

THE SHARING OF PROPERTY BY THE RICH WITH THE POOR IN GREEK THEORY AND PRACTICE

(τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις κοινωνεῖν)*

Laws 736 C–E is one of the rare passages in Plato’s political writings which deal at any length with the question of the possibility of reforming existing Greek states.

Plato’s basic assumptions are that all actual Greek states are corrupt and that, unless changes that secure “some equality of property ownership”¹ are introduced, the states cannot be reformed.

However, according to Plato, the strength of vested interests opposed to change is such that a statesman who tries to introduce change by legislation cannot achieve anything, while conditions are such that he nonetheless cannot leave the state of property ownership without trying to change it. “For when an old established state”, Plato says, “is obliged to settle such strife [*viz.* the strife between the rich and the poor, who demand cancellation of debts and redistribution of land] by law (νομοθετεῖσθαι ἀναγκασθεῖση), it can neither leave vested interests unaltered (οὔτε ἔαν οἷόν τε ἀκίνητον) nor yet can it in any wise alter them (οὔτ’ αὖ κινεῖν δυνατόν ἐστί τινα τρόπον),² and no way is left save aspiration³ and cautious change, little by little, extended over a long period (εὐλαβῆς ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ σμικρὸν μεταβιβάζουσιν).”

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¹ ἰσότητα αὐτοῖς τινα κατασκευάζουσι τῆς οὐσίας, *Leg.* 684D.

² For μὴ κινεῖν τὰ ἀκίνητα, cf. G.R. Morrow, *Plato’s Cretan City* (Princeton 1960) 102, note 13.

³ εὐχὴ δὲ μόνον, cf. G. Müller, *Studien zu den platonischen Nomoi* (München 1951) 181, n. 1: “εὐχὴ ist in der *Politeia* (450 d 1) schon Utopie, hier (841 c 7, 736 d 2) wirklich Wunsch, Gebet um etwas Mögliches.”

The way of change is this: “There must be a supply of men, from time to time, to effect the change (τῶν κινούντων),⁴ who themselves, on each occasion, possess abundance of land (κεκτημένων . . . αὐτῶν γῆν ἄφθονον) and have many persons in their debt (κεκτημένων . . . ὀφειλέτας αὐτοῖς πολλούς), and who are equitable enough (δι’ ἐπιείκειαν) to wish to *give a share* of these things to *those* of them *who are in want* (τούτων πη τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις . . . κοινωνεῖν),⁵ partly by remissions (ἀφιέντας) and partly by distributions (νεμομένους), making a kind of rule of moderation (τῆς μετριότητος ἐχομένους) and believing that poverty consists not in decreasing one’s substance but in increasing one’s greed”.

“For this”, Plato concludes, “is the main foundation of the security of a state (ἀρχὴ σωτηρίας) and on this as on a firm base (οἶον κρηπίδος) it is possible to build whatever kind of civic organization may be subsequently built” (*Leg.* 736 C–E).⁶

Plato’s “only possible way” with regard to the division of property — that of gradual change in the right direction, with the *possidentes* using their property in the right manner, and holding the right attitude towards it — has received comparatively little attention, and is usually seen as unrealistic. Certainly, Plato himself is quite conscious of the fact that exceptionally favourable circumstances are required and must recur “from time to time over a long period” in order to lead to the desired goal. However, what is visualized here by Plato as a possibility is not unknown in Greek *practice*, while his *theory* is in line with some earlier theoretical reflections and, especially, with the contemporaneous and slightly later thought of Isokrates and Aristotle.

I submit, that tracing the ἀπορουμένοις κοινωνεῖν theme, may, in addition to contributing to a better understanding of Plato’s stand, throw some light on a not unimportant facet of Greek social theory and practice.

In examining the *theory* regarding τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις κοινωνεῖν, I shall deal only with the more important instances, concentrating on

⁴ Cf. E. B. England (ed.), *The Laws of Plato*, I (New York 1976) 504: “there should be a supply of reformers from time to time (men who, etc.)”

⁵ *Leg.* 736 D.

⁶ Cf. also: “there is no way of escape, broad or narrow, other than this device. So let this stand fixed for us now as a kind of pillar (ἔρμῃ) of the state,” in 737A.

social-political thought to the exclusion of merely gnomological or moralistic pronouncements.⁷

The earliest evidence is *Demokritos*, Diels-Kranz, Fr. 255: “When the well-to-do (οἱ δυνάμενοι) prevail upon themselves (τολμέωσι) to lend to the have-nots (τοῖς μὴ ἔχουσι προτελεῖν), and help them (ὑπουργεῖν) and benefit them (χαρίζεσθαι), herein at last is pity (τὸ οἰκτίρειν), and an end to isolation (μὴ ἐρήμους εἶναι), and friendship (τὸ ἐταίρους γίγνεσθαι), and *homonoia* (τὸ τοὺς πολιήτας ὁμονόους εἶναι), and other blessings (ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ) such as no man could enumerate”.

