

# Thucydides: Peloponnesian War

## Selections from Book 2

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From the translation by Richard Crawley (first published in 1874 and revised in 1910 by Richard Feetham)

### Funeral of Athenians

[2.34.1] In the same winter the Athenians gave a funeral at the public cost to those who had first fallen in this war. It was a custom [*nomos*] of their ancestors, and the manner of it is as follows. [2.34.2] Three days before the ceremony, the bones of the dead are laid out in a tent which has been erected; and their friends bring to their relatives such offerings as they please. [2.34.3] In the funeral procession cypress coffins are borne in cars, one for each tribe; the bones of the deceased being placed in the coffin of their tribe. Among these is carried one empty bier decked for the missing, that is, for those whose bodies could not be recovered. [2.34.4] Any citizen or stranger who pleases, joins in the procession: and the female relatives are there to wail at the burial. [2.34.5] The dead are laid in the public tomb in the most beautiful approach of the city [*polis*], in which those who fall in war are always buried; with the exception of those slain at Marathon, who for their singular and extraordinary bravery [*aret  *] were interred on the spot where they fell. [2.34.6] After the bodies have been laid in the earth, a man [*an  r*] chosen by the city-state [*polis*], of approved wisdom [*gn  m  *] and eminent reputation, pronounces over them an appropriate eulogy [*epainos*]; [2.34.7] after which all depart. Such is the manner of the burying; and throughout the whole of the war, whenever the occasion arose, the established custom [*nomos*] was observed. [2.34.8] Meanwhile these were the first that had fallen, and Pericles, son of Xanthippus, was chosen to speak. When the proper time arrived, he advanced from the tomb to an elevated platform in order to be heard by as many of the crowd as possible, and spoke as follows:

### Pericles' Funeral Oration

[2.35.1] "Most of my predecessors in this place have commended [*epaine  n*] him who made this speech part of the law [*nomos*], telling us that it is well that it should be delivered at the burial of those who fall in battle. For myself, I should have thought it sufficient [*arke  n*] that men [*an  r*] who became good [*agathos*] in deeds be rewarded by honors also shown by deeds; such as you now see in this funeral prepared at the people's cost. And I could have wished that the bravery [*aret  *] of many were not to be imperilled by a single man

[*anēr*], to be believed according to whether he spoke well or ill. For it is hard to speak properly upon a subject where it is even difficult to convince your hearers that you are speaking the truth. [2.35.2] On the one hand, the friend who is familiar with every fact of the story may think that some point has not been set forth with that fullness which he wishes and knows it to deserve; on the other, he who is a stranger to the matter may be led by envy to suspect exaggeration if he hears anything above his own nature. For men can endure to hear others praised [*epainos*] only so long as they can severally persuade themselves of their own ability to equal the actions recounted: when this point is passed, envy [*phthonos*] comes in and with it incredulity. [2.35.3] However, since it was so approved by those of long ago, it becomes my duty to obey the law [*nomos*] and to try to satisfy your several wishes and opinions as best I may.

[2.36.1] "I shall begin with our ancestors: it is both just and fitting that they should have the honor of being commemorated [*mnēmē*] first on an occasion like the present. They dwelt in the country without break in the succession from generation to generation, and handed it down free to the present time by their bravery [*aretē*]. [2.36.2] And if those ancestors deserve eulogy [*epainos*], much more deserving are our own fathers, who added to their inheritance the empire [*arkhē*] which we now possess, and spared no pains to be able to leave their acquisitions to us of the present generation. [2.36.3] Lastly, there are few parts of our dominions that have not been augmented by those of us here, who are still more or less in the vigor of life; while the *polis* has been furnished by us with everything that can enable it to depend on its own resources [*autarkēs*] whether for war or for peace. [2.36.4] That part of our history which tells of the military achievements which gave us our several possessions, or of the ready zeal with which either we or our fathers stemmed the tide of Hellenic or foreign aggression, is a theme too familiar to my hearers for me to dilate on, and I shall therefore pass it by. But what was the road by which we reached our position, what the form of government under which our greatness grew, what the national habits out of which it sprang; these are questions which I may try to solve before I proceed to my eulogy [*epainos*] upon these men; since I think this to be a subject upon which on the present occasion a speaker may properly dwell, and to which the whole assemblage, whether citizens or foreigners, may listen with advantage.

[2.37.1] "Our constitution does not copy the laws [*nomos*] of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. When it comes to the laws [*nomos*], they afford equal justice to all in their personal disputes; but when it comes to prestige, an individual receives honor for recognized public achievement, not because of class but because of merit [*aretē*]; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to do

something good [*agathos*] for the state [*polis*], he is not hindered by his low status. [2.37.2] The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. [2.37.3] But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear [*deos*] is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey whoever is in power [*arkhē*] and the laws [*nomos*], particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually laid down, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged shame [*aiskhunē*].

