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Everett N K Ofori



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Don't turn your headstarts into head bumps, but if you do, let those head bumps help you make a big headway.
- Everett Ofori (Editor)

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Allegory

When something happens around you and you do not quite like it, what do you do? Do you go up to the people causing the commotion and tell them how unwise they are? Or do you bite your lips, hoping that the stupidity ends as soon as possible.

There are times when we can speak freely, without fear at all. If our close friends or family members are misbehaving, we often feel an obligation to let them know that they are probably on the wrong track. Even if they do not agree with us, they are unlikely to harm us just for letting them know what they themselves might have known to be unbecoming behavior.

But we cannot hope for such safety in all our relationships and encounters. So, throughout history, clever men and women have often found it necessary to disguise their advice to powerful people in the form of an allegory. Sometimes, the allegory is meant to help people avoid making one mistake or another. To be sure, some might have used allegory for the sheer pleasure of exercising their creativity while entertaining their listeners or readers.

An allegory may be a story or a poem that carries a hidden meaning or message. In effect, if you read an allegory carefully, it is possible to make comparisons between the characters, events, and places in the story or poem with ideas that the writer wants to drive home to the readers.

As Sylvan Barnet notes in the book, *An Introduction to Literature* (1997), an allegory is a...

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...work in which concrete elements (for instance, a pilgrim, a road, a splendid city) stand for abstractions (humanity, life, salvation), usually in an unambiguous, one to one relationship. The literal items (the pilgrim, and so on) thus convey a meaning, which is usually moral, religious, or political. To take a nonliterary example: The Statue of Liberty holds a torch, enlightenment, showing the rest of the world the way to freedom), and at her feet are broken chains (tyranny overcome).

An allegory is sometimes seen as an extended metaphor or comparison between two things and is valuable not just as a way to say something important without getting into trouble but also to teach or highlight an idea or principle.

Fable and parable are sometimes used as synonyms for allegory.

Famous books of allegory include John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Do any others come to mind for you?

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Mutsumi Matsugu
(Japanese Language Instructor)
Tokyo, Japan

Am I homesick? I need to overcome it right now!

Since I came to Sacramento, California for work, it has already been 4 months. I believe that I am adjusting to my work place, community and culture.

Last month, my mom, sister and niece came to my home, and spent three weeks. I had a good time, however, they returned to Japan five weeks ago.

I was okay in Japan when I stayed at home by myself. Of course, I have a family member and a dog at home. Sometimes I prefer to be alone. I can go shopping, or go to a movie or attend a concert by myself in Tokyo.

However, after my family went back to Japan, I felt so lonely in the U.S. It was okay when I was in the workplace. I could be in the company of my staff and interact with customers.

However, I had to go back home at the end of the day. In particular, I felt a sense of anxiety at night and I wondered what I should do at home. I woke up from sleep a few times, so I began to fear the coming of the night. I asked myself, "Am I homesick?"

Usually Japanese people might have Japanese friends or co-workers when they move to a new country. However, I have met only one Japanese woman in my town. She has visited my home a few times even though I did not know her very well. Her only purpose was to invite me into her religious group. I strongly told her, "Sorry, I am not interested in your religion." "No, No, Mutsumi," she replied, "I would like to become your friend! Please contact me anytime."

She left me her mobile phone number and email address. Her visit brought me to my senses. "I have to do something by myself. My work is okay, however, I know only my work place!"

First of all, I started using "Uber." After downloading the Uber app and placing a request for the company's service, Uber came to my home within 10 minutes.

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Usually when I use a taxi to go to downtown Sacramento, it costs between \$40 and \$60. However, I paid \$20 for the Uber service. Also, I did not need to pay a tip.

Uber drivers send passengers their picture and name upon confirming the reservation. It is a smart service. I began to engage in a wide range of activities.

Also, I have come to like talking to people in recent months. When I was alone at night, I really wanted to talk to somebody. However, I did not want to call my family every day. If I called them every day, they would worry about me. I did not want them to be anxious. Therefore, I resumed taking an online English lesson that I had taken before. I had two favorite Filipina teachers. They were teachers, however we talked to each other like friends. Also, I could brush up my English. I take English lessons almost every day now.

Finally I started yoga classes again. I liked doing such exercises in Japan. However, I had not done any exercises while in the U.S.. I always walked the same street between my apartment and my workplace. Recently it began to make me bored. I went to yoga class by Uber. The teacher was so friendly and there were 20 members in the room. The room was not fancy and clean like yoga classes in Tokyo, however, the atmosphere with silent music and the smell of incense increased my level of motivation.

