

Ancient Slavery and Abolition

From Hobbes to Hollywood

Edited by

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70. Andrews (1986), 229.
71. Hickman (2008).
72. See Percival (1859), vol. 2.
73. See the epigraph to the poem (reproduced in Hervey (1866), 225–7), which is discussed for its political fervour but without reference to the self uprising in Trousson (1976), vol. 2, 344–5.
74. Hervey (1866), 227.
75. 'The Maroons of Jamaica', reproduced in Higginson (1889), 116–50 at p. 116.
76. Curran (1986a), 444 with 448 fig. 2; Podlecki (2005), 57; Hutchings (2001).
77. Blake (1965), 45.
78. May (1629), no. 7 (no page number).
79. For a brilliant discussion of the ancient text and its relevance to modern discussions of the limits of realism see Morales (1996).
80. Willis (1850), 77–82.
81. Baker (1999), 4.
82. The Parrhasius story was used after the American Civil War in a pseudo-classical tragedy by the Louisiana playwright Espy Williams, written in 1878, and performed often in New Orleans until at least 1889. The slavery issue was deracialized and complicated in another direction by making Parrhasius' wife the long-lost daughter of the slave whose torture was central to the plot. A shortened version of Williams' *Parrhasius* was then produced by the famous Shakespearean actor Robert Mantell, with some success, in provincial theatres in San Francisco, Memphis, and Kansas: see Nolan (1961).
83. At the end of ch. 16, Deronda's psychological suffering is likened to 'the cry of Prometheus'; see also the motto at the head of ch. 38.
84. Reproduced from Sladen (1888), 215; Hay had published some of his own poems in his study of Wordsworth (1881).
85. This essay has benefited greatly from the input it received when delivered in three North American contexts. In February 2009 it was delivered as the James Dolliver lecture at the University of Puget Sound; in February and March 2010 it was delivered as the Edith Kreeger Wolf Lecture in Humanities at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, and at the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, Notre Dame University, as the Provost's Distinguished Women's Lecture. I am especially grateful for the insightful remarks of David Lupher, Elizabeth Vandiver, Sara Monoson, Kate Boshier, Patrice Rankine, Bonnie Honig, and Isabelle Torrance.

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Recollecting Aristotle Pro-Slavery Thought in Antebellum America and the Argument of *Politics* Book 1

S. Sara Monoson

In the view of Southern slave-owners passionate about the excellence of planter society, the growing national and international movement for the immediate and total abolition of black slavery in the United States which was gathering steam in the 1830s, appeared nothing short of 'fanatical', and the need for an aggressive response, urgent. In the torrent of pro-slavery propaganda that ensued, Aristotle played a prominent and often noted, yet poorly understood, role. Southern academics, politicians, and polemicists who read Aristotle's work either in Greek or in translation or who encountered elements of his philosophy through its representation in the work of others, claimed him as a notable progenitor of the pro-slavery cause. Some took evident pleasure in recalling that this venerable Greek philosopher was a 'warm', 'strenuous', and 'zealous' advocate of slavery.² Some pronounced his writings 'man's best guide', second only to the Bible.³ Scripture was the main moralizing reference point within the debates, but in this chapter I would like to consider whether the various references to Aristotle were more than 'learned embroidery' to the main argument.⁴ Are the appeals to Aristotle in various pro-slavery sources a sign of a significant consideration of his political philosophy among the Southern intelligentsia, or simply a further example of the very nineteenth-century American penchant for

deploying ancient authorities whenever possible?⁵ I consider in this chapter the extent to which American pro-slavery propaganda of the 1830s–50s exhibits any intellectual engagement with the arguments of Aristotle's *Politics* book 1.

Interpretation of this inglorious episode in the reception history of classical antiquity is a surprisingly tricky project. For example, not once did John C. Calhoun, a beloved Southern leader (he served as senator from South Carolina, vice-president under two different presidents, and was himself once a leading candidate for president), actually mention Aristotle in his many, widely circulated and highly esteemed speeches in support of slavery. Yet, in an 1840 private letter he makes plain his own familiarity with and affection for Aristotle's writings on politics:

I would advise a young man . . . to read the best elementary treatise on Government, including Aristotle's, which I regard as among the best.⁶

His contemporaries celebrated perceived similarities between their views.⁷ Another source suggests a different kind of difficulty. George Fitzhugh, a popularizer of the pro-slavery argument, mentions Aristotle only in the context of chiding comments aimed at philosophers in general in his 1854 tract, *Sociology for the South*. But, once alerted by an admiring correspondent to connections between the views developed in that essay and the content of the philosopher's works, he laments his own earlier failure to draw on that resource. Writing in response he says:

I am in a fix. If I admit I never read Aristotle, why I am no scholar. If I did read him, I am a plagiarist.⁸

He vows to make full use of Aristotle in his future work and indeed does so, as is apparent in the text of his next wildly popular polemic of 1857, *Cannibals All!* These examples suggest some of the methodological complexities that attend this investigation. I keep in focus the extent to which recollecting Aristotle could be, in the hands of American pro-slavery writers, a politically potent act and investigate why some writers purposefully and explicitly 'draft' Aristotle into service,⁹ rather than focusing on every substantive commonality recognizable to us today.

I begin by setting out overviews of the argument of *Politics* book 1 and of the contours of pro-slavery ideology so that the basic resemblances between these two perspectives that have exercised commentators are clear.¹⁰ I then detail three contexts within which these propagandists routinely, and explicitly, turn to Aristotle. First, I show that they rely upon Aristotle to anchor their pro-slavery activism in a sophisticated philosophical objection to natural rights theory, shielding it from the charge of being motivated by colour prejudice or race hatred. Second, I demonstrate that they appeal to Aristotle to shore up their view that the North in truth practises a variant of slavery—wage slavery—that causes far more human misery than chattel slavery as practised in planter society in the South. They also use references to Aristotle to differentiate their sociological critique of industrial capitalism from that of contemporary socialists. Third, I explain that Southern propagandists appeal to Aristotle's theory of natural slavery to support their identification of black Africans as that part of the human family naturally suited to slavery. Some, recognizing that Aristotle's theory in *Politics* book 1 actually struggles to identify precisely who qualifies as a natural slave, further claim that American pro-slavery theory's basis in race represents a significant *advance* over Aristotle's reliance upon examination of the native social and political condition of candidate populations. I conclude by discussing an inconvenient aspect of the argument of *Politics* book 1 that pro-slavery propagandists consistently ignore, whether wilfully or not. They disregard the fact that Aristotle's discussion is occasioned by contemporary attacks on the justice of slavery. The text of the *Politics* makes clear that Aristotle was arguing with abolitionists in his own time and not, as pro-slavery writers regularly suggest, simply setting out the philosophical justification of a practice that went unquestioned during venerable Greek antiquity.