Although Demokritos’ importance in the development of Greek ethical and political thought has long been recognized, no coherent system of ethics, even less of politics, can be arrived at from the extant fragments.⁸ Hence, the text quoted remains somewhat isolated, even if it can be loosely related to some other fragments.⁹

The counterpart of Demokritos’ ideal of εὐθυμία for the individual¹⁰ is the ideal of ὁμόνοια for the *polis*.¹¹ *Homonoia* among citizens can be achieved only if the relationship between the rich and the poor is as it should be. The key to establishing such a relationship is, according to our text, in the hands of the rich. Only if the rich display the right attitude towards the poor and their needs — and this is contingent upon their taking the right attitude towards the *use* of their own property — is *homonoia* attained. ‘Ὁμόνοια, the ultimate goal, is by no means the only good to emerge. When the spirit visualized by Demokritos prevails, it is a blessing not only to the community but also to the recipient and to the giver, with the latter being not the least of the beneficiaries. Τὸ οἰκτίρειν is morally good, but the rich donor’s gain is not solely a moral one; in the *polis*, isolation (ἐρήμους εἶναι) is painful and potentially dangerous for the rich.

⁷ For the latter, see H. Bolkestein’s well-known, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im vorchristlichen Altertum* (Utrecht 1939) 94 ff. 130, 150 ff., 171, 272, and *passim*.

⁸ See C. Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (Oxford 1928) 186 ff., and esp. 210 ff.; *pace* P. Natorp, *Die Ethika des Demokritos* (Marburg 1893) 88 ff.

⁹ E.g. Frr. 191, 250, 248, 50, 251, 252, 282, 287; also possibly, 101, 102, 249, 283, 284, 285, 286.

¹⁰ Fr. 191.

¹¹ Fr. 250.

Friendship and concord along the lines postulated in the fragment are, of course, advantageous for the economically weak, but in the *polis*, especially in a democratic one (where the rich are often dependent politically on the poor), they are equally important to the *possidentes*. These and innumerable other boons materialize, according to Demokritos, when the rich assume the right attitude towards their less-privileged fellow-citizens and, above all, towards the use of their own property.¹²

Turning to *Archytas*, we find ourselves in a position somewhat similar to that regarding the Demokritean fragment. Although Archytas, one of the most important figures of the intellectual and political life of Plato's time, would certainly have had a theory of conduct and of politics, his statement relevant to our theme, Fragment 3, is somewhat isolated and cannot be related to a wider context.¹³ In fact, only one part of Fr. 3 refers to Archytas' theory of the proper relationship between the well-to-do and the poor. Nonetheless, the theory propounded in it is of considerable interest, and stands half-way between that of Demokritos and those of Plato, Isokrates and Aristotle.

Fr. 3 is from Archytas' *περὶ μαθημάτων*.¹⁴ The text, as preserved, has two parts: 11. 1–6 deal with man's need to become *ἐπιστήμων* and the way to do so; 11. 7 sqq. deal with *λογισμός* and its paramount importance in the life of the individual and of society. Considerations relevant to our problem arise in the latter context. Though there is some doubt whether the two parts of the fragment are logically connected,¹⁵ it will better be quoted here in full.

"In subjects of which one has no knowledge" — says Archytas in the first part — "one must obtain knowledge either by learning from someone else, or by discovering for oneself. That which is learnt, however, comes from another and by outside help, while that which is

¹² See Bolkestein, *op. cit.*, esp. 130 and 150 ff.; Bailey, *op. cit.*, 212; Natorp, *op. cit.*, 115; Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (Cleveland, APA 1967) 120–122; cf. also W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, III (Cambridge 1969) 73, with n. 2.

¹³ See Ueberweg-Praechter,¹² I 61, 65 ff., 71, 184 ff.; Guthrie, *op. cit.*, I (Cambridge 1967) 336; J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, (London 1930) 276.

¹⁴ See Diels-Kranz⁶, I, 436.

¹⁵ Diels-Kranz⁶, I, 437, on line 7.

discovered comes by one's own efforts and independently. To discover without seeking is difficult and rare, but with seeking is frequent and easy. If, however, one does not know how to seek, discovery is impossible."

The second part of the fragment has λογισμός as its subject: "Right Reckoning (λογισμός), when discovered (εὑρεθείς) checks civil strife and promotes concord (στάσιν ... ἔπαυσεν, ὁμόνοιαν ... αὔξησεν); for where it has been achieved, there can be no *pleonexia* and there is equality (πλεονεξία ... οὐκ ἔστι καὶ ἰσότητας ἔστιν). It is this [*viz.* Right Reckoning] that brings us to terms over mutual obligations (περὶ τῶν συναλλαγμάτων διαλλασσόμεθα) and through this *the poor receive from the men of means* (οἱ πένητες λαμβάνοντι παρὰ τῶν δυναμένων) and *the rich give to the needy* (οἱ πλούσιοι διδόντι τοῖς δεομένοις), both trusting that by means of this [*viz.* Right Reckoning] they will be treated fairly (πιστεύοντες ἀμφοτέροι διὰ τούτῳ τὸ ἴσον ἔξειν)", 11.7–12.

The rest of the fragment (11. 13 sqq.) deals with the moral importance of *logismos*. It is "the standard (κανὼν) and the deterrent of wrongdoers"; it "checks those who are able to reckon [*viz.* the consequences] before they do wrong, convincing them that they will not be able to avoid detection when they come against it; and by showing those who don't know how to reckon that in this [*i.e.* the inability to reckon consequences] lies their wrongdoing, and prevents them from committing the wrong deeds."

