, πρέπει να ορίσουμε με ακρίβεια τις έννοιες που αντιστοιχούν στις λέξεις, για να μπορούμε να φτάσουμε σε κρίσεις ανάγοντας σ' αυτές τις έννοιες, τις γνώμες, τις έρευνες και τις απορίες, και να μη γίνονται οι αποδείξεις μας στο άπειρο, αφού όλα θα τα αφήνουμε άκριτα ή θα χρησιμοποιούμε άδεις φράσεις. Γιατί είναι ανάγκη το αρχικό νόημα κάθε λέξης να είναι

φανερό και να μη χρειαζόμαστε απόδειξη, αν θέλουμε *Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν τὰ ὑποτεταγμένα τοῖς φθόγγοις, ὧς Ἡρόδοτε, δεῖ εἰληφέναι, ὅπως ἂν να ἔχωμεν κάτι σταθερό στο οποίο θα αναφερόμαστε - τὰ δοξαζόμενα ἢ ὑποτιθέμενα ἢ ἀποροόμενα ἔχωμεν εἰς ταῦτα ἀναγνώτες ἐπικρίνειν, σε σχέση με αυτό που ζητάμε ή ερευνάμε ή υποθέτου- και μὴ ἄκριτα πάντα ἡμῖν < ἦ > εἰς ἄπειρον ἀποδεικνυοσιν ἢ κενούς φθόγγους με. Επίσης, θα πρέπει να στηριζόμαστε στις αισθήσεις ἔγωγε. ἀνάγκη γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον ἐννόημα καθ' ἕκαστον φθόγγον βλέπεσθαι καὶ μηδὲν*

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**Post by “Godfrey” of May 26, 2021 at 2:45 PM**

From Googling "apprehension:"

understanding; grasp, "the pure apprehension of the work of art." Similar: comprehension, realization, recognition, appreciation, discernment

This sounds like "getting it" as opposed to the process (thinking, logic, reasoning, etc) that leads to "getting it."

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**Post by “Cassius” of May 26, 2021 at 4:30 PM**

I will also say that "*since overt disagreement with the Founder is not permissible within the context of the garden*" does not seem like a sympathetic way to phrase the issue.

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**Post by “Cassius” of May 27, 2021 at 12:15 PM**



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**Post by “Cassius” of May 27, 2021 at 12:18 PM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2032-voula-tsouna-zoom-presentation-this-thursday-may-27-at-12-noon-edt/>

I am getting the impression so far, 15 minutes in, that we are about to spend an hour discussing what it means to "grasp" something by observing that Epicurus said that we need to grasp both the forest and the trees - both the big picture and the details - except that since he spoke in Greek so he used the word "*epibole*."

#### Notes

1. The phrase that certain things "have their own *epibole*" seems particularly troubling to me.
2. I am not convinced that there is anything of significance in the "projection" terminology"
3. Ok so "attention" is not a sufficient word. I agree. The issue of grasping is broader than paying attention.
4. Even in referring to the opening of Lucretius Book 1 about Epicurus projecting his mind throughout the universe, I am not sure there is anything all that deep here. "Mental projection" seems to mean a lot more to her than it does to me - it seems to me it's just a way of describing focusing your mind on something so you can grasp it.
5. Ok now we head toward the issue of whether this grasp, no matter how strong, constitutes a criteria of truth. I continue to think, so far, that Epicurus would never elevate a "grasp" - no matter how strong that grasp might be - to a criteria of truth.
6. Oh this text item TEN is very helpful I think -- and I think it clearly means that the word simply means "grasp" or "has a full understanding" and little more than that. Sure it means we'll have strength of mind, because we have focused on the issues, studied both the details and the big picture, and we are comfortable with both. That's highly important, but there's nothing mysterious here.
7. Ok now they are in questions, and a Platonist comes in to say he likes Plato better but will ask something anyway. Not sure this is a great use of time - typing the questions would be more efficient (but maybe not as much fun)
8. Voula has a pleasing personality and presentation so she makes a good lecturer.
9. Repeat -- it adds nothing to switch back and forth between Greek and English words other than to make the speaker (the Platonist) sound intelligent and make the discussion harder for the normal person to follow,
10. David Konstan asks question (he's the writer correct?)
11. Very long and complex question about Plotinus - another reason to vet the questions in writing first.

