THE W. B. STANFORD MEMORIAL LECTURES

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Ideas of slavery from Aristotle to Augustine

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011–4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

First published 1996
Reprinted 1999

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Garnsey, Peter.
Ideas of slavery from Aristotle to Augustine / Peter Garnsey.
p. cm. – (The W. B. Stanford memorial lectures)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0 521 57403 X (hardback). – ISBN 0 521 57433 1 (paperback)
1. Slavery–Public opinion–History. 2. Slavery in literature–History. 3. Slavery and the church–History. I. Title.
II. Series.
HT861.G37 1997
306.3'62–dc20 96–14154 CIP

ISBN 0 521 57403 X hardback
ISBN 0 521 57433 1 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2001

To freedom and friendship

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Abbreviations

AARC	*Atti dell'Accademia Romanistica Costantiniana*
AC	*L'Antiquité Classique*
Annales ESC	*Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations*
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
Ath.	*Athenaeum*
BA	Bibliothèque Augustinienne
Bull.J.Ryl.Libr.	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*
CCL	*Corpus christianorum: Series latina*
CJ	*Codex*, Justinian
Class. et Med.	*Classica et Mediaevalia*
Coll.	*Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio*
CP	*Classical Philology*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CSEL	*Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*
CSSH	*Comparative Studies of Society and History*
Dig.	*Digesta seu Pandectae*, Justinian
EFH	*Entretiens, Fondation Hardt*
EGM	Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* = *Every good man is free*
G&R	*Greece and Rome*
GRByzSt	*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
Hist.Refl./Réfl.Hist.	*Historical Reflexions/Réflexions Historiques*
HSCPh	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
IJ	*Institutiones*, Justinian
Index	*Index: quaderni camerti di studi romanistici*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JJP	*Journal of Juristic Papyrology*

JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LS	A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* = Long and Sedley (1987).
MEFR	*Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'Ecole française de Rome*
MSNAF	*Mémoires de la société nationale des antiquaires de France*
NT	*Novum Testamentum*
PAPA	*Proceedings of the American Philological Association*
PCPhS	*Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*, Migne
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, Migne
PR	*Philosophical Review*
REA	*Revue des études anciennes*
Rech. Aug.	*Recherches Augustiniennes*
REG	*Revue des études grecques*
REL	*Revue des études latines*
Rev. Bén.	*Revue bénédictine*
Rev.Et.Aug.	*Revue des études Augustiniennes*
RIDA	*Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité*
RIL	*Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Classe de Lettere, Scienze morali e storiche*
Riv.It.Sc.Giur.	*Rivista italiana per le scienze giuridiche*
RSA	*Rivista storica dell'Antichità*
RSCI	*Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia*
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCI	*Scripta classica israelica*
SVF	*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, J. von Arnim
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*

Preface

This is a revised and extended version of the Stanford Lectures which I had the honour to give at Trinity College Dublin in April 1995. I am most grateful to John Dillon and Kathleen Coleman and to their colleagues in the Classics Department for their kind invitation and warm welcome. I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in their delightful campus and city. My audiences were lively and responsive, and I learned a great deal from their comments and criticisms.

I had an inkling that my hosts were expecting me to choose a quite different subject for my lectures, given that my visit happened to coincide with the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of a catastrophic event in Irish history – in which case I have to thank them for their tolerance as well as for their hospitality.

My present subject has been creeping up on me for some time, in fact ever since, more than twenty years ago, when on the staff of the Classics Department at Berkeley, I heard Moses Finley's Sather Lectures on the ancient economy and 'audited' his class on slavery. That was my first introduction to Aristotelian slave theory. Not long afterwards, having in the meantime moved to Cambridge, I succumbed to an unexpected and perhaps misdirected invitation from Finley to lecture in his stead, in collaboration with Richard Tuck, on Greek, Roman and early Christian Political Theory. This gave me an opportunity, among other things, to renew my acquaintance with natural slave theory and to encounter Augustine's thinking on slavery for the first time. More recently I have benefited enormously from studying Augustine in the company of a number of talented graduate students and senior scholars in the context of seminars that I have organized, in the first instance on the new sermons discovered in

Mainz by François Dolbeau. Finally, I have had the very good fortune to join forces again with Richard Tuck in teaching a course on Western Slavery Theory from Antiquity to the American Civil War. This has given me the chance to begin to plug some of the large gaps in my knowledge, while watching a master of political philosophy at work in his very extensive area of expertise, which includes my own.

My debts, personal and intellectual, are many. I have benefited from the encouragement and assistance, given at various stages of the project, by a number of friends, especially Margaret Atkins, Myles Burnyeat, Paul Cartledge, John Dillon, Michael Frede, Richard Gordon, Verity Harte, Caroline Humfress, Geoffrey Lloyd, Michael O'Brien, Christopher Rowland, Malcolm Schofield, David Sedley and Richard Tuck.

I owe a great deal to my predecessors in the field, in particular, to M. I. Finley, David Brion Davis and P. A. Milani. At the same time, I have the impression that there is need of a work such as this which brings together the main strands of thought on slavery in antiquity. Those that I have identified and endeavoured to follow through in this book include natural slave theory, the Stoic wise man paradox, the Biblical foundation stories of slavery (Esau, Canaan), and the use of slavery as metaphor.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I presents a typology of attitudes to slavery. A number of positions that are taken on slavery are distinguished and illustrated with citations from a wide catchment-area of authors. (I cite extensively in translation from the original works. The benefits are obvious in the case of texts that are relatively inaccessible, but my general aim has been to facilitate the task of the reader in following the argument.) Part II is made up of studies of five individuals and one group of thinkers of Stoic persuasion whom I consider to have made a significant contribution to the theory and ideology of slavery. My choice of thinkers has a certain logic, which I hope will be seen to be both transparent and compelling. It has enabled me to follow through main themes and sample a number of different but intersecting intellectual traditions, while pointing to interesting contrasts in the approaches of contemporaries or near-contemporaries of common culture and educational background: Aristotle and the Stoics, Philo and Paul, Ambrose and Augustine.

The argument of the book, and the format in which it is presented, require a word of introduction. Anyone approaching this subject will

soon become aware that the secondary literature is dominated by the conviction that, Aristotle's natural slave theory apart, no slave theory worthy of the name survives from antiquity. With this is often linked the assumption that ancient societies were tolerant and accepting of slavery, neither questioning nor justifying its existence. (To be sure, other stances, usually more optimistic, and usually involving the supposedly corrosive effect of Stoicism and Christianity on slavery, have been taken up, and will be considered in the course of the argument.) My aim is to test each of these assumptions. In this, the two Parts serve overlapping rather than distinct and separate functions. Part I addresses both the assumption of universal and passive acceptance, and the alleged absence of systematic thought on slavery; Part II the latter thesis: it gives extended treatment, in the form of detailed case-studies, to some positions on slavery that have been adumbrated in Part I, particularly in chapters 3 ('Justifications of slavery') and 5 ('Fair words'). No sharp conceptual distinctions are involved in the division between *attitudes to slavery* (Part I) and *theories of slavery* (Part II). The word 'attitude', in my usage, embraces a broad range of meaning extending from *opinion* to *settled mode of thinking*, which may or may not encompass or give rise to a 'theory' or *system of ideas*. By employing 'attitude' in this way, I can both introduce major thinkers on slavery, and draw on and exploit where appropriate unsystematic treatments of slavery in ancient texts, whether they occur in fragments or continuous passages.

'. . . where appropriate': it has not been my aim to produce a complete catalogue of 'thoughts on slavery'. This is a short book that has grown out of three lectures, rather than a lifetime's work. I hope that readers who regret the lack of comprehensiveness will nevertheless catch something of the excitement I have felt as I isolated Aristotle's natural slave, diagnosed the intellectual schizophrenia of Philo, discovered a 'lost' treatise on the Stoic wise man paradox in Ambrose, and located a kind of natural slavery in Paradise with the aid of a new sermon of Augustine.

Introduction

I

Slavery and slave theory in antiquity

Slavery in practice

The word 'power' has many meanings: . . . in the person of a slave it means ownership. Paulus, Roman jurist, early third century.[1]

As our trade esteemed Negroe labourers merely a commodity, or *chose* in merchandize, so the parliament of Great Britain has uniformly adhered to the same idea; and hence the planters were naturally induced to frame their colony acts and customs agreeable to this, which may be termed *national sense*, and declared their Negroes to be fit objects of purchase and sale, transferrable like any other goods or chattels: they conceived their right of property to have and to hold, acquired by purchase, inheritance, or grant, to be as strong, just, legal, indefeasible and compleat, as that of any other British merchant over the goods in his warehouse.

(Edward Long, planter and lawyer, 1772)[2]

A slave was property. The slaveowner's rights over his slave-property were total, covering the person as well as the labour of the slave. The slave was kinless, stripped of his or her old social identity in the process of capture, sale and deracination, and denied the capacity to forge new bonds of kinship through marriage alliance. These are the three basic components of slavery. They reveal its uniqueness and

[1] *Dig.* 50.16.215: Paulus, *Ad legem Fufiam Caninium* (an Augustan law of 2 BC restricting testamentary manumission). Cf. *Dig.* 1.5.4.1; Buckland (1908), ch. 2.

[2] E. Long, *Candid Reflections upon the Judgement lately awarded by the Court of King's Bench in Westminster-Hall. On what is commonly called the Negroe-Cause. By a Planter*, London. Cited in Shyllon (1974), 150. Cf. Article 1 of the Slavery Convention of the League of Nations (1926): 'Slavery is a status or condition of person over whom any or all the powers attaching to the rights of ownership are exercised.' Cited in Greenidge (1958), 224.

explain its appeal to owners. There were other types of 'unfree'. Chattel slavery has been historically a rare mode of unfreedom. But no other labour system offered a proprietor such flexibility and control over his labour force as did chattel slavery.[3]

There have been slaves in many societies, but very few slave societies. In a genuine slave society (as distinct from a society with slaves, or a slave-owning society), slaves are numerous, but the crucial issue is not slave numbers, but whether slaves play a vital role in production. In a pre-industrial society with, inevitably, an agrarian base, this means that they should form the core of the agricultural labour force, more particularly on the estates of the wealthy. Societies of the Ancient Near East do not meet this criterion; nor does most of the territory that made up the Roman Empire in its prime.[4] One might also expect to find (in slave societies) slaves in mining, another important sector of the economy, and in 'industry', wherever an enterprise was larger than could be manned by the members of a family. ('Industrial' enterprises in classical antiquity were not 'factories' in the modern sense with an elaborate division of labour, but small-scale assemblages of craftsmen doing basically the same kind of work.)

Not all slaves in a slave society were productively employed. Where significant wealth is gained from military activity or tribute, slaves can be afforded as consumers. In classical Rome slaves congregated in the households of the rich, doing domestic service and boosting the status of the owner by their presence in numbers. However, it is unwise to draw a sharp distinction between household slaves and slaves employed in agriculture. There existed also, in Greece as well as in Rome, an upper echelon of skilled slaves, based on the household but

[3] For definitions of slavery, see Davis (1966), 46–7; Patterson (1982), 431; Finley (1980), 67–78. A select bibliography on slavery as practised in antiquity (as distinct from slave theory) might include Westermann (1955); Biezunska-Malowist (1974–7); Hopkins (1978); Finley (1980) (1981) (1985) (1987); de Ste Croix (1981); Bradley (1984) (1994); Garlan (1988). Brockmeyer (1979) provides a useful bibliographical guide.

[4] The main labour force on the land in the Ancient Near East, e.g. in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, appears to have been semi-free 'serfs'; slaves were employed mainly in the domestic sphere. See Mendelsohn (1949); Dandamaev (1984); Powell (1987). For Egypt, see e.g. Cruze-Uribe (1982); Biezunska-Malowist (1974–7); Bagnall (1993). There is not much sign that slaves were employed in agriculture in Palestine in any period of Jewish history. See Kreissig (1973); Richter (1978); Cardellini (1981). For the Roman Empire, see n. 6.

working outside it, bringing in monetary income from crafts, financial services or commerce.

Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BC is the best-known of the Greek city-states whose economies were based on chattel slavery. In the course of the third century BC a slave society evolved in Italy and Sicily, centred on the imperial capital of Rome and its 'home provinces' in the centre and south. Slaves maintained a significant presence in the rural economy of these areas at least as long as the Roman Empire remained intact. The system of tied tenancy (the 'colonate') that is characteristic of the late Roman Empire may have made inroads into the slave system, but did not displace it.[5]

However, even allowing for significant gaps in our information for some other parts of the Mediterranean region, it can be confidently stated that in most of the classical world at most times slaves made up only a small percentage of the labour force.[6] This means that the taxes and rents extracted from a free but dependent peasantry were often more important than the income that could be drawn through the exploitation of slaves. The challenge is to explain why chattel slavery arose when and where it did, displacing the more standard non-slave dependent labour constrained by economic or 'extra-economic' relationships.

Factors relevant to the introduction of chattel slavery include military strength, or the capacity to capture slaves as booty from other, weaker communities (and any defeated enemy population might in principle be enslaved)[7]; the presence of a propertied elite with the means to acquire slaves; and room for slaves in the economy of the host society. All three factors operated in the Roman case. Rome's victorious wars greatly swelled the supply of slaves; leading Romans and Italians, enriched by these wars, bought slaves cheaply and in bulk or brought them home as booty; and continuous, large-scale conscription of peasants over a long period of time left a large hole in the

[5] The survival of rural slavery in Italy and Sicily in the late Empire is disputed. For MacMullen (1987), Italy and Sicily remained, uniquely, slave societies; Whittaker (1987) is essentially in agreement, but envisages some decline.

[6] Finley (1980), 79; MacMullen (1987); Whittaker (1980) in Garnsey (1980); Whittaker (1987).

[7] On enslavement following capture, see Pritchett (1991), 170–2, 223–44. A law ascribed to the Athenian statesman Lycurgus prohibited the purchase by a citizen or resident of Athens of a captive who was of free birth. See Plutarch, *Mor.* 842A. The law is distinctly problematic. See Pritchett (1991), 416–17.

agricultural labour force in Italy. The process by which chattel slavery was introduced into Greek city states from the sixth century BC (the island of Chios, in the historical tradition, leading the way) cannot be followed closely. It seems that endemic warfare, generally small in scale, together with piracy, produced a supply of slaves which could be tapped by proprietors who had the resources to purchase them. It is likely enough that in some parts of Greece slaves were employed in the home as household servants before they were introduced systematically into agriculture. However, Athenians, at any rate, in the late archaic period had need of slaves because the reforming law-giver Solon in the early sixth century outlawed debt-bondage and other forms of dependent labour affecting the free residents of Attica, thus depriving rich Athenians of their workforce. In contrast, the main rivals to the Athenians in Greece, the Spartans, did not need to import slaves. They were committed to helotage, a system of forced labour involving the enslavement of the local, Greek inhabitants to the community, not to individual Spartans. There are parallels to Spartan helotage elsewhere in Greece, notably in the *penestai* of Thessaly, and on the margins of the Greek world in colonized areas, for example in the territory of Heraclea Pontica on the southern coast of the Black Sea, where the Mariandyni worked their lands under the control of the Heracleots.[8]

Even in those rural areas where slavery flourished free labour was not completely displaced. A permanent slave labour force was commonly supplemented by seasonal wage labour.[9] This was a necessary response to the highly seasonal climate of the Mediterranean region and the growth cycle of the standard Mediterranean crops. Cereals and, more particularly, olives, required relatively low annual labour inputs, and most of the work was required for the harvest, and for ploughing in the case of arable. It would have been uneconomic to keep through the year, as slaves, the number of workers who were needed for harvesting. Harvesters were usually free men, who might be drawn from the landless or from smallholders (working their own or someone else's land), seeking to supplement their exiguous

[8] On the ambiguous status of helots and similar groups, see Finley (1964); de Ste Croix (1981), 147–62, esp. 149–50; de Ste Croix (1988); Cartledge (1988). For the Mariandyni, see pp. 146–50.

[9] For Greece, see Amouretti (1986), 214–15, and in general, for the location of the free poor, Jameson (1994). For Rome, see Garnsey (1980); Rathbone (1981).

incomes. To this extent the slave-system and the peasant-system existed side by side and were mutually supporting. Also, in the setting of the urban economy, slave-owners who needed skilled workers in non-agricultural enterprises turned to slaves rather than free wage-labourers, who made up the bulk of the unskilled, temporary and seasonal workforce.

This points to a paradox at the heart of the slave system. Slavery is the most degrading and exploitative institution invented by man. Yet many slaves in ancient societies (not all, not even all skilled slaves, a class that included miners) were more secure and economically better off than the mass of the free poor, whose employment was irregular, low-grade and badly paid. The point was not lost on contemporaries, slaves and slaveowners alike. It was not unknown for free men to sell themselves into slavery to escape poverty and debt, or even to take up posts of responsibility in the domestic sphere. In antebellum America some apologists for slavery based their case on a comparison between the blessings of slavery in the paternalistic south and the 'hunger slavery' or 'pauper slavery' of the wage-labour system of the capitalistic north (and England).[10]

Slavery, then, was far from being the universal or typical labour system in the ancient Mediterranean world. But it can hardly be dismissed as marginal, if it was embedded in the society and economy of Athens, the creator of a rich and advanced political culture, and of Rome, the most successful empire-builder the world had thus far known. The pro-slave theorists of the old south saw Athens and Rome as the standard-bearers of classical civilization and understandably called them up in support of their cause,[11] along with the Biblical slaveowning societies of ancient Israel and early Christianity. In any

[10] See e.g. Edmund Ruffin (1794–1865) in McKitrick (1963), 69–85, at 76–81. A key text for Roman society is Epictetus 4.1.33–7 (= 87). Unlike Harrill (1993), I do not read this passage as simply an aspect of the ideology of the slaveowning class; but I agree with him that freedmen, for a variety of reasons, to do either with financial independence or, on the other hand, continued dependence on former masters, might be relatively secure after manumission. For voluntary slavery, see Ramin and Veyne (1981).

[11] See p. 237. Writing to Dr Johnson on 15 January 1778, Boswell showed his displeasure at the verdict of Lord Mansfield in the Somerset case, but expressed satisfaction that 'the Lord President, Lord Elliock, Lord Monboddo, and Lord Covington resolutely maintained the lawfulness of a *status* which has been acknowledged in all ages and countries, and that when freedom flourished, as in old Greece and Rome'. Quoted in Shyllon (1974), 181.

case, the presence of slavery extended far beyond those parts of the Mediterranean where it was vital to the agricultural economy. In particular, slaves were abundant in the cities, the residential centre and power-base of the social, cultural and political leadership of the Graeco-Roman world. Thus, to illustrate only from late antique north Africa (an area where the rural labour force was predominantly free from Egypt to Morocco), Augustine bishop of Hippo Regius in eastern Algeria and Synesius bishop of Cyrene could each assert that there were slaves in every household.[12] Moreover, it was precisely in the domestic setting that slavery impinged most on the consciousness of slaveowners. The anxieties, fears, thoughts and theories that surface in the literary texts and that it is the business of this work to explore, are precipitates out of the day-to-day, face-to-face contact of exploiter and exploited. Unfortunately, the evidence is completely one-sided, for there are no slave biographies from antiquity. The *Life of Aesop*, a comic fabrication of unknown authorship and purpose, whose central character is 'an invented, generalized caricature of a slave', is no substitute.[13]

We should not expect slave systems to be identical from one society to another. There were subtle differences between Athenian and Roman chattel slavery. Athenian democracy and democratic ideology fed off slavery. The gross exploitation of allegedly culturally inferior non-Greeks – and most slaves in Athens were 'barbarians', or foreigners, from Thrace, the Black Sea region, Asia Minor and Syria – facilitated a remarkable degree of political participation of ordinary (adult male) members of the society.[14] Slavery both provided the economic necessities of life for a number of Athenians, and gave them the

[12] Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps.* 124.6–7 = *CCL* 40.1840–1841.12–14; Synesius, *De regno* 15 = *PG* 66.1093.

[13] See Perry (1952) for the text, Daly (1961) for a translation, and Hopkins (1993) for a brilliant attempt to extract historical meaning out of the text. Bradley (1994) gives particular, sustained attention to the problem of recovering the slave's experience of slavery.

[14] The catalogue in Pritchett (1991), 226–34, contains many references to the enslavement of Greeks by Greeks. It remains true that most slaves in Greece were non-Greeks. Apart from Solon's law, there is no evidence and no likelihood that the employment of Greek slaves within Greece was illegal. In early Rome there was a law against the employment within the community of Roman slaves, whose condition was a consequence of a legal penalty. See Lévy-Bruhl (1934). The conviction that slaves should ideally be outsiders did not disappear altogether at Rome, but in the context of an ever-expanding empire the identity of the outsider was subject to constant redefinition and revision.

freedom to pursue 'the good life' in the sphere of politics. In Rome there was a paradox of a rather different kind. Romans enslaved on a grand scale, but also freely emancipated slaves.[15] Slaves were freed and in many cases became Roman citizens, in considerable numbers. Why was this so?

The Romans were a practical people. They could see that the integration within their community of conquered peoples, whether slaves or free subjects, was a recipe for growth and the consolidation of conquest. Roman citizenship was inclusive. It was a device for expanding the demographic, military and economic base of the community. Athenian citizenship was exclusive, and the more democratic the Athenian constitution and political practice became, the harder it was to get onto the citizen rolls. It was Pericles the champion of the radical democracy who was behind the law that no one could be an Athenian citizen who did not have two Athenian parents. Manumission of slaves did happen in classical Athens, but it was not common, and freed slaves entered a limbo-world in which full political and economic membership of the community was denied them. Their status in some ways resembled that of another marginal group, the metics, that is, resident foreigners of free birth.

In general, while the juridical status of chattel slaves was more or less invariable from one society to another, there was plenty of scope for the differential treatment of slaves. The variations in the practice and incidence of manumission raise the possibility that these differences might be structural, and enable broad cross-societal comparisons to be made. We might want to speculate, for example, that the combination of traditional Roman pragmatism and Stoic and Christian humanitarianism promoted better master/slave relationships and afforded slaves greater opportunities for social mobility in Roman or Graeco-Roman society than in Greek.[16] There is a risk that

[15] For the rate of manumission in Rome, see Wiedemann (1985). Alföldy (1972) exaggerates its frequency.

[16] The generally benign and ameliorating effect of Christianity was argued long ago by Wallon (1847), while Allard (1876) was convinced that the Church was opposed to slavery. See Finley (1980), ch. 1, for the early historiography of slavery. It is noteworthy that Augustine claimed only that Christianity improved master/slave relations; see *De mor. eccl. cath.* 1.30.63 (= *PL* 32.1336): 'You teach slaves to be faithful to their masters from a love of duty rather than from the necessity imposed on them by their status. You make masters more benign towards their slaves out of regard for the one God who is Master of both, and you dispose them to look after their interests rather than keep them down by force.' Even this claim is unverifiable.

in entertaining such hypotheses we overlook the fact that the slave system was by its nature barbaric. Even slaves with good prospects of emancipation regularly suffered petty humiliations and cruelties, and occasionally appalling atrocities, as when the Roman senate in Nero's reign invoked the full asperity of the law to put to death a large number of domestic slaves and freedmen (400, according to the source) in revenge for the assassination by one of them of the household head, who happened to be the prefect of Rome.[17]

There are broad comparisons to be made between societies in the way slaves were treated, but this issue should also be treated on an individual level, as a function of the relationship between particular masters and slaves. The origin of a slave, the job that a slave did, his or her usefulness to the master, the attitude and character of the master or mistress: these are the kinds of variables that are relevant here. Was a slave first-generation or born and raised in the household? Slave-breeding receives little mention in the sources before the Roman Principate. This might seem to imply that Romans of the imperial period were less inclined than Republican Romans or classical Greeks to regard individual slaves as a short-term investment, to be discarded and replaced after a relatively brief period of service.[18] A slave born in the household could be trained and his acquired skills exploited over an extended period of time, first as a slave, then as a freedman. An

[17] Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.42–5.

[18] There were, however, slaves in democratic Athens and Republican Rome who achieved positions of responsibility. For Athens, an evocative source is the 'Old Oligarch', an anonymous Athenian writer from the fifth century BC, who disliked the radical democracy, and who alleges that Athenians were forced to give their slaves a considerable amount of freedom because they knew that otherwise they would not get the best out of them. He goes on to complain that it was impossible to tell slaves and citizens apart on the streets of Athens. See Ps.-Xenophon, *Const. Ath.* 1.10–12. Cohen (1992), esp. 73–100, collects and interprets the evidence from Athens for slaves in business, with special reference to banking. The evidence from Rome is mainly relevant to the period of the Principate, but see the discussion, drawing on Cicero's correspondence, in Bradley (1994), at 77–80.

On slave-breeding, the presence, also in the Republican period, of slaves born in the household (*vernae*) can hardly be discounted, at any rate in the urban setting. (Much is made of Columella, *De re rustica* 1.8.19 (of mid-first century AD date) referring in a rural setting to rewards for female slaves for bearing children, for which passage there is no equivalent in the earlier treatises of Cato and Varro.) The biographer of Atticus claims that he used only *vernae* as servants in his household, see Cornelius Nepos, *Att.* 13.4. On *vernae*, see Schtaerman (1969), 36–70; Rawson (1986); Hopkins (1978), 139–41, exploiting the Delphic manumission documents (around 1,000 documents referring to more than 1,200 slaves, from 201 BC to AD 100).

educated secretary, a canny accountant or a skilled craftsman were better off than men in the mines or in chain-gangs on large estates. It does not follow that slaves with prospects of advancement escaped punishment and abuse of various kinds. Slaveowners strove for absolute obedience from their slaves, and they knew that the way to instil obedience was to combine inducements to good behaviour with the ever-present threat of and not infrequent resort to violence.

The reactions of slaves to their condition and to their owners were similarly variable and for broadly speaking the same reasons. The spectrum of responses ranged all the way from 'working the system' – in the sense of co-operating to the full with the master in the interests of self-advancement – through passive acquiescence and mildly non-co-operative behaviour (laziness, pilfering, sabotage) to active resistance (suicide, running away, assault on masters). All these were personal strategies pursued by individuals in what they conceived to be their own interest. Even when slaves banded together in open revolt, as they did in antiquity only very rarely, the rebels were not seeking to abolish the institution of slavery and restructure society in the interests of an exploited class.[19]

Attitudes to slavery

Slavery was a structural element in the institutions, economy and consciousness of ancient societies. Within these societies slavery had won broad and deep acceptance, in particular, among the propertied classes, who also formed the social and political elite. But what is implied in the 'acceptance' of slavery? For Robert Fogel, this signifies the absence not only of any movement for the abolition of slavery, but also of either critics or defenders of the institution. He writes:

> For 3,000 years – from the time of Moses to the end of the 17th century – virtually every major statesman, philosopher, theologian, writer and critic accepted the existence and legitimacy of slavery. The word 'accepted' is chosen deliberately, for these men of affairs and molders of thought neither excused, condoned, pardoned, nor forgave the institution. They did not have to; they were not burdened by the view that slavery was wrong. Slavery was considered to be part of the natural scheme of things. 'From the hour of their birth', said Aristotle, 'some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.'

[19] Bradley (1994), 107–31, is a good discussion of slave responses.

Fogel goes on to claim that theologians saw a possible conflict between divine and human law, but adds that they headed this off by treating the spirit, as opposed to the body, as free:

> It is true that some theologians were troubled by the possible dichotomy between servitude and the 'divine law of human brotherhood'. But this apparent contradiction was neatly resolved in Christian theology by treating slavery as a condition of the body rather than of the spirit. In the spiritual realm, 'all men were brothers in union with God', but in the temporal realm, slavery was 'a necessary part of the world of sin'. Thus the bondsman was inwardly free and spiritually equal to his master, but in things external, he was a mere chattel.[20]

Fogel is challenging students of the ancient world to ask a number of questions, including the following: Was there a debate or an exchange of views on the morality and legitimacy of slavery? Were dissentient views expressed? Did anyone say, or think, that slavery was wrong? Did spokesmen for the slave-owning societies emerge to justify the institution? Are attitudes to slavery, whether critical or supportive, reflected in the way slave-systems were run?

Part I of this work addresses these questions. I find that alongside the many texts that take slavery for granted (ch. 2) there are some (few) attacks on slavery as an institution (ch. 6), as well as the more predictable (and numerous) criticisms of abuses or mismanagement in contemporary slave systems (ch. 4). Then there are a number of apparently progressive statements ('Fair words') centring on the notions of the humanity of slaves and their common kinship with masters (ch. 5). The meaning and ideological function of these utterances have to be carefully evaluated, but there must be a suspicion that they reflect the moral anxieties and tensions of a slave-owning class engaged in the thoroughgoing and brutal exploitation of their fellow men. The counterpart to the expression of these sentiments in literature is the measures taken by individual slaveowners (especially in the urban setting, in the Roman period), with the backing of the law, to mitigate slavery (ch. 7). Finally, there are justifications of slavery, of which natural slave theory as expounded by Aristotle is the most familiar (ch. 3).

All this adds up to much less than a lively, open debate over the existence and legitimacy of slavery such as was waged in the antebellum

[20] Fogel (1989), 201.

South, but also rather more than a universal, passive acceptance of the institution. The overt critiques of slavery are on the surface few, weak and isolated, not of the stuff, one might imagine, to provoke a concerted and vigorous defence of the institution. Yet Aristotle's theory – to which Fogel refers, but in such a way as to imply that its exposition lacked a specific context – was apparently expounded in response to one of those criticisms. The origins of other theoretical defences of slavery are more obscure, but Fogel points the way in alluding to perceived conflicts between divine and human law. In any case, slavery *was* defended by the slave-owning class, and not only by the practical measures of coercion and concession (stick and carrot), but also by theory and ideology.[21]

Theories of slavery

And after Aristotle? The simple answer is that he produced not only the first but also the last formal, systematic analysis of the subject in antiquity, as far as we know.[22]

Slave theory in antiquity is commonly thought of as reducible to Aristotle and his natural slave theory, a defence of slavery as not only necessary but also just. For this reason, and because the theory is controversial, not to say offensive to modern moral sensibilities, it has provoked a voluminous literature. Few have tried to trace its subsequent influence, or looked for similar or rival patterns of thought on slavery in the ancient sources. Any enquiry into post-Aristotelian thought on slavery has evidently been thought as unlikely to be productive. This assumption is mistaken, but one can see why it has been harboured. There is no hint of an intellectual confrontation over

[21] According to Thompson (1990), ideology is a designation for the 'ways in which the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms serves, in specific contexts, . . . to establish and sustain relations of domination' (p. 7). See Clark (1994) for a vigorous study of the ideological construction of women in the works of the Church Fathers.

[22] The citation is from Finley (1980), 120. Milani (1972) provides a comprehensive discussion of post-Aristotelian (and pre-Aristotelian) writers. There are brief treatments in Verlinden (1955/77) and Davis (1966). I admire the volumes of Orlando Patterson on slavery (1982) and freedom (1991), but cannot myself attempt work on such a monumental scale. On (Greek) freedom, Raaflaub (1985) is to be recommended. The attitudes of Paul and Augustine have received a considerable amount of attention (see below, ad loc.). Combes (1991) surveys slave imagery in selected Christian writers. Klein (1988) deals in detail with Ambrose and Augustine and briefly with Basil, Philo and Aristotle.

slavery in the philosophical and theological literature after Aristotle (let alone a movement for abolition). In the *Politics* Aristotle refers to and refutes the assertions of unnamed persons that slavery rested on man-made convention and brute force. In my view it was precisely those criticisms which provoked him into setting out his natural slave theory. The philosophical movements that became fashionable in the period after Plato and Aristotle, far from continuing the debate over natural slavery, redefined slavery and freedom as properties of the mind or soul, thereby removing at a stroke the 'need' to justify or question legal slavery, or investigate its origins. Christians similarly, it has been supposed, lacked any motive for theorizing about legal slavery, inasmuch as they too were preoccupied with the moral or spiritual dimension of human existence. In general, post-Aristotelian thinkers, in so far as they addressed themselves to legal slavery at all, confined themselves to urging masters to treat their slaves well and instructing slaves to obey their masters and be content with their lot.

This summary of commonly held opinion fails to satisfy in all the three areas it touches on: Aristotle's role in slave theory, the contribution of later writers, and the implications and significance of the redefinition of slavery in moral and spiritual terms.

Aristotle's achievement needs to be put into perspective. It should first be noted that he did not compose a treatise on slavery.[23] His thoughts on the subject are to be found in a few pages of *Politics* book I, apart from a few scattered paragraphs in his ethical works and in later books of the *Politics*.[24] The last of these 'fragments', in *Politics* book VII, is an unfulfilled promise of more to come, on slave employment and manumission (*Pol.* 1330a32–4), and serves as a reminder of how partial his coverage was.

Aristotle's analysis of slavery in book I comes in three instalments. One is a short, comparative, discussion of the main hierarchical relationships (three domestic, the other political) (*Pol.* 1252a24–b15). The second, also short, returns to this topic, but gives special attention to the psychology of the three kinds of household dependants (slave, female, child) and to their capacity for virtue (*Pol.* 1259a38–60b26). The bulk of Aristotle's discussion is in chapters 3–7 of book I, taking

[23] Had he written such a work, it would not have been the first. The tradition refers to a lost work *On Liberty and Slavery* by Antisthenes, an associate of Socrates.

[24] *Pol.* 1278b32–8; *EN* 1160b28–32; 1161a30–b10; *EE* 1241b18–24; 1242a28–32.

up a little less than a third of the book (but still shorter than the treatment of household property, not including slavery, and the art of acquisition).

In total this is not a negligible amount. It is certainly more than might have been expected in a work on politics, in which the household is introduced simply as a basic building-block of the polis, and the master/slave relationship as one of the three operating in this setting.[25] As it is, domestic matters are soon left behind as Aristotle becomes immersed in the proper subject matter of the work. But it is salutary to remind ourselves that Aristotle's discussion of slavery is rather less than comprehensive and integrated.

One consequence of this is that we should be less inclined than we otherwise might have been to 'write off' other writers, whose thoughts on slavery might appear to be quantitatively unimpressive and disconnected. It is possible to put together a fairly substantial collection of thoughts and theories about slavery from the works of philosophers and theologians. While these texts do not bear witness to an open confrontation on slavery such as arose in antebellum America, they include considered theoretical statements that offer justifications of slavery, and on the other hand expressions of anxiety, doubt and criticism over both the justice of the institution and the way its victims were treated.

Secondly, natural slave theory was not Aristotle's and his alone. The theory had a history both before and after him. If no formal presentation of the theory was made by a predecessor (and this is not certain,[26]) major ingredients can be found in the works of Plato. The essence of the theory as it appears in Aristotle is that there are people who are deficient in reason and need to be subordinated to their intellectual and moral superiors in a master/slave relationship. Plato had

[25] Aristotle has much less to say about wife and children than about slaves, despite holding that 'household management takes more interest . . . in the excellence (*arete*) of its free members than in that of slaves' (1259b18–22). (Students of slave theory can be grateful for this.) In the course of discussing the master/slave relationship Aristotle usually takes a side-glance at the other relationships. There is no implication that the various relationships are closely comparable. On the contrary, he is anxious to press the case for the particularity of each and every hierarchical relationship. See Schofield (1990).

[26] Aristotle defends natural slave theory against certain unnamed critics (*Pol.*1253b20–3; 1255a3–12). If those critics were attacking a considered statement in support of the theory, which is possible but not provable, then Aristotle was not the first to present himself as a champion of natural slavery.

declared that certain individuals by nature had an inadequate grasp of reason, which made their enslavement to 'the best men' necessary and advantageous for them; he preached the benefits to the individual of the body's enslavement to the soul, providing Aristotle with a paradigm for the slave/master relationship; and he deplored the enslavement of Greeks by Greeks and pointed to barbarians as a more appropriate source of slaves, thus preparing the ground for Aristotle's characterization of barbarians as natural slaves.[27]

As for the period after Aristotle, consider the following statements (beginning with one from Aristotle):

1. 'It is manifest therefore that . . . some are free men and others slaves by nature' (Aristotle, *Politics* 1255a1–2).
2. 'No one is by nature a slave' (Philo, *De specialibus legibus*, 2.69).
3. 'For in God's judgement that which is base and irrational is by nature a slave' (Philo, *Legum allegoria* 3.88).
4. 'Slavery is an institution of the *ius gentium*, whereby someone is against nature made subject to the ownership of another' (Florentinus, *Dig.* 1.5.4.1).
5. 'Being by nature slaves, we address the Father as Lord' (Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* II 51, 253c).
6. 'Do they not realize that even among men, no one is a slave by nature?' (Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 20).
7. '*Natura* does not make a man a slave, folly does' (Ambrose, *Epistulae* 7.9; cf. *De Jacob et vita beata* 12.12).[28]
8. 'By nature, in the condition in which God created man, no man is the slave either of man or of sin' (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19.15).

It is unlikely that any of writers 2–8 had read the *Politics*.[29] Yet they are all, consciously or not, engaging in a debate on slavery and adopt-

[27] See Plato, *Rep.* 590c–d, cf. *Laws* 966b; *Phaedo* 79b–80a, cf. *Timaeus* 34c and *Rep.* 444b; *Rep.* 469b–c. See also Ps.-Plato, *Cleitophon* 408a–b: a man who does not know how to use his soul should not live, or if he must he should be a slave, 'handing over the rudder of his will, as it were of a ship, to another man, who has learned the art of steering men'. See Vlastos (1973a) for the thesis that Plato's conception of a cosmic hierarchy of being based upon varying degrees of knowledge provided an acceptable framework for the location of slavery within the natural society. For slavery in Plato, see also Vlastos (1973b); Morrow (1939), 30–46; Schütrumpf (1993).

[28] For the meaning of *natura* in Ambrose, see pp. 201–2.

[29] For the transmission of the works of Aristotle see Gottschalk (1990). How far the *Politics* was available and used remains problematic.

ing ideological positions therein. The appeal to nature, which they all make (even if their understanding of this concept differed), suggests that the basic point at issue is whether slavery was to be regarded as an ephemeral social-historical phenomenon, or as something eternal and out of time.[30] Aristotle, in presenting slavery as part of the natural order, was opting for the second alternative and establishing its legitimacy on the firmest possible foundations. It is noteworthy that Philo and Ambrose developed arguments reminiscent of Aristotle, while Augustine's discussion in places contains Aristotelian echoes.[31] Philo, a Hellenized Jew from Alexandria, offered nothing less than a religious version of the natural slave thesis. Esau son of Isaac and brother of Jacob to whom he was enslaved was a natural slave – as was Canaan grandson of Noah. It was God who ordained their enslavements and who created in fact a whole class of natural slaves.

Christian theologians inherited the problem of Biblical enslavements that were apparently condoned or designed by God. Many, Ambrose included (whose interpretation, however, closely follows that of Philo up to a certain point), agreed with Paul that the solution lay with God, whose ways, though mysterious, are never unjust. The conspicuous inconsistency continued to trouble the more inquiring minds and sensitive spirits. Augustine repeatedly agonized over it, eventually deciding that slavery was an aspect of the judgement of God, but that the burden of responsibility lay with man. Sin, specifically the sin of Adam, was the cause of slavery.

Slave theory in antiquity, therefore, does not begin and end with Aristotle. Nor does the idea of natural slavery. That said, Aristotle was undoubtedly the high priest of natural slave theory, he elaborated it, and it was his canonical version which reverberated down the ages. The theory exercised Thomas Aquinas,[32] tied Vitoria in knots[33] and was brought into the service of European imperialism in the early sixteenth century by John Major, a Paris-based Scottish theologian and historian.[34] A little over three centuries later, William Harper,

[30] For the appeal to nature as a characteristic strategy of ideology, see Clark (1994), 161–2, drawing on Thompson (1990), 65–6.

[31] Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 19.21: 'Plane hoc exemplo satis edoctum est quibusdam esse utilem servitutem . . .' See pp. 39–40.

[32] For a summary of Aquinas' discussion see Davis (1966), 112–15.

[33] F. de Vitoria, *De Indis et De Iure Belli Relectiones*, in E. Nys, ed. (1917), 125–9, 150–62. Page 128 (paras. 335–6) contains an interesting misreading of Aristotle.

[34] See Hanke (1959); Pagden (1982); Nippel (1993).

American landowner, judge and politician, in his *Memoir on Slavery* of 1838, recommended Aristotle's *Politics* to his fellow slaveowners in the deep South.[35]

Slavery as metaphor

One of the eight *bons mots* quoted earlier stands out from the rest. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria in the first half of the fourth century, wrote:

Being by nature slaves, we address the Father as Lord.

Athanasius was using slavery as a metaphor for the relationship of humanity to God.[36] In Christian theology from Paul onwards slavery to God was seen as the only alternative for men to slavery to sin. The Stoics had a counterpart – slavery to the passions and emotions.[37]

We have here come upon an extra dimension of thinking about slavery, one not at all centred on legal or institutional slavery. If we ignored this dimension, we would be turning our backs on most thinking about slavery in the period after Aristotle. In the post-classical period moral slavery, or slavery of the soul, is given priority.

Legal slavery is never far away. The Stoics needed legal slavery, in the first instance, to show what 'true' slavery was *not*. In addition, some Stoics at least were interested in and concerned about the way legal slaves were treated. Seneca offered an argument against cruelty by masters to slaves in terms of the common kinship of men as rational

[35] William Harper writes on Aristotle's *Politics* (cited in Tise (1987), 340): 'Little of what is just or profound on the principles of government has appeared since, of which the traces may not be found there.' The general context is advice given to slaveholders that they should derive inspiration and wisdom from the practice of slavery in Greece and Rome.

[36] For the Christian use of metaphor in general, see Soskice (1985). For slave/servant of God in (largely pagan) epigraphy, see Pleket (1981). The author does not set the inscriptions alongside philosophical or theological writings, and the possible connections between the two kinds of evidence remain to be explored.

In philosophy, the concept is at least as old as Plato. See *Phaedo* 62b–c: men as God's *ktemata*, i.e. *living* possessions, better slaves here than sheep or cattle, cf. *Laws* 777b (man as a difficult *ktema*). See also *Phaedo* 85a–b: Socrates as fellow-slave (*homodoulos*) of the swans and sacred to the same God – referred to as his master (*despotes*). For man as plaything of the God, see *Laws* 644d–e and 803c.

For slave/servant of God in Epictetus see n. 41, below.

[37] The idea goes back, in philosophy, at least as far as Plato's Socrates. See n. 27, above, and next note. It surfaces in a rhetorical context in Libanius, *Or.* 25.14–30. See Schouler (1973).

beings in the moral/spiritual sphere, the world of gods and men. There is an issue whether these doctrines had an impact on the laws and the practice of slavery. Christianity too is sometimes held to have influenced legislators, slaveowners – and slaves (in reconciling them to their condition). Christian thought ran along lines parallel to Stoic, in the pre-eminence it gave to moral slavery or slavery of the soul, its acknowledgement of the equality of all men (in the eyes of God) and its interest in master/slave relations.

In general, Christian thought moved easily from one kind of slavery to the other, sometimes confusingly. This is true also of Jewish thinking about slavery, although in the thought world of the authors of the Pentateuch the alternatives are slavery to men (legal or physical) and slavery to God (spiritual). Augustine in a *tour de force* produced a theory of the origins of slavery which brought legal and spiritual slavery together, deriving both from the sin of Adam.

Let us look a little more closely at slavery as metaphor in Stoic and in Christian thought. The Stoics (as already indicated) developed a distinction between legal and moral slavery. Both kinds were acknowledged, but only moral slavery was of central, philosophical interest to them. True slavery, like true freedom, was held to be a property of the mind, or soul. An individual was in the grip of slavery to the extent that he cared about externals, including anything that happened to his body. Legal slavery was assimilated into a general category of 'external conditions', including poverty, sickness and death, that one might either ignore and be free, or allow to dominate one's thoughts and cares and be a slave. In this way, a legal slave might be also a moral slave.

As with Aristotle, so with the Stoics, one can exaggerate the novelty of their views. The Stoics saw themselves as disciples of Socrates, and read Plato and other authors to recover his teachings.[38] They took over the Socratic mind/body contrast. They developed the ideas – the seeds of which are perhaps already present in Plato, for example in *Republic* book IX – that enslavement to the passions is the lot of the mass of mankind, that only the just and wise are free, and that they are very few. This was a central Stoic paradox, flowing through, doubtless by way of a sequence of works now lost, to Cicero and Philo, who wrote the first extant treatises on the paradox.

[38] See e.g. Long (1988); Striker (1994)

Stoicism was a long-lived philosophy. Founded by Zeno of Citium about a generation after the death of Aristotle (in 323/2), it was flourishing in the time of the early theologians, Philo the Jew and Paul the ex-Jewish Christian, and was still going strong a century or so later. Philo was, or could be, a self-conscious Stoicizer, while some of Paul's conceptions run parallel to those of the Stoics. Paul preached that men are equal in the sight of God (Gal. 3:28 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female . . .'); that what matters for an individual is the state of his soul and his relation to the Deity; and that legal slavery and, in general, one's physical condition and status in society are unimportant.

Christian and Stoic uses of the concept of slavery differed in one conspicuous respect. In Christian theology it can be a good thing to be a slave – a slave of God, that is, as opposed to a slave of sin. This goes back in the literature of Christianity to Paul, who described himself with evident pride as a slave of Christ, or God. Paul drew this image not from Stoicism or any other classical philosophy but from the Old Testament. One of the ways in which the ancient Israelites conceptualized their relationship with Jehovah was in terms of slavery. Moses and the other patriarchs preceded Paul as slaves of God. The use of *doulostebed* in the Pentateuch/Hebrew bible shaped the thought-world of the early Christian Church.[39]

Paul called Christians at one time slaves in Christ, and at other times free men in Christ, freedmen in Christ, and sons or children of God. Stoics could feel comfortable with some of these appellations (free, sons, children), less so with others (slaves, freedmen). The idea that to be a slave/servant of God *was to be free in God* was Jewish.[40] The Stoic wise man might, at a pinch, be called 'free in God', but the Stoic slave was a fool, and vicious.[41]

[39] The Hebrew *ebed* covers a wide spectrum, from chattel slavery, e.g. Joseph, to favoured servant, e.g. Moses in Numbers 12:7, or the suffering servant of Isaiah, e.g. 42:1: 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth' – whom Christians have read as Christ.

[40] Lyall (1984), 153–76, argues for a Jewish origin of the concept of redemption/emancipation in Paul.

[41] The Stoic Epictetus describes the (Cynic) wise man Diogenes as a *diakonos*, 'servant', of God (see 3.24.65; cf. 3.22.69; 4.7.20). He also says of the wise man that he is free through acceptance of the will of God. In all this he comes quite close to the Christian position (albeit that the Stoic deity or deities and the Christian God are quite dissimilar). It is important that Epictetus never calls the wise man a *doulos* of God. This, his regular word for slave, is reserved for the bad or inferior man.

Paul's conceptualizations provided the foundation of later Christian thinking on slavery. Thus for example the idea of promotion of Christians from the status of slaves to that of adopted sons – expounded by Origen in the third century, Athanasius in the mid-fourth, and Augustine in the late fourth and early fifth – has its roots in the Pauline Epistles and the Gospel of St John. It was from this context that Athanasius' pronouncement came: we are slaves by nature, and sons by adoption.[42]

What, however, of the enslavement of man by man? In life slavery was the most despicable and shameful condition that humans could experience. Slaves, legal slaves, were at the bottom of the social heap, and the quintessential master/slave relationship was one of fear. How could the Church Fathers' lofty vision of divine sonship coexist with this grim reality? Christian spokesmen did not neglect legal slavery altogether, any more than Stoics did, but their attitude was conformist. Paul and Seneca advised masters to be humane to their slaves, and Paul instructed slaves to obey their masters (and wives their husbands) as if they were serving God.[43] Such quietism was born of the conviction that physical slavery was a matter of no importance alongside virtue (for the Stoic) and salvation (for the Christian). It is deeply troubling that people with a positive view of human nature and its potential were unable to resolve, once and for all, that slaves were persons and not things. Inconsistency, as Versnel has reminded us, is part of the regular fabric of history.[44] This particular inconsistency has understandably evoked embarrassment and condemnation from modern observers of ancient society.[45]

Cf. Seneca's position in *De vita beata* 15.5–7, which is more representative of orthodox Stoicism. The passage concludes: 'This is the sacred obligation by which we are bound to submit to the human lot, and not to be disquieted by those things that we have no power to avoid. We have been born under a monarchy: To obey God is freedom.' Note that Seneca avoids the metaphor of slavery to describe the relationship of God to humanity. That the wise man obeys, or walks in step with, God (or Providence or Nature) is a mark of his freedom and independence, not its opposite.

[42] Widdicombe (1994).

[43] For 'Paul' read 'Paul and his followers'. On the authenticity of the Pauline Letters, see Kümmel (1975).

[44] Versnel (1990), 1–34.

[45] For some strong reactions, see de Ste Croix (1951), 418–25; Williams (1993), 115–16.

PART I

ATTITUDES TO SLAVERY

2

Slavery accepted

A1 Plato, *Laws* 776b–c, 778a (347/6 BC)

Wherefore a man and his wife shall leave to his and her father and mother their own dwelling-places . . . and they shall beget and bring up children, handing on the torch of life from one generation to another, and worshipping the Gods according to law for ever.

In the next place, we have to consider what sort of property will be most convenient. There is no difficulty either in understanding or acquiring most kinds of property, but there is great difficulty in what relates to slaves. And the reason is that we speak about them in a way which is right and which is not right; for what we say about our slaves is consistent and also inconsistent with our practical experience of them . . .

Now that each of the citizens is provided, as far as possible, with a sufficient number of suitable slaves who can help him in what he has to do, we may next proceed to describe their dwellings.

A2 Aristotle, *Politics* 1253b1–18 (320s BC)

And now that it is clear what are the component parts of the state, we have first of all to discuss household management; for every state is composed of households. Household management falls into departments, corresponding to the parts of which the household in its turn is composed; and the household in its perfect form consists of slaves and freemen. The investigation of everything should begin with its smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of the household are master and slave,

> husband and wife, father and children; we ought therefore to examine the proper constitution and character of each of these three relationships, I mean that of mastership, that of marriage (there is no exact term denoting the relation uniting wife and husband), and thirdly the progenitive relationship (this too has not been designated by a special name). Let us then accept these three relationships that we have mentioned . . . Let us begin by discussing the relation of master and slave, in order to observe the facts that have a bearing on practical utility, and also in the hope that we may be able to obtain something better than the notions at present entertained, with a view to a theoretical knowledge of the subject.

Plato first equips the citizen of his ideal state with a wife for purposes of procreation, and then moves on to property. Under this head he discusses only slaves: each citizen is assigned as many slaves as he needs. Slaves are singled out because they are the only form of property that raises difficulties 'in understanding or acquiring'. 'Understanding' is suggestive of the philosopher's dilemma in conceptualizing a thing which is also a man, but Plato raises only the derivative, practical question of how slaves should be treated.

Aristotle here sets slaves off against not other forms of property (that comes later) but free men. Of the domestic relationships he takes that between master and slave first in the discussion, but this has no special significance. Earlier he had mentioned 'the union of female and male for the continuance of the species' before 'the union of natural ruler and natural subject for the sake of security' (*Pol.* 1252a26–33). Still, Aristotle's discussion of the household, taken as a whole, does give prominence to slavery. The reason for this is similar to Plato's for singling out slaves among property. In each context slavery raises particular problems and is alone in this. But whereas Plato's concern is with the behavioural aspects of the slave question, Aristotle's is primarily with theory. Each philosopher is dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs in the domain in which he is interested. Neither is in any doubt that slavery is and should be an integral part of society, though Aristotle has in his sights a body of opinion that might appear to question this. His refutation of these views belongs in the next chapter.

A3 Varro, *Res rusticae* 1.17 (late 30s BC)

Now I turn to the means by which the land is tilled. Some divide these into two parts: men, and those aids to men without which they cannot cultivate; others into three: the class of instruments which is articulate, the inarticulate, and the mute; the articulate comprising the slaves, the inarticulate comprising the cattle, and the mute comprising the vehicles. All agriculture is carried on by men – slaves or freemen or both . . .

A4 Gaius, *Institutiones* 1.8–9[1]; 2.1, 12–14, 14a (mid-second century AD)

The whole of the law observed by us relates either to persons or to things or to actions. Let us first consider persons.

The primary distinction in the law of persons is this, that all human beings are either free men or slaves. . . .

In the preceding book we treated of the law of persons. Let us now consider things. These are either in private ownership or regarded as outside private ownership. . . .

Further, things are divided into corporeal and incorporeal. Corporeal things are tangible things, such as land, a slave, a garment, gold, silver, and countless other things. Incorporeal are things that are intangible, such as exist merely in law, for example an inheritance, a usufruct, obligations however contracted . . .

Things are further divided into *mancipi* and *nec mancipi*. *Mancipi* are lands and houses on Italic soil; likewise slaves and animals that are commonly broken to draught or burden, such as oxen, horses, mules, and asses; likewise rustic praedial servitudes, whereas urban praedial servitudes are *nec mancipi* . . .

