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.1 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. 1.574). 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. Through no acts of selling and buying it seems to be given away for nothing; but the unpaid part of the slave's labour has the quality of being legally bound to his master for life and, if he escapes, to be hunted down and punished severely by the state. The same idea is amusingly expressed by the Athenian comic poet Crates (fr. XVI.376). Much running on wheels of their own accord to Olympus! Such was the tripods made by the god Hephaestus, which Homer had described as complete automation: the same idea is that of the statues endowed with life by Daedalus or of the god Hephaestus' inventing the fire. The same idea is that 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. Through no acts of selling and buying it seems to be given away for nothing; but the unpaid part of the slave's labour has the quality of being legally bound to his master for life and, if he escapes, to be hunted down and punished severely by the state. The same idea is amusingly expressed by the Athenian comic poet Crates (fr. XVI.376). Much running on wheels of their own accord to Olympus! Such was the tripods made by the god Hephaestus, which Homer had described as complete automation: the same idea is that of the statues endowed with life by Daedalus or of the god Hephaestus' inventing the fire. The same idea is that 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. Through no acts of selling and buying it seems to be given away for nothing; but the unpaid part of the slave's labour has the quality of being legally bound to his master for life and, if he escapes, to be hunted down and punished severely by the state. The same idea is amusingly expressed by the Athenian comic poet Crates (fr. XVI.376). Much running on wheels of their own accord to Olympus! Such was the tripods made by the god Hephaestus, which Homer had described as complete automation: the same idea is that of the statues endowed with life by Daedalus or of the god Hephaestus' inventing the fire. The same idea is that 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. Through no acts of selling and buying it seems to be given away for nothing; but the unpaid part of the slave's labour has the quality of being legally bound to his master for life and, if he escapes, to be hunted down and punished severely by the state. The same idea is amusingly expressed by the Athenian comic poet Crates (fr. XVI.376). Much running on wheels of their own accord to Olympus! Such was the tripods made by the god Hephaestus, which Homer had described as complete automation: the same idea is that of the statues endowed with life by Daedalus or of the god Hephaestus' inventing the fire. The same idea is that 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.
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 (telaīnai, publiciani), 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 pentacosiomedimnon (though not, in my opinion, the other Solonian telē) 1 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 liturges (public duties); and it is significant that in this case the income was purely from landed property. A recent theory that the four Solonian telē at Athens were later based on money income is an impossible one, as I have already demonstrated elsewhere. 2 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 the taxation of money income being introduced. 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 wageservice 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 the aid of a master, 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, leisureed existere 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, 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 vocations 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.) 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 (hōi eupoi, hōi tas ouias 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 as I think discretion an unconstrained line of leisure (or ‘to live a leisureed life liberally and temperately’), scholazontes eleutheriōn hama kai sōphronōs, as Aristotle put it (Pol. VIII.5, 1326b30-2). 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 (tupinai), whose minds accordingly become shrunken (ystellontai). 3

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 greatest 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 hoplē pararchomenoi, 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
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

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 pollloi, ho ochlos, to plithos); 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 (naukleros) of a merchant ship or two 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 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 AGRM). 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 1.9, 1367b-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 thitoton). And he goes straight on to give, as another example of to kalon, 'not carrying on a menial craft [a hamanos technē], for it is the mark of a gentleman not to live for the benefit of another' (to mi pros allon zên). Finley mistranslates this passage. 'The condition of a free man is that he not live under the constraint of another.' However, in view of Aristotle's other uses of the phrase in question and similar ones 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. It is of the main-land 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.1.27-8; 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 'thesaursued' movável 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, 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 (Agi 9.5; Grec. 41.7) the fortune of the third-century Spartan King Agis IV (which he is said to have distributed among his fellow-citizens by giving them 600 talents of coined money, apart from a quantity of agricultural and pasture land; but this is probably a great exaggeration. The Athenian Hippocionus, son of Callias, often said to be the richest Greek of his day (around the 420s), 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 Hippocionus a little over two centuries later, is said by Polybius (XXI.xxxii.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 fortune 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 Demaretids and Thermistocles, 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. 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, or to have suffered from the local rulers' share in the surplus extorted from the primary 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 Darius I, tyrant of Syria, made a present of 100 minae (10,000 drachmae, or 1½ talents) to his mercenary captain Archylus for being the first man over the wall in his siege of Mota 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. 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 Promele and Seleucus possessed more than all the kings of Sparta combined (Agi. 7.2).

In the Hellenistic and Roman periods the leading families of the cities of Asia enjoyed greater wealth than ever 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 Habich in 1960, has led to a marked revaluation of the evidence and a realisation that to speak loosely of 'Greek' or 'oriental' senators 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 Antiocch, Alexandria in the Troad) or towns with important groups of Italian settlers, such as Pergamum, Attaleia in Pamphylia, Ephesus, and Mytline. Secondly, as Habich 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 Syria-Palestine in the late Republic and early Principate, sometimes possessed of immense wealth and much inter¬ connected 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...
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. 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' (*inflma natatismum humiliata, 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' (*antique alias parsimoniae*). 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' (*lín métron*). 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. We have no way of verifying these figures, but they ought not to be rejected out of hand. 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 Amphic, a comic poet of the fourth century B.C., 'is the father of life to man; land alone knows how to cover up poverty.' For a positive panegyric of *agros* (Latin *agricola*), in the sense of 'gentleman-farming', owning a farm (and taking a merely supervisory interest in it), we can turn to the *Oeconomiu* of Xenophon, a man of unimpeachable orthodoxy and traditional opinions, who wrote the work in question at some time between the second and fourth decades of the fourth century B.C. Farming, in the sense I have indicated, is to Xenophon the noblest of pursuits, the most pleasant 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バッグ hazoth* (on whom see *OPW* 371-6); it is 'most important both as an occupation [an *ergasia*] and as a branch of knowledge [an *episteme*].

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 Lyssander 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' (*Oecom. IV* 20-5, only partly repeated in Cic., *Cat. mat.*). Sirdes 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.