- This is the first zoom presentation I have watched involving presentation of a paper. She's basically reading large sections of it, but this will hopefully be followed by question and answer. What's the best format using zoom? Is it ok to basically read a paper as the main presentation? (thinking out loud)

## Post by “Cassius” of May 27, 2021 at 12:59 PM

The lecture handout:

Handout of translated texts

Hellenistic Forum

20 May 2021

### THE EPICUREAN NOTION OF EPIBOLÊ

Voula Tsouna

T1

‘Those who have sufficiently advanced in the comprehensive survey (epiblepsis) of the entire system ought to fix in their memory the outline of the whole treatise, organised as it is under the headings of its principal elements. For we frequently are in need of a comprehensive grasp of the whole (athroa epibolê), whereas we seldom need to have a grasp of the details (kata meros epibolê)’ (Epicurus, H 35).

T2

‘Thus we must continually return to those (principal elements) and must memorise them, so that we shall both acquire a comprehensive epibolê of things and discover all the details with precision when the general outlines have been correctly understood and remembered. For this is the privilege of the advanced student, to be able to make ready use of his epibolai by referring each of them to the basic elements and the (corresponding) terms. For it is impossible to contemplate the results of continuous diligent study of the totality of things unless we can summarise in simple expressions and hold in the mind all that might have been accurately expressed even to the most minute detail’ (H 36).

T3

‘First, then, Herodotus, we must grasp the items which fall under the words, so that we may have them as a reference point against which to judge matters of opinion, enquiry and puzzlement, and not have everything indiscriminated for ourselves as we attempt infinite chains of proofs, or have words which are empty. For the primary concept corresponding to each word must be seen and need no additional proof, if we are going to have a reference point for matters of enquiry, puzzlement, and opinion. Furthermore, we should attend in every way to our sensations and, generally, to the present epibolai (tas parousas epibolas) whether of the

mind or of anyone of the criteria, and similarly to our actual feelings, so that we may have the means of drawing sign-inferences about not yet confirmed or non-evident things' (H 37-38).

T4

'And whatever representation (phantasian) we receive by way of epibolê (epiblêtikôs) through the mind or the sense-organs, whether it is a representation of shape or of some other property, this shape is the shape of the solid thing and has been constituted either in accordance with a close condensation of the film(s) of atoms as a whole or in accordance with what remains of it. On the other hand, falsehood and error always dwell in the additional element of opinion about <that which awaits> to be confirmed or remain uncontested but then receives no confirmation <or is contested>. [(This opinion is formed) following a certain movement in ourselves, which is attached to the representational epibolê (phantastikê epibolê) but distinct from it, and according to which falsehood occurs]. For the imaginary figments (phantasmôn) received, for instance, in a picture or arising in dreams or from certain other epibolai of the mind or of the other criteria would never have resembled the things that we call real and true, were there not certain actual things of the same kind as those that we compare them to. On the other hand, error would not have occurred, if we had not experienced also some other movement in ourselves conjoined with the representational epibolê but distinct from it. In relation to this movement, if it is not attested or is contested, falsehood arises, whereas if it is attested or not contested truth is established. We must closely adhere to this doctrine, if we are not to reject the criteria established on the basis of clear evidence (kata tas enargeias) nor throw everything into confusion by asserting falsehoods as if they were truths' (H 50-52).

T5

'All these properties, I claim, merely give the body its own permanent nature. They all have their own epibolai and distinguishing features, but always along with body as a whole (tou athroou) and never in separation from it; and it is in accordance of this complete conception of body as a whole (kata tèn athroan ennoian) that it is designated as such' (H 69).

T6

'The exposition is of such a sort that those who have already tolerably or even perfectly mastered the details can, by analysing them into the corresponding sort of epibolai, pursue most of their investigations of nature in its totality. On the other hand, those who do not really belong to the category of mature students can rapidly and silently run over in their minds the cardinal doctrines of this exposition in order to gain peace of mind' (H 83).

