6

Recognition and Imbalances of Power: Honour Relations and Slaves' Claims vis-à-vis Their Masters

Mirko Canevaro

Introduction: Recognition, Domination and the Honour of Slaves

Seen from the vantage point of much recent work in moral and political philosophy, as well as in social psychology, about value, dignity and recognition, the problem of whether slaves have 'honour' – whether they are implicated in reciprocal relations of mutual respect and recognition, and can develop through these an autonomous subjectivity – is one that appears at the same time bizarre and deeply troubling.[1] On the one hand, theories of respect and recognition, along the lines of those developed by Charles Taylor, Stephen Darwall, Kwame Anthony Appiah and even more comprehensively Axel Honneth, put mutual, reciprocal recognition at the basis of their accounts of all forms of social interaction. By doing this, they imply that whenever two subjects 'function' together, this involves some form of mutual recognition. From this point of view, the very idea that slaves are defined by lack of honour – as Orlando Patterson has influentially argued – seems improbable.[2] And much historical

[1] The philosophical salience of issues of respect and recognition in the last three decades has been enormous. The most influential philosophical accounts of recognition are those of Charles Taylor (e.g. Taylor 1989; 1992) and Axel Honneth (particularly Honneth 1995b; also Fraser and Honneth 2003, which contains a criticism by Nancy Fraser of theories of recognition, with Honneth's response; 2012, a collection of Honneth's essays on the topic). Honneth 2018 provides an enlightening account of the emergence of notions of recognition in the philosophical tradition, in three strands (which he conveniently associates with France, Britain – mostly Scotland, in fact – and Germany). Much work on respect, identity and even honour should be ascribed to the same surge of interest in recognition and intersubjectivity: see particularly Appiah 2010; 2018; Darwall 1977; 2006; 2013b; Fukuyama 2018. Much work in social psychology has confirmed the basic tenet of theories of intersubjectivity: that intersubjectivity is a basic human capacity which is evident already in infants' earliest interactions with others, and that it is necessary for the proper development of the self. See e.g. Meltzoff and Moore 1977; Trevarthen 1979; 1998; Moll and Meltzoff 2011, Trevarthen and Aitken 2001; Tomasello and Farrar 1986; Tomasello 1999; 2019; Gallagher 2020.

[2] Patterson 1982: 10–12, 86–8 and *passim*. See also his defence of his own definition of slavery in Patterson 2016, against the very pertinent criticism of Lewis 2016. Lewis 2016 observed that any attempt to remove slaves '*tout court* from the dialectic of esteem and honour that characterizes social relations in any society' is deeply problematic.

research, for instance, on Atlantic slavery – concerned with issues of masculinity, or of horizontal and caring relations within slave communities – appears to confirm that this approach to what a slave is conceals more than it reveals.[3] Slaves can and do develop a sense of themselves, of their honour and of the honourable treatment they are due, however unequal their place may be in the relevant relations.

On the other hand, the same body of work on value, dignity and recognition, by putting recognition at the basis of the very construction of an individual's subjectivity – one involving self-respect and a working notion of personal boundaries and claims vis-à-vis others – leaves open the possibility that in fact slaves, by being excluded from dynamics of reciprocal honour, could fail to develop fully an actual subjectivity, remaining socially dysfunctional quasi-subjects.[4] Such a conclusion would not only confirm Patterson's tenet about lack of honour as constitutive of slave identity, but would also, perversely, lend some truth to Aristotle's arguments about 'natural' slavery (Arist. *Pol.* 1.2, 5):[5] slaves would not be 'naturally' different from the free in the sense that they are natural-born slaves, yet by being socialised defectively – without the recognition that fuels the formation of a functioning subjectivity – they would in fact become qualitatively different from the free. They would not, perhaps, be fully incapable of deliberating well in their own interests, as Aristotle claims they are, but their subjectivity and their social faculties would be severely impaired. Their defective subjectivity would be incapable of self-respect, of formulating claims vis-à-vis others grounded on a notion of their desert, of what is due to them. And Aristotle does in fact point in this direction when, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (5.5, 1132b33–1133a4), he contends that when people are incapable of returning evil for evil (to obtain *timōria*),[6] they feel they have the life of a slave – for this reason, in Aristotle's account, anger is the prerogative of the free citizen. His contention here can be better understood

[3] From seminal works such as Blassingame 1972, Genovese 1974, Kolchin 1983, Piersen 1988 to the recent enlightening perspective offered e.g. in Doddington 2018a; 2018b.

[4] This would indeed be the consequence if we were to accept wholesale Honneth's model of multiple spheres of recognition, each one connected to a different aspect in the development of subjective self-awareness and self-understanding (Honneth 1995b: 92–140; see also Zurn 2015: 28–34). His first sphere of recognition, concerned with basic love relations and issues of physical integrity, is responsible for producing basic self-confidence in one's own basic (corporeal) subjective existence. The successive spheres of recognition are connected with other aspects of the full definition of one's self. But see also, from a very different tradition, e.g. Eribon 2004, with his model of spite and the insult as constitutive of the gay self. Such an approach – by casting recognition as essential to the formation of a functioning subjectivity – would, for instance, lend credence to Stanley M. Elkins' much criticised contention that the extreme paternalism and dehumanising structure of slavery in the American South produced a psychological phenomenon in which enslaved people internalised their subservient status, creating what he called the 'Sambo' personality. According to Elkins, this was a docile, childlike and dependent identity that enslaved people adopted in response to the overwhelming power dynamics of slavery. His conclusion was that the institution of slavery stunted personal agency and resistance among the enslaved, forcing them into a state of psychological submission. See Elkins 1959, with criticism e.g. in Lewis 1967.

[5] For Aristotle's theory of natural slavery see Roth's chapter in this volume. See also e.g. Cambiano 1987; Brunt 1993: 434–88, Schütrumpf 1993; Garver 1994; Garnsey 1996: 12–16, 107–27; Schofield 1999: 101–23; Kraut 2002: 277–305; Frank 2004; Deslauriers 2006; Millett 2007; Heath 2008; Pellegrin 2013; Greenwood 2022.

[6] For the meaning of *timōria*, which is neither 'vengeance' not simply 'punishment', but 'redress', 'justice' as the restoration of the *timē* that has been violated, see Cairns 2015.

if one reads it in the light of Aristotle's treatment of anger in the second book of the *Rhetoric* (2.2, 1378a31–b5). In his account, anger is the (appropriate) reaction to slighting (*oligōria*) by others, because it motivates one to seek redress (*timōria*) and reaffirm his claims to *timē* (as honour and honourable treatment) vis-à-vis others. But, in order for anger to be experienced, one needs to have a fully formed sense of oneself (i.e. a subjectivity) as a partner in reciprocal relations based on mutual entitlements and obligations – based, that is, on honour.[7] This is why Aristotle contends that slaves are incapable of anger – the anger felt by the free when they are subjected to *oligōria*. Because slaves, in his account, are not fully parties to reciprocal relations based on mutual entitlements and obligations, they do not feel anger and seek *timōria* – they cannot in fact imagine the possibility of *timōria*, as *timōria* is normally precluded to them.[8]

This volume, in a sense, is devoted to refuting this understanding of slaves' (lack of) access to honour relations and its effects on their subjectivity: a number of chapters explore the sheer variety of social relations that were in fact available to slaves. Through these relations they could develop fully functioning subjectivities and a sense of themselves grounded in relations of respect, recognition and group belonging. Vlassopoulos has already stressed the importance of slave communities – we might say as distinctive 'fields',[9] characterised by distinctive normative orders producing distinctive criteria of honourability and a distinctive habitus – in which slaves could acquire honour and develop a positive sense of themselves, of their worth and of their claims. And, in much work on 'free spaces' where free and slaves interacted in day-to-day life, he has also shed light on how communities – again, 'fields' of sociality – which cut across the free/slave boundary could produce slave identities that were not rooted in dishonour and humiliation.[10] Mazzinghi Gori's and Vlassopoulos' chapters in this volume also show that slaves are described in the literary sources as deriving a sense of self-worth – *timē*, *axia* – from a number of identities, associated with a variety of groups and relations: ethnicity, belonging to a particular *oikos*, work skills, roles such as that of pedagogue.[11] In this chapter, I want to turn to what is perhaps the least promising

[7] For the account of *hybris* and anger in Arist. *Rh.* 2.2 see Cairns 1996: 2–8, and now Cairns 2020.

