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ARISTOTLE
THE POLITICS

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TO THE MEMORY OF

T. A. SINCLAIR

when applied analogously, to discovering the function and aim of the state; in short, he sees some sort of functional parallel between a living thing and a polis *(see I ii and IV iv, second section). Both assumptions are large and disputable; but to Aristotle's synoptic mind they are irresistibly attractive.*

1252a1 Observation tells us that every state is an association, and that every association is formed with a view to some good purpose. I say 'good', because in all their actions all men do in fact aim at what they think good. Clearly then, as all associations aim at some good, that association which is the most sovereign among them all and embraces all others will aim highest, i.e. at the most sovereign of all goods. This is the association which we call the state, the association which is 'political'.[1]

1252a7 It is an error to suppose, as some do, that the roles of a statesman,[2] of a king, of a household-manager and of a master of slaves are the same, on the ground that they differ not in kind but only in point of numbers of persons – that a master of slaves, for example, has to do with a few people, a household-manager with more, and a statesman or king with more still, as if there were no differences between a large household and a small state. They also reckon that when one person is in personal control over the rest he has the role of a king, whereas when he takes his turn at ruling and at being ruled according to the principles of the science concerned, he is a statesman.[3] But these assertions are false.

1252a17 This will be quite evident if we examine the

1. *Hē koinōnia politikē*: 'the association that takes the form of a *polis* (state)'.

2. *Politikos*, 'statesman', in the sense explained in the introduction to this chapter.

3. The formulation is adequate as far as it goes; but Aristotle's point is that a king and a statesman differ sharply in *kind*: a king is set apart in some fundamental respect from his subjects, while a statesman is the *equal* of his; cf. I vii and xii.

matter according to our established method.[4] We have to analyse other composite things till they can be subdivided no further, because we have reached the smallest parts of the wholes; so let us in the same way examine the component parts of the state and we shall see better how these too differ from each other, and whether we can acquire any systematic[5] knowledge about the several roles mentioned.[6]

I ii

(1252a24–1253a39)

THE STATE EXISTS BY NATURE

This long chapter is an admirable illustration of Aristotle's analytical and genetic method, and contains many rich and suggestive ideas. By imaginative reconstruction rather than by factual history (cf. Plato, Laws *III) he traces the formation (a) of the 'pairs' of husband/wife and master/slave, (b) of the household from the 'pairs', (c) of the village from a coalescence of households, and (d) of the state from a coalescence of villages. The 'nature' of a thing, he claims, is not its first but its final condition; just as an individual man is the natural end of the process of human coming-to-be, so too the state is the natural end and culmination of the other and earlier associations, which were themselves natural; the state therefore exists* by nature. *It provides all men's needs (material, social, religious, etc.), and offers them the fulfilment not only of living but of living 'well', in accordance with those virtues that are peculiarly human. The state is thus 'all-providing', which is 'best', which is characteristic of natural ends. (Aristotle's discussion and*

4. The analytical method described in the introduction to this chapter.

5. *Technikos*.

6. Of statesman, household-manager, etc.

definition of 'nature' in Physics *II i would be useful background reading.)*

The repeated emphasis Aristotle places on the state's being 'natural' suggests that the chapter has also the polemical purpose of refuting those who believed that the state was an 'artificial' or a 'conventional' creation. Such argument was a special form of the general controversy of the fifth and fourth centuries about the relative status and merits of nomos, *law, and* phusis, *nature (see Newman's discussion, I 24 ff.). Aristotle does not name his opponents, and it is doubtful whether he has any particular persons in mind.*

Two further points are worth noting: (a) Aristotle regards human society as inevitably and naturally hierarchical; he assumes as self-evident that the male's abilities are superior to the female's, and the master's to the slave's (not that slave and female are on that account to be treated alike: see n. 4), and that Greeks are superior to non-Greeks. 'Who rules whom?' and 'With what justification?' are questions at the centre of his political theory, and his defence of slavery in subsequent chapters is all of a piece with this general approach. (b) Like most Greek writers, he delights in appealing to the poets, and to the popular ideas they express, in order to justify his position. He believes that in subjects such as political and ethical theory, in which precise demonstration is impossible, one should welcome support from the experience of mankind.

The Two 'Pairs'

1252a24 We shall, I think, in this as in other subjects, get the best view of the matter if we look at the natural growth of things from the beginning. The first point is that those which are incapable of existing without each other must be united as a pair. For example, (a) the union of male and female is essential for reproduction; and this is not a matter of *choice*, but is due to the

natural urge, which exists in the other animals too and in plants, to propagate one's kind.[1] Equally essential is (b) the combination of the natural ruler and ruled, for the purpose of preservation. For the element that can use its intelligence to look ahead is by nature ruler and by nature master, while that which has the bodily strength to do the actual work is by nature a slave, one of those who are ruled. Thus there is a common interest uniting master and slave.

Formation of the Household

1252a34 Nature, then, has distinguished between female and slave: she recognizes different functions and lavishly provides different tools, not an all-purpose tool like the Delphic knife;[2] for every instrument will be made best if it serves not many purposes but one. But non-Greeks assign to female and slave exactly the same status. This is because they have nothing which is by nature fitted to rule; their association[3] consists of a male slave and a female slave.[4] So, as the poets say, 'It is proper that Greeks should rule non-Greeks',[5] the implication being that non-Greek and slave are by nature identical.

1252b9 Thus it was out of the association formed by

1. Male and female are 'incapable of existing without each other' not as individuals but as members of a species, over a period of many generations. Note the contrast between instinctive *nature* (*phusis*) and rational and purposive *choice* (*prohairesis*); on the latter, see *Nicomachean Ethics* III ii.

2. Evidently a knife capable of more than one mode of cutting, and not perfectly adapted to any one of them.

3. I.e of marriage.

4. Somewhat confusingly, Aristotle uses 'slave' both in a literal and in a metaphorical sense. In non-Greek societies a woman and a slave are 'in the same position' in that their *de facto* rulers (husband and master respectively) have not the wisdom and the rationality nature demands in a 'natural' ruler: authority is exercised by persons who are in point of fitness for rule *no better than* slaves. The 'slave' husband makes a 'slave' of his *wife*.

5. Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulis* 1400.

men with these two, women and slaves, that a household was first formed; and the poet Hesiod was right when he wrote, 'Get first a house and a wife and an ox to draw the plough.'[6] (The ox is the poor man's slave.) This association of persons, established according to nature for the satisfaction of daily needs, is the household, the members of which Charondas calls 'bread-fellows', and Epimenides the Cretan 'stable-companions'.[7]

Formation of the Village

1252b15 The next stage is the village, the first association of a number of houses for the satisfaction of something *more* than daily needs. It comes into being through the processes of nature in the fullest sense, as offshoots[8] of a household are set up by sons and grandsons. The members of such a village are therefore called by some 'homogalactic'.[9] This is why states were at first ruled by kings, as are foreign nations to this day: they were formed from constituents which were themselves under kingly rule. For every household is ruled by its senior member, as by a king, and the offshoots too, because of their blood relationship, are ruled in the same way. This kind of rule is mentioned in Homer:[10] 'Each man has power of law[11] over children and wives.' He is referring to scattered settlements, which were common in primitive times. For this reason the gods too are said to be governed by a king – namely because men themselves were originally ruled by kings and some are so still. Just as men

6. *Works and Days* 405.
7. Charondas was a lawgiver of Catana, in Sicily, probably of the sixth century; Aristotle refers to him several times. Epimenides was a Cretan seer and wonder-worker of about 600.
8. *Apoikia*: 'settlement', 'colony', 'extension'.
9. I.e. 'sucklings of the same milk'.
10. *Odyssey* IX, 114–5.
11. *Themisteuei*, 'lays down *themis*' ('ordinance', 'customary law', a term in early Greek social and legal thought).

imagine gods in human shape, so they imagine their way of life to be like that of men.

Formation of the State

1252b27 The final association, formed of several villages, is the state. For all practical purposes the process is now complete; self-sufficiency[12] has been reached, and while the state came about as a means of securing life itself, it continues in being to secure the *good* life. Therefore every state exists by nature, as the earlier associations too were natural. This association is the end of those others, and nature is itself an end; for whatever is the end-product of the coming into existence of any object, that is what we call its nature – of a man, for instance, or a horse or a household. Moreover the aim and the end is perfection; and self-sufficiency is both end and perfection.[13]

The State and the Individual

1253a1 It follows that the state belongs to the class of objects which exist by nature, and that man is by nature a political animal.[14] Any one who by his nature and not simply by ill-luck has no state is either too bad or too good, either subhuman or superhuman – he is like the war-mad man condemned in Homer's words[15] as 'having

12. *Autarkeia*, 'political and/or economic independence'. Aristotle's use of the word here is however somewhat wider than this, and embraces opportunities to live the 'good' life according to the human virtues.
13. Aristotle makes succinct use of his teleological technicalities: the 'aim' ('that-for-the-sake-of-which', *to hou heneka*) is the 'final cause', the 'end' or purpose towards which a process of development is directed and in which it culminates.
14. *Politikon zōon*, 'who lives whose nature is to live, in a *polis* (state)'; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, I vii *ad fin.*
15. *Iliad* IX, 63.

no family, no law,[16] no home'; for he who is such[17] by nature is mad on war: he is a non-cooperator like an isolated piece in a game of draughts.

1253a7 But obviously man is a political animal[14] in a sense in which a bee is not, or any other gregarious animal.[18] Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. Speech is something different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and used by them to express pain or pleasure; for their nature does indeed enable them not only to feel[19] pleasure and pain but to communicate these feelings to each other. Speech, on the other hand serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust. For the real difference between man and other animals is that humans alone have perception[19] of good and evil, just and unjust, etc. It is the sharing of a common view in *these* matters that makes a household and a state.

1253a18 Furthermore, the state has a natural priority over the household and over any individual among us. For the whole must be prior to the part. Separate hand or foot from the whole body, and they will no longer be hand or foot except in name, as one might speak of a 'hand' or 'foot' sculptured in stone. That will be the condition of the spoilt[20] hand, which no longer has the capacity and the function which define it. So, though we may say they have the same names, we cannot say that they are, in

16. *Athemistos*: see n. 11.

17. I.e. without a state. It is such a person's *pugnacity* that Aristotle seems to regard as marking him out as in some sense non-human; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b9.

18. A slightly comic sentence; but obviously it is the notion of the state as an *association* that Aristotle has in mind. On this sentence see R. G. Mulgan, 'Aristotle's doctrine that man is a political animal', *Hermes*, 102 (1974), pp. 438–45, and cf. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 487b33–488a13.

19. *Aisthēsis*.

20. Literally 'destroyed', 'ruined' (by the dismemberment apparently envisaged in the preceding sentence).

that condition,[21] the same things. It is clear then that the state is both natural and prior to the individual. For if an individual is not fully self-sufficient after separation, he will stand in the same relationship to the whole as the parts in the other case do.[22] Whatever is incapable of participating in the association which we call the state, a dumb animal for example, and equally whatever is perfectly self-sufficient and has no need to (e.g. a god), is not a part of the state at all.

1253a29 Among all men, then, there is a natural impulse towards this kind of association; and the first man to construct a state deserves credit for conferring very great benefits. For as man is the best of all animals when he has reached his full development, so he is worst of all when divorced from law and justice. Injustice armed is hardest to deal with; and though man is born with weapons which he can use in the service of practical wisdom and virtue, it is all too easy for him to use them for the opposite purposes. Hence man without virtue is the most savage, the most unrighteous, and the worst in regard to sexual licence and gluttony. The virtue of justice is a feature of a state; for justice is the arrangement of the political association,[23] and a sense of justice decides what is just.[24]

21. Of not having a function and a capacity.

22. E.g. limbs (individuals : state :: limbs : body).

23. *Politikēs koinōnias taxis*, 'the framework or organization of the association that takes the form of a *polis* (state)'.

24. In this paragraph *dikaiosunē*, the 'virtue' or 'sense' of justice, seems to be distinguished from *dikē*, 'justice', the concrete expression or embodiment of that virtue or sense in a legal and administrative system. 'What is just' (*dikaion*) evidently means particular and individual just relationships arrived at or (in courts) re-established by the application of *dikaiosunē* through the medium of the system of justice, or just system, *dikē*.