The passage from Varro captures nicely, in terms reminiscent of those used by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,[2] the ambiguity of the status of the slave. For Aristotle he is a 'living tool', for Varro (in the context of a treatise on farming) he is at once a piece of equipment, to be distinguished from animals, and vehicles, and a man, to be distinguished from a free man. The same ambiguity operated in

[1] Cf. *IJ* 1.3 pref. [2] *EN* 1162b4.

legal theory and practice. There was no Greek or Roman law of slavery as such.[3] In Rome, slave law consisted of the very substantial bundle of regulations governing slaves as persons (*personae*) and as things (*res*). Slaves are, more or less, everywhere in the law books – as they were in Roman society. The law of persons holds the greater potential interest for us, since it is the area where one might look for signs of morality, the operation of conscience, and the influence of philosophical or religious creeds. Of two issues to be raised in later sections (chs. 5 and 7), the clash between the status of the slave in natural law as opposed to international law and civil law, and the implications of initiatives taken by the state authorities against excessive punishment of slaves by masters, Gaius is silent on the former but alludes to the latter, if only to comment that a master who wilfully damages his own property is being a prodigal. This is in line with the severely pragmatic tone of his whole discussion. The key passage runs as follows:

Let us consider first persons under another's authority (*alieni iuris*); for, knowing these, we shall at the same time know who are under their own authority (*sui iuris*). And first let us consider those who are in another's power.

Slaves are in the power of their owners. This power is in accordance with the law of nations (*ius gentium*), for it is observable that among all nations alike masters have power of life and death over their slaves, and whatever is acquired by a slave is acquired for his master.

But at the present day neither Roman citizens nor any other persons subject to the rule of the Roman People are allowed to treat their slaves with excessive and causeless harshness . . . We ought not to abuse our lawful right – the principle under which prodigals are interdicted from administering their own property . . . (1.50–3, part)

A5 Philo, *De specialibus legibus* (*The Special Laws*) 2.123 (early first century AD)

The Law does permit the acquisition of slaves from other nations for two reasons: first, that a distinction should be made between fellow-countrymen and aliens; secondly, that that most indispensable possession, domestic service, should not be absolutely excluded from his, Moses', polity . . . For the course

[3] See Watson (1971), 12, on 'the virtually total absence of any rule of law peculiar to the institution of slavery' (cf. 50). On slavery in Roman law in general, see Buckland (1908); Robleda (1976); Watson (1987).

of life contains a vast number of circumstances which demand the ministrations of slaves.

The key passages in the Mosaic law to which Philo refers are Exodus 21:1–6 (cf. Lev. 25:39–43, 47–55; Deut. 15:12–18) and Leviticus 25:44–6, which run as follows:

Exodus 21: 1–6

1. Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them.

2. When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years: and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.

3. If he comes in single, he shall go out single: if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him.

4. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out alone.

5. But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out free',

6. Then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.

Leviticus 25:44–6

44. 'As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are round about you.

45. You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn among you and their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property.

46. You may bequeath them to your sons after you, to inherit as a possession for ever; you may make slaves of them, but over your brethren the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another, with harshness.

In some slave-owning societies it was felt that slaves should be outsiders and not originate in the society in question. Classical Greece was one such society. The ancient Israelites practised a dual system of slavery. The enslavement of Jews was considered regrettable and was limited to six years, unless the slave wished to stay with his master. The enslavement of non-Jews, on the other hand, was fully acceptable, and was for life. In fact, the Jewish slave was more of an indentured servant than a slave: in contrast with the foreigner, he retained his family ties and standing and therefore essential independence from the householder, with whom his relationship was basically contractual. Only the foreign slave was the property of the householder, his transfer out of his own biological family and incorporation into his master's household

being marked by circumcision. Differential treatment of Hebrew and foreign slaves was a probable consequence of difference in status.[4]

The policy of discriminating against foreigners in the matter of enslavement arose out of a natural and predictable desire to shield one's own people from this most humiliating and abject condition. In the case of the ancient Israelites, the professed *justification* is to be found in the words of the Bible: 'You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.' 'For they are my servants, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as slaves.' 'For to me the people of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God' (Deut. 15:15; Lev. 25:42, 55). The Israelites had been released from bondage by the intervention of their God. They must never again be enslaved to men but rather fulfil their destiny, as the chosen people of God, to be *His* servants.

The insider/outsider distinction alluded to in the Philo passage is conspicuous in the Mosaic law, much more conspicuous, as it happens, than in the Mishnah, a Jewish law code compiled in the second century AD, where it appears as a distinction between Hebrew and Canaanite.[5] For present purposes, however, it is less central than Philo's second observation, to the effect that slavery was essential and necessary. This basic assumption underlies all the discussion of slavery in the Jewish sources from antiquity – except where the beliefs and practices of certain Jewish sects are in question (see below, pp. 78–9). It is noteworthy that the sources, in particular, Philo and Josephus, which refer to the (unconventional) views of the Essenes and Therapeutae, do not convey the impression that their own view of slavery is being challenged and needs to be defended and justified.

A6 Ephesians 6:5–8 (mid/late first century AD)

> 5. Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ;

[4] A man, apparently a Jew, who sold himself to someone out of poverty, was to be treated not as a slave but as a temporary hired worker; cf. Philo, *De spec. leg.* 1.122. Again, Philo's message that masters should be considerate to their slaves and slaves should be respectful of their masters was directed especially at Hebrew servants. On Philo's attitude, see ch. 10; for Essenes and Therapeutae, see pp. 78–9.

[5] The Mishnah gives less emphasis to the citizen/foreigner distinction, which it refers to as Hebrew/Canaanite. See Flesher (1988). Also on the Jewish law of slavery, see Urbach (1964); Lemche (1976); Richter (1978), 131–42; Kippenberg (1983).

6. Not in the way of eye service, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

7. Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

8. Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with him.

A7 Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 124.7 (c. AD 403)

And what does the apostle say when he teaches that slaves are set under their masters? 'Slaves be obedient to those who are your earthly masters.' For the Master is according to the spirit. He is the true and eternal master; they are temporary and of finite time. You, when you walk on a road, when you live in this life, Christ does not want to make you proud. He has touched you so that you may be made a Christian, and treat your master as a man; you were not made a Christian so that you might disdain to serve. When you serve a man, under Christ's orders, you do not serve that man, but him who commanded you. And this is what the apostle says: 'Be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord.' Look, he did not make free men out of slaves, but good slaves out of bad slaves. How much the rich owe to Christ, for creating stability in their homes! If there were an unfaithful slave therein, Christ would correct him and would not say to him: 'Get rid of your master, for you have recognized him who is your true master; he may be impious and hostile, but you are faithful and just; it is unworthy that a just and faithful man serve one who is unjust and unfaithful.' He did not say that to the slave, but rather 'Be a slave.'

A8 Thomas Roderick Dew, *Abolition of Negro Slavery* (1832), in Faust (1981), 61–2[6]

With regard to the assertion that slavery is against the spirit of Christianity, we are ready to admit the general assertion, but

[6] In the passage preceding this quotation Dew concedes that 'slavery is wrong, in the abstract at least', but retorts that 'any question must be determined by its circumstances', by which he means the likelihood that 'we cannot get rid of slavery without

deny most positively that there is anything in the Old or New Testament which would go to show that slavery, when once introduced, ought at all events to be abrogated, or that the master commits any offence in holding slaves. The Children of Israel themselves were slave-holders, and were not condemned for it . . . When we turn to the New Testament, we find not one single passage at all calculated to disturb the conscience of an honest slave-holder. No one can read it without seeing and admiring that the meek and humble Saviour of the world in no instance meddled with the established institutions of mankind . . . He was born in the Roman world, a world in which the most galling slavery existed, a thousand times more cruel than the slavery in our own country – and yet he nowhere encourages insurrection – he nowhere fosters discontent – but exhorts *always* to implicit obedience and fidelity . . . 'Let every man (says Paul) abide in the same calling wherein he is called. Art thou called *being* a servant? Care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free use *it* rather' (1 Corinthians 7.20, 21) . . . Servants are even commanded in Scripture to be faithful and obedient to unkind masters. 'Servants (says Peter), be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but to the forward. For what glory is it if when ye shall be buffeted for your faults ye take it patiently; but if when ye do well and suffer for it, yet take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.' (1 Peter 2:18, 20). These and many other passages in the New Testament most convincingly prove that slavery in the Roman world was nowhere charged as a fault or crime upon the holder, and everywhere is the most implicit obedience enjoined.

Dew and other pro-slave theorists in the antebellum South knew their Bible well. What is interesting about his treatment is his acknowledgement that slavery was incompatible with Christianity – 'against the spirit of Christianity'. In this he differs both from various other contemporary defenders of slavery such as Thomas Stringfellow, who produced a much more thorough treatment of the same theme in his *A Scriptural View of Slavery*, and, more signifi-

producing a greater injury to both the masters and slaves'. If this is the situation, then 'there is no rule of conscience or revealed law of God which can condemn us'. And in any case, 'the original sin of introduction rests not on our heads'.

cantly for us, from early Christian writers like the author of Letter to the Ephesians and Augustine.

The Ephesians passage, which is completely consistent with a number of other texts composed by Paul or his followers including those cited by Dew, is uncritical of slavery.[7] Nor did the Pauline writers, or any other spokesmen for Christianity, for that matter, follow the instruction of the authors of the Pentateuch that slavery to man was only proper for 'others'. If the 'children of the flesh' were intended to be, or saw themselves as, slaveowners rather than slaves, this was not the case with the 'children of the promise'. It was enough for Paul that in the sight of God, that is, in the realm of the spirit, all barriers came down, including those between masters and slaves, Greeks and Jews, men and women – as he puts it in Galatians 3:28. If the Pauline authors saw a clash between this doctrine and the message to slaves and masters in Ephesians they saw no need to comment on it.

Augustine immediately before developing the message of Ephesians expresses a sentiment inspired by Galatians: 'There are masters, there are slaves. The names are different, but they both bear, as men, the same name.' In juxtaposing these texts he betrays no sign of embarrassment. There are close resemblances between the statements of Augustine and Dew, but the African bishop goes further than the Southern judge and politician in putting into Christ's mouth words aimed at quieting the restless slave. Both are concerned with the preservation of order: Dew's aversion to 'insurrection' and 'discontent' is matched by Augustine's interest in domestic stability, which, as he indicates elsewhere, he sees as the key to civic tranquillity (*City of God* 19.16).

49 John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catechesis* 12.25

> For this word is a covenant with the Master. And just as we, when we buy slaves, first ask those who are being sold if they are willing to be our slaves, so also does Christ . . . And see the lovingkindness of God. Our practice is, before we put down the price, to ask those who are being sold if they are willing, and when we have learned that they are, then we put down the price. Christ does not do this: rather he puts down price for us all, and it is his precious blood. For he says, you were bought for a price.

[7] See Col. 3:22–4:1; Tit. 2:9–10; Philemon; 1 Tim. 6:1.

As for Theophilus, when Gregory says 'I have already manumitted the boy Theophilus to remain with me', he is using the language of the law; he is referring to *paramone*, a standard contract according to which a slave was freed, but for service in the household of the former master. The freedom of those emancipated on these terms was conditional on satisfactory service; the weakness of their position is exposed in this document, in Gregory's pronouncement that those whom he had freed 'shall remain now in freedom, and . . . retain their *peculia* intact without any restriction' – where *peculia* refers to quasi-private funds, the funds under the control of slaves or freedmen, but technically belonging to the master.

So, this is the household of a bishop: an enlightened bishop, no doubt, one who frees slaves (or some slaves) and gives them his patronage, but who also keeps them (or some of them) in his personal service, and in a legal status in which they are free but vulnerable. The household of an eminent and relatively humane secular administrator may not have looked very different.[9]

[9] On this Will, see Martroye (1924); van Dam (1995). On *paramone*, see Westermann (1948); Samuel (1965); Hopkins (1978), 141–58.

3

Justifications of slavery

If the existence and necessity of slavery were customarily accepted or taken for granted in the slave-owning societies of antiquity, some spokesmen for those societies made a point of defending and justifying the institution. Aristotle in the *Politics* repeatedly asserted that slavery was useful and necessary. The logic of the argument is as follows:

B1 Aristotle, *Politics*, bk 1, passim

1a 1254a30–2

In every composite thing . . . there is always found a ruling and a subject factor, and this characteristic of living things is present in them as an outcome of the whole of nature.

1b 1254a22–3

Authority and subordination are conditions not only inevitable but also expedient.

1c 1254b25–27

And also the usefulness of slaves diverges little from that of animals; bodily service for the necessities of life is forthcoming from both, from slaves and from domestic animals alike.

1d 1277a35–7

One form of authority is that of a master; by this we mean the exercise of authority in regard to the necessary work of the house, which it is not necessary for the master to know how to execute, but rather how to utilize; the other capacity, I mean the

ability actually to serve in these menial tasks, is indeed a slave's quality.[1]

1e 1330a26–30

Those who are to cultivate the soil should best of all, if the ideal system is to be stated, be slaves . . .[2]

1f 1328a22–5

But since, just as with all other natural organisms those things that are indispensable for the existence of the whole are not parts of the whole organization, it is also clear that not all of the things that are necessary for states to possess are to be counted as parts of a state . . .

1g 1278a2–4

Slaves also are not in one of the classes mentioned, nor are freedmen. For it is true that not all the persons indispensable for the existence of the state are to be deemed citizens . . .

1h 1328b37–1329a3

It is therefore clear from these considerations that in the most nobly constituted state, and the one that possesses men that are absolutely just . . . the citizens must not live a mechanic or a mercantile life – for such a life is ignoble and inimical to virtue; nor yet must those who are to be citizens in the best state be tillers of the soil – for leisure is needed both for the development of virtue and for active participation in politics.[3]

[1] The services of slaves are qualitatively different from those of 'other' household tools. They are instruments of action (*praxis*, doing things) rather than instruments of production (*poiesis*, making things). See Aristotle, *Pol.* 1253b33–1254a8.

[2] See also Aristotle, *Pol.* 1329a25–9. Craftsmen and thetes were preferably slaves too, see 1278a6–8: 'In ancient times in fact the artisan class consisted of slaves or aliens, owing to which the great mass of artisans are so even now.' Cf. 1277a38–9: slaves might also be handcraftsmen. See in general Lévy (1979); and next note.

[3] For services to individuals as distinct from services to the polis, see Aristotle, *Pol.* 1278a12–13: 'Among menial occupations those who render such services *to an individual* are slaves, and those who do so *for the community* are artisans and hired labourers.' On the other hand, Aristotle talks of the production of food (by farmers) and tools (by artisans) as requirements of the polis (1328b6–7). He does envisage the possibility that slaves will work common land.

11 1328a36–8

> The polis is one form of partnership of similar people, and its object is the best life that is possible. And . . . the greatest good is happiness, and this is some perfect activity or employment of virtue . . .[4]

To summarize: every complex thing has an inbuilt ruling principle which is both necessary and useful for its existence. Within the household, slaves render bodily services, in the first instance to an individual, the master, to ensure the necessities of life in this sphere. These services extend into the master's fields. Slaves are also indispensable to the polis, but indirectly, as a by-product of their services to the master and the household. Although master and household are integral parts of the polis, this status is not extended to the slaves. Being indispensable to is quite distinct from being part of or being a partner in. The latter status, in the case of the polis, is unavailable to slaves: free status is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of citizenship. By performing essential bodily labours for masters, slaves free those masters for the pursuit of the best life within the framework of the polis. For those who take part in politics must be a leisured class, and the end of politics and the polis is the best life that is possible, and the greatest good, happiness.

For Aristotle, then, slavery serves two purposes, one economic, the other political. The economic end is subordinate to the political: it is the difference between life, and the good (or best) life.[5] As regards the economic end, there is of course no trace of an argument for the superior profitability and efficiency of slavery over other forms of dependent labour.[6] At one point a preference is stated for slaves as the agricultural labour-force, with foreign workers or *perioikoi* (presumably envisaged

[4] Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1280a31–2: 'If, on the other hand, the polis was formed not for the sake of life only but rather for the good life . . .'.

[5] Aristotle's prime concern is with the politics, not the economy, of slavery. See Kelsen (1977), 172–5.

[6] Nor does anyone else in antiquity. The Roman argument against using slaves in agriculture is a moral one. See Finley (1980), 91–2. The antebellum debate over slavery provides a contrast. See e.g. Edmund Ruffin in McKitrick (1963), 72: 'It is manifest that slave labor . . . will be cheapest and most profitable to the employer, and to the whole community, and will yield more towards the general increase of production and public wealth.' Fogel and Engerman (1974) argued that the slave system of the South was highly efficient compared with the employment of free labour of the North. Cf. David (1976); Wright (1978), chs. 1–2. For the economy of ancient Greek slavery, see most recently Osborne (1995).

as technically free but dependent) classed as a second-best (1330a26–30).[7] No reasons are given, but they are unlikely to have been conceived as economic. Slavery is to be preferred, in each and every sphere of life where human labour is needed, essentially because it is rooted in nature: 'and nature is an end, . . . that which each thing is when its growth is completed'(1252b33–5).

However, Aristotle considered it important to show, not just that slavery was rooted in nature, but also that there existed a class of people who were naturally fitted to be slaves: 'It is manifest . . . that . . . some are free men and others slaves by nature' (1255a1–2). It is at this point that moral considerations, and in particular the justice of reducing people to slavery, come into the reckoning.

Aristotle's theory of natural slavery is analysed in detail in a later chapter. In essence, the natural slave is said to suffer from a deficiency of the reasoning part of the soul. This has moral and intellectual implications: it means that he is incapable of living a life of autonomy and independence, in other words, the life of a free man. His best hope of fulfilling his (limited) potential is to serve a natural master, who can guarantee him security, while harnessing his capacities, essentially for bodily service, to his own ends and those of the household. Such service is useful and beneficial for the slave. There are echoes of the theory in a number of later writers, who however are operating in quite different intellectual environments and do not acknowledge (nor in all probability feel) a debt to Aristotle.

B2 Cicero, *De re publica* 3.35ff. (40s BC) (from Augustine et al.)

2a Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (*City of God*) 19.21

There is certainly in that same work, the *De re publica*, a very sharp and vigorous argument against injustice and on behalf of justice. And since, when an argument was put forward earlier on the side of injustice against justice and it was maintained that a state cannot exist or be administered except through injustice, this was laid down as the strongest link in the argument that it is unjust for some men to serve other men as masters (and yet an imperial city, embracing a mighty state, cannot command provinces without pursuing such injustice); to all this argument the reply on the side of justice was that the rule over provincials

[7] Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1329a25–9, where no preference is clearly stated.

is just, precisely because servitude is the interest of such men, and is established for their welfare when rightly established; that is, when licence to do wrong is taken away from wicked men; and that those subdued will be better off, because when not subdued they were worse off. In support of the reasoning a striking example is introduced, as if drawn from nature, and stated as follows: *'Why, then, is it that God commands man, the soul commands the body, the reason commands lust and the other vicious parts of the soul?'* By this example it is taught clearly enough that servitude is the interest of some men, and that service, to God at any rate, is the interest of all.

2b Augustine, *Contra Julianum* 4.12.61 (c. AD 421)

But if you are defending these things as lesser goods to which the soul should not give way in preference to higher goods, if you are representing lust as not a vice but as an inferior good, then pay attention to the clear message of Cicero in the same book of *De re publica*, book three, where he was presenting the case for empire. *'Do we not observe'*, he says, *'that dominion has been granted by Nature to everything that is best, to the great advantage of the inferior? For why else does God rule over man, the mind over the body, and reason over lust and anger and the other evil elements of the mind?'* Will you now at least concede, following his instruction, that those parts of the soul that you insist are good are vicious? And now listen to what he says a little later: *'But we must'*, he says, *'distinguish different kinds of domination and subjection. For the mind is said to rule over the body, and also over lust; but it rules over the body as a king governs his subjects or a father his children, whereas it rules over lust as a master rules his slaves, restraining it and breaking its power. So kings, commanders, magistrates, senators, and popular assemblies govern citizens as the mind governs the body; but the master's restraint of his slaves is like the restraint exercised by the best part of the mind, the reason, over its own evil and weak elements, such as the lustful desires, anger, and the other disquieting emotions.'*

2c Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14.23 (c. AD 418)

When in his discussion of the different forms of rule in his work *De re publica* Cicero drew an analogy for his purpose from the

nature of man, did he not say that the members of the body are ruled like children because of their readiness to obey, whereas the depraved parts of the soul are constrained by a harsher rule, like slaves?

2d Isidorus, *Origines* 18.1 (early seventh century AD); Nonius, p. 498.13 (?fourth century AD)

Those wars are unjust that are undertaken without provocation. For only a war waged for revenge or defence can actually be just

. . .

But our people by defending their allies have gained dominion over the whole world.

In the fragmentary third book of Cicero's *De re publica,* a debate is staged between Philus and Laelius on the issue of justice in a state, with special reference to Rome and its relations with its empire. It fell to Laelius to defend justice against the arguments marshalled by Philus in favour of the thesis that a state cannot be governed without injustice. In the process Laelius advances the doctrine that slavery can be beneficial to some people. In fact, the passages cited above furnish a double endorsement of this view, because Augustine also gives it his backing, as in the following sentence in *City of God*: 'By this example it is taught clearly enough that servitude is the interest of some men, and that service, to God at any rate, is the interest of all.'

There is an immediate problem of how to penetrate to Cicero's text. We have access to it largely through Augustine, and Augustine was using him for his own purposes.[8] In the above citations, those words which purport to be Cicero's own are italicized.[9] They amount to only

[8] In the *City of God* passage as a whole, Augustine is concerned to refute Cicero's claim that the Roman *res publica* was a *res populi,* where *populus* is defined as 'a numerous gathering united in fellowship by a common sense of right and a community of interest'. He does so on the grounds that there is no such community where there is no justice, there is no justice where each is not given his due, and in Cicero's state God is not given his due. Augustine then evokes the Philus/Laelius debate, implicitly rejecting the argument of Philus that serving other men as masters is unjust, in favour of the position of Laelius that ruling men can be just.

In the *Contra Julianum* the debate is over the status of *libido*, sexual lust, whether it is a 'lesser good' or an out-and-out vice.

[9] Note, however, the minor discrepancies between Augustine's two versions of the 'Cur igitur Deus homini' sentence:

C. *Jul.*: 'Cur igitur Deus homini, animus imperat corpori, ratio libidini *iracundiaeque et ceteris vitiosis eiusdem* animi partibus?'

a small part of the whole. This means, for example, that we cannot be sure how Cicero characterized those for whom slavery is beneficial. In some heavily abbreviated sentences from the *City of God*, Augustine refers to them as provincials, as the wicked (*improbi*), and as people who might do harm if not tamed.[10] This should not be taken to imply that Cicero lumped all provincials together as deserving of enslavement, and defined them simply as a rebellious or criminal element who must be subdued because of their capacity to cause injury. But injury to whom? Just to pose this question is to raise the possibility that Cicero recognized different kinds of subjects who merited different kinds of treatment, that there were some who had to be protected rather than constrained. This turns out to be a central theme of the whole passage (see below).

Meanwhile, we do have, in the *Contra Julianum*, something that is presented as a direct quotation from Cicero, and it throws a different light on the character of those who deserved to be slaves: they are inferiors (*infimi*),[11] whose domination by the best men to their own very great advantage has been ordained by nature. The inferiors of Cicero beg to be compared with the inferiors or fools of Stoic doctrine, who are many, and inferior to the few wise men.[12] In general, this text bears witness to an interest in Cicero to link the debate over imperialism, which might seem to be a narrowly political issue, with the traditional philosophical discussions concerning the nature of hierarchical relationships both political and domestic. A similar function is performed by the analogy with the soul, which so impresses Augustine (who calls it noble and cites it twice), and which is also undoubtedly Ciceronian. The soul is said to rule over lust as a master over slaves, 'coercing it and breaking its hold', whereas the soul rules over the body as a king over his citizens or a parent over his children. Augustine goes on to

De civ. Dei: 'Cur igitur Deus homini, animus imperat corpori, ratio libidini *ceterisque vitiosis* animi partibus?'

The latter appears to be a mildly truncated version of the former, which was presumably the original.

[10] Cf. *De civ. Dei* 14.23, referring to a lack of capacity to obey on the part of the vicious elements of the soul (cf. slaves), in comparison with bodily members (cf. children).

[11] The reading *infimorum* rather than *infirmorum* in *C. Jul.* seems certain, in view of *infimum bonum . . . minora bona* earlier in the same text.

[12] For Stoic inferiors, see ch. 9. There is a superficial resemblance between this passage and the fragment of Posidonius' *Histories* on the submission of the Mariandyni to the Heracleots. But, despite accepted opinion, Posidonius does not have natural slavery in mind here. See pp. 146–50.

supply, also in the *Contra Julianum*, a fuller but emended statement of the same point. The analogy between soul/body and the political relationship is maintained, but romanized: to kings is added, on the side of the rulers, generals, magistrates, senate and popular assemblies, and to citizens, on the side of the ruled, allies. Meanwhile the rule of the soul over lust is given a more precise formulation in terms of the rule of 'the best part of the soul', that is, intelligence or reason over 'its own vicious and weak elements, such as the lustful desires, anger, and the other disquieting emotions'.

We are now in a better position to assess the content and thrust of Laelius' argument. The Roman focus of the discussion is clear. Laelius' defence of justice in a state, and in the Roman state in particular, led into a favourable account of Roman imperialism, to the effect that its moving spirit was the desire to defend and protect Rome's allies (see B2d above). It is likely that this was the aspect of the argument which Cicero himself wished to stress. It is interesting in this connection that when he speaks in his own voice about Roman imperialism, in the passage of the *De officiis* (*On Duties*) that runs parallel to the one under discussion, the language of overlordship (*dominatio*) is deliberately replaced by that of patronage (*patrocinium*):

> As long as the empire of the Roman People maintained itself by acts of service not of oppression, wars were waged in the interest of our allies or to safeguard our supremacy: the end of our wars was marked by acts of clemency or by only a necessary degree of severity; the senate was a haven of refuge for kings, tribes and nations; and the highest ambition of our magistrates and generals was to defend our provinces and allies with justice and honour. And so our government could be called more accurately a protectorate of the world than a dominion. (*De off.* 2.26)[13]

This was the ideal. In the passage from the *De re publica*, Cicero was more prepared to confront reality, the existence of unwilling and rebellious subjects alongside friends and allies. Different responses to Roman rule required different styles of treatment.[14] Cicero developed this line of argument with the aid of illustrations from the family and the state, underpinned by the analogy of the soul. This part of the argument incorporates ingredients from earlier justifications of slavery. There is a distinct Aristotelian ring in the idea that slavery is

[13] Contrast the more jingoistic comments in Cicero, *Phil.* 6.7.19; 10.10.19–20.
[14] Cf. Virgil, *Aen.* 6.853: 'parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.'

beneficial *to the slaves*, the placing of this idea in the general context of the natural advantage to inferiors to be ruled by their superiors, and the analogy between slaves and the libidinous elements of the soul. There are also divergencies from Aristotle, and contributions from other sources are likely.[15] The influence of the Middle Stoics Panaetius and Posidonius has been suspected, but this is a false trail. We have in any case little direct knowledge of their works. With regard to Panaetius, who is often seen as a dominant influence over Cicero, at least in *De officiis*, there is the attendant risk of denying Cicero a mind of his own.[16] Not that Cicero gives Laelius anything very novel to say here.[17] Meanwhile, we should not forget that Carneades, notoriously, had put both sides of the case. Philus advanced arguments associated with him – and disowned them.[18] Was Carneades also a source for Laelius, at any rate for the more traditional philosophical side of the argument?

B3 Philo, *Legum allegoria* (*Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis*) 3.88 (early first century AD)

> Once again, of Jacob and Esau, when still in the womb, God declares that the one is a ruler and leader and master, but that Esau is a subject and a slave. For God the maker of living beings knows well the different pieces of his own handiwork, even before He has thoroughly chiselled and consummated them, and the faculties which they are to display at a later time, in a word, their deeds and experiences. And so when Rebecca, the soul that waits on God, goes to inquire of God, He tells her in reply, 'Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger' [Gen. 25:23]. For in God's judgement that which is base and irrational is by nature a slave, but that

[15] But in Cicero's formulation Aristotle's soul analogies are reversed. See Ferrary (1988), 371–4. Cicero indicates elsewhere that he thought of himself as following (Pythagorean and) Platonic psychology: See *Tusc.* 4.10.

[16] See Atkins (1989); Griffin and Atkins (1991), introduction. Against the influence of Panaetius or Posidonius in this passage, see Ferrary (1988), 363–81.

[17] Here I differ from Dumont (1983) (1989), 693–724; cf. Ferrary (1988) (1995), 62 n. 30: 'He [*sc.* Cicero] replaces the Aristotelian notion of a slave by nature with that of a slave by defect of character.'

In general, Cicero appears to have had little to contribute to slave theory.

[18] See *De re pub.* 3.8.

which is of fine character and endowed with reason and better, is princely and free. And this not only when either is full-grown in soul, but even if their development is still uncertain.

B4 Origen, *Homily on Genesis* 16.1 (mid third century AD)

1. According to the trustworthiness of scripture, no Egyptian was free. For 'Pharaoh reduced the people to slavery to himself', nor did he leave anyone free within the borders of the Egyptians, but freedom was taken away in all the land of Egypt. And perhaps for this reason it is written: 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' Egypt, therefore, became the house of bondage and, what is more unfortunate, of voluntary bondage.

For although it is related of the Hebrews that they were reduced to bondage, and that, freedom having been snatched away, they bore the yoke of tyranny, nevertheless they are said to have been brought to this state 'violently' . . . There was a natural freedom in them which was not wrenched away from them easily or by some deception, but by force.

But Pharaoh easily reduced the Egyptian people to bondage to himself, nor is it written that he did this by force. For the Egyptians are prone to a degenerate life and quickly sink to every slavery of the vices. Look at the origin of the race and you will discover that their father Ham, who had laughed at his father's nakedness, deserved a judgement of this kind, that his son Canaan should be a servant to his brothers, in which case the condition of bondage would prove the wickedness of his conduct. Not without merit, therefore, does the discoloured posterity imitate the ignobility of the race.

But the Hebrews, even if they be reduced to bondage . . . suffer 'violently' and by necessity. For this reason, therefore, they are freed 'from the house of bondage' and recalled to the original freedom which they had lost against their will. For it is even provided for in the divine laws that if perhaps someone buy a Hebrew slave, he may not possess him in perpetual bondage, but the slave may serve him for six years and in the seventh year he may depart free. Nothing like this is proposed concerning the Egyptians. Nowhere does the divine Law entertain concern for Egyptian freedom, because they had lost it willingly. It leaves

them to the eternal yoke of their condition and to perpetual bondage.

2. If therefore we understand these words spiritually, what the bondage of the Egyptians is, we recognize that to serve the Egyptians is nothing other than to become submissive to carnal vices and to be subjected to demons.

B5 Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 20 (late fourth century AD)

Some say that the Spirit is neither master nor slave, but like a freeman. What miserable nonsense! What pitiful audacity! What shall I lament, their ignorance or their blasphemy? They insult the dogmas pertaining to the divine nature by confining them within human categories. They think they see differences of dignity among men, and then apply such variation to the ineffable nature of God. Do they not realize that even among men, no one is a slave by nature? Men are brought under the yoke of slavery either because they are captured in battle or else they sell themselves into slavery owing to poverty, as the Egyptians became the slaves of Pharaoh. Sometimes, by a wise and inscrutable providence, worthless children are commanded by their father to serve their more intelligent brothers and sisters. Any upright person investigating the circumstances would realize that such situations bring much benefit, and are not a sentence of condemnation for those involved. It is better for a man who lacks intelligence and self-control to become another's possession. Governed by his master's intelligence, he will become like a chariot driven by a skilled horseman, or a ship with a seasoned sailor at the tiller. That is why Jacob obtained his father's blessing and became Esau's master: so that this foolish son, who had no intelligence properly to guide him, might profit from his prudent brother, even against his will. Canaan became 'a slave of slaves to this brother', because his father Ham was void of understanding, unable to teach his son any virtue. That is why men become slaves, but those who escape poverty, war, or the need of a guardian, are free. And even though one man is called a master, and another a slave, we are all the possessions of our Creator; we all share the rank of slave . . . So whom will you call a freeman? Someone who serves no King? Someone who lacks both the strength to rule or the will-

ingness to be ruled? No such nature exists, and it is blasphemous to think that the spirit is such a being. Either He is a creature, and therefore a slave, or else He is above creation and shares the Kingship.

B6 Ambrose, *De Jacob et vita beata* 2.3.11 (cf. AMB6)

The one who could not command and rule the other ought to have served him, in order to be ruled by the one who was more wise. It was not the role of the holy patriarch to deliver his own son to the ignoble state of slavery. But since he had two sons, one without moderation and the other moderate and wise, in order to take care of both like a good father, he placed the moderate son over the son without moderation, and he ordered the foolish one to obey the one who was wise. For the foolish man cannot of his own accord be a disciple of virtue or persevere in his intent, because the fool changes like the moon. Isaac was right to deny Esau freedom to make his own choices: else he might drift like a ship in the waves without a helmsman.

These passages treat the classic Old Testament enslavements of Canaan and Esau, and in a way that evokes Aristotle's natural slave theory. We are presented with, in effect, a theological version of the theory: each account accepts that Divine Providence is at work.

Philo, considering the words of God to Rebecca and their outcome in the enslavement of Esau to his brother Jacob, concludes that this is a case of the subjection of a 'natural slave', judged by God to be inferior and lacking in reason, to a natural free man who is endowed with virtue and reason. Other passages from Philo (to be discussed in ch. 10) elaborate on Esau's vicious nature, add the idea that he benefited from his enslavement, and suggest that he stands for a class of people naturally suited to serve. The fact that God is creator as well as judge of Esau and his like is not treated as at all problematic.

Origen on the basis of scriptural testimony classes the Hebrews as naturally free and the Egyptians by strong implication as natural slaves. He specifically notes the contrasting ways in which they allegedly submitted to slavery (the Egyptians voluntarily, the Hebrews only under constraint), and the six-year limit placed on Hebrew slavery. Origen explains that the Egyptians only too easily became slaves to vice, a propensity already present in their putative ancestor Ham, and

in his case punished by his son's slavery.[19]

Basil's analysis is complex and confused. Having declared initially that slavery is not natural but is rather a consequence of capture or self-sale, he introduces natural slavery alongside these other means of entry into the slave condition (to which is later added the need of a guardian) in order to explain another form of enslavement, of which Esau and Canaan serve as examples.[20] The basic elements in the account are the superior intelligence of the masters, the lack of intelligence and a *natural* lack of self-control in the enslaved and (in some detail) the benefits accruing to them from their subject condition. Basil rounds off his discussion with the assertion that every created thing is a slave of the Creator anyway.[21] All this is in service of the theological argument that the Holy Spirit is not a slave (nor for that matter free, this being another human category), but divine, as being above creation.

Ambrose returns on several occasions to the story of Esau's enslavement, but only in the *De Jacob* does he pause over the patriarch's action – the role of God is never questioned. Any suggestion of criticism is quickly dispelled, as Ambrose moves into a Philonian explanation stressing the deficiencies of Esau and the benefits that accrued to him from his enslavement to a wise man. In this account Esau and Jacob are natural slave and natural master in all but name.

87 Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19.15 (part; see AUG 10) (AD 425)

> The prime cause of slavery, then, is sin, so that man was put under man in a state of bondage; and this can be only by a judgement of God, in whom there is no unrighteousness, and who knows how to assign divers punishments according to the deserts of the sinners.

Augustine, unlike the writers just cited (83–6), does see a moral dilemma in a just God imposing slavery on a section of his creation, and he resolves it by representing this as a punishment for sin. The finger is pointed decisively at man: because of Adam's sin, man

[19] For Philo's rather similar treatment of Egypt, see pp. 170–1. According to Basil, the Egyptians sold themselves into slavery out of poverty.

[20] Basil contradicts himself, unless he is using *phusis* in the sense of 'birth' – as Ambrose uses *natura*. See ch. 12.

[21] For the development of this idea in Origen, Athanasius and Augustine, see pp. 227–31.

deserves slavery. Moreover, a few chapters further on, Augustine will say that for some people, at any rate, slavery is beneficial (cf. B2a, end) – a declaration that carries a whiff of natural slave theory.

B8 Florentinus, in *Dig.* 1.5.4.2 (second century AD)

> Slaves (*servi*) are so-called because generals have a custom of selling their prisoners and thereby *preserving* rather than killing them: and indeed they are said to be *mancipia*, because they are captives in the hand (*manus*) of their enemies.

Natural slave theory represented slavery as a blessing to natural slaves. Other weaker assertions along the same lines surface in certain authors. Jurists, perhaps feeling the need to justify the existence of slavery by the 'law of nations' (*ius gentium*), suggested on the basis of a false etymology that for war captives slavery was a benefit, in as much as they had been rescued from death at the hands of their captors. Alan Watson introduces the texts in this way:

> The declaration that slavery is an institution of the law of nations that is contrary to nature . . . betrays an uneasiness over the morality of slavery which may account for the placing of the next text both by Florentinus . . . and in Justinian's *Institutes* (IJ 1.3.3) . . . The correctness of the etymologies need not detain us, but the existence of the text just in this position suggests that slavery is being morally justified: slaves are persons who have received a benefit – their lives have been preserved when they would otherwise have been violently ended.[22]

Another severely practical justification of slavery, in terms of the greater security available to slaves in comparison with the free poor, surfaces in the *Discourses* of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, who had himself been a slave (his name means 'acquired in addition'):

B9 Epictetus 4.1.33–7

> The slave wishes to be set free immediately. Why? Do you think that he wishes to pay money to the collectors of twentieths? No; but because he imagines that hitherto through not having

[22] Watson (1987), 8. See also Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 19.15. Fragment 102 of Heraclitus sanctions the enslavement which is an outcome of war: strife is necessary for existence, it necessarily takes the form of war, slavery is the inevitable consequence of war, and is therefore justified. See Schlaifer (1936), 113.

> obtained this, he is hindered and unfortunate. 'If I shall be set free, immediately it is all happiness, I care for no man, I speak to all as an equal and, like to them, I go where I choose, I come from any place I choose, and I go where I choose.' Then he is set free; and forthwith having no place where he can eat, he looks for some man to flatter, some one with whom he shall sup: then he . . . works with his body and endures the most dreadful things; and if he can find someone to feed him he falls into a slavery much worse than his former slavery . . . He says, What evil did I suffer in my state of slavery? Another clothed me, another supplied me with shoes, another fed me, another looked after me in sickness; and I did only a few services for him. But now a wretched man, what things I suffer, being a slave of many instead of to one.

The theme occurs elsewhere in literature, in Roman comedy, perhaps drawing on Greek models, and in Christian sources.[23] Advocates of slavery in the American South liked to contrast the miserable, 'slavish' condition of the poor, 'free' workers of the North and of England with their own well-cared-for slaves. Thus, Edmund Ruffin wrote:

> Hence, while all of the millions of pauper populations of England are truly slaves, and as much under constraint as if each one and his family belonged to an individual master, or as negro slaves are here, they have not the familiar comforts, or the care for the preservation of their health and lives, enjoyed by every negro slave in Virginia and Mississippi.[24]

From the other side of the fence, Patsy Mitchner, a child of eight at emancipation, told an interviewer in 1937:

> Slavery was better for us than things is now, in some cases. Niggers then didn't have no responsibility, just work, obey and eat. Now they got to shuffle around and live on just what the white folks mind to give them. Slaves prayed for freedom. Then they got it and didn't know what to do with it. They was turned out with nowhere to go and nothing to live on. They had no experience in looking out for themselves, and nothing to live on. They had no experience in looking out for themselves, and nothing to work with, and no land.[25]

[23] See Plautus, *Cas.* 293; *Epid.* 725; Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 61.5.

[24] Cited from McKitrick (1963), 79.

[25] Cited from Hurmence (1984), 79. The slaves' prayers for freedom were too successful, according to Patsy Mitchner, comparing them to the prayers for rain that produce a flood. She concludes: 'Slavery was a bad thing, and freedom, of the kind we got,

We have no means of telling how common it was for slaves in Greece and Rome to suffer a deterioration in their material circumstances after manumission. For the argument to have a chance of achieving its end, namely, to persuade slaves to be contented with their lot, it had at least to sound plausible. For some slaves no doubt it did. But they presumably went on 'praying for freedom'.

The parallel argument or conceit, that a slave is better off than his master, is advanced by two writers of late antiquity, Libanius, the orator from Antioch, and Theodoret, another Antiochene, who became bishop of Cyrrhus.[26] Libanius (b. 314) was an old man or recently deceased when Theodoret (b. ?383–93) appeared on the scene. Though on different sides of the pagan/Christian divide, the two men were self-evidently products of the same educational system.

B10 Libanius, 'On slavery', *Orationes* 25.66–7 (AD 383–93)

> Menander, son of Diopeithes, was not lacking in shrewdness. He very often found himself in thrall to his own slaves, and thus felt able to say: 'There is only one slave in the house: the master.' And certainly, keeping a slave, in good seasons and in bad, is a real worry. All the slave has to do is cast his eyes towards his master's hands, whereas the master is obliged to hold out his hands to the slave. He may well complain about the weather, the anger of Zeus, the failure of the winds to blow, and all that hinders the ripening of the crop. But none of these things release him from the performance of his duty to the slave. On the contrary, the land always provides the slave with something, even when it provides nothing. As for clothes and shoes, the cloth is woven and the leather stitched up while he sleeps. If the slave falls ill, he has nothing to be anxious about except his illness; to another falls the worry of seeing to remedies, doctors, incantations. And at the moment of death, there is no need for fear on the subject of burial; the burden of that will fall on the man who, for all that he appears to be a master, is in actual fact a slave.

with nothing to live on, was bad. Two snakes full of poison. One lying with his head pointing north, the other with his head pointing south, and the snake called freedom lay with his head pointed north. Both bit the nigger, and they was both bad.' See Escott (1979), ch. 7.

[26] For Libanius, *Or.* 25, see the edition and French translation of Schouler (1973); for the treatise of Theodoret see *PG* 83.665–85, and the English translation of Halton (1988).

B11 Theodoret, 'That the division into slaves and masters is an advantage in life', *On Divine Providence* 7, at 677B–680B (part) (430s AD)

> If in the interests of truth you were prepared to review all that we have said, leaving mere controversy aside, you would find that the role of master is fraught with care while that of slave has numerous advantages. The master of the house, beset by many worries, considers how to provide for the needs of the slaves, how to pay the state taxes, how to sell his surplus produce and buy what he needs. If the land is unkind to farmers, imitating in this the ingratitude of men to the Creator, the master is distressed, looks around his creditors, pays his accounts, and goes into voluntary slavery . . .
>
> The slave, on the other hand, though a slave in body, enjoys freedom of soul and has none of these worries . . . He takes his food, rationed no doubt, but he has no anxieties.
>
> He lies down to sleep on the pavement, but worry does not banish sleep: on the contrary, its sweetness on his eyelids keeps him from feeling the hardness of the ground. Wisdom, speaking in accordance with nature, said: 'Sleep is sweet to the slave.' [Eccles. 5:1] . . .
>
> His master is constantly bothered by indigestion: he takes more than enough, bolts his food, and forces it down. The slave consumes only what he needs, takes what is given to him with moderation, enjoys what he receives, digests it slowly, and it fortifies him for his work.
>
> You consider only the slavery of this man; you do not consider his health. You see the work, but not the recompense involved; you complain of toil, but forget the happiness of a carefree life . . .

Both discourses are at one level rhetorical exercises, but that does not mean that they are value-free. Theodoret brings to the *thesis* 'That the master/slave division is an advantage in life' a strong degree of personal engagement. The positions he advances may be taken to derive from his own moral and religious convictions and to reflect the (conservative) views of other Christians in his circle. The main thrust of Libanius' discourse or *dialexis*, that free men and slaves are equally

slaves because in one way or another they cannot control their lives, is simply a more subtle way of soothing troubled consciences or heading off challenges, real or potential, to slavery. For if we are all slaves, there is no point in our exercising ourselves over the supposed disadvantages suffered by some of us, namely, physical or institutional slaves.[27]

[27] Libanius admits that physical slaves might be worse off than 'other' slaves, that there might be 'degrees of slavery', but only in passing. See §§30, 35.

4

Slave systems criticized

A number of authors find fault with the slave system as it operated in practice, including the way slaves were treated, and with certain aspects of slave-acquisition. The criticisms that are levelled are concrete and raise practical concerns. They are limited in objective and do not question the existence of slavery as an institution. Hence they have to be carefully distinguished from what appear to be genuine critiques of slavery (see ch. 6). What they suggest is an awareness among society's leaders that the slave system had to be monitored and controlled if society was to remain stable or even survive in its present form. (It does not follow that intervention by political or in the Christian era ecclesiastical authorities was common or effective.) At most, that is, when such criticisms are combined (as in Seneca) with an assertion of the common humanity of masters and slaves, they appear to point to a degree of moral anxiety over slavery. This anxiety may be only skin-deep, and can happily coexist with the view that slavery is perfectly acceptable, so long as it is remembered that slaves are people as well as things. In general, the texts are interesting in helping us to understand at what points slavery as a organization or system became unacceptable in the minds of certain observers, who were themselves participants.

C1 Plato, *Laws* 776c-778a (347/6 BC)

Megillus (Spartan). I do not understand, stranger, what you mean.

Athenian. I am not surprised, Megillus, for the state of the Helots among the Lacedaemonians is of all Hellenic forms of slavery the most controverted and disputed about, some

approving and some condemning it; there is less dispute about the slavery which exists among the Heracleots, who have subjugated the Mariandynians, and about the Thessalian *penestai* . . . Different persons have got these two different notions of slaves in their minds – some of them utterly distrust their servants, and, as if they were wild beasts, chastise them with goads and whips, and make their souls three times, or rather many times, as slavish as they were before; and others do the opposite . . .

Cleinias (*Cretan*). Then what are we to do in our own country, stranger, as regards the right to own and punish slaves, seeing that there are such differences in the treatment of them?

Athenian. Well, Cleinias, there can be no doubt that man is a troublesome animal, and therefore he is not very manageable, nor likely to become so, when you attempt to introduce the necessary division of slave, and freeman, and master; that is obvious. He is a troublesome piece of goods, as has been often shown by the frequent revolts of the Messenians, and the real mischiefs which happen in states having many slaves who speak the same language, and the numerous robberies and lawless life of the Italian *banditti* as they are called. A man who considers all this is fairly at a loss. Two remedies alone remain to us – not to have the slaves of the same country, nor if possible, speaking the same language; in this way they will more easily be held in subjection; secondly, we should tend them carefully, not only out of regard for them, but yet more out of respect for ourselves . . . Slaves ought to be punished as they deserve, and not admonished as if they were freemen, which will only make them conceited. The language used to a servant ought always to be that of a command, and we ought not to jest with them, whether they are males or females – this is a foolish way which many people have of setting up their slaves, and making the life of servitude more disagreeable both for them and for their masters.

C2 Diodorus Siculus 34.2.25–6, 33 (mid first century BC)

There was never a sedition of slaves so great as that which occurred in Sicily . . . To most people these events came as an unexpected and sudden surprise, but to those who were capable of judging affairs realistically they did not seem to happen

without reason. Because of the superabundant prosperity of those who exploited the products of this mighty island, nearly all who had risen in wealth affected first a luxurious mode of living, then arrogance and insolence. As a result of this, since both the maltreatment of the slaves and their estrangement from their masters increased at an equal rate, there was at last, when occasion offered, a violent outburst of hatred . . .

Not only in the exercise of political power should men of prominence be considerate towards those of low estate, but so also in private life they should – if they are sensible – treat their slaves gently. For heavy-handed arrogance leads states into civil strife and factionalism between citizens, and in individual households it paves the way for plots of slaves against masters and for terrible uprisings in concert against the whole state. The more power is perverted to cruelty and lawlessness, the more the character of those subject to that power is brutalized to the point of desperation. Anyone whom fortune has set in low estate willingly yields place to his superiors in point of gentility and esteem, but if he is deprived of due consideration, he comes to regard those who harshly lord it over him with bitter enmity.

C3 Seneca, *Epistulae* 47.2–5, 11–13 (mid first century AD)

That is why I smile at those who think it degrading for a man to dine with his slave. But why should they think it degrading? It is only because purse-proud etiquette surrounds a householder at his dinner with a mob of standing slaves. The master eats more than he can hold, and with monstrous greed loads his belly until it is stretched and at length ceases to do the work of a belly; so that he is at greater pains to discharge all the food than he was to stuff it down. All this time the poor slaves may not move their lips, even to speak. The slightest murmur is repressed by the rod; even a chance sound – a cough, a sneeze, or a hiccup – is visited with the lash. There is a grievous penalty for the slightest breach of silence. All night long they must stand about, hungry and dumb.

The result of it all is that these slaves, who may not talk in their master's presence, talk about their master. But the slaves of former days, who were permitted to converse not only in their master's presence, but actually with him, whose mouths were

not stitched up tight, were ready to bare their necks for their master, to bring upon their own heads any danger that threatened him; they spoke at the feast, but kept silence during torture. Finally, the saying, in allusion to this same high-handed treatment, becomes current: 'As many enemies as you have slaves.' They are not enemies when we acquire them; we make them enemies.

I shall pass over other cruel and inhuman conduct towards them; for we maltreat them, as if they were not men, but beasts of burden . . .

I do not wish to involve myself in too large a question, and to discuss the treatment of slaves, towards whom we Romans are excessively haughty, cruel and insulting. But this is the kernel of my advice: treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters. And as often as you reflect how much power you have over a slave, remember that your master has just as much power over you. 'But I have no master', you say. You are still young; perhaps you will have one. Do you not know at what age Hecuba entered captivity, or Croesus, or the mother of Darius, or Plato, or Diogenes?

Associate with your slave on kindly, even on affable, terms; let him talk with you, plan with you, live with you . . .

Plato introduces two distinct themes. At one level he is criticising helotage (or state serfdom) in Sparta, which was notoriously unstable: he identifies the cause of the problem in enslavement *without deracination*. The Helots, who were Greeks, Laconian or Messenian, had been subjected *in situ*, and allowed to maintain their culture intact. In this context revolts were likely or inevitable, moreover, revolts with a 'nationalistic' air about them. The second theme is the proper treatment of slaves. This is not developed specifically in connection with helotage, though there can be no doubt that harsh treatment exacerbated the helot problem. Rather, Plato issues a general directive applicable to the operation of domestic slavery, namely, that masters should never unbend towards their slaves, but communicate with them only through commands.

The discussion of the First Sicilian Slave War in the universal history of Diodorus of Sicily (preserved in substantial fragments in Byzantine works) begs comparison with the passage of Plato. It traces

the origins of the War to, on the one hand, systemic errors (the slaves were too many, and a number of them were employed as more or less free-range herdsmen, and were allowed to indulge in banditry), and, on the other, the brutality of masters (who freely used marks, brands and fetters, and provided minimal subsistence). Diodorus, unlike Plato, shows some interest in and understanding of the mentality of slaves, and this has led scholars to detect the influence of the historical works of Posidonius the Stoic philosopher (among others). This is a reasonable enough supposition, even if only one passage can be securely identified as Posidonian, an unsympathetic portrayal of the slave-owner Damophilus. In any case, Diodorus' discussion, though balanced and evenhanded, contains no philosophical, let alone specifically Stoic, argument – unlike that of Seneca in his 47th Letter and the third book of the *De beneficiis*.[1]

If Plato adopts a cold and severe tone in his discussion of slave-treatment, and Diodorus writes with some sympathy for the rebellious slaves, Seneca, focusing on slavery in the household, is passionate and humane.[2] This does not mean that his approach is direct. The basic message of the three writers is similar, the risk of slave-violence, but in Seneca it has to be read between the lines. Seneca attacks the behaviour of masters, but he pulls his punches. The charge is made that masters are brutal to their slaves. However, Seneca backs away from a full and emotive discussion, restricting himself to a tepid example of maltreatment, namely, overweening behaviour at the dinner-table. As for the theme of slave-retaliation, this is soft-pedalled. Seneca directs the gaze of his readers to the future, reminding them that fortune is fickle and can quickly convert an arrogant master into a slave or a slave into an arrogant master (something of a topos). As for the present, we hear only that abused slaves become enemies. Need he say more? The risk of assassination was real and ever-present. In Seneca's own lifetime, in a celebrated incident carrying grave political repercussions, the prefect of the city of Rome was killed by a member of his huge urban *familia* of slaves (and freedmen).[3] Considering that his subject

[1] Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 542b = F59 EK (Edelstein and Kidd (19-2)); cf. Diodorus 34.2.34. On sources, see Dumont (1989), 203–13, 239–41; Kidd, *Comm.* on F59 EK and F262 EK. See Garnsey (forthcoming).

[2] He also in *Ep.* 47.5 (quoted) and elsewhere supports his case by appealing to the common kinship of man. For this reason other parts of *Ep.* 47 are treated below, in ch. 5.

