



SLAVES AND CITIZENS

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R. M. Hare has argued¹ that there are conceivable (though unlikely) circumstances in which it would be right not to abolish the institution of slavery: in the imaginary land of Juba established slave-plantations are managed by a benevolent elite for the good of all, no 'cruel or unusual' punishments are in use, and citizens for the neighbouring island of Camaica, 'free' but impoverished, regularly seek to become slaves. Hare adds that it is unlikely, given human nature, that 'masters' would treat 'slaves' humanely, and avoid a gradual corruption of their moral consciousness which would cancel out any possible advantages of the system. Slavery is wrong, he argues, not because it violates 'fundamental human rights', but because it would in practice generally increase misery.

The history of domestication confirms Hare's suspicion that things would probably get worse. Animals were once included in human society, though at a lower level and on a variety of terms: some were almost friends, some servants and some prey. All of them have come to seem merely material for our human purposes, and any moral or superstitious hesitation that we might have felt about using them in ways that 'the original bargain' did not allow has been allowed to lapse. Once begin to think of other creatures as being 'at our disposal', things for use and sale, and it is not easy to avoid moral corruption. On the other hand, this same history suggests that Hare cannot rely on utilitarian calculation to give the answer he requires. Before abandoning talk of 'fundamental human rights' it would be as well to consider the fate of those creatures who have been held not to have them. In the absence of superstitious awe it is very difficult not to regard them merely as elements in a utilitarian calculation which will discount most of their experience. How much does it matter that our domesticated animals do not much enjoy life, or even suffer in our service? Those pains and losses, demonstrably, do not count for very much with most of us when weighed against

our pleasures and possible gains. An objective utilitarian, one who is really conscious of the quality of every affected creature's life and judges accordingly, *might* conclude that domestic servitude now involves far more loss than profit. My own feeling is that she would, thought I am not so sure that such a utilitarian would go on to recommend vegetarianism, a ban on exploitative experiments and so on: the individual and social costs of such a policy would have to be weighed carefully (*pace* Singer²). In the absence of such an objective utilitarian, the debate seems rather scholastic. Ordinary human beings who attempt to weigh up cost and profit inevitably count their own concerns, and those of creatures with whom they readily identify, as of more moment. It is admitted that dogs, cows, chickens may suffer, or lose enjoyments, in our service, but such costs do not weigh with us, because dogs, cows, chickens do not weigh with us. They do not count, because we have not for a long time thought of them as having anything like 'equal rights' with us. Even utilitarians who think such rights absurd are influenced in their calculations by the distancing of concern which is represented by their denial specifically to animals. Even if no one has rights, animals do not have them most of all, as Frey's book revealingly argues.³

Correspondingly, it may well turn out that Hare's Juban slavery becomes unbearable precisely because 'rights' are not in question. Utilitarian calculation, as it will be performed by the masters, will automatically discount the interests of the slaves, even while the masters mouth aphorisms like 'a happy slave is a profitable slave'. The general interests of the slaves may be considered for a while: those interests which any human being has, for food and shelter and sufficient clothing. Their particular interests, for a supply of camomile, or Beethoven quartets, or a different job, are unlikely to enter the master's calculations. When times are hard it will be their interests that are sacri-

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ficed to the masters'. The slaves, not the masters, will be reminded of 'the common good', and it will be the masters who define what that good is to be. We can of course continue the fantasy: as slavery becomes an obviously harder life, and slaves have less to gain by working hard, or identifying themselves with their masters' interests, greater force will be needed to control them. Casual sabotage will be the norm, even if open revolt is avoided. And on the neighbouring island of Camaica, free human beings - self-selected as those unwilling to trade freedom for supposed security - will have created a thriving capitalist economy. Or so, at any rate, Ludwig von Mises argued, on the straightforward ground that free labour is far more productive:⁴ slave-societies are inferior not because masters are always cruel but because the workers have no reason to exert themselves, and so the general level of production is low.

Like Hare, von Mises avoids any appeal to 'human rights' as a reason for deploring the existence of slave-societies. Like Hare, he would doubt the likelihood of Hare's initial postulate, that Juba could ever be a likelier economic proposition. Unlike Hare, he points out how far slaves or serfs themselves can be induced to believe the ideology of a slave-society: namely, that they are incapable of free existence. His reply, that free labour is more fruitful, depends upon the denial of that ideology. People may be unequal in their talents, but all are capable of managing their own lives, and will do so to better effect than any imaginable human master. In the words of Jefferson's first Inaugural speech:

Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he then be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him?⁵

So utilitarian argument, calculation of likely costs and profits, suggests (if anything) that it is better to act as if there were human rights, particularly the fundamental right of self-determination. If a human creature is not to determine her own future, but to wait for a careful calculation to be performed by the elite, it may be taken for granted both that her interests will count for correspondingly less even than (by objective calculation) they should, and that the level of production will fall (since no particular member of the servant classes has much to gain from exertion).

