

Politics, Book I:
Slavery, Property, Sexual Hierarchy

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‘All men are created equal...’

An impossible thought for ancient
thinkers

Hierarchy of Beings

- Hierarchy is *natural* (*Pol.*, I, *passim*);
 - = relations of super- and subordination
 - Master-slave; male-female (esp. p. 17, *Pol.* 1.5).
- Each being has its own kind of soul (*anima*):
 - not to be confused w/ Christian idea of soul;
 - Plants: vegetative soul; stays in one place, serve animals;
 - Animals: sensitive soul; have locomotion
 - Humans: rational soul, locomotion, activity
- Higher vs lower humans:
 - those who have the capacity to rule:
 - statesmen, men in general, and Greeks.
 - Those who need to be ruled
 - **natural** slaves, women/wives, and barbarians.

WHAT IS SLAVERY?

WHY DOES IT PERSIST TO THIS DAY?

What forms does it take?

A base instrument: the *Auloi* [Pipes]



Actual Slavery

Status

- No rights;
- Property of master, who could kill or punish in any way he wished;
- Law required slaves to be tortured when giving evidence;
- Manumission (grant of freedom) rare in ancient Greece, common in Rome.
- Worshipped master's family gods (ancestors)
- Given a name.

Sources of slaves

- Birth
- Purchase
- Conquest/War
- Criminal conviction; in Athens this meant being sent to the silver mines, where death was certain;
- The reality was different from Aristotle's theory!

Elaboration on ancient slavery

In Athens

- Domestic servitude:
 - Debated and codified
 - Personal dependence
 - Essential element of *oikos* (household)
 - Manumission rare & contracts offered few advantages
 - Closed system—did not offer passage to citizenship.
- Penal slavery= certain death
- Public slavery,
 - e.g. to repair roads (*Const. Ath.*, LIII),
 - collect dead bodies in streets (*Const. Ath.*, L).

Elsewhere

- ‘Helotage’: enslaved communities,
 - e.g. Sparta’s Helots
 - retained identity, customs, gods, etc
 - Similar idea in *Pol.* 7.10.
- Roman manumission;
 - strategically created patron-client networks;
- Christians did not abolish slavery:
 - Slavery = opportunity for virtue;
 - Paul’s epistle to Timothy.
- Stoic view of slavery
 - condition that one must bear.

Household management

- Household = *oikos* (cf. 'ecology')
- Ruled despotically, a 'monarchy', 'royal' rule:
 - Rule of superior over inferior (*Pol.* 1.7)
 - 'The master is not called master because he has science, but because he is of a certain *character*' (emph. added; *Pol.* 1.7)
- Vs constitutional rule:
 - rule over equals, e.g. citizens of polis
 - Husband over wife.
- Includes acquisition of property generally.

Master-Slave relationship (*Pol.* 1.5-1.7)

- Aristotle's 'natural' slave:
 - A naturally servile character, strong body; requires guidance
 - 'from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule' (*Pol.* 1.5);
 - 'some are slaves everywhere, others nowhere' (*Pol.* 1.6);
 - Slaves = 'living possessions' (1.4), part of household property.
- Science of the master:
 - How to order the work to be done.
- Science of the slave
 - How to perform tasks—e.g. cookery, pipe-playing, accounting;
 - Slave's 'excellence', sufficient not to fail in his/her work (1.13).

Aristotle's humane slavery

- Humane slavery:
 - Master should not abuse his authority;
 - Master and Slave can even be friends and have common interest:
 - Master to be source of slave's excellence
 - 'That is why they are mistaken who forbid us to converse with slaves and say we should employ command only, for slaves stand even in more need of admonition than children' (1.13).
 - cf. Hegel, master-slave dialectic.

Slave as property

- ‘The rule of a master, although the slave by nature and the master by nature have in reality the same interests, is nevertheless exercised primarily with a view to the interest of the master, but accidentally considers the slave, since, if the slave perish, the rule of the master perishes with him’ (*Pol.*, 3.6).

Slaves as property

- Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 2, 10:
 - Slaves preserved not for themselves, but as property.
- In later Rome Christians advocated humane treatment of old, or sick slaves
- See Wiedemann, p. 181.

Relation must be *natural*,

not conventional!

Do you know any natural slaves?

