

Aristotle. 1910. *Historia Animalium*. Transl. by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Extracts of Book I, part 1 and Book IV, parts 7.

and

Aristotle. 1882. *Parts of Animals*. Transl. by William Ogle. London: K. Paul, French & Co.

Extracts of Book IV, parts 5.

History of Animals extracts were downloaded from from The Internet Classics Archive http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/history_anim.4.iv.html. *Parts of Animals* extracts were downloaded from http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/history_anim.4.iv.html

From History of Animals Book I part 1:

"Other creatures adhere at one time to an object and detach themselves from it at other times, as is the case with a species of the so-called sea-nettle; for some of these creatures seek their food in the night-time loose and unattached.

Many creatures are unattached but motionless, as is the case with oysters and the so-called holothuria. Some can swim, as, for instance, fishes, molluscs, and crustaceans, such as the crawfish. But some of these last move by walking, as the crab, for it is the nature of the creature, though it lives in water, to move by walking." [from D'Arcy WentworthThompson's translation. online at The Internet Classics Archive http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/history_anim.4.iv.html]

From On the Parts of Animals Book IV part 5:

"The Ascidians differ but slightly from plants, and yet have more of an animal nature than the sponges, which are virtually plants and nothing more. For nature passes from lifeless objects to animals in such unbroken sequence, interposing between them beings which live and yet are not animals, that scarcely any difference seems to exist between two neighbouring groups owing to their close proximity.

A sponge, then, as already said, in these respects completely resembles a plant, that throughout its life it is attached to a rock, and that when separated from this it dies. Slightly different from the sponges are the so-called Holothurias and the sea-lungs, as also sundry other sea-animals that resemble them. For these are free and unattached. Yet they have no feeling, and their life is simply that of a plant separated from the ground. For even among land-plants there are some that are independent of the soil, and that spring up and grow, either upon other plants, or even entirely free. Such, for example, is the plant which is found on Parnassus, and which some call the Epipetrum. This you may hang up on a peg and it will yet live for a considerable time. Sometimes it is a matter of doubt whether a given organism should be classed with plants or with animals. The Ascidians, for instance, and the like so far resemble plants as that they never live free and unattached, but, on the other hand, inasmuch as they have a certain flesh-like substance, they must be supposed to possess some degree of sensibility." [from William Ogle's translation. online at The Internet Classics Archive http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/history_anim.4.iv.html]

This doesn't sound much like a holothuroid. Some older authorities thought Aristotle was referring to the siphonophore hydrozoan *Physalia* or Portuguese man-of-war jellyfish. Linnaeus took no sides and referred both *Physalia* and what we now call holothuroids, along with some other things to his taxon *Holothuria*. H. Ludwig (1889-1892) in *Die Seewalzen* writes:

"Joh. Mueller and Grube believe rather that Aristotle mentions a sea cucumber elsewhere when he refers to a black, round, uniformly thick and beam-shaped animal."

I believe this is the relevant passage from Aristotle's History of Animals Book IV Part 7:

"Furthermore, there are some strange creatures to be found in the sea, which from their rarity we are unable to classify. Experienced fishermen affirm, some that they have at times seen in the sea animals like sticks, black, rounded, and of the same thickness throughout; others that they have seen creatures resembling shields, red in colour, and furnished with fins packed close together; and others that they have seen creatures resembling the male organ in shape and size, with a pair of fins in the place of the testicles, and they aver that on one occasion a creature of this description was brought up on the end of a nightline." [from D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's translation online at The Internet Classics Archive http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/history_anim.4.iv.html]