"[2.38.1] Further, we provide plenty of means for the mind [*gnōmē*] to refresh itself from toil [*ponos*]. We celebrate games and sacrifices all the year round, and the elegance of our private establishments forms a daily source of pleasure and helps to banish distress [*lupē*]; [2.38.2] while the magnitude of our city [*polis*] draws the produce of the world into our harbor, so that to the Athenian the goods [*agathos*] of other countries are as familiar to enjoy as those of his own.

" [2.39.1] If we turn to our military policy, there also we differ from our opponents. We throw open our city [*polis*] to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality; trusting less in system and policy than to the innate bravery [*eu-psūkhos*] of our citizens; while in education, where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness [adj. *anēr*], at Athens we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger. [2.39.2] In proof of this it may be noticed that the Lacedaemonians do not invade our country alone, but bring with them all their confederates; while we Athenians advance unsupported into the territory of a neighbor, and fighting upon a foreign soil usually vanquish with ease those who are defending their homes. [2.39.3] Our united force was never yet encountered by any enemy, because we have at once to attend to our navy and to dispatch our citizens by land upon a hundred different services; so that, wherever they engage with some such fraction of our strength, a success against a detachment is magnified into a victory over the nation, and a defeat into a reverse suffered at the hands of our entire people. [2.39.4] And yet if with habits [*nomos*] not of labor [*ponos*] but of ease, and courage that is not artificial but natural, we are still willing to encounter danger, we have the double advantage of escaping the experience of hardships in anticipation and of facing them in the hour of need as fearlessly as those who are never free from them.

" [2.40.1] Nor are these the only points in which our city [*polis*] is worthy of admiration, for we love fine things without extravagance, and we love wisdom

but without softness; furthermore we use wealth more as an opportunity for action rather than something for which to speak boastfully, and being poor is not shameful [*aiskhros*] for anyone to admit, but what is really shameful [*aiskhros*] is not to escape [*dia-phugeîn*] it by work.

[2.40.2] Those who oversee the affairs of the *polis* also attend to their private affairs, and the rest, though occupied with their trades, are still skilled judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these duties not as non-political [not *apragmōn*] but as useless, we Athenians are at least able to judge, or even propose, public questions, and, instead of looking on discussion as an obstacle in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all.

[2.40.3] Again, in our enterprises we present the singular spectacle of daring and deliberation, each carried to its highest point, and both united in the same persons; although with others over-confidence is the result of ignorance, while deliberation leads to inaction. But the greatest courage [*psūkhē*] will surely be adjudged most justly to those, who best know the difference between fear and pleasure and yet are never tempted to shrink from danger. [2.40.4] In doing good [*aretē*] we are equally singular, acquiring our friends by conferring, not by receiving, favors. Yet, of course, the doer of the favor is the more reliable friend of the two, in order by continued kindness [*kharis*] to keep the recipient in his debt; while the debtor feels less keenly from knowing that he is going to repay the benefit [*aretē*] not as a favor [*kharis*] but as a debt.

[2.40.5] And it is only the Athenians, who, fearless of consequences, grant their favors [*kharis*] not from calculations of expediency, but in the confidence of liberality.

“ [2.41.1] In short, I say that as a city [*polis*] we are the education of Hellas, while I doubt if the world can produce a man [*anēr*] who, where he has only himself to depend upon [*autarkēs*], is equal to so many emergencies, and graced [*kharis*] by so happy a versatility, as the Athenian. [2.41.2] And that this is no mere boast thrown out for the occasion, but plain matter of fact, the power of the *polis* acquired by these habits proves. [2.41.3] For Athens alone of her contemporaries is found when tested to be greater than her reputation, and alone causes neither outrage in the attacking enemy, because he is being injured by such men, nor resentment in her subjects because their masters [from *arkhē*] are unworthy. [2.41.4] Rather, the admiration of the present and succeeding ages will be ours, since we have not left our power without witness, but have shown it by strong signs; and far from needing a Homer for our eulogist [related to *epainos*] or another of his craft whose verses might charm for the moment but whose claims the factual truth will destroy, we have forced every sea and land to be the highway of our daring, and everywhere, whether for evil or for good [*agathos*], have left imperishable memorials [*mnēmeion*]

behind us. [2.41.5] Such is the *polis* [of Athens] for which these men, because they thought it right that they not be deprived of her, nobly fought and died; and well may every one of their survivors be ready to suffer in her cause.