I see no valid reason for viewing 11. 1–7 as unconnected to the rest of the fragment; it may well be that the discussion of how one learns or discovers a thing for himself is intended to illustrate the way one arrives at *logismos*. In that case, the sequence would be as follows: the way one can reach *logismos*; the role of *logismos* in state and society; its moral role. It is the middle part of Fr. 3 which concerns us here.

The text opens with the general statement that *logismos*, when discovered and applied in a human community, checks στάσις and promotes ὁμόνοια. Taken as a general *gnome*, this would mean that, if men would understand that civil strife is evil and concord good, they would try to act accordingly. Archytas, however, is not offering a *gnome*; he is arguing a view. His argument revolves around property and one's attitude towards it. The argument — introduced by γάρ in 1.8 and going down to ἴσον ἔξειν — is: when *logismos* prevails, the rich are not greedy

for more and more possessions (πλεονεξία ... οὐκ ἔστι) and the lower class has the right measure of property¹⁶ because Right Reckoning “brings us to terms over mutual obligations”; consequently, the rich give (διδόντι) to the needy what they understand to be the due measure which should be given to the poor; while the poor receive (λαμβάνοντι) their due measure and do not demand more. Thus, both sides trust that they are treated fairly. It is *this* that checks *stasis* and strengthens *homonoia* in the *polis*.¹⁷

Archytas' view, though less gnominically put than Demokritos' Fr. 255, and less dramatically expressed than Plato's *Leg.* 736 C–E, is in line with both.

So is that of *Isokrates*. He has a great deal to say about the praiseworthy attitude of the rich towards the poor, and the resulting excellent relationship between the two in the “good old days of the forefathers”. However, his depictions of “the times of Solon and Kleisthenes”, or “before the Persian Wars”, or “the time of Aristides and Themistokles” have very little value as historical evidence; most of this reflects *Isokrates*' reaction to the situation of his own times and his concepts of a Good Society for his own generation. From this point of view, *Isokrates*' “historical” elaborations on the *possidentes*' correct attitude towards the poor, and the model relationship between rich and poor, have considerable evidential value here.¹⁸

In the “good old days of the forefathers”, not only was Athens' constitution excellent, but its society was well-balanced and sane.¹⁹ The rich had a proper and salutary attitude towards property and, consequently, towards their poor fellow-citizens. Those who possessed wealth regarded “poverty among their fellow-citizens as their own disgrace (αἰσχύνην ἑαυτοῖς εἶναι τῆν τῶν πολιτῶν ἀπορίαν)”, and came to the relief (ἐπήμυνον) of the distress of the poor.²⁰ This they did by

¹⁶ ἴσότης here is not political or economic equality; it is possession by the lower classes of the “right” or “due” measure — having, that is, a “fair deal.” See τὸ ἴσον ἔξειν in 1. 12.

¹⁷ See the recent excellent comments of T. Cole, *op. cit.*, 121 f., on this text, “which obviously belongs to the same general tradition as ... Democritus”, cf. also Guthrie, *op. cit.*, III, 153, 171.

¹⁸ See my “*Isokrates* and the social-economic situation in Greece”, *Ancient Society*, 3 (1972), 21 ff.

¹⁹ *Arpg.* 20 and 31.

²⁰ *Arpg.* 32; cf. παρὰ τῶν ἐχόντων ὠφελίαις in *Arpg.* 55.

“handing over lands to some at moderate rentals (γεωργίας ἐπὶ μετρίαις μισθώσεσι), sending out some to engage in commerce (κατ’ ἐμπορίαν ἐκπέμποντες), and furnishing means to others to enter upon various occupations (εἰς τὰς ἄλλας ἐργασίας ἀφορμὴν παρέχοντες) ... Thus the rich experienced the double satisfaction of helping their fellow-citizens and at the same time making their own property productive for themselves.” Consequently, “those in humbler circumstances were so far from envying the rich ... that they actually believed that the prosperity of the wealthy was the guarantee of their own well-being.”²¹

“In fine, the result of their dealing honorably with one another was that the ownership of property was secured (κτήσεις ἀσφαλείς) to those to whom it rightfully belonged while *the use of property was shared by all the citizens who needed it* (χρήσεις κοινὰ πᾶσι ... τῶν πολιτῶν) ... Thus the forefathers managed well both in their relations with each other and in their governing of the state,” *Arpg.* 31–36.²²

This is the Isokratean ideal of “sobriety in government (σωφρόνως οἰκεῖν) through the manner of daily life and the absence of want among all their citizens”, or of μέτριος βίος μετὰ δικαιοσύνης.²³ In the final analysis, this ideal is based upon the rich having the right attitude to their property and using it aright for the benefit of the poor, of themselves and, consequently, of the state as a whole.

Isokrates’ theory of the proper use of property by the rich is in basic accord with the earlier theories and, despite differences of approach, with the practically contemporaneous *Leg.* 736 C–E. In both the *Laws* and the *Areiopagitikos*, the operative concept is that of the rich sharing their property with the poor;²⁴ in both Plato and Isokrates, the rich are envisaged as acting voluntarily, motivated by the desire to help their underprivileged fellow-citizens; in both the *Leg.* and the *Arpg.*, the rich

²¹ Cf. *Arpg.* 54–55.

²² Cf. *Arpg.* 55, 83; see also *Pang.* 41. Isokrates represents the situation in his own time as the very reverse of what is posited above. The enmity between the poor and the rich is such that “those who own property would rather throw their possessions into the sea than lend aid to the needy”, while the poor “would less gladly find a treasure, than seize the possessions of the rich”, *Archid.* 67.

