

### III

## Property and the Propertied

### (i)

#### The conditions of production: land and unfree labour

In the ancient world the principal 'means of production', in the sense in which I am using that term, were land and unfree labour. The latter expression should really include, in addition to chattel slavery and serfdom and debt bondage (to be discussed in Section iv of this chapter), all kinds of compulsory labour services exacted from the exploited classes by local city governments or a royal or Roman imperial administration; but I find it more convenient to discuss these labour services performed for governmental authorities (forms of 'indirect collective exploitation', as I am calling them: see IV.i below) in the next chapter, which deals principally with the peasantry. The ownership of land and the power to exact unfree labour, largely united in the hands of the same class, together constitute, therefore, the main keys to the class structure of the ancient Greek communities. Free wage labour, which plays the essential part in capitalist production, was relatively unimportant in antiquity (see Section vi of this chapter). In a sense, as Marx insisted, the hired labourer is not fully free, as he has virtually no alternative to selling his labour-power for wages; his 'surplus labour' (as Marx calls it), from which the employer derives his profit, is given without an equivalent, and 'in essence it always remains forced labour, no matter how much it may seem to result from free contractual agreement' (*Cap.* III.819). Just as 'the Roman slave was held by fetters, the wage-labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads. The appearance of independence is kept up by means of a constant change of employers, and by the  *fictio juris*  of a contract' (*Cap.* I.574). Yet the disappearance of legally, economically or socially unfree labour and its replacement by wage labour entered into under a contract which can have a good deal of free choice in it is a very real step forward. 'It is one of the civilising aspects of capital that it enforces surplus-labour in a manner and under conditions which are more advantageous to the development of the productive forces, social relations, and the creation of the elements for a new and higher form than under the preceding forms of slavery, serfdom etc.' (*Cap.* III.819). Whether this entails our attributing to the ancient hired labourer a position superior to that of the slave or serf is a doubtful point, to which we shall return in Section vi of this chapter.

In a brilliant passage in *Wages, Price and Profit*, ch. ix (reappearing in a slightly different form in *Capital* I.539-40), Marx draws attention to the most obvious difference in the exploitation of the slave, the serf and the wage labourer. The slave's labour has the appearance of being totally unpaid; he works all the time for his master and receives in return only enough to allow him to live – and perhaps to

reproduce himself. 'Since no bargain is struck between him and his master, and no acts of selling and buying are going on between the two parties, all his labour seems to be given away for nothing.' With the serf liable to labour rent, or the peasant subjected to the *corvée*, who works for so many days on the field which is regarded as his own possession, and for so many days on his lord's field, the reality emerges clearly: 'the paid and unpaid parts of labour are sensibly separated.' The position of the wage-labourer, like that of the slave, can also give rise to confusion: all the labour given by the hired worker has the appearance of being paid, even that 'surplus labour', as Marx called it, out of which comes the employer's profit, the 'surplus value' yielded up by the worker. 'The nature of the whole transaction is completely masked by the intervention of a contract and the pay received at the end of the week. The gratuitous labour appears to be voluntarily given in the one instance, and to be compulsory in the other [the case of the slave or serf]. That makes all the difference.' I will add only that 'the intervention of a contract' similarly masks the exploitation by a landlord of a leasehold tenant who is not tied to his plot but is free to leave it and go elsewhere, to negotiate a lease on better terms with another landlord, if he can, or to take service as a wage-labourer. [*Wages, Price and Profit* ix = *MESW* 210-12.].

How were the propertied classes of the Greek and Roman world to obtain their surplus? Letting land (and houses) to free tenants was always practised in some degree; but (as I have shown in II.iii above) it would naturally yield a lower rate of exploitation than working the land directly, with unfree labour, wage labour, or a combination of the two. Now wage labour was, as I have said already (and will demonstrate in detail in Section vi of this chapter), of little account in antiquity, in particular because it was generally unskilled and not plentifully available. Therefore, there was simply no way in which the propertied classes of the Greek world could obtain a substantial surplus directly except through unfree labour – a most powerful argument for the role played by such labour in the economy of all the Greek states, which is too often neglected. It is very interesting to find that Aristotle, in a passage near the beginning of the *Politics* (I.4, 1253<sup>b</sup>33-4<sup>a</sup>1), can imagine only one alternative to using slaves – and that is *complete automation*: that of the statues endowed with life by Daedalus or of the tripods made by the god Hephaestus, which Homer had described as running on wheels of their own accord to Olympus! (*Iliad* XVIII.376). Much the same idea is amusingly expressed by the Athenian comic poet Crates (fr. 14-15, *ap.* Athen. VI.267e-8a). There were also, it is true, ways in which the propertied class could obtain part of its surplus indirectly, even while a very large number of humble Greeks, including most of those I am calling 'peasants' (see IV.i-iv below), were still in a condition of freedom and could not easily be exploited directly to any intense degree: this indirect exploitation, which mainly took the form of taxation and compulsory services, is rather a difficult subject, best left until Chapter IV, in which I shall be dealing with the peasantry and other small, free, independent producers. When, in the Later Roman Empire, there was apparently a considerable increase in the exploitation of the small free producers, the use of slave labour in the strict sense was in principle less necessary; but the Greek and Roman world always remained what we may loosely call a 'slave society', with unfree labour continuing to be a main source of exploitation, and when it became necessary for the screw to be tightened upon

the peasantry, a large number of them were reduced to a form of serfdom.

Contrary to what is sometimes said, a great deal of slave labour was employed in agriculture, which was by far the most important sector of the ancient economy (see Sections iii and iv of this chapter and Appendix II below).

In the Greek and Roman world wealth was never measured by general income in money, nor were taxes ever levied upon money income. When wealth was quantified it was as capital, and when direct taxes were levied they were either a proportion of a crop (a tenth or whatever), always collected by tax-farmers (*telônai*, *publicani*), or they took the form of a capital levy, as in the case of the Athenian *eisphora* and the *tributum* paid by citizens in the early Roman Republic. Very occasionally we hear of a political qualification being assessed in terms of agricultural produce, again in kind: the Athenian Pentacosimedimnoi (though not, in my opinion, the other Solonian *telē*)<sup>1</sup> were so assessed. Only in Egypt, under the Roman Principate, is there any evidence of income expressed in money being given official recognition as a qualification for the performance of liturgies (public duties); and it is significant that in this case the income was purely from landed property.<sup>2</sup> A recent theory that the four Solonian *telē* at Athens were later based on money incomes is an impossible one, as I have already demonstrated elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> A conclusive argument against any assessment in terms of money income is provided by the extremely primitive nature of ancient accounting, which was incapable of distinguishing properly between what is nowadays kept apart as 'capital' and 'income', let alone enabling a merchant or even a landowner to arrive at a concept of 'net profit', without which the taxation of money income is unthinkable. There seems to have been no really efficient method of accounting, by double or even single entry, before the thirteenth century. (I have discussed Greek and Roman accounting in detail, and have said something about the emergence of modern accounting in the Middle Ages, in my GRA = *Studies in the History of Accounting*, edited by A. C. Littleton and B. S. Yamey [1956] 14-74.)

## (ii)

## The propertied class (or classes)

The most important single dividing line which we can draw between different groups of free men in the Greek world is, in my opinion, that which separated off from the common herd those I am calling 'the propertied class', who could 'live of their own' without having to spend more than a fraction of their time working for their living. (Expressions like 'live of their own' were sometimes used in English political writings of the seventeenth century and later; but my impression is that they usually signified not the ability to live entirely without working at all – the sense in which I am using the word – but the capacity to live an 'independent' life, on the land or by some form of handicraft or other occupation, without entering into the employment of another by taking wage-service under him; cf. Section vi of this chapter, *ad fin.*, and its nn. 48-51.)

Although small peasants and other free men such as artisans and shopkeepers, working on their own account, without much property of their own, must always have formed a substantial proportion of the free population of the Greek world, and indeed were probably a majority of the whole population until about the end

of the third century of the Christian era, they would normally have to spend most of their time working for their livelihood, with their families, at somewhere near the subsistence level, and would not be able to live securely and at leisure, as members of the upper class. (I deal very briefly with these small, free producers in IV.ii and vi below.) By and large, a comfortable, leisured existence could be secured only by the possession of property (primarily in land: see Section iii of this chapter), which alone gave the upper classes that *command over the labour of others* which made it possible for them to live the good life, as the Greeks saw it, a life not constrained by the inescapable necessity of working for one's living, a life which could be devoted to the pursuits considered proper for a gentleman: politics or generalship, intellectual or artistic pursuits, hunting or athletics. Isocrates (VII.45), writing in the mid-fourth century B.C., characteristically brackets together 'horsemanship, athletics, hunting and philosophy' as the very proper avocations fostered by the Athenians in the good old days, enabling some men to develop outstanding qualities and others at least to avoid most evils. (For the prestige that might be derived from athletic prowess, see my *OPW* 355.)<sup>1</sup> For the present we can largely forget about the small peasant, the artisan and their like, who formed the very backbone of many Greek states: we shall come to them in Chapter IV below. Our concern here is with the propertied (*hoi euporoi*, *hoi tas ousias echontes*, and many similar expressions), who alone had the leisure (*scholē*, or in Latin *otium*), a prerequisite of what was then considered to be the good life, as I have defined it. The dividing line between such people and the more or less propertyless masses below them was created by the possession of sufficient property to make it possible for them 'to live with discretion an unconstrained life of leisure' (or 'to live a leisured life liberally and temperately'), *scholazontes eleutheriōs hama kai sōphronōs*, as Aristotle put it (*Pol.* VII.5, 1326<sup>b</sup>30-2). Most Greeks would have put less emphasis on the restraint which Aristotle and his like thought so important. Heracleides Ponticus, a contemporary of Aristotle, declared in his treatise *On pleasure* that pleasure and luxury, which relieve and reinforce the mind, are the characteristics of free men; labour (*to ponein*), on the other hand, is for slaves and humble men (*tapeinoi*), whose minds accordingly become shrunken (*systellontai*).<sup>2</sup>

These men, liberated from toil, are the people who produced virtually all Greek art and literature and science and philosophy, and provided a good proportion of the armies which won remarkable victories by land over the Persian invaders at Marathon in 490 and at Plataea in 479 B.C. In a very real sense most of them were parasitic upon other men, their slaves above all; most of them were not supporters of the democracy which ancient Greece invented and which was its great contribution to political progress, although they did supply almost all its leaders; and they provided little more than the commanders of the invincible navy organised by Athens which kept the Greek cities of the Aegean secure against Persia. But what we know as Greek civilisation expressed itself in and through them above all, and it is they who will normally occupy the centre of our picture. I may add that they were a distinctly smaller class than the combined hoplites (heavy-armed infantry) and cavalry, the *hopla parechomenoi*, who must always have included at the lowest hoplite level a certain number of men who needed to spend a certain amount of their time working for their living, generally as peasant farmers. As I hope I have made clear already (in II.iii

above), a man's position as a member of the propertied class depends in principle upon whether he *needed* to work in order to maintain himself. If he was not obliged to do so, then whether he actually did or did not spend time on such work himself (supervising the labour of those he exploited on his agricultural land, for instance) is irrelevant for his class position.

I have spoken of 'the propertied class', in the singular, as if all those whose level of existence was above the minimum just mentioned formed a single class. In a sense they did, as opposed to all the rest (*hoi polloi*, *ho ochlos*, *to plēthos*); but of course there were very considerable differences inside this 'propertied class', and it will often be necessary to think of its members as subdivided into a number of classes. As compared with the slave, the hired labourer, the full-time artisan, even the peasant who did little more than scrape a living from a small farm worked by himself and his family, we are surely justified in seeing as members of a single 'propertied class' such men as the owner of a large or even medium-sized farm, worked by slaves under a slave bailiff (*epitropos*, in Latin *vilicus*), or leased out at a rent (in which case it would necessarily yield a lower profit); the proprietor of a workshop of, say, 20-50 slaves, supervised by a slave manager; the lessee of mines in the Laurium district of Attica, worked by slaves, and similarly supervised by a manager who would himself be a slave (or conceivably a freedman); the owner (*nauklēros*) of a merchant ship or two<sup>3</sup> which he hired out to traders (*emporoi*) or used for trading himself, manning them with slaves (and of course rarely if ever travelling himself for purely business reasons); the owner of a fair quantity of money capital which he lent out at interest, partly perhaps on mortgage of land (a perfectly safe investment, but bringing in no great return), or, at a much higher rate of interest, on bottomry bonds (a form of transaction known from at least the end of the fifth century B.C., which I have recently described in detail in my AGRML). On the other hand, all those I have just described would be worlds apart from a great Roman senator who owned hundreds of acres and of slaves, and who was even more emphatically a member of the 'propertied class'; but *the scale on which exploitation of the labour of others takes place* must also be taken into account in assessing a man's class, as well as the type of production concerned, and the senator could only be considered a member of the same 'propertied class' as the much smaller figures I have mentioned when they are being collectively contrasted with the exploited classes and the peasantry. I shall sometimes speak of 'the propertied classes', sometimes of 'the propertied class': the latter expression will be particularly appropriate when we are thinking of all the men of property as a single entity, over against the non-propertied.

The Greek propertied class, then, consisted essentially of those who were able to have themselves set *free* to live a civilised life by their command over the labour of others, who bore the burden of providing them with the necessities (and the luxuries) of the good life. This *freedom* of the Greek propertied class is what Aristotle has principally in mind in some very interesting passages, of which I shall single out one here: the concluding sentence of the discussion in *Rhetoric* I.9, 1367<sup>a</sup>28-32, of the concept of *to kalon* – the noble, perhaps; but there is no precise English equivalent. In this passage the word *eleutheros*, literally 'free', is applied in the peculiar sense in which Aristotle and other Greeks sometimes used it, to the gentleman, the man who is fully free from all constraining toil, as

opposed to the *aneleutheros*, who works for another's benefit. Aristotle remarks that at Sparta it is *kalon* to have long hair, and he adds, 'for it is the mark of a gentleman [an *eleutheros*], since it is not easy for a man with long hair to do work appropriate to a hired labourer' (*ergon thētikon*). And he goes straight on to give, as another example of *to kalon*, 'not carrying on a menial craft [a *banautos technē*], for it is the mark of a gentleman not to live for the benefit of another' (*to mē pros allon zēn*). Finley mistranslates this passage, 'The condition of a free man is that he not live under the constraint of another.'<sup>4</sup> However, in view of Aristotle's other uses of the phrase in question and similar ones<sup>5</sup> there is not the slightest doubt that he means what I have stated in the text above; and in the context the distinction is between the vulgar artisan and the gentleman; slavery and the slave are never mentioned there. (But Finley goes on to say, quite correctly, that Aristotle's 'notion of living under restraint was not restricted to slaves but was extended to wage labour and to others who were *economically dependent*'.)

It is desirable at this point to issue a warning. In most of the universities of this country and others in the Western world and the Antipodes, the expression 'Greek history' is likely to be taken to apply to the history of Old Greece from the eighth to the fourth century B.C., and above all to the mainland states, especially Athens and (to a less extent) Sparta. This may be natural enough, because of course a large proportion of the surviving literary evidence (as of those parts of the archaeological and epigraphic evidence which have been collected and published in a form accessible to non-specialists) relates to Old Greece in general and to Athens in particular. Right up to the end of the undergraduate stage this situation is likely to persist, even if in specialist studies interest happens to shift away from the Archaic and Classical periods – which, however, can still be made to yield fresh material, by archaeologists and others, and the economic and social history of which still offers great opportunities to anyone whose training has not been too narrowly confined within the tradition of strictly historical research, and who is not content to remain indifferent (like so many ancient historians) to the techniques developed by sociologists, anthropologists and economists. But we must never forget – and this is the 'warning' of which I spoke a moment ago – that even in their great days, in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., the Greeks of the mainland inhabited a very poor country, with little natural wealth, agricultural or mineral, and that the predominance of the great states, Sparta and Athens, was due to military or naval strength, resting upon an organised system of alliances: Sparta's Peloponnesian League, or the Delian League which grew into an Athenian empire, and was succeeded in the fourth century by the much weaker Second Athenian Confederacy.<sup>6</sup> It is of mainland Greece that Herodotus was thinking when he made Demaratus say that Greece and poverty had always been foster-sisters (VII.102.1).

What many people still fail to realise is that some of the most important cities on the west coast of Asia Minor and its offshore islands were already, by the early fourth century, on the way to becoming more wealthy than the cities of mainland Greece – just as Syracuse, under the rule of its remarkable tyrant, Dionysius I, in roughly the first three decades of the fourth century, achieved greater strength than any of the contemporary cities on the Greek mainland, and built up a small empire of its own in Sicily and south Italy. The Asiatic cities scarcely ever enjoyed political power and independence in the same way as

Athens and Sparta in their palmy days: situated as they were on the fringe of the great Persian empire, they were from the late sixth century to the late fourth (when they were finally 'liberated' by Alexander the Great) either under Persian control or subject to strong influence and pressure from Persian satraps or native dynasts, except when they were under Athenian dominance in the fifth century. I have remarked upon this situation elsewhere (*OPW* 37-40): it deserves much more detailed investigation than it has yet received. Here I will only say that I can remember the shock of surprise with which I first realised the significance of the information given by Xenophon (especially in *HG* III.i.27-8; cf. *OPW* 38-9) about the vast wealth of the family of Zenis of Dardanus and his widow Mania, who collected the revenues of a large area in the Troad on behalf of the Persian satrap Pharnabazus in the years around 400 B.C. We can hardly doubt that the bulk of the fortune of this family will have been invested in land, whether it was within the territory of Dardanus and other Greek cities or whether it formed part of the adjacent Persian empire; but there is good evidence from Xenophon that their 'thesaurised' movable wealth, stored (after the murder of Mania by her son-in-law Meidias) in a treasury in the fortress town of Gergis above the Scamander valley, is likely to have been worth between 300 and 400 talents,<sup>7</sup> a far larger fortune (even without the family's landed property, likely to have been more valuable still) than any which can be confidently attributed to any inhabitant of mainland Greece before the Roman period. It is true that according to Plutarch (*Agis* 9.5; *Graech.* 41.7) the fortune of the third-century Spartan King Agis IV (which he is said to have distributed among his fellow-citizens) included 600 talents of coined money, apart from a quantity of agricultural and pasture land; but this is probably a great exaggeration. The Athenian Hipponicus, son of Callias, often said to be the richest Greek of his day (around the 420s), was credited with property (in land and personal effects) to the value of only 200 talents (*Lys.* XIX.48). We do hear of some larger fortunes alleged to exist in the fourth century B.C., but all the figures are again unreliable. Alexander Isius of Aetolia, who had the same reputation as Hipponicus a little over two centuries later, is said by Polybius (*XXI.xxvi.9,14*) to have possessed property to the value of 'more than 200 talents'. Fortunes such as those of Zenis and Mania, I suggest, were possible only for the few fortunate Greeks who enjoyed the favour of the Great King or one of his satraps. We know of some other such families in the fifth and fourth centuries, in particular the Gongylids and Demaratids and Themistocles, all of whom received vast estates in western Asia Minor from the King in the fifth century (see *OPW* 37-40).

The wealth of the Great King was enormous by Greek standards, and some of his satraps were many times richer than any Greek of their day. We happen to know that Arsames, a great Persian noble who was satrap of Egypt in the late fifth century B.C., owned land in no less than six different areas between Susa and Egypt (including Arbela and Damascus), and in Lower and Upper Egypt too.<sup>8</sup> This need not astonish us, for although the Achaemenid rulers of the Persian empire seem not to have exacted excessive tribute, according to ancient standards, from the satrapies of their empire, but to have allowed the local ruling class a considerable share in the surplus extorted from the primary producers, yet there were evidently all sorts of opportunities for satraps to make large personal gains, quite apart from the tribute.

Alexander the Great, who conquered the whole Persian empire between 334 and 325, and his successors, who divided up his vast kingdom between them, were able to make gifts of very great value to their followers, in money and land. There is a nice little illustration of how such rewards had grown even before Alexander had completed his conquests in the fact that whereas Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse, made a present of 100 minae (10,000 drachmae, or  $1\frac{2}{3}$  talents) to his mercenary captain Archylus for being the first man over the wall in his siege of Motya in Sicily in 398 (*Diod.* XIV.53.4), Alexander in 327, at the siege of 'the Sogdian rock', offered to the first man who scaled the wall a reward of no less than 12 talents (*Arr., Anab.* IV.18.7) – probably a greater sum than the whole fortune of any except a handful of Athenians in Alexander's day. The great estates handed out to some of the 'King's friends' in Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt must have made their owners far richer than any mainland Greek had ever been.<sup>9</sup> It is no surprise to find that Plutarch, in the very work (referred to above) in which he speaks of King Agis IV of Sparta as owning 600 talents in coined money apart from his land, also makes Agis say that the satraps and servants of Kings Ptolemy and Seleucus 'possessed more than all the kings of Sparta combined' (*Agis.* 7.2).

In the Hellenistic and Roman periods the leading families of the cities of Asia enjoyed greater wealth than ever<sup>10</sup> and were among the strongest supporters of Roman rule. Largely because of their conspicuous wealth they began to enter the Roman Senate in the early Principate, albeit slowly; but the senatorial families they provided steadily increased in number in the second century, and by the reign of Hadrian 'orientals' seem to have been almost on an equality with westerners in their chance of becoming senators and even reaching the highest posts, of praetor and consul. Recent research, admirably summarised by Habicht in 1960,<sup>11</sup> has led to a marked reevaluation of the evidence and a realisation that to speak loosely of 'Greek' or 'oriental' senators<sup>12</sup> can effect a blurring of some important distinctions. First, we must separate from genuine 'Greeks' the descendants of Roman (or Italian) families transplanted to the eastern provinces and now inhabiting either Augustan military colonies (Pisidian Antioch, Alexandria in the Troad) or towns with important groups of Italian settlers, such as Pergamum, Attaleia in Pamphylia, Ephesus, and Mytilene.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, as Habicht has rightly emphasised, we must not fail to notice among the 'oriental' senators a very important group of members of the old dynastic families of Asia Minor and Syro-Palestine in the late Republic and early Principate, sometimes possessed of immense wealth and much interconnected by marriage: among these are descendants of the Attalids of Pergamum; of Galatian tetrarchs and the Galatian King Deiotarus; of Archelaus and Polemo, the kings of Cappadocia and Pontus; and of King Herod of Judaea. Thirdly, the appreciable number of men who can be identified as immediate descendants of new 'oriental' senators must not themselves be counted as 'new' senators, for they were members of the senatorial order equally with the older senatorial families and could normally expect to become senators in their turn: this is particularly important when we are comparing reigns or periods and trying to see how many *new* Greeks entered the Senate during each of them.

The largest fortunes we hear of in the Roman empire, however, always remained those of Western senators, even in the Later Empire, until in the fifth

century the governing class in the West lost many of their possessions through barbarian conquest of areas where some of their great estates lay: North Africa, Spain, Gaul, and Britain.<sup>14</sup> In the early Principate, in particular, some Romans acquired immense wealth through the munificence of the emperors, especially Augustus, who after the civil wars could dispose of confiscated property on a vast scale. An Italian *novus homo* who became suffect consul in B.C. 16, L. Tarius Rufus, described by Pliny the Elder as a man 'of exceedingly low birth' (*infima natalium humilitate*, NH XVIII.37), acquired through the generosity of Augustus, according to Pliny, a fortune of 'about a hundred million sesterces' (well over 4,000 Attic silver talents), which he proceeded to dissipate by unwise purchases of agricultural lands in Picenum, although he remained 'in other respects a man of old-fashioned parsimoniousness' (*antiquae alias parsimoniae*).<sup>15</sup> But it is the Western senators of around A.D. 400 who are credited with the most enormous fortunes of all. A famous fragment of the historian Olympiodorus, of Egyptian Thebes (fr. 44, Dindorf or Mueller), gives some figures for alleged annual incomes in both the richest and the middling senatorial grades. These are almost beyond belief: even senators of second-order wealth (*deuteroi oikoi*) are said to have had incomes of 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of gold; they turn out to include the great orator Q. Aurelius Symmachus (consul in 391), who is placed among 'the men of middle fortunes' (*tôn metriôn*). The richest senators are said to enjoy incomes of 4,000 pounds of gold, plus about a third as much again in the value of what they receive by way of agricultural produce in kind. (Does this perhaps imply that about three quarters of the rents of Western senators at this period were paid in gold and about one quarter in kind?) Those who held certain offices were expected to spend lavishly on public entertainments, the 'games', and we hear of vast sums being spent on a single celebration: 1,200, 2,000, and even 4,000 pounds of gold.<sup>16</sup> We have no way of verifying these figures, but they ought not to be rejected out of hand.<sup>17</sup> I should say that we can perhaps take 1,000 pounds of gold as not far short of HS 4½ million during the early Principate (1 lb. gold = 42-45 aurei = HS 4,200-4,500).

I have given some of the figures for the reputed wealth of the great men of later periods in order to place in better perspective the relatively mean little estates possessed by even the 'aristocracy' of Classical Greece.

## (iii)

## Land, as the principal source of wealth

Wealth in the Greek world, in the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods, as in the Roman empire throughout its history, was always essentially wealth in land, upon which was conducted the cultivation of cereals (providing the main source of food) and of other agricultural products, especially those of the olive and the vine, and also the pasturing of cattle, sheep and horses. The ruling classes of all the Greek states were always primarily landowners; the oft-repeated notion that the governing classes of places like Aegina and Corinth were merchants, a 'Kaufmannsaristokratie', is an invention of modern scholarship (cf. my *OPW* 266-7, esp. n.61). A citizen merchant who did happen to make his pile and aspired to lead the life of a gentleman would have to retire and buy land. 'Agricultural land [*agros*],' says Amphis, a comic poet of the fourth

century B.C., 'is the father of life to man; land alone knows how to cover up poverty.'<sup>1</sup> For a positive panegyric of *geōrgia* (Latin *agricultura*), in the sense of 'gentleman-farming', owning a farm (and taking a merely supervisory interest in it), we can turn to the *Oeconomicus* of Xenophon, a man of unimpeachably orthodox and traditional opinions, who wrote the work in question at some time between the second and fourth decades of the fourth century B.C.<sup>2</sup> Farming, in the sense I have indicated, is to Xenophon the noblest of pursuits, the pleasantest and most agreeable way of gaining a living; it fortifies the body and instils valour (cf. IV.iv below); to the prudent man who is prepared to take a keen interest, nothing is more profitable; and above all it is easy to learn and it affords most opportunities for the useful employment of leisure for the real gentleman, the *kalos kagathos* (on whom see *OPW* 371-6); it is 'most important both as an occupation [an *ergasia*] and as a branch of knowledge [an *epistēmē*].'<sup>3</sup> Xenophon, like other authors, may speak at times as if his farmer would actually take part in the work of the farm, but it is always understood that in so far as he does this he does it for pleasure and for the sake of the physical and moral benefits such exercise can bestow, and not because economic necessity obliges him to work. Xenophon makes the great Spartan commander Lysander express astonishment at the very idea that the Persian prince Cyrus could himself have laid out his magnificent park (*paradeisos*) at Sardis and actually done some of the planting with his own hands, until Cyrus tells him that it was his principle never to dine until he had exerted himself strenuously in 'some activity of war or agriculture' (*Oecon.* IV.20-5, only partly repeated in Cic., *Cat. mai.* 59). Even a Roman emperor and his heir apparent might choose to get themselves into a healthy sweat by helping to gather in the grapes, as we hear of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius doing on one occasion in the mid-140s.<sup>4</sup>

I believe that the standard attitude to farming of the Greek and Roman propertied classes was that expressed by Cicero in the *De oratore*, as part of a long passage (I.234-57) in which he argues that just as an orator needs no detailed acquaintance with the civil law, the *ius civile*, but can easily pick up whatever he needs to know for a particular case he is conducting, so the landowner can be content with 'what is a matter of common knowledge' (*hac communi intelligentia*, 249): the nature of sowing and reaping, the pruning of vines and other trees, the time of year and the manner in which such things are done. Such knowledge is quite sufficient for giving instructions to one's general manager (*procurator*) or orders to one's overseer (*vilicus*).

We hear again and again in Latin writers of some leading figures in the early Roman Republic who are represented as afflicted by what Horace calls 'cruel poverty' (*saeva paupertas*: *Od.* I.xii.43): they own very small farms (some of the sizes given are ridiculous) and actually take part themselves in working them. Among those who turn up most often are L. Quinctius Cincinnatus (dictator 458) and M'. Curius Dentatus (consul 290, 275, 274). The former, we are told, was actually at the plough when informed that he had been nominated Dictator.<sup>5</sup> Yet it is sometimes made clear in the tradition that such men were simply amusing themselves. Cicero, for example, in a passage in his treatise on old age (*Cat. mai.* 51-60), first says he is going to speak of the 'pleasures' of farmers (*voluptates agrorum*, § 51); after mentioning Curius and Cincinnatus he uses of their agricultural activities the words *oblectabant* ('they delighted in them') and

*delectatione* ('with enjoyment'); and he goes on to show that the sort of farmer he has in mind is a well-to-do master (*dominus*), whose farmhouse (*villa*) is well-stocked (*locuples*) and whose storehouse is full of wine and oil and other provisions (§ 56). Quite different were the small farmers who actually had to work alongside their slaves; they do not form part of what I am calling 'the propertied class'. On the borderline of that class would be those who needed to work with their slaves only occasionally. They may have been quite a large group in the Greek states of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. (We may compare the situation in the American Old South, as described by Stamp, *PI* 34-5.) As Peter Garnsey has well said, speaking of the Roman 'peasant cult' of the Late Roman Republic, 'The idealisation of the peasant patriarch was then, as in the twentieth century, primarily an expression of the nationalist ideology of the ruling class of a militarist State' (PARS 224).

In a treatise of Cicero's which was considered an important part of the education of the eighteenth-century English gentleman - 'Tully's *Offices*', it was then generally called - there is a much-quoted statement, *De offic.* I. 151, which is just as characteristic of the outlook of the Greek as of the Roman propertied class: indeed, it is probably derived from the Rhodian Stoic philosopher Panaetius, of the second century B.C. (Here I agree with Brunt's valuable article, ASTDCS, although I would be inclined to allow Cicero a rather larger contribution in some respects than would Brunt and some others.) The life of the merchant, we are told, if he operates on a very large scale, is not entirely contemptible; and Cicero warmly commends the merchant who, 'sated (or rather, satisfied) with his profits, retires from the harbour to the fields . . . But still,' Cicero concludes, 'of all means of acquiring wealth there's nothing better, nothing more profitable, nothing sweeter, nothing more worthy of a free man, than *agricultura*' - which here also means, of course, not *working* a farm but *owning* one; just as, 'in the writings of the physiocrats, the *cultivateur* does not stand for the actual tiller of the soil, but for the big farmer' (Marx, *Cap.* III. 604). Veyne and Finley have expressed the fundamental idea admirably: 'In antiquity land ownership on a sufficient scale marks "the absence of any occupation"' (see Finley, *AE* 44 and 185 n. 19). The life of the landowner is a life of leisure (cf. Cic., *De offic.* I. 92). The peasant farmer who has to work his own land is a very different creature. In a fragment of the Athenian comic poet Menander, a line which says that 'farming is slave's work' is preceded by one which explains that 'it is deeds of war by which a man ought to prove his superiority' (fr. 560, ed. A. Koerte, II<sup>2</sup>. 183). For 'deeds of war', others might substitute politics or philosophy, athletics or hunting (cf. Section ii of this chapter). Cicero quotes a passage from a play of Terence (from a Greek original by Menander), produced in 163 B.C., in which a character, Chremes, refers to such acts as digging, ploughing and carrying as what Cicero calls *illiberalis labor*, 'ungentlemanly toil' (*De fin.* I. 3) - and indeed in the play itself Chremes strongly advocates leaving all such work to one's slaves (*Heaut.*, Act I, Sc. i). In Italy in the reign of Nero farming was regarded by the upper classes as a demeaning employment, a *sordidum opus* (Colum., *RR* I. *praef.* 20). The essential thing is that one should not need to work for one's daily bread.

The characteristic members of my 'propertied class', then, are essentially Machiavelli's 'gentry' (*gentiluomini*), defined by him in his *Discourses on the First*

*Decade of Livy* (I. 55) as 'those who live in idleness on the abundant revenue derived from their estates, without having anything to do either with their cultivation or with other forms of labour essential to life'.<sup>6</sup> But Machiavelli continues at once, 'Such men are a pest [*pestizioni*] in any republic and in any province'; and a little later he adds, 'Where the gentry are numerous, no one who proposes to set up a republic can succeed unless he first gets rid of the lot!' (He excepts from his strictures the *gentiluomini* of the Venetian Republic, who 'are so in name rather than in point of fact, for they do not derive any considerable income from estates: their great wealth is based on merchandise and movable goods'.) The contrast between Machiavelli's outlook and that of a wealthy Greek or Roman is interesting; Machiavelli, writing in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, foreshadows the economically far more progressive mentality of the bourgeois society that was about to emerge.

It was axiomatic in the Greek and Roman world that the gentleman should own his land and not be a lessee of it, a mere tenant. Xenophon can make Socrates speak of the man who is concerned only with his beloved's appearance as 'like one who has rented a piece of land: his concern is not that it may become more valuable but that he himself may get the greatest possible amount of produce out of it; whereas the man whose aim is affection (*philia*) is more like one who owns his own farm, for he strives with all his might to make his beloved of greater worth' (*Symp.* VIII. 25). Among all the ancient thinkers I know who belonged (like Xenophon and Cicero) to the propertied class, I have found but one who not only recommends the gentlemanly intellectual, the would-be philosopher, both to supervise the work on his farm and actually to take part in it personally and work with his own hands, but who also explicitly says that it does not matter whether the farm is his own property or not. This is the Roman equestrian and Stoic philosopher of the late first century, Musonius Rufus, whose relatively enlightened views on marriage I had occasion to refer to in II. vi above. In his disquisition, 'What means of livelihood befits a philosopher?', a fragment of which is preserved by Stobaeus, there is a veritable paean of praise of farming and the pastoral life. Musonius says that the earth repays many times over the effort that is put into her and gives an abundant supply of the necessities of life to the man who is willing to work; and he adds, in a charming phrase, that 'she does this in such a way as to preserve dignity and without giving any offence'. One may suspect that Musonius was indulging in a flight of fancy and idealising a situation of which, as a Roman equestrian, he had had no real, direct, personal experience, except perhaps by occasional free choice. However, he is at least trying to deal with the real world, unlike that curious Epicurean enthusiast, Diogenes of Oenoanda, a figure known to us only through the very long inscription he put up in his native city in Lycia (south west Asia Minor) around A.D. 200: a recently published fragment of this depicts a future Golden Age in which - if the text has been correctly restored - everyone will take part not only in the study of philosophy but in agricultural and pastoral activities.<sup>8</sup>

When Plotinus, a leading philosopher of the third century of the Christian era, is discussing what makes men rich or poor (*Enn.* II. iii. 14), the first cause of wealth that he notices is inheritance; and when he turns to riches acquired by labour (*ek ponōn*), his one example is 'from farming'; the only other means of

acquisition he notices is not trade or industry, but 'finding a treasure'. There is one notorious example of this: Ti. Claudius Atticus (the father of the great sophist, Herodes Atticus), at the very end of the first century, found a large sum of money in his house at Athens; although, as Rostovtzeff says, this was in reality 'not a treasure but probably money hidden by Herodes' grandfather, Hipparchus, in the troublous times of Domitian's persecutions (of which Hipparchus was himself a victim).<sup>9</sup> At the other end of the social scale, Horace in one of his *Satires* imagines a poor wage-labourer (*mercennarius*) finding by good luck a silver treasure (an *unus argenti*) which enables him to buy the farm on which he works (*Sat.* II.vi.10-13).