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 (1.334-57) in which he argues that just as an orator needs no detailed acquaintance with the civil law, the *ius civil*, 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' (*his communi intelligens, 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' (*aerva 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. 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 (Cic., *cat. mat.* 51-68), first says he is going to speak of the 'pleasures' of farmers (*voluptates agricolam*, § 51); after mentioning Curius and Cincinnatus he uses of their agricultural activities the words *oblectabant* ('they delighted in them') and...
Machiavelli's 'gentry' 
need to work for one's daily bread. (Colum., 20). The essential thing is that one should not RRl.praef. Act I, Sc.i). In Italy in the reign of Nero (Heaut., defin. ploughing and carrying as what Cicero calls in 163 B.C., in which a character, Chremes, refers to such acts as digging, passage from a play of Terence (from a Greek original by Menander), produced Koerte, II*. 183). For 'deeds of war', others might substitute politics or philo¬... And he goes on to show that the sort of farmer he knows who belonged (ike Xenophon and Cicero) to the propertied class, I have found out one who 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 effici. 1.92). 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. Koert, IP. 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 illicita labor, "ungentimently toil (De fin. 1.3) – 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 cordidum opus (Column., RR I, ppa. 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' (gentilumini), defined by him in his Discourses on the First

III. Property and the Propertied (iii)

Decade of Lively (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.' But Machiavelli continues at once, 'Such men are a pest [gentilumini] 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 gentilumini 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 of Roman times is interesting: Machiavelli, writing in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, foresaw 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 lesee 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 (ike Xenophon and Cicero) to the propertied class, I have found only 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.v above. In his dissertation, 'What means of livelihood befits a philo¬...er?, 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 occasion of free choice. However, he is at least trying to deal with the real world, unlike that curious Epicurean enthusiast, Diogenes of Oinoanda, a figure known to us only through the very long inscription he put up in his native city in Lyca (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. 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 ponon), 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 troublesome times of Domitian's persecution' (of which Hipparchus was himself a victim). At the other end of the social scale, Horace in one of his Satires imagines a poor wage-labourer (a mercenarius) finding by good luck a silver treasure (an nummus argentum) 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 arete (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 manufacturer. 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 occupation' of a diatribe (1.17; I am tempted to recall Arist., b.234-5 and n.7). Philostratus will admit that Isocrates' father Theodoras was an aulopaios ('oboe-maker') who would have been known nothing about auloi or anything else connected with banastic activity, nor would he have been honoured with the statue at Olympia if he had worked at any mean occupation' (Vita soph. 1.17; I am tempted to recall Arist., Pol. VIII.6, 13414b-18b, a diatribe against the auloi). 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 Thalassium of Antioch to its ranks because he was said to be a cutler, Libanius retorted that Thalassium, 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.
The Emperor Julian in 362 exempted decurions from the collatio lustralis (chrysargyron in Greek), a tax payable during the years of the fourth and fifth centuries by negotiores, a term which by then had come to mean 'tradesmen' in the widest sense, including manufacturers, artisans, merchants, shopkeepers, moneylenders etc. In so doing he added to his edict the words 'unless perseverance 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 = XII.i.4: 'nisi forte decurionem aliquid mercari consitterit'). 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 tura est); and they add that any such member of the potiores 'either ought not to involve himself in trade' or ought to be 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 of men from among the common people, rich in the possession of their families, 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.xiii.3). Decurions were not even expected to take the kind of salaried post known as procuratio, managing some one 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 'severe obsequiousness' (CTh XII.i.92 = CJ X.xxxiii.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. Sicinius Claseus, senatorial 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' - 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 naviculari (paukloëi 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, the

---

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 brick yards 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.' 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 figlines) on brick-stamps had any direct connection with brick-making. 11

For the period of the Roman Principate and Later Empire I need do no more than refer to Rostovzeff's great work, cited above, to A. H. M. Jones's magnum opus (L.B.), 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.
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

The burden of making the prescribed shipments. We even hear from Callistratus, in the Digest (I.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 navicularis alone, by the way, and not – as recently stated by Cardascia and Gamsey 12° – to negotiatores 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 (publici, telimates), 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 f: 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 cives, 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. 18 Lugdunum, Arelate and Narbo, the three great emporia 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. 19

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, PRHI 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.4386), 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. 20 Petra may well have been another such town, on a rather smaller scale, and I suppose there may have been one or two more. 21

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 (LXX) 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, 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; 198 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 kaitheorian (Ath. pol. 11.11). 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
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

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, but *emporiorian* is not an original understanding: it means best be discovered from its occurrence in a text of the early fourth century B.C., Isocrates XVII (Tractacidi) 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 that one Aristotle was later to use for Solon’s travels: the young man went *hama* *kat’* *emporios* kai *kata* *theoriasin*, 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 away 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 Laerctius (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 five years before the hope that the Athenians would grow to accept his laws, but he rejects Helodorus in favour of some unknown writer who he maintains that Solon gave out that he was leaving Athens on account of his *naukreria*, 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 (emporioi), and thus *hama* *kat’* *emporias* he was leaving Athens on account of his *naukreria*, 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 (emporioi), and thus *hama* *kat’* *emporias* he was leaving Athens on account of his *naukreria*, which ought to mean business interests as a shipowner (Sol. 25.6).
they at least would all have to own ships, which of course they could use
first and foremost, whose estates were saddled with the burden of this
duty, were landowners

_and Alexandria.

And since, as I have mentioned above, the _naviculærii_ (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

_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_, 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 _properly 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 producers', 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 property classes to a greater or lesser degree, in ways I shall describe in IV.i below. Here I am dealing with the property 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 servidom.

* * * * *

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, servidom and debt bondage – which today has a very special status. This set of definitions is enshrined, for 'slavery', in Article 1 (I) of the Slavery Convention of 1926, organised by the League of Nations, 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, 1956), 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 convicth labour in antiquity.) I may add that compulsory labour services such as the mozar (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) Servidom, 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. I. xvi. 299; Nov. J. XXII.9).

It will be useful if I quote at this point a paragraph from the very thorough study of 'Paramoncl 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 obligations, 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 266).

B. Servidom 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 determinable 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 determinable 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 serv is a peasant (see IV.i 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 P.260.) The question of the precise manner in which later 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. Loize, 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 a 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 ‘Schuldknechtschaft’, 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-serf 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.

III. Property and the Propertyed (iv)

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 seisachthia 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 admirably 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’ (nē daniezein epi tois sōmatin), and thereby ruled out all forms of debt bondage too.2 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: servus 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’ (AB 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 musts 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** F.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' (**RHG** 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, the European Middle Ages) as distinct from the mediaeval serf within the feudal system! this is clear from his **Inst. J** (I.iii.pr.). No intermediate or mixed status is recognised. There follows in **Busolt**<ref> (see GS I.272-80; II.667-70 etc.)</ref>. 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 recognizing 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 (Liii.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 freeladen. 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 (<ref>Gai., Inst. I.9</ref>).