[8] See Konstan 2006: 55–6 for slaves' inability to feel anger – Konstan draws the correct conclusions from Aristotle's account, yet his argument here appears at times to take what is prescriptive (and even ideological) in Aristotle's account of emotions and turn it into a descriptive account of the actual emotional capabilities of slaves. In reality (as I shall argue below at pp. 133–8), slaves were perfectly capable of feeling anger (as Aristotle in fact knows well; see below, pp. 133–4 on *Rh.* 2.3, 1380b16–20), and precisely because they were in fact involved in honour relations and derived claims and entitlements from them. Aristotle himself seems at times unable to maintain his own position, as in his advice about slave management (and even in his own will) he assumes that slaves in fact are *philotimoi* (see below pp. 122–3).

[9] I borrow here the term 'field' from Bourdieu [1972] 1977; 2000. Works on honour such as Appiah 2010: 19–22 (who defines 'honor world' as 'a group of people who acknowledge the same codes') and Rabbås 2015: 634 ('honour arenas') point in the same direction – that of distinctive and partially autonomous spheres with specific standards of honourability – although their terminology tends to reify social interaction (as a kind of rule-following) when it is in fact, again with Bourdieu, more loosely governed by 'feel for the game'; see the Introduction to this volume, p. 8 n. 31. See Canevaro 2018: 121–2 for such a notion first applied to Greek social history (and to slavery in particular).

[10] Vlassopoulos 2007; 2009; 2011a; 2011b; 2015; 2018a; 2021.

[11] See also Cox 2013 on the social networks available to slaves in Menander; Vlassopoulos 2015; 2018a; 2021 on their social networks more widely.

kind of social relation, if we are looking for reciprocally empowering honour dynamics; yet at the same time to what is arguably the most fundamental kind of relation for slaves (*qua* slaves), which is at the core of their very status and identity as slaves: the relation with their masters. This relation is in fact the crux of Patterson's argument – it is more fundamental to his contention that slaves are 'naturally dishonoured' than slave-to-slave relations, the focus of much recent scholarship. If it is possible to show – as I shall attempt to do – honour dynamics operating also in *this* relation, then Patterson's understanding of slaves' (lack of) access to honour is undermined not only through shifting the focus of analysis (as is often done), but on his own grounds.

In recent work I have argued that the Athenians tried very hard in their laws, their institutions and the public ideology attached to them to deny slaves any possible claim to *timē*. And this was clearly not exclusive to the Athenians. Allowing that slaves may possess a modicum of *timē* might potentially result in acknowledging, legally, that they had legitimate claims, therefore giving rise to something resembling legally sanctioned slave rights vis-à-vis their masters.[12] This might endanger the rights of the masters, which were grounded in relations of ownership (and not in any form of reciprocity or mutual recognition), as shown comprehensively by Lewis in his book.[13] Because of this, in their institutional practice and legal discourse, the Athenians (like most Greeks) strove to frame those constraints on masters' (and free persons') behaviour towards slaves that were necessary to secure smooth social and economic interactions not as due to slave rights (to slaves' *timē*), but rather as due to the limits of honourable behaviour for the free. Hybristic behaviour against slaves – it was argued, over and over again – was forbidden not because it infringed on the *timē* of slaves (as the *polis* did not legally recognise the *timē* of slaves, as a 'dignity' and a status from which legitimate claims descended which could be upheld institutionally), but because *hybris* was criminal regardless of the victim's *timē* (or lack thereof).[14] There is no denying that such a justification – however popular, even standard in the Greek sources – is disingenuous.

[12] Canevaro 2018 (see also Lewis 2018: 42–3; Ismard 2019b: 198–202; Harris 2019a). On the connection between *timē* and rights see Canevaro 2020; Canevaro and Rocchi 2025. More generally, on the meanings and workings of *timē*, see Introduction, pp. 7–17, as well as the following works that are beginning to establish a new model for its dynamics: Cairns 1993a; 1996; 2011b; 2019; Rabbås 2015; Canevaro 2016a, esp. 77–97, and *passim*; 2018; 2019; 2025. See also Van Wees 1992; Scodel 2008.

[13] Lewis 2016; 2018: 25–81 and *passim*.

[14] This argument, however ideological, relies on the importance of disposition to the very concept of *hybris* (Cairns 1996). Against Fisher's focus on the act itself, and the dishonour that it causes to the victim, *hybris* was equally concerned (and at times primarily concerned) with the agent's disposition (as a self-aggrandising attitude, the tendency to arrogate to oneself more *timē* than one has a claim to). This dimension is abstracted – even fossilised – by the law and in legal discourse, and allows for the argument about the irrelevance of the slaves' *timē* to be made, and to be accepted as convincing by its audience (in an ideological context, that of the *polis* as the institutionalised community of citizens, which has every interest in not recognising any legally sanctioned rights for slaves). My account of the workings of the *graphē hybreōs* in Athens builds on, but also modifies in significant respects those of MacDowell (1976; 1990: 18–22) and Fisher (1976; 1979; 1992). For a different account of the meaning of the provision forbidding *hybris* against slaves see in particular Fisher 1995. See now also Dmitriev 2016, whose interpretation is based, however, on an incorrect understanding of the meaning of the term *oiketēs*; see Lewis 2018: 295–306. Fisher's chapter in this volume partly defends and partly reassesses his understanding of *hybris* in general, and *hybris* against slaves in particular, in dialogue with Cairns 1996 and Canevaro 2018.

As we argue in the Introduction, it is precisely because the most natural way to interpret the law on *hybris* was as an extension to slaves of the protection against humiliating and degrading treatment afforded to the free that the Athenians – representatives here of most (all?) free and slave-masters – try so hard to forestall it. Their protestations demonstrate their unease at that implication, but even so their language suggests that *hybris* against slaves does imply the same unwarranted contempt and desire to humiliate as does *hybris* against free individuals. The corollary of victimhood is at least an implicit claim to recognition. This is the claim they try so hard to deny, paradoxically highlighting it as they do so.[15]

Yet this wilful denial of the slaves' *timē*, however strongly the Athenians were committed to it in the legal and institutional sphere of the *polis*, did not apply across the board. As I have argued at greater length elsewhere, the fact that the Athenian *polis* was unwilling to uphold, legally and institutionally, any claim to *timē* that slaves may have does not entail that slaves were not explicitly implicated in honour relations in other spheres of sociality – in other 'fields'. In fact, it is precisely because slaves could gain honour in a number of social spheres that the Athenians went to such lengths to make sure that, whatever honour a slave may have been accorded in the household, in some 'free space' or in a slave community, this was not in any way relevant in the institutionalised domain of the *polis* itself – of its laws and institutions. There, slaves had to remain items of property owned by their masters.[16]

We have plenty of evidence that day-to-day relations between masters and slaves within the household were in fact explicitly conceptualised by the masters in terms of *timē*. Klees and Fisher have brought to our attention a number of relevant texts.[17] In Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus, for instance, provides a series of recommendations about the management of slaves:[18] he recommends using praise and honour as key tools for securing hard work and compliance from slaves, going so far as to state that he treats his slaves as free men, 'honouring' them as *kaloi kagathoi* (14.6–10). He also recognises that slaves are capable of *philotimia*, therefore underscoring the notion that they can become actors in social relations based on *timē*.[19] Plato, in the *Laws* (6, 777c–778a), is more concerned with punishment and with limiting the excesses of familiarity with slaves (as well as with eradicating dispositional *hybris* in the free), but he clearly acknowledges that master–slave relations are unavoidably characterised by dynamics of honour, and that masters normally honour slaves (777d: προτιμῶντας), presumably for good performance, loyalty and the like. Aristotle himself, in spite of his theory of natural slavery, alludes approvingly to practices that rely on slaves' capacity for

[15] See Introduction, pp. 19–22.

[16] Canevaro 2018: 120–2 (see also Ismard 2019b: 201–2, 221–2).

[17] Discussed in Porter's chapter in this volume. See also Klees 1975; Fisher 1995 (also Vlassopoulos 2018a).

[18] For a detailed account of Xenophon's recommendations about the management of Ischomachus' estate see now Porter 2019a: 82–129, with through discussion of previous bibliography.

