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978-0-521-57433-4 - Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine

Peter Garnsey

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Historically there have been few slave societies. The ancient world provides two examples in Greece and Rome. This study, unique of its kind, asks how slavery was viewed by the leading spokesmen of these societies. There was no movement for abolition, nor a vigorous debate, such as occurred in antebellum America, but this does not imply that slavery was accepted without question. Dr Garnsey draws on a wide range of sources, pagan, Jewish and Christian, over ten centuries, to challenge the common assumption of passive acquiescence in slavery, and the associated view that, Aristotle apart, there was no systematic thought on slavery. The work contains both a typology of attitudes to slavery ranging from critiques to justifications, and paired case-studies of leading theorists of slavery, Aristotle and the Stoics, Philo and Paul, Ambrose and Augustine. A final chapter considers the use of slavery as a metaphor in the Church Fathers.

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THE W. B. STANFORD MEMORIAL LECTURES

**This lecture series was established by public subscription,
to honour the memory of William Bedell Stanford,
Regius Professor of Greek in Trinity College, Dublin,
from 1940 to 1980, and Chancellor of the University of
Dublin from 1982 to 1984.**

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University of Cambridge*



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To freedom and friendship

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Abbreviations

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

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

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Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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