There are various words in Greek — such as *pais* ("boy") and its variants, *o soma* ("body") — which are used on occasion in the sense of 'slave', besides the more standard terms: *doulos*, *andrapodon*, *oikistes*; and there are other expressions in Latin apart from *servus* and *mancipium*, the regular technical terms. All these words can 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 'bondsman', 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 other 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 **Onomastikon** 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 eleutheron kai doulin*, 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 **Onomastikon** represents only a Byzantine epiphanon.) 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 Gymnetaes and the Korynephoroi (elsewhere Katonaphoroi) of Sicyon, and see the remainder as peoples of 'unfree' condition, in a kind of "kollektsivsklaveri" to their conquerors, akin to (but distinct from) 'feudale Hörigkeit' (**MED** 79); these are the **Uberi aut servi**, the Klaressati and Minoitai of Crete, the Thessalian Pentakos, 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 Kyllikyrioi (or, later, Kallikyrioi or Killykyrioi) of Syraecae, the Wokiatrai of East Locris, and perhaps the Bithynians in the territory of Byzantium. 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*<ref> was the technical term for the subject population of Thessaly, is used for the peasants of Etruria by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (**AR** IX.4; cf. **II.23**) or when the verb *heiltesten*, 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.26b-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 civilization was founded on 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 On Economics I (an early Peripatetic, perhaps Theophrastus), 'the first and most necessary kind is that which is best and most appropriate to household management [xoikonomikâta]; namely, the human variety [anepistos]. Therefore we must first provide ourselves with industrious slaves [cloutoi spoudaioi] (I.5, 1344a23-5). Immediately after this the author proceeds to distinguish the two immediate sorts of slave: the ordinary worker (ergatis) 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 Politic 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.4.125,35-41). 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, 1253a7-14 ff.). Polybius speaks of slaves, equally with cattle, as being among the essential requirements of life (anankaitai tou biou chreiai, IV.38.4). But I do not see how the brilliant civilization 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 (TS 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 periods to be made here. First, the upper classes of Rome in its great days occupied 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 Hellenic 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 any rate the more exorbitant 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. In a city like Athens, however, just because it was a democracy and the poorer citizens were to some extent protected against the powerful, 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 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 on an exceptional degree of 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;
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 a quite short period. 1 The Pseudo-Aristotelian Oeconomia I (5, 1344b35) allots to slaves just three things: work, punishment and food. (It is interesting to find precisely the same list, in reverse order, in Eúcúxv. XXXIX.24; cf. 26, and XXXII.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 mitóteikoi. 2 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.i 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 inhospitable 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, and like decrepíto xevan, old sick skulls, and 'anything else of a former calendar' (DiscolXnum). 3 (One may well wonder who would buy old or sick slaves?) In Varro's book on agriculture we read that in græda loca (presumably malarious districts) it is better to use mercenarii, 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.) 4 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 negroes are worth too much to be risked here; if the Paddies are knocked overboard or get their backs broke, nobody loses anything. 5 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 might even 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 might 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 (Diét. IV.1.33 ff., esp. 35-7; another part of the same passage is quoted in VII.ii 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, vitae in Latin. During the Roman Principate and Later Empire, imperial slaves were naturally in the best position to do well for themselves, even when they became freedmen. There are two particularly nice illustrations of this. One is an inscription of the reign of Tiberius (ILS 1514 = EJ 158), set up to a provincial member of the familia Cæsari, Mucius Scurratus, a merc disparator (cashier) in the fiscus (the provincial treasury) of Gallia Lugdunensis. 6 The inscription bears the names of no fewer than fifteen men and one woman 'from among the number of his vitaei, 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 manus), two 'gentlemen of the bedchamber' (a cubicula), two men who looked after Mucius' silver plate (th argyron), two footmen (peditius), two cooks, a doctor, a business manager (negotiator), a man who controlled the household expenditure (tummarius), and a valet (a servus); the function of the woman, Secunda, is not specified. Mucius evidently had other vitaei - 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 Drusillanus, who a little later occupied a similar position to Mucius Scurratus, that of dispenser, in the province of Hither Spain in the reign of Claudius (NH XXXII.I.145). He is said to have had a silver dish (a luna) weighing 500 lb., to manufacture which a special workshop had to be constructed, and eight companion pieces (comites riuo), 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 not more than one under-servant 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 dispesator (and incidentally their vitaei) by Weaver (SAS, ed. Finley, 132). In the Later Roman Empire the eunuch osuholdari of the Sacred Bedchamber became persons 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.4.146, & 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' (Onai. XXXI.9-11). Frederick Douglass, himself a former slave in the Old South, remarked that to be a slave, was thought 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' (Stampf, PI 338-9). We certainly hear from time to time in antiquity of slaves being owned by men described as 'poor' (penetes), like Chremylus in the Plutus of Aristophanes (see lines 29, 254, with 26, 1105), or at least as very lowly people. And Sidonius Apollinarius speaks in the third quarter of the fifth century of the Bretons as trying to encive away the slaves (mancipia) belonging to a man in his part of Gaul whom he describes, in very much the same way, as 'humilis obscurus desplicabilisquis' (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 penetes but even goretis, 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 CCA [ed. Finley] III, 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.

Every other 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 presset 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 Guéll, 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, but rather the reverse, for there could be nothing of greater interest to the property 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 at 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.ii below and its n.54. As I point out there, such men were playing a role of great importance in providing the property 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, pragmatetai or epistropoi), 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, 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 property 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., Onat, 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 afficionum 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. Oc. 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.6 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, 1330c25-8; Ps.-Arist., Oecon. I.5, 1344b18; Athen. VI.246f-5a; Varro, RR I.xviii.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 (amagelates), 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.lxxxvii.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 in 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 Athens during the Spartan occupation of Decelea in the late fifth century B.C. (I have said something 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 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 tolerable theraponron, 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 as slaves, as when they are called ‘the slave population’ (he 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’ (bathileikoi douloi, XI ii.4. 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 possesser, 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 adscriptici, or enagographoi 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. 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 basis of all slavery, in any case, is the subjective, productive threat to life of anyone of 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, PP 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 woman's" (Stampp, pp. 312-14).

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, p. 542).