[19] On *philotimia* as the key factor in the relations between civic obligations, individual liberty and voluntarism see in particular Liddel 2007: 166–70 and *passim*. On the development of the meaning of *philotimia* towards public-spiritedness and patriotism see Whitehead 1983; 1993 (but also Ferrucci 2013, which nuances this evolution); Deene 2013; Lambert 2018: 71–92; Keim 2018. See also Canevaro 2016a: 78–81 and n. 308; 83–7 and *passim*.

philotimia and recommends in strong terms using manumission as an incentive to secure their compliance and the highest level of performance (*Pol.* 7.10, 1330a32–4)[20] – this is advice that we know from his will (as preserved in Diogenes Laertius) he followed himself, with his own slaves (Diog. Laert. 5.15).[21] Likewise, pseudo-Aristotle's *Oeconomica* (1344a23–b21) also recommends that masters should use the goal of manumission as a tool for encouraging compliance; that they should treat slaves according to their deserts and reward the more 'free-spirited' (*eleutherioi*) among them with a share of *timē*.[22]

Prima facie, then, judging from these passages, Patterson (and Aristotle) must be mistaken. Even vis-à-vis their masters, slaves are not without honour absolutely: they are denied honour in certain contexts but conceptualised and treated as fully capable of honour-seeking and honourable behaviour in others. So, if it is true, as noted by Niall McKeown, that masters often 'wanted to see slaves merely as extensions of their own social persona',[23] this was not invariably the case – not only were slaves active social actors vis-à-vis each other and in 'free spaces', as we have seen; masters, while denying them social agency in the institutional 'field' of the *polis* community, within the household did in fact conceptualise them, treat them and perhaps most importantly speak to them as social agents, capable of *philotimia* and motivated by a concern with *timē*, with all the consequences in terms of trust, entitlements and obligations that this entails.

As we draw from these passages a picture of what master–slave relations must have looked like within the household – slaves were often recognised as having a desire for *timē*, and were granted *timē* – we should, however, not lose sight of the fact that these texts are in fact concerned with slave management. What they advise upon is not how to give slaves their due, but how to create a system of incentives – from praise to rewards, all the way to manumission – to secure slaves' loyalty and enhance their performance in the service of the master's (chiefly economic) interests. The use of honorific language and the appeal to honour dynamics is depicted and justified in these texts mainly in instrumental terms (regardless of whatever actual feelings of respect or affection might have emerged in some instances),[24] while the underlying imbalance of power (and the threat of violence) that they take for granted (and often explicitly commend) is extreme. Plato's *Laws* is particularly explicit about these power dynamics: not only does Plato treat practices of honouring slaves as instrumental, but he explicitly paints the relation between master and slave as one in which the master holds absolute (and arbitrary) power over the slave.[25] Plato chooses to set no limits on the masters' discretion in dealing with slaves, recommends using cruel corporal punishments rather

[20] Garnsey 1996: 97–8 rightly comments: 'One wonders how he would have coped with the contradiction between the suggestion that the carrot of freedom should be dangled before all slaves and the doctrine of natural slavery.'

[21] For an analysis of the wills of the philosophers – their authenticity and what they have to say about manumission – see Canevaro and Lewis 2014: 103–10.

[22] For pseudo-Aristotle's *Oeconomica*, see now Valente's (2011) comprehensive commentary.

[23] McKeown 2019.

[24] For the issue of affection between masters and slaves see Hunt 2017; 2018: 99–100, 104, 106–11, and now Mazzinghi Gori 2023: 175–217 and in this volume.

[25] Pl. *Leg.* 6, 777e: ταὐτὸν δ' ἔστ' εἰπεῖν τοῦτο ὀρθῶς ἅμα λέγοντα ἐπί τε δεσπότῃ καὶ τυράννῳ καὶ πᾶσαν δυναστείαν δυναστεύοντι πρὸς ἀσθενέστερον ἑαυτοῦ.

extensively, and even warns against excessive familiarity (6, 777e) and excessive honouring (6, 777d: προτιμῶντας) of slaves, which can make them hybristic and give them notions of equality with their masters (6, 777e–778a).[26] On the one hand, Plato is designing here a law code, so the level at which his recommendations are formulated is that of the *polis* as a whole – as in Athens, at that level the slaves are granted no claims to *timē*, and if *hybris* towards them is to be avoided, this is about the masters' dispositions, not the slaves' rights.[27] On the other hand, this outlook underlines even further the instrumentality of honour practices used within the household as incentives for improving slaves' loyalty and performance.

Can these dynamics of *timē* amount to actual relations based on mutual recognition if they are instrumental to the preservation of the most extreme and brutal power relations? What are we to make of the kind of 'recognition' (and mutual obligations) emerging from this use of honorific language and practices in slave management? Do they actually enable agency and the formation of independent subjectivities, as recognition is meant to do? Or do they rather limit agency and worsen the subjugation of the slaves, who are tricked into concentrating their efforts towards carrying out their masters' wishes rather than towards developing and carrying out their own autonomous aims and desires?

These are important issues, which have emerged, contentiously, also in modern work on recognition: the sidelining of power dynamics in accounts of relationality and social reproduction (such as Axel Honneth's) which stress the centrality of recognition has been criticised, for instance, by a new generation of French critical theorists (most recently by Geoffroy de Lagasnerie) who have been building on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. And the fundamental problem of the role of recognition dynamics in societies characterised by strongly asymmetrical power structures – of whether they are empowering or rather disempowering – is already in stark focus in the work of Louis Althusser, who famously coined the category of 'ideological recognition', developed then further in the work of Judith Butler.[28] Ideological recognition describes recognition dynamics that are structured in such a way as not to advance the cause of the oppressed; they rather incentivise them to buy into the existing ideological order, therefore carrying out tamely their role in the existing relations of production. Such forms of recognition, far from enabling agency and the formation of an independent subjectivity, are a ruse to make the oppressed complacent and oblivious to their condition, thus perpetuating the existing power structures. Honneth provides some good examples of the workings of this mechanism:

> The pride that 'Uncle Tom' feels as a reaction to the constant praises of his submissive virtues makes him into a compliant servant in a slave-owning society.

[26] For Plato's approach to slave management in the *Laws* see, still, Morrow 1939; see also Meital and Agassi 2007.

[27] See Klees 1975: 165–7; Canevaro 2018: 118.

[28] For criticism of theories of recognition, built on the foundation of Bourdieu's thought, see e.g. de Lagasnerie 2013. For the notion of 'ideological recognition' see Althusser 2001; Butler 1997. Honneth 2018: ch. 2 historicises these approaches within a distinctive (French) tradition stemming from La Rochefoucauld and Rousseau, through Sartre, all the way to Althusser and Butler (and Lacan); ch. 4 discusses where these approaches can in fact enrich the Hegelian tradition of recognition in which Honneth's work is set.

> The emotional appeals to the 'good' mother and housewife made by churches, parliaments or the mass media over the centuries caused women to remain trapped within a self-image that most effectively accommodated the gender-specific division of labour. The public esteem enjoyed by heroic soldiers continuously engendered a sufficiently large class of men who willingly went to war in pursuit of glory and adventure . . . [These examples draw] attention to forms of recognition that, by employing methods of ritual affirmation in order to create a self-image that conforms to social expectations, can be effective as a means of social domination.[29]

Honneth does not deny the salience of these mechanisms, and it is in fact easy to see them at work in the use of honouring practices for slave management as they are recommended in the Greek texts that I have briefly discussed above. But is it actually the case that, when the underlying power structures are characterised by domination, recognition dynamics are invariably disempowering? That they cannot lead to the formation of a functioning subjectivity, of individual autonomy, of a positive sense of self, with claims and entitlements, *in spite of*, and *against*, the underlying power dynamics? Honneth, in an important recent essay as well as in earlier essays on Pierre Bourdieu's work, has in fact denied that this is the case: he has argued that, although 'ideological recognition' is a useful and pertinent category, recognition, in whatever form, can still create true entitlements and true obligations for all parties, however asymmetrical and skewed these entitlements and obligations may be.[30] To him, whenever social relations are structured around recognition and respect – whenever they create a recognition order – this produces reciprocal entitlements and obligations which are felt as justified by both parties. These, through fostering a sense of self-worth, can aid the formation of an autonomous subjectivity. In Honneth's words, if we abandon for a second 'the certainty afforded by hindsight', then the question is:

> Why should the slave's experience of being esteemed for his submissiveness by his white masters not allow him to attain a feeling of self-worth that provides him with a certain degree of inner autonomy? And does the public recognition of women as caring mothers not give them a measure of compensation for the disrespect they have endured as a result of their exclusion from roles outside the home? And finally, the set of values characteristic of male heroism may have provided men who suffer from social insignificance, owing to unemployment or lack of qualifications, an opportunity to become part of an independent, male subculture in which they could gain compensatory prestige and reputation. In each case, these possibilities of interpretation reveal that upon closer inspection of the historical circumstances, a particular *dispositif* of esteem that in retrospect seems to be pure ideology can in fact prove to be a condition for a group-specific attainment of increased self-worth.[31]

[29] Honneth 2012: 77.

[30] Honneth 2012: 75–97. See also Honneth et al. 1986 and Honneth 1995a for his early engagement with Bourdieu's theories (on which see Basaure 2011), and Honneth 2018: chh. 2 and 5 for further reflection on this 'French' tradition on recognition.