Here and there, of course, a poor man might acquire property through the exercise of some exceptional personal skill, as a soothsayer or doctor or poet or politician, or, in the Roman period, as an advocate or (especially in the Later Empire) a soldier, although his chances of rising high in some of these ways (politics and advocacy in particular) would be small if he had not received a proper education from a well-to-do father in the first place. A political career always offered the greatest possibilities of profit, to those who were qualified for it, but politics was arduous and very risky, and at the highest levels anyway it was a full-time job and therefore open only to a man who was well-off already; and in the Classical period, unless one had inherited political *aretē* (competence and 'know-how') by being born into the right sort of family, one would have little chance of rising to the top.

Occasionally – less often, I believe, than is generally supposed – a man might rise from poverty to riches through trade or manufacture. Personal participation in trade or industry, however, would so seriously affect one's life-style that one could hardly hope to be accepted in the best society; and there are many denunciations of such activity in the literary record. Philostratus, writing in the second quarter of the third century of the Christian era, was anxious to exculpate the Athenian orator Isocrates, who had lived some six centuries earlier, from the charge of being an *aulopios* ('oboe-maker' would be a less misleading translation than the usual 'flute-maker') levelled at him by the comic poets (see my *OPW* 234-5 and n.7). Philostratus will admit that Isocrates' father Theodorus was an *aulopios*, but he insists that 'Isocrates himself knew nothing about *auloi* or anything else connected with banausic activity, nor would he have been honoured with the statue at Olympia if he had worked at any mean occupation' (*Vita soph.* I.17; I am tempted to recall Arist., *Pol.* VIII.6, 1341<sup>a</sup>18-<sup>b</sup>8, a diatribe against the *aulos*). The practised advocate Libanius, in the late fourth century, knew even better how to defend a man on such a charge. When the Senate of Constantinople refused to admit the wealthy Thalassius of Antioch to its ranks because he was said to be a cutler, Libanius retorted that Thalassius, like the father of Demosthenes, simply owned slaves who made knives (*Orat.* XLII.21); and that made all the difference, because by leaving one's slaves to work under the supervision of a manager (who would himself be a slave or freedman) and living on one's landed property one could enjoy the life-style of a gentleman as well as anyone else, even if (as would rarely happen) the larger part of one's income came from the slave artisans. That was precisely the situation of the prominent fifth- and fourth-century Athenian politicians like Cleon and Cleophon and Anytus who are satirised by Aristophanes and other comic poets

as tanners and leather-sellers and cobblers and potters and cattle-dealers and lyre-sellers: since politics, at any rate at the top level, was a full-time occupation in a Greek city, if one was a politician one would not go in personally for trade or industry (see *OPW* 234-5, 357, 371). It would only be among the snobs like Aristophanes that one would then 'lose face' because one's fortune (or, more likely, that of one's father or even grandfather: see *OPW* 235 n.7) originally came from industry or trade. Not a few of those among Aristophanes' audience who laughed at his nasty little jokes about the 'demagogues' he so detested must have been tradesmen of one sort or another and are not likely to have felt demeaned by their calling (cf. IV.vi below) – although of course they would probably all have been glad to escape from the practice of a trade and settle down as landowners if they could. The ideas of a dominant class (at least if it is not a conquering, alien race) are always accepted in some measure by those it exploits, and most of all (as modern experience shows) by those who are near the top level of the exploited and see themselves as about to rise into the ruling class. And most of the words used in Greek to express social qualities and distinctions were heavily loaded with the moral overtones which had always been associated with them (cf. VII.iv below), so that the poorer Greek would find it hard to avoid expressing himself in the very terms which proclaimed his unworthiness.

The situation I have depicted remained true of the Greek world (as of the Latin area of the Roman world) throughout its existence. Marx noticed that 'the secret history of the Roman Republic is the history of its landed property' (*Cap.* I.81 n.1, on p.82). In Rostovtzeff's remarkably full survey of the evidence, in his great work on the social and economic history of the Roman empire, there are several statements which may give a misleading impression if taken by themselves, to the effect that, for instance, 'The main source of large fortunes, now [A.D. 69-192] as before, was commerce' (*SEHRE*<sup>2</sup> 153, cf. 157); or, 'Commerce, and especially foreign and interprovincial maritime commerce, provided the main sources of wealth in the Roman empire [in the first two centuries of the Christian era]' (*ibid.* 172). And the second of these statements continues immediately, 'Most of the *nouveaux riches* owed their money to it [commerce]'. In these and other cases, where Rostovtzeff speaks as if commerce were the main source of Roman wealth, he has in mind *new* fortunes, cases of upward social mobility, in which men rose from below into the propertied class. In this he may well be mainly right. But in the continuation of both the passages I have just quoted, as elsewhere, Rostovtzeff shows he recognised that large profits made by commerce would not be re-employed in commerce so much as invested in something quite different: land above all, also perhaps mortgages, money-lending, even industry (*ibid.* 153, 172, 218; cf. 17, 57-8, 223-6 etc.). He knew that commerce took second place to agriculture in the economic life of the empire even in the early Principate (*ibid.* 66), that agriculture was of 'capital importance', that 'it is no exaggeration to say that most of the provinces were almost exclusively agricultural countries', and that 'the largest part of the population of the empire was engaged in agriculture, either actually tilling the soil, or living on an income drawn from the land' (*ibid.* 343); the rural population had 'enormous importance . . . for the empire in general', far exceeding the city population in number; and indeed 'the country people who tilled the soil formed an enormous majority of the population of the empire' (*ibid.* 345-6). In his section

on the African provinces in the period A.D. 69-192 he can say that 'in every case where we can trace the origin of the large fortunes of wealthy municipal nobles, we find them to have been derived from ownership of land' (ibid. 331). Even what looks at first sight like 'wealth derived from industry' may turn out on closer examination to be wealth derived from ownership of the land on which the industry was carried on. This was half realised by Tenney Frank several decades ago. Referring to the great development of the brickyards on the estates near Rome of the Domitii (beginning with the sons of Domitius Afer, the famous orator, who died in A.D. 58 and whose great-granddaughter was the mother of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius), he said, 'And yet the wealth of this family was probably not thought of as coming from "industry" so much as from a careful exploitation of the resources of their landed estates.'<sup>10</sup> This is perfectly true. But Frank went on to describe this as 'practically the only instance in a thousand years of Roman history in which wealth derived from industrial success contributed to political distinction' (ibid., my italics), a statement we can now recognise to be incorrect, for recent researches by a team of Finnish scholars at Rome have shown that there is no reason to suppose that the Domitii and similar landowners whose names appear (as owners of *praedia* or even *figlinae*) on brick-stamps had any direct connection with brick-making.<sup>11</sup>

For the period of the Roman Principate and Later Empire I need do no more than refer to Rostovtzeff's great work, cited above, to A. H. M. Jones's *magnum opus* (*LRE*), and to two valuable papers by Jones, one on 'The economic life of the towns of the Roman Empire', 1955, and the other on 'Ancient empires and the economy: Rome', 1965, published 1969 (both are now conveniently reprinted in Jones, *RE* 35-60 and 114-39). In the Later Roman Empire there is if anything an even greater volume of evidence than in earlier periods for the overwhelming predominance of agriculture in the economic life of the empire – in the eastern provinces as much as in the Latin West, although the concentration of landed property in a few hands seems to have been much less marked in the East. This predominance of agriculture over trade and industry can now be taken for granted. I propose, however, to give here some half a dozen interesting pieces of evidence (which are not all as well known as they should be) from the legal codes: these concern mainly the position of decurions, the members of the local Town Councils, about whom I shall have a good deal to say in VIII.ii below. These legal texts are particularly valuable because virtually all men of substantial property who were not exempted through being *honorati* (members of some superior grade in society) were by now obliged to become members of their Council and thus assume the sometimes heavy financial and administrative burdens involved.

Callistratus, a Roman lawyer of the first half of the third century, is quoted in the *Digest* (L.ii.12) as saying that 'those who deal with goods and sell them' (*qui utensilia negotiantur et vendunt*) are not excluded from the decurionate or from municipal office, and should not be disdained as 'viles personae', even though they are liable to be flogged by the aediles. Nevertheless, he says he thinks it unbecoming (*inhonestum*) for such persons to be received into a municipal Council, especially in those states which have a supply of *virii honesti*: it is only a deficiency of the latter which makes it necessary to allow the former to have access to a *dignitas municipalis*.

The Emperor Julian in 362 exempted decurions from the *collatio lustralis* (*chrysargyron* in Greek), a tax payable during most of the fourth and fifth centuries by *negotiatores*, a term which by then had come to mean 'tradesmen' in the widest sense, including manufacturers, artisans, merchants, shopkeepers, moneylenders etc.<sup>12</sup> In so doing he added to his edict the words 'unless perchance it should prove that a decurion is engaging in trade in some way' – as if this were an unlikely contingency. (The law is *CTh* XII.i.50 = XIII.i.4: 'nisi forte decurionem aliquid mercari constiterit'.) In a constitution of 364, relating to the payment of the same tax, the Emperors Valentinian I and Valens subject even 'the more powerful men' (*potiores*) to the *collatio lustralis* 'if indeed they make a practice of trading' (*si tamen his mercandi cura est*); and they add that any such member of the *potiores* 'either ought not to involve himself in trade' or ought to be the first to pay the tax (*CTh* XIII.i.5) – evidently such men were exceptional.

Another imperial constitution, of 370, opens with the words, 'If any trader [*negotiator*] should purchase farms and be called to his local Council as the holder of landed property', and ends by saying that such a man is to be 'subject to the compulsory public burdens of that Council to which he gave himself of his own accord by converting the use of his money into the profit of agricultural land' (*CTh* XII.i.72). In 383 the emperors thought it necessary to pass a special law permitting the enrolment on the city Councils of the Danubian province of [Lower] Moesia<sup>13</sup> of 'men from among the common people, rich in the possession of slaves', to prevent them from evading their financial obligations: these men are evidently owners of workshops who would otherwise have escaped enrolment because of having little or no land (*CTh* XII.i.96; Clyde Pharr badly mistranslates this text, *TC* 356). Finally, by a constitution of 408 or 409, Honorius altogether forbade 'those who are decidedly noble by birth or resplendent with honours or notably rich in property to carry on trade, to the detriment of the cities, so that the intercourse of buying and selling may be easier between commoner and merchant' (*CJ* IV.lxiii.3).<sup>14</sup> Decurions were not even expected to take the kind of salaried post known as *procuratio*, managing someone else's property as bailiff: for a decurion to accept such a post is described in a constitution of 382 as 'the most infamous baseness', involving 'servile obsequiousness' (*CTh* XII.i.92 = *CJ* X.xxxii.34). But this is a subject which falls to be treated under the general heading of 'hired labour' in Section vi of this chapter and its n.4.

In addition to the evidence cited above from the legal sources, it is worth mentioning the inscription recording the fact that Q. Sicinnius Clarus, imperial legate of Thrace, when constituting the posting station of Pizus as an *emporion* in 202, said he had put in charge of this and other newly founded *emporia* (all below the rank of city) 'not commoners engaged in trade but toparchs [district magistrates] who are city councillors'<sup>15</sup> – probably of Augusta Traiana, the modern Stara Zagora in Bulgaria.

A decisive argument for the predominance of landed wealth over commercial wealth in the Greek and Roman world is that in the Later Empire even the *navicularii* (*nauklēroi* in Greek), who were responsible for government shipments, mainly of corn to Rome (and after 330 to Constantinople as well), were primarily landowners, to whose estates was attached the *navicularia functio*, the



burden of making the prescribed shipments.<sup>16</sup> We even hear from Callistratus, in the *Digest* (L.vi.6.6 & 9, citing rescripts of Marcus and Verus, and of Antoninus Pius), of men who as early as the mid-second century enrolled themselves in the *corpus naviculariorum*, purely in order to obtain the valuable immunity they would thereby receive from other public burdens, although some of them actually owned no ships at all! (It was to *navicularii* alone, by the way, and not – as recently stated by Cardascia and Garnsey<sup>17</sup> – to *negotiatores* or *negotiantes* in general, that Constantine and Julian gave the honour of equestrian status, by laws which have not survived but are referred to in a subsequent constitution of Gratian and his co-emperors in 380: *CTh* XIII.v.16.pr.) Finally, tax-farmers (*publicani*, *telōnai*), who continued in the Roman Empire to farm most indirect taxes (such as customs and market dues, and taxes on inheritances, slave manumissions and auction sales), must not be thought of as a group distinct from landowners: they had in fact to give security in freehold landed property for the due performance of their obligations.

In his fascinating story of the very able Antoninus, who 'defected' to Persia in 359, Ammianus begins by calling him a 'wealthy merchant' (*opulentus mercator*) and goes on to tell how he then took a not very exalted civil service post as an accountant under the military governor of the province of Mesopotamia: this was evidently a potential rise in status, and it led in due course to the honorary rank of *protector* (*Amm. Marc. XVIII.v.1 ff.*; cf. VIII.iii below).

\* \* \* \* \*

What I have been saying about the minor role of commerce and industry in the fortunes of the propertied classes of the Greek world throughout its existence is almost universally true, but there are of course exceptions. I am thinking not so much of *individuals*: the vast majority of those who rose into the propertied class by their own efforts in trade or industry would be certain to become landowners when they could. I have in mind a handful of *cities*, the dominant class of which either certainly or probably included a substantial proportion of merchants. They are not easy to find and may not have amounted to more than one or two. I am not concerned here with the Latin West, where Rome's port Ostia (which had only a small *territorium*) stands out as perhaps the one Western city in which far more wealth came to the local notables from commerce than from land.<sup>18</sup> Lugdunum, Arelate and Narbo, the three great *emporía* of Roman Gaul, and also Augusta Treverorum (Trèves, Trier), were certainly in a sense commercial towns, in that a large volume of goods passed through them; but the governing class in each case (the magistrates and decurions) seem to have been almost entirely landowning, while a high proportion of those who acquired wealth through trade and industry seem to have been freedmen or foreigners.<sup>19</sup> The leading 'commercial city' of the whole empire, Alexandria, undoubtedly had some rich merchants among its citizens, but I know of no evidence whether they accounted for any substantial proportion of its governing class: I should be astonished if they did. One of its citizens, Firmus, is said by one very base source, the *Historia Augusta* (*Firmus* 3.2-3), both to have been a merchant and to have aspired to the imperial power, in some kind of unsuccessful revolt against the Emperor Aurelian (in 272). If both these statements are correct, Firmus would certainly be unique; but the first may not be true, and the second is

probably at least a great exaggeration. The whole story, indeed, may be fictitious (see Bowman, *PRH* 158). Otherwise, I know of no specific evidence for rich merchants at Alexandria except in three late hagiographic sources, which – for what they are worth – speak of fortunes that work out at about 275, 70 and 50 lb. gold (see Jones, *LRE* II.870-1; *RE* 60, 150). But even the largest of these, from the *Historia Monachorum* 16 (in *MPL* XXI.438c), if expressed in the way it might have been in the early Principate, would have come out at not very much more than HS 1 million, the minimum qualification of a Roman senator, and neither of the other two would have reached the equestrian qualification of HS 400,000.

In the East, the one certain example of a city which must surely have had a governing class consisting at least partly of merchants is Palmyra, which was of no great importance until well into the last century B.C., but then grew rapidly into a prosperous commercial city, until its period of affluence was ended by its sack by Aurelian in 272. Palmyra gained much of its wealth from its control of a considerable part of the profitable caravan trade with the East.<sup>20</sup> Petra may well have been another such town, on a rather smaller scale, and I suppose there may have been one or two more.<sup>21</sup>

Mention of Palmyra and of its vital role in the Eastern trade reminds one of the customs duties, sometimes heavy, which were levied there and at some other places on the eastern frontier of the empire on all imports and exports. There is a nice little story in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (I.xx) about a journey to the East made by Apollonius, who left the Roman empire at Zeugma on the Euphrates. The tax-collector took Apollonius up to the notice-board and asked him what he had to declare. Apollonius replied with a string of feminine nouns: 'Temperance, Justice, Virtue, Chastity, Courage, Perseverance'. The tax-collector took these to be female slaves, who were sometimes given such names and on whom export duty would have to be paid – we know that the duty on prostitutes at Coptos in Egypt in A.D. 90 was as much as HS 108 or 27 denarii each (*OGIS* 674.16-17: 108 Egyptian drachmae). So he demanded a list of the girls. 'Ah,' said Apollonius, sententious as ever, 'it is not slave-girls I am taking out, but ladies to whom I am slave (*despoinas*).'

\* \* \* \* \*

We need not doubt that Greek (and Roman) landowners took care to dispose of the products of their estates in ways as profitable to themselves as possible. Naturally, this will normally have involved arranging for its transport to the nearest market, but we have extraordinarily little evidence about this kind of activity. I cannot believe that members of the propertied class (in my sense) would themselves take their produce even to their city market if they could help it, let alone transport it across the sea, or otherwise indulge personally in commerce.

Solon may be taken as a test case, for modern works constantly state it as a fact that he went on sea journeys as a merchant both as a young man and after the passing of his laws in 594/3 B.C. The source most usually quoted for the latter statement is Aristotle (writing nearly three centuries later), who certainly speaks of Solon's voyage to Egypt after 594 as 'combining business with pleasure': he went, says Aristotle, *kat' emporian hama kai theōrian* (*Ath. pol.* 11.1). However, it is very interesting to find that our earliest witness by far, namely Herodotus (I.29.1), when giving both a pretext and a cause for the later voyage (to Egypt

and elsewhere), says not a word about trade: Solon's pretence was that he wanted to see the world, the real reason was that he wished to avoid being pressed to repeal his laws. And I suggest that Aristotle's expression, *kat' emporian hama kai theōrian*, has not been correctly understood: precisely what it means can best be discovered from its occurrence in a text of the early fourth century B.C., Isocrates XVII (*Trapeziticus*) 4 – the only other example of the phrase that I have been able to find. The speaker, a young man from the 'Pontic kingdom' in the Crimea, says that when he sailed to Athens, his father, financing his journey, sent with him two ships loaded with corn; and here it is very significant that the expression used is precisely the same as the one Aristotle was later to use for Solon's travels: the young man went *hama kat' emporian kai kata theōrian*, the single 'commercial' activity being undertaken for the enlargement of his experience rather than an economic purpose. The phrase in question, identical (except for the word-order) in Isocrates and Aristotle, may have been a familiar expression in the fourth century, since it is likely that any Greek who was sailing about from one place to another in the Mediterranean world might take some of the products of one place to sell at a profit in another, as a means of paying for his travels. One of the stories in Diogenes Laertius (VI.9) about Antisthenes tells of another 'Pontic youth' who financed a stay at Athens with a shipload of another commodity that was regularly exported from the Pontus to Athens: salt fish. And even Plato is said by Plutarch to have financed his visit to Egypt by selling olive oil there (*Solon* 2.8). As for Solon, Plutarch (who was writing nearly seven centuries afterwards) almost agrees with Herodotus when he says that Solon's real motive for sailing away from Athens after 594 was the hope that the Athenians would grow to accept his laws, but he rejects Herodotus in favour of some unknown writer when he maintains that Solon gave out that he was leaving Athens on account of his *nauklēria*, which ought to mean business interests as a shipowner (*Sol.* 25.6). Plutarch also quotes a statement by the unreliable Hellenistic biographer Hermippus that when Solon was a young man he tried to repair his family fortunes, largely dissipated by his father's many acts of charity (a nice moralising touch!), by going in for commerce (*emporía*); against this, perhaps remembering Herodotus, Plutarch says we are also told that Solon travelled 'for the sake of gaining experience and knowledge [*polypeiria* and *historia*] rather than money-making [*chrēmatismos*]' (*Sol.* 2.1; cf. *Mor.* 410a). Evidently the participation of Solon in commerce was a story that grew with the years and the telling.

It is essential to realise that just as Hesiod had represented trade as a *pis aller* for the peasant who was unable to make a living from the land (see V.i below), so in Solon trade heads the list of activities to which a man may be driven who is propertyless (*achrēmōn*) and under the compulsion of poverty (*peniē*, fr. 1.41 ff.); and clearly the merchant's life in Solon's mind is a hard and dangerous one. After the trader comes the agricultural labourer who hires himself out by the year (fr. 1.47-8): this is the sole reference we have from early Attica to such people except for the name of the lowest of Solon's four property-groups, the *thētes*, a word which normally means wage-labourers. Next in the list we have the artisan; and then – incongruously, to our way of thinking – the poet, the seer, and the doctor. Actually, Solon does not speak slightly of any of these people, even of the trader or the labourer or the artisan: in this he is exceptional.

His own basic outlook is surely that of the landed gentleman (see esp. fr. 1.3-16; 13; 14.1-3; 24.1-7).

It is probably as a result of the elaboration in the Hellenistic period of such tales as those I have mentioned above concerning Solon that Plutarch (*Solon* 2.6-8) was ready to contrast what he took to be the conditions of the Archaic age with those that obtained later and in his own day, and declare that 'in those times [the Archaic period] work was no disgrace' (these four words are a quotation from Hesiod, *WD* 311), a trade or craft (a *technē*) brought no stigma (*diabolē?*), and commerce (*emporía*) was in good repute, as it gave a man familiarity with foreign countries, friendship with kings and a wide experience of affairs; some [merchants] became founders of great cities, as Protis of Massalia.<sup>22</sup> And then Plutarch, before concluding with the remark about Plato which I have already quoted, adds, 'They say that Thales and Hippocrates the mathematician went in for commerce' – but the surviving sources referring to Hippocrates' alleged activity as a merchant (*emporos*) are even later than Plutarch (see Diels-Kranz, *FVS*<sup>2-11</sup> no.42.2,5), and the only story preserved about Thales' alleged 'commercial activities' is the one familiar from Aristotle, about how Thales secured a monopoly by hiring all the olive-presses of Miletus and Chios on one particular occasion, with the justified expectation of securing a large profit, in a year which he foresaw would produce an exceptional crop of olives! (*Pol.* 1.11, 1259<sup>a</sup>5-21; cf. *Diog. Laert.* 1.26). Plutarch is able to cite no good evidence of any kind for his statement about the situation of traders in the Archaic period.

We also happen to know that in the first half of the sixth century Charaxus of Lesbos, son of Scamandronymus and brother of Sappho the poetess, sailed to Naucratis in Egypt; and according to Strabo (who of course lived more than half a millennium later) Charaxus brought to Naucratis a cargo of Lesbian wine, *kat' emporian* (XVII.i.33, p.808; cf. *Athen.* XIII.596b-d). If that is true, Charaxus may have been deliberately trying to obtain a higher price for his wine by cutting out the middle-man; or he may simply have been 'seeing the world', and the sale of the wine may have been merely incidental and a means of financing his voyage – there is no evidence to show whether the journey was a single or a repeated one. It is characteristic of the sources for early Greek economic history, by the way, that we only hear of this visit of Charaxus to Naucratis because Charaxus, while in Egypt, happened to become enamoured of a famous courtesan, named Doricha (or Rhodopis, but this may have been her nickname), a *mésalliance* for which he was apparently reproached by his sister in a poem known to Herodotus (II.134-5, esp. 135.6) but not to us, and perhaps sympathised with in some fragments recovered not long ago among the Oxyrhynchus papyri (5 and 15b Page; see Page, *SA* 45-51; contrast Gomme, in *JHS* 77 [1957] 258-9). Gomme, in his attack on Page's interpretation of Sappho, fr. 5 and 15b, takes very seriously the words *kat' emporian* in Strabo, and feels able to add scornfully, 'so much for the family of "noble birth and high fashion"' (a phrase of Mure's). But the family surely was an aristocratic one, and we have seen from Isocrates and Aristotle what *kat' emporian* is capable of meaning in such contexts.

What is referred to as 'trade' or 'commerce' in the Archaic period and even rather later may prove on inspection to be something very different from the activities now connoted by such expressions. Take for example the story quoted

by Athenaeus (VI.232ab) from Theopompus (FGrH 115 F 193), concerning events that occurred in the 470s B.C. Architeles the Corinthian, who had by degrees bought up a large quantity of gold, sold it to the emissaries of Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, adding a handful of gold by way of gift. In return, the grateful Hiero sent Architeles a shipload of corn and many other gifts as well. This transaction partakes not only of trade in the proper sense, but also of the ancient practice of gift-exchange between aristocrats. I may add that I know of no specific reference to the conduct of 'the corn-trade of the city of Corinth', in the proper sense, except the statement of Lycurgus (see OPW 265) that the Athenian Leocrates, some time after 338 B.C., settled as a metic at Megara, and while living there shipped corn from Epirus to Leucas and thence to Corinth. (That Corinth did sometimes import corn from the West is made very probable by the reference in Thuc. III.86.4 to the export of corn from Sicily to the Peloponnese; for Lechaëum, the western port of Corinth, is perhaps the most likely place to which such corn would go.)

Pericles is said by Plutarch (*Per.* 16.4) to have sold the whole produce of his estate on a single occasion each year, as if this were exceptional; devoted as he was to politics, he did this, we are told, with the aim of wasting as little time as possible on such things, and through an able slave, Evangelus. This may be true, but once more it is the kind of thing Hellenistic biographers were fond of inventing.

I agree with a recent statement by Pleket that 'it is on predominantly local markets that urban landowners will have sold their products (corn, oil, wine)', using as intermediaries 'either their freedmen or independent *negotiatores*'.<sup>23</sup> However, I think that in the latter part of the same paragraph, beginning, 'Perhaps we are all brought up too much with the idea that the aristocracy in antiquity was an *exclusively* landed elite', Pleket puts too much emphasis on the 'commercial interests of landowners', which were very minor. Our evidence about the way in which landowners dealt with the produce of their estates is too scanty for us to be able to produce a confident picture, though we may agree with Pleket that in the Later Roman Empire the widespread decline of trade is likely to have forced many landowners to take more active steps to promote the sale of their crops. The essential fact is that these landowners always remained primarily landowners, and that any 'commercial' activities they might indulge in never became more than a minor and wholly subsidiary part of their activities. It is of little significance that Rufinus of Pergamum (as Pleket notes) had a shipowner in his service (an *idios nauklēros*): that must have been quite a common phenomenon. According to Libanius, a rich man could be expected to possess ships, along with land and gold and silver (see Liebeschuetz, *Ant.* 75 and n.7). We may also remember Myrinus of Zeleia in Phrygia, *pragmateutēs* (Latin *actor*) of a landowning noblewoman, Claudia Bassa, who according to his own epitaph not only collected his mistress's rents for thirty-five years but also undertook journeys on her behalf to numerous distant places, including Italy, Dalmatia, Istria, Liburnia and Alexandria.<sup>24</sup> And since, as I have mentioned above, the *navicularii* (the government shippers – of corn in vast quantities, by the way, from Africa and Egypt to Rome and Constantinople) were landowners first and foremost, whose estates were saddled with the burden of this duty, they at least would all have to own ships, which of course they could use for

their own purposes, in so far as they were not required for government transport.

(iv)

#### Slavery and other forms of unfree labour

Although ancient slavery has been examined again and again, from many different points of view, I believe that I am justified in making yet another attempt to give a general treatment of the subject, if only because of three methodological characteristics of the account I shall present.

First, I hope that I have at least moved the discussion on to a different plane by conducting the investigation in terms not merely of slavery in the narrow sense ('chattel slavery') but of *unfree labour*,<sup>1</sup> in its different forms, of which slavery in the strict sense is only one, and not always the most important in the sphere of actual production – although, for reasons I shall explain towards the end of this section, I believe it always played a very significant role.

Secondly, the situation we have to examine, as I see it, is one in which *the propertied class* (defined in Section ii of this chapter) extracts the greater part of its *surplus* from the working population by means of *unfree labour*. That is a very different matter from trying to show that in Greek (and Roman) antiquity *the bulk of production* was done by slaves, or even (at least until the Later Roman Empire) by slaves, serfs and all other unfree workers put together – I am sure it was not: in my opinion, the combined production of free peasants and artisans must have exceeded that of unfree agricultural and industrial producers in most places at all times, at any rate until the fourth century of the Christian era, when forms of serfdom became general in the Roman empire. I have already explained, in II.iii above, why I believe that the significant thing we have to concentrate on is not the overall role of unfree compared with free labour, but the role played by unfree labour in providing the dominant propertied classes with their surplus, a very different question and a much more restricted one, not so entirely open-ended as the other. In this, I am certainly following the central thought of Marx, for whom the fundamental difference between the various forms of society lay in 'the mode in which surplus labour is in each case extracted from the actual producer', 'the specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers' (*Cap.* I.217; III.791, cited more fully in II.iii above). And in the opinion of Marx, expressed most clearly in the *Grundrisse* (156), 'Direct forced labour [*direkte Zwangsarbeit*] is the foundation of the ancient world' (E.T. 245) – a statement which must certainly be interpreted in the light of the passages from *Capital* which I have just noticed. I accept this. I think it would not be technically correct to call the Greek (and Roman) world 'a slave economy'; but I should not raise any strong objection if anyone else wished to use that expression, because, as I shall argue, the propertied classes extorted the bulk of their surplus from the working population by means of unfree labour, in which slavery, in the strict technical sense, played at some periods a dominant role and was always a highly significant factor.

Thirdly, I have tried to avoid the very common mistake of denying the existence, or minimising the extent, of slave labour in situations where all we have a right to assert is that there is no, or little, *evidence* for it. The point here is that we often have no right to *expect* such evidence. Our knowledge of the large-

scale use of slaves in production (especially in agriculture, which matters most) depends mainly upon a mere handful of literary texts, even for Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and Italy and Sicily in the late Republic and early Principate, where we know that slavery was particularly widespread. (I shall have much more to say on this topic later, both in this section and in Appendix II.)

I quoted, in II.iii above, statements by Aristotle about the poor or property-less free man who was obliged to use an ox, or his wife and children, as a substitute for slaves. But in this section I am not concerned with such people, who of course were themselves liable to be exploited by the propertied classes to a greater or less degree, in ways I shall describe in IV.i below. Here I am dealing with the propertied class and the unfree labour from which they derived the bulk of their surplus; the poor free man is prominent in this section only in so far as he fell into debt bondage or serfdom.

\* \* \* \* \*

The resources of different languages – Greek, Latin and the various modern languages – differ greatly in the categories of unfree labour which they make it possible to distinguish by name; but as it happens there is a set of definitions of the three main categories I propose to recognise – namely chattel slavery, serfdom and debt bondage – which today has a very special status. This set of distinctions is enshrined, for ‘slavery’, in Article 1(1) of the Slavery Convention of 1926, organised by the League of Nations; and, for ‘serfdom’ and ‘debt bondage’, in Article 1 of the Supplementary Convention on the abolition of slavery, the slave trade, and institutions and practices similar to slavery. (The Supplementary Convention resulted from a conference at Geneva organised by the United Nations in 1956 and attended by representatives of no fewer than forty-eight nations.) There is a particularly well-informed account of the whole subject by C. W. W. Greenidge, *Slavery* (London, 1958), who gives the full texts of the two Conventions in his second and third Appendices (pp.224 ff.) and a summary of their respective first Articles on pp.25–6.

It would be perverse to disregard internationally established practice unless there is a valid reason for doing so, as there is not in this case, and I shall follow it as far as possible, except that I shall not treat as a separate category the ‘forced labour’ which, for reasons of state in the modern world, has been set apart from ‘slavery and other institutions and practices akin to slavery’. As Greenidge puts it (accepting the definitions in the Conventions of 1926 and 1956), ‘Slavery is the exaction of involuntary labour by one individual from another individual to whom the latter belongs, whereas forced labour is the exaction of involuntary labour from an individual to a government, i.e. a collectivity, to punish or discipline the person from whom the labour is exacted’ (*Slavery* 25). According to the modern definitions in the Conventions referred to above, those who in the ancient world were mine slaves belonging to individual owners and those who were criminals condemned by the Roman state to convict labour in the mines (*ad metallum*, always in perpetuity) would have to be put in two different categories: the first would be in ‘slavery’, the second in ‘forced labour’. In antiquity there would hardly have been more than a technical difference between the two groups, not significant for my purposes, and I shall therefore treat ‘forced labour’ as a form of slavery. (I shall devote only a single brief paragraph to

convict labour in antiquity.) I may add that compulsory labour services such as the *angariae* (see I.iii above and IV.i below), which were performed either by free individuals or by village communities for a Hellenistic monarch or the Roman state, or for a municipality (including any Greek city), are dealt with in this book under the heading of ‘indirect collective exploitation’, in IV.i below.

My own general category of ‘unfree labour’ divides naturally under the three headings which follow, established by the international Conventions referred to above: (A) Slavery, (B) Serfdom, and (C) Debt bondage. At this point I shall merely describe them briefly, deferring discussion of each until later in this section.

A. *Slavery* is defined in the 1926 Convention as ‘the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised’. I accept this definition of ‘chattel slavery’ (as it is often called) for the ancient as well as the modern world, the more willingly since what it stresses is not so much the fact that the slave is the *legal property* of another as that ‘the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised over him’ – for the essential elements in the slave’s condition are that *his labour and other activities are totally controlled* by his master, and that he is virtually without rights, at any rate enforceable legal rights. In Roman law, enslavement was regarded as closely resembling death (Ulpian, *Dig. L.xvii.209; Nov. J. XXII.9*).

It will be useful if I quote at this point a paragraph from the very thorough study of ‘*Paramonē* clauses’ by A. E. Samuel in 1965. After considering in detail a large number of documents connected with (*inter alia*) manumission, Samuel makes a statement which some might think over-legalistic and framed in rather too absolute terms, but which nevertheless contains an important truth:

Legal freedom in Greece is essentially a concept of property. The sole meaning of freedom is that a man has jurisdiction over his property and family, and the concept of manumission is the concept of change of property; a man no longer is property, but has it. A man’s activities can be limited by restrictions, and he can be subject to burdensome obligation, and these matters do not affect his freedom. If a man can own property, he is free, and if he is free, he can own property. That is the meaning of manumission (RPCAD 295).