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, heißen, 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 [depotai] over the Bithynians as the Spartans over the Helots" (FGrH 81 F 8, ap. Athen. VI. 271 bc); Theopompus, writing in the fourth century B.C., could say of the Illyrian Ardisioi (Vardei has been suggested as an emendation) that they "owned 300,000 dependants [prospletai] like Helots" (or "as if Helots", FGrH 115 F 40, ap. Athen. X. 443b = VI. 217d); and the aged Isocrates, writing to Philip II of Macedon in 336 B.C. (Ep. III. 5), could relish the prospect that Philip would "compel the barbarians to heißen to the Greeks" (Isocr., Proselatai, 300,000 dependants [prospletai] like Helots). 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 89-95), 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., Lyar. 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, polemoi, 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 polemos. 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. 18 The Messenians were not only a single people: until the late eighth century they had been hos Messenios, 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 demosion doulo), 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 when he was writing, the early first century of the Christian era. 19

The other main serf people of mainland Greece, the Penestai of Thessaly, 20 also gave their masters much trouble in their efforts to free themselves, according to Aristotle (Pol. II. 9, 1269 p36-7; 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, 1272b16-22) 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 p39-2), whereas the Spartan Helots and Thessalian Penestai received help from states which were at enmity with their masters (ibid. 1269 p7-2).

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 Illirian-Thracian people) possessed a thousand men, so many that those who in time of peace farmed the land and during war fought in regiments commanded by their masters (FGHR 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 period 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 Mariandyoi, 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 may 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
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, Pannoumouke (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, and similarly any persons from this village being laoi who have moved away to other places' (Welles, RCHP 18.11-13). It is a fact, certainly, that sometimes 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) 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 able 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), 27 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 somata laika (lines 2.22) by private individuals, and provides that if the somata 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 somata laika eleuthera must not be sold or given in pledge except in specified circumstances arising in fiscal matters. The Greek word somata (literally 'bodies') is very often, though not always, used of slaves; the noun oiketes, 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 Bietzutiska-Malwitz this ordinance is dealing with 'one main-d'oeuvre libre mais dependants'; and in Rostovzew'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 somata laika eleuthera and the somata oiketika'. 28 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 oiketia (or oiketres, e.g. SIG 495, 112-13) and in other epigraphic and literary sources. 30 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. 31 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 oiketia, who are usually taken to be slaves. I will only add that in Ptolemaic Egypt we hear of peasants, often bastikei georgoi ('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. 32

There is, however, even better evidence of the existence of serfdom in Hellenistic Asia, which is sometimes neglected by those who study the subject, 33 perhaps because it comes mainly from the beginning of the Roman period, in the works 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' (hierodoulai in Greek), 34 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 has both not been 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 (GCA 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,
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

Thessalian Penestai, and Mariandynoi of Heraclea Pontica. This feature is that they can 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 μὴ ἐστὶν ἡτέρων ἀπολλον- 

trōsai) that the hierodules and their descendants are not to be alienated but also forbid their reduction to slavery (μὴ... kata- 

tawosūtēsaitai), thus providing conclusive proof that the hierodules, in spite of their name, were not technically slaves (see esp. IGLS I.1 = OGIS I.383, lines 171-89). 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 iii.37, p.559), and 'almost 3,000' in a settlement belonging to the temple of Zeus of Venasa in Morinone (also in Cappadocia, id. 6, p.537). These temples, and others in the more remote parts of Asia Minor, 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 Ascaenus 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. Outside Asia, and especially in Egypt, we hear of temple-servants who may well have been serfs, but the evidence is rather obscure. 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).

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.ii 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, 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 last-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 Thomer cited in IV iv n.15 below could still wish to cling to this outmoded notion. Pre-Classical modes of production (cf. IV 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 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 Heralcea 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.) 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/Asian’ mode of production, even if we were prepared to concede its existence in principle; and the existence of this area would have to be a powerful effect upon neighbouring districts.

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 should emphasise that it is 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, SEHHW 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, 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 agriculture 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 demes were eventually promoted to the status of cities; 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); 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.; SIC 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’ (SEHHW 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 chires, those of the existing laoi who had been serfs ceased to be so and became free paroikoi or kataikoi 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. 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’ (kataikoi), 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 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 kataikoii, 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 over-confident. 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 (demosioi), the descendants of freedmen, and ‘adult or youthful basilikoi’ (OGIS 338.10-19, 20-6). At the same, mention is sometimes made of a term 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 many 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 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, 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 servitude the whole working agricultural population of the Graeco-Roman world. In outline, leasehold tenants (colonii) 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 colonii, which had originally been used in the sense of ‘farmer’ or ‘colonist’ and during the Principate had increasingly come to mean ‘lessor’ 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.1.33) the term colonus begins to appear, in the sense of the tied colonus (see IV.iii below). By the mid-fifth century we find the Latin term adscripti (enapographoi or enhypographoi in Greek) employed to designate those coloni who according to my definitions were strictly serfs (see IV.iii again). Even when the serf colonus 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 applicable. (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 adscripti (CJ XI.108, 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 spusi cui natum est annum), and he could speak of their possessors as exercising over them ‘the power of a master’ (domini potestas, CJ XII.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 very meaning more something 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 serv 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
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

