Introduction

The Constituent Elements of Slavery

ALL HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS are structured and defined by the relative power of the interacting persons. Power, in Max Weber's terms, is "that opportunity existing within a social relationship which permits one to carry out one's will even against resistance and regardless of the basis on which this opportunity rests."[1] Relations of inequality or domination, which exist whenever one person has more power than another, range on a continuum from those of marginal asymmetry to those in which one person is capable of exercising, with impunity, total power over another. Power relationships differ from one another not only in degree, but in kind. Qualitative differences result from the fact that power is a complex human faculty, although perhaps not as "sociologically amorphous" as Weber thought.

Slavery is one of the most extreme forms of the relation of domination, approaching the limits of total power from the viewpoint of the master, and of total powerlessness from the viewpoint of the slave. Yet it differs from other forms of extreme domination in very special ways. If we are to understand how slavery is distinctive, we must first clarify the concept of power.

The power relation has three facets.[2] The first is social and involves the use or threat of violence in the control of one person by another. The second is the psychological facet of influence, the capacity to persuade another per-

son to change the way he perceives his interests and his circumstances. And third is the cultural facet of authority, "the means of transforming force into right, and obedience into duty" which, according to Jean Jacques Rousseau, the powerful find necessary "to ensure them continual mastership." Rousseau felt that the source of "legitimate powers" lay in those "conventions" which today we would call culture.[3] But he did not specify the area of this vast human domain in which the source of authority was to be found. Nor, for that matter, did Weber, the leading modern student of the subject.[4] In Chapter 2 I show that authority rests on the control of those private and public symbols and ritual processes that induce (and seduce) people to obey because they feel satisfied and dutiful when they do so.

With this brief anatomy of power in mind we may now ask how slavery is distinctive as a relation of domination. The relation has three sets of constituent features corresponding to the three facets of power. It is unusual, first, both in the extremity of power involved, and all that immediately implies, and in the qualities of coercion that brought the relation into being and sustained it. As Georg Hegel realized, total personal power taken to its extreme contradicts itself by its very existence, for total domination can become a form of extreme dependence on the object of one's power, and total powerlessness can become the secret path to control of the subject that attempts to exercise such power.[5] Even though such a sublation is usually only a potential, the possibility of its realization influences the normal course of the relation in profound ways. An empirical exploration of this unique dimension of the dialectic of power in the master-slave relationship will be one of the major tasks of this work.

The coercion underlying the relation of slavery is also distinctive in its etiology and its composition. In one of the liveliest passages of the *Grundrisse,* Karl Marx, while discussing the attitudes of former masters and slaves in postemancipation Jamaica, not only shows clearly that he understood slavery to be first and foremost "a relation of domination" (his term and a point worth emphasizing in view of what has been written by some recent "Marxists" on the subject) but identifies the peculiar role of violence in creating and maintaining that domination. Commenting on the fact that the Jamaican ex-slaves refused to work beyond what was necessary for their own subsistence, he notes: "They have ceased to be slaves, . . . not in order to become wage labourers, but, instead, self-sustaining peasants working for their own consumption. As far as they are concerned, capital does not exist as capital, because autonomous wealth as such can exist only either on the basis of *direct* forced labour, slavery, or *indirect* forced labour, *wage labour.* Wealth confronts direct forced labour not as capital, but rather as *relation of domination*" (emphasis in original).[6] It is important to stress that Marx was not saying that the master interprets the relationship this way, that the master is in any way necessarily precapitalist. Indeed, the comment was pro-

voked by a November 1857 letter to the *Times* of London from a West Indian planter who, in what Marx calls "an utterly delightful cry of outrage," was advocating the reimposition of slavery in Jamaica as the only means of getting the Jamaicans to generate surplus in a capitalistic manner once again.[7]