I. THE BASIC RESEMBLANCE OF PRO-SLAVERY THOUGHT TO THE ARGUMENT OF POLITICS BOOK 1

The central claims of Aristotle's *Politics* book 1 can be simply stated. Nature produces a plurality of sorts of people. This variation has

moral and political importance. He proposes that, as political scientists, we must decipher these differences and conduct a normative inquiry into how best to order them hierarchically and into partnerships so as to form a just state and thus produce the material conditions necessary for human happiness, virtue, and freedom to come into being in the world. As scientists, we can identify slave, along with male, female, adult, child as differences found in nature. We can further understand that a partnership between a natural slave and a natural ruler can form a simple compound that, when joined together with other simple compounds (husband and wife, father and children), produces a household capable of generating wealth. This compound combines, in turn, with other households to form more complex social organisms—villages and cities—that can develop social, economic, and political formations supportive of prosperity, virtue, and happiness. As the 1853 translation puts it:

Hence it is evident, that a state is one of the works of nature, and that man is naturally a political animal, and that whosoever is, naturally, and not accidentally, unfit for society, must be either inferior or superior to man . . . It is clear then, that man is truly a more social animal than bees.¹¹

To best understand the distinct purposes and excellence of the most complex form of natural human association, a political community, Aristotle insists one must start by investigating in detail the character of its component parts. And so he attends to the master-slave relationship in detail.

He offers definitions of 'natural slave' that capture the sociological condition of such status. A slave is 'an ensouled article of property, an instrument for the maintenance of life separable from its owner, and a person who is not merely the slave of the master but who wholly belongs to the master.'¹² He continues by stressing that while all human beings have reason, not all are capable of deliberation and ruling. Some souls possess a deficient form of reason. He concludes, again in the 1853 rendering:

From the hour of their birth, some are marked out for the purpose of obeying, and others for ruling . . . [there are some who are] inferior to their fellows as the body is to the soul, or brutes to men . . . these, I say are slaves by nature . . . some are free by nature, and others are slaves, and that in the case of the latter the lot of slavery is both advantageous and just.¹³

It is advantageous because the master-slave relationship supplies a slave with rational direction and a pathway to participation in excellence. Aristotle proposes that the relationship addresses the deficiency of the slave in a way that is mutually beneficial to both parties. A natural slave gains some skills and forms of knowledge appropriate to his service activities and an opportunity to practise a variant of the moral virtues like courage and temperance, even a form of happiness. The master gains both wealth and release from labour (e.g. drudgery, menial tasks, and debilitating work) and can spend his leisure time developing his public and intellectual life. The relation is just, then, because being rooted in nature, it advances the high purposes of the *polis* (not just life but good life) and, when properly practised, amounts to an exercise of authority that tends to the well-being of the ruled (slave) as well as the ruler (master)—indeed to that of the entire household and community. Aristotle goes to great lengths to explain how one should go about empirically determining in practice precisely who is indeed fitted for slavery. As slave nature is based on a condition of soul, it is not easily visible. His answer, too complicated to recount here, is that barbarian peoples act in their own lands in a manner that supports the inference that they have a natural deficiency of reason that suits them for dependence on natural rulers. In book 1 he also argues that accumulating wealth through the production of agricultural surpluses is more conducive to the development of the habits of virtue than mercantile or financial activities and thus reasons that communities based on agriculture are better positioned to form good political orders.¹⁴

Aristotle's theory can be viewed as a defence of the *polis* from the very real threats to its continued survival as the locus of independent political activity presented by the conquests of Philip and Alexander. A sense of peril also frames the development of pro-slavery ideology in the South. Calls for immediate abolition raged in the United States from the 1830s. International developments (abolition in Britain and its possessions, several Caribbean, Central and South American nations, including Mexico in 1829) and the enactment of a wave of emancipation statutes in Northern states made a choice between abolition and civil war appear inevitable. William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* began publishing. Abolitionist literature blanketed the

South, prompting efforts to suppress its distribution, even to confiscate the US mail. In addition, Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion, known in Virginia as 'the Southampton Massacre', made the threat of violent insurrection palpable and the need to avert it pressing. National political crises and tenuous resolutions were nearly routine (e.g. Three-fifths Compromise, Missouri Compromise, nullification, Fugitive Slave Act). Pro-slavery theorists understood that to face down the new wave of 'incendiary'¹⁵ demands for immediate abolition and shore up the resolve of compatriots they had to offer more than a plea for tolerance of their peculiar institution as a necessary 'evil'. They had to argue that it was an unadulterated positive good and should remain a permanent feature of Southern culture.

Southern leaders took up this challenge with relish, eagerly setting out to 'meet the enemy on the frontier'.¹⁶ The tracts they produced fearlessly and sometimes brilliantly attach the defence of slavery to a conception of the grand meaning of America meant to compete with the vision of the more liberal founders like Jefferson. They questioned, at times rail against, natural rights theory and the philosophical abstraction, 'rights of man', as well as what they take to be the empirically falsifiable notion of the 'natural equality of all'. They unabashedly question the sagacity of phrase 'all men are born free and equal' enshrined in the *Declaration of Independence*.¹⁷ Instead, they argue for founding American politics on the premiss that inequalities are rooted in Nature and ordained by God. Of necessity, they claim, in every society there are those suited to command and be free, and those destined for a labouring life of one sort or another. Scripture confirms it. Furthermore, history reveals that civilization itself requires such ordered hierarchies among human beings. 'In all social systems', one famous pro-slavery oration before the US Senate begins, 'there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life... Such a class... constitutes the very mud-sill of society and political government; and you might as well attempt to build a house in the air, as to build either the one or the other, except on this mud-sill'.¹⁸ Great ones marked by exceptional cultural achievement are no exception; witness Greece and Rome. America's excellence, too, requires slavery. This is apparent, they imply, if one examines contemporary American society critically. The accomplishments of the North, as well as the South are in fact both predicated

on forms of slavery—'nasty' wage slavery' in the industrial North and kind black slavery in the agricultural South. And each part of America today faces fanatics who would bring chaos and misery; consider abolitionism and radical socialism. Allowing black slavery to flourish and expand could shape the economic life of the nation, they suggest, enabling the whole country to 'retard'¹⁹ the awful conflicts between labour and capital that beset every age, thus setting America on its rightful path to greatness. The alternative is the collapse of the Union. 'Abolition and the Union cannot co-exist', former Vice-President Calhoun declared. He continued, 'As a friend of the Union I openly proclaim it... To maintain the existing relations between the two races, inhabiting that section of the Union is indispensable to the peace and happiness of both'.²⁰

To complete the defence of slavery advocates had to demonstrate not only that slavery is a natural and necessary institution but that two further claims were also true: first, that in being based on black slavery, planter society is indeed founded on a correct identification of a specific population suited to slave status and, second, that black slavery as practised is, for both slave and master, 'a positive good'.²¹ Accordingly, pro-slavery propagandists set out to amass what they took to be compelling empirical evidence for the slavish nature of black Africans and for the benefits of the relationship of master and slave that accrue to whites and blacks alike. They waded into demography, sociology, and, of course, religion.²² And they offer anecdotal evidence and personal testimony in support of some astonishing assertions. For example, Professor Thomas R. Dew, president of the College of William and Mary, proposed that 'A merrier being does not exist on the face of the globe than the Negro slave of the United States'.²³

There are indeed obvious similarities between the argument of *Politics* Book 1 and Southern pro-slavery ideology. Both take human nature to be plural, a hierarchical social order to be a part of nature, and slavery to be a natural element of a key building block of that order, the household. Both assert that some human beings are fitted by their very nature for slavery and that a reliable means of identifying precisely who that is can be explicated. Both locate the origin of wealth in the productivity of labour. Both assume the enjoyment of

freedom requires a release from labour. Both insist on the coincident nature of the interests of master and slave. Both conclude, in the words of the modern writers, that slavery is best understood not as a necessary evil but rather as a positive good.