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. This translation is wrong: the essential characteristic of the perioikoi 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. 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. Aristotle wished the lands of his ideal State to be cultivated, if not by slaves, then by barbari perioikoi (Politics 1329a24-46); 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.) 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 heilōtein, 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 heilōtein 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 iv, in MEWS 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 third century AD (see MEW 347); 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 my II 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 Frömmigkeit] 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 adjutant 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. 1.715.) 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 great majority of Greek cities. We often hear of laws being passed by Greek
Hat. 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
agogimoi' as weapons and ploughs as securities for debt, nevertheless allowed the debtors
were sold abroad). A fragment of Menander shows how wary we must be. Diao, in the
Hero, asked if the girl he loves is a doulos (a slave), reply, 'Well, yes, in a sort of way'
(βάρτος, ὑπάλληλος, τρωπόν τινα); 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
inspired by the contemporary world when he declares that
most
LEIBEGENHOF
MEW
MEGA
III.iv,587
unfortunately omitted from
Mitt el a l tersk n echts ch aft
Leibeigennhaft
schaft,
Leibeigen-
Horigkeit
Horigkeit
status.
LGPD
LGPD
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 eventual
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 speak¬
ing from his knowledge of the contemporary world when he declares that
most
Greeks
lawservants
(some
words (even
sense that he was not technically a slave, so in Greek we find applied to those in
debt bondage or the condition of a peasant serf who was 'free' only in the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
Engels
Engels
II
22
But
22
After expressing his pleasure at the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
LEIBEGENHOF
MEW
MEGA
III.iv,587
unfortunately omitted from
Mitt el a l tersk n echts ch aft
Leibeigennhaft
schaft,
Leibeigen-
Horigkeit
Horigkeit
status.
LGPD
LGPD
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 eventual
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 speak¬
ing from his knowledge of the contemporary world when he declares that
most
Greek
lawservants
(some
words (even
sense that he was not technically a slave, so in Greek we find applied to those in
debt bondage or the condition of a peasant serf who was 'free' only in the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
Engels
Engels
II
22
But
22
After expressing his pleasure at the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
LEIBEGENHOF
MEW
MEGA
III.iv,587
unfortunately omitted from
Mitt el a l tersk n echts ch aft
Leibeigennhaft
schaft,
Leibeigen-
Horigkeit
Horigkeit
status.
LGPD
LGPD
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 eventual
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 speak¬
ing from his knowledge of the contemporary world when he declares that
most
Greek
lawservants
(some
words (even
sense that he was not technically a slave, so in Greek we find applied to those in
debt bondage or the condition of a peasant serf who was 'free' only in the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
Engels
Engels
II
22
But
22
After expressing his pleasure at the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
LEIBEGENHOF
MEW
MEGA
III.iv,587
unfortunately omitted from
Mitt el a l tersk n echts ch aft
Leibeigennhaft
schaft,
Leibeigen-
Horigkeit
Horigkeit
status.
LGPD
LGPD
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 eventual
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 speak¬
ing from his knowledge of the contemporary world when he declares that
most
Greek
lawservants
(some
words (even
sense that he was not technically a slave, so in Greek we find applied to those in
debt bondage or the condition of a peasant serf who was 'free' only in the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
Engels
Engels
II
22
But
22
After expressing his pleasure at the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
LEIBEGENHOF
MEW
MEGA
III.iv,587
unfortunately omitted from
Mitt el a l tersk n echts ch aft
Leibeigennhaft
schaft,
Leibeigen-
Horigkeit
Horigkeit
status.
LGPD
LGPD
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 eventual
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 speak¬
ing from his knowledge of the contemporary world when he declares that
most
Greek
lawservants
(some
words (even
sense that he was not technically a slave, so in Greek we find applied to those in
debt bondage or the condition of a peasant serf who was 'free' only in the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
Engels
Engels
II
22
But
22
After expressing his pleasure at the
fact that he and Marx are in agreement on the history of
LEIBEGENHOF
MEW
MEGA
III.iv,587
unfortunately omitted from
Mitt el a l tersk n echts ch aft
Leibeigennhaft
schaft,
Leibeigen-
Horigkeit
Horigkeit
status.
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-828a). In this work Plutarch (828e) shows a pathetic inability to grasp the significance for the poor man of the actual 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 (830hab), Plutarch tells him to gain a living by teaching and writing (grammata didaskoi); by acting as paedaigeis, which involved taking children to school, an action normally performed by slaves; by being a door-keeper (theyraion), another activity almost monopolised by slaves; or by going in for sailing (pleion) or the coasting trade (parapleion) — 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 chora 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 the servant. 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 (Verkleinerung, Schuldknechtschaft). 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.29 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;25 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.26

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 laconice provision of the Law of the Twelve Tables (III.6), they might cut his body in pieces and divide the parts among themselves (FIRA P.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 Caesarius Africanus, represented by Gellius as praising the wholesome severity of the law in question (NA XX.1.19, 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 servitute', as Varro put it (vasa operis in servi tute, LL VII.109); with the result that his creditor, if he defaulted (and perhaps even before that), could seize him, by the procedure known as manus mietio 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.27 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 Wees 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 ältesten Provinzen des römischen Kaiserreichs (1891) 418-58 (esp. 442-4, 450 on the Principate; and 451-8 on the later Empire).

Voices understood particularly well the nature of the Roman state and its law, as an instrument of the property 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. 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, enabled some few debtors to escape ‘personal execution’ (and infamia) by ceding all or most of their property with a view to their future discharge, and thus avoid being ‘adjudged’ to their creditors and dragged off to prison. 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 indicari detractetur in carcerem (C VII.Ixii.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 Voess, PCBRR 505-10). Papyri show that it might be available in principle even to a ‘poor’ man, 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 distrazio 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 data persona; the examples given by Gaus, 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 indicari, 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).
forbidding the existence of private prisons

and n.3, 456). In the Later Empire, in spite of a series of imperial laws positively

category), is hardly clear (see e.g. Mitteis.

cither

RuV

forbidden to commit them to bondage (for the Latin word

even tried to sell themselves into slavery), or whether they are

free men

who had become the bondsmen of their creditors (or had

debt to creditors'

pledges

for debt should consist

sisted that

and not of 'suns, or

of

only

whom the Severan lawyer Callistratus evidently had in

year stated that 'the laws do not permit

liheros

following
to be in servitude

the

of

emperor

potentiore vi oppressus

(Dig.

century)

in

'kept

with

were if anything disregarded

passed

come from the Principatc. In

Later Empire the position of the lower classes

potentials,
or

or

whom

had

been detained in custody by

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 (arcer) 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 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 he could, of course, merely seize a defaulting debtor and incurring the expense of keeping him in idleness,

except perhaps when he was believed to have concealed assets? The additus or

indicatus 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 Principatc. 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 potentiiores, 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.

XLVI. viii. 28. 7). A constitution of Diocletian and Maximian dated 293 in-

sisted 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 liberis to be in servitude

[servire] for debt to creditors' (CJ IV. x. 12). Whether these liber 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),

large landowners openly maintained such prisons, where defaul ters 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 n. 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, at least to the time of Justinian, that

measures such as cessio bonorum benefited mainly the properties classes; and

that attempts by the imperial government (such as they were) to assist the weak

foundered on the defiance of the potentiiores.

'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 paramontem (undertured 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 apprentice¬

ship. Juridically, the person subject to the obligation of paramontem 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

additus, 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

'tyrants of free men selling themselves to be slaves according to a contract

doulc_inon kata typrographi\), sometimes on very harsh terms (XV. 23). I suspect,
too, that something very like paramontem 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 servit\'a' (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

sell-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) was sanctioned at least from Constantine's time (Fragm. Var. 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 (e.g. 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. A passage not often quoted in this connection is I Clement i. v. 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 [rei doulian], and with the price paid for themselves have fed others.