I iii

(1253b1–23)

THE HOUSEHOLD AND ITS SLAVES

Aristotle now focuses attention on the household and its economic arrangements, and turns first to consider slaves. Slavery was an integral part of the economy of ancient Greece; and since Aristotle thinks of life in the Greek state as being the 'natural' and 'best' life for man, he is immediately faced with the crucial task of showing that at least some slavery is 'natural'. Although for the most part slavery was simply taken for granted, there was, as he candidly admits, some opposition from those who held it to be against nature, because based on force (cf. I vi). Again, it is not clear that Aristotle has identifiable opponents in mind. Certainly there seems to have been some controversy about slavery, of which echoes may be found also in Plato, Laws *776 ff.; Newman I 139 ff. discusses the evidence. In this short chapter, then, Aristotle girds his loins for a defence of slavery as a 'natural' institution.*

1253b1 Now that I have explained what the component parts of a state are, and since every state consists of households, it is essential to begin with household-management. This topic can be subdivided so as to correspond to the parts of which a complete household is made up, namely, the free and the slaves; but our method[1] requires us to examine everything when it has been reduced to its smallest parts, and the first and smallest division of a household into parts gives three pairs – master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. And so we must ask ourselves what each one of these three relationships is, and what sort of thing it ought to be. The word 'mastership' is used to describe the first, and we may use 'matrimonial' (in the case of the union of man and woman) and 'pater-

1. See I i.

nal' to describe the other two, as there is no more specific term for either.[2] We may accept these three; but we find that there is a fourth element, which some people regard as covering the whole of household-management, others as its most important part; and our task is to consider its position. I refer to what is called 'the acquisition of wealth'.

1253b14 First let us discuss master and slave, in order to see (a) how they bear on the provision of essential services, (b) whether we can find a better way towards understanding this topic than if we started from the suppositions usually made. For example, some people suppose that being a master requires a certain kind of knowledge, and that this is the same knowledge as is required to manage a household or to be a statesman or a king – an error which we discussed at the beginning.[1] Others say that it is contrary to nature to rule as master over slave, because the distinction between slave and free is one of convention only, and in nature there is no difference, so that this form of rule is based on force and is therefore not just.

I iv

(1253b23–1254a17)

THE SLAVE AS A TOOL

In this notorious chapter Aristotle describes, from his own teleological standpoint, the position of the slave in

2. *Despotikē* ('of a master'), with some such noun as *archē* ('rule') to be supplied here and (in the plural, *archai*) after 'three' in the next sentence. In the case of 'matrimonial' (*gamikē*, 'to do with marriages'), and 'paternal' (*teknopoiētikē*, 'procreative'), Aristotle gropes for words. He lacks an adjective for a husband's authority over his wife and for *all* their relationships in general, including the sexual, and for the relationship (mainly of authority) of both parents to their children, not only of the father (for which he *could* have used *patrikē*); cf. I xii. For once, a Greek did not 'have a word for it'.

his day. According to him, the slave is a 'live tool' used by the master for purposes of 'life' and 'action', not of production. He is of course thinking of the household, which is not primarily productive; but even so it looks as if his bias in favour of a 'gentlemanly' life has tempted him into thinking of a slave as invariably in personal attendance on his master. In fact, many slaves were used in productive labour in factories and mines and on farms.

In the third paragraph of the chapter, the argument seems to be: (a) a piece of property is described in the same terms as a part; (b) a part 'belongs to another tout court' *(i.e. to the whole); (c) slaves are pieces of property;* so *(d) slaves 'belong to others* tout court' *(i.e. to their masters) – whereas masters, not being pieces of property, are master 'of' their slaves but do not 'belong to them* tout court'.

Is Aristotle suggesting that the slave 'belongs tout court' *to his master in the sense of being dependent on him as a member of a 'pair', or perhaps in the way an individual is 'part' of the state (I ii)? If so, the naturalness of the 'belonging' is in a sense established. But the implications of the argument are none too lucid, and evidently it is in Chapters v–vii that the main arguments for the naturalness of slavery are presented.*

1253b23 Now property is part of a household, and the acquisition of property part of household-management; for neither life itself nor the good life is possible without a certain minimum supply of the necessities. Again, in any special skill the availability of the proper tools will be essential for the performance of the task; and the household-manager must have his likewise. Tools may be animate as well as inanimate; for instance, a ship's captain uses a lifeless rudder, but a living man for watch; for a servant is, from the point of view of his craft, categorized as one of its tools. So any piece of property can be regarded as a tool enabling a man to live, and his property is an assemblage of such tools; a slave is a sort

of living piece of property; and like any other servant is a tool in charge of other tools. For suppose that every tool we had could perform its task, either at our bidding or itself perceiving the need, and if – like the statues made by Daedalus or the tripods of Hephaestus, of which the poet says that 'self-moved they enter the assembly of the gods'[1] – shuttles in a loom could fly to and fro and a plucker[2] play a lyre of their own accord, then master-craftsmen would have no need of servants nor masters of slaves.

1254a1 Tools in the ordinary sense are productive tools, whereas a piece of property is meant for action.[3] I mean, for example, a shuttle produces something other than its own use, a bed or a garment does not. Moreover, since production and action differ in kind and both require tools, the difference between their tools too must be of the same kind. Now life is action and not production; therefore the slave, a servant, is one of the tools that minister to action.

1254a9 A piece of property is spoken of in the same way as a part is; for a part is not only part of something but belongs to it *tout court*; and so too does a piece of property. So a slave is not only his master's slave but belongs to him *tout court*, while the master is his slave's master but does not belong to him. These considerations will have shown what the nature and functions of the slave are: any human being that by nature belongs not to himself but to another is by nature a slave; and a human being belongs to another whenever, in spite of being a *man*, he is a piece of property, i.e. a tool having a separate existence[4] and meant for action.[3]

1. Homer, *Iliad* XVIII, 376: Hephaestus' statues were fitted with wheels. Daedalus' statues were so lifelike that they were thought to move.

2. A 'plucker' was the instrument with which the strings of the lyre were played by the performer.

3. *Praktikon*, 'with which to do something'.