Conventional slavery (*Pol.* 1.6, p. 18)

- Convention is not necessarily right, it's just customary:
 - however, it is 'a sort of justice';
 - e.g. convention that people captured in war may be made slaves;
 - even if the cause of the war may not be just;
- Aristotle could have added:
 - War in of itself may be unjust: he criticizes Sparta for making war its goal;
- Idea of kings or nobles being slaves is absurd:
 - b/c presumably more excellent than ordinary men;
 - 'That is why people do not like to call themselves slaves, but confine the term to foreigners'.

Other views of slavery

- Some say ‘distinction between slave and freeman exists by convention only, and not by nature; and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust’ (1.3)

E.g. **sophists** taught that slavery is a *convention*;

- not a natural institution;
- People become slaves through capture in war (or birth);
 - there is no slave *by nature*;
- It is therefore incorrect to assume that Aristotle’s review simply *reflects* the view of his peers!
- This would be Historicism: reduction of a view or idea to being simply a product of its era.

Stoic view of slavery

- Stoicism started in Greece, with the teachings of Zeno, ca. 322 BCE; included
 - Epictetus, freedman of a freedman of the emperor Nero (1st cent. CE)
 - The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (2nd cent. CE)
 - Stoics distinguished b/w moral and legal slavery:
 - Legal: merely an external condition like illness and poverty that one can ignore;
 - Moral: allowing external conditions to dominate oneself, leading to true slavery.

Ancient & Christian Views

- The Christian view:
 - See e.g. St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon, a slave-owner (next slide);
 - No Christian condemnation of slavery;
 - Slavery persisted throughout the Christian era, going under a variety of names;
 - Christianity did, however, recognize the slave as having a soul and a right to marry;
 - Slaves could join monasteries as monks (*Rule of St. Benedict*, 6th cent.).

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St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon

- I urge you on behalf of my child Onesimus, whose *father* I have become in my imprisonment, who was once *useless* to you but is now *useful* to (both) you and me. I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you.
- I should have liked to retain him for myself, so that he might serve me on your behalf in my imprisonment for the gospel, but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that the good you do might not be forced but voluntary.
- Perhaps this is why he was away from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a *slave* but more than a slave, a *brother*, beloved especially to me, but even more so to you, as a man and in the Lord. So if you regard me as a *partner*, welcome him as you would me.

Aristotle, Locke & Rousseau on slavery

	Aristotle	Locke	Rousseau
S of N	No	Yes: war & peace	Yes: peaceful
S of W	No	Yes: but ag. Law of nat.	No: only b/w states; no states in S of N
Slavery	Yes; by nature	Yes; esp. penal	No: ag. Man's nat.

Locke on how to become a slave

- Liberty is natural to man (2nd Treatise, 22)
 - one cannot consent to enslave oneself (23);
 - “he that cannot take away his own life, cannot give another power over it” (23);
 - age-old prohibition on suicide.
- So how can you become a slave?!
- By entering into the State of War w/ someone else
- If you’re a slave, it’s b/c you did sth wrong!

Locke's justification for slavery

- ‘...having by his *fault* forfeited his own life, by some act that deserves death; he, to whom he has forfeited it, may (when he has him in his power) delay to take it, and make use of him to his own service, and he does him no injury by it [emph. added]:
- for, whenever [the slave] finds the hardship of his slavery outweigh the value of his life, it is in his power, by resisting the will of his master, to draw upon himself the death he desires’ (23).

Rousseau on conventional slavery

- “...a slave made in war or a conquered people is not bound to anything at all toward their master, except to obey him as long as they are forced to do so.”
- “In taking an equivalent of his life, the victor did not spare it: instead of killing him unprofitably, he killed him usefully” (12).

Examples of modern slavery

- Mauritania:
 - slavery abolished, but continues; Blacks enslaved to Arab-Berbers.
- PRC: labour camps, 'laogai'
- Pakistan: brick kilns
- Thailand, Cambodia: brothels
- Europe and North America:
 - human trafficking from Russia, eastern Europe, for brothels, domestic servitude.

On contemporary slavery, see
this website:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl
/hi/world/05/slavery/html/5.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/world/05/slavery/html/5.stm)

Aristotle on Women

Comment

- In chapter 12 (1259: 1-5), Aristotle states that a husband's rule over his wife is "a constitutional rule". If we are to understand "constitutional" in this context as similar to constitutional rule in the state, this shows Aristotle to regard women as equals to their husbands. Just as all freemen are equals in a constitutional polity and must partake in political decision making, women must play a (crucial) role in the management of a household.