The implication of the word used, epomiasan, is 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 paramonte; 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. Anyone who wishes to make a direct comparison between what I call debt bondage and ordinary chattel slavery can read a useful, if 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 unfree labour. I believe that this has not been sufficiently realised. When there is little or no relevant literature or epigraphical 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 choriakoianteis (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 Barford, 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
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

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 debt servant (scholasticus) as in some sense slaves of their 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 'coloni' was 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 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. This is true of the occasional early forms of serfdom like that of the Spartan Helots but also the widespread Later Roman colonate, which had to be expressed in language derived from slave terminology, whether technical (Helots as the Spartan doules) 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 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 [doulos], a Myrineus' — meaning that he came from Myrina, an Aeolic Greek city on the coast of Lydia in western Asia Minor.*

* * * * *

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 (villius) 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.1.4917).

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* 543 = IG IX.517. lines 26 ff.; there is an English translation in Lewis and Reinhold, RGC I.386–7). The Rhodians, in their heroic resistance to the famous siege by Demetrius Poliortes 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 Arcopagus, 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 reinsert); 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 (superstiti) in having large numbers of citizen freedmen who were bound to assist them in their public life and who would be clients (pelatalis, the Greek word corresponding to the Latin clientes) of their descendants also (Ant. Rom. IV.22.4 to 23.7. esp. 23.6).1 Probably no Greek state had anything approaching the Roman clientela (see my SVP, also VI.ii. and v below), the institution of patronage and clientship, which (among its many ramifications) made of the freedman a client of his former master and his descendants. (We know much about the relationship of the Roman freedman to his ex-master,2 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.3 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 (ILV), 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 ingenius, free-born, and subject to none of the considerable legal and social disabilities attaching to actual freedmen,4 even though they would remain clients of their father's former owner and his heirs. One freedman's son, C. Thorianus, is said to have entered the Roman Senate under Augustus (Dio Cassius I.37.26); 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.5 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. 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 Licinius, who is accused of behaving with odious injustice during his 'rule' of his native Gaul, evidently amassed great wealth. 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 *notuples* 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). Narcissus and Pallas, two of Pliny's three outstanding imperial freedmen, are each credited with up to HS 400 million (over 16,000 talents), and Callistus, the third, cannot have been far behind (see Duncannon, *EREQS* 343, no.10). Such figures are quite 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 drachmai). 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 and Crassus were the greatest 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). 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. The one important office that imperial slaves and freedmen never lost was that of *cubicularius* or chamberlain, always freed after freedmen never lost was that of *cubicularius*. The important office of chamberlain, always freed after freedmen never lost was that of *cubicularius*.
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' (*paprer*), although an honorary equestrian - is expressing his scorn for a rich freedman, Callistratus, and the word *libertina* is the one clue he gives to the man's status.

I feel that far too much reliance has been placed on the fictitious *ona 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 1.57-8). 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. 16

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 *peulium* 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 funereal inscription (II.S 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, *accessus*. (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 *civis*, HS 400,000 (\*ape libens census donavit equestri\*); 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 (\*exeleuterhoi\*) 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, 26-1).

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 Menodota at Sillyum 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 *pompidattarioi* (Roman freedmen duly manumitted per vindictam put on the same level as *apelleutheroi* (Greek freedmen) and *paroikoi* (residents without local citizenship), and below the citizens (poleis) of Sillyum (IGRR III.801.15-22). 17

I know of no reliable evidence from any part of the Greek world (or the Roman world) 18 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. 19

(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 properly 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, *misthdoi* or *thei*; in Latin, *mercenarii*) 21 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 prosodos echnous*]?' 'No, not that either.' 'Then haven't you some craftsmen [cheirotechtais *tites*]?' 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 Theodore that she even asks him to go into partnership with her: he is to be her associate in the trade of which he is master (butter-making, hunting). When Socrates evades this, Theodore 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 Theodore to come and see him — although he is rather doubtful 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 Theodore. 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, synekikes, in Athens and the Peiraeus); or thirdly to have slave craftsmen, who might work either under an overseer, or on their own as choris oikountes (see Section IV of this chapter).

The second dialogue from the Memorabilia (II.vii, esp. 2-6) is a conversation between two Socrateses 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 alpita (barley groats) 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 a great many others of the Megarians (i.e. clearly means most of the well-to-do Megarians), by making various kinds of clothes. ‘Ah, but, Socrates,’ objects Aristarchus, ‘they have many barbaras 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 menfolk 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 teicountai we shall encounter presently in Aristotle would normally have obtained their wealth by making use of slave labour, like Socrates’ Mega¬ritarchs and others like them. Xenophon’s 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 (lanaficium. 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 humble 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 — túi semai 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’ (halippos an douleian hypomeinai). 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 take 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
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

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 epitepos), it is taken for granted that he will be a slave (see esp. Oecov. 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 procuration 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 III.1.92 = CJ X.237,14). 5