[3] Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.42–5.

was domestic slavery, he probably calculated that what he had said was quite enough to disturb his audience.

Seneca, steering clear of close analysis, also missed the opportunity to make the obvious suggestion that the quality of the relationship between master and slaves was to some extent a function of the number of slaves in the household. The murdered city prefect had had (in round figures) 400 domestic slaves. Seneca does address the subject of the size of a slave household in *De tranquillitate animi*, but only with a view to demonstrating that ownership of a large contingent of slaves is incompatible with happiness:

> If anyone has any doubt about the happiness of Diogenes, he may likewise have doubt about the condition of the immortal gods as well . . . Would you say that Demetrius, the freedman of Pompey, who was not ashamed to be richer than Pompey, was a happier man? He, to whom two underlings and a roomier cell would once have been wealth, used to have the number of his slaves reported to him every day as if he were the general of an army. But the only slave Diogenes had ran away from him once, and, when he was pointed out to him, he did not think it worthwhile to fetch him back. 'It would be a shame', he said, 'if Diogenes is not able to live without Manes when Manes is able to live without Diogenes.' But he seems to me to have cried: 'Fortune, mind your own business; Diogenes has now nothing of yours. My slave has run away – nay, it is I that have got away free.' (*De tranqu. an.* 8.5–7)

Moreover, in the passage that follows, dealing with the disadvantages of owning many slaves, it is the economic burden, and the nuisance value, of having slaves which are brought to the fore. Physical danger to the master, and indeed slave-treatment in general, are not alluded to:

> A household of slaves requires clothes and food; so many bellies of creatures that are always hungry have to be filled, we have to buy clothing for them, and watch their most thievish hands, and use the services of people weeping and cursing. How much happier is he whose only obligation is to one whom he can most easily refuse – himself. Since, however, we do not have such strength of character, we ought at least to reduce our possessions, so as to be less exposed to the injuries of Fortune. (*De tranqu. an.* 8.8–9)

The message that we should *reduce* our possessions – including presumably the number of slaves we own – may serve as a reminder that Seneca, just as much as Plato and Diodorus, took for granted the continued presence of slaves. Even Diogenes the Cynic had had a slave, once.

C4 Aristotle, *Politics* 1255a22–9

But some persons, doing their best to cling to some principle of justice (for the law is a principle of justice), assert that the enslavement of prisoners of war is just; yet at the same time they deny the assertion, for there is the possibility that wars may be unjust in their origin, and one would by no means admit that a man who does not deserve slavery can be really a slave – otherwise we shall have the result that persons reputed of the highest nobility are slaves and the descendants of slaves if they happen to be taken prisoners of war and sold. Therefore they do not mean to assert that Greeks themselves if taken prisoners are slaves, but that barbarians are.

C5 Cicero, *De re publica* 3.38 (quoted in Nonius, p. 109.1)

For there is a kind of unjust slavery, when those who are capable of governing themselves are under the domination of another . . .

C6 Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 265b-266f, part (early third century AD) (citing Theopompus and others on the Chians)

The first Greeks, so far as I know, who made use of purchased slaves were the Chians. This is recorded by Theopompus in the seventeenth book of his *Histories*: 'The Chians were the first Greeks, after the Thessalians and Lacedaemonians, to use slaves, but they did not acquire them in the same way. For the Lacedaemonians and Thessalians, as will be seen, constituted their slave-class out of the Greeks who had earlier inhabited the territories which they themselves possess today, the Lacedaemonians taking the land of the Achaeans, the Thessalians that of the Perrhaebians and Magnesians. The people reduced to slavery were in the first instance called helots, in the second *penestai*. But the slaves whom the Chians own are derived from non-Greek peoples, and they pay a price for them.' This, then, is the account given by Theopompus. But I believe that the Deity became angry at the Chians for this practice, since, at a later time, they were disastrously involved in war on account of their slaves . . .[4]

I imagine that none of you is ignorant either of the story told

[4] There follows in Athenaeus a narrative of the slave revolt on Chios by Nymphodorus of Syracuse.

by the noble Herodotus concerning Panionius of Chios and the just deserts which he suffered for having made eunuchs of free-born boys, and selling them. Nicolaos the Peripatetic and Posidonius the Stoic both say in their *Histories* that the Chians were enslaved by Mithridates the Cappadocian and handed over in chains to their own slaves, to be transported to Colchis. So truly did the Deity vent his wrath upon them for being the first to use purchased slaves, although most people did their own work when it came to menial services . . .

C7 Diodorus Siculus 36.3.2–3

The senate then issued a decree that no citizen of an allied state should be held in slavery in a Roman province, and that the praetors should provide for their liberation. In compliance with the decree Licinius Nerva, who was at this time governor of Sicily, appointed hearings and set free a number of slaves, with the result that in a few days more than eight hundred persons obtained their freedom. And all who were in slavery throughout the island were agog with hopes of freedom. The notables, however, assembled in haste and entreated the praetor to desist from this course. Whether he was won over by their bribes or weakly succumbed in his desire to favour them, in any case he ceased to show interest in these tribunals, and when men approached him to obtain freedom, he rebuked them and ordered them to return to their masters. The slaves, banding together, departed from Syracuse, and taking refuge in the sanctuary of the Palici, canvassed the question of revolution.

C8 Augustine, *Epistulae* 10*.2, to Alypius (early 420s AD)

There are so many of those in Africa who are commonly called 'slave dealers' that they seem to be draining Africa of much of its human population and transferring their 'merchandise' to the provinces across the sea. Almost all of these are free persons. Only a few are found to have been sold by their parents, and these people buy them, not as Roman laws permit, as indentured servants for a period of twenty-five years, but in fact they buy them as slaves and sell them across the sea as slaves. True slaves are sold by their masters only rarely. Now from this bunch of merchants has grown up a multitude of pillaging and corrupt-

ing 'dealers' so that in herds, shouting, in frightening military or barbarian attire they invade sparsely populated and remote rural areas and they violently carry off those whom they would sell to these merchants . . .

c9 Augustine, *Epistulae* 24*.1, to Eustochius (early 420s AD)

Therefore, since the Apostle commanded that legal disputes in this world, if they take place among Christians, be settled not in court but in church, there is a necessity for us to put up with wrangling over such issues. There even earthly judgements are sought from us, especially concerning the temporal lot of men, because we are able, according to the apostolic discipline, to command slaves to be subject to their masters, but not to impose the yoke of slavery on free men. With this in mind, I ask your most pure charity to be so kind as to instruct me what is to be observed concerning those who are born of a free woman and a male slave. For I am already aware that those born of a slave girl and a free man are slaves . . .

These texts between them cover most of the ways in which slaves were made. They point to possible 'faults' in the system of slave-acquisition, without, however, questioning the existence of slavery as such. The passage of Athenaeus on the people of Chios is on the surface critical of chattel slavery, but is problematic, and has to be treated as a 'wild card' (see below).

For Aristotle (c4) operating within the framework of natural slave theory, there are people who deserve to be slaves and people who do not. As he puts it elsewhere: 'there exist certain persons who are essentially slaves everywhere, and certain others who are so nowhere' (*Pol.* 1255a31–2). In fact the undeserving are sometimes caught in the net. So Aristotle is compelled to meet those who criticize the doctrine of natural slavery half-way and admit the deficiencies of the standard method of obtaining slaves, capture in war. This method works properly only when a war is just, as it will be whenever Greek fights barbarian. The Cicero fragment (c5) is, at least on the surface (for it lacks a context), compatible with these sentiments.[5]

The people of Chios, says Theopompus in Athenaeus, introduced

[5] The fragment is placed by editors together with others in the context of Laelius' defence of justice. Note that:

chattel slavery (c6). They broke with the tradition according to which a conquering people 'helotized' (or 'enserfed') the native, generally Greek, inhabitants. The Chians acquired non-Greeks, and paid for them. Aristotle would not have been disturbed by any of this, unless we are to suppose that he regarded any method of slave-acquisition other than capture in war as less than ideal. In practice most war captives whose lives were preserved would have been sold as slaves unless ransom-money was made available.[6]

Athenaeus goes on to say that an angry Deity involved Chios in a protracted war with their slaves 'because of this', and in a later incident arranged for Mithridates to hand them over to their own slaves for transportation abroad. Athenaeus (or his Deipnosophist spokesman) deliberately signals these views as his own, and avoids any suggestion that he was merely endorsing received opinion. What moves our opinionated compiler to moralize in this way? Was this an 'emotional reaction experienced in the face of chattel-slavery', as has been suggested?[7]

It was no secret that chattel-slavery was largely unregulated and open to a great deal of abuse. Virtually anyone could be waylaid and carted off to a slave-market, and terrible things could happen to him in the process. Athenaeus picks up the story told in Herodotus (8.105–6) of Panionius of Chios, 'a man who made his living by the abominable trade of castrating any good-looking boys he could get hold of, and taking them to Sardis or Ephesus, where he sold them at a high price', and of the terrible revenge exacted by one of his victims, Hermotimus, on him and his four sons.

At the close of the second century BC, the Roman senate, for political rather than humanitarian reasons one may assume, stepped in to protect citizens of allied cities in Sicily from enslavement. However, its chosen agent, the praetorian governor of the province, crumpled in the face of powerful vested interests – and so a second terrible slave war erupted.

Augustine as bishop of Hippo in eastern Algeria describes in a letter

(i) Natural slaves as defined by Aristotle are also incompetent to govern themselves.

(ii) Cicero in another fragment distinguishes between just and unjust wars – the Romans fight only the former. See Isidorus, *Orig.* 18.1 (= 82d).

(iii) In *Phil.* 6.7.19; 10.10.19–20, Cicero sets up an Aristotelian-style dichotomy between Romans, who cannot be slaves, and others.

[6] On ransoming, see Pritchett (1991), 245–311.

[7] See Vidal-Naquet (1972), p. 41 n. 16, referring to Momigliano's suggestion made to him. Both historians attribute the sentiment not to Athenaeus but to 'certains milieux intellectuels de la fin de l'époque hellénistique.'

how he saved a boatload of his parishioners from sale abroad through the agency of unscrupulous slave-traders, and put church funds into bringing back others seized by barbarians (c8). In a second letter he asks a friend Eustochius for advice as to the status of the issue of a certain kind of mixed union (c9). It is in this second letter that he sets out the two general principles that guide him, namely, that the free should not be enslaved and that slaves should obey their masters. By 'free' he means free provincials, or as he puts it in Letter 10*, 'Romans from the provinces', as distinct from 'barbarians', who are fair game. (§5). The Roman army can resist genuine barbarian forces, motivated by the fear 'that Romans will be held in barbarian captivity', and by implication, by the desire to take man-booty themselves. But, in what Augustine dresses up rhetorically as a role reversal, there is a plague of evil traders who 'invade' Africa in the garb of barbarian soldiers, 'emptying' it of 'its native inhabitants'. Augustine is not attacking slave-trading as such, but only the 'cowboys' in the trade who have extended it into unacceptable and illegitimate areas, that is, beyond traffic in slaves and barbarians. In this he was in step with the imperial government, which had a decade or two earlier issued an edict in the name of the emperor Honorius 'repressing traffic of this sort, sentencing such wicked "businessmen" to be flogged with leaden thongs, proscribed, and sent into perpetual exile' (§3). Similarly, in the letter to Eustochius, Augustine shows himself perfectly prepared to rule, in his capacity as episcopal judge, that the children of a free woman and a male slave are slaves, if that is the law.

To return to the Chians: what we have in Athenaeus is something less than a root-and-branch criticism of the operation of the slave market; and slavery could not have survived without it. Why did the Chians have trouble with their slaves? If we were not dependent on the snippets of Athenaeus, if we had the quality and quantity of information about Chios that we have about Sicily, we would no doubt find that the root of the trouble lay in the numbers of slaves (there were, presumably proportionately, more slaves in Chios than anywhere else in Greece apart from Sparta, according to Thucydides), their mode of employment and the way they were treated.[8]

[8] See Thucydides 8.40.2 on slavery in Chios. Athenaeus is alive to the issue of treatment, as is shown both by his use of Herodotus' story concerning Panionius and by the direction that his discussion takes after he has finished with the Chians: 'The Athenians took measures to protect the condition of their slaves . . .'.

5

Fair words

The abolition of slavery was not contemplated in antiquity. But some voiced opinions that might have led to a campaign against the institution in a different historical context. These included men of power: Seneca, for example, adviser to the emperor Nero and a leading senator, or Ulpian, whose service to the Severan dynasty culminated in his tenure of the praetorian prefecture, in which capacity he was the highest legal authority in the empire after the emperor. Both men were theoretically well placed to work for reform in the area of slave law. To say that they were disinclined to do so would be inaccurate: more likely, the possibility never occurred to them.

The surviving evidence for attitudes to slavery offers a number of 'progressive' utterances (this chapter) and a few critical comments on slavery (ch. 6). This distinction may be illustrated from a comparison between a comment of Aristotle and two legal texts from the Roman period, which run as follows:

D1 Florentinus, in *Digest* 1.5.4, pref.(second century AD)

> Slavery is an institution of the law of nations (*ius gentium*), whereby someone, against nature, is made subject to the ownership of another.

D2 Ulpian, in *Digest* 50.17.32 (early third century AD)

> With respect to the civil law (*ius civile*) slaves are held to have no standing. But as regards natural law (*ius naturale*) that is not the case. According to natural law all men are equal.

In the view of these jurists, the status of slaves in civil law and in natural law did not tally. In making this observation they were not

engaging in a debate on the morality of slavery, but making a formal distinction between different kinds of law. Their commitment to positive law, which upheld, administered and legitimated slavery, was total. In contrast, Aristotle, writing in Athens five centuries previously, knew of men 'versed in the law' who condemned slavery as an unjust institution based on force (E2).

D3 Sophocles, fr. 854 (late fifth century BC)

The body is servile, but the mind is free.

D4 Euripides, fr. 831 (cf. *Ion* 854–6; fr. 511) (late fifth century BC)

Many a slave is dishonoured by nothing but the name, while his soul may be more free than that of a non-slave.

D5 Euripides, *Helen* 728–33

Messenger:
Though I was born a slave, with a slave's name,
My mind is my own, and I should like to be ranked
Among the noble slaves. Far better that way
Than for one man to be twice handicapped –
Having to obey the people round about him
And to be cursed with a servile spirit too.

D6 *Comparatio Menandri et Philistionis* II.117 (late fourth century BC)

Be free in spirit, even if you are a slave: then you will no longer be a slave.

D7 Bion, in Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 3.2.28 (early third century BC)

Good slaves are free, but bad free men are slaves of many passions.

D8 Zeno, cited by Diogenes Laertius 7.32–3, part (cf. 51) (early third century BC)

Some people criticize Zeno extensively . . . for his statement [*sc.* in his *Republic*] that all who are not virtuous are foes, enemies, slaves and estranged from one another, including parents and children, brothers and brothers, relations and relations. They criticize him again for presenting only virtuous people in the Republic as citizens, friends, relations and free . . .

D9 Seneca, *De beneficiis* (*On Benefits*) 3.20.1

It is a mistake for anyone to believe that the condition of slavery penetrates into the whole being of a man. The better part of him is exempt. Only the body is at the mercy and disposition of a master. The mind, however, is its own master.

D10 Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes* 15.29 (c. AD 100)

But perhaps it was not in this way that the term 'slave' was originally applied – that is, to a person for whose body someone paid money, or, as the majority think, to one who was sprung from persons who were called slaves, but rather to the man who lacked a free man's spirit and was of a servile nature. For of those who are called slaves we will, I presume, admit that many have the spirit of free men, and that among free men there are many who are altogether servile. The case is the same with those known as 'noble' and 'well-born.'

These texts, some of them mere fragments, distinguish between legal and moral slavery.[1] This distinction is especially associated with Stoicism. I cite above Zeno the founder of Stoicism, Seneca, a prominent late Stoic, and from the next generation Dio Chrysostom, a Stoicizing philosopher and rhetorician from Prusa in north-west Asia Minor. According to this school of thought, in the sphere of the mind or soul master and slave are on equal terms. Their positions might actually be reversed if the 'master' is servile in spirit and the 'slave' free. The slavery that is a property of the mind is true slavery, and its counterpart, freedom, true freedom. Dio speculates that the concepts of freedom and slavery might *originally* have been applied in this way. However, well before the emergence of Stoicism, these same sentiments had made an appearance in Greek literature, in tragedy in the first instance,[2] circulating therefore quite widely, before they passed by way of a Cynic filter into Stoicism.[3]

[1] On the fragments, see Schlaifer (1936), 199–200; Garlan (1988), 125–6; Cambiano (1987), 24–6. Antisthenes, an associate of Socrates, is credited with a work *On Liberty and Slavery*, but we have no information about its contents.

Antiphon 87 B44 as reinterpreted by Barnes (1987) does not refer to slavery. On the significance of slaveless utopias, mainly a creation of Attic comedians, see Vidal-Naquet (1972); Garlan (1988), 126–38.

[2] For slavery in Euripides, see e.g. Synodinou (1977). The message that comes from the dramatists, including Euripides, is, however, mixed. See e.g. Milani (1972), 68–78.

[3] Bion (cf. D7) was heavily influenced by Cynicism. See in general Kindstrand (1976).

These doctrines were the cheapest form of control at the disposal of the master class, and control was their primary function. There was no need to bring force into play against slaves, if they could be persuaded that virtue was of greater value than legal status and was within their grasp. The virtue attainable by the slave, however, was different and at a lower level from that to which a free man could aspire: it was reducible to loyal service of the master. Whereas the defining characteristic of a free man was independence, a slave, whether good or bad, was necessarily caught up in his or her master's orbit. This remained true through antiquity, from Homer, whose Eumaeus, the faithful swineherd of Odysseus, is the prototype of the good slave, to Seneca, who filled pages of *On Benefits* with *exempla* of special services of individual slaves to their masters, and beyond. The literature from antiquity abounds in edifying stories of good slaves who loyally served their masters even unto death.[4]

This points to a second function of the doctrines in question, to bring comfort and reassurance to masters (rather than to slaves). If masters could persuade *themselves* that their slaves – those with whom they were in daily contact and on whom they were most dependent – were trustworthy and obedient, this eased their fears of suffering death or injury at their hands. More than this, the moral authority of a master who received singular service from a slave was felt to be enhanced. When (to cite a favourite story) Urbinius Panapio set up an inscribed monument to the piety of a slave who had put on his master's clothing and ring and been murdered in his stead, honour redounded on him as well as on his (unnamed) benefactor.[5]

D11 Seneca, *Epistulae* 47.1, 10 (cf. 17) (mid-first century AD)[6]

> I am glad to learn, through those who come from you, that you live on friendly terms with your slaves. This befits a sensible and

But Bion was a contemporary of Zeno, and we need to go back to Diogenes to find a Cynic precursor of the Stoics. See e.g. Diogenes Laertius 6.66; Epictetus 3.24.67 (see n. 1, above).

[4] The story of the slave of Antius Restio, who though punished by his master with branding saved his life, was very popular. See Appian, *Bell. civ.* 4.43; Cassius Dio 47.10; Valerius Maximus 6.8.7; Macrobius 1.2.19–20. Roman comedy is a fruitful source (e.g. Tyndareus in Plautus, *Captivi*). And see next note. Discussions in Vogt (1974), 129–45; Bradley (1984), 21–45.

[5] Appian, *Bell. civ.* 4.44; Cassius Dio 47.10.2–4; Valerius Maximus 6.8.6; Seneca, *De ben.* 3.25; Macrobius 1.2.16.

[6] Cf. Seneca, *De ben.* 3.18.2, 20, 28. See also Ambrose, *Noah* 94 = *CSEL* 32.1.481: 'The same nature is mother of all men, and we are therefore all brothers . . .'

well-educated man like yourself. 'They are slaves', people declare. No, rather they are men. 'Slaves'. No, comrades. 'Slaves'. No, they are unpretentious friends. 'Slaves'. No, they are our fellow-slaves, if one reflects that Fortune has equal rights over slaves and free men alike . . .

Kindly remember that he whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies, and on equal terms with yourself breathes, lives, and dies. It is just as possible for you to see in him a free-born man as for him to see in you a slave.

D12 Epictetus 1.13 (late first / early second century AD)

But when you have asked for warm water and the slave has not heard, or if he did hear has brought only tepid water, or he is not even found to be in the house, then not to be vexed or to burst with passion, is not this acceptable to the gods? 'How then shall a man endure such persons as this slave?' Slave yourself, will you not bear with your own brother, who has Zeus for his progenitor, and is like a son from the same seeds and of the same descent from above? But if you have been put in any such higher place, will you immediately make yourself a tyrant? Will you not remember who you are and whom you rule? That they are kinsmen, that they are brethren by nature, that they are the offspring of Zeus? 'But I have purchased them, and they have not purchased me.' Do you see in what direction you are looking, that it is toward the earth, toward the pit, that it is toward these wretched laws of dead men? But towards the laws of the gods you are not looking.

Seneca and Epictetus eloquently preach the humanity of slaves and the common origin of slaves and masters. The doctrine is presented as a reason for masters to treat their slaves well. This may conceivably have been a subtext of the first group of texts considered above, but it does not come to the surface (in the extant literature) before the late Stoa – by which time the basic message has been considerably elaborated. The humanitarian tone of Seneca (in particular) should not distract our attention from the fact that he, as much as anyone else, saw good master/slave relations as essential to the peace of the household and the survival of the existing social structure. But the nature of his

arguments, and the energy with which they are presented, do perhaps provide an opening for the suggestion that he felt a twinge of conscience at the inhumanity and injustice of slavery.

Be that as it may, the utterance of 'fair words' coexisted with the toleration of harsh realities, in these texts and in society at large. In Seneca's moral equation the fact that slaves were people and shared common kinship with their masters entitled them to good treatment, but he well knew that the dice were loaded against this, in a system which gave all the power to masters and no right of legal redress to slaves, and which routinely prescribed for slaves torture and the most brutal punishments.

D13 Paul, Letter to the Galatians 3:28 (= P9, below) (mid-first century AD)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

D14 Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 124.7 (c. AD 403)

For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands to do wrong.

Now the just are in considerable difficulties, for the unjust are dominant over them. How is this? The unjust attain to official positions in this world; they have become judges, or kings; God does this is order to discipline his flock, to discipline his people; this cannot be done without their being shown the honour owed to those in power. God structured his church in such a way that every position of power that is ordered in the world should receive honour, and sometimes from those who are better men. I will give an example from which you can make inferences concerning all power-grades. The elemental, daily demonstration of the power of man over man is that of master over slaves. Almost every household has a display of power of this kind. There are masters, there are also slaves. The names used are different. Nevertheless, 'men' and 'men' are similar names. And what does the apostle say, instructing slaves to be submissive to their masters? 'Slaves obey your earthly masters . . .'

D15 Augustine, *New Sermon* (*Mainz* 54), ch. 4, lines 91–103 = Dolbeau (1991) = *Rev.Et.Aug.* 37 (1991), 261–306, at 273–4 (early fifth century AD)

But first see this working out in everyday life – for this can furnish you with a way of understanding that God has not abandoned mortal men. There are certain comparisons that can be drawn with human actions which will help us to see that punishment can be inflicted in mercy. Well then: you administer discipline to your slave, and in the act of disciplining him you show pity precisely in appearing to be punishing him – but I do not say this to the slave. Perhaps you are angry with the slave so as to hate him. You should not be, if you are a Christian; you should not be, if you bear in mind that you are a man; you should not be, if you remember that 'slave' and 'master' are different words, but 'man' and 'man' are not. You should not pursue a sinning slave with hatred. But in so far as they are men, let us set aside this comparison and substitute one involving the son. No one can but love his children: a man who loves his son deserves no praise . . .

D16 John Chrysostom, *Homilies on St John* 27 (early fifth century AD)

Let us then obey this teacher of all wisdom, and when we are angry with our slaves, let us consider our own sins, and be ashamed at their forbearance. For when you are insolent and your slave bears your insults in silence, when you act in an unseemly way and he like a wise man, take this instead of any other warning. Though he is your slave, he is still a man, has an immortal soul, and has been honoured with the same gifts as you by your common Lord. And if he who is our equal in more important and more spiritual things, on account of some poor and trifling human superiority bears our injuries so meekly, what pardon can we deserve, what excuse can we make, who cannot, or rather will not, be as wise through fear of God, as he is through fear of us? Considering then all these things, and calling to mind our own transgressions and the common nature of man, let us be careful at all times to speak gently, so that being humble in heart we may find rest for our souls . . .

D17 Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei* (*On the governance of God*) 3.28 (440s AD)

> If slaves obey their masters according to their own judgement they are not obedient even when they obey. When a slave performs only those of his master's commands which he likes to perform, he is not following his master's will, but his own. If we who are but weak little men do not wish to be held entirely in contempt by our slaves whom their slavery makes our inferiors but whom their humanity makes our equals, how unjust is it for us to despise our heavenly Master? Yet we, being human beings, do not think that we should be despised by men who are also human beings. Perhaps we are of such great wisdom and deep intelligence that we, who are unwilling to bear outrages from our slaves, wish God to be subject to outrages from us. Perhaps we believe that God should benignly tolerate those things which we ourselves know are undeserving of human tolerance.

Paul's doctrine of the unity of humanity in Christ runs parallel to the Stoic view and is presented with equal vigour. Certain of the Church Fathers present versions of the common humanity theme, some of them somewhat anodyne, and appearing to owe as much to Stoicism as to New Testament Christianity. And the characteristically Stoic connection of these ideas with instructions to masters to treat their slaves well is sometimes lost or muted.

In Augustine's *Commentary* on Psalm 124, a token evocation of the common humanity of slaves and masters is uncomfortably sandwiched between, on the one hand, the opening pronouncement that by divine ordinance those in power, whether secular or ecclesiastical, just or unjust, are to be honoured, and, on the other, the stern admonition to slaves (for which he enlists the help of Christ) to 'be slaves', and to be good rather than bad slaves.

In the citation from the *New Sermon* Augustine is concerned to justify the anger of God and to characterize it as 'merciful punishment'. He illustrates again from slavery, but finding the example difficult to control (as well he might) he abandons it for the rather more appropriate image of the father disciplining his son. In the moment of transition he reminds the master that to punish the slave, a human being, with hatred, is unchristian. John Chrysostom is also interested in explaining why masters should not lose their temper with their

slaves, but his account is both more generous to the slave and more overtly Christian than that of Augustine. He can however sound decidedly less liberal (see D20).[7]

Salvian, bishop of Marseilles in the mid fifth century, like Augustine, employs the motif of common humanity of masters and slaves in the service of a theological argument, but with greater effect. If we masters object to being despised by those who are our equals *qua* humans, how can we expect God to put up with *our* disobedience? As with John Chrysostom, so with Salvian, other texts (see D20) suggest that he was more aware of the 'inferiority' of slaves than their 'equality', and that he measured this inferiority in terms of moral qualities as much as position on the social scale.

Epilogue: fair words – and foul

D18 Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1.16–17 (mid fourth century BC)

Socrates. Who would care to have a man in his house who wants to do no work and has a weakness for high living? Let us see how masters treat such slaves. Do they not starve them to keep them from immorality, lock up the stores to stop their stealing, clap fetters on them so that they cannot run away, and beat the laziness out of them with whips? What do you do yourself to cure such faults among your servants?

Aristippus. I make their lives a burden to them until I reduce them to submission.

D19 Pliny, *Epistulae* 3.14 (late first century AD)

You see how many dangers, how many insults, how many mockeries, we are exposed to. Nor can anyone be safe, just because he is considerate and gentle. The murder of masters is criminal, not rational.

D20 John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Titus* 4

For both among themselves, and everywhere, it is admitted that the race of slaves is passionate, not open to impression, intractable, and not very apt to receive instruction in virtue not from

[7] For an extended discussion of the theme of anger with slaves by the same author, at the expense of women slave-owners, see *Hom. on Eph.* 15, *PG* 64.123–24.

their nature, God forbid, but from their ill breeding, and the neglect of their masters . . . For if under the direction of a father and mother, a guardian, a master, and teacher, with suitable companions, with the honour of free status, and many other advantages, it is difficult to escape intimacies with the wicked, what can we expect from those who are destitute of all these, and are mixed up with the wicked . . .? What sort of persons do we suppose they will be? On this account it is difficult for any slave to be good, especially when they have not the benefit of instruction either from those outside or from ourselves. They do not converse with free men of orderly conduct, who have a great regard for their reputation. For all these reasons it is a difficult and surprising thing that there should ever be a good slave.

D21 Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei* 4.10–18 (part)

Our miseries, infirmities, destruction, captivities and the punishment of wicked slavery are proofs that we are bad slaves of a good master . . .

Some of the rich say: 'We do not do the same things that slaves do. Slaves are thieves and runaways, slaves are constantly catering to their palates and stomachs.' It is true that these are the vices of slaves, but the masters, not all of them though, have more and greater vices . . .

If a slave is a runaway, so are you also, O rich and noble, for all who forsake the Law of their Lord are runaways from their Master. Rich men, what fault do you find in the slave? You do the same as he. He is a runaway from his master and you from yours. But you are more blameworthy than he, because he, perhaps, flees from a bad master, and you from a good one. You accuse the slave of inordinate gluttony. It is a rare fault in him, arising from want, but it is a daily fault in you by reason of abundance.

Contempt for slaves as a class abounds in the literature of antiquity from the fifth century BC, surfacing first in Greek tragedy. Slaves were idle, libidinous, greedy, bibulous, thieving, violent, treacherous and stupid – or if not stupid, scheming.[8] The passage from Xenophon is

[8] For the cunning slave of Roman comedy, see Segal (1987), 164–9; (1989).

typical: the fact that Socrates is presented as the spokesman for these attitudes only serves to emphasize how standard they are.

How far caricature, how far reality? The issue could be debated, but that is not my present concern. John Chrysostom says that slaves were every bit as bad as they were made out to be, and he even claims endorsement from the slaves themselves for this view. Under Christian influence, of course, they could become well behaved and mild. The passage is interesting for the frank admission of its author that the slave condition was in itself thoroughly corrupting. And the slave-owning condition, one might ask? At any rate, whenever a slave did offend, the stereotype was reinforced. Pliny's reaction to the murder of the Roman high magistrate, Larcius Macedo, was predictable and is representative of even the more progressive opinion of his time. Pliny was one of those who prided himself on his generosity to dependants.[9] Salvian distances himself from the more mindless characterizations of servile mentality and behaviour, and even offers rational explanations of their misconduct. His intention, however, is not to subvert the stereotype, which he clearly believes in, but to lambast his contemporaries for their greater offence of impiety to God.

The labelling of slaves as inherently bad or stupid (cf. 'Sambo') is the crudest way of justifying the institution. Schlaifer saw that it provided a basis for natural slave theory.[10] The important point is that, while it appears to clash violently with the positive appraisal of slaves as human beings with potential for virtue or salvation, the two ideologies could and did coexist in the minds of slaveowners, including those of more liberal persuasion. Good slaves were those who had emerged from the ruck; they were the exceptions who confirmed the stereotype of the bad and contemptible.

[9] See e.g. Pliny, *Ep.* 8.16.

[10] Schlaifer (1936), at 113–14. Christian writers (and Philo) as we shall see, can sometimes sound rather like Aristotle. In D20 John Chrysostom at one point says that slave vices do not come 'from their nature, God forbid', but a little later (not cited above) speaks of slaves as 'naturally self-willed' as a class.

6

Slavery criticized

Critical comments on slavery as an institution are a mixed bag. They come from different cultural and religious traditions, have a wide chronological spread, and are of uneven quality. They range from a one-line fragment of disputed meaning attributed to a shadowy sophist from classical Athens, to an extended and unambiguously worded *Homily* by a well-known bishop who lived in Cappadocia in inner Asia Minor around 700 years later.

E1 Alkidamas, scholiast on Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 1.13 1373b18 (c. 370 BC)

The deity gave liberty to all men, and nature created no one a slave.

E2 Aristotle, *Politics* 1253b20–23; 1255a3–12

There are others, however, who regard the control of slaves by a master as contrary to nature. In their view the distinction of master and slave is due to law or convention; there is no natural difference between them: the relation of master and slave is based on force, and being so based has no warrant in justice . . .

But it is easy to see that those who hold an opposite view are also in a way correct. 'Slavery' and 'slave' are terms which are used in two different senses. There is, as we have seen, a kind of slavery which exists by nature; but there is also a kind of slave and of slavery which exists only by law or, to speak more exactly, convention. The law in virtue of which those vanquished in war are held to belong to the victor is in effect a sort of convention. That slavery can be justified by such a convention is a principle against

> which many of those versed in the law bring what may be called an 'indictment of illegality'. They think that the principle violates the nature of law; and they regard it as a detestable notion that anyone who is subjugated by superior power should become the slave and subject of the person who has the power to subjugate him, and who is his superior in power. Some, however, support, if some oppose, the principle; and even men of judgement differ.

The statement of Alkidamas (a pupil of the sophist Gorgias) is said by the scholiast to have come from his *Messeniaca*, composed soon after the helots of Messenia had been liberated from the Spartans in 370 BC. Alkidamas apparently crossed swords with the Athenian orator Isocrates, the latter taking the side of the Spartans in his *Archidamus*. The statement reads as a negative comment on the concept of natural slavery, and thus as an attack on the morality of institutional slavery, and that is how I propose to take it. That is to say, Alkidamas was not merely standing up for the (Greek) Messenians, nor merely taking the opportunity to condemn helot-type slavery as such, involving the conquest and subjugation of whole peoples.[1]

At one point in the *Politics* Aristotle refers to the view ascribed to certain unnamed persons that slavery was unjust, inasmuch as it was a product of convention and rested on nothing else than superior force. Aristotle's own conviction was that some people are natural free men while others are natural slaves.

Here are the beginnings of a critique of slavery on moral grounds. Aristotle gives few clues as to who advanced it. They are usually regarded as a few isolated individuals.[2] Rather more than this is suggested by 'many of those versed in the law' and 'some men of judgement' (*sophoi*). They were perhaps 'philosophers of law' – not, in any case, jurists, there having been no such profession in Athens. The intellectual origins of the critique lie ultimately in the activity of the sophists, which was centred in the second half of the fifth century and

[1] Text in Rabe, ed., *Comm. in Arist. Graeca* 21, pt. 2, p. 74. On Alkidamas, see Guthrie (1969), 159; Garlan (1988), 125; Schlaifer (1936), 200. For a different view, see Cambiano (1987), 24–5. Philemon, an older contemporary of Menander and also a writer of New Comedy, expressed a sentiment similar to EI, but the dramatic context and broader significance are unrecoverable: 'Even if someone is a slave, he has the same flesh; by nature no one was ever born a slave' (fr. 39, ed. Meineke).

[2] Cambiano in Finley (1987), 23, writes: 'Almost certainly they were either isolated intellectuals or members of some exclusive group.'

the early fourth and was marked by sceptical inquiry into traditional beliefs and practices.[3] How far the critique was taken is a moot point, but Aristotle evidently thought that it was sufficiently dangerous to warrant a counter-attack.[4]

Aristotle has some sympathy with the position of these critics, and is by no means concerned to offer a justification for the system of slavery *as it operated in his time.* He admits that there is no justice, nothing natural, in legal slavery, unless legal slaves happen to be natural slaves. He knows that they might not be. The 'wrong people' might become slaves, typically in consequence of capture in war. Aristotle's natural slaves were barbarians, that is, non-Greeks. Foreigners did make up the bulk of the slave population. However, Greeks, even well-born Greeks, might be caught up in the net of slavery. The system of slave-acquisition was ultimately unrespecting of ethnic (or social) distinctions.

Anyway, the implicit critique of legal slavery as currently practised becomes in Aristotle's hands a compelling argument for natural slavery. The need to make distinctions between prisoners of war in terms of their social status (well-born or not?), ethnic origin (Greek

[3] On the sophists see Classen (1976); Guthrie (1969); Cassin (1986); also Furley (1981); Rankin (1983).

[4] The thesis of the critics is that slavery is unjust: it is grounded in convention rather than nature, and it rests on force. But the progress of the argument of *Pol.* 1.6 is difficult to follow:

(a) Slavery/slave is ambiguous, for there is both a slave by convention (*kata nomon*) and a slave (*douleuon, sc.* a slave by nature).
(b) Slaves by convention are (*sc.* typically) war-captives, held to be slaves by 'a kind of agreement' (*homologia*), also called a 'right' (*dikaion*).
(c) This convention/agreement/right is immoral, because such enslavement rests on superior force, in the view of 'many of those versed in the laws', and also some (but not all) men of judgement (*sophoi*).
(d) Rule based on force is not without virtue; superior strength is not devoid of goodness.
(e) It is disputed whether rule based on force is just. Some say that justice is nothing but stupidity (reading *anoia* rather than *eunoia*; cf. Thrasymachus in Plato, *Rep.* 348c); others say that justice simply is the principle that the stronger should rule (cf. Callicles, in Plato, *Gorg.* 483d).
(f) (Some of ?) those who say that war-enslavement is just (cf. Heraclitus, ed. Diels, fr. 102) undercut their case by admitting that it makes a difference if a war is just or unjust, and if 'men of the noblest birth' (= Greeks?) are captured rather than 'barbarians'.
(g) The only resolution of the argument is to admit that there are natural free persons and natural slaves.

See the convincing discussion of Schofield (1990), 23–7 (Appendix).

or barbarian?), and the nature of the war in which they were taken (just or unjust?), has the consequence, for Aristotle, that we are forced to concede the existence of 'certain persons who are essentially slaves everywhere and certain others who are so nowhere'.

E3 Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* (*Every Good Man is Free*; hereafter *EGM*) 79 (early first century AD)

> Not a single slave is to found among them, but all are free, exchanging services with each other, and they denounce the owners of slaves, not merely for their injustice in outraging the law of equality, but also for their impiety in annulling the statute of Nature, who, mother-like, has born and reared all men alike, and created them genuine brothers, not in mere name but in very reality, though this kinship has been put to confusion by the triumph of malignant covetousness, which has wrought estrangement instead of affinity and enmity instead of friendship.

E4 Philo, *De vita contemplativa* (*On the Contemplative Life*) 70

> They do not have slaves to wait on them, as they consider that the ownership of servants is entirely against nature. For nature has borne all men to be free, but the wrongful and covetous acts of some who pursued that source of evil, inequality, have imposed their yoke, and invested the stronger with power over the weaker . . .

The first text of Philo relates to the Essenes, a Jewish sect whose ascetic way of life and high moral values attracted the interest of ancient Jewish writers, and who are now identified with the community revealed in the Dead Sea scrolls. The second, parallel passage concerns the even more mysterious Therapeutae. The whole of Philo's treatise *On the Contemplative Life* is devoted to a study of this group of 'philosophers'.

The views attributed to these groups are radical, but their application is limited.[5] Philo is presenting them as models of virtue, to be set alongside the Persian Magi and the Indian Gymnosophists. He

[5] On the Essenes see also Philo, *Hypothetica* 1.4; Josephus, *AJ* 18.21. Scholars are preoccupied with the issue of whether the views expressed genuinely reflect the views and practices of the Essenes (and Therapeutai) or the opinions of Philo himself. See esp. Nikiprowetzky (1982).

appears to see them as people who live the philosophical life and can function without conventional communal institutions (money, property and slavery are specified in the passage on the Essenes). There is no implication that ordinary communities can get by without slaves (and the rest). Philo is quite clear that they could not. Elsewhere he insists that slave-service is essential for a wide variety of tasks (cf. A5 = *De spec. leg.* 2.123).

E5 Lactantius, *Institutiones divinae* 5.14.15–15.3 (early fourth century AD)

The other part of justice is equity (*aequitas*). I do not speak of the equity of judging well, which is itself laudable in a just man. I mean rather that of equalizing self with fellow-men, which Cicero calls equability (*aequabilitas*). God who creates and inspires men wished them all to be fair, that is, equal. He set the same condition of living for all. He begot all unto wisdom. He promised immortality to all. No one is segregated from His heavenly benefits. Just as He divides His one light equally for all, lets His showers fall upon all, supplies food, grants the sweetest rest of sleep, so He bestows the virtue of equity upon all. With Him, no one is master, no one slave. For if He is the same Father to all, we are all free by equal right. No one is a pauper with God except him who is in need of justice; no one rich, but him who is filled with the virtues; no one, finally, is distinguished except the one who has been good and innocent; no one very illustrious, unless he has done the works of mercy with largesse; no one quite perfect, unless he has completed all the steps of virtue. Wherefore, neither the Romans nor the Greeks could possess justice, because they had men distinguished by many grades, from the poor to the rich, from the lowly to the powerful, from private citizens even to the most sublime heights of kings. For when all are not equal, there is no equity, and inequality itself excludes justice, whose whole power is in this, that it makes equal those who came to the condition of this life by an equal lot.

If those two sources of justice, then, are altered, all virtue and all truth is removed, and justice itself goes back into heaven . . . Someone will say: 'Are there not among you some poor, some rich, some slaves, some masters? Is there not something of concern to individuals?' Nothing . . . For since we measure all

> human things, not by the body, but by the spirit, and although the condition of the bodies may be diversified, there are not slaves among us, but we regard them and we speak of them as brothers in spirit and as fellow-slaves in religion.

In the course of explaining and justifying divine corrective punishment, Lactantius introduces a novel twist, flirting with a radical vision of society. He evokes equity, an aspect of justice, and equates it with Cicero's concept of equability, according to which people are on the same level. Equability was hardly a central plank of Cicero's political philosophy. Nevertheless it was according to Lactantius part of God's plan for men when he created them. There follows a remarkable critique of Graeco-Roman society for failing to realize God's utopian vision. The exemplary divisions in society which man has created in defiance of God's plan are those between rich and poor, powerful and lowly, king and citizen. No master/slave distinction here. It comes up later, however, in conjunction with the rich/poor distinction: 'Someone will say: "Are there not among you some poor, some rich, some slaves, some masters?"' Lactantius has handed the social critique over to a ghost speaker while himself falling back on *spiritual* equality. The discussion ends with the juxtaposition and virtual identification of brotherhood and slavery in the world of the spirit: 'we speak of them as brothers in spirit and as fellow-slaves in religion'. The damage has been done. What stays in the mind is the absence of justice among men as witnessed in the existence of social divisions – the division between masters and slaves included, even if Lactantius has not placed it centre-stage – in consequence of humanity's wilful abandonment of God's vision of equality on earth. Despite Lactantius' efforts to repair the damage he has himself inflicted, the logic of his own argument is that spiritual equality is a second-best.

E6 Gregory of *Nyssa*, *Homilies* IV on Eccl. 2:7 (late fourth century AD)[6]

> *'I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house.'*

[6] See *Ecclesiasten Homiliae (et al.)* ed. J. McDonough and P. Alexander, *Opera*, vol. 5 (Leiden, 1962). The *Homily* is translated in Hall (1993). See Wickham (1993); Bergada (1993), in the same volume. The discussions of Gaïth (1953), 126–30, and Dennis (1982) are valuable.

. . . But now he [*sc.* Solomon] reaches, as it were, a more serious indictment of things he has done, as a result of which one is accused of the feeling of Pride. For what is such a gross example of arrogance in the matters enumerated above – an opulent house, and an abundance of vines, and ripeness in vegetable-plots, and collecting waters in pools and channelling them in gardens – as for a human being to think himself the master of his own kind? '*I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house.*' Do you notice the enormity of the boast? This kind of language is raised up as a challenge to God. For we hear from prophecy that *all things are the slaves* of the power that transcends all [Ps. 119/118:91]. So when someone [p. 335] turns the property of God into his own property and arrogates dominion to his own kind, so as to think himself the owner of men and women, what is he doing but overstepping his own nature through pride, regarding himself as something different from his subordinates?

335.5 '*I bought male and female slaves.*' What do you mean? You condemn man to slavery, when his nature is free and possesses free will, and you legislate in competition with God, overturning his law for the human species. The one made on the specific terms that he should be the owner of the earth, and appointed to government by the Creator – him you bring under the yoke of slavery, as though defying and fighting against the divine decree.

335.11 You have forgotten the limits of your authority, and that your rule is confined to control over things without reason. For it says '*Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth*' [Gen. 1:26]. Why do you go beyond what is subject to you and raise yourself up against the very species which is free, counting your own kind on a level with four-footed things and even footless things?

You have subjected all things to man, declares the word through the prophecy, and in the text it lists the things subject, cattle and oxen and sheep [Ps. 8:7–8]. Surely [p. 336] human beings have not been produced from your cattle? Surely cows have not conceived human stock? Irrational beasts are the only slaves of mankind. But to you these things are of small account.

Raising fodder for the cattle, and green plants for the slaves of men, it says [Ps. 104/103:14]. But by dividing the human species in two with 'slavery' and 'ownership' you have caused it to be enslaved to itself, and to be the owner of itself.

336.6 *'I bought male and female slaves.'* For what price, tell me? What did you find in existence worth as much as this human nature? What price did you put on rationality? How many obols did you reckon the equivalent of the likeness of God? How many staters did you get for selling the being shaped by God? God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness [Gen.1:26]. If he is in the likeness of God, and rules the whole earth, and has been granted authority over everything on earth from God, who is his buyer, tell me? Who is his seller? To God alone belongs this power; or rather, not even to God himself. For his gracious gifts, it says, are irrevocable [Rom. 11:29]. God would not therefore reduce the human race to slavery, since he himself, when we had been enslaved to sin, spontaneously recalled us to freedom. But if God does not enslave what is free, who is he that sets his own power above God's?

336.20 How too shall the ruler of the whole earth and all earthly things be put up for sale [p. 337]? For the property of the person sold is bound to be sold with him, too. So how much do we think the whole earth is worth? And how much all the things on the earth [Gen.1:26]? If they are priceless, what price is the one above them worth, tell me? Though you were to say the whole world, even so you have not found the price he is worth [Matt. 16:26; Mk 8:36]. He who knew the nature of mankind rightly said that the whole world was not worth giving in exchange for a human soul. Whenever a human being is for sale, therefore, nothing less than the owners of the earth is led into the sale-room. Presumably, then, the property belonging to him is up for auction too. That means the earth, the islands, the sea, and all that is in them. What will the buyer pay, and what will the vendor accept, considering how much property is entailed in the deal?

337.13 But has the scrap of paper, and the written contract, and the counting out of obols deceived you into thinking yourself the master of the image of God? What folly! If the contract were lost, if the writing were eaten away by worms, if a drop of water should somehow seep in and obliterate it, what guarantee

have you of their slavery? What have you to sustain your title as owner? I see no superiority over the subordinate [p. 338] accruing to you from the title other than the mere title. What does this power contribute to you as a person? Not longevity, nor beauty, nor good health, nor superiority in virtue. Your origin is from the same ancestors, your life is of the same kind, sufferings of soul and body prevail alike over you who own him and over the one who is subject to your ownership – pains and pleasures, merriment and distress, sorrows and delights, rages and terrors, sickness and death. Is there any difference in these things between the slave and his owner? Do they not draw in the same air as they breathe? Do they not see the sun in the same way? Do they not alike sustain their being by consuming food? Is not the arrangement of their guts the same? Are not the two one dust after death? Is there not one judgement for them? A common Kingdom, and a common Gehenna?

338.14 If you are equal in all these ways, therefore, in what respect have you something extra, tell me, that you who are human think yourself the master of a human being, and say, *'I bought male and female slaves'*, like herds of goats or pigs. For when he said he bought male and female slaves, he added that abundance in flocks of sheep and cattle came to him. For he says much property in cattle and sheep became his, as though both cattle and slaves were subject to his authority to an equal degree.

Gregory was drawing on a long tradition of 'liberal' thought in both pagan and Christian circles, stressing the shared humanity of slaves and masters and their common potential for virtue and for salvation, which nevertheless sat easily with a readiness to tolerate and even justify the institution. The core of Gregory's argument, that which, together with the rhetorical skills for which he was famous, transforms it into a fierce attack on slave-owning, is the insistence that man was made in the image and likeness of God, and therefore by his nature is both free and sovereign in the earthly sphere. Slave-owning, setting oneself up as 'master of the image of God', involves the denial of that which is specifically human in mankind. It is to oppose God, challenge his natural law, and scupper his plans for mankind to rule with dignity and honour on earth. It is the sin of pride, in one of its manifestations.

These are arguments for the abolition of slavery, though they are

not flagged as such. Gregory stops short of urging that the whole institution be done away with, or even instructing his audience to emancipate their own slaves forthwith. So what was he was doing? And what did others think he was doing?

He was preaching a sermon about sin, specifically the sin of pride. He goes on to condemn other sins, love of money, usury, drunkenness, love of pleasure, in the same, highly rhetorical fashion. An attack on slave-owning as sin, we might say, was bound to be ineffectual. For we are all sinners, no one is perfect. There was no chance of abolishing sin, and especially the sin of pride, under which, according to Gregory, slave-owning was to be subsumed. What prospect then of abolishing slavery?

This might seem unnecessarily defeatist. To concede that the message was a moral one and not designed to overturn an institution is not to deny the *Homily* a practical purpose, that of influencing the behaviour of his audience. They were apparently being instructed to give up the sins of avarice, usury, drunkenness, pleasure-seeking – and slave-owning. Of these sins, slave-owning was the easiest to give up: a visit to a magistrate (or a church, in a province where *manumissio in ecclesia* was permitted) would do the trick.[7] And if this had been part of an orchestrated attack on slave-owning launched from every pulpit in Christendom, what then?

Gregory's sermon was no such thing. It happens to be unique in the surviving evidence. That evidence is substantial, and it includes many indications that slavery was accepted by church leaders and tolerated within the Christian community at large. Gregory's own brother, Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, held the view that slavery brought benefits to slaves.[8] Basil's friend Gregory of Nazianzus, also a bishop from an eminent family, is shown by his Will to have been a slaveowner.[9]

[7] See Fabbrini (1965); Herrmann (1990), 232–62.

[8] See B5, and Giet (1941), 84–93. Cf. Rousseau (1994), e.g. 42, 138–9. See also Theodoret in B11; and for critics of slavery, E7 below.

[9] See A10, and comments there. The rules governing those living in monastic communities envisaged the emancipation of slaves. See e.g. Augustine, *Serm.* 356.3, 7 (= *PL* 38–9.1574–77). But this is because monks are required to give up their personal property, whether immobile or mobile, in order to meet the rule of poverty. No moral explanation is relevant. Nonnoi (1934), 539, claims with reference to *Sermon* 21, at 6, that Augustine repeatedly urges Christians (*sc.* in the congregation) to manumit their slaves. I do not find evidence for this in the text in question (or in any other work of Augustine).

That being the case, we might be inclined to fall back on a position such as the following: Gregory's message was intended to influence the behaviour of his audience towards their slaves, but something less than the total renunciation of slave-owning was anticipated: perhaps a generous programme of manumission, and a special effort to treat slaves humanely. Gregory of Nazianzus, if we knew more about him (he certainly manumitted some slaves), might turn out to be an exemplary Christian slaveowner. In a more lowly but doubtless more spiritually uplifting setting (for Gregory of Nazianzus rose to the heights of the Patriarchy of Constantinople) Gregory's elder sister, the saintly Macrina, earns praise from her brother, also her biographer, for leading their mother 'to adopt her own standard of humility, persuading her to put herself at the same level as her company of virgins, so that she shared with them, as equals, the same table, the same bed and the sundry necessities of life, all differences of rank being set aside'.[10]

E7 Theodoret, 'That the division into slaves and masters is an advantage in life', *On Divine Providence* 7 668B, 669B–C (430s AD)

> The previous discourse adequately demonstrated the extreme folly of their complaints against the apparent inequalities of life and their failure to take into account the relevant facts. It showed that poverty has its uses and it disproved the necessity of wealth. Since they are not satisfied with complaining about poverty but also bewail slavery and lament about imperial taxes and the other things which fit only too well into this life, let us now deal briefly with these points, imitating the best doctors who, when they notice their patients are off their food and loathe everything offered them, well and truly outwit their revulsion with the aid of medical artifices . . .

I began this chapter with Aristotle, who cited the arguments of critics of slavery – of whose existence we would otherwise have been in ignorance – in order to refute their criticisms. Theodoret, somewhat later, assumes a similar role. The bishop's discourse bears the stamp of the school of the orator, but it is no mere rhetorical set-piece, nor are his opponents imaginary. But who are they? Labelled as professional

[10] Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita S. Macrinae* 11, 996 D; ed. P. Maraval, SC 178.

grouchers by our author, they are apparently social radicals whose targets include social inequality and exploitation by the state as well as slavery. We should probably look for them among heretical groups with ascetic tendencies, like, in an earlier period, the Eustathians. These were followers of Eustathius, an unconventional bishop of Sebastia in Armenia, who was condemned by a Council at Gangra in AD 359 for, among other things, encouraging slaves to abandon their masters and become monks. The third Canon of this council anathematizes anyone who 'on a pretext of piety, teaches a slave to despise his master and to leave his service, and not to serve him with goodwill and all honour'.[11]

[11] See de Ste Croix (1975), 33, for references. According to Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 2.43, he (among other things) separated wives from their husbands and slaves from their masters, ordered abstention from meat, encouraged those who disliked going to church to assemble in the home, wore peculiar dress and induced his followers to do likewise. The Pelagians were contemporary with Theodoret but are less likely to have been his targets. They were vigorous in their attack on riches, but are not known to have criticized slavery. See the anonymous *De divitiis*, *PL* Suppl. 1.1380–1418, transl. Rees (1991).

