

The Politics

Aristotle

The Two 'Pairs'

- Those which are incapable of existing without each other must be united as a pair.
- Male and female – not a matter of choice but natural urge.
- Natural ruler and ruled, for the purpose of preservation...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 actual work is by nature slave, one of those who are ruled.

Non-Greeks and Females

- Non-Greeks have nothing which is by nature fitted to rule; their association consists of a male slave and a female slave.
- Females are different than men too. However, females have different functions compared to slaves.

What are Slaves?

- A piece of property is spoken in the same way as a part is; for a part is not only a 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 (think of the hand and body metaphor).
- Any human being that 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 and meant for action.

“Justifying” Slavery

- 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...
- Some hold it to be indefensible that a man who has been overpowered by the violence and superior might of another should become his property...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 good. It seems therefore that force is not without virtue.

Acquiring Goods

- If then nature makes nothing without some end in view, nothing to no purpose, it must be that nature has made all of them (animals and plants) 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.
- Trade is different than exchange. With money the *end* has changed. For this kind of acquisition of goods the end provides no limit, because the end is wealth in that form, i.e. the possession of goods. 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 of goods are so similar.

Sharing Wives and Children? (1)

- In a state, either all the citizens share all things, or they share none, or they share some but not others. It is clearly impossible that they should have no share in anything; at the very least, a constitution being a form of association, they must share in the territory, the single territory of a single state, of which single state the citizens are sharers.
- The proposal that wives should be held in common presents many difficulties (Plato)... 'It is best that the whole state should be as much of a unity as possible'. But obviously a state which becomes progressively more and more of a unity will cease to be a state at all. Plurality of numbers is natural in state; and the farther it moves away from plurality towards unity, the less a state it becomes and the more a household, the household in turn an individual. So, even if it were possible to make such a unification, it ought not to be done; it will destroy the state... The state consists not merely of a plurality of men, but of different kinds of men; you cannot make a state out of men who are all alike.

Sharing Wives and Children? (2)

- A Household is a more self-sufficient thing than the individual, the state than the household; and the moment the association comes to comprise enough people to be self-sufficient, effectively we have a state. Since, then, a greater degree of self-sufficiency is to be preferred to a lesser, the lesser degree of unity is to be preferred to the greater.
- Moreover...Socrates wants; for each man will always refer to the same boy as his son, the same woman as his wife, and will speak in the same way of his possessions and whatever else comes within his purview. But that is not at all how people will speak who hold wives and children in common. They may do so all together, but not each separately; and the same with regard to possessions.
- There is a further harm in the doctrine: the greater the number of owners, the less the respect for common property. People are much more careful of their personal possessions than of those owned communally.

The Ownership of Property

- While property should up to a point be held in common, the general principle should be that of private ownership. Responsibility for looking after property, if distributed over many individuals, will not lead to mutual recriminations; on the contrary, with every man busy with his own, there will be increased effort all round. 'All things in common among friends' the saying goes, and it is the personal virtue of individuals that ensure their common use. (Common goods vs. private goods problem. Also, sharing with *one's own will* is a virtue.)

Equality of Possessions (I)

- Equality of possessions may exist and yet the level be fixed either too high, with resultant luxury, or too low, which leads to a life of penury. It is clear, therefore, that it is not enough for a legislator to equalize possessions: he must aim at fixing an amount midway between extremes. But even if one were to fix a moderate amount for all, that would still be no use: for it is more necessary to equalize appetites than possessions, and that can only be done by adequate education under the laws.

Equality of Possessions (II)

- While there is certainly some advantage in equality of possessions for the citizens as a safeguard against faction, its efficacy is not really very great. In the first place discontent will arise among the more accomplished people, who will think they deserve something better than equality. (This is the reason for the many obvious instances of revolt and faction inspired by them.) Secondly, the depravity of mankind is an insatiable thing. At first they are content with a dole of a mere two obols, then when that is traditional, they go on asking for more natural limit to wants and most people spend their lives trying to satisfy them. In such circumstances, therefore, a better point of departure than equalizing possessions would be to ensure that naturally reasonable people should not wish to get more than their share, and that the inferior should not be able to; and that can be achieved if they are weaker but not treated unjustly.

The Just Distribution of Political Power

- Thus it is thought that justice is equality; and so it is, but not for all persons, only for those that are equal. Inequality also is thought to be just; and so it is, but not for all, only for the unequal. We make bad mistakes if we neglect this 'for whom' when we are deciding what is just. The reason is that we are making judgments about ourselves, and people are generally bad judges where their own interests are involved.
- The association which is a state exists not for the purpose of living but for the sake of noble actions. Those who contribute most to this kind of association are for that very reason entitled to a larger share in the state than those who, though they may be equal or even superior in free birth and in the family, are inferior in the virtue that belongs to a citizen. Similarly they are entitled to a larger share than those who are superior in riches but inferior in virtue.

A Teleological Account of Justice and Equality

- If say, pipe-players are equal in skill, we must not give an advantage in instruments to those of better birth, for that would not enable them to play any better. The use of the better instrument ought to belong to the better performer...If one man is outstandingly superior in pipe-playing, but far inferior in birth or good looks (even supposing that birth and good looks are each a greater good than the skill of pipe-playing, and its superiority to them is greater in proportion than the superiority of this player's ability to that of the rest), even then, I say, he should still get the best pipes. For superiority both in wealth and in birth ought to contribute to the quality of the performance – to which these qualities in fact contribute nothing at all.

Who Should Rule?

- In what spheres is this sovereignty of the free men to be exercised? We must remember that they are not men of wealth, and have no claim to virtue in anything. To let them share in the highest offices is to take a risk: inevitably, their unjust standards will cause them to commit injustice, and their lack of judgment will lead them into error. On the other hand there is a risk in not giving them a share, and in their non-participation, for when there are many who have no property and no honours they inevitably constitute a huge hostile element in the state. But it can still remain open to them to participate in deliberating and judging.