²³ *Pax* 93 with *Arpg.* 53 (cf. *ibid.* 50).

²⁴ τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις κοινωνεῖν *Leg.* — κοινὴ χρήσις *Arpg.* 35.

adopt a correct and salutary attitude towards property and its uses; in both, the desired goal can be reached only by means of the rich; finally, for both Plato and Isokrates, the right attitude towards property is one of μετρίότης.²⁵

Aristotle in the *Politics* follows similar lines and, on some important points, is clearly influenced by Isokrates. A discussion of Aristotle's views on property and class relationships is neither possible nor called for here. I shall cite only one or two texts directly relevant to the theme pursued here.

The main text is *Pol.* 1320 A 17 — 1320 B 17. It deals with policies that should be adopted in order to ensure the preservation of the "last form" of democracy. Aristotle's discussion is not, however, limited to democracy; its scope is widened so as to include other types of constitutions where similar conditions might obtain. The crucial issue, as Aristotle sees it, is that of the claims made by the poor and their leaders on the property of the rich. In an extreme type of democracy, the starting point of Aristotle's discussion, "the citizens are very numerous, and can hardly be made to assemble unless they are paid; and to pay them when there are no revenues presses heavily upon the notables, for the money must be obtained by a property tax and confiscations and corrupt practices of the courts — things which before now have overthrown many democracies."

According to Aristotle, in extreme democracy the demagogues distribute revenues to the poor, while the poor want more the more they receive. "Such help" — says Aristotle — "is like water poured into a leaking cask." The poor should be helped by the state and by the rich, but in a way that is equally in the interest of all classes, and contributes to the preservation of the state. "The true friend of the people should see that they be not too poor, for extreme poverty lowers the character of democracy; measures, therefore, should be taken which give them lasting prosperity."

Such are Aristotle's basic assumptions. His practical advice then follows, containing both suggestions of measures that should be implemented and examples of the practices of some states.

²⁵ μετρίότητος ἐχομένους *Leg.* — μέτριος βίος μετὰ δικαιοσύνης *Pol.* 93.

Aristotle's first suggestion is that the proceeds of public revenues should be collected and distributed among the poor, if possible in such quantities as may enable them to purchase a little farm (εἰς γηδίου κτήσιν) or, at any rate, to make a beginning in trade or husbandry (πρὸς ἀφορμὴν ἐμπορίας καὶ γεωργίας). This strongly recalls Isokrates' ἐπήμυνον ταῖς ἐνδείαις, ... γεωργίας ... παραδιδόντες, ... κατ' ἐμπορίαν ἐκπέμποντες ... εἰς ... ἐργασίας ἀφορμὴν παρέχοντες.²⁶ In fact, the verbal parallels can hardly be missed. However, Isokrates envisages these measures as private benefactions of the rich to the poor — benefactions that benefit the poor, the rich themselves, and the entire community — while Aristotle seems to be suggesting measures to be taken by the state, though it is quite possible that the rich were to be involved indirectly. In any event, Aristotle suggests supplementing this measure with direct benefactions of the rich to the poor: “and if this benevolence cannot be extended to all, money should be distributed [viz. for such constructive purposes] according to tribes and other divisions.”²⁷

The historical examples which follow are introduced by Aristotle as bearing witness to “administering the state in this spirit (τοιούτου τρόπου)”, that is, the spirit he advocated in his discussion up to this point. The first example is that of the Carthaginians who, from time to time, send some of the poor to their dependent cities, where they can make good economically. This is a state measure. The next example is that of the rich dividing up the poor among themselves and supplying them with the means of going to work. This, of course, is an example of direct, constructive help extended by the rich to the poor, and serving what is well understood to be the interest of all concerned. The practice of the Tarentines serves as the final example. They are said to make their property κοινὰ τοῖς ἀπόροις ἐπὶ τὴν χρῆσιν. Aristotle indicates his approval of this custom, not only by citing it as being in line with the τρόπος he advocates, but also by stressing that it is “well deserving of imitation.”²⁸

²⁶ *Arpg.* 32; for the context of this quotation, see above, pp. 51–52.

²⁷ *Pol.* 1320 B 2–3; cf. also another suggestion of Aristotle's in 1320 A 11 sqq.

²⁸ These examples are analyzed in some detail, below, pp. 58–60.

All in all, Aristotle advocates here a system of constructive assistance to the poor. The aid is to come from state revenues and from the rich, who voluntarily share their property, “for common use (κοινὰ ... ἐπὶ τὴν χρῆσιν)”, with the needy in a spirit of benevolence and liberality,²⁹ unmistakably acting in the interest of the entire community.

Sharing property for common use is strongly advocated by Aristotle in his famous discussion of the respective merits of the systems of private and common property in *Politics*, Book Two, Ch. Five. His view, is, of course, that “the present arrangement [*viz.* of private property], if improved by good customs and laws (ἔθεσι καὶ τάξει νόμων ὀρθῶν)³⁰ would be far better [*i.e.* than common property], and would have the advantages of both systems”, *Pol.* 1263 A 22.

