

PAUL CARTLEDGE: *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2009. ISBN 978-0-521-45455-1 (hb), 978-0-521-45595-4 (pb). XXIII, 169 pp. GBP 40, USD 70 (hb); GBP 14.99, USD 24.99 (pb).

This book is part of the series *Key Themes in Ancient History*, a series consisting of studies written by specialists and aimed at beginners or non-specialists. In this book the key theme is Greek political theory and its application to real ancient communities. The author Paul Cartledge (= C.) has managed to compact many relevant aspects, relevant in antiquity, as well as today, within only 135 pages. C. looks at political theory as a set of ideas dealing with how, by whom, and to which purpose a community should be ruled, as well as with the question when and in which circumstances these ideas were born.

In the introductory chapters C. sets the parameters of the study: he summarizes the sources and discusses what to draw from them, at the same time setting the tradition and general questions of modern historiography in context. After having clarified some basic terms such as monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy, as well as the conceptual distinctions between a *polis* and what is today known as a "state", C. carefully explains why and how ancient Greek-style democracy was different from modern Western democracy. Matters like the lack of human rights in general and especially of the rights of minorities, which strikes a Westerner as quite alien, become understandable within C.'s discussion of the concepts of "public and private", "gender", "freedom and slavery" and "constitutions" in the Greek *polis*.

The book is constructed around chronologically arranged historical narratives giving an overview of the central ideas and events of a particular period. These narratives are followed by case studies, chosen by the author to illustrate the presented events and ideas in practice. In addition, there is a chronological table of some historical key moments in the Greek world (p. xi) and a selection of translations of essential Greek texts (Appendix I). The icing on the cake is the close reading of the antidemocratic text "Athenian Constitution", wrongly attributed to the *corpus* of Xenophon (appendix II).

Throughout the study, often in the headings, C. plays with the three forms of governing a community as defined in the third book of Herodotus' *Historia*, in the so-called *Persian Debate*: rule by one (monarchy, tyranny, *dunasteia* = collective tyranny), rule by some (oligarchy, aristocracy) and rule by all (democracy). As the nuclear idea of a political theory is the consideration which form of rule gives the best result, C. strongly stresses that in a Greek *polis* a very important factor in this consideration was the gods. In every Greek community, religion (a term used because of the lack of a better one) and politics inseparably intertwines: a *polis* was truly filled with various deities, and often it was a *polis* more for gods than for mortals. Over the span of the study C. stresses the importance of religious matters facilitating the understanding of a modern reader concerning the underlying nature of the Greek *polis*.

In the first narrative ("The prehistoric and protohistoric Greek world, c. 1300–750") C. calls Mycenaean Greece protohistoric, for the reason that it did have writing, but that the writing was restricted to a circle of scribes and to commercial administration only. Information regarding this period comes through archaeology and Homeric epics, which are not fruitful sources for the study of political ideology. C. concludes (Chapter 3) that despite some traces of the dawning of the idea of a *polis*-like community (speech-making, patriotism), Homeric epics only illustrate the category of "rule by one" and do not have any kind of coherent political idea of a *polis*. As is appropriate in a study like this, Hesiod is paired with Homer. With Hesiod

things change somewhat and *Works and Days* can be read as a public manifesto of a person who has been treated unjustly over his father's estate by the ruling kings. C. states that the real importance of Hesiod's complaint, which probably fell on deaf ears, is that it clearly shows a need for social reform.

The most important of C's key themes (p. 46) is democracy and its evolution. In the narratives covering the archaic and classical Greek world C. looks at the birth and the development of Athenian democracy, at the same time placing it in a larger context. The author stresses that democracy cannot be treated as one single concept, as it had several different stages and degrees. C. discusses the two traditions concerning the founder of democracy: according to the Athenians the inventor was Solon, according to Herodotus it was Cleisthenes. C. discusses both candidates (Chapters 4 and 5).

Not much is known of Solon and his works, but from the scanty sources we have it can be deduced that in a period of deep economic crisis he wanted to shield Athens from tyranny and in order to do this he cancelled debts that had overburdened many and cancelled enslavement of indebted Athenians through new legislation and opened government appointments to persons outside the traditional aristocracy (the *Eupatridai*) and thus prevented the sole rule by a non-responsible rich elite. C. points out that Solon's reforms by no means meant any kind of radical democracy, but that he rather achieved a certain balance between the small privileged class relying on birth and the majority, the poor *demos*, which gradually led to more equal distribution of wealth. Nevertheless, Solon's Athens was ruled only by some.