Elisabeth Welskopf, the late East German scholar who was one of the leading Marxist students of slavery, discussed at great length the critical role of direct violence in creating and maintaining slavery.[8] Force, she argued, is essential for all class societies. Naked might—violence, in Georges Sorel's terminology[9]—is essential for the creation of all such systems. However, organized force and authority—what Welskopf calls "spiritual force"—usually obviated the need to use violence in most developed class societies where nonslaves made up the dominated class. The problem in a slaveholding society, however, was that it was usually necessary to introduce new persons to the status of slaves because the former slaves either died out or were manumitted. The worker who is fired remains a worker, to be hired elsewhere. The slave who was freed was no longer a slave. Thus it was necessary continually to repeat the original, violent act of transforming free man into slave. This act of violence constitutes the prehistory of all stratified societies, Welskopf argued, but it determines both "the prehistory and (concurrent) history of slavery." To be sure, there is the exceptional case of the Old South in the United States, where the low incidence of manumission and the high rate of reproduction obviated the need continually to repeat the violent "original accumulation" of slaves. While Welskopf does not consider this case (her concern is primarily with the ancient world), her analysis is nonetheless relevant, for she goes on to note that the continuous use of violence in the slave order was also made necessary by the low motivation of the slave to work—by the need to reinforce reward with the threat and actuality of punishment. Thus George P. Rawick has written of the antebellum South: "Whipping was not only a method of punishment. It was a conscious device to impress upon the slaves that they were slaves; it was a crucial form of social control particularly if we remember that it was very difficult for slaves to run away successfully."[10]

But Marx and the Marxists were not the first to recognize fully the necessity or the threat of naked force as the basis of the master-slave relationship. It was a North Carolina judge, Thomas Ruffin, who in his 1829 decision that the intentional wounding of a hired slave by his hirer did not constitute a crime, articulated better than any other commentator before or after, the view that the master-slave relationship originated in and was maintained by brute force. He wrote:

> With slavery . . . the end is the profit of the master, his security and the public safety; the subject, one doomed in his own person, and his posterity, to

> live without knowledge, and without the capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap his fruits. What moral considerations such as a father might give to a son shall be addressed to such a being, to convince him what it is impossible but that the most stupid must feel and know can never be true—that he is thus to labour upon a principle of natural duty, or for the sake of his own personal happiness. Such services can only be expected from one who has no will of his own; who surrenders his will in implicit obedience in the consequence only of uncontrolled authority over the body. There is nothing else which can operate to produce the effect. The power of the master must be absolute, to render the submission of the slave perfect.[11]

Justice Ruffin may have gone a little too far in what Robert M. Cover describes as "his eagerness to confront the reality of the unpleasant iron fist beneath the law's polite, neutral language."[12] He certainly underestimated the role of "moral considerations," to use his term, in the relationship. But his opinion did penetrate to the heart of what was most fundamental in the relation of slavery. As we shall see when we come to the comparative data in Chapter 7, there is no known slaveholding society where the whip was not considered an indispensable instrument.

Another feature of the coercive aspect of slavery is its individualized condition: the slave was usually powerless in relation to another individual. We may conveniently neglect those cases where the slave formally belonged to a corporation such as a temple, since there was always an agent in the form of a specific individual who effectively exercised the power of a master.[13] In his powerlessness the slave became an extension of his master's power. He was a human surrogate, recreated by his master with god-like power in his behalf. Nothing in Hegel or Friedrich Nietzsche more frighteningly captures the audacity of power and ego expansion than the view of the Ahaggar Tuaregs of the Sahara that "without the master the slave does not exist, and he is socializable only through his master."[14] And they came as close to blasphemy as their Islamic creed allowed in the popular saying of the Kel Gress group: "All persons are created by God, the slave is created by the Tuareg."[15]

These Tuareg sayings are not only extraordinarily reminiscent of Ruffin's opinion but of what Henri Wallon, in his classic study, wrote of the meaning of slavery in ancient Greece:

> The slave was a dominated thing, an animated instrument, a body with natural movements, but without its own reason, an existence entirely absorbed in another. The proprietor of this thing, the mover of this instrument, the soul and the reason of this body, the source of this life, was the master. The master was everything for him: his father and his god, which is to say, his authority and his duty . . . Thus, god, fatherland, family, existence, are all, for the slave, identified with the same being; there was nothing which made

> for the social person, nothing which made for the moral person, that was not the same as his personality and his individuality.[16]

Perhaps the most distinctive attribute of the slave's powerlessness was that it always originated (or was conceived of as having originated) as a substitute for death, usually violent death. Ali Abd Elwahed, in an unjustly neglected comparative work, found that "all the situations which created slavery were those which commonly would have resulted, either from natural or social laws, in the death of the individual."[17] Archetypically, slavery was a substitute for death in war. But almost as frequently, the death commuted was punishment for some capital offense, or death from exposure or starvation.

