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Title of extract: **Background: Warfare, Slavery and Ideology**

Name of Author: **Hunt, P.**

Title/Author of book/edition (if applicable): **Slaves, Warfare and Ideology in the Greek Historians. Hunt, P.**

Name of Visual Creator or other acknowledgement (if applicable):

Journal details –title/Vol/Year (if applicable):

Publisher: **Cambridge University Press**

Pages scanned: **1 - 25**

Course of Study (Module name and number): **Armies and Navies CLAH6003**

Name of Designated Person

authorising scanning: *E.L. Harris*

Date authorised: 04.07.13

Moodle/Powerpoint

CHAPTER I

Background: warfare, slavery, and ideology

It was not I who wrote the decree, the battle of Chaeroneia did.
Hyperides on his proposal to free and arm Athenian slaves to fight
Philip after the defeat at Chaeroneia.¹

War in archaic Greece was as traditional as the society that produced it. The hoplite battle was a limited and conventional way of fighting. Their monopoly of the military reinforced the dominance of independent farmers in political life. With the economic growth and the sophisticated and innovative culture of the classical period, warfare also lost its traditional character. The escalation that Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon document threatened to tear cities apart rather than to bolster their social structures. This book considers the encounter of an ideology rooted in aristocratic and then hoplite combat with the total war of the classical period.

Specifically, the increased manpower needs of a harsher system of war favored the recruitment of slaves and Helots. Chattel slavery had contributed to the economic growth that allowed the transgression of the hoplite ethic; the exploitation of Helots allowed the Spartan army to become the first professional one in the Greek world. Accordingly, large unfree populations were present to fight for their cities or – in another breach of previous practice – to desert or rebel at an enemy's instigation.² When the instances of slave participation are viewed in isolation or are falsely assigned to the category of emergency measures, they may appear to be of marginal importance. When the important cases of slave and Helot involve-

¹ Hyperides fr. 28 Jensen.

² To avoid the frequent use of the awkward expression "unfree," I often use "slave" in a loose sense to include Helots as well. Where the distinction between the two is important, the expressions "Helots" and " chattel slaves" will make this clear.

ment are put together, it becomes clear that, during the classical period, the unfree played a decisive role on several occasions and participated on even more.

We will treat these events in the appropriate chapters; a general idea of their significance can be gained by a consideration of the two major Greek powers for most of our period, Athens and Sparta. The single useful piece of epigraphic evidence on the subject suggests that the navy upon which Athens' power rested may have contained about as many slaves as Athenian citizens.³ The Spartan-led navy that eventually defeated Athens probably contained an even larger proportion of slave rowers. During the height of Spartan power there were as many Neodamodeis, ex-Helot hoplites, on active military service as there were Spartan citizens in total. The fall of Sparta and supremacy of Thebes was sealed as much by the establishment of Messene for Sparta's rebellious Helots as by the battle of Leuctra, which crippled Sparta's army.

All of this was anathema to the traditional link between politics and war. How could slaves, generally considered cowardly items of property, take part in one of the defining activities of the citizen? The participation of slaves in war was not simply immoral. It was not simply a matter for condemnation. Rather, within a certain ideology, it ought to have been impossible. Accordingly, the use of slaves in war receives short shrift in the classical historians. Their world views could not easily accommodate a military role for slaves.

Much of this book will be devoted to demonstrating in detail these two propositions: slaves were important to Greek warfare; classical Greek historians tend to play down their role. The reasons for Greek unease with slaves in warfare turn out to tell us a great deal about classical society, economics, and the places of these three historians within their cultures. In crude terms the use of slaves in warfare was regarded as an abomination because of Greek culture's admiration of martial prowess and contempt for slaves.