B. *Serfdom* is defined in the 1956 Convention as ‘the tenure of land whereby the tenant is by law, custom or agreement bound to live and labour on land belonging to another person and render some determinate services to such other person, whether for reward or not, and is not free to change his status’. I must add one qualification: ‘render some determinate services’, in the conditions of antiquity (especially the Later Roman colonate, for which see IV.iii below), need not necessarily mean more than the paying of a determinate rent, in money or kind or share of crop. It is necessary to recognise that the serf is a peasant (see IV.ii below) who does not own, or does not fully own, but at least possesses (as the slave and normally the bondsman do not) the means of production of his livelihood, usually on a hereditary basis, and who is responsible for providing his own maintenance (clothing and food) from his own productive efforts (as the slave cannot normally be), but who is not a fully free man: he is to a considerable extent under the control of his lord, and he is ‘bound to the soil’ (to the particular farm on which he labours or to his village), often by law, though sometimes only by custom or contract, or (see below) by a treaty made on sub-

mission to conquest. (To quote Marc Bloch, speaking of the early Middle Ages, 'Neither the barbarian laws nor the Carolingian capitularies contain a line that forbids tenants to desert their land, or the master to tear them from it. It is the lord's business to keep his tenants, legally or illegally,' *CEHE* I<sup>2</sup>.260.) The question of the precise manner in which Late Roman *coloni* of different types and in different areas were bound to the soil can be left to IV.iii below. I should perhaps mention here that binding to the soil (to farm or village) was not limited purely to *tenants* living and labouring 'on land belonging to another person' (to quote the 1956 Convention), but that working peasant *freeholders* could also be bound, although with them it was always their village to which they were tied: we may call such people 'quasi-serfs' (see IV.iii below). Since there is evidently in some people's minds a groundless connection between serfdom and 'feudalism', I must make it clear that although in some or most societies to which the term 'feudal' has been applied (or misapplied) the labour of serfs has been prominent, serfdom can exist and has existed (as in the Later Roman Empire) quite independently of anything that is likely to be called (or miscalled) 'feudal' (cf. IV.v below). At this point I need add only that most, if not all, of the serf peoples we encounter in the Greek world before the Hellenistic period entered that condition as a result of conquest by invaders who settled in their territory (cf. Lotze, *MED*, esp. 69-79; and see, later in this section, 'II. Serfdom'). We hear in several of these instances (Sparta, Thessaly, Pontic Heraclea) of treaties or compacts made between conquerors and conquered, regulating in some degree the future position of the conquered and in particular preventing them from being sold abroad. We must not, however, treat conquest by alien invaders as the necessary genesis of serfdom: as we shall see (in IV.iii below), that of the Later Roman colonate, for example, had a totally different origin.

C. *Debt bondage* is defined in the 1956 Convention as 'the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or those of a third person under his control as a security for a debt, where the value reasonably assessed of those services rendered is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined'. In the Greek (and Roman) world there were many different forms of debt bondage, not all of which, perhaps, are fully covered by the definition I have just quoted.

The position of the defaulting debtor in antiquity was always very precarious. He might often be actually enslaved, legally or illegally – a permanent change of status. There is a convenient distinction in German between 'Schuldhaft', corresponding to one form of what I call 'debt bondage', and 'Schuld knechtschaft', actual enslavement for debt. We must be careful to distinguish between the two. I would call the man concerned a 'debt bondsman' only if he did not technically become a slave (a distinction of great importance in principle) and if his condition in practice was such that he might (at least in theory) hope eventually to become free again: the possibility of a limitation in time of his quasi-servile status is for me a characteristic mark of the bondsman as opposed to the slave. (Here my usage differs from that of some others, e.g. Finley: see his *SD* 164 n.22.) But there was no general technical term in Greek for such a man: see the opening pages of Finley, *SD*, who has much to say that is interesting,

especially on the myth of Heracles' service to Omphale, and on various forms of debt bondage and debt slavery in the ancient Near East, with ample bibliography.

Debt bondage was evidently widespread throughout the Greek world, and we must not be misled by the fact that the one Greek city we know most about, Athens, abolished the institution in the Archaic period. This happened when the legislation that accompanied the *seisachtheia* of Solon (his cancellation of debts), as early as 594/3 B.C., put an end – of course only at Athens – to debt bondage as well as enslavement for debt in the full sense. I think that those who study Greek history too often fail to realise what a radical reform this was, and how adroitly the new law was framed: Solon did not merely (as people often say) 'forbid enslavement for debt'; he went so far as to forbid 'pledging the body as security' (*mē daneizein epi tois sōmasin*), and thereby ruled out all forms of debt bondage too.<sup>2</sup>

I am aware that I ought perhaps to have made a more careful separation between the type of debt bondage in which the debtor actually works for the creditor and that which involves confinement in a prison, whether private or official (cf. the Latin expression quoted under heading III below: *vel privata vel publica vincula*), and also between debt bondage resulting from 'personal execution' and that which can only be effected by order of a court of law. To have made the necessary qualifications, however, would have lengthened the treatment of the subject unduly.

\* \* \* \* \*

The definitions I have accepted of my three categories of unfree labour are, I think, the ones most people would accept for the ancient world. I admit that they do not always have precise equivalents in modern languages, but I think that sufficiently close approximations can usually be found. And the three do correspond to definite situations which we find existing in antiquity, even if the edges of each category are, so to speak, blurred: a bondsman who has not the least hope in practice of freeing himself is virtually a slave; a slave who is settled as tenant of a piece of land, with a 'cabin' and a 'wife' and family ('quasi colonus', as the lawyers put it: see IV.iii below), is in practice far nearer to a serf than to an ordinary agricultural, industrial or mine slave; and so on.

One contemporary historian of the ancient world, Sir Moses Finley, has a strong but unreasonable objection to the use of the word 'serf' in relation to the Greek and Roman world. He is perfectly justified in protesting against the rigid reduction of the ancient work-force to 'only three possible categories: slaves, serfs and free wage-earners' (*AE* 65; cf. *SSAG* 178-9), and he has himself done much to illuminate intermediate and special categories (see especially his *SSAG*, *SD* and *BSF*). Of course we must not treat these three categories as real entities, divided by sharp lines: there were many intermediate or special situations contributing to what Finley is fond of calling a 'spectrum' or 'continuum' of different statuses which in practice shaded imperceptibly into each other (see II.v above). Yet it seems to me that to decline to draw firm lines inside this 'spectrum' is as capricious as refusing to speak of the colours red, blue, yellow and the rest, simply because any precise lines of division of the colour-spectrum must be to some extent arbitrary, and different people would draw them at slightly different points. Even Finley is perfectly prepared to speak of 'slaves', among whom great variations of condition existed, and of 'wage-earners',

another term which included very different kinds of status. He also often uses the term 'peasants', a far broader category (defined in *AE* 105); he even has a 'peasant spectrum' (*AE* 104). Yet although his 'peasants' often cry out for a term that will distinguish the broad group I have defined as 'serfs', he refuses to use the word which almost everyone else applies to them and of which there is now an internationally agreed definition. The reason for this is simply that he insists gratuitously upon confining the term 'serf' to the European mediaeval serf within the feudal system: this is clear from his *AE* 189 n.5 (especially the reference to Marc Bloch in *CEHE* P.253-4) – where, incidentally, he specifies several features of serf status, every single one of which can be found (as he seems not to be aware) in forms of the Late Roman colonate. Pierre Vidal-Naquet has also stated, equally without good reason, that to speak of serfs is to create 'une confusion avec l'époque du moyen-âge européen' (*RHGE* 40 n.6). To this I would make a twofold reply. First, there were serfs (in my sense, the one now officially accepted throughout much of the modern world) long before the European Middle Ages; and secondly, what we must fear is not 'confusion' with the mediaeval world, but the failure to notice features that appear in closely related (though not identical) forms in Graeco-Roman antiquity and in the Middle Ages. I may add that the often very acute discussion by Lotze (*MED*) of a famous passage in Pollux (III.83) which I shall notice presently is also marred by an unwillingness to treat serfdom (in my sense) as a general phenomenon: for Lotze, 'Hörigkeit' must be specifically 'feudale Hörigkeit' (*MED* 60 ff., at 64-8, 77, 79) – an unnecessary restriction which is not found, for instance, in Busolt (see *GS* I.272-80; II.667-70 etc.).

Before proceeding further we must acknowledge the fact that the categories into which we are dividing unfree labour are not those which were employed by the Greeks or the Romans. They were inhibited from recognising what we call serfdom and debt bondage as distinct categories, because they divided mankind into just two groups: free and slave. This was just as true when the Emperor Justinian issued his *Institutes* in A.D. 533 as in Classical Greek times. According to the *Institutes*, all *homines* (an expression which here, as almost everywhere else, includes women as well as men) are *liberi aut servi*, either free or slave (*I.iii.pr.*). No intermediate or mixed status is recognised. There follows in *Inst. J. I.iii.4-5* the statement that there are no differences of legal status (*condicio*) among slaves, whereas there are 'many differences' among the free; the next sentence speaks only of a division into free-born and freedmen. The main statement of principle reproduces the very words of another work: the *Institutes*, written nearly four centuries earlier, of the jurist Gaius, who probably originated in the Greek East (*Gai., Inst. I.9*).

There are various words in Greek – such as *pais* ('boy') and its variants, or *sōma* ('body') – which are used on occasion in the sense of 'slave', besides the more standard terms: *doulos*, *andrapodon*, *oiketēs*; and there are other expressions in Latin apart from *servus* and *mancipium*, the regular technical terms. All these words could be used loosely and even purely metaphorically. But for 'serf' and 'serfdom' there are no strict technical equivalents in Greek or Latin, and serfdom is not visible on a large scale in most areas of the Greek world until the Later Roman Empire, although there were certainly subject peoples in particular localities who qualify as serfs under my definition or virtually any other. Nor

were there standard technical expressions for 'bondage' and the 'bondsmen', although this institution was known throughout the Greek world, as I have already indicated. The fundamental division into 'free and slave' is invariable in ancient sources, and I know of only one literary statement in either language which explicitly recognises the existence of a set of intermediate or mixed categories: this is a brief and isolated passage (generally believed to be derived from Aristophanes of Byzantium) in the *Onomasticon* of Julius Pollux, a Greek from Naucratis in Egypt who taught rhetoric at Athens in the late second century, in the reign of Commodus, and who refers to those 'between free and slave' (*metaxu eleutherōn kai doulōn*, III.83). As it stands, it is a very disappointing statement: our text simply gives a short list of local peoples, amounting to some six or seven items, beginning with the Spartan Helots, who were certainly State serfs (see my *OPW* 89-94, and below), and continuing with a miscellaneous collection of other local peoples, probably of very different statuses varying mainly between what we should call freedom and serfdom. (The original work may well have been more informative – our version of the *Onomasticon* represents only a Byzantine epitome.) The passage has often been discussed. The conclusion of Lotze, in his monograph on it, is that we should set apart, as essentially free men, two of Pollux' categories, the Argive Gymnetes and the Korynephoroī (elsewhere Katonakophoroī) of Sicyon, and see the remainder as peoples of 'unfree' condition, in a kind of 'Kollektivsklaverei' to their conquerors, akin to (but distinct from) 'feudale Hörigkeit' (*MED* 79); these are the Spartan Helots, the Klarotai and Mnoītai of Crete, the Thessalian Penestai, and the Mariandynoi of Heraclea Pontica. To these he would add some peoples of similar condition known to us from other sources: the Killyrioi or Kylyrioi (or, later, Kallikyrioi or Killikyrioi) of Syracuse, the Woikiatai of East Locris, and perhaps the Bithynians in the territory of Byzantium.<sup>3</sup> With this I largely agree, except that I would unhesitatingly put the 'unfree' peoples in my category of serfs, and bring in certain other serfs who need to be, but seldom are, mentioned in this connection (see under the heading 'II. Serfdom' below).

Undoubtedly there did exist in the Greek world a whole range of statuses between full slavery and complete freedom. But what I want to emphasise here is the fact, well brought out by the Pollux passage, that the only mixed or intermediate categories to which the Greeks were prepared to give full recognition were a few individual cases which had established themselves in customary law and were treated as *local exceptions* to the general rule that everyone was either slave or free. A Greek confronted with some peculiar serf-like status might apply to it by analogy a term that was in strictness appropriate only to some different but better-known example, as when the word *penestai*,<sup>4</sup> the technical term for the subject population of Thessaly, is used for the peasants of Etruria by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*AR IX.v.4*; cf. *II.ix.2*); or when the verb *heilōteuein*, corresponding to the noun Helot, is applied to a group of dependent people in some other area, or their condition is likened to that of the Helots (see again 'II. Serfdom' below). How long these local variations continued is hard to say. The Pollux passage is timeless: it does not say when these statuses existed, or whether they had lasted down to Pollux' own day (or the third/second centuries B.C., the date of Pollux' probable source, Aristophanes of Byzantium) or disappeared earlier. I suspect that in fact by Pollux' time they were all

almost certainly things of the distant past, as the Spartan Helots certainly were (see below and n. 19). If so, we have a significant piece of evidence in favour of the argument I shall advance later in this section (under heading 'II. Serfdom'), to the effect that when an area in which forms of serfdom existed was taken into the Greek or Roman world, those forms tended to decay and ultimately to disappear.

I must mention here that I shall not be separately discussing on its own the longest treatment of slavery to be found in any ancient author: Athenaeus VI.262b-275b, a mere rag-bag of fragments from Greek writers, assembled higgledy-piggledy and with no real discrimination or judgment, yet most valuable as a quarry (if used with discretion), because of some of the passages from earlier authors which it preserves. I will only refer to a recent article which contains much bibliographical material, partly arising out of the Athenaeus passage: Vidal-Naquet, RHGE (1972).

\* \* \* \* \*

It is now time to look at each of our three categories of unfree labour in turn.

I. *SLAVERY*. It seems to me beyond dispute that the magnificent achievements of the Greeks were partly due to the fact that their civilisation was founded to a considerable degree on a slave basis. That slave labour was indeed regarded by the Greeks in general as essential to their way of life is something I hope I can take for granted, without having to go to the trouble of proving it by citing a great deal of evidence. 'Of property,' says the author of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica* I (an early Peripatetic, perhaps Theophrastus), 'the first and most necessary kind is that which is best and most appropriate to household management [*oikonomikôtaton*]: namely, the human variety [*anthrôpos*]. Therefore we must first provide ourselves with industrious slaves [*douloi spoudaioi*]' (I.5, 1344<sup>a</sup>23-5). Immediately after this the author proceeds to distinguish the two main species of slave: the ordinary worker (*ergatês*) and the *epitropos*, the manager or overseer. (We must not forget that the vast majority of the overseers we come across in antiquity were themselves slaves or ex-slaves: their essential role must not be overlooked.) I have referred in Section i of this chapter to a fascinating passage in the *Politics* in which, to replace slaves, Aristotle can think only of the self-moving statues of the legendary artificer, Daedalus, or the automated tripods of the god Hephaestus (I.4, 1253<sup>b</sup>35-4<sup>a</sup>1). A little earlier Aristotle had said that a complete household consisted of 'slaves and free', and had described master and slave, with husband and wife, and father and children, as 'the primary and simplest elements of the household' (I.3, 1253<sup>b</sup>5-7, 14 ff.). Polybius speaks of slaves, equally with cattle, as being among the essential requirements of life (*anankaiai tou biou chreiai*, IV.38.4). But I do not feel I need pursue this matter further. Slavery was a fact of Classical Greek life, and from the strictly economic point of view (the efficient satisfaction of material wants) it was useful, indeed indispensable (cf. II.i above). I do not see how the brilliant civilisation of the Classical period could have come into existence without it. I should like to quote here a fine passage in Marx:

In the development of the richness of human nature as an end in itself . . . at first the development of the capacities of the human species takes place at the cost of the

majority of human individuals and even classes . . . ; the higher development of individuality is thus only achieved by a historical process during which individuals are sacrificed; for the interests of the species in the human kingdom, as in the animal and plant kingdoms, always assert themselves at the cost of the interests of individuals (TSV II. 118).

Now we must not confuse the situation in Greek cities, even Athens, with that at Rome, with which I wish briefly to compare it. There are two separate points to be made here. First, the upper classes of Rome in its great days had an immensely larger area from which to draw their surplus than was ever available to the rulers of any Greek city (even fifth-century Athens), and when Rome became an imperial power its upper classes were infinitely richer than their Greek counterparts – and remained so on the whole even when individual Greeks began to enter the Roman senatorial class: see Section ii of this chapter, especially its nn. 11-13, also VI.iv below for emphasis on the vastly greater scale of exploitation by the Romans of their provinces in the late Republic than by the Athenians of the subject states of their 'empire' in the fifth century B.C. The second important distinction between many Greek cities and Rome is that owing to the absence of any real political democracy in the Roman world, the humbler free men were much more at the mercy of the men of power than were the poorer citizens of a Greek democracy. But democracy, when it really works (as it did, for the citizens, at Athens and some other Greek cities), has certain very important consequences: it gives the whole citizen population extensive and enforceable legal rights, and so gives the humbler and poorer citizen an opportunity of protecting himself against at any rate the more extreme forms of ill-treatment by the powerful. I am sure that a rich Athenian of the fifth or fourth century B.C. who wanted to grab the land of his humble neighbour would not dare to adopt the methods described in the fourteenth satire of Juvenal and other sources, which included sending in cattle to trample down the unfortunate man's crops and thus ruin him and compel him to part with his land cheaply.<sup>5</sup>

In a city like Athens, however, just because it was a democracy and the poorer citizens were to some extent protected against the powerful,<sup>6</sup> the very most had to be made out of the classes below the citizens. Now metics (free foreigners residing in the city) could not be milked intensively: they paid a small tax to the state, but if the screw was put on them too hard they would simply go elsewhere. The essential fact about the slave, however, was that the screw could be put on him in any way the master liked, because he was *without rights*: as I mentioned earlier in this section, that is one of the distinguishing features of the slave's condition; mere ownership of the slave as a chattel, a piece of property, is in the long run less significant, as a feature of his condition, than the *unlimited control over his activities* which his master enjoys.<sup>7</sup> Even that windbag Dio Chrysostom could define slavery as the right to *use* another man at pleasure, like a piece of property or a domestic animal (XV.24). We need not be surprised, then, if we find a more intense development of slavery at Athens than at most other places in the Greek world: if the humbler citizens could not be fully exploited, and it was inexpedient to try to put too much pressure on the metics, then it was necessary to rely to an exceptional degree on exploiting the labour of slaves. This *explains* 'the advance, hand in hand, of freedom and slavery' in the Greek world, noted by Finley (SCA 72) but left by him as a kind of paradox;

entirely without explanation. (Finley is handicapped here, as elsewhere, by his refusal to think in terms of class categories and by his curious disinclination to recognise exploitation as a definable characteristic of a class society: see his *AE* 49, 157.)

The master might find that he got more out of his slaves by very harsh treatment: mine slaves, in particular, often seem to have been worked to death in quite a short period.<sup>8</sup> The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica* I (5, 1344<sup>a</sup>35) allots to slaves just three things: work, punishment and food. (It is interesting to find precisely the same list, in reverse order, in *Eccius*. XXXIII.24; cf. 26, and XXIII. 10.) But in some kinds of work, especially skilled work, it might pay the master better to treat his slaves well, and even perhaps set them up on their own, as *chōris oikountes*.<sup>9</sup> As well as giving them the stick (literally, as well as metaphorically), he might even dangle before their eyes the carrot of ultimate manumission. But whatever the method employed, it was he, the master, who decided what it was to be. I have mentioned already (near the end of II.ii above) that the flogging of slaves was generally taken for granted. I dare say that except when slaves were dirt cheap (after a profitable war, for instance) most masters would not treat their slaves in too inhuman a manner and work them swiftly to death, for they were human capital and precious for that reason if for no other. Some masters might take particular care of slaves who became ill; but others of course might follow the advice of that typical old Roman landowner, Cato, by cutting down the rations of sick slaves or selling off those who were elderly or diseased, just like decrepit oxen, old tools, and 'anything else that is superfluous'.<sup>10</sup> (One may well wonder who would buy old or sick slaves!) In Varro's book on agriculture we read that in *gravia loca* (presumably malarious districts) it is better to use *mercennarii*, hired hands, rather than slaves. (Columella would have such lands let out to tenants, and similarly those too far away to be regularly supervised by their owner.)<sup>11</sup> Slaves are apt to be thought less expendable than hired labourers: this is well illustrated by a story told by the American writer, F. L. Olmsted, in an account of his journey on the steamboat *Fashion* up the Alabama River in 1855. He saw some bales of cotton being thrown from a height down into the ship's hold: the men throwing the bales down were negroes, the men in the hold were Irishmen. Olmsted remarked on this to the mate of the ship. 'Oh,' said the mate, 'the niggers are worth too much to be risked here; if the Paddies are knocked overboard or get their backs broke, nobody loses anything.'<sup>12</sup> The slave, representing an investment by his master, might at least expect to receive enough food to keep him alive and working; if he were manumitted, this supply might immediately dry up. Epictetus, an ex-slave who had thoroughly acquired the outlook of a master, took pleasure in pointing out that the slave who thinks only of gaining his freedom may be reduced, when he is manumitted, to 'slavery much more severe than before'; he may experience the pangs of disappointed love and 'long for slavery again' (it seems to be assumed that slaves would never fall in love); and the wretched man will remember too how in slavery he was fed and clothed and received medical attention, and he will realise that mere freedom has made him no better off (*Diss.* IV.i.33 ff., esp. 35-7; another part of the same passage is quoted in VII.iii below).

It might be thought that slaves before they were freed could never have been of much account. Certainly the position of the slave was always exceedingly

precarious. But some slaves of rich masters were allowed to prosper and even acquire slaves of their own, *vicarii* in Latin. During the Roman Principate and Later Empire, imperial slaves were naturally in the best position to do well for themselves, even before they became freedmen. There are two particularly nice illustrations of this. One is an inscription of the reign of Tiberius (*ILS* 1514 = *E/J*<sup>2</sup> 158), set up to a provincial member of the *familia Caesaris*, Muscius Scurranus, a mere *dispensator* (cashier) in the  *fiscus* (the provincial treasury) of Gallia Lugdunensis.<sup>13</sup> The inscription bears the names of no fewer than fifteen men and one woman 'from among the number of his *vicarii*, who were with him at Rome when he died'. All these slaves of a slave, except the woman, are careful to mention their respective functions in Muscius' household: there are three personal servants (*a manu*), two 'gentlemen of the bedchamber' (*a cubiculo*), two men who looked after Muscius' silver plate (*ab argento*), two footmen (*pedisequi*), two cooks, a doctor, a business manager (*negotiator*), a man who controlled the household expenditure (*sumptuarius*), and a valet (*a veste*); the function of the woman, Secunda, is not specified. Muscius evidently had other *vicarii* – how many, we do not know. The other illustration of the possession of wealth by an imperial slave is the Elder Pliny's account of Rotundus Drusillianus, who a little later occupied a similar position to Muscius Scurranus, that of *dispensator*, in the province of Hither Spain in the reign of Claudius (*NH* XXXIII. 145). He is said to have had a silver dish (*a laux*) weighing 500 lb., to manufacture which a special workshop had to be constructed, and eight companion pieces (*comites eius*), weighing 250 lb. each – a total of 2,500 lb. of silver. Before dismissing this offhand as a mere yarn we should do well to remember that Muscius had needed more than one under-slave to look after his silver plate! These rather surprising examples of wealthy imperial slaves bring out the fact that in the imperial household, at any rate, some slaves were of higher status than some freedmen: this has recently been stressed in relation to the imperial *dispensatores* (and incidentally their *vicarii*) by Weaver (*SAS*, ed. Finley, 132). In the Later Roman Empire the eunuch *cubicularii* of the Sacred Bedchamber became personages of great influence (see Section v below). They all began their careers as slaves until the Emperor Leo ordered them to be freed on admission to the imperial household (*CJ* XII.v.4.pr.6, of c. 473). Finley is certainly right in saying that 'much the greatest opportunity for social mobility lay among the imperial slaves'; and we need not limit this, as he does, to 'the first century of our era' (*BSF* 244), although it was most conspicuous then.

There was no doubt a certain sense of backstairs importance and of hierarchy inside slave households, as there has so often been among the servants of the upper classes in more modern times. When Libanius, professor of rhetoric at Antioch during most of the second half of the fourth century, was petitioning the Council of Antioch to supplement the meagre salaries of his Assistant Lecturers, by giving them some lands to farm, he pictured them as living in unendurable squalor: some of them, he said, had only three slaves, others two, others not even that – slaves who got drunk and were insolent to their masters 'because they belonged to such small establishments' (*Orat.* XXXI.9-11). Frederick Douglass, himself a former slave in the Old South, remarked that 'to be a slave, was thought bad enough; but to be a *poor man's* slave was deemed a disgrace indeed'; and another ex-slave, Steward, said he had 'heard of slaves



object to being sent in very small companies to labour in the field, lest that some passer-by should think that they belonged to a poor man, who was unable to keep a large gang' (Stampp, *PI* 338-9). We certainly hear from time to time in antiquity of slaves being owned by men described as 'poor' (*penētes*), like Chremylus in the *Plutus* of Aristophanes (see lines 29, 254, with 26, 1105), or at least as very lowly people. And Sidonius Apollinaris speaks in the third quarter of the fifth century of the Bretons as trying to entice away the slaves (*mancipia*) belonging to a man in his part of Gaul whom he describes, in his lordly way, as 'humilis obscurus despicabilisque' (*Epist.* III.ix.2). However, we must remember that the various terms in Greek and Latin which are usually translated 'poor' can sometimes refer to quite well-to-do people: an extreme example is Demosthenes XVIII.108, where we find applied to the 1,500 particularly wealthy Athenians who between 357 and 339 were saddled with paying for the trierarchy not merely the word *penētes* but even *aporoī*, a term normally kept for those who had no property at all, or virtually none.

In the Classical and Hellenistic periods, contrary to what is sometimes said (e.g. by A. H. M. Jones, *SAW* in *SCA* [ed. Finley] 3, and *AD* 13), a great deal of slave labour in many Greek states (including Athens) was employed on the land, which, as we have seen (in Section iii of this chapter), was always by far the most important sector of the ancient economy. I have had to relegate the evidence to Appendix II, not because the subject is unimportant, but because it consists mainly of small scraps which would be uninteresting and indeed often unintelligible to all but Classical scholars.

Even after the use of slaves in agriculture had declined (a process we shall trace in IV.iii below), many were still so engaged. The legal writers represented in the *Digest* have much to say about slaves and relatively little about hired labour; letting to tenants is much in view, but perhaps not quite as much as we might have expected. It is simply impossible to make even an informed guess about the proportion of agricultural work done by slaves and free peasants respectively. My impression is that, over all, direct cultivation by slaves was steadily giving way to letting to tenants during the first three centuries of the Christian era, although perhaps at very different rates in different parts of the Roman empire. But, as I shall show in IV.iii, the fact that land is leased must certainly not be taken to exclude its being made to yield a greater profit to the landowner and/or the tenant by the use of slaves, who may belong to the lessee or may be supplied by the landlord as part of what the Roman lawyers called the *instrumentum* (the equipment) of the farm. Sometimes, perhaps, the absence of specific evidence for slave labour may suggest that relatively few slaves were being used; but it is very rarely that the evidence can legitimately be pressed in that way, since in most areas at most periods large numbers of slaves could easily be present without leaving behind any recognisable sign of their existence. In particular, above all where the evidence for slaves and freedmen is mainly epigraphic (as it often is), we must expect to find two complicating factors: slaves employed in managerial capacities, especially of course those who emerged as freedmen, are likely to be heavily over-represented (in epitaphs, for instance); and among ordinary slaves, agricultural ones are less likely to appear than domestics or those engaged in some form of manufacture. In this connection it is useful to glance at the excellent article by Stéphane Gsell, *ERAR* (which I may have no

occasion to mention elsewhere, since it deals entirely with Roman Africa), pointing out that the slaves revealed to us by the African inscriptions were not, in general, humble agricultural workers: these, as he says, 'disparaissaient sans laisser aucune trace' (*ERAR* 402). In some periods, especially the Middle and Later Roman Empire, we may find reason to conclude, at least for many areas, that slaves and freedmen were indeed relatively few and were concentrated at the top end of the working scale, fulfilling mainly managerial functions. This, however, must not lead us to depreciate the importance of slavery in production,<sup>13a</sup> but rather the reverse, for there could be nothing of greater interest to the propertied classes than making the largest possible profit out of their landed estates, and the direction and control of the labour on those estates must always have been a matter of the first importance. A good steward was highly valued. As I show in Section vi of this chapter and in Appendix II below, it was assumed in Classical Athens that the overseer of a farm would necessarily be a slave; and the same is probably true of the rest of the period with which this book deals. Free Greeks and Romans disliked taking permanent employment as managers (see again Section vi of this chapter). In the Roman agricultural writers the *vilici* (stewards or bailiffs) and their subordinates are assumed to be slaves, and I have no doubt that they were so in reality. (I have not tried to collect the epigraphic evidence, but as far as I am aware it confirms the literary sources.) Needless to say, competent *vilici* would be required to supervise hired labourers just as much as slaves, in so far as such men were used – mainly at the peak periods of agricultural activity, but also occasionally for special jobs (see Section vi of this chapter). Sometimes in the Roman period slave (or freedmen) managers are found in control of slaves; in other cases they seem to be mainly supervising *coloni*: see IV.iii below and its n.54. As I point out there, such men were playing a role of great importance in providing the propertied classes with their incomes. In the Later Roman Empire slaves (and freedmen) certainly remained prominent as stewards or bailiffs or overseers or agents (*actores* now, or *procuratores*; in Greek, *pragmateutai* or *epitropoi*), and indeed are an actual majority among men in that capacity who are referred to in the literary, legal and papyrological sources for the Later Empire,<sup>14</sup> even when their masters' lands are mainly let to *coloni* rather than worked by direct slave labour. Slavery, then, was still fulfilling an essential role in production at the very time when it is generally supposed to have been 'in decline' – as indeed it was in some degree, at lower levels.

At the same time, domestic slavery continued on a large scale in the Later Roman Empire in the households of members of the propertied classes, and it was accounted a great misfortune by many of the well-to-do (by no means only the very rich) not to be able to possess a full number of domestic servants. Two examples will suffice. I have referred above to the well-known speech in which the leading teacher of rhetoric at Antioch in the late fourth century sought to arouse pity for the sad plight of some of his assistants, who were so under-paid, according to him, that they could afford only two or three slaves, if that (Liban., *Orat.* XXXI.9-11). The other text is rarely if ever noticed, no doubt because it comes from the *Acta* of the Church Council of Chalcedon, which are read by few but ecclesiastical historians, and perhaps not in bulk by many of them, since a large part of the contents is (or ought to be) rather painful reading for those

who wish to believe that the deliberations and decisions of orthodox bishops may be expected to reveal the workings of the Holy Spirit. At the third session of the Council, on 13 October 451, four documents were presented attacking Dioscorus, the Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria, whom the Catholics were determined to discredit and depose. Three of the four complainants made great play with accusations that Dioscorus had reduced them to beggary. One, a priest named Athanasius, asserted that as a consequence of Dioscorus' persecution of him he had had to give a bribe of no less than 1,400 pounds of gold to Nomus, the powerful *magister officiorum* of Theodosius II, to prevent himself from being kept in prison indefinitely, and that he had been robbed of all his other property as well, with the consequence that he was driven to live by begging, with 'the two or three slaves [*mancipia*] that remained' to him! (*Acta Conc. Oec.* II.iii.2.36-7 = 295-6, ed. E. Schwartz; Mansi VI.1025-8).

It is not my intention here to give anything like a complete account, even in outline, of slavery in the ancient Greek world – a subject on which the bibliography is already enormous. (See the *Bibliographie zur antiken Sklaverei*, ed. Joseph Vogt [Bochum, 1971], containing 1,707 items, to which many additions could now be made.) Slavery will of course come up in various ways in other parts of this book, especially IV.iii below. But I think I ought at least to explain why at Athens and in the other Greek cities where slavery was already highly developed in the Classical period we never hear of slave revolts – although a few such revolts did develop in various parts of the Mediterranean world in the Hellenistic period, particularly in the 130s-70s B.C.<sup>15</sup> The reason is simple and obvious: the slaves in each city (and even in many cases within single families and farms and workshops) were largely imported 'barbarians' and very heterogeneous in character, coming from areas as far apart as Thrace, South Russia, Lydia and Caria and other parts of Asia Minor, Egypt, Libya and Sicily, and sharing no common language or culture. The desirability of choosing slaves of different nationalities and languages was well recognised in antiquity, and it is stressed by several Greek and Roman writers as an indispensable means of preventing revolts: see Plato, *Laws* VI.777cd; Arist., *Pol.* VII.10, 1330<sup>a</sup>25-8; Ps.-Arist., *Oecon.* I.5, 1344<sup>b</sup>18; Athen. VI.264f-5a; Varro, *RR* I.xvii.5. Serfs in any given area, on the other hand, would normally be of a single ethnic stock, likely to retain a measure of uniformity and common culture, and for that reason could be expected to feel some solidarity and be more collectively troublesome to their masters, especially if they were in a position to receive help from their masters' enemies. As we shall see presently, the Helots of the Spartan area (particularly the Messenians) and to a less extent the Thessalian Penestai were a perpetual danger to their lords.

We often hear of the flight of individual slaves; but if they were of real value to their masters they would not perhaps, in normal times, have much chance of achieving their freedom, as their masters would use all available means of recapturing them. Dio Chrysostom could take it for granted that a man buying a slave would enquire 'if he ever ran away and would not remain with his former master' (XXXI.42). One particular Greek slave of Cicero's, Dionysius, an educated man whom his master used as a reader (*anagnōstēs*), and who had absconded in 46 B.C. with a number of valuable books from Cicero's library, puts in an appearance in no fewer than four letters in our collection of Cicero's

correspondence (*Ad Fam.* XIII.lxxvii.3; V.ix.2; xi.3; xa.1). Vatinius, commanding in Illyricum, where Dionysius was last seen at Narona, promised Cicero that he would not give up until he had secured the man; but whether he was able to do so we do not know. We occasionally hear of the flight of slaves *en masse*, but only, I think, in time of war. By far the most famous text is Thucydides VII.27.5, speaking of the desertion of 'more than 20,000 slaves' from Attica during the Spartan occupation of Decelea in the late fifth century B.C. (I have said something about this in Appendix II below.)

In the background, always, was the fact that fellow-citizens could be relied upon, in Xenophon's phrase, to act as unpaid bodyguards of one another against their slaves (*Hiero* IV.3). There is a fascinating passage in Plato in which this theme is expanded (*Rep.* IX.578d-9a). Socrates, with the monotonously enthusiastic assent of Glaucon, is developing his ideas on the subject of tyranny. He speaks of rich men in cities who resemble the tyrant in owning many slaves and yet live in security and are not at all afraid of them. The reason (supplied for once by Glaucon) is said to be that 'the whole city protects each single individual'. Socrates agrees, and he goes on to invite Glaucon to contemplate the case of a man owning fifty slaves or even more, suddenly wafted away by some god, with his wife and children and all his slaves and other property, to some desert place, where there is no free man to assist him. And what is likely to happen then? Why, the man will be terrified of an uprising of his slaves in which he and his family will be massacred. He will therefore be obliged to fawn upon some of the slaves and, against his own wishes, to give them their freedom, as the only possible means of escaping destruction. And it is only now, if you please, and not before, that the precious pair see the slaveowner as having become a *kolax therapontōn*, a parasite on his own servants!