It would be useful if people thought that there were good reasons, over and above any current calculation of the utilitarian odds, for not enslaving others. It has similarly been argued⁶ that Hindu respect for sacred cows preserves peasant farmers from the dangers of erroneous calculation of future profit. It is almost always better *not* to kill the cow who will provide milk, and fuel, and traction, even though she seems an expensive luxury to ignorant Westerners, and may be a temptation to a peasant on hard times. Similarly it is almost always better *not* to trade freedom for security, *not* to enslave people who might instead be free partners. Utilitarians who reflect on these things, have good reason to instil motives of respect and awe in the general mass of humanity, since it is these motives which will (perhaps) preserve the greater good against biased calculations.

If such a utilitarian were our controller, she would have to face a certain paradoxicality in her efforts: for it is better, on the one hand, *not* to treat people as if they were one's tools and *not* to determine their futures for them; and on the other hand, that is what she is doing. All the remarks about the fallibility of human calculation, the readiness to think that those for whom we calculate have no serious interests or plans of their own, would apply to her with force redoubled. No one who was not absolute controller would be able to instil such motives where they were not before. No one who was absolute controller would be very likely to be an objective utilitarian, or to allow very much strength to the opinions of those whom she controlled. Fortunately, it seems likely that the job has already been done for us, not by any human agency, but by the invisible hand of mammalian evolution. The capacity to feel respect and awe for our fellows has been built into us because creatures with those motives have left more descendants than those that did not. It has been profitable not to interfere with the doings of others, not to snatch what is 'theirs', not to regard them as merely material for our own purposes, not to regard their dead bodies as merely rubbish or as merely meat, not to disregard their discomfort and annoyance. These complex motives, some of which govern our behaviour to other animals than the human, lie at the base of our recognition of 'rights'. Those who sought to dominate all their surroundings, who made no difference between infants and adults, or were not especially aware of those creatures on whose lives and good will they depended, left few descendants. The characteristics we now have are those which were selected in our evolutionary past: not that they are the best characters that they could be for the good of the 'species', but simply that they were more successful in replicating themselves than the available rivals.

The point of these last remarks (some of which I have defended elsewhere⁷) is to suggest that the motives which ground our moral and political behaviour may have been written into us by an invisible hand in a way that mimics (though it does not quite match) the efforts of an imaginary utilitarian controller. That imagined autocrat does not need to instil motives of respect in us: they are already there. We are already prone to find something sacred in the bodies and purposes of most other human, and some non-human creatures. The gap which utilitarians find difficult to accommodate, between act and omission, is for us an obvious emotional truth - it is one thing to be unwilling to kill or hurt another, and quite another thing to give positive assistance, though the result of not doing so may be the other's hurt. We are not very ready to perform large-scale utilitarian calculation about their and our interests, and then act upon them. We act out of other, more immediate motives than these, and build our ideologies out of what we are programmed to feel. Nothing in all this, by the way, denies either that our programming may go wrong, or that there is a place for more global calculations.

So perhaps it is worth considering that we object to slavery not because we have performed some complex and unreliable calculation of the kind that Hare requires, but because it does violate one of our fundamental views. Slavery is wrong because it violates the right of self-determination, and that 'right' is the projection, whatever else it may be, of our recognition that here is another creature

with whom there are more profitable modes of companionship. We are equipped to share another creature's viewpoint, to find that creature significant, to be friends or at least to be friendly. These feelings do not rest upon any conscious calculation of the greater good, nor can they always be expected to serve such a good. Sometimes they may make it impossible (or at least very difficult) for us to reach what might, in the abstract, be a better solution. 'Violating rights' is a matter of going against these fundamental responses, and we do not do so willingly (or at all) merely because reason tells us of a happy land far, far away which can be reached by so doing. This is partly, no doubt, because we have good reason to disbelieve such prophecies, but also because our conduct is not wholly governed by such global calculation of interests. Similarly, non-human animals can be induced to do things which do not serve the long-range interests of their kind because they respond to immediate features of their situation in accordance with established emotional patterns. This is not a sign of stupidity, but of the difference between their goals and our abstract calculation of what would be their greater good. We daily demonstrate that our motivations are similarly local and immediate. Not only are we unable and unwilling to conduct ourselves by global calculation of the unforeseeable, we do not even much relish the idea of being controlled by any such global calculator who will treat us merely as elements in her overall plan.

The point of these remarks is simply to suggest that the institution of slavery is not, in the first instance, to be rejected either because it increases misery (as Hare alleges) or because it fails to secure as great a profit as would free labour (as von Mises alleges). Our rejection of the master-slave relationship rests more securely on our understanding that this is an inappropriate or disrespectful one. To enslave others is to violate their rights, even if only in the sense that it violates the natural relationship between creatures capable of companionship.