Contrary to the Athenian tradition, Herodotus (6,131,1) says it was Cleisthenes who introduced democracy in Athens. C. takes this often overlooked statement under close scrutiny and brilliantly puts Herodotus into the context, showing in Chapter 5 ("Rule by all: the Athenian revolution c. 500 BCE") how democracy evolved in post-Cleisthenian Athens, and how Ephialtes and Pericles were essential factors in the evolution of a democratic system. In addition, the author analyses the coinage and establishment of the very term δημοκρατία (*vs.* the older ἰσονομία) with its various (often negative) connotations. The birth of political theory and its discussion can be detected in the texts of the Ionian enlightenment, but also in Athenian tragedy festivals, which C. describes as part of the Cleisthenic intellectual-political revolution.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the trial of Socrates. Interestingly, and surely contrary to common modern opinion, C. makes a case for defending the Athenian *demos* in its act of convicting Socrates. He presents four "articles" to show how Athens in religious matters was a standard Greek city, then he offers four "propositions" to argue that Athens, at the same time, was a highly unique place in exceptional circumstances. C. manages to convince the reader that the charges against Socrates, his trial and the result of the trial, understood in their own context were based on a logical and right decision. C. argues that at the time of the trial of Socrates (399) when the political situation was very difficult (after the Peloponnesian War, with the devastating plague and the harsh regimen of the thirty tyrants), and with religion completely intertwined with politics, the Athenians had every reason to think that what they had to do to save the democracy was to purge the citizen body of religious traitors, which Socrates was presented as.

Before moving to the Hellenistic period, C. takes a look at the interesting phenomenon of the strong anti-democratic views of democratic Athens' leading intellectuals (Chapter 8). Xenophon, Plato, Isocrates and Aristotle often express resentment towards the rule by the *demos*. Considering that the aristocrat Xenophon and Plato were pupils of Socrates, their re-

sentment is not surprising, and the pro-aristocratic and oligarchic opinions were then handed down by Aristotle to Alexander, who made his own interpretation of them.

The fifth narrative ("The Hellenistic Greek world, c. 300–30 BCE") looks at the Hellenistic age, which is described as a transition from the Greek world to the Roman Empire. To illustrate political thought in the Hellenistic age, C. has chosen Sparta as a case study (Chapter 9). First the author presents an overview of the phenomenon called anti-politics, i.e. refusal of political participation as a way to influence the community. In ancient Greece, this attitude was shown either in the advocacy of a withdrawal from politics to a self-sufficient life or in the creation of imaginative ideal places to live. The latter, called the utopian tendency by C., appears in the writings of Athenian authors (e.g. Plato and Xenophon) and most (e)utopias seem to be influenced by idealized perceptions of the Spartan way of life in the ascetic and communalist Lycurgan style. In reality, Sparta was in decay by the middle of the 3rd century in both internal and external affairs and did not have much in common with these idealized views. However, it did go through two attempts to reform the city politically, economically and socially. These attempts, by King Agis IV and King Cleomenes III, were so radical, that they deserve to be called the "Spartan revolution". C. points out that although the results of these reforms were short-lived they appear to be real attempts to put utopian theory into practice.

In the final narrative ("Graecia capta"), C. approaches the development of political theories in the Greek world that had become subject to Roman rule. C. states (in Chapter 10) that in "the massy shape of Cicero" (p. 124) the inheritance of Greek political thinkers was transferred to Rome. The main character of the chapter is, however, Plutarch, a Greek and Roman citizen, whose writings reflect a realistic adaptation to circumstances, and yet do not conceal the powerless state of the Greeks in the Roman Empire.

In his concluding chapter, C. summarizes his main *theseis*: Greek *poleis* and their politics were profoundly different from our societies, they were not by any means 'liberal' in the modern (Western) sense. That, however, does not mean that there is not something to learn from ancient Greek politics. C. touches upon some obvious pain spots in our own democratic systems (e.g., the power of mass media and the problems of representative democracy) and makes the reader see that we, in fact, are wrestling with problems surprisingly similar to the ancient Greek *poleis*.

In this book, Cartledge navigates the reader through different stages of the Greek world of politics, and does it in a fascinating and entertaining way. His style is that of an established, first-class British scholar: thought provoking, loaded with intellectual and academic substance, and yet, extremely enjoyable to read.

Tiina Purola

THOMAS C. BRICKHOUSE – NICHOLAS D. SMITH: *Socratic Moral Psychology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-19843-1. VII, 276 pp. GBP 50, USD 85.

Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith argue in this book against a widely shared interpretation of Socrates' moral psychology. Socrates is believed to have an intellectualist view of human moral psychology, according to which virtue is a kind of knowledge and human