Leading Southern theorists observed the parallels. As we saw above, after gaining some familiarity with Aristotle's writing at the behest of a correspondent, in a private letter Fitzhugh worried that his own earlier writings probably appear to have plagiarized Aristotle. In the opening pages of a subsequent publication he recalls the experience: 'We procured in New York a copy of *Aristotle's Politics and Economics*. To our surprise, we found that our theory of the origin of society was identical with his, and that we had employed not only the same illustrations but the very same words.'²⁴ Others note similarities less dramatically. Dew's important *Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832* reminds readers that Aristotle, like contemporary Southerners, maintains that it was 'reasonable, necessary and natural... [for] comparatively few free-men to be served by many slaves'. He continues, suggesting that, like modern opponents of abolition, Aristotle 'believed slavery necessary to keep alive the spirit of freedom.'²⁵ Chancellor (i.e. Chief Judge) of South Carolina William Harper, observes connections between Aristotle's thought and Southern political theory when he says in a speech:

I know of few works more worthy to be recommended than the *Politics* of Aristotle. Little of what is just or profound on the principles of government has appeared since, of which the traces may not be found there.²⁶

William Grayson, a writer best known for his reply in verse to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1856 stresses that Calhoun's theories are 'as ancient as Aristotle'.²⁷

Nevertheless, while it is certainly true that these observations suggest that some Southern writers found reading Aristotle 'a deep source of inspiration'²⁸ and took comfort in his company, it would be absurd, of course, to say any favoured slavery *because* they followed Aristotle.

II. CITING ARISTOTLE'S POLITICS IN RESISTANCE TO THE AUTHORITY OF PREVAILING NATURAL RIGHTS THEORY

A new edition of the Greek text of the *Politics* (with accompanying Latin translation) as well as at least three translations into English were all in circulation during the 1830s–50s.²⁹ This wave of scholarly and publishing activity may itself be a sign of the political significance conservative thinkers of the time invested in Aristotle's political writings.³⁰ The tenor of the introductory essay by Gillies produced for the 1804 edition and reprinted in a new edition for Oxford's Bohn's Classical Series in 1853 suggests as much. Gillies straightforwardly asserts that Aristotle stands as a corrective to the 'spectious theory' (i.e. natural rights) advanced by Locke, Rousseau, Paine, and the 'innumerable pamphleteers whose writings occasioned or accompanied the American and French revolutions.' It continues,

Such works... have produced and are still producing, the most extraordinary effects: by arming the passions of the multitude with a false principle, fortifying them by specious arguments.

He acknowledges that challenging Locke means broaching the 'delicate subject of slavery' but does not address the issue, content only to express confidence in 'the judgment of my author'.³¹ Pro-slavery propagandists, however, recognize that in Aristotle they had a near-perfect vehicle for situating their objections to abolition in a rigorous philosophical protest against the dominant—and to them pernicious—political theory of the time, the doctrine of natural rights. Linking the pro-slavery cause to opposition to natural rights theory would, they hoped, catapult pro-slavery thought into the realm of grand social theory and provide, at least in their own eyes, a measure of protection from the charge of narrow-minded colour prejudice and irrational race hatred.

Early evidence for this appears in an 1838 essay, 'Thoughts on Slavery', for the *Southern Literary Messenger*. The anonymous author ('a Southron') opens his case for slavery based on Scripture with

some comments on the insidious reasoning of natural rights theory. In particular, he appeals to Aristotle to show that Montesquieu 'feebly' reasons that slavery originates 'in the establishment of a right, which gives one man such power over another, as renders him absolute master of his life and fortune' and denounces slavery wholesale as 'bad in its own nature' because, by necessity, it causes only harm, producing no good at all. From this mistaken view, Southron continues, Montesquieu infers that

the state of slavery... is neither useful to the master nor to the slave; not to the slave because he can do nothing through a motive of virtue, nor to the master, because by having an unlimited authority over his slaves, he insensibly accustoms himself to the want of all moral virtues, and becomes fierce, hasty, choleric, voluptuous, and cruel.³²

Southron finds this view thoroughly obnoxious. 'This is not slavery as it exists in this country,' he protests. In the United States slavery is regulated by law. The US Constitution made slavery an 'integral portion of federal representation,' he reminds readers.³³ What really unsettles him so is that the 'friends of the rights of man' characterize slavery as *necessarily* vicious. He allows that it can be cruel. He accepts that at times and in places 'abuses of slavery' have taken place and have caused suffering and vice. But, he insists, 'with the abuses of slavery we have no concern: it has been abused in every age, by every people.'³⁴ Because Scripture teaches that slavery is the result of the 'agency of the Creator himself'³⁵ and the influence of religion can, he argues, produce kind masters and happy slaves, a true account of slavery's origin must, unlike Montesquieu's, leave room for its capacity to be beneficial. A true account of its origin would demonstrate that 'the denunciations of slavery in all writers upon natural law apply only to the flagrant abuse of this institution', not to the institution itself. He proposes that just such an account can be found through 'an attentive perusal of the first six chapters of Aristotle's political treatise.'³⁶ He then spends quite a few pages reporting Aristotle's view of social life as natural to man, focusing on detailing why he proposes that husband, wife, children, *and slaves* are the necessary elements of the family, the first and most natural development of man's essentially social nature.

The strongest expression of the importance of Aristotle's standing as an opponent of natural rights theory for pro-slavery thought appears in the fiery work of the popular propagandist, George Fitzhugh.³⁷ He even admits to his readers that couching certain claims in Aristotelian reasoning is a necessary part of the presentation of a strong case for slavery. For example, Fitzhugh tells his readers point blank that while his own claim to any authority on such matters might be thought 'repulsive' by many, the same cannot be said about the identical doctrine 'coming from Aristotle.'³⁸ Delivering certain views through the medium of an Aristotelian objection to the theory of natural right, he implies, makes them appear to be based on matters of principle and thus harder to dismiss as the product of colour prejudice or hatred. He follows through on this in two publications both of which appeared in 1857—his popular propagandist tract, *Cannibals All!* and quasi-scholarly joint review of the 1853 Walford edition of the *Politics and Economics of Aristotle* and 1851 (posthumous) publication of Calhoun's *Disquisition on Government for De Bow's Review*.

At the outset of *Cannibals All!* Fitzhugh proclaims: 'the true vindication of slavery must be founded on [Aristotle's] theory of man's social nature, as opposed to Locke's theory of the Social Contract.'³⁹ He offers his popular readership a condensed account of that theory, focusing on the natural place of slaves in a well-ordered household. He invites readers to infer that abolition would initiate the collapse of healthy families, and, in turn, cause the breakdown of the entire social and political order. He frames his discussion with an appeal to Aristotle to suggest that to defend slavery is, in effect, to defend the cause of civilization itself against the destructive influences of social contract and natural rights theory. Abolition is, from this vantage point, a fanatical outgrowth of this prevailing philosophy. With Aristotle on board he can urge that they, not us, are the irrational extremists in the grip of a false ideology.