“ [2.42.1] Indeed if I have dwelt at some length upon the character of our *polis*, it has been to show that our stake in the struggle is not the same as theirs who have no such blessings to lose, and also that the eulogy of the men over whom I am now speaking might be established by definite signs. [2.42.2] That eulogy is now in a great measure complete; for the *polis* [= Athens] that I have celebrated is only what the bravery [*aretē*] of these and their like have made her, those whose fame, unlike that of most Hellenes, will be found to match their deeds. It is my belief that these men’s [*anēr*] closing scene indicates their bravery [*aretē*], either as its final confirmation or the first intimation of their having any. [2.42.3] For there is justice in the claim that steadfastness [*andragathia*] in his country's battles should be as a cloak to cover a man's other imperfections; since the good [*agathos*] action has blotted out the bad, and his merit as a citizen more than outweighed his demerits as an individual. [2.42.4] But none of these allowed either wealth with its prospect of future enjoyment to unnerve his spirit, or poverty with its hope of a day of freedom and riches to tempt him to shrink from danger [*dia-phugeîn*]. No, holding that vengeance upon their enemies was more to be desired than any personal blessings, and reckoning this to be the most glorious of hazards, they joyfully determined to accept the risk, to make sure of their vengeance, and to let their wishes wait; and while committing to hope the uncertainty of final success, in the business before them they thought fit to act boldly and trust in themselves. Thus choosing to die resisting, rather than to live submitting, they fled [*phugeîn*] only from dishonor [*aiskhros*], but met danger face to face, and through the fortune of the briefest instant, at the height [*akmē*] of their glory rather than of their fear [*deos*], they left us.

“ [2.43.1] So died these men as befitted the *polis*. You, their survivors, must determine to have as unflinching a resolution in the field, though you may pray that it may have a happier issue. And not contented with ideas derived only from words of the advantages [*agathos*] which are bound up with the defence of your *polis* from the enemy, though these would furnish a valuable text to a speaker even before an audience so alive to them as the present; but instead you must yourselves contemplate the power of the *polis* in action every single day and make her your passion [*erastēs*]; and then, when all her greatness shows itself to you, you must reflect that it was by courage, sense of duty, and a keen feeling of honor in action that men [*anēr*] were enabled to win all this, and that no personal failure in an enterprise could make them consent to deprive their *polis* of their bravery [*aretē*], but they bestowed it on her as the finest contribution that they could offer. [2.43.2] For this offering of their bodies made in common by them all they each of them individually received

that eulogy [*epainos*] which never grows old, and for a tomb, not so much that in which they have been laid, but that noblest of shrines where their glory is left behind to be eternally remembered upon every occasion on which deed or story shall call for its commemoration. [2.43.3] For famous men [*anēr*] have the whole earth for their tomb; and in lands far from their own, where the column with its epitaph declares it, there lives on in every person an unwritten record [*mnēmē*] not on stone but in our hearts [*gnōmē*].

[2.43.4] Take these as your model and, judging happiness to be freedom, and freedom to be bravery [*eu-psūkhos*], never decline the dangers of war.

[2.43.5] For it is not the miserable that would most justly be unsparing of their lives; these have no hope for what is good [*agathos*]: it is rather they to whom continued life may bring reverses as yet unknown, and to whom a downfall, if it came, would be most tremendous in its consequences. [2.43.6] And surely, to a man [*anēr*] of spirit, the degradation of cowardice must be immeasurably more grievous than the unfelt death which strikes him in the midst of his strength and shared hope.

“ [2.44.1] Comfort, therefore, not condolence, is what I have to offer to the parents of the dead who may be here. Numberless are the chances to which, as they know, the life of man is subject; but fortunate indeed are they who draw for their lot a death so glorious as that which has caused your pain [*lupē*], and to whom life has been so exactly measured as to terminate in the happiness in which it has been passed. [2.44.2] Still I know that this is a hard saying, especially when it concerns those of whom you will constantly be reminded [*hupomnēma*] by seeing, in the homes of others, blessings of which once you also boasted: for pain [*lupē*] is felt not so much because of being deprived of good things [*agathos*] we have never experienced, but rather because of the loss of that to which we have been long accustomed. [2.44.3] Yet you who are still of an age to beget children must bear up in the hope of having others in their place; not only will they help you to forget those whom you have lost, but they will be to the *polis* both a reinforcement and a security; for never can a fair or just policy be expected of the citizen who does not, like his fellows, deliberate with the interests and apprehensions of a father.

[2.44.4] While those of you who have passed your prime must congratulate yourselves with the thought that the best part of your life was fortunate, and that the brief span that remains will be cheered by the fame of the departed. For it is only the love of honor that never grows old; and honor it is, not gain, as some would have it, that rejoices the heart of age and helplessness.

“ [2.45.1] Turning to the sons or brothers of the dead, I see an arduous struggle before you. When a man is gone, all are accustomed to praise him, and should your merit [*aretē*] be ever so transcendent, you will still find it difficult not merely to overtake, but even to approach their renown. The living have envy [*phthonos*] to contend with, while those who are no longer in our

path are honored with a goodwill into which rivalry does not enter. [2.45.2] On the other hand, if I must say anything on the subject of excellence [*aretē*] of women to those of you who will now be in widowhood, it will be all comprised in this brief exhortation. Great will be your glory [*doxa*] in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least renowned [*kleos*] among the men, whether for excellence [*aretē*] or for censure [*psogos*].

