

# 1

## What Is Slavery?

What is slavery? Modern scholarship has largely focused on two definitions: slaves were human property,<sup>6</sup> and slavery is a form of social death: the violent domination of dishonored outsiders without acknowledged kinship links (natal alienation).<sup>7</sup> There is no shortage of ancient sources that support these two definitions (1.1, 1.11–2, 1.14). On this basis, scholars have constructed a stereotype of slaves as outsiders acquired through trade or war (1.2) who lived and worked under the direct control of their masters.

We aim to assess the advantages and limits of these approaches by examining servile groups like the Spartan helots and the Cretan *woikeis*, who were native inhabitants with their own families, working the land and surrendering a part of the harvest to their masters. Were such groups really slaves, or should they be interpreted as persons in an intermediate state “between slavery and freedom,” as serfs or dependent peasants (1.3)? Or should we rather see them as slaves with peculiar characteristics, as a result of the peculiar histories of the societies in which they lived (1.4–9)? If so, slavery was not a uniform institution across ancient societies but a complex and contradictory phenomenon affected by a variety of economic, political, social, and cultural processes.<sup>8</sup> Social death was undoubtedly a constant threat that slaves faced and a harsh reality for many of them, but how should we account for cases in which masters (1.18) or states (1.15) honored their slaves? How should we interpret sources in which slaves present themselves as honorable persons (1.17) or honor their fellow-slaves (1.16)? Natal alienation was undoubtedly part of the slave condition, but how should we account for the evident significance of slave families for how slaves acted (1.13)?

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<sup>6</sup> Andreau and Descat 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Patterson 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis 2018.

If property and social death emphasize the power of masters over slaves, we also need to take into account the role of slave agency. Should we see slavery as a relationship unilaterally defined by the masters or rather as an asymmetrical negotiation of power involving, masters, slaves, and other groups and agents?<sup>9</sup> In this respect, we explore a variety of issues: the negotiations that were inherent in the master–slave relationship (1.19, 1.21–2), the slaves’ quest for emotional fulfillment and support and its impact on how slavery operated as an institution (1.20, 1.25), the significance of the intervention of the state and other third parties in relations between masters and slaves (1.23–4), and the conjunctures that slaves could take advantage of to enhance their conditions (1.26).

Finally, we move beyond property and social death to examine other ways (modalities) of conceptualizing slavery that existed in ancient societies, even in the text of the same author: as domination, an instrumental relationship, an asymmetrical relation of benefaction and reward, and so on (1.27). Although some sources can describe enslaved persons as natural slaves (1.28), it was also possible to conceive of slavery as an extreme form of bad luck, from which it was legitimate to seek to escape (1.30). These diverse modalities were partly complementary and partly contradictory;<sup>10</sup> we shall explore their consequences for how slavery operated in the various ancient societies.

## **PROPERTY AND DOMINATION: “CHATTEL SLAVES” AND OTHERS**

### **1.1 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253b23–1254a17:<sup>11</sup> Greek Philosophical Treatise (Fourth Century BCE)**

Literature: Garnsey 1996: 107–27; Millett 2007; Vlassopoulos 2011a.

Because property is part of the household, so the art of acquiring property is part of household management – for both living and living well are impossible without the necessaries. Now, as a specific art would have to have its own proper tools, if its work is to be accomplished, so is the case with the person practicing household management. Tools can be inanimate or animate. For example, for the helmsman, the helm is an inanimate tool, while the lookout man an animate one (for when an art is concerned, an assistant is a kind of tool). Accordingly, a possession is a tool for maintaining life; property is a multitude of tools; a slave is a kind of animate possession; and every assistant is like a tool before tools. For if every tool could accomplish its own task when ordered or by sensing in advance what it should do [...], then master-builders would not need assistants, nor would masters need slaves.

<sup>9</sup> Harper 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Vlassopoulos 2021a.

<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise specified, we have translated what is considered the standard edition of the Greek and Latin literary texts.

“Possessions” are spoken of in the same way as “parts.” A part is not merely a part of another entity but also is wholly of that other entity. The same is true of a possession. This is why a master is just the master of his slave, not “his slave’s” without qualification, but a slave is not merely the slave of his master but also wholly his. It is clear from these considerations then what the nature and the essential quality of a slave are. For anyone who, while being human, is by nature not of himself but of another, is by nature a slave; now, a human being is of another when, while being human, he happens to be a possession.

- Property, tool, nature: how does Aristotle use these concepts to characterize slavery?
- What does he mean when he claims that the master is just the master of the slave, but the slave belongs to the master completely?
- Under what conditions does Aristotle think that slavery would be superfluous?

## 1.2 *Digest*, 1.5.3–4: Collection of Latin Juristic Texts (Sixth Century CE)

The *Digest* is a collection of excerpts from the works of republican and early imperial Roman jurists made during the reign of the emperor Justinian in the sixth century CE.

Literature: Lambertini 1984; Cavallini 1994; Garnsey 1996: 23–34; Welwei 2000; Lenski 2016.

Gaius, *Institutes*, Book 1: Certainly, the most important division in the law of persons is the following: all men are either free or slave.

Florentinus, *Institutes*, Book 9: Freedom is one’s natural ability to do what one pleases unless this is prevented by force or by law. Slavery is an institution of the law of nations<sup>12</sup> whereby a person is subjected against nature to the ownership (*dominium*) of another. Slaves (*servi*) are thus named because commanders tend to sell captives, and thus to preserve them, rather than kill them. They are, indeed, said to be *mancipia* because they are *captured* from the enemy by force (*manus*).

- What is freedom according to these passages?
- What is the cause of slavery?
- What conception of slavery underlies these passages? How does it relate to the view expressed in 1.1?

<sup>12</sup> See 1.11.

### 1.3 Pollux, *Onomastikon*, 3.83: Greek Thesaurus (Second Century CE)

Literature: Lotze 1959; van Wees 2003; Paradiso 2007; Lewis 2018: 143–6.

Between free men and slaves are the helots of the Lacedaemonians, the *penestai* of the Thessalians, the *klarôtai* (i.e. “those belonging to the allotted land”) and *mnôitai* of the Cretans, the *dôrophoroi* (i.e. “tribute-bearers”) of the Mariandynoi,<sup>13</sup> the *gymnêtes* (i.e. “unarmed”) of the Argives and the *korynêphoroi* (i.e. “club-bearers”) of the Sikyonians.<sup>14</sup> But those helots who are released to freedom are called *neodamôdeis* (i.e. “new members of the community”) by the Lacedaemonians.