The prestige of Greek warfare derived from several sources. Some of these seem obvious and natural: societies tend to reward and to admire their protectors. More sinister, the possession of weapons can be a source of political power. Throughout recorded history, classes

³ *IG* 2² 1951 now *IG* 1³ 1032 a-i. See Laing (1966) and Graham (1992).

that wield military power have often dominated their societies.⁴ The ideological counterpart of this domination is the high cultural value put upon the warrior and upon war. Most significant for our investigation, Greece had no warrior class separate from the leaders and citizens of its cities.⁵ Thus participation in warfare was linked first with aristocratic rule and then with the egalitarian ethos of hoplite farmers. In the fifth century, the *thetes*, the lowest class of Athenian citizens, gained ideological clout since they rowed in the navy upon which Athens' power rested.⁶

Despite the historic and ideological link between political prerogatives and military service, the Athenians were not about to extend rights to their slaves when they too rowed in the navy. Consequently, the position of slaves presented an awkward anomaly for the Athenian mentality. Although metics, resident aliens, also served Athens – both in the navy and as hoplites – without political rights at Athens, there were additional factors that made fighting slaves more threatening.

Slaves' particular unsuitability for war, which we shall document at length, was essentially due to two factors. First and most directly, the Greeks affected to believe that slaves were cowards. This image of slaves, attested in many other slave societies, to a certain extent merely reflects the reality of slaves' relative powerlessness: slaves could rarely stand up to their masters. Paradoxically, such representations may also assuage the insecurity of masters living in dangerous proximity to their slaves. Second and perhaps more important, slavery played an important ideological role in the relations between sections of the free population. Economically, the relatively peaceful coexistence of rich and poor in Athens was based on slave labor. On the ideological level, slaves were a group against which all Athenians could define themselves as a unity. Thus slaves especially ought to have been kept from the warfare so closely connected with civic rights.⁷

⁴ Andreski (1968) 26; Howard (1991) 167. Harris (1977) 47–97 finds also a strong connection between the male monopoly of warfare and patriarchy.

⁵ Mossé (1985) 221–222; Garland (1989) 143.

⁶ [Xen.] 1.2; Millett (1993) 183, 187, 191; cf. Momigliano (1944), Andreski (1968) 27, and Starr (1978).

⁷ In fact, the extension of military roles to every level of the Athenian citizen population may have increased the distaste for recruiting slaves. Vagts (1959) 442–443 points out that the extension of military participation and prestige often requires singling out small groups

Evidence from epic, drama, oratory, and philosophy will help fill out our picture of classical ideologies; post-classical biographers and historians as well as writers on military tactics give us additional evidence about actual military practices. Only the classical historians face both ways. Only Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon both exemplify the thinking of the classical Greek world and systematically narrate its warfare.⁸ They were directly confronted with describing wars in which slaves participated within systems of thought that could not easily acknowledge this possibility. Although all three historians faced this same problem, their distinct outlooks, periods, and subject matters ensure that each contributes different perspectives to our understanding of the Greek ideology and practice of slavery and war.

The contrast between slavery and freedom is central to the world of Herodotus. Nations that are soft, cowardly, subject to despotic rule, or defeated in war are likened to slaves. In his story of the Scythians' slaves Herodotus makes it clear that not only metaphorical but actual slavery is incompatible with military prowess. His noble story of Greece's fight for freedom has no place for slave warriors by the side of the victorious Greeks.

Although Thucydides is justly renowned for his unflinching gaze, his narrative too was shaped by the categories of his time and world. These sharply distinguished between slaves and citizens and associated only the citizens with military participation. This dichotomy between slaves and citizens smoothed the uneasy coexistence between rich and poor among the citizens. The Peloponnesian War drove Athens into civil war and gave rise to the widespread use of Helots and slave rowers as well as the incitement of slave revolts. Consequently, the categories of slave and of citizen were increasingly blurred at the very time they were most needed to unite the fractured citizenry. In his history Thucydides maintains these threatened boundaries at the cost of playing down the awkward role of slaves in his war.

Xenophon is best understood in terms of his militaristic justi-

without honor: the prestige of fighting, common and thus cheap, could be bolstered by the contrast with a despised class. In classical Athens, slaves may have served this role.