The condition of slavery did not absolve or erase the prospect of death. Slavery was not a pardon; it was, peculiarly, a conditional commutation. The execution was suspended only as long as the slave acquiesced in his powerlessness. The master was essentially a ransomer. What he bought or acquired was the slave's life, and restraints on the master's capacity wantonly to destroy his slave did not undermine his claim on that life. Because the slave had no socially recognized existence outside of his master, he became a social nonperson.

This brings us to the second constituent element of the slave relation: the slave's natal alienation. Here we move to the cultural aspect of the relation, to that aspect of it which rests on authority, on the control of symbolic instruments. This is achieved in a unique way in the relation of slavery: the definition of the slave, however recruited, as a socially dead person. Alienated from all "rights" or claims of birth, he ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate social order. All slaves experienced, at the very least, a secular excommunication.

Not only was the slave denied all claims on, and obligations to, his parents and living blood relations but, by extension, all such claims and obligations on his more remote ancestors and on his descendants. He was truly a genealogical isolate. Formally isolated in his social relations with those who lived, he also was culturally isolated from the social heritage of his ancestors. He had a past, to be sure. But a past is not a heritage. Everything has a history, including sticks and stones. Slaves differed from other human beings in that they were not allowed freely to integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited meanings of their natural forebears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory. That they reached back for the past, as they reached out for the related living, there can be no doubt. Unlike other persons, doing so meant struggling with and penetrating the iron curtain of the master, his community, his laws, his policemen or patrollers, and his heritage.

In the struggle to reclaim the past the odds were stacked even more heavily in favor of the master than in the attempt to maintain links with living relatives. One of the most significant findings of Michael Craton's study of the oral history of the descendants of the Worthy Park plantation slaves of Jamaica was the extraordinary shallowness of their genealogical and historical memory.[18] The same is attested by the recorded interviews with American ex-slaves.

When we say that the slave was natally alienated and ceased to belong independently to any formally recognized community, this does not mean that he or she did not experience or share informal social relations. A large number of works have demonstrated that slaves in both ancient and modern times had strong social ties among themselves. The important point, however, is that these relationships were never recognized as legitimate or binding. Thus American slaves, like their ancient Greco-Roman counterparts, had regular sexual unions, but such unions were never recognized as marriages; both groups were attached to their local communities, but such attachments had no binding force; both sets of parents were deeply attached to their children, but the parental bond had no social support.

The refusal formally to recognize the social relations of the slave had profound emotional and social implications. In all slaveholding societies slave couples could be and were forcibly separated and the consensual "wives" of slaves were obliged to submit sexually to their masters; slaves had no custodial claims or powers over their children, and children inherited no claims or obligations to their parents. And the master had the power to remove a slave from the local community in which he or she was brought up.

Even if such forcible separations occurred only infrequently, the fact that they were possible and that from time to time they did take place was enough to strike terror in the hearts of all slaves and to transform significantly the way they behaved and conceived of themselves. Nothing comes across more dramatically from the hundreds of interviews with American ex-slaves than the fear of separation. Peter Clifton, an eighty-nine-year-old ex-slave from South Carolina, was typical when he said: "Master Biggers believe in whippin' and workin' his slaves long and hard; then a man was scared all de time of being sold away from his wife and chillun. His bark was worse than his bite tho', for I never knowed him to do a wicked thing lak dat."[19]

Isaiah Butler, another South Carolina ex-slave, observed: "Dey didn't have a jail in dem times. Dey'd whip em, and dey'd sell 'em. Every slave know what 'I'll put you in my pocket, Sir' mean."[20]

The independent constituent role of natal alienation in the emergence of slavery is vividly illustrated by the early history of slavery in America. Winthrop D. Jordan has shown that in the early decades of the seventeenth century there were few marked differences in the conception of black and

white servitude, the terms "slave" and "servant" being used synonymously. The power of the master over both black and white servants was near total: both could be whipped and sold.[21]