[31] Honneth 2012: 77–8.

In the rest of this chapter, now that I have expounded at length the historical problem I am concerned with and its wider sociological and philosophical resonance, I shall attempt to test this thesis against the extant evidence for Greek honour and Greek slavery. My working thesis, following Honneth, is that as soon as a master uses honour, *philotimia* and the associated dynamics as motivational forces to influence the behaviour of a slave, he subjects himself to a normative order which is abstracted from his arbitrary will, which exists per se, and which can be exploited by the slave to make demands, or to develop a consciousness not just of being oppressed, but of being wronged. Mistreatment beyond what is sanctioned by this normative order is then no longer, simply, perceived by the slave as burdensome and oppressive; it is perceived as unfair, unjust, unwarranted, undeserved. Casting power relations in terms of *timē*, that is, already produces a change in their nature: the power of the master is no longer arbitrary, but constrained (however tenuously) by norms that the master has himself imposed in 'honouring' the slave for good behaviour and punishing him, or scolding him, for bad behaviour. Conversely, the slave acquires the instruments to perceive the master's infractions as 'unjust' – by virtue of this language and these dynamics of honour, he becomes capable of conceiving of himself as the bearer of (some) rights, someone who can gain (or has gained) respect (*timē*) with his behaviour, and to whom this respect is due. These dynamics then create room for slaves to formulate a notion of their own worth which is deserving of recognition – they create room for slaves' moral agency – not just vis-à-vis each other, but also vis-à-vis their masters. *Pace* Aristotle, by being implicated in dynamics of honour (however instrumentally), slaves do acquire the ability to get angry as a reaction to *oligōria*, and towards re-establishing their *timē* through *timōria*.

Reciprocal Honour in Master–Slave Relations and the Entitlements of Slaves

My evidence for the existence of honour dynamics in master–slave relations is by necessity scattered and tentative, because, after all, what I am dealing with here is individual motivation and perceived social constraints and preferences. Nevertheless, I believe that the evidence bears clear signs of the empowering effects that honour language and dynamics have upon slaves, even when used instrumentally by masters. At the same time, it also shows that, once established, these dynamics create actual 'moral' constraints on the masters themselves.

It is, I believe, precisely these dynamics that are implied by Plato's recommendations in the *Laws*, which I have discussed above. Plato warns against excessive leniency and the excessive honouring of slaves (προτιμῶντας), claiming that these make slaves hybristic and give them notions of equality with their masters. *Hybris*, as argued by Cairns, involves a culpable miscalculation, an unwarranted overestimation, of one's claims to *timē* vis-à-vis those of others.[32] In this instance, it is the slaves that, as a result of excessive honouring by their masters (προτιμῶντας), come to overestimate their

[32] Cairns 1996; 2020; (forthcoming c). See also Canevaro 2018.

claims to *timē* – this is their *hybris* – to the point that they derive from consistently being honoured a notion that they might be equal to their masters. And this is what, for Plato, needs to be avoided at all costs: his recommendations to use violence, and the absence of legal constraints on masters in his law code, are designed to prevent the formation of actual reciprocal relations between masters and slaves, based on mutual obligations – the relation must remain one of absolute domination, of tyranny.

It is dubious whether honouring and familiarity might have actually given slaves a notion of being equal to their masters, but some of the evidence from Menander discussed also in Mazzinghi Gori's chapter does suggest that they could derive from them a certain self-respect, a sense of their own entitlements, and that masters had obligations towards them – that there was a standard of treatment they were due.[33] What followed from this sense of their own entitlements was that, *pace* Plato, punishments were not perceived by them as generically within the rights of their masters, regardless of desert, but as right or wrong depending on desert. A striking example of these dynamics is found at lines 641–4 and 652–7 of Menander's *Samia*.[34] Here, Parmenon, desperate with regret, reflects upon his actions in Act 3, when, after an outburst of anger by his master Demeas who had threatened to brand him, he had run away despite being convinced of having done nothing wrong. Parmenon describes his actions (running away) as foolish and, more interestingly, εὐκαταφρόνητον, worthy of contempt, 'not deserving the normal degree of τιμή'. He then proceeds to explain why his escape is εὐκαταφρόνητον: precisely because he had done nothing wrong (οὐθὲν ἀδικῶν) (at least at that point, until he fled). In decrying his foolishness, Parmenon appeals to a standard – almost normative – scenario in which slaves are punished for doing something wrong, not arbitrarily, while slaves who have done nothing wrong can expect not to be punished. Punishment (and praise) are dependent on desert, on proven worth. With this normative scenario as the backdrop for evaluating the actions of a slave, it follows that a slave that runs is a guilty slave, one who deserves to be punished and is worthy of contempt, whereas an innocent slave stands his ground, honourably, confident that he will not be punished, proving by the very dignified act of staying that he is in fact innocent, deserving.

Parmenon, at the end of the passage, cites the emotional reasons for which he ran away: he was afraid of being punished unjustly, and punishment, when it happens, hurts whether it is right or wrong (ἀδίκως . . . ἢ δικαίως). The passage, then, in its final lines puts into sharp relief the potential for arbitrariness of the absolute power of the master over the slave. But, at the same time, it describes this as unjust (ἀδίκως) by appealing to criteria of just treatment according to desert that are not external to the relationship between master and slave, but derive from the normative order itself which is imposed by the master on that relationship: good behaviour brings praise and honours, bad behaviour brings punishment, humiliation and contempt. The slave knows that he must regulate his behaviour according to these principles, but he also expects the master to consider himself bound by them, and denounces the possibility

[33] For recent studies of slavery in Menander see e.g. Krieter-Spiro 1997; Cox 2013; Konstan 2013; Heap 2019: 73–108. See more comprehensively Mazzinghi Gori's chapter.

[34] On these verses see Sommerstein 2013: 295–7.

of arbitrary punishment, irrespective of desert, as unjust. He therefore derives his claim to respect from what is in fact a basic tool of slave management; he does so by appealing to the abstract normative order created by this tool.[35]

That these claims were not unilateral, but matched a corresponding sense, on the part of the masters, of their own obligations, emerges clearly from the final paragraph of Demosthenes' *Against Phaenippus* (42.32). In this speech (for a *diadikasia* which followed a failed *antidosis*), the speaker demands that the judges relieve him of a hefty liturgical expense and charge instead Phaenippus, who is richer and has contributed little to liturgies in the past, avoiding them as much as possible.[36] At the end of the speech, in pleading his case, the speaker asks the judges to treat him *at least* as fairly as slaves are (to be) treated by their masters. He states: 'For if I were your slave and not a citizen, and if you were to see my industriousness and goodwill toward you, you would have relieved me of my expenditures and would have approached one of the others who was running away' (trans. Scafuro). The assumption is clear (quite apart from the mention of expenditure, which is specific to this case): slaves who behave with industriousness and goodwill have a claim to the favour of their masters (in this instance, the *dēmos*),[37] while slaves who run away are (to be) punished. This is the same assumption that was behind Parmenon's remorse, yet here it is shared, and validated, by the masters themselves. And that this principle was in fact shared by masters too is clear from another scene in Menander, in the *Dyscolus*. There, when at lines 110–21 the slave Pyrrhias recounts Cnemon's attempt to hit him with various objects, Sostratus (who is free and a master of slaves) immediately assumes that Pyrrhias must have done something wrong to deserve the punishment. When Pyrrhias insists that he has not, Sostratus asks, incredulously: 'Do you mean someone was whipping you although you were doing nothing wrong?!' (142–3).[38] The imposition of rules of behaviour – of norms about what it means to be a good slave – creates entitlements for the slave as well as obligations on masters, recognised as such by the masters themselves. These restrict the masters' leeway for arbitrary power and domination, and underpin a sense of the slaves' own worth, which Menander's slaves do not hesitate to affirm. We shall see in the final part of this paper that failure by masters to conform to these norms that they have themselves imposed is also considered grounds for slaves' revolts against them.

The same social dynamics – the emergence of entitlements and obligations from the instrumental use of honouring and punishing – can also be gauged from what is possibly one of the few pieces of real evidence for the direct voice of a Greek slave.

[35] For all these reasons it is not very likely that the point of the episode of Moschion (unjustly) punching Parmenon is that Moschion is transitioning to being a proper head of household, by asserting his authority (as suggested by Konstan 2013: 146–51; cf. Hunter 1994: 169–70). The implication of the episode is that Moschion has rather done precisely what a master should not do – see also below pp. 133–4 on Arist. *Rh*. 2.3, 11380b16–20.

[36] For this speech, see MacDowell 2009: 148–51 and Scafuro 2011: 103–9.

