



## **Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn**

**The Works of George Lord Lyttleton**

**Lyttelton, George <Lord>**

**London, 1774**

XXXI. Aristides - Phocion - Demosthenes.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-50364](https://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-50364)

less distinguished from the vulgar herd of mankind, than the scoffer at all religion, and the despiser of all dominion.—But let us end our dispute. I feel my folly in continuing to argue with one, who in reasoning does not seek to come at truth, but merely to shew his wit. Adieu, Diogenes; I am going to converse with the shades of Pythagoras, Solon, and Bias.—You may jest with Aristophanes, or rail with Thersites.

\*\*\*\*\*

## DIALOGUE XXXI.

ARISTIDES.—PHOCION.—DEMOSTHENES.

ARISTIDES.

HOW could it happen, that Athens, after having recovered an equality with Sparta, should be forced to submit to the dominion of Macedon, when she had two such great men as Phocion and Demosthenes at the head of her state?

PHOCION.

It happened because our opinions of her interests in foreign affairs were totally different; which made us act with a constant and pernicious opposition, the one to the other.

ARISTIDES.

I wish to hear from you both (if you will indulge my curiosity) on what principles you could form such contrary judgements concerning points of such moment to the safety of your country, which you equally loved.

DEMOSTHENES.

My principles were the same with your's, Aristides. I laboured to maintain the independence of Athens against the incroaching ambition of Macedon, as you had maintained it against that of Persia. I saw that our own strength was un-  
Z z z equal

equal to the enterprise: but what we could not do alone, I thought might be done by a union of the principal states of Greece; such a union as had been formed by you and Themistocles, in opposition to the Persians. To effect this, was the great, the constant aim of my policy; and, though traversed in it by many whom the gold of Macedon had corrupted, and by Phocion, whom alone, of all the enemies to my system, I must acquit of corruption, I so far succeeded, that I brought into the field of Chaeronea an army equal to Philip's. The event was unfortunate; but Aristides will not judge of the merits of a statesman by the accidents of war.

## PHOCION.

Do not imagine, Aristides, that I was less desirous than Demosthenes to preserve the independence and liberty of my country. But, before I engaged the Athenians in a war *not absolutely necessary*, I thought it proper to consider what the event of a battle would probably be. That which I feared, came to pass: the Macedonians were victorious, and Athens was ruined.

## DEMOSTHENES.

Would Athens not have been ruined if no battle had been fought? Could you, Phocion, think it safety, to have our freedom depend on the moderation of Philip? and what had we else to protect us, if no confederacy had been formed to resist his ambition?

## PHOCION.

I saw no wisdom in accelerating the downfall of my country, by a rash activity in provoking the resentment of an enemy, whose arms, I foretold, would in the issue prove superior, not only to ours, but to those of any confederacy we were able to form. My maxim was, that a state, which cannot make itself stronger than any of its neighbours, should live in friendship with that power which is the strongest. But, the more

apparent it was, that our strength was inferior to that of Macedonia, the more you laboured to induce us, by all the vehemence of your oratory, to take such measures as tended to render Philip our enemy, and exasperate him more against us than any other nation. This I thought a rash conduct. It was not by orations that the dangerous war you had kindled could finally be determined: nor did your triumphs over me in an assembly of the people intimidate any Macedonian in the field of Chæronea, or stop you yourself from flying out of that field.

DEMOSTHENES.