- Which groups are enumerated in this passage? In which parts of the Greek world are they located?
- How are these groups characterized? On what grounds?
- Do the passages below by Strabo (1.6) and Plutarch (1.7–8) support such a characterization?
- Did these groups exist when Pollux was compiling his thesaurus? Cf. 1.6.

### 1.4 Thucydides, 5.23: Greek Historiography (Late Fifth Century BCE)

Thucydides lists the terms of the alliance agreed between the Athenians and the Lacedaemonians in 422/1 BCE, after the signing of the “peace of Nikias,” a peace treaty that ended the first ten years of the Peloponnesian war.

Literature: Vlassopoulos 2011a.

The Lacedaemonians <and the Athenians> will be allies for fifty years under the following terms: If any enemies invade the land of the Lacedaemonians and harm the Lacedaemonians, the Athenians are to help the Lacedaemonians in the most effective way possible, as far as they can. [...] And if any enemies invade the land of the Athenians and harm the Athenians, the Lacedaemonians are to help <the Athenians> in the most effective way possible, as far as they can. [...] And these things are to be done in a just, prompt and honest manner. Also, if the slaves revolt, the Athenians are to help the Lacedaemonians with all their power, as far as they can.

<sup>13</sup> A people on the south coast of the Black Sea; cf. 3.29.

<sup>14</sup> Sikyon and Argos are cities in the northern Peloponnese.

- What is the exception in this list of reciprocal obligations for Athenians and Spartans?
- Who are the people referred to as slaves? How does this compare with Pollux's definition in 1.3?
- Why is there no reciprocal obligation for the Spartans to help the Athenians in the case of a slave revolt? What does this imply about differences between the Athenian and Spartan slave systems?

### **1.5 Thucydides, 8.40.2: Greek Historiography (Late Fifth Century BCE)**

In 412/1 BCE, in the course of the Peloponnesian War, the Chians asked for Spartan help to revolt from the Athenians, who then tried to reconquer the island. On the slaves of Chios, cf. 9.24, 11.6.

Literature: Luraghi 2009; Lewis 2018: 139–41.

The Chians had many slaves – a greater percentage than any other city, except that of the Lacedaemonians. And because they were so many, the punishments they used to receive for their offences were harsher. So, when the Athenian forces seemed firmly established with a fortified base, the majority of the slaves immediately deserted to them and, as they knew the land well, it was they who caused the greatest harm.

- Who are the slaves in Lacedaemon, who are compared with the slaves in Chios?
- Does this description of the servile groups of Sparta differ from the way they are described in 1.3?
- What makes possible the description of helots in such divergent ways?
- Should we prefer one description to another?
- How are Chian slaves treated? Why?
- If Athenian chattel slaves were unlikely to revolt (1.4), how do Chian chattel slaves compare? How can we explain such divergence?

### **1.6 Strabo, Geography, 8.5.4: Greek Geography (End of First Century BCE/Early First Century CE)**

Ancient authors tried to account for the origins of the helots. Here Strabo reports the views of Ephorus, a fourth-century BCE historian: according to his account, originally the Spartans were equal with the other communities of Laconia.

Literature: Vidal-Naquet 1986.

Ephorus says that (king) Agis, son of Eurysthenes, withdrew the equality and commanded everyone to pay tribute to the Spartans. All the others obeyed, but the Heleians, who had the city of Helos – and were called Helots – revolted. They were defeated totally in war and were condemned to be slaves on specified terms: namely, that their owner was not allowed to manumit them or to sell them outside the border. And this war was called the war against the Helots. We may almost say that it was those around Agis who established the helot system that persisted until the time of the Roman rule. For the Lacedaemonians held these men in a way as public slaves, having assigned to them some houses to live in and special services to perform.

- How are the origins of the helots explained?
- What conditions modified the slavery of the helots? What do you think were the reasons for such conditions?
- How does Strabo try to conceptualize the peculiar slavery of the helots? With what does he compare them?

### **1.7 Plutarch, *Spartan Sayings* 239d–e: Greek Collection of Sayings (Late First/Early Second Century CE)**

Literature: Hodkinson 2008; Luraghi 2009.

Lycurgus<sup>15</sup> was thought to have secured for the citizens a fine and blessed good: abundance of leisure. For it was absolutely forbidden to touch manual work; moreover, there was no need at all of money-making, which involves painstaking accumulation, or of business activity, because Lycurgus had rendered wealth wholly unenviable and dishonorable. The helots worked the land for the Spartans, paying to them a part of the produce (*apophora*), which was regularly set in advance. A curse was in place against anyone who rented out the land for more, so that the helots might serve gladly since they were making some gain, and the Spartans themselves might not try to get more.

- In which way did the Spartans benefit from the agricultural work of their helots? How did it differ from other forms of employing slaves in agriculture? Cf. 4.2–6.
- How does Plutarch explain the reason for this arrangement?
- Do you accept Plutarch's explanation? What other explanations can you think for this arrangement?
- Does this arrangement make helots completely different from chattel slaves? Cf. 12.18–9.

<sup>15</sup> The legendary founder of Spartan social and political order.

### 1.8 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, 28: Greek Biography (Late First/Early Second Century CE)

Literature: Luraghi 2002; Luraghi and Alcock 2003.

In other respects, too, the Spartans used to treat the helots harshly and cruelly, to the point that they would force them to drink great amounts of unmixed wine and introduce them to the communal messes, thus demonstrating to the young what it meant to be drunk. And they would order them to sing songs and dance dances ignoble and ridiculous and abstain from the songs and dances of the free. This is why they say that later, during the invasion of Laconia by the Thebans,<sup>16</sup> when the Thebans would order the helots they captured to sing the songs of Terpander, Alcman, and Spendon the Spartan, they used to refuse, saying that their masters would not wish it. So those who say that in Lacedaemon the free man is freest, while the slave is most a slave, have correctly gauged the difference.

- How did the Spartans try to humiliate the helots?
- Why did the Spartans enforce such practices on the helots?
- What example does Plutarch cite to show the effects of such practices on slaves?
- Does Plutarch think that helots were “between slave and free”? Cf. 1.3.
- What do you think?

### 1.9 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1264a17–22: Greek Philosophical Treatise (Fourth Century BCE)

Aristotle draws attention to the vagueness of Plato’s *Republic* about whether the ideal of communal property would apply to all the classes in the ideal city or to the guardians only.

Literature: Lewis 2018: 147–65.

