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GREEK NATIONALISM AND HOME RULE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY, B.C.

A certain view of fourth century Greek politics is familiar. We mean what may be called the Demosthenic theory in which nearly all English and American readers of history have agreed. It assumes Athens to have been a real democracy, a government of freedom, the great bulwark of liberty for the entire Greek world at the time. It sets down Philip of Macedon as a barbarian. It maintains that his conquest of Greece before it was completed was of right feared as the death of Greek liberty, just as when executed it actually killed Greek liberty and buried it out of sight. Demosthenes in opposing first Philip and then Alexander, so runs the well-known contention, was not only a hearty patriot but an altogether wise patriot, those who favoured the Macedonian being deficient in true Greek spirit, except perhaps Phocion and a few others whose character stands so high that no one can impugn it. Over these it is the fashion to heave a sigh. They were misguided, very likely wishing well to their country, but too ignorant to know what was for its best good.

For this common, popular, and time-honoured view, and for the tenacity with which it continues to be held, there are many reasons. It was burned into the souls of many of us by the hot periods of that incomparable orator, Demosthenes himself. Such as have read his orations are apt to be so bewitched by his eloquence and apparent frankness, so overpowered by his masterly argument, and so dazed by his brilliant invective, that they insensibly adopt his position without due reflection upon the evidence now available to substantiate a contrary one. The great number of general readers, who know nothing of Demosthenes at first hand, have still heard and read so much in his praise that they suppose him well-nigh infallible. Forgetting that there are two sides to this as to every question, and hardly remembering Isocrates or Phocion even by name, when the name of Demosthenes is pronounced they freely applaud him as the intrepid and knowing sage of Greece's vital crisis, whom all true patriots to the end of time must delight to honour.

But Demosthenes is understood to argue for democracy, for

a free polity, for a constitutional form of government; and among all to whom the institutions of freedom are dear this is an additional reason for siding with him. In what degree Athens possessed a statehood like the democracy which is so popular in the twentieth century we shall inquire farther on.

Another influence of tremendous weight in support of the Demosthenic contention is the attitude and argument of George Grote, the historian. Grote wrote so much upon Greek history, and for the most part so well, giving law to the great majority not only of those who read but also of those who write Greek histories, and maintaining this authority of his through so many years, that we have contracted the habit of accepting his assertions without challenge. His opinion, moreover, touching the matter before us, is presented in so enthusiastic and unhesitating a manner that if any ever incline to entertain scruples in respect to its truth, they are in danger of being swept off their feet by his very positiveness.

Grote, very able man though he was, was not infallible. In governmental theory he was one of the worst doctrinaires who ever put pen to paper. Along with a few of his contemporaries like James and John Stuart Mill, Ricardo and Roebuck, Grote was still under the infatuation of French Revolutionary ideas. These thinkers were profoundly impressed with the belief that all possible human happiness would come with the perfect triumph of democracy. Democracy, the world's one thing needful! This was the creed of the Gallican political church whose pope Robespierre came to be. The English radicals of a hundred years ago also all subscribed to it. Nearly everyone of them had recanted by the date of Waterloo, but the elect persevered in the faith, and Grote was one of them. One may thoroughly believe in free government without expecting from its prevalence so much of a millennium as these enthusiasts were sure it would bring.

Still another very powerful influence helps beguile us into accord with Demosthenes. It is that of the immortal Thucydides. In his history of the Peloponnesian War Thucydides makes everything turn upon the fate of Athens. One gets from him the impression that if Athens only remained and prospered everything must go well with Greece, and that on the other hand the fall or humiliation of Athens would of necessity be the undoing of all Greece. Thucydides so trains us in this manner of thought

that we become disqualified to consider coolly the question whether the fortunes of Greece might not possibly have risen or fallen in some other way. When therefore we jump the half century from Thucydides to Demosthenes, Demosthenes's theory of what was public policy in his day has over us an illogical advantage. We are predisposed to fall in with his estimates, to throw up our hats at every victory of the Athenian state, to curse the foes of Athens as the foes of mankind, dangerous in proportion to their might, and with all our pulmonary powers to re-echo the great orator's passionate outbursts against Philip and his party.