II

How can this be true? Aristotle was the first political philosopher known to us openly to assert that domination was a natural form, and that there were people who were natural slaves, destined to be manipulated or commanded by the naturally free.⁸ But there is good reason to suspect that he was not the first to have this convenient belief. People have had slaves for millenia, and readily convinced themselves that slavery was an appropriate condition for them. More recently, ideologues have argued from the existence of dominance relationships amongst other animals to the naturalness, or at least the inevitability, of similar relationships among human beings.⁹ That anyone should be a slave, strictly so called, is thought a little too outrageous, but the thought that most people can expect only to be obedient, that there are those especially suited to be rulers (and our problem how to make sure that they, who will take control in any case, have some slight concern for their subjects) seems axiomatic. 'State-kept schoolmen', like ourselves, should always be conscious that the intellectual's historic function has been to provide a show of argument for the *status quo* - or else of course to construct imaginary

alternatives which will provide the subject population with its dreams!

Aristotle, as well as more modern ideologues, saw that one animal might dominate another, and thence concluded that this relationship could not be denounced as 'against nature'. More exact inquiry reveals that dominants, so called, do not give orders, nor even lead, their subordinates. A dominant monkey is 'on top' in the sense that he or she is recognized by the others as likely to win first place in any dispute. Instead of 'scrambling' for a scarce resource, the animals rely upon a previously established 'peck order'. Sometimes the established dominant will lend assistance to others, either because they are generally his or her relatives, or because they serve to assist the dominant against his/her nearest rival and chief threat. There are some things that dominants will forbid others to do (more or less successfully): male dominants will be likely (though not certain) to monopolize the breeding females. What dominants do not do, as a rule, is give a lead, nor do they issue any positive instructions. Leaders, in the sense of those who initiate new movements or devise new tricks, are very often subordinate members of the group. Amongst mammals, the mothers do act as both dominant and leader to their offspring, until they are grown, and sometimes continue to show concern for them even after that. Dominance and territorial behaviour are very similar: any territorial animal is dominant within its own territory; any dominant carries its own territory around with it. We misperceive the situation if we think that all or most dominants are anything like human masters. One particular misperception, by the way, is to suppose that male dominants exert any mastery over females. Females usually have their own hierarchies, and are largely unaffected by the males' disputes. Lions do not have real harems; lionesses do adopt real pets!¹⁰

Aristotle's conviction that there were natural slaves is not well supported by appeals to ethological data. But we should not dismiss them so abruptly as custom dictates, with bland declarations that 'of course there are no natural slaves in the world'.¹¹ A natural slave, by Aristotle's account, is a person who cannot live her life in accordance with a rational plan, who can understand but cannot initiate rational discussion, who can obey but not internalize the law, who will (whatever the social situation) in fact be manipulated and controlled by others. Some of them, governed by immediate desires, will be dangerous enough to require that we seek to control them; others, whose desires are milder, will at least have no objection to being planned and provided for. It is not obvious to me that there are no people like that, though I would be more hesitant than Aristotle in labelling their condition natural and innate, and in expecting any usable criteria for picking them out from the mass of the population: being strong and thick-skinned, for example, will hardly do! Of course, it is very likely that Aristotle (and other philosophers) were unconsciously moved by the thought that civilized life could not be maintained without a supply of labourers without wills of their own, and therefore convinced themselves that a benevolent nature would provide such a supply. In much the same way, if you will forgive my harping on the subject, modern thinkers who suppose that civilization can only be maintained by exploiting animals readily convince themselves

that animals are not of a kind to mind the experience, or to matter if they do.

But ideology and ethological error apart, there were two other reasons for Aristotle's belief in the appropriateness of slavery for certain sorts of people, its inappropriateness for other sorts. The first lay in his theory of mind: there were for him two sources of voluntary action, two ways in which one might behave 'willingly', namely desire and decision. To act out of desire, merely because one wanted to, was the behaviour of non-human animals and slaves (and also, when their passions overcame them, women and acritic men).¹² To act on decision was to do something as being the right thing to do, because one reckoned it good. Strictly speaking there was no true act at all, no praxis, unless it issued from deliberate decision, but there was voluntary behaviour. Neither animals nor slaves were zombies, but they did not strictly act out their own decisions. Human slaves (I speak of 'natural slaves') differed from animals, or most animals, in being able to understand and obey the instructions of others. That there were such 'natural slaves' was a possibility created by this analysis of human behaviour. We know what it is to do what we want, and what it is to do what we think we should. The weak-willed (and women) sometimes do the former though they know the latter. Slaves do the former, though they can, if properly controlled, be induced to do what they should, for the wrong motive. Slaves obey the law not because it embodies what the decent man would choose to do anyway, but because they are afraid of punishment or desire the immediate rewards of virtue. Such people, Aristotle held, are slaves in nature even if they are called 'free'.