The advantage of common property being incorporated into a system of private property is brought forth and explained as follows: “By reason of goodness (δι’ ἀρετήν), and *in respect of use* (πρὸς τὸ χρῆσθαι), ‘Friends,’ as the proverb says, ‘have goods in common (κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων)’. Even now there are traces of such a principle in some states (ἐν ἐνίαις πόλεσι), showing that it is not impracticable but, in some well-ordered states, exists already to a certain extent and may be carried further.” This principle is further explained by Aristotle: “For although every man has his own property, some things he will place *at the disposal of his friends* (χρήσιμα ποιεῖ τοῖς φίλοις), while *he shares the use of others with them* (τοῖς δὲ χρῆται κοινῶς).”³¹ The only example given is that of the Lacedaemonians’ use of one another’s slaves, houses, dogs, and provisions when on a journey, “as if they were their own.” This would seem, on the face of it, to be a kind of complimentary, friendly help among equals, not effective economic help by the rich to the poor, as posited in the discussion in *Pol.* 1320 A 17 —

²⁹ According to Aristotle, the special business of the legislator is to create in men a benevolent disposition, *Pol.* 1263 A 38 sqq.; for Aristotle’s high praise of liberality in the use of one’s property, see *e.g.* 1263 B 5–6, 11–14; on Aristotle’s view of “proprietary right as proprietary duty,” see W.L. Newman, ed. *The Politics of Aristotle*, I (Oxford 1887) 198 ff., 212.

³⁰ 1263 A 22.

³¹ “The expression κοινῆ χρῆσις is apparently adopted by Aristotle from Isocrates’ ideal picture of Athens under the sway of the Areopagos (*Arp.* 35) ... the stress lays on the duty of using property aright,” Newman, *op. cit.*, I, 201; cf. also IV, 394.

B 17. However, I think that Newman is, again, right in noting, when commenting on the ξῖναι πόλεις in which the right practices already exist: “*Tarentum* ... (1320 b 9 sqq.): *Carthage* ... (1320 b 4 sqq.): the *Lacedaemonian* and *Cretan states* (1263 b 40 sqq.): *Rhodes* (Strabo, p. 652). Compare also *Isocrates’ picture of the earlier Athens* (Areopag. para. 35).”³² In some of these cases, such as Tarentum, Rhodes, and Isokrates’ picture of earlier Athens, the sharing of property certainly went beyond complimentary friendly help,³³ and consisted of actual economic aid given by the rich to the poor. Hence the κοινή χρῆσις of Aristotle’s theory must have comprised both types of help.³⁴

Some instances of “the rich sharing their property with the poor” in Greek *practice* follow.

According to a little-known story related by Aelian, *Varia Historia* XIV, 24, “Theokles and Thrasonides in *Corinth* and Praxis in *Mytilene* valued property but little (χρημάτων κατεφρόνησαν) and displayed magnanimity (μεγαλοφροσύνην) seeing their fellow-citizens in a state of poverty (ἐν πενίᾳ ὄντας) while they themselves were affluent (αὐτοὶ πλουτοῦντες). They also advised others to lighten the burden of poverty (ἐπικουφίσαι τῆς πενίας τὴν ἀνάγκην) for those in need (τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις). And, after they did not succeed in convincing others, they themselves remitted the debts owed to them (τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἀφῆκαν χρέα), and thus gained not money but life itself. For those whose debts were not remitted, attacked their creditors, and, wielding the arms of

³² Newman, *op. cit.*, II, 249 (italics mine).

³³ See below, p. 60, p. 61, and above, p. 52.

³⁴ I will add a word on the Second Meliamb of Kerkidas of Megalopolis (c. 290–220 B.C.). Though far in time and in circumstances from what we are dealing with here, it should, at least, be mentioned in this connection. The Second Meliamb of Kerkidas is an attack on the rich of his time who, in their headlong rush to grow richer and richer, trample down all who stand in their way. Where is Zeus, Kerkidas asks, the Father of the Gods? Truly, he is father of some, but stepfather to others. Have the eyes of Themis become too dim to see? Let us, the poet exhorts, bow to new Gods, Μετάδως the goddess of “sharing with others,” and to Nemesis. The Second Meliamb is not a call to revolution, nor a prophecy of impending doom, but a rebuke and a warning to the upper class, to which Kerkidas himself belongs. In sum it says: “Open your eyes before it is too late. The only possible way is sharing with others.” Five generations or so after Plato’s τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις κοινωνεῖν “sharing with others” has been deified; cf. also *Ancient Society*, 5 (1974), 67 f.

rage, and proffering the most reasonable claim, that of irresistible (ἄμυχον) necessity, slew their creditors.”

This account in Aelian *V.H.* is the only evidence we have for the above-noted events in Corinth and Mytilene. Pöhlmann³⁵ assumes that the story derives from a fourth-century B.C. source which told of fourth-century events; with regard to the events in Mytilene, Pistorius³⁶ conjectures that they occurred on the eve of the tyranny of Kammys, i.e., c. 350 B.C. As for Corinth, there is no possibility of assigning, even conjecturally, a more specific date than that suggested by Pöhlmann.