" [2.46.1] My task is now finished. I have performed it to the best of my ability, and in word, at least, the requirements of the law [*nomos*] are now satisfied. If deeds be in question, those who are here interred have received part of their honors already, and for the rest, their children will be brought up till manhood at the public expense: the state [*polis*] thus offers a valuable prize, as the garland of victory in this race of valor, for the reward both of those who have fallen and of their survivors. And where the rewards for merit [*aretē*] are greatest, there the citizens are the best [from *aretē*] men [*anēr*].

" [2.46.2] And now that you have brought to a close your lamentations for your relatives, you may depart."

[2.47.1] Such was the funeral that took place during this winter, with which the first year of the war came to an end. [2.47.2] In the first days of summer the Lacedaemonians and their allies, with two-thirds of their forces as before, invaded Attica, under the command of Arkhidamos, son of Zeuxidamos, King of Lacedaemon, and occupied and laid waste the country.

## The plague at Athens

[2.47.3] Not many days after their arrival in Attica the disease first began to show itself among the Athenians. It was said that it had broken out in many places previously, in the neighborhood of Lemnos and elsewhere; but a pestilence of such extent and mortality was nowhere remembered. [2.47.4] Neither were the physicians at first sufficient [*arkeîn*], ignorant as they were of the proper way to treat [*therapeuein*] it, but they themselves died the most most often, as they visited the sick most often; nor did any human skill succeed any better. Supplications in the temples, divinations, and so forth were found equally futile, till the overwhelming nature of the disaster at last put a stop to them altogether.

[2.48.1] It first began, it is said, in the parts of Ethiopia above Egypt, and from there it descended into Egypt and Libya and into most of the [Persian] king's country. [2.48.2] Suddenly falling upon the *polis* [of Athens], it first attacked the population in Piraeus—which was the occasion of their saying that the Peloponnesians had poisoned the reservoirs, there being as yet no wells there—and afterwards appeared in the upper city [*polis*], when the deaths became much more frequent. [2.48.3] All speculation as to its origin and its causes [*aitiā*], if causes adequate for such destruction may have the power to produce

this change, I leave to other writers, whether lay or professional; for myself, I shall simply set down its nature, and explain the symptoms by which perhaps it may be recognized by the observer, if it should ever break out again. This I can the better do, as I had the disease myself, and observed its course in the case of others.

[2.49.1] That year then is admitted to have been otherwise unprecedentedly free from sickness; and such few cases as occurred all developed into this.

[2.49.2] As a rule, however, there were no preliminary symptoms; but people in good health were all of a sudden attacked by violent heats in the head, and redness and inflammation in the eyes, while internally the throat or tongue became bloody and emitted an unnatural and fetid breath. [2.49.3] These symptoms were followed by sneezing and hoarseness, after which the pain [*ponos*] soon reached the chest, and produced a hard cough. When it fixed in the stomach, it upset it; and discharges of bile of every kind named by physicians ensued, accompanied by very great distress. [2.49.4] In most cases also dry heaving followed, producing violent spasms, which in some cases ceased soon after, in others much later. [2.49.5] Externally the body was not very hot to the touch, nor pale in its appearance, but reddish, livid, and breaking out into small pustules and ulcers. But internally it burned so that the patient could not bear to have on him clothing or linen even of the very lightest description; or indeed to be otherwise than stark naked. What they would have liked best would have been to throw themselves into cold water; as indeed was done by some of the neglected sick, who plunged into the rain-tanks in their agonies of unquenchable thirst; though it made no difference whether they drank little or much. [2.49.6] Besides this, the miserable feeling of not being able to rest or sleep never ceased to torment them. The body meanwhile did not waste away so long as the disease was at its height, but held out beyond expectation against its ravages; so that when they succumbed to the internal inflammation, as in most cases, on the seventh or eighth day, they had still some strength in them. But if they passed [*dia-phugeîn*] this stage, and the disease descended further into the bowels, inducing a violent ulceration there accompanied by severe diarrhea, this brought on a weakness which was generally fatal. [2.49.7] For the disorder first settled in the head, ran its course from there through the whole of the body, and, even where it did not prove fatal, it still left its mark on the extremities; [2.49.8] for it settled in the genitalia, the fingers and the toes, and many escaped [*dia-phugeîn*] with the loss of these, some too with that of their eyes. Others again were seized with an entire loss of memory on their first recovery, and did not know either themselves or their friends.

[2.50.1] But while the nature of the disease was beyond words, and its attacks almost too grievous for human nature to endure, it was still in the following circumstance that its difference from anything ordinary was most clearly



shown. All the birds and beasts that prey upon human bodies, either abstained from touching them (though there were many lying unburied), or died after tasting them. [2.50.2] In proof of this, it was noticed that birds of this kind actually disappeared; they were not around the bodies, or indeed to be seen at all. But of course the effects which I have mentioned could best be studied in a domestic animal like the dog.