II. SERFDOM. There are essential differences between the slave and the serf, for 'serfdom is not slavery; it is a status intermediate between slavery and complete freedom' (Greenidge, *Slavery* 24). For a slave to become a serf represents a real rise in status. The serf, in my sense, although 'not free to change his status' (according to the 1956 Convention), is not in theory, like the slave, his lord's property. I would prefer, however, to concentrate on the more practical side of the condition of the ancient serf, for the precise nature of his legal status is often unclear to us, owing to the nature of the evidence, and was sometimes a matter of dispute in antiquity, and the terminology used in our sources can on occasion be misleading. For example, although the Spartan Helots were certainly serfs rather than slaves in my scheme (see below), they are sometimes referred to specifically as slaves, as when they are called 'the slave population' (*hē douleia*) in the official treaty of alliance between Sparta and Athens in 421 (*Thuc.* V.23.3). And a Greek writer could easily apply the terminology of slavery to that part of the indigenous population of Asia which worked the land, often in serfdom and sometimes referred to as the *laoi*. Thus Strabo could say of the *laoi* of Iberia in the Caucasus (roughly the modern Georgia) that they were 'slaves of the kings' (*basilikoi douloi*, XI.iii.6, p.501). Again, as we shall see later, Theodosius I could declare in the early 390s that serf *coloni*, although legally free men, 'should be regarded as slaves of the very land to which they were born' (which of course did belong to their masters), and Justinian was perplexed by the similarity

of the legal powers exercised over both groups by the *dominus* and the *possessor*, as the master and the landlord are called respectively. No, in distinguishing the condition of the serf from that of the chattel slave I think we shall do better to concentrate on two characteristics that have not yet been mentioned.

First, the services which could legally be required of the serf were limited, at least in theory, either by legal enactment (a Roman imperial edict, for example) or by a compact entered into by his people, perhaps long ago, with conquering invaders, whose serfs they became (see below). Needless to say, the position of the serf has always been precarious: a local potentate might not scruple to disobey an imperial law; and how is a conquering people to be compelled to abide by its undertakings, even if given by treaty under oath? But the serf was never entirely without rights, as the slave might be. Secondly (and even more important, though often overlooked), serfs, because they were 'bound to the soil', could marry and have a fairly secure family life, whereas the slave, who could not legally 'marry' at all, had no redress if his master decided to sell him separately from the woman he regarded as his 'wife' and their offspring, until some time in the fourth century, when first *originarii* (whom I would identify with those described in the East as *adscripticii*, or *enapographoi* in Greek) and then, in c. 370, all those agricultural slaves who were 'enrolled in the tax register' rose to a quasi-serf position, in that it became illegal to sell them separately from the land they worked.<sup>16</sup> Next to the prospect of freedom itself, perhaps, nothing can be more important to those who are unfree than the knowledge that their family life at least is secure. The break-up of a slave family is the most effective of all threats against its members. As an ex-slave in the American Old South reminded sceptics, 'The agony at parting must be seen and felt to be fully understood' (Stampp, *PI* 348). A man there who claimed to have witnessed the sale of such a family only once said he 'never saw such profound grief as the poor creatures manifested' (Genovese, *RJR* 456). Genovese has collected much evidence about the deep attachments created among slaves in the Old South by their establishment of family life, which was in general allowed, even though slave 'marriages' were never legally recognised as such by any state (*ibid.* 452-8), any more than they were in antiquity (including the Christian Later Roman Empire). Indeed, the slaves were actually encouraged to create and maintain family relationships, which were commonly believed by their owners to make them more tractable - more 'attached to the plantation' and 'better and less troublesome workers' (*ibid.* 452, 454). As the author of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica* saw it, the children of slaves are as it were their hostages for good behaviour (see IV.iii, § 4 below). Thus, paradoxically, a feature of the serf's condition (his being 'bound to the soil') which is one of its greatest derogations from freedom will also - as compared with chattel slavery - work to his advantage if it prevents the master from separating him from the land on which he works or resides, with his family, as in the Later Roman colonate. Neglect of this vital feature of the serf's condition is noticeable in several recent treatments of the forms of subjection in antiquity (e.g. Lotze, *MED* 63 ff., esp. 67). Even the free peasant who became a serf would at least be secure against eviction, in theory at any rate.

The possibilities of variation in the condition of serfs are considerable, and we must not make the mistake of thinking that certain other peoples resembled the

Spartan Helots closely, either in their legal status or in their actual condition, simply because certain Greek writers came near to identifying them (see the next paragraph). It is hard to decide, in respect of most of the serf peoples we happen to know about, whether they went on living (as some did) in their traditional villages and thus enjoyed a relatively congenial form of dependence, or whether they lived on individual farms owned by the masters to whom they belonged, or to whom they were allocated, as the Helots, or most Helots, certainly did (see Lotze, *MED* 38).

The Helots of the Spartan area are by far the best known Greek serfs before the colonate of the Later Roman Empire. Their condition was so celebrated in the Greek world that - to give but four examples - the verb corresponding to their name, *heilôteuein*, could be used to convey an impression of the unfree status of another conquered people, the Mariandynoi of Heraclea Pontica (Strabo XII.iii.4, p.542); the Hellenistic historian Phylarchus felt that he could best convey the condition of the Bithynians subject to Byzantium by saying that the Byzantines 'exercised mastery [*desposai*] over the Bithynians as the Spartans over the Helots' (*FGrH* 81 F 8, *ap.* Athen. VI.271bc);<sup>17</sup> Theopompus, writing in the fourth century B.C., could say of the Illyrian Ardiaioi (Vardaei has been suggested as an emendation) that they 'owned 300,000 dependants [*prospelatai*] like Helots' (or 'as if Helots', *FGrH* 115 F 40, *ap.* Athen. X.443b = VI.271de); and the aged Isocrates, writing to Philip II of Macedon in 338 B.C. (*Ep.* III.5), could relish the prospect that Philip would 'compel the barbarians to *heilôteuein* to the Greeks'. (Isocrates, of course, was thinking of the non-Greek inhabitants of Asia.) Actually, we know of no precise parallels to the condition of the Helots, which was much debated in the Classical period (see Plato, *Laws* VI.776c), and a certain amount of oversimplification is involved by forcing it into any general category; but for convenience I shall treat them as the 'State serfs' they undoubtedly were. I need add nothing here to what I have said elsewhere about the Helots (*OPW* 89-93), but I should perhaps repeat the most extraordinary of all pieces of evidence about the relationship between the Helots and their Spartan masters, which comes from no less an authority than Aristotle (*fr.* 538, *ap.* Plut., *Lycurg.* 28.7). Every year, on taking office, the principal magistrates of Sparta, the ephors, made a formal declaration of war upon the Helots, so that they became enemies of the state, *polemioi*, and could be killed as occasion required, without bringing on the Spartans the religious pollution involved in putting to death, otherwise than by due process of law, anyone who was not officially a *polemios*. Declaring war on one's own work-force is an action so unparalleled (as far as I know) that we need not be surprised to find the relationship between Spartans and Helots unique in the Greek world.

When we speak of Helots and the hostility between them and the Spartans we are justified in thinking primarily (though not entirely) of the Messenians, who greatly outnumbered the Laconian Helots.<sup>18</sup> The Messenians were not only a single people: until the late eighth century they had been *hoi Messēnioi*, an autonomous political unit which had recently become, or was in process of becoming, an independent Greek *polis*, in the very area where they subsequently laboured for their Spartan masters. They had, therefore, a natural feeling of kinship and unity. After Messenia was liberated and became an independent *polis* again, in 369 B.C., the only Helots left were the Laconian ones, many

of whom were liberated subsequently, especially by Nabis in the early second century B.C. By the end of the Roman Republic at the latest the status of Helot had ceased to exist, for Strabo, who calls the Helots 'State slaves, in a sense' (*tropon tina dêmosioi douloi*), says that they existed 'until the Roman supremacy' (VIII.v.4, p.365), and this can only mean the second century B.C. (or conceivably the first) – for Strabo would have used quite a different expression had the Helots remained such down to the time at which he was writing, the early first century of the Christian era.<sup>19</sup>

The other main serf people of mainland Greece, the Penestai of Thessaly,<sup>20</sup> also gave their masters much trouble in their efforts to free themselves, according to Aristotle (*Pol.* II.9, 1269<sup>a</sup>36-7; cf. only *Xen.*, *HG* II.iii.36). The subject Cretans whom Aristotle compares to the Helots and Penestai were much less of a problem: Aristotle attributes this in one place to their comparative isolation from the outside world (*Pol.* II.10, 1272<sup>b</sup>16-22) and in another to the fact that Cretan cities, although they often fought with one another, never entered into alliances with each other's disaffected *perioikoi* (as he calls them, *Pol.* II.9, 1269<sup>a</sup>39-b<sup>2</sup>), whereas the Spartan Helots and Thessalian Penestai received help from states which were at enmity with their masters (*ibid.* 1269<sup>b</sup>2-7).

When we hear of alleged *douloi* who were regularly used as soldiers, we are justified in regarding them as serfs rather than slaves. According to the Hellenistic historian Agatharchides of Cnidus, individual Dardanians (an Illyrio-Thracian people) possessed a thousand or more such *douloi*, who in time of peace farmed the land and during war fought in regiments commanded by their masters (*FGrH* 86 F 17, *ap.* Athen. VI.272d). This may remind us of certain Demosthenic passages (cited in n.20) which show large bodies of Thessalian Penestai fighting under the command of their master.

I have explained above that until the Later Roman Empire we can identify only isolated *local* forms of serfdom in the Greek world. Pollux, in the famous passage I have quoted, mentions only quite early forms, which (as I have suggested) had probably long since ceased to exist. Only one of his peoples 'between slave and free', the Mariandynoi, lived in Asia, and they had been subjected not by one of the new Hellenistic foundations but probably as far back as the sixth century B.C., soon after the Milesians founded their colony at Heraclea. We do, however, have evidence of the existence of serfdom during the Hellenistic period at various places in Asia Minor and Syria – mainly, though not quite exclusively, in the area which was hellenised only in the time of Alexander onwards. Unfortunately, although this subject has been much discussed over the last two generations, nothing like agreement has yet been reached, mainly because there is surprisingly little clear evidence, and many scholars have not taken a broad enough view but have generalised from the few fragments of evidence on which they have concentrated. The whole question is much too complicated to be discussed at length here, and I shall present only a summary of the views I hold, which I may be able to justify in detail elsewhere.

I must begin this brief discussion of Hellenistic serfdom by insisting that we must never be surprised to find very great variations in land tenure from one area to another and even within a given small area. How wide such variations can be within a single country, even today, emerges particularly well from a standard work on land tenure in modern Iran, before the reform of 1962: Ann

K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (1953, enlarged repr. 1969). A reading of at least chapters 13-18 and 21-2 of that book might do something to lessen the over-confidence of modern scholars who do not hesitate to generalise about land tenure in Seleucid Asia Minor and Syria or the Pergamene kingdom on the basis of a handful of isolated and often fragmentary texts. Again, if we look for comparison at mediaeval Europe we can find numbers of local exceptions to almost any rule we try to formulate. If our evidence were as bad for fourteenth-century England as it is for Hellenistic Asia Minor, and we happened to possess only the records (very well analysed by Eleanor Searle) of Battle Abbey in Sussex, dealing with the manor of Marley after its creation in 1310, we might have imagined that a manorial estate at that time consisted of nothing but 'demesne land', worked entirely by free wage-labour, with no sign of serfdom or even of labour-rents (then still almost universal in southern England), and that it practised full 'convertible husbandry', which did not in fact become standard practice for some generations.<sup>21</sup>

The Achaemenid kings of Persia (with their satraps)<sup>22</sup> and their Macedonian successors created new forms of property ownership, mainly by distributing large areas of land to their favourites and (on very different terms) to some of their soldiers; but there is every reason to think that they allowed ancient customs to persist, to some extent at least, as far as those who actually worked the land were concerned; and this would allow many local peculiarities to survive. I should like, in passing, to register a doubt concerning the view, so popular in modern times, that the Achaemenids claimed to be actual owners of all the land in their kingdom, in a sense more real than the modern fiction of the ruler's 'eminent domain'. In mid-ninth-century Israel, certainly, the king enjoyed no such rights: this emerges clearly from the splendid story in I Kings xxi, in which King Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard but is unable to compel him to transfer it to himself, even by sale or exchange, until the evil Queen Jezebel contrives to have Naboth judicially murdered, whereupon it seems that his property is forfeited to the king – with fatal consequences to that wicked man.<sup>23</sup> Whether or not the Achaemenid monarchs claimed to be the owners of all the land in the Persian empire, it was natural for the Macedonian kings, from Alexander onwards, to assert their rights of conquest in the East and to regard themselves as invested with the ownership of all 'spear-won territory' (see e.g. Diod. XVII.17.2) outside the area of those Greek cities which they were graciously prepared to recognise as such (cf. V.iii below).<sup>24</sup> Even within the vast area of 'king's land', however, there existed several different varieties of tenure (see Kreissig, *LPHO*, esp. 6-16); and below the holders who occasionally appear in our sources it is likely that ancient forms of tenure mainly persisted at first.

If, when interpreting the epigraphic evidence for land tenure in Asia in the Hellenistic period, we allow the Greek to mean what we have every right to expect it to mean, there is not the slightest doubt that serfdom, in one form or another (not necessarily always the same), is among the variety of tenures with which we are confronted. There are a few documents recording the sale or gift of land which include its occupiers in the sale or gift and yet give reason for thinking that some at least of these occupiers, especially those called *laoi* or *basilikoi laoi* (the native population), were not slaves. Now it may well be that the conveyance of land with its occupants makes it highly probable that those

occupants, if not slaves, are serfs, bound to the soil, whether to a particular farm or to their village community. (As we shall see later, we find both these types of restriction of peasant movement in the Later Roman colonate.) But I do not think we can be absolutely certain that these people are indeed serfs, in cases in which we have no further evidence of their condition: they may have been mentioned with the land simply because they were the more or less hereditary tenants, who could be *expected* to continue working the land as before and who would therefore constitute a most valuable asset, at any rate if agricultural labour was not otherwise easily obtainable. To borrow a technical expression from English law – they might be thought to constitute a kind of ‘goodwill’ in the land: to make an important contribution to its value by creating a high probability that it would not lack families to work it, just as the ‘goodwill’ that goes with a shop in modern England, for example, may greatly increase its selling value. However, at least one famous mid-third-century inscription, a sale of land by the Seleucid King Antiochus II to his divorced queen, Laodice, does make it virtually certain that the *laoi* who are sold with the land were indeed serfs. The king’s letter says that he has sold to Laodice for 30 talents, free of royal taxation, Pannoukome (or the village of Pannos) with its land, ‘and any inhabited places [*topoi*] that may be in it, and the *laoi* that belong to it, with all their households and with the income of the [current] year,<sup>25</sup> . . . and similarly any persons from this village being *laoi* who have moved away to other places’ (Welles, *RCHP* 18.1–13). It is a fact, certainly, that some of the *laoi* are said to have gone to live elsewhere, very probably in a place of greater security (cf. *RCHP* 11.22–5); but there can be no reasonable doubt (in spite of recent assertion to the contrary)<sup>26</sup> that the document records an out-and-out sale to Laodice, in terminology which is as explicit as it could be, and that the *laoi* of the village in question were included in the sale, even if some of them had moved away – Laodice, having acquired title to them, is obviously to have the right to recall them, if she so desires, to the village, which now belongs to her and to which they are evidently regarded as bound.

A famous Vienna papyrus of 260 B.C. (*PER* Inv. 24552 gr. = *SB* V.8008),<sup>27</sup> aimed at giving some protection against indiscriminate enslavement to the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine, then subject to Ptolemy II, refers to the purchase of *sōmata laika* (lines 2, 22) by private individuals, and provides that if the *sōmata* in question were *oiketika* when acquired they can be retained, but that if *eleuthera* they are to be taken away from their purchasers (unless sold to them by agents of the king), and that in future *sōmata laika eleuthera* must not be sold or given in pledge except in specified circumstances arising in fiscal matters. The Greek word *sōmata* (literally ‘bodies’) is very often, though not always, used of slaves; the noun *oiketēs*, from which *oiketika* is derived, is uncommon in Ptolemaic papyri but when it is used seems almost always to designate slaves; and the adjective *laika* comes from *laos*, a word reserved for indigenous inhabitants, ‘natives’ (cf. I.iii n. 13 below). According to Biezuńska-Małowist this ordinance is dealing with ‘une main-d’oeuvre libre mais dépendante’; and in Rostovtzeff’s view it was probably directed ‘against the endeavours of certain people to enslave free workmen, chiefly by transforming Oriental bondage resembling slavery into regular slavery of the Greek type’; he adds that ‘this may be the basis of the distinction made in the Vienna papyrus between the *sōmata laika eleuthera*

(Oriental bondage) and the *sōmata onta oiketika*’.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the former group (the *eleuthera*) may well have been, or at least included, those who were completely free. We do not yet have enough information about land tenure in Syria in the third century to be precise.

It also seems probable that what I call serfs are referred to in inscriptions mentioning *oiketai* (or *oiketia*, e.g. *SIG*<sup>3</sup> 495.112–13)<sup>29</sup> and in other epigraphic and literary sources.<sup>30</sup> Among inscriptions I wish to mention only the famous one of Mnesimachus, inscribed on a wall of a temple of Artemis (Cybele) at Sardis in western Asia Minor, probably around 200 B.C., and recording a conveyance – not, as used to be supposed, a mortgage – of Crown land near Sardis by Mnesimachus, to which he did not have an indefeasible freehold title.<sup>31</sup> The inscription mentions both ‘the *laoi* and their households with their belongings’ (who seem to be described as ‘attached to the plots’ and are apparently liable to rents in money and labour), and also *oiketai*, who are usually taken to be slaves. I will only add that in Ptolemaic Egypt we hear of peasants, often *basilikoi geōrgoi* (‘cultivators of Crown land’), who were undoubtedly free in the technical sense that they were not slaves and cannot properly be described as serfs either, but were subject to very strict controls and supervision to a greater extent than any other non-serf peasants I have come across in the Greek world.<sup>32</sup>

There is, however, even better evidence of the existence of serfdom in Hellenistic Asia, which is sometimes neglected by those who study the subject,<sup>33</sup> perhaps because it comes mainly from the beginning of the Roman period, in the pages of the Greek geographer Strabo, who lived at Amaseia in Pontus, on the southern shore of the Black Sea, and who wrote under Augustus and Tiberius. Certain passages in Strabo prove conclusively the existence of what I am calling serfdom on some of the temple estates in Asia Minor; and other evidence to the same effect is furnished by some remarkable inscriptions of the kings of Commagene (in north-eastern Syria), of the middle and late first century B.C. This evidence relates specifically to what are called ‘hierodules’ (*hierodouloi* in Greek),<sup>34</sup> literally ‘sacred slaves’, and perhaps best described in English as ‘temple-servants’. My own belief is that the generic form of tenure of these hierodules (which I shall describe immediately), far from being exceptional and limited to temple-lands, is very likely to be one of the most ancient kinds of land tenure in Asia, which happens to have survived long enough to allow us to find a specific description of it simply because the land was sacred and belonged to temples, and was therefore not subject to the normal vicissitudes of private ownership, which might involve fragmentation (as a result of inheritance, as well as sale) and alteration of the terms of occupation. I must add that my position is not at all the same as that of Sir William Ramsay, who believed that all or most of Asia Minor once consisted of temple-states, the lands of many of which were confiscated by the Hellenistic kings. Ramsay’s theory has been thoroughly refuted by Jones (*GCAJ* 309–10 n.58). What I have suggested is quite different: that the examples of ‘sacred’ serfdom which we find existing in the temple-estates in the late Hellenistic period are likely to be survivals of forms of serfdom that had earlier been widespread in Asia.

I find it particularly significant that in at least two of the main texts mentioning hierodules we hear of a feature of their condition which is also found in the case of three other peoples identified as serfs in the Classical period: Spartan Helots,

Thessalian Penestai, and Mariandynoi of Heraclea Pontica.<sup>35</sup> This feature is that they cannot be sold off the land on which they reside. Strabo says that when Pompey (in 64–63 B.C.) made his favourite Archelaus priest of the important temple of Ma (or Enyo) at Comana in Pontus, he made him ruler of the whole principality and master of the hierodules who lived there, to the number of at least 6,000, 'except that he was to have no power to sell them' (XII.iii.32–6, esp. 34, p.558). This, I think, is likely to have been a recognition of a long-existing situation. Inscriptions from Commagene, including the famous one set up by Antiochus I of that country on the Nimrud Dagh (in south-eastern Turkey), are even more specific: they not only provide (in the words *mēte eis heteron apallo-triōsai*) that the hierodules and their descendants are not to be alienated but also forbid their reduction to slavery (*mēte . . . katadoulōsasthai*), thus providing conclusive proof that the hierodules, in spite of their name, were not technically slaves (see esp. *IGLSI*.1 = *OGISI*.383, lines 171–89).<sup>36</sup> Strabo mentions several other sets of hierodules, including 'more than 6,000' at Comana in Cappadocia, of whom the priest of Ma was *kyrios*, master (XII.ii.3, p.535), and 'almost 3,000' in a settlement belonging to the temple of Zeus of Venasa in Morimene (also in Cappadocia, id. 6, p.537). These temples, and others in the more remote parts of Asia Minor,<sup>37</sup> had evidently preserved the ancient way of life on their estates. On the lands of some other temples serfdom had decayed, no doubt owing to Greek or Roman influence. The temple of Men Ascaënus in the territory of Pisidian Antioch, for example, had once had a number of hierodules, but this situation had come to an end in Strabo's own time (XII.viii.14, p.577; and see Levick, *RCSAM* 73, 219). There were also fewer hierodules in Strabo's day than in earlier times at the temple of Anaitis at Zela in Pontus, where the priest had once been 'master of everything' (*kyrios tōn pantōn*); Strabo describes the Zela of his own day as 'for the most part a small town [*polisima*] of hierodules' (XI.viii.4, p.512; XII.iii.37, p.559). There are also many temple estates in Asia Minor (and at least one in northern Phoenicia), recorded by Strabo or known from other sources (almost entirely epigraphic), where hierodules are not specifically mentioned but where they, or other serfs, are very likely to have existed.<sup>38</sup> Outside Asia, and especially in Egypt, we hear of temple-servants who may well have been serfs, but the evidence is rather obscure.<sup>39</sup> I am ignoring here other types of hierodules, such as the sacred prostitutes whom we hear of in some places in the Greek East (Pontic Comana, for instance), and even in Greece itself (at Corinth) and in Sicily (at Eryx).<sup>40</sup>

The material I have adduced proves beyond question that forms of serfdom existed in Asia in Hellenistic times, almost certainly as a survival from earlier regimes. It is essential to realise, however, that these forms of serfdom tended to dissolve as a result of contact with the more advanced Greek and Roman economy (above all, no doubt, when the land came into the ownership or under the control of Greeks or hellenised natives or of Romans), and after a few generations virtually ceased to exist, except as part of very conservative complexes such as the temple estates I have discussed above and in remote areas little affected by the Graeco-Roman economy, like Iberia/Georgia (see above). Until the introduction of the Later Roman colonate (for which see IV.iii below) serfdom failed to maintain itself in the Greek world (or, as we shall see presently, in the rest of the Roman empire), and when it disappeared in a particular area,

there is no sign that it was re-established.

It has been claimed recently by some Marxist scholars, especially (in their different ways) Kreissig and Briant,<sup>41</sup> that the dependent condition in Asia which I call serfdom (as does Kreissig, though not Briant) is a form of production basically different from the Hellenic one, and that in the Hellenistic kingdoms we should recognise the existence of what Marx himself and some of his followers have called the 'Oriental' or 'Asiatic' mode of production. I cannot do better than cite part of the last paragraph of Kreissig's latest article, which is conveniently written in English and is a most useful collection of material on Hellenistic land tenure. According to his view, in the forms of tenure he specifies, which include by far the greater part of the land in Hellenistic Asia, 'the laoi-system, dependent labour in the form of serfdom, overwhelmingly predominates . . . In the most basic section of production, in agriculture, the Orient in Hellenistic times is profoundly Oriental, not at all Greek. 'Hellenism' was confined to elements of social superstructure' (LPHO 26).

I cannot accept this as it stands, for the following reasons:

1. The existence of an 'Oriental' or 'Asiatic' mode of production seems to me a useless and even misleading conception, evolved by Marx on the basis of what can now be seen as a seriously defective knowledge of the Oriental world (though based on the best sources available in his day), and far too imprecise to be of any value in historical or sociological analysis. I cannot believe that anyone who has read the works of Perry Anderson and Daniel Thorner cited in I.iv n.15 below could still wish to cling to this outmoded notion. Pre-Classical modes of production (cf. I.iv above) need to be characterised quite differently and much more specifically.

2. Even if we assume for the moment that an 'Oriental/Asiatic' mode of production is a concept worth employing, there is a decisive argument against seeing the serfdom of Hellenistic Asia as an example of it, which takes the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Around A.D. 300, with the introduction of the Later Roman colonate, serfdom reappeared, this time imposed and maintained by the Roman imperial government and on a much larger scale than ever before, increasing both in geographical scope and in severity as time went on, and becoming the predominant mode of production. As we shall see (in IV.iii below), all working tenants and even working freeholders were originally bound to the land, some to their actual plots, others to their villages. This was serfdom indeed, not fundamentally different, as a mode of production, from some of the earlier forms we have noticed in Greece and Asia. If we were to treat the serfdom of the early Hellenistic period as 'non-Hellenic', as an 'Oriental/Asiatic' mode of production, then we should be ineluctably driven to consider the Later Roman Empire as having that mode of production – a notion which is patently ridiculous.

3. Kreissig himself admits that in an area such as Priene, 'an old Greek colony and not a new settlement of the Hellenistic period in Asia Minor, . . . chattel slavery . . . would have been quite normal' (LPHO 25). But before Alexander's conquests a very large part of the best land in western and south-western Asia Minor had been taken over by Greek colonists, who from the ninth century onwards founded walled settlements that grew into cities; and we can surely

suppose – badly informed as we are about methods of exploitation of agricultural land in Asia Minor – that the citizens of all the cities founded in Archaic and Classical times would have made use of slaves for agriculture when they could. The obvious exceptions would be cases where a pre-existing system of serfdom, or one that could be introduced at the conquest of the land, gave something like equal possibilities of exploitation; but the only certain pre-Hellenistic example we have of this in Asia, noticed by the Greeks as peculiar, is Heraclea Pontica (see above). (Of course there may have been other pre-Hellenistic instances of serfdom, but I know of no certain evidence of any, except perhaps the Pedieis in the territory of Priene.)<sup>42</sup> A goodly part of the coastal areas of Asia Minor (its most fruitful and populated regions) would therefore have to be removed from the category of an 'Oriental/Asiatic' mode of production, even if we were prepared to concede its existence in principle; and the existence of this area would be bound to have a powerful effect upon neighbouring districts.<sup>42a</sup>

4. As for the remainder of Asia Minor and Syria, Kreissig and others have hardly made sufficient allowance for the fact that serfdom there in the Hellenistic period was a very transitory phase, which evidently began to wane as soon as it was exposed to Greek (or Roman) influence. After going through all the evidence cited by Kreissig and Briant, I would emphasise that it is concentrated in the earliest part of the Hellenistic period, especially the late fourth century and the first half of the third, and that it is rare in the second century and ceases entirely thereafter, save in such exceptional cases as age-old temple estates or districts little exposed to Greek or Roman influence. After Strabo's time, until the introduction of the Later Roman colonate, there is virtually no evidence of the continued existence of serfdom, even in remote areas (cf. Rostovtzeff, *SEHWW* I.512), although of course our evidence is too poor to enable us to say confidently that it died out altogether. I conclude, therefore, that in the absence of special circumstances serfdom tended to decline in each area as soon as it came under Greek (or Macedonian) or Roman rule and was directly exposed to Greek or Roman influences – which spread by degrees farther and farther into Asia. However, although serfdom was not a major or necessary part of the original Graeco-Roman system of production, it was by no means entirely alien to that system: it certainly existed, as we have seen, as a *local* institution, at various places within the Greek world, sometimes maintaining itself for centuries in an area where it had become traditional. As I shall explain in IV.iii below, when the rate of exploitation achieved by slavery had become greatly reduced, and the Roman empire, if it was to survive, had to bear heavy additional burdens (especially a much enlarged army and civil service), serfdom was introduced from above on a grand scale, in the form of the Later Roman colonate. The existence of serfdom in the Hellenistic East, therefore, even in the fairly brief period during which it retained its importance, should not lead us to deny that that area was subjected to the standard Graeco-Roman method of production. Outright slavery, as the mode of production most favoured by the Greek and Roman propertied classes, must always have exercised a pervasive influence, even in areas where as yet it did not actually predominate. The vast wealth of the 'King's friends' of the Hellenistic period (cf. III.ii above & its nn.9-10 below), and of the leading citizens of many Greek cities at that time (including some of

those newly founded by the kings), must naturally have led to a rapid expansion of the area dominated by the Classical mode of production, in which slavery played a vital role; and slavery and the exploitation of free peasants who had emerged from serfdom then became the principal means by which the propertied classes acquired their surplus.

I must again insist that we know too little about systems of land tenure in Asia to be able to describe with confidence the methods by which the working agricultural population was exploited, either before or after they came under the direct control of Greek cities. In particular, we simply do not know what happened to the native population of each area, the *laoi* (no doubt consisting largely of serfs), when they were first taken over fully into the Greek economy. Even the moment at which we should conceive that change as happening is uncertain, but perhaps we should see it as essentially the transfer of the peasants concerned from 'king's land' (and probably the lordship of a native dynast or of a Hellenistic courtier who allowed the old system of exploitation to continue) to a Greek city. Not only were many new cities founded by the Hellenistic kings and the Roman emperors in Asia; many ancient villages and military cleruchies were eventually promoted to the status of cities;<sup>43</sup> lands were sometimes (how often, we cannot tell) transferred to favourites of the kings, with permission to 'incorporate' them in the territory of a city (see esp. Welles, *RCHP* 10-13 and 18-20);<sup>44</sup> and land could also be sold or given to a city by a king: we know of a sale to Pitane by Antiochus I, and of a gift by Ptolemy II to Miletus (*OGIS* 335.133 ff.; *SIG*<sup>3</sup> 322, § 38).

What, then, happened to the serf when he emerged from that condition? Again, the answer is that we do not know: we can only speculate, in deciding between certain alternatives. In principle, the alternatives are that when his condition changed he was likely to become either an outright slave or a free leasehold tenant – or conceivably a freeholder, but I would imagine that this was very rare at the initial stage, although the descendants of some ex-serfs might manage to acquire ownership of land eventually. Many Greeks who took over agricultural land from indigenous Asiatic owners must have been strongly tempted to treat serfs – to whose condition they would be unaccustomed – as chattel slaves, when they felt they could get away with it. And I agree with Rostovtzeff: 'I see nothing to prevent the kings, the chief priests, or the feudal [sic] lords of Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, and Paphlagonia from selling under one pretext or another some of their serfs to an agent of the Roman *publicani* [tax-farmers] or to a Delian slave dealer' (*SEHWW* III.1515 n.49). Let us concede, then, that some proportion – but an unknowable proportion – of former peasant serfs were reduced to full slavery.

On the other hand, many scholars have held that when former 'king's land' was absorbed by a city (whether ancient or newly founded) and became part of its territory, its *chōra*, those of the existing *laoi* who had been serfs ceased to be so and became free *paroikoi* or *katoikoi* of the city – not its citizens, and therefore possessing no political rights in it, but recognised free inhabitants. This was the view Rostovtzeff expressed in different places, with varying degrees of confidence, and it has often been stated as an undoubted fact by others.<sup>45</sup> A forthright expression of it is by Tarn, who says that 'the peasants *might* sometimes still be serfs, . . . but generally they became free hereditary 'settlers' (*katoikoi*), paying

taxes to the city, and their villages sometimes began to acquire a kind of corporate life . . . The Greek city then was a boon to the Asiatic peasant and tended to raise his status' (HC<sup>3</sup> 134-8, at 135).

The most persuasive argument for this theory, to my mind, is the absence of evidence for serf tenures in Roman Asia after Strabo's time and the apparent presence of large numbers of free peasants. Positive evidence of the conversion of serfs into free *paroikoi* or *katoikoi*, however, seems scarcely to exist. One inscription which is often quoted as evidence for this process, namely the letter of a Hellenistic king to Priene, of the third century B.C. (Welles, *RCHP* 8), seems to me of no value whatever in this connection: its interpretation, by Welles and others (even Kreissig, *LPHO* 24), seems to me greatly overconfident.<sup>46</sup> Again, in 133 B.C. the city of Pergamum gave its citizenship to all its registered *paroikoi* and certain other persons (mainly military), and at the same time promoted to the class of *paroikoi* various other groups, including public slaves (*dēmosioi*), the descendants of freedmen, and 'adult or youthful *basilikoi*' (*OGIS* 338.10-19, 20-6).<sup>47</sup> As in the inscription of Priene just mentioned, there is no mention of *laoi*. But who are the *basilikoi*? Some take them to be slaves, others serfs. I suspect that the ambiguous term *basilikoi* was used deliberately, to cover both statuses and any doubtful or intermediate cases.

Serfdom, then, did virtually disappear from Hellenistic and Roman Asia, but we have no means of telling how many ex-serfs became slaves and how many achieved a fully free status. I would guess that incorporation of their land in the territory of a city did tend to lead, in the long run, to a theoretically freer status, as most scholars have believed. This might be expected to enable them to make a rather more effective resistance to exploitation; but, on the other hand, they would still enjoy no political rights, and indeed their former position as serfs may have given at least some of them some traditional privileges (a limit, for example, on the rents or labour-services that could be demanded of them) which would no longer apply when they achieved a technically free status. Indeed their incorporation in what was to a certain extent a market-economy and a money-economy may well have led to increasing exploitation of them and to an increase in economic and social differentiation among them.

I need make only a brief mention of what I may call 'the Roman area': that part of the Roman empire which was not Greek according to my definition in I.ii above. Serfdom was not native to the original Roman area either, although some form of it may well have existed in Etruria (see above, and n.4 below). The Romans may have preferred to treat as free at least some of those coming under their control who were in some form of serfdom: I give three probable examples in a note,<sup>48</sup> one from Sicily, admittedly a Greek area in my sense.

It is time now to turn to the Later Roman colonate. It was only at the end of the third century of our era that legislation began to be introduced, subjecting to forms of legal serfdom the whole working agricultural population of the Graeco-Roman world. In outline, leasehold tenants (*coloni*) became serfs, bound either to their actual farms or plots or to their villages and almost as much subject to their landlords as were slaves to their masters, even though they remained technically *ingenui*, free men rather than slaves; working peasant freeholders too were tied, to their villages. There were appreciable differences between different

groups among the working agricultural population and between different areas: for the details, which need not concern us here, see IV.iii below.