4. I.e. separate from its possessor (unlike the hand in I ii, which loses its power when severed from its owner).

I v

(1254a17–1255a3)

SLAVERY AS PART OF A UNIVERSAL NATURAL PATTERN

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that at least some slavery must be natural, because the relationship of master and slave conforms to a broad pattern found universally in nature in the widest sense: better/worse, male/female, man/beast, mind/body, rational/irrational, ruler/ruled. *Such a pattern makes obvious sense to Aristotle, who justifies it teleologically by its beneficial results: to be ruled is to the slave's advantage, and is to that extent just. In the final paragraph some admitted exceptions to the pattern do not make him doubt its essential validity: presumably he finds it sufficient for the purposes of his argument that nature achieves her ends only 'for the most part' (as he often concedes in other contexts).*

Aristotle's view that slavery is expedient both for master and for slave has attracted a great deal of criticism, much of it obvious and justified. Is there anything to be said in its favour? It clearly relies on the assumption that most masters are rational and most slaves are not; or rather, that men fall readily into two classes, rational and irrational, and that the former should rule the latter. With large qualifications, it is at least arguable that such rule ought to be enforced, and is in fact enforced, in society at large. One does not have to defend the particular institutional form of such rule that Aristotle seeks to justify (ancient slavery). If (and it is a big if) we grant his asumptions, the master/slave relationship does indeed seem analogous in some respects to certain other relationships which are presumably desirable (e.g. mind over body, man over beast). But this is of course to defend not slavery as such, but only in so far as it embodies the

rule of rational over irrational. In so far as it does not, even Aristotle would hesitate to defend it, as his next chapter makes clear.

I conclude with two points that are forgotten easily and often: (a) The fact that slavery is a dirty word nowadays should not trick us into believing that ancient Greek slavery was invariably harsh and therefore not *'expedient' for slaves: much depended on the masters' attitudes, which in the nature of the case varied widely. (b) The distinction between slave and free was much sharper in point of legal and political status than in social life and economics, where there was some overlap between the poorer free men and the better-off slaves.*

1254a17 But whether anyone does in fact by nature answer to this description, and whether or not it is a just and a better thing for one man to be a slave to another, or whether all slavery is contrary to nature – these are the questions which must be considered next. Neither theoretical discussion nor empirical observation presents any difficulty. That one should command and another obey is both necessary and expedient. Indeed some things are so divided right from birth, some to rule, some to be ruled. There are many different forms of this ruler–ruled relationship, and the quality of the rule depends primarily on the quality of the subjects, rule over man being better than rule over animals; for that which is produced by better men is a better piece of work; and the ruler–ruled relationship is itself a product created by the men involved in it.

1254a28 For wherever there is a combination of elements, continuous or discontinuous,[1] and a common unity is the result, in all such cases the ruler–ruled relationship appears. It appears notably in living creatures as a consequence of their whole nature (and it can exist

1. E.g. mind and body form a continuous combination (an individual living being); master and slave form a *dis*continuous combination.

also where there is no life, as dominance in a musical scale,[2] but that is hardly relevant here). The living creature consists in the first place of mind and body, and of these the former is ruler by nature, the latter ruled. Now we must always look for nature's own norm in things whose condition is according to nature, and not base our observations on degenerate forms. We must therefore in this connexion consider the man who is in good condition mentally and physically, one in whom the rule of mind over body is conspicuous – because the bad and unnatural condition of a permanently or temporarily depraved person will often give the impression that his body is ruling over his soul.

1254b2 However that may be, it is, as I say, within living creatures that we first find it possible to see both the rule of a master and that of a statesman.[3] The rule of soul over body is like a master's rule, while the rule of intelligence over desire is like a statesman's or a king's.[4] In these relationships it is clear that it is both natural and expedient for the body to be ruled by the soul, and for the emotional part of our natures to be ruled by the mind, the part which possesses reason. The reverse, or even parity, would be fatal all round. This is also true as between man and the other animals; for tame animals are by nature better than wild, and it is better for them all to be ruled by men, because it secures their safety. Again, as between male and female the former is by nature superior and ruler, the latter inferior and subject. And this must hold good of mankind in general.

1254b16 Therefore whenever there is the same wide discrepancy between human beings as there is between soul and body or between man and beast, then those

2. A clipped reference to the special position of the note *mesē* in the scale: see [Aristotle], *Problems* 920a19–23, b7–15, 922a22–7.

3. See I i.

4. That is, I take it, mind *commands* body, but intelligence has to *persuade* desire.

whose condition is such that their function is the use of their bodies and nothing better can be expected of them, those, I say, are slaves by nature. It is better for them, just as in the cases mentioned, to be ruled thus.[5] For the 'slave by nature' is he that can and therefore does belong to another, and he that participates in reason so far as to recognize[6] it but not so as to possess it (whereas the other[7] animals obey not reason but emotions). The use made of slaves hardly differs at all from that of tame animals: they both help with their bodies to supply our essential needs. It is, then, nature's purpose to make the bodies of free men to differ from those of slaves, the latter strong enough to be used for necessary tasks, the former erect and useless for that kind of work, but well suited for the life of a citizen of a state[8], a life which is in turn divided between the requirements of war and peace.

1254b32 But the opposite often occurs: people who have the right kind of bodily physique for free men, but not the soul, others who have the right soul but not the body. This much is clear: suppose that there were men whose mere bodily physique showed the same superiority as is shown by the statues of gods, then all would agree that the rest of mankind would deserve to be their slaves. And if this is true in relation to physical superiority, the distinction would be even more justly made in respect of superiority of soul; but it is much more difficult to see beauty of soul than it is to see beauty of body. It is clear then that by nature some are free, others slaves, and that for these it is both just and expedient that they should serve as slaves.

5. I.e. by a master.

6. *Aisthanesthai*, cf. *aisthēsis*, I ii, n. 19.

7. I.e. other than man.

8. *Politikos bios*, 'the political life, life as a member of a *polis*'.