The second reason for Aristotle's view is to be found in his understanding of the great empires - and it is here that readers may at last begin to see what this paper is really about! The spectacle of despotic government amongst barbarians convinced Aristotle (if he needed convincing) that such barbarians must be of a slavish nature.¹³ What free person, knowing him or herself to be capable of seeing and acting on the right, could endure to be ruled by such an absolute authority? Such hereditary despots did not fear a popular uprising (though they might fear their younger sons or rival nobility), because they ruled over a people who lacked the capacity to see beyond the immediate dangers of disobedience, or to envisage a better way of life. It is worth adding, though Aristotle himself may not quite have seen the significance of his remark, that barbarians also show their slavishness in treating women as mere slaves.¹⁴ Not only are 'natural slaves' unable to plan their own lives, they cannot recognize others as motivated by anything other than immediate desire, nor find in them any other value than the crudely utilitarian. True friendship is only possible between those who can recognize each other as ends-in-themselves, valuable just for themselves and not only as means to pleasure or profit.¹⁵ To treat people as mere tools when they have their own projects and perception of the law is to reveal oneself to be a slavish spirit.

The subjects of the great empires, so Aristotle thought, were at the disposal of their rulers, unable to conceive any other mode of human companionship than that enshrined in master-slave relationships, unable to take responsibility for their own actions and futures, unable to internalize the law,

unable to treat others as free partners and potential friends. Karl Wittfogel coined the expression, 'hydraulic despotism', to describe what he saw as a distinctive mode of social organization created by the need to mobilize mass labour to irrigate and (later) to communicate.¹⁶ There have been even less plausible general theories, such as Jaynes' baroque hypothesis that kings and subjects alike were then wholly unselfconscious, dominated by the hallucinated voices of dead priest-kings resident in the right half of their brains.¹⁷ Aristotle found the explanation for the extraordinary passivity of imperial subjects in their servile natures. If they had any real capacity for self-planning, for open friendships, for obedience to law instead of to arbitrary commands of government, they would surely have realized those capacities by now. As they had not, they gave evidence of being genuinely 'natural slaves', and therefore (conveniently) a decent source for Greek slave-traders. If they were going to be slaves anyway surely even they would be better off as slaves of the naturally free? Since they were incapable of genuine friendship, there was no possibility of reaching any more companionable arrangement with them, nor could they be trusted not to attack the free world - whether from momentary passion or from servile obedience to the power-lusts of their despots.

Aristotle probably misperceived the situation. There certainly seems no good reason to believe that the slave-syndrome he describes is an inheritable condition, rather than a cultural malformation brough about by the needs of the 'hydraulic empire'. If there are genuinely natural slaves, it is improbable that there are whole populations of them. But the cultural or psychological form of slavery is still worth contemplating. People are slaves, in this radical sense, if they are at the absolute disposal of others, cannot participate in the decision-making of the community, cannot even make their own decisions, are swayed solely by desire and fear. The political form which suits their condition is despotism, and this may well be felt to be legitimate, simply because it is established. In slave cultures 'state-kept schoolmen' help to preserve the myths which will prevent any clear look at the culture, any realization of the other human possibilities. Some slaves are trustees; some even reveal that they are not quite Aristotelian slaves by internalizing at any rate the law of their slave-society, which is in fact directed by the inherited policies of the elite class, whether these be merely passionate or show signs of rationality.

So what is the alternative? Aristotle's love is given to the polis, considered as a community of free partners who share in the offices of their society and are brought up to seek what it is that the law, the mean, requires.¹⁸ Conventional political philosophy, not wholly unreasonably, tends to equate such a polis with the liberal nation-state, and finds Aristotle's organization not democratic enough. But there is an alternative approach which I think deserves more consideration. Hare's Juba, you will remember, was designed so as to look very like an ordinary liberal state, and the implication was that such a society might be as acceptable as ours. An institution that is implicitly accepted by its subjects, and provides a good deal of what they want even if no opportunity to run their own lives, cannot be all that bad. The resemblance between Juba and the modern nation-state, however, might carry a different

weight of meaning. If Juba reveals what our states are like, perhaps they are all corrupt. Subjects of the modern state are already slaves, although they have forgotten what they are.

III

Having crept up on the anti-statist position by this seemingly devious route, I perhaps owe it to my readers to make two remarks. The first, that I am not the only scholar to connect anti-statism, anarchism, with the Aristotelian tradition:

The anarchists and communards have only reminded us of Aristotle's simple discovery: man is a political animal, a being whose natural association is governed by laws he himself has created and to which he has subjected himself¹⁹

- though this is to neglect the importance for anti-statist thought of 'unmade law'. Machan has explicitly founded his libertarianism on a form of ethical egoism derived from Aristotle's eudaimonism.²⁰ Secondly, I shall not be expounding Aristotle as such in what follows: though he lies at the beginning of what was to become the anarchist tradition, there are a great many statist and illiberal elements in his thought which this is not the place to consider.