[2.51.1] Such then, if we pass over the varieties of particular cases which were many and peculiar, were the general features of the disease. Meanwhile at that time none of the ordinary illnesses troubled them; or if any case occurred, it ended in this. [2.51.2] Some died in neglect, others in the midst of every attention [*therapeuein*]. No remedy was found that could be used as a specific; for what did good in one case, did harm in another. [2.51.3] Clearly no physical constitution was sufficient [*autarkēs*] to resist it, all alike being swept away, although treated with the utmost attention [*therapeuein*]. [2.51.4] By far the most terrible feature in the malady was the dejection which ensued when any one felt himself sickening, for the feelings [*gnōmē*] of despair into which they instantly fell took away their power of resistance, and left them a much easier prey to the disorder; besides which, there was the awful spectacle of men dying like sheep, through having caught the infection in nursing each other. This caused the greatest mortality. [2.51.5] On the one hand, if they were afraid to visit each other, they perished from neglect; indeed many houses were emptied of their inmates for lack of a care-giver [*therapeuein*]: on the other, if they ventured to do so, death was the consequence. This was especially the case with such as made any pretensions to goodness [*aretē*]: a sense of obligation [*aiskhunē*] made them unsparing of themselves in their attendance in their friends' houses, where even the members of the family were at last worn out by the moans of the dying, and succumbed to the force of the disaster. [2.51.6] Yet it was with those who had recovered [*dia-phugeîn*] from the disease that the sick and the dying found most compassion. These knew what it was from experience, and had now no fear for themselves; for the same person was never attacked twice—never at least fatally. And such people not only received the congratulations of others, but they themselves also, in the elation of the moment, half entertained the vain hope that they were for the future safe from any disease whatsoever.

[2.52.1] An aggravation of the existing suffering [*ponos*] was the influx from the country into the city, and this was especially felt by the new arrivals.

[2.52.1] As there were no houses to receive them, they had to be lodged at the hot season of the year in stifling cabins, where the mortality raged without restraint. The bodies of dying men lay one upon another, and half-dead creatures reeled about the streets and gathered round all the fountains in their longing for water. [2.52.3] The sacred places also in which they had quartered themselves were full of corpses of persons that had died there, just as they

were; for as the disaster passed all bounds, men, not knowing what was to become of them, became utterly careless of everything, whether sacred or profane. [2.52.4] All the burial customs [*nomos*] before in use were entirely upset, and they buried the bodies as best they could. Many from want of the proper appliances, through so many of their friends having died already, had recourse to the most shameless modes of burial: sometimes getting the start of those who had raised a pile, they threw their own dead body upon the stranger's pyre and ignited it; sometimes they tossed the corpse which they were carrying on the top of another that was burning, and so went off.

[2.53.1] Nor was this the only form of lawless extravagance in the city [*polis*] which owed its origin to the disease. Men were now more inclined to do what they had formerly done reluctantly and secretly, seeing the rapid transitions produced by persons in prosperity suddenly dying and those who before had nothing succeeding to their property. [2.53.2] So they resolved to spend quickly and enjoy themselves, regarding their lives and riches as alike things of a day. [2.53.3] Perseverance in what men called honor was popular with none, it was so uncertain whether they would be spared to attain the object; but it was settled that immediate pleasure, and all that contributed to it, was both honorable and useful. [2.53.4] There was neither fear [*phobos*] of gods or law [*nomos*] of man to restrain them. As for the first, they judged it to be just the same whether they worshipped them or not, as they saw all alike perishing; and for the last, no one expected to live to be brought to trial for his offences, but each felt that a far severer sentence had been already passed upon them all and hung ever over their heads, and before this fell it was only reasonable to enjoy life a little.

[2.54.1] Such was the nature of the calamity, and heavily did it weigh on the Athenians: death raging inside the city and devastation outside. [2.54.2] Among other things which they remembered in their distress was, very naturally, the following verse which the old men said had long ago been uttered:

'A Dorian war shall come and with it death [*loimos*].'

[2.54.3] So a dispute arose as to whether dearth [*limos*] and not death [*loimos*] had not been the word in the verse; but at the present juncture, it was of course decided in favor of the latter; for the people made their memory [*mnēmē*] fit in with their sufferings. I fancy, however, that if another Dorian war should ever afterwards come upon us, and a dearth should happen to accompany it, the verse will probably be read accordingly. [2.54.4] The oracle also which had been given to the Lacedaemonians was now remembered [*mnēmē*] by those who knew of it. When the god was asked whether they should go to war, he answered that if they put their might into it, victory would be theirs, and that he would himself be with them. [2.54.5] With this oracle

events were supposed to tally. For the disease broke out as soon as the Peloponnesians invaded Attica, and never entering Peloponnese (not at least to an extent worth noticing), committed its worst ravages at Athens, and next to Athens, at the most populous of the other towns. Such was the history of the disease.

