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Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity

edited by PETER GARNSEY and C. R. WHITTAKER

Trade in antiquity – its scale, status, pattern and context – is the subject of lively debate among historians. But no analysis has made a special investigation of trade in essential food stuffs. Famine and food-crisis are also neglected subjects. This study, originating in papers written for the Eighth International Economic History Congress (Budapest, 16-20 August, 1982) is structured around the two focal points of trade and famine. A theme of the volume is that a combination of natural and artificial shortages made inevitable the bulk movement of staples between regions in all periods of antiquity. Novel contributions are offered in addition in relation to the cost of shipping, the extent of long-distance trade in wine, the relative demand for wheat and barley, the incidence and gravity of food crises, the efficiency of famine-relief measures and the part played by food shortages in the collapse of the late Roman frontier system.

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Plato's Arguments for Forms

by ROBERT WILLIAM JORDAN

If we are to understand why Plato had a theory of Forms, we must explain firstly, why Plato thought it necessary to depart from the ontology of the Socratic dialogues; secondly, why Plato then posited the existence of entities that have the characteristics that Plato ascribes to Forms (entities that are 'unmixed', 'unchanging', 'in every way being' and so on); thirdly, why Plato took this course when other philosophers have not done so (and even he himself and his immediate pupils were later to modify or abandon the theory). Dr Jordan discovers an answer to these questions where we might expect to find one – namely in the arguments Plato gives us in favour of the hypothesis that there are Forms. These arguments, on analysis, reveal not just a concern with the nature of knowledge and explanation; but an interest in the analysis of the apparent contradictions that Plato (in his middle period) thought to be presented to the intellect by the sensible world. These contradictions, he then thought, could not be resolved except by those with knowledge of the Forms.

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