Gradually there emerged, however, something new in the conception of the black servant: the view that he did not belong to the same community of Christian, civilized Europeans. The focus of this "we-they" distinction was at first religious, later racial. "Enslavement was captivity, the loser's lot in a contest of power. Slaves were infidels or heathens."[22] But as Jordan argues, although the focus may have changed, there was really a fusion of race, religion, and nationality in a generalized conception of "us"—white, English, free—and "them"—black, heathen, slave. "From the first, then, vis-à-vis the Negro the concept embedded in the term Christian seems to have conveyed much of the idea and feeling of *we* as against *they:* to be Christian was to be civilized rather than barbarous, English rather than African, white rather than black."[23] The strangeness and seeming savagery of the Africans, reinforced by traditional attitudes and the context of early contact, "were major components in that sense of *difference* which provided the mental margin absolutely requisite for placing the European on the deck of the slave ship and the Negro in the hold."[24]

Although using different symbolic tools, much the same sense of apartness, of not belonging, emerged in other cultures to differentiate the genuine slave from other forms of involuntary servants over whom almost total power was exercised. Yet the natal alienation of the slave was not necessarily expressed in religious, racial, or even ethnic terms. Among primitives, as we shall see, alienation from one's natal ties was all that was necessary. Sometimes law alone, superimposed on the slave's sense of not belonging, was sufficient. Indeed, it was Moses Finley, drawing on the Greco-Roman experience, who was among the first to emphasize what he called the "outsider" status of the slave as a critical attribute of his condition.[25] He did not make the mistake that Henri Lévi-Bruhl had earlier made, of generalizing from the Roman experience to the conclusion that the social alienation of the slave was necessarily an ethnic one.[26] Insofar as Roman slaves were foreigners, Finley argued, they were outsiders twice over, clearly allowing for the reduction of locally recruited slaves to the status of outsiders.

I prefer the term "natal alienation," because it goes directly to the heart of what is critical in the slave's forced alienation, the loss of ties of birth in both ascending and descending generations. It also has the important nuance of a loss of native status, of deracination. It was this alienation of the slave from all formal, legally enforceable ties of "blood," and from any attachment to groups or localities other than those chosen for him by the master, that gave the relation of slavery its peculiar value to the master. The slave was the ultimate human tool, as imprintable and as disposable as the master wished. And this is true, at least in theory, of all slaves, no matter

how elevated. Paul Rycaut's classic description of the Janissaries as men whom their master, the sultan, "can raise without Envy and destroy without Danger"[27] holds true for all slaves in all times.

The incapacity to make any claims of birth or to pass on such claims is considered a natural injustice among all peoples, so that those who were obliged to suffer it had to be regarded as somehow socially dead. Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* goes to the heart of the matter when he says:

> By the rule of nature, to suffer injustice is the greater disgrace because the greater evil; but conventionally to do evil is the more disgraceful. For the suffering of injustice is not the part of a man, but of a slave, who indeed had better die than live; since when he is wronged and trampled upon, he is unable to help himself, or any other about whom he cares.[28]

All slaves of all times and places were forced to suffer the natural injustice of which Callicles spoke. But nowhere in the annals of slavery has their condition been more poignantly expressed than by an American ex-slave, a Mr. Reed, who was interviewed by Ophelia Settle Egypt of Fisk University in about 1930.

> The most barbarous thing I saw with these eyes—I lay on my bed and study about it now—I had a sister, my older sister, she was fooling with the clock and broke it, and my old master taken her and tied a rope around her neck—just enough to keep it from choking her—and tied her up in the back yard and whipped her I don't know how long. There stood mother, there stood father, and there stood all the children and none could come to her rescue.[29]

How, we may ask, could persons be made to accept such natural injustice? The question applies not only to the victims but to those third parties not directly involved in the slave relation who stood by and accepted it. Denying the slave's humanity, his independent social existence, begins to explain this acceptance. Yet it is only a beginning, for it immediately poses the further question: how was the slave's social death, the outward conception of his natal alienation, articulated and reinforced?

Chapter 2 will attempt to answer this question by means of comparative data. There it will be shown that the master's authority was derived from his control over symbolic instruments, which effectively persuaded both slave and others that the master was the only mediator between the living community to which he belonged and the living death that his slave experienced.