[2.55.1] After ravaging the plain, the Peloponnesians advanced into the Paralian region as far as Laurion, where the Athenian silver mines are, and first laid waste the side looking towards Peloponnese, next that which faces Euboea and Andros. [2.55.2] But Pericles, who was still general, held the same opinion [*gnōmē*] as in the former invasion, and would not let the Athenians march out against them.

[2.56.1] However, while they were still in the plain, and had not yet entered the Paralian land, he had prepared an armament of a hundred ships for Peloponnese, and when all was ready put out to sea. [2.56.2] On board the ships he took four thousand Athenian heavy infantry, and three hundred cavalry in horse transports, and then for the first time made out of old galleys; fifty Chian and Lesbian vessels also joining in the expedition. [2.56.3] When this Athenian armament put out to sea, they left the Peloponnesians in Attica in the Paralian region. [2.56.4] Arriving at Epidaurus in Peloponnese they ravaged most of the territory, and even had hopes of taking the city [*polis*] by an assault: in this however they were not successful. [2.56.5] Putting out from Epidaurus, they laid waste the territory of Troezen, Halieis, and Hermione, all towns on the coast of Peloponnese, [2.56.6] and thence sailing to Prasiai, a maritime town in Laconia, ravaged part of its territory, and took and sacked the place itself; after which they returned home, but found the Peloponnesians gone and no longer in Attica.

[2.57.1] During the whole time that the Peloponnesians were in Attica and the Athenians on the expedition in their ships, men kept dying of the disease both in the army and in the city [*polis*] of Athens. Indeed it was actually asserted that the departure of the Peloponnesians was hastened by fear of the disorder; as they heard from deserters that it was in the city [*polis*], and also could see the burials going on. [2.57.2] Yet in this invasion they remained longer than in any other, and ravaged the whole country, for they were about forty days in Attica.

[2.58.1] The same summer Hagnon, son of Nikias, and Kleopompos, son of Kleinias, the colleagues of Pericles, took the armament of which he had lately made use, and went off upon an expedition against the Chalcidians in the direction of Thrace and Potidaea, which was still under siege. As soon as they arrived, they brought up their engines against Potidaea and tried every means of taking it, [2.58.2] but did not succeed either in capturing the city [*polis*] or in doing anything else worthy of their preparations. For the disease attacked

them here also, and committed such havoc as to cripple them completely, even the previously healthy soldiers of the former expedition catching the infection from Hagnon's troops; while Phormio and the sixteen hundred men whom he commanded only escaped by being no longer in the neighbourhood of the Chalcidians. [2.58.3] The end of it was that Hagnon returned with his ships to Athens, having lost one thousand and fifty out of four thousand heavy infantry in about forty days; though the soldiers stationed there before remained in the country and carried on the siege of Potidaea.

[2.59.1] After the second invasion of the Peloponnesians a change came over the spirit of the Athenians. Their land had now been twice laid waste; and war and pestilence at once had changed their attitudes [*gnōmē*].

[2.59.2] They began to find fault [*aitiā*] with Pericles, as the author of the war and the cause of all their misfortunes, and became eager to come to terms with Lacedaemon, and actually sent ambassadors thither, who did not however succeed in their mission. They were now utterly desperate in their attitude [*gnōmē*] and all vented itself upon Pericles. [2.59.3] When he saw them exasperated at the present turn of affairs and acting exactly as he had anticipated, he called an assembly, being (it must be remembered) still general, with the double object of moving them to greater calm and confidence by dispelling their angry attitude [*gnōmē*].

He accordingly came forward and spoke as follows:

## Pericles' last speech

"[2.60.1] I was not unprepared for the indignation of which I have been the object, as I know its causes [*aitiā*]; and I have called an assembly for the purpose of reminding you upon certain points, and of protesting against your being unreasonably irritated with me, or cowed by your sufferings. [2.60.2] I think that the city [*polis*] if it is generally sound benefits its private citizens more than if it prospers as far as individuals are concerned but fails as a whole.

[2.60.3] A man [*anēr*] may be personally ever so well off, and yet if his country be ruined he must be ruined with it; whereas a flourishing commonwealth always affords chances of salvation to unfortunate individuals.

[2.60.4] Since then a state [*polis*] can support the misfortunes of private citizens, while they cannot support hers, it is surely the duty of every one to be zealous in her defence, and not like you to be so caught up in your personal afflictions as to give up all thoughts of the common safety, and to blame [*aitiā*] me for having counselled war and yourselves for having voted it. [2.60.5] And yet if you are angry with me, it is with a man [*anēr*] who, as I believe, is not inferior either in knowledge of the proper policy, or in the ability to expound it, and who is moreover not only a patriot but also incorruptible. [2.60.6] A man

possessing that knowledge without that faculty of exposition might as well have no idea at all on the matter: if he had both these gifts, but is disaffected with his *polis*, he would not be an eager advocate for her interests; while if his patriotism were not proof against bribery, everything would go for a price. [2.60.7] So that if you thought that I was even moderately distinguished for these qualities when you took my advice and went to war, there is certainly no reason now why I should be charged [*aitiā*] with having done wrong.

