Classics Orations

Ancient Greek Oration

Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 2.40
William Brown, Class of 2020

φιλοκαλοῦ μέν τε γὰρ μετ᾽εὐτελείας καὶ φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας: πλούτῳ τε ἔργου μᾶλλον καιρῷ ἢ λόγου κόμπῳ χρώμεθα, καὶ τὸ πένεσθαι οὐχ ὁμολογεῖν τινὶ αἰσχρόν, ἀλλὰ μὴ διαφεύγειν ἔργῳ αἴσχιον. . . [2] καὶ οἱ αὐτοὶ ἤτοι κρίνομέν γε ἢ ἐνθυμούμεθα ὀρθῶς τὰ πράγματα, οὐ τοὺς λόγους τοῖς ἔργοις βλάβην ἡγούμενοι, ἀλλὰ μὴ προδιδαχθῆναι μᾶλλον λόγῳ πρότερον ἢ ἐπὶ ἃ δεῖ ἔργῳ ἐλθεῖν. [3] διαφερόντως γὰρ δὴ καὶ τόδε ἔχομεν ὥστε τολμᾶν τε οἱ αὐτοὶ μάλιστα καὶ περὶ ὧν ἐπιχειρήσομεν ἐκλογίζεσθαι: ὃ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀμαθία μὲν θράσος, λογισμὸς δὲ ὄκνον φέρει. κράτιστοι δ᾽ἂν τὴν ψυχὴν δικαίως κριθεῖεν οἱτά τε δεινὰ καὶ ἡδέα σαφέστατα γιγνώσκοντες καὶ διὰ ταῦτα μὴ ἀποτρεπόμενοι ἐκ τῶν κινδύνων. [4] καὶ τὰ ἐς ἀρετὴν ἐνηντιώμεθα τοῖς πολλοῖς: οὐ γὰρ πάσχοντες εὖ, ἀλλὰ δρῶντες κτώμεθα τοὺς φίλους . . .[5] καὶ μόνοι οὐ τοῦ ξυμφέροντος μᾶλλον λογισμῷ ἢ τῆς ἐλευθερίας τῷ πιστῷ ἀδεῶς τινὰ ὠφελοῦμεν.

[1] For we love beauty with moderation and love wisdom without being weaklings—indeed, we use our wealth as an occasion for action, not as an excuse for bragging. We do not call impoverishment shameful; it is shameful, instead, not to work towards escaping impoverishment. . . [2] We ourselves at least discuss, or even develop, our policy properly; we do not believe that words are harmful to deeds, but rather that setting out upon what must be done without being instructed by a speech beforehand is harmful to deeds. [3] For we especially hold to this fact, that we dare most of all to reflect on the things that we undertake. To others, ignorance is courage, while knowledge brings hesitation. But they would be rightly judged strongest in spirit who, foreseeing most clearly both terrible and pleasant things, nevertheless do not turn away from danger. [4] And we are different from many men in our virtue, since we acquire friends not by receiving benefits but by conferring them . . . [5] We alone bring aid to others, without cowardice, not according to our knowledge of the profit, but according to our reliance on our liberty.