In all this are we not entirely or almost entirely mistaken? May not Demosthenes have been wrong in his conviction? May not he have been, if not less whole of heart, at least less wise than we have been wont to suppose him? Were Philip and Alexander either in purpose or in fact so inimical to Greek freedom or so truly the pests of the world as Demosthenes makes out? May not Phocion, the most conspicuous of Demosthenes's antagonists, have been quite as zealous in Greek patriotism as his more eloquent rival, with a very much larger and saner judgment regarding the proper public policy for Athens and Greece to pursue at that perplexing time?

Two special considerations force the historian to ponder these questions. The first is the character of Phocion. This is certainly impressive, even as presented in Grote. All the historians love to dwell upon Phocion's integrity, his splendid generalship, and even, touching most matters, his wisdom. Read Plutarch's account of Phocion, and you will find yourself unable to think that the opposition to Demosthenes and his policy by so clear-headed and public-spirited a man could have been wholly ill-founded.

The other cause which bends attention to this portion of Greek history is the analogy thereto furnished by German history since Napoleon. The great problem of Greek politics in the fourth century B.C. was precisely that of German politics in the days of Metternich and Bismarck. In tracing this parallel, compare Philip and Alexander with Bismarck, France and Austria with the Persian power, Phocion with the great men of the German National Liberal party of '66 and '70, and Demosthenes with Gagern, Rotteck, and the other zealous particularists devoted to small-state autonomy from 1848 to the achievement of German unity. This parallel is almost complete at every point.

As the real weal of Germany in our times has been and is bound up in the fortunes of Prussia, so in Phocion's day it was not for the interest of Greece as a whole or even of Athens to defeat Philip and Alexander. As William I and Bismarck, with all their selfishness and rapacity, were the evident agents of destiny in unifying and strengthening the fatherland, so the Macedonian monarchs were ordained to fuse Greece by fire into one whole. On the other hand, just as a real and most natural attachment to his immediate state led Rotteck mistakenly to defend its separate sovereignty, fighting Prussia as a dangerous and ruinous mischief-maker when she was not so, in precisely the same way narrow but deep love for Athens induced Demosthenes to antagonise with all his might the southward advance of Macedonian power, supposing that thus he was nobly serving Athens and all Greece, whereas he was in fact multiplying the sorrows of both. This being so, Phocion stands forth as the eminent and wise Athenian of the time, while Demosthenes, whom we have so long implicitly followed, is made to appear poor in political wisdom if not in sincerity and integrity.

Dr. John Skelton among "Some Reminiscences of Froude," in *Blackwood's* for December, 1894, relates an utterance which Froude once made in a party of members of Parliament, that "throughout human history the great orators had been invariably proved wrong." The account says that there were "shrieks of indignation" at Froude's utterance; but that "at last it was allowed that facts looked as if it were true." No doubt it was in part Gladstone's oratory that led Froude to say: "I do not love Beaconsfield, but I love Gladstone less."

We do not here challenge the moral character of Demosthenes. It is quite clear that he never stood so high in the estimation of his countrymen, even those of his own party, as Phocion did, and there were doubtless the best of reasons for this. Certain acts of his were mean and indefensible. But let this pass. The man had his excellent traits. His countrymen recognised in him a true patriot. The welfare of Athens, as he saw it, and that of Greece too, as he saw it, were dear to him. All will give him credit for meaning well. The judgment expressed is that he was mistaken at almost every point in his estimate of what was best. Neither were the great Macedonian characters, on the other hand, saintly or impeccable. They were no single-minded toilers for the welfare of Greece. Personally

both of them were very imperfect. As statesmen and warriors, too, they acted more or less selfishly. Inordinate ambition possessed them. In love of country they are to be ranked with Napoleon and Julius Cæsar rather than with Washington. The contention is that they both saw with clear eye the vanity of the old Greek *régime*, the total uselessness of endeavouring to unify Greece or to make her independent of Persia by any of the devices paraded by the noisy Greek politicians of the day, and that they therefore set out with patriotism and philanthropy enough to give their cause a certain moral glow in their own minds, and set out by force of arms, for this was then the only way, first, to unify Greece, and, secondly, to make her eternally independent of Persia.