In his essay for *De Bow's Review* Fitzhugh pleads this case even more aggressively. He implores fellow Southerners to recognize that 'while statesmen, not philosophers, formed our government, the latter threw in and attached a plentiful batch of abstractions, taken from the doctrines of Locke, Rousseau, and such like political

visionaries, that have done no good and are threatening much harm.' He explains:

Unfortunately for us of America, the minds of Franklin, Jefferson, Paine, and probably many others who gave tone and direction to public opinion during, and just after our revolution, were tintured with this rash philosophy. It has fallen to anti-abolitionists to 'assail' that entire philosophy. But, he laments, 'there is little other political philosophy in the world' upon which to draw. It is time, he continues, for 'the religious, the moral and the conservative' to search out an 'opposite philosophy with which to repel and refute their assaults'. He revels in his discovery of Walford's 1853 English edition of Aristotle. 'In this work of Aristotle will be found the book which they need.' Aristotle is the 'fountain-head' of a whole tradition of thought in which the South should gleefully place itself.⁴⁰

A first step toward producing a generation of Southern intellectuals fully cognizant of the South's standing as the true heir to a venerable tradition would be, Fitzhugh urges, 'to cast aside all our old school books and text books and adopt new ones'.⁴¹ He acknowledges that many are in the process of producing such invaluable new works and identifies Calhoun as a pioneer in this regard. But he insists that none can compare to Aristotle. That is why he so enthusiastically recommends the edition of Calhoun's writings on government edited by Richard Cralle. In his view, 'Calhoun . . . maintains much of the doctrines of Aristotle'.⁴² Since the Walford edition came out three years after Calhoun's death in 1850 Fitzhugh assumes that it is doubtful that Calhoun had actually read Aristotle. That is probably not right. The Ellis edition was available and Calhoun does betray familiarity with it in his personal correspondence.⁴³ Nevertheless, from Fitzhugh's point of view, Calhoun's presumed unfamiliarity with Aristotle's writings makes his work even more important. For him, 'the coincidence of opinion between these two great, observant, learned, and experienced men, living more than two thousand years apart, goes far to strengthen the authority of Aristotle [and] to prove his adaptation for modern use'.⁴⁴ The doctrines of Calhoun and Aristotle repudiating social contract theory are, he insists, 'of vital importance to the South' and their treatises should 'be used as text books in our schools'.⁴⁵ While such pronouncements bolstered

Southern self-confidence, they inspired little more than mockery in the North. For example, one abolitionist orator announced:

I know there are men in Virginia and South Carolina who quote Aristotle and Cicero in favor of American slavery; they seem to have read the translations of these authors only to get arguments against the Natural Rights of mankind. Similar men have studied the Old Testament but to find out that Abraham was a slaveholder, that Moses authorized bondage; they have read the New Testament only to find divine inspiration in the words of Paul, which they wrest into this: 'Slaves, Obey your masters.'⁴⁶

III. ARISTOTLE'S PART IN THE SOCIOLOGICAL CASE FOR SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Another striking feature of Southern pro-slavery writing is its sociological cast. Pro-slavery writers supplement the philosophical justification of slavery discussed above with a case for the excellence of the Southern plantation model of slavery in particular. They root this case in what they take to be a careful analysis of empirical reality. They focus on detailing what they take to be the material advantages of living in bondage on a plantation when compared with other forms of service observable throughout history and across cultures. They aim especially to establish a contrast between the deprivations suffered by free labouring people in increasingly densely populated contemporary European and Northern industrial societies and what they believe to be the comfortable material condition of black slaves in Southern plantation society. In this way they expect to inoculate themselves against charges wielded by abolitionists that slavery is, by necessity, vicious. Instead, pro-slavery writers insist that slavery in the American South is a kindly institution that arouses paternalistic feelings among owners.

Pro-slavery writers appeal to Aristotle to support the sociological element of their argument in two distinctive ways. First, they position their turn to the empirical evidence as an Aristotelian, and therefore intellectually sound, move. As Harvey Wish detailed in 1949, a 'more or less explicit' notion of a 'direct antithesis in social

philosophy between Aristotle and Plato... was applied to the sectional conflict.⁴⁷ From the Southern point of view, Northern abolitionists and socialists practise a model of thinking akin to Plato's utopianism and wild flights of imagination while they, in contrast, follow Aristotle's practice of reasoning from extensive observation. When Scripture is not sufficient, one pro-slavery activist stresses, the 'only efficient, trustworthy mode of procedure is by reference to history, and by legitimate induction from the facts which human experience may offer.'⁴⁸ Second, they draw upon Aristotle to argue that the abject condition of free labourers in industrial society renders their formal status as 'free men' nearly farcical. Instead, they propose, such workers are in truth in relations of dependence best captured by the provocative phrase, 'wage slaves', and necessarily suffer living conditions more terrible than those of the typical black slave.⁴⁹

In an 1850 essay explicitly designed to deepen Southern pro-slavery thought by drawing upon Aristotle, the scholar George Frederick Holmes argues that in *Politics* book 1 Aristotle identifies slavery as a specific 'relation of dependence' in which the slave has no control over the disposition of his own person and no property of his own.⁵⁰ He claims that free industrial labourers are in a conceptually identical condition. They are utterly dependent upon a relationship with an employer to secure all their material needs and labour under conditions that preclude any accumulation of wealth. Plus, he reasons, the inner logic of industrial capitalism causes the reduction of labourers to a condition of near destitution and unmitigated misery—employers can maximize the extraction of wealth from these labourers only by driving wages down as much as possible. Their lives are consumed with activity aimed at securing merely the material conditions of life (much of that activity mind-numbing drudgery) and admit of little, if any, opportunity to take up activity that expresses human freedom—autonomy, contemplation, or political activity. Industrial labourers do not enjoy any meaningful freedom. They enjoy no true independence. They have no leisure time in which to cultivate virtue and excellence. They are in a condition that Aristotle's theory identifies as distinctly *unfree*.⁵¹ And so a proper sociological understanding of American society shows that two different forms of slavery power its economic development, wage

slavery in the North and black chattel slavery in the South.⁵² Referring to northern conditions as virtual slavery, Holmes calmly insists, 'The absence of the name is no evidence of the absence of the reality.'⁵³

The Aristotelian critique of free labour by pro-slavery thinkers like Holmes resembles that of contemporary socialists and they acknowledge this. For example, the propagandist Fitzhugh writes:

Nothing written on the subject of slavery from the time of Aristotle, is worth reading, until the days of the modern Socialists. Nobody, treating of it, thought it worthwhile to enquire from history and statistics, whether the physical and moral condition of emancipated serfs or slaves had been improved or rendered worse by emancipation. None would condescend to compare the evils of domestic slavery with *the evils of liberty without property*.⁵⁴

Pro-slavery writers stress, with the socialist critics, that wage slavery produces large numbers of whites who do not live self-directed lives but instead suffer oppression and exploitation that renders them perpetually impoverished. The way in which northern capitalists' extract wealth from labouring whites is, Fitzhugh says, a form of 'moral cannibalism'.⁵⁵ In his view, and in that of mainstream Southern pro-slavery writers, Northern American society thus offers no advance at all over the old societies of Europe in which pauperism, wretchedness, and unrest (e.g. the revolutions of 1848) are rampant.⁵⁶ In the tumultuous national politics that followed the economic depression of 1837, moreover, critiques of capital expressed by Calhoun, the South's most prominent national political figure, appealed to some labour activists on the 'radical left'. Seeking a way to reduce the influence of the business class and moderate the power of the federal government, some labour Jacksonians advanced the 'perverse proposal that labour's redemption depended on the slaveholders' triumph' and worked to forge a slave-holding/labour political alliance.⁵⁷