State power, as I shall be considering it, consists in the monopoly of force within a given region, directed towards the property and lives of its subjects. The rulers of Wittfogel's hydraulic empires called upon the labour of their subjects to construct the instruments of their oppression, and backed their power with terror and the perversion of religious feeling. All but the very lowest subjects could doubtless feel some pride in the accomplishments of the empire, and a corresponding contempt for those still outside its clutches. This goes some way to answering Cohen's reasonable question:

As a socio-political system the state permits greater inequity within its population than any known earlier form of association. Why do people give up, or why are they forced to give up, so much local and individual autonomy to become part of, and subordinate to, despotic, sometimes quite cruel forms of government?²¹

The eighteenth-century anti-federalist who pleaded that he 'had rather be a free citizen of the small republic of Massachusetts, than an oppressed subject of the great American empire'²² spoke for many, but the gleam of empire, and the hope of ending up in the higher classes, is enough to persuade multitudes.

The standard, Hobbesian reply is of course that without a power strong enough to repress all other powers within a region people cannot be relied upon to keep their word, or their distance. Better one master than many. An unfortunate by-product of Leviathan's creation is that human groups of greatly increased powers now face each other, and fight to whatever conclusion they can. It is not obvious, historically, that wars between states have been less

destructive than the quarrels that it is alleged would have occurred in their absence:

Governments are the principal violators of men's rights. They make thieves, murderers and rapists look saintly by comparison. Government and government alone foments wars, sends men to death camps and labour camps, devises and uses nuclear bombs, arrests individuals in the middle of the night and takes them to where they are never heard of again, and - most frequently of all - systematically plunders them of what they have laboured to earn.²³

The indictment is clearly correct in general, even though well-to-do subjects of a moderately decent state are understandably inclined to count these acts as perversions of a basically worthy institution. Surely we are all beneficiaries of the state, owing our security, our welfare, our salaries to its organization of the commonwealth? The task of reformers must be to control the brutalities of state power, and use its wealth and strength for good ends (those we think are good). Some states, we say, are indeed despotic, but the solution is to place the ultimate controls in the hands of the people, with the aid of the secret ballot, exercised periodically to elect our representatives. It is one of the most characteristic of reformist foibles to suppose that they are alone in the land, that no one will use the powers they claim!

What if the reformist, liberal position be the ideology of slaves, eagerly convincing themselves that there is no real alternative to secure slavery, and thanking their masters for such small concessions to natural justice as they are inclined to make? If slavery is a wrongful institution because it violates fundamental human rights, denies the response we naturally make to potential friends and partners, then maybe state power is similarly wrong:

Lawmakers . . . can add nothing to [justice, the supreme law] nor take anything from it. Therefore all the laws of their own making have no colour of authority or obligation . . . To say that any or all other men may rightfully compel [an individual] to obey any or all such other laws as they may see fit to make, is to say that he has no rights of his own, but is their subject, their property and their slave.²⁴

Spencer's supreme law is, I suspect, identical with what another anarchist called 'the laws of free will, the Rules (as the hobbits said) both ancient and just'.²⁵ No one is to enslave anyone nor coerce anyone except to prevent such enslavement or absolute coercion. No one, in particular, is to force another to do what she does not herself consider right: that is, to treat another source of action merely as material. The rejection of state power does not rest, as it does in Rupert Paul Wolff's case, on the demands of autonomy as such (that one never do what one is told, merely because another requires it), but on the 'natural right' to be left alone to determine one's own life.²⁶ State power is born in conquest, not in free contract, and has no more right to its prey than any other robber band.

In the interest of rendering this conclusion more obvious, consider the following political fable, which owes some-

thing to Spencer's 'Story of the Slave'.²⁷ There was once a band of brigands, living as predators rather than producers.²⁸ The brigands formed some friendships with each other, but their relationships were mostly those of dominance and submission. One winter it occurred to them that instead of taking food away from the productive villagers down in the valley they could simply take up residence there. This they did, killing such of the villagers as openly opposed them and telling the rest that they were now their protectors against any (other) robber bands. The villagers, who had hitherto organized their affairs by the laws of free will, were slowly forced into a sly submission. The robbers took the village women, reared children and grew old. Their descendants might have been peacefully absorbed, but it occurred to that same brigand genius to enlist youngsters in his military elite. At first only their own descendants became nobles, but likely looking villagers were also taken up. After a few hundred years the common people were even allowed some limited say in the question of who should reach the nobility, though it was always understood that no one who advocated any radical change in the organization of the village would be welcome. These elections were held in adversarial rather than consensus style, and power to manipulate 'the people's choice' and determine the event notoriously lay with cabals. All villagers were heavily taxed, and encouraged to accept the situation by being told that some of these moneys would be dispensed on projects of their own choice. It rarely occurred to anyone to note that if group A and group B agreed to support each other's projects then the whole community would be paying for both A and B, though no one very much wanted either of them, and either group could probably have afforded its own project were it not also paying for the other. The villagers were always subject to confiscation of their property, to press-gangs (or conscription) and continual propaganda to the effect that they were incapable of governing themselves within their own natural communities. The Spencerian question is, of course: when did these conquered villagers retrieve their freedom? And the answer comes: not yet:

While nominally extended by the giving of votes the freedom of the individual has been in many ways actually diminished; both by the restrictions which ever-multiplying officials are appointed to insist on, and by the forcible taking of money to secure for him, or for others at his expense, benefits left to be secured by each for himself.²⁹

But this will seem like romantic individualism, 'the petty bourgeoisie's aversion to discipline',³⁰ unless we can show that there is a feasible alternative. How was the village in my fable ordered before the brigands came? The popular picture of an anarchist is of a bomb-throwing lover of disorder, incapable of organizing even an assassination. The anti-statist reply is that 'Anarchy is order: government is civil war', and that 'liberty is the mother of order, not its daughter'.³¹ The belief that order can be achieved only by submission to the state is ill-founded:

The maintenance of law and order, the dispensing of justice, the provision of welfare and economic sustenance - all that we expect the state to provide today -

were carried out in the old kingdoms by local corporate bodies.³²

And more eminent testimony:

The great part of the order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It has its origins in the principles of society and the natural constitution of men . . . Common interest regulates their concerns and forms their law; and the laws which common usage ordains have a greater influence than the laws of government.³³

The anti-statist position rests upon the claim that there is a form of social life whose laws arise 'naturally' from the communion of a free and responsible agents. Such free agents may sometimes act merely out of friendly obedience to another, but they do so in the conviction that this is the right thing for them to do. They recognize each other as equals and as potential friends, and would not seek to make mere tools of each other. Anarchists have differed in their emphasis: some would wish to allow each individual person territory wholly of her own, and have looked to the forces of the market economy to help disentangle individual interests. Josiah Warren, indeed, carried this so far as to attempt to put his six-year-old daughter on a business footing, working in the house for an agreed number of hours in exchange for her board and upkeep.³⁴ Other anarchists have pointed out the difficulty of disentangling individual contributions to the commonwealth, and denounced state-law precisely for denying people their rightful property:

Laws on property are not made to guarantee either to the individual or to society the enjoyment of the produce of their own labour. When the law establishes Mr So and So's right to a house, it is not establishing his right to a cottage he has built for himself, or to a house he has erected with the help of some of his friends. In that case no one would have disputed his right. The law is establishing his right to what belongs to everybody in general and to nobody in particular. The same house built in Siberia would not have the value it possesses in a large town.³⁵

It is not only difficult in practice to disentangle individual contributions to the common wealth: it is, from the point of view of anti-statist Aristotelianism, undesirable in theory. That social form which is merely a market alliance allows people to regard each other as mere tools, 'friends for use or pleasure':³⁶ the form of life which allows for equal friendship also involves mutual concern and frequent joint decision. Even the pure market model requires some shared concept of honour and mutual forbearance, but we have the chance of richer friendships than that. But if this is so, if we are right to live within genuine communities that must reach joint decisions, and if much of the wealth we enjoy has to be supposed a *common* wealth, what becomes of anti-statism? Will not such a community precisely *be* a state? Must not its members make their bow to Leviathan and hope to conciliate the brute? To this riposte there are two replies: firstly that we do need to disentangle different levels of organization if freedom is to flourish; secondly, that not all common decisions need be

made in the adversarial mode to which we have become accustomed.

On the first point:

True progress lies in the direction of decentralization, both territorial and functional, in the development of the spirit of local and personal initiative, and of free federation from the simple to the compound.³⁷

Kropotkin was, arguably, the greatest of 'left-wing' or communistic anarchists, and more insistent than many on the importance, to herself and the community, of an individual's own inner strength and freedom, but he was not alone in advocating a society of interlocking groups:

Each individual, each association, commune, or province, each region and nation, has the absolute right to determine its own fate, to associate with whomever it will, or break any alliance, without regard to so-called historical claims or the convenience of its neighbours.³⁸

It is by subdividing these republics from the great National one down thr' all its subordinations, until it ends in the administration of every man's farm and affairs by himself; by placing under every one what his own eye may superintend, that all will be done for the best.³⁹

The first quotation is from Bakunin, an anarchist admirer of Jeffersonian federalism; the second from Jefferson himself, who named the foundation of republican government as 'the equal right of every citizen in his person and property',⁴⁰ but also held that the earth belonged only in usufruct to the living⁴¹ and that the existence in any country of uncultivated land and unemployed poor proved that 'the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right':

If, for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated we must take care that other employment be permitted to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed.⁴²

It is by ensuring that decisions are taken by the smallest practicable grouping, within the framework of the commonwealth, that each agent is given the chance of freedom.