In making up one's mind about a long past historical period, probability is usually all that we can expect; while there is perhaps not sufficient evidence to convert into a demonstration the hypothesis just sketched, careful study of the historical sources for the period renders this hypothesis far more probable than the old one.

Since Professor Droysen led off with it in his *Alexander the Great*, the best writers upon Greek history have been swinging around to this anti-Demosthenic theory, deserting Grote, Niebuhr, and Arnold Schäfer more and more. Droysen went too far. With him Alexander was the veritable demigod whom he sottishly decreed that his subjects should see in him. Of course Droysen has little respect for Demosthenes. Victor Duruy is the only late writer of note who still blows the trumpet for our old orator. He says that "the result of the Macedonian dominion was the death of European Greece," and calls it the immortal glory of Demosthenes to have perceived this; yet even he admits that "the civilisation of the world gained" by the Macedonian conquest, and hence, after all, places himself, "from the point of view of the world's history, on the side of Philip and his son." Younger writers, such as Holm, Mahaffy, and Benjamin Ide Wheeler, have trodden the ground with independent feet, and have in all substantial respects come out where Droysen did. They exalt the man with a great national policy in his head though with a sword in his hand, at the expense of him who dinned the populace with high-sounding pleas for his obstructive course.

Let no one be surprised at this change of view. Studies in

classical history have been pressed with remarkable vigour for the last fifty years, the result being that many opinions which our predecessors thought fixed are now reversed or radically modified. Take the subject of the despots. Formerly, under the same influence which led Grote to esteem Demosthenes and to abhor Philip, nearly all histories figured those despots who were perpetually appearing, flourishing, and perishing in Greece, as simply emissaries of the devil, dire scourges to the communities which they ruled; whereas it is now found that many of them were worthy men, moved, even in the assumption of their so-called despotism, by true regard for the people, and hostile only to aristocrats who before had been infinitely selfish and cruel.

We now know, too, what to say about the wealth of Athens and of Rome. Neither of these states became rich in a legitimate way. Athens piled up gold by plundering the confederacy of Delos, Rome by robbing the world. Hence their civilisation, as far as based upon their public resources, and of course that was to a considerable extent its foundation, forms no example for the guidance of modern societies in their efforts to rise. You cannot reason from the economy of either to any fiscal policy for states to pursue in modern days.

We are learning that republicanism or democracy, whichever one pleases to call it, was in ancient times a very different thing from aught that now exists under either name. The various republics of Greece and the republic of Rome were nothing but oligarchies, often atrociously tyrannical. Even at their best estate the rights of individuals in them, of their citizens even, were far less perfectly guarded than in some pretty absolute monarchies of later times.

"The Athenian imperial democracy," says Mahaffy, "was no popular government. In the first place there was no such thing as *representation* in their constitution. Those only had votes who could come and give them at the general Assembly, and they did so at once upon the conclusion of the debate. There was no Second Chamber or Higher Council to revise or delay their decisions; no crown; no High Court of Appeal to settle claims against the State. The body of Athenian citizens formed the Assembly. Sections of this body formed the jury to try cases of violation of the constitution either in act or in the proposal of new laws.

"The result was that all outlying provinces, even had they obtained votes, were without a voice in the government. But as a matter of fact they had no votes, for the States which became subject to Athens were merely tributary; and nothing was further from the ideas of the Athenians than to make them

members of their Imperial Republic in the sense that a new state is made a member of the present American Republic.

"This it was which ruined even the great Roman Republic, without any military reverses and when its domination of the world was unshaken. Owing to the absence of *representation*, the Empire of the Roman Republic was in the hands of the city population, who were perfectly incompetent, even had they been in real earnest, to manage the government of the vast kingdoms their troops had conquered. In both cases the outsiders were governed wholly for the benefit of the city crowd.