[37] For the *dēmos* collectively owning public slaves see Ismard 2017. For the rich and the powerful as (metaphorically) slaves of the *dēmos* see e.g. Isoc. 7.26 as well as the two slaves of Dēmos in Ar. *Eq*., who are identified as the generals Demosthenes and Nicias.

[38] On the dynamic between Pyrrhias and Cnemon see Konstan 2013: 155–6; Cox 2013: 164.

This is a lead letter from the early fourth century (*SEG* l 276), found in the Athenian *agora* and published by David Jordan in 2000. Jordan denies that this letter was written by a slave, but Edward Harris has proved, to my mind conclusively, that the writer must in fact be a slave.[39] Here is Harris' translation:

> Lesis is sending [a letter] to Xenocles and his mother [asking] that they by no means overlook that he is perishing in the foundry [αὐτὸν ἀπολόμενον ἐν τῶι χαλκείωι] but that they come to his masters and that they have something better found for him. For I have been handed over to a thoroughly wicked man [ἀνθρώπωι γὰρ παραδέδομαι πάνυ πονηρῶι]; I am perishing from being whipped [μαστιγόμενος ἀπόλλυμαι]; I am tied up; I am treated like dirt [προπηλακίζομαι] – more and more!

Lesis, a slave, addresses the letter to his mother and to a man named Xenocles,[40] describes himself as the victim of abuse in his work as an apprentice of, or leased to, a foundry owner, and asks them to intercede with his masters and convince them to find him a new occupation. What is particularly interesting for our purposes is the way in which Lesis chooses to justify his request for an intervention of his masters.[41] He stresses repeatedly that 'he is perishing' from all the whipping (ἀπολόμενον; μαστιγόμενος ἀπόλλυμαι), but it is not with the simple fact of his painful condition that he justifies his request. Despite the brevity of the text, his words stress that this treatment is in no way deserved – it has nothing to do with his behaviour; it is unwarranted. It is instead due to the owner of the foundry's disposition: he is 'a thoroughly wicked man' (Ἀνθρώπωι . . . πάνυ πονηρῶι). The adjective *ponēros* is a generic word that indicates all forms of moral wickedness, with reference to shared standards of acceptable behaviour.[42] Here it both identifies the owner of the foundry as someone who does not conform to such standards – and that such standards exist, even for the treatment of slaves, is taken for granted by Lesis – and, at the same time, frees Lesis from any responsibility for his condition: this is not deserved punishment, but undeserved and arbitrary cruelty. It is as if Lesis were implicitly responding to Sostratus' assumption (in Menander's *Dyscolus*) that if a slave is being whipped, he must have done something wrong, by insisting that he has not done anything wrong!

Within this picture of undeserved abuse, Lesis finally describes what he is suffering using the verb προπηλακίζομαι, which Harris translated with 'I am treated like dirt'. This verb is consistently used to comment on relations founded on honour

[39] Jordan 2000, with a discussion of the dating of the letter and its discovery at pp. 93–5; Harris 2006: 271–9. Harvey 2007, Hunt 2018: 137–8, Lewis 2018: 45, Forsdyke 2021: 1–2 and Vlassopoulos 2021: 155–6 all agree with Harris (see also Fisher's chapter in this volume).

[40] See Harris 2006: 276 and Harvey 2007: 50 for speculation about the relationship between the mother and Xenocles.

[41] Harris 2006: 273–4 takes it as a given that Lesis must have written the letter, and e.g. Pébarthe 2006 and Missiou 2011 have clarified how widespread literacy actually was in Athens. Still, it is possible that someone else might have written it for Lesis, probably under dictation (Harris 1989: 111 n. 207 points to a fragment of comedian Theophilus, fr. 1 KA, as evidence that it was a special privilege for a slave to be taught to read and write; Thomas 2009: 25 is also cautious as to who actually wrote the letter).

[42] For the meaning of this term in Athenian political and economic history see Rosenbloom 2002; for its use in comedy see Storey 2008: 129–32 (correcting Whitman 1964; see also Rosen 2007: 244 n. 1).

(and dishonour): it indicates forms of extreme disrespect, by definition unwarranted, which trample on others' claims to honourable treatment, and therefore is found in association both with *atimia* (as disrespect) and with *hybris*. For instance, in painting the picture of a quintessentially hybristic Alcibiades, Andoc. 4.16 notes that Alcibiades refuses to be equal or slightly superior to his peers (i.e. he overestimates his claims to *timē*), and as a result treats them with contempt (καταπεφρόνηκεν – cf. εὐκαταφρόνητον above, p. 127, used by Parmenion of himself in the *Samia*) and 'treats each one of them like dirt' (ἕνα δ' ἕκαστον προπηλακίζων). His overestimation of his own claims to *timē* results in the trampling of others' claims to *timē*, which is described with προπηλακίζω. At Pl. *Resp*. 8, 562d the word is used by Socrates when he stresses that the democratic city is constitutionally unable to give individuals their due: 'It showers with abuse [προπηλακίζει] those who obey the rulers as voluntary slaves and nonentities, but both in public and private it praises and honors rulers who are like subjects, and subjects who are like rulers' (trans. Reeve). Προπηλακίζειν here is to treat like slaves those who are not slaves, and do not deserve to be treated like slaves.[43] In Demosthenes' *Third Philippic* (9.60), Euphraeus is repeatedly the victim of *hybris* (ὑβρίζετο) and 'is treated like dirt' by the *dēmos* – here the association with *hybris* in the context of the description of treatment patently undeserved is explicit. Note also that at *Resp*. 7, 536c, where Plato has philosophy being 'undeservedly reviled' (προπεπηλακισμένην ἀναξίως), this in fact causes, as a reaction, anger – the anger that we feel when something or someone is not given their due (just as Aristotle explains; see above, pp. 119–20). This is made even clearer in Plato's *Laws*, at 866e: men who 'are treated like dirt with disrespectful words and actions' (προπηλακισθέντες λόγοις ἢ καὶ ἀτίμοις ἔργοις) kill in anger (θυμῷ) in pursuit of redress (μεταδιώκοντες τὴν τιμωρίαν). Προπηλακίζειν, then, is to do with *atimia* as disrespect,[44] shown in words and actions, and causes in the victims anger motivating them to seek redress and recover their honour – this is the same scenario described by Aristotle, which, however, in his account, was not meant to apply to slaves.[45]

The verb προπηλακίζομαι, then, indicates unduly disrespectful treatment which disregards one's claims to *timē*. In using it, Lesis was stressing not only the wickedness of the foundry's owner and his nasty behaviour (dispositionally so), but also the fact that his treatment is specifically unjust with reference to what Lesis is due, what he deserves. His words reveal a certain sense of self-worth, of being entitled to better treatment, by virtue of his behaviour and in accordance with a normative order which associates, in a reciprocal fashion, punishment with bad behaviour and honour with good behaviour. It is by appealing to this normative order and to these standards of behaviour that he passes a moral judgement on his abuser's actions which is meant to be shared also by his mother, by Xenocles and by his masters.

[43] Cf. Dem. 21.180: ἐδόκει γὰρ ὕβρει καὶ οὐκ οἴνῳ τύπτειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς πομπῆς καὶ τοῦ μεθύειν πρόφασιν λαβὼν ἀδικεῖν, ὡς δούλοις χρώμενος τοῖς ἐλευθέροις ('You decided that he struck with *hybris* not because of wine and had seized on the excuse of the procession and his drunkenness to treat free men like slaves', trans. modified from Harris).

[44] For *atimia* as disrespect that does not necessarily translate into humiliation for the person disrespected see Canevaro 2018: 109–10, 112–13.

[45] But see below, pp. 133–4.