There is an echo of Lactantius E5 in Theodoret: at 669B–C he says that the Creator's original design did not include a division of mankind into rulers and ruled, slaves and rulers. But whereas in Lactantius this develops into a critique of social inequality, Theodoret's sympathies are on the other side. He goes on to find the origin of the master/slave division in sin (like Augustine shortly before him), but that division becomes in his account both necessary and advantageous.

7

Slavery eased

Slavery is a cruel and inhumane institution. The physical and psychological abuse of slaves in antiquity was routine. There nevertheless existed practices and procedures which brought some benefit to slaves if masters chose to have recourse to them. Slaves could be taught skills, hold responsible positions, enjoy a certain degree of independence, gain their freedom. Or they could simply be treated relatively well, in the sense that masters could be less exploitative and less prone to use naked force than they had the power to be. Was this the way the 'progressive mentality' functioned, not to contemplate, much less work for, the abolition of slavery as a system, but to reduce the harshness and ignominy of slavery? It is difficult to assess the quality of master/slave relations in ancient societies or to make cross-societal comparisons. Slavery in the Old South is commonly judged to have been more harsh than Greek or Roman slavery, and Roman society to have afforded slaves better chances of self-advancement through manumission than Greek society. American slaves were denied families of their own, deliberately kept illiterate, and rarely manumitted.[1] The explanation of such differences lies in the mentalities and social structures of the people concerned. American slavery was of course racist, based on the allegedly ingrained and permanent inferiority of blacks to whites. The following citation from a spokesman for American slavery requires no commentary:

F1 Thomas Roderick Dew, *Abolition of Negro Slavery* (1832), in Faust (1981), 58

> In Greece and Rome, and we imagine it was so during the feudal ages, the dominant slaves were frequently among the most

[1] See e.g. Webber (1978); Cornelius (1991); Johnson and Roark (1984).

> learned, virtuous, and intelligent members of society. Terence, Phaedrus, Aesop and Epictetus were all slaves. They were frequently taught all the arts and sciences, in order that they might be more valuable to their masters . . . There was no obstacle therefore to the emancipation of such men as these . . . either on the score of education, intelligence, talents, or something else – the body of free men could readily and without difficulty or danger absorb them. Not so now – nor ever will it be in all time to come, with our blacks.

If slaves in Greece were given fewer rights, concessions and rewards than their counterparts in Rome, then we should look for an explanation, on the one hand, in the Greek sense of cultural superiority over their neighbours (from whom in large part they drew their slaves), and on the other, in the strong definitions which Greeks, and most conspicuously Athenians, gave to freedom, the antithesis of slavery, and to citizenship, from which slaves were barred. Romans were not above despising other peoples, but they were more open-minded in their choice of whom to buy, whom to promote and how far.

In the Roman period there is a complication, in that it is commonly felt that the already (relatively) tolerant attitude of Romans received a boost from philosophical and religious movements. The claim is hard to prove. Although Stoics were sometimes vocal in advocating the humane treatment of slaves, it is not easy to establish that their pleas had a direct impact on those who framed and administered the legal system, let alone on society at large. The possibility that in early Christian communities the condition and prospects of slaves improved has to be weighed against the conservative attitudes of Church leaders as revealed in their advice to both masters and slaves. There are some new developments in the fourth and fifth centuries, a time when the Church grew in numbers and power under the sponsorship of Christian emperors, but their global impact on Christian congregations, let alone society at large, is difficult to evaluate. Finally, the nature of master/slave relationships within the household is largely invisible, since our capacity to penetrate families, whether pagan, Christian, or pagan-turned-Christian, is severely circumscribed.

F2 Plato, *Laws* 776d-778a (part)

Athenian. We know that all would agree that we should have the best and most attached slaves whom we can get. For many a man has found his slaves better in every way than brothers or sons, and many times they have saved the lives and property of their masters and their whole house – such tales are well known.

Megillus (Spartan). To be sure.

Ath. But may we not also say that the soul of the slave is utterly corrupt, and that no man of sense ought to trust them? And the wisest of our poets, speaking of Zeus, says: 'Far-seeing Zeus takes away half the understanding of men whom the day of slavery subdues.'

Different persons have got these two different notions of slaves in their minds – some of them utterly distrust their servants, and, as if they were wild beasts, chastise them with goads and whips, and make their souls three times, or rather many times, as slavish as they were before; and others do just the opposite.

Megillus. True.

Cleinias (Cretan). Then what are we to do in our own country, stranger, as regards the right to own and punish slaves seeing that there are such differences in the treatment of them?

Ath. The right treatment of slaves is to behave properly to them, and to do to them, if possible, even more justice than to those who are our equals . . . And he who in regard to the natures and actions of his slaves is undefiled by impiety and injustice will best sow the seeds of virtue in them . . . Slaves ought to be punished as they deserve, and not admonished as if they were freemen, which will only make them conceited. The language used to a slave should always be that of a command, and we ought not to jest with them, whether they are males or females – this is a foolish way which many people have of setting up their slaves, and making the life of servitude more disagreeable both for them and for their masters.

Cleinias. True.

F3 Aristotle, *Politics* 1260b5–8

Those persons are mistaken who deprive the slave of reasoning and tell us to use command only; for admonition is more properly employed with slaves than with children.

F4 Aristotle, *Politics* 1330a32–4

How slaves should be employed, and why it is advantageous that all slaves should have their freedom set before them as a reward, we will say later.

F5 Cicero, *De officiis* 2.24 (44 BC)

Admittedly those who exercise a command over men constrained only by force may need to employ severity, just as a master must towards his servants if he cannot otherwise control them.

F6 Philo, *Every Good Man is Free* (*EGM*) 35 (early first century AD)

There are others born in slavery, who by a happy dispensation of fortune pursue the occupations of the free. They receive the stewardship of houses and landed estates and great properties; sometimes too they become the rulers of their fellow slaves. Many too have the wives and orphan children of their masters committed to their charge, being preferred for trustworthiness to friends and members of the family. Still all the same they are slaves though they lend, purchase, collect revenues and are much courted.

F7 Seneca, *De beneficiis* 3.19.2; 21.2 (mid first century AD)

Even under these conditions I shall still win the day and promote a slave to such a position that he will, in many respects, be a free man . . .

There are certain things, as for instance food and clothing, which the master must supply to the slave; no one calls these benefits. But suppose the master is indulgent, gives him a liberal education, has him taught the branches in which the freeborn are schooled – all this will be a benefit . . .

F8 Modestinus, in *Dig.* 48.8.11.1–2; 40.8.2 (early third century AD); cf. *CJ* 7.6.3

If a slave be thrown to the beasts without having been before a judge, not only he who sold him but also he who bought him shall be liable to punishment. Following the Petronian law and the senatorial decrees relating to it, masters have lost the power

of handing over at their own discretion their slaves to fight with the beasts; but after the slave has been produced before a judge, if his master's complaint is just, he shall in this case be handed over to punishment . . .

Under an edict of the deified Claudius, freedom is due to the slave whom the owner treats as abandoned because of grave bodily weakness.

F9 Gaius, *Institutiones* 1.53 (mid second century AD)

But at the present day, neither Roman citizens nor any other persons subject to the rule of the Roman people are allowed to treat their slaves with excessive and causeless harshness. For by a constitution of the late emperor Antoninus it is laid down that one who without cause kills his own slave is as much amenable to justice as one who kills another's. And even excessive severity on the part of masters is restrained by a constitution of the same emperor; for, on being consulted by certain provincial governors as to slaves who take refuge at the temples of the gods or the statues of the emperors, he ordained that masters whose harshness is found to be unbearable are to be forced to sell their slaves. Both enactments are just, for we ought not to abuse our lawful right – the principle under which prodigals are interdicted from administering their own property.

F10 Ulpian, *De officiis proconsulis (On the Duties of a Proconsul)* 8: 'De dominorum saevitia': Coll. 3.3.1–6 (early third century AD)

If a master acts towards a slave with violence or forces him into unchaste and base conduct, the responsibility of governors is laid out in a rescript of the divine Pius addressed to the proconsul of Baetica Aurelius Marcianus. The rescript runs as follows:

1. The power of masters over their slaves should be unimpaired, and no one should suffer any reduction of his authority.

2. But it is in the interests of masters that aid be forthcoming to those who make a just complaint in the face of cruelty, or hunger or intolerable injury.

3. Thus it is for you to judge concerning the complaints of

those slaves from the establishment of Julius Sabinus who have taken refuge at a statue, and if you decide that they have been treated more harshly than is right, or have suffered scandalous injuries, then command them to be sold and not returned into the power of Sabinus. And if he deliberately goes against the terms of my constitution, then he must be told that I will severely punish such an offence.

4. The Divine Hadrian exiled a certain lady called Umbra for five years because she inflicted the most cruel punishment on her maidservants for the most trivial of causes.

5. Likewise, Divine Pius replied to a letter of Alfius Julius in this way: 'Obedience should be secured from slaves by a display of moderation rather than power – following the assignation to them of a burden of work which is sufficient and yet fair.'

6. Thus you ought to ensure that you treat your slave with justice and self-restraint, so that you will be able to obtain what you need from them without difficulty. However, if it appears that you exercise domination with excessive harshness and severity, it will be necessary for the proconsul to intervene and compel you to sell them, acting on my authority – lest any kind of civil disturbance erupt. Consulship of Glabrio and Homullus [AD 152].

F11 Ulpian, in *Dig.* 47.10.15.44 (early third century AD)

The praetor does not promise an action for every affront to a slave; if a slave be struck lightly or mildly abused, the praetor will not give an action; but if he be put to shame by some act or lampoon, I think that the praetor's investigation into the matter should take account of the standing (*qualitas*) of the slave; for it is highly relevant what sort of slave he is: whether he be honest, regular and responsible, a steward or only a common slave, a drudge, or whatever. And what if he be in fetters, branded and of the deepest notoriety? The praetor therefore will take into account the alleged affront to the person of the slave said to have suffered it and will grant or refuse the action accordingly.

F12 Lactantius, *De ira* 5.12 (early fourth century AD)

Let us imagine a master who has in his establishment a good and a bad slave: he certainly does not hate, or for that matter bestow

benefits and honours on, both of them – were he to do that, he would be both unjust and stupid. Rather, he addresses himself to the good one as to a friend, he honours him, entrusts to him the administration of his household, his family, and all his property. As for the bad slave, he brings the whole range of punishments to bear on him: curses, lashings, nakedness, hunger, thirst, chains. He will thus give the rest of the slaves an incentive not to misbehave, and the bad slave to behave well. Fear will restrain some of them, while others will be encouraged by the desire for honour.

The treatment of slaves

A slave was a thing but also a human being. How was a master to treat this ambiguous creature, over whom he had enormous, even if not total, power? Severe treatment, harsh discipline were standard.[2] This is attested in a wide range of literature, philosophical and religious included. Seneca's passionate plea to masters not to be cruel to their slaves (*Letter* 47 = C3) was not mere rhetoric, while Cicero in *On Duties* (F5) writes of the necessity of coercion and severity toward those subjected by force. He does add 'if no other way of controlling them is possible', and this opens up the possibility of more generous treatment. Cicero's formula would have appealed to some masters more than others, to some philosophers more than others – to Aristotle more than Plato. Plato's Athenian in the *Laws* (F2) considers it the role of masters to punish and to command – steering a middle course between treating slaves like wild beasts (which makes them more servile than ever) and as intimates (which causes trouble for both parties). Aristotle (F3) thinks this unnecessarily harsh (but betrays only a passing interest in the whole matter). In the *Ethics*, against the tenor of his argument in that work, he admits that a master might have a friendship with a slave *qua* man (*EN* 1161b5–6). Yet both philosophers would have shared the same goal, of drawing devoted service from slaves. Plato anticipates Seneca in remarking that slaves are frequently more useful to their masters than close relatives are.

The comparison with Seneca is somewhat misleading. Although it

[2] On treatment, see Garlan (1988), 148–59; Bradley (1994), 28–9, 49–50; Saller (1994), 133–54. The psychological damage inflicted on slaves by slavery is a theme of Patterson (1982), e.g. 77–104.

cannot be said that Aristotle (at least) lacked the concept of common kinship of men altogether (cf. *EN* 1155a16–22), he does not develop it in discussing slavery, as Seneca so conspicuously does. But the prudential motive for treating slaves properly – however this was defined – is present in all three philosophers.

What is unsaid in the sources so far considered, but is nevertheless there beneath the surface, is the fact that slaves were not a homogeneous mass and were not all treated in the same fashion. One could use moral language to distinguish between slaves and to justify dealing with them in different ways, as the Church Fathers commonly did. The message of Lactantius in the passage from *De ira* (F12) is that a master treats good and bad slaves differently, rewarding the former and punishing the latter.

An alternative to the language of morality is the language of status (tinged with morality, to be sure), commonly used by Roman jurists. Roman law recognized the *persona* of slaves (who in so far as they were *res* lacked both rights and obligations) by granting them various legal capacities. For example, in the absence of a law of agency, legal devices were produced in order to empower dependants, especially slaves, but also sons, to make legally binding transactions for their masters.[3] However, the slave did not have only *persona*, he also had *qualitas*. Ulpian included in his Commentary on the Praetor's Edict (F11) a statement of the principle of the differential treatment *of slaves* (not just of free men). Magistrates and judges were evidently expected to take account in their decisions of the character, attitude and function of a slave.

The other crucial variable was the character of the master. This is true, but banal. It is more significant that the law, while conceding that a slave came under the domestic jurisdiction of his master, made some attempt to set limits on the master's coercive powers.

A number of laws issued by the Roman authorities in the course of the first and second centuries AD appear to have had the aim of restricting the use of arbitrary and cruel punishment by masters on slaves. We hear, for example, of a law (of perhaps AD 61) forbidding masters on their own authority from making their slaves fight in the arena with wild beasts, another (enacted by the emperor Claudius) granting freedom to sick slaves abandoned by their masters (F8); and so on.

[3] See Kirschenbaum (1987); Aubert (1994).

The laws in question have been held to be unenforceable, and categorized as 'analogous to modern laws against cruelty to animals'.[4] But (on the issue of enforcement) although it might be reasonable to suspect the worst, there are signs that the worst did not always happen, and the efficacy of asylum at least cannot be dismissed without discussion. The advantage of asylum was that it involved the slave's escaping from the orbit of the master and opened up the possibility of access to another authority. Of course, local magistrates and provincial governors, masters themselves to a man, would not have been inclined to accept the word of a slave against a master, or do anything to undermine the authority of masters in general.

Recognition of the right of asylum goes back a long way in Greek and Roman history. In the Roman legal sources the evidence becomes explicit from the beginning of the Principate.[5] A passage from Ulpian's commentary on the aedile's edict shows that as early as the reign of Augustus the issue of whether asylum-seeking slaves were runaways was debated at the highest level. Ulpian's discussion revolves around statements of (Antistius) Labeo and Caelius (Sabinus), leading jurisconsults of the reigns of Augustus and Vespasian, respectively. The issue was argued, and it would seem decided, in favour of the slave. This is not certain, because Ulpian chooses to pass on opinions (with which he agrees) as to the circumstances in which a slave is to be judged a runaway, together with his own judgement (presumably in accord with the decisions of the earlier jurists), which runs as follows:

> I think that a slave who does what it is adjudged permissible to do publicly is not a fugitive. No more do I regard as a fugitive a slave who flees to the emperor's statue; for he does not so act with the intention of running away. Likewise, I think of a slave who seeks asylum or other sanctuary, because he does not do so with the intention of running away; but if he first runs away and then takes shelter, he does not cease to be a fugitive.
>
> (*Dig.* 21.1.17.12–16, at 12)

The juristic sources attest lively interest in asylum and in the treatment of slaves in general, in the Antonine and Severan eras (that is, the second and early third centuries AD). In particular, the emperor Antoninus Pius addressed these issues. So says his younger

[4] Buckland (1963), 64–5; Bradley (1984), 123–9.

[5] On asylum, see e.g. Schlesinger (1933); Kaser (1975), 126 n. 19, 127, 286 nn. 34–5; Herman (1935); Thurman (1969).

contemporary, the jurist Gaius, who provides a summary of his legislation on the subject (F9), and there is confirmation from the Severan jurist Ulpian (F10). Ulpian's work *On the Duties of a Proconsul* contained a chapter on the severity of masters. It included, among other things, a rescript of Pius to the proconsul of the province of Baetica (in southern Spain) concerning the flight to an imperial statue of slaves owned by one Julius Sabinus, and a judgement of the preceding emperor Hadrian exiling a woman for gratuitous cruelty to her maidservants. It is not recorded (the decision is reported only in brief summary) whether the victims of Umbra sought asylum. Presumably they did.

These cases are remarkable. Domestic feuds between slaveowner and slaves had gained the attention of not only the proconsul but also the emperor. I surmise that, at least from the early Antonine period, the instructions routinely issued to governors by emperors included an item telling them to keep an eye out for, and report cases of, maltreatment of slaves by masters. Anyway, we can see that in the reign of Pius asylum-seeking by slaves triggered off a process which ended, via consultation of emperor by governors, in the issuing of the ruling that abused slaves were to be sold away from their cruel masters. The remedy was perhaps not an entirely new one, but it was regularized by Pius.

The true significance of the concession remains very much open to debate. Asylum, especially when linked with a change of master, was of a different order from the other regulations in the interests of slaves. Still, a change of master *was* the best that the slave could hope for, and we may wonder whether officials were likely to administer the law in the interests of slaves *without specific direction from above*. Pius apparently got the bit between his teeth, but how many emperors (not to mention lesser officials) matched his zeal? He might set a pattern, but others were free to deviate from it.

The influence of Stoic ethical teaching is sometimes seen behind these developments, which happen to have more or less coincided with the lifetimes of the Stoics Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. One example will illustrate how hard it is to clinch the issue. The third of the imperial rescripts cited from Ulpian's *On the Duties of a Proconsul* was sent in AD 152 to one Alfius Iulius of unknown status who had apparently sought the emperor's advice in a letter. It is interesting to compare Seneca's sermon to slaveowners in general with the lecture delivered by Pius to this individual slaveowner. The philosopher and the emperor

were preaching the same basic message, that slaves should be treated fairly and with moderation. It is noteworthy that Pius, instead of following Seneca in echoing the distinctively (but not exclusively) Stoic message of the kinship of all men, invokes only the risk of counter-violence. Gaius, as it happens, in his summary treatment of the emperor's laws on the cruelty of masters, omits Pius' interest in civil order, choosing to add a note of his own, which categorizes the cruelty of masters as prodigality, a wasteful use of resources. The jurist betrays no more overt interest in the humanity of the slave than did the emperor. When Pius does make reference to 'the rights of men' in the letter to the proconsul of Baetica, it is masters, not slaves, he has in mind.

As to the influence of Christianity on the treatment of slaves: many a homily urges masters to be well-disposed to their slaves to the end of rendering them well-behaved and obedient, though it is either stated or understood that this cannot be achieved without strict discipline and 'restraint'. And model relationships between slaves and their masters or mistresses were available in the hagiographical literature. But the effect of all this on householders of believers is largely invisible – let alone on society as a whole, outside this inner ring.[6]

Manumission

Manumission was both more common and more rewarding for the beneficiary in Rome than in Greece.[7] Emancipated slaves belonging in certain categories – those manumitted formally in front of a magistrate as opposed to informally (as for example among friends), and fulfilling certain other requirements – became Roman citizens automatically. This made a big difference to their lives. In this relatively open society, it gave them, or more likely their sons and descendants, the possibility of rising in the social hierarchy. Only selected slaves were given this opportunity, but cumulatively the numbers must have been significant.

The prospect of manumission gave slaves an incentive to work and to behave well. An early expression of this awareness is given by Aristotle in the *Politics*, in a stray sentence (F4). Although he promises

[6] Manumission practices are relevant to this question. See below.

[7] For manumission, see Gauthier (1974) (comparative); Calderini (1908); Whitehead (1980) (Greece); Veyne (1961); Hopkins (1978), ch. 3; Garnsey (1981); Weaver (1990) (1991) (all on classical Rome). For *manumissio in ecclesia*, see n. 15, below.

a later discussion, there is none in what remains of the *Politics* (1330b–1342b, the rest of book VII and book VIII). One wonders how he would have coped with the contradiction between the suggestion that the carrot of freedom should be dangled before all slaves and the doctrine of natural slavery.

Manumissions principally benefited two kinds of slaves, those who had been given initiative and a certain amount of *de facto* freedom, and those with whom the master had developed affective ties.

Seneca observed that the promotion of a slave through education to a quasi-free status was always possible (F7). This was a favour a generous master could bestow on a slave if he wished, as distinct from the unavoidable necessity of providing him with food and clothing. Philo (F8) goes rather further in referring to the custom of giving a trusted slave responsibility over his master's affairs.[8] Neither writer refers specifically to the practice familiar from the legal sources of furnishing slaves with capital (*peculium*) and putting them into business to make money for their masters and to give themselves the chance to purchase their freedom.[9] They were practising philosophy rather than social history. Seneca's discussion is largely general, while Philo is arguing that one cannot tell a slave by the job that he is doing, for true slavery is a property of the soul. As it happens, there was a category of slave mentioned in juristic treatises but not in literature consisting of those who voluntarily became slaves in order to take up positions of responsibility in private households.[10]

Secondly, the affective relationships that sometimes developed between master and slave might issue in manumission. In the Roman period this seems to have been a common motive for the manumission of individuals, who would typically be trusted servants working in close proximity to the master, or female slaves freed for the purpose of marriage.[11]

Manumission was largely a matter for the individual slaveowner, although the state took an interest. As we move into the Christian era, it becomes an issue whether Christian households, and the Christian

[8] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1255b35–7 envisages a (slave) steward freeing the master from domestic cares for 'politics or philosophy'; see also Lactantius on the good slave (F12).

[9] For the *peculium*, see e.g. Buckland (1908), 187–238.

[10] See Ramin and Veyne (1981), at 493–97, for slavery *ad actum gerendum/administrandum*.

[11] On manumission for marriage, see refs. in Evans Grubb (1993a), 127 n. 6.

church (for the church too was a slaveowner), freed slaves more readily than pagans were doing or had done – and in general, whether the Christian faith gave a new momentum to the promotion of slaves. We lack detailed evidence, especially for the pre-Constantinian period. It has been assumed, perhaps too hastily, that manumission was positively encouraged within the Christian community from early on.[12] The case is stronger for an increase in the incidence of manumission in Christian circles in Late Antiquity.

There is a distinction to be made between the mass of ordinary Christians and those of ascetic persuasion. If there was a movement towards the systematic manumission of slaves, it took place among the latter group, not insignificant in numbers or slave-owning capacity, who in renouncing the world and its values stripped themselves of personal possessions, including slaves. The best-known example is that of the younger Melania, who in turning to an ascetic life rid herself of the bulk of her enormous wealth – and freed eight thousand of her slaves. They were probably for the most part labourers on her extensive estates, most of which she sold. It usually goes unremarked that, according to her biographer and contemporary Palladius, she sold to her brother some others who did not want to be freed, and retained a number of attendants, slave and free, whom (to be sure) she treated in a 'democratic' spirit that recalls Gregory of Nyssa's sister Macrina.[13] The inmates of monastic communities such as Augustine's 'monastery of priests' in north Africa were required to sell their land and manumit their slaves or to provide good reason for not doing so,

[12] Harrill (1993) interprets optimistically a passage from the second-century bishop Irenaeus, *Pol.* 4.1–3 (= SC 10.148–50), and other texts. Irenaeus writes: 'Do not behave arrogantly towards slaves, either male or female. But let them not be puffed up. Rather let them be enslaved all the more to the glory of God, so that they may happen upon a greater freedom from God. Let them not wish to be manumitted out of the money in the common chest, so that they may not be found slaves of their desire.' For Harrill, 'Ignatius' apprehension about the corporate manumission of Christian slaves reveals not his so-called social conservatism on slavery, but his wider apologetic stratagem for social acceptability and internal unity under his own terms as bishop.' I remain unconvinced; nor do I deduce from this text a swelling of the ranks of manumitted slaves in Christian congregations in the second century AD (whatever the attitude of Irenaeus might have been).

[13] The stuff of hagiography, we might feel. The point is that such behaviour conformed to an ideal, and that in itself is revealing. See Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 61.5–6, and for full refs. *PLRE* I, p. 593. Palladius reports that at the time of writing (c. AD 420) Melania and her mother 'are now dwelling in the country, sometimes in Sicily, again in Campania, with fifteen eunuchs and sixty maidens, both freewomen and slaves'. For Macrina see p. 85.

such as technical problems involved in joint ownership or the need to support an aged relative. The goal, as articulated by Augustine, was to produce a community modelled on the company of Christians that grew up around the apostles: 'Nor was there anyone in need among them. For as many of them as owned estates or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds from them and laid them at the feet of the apostles; while distribution was made to each as each had need' (Acts 4:35). In his discussion Augustine is attentive only to the efforts of the clergy/monks to become poor; the slaves are presented merely as a form of private property to be discarded. That is not to say that they were left to fend for themselves after manumission. The Church took care of them, drawing on the 'common fund' fed precisely by donations from the clergy selling property in order to meet Augustine's rules. The few slaves of the deacon Heraclius were already resident in the monastery, serving their master and perhaps the monastic community as a whole. The change of status of people such as these would not have transformed their lives perceptibly.[14]

Ordinary Christians, not being bound by the rule of poverty (any more than by the rule of chastity), lacked this motive for freeing (or selling) their slaves. It may be that the device of *manumissio in ecclesia*, by its very existence and accessibility, made some of them readier than they might otherwise have been to manumit, especially if the Church accepted some commitment to support beneficiaries where necessary.[15]

It is significant that whereas Church leaders apparently did not exhort their congregations to manumit either selectively or *en gros*,[16] they regularly called for improvements *within the master/slave relationship*. Their message was entirely unoriginal: it involved (for example in Augustine or John Chrysostom) repetition of the traditional Pauline instruction to masters to treat their slaves well and to slaves to stay put and give good service to their masters, good or bad, in the knowledge that they were serving Christ.[17]

Looking at Graeco-Roman society as a whole, and asking what

[14] For Augustine's attitude, ch. 6 n. 9, with reference to *Sermon* 21 (= *CCL*41.276–8, at 281–3). For the monastery, see *Sermon* 356 (= *PL*38–9, p. 1574–81).

[15] For *manumissio in ecclesia* see Fabbrini (1965); Herrman (1980), 232–60.

[16] Gregory of Nyssa is the only Churchman on record to have opposed slaveowning as such, and even he stops short of a straightforward instruction to his audience to strip themselves of slaves forthwith (E6).

[17] See A7; John Chrysostom, *Homilies on I Corinthians* 19 (= *PG*61.156–7).

difference it made that there was now a Christian emperor, assisted by an increasingly Christian judiciary and bureaucracy, we find very little sign of change in the law of slavery and the way it was administered. There was a lot of legislation touching on slavery but not much about it that was peculiarly Christian or enlightened. Constantine's response to the status confusion that was endemic in Roman society was to reaffirm the classic distinctions between slave and free, slaveborn and freeborn, and his successors deviated little. Hostility among both secular and ecclesiastical leaders to 'mixed marriages' and to the ordination of slaves is symptomatic; it is no surprise to find Pope Gelasius, in language reminiscent of Antoninus Pius three centuries earlier but in rather different circumstances, asserting the 'rights of masters and proprietors' against 'fugitive' slaves who had discovered a religious vocation.[18]

[18] For assessment of the impact of Christianity viewed from the top down, see MacMullen (1986), and for a different approach, Kyrtatas (1995). On marriage and the law, see now Evans Grubbs (1993a) (1993b) (1995). Earlier literature on the relevant imperial laws includes Dupont (1937); Volterra (1958); Sargenti (1975); Gaudemet (1978); Crifo (1988); Carcaterra (1990); Waldstein (1990). On the ordination of slaves, see Barone-Adesi (1990); Manfredini (1995), who cites Gelasius, *Ep.* 10, 14, *PL* 59, cols. 52ff., on p. 530 n. 9.

PART II

THEORIES OF SLAVERY

Section 1

Classical, Hellenistic and Roman philosophers

Introduction: Aristotle and the Stoics

Greek philosophy bequeathed two different theoretical approaches to slavery. Aristotle offered a justification for legal slavery in the existence in certain individuals of intellectual and moral deficiencies. In such people, the effect of these flaws was to reverse in them the 'natural' relationship that was a mark of rational man, namely, the subordination of body to soul and of desires and passions to reason.

For the Stoics, people who were at the mercy of their desires and passions were *eo ipso* in a state of slavery – and most were in this state, the wise being very few. Moreover, this kind of slavery, moral slavery, was the only kind that mattered. Legal slavery affected the body, and as such was judged to be an external condition, and of no significance.

Both positions carry implications for contemporary slavery institutions. Neither expressly endorses the system of slavery *as it operated at the time*. Aristotle even admits at one point that the conventional methods by which slaves were made sometimes caught up people who were by nature free. This concession is made in the cause of 'proving' that there are people who are by nature slaves (and others who are by nature free) – a Pyrrhic victory, we may feel. His general strategy involves distracting our attention from the (thousands of) actual, unnatural slaves, and forcing us to focus on an imaginary, model slave, whose enslavement would seem uncontroversial.

The Stoic view on the social and political level was quietist and conformist, containing no recipe for institutional change. The individual was morally obliged to combat the slavery within him, but this had no implications for his or anyone else's legal and social status.

Still, it might be said that while turning their backs on legal slavery (in the sense that they defined slavery in terms of moral virtue and subordinated institutional slavery, together with the whole political order of which it was a part, to the cosmic order), the Stoics gave it a kind of *ex post facto* justification. It was Stoic doctrine that one had been assigned a role by Providence and should not strive to change it.

Aristotle died in 323/2 and Zeno founded the Stoa around 300. A philosophy centred on the polis gave way, it would seem, to another that turned inward and focused on the soul. Further, the death of Aristotle coincided with the termination of Athenian democracy and independence at the hands of Macedon, the first of the large central states. The polis as a symbol of autonomy and freedom was dead, and traditional political philosophy, systematic thinking about the polis, its institutions and values, died with it.

We can agree that, for all intents and purposes, polis-centred philosophy died with Aristotle, without conceding that the Stoics represented a sharp break with the past. Zeno had arrived in Athens about ten years before the death of Aristotle, not long after the latter had set up his own school, the Lyceum (in 335). Already in the mid-to-late fourth century, some philosophers were rebelling against Plato's deductive moral system and Aristotelian teleology. Zeno fell under the influence of the Cynics (in the person of Crates) who passed on to him their conviction that virtue is not embedded in the polis but is located in the self-sufficient wise man. The philosopher whom the Stoics saw as their ancestor and the source of their ethical doctrines, was, however, Socrates. In the *Discourses* of Epictetus, the most substantial Stoic tract to have survived from antiquity, two historical wise men only are mentioned by name – Socrates and Diogenes the Cynic.

Formally, the transition from Lyceum to Stoa was chronologically neat. In reality, Aristotelian and Stoic views were an outgrowth of the same society.

8

Aristotle

Introduction

Natural slavery as presented by Aristotle is a battered shipwreck of a theory. Many have pointed to weaknesses and inconsistencies in his arguments.[1] My concern is not to add to the chorus of criticism, but rather to explore his methodology and its consequences, as he seeks to pin down that elusive quarry, the natural slave. Aristotle does not find it easy to say what a natural slave, essentially, is. Not surprisingly, he finds it far easier to say what a natural slave is like, or not like. Analogies and comparisons play an important part in his argument. Those he considers are quite numerous, and we are reminded that one of his criticisms of Plato is that he failed to see that the sundry superior/inferior relationships are all different and should not be conflated.[2] This means, at once, that many comparisons and metaphors are worth considering, and that no one of them is likely precisely to fill the bill. It is none the less worth watching him gravitate towards some and reject others, assessing the reasons for his choices, and noting the consequences for the status of the natural slave.[3]

This approach brings some unexpected dividends. If one compares Aristotle's thinking on slavery in the *Politics* and in the *Nicomachean Ethics* – and it is common practice to pass freely from one work to the other – one comes upon an interesting discrepancy. In the *Politics*, Aristotle rules out a comparison of slavery with tyranny, on the

[1] Select bibl.: Smith (1983/91); Clark (1985); Cambiano (1987); Ambler (1987); Schofield (1990); Shulsky (1991); Brunt (1993); Williams (1993); Lloyd (1993).
[2] See 1252b5ff., with Schofield (1990).
[3] My discussion-by-analogy does not of course follow the structure of the *Politics*.

grounds that slavery is (or can be) natural, whereas tyranny is contrary to nature. In so doing he is eroding an analogy for the master/slave relationship that is favoured in the *Ethics*. On further inspection, there turn out to be at least two other significant features of natural slavery which are individual to the *Politics*, a natural symbiosis of master and slave, and mental deficiencies in the natural slave. My inference is that the idea of the natural slave is unique to the *Politics*.

Defining a natural slave

What is a natural slave? Aristotle has this to say:

ARIST1 *Politics* 1254a4–18

> One who is a human being belonging by nature not to himself but to another is by nature a slave; and a person is a human being belonging to another if being a man he is an article of property, and an article of property is an instrument for action separable from its owner.

Apart from the designation of the natural slave as a human being (*anthropos*) rather than a lower animal (or a thing), nothing of substance comes out of this definition, nothing about the natural slave, that is. The definition of a slave as one possessed by someone else is unproblematic. What we want to know is, among those people who are possessed by others, what it is that marks off a natural slave from a legal slave. Aristotle recognizes this distinction.

The problem of pinning down the natural slave would be less acute if there were firm, visible criteria by which he could be identified. It would be a straightforward matter, says Aristotle, if the natural slave had a distinctive physique. But nature slipped up:

ARIST2 *Politics* 1254b28–34

> The intention of nature therefore is to make the bodies . . . of freemen and of slaves different – the latter strong for necessary service, the former erect and unserviceable for such occupations, but serviceable for a life of citizenship . . . though as a matter of fact often the very opposite comes about – slaves have the bodies of freemen and freemen the souls only.

What of mental qualities?

ARIST3 *Politics* 1254b21–4;1260a7–14

3a 1254b21–24

> For he is by nature a slave who is capable of belonging to another (and that is why he does so belong), and who participates in reason so far as to apprehend it but not to possess it; for the animals other than man are subservient not to reason, by apprehending it, but to feelings.

Natural slaves, then, are deficient in reason but not totally without it. Later they are said to lack the power of deliberation. That is, natural slaves cannot make decisions with respect to their own lives, but can only follow the decisions of others:

3b 1260a7–14

> Hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. For the free rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in a different way. And all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways; for the slave has not got the deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but without full authority, while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form.

Aristotle does not go on to offer any characteristic models of behaviour that might help us spot a natural slave. Mental qualities, he admits, are harder than physical attributes to work with. His words are: 'beauty of soul is not so easy to see as beauty of body' (1254b39–40). Thus Aristotle says what functions slaves perform *qua* slaves, but not how we are to deduce, from any particular action of a slave, to which category of slave he belongs. It is not clear, for example, that a natural slave is necessarily less efficient than a legal slave in understanding and carrying out an order from his master. Consider the following statement in the *Ethics*:

ARIST4 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1149a25–8

> The trouble about anger would seem to be that, while it does to some extent listen to reason, it does not hear it aright. It is like an over-hasty slave who scuttles out of a room before he has heard the whole of his instructions, which he then proceeds to bungle . . .

What 'kind of slaves' are these? It would have been easier if Aristotle's natural slaves had been village idiots, whose mental weakness is easily identified. But then village idiots would not be much use as slaves.

Slaves, animals, savages

'One who is a human being . . .' The classification of the natural slave as human is basic and may seem trivial. But Aristotle wrote in the *Ethics*: 'There can therefore be no friendship of a master for a slave as such, though there may be for him as a man' (*EN* 1161b5–6 = ARIST18c, below). For the author of the *Ethics* it would seem that 'slavery as such' is a less than human condition. What view was held by the author of the *Politics*?

Let us explore the boundary between slaves and (non-human) animals. At several points in the text, Aristotle confronts man and animal without making special reference to slavery. In such cases there is the worrying suspicion that the propositions he comes up with do not apply to slaves. At one point in book I he lays down the following principle:

ARIST5 *Politics* 1254a36–b3

> And to discover what is natural we must study it preferably in things that are in a natural state and not in specimens that are degenerate. Hence in studying man we must consider a man that is in the best possible condition in regard to both body and soul . . .

Aristotle's concept of nature is normative, incorporating notions of value. A human being in his natural state is a good human being, and a good human being is a flourishing human being, 'in the best possible condition with regard to both body and soul'. A natural slave is hardly a suitable model of a flourishing human being. Does it follow, however, that he is degenerate? It is true that in a sense all created things, when measured against rational man (and man as male), represent a 'falling away' from nature. This language is used (in the *Ethics*) of animals (and madmen), which lack decision-making and reasoning capacities.[4]

[4] *EN* 1149b34–6: *exesteke tes phuseos*. The verb *existemi/existasthai* (as G. E. R. Lloyd has pointed out to me) is constantly in use in *GA* IV.3, where the discussion, however,

On the other hand, Aristotle very much wants to show (in the *Politics*) that the slave condition is natural, that it is good for a certain class of humans to be living in this way, to be tied to natural masters. In sum, the formulation 'to discover what is natural we must study it preferably in things that are in a natural state and not in specimens that are degenerate' is written in terms of man, but a parallel one could in principle have been composed in terms of natural slave.

The upshot is, that the distinctions between human and animal, and slave and animal, do not coincide. It turns out that in the *Politics* the line between human and animal is usually firmly drawn, but that between slaves and animals is fuzzy. Thus, humans, as distinct from animals, are credited with the capacity for rational discourse (*logos*), and for distinguishing good from evil and right from wrong:

ARIST6 *Politics* 1253a9–18[5]

> For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses rational discourse. The mere voice, it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well, but rational discourse is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful and therefore also the right and the wrong. For it is the special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities, and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state.

However, on slaves as compared with animals, the texts divide. Some have an arrow pointing up towards rational man, others have an arrow pointing down towards lower animals. Thus, in a text of the former kind, a natural slave is said to be capable of perceiving reason whereas a lower animal is not, but rather is a slave to its feelings (ARIST3a). Again, in the answer he gives to his own question whether slaves have virtue, Aristotle evidently feels that he has managed to maintain the distinction between a slave and a free man while preserving the slave's

mainly concerns women. In *Physics* 199a 33ff., Aristotle talks of 'failures' (*hamartemata*), citing monsters (I owe this reference to M. Schofield). See also Clark (1975), ch. II.2.

[5] See also *Pol.* 1254b16ff.;1332a32ff. Aristotle is not here interested in presenting the case for *phronesis* in animals, on which see Labarrière (1990). For Aristotle on animals versus humans, see Sorabji (1993), e.g. 12–20.

humanity as one who participates in reason. Natural slaves have a measure of virtue, as much as they need. Moral goodness is related to the end, and is limited by this. The end of the slave is to provide necessities for his master's life, and he needs only enough virtue to enable him to do this efficiently. It is the master's job to cultivate virtue of that kind in a slave but no more:

ARIST7 *Politics* 1260a33–b5 (part)

> And similarly the slave's virtue also is in relation to the master.
>
> And we laid it down that the slave is serviceable for the mere necessaries of life, so that clearly he needs only a small amount of virtue, in fact just enough to prevent him from failing in his tasks owing to intemperance and cowardice . . . It is manifest that the master ought to be the cause to the slave of the virtue proper to a slave, but not as possessing that art of mastership which teaches a slave his tasks.

On the other hand, in a text encouraging comparison with the animal kingdom, Aristotle comments that the functions of tame or domestic animals and slaves are little different. Both are essentially engaged in bodily service to secure the necessities of life for others (1254b25 cf. 17ff.). This should be but is not necessarily reflected in the bodies of slaves (1254b27–37).

ARIST8 *Politics* 1254b25–34

> And also the usefulness of slaves diverges little from that of animals; bodily service for the necessities of life is forthcoming from both, from slaves and from domestic animals alike. The intention of nature therefore is to make the bodies also of freemen and of slaves different – the latter strong for necessary service, the former erect and unserviceable for such occupations, but serviceable for a life of citizenship (and that again divides into the employments of war and those of peace); though as a matter of fact often the very opposite comes about – slaves have the bodies of freemen and freemen the souls only . . .

Again, animals and slaves are capable of life, but not 'the good life'. This has the consequence that they are not fitted for life in a polis:[6]

[6] See Irwin (1988), 339; cf. *EN* 1177a8; also 1099b32–1100a1, comparing non-rational animals *and children*.

ARIST9 *Politics* 1280a31–5

> But if on the other hand the polis was formed not for the sake of life only but rather for the good life – for otherwise a collection of slaves or of lower animals would be a polis, but as it is, it is not a polis, because slaves and animals have no share in happiness or in living according to rational choice . . .

The best that slaves or animals can expect is security (1252a30–1)[7]. Finally, Aristotle categorizes the acquisition of natural slaves as 'a species of hunting' (to which he adds 'or war'; 1255b35), and (in a parallel passage) does not baulk at an explicit comparison of natural slaves with wild beasts:

ARIST10 *Politics* 1256b20–5

> The art of war is a natural art of acquisition, for the art of acquisition includes hunting, an art which we ought to practise against wild beasts, and against men who, though intended by nature to be governed, will not submit; for war of such a kind is naturally just.[8]

It seems that natural slavery is some kind of subhuman condition. Can we get any further than this? Are natural slaves assimilable to the category of 'bestial' people that is introduced in the *Ethics*?[9] These people are diseased or physically underdeveloped, 'degenerate', one might say.[10] They are said to be individuals, and rare, and though Aristotle claims that they are mainly barbarians, he does not go on to suggest that they are natural slaves. In a later passage bestiality is associated with senseless or insane people:

[7] See also *Pol.* 1252b16 and 1252b29–30, 1278b20–5; Irwin (1988), 400.

[8] See also *Pol.* 1333b38–1334a2: 'Training for war should not be pursued with a view to enslaving men who do not deserve such a fate. Its objects should be these – first, to prevent men from ever becoming enslaved themselves; secondly, to put men in a position to exercise leadership – but a leadership directed to the interest of the led, and not to the establishment of a general system of slavery; *and thirdly, to enable men to make themselves masters of those who naturally deserve to be slaves.*' Aristotle has just been criticizing the behaviour of Greek states of his day, and in particular the Spartans, who, among other things, turned their war machine against neighbouring states, i.e. Greeks. See Lloyd (1993), 145–7.

[9] *EN* 1145a15–33.

[10] The key word *perotheis* also occurs in one or other of its forms in *EN* 1148b17 and 1149b29–30; Plato, *Laws* 874e, 925e. See Gauthier and Jolif (1970), ad *EN* 1145a31: 'défaut de croissances' (in a physiological sense); cf. *ateleia* in *DA* 425a10; *GA* 737a28; 766a26; 784a10; *HA* 498a32.

ARIST11 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1149a9–12

> [They] are by nature incapable of reasoning and live a life of pure sensation, like certain tribes on the borders of the civilized world, or like people who are diseased through the onset of illnesses like epilepsy or madness.

Natural slaves (or slaves of any kind) are apparently not what he has in mind. Aristotle, so to speak, missed an opportunity of introducing natural slaves in this context in the *Ethics*. But then he also 'failed' to introduce into the *Politics* a category of 'bestial' people and to align natural slaves with them. My inclination is to explain these two 'omissions' in the following way: in the first place, when he wrote the passage in question in the *Ethics* he had not conceptualized natural slavery; and secondly, his insistence in the *Politics* on the 'naturalness' of natural slaves led him to envisage for them a form of subhumanity which was not obviously 'degenerate' in the way that the bestial peoples of the *Ethics* manifestly were.

Slaves, women and children

The passages in the *Politics* that deal with mental capacities serve to distinguish the natural slave on the one hand from the lower animals, and on the other from women and children. Animals lack reason altogether and are enslaved to their feelings (ARIST3a). Women and children, unlike natural slaves, possess the deliberative part of the soul, though women have it 'without full authority' and children 'in an undeveloped form' (ARIST3b). The necessity of educating women and children, but not slaves, apparently, is also recognized:

ARIST12 *Politics* 1260b15–21.

> For since every household is part of a polis, and these relationships are part of the household, and the excellence of the part must have regard to that of the whole, it is necessary that the education both of the children and of the women should be carried on with a regard to the form of the constitution, if it makes any difference as regards the goodness of the polis for the children and the women to be good. And it must necessarily make a difference; for the women are a half of the free popula-

tion, and the children grow up to be the partners in the government of the polis.

There are implications at the level of domestic relationships. Aristotle held it to be axiomatic that a hierarchical relationship, that between superior and inferior, ruler and ruled, is necessary and beneficial:

ARIST13 *Politics* 1254a22–33 (part)

> Authority and subordination are conditions not only inevitable but also expedient; in some cases things are marked out from the moment of birth to rule or to be ruled. And there are many varieties both of rulers and of subjects . . . because in every composite thing, where a plurality of parts, whether continuous or discrete, is combined to make a single common whole, there is always found a ruling and a subject factor, and this characteristic of living things is present in them as an outcome of the whole of nature . . .

Aristotle also argued, against Plato, as we saw, that the various superior/inferior relationships are different in kind and have to be considered individually. In rejecting a comparison between the natural slave mentality and the mentalities of women and children Aristotle has in effect denied that the other domestic relationships, parent/child, husband/wife are appropriate models for the master/slave relationship.[11]

The effect of these distinctions is to marginalize the natural slave, and make it that much more difficult to pinpoint his essential character or capacity as a man. Aristotle, while raising the natural slave somewhat above the animal kingdom, has not yet found a category of human to whom he can be appropriately compared.

Master/slave and political relationships

There remains the political relationship between ruler and ruled. This too is judged to provide an inappropriate model and is rejected. It is

[11] However, in *EN* 11 34b 8–18 slaves and children are found to be comparable in the matter of justice, in that both are stated to be 'one's own', 'as it were a part of oneself', and contrasted with women. On slaves/children, for whom Greeks used the same word (as did Romans), see Golden (1985) (1988). For Aristotle on women, see Clark (1975), 206–11, (1982); Lloyd (1983), 94–105; Cartledge (1993a), 66–70.

axiomatic that the three natural or correct constitutions, monarchy, aristocracy and polity all involve rule over free men (cf.1255b17ff.). They are assimilated to other domestic relationships, specifically, monarchy with the parental, and aristocracy with the conjugal.[12]

The three *deviant* constitutions, tyranny, oligarchy and democracy, will not do as paradigms either. Of the three, tyranny would seem to be the obvious candidate. Tyranny is a perverted form of monarchy, being monarchy ruling in the interests of the ruler rather than the ruled (1279b5ff.). As such it will not be endured willingly by subjects who are by definition free (1295a1ff.).

In not accepting the analogy with tyranny, Aristotle was going against the implications of linguistic usage, for *despotes*, and its cognates, are applied to both tyrant and master. His argument is, that while tyranny, along with the other deviant political forms, is *unnatural*, slavery, when the 'right' people are enslaved, is *natural*. He writes:

ARIST14 *Politics* 1287b37–41

> For there is such a thing as being naturally fitted to be controlled by a master, and in another case, to be governed by a king, and in another, to exercise citizenship, and a different government is just and expedient for different people. But there is no such thing as natural fitness for tyranny, nor for any other of the forms of government that are divergencies, for these come about against nature.

If the master is not (comparable to) a tyrant, then it follows that he cannot be pursuing entirely his own interest – which is the essence of tyranny (cf. *EN* 1160b29–30). This is Aristotle's position in the *Politics*. His intentions are stated early on, with the introduction of the key notion of a symbiosis between master and slave, parallel to that between male and female:

ARIST15 *Politics* 1252a26–34

> The first coming together of persons to which necessity gives rise is that between those who are unable to exist without one

[12] Kingship: *EN* 1160b22–7; 1161a10–20; *Pol.* 1252b21; 1325a28. Aristocracy:*EN* 1160b30–2; 1161a22–5; but cf. *Pol.*1259b2 suggesting Polity. The third correct constitution involves the rotation of rulers and ruled and equality and freedom among the ruled. In *EN* 1161a3–6;25–30, it is called timocracy and aligned with the fraternal relationship.

> another, for instance, the union of female and male for the continuation of the species . . .; and the union of natural ruler and natural subject for the sake of security – for he who can foresee with his mind is a natural ruler and natural master, and he who can do these things with his body is naturally a slave; so that master and slave have the same interest.

Later in book I we hear that natural master and natural slave enjoy 'a certain community of interest and friendship' (1255b12–13). A fuller and more down-to-earth statement in book III on the quality of the relationship emphasizes that the interest pursued is primarily the master's, but the slave's interest, though 'incidental', is not in any doubt:

ARIST16 *Politics* 1278b32–8

> The authority of a master over a slave, although in truth when both master and slave are designed by nature for their positions their interests are the same, nevertheless governs in the greater degree with a view to the interest of the master, but incidentally with a view to that of the slave, for if the slave deteriorates, the position of the master cannot be saved from injury.

The tyranny/slavery analogy is not banished from the *Politics* altogether. It is retained, significantly, for the legal slave who is not a natural slave:

ARIST17 *Politics* 1255b14–16

> Hence there is a certain community of interest and friendship between slave and master in cases when they have been qualified by nature for those positions, although when they do not hold them in that way, but by law and by constraint of force, the opposite is the case.

This text may serve as a bridge leading us back to the analysis of slavery in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For in that work Aristotle has no scruples at all about comparing tyranny and slavery. At a certain stage in book VIII he is exploring on the political level the relationships of friendship and justice, with which friendship is linked, and arrives at a classification of constitutions (three pure forms, three perversions) which is similar but not identical to that of the *Politics*. His next step

is to look for analogues of the constitutions in the family, and this leads him to ask questions about friendship and justice: how far they exist, and of what kind they are. He begins the key passage by stating his conviction that family relationships provide the model for political relationships:

ARIST18 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1160b22–1161b6

18a 1160b22–4

> Now something like these various forms of government can be traced in family life, on which they seem to be modelled.

He continues:

18b 1160b24–32

> The relation of a father to his sons resembles kingship, since a father has the interests of his children at heart. That is why Homer calls Zeus 'Father Zeus', for paternal government is the ideal of kingship. But in Persia paternal government resembles tyranny, for Persian fathers treat their sons as slaves. Again the relation of master to slaves is a kind of tyranny, for it is the master's interest that is the object of its activities. This seems right, but the Persian system is wrong: forms of government should vary with the type of persons governed.

Aristotle is saying that tyranny is like mastership, tyrants are like masters. The Persians have got it wrong, but only because they confuse the categories, treating as slaves not only slaves, but also sons.[13]

After pairing aristocracy with the conjugal relationship and timocracy with the fraternal, he proceeds to explore the nature of the friendship that exists in the various relationships. Eventually, he comes to the deviant constitutions:

18c 1161a30–b6

> But in the perverted constitutions friendship, like justice, goes but a little way, and least in the worst; for under a tyranny there can be little or no kindness between ruler and ruled. They have

[13] Aristotle returns to this point at the beginning of the *Politics*: the Persians have conflated and degraded the various kinds of rule; subjects, children, women, are all treated as slaves. Barbarians, in general, 'have no class of natural rulers'(1252b5–9)

> nothing in common, so there can be no friendliness between them, just as there can be no justice. The relations between them are those of the skilled workman to his tool or of the soul to the body. No doubt the tool is in every case all the better for the manipulation it receives from the user, but there can be no friendship or justice in our dealings with inanimate things. We cannot even have it towards a horse or a cow, nor even towards a slave in his character of slave. For the slave has nothing in common with his master; he is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave. There can therefore be no friendship of a master for a slave as such, though there may be for him as a man.

The inconsistency between the treatment of tyranny/slavery in *Ethics* and *Politics* is therefore clear. In the *Ethics* tyranny is found to be a good analogy for mastership.[14] In the *Politics* this may work for legal slaves, but it does not for natural slaves. I infer that in composing these passages in the *Ethics*, Aristotle does not have natural slavery in his sights. But let us move on.

Soul and body, craftsman and tool, whole and part

The result of rejecting the political analogy in the *Politics* is that the slave's status as a human being (*anthropos*) is left hanging by a thread. The three images around which the rest of Aristotle's account hovers, soul/body, craftsman/tool, and whole/part do nothing to rescue his humanity. They cannot do so, by reason of their very nature.

In analysing these analogies one by one below, I follow Aristotle's general practice in the *Politics*. It was always open to him, and appropriate for him, to present them in combination. Two of them are fused on one occasion in the *Politics* (1254a9–11= ARIST26), and all three in passages from two other works, *Parts of Animals* and *Eudemian Ethics*:

[14] The tyranny comparison is not without its problems, inasmuch as its essential character is unjust rule over *free* subjects. In the *Politics* the problem is resolved thus: 'Yet it is strange if there is not a natural distinction between peoples suited to be despotically ruled, and those not suited; so that if this is so, it is not proper to attempt to exercise despotic government over all people, but only over those suited for it, just as it is not right to hunt human beings for food or sacrifice, but only the game suitable for this purpose, that is, such wild creatures as are good to eat' (1324b37–42).