"The mistakes and the injustices which resulted in the Roman executive were such that any able adventurer could take advantage of the world-wide discontent, and could play off one city faction against the other. It is not conceivable that any other general course of events would have taken place at Athens, had she become the ruler of the Hellenic world. Her Demos regarded itself as a sovran, ruling subjects for its own glory and benefit; there can, therefore, be no doubt that the external pressure of that wide-spread discontent which was the primary cause of the Peloponnesian war would have co-operated with politicians within, if there were no enemies without, and that ambitious military chiefs, as at Rome, would have wrested the power from the sovran people either by force or by fraud."

In other words, however distressing the ills that might happen to Athens through Philip's success, they could not be worse than those which were sure soon to beset her in any event; while for Greece as a whole Philip's victory would mean unity and a peace such as could have been secured in no other way.

This splendid possibility, which must have impressed the minds of Phocion and Philip, is obscured to our thought by the untimely death of both the great Macedonian monarchs before their plans had any time to bear fruit. We know what actually came to pass. But two years from the decisive day of Chæronea, Philip is stricken down by the assassin Pausanias. Alexander mounts the throne, a youngster of twenty. The world flies to arms against him, not knowing that a greater than Philip is here. Marching double-quick against the Thracians and Illyrians, who at once succumb, he volts to smite rebellious Thebes and Athens. The West being thus quieted again, the boy warrior, leaving Antipater behind with a sufficient home guard, crosses to Asia, never to return. Desperate chaos follows his death, of course, and when, little by little, order is evolved, it is a new order, not the old one. Never again does Athens sit there as a queen looking out upon her Ægean; her day of political glory is ended forever.

It is of course natural to trace all this wild disorder, involving

the decline of Athens, the wars of Alexander's successors small and great, and also the Roman conquest at last, to Philip's victory at Chæronea, "that dishonest victory," as Milton, to Lady Margaret, calls it, "that dishonest victory at Chæronea, fatal to liberty, [which] killed with report that old man eloquent." As we read the tangled and bloody record, we say to ourselves: Oh, how much better all would have been had the Athenians risen at the cry of Demosthenes, and beaten Philip instead of being beaten! We assume that had this happened Greece would have kept on its old splendid way, able to have conquered Rome herself when Rome came. Philip ruined Greece; the advice of Demosthenes, had it been followed, would have saved her.

Superficially considered, all this seems clever reasoning; but it is in fact a stupendous fallacy. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc.* Philip conquered and subsequently things went ill with Greece. A man looked at Mars and afterwards had the cholera.

Let us no longer argue so childishly. The evils that befell Hellas were not at all those which Demosthenes prophesied. They are no proof of his foresight. From the point of view of his wishes they were entirely accidental. To see this we need only inquire what would in all probability have come to pass had Alexander lived. One may heavily discount Droysen's adoration of the young conqueror, and yet from what he achieved while alive and the way in which he achieved it, believe that immeasurable blessings to Greece and to humanity would have resulted from a lengthening of his days.

It cannot be rash to affirm that ten or twenty years added to Alexander's career would probably have changed subsequent history in at least three colossal particulars:

1. Probably Greece would have been more happily, perfectly, and permanently cemented together than was the case or could in any other way have been the case;

2. Probably Greece would at last have been not only forever free from Asia but also forever Asia's lord, and this in a manner truly beneficial to both;

3. Probably Greece would have ruled Rome instead of being ruled by Rome, and this, too, in such wise as to have benefited both, and the world as well.

It is probable, first, that a longer life for Alexander the Great would have secured Greece a more complete and permanent unity than was ever real or possible otherwise. No one will

deny that after the terrible Peloponnesian War it was desirable that Greece should at some rate or other be brought under a single authority. All agree that it would have been relatively a good thing if Athens could have attained a lasting hegemony. Next best, perhaps, among the apparent possibilities before the rise of Philip, would have been the leadership of Thebes, and next that of Sparta. But any supremacy would have been preferable to the dreadful discord and uncertainty whence Greece had suffered ever since the maritime power of Athens began to grow.