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 Liv above, this interesting fact was noticed by Marx and is referred to in his letter to Engels of 28 September 1857. MESC 118-19.) I need not, therefore, dwell upon this topic here, as the subject of Greek mercenaries has often been dealt with (see V.11 n.16 above). Among the earliest pieces of evidence for Greek mercenaries—serving, however, not inside the Greek world but for the Egyptian Pharaoh Ptolemy 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 thes, as Aristotle usually calls him. The term often found in other authors and in inscriptions is misthos (the man who receives misthos; pay); but Aristotle for some reason never employs this word, although he does use its cognates. 6 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 thes or misthos, 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 technton or hanausos (occasionally a hanausos technitos) — although I must admit that in some contexts Aristotle, when he is speaking loosely (e.g. in Pol. I.13, 1269b36-b1), can use hanausos/techritis for a larger category, including the thes (I deal with the skilled man, the techritis, in IV.61 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 Ethics are put together. 7 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 hanausos/techritis tends to be skilled and better rewarded; but this is sometimes implied, especially in a passage in which Aristotle distinguishes the labour of the hanausos/techritis from that of the men who are ‘unskilled and useful only with the body’ (Pol. I.11.1258b25-7). 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 techritis, 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.7.3-5. (The term theoretechnis 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 misthos, but sometimes (outside Athens) as a ergolabos, ergolabon or ergoneis, and sometimes he receives no technical name, as at Epidaurus (where it is simply said that he ‘undertook’, helietai, a particular task) or in fifth-century Athens, I deal with such men in IV.61 below; their class position is distinct from that of misthois, 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.371d6; cf. Pol. 292d; Laws XI.919bc; and V.742a, where the misthos are slaves or foreigners). In Rep. II.371d-e Plato describes his misthos 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’ (heta peoannoten en tis lexeiai echanev: 'those hiring, 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.170n2; 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 thes 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), which was a necessary condition (though not of course a sufficient condition) for becoming a good and competent citizen (see esp. Pol. VII.9, 1329a1-2), and indeed was the goal (telos) of labour, as peace was of war (VII.15, 1334a14-16) — although of course there was 'no leisure for slaves' (as scholē double). Aristotle quotes a proverb to that effect (1334a20-1). 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 Politic, discussed in II.4 above) that 'the masses' (to plèthos) can be divided into four groups (more) according to the kind of work they perform: farmers, artisans, traders, and wage-labourers (georgiken, banauskion, skōnion, thetikon), with the wage-labourers (thetikon) 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/technités, 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, 1278a21-5). By the exercise of his skill, then, and no doubt by exploiting slave labour in addition, the banausos/technités 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 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: and the fourth-century Xenophon, Sisyphus in his dialogue of that name, is pictured as farming with his father in Naxos and employing a dependant of theirs as a hired labourer (polai... ek... ephōmin). 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); 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 602-3). When Euripides' Electra is speculating dolefully, after she has re-encountered her brother Orestes, about his present miserable existence in exile, she imagines him working as a hired labourer (Elec. 130-) uses the word latres, and lines 201-6 have thēsan 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; Isocr. V.39). In one speech by Demosthenes (L VII.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', douλiha kai tapetina pragmati. 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 (polai... ek... ephōmin): 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 (Euth. 7c, 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' (mésophoi, VIII.82). Demosthenes, too, uses the term mésophoi 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. XLI.5.1-2; Pol. 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 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 thēs.

* * * * *

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 sacer, 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); 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 602-3). When Euripides' Electra is speculating dolefully, after she has re-encountered her brother Orestes, about his present miserable existence in exile, she imagines him working as a hired labourer (Elec. 130-) uses the word latres, and lines 201-6 have thēsan 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; Isocr. V.39). In one speech by Demosthenes (L VII.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', douλiha kai tapetina pragmati. 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 (polai... ek... ephōmin): 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 (Euth. 7c, 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' (mésophoi, VIII.82). Demosthenes, too, uses the term mésophoi 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. XLI.5.1-2; Pol. 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
in the Parable of the Vineyard, in Mr. XX 1-16 - congregated in a recognised artisanship like bricklayers and plasterers are receiving 2 or 2½ drachmas per day. While the hired labourers (mīthiēs) get only 1½ drachmas. (The daily keep, τρόφις, of the public slaves employed in the same operations was half a drachma per day). At Athens, men wishing to be hired – like the agricultural labourers in the Parable of the Vineyard, in Mr. XX 1-16 – congregated in a recognised artisanship like bricklayers and plasterers are receiving 2 or 2½ drachmas per day. 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, 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. I. III. 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 mutuarius operam cum vicinis suis cambiat); and Gellius, NA II. 29. 7 (operam mutuum dedit – 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 (operae mutuarii facilius conducunt).

It is unlikely that it was 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 denounced divine punishment on those who oppress ‘the hirer 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 322 sent Maccabaeus 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. III. 12.24; we surmise, perhaps, that the two expeditions were pre-chequed; but he adds, ‘when the number of thrushes is large...’ (Vog. 1.4)). But the story did not emerge 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 mercenarii whose employment Varro, as we have seen (in Section II above), advised as areas too unhealthy for precious slaves to be risked there. And Varro's recommendation 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 Graeco-Roman world. I should mention here that in the same passage Varro states that many sharecroppers, '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 Ilyricum (RR I. 17.2-3; cf. Section IV of this chapter and its n. 65, 67). I could resist mentioning also the passage in which Columella, discussing the rearing of thrushes (turdus), 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 (neque parce condivantur qui mundant), and they themselves tend to swallow a fair quantity because of the nice taste' (RR VIII. 10.4). We must surely suspect 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 pity, 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 desperate poor condition of some hired agricultural labourers is given by Strabo (III.iv 17, p. 168), preserving the account by Poseidippus of a story told him by...
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

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 seamlessly so that you would think the woman had not given birth to it but had found it’. RR II.8.9.) 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, Testament, James V.4. rebukes rich men for fraudulently withholding the wage earlier times, the hired man might well be unable to obtain payment of his wage. 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, Testament, James V.4. rebukes rich men for fraudulently withholding the wage

It does not happen to mean ‘rent’; we can nearly always translate by the equally imprecise ‘pay’. does not help us to distinguish between misthotos and misthotes; 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 misthosai ta misthomata (as in Arist., Ath. Pol. 47.2; Hdt. II.180, and many other texts); but the expression misthomata can have different shades of meaning, and in one of the late-fifth-century inscriptions from Athens, Eucharis distinguished between the use of the phrase misthomata and kathedemisai probably distinguishes between payments made at piece-rates and day-rates respectively (IG II.373.245-6). Misthos is a passive formation, misthotes 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 operum (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 enmisthos’, 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 (thekites ochlos kai idiotes) working in a subordinate capacity, and the prosperity of the city was thus shared out widely among the whole population (12.6). Certainly, any misthoses contracting for a major piece of work may have utilised misthotes as well as slaves. However, the whole passage is highly rhetorical in character and — as Meiggs and Andrews have independently demonstrated recently — is likely to be so exaggerated as to have little or no connection with the reality. Such reliable evidence as we have (mainly from inscriptions) suggests that even at Athens and its colonies 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), the 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 technical, 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. In the eyes of Isocrates (VII.21), when Athens had been ‘full of merchants and foreigners and metai’ 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 oikodemos) badly and ‘drive them out of the city’ into the countryside (Pol. 11.1, 1311b13-14). A little later (id. V.10, 1313b28-25) 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, Pol. 13.14, 1313b25-8). In the eyes of Isocrates (VIII.21), when Athens had been ‘full of merchants and foreigners and metai’ 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.

