

Excerpts from Plato, Menexenos, that provide parallels to the Epistle to Hebrews

Socrate and Menexenos discuss about the public speech of Aspasia, that she held at the commemoration of Athens' late (dead) heroes.

1. Imitate the virtues of the departed...

Menex 236.d.7 to Menex 237.a.1 λόγῳ δὲ δὴ τὸν λειπόμενον κόσμον ὃ τε νόμος προστάττει 236.e ἀποδοῦναι τοῖς ἀνδράσιν καὶ χρή. ἔργων γὰρ εὖ πραχθέντων λόγῳ καλῶς ῥηθέντι μνήμη καὶ κόσμος τοῖς πράξασι γίγνεται παρὰ τῶν ἀκουσάντων: δεῖ δὴ τοιοῦτου τινὸς λόγου ὅστις τοὺς μὲν τετελευτηκότας ἱκανῶς ἐπαινέσεται, τοῖς δὲ ζῶσιν εὐμενῶς παραινέσεται, ἐκγόνοις μὲν καὶ ἀδελφοῖς **μιμῆσθαι τὴν τῶνδε ἀρετὴν** παρακελευόμενος, πατέρας δὲ καὶ μητέρας καὶ εἴ τινες τῶν ἄνωθεν ἔτι προγόνων λείπονται, τούτους δὲ 237.a παραμυθούμενος. τίς οὖν ἂν ἡμῖν τοιοῦτος λόγος φανείη;

The tribute of words remains to be given to them, as is meet and by law ordained. For noble words are a memorial and a crown of noble actions, which are given to the doers of them by the hearers. A word is needed which will duly praise the dead and gently admonish the living, exhorting the brethren and descendants of the departed to **imitate their virtue**, and consoling their fathers and mothers and the survivors, if any, who may chance to be alive of the previous generation. What sort of a word will this be, and how shall we rightly begin the praises of these brave men?

2. The theme of the mother land and of soujourning

Menex 237.b.2 to Menex 237.c.3 τῆς δ' εὐγενείας πρῶτον ὑπήρξε τοῖσδε ἢ τῶν προγόνων γένεσις οὐκ ἔπηλυς οὔσα, **οὐδὲ τοὺς ἐκγόνους τούτους ἀποφηνάμενη μετοικοῦντας ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ ἄλλοθεν σφῶν ἠκόντων, ἀλλ' αὐτόχθονας καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν πατρίδι οἰκοῦντας καὶ ζῶντας**, καὶ τρεφομένους οὐχ ὑπὸ μητριᾶς ὡς οἱ ἄλλοι, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ 237.c μητρὸς τῆς χώρας ἐν ἧ ὄκουν, καὶ νῦν κείσθαι τελευτήσαντας ἐν οἰκείοις τόποις τῆς τεκούσης καὶ θρεψάσης καὶ ὑποδεξαμένης. δικαιοτάτον δὴ κοσμήσαι πρῶτον τὴν μητέρα αὐτήν:

As to their birth, first, their ancestors were not strangers, **nor are these their descendants sojourners only, whose fathers have come from another country; but they are the children of the soil, dwelling and living in their own land.** And the country which brought them up is not like other countries, a stepmother to her children, but their own true mother; she bore them and nourished them and received them, and in her bosom they now repose. It is meet and right, therefore, that we should begin by praising the land which is their mother, and that will be a way of praising their noble birth.

3. Complaining about time and using p-type alliteration (pollai-pleio)

Menex 246.a.5 to Menex 246.b.2 Καὶ τὰ μὲν δὴ ἔργα ταῦτα τῶν ἀνδρῶν τῶν ἐνθάδε κειμένων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσοι ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως τετελευτήκασιν, **πολλὰ μὲν τὰ εἰρημμένα καὶ καλά, πολὺ δ' ἔτι πλείω καὶ**

καλλίω τὰ 246.b ὑπολειπόμενα: πολλαὶ γὰρ ἄν
 ἡμέραι καὶ νύκτες οὐχ ἱκαναὶ γένοιτο τῷ τὰ πάντα
 μέλλοντι περαίνειν.

Such were the actions of the men who are here interred, and of others who have died on behalf of their country; many and glorious things I have spoken of them, and there are yet many more and more glorious things remaining to be told—many days and nights would not suffice to tell of them.