It seems perfectly certain that there was no possibility of a solid and continued *modus vivendi* in Greece in any of the ways named. They had all been tried and had failed. Too much jealousy prevailed among the states. As surely as Athens or Sparta or Thebes grew strong enough to threaten an overlordship, a league was formed against it, headed by the next most powerful city. Had the larger states grown less inclined to bite and devour one another, the smaller would have banded together to snub and humble any aspirant. Witness the continual hostility which met Athens both in her old Confederacy of Delos, and in the new Confederacy of 377, after the Peloponnesian War. There is nothing in the known history or character of the old Greek commonwealths on which to base the slightest belief that any of them would ever have been able to preserve peace throughout Hellas as Rome came little by little to do in Italy.

If then Greece was ever to be made one, the change must have been coerced with a high hand and an outstretched arm from beyond Greece proper. The Greek peoples were too proud and brave to have submitted to a foreigner without resistance. The condition of affairs which was for their own good could be set up among them only by a conqueror.

But two powers then existed able to inflict on Greece this needed mercy. They were Persia and Macedon. It seems incredible that any could have for a moment doubted to which of these it would be preferable to submit. It astounds us to learn of Greeks who, sooner than yield to Macedon, would have invited the Great King himself to set up in Europe the very mastery which the fathers at Marathon and Thermopylæ had so bravely fought to prevent. Demosthenes must have been one of these, for no language against any monarchy on earth could contain more venom than that which he applied to Philip. But

if it was undesirable that the centralising agent should hail from the east, he from the north must come and rule.

Philip did come. For a brief time he ruled, and with the best results. Never before for so long was Greece so well off in all the essentials of good government as during the period between Chæronea and the death of Antipater. This fact, again, we overlook because of the painful anarchy which succeeded. Had Alexander lived—such is the probability—the good times would have continued. His firm and unitary government must have grown popular at last. Athens would naturally have been its centre. The various Hellenic populations, including those of Macedonia, Thessaly, and Epirus, would little by little have become amalgamated, a desirable result which in fact never occurred. A national character might thus easily have been built up, lacking all those elements of weakness and meanness really displayed by the later Greeks, a character which might have preserved the nation at the head of civilisation for indefinite ages. No one knows that the future of Greece could have been so happy as this. We maintain only that such was the probability. Phocion, no doubt, saw as much. Only such a supposition explains his course. That Demosthenes did not see it was natural, yet forbids that he should be ranked in the first class of statesmen or of seers.

It is probable, secondly, that had Alexander not been struck down, Greece would have become not only forever free from Persia but also the permanent sovereign of Asia; and this, not by keeping the Asiatics down, after the old fashion, but by more fully fusing the two civilisations, as Alexander had begun to do, saving all the long Asiatic wars of the *diadochi* and of Roman and Mohammedan times, and making the entire march of west Asiatic civilisation indefinitely more splendid than it was.

It is a point not sufficiently attended to in discussing Greek and general history that ever after the Peloponnesian war, Persia had great power in Greece and was a distinct threat to the autonomy of the Grecian states. There is abundant evidence of this fact. In his panegyric upon Athens Isocrates taunts the Spartans with having, in the Peloponnesian war, made a treaty with Persia, surrendering to the Great King all the Greek cities of Asia Minor. That was base enough, surely; but the second Athenian Confederacy, of 377 B.C., the constitution of which is preserved to us in an important inscription, did the very same

thing. The high contracting parties, Byzantium, Lesbos, Rhodes, Eubœa, Thebes, and Athens, banded together mainly to protect these states against Sparta, acknowledged, as far as Asia Minor was concerned, the Persian supremacy. Can one for a moment question that if they had been hard pressed in war they would have accepted a Persian protectorate over themselves at the expense of Sparta, or that Sparta would have done the same to spite them? Nor is this all. The threat which Persia constituted is distinctly recognised in several important writings by Isocrates, in his oration *On the Peace*, and his oration and letters to Philip. This patriotic Greek saw clearly that it lay in Philip's power, and nowhere else, to put an end to this danger forever. With this in view he begged the monarch to turn his arms to the East, an importunity which, as everything indicates, had its fruit in Alexander's expedition. And further yet, Mahaffy has brought together texts of Demosthenes himself which show that he, too, at the outset of his career, regarded Persia as the serious foe of all Greece.