⁸ I have used fragmentary historians and the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* for military practices; it would be over-ambitious to extract a world view even from the latter. The uncertainties of source criticism would make it unwise to attempt an account of Ephorus or other historians whose narratives must be extracted from the surviving history of Diodorus Siculus.

fication both of leadership and of slave-master relationships. His philosophy equates the virtues which justify rule with those which bring success in war: rulers should also be the best soldiers. In contrast, slaves are anti-warriors: they are soft, feminine, non-Greek, and cowardly. Although this political philosophy had elite or hoplite domination of the city as its primary aim, Xenophon explicitly calls for the exclusion of slaves from warfare, a necessary corollary, on several occasions. Since Xenophon wrote in a variety of genres, he also provides our best evidence for the Greek stereotype of slaves as cowards in ancient Greece. Arming slaves threatened this stereotype, so fragile yet so psychologically necessary for slaveholders.

These specific cultural and social factors made the participation of slaves in war awkward for the Greeks. Other attitudes could accommodate slave warriors: oligarchic thinking did not insist on the primacy of the divide between slaves and citizens; the increasingly hierarchical armed forces of the fourth century included levels considered appropriate to slaves as well as to citizens and to nobles; professional or mercenary armies were tools of the state rather than the citizens-in-arms. So not even in the realm of ideology was the exclusion of slaves from warfare natural or obvious. Rather I suspect that a coincidence between the ancient and the modern Western ideal of citizens and soldiers has led to an overly enthusiastic embrace of only one strand of Greek ideology, the prohibition of slaves from warfare.

The fundamental reason for modern underestimation of the importance of slave participation in warfare is the very reticence of the ancient sources that this book aims to document. Two other lines of reasoning, although often unstated, tend to leave modern scholars skeptical about slaves in war. My specific arguments about the extent of slave use will stand or fall on their own merits. Nevertheless, a discussion of these unspoken grounds for objection may disarm them and will also illustrate the significance of this project. The first set of objections is intellectual, the second political.

Structuralism and the study of mentalities have had great influence in the field of Greek history. Both emphasize the ways that people think about their world rather than attempting to unmask the realities that lie beneath these models. Inspired by structural linguistics, structuralism holds that all societies organize their conceptual worlds according to systems of opposed categories. It is this system of differences rather than any specific events – or even conscious

thought – that is the subject of their science.⁹ The study of mentalities is just as focused on the way that people understand their worlds. It emphasizes, however, the unique mental worlds of different peoples and periods.¹⁰ Neither school is primarily concerned with the accuracy of the models and interpretive categories it elicits. Historians influenced by these schools of thought emphasize the ideological equivalence of soldier and citizen. They pay little attention to actual practice.¹¹

In some ways, this concentration on ancient ideology is salutary. Greek thinking often turns out to have been more complex and various than expected: our authors' slant on fighting slaves is certainly not a screen that we need only to get behind. Nevertheless, no matter how subtle the reading of the Funeral Oration's ideology, Pericles' ideal of "falling in love" with your city needs to be confronted with the blunt realism of Aeneas Tacticus' one thousand and one ways to do in your political enemies – religious festivals, for example, were particularly opportune.¹² What people say is usually interesting and revealing; it is not always true. My goal is to pay attention to the model through which the Greeks understood the world without assuming that it perfectly represents – or creates – their world.

Other objections to my argument may derive from political motives of several sorts. One is the notion that the reputation of the West's admired ancestors, the Greeks, may be contaminated if they turn out to have used slaves in their wars. The undoubted bellicosity of the Greeks, especially the Athenians, has often been palliated by

⁹ Lévi-Strauss (1963) is the classic introduction to structural anthropology. Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1986) and Hartog (1988) are two works important to our subject influenced by structuralism.

¹⁰ See Lloyd (1990) for bibliography and critical appraisal of the study of mentalities, cf. Williams (1993). Geertz's "thick description," which we discuss below is closely aligned with the study of mentalities.

¹¹ Loraux (1986) 336 for example, is quite explicit in her distaste for the "historian in quest of *realia*." She has "refused to indulge in the interminable rooting out of illusion." Consequently, Loraux, however perceptive in her reading of ideology, is hardly the scholar to consult for actual practice, e.g., Goldhill (1990) 109.