The symbolic instruments may be seen as the cultural counterpart to the physical instruments used to control the slave's body. In much the same way that the literal whips were fashioned from different materials, the symbolic whips of slavery were woven from many areas of culture. Masters all over the world used special rituals of enslavement upon first acquiring slaves: the symbolism of naming, of clothing, of hairstyle, of language, and of body

marks. And they used, especially in the more advanced slave systems, the sacred symbols of religion.

Natal alienation has one critical corollary that is an important feature of slavery, so important indeed that many scholars have seen it as the distinguishing element of the relation. This is the fact that the relation was perpetual and inheritable. James Curtis Ballagh's assessment sums this up for many scholars: "The distinguishing mark of the state of slavery is not the loss of liberty, political or civil, but the perpetuity and almost absolute character of that loss, whether voluntary or involuntary."[30] He then showed, from the case of Virginia, how in legal terms the crucial emerging difference between indentured servants and slaves during the seventeenth century was the consolidation of the view that "all negroes and other slaves shall serve *durante vita,*" beginning with the passage of the 1661 act of the Assembly, which stated that blacks, unlike white indentured servants, "are incapable of making satisfaction [for the time lost in running away] by addition of time."[31]

Ballagh was wrong, however, in his assumption that the inheritability of slavery was the "natural consequence" of the life bondage of the slave, although in fairness we should point out that he was shrewd enough not to commit the easy error of deriving inheritability from the totality of the master's power. It is easy to show in purely empirical terms that neither absolute power nor lifetime subjection to such power necessarily imply the inheritability of such status. The most obvious case is that of prisoners serving life sentences. Some oriental societies, especially China, did reduce the children of such convicts to slavery, but they were the exceptions.[32] More telling perhaps is the case of debt-bondage. In many societies the masters of debt-servants had as complete control over them as they did over slaves, including the right to sell them. The distinction, often made, between selling their labor as opposed to selling their persons makes no sense whatever in real human terms. Debt-servitude was, for all practical purposes, usually lifelong in societies where it was found, since the debtor's labor only repaid the interest. Still, despite the totality of the master's power and the expected lifelong servitude of the debtor, his status was almost never inherited by the debtor's children, even those born after servitude began.[33] Clearly then, there was no "natural" development from total power and lifelong subjection to hereditary servitude.

The hereditary factor only entered in when the servant lost his natal claims to his own parents and community. Having no natal claims and powers of his own, he had none to pass on to his children. And because no one else had any claim or interest in such children, the master could claim them as his own essentially on the grounds that whatever the parents of such children expended in their upbringing incurred a debt to him. Not by virtue, then, of his lifetime power over the slave did the master claim the latter's

issue, but by virtue of the absence of any third party's interest in the child, the absence of the child's capacity to assert a claim on any such third parties, and the claim that necessarily accrued to the master with the parent's expenditures for childrearing.

The peculiar character of violence and the natal alienation of the slave generates the third constituent element of slavery: the fact that slaves were always persons who had been dishonored in a generalized way. Here we move to the sociopsychological aspect of this unusual power relationship. The slave could have no honor because of the origin of his status, the indignity and all-pervasiveness of his indebtedness, his absence of any independent social existence, but most of all because he was without power except through another.

Honor and power are intimately linked. No one understood this more than Thomas Hobbes. In the chapter of *Leviathan* in which he sets out to define his central concept—power—and related conditions, Hobbes devotes more than two-thirds of his effort to a detailed disquisition on the nature of honor. Fully recognizing that honor is a social-psychological issue, Hobbes wrote: "The manifestation of the Value we set on one another, is that which is commonly called *Honouring,* and *Dishonouring.* To Value a man at a high rate, is to *Honour* him; at a low rate, is to *Dishonour* him. But high, and low, in this case, is to be understood by comparison to the rate that each man setteth on himself."[34] The link between honor and power is direct: "To obey, is to Honour; because no man obeys them, whom they think have no power to help, or hurt them. And consequently to disobey, is to Dishonour." Somewhat cynically, Hobbes observes that it really does not matter "whether an action . . . be just or unjust: for Honour consisteth onely in the opinion of Power."[35]

As usual, Hobbes overstates his case; and his materialism prevents him from recognizing important dimensions of honor which, if anything, might have strengthened his argument. In Chapter 3 I shall explore the concept of honor in depth, and in the light of modern studies. Hobbes, however, gives us a useful starting point, for he was basically right in recognizing the significance of honor as a critical aspect of the psychology of power. Furthermore, his emphasis on the concept as a social-psychological process, as distinct from a purely psychological one, is still far in advance of, say, the reductionist utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill, who speaks of "the sense of honour" as "that feeling of personal exaltation and degradation which acts independently of other people's opinion, or even in defiance of it."[36] Nor does Mill ever make the critical connection between honor and power that came so easily to the more incisive mind of Hobbes.