T7

'At a time when human life lay for all to see squalidly sprawled on the ground, crushed beneath the weight of institutional religion (religio) that reared its head from the regions of heaven,

lowering over mortals and terrible to behold, it was a man from Greece who first dared to raise those mortal eyes against her and was the first to make a stand against her. Neither the fables of the gods nor thunderbolts nor the heaven with its threatening roar held him back, but these all the more stirred up the eager courage of his mind (*acrem animi virtutem*), making him desire, first of all men, to break open the tight-shut bars of nature's gates. And so the energetic power of his mind (*vivida vis animi*) prevailed and issued forth (*previcit et processit*) far beyond the flaming walls of the world, as he roamed through the immeasurable universe with his mind and imagination (*atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque*). Whence he returns victorious to relay to us what can occur and what cannot, and moreover how each thing has its power delimited and its deep-set boundary stone. As a result, religion is now in her turn trampled underfoot, while we by his victory are raised to the heights of heaven' (Lucretius, DRN I.62-79).

T8

'You (sc. the Stoics) on the contrary cannot see how nature can achieve all this without the aid of some (cosmic) intelligence, and so, like the tragic poets, being unable to bring the plot of your drama to a solution, you have recourse to a god. You certainly wouldn't have needed his intervention if you contemplated the measureless magnitude of space stretching in every direction, by projecting and focusing itself (*se iniciens ... et intendens*) into which the mind travels far and wide without ever seeing a boundary of its extremities at which it could stop' (Cicero, ND I.53-54).

T9

'The construction of inferences from signs (did not happen) by contraposition of 'if this is [this] but was apprehended] through the [appearances providing uses] for it. Indeed the person who is puzzled about how [representations] of the mind [will be judged thinks] that inferences from signs [should be constructed] if they are verified by observation and do not [conflict] with all the things that are called criteria of non-evident things - with sensations, preconceptions, representational [epibolai of the mind], and feelings' (Philodemus, De sign. fr. 1 De Lacy and De Lacy).

T10

'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).

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### Post by "Cassius" of May 27, 2021 at 1:41 PM

Worthy of note. - Anthony "A.A. Long," writer of some of my favorite articles on Epicurus.



Also present were David Konstan, Julian Annas, and a couple of other names I recognized. Didn't see David Sedley or MF Smith however.

Did anyone else see the presentation? Comments on it?

Unfortunately I don't see a way to watch a replay. And I don't immediately see a link to the full paper.

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

Quote

T10

'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.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of May 27, 2021 at 4:08 PM**

#### Quote

In Part Three I pursue the aforementioned distinction in late Epicureanism, in particular Lucretius and Philodemus. I try to show how, during that period, epibolê enjoys the status of a criterion and also acquires paramount moral importance. I conclude with a few general remarks.

If she got around to discussing this in the Zoom presentation I must have missed it. I heard a few comments about it, but it seemed to me that most of the presentation ended up revolving around the issue of what the epibole word means, rather than how it fits into the Epicurean canon of truth.

Did anyone pick up her position in any greater clarity than what is written above? I remain unclear on Tsouna's own view as to whether any form of grasp should be considered a criteria of truth. I didn't hear anything to persuade me that it should be counted a fourth leg, and much that I heard continue to motivate me that it shouldn't.

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### **Post by "Don" of May 27, 2021 at 4:38 PM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2032-voula-tsouna-zoom-presentation-this-thursday-may-27-at-12-noon-edt/>

Do we know if they recorded it? I'd be nice if her paper/presentation was available.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of May 27, 2021 at 5:34 PM**

Surely the paper is available somewhere but I doubt they recorded it - I looked and don't see links to past episodes. We'll keep an eye out for the paper

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### **Post by “Joshua” of May 27, 2021 at 6:30 PM**

Quote

This is the first zoom presentation I have watched involving presentation of a paper. She's basically reading large sections of it, but this will hopefully be followed by question and answer. What's the best format using zoom? Is it ok to basically read a paper as the main presentation? (thinking out loud)

I didn't watch any of this, but this question strikes me as interesting. I went to several book readings in college, mostly of poetry and nonfiction/essays. I always enjoyed the author reading selections from their own work, but the key word is *selections*! With poetry this is easy, but one essayist in particular does stand out in mind as having been totally captivating; but of course he was writing about his life, his students, his dying father...

An academic work must be more taxing to listen to, as well as to present.

The very best reading I ever attended was one of my professors'. I've never seen a man so completely alive to the power of language. He was also a jazz musician, and he enlisted a few students from that category for accompaniment, so the thematic range of the evening was truly powerful.