If these assumptions be correct,³⁷ the events described in *V.H.* may have occurred quite close in time to the writing of Plato's *Laws*. Be that as it may, the facts of the story related by Aelian would seem to be rather close to the circumstances Plato postulates as desirable and possible in *Leg.* 736 D–E. Plato visualizes both remission of debts and distribution of land to the poor by the very rich, while in Aelianus we find only remission of debts. Other than that, there is remarkable similarity of detail. Both in the *Leges* and the *Varia Historia*, the benefactors are of the class of the very rich;³⁸ both the rich men of the *Leges* and those of Aelianus' story are affected by the distress of their needy fellow-citizens, and wish to help them by using their own property.³⁹ The men spoken of in the *Varia Historia* are, like those of the *Leges*, major creditors, who carry out a private remission of debts on, it would appear, a considerable scale;⁴⁰ the rich men of the *Leges* act out of a feeling of equity and moderation, those of the *Varia Historia* out of magnanimity.⁴¹

³⁵ R.v. Pöhlmann, *Gesch. d. sozialen Frage u. d. Sozialismus in der antiken Welt I* (München 1893) 334 f., cf. 388 f.

³⁶ H. Pistorius, *Beiträge z. Gesch. v. Lesbos im vierten Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Bonn 1913) 51 ff.

³⁷ See also, R. Herbst, *PWRE XVI 2* (1935) s. v. *Mytilene*, cols. 1411 ff.; Bolkestein, *op. cit.*, 131; cf. D. Asheri, *Leggi greche sul problema dei debiti* (Torino 1969) 102, note 68. For recent bibliography, see Aelian, *Varia Historia*, ed. M.R. Dilts (Teubner, 1974), XVI–XVIII.

³⁸ κεκτημένων ... γῆν ἄφθονον *Leg.* — πλουτοῦντες αὐτοί *V.H.*

³⁹ ἐθελόντων ... τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις ... κοινωνεῖν *Leg.* — ἐπικουφίσαι τῆς πενίας τὴν ἀνάγκην τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις *V.H.*

⁴⁰ κεκτημένων ... ὀφειλέτας ἑαυτοῖς πολλούς *Leg.* — τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἀφῆκαν χρέα *V.H.*

⁴¹ δι' ἐπιείκειαν ... τῆς μετριότητος ἔχομένους *Leg.* — μεγαλοφροσύνην ἐπεδείξατο, *V.H.*

Whether the story told in *Varia Historia* is based on a fourth-century B.C. source and relates fourth-century events or, as is, I think, less likely, it is based on a late source and gives *loci communes*, it clearly reflects Greek *practice*.⁴²

Aristotle, *Pol.* 1320 B 9–17, furnishes evidence for the practice of the rich sharing the use of their property with the poor in *Tarentum*. The context in which these practices of the Tarentines are cited is Aristotle's discussion of the need to alleviate the poverty of the lower classes, in a spirit of benevolence, for the preservation of the state, and to ensure the best interests of all classes.⁴³

“The example of the Tarentines”, says Aristotle, “is also well worth of imitation, for by *sharing the use of their property with the poor* (κοινὰ ποιῶντες τὰ κτήματα τοῖς ἀπόροις ἐπὶ τὴν χρῆσιν), they gain their goodwill (εὖνουν παρασκευάζουσι τὸ πλήθος)”, *Pol.* 1320 B 9–11.⁴⁴

What, exactly, does κοινὰ ποιῶντες τὰ κτήματα τοῖς ἀπόροις mean here? And, consequently, what is the Tarentine practice cited by Aristotle?

⁴² The case of *Protogenes of Olbia* is an interesting example of such social practices. The man was a financial magnate in Olbia, who lived in the latter part of the third century B.C. The story of his public career and his benefactions to his native city is known to us from a long honorific inscription, *SIG* 495, dating from c. 230 B.C. Most of Protogenes' munificence was directed towards his city, or towards “the demos.” However, in the last sentences of the inscription (ll. 176–188) we learn of a different kind of benefaction by Protogenes — a voluntary remission of privately owned debts. When, c. 230 B.C., demands were raised by the *demos* to ease the burden of debts, Protogenes on his own initiative remitted all private debts owed to himself and to his father, totalling six thousand pieces of gold. The sum is huge; it is almost half of Protogenes' generous benefactions to his native city, which totalled 12,700 golden pieces. His private remission of debts for the benefit of those in need was on a large scale indeed! Protogenes surely was one of those whom Plato would call *κεκτημένων καὶ ὀφειλέτας εαυτοῖς πολλοῦς*. The deed, and the situation as it transpires from the inscription, are not unlike those related in *V.H.* See also the recent treatment by Asheri *op. cit.*, 53 ff. with bibliography, 55 note; cf. W.W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation*² (London 1930) 99–101,

⁴³ *Pol.* 1320 A 17 — 1320 B 17; see also above pp. 53–55. Though the situation in an extreme form of democracy is the immediate *à propos* of Aristotle's discussion, it is not restricted to such regimes (above, p. 53). In fact, most of the historical examples cited by Aristotle — including that of *Tarentum* — are not of extreme democracies and some not of democracies at all.

⁴⁴ They also, relates Aristotle, make part of their magistracies especially accessible to the poor by arranging that they should be filled by lot, *ibid.* ll. 11–14.