As I have said before, neither in Greek nor in Latin had there been any general technical word for 'serf' or 'serfdom'; but the Latin word *coloni*, which had originally been used in the sense of 'farmer' or 'colonist' and during the Principate had increasingly come to mean 'lessee' of agricultural land, was commonly used from the reign of Constantine (the early fourth century) onwards to refer to men I call serfs. From A.D. 342 (*CTh* XII.i.33) the term *colonus* begins to appear, in the sense of the tied colonate (see IV.iii below). By the mid-fifth century we find the Latin term *adscripticii* (*enapographoi* or *enhyppographoi* in Greek) employed to designate those *coloni* who according to my definitions were strictly serfs (see IV.iii again). Even when the serf colonate was in full swing, however, the government found it difficult if not impossible to express the legal condition of the *coloni* satisfactorily without resorting to the terminology of slavery, which, as it realised, was not properly appropriate. (I shall deal with this subject rather more fully in IV.iii § 21 below.) The Emperor Justinian could show some exasperation at the difficulty he found in distinguishing between slaves and *adscripticii* (*CJ* XI.xlviii.21.1, A.D. 530). Earlier, in a constitution of c. 393, relating to the civil diocese of Thrace, the Emperor Theodosius I, while admitting that its *coloni* were legally 'of free status' (*condicione ingenui*), could qualify that statement by adding that they 'must be regarded as slaves of the very land to which they were born' (*servi terrae ipsius cui nati sunt aestimentur*), and he could speak of their *possessor* as exercising over them 'the power of a master' (*domini potestas*, *CJ* XI.lii.1.1). I need hardly add that of course it was impossible at law for land to own slaves or anything else: a fiction of that sort would surely have shocked a jurist of the Classical period of Roman law (the second and early third centuries), who would have condemned it as the legal nonsense it was. There were other attempts, which I shall record in IV.iii below (§ 21), to represent the land as endowed with some mysterious legal personality of its own, and exercising compulsion. I may add that in mediaeval Europe we encounter from time to time assertions that everyone is either free or a *servus* (see e.g. Hilton, *DSME* 9); but by then the word *servus* would often mean something more like 'serf' than 'slave'.

One cannot help remembering here the brilliant passages in two very early works of Marx, the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* (1843) and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844), describing the inheritor of an entailed estate as the property of that estate, inherited by the land, 'an attribute fettered to it', indeed 'the serf of landed property'! (*MECW* III.106, 266). But Marx, of course, was fully conscious of the paradox: he was writing in a very theoretical way and with great irony, while the Roman emperors were simply giving lame excuses for a situation which they knew to be anomalous under Roman law but were trying to justify.

I have gone into some detail on the question of the legal status of the *coloni* of the Later Empire, as seen by the Roman government, because it brings out most forcibly the dominant role that slavery in the strict sense always played in the minds of the Roman ruling class. They may grudgingly admit that their *coloni* are *ingenui* and not slaves; but they are driven by the subject condition of the *coloni* to apply to them all but the strictly technical terms of slavery – never simply



*servi* or *mancipia*, but *servi terrae* and similar expressions, which from the strictly legal point of view are mere metaphors. The very fact that Graeco-Roman society was still, so to speak, permeated with slavery and dominated by its ideology, I would suggest, strongly affected the institutions of serfdom that developed from the fourth century onwards (cf. the last part of IV.iii below).

I think it will be helpful if I speak briefly at this point about the use in Greek texts of the word *perioikoi*, often translated 'serfs', as for example in Ernest Barker's version of Aristotle's *Politics* and even in W. L. Newman's commentary thereon.<sup>49</sup> This translation is wrong: the essential characteristic of the *perioikos* was not at all that he was unfree (what we call a slave or serf), but that he was *without political rights in the state*. He would not be a slave, but he might not be a serf either. It was the Spartan *perioikoi* whom a Greek of the Classical period would naturally think of first, when he heard the term *perioikoi* used, and everyone knew roughly what the status of the Spartan *perioikoi* was: they were certainly not unfree and they had a certain amount of self-government in their settlements, which on occasion can even be called, inaccurately, *poleis* (see my *OPW* 345-6); but of course they had no political rights in the Spartan State.<sup>50</sup> Other communities of *perioikoi* are known to have existed in Greece itself in the territory of Argos, Elis and Thessaly, and outside the Greek mainland in Cyrene and Crete.<sup>51</sup> Aristotle wished the lands of his ideal State to be cultivated, if not by slaves, then by *barbaroi perioikoi* (*Pol.* VII.10, 1330<sup>a</sup>25-31; cf. 9, 1329<sup>a</sup>24-6); but since he goes on to speak of them as if they might all 'belong to' private owners or to the community, I am sure he would not have conceived them as necessarily in a state of freedom: surely in his mind they would be more like serfs. Aristotle was acquainted with Asiatic peoples who were in some form of serfdom or quasi-serfdom to their Greek conquerors, such as the Mariandynoi of Pontic Heraclea, whom I have mentioned above. (He had evidently studied the history of Heraclea Pontica.)<sup>52</sup> And Aristotle would doubtless think it perfectly natural for Greeks to accept the existence of serfdom in any non-Greek country they conquered. Similarly, when Isocrates, after complaining that the Spartans have compelled their neighbours (the Messenians) to *heilôteuein*, speaks of it as in their power to join with Athens in 'making all the barbarians into *perioikoi* of the whole of Hellas' (IV.131), he is surely thinking of a status comparable to that of the Spartan Helots rather than that of the Spartan *Perioikoi* – compare his letter to King Philip II of Macedon (which I quoted above when discussing the Helots), anticipating that Philip would compel the native inhabitants of Asia to *heilôteuein* to the Greeks (*Ep.* III.5).

Before leaving the subject of serfdom I must mention that the definition I have adopted (from the 1956 Convention) of serfdom and the serf may not appear at first sight identical with that which Marx seems to have had in mind when he used those terms, or German words of which they are legitimate English translations. In reality my conception is very similar to his: it merely lacks one element which sometimes, but not always, figures prominently in his view of serfdom. The immediate impression that emerges from some of the writings of Marx is that for him the outstanding characteristic of serfdom was 'labour rent' (*Arbeitsrente*): the obligation upon a man who is 'in possession of his own means

of production' to perform a substantial amount of labour on his lord's land. This is true in particular of Marx's main discussion of 'labour rent', in *Capital* III.790-4 (= *MEW* XXV.798-802), from which I have quoted elsewhere – it is one of the most important passages Marx ever wrote. At one point there he seems to be giving a brief description of serfs as 'those subject to enforced labour' (*Cap.* III.793). Whenever Marx wrote of serfdom, he was probably thinking primarily of a typical situation in Europe, involving, as he puts it, 'the peasant serf, such as he, I might say, until yesterday existed in the whole East of Europe. This peasant worked, for example, three days for himself on his own field or the field allotted to him, and the three subsequent days he performed compulsory and gratuitous labour on the estate of his lord' (*Wages, Price and Profit* ix, in *MESW* 211; cf. *Cap.* III.790).

I feel myself that the existence of 'labour rent' would tend to make the tenant more subservient to his landlord, especially in an economy where slave labour was not uncommon, for the tenant would be working directly under the orders of the landlord or his agent (*actor, procurator*) and might well become, in the eyes of the overseer, hardly distinguishable from a slave.

Now if 'labour rent', in the form of substantial personal service on the lord's land, is indeed an essential characteristic of the serf, then serfdom could hardly be said to have existed at all in antiquity, for there is no proof of the yielding of 'labour rent' on any substantial scale in the whole Greek or Roman world until a very late date, in the sixth century, when the Ravenna papyri disclose the existence of regular labour services for several days a *week*, whereas at other times and places in the ancient world we find at most only a few days' service a *year*, as in a famous series of inscriptions from north Africa (see IV.ii below and its nn.16-19). Yet, after all, the giving of actual labour service does not seem to have been, for Marx, a necessary feature of serfdom, for he can say of the man he calls, in English, a 'self-sustaining serf' ('a direct producer who is not free', but is subject to a 'direct relation of lordship and servitude') that his 'lack of freedom may be reduced from serfdom with enforced labour [*Leibeigenschaft mit Fronarbeit*] to a mere tributary relationship', presumably the payment of an ordinary rent in money or kind (*Cap.* III.790). And after distinguishing the serf from the slave (who 'works under alien conditions of production and not independently') he says of the serf that 'conditions of personal dependence are requisite, a lack of personal freedom, no matter to what extent, and being *tied to the soil* as its accessory, bondage [*Hörigkeit*] in the true sense of the word' (*ibid.* 791, my italics; *MEW* XXV.799). Similarly, in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844 Marx could say of the serf that he is 'the adjunct of the land' (*MECW* III.266), and in *Wage Labour and Capital* that he 'belongs to the land' (*MECW* IX.203). In the *Grundrisse* he speaks of the worker 'in the serf relation' as 'an appendage of the soil [*Zubehör der Erde*], exactly like draught-cattle' (368 = E.T. 465). In the first volume of *Das Kapital* (*MEW* XXIII.743) Marx describes the emergence of the wage-labourer under capitalism as taking place after he had ceased being 'attached to the soil' and '*leibeigen oder hörig* to another person'. (The standard English translation misleadingly renders the German words I have just quoted by 'slave, serf or bondsman', *Cap.* I.715.) Although Marx sometimes uses the terms *leibeigen* and *hörig* in a general sense of being subject to and dependent upon someone else and under his control, the words 'attached to

the soil' (*an die Schelle gefesselt*) prove beyond question that he was thinking here of the man I am calling a serf. So I think Marx would have accepted the man I have defined as a serf under that designation. Indeed, in a footnote in Vol. I of *Capital* (717-18 n.2), referring to the situation in Silesia in the late eighteenth century, he can use the expression 'diese serfs' which in *MEW* XXIII.745 n.191 is explained as 'Leibeigenen'. For such a condition he normally employs the term *Leibeigenschaft*, but sometimes *Hörigkeit*, apparently as an alternative name for the same status.<sup>53</sup> A passage in which he dwells upon the condition of the serf of mediaeval and modern times is *Cap.* I.235-8 (= *MEW* XXIII.250-4). Here he speaks again and again of *Leibeigenschaft* and *Fronarbeit*. I need only add that of course we must not take the use of the words 'serf' and 'serfdom' to imply any necessary connection with feudalism, even if we regard feudalism as necessarily involving forms of serfdom (cf. IV.v below). This point is made explicitly in a letter from Engels to Marx dated 22 December 1882. After expressing his pleasure at the fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of *Leibeigenschaft*, Engels continues, 'It is certain that *Leibeigenschaft* and *Hörigkeit* are not a peculiarly mediaeval-feudal form; we find them everywhere, or nearly everywhere, in places where conquerors have the land cultivated for them by the old inhabitants, e.g. very early in Thessaly.' Engels was of course thinking of the Penestai, of whom I have spoken briefly above. He and many others, he adds, had been misled by this about *Mittelaltersknechtschaft* (mediaeval servitude): 'one was much too inclined to base it simply on conquest'. (This letter of Engels is unfortunately omitted from *MESC* in the English version I normally refer to, of 1956; but it can be found on pp.411-12 of an earlier English edition, of 1936, which has a different selection of letters. The German text is in *MEGA* III.iv.587 and *MEW* XXXV.137.)

**III. DEBT BONDAGE.** I said earlier that debt bondage was a common phenomenon in the Greek world and we must not make the mistake of supposing that many other cities followed the example of Athens and abolished it entirely. As far as I know, we cannot name any other single city which certainly did away with debt bondage, and it is quite likely that many allowed even actual enslavement of defaulting debtors. The Sicilian Greek historian Diodorus, who visited Egypt and wrote his account of it (with much second-hand material) in the second third of the last century B.C., inspires no confidence when he attributes Solon's reform of the Athenian debt laws to borrowing from the legislation of the late-eighth-century Pharaoh Bocchoris; but he is surely speaking from his knowledge of the contemporary world when he declares that *most* Greek lawgivers, although they forbade the taking of indispensable articles such as weapons and ploughs as securities for debt, nevertheless allowed the debtors themselves to become *agōgimoi* (I.79.3-5), a technical term which would cover liability to both debt bondage and actual enslavement (*Plut.*, *Sol.* 13.4). We happen to know that one Alexandrian citizen could not be a slave to another (*P. Hal.* 1.219-21). Some other Greek cities evidently had the same rule as early Rome, that a citizen who was enslaved must be sold abroad (at Rome, 'trans Tiberim'); but we cannot be sure that this rule was universal (see Finley, *SSAG* 173-4). I think it virtually certain that forms of debt bondage existed at all times in the great majority of Greek cities. We often hear of laws being passed by Greek

cities, dealing with problems of indebtedness: Asheri, *LGPLD* (1969), discusses forty known examples in the half-millennium between 594/3 and 86/5 B.C.

Just as Latin words like 'servitus' and 'servire' were sometimes used (as we shall see presently) to mean either the merely temporary 'servitude' of a free man in debt bondage or the condition of a peasant serf who was 'free' only in the sense that he was not technically a slave, so in Greek we find applied to those in debt bondage words (even *doulos*) which ought to be reserved for the slave, as well as those which are most often applied to slaves (e.g. *sōmata*, literally 'bodies'). A fragment of Menander shows how wary we must be. Daos, in the *Hero*, asked if the girl he loves is a *doulē* (a slave), replies, 'Well, yes, in a sort of way' (*houtōs, hēsychēi, tropon tina*); and he goes on to explain that she and her brother are serving to work off a debt (*Hero* 18-40, esp. 20). This is evidently conceived as happening in Attica, for the setting of the play is the Athenian deme of Ptelea (line 22); but we must remember that all Menander's plays were produced in the generation following the destruction in 322 of the fifth/fourth-century Athenian democracy, when forms of debt bondage could well have crept in and even received at least tacit legal recognition (cf. V.iii below).<sup>54</sup> Some of our texts from the Classical period, if taken literally, suggest that in some Greek cities the consequence of defaulting on a debt might be actual enslavement or the sale of one's children (see e.g. *Lys.* XII.98; *Isocr.* XIV.48; *Ar.*, *Plut.* 147-8).<sup>55</sup> I doubt if Aristophanes, in the *Acharnians* (729-835), would have represented his Megarian as actually trying to sell his two daughters (who would then, of course, become the slaves of the buyer) unless such things were known to happen in the Greek world, even perhaps in places where they were contrary to law. According to Herodotus, writing in the third quarter of the fifth century, the Thracians – who were of course a non-Greek people, and incidentally provided Classical Greece with more slaves than any other 'barbarian' race – had a custom of selling their children abroad (V.6.1); and over six hundred years later Philostratus attributes to the Phrygians of Asia Minor (by then largely hellenised) a similar practice of selling their children (*Vita Apollon.* VIII.7). In both cases the sales are represented as outright; and although nothing is said of debt, we may suspect that usually the children would be sold as a substitute for the enslavement or debt bondage of the parents. (Diodorus says that the Gauls would give Italian merchants a boy, *pais* – as a slave, of course – in exchange for a jar of wine; but he gives as a reason not debt but the Gauls' love of wine and the 'accustomed avarice' of the Italian merchants, V.26.4.)

Arrest and imprisonment for debt seem to have been common in the cities of the Achaean League in the mid-second century (Polyb. XXXVIII.xi.10, B.C. 147-6). At Temnos in Asia Minor, in the last century B.C., we hear from Cicero of a man named Heracleides becoming 'addictus' to his surety, Hermippus, who had had to discharge his debt (*Cic.*, *Pro Flacc.* 42, 46-50, esp. 48-9). Although 'addictio' was also an institution of Roman law (mentioned below), entitling a creditor to seize his judgment debtor and imprison him or (in practice) make him work for him, it seems equally likely that this case would have been regulated by the local law of Temnos. The practice of seizure and imprisonment for debt was still rife in Egypt in A.D. 68, as shown by the famous edict of Tiberius Julius Alexander, the Roman Prefect, to which I shall return presently. And Plutarch, around A.D. 100, could speak of debtors being actually sold by

their creditors (*Mor.* 829e), and of others who fled for sanctuary to the temple of Artemis in Ephesus (828d), evidently to save themselves from seizure. The passages I have just referred to come from an invective against borrowing, usually known by the Latin translation of its title, *De vitando aere alieno* (*Mor.* 827d-832a). In this work Plutarch (828f) shows a pathetic inability to grasp the significance for the poor man of the law of Solon to which I have already alluded. At one point, too, he can remark that 'nobody lends to the poor man' (830d), while at another he says, 'Do you possess nothing? Don't borrow, for you won't be able to repay' (829f). In a passage which is almost unique in Greek literature in proffering advice to the very poor man on how to maintain himself (830ab), Plutarch tells him to gain a living by teaching reading and writing (*grammata didaskōn*); by acting as *paidagōgos*, which involved taking children to school, an action normally performed by slaves; by being a door-keeper (*thyrorōn*), another activity almost monopolised by slaves; or by going in for sailing (*pleōn*) or the coasting trade (*parapleōn*) – anything rather than becoming a borrower, for Plutarch well knew what that was likely to lead to. (I shall return to this passage in Section vi of this chapter, dealing with hired labour.)

Those who are familiar with the New Testament will remember the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, in Mt. XVIII.23-34, where Jesus, thinking as he always did in terms of the *chōra* of Palestine (see VII.iv below), is giving a vivid picture of the kind of thing that might well happen to someone who defaulted on a debt to a member of the family of Herod. The 'slave' (he is called *doulos* in the Greek), who owes his master, a king, the enormous sum of 10,000 talents, is very nearly sold up, with his wife and children; but he pleads for mercy, and his master remits the debt. The servant subsequently puts a 'fellow-slave' who owes him a mere 100 denarii under guard (or 'in prison'); but he himself ends up being 'delivered to the tormentors' until he has cleared off his own debt to his master. (The picture is complicated, from a strictly juristic point of view, by the fact that both the royal servants are called 'slaves'; but I think we need not bother about that.) The first servant is originally condemned by the king to be sold, with his family: this is permanent enslavement (*Versklavung*, *Schuld knechtschaft*). The second servant has temporary debt bondage (*Schuldhaft*) imposed upon him, by a powerful member of the king's household acting on his own authority: this is a form of what is often called 'personal execution'; and we may contrast this with Mt. V.25-6 and Lk. XII.58-9, contemplating the possibility of the enforcement of a debt through formal judicial process, leading to official imprisonment.<sup>56</sup> The first servant seems eventually to suffer debt bondage too, with torture thrown in; and here we need not consider too closely whether it is a form of 'personal execution' or an official condemnation by the king. In the Gospels, then, we can see three different sets of circumstances resulting from a debtor's default: outright enslavement, and debt bondage resulting either from 'personal execution' or from legal process. (There is, by the way, some interesting material on this subject in the Old Testament, above all Nehem. V.1-13, which reminds us of Solon's *seisachtheia*; also II Kings iv.1; Prov. XXII.7, and other references in Finley, SD 179 n.65.)

I am sure that there were many other places in the Greek East at about the beginning of our era where conditions would have been very similar to those described in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (and elsewhere in the Bible),

especially in areas ruled for a long time by kings or dynasts which had recently been incorporated, or were soon to be incorporated, in the Roman empire. It is not clear to me what lies behind the claim by the Roman client king, Nicomedes III of Bithynia, in 104 B.C., that 'most of the Bithynians had been carried off by [Roman] *publicani* and were serving as slaves in the [Roman] provinces' – an allegation which led the Roman Senate to decree that no citizen of an 'allied' state should be held as a slave in a Roman province (Diod. XXXVI.3.1-2). Perhaps, as Badian has suggested, the *publicani* had made loans to Nicomedes, and he had pledged some of his subjects to them as security (*PS* 87-8). In Ptolemaic Egypt, for which we have much information from the papyri, there is clear evidence both for outright enslavement for debt and for debt bondage;<sup>57</sup> but in the Roman period the latter seems to have replaced the former. It is difficult to generalise about Greek cities, because the evidence is so scanty, but it does look as if debt bondage largely superseded outright enslavement for debt during the Hellenistic period.<sup>58</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

So far, in speaking of debt bondage (and of actual enslavement for debt), I have been dealing with the Greek world in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. In Roman law, to which I must now turn (because it ultimately prevailed throughout the Greek world), the position of the defaulting debtor was in early times very bad indeed. His creditors might keep him in chains; and ultimately, according to the most probable interpretation of a laconic provision of the *Law of the Twelve Tables* (III.6), they might cut his body in pieces and divide the parts among themselves (*FIRA* I<sup>2</sup>.33-4; there is an English translation in *ARS* 10, cf. 14). Other interpretations have been suggested; but the ancient writers who are known to have mentioned this law, even if they were shocked by it, all took it in the literal sense (which I have accepted): Quintilian, Tertullian, Cassius Dio, and especially Aulus Gellius, who may well be conveying the opinions of a leading second-century jurist, Sextus Caecilius Africanus, represented by Gellius as praising the wholesome severity of the law in question (*NA* XX.i.19, 39-55). The wealthy Roman regarded a defaulting debtor who had been driven to borrow because of dire need, rather than for some speculative or luxurious purpose, almost as a kind of criminal. Alternatively a debtor, in early Roman times, might become subject to the mysterious *nexum*, an institution of the early Roman law (much discussed in modern times) whereby, most probably, a debtor in effect committed himself totally to his creditor as security, 'giving his labour [or 'labour power'] into servitude', as Varro put it (*suas operas in servitute*, *LL* VII.105); with the result that his creditor, if he defaulted (and perhaps even before that), could seize him, by the procedure known as *manus iniectio* or otherwise (possibly without even resorting to legal process), and deal with him as he wished, on default selling him as a slave and perhaps even putting him to death.<sup>59</sup> Historians are often content to say that *nexum* was abolished by the Lex Poetelia of (probably) 326 B.C. – and so indeed it may have been, in its full original form; but the position of the defaulting debtor remained precarious in the extreme. Modern Roman lawyers and historians usually say very little about his plight. I have found no account in the last half-century to equal the fundamental study by Friedrich von Woess in 1922 (*PCBRR*), which showed beyond

doubt that in practice what is commonly called 'personal execution' – that is to say, seizure by a creditor – always remained in the forefront as a means of coercing a defaulting debtor. This was also the position taken some thirty years earlier by Ludwig Mitteis, in his great work (quoted here as *RuV*), *Reichsrecht und Volksrecht in den östlichen Provinzen des römischen Kaiserreichs* (1891) 418–58 (esp. 442–4; 450 on the Principate; and 450–8 on the Later Empire).<sup>60</sup>

Von Woess understood particularly well the nature of the Roman state and its law, as an instrument of the propertied classes; for the propertyless, he realised, the state 'couldn't care less': 'Der antike Staat ist ein Klassenstaat, der nur für die führenden Schichten Interesse hat, das Schicksal der Besitzlosen ist ihm herzlich gleichgültig' (PCBRR 518).

Well before the end of the Roman Republic a procedure had been devised known as *bonorum venditio*: the 'selling up' of the whole of an insolvent debtor's property.<sup>61</sup> This, however, was not at all a benefit to the debtor, but rather an added penalty, as it did nothing to prevent 'personal execution' against the debtor himself or his being subsequently sued for anything that might still remain owing, and it also involved disgrace, *infamia*, and was regarded as a great misfortune (see esp. Cic., *Pro Quinct.* 48–51, characteristically exaggerated as the passage is).

The procedure known as *cessio bonorum*, instituted by Julius Caesar or Augustus,<sup>62</sup> enabled some few debtors to escape 'personal execution' (and *infamia*) by ceding all or most of their property towards discharge of their debts, and thus avoid being 'adjudged' to their creditors and dragged off to prison.<sup>63</sup> The earliest surviving imperial constitution I can find which refers to *cessio bonorum* shows that that is precisely what the alternative was: the cession of property is a *beneficium*, a privilege, *ne iudicati detrahantur in carcerem* (CJ VII.lxxi.1, of A.D. 223). But *cessio bonorum* was permissible, it seems, only for a man whose default was not blameworthy and was due to misfortune: fire, theft and shipwreck are mentioned (Seneca, *De benef.* VII.xvi.3; *CTh* IV.xx.1: see esp. von Woess, PCBRR 505–10). Papyri show that it might be available in principle even to a 'poor' man;<sup>64</sup> but such a person would surely be much less likely than a man of substance to be granted the privilege, and *ex hypothesi* it would be of no use to the propertyless.

A greater privilege, the appointment (by the praetor in Rome or by the provincial governor) of a special *curator*, to carry out *distractio bonorum*, the sale of enough of the debtor's property to satisfy his creditors, was available, at least before Justinian's day, only to an insolvent who was a person of great consequence, a *clara persona*: the examples given by Gaius, in *Dig.* XXVII.x.5, are a senator or his wife. It did not involve *infamia*.

Recent standard works on Roman law, however much they may disagree about the technical details of *manus iniectio*, *addictio*, and the *actio iudicati*, leave no doubt that in the Roman world 'personal execution' never ceased to exist. As Schulz says, 'The plaintiff was permitted to take the defendant home and to keep him there until the judgment was fulfilled . . . This execution on the person existed throughout the whole classical period [of Roman law, roughly the second century and the first half of the third], though it is but rarely mentioned in our sources. Some rules of classical law remain unintelligible if one does not remember this form of execution' (*CRL* 26–7).<sup>65</sup>

We hear of men referred to in Latin as *obaerarii* or *obaerati* in several different parts of the Graeco-Roman world who are evidently being made to labour under burdensome conditions as a result of having defaulted on debts (which of course may include rents);<sup>66</sup> and a number of isolated texts strongly suggest that creditors often imposed very harsh conditions on defaulting debtors (including tenants), making them work almost like slaves in order to discharge their liabilities.<sup>67</sup> Later evidence shows the prohibition of imprisonment of private debtors in the well-known edict of Tiberius Julius Alexander, prefect of Egypt in 68, to have been essentially a piece of propaganda for the new regime of the Emperor Galba and a mere flash in the pan.<sup>68</sup> 'personal execution' in Egypt in particular remained 'ineradicable' and 'pertinacious', as Mitteis insisted (*RuV* 55, 59, 447–50). Much would depend on the relative social position of creditor and debtor, always an important factor in the Roman world<sup>69</sup> and one which played an even greater role in the Later Empire (cf. VIII.i below). In a court case in A.D. 85 the prefect of Egypt expressed horror at the conduct of a creditor named Phibion: 'You deserve to be flogged,' he said, 'for keeping in your custody a man of quality (*euschēmōn*) and his wife' (*M. Chr.* 80 = *P. Flor.* 61 II.59–61).

Quintilian, writing his handbook on oratory in the late first century, could speak of debates on whether a man is a slave if at the time of his birth his mother was 'addicta' (serving a creditor as a bondswoman), and whether 'an *addictus*, whom the law orders to be in servitude [*servire*] until he has paid his debt', is a slave or not (*Inst. orat.* III.vi.25; VII.iii.26). (Of course there could be no possible doubt about the answers, from the proper legal point of view: the first man was born free, *ingenuus*, and the second was free also; but the very fact that such questions could be thought worthy of oratorical debate is significant.) And when Quintilian thinks it necessary to point out that 'being a slave is different from being in a state of servitude' (*aliud est servus esse, aliud servire*), it is the bondswoman, the *addictus*, whom he is setting beside the slave (V.x.60). A fragment, from the second century, of one of those curious rhetorical declamations in which orators displayed their often perverse ingenuity refers to an *addictus* in servitude to a money-lender, and asserts that 'an *addictus* never hopes for freedom' (Calpurnius Flaccus, *Declam.* 14, ed. G. Lehnert, 1903, pp.13–14). The statement is strictly untrue, of course, both literally and juridically, and is even falsified in the imaginary case given by the orator; but it may well give a fair impression of the situation of many *addicti* who realised that they had little or no hope of escaping from servitude. Two of the declamations which have come down to us under the name of Quintilian (for which see Michael Winterbottom, in *OCD*<sup>2</sup> 317) also deal with the *addictus*. One, in the 'major' series (Ps.–Quintil., *Declam.* III.17), describes an unfortunate debtor, known to us from a passage in Livy (VIII.28.1–9), as 'an *addictus* and scarcely a free man'. The other, from the 'minor' set (Ps.–Quintil., *Declam.* 311), again raises the question whether an *addictus* is a free man or a slave, under the guise of a disputed claim by an *addictus* that he has been freed from his status by a clause in his deceased creditor's will, manumitting all his 'slaves'. Fortunatianus, in an *Ars Rhetorica* written probably as late as the fourth century, when giving a list of twenty-one different ways in which a particular person can be described, including name, age, sex, place of origin, 'fortuna' (rich or poor) etc., gives under the heading 'condicio' (legal status) the examples 'servus, addictus' (II.1, p.103, ed. C. Halm, *Rhet. Lat. Min.*, 1863). In Gaius' *Institutes* (III.199) we find a casual

reference to the fact that just as there can be theft (*furtum*) of members of one's family (a child in *potestas* or a wife in *manus*) or of one's *auctoratus* (a man bound under contract as a gladiator), so there can be theft of one's judgment debtor, a *iudicatus*, who is evidently assumed to be giving useful service in working off his debt. Salvius Julianus, one of the greatest of the Roman lawyers, who wrote in the second third of the second century, could contemplate a situation in which 'someone carries off a free man by force and holds him in chains' (*Dig. XXII.iii.20*); and Venuleius Saturninus, writing about the same time, could speak of the use of 'private or public chains' (*vel privata vel publica vincula, Dig. L.xvi.224*). In the early third century yet another jurist, Ulpian, writes of the man who, although not strictly 'in servitude', is put in chains by a private individual (*in privata vincula ductus, Dig. IV.vi.23.pr.*). At about the same period Paulus speaks of the man who casts someone into prison, to extract something from him (*Dig. IV.ii.22*): the passage seems to me to imply that the prison (*carcer*) is a private one. 'Private imprisonment by powerful creditors was an evil which the State, in spite of repeated enactments, was not strong enough to uproot' (Jolowicz and Nicholas, *HISRL*<sup>3</sup> 445). Some of the situations described above may, of course, have been created by indiscriminate acts of violence by powerful men; but they make much better sense if the perpetrators were creditors, as Jolowicz and Nicholas rightly assume in the passage I have just quoted.

It is true that the creditor who seized his judgment debtor had no *explicit legal right* to make him *work* off his debt. But what would be the point of merely seizing a defaulting debtor and incurring the expense of keeping him in idleness, except perhaps when he was believed to have concealed assets? The *addictus* or *iudicatus* to whom the word *servire* could be applied in popular speech (see above) must normally have been 'constrained' to work for his judgment creditor, if only to save himself from the even more unpleasant alternative of incarceration and chains, with only just enough food to keep him alive.

Most of the texts concerning 'personal execution' that I have quoted so far come from the Principate. In the Later Empire the position of the lower classes deteriorated further, and laws passed to give some protection to the humble were if anything disregarded with even greater impunity by the powerful, the *potentes* or *potentiores*, whom the Severan lawyer Callistratus evidently had in mind when he wrote (in the early third century) of the man who is 'kept in chains, *potentiore vi oppressus*' (*Dig. IV.vi.9*), and again when he recorded that taking refuge at a statue of the emperor was permitted, as an exception, to a man 'escaping from chains, or who had been detained in custody by *potentiores*' (*Dig. XLVIII.xix.28.7*). A constitution of Diocletian and Maximian dated 293 insisted that pledges for debt should consist only of property and not of 'sons, or free men' (*CJ VIII.xvi.6*). Another constitution of the same emperors in the following year stated that 'the laws do not permit *liberos* to be in servitude [*servire*] for debt to creditors' (*CJ IV.x.12*). Whether these *liberi* are to be conceived as *free men* who had become the bondsmen of their creditors (or had even tried to sell themselves into slavery), or whether they are *children* whose parents are being forbidden to commit them to bondage (for the Latin word could refer to either category), is hardly clear (see e.g. Mitteis, *RuV* 363-4, 451 and n.3, 456). In the Later Empire, in spite of a series of imperial laws positively forbidding the existence of private prisons (*CJ IX.v.1* and 2, A.D. 486 and 529),<sup>70</sup>

large landowners openly maintained such prisons, where defaulters could be coerced, along with other undesirables and criminals. More is known about this practice from Egypt than elsewhere (see Hardy, *LEBE* 67-71). One papyrus reveals that on a particular day in c. 538 there were no fewer than 139 persons in the estate prison of the Apion family at Oxyrhynchus (*PSI*953.37, 54-60): many if not most of them are likely to have been debtors.

We may conclude, then, that 'personal execution' continued unabated throughout the Principate and Later Empire,<sup>71</sup> at least to the time of Justinian;<sup>72</sup> that measures such as *cessio bonorum* benefited mainly the propertied classes; and that attempts by the imperial government (such as they were) to assist the weak foundered on the defiance of the *potentes*.

'Debt bondage' in antiquity, as I have defined it, would include at any rate the more burdensome form of the condition (which I can do no more than mention here) often known technically as *paramonē* ('indentured labour' is perhaps the nearest English equivalent for at least some of its varieties), which itself varied considerably not only from place to place and time to time but also from transaction to transaction, and might arise in very different ways, for example as a condition of manumission from slavery, or as a result of defaulting on a debt or even incurring one, as well as embodying a contract of service or apprenticeship.<sup>73</sup> Juridically, the person subject to the obligation of *paramonē* was undoubtedly 'free' rather than a slave, but his freedom in some cases was so circumscribed as to be very like that of the judgment debtor in Roman law, the *addictus*, who (as we have seen) could be said to be 'in a state of servitude' (*servire*), although not technically a *servus*. It may well be that Dio Chrysostom had one of the more onerous forms of this institution in mind when he spoke of 'myriads of free men selling themselves to be slaves according to a contract' (*douleuein kata syngraphēn*), sometimes on very harsh terms (*XV.23*). I suspect, too, that something very like *paramonē* may possibly have been involved in the case of the boys and girls described by Cassiodorus as standing around at the great fair in Lucania (in southern Italy), to be 'sold' by their parents, to their own profit, passing 'from the labour of the fields into *urbana servitia*' (*Var. VIII.33*, written about 527).

Before I leave the topic of debt bondage I wish to mention briefly a subject which can hardly be discussed in any detail without going into highly technical questions: I mean the sale of oneself or of one's children into slavery. This of course falls in strictness under the head of 'chattel slavery' rather than 'debt bondage', and it has already come up once or twice in this section; but since self-sale or sale of children would virtually always in practice be the result of extreme poverty and very probably of debt, and is often associated with the pledging of individuals for debt, it is convenient to refer to these practices here. The situation before the Roman conquest of the Greek world is so poorly known that it is best for us to confine ourselves to the Roman period, merely noticing that the enslavement of free men seems to have been possible in many places in the Greek East before they became subject to Rome (see above, and Mitteis, *RuV* 357-72). In legal theory a free person could not in general become a slave on Roman territory. But certain exceptions existed at various times even in strict law, quite apart from the enslavement resulting from certain types of sentence for crime, such as condemnation to the mines or quarries. In particular,

the sale of newborn children (*sanguinolenti*)<sup>74</sup> was sanctioned at least from Constantine's time (*Fragm. Vat.* 34, of A.D. 313) and perhaps earlier (*CTh* V.x.1, of 319 or 329, referring to the 'statuta priorum principum'). Whether or not the sale of older children was ever legally permitted, it certainly occurred as a result of poverty and debt: this is clear above all from a series of constitutions issued between the early fourth century and the mid-fifth (see esp. *CTh* XI.xxvii.2; III.iii.1; *Nov. Val.* XXXIII) and from various literary sources and papyri; and we also know that adults in need sometimes sold themselves into slavery.<sup>75</sup> A passage not often quoted in this connection is *I Clement* lv.2 (usually thought to have been written at the end of the first century):

We know that many among us [presumably the Christians of Rome] have handed themselves over into bondage [*eis desma*], in order to ransom others. Many have given themselves into slavery [*eis douleian*], and with the price paid for themselves have fed others.