If everything is common to all in the same way as among the guardians, then in what way will the farmers be different from the guardians? Or what benefit will there be to those who submit themselves to their rule? Or on what consideration will they submit themselves to the guardians’ rule unless the guardians think of a clever idea similar to that of the Cretans? For the Cretans have allowed to their slaves everything they allow to themselves, with only two exceptions: they forbid them to use the gymnasia and possess weapons.

<sup>16</sup> In 369 BCE the Thebans invaded Laconia and Messenia, ultimately liberating the Messenian helots.

- What activities are prohibited to Cretan slaves? Why?
- Does this necessarily mean that Cretan slaves were better treated than Spartan helots?
- Does the description “between slave and free” (see 1.3) fit Cretan slaves better than helots?

### **1.10 Ps.-Xenophon, *Constitution of the Athenians*, 1.11–2:<sup>17</sup> Greek Political Treatise (Probably Fifth Century BCE)**

This text, while critical of Athenian democracy, attempts to offer a sociological analysis of why the Athenian system works and is difficult to overthrow.

Literature: Vlassopoulos 2007; Canevaro 2018.

If anyone is also surprised at the fact that here they allow their slaves to live in luxury and, some of them, magnificently, they could be shown to be doing this too with good reason. For where there is a naval power, it is necessary for financial reasons to be slaves to the slaves – so that we may receive the payments (*apophora*) the slaves make – and then to let them free. “But in Lacedaemon, my slave would have been in fear of you!” But if your slave is in fear of me, there will be a risk that he might even give his money so as not to be in danger. Where there are wealthy slaves, it is no longer useful that my slave should be in fear of you. This is why we established equality of speech between slaves and free men and between metics and citizens.

- How does the author describe the condition of slaves at Athens?
- How does he explain the peculiar condition of Athenian slaves?
- Do you find his explanation credible? What is the author’s agenda?
- Why would a Spartan helot fear a free man who is not his master more than an Athenian slave would?
- Can we say that Spartan helots behaved more slavishly than Athenian slaves?
- Can we say that some Athenian slaves worked and lived as independently as most Spartan helots?
- In the light of this and the above passages, does it make sense to posit a single categorical distinction between helots and chattel slaves?

<sup>17</sup> Greek text: Marr and Rhodes 2008.

## SOCIAL DEATH

### 1.11 Social Death and Roman Law

Civil law was the law applying to Roman citizens; the law of nations refers to rules common to all human communities; natural law was law according to nature. On the Digest, see 1.2.

Literature: Buckland 1908: 397–418; Wieling 1999: 1–30; Bodel 2017.

#### 1.11.a *Digest*, 50.17.32: Collection of Latin Juristic Texts (Sixth Century CE)

Ulpian, *On Sabinus*, Book 43: As far as the civil law is concerned, slaves are regarded as nobodies. However, this is not the case with natural law because as far as natural law is concerned, all human beings are equal.

#### 1.11.b *Digest*, 50.17.209: Collection of Latin Juristic Texts (Sixth Century CE)

Ulpian, *On the Lex Iulia et Papia*, Book 4: We compare slavery closely with death.

#### 1.11.c *Paul's Views (Pauli Sententiae)*, 4.10.2: Latin Juristic Text (Third Century CE)

For the *senatus consultum Claudianum* (SCC), see 11.22. According to this law, a free woman who entered a union with a slave could lose her free status and become a slave.

Under the *senatus consultum Claudianum*, a daughter who is a slave or a freed-woman cannot inherit her mother's estate if the latter dies intestate. For neither slaves nor freedpersons are acknowledged as having a mother who is a Roman citizen.

- What does Ulpian compare slavery with? Why?
- What are the rights of slaves according to civil law?
- Does Roman law recognize slave kinship?
- How do these passages use the distinction between natural law, civil law, and the law of nations with regard to slavery?

### 1.12 *P.Herm. 18, 1–12: Papyrus with Record of Official Proceedings in Greek, Egypt (323 CE?)*

Literature: Wolff 1966; Straus 2004a: 14–15.

[...] when [...] were about to become consuls [for the third time], on the eighth day before the Ides of December, on the 9th day of the month Choiak.

When Firmus came forward and presented Patricius, the advocate, Clematius said: “Firmus, who came forward, has a slave called Patricius. Firmus has brought him here so that he be questioned on his status.”

The officials<sup>18</sup> said to Patricius, “Are you slave or free?” He responded: “Slave.”

The officials said to him, “Whose slave?”

He replied, “Firmus’s.”

The officials said to him, “From which place did he acquire you?”

He replied, “From Reskoupos.”

The officials said to him, “From whom?”

He responded, “From Nikostratos.”

The officials said to him, “Is your mother a slave?”

He replied, “Yes.”

The officials said to him, “What is her name?”

He replied, “Hesychion.”

The officials said to him, “Do you have siblings?”

He replied, “Yes, one. His name is Eutybios.”

The officials said to him, “Is he a slave, too?”

He replied, “Yes.”

- What kind of questions do the officials ask to establish the identity of the slave?
- What questions do they ask concerning his family? What does this imply?
- What question concerning his family do they *not* ask? What does this imply about natal alienation?

### 1.13 *Ammianus Marcellinus, History, 28.1.49: Latin Historiography (Fourth Century CE)*

Ammianus here delineates the persecution in Rome of members of the senatorial rank through trials under the emperor Valentinian I. Fausiana was a widow of senatorial rank, accused of adultery with two men of the same rank, Abienus and Eumenius. Anepsia was also a widow of senatorial rank. Simplicius of Emona was at the time (*ca.* 374–5 CE) in charge of the persecution.

<sup>18</sup> In the original Greek, these officials are specified as holding the office of *hypomnematographos*, literally “recorder of deeds”.

Literature: Harper 2011: 69–78, esp. 72.

But after Fausiana was convicted, they (i.e. Abienus and Eumenius) were enlisted among the accused and summoned with edicts to appear in court. They took themselves off into deeper concealment. Of the two, Abienus was hiding for a long time in the house of Anepsia. However, as unexpected events often aggravate pitiable misfortunes, a man called Sapaudulus, a slave of Anepsia, stricken by pain because his spouse (*coniunx*) had received a beating, denounced the matter to Simplicius, after reaching him in the night. Public attendants were sent and, when they were pointed out to them, the attendants dragged them away from their hiding place.

- Why did Sapaudulus reveal the secret of his mistress?
- What political conditions allowed Sapaudulus to take his revenge? What are the implications of this for the exercise of slave agency?
- What were the consequences of slave family for this particular mistress?
- What can we learn from this story about the significance of kinship for slaves?