ARIST19 *Parts of Animals* 645b14–20

> Now as each of the parts of the body, like every other tool, is for the sake of some purpose, namely, some action, it is evident that the body as a whole must exist for the sake of some complex action. Just as the saw is for the sake of sawing, and not sawing for the sake of the saw, because sawing is the use of the instrument, so in some way the body exists for the sake of the soul, and the parts of the body for the sake of those functions to which they are naturally adapted.[15]

ARIST20 *Eudemian Ethics* 1241b18–24

> But since the relations of soul and body, craftsman and tool, and master and slave are similar, between the two terms of each of these pairs there is no association; for they are not two, but the former is one and the latter a part of that one, not one itself; nor is the good divisible between them, but that of both belongs to the one for whose sake they exist. For the body is the soul's tool born with it, a slave is as it were a member or tool of his master, a tool is a sort of inanimate slave.

The main thrust of the argument in the two passages is similar: in each of the three relationships that are considered in both, one of the terms has no other function or *raison d'être* than to serve the other. The second text goes further than the first in two ways: it presents the three relationships as analogues for the master/slave relationship, here fed in for the first time; and, going beyond the teleological theme which the two texts have in common, it investigates the quality of the relationships by asking how far they have the characteristics of a community or association. A similar question is asked in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of the three domestic relationships, but in relation to justice, which supplies the principles according to which the life of a community is regulated. The question is answered negatively in both places, and by exploring the implications of the whole/part image. As Aristotle puts it in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

ARIST21 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1134b10–13

> Now a slave, or a child before it has reached a certain age and acquired an independent status, is in a manner of speaking a part

[15] Verity Harte kindly brought this text to my attention.

> of oneself. Since nobody deliberately injures himself, he cannot be guilty of injustice towards them. This means that there can be nothing in their relations which is politically just or unjust.[16]

In sum, the three relationships under consideration, especially when they occur in combination, as analogues of the master/slave relationship, inevitably have a depressing effect upon the status of natural slaves.

The soul/body analogy

The soul/body relationship enters Aristotle's *Politics* as a leading example of the natural rule of some things by others, and is labelled despotic rule:

ARIST22 *Politics* 1254a34–54b7 (part)

> But in the first place, an animal consists of soul and body, of which the former is by nature the ruling and the latter the subject factor . . . It is in a living creature, as we say, that it is first possible to discern the rule both of master and of statesman: the soul rules the body with the sway of a master, the intelligence the appetites with constitutional or royal rule . . .

As the last phrase indicates, the soul is involved in a second hierarchical relationship, that of the rational part of the soul with the appetitive part of the soul.[17] But this latter is needed as an analogy for the political relationship, specifically for polity and for kingship. It is therefore out-of-bounds to the slave. Soul/body, however, is judged a fit model for master/slave. The analogy makes another appearance a little later (in a passage immediately preceding his attempt to define the character of the body and the mind of the natural slave):

ARIST23 *Politics* 1254b16–21

> Therefore all men that differ as widely [*sc.* from other men] as the soul from the body and the human being from the lower animal (and this is the condition of those whose function is the use of the body and from whom this is the best that is

[16] The passage in *EN* adds the idea of possession: slaves and children are 'one's own'.
[17] See also *Pol.* 1333a11–24; cf. *EN* 1102b13–1103a3; and in general see Smith (1983/91).

> forthcoming) – these are by nature slaves, for whom to be governed by this kind of authority is advantageous, inasmuch as it is advantageous to the subject things already mentioned.

The juxtaposition of man/natural slave, soul/body and man/animal is revealing – as is the assimilation of slave to lower animal in the parenthesis that follows.

The craftsman/tool analogy

This analogy takes us into the realm of the household. That is where Aristotle feels that the slave belongs, not in the polis, full membership of which is for the free. The household needs property, and that is precisely the category in which this analogy will place the slave. A slave is property, one of the 'necessaries' of the household, a tool (*organon*) for living and for good living.

The slave/tool is different from the other tools in being alive, and in being a tool for action rather than for production as a shuttle is.

ARIST24 *Politics* 1253b38–1254a9

> If thus shuttles wove and quills played harps of themselves, master-craftsmen would have no need of assistants, and masters no need of slaves. Now the tools mentioned are instruments of production, whereas an article of property is an instrument of action; for from a shuttle we get something else beside the mere use of the shuttle, but from a garment or a bed we get only their use. And also inasmuch as there is a difference in kind between production and action, and both need tools, it follows that those tools also must possess the same difference. But life is doing things, not making things; hence the slave is an assistant in the class of instruments of action.

But even so, the functions of the slave/tool are limited to bodily services; and these require very little virtue. Aristotle is walking a tightrope here. He wants to preserve the key distinction between slave and free, that only the latter possess moral virtues (1259b22–1260a37; ARIST7); but a consequence of stripping a slave of virtue altogether would be to cast him as a wild animal. As he wrote in an earlier chapter, 'Devoid of virtue, man is the most unscrupulous and savage of animals . . .' (1253a36–8).

Aristotle may think he has resolved his dilemma, but his living tool seems to have very little that is human about it.

The whole/part analogy

The key text runs as follows:

ARIST25 *Politics* 1253a19–29

> For the whole must necessarily be prior to the part; since when the whole body is destroyed, foot or hand will not exist except in an equivocal sense, like the sense in which one speaks of a hand sculptured in stone as a hand; because a hand in those circumstances will be a hand spoiled, and all things are defined by their function and capacity, so that when they are no longer such as to perform their function they must not be said to be the same things, but to bear their names in an equivocal sense.

The whole/part analogy is much favoured in the *Politics* and is used in diverse ways, but principally of the relation of individual citizen to his polis and of the slave to his master. This in itself illustrates the fact that the analogy is not well-integrated and is difficult to control. We note that slaves are part of their master, the master/slave relationship is part of the household, the household is part of the polis – but the natural slave is not part of the polis.[18]

In addition, the biological nature of the metaphor creates problems, especially for the citizen/polis relationship, for the citizen surely has a separate and autonomous existence.[19] The slave too is acknowledged to be separate from his master (1254a18): but this perhaps does not matter so much since there is still an analogy between what he is doing for his master and what a (living) hand is doing for the body of which it is a part.

The point of the whole/part metaphor is to underline things which are interesting and important to Aristotle: in the case of the citizen/polis, it is that citizens are not self-sufficient (cf. 1253a25–9); in

[18] For slaves as necessary to, not part of, the polis, see *Pol.* 1278a3–6; cf. 1326a18; 1328a23–8. In these discussions they are joined by some other classes of free men, particularly artisans. See Lévy (1979).

[19] *Pol.* 1274b39–1275a2. In *Metaphysics*, Delta 10, it is recognized that separate, autonomous things might be parts of other things. For Aristotle on parts/wholes in general, see Harte (1994), 182–237.

the case of the slave, it is his belonging to another and his performance of a particular function, the provision of the bodily services that are necessary for the master and for the proper functioning of the household. Aristotle neatly achieves this end by grafting this image on to that of the craftsman and his tool:

ARIST26 *Politics* 1254a9–11

> And the term 'article of property' is used in the same way as the term 'part'. A thing that is a part is not only a part of another thing but absolutely belongs to another thing, and so also does an article of property.

Aristotle envisages the slave/part receiving benefit, as being part of a common enterprise:

ARIST27 *Politics* 1255b10–12

> For the same thing is advantageous for a part and for the whole, or again for body and soul, and the slave is a part of the master – he is, as it were, a part of the body, alive but yet separated from it.

This is another statement of the recurring theme of the symbiosis between natural master and natural slave. We may feel that the notion of mutual benefit fits the citizen/polis relationship rather better than that of the slave/master. Certainly Aristotle is much more committed to showing that a citizen achieves happiness as part of a polis (cf. 1329a20ff.), than that there is something for the slave in his relationship with his master. Nevertheless he consistently promotes the latter idea.

Whatever Aristotle's overall intention, the net result of his analysis is that there is very little humanity in his natural slave.

Conclusion

Slaves are depicted as subhuman in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, but in rather different ways.

Let us return to a passage introduced earlier, *EN*1161b5–6 (= ARIST18c). Here Aristotle states that friendship is possible with the slave *qua* man but not with the slave *qua* slave. This statement does not cohere with the rest of the account of slavery in the *Ethics*. The

half-recognition that slaves could be friends *qua* men shows that Aristotle, to be consistent, ought to have given slaves more humanity than he does elsewhere in this work – access to the virtues, the capacity to pursue their own goals, and so on. The *Ethics* gives no other grounds for treating a slave as a man. In particular, the tyrant analogy implies that slaves have no interests of their own: in what sense, then, are they human?

At the same time, the sentence in question makes perfect sense in itself if slaves are to be regarded as exploited and oppressed human beings – as human beings who are *treated* as subhuman – but whose degradation can to some degree be offset, in individual cases, through affective ties with masters. This is not only a coherent position to advance on slavery, it is also an accurate description of the way it worked. It is an accurate description of a legal slave.

The sentence becomes deeply problematic (and not only inconsistent with Aristotle's discussions of slavery elsewhere in the *Ethics*) only when it is made to carry the weight of the natural slave theory. The essential characteristics of that theory are two:

1. The slave is subhuman (rather than a human being treated as subhuman).
2. The slave/master relationship is mutually beneficial and necessary (rather than serving the master's interests entirely).

Neither assertion is plausible nor easy to establish by philosophical or scientific argument. Aristotle's arguments in support are feeble. Both theses are special to the *Politics* – there is no trace of them in the *Ethics*. Aristotle's discussion of slavery in these two works should no longer be regarded as a unity.

There may be consequences for dating the relevant parts of the two works (rather than the two works as their entirety). Aristotelian chronology is notoriously difficult and controversial, and this is not the place for a thorough discussion.[20] If, as I suspect, Aristotle could not have talked of slavery in the *Ethics* in the way that he does *having already conceptualized natural slavery*, and if one can supply context and motivation for such a conceptualization in the *Politics*, then the natural slave thesis can be plausibly represented as a later development in his thinking on slavery. An explanation of such a

[20] See e.g. Düring (1966), who happens to date *Pol.* 1 earlier than *EN*.

development from the *Ethics* to the *Politics* might proceed along the following lines:

1. Aristotle became aware of, and perhaps embroiled in, some kind of exchange about slavery. He was by nature a conservative, and was not prepared to concede that slavery was mere convention, dependent on brute force.
2. In the *Politics* he developed a grand theory of the polis as the final and perfect association, alone self-sufficient, and existing by the ordinance of nature. The discussion of slavery is only a very small part of his treatment of the polis, but slavery was nevertheless, via the household, a structural element in the polis. More than this, Aristotle could not envisage 'the best' people, whose virtue set the tone for the polis as a whole, realizing their potential for virtue without slaves. He decided slavery must be natural.
3. He 'discovered' a body of people who would do nicely as natural slaves. Slaves in Greece were mainly barbarians, foreigners, and there was a convention against making chattel slaves of fellow-Greeks. Aristotle decided to designate them, *qua* barbarian, natural slaves. This was a crucial decision, for otherwise the category of natural slaves might be thought of as entirely academic. It was also a popular choice, if Aristotle can be believed. The Greeks, he says point-blank, prefer to use the term 'slaves' only of barbarians (*Politics* 1255a28ff.).[21]

Slavery was a system of economic exploitation, imposed and sustained by law and physical force. It involved the subjection of a great many people who did not fit Aristotle's description of a natural slave and did not 'merit' slavery. The function of the natural slave theory was to distract attention from the existence of these unnatural slaves by promoting a paradigmatic image of the 'real' slave, whom all could agree to be properly enslaved. All was well, so long as one stayed within the context of the thesis, wherein modal slaves replace actual

[21] Cf. *Pol.* 1252b5ff: the barbarians break the 'rule' that the various ruler/ruled relationships have different ends, there being no natural ruling element and no free political class, in barbarian society. Barbarian and slave are by nature the same. That is why the poets say: 'It is natural for Greeks to rule barbarians.' See also 1327b19ff., where a discussion of the nature of an ideal constitution and of an ideal citizenry is opened up to include non-Greeks. See in general Hall (1989), Index: slavery, slaves.

slaves. Even Aristotle is found sliding from the ideal to the actual, as when he concedes that warfare nets natural free men as well as natural slaves and recommends that all slaves should be offered the prospect of freedom. In his own Will, according to his Biographer, he manumitted some slaves and made provision for others to gain their freedom 'if they deserved it'. What natural slaves 'deserved' or rather what was in their best interests was to find a natural master and stay with him. Natural slave theory offered ideological support to slaveowners rather than prescriptions for or descriptions of actual master/slave relationships.[22]

[22] Freedom recommended: *Pol.* 1330a32–3; cf. Ps.-Aristotle, *Oikon.* 1344b15–19; the Will: Diogenes Laertius 5.14–15.

9

The Stoics

Preliminaries

In late fourth- and third-century BC Greece the polis-centred philosophy of the style of Plato and Aristotle receded in the face of philosophical movements (among which Stoicism will engage our attention) that were preoccupied with individual morality and emphasized the role of Nature in regulating the behaviour of men. One element in this broad movement was a definition of slavery and its counterpart, freedom, as moral qualities, properties of the soul. Slavery according to the law, though not ignored altogether, received little attention. The doctrine of natural slavery appears to have been more or less forgotten, among philosophers, at least. This was in part a consequence of their marginalization of legal slavery, for natural slave theory had entered mainstream philosophical discourse as Aristotle's answer to doubts that had been aired about the legitimacy and justice of legal slavery. More fundamentally, it followed from the apparent (and to us remarkable) neglect of Aristotle by the new philosophical schools.[1] There is certainly no sign that the Stoics (or other Hellenistic philosophers) took a stance on natural slavery. Yet there appears to be a common assumption that by the early imperial period in Roman history (roughly, the first century AD) it was a commonplace that no man was by nature a slave, and that the Stoics above all were responsible for expounding and popularizing this doctrine.[2] It is true that the Stoics characteristically did not subscribe to the theory of natural slavery, but this does not go far enough. The Stoics

[1] For the neglect of Aristotle, see Sandbach (1985); on the transmission of his writings in antiquity, see Gottschalk (1990). [2] See e.g. Griffin (1976), 459–60; cf. 257–8.

did not even directly address the issue. In view of this 'failure', the most we can hope to do is to try to infer what they *might* have thought on the issue from positions that they adopt on related matters, such as the nature of men and their capacity for virtue.

The sources

The transition from classical to Hellenistic political philosophy, from the *Republic* of Plato and the *Politics* of Aristotle to the *Republic* of Zeno (*floruit* early third century BC) and the *Republic* of Chrysippus (*floruit* later third century BC) forces on the slave theorist a drastic change of methodology and a lowering of aspirations. Instead of the luxury of complete texts and substantial *corpora*, there is the penury of collections of snippets culled from the works of substantially later writers, often unsympathetic and tendentious. In the first and second centuries AD whole works by Stoic philosophers appear, and with them extended discussions on slavery. But in saying this we have highlighted another problem. Stoic doctrine was developed over centuries by a number of philosophers working in scattered locations. This being the case, Stoicism is unlikely to have been a seamless web. Late Stoics such as Seneca, Musonius Rufus and Epictetus may be poor spokesmen for Panaetian and Posidonian Middle Stoicism, let alone for the views of the Founding Father Zeno, and his successors Cleanthes and Chrysippus.

The scale of the problem can be briefly illustrated by means of two examples. The Stoic paradox 'Every good man is free, every bad man a slave' receives its first extant exposition from Cicero, himself an eclectic, though preserving in his philosophical works a considerable amount of Stoic thought; it is the fifth of the paradoxes treated in his *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. A modest piece, it none the less counts as the first surviving work of slave theory after Aristotle. Yet the paradox surfaced in the early days of Stoicism, and must have received a considerable amount of attention in the two and a half centuries that intervened before Cicero.

Secondly, the doctrine that no man is by nature a slave, commonly associated with the Stoics, is first pronounced by a philosopher, again in the extant literature, by Philo of Alexandria, who flourished more than three centuries after Zeno. Moreover, it occurs not in Philo's Stoicizing treatise *Every Good Man is Free*, but as a casual aside in a

work of biblical exegesis.[3] The lesson to be learned from this example, which I choose deliberately in order to underline the degree of our uncertainty even on matters of central concern to us, is that we are unlikely to be able to answer our questions about the Stoics with reference to unequivocal utterances and clearly expounded doctrines.

The sources for Stoic views on slavery, then, in summary: as already indicated, we have only fragments of the works of the early Stoics, preserved in the form of isolated citations by much later writers. The main texts are four.

51 Diogenes Laertius 7.32–3

Some people, including the circle of Cassius the Sceptic, criticize Zeno extensively: first, for declaring at the beginning of his *Republic* that the educational curriculum is useless; and secondly, for his statement that all who are not virtuous are foes, enemies, slaves and estranged from one another, including parents and children, brothers and brothers, relations and relations. They criticize him again for presenting only virtuous people in the *Republic* as citizens, friends, relations *and free* . . .

52 Diogenes Laertius 7.121–2

The Stoics say: 'Only he [sc., the wise man] is free, but the bad are slaves. For freedom is the power of autonomous action, but slavery is the lack of autonomous action. There is also a different slavery which consists in subordination, and a third consisting in possession as well as subordination; this last is contrasted with despotism, which also is a bad state.

53 Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 267b

'Writing in his *On Concord* book 2, Chrysippus says that there is a difference between a slave (*doulos*) and a servant (*oiketes*): freedmen are still slaves, but those who have not been released from ownership are servants. 'A servant', he says, 'is a slave designated by ownership.'

54 Seneca, *De beneficiis* 3.22.1

A slave (servus), in the opinion of Chrysippus, is 'a hireling for life' (*perpetuus mercennarius*).

[3] Philo, *De spec. leg.* 2.69. The assignment of this fragment to Chrysippus by Griffin (1976), 459, is not conclusive.

Any attempt to put together a coherent version of 'orthodox' or 'mainstream' Stoic doctrine on the basis of these isolated and rather mysterious scraps is fraught with problems. I shall be approaching them with more limited objectives in mind.

Similarly, we have little first-hand knowledge of the so-called Middle Stoics, whose leading representatives, Panaetius and Posidonius, flourished in the later second century BC and the first half of the first century BC, respectively. Again, their works are not extant. Of Panaetius' views on slavery there is virtually nothing that can be said, especially if we are disinclined to assume that Cicero in *De officiis* is heavily dependent on him.[4] The evidence for Posidonius' thinking on slavery is thin. It consists in the main of passages – taken, moreover, from his historical not philosophical works – attributed to him, or regarded as his in origin, by modern authorities, not by the ancient sources themselves; and of citations from Athenaeus' eccentric work *The Deipnosophistai* composed in the early third century AD. The latter include a text concerning the Mariandyni and Heracleots which is philosophically interesting but problematic (and will be discussed below); another, on the Chians, is a mere snippet and reveals very little.[5]

This is a meagre harvest, but rather than concluding that systematic Stoic treatments of slavery once existed and have vanished without trace, I am inclined to believe that the Stoics of the early and middle periods had limited interest in slavery, and in so far as they *were* interested, it was not slavery of the body that they cared about or talked about, but slavery of the soul. With late Stoicism, we at last begin to get some extended treatment of slavery, but with the exception of Seneca, who is in any case interested only in master/slave relationships, the discussion is largely about moral slavery.[6]

Moral slavery

Diogenes the Cynic was captured by pirates and put up for sale. Asked by the auctioneer what he could do, he replied: 'Rule men. Knock me

[4] For the relation of Panaetius and Cicero, see Atkins (1989); Griffin and Atkins (1991), introd. There is very little mention of slavery in Cicero's philosophical works, including those which treat Stoic doctrines. See above, pp. 38–43.

[5] For Posidonius, see pp. 146–50; and Garnsey (forthcoming).

[6] The few references to slavery in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius lack philosophical interest. Writers who treated slavery in a Stoicizing way include Philo of Alexandria and Dio of Prusa (late first century AD).

down to anyone who wants to buy himself a master.' A rich Corinthian came up. 'Sell me to him,' said Diogenes, 'He needs a master.' Later we are told how Diogenes took his master in hand: 'And how he behaved to his master after he had been sold! He began immediately to argue with him, telling him that he ought not to dress in that way, or have his hair cut in that way, and about his sons, how they ought to behave.'[7]

Diogenes flourished in the mid-fourth century BC somewhat before the emergence of Stoicism. The Cynic influence on early Stoicism was strong.[8] In the area of political theory, Cynic attitudes are encapsulated in Diogenes' famous self-description as a *kosmopolites*, citizen of the cosmos, which implied a rejection of the conventional polis and its institutions. This view was taken up and moulded into a classic Stoic doctrine, summed up centuries later by the Church Father Clement of Alexandria in these terms:

55 Clement, *Stromateis* 4.26 (mid third century AD)

> The Stoics say that the heaven is in the proper sense a city, but that those here on earth are not – they are called cities, but are not really. For a city or a people is something morally good . . .

Diogenes became a Stoic hero, playing the role in their literature of a model wise man, as in the story of his capture and enslavement. To the Stoic, legal slavery, the kind of slavery that befell Diogenes, is of no significance. It is not in our control, it is one of the externals, like health and illness, wealth and poverty, high and low status. As such, it is to be judged as neither good nor bad, but, rather, indifferent. True slavery like true freedom is a condition of the soul, not the body. Therefore a free soul or mind can exist within an unfree body. The soul, specifically the reasoning faculty, *is* under our control, through the dispensation of the gods. Whether or not we are free and independent and exercise free choice (*prohairesis*) is a function of our attitude to externals. We can either not be constrained and dominated by them and be free, or allow them to constrain or dominate us and be slaves. As to the quality of the independence of the wise or good man, there is a *bon mot* of Zeno preserved in Philo:

[7] See Epictetus 4.1.114 (cf. 2.13.24; 3.24.40); Aulus Gellius 2.18.9; Diogenes Laertius 6.74–5 (an excerpt from his Life of Diogenes).

[8] For Cynics and Stoics, and their politics, see Schofield (1991), 13–16, 23–4, etc.; Moles (1995).

56 Zeno, in Philo, *EGM* 97

> Sooner will you sink an inflated bladder than compel any virtuous man to do against his will anything that he does not wish . . .

and a rather more prosaic, unattributed, saying, related by Stobaeus (and dealing with reactions to other people rather than to external conditions):

57 Stobaeus, *Eclogai* 2.99

> The good man is neither compelled by anyone nor does he compel anyone, he is neither obstructed nor does he obstruct, he is neither forced by anyone nor does he force anyone, he neither masters nor is he mastered . . . The opposite is true of the bad man.

In this sphere, the sphere of the soul, Diogenes remained a free man, whereas his buyer was a slave, dominated by passions and emotions. That was at least how Diogenes read him: 'Sell me to him. He needs a master.'

The kernel of Stoic thought on slavery, then, is contained in the following principles:

1 Slavery according to the law, institutional slavery, is an external, beyond our control, and therefore not worth caring about.
2 Slavery as a condition of the soul is both within our control and all-important.

From these points emerges a third, the famous Stoic paradox:

3 Only the wise or good man is free and independent; the inferior/foolish or bad man is dependent and slavish.

As for the incidence of wise men, the Stoics, notoriously, asserted:

4 The wise are very few, while virtually all of humanity is inferior. Most men are (moral) slaves.

This is a bare summary of Stoic thinking on slavery. It remains to consider in detail the way Stoics handled legal slavery, and to explore the implications of their doctrines for natural slavery, which is not covered in the above outline.

Legal slavery

Slavery according to the law was marginal to Stoic philosophical discourse. Late Stoic writings – in practice those of Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius – do not gainsay this hypothesis. No ideas are presented therein on the causes, origins or justification of slavery. Seneca, as already indicated, confines his attention to the practical matter of the treatment of slaves by masters. The limitations of his discussion from a philosophical point of view are highlighted by the fact that, while he raises the matter of the humanity of the slave – this, together with the concrete benefits that slaves can bring to masters, are the main planks of his case for generous treatment of slaves – he does not use this as a way of introducing deeper issues such as the morality of slavery as an institution.

Epictetus' interest is limited to the exploration of the nature of freedom and slavery, which (of course) are found to belong to the sphere of morality. It was still open to him to introduce legal slavery by the back door, so to speak, as one of those conditions or happenings which, if it befell an individual, would reveal whether he was truly a slave or a free man. Epictetus regularly urges his readers to adopt an attitude of supreme indifference towards such externals, as in the following passage.

s8 Epictetus 4.1.76–9 (early second century AD)

> Shall I not, then, set my desire on health? No, not at all, nor on anything else which is not your own. For that which is not in your power to acquire or to keep is none of yours . . . Is not my hand my own? It is a part of you, but by nature it is clay, subject to hindrance and compulsion, a slave to everything that is stronger than you are. And why do I name you the hand? You ought to treat your whole body like a poor loaded-down donkey, as long as it is possible, as long as it is allowed; and if it be commandeered and a soldier lay hold of it, let it go, do not resist nor grumble. If you do, you will get a beating and lose your little donkey just the same.

Now, while Epictetus has a great deal to say about various externals or indifferents – wealth/poverty, health/sickness, political ambition/downfall, various unpleasant things that a tyrant can do to one,

and death – legal slavery is very seldom mentioned in such contexts.[9] This is peculiar. Epictetus had himself been a slave. His silence makes one wonder whether references to slavery were also scarce in earlier, classic Stoic discussions of things that might befall us (or rather, our bodies), things that were not in our control.

It cannot simply be assumed without argument that the late Stoics inherited from their predecessors a relative lack of interest in legal slavery, and the philosophical issues it raises. Four-to-five centuries is a long time for a system of beliefs and attitudes, in so far as it was ever a coherent whole, to remain unified and stable. In any case, one fragment (52) might appear to point to systematic discussion of slavery among the early Stoics,[10] in so far as it presents a kind of typology of slavery, one that encompasses both legal and moral varieties. The text in question is preserved by the late third-century AD writer Diogenes Laertius in his biography of Zeno.

The text presents a division between moral slavery and chattel slavery, but with the addition of a problematic intermediate category, namely, the condition of being subject to another but without being his property. In classical societies there were a number of relationships of subordination outside of ownership: fragments 53 and 54, attributed to Chrysippus, happen to mention two such relationships, involving the freedman (with a patron)[11] and the 'hired worker for life' (with an employer). Other relationships that might be added include the child/parent, wife/husband and ruled/ruler, not to mention that between a temporary hired worker and his employer. In outlining this intermediate category of slavery, the Stoic writers in question were tapping into the prevailing system of values, according to which, for example, working for another was judged to be in itself servile.[12] Supposing that they had such relationships in mind, one must still ask why they branded them a form of slavery, and what is the significance

[9] See Epictetus 4.1.30, and n. 7 above for Diogenes. Diogenes is made to pass comment on other matters too, such as death, fame, pleasure, finer clothing, poverty. See e.g. 1.14.6.

[10] Erskine (1990) bases an elaborate reconstruction of Stoic thought on slavery on this text.

[11] It is possible that Chrysippus is saying, as Ambrose said centuries later, that manumission does not make a man free. See pp. 201–2. If so, he would be making a point about moral slavery.

[12] For this ideology, see e.g. Finley (1985), 40–2, citing *inter alia* Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1367a32 and Cicero, *De off.* 1.150–1.

of their having done so. An answer might proceed along the following lines.

The essence of slavery for the Stoic was the loss of the power of autonomous action, and our text begins with the assertion of the classic Stoic paradox, that slavery and its counterpart freedom thus defined were attributable exclusively to inferiors and to the wise man, respectively. However, the Stoic writers in question, making a concession to common usage, apparently extended the language of slavery to cover social relationships in which the freedom of action of one party could be said to have been lost or restricted. I would conjecture that it was standard practice, for example, in Stoic treatises on the paradox in question, to acknowledge the existence of different senses of slavery and freedom. Philo begins his work on the paradox (after preliminary remarks) in this way. It is interesting that our writers identify three categories of slavery rather than the expected two.[13]

I do not imagine, therefore, that any comprehensive treatment of legal slavery lies behind this text. The typology as it stands downgrades legal slavery, blurs the distinction between chattel slavery and other forms of social and economic exploitation and subordination, and ranks it after them. In any case, those distinctions made, the early Stoics, I imagine, simply got on with the job that interested them, which was to outline their theory of slavery and freedom as moral qualities, the property of bad and good men respectively. This is certainly how Philo proceeds, admitting legal slavery into his treatise only to make negative points about what slavery was *not*.[14]

I suspect that early Stoic writers followed a similar course when treating political communities, as distinct from individuals. The externals, legal slavery included, were collectively of philosophical interest essentially for the Stoics to deny that they are under our control, that they really matter. Similarly, in the sphere of politics, the fact that in Stoicism (as in other post-classical philosophies) the focal point of philosophical discussion had shifted from the polis to private

[13] If Philo's treatise is anything to go by, the intermediate category had been forgotten about by the period of the late Stoa. The last sentence of 52 is interesting. It seems to say that anyone who has legal ownership of a chattel slave is *eo ipso* in a bad moral condition. This might be an example of a Stoic doctrine that was incompatible with natural slavery. A wise man, as a man of virtue, could not be a master. But who better (or who else?) could serve as a natural master? That would appear to be an empty category.

[14] Dio of Prusa follows a similar strategy in *Orations* 14 and 15.

morality, probably means that the Stoics viewed institutional slavery along with the other institutions of the polis obliquely rather than directly, and betrayed relatively little (rather than no[15]) interest in them.

Zeno composed a *Republic* (as did Chrysippus). This work belonged in the same tradition as Plato's *Republic*, but was designed to correct and subvert it. In it Zeno apparently set about the redefinition of political or quasi-political concepts such as freedom, citizenship and friendship in terms of virtue (51). It cannot be ruled out altogether that Zeno passed over in silence the conventional meanings given to such concepts. It is more likely, however, that he criticized them as they came into his sights – as he is said to have attacked current educational institutions as 'useless'. Such condemnations could of course have taken the form either of broadsides or of considered arguments. However Zeno dealt with slavery in his *Republic*, we need not imagine that he gave it more than passing attention.[16] It has been debated whether slavery existed in Plato's ideal state.[17] Given that Zeno was even more dismissive than Plato of existing *poleis* and their institutions, it should follow that slavery occupied Zeno no more than it did Plato, and probably rather less.

I am inclined to argue, therefore, that the Stoics distanced themselves from institutional slavery, and gave it very little attention in their writings. I have one final point of substance to make, which also makes a convenient bridge to to the next section of this chapter. There is no sign that the Stoics debated the origins and justification of legal slavery in the terms of the argument that surfaces in Aristotle's *Politics*. They do not appear to have argued, as Aristotle's opponents had done, that slavery was a man-made institution, and an unjust one at that, based on force. The reason is that in terms of their philosophy the whole debate was an irrelevance. Of course legal slavery was a product of *nomos*, law or convention. But it was also, from the point of view of the individual, an external and an indifferent, not something to engage our attention, excite our emotions or exercise our

[15] The Stoic philosophers were not *exclusively* interested in the morality of the individual. Some acted as counsellors of monarchs (which might of course have involved the giving of practical advice rather than theoretical instruction). Cf. *SVF* I.216 (Zeno, Persaeus); III.691 (Chrysippus). Also, they were interested in justice and other civic virtues.

[16] Schofield (1991), 25–6, argues for a considerable Stoic interest in the institutions of the contemporary polis. [17] Vlastos (1973b).

intellects.[18] Even for the man who succumbed to slavery there was no room for complaint or resentment, since it was not for humans to find fault with anything that God had done to them; rather, they should willingly accept the inevitable.[19]

If the position of Aristotle's opponents had little appeal for the early Stoics, they were even less likely to fall in with Aristotle's strategy of resolving the argument by conjuring up a category of slaves by nature. The Stoics (in my view) did not believe in natural slavery. They may not have said so, and a failure to say so would be consistent with their avoidance of a confrontation with Aristotle.

Natural slavery

That the Stoics rejected the theory of natural slavery is often assumed without discussion. Yet doubts and even outright disbelief have also been expressed.[20] The fragment of Posidonius on the Mariandyni and Heracleots, thought to give off more than a whiff of Aristotle, has raised questions about the unity of Stoic thought on the matter. But to talk of Stoics or the Stoics as having rejected one position on natural slavery or advocated its opposite is misleading, if the issue was not even faced. One *can* argue that certain Stoic doctrines are not easily reconcilable with natural slave theory – and that *in this sense* Stoics were opposed to the theory – and that is what I intend to do.

The Stoics divided mankind into the wise or good and the inferiors or bad. If they envisaged this central division between wise and inferiors in terms of a relationship of natural master to natural slave – if, that is, they held that the wise are 'masters' – then they can be said to have believed in natural slavery. There is a second, fall-back position: one might be able to make a weaker claim of Stoic commitment to the theory if it could be shown that they thought in terms of certain people, presumably a sub-group within the inferiors, as being *irremediably* vicious and foolish – a necessary condition of a belief in natural slavery.

[18] Philo, *EGM* 19, is suggestive: 'No one makes the first kind [*sc.* slavery applied to bodies] the subject of investigation.'

[19] Epictetus 1.14.15; Marcus, *Med.* 3.16; 4.10; 5.27. It does not follow that (in the Stoic view) opportunities offered for improved physical circumstances were to be ignored or rejected.

[20] See e.g. Griffin (1976), 459–60 (doubts aired but suppressed); Milani (1972), 167–9, 179, 192, etc. (disbelief).

Is Stoic folly irremediable?

The doctrine of the very few wise men who are free and the mass of inferiors who are slaves is not laid out as a doctrine of people who are divided in this way by virtue of natural disposition. And some texts appear to suggest the contrary:

S9 Cleanthes in Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 2.65.8 (mid third century BC)

[Cleanthes says] All men have natural tendencies to virtue.

S10 Chrysippus and others, in Diogenes Laertius 7.91

Virtue is teachable . . . as is evident from the fact that inferior men become good.[21]

Similar views are eloquently expressed by Epictetus:

S11 Epictetus 2.11.2–3

We do not come into being with a natural concept of a right-angled triangle, or a half-tone musical interval, but are taught each of these by some technical or systematic instruction, and so those who do not know them do not even think they know them. Who on the other hand has not come into being with an inborn concept of good and evil, fine and base, appropriate and inappropriate, of happiness, of what is proper and what is one's fate, and of what one ought or ought not to do?

We should not exaggerate the claims made by these texts about the potential of all humans to become virtuous. A tendency towards virtue among all men comes to rather less than a capacity of every rational being to become wise (and to enter the Stoic cosmic city, which is only for the wise).[22] We could all have a tendency to aim for virtue while most of us fall short of achieving it. And the fact that some bad people become good does not entail that all bad people *can* become good. In fact, the texts do not address the issue of the human

[21] Cf. Seneca, *Ep.*120: 'Nature . . . has given us the seeds of knowledge, though not the knowledge itself'; and see Scott (1988).

[22] On the cosmic city, see Schofield (1991).

Note that the Stoics accepted the capacity of *women* for virtue and for philosophy. For the evidence, which runs from Cleanthes to Musonius Rufus, whose treatise 'that women too should philosophize' is extant (ed. Hense), see Schofield (1991), 43.

capacity for moral progress.[23] Will any of the runners reach the finishing-post? We are not informed. Still, there is hope in the air: the runners are brought to the starting-point and pointed (or they point themselves) in the right direction. And all are participants in the race: no one, apparently, is excluded. Aristotelian pessimism about the congenital incapacity of a section of humanity seems to have been left behind.

There are other texts, however, which appear to imply that certain people do have an inborn disposition towards vice:

S12 Cicero, *De fato* 7–8 (part)

> Let us return to Chrysippus' snares, and reply to him first about the influence of environment, then pursue the rest later. We see how great the differences are between the natures of places. Some are healthy, some disease-ridden. In some the people are phlegmatic to the point of overflowing, in others they are utterly dried out. And there are many other immense differences between places. At Athens the atmosphere is rarefied, resulting in the Athenians' reputedly sharp wits; while at Thebes it is heavy, so that the Thebans are stout and tough. Yet neither will that rarefied atmosphere bring it about whether someone attends Zeno's lectures or those of Arcesilaus or of Theophrastus, nor will the heavy atmosphere bring it about that someone competes at the Nemean rather than the Isthmian games . . . But [Chrysippus will reply] given that men's natures differ, so that some love sweets while others love savouries, some

[23] Cicero cannot be taken to be voicing standard Stoic views when he says: 'In fact there is no human being of any race who, if he finds a guide, cannot attain to virtue' (*De leg.* 1.30).

In addition to teaching the possibility of moral progress, the Stoics held that there were no degrees of virtue and vice, no intermediate positions (Diogenes Laertius 7.127 (= LS p. 380, 61I; cf. 61T–U). Note the famous image of the drowning man in Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions* 1063A–B (*SVF* IV.539, part = LS p. 382, 61T): 'Yes, they [the Stoics] say, but just as in the sea the man an arm's length from the surface is drowning no less than the one who has sunk 500 fathoms, so even those who are getting close to virtue are no less in a state of vice than those who are far from it. And just as the blind are blind even if they are going to recover their sight a little later, so those progressing remain foolish and vicious right up to their attainment of virtue.'

One of the drowning men is a moral improver. The image may perhaps be seen as an ingenious way of reconciling the doctrine that a man is either completely virtuous or completely vicious, with the idea that there is scope for moral progress.

are passionate while others are irascible or cruel or arrogant, and others shrink from such vices – given, he says, such gulfs between different natures, why should it occasion surprise that these dissimilarities are the products of different causes?

513 Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 7.2.6ff.(mid second century AD)

Against this [the objection that Stoic 'fate' is inconsistent with the condemnation of wrongdoing] Chrysippus has many subtle and acute arguments, but virtually all his writings on the issue make the following point. 'Although it is true', he says, 'that all things are enforced and linked through fate by a certain necessary and primary rationale, nevertheless our minds' own degree of regulation by fate depends on their peculiar quality. For if our minds' initial natural make-up is a healthy and beneficial one, all that external force exerted upon them as a result of fate slides over them fairly smoothly and without obstruction. But if they are coarse, arrogant, inept and unsupported by education, then even if they are under little or no pressure from fated disadvantages, they still, through their own ineptitude and voluntary impulse, plunge themselves into continual wrongdoings and transgressions . . .

Chrysippus (according to Cicero) noted that the characters of people are very diverse, and considered (according to Gellius) that the 'initial natural make-up' of our minds affected the degree of our vulnerability to 'wrongdoings and transgressions', which might be 'continual'. Moreover (to return to Cicero's text) the different 'propensities' of men (for example, Athenians as opposed to Thebans) are due to 'natural and antecedent causes', including the physical environment, climate and physiology. Cicero goes on to represent Chrysippus as saying that rational decisions are predestined by a combination of environmental factors and congenital disposition (itself governed by physical causes).

The problems raised by Chrysippus' discussion of causation and the implications for human action and responsibility are much discussed.[24] What seems to be the case and to be relevant for our purposes is that the causal chain leading to decision and action is much more

[24] See Sedley (1993); also Long (1971b); Sorabji (1980), ch. 4.

complex and less mechanistic than it is represented by Cicero (whose text is in any case incomplete). And while character is causally determined by each individual's genetic and environmental background, a contribution can still be made to its development by upbringing and education. A tendency to vice is not, apparently, irreversible.

We come next to a consideration of Stoic views on the nature of relationships among men.

Common rationality

The Stoics developed a doctrine of the common kinship of all people as rational beings. Slaves and free are pronounced to be brothers, descended from the same stock, from the divinity or 'the world'. Surely a belief in natural slavery is incompatible with this doctrine?

Consider Epictetus' vision of the world of God and men. In an extended passage he infers the existence of the world community, the cosmic city, from the fact that God and men are kin, that men are sons of God:

514 Epictetus 1.9.1–6

> If the things are true which are said by the philosophers about the kinship between God a nd man, what else remains for men to do than what Socrates did? Never in reply to the question, to what country you belong, say that you are an Athenian or a Corinthian, but that you are a citizen of the world . . . He then who has observed with intelligence the administration of the world, and has learned that the greatest and supreme and the most comprehensive community is that which is composed of men and God, and that from God have descended the seeds of being, not only to my father and grandfather, but to all beings which are generated on the earth and are produced, and particularly to rational beings – for these only are by their nature formed to have communion with God, being by means of reason conjoined with Him – why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the world, why not a son of God, and why should he be afraid of anything which happens among men?

The theme is repeated in another passage, this time aimed at masters:

s15 Epictetus 1.13

> Don't you remember what you are, and over whom you rule, that they are kinsmen, that they are brothers by nature, that they are the offspring of Zeus?

Seneca reminds cruel masters that they have the same origins as their slaves:

s16 Seneca, *De beneficiis* 3.23; cf. 28.1

> The one world is the parent of all.

And again:

s17 Seneca, *Epistulae* 47.10

> (Please remember) that the man whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies, and on equal terms with yourself breathes, lives and dies.

More generally, Stoics of the middle and late Stoa developed the concept of *oikeiosis*, the natural 'affinity' felt towards nature and one's own self, extending it to other human beings (in the first instance, one's children). Man had a natural impulse to care for others, and it was one of his duties (*kathekonta*) to do so.[25] As it is put in Cicero's *On Ends*:

s18 Cicero, *De finibus* 3.62–3

> Again, it is held by the Stoics to be important to understand that nature creates in parents an affection for their children; and parental affection is the source to which we trace the origin of the association of the human race in communities . . . As it is manifest that it is natural for us to shrink from pain, so it is clear that we derive from nature herself the impulse to love those to whom we have given birth. From this impulse is developed the sense of mutual attraction which unites human beings as such; this also is bestowed by nature. The mere fact of their common humanity requires that one human should feel another man to be akin to him.[26]

[25] See Pembroke (1971); Engberg-Pedersen (1986).
[26] See also Marcus, *Med.* 2.1; cf. 7.13; etc.

In a work of the Stoic philosopher Hierocles (*floruit* c. AD 100) the objects or recipients of *oikeiosis* are graded in accordance with the amount and the quality of 'respect' that is due to them. This 'difference and inequality' is represented by means of a series of concentric circles, enclosing, in order of priority and proximity to the centre, one's own mind, close relations, remote relations, members of one's own community, and finally, all humanity.[27]

519 Hierocles, in Stobaeus, *Eclogai* 4.671–3, 11

> Each one of us is as it were entirely encompassed by many circles, some smaller, others larger, the latter enclosing the former on the basis of their different and unequal dispositions relative to each other. The first and closest circle is the one which a person has drawn as though around a centre, his own mind . . . Next, the second one further removed from the centre but enclosing the first circle; this contains parents, siblings, wife, and children. The third one has in it uncles and aunts, grandparents, nephews, nieces, and cousins. The next circle includes the other relatives, and this is followed by the circle of local residents, then the circle of fellow-tribesmen, next that of fellow-citizens, and then in the same way the circle of people from neighbouring towns, and the circle of fellow-countrymen. The outermost and largest circle, which encompasses all the rest, is that of the whole human race . . .

The common theme of these and similar texts is universality: *all* men are related; we are *all* sprung from the same source; *all* men have rationality; we have an affinity towards, and a responsibility to care for, 'the *whole* human race'. It is this which sits uneasily with the notion of natural slaves and natural masters, which rests on the principle that the human race is *not* a unity, but includes a category of subhumans, or subrational people. It is a measure of Seneca's distance from this doctrine that his slaves are presented in an artificially favourable light. They are virtuous, or at least potentially so; far from being inferior to their masters, they might be their moral equals. Seneca writes:

[27] Contrast how Aristotle halts a similar regress, *EN* 1097b8–13.

520 Seneca, *Epistulae* 31.11

> What we have to seek for . . . is the soul, but the soul that is upright, good and great. What else could you call such a soul than a god dwelling as a guest in a human body? A soul like this may descend into a Roman equestrian or equally a freedman or a slave. For what is a Roman equestrian or a freedman or a slave? They are mere titles, born of ambition and wrong. One may leap to heaven from the very slums . . .[28]

This is a representative passage except in one respect, in the hint that is given (it is no more) that a man might be unjustly (*iniuria*) enslaved.[29] In general, Seneca shows little interest in how people become legal slaves – beyond ascribing this to fortune – or in the issue of the justice of slavery. Such questions *might* have brought up the matter of natural slavery. As it is, they and it are marginal or even irrelevant to his concerns.

It would similarly be a mistake to think that Hierocles had the natural slave thesis in his sights, just because his model appears to present the members of the human race as an undifferentiated mass, the recipients of our feelings of affinity and our concern to an equal degree.

Stoic hierarchies

There is no obvious reason why the Hieroclean concentric circles, and this whole package of Stoic doctrine – common kinship, *oikeiosis*, *kathekonta* – could not coexist with the recognition of social and moral hierarchies.

Such a conjunction happens to occur in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. For Marcus, concern for and tolerance of all humanity and the rule of superiors over inferiors are equally natural, equally enjoined by the cosmic intelligence. In addition to numerous passages in which he talks of the natural affinity of rational beings for one

[28] Cf. e.g. Seneca, *Ep.* 44.

[29] See Seneca, *Cons. Mar.* 20.2: '. . . If Fortune has apportioned unjustly the common good, and has given over one man to another though they were born with equal rights (*aequo iure*), death levels all things.' Seneca is not saying here (nor in *Ep.* 31.11) that slavery in general is unjust, but rather that the enslavement of particular individuals could be unjust (as indeed Aristotle conceded). Note that Seneca compares these slaves with certain captives (not *any* captives), namely 'those whom unbridled power' had imprisoned, and with exiles, also presumably victims of tyranny.

another and the ethic of social responsibity that this entails, he writes, of the necessity of hierarchy:

s21 Marcus, *Meditations* 5.30

> The intelligence of the universe is social. Accordingly it has made the inferior things for the sake of the superior, and it has fitted the superior to one another. You see how it has subordinated, co-ordinated and assigned to everything its proper portion, and has brought together into concord with one another the things which are the best.

The statement as it stands is an innocuous generalization, one to which all the philosophers of antiquity would have subscribed. But their lists of *exempla* would not have been identical. Aristotle, notoriously, included natural slavery as an exemplary superior/inferior relationship. There is no need to think that Marcus would have followed him in this.[30] Or the Founding Fathers of Stoicism. Did not the paradox in its extended form run, that only the wise are free *and kings*?[31]

But one Stoic philosopher, embarrassingly, appears to have walked in step with Aristotle. Athenaeus writes of Posidonius:

s22 Posidonius, in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 263c–d

> Posidonius (he of the Stoa) says in the eleventh book of his *Histories*: 'Many persons, being unable to manage themselves on account of the weakness of their intellect, give themselves voluntarily to the service of more intelligent men, in order that they may secure from them provision for their daily needs, and in turn may themselves render to their patrons through their own labours whatever they are capable of in the way of service. And in this manner the Mariandynians put themselves in subjection to the Heracleots, promising to serve them continuously so long as the Heracleots provided for their needs, though they

[30] The paragraph in the *Meditations* that follows is not a list of *exempla*. In what is a collection of thoughts rather than a continuous argument, Marcus insists on the need to behave properly towards gods, parents, brothers, 'those who looked after you in infancy', friends, kin and slaves. In an earlier passage (5.16), he writes, of superiority and inferiority: 'The things which have life are superior to those which have not life, and of those which have life the superior are those which have reason.'

[31] See Diogenes Laertius 7.123; cf. Philo, *EGM* 20 (wise man as viceroy of God who is King; wise man's sovereignty). And see above, n. 13, for the implication in s2 that the wise man cannot be a master.

> stipulated in addition that there should be no selling of any of them beyond the Heracleot territory, but that they should stay right in their own territory.

In this fragment an event that occurred perhaps five centuries before Posidonius' lifetime is given a tendentious and highly unlikely interpretation, namely, voluntary submission by the weaker party (the ?Thracian Mariandyni), as opposed to conquest by the stronger (the Greek Heracleots). And the passage begins with a pseudo-historical generalization which poses as an explanation of this action, and which appears to contain a number of echoes of Aristotelian slave theory: the submissive Mariandyni suffered from intellectual incapacity; their submission was beneficial to them as well as to their masters; they surrendered voluntarily, as natural slaves ideally should do; and they became legal slaves, as natural slaves ideally should be.[32]

The thought of the fragment is Stoic, not Aristotelian. Weakness of the intellect is an aspect of Stoic psychological theory.[33] Specifically, it belongs to discussions about the differing responses of the wise and the inferior to the onslaught of the passions on the soul. Whereas the wise are held to be stable, strong and 'tense', the inferior are inconstant, weak and 'lacking in tension'. The soul of the inferior man is compared to a body vulnerable to disease, to fighting children, to the rider of a disobedient horse, and to the subjects of a tyrant. Posidonius was fully engaged in this discussion (in polemic with Chrysippus), introduced his own terminology and added to the store of similes.[34]

[32] For the fragment as Aristotelian, see e.g. Capelle (1932); Griffin (1976), 459–60; Milani (1972), 179–80; Ferrary (1988), 379–80.

A context-less fragment of this kind has to be approached with extreme caution. It is similarly risky to put this text together with other fragments of Posidonius, or with passages (such as Cicero, *De re pub.* 3.35–6, see 82) which allegedly reflect his influence. An additional factor is that it is Posidonius *as historian* who speaks to us about slavery, in so far as he does. The net result of all this is that the considered opinions of Posidonius on slavery are beyond our reach. See Garnsey (forthcoming).

[33] For the concept in Stoic literature in general, see *SVF* III. 177; 471; 473; etc. (*asthenia* = weakness); 1.148; 202; II.840; 894, etc. (*dianoia* = reason). For weakness in Posidonius, see next note. I have benefited from the advice of D. Sedley and I. Kidd in these matters.

[34] For the comparisons, see Galen, *On Hippocrates' and Plato's Doctrines* 5.2.1 (= LS 65R); Plutarch, *On Moral Virtue* 446F–447A (=LS 65G); Stobaeus 2.88.8 and 2.90.6 (= LS 65A).

For Posidonius on weakness, see Galen in Posidonius frs. 164–9 Edelstein and Kidd, with Sedley (1991), 148–50. The term *euemptosia* (= 'proneness') is distinctively Posidonian, and the horse simile is apparently his.

The Mariandyni (and their like) were Stoic inferiors. Stoic inferiors were not Aristotelian natural slaves, and there is nothing in the wording of this text to contradict this. To attribute to inferiors a weakness in respect of their reasoning powers is not enough *in itself* to earn them the designation of natural slaves. Again, the voluntary submission of inferiors to superiors was not in principle unacceptable to Stoics (as we have already seen in the case of Marcus). Such a relationship was a central feature of the Golden Age society pictured by Posidonius in a fragment from an unnamed work passed down by Seneca, and it is characterized as entirely natural. Posidonius envisaged a community without political institutions, laws and courts, in which people not yet vicious naturally submitted to their superiors, while the wise rulers refrained from exploiting those under them:

523 Seneca, *Epistulae* 90.4–5

> But the first mortals and those born from them, still uncorrupted, followed nature. They held leader and law to be equal and entrusted themselves to the authority of their betters. For nature has the habit of subjecting the weaker to the stronger ... They [the rulers] kept their hands under control and protected the weaker from the stronger. They gave advice, both to do and not to do; they showed what was useful and what was useless. Their forethought provided that their subjects should lack nothing; their bravery warded off dangers; their kindness enriched and adorned their subjects. For them ruling was a service, not an exercise of royalty. No ruler tried his power against those to whom he owed the beginnings of his power; and no one had the inclination, or the excuse, to do wrong, since the ruler ruled well and the subject obeyed well, and the king could utter no greater threat against disobedient subjects than that they should depart from the kingdom.

Slavery is not mentioned here. Men in their original state followed their natural leaders willingly, and there was no need to enslave them. In time corruption set in and there evolved political communities with rulers who were more like tyrants, and laws became necessary. In fortunate communities these laws were framed by wise men (Solon, Lycurgus, and so on; 90.6). There is no reference to slavery even at this

point – in Seneca's admittedly very brief evocation of the corrupt city of Posidonius.[35]

To return to the Mariandyni: were they not legal slaves, and doesn't this make a difference? What Posidonius *says* is that they negotiated a contract which involved an exchange of service for the provision of their essential needs, and the guarantee that they would not be sold out of their homeland. Their status is left vague. What is clear is that they were determined not to be chattel slaves, who typically suffered the fate of being uprooted from their native environment and sold abroad. If we stay within the logic of the passage, as we must if our aim is to recover the thought processes of the author, then they were not slaves at home, in Posidonius' view. He might have said, as Strabo, writing not long after, did, that 'they [the Heracleots] sold them but not beyond the boundaries of their country'. He did not, and in not doing so was implictly rejecting this detail, which later figures in Strabo's account, along with other elements also omitted by Posidonius.[36]

To sum up: Posidonius (for reasons that are unknowable) was reviewing the case of the Mariandyni. He had received the tradition that this tribe had voluntarily submitted to the citizens of a Greek polis newly established on or near their territory. He tried to work within and make sense of the tradition. He decided that the behaviour of the tribesmen was intelligible, and perfectly natural, in so far as they were inferiors submitting to the direction of their intellectual

[35] If Posidonius did refer to slavery, then there might be grounds for a comparison with Plato, into whose polis slavery enters when degeneration into stasis begins: 'The violence of their opposition [*sc.* involving the two elements of the governing class] is resolved in a compromise under which they distribute land and houses to private ownership, while the subjects whom they once ruled as free men and friends, and to whom they owed their maintenance, they enslave, keeping them as serfs and menials, and they devote themselves to war and holding the population in subjection' (*Rep.* 547b–c). However, Plato's ideal city might already have included slaves (perhaps at the domestic level), cf. 433d3. Presumably at 547b–c he is thinking not of slaves so much as of Spartan-type helotage (the timocratic state being modelled on Sparta). Thus the comparison between Posidonius and Plato cannot be clinched.