The implication of the word used, *epsōmisan*, is I think that it was their starving children who needed to be fed. (Of course, this text and some similar ones may in reality refer to some form of *paramonē*: see above.)

The unfree labour characteristic of the pre-Classical Near East and illustrated particularly in numerous cuneiform documents seems to have included a high proportion of cases of what was really debt bondage rather than slavery of the Greek and Roman type; but that is a subject with which I cannot concern myself in this book.<sup>76</sup> Anyone who wishes to make a direct comparison between what I am calling debt bondage and ordinary chattel slavery can read a useful, if idealised, account in Philo, *De spec. leg.* II.79-85, of Hebrew debt bondage, as contemplated by Deut. XV.12-15; cf. Exod. XXI.2; Levit. XXV.39-43; Jerem. XXXIV.14. Philo is trying to make the point that men in this kind of bondage, who must be set free at the end of six years' service, although called slaves, *douloi*, are really in the position of hired labourers; he uses both the standard technical terms, *thēs* and *mishthōtos* (cf. Section vi of this chapter). That concludes my treatment of the subject of debt bondage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Convict labour was never very important in the Greek or even the Roman world,<sup>77</sup> and it is only in the Later Roman Empire that we hear much of it. It appears most often in the condemnation of men of low status *ad metallum*: that is to say, to serve in perpetuity in the State mines or quarries (see Jones, *LRE* II.838). In the so-called 'Great Persecution', in the early years of the fourth century, we know from Eusebius that many Christians were condemned to the copper mines of Phaeno in the south of Palestine, many others to the porphyry quarries of the Eastern Desert of Egypt, and others again to mines in Cilicia.<sup>78</sup> In the fourth century minor criminals from districts in Italy and from Sardinia were sometimes condemned to work in the Roman bakeries (*CTh* IX.xl.3,5-7) – where the bakers used to supplement their inadequate supply of convicts, according to the ecclesiastical historian Socrates, by setting up taverns and brothels on the ground floors above their bakeries, from which unsuspecting customers were precipitated below, and put to work at baking for the rest of their days, until the Emperor Theodosius I in c. 390 put a stop to the practice (*HE* V.xviii.3-8).

\* \* \* \* \*

Returning to the subject of slavery proper, I should like to stress something of which so far I have given only the briefest mention. The nature of our evidence for antiquity is often such as to tempt us to draw misleading conclusions about the absence of certain phenomena, when all we have a right to do is to note the absence of evidence for those phenomena; and so it is here. The nature of the evidence for ancient slavery is such that we are likely to find slave labour (outside the domestic scene, anyway) greatly under-represented in our sources, as indeed are all forms of labour. The evidence for the employment of slaves in production in antiquity can be very scanty even for places and times at which we know it was widespread and essential. Even where the fundamental part played by slave production cannot be denied, as for parts of the Greek mainland and some of the Aegean islands during the Classical period and (to a less extent) the Hellenistic age, we should have scarcely any mention of the use of slaves in Greek agriculture outside Attica were it not for the fact that historians (Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius) make incidental mention of such slaves in accounts of military campaigns, if as a rule only when recording captures and booty; see Appendix II. Indeed, but for a few scattered texts in the Athenian orators and a handful of inscriptions we should have hardly any specific evidence of the central role played by slaves in production even in Attica itself, to set beside the general (and often vague) references to slavery in Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and other literature. For many areas of the Greek world in most periods no sources exist from which we can expect specific evidence of the employment of slave labour. I believe that this has not been sufficiently realised. When there is little or no relevant literature or epigraphic material from which we can expect to derive enlightenment about the labour situation – as, for instance, in most of the Greek world outside Egypt in the Hellenistic period – we must be particularly careful not to jump to the conclusion that unfree labour was of little significance.

To give only one example – we have no right to expect any mention, even in our best-preserved building accounts, of the many slaves who must have been working under the craftsmen and transport-contractors who undertook the various pieces of work (mainly quite small) referred to in the inscriptions concerned. Some of the building accounts mentioned in Section vi below and its nn.20-3, for instance those for the Erechtheum and the temple of Eleusis in Attica, name a number of slaves, all of whom I would take to be *chōris aikountes* (see above and n.9). To treat such slaves as the only ones involved in the building operations is an error of which scholars have too often been guilty. Anyone entering into a State building contract might, and often would, make use of slaves in carrying out the works for which he had undertaken responsibility; and of course there would be no occasion for any of these slaves to be mentioned in the inscriptions. No slaves are referred to in some of the building accounts, including those recording the works at Epidaurus in the fourth century (discussed at length by Burford, *GTBE*); but it would be ridiculous to suppose that there were no slaves working there. And the slaves engaged in the Athenian building operations are likely to have been far more numerous than those who are mentioned by name in the inscriptions.

Those who are inclined to infer from the scarcity of references to agricultural

slave labour that the bulk of the agricultural work on the farms of the well-to-do was not done by slaves should ask themselves what evidence there is for any other kind of labour! As I have indicated earlier in this section (under 'II. Serfdom'), there must have been many serfs and quasi-serfs in those Asiatic areas which came under Greek (or Macedonian) control from Alexander's time onwards; and of course a large part of the working peasant population of the whole Roman empire was brought into some kind of serfdom, at different times in different areas, in the late third century and later (see IV.iii below). But serfdom, I have suggested above, tended not to persist under Roman rule before the institution of the Later Roman colonate. *How then, if not by slave labour, was the agricultural work done for the propertied class? How, otherwise, did that class (a landowning class above all: see III.ii-iii above) derive its surplus?* The only alternatives are by wage-labour or by leasing. But there is good reason to think that wage-labour existed on only a small scale, apart from seasonal activities such as harvesting and vintage and olive-picking, and the hiring of slaves (see Section vi of this chapter). And leasing (see IV.iii below) cannot be expected to yield nearly as much profit as working land directly with slave labour – provided of course the landowner can acquire not only ordinary working slaves but also a thoroughly competent steward, assisted where necessary by 'slave-drivers'. (The steward, as we saw above, would himself be a slave, or perhaps a freedman, and all the slave-drivers would be slaves.) The view held by Roman agriculturalists of the late Republic and early Principate was that one should let a farm to a tenant only when one cannot work it properly oneself with slaves – either because the climate is too bad or the soil too poor – or when it is too far away for regular personal supervision by the owner (see Colum. I.vii.4-7, discussed in IV.iii below). Therefore, provided the cost of purchasing or rearing the slaves and their overseers was not too great, slavery, as a means of extracting a surplus, was superior to any other method of exploitation; and surely, when Greeks or Romans who were used to slave-worked agriculture in their own countries went to settle in Asia Minor or Syria, they would use slaves to work their farms when they could. An exception might be furnished by some local form of serfdom, or of quasi-serfdom, in so far as the workers concerned could be kept in that condition by their Greek masters; but it looks as if these local peculiarities were usually not long-lasting, serfdom (as I have said) not being an institution that flourished under Greek or Roman rule until the introduction of the Later Roman colonate.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some may question my justification for having used the portmanteau term, 'unfree labour', on the ground that it is objectionably broad. Is there not an important difference, it may be said, according to Marxist categories or indeed any acceptable ones, between slave production and serf production? The serf has at least *possession* of the means of agricultural production, which is legally recognised in some degree although it may not amount to *ownership*, or even to Roman *possessio* – which, incidentally, not even a free leasehold tenant enjoyed under Roman law. The position of the serf is therefore different in an important way from that of the slave. Was there not, then, a profound change in the conditions of production, as between the earlier period of slavery and the period of widespread serfdom which (as we shall see in IV.iii below) began round about

A.D. 300 and eventually covered a large part of the Graeco-Roman world?

My answer begins with the assertion that 'unfree labour', in the broad sense in which I use that expression, is a most useful concept, in contrast with the 'free' wage-labour which is the basis of capitalist society. Slavery and serfdom are in many respects similar, and societies in which they are the dominant forms of production will be fundamentally different from capitalist society, founded on wage-labour. In the Greek (and Roman) world it is particularly hard to separate slavery and serfdom because, as I have demonstrated, neither the Greeks nor the Romans recognised serfdom as a distinct institution, and neither had a general word for it. I have illustrated in this section the perplexity shown by Roman emperors from the fourth to the sixth centuries in dealing with serf *coloni*, who were (as the emperors well knew) technically 'free men' (*ingenui*) as opposed to slaves (*servi*), but whose condition in practice was really more like that of slaves. The solution adopted by some of the fourth-century emperors, it will be remembered, was to regard the serf *coloni* as in some sense slaves of their land; but this conception was as questionable from the legal point of view as regarding the judgment debtor who had become *addictus* as being in a form of slavery to his creditor.

There is surely no doubt at all that in the Greek (and Roman) world, when forms of unfree labour appear, it is commonly slavery in the strict sense which is in the forefront. Serfdom occurs, in the Classical Greek world, only in local forms, each of which is treated as a unique case. Only in the Later Roman Empire does it appear on a large scale, and there is really no word for it until 'colonatus' is coined in the mid-fourth century (see above). Even then, we sometimes hear of large slave households, though mainly in the West (see IV.iii below). The relative numbers of serfs and slaves cannot be estimated with any degree of confidence, although by now there were undoubtedly far more serfs than slaves, at any rate, if we discount domestic slaves, whose role in production would be indirect only. There is, however, a great deal of material in the Roman law-books which to my mind proves conclusively that even chattel slavery remained very important in the Greek and Roman world, right down to the time when Justinian published his great *Corpus Iuris Civilis* in the early 530s. I suspect that the continued existence of slave and freedman managers (see above), even when slavery was far less important at lower levels than it had been, may be partly responsible for the frequent references to slavery in the *Corpus*.

It therefore seems realistic to me to describe slavery as the dominant form of ancient 'unfree labour', not in the quantitative sense that the propertied class actually derived its surplus at most times mainly from the labour of chattel slaves, but in the sense that slavery, with debt bondage (a condition which hardly differed from slavery in practice except in being chronologically limited), was the archetypal form of unfree labour throughout Graeco-Roman antiquity, so that not only the occasional early forms of serfdom like that of the Spartan Helots but also the widespread Later Roman colonate had to be expressed in language derived from slave terminology, whether technical (Helots as the Spartan *douleia*) or not (*coloni* as 'slaves of the land' or 'in servitude' to it). I suggest that such a society, where slavery in the strict sense is omnipresent in the psychology of all classes, is something very different from one in which slavery proper is unknown or unimportant, even if it is serfdom which then provides the propertied class with much of its surplus.

\* \* \* \* \*

A very recent publication has revealed that we now have explicit evidence of a vase-painter at Athens who was a slave and was even prepared so to describe himself on one of his products. On a black-figure *kyathos* (a ladle in the form of a cup) dating from the 520s B.C. and discovered at Vulci, a man named Lydus records that he painted the vase and that his name was 'Lydus, a slave [*dōlos*], a Myrineus' – meaning that he came from Myrina, an Aeolic Greek city on the coast of Lydia in western Asia Minor.<sup>79</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Freedom was the great hope of every slave. Some could be almost certain of manumission. For others, who had little or no chance of it, there was only one way of escape from slavery: death. That in death the slave gained his freedom is a not uncommon theme in slave epitaphs (see e.g. *Anth. Pal.* VII.553). To end this Section I quote one of the most moving of all ancient epitaphs. It is on the slave Narcissus, a farm overseer (*vilicus*) in the territory of Venafrum in Italy, who died at the age of twenty-five, and who is made to say that his freedom, denied to him as a youth by law, has been made eternal by an untimely death (*CIL* X.i.4917).<sup>80</sup>

*Debita libertas iuveni mihi lege negata  
Morte immatura reddita perpetua est.*

(v)

### Freedmen

The slave of a Roman citizen, if manumitted formally by his master in one of the ways legally prescribed, became a Roman citizen. The manumitted slave of a citizen of a Greek city seems never to have achieved, as an automatic result of manumission by his master, more than metic status, as he certainly did in Classical Athens. In all Greek states, as far as we know, only a decision of the sovereign body could confer citizenship upon a freed slave, as upon anyone else who was not born a citizen; and such decisions were uncommon. There is an interesting letter of King Philip V of Macedon to the Thessalian city of Larissa, now dated 215 B.C., pointing out that if they were to follow the Roman instead of the Greek practice they would be able to increase significantly the size of their citizen body (*SIG*<sup>3</sup> 543 = *IG* IX.517, lines 26 ff.: there is an English translation in Lewis and Reinhold, *RC* I.386-7). The Rhodians, in their heroic resistance to the famous siege by Demetrius Poliorcetes in 305-4, were unusually generous in granting citizenship as well as freedom to those slaves (purchased by the state from their masters) who had fought well during the siege (*Diod. Sic.* XX.84.3; 100.1). At Athens, citizenship was occasionally conferred by a special grant of the Assembly upon ex-slaves for services rendered, as upon Pasion in the first quarter of the fourth century B.C. and upon his former slave Phormio in 361/0 (see Davies, *APF* 427 ff., esp. 430, 436). By the Antonine period there were apparently freedmen at Athens who had managed to become not only citizens but members of the Council: these were expelled by order of Marcus Aurelius. (Freedmen, although not their sons born after their manumission, were as a rule disqualified from becoming city councillors.) Marcus did not exclude the sons of freedmen (born after the manumission of their fathers) from serving on the

Athenian Council. As for the august Areopagus, he wished it were possible to allow only those whose fathers and grandfathers had been born in freedom to become members (an 'ancient custom' which he had earlier, it seems, during his joint reign with Verus in 161-9, tried to reimpose); but since this rule had become impossible to enforce, he later consented to allow the admission of those whose fathers and mothers had been born in freedom. (These provisions of Marcus have come to light only recently, in an inscription first published in 1970, which has aroused some discussion: see Appendix IV below, § 2.)

As far as I know, there is only one statement in any ancient author which attempts to explain the surprising generosity of the Romans towards slaves manumitted by their masters, in accepting them as Roman citizens, and it is too rarely quoted. It occurs in the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a leading Greek literary critic, who wrote at Rome at the end of the last century B.C. Dionysius, drawing attention to the difference between Greek and Roman manumission, emphasises the great advantage obtained by Romans who were very rich (*euporōtatoi*) in having large numbers of citizen freedmen who were bound to assist them in their public life and who would be clients (*pelatai*, the Greek word corresponding to the Latin *clientes*) of their descendants also (*Ant. Rom.* IV.22.4 to 23.7, esp. 23.6).<sup>1</sup> Probably no Greek state had anything approaching the Roman *clientela* (see my *SVP*, also VI.iii and v below), the institution of patronage and clientship, which (among its many ramifications) made of the freedman a *cliens* of his former master and his descendants. (We know much about the relationship of the Roman freedman to his ex-master,<sup>2</sup> little about that of his Greek counterpart.)

My remarks on freedmen will be highly selective, as it is not my purpose to give a general account of them. Admittedly, there have been few useful studies of Greek freedmen since A. Calderini's book, *La manomissione e la condizione dei liberti in Grecia*, published as long ago as 1908, but we have had three books on Roman freedmen in recent years in English alone.<sup>3</sup> All I want to do here is to emphasise that the question whether a man was a slave or a Roman freedman or a freeborn Roman or Greek might be far less important than the question *whose* slave or freedman he was or had been and what financial condition he had reached. I have spoken before (II.v), with disapproval, of the elevation of 'status' – useful as it can be as a descriptive and secondary classification – to a position superior to that of class as an instrument for the effective analysis of Greek society. This consideration applies with exceptional force in the present context, at any rate to the centuries in which some or all Greeks were under Roman rule (and above all to the third and following centuries C.E., when virtually all free Greeks were also Roman citizens), since being a Roman freedman ('libertinus') was *strictly a one-generation condition*, and any children born to a freedman after manumission were *ingenui*, free-born, and subject to none of the considerable legal and social disabilities attaching to actual freedmen,<sup>4</sup> even though they would remain clients of their father's former owner and his heirs. One freedman's son, C. Thoranius, is said to have entered the Roman Senate under Augustus (*Dio Cassius* LIII.27.6); and P. Helvius Pertinax, who was twice consul (c. 175 and 192), and emperor for a few weeks in 193, may also have been the son of a freedman.<sup>5</sup> Had I been dealing with the Latin West instead of the Greek East, it would have been necessary to say something of the prominent role



played by the descendants of freedmen in municipal life in many cities, but nearly all our evidence for this comes from the West, especially Italy.<sup>6</sup>

'A freedman is a freedman is a freedman' is hardly a more helpful assertion, therefore, than 'a slave is a slave is a slave'. At one extreme, especially in the late Roman Republic and early Principate, there were freedmen of wealth and influence far greater than that of most *equites* and even some senators of their day. (I need have no hesitation in paying attention to these men, as many of them were of Greek origin, in the widest sense.) Demetrius, the powerful freedman of Pompey, is said to have died worth 4,000 talents, which would be HS 96 million in Latin terms (Plut., *Pomp.* 2.9; cf. 40.1). Augustus' freedman and procurator Licinus, who is accused of behaving with odious injustice during his 'rule' of his native Gaul, evidently amassed great wealth.<sup>7</sup> And the three greatest of all imperial freedmen, in the reigns of Claudius (41-54) and Nero (54-68), are said by Pliny the Elder (*NH* XXXIII.134) to have been – among 'many' liberated slaves! – even richer than Crassus, one of the great millionaires of the late Republic, who is particularly remembered for his remark that a man could not count as rich (*locuples*) unless he could maintain a whole army out of his own income, and who must have been worth more than HS 200 million (over 8,000 talents).<sup>8</sup> Narcissus and Pallas, two of Pliny's three outstanding imperial freedmen, are each credited with up to HS 400 million (over 16,000 talents),<sup>9</sup> and Callistus, the third, cannot have been far behind (see Duncan-Jones *EREQS* 343, no.10). Such figures tend to be exaggerated in literary sources; but if in fact any of these men did possess anything like HS 400 million, then he may have been even richer than Seneca, whose wealth was said to reach HS 300 million (or 12,500 talents): see Tac., *Ann.* XIII.42.6; Dio Cass. LXI.10.3 (75 million drachmae). If we set aside the imperial families of the early Principate, which of course were incomparably richer than any others, we can say that in the late Republic and the Principate only Pompey the Great is credited in the surviving sources with wealth greater than that of Pallas and Narcissus: Pompey's fortune, confiscated at his death, may have been of the order of HS 700 million (or nearly 30,000 talents).<sup>10</sup> However, Narcissus and Pallas were the most extreme examples that could be found at any time during the Principate, and several of the other most notorious freedmen also belonged to the same period (roughly the second third of the first century of the Christian era) – Felix the brother of Pallas, for instance, who became the husband of three successive Eastern princesses; as procurator of Judaea, he 'exercised a royal power in the spirit of a slave' (Tac., *Hist.* V.9) and incidentally is said to have kept St. Paul in prison for two years, hoping he would be bribed to release him (Acts XXIV, esp. 26-7).

Soon after this time imperial freedmen were gradually ousted from the higher offices in the imperial civil service, from which the vast fortunes of Pallas and his like had come, and these offices, in the late first and early second centuries, were taken over by equestrians.<sup>11</sup> The one important office that imperial slaves and freedmen never lost was that of *cubicularius*, 'chamberlain', always freed after c. 473 (see Section iv above). The *cubicularii*, who were all eunuchs, were in charge of the imperial bedchamber of the emperor and empress (the 'Sacred Bedchamber', *sacrum cubiculum*), and since castration was illegal within the Roman empire they had virtually all begun life (in theory anyway) as imported 'barbarian'

slaves; but the scope of their activities extended very widely, in particular to imperial audiences. In the Later Empire very great political influence was sometimes exerted by the *cubicularii*, especially of course the Grand Chamberlain, *praepositus sacri cubiculi*.<sup>12</sup> The Emperor Julian, writing an open letter to the city of Athens in 361, could speak of the benevolence towards him of the late Empress Eusebia before his accession as having been manifested 'through the eunuchs in her service', just as he attributed primarily to the machinations of the Emperor Constantius' accursed chief eunuch (*ho theois echthros androgynos*, as he calls him), whose name happened to be Eusebius, the fact that the emperor could keep him for six months in the same city (Milan), without seeing him more than once (*Ep. ad Athen.* 5, p.274ab). The official *Acta* of the first Council of Ephesus in 431 happen to preserve a remarkable letter from the Alexandrian archdeacon Epiphanius to Bishop Maximian of Constantinople, giving a list of the bribes lavished on members of the imperial court of Theodosius II and Pulcheria in the early 430s by St. Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria, in his determination to see that the contradictory decisions of the rival parties at the Council should eventually be turned to the advantage of himself and the Catholics, against Nestorius and his followers. The highest figure recorded in this list, 200 pounds of gold (14,400 solidi), was paid to Chryseros, a *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, who also received many other costly presents, and several others among the *cubicularii* received at least 50 pounds of gold, as did two of Pulcheria's *cubiculariae* ('Women of the Bedchamber').<sup>13</sup> More than one of the eunuch imperial freedmen *cubicularii* achieved distinction in military commands, above all of course the great Narses, *sacellarius* and *praepositus*, a supremely successful general under Justinian.<sup>14</sup>

It was not only freedmen of the *familia Caesaris* who acquired riches. Pliny the Elder, as we saw a moment ago, could speak of 'many' freedmen (not merely Callistus, Pallas and Narcissus) as being richer than Crassus. Pliny himself in the same passage (*NH* XXXIII.134-5) gives details of the will of a freedman, C. Caecilius Isidorus, who died in 8 B.C.: according to Pliny, the man said that although he had lost a great deal in the civil wars he was leaving 4,116 slaves, 3,600 yoke of oxen, 257,000 other cattle, and HS 60 million in cash (2,500 talents), and he ordered HS 1,100,000 (over 450 talents) to be spent on his funeral. (At least some of these figures are probably exaggerated, perhaps grossly so.)<sup>15</sup> I must not omit to mention the delightful account in Petronius (*Sat.* 45-77) of the enormous property of the *imaginary* freedman Trimalchio, who is represented as being worth HS 30 million (1,250 talents): he is made to say that he was left 'a fortune worthy of a senator' (*patrimonium laticlavium*) by his former master's will and that he had greatly increased it by his own efforts. Among Trimalchio's friends are depicted several other wealthy freedmen: one is said to be worth HS 800,000 and another a million (*Sat.* 38), and there is a reference to yet another freedman who had died leaving HS 100,000 (*Sat.* 43). Now I would not deny that quite a number of freedmen may have been really well-to-do, and a few perhaps very rich indeed – although I think that in order to attain great wealth a freedman who had not been a member of the *familia Caesaris* would need (like Trimalchio) to receive a very substantial legacy from his former master, and this would be anything but a frequent occurrence. But, apart from the altogether exceptional imperial freedmen, I see little evidence for large

fortunes in the hands of freedmen. It would be a mistake to see in Martial's expression, *libertinas opes* (V.13.6), any implication that freedman status and wealth went naturally together: in this poem, Martial – who calls himself 'a poor man' (*pauper*), although an honorary equestrian – is expressing his scorn for a rich freedman, Callistratus, and the word *libertinas* is the one clue he gives to the man's status.

I feel that far too much reliance has been placed on the fictitious *cena Trimalchionis* in Petronius: its inventions have too easily been accepted as facts and its deliberately comic exaggerations treated as if they were typical. Even Rostovtzeff could write at some length about Trimalchio as if he were a real person instead of an imaginary character; he calls him 'one type of this age' (the Julio-Claudian), although later in the same passage he does add, 'I am inclined to think that Petronius chose the freedman type to have the opportunity of making the *nouveau riche* as vulgar as possible' (*SEHRE*<sup>2</sup> I.57-8). Finley, who refers to Trimalchio in at least ten different places in his *Ancient Economy*, treats him as if he were not only a real person but a representative one: 'Trimalchio,' he says, 'may not be a wholly typical ancient figure [my italics], but he is not wholly untypical either' (*AE* 36, cf. 38, 50-1, 61, 78, 83). And later he says, 'Once again we turn to Trimalchio for the bald truth' (*AE* 115-16) – but in reality we find once more a ludicrous series of comic exaggerations.<sup>16</sup>

Surely the great majority of freedmen, at the time of their manumission, will have been men of at best very modest wealth, even if a fair number of them were comfortably off, and a few quite rich. Many of them must have been poverty-stricken wretches who were either allowed to buy their freedom with every penny they had managed to accumulate as their *peculium* during slavery, or were left at their master's death with the gift of freedom and nothing else. A children's nurse who was manumitted on retirement might not be far off the poverty-line, but the Younger Pliny settled on his old nurse a 'little farm' worth HS 100,000 (*Epist.* VI.iii.1) – perhaps of about 25-30 acres (see Sherwin-White, *LP* 358). Nearly all those freedmen who accumulated really large fortunes will have done so because they had been the slaves of very rich men, or had belonged to the *familia Caesaris*. A delightful funerary inscription (*ILS* 1949) from near Rome, which no one able to read simple Latin should miss, records the benefits received from M. Aurelius Cotta Maximus, who was consul in A.D. 20, by one of his freedmen, Zosimus, who after manumission had acted as his official attendant, *accensus*. (The man's name is Greek, whether or not he himself was of Greek origin.) Cotta had more than once given him the equivalent of the equestrian census, HS 400,000 (*saepe libens census donavit equestris*); he had brought up his sons and given dowries to his daughters, 'as if he himself were their father'; he had obtained for one son the honour of a military tribunate (the usual first step in an equestrian career); he ended by paying for the inscription, in elegiac couplets, which he either wrote himself or entrusted to someone who understood how necessary it was to stress Cotta's munificence.

It appears from a famous inscription of the year 133 B.C. that freedmen (*exeleutherōi*) and their descendants in the important Greek city of Pergamum were in a condition inferior to other non-citizen residents, here called *paroikoi*, for while those already registered as *paroikoi* were to receive the citizenship (in the emergency confronting the city), the descendants of freedmen (though not,

apparently, freedmen themselves) were merely to become *paroikoi*, and this was clearly regarded as an improvement in their status (*IGRR* IV.289 = *OGIS* 338, lines 11-13, 20-1).

In a Greek city in the Roman period we can expect to find freedmen of Roman citizens having much the same social rank (other things being equal) as other freedmen, outside the local citizen body. Thus in the donations of Menodora at Silyum in Pisidia, prescribing hand-outs to be given in a series of grades, according to social position (see Section vi of this chapter, just after its n.35), we find *ouindiktarōi* (Roman freedmen duly manumitted *per vindictam*) put on the same level as *apeleutherōi* (Greek freedmen) and *paroikoi* (residents without local citizenship), and below the citizens (*poleitai*) of Silyum (*IGRR* III.801.15-22).<sup>17</sup>

I know of no reliable evidence from any part of the Greek world (or the Roman world)<sup>18</sup> that could enable us to draw trustworthy conclusions about the comparative frequency of manumission at different periods or in different areas, or the ages at which it took place. The evidence, even that of inscriptions, is always too 'weighted' to give us anything like a 'random sample' and is useless for statistical purposes.

Finally, I must reiterate that the financial condition of the freedman really mattered more than his technical legal status, which *died with him* (and with those of his children who had been born in slavery and manumitted with him), while his children born after his manumission counted as free-born and could inherit the bulk of his property.<sup>19</sup>

## (vi)

## Hired labour

I have already pointed out that the single most important organisational difference between the ancient economy and that of the modern world is that in antiquity the propertied class derived its surplus mainly from unfree labour (especially that of slaves) and only to a very small degree from hired labour (wage-labour), which was generally scarce, unskilled and not at all mobile. We must also remember that many hired labourers (in Greek, *mishōtoi* or *thētes*; in Latin, *mercennarii*)<sup>1</sup> will have been slaves hired out by their masters.

I can illustrate what I have just been saying about the prevalence of slave labour and the comparative insignificance of hired labour by summarising three of the delightful little Socratic dialogues included in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, which demonstrate very nicely how small a role was played by wage-labour in Classical Athens. They are all lifelike conversations, bearing in this respect little resemblance to the dialogues – often, no doubt, of far greater philosophical profundity – in which Socrates just argues down some unfortunate Platonic stooge. In the first of these, the charming conversation between Socrates and the high-class call-girl Theodote (*Mem.* III.xi, esp. 4), Socrates, with assumed innocence, quizzes the girl about the source of her income. She was obviously well-off, as she had nice furniture and a lot of good-looking and well-set-up slave girls. 'Tell me, Theodote,' Socrates says, 'have you a farm [an *agros*]?' 'No,' she says. 'Then have you a house that brings in rents [an *oikia prosodous echousa*]?' 'No, not that either.' 'Then haven't you some craftsmen [*cheirotechnai tines*]?' When Theodote says that she has none of these, Socrates asks where she

does get her money from, as if he had exhausted all possible alternatives. She answers, very prettily, that she lives on the generosity of her friends. Socrates politely congratulates her on having such a satisfactory asset. The conversation goes on, and Socrates makes such an impression on the simple Theodote that she even asks him to go into partnership with her: he is to be her associate in the chase for lovers, *synthēratēs tōn philōn* (a metaphor drawn from Xenophon's own favourite recreation, hunting). When Socrates evades this, Theodote says she hopes that at any rate he will come up and see her some time; but he turns that aside too, and the conversation ends with Socrates telling Theodote to come and see him – although he is rather cavalier about it: he says he will welcome her provided he has with him no other girl-friend of whom he is fonder still. (I like this dialogue. It is not often that one finds Socrates in what one might call a heterosexual attitude.) The point of this story that particularly concerns us is in the nature of the three questions which Socrates puts to Theodote. They suggest – and here they are entirely in accord with all the other evidence – that anyone at Athens who did not work for a living might be expected first to own a farm (which of course he would either work with slaves under an overseer or let outright); or secondly to own a house, which he would let either as a whole or in sections (there were many tenement houses, *synoikiai*, in Athens and the Peiraeus);<sup>2</sup> or thirdly to have slave craftsmen, who might work either under an overseer, or on their own as *chōris oikountes* (see Section iv of this chapter).

The second dialogue from the *Memorabilia* (II.vii, esp. 2-6) is a conversation between Socrates and one Aristarchus in 404/3, under the tyranny of 'the Thirty' in Athens. Aristarchus, once a rich man, is now at his wits' end to know how to maintain a household of fourteen free persons, mainly female relatives temporarily abandoned by their menfolk, who had gone off to join the democratic Freedom Fighters on the barricades in the Peiraeus. Aristarchus of course is getting nothing from his land, and he is receiving no rents from his house property either, because so many people have fled from the city, nor can he sell or pawn his movable goods, because there are no buyers or lenders. Socrates gives him excellent advice – quite different, surely, from what Plato's Socrates would have recommended. He begins by citing examples of several men with large households who have prospered exceedingly: Ceramon, who has become rich in some unspecified manner, through the earning power of his slave workmen; Nausicydes, who has done so well out of making *alphita* (barley groats)<sup>3</sup> that he has large herds of swine and cattle and often undertakes expensive liturgies (civic services); and some other people who live luxuriously – Cyrebus, by being a baker, Demeas and Meno and 'most of the Megarians' (he clearly means most of the *well-to-do* Megarians), by making various kinds of clothes. 'Ah, but, Socrates,' objects Aristarchus, 'they have many *barbaroi* as slaves and make them work for them, whereas my household are free and my kith and kin.' 'Well, and if they are,' retorts Socrates, 'do you think they should do nothing but eat and sleep?' Eventually Aristarchus is persuaded to put his womenfolk to work; he borrows money and buys wool. They enjoy the work so much that they even refuse to have a break at their dinner-hour, and their one complaint is that Aristarchus himself is the only person in the house who eats the bread of idleness – a criticism which Socrates rebukes with an improving fable about the dog which protects the sheep against wolves. This passage shows

that in Xenophon's opinion the average upper-class Athenian of his day automatically assumed that a really profitable manufacturing business would be slave-worked. We can agree that this assumption did exist, and was justified, and that manufacture without slaves would only be on a very small scale. The prosperous *technitai* we shall encounter presently in Aristotle would normally have obtained their wealth by making use of slave labour, like Socrates' Megarians and the rest. The passage also shows that an Athenian belonging to the propertied class would not think it proper for his own family to do any manual work, except of course the sort of spinning and weaving and so forth for the benefit of the family itself which Greek women were expected to do – and Roman women, even (down to the early Principate) of the highest social class. We are told that the Emperor Augustus normally wore (though only when at home!) clothes made by his sister, wife, daughter or grand-daughters, and that he had his daughter and grand-daughters trained in spinning and weaving (*lanificium*, Suet., *Aug.* 73; 64.2). The women of Aristarchus' family were doing something quite different from that: they were producing things to be sold on the market as commodities. Needless to say, the story provides no evidence about the habits or outlook of the humbler Athenian, who must often have done manufacturing work of this kind, with his whole family: there is no reason to think he considered such work degrading, although no doubt he was glad to get clear of it when he could, if there were an opportunity for him to rise into the upper class. But at present we are mainly interested in the fact that the labour exploited by the propertied class is that of slaves.

My third passage from the *Memorabilia* (II.viii, esp. 3-4) is a conversation Socrates had with Eutherus, described as an old comrade of his and therefore no doubt a member of a respectable propertied family. It is after the end of the Peloponnesian war in 404 B.C. Eutherus tells Socrates that he has lost his property abroad and now, having nothing on the security of which he can borrow, has been obliged to settle down in Attica and earn his living by working with his hands – *tōi sōmati ergazomenos*, 'working with his body', as the Greeks put it. Socrates points out that he will soon be an old man and advises him to take a permanent job as overseer or bailiff to some landowner, supervising operations and helping to get in the harvest and generally looking after the property. Eutherus' reply is very interesting: I think it would have been made by any Greek citizen who belonged to what I am calling the propertied class and perhaps by a good many quite humble men too. He says, 'I just couldn't stand being a slave' (*chalepōs an douleian hypomeinaimi*). What Eutherus cannot endure is the idea of being at another's beck and call, of having to submit to dictation and reproof, without the option of being able to walk out or to give as good as he got. If one is making or selling things oneself or even – as Eutherus had been doing – working for hire on short-time jobs, one can at least answer back, and at a pinch betake oneself elsewhere. To take the sort of permanent employment which most people nowadays are only too glad to have is to demean oneself to the level of the slave: one must avoid that at all costs, even if it brings in more money. Of course a really poor Greek, even a citizen, might sometimes have been glad to find such a post, but only, I think, as a last resort. When we meet identifiable bailiffs or business managers in the sources, they are always slaves or freedmen: see Appendix II below. It is true that at the very opening of Xenophon's

*Oeconomicus* (I.3-4) the possibility of becoming someone else's overseer is raised, but only as a hypothetical point, as an illustration of the fact that what you do for yourself you can also do for others. But in the later chapters, XII-XV, which are thoroughly practical and discuss the choice and training of an overseer or bailiff (an *epitropos*), it is taken for granted that he will be a slave (see esp. *Oecon.* XII.2-3; XIII.6-10; XIV.6,9).