The slave, as we have already indicated, could have no honor because he had no power and no independent social existence, hence no public worth. He had no name of his own to defend. He could only defend his master's

worth and his master's name. That the dishonor was a generalized condition must be emphasized, since the free and honorable person, ever alive to slights and insults, occasionally experiences specific acts of dishonor to which, of course, he or she responds by taking appropriate action. The slave, as we shall see, usually stood outside the game of honor.

The honoring of the master and the dishonoring of the slave were the outward product of their interaction. We can say little or nothing about the private lives of the members of either group. Certainly we know next to nothing about the individual personalities of slaves, or of the way they felt about one another. The data are just not there, and it is the height of arrogance, not to mention intellectual irresponsibility, to generalize about the inner psychology of any group, be they medieval Jewish merchants, New England Puritan farmers, or Scythian slave policemen in Athens.

What we do know a great deal about, however, is the political psychology of the everyday life of masters and slaves in their relationships with one another. The interaction was complex and fascinating, fraught with conflict and perversity. It was Hegel who first explored in depth the dialectics of this political psychology.[37] Eugene Genovese, paraphrasing Hegel, has argued that "the slaveholder, as distinct from the farmer, had a private source of character making and mythmaking—his slave. Most obviously, he had the habit of command, but there was more than despotic authority in this master-slave relationship."[38] I disagree with Genovese on what is critical in the interaction, just as I do with Hegel on his stance that the slave stood interposed between his master and the object his master desired (that which was produced).[39] This may have been partly true of the capitalistic antebellum U.S. South, but as the comparative data will show, in a great many slaveholding societies masters were not interested in what their slaves produced. Indeed, in many of the most important slaveholding societies, especially those of the Islamic world, slaves produced nothing and were economically dependent on their masters or their master's nonslave dependents.

What was universal in the master-slave relationship was the strong sense of honor the experience of mastership generated, and conversely, the dishonoring of the slave condition. Many masters, especially among primitives, acquired slaves solely for this purpose. But even if the motivation was chiefly materialistic, the sense of honor was still enhanced. The traits Genovese attributed to the southern slaveholder—"his strength, graciousness, and gentility; his impulsiveness, violence, and unsteadiness[,t]he sense of independence and the habit of command [which] developed his poise, grace and dignity"[40]—hold for the way in which all slavemasters conceived of themselves, whether they were Toradja tribesmen in the central Celebes, ancient Greek intellectuals, or Islamic sultans. What they actually were is a matter on which I do not feel qualified to comment.

The counterpart of the master's sense of honor is the slave's experience

of its loss. The so-called servile personality is merely the outward expression of this loss of honor.[41] And it is truly remarkable how consistent are the attributes of the expression of generalized dishonor not only among all slaves but among all oppressed peoples. There is, for example, the crushing and pervasive sense of knowing that one is considered a person without honor and that there simply is nothing that can be done about it. As Sosia observes in Plautus' *Amphitryo,* "It's not just the work, but knowing you're a slave, and nothing can alter it."[42] There is, too, the outward expression of self-blame. "You know," observes Phaniscus in Plautus' *The Ghost,* "slaves get the masters they deserve."[43] One finds this view repeated constantly by American ex-slaves in their interviews. "De Massa and Missus was good to me but sometime I was so bad they had to whip me," said Victoria Adams.[44] "It was always for something, sir. I needed de whippin'," recalled Millie Barber.[45]

More tragic than the victim's outward acceptance of blame as part of the dynamics of interaction with the master was his tendency to express psychological violence against himself: the outward show of self-hatred in the presence of the master, which was prompted by the pervasive indignity and underlying physical violence of the relationship. In Plautus' most mature play, *The Rope,* Palaestra, a slave anticipating escape from her condition, begins to cry, exclaiming "Oh life and hope." She is roguishly comforted by Trachalio, who tells her, "Just leave it all to me." To this Palaestra retorts, "I could if I had no force to fear, force which forces me to do violence to myself."[46] It does not matter whether these were Plautus' words or the words of the Greek playwright he was adapting. Whoever wrote them knew, in a profound way, what slavery really meant: the direct and insidious violence, the namelessness and invisibility, the endless personal violation, and the chronic inalienable dishonor.