When anyone goes to a new country, she or he becomes homesick like me at some point. However, I believe we can recover if we can find something new and interesting to do. My purpose is to build up our business in the U.S, however, I would like to find new enjoyment here.

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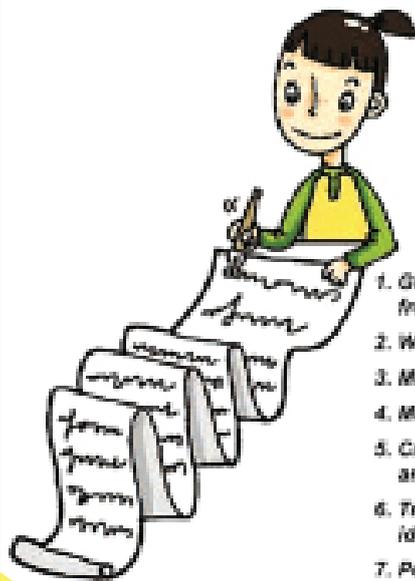
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A Company Milestone that Impressed Me



Junichi Tanimura
(Finance Sector, Tokyo, Japan)

Last week, I attended a company event at the Hilton Hotel Tokyo. That event was “Deaf Culture” and this event aimed to raise awareness about Deaf Culture in Japan.

There were almost 200 people at the event.

The majority of the participants were deaf; the rest were not deaf but expressed a keen interest in deaf culture.

The event lasted for two hours and we had a buffet-style dinner.

Everyone was observed to sign with one another.

Of course, some of them made an effort to sign and to understand deaf signers.

The most interesting part of this event was that we were treated to a deaf musical!

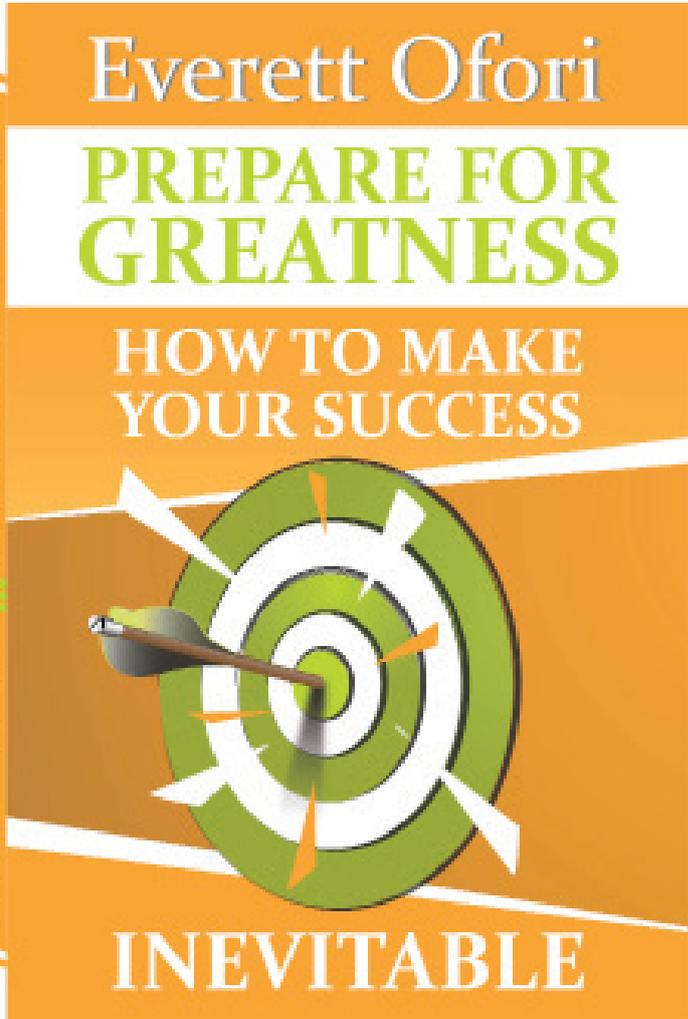
It was based on the Lion King musical but all the cast members used sign language to perform.

It was a really mesmerising performance and all of us gave a standing ovation following the performance.

I hope that there is another similar event next year and I would like to see many international deaf and non-deaf participants alike.

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Reprint / Release 2013:
Check it out!!!



A wise person does not seek to learn everything in life through direct experience. While we are often enriched by our experiences, good and bad, there are times when we profit most from learning from others. Through the experiences of others, we can chart a better course through life by avoiding the clear and present dangers that others have marked out. We can also keep our eyes on the markers of success that have been placed along life's highway so that we do not get lost on bypaths and deadends. Pick up powerful personal and professional insights from Prepare for Greatness: How to Make Your Success Inevitable.