[36] Namely, the forcible subjugation of the Mariandyni and an overt comparison with Spartan helotage. Strabo 12.3.4, p. 542, runs: 'This too has been said, that the Milesians who were first to found Heraclia forced the Mariandyni, who held the place before them, to serve as Helots, so that they were sold by them, but not beyond the boundaries of their country (for the two peoples came to an agreement on this), just as the Mnoan class as it was called were serfs of the Cretans and the *penestai* of the Thessalians.' For the various traditions on the Mariandyni, see especially Vidal-Naquet (1972) and Burstein (1976).

superiors. What Posidonius thought he had found was a historical example of a voluntary agreement between a ruling community and a subject community, which involved control but fell short of slavery. This was a Stoic philosopher at work. Aristotle was far from his mind.

Conclusion

The contribution of Stoicism to slave theory was to shift the focus of attention from legal to moral slavery. In so doing they were no longer asking, as Aristotle was forced to do, how the starkest form of legal exploitation of some people by others could be justified, but how humans could free their souls from oppression by the passions and emotions, and bring their moral attitudes and behaviour into line with a higher law than the law of man, the law of Nature.

One consequence of the change in focus is that natural slavery was quietly shelved. The category of semi-rational subhumans, fitted for and benefited by slavery plays no part in Stoic discourse. There is no debate over the question whether some people were irremediably vicious and foolish.

That the Stoics did not embrace that proposition (and there is not a single text that suggests that they did) is a plausible inference from the character of their ethical theory. Their point of departure was an acceptance of the rationality of all humans. In the late Stoa this blossoms into the thesis that all men are *related* in nature. They were putting distance between themselves and Aristotle simply in establishing this base-line.

There is not much sign that they were prepared to advance much beyond it. Stoicism (the Stoicism of the paradox 'Every good man is free and every bad man a slave', the Stoicism of Epictetus) was unoptimistic about the chances of attaining moral freedom and independence. All might be born with the impulse towards virtue, and inferiors *can* become wise. But the wise are very few.

Similarly, the doctrine of common rationality and fellow-feeling was not a springboard for a critique of slavery. This whole, impressive edifice of theory was put to no more important work than to dissuade cruel masters from abusing their slaves. In practice little changed.

That the critical potential of Stoicism was not realized shows how

deeply slavery as an institution–was entrenched in Graeco-Roman society, including its upper reaches, where Stoic doctrines circulated. But in addition, some Stoic doctrines reinforced and gave an extra dimension to the acceptance of existing hierarchies within the social/political realm, including the master/slave relationship, which was a characteristic of all philosophies.

Stoicism was deterministic. Fate or Providence has planned in advance the main details of one's life. It has assigned one a role to play, and it is one's moral responsibility to apply oneself willingly to this role. This doctrine receives heavy emphasis in the Roman Stoicism of Cicero's *De officiis*, and later of Marcus Aurelius.[37] It has its roots in the early Stoa. Hippolytus, a Christian source, referring to Zeno and Chrysippus, writes:

524 Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies* 1.21

> They too affirmed that everything is fated, with the following model. When a dog is tied to a cart, if it wants to follow it is pulled and follows, making its spontaneous act coincide with necessity, but if it does not want to follow it will be compelled in any case. So it is with men too: even if they do not want to, they will be compelled in any case to follow what is destined.

Cleanthes cited by Epictetus expresses the same sentiment, more prosaically:

525 Cleanthes, in Epictetus, *Manual* 53

> Lead me, Zeus and Destiny, wherever you have ordained me. For I shall follow unflinching. But if I become bad and unwilling, I shall follow none the less.

The message for slaves, explicit in the Late Stoics, was to stay put and serve their masters well. Therein lay moral goodness, and therefore happiness.[38]

As we saw, Seneca had a message for masters, that they should treat their slaves well. This involves, I suppose, a minor modification of the Stoic position that externals were not to be taken seriously.[39] Slavery

[37] Cicero, *De off.* 1.107, 110–11, 114–17 (= LS 66E, 1, pp. 424–51); cf. *De fin.* 3.17, 20–2 (= LS 59D).

[38] The Stoics held that happiness (really) consists in virtue. See LS vol. 1, pp. 398–9.

[39] For another 'adjustment,' see Seneca, *De clem.* 2.5.2.

itself, and the doctrine of externals which helped to prop it up, remained untouched. This was the logical consequence of placing all the emphasis on the cosmic city, and in refusing to apply the concept of freedom in its conventional sense – all of which goes back to the Founding Fathers of Stoicism.

Section 2

Early theologians

Introduction: Philo and Paul

Philo was a leader of the Jewish community of Alexandria in Egypt under the emperors Tiberius, Gaius and, presumably, Claudius (for we lose touch with him after AD 40, when he was probably in his 50s). This was a time when official anti-semitism had aggravated already existing tensions between the Greek and Jewish communities in the city, and had boiled over into a pogrom. Philo went on an embassy to Rome (in AD 40) to complain of the persecution and seek confirmation of the freedom and autonomy of the Jewish community.[1] For the most part, only those of his works which show him in the role of politician and diplomat, that is, the *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*, are read by historians. A few philosophers and theologians know Philo as middle-Platonist and as commentator on the Pentateuch, respectively. He is not normally consulted for his views on slavery and freedom. Those views play a significant role in our story, forming a bridge between, on the one hand, classical and Hellenistic, and on the other, Christian theories of slavery.

In contrast, a substantial literature has grown up around Paul's thinking on the same subject, in three areas in particular:

1. The 'theology of slavery', that is, Paul's use of the concept of slavery as a way of exploring the relationships between the divine and the human, and within human society.
2. Paul's prescriptions for the proper behaviour of Christian masters and slaves.

[1] On the position of the Jews in Alexandria, see Schürer (1986), e.g. 92–4, 127–9; Fraser (1972), 54–8; *Corp. Pap. Jud.* I, 59–74.

3 The implications of his theology for social relationships within the Church.

A comparison of Philo and Paul is an attractive proposition. They both had things to say about slavery, which differed in interesting ways. They were near contemporaries. Philo died perhaps in the 40s AD, Paul in the mid 60s. They were both Diaspora Jews from Greek cities in the eastern Mediterranean. Philo came from a very wealthy and prominent family in Alexandria. There are signs that Paul's family was comfortably off, though not rich. He was born a Roman citizen (and a citizen of Tarsus too), which counted for something in the social hierarchy in this period, especially in the east, where Roman citizenship was still something of a rarity. If we can believe Acts (for the Paul of Acts is sometimes at odds with the Paul of the Epistles), he received a good education: his family was sufficiently well off to send him to Jerusalem, perhaps in his late teens, to study with Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). In becoming a tent-maker (Acts 18:3), he was not self-consciously lowering his station; rather, it was regular practice for Jews to take on a trade when they reached the age of 20, as the Mishnah indicates (Aboth 5.21). At all events, it did not get in the way of his education.

Both men knew the Jewish Scriptures, but Paul's immersion in them was deeper than Philo's. Paul says: 'I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers' (Gal. 1:14); and he describes himself as a Pharisee (Phil. 3:6). Philo is the first surviving commentator in Greek on the Pentateuch. But there are signs – for example, his lack of Hebrew – that he may have undertaken this task only in his later years, perhaps in an attempt to return to his roots after a period as a free-thinker steeped in Hellenic culture.

Of the two, only Philo has claims to be called a philosopher. He is usually dubbed a middle Platonist, though there are significant Stoic influences.[2] No doubt his family secured him the best philosophical education available to a gentleman. The case for Paul's exposure to philosophy is much less sure. He is more obviously a rhetorician than

[2] For Philo as Platonist, see Dillon (1977); Runia (1990). The literature on Paul and his social/cultural context is extensive. For the contribution of Greek culture, see recently Fairweather (1994a) (1994b); Engeberg-Pedersen (1995a) (1995b); Alexander (1995).

a philosopher. Strabo (writing in the early 20s AD) comments (C 674) on the variety of rhetorical schools in Tarsus. He also names Tarsus in the same breath as Athens and Alexandria as a centre of philosophy, and makes mention of a number of Stoics, mainly from an earlier period (C 674–5). Something of the ideas and conceptual framework of Stoicism is thought to have rubbed off on Paul. But a Rabbinic education would have introduced him to popular versions of Hellenistic philosophy. We need not suppose that he received any formal philosophical training.

Of main influences or allegiances that Paul did not share with Philo we can specify two: Christianity and Roman law. Both of these enabled Paul to expand the symbolic use of slavery in novel ways, always in the service of his theology. It is impossible, however, to view Pauline theology, including his theology of slavery, without considering the Old Testament background. Certainly the most interesting point of comparison between the thinking of Paul and Philo on slavery is their different responses to the role of slavery as an institution and a concept in ancient Israelite society as transmitted by the Biblical writers. What Philo and Paul will have deduced from the Pentateuch can be summarized as follows:

1 Slavery was an accepted, structural element in the society of ancient Israel.
2 Slavery was the fate of others, not of Jews. Jews could be subjected only to temporary slavery, unless they chose to stay with their masters (Exodus 21:1–7; Deut. 15:12–18).
3 Accordingly, 'bad' slavery was defined as slavery (of Jews) to men. 'Bad' slavery in the sense of moral slavery (as far as I can see) is present only in inchoate form in the Old Testament writings.
4 The alternative to slavery to men is slavery to God, which we can label 'good' slavery. Moses, Abraham and the rest of the patriarchs were slaves of God. So for that matter were the whole chosen people of God. They had been freed from slavery in Egypt to be the slaves of their God (e.g. Lev. 25:42 and 55), and were firmly instructed not to become slaves of men.
5 There are some 'foundation stories' of slavery which form an intermediate, problematic category. They are the enslavement of Canaan by order of Noah and the enslavement of Esau by order

of Isaac (Gen. 9:18–27; 17:1–42). They are problematic because they are ordered by patriarchs, and within their own families. Moreover, the enslavement of Esau is specifically represented as condoned by God, as part of his plan in fact: God tells Rebecca as much when she asks Him what is going on in her womb.

Philo had no difficulty with the first two points (cf. A5). Paul tacitly accepted the structural necessity of slavery in society.[3] However, his position on the ethnic identity of slaves does not run parallel with that of Philo. He did not regard slavery to man within the Christian community as inherently bad.

Pauline 'slavery to sin' is reminiscent of Stoic slavery to the emotions and passions. However, the doctrine has its origins in Scripture rather than Greek philosophy, being the outgrowth of a Christian reading of Old Testament narratives, especially the story of the Fall.

'Good' slavery as a spiritual relationship occurs in both our writers, but Paul both gives it more prominence and extends its use.

Their reactions to the two stories of Canaan and Esau are different and interesting: Paul is stranded in a cul-de-sac, anxiously pondering the motives of God. For Philo, however, enslavement through the Providence of God poses no problems. He finds a through-route. It is one that leads him into a version of Aristotelian slave theory.

[3] The presence of slavery in the Jewish and Christian communities, and its acceptance in the Old and New Testaments was naturally exploited by pro-slave campaigners in the antebellum South, who knew their Bibles well – men like Thomas Dew and Thornton Stringfellow, the latter in his *A Scriptural View of Slavery*, first published in 1841.

10

Philo

Moral slavery and freedom

Philo, the Hellenized Jew from Alexandria, does not usually figure in discussions of slave theory in antiquity.[1] Nevertheless, his views are interesting both in themselves and for the role they play in linking pagan – both Stoic and Aristotelian – and Christian thought on slavery.

Stoic *and* Aristotelian? The juxtaposition may cause surprise. I have just been arguing that there was considerable distance between the two schools of thought. Yet, in my view, Philonic slave theory is split down the middle between Stoic and Aristotelian perspectives.

For that matter, the implication that Christian writers were not untouched by Aristotle's theories through the medium of Philo might also raise some eyebrows. Yet, especially in the case of Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the late fourth century, the influence of Philo is direct and palpable.

The Stoicizing Philo is above all the Philo of the treatise *Every Good Man is Free* (*EGM*) and the unfortunately lost *Every Bad Man is a Slave*, to which he refers at the beginning of *EGM*. *EGM* is normally regarded as a work of his youth (and put aside). It is set up as a Stoic treatise, explores a famous Stoic paradox, and in much of its content looks forward to the discussions of Seneca and Epictetus.[2]

After a prolegomenon Philo proceeds to define his subject:

[1] For Philo on slavery, see Geiger (1932); Milani (1972), 247–53; Nikiprowetzky (1982); Klein (1988), 44–49; Garnsey (1994); as Platonist, see Dillon (1977); Runia (1990); on the Essenes and Therapeutai, who excluded slavery from their communities, see 84–5; Philo as exegete, Mansfeld (1988).

[2] There are traces of Stoic doctrine scattered through the works of Philo. See e.g. *De Jos.* 29 (the cosmic city).

PHI Philo, *EGM* 17–19

> Slavery then is applied in one sense to bodies, in another to souls; bodies have men for their masters, souls their vices and passions. The same is true of freedom; one freedom produces security of the body from men of superior strength, the other sets the mind at liberty from the domination of the passions. No one makes the first kind [*sc.* of slavery] the subject of investigation. For the vicissitudes of men are numberless and in many instances and at many times persons of the highest virtue have through adverse blows of fortune lost the freedom to which they were born. Our inquiry is concerned with characters which have never fallen under the yoke of desire, or fear, or pleasure, or grief; characters which have, as it were, escaped from prison and thrown off the chains which bound them so tightly. Casting aside, therefore, specious quibblings and the terms which have no basis in nature but depend upon convention, such as 'home-bred', 'purchased', or 'captured in war', let us examine the veritable free man, who alone possesses independence, even though a host of people claim to be his masters.

Philo's two kinds of slavery are a simplified version of the early Stoic typology preserved in a passage of Diogenes Laertius (52). Philo follows the Founding Fathers of Stoicism in placing all the emphasis on slavery of the soul and in characterizing it as submission to the passions or emotions (here they are desire, fear, pleasure and grief). His line on slavery according to the law, that it is not worth investigating, is predictable and consistent with Stoicism. No doubt following earlier models now lost, Philo in the bulk of his treatise discusses legal slavery only tangentially, quarrelling with those who decide who is a slave and who is not in accordance with conventional criteria: the performance of servile tasks (23, 32–5), the display of obedience (36) and the existence of contracts of sale or manumission (37–40, 100, 156–7).[3]

Philo's teaching on the wise man, which is central to the treatise, is recognisably Stoic: the wise are few (*EGM* 72–3), and are 'friends of God' (*EGM* 20, 42ff.). In narrowing the gap between God and man in

[3] Despite his talk of quibbling (**Ph1**, end), Philo himself distinguishes meaningfully among legal slaves in e.g. *De Abr.* 232 and *De Jos.* 219.

the person of the wise or good man, Philo is tending towards a position associated with Chrysippus. Chrysippus was inclined to put gods and wise men on a par. In his treatise On Nature he claimed that good men have equal grounds to boast as gods do 'since they are not surpassed in anything by Zeus'. In the same work he stated:

> Zeus does not excel Dion in virtue, and Dion and Zeus, being wise, are benefited alike by each other, when the one encounters a movement of the other. For this and nothing else is the good that comes to men from gods and gods from men, once these have become wise. (Plut. *Comm. not.* 1076A)[4]

For Philo, the wise man was the viceroy and friend of god, his freedom guaranteed by 'the rights of friendship' (*EGM* 20). In returning to the topic later (*EGM* 42ff.), he insists that the 'friends of God' are free, and makes a comparison with the companions (almost courtiers) of kings, a significant political institution of the Hellenistic period:

PH2 Philo, *EGM* 42

> Surely when we agree that the 'friends' of kings enjoy not only freedom but authority, because they take part in their management and administration as leaders, we must not give the name of slaves to those who stand in the same relation to the celestial gods, who are god-lovers, and thereby necessarily god-beloved, rewarded with the same affection as they have shown, and in the judgement of truth as the poets say, rulers of all and kings of kings.

Philo moves on to consider the status of the classic wise man of the Old Testament, Moses.

PH3 Philo, *EGM* 43–4

> The legislator of the Jews in a bolder spirit went to a further extreme and in the practice of his 'naked' philosophy, as they call it, ventured to speak of him who was possessed by love of the divine and worshipped the Self-existent only, as having passed from a man into a god, though, indeed, a god to men, not to the different parts of nature, thus leaving to the Father of all the place of King and God of gods [Exod. 7:1]. Does one who has obtained so great a preferment deserve to be considered a

[4] For this as the orthodox Stoic line see Schofield (1991), ch. 3, esp. 80–4.

> slave and not rather the solely free? Though he was not deemed worthy of divine rank in his own right, yet because he had God for a friend, he was bound to have absolute felicity, for he had no feeble champion, nor one neglectful of the rights of friendship in Him who is the comrade's god and keeps watch over the claims of comradeship.

Philo decides that the words of Exodus establish Moses as God in relation only to men.[5] The rhetorical question that follows, insisting that Moses deserves the label of free man, or even the only free man, rather than slave, confirms that in this passage Philo the Stoicizer rather than Philo the Jewish exegete is at work. In brief, in the *EGM*, Moses the leader of the Israelites is a free man precisely because he is presented as a wise man on the model of the Stoic wise men.

Now, as a Jew Philo should have had no difficulty with the notion of men as slaves of God. As we saw, a consequence of the ancient Israelites' perception of their special status in the sight of God was that they saw themselves as His slaves. They had been freed from slavery in Egypt to be the slaves of their God. And in fact Philo taps into this tradition when he is playing the role of Jewish exegete rather than Stoic philosopher. Thus in *De Cherubim* he evokes the special relationship of God with Abraham, as exemplified in his hospitality to the three divine visitors and their return-gift of Isaac:

PH4 Philo, *De Cherubim* 106

> If such a house [*sc.* a virtuous soul] be raised amid our mortal race, earth and all that dwells on earth will be filled with high hopes, expecting the descent of the divine potencies. With laws and ordinances from heaven they will descend, to sanctify and consecrate them on earth, according to their Father's bidding. Then, joined in commonalty of daily life and board with virtue-loving souls, they sow within them the nature of happiness, even as they gave *to wise Abraham* in Isaac the most perfect thank-offering for their stay with him. The purified mind rejoices in nothing more than in confessing that it has the lord of all for its master. For *to be the slave of God* (*douleuein*) is the highest boast of man, a treasure more precious not only than freedom, but than wealth and power and all that mortals most cherish.

[5] Cf. *De vita Mosis* 1.158.

Abraham the wise is also a slave of God. Earlier Abraham had been addressed as a 'fellow-slave', *homodoulos* (*sc.* of God), with the three visitors.[6]

Again, in his treatise on Joseph, Philo has Joseph describe himself to his penitent brothers as god's servant and minister (*huperetes/diakonos*).

PH5 Philo, *De Josepho* 241

> And I consider that the cause of what has happened is not you but God, Who willed to use me as His servant and minister, to administer the boons and gifts which He deigns to grant to the human race in the time of their greatest need.

When a little later Joseph refers back to his early slavery (to men), he uses a different word, *doulos*. If Philo is here making a conceptual distinction between two kinds of slavery, it is not one that he applies with any consistency.[7] Consistency is not one of his hallmarks. This matters in some cases less than in others.[8] One case where it does matter is in the use of the word *phusis* in connection with slavery.

There are two dimensions to this. First, Philo is capable of using 'slave by *phusis*' in two different senses, 'slave by nature' and 'slave by birth'.[9] This is awkward but does not involve him in contradiction. However, he also uses one sense of *phusis* to support two opposing positions on slavery. First, the two senses:

[6] For other variants, see e.g. *De vita Mosis* 2.67, 137; cf. *De Abr.* 130; 115.

[7] *De Abr.* 116. Overall Philo is equivocal over Abraham's proper designation. In *De sobr.* 55 he cites God's words to Abraham in Gen. 18:17 thus: 'Shall I hide (*sc.* anything) from Abraham my *friend* (*philos*) (*sic*)?' Yet in *Leg. alleg.* 3.207, the same sentence is rendered: 'Shall I hide that which I am doing from Abraham my *slave* (*pais*)?' in line with the reading in LXX. In *De sobr.* 55, in the context of Noah's prayer for Shem 'the good' ('Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant', Gen. 9:26) which follows the cursing of Canaan, Philo writes: 'While the words "Lord and God" proclaim Him master and benefactor of the world which is open to our senses, to that goodness which our minds perceive He is saviour and benefactor only, not master or lord. For wisdom is rather God's friend than His slave (*doulos*).'

[8] For an inconsistency of no great significance, see *EGM* 19, cf. *De Jos.* 219 and *De Abr.* 232. In *EGM* he belittles the making of distinctions between different kinds of (legal) slaves, following perhaps a traditional Stoic line. In *Joseph* and *Abraham* he shows considerable interest in such distinctions, in the latter case actually introducing them into his exegesis of Genesis where before they were not present.

[9] For *phusis* as birth, see pp. 201–3.

PH6 Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 2.69

But the holiday of the Sabbath is given by the law not only to servants but also to the cattle, though there might well be a distinction. For servants are free by nature, no man being by nature a slave, but the unreasoning animals are intended to be ready for the use and service of men and therefore rank as slaves. Yet all the same, though it is their proper business to carry burdens and undergo toils and labour for their owners, they obtain their respite on the seventh day.

PH7 Philo, *De Josepho* 246–8

They [*sc.* the brothers] praised also the pre-eminent self-restraint of his modest reticence. He had passed through all these vicissitudes, yet neither while in slavery did he denounce his brothers for selling him nor when he was haled to prison did he in his despondency disclose any secret, nor during his long stay there make any revelations of the usual kind, since prisoners are apt to descant upon their personal misfortunes. He behaved as though he knew nothing of his past experiences, and not even when he was interpreting their dreams to the eunuchs or the king, though he had a suitable opportunity for disclosing the facts, did he say a word about his own high lineage. Nor yet, when he was appointed to be the king's viceroy and was charged with the superintendence and headship over all Egypt, did he say anything to prevent the belief that he was of obscure and ignoble station, whereas he was really a noble, no slave by birth, but the unfortunate victim of the ruthless conspiracy of those who should have been the last to treat him so.

I have rendered the key phrase 'slave by *phusis*' in the first passage 'slave by nature', and in the second 'slave by birth'. The two meanings belong to quite different contexts, which need to be carefully kept apart. 'No man is by nature a slave' evokes the skirmish between Aristotle and his critics, settled by Aristotle by means of assertions about the psychology and functions of a slave. On the other hand, to say that Joseph was not by *phusis* a slave, but rather a noble, implies that slaves 'by *phusis*' are by no means an empty class. The reference is to a common way in which slaves were made in antiquity, by home breeding – the child of a slave was *ipso facto* a slave.

Thus there is no contradiction between the two Philonic usages of 'slave by *phusis*'. Each is compatible with a Stoic position on slavery, though I would contend that the first belongs to a debate in which the Stoics took no part. The second usage does play a role in Stoic discourse. To illustrate from Philo's *EGM*: we note in the first place that 'homebred' slaves are one of three categories of institutional slaves admitted in the introductory, definitional section (PH1); and that elsewhere Philo is concerned to argue that those (like Joseph, in fact) who were kidnapped and sold *were not slaves*, because slavery is a property of the mind rather than the body:

PH8 Philo, *EGM* 37

> Again, anyone who thinks that people put up for sale by kidnappers thereby become slaves goes utterly astray from the truth. Selling does not make the purchaser a master, nor the purchased a slave. Fathers pay a price for their sons and sons often for their fathers if they have been carried off in raids or taken prisoners in war, and that such persons are free men is asserted by the laws of nature which have a more solid foundation than those of our lower world.

Serious problems arise in the matter of Philo's usage of *phusis* only when he admits a category of natural slaves. In doing so he is contradicting himself, and, consciously or not, taking up an Aristotelian stance.

Old Testament enslavements: the case of Esau

The early history of the Israelites, as told in the Old Testament, contains some stories of the physical enslavement of individuals. The most conspicuous and interesting of these are three. They concern: Canaan, grandson of Noah; Esau, son of Isaac (both enslaved to close kin); and Joseph, son of Jacob (sold abroad by his brothers).

The case of Joseph is a prototype of the undeserved enslavement of an individual (the enslavement of the Israelites at the hands of the Egyptians is of the same kind, writ large). As we saw, Philo could have dealt with this in *EGM* without deviating from a Stoicizing line of argument.

The cases of Canaan and Esau are significantly different from that

of Joseph. These were acts of physical enslavement (involving something else than slavery of the soul) which could not receive a standard Stoic interpretation. The individuals concerned (Canaan, Esau) could not be easily represented as *really* free when they had been enslaved by order of Jewish patriarchs and with the approval of Jehovah.

Philo seeks an explanation. The one at which he arrives introduces a damaging incoherence into his discussion of slavery: a Stoic or Stoicizing account of slavery is forced to cohabit with a religious version of Aristotle's thesis of natural slavery.

The bulk of Philo's discussion of the enslavements in question is to be found in other treatises. But he makes a beginning in *EGM*. At one point in *EGM* he is discussing the relation of the wise man to the fool. With Philo it is axiomatic that the wise man has sovereignty over other men. We hear that fools are by the law of nature in subjection to the wise; and fools are compared to a herd of cattle requiring a herdsmen.[10] But (after an interlude) he goes further, first explaining how fools are servile, and then, evoking the enslavement of Esau by Isaac, claiming that fools are better off as slaves to the wise. For fools are ignorant about how to run their lives. They should live under the direction of virtue, as Zeno did, not of vice, as they do. Their ultimate failing is a deficiency of reason which blinds them to the damage that is being done to their souls.

Up to this point Philo claims Zeno as his guide, though all he actually cites of Zeno is the rhetorical question: 'Shall not the bad rue it if he speak against the good?' And he goes on to claim that Zeno must have been under the influence of Moses, an assertion 'proven' by the story of the enslavement of (the unnamed) Esau:

PH9 Philo, *EGM* 57

> We may well suppose that the fountain from which Zeno drew this thought was the law-book of the Jews, which tells of two brothers, one wise and temperate, the other incontinent, how the father of them both prayed in pity for him who had not attained to virtue that he should be his brother's slave. He held that slavery, which men think the worst of evils, was the best

[10] Cf. Thuc. 7.57;1.141.1, with de Ste Croix (1972), 36: Athenian allies as both 'subjects' (*hupekooi*) and enslaved. The metaphor of the shepherd is traditional (cf. *Iliad* 1.263, etc.), and a standard one in Philo. See e.g. Philo, *De vita Mosis* 1.60–2; *De Jos.* 1–3.

possible boon to the fool, because the loss of independence would prevent him from transgressing without fear of punishment, and his character would be improved under the control of the authority set above him.

Aristotle too held that slavery can be good for the slave, if he is a certain kind of person, if he is deficient in reason, and has at best a low level of virtue, enough to enable him to obey orders. In Philo it is the man 'who has not attained virtue', the man lacking in wisdom, who needs slavery.

This passage is just an aside in *EGM*. Philo does not elaborate at this juncture. In particular, he says nothing about the origins of Esau's vice, his ignorance or folly.

There is more in other works of Philo about the benefits of slavery, especially in connection with the Old Testament enslavements. Moreover, Philo is quite specific elsewhere about the existence of a *class* of natural slaves, and he describes in general terms the kind of men that they were. All of this is in flat contradiction of the dictum that no man is by nature a slave which, we have seen, appears in a work of Philo.

Take for example an extended passage from *Allegorical Interpretation:*

PHI0 Philo, *Legum allegoria* 3.88–104 (part)

10a 3.88–9

Once again, of Jacob and Esau, when still in the womb, God declares that the one is a ruler and leader and master but that Esau is a subject and a slave. For God the maker of living beings knows well the different pieces of his own handiwork, *even before He has thoroughly chiselled and consummated them*, and the faculties which they are to display at a later time, in a word, their deeds and experiences. And so when Rebecca, the soul that waits on God, goes to inquire of God, He tells her in reply, 'Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy belly, and one people shall be above the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger' (Gen. 25:23). *For in God's judgement that which is base and irrational is by nature a slave,* but that which is of fine character and endowed with reason and better, is princely and free. And this not only when

either is full-grown in soul, but *even if their development is still uncertain.*

There are three parts to this message:

1 Esau was a natural slave.
2 There is a class of natural slaves, of whom Esau can be taken as a representative.
3 God lies at the bottom of this. It's his doing.[11]

Let us glance at the wider context. The whole passage, beginning at 65, is a commentary on Gen. 3:14ff., God's curse on the serpent. The first stage of the argument establishes the existence of evil which deserves no defence but simply punishment. Philo asks: Why did God, who heard Eve's defence, condemn the serpent out of hand? And he answers: Because God punishes sheer wickedness without giving it the chance to defend itself. This is what happened to the serpent, to Er, and to Esau. The serpent stands for pleasure, Er represents the body, and Esau is the archetypal bad man.

Says Philo:

10b 3.75

God has made some natures of themselves faulty and blameworthy in the soul, and others in all respects excellent and praiseworthy, just as is the case with plants and animals.

In the second stage of the argument Philo turns to those endowed with good natures. Their good fortune, just as much as the bad fortune of those saddled with bad natures, is nothing to do with anything they might have done or might be about to do. God is moved by Grace, that is all. The most that can be said on their behalf is that they turned out well, from birth:

10c 3.77

Exactly then as God has conceived a hatred for pleasure and the body without giving reasons, so too has he promoted goodly natures apart from any manifest reason, pronouncing no action of theirs acceptable before bestowing his praises upon them. For should anyone ask why the prophet says that Noah found grace

[11] The recurring metaphors of the sculptor and the moneyer emphasize God's complete control over the proceedings. See e.g. *Leg. alleg.* 3.104.

> in the sight of the Lord God, when as yet he had, so far as our knowledge goes, done no fair deed, we shall give a suitable answer to the effect that he is shown to be of an excellent nature from his birth, for Noah means 'rest' or 'righteous'.

As with Noah, so with Melchizedek, the model peaceable and priestly king (79ff.): he too had done nothing to deserve his blessedness. Neither had Abraham (83ff.), nor Isaac (85) – blessed even before he was begotten – nor Jacob (88), juxtaposed with Esau, in the passage already cited. The same was true of Bezalel, Craftsman of the Tabernacle. Philo says:

10d 3.95

> He [God] has so far pointed to no work or deed of Bezalel's such as to win him even commendation. We must say then that here too we have a form which God has stamped on the soul as on the tested coin.

And he concludes:

10e 3.104

> Seeing then that we have found two natures created, undergoing moulding, and chiselled into full relief by God's hands, the one essentially hurtful, blameworthy and accursed, the other beneficial and praiseworthy, stamped the one with a counterfeit, the other with a genuine impression, let us offer a noble and suitable prayer.

The moral dilemma is patent. Why did God create the second, evil nature? Was it fair of God to saddle Esau, and all the other natural slaves, with their fates? Philo does not openly acknowledge the problem. But he follows a strategy which is markedly defensive, as if he is aware of the difficulty.

The strategy involves, first, stressing the benefits of slavery in cases like Esau's. Philo writes (in a passage reminiscent of *EGM* 57):

PHI 1 Philo, *De virtutibus* 209

> Therefore for the younger they [the parents] prayed that he should be blessed above all others, all which prayers God confirmed, and would not that any of them should be left

unfulfilled. But to the elder in compassion they granted an inferior station to serve his brother, rightly thinking that it is not good for the fool to be his own master.

Philo goes on to say that Esau did not endure his servitude contentedly, but rebelled against 'the excellent rule set over him', and so did not even win the second prize in the contest for virtue. Esau's rebelliousness was not just a reaction to his treatment. Elsewhere we are reminded that Esau was by nature a man of violence and for this reason needed to be disciplined by slavery:

PH12 Philo, *De congressu quaerendae eruditionis gratia* (*Preliminary Studies*), 175–6

Thus, so profitable a thing is affliction of one sort that even its most humiliating form, slavery, is reckoned a great blessing. Such slavery we read of in the holy scriptures as invoked by a father on his son, by the most excellent Isaac on the foolish Esau. There is a place where he says: 'Thou shalt live on thy sword and shall be a slave to thy brother' [Gen. 27:40]. He judges it most profitable for him who chooses war instead of peace, who by reason of his inward tumult and rebellion is armed, as it were, with the weapons of war, that he should become a subject and a slave and obey all the orders that the lover of self-control may impose.

In another text the nature of the benefit is spelled out: the slave can exchange the old, bad masters that are within him for a new, kind one:

PH13 Philo, *Legum allegoria* 192–4

But vainly deeming himself wise is he who says, 'My blessings and my birthright hath he taken': not thine, man, does he take, but those which are opposite to thine: for those which are thine have been accounted meet for slavery, but his for lordship. And if thou shalt consent to become a slave of the wise one, thou shalt cast from thee ignorance and boorishness, plagues of the soul, and be partaker of admonition and correction. Now indeed thou art a slave of the harsh and insufferable masters within thee, to whom it is a fixed law to set no one free. But if thou escape and abandon these, a master to whom his slaves are dear shall welcome thee, holding out bright hopes of liberty, and shall not give thee up again to thy former masters.

How does the good master behave towards the responsive slave? Not apparently in accordance with conventional notions of kindness, but rather by means of intimidation:

PH14 Philo, *Quod Deus immutabilis sit* (*Unchangeableness of God*) 64

> But those whose natural wit is more dense and dull, or whose early training has been mishandled, since they have no power of clear vision, need physicians in the shape of admonishers, who will devise the treatment proper to their present condition. Thus ill-disciplined and foolish slaves receive profit from a master who frightens them, for they fear his threats and menaces and thus involuntarily are schooled by fear. All such may well learn the untruth, which will benefit them, if they cannot be brought to wisdom by truth.

If a slave does not make a positive response and seize the benefits that can be his, then there is nothing for him but chastisement:

PH15 Philo, *De sobrietate* 69

> It is with good reason that Moses writes down the fool as the slave of them who lay claim to virtue, either that, promoted to serve under a higher control he may lead a better life, or that, if he cling to his iniquity, his masters may chastise him at their pleasure with the absolute authority which they wield as rulers.[12]

The second arm of Philo's strategy is the gratuitous vilification of Esau. Esau is portrayed as the embodiment of evil. So he has no right to our sympathy; and he needs an overseer.

Philo's case against Esau comes down to six main observations:

1. Esau and Jacob are moral opposites, standing respectively for vice and virtue (*De ebrietate* 9ff.).
2. Esau is the soul that is mixed, discordant, rough and hairy, Jacob one that is single, unmixed, smooth and level (*De migr. Abr.* 152–3).
3. Esau is an oak, hard, wooden, stiffnecked, ignorant and hence disobedient. His life, any life lived in folly, is just fiction and fable, utterly false (*De congr.* 61–2; *De fuga* 39).

[12] Geiger (1932), 75 n. 256) compares this last text especially with Aristotle.

4 Esau, the bad man, is an exile: he has no city, no household – he is a rustic (*Leg. alleg.* 3.1ff; cf. *De gigant.* 67).[13]

5 Jacob is younger than Esau, but it is not years that count (as we hear in Ham's case).[14]

6 Esau is linked with Egypt, both standing for blind passion and vice. Philo juxtaposes two pairs of opposites, on the one hand, the destruction of Egypt's first-born and the sanctification of Israel's first-born, and, on the other, the displacement of Esau and the elevation of Jacob (*De sacrif. Abelis et Caini* 134–5).

Of the various points made against Esau I will pick up just the last, the link with Egypt.[15] This raises the question: Did Philo envisage foreigners or some particular ethnic groups as naturally servile, in the way that Aristotle equated barbarians and natural slaves?

We saw that there was an ethnic distinction within slavery as practised by the ancient Israelites. Slaves might be either Jewish or Gentile, and the laws of Moses distinguished firmly between them. The enslavement of Jews was considered regrettable and was limited to six years, unless the slave wished to stay with his master: according to Philo, they were not really to be regarded as slaves. They should, rather, be treated as temporary hired workers (Lev. 25:39–42; Philo, *De spec. leg.* 2.122).[16] The equation of foreigners and natural slaves would have constituted a further development. Does Philo take this extra step?

The implications of the comparison between Esau and Egypt can be explored a little further. Philo freely and persistently presents Egypt as the symbol of body as opposed to soul, of the passions as opposed

[13] The Stoic resonances are clear. See Schofield (1991), App. G. For Esau as without a polis (*apolis*) cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1253a7: 'A man who is by nature and not merely by fortune *apolis* is either low in the scale of humanity, or above it, inasmuch as he resembles an isolated piece in the game of draughts.'

[14] Ham and Canaan receive like treatment at the hands of Philo. Ham's offence is amplified. Philo in *De sob.* (6ff.; 31ff.; 44ff.; etc.) says, going well beyond the narrative in Genesis, that he mocked his father's nakedness and proclaimed it abroad. Further, Ham as a younger son is compared with a child, who lacks reason and understanding. It is not years that count but capacity: Folly goes with the earliest years, and desire for moral excellence is a later birth (Philo has to produce a different argument for Esau, the older of two twins).

[15] For Philo on Egypt, see e.g. *Leg. alleg.* 2.59, 77; 3.37; *De fuga* 148, 180; *De congr.* 83, 85. In *De Jos.* 135, Egypt is 'slave' (*doule*) in a political sense.

[16] Cf. Lev. 25:39–42, and in the Stoic literature, Chrysippus in Seneca, *De ben.* 3.22; Cicero, *De off.* 1.41.

to reason, and as the seat of evil. In all these cases there is a clear link with servility in his analysis. For example, in *EGM* 40, the body is called 'by nature slavish'; this is in a passage where the wise man, who is quite immune from temptation, is contrasted with the highly susceptible masters of 'pretty little slave girls' (whom Philo admits to have often seen), endowed with a natural gift for wheedling words, as well as with natural beauty.

Still, Philo does not call the Egyptians natural slaves *tout court*, nor does he dream up a genealogy for them which would make them slaves by descent. The inference was waiting to be drawn, for example, from the words of God to Rebecca concerning the two peoples in her womb, one of which was destined to be founded by Esau, whose slavery God also foretold. Christian writers freely invented genealogies, especially making use of Ham and Canaan. Justin calls the Canaanites a people handed over to slavery (*Dial. Tryph.* 139), while Origen is clear that the Egyptians were slaves and explains this with reference to 'their master Ham', father of Canaan (B4). One wonders whether it was Philo's circumstances, his living in a sensitive place in sensitive times, and his involvement in politics both local and imperial, that held him back from making explicit what is clearly implied in his analysis.

Conclusion

Philo had before him two kinds of slavery: 'Slavery is applied in one sense to bodies, in one sense to souls.' Bodily slavery is a consequence of capture in war or sale or birth. Slaves in the body are not *ipso facto* real slaves: they are inferior to their masters only in fortune. As Philo says, anticipating Seneca:

PHI6 Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 3.137

> Slaves rank lower in fortune, but can lay claim to the same nature as their masters, and in the law of God the standard of justice is adjusted to nature and not to fortune. And therefore the masters should not make excessive use of their authority over slaves by showing arrogance and contempt and savage cruelty. For these are signs of no peaceful spirit, but of one so intemperate as to seek to throw off all responsibility and take the tyrant's despotism for its model.

True slaves, that is, moral slaves, are those who are dominated by feelings or passions. Moral slavery, in Philo as in orthodox Stoicism, was avoidable: it lay within the sphere of our control, responsibility and accountability.

Philo also believed that moral slavery was ordained by God, who has created two natures, one servile, the other blessed. He went on to sanction the subjection of moral slaves to institutional slavery, because they need to be controlled, in their own and in everyone else's interest. Philo makes the transition from moral slavery to physical slavery. Moral slaves, it seems, should be physical slaves.

So Philo was capable of, in one place, taking up a position comparable with that of Aristotle's opponents, and, in another, of expressing views apparently compatible with Aristotle's natural slavery thesis. He was also able to avoid the issue completely in *EGM*, that is when operating in self-consciously Stoic mode. If we cannot explain how Philo tolerated this contradiction, we can at least understand its origin. It arose when he came face to face with some archetypical moral slaves who were also physical slaves, furnished by the Hebrew Scriptures: Esau especially, but also Canaan.

II

Paul

Introduction

Paul, in common with the Stoics and Philo, gives priority to moral/spiritual slavery over slavery according to the law.[1] He touches on the enslavement of Esau, and might therefore have been provoked to ask why and how the institution of slavery arose. However, he is ill at ease with this story and tentative in interpreting its implications. Like Seneca and other Stoic philosophers he *is* interested in the quality of master/slave relationships, as one aspect of his campaign to secure peace and solidarity within the Christian community. A vision of the unity of mankind plays a supporting role in his argument, as it does in Seneca's. The comparison breaks down when one looks more closely at the aims and preoccupations of the two men. Seneca addresses only masters. He holds out to them, as an incentive for gentle treatment of their slaves (who as rational beings are their kinsmen), the prospect of present benefits – ranging from dedicated and sacrificial service from their slaves to release from the fear of assassination at their hands. Paul, addressing *both* slaves and masters, equals in the sight of God, talks of rewards and hints at punishments in the next world. His message for slaves is that in serving their masters well they are serving Christ. The instructions to slaves and masters are to be seen as part of a call to all men, whatever their social, legal or

[1] For 'Paul' read 'Paul and some of his followers'. Not all the works attributed to Paul were composed by him. Ephesians, 1 Timothy and Titus are not by Paul. The verses I cite from these Letters convey essentially the same message on slavery as is presented in authentic Pauline letters, and are not far removed from him in time. I follow Kümmel (1975) in these matters.

ethnic condition, to be (good) slaves of God and not (bad) slaves to sin.

The enslavement of Esau

The 'foundation stories' of slavery in the Old Testament, as we saw in discussing Philo, raise questions about the origins and justification of legal slavery. Paul treats Esau's supersession and enslavement only briefly, but in a way to problematize the issue for later Christian commentators.

Esau comes up in Romans 9, where Paul is grappling with the problem of the Jews:

P1 Romans 9:1–24 (part)

1. I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit,

2. That I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

3. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race:

4. They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises . . .

6. But not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

7. And not all are children of Ahraham because they are his descendants; but 'Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.'

8. This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants.

9. For this is what the promise said, 'About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son.'

10. And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,

11. Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of his call,

12. She was told, 'The elder will serve the younger.'

13. As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'

14. What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!

15. For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I havecompassion.'

16. So it depends not on man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy . . .

18. So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills.

19. You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?'

20. But, who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder, 'Why have you made me thus?'

21. Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?

22. What if God, desiring to shew his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction,

23. In order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has beforehand prepared for glory;

24. Even us, whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

The fate of the Jews, Paul's own people, weighed on him heavily. How could the chosen race have been found wanting and judged not to be the children of God? How could the children of the flesh have been superseded by the children of the promise? Paul makesthe decisive act the subordination of Esau, the first-born, to Jacob. Esau's enslavement, and in general his supersession by Jacob, becomes an allegory of the displacement of Jews by Christians as the chosen people of God.[2]

Paul seeks an explanation and is sure that it lies with God not man. Unlike Philo, or the author of Genesis for that matter, Paul raises the moral question: is there injustice in God? He answers with a resounding no. God is entitled to deal with his creation as he wishes. He, the potter, has a right over the clay, and who are we, mere mortals, to question this?

Again, unlike Philo, Paul does not use the diversionary tactic of

[2] Rom. 11:35 contains the suggestion that the exclusion of Esau and those he stands for will not be permanent.

vilifying Esau and weighting our sympathies against him. The enslavement of Esau is presented as a real, physical enslavement, unmerited, and yet condoned by God.

In general, Paul stays close to the story in Genesis, leaving it only to raise the moral dilemma and to admit that he cannot resolve it, for the very good reason that he is man, not God. Philo is less morally sensitive and more prepared to speculate, which he does along Aristotelian lines. Both approaches have their successors in the commentaries of the Church Fathers.

Slaves and masters

Paul like everyone else accepted legal slavery. The social attitudes he betrays in addressing slaves and their masters are conventional and conservative. The first and crucial instruction as set out in 1 Corinthians is that slaves should stay precisely where they are without resentment, in the knowledge that it makes no difference to Christ whether one is a slave or a free man.[3] Paul practised what he preached, in returning to his master Philemon, Onesimus, the fugitive slave whom he had converted to Christianity and employed in his service.

P2 1 Corinthians 7.20–4

20. Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called.

21. Were you a slave when called? Never mind. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.

22. For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ.

23. You were bought for a price; do not become slaves of men.

24. So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God.

P3 Philemon 10–19

10. I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment.

11. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.

[3] On the interpretation of 1 Cor. 7:21, see Scott Barchy (1973).

12. I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.

13. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel;

14. But I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will.

15. Perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back for ever,

16. No longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17. So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

18. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account;

19. I Paul write this with my own hand, I will repay it – to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.

In the Letter to the Colossians Paul introduces additional elements: slaves must obey willingly, with fear of the Lord. They must behave, in fact, as if their master was Christ. Their service will be rewarded – by Christ. Masters must be fair to their slaves in the knowledge that they too have a Master in heaven. A variant of this message appears in the Letter to the Ephesians written within a generation of Paul's death.[4]

P4 Colossians 3:22–4:1

22. Slaves, obey in everything those that are your earthly masters, not with eyeservice as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord.

23. Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men,

24. Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward: you are serving the Lord Christ.

25. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

[4] On the authorship and date of the Letter to the Ephesians, see Kümmel (1975), 357–66; Lincoln (1990), lix-lxxxvi (and on slaves and masters, 411–28). The quotations from the Pastoral Epistles that follow are also non-Pauline (see n. 1, above). And 1 Peter is not by the Apostle Peter. It was composed in Palestine in the Second Temple Period.

4:1. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

P5 Ephesians 6:5–8

5. Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as to Christ;

6. Not in the way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

7. Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

8. Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with Him.

The author of the letter to Titus urges slaves to show submissiveness and honesty to the glory of God and in expectation of future reward:

P6 Titus 2:9–13

9. Bid slaves to be submissive to their own masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to be refractory,

10. Nor to pilfer, but to show entire and true fidelity, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

11. For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men,

12. Training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright and godly lives in this world,

13. Awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ . . .

In the First Letter to Timothy, the writer represents dishonouring a master as tantamount to blasphemy. As if in tacit recognition that resentment among slaves was ubiquitous and inevitable, he pleads that Christian masters (at least?) should be treated with respect:

P7 1 Timothy 6:1–2

1. Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed.

2. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespect-

ful on the ground that they are brethren; rather, they must serve all the better, since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these duties.

In 1 Peter it is admitted that masters might be bad. This, however, does not release slaves from the necessity of serving willingly and patiently. As justification of their subordination, the author presents Christ's life and death, the death of a slave, as a model for slaves to follow, evoking the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:

P8 1 Peter 2:18–21

18. Slaves, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle, but also to the overbearing.

19. For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly.

20. For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and suffer for it, you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval.

21. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips.

23. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly.

24. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

25. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Christian slaves, then, are to be content with their condition and to be wholeheartedly obedient, while masters should treat their slaves well. These instructions are not distinctively Christian. Stoic philosophers would have agreed that slaves, like the rest of mankind, are allotted a role in life, and should be prepared to stay in it and perform the attendant functions willingly.

There is (of course) a peculiarly Christian element in the Pauline message. Slaves more particularly, but masters too, are given a powerful new motivation for being, respectively, obedient and kind. A slave

who serves an earthly master well is serving God well and qualifies for eternal rewards. There is, conversely, a hint that bad slaves are preparing eternal punishment for themselves, for not honouring a master is dishonouring God. In reminding masters that they too have a master in heaven, the Pauline authors are giving them a veiled warning of possible 'disciplinary proceedings' to come. The expectation that the Coming of the Kingdom, and therefore the moment of reckoning, was nigh gave an added piquancy to this message, while providing an additional disincentive against social change.[5]

Slaves and free men, slaves and sons

The second strand of Paul's argument for good master/slave relations is an appeal to the unity of mankind in the sight of God. This bears an obvious resemblance to the Stoic brotherhood of man, but the two doctrines are put to quite different use. The Pauline unity in Christ is grafted on to and inseparable from his eschatological vision of the judgement of God. 'One in Christ' or 'one in the sight of God' entails equal access to divine rewards and equal vulnerability to divine punishments, on the basis of either faith or unbelief. Secondly, Paul's concept of unity is spelled out more dramatically and provocatively, and in more detail, than any Stoic counterpart. In the process Paul appears to thumb his nose at all the important social and cultural hierarchies of his world, as upheld by laws, conventions and values. The slave/free distinction in particular is treated in a cavalier way. The Corinthians are told (P2) that they are at once free men in Christ, slaves of Christ and freedmen of Christ. 'Iurisconsultus abesto!' It is noteworthy that the slave/free division figures in all the various lists of those distinctions (of gender, ethnicity, culture and legal condition) which are judged to be meaningless in the sight of God.[6] As follows:

P9 Galatians 3:28

> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

[5] This could, however, work the other way. The millenarian spirit might show itself in active moves to produce a Christian community here and now on earth on the model of the anticipated eschatological community.

[6] On texts P9–11, see pp. 69–72.

P10 1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free; and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

P11 Colossians 3:11

Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man: but Christ is all, and in all.

In the Roman law of persons the fundamental division was between free men and slaves. In two of his letters Paul introduces a further distinction which was meaningful in the sight of Roman law but not listed among those judged meaningless in the sight of God, that between sons and slaves. Paul, and various Christian thinkers who came after him, exploited the tension between these two terms in law and in theology, in exploring such central doctrinal issues as the relation of God to man, the status of Christ, and the meaning of Christian discipleship.

The Galatians passage (P9) continues in the following way:

P12 Galatians 3:29–4:7

29. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

1. I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is owner of all the estate;

2. But is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father.

3. So with us, when we were children, we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe.

4. But when the time had come fully, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5. To redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

6. And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba, Father.'

7. So through God you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir.

Slave and son begin as near status-equals, for while the son is an infant he is tantamount to a slave. But their paths separate: the

situation of the son improves as he matures and gains his inheritance. The great divider between slave and son is the capacity of the son to inherit.

It is interesting that Paul chooses the context of guardianship, and specifically the guardianship of minors, by which to advance his argument. This is a deliberate choice, to suit a complex exposition which exploits technicalities of Roman law. An alternative strategy would have been to present slaves and sons as equally subject to *patria potestas*. This might have achieved a similar side-effect, that of blurring the status distinction between them. But the implications would have been unfortunate: a son (that is, a follower of Christ) claiming his inheritance by escaping from the *potestas* of his father (that is, God).

In sum, Paul has used Roman law as a tool to develop his theology, and has used it accurately.[7] He has captured at once the ambiguity of the position of the son *qua* infant, and the clarity of the son's position once he has received his inheritance, in both cases by comparing his condition with that of a slave. Two and a half centuries later, Lactantius will go so far as to claim for a theological argument on a similar subject that it is validated by Roman law.[8]

For a different perspective on the son/slave distinction we turn to the Letter to the Romans. Here sons and slaves are virtually interchangeable.

In Romans 8 we read:

P13 Romans 8:14–17

14. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

15. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba, Father',

16. It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may be also glorified with him.

[7] For *tutela impuberis*, see Buckland (1963), 142–3; Zulueta (1953), vol.II, 49–50. C. Humfress has persuaded me that Paul has in mind here Roman law rather than any other legal system. For legal metaphors in Paul, see Lyall (1984); for sons in Paul, see Byrne (1979).

[8] See LACTI (ch. 14). For the influence of Roman law on the Church Fathers, see Gaudemet (1975).

Two chapters earlier, however, followers of Christ have been 'set free from sin to become *slaves* to God' (6:15–23, at 22; P14) – and we note that at the very beginning of the work the author styles himself: 'Paul, a slave of Christ'.

We saw that according to Paul in 1 Corinthians Christians enjoy in the sight of God the status of slaves, of free men and of freedmen. We can now add – of sons.

Bad slavery, good slavery

The twin concepts of good slavery and bad slavery are both well-developed in Paul. In Stoic thought slavery was almost invariably bad.[9] This was slavery to the passions and emotions, the mark of fools, or the mass of mankind. It is the equivalent, roughly, of Paul's slavery to sin.