Unlike socialists and other left-leaning critics of industrial capitalism, of course, pro-slavery writers expected the struggle between capital and labour to expose the necessity and attraction of slavery and the essential truth, expressed in Aristotle, that a successful society

requires a slave-based economy. Fitzhugh makes this point with characteristic drama:

The world will only fall back on domestic slavery when all other social forms have failed and been exhausted. That hour may not be far off.⁵⁸

They actually contend that slavery of the sort practised in the American South is a humane and attractive condition necessary not only to develop wealth and freedom for owners but also to advance the well-being of the labouring segment of society and to preserve the family. They attribute the good condition of slaves in part to the influence of Christianity on white owners and overseers.⁵⁹ But they also consider Aristotle to have identified a main reason for its essential gentleness in the course of his argument in *Politics* book 2 against Plato's proposal for common ownership and gender equality (that is, for abolishing private property and the family) in his *Republic*. Aristotle maintains that human beings naturally better care for things they own privately and more easily neglect the condition of things owned in common. He writes: 'Property that is common to the greatest number of owners receives the least attention; men care most for their private possessions.'⁶⁰ Aristotle stresses a complementary point in book 1 when he argues that proper household management (a part of the skill of 'wealth-getting') takes 'more interest in the human members of the household than in that of its inanimate property, and in the excellence of these than in that of its property' and goes on to detail the peculiar excellence that a natural slave can develop when placed in a relationship of dependence on a natural ruler.⁶¹ With Aristotle pro-slavery propagandists assert that it is in the very logic of ownership for a slave-owner to care for the well-being of his investment (cruelty is on this view an actionable violation, not indicative of true slave-holding behaviour). The employment of 'wage slaves', on the other hand, has an internal logic that will not elicit similarly beneficent behaviour from the free men of standing. One Southern propagandist could even write in all seriousness that

If the English laws were to allow slavery, such as we have, there would be many more persons wishing to sell their liberty than of those wishing to buy.⁶²

The pro-slavers fantasized that the condition of black slaves was comfortable and advantageous, and dismissed any evidence to the contrary as malignant fictions or anomalies. Visual evidence confirms the widespread embrace of this fantasy throughout the South.⁶³ That this attitude persisted during the Civil War is apparent from the images on Confederate currency of happy slaves cheerfully working in the fields (Fig. 9.1a, b).⁶⁴

How could they be so deluded? That is of course a complex question. But clearly this is an extraordinary example of how it is possible for beliefs to be resilient in the face of an excess of contradictory evidence in plain sight. Consider that Fitzhugh wrote to Frederick Douglass suggesting that he and his fellow freemen should be immediately and beneficially re-enslaved. Competition with white labourers was, he argued, killing off freed blacks. They are 'neither so moral, so happy, nor half so well provided as the slaves'. He even proposed a modification of slavery be made available to free blacks: 'Let them select their masters.'⁶⁵

The extraordinary claims about the material comforts enjoyed by slaves (which depended, of course, upon wilful ignorance of the vast amount of evidence of the physical brutality visited upon black people) does not exhaust the sociological case for slavery produced by pro-slavery writers, nor their interest in Aristotle in this context. They assert, as we have seen, that the very condition of dependence is a positive good. Recall that in Aristotle's view, for slavery to be just it must benefit both free master and slave. But he does not equate access to material comforts with benefits sufficient to justify this relation of utter dependence. Instead, Aristotle's discussion focuses on the way a relation of dependence upon the master corrects a deficiency in reason (a lack in the soul) and provides the slave with a route to the practice of a certain measure of (appropriate) virtues.⁶⁶ Taking a cue from Aristotle, the 'positive good' theorists included fuller enumeration of the benefits of slavery *for the slaves*, focusing on access to Western civilization and the Christian religion. These benefits, they assume, amply satisfy the Aristotelian demand that the relation of dependence profit the slave in more ways than receipt of bodily well-being.

IV. SURPASSING ARISTOTLE: RACE AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE INTENTIONS OF NATURE

Pro-slavery writers identify with Aristotle's confident assertion that the requirements of civilization make it 'manifest'⁶⁷ that among the persons that inhabit the earth, some are slaves by personal constitution and character of soul (that is, by nature) and some are by nature free and destined to rule. And they follow Aristotle in claiming that to craft a just and prosperous state it is necessary to sort people into these categories, assign them appropriate functions, and deliver distinctive benefits. But they have a far more complex relation to Aristotle's discussion of how it is possible to tell who is by nature of which character. Aristotle assumes that it is a difficult task to identify precisely which persons in the world are natural slaves and offers a scientific way of navigating this political problem. In sharp contrast, American pro-slavery advocates assume that it is in fact very easy to tell who is by nature suited to slavery and who to freedom because, in their view, these different conditions of soul map perfectly onto the different races. They adapt Aristotle's arguments to their racist purposes and boldly claim that in doing so they are correcting and improving upon the wise philosopher's work.

Aristotle starts from the observation that the 'intentions of nature'⁶⁸ are not perfectly clear in individual empirical cases because a condition of soul is invisible. For Aristotle, a capacity to work philosophically with the distinction between appearances and reality is necessary to make accurate inferences from empirical observation about precisely who possesses a slavish soul and who does not. Aristotle dismisses body type as a reliable indicator of free or slave by nature even though natural slaves will be especially suited to hard physical labour. As a matter of fact, he acknowledges, 'Slaves often have the bodies of freemen.'⁶⁹ Moreover, it does not even occur to him to consider skin colour as a useful sign. He does not trust physical markers much at all. And so, he takes it to be a chief task of political science to make the intentions of nature apparent to rational people. He argues that an observable form of human activity



Figure 9.1 John W. Jones, (a) Slave mother and child; (b) Original bank note, interpreted in the series "Confederate Currency: The Color of Money" by John W. Jones

must supply the basis for a reasonable inference about the slavish or free condition of a human soul. The activity to which he devotes the most extensive attention—victory and loss in war—is rejected as a poor indicator. He offers a different observable form of activity—endurance of despotism without resentment—as a good sign that faulty deliberative capacities, and thus slavish natures, are widespread in a population. And it is on this basis that he confidently concludes that natural slaves can be found among the barbarian peoples of Europe and Asia. He then offers that it is reasonable to treat these group memberships as good *proxies* for slavish nature. He does not argue that race itself is a physical marker of a condition of soul.

