

ANCIENT GREEK for EVERYONE
Unit 16
CLASSICAL READING

Political theory thrived in fourth-century BCE Greece. While the political writings of Plato and Aristotle are more often read and studied today, Isocrates was also an influential and respected intellectual on political thought at the time. Among Isocrates' writings is an open letter to Nicocles, then the ruler of the island of Cyprus. The letter offers general principles for training a king. In this section, he focuses on preparing a king mentally.

... οὐδενὶ τῶν ἀσκητῶν οὕτω προσήκει τὸ σῶμα γυμνάζειν ὡς τοῖς βασιλευσὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν αὐτῶν· ἅπασαι γὰρ αἱ πανηγύρεις οὐδὲν μέρος τιθέασι τούτων τῶν ἄθλων, περὶ ὧν ὑμεῖς καθ' ἑκάστην ἀγωνίζεσθε τὴν ἡμέραν. ὧν ἐνθυμούμενον χρὴ προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν, ὅπως ὅσονπερ ταῖς τιμαῖς τῶν ἄλλων προέχεις, τοσοῦτον καὶ ταῖς ἀρεταῖς αὐτῶν διοίσεις. καὶ μὴ νόμιζε τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις πράγμασι χρησίμην εἶναι, πρὸς δὲ τὸ βελτίους ἡμᾶς καὶ φρονιμωτέρους γίγνεσθαι μηδεμίαν δύναμιν ἔχειν· μηδὲ καταγνῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοσαύτην δυστυχίαν, ὡς περὶ μὲν τὰ θηρία τέχνας εὐρήκαμεν αἷς αὐτῶν τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμεροῦμεν καὶ πλείονος ἀξίας ποιούμεν, ἡμᾶς δ' αὐτοὺς οὐδὲν ἂν πρὸς ἀρετὴν ὠφελήσαιμεν, ἀλλ' ὡς καὶ τῆς παιδείσεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιμελείας μάλιστα δυναμένης τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν εὐεργετεῖν, οὕτω διάκεισο τὴν γνώμην, καὶ τῶν τε παρόντων τοῖς φρονιμωτάτοις πλησίαζε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων οὐς ἂν δύνη μεταπέμπου, καὶ μήτε τῶν ποιητῶν εὐδοκιμούντων μήτε τῶν σοφιστῶν μηδενὸς οἴου δεῖν ἀπείρως ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν ἀκροατῆς γίγνου, τῶν δὲ μαθητῆς, καὶ παρασκεύαζε σεαυτὸν τῶν μὲν ἐλαττόνων κριτὴν, τῶν δὲ μειζόνων ἀγωνιστὴν· διὰ γὰρ τούτων τῶν γυμνασίων τάχιστ' ἂν γένοιο τοιοῦτος οἶον ὑπεθέμεθα δεῖν εἶναι τὸν ὀρθῶς βασιλεύσοντα καὶ τὴν πόλιν ὡς χρὴ διοικήσοντα. μάλιστα δ' ἂν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ σαυτοῦ παρακληθείης, εἰ δεινὸν ἠγήσαιο τοὺς χεῖρους τῶν βελτιόνων ἄρχειν καὶ τοὺς ἀνοητοτέρους τοῖς φρονιμωτέροις προστάττειν· ὅσω γὰρ ἂν ἐρωμενεστέρωσ τὴν τῶν ἄλλων ἄγνοιαν ἀτιμάσης, τοσοῦτω μᾶλλον τὴν αὐτοῦ διάνοιαν ἀσκήσεις.

(Isocrates 2.11-14)

VOCABULARY

ἄγνοια –ας ἡ stupidity	θηρίον –ου τό beast, animal
ἀγωνίζομαι compete, struggle	καταγνῶς (2 nd sg aorist) render judgment
ἀγωνιστής –οῦ ὁ competitor, rival	κριτ ἤς –οῦ ὁ judge, critic
ἄθλον –ου τό labor	μάλιστα especially
ἀκροατής –οῦ ὁ listener	μᾶλλον more
ἄν marks a hypothetical situation	μεταπέμπου command “send for”
ἄνότης –ον ignorant	νόμιζε command “believe”
ἄπειρος –ον inexperienced	οἶον as
ἀσκέω train	οἶου command “think”
ἀσκητής –οῦ ὁ athlete	ὅπως so that, in order that
ἀτιμάσης “you should dishonor”	ὅσος –α –ον (as much) as
βασιλεύσοντα (acc sg) one who will be king	ὅσονπερ as much as
γέναιο “you can become”	παίδευσις –εως ἡ education
γίγνου command “become”	πανήγυρις –εως ἡ assembly
γυμνάζω exercise	παρακληθείης “you could be comforted”
γυμνάσιον –ου τό exercise	παρασκεύαζε command “prepare”
διάκεισο command “fixate”	παρών –όντος ὁ someone present
διάνοια –ας ἡ intellect	πλησίαζε command “stay near”
διοικήσοντα (acc sg) one who will manage	προέχω surpass, exceed
δυνάμενος –η –ον powerful, having power	προσέχω turn to
δύνη ~ δύνασαι	προσῆκει it belongs to, concerns
δυστυχία –ας ἡ bad luck	προστάτω command
ἐνθυμούμενος –η –ον internalizing	σοφιστής –οῦ ὁ intellectual
ἐπιμέλεια –ας ἡ diligence	τοιούτος –αύτη –οὔτο of the same kind (as)
ἐρρώμενος –η –ον earnest, vigorous	τοσοὔτος –αύτη –οὔτο as much (as)
εὐδοκμῶν –οὔσα –όν famous	so great (...ὡς = that)
εὐεργετεῖν benefit	ὑποτίθημι advise
εὐρήκαμεν (1 st pl perfect) “we have found”	φρόνιμος –η –ον smart
ἤγήσαιο “you would believe”	*ὥστε so that, with the result that
ἡμερόω tame	ὠφελήσαιμεν “we can help”