These reciprocal dynamics – founded on a system of reciprocal norms which is certainly meant to foster higher levels of performance and compliance in slaves but ends up creating obligations for masters and specular entitlements for slaves – are not only found at work in remonstrations against abuse, but also in more 'virtuous' relations characterised by loyalty, praise and rewards. This emerges very clearly from the exchanges between Smicrines and Davus in Menander's *Aspis*, discussed also in Mazzinghi Gori's chapter. There, Smicrines, in attempting to affirm himself as the legitimate soon-to-be master of Davus (whose actual master is believed to be dead), strives to secure his loyalty precisely by trying to create a reciprocal relation with the slave which is based on mutual respect. He calls for his involvement in arranging for his marriage with Cleostratus' sister, now *epiklēros*, by intimating (187–93): οὐκ ἀλλότριος εἶ.[46] The implication is that Davus is a party to the reciprocal relations of honour, respect, mutual claims and entitlements that have come to the fore with the death of his previous master – he cannot avoid it. Davus denies that being involved is within his prerogatives as a slave, first by repeating the Delphic saying γνῶθι σαυτόν, which in this case could be plausibly translated as 'know your place!', and then by appealing to standards of propriety for a slave – norms of behaviour for the honest, non-*ponēros* slave. This little dance between Smicrines and Davus is one about what a reciprocal relation between the two should look like, with Smicrines attempting to tie him to himself, paradoxically, by granting him moral agency – he even asks him, at 205, 'in heaven's name, do you believe I'm wrong?' (δοκῶ δέ σοί τι, πρὸς θεῶν, ἁμαρτάνειν;); and Davus instrumentally rejecting that moral agency by pointing to his (lack of) status as a slave, for whom it is inappropriate to meddle in the affairs of the free (203–4: τὰ τῶν ἐλευθέρων αὐτοὶ δὲ πράττεθ' οἷς τὸ τοιοῦτον ἁρμόσει), and as an outsider from Phrygia (206–8).[47] Smicrines, of course, reads these remonstrations for what they are: a refusal by the slave to be implicated in a reciprocal relation with him (209–11). They are evidence of lack of respect, which calls for disrespect in return, which is what Smicrines finally promises the slave at 391–8: because of the slave's refusal to enter an honour relation with him, he in turn will not feel bound to behave appropriately, gently, even humanely, with the slave. Even a negative character such as Smicrines, ultimately, justifies his future abusive behaviour by appealing to Davus' own disregard of the obligations of reciprocity.

The fact that casting slave incentives in terms of honour and reciprocity has a moralising effect on relations – regardless of the instrumentality of these incentives – emerges also from some of the evidence about the most basic incentive for slaves: the possibility of manumission.[48] One revealing piece of evidence – this time quite late – is an epitaph which reports the manumission record for the ex-slave Syrion, from Bylazora (in

[46] For the relationship between Davus and Smicrines see also Dillon 2004: 149–51 – Dillon stresses the extent to which Smicrines appears to value Davus' opinion and help. See for this passage Beroutsos 2005: 67–9 and Ireland 2010: 86–7.

[47] See Beroutsos 2005: 70–1.

[48] The scholarship on manumission is extensive, but see now particularly Canevaro and Lewis 2014; Zanovello 2014; 2016; 2018; 2021; Lewis 2015; Zanovello and Lewis 2017; also Kamen 2005; 2014 (with plenty of previous scholarship); for different interpretations see Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005; Sosin 2015.

Macedon), dating from the Roman imperial period (*SEG* xlvii 896).[49] Syrion is manumitted by the children of the woman who was his mistress, in accordance with her will. The manumission deed imposes on him duties of *paramonē* (post-manumission obligations towards the ex-master), yet it makes a point of justifying what is fundamentally a legal obligation which could be imposed at the discretion of the master as, instead, embedded in a reciprocal relation based on mutual respect and care. Syrion is bound to perform every year the customary rites for his ex-mistress not (only) because this is what his post-manumission contractual obligations state he should do, but because he owes it to the woman who raised him (he is a *threptos*)[50] – it is proper for him to do so (lines 9–10: ἵνα] τὰ καθήκοντα καθ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸν ταῖς ἐθίμ[αις ἡμέραις] ποιῇ τῇ θρεψάσῃ). And, at the same time, the manumission record acknowledges that Syrion, far from shirking from his reciprocal duties to his ex-mistress, has always appropriately performed these rites so far, behaving therefore honourably (line 10: ὡς καὶ μέχρι νῦν πεποίηκεν). One is reminded here of the ex-slaves Pampylus and Threpta, mentioned by Theophrastus in his will (Diog. Laert. 5.54–5), and not only because of Threpta's name.[51] Pampylus and Threpta had both been already manumitted by the time of Theophrastus' death, but it appears that they were bound by obligations of *paramonē*, specifically of *therapeia*: Pampylus at least had been taking care of the temple, the monument, the garden and the walk, according to what had been agreed with the manumission. As Theophrastus bequeaths to them 2,000 drachmas (which informally already belonged to them, but which Theophrastus controlled), in confirming Pampylus' duties of *therapeia* he also acknowledges his blameless fulfilment of his obligations up to that point.

One derives from this a sense of a successful reciprocal relation in which both parties (however unequal) do what they should and receive what they are owed. This very same dynamic is apparent also in another source from the Roman imperial period – from the shock and the complaints of a master (in fact, a mistress) whose slave, after being (allegedly) treated with trust and respect, decided to run away. In *P.Turner* 41, in a petition of *c.* 245–50 CE to Aurelius Protarchos, the *stratēgos* of the Oxyrhynchite nome, Aurelia Sarapias complains that one of her slaves has escaped despite the fact that she thought he 'would commit nothing wrong, since he was inherited by me from my father and had been entrusted by me with our affairs' (lines 8–10: μηδὲν φαῦλόν τι διαπρά[ξ]ασθαι τῷ εἶναί μου πατρικὸν καὶ πεπιστεῦσθαι ὑπ᾽ ἐμοῦ τὰ ἡμέτερα).[52] Instead, betraying the relationship of mutual respect between him and his old master as well as his new mistress (Aurelia complains), he stole various things and ran away – she even knows where he ran to: 'Chairemon's house, in the hamlet of Nomo' (lines 19–20). Not only does she make a point of stressing the mutual obligations (and therefore claims) between the two – which she had respected but the slave had not – she even describes the slave's actions with these words (lines 10–14): οὗτος . . . ἀλλότρια φρονήσας τῆς παρεχομένης αὐτῷ ὑπ᾽ ἐμοῦ τειμῆς [i.e. τιμῆς] καὶ χορηγίας τῶν ἀναγκαίων πρὸς δίαιταν

[49] On this text see also Chaniotis 2018.

[50] He belonged to the particular category of the *threptoi*: those who, as children, could not be raised by their natural parents and were raised by someone else. *Threptoi* are frequently attested in the evidence, with a variety of statuses (sometimes slaves, sometimes, as here, manumitted, sometimes adopted etc.); see Ricl 2009.

[51] See Canevaro and Lewis 2014: 106–8 for this will and the relevant slaves.

[52] See on this episode Gülzow 1969: 29–41 and Llewelyn 2001: 55–60.

('he assumed a hostile attitude towards the honour and the services and the provision of the necessaries for life that I gave him'). The slave's escape, that is, is serious not just because he is a slave – her property – and it is illegal and unacceptable that a slave should run away; it is serious because he has broken the obligations of a reciprocal relation with his mistress, specifically one founded on *timē* – the *timē* Aurelia (and her father) have consistently granted him, together with a livelihood, and which he has failed to return. Even the extreme case of a runaway slave is thus moralised in this text by the master, with the same appeal to the mutual obligations of a relationship based on *timē* that are central also to Syrion's performance of his *paramonē* duties and to Pampylus' and Threpta's duties of *therapeia*.

It is easy to see how slaves may derive from such dynamics a sense of their own worth (of their own *timē*), and of their claims and entitlements vis-à-vis their masters. Within such dynamics, even manumission becomes hardly a gift, but something one gains by good performance, and is entitled to, as well as something the master owes. Something of these feelings, as well as anxiety about the 'honourability' of the masters (because of the power imbalance behind these relations), can be read between the lines of a Dodona tablet (6 Christidis) which reports what appears to be an oracular interrogation by a slave named Kittos to the god: Kittos asks the oracle whether he will get his freedom from his master Dionysios.[53] But the question is not just generically whether he will be manumitted: he asks whether he will get the *eleutheria* that Dionysios promised (or agreed upon with) him (ἢν οὖν ἔθετ᾽ αὐτῶι Διονύσιος). As Kittos asks the god about his future, he makes a point of stressing that his request for freedom is not a random one, but one grounded on a previous agreement with his master – a reciprocal one – to which the master is also bound, or at least, by right, should be.