#### **1.14 Ps.-Plutarch, *On the Education of Children*, 8f–9a: Greek Moral Philosophy (Late First/Early Second Century CE)**

Literature: Golden 1985; Klees 2005.

I also state that children should be guided toward honorable practices through admonitions and reasoning – not, by God, through beatings and blows. For these measures seem rather more fitting to slaves rather than to the free. Children end up dull and shudder at hard work, partly from the pain of the blows, partly from the outrage they suffer. It is, instead, praise and rebuke that are most beneficial for the free – praise because it urges toward what is good, rebuke because it keeps one away from what is disgraceful.

- By what means should free children be trained? How should slaves be trained?
- How can we explain the different treatment of free and slave?

#### **1.15 IG I<sup>3</sup> 1390: Greek Inscription on Theater Seat, Athens (450–400 BCE)**

In the ancient world, the privilege of sitting in the first row at the theater was a major indication of honor, reserved for magistrates, priests, and benefactors of the community and bestowed on prominent foreigners. The theater of Dionysus in Athens had inscriptions on the marble seats, reserving them for particular categories of people. Ancient cities possessed public slaves who performed many important tasks as civil servants.

Literature: Kamen 2013: 19–31; Ismard 2017: 57–79.

(Seat) of the (slave) assistants of the Council.

- To what people does this inscription refer?
- Why do you think the Athenians conferred this honor on these slaves?
- Can we learn something about slavery from this inscription?

### **1.16 SEG XL 1044: Greek Funerary Inscription, Gordos, Lydia (69–70 CE)**

This funerary text uses the language of honorific inscriptions, a common feature of epitaphs from Roman Lydia. All the names recorded are Greek. Because the style is largely elliptical, we have added the assumed words in round brackets, to assist comprehension.

Literature: Martin 2003; Zoumbaki 2005.

In the year 154, on the eighth day of the last third of the month Artemisios. Elikonis honored Amerimnos, her husband [...]; Amerimnos (honored) his father; Terpousa (honored) her own son; his grandmother Nikopolis (honored him); Alexandros and Demetria and Terpousa (honored) their brother; Aigialos, his foster father, (honored him); Gamos (honored) his in-law. All his kinsmen and fellow slaves honored Amerimnos.  
Farewell.

- What kind of inscription is this?
- What kind of community is presented here honoring Amerimnos? What forms of kinship are evident? Cf. 7.12.
- Are these people slaves? How can we know?
- Is the master of these people mentioned? If not, what are the implications?
- What do you think about the use of the vocabulary of honor by this group of slaves?

### **1.17 CIL VI, 6308 (Latin Text After Caldelli and Ricci 1999): Latin Funerary Inscription, Rome (First Half of First Century CE)**

The deceased was buried in the columbarium of the slaves and freedpersons of the aristocratic Statilii Tauri (see 4.9, 10.16). For columbaria, see 7.17.

Literature: Caldelli and Ricci 1999; Borbonus 2014.

Jucundus, [freedman?] of Taurus, litter-bearer. So long as he was alive, he was a man, and defended both himself and others. So long as he was alive, he lived honorably.

This is offered by Callista and Philologus.

- What was Jucundus' legal and work status?
- How is he described in his epitaph?
- What was the role of honor in Jucundus' life?

### 1.18 *P.Turner 41, 1–20: Papyrus with Petition in Greek, Oxyrhynchos, Egypt (Mid-Third Century CE)*

Literature: Llewelyn 1992: 55–60, 1997: 9–46.

Aurelia Sarapias, also called Dionysarion, daughter of Apollophanes, also called Sarapammon, formerly *exegêtês* of Antinoopolis, acting without a guardian, in accordance with the *ius liberorum*.<sup>19</sup> I own a slave, formerly my father's, Sarapion by name, who I thought would commit no wrongdoing because he was part of my patrimony and had been entrusted by me with our affairs. This man, I don't know how, at the instigation of others, adopted an enemy's attitude toward the honor and the provision of the necessities for life I was giving him. He stealthily took from our household some clothes I had prepared for him and some other stuff, which he helped himself to from our belongings, and secretly ran away. When it came to my ears that he was at Chairemon's, in the hamlet of Nomou, I requested [...].

- What are the names of the mistress and the slave? Can we draw any conclusions from this?
- How is Sarapion described?
- Why did Sarapias not expect him to betray her and flee?
- Why does Sarapias think that Sarapion was ungrateful? What did she offer her slave?
- What do you think of the employment of the term honor in this context?
- How does Sarapias explain Sarapion's change of behavior? How credible do you find her explanation? What other explanations can you think of?
- What can we learn about "the mind of the master class" from this petition?

<sup>19</sup> According to this law, women with a certain number of children were allowed to act without a guardian. See also 10.17.

## SLAVERY AS AN ASYMMETRICAL NEGOTIATION

### 1.19 Herodas, *Mimiambos*, 5:<sup>20</sup> Greek Verse Mime (First Half of Third Century BCE)

Herodas' mimiambos are poems of a dramatic form, written in a type of iambic meter associated with invective poetry. They are influenced by comedy and the mime and were probably not only read but also performed, possibly to a fairly learned audience. For many societies, the theme of sexual relations between a mistress and her slave is an object of satire.

Literature: Fountoulakis 2007; Parker 2007; Todd 2013.

**Bitinna:** Tell me, Gastron. Is *this* so overfull, that it is no longer enough for you to move my legs, but you've been coming on to Menon's Amphytaia?

**Gastron:** I to Amphytaia? Have I seen the woman you speak of?

**Bitinna:** You spin out excuses all day long.

**Gastron:** Bitinna, I'm a slave. Do whatever you want with me but don't suck my blood day and night.

**Bitinna:** You! You can't hold your tongue either! – Kydilla, where is Pyrrhias? Call him to me.

**Pyrrhias:** What is it?

**Bitinna:** Bind this man! Are you still standing there? Untie first the rope from the bucket. Fast! – If I don't make an example of you to the whole country with my beatings, don't count me a woman. – Isn't he, rather, like the proverbial Phrygian, who is the better for a beating? – I am the one responsible for this, Gastron, I, who set you up among men. But if I erred back then, you won't find Bitinna a fool now, as you think – not anymore. – Come, you, by yourself! Take his cloak off and bind him.

**Gastron:** No, no, Bitinna, I beseech you as your suppliant.

**Bitinna:** Take it off, I say. You must realize that you are a slave and that I put down three minae for you. I wish the day that brought you here had never dawned. – Pyrrhias, you'll be sorry. I see you doing everything but binding him. Tie his elbows together tightly; saw them off with the rope.