But whereas good slavery is prominent in the Old Testament, bad slavery in the Pauline sense is apparently not fully conceptualized. Paul takes over and develops good slavery, and builds a fully fledged Christian doctrine of slavery to sin on raw materials provided by the Old Testament. Let us look a little more closely at both concepts. One is either a slave to sin or a slave to God. As Paul writes to the Romans:

P14 Romans 6:15–23

15. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

16. Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

17. But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed;

18. And, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

19. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.

[9] For the concept of *diakonos* of God in Epictetus, see p. 18 n. 41.

20. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

21. But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death.

22. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life.

23. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is a specifically Christian doctrine, in the sense that slavery to sin is the condition of non-Christians and pre-Christians as well as erring Christians. The Jews too are caught up in the net. The ancient Israelites saw themselves as redeemed by their God, but in Paul's view they needed to undergo a further act of emancipation, because they were still enslaved to the Law (Gal. 4:2–7 = P12).

The Pauline image of slavery to God or Christ ('good' slavery) has several facets or roles. First, it designates leaders. This is a carryover from the Old Testament. Paul as slave of God (and Christ) stands in succession to Moses, Abraham and the patriarchs. But Christians also have a new model of a slave of God before them in Christ himself (P7, cf. P15, below). Secondly, all Christians are slaves of God, just as all the ancient Israelites were – for if not slaves of God, then slaves to sin. Thirdly, Christians serve their neighbours. Both the leadership and the rank-and-file members of the Christian community play this role. Paul calls himself not only a slave to God, but a slave to all Christians.

So much for the functions served by good slavery in the discourse of Paul. But what does slavery in these contexts mean?

The defining characteristic of good slavery is humility, obedience, devotion. This applies whether the object of service is God or one's fellow men, and it fits equally those who have a leadership function and ordinary Christians. To be sure, the epithet 'slave of God', when applied to a leader, carried a special stamp of authority. When Paul opened his letter to the Romans with 'Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ', he was claiming for himself a specially privileged position. But then, all those who served the Christian God were in some sense selected out from the mass of humanity, 'called to his purpose' (Rom. 8:28; cf. 29–30; Matt. 22:14). They could all claim status-by-

association.[10] Moreover, as we saw, Paul put this title, this privilege, into perspective by insisting that the slave of God was also the slave of all.

The idea that those in a position of authority must serve the humblest may not have pleased the higher-status members of the early Christian communities, for example, at Corinth. But Paul is insistent that the injunction to serve applies to all Christians, wherever they stand in the social hierarchy, or the Church hierarchy – the latter is a hierarchy of service.

Slavery, then, signified absolute obedience and humility. The Old Testament roots of this doctrine are clear. That man was created to serve God was already a key Jewish idea. To proceed beyond this, as we must, we have to confront Christian teaching on incarnation, crucifixion and salvation. Paul writes to the Philippians:

P15 Philippians 2:5–12

5. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus,

6. Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7. But emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men;

8. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient even unto death, even death on a cross.

9. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,

10. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Christ became a slave and died a slave's death. The response of mankind to this act of self-humiliation could only be the acknowledgement of its utter dependence upon God. The language of slavery might seem entirely appropriate for this. Christ's death, however, was not the end, for Christ was glorified. For his followers too there was a reward in prospect. Humility and abasement before God were the path of salvation.

[10] See Martin (1990), 51; cf. 46.

To sum up: slavery in Paul, good slavery, means obedience and humility towards God and towards men. It carries a certain cachet, and it is the key to salvation.[11]

Slavery and society

Paul was a Christian theologian steeped in the Jewish scriptures and law. He also drew ideas from classical philosophy, even if second-hand and in an attenuated form. These influences, when fused with Paul's own historical experience and perception of the social and ideological context, produced the distinctive mix which is Pauline slave theory. If it is true that this theory is inseparable from the historical context, it is by no means easy to decide how Paul (and his followers) read contemporary Graeco-Roman society and the role of slavery within it. There is a problem in trying to identify specific attitudes to the practice and ideology of slavery, or a Pauline 'world-view', in occasional letters which were intended by their author(s) to regulate fledgeling Christian communities and facilitate Christian discipleship in an alien world. It has nevertheless been suggested that Paul's use of the metaphor of slavery betrays the influence of particular aspects of the functioning of slavery as an institution, specifically, the phenomenon of upwardly mobile slaves. These were slaves who exercised power because they served powerful people (emperors, courtiers, aristocrats) and for no other reason. In due course they became powerful freedmen, and their families, if they had families, eventually penetrated the upper orders of society. A consequence of focusing on great imperial freedmen such as the emperor Claudius' Pallas and Narcissus might be to emphasize slavery as a mark of high status rather than as a symbol of humility.[12]

But was (legal) slavery associated in Paul's mind predominantly with an ideology of success? Slavery for most slaves was highly undesirable and anything but an avenue of upward mobility.[13] In so far as

[11] See Martin (1990). [12] As does Martin (1990).

[13] Cf. Martin (1990), e.g. 142: 'The ultimate goal of Paul's rhetoric is to challenge the traditional linkage between high-status indicators and leadership within the Church.' See also Judge (1982) (1984). Other recent contributions include Theissen (1982); Marshall (1987).

My impression is that the pendulum has swung too far towards Paul as a self-conscious social radical. Specifically, I see little sign in the letters that Paul was seeking to undermine the position of those who were powerful in Corinthian society (and in

Paul (and his followers) had something positive to offer the good (Christian) slave *in this life*, it boiled down to the message that a slave could be assured that in rendering good service to his master, good or bad, he was serving Christ – and even following Christ's example, where he was suffering under a cruel master.

There is another, perhaps more important issue, to do not with the impact of society on Paul's theology, but with the reverse, the impact of his doctrines on society. There was a large gap between Christian doctrines, notably, the equality of all in the sight of God, and the values of the secular world. We would like to know how far this created social tensions in the emerging Christian communities, whether Paul exacerbated these tensions by his preaching and his style of life, and if so whether he did so self-consciously.[14]

There are signs, for example in the references in 1 Corinthians 11:5 to women who pray and prophesy, that some Christians understood Paul's message to be that the church was already in some sense eschatological, and that the structure of the Christian community and social relationships therein should reflect the egalitarian principles governing the eschatological church. If this was the case, Paul appears to have reacted against this tendency which he had encouraged, probably unwittingly.[15] It is noticeable that the man/woman distinction of

any case he was addressing only those representatives of it who were in the Christian community), or that complaints were levelled at him on this score. He for his part singles out for criticism, apart from immorality, in-fighting within the Christian community, but none of the examples of disunity in Corinth that he gives points clearly to antagonism between social and economic unequals.

Criticisms of Paul were of a personal nature, to do with his style as a preacher and his style of life, specifically, his opting for a trade as an alternative to receiving money from the Christian community. That in becoming self-supporting Paul was deliberately challenging the prevailing, conservative value-system is only one interpretation and not necessarily the most plausible one.

Criticisms by Paul: divisions: 1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3; 4:6–7; 11:18 etc; who was leader, Paul or another?: 1 Cor. 1:12; cf. 3:4–6; going to law: 1 Cor. 6:1–6.; sacrificial meat: 1 Cor. 1:8; cf. 10:28–32. I do not accept that this last matter was a 'class issue'. Nor is it self-evident or an attractive option that Paul means by the weak, as e.g. in 1 Cor. 9:22, members of the lower classes.

[14] There is legal (but not literary) evidence for free men selling themselves into slavery to escape debt and poverty, or to obtain a responsible post in a household (by pre-arrangement?). See Ramin and Veyne (1981). There is no likelihood that the status of slave was actively sought after by a significant number of people for its 'career potential'.

[15] There are traces of millenarianism in 1 Corinthians (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:25, 31.) But Paul is also critical of those who behave as if the Kingdom of God is already here. (1 Cor. 4:8).

Galatians 3:28 is dropped from the parallel passages in later letters (p9–11). In contrast with the letter to the Galatians, alive with the millenarian spirit and the associated idea of equality, 1 Corinthians is concerned with practical issues of ecclesiastical politics and Christian morality. The instructions issued to slaves and masters (among others) in this and other letters suggest that Paul and those who succeeded him in positions of leadership were now pursuing the relatively modest aim of putting Christian ethical norms into operation *within* existing social structures. Those instructions, as we saw, included nothing that could have threatened the social structure of slavery. It might even be suggested that they contained the recipe for its survival and future strength. Both sides of the relationship had been given, in the prospect of future rewards and the threat of future punishments, an important new motive for making slavery work and work well.

It may still be asked whether it was possible to forge a Christian community in which people related to each other in the spirit of humility/humiliation and service after the pattern of Christ (cf. Phil. 2:5) without subverting existing social structures. Perhaps Paul's outlook was no better integrated and no more internally consistent than that of Philo.

Section 3

Church Fathers

Introduction: Ambrose and Augustine

When Augustine arrived in Milan in 384 as the newly appointed professor of rhetoric, he was entering the 'kingdom' of Ambrose. Ambrose was already the dominant force in that city, then the imperial capital of the West, and was soon to complete the rout of the Arians and their supporters at court led by the Empress Justina. Ambrose was in the twelfth year of his episcopacy. Augustine, at 30, was fourteen years his junior and still deep in his spiritual quest, having lately abandoned the certainties of Manichaeism for the scepticism of Cicero's New Academy. His decision to become a catechumen did not reflect a burgeoning Christian faith.[1]

'And I came to Milan . . . to Ambrose the bishop' (*Confessions* 5.13.23). Augustine in the *Confessions* is vague about their relationship. The bishop gave a polite reception to the protégé of Symmachus, prefect of the city of Rome, but after this little that is concrete emerges. Ambrose was out of reach, engaged in power politics, courted by important people, unresponsive to those who would learn from him:

> When he read, his eyes travelled over the page and his heart sought out the sense, but voice and tongue were silent. No one was forbidden to approach him, nor was it his custom to require that visitors should be announced: but when we came in to him we often saw him reading, and always to himself; and after we had sat long in silence, unwilling to interrupt a work on which he was so intent, we would depart again. (*Confessions* 6.3.3)

[1] These events are well covered in the secondary literature. See e.g. Courcelle (1950); Brown (1967); Matthews (1975).

The influence of Ambrose on Augustine in bringing him to Catholicism and laying down a strong doctrinal base was immense. In later years, when Augustine was looking for support in the struggle against heresy, particularly Pelagianism, it was to the authority of Ambrose above all that he turned. But Augustine was Ambrose's pupil at Milan only in the sense that he listened regularly to his sermons, imbibing his learning and admiring his rhetoric. The two were unequals in family background, culture and education. The best education available in north Africa to one of curial origin from a small town in the backblocks of Numidia could not stand up against an upper-class education in the city of Rome, purchased by a top Roman administrator, a praetorian prefect of the Gauls, for a son who would himself pursue a career in the bureaucracy for a time, as governor of Emilia and Liguria. Ambrose unlike Augustine read Greek easily, and drew extensively in his sermons and treatises on the works of pagan philosophers and Greek Fathers.

Ambrose's accumulated learning was prodigious. Augustine had read less but asked more searching questions of the text. Their responses to the queries of Ambrose's successor-to-be as bishop of Milan, Simplicianus, cover similar territory but quite different skills and approaches are in play. Rather than engaging in a frontal attack on 1 Cor. 7:13 which Simplicianus had asked him to elucidate, Ambrose uses it as a springboard for launching a Christianizing version of the Stoic paradox that freedom lies with wise and good men and slavery with the foolish and bad (*Ep.* 7). Augustine's *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* includes a discussion of Romans 9 on the displacement of Esau by Jacob and of Jews by Christians. Augustine sees the problem, acknowledges its seriousness, and wrestles with it tenaciously, exploring all its angles. It was Augustine, not Ambrose, who eventually constructed on a Pauline base a new theology revolving around grace, freedom, sin and predestination. And it was Augustine who arrived at a new synthesis on slavery, which drew on the discussions of predecessors such as Ambrose, but was not envisaged by them. Ambrose, while dealing with the same raw materials (especially the sin of Adam and the Old Testament enslavements) remained locked into the thought-world of Philo. Philo saw nothing problematic in the enslavements of Esau and Canaan, and neither did Ambrose.

12

Ambrose

Preliminaries

Three treatments of the Stoic paradox *Every Good Man is Free, Every Bad Man a Slave* have survived from antiquity. They were composed not by professional Stoic philosophers, but by an eclectic (Cicero), a Jew (Philo) and a Christian (Ambrose). In this chapter I make the third of the sequence the focal point of a study of the ideas on slavery of its author, who was bishop of Milan from 374 to 397. In choosing this option I am following my preferred procedure of basing my analysis on extended discussions (where they are available) rather than on sundry isolated fragments. In this case, there is the additional consideration that in Ambrose we have a scholar who was steeped in and responsive to pagan classical as well as sacred learning, and who spoke with many voices, so that at one moment he can sound like Plato, at another Aristotle – or Cicero, or Philo, or Paul, or Epictetus.[1]

[1] *Platonic*: man is like God in respect of his rational element (also Stoic), see *Hex.* 6.42 = *CSEL* 32.1.234; *Exp. Ps.* 118.16 = *CSEL* 62.212f.; cf. *Timaeus* 89e–90a. See also *Fug. saec.* 127 = *CSEL* 32.2.178 (similarity with God). See Dudden (1935), 13–14.

Stoic and Ciceronian: *De Noe* 94 = *CSEL* 32.1.481 (kinship of all men); *De off.* 3.28 = *Bibl. Amb.* 13.290 (walking in step with nature); etc. This last work was of course modelled on the Stoic-influenced *De off.* of Cicero, of whom he was an admirer and imitator.

Pauline: *Exhort. virg.* 3 = *PL* 16.352 (universalism); *Ep.* 36.19–23 = *CSEL* 82.10.2.13–16 (Joseph as humble slave of bad master; etc.); and see below.

The references to Ambrose on slavery are usefully assembled in Klein (1988). There is a brief discussion in Dudden (1935), vol. II, 544–5. This work remains a splendid introduction to Ambrose. For Ambrose and Philo, see Madec (1974); Savon (1975) (1977) (1984); Sodano (1975); Lucchesi (1977); Nikiprowetzky (1981). Other work on Ambrose includes Maes (1967).

On slavery in other Christian thinkers, see Rupprecht (1974), who however omits Ambrose.

The Letter to Simplicianus (*Ep.*7) – for this is the outward form of his treatise on the paradox – affords us the best chance of seeing if any distinctive Ambrosian doctrine emerges from the blending of so many disparate elements.

Of the three treatises, that of Ambrose is clearly the most 'contaminated'. Yet it owes a heavy debt to Philo's work, differing from it mainly in the provision of a Christian superstructure and in a more enthusiastic employment of Biblical illustrations and quotations. Ambrose makes a point of preferring Old Testament and, less often, specifically Christian, exempla to traditional Stoic material drawn from 'the books of the philosophers or the ascetics of India, and the highly praised answer which Calanus gave Alexander when he told him to follow him' (*Ep.* 7.34).[2] But Stoic doctrine on the nature of slavery and freedom provides the solid core of the piece. There are two brief intrusions of alien doctrine, Philonic and Pauline, which interrupt the flow of the argument. These will engage our attention after the Stoic basis of the treatise has been established.

A Stoic base

Ambrose's starting-point is his friend's professed uncertainty over 1 Cor. 7:23, where Paul 'summons us from slavery into freedom' with the words: 'You have been bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.' Ambrose glosses this in the following way:

AMBI *Epistulae* 7.4

> In this he shows that our freedom is in Christ, our freedom is in the knowledge of wisdom. This [*sc.* latter] doctrine has been greatly tossed around and batted about by philosophers in energetic dispute, as they assert that 'every wise man is free', but that 'every fool is a slave'.

[2] Despite the disclaimer that for contempt of death he does *not* draw on the traditional (pagan) sources, Ambrose presents versions both of the letter of Calanus (an Indian Gymnosophist) to Alexander, and of his verbal reply, as follows: 'Of what kind of praise do I seem worthy, if you ask me to return to Greece and I can be compelled to do what I do not want to do? Your words are truly filled with authority, but my mind is more filled with liberty.' Cf. Philo, *EGM* 92–6.

Ambrose's preferred examples of contempt of death are martyrs ranging from the daughter of Abraham and the sons of the Maccabees to Thecla, Agnes and, especially, Pelagia. See *Ep.* 7.36–8 = *CSEL* 82.10.1.61–2.

Ambrose has wasted no time in introducing the Stoic paradox and fusing it with Pauline doctrine. Paul and the philosophers were talking about the same thing. But lest it be thought that the philosophers began anything, their saying was anticipated by Solomon, while the virtues of their wise man needed to be complemented and topped up with Christian virtues:

AMB2 *Epistulae* 7.5

> This was said long before by Solomon in the words: 'A fool changes like the moon.' A wise man is not shattered by fear, or changed by power, or elated by good fortune, or overwhelmed by sadness. Where there is wisdom there are strength of spirit and perseverance and fortitude. The wise man is constant in soul, not deflated or elated by changing events. He does not toss like a child, carried about by every wind of doctrine, but remains perfected in Christ, grounded by charity, rooted in faith. The wise man is never idle and experiences no changing states of mind. But he will shine like the Sun of justice that shines in the kingdom of His Father.

Ambrose locates the source of this philosophy in the actions of the biblical wise men Noah and Isaac in punishing folly with slavery. There follows (in chapters 6–8) the first of the two intrusions referred to above: it is the counterpart to Philo's Esau chapter in *EGM* (PH9; and below).

After this diversion Ambrose returns to the main argument of the letter/treatise. One might have expected early in the work, perhaps now, a definition of slavery, following Philo's example (PH1). Ambrose has such a passage, but it is clumsily inserted in the middle. He talks as Philo does of the two types of slavery and the insignificance or irrelevance of one type, slavery of the body, as opposed to the other, slavery of the mind:

AMB3 *Epistulae* 7.24

> Slavery is twofold, one of the body and the other of the soul, men being masters of the body, but sin and passion masters of the soul, and from these only freedom of spirit frees a man so that he is delivered from his slavery.

Ambrose launches the main argument of the treatise with a discussion of what makes a slave. This begins with and revolves around a

gnomic utterance whose pedigree is problematic (and will be discussed a little later), but which might be read in a Stoic way: '*Natura* does not make a slave but folly does . . .' He goes on to elucidate this dictum with reference to the story of Joseph, whose sinless soul and spectacular record as Pharaoh's right-hand man demonstrated that he was 'really' a free man, though in law a slave. Esau is mentioned first but quickly dropped in favour of Joseph, virtue and career-success not being his hallmarks. The passage runs parallel to the section in *EGM* where Philo, probably following earlier Stoic models, is arguing that true slavery cannot be identified by means of the conventional identifying characteristics of servitude. Philo does not use the example of Joseph here,[3] but supplies Ambrose with other motifs, like the lions who dominate their buyers (*EGM* 40). The section reads (in part):

AMB4 *Epistulae* 7.9–13 (part)

> 9. Thus *natura* does not make a man a slave but folly does, just as manumission does not make a man free but wisdom does. Esau was born free but became a slave. Joseph was sold into slavery but he was raised to power that he might rule those who had purchased him. Yet he did not slight his obligation to work zealously; he clung to the heights of virtue; he preserved the freedom of innocence, the stronghold of blamelessness. So the Psalmist beautifully says: 'Joseph was sold into slavery. They bound his feet with fetters'[Ps. 104:17–18]. 'He was sold into slavery', he says. But he did not become a slave. 'They bound his feet', but not his soul . . .
>
> 10. How is his soul bound when he says: 'The iron pierced his soul'[Ps. 104:18]? Although the souls of others were pierced with sin (iron is sin, because it pierces within), the soul of blessed Joseph did not lie open to sin, but pierced through sin . . .
>
> 11. How was he a slave, the man who showed the princes of his people how to regulate the corn supply, so that they knew beforehand and made provision for the coming famine? Or was

[3] Ambrose has a great deal to say about Joseph elsewhere. In *Ep.* 36, at 19 cf. 23 = *CSEL* 82.10.2.13, 15–16, Joseph becomes a model of the faithful slave who serves a bad master. Joseph's role in Egypt is reminiscent of that of Diogenes the Cynic in Stoic literature e.g. Epictetus: Diogenes is said to have taken over his master's affairs and the instruction of his sons (cf. Epictectus 4.1.116). Ambrose does not use Diogenes, though Philo does.

he a slave, the man who took possession of the whole country of Egypt and reduced its entire population to slavery? . . .

12. A sale did not make a slave of him, though he was sold to traders . . .

13. But why do we take great pains to assert this? Do we not commonly see parents ransomed by their children when they have fallen into the power of pirates or savage barbarians? Are the laws of ransom stronger than the laws of nature? Is filial piety being forced into slavery? There are merchants of lions, yet they do not rule them, but when they see them angrily shake their shaggy masses from their neck they flee and seek shelter. The money which purchased these masters for them makes no difference, nor do the auction tables on which the buyer is generally judged and sentenced. A contract [*sc.* of sale] does not change one's status nor take away the freedom that goes with wisdom. Many free men are servants of a wise slave and he is a wise slave who rules his foolish masters . . .

17. Not only is the person free who has not fallen to the buyer's bid, nor seen the finger raised, but that man rather is free who is free within himself, free by the law of nature, knowing that the law of nature has been spelled out in terms of morality, not status, and that one's duties are measured out in accordance not with human decision, but with the regulations of nature . . .

In the twenty remaining chapters Ambrose deviates little from the Christianizing Stoic course initiated in the opening sections: the wise/free man has nothing on his conscience; he is victor in the battles that count, over fear (particularly of death), lust and the passions and vices in general; he is law-abiding, strong and immovable.

A dose of Philo/Aristotle

AMB5 *Epistulae* 7.6–8 (part)

6. Let us consider the source of that philosophy from which the patriarchs drew their wisdom and learning. Was not Noah the first to curse his son when he learned that Ham had in folly made fun of his nakedness: 'Cursed be Ham; he shall be a household slave to his brethren', and he put as masters over him his

brothers, who with wisdom knew that they should respect their father's years.

7. Did not Jacob, that source of all wisdom, who by reason of his wisdom was preferred to his elder brother, pour an abundance of this reasoning into the hearts of all? Although the devoted father felt a father's affection for both his sons, he judged each differently . . . He bestowed grace on one and pity on the other, grace on the wise and pity on the foolish. Because he [*sc.* Esau] could not rise to virtue by means of his own resources, or make any advance on his own initiative, he [*sc.* Isaac] gave him the blessing of serving his brother, of being his slave, showing that folly is worse than slavery, which would be a remedy for him, because a fool cannot rule himself, and if he does not have someone to control him, he will be destroyed by his desires.

8. After due deliberation the devoted father made him his brother's slave so that he would be guided by the other's prudence . . . So he put a yoke on the foolish one as on an unruly man, and he denied freedom to one who he decreed must live by his sword. He put his brother over him so that he might not sin by his temerity, but that, being subject to this authority and limitations, he might come to repentance. Slavery, you see, draws a distinction (some are weak of necessity though strong of purpose, because that is more beautiful which is done not of necessity but willingly), and so he put on him the yoke of necessity and later secured for him the blessing of willing subjection.

This is an elaborated version of the summary paragraph in Philo's *EGM* in which he refers to the enslavement of Esau (PH9). Despite the evocation of the wise/foolish distinction, the folly in question, like the remedy for it, has an Aristotelian rather than a Stoic flavour. In discussing Stoicism, I looked for but failed to find a formulation along these lines in the Stoic literature. To a Stoic, a fool is someone who has lost control in an area which was his to govern: he has allowed himself to be dominated by his passions and emotions. In Ambrose the fool is someone with permanent mental and moral deficiencies, who needs to be enslaved and would benefit by being enslaved. Ambrose has transported a (Stoic) distinction between morally wise and foolish men into an (Aristotelian) world where the latter are subjected to the former in

a legal slave/master relationship beneficial to both parties. The transaction is illegitimate – the Stoic doctrine cannot be poured into an Aristotelian mould and retain its identity – whether Ambrose realizes it or not.

Ambrose was not the first to carry out this experiment. Philo had done so before him, and Ambrose stays close to Philo in Letter 7. But does Ambrose venture as far as Philo did? We saw that Philo went on in other treatises to produce a religious version of the natural slave thesis, attributing to God the creation of two natures, one, the inferior, a slave nature. We should not perhaps expect such a development in Letter 7, because it is also absent in Philo's *EGM*, and it is the *EGM* that Ambrose is following here. And in fact in Letter 7 Ambrose's attention does not stray beyond the main actors in the drama, the father and his sons. However, he has another, more detailed discussion of Esau's enslavement, in *De Jacob*, which differs in important details – though not in the final episode, which is told in this way:

AMB6 *De Jacob et vita beata* 3.11

> Nevertheless, Esau brought it about by his demands and entreaties that he did receive a blessing, but such a blessing as was in agreement and correspondence with the earlier one, namely that he should serve his brother. Indeed the one who could not command and rule the other ought to have served him, in order to be ruled by the one who was more wise. It was not the role of the holy patriarch to deliver his own son to the ignoble state of slavery. But since he had two sons, one without moderation and the other moderate and wise, in order to take care for both like a good father, he placed the moderate son over the son without moderation, and he ordered the foolish one to obey the one who was wise. For the foolish man cannot of his own accord be a disciple of virtue or persevere in his intent, because the fool changes like the moon. Isaac was right to deny Esau freedom to make his own choices: else he might drift like a ship in the waves without a helmsman.[4]

[4] Ambrose discusses the affair in a letter to Orontianus, *Ep.* 20.3–8. At 6, he reaffirms Esau's folly and incapacity and the beneficial effects of slavery on him. In this as in the other passages Ambrose makes clear that slavery was envisaged as a permanent remedy for Esau's condition. The best that Esau could hope for was for compulsory

Ambrose here admits that there was something that needed explaining in a patriarch's act of imposing the degenerate condition of slavery on his own son. Yet the enslavement was a blessing, the act of a pious father who perceived that slavery was a benefit for 'a man of folly' (and of 'parricidal madness', cf. 2.5), incapable of pursuing virtue on his own accord or of persevering in such an undertaking.

Earlier Ambrose had allowed himself to probe behind the scenes, to ask himself what forces were operating behind the patriarch. In the first instance, a 'pious mother':

AMB7 *De Jacob et vita beata* 2.2.6

> However, Rebecca did not prefer one son to another son, but a just son to an unjust one. And indeed, with that pious mother, God's mysterious plan was more important than her offspring. She did not so much prefer Jacob to this brother; rather, she offered him to the Lord, for she knew that he could protect the gift that the Lord had bestowed. In the Lord she took counsel also for her other son; she withdrew him from God's disfavour, lest he incur graver culpability if he lost the grace of the blessing he did receive.

Rebecca, in preparing for the supersession of the older by the younger brother, was walking in step with the divine plan. She was only dimly aware of the content of the plan – referred to regularly as a *mysterium* or an *oraculum* – but it clearly involved more than the family of Isaac.[5] With the benefit of hindsight, Ambrose fills in the main outlines, making free use of allegory: Jacob's gift of sheep fore-

slavery to give way to willing slavery (The talk of willing slavery seems to introduce a third 'source' besides Aristotle/Philo and Stoicism, namely, Paul.)

In *Ep.* 20 as in *Ep.* 7 Ambrose stays with the father and his sons in discussing the incident itself. He does however treat the different fortunes of Esau and Jacob as a paradigm for Jewish slavery (to the Law) and Christian freedom (arising out of the promise).

There is an implicit comparison in Ambrose's treatment between Esau and the barbarians, both being violent and warlike. For barbarians, see e.g. *Ep.* 51.5 = *CSEL* 82.10.2.62; 76.20 = *CSEL* 82.10.3.120; with *Abr.* 2.28 = *CSEL* 32.1.584–6; with Cracco Ruggini (1968); Pavan (1978); Bianchini (1987), 241–6.

[5] On Rebecca, cf. *De Isaac vel anima* 4.18 = *CSEL* 32.1.655: 'Now Rebecca conceived and by her patience undid the knot of sterility. Let us consider what her prophetic and apostolic soul brought to birth and how. "She went to consult the Lord" [Gen. 25:22], because the children leapt up in her womb, and received the reply, "Two nations are in your womb" [Gen. 25:23]. For of herself she presumes nothing but invokes God as supreme protector of her counsels; filled with peace and piety, she joins two nations together by her faith and by prophecy and encloses them in her womb, so to speak.'

tells the (life and) death of Christ, and the transfer of the clothing from older to younger brother symbolizes the displacement of the synagogue by the Church:

AMB8 *De Jacob et vita beata* 2.2.8–9 (part)

> 8. Jacob went to his sheep and brought blameless offspring, that is, the gifts foretold in holy prophecy; for he believed that no food was sweeter to the patriarch than Christ, who was led like a sheep to the slaughter and like a lamb to be a victim. He judged that this was a useful nourishment both for his relatives and for the people, of which he was a symbol, for through it there was to come the forgiveness of sins.
>
> 9. Accordingly, Jacob received his brother's clothing, because he excelled the elder in wisdom. Thus the younger brother took the clothing of the elder because he was conspicuous in the merit of his faith. Rebecca presented this clothing as a symbol of the Church; she gave to the younger son the clothing of the Old Testament, the prophetic and priestly clothing, the royal Davidic clothing, the clothing of the kings Solomon and Ezechias and Josias, and she gave it too to the Christian people, who would know how to use the garment they had received, since the Jewish people kept it without using it and did not know its proper adornments.

In this way Ambrose establishes both the ultimate responsibility of God for the enslavement and the justice of the action. His solution is in basic outline the same as that of Paul, but whereas Paul was deeply troubled, Ambrose allows himself only a momentary twinge of doubt. But the major difference lies in the Aristotelian colouring that Ambrose gives to the incident. That is the heritage of Philo (for there is little chance that Ambrose knew the *Politics* of Aristotle, whereas his dependence on Philo is well-established). Yet, for whatever reason, Ambrose does not follow Philo in spelling out a throughgoing religious version of the natural slave thesis, according to which God created two natures, one blessed, the other servile.

A (further) injection of Paul

At chapter 21 of Letter 7, Ambrose turns from a purely general discussion of the principle that freedom is available only to a wise man – for

only he can do as he wishes and do things well – to annex this doctrine for Christianity. A convoluted argument designed to show that the Apostle Paul was free, preached willingly and was therefore wise, rises to the grand climax:

AMB9 *Epistulae* 7.22

> Everyone who accepts Christ is wise; he who is wise is free; every Christian, then, is both wise and free.

Ambrose is repeating a tactic employed right at the outset of the treatise. There the paradox, and the wise man, are no sooner introduced than they are secured for Christianity. Ambrose is making Stoicism work for the Christian cause.

The following chapter inserts a new ingredient. Up to this point and thereafter the work has centred on slavery of the traditional, Stoic kind, that is moral slavery. It is the opposite of moral freedom, and it is bad slavery. Now Ambrose introduces a form of slavery that is good:

AMB10 *Epistulae* 7.23

> The Apostle has taught me that beyond this liberty there is the liberty of being a slave: 'For free though I was,' he says, 'I made myself a slave of all that I might gain the more converts.' What lies beyond that freedom except to have the spirit of grace, to have charity? Freedom makes me free before men, charity a friend before God. Therefore Christ said: 'But I have called you friends [John 15:15]'; Charity is good, and of it is said: 'By the charity of the Spirit serve one another [Gal. 5:13].' Christ too was a slave, so that He might make all men free. 'His hands have served in the basket' [Ps. 80:7]. He who did not think it robbery to be equal with God took the nature of a slave, and He became all things to all men to bring salvation to all. Paul, an imitator of Him, as if he was under the Law and lived as if outside the Law, spent his life for the advantage of those whom He wished to gain.

It was predictable that good slavery would make an entrance somewhere in the Letter (though Philo did not succumb to a similar temptation in the *EGM*), given the strength of Ambrose's allegiance to Paul and his general commitment to a Christian brand of Stoicism. The surprise is that he reproduces just one of the ways in which Paul uses the slave metaphor, omitting the primary idea of slavery to God or

Christ.[6] But he does not leave this space empty: the relationship of the Christian disciple to God is conceptualized in terms of friendship (which unlike good slavery carries clear Stoic overtones). The logic seems to be as follows: There is freedom. There is also something more precious than freedom ('beyond freedom'). For freedom belongs to the *human* dimension ('freedom makes me free *before men*'). There is a higher good within our grasp, a relationship of friendship with God. Access to that is secured by the performance of a kind of slavery, namely, service to our fellow men, which is identical with charity. Ambrose's interest seems to be (not for the first time in this letter) to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian ethic. If he is aware that he has clouded the (Stoic) waters, it does not bother him. He returns straightaway to the orthodox Stoic line on slavery as if nothing has happened.[7]

What makes a slave? *or* Towards a theory of the origins of slavery

When Ambrose addresses the question 'What makes a slave?', which he does more than once, we approach with caution. The key words are ambiguous, the overall meaning opaque, and the potential sources of inspiration diverse. It would be agreeable to be able to credit him with a clear and distinctive statement on the origins of slavery, but we might have to settle for something less.

Thus *natura* does not make a man a slave but folly does, just as manumission does not make a man free but wisdom does.

Non igitur *natura* servum facit, sed insipientia, nec manumissio liberum, sed disciplina. (AMB4, beg.)

What does *natura* mean? We know what it means and what the clause in which it occurs implies in Aristotle, *Politics* book 1. But that

[6] The concept of slavery to God is not foreign to Ambrose. In *Ep.* 36.31 = *CSEL* 82.10.1.20 he urges the master to moderate his discipline in relation to his slaves in the knowledge that 'he himself is a slave of God and calls upon a heavenly father who is master'; also *Ep.* 20.3 = *CSEL* 82.10.1.147; 36.8 = *CSEL* 82.10.2.6–7; *De fide* 1.104 = *CSEL* 78.8.45. In *Ep.* 36.12 = *CSEL* 82.10.2.9, Ambrose introduces the novel idea of Christians as *mercennarii* (hired labourers) and *operarii* (workers) of the Father, citing Luke 15:17–19.

[7] The transition is rough. Ch. 24 opens with a sentence that looks back to the Christian material in ch. 23: 'Est ergo sapienti et servire libertas.' Then Ambrose reverts to the Philonian (vaguely Platonist) distinction between slavery of the soul – which characterizes the foolish man – and slavery of the body.

was written seven centuries before, and the confrontation recorded there was probably one-off and quickly forgotten. Anyway, we can be sure that when Ambrose says that *natura* does not make a man a slave he is not using the word in an Aristotelian sense, and he is not self-consciously confronting the natural slave thesis. He is not saying, as Aristotle's opponents did, that the institution of slavery was the product of force legitimated by secular law. His own view (cf. AMB4) was that freedom and slavery are defined and governed not by the laws of one or more political communities, but by the laws of nature or the cosmos, the world of gods and men, that were written 'in terms of morality, not status'. This is in line with Stoic doctrine.

In the passage before us, *manumissio* should pick up *natura*, just as *disciplina* does *insipientia*. It does not, and it cannot, unless *natura* like *manumissio* refers to *something that can happen to you*, rather than *what you essentially are*, that is, your innate character.[8]

Natura/*phusis* can also mean 'birth', and so it does here. Birth, the accident of who one's parents are, cannot make you a slave. In the thought-world of Stoics such as Epictetus, it belongs to the class of things which one cannot control and for which one cannot be held responsible.

This interpretation is confirmed as we read further. Ambrose goes on to say that neither Esau nor Joseph was a slave by birth. Both were born free and subsequently enslaved.

In addition, there happens to be a sentence in *De Jacob* that is closely parallel to ours. It comes at the end of a discussion of the nature of true slavery and freedom which proceeds along orthodox Stoic lines:

AMB11 *De Jacob et vita beata* 2.3.12A–B

> Every man who does not possess the authority conferred by a clear conscience is a slave; whoever is crushed by fear or

[8] For Ambrose's (varied) use of *natura*, cf. *Ep.* 7.13; 17; *De Jacob* 1.7.31 = *CSEL* 32.3.24–5: 'In the case of such a man [*sc.* the man who has been perfected], the state of his body and the use he makes of his outer nature, so to speak, do not count beside the intent of his mind and his essential nature.' Note also the slide in meaning of *natura* in AMB4, so that at the end of the passage it approximates to 'morality'.

Aristotle says that *phusis* can mean birth: see *Phys.* 193b13–19 and *Metaphys.* 1014b16–18, with Ross (1924), vol. 1 ad loc., citing an early edition of Burnet (1945), at 10–12, 205–6 (referring to Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1112A). *Phusis* is not used in this sense in the *Politics*. Note too *Pol.* 1254a23: 'ek genetes' ('from birth').

> ensnared by pleasure or led astray by desires or provoked by anger or felled by grief is a slave. In fact, every passion is servile, because 'everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin' [John 8.34]; worse, he who has submitted to vices is the slave of many sins. For he has sold himself to many masters, so that there is scarcely any escape-route from slavery open to him. But take the man who is the master over his own will, judge over his counsels, agent of his judgement, the man who restrains the longing of his bodily passions and does well what he does. Such a man is assuredly free. For the man who does all things wisely and in complete accord with his will is the only free man. *It is not the status that a man happens to have that makes him a slave, but rather shameful folly* (*non condicio fortuita servum facit, sed probrosa insipientia*).[9]

To return to our main text (AMB4): Ambrose has here singled out, with reference to Esau and to Joseph, the two main ways in which legal slaves were made, through breeding and capture issuing in sale, and he has ruled them out as avenues into 'real' slavery. This position is compatible with, though not necessarily peculiar to, Stoicism.

So much for the negative part of the Ambrosian dictum, what does *not* make a slave. What lies behind true slavery is folly / wicked folly. This appears to point to the Stoic fool, and the parallel statements might be read in a Stoic way, as in the following formulation where I combine the two: 'It is not who your parents are, nor the legal or social status you happen to have, which makes you a slave. Rather, it is the state of your soul. If you are in thrall to your passions and emotions, you are truly a slave.'

But is this what Ambrose had in mind? We have been given sufficient indication already that he was not concerned to reproduce undiluted Stoic doctrine.

Meanwhile, we saw what Philo did with the fool – he turned him into the equivalent of a natural slave. Was Ambrose also doing this, or something like it?

We should bear in mind that the adage '*Natura* (birth) does not

[9] The next sentence opens: 'Indeed the wise servant rules foolish masters, and "their own servants will lend to their masters [Prov. 22:7]" ', and Ambrose goes on to attack the Jews, who 'lent the Gentiles the letter and now borrow from them the grace of learning in the spirit, and have earned their servitude, because he who borrows is a slave, as if sold for the profit of his creditor.'

make a slave but folly does' follows the stories of Ham and Esau. (AMB5). Ham mocked his father's nakedness 'foolishly'. Esau suffered *his* fate because he was 'foolish'.[10] Thus Ambrose was offering a generalization based on the two enslavements. But we also saw that he took over the Aristotelian colouring of Philo's account.[11] Esau's folly was congenital, it merited and necessitated slavery, which was viewed as a remedy and benefit.[12] We would expect the 'folly' of the adage to have the same quality and carry the same overtones. 'By rights' this folly should be Philonic rather than Stoic. If we are inclined to hesitate over this, it is because we have doubts about the logical consistency of Ambrose's thought; we wonder whether he was conscious of or cared about the issues involved.

Ambrose's Christianity has not yet impinged on the discussion. In his Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Philippians, he writes as follows:

AMB12 *Commentaria in Epistulam ad Philippenses* 2.255A

> It is written not that he took the form of God, but that he was in the form of God; and that he took the form of a slave, inasmuch as he suffered humiliation as if he were a sinner. For slaves are made out of sin, just as in the case of Cham the son of Noah, who was the first to take the name of slave and to do so deservedly.[13]

In the concluding chapters of Letter 7, which are heavy with Pauline and other scriptural citations, sin and slavery to sin become leading concepts. But slavery to sin and its Stoic counterpart slavery to the passions and vices (not displaced in Letter 7),[14] are located in the spiritual

[10] In the single chapter in which he deals with Esau, Ambrose uses the word *insipientia* and its cognates four times and the synonym *stultus* once. Cf. Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Col.* 4:1 = *CSEL* 81.3.202: 'Ham was named a slave out of folly (*stultitia*), for foolishly (*stulte*) laughing at his father's nudity.'

[11] This would have been the clearer if Ambrose had chosen to expand on the second clause – with a discussion of Esau. He chooses instead to pursue the idea inherent in the first clause via a discussion of Joseph's character and career.

[12] The enslavement of Ham's son Canaan is not handled in the same way, i.e. it is presented tersely and without any interpretative indicators. This might be taken as confirmation of Ambrose's dependence on Philo, who does not tell that story in *EGM*.

[13] The Philippians passage is treated also in *De fide* 5.107–9 = *CSEL* 78.8.255–7.

[14] Cf. *Ep.* 7.45 = *CSEL* 82.10.1.66: 'Ergo liberati a peccato, quasi "practio empti sanguinis Christi", non subiciamur "servituti hominum" vel passionum, non erubescamus peccatum nostrum fateri.' For slavery to sin, see also *De off.* 2.66 = *PL* 16.127; *Exp.Ps.* 12.36.16 = *CSEL* 64.82; *De Joseph* 20 = *CSEL* 32.2.86.

and moral realm. Ambrose does not make the transition from Stoic and Philonic discourse to Christian when he is addressing the *physical* enslavements of Canaan and Esau – except briefly in the above passage. It was left to Augustine to develop a fully-fledged theory of the origins of slavery on the basis of a doctrine of sin.[15]

[15] Many of the ingredients of Augustine's theory are already present in the works of Ambrose. See Dudden (1935), 612ff. on relevant doctrines. But original sin is not Ambrosian. See brief discussion in Kelly (1977), 354–5.

13

Augustine

Preliminaries

In the world of Augustine slavery according to the law was more or less universal:

AUG1 *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 124.6–7

> The elemental, daily demonstration of the power of man over man is that of master over slave. Almost every household has a display of power of this kind.

Slavery (in another sense) was unavoidable, for we are slaves either of God or of sin:

AUG2 *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 103.3, 9

> We are, willy nilly, slaves.

In response to the ubiquity of institutional slavery and the inevitability of spiritual slavery of one kind or another, Augustine produced, on the one hand, a moral theology of slavery, or pastoral advice about the way masters and slaves should comport themselves in relation to one another, and, on the other, a dogmatic theology of slavery, or a theoretical statement about the place of slavery in the divine order.[1] Whereas in the former area he does little more than repeat in a more elaborate form the prescriptions of his predecessors, in the latter

[1] These are not entirely separate categories. Augustine's theory of the origin and justification of slavery is just what one would expect from someone with his attitude to slavery as it operated in practice. For Augustine on slavery, see especially Corcoran (1985) and Klein (1988).

he is more original, drawing on old material to produce a new synthesis. Why this unevenness in his creativity? Augustine cannot be said to have lacked interest in the practice of slavery. He frequently issued practical instructions to masters and, rather less often, to slaves. But instead of devising new arguments to back up the advice he is giving, he tends to fall back on old ones, which moreover are sometimes presented with a certain lack of conviction. Thus, for example, in his Commentary on Psalm 124, in the midst of a long discussion of the proper attitude of slaves to their service, Augustine evokes, but pays no more than lip-service to, the theme of the common humanity of slaves and masters.[2] In contrast in sundry works he shows a lively awareness of the possibilities afforded by slavery as metaphor for the elucidation of central Christian beliefs. We have to bear in mind the intellectual climate of the times, and in particular the preoccupation of church leaders, who included the best minds of the day, with theology. Theology absorbed most of their intellectual energies. Augustine's thoughts on slavery are to be seen merely as a contribution to a much larger enterprise.

Masters and slaves

Augustine started from the basic premiss that owning slaves is a human right, and, like property rights in general, is determined by the political authorities and is governed by its laws – laws, however, which were derived from and sanctioned by God. As he writes:

AUG3 *In Johannis Evangelium tractatus* 6.25

> What of those villas? By what law do you defend them, divine or human? Let them reply; we have divine law in the scriptures and human law in the enactments of kings. Whence does a possessor gain his power of possession? Surely it is by human law? For by divine law 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.' God has made poor and rich out of the same material, and the one earth supports poor and rich. But by man-made law one

[2] See DIO. Cf. Dolbeau (1991) = *Mainz 54*, lines 100ff., for a similar sentiment. There is a more overtly Christian version in *Serm.* 58.2.2 = *PL* 38.393; *Serm.* 59.1.2 = *PL* 38.400: masters must regard slaves as brothers, since they both have one Father and pray 'Our Father . . .' For another use of traditional, Stoic material, see *De civ. Dei* 4.5.3 (end), echoing e.g. Seneca, *Ep.* 47.17.

> says: This is my villa, this is my house, this is my slave. By man-made law, by the law of emperors. Why so? Because God has handed down to the race of men even the man-made laws through the medium of emperors and kings of the world. Do you want us to read out the laws of emperors and discuss the villas with reference to them? If you want to be an owner by virtue of man-made law, let us read out the laws of emperors. Let us see if they meant anything to be owned by heretics. But what is an emperor to me? You own land by virtue of his law. Take away the laws of emperors, and who will dare say: 'That villa is mine, that slave is mine or this house is mine'? People have accepted the laws of kings so that they can possess those very things.[3]

The gist of Augustine's instructions to masters and slaves is that masters must rule and slaves must accept that their place is to serve (AUG4, italics). Christian masters, to be sure, have the duty to nurture all members of their households including slaves in the Christian faith and to prepare them for the world to come. In general, they should practise the Christian ethic of service to others, even to those whom they command as subordinates. But the master's first responsibility is to maintain domestic peace. The attainment of that desirable end is contingent on the maintenance of the traditional power structures within the household. There are implications for the political order. Augustine asserts, using an image favoured by Aristotle, that harmony in the parts – that is, households – engenders harmony in the whole – that is, the city.

AUG4 *De civitate Dei* 19.14, 16 (part)

> 14. In the first place, then, he [*sc.* he who loves God] has the care of his own household, inasmuch as the order of nature or of human society provides him with a readier and easier access to them for seeking their interest. Wherefore the apostle says: 'Whosoever does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he denies the faith, and is worse than an

[3] For slaves as a form of wealth in Augustine, see refs. in Corcoran (1985), 30. See e.g. *In Johan. ev. tr.* 8.4 = *CCL* 36.84.1 (slaves as wedding presents). But note *De serm. Dom. in monte* 1.19.59 = *CCL* 35.69.1505 ('A man must not possess a slave as he would a horse or money . . .').

infidel' [1 Tim. 5:8]. So at this point begins domestic peace, the ordered agreement among those who dwell together concerning command and obedience. For those who are concerned for others give commands, the husband to his wife, the parents to their children, the masters to their servants; while those who are objects of concern obey; for example, the women obey their husbands, the children their parents, the servants their masters. But in the home of the just man who lives by faith and who is still a pilgrim in exile from the celestial city, even those who give commands serve those whom they seem to command. For they command not through lust for rule but through dutiful concern for others, not with pride in exercising princely rule but with mercy in providing for others.

16. But those who are true fathers of their households take thought for all in their households just as for their children, to see that they worship and win God's favour, desiring and praying that they may reach the heavenly home where the duty of commanding men will not be necessary, because there will be no duty of taking thought for those who are already happy in that immortal state; *but until they arrive there the fathers are more obligated to maintain their position as masters than the slaves to keep their place as servants.*

So if anyone in the household by disobedience breaks the domestic peace, he is rebuked by a word or a blow or some other kind of just and legitimate punishment, to the extent permitted by human fellowship, for the sake of the offender, so that he may be closely joined to the peace from which he broke away . . . Since, then, a man's house ought to be the beginning or least part of the city, and every beginning ministers to some end of its own kind, and every part to the integrity of the whole of which it is a part, it follows clearly enough that domestic peace ministers to civic peace, that is, that the ordered agreement concerning command and obedience among those who dwell together in a household ministers to the ordered agreement concerning command and obedience among citizens. Thus we see that the father of a family ought to draw his precepts from the law of the city, and so rule his household that it shall be in harmony with the peace of the city.

Other texts confirm both that masters were held responsible for their slaves' moral and spiritual welfare, and that the essence of their relationship was the imposition of strict discipline by the master, exacting the response of fearful obedience from the slave.[4]

As masters must rule, so slaves must serve. Augustine, as already mentioned, usually addresses masters rather than slaves, but his Sermon on Psalm 124 is an exception (cf. A7; D10; AUG5). Augustine asks why it is that the just are often dominated by the unjust, and illustrates as he standardly does from slavery in the household. But the inference to be drawn by slaves from this unfortunate reality (and from the common humanity of master and slave, which Augustine lightly touches on here) is not that they are entitled to feel resentful or to seek to escape their condition. Christ himself would have quelled any feelings of rebelliousness with the firm instruction to 'be a slave'. Augustine then produces his trump-card, a reminder of the example of Christ, issued in direct speech by Christ himself. This leads through an attack on the 'bad slaves' who did Him violence, to a sideswipe at the emperor Julian, that model 'bad master' in the sphere of government. Christian soldiers obeyed even Julian, except when ordered to disavow Christ. Augustine brings the passage to an end by reiterating that the rule of the bad over the good is only temporary; at the second coming the good will be rewarded, and they, like the bad, will be found among slaves as well as masters:

AUG5 *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 124.7–8 (part)

> 7. And to give strength to the slave, He has said: 'Serve as I did before you, I served bad masters.' When the Lord held out at the time of his great Passion, to whom did he turn except as a master to his slaves? And to whom was there for him to turn except to bad slaves? For if they had been good slaves, they would have honoured their master. But because they were bad slaves, they caused him harm. And what did he do to them in return? He gave back love for hatred. For he said: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' If the Lord of heaven and earth through whom all things were made was a slave to unworthy

[4] On the punishment of slaves, see Poque (1984), e.g. 284–96; on master/slave relationships in general, see Corcoran (1985), ch.1. On the vexed question, whether slave/master relations improved under the Christian Empire, see pp. 78, 97–102. Augustine claimed they had. See *De mor. eccl. cath.* 1.30.63 = *PL* 32.1336.

people, if he interceded for the mad and the furious, and showed himself in his approach to them as a kind of physician (for physicians, those trained in the art of healing, are slaves to the sick); how much more should a man not disdain to serve even a bad master, with all his heart and with complete good will? Look, a better man is slave to a worse man, but only for a time. And that which I have said about masters and slaves applies to powers and kings, in fact to all those who rule in this world. Sometimes those powers are good and fear God. Sometimes they do not fear God. Julian was a faithless emperor, an apostate, an enemy, and an idolator. Yet Christian soldiers served the faithless emperor. When it came to the cause of Christ, they did not acknowledge any but the one who was in heaven. Whenever he required that they worship idols, burn incense, they put God before him. When he said to them, however, send forth the battle line, march against that tribe, they immediately obeyed. They distinguished the eternal master from the temporal one; and yet it was on account of the eternal master that they were placed under the temporal one.

8. But surely it will not always be so that bad men rule over good? No . . .

A time will come, when the one God will be acknowledged. A time will come when Christ in his glory will appear to assemble before him all peoples, and divide them up, as a shepherd divides the goats from the sheep; he will put the sheep to the right and the goats to the left. And you will then see many slaves among the sheep and many masters among the goats. And again, you will see many masters among the sheep and many slaves among the goats. It is not the case that because we have given consolation to slaves, all slaves are good; or that because we have checked the pride of masters, all masters are evil. There are good, faithful masters, and also bad ones; there are good, faithful slaves, and also bad ones. But in so far as good slaves serve bad masters, they will only do this for a time. 'For the Lord will not leave the rod of sinners over the fate of the just.'

In this passage Augustine eloquently expands on a theme of Paul and Peter (P2–8). The main element that is missing (and supplied by other texts of Augustine) is a distinction among slaves between the

slaveborn and the freeborn. The instruction of the Apostles to stay put and serve willingly was directed primarily at the former. It was considered the duty of the Church to try to prevent the enslavement of the free within the empire, more especially within its own fold, and to buy back the freeborn captives of barbarians (c8–9).[5] Bringing freeborn (pagan) barbarians into the empire as slaves was however quite acceptable:

AUG6 *Epistulae* 199.12.46

> There are here in Africa innumerable tribes of barbarians among whom the Gospel has not been preached yet, as is easily learned any day of the week from the prisoners who are brought from there and have now become slaves of the Romans.

The 41st Homily on St John's Gospel (on John 8:36) is another sample of Augustinian thinking on the matter. In addition, in its reference to discontent among north African slaves, it supplies Augustine with an additional motive (additional to his natural inclination) to endorse the teaching of the Apostles.

AUG7 *In Johannis Evangelium tractatus* 41.4 (part)

> 'Amen, Amen, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave of sin' [John 8:34]. O what a wretched thing is slavery! It is very common for men when suffering under bad masters to put themselves up for sale. Their aim is not to do without a master, but to change masters. But what is the slave of sin to do? To whom is he to turn? Whither is he to turn? Whither is he to seek to sell himself? For the slave of a man who is oppressed by the harsh domination of his master seeks respite in flight. But where is the slave of sin to flee? He drags himself with him wheresoever he flees. A bad conscience cannot escape itself, there is nowhere for it to go, it pursues itself; it cannot withdraw from itself; for the sin which it does is within. It committed sin in order to enjoy some bodily pleasure; the pleasure comes and goes – the sin remains. That which brought delight has passed on, leaving the source of affliction behind. This is evil slavery indeed! Sometimes men flee to the church, and lawless as they are,

[5] See *Ep.*[e] 10 = *CSEL* 88.46–51; Possidius, *Vita* 24 = *PL* 32.54; *Serm.* 134.3.3 = *PL* 38.744.