Pro-slavery ideologues seized upon Aristotle's idea of 'natural slavery' because it appears to give credence to their interpretation of the significance of race. But these great admirers of Aristotle should have been forced to navigate his stern warning about the unscientific character of relying upon observation of body type to judge a condition of soul. Most didn't bother. This is in large part because they believed that scriptural authority renders this complexity in Aristotle irrelevant.⁷⁰ They read the Old Testament story of the curse of Canaan and the scriptural identification of his father Ham's dark colour as 'a racial marking that prefigures the bodily appearance of their own black slaves.'⁷¹ Canaan and his descendants were to be slaves to his brothers and their progeny. They imagine black Africans to be the modern descendants of Canaan, ordained to be slaves to other races of men.⁷² A poor but persistent translation of a specific passage from book 1 has perhaps facilitated the neglect of Aristotle's critical comments on drawing inferences from the appearance of bodies. This passage might have suggested to some pro-slavery thinkers that even though Aristotle did not argue that racial characteristics are determinate, he gestured towards the idea that visibly discernible physical 'marks' of slave and free nature actually existed. They reconciled Aristotle's cautionary comments and race theory by finding in Aristotle the germ of their favoured view. In the 1853 Walford edition the passage reads:

From the hour of their birth, some are *marked out* for the purpose of obeying, and others for ruling.⁷³

The verb translated 'marked out' is *diestēke* (from *diistēmi*), to 'separate out'. It carries no necessary implication of a physical marking. In other passages in book 1, for example, Aristotle uses the same verb to 'separate' (distinguish between) a theory of justice from the idea of rule of the stronger.⁷⁴ Translating it as 'marked out' in the passage above betrays a modern inclination to treat 'biological' features as defining. In addition, this phrase appears immediately after Aristotle acknowledges that 'authority and subordination are conditions not only necessary but also *expedient*.'⁷⁵ Placing one in slavery or freedom from birth is an expedient. The issue that Aristotle continues to explore as this passage develops is the basis on which it is just to separate out an infant, that is, to act in an opportune way. How can one discern his nature with reasonable confidence? Aristotle later answers that a group membership—Greek or Barbarian—can indeed be a legitimate signifier. But he does not 'ascribe these differences to race or physiognomy' in the sense that Southern propagandists understood those terms and does not recognize biological race as a legitimate signifier.⁷⁶

It is also the case that pro-slavery writers find the language of 'natural slave' an economical and dramatic way of representing the full force of their racist assessment of people of African descent and deploy it without much attention at all to the details of Aristotle's critical views. 'Natural slave' captures the consequence of viewing blackness as an 'eternal brand' of inferiority worn upon the face.⁷⁷ Judge Upshur, for example, proclaims that slavery's 'true character and tendencies as a political institution, were much better understood by Aristotle than by Wilberforce' but, when he compares ancient and contemporary views of slavery, entirely ignores Aristotle's critical theory of natural slavery, focusing only on the typical Greek practice of enslaving 'captives in war' who were 'for the most part white men like themselves'. Thus on the subject of who gets marked out for slavery, he finds modern slavery a huge advance. The ancients had to politically navigate the problems that attend the errors of identification or the possibility that slaves could become assimilated into the free population (through manumission or fraud). Their free population could easily become corrupt even if their disciplinary policies were harsh. 'Our safety', in contrast, 'is in the color of the slave; in an eternal, ineffaceable distinction of nature'

that precludes the possibility of easy assimilation. In his view, the very fact that Americans and their slaves recognize colour as a biologically based, inescapable, and easily detectable indicator of a slave nature accounts for the special excellence of Southern plantation society. Accordingly, he concludes, 'We should cherish this institution, not as a necessary evil which we cannot shake off, but as a great positive good, to be carefully protected and preserved.'⁷⁸

Some pro-slavery writers do engage somewhat more carefully with Aristotle's discussion of the empirical identification of slave and free natures. The most notable example of this effort is an 1850 essay by George Frederick Holmes, 'Observations on a Passage in the *Politics* of Aristotle relative to Slavery', in the *Southern Literary Messenger*. He seeks to supplement or even deepen Southern pro-slavery thinking by making it attentive to the substantive arguments of Aristotle about how to go about identifying populations of natural slaves. Holmes divides his study into an examination of the accuracy of Aristotle's 'position' and of the accuracy of his account of its proper 'application'. Aristotle's basic 'position' he identifies as follows: 'Nature has clearly designed some men for freedom and others for slavery.'⁷⁹ He summarizes Aristotle's 'application' of this position as the identification of the Greeks with freedom and Barbarian races of Asiatic origins with slavery.

Holmes's case for the 'general truth'⁸⁰ of Aristotle's 'position' that 'Nature has clearly designed some for freedom and others for slavery' is not our central concern here. I note only that he places great stock in the observation of the 'universality of the habit of slavery' in some form or other throughout the 2000 years of history since Aristotle's day (dwelling on the essential identity of wage labour with dependence) and the philosophical assessments of the origin of human society. His attention to Aristotle's 'application' of the idea of natural slavery to flesh and blood realities, however, is telling. Here we find his confrontation with Aristotle's comments on Greek and Barbarian races and failure to treat visible biological differences as markers of free or slave souls.

Holmes argues that Aristotle recognizes the concept of 'race' but is not adept at using it to structure his analyses. Referring to Aristotle's conclusions regarding the natures of Greeks and Barbarians, he is pleased to observe that 'Aristotle maintains that . . . there are certain

races designed by nature for servitude, as there are others as manifestly designed for freedom and command.'⁸¹ But, he proposes, though often 'paying strict attention to the characteristics of different races', his application of 'the great principle' is simply 'erroneous'.⁸² In his view, Aristotle places the Asiatics, the Barbarians, in the slave class, and the Europeans in the free class, noting that while Aristotle gives a 'marked pre-eminence to the Greeks' he seems alert to the promise of the 'uncivilized races of northern Europe'.⁸³ Holmes considers this a muddle. He explicitly attributes Aristotle's classification of Asiatics as natural slaves to what he calls 'the peculiar prejudices of the Greeks' arising from their wars with the Persians and the hostility these conflicts engendered among the Greeks.⁸⁴ But, though Holmes is quick to denounce Aristotle's motivation as prejudiced, he is also quick to come to the defence of the mode of reasoning Aristotle relies upon in his account of their fitness for slavery. To redeem Aristotle he adds that his observation that Asiatics exhibit a distinct capacity to endure despotism without resentment holds not only in antiquity but for centuries more. Holmes insists the usefulness of race is its capacity to signal a condition of 'universal duration'—a free or slave nature—not a particular culture's capacity more or less to maximize these potentials in any particular period. In his view, by failing to see white and black as the crux of race matters, Aristotle bungles the race-sensitive aspect of his analysis of natural slavery. Holmes softens Aristotle's error by referring to the backward state of science during Aristotle's lifetime. In 'our own day', in contrast, 'the distinct functions of different races in the onward march of human progress promises to be recognized as the principle axiom of historical science'.⁸⁵ A decade later Fitzhugh echoes Holmes's argument. He too prefers not to abandon Aristotle's theory of natural slavery but instead to use modern 'science' to correct it. He writes: 'Aristotle was neither anatomist, physiologist, nor phrenologist; hence, he mistook varieties of the Caucasian race for distinct and inferior races or species of the human family.'⁸⁶

Having dispatched Aristotle's 'abhorrent'⁸⁷ practice of finding a hierarchy—including slave and free by nature—in the diversity of Caucasian peoples, Holmes moves to consider whether an Aristotelian mode of reasoning can today reach the determination as to whether there indeed appear to be 'certain races destined for freedom

and others for servitude.⁸⁸ That is, he considers whether an Aristotelian mode of analysis of history can produce findings that square with what he thinks he knows to be true about the distinctive natures of white and black races. He claims to practise a form of 'induction'. In particular, he claims to be able to infer from the historical record the essential meaning of race. The result of his efforts is a stunningly race-inflected progress narrative. I quote this noxious account at length as it weaves together Aristotle-inspired ideas (persistent patterns of activity that suggest natural aptitudes, functionalism, that free and slave exhibit distinctive virtues) to support the introduction of strong racial categories into an Aristotelian analytic framework. Holmes writes:

The destinies and especial services of the Egyptians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Saracens, Germans, French, and Anglo-Saxons are definite and clear. It is equally clear that since the commencement of the historic age the torch of human advancement has been exclusively in the hands of the Indo-Germanic races. Does a doctrine capable of such wide and useful application fail us in regard to the question of Slavery? By no means, the distinction between the Caucasian and Negro is a palpably specific difference, and all history teaches us that it has been attended with an equally wide and palpable difference of functions . . .