¹² Pericles in Th. 2.43.1(M): "you should every day look at the true power of the city and should fall in love with the city." Aeneas Tacticus 17.1–2: "In a state full of dissension and mutual suspicion, circumspection is needed about the crowds at torch-races, horse-races, or other contests – indeed, at all religious festivals for the whole people . . . A faction can take advantage even of occasions like these to overcome its opponents. For example . . ." Cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15.4, 18.4.

the argument that they, at least, put their own lives on the line when they voted for war. That this was only part of the story seems to undermine one of the last claims to simple admiration that the classical Greeks retain.

I have more sympathy for a fear which can perhaps be characterized as leftist in its sympathy for the oppressed: if slaves are shown to have fought for their masters, this could be taken to indicate their attachment rather than resentment or resistance to slavery.¹³ Of course, some slaves may have loved their masters. Some may have wanted to risk their lives for the very system of slavery. Many varieties of behavior and belief are likely to occur among large numbers of individuals. I suspect that most slaves were quite smart enough to hate their masters – we will see some hints of this in Xenophon – or felt at best ambivalence. The key point will emerge that fighting does not indicate true feelings or require affection. People can – and usually do – fight for others, for pay, or out of compulsion.

On the one hand, reactionary historians maintain the purity of citizen warfare. On the other, "leftist" historians unnecessarily protect an abstract ideal of discontented slaves. Neither motivation makes for good history. In both cases, we are repeating the gesture of the Greeks themselves for whom the categories of slave and citizen/warrior had to be kept separate.¹⁴

CLASSICAL WARFARE

Although war and battles have always been the stuff of history, in recent decades historians have paid particular attention to the connections between Greek warfare, culture, and society. Yvon Garlan points out that from 490 to 338, Athens was at war two years out of every three and never experienced ten years of peace.¹⁵ In the absence of a standing, professional army most male citizens could – and did on occasion – experience warfare first-hand. From the fifth to the mid-fourth century, throughout our whole period, the basic divisions of the citizen body at Athens were based on military status:

¹³ Fogel (1989) 158 notes a similar "work ethic" of resistance in some work on Southern slavery.

¹⁴ See Bernal (1987) for another interpretation of classical historiography in terms of a concern for purity, in this case racial purity.

¹⁵ Garlan (1975) 15.

the top class provided money for public services including warships, the *hippeis* formed the cavalry, the next class, the *zeugitai*, were hoplites, and the *thetes* rowed in the navy.¹⁶

Warfare was also central to Greek culture. Vidal-Naquet interprets the coming of age in Athens as the transformation of the anti-hoplite *ephebe* into the hoplite citizen.¹⁷ Winkler argues that tragic festivals were the "occasion for elaborate symbolic play on themes of proper and improper civic behavior, in which the principal component of proper male citizenship was military." In particular, he emphasizes the "quasi-military features of tragic choral dancing."¹⁸ Hanson shows that hoplite warfare was part of the yearly cycle of life for early classical farmers.¹⁹ Furthermore, "the peacetime fascination with the use of shield and spear, the hoplite's ritualistic dance, the competitive race in armor – and the interest of the vase painter, sculptor, and poet" are manifestations of constant anxiety about battles to come.²⁰

Some hyperbolic formulations, however, distort the relationship of social status and military participation. Vidal-Naquet insists that the nobility of nobles was "utterly inseparable from their characters as warriors." He implies that there was no social status other than that conferred by fighting.²¹ Such a way of thinking may typify some of Xenophon's or Livy's more extravagant moments, but does not characterize any real society. Meier has no trouble showing that the status of Greek nobles depended on factors other than warfare. Some such factors were luxury, music, owning land, and taking part in politics.²² Similarly, the rough equality of hoplites depended as much on their possession of similar farms as upon their interchangeable places in the phalanx.

The importance of warfare in Greek culture may have been a constant until the mid-fourth century; the nature of armed conflict and its social effects changed dramatically in the fifth century. War in the archaic period had been limited with respect to the means employed and to the parts of society that took part. Throughout the fifth century – culminating in the Peloponnesian War – limits on the way that war was waged broke down.

