

Classical Association of New South Wales
Reading competition 2010

Readings for the preliminary round, 9 and 11 June 2010

Years 10-11 Greek, Euripides *Hippolytus* 375-86.

Phaedra speaks:

375 ἤδη ποτ' ἄλλως νυκτὸς ἐν μακρῶι χρόνῳι
θνητῶν ἐφρόντισ' ἦι διέφθαρται βίος.
καί μοι δοκοῦσιν οὐ κατὰ γνώμης φύσιν
πράσσειν κακίον'. ἔστι γὰρ τό γ' εὖ φρονεῖν
πολλοῖσιν· ἀλλὰ τῆιδ' ἀθρητέον τόδε·

380 τὰ χρήστ' ἐπιστάμεσθα καὶ γιννώσκομεν,
οὐκ ἐκπονοῦμεν δ', οἱ μὲν ἀργίας ὑπο,
οἱ δ' ἡδονὴν προθέντες ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ
ἄλλην τιν'. εἰσὶ δ' ἡδοναὶ πολλαὶ βίου,
μακρὰί τε λέσχαι καὶ σχολή, τερπνὸν κακόν,

385 αἰδῶς τε· δισσαὶ δ' εἰσὶν, ἡ μὲν οὐ κακὴ,

386 ἡ δ' ἄχθος οἴκων·

Why do people mess up their lives?

I have pondered before now in other circumstances in the night's long watches how it is that the lives of mortals are in ruins. I think that it is not owing to the nature of their wits that they fare worse than they might, since many people possess good sense. Rather, one must look at it this way: [380] we know and understand what is noble but do not bring it to completion. Some fail from laziness, others because they give precedence to some other pleasure than being honorable. Life's pleasures are many, long leisurely talks—a pleasant evil— [385] and the sense of awe. Yet they are of two sorts, one pleasure being no bad thing, another a burden upon houses.

Translation by David Kovacs