Malcolm Schofield (hereafter S) thinks of Greek and Roman political philosophy as a body of attempts to remedy the endemic problem of *stasis* (faction and consequent civil conflict) in ancient society. The philosophers were trying to find a basis for harmony that would unite the citizens and save the classical city from destruction. In this book S approaches some familiar topics in a fresh way, writing in a style that is accessible to the non-specialist. Mature undergraduates, academics, and the informed general reader seem to comprise the target audience. As the author clearly indicates, eight of the ten essays in this volume have been published before; six of these eight have been subjected to ‘a few small revisions or additions’ (x).

Three main factors are highlighted as being fundamental to the avoidance of *stasis*: political wisdom, the bonds that hold society together, and justice (1). The opening two chapters address the issue of political wisdom in the *Iliad* and Plato. In the first, S looks in detail at the evidence for deliberation among Homer's heroes. His aim is to refute the position of Moses Finley, who, 'in a few close-packed pages in... *The World of Odysseus*’ (4), claimed that Homer's heroes lacked practical reason and were not even capable of *euboulia* (excellence in counsel, sound judgment). The second chapter argues that Plato’s later dialogues do not indicate a loss of faith in the philosopher-king. In fact, Plato, and a vast train of thought in his wake, remained wedded to the idea that society could best solve its problems by relying on the wisdom of a good king.

In Chapters 3-7, Zeno of Citium, Plato and Aristotle are mined for their views on the bonds that hold society together, with S investigating whether a society is best cemented by virtue, economic reciprocity, equality, hierarchy, or a principled combination of the last two. There turn out to be limits all round. Zeno of Citium produced a practical recipe for virtue and community, but it was very demanding because it was based upon the myth of Sparta (ch.3). Plato argues for the simple market economy over a more acquisitive economy that is immediately and fundamentally afflicted by the political divisions that derive from the desire to accumulate wealth (ch.4). Aristotle views political friendship as an association marked by advantage,
equality and contract not trust. It is focused upon immediate reciprocity (like buyers and sellers). Yet S opposes the view that this reduces it to a sequence of commercial transactions: ‘it remains an authentic form of friendship, presumably because each partner wants the other to prosper so that he may remain a source of supply in the future’ (94). Chapter 6 is concerned with Aristotle’s views on equality and hierarchy in the city. In contrast to Plato, Aristotle had strong egalitarian leanings, though various kinds of equalities, many of them aristocratic in origin, were fundamental to the classical Greek polis in general (114). Chapter 7 argues that Aristotle’s approval of slavery is really an idea conditioned by the times in which he lived rather than a reasoned reflection on human nature. There have to be distinct forms of rule, thought Aristotle, for humans show a great variety of deliberative capacities. ‘Aristotle thus avoids having to lay down by fiat his prize thesis that political rule is quite different from despotism and that the one is the right system for a properly thriving human society, the other illegitimate.’ (132)

Finally, in Chapters 8-10, the substance and function of justice are addressed through analyses of Aristotle’s Politics and Cicero’s De officiis and De re publica. A fundamental question is asked: ‘Is there a dominant preoccupation with rights in ancient social and political thought?’ (1) S gives a firm negative answer, offering a revisionist reading of the Politics, from which citizenship emerges as a matter of hierarchy and inequality rather than rights (ch.8). The final two chapters discuss Stoic political theory. Chapter 9 seeks to interpret the view of Diogenes of Babylon, preserved in Cicero’s De officiis, that a seller is not obligated to disclose facts which might undermine his ability to make a sale. Julia Annas thinks that Diogenes meant there was nothing legally amiss with the merchant’s conduct—though he did not mean to deny that it might be morally reprehensible (176). S objects that there is no primary emphasis upon legal rights in this or any related text:

What is at stake is, as most readers have supposed, private property and our moral obligations with regard to buying and selling it. ... Diogenes puts a reasoned and not implausible argument for the view that in the problem cases there need be no dishonesty or injustice in pursuing one’s self-interest. (176)
Chapter 10 is an analysis of what Cicero meant by *res publica* in his *Republic*. In contrast to Finley, who saw Cicero's aristocratic ideology as a simple product of his senatorial prejudices, S believes it is 'a lucid and original analysis of what makes a government legitimate, and as simple and persuasive an explanation as one could hope to find of why an elected aristocracy of men of energy and judgment is the best way for a sovereign people to manage its affairs' (193).

S enjoys polite engagement with the views of other contemporary writers, though he admits that Moses Finley's work served as both 'a major stimulus and indeed irritant' (2). He is acutely aware of the literary qualities of his texts, and is painstaking in his analysis of them, adopting what he calls a 'problem-posing/solving' approach (1). In fact, the arguments often seem more textual than political. Other critics confuse and confound; S unravels the knots that others have created. The way he describes a complementary rather than a contradictory relationship between Plato's *Laws*, *Statesman* and *Republic* seems a good example of his strengths in this regard (ch.2). Above all, S is concerned throughout to emphasise the degree to which ancient political thought is 'irredeemably "other"' (2). As a consequence it is not easily understood in the light of contemporary preoccupations, especially that with individual rights (cf. chs.8, 9), which in fact derives from the early modern political theorists.

The themes and texts treated in this book are fundamental to ancient political thought. The careful and innovative way that S has approached his task should ensure that the results remain of interest for some time to come.

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