The picture I have painted so far is one in which those very tools of slave management that are recommended by Xenophon, pseudo-Aristotle and others end up creating the room for slaves to develop a certain level of self-worth, a sense of their claims and entitlements, which create matching obligations for their masters. These authors correctly stress that the most effective way to control slaves and secure a high level of economic performance is to treat them as *philotimoi*, dispensing *timē* and punishments in accordance with their desert. But this cannot help but produce a normative order which, whatever the power dynamics behind it, becomes in a sense abstracted from the arbitrary will of the masters, and available for slaves as the basis for claims to honourable treatment, claims about their worth and desert. Despite the public, *polis*-level, absolute tenet that slaves do not and cannot have honour, in practice interpersonal relations, even the most asymmetrical ones between masters and slaves within the *oikos*, must coalesce around reciprocal dynamics based on *timē*. And the denial of due *timē* – as *oligōria* – is, as Aristotle explains (see above, pp. 119–20), the basis for anger that motivates attempts to seek redress (*timōria*). Aristotle himself, despite his contention that slaves are 'naturally' excluded from *timē* relations and that those excluded from *timē* relations cannot feel

[53] For the slaves and slave-owners found in oracular tablets, particularly those from Dodona, see Eidinow 2011. For these tablets in general see Lhôte 2006, Dakaris et al. 2013, and also Eidinow 2007: 72–124 and *passim*, Piccinini 2013, Parker 2016; and now, insightfully, Hinsch 2022; for this tablet in particular see Eidinow 2007: 102; 2011: 260–4.

anger, ultimately has to acknowledge (almost in passing) that slaves do in fact feel anger, indignation (*Rh.* 2.3, 11380b16–20): 'And [people become calm] if they think they themselves have done wrong and suffered justly; for anger does not arise against justice nor against what people think they have appropriately suffered; that was [implicit in] the definition of anger. Thus, one should first chastise in words; for even slaves are less indignant when [so] punished.'[54] By stating that slaves ἀγανακτοῦσιν . . . ἧττον if they are first told what they have done wrong and are therefore convinced that the punishment is deserved and not unwarranted, Aristotle implicitly admits that they do have a capacity for ὀργή, because they are in fact fully implicated in *timē* relations that produce a normative order which determines who has done wrong (ἀδικεῖν) and what punishment is just (δικαίως). Thus, in a way, the 'ideological' use of recognition to foster asymmetrical power relations backfires: whatever the aims of the masters, it contributes to the slaves' development of an autonomous subjectivity, of a sense of their self-worth which, when denied, gives rise to 'moral' remonstrations, to indignation, to morally justified anger and even, as we shall see, to rebellion.[55]

Hybris, the Slave's Claims Denied and Rebellion

In the last part of this chapter I turn to Diodorus' account of the causes of the First Sicilian Slave Revolt of the first century BCE – the most extensive account of a slave rebellion in a culturally and socially Greek context (albeit in Roman provincial Sicily).[56] For my purposes here, I am not much interested in whether Diodorus' account is reliable.[57] I am also not interested here in the degree of autonomy of Diodorus' narrative, and in how much he relies on Posidonius.[58] I am more interested in how Diodorus describes the revolt as emerging from particular episodes – one particular episode, in fact – of failed reciprocal relations based on (dis)respect between masters and slaves, within the *oikos*. As we shall see, not only is the narrative in Greek, but the very categories employed, and

[54] καὶ ἐὰν ἀδικεῖν οἴωνται αὐτοὶ καὶ δικαίως πάσχειν, οὐ γίγνεται ἡ ὀργὴ πρὸς τὸ δίκαιον: οὐ γὰρ ἔτι παρὰ τὸ προσῆκον νομίζουσι πάσχειν, ἡ δ᾽ ὀργὴ τοῦτο ἦν: διὸ δεῖ τῷ λόγῳ προκολάζειν: ἀγανακτοῦσιν γὰρ ἧττον κολαζόμενοι καὶ οἱ δοῦλοι.

[55] For an overall discussion of slave rebellions in the ancient world see Urbainczyk 2008 (cf. Morton 2023 on the historiography of slave revolts).

[56] For the Sicilian slave war see e.g. Urbainczyk 2008: 10–21, 38–6, 58–60, 81–90 and now Morton 2023. The text of Diodorus' account of the slave wars is, however, problematic: it is preserved in abbreviated fashion in two versions, one of the ninth century by Photius, the other of the tenth by the composers of the Excerpts of Constantine; see Urbainczyk 2008: 81–90 and Pfuntner 2015.

[57] Morton (2018; cf. 2023: 68–95) has now shown that in many respects it is not (with abundant discussion of previous scholarship).

[58] Diodorus was long considered mostly a copier, and his text valuable inasmuch as it preserves sources now lost, yet Sacks 1990 in particular has reassessed the presence of Diodorus' own voice in the *Bibliotheca*, and much scholarship since has been concerned with his own authorship and outlook (see the extensive references in Morton 2018: 534–5 n. 4). The account of the slave wars, however, is mostly read as derivative of Posidonius, particularly because Athen. *Deip.* 12.59.21–9 preserves a fragment of Posidonius which appears to confirm Diodorus' reliance from him in this narrative (Diod. Sic. 34/35.2.34 is verbally similar to Posidonius' fragment). See e.g. Momigliano 1975: 33–4; Ambaglio 2008: 27; Bradley 1989: 133–6; Shaw 2001: 27. Urbainczyk 2008: 82–3 and Stronk 2017: 76–7 are more cautious. Morton 2018 (cf. 2023: 68–95) now explores the Diodoran 'role as an author and his historical thought' in the narratives of the slave revolts.

the dynamics explored, in Diodorus align with the discourse of honour and slavery as we have reconstructed it so far. His account emerges from a culturally Greek context and reflects fully Greek categories and attitudes, whatever the ambiguities of a slave system conditioned by Roman domination. Whether Diodorus' account is historical or not – and it must be at the very least reductive – it does validate some of the arguments I have been putting forward that reciprocity and mutual respect were central to master–slave relations and created mutual entitlements and obligations. Diodorus' account does not give us access to the real voices of the slaves, but it does give us access to a point of view – that of some free and of some masters – which acknowledges that slaves are in fact embedded in relations founded on reciprocity and mutual respect, that they are aware of the implications of such relations, that they advance claims on that basis and that they do become angry when these claims are not recognised. Not only that, but masters do have obligations that match these claims, and, if they fail to fulfil them, they behave unjustly.

Diodorus starts his narrative by providing a rather dubious account of the general condition of slaves and of the cruel and hybristic behaviour of masters in Sicily and Southern Italy at the time, arguing that the result was widespread banditry, and that this was the background of the revolt (34/35.2.33). He concludes this account (at the end of 34/35.2.33) with a general explanation/recommendation about masters' behaviour which is very much in line with the accounts of *hybris* against slaves in Demosthenes' *Against Meidias* (21.46–50), in Aeschines' *Against Timarchus* (1.17) and in Plato's *Laws* (7, 777d). In these texts, as I have argued in the past,[59] the fact that masters should behave humanely towards their slaves and not hybristically is deliberately separated from the issue of the slaves' claims and desert, of their rights, which are forcefully – and even disingenuously – denied. The reason why *hybris* against slaves is a bad thing – these texts argue over and over again – is that *hybris* is to be forbidden altogether, not for the slaves' sake. The fact that the prohibition on *hybris* is to be extended also to behaviour towards slaves is explained as due to *philanthrōpia*. This concept, despite obviously – etymologically and logically – implying at least some level of recognition of basic humanity, is normally characterised in the sources as a fully supererogatory disposition to humane behaviour by definition independent from any claims, 'worth' or desert of the target of the behaviour.[60] In the relevant passage in Diodorus (34/35.2.33) the point of view is, similarly, that of the community of the free (of the *polis*), and his recommendations are consistent with the picture that we find in Demosthenes, Aeschines and Plato: the powerful should behave with *philanthrōpia*, otherwise *hybris* will have serious consequences for the community – whatever community, whether the *polis* or the

[59] Canevaro 2018: 118–19; see also the Introduction to this volume, pp. 19–22 and above, pp. 121–2.

[60] For Athenian *philanthrōpia* see Dover 1974: 201–5; Christ 2013; Canevaro 2016a: 370–1. For Diodorus' own reflection on Athenian *philanthrōpia* see Holton 2018. For the development of the concept in the Hellenistic period see Gray 2013. For the meaning of *to philanthrōpon* in Aristotle's *Poetics* (identical to what we find elsewhere, despite much confusion in scholarship), see Konstan 2006: 214–18, *pace* e.g. Apicella Ricciardelli 1971–2; Carey 1988: 137–9; Zierl 1994: 24, 28, 138. For the use of such moralising language in Diodorus see Sacks 1990: 42–6, 78–9; Morton 2018: 536–40. Dowden *BNJ* 87 F108b argues that some of this moralising language is Posidonian. It seems to me that this is very standard Greek moral language, common from Aristotle and Demosthenes, through Polybius, all the way to Diodorus, and equally common in inscriptions – not language typical of one or the other author's specific moral outlook.

oikos – producing *stasis* and unrest. There is no direct concern here for the dignity and the potential claims of the slaves themselves.

When Diodorus moves, however, to the actual events, the scenario is subtly different (34/35.2.10–13, 34–9): he concentrates on one particular household in which the spark of the rebellion was lit, and he explicitly represents the behaviour of the slaves in response to the *hybris* of the masters in terms of reciprocity, respect and relative desert. The slaves here pass moral judgement on their masters, assessing their behaviour with reference to standards of respectful treatment, and rebel to obtain redress.