I vi

(*1255a3–b15*)

THE RELATION BETWEEN LEGAL AND NATURAL SLAVERY

Aristotle has to face the fact that the generalizations of the last chapter do not hold good universally: some slavery comes about not by nature but by human force, as when men perfectly fitted for mastership become slaves through capture in war. He reports that this 'legal' slavery had both defenders and attackers, and in the second paragraph briefly explores some confused reasoning which he suggests led to the difference of opinion. In the remainder of the chapter he argues that the defenders, in not making the right to enslave in war absolute and justified in all circumstances, in effect presuppose that some men are 'natural' masters and some 'natural' slaves – which is precisely his own position. At the end of the chapter it becomes clear that his sympathies are not with the defenders of the doctrine that 'might is right'.

*The argument of the opaque second paragraph is in my view as follows. Aristotle suggests that the reason for the difference of opinion about the justice of forcible enslavement of captives in war arises from false conclusions from the following propositions: (a) that virtue (*moral *'superiority') with resources is well equipped to use force; (b) that a victor in war uses force and conquers because of* some *'superiority' or goodness' (in something); (c) [the 'overlap'] that the 'superiority' in (b) is that in (a).*

One side, noting (rightly) that moral superiority and superiority of force are different, so that forcible enslavement in war is not always just, concludes (wrongly) that it is always *unjust, and that to talk of justice in such connections is a nonsense (cf. I iii, end). The other side, wrongly accepting the identification, or invariable linking, of the two 'superiorities', argues that forcible enslavement in war is* always *just, i.e. that justice is the 'rule of the stronger'. Since the 'overlap' does not invariably exist (superiority of force may or may not go with moral superiority, according to circumstances), neither the arguments that assume their invariable identity nor those assuming their invariable lack of identity can be cogent against Aristotle's own view that the justification of slavery lies in the moral superiority of the master (i.e. that forcible enslavement is just, presumably, if and only if imposed by the morally superior). The Greek, however, is teasingly vague, and admits various interpretations; and Ross's text alone has* ἄνοια *('nonsense') in 1255a17 (the MSS have* εὔνοια, *'good will'). For a full discussion, see my article in A. Moffatt (ed.),* Maistor: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning *(Canberra, 1984), pp. 25–36.*

1255a3 On the other hand it is not hard to see that those who take opposing views are also right up to a point. The expressions 'state of slavery' and 'slave' have a double connotation: there exists also a *legal* slave and state of slavery.[1] The law in question is a kind of agreement, which provides that all that is conquered in war is termed the property of the conquerors. Against this right[2] many of those versed in law bring a charge analogous to that of 'illegality' brought against an orator:[3] they hold it to be indefensible that a man who has been overpowered by the violence and superior might of another should become his property. Others see no harm in this; and both views are held by experts.

1255a12 The reason for this difference of opinion, and for the overlap in the arguments used, lies in the fact that in a way it is virtue, when it acquires resources, that is best able actually to use force; and in the fact that anything which conquers does so because it excels in some

1. I.e. as well as a 'natural' slavery.
2. *Dikaion*.
3. In the Athenian Assembly a charge 'of illegality' (*paranomōn*) could be brought against a proposer of a law which contravened existing law.

good. It seems therefore that force is not without virtue, and that the only dispute is about what is just. Consequently some think that 'just' in this connection is a nonsense, others that it means precisely this, that 'the stronger shall rule'.[4] But when these propositions[5] are disentangled, the other arguments[6] have no validity or power to show that the superior in virtue ought not to rule and be master.

1255a21 Some take a firm stand (as they conceive it) on 'justice' in the sense of 'law', and claim that enslavement in war is just, simply as being legal; but they simultaneously deny it, since it is quite possible that undertaking the war may have been unjust in the first place. Also one cannot use the term 'slave' properly of one who is undeserving of being a slave; otherwise we should find among slaves and descendants of slaves even men who seem to be of the noblest birth, should any of them be captured and sold. For this reason they will not apply the term slave to such people but use it only for non-Greeks.[7] But in so doing they are really seeking to define the slave by nature, which was our starting point; for one has to admit that there are some who are slaves everywhere, others who are slaves nowhere. And the same is true of noble birth: nobles regard themselves as of noble birth not only among their own people but everywhere, and they allow nobility of birth of non-Greeks to be valid only in non-Greek lands. This involves making two grades of free status and noble birth, one absolute, the other conditional. (In a play by Theodectes,[8] Helen is made to say, 'Who would think it proper to call me a slave, who am sprung of divine lineage on both sides?') But in introducing this point they are really basing the distinction between

4. Cf. Thrasymachus' arguments in Plato, *Republic* I.
5. (a) 'virtue, when . . . force'; (b) 'anything which . . . good'.
6. Those outlined in the first paragraph of the chapter?
7. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 469bc.
8. A tragic poet of the mid fourth century. The quotation is fr. 3 in A. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (2nd ed., Leipzig, 1889), p. 802.

slave and free, noble-born and base-born, upon virtue and vice. For they maintain that as man is born of man, and beast of beast, so good is born of good. But frequently, though this may be nature's intention, she is unable to realize it.

1255b4 It is clear then that there is justification for the difference of opinion: while it is not invariably true that slaves are slaves by nature and others free, yet this distinction does in some cases actually prevail – cases where it is expedient for the one to be master, the other to be the slave. Whereas the one must be ruled, the other should exercise the rule for which he is fitted by nature, thus being the master. For, if the work of being a master is badly done, that is contrary to the interest of both parties; for the part and the whole, the soul and the body, have identical interests; and the slave is in a sense a part of his master, a living but separate part of his body.[9] For this reason there is an interest in common and a feeling of friendship between master and slave, wherever they are by nature fitted for this relationship; but not when the relationship arises out of the use of force and by the law which we have been discussing.