**Gastron:** Bitinna, let me off this error. I'm human. I erred. But if you catch me again doing something not to your liking, have me tattooed.

**Bitinna:** Don't try to make up to me like this. Do it to Amphytaia, with whom you roll about and [...].<sup>21</sup>

**Pyrrhias:** I've bound him fast for you.

**Bitinna:** See to it that he doesn't untie himself without your noticing. Take him to the executioner's, to Hermon, and tell him to strike a thousand blows into his back and a thousand to his belly.

<sup>20</sup> Greek text: Cunningham 2002.

<sup>21</sup> The end of this sentence has not survived in its entirety.

**Gastron:** Will you have me killed, Bitinna, without first examining whether this is true or false?

**Bitinna:** When you yourself just said, with your own tongue, “Bitinna, let me off this error?”

**Gastron:** I wanted to cool off your anger.

**Bitinna:** You, are you still standing staring? Aren’t you taking him where I’m telling you to? – Kydilla, crush the snout of this rogue. – And you, Drechon, do me the favor and follow wherever this man here might lead you. – Slave girl, give a rug to this cursed fellow, to cover his unmentionable ... tail, so that he won’t become a spectacle walking naked through the market-place. – For the second time, Pyrrhias, I’m telling you once more: you are to tell Hermon to inflict a thousand here and a thousand there. Have you heard? If you stray from what I say by one iota, you yourself will pay both the principal and the interest. Go on now. And don’t take him by Mikkale’s but by the direct road. – Just as well I remembered: Slave girl, call them, run and call them, before they get far.

**Kydilla:** Pyrrhias! You wretch! You deaf one! She’s calling you. Ah! But you look as if it is a grave-robber you pull to pieces – not your fellow-slave. Look how violently you are now dragging him to be tortured! Ah, Pyrrhias! It is you whom Kydilla will see, with these very two eyes, in five days, at Antidoros’, rubbing your ankles with those Achaean chains that you recently shed.

**Bitinna:** Hey, you. Come back here, keeping this man bound exactly as when you were taking him away. Call me Kosis the tatooper and ask him to come here, bringing needles and ink. – In one go, you must turn ... colorful. – Gag him and hang him, like the ... honorable Daos!

**Kydilla:** No, mummy. Let him off now. I beg you. As your Batyllis may live, and you may see her entering her husband’s house and take her children in your arms. This one error... .

**Bitinna:** Kydilla, don’t give me grief, or I will run out of the house. Shall I let *him* off? This seventh-generation slave? And which woman won’t justly spit on my face when she sees me? No, by the Lady Tyrant, our goddess! But since he, although human, does not know himself, he will now find out, with this inscription on his forehead.

**Kydilla:** But it is the twentieth, and the Gerenia festival is in four days.

**Bitinna:** I’ll let you off the hook now. And be grateful to this girl here, whom I cherish no less than Batyllis, as I reared her in my own arms. But when we have poured our honeyless libations to the dead, you will then celebrate a second “honeyless” festival.

- What is the relationship between Gastron and Bitinna? Why does Bitinna want to punish Gastron?
- How does Gastron attempt to avoid punishment?
- How does Kydilla try to get Gastron off the hook? What does her strategy tell us about master–slave relations?
- How are relationships among slaves depicted in this passage?

- What is the relationship between Kydilla and Bitinna? How do both sides use their relationship to present their arguments and achieve their aims?
- To which genre does the passage belong? What is the point of presenting a mistress that has sexual relationships with her slave?
- Can we use this passage to understand slavery as an asymmetrical negotiation between masters and slaves?

**1.20 Galen, *How to Detect Malingerers (Quomodo simulantes morbus deprehendi)*, pp. 114, 14–115, 14 Deighgräber and Kudlien<sup>22</sup> (XIX.4–5 Kühn): Greek Medical Treatise (Late Second/Early Third Century CE)**

Literature: Schlange-Schöningen 2003: 255–90, 2006.

I must now recall what has already been said, namely that experience together with resourcefulness can detect those who make false claims, including those who pretend to be suffering from severe pain. When another man claimed that he had extremely severe pain in his knee – this man was a slave, one of these who run beside their master in his journeys – I noticed that his pain was a sham. What made me suspicious was both the fact that his master would set out that day and the character of the lad; he was the kind who are capable of shamming in such things. I also asked one of his fellow-slaves who disliked him whether the lad had a liaison with some woman, which would naturally make him wish to stay put when the master set off on a longer journey, into the country, away from home. And this was indeed the case. These things I found out using common resourcefulness. However, there was a huge swelling on the lad's knee, who would astound a lay man but would be obvious to one with specialist experience as caused by thapsia.<sup>23</sup> This is the result of medical experience, not something that a layperson can resolve with his resourcefulness. Another result of medical experience was the discovery that the lad had not previously suffered or done anything that was capable of suddenly causing such a swelling. For he had not run more than normal, nor had he been wounded by someone else, nor had he got hurt by leaping over a ditch. Moreover, there were no signs of blood excess in his body, nor had his earlier regimen included excessive consumption of food and drink or a sedentary lifestyle. On top, when we asked him what type of pain he felt, he was slow to respond, did not give a straight answer and contradicted himself. So, when his master went out, I put a drag on his knee, which does not at all extinguish pain but is capable of cooling the heat produced by thapsia. After one hour, I had him admitting that he felt no pain at all.

- What is the job of the malingering slave? Are you surprised that the master calls a famous doctor like Galen for such a slave?

<sup>22</sup> CMG V 10,2,4.

<sup>23</sup> A poisonous plant.

- Why does Galen suspect that the slave is lying?
- What does he suspect the reason to be?
- How does he try to find out the truth? Does he ask the master?
- What can we learn about slave life and relations among slaves from this passage?
- Are the slaves mere instruments for the purposes of their masters?
- How does acknowledging slave agency change our understanding of slavery?

**1.21 Galen, *The Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*  
(*De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*), V.7.64–66, pp. 352,20–354,2  
De Lacy<sup>24</sup> (V.497–98 Kühn): Greek Medical Treatise (Late  
Second/Early Third Century CE)**

Galen is here commenting on Plato, *Republic*, 440c1–d3, which illustrates via an example that the spirited part of the soul is an ally of the rational part of the soul. The Platonic example consists of the opposing reactions of two men to harsh treatment: one of them believes that he is in the wrong, while the other believes that he is being wronged.

Literature: Schlange-Schöningen 2003: 255–90, 2006.