4. Complaining again about time

Menex 239.b.3 to Menex 239.c.7 Εὐμόλπου μὲν οὖν καὶ Ἀμαζόνων ἐπιστρατευσάντων ἐπὶ τὴν χώραν καὶ τῶν ἔτι προτέρων ὡς ἡμόναντο, καὶ ὡς ἤμυναν Ἀργείοις πρὸς Καδμείους καὶ Ἡρακλείδαις πρὸς Ἀργίους, ὃ τε χρόνος βραχὺς ἀξίως διηγήσασθαι, ποιηταὶ τε αὐτῶν ἤδη καλῶς τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐν μουσικῇ ὑμνήσαντες εἰς πάντα μεμνηύκασιν: ἐὰν οὖν ἡμεῖς 239.c ἐπιχειρῶμεν τὰ αὐτὰ λόγῳ ψιλῷ κοσμεῖν, τάχ' ἂν δεῦτεροι φαινοίμεθα. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν διὰ ταῦτα δοκεῖ μοι ἔαν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἔχει τὴν ἀξίαν: ὧν δὲ οὔτε ποιητῆς πῶ δόξαν ἀξίαν ἐπ' ἀξίοις λαβὼν ἔχει ἔτι τέ ἐστιν ἐν ἀμνηστία, τούτων περὶ μοι δοκεῖ χρῆναι ἐπιμνησθῆναι ἐπαινοῦντά τε καὶ προμνῶμενον ἄλλοις ἐς ὧδάς τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ποίησιν αὐτὰ θεῖναι πρεπόντως τῶν πραξάντων.

Time is truly short for telling now of their defence of their country against the invasion of Eumolpus and the Amazons, or of their defence of the Argives against the Cadmeians, or of the Heracleids against the Argives; besides, the poets have already declared in song

to all mankind their glory, and therefore any commemoration of their deeds in prose which we might attempt would hold a second place. They already have their reward, and I say no more of them; but there are other worthy deeds of which no poet has worthily sung, and which are still wooing the poet's muse. Of these I am bound to make honourable mention, and shall invoke others to sing of them also in lyric and other strains, in a manner becoming the actors.

5. Making headlines and marking head topics...

Menex 239.c.7 to Menex 239.d ἔστιν δὲ τούτων ὧν λέγω πρῶτα: Πέρσας ἡγουμένους τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ δουλουμένους τὴν Εὐρώπην ἔσχον οἱ τῆσδε τῆς χώρας ἔκγονοι, γονῆς δὲ ἡμέτεροι, ὧν καὶ δίκαιον καὶ χρῆ πρῶτον μεμνημένους ἐπαινέσαι αὐτῶν τὴν ἀρετὴν. δεῖ δὴ αὐτὴν ἰδεῖν, εἰ μέλλει τις καλῶς ἐπαινεῖν, ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ χρόνῳ γενόμενον λόγῳ, ὅτε πᾶσα μὲν ἡ Ἀσία ἐδούλευε τρίτῳ ἤδη βασιλεῖ, ὧν ὁ μὲν πρῶτος Κῦρος ἐλευθέρωσας Πέρσας τοὺς αὐτοῦ πολίτας τῷ αὐτοῦ φρονήματι 239.e ἅμα καὶ τοὺς δεσπότας Μήδους ἐδουλώσατο καὶ τῆς ἄλλης Ἀσίας μέχρι Αἰγύπτου ἤρξεν, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς Αἰγύπτου τε καὶ Λιβύης ὅσον οἶόν τ' ἦν ἐπιβαίνειν,

And first among all I will tell how the Persians, lords of Asia, were enslaving Europe, and how the children of this land, who were our fathers, held them back. Of these I will speak first, and praise their valour, as is meet and fitting. He who would rightly estimate them should place himself in thought at that time, when the whole of Asia was subject to the third king of Persia. The first king, Cyrus, by his valour freed the Persians, who were his countrymen, and subjected the Medes, who were their lords, and he ruled over the rest of Asia,

as far as Egypt; and after him came his son, who ruled all the accessible part of Egypt and Libya;

6. Rhetoric ennumeration, p-type alliteration (pollai - palai)

Menex 244.d.1 to Menex 244.d.3 καὶ μηκύνειν μὲν τί δεῖ; οὐ γὰρ πάλαι οὐδὲ παλαιῶν ἀνθρώπων γεγονότα λέγοιμ' ἂν τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα:

And why should I say more? for these things I am speaking of, happened not long ago nor about people of old...