The last of the three Socratic dialogues of Xenophon which I have just recounted brings out very well the low estimate of wage-labour in Classical Greece; and things were no different in Hellenistic and Roman times. Nearly eight hundred years later there is a fascinating constitution of Gratian and his co-emperors (mentioned in Section iii of this chapter and dating from A.D. 382), which in the most stringent terms forbids the entrusting of property by way of *procuratio* to a decurion (a member of a city Council), who would thus become what we should call a bailiff or salaried manager. The emperors speak of a decurion who accepted such a post as one who, 'undertaking the most infamous baseness, heedless of his liberty and his lineage, ruined his reputation by his servile obsequiousness' (*CTh* XII.1.92 = *CJ* X.333ii.34).<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The first appearance in antiquity of hired labour on a large scale was in the military field, in the shape of mercenary service. (As I mentioned in I.iv above, this interesting fact was noticed by Marx and is referred to in his letter to Engels of 25 September 1857: *MESC* 118-19.) I need do no more than just mention this topic here, as the subject of Greek mercenaries has often been dealt with (see V.ii n.16 below). Among the earliest pieces of evidence for Greek mercenaries - serving, however, not inside the Greek world but for the Egyptian Pharaoh Psamtik II in Nubia - is the inscription M/L 7, scratched on the leg of a colossal statue of Rameses II in front of the temple at Abu Simbel.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is Aristotle, needless to say, who gives the most useful analysis of the position of the hired man, the *thēs*, as Aristotle usually calls him. The term often found in other authors and in inscriptions is *misthōtos* (the man who receives *misthos*, pay); but Aristotle for some reason never employs this word, although he does use its cognates.<sup>5</sup> It does not seem to have been sufficiently realised that in the eyes of Aristotle (as of other Greeks) there was an important qualitative difference between the *thēs* or *misthōtos*, who is specifically a hired man (a wage-labourer), and the independent skilled artisan or craftsman who works on his own account (whether employing slaves or not) and is commonly called a *technitēs* or *banausos* (occasionally a *banausos technitēs*) - although I must admit that in some contexts Aristotle, when he is speaking loosely (e.g. in *Pol.* I.13, 1260<sup>a</sup>36-<sup>b</sup>1), can use *banausos/technitēs* for a larger category, including the *thēs*. (I deal with the skilled man, the *technitēs*, in IV.vi below.) Unfortunately Aristotle does not give a full theoretical discussion of this difference, but it emerges very clearly when several passages in the *Politics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Nicomachean and Eudemian Ethics* are put together.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle does not say in so many words that the labour given by the hired man is characteristically unskilled and poorly rewarded, while that of the *banausos/technitēs* tends to be skilled and better rewarded; but this

is sometimes implied, especially in a passage in which Aristotle distinguishes the labour of the *banausoi/technitai* from that of the men who are 'unskilled and useful only with the body' (*Pol.* I.11, 1258<sup>b</sup>25-7). This is understandable: of course a skilled man would always work on his own (and even exploit slave labour) when he could, whereas the unskilled man would scarcely ever be able to do that. For some Greeks, including Xenophon, the word *technitēs*, most often used for the independent craftsman, had acquired such a necessary primary connotation of skill that it could even be used of skilled slaves, as in *Mem.* II.vii.3-5. (The term *cheirotechnai* is used in precisely the same sense, of skilled slaves, in Thucydides VII.27.5, to describe the majority of the 'more than 20,000 slaves' who escaped from Attica during the final stages of the Peloponnesian war; see Appendix II below.) When he was not just making things for sale on his own account, the skilled artisan (or, for that matter, the man who possessed some equipment of his own that could be useful in transport, for instance) would normally perform work for others by entering into specific contracts. Our evidence for such activities comes mainly from inscriptions recording public works (see below), where the 'contractor' (as we should call him) is most often referred to as a *misthōtēs*, but sometimes (outside Athens) he is *ergolabos*, *ergolabōn* or *ergōnēs*, and sometimes he receives no technical name, as at Epidaurus (where it is simply said that he 'undertook', *hēteio*, a particular task) or in fifth-century Athens. I deal with such men in IV.vi below: their class position is distinct from that of *misthōtoi*, who hire themselves out in a general way and not (as a rule) for specific jobs or those requiring skill or equipment.

Here it is interesting to recall a remark made by Plato, who was just as contemptuous as Aristotle of hired labourers and placed them (as did Aristotle) at the very bottom of his social scale (*Rep.* II.371d; cf. *Polit.* 290a; *Laws* XI.918bc; and V.742a, where the *misthōtoi* are slaves or foreigners). In *Rep.* II.371de Plato describes his *misthōtoi* as servants who are altogether unfit to associate with his citizens on an intellectual level but have enough physical strength to labour; and he goes on to speak of them, very accurately, as 'those who sell their labour power' (*koi pōizontes tēn tēs ischyos ducian*: very literally, 'those selling the use of their strength') - a phrase which should remind us immediately of a major step forward taken by Marx in formulating his theory of value, when he came to realise, in 1857-8, that one must speak of the worker's selling to his employer not his *labour* but his *labour power* (or capacity): see the Foreword by Martin Nicolaus to his English translation of Marx's *Grundrisse* (1973) 20-1, 44-7. Marx refers on two occasions to a phrase in Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan* I.x) which already embodied the idea he wished to express: 'The value, or worth of a man, is as of all other things, his price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his power' (*Cap.* I.170 n.2; and *Wages, Price and Profit*, ch.vii). But he does not seem to have noticed the significance of the passage in Plato's *Republic* which I have quoted, and I have never seen it cited in this connection. In antiquity, most wage-labourers were unskilled men, not contracting to do specific pieces of work for another (as the skilled independent artisan may do), but hiring out their general labour power to others in return for pay; and it looks as if they tended to be severely exploited.

As we should expect from Aristotle, his disapproval of the *thēs* is an integral part of his sociology and is deeply rooted in his philosophy of life. For him, there

could be no civilised existence for men who did not have *leisure* (*scholē*),<sup>7</sup> which was a necessary condition (though not of course a sufficient condition) for becoming a good and competent citizen (see esp. *Pol.* VII.9, 1329<sup>a</sup>1-2), and indeed was the goal (*telos*) of labour, as peace was of war (VII.15, 1334<sup>a</sup>14-16) – although of course there was ‘no leisure for slaves’ (*ou scholē doulois*): Aristotle quotes a proverb to that effect (1334<sup>a</sup>20-1). Now the overriding necessity for leisure excludes the citizens of Aristotle’s ideal State from all forms of work, even farming, not to mention craftsmanship. But in an ordinary city he realises (in passages from Books IV and VI of the *Politics*, discussed in II.iv above)<sup>8</sup> that ‘the masses’ (*to plēthos*)<sup>9</sup> can be divided into four groups (*merē*) according to the kind of work they perform: farmers, artisans, traders, and wage-labourers (*geōrgikon, banausikon, agoraion, thētikon*), with the wage-labourers (*thētikon*) clearly forming a group different from that of the independent artisans (*banausikon*); and although (as I have already mentioned) his language elsewhere is sometimes ambiguous, in that it is hard to tell whether he is identifying the *thēs* with, or distinguishing him from, the *banausos/technitēs*, yet in some other passages he again shows that he does have two distinct groups in mind, especially when he says that in oligarchies the existence of high property-qualifications makes it impossible for the *thēs* to be a citizen, while a *banausos* may be, ‘for many of the *technitai* are rich’ (*Pol.* III.5, 1278<sup>a</sup>21-5).<sup>10</sup> By the exercise of his skill, then, and no doubt by exploiting slave labour in addition, the *banausos/technitēs* may even gain enough property to enter the wealthy class, but this is denied to the (unskilled) *thēs*.

However, the essential fact which, in Aristotle’s eyes, makes the hired man a less worthy figure than the ordinary artisan is not so much his comparative poverty (for many independent artisans are likely to be poor too) but his ‘slavish’ dependence upon his employer. This would apply equally, of course, to the day-labourer and to the permanent bailiff, even if a gentleman like Xenophon’s Eutheros might feel that working in the former capacity was not quite so ‘slavish’ because he would retain more freedom of movement. Near the end of the *Politics* (VIII.2, 1337<sup>b</sup>19-21) Aristotle contemplates acts which are done for other people and do not have certain saving characteristics (some of which he specifies): any such act he stigmatises as both *thētikon* (appropriate to the hired labourer) and *doulikon* (appropriate to the slave); clearly the two adjectives had a very similar colouring in his mind.<sup>11</sup> To allow your life to revolve around anyone except a friend is *doulikon*, slavish, Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (IV.3, 1124<sup>b</sup>31-5<sup>a</sup>2), and he adds that ‘this is why all flatterers are *thētikoi*’, they have the characteristics of hired men. In Section ii of this chapter I quoted Aristotle’s remark in the *Rhetoric* (I.9, 1367<sup>a</sup>28 ff.) that at Sparta the gentleman wears his hair long, as a mark of his gentlemanly status, ‘for it is not easy for a man with long hair to do work appropriate to a hired labourer’ (*ergon thētikon*), and also the statement that follows, that ‘it is the mark of a gentleman not to live for the benefit of another’.

There is one curious feature of Aristotle’s attitude to the wage-labourer which is worth mentioning. For him (see *Pol.* I.13, 1260<sup>a</sup>36-<sup>b</sup>6) the slave is at least a ‘partner in life’ (*koinōnos zōēs*) with his master, whereas the *banausos technitēs* (here certainly including the *thēs*, of whom Aristotle may be mainly thinking) is ‘further removed’ (*porrhōteron*) from his employer and ‘subject only to what

may be called a limited servitude’. Now Aristotle expects the master to impart to his slave a certain amount of *aretē* (in this case, moral virtue); but nothing is said about the necessity for any such process for the benefit of the workman who – rather strangely, to our way of thinking – is evidently conceived by Aristotle as deriving less benefit from his relationship to his employer than the slave may be expected to obtain from his association with his master. Here again no distinction is drawn between the temporary or long-term wage-labourer or independent craftsman: none of them, in Aristotle’s eyes, has a relationship with the master as close as that of the slave.

\* \* \* \* \*

The lot of the hired man is almost invariably presented throughout Greek and Roman history in an unpleasant light. The one striking exception I know is Solon, fr. 1.47-8 (Diehl = 13.47-8 West), where the farm labourer hired by the year is depicted no more unfavourably than other propertyless men, constrained by poverty (line 41): the sea trader, the artisan, the poet, the doctor or the seer. When Homer was making the shade of Achilles compare his existence in the underworld with the most unpleasant kind of life he could think of on earth, the occupation he pictured was that of *thēs* to a poor and landless man (*Od.* XI.488-91);<sup>12</sup> and Hesiod shows what sort of treatment the agricultural labourer could expect at about the beginning of the seventh century B.C. when he advises the farmer to put his *thēs* out of doors when summer comes (*Works and Days* 602). When Euripides’ Electra is speculating dolefully, before she has re-encountered her brother Orestes, about his present miserable existence in exile, she imagines him working as a hired labourer (*Electr.* 130-1 uses the word *latreueis*, and lines 201-6 have *thēssan hestian*). We have seen with what disfavour Xenophon expected an Athenian gentleman to regard taking even a rather superior form of permanent service for wages, as a bailiff; and the fourth-century Attic orators speak of being driven to work for wages as if it were a fate second only to slavery in unpleasantness (Isocr. XIV.48; Isac. V.39). In one speech by Demosthenes (LVII.45) the fact that many citizen women in a time of emergency had become ‘wet-nurses and wool-workers and grape-harvesters’ is given as an illustration of the way in which poverty may compel free individuals to do ‘many servile and base acts’, *doulika kai tapeina pragmata*. Euthyphro, in Plato’s dialogue of that name, is pictured as farming with his father in Naxos and employing a dependant of theirs as a hired labourer (*pelatēs . . . ethēuon ekei par’ hēmin*): when the wretched man kills one of the slaves on the farm in a drunken quarrel, Euthyphro’s father binds him and throws him into a ditch, where he dies (*Euthyphro* 4c, cf. 15d). When Isocrates was speaking of fifth-century Athens as having the tribute of the allies displayed on the stage of the theatre at the festival of the Dionysia, he evidently felt that it made the idea more painful and wounding when he described the silver as ‘brought in by hirelings’ (*misthōtoi*, VIII.82). Demosthenes, too, uses the term *misthōtos* for ‘political hireling’ in a bitterly contemptuous way (IX.54, and esp. XIX.110). Hired labourers are commonly depicted as doing rough or unskilled work, or tasks considered characteristic of slaves (see e.g. Ar., *Birds* 1152-4; Ps.-Dem. XLIX.51-2; Poll. VII.131). And when there is evidence about their pay, it is very low, as in the two long and important Athenian building-inscriptions of the late fourth century

B.C. relating to Eleusis (IG II<sup>2</sup>. 1672-3, on which see below): at this time, skilled artisans like bricklayers and plasterers are receiving 2 or 2½ drachmae per day, while the hired labourers (*misthōtoi*) get only 1½ drachmae.<sup>13</sup> (The daily keep, *trophē*, of the public slaves employed in the same operations was half a drachma per day.)<sup>14</sup> At Athens, men wishing to be hired – like the agricultural labourers in the Parable of the Vineyard, in Mt. XX. 1-16 – congregated in a recognised place, known as Kolonos Agoraios (or Ergatikos or Misthios), apparently at the west end of the Athenian Agora. This is known only through a fragment of Old Comedy and the scholiasts and lexicographers: the evidence has been very well set out by Alexander Fuks.<sup>15</sup> Hired labour at the peak periods of agricultural activity (harvesting, vintage, olive-picking) must have been quite common everywhere; but I have come across surprisingly few passages in Greek literature which mention the employment of hired labour in any form of agricultural work in the Classical period,<sup>16</sup> and it is worth remembering that men so engaged might well turn out to be slaves, hired out by their masters, as they certainly are in Ps.-Dem. LIII.20-1. No doubt there was also a good deal of mutual assistance among farmers, although I do not recall in Greek literature any parallel to the mention of such exchanges by two Latin authors of the mid-second century of the Christian era: Apuleius, *Apol.* 17.1 (*an ipse mutuarias operas cum vicinis suis cambies*), and Gellius, *NA* II.29.7 (*operam mutuam dent* – from an Aesopic fable, of which Ennius made a version, in Latin tetrameters, id. 20). A prosperous farmer might wish to employ his poorer neighbours as hired workers at peak periods, as apparently in Cato, *De agr. cult.* 4 (*operarios facilius conduces*).

In antiquity it was not only in the Greek and Roman world that the hired man was despised and likely to be ill-treated. In Judaea in the Persian period (the fifth or fourth century B.C.) the prophet Malachi threatened divine punishment on those who oppress 'the hireling in his wages', mentioning in the same breath those traditionally helpless figures of Israelite society, 'the widow and the fatherless' (Mal. III.5; cf. Deut. XXIV.14-15; Lev. XIX.13). When Alexander the Great in 323 sent Miccalus of Clazomenae from Babylon with a large sum of money (500 talents), to procure experienced additional crews from Phoenicia and Syria for an expedition into the Persian Gulf, we are told by Arrian that his instructions were to 'hire some and buy others' (*Anab.* VII.19.5). Evidently hired men and slaves could be expected to serve side-by-side. I must not take time to mention other evidence from the 'pre-Classical' world. (I have referred at the end of this section to the passages in the New Testament that mention hired labour.)

For the Hellenistic period, where the sources for economic history are more documentary than literary, and regional differences can be very great (not only between Greece, Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt, but between individual areas within those countries), the evidence about wage-labour is hard to disentangle from that concerning the activity of artisans or even of peasants who occasionally take service as hired labourers.<sup>17</sup> But over fifty years ago a brilliant essay by W. W. Tarn, 'The social question in the third century',<sup>18</sup> which Rostovtzeff described as 'the best treatment of the social and economic conditions of Greece and the Greek islands in the third century B.C.' (*SEHWW* III.1358 n.3), showed good grounds for thinking that in the early Hellenistic age, while a few Greeks became richer, the condition of the masses probably became appreciably worse; and of course in such conditions hired labourers are bound to suffer. (I accept

this conclusion, even though I am far less confident than Tarn about the validity and the implications of many of his figures.)

In the Roman Principate and Later Empire the evidence is again very hard to interpret, and again the situation undoubtedly varied greatly from area to area. We seldom hear of hired labour except in agriculture, where it was highly seasonal, and in building, where it was casual and irregular (see below).<sup>19</sup> As a rule, the situation of such hired workers as we find seems to be very humble indeed, even if occasionally an isolated one manages, by a combination of good luck and hard work (he would certainly need both), to rise in the world and enter the propertied class, like the unknown man who is the subject of a famous third-century metrical epitaph from Mactar in Africa (modern Tunisia): he came from a poor family, but partly by acting as foreman of gangs of reapers at harvest-time, he succeeded in becoming a prosperous landowner himself and a member of his local Council (*ILS* 7457 = *CIL* VIII.11824; there is a translation in MacMullen, *RSR* 43). But this man was probably a very rare exception. I doubt if he is much more 'typical' than the unnamed bishop who is said by John Moschus to have worked with his hands as a labourer in the rebuilding of Antioch after the great earthquake of 526 (*Præmon. spirit.* 37, in *MPG* LXXXVII.iii.2885-8). There was also a story mentioned by Suetonius (who says his efforts to verify it had been unsuccessful) that the great-grandfather of the Emperor Vespasian (who reigned from 69 to 79) had been a contractor (*maniceps*) responsible for bringing gangs of agricultural labourers from Umbria into the Sabine country (*Vesp.* 1.4); but the story did not allege that the man rose in this way from poverty. No doubt a certain amount of such migratory labour existed in various parts of the Greek world, as well as in the West, and there will undoubtedly have been a number of miserably poor Greeks like the Italian *mercennarii* whose employment Varro, as we have seen (in Section iv above), advises in areas too unhealthy for precious slaves to be risked there. And Varro's recommended practice of employing hired men even in healthy districts for occasions of heavy work, such as the harvest and the vintage, must have been general in the Græco-Roman world. I should mention here that in the same passage Varro states that many *obarii*, who must be men in some kind of debt-bondage, were still employed in his day on farms in Asia Minor and Egypt as well as Illyricum (*RR* I.17.2-3; cf. Section iv of this chapter and its no. 66-7). I cannot resist mentioning also the passage in which Columella, discussing the rearing of thrushes (*turdii*), says that some people gave them dried figs which were pre-chewed; but, he adds, 'when the number of thrushes is large, it is hardly expedient to do this, because it costs not a little to hire people to chew the figs (*nec parvo conducuntur qui mandant*), and they themselves tend to swallow a fair quantity because of the nice taste' (*RR* VIII.10.4). We must surely suppose that there were large numbers of poor peasants and artisans who supplemented their meagre incomes by taking temporary hired posts when they needed to do so and the work was available; and some unskilled men will doubtless have been obliged to earn their living primarily in that way. But this would be a *pis aller*, to be resorted to only if one were unable to make a living either on the land or as a skilled craftsman or semi-skilled worker. A pathetic illustration of the desperately poor condition of some hired agricultural labourers is given by Strabo (III.iv.17, p. 165), preserving the account by Poseidonius of a story told him by a

Massiliot friend about an estate of his in Liguria. Among a number of labourers, male and female, whom the Massiliot had hired for digging ditches was a woman who left her work to give birth to a child and came straight back to her work on the same day, as she could not afford to lose her pay. (I do not think this story loses its force when we compare it with Varro's statement that women in Illyricum 'often' give birth during a brief pause in their agricultural work and then return with the child so nonchalantly that 'you would think the woman had not given birth to it but had found it'. *RR* II.x.9.) In the Roman period, as in earlier times, the hired man might well be unable to obtain payment of his meagre wages (cf. Dio Chrys. VII.11-12). A well-known passage in the New Testament, James V.4, rebukes rich men for fraudulently withholding the wage of the labourers (*ergatai*) who have been harvesting or mowing their fields. And in the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus, dating from the early seventh century, we hear the complaint of a man who claims to have been working as the hired agricultural labourer of a rich man for fifteen years, without receiving his pay; but such long service under a single employer is, I believe, unparalleled (*Pratum spirit.* 154, in *MPG* LXXXVII.iii.3021-4).

Although I do not agree in all respects with the analysis of Francotte, in his book on Greek industry, I think that he is broadly right when he says that the description of a man as *misthōtos* indicates 'une condition sociale inférieure . . . C'est un ouvrier de rang subalterne, un "mercenaire", un "journalier"' (*IGA* II.150 ff., at 157).

\* \* \* \* \*

Public works may have been an important source of employment of hired labour (as well as the more skilled activity of craftsmen) in some Greek cities, but here the evidence of the literary sources is scanty and very unhelpful, and the modern literature is far from satisfactory. We have a considerable quantity of epigraphic material for public building works from Epidaurus, Delos and other places,<sup>20</sup> but the most instructive detailed evidence comes from Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., above all from a series of accounts of the early 320s, relating to the works in the temple at Eleusis – the only ancient source I know which provides unimpeachable evidence in a single set of documents not merely for a wide range of prices, including that of corn (both wheat and barley, sold by public auction), but also for the wages of men specifically called *misthōtoi*, for the cost of maintenance of public slaves (*dēmosioi*), and for contract work, remunerated sometimes at 'time-rates' (often calculated by the day, occasionally by the month) and sometimes at 'piece-rates', all in the same chronological and geographical context.<sup>21</sup> For the ancient economic historian this is one of the most valuable sources from Greek antiquity. Most of the work here, as well as in the great majority of other cases of which we know anything, was done by a series of what we should call 'contractors' (*misthōtai*), and not many *misthōtoi* in the strict sense are visible (see above, and n.13), although of course some wage-labour may have been employed by those contractors who did not do all the work for which they were responsible either by themselves or with the aid of their slaves. Going back to what I said earlier in this section, when dealing with Aristotle's treatment of hired labour, I must draw attention again to the fundamental distinction between the general labourer, the *misthōtos* (plural

*misthōtoi*) in the proper sense (Aristotle's *thēs*: see above) and the *misthōtēs* (plural *misthōtai*) or 'contractor'. I want to emphasise that we shall only confuse ourselves if, with some modern writers, we take the principal dividing line to be that between piece-worker and time-worker, or if we assume that the payment of something called *misthes* places the recipient among *misthōtoi*.<sup>22</sup> The essential dichotomy is between the general labourer, the *misthōtos*, who hires out his labour power for unskilled or at best partly skilled work, in a general way, and the man I am calling a 'contractor' (*misthōtēs*, *ergolabos*, *ergōnēs* etc.: see above), who undertakes a *specific task*, always (or virtually always) involving either skill or at least the possession of equipment of some kind, such as oxen or asses or carts for traction or transport, block-and-tackle (*trochileia*) or the like, and probably slaves.<sup>23</sup> As I have indicated, the use of the word *misthos*, which (when it does not happen to mean 'rent') we can nearly always translate by the equally imprecise 'pay', does not help us to distinguish between *misthōtēs* and *misthōtos*: it can be used in either case, and even for what we should call a 'salary' given to an architect or some other relatively dignified person – in which case it is normally calculated by the day, even if actually paid at a much longer interval. The state or its officials (in Athens, usually the Poletai) would 'farm out' contracts, sometimes for very small sums. Often this procedure is described by some such phrase as *misthousi ta misthōmata* (as in *Arist., Ath. Pol.* 47.2; *Hdts* II.180, and many other texts); but the expression *misthōmata* can have different shades of meaning, and in one of the late-fifth-century inscriptions from the Athenian Erechtheum the use of the phrase '*misthōmata* and *kathēmerisia*' probably distinguishes between payments made at piece-rates and day-rates respectively (*IG* I<sup>2</sup>.373.245-6). *Misthōtos* is a passive formation, *misthōtēs* an active, and the basic distinction is remarkably like that which modern Roman lawyers have established between what is called in Latin *locatio conductio operis* and *locatio conductio operarum* (see below).

There is a much-quoted passage in chapter 12 of Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*, purporting to describe the organisation of the great public works initiated by that statesman at Athens, in the third quarter of the fifth century B.C., and representing them as undertaken deliberately to provide employment for the whole citizen population (to 'make the whole city *emmisthos*', 12.4), including 'the unskilled and banausic masses' (12.5). Most of the workers Plutarch then proceeds to specify would have had to be skilled, but according to him each separate craft had its own mass of unskilled men (*thētikos ochlos kai idiōtēs*) working in a subordinate capacity, and the prosperity of the city was thus shared out widely among the whole population (12.6). Certainly, any *misthōtēs* contracting for a major piece of work may have utilised *misthōtoi* as well as slaves. However, the whole passage is highly rhetorical in character and – as Meiggs and Andrewes have independently demonstrated recently – is likely to be so exaggerated as to have little or no connection with the reality.<sup>24</sup> Such reliable evidence as we have (mainly from inscriptions) suggests that even at Athens metics and other foreigners (as well as slaves) participated in public works to a considerable degree; and in those few other cities for which we have similar information (and which would normally be less able to supply all the craftsmen needed) the role of non-citizens seems to have been greater still: this makes it unlikely that the main purpose of such works was to 'provide employment' for

citizens. Certainly a city was regarded as prosperous, and felt itself to be prosperous, when there was an exceptional amount of productive activity going on inside its walls, as for example at Ephesus in 407 and again in 395, when large-scale military preparations were being undertaken there by Spartan commanders, in the first case by Lysander (Plut., *Lys.* 3.3-4) and in the second by Agesilaus (Xen., *HG* III.iv.16-17); but city revenues were seldom enough to allow for very much enterprise of this kind. In all such cases it was doubtless the local artisans, the *technitai*, who were the main beneficiaries, and when there was more work on hand than they could cope with there was very likely to be an influx of foreign craftsmen.<sup>25</sup> In the eyes of Isocrates (VIII.21), when Athens had been 'full of merchants and foreigners and metics' it had enjoyed twice the revenue it received at the time he was writing (c. 355 B.C.), when – according to his exaggerated picture – such people were absent.

Anyone who wants to make out that the hiring of free labour in construction works played a major part in the economic life of ancient cities should ask himself how, in that case, the men concerned were able to live at all when – as often happened – there was little or no public building going on. It is worth noticing the attitude of Aristotle, who was well aware that 'tyrants' in particular had been responsible for major public works, but never attributes these to a desire to provide a better livelihood for the urban poor. On the contrary, in one passage he gives it as a characteristic of tyrants that they (like oligarchs) treat the common people (the *ochlos*) badly and 'drive them out of the city' into the countryside (*Pol.* V.10, 1311<sup>a</sup>13-14). A little later (id. 11, 1313<sup>b</sup>18-25) he develops the theory that the tyrant is anxious to keep his subjects poor, an objective for which he sees two reasons: for the first, the interpretation is doubtful (as the text may be unsound: see Newman, *PA* IV.456-7); the second is the desire to keep people so occupied that they will have no leisure to go in for plots! (cf. *Ath. pol.* 16.3). The illustrations Aristotle gives are the Egyptian pyramids and the public works undertaken by three sets of Greek tyrants (all in the Archaic age): the Corinthian Cypselids, Peisistratus of Athens, and Polycrates of Samos. All these measures, he adds, have the same results: poverty and the lack of leisure. Now the whole of Aristotle's argument assumes that the works concerned will have been carried out, not by *corvées* but by the voluntary labour of free men, citizens indeed – nothing is said of slaves, although of course their use as assistants is not excluded. Most people nowadays would naturally assume that the *purpose* of the works in question was at least partly to give employment to the citizens who were engaged in them. I think that this motive may well have been present, at least in some cases; but in Aristotle's mind it played no part at all: for him, the citizens were being given work in order to keep them poor and too much occupied to have any inclination to plot against their tyrant. Why the tyrant should desire his subjects to be poor may not be immediately obvious to us. Xenophon at any rate seems to have thought that the more poverty-stricken the subjects of a tyrant were, the more submissive (*tapeinoteroi*) he could expect to find them (*Hiero* V.4). But in order to understand Aristotle fully here, we must look at a silly passage in Plato's *Republic* (VIII.566e-7a), which Aristotle is thoughtlessly transcribing, and muddling unnecessarily at the same time by introducing the notion of public works. Plato sees the tyrant as beginning with demagogic measures such as the cancellation of debts and the

distribution of land to the *dēmos* (elements which do not occur in Aristotle); then, if peace is secured, the tyrant constantly stirs up foreign wars, 'so that the *dēmos* may be in need of a leader' – an idea which is repeated word for word by Aristotle (1313<sup>b</sup>28-9). In Plato, the way in which the tyrant impoverishes the people is by making them pay financial levies (cf. Arist., 1313<sup>b</sup>25-8); this it is which makes them poor and obliges them to spend all their time working, so that they are disinclined to plot. The public buildings which Aristotle drags in are not properly worked into the argument, which is clearer and better without them – if otherwise equally feeble – in Plato. We may feel that Aristotle is far from his best in the passages I have just quoted, but I do not think we can afford to ignore the complete absence from his work and that of all his contemporaries (including Plato) of any suggestion that public works were ever undertaken to provide a livelihood for the urban poor. The few other passages describing public building in Greek authors, with the single exception of Plutarch, *Pericles* 12 (discussed in the preceding paragraph), also contain no hint of any desire to create employment. Indeed, there is nothing about the provision of employment by means of public works in the whole of the literature of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., as far as my knowledge goes. This is certainly true even of the treatises addressed to (or put into the mouths of) tyrants: the *Hiero* of Xenophon, and Isocrates II (*To Nicodes*), III (*Nicodes*), and IX (*Eragoras*).<sup>26</sup> Isocrates, in one of his most unpleasant speeches, the *Areopagiticus* (VII), giving at one point a ludicrously idealised picture (§§ 15 ff.) of 'the good old days' at Athens (meaning the early fifth century: see § 16), pretends that while the poor regarded the wealth of the rich (which they scrupulously respected) as a means of prosperity (*euporia*) for themselves, the rich behaved benevolently towards the poor, leasing land to some of them at moderate rents, sending out others on commercial journeys, and providing resources for others 'to engage in other kinds of activity' (*eis tas allas ergasias*, § 32). But in this case too there is no mention of public works (although of course Isocrates was well aware of the public building that had gone on later in the fifth century, § 66), for the acts of kindness are represented as those of wealthy individuals (cf. § 55); and I may add that the word *ergasia* has just been used, in § 30, in relation to agricultural work. Later in the speech we are told that the Athenians in the same period impelled the poor 'towards farming and trading operations' (§ 44), and that many citizens 'never entered the city even for festivals' (§ 52). Keeping the poor in the country, away from the city, is a course urged upon oligarchs by the author, doubtless Anaximenes, of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Rhetoric to Alexander*, who points out that if the *ochlos* congregates in the city it will be more likely to unite and put down the oligarchy (2.19, 1424<sup>b</sup>8-10).

The literary passage which gives the most detailed and convincing account of a large-scale piece of public construction in the Classical period is Diodorus XIV.18, dealing with the fortification of Epipolae with a wall 30 stades in length (about 3½ miles or between 5 and 6 km.), undertaken by the great tyrant Dionysius I of Syracuse at the very end of the fifth century. We hear of 60,000 able-bodied *countrymen* organised in 30 labour teams, each with a master-builder (*architekton*) in charge of one stade (nearly 600 feet), six builders (*oikodomo*) under him, each responsible for one plethron (nearly 100 feet), and 200 unskilled labourers assisting each *oikodomos*. Other men quarried the necessary stone and



transported it to the site, with 6,000 yoke of oxen. (There is no mention of slave labour.) In so far as we can rely upon the narrative in Diodorus, the passage provides evidence against the existence of a sufficient pool of free labour for major construction work inside even this exceptionally large Greek city, since the mass of the workers are represented as being brought in from the countryside. The whole project is said to have been undertaken in a great hurry, and finished in twenty days. Prizes were offered to each category within the team which finished first. I may say that we hear of no attempt by Dionysius to provide regular employment for his subjects, although he did carry out a certain amount of public building (see Diod. XV.13.5). When in 399 Dionysius built warships and made large quantities of weapons and missiles (again organising the work very thoroughly), he collected great numbers of craftsmen (*technitai*), not only from the cities he himself controlled but also, by providing high pay, from Italy, Greece and even the area dominated by Carthage (Diod. XIV.41-2); and again the work was done as quickly as possible.

Only in one case, apart from Diodorus XIV.18.4 (mentioned in the preceding paragraph), are we given a definite figure, reliable or not, for the number of men involved in a major building project: Josephus says that 'over 18,000 *technitai*' were engaged on finishing the Second Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 64, two years before the outbreak of the great Jewish revolt (*AJ* XX.219). According to Josephus, on the completion of the temple the 18,000, who had been dependent on this work for their daily bread, were now 'out of work and lacked pay' (*argēsantes . . . kai misthophorias endeeis*); and Agrippa II, who had been financing the work, now agreed to have the city paved with white marble (evidently to provide work), although he refused to have the east portico raised in height, as the people had demanded (*ibid.* 220-3). Josephus can be very unreliable over figures, and I would expect the 18,000 to be a vastly exaggerated estimate. I imagine that a good many of the men concerned ought to be regarded as independent craftsmen rather than men who regularly hired themselves out, even if in this case they mainly worked for daily wages – which Josephus says they received if they had done only one hour's work (*cf.* Mt. XX.1-15). Probably a good many of them had come into Jerusalem from the countryside of Judaea, Galilee and even farther afield, and would expect to go home again when the work was finished. The economic situation in and around Jerusalem was now very strained, with a great deal of serious poverty: this of course contributed greatly to the enthusiasm of the revolt.