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Aristotle's Shocking Claim:

The Institution of Slavery is Part of the Natural Order of Human Relationships

In his *Politics*, Aristotle accepts and defends the institution of slavery as part of the natural order of human relationships. How and why could he have taken this position? What arguments could be made against this position, particularly in respect to “human nature?”

Introduction

Aristotle is a towering intellectual giant to whom philosophers and scientists alike owe a debt of gratitude. An apparent blemish in what seems to have been a stellar life of achievement is Aristotle's endorsement of natural slavery.

When “natural slavery” is interpreted to mean that some people are born slaves while others are not, the image of Aristotle descends into the pit, leaving Everyman, who has benefited from gaining knowledge over time about how terrible slavery was and is, feeling a sense of pride in having better moral judgment than Aristotle.

The first part of this paper argues that Aristotle was perhaps too intelligent to have been so stupid as to believe that slavery was a congenital condition, and that, in saying that some people are born slaves he was simply alluding to the disadvantaged position that made it necessary for some people to serve others while looking for liberation somewhere down the line.

The second part provides some arguments against the basic reading of Aristotle that some are born natural slaves while others are not.

How and why Aristotle Could have “endorsed” Natural Slavery

As with public intellectuals today, Aristotle was engaged in one of the most important debates of his era, namely, a discussion on whether slaves were born or made. In fact, it seems challenging for die-hard supporters of Aristotle to defend Aristotle's quite explicit pronouncement, that: “From the hour of their birth some are marked for subjection, others for rule.” This appears to leave little room for interpretation. But Aristotle belonged to a society in ancient Greece that is said to have had no parallel in history. As Meltzer notes, “That single city, in three generations, produced great statesmen, poets, sculptors, historians, teachers. It was a brilliant century, with a wealth of achievement almost beyond belief.”

Living in such a city, more accomplished than its neighbors, Aristotle could not help but see that the Greeks possessed qualities of leadership, ambition, zeal, and abilities that marked them for leadership, in greater measure than those from the neighboring states. It seems that he was just putting his perceptions into words.

Aristotle, brilliant as he might have been, was still a man of his time. In this regard, when viewing the incredible disparity between the Greeks and the so-called barbarians, who might have found it a step up to serve under some Greek person, it is understandable why Aristotle might have come to the conclusion that the so-called barbarians were natural slaves.

While a cursory examination of Aristotle's position might lead to a dismissal of his view as nothing more than a case of ethnocentrism, Aristotle makes an effort to explain, showing that there is more to his thinking than a simplistic reading of it. As Aristotle notes,

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Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as in the case of those whose business is to use their body, and who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master.

It is disturbing for some to encounter one of the most brilliant minds throughout history so openly in favor of an institution that many in the modern world see as wrong. Aristotle's views are no stranger than the views of some today that see people in developing countries as being responsible for their own failure to rise economically. The unspoken implication in such cases is that if the people were of superior mental abilities, they would have found a way out of their morass of problems.

In addition, we have no problem conceding Prince William of the United Kingdom as being destined for kingly glory while a child born to a poor teenage mother in urban America might end up "poor," a more politically correct term for what Aristotle might have termed a "slave."

In the same way that there is nothing wrong with observing that children of the elite tend to become elites while the children of the poor tend to be poor, Aristotle was just pointing out something he saw as fact.

Darrell Dobbs, in *Natural Right and the Problem of Aristotle's Defense of Slavery*, makes a plausible case that Aristotle was more subtle and sophisticated than he has been made out to be.

In fact, there are indications that even while recognizing that some people are born with a slavish nature, Aristotle was not endorsing the enslavement and abuse of one group of people by another.

Aristotle expresses his dissatisfaction with those who would unjustly dominate others when he says that "nothing this transgression would bring about in the future could compensate for the departure from virtue that the transgressor has thus already committed."

According to Dobbs, the word "physei" in Greek, which has been translated as "by nature," is part of the problem with Aristotle's being cast as a bigot. As Dobbs notes, "It is as a consequence of this failure – not Aristotle's failure but that of his readers – that inconsistencies appear in the text."

Indeed, Dobbs argues that the part of the context in which Aristotle made his statement about "natural slaves" that commentators often miss is the element about telos, or the teleological element that suggests that being a slave does not have to mean that one will always be a slave.

In this reading, nature, as conceived by Aristotle, was not just about what one might observe about the beginnings of a human life, whether one of poverty, service, ignorance, or otherwise, but that nature becomes nature through human attempts at perfectibility.