Menex 246.a.5 to Menex 246.b.2 πολλὰ μὲν τὰ εἰρημμένα καὶ καλὰ, πολὺ δ' ἔτι πλείω καὶ καλλίω τὰ 246.b ὑπολειπόμενα: **πολλαὶ γὰρ ἂν ἡμέραι καὶ νύκτες οὐχ ἱκαναὶ γένοιντο τῷ τὰ πάντα μέλλοντι περαίνειν.**

many and glorious (good) things I have spoken of them, and there are yet many more and even more glorious (better) things remaining to be told — **many days and nights would not suffice to tell of them**

7. The theme of remembering, of teaching children - paides

Menex 246.b.5 to Menex 246.c.6 ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτός, ὦ παῖδες ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν, νῦν τε παρακελεύομαι καὶ ἐν τῷ λοιπῷ χρόνῳ, ὅπου ἂν τῷ ἐντυγχάνω 246.c ὑμῶν, καὶ ἀναμνήσω καὶ διακελεύσομαι προθυμείσθαι εἶναι ὡς ἀρίστους: ἐν δὲ τῷ παρόντι δίκαιός εἰμι εἰπεῖν ἃ οἱ πατέρες ἡμῖν ἐπέσκηπτον ἀπαγγέλλειν τοῖς ἀεὶ λειπομένοις, εἴ τι πάσχοιεν,

ἡνίκα κινδυνεύσειν ἔμελλον. φράσω δὲ ὑμῖν ἅ τε αὐτῶν ἤκουσα ἐκείνων καὶ οἷα νῦν ἠδέως ἂν εἴποιεν ὑμῖν λαβόντες δύναμιν, τεκμαιρόμενος ἐξ ὧν τότε ἔλεγον.

Even as I exhort you this day, and in all future time, whenever I meet with any of you, **shall continue to remind and exhort you, O ye sons of heroes,** that you strive to be the bravest of men. And I think that I ought now to repeat what your fathers desired to have said to you who are their survivors, when they went out to battle, in case anything happened to them. I will tell you what I heard them say, and what, if they had only speech, they would fain be saying, judging from what they then said. And you must imagine that you hear them saying what I now repeat to you:—

Menex 246.d.1 to Menex 246.e.2 246.d ὦ παῖδες, ὅτι μὲν ἐστε πατέρων ἀγαθῶν, αὐτὸ μηνύει τὸ νῦν παρόν: ἡμῖν δὲ ἐξὸν ζῆν μὴ καλῶς, καλῶς αἰρούμεθα μᾶλλον τελευτᾶν, πρὶν ὑμᾶς τε καὶ τοὺς ἔπειτα εἰς ὄνειδη καταστήσαι καὶ πρὶν τοὺς ἡμετέρους πατέρας καὶ πᾶν τὸ πρόσθεν γένος αἰσχῦναι, ἡγούμενοι τῷ τοὺς αὐτοῦ αἰσχύναντι ἀβίωτον εἶναι, καὶ τῷ τοιούτῳ οὔτε τινὰ ἀνθρώπων οὔτε θεῶν φίλον εἶναι οὔτ' ἐπὶ γῆς οὔθ' ὑπὸ γῆς τελευτήσαντι. χρὴ οὖν μεμνημένους τῶν ἡμετέρων λόγων, ἐάν τι καὶ ἄλλο 246.e ἀσκήτε, ἀσκεῖν μετ' ἀρετῆς, εἰδότας ὅτι τούτου λειπόμενα πάντα καὶ κτήματα καὶ ἐπιτηδεύματα αἰσχροὶ καὶ κακά.

O, sons, the event proves that your fathers were brave men; for we might have lived dishonourably, but have preferred to die honourably rather than bring you and your children into disgrace, and rather than

dishonour our own fathers and forefathers; considering that life is not life to one who is a dishonour to his race, and that to such a one neither men nor Gods are friendly, either while he is on the earth or after death in the world below. **Remember our words**, then, and whatever is your aim let virtue be the condition of the attainment of your aim, and know that without this all possessions and pursuits are dishonourable and evil.

Menex 246.e.7 to Menex 247.a.6 πᾶσά τε ἐπιστήμη χωριζομένη 247.a δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς πανουργία, οὐ σοφία φαίνεται. ὧν ἕνεκα καὶ πρῶτον καὶ ὑστατον καὶ διὰ παντὸς πᾶσαν πάντως προθυμίαν πειρᾶσθε ἔχειν ὅπως μάλιστα μὲν ὑπερβαλεῖσθε καὶ ἡμᾶς καὶ τοὺς πρόσθεν εὐκλεία: εἰ δὲ μή, ἴστε ὡς ἡμῖν, ἂν μὲν νικῶμεν ὑμᾶς ἀρετῇ, ἢ νίκη αἰσχύνην φέρει, ἢ δὲ ἦττα, ἐὰν ἡττώμεθα, εὐδαιμονίαν.

And all knowledge, when separated from justice and virtue, is seen to be cunning and not wisdom; wherefore make this your first and last and constant and all-absorbing aim, to exceed, if possible, not only us but all your ancestors in virtue; and know that to excel you in virtue only brings us shame, but that to be excelled by you is a source of happiness to us.

Enumeration

Alliteration

Time evaluation during speech

The honor code

The homeland theme, the sojourning theme, the children education theme - paidion... / parents, discipline.