How Alexander's battles changed all this; how he turned the tables, forever humbling insolent Persia and placing upon the world's throne that puny Hellas who had previously been so timorous whenever she looked eastward—this all the historians recount; but none of them save Droysen and Wheeler duly appreciate the evidence that Alexander meditated a civil conquest of the East that must have been more glorious than all that his arms achieved. He purposed to break down the middle wall of partition between the two civilisations and to amalgamate them, combining the hitherto warring peoples into one new and richer nationality. Himself he married a Persian wife, and induced many of his officers to imitate him. He adopted Persian customs. He has indeed been charged with vanity for doing so; but the man's career renders such a view far less natural than that he was planning to win the affections of the vanquished in order to fuse them with the victors into one race. Oh, that time had been given him to work out that benign purpose! What Greek sweetness and light actually did accomplish in Asia gives some hint how sorely civilisation lost by the straitening of their opportunity.

Hardly more doubtful is it, thirdly, that had Greece and Asia been "Macedonised," occidental culture even down to our own time would have been far richer. Then Greece with all the

East at her back would have conquered Rome instead of being conquered by Rome, and an improved Hellenic instead of a Roman civilisation would have been imposed upon the West.

Words would fail should one attempt to measure how vast a meaning this would have had for posterity. Had the unification of Greece itself and of Greece with Asia been carried out, a blending of strength, wealth, and intelligence such as the world has never seen would have been realised, forming a civilisation dominated by mind and not by brawn. Superstition would never have occupied in it the place of rational faith, so as to have given way before enlightenment, as occurred at Rome, permitting wealth to occasion gross moral corruption; while, rich Asia being absorbed instead of plundered, wealth would have had to be acquired in a more legitimate and less dangerous way. Greece, therefore, we may assume, would not have collapsed as Rome did in face of barbarian attacks. Dark ages there would have been none, and the civilising of North Europe would have required centuries less time.

Further, there need have been no break in the development of art from Lysippus to Michel Angelo, for it was Rome's unspiritual control of the world and her subsequent "fall" which led to the æsthetic interregnum and chaos which did take place.

Most important of all, had Greece, under the auspices named, become, instead of Rome, the torchbearer of the world's culture during later antiquity, modern civilisation would have been guided by a momentously happy combination of theory and practice, in place of suffering as it always has from the divorce and mutual hostility of the two.

The health which the whole of civilisation has lost in this way is shown by contrast with the achievements of one specially favoured element of it, namely, Roman law. We never tire of glorifying Roman law, and the utmost praise we can give it is quite too small. Next to Christianity it is far the most precious gift which antiquity has sent down to us. The Roman law is precisely the one institute or instrumentality of culture in which Greek philosophy and Roman practicalness perfectly combine; and it is to this combination that its unparalleled efficiency has been due. Suppose that in the same manner thought and action, intelligence and will, mind and sentiment, ideal and actual had been annealed together in theology, in church policy, in education, in public law, and in politics. One's mind well-nigh

loses its balance in attempting to think "how heavenly far" we might thus have brought humanity by this time. The mere "practical" man with his swagger of self-sufficiency would then not be with us. Scholarship would never mean pedantry. The work of religion would not be clogged by formalism; nor, on the other hand, should we hear good people expressing contempt for all liturgy and church organisation. No crazily liberal crusade would there be in politics, for in a good sense all would be liberals from the least even unto the greatest.

It was not so to be. The Eternal, it would seem, saw that a longer, slower, tougher probation for our race fitted better into the infinite scheme of things. The needed integration of form and matter, thought and life, is therefore left for us of to-day to work out. Matter, crass, dull stuff—the other, as Plato calls it—confronts us everywhere. Man's task is to ram it full of mind. For this every intelligent man and woman is bound to contribute according to ability and opportunity.

Shall we not learn from the example of Demosthenes the danger of pettiness in our views and purposes? Limitless is the range of mind if we will only let it out into God's open. In shaping ideals for our characters and our work in life, let us cut by the biggest patterns. Plan to win all Greece, Asia, and the world instead of struggling a lifetime for a little rockpatch like Attica, to lose it at last, dying poisoned and in exile.

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