The usual reference with regard to this is to Aristotle's famous dictum that "property should be in a certain sense common";⁴⁵ this is usually explained by a reference to the saying "Friends have goods in common", and exemplified by the Lacedaemonians, who "use one another's slaves, horses, and dogs, and when they lack provisions on a journey, they take what they find in the fields." The practice of the Tarentines is, then, commonly identified with that of Sparta, and attributed to the influence of a mother city on its colony.⁴⁶ Such interpretation, though not impossible, does not fit our text very well and, especially, its context. Aristotle in *Pol.* 1263 A 29 sqq. describes, in the main, a use in common among equals, exemplified by Lacedaemonian practice. This use applies to fringe matters, not to economic essentials. That is not the case in the discussion in *Pol.* 1320 A 17 — 1320 B 17, illustrated by historical examples, one of which is that of Tarentum. Its subject is, surely, the right attitude to property — an attitude that leads to the sharing by the rich of their property with the poor citizens, for the true benefit of all concerned.

A passage in Isokrates' *Areiopagitikos* suggests a different and, I think, more plausible interpretation. Speaking of the excellent relationship between the rich and the poor which, allegedly, prevailed in "the good, old days of the forefathers," but in fact propounding his own view of what the relationship should be, Isokrates contends that the result of the fair dealing of the rich with the poor was that the ownership of property was secured while *the use of property* (αί χρήσεις) was *shared by all citizens who needed it* — (κοινὰ πᾶσι τοῖς δεομένοις τῶν πολιτῶν).⁴⁷ This is further exemplified by the attribution to the "good rich of old" of giving γεωργία on moderate terms to the poor, of sending out some of the poor κατ' ἐμπορίαν and of furnishing means to others to enter upon various occupations — εἰς τὰς ἄλλας ἐργασίας ἀφορμῆν παρέχοντες.⁴⁸ Thus the κοινὰ ἐπὶ τῆν χρῆσιν of the

⁴⁵ 1263 A 21 sqq.; above, pp. 53–54.

⁴⁶ Newman, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*; see, recently A.R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (London 1966) 39.

⁴⁷ *Arrg.* 35; see, for this text, above p. 51–52.

⁴⁸ *Arrg.* 32; see above, p. 52. This is exactly Aristotle's view of what should be done, in the discussion preceding the examples, note εἰς γηδίου κτήσιν, πρὸς ἀφορμῆν ἐμπορίας etc.

Tarentum — passage is “common for purposes of use”,⁴⁹ and is almost exactly paralleled by the χρήσεις κοιναί of the *Areiopagitikos*. The *Koine chresis* of Tarentum would then not be, as commonly supposed, the complimentary one found among equals in Lacedaemon, but one economically helpful to the poor, and beneficial to the poor and the rich alike, like the *chresis* of the Isokratean text.⁵⁰ Such an interpretation of the Tarentine practice would be more in conformity with both the other historical examples and the general lines of Aristotle’s argument, than the currently accepted one.⁵¹

In the same context Aristotle gives *another example* of such benevolent practices: “It is a trait of notables who are men of sense and good feeling (χαριέντων καὶ νοῦν ἔχόντων γνωρίμων), *to each take charge of a section of the poor* (διαλαμβάνοντας τοὺς ἀπόρους) and *give them the means* (ἀφορμάς) *of going to work* (ἐπ’ ἐργασίας)”, *Pol.* 1320 B 7–9. The state, or states, in which these practices obtain are not named here but, as this comes in between the example of Carthage⁵² and the example of Tarentum,⁵³ and as commenting on the Tarentine example, Aristotle says μιμεῖσθαι καὶ τὰ Ταραντίνων, we should take it as a *practice obtaining in one, or some Greek states*, and not, *pace Newman*,⁵⁴ as Aristotle’s theoretical counsel.⁵⁵

Rhodes, as described by Strabo 14, 2, 5 (c 653), is another distinct example of such Greek practice. “The Rhodians are concerned for the

⁴⁹ Newman, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

⁵⁰ See also above, p. 56.

⁵¹ See also Bolkestein, *op. cit.*, 171 f. There certainly is some point of rapport between the Tarentine practice — on such an interpretation as is suggested here — and τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις κοινωνεῖν of the *Laws*, but R.B. Levinson, *In Defence of Plato* (Cambridge, Mass. 1953) 354, n. 258, who practically identifies the two passages, is oversimplifying. On the *demos* of Tarentum, see Theopomp. Fr. 95 in *Hell. Oxy.* ed. Grenfell and Hunt (cf. Newman, *op. cit.*, 537); for Tarentum see now L. Moretti in: *Taranto nella civiltà della Magna Grecia* (Napoli 1971) 22 ff.

⁵² On which, see below, note 55.

⁵³ Above, p. 58.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

⁵⁵ Another historical example of benevolent practices cited by Aristotle is that of *Carthage*. “In administering the state,” says Aristotle, “in this spirit [*viz.* of well-directed benevolence] the Carthaginians retain the affections of the people. Their policy is from time to time to send some of them into their dependent towns, where they grow rich”, 1320 B 4–7. This seems to be a state measure (cf. also 1273 B 18–24), not exactly along the lines pursued by us here.

people in general (δημοκρηδεῖς); although their rule is not democratic, yet they desire to take care (συνέχειν) of the multitude of poor people (τὸ τῶν πενήτων πλῆθος).

The people are accordingly supplied with corn (σιταρχεῖται ὁ δῆμος) and the well-to-do support those in need (τοὺς ἐνδεεῖς ὑπολαμβάνουσι), according to some ancestral practice (ἔθει τιμὴ πατρίῳ); and there are also some liturgies for the provision of food (λειτουργίαι τέ τινές εἰσιν ὀψωνιζόμεναι).