I vii

(*1255b16–40*)

THE NATURE OF RULE OVER SLAVES

This chapter is a good example of the fluidity of Aristotle's thought, and of some difficulties in his view of slavery. First he again distinguishes mastership from other forms of rule, and then suggests that the essence of being a master lies in being a certain sort of person (i.e. rational, wise, etc.), not in having knowledge of how to use slaves. This curious point seems to be made because, as he notices, some fairly humble knowledge, which we are

9. Cf. I iv.

tempted to call a 'master's' knowledge, may be possessed and exercised by those who are not masters, e.g. overseers (who might be slaves themselves): how then can it be the essence of mastership? On the other hand it is difficult to see how one can be a master simply by being of a certain character, without having an active relationship, presumably of command, with one's slaves. Aristotle could perhaps have distinguished between (a) the knowledge, characteristic of and peculiar to a master, of the 'ends' of a slave's work, in some wide context, and (b) the technical *knowledge, possessed by overseers also, of the work itself. But he does not do this, and seems to feel in something of a dilemma. In this chapter we hear him 'thinking off the top of his head'.*

1255b16 From all this it is clear that there is a difference between the rule of master over slave and the rule of a statesman.[1] All forms of rule are not the same though some say that they are.[1] Rule over naturally free men is different from rule over natural slaves; rule in a household is monarchical, since every house has one ruler; the rule of a statesman is rule over free and equal persons.
1255b20 A man is not called master in virtue of what he knows but simply in virtue of the kind of person he is; similarly with slave and free. Still, there *could* be such a thing as a master's knowledge or a slave's knowledge. The latter kind may be illustrated by the lessons given by a certain man in Syracuse who, for a fee, trained house-boys in their ordinary duties; and this kind of instruction might well be extended to include cookery and other forms of domestic service. For the tasks of the various slaves differ, some being more essential, some more highly valued (as the proverb has it 'slave before slave, master before master').[2]

1. See I i.
2. A line of Philemon (fourth–third century), a poet of the New Comedy (fr. 54 in T. Kock, *Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta*, Leipzig, 1880–88, II i).

1255b30 All such fields of knowledge are the business of slaves, whereas a master's knowledge consists in knowing how to put his slaves to *use*; for it is not in his acquiring of slaves but in his use of them that he is master. But the use of slaves is not a form of knowledge that has any great importance or dignity, since it consists in knowing how to direct slaves to do the tasks which they ought to know how to do. Hence those masters whose means are sufficient to exempt them from the bother employ an overseer to take on this duty,[3] while they devote themselves to statecraft or philosophy. The knowledge of how to *acquire* slaves is different from both these,[4] the just method of acquisition, for instance, being a kind of military or hunting skill.[5]

So much may suffice to define master and slave.

I viii

(*1256a1–b39*)

THE NATURAL METHOD OF ACQUIRING GOODS

The main point of this chapter is simple enough: that the acquisition of goods/wealth (chrēmatistikē) *is 'part' of household management in that the manager must have available a supply of certain necessary articles (food, money, etc.) which have to be acquired from somewhere by some means. True to his principles of natural teleology, Aristotle attempts to delimit a 'natural' mode of goods-acquisition (in the widest sense of 'goods'), by arguing from a comparison between (a) the way animals gain the 'goods' (food) provided by nature, by taking it directly*

3. *Timē*.
4. The knowledge appropriate to a slave and the knowledge appropriate to his master as user.
5. A reflection evidently suggested by the preceding chapter (presumably with a tacit restriction that those enslaved by the 'just' method of acquisition must be 'natural' slaves: see also I viii and VII xiv, end).

and by natural instinct from the environment, and (b) certain modes of acquisition open to men (hunting, fishing, farming, etc.), by which they too take what nature 'gives'. The methods of (b) he suggests, being similar to those of (a), are natural.

The argument is suggestive, and has the merit of pointing up a certain parallelism of behaviour as between human and other animal life. Aristotle believes that each species is eternal; inevitably and naturally, then, the members of each must and do have some inner cause or drive which ensures they get enough to live on, or the species would not survive; and each animal species seems to live off some other animal and/or vegetable species. On the other hand, an opponent could make various objections. They will centre on: (1) Have men and animals the same *nature? If not, is it legitimate to infer anything at all from (a) and (b), however formally similar they may be as patterns of behaviour? (2) The difficulty of deciding what behaviour is 'natural'. For example, animals sometimes kill and eat their young. Is this practice 'natural', or a perversion of nature? If natural, should human beings also kill and eat each other? (3) Even if one could decide what human behaviour is 'natural', ought this necessarily to be adopted as an ethical or social* norm? *The chapter is in fact full of large assumptions and inferences both expressed and unexpressed; and again, as in I ii, his own account of the criteria for what is natural* (Physics, *II i) would be informative background reading.*

One may note also: (a) Aristotle's inclusion of piracy among the 'direct' modes of acquisition – in this he simply reflects the fact that the ancient world took it more or less for granted; (b) the near-equation of men 'fitted to be ruled' with animals: both are 'for' use by men fit to rule, and slave-raiding against such inferior people is evidently therefore 'natural'; (c) his disapproval of the pursuit of unlimited wealth, on the grounds that only a limited amount is necessary for the 'good' life.

In this set of four chapters on economics (viii–xi), and the related discussion of Nicomachean Ethics V v, *Karl Marx found important anticipations of his own ideas; for references, see Select Bibliographies.*

1256a1 Let us then, since the slave has proved to be part of property, go on to consider property and the acquisition of goods in general, still following our usual method.[1] The first question to be asked might be this: Is the acquisition of goods the same as household-management, or a part of it, or subsidiary to it? And if it is subsidiary, is it so in the same way as shuttle-making is subsidiary to weaving, or as bronze-founding is to the making of statues? For these two are not subsidiary in the same way: the one provides instruments, the other the material, that is, the substance out of which a product is made, as wool for the weaver, bronze for the sculptor. Now it is obvious that household-management is not the *same* as the acquisition of goods, because it is the task of the one to provide, the other to use; for what other activity than managing the house is going to make use of what is in the house? But whether acquisition of wealth is *part* of household-management or a different kind of activity altogether – that is a debatable question, if, that is to say, it is the acquirer's task to see from what sources goods and property may be derived. For there are many varieties of property and riches, so that a first question might be whether farming, and in general the provision and superintendence of the food supply, are parts of the acquisition of goods, or whether they are a different kind of thing.