“[2.61.1] For those of course who have a free choice in the matter and whose fortunes are not at stake, making war is utter madness. But if the only choice was between submission with loss of independence, and danger with the hope of preserving that independence, in such a case it is he who will flee [*phugeîn*] the risk that deserves blame, not he who will. [2.61.2] I am the same man and do not alter, it is you who change, since in fact you took my advice while unhurt, and waited for misfortune to repent of it; and the apparent error of my policy lies in the weakness of your resolution [*gnōmē*], since the suffering [verb: *lupē*] that it entails is being felt by every one among you, while its advantage is still remote and obscure to all, and a great and sudden reverse having befallen you, your mind is too much depressed to persevere in your resolves. [2.61.3] For before what is sudden, unexpected, and least within calculation, the spirit cowers; and putting all else aside, the disease has certainly been an emergency of this kind. [2.61.4] Born, however, as you are, citizens of a great *polis*, and brought up, as you have been, with habits equal to your birth, you should be ready to face the greatest disasters and still to keep unimpaired the glory of your prestige. For the judgment of mankind is as critical of weakness that falls short of its reputation, as it is hostile to arrogance that aspires higher than its due. Cease then to grieve for your private misfortunes, and address yourselves instead to the safety of us all.

“[2.62.1] If you reject the burdens [*ponos*] which the war makes necessary, and fear that after all they may not end in success, it should suffice [*arkeîn*] for you that I have on many occasions already shown you that this is a false fear but I will now reveal an advantage arising from the greatness of your empire [*arkhē*], which I think you have never realized, which I never mentioned in my previous speeches, and which has so bold a sound that I should scarcely venture it now, if it were not for the unnatural depression which I see around me.

[2.62.2] You perhaps think that your empire [*arkhē*] extends only over your allies; I will declare to you the truth. The visible field of action has two parts, land and sea. In the whole of one of these you are completely supreme, not merely as far as you use it at present, but also to what further extent you may think fit: in fine, your naval resources are such that your vessels may go where they please, without the king or any other nation on earth being able to stop them. [2.62.3] So that although you may think it a terrible thing to be

deprived of your land and houses, still you must see that your power lies elsewhere; and instead of fretting on their account, you should really regard them in the light of the gardens and other accessories that embellish a great fortune, and as, in comparison, of little moment. You should know too that liberty preserved by your efforts will easily recover for us what we have lost, while, if we surrender, even what you have will pass from you. Your fathers receiving these possessions not from others, but from themselves, did not let slip what their labor [*ponos*] had acquired, but delivered them safe to you; and in this respect at least you must prove yourselves their equals, remembering that to lose what one has got is more disgraceful [*aiskhros*] than to fail in trying for more, and you must confront your enemies not merely with spirit but with disdain. [2.62.4] Indeed lucky ignorance can impart confidence, even to a coward, but disdain is the privilege of those who, like us, have been convinced by knowledge [*gnōmē*] of their superiority to their adversary. [2.62.5] And where luck is equal, knowledge fortifies courage by the contempt which is its result, its trust being placed, not in hope, which is the refuge of the desperate, but in a judgment [*gnōmē*] grounded upon existing resources, which is the basis of planning.

"[2.63.1] Again, your *polis* has a right to your services in sustaining the prestige from its empire [verb *arkhē*]. These are a common source of pride to you all, and you cannot flee [*phugeîn*] its burdens [*ponos*] and still expect to share its honors. You should remember also that what you are fighting against is not merely slavery as an exchange for independence, but also loss of empire [*arkhē*] and danger from the animosities incurred during that empire [*arkhē*]. [2.63.2] Besides, to withdraw is no longer possible, if indeed any of you in the panic of the moment desires to make a grand gesture of unambitiousness [*apragmōn*]. For what you possess is a tyranny; to take it perhaps was wrong, but to let it go is unsafe. [2.63.3] And men of these views, if they persuade others, would quickly destroy the *polis*, indeed even if I suppose they should found an independent settlement by themselves; for the non-political [*apragmōn*] are never secure without people of action at their side; and it is not to the advantage of an imperial [*arkhē*] city [*polis*] but a subservient one to live safely in slavery.