In Diodorus' account, it was because of how slaves were maltreated in this particular household that one of the slaves, called Eunus, was asked to guide the rebellion (initially by the slaves of this particular *oikos*). This was the household of Damophilus and his wife Megallis. Damophilus is portrayed (both in Photius and in the Constantinian excerpts) as a model hybristic character, in line with the prototype of the hybristic citizen, which is perhaps most memorably painted in Demosthenes' *Against Meidias*. He is wealthy and of a haughty disposition (ὑπερήφανος δὲ τὸν τρόπον), travels by coach, boasts of, and displays lavishly, his wealth, and is led to *hybris* by his good fortune (and, typically, by his inability to see its transience).[61] His treatment of slaves (matched by his wife's) is also typical of a hybristic character:

> [36] he treated them outrageously, marking with branding irons the bodies of men who in their own countries had been free, but who through capture in war had come to know the fate of a slave. Some of these he put in fetters and thrust into slave pens; others he designated to act as his herdsmen, but neglected to provide them with suitable clothing or food . . . [37] Because of his arbitrary and savage humour not a day passed that this same Damophilus did not torment some of his slaves without just cause. His wife Megallis, who delighted no less in these arrogant punishments, treated her maidservants cruelly, as well as any other slaves who fell into her clutches. (trans. Walton)

What we can see in this account of Damophilus' (and Megallis') behaviour is something we are familiar with from much of the evidence I have examined earlier, and from the very words of the few slave voices we have been able to retrieve: Damophilus' punishments are ἐπ' αἰτίαις οὐ δικαίαις – they are unjust, unjustified. This already brings us into the realm of reciprocity, of standards of praise and punishment that are meant to be binding for the slave as well as the master. And this is immediately identified as the real basis of the rebellion: καὶ διὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ὕβριν καὶ τιμωρίαν ἀπεθηριώθησαν οἱ δοῦλοι πρὸς τοὺς κυρίους. It is because of their *hybris* and of the desire for redress (*timōria*) for such unjust treatment that the slaves rebelled against their masters.

The centrality of reciprocity, of disrespect and of *timōria* to the slaves' actions is highlighted further by Diodorus' description of their behaviour during the rebellion. When the rebels find Damophilus and Megallis, they taunt them, tie them up, maltreat them and ultimately slaughter them without mercy. But they treat their daughter very differently (34/35.2.13, 39). Because of her conspicuous *philanthrōpia* and

[61] See Cairns (forthcoming a) on this aspect of *hybris*.

open-heartedness (ἁπλότητι δὲ τρόπων καὶ φιλανθρωπίᾳ διαφέρουσα), and the fact that she has always tried in every way to help the slaves and mitigate her parents' abuse, they remember her former *charis* (τῆς προγεγενημένης χάριτος ξενολογησάσης – note the open reference to behaviour marked by concern with reciprocity) and they feel pity for her (αὐτῇ τὸν παρὰ τῶν εὖ πεπονθότων ἔλεον – note that pity, in Aristotle's account, is something felt on account of an undeserved misfortune).[62] They do not therefore dare to behave with *hybris* towards her but all make a point of protecting her chastity (οὐ μόνον οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμησε μεθ' ὕβρεως ἐπιβαλεῖν τῇ κόρῃ τὰς χεῖρας, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἄθικτον πάσης ὕβρεως τὴν ἀκμὴν αὐτῆς ἐτήρησαν) and deliver her safe and sound to Catana, where some of her relatives live. The passage is full of references to reciprocity and to respectful behaviour based on mutual recognition – the master–slave relation with the daughter is almost an idealised image of what such relations should be like.

What Diodorus concludes from all this (34/35.2.40, cf. 13), significantly, is that

> Although the rebellious slaves were enraged against the whole household of their masters, and resorted to unrelenting *hybris* and *timōria*, there were yet some indications that it was not from innate savagery but rather because of the arrogant treatment they had themselves received (εἰς αὐτοὺς ὑπερηφανίας) that they now ran amok when they turned to punish who had wronged them in the past (ἐλύττων πρὸς τὴν τῶν προαδικησάντων κόλασιν τραπέντες).

And he adds: 'Even among slaves human nature needs no instructor in regard to a just repayment (δικαίαν ἀπόδοσιν), whether of *charis* or of *timōria*' (trans. modified from Walton). This explanation of their behaviour falls squarely within the normative boundaries of reciprocal relations based on *timē*: the slaves' actions are a form of *timōria* – they are seeking redress because they have been wronged, unjustly, out of arrogance, by their masters.[63] And they punish the masters out of justified anger, the result, as Aristotle would say, of *oligōria*, of the masters' wanton disregard for what the slaves deserve and for their own obligations towards the slaves.

For Diodorus, then, it is not simply physical abuse and terrible conditions that are at the basis of this slave revolt. It is rather humiliation, *hybris*, arbitrary cruelty and the unwillingness of particular masters to respect the requirements of a stable normative framework for praise and punishment in which slaves can develop a sense of self-worth, autonomy and reciprocal claims and obligations. This framework is in fact none other than the standard one of praise and punishment for incentivising compliance and performance that we have encountered already in Xenophon and pseudo-Aristotle, the same framework that underpinned the remonstrations of Menander's slaves and of Lesis in his letter to his mother, as well as the hopes of Kittos and the rewards to Syrion. Diodorus shows that the sense of entitlement and self-worth which slaves could derive from these extremely asymmetrical honour relations was such that, in extreme circumstances, it could motivate them to rebel against their masters. And even if we want to

[62] For pity in Aristotle see Ben-Ze'ev 2003 and Konstan 2001: 128–36; 2006: 128 (with Cairns' review of Konstan 2001 in *Hermathena*, 176 (2004), 59–74).

[63] On *timōria* see Cairns 2015.

doubt Diodorus' insights into slave psychology and slaves' motivations for rebelling, his account at least shows that masters could conceptualise slave revolts as 'just', 'justified', and their own behaviour as shameful, unjust, on the basis of this framework. They were aware that the system of incentives they put in place created reciprocal relations that entailed obligations also for them, to which their slaves could try to hold them – and that there could be consequences if they ignored these obligations.[64]

Conclusion

To conclude, I want to stress that the picture I have attempted to draw in this chapter is not that of a benign and paternalistic meritocracy in which, because slaves are honoured for loyalty and high performance, the underlying power dynamics of their relations with their masters are somehow mitigated, they have the chance to develop a functioning subjectivity, and all is, as it were, forgiven and forgotten. Far from it. There is no doubt that the honour relations between masters and slaves that I have described were fully instrumental and 'ideological', to go back to Althusser's definition. They were set up for very precise purposes: economic exploitation and control. And, to a large extent, they appear to have been successful in keeping the slaves subjugated, tricking them into devoting considerable effort towards achieving a form of recognition that only deepened their subjugation. But dismissing such pride, such self-respect as the slaves could derive from these honour dynamics as merely fictitious, 'ideological' and therefore nothing more than a tool of self-binding, would be an egregious example of what E. P. Thompson called 'the enormous condescension of posterity',[65] because, as I have tried to argue, this is only part of the story: focusing only on power dynamics hides as much as it reveals. The evidence that I have examined also suggests that these recognition relations – these honour relations – regardless of how asymmetrical they might have been, produced a logic of their own that went beyond, sometimes even against, the underlying power dynamics. They created, that is, a normative order of reciprocal claims and obligations that, however skewed, transcended the arbitrary will of the masters and could become morally binding for the masters themselves, so that it could be creatively exploited by the slaves to develop an autonomous subjectivity, a sense of their worth and desert, and to formulate 'just' claims vis-à-vis their masters. By reference to these standards of honourable behaviour and desert, slaves saw themselves as worthy of (some) respect, even from their masters. They sometimes saw themselves as wronged by their masters. They got angry, indignant. They went as far as rebelling against their masters to lay claim to the little respect they felt they had earned, they had a right to.

[64] See Arnaoutoglou 2007 for a survey of traces, in legal texts, of the masters' fear of slaves.

[65] Thompson 1963: 12. As I quote Thompson's famous formulation, I cannot but recall – as a notable example of such condescension – Talbert 1989: 30, according to whom helotage was relatively stable because 'Like the lower orders in many societies throughout human history, helots knew their place within severely limited horizons, clung to it and seldom thought coherently about how to alter it, regardless of how humiliating or undesirable it might seem to others . . . we should expect helots to have been relatively ignorant, simple people, almost without education or awareness of the outside world. Few, if any, can ever have gained the chance to develop the skills, let alone the sophistication, to make them natural leaders or agents for change.'