It was in the interaction between master and slave that such feelings were expressed and played out. Clearly, no authentic human relationship was possible where violence was the ultimate sanction. There could have been no trust, no genuine sympathy; and while a kind of love may sometimes have triumphed over this most perverse form of interaction, intimacy was usually calculating and sadomasochistic.

Occasionally we get a glimpse of the relationship in action from incidents recalled by American ex-slaves. This is how Grace Gibson from South Carolina described the moment when she was given as a present to her young mistress:

> I was called up on one of her [Miss Ada's] birthdays, and Marster Bob sorta looked out of de corner of his eyes, first at me and then at Miss Ada, and then he make a little speech. He took my hand, put it in Miss Ada's hand, and say: "Dis your birthday present, darlin'." I make a curtsy and Miss Ada's eyes twinkle like a star and she take me in her room and took on powerful over me.[47]

Frederick Douglass, undoubtedly the most articulate former slave who ever lived, repeatedly emphasized as the central feature of slavery the loss of honor and its relation to the loss of power. After physically resisting a brutal white who had been hired by his exasperated master to break him, Douglass, whose spirit had nearly broken and who had run the risk of being executed for his resistance, recalls that he felt "a sense of my own manhood . . . I was nothing before, I was a man now."[48] And he adds in a passage for which this chapter may be read as an extended exegesis: "A man without force is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot honor a helpless man, although it can pity him; and even that it cannot do long, if the signs of power do not arise."[49]

At this point we may offer a preliminary definition of slavery on the level of personal relations: *slavery is the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonored persons.* The chapters of Part I are devoted to an elaboration of this statement.

Even at this most elementary level of personal relations it should be clear that we are dealing not with a static entity but with a complex interactional process, one laden with tension and contradiction in the dynamics of each of its constituent elements. The power of the master, in its very extremity, tended to become sublative; the slave's natural love for and attachment to kinsmen worked against the master's attempt to deny him all formal claims of natality; and the master's need for honor and recognition was both enhanced and undermined by the dishonoring of the slave and the latter's own effort to eke out some measure of pride and dignity in the face of the master.

However, it is not solely on the level of personal relations that we should examine slavery. Like all enduring social processes, the relation became institutionalized. Patterned modes of resolving the inherent contradictions of the relation were developed. Such modes were no less dynamic in their operation than were the constituent elements. On the institutional level the modes of recruitment, enslavement, and manumission were all intimately interrelated. The desocialized new slave somehow had to be incorporated; but the process of incorporation created new contradictions, which usually made necessary the process of manumission. One of the major tasks of this work will be to disclose the dynamics of this institutional process.

Parts I and II, therefore, explore cross-sectionally the peculiar features of slavery as a personal relation and as an institutional process. A significant problem with all attempts at discovering inductively the invariant dynamics of any given process is the inclination to neglect what may be called the limiting cases. By these I refer not to the extreme cases, which are fully accounted for in our samples, but to those apparently borderline cases that challenge the conceptual stability of the processes one has identified. It is always tempting to cut corners and simply exclude any limiting cases. Analysis of such cases, however, is essential to any comparative study, for both substantive and methodological reasons. In Part III of this book I examine

the extraordinary phenomenon of palatine slavery. By showing how and why these elites were indeed genuine slaves, I shall not only have secured and more boldly defined the boundaries of my analysis, so to speak, but in the process raised issues that illuminate the interior analytic landscape I have previously explored.

These issues lead to my concluding analysis. Here I do not merely summarize my major findings; I integrate them into a final rendering of slavery as a special form of human parasitism. In so doing I bring into focus, and I hope illuminate, the domain of freedom, which inevitably shadows any attempt to understand the structure and meaning of slavery.