In the whole Graeco-Roman world, it was probably in Rome itself that there was the highest concentration of free men, including freedmen. Anyone accustomed to modern cities would naturally tend to assume that these men would have made themselves available in large numbers for hired labour. In fact there is no evidence at all for *regular* hired labour of any kind at Rome. A certain proportion of the free poor lived to some extent on hand-outs provided by wealthy families whose clients they were – thus bringing themselves within 'the sound section of the populace, attached to the great houses', whom Tacitus, in his patronising way, compares favourably with the *plebs sordida*,<sup>27</sup> frequenting (in his picture) the circus and theatres (*Hist.* I.4). But the great majority of the *plebs urbana* must have been shopkeepers or traders, skilled craftsmen (or at least semi-skilled artisans), or transport-workers using ox-carts, asses or mules. We

know that there were large numbers of such people (an actual majority of them probably freedmen or the children of freedmen, by the late Republic), because of the mass of inscriptions which have survived, mainly either epitaphs of individuals or documents connected with one or other of the scores of what are often, if misleadingly, called 'craft-guilds' (one form of *collegia*), which flourished at Rome, and to which, incidentally, slaves were only rarely admitted.<sup>28</sup> Now even some of these skilled and semi-skilled workmen might be driven at times to take service for hire as general labourers, although as a rule they would not do that, but perform their specialised tasks for particular customers. And of course the unskilled would very often hire themselves out generally. We are obliged, therefore, to assume the existence of a great deal of *short-term* hiring at Rome – a very precarious form of livelihood. Here it is worth taking into consideration the one literary work we possess which describes in painstaking detail a whole system of public works: the *De aquis* (*On the Aqueducts*) of Sextus Julius Frontinus, written at the very end of the first century. Frontinus speaks several times of slave workers (II.96, 97, 98, 116-18) and gives particulars of two large slave-gangs, one belonging to the state and the other to the emperor, totalling together no fewer than 700 men (II.98, 116-118), but never refers to free wage-labour. He also contemplates the possibility that certain works may need to be undertaken by private contractors (*redemptores*, II.119,124). There is nothing at this point to indicate whether the contractors would make use of slaves or of free workers; but Frontinus also mentions that in former times, before Agrippa organised the care of the aqueducts systematically (II.98), contractors had regularly been used, and the obligation had been imposed upon them of maintaining permanent slave-gangs of prescribed sizes for work on the aqueducts both outside and inside the city (II.96). There is no reference anywhere in Frontinus to the employment of free wage-labour in any form. On the other hand, we must remember that Frontinus is dealing entirely with the permanent maintenance of existing aqueducts; he says not a word about the type of labour involved in their original construction, a short-term job in which free artisans and transport-workers and hired labourers must surely have been involved, as well as slaves. (It is in the *De aquis*, by the way, that Frontinus, with all the philistine complacency of a Roman administrator, depreciates, in comparison with the Roman aqueducts he so much admired, not only 'the useless Pyramids' but also 'the unprofitable [*inertia*] though celebrated works of the Greeks' [I.16] – he no doubt had in mind mere temples like the Parthenon.)

Brunt has maintained that 'demagogic figures' at Rome are 'continually associated with public works'.<sup>29</sup> There does seem to be some truth in this, and I see no objection to attributing to some of the Roman *populares* a desire to provide work for poor citizens living at Rome. But I feel far from certain about this. Neither from the Late Republic nor from the Principate, at Rome or anywhere else, do I know of any explicit evidence of an attempt to recruit a labour force from poor citizens as a means of providing them with sustenance – except of course for the passage in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles* 12.4-6 (quoted above), which I would take (with Andrewes: see above and n.24) to be a reflection of conditions nearer to Plutarch's own time than to fifth-century Athens. It hardly encourages one to feel confidence when the only piece of literary evidence on such a major subject turns out to be an imaginary description of Classical Athens

in the fifth century B.C.! Moreover, when Polybius speaks of the interest of the Roman *plēthos*<sup>30</sup> in State contracts (for the construction and repair of public buildings, and for the farming of taxes), he is thinking only of those rich men who in the Late Republic formed the equestrian order, for when he proceeds to specify the various groups concerned in these activities and the profits<sup>31</sup> (*ergasiai*) they involved, he lists only the contractors themselves, their partners and their sureties; there is no mention of small sub-contractors (who would be artisans of various kinds), let alone men who were hired and worked for wages (Polyb. VI.xvii.2-4). This must not be taken to disprove some involvement of free labour in public works; but it does suggest that such labour did not play a major part. (Cf. also what I say below about Dio Chrysostom's *Euboean Oration*, VII.104-152.)

I find it hard to take seriously that unique and much-quoted text, Suetonius, *Vespasian* 18.2, in which the emperor refuses to make use of a new invention by a certain *mechanicus*, designed to facilitate the transport of heavy columns to the Capitol, on the ground that it would prevent him from 'feeding the populace' (*plebiculam pascere*).<sup>32</sup> The obvious implication is that such work was done, and Vespasian wished it to continue to be done, by the paid labour of citizens, which the adoption of the invention would have made unnecessary, thus depriving the citizens concerned of their livelihood. My reason for declining to accept this story as true is that Vespasian – who was no fool – could have had no possible motive for refusing to take up the invention *at all*, even if it would have saved a great deal of indispensable labour *at Rome*, for of course it could have been most usefully employed elsewhere in the empire, especially for such things as military fortifications, however impolitic it might have been to bring it into use at Rome itself. For this reason alone the story must surely have been an invention. Moreover, the emperors did not in fact regularly dole out food, money or anything else to the poor at Rome (or anywhere else) at any time *in return for labour*, and we never hear of any attempt to recruit a labour force from the poorer citizens as a means of providing them with sustenance. Vespasian, like most of the earlier emperors, certainly carried out a large programme of public building at Rome; but as far as I am aware we have not a single scrap of evidence about the type of labour employed in these works. I would guess that they were mainly organised through contractors, both large and small (*redemptores, mancipes*), who will have used gangs of slaves (if perhaps not often on the scale of the 500 with which Crassus is credited by Plutarch, *Crass.* 2.5), and will also have done a good deal of what we should call 'sub-contracting' to independent artisans and transport-workers, as well as employing much casual labour for unskilled work. I am tempted to say that employment on public works cannot regularly have played a major part in the life of the humbler Roman, for the programme of public building varied a great deal in quantity from time to time, and in particular, whereas Augustus had been responsible for a tremendous amount of construction and reconstruction, there was hardly anything of the kind in the reign of his successor, Tiberius, which lasted for 23 years (14-37). Had the lower classes at Rome depended to any large degree on employment in public works, they simply could not have survived such periods when little or no building was going on. However, even if the story about Vespasian which we have been discussing is almost certainly a fiction, it was accepted as true by

Suetonius, writing probably within half a century of Vespasian's death in 79, and it must have sounded plausible to at least some of his contemporaries. The same will be true of Plutarch, *Pericles* 12.4-6 (see above), if indeed it comes, as I believe, from the Roman period (see above), and probably the original source, as well as Plutarch, was influenced by conditions at Rome. We must presumably conclude, therefore, that the labour of humble free men did play a real part – how large, we have no means of telling – in the organisation of public works at Rome in the first century, although hired labour, in the strict sense, is likely to have played a far smaller role than that of skilled and semi-skilled men performing specific tasks. But the city of Rome, of course, is a very special case.

I for one find it impossible to accept the motive attributed by Dio Cassius (LXVI [LXV].10.2, in the abridgment of Xiphilinus) to Vespasian's action in being the first, at the rebuilding of the Capitoline temple, to bring out a load of earth: he hoped, according to Dio-Xiphilinus, to encourage even the most distinguished men to follow his example, 'so that the service [*diakonēma*] might become unavoidable by the rest of the populace'. (This motive does not appear in the earlier account by Suet., *Vesp.* 8.5.) There were certainly no *corvées* at Rome. Therefore, if we want to take the text seriously, we must suppose that the labour to be furnished by the citizens would necessarily be voluntary and unpaid, for Vespasian is seen as expecting the actions of 'the most distinguished men' to encourage 'the rest of the populace' to come forward; and it seems to me absurd to imagine 'the most distinguished men' as offering their services for hire. Yet it is surely unlikely in the extreme that large numbers of poor men would have wished to offer their labour for nothing, even towards the construction of a temple, and indeed many could scarcely have afforded to do so. The text, then, hardly makes sense. If, on the other hand, we seek to avoid the absurd conclusion I have just outlined by supposing that the poor were being expected to offer their services for pay, then the argument becomes most uncomfortable for those who believe that public works were largely carried out by the labour of poor free citizens, for it is a necessary implication of the story that not many poor citizens could have been induced to come forward but for the emperor's initiative! I should therefore prefer to adopt a suggestion made to me by Brunt: that we should ignore the motive suggested by Dio, and see Vespasian's act as something akin to the laying of a foundation-stone by royalty in the modern world. (As he points out, there is a close parallel in Suet., *Nero* 19.2; cf. also Tac., *Ann.* 1.62.2.)

In the Roman provinces, including those of the Greek East, a good proportion of major public building by the cities during the Principate came to depend upon imperial munificence. Unfortunately, we are as badly informed about the types of labour employed on building in the provinces as we are for Rome and Italy – except of course when the work was carried out by the army, as happened frequently from at any rate the second half of the second century onwards.<sup>33</sup>

One may well wonder how it was possible for the poor in great cities to maintain themselves at all. Certainly at Rome<sup>34</sup> and (from 332 onwards) at Constantinople the government provided a limited quantity of food free (mainly bread, with oil and meat also at Rome) and in addition tried to ensure that further corn was made available at reasonable prices. It is clear from a passage in Eusebius (*HE* VII.xxi.9) that a public corn dole (*dēmosion sitēresion*)

was being distributed at Alexandria near the beginning of the sole reign of Gallienus (the early 260s); and Egyptian papyri, mostly published very recently, have now revealed that corn doles also existed at Hermopolis at the same date, at Oxyrhynchus a few years later, and a whole century earlier at Antinoöpolis. All the evidence is given by J. R. Rea in his publication of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Vol. XL (1972). At Oxyrhynchus, from which we have much more evidence than anywhere else, the rules governing admission to the list of privileged recipients (partly chosen by lot) were complicated and are not entirely clear; but there is little doubt that it was reasonably well-to-do local citizens who were the chief beneficiaries and that the really poor would have little chance of benefiting (cf. Rea, op. cit. 2-6,8). Freedmen seem to have qualified only if they had performed a liturgy, and therefore had at least a fair amount of property (ibid. 4, 12). The distribution at Alexandria was subsidised by the government, at least in the fourth century (cf. Stein, *HBE* II.754 n. 1), when there is reason to think that Antioch and Carthage (the next largest cities of the Mediterranean world after Rome, Constantinople and Alexandria) also received State subsidies of corn (see Jones, *LRE* II.735, with III.234 n.53; Liebeschuetz, *Ant.* 127-9). A serious riot in such a city might result in the suspension or reduction of the corn distribution: this seems to have happened at Constantinople in 342 (Soz., *HE* II. 13.5; Soz., *HE* III.7.7), at Antioch after the famous 'riot of the statues' in 387 (Liebeschuetz, *Ant.* 129), and at Alexandria as a consequence of the disturbances that followed the installation of the Chalcedonian patriarch Proterius in c. 453 (Evagr., *HE* II.5). The evidence so far available may give only a very inadequate idea of the extent of such corn doles. As Rea has said, 'We have relatively very little information about what begins to bear the appearance of an institution widespread in the cities of Egypt' (op. cit. 2). Whether such doles existed outside Egypt and the other places named above we have at present no means of telling. We hear of subsidies in corn (and wine) granted by the emperors from Constantine onwards to some Italian cities of no very great size, such as Puteoli, Tarracina and Capua; but these were very special arrangements intended to compensate the cities concerned for the levies in kind (of wood, lime, pigs and wine) which they were obliged to furnish for the maintenance of the city of Rome itself and its harbour at Portus (see Symm., *Rel.* xl, with Jones, *LRE* II.702-3, 708-10). Apart from this there are only isolated examples of imperial munificence to individual cities, which may or may not have been long-lasting, as when we are told that Hadrian granted Athens *sitos etēsios*, which may mean a free annual subsidy of corn, of unknown quantity (Dio. Cass. LXIX.xvi.2). There is evidence from many parts of the Greek world for cities maintaining special funds of their own for the purchase of corn and its supply at reasonable prices: as early as the second half of the third century B.C. these funds became permanent in many cities (see e.g. Tarn, *HC*<sup>3</sup> 107-8). The food liturgies at Rhodes may have been unique (Strabo XIV.ii.5, p.653). In the Hellenistic and Roman periods wealthy men sometimes created funds in their cities out of which distributions of food or of money (*sportulae* in Latin) could be made on certain occasions; but, far from giving a larger share to the poor, these foundations often discriminated in favour of the upper classes.<sup>35</sup> In his book on Roman Asia Minor, Magie speaks of what he believed to have been 'the only known instance . . . of what is now thought of as a charitable foundation . . . : the gift of 300,000 denarii by a wealthy woman of Silyum [in Pamphylia] for the

support of destitute children' (*RRAM* I.658). In the inscription in question (*IGRR* III.801) there is however no justification at all for speaking of 'destitute children'; and the rest of the inscription, with two others relating to the woman concerned, Menodora, and her family (ibid. 800, 802), shows clearly that these people made their gifts strictly in conformity with social rank, according to a hierarchical order in no fewer than five or six grades, in which councillors come first, and after that 'elders' (*geraiot*), members of the local Assembly (*ekklēsiastai*), and then ordinary citizens; below these are *paroikoi* (resident strangers, who would have been called 'metics' in Classical Athens) and two varieties of freedmen (cf. Section v of this chapter and its n. 17), and finally the wives of the three leading grades, who (in the two inscriptions in which they are noticed) receive either the same amount as the freedmen etc. or rather less. In each case the councillors receive at least twenty times as much as the freedmen. (A convenient summary of the figures, which are not perfectly clear in the inscriptions, is given by T. R. S. Broughton, in Frank, *ESAR* IV.784-5.)

\* \* \* \* \*

I am concerned in this book with the Roman world only in so far as the Greek East came to be included in it, and I shall have little to say about strictly Roman wage-labour, a good, brief, easily intelligible account of which will be found in John Crook's *Law and Life of Rome* (1967).<sup>36</sup> A certain amount of free hired labour in the Roman world can be detected, for instance, in mining and various services, often of a menial character, as well as in agriculture, where we have already noticed the employment of *mercennarii*: see above on the Mactar inscription, and Section iv of this chapter. The situation does not seem to have changed much in the Later Roman Empire, during which the greater part of our information comes from the Greek East (see Jones, *LRE* II.792-3, 807, 858-63). Many technical problems arise in connection with what we should now call 'professional' posts (see below). Cornelius Nepos, writing in the third quarter of the last century B.C., could remark on the fact that the status of *scribae* (secretaries) conveyed much more prestige (it was *multo honorificentius*) among the Greeks than among the Romans, who considered *scribae* to be *mercennarii* - 'as indeed they are', adds Nepos (*Eum.* 1.5). Yet secretaries employed by the State, *scribae publici*, who were what we should call high-level civil servants and might serve in very responsible positions as personal secretaries to magistrates, including provincial governors, were members of what has been rightly called an 'ancient and distinguished profession' (Crook, *LLR* 180, referring to Jones, *SRGL* 154-7). Statements of this kind make it easier to accept a later apologia, one's instinctive reaction to which might have been derision: Lucian, the second-century satirist from Samosata on the Euphrates, who wrote excellent literary Greek although his native tongue was Aramaic,<sup>37</sup> was at pains to excuse himself for accepting a salaried post in the Roman imperial civil service, although in an earlier work (*De merc. cond.*) he had denounced other literary gentlemen for taking paid secretarial posts in private employment; and the excuse is that his own job is in the service of the emperor (*Apol.* 11-13) - that is to say, the State.

There was a parallel in Roman thinking, and to some extent even in Roman law (which of course applied in theory to the whole empire from c. 212 onwards), to the distinction drawn by Aristotle between the hired man and the

independent craftsman: the earliest text I know that brings it out clearly is part of a much-quoted passage in Cicero's *De officiis* (I.150), referring to 'the illiberal and sordid ways of gaining a living of all those *mercennarii* whose labour (*operae*), not their skill (*artes*), is bought; their very wage is the reward of slavery (*ipsa merces auctoramentum servitutis*)'. Here again we find the notion, prevalent among upper-class Greeks, that general wage-labour in the strict sense (not the specific labour of the independent craftsman) is somehow servile.<sup>38</sup> Even if Cicero is closely following Panaetius of Rhodes (see Section iii of this chapter), the sentiments he expresses at this point are thoroughly characteristic of the Roman propertied class.

At this point I must briefly mention a technical and difficult question: the distinction which most modern 'civilians' (Roman lawyers) draw between two different forms of the contract known to the lawyers of Rome as *locatio conductio* – essentially 'letting out', 'lease', 'hire'. (The rest of this paragraph can easily be skipped by those with no stomach for technical details.) The simplest form of this contract, with which we are all familiar, is *locatio conductio rei*, letting and hiring out a thing, including land and houses. Two other forms of *locatio conductio*, between which I now wish to discriminate, are *locatio conductio operis (faciendi)* and *locatio conductio operarum*.<sup>39</sup> a distinction does seem to have existed between them in Roman times, although it was never made as explicitly by the lawyers as by Cicero in the passage I have just quoted, and was always a socio-economic rather than a legal distinction. We must begin by excluding many 'professional services', in the modern sense: in Roman eyes they were simply not in the category of things to which the contract *locatio conductio* could apply.<sup>40</sup> This is a very thorny subject, which has been much discussed by Roman lawyers: I agree with the opinion that the texts do not allow us to construct a coherent overall picture, because the status of the various so-called *operae liberales* (a modern expression not found in the sources)<sup>41</sup> underwent considerable changes between the Late Republic and the Severan period – a few leading teachers and doctors, for example, achieved a notable rise in status, while some surveyors (*mensores, agrimensores*) sank. Broadly speaking we can say that professions like oratory and philosophy were perfectly respectable because they involved in theory no direct payment for the service rendered (except of course to 'sophists' and philosophers who held State appointments as professors), while doctors, teachers and the like, who did receive such payments, were thereby mainly disqualified from the high degree of respect which nowadays is accorded to their professions, until in the first two centuries of the Principate a few of their most prominent members, especially teachers of literature and rhetoric at the highest level, achieved a very dignified position. The derogatory term *mercennarius* is never used in connection with *locatio conductio operis* but is attached only to the man who 'had hired out his labour', *operas suas locaverat* (Dig. XLVIII.xix.11.1 etc.); and this form of contract can scarcely be distinguished from *locatio conductio sui*, where a man 'had hired himself out' (see e.g. Dig. XIX.ii.60.7: 'si ipse se locasset'). Hiring out one's labour (*operae*) was in itself discreditable, and Ulpian could say that the incurring of a certain specific legal stigma by a man who hires himself out to fight with wild beasts in the arena depends not on his having actually indulged in that particular practice but in having hired himself out to do so (Dig. III.i.1.6). It is

merely a curious anomaly that in *locatio conductio operarum* the workman (the *mercennarius*) who contracts for the 'letting out' (of his services) and who does the work (the *opere*) and receives the payment should be the *locator*, whereas in *locatio conductio operis* the *locator* is the man who 'puts out' the job to the *conductor* (we might call the latter 'the contractor'), who does the work (the *opus*) and receives the payment. (In *locatio conductio rei*, the *locator* is what we should call, in the case of land, the 'lessor', and of course it is he who receives the payment.) The legal technicalities, complicated as they are, should not be allowed to hide from us the very real difference which Cicero had in mind when he distinguished the relatively respectable man who allowed his *skill* to be purchased (for a particular job) and the *mercennarius* who in selling the general disposition of his labour power received as his hire 'the reward of slavery'.

In case it is objected that all the evidence I am citing comes from upper-class circles, and that only the well-to-do would regard wage-labour as a mean and undesirable activity, I must insist that there is every reason to think that even humble folk (who of course were far from despising all work, like the propertied class) really did regard hired labour as a less dignified and worthy form of activity than one in which one could remain *one's own master*, a truly free man, whether as a peasant, trader, shopkeeper, or artisan – or even a transport-worker such as a bargee or donkey-driver, who could hardly be classed as a skilled craftsman. I am tempted to suggest that in Greek and Roman antiquity being a fully free man almost necessarily involved being able, in principle, to utilise slave labour in whatever one was doing! Even a petty retailer (a *kapēlos*) who was prospering might buy a slave to look after his shop or stall; a carter or muleteer might aspire to have a slave to attend to his animals. But the *misthōtes*, who would be paid the very minimum for giving his employer the full use of his labour-power, would never be able to employ a slave out of his miserable wage; he alone was not a properly free man.

As I hope I have made sufficiently clear, the status of the labourer was as low as it could well be – only a little above that of the slave, in fact. Even in their own eyes, I feel sure, men who hired themselves out would have had a minimum of self-regard. Corax, a fictitious character who in the *Satyricon* of Petronius is hired as a porter and is called a *mercennarius* (mistranslated 'slave' by Rouse in the Loeb edition of 1913, corrected to 'hireling' in a revised edition in 1969), strongly objects to being treated as a beast of burden and insists (in correct technical terminology: see above) that what he has hired out is the service of a man, not a horse (*hominis operas locavi, non taballi*).<sup>42</sup> 'I am as free as you are,' he says to his employer, 'even if my father did leave me a poor man' (117.11-12). But it is implicit in the story that Corax knows he is not behaving like a free man. I would accept that as a true picture of such men in general. I find it significant that Plutarch, when advising the propertyless man on how to maintain himself (*Mor.* 830ab), makes no reference to taking hired service in a general way. The occupations he suggests (which I have reproduced in Section iv of this chapter, while discussing debt bondage) do include two unskilled activities, ordinarily performed by slaves, which the poor free man could undertake only for a wage: acting as *paidagōgos*, to take children to school, or as a doorkeeper, *thyrōrōn* (cf. Epict., *Diss.* III.26.7). For the former, he might be paid at what we should call piece-rates; for the latter, only time-rates seem appropriate. But each

of these tasks, however unskilled and humble, is one that has a narrowly defined sphere of action and does not allow for the man who is hired to be used as a general labourer. For Plutarch, and surely for most Greeks, I suspect that this would make a great difference. Undertaking this kind of post would at least put one on the borderline between the provider of skilled services and the general hired labourer in the full sense; and we ourselves might be inclined to think that Plutarch's individual would be crossing the line and could best be classified with the hired man. But perhaps, for Plutarch, the specificity of the services he recommends would have prevented the men concerned from sinking into the category of mere hirelings. The only other passage I know in Greek literature which shows any concern about the provision of a livelihood for the urban poor is in Dio Chrysostom's *Euboean oration*, VII.104-152; and the greater part of this is devoted to discussing occupations in which the poor must *not* be allowed to indulge, either because they minister to the unnecessarily luxurious life of the rich or because they are useless or degrading in themselves (109-11, 117-23, 133-52). Ideally, Dio would clearly like to settle the urban poor in the countryside (105, 107-8); the only identifiable occupation he recommends for those in the city is to be craftsmen (*cheirotechnai*, 124), although in another place (114), with what we can recognise as a literary allusion (to a speech of Demosthenes, LVII.45), he does say that a man ought not to be sneered at merely because his mother had been a hireling (*erithos*) or a grape-harvester or a paid wet-nurse, or because his father had been a schoolmaster or a man who took children to school (*paidagōgos*). I must add that there is never the slightest hint of public works undertaken in order to 'give employment' in any of the dozen or so orations of Dio delivered in his native city of Prusa (XXXVI, XL, XLII-LI), although there are several references in these speeches to public building and Dio's own responsibility therefor.<sup>48</sup> One passage in particular, XLVII.13-15, makes it perfectly clear that the aim of all such works was simply to make the city more handsome and impressive – an activity in which many cities of Asia Minor indulged to excess in the first and second centuries. In all Dio's references to his goodwill towards the *dēmos*, *dēmotikoi*, *plēthos* (e.g. in L.3-4; XLIII.7, 12) there is never any reference to public works; and his claim to have pitied the common people and tried to 'lighten their burdens' (*epikouphizein*, L.3) would have been quite inappropriate to such activities.

Surely, in any slave society a low estimation of hired labour is inevitable, in the absence of very special circumstances: few free men will resort to it unless they are driven to do so by severe economic pressure, and they will suffer in their own estimation and that of everyone else by doing so. Wages will tend to be low: among the factors that will help to keep them down may well be a supply of 'spare' slave labour, with masters possessed of slaves they cannot profitably use letting them out for hire dirt cheap rather than have them on their hands, doing nothing profitable. In the antebellum South, where to work hard was to 'work like a nigger', and poor whites could be said to 'make negroes of themselves' by wage-labour in the cotton and sugar plantations, there were many exhortations to the yeoman farmer and the urban and rural proletarian not to feel demeaned by working with his own hands – 'Let no man be ashamed of labour; let no man be ashamed of a hard hand or a sunburnt face.' But the very fact that such assurances were so often delivered is a proof that they were felt to be necessary to contradict established attitudes: this point has been well made by

Genovese (*PES* 47-8, with the notes, 63-4), who emphasises the presence in the Old South not merely of 'an undercurrent of contempt for work in general' but in particular of 'contempt for labour performed for another' – precisely the situation of the ancient *misthōtos* or *mercennarius*. The poison of slavery, in a 'slave society' – one in which the propertied class draws a substantial part of its surplus from unfree labour, whether of slaves or of serfs or of bondsmen (cf. II.iii above) – works powerfully in the ideological as well as in the social and economic spheres. It has often been remarked that in the Greek and Roman world there was no talk of 'the dignity of labour', and that even the very concept of 'labour' in the modern sense – let alone a 'working class' – could not be adequately expressed in Greek or Latin.<sup>44</sup> (I do not imply, of course, that labour is depreciated only in what I am calling a 'slave society': see below.)

It has often been said that in the Greek and Roman world the 'competition' of slave labour must have forced down the wages of free, hired workers and would be likely to produce 'unemployment', at any rate in extreme cases. 'Unemployment', indeed, is often imagined to be the necessary consequence of any great increase in the use of slave labour in a particular place, such as Athens in the fifth century B.C. But we must begin by understanding that *unemployment*, in anything like the modern sense, was virtually never a serious problem in the ancient world, because, as I have shown, *employment*, again in our sense, was not something sought by the vast majority of free men; only those who were both unskilled and indigent would normally attempt to take service for wages. I shall deal presently with the question how far slavery affects the position of these hired labourers proper; for the moment I wish to concentrate on the artisan or skilled craftsman (the *technitēs*), including the man who was semi-skilled and had some equipment (see above), engaged in transport and the like. Such a man, in the ordinary way, obtained a rather different kind of 'employment': he performed specific jobs for his customers, for which he would be paid at 'piece rates', according to what he did, except perhaps when he was working on what we should call a 'government contract', in public works, when he might be paid at 'time rates', by the day. (The best-known evidence for such payments comes from the accounts relating to the Athenian Erechtheum in the late fifth century B.C. and the temple at Eleusis in the late fourth century, references for which will be found in n.21 below.) A sudden influx of working slaves might of course reduce the craftsman's chances of finding people needing his services and willing to give him jobs to do; and to this extent the slaves might be said to 'compete with free labour' and in a very loose sense to 'create employment'. However, it would be simple-minded to say that a man who made use of several slaves in his workshop 'must have' under-sold the small craftsman who worked on his own in the same line: the larger producer in antiquity, not being exposed to the psychological pressures, the ambitions and the opportunities of a rising capitalist entrepreneur, might be more likely to sell at current standard prices and pocket the additional profit he might expect from the exploitation of the labour of his slaves – here I am rather inclined to agree with Jones, even if he was able to give only one illustration, which does nothing to establish his case (*SCA*, ed. Finley, 6).<sup>45</sup> Above all, we must remember that the size of a slave workshop, unlike a modern factory, would not increase its effectiveness in proportion to the number of its workers: it is machinery which is the decisive factor in the modern world,

allowing the larger workshop to produce more cheaply and thus to undercut the smaller one (other factors being equal) and drive it out of business. The ancient workshop had no machinery of any kind. It would be valued, apart from any freehold premises in which it happened to be carried on, solely in terms of the slaves employed in it and any raw materials of value, as in Dem. XXVII.4 ff. (esp. 9-10), where the orator – anxious as he is to put as high a value as he possibly can on his father's estate – values the two workshops controlled by the elder Demosthenes (one his own, the other held as security for a debt) in terms of nothing but the raw materials in them (ivory, iron, copper and gall) and their 52 or 53 slaves.<sup>46</sup> Demosthenes speaks of the slaves as if they virtually were the 'factory' in each case. Increasing the number of slaves in an ancient workshop would do nothing to improve its efficiency. In fact, as soon as it became large, problems of discipline would be likely to arise. So the ancient artisan was not nearly as likely to be 'driven off the market' and into 'unemployment' by 'slave competition' as we might have been tempted to think, on the basis of misleading modern analogies.

Having sufficiently distinguished the skilled craftsman and his like, I now return to the wage-labourer proper, who hired out his general services for wages. I suggest that such men might indeed have their wages forced down and even suffer unemployment, owing to the 'competition of slave labour', in one set of circumstances particularly. I refer to a situation in which slavowners were hiring out their slaves on a considerable scale: we know this did happen (see Section iv of this chapter), but how prevalent the practice was we cannot tell. If in these conditions the demand for hired labour was not greater than those free men wishing to perform it were able to fulfil, then some of the free men would be likely to fail to obtain work, even if the slaves' masters offered them at wages no lower than would be given to the free; and if the masters were willing to hire out their slaves at cut rates, then the free men's chances of getting employment would be much reduced.<sup>47</sup>

I know of only one isolated passage in all Greek or Roman literature which gives even a hint of any feeling on the part of free men that slaves were 'taking the bread out of their mouths'. This passage occurs in a quotation by Athenaeus (VI.264d; cf. 272b) from the Sicilian Greek historian Timaeus of Tauromenium, who wrote in the late fourth century B.C. and the early decades of the third (FGrH 566 F 11a). According to Athenaeus, Timaeus said that Mnason of Phocis (a friend of Aristotle's) bought a thousand slaves, and was reproached by the Phocians for thus 'depriving as many citizens of their livelihood'. So far, so good, perhaps – although the number of slaves is suspiciously high, especially for a rather backward area like Phocis. But Timaeus (or at any rate Athenaeus) then goes on, 'For the younger men in each household used to serve their elders'; and this seems to me a complete *non sequitur*. I cannot help thinking that Athenaeus has misquoted Timaeus, or that something has gone wrong with the text. Even if one is content to accept the passage as true and meaningful, there is no parallel to it, as far as I know. Otherwise there are only a few general remarks such as Appian's that the Roman poor in the Republic spent their time in idleness (*epi argias*), as the rich used slaves instead of free men to cultivate the land (BC I.7).

Even in societies in which unfree labour is a thing of the past, or nearly so, wage-labourers have often been despised by the propertied class, and sometimes

they have been deeply distrusted even by would-be reformers on the ground that those who receive wages (especially domestic servants) are too dependent upon their employers to be able to think and act of their own volition, and for that reason are unworthy to be entrusted with democratic rights. The English Levellers of the seventeenth century have been described as 'the one genuinely democratic party thrown up by the Puritan revolution' (Woodhouse, *PL*<sup>2</sup>, p.[17] of Introduction); yet some of them<sup>48</sup> wished to exclude from the franchise all apprentices and 'servants', as well as 'those that take alms', on the ground that 'they depend upon the will of other men and should be afraid to displease [them]. For servants and apprentices, they are included in their masters and so for those that receive alms from door to door' – thus Maximilian Petty, in the second 'Putney Debate', on 29 October 1647 (Woodhouse, *PL*<sup>2</sup> 83). The conjunction of beggars with servants and apprentices is significant.<sup>49</sup> There is no doubt that James Harrington, the very interesting and influential political writer of the third quarter of the seventeenth century, divided the population into two classes: Freemen or Citizens who can, and Servants who cannot, 'live of themselves' or 'live upon their own'.<sup>50</sup>

The desire to discriminate politically against those who work for wages continued well beyond the seventeenth century. I cannot follow it further here than to say that it is still very visible in some works of Immanuel Kant, written in the 1790s, where we may find some interesting reminiscences of the distinctions drawn in Roman law referred to above. Kant wished to confine the franchise to those who were their own masters and had some property to support them. A man who 'earned his living from others' could be allowed to qualify as a citizen, in Kant's eyes, only if he earned it 'by *selling* that which is his, and not by allowing others to make use of him'. Kant explains in a note that whereas the artist and the tradesman, and even the tailor and the wig-maker, do qualify (they are *artifices*), the domestic servant, the shop assistant, the labourer, the barber, and 'the man to whom I give my firewood to chop' do not (they are mere *operarii*). He ends his note, however, with the admission that 'it is somewhat difficult to define the qualifications which entitle anyone to claim the status of being his own master'! (I suspect that Roman law may have been among the influences at work on Kant's thought here. The distinction he draws may remind us irresistibly of that between *locatio conductio operis* and *operarium* which I drew attention to above as a social and economic differentiation. Kant was prepared to give it legal and constitutional effect, even though he was unable to define it satisfactorily.) In a work published four years later Kant returned to this theme, asserting that 'to be fit to vote, a person must have an independent position among the people'; and now, without attempting a more precise definition of his 'active citizen', he gives four examples of excluded categories which 'do not possess civil independence', such as apprentices, servants, minors and women, who may 'demand to be treated by all others in accordance with laws of natural freedom and equality' but should have no right to participate in making the laws.<sup>51</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

I must end this chapter by re-emphasising a point I have made elsewhere in this book: that if free hired labour played no very significant part at any time in

the economy of the Greek world, then the propertied classes must have extracted their surplus in other ways, primarily through *unfree labour* (that of slaves, serfs and bondsmen) performed 'directly' for individuals (a subject I have already dealt with in Section iv of this chapter), but also 'indirectly' to some extent, in the form of *rent* (in money or kind) from leases, or else from *taxation*, or *compulsory services* performed for the state or the municipalities (which I propose to deal with in the next chapter).

It may not be out of place if I add a note<sup>52</sup> listing all the references to hired labour in the New Testament, of which the only ones of particular interest are Mt. XX.1-16 (the 'Parable of the Vineyard', referred to above) and James V.4.

## IV

*Forms of Exploitation in the Ancient Greek World,  
and the Small Independent Producer*

(i)

'Direct individual' and 'indirect collective' exploitation

So far, in discussing the forms of class struggle in the ancient Greek world, I have spoken mainly of the *direct individual* exploitation involved in the master-slave relationship and other forms of unfree labour, and in wage-labour. I have done little more than mention such relationships as those of landlord and tenant, and mortgagee and mortgagor, involving the payment of rent or interest instead of the yielding of labour, and (except in I.iii above) I have similarly said little or nothing about the *indirect collective* exploitation effected through the various organs of the state – a term which, when applied to the Hellenistic and Roman periods, must be taken to include not only imperial officials (those of the Hellenistic kings and of the Roman Republic and Empire) but also the agents of the many *poleis* through which the Greek East came more and more to be administered. Broadly speaking, all those among the exploited classes who were of servile or quasi-servile condition (including serfs and bondsmen) and also hired labourers, tenants and debtors were subject to what I have called *direct* exploitation by *individual members* of the propertied class, although – even apart from the slaves of the emperors and other members of the imperial household, the *familia Caesaris* – there were a certain number of public slaves (*dēmosioi*, *servi publici*) owned by the Roman state or by particular *poleis*. The forms of exploitation which I have called *indirect*, on the other hand, were applied by the state (in ways I shall describe presently) for the *collective* benefit of (mainly) the propertied class, above all to persons of at least nominally free status who were small independent producers: of these a few were either traders (merchants, shopkeepers or petty dealers) or else independent artisans (working not for wages, but on their own account; cf. Section vi of this chapter and III. vi above), but the vast majority were peasants, and most of what I have to say about this category of small independent producers will be concentrated on the peasantry – a term which I shall define in Section ii of this chapter.

Ideally, it might have been best to deal separately with the kinds of exploitation effected by landlords and mortgagees (taking the form of rent or interest) together with other kinds of what I have called 'direct individual' exploitation; but since they applied almost entirely to those I am calling 'peasants', I have found it convenient to treat them in this chapter, with forms of 'indirect collective' exploitation.

By 'indirect and collective' forms of exploitation I mean those payments or services which were not rendered from individual to individual but were