So how might we take this concept and make it more approachable... 🤔

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of May 27, 2021 at 8:04 PM**

Pardon my tardiness in posting: I attended the presentation but am only now able to weigh in.

I got the impression that this was not a finished paper but a work in progress. She seemed to be working with *athroa epibole* versus *kata meros epibole* in order to draw some conclusions. Basically, is there a difference between a "big picture" *epibole* and an *epibole* of a detail or details? Is memory involved in one but not the other? Is memory involved at all in an *epibole*? Is attention?

Also she was examining whether *epibole* are projections from outside things, projections outward from the mind, or projections inward into the mind.

Again, my impression is that she's still grappling with all of this. I think at one point she said that at this point her main goal was to catalog the occurrences of *epibole* being mentioned in the sources. She also mentioned that grammar doesn't seem to be the main guide, theory is.

In the Q&A she or somebody said that one needs to attend to *epibolai* in order to do epistemology. This would be different from "attending" being part of an *epibole*.

Tony Long pointed out that *epibolai* are not acts of the mind, but how it's being affected. At least as he grasps the idea 😊

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### Post by "Cassius" of May 27, 2021 at 9:07 PM

Thanks godfrey! What was going through my mind in a lot of my comments is how we might use a zoom format for projects of our own. No doubt there is a value in seeing people online ask questions, but I find as i get older that I have ever less tolerance for what I consider to be grandstanding by questioners - and questions in philosophic contexts tend to turn out to be mini-sermons in themselves very frequently.

And ha - i laugh as I think this to myself - it also seems to me that the people who make a beeline to the microphone first tend to be the oddest of the oddballs, and the people with the most intelligent and thoughtful questions tend to be the most polite and retiring and thereby generally end up at the end of the line.

i thought the overall result was very worthwhile even though there was a good bit of reading, and I really don't know if or whether there should be a way to avoid that. i tend to think that some kind of visuals during a presentation makes them easier for everyone to appreciate, while at the same time the facial expressions do add a very valuable element.

## **Post by "Godfrey" of May 27, 2021 at 9:36 PM**

This seemed much less "formal" than something we might do... almost like if someone wanted to read a paper they were working on during our monthly Skype call. I don't know anything about the Forum that put this on: was it a regular meeting of some sort?

I think, at a minimum, for a "presentation" it would be better for the speaker to put their script next to their camera so they at least seem to be more engaged; kind of like a low tech teleprompter.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of May 28, 2021 at 6:18 AM**

Yes that's a good idea, and a good comparison. I haven't looked at other broadcasts from the forum, but I gathered this was probably pretty typical.

It didn't help in my case that the zoom call kept breaking up, especially in the QA session at the end. Did you experience that Godfrey?

and yes either the script itself, or at least a list of bullet points so we would know where we were in the presentation.

I think a major point that this discussion of grasping is reinforcing with me is the issue that Epicurus has right on the surface of the text we're reading most from:

There's both a "big picture" and a "detailed picture" and if we want to be most proficient in living we have to be able to have a command of both, and be able to constantly flip back and forth between them without skipping a beat. I don't see that as a particularly blinding insight but maybe I'm overlooking it because it seems so obviously true - and yet I think the failure to do that (have command of both levels) is what we see time and time again. People get obsessed with details (like the meaning of ataraxia or epibole) and they get fixated for long periods of times on details while the rest of their lives is totally at odds with the Epicurean big picture (absence of gods, absence of absolute standards of virtue, absence of life after death). Or the get fixated on the very highest level picture (that same absence of gods, absence of absolute standards of virtue, and absence of life after death) and they never offer ordinary people any level of detailed advice about how that high-level insight is to be applied moment by moment.

I think if we could find a way to drive that lesson home, with a limited number of core examples of both the big picture and the details, we'd be 90% or more of the way to providing a solid Epicurean program without ever once mentioning 'ataraxia" or "aponia" or "epibole" or any

greek or latin word whatsoever.

I'll close with the caveat that I love Latin in particular, and I also honor the Greek, and for those who find it interesting I am all for explaining it to them. But when I look around at day to day life outside my office i think I see fewer and fewer people who seem interested in that. Were it not for [Charles](#) and @Nate being with us, our average age is probably not having us all on Social Security, so the clock is ticking on our work! 😊