My flight from thence, I must own, was ignominious to me; but it affects not the question we are agitating now, whether the counsels I gave to the people of Athens, as a statesman and a public minister, were right or wrong. When first I excited them to make war against Philip, the victories gained by Chabrias, in which you, Phocion, had a share, particularly that of Naxos, which completely restored to us the empire of the sea, had enabled us to maintain, not only our own liberty, but that of all Greece, in the defence of which we had formerly acquired so much glory, and which our ancestors thought so important to the safety and independence of Athens. Philip's power was but beginning, and supported itself more by craft than force. I saw, and I warned my countrymen, in due time, how impolitic it would be to suffer his machinations to be carried on with success, and his strength to increase by continual acquisitions, without resistance. I exposed the weakness of that narrow, that short-sighted policy, which looked no further than to our own immediate borders, and imagined, that whatsoever lay out of those bounds was foreign to our interests, and unworthy of our care. The force of my remonstrances roused the Athenians to a more vigilant conduct. Then it was, that the orators whom Philip had corrupted loudly inveighed against me, as alarming the people with imaginary dangers, and draw-

Z z z 2

ing

ing them into quarrels, in which they had really no concern. This language, and the fair professions of Philip, who was perfectly skilled in the *royal art of dissembling*, were often so prevalent, that many favourable opportunities of defeating his designs were unhappily lost. Yet sometimes, by the spirit, with which I animated the Athenians and other neighbouring states, I stopt the progres of his arms, and oppofed to him such obſtacles, as cost him much time and much labour to remove. You yourſelf, Phocion, at the head of fleets and armies ſent againſt him by decrees which I had proposed, vanquished his troops in Eubœa, and ſaved from him Bysantium, with other cities of our allies on the coaſts of the Helleſpont, from which you drove him with shame.

## PHOCION.

To The proper uſe of those advantages was to ſecure a peace to Athens, which they inclined him to keep. His ambition was checked; but his forces were not ſo much diminished, as to render it ſafe to provoke him to further hostilities.

## DEMОСTHENES.

His courage and policy were indeed ſo ſuperior to our's, that, notwithstanding his defeats, he was ſoon in a condition to purſue the great plan of conqueſt and dominion, which he had formed long before, and from which he never defifted. Thus, through indolence on our ſide, and activity on his, things were brought to ſuch a crisis, that I ſaw no hope of delivering all Greece from his yoke, but by confederating againſt him the Athenians and the Thebans; which league I effected. Was it not better to fight for the independence of our country in conjunction with Thebes than alone? Would a battle lost in Bœotia be ſo fatal to Athens, as one lost in our own territory, and under our own walls?

## PHOCION.

You may remember, that, when you were eagerly urging this argument, I defired you to conſider, not where we ſhould fight,

fight, but how we should be conquerors: for, if we were vanquished, all sorts of evils and dangers would be instantly at our gates.

ARISTIDES.

Did not you tell me, Demosthenes, when you began to speak upon this subject, that you brought into the field of Chæronea an army equal to Philip's?

DEMOSTHENES.

I did, and believe that Phocion will not contradict me.

ARISTIDES.

But though equal in number, it was, perhaps, much inferior to the Macedonians in valour and military discipline.

DEMOSTHENES.

The courage shewn by our army excited the admiration of Philip himself, and their discipline was inferior to none in Greece.

ARISTIDES.

What then occasioned their defeat?

DEMOSTHENES.

The bad conduct of their generals.

ARISTIDES.

Why was the command not given to Phocion, whose abilities had been proved on so many other occasions? was it offered to him, and did he refuse to accept it? You are silent, Demosthenes. I understand your silence. You are unwilling to tell me, that, having the power, by your influence over the people, to confer the command on what Athenian you pleased, you were induced, by the spirit of party, to lay aside a great general, who had been always successful, who had the chief confidence of your troops and of your allies, in order to give it to men, zealous indeed for your measures, and full of military ardour, but of little capacity or experience in the conduct of a war. You cannot plead, that, if Phocion had led your troops