"[2.64.1] But you must not be seduced by citizens like these or angry with me—who, if I voted for war, only did as you did yourselves—in spite of the enemy having invaded your country and done what you could be certain that he would do, if you refused to comply with his demands; and although besides what we counted for, the disease has come upon us—the only point indeed at which our calculation has been at fault. It is this, I know, that has had a large share in making me more unpopular than I should otherwise have been—quite undeservedly, unless you are also prepared to give me the credit of any success with which chance may present you. [2.64.2] Besides, the acts of the

gods we must accept as a necessity, those of the enemy with fortitude; this was the old way at the *polis* [=Athens] , and do not you prevent it being so still. [2.64.3] Remember, too, that if your country has the greatest name in all the world, it is because she never bent before disaster; because she has expended more lives and toil [*ponos*] in war than any other city, and has won for herself a power greater than any hitherto known, the memory [*mnēmē*] of which will remain; even if now, in obedience to the general law of decay, we should ever be forced to yield, still it will be remembered that we held rule over more Hellenes than any other Hellenic state, that we sustained the greatest wars against their united or separate powers, and inhabited a city [*polis*] unrivalled by any other in resources or magnitude. [2.64.4] These glories may incur the censure of the non-political [*apragmōn*]; but in those who want to act they will awaken emulation, and in those who must remain without them an envious [*phthonos*] regret. [2.64.5] Hatred and unpopularity at the moment have fallen to the lot of all who have aspired to rule others; but where envy [*epi-phthonos*] must be incurred, true wisdom incurs it for the highest objects. Hatred also is short-lived; but that which makes the splendor of the present and the glory of the future remains for ever unforgotten. [2.64.6] Make your decision, therefore, looking forward to the glory of the future, and accepting the obligations [*aiskhros*] of the present: do not send heralds to Lacedaemon, and do not betray any sign of being oppressed by your present sufferings [*ponos*], since they whose minds [*gnōmē*] are least sensitive to distress [*verb lupē*], and whose hands are most quick to meet it, are the greatest men and the greatest cities [*polis*]."

## Assessment of Pericles

[2.65.1] Such were the arguments by which Pericles tried to cure the Athenians of their anger against him and to divert their thoughts [*gnōmē*] from their immediate fears. [2.65.2] As a community he succeeded in convincing them; they not only gave up all idea of sending to Lacedaemon, but applied themselves with increased energy to the war; still as private individuals they could not help being distressed [*lupē*] because of their sufferings, the common people [*dēmos*] having been deprived of the little that they ever possessed, while those of rank and influence had lost fine properties with expensive houses and buildings in the country, and, worst of all, had war instead of peace. [2.65.3] In fact, the public feeling against him did not subside until he had been fined. [2.65.4] Not long afterwards, however, according to the way of the multitude, they again elected him general, and committed all their affairs to him, having now become less sensitive to their personal misfortunes, and the whole *polis* understanding that he was the best man of all for the public necessities. [2.65.5] For as long as he was at the head of the *polis* during the peace, he pursued a moderate and conservative policy; and in his time its greatness was at its height. When the war broke out, here also he

seems to have accurately assessed the power of his country.

[2.65.6] He outlived its commencement two years and six months, and the correctness of his forethought respecting it became better known by his death. [2.65.7] He told them to stay calm, to take care of [*therapeuein*] their navy, to acquire no new empire [*arkhē*], and to expose the *polis* to no hazards during the war, and, promised them a favorable result if they did this. What they did was totally opposite, allowing private ambitions and private interests, in matters apparently quite unrelated to the war, actions harmful both to themselves and to their allies—actions whose success would only produce honor and advantage for individuals, and whose failure entailed certain disaster for the *polis* in the war. [2.65.8] The cause [*aition*] was that Pericles indeed, by his prestige and his wisdom [*gnōmē*] and his manifest incorruptibility, was enabled to exercise an independent control over the multitude—in short, to lead them instead of being led by them; for as he never sought power by improper means, he was never compelled to flatter them, but, on the contrary, enjoyed so high an estimation that he could afford to anger them by contradiction. [2.65.9] Whenever he saw them unseasonably and insolently elated, he would with a word reduce them to alarm; on the other hand, if they fell victims to a panic, he could at once restore them to confidence. In short, what was nominally a democracy became, in his hands, rule [*arkhē*] by the first citizen [*anēr*]. [2.65.10] With his successors it was different. More on a level with one another, and each grasping at supremacy, they ended by committing even the conduct of state affairs to the whims of the people [*dēmos*]. [2.65.11] This, as might have been expected in a great and imperial [*arkhē*] city [*polis*], produced a host of blunders, and amongst them the Sicilian expedition; though this failed not so much through an mistake in judgment [*gnōmē*] regarding whom to attack, as that the senders did not take the best measures afterwards to assist those who had gone out, but choosing rather to occupy themselves with private conspiracies for the leadership of the people [*dēmos*], by which they not only paralysed operations in the field, but also first introduced discord in the city [*polis*]. [2.65.12] Yet after losing most of their fleet besides other forces in Sicily, and with faction already dominant in the *polis*, they could still for three years make head against their original adversaries, joined not only by the Sicilians, but also by their own allies nearly all in revolt, and at last by the king's son, Cyrus, who furnished the funds for the Peloponnesian navy. And they did not surrender until they collapsed all by themselves, entangled in their own personal feuds.

[2.65.13] So abundant were the resources from which Pericles alone foresaw an easy victory in the war over the unaided forces of the Peloponnesians.

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