1256a19 But again, there are many different kinds of food, and that means many different ways of life, both of animals and humans; for as there is no life without food, differences of food produce among animals different kinds of life. Some animals live in herds and others scattered about, whichever helps them to find food, some of them

1. See I i.

being carnivorous, some frugivorous, others eating anything. So, in order to make it easier for them to get these nutriments, nature has given them different ways of life. Again, since animals do not all like the same food but have different tastes according to their nature, so the ways of living of carnivorous and frugivorous animals themselves differ according to their different kinds. Similarly among human beings there are many varieties of life: first there are the nomads, who do least work, for nutriment from domestic animals is obtained with a minimum of toil and a maximum of ease; but when the animals have to move to fresh pastures, the human beings have to go with them, tilling as it were a living soil. Others live from hunting in all its variety, some being simply raiders, others fishermen who live near a lake, a marsh, a river, or a fish-bearing area of the sea; others live off birds and wild animals. The third and largest class lives off the earth and its cultivated crops.

1256a40 These then are the main ways of living by natural productive labour – ways which do not depend for a food-supply on exchange or trade. They are the nomadic, the agricultural, the piratical, fishing, and hunting. Some men live happily enough by combining them, making up for the deficiencies of one by adding a second at the point where the other fails to be self-sufficient; such combinations are nomadism with piracy, agriculture with hunting, and so on. They simply live the life that their needs compel them to.

1256b7 Such a mode of acquisition is clearly given by nature herself to all her creatures, both at the time of their birth and when they are fully grown. For some animals produce at the very beginning of procreation sufficient food to last their offspring until such time as these are able to get it for themselves; for example those which produce their young as grubs or eggs. Those which produce live offspring carry in themselves sufficient food for some time – the natural substance which we call milk. So obviously, by parity of reasoning, we must believe

that animals are provided for at a later stage too – that plants exist for their sake, and that the other animals exist for the sake of man, tame ones for the use he can make of them as well as for the food they provide; and as for wild animals, most though not all can be used for food or are useful in other ways: clothing and instruments can be made out of them.

1256b20 If then nature makes nothing without some end in view, nothing to no purpose, it must be that nature has made all of them for the sake of man. This means that it is according to nature that even the art of war, since hunting is a part of it, should in a sense be a way of acquiring property; and that it must be used both against wild beasts and against such men as are by nature intended to be ruled over but refuse; for that is the kind of warfare which is by nature just.

1256b26 One form then of property-getting is, in accordance with nature, a part of household-management, in that either the goods must be there to start with, or this technique of property-getting must see that they are provided; goods, that is, which may be stored up, as being necessary for providing a livelihood, or useful to household or state as associations. And it looks as if wealth in the true sense consists of property such as this. For the amount of property of this kind which would give self-sufficiency for a good life is not limitless, although Solon in one of his poems said, 'No bound is set on riches for men.'[2] But there *is* a limit, as in the other skills; for none of them have any tools which are unlimited in size or number, and wealth is a collection of tools for use in the administration of a household or a state. It is clear therefore that there is a certain natural kind of property-getting practised by those in charge of a household or a state; and why this is so is also clear.

2. Fr. 13, line 71 in J. H. Edmonds, *Elegy and Iambus I* (London and New York, Loeb edition, 1931).

I ix

(1256b40–1258a18)

NATURAL AND UNNATURAL METHODS OF ACQUIRING GOODS

Aristotle now proceeds to develop the distinction he has already mentioned briefly in I viii, between natural and unnatural methods of acquiring goods, chrēmatistikē. *In these two chapters he distinguishes:*

(1) The acquisition of goods (food, etc.) directly from the environment, by hunting, etc. Mutatis mutandis, *this method is common to animals and men, and is 'natural'* chrēmatistikē.

(2) Exchange, of goods for goods or for money. This too is natural: it adjusts inequalities due to nature in the distribution of goods, and is not pursued beyond the satisfaction of needs.

(3) Trade, strongly characterized by the use of money and a desire to pursue monetary gain beyond *the satisfaction of needs. This is unnatural.*

Of these, (2) and (3) are both chrēmatistikē, *'the acquisition of goods', in a general sense; but the word is also in this chapter used several times of (3) in a stronger and unfavourable sense: 'money-making'. Only (2), exchange* (metablētikē *or* allagē), *is naturally part of household-management, for (3), trade* (kapēlikē), *goes beyond what is necessary for the maintenance and self-sufficiency of a community, and is thus not natural.*

Aristotle's imaginative and plausible historical explanations of barter and of the invention of money, and his psychological speculations about the desire for unlimited acquisition, have impressive range and subtlety. Perhaps the sharpest reasoning of this chapter occurs in his comparison between money-making and other skills. A doctor recognizes no limit to the 'end' (health) of his craft: he would hardly wish to restrict the 'amount'

of health he produces by his 'tools' (drugs, instruments, etc.). But 'money-making' too is a skill, with an unlimited end, money, and money is also its 'tool' or means. Ends and means are therefore formally identical, and (unlike in other skills) the ends do not tend to limit the means; so means too, as a result of the skill of 'money-making', chrēmatistikē, *become unlimited. The unfortunate result is that household-managers, who have the same means, goods and money, as traders ('money-makers'), with which to achieve* their *ends, i.e. of the household, suppose that* their *means too, i.e. as well as those of traders, ought to be unlimited. This, Aristotle claims, is a mistake, for the manager's 'means' are for 'living', for which limited and modest means (in the other sense of this word) suffice. All this is nicely observed and cleverly argued in the terminology of Aristotle's teleology, and his exposition is an intricate combination of logic, imagination, psychology and common sense.*

1256b40 But there is another kind of property-getting to which the term 'acquisition of goods'[1] is generally and justly applied; and it is due to this that there is thought to be no limit to wealth or property. Because it closely resembles that form of acquisition of goods which we have just been discussing,[2] many suppose that the two are one and the same. But they are not the same, though admittedly they are not very different; one is natural, the other is not. This second kind develops from the exercise of a certain kind of skill won by some experience. *1257a5* Let us begin our discussion thus: Every piece of property has a double use; both uses are uses of the thing itself, but they are not similar uses; for one is the proper use of the article in question, the other is not. For example a shoe may be used either to put on your foot or to offer in exchange. Both are uses of the shoe; for

1. *Chrēmatistikē*, 'the acquisition of goods' in the unfavourable sense (type (3) in the introduction to this chapter).