Reply

- In what sense can we understand that some human beings are naturally inclined to being led and others to exercising the authority of leadership?
- A defense of Aristotle should not say that, maybe, after all, Aristotle does not say, or fully say, what we suspected he said (about natural slaves and inferior women) and that actually there might not be as much a dissension between his views and ours as was first thought. On the contrary I believe that the very interesting thing about Aristotle is that he has such radically non-modern views, even maybe anti-modern views.
- It is a deepening of this opposition and a displacement of the modern reader outside of his realm to a different viewpoint that a defense of Aristotle should strive towards.

Reply, cont.

- ...what do we learn by continuing our reading of Aristotle? Precisely that he comes to claim with more certainty, because [he provides] more detail, the truth of the natural hierarchy that can be found in the art of household management: that of a freeman over the slave, of the husband over the wife and of the father over the children.
 - "For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature" (1259^b1-5).

Aristotle on Women

- Husband's 'rule over his wife is like that of a statesman over fellow citizens', i.e. **constitutional** (*Pol.* 1.12).
- Women have a degree of governing capacity, i.e. for child care, but 'without authority' (*Pol.* 1.13);
- Male commands; female obeys:
 - 'Silence is a woman's glory' (Sophocles, quoted in *Pol.* 1.13);
 - Socrates wrong: men and women do not have same courage (1.13)
- Favors moderate exercise for women (Bk 7);
- Women should be younger than their husbands (18 for wife, mid-30's for husband; *Pol.* 7.16).

Actual Status of Women

Athens:

- Confined to home: weaving and child care;
- Allowed outside ONLY for important religious festivals;
- No sports!
- Forbidden to marry or have relations with *metics* (foreigners);
- Metic women had greater freedom.

Sparta:

- Young, unmarried women exercised in public;
- Did not perform household labor;
- Only job was child-bearing, childcare;
- Eugenics
- Old husbands introduced young men to their wives for procreation.

Property

Is it possible to have too much?

Unnatural Acquisition: usury

- Natural acquisition = barter;
- Unnatural acquisition:
 - Coinage = means of exchange enabled retail and international trade ;
 - Banking/usury (lending money at interest):
 - ‘the most hated sort [of wealth-getting]...which makes gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it’.
- Forbidden by the medieval Church;
- Usury today means to exceed a certain *rate* of interest, and is still a crime;
- What is the usury rate in HK?

Unnatural Trade 1.9

- Example of unnatural use of an object:
- A shoe is made for wear, not for exchange;
 - ‘Hence, we may infer that retail trade is not a natural part of the art of getting wealth; had it been so, men would have ceased to exchange when they had enough’;
- How would Aristotle define ‘enough’?
- How would we? Do we accept this notion?
- Cf. idea of ‘limits to growth’ put forward by environmentalists.

Islamic Finance

- *Koran* (the source of Islamic law and practice) forbids *riba*, or interest;
 - Like Aristotle, rejects money as *commodity*;
 - forbids gambling;
 - sees money as store of value. Does Aristotle?
- HSBC, Deutsche Bank offer special investment vehicles for Islamic investors:
 - Motto: ‘equity financing, not debt’;

Quoted in *Financial Times*, 24 Sept. 2006, pp. W5-6.

Why not stockpile money (1.9)?

- Some assume riches = large quantity of coin;
- Others say coin = convention (recall slavery argument), and hence nothing;
- Example of Midas: “how can that be wealth of which a man may have a great abundance and yet perish with hunger...?”
- These are “riches of the spurious [false] kind.”

Other objections to wealth-getting (1.9)

- Object of life: To lead a *good* life (not just ANY life);
 - This is also the purpose of the household;
- “...some persons are led to believe [by confusion over means] that getting wealth is the object of household management, and the whole idea of their lives is that they ought either to increase their money without limit, or at any rate not to lose it. The origin of this disposition in men is that they are intent upon living only, and not upon living well....”

Legitimate wealth-getting (1.11)

- Tillage of soil;
- Animal Husbandry:
 - Study which animals yield best, and in which environments;
- Treatises of Chares, Apollodorus;
- Exploitation of natural resources: timber, mining
- Thales of Miletus,
 - his knowledge of meteorology enabled him to predict the olive harvest, hire presses, create a monopoly, and make a lot of money;
- Thales 'showed the world that philosophers can easily be rich if they like, but that their ambition is of another sort'!