Thus the poor have the means to live (τὸν ... πένητα ἔχειν τὴν διατροφὴν), and at the same time the city has its needs amply supplied (τῶν χρειῶν μὴ καθυστερεῖν), especially as regards its shipping (τὰς ναυστολίας).⁵⁶

The opening paragraph of the text is general; it does not refer to any specific practices or measures, but speaks in general terms of the famous Rhodian *eunomia*⁵⁷ and, more specifically, of the harmonious relationship between the rich and the lower classes of Rhodes.

The measures by which the commercial aristocracy of Rhodes implemented its sound social policy, and thus succeeded in securing almost uninterrupted social equilibrium and political stability, are referred to in the second paragraph of our text; most of these statements deal with help extended to the poor by the rich, out of their own resources.

The text, as I understand it, speaks of three different measures: first, σιταρχεῖται ὁ δῆμος; second, οἱ εὐποροὶ τοὺς ἐνδεεῖς ὑπολαμβάνουσιν ἔθει τιμὴ πατρίῳ; third, λειτουργίαι ... τινες ὀψωνιζόμεναι.

The first is almost certainly a measure taken by the state in order to secure a regular supply of corn at stable and reasonable prices. How pressing the problem of food supply became in the Hellenistic age is well known. Indeed, this was one of the first charges upon the attention of the city's government. Though Rhodes itself relied to a considerable

⁵⁶ I have divided the text into paragraphs according to the content, as I understand it, with slight changes from the usually adopted punctuation. I believe, along with Rostovtzeff and others, that Strabo is here, in the main, following Panaitios and Posidonios; Rostovtzeff's well-known chapter on Rhodes, in *C.A.H.* VIII, is still most useful for the general interpretation of this text; see also *SEHFW*, II, 684, 622, with notes.

⁵⁷ See Rostovtzeff, *C.A.H.* VIII, 633.

degree upon imported corn, it controlled a large part of the world corn-trade, and had become the great corn-market of the world. It was, therefore, in a good position to provide an abundant food-supply for its own population. "In any event, whether the task was difficult or not, intelligent organization was needed, and Strabo is witness that the Rhodians found a fair scheme for satisfying the needs of the population and for preventing hunger riots."⁵⁸ This, a clearly governmental measure, has nothing to do with the rich sharing their property with the poor. However, the other two measures do consist of private contributions by the rich to the poor, although the state also has an instrumental role.

We do not know how, exactly, "the well-to-do supported (ὕπολαμβάνουσι) the poor". The only thing said by Strabo in explanation is that it was "according to some ancestral practice", and we have no evidence of the precise character of this old usage. All we can say is that it was *not* connected with supplying food, as that is described both in the preceding clause (*viz.* σιταρχεῖται etc.), and in the following one (*viz.* ὀψωνιζόμεναι etc.).⁵⁹

With regard to the "liturgies for the providing of food" (ὀψωνιζόμεναι), A.B. Büchschütz⁶⁰ may be right in speaking of "Speisungen, die an gewissen Festen dem ganzen Volke oder einzelnen Theilen desselben gegeben wurden." On such an interpretation, these *leitourgiai* would be donations to the poor given by the rich for a specific purpose, on lines prescribed by law or usage.

The final paragraph of the text is a summing up⁶¹ of the beneficial results of state care and of well-directed private giving by the rich to the

⁵⁸ Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, 634 f.; Rostovtzeff's remark in this connection that "it is probably not an accident that we have no evidence at Rhodes of gifts of corn for feeding the people" is worth noting, as is the fact that a special *prytanis* worked with the Guardians of the Corn at Rhodes.

⁵⁹ Above, p. 61 and note 56. (It is not impossible that ὕπολαμβάνουσι of the text hints at something not unlike ἀναλαμβάνοντες of Aristotle — that is, dividing the needy among the individual rich for purposes of something like semi-organized economic help.)

⁶⁰ *Besitz und Erwerb im griechischen Alterthum* (Halle 1869) 281 with note 5. Some (slight) inscriptional evidence is mentioned in H. van Gelder, *Geschichte der alten Rhodier* (Utrecht 1900) 175 f.

⁶¹ Introduced by ὥστε.

poor at Rhodes.⁶² The results, as made clear in the text, are beneficial for the poor and for the state, and consequently, for the rich too. Of course the most important reason for the peaceful internal life of the Rhodian community was its steadily growing prosperity. But, ultimately, the carefully thought out and well-directed state and private practices in regard to the lower classes were not only made possible by this prosperity, but also contributed much indeed to it.

In this exploratory study I have dealt only with the main evidence regarding the theory and practice of τοῖς ἀπορουμένοις κοινωνεῖν.

However, I submit that, even on such evidence as has been produced here, it is clear that not only the idea but also the practice of the rich sometimes sharing the use of their property with the poor, as it would seem, to a not inconsiderable extent — but without ever drastically changing the state of property ownership — was a not unimportant facet of Greek social life.

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⁶² The διατροφή of this passage is “means of living”, “sustenance”; ναυστολία refers to Rhodian shipping where the crews of the warships were almost exclusively citizens, as were also, I believe, those of the merchant-navy, as well as the shipbuilders and the dock-yard workers. Cf. Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, p. 635.