The mode of organization, through all these interlocking companies and regional groupings, might very well have the same despotic character as the state itself. But the crucial feature of anarchic organization - and my second point - makes a difference. Whether it is accomplished through economic exchange, or through open discussion, the object of the exercise is to leave everyone satisfied. Mary Parker Follett, not openly an anarchist, spelt out the three main techniques of resolving conflict: domination, compromise and integration.⁴³ In the first case one party effectively enslaves the other, and the fact that the other may some day return the compliment does not alter the nature of the relationship. In the second case both parties abandon some of their hopes or accept that the other's plans (which may not

be ones they welcome) are also fulfilled. Follett's third, preferred technique, which is still advocated in management studies, is to seek a solution which will wholly satisfy the underlying aims of all concerned. Conflict is an opportunity, not an evil:

A business should be so organized that full opportunity is given in any conflict, in any coming together of different desires, for the whole field of desire to be viewed.⁴⁴

It may be reasonably doubted that we can know *a priori* that there will always be a possible integration of apparently opposing plans, but it is clear that there is one more often than we suppose, conditioned as we are to expect that society is a zero-sum game, and our major problem to make sure that we are on the winning side. The system of interlocking groups that Follett and others advocated is not the usual branching kind (where each sub-group reports with others of the same category to a more powerful group), but one where circles of membership overlap and report to each other. Attempts to implement this pattern, one must admit, almost always lapse again into the authoritarian mode, but we need not believe that this is a necessary truth. Some commentators, perhaps unfairly, have suspected that it is we in the developed West who are out of step:

The non-western political pattern of decision-making is an intensive and time-taking consultative process in which different views are argued until consensus emerges, and this is confirmed in a final vote.⁴⁵

These decision-making transactions amount to discoveries of deeper unities, wider identities. It is because this sort of thing is possible that even anarcho-capitalism is not the simple-minded pursuit of self-interest that some suppose, and certainly not the unreconstructive advocacy of bad manners and petty crime that is found amongst some modern pamphleteers. Freedom, of the kind which is denied in slave-societies, does not rest merely in the absence of external human impediment (so that Robinson Crusoe was free before Friday), but in the form of social exchange and personal development that enables all to meet as friends.⁴⁶

The free individual was always defined [by Emerson] in the context of a society made up of other free individuals - or ultimately in a universe - which curbed his personal individualism by reference to the basic right of all others to become free.⁴⁷

Even to speak of one's individualism being 'curbed' by society is perhaps misleading: in a genuinely *political* society my identity as an individual is of a piece with my social relationships, and my welfare is not that of a self-sufficient monad, but of a person, with family and friends and the great globe itself to help to define me. What I decide is not independent of what 'we' decide - whatever the 'we' is that I find myself a member of.

Government and the state are institutions which permit some people to impose their will upon all those within the boundaries fixed by historical accident to mark the limits of one's state power against another's. Relatively decent governments both take account of large-scale demands on the

part of the subject population, and allow some latitude to individual and local action. Even decent governments disapprove of loyalties that transcend state boundaries; even decent governments have an interest in convincing their subjects that they are incapable of managing their own lives, or that it would be impractical to turn again to the local, corporate, and voluntary fellowships that have in the past accomplished what we need. Even decent governments have an interest in spreading the falsehood that 'the state' is simply the total body of citizens, working together for the common good - though it is obvious that there is no such well-defined body with a common, freely worked out purpose. Their claims, obviously, are not wholly implausible. But if, as also seems plausible, it is possible to live as

free and social beings, negotiating and integrating our plans as allies and potential friends, we must consider seriously whether governments are anything more than partly reformed brigands, and all the efforts of political philosophers to offer an abstract justification of the institution only rationalizations of despotism.

If slavery, which is to use people merely as tools, is an offence to that form of shared life which we are evolved to seek, enjoy and admire, state-slavery is no less. On the island of Camaica no one is a slave, and all can find an Aristotelian happiness in the shared enterprise of political and contemplative life.