The man who thinks that he is suffering justly, because he himself committed some wrong first, endures his punishment all the more nobly the nobler he is by nature. The other man, who thinks that he is being wronged, gets angry, rages and fights on the side of what seems to him to be just. We can observe these things happening every day among our slaves, too. Those who are caught thieving or doing things of that sort do not get angry when they are being whipped or starved or dishonored by their masters. But those who think that they suffer, or have suffered, such punishments wrongly, their spirit always turns savage inside them and craves vengeance on the one who is wronging them.

- Which forms of punishment for slaves are presented in the passage?
- What criterion determines whether slaves accept punishment or not, according to Galen? Do you believe Galen?
- How might the principle of just punishment have affected the unilateral right of masters to punish their slaves?

**1.22 Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, 1.26.3–9: Latin Miscellany of  
Learned Material (Second Century CE)**

Aulus Gellius here reports part of the answer given to him by Lucius Calvinus Taurus, a contemporary Platonist philosopher, when he asked him whether wise men ever got angry. Plutarch, another Platonist, was an influential philosopher and biographer.

<sup>24</sup> CMG V 4,1,2.

Literature: Harris 2001: 317–36; Klees 2005; Hunt 2016; Lenski 2016.

“This is what I think,” Taurus said, “about getting angry. But it would do no harm to hear, also, what our Plutarch, an extremely learned and wise man, thought. Plutarch,” he said, “once gave orders that a slave of his, a worthless and insolent fellow but with ears filled with philosophical works and arguments, be stripped of his tunic for I don’t know what offence, and whipped. The beating had started, and he kept protesting that he had not done anything deserving flogging – he had not been guilty of anything wrong or criminal. In the end, amid the flogging, he began to shout – no longer making complaints, groans, and laments but serious and reproachful arguments: that Plutarch’s behavior was improper for a philosopher; that it was shameful to get angry; that Plutarch had often lectured on the evil of anger and had even written a very fine book *On Lack of Anger*, and that it was not compatible with anything of what was written in the book that he, submitting and yielding to anger, punished him with many blows.

“Then Plutarch spoke, calmly and mildly. ‘Oh you who deserve to be under the whip, do I now seem angry to you? Is it from my face, or from my voice, or my complexion or, even, from my words that you perceive I’ve been seized by anger? I think that neither my eyes are fierce, nor is my face wild, nor am I shouting uncontrollably, nor am I raging to the point of foaming around the mouth or turning red, nor am I saying words to be ashamed of or regret, nor am I trembling or gesticulating because of anger. For, in case you don’t know it, all these things are the typical signs of anger.’ And, turning at the same time toward the one who was whipping the slave, he said: ‘Meanwhile, while this fellow and I are arguing, you continue your task.’”

- How does the slave initially attempt to avoid punishment? How does this relate to 1.21?
- What is the second argument that he uses? Does it work?
- How is Plutarch’s emotional state portrayed in this passage? Can we learn something about masters’ mentality from Plutarch’s response?
- How does this master–slave negotiation relate to that described in 1.19?
- What conclusions should we draw from the fact that the slave has learned some of his master’s philosophy?
- What conclusions can we draw about slave agency from this passage?
- How does this passage illustrate both the asymmetry and the negotiation that slavery involves?

### **1.23 Digest, 1.6.1–2: Collection of Latin Juristic Texts (Sixth Century CE)**

On the Digest, see 1.2.

Literature: Härtel 1977; Knoch 2017: 111–18.

Gaius, *Institutes*, Book 1:

Slaves are under the power (*potestas*) of their masters. This power is derived from the law of nations, for we can observe that equally among all nations masters have had power of life and death over their slaves. Whatever acquisition is made via the slave is made by the master. In our times, however, no man who is a subject of the Roman Empire is permitted to act against his slaves with excessive brutality and without a cause acknowledged by the laws. For, through an enactment of the divine (emperor) Antoninus, one who kills his own slave without cause is to be punished in the same way as one who has killed the slave of another. But even excessive harshness of masters is also curbed via an enactment of the same emperor.

Ulpien, *On the Duties of the Provincial Governor*, Book 8:

If a master acts brutally against his slaves or forces them to indecency and disgraceful violation, the tasks of the governor are stated in the rescript addressed by the divine Antoninus Pius to Aelius Marcianus, the governor of the province of Baetica. The terms of this rescript are the following: “It is certainly proper that the power (*potestas*) of the masters over their slaves be unimpaired and that no man’s rights be taken from him. However, it is in the interest of the masters not to deny relief to those who justly implore for help against brutality or starvation or intolerable insult. For this reason, investigate the complaints of the slaves of the household of Julius Sabinus who fled and took refuge at my statue. If you find that they have been treated more harshly than is fair or subjected to infamous insult, order that they be sold on the condition that they may not come back under the power (*potestas*) of their present master. And if he should fraudulently evade my decision, he should know that I will pursue the punishment of this offence more severely.” Also, the divine (emperor) Hadrian ordered the banishment from Rome for a five-year period of one Umbricia, a married woman of good family, because she had treated her female slaves in the most savage way for extremely trivial reasons.

- What powers do masters have to punish their slaves? Cf. 5.1.
- How did Roman emperors limit the masters’ right to punishment?
- How is this limitation justified?
- How did the slaves of Julius Sabinus attempt to escape their cruel master? Cf. 6.14–5.

#### **1.24 Libanius, *Orations*, 47.21: Greek Epideictic Oratory (Fourth Century CE)**

Libanius uses an analogy in order to persuade the emperor of the need to prevent tenants of agricultural land around Antioch in Syria from requesting help from people other than the owners of the land they cultivate.

Nor is it right that a slave who demands justice for wrongs he has suffered should look to someone else and present himself before someone who has no proper authority over him and beg for that man's help, thereby bypassing his master. For he would no longer belong to his master entirely but would surrender a large share of himself – both of his goodwill and his labor – to the person who assisted him. It is indeed right that he receive justice, but he should receive it through his master. The result of a slave's securing justice through someone else is often that the master could be deprived of his slave, becoming the object of the slave's contempt because of the other man's assistance.

- Why should slaves ask only their masters for help?
- What was the danger if they asked other people for help? How does this relate with 1.23?
- What implications does this passage have for slavery as a relationship? Did it involve only masters and their slaves?

### **1.25 Gerontius, *Life of Melania*, 10: Saint's Life in Greek (Fifth Century cē)**

A little before the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 CE, the extremely wealthy Roman aristocrats Melania the Younger and her husband Pinianus are planning to liquidate their property to donate the money to the Church. Cf. 11.14.c, on the reaction of some slaves to the Visigothic invasion.