In Plato, the way in which the tyrant impoverishes the people is by making them pay financial levies (cf. Arist., 1313b25-8); this is what makes them poor and obliges them to spend all their time working, so that they are disinclined to plot. The public buildings which Aristotle describes are not properly worked into the argument, which is clearer and better without them—if otherwise equally feasible—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 treaties addressed to (or put into the mouths of) tyrants: the Hero of Xenophon, and Isocrates II (To Nicocles), III (Nicocles), and IX (Erostauros). Isocrates, in one of his most unpleasant speeches, the Aprostogenes (VII), giving at one point a luridly idealised picture (§§ 15 ff.) of ‘the good old days’ in 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 (europia) 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 ta alla ergasia, §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 ergaia 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 occupations’ (§ 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 Aristoxenians, of the pseudo-Aristotelian Rhetor to Alexander, who points out that if the oikodemos congregates in the city it will be more likely to unite and put down the oligarchs (2.19, 142b8-10).

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 5½ 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 90 labour teams, each with a master-builder (architecton) in charge of one stade (nearly 600 feet), six builders (oikodemos) under him, each responsible for one plethron (nearly 100 feet), and 200 unskilled labourers assisting each oikodemos. Other men quarried the necessary stone and the
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. XIV.13.5). When in 99 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, were thrown 'out of work through lack of pay' (argiastes . . . 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 (in his picture) the circus and theatres 1.4), But the great majority of the free poor lived somehow on hand-outs provided by the temple, 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, 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 oikogea), which flourished at Rome, and to which, incidentally, slaves were only rarely admitted. Now even some of these skilled and semi-skilled workmen might be driven at times to seek employment as free labourers. (It is in the De aquis, by the way, that Frontinus, with a desire to encourage 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

III. Property and the Propertyed (vi)
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

in the fifth century B.C. Moreover, when Polybius speaks of the interest of the Roman plebians 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 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. xvi. 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 Euhemer 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' (plebium pascere). 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 the movement of military and civil 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, mancipipes), who will have had gangs of slaves (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 extent 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. Periplus 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.

For one thing it is 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 [dikaioumena] might become unavoidable by the rest of the populace'. (This motive does not appear in the earlier account by Sueton., Vesp. 8.5.) There were certainly no conveners 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. It is surely unlikely in the extreme that large numbers of poor free citizens 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 Sueton., Nov 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. One may well wonder how it was possible for the poor in great cities to maintain themselves at all. Certainly at Rome 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 dolce (dimorum itineris)...
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 Osyryhynus a few years later, and a whole century earlier at Antinoopolis. All the evidence is given by J. R. Rea in his publication of *The Osyryhynus Papyri*, Vol. XI (1972). At Osyryhynus, 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.224 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 (Socra., *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 Proterus in c. 453 (Evagre., *HE* II.5). The evidence so far available may give us a very inadequate idea of the extent of such corn distributions; but, far from giving a larger share to the poor, these *sportulae* (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.

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 State, *sitos etesios,* which may mean a munificence to individual cities, which may or may not have been long-lasting, as when we are told that Hadrian granted Athens *sitos etesios,* 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., HCP* 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 are often discriminated in favour of the upper classes. 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 Sillyum [in Pamphylia] for the support of destitute children' (*RRAM* I.658). In the inscription in question (*IGR* III.801) there is however no justification at all for speaking of 'distitute 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' (gerasoi), members of the local Assembly (*ekklesi-astai*), 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 inscription, 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). A certain amount of free hired labour in the Roman world can be detected, for instance, in mining and various *mercennarii,* often of a menial character, as well as in agriculture, where we have already noticed the employment of *mercennarii.* See above on the Maciar 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 *multi 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, *SRGI* 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, 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 mercenarii whose labour (operae),
not their skill (artes), is bought; their very wage is the reward of slavery (ipsa
merces aut auctumamentum servitutis’). Here again we find the notion, prevalent among
upper-class Greeks, that general wage-labour in the strict sense (not including
labour of the independent craftsman) is somehow servile.40 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
proportioned 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
— 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 reri, 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
(factendi) and locatio conductio operam;41 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 phenomenon. We must be careful not to
exclude the distinction which most modern ‘civilians’ (Roman lawyers) draw between
two forms of locatio conductio operis, one of which is the man who ‘had hired out 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 propor-
tioned 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
undertake any kind of work in whatever one was doing! Even a petty retailer 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 misfit,
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 mercenarius (mistranslated ‘slave’ by Rowe in the
Loeb edition of 1913, corrected to ‘hiring out’ 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 he has hired out is the service of a
man, not a horse (hominis operae locat, non caballi).42 I am as free as you are,’ he
tells 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 main-
tain 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 paidagogen, to take children to school, or as a doorkeeper,
θηροῦρῳ (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 work 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 hirings. 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 have 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 (chēriotēchnai, 124), although in another place (114), with what we can recognise as a literary allusion (to a speech of Demosthenes, I.7.45), he does say that a man ought not to be sneered at merely because his mother had been a hiring (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 (pandēgōgos). I must add that there is never the slightest hint of public works undertaken 'in any of the doyen 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.44 One passage in particular, XI.7.13-15, 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 works of Asia Minor indulged to excess in the first and second centuries. In all Dio's references to his goodwill towards the demos, diemotikōn, plēthos (e.g. in L.3-4; XLIII.7, 12) there is never any reference to public works; and his claim to have pitted 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 fear or demean 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

---

**The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World**

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 work 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 hirings. 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 have 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 (chēriotēchnai, 124), although in another place (114), with what we can recognise as a literary allusion (to a speech of Demosthenes, I.7.45), he does say that a man ought not to be sneered at merely because his mother had been a hiring (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 (pandēgōgos). I must add that there is never the slightest hint of public works undertaken 'in any of the doyen 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.44 One passage in particular, XI.7.13-15, 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 works of Asia Minor indulged to excess in the first and second centuries. In all Dio's references to his goodwill towards the demos, diemotikōn, plēthos (e.g. in L.3-4; XLIII.7, 12) there is never any reference to public works; and his claim to have pitted 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 fear or demean 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

---

**III. Property and the Propertied**

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 misthos or mercenarius. 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 bondmen (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.44 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. We 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 tekhnēte), 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, cd. Finley, 6).45 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 freethold 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. 82 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 slaveowners 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. 83

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 (BCI.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
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 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 Lili 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 (*démoioi*, *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 Ill. 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