NOTES

- R. M. Hare, 'What is Wrong with Slavery', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 8 (1978-79), 103: Hare understands slavery as a legal condition such that the victim's 'rights', if any, are defined solely by laws she has no part in making, and such that she has herself no right of appeal against her 'owner'. The Camaican regime, in his account, is the product of inefficient government rather than anarchistic principle.
- P. Singer, *Animal Liberation* (London: Cape, 1977): this is not to say that I do not advocate these reforms!
- R. Frey, *Interests and Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
- L. von Mises, *Liberalism*, trans. R. Raico, A. Goddard (ed.) (Kansas City: Sheed Andre & McMeel, 1978), 21.
- Cited by S. E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 82.
- M. Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches* (New York: Random House, 1974).
- See my *The Nature of the Beast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
- Aristotle, *Politics* I, 1254a24f.
- See L. Tiger and R. Fox, *The Imperial Animal* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971); E. O. Wilson, *Sociobiology* (Boston University Press, 1975).
- 'Aristotle's Woman', *History of Political Thought* 3, No. 2 (Summer 1982), 177.
- W. W. Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle on Slaves and Women', *Articles on Aristotle*, II; J. Barnes, M. Schofield, R. Sorabji (eds) (London: Duckworth, 1977), 135. See my *Aristotle's Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, 1148b32f.
- Aristotle, *Politics* III, 1285a18f.
- Aristotle, *Politics* I, 1252b4f.
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1156a6ff.
- K. A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).
- J. Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).
- Aristotle, *Politics* III, 1287b4f.
- Lisa Newton, 'The Profoundest Respect for Law', *Anarchism: Nomos*, XIX, J. R. Pen-
- nock and J. W. Chapman (eds) (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 165.
- T. R. Machan, *Human Rights and Human Liberties* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1975), 71; see also D. Rasmussen, 'Essentialism, Values and Rights', *The Libertarian Reader*, T. R. Machan (ed.) (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowan & Littlefield, 1982), 37.
- R. Cohen, *The Origins of the State*, R. Cohen and E. R. Service (eds) (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Problems, 1978), 1.
- 1787: *The Antifederalist Papers*, M. Borden (ed.), (Michigan State University Press, 1965), 2.
- J. Hospers, *Libertarianism* (Los Angeles: Nash, 1971), 60.
- L. Spooner to Grover Cleveland, 1886, p. 3: *Let's Abolish Government* (New York: Arno, 1972).
- J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of The Rings*, I (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954), 18; see also *Letters*, H. Carpenter (ed.), (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 64: 'The most improper job of any man, even saints, is bossing other men'.
- See Machan, op. cit. 143: this is not to say that it would be best to remain solitary all one's life.
- H. Spencer, *Man Versus the State* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton, 1960), 41; R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 290.
- See M. N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1982), 187, after A. J. Nock.
- H. Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, I, 575; D. Wiltshire, *The Social and Political Thought of H. Spencer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 106.
- Mao Tse-Tung, *Thoughts of Chairman Mao* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 163.
- A. Bellagarigue: G. Woodcock, *Anarchism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 258; E. Goldman, *My Further Disillusionment in Russia* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1924), 153.
- C. Navari, 'The Origins of the Nation-State', *The Nation-State* L. Tivey (ed.) (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), 17.
- T. Paine, *Rights of Man*, 1792, II, 1; G. Ostergaard, 'Resisting the Nation-State', Tivey, op. cit. 83.
- J. J. Martin, *Men Against the State*, (Colorado Springs: R. Myles, 1970: first printed DeKalb: Allen Ass, 1953), 4; Warren was very concerned for the right of children to independence; see also L. S. Moss, 'Private Property Anarchism', *Further Explorations in the Theory of Anarchy*, G. Tullock (ed.) (Blacksburg, Virginia: University Publications, 1974), 1.
- The Essential Kropotkin*, E. Capouya and K. Tompkins (eds) (London: Macmillan, 1976), 39.
- Aristotle, *Politics*, III, 1280a25ff.
- Kropotkin: Capouya and Tompkins, op. cit. 110.
- Bakunin: D. Guerin, *Anarchism*, trans. M. Klopfer (London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 67. Amoralism is an infection that gravely damaged Benjamin Tucker, another great libertarian, as well. Anarchists who draw their inspiration from Spooner or Kropotkin are less confused.
- T. Jefferson to Cabell, 1816: A. Koch, *The Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 163.
- Jefferson: A. Koch, *Power, Morals and the Founding Fathers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), 29.
- Jefferson: *Writings*, V, 116: S. G. Brown, *The First Republicans* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1954), 12.
- Jefferson to Madison, 1785: Brown, op. cit. 51.
- M. P. Follett, *Dynamic Administration*, H. C. Metcalf and L. Urwick (eds) (Bath: Management Publications Trust Ltd, 1941), 30; see also F. C. Thayer, *An End to Hierarchy! An End to Competition!* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1973).
- Follett, op. cit. 39.
- J. W. Burton, *Systems, States, Diplomacy and Rules* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 23.
- See A. Collier, R. D. Laing: *The Philosophy and Politics of Psychotherapy* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1977), 36.
- Mead, op. cit. 100.