Literature: Roth 2005; Harper 2011: 192–5; Vlassopoulos 2018a.

And while Melania and Pinianus were making these plans, the enemy of truth, the devil, raised a most challenging trial for them. He felt envy at the young couple's godly fervor and suborned Severus, the brother of the blessed Pinianus, and he convinced the slaves of Melania and Pinianus to say: "By no means are we being put up for sale! If we are forced, rather than being put on the market, we will have your brother Severus as our master, and he will buy us himself." This disturbed them greatly, seeing their slaves in their estates around Rome revolting.

- How do the slaves react to the news of their being put on the market? Why? What difference would it make to them?
- What proposal do they make? Why?
- How do the wishes of Severus and the slaves fit in together?
- What does the intervention of Severus tell us about the factors that shape slavery as a negotiation?

### 1.26 Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 1–7: Greek Comedy (Late Fifth Century BCE)

This comedy was written in Athens during the course of the Peloponnesian War. The speaker is an old Athenian man.

Literature: Hanson 1992; Demont 2007.

Oh dear, oh dear! Oh, king Zeus, what a piece of work this night has been! Unending. Won't day ever come? Yet, I heard a cock crow long ago. But the slaves are snoring. They wouldn't have done this before. Oh war, be damned, for the many evils you've brought. For now, I can't even punish my slaves.

- Why can the speaker not punish his slaves as he used to?
- Is this comic exaggeration? Cf. 11.11.c.
- Which factors can affect slavery apart from slaves and masters?
- How can these factors affect slavery as an asymmetrical negotiation?

## MODALITIES OF SLAVERY

### 1.27 Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*: Greek Dream Book (Second Century CE)

Literature: Annequin 1987, 2005; Kudlien 1991; Pomeroy 1991; Vlassopoulos 2018a; Thonemann 2020.

1.48: To dream that one's own feet are on fire is a bad sign for everyone equally and signifies loss and destruction of what one has, including one's children and slaves. For, similar to slaves, children submit to their parents and serve them like slaves. This point is missed by many dream interpreters, who hold that feet signify only slaves.

1.62: If a slave competes in a sacred contest, wins, and receives a garland, he will be proclaimed free. For these achievements are characteristic of free men.

1.78: Having sex with one's own slave, male or female, is good. For slaves are the possessions of the person who has had the dream. They thus signify that he will get pleasure from his possessions, which naturally happens when they increase in quantity and value. To be penetrated by a slave is not a good sign for it signifies that one will be harmed by the slave and become the object of the slave's contempt.

2.8: Rain, hurricane, and stormy weather bring on dangers and harm. Only to slaves, poor men, and those who are in difficulty do they foretell relief from their present troubles. For great storms are followed by fair weather.

2.9: Being struck by lightning will result in the manumission of those slaves who are not in a position of trust, but slaves who are trusted and honored by their masters or who own many possessions will lose the trust, the honor, and the possessions.

2.12: Seeing a tame lion wagging its tail and approaching harmlessly could be a good sign and bring benefits: to a soldier from his king, to an athlete from his bodily vigor, to a citizen from a magistrate, to a slave from his master. For the lion resembles them in power and strength.

3.28: A mouse signifies a slave. For mice too live with us, are fed on the same food as us, and are cowardly. It is therefore good to see many mice inside one's house, especially if they are joyful and having fun. For they foretell much merriment and further acquisition of slaves.

4.30: Together with their other effects, slaves (in dreams) can also be references to the body of their masters. One who sees in his dream his slave suffering from fever will probably fall ill himself. For the relationship of the slave to the man who has the dream is analogous to that of the body to the soul.

- With what other categories of people are slaves associated in each passage? Are they different or the same?
- What conceptions of slavery are present in these various passages?
- Are these various conceptions of slavery compatible with each other?

### **1.28 Herodotus, 4.1–4.4: Greek Historiography (Fifth Century BCE)**

The fourth book of Herodotus is devoted to the Scythians, a major power in the north coast of the Black Sea. After reporting a Scythian expedition against the Medes in the Near East, Herodotus narrates the consequences of the long absence of the Scythians from home.

Literature: Harvey 1988; Hunt 1998: 42–52.

After 28 years away from their own land and upon their return home after such a long time, the Scythians were met by a task no less laborious than their war against the Medes, for they found a substantial army opposing them. To be more specific: the wives of the Scythians, as their husbands had been away from them for a long time, were having relations with the slaves. [...] From these slaves and the Scythian wives, a generation of youths was reared, who, when they learnt of their origins, were opposed to the Scythians returning from the land of the Medes. First, they dug a wide trench, stretching from the Taurian mountains to lake Maiotis, at the point where it is broadest, and thus cut off the land. Then, when the Scythians attempted to invade, they camped opposite them and started fighting them. As they met in battle many times and the Scythians could not manage to gain the upper hand in this manner, one Scythian said the following: "What are we doing,

Scythians? We are fighting against our own slaves, so we get killed and thus become fewer, and we kill them and will thus rule over fewer men in the future. Therefore, I think that we should now leave aside spears and bows, and each one should take his horse whip and draw near them. Until now, they have seen us bearing arms and thought of themselves as the same as us and of the same origin. But when they see us bearing whips rather than arms, they will learn that they are our slaves. When they realize this, they will not stand their ground." The Scythians heard this and proceeded to do it. The others, shocked at what was going on, forgot the battle and started to flee. This then is how the Scythians ruled over Asia and, when driven out again by the Medes, it was by such means that they returned to their own land.

- How did the Scythians overcome the resistance of the sons of their slaves?
- Did the children of the Scythian women and the Scythian slaves grow up as slaves?
- If not, why did the stratagem of the Scythians work on these young men, according to the passage? What does this imply about how masters thought of slaves?
- What conception of slavery is evident in this passage? Cf. 1.1.

### **1.29 Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 1.3.10–11: Greek Collection of Socratic Conversations (First Half of Fourth Century BCE)**

Socrates is commenting on the behavior of Kritoboulos, son of his friend Kriton of Alopeke.

Literature: Brock 2007; Vlassopoulos 2011a.

"You should now consider Kritoboulos a most reckless man, capable of anything; he would do a somersault into a ring of knives or jump into fire."

"What did you see him do," Xenophon said, "that makes you condemn him like that?"

"Didn't he dare," Socrates said, "to kiss Alcibiades' son, who is extremely beautiful and exactly in the bloom of youth?"