In all ages . . . the Negro has been the slave and has never appeared as the master.

In those cases where he has attained national independence, by a voluntary gift, or successful rebellion, as in Liberia and St. Domingo, or by emancipation, or free colonization, as the West Indies and Sierra Leone, his condition only serves to exhibit his utter incapacity to avail himself of the advantages of freedom. The various Caucasian races, on the contrary have wholly or in part been subject at times to a servile condition, but with the progress of civilization they have uniformly advanced, and have extricated themselves from slavery by the exhibition of an aptitude for freedom. The virtues of the Negro are the virtues of Slavery, and become vices when his condition is changed. The virtues of the Caucasian unfit him for Slavery.⁸⁹

Holmes concludes his reconciliation of Aristotle and race science by bringing Scripture back in: 'The whole long sweep of history is only an illustration and confirmation of the truth of the prophetic destination of the race of Canaan.'⁹⁰

It is perhaps ironic that by taking the observable omnipresence of slavery and racial inequality in history as evidence of their natural justice Holmes actually commits a logical error that Aristotle warns against in *Politics* book 1. Aristotle explicitly counsels against treating the extent of a practice in history as evidence of its natural justice. Aristotle himself never marshals the ubiquity of slavery through history and cross-culturally as evidence of its roots in nature and justice. Instead, Aristotle insists on the logical separation of these issues. In Aristotle's view it is wrong to treat the prevalence of slavery as an indication of its justice. This is likely because, as a sensitive observer and scientist, he suspects that many factors might account for such a condition. In his world chief candidates would be the prevalence of war and the pervasive practice of enslaving prisoners, as well as the frequency of violent crime, banditry, abandonment, and abductions and the development of a legal and illegal slave trade. His critical theoretical concern is to identify why slavery is for some portion of the human family a natural and beneficial condition, how we can accurately identify that population and precisely how this relationship can produce a positive good for all involved. Whether just forms of slavery are *also* commonplace in the world and whether the observable practices of slavery are in all cases just, are for him, in principle, different questions.⁹¹ Holmes does not display a similar measure of sensitivity to complexity. In his zeal to reconcile Aristotle and race theory, and to assert that Southern thought in this way surpasses Aristotle, he neglects other analytical distinctions Aristotle considers necessary to properly think through the question of the justice of slavery.

V. PRESERVING PRECEDENT: AN ASPECT OF BOOK 1 ROUTINELY IGNORED IN AMERICAN PRO-SLAVERY WRITING

Pro-slavery writers take no notice of the fact that Aristotle's text provides evidence of a controversy over the justice of slavery in antiquity. They treat his systematic attention to objections to slavery

as parts of an abstract philosophical investigation, not as the development of a response to real critics. But Aristotle explicitly positions his discussion of slavery in opposition to calls for abolition among his own contemporaries. Aristotle writes that he is responding to those who maintain 'that for one man to be another man's master is contrary to nature, because it is only by convention that makes the one a slave and the other a freeman and there is no difference between them in nature, and that therefore it is unjust, for it is based on force.'⁹² His entire examination of the question of slavery aims to intervene in a debate not only over how best to understand the master-slave relation but over whether it is contrary to nature or not. And Aristotle actually starts his discussion by agreeing at least in part with contemporary critics of slavery. He insists that slavery is just *only* when the slaves are naturally suited to that condition and can benefit from it, and not when the slaves are relegated to that condition as a result of having suffered a misfortune (e.g. having been defeated in battle) or as a result of some other accidental occurrence.

At best pro-slavery writers miss, but more likely they suppress or ignore, the evidence in *Politics* book 1 for slavery's justice actually having been disputed in Aristotle's own time. Pro-slavery propagandists do not identify with Aristotle's effort to respond to critics. Instead, they appear invested in the view that Aristotle expresses the underlying philosophical justification of a practice that went unquestioned in Greek antiquity. Pro-slavery writers seem completely oblivious to a potential parallel between Aristotle's effort to quiet contemporary abolitionists and their own struggle. The reason would seem to lie in the value pro-slavery ideologues place on Greek antiquity as precedent. They treat Greece as an exemplar of what an 'unmitigated' slave society can accomplish. Pro-slavery writers represent the ubiquity of slavery throughout recorded history as a sign of its natural justice and cite Greek antiquity as a standard-bearer of what unhesitatingly following nature in this regard makes possible. 'The testimony of all antiquity [is] in its favor', wrote the anonymous Southron in 1838.⁹³ There is no room in their portrait of ancient slave society for any hint of uncertainty regarding the justice of this institution. For example, Southron writes that Aristotle 'enunciat[ed] the natural origin of slavery, so revolting to the friends of the rights of man, so directly opposed to the prevailing notions of free-

thinkers . . . in a period of unmitigated slavery, without fear of contradiction'. He continues, slavery was

advanced as an unquestionable fact, open to the observation of the whole world, which none could question, because it was the deliberate opinion of the age in which he lived.⁹⁴

'The whole of the ancient world', wrote Thomas Dew in his account of the Virginia Legislature's debate on slavery, 'never for a moment doubted' slavery's justice.⁹⁵

I have shown that pro-slavery writers of the antebellum period indeed worked with Aristotle's views and arguments in *Politics* book 1 as they struggled to craft a sophisticated intellectual response to increasingly pervasive demands for abolition. These authors did not simply pepper their publications and speeches with light-handed references to the philosopher to show off their classical learning and elevate the standing of the writer, comfort compatriots by placing them in illustrious company, or irritate opponents who themselves venerated antiquity. The widespread practice among Southern intellectuals of citing of Aristotle is not ornamental. Their citations, adaptations, and corrections of Aristotle are all evidence of a dynamic engagement with this ancient text by a community of activists.⁹⁶ Their shared attachment to Aristotle in part defined them. And their varied and at times complicated deployments of his arguments and words capture a part of their intellectual and political practices. The Aristotle they prize may be nearly unrecognizable to today's moral philosophers and political scientists who focus on other, more contemporary, aspects of his thinking, chiefly his account of democracy, plurality, the emotions, and virtue ethics. But it is worth remembering that this episode in the reception history of Aristotle's *Politics* book 1 shows that Aristotle could provide an intellectual framework for a toxic way of thinking about human differences.

NOTES

1. Harper (1838), 59, Calhoun (1837), 2, Southron (1838), 744. 'Immendiatism' also sparked a wave of Northern 'anti-abolitionism'. See Tise (1987), 261-85.