Such perfectibility does not take place with human beings remaining perpetually infantile but that through intercourse with other human beings, through action, including social, political, and otherwise, those who recognize their own potential for rising above their "slavish nature" would take advantage of the opportunities for learning and growing around them to emerge from the darkness of slavery.

In other words, through a certain sense of awakening and participation in the world around them, slaves might become unfit for slavery. This same idea is conveyed in another way by Javier Martinez, who writes: "The answer that has emerged so far from Aristotle's treatment of this subject tells us that there are people whose souls are so disordered and so confused that they require someone else to guide them." And such guidance, of course, had to be away from slavery and towards freedom.

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Even if Aristotle's characterization was innocent, it did serve as a convenient argument for supporters of slavery in the American south. These southern slaveholders "invoked the examples of ancient Greece and Rome to show that slavery could provide the necessary foundation or "mudsill" for the highest achievements of freedom and civilization."

In the end, it seems that Aristotle's chief concern was the functioning of the polis, which required people at different stations to make it work well. In this connection, those with the leisure to develop their deliberative capacities were essential, as were the slaves that made it possible for these leaders of government and society to have the freedom to think and govern. It is encouraging for our modern sensibilities to learn that, "Aristotle insists that slavishness is found in divergent concentrations from culture to culture. Yet he does not ascribe this difference to some deficiency of intelligence in the gene pools of particular races, but finds instead that it is "on account of their customs being more slavish by nature" that barbarians turn out to be less fit for liberty than are the Greeks.

That Aristotle was a person of his time is also evident from the diversity of thought schools, whether Cynics or Epicureans, that challenged slavery, but only up to a point. If it is to be agreed that it is through action and participation that one became a slave rather than birth or ancestry, it is difficult to see how those on the outside, the slaves, could force or work their way into citizenship if there were no mechanisms for letting them rise about their station. In this regard, the progress of the ancient world of which Aristotle was a part was one that "was fully compatible with human bondage" and for which there was no urgent sense to abolish such a convenient practice that served a few influential people so well.

Arguments Against Aristotle's Conception of "Natural Slavery"

Most of the enslaved in Greece were foreigners. Some of these may have come into slavery for lack of opportunity in their homelands, much as people today travel from one country to another in search of opportunity.

Much as people from some countries today travel to work as domestic servants in other countries it is easy for such people to be stereotyped. As Meltzer highlights, both Aristotle and Plato, Aristotle's teacher, held the view that foreigners or "barbarians" were slavish in nature. And yet, "The plain fact of life was that slavery was universally practiced. So many slaves were in bondage through warfare, piracy, kidnapping, shipwreck, that "natural slavery" was self-evidently ridiculous." This was a world in which might was considered right and those with the whip and the means could compel their fellow human beings to submit to their will.

Still, throughout history, whenever the chains of oppression have been too tight, slaves have revolted. A system that was natural through and through might never have yielded to such sporadic overthrow.

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Though Meltzer reports that such violence on the part of the enslaved was not frequent, he writes about Rome thus:

after the Second Punic War (218 – 201 BC), revolts broke out here and there in the Republic. In 198 B.C. North African slaves... found allies among the slaves nearby. Two years later a greater number of rural slaves in Etruria rebelled. A Roman legion put down the Etrurian revolt, crucifying the leaders and sending the survivors back to their owners.

If slavery was a matter of human nature, then there would be no desire on the part of slaves to transcend their situation. They would gladly have endured the bondage, along with the whippings and mutilation and savagery that attended it.

Also, that slaves ran the gamut from tutors and doctors and librarians and philosophers clearly show that it was not so much a matter of lack of ability or any deficiencies in body or soul that placed a person in the position of slave. Rather, the expediency of the times might have prevented people from giving serious consideration to the words of people like the sophist Alcidamas, circa 361 B.C., who said that “God created us all free; nature makes no slaves.”

Aristotle and the other privileged people of the era sought comfort in justifying the unjustifiable. Rather than seeing the humanity of their fellow beings, the greedy and the haughty found in enslavement a way to boost their ego and indulge in the pleasures of life even if it meant doing so at the full expense of their fellow human beings.

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Writing Showcase

This newsletter offers an opportunity for English learners around the world to share their thoughts and experiences and get some writing practice in the process. In many areas of life, most people would readily agree that quality is more important than quantity. This is no less true when it comes to writing. To get to the point where you can produce quality writing on a consistent basis, however, you may have to get into the habit of writing regularly knowing that much of what you produce might win no prizes for excellence. As you keep on writing and thinking, however, who knows what hidden gems might emerge?

Writing Showcase is published on a bimonthly basis (every two months). If you are interested in contributing to it, please contact the editor, Everett Ofori.



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