"Well, if such is his reckless deed," Xenophon said "I think that I too would endure this danger!"

"Wretched man," Socrates said. "What do you think would happen to you if you kissed someone beautiful? Wouldn't you immediately become slave, from free, and waste much in harmful pleasures and have no time to pursue beautiful and honorable things but be forced instead to concern yourself with things you wouldn't care for even if mad?"

- How is slavery understood in this passage?
- Should we dismiss this use of slavery as metaphorical and, hence, historically insignificant?

### 1.30 Dio Chrysostom, *Oration 15 (Excerpted)*:<sup>25</sup> Greek Epideictic Oratory (Late First/Early Second Century CE)

Literature: Panzeri 2011.

As it happens, I was present lately when two men had a dispute over slavery and freedom. [...] The one man, finding his arguments outmatched and himself at a loss, turned to abuse, as often happens in such cases, and taunted the other with not being a free man. The taunted man very gently smiled and said: "My good man, how can one tell who is a slave and who is a free man?"

The first man said: "By Zeus, I do know, of course, that I and all these here are free men, while you have nothing to do with freedom." [...]

The other stood up and [...] asked him how he knew this about the two of them. The first man said: "Because I know that my father is an Athenian, if anyone is, while yours is a slave of so and so," mentioning his name. [...] "And I also know that your mother is a fellow-slave of your father." [...]

The other responded: "Come now, by the gods, if I do agree with you that my parents are such as you say, how can you know about their slavery? Did you also have precise knowledge of their parents and are prepared to swear that they were both born to slave people and that so were those before them and everyone from the beginning of the line? For, clearly, if there has been one free man among a kin-group, it is no longer possible rightly to consider his descendants as slaves. It is impossible, my good man, that any kin-group existing from all eternity, as they say, does not have countless members who have been free and no fewer who have been slaves." [...]

The first man responded: "Let us then leave aside arguments related to one's kin-group and ancestors, since you consider these so difficult to determine." [...]

And the other said: "But, in the name of the gods, what actions and experiences of mine do you know of, that make you say you know I am a slave?"

"I know that you are kept by your master, that you attend him and do whatever he orders you to do, and that you take a beating if you don't obey."

"But you thus also make sons their fathers' slaves," the other said, "for poor sons often attend their fathers and walk with them to the gymnasium or to dinner; also, they are all kept by their fathers, often take beatings from them and do whatever their fathers command them to do. Moreover, on the basis of showing obedience and taking a beating, you can go on and claim that a school-master's pupils are his slaves and that gymnastic trainers or any other teachers are their pupils' masters. For they too give orders and beat those who disobey."

"No, by Zeus!" the first man said, "for gymnastic trainers and other teachers cannot imprison their pupils, nor sell them nor throw them into the mill; masters, however, are allowed to do all these things."

"Well, perhaps you are not aware of the fact that among many communities, and extremely well-ordered ones at that, fathers are allowed to do to

<sup>25</sup> Greek text: von Arnim 1893–96.

their sons all these things you mentioned, including selling them, if they so wish, and even more terrible than these: that is, they are allowed to kill them, without trial or without even bringing any accusations at all against them. Yet these men are not their fathers' slaves but their sons. And if I was as much of a slave as could be," he said, "and had been one justly from the beginning, what prevents me being as much of a free man as anyone else from now on? Or what prevents you from the opposite fate? That is, if you had been born to manifestly free parents, to be now more of a slave than anyone else?"

"I can't see," the first man said, "how I, a free man, will become a slave, but it is not impossible that you have become free, if your master manumitted you. [...] How, as you claim, can *I* become a slave?"

"Well, countless men, while free, sell themselves, and end up working as slaves by contract – sometimes not at all on reasonable terms, but on the harshest ones."

Up to this point, those present paid attention to the arguments with the idea that they were put forward not so much in earnest as in jest. Afterward, however, they started to be more involved in the rivalry, and it seemed to them odd that it was not possible to name a criterion by which one could indisputably distinguish the slave from the free, but instead, it was easy to question everything and produce counter-arguments constantly. So, they set aside the particular case of that man and his slavery and started to examine who is a slave. And they tended toward the conclusion that the man who is validly possessed by someone else, like another item of his property or another one of his grazing animals, to the degree that he can be used in any way the owner wants, this man is correctly called and is the slave of his owner. Once more, the man who had been bringing counter-arguments in relation to slavery raised the question: what on earth determined the validity of possession? For many long-time owners had been shown to possess houses, or fields, or horses, or oxen unjustly, including even some who had inherited these things from their fathers. Similarly, it was possible to possess a man unjustly.

"For owners acquire slaves, similarly to all the rest of their property by taking them from others, or as gifts, or by purchase, or by inheritance, or by having them born in their own house – those called 'home-born' slaves. Another way of possession, which I think is the most ancient of all, is when men are taken as war captives or through plunder and are thus enslaved. It stands to reason that those who were first enslaved were not initially born slaves but were defeated in war or captured by robbers and were thus forced to be slaves to their captors. So, the most ancient way, which all the rest depend on, is extremely weak and has no strong value. For whenever these men manage to flee again, nothing prevents them from being free, as they were slaves unjustly; consequently, they were not slaves before that either. In fact, there are cases in that not only did they themselves flee from slavery but also enslaved their masters. In this case, too, a shell flips, as they say, and everything becomes the opposite of what it was before."

One of the bystanders said that the captured persons themselves could not perhaps be called slaves, but those born to them, and those of the following generation and the one after that, could fittingly be called slaves.

“But how? For if being captured makes one a slave, then the name of slave would be more fitting to those captured than to their children; if again it is having been born to slaves what makes one a slave, then clearly the children born to men who were free but got captured cannot be slaves. [...] So, if even this way of possession, from which all the others derive, is not just, it is possible that no other such way is just, and no one can be characterized as really and truly a slave. But perhaps to start with, we should not characterize as a slave one for whose body money has been paid or one born to parents characterized as slaves, as is widely thought, but rather one whose behavior is not that of a free man but befitting a slave. For we can agree that many called slaves have the comportment of free men, while many free men behave in ways much befitting a slave.” [...]

- At what circumstances does the first man accuse his interlocutor of being a slave? What does this show about the ways slavery is understood?
- How does the man who accuses the other of being a slave understand and define slavery throughout the oration?
- What are the problems of such definitions, according to his interlocutor? What do you think?
- What is the definition of slavery agreed by the bystanders? What are its problems?
- What is the last conception of slavery presented in the oration? No real objections are raised to that in the oration, but what is your opinion?