2. The 'natural' kind, described in the last paragraph of I viii.

even he that gives a shoe to someone who requires a shoe, and receives in exchange coins or food, is making use of the shoe as a shoe, but not the use proper to it, for a shoe is not expressly made for purposes of exchange. The same is the case with other pieces of property: the technique of exchange can be applied to all of them, and has its origin in a state of affairs often to be found in nature, namely, men having too much of this and not enough of that. (It was essential that the exchange should be carried on far enough to satisfy the needs of the parties. So clearly trade is not a natural way of getting goods.)[3] The technique of exchange was obviously not a practice of the earliest form of association, the household; it only came in with the large forms. Members of a single household shared all the belongings of that house, but members of different households shared many of the belongings of other houses also. Mutual need of the different goods made it essential to contribute one's share, and it is on this basis that many of the non-Greek peoples still proceed, i.e. by exchange: they exchange one class of useful goods for another – for example they take and give wine for corn and so on. But they do not carry the process any farther than this.

1257a28 Such a technique of exchange is not contrary to nature and is not a form of money-making;[1] for it keeps to its original purpose: to re-establish nature's own equilibrium of self-sufficiency. All the same it was out of it that money-making[1] arose, predictably enough – for as soon as the import of necessities and the export of surplus goods began to facilitate the satisfaction of needs beyond national frontiers, men inevitably resorted to the used of coined money. Not all the things that we naturally need are easily carried; and so for purposes of exchange men entered into an agreement to give to each other and accept from each other some commodity, itself useful for the business of living and also easily handled, such as

3. Because it carries exchange beyond the extent necessary to adjust natural inequalities in the distribution of goods.

iron, silver, and the like. The amounts were at first determined by size and weight, but eventually the pieces of metal were stamped. This did away with the necessity of measuring, since the stamp was put on as an indication of the amount.

1257a41 Once a currency was provided, development was rapid and what started as a necessary exchange became *trade*, the other mode of acquiring goods. At first it was probably quite a simple affair, but then it became more systematic[4] as men become more experienced at discovering where and how the greatest profits might be made out of the exchanges. That is why the technique of acquiring goods is held to be concerned primarily with coin, and to have the function of enabling one to see where a great deal of money may be procured (the technique does after all produce wealth *in the form of* money); and wealth is often regarded as being a large quantity of coin because coin is what the techniques of acquiring goods and of trading are concerned with.[5]

1257b10 Sometimes on the other hand coinage is regarded as so much convention[6] and artificial trumpery having no root in nature, since, if those who employ a currency system choose to alter it, the coins cease to have their value and can no longer be used to procure the necessities of life. And it will often happen that a man with wealth in the form of coined money will not have enough to eat; and what a ridiculous kind of wealth is that which even in abundance will not save you from dying with hunger! It is like the story told of Midas:[7] because of the inordinate greed of his prayer everything that was set before him was turned to gold. Hence men

4. *Technikos*; cf. 'skill' at end of first paragraph.

5. In shops, etc.: see end of next paragraph.

6. An etymological point: 'coinage' = *nomisma*; 'convention' = *nomos*.

7. A legendary King of Phrygia, notorious for extreme wealth. He prayed to the god Dionysus that everything he touched should turn to gold: the prayer was granted, and naturally he found he could not eat.

seek to define a different sense of wealth and of the acquisition of goods, and are right to do so, for there *is* a difference: on the one hand wealth and the acquisition o goods in accordance with nature, and belonging to household-management; on the other hand the kind that is associated with trade, which is not productive of goods in the full sense but only through their exchange. And it is thought to be concerned with coinage, because coinage both limits the exchange and is the unit of measurement by which it is performed; and there is indeed[8] no limit to the amount of riches to be got from this mode of acquiring goods.[1]

1257b25 The art of healing aims at producing unlimited health, and every other skill aims at its own end without limit, wishing to secure that to the highest possible degree; on the other hand the *means* towards the end are not unlimited, the end itself setting the limit in each case. Similarly, there is no limit to the end which this kind[1] of acquisition has in view, because the end is wealth in that form, i.e. the possession of goods. The kind which is household-management, on the other hand, does have a limit, since it is not the function of household-management to acquire goods.[9] So, while it seems that there must be a limit to every form of wealth, in practice we find that the opposite occurs: all those engaged in acquiring goods go on increasing their coin without limit, because the two modes of acquisition o goods are so similar. For they overlap in that both are concerned with the same thing, property; but in their use of it they are dissimilar: in one case the end is sheer increase, in the other something different. Some people therefore imagine that increase is the function of household-management, and never cease to believe that their store of coined money ought to be either hoarded, or increased without limit.

8. See the quotation from Solon in I viii.

9. Not, at any rate, without limit. See the first paragraph of I viii and the first two of I x: the function of household-management is to *use* goods (and use sets limits to their acquisition).

1257b40 The reason why some people get this notion into their heads may be that they are eager for life but not for the good life; so, desire for life being unlimited, they desire also an unlimited amount of what enables it to go on. Others again, while aiming at the good life, seek what is conducive to the pleasure of the body. So, as this too appears to depend on the possession of property, their whole activity centres on business, and the second mode of acquiring goods[1] owes its existence to this. For where enjoyment consists in excess, men look for that skill which produces the excess that is enjoyed. And if they cannot procure it through money-making,[1] they try to get it by some other means, using all their faculties for this purpose, which is contrary to nature: courage, for example, is to produce confidence, not goods; nor yet is it the job of military leadership and medicine to produce goods, but victory and health. But these people turn all skills into skills of acquiring goods, as though that were the end and everything had to serve that end.

1258a14 We have now discussed the acquisition of goods, both the unnecessary kind of acquisition,[1] what it is and why we do in fact make use of it, and the necessary, which differs from the other in being concerned with household-management and food in a way that accords with nature, and also in being limited as opposed to unlimited.

I x

(1258a19–1258b8)

THE PROPER LIMITS OF HOUSEHOLD-MANAGEMENT; THE UNNATURALNESS OF MONEY-LENDING

In recapitulating the last two chapters, Aristotle first argues, more explicitly than hitherto, that the duty of the household-manager is to use and distribute goods, not to acquire them. He then adds a point of major