> wishing to be without a master, but not without their sins, generally give us a lot of trouble. On the other hand, it sometimes happens that men who are subject to an illegal and shameful yoke, flee to the church because they are freeborn men held in slavery, and they appeal to the bishops. The bishop is considered unmerciful if he does not make efforts to prevent the suppression of free birth. Let us all flee to Christ, let us appeal to God to free us from sin. Let us put ourselves up for sale so that we may be redeemed by his blood. The Lord says: 'You were sold for nothing, and can be redeemed for nothing.' For nothing: you paid nothing, because I paid for you – not with silver, but with my blood. For we would otherwise have remained in both slavery and poverty.

Augustine's purpose here was not to set out his own attitudes to contemporary slavery or to give advice to responsible authorities, but to stress the misery of slavery to sin and the tyrannical power it held over its victims. This was someone who held that slavery to a man was preferable to slavery to lust (AUGIO italics). We shall now see how his concern with sin led him to theorize not only (inevitably) on the origin of sin and of slavery to sin, but also (rather less predictably) on the origins of institutional slavery.

The origins of slavery

> The prime cause of slavery is sin, so that man was put under man in a state of bondage; and this can be only by a judgement of God, in whom there is no unrighteousness, and who knows how to assign divers punishments according to the deserts of the sinners. (AUGIO, italics)

How did Augustine arrive at this conclusion? Ambrose had given a lead. Viewing Noah's cursing of Ham and enslavement of Canaan as a consequence of moral rather than an intellectual weakness for a moment, he decided that sin was the cause of slavery (AMBI2). The 'Canaan case' was not exactly problem-free – why was Canaan punished rather than Ham? – but at least there was here a straightforward correlation between an act of folly, now redefined as a 'sin', and the loss of freedom. There was also the deeper issue of whether the punishment fitted the crime. But it was the 'Esau case' rather than the 'Canaan case' that set Christian writers worrying about the issue of

justice (in so far as they faced it at all). For Esau did no wrong. So Paul had thought, and Paul's word was tantamount to law for Augustine.

Ambrose, as we saw, approached Esau by way of Philo, not Paul. This led him to focus on the alleged benefits to Esau of his enslavement, and to speculate on the deeper, symbolic significance of the event. Following this line of enquiry, Ambrose had no special motive for exploring the roots of Esau's folly, or asking why he suffered the fate that he did.

Augustine, however, followed Paul in seeking an explanation for Esau's fate, and he returned to the matter on numerous occasions.[6] One consequence of cleaving to the text of Paul was that his argument bears no trace of the beneficial thesis.[7] Paul took it for granted that Esau's supersession and slavery were a slap in the face rather than a benefit, and Augustine does not suggest otherwise. But this means that he is compelled to ask (as Ambrose and Philo before him were not), whether Esau's treatment was unmerited. His answer is ambiguous. Yes, it was unmerited, in that Esau had done nothing to deserve it – nor was anything he was going to do a consideration. His fate was settled before he was born, and not according to merits or defects, past, present or future. But then, on the other hand, Esau's fate was not unmerited, in that he was a sinner, and from birth, by virtue of being a descendant of Adam. Esau, like everyone else born of man and woman, was a bearer of original sin. Including Jacob. Including infants who died unbaptized (an analogy much favoured by Augustine).

This was an important strategic move to take, for it shifted the balance of responsibility from God to man. God was the creator of all things, souls as well as bodies.[8] But he was not responsible for sin; that responsibility lay with Adam, who had misused the divine gift of free will.

Two problems remained. One, more than a little difficulty (*magna*

[6] The longest and most intense treatment is in the *De div. quaest. ad Simp.* 2 = *CCL* 44.24–6.

[7] Note that in *De civ. Dei* 19.21 (= 82a, end) Augustine shows, in a different context, that he has not altogether escaped the influence of the beneficial thesis.

[8] Augustine had difficulties over the origin of the soul and the process by which it became contaminated by sin. See *Ep.* 202A = *CSEL* 57.305, at 2.6: 'I admit that up to the present I have not discovered how the soul derives its sin from Adam, which it is not allowed us to doubt, without being itself derived from Adam, which is something to be carefully enquired into rather than rashly affirmed.'

quaestio), related to Jacob's apparently unethical behaviour: how was it that someone 'without deceit' could have obtained a blessing meant for another 'through deceit'?[9] Augustine acts the slippery advocate, supporting his client with tortuous argument and far-fetched allegory.[10]

The second and prior issue is the unequal treatment of the two brothers. Though each was equally guilty of original sin, one was cursed and rejected, the other blessed and elevated. Esau was a bearer of original sin; therefore God owed him nothing except eternal punishment. God owed Jacob nothing either except eternal punishment, but in this case He showed mercy. This time God could not 'escape' responsibility. It was his grace, bestowed on one, withheld from the other, that made the difference. Augustine insists on this, firmly rebuffing those who looked for an answer in terms of merit. The following passage, an excerpt from a letter composed in AD 418, is typical:

AUG8 *Epistulae* 194.34, 38 (part)

> 34. Who are these that reply to God, when He says to Rebecca, who had twin sons of one conception of Isaac our father, 'When the children were not yet born nor had done any good or evil (that the purpose of God according to election might stand)' – the election, namely, of grace not of merit, the election by which He does not find but makes elect – 'that it was not of works but of him that calleth, that the elder should serve the younger'? To this sentence the blessed Apostle adds the testimony of a Prophet who came long afterward: 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated' [Mal. 1:2–3], to give us to understand plainly by the latter utterance what was hidden in the predestination of God by grace before they were born. For what did He love but the free gift of His mercy in Jacob, who had done nothing good before his birth? And what did He hate but original sin in Esau, who had done nothing evil before his birth? Surely He would not have loved in the former a goodness which he had not practised, nor would He have hated in the latter a nature which He himself had created good . . .
>
> 38. Although they were of the same father, the same mother,

[9] See *Quaest. Gen.* 74 = *CSEL* 33.28. [10] See e.g. *Serm.* 4 and 5 = *CCL* 41.20–60.

> the same conception, before they had done anything good or evil God loved the one and hated the other, so that Jacob might understand that he was of the same clay of original sin as his brother, with whom he shared a common origin, and thus he sees that he is distinguished from him by grace alone.

It was one thing to lay down a doctrinal line, another to find an explanation that would give satisfaction on both the intellectual and the moral plane. Time and time again Augustine returns the same answer as Paul had done in Romans 9, a text which is always at the centre of his discussions: there *is* no human explanation; it is a mystery, *mysterium*, a holy mystery, *sacramentum*. If there is an answer that we humans can understand, it lies in allegory. Augustine explains, as Paul (and Ambrose) had done, that the younger son superseding the older son stands for the displacement of the Jews by the Christians:

AUG9 *De civitate Dei* 16.35

> Yet it is more fitting to believe that the prophetic statement: 'One people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger' portended something greater than this [*sc.* that the younger Israelites would rule the older Idumaeans]. And what is this greater significance, save that which is most plainly fulfilled in the case of the Jews and the Christians?

It was in the process of puzzling over grace and predestination, original sin and free will, that Augustine arrived at his solution to the problem of the origin of slavery. It is set out (unfortunately with brevity, loose construction, and lack of clarity) in a chapter of the *City of God*:

AUG10 *De civitate Dei* 19.15 (part)

> This is the prescription of the order of nature, and thus has God created man. For He says: 'Let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds that fly in the heavens, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' *For he did not wish a rational creature, made in his own image, to have dominion save over irrational cratures: not man over man, but man over the beasts* . . . The condition of slavery is justly imposed on the sinner. Wherefore we do not read of a slave anywhere in the

Scriptures until the just man Noah branded his son's sin with this word; so he earned this name by his fault, not by nature. The origin of the Latin word for 'slave' is believed to be derived from the fact that those who by the law of war might have been put to death, when preserved by their victors, became slaves, so named from their preservation. But even this could not have occurred were it not for the wages of sin; for even when a just war is waged, the enemy fights to defend his sin, and every victory, even when won by wicked men, humbles the vanquished through a divine judgement, correcting or punishing their sins. Witness the man of God, Daniel, who in captivity confesses to God his own sins and those of his people, and in pious sorrow recognizes in them the cause of his captivity. *The prime cause of slavery, then, is sin, so that man was put under man in a state of bondage; and this can be only by a judgement of God, in whom there is no unrighteousness, and who knows how to assign divers punishments according to the deserts of the sinners.*

But as our Lord in heaven says: 'Every man who sins is the slave of his sin'[John 8:34] . . . *And surely it is a happier lot to be slave to a man than to a lust;* for the most cruel overlord that desolates men's hearts, to mention no other, is this very lust for overlordship. Moreover, in a peaceful order in which some men are subjected to others, humility is as beneficial to servants as pride is harmful to masters. *But by nature, in which God first created man, no man is the slave either of another man or of sin.* Yet slavery as a punishment is also ordained by that law which bids us to preserve the natural order and forbids us to disturb it; for if nothing had been done contrary to that law, there would have been nothing requiring the check of punishment by slavery . . .

The logic of the argument is as follows:

1. In the state of nature, that is, before the Fall, there was no slavery either to man or to sin. It was God's intention for men to dominate animals, but not other men.[11] The arrival of slavery

[11] In *Quaest. Gen.* 1.153 = *CCL* 33.59, the man/animal relationship is conceptualized in terms of slavery, and Gen. 1:26 is cited: 'This slavery, this mastership, are beyond any doubt just, where animals serve man and man rules over animals.' Gregory of Nyssa quoted the same verse of Genesis, not to observe that there was no slavery in paradise, but to urge there should be no slave-owning here and now on the earth (E6).

following the Fall therefore represented a step down from the order of nature that God created. It was not what He had in mind. The cause of slavery was not nature but sin.[12]

2. We are all sinners, we all bear guilt because of the sin of Adam (who is not named); we are owed nothing from God except punishment.
3. This punishment splits into the reformatory and the retributive.
4. One form that divine punishment has taken is slavery. Slavery is part of God's judgement on sinful mankind.
5. As such, slavery is not unjust, for there is no injustice in God.
6. Slavery falls on humans in two ways:
   - 6a Some humans are enslaved because of their own specific sins. The enslavement ordered by Noah in response to his son's sin is one example of this (the fact that it was not the son Ham but the grandson Canaan who was enslaved is here overlooked). Another example, referred to obliquely, is the enslavement of unjust opponents in a just war.
   - 6b On the other hand, some humans are enslaved because of the specific sins of *others*. (So in fact, but not cited as such, Canaan.) Thus, in the context of a just war, when the wrong side, that is, the just, loses and enslavement follows: this punishment too is dictated by the judgement of God.
7. The prime cause of slavery is sin.

In conclusion, let us pinpoint the special features of Augustine's theory:

1. His is a man-centred explanation of slavery. Man had misused the freedom he had been given in the natural state.
2. The explanation covers *both* moral and physical slavery, slavery of both soul and body. 'And yet by nature, in the condition in which God created man, no man is the slave either of man or of sin.' Both slavery to man and slavery to sin enter the picture after the Fall.

Paul had implicitly, if not explicitly, derived *spiritual* slavery from the sin of Adam (in Romans, but in ch. 5 esp. v. 12, rather than ch. 9).

[12] Note that *natura* is used in different senses in the oppositions *natura/peccatum* (of Augustine) and *natura/insipientia* (of Ambrose). Augustine's view is followed, and elaborated, in Theodoret, *On Divine Providence* 7 at 669B–677A, 681–5.

This was the rock on which Augustine built the doctrine of original sin. Paul, however, did not trace the origins of *physical* slavery back to Adam and Eve.[13]

3. Augustine's account of slavery of man to man takes in all slavery in a second sense: not just the Old Testament enslavements, but also the standard wartime enslavements of his world and preceding periods of history, and, in general, enslavement through adversity or misfortune. Sin lay behind all of these enslavements.
4. Augustine's formulation 'sin is the cause of slavery' is an all-embracing, total explanation, in another way. It takes in not only all slavery, but also all sin: not just personal misdeeds (*peccata propria*) like Ham's mockery of his naked father, but also original sin (*peccatum originale*), which fastens on all men. It was this that caught up with Esau.

[13] Note also that in *De Jacob et vita beata* 2.3.12, Ambrose claims only that Adam and Eve introduce slavery *to sin*.

14

Slavery as metaphor

Preliminaries

The metaphor of slavery is one of many used by Augustine to explain his ideas on such central matters as God's relationship to humanity, the Fall, sin and redemption.[1] It is, however, one that he particularly favours, one to which he characteristically turns when he is looking for an illustration from 'everyday life' to clarify a difficult theological idea.[2]

Slavery to God and slavery to sin, as we saw, are leading concepts in his theology. They are also handy weapons in his polemic against Jews, heretics and pagans. All these enemies of Christ are slaves to sin in their different ways. Jews in Augustine as in Paul are slaves to the Law through fear. Then, the supersession of the Jews by the Christians is a regularly recurring motif in Augustine. Apart from the use of the Esau/Jacob story as a paradigm for this, Augustine has an extravagant image of the Jews as slaves employed as custodians and carriers of books (the Old Testament) which are for their Christian masters to read, comprehend and profit from.[3] Pagans, leading examples of whom include Nebuchadnezzar, the emperor Nero, and Julian the Apostate, are slaves of idols.[4] Heretics and schismatics are slaves of

[1] For a full discussion of Augustine's use of metaphor, see Poque (1984). On the use of slavery as a metaphor in the Church Fathers in general, see Combes (1991).

[2] See AUG 11, below. The example was, as it happens, inappropriate.

[3] For Jews displaced in favour of Christians, see e.g. *Tract. adv. Jud.* 9 = *PL* 42.58; *De civ. Dei* 16.35; *Enarr. in Ps.* 46.6 = *CCL* 38.532; etc. Cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 1; *Adv. Marc.* 3.24. On Jews as book-carriers see *Serm.* 5.5 = *CCL* 41.56; *Enarr. in Ps.* 56.9 = *CCL* 39.700; 40.14 = *CCL* 38.459; *Contra Faustum* 12.23 = *CSEL* 25.1.351.

[4] E.g. *Serm.* 22.5; *Ep.* 185.8 = *CSEL* 57.7; *Serm.* 1.133.9; *De civ. Dei* 4.29.

God, but bad slaves and runaways. This image opens the door to the coercion of deviants. As runaway slaves must be severely chastised, so heretics must be forced into the Catholic Church.[5]

What of (orthodox) Christians? Their position was ambiguous. Being 'of the faith', they were slaves of God, potentially at least. In practice, as fallible human beings and bearers of original sin, they were slaves of sin. Their equivocal status is expressed also in terms of the distinction between slaves and sons. Paul was inclined to elide this distinction, important though it was in Roman law, and he did so in two different ways: by 'demoting' sons to the level of slaves, and by 'elevating' slaves to the status of sons. For, on the one hand, he observed that there was little to distinguish the status of infant sons from that of slaves; while, on the other, he called followers of Christ at one time 'sons' or 'children' of God, and at another time 'slaves' of God (Rom. 8:14–17; cf. 6:22).

I investigate these ambiguities and tensions below with reference to works of selected Church Fathers, namely, Origen, Lactantius, Athanasius and, principally, Augustine. Augustine is equally capable of depressing the status of sons and raising the status of slaves, in each case in the cause of doctrinal exposition. In the former operation he is preceded most conspicuously by Lactantius,[6] in the latter by Origen and Athanasius.

Then, in the latter part of the chapter, I identify an employment of the slave metaphor which I believe to be individual to Augustine, namely, the use of slavery as a way of delineating and confirming the existing ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Sons and slaves in Lactantius and Augustine

Discussion of sons and slaves occurs in Lactantius in two main contexts, in the *Divine Institutes* where he is attacking polytheism, and in *On Anger* where he argues that God is, and should be, angry as well as merciful. There are two clear tendencies: one is to elide the distinction between son and slave, the other (which is related) is to give heavy

[5] *Serm.* 12.2; 295.5 = *PL* 38.1350; *Ep.* 93.5 = *CSEL* 34.2.449 ('cogite intrare'); 105.1 = *CSEL* 34.2.595; 185.21 = *CSEL* 57.20.

[6] Lactantius' discussion of the relevant themes, while owing something to Tertullian (see e.g. *Adv. Marc.* 3.2.13–16) and Cyprian (e.g. *De bono pat.* 3), is much more detailed and elaborate. All three were of African origin.

emphasis to the disciplinary and coercive role of the head of the household (and by analogy, God). Both points are interesting in view of the commonly expressed opinion that in Roman law sons and slaves were clearly distinguished, and that the distinction was particularly visible in the field of corporal punishment. Slaves were beaten, sons were not.[7]

In the Fourth Book of the *Divine Institutes* a metaphor from the household unfolds in this way:

LACTI *Institutiones divinae* 4.3.14–17, part

1a 4.3.14–15

> Therefore one God is to be worshipped, who can truly be called 'father'. The same must also be 'master', because just as he can show mercy, so too can he coerce. He deserves the name 'father', because he showers on us many and great gifts; but he is equally master, because he has the supreme power of chastisement and punishment. That master and father are one is established by the rules of civil law.

In the next sentence but one *pater* becomes *paterfamilias*, underscoring the Roman legal context, and Lactantius says something surprising:

1b 4.3.16–17

> Who can bring up sons unless he has the power of a master over them? The father is deservedly called the father of the family though he might have children only: it is easy to see that the name 'father' embraces slaves too, because of the 'family' that follows, and the name 'family' embraces also sons, because father comes before it. It is clear, then, that the same man is both father of slaves and master of sons. Then again, the son is manumitted as if he were a slave, and the slave who is freed receives the name of his patron as if he were a son. But if he is called father of the family, to indicate that he is endowed with a twofold authority, so that he should show mercy because he is the father, and coerce because he is the master, it follows that the one who is a slave is a son also, and the master and father are likewise one and the same.

[7] See Saller (1991).

This is curious and unexpected. The discussion might have gone in another direction, as it does a little later:

LACT2 *Institutiones divinae* 4.4.2

> Since, however, God who is one embraces the character of both a father and a master, we ought to love Him because we are His children, and we ought to fear Him because we are His slaves.

Lactantius here asserts the unity of the Godhead while preserving a clear distinction between sons and slaves. The *paterfamilias* evokes love from his children through his indulgence and fear from his slaves in response to his coercive authority. In LACT1, however, the polarity between father/son/indulgence–love and master/slave/coercion–fear is broken down, and the categories of dependent relationship confused. Each role, father and master, is exercised over *both* son *and* slave.

Lactantius elsewhere couples bad slaves and bad sons, as in the following sentence:

LACT3 *Institutiones divinae* 4.4.5

> Thus it comes about that philosophers and those who worship false gods are comparable to either disowned children or fugitive slaves, who shun, respectively, their father and their master. And just as the disowned lose out on their father's inheritance and runaways do not escape punishment, so the philosophers will not attain to immortality, which is the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, and the highest good that they so earnestly seek, nor will the worshippers of false gods evade the penalty of eternal death, which is the punishment that the true master exacts from fugitives from his majesty and authority.

Lactantius returns to these themes in the treatise *On anger*, which deals expressly and centrally with God's relationship to humanity. We find that the God/man relationship is expressed in terms of the same, elaborate metaphor from the household. God is the *paterfamilias* in whom are united the qualities of father and master, *pater* and *dominus*. There are no novelties, but Lactantius is perhaps even more inclined in this treatise to stress the reality and justice of divine coercion. This tendency is no more marked than in the ringing sentence:

LACT4 *De ira* 17.11

The world is like the household of god, and men are like slaves.

It is striking that of the various vertical relationships withih the household, it is the 'despotic' which Lactantius has singled out as the appropriate metaphor for the relationship between God and man. It is also to be remarked upon that when he does produce a comprehensive list of those subject to human *patria potestas* – slaves, children, wife, pupils (*discipuli*) – it is to remind the *paterfamilias* of his duty to coerce.

It is understandable in a treatise which is entirely devoted to proving that God does, should, must show anger, that the coercive role of the *paterfamilias* is centre-stage. Can we, however, go further and make an inference about Lactantius' social as distinct from theological attitudes? It is hard not to believe that this writer was a disciplinarian by conviction, and that for him the disciplining of children was, and should be, as routine as the disciplining of slaves, and in general that in his view coercion of dependants was in accordance with the will of God. For that is the effect of the analogy of the household: as with God, so with men. Formally the argument is presented the other way round, because Lactantius is trying to prove the reality and necessity of divine anger: as we ought (*sc.* to coerce), so God ought . . .

Lactantius is in fact not engaged in issuing advice for heads of household, let alone in describing existing patterns of behaviour within the household. This, I imagine, is why we hear little about the nature of the punishment with which sons as well as slaves are threatened.

Although little or nothing is said about the manner of punishment inflicted by the *paterfamilias*, Lactantius does say something about motives. It is a saving grace of the anger of God that it is just and aimed at correction not vengeance. And so it should be among men. Lactantius does not go so far as to claim that punishment is a mark of affection, that *gratia* is displayed through *ira*. This is a message that Augustine would drum home.

Lactantius does confront the complaint of the faithful that while they, the slaves of God, are marked down for punishment and suffer correction, sinners appear to be free and prosperous. The exemplary sinners happen to be runaway slaves and disowned sons. Lactantius'

answer is chilling. There is no hurry. God is patient. The eternal fires are being stoked for them.[8]

In one of the newly discovered sermons Augustine appears to downgrade sons to the level of slaves, envisaging them as being equally subject to coercion by the *paterfamilias* and by God. Augustine shares the interest of Lactantius in this theme, and also his concern with explaining and justifying the anger of God. The key passage runs as follows:

AUG11 *New Sermon* (*Mainz* 54), Ch. 4, lines 91–125 (part); Ch. 7 (end), lines 245–9

11a Ch. 4, 91–125 (part)

> But first see this working out in actual daily life – you can learn from this how God's mercy has not abandoned mortal men – there being certain comparisons that can be drawn from human existence which show us that punishment can be inflicted in mercy. What am I to say? You administer discipline to your slave, and in the act of disciplining you show pity precisely at the moment when you appear to be inflicting punishment – however, I do not say this to the slave. Perhaps you are angry with the slave to the point of hating him. You should not be, if you are a Christian. You should not be, if you keep before you that while 'slave' and 'master' are different words, 'man' and 'man' are not. You should not pursue a sinning slave with hatred. But, in so far as slaves are men, let us discard this comparison, and replace slave with son. No one is capable of not loving his sons, and there is no praise to be earned by a man for loving his son. The master says: 'For what profit will you gain if you love them who love you? Surely tax-collectors do as much?' How much more are sons loved, whom men beget to succeed them. No one, to be sure, can by the very law of nature, hate him whom he has brought into the world . . .
>
> A man sees his son descending to pride, lifting himself up

[8] For a more optimistic side of Lactantius, see *Inst. div.* 5.14.17, where he says that 'we are all his sons, enjoying equal rights', and goes on to use the related concept of brotherhood. The context makes a difference. Slavery is perhaps seen as a more appropriate image where punishment or correction is at issue, sonship where God's blessings are under discussion. This passage is part of a longer discussion in which Lactantius expresses radical social views. See E5.

against his father, taking for himself more than he should, wanting to dissolve himself in empty pleasures, wanting to squander what he does not yet possess. And when he does all this he is cheerful, laughing, rejoicing, gloating. His father, however, stops all this with reproof, punishment, beatings. He wipes the grin off his son's face, and substitutes tears. It looks as if he has taken away something good and brought evil in its place. (Look what he has banished: mirth; and look what he has introduced: groans.) Yet, if he had let that mirth go unpunished, he would have been cruel; it is in the forcing of tears that mercy is located. Thus, if a father who induces tears is found to be merciful, why do we not understand that our creator could have done what we proclaimed in song: 'God, you rejected us and put us down?' But why did he do this? Surely not for destruction, surely not for perdition? Hear what comes next: 'You were angered and you showed us pity'. Why is he angry with you, and justly so? Read the following words in conjunction: 'Before I was humiliated, I sinned.' What benefit did it bring you that you were rejected and put down? 'It is good for me that you have humiliated me, so that I may learn your judgements.'

Augustine takes the argument a stage further with an elaborate comparison between two tripartite vertical structures. The first is the order of existence, with God above men, and men above other created things. The second is the hierarchy of the household, with a master of free status at the top, below him a slave who, however, doubles up as master because he too has a slave (he is, in effect, a *servus vicarius*), and at the third and lowest level, that slave, the slave of a slave.

Augustine has the slave/master punished for raising himself against his master. The agent of punishment is the slave of the slave, who is instructed by the overall master to beat his own master; or, in another formulation, it is our body, which also plays a second role as the cause of our sin, our attempting to rise above our station. As Augustine puts it:

11b Ch. 7 (end), lines 245–9

Thus our God, because we offended him, gave orders that we be tortured in relation to our body; our body was made mortal, and that is why we both suffer punishments and have dared to puff

> ourselves up against the master. Therefore we are now being beaten by our slave. We are being tortured in the torments of our flesh; the master humiliated us by having us beaten by a slave.

The argument about the motivation of God's punishment is clinched with a reference to the crucifixion: the father handed over his own son for punishment in mercy, the son handed himself over in mercy (lines 300–1).

I confine myself to two observations arising from this sermon which fit our present purposes. First, Augustine does recognize a distinction between son and slave, not so much in the way they are treated, as in the way they are viewed. In both cases punishment can and should be imposed in mercy; in neither case should the miscreant be hated. With slaves, this is because they are men. But there the similarity between sons and slaves ends. Augustine switches from slaves to sons in order to advance the argument to its next stage, where he wants to claim that punishment is inflicted not just out of pity but out of love. It can be said only of sons that they are loved in accordance with the law of nature, a law respected as much by beasts as by men, as much by wild beasts as by tame beasts.

Secondly, slave and son have a lot in common, and that includes liability to physical punishment. It does not seem to matter to Augustine who is being beaten, son or slave, in the service of the theological point that he is making. In the first part of the argument it is mainly the son, in the second part it is the slave. Both stand equally for us humans, who are subject to punishment, and deservedly so, because we sinned first (lines 250–1).

Sons and slaves in Origen, Athanasius and Augustine

Origen of Alexandria in Egypt and then of Caesarea in Palestine, writing in the first half of the third century AD, addresses himself to the change of status that is undergone by someone who becomes a follower of Christ.[9] Building on Paul's idea of a transition from the spirit of bondage to that of adoption (Rom. 8:15) and John's concept of rebirth as children of God (John 1:12), Origen reconstructs the original state of humanity as being one of slavery defined by fear. This state is then outgrown, as 'perfect love casts out fear' (1 John 4:18), and we

[9] For what follows on Origen and Athanasius I am in debt to Widdicombe (1994).

relate to God less as to a master than as to a father. Lest there be any confusion between our sonship and Christ's, Origen draws a contrast between those who have become sons by adoption, and the only-begotten, the son by nature.

The same ground was traversed about a century later by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, who was forced by the Arian dispute over the nature of the Trinity to explore the ontological status of Christ and his relationship with God. In *Against the Arians*, Athanasius accepted and reinforced Origen's distinction between sonship by nature and sonship by adoption: Christ was a/the son by nature, we in contrast are slaves by nature. God is our natural master, but we have the capacity of calling him Father, once we have accepted 'the spirit of the son' (*Contra Arianos* 2.51, 253C). A little later in the same work, Athanasius expresses the same sentiment, but, interestingly, without the terminology of slavery: 'From the beginning we are creatures by nature, and God is our creator through the Word; but afterwards we are made sons, and henceforth God the creator becomes our Father also' (*Contra Arianos* 2.59, 273B). Slaves by nature, creatures by nature: they are the same thing. The message is that it is *qua* created beings that we are slaves.

These two ideas: the evolution of slaves into sons, and slavery to God by nature, are both present in Augustine.

First, from slaves to sons. The *New Sermon* (*Mainz 62*) has 1,545 lines and must have taken several hours to deliver. Augustine was never laconic, but the inordinate length of this sermon is related to the fact that it was the New Year and there was a rollicking pagan festival in progress outside from which the preacher was anxious to detain his congregation. Its message is that Christians should not undermine the attack on pagan idol-worship by themselves indulging in the veneration of columns, statues, churches, angels, or martyrs and their shrines. God alone should be worshipped. In the course of the discussion of martyrs Augustine conjures up the image of the household in the following way:

AUG12 *New Sermon* (*Mainz 62*), ch. 12, lines 264–81; ch. 48, lines 1166–72

12a Ch. 12, lines 264–81

Why have we said this? So that when we attack the pagans we do not give them an excuse for attacking us. You come to the

places of the martyrs so as to take away a pious memory in your hearts, and so that from the honour won by the martyrs there may arise a devotion for the God who did not desert the martyrs in their suffering, but aided them as they did battle, and crowned them in their victory. Thus you make yourselves worthy objects of the prayers of martyrs. As a rule a good slave is deeply indignant if he is honoured while his master is despised, a good slave who has actually been transformed from a slave into a son. In one respect he is still a slave, who is destined to be made a son out of a slave, and in another respect he is already a son. To be a slave in fear is one thing, and a son in love another. A great house has everything: hired workers, slaves and sons. Hired workers are those who look for worldly gains within the church, they are those of whom the apostle says that they do not proclaim the good news in purity. And yet he permits them, saying: 'Let Christ be proclaimed, whether for opportunistic reasons or in truth.' Slaves are those who do what a master bids them in fear. They are actually of the house, in fact they are nearer the centre of a great house than hired workers are; of these slaves sons are made, when they begin to serve out of love. So, as I said at the beginning, a great house has everything. What do we think the martyrs are, my brothers? God forbid that we classify them among the hired workers, or among those who are not yet sons. For they loved Christ, and out of love for him despised not only all the pleasures of the world but also all torments . . .

Much later in the same sermon Augustine returns to the earlier theme, according to which only God is to be worshipped, referring this time to the angels:

12b Ch. 48, lines 1166–72

They are servants, doing what they have been bidden to do, referring our prayers to God, not themselves exacting them from God. No angel says to man, . . . as do perverse and corrupt ministers of certain authorities: 'Give me something, if you want me to take a message, if you want me to admit you.' Our Lord does not have a great house of that kind. His slaves love him, his sons love him.

The main points for our purposes are two:

1. At the heart of the text is a distinction between sons and slaves. Slaves obey their master out of fear, whereas the hallmark of the father/son relationship is love (lines 272–3).[10] This fear/love distinction, though conventional and somewhat prescriptive, is grounded in the status distinction between slaves and sons recognized in law and custom; it also presumably draws to some extent from experience in the household.[11]
2. Next, Augustine has slave evolving into son – not any slave, but a good slave. All that is required is that the slave begin to serve with love. The martyr is like neither the hired worker nor the 'not yet son', but is rather a model good slave who is now called son. Slave and son in this usage would seem to be synonymous, and we note that Christ is introduced several times as the archetypical good slave. But Augustine can also write: 'His slaves love him, his sons love him', preserving the shell of the distinction at least.[12]

Next, natural slavery. At one point in the *New Sermon* (*Mainz 5*) 'On Obedience', Augustine ponders the first act of human disobedience, which, though in appearance small, was none the less 'the first cause of the destruction of mankind'. Why did Adam touch the tree? There is a prior question, however: why did God put the tree there and prohibit Adam from touching it? These are Augustine's words:

[10] The fear/love distinction may be broken down or qualified. See e.g. *Serm.* 297.2 = *PL* 39.2314: both slave and son fear, but whereas the slave fears torture, the son fears love (i.e. the love that issues in punishment); *Enarr. in Ps.* 118.31.3 = *CCL* 40.1771: fathers are feared and loved by pious sons; *Enarr. in Ps.* 70.1.1 = *CCL* 39.941; etc.

[11] How far, is a vexed question. Poque (1984) and Shaw (1987) believe that Augustine is a direct source for actual attitudes and behaviour in north African society. I am sceptical. For example, in the matter of the physical punishment of sons, which they believe was ubiquitous (e.g. Poque (1984), 203), Augustine's teaching on punishment has a firm scriptural base, in texts such as Proverbs 3:11–12 and Hebrews 12:5–8, around which he frequently builds his argument. Augustine himself appears as an enthusiastic disciplinarian, but this is a separate point. See Poque (1984), 194, 222–3, referring e.g. to *Enarr. in Ps.* 37.18 = *CCL* 38.397; *Serm.* 56.17 = *PL* 38.385.

[12] Was the argument influenced by the status confusion that apparently arose from 'mixed marriages', in particular between slave men and free women? The idea seems far-fetched. For the phenomenon, see Evans-Grubbs (1993a), drawing almost entirely on legal sources.

AUG13 *New Sermon* (*Mainz 5*), ch. 7, lines 138–53

> 'Do not', he says, 'touch this tree.' But surely if it had not been good, it would not have been in paradise. Or do you perhaps believe that God had filled the world outside paradise with everything good and had planned evil in paradise? And for sure, while there were good things in the rest of the world, things were better in paradise. Yet, because among all the goods that were set in paradise obedience was the one to be preferred, God imposed a prohibition for some purpose, lest by prohibiting nothing he not be dominant. Well, then, perhaps someone imagines that God wanted to dominate out of arrogance. But God's domination is beneficial not to God, but to the dominated. He is neither the less if we spurn Him, nor the greater if we serve Him. It is expedient for us not to Him that we be under such a master. He who wants to dominate us, in this case wants it for our benefit, not His own. He does not lack any good that we have, whereas we lack all the goods that He has, for God is Himself the highest good for us. The highest and best good for us, than which nothing is to be preferred, is God Himself. See the slave confessing, hear what he says in the Psalm: 'I said to the Lord: you are my God, for you do not lack any good things that I have.' So God prohibited something so as to impose a rule, so that He who was Lord should be served, so as to mark off obedience from disobedience, just as virtue from vice . . .

In the *City of God* (in a passage composed around two decades after this sermon) Augustine found that both physical slavery and spiritual slavery were consequences of the Fall. In this sermon, he is presenting the relationship of God to *pre*lapsarian man in terms of the master/slave relationship. He is saying that the natural relationship of man to God is that of slave to master. There is no incompatibility here, because the spiritual slavery which is the consequence of the sin of Adam is bad slavery, that is, slavery to sin, whereas the spiritual slavery which is the natural condition of man is good slavery, slavery to God.

The slave hierarchy, according to Augustine

Mainz 5 gives us another interesting insight into the mind of Augustine. This is the context: Augustine is chiding the congregation

at Carthage for creating a rumpus in the church the previous day and forcing him to abandon his sermon. After chastising himself for not consulting his host, the primate Aurelius, before he gave up, he rebukes the congregation for their display of disobedience to their bishops. In so doing, he gives the New Testament message to Christians to serve one another an inegalitarian twist:

AUG14 *New Sermon* (*Mainz* 5), ch. 10, lines 223–7; ch. 11, lines 237–43

14a Ch. 10, lines 223–7

> But someone might say, 'My bishop should follow my Lord's example and serve me.' My dear people, I say to this – and let those who are capable understand this – if your bishop were not a servant, he would not be giving orders. For he is a servant who gives beneficial orders, he serves with vigilance, he serves with consideration, he serves with concern, he serves, in a word, with love. For he who came here to minister certainly gave orders to his disciples.

Augustine's first example is of the preparation of the Paschal feast, delegated by Jesus to others. He then turns to the entry into Jerusalem:

14b Ch. 11, lines 237–43

> He said, 'Go into the village opposite and you will find there the colt of an ass tied up, on which no one has sat; bring it to me . . .' They listened to him, went off, and did his bidding. Did anyone hold back, did any one say: 'Why does he want the colt brought to him? It cannot be the case that someone who has brought the dead back to life has worn himself out with walking.' Listen, slave: do what you are bidden by him who looks after your welfare, who attends to your safety.

Augustine turns to allegory – the village stands for this world and its values, which includes disobedience; the colt stands for the gentiles, bound up by the devil and not yet having carried a prophet. Augustine still has to find a *dramatis persona* for his audience, not to mention himself and Bishop Aurelius:

14c Ch. 11, lines 263–76

> What are you, my brethren, what do you want to be: those who released the colt, or the colt itself? You would not dare claim for yourselves the role of those by whom the colt was released; it was the apostles who filled that role. That is the role of people under orders: we sustain that role, with our utmost solicitude, by means of the powers that the lord thinks fit to assign to us. No, we are talking of you. You are the colt, you obey those who lead you off so that you can carry the lord. So, my dear people, consider how the disciples released the colt and led it to the master. They led it, and it followed them; they did not drag it along, and it did not resist them. Yet, and we are speaking now of the service that we perform, when the disciples led the colt to the lord, they were doing a service for the colt; so too we do a service for you when we lead you to the lord, when we teach and advise obedience; if service were not being given you in your weakness, you would not be listening to us today.[13]

This is Augustine's vision of a well-ordered Church. At the head are the bishops, themselves under the jurisdiction of God, and under their authority, the laity. Like the apostles in the story of the colt, the bishops both obey orders and give orders. *Mainz 54* (cf. AUG11) offers a useful parallel with its picture of a three-layered universe: God stands over humanity, which is itself over and above the rest of creation. We saw that Augustine chose to clarify this with a homologous example from everyday life involving a master, his slave and his slave's slave. The master is alone a master and *only* a master. His slave is both slave (to this master) and master (over his slave). The slave's slave is *only* a slave.

Conclusion

Christian theologians from Paul to Augustine (and beyond) made free use of the image of slavery, applying it even to themselves and their Christian brethren, 'fellow-slaves in religion'.[14] The idea that humility and self-surrender were natural and proper attitudes to adopt towards

[13] *Enarr. in Ps.* 31.2.23 = *CCL* 38.241 gives a different version of the colt image, emphasizing discipline, and involving a promotion from pack-animal to son!

[14] Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 5.15.6.

God is rooted in the world of the ancient Israelites. Moses, Abraham and the other Old Testament heroes were slaves of God before Paul and company were, and before Christ himself was. But the Christian theology of the incarnation and crucifixion deepened the Jewish insight into the religious significance of obedience and service. The slavery of Christ and the slavery of redeemed mankind were not simply a repeat of that of paradise.

The other side of the coin is that it was a compliment and a privilege to be called a slave – of God. Jerome in his *Homily on Psalm 115* remarks that the Psalmist's words 'I am your slave' appear to be spoken out of humility, but immediately adds: 'It is a mark of great dignity and merit to be slave of the Lord and not a slave of sin.'[15]

Moreover, slavery in the Christian context was the key to salvation, and as such the badge of a rather exclusive club. This theme, already adumbrated by Paul, is elaborated by Augustine. We are all slaves, but there are slaves and slaves.

First, within the Christian community of slaves, there is a hierarchy of authority, of which the living proof and exemplum is the vertically structured institutional church. Within the church there are slaves who serve by giving orders, and there are slaves who serve by carrying out those orders without question.

Second, in the totality of humanity there is a division between bad slaves, that is, Jews, pagans, heretics and Christians still enslaved to sin, and good slaves, who are faithful servants of the Christian God.

Slavery, then, divides both mankind from God and men from men, the damned from the called (or better, the chosen). It is within the latter group of the called that conventional status-divisions fade away, as slave and son become substitutable (as in Paul or Lactantius), or as slave evolves into son (as in Origen, Athanasius and Augustine). It is true that in the darker vision of Lactantius and Augustine, slave and son merge as joint objects of divine chastisement, although we are constantly reminded that without such corrective punishment we cannot qualify for the inheritance.

All this is metaphor. It is worth asking whether, for the Church Fathers, slavery and sonship had two more or less independent existences, one metaphorical, in the land of theology, the other physical,

[15] Jerome, *Brev. in Ps.* 115 = *PL* 26.1183. He goes on to refer to Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Paul.

in Graeco-Roman society. The two worlds seem to me to have intersected surprisingly little.

Thus, if the son/slave distinction was blurred in Christian writers from Paul to Augustine, in the secular world it still held good in all essentials. It is quite clear that the distinction still operated in the fields of punishment and reward, so that slaves were still subjected to severer punishments, and sons were still looked to as heirs.[16] Augustine certainly had no more interest in removing the son/slave distinction in actuality than he had in breaking down the divisions between master and slave, father and son, and husband and wife.[17]

[16] Augustine often talks of the son as the potential heir who must be groomed for this role by stern discipline. See Poque (1984), 210–11; Shaw (1987), 20. On the brutal punishments to which slaves were liable, much worse than the whip (*flagellum*), see Poque (1984), 284–96.

[17] For husband and wife, see now *Mainz 41* (*De bono nuptiarum*) and *Mainz 42* (*De honorandis vel contemnendis parentibus*) = Dolbeau (1992c).

Conclusion

'The slaveholders' diaries, letters, and other personal papers', writes Eugene Genovese,

> show that the Bible and religious tracts held pride of place in their reading . . . In the academies and colleges students got large doses of Greek and Roman history as well as literature, and many retained a lifelong interest . . . No doubt they had many reasons for their continued interest, including and perhaps especially sheer pleasure. Among those reasons was the moral and historical support they found for their adherence to a slave society. The proslavery theorists never tired of proclaiming that the greatness of ancient Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome had been based on slavery, and the reading of ancient history and literature seemed to confirm the proclamation.[1]

Slavery though by no means ubiquitous was deeply entrenched in ancient societies. The slave-owning class extended well down the social scale, and included even slaves. Slaveowners large and small were uniformly committed to the system, which they saw as a fundamental feature of their society. No one launched, nor contemplated, a movement for abolition, not even slaves, who were more interested (especially in the Roman context) in joining their oppressors than in opposing them as a class. Why?

It made a difference that there was no alternative and competing model against which the slave system could be measured. In antebellum America, the existence of a rival free-labour system to the North forced the slave-owning South to defend itself and its way of life, first with argument, and ultimately with weapons. There was no cause for an Edmund Ruffin to emerge to argue for the profitability of

[1] Genovese (1992), 4–5.

the slave economy of ancient Greece. Persia and Egypt were the most advanced neighbouring civilizations of the Graeco-Roman (and Jewish) world, but they were judged to be more completely slave societies than those of the Greeks and Romans: everyone was a slave in Persia apart from the King, everyone in Egypt apart from the Pharaoh. These societies lacked political institutions and the fundamental concepts of citizenship and freedom. For in the Graeco-Roman world slavery was not just an economic system – as such it ebbed and flowed without ever fading away. Slavery, from Aristotle to Augustine, was a basic, structural element of the household, affording owners and their families the leisure to indulge in the good life, however they defined it.

Given that any discussion of the pros and cons of ancient slavery had to arise from within the society, without any external stimulus or prompting, it would not be surprising to find a complete absence of criticisms or apologia of slavery. That is not, however, the situation. The ancient world does not fit the model of a slave society (or societies) wherein slavery was simply accepted, in the sense that there was so little discomfort felt about the institution that no one saw the need to defend it. Interventions of a critical or justificatory nature did occur, anxieties and tensions surfaced, and ideologies were actively engaged in keeping them in check. The voices raised in justification and loaded explanation of the existence of slavery are much the more numerous and authoritative, but this in itself implies that there was perceived to be a case to be answered. One suspects that the real debate took place within the hearts and minds of its defenders, more especially those whose philosophical or religious beliefs gave them a glimpse of human nature that was hard to reconcile with slavery. The overt attacks on slavery are few and isolated, their impact limited.

The closest approximation to an exchange over the legitimacy of slavery occurs in the text of Aristotle's *Politics*. Aristotle is replying to the charge that there was no justice in slavery, only the operation of brute force backed up by man-made law or convention. Aristotle does not say who was advancing these views – except that they were persons engaged in law and in philosophy – in what context, and with what intent. They appear to be heirs of the late fifth- and early fourth-century sophists, who were notorious for their criticism of established institutions and beliefs. Their arguments, as Aristotle presents them, contain traces of positions taken up on justice by Thrasymachus and Callicles (according to Plato). If Aristotle's opponents were faithful to

their sophistic inheritance, then they were presenting something less than a root-and-branch condemnation of slavery. The sophists were sceptics rather than nihilists. They subjected the polis, its institutions and its values to critical scrutiny, questioning whether they were rooted in nature but stopping short of saying that they had no grounds for existing at all.

Aristotle found the arguments in question subversive, and met the challenge they posed by asserting that slavery was natural, beneficial and useful to both sides of the master/slave relationship, and a necessity for the attainment of the good life. This was a sophisticated version of the popular ideology according to which slaves were as a race degenerate and vicious and therefore fit for subjection – a motif of ancient literature from Aristophanes to John Chrysostom. Natural slave theory was, not surprisingly, equally enduring, even if not so often articulated. There survives a sprinkling of examples of Aristotle-style thinking on slavery in the philosophical and, especially, theological literature from later periods of antiquity. We do not have to believe that the writers concerned had Aristotle on their desks before them. Aristotle was far from being in the post-classical period, as he was in the time of the Renaissance, '*the* philosopher'. Aristotle had all but disappeared from view within a generation of his death, and he was inconspicuous and uninfluential thereafter. Later thinkers did not so much echo his views – lacking need or motive to do so – as share his presuppositions. His opponents' views are not reiterated as such among later writers, though perhaps shared by some of them. They appear as the ephemeral product of a short-lived intellectual revolution.

A third strand of thought on slavery that surfaces in Aristotle had better prospects for the future: the social critique of slavery. Aristotle conceded that there were people wrongly enslaved who could reasonably be regarded as not slaves at all, but actually free. In this he was meeting his opponents half-way ('they are also in a way correct'). Perhaps his intention was to 'reclassify' their argument and take away its sting, by granting it validity as social criticism but not as anything more. There were in all periods of antiquity critics of *existing forms of slavery* (rather than of slavery as such), and their assertions are sometimes backed with arguments of philosophical interest. Seneca's plea for the generous treatment of slaves by masters on the grounds that they are linked by common kinship is a familiar example. The

motivation for such interventions is obvious enough: the security of masters and the stability of society could only be secured if slaves accepted their lot, and for this a subtle blend of coercion and paternalism was needed. Many Romans, by holding before (some of) their slaves hopes of a better future, were able to exploit them to the full, while avoiding the twin evils of breaking their spirit and turning them into rebels. The balance was a delicate one, easily upset. Seneca was writing against a historical backdrop of runaway slaves, assassinated masters, and, in an earlier period, full-scale slave revolts.

For us there is a blatant inconsistency between a highminded conception of mankind as united and rational and the enslavement of large numbers of men and women. Seneca admits to an inconsistency of a more limited scope, between his vision of humanity and the harsh treatment (rather than existence) of slaves. We may have to accept that his moral sensibilities went no deeper than this.

Other criticisms of slavery as an institution are flashes in the pan. They are also innocuous. The Essenes and Therapeutae, Jewish sects which condemned slavery and also did without it, were regarded as exotic groups of philosophers fulfilling a utopian dream beyond the frontiers of normal society. (The monastic movement of late Antiquity furnishes only a partial parallel, in so far as its spokesmen (such as Augustine, or Basil) required their monks to do without slaves, in order to keep the rule of poverty, but without condemning the institution.) Gregory of Nyssa's lively attack on slave-owning as an aspect of the sin of pride is unique. Slave-owning, it is clear, was a structural element of Christian as well as pagan and Jewish society and was accepted as such by Church leaders. If Gregory freed all his slaves, and he does not say that he did, then he was one of very few who did so. The 'other Gregory', his contemporary the bishop of Nazianzus, did not, as his Will testifies. Our Gregory's sister Macrina treated her slave attendants 'democratically', and this was seen as an acceptable way of coping with slavery at least among those of ascetic inclinations. There may well have been Christians, including Gregory perhaps, who perceived that slavery was against the spirit of Christianity, but if so, they are also likely to have felt that any attempt to abandon it would fatally destabilize society. If that was the position of Gregory, then he would have seen eye-to-eye with the *apologist* of slavery in the antebellum South, Thomas Roderick Dew. In any case, it is more likely that Gregory's broadside was applauded for its eloquence than that it sent

shock-waves through society. There is no sign of any riposte to his arguments. Philo (and others) had reported the social practices and attitudes of the Essenes and Therapeutae with wonder but also without anxiety. Yet it is in Philo's writings that the doctrine of natural slavery is reborn, in another context, and quite without provocation.

The enslavements of Canaan and Esau were presented by the writer of Genesis as allegories of the conquest and subjection of the Canaanites and Edomites (or Idumaeans) by the ancient Israelites. Philo read into these accounts the creation of two kinds of people, the naturally servile and the naturally blessed, through the operation of divine providence. Philo saw no moral dilemma here: it was a matter of the chosen people of God fulfilling their destiny, and the needs of the rejected of God were best met in service to their superiors. Had not Esau's displacement and slavery been presented as a blessing? It was the Christians, inheriting the stories when they annexed the Old Testament, who found them problematic. Leaving aside the personal anguish suffered by Paul (as a Jew by origin) as he re-read Esau's rejection as a symbol of the downgrading *of the Jews*, the fate of Esau (in particular) and the manner of its accomplishment raised questions about the justice of God. Some Christian interpretations stayed remarkably close to the thought-frame of Philo, in representing Esau's enslavement as a benefit for one who suffered from congenital moral deficiencies, and in avoiding the sensitive question of ultimate responsibility. Augustine squared the circle by deciding that slavery is part of God's plan for mankind, *and* that mankind rather than God is accountable for its introduction because of Adam's guilt which all humans share. This solution at once sanctioned the existence of slavery and headed off any enquiry as to its ethical basis. The connection of slavery with sin was established, but not in such a way as to undermine the institution. Sin had issued in slavery, but slavery was not itself sin; it could not be if it was an aspect of God's (just) judgement of men. The medieval Church was unable to shake off this heavy legacy. Its leading theorist, Thomas Aquinas, had before him both a rediscovered Aristotle and Augustine.

There was another pattern of thought which discouraged criticism of the institution. Physical slavery might be a miserable state to be in, but it was far preferable to moral or spiritual slavery. As Augustine put it: 'It is better to be slave of a man than slave of a lust.' Or, in the daring formulation of Ambrose: 'Slavery is wretched, but Joseph was not

wretched. Far from it, he was conspicuously happy, when, though placed in servitude, he checked the passions of his mistress' (*De off. min.* 2.20). The basic idea was pagan before it received a Christian reorientation. It appears first in the Greek literature of the classical period as a message to the good slave that virtue is freedom. In Stoic thought it is elaborated as the doctrine that only the wise and good man who is completely impervious to the emotions and passions is truly free. Whether or not one is a slave or a free man (poor or rich, ill or in good health) is irrelevant to virtue; it is an indifferent. The Christian position is recognizably similar, but there are inevitable adjustments. Where the Stoics had confronted moral slavery and moral freedom, Paul and later Christian commentators envisaged a choice between two kinds of slavery, one bad, the other good, slavery to sin and slavery to God, which was also perfect freedom, and the route to salvation. In this they were drawing on Old Testament modes of thought. The ideas that utter subjection and devotion to God were man's natural state – that, as Athanasius put it, we are by nature slaves – and that to be God's servant or slave was to be free are Jewish in origin.

What Jewish and Christian thinkers had in mind by 'slavery' is more accurately rendered 'obedience' or 'service'. It had almost nothing in common with ancient domestic servitude, let alone the notorious slave-gangs who worked the mines or the estates of the rich in late Republican Italy. The cultural baggage which 'slavery' carries with it, and the persistent use of the same vocabulary in different ways for contrasting purposes, pose special problems for us. Slavery in the world of Paul or Augustine and in the vast corpus of patristic writings was not just a metaphor. While in their homilies and doctrinal treatises the Church Fathers were presenting slavery as the essence of freedom, the form of the proper relationship between man and God, in the world in which they lived slavery and other conventional status-distinctions had not faded away. Some Church Fathers betray unease at this juxtaposition, but few are open about it.[2]

The definition of true slavery as moral/spiritual rather than corporeal is an escape from, rather than a resolution of, the dilemma posed by slavery. But some did not rest their case there, but went so far as to

[2] See Weiss (1979), for the view that Valerianus, a fifth-century semi-Pelagian bishop of Cimiez in the south of France, shows obvious discomfort. The case is interesting, but I think overstated. See also Weiss (1970).

argue that slavery was part of the natural order, or in Christian terminology an aspect of the judgement of God, and not therefore unjust or illegitimate. This ideology was completely consistent with the social attitudes of the intellectual, religious and political leaders of ancient societies, who were utterly committed to the institution of slavery, holding that when properly regulated, it guaranteed security for slaves, the good life for the citizenry, and the stability of the society as a whole. The world-view of the apologists for slavery in the Old South was strikingly similar.

It will surprise no one that the hero of my narrative is Gregory of Nyssa who, perhaps uniquely, saw that slavery itself is a sin.

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Translations

My translations are sometimes based on previously published versions but I have emended them as I found necessary. I am grateful to the publishers concerned for their permission to reprint. The following list gives details.

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