against

against Philip, there was any danger of his basely betraying his trust. Phocion could not be a traitor. You had seen him serve the republic, and conquer for it in wars, the undertaking of which he had strenuously opposed, in wars with Philip. How could you then be so negligent of the safety of your country, as not to employ him in this, the most dangerous of all she ever had waged? If Chares and Lysicles, the two generals you chose to conduct it, had commanded the Grecian forces at Marathon and Platæa, we should have lost those battles. All the men whom you sent to fight the Macedonians under such leaders, were victims to the animosity between you and Phocion, which made you deprive them of the necessary benefit of his wise direction. This I think the worst blemish of your administration. In other parts of your conduct I not only acquit, but greatly applaud and admire you. With the sagacity of a most consummate statesman, you penetrated the deepest designs of Philip; you saw all the dangers which threatened Greece from that quarter, while they were yet at a distance; you exhorted your countrymen to make a timely provision for their future security; you spread the alarm through all the neighbouring states; you combined the most powerful in a confederacy with Athens; you carried the war *out of Attica*, which (let Phocion say what he will) was safer than meeting it *there*; you brought it, after all that had been done by the enemy to strengthen himself and weaken us, after the loss of Amphipolis, Olynthus, and Potidæa, the outguards of Athens; you brought it, I say, to the decision of a battle with equal forces. When this could be effected, there was evidently nothing so desperate in our circumstances, as to justify an inaction, which might probably make them worse, but could not make them better. Phocion thinks that a state, which cannot itself be the strongest, should live in friendship with that power which is the strongest. But in my opinion *such friendship is no better than servitude*. It is more adviseable

able to endeavour to supply what is wanting in our own strength by a conjunction with others who are equally in danger. This method of preventing the ruin of our country was tried by Demosthenes. Nor yet did he neglect, by all practicable means, to augment, at the same time, our internal resources. I have heard, that when he found the public treasure exhausted, he replenished it, with very great peril to himself, by bringing into it money appropriated before to the entertainment of the people, against the express prohibition of a popular law, which made it death to propose the application thereof to any other use. This was virtue, this was *true and genuine patriotism*. He owed all his importance and power in the state to the favour of the people: yet, in order to serve the state, he did not fear, at the evident hazard of his life, to offend their darling passion, and appeal against it to their reason.

## PHOCION.

For this action I praise him. It was indeed far more dangerous for a minister at Athens to violate that absurd and extravagant law than any of those of Solon. But, though he restored our finances, he could not restore our lost virtue; he could not give that firm health, that vigour to the state, which is the result of pure morals, of strict order and civil discipline, of integrity in the old, and obedience in the young. I therefore dreaded a conflict with the solid strength of Macedon, where corruption had yet made but a very small progress, and was happy that Demosthenes did not oblige me, against my own inclination, to be the general of such a people in such war.

## ARISTIDES.

I fear that your just contempt of the greater number of those who composed the democracy, so disgusted you with this mode and form of government, that you were as averse to serve under it, as others, with less ability and virtue than you, were desirous of obtruding themselves into its service. But, though such

## DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD.

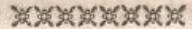
such a reluctance proceeds from a very noble cause, and seems agreeable to the dignity of a great mind in bad times, yet it is a fault against the highest of moral obligations, the love of our country. For, how unworthy soever individuals may be, the public is always respectable, always dear to the virtuous.

## PHOCION.

True: but no obligation can lie upon a citizen to seek a public charge, when he foresees that his obtaining of it will be useless to his country. Would you have had me solicit the command of an army which I believed would be beaten?

## ARISTIDES.

It is not permitted to a state to despair of its safety, till its utmost efforts have been made without success. If you had commanded the army at Chaeronea, you might possibly have changed the event of the day: but, if you had not, you would have died more honourably there, than in a prison at Athens, betrayed by a vain confidence in the insecure friendship of a perfidious Macedonian.



## DIALOGUE XXXII.

MARCUS AURELIUS PHILOSOPHUS.—SERVIUS TULLIUS.

## SERVIUS TULLIUS.

YES, Marcus, though I own you to have been the first of mankind in virtue and goodness, though, while you governed, philosophy sat on the throne and diffused the benign influences of her administration over the whole Roman empire, yet, *as a king*, I might, perhaps, pretend to a merit even superior to yours.

MARCUS