2. Dew (1832), 16; Bledsoe (1856), 62; Hunter (1845), 462.
3. Fitzhugh (1857*a*), 41.
4. Finley (1980), 18.
5. No single American ideological camp from the colonial to civil war period had a monopoly on classical learning or an exclusive claim to an ancient intellectual pedigree. See Wish (1949), 264–5, Reinhold (1984), Richard (1994), Wood (2000), Winteler (2002), Mæckler (2006), Greenwood (2009), Malamud (2009).
6. Harrington (1989), 65.
7. Fitzhugh (1857*b*), 169, discussed below.
8. George Fitzhugh to George F. Holmes, 11 Apr. 1855. In *Holmes Letter Book* (Duke University Library). I owe this citation to Harrington (1989), 67.
9. I borrow this phrase from Wish (1949), 266.
10. e.g. Jenkins (1960).
11. Walford (1853), 6–7 (*Politics* 1254^a20–5).
12. *Politics* 1253^b32, 1254^a12–13.
13. Walford (1853), 11, 12, 13.
14. The preceding two paragraphs are drawn from Monoson (2010).
15. Calhoun (1837), 2.
16. Calhoun (1837), 1.
17. Harper (1838), 5.
18. Hammond (1858).
19. Holmes (1850), 199.
20. Calhoun (1837), 3.
21. Calhoun (1837), 3. 'Positive good' became a watchword of Southern ideology. Abolitionists mocked it. See *Liberator Files*, 22 September 1854.
22. They draw on the theories of contemporaries Thomas Robert Malthus and Auguste Comte.
23. Dew (1832).
24. Fitzhugh (1857*a*), 9.
25. Dew (1832), 16, 112. Dew reviews not only the principled defence of slavery but details the 'utter impracticalities' gradual or sudden abolition would present—mass deportation of blacks to Africa (the 'colonization' solution), the establishment in Virginia of a free multiracial society, the introduction of free white or black labour into plantation agriculture.
26. Harper (1835), 16.
27. Grayson (1860).
28. Wish (1949), 254.

29. Ellis (n.d.), Gillies (1804), Walford (1853), Bekker (1831). Holmes (1850), 193 and Fitzhugh (1857*b*) comment on their sources.
30. The English Civil War, emergence of natural rights theory, Greek independence movement, and resistance to the abolition movement all occasioned some resurgence of interest in Aristotle's political writings. Note that Locke presents his *Two Treatises on Government* in part as a response to Filmer's *Observations on Aristotle's Politiques*. Also see Barker (1906). Congreve (1855), vii (Greek text based on Bekker with notes in English) lists scholarly work currently in circulation in English, French, and German.
31. Walford (1853), xxxv, xxxvii (reprint of the 'Introduction' to Gillies (1804)).
32. Southron (1838), 737–8.
33. This is a reference to the inclusion of the slave population in the calculation of the size of a State's delegation to the House of Representatives—each slave counted as 3/5th of a person. See Article 1, Section 2, Paragraph 3 of the US Constitution.
34. Southron (1838), 742.
35. Southron (1838), 742.
36. Southron (1838), 738.
37. Other authors who make explicit their dependence on Aristotle to articulate opposition to natural rights theory include Holmes (1850) and Bledsoe (1856).
38. Fitzhugh (1857*a*), 9.
39. Fitzhugh (1857*a*), 9.
40. Fitzhugh (1857*b*), 164–5.
41. Fitzhugh (1857*b*), 166.
42. Fitzhugh (1857*b*), 169.
43. See n. 6 above.
44. Fitzhugh (1857*b*), 169.
45. Fitzhugh (1857*b*), 172.
46. Parker (1858).
47. Wish (1949), 258.
48. Holmes (1850), 196.
49. They use this phrase, e.g. Fitzhugh (1957*a*).
50. Holmes (1850), 195.
51. Only those who are 'released from menial occupations' can hope to develop virtue. *Politics* 1278^a10 (trans. Rackham (1977)).
52. Cf. the quasi-Marxist cast of their argument to what Marx actually wrote about American slavery: 'Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have

- no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance. Without slavery North America, the most progressive of countries, would be transformed into a patriarchal country. Wipe out North America from the map of the world, and you will have anarchy—the complete decay of modern commerce and civilization. Cause slavery to disappear and you will have wiped America off the map of nations... *Modern nations have been able only to disguise slavery in their own countries, but they have imposed it without disguise upon the New World?* Marx n.d. 94–5 (Paris, 1847) (my emphasis).
53. Holmes (1850), 199.
 54. Fitzhugh (1857*a*), 15, my emphasis.
 55. Fitzhugh (1857*a*), 11.
 56. Fitzhugh (1857*a*), 9–10.
 57. Wilentz (2005), 533. See the discussion of labour activist Orestes Brownson's ties to Calhoun in Wilentz (2005), 532–9. See McCurry (2010) on the anti-democratic cast of Confederate politics towards non-slave-owning whites in the South.
 58. Fitzhugh (1857*a*), 4.
 59. e.g. Southron (1838).
 60. 1261^b33–5, trans. Rackham (1977).
 61. 1259^a20–5 and ff. trans. Rackham (1977).
 62. Dew (1832), 26–7.
 63. See Wood (2000).
 64. To view these images see 'Color of Money Collection' at the John W. Jones Gallery accessible at <http://gallerychuma.com/ColorofMoney.htm>. Jones is a contemporary painter who interprets the iconography on Confederate currency.
 65. I owe this citation to Mailloux (2002), 109. Fitzhugh sent Douglass a copy of *Sociology for the South* through a mutual acquaintance.
 66. See Monoson (2011).
 67. *phanteron*, 1255³.
 68. *bouletai hē phusis*; at 1254^b27.
 69. 1254^b33.
 70. Genesis 9. 20–7.
 71. Mailloux (2002), 104.
 72. e.g. Holmes (1850), 200.
 73. Walford (1853), 11 (*Politics* 1254^a23–4). Rackham (1977) and Everson (1996) also use 'mark' for *diistērni* in this passage.

74. 1255^a19, also see 1254^b15–20; 1256^a29.
75. *surpheronōn*, trans. Rackham (1977).
76. Mailloux (2002), 114, quoting Hannaford (1996), 57.
77. Upshur (1839), 686. See also Calhoun (1837), Dew (1832), Fitzhugh (1857*a*) and (1861).
78. Upshur (1839), 687.
79. 1255^a1–2, Holmes translating (1850: 193).
80. Holmes (1850), 194.
81. Holmes (1850), 194, my emphasis.
82. Holmes (1850), 200.
83. Holmes (1850), 194.
84. Holmes (1850), 194.
85. Holmes (1850), 200.
86. Fitzhugh (1861), 448.
87. Holmes (1850), 194.
88. Holmes (1850), 200, my emphasis.
89. Holmes (1850), 200.
90. Holmes (1850), 200.
91. I draw on the more extensive discussion in Monoson (2011).
92. 1253^b23–6, trans. Rackham (1977).
93. Southron (1838), 737.
94. Southron (1838), 738, my emphasis.
95. Dew (1832), 15.
96. For comparison, see Hanke (1959), 13, 16–17, 113–14 on the use of Aristotle in arguments about native peoples of North America.