In appearance Greek land warfare was modern: the Greeks used

¹⁶ Hansen (1991) 116.

¹⁹ Hanson (1983).

²¹ Vidal-Naquet (1986d) 85 followed by Lengauer (1979) 12–13.

²² Meier (1990) 561, 573ff.

¹⁷ Vidal-Naquet (1986c) 120.

²⁰ Hanson (1989) 221.

¹⁸ Winkler (1990a) 21, 56.

the compact formations usually taken to distinguish "true" from "primitive" war.²³ Nevertheless, the brief, but bloody, battles of early hoplite warfare show more characteristics of traditional – if not primitive – war than of prolonged modern struggles. Early Greek hoplites fought in ways that tended both to limit the killing to one time and place and to reduce the economic impact of war.²⁴ The decisive nature of Greek battle did not depend upon the magnitude of the victories obtained but rather upon certain conventions. Hanson points out that killing was limited by "the postmortem viewing of the dead, the exchange of bodies, the erection of the battlefield trophy, the lack of organized pursuit and further slaughter, and, above all, the mutual understanding to abide by the decision achieved on the battlefield."²⁵ Pritchett notes other conventional features such as formal challenges and prearranged battles.²⁶ Tactical maneuvering or trickery played only a small part in early hoplite warfare.²⁷ With the exception of Sparta's conquest of Messenia, hoplite war had as its goal merely the acquisition – often temporary – of marginal border lands.²⁸

Granted, the idea of the fair and limited fight did not completely dominate Greek thinking about war. In Homer there are hints of an earlier, less conventional view of war. For example, Homer does not consider ambushes unheroic. Odysseus even went looking for poison for his arrows, although the Gods disapproved.²⁹ Even in the classical age, the dominance of hoplite ideology was never quite complete. In Euripides' *Heracles*, Lycus and Amphitryon argue about the relative merits of hoplite fighting and archery. The villainous tyrant Lycus opposes the stout hoplite to Heracles' cowardly bow; the noble Amphitryon favors killing enemies from a distance without fear of retaliation.³⁰ It would be over-schematic to imagine a

²³ Turney-High (1971) 39.

²⁴ Hanson (1991a) 6; Ober (1994) 7.

²⁵ Hanson (1989) 223.

²⁶ *GSW* 2.147, 2.173.

²⁷ *GSW* 3.331; Detienne (1974) 180 n. 17.

²⁸ Connor (1988) 16. Sparta seems also to have tried to interfere in other cities' internal affairs, but see Cartledge (1979) 139–140, 148 for a critical appraisal of Sparta's role as deposer of tyrants.

²⁹ *GSW* 3.330. Hom. *Od.* 1.260–263. In an older version of the return of Odysseus – who did name his son Telemachus, fighter from afar – Odysseus may have killed all of the suitors with his bow: Homer has Odysseus run out of arrows and rearm to finish the fight with a spear to accommodate the hoplite class's contempt for unsporting combat at a distance (Griffin [1987] 71).

³⁰ Eur. *HF* 151–204.

Homeric time of acceptance, a hoplite period of strict rules, and then a complete breakdown in the fourth century. Nevertheless, Hanson *et al.* are basically right: the Greeks rarely used tricks and fought largely according to convention during the archaic and early classical period.³¹

Traditional hoplite warfare lasted as long as it did for various reasons. The common Greek culture of the different city-states must have played an important part. The antagonists all shared in a common language, similar customs, and the pan-Hellenic festivals. In contrast, the Greeks did not defend themselves against the Persians by offering fair fights on level ground.³² Common adherence to the hoplite ethic was in some sense "a wonderful conspiracy" in that loss of life and especially economic harm was minimized.³³ The level of military technology may have abetted the conspiracy: since the Greeks were unable to storm walled cities, the scope of victories was necessarily limited. The costs of escalation may have obviously outweighed the possible benefits.³⁴ The way that the campaigning season dovetails into the yearly cycle of agriculture suggests that there may not have been the extra time or wealth to fight extended wars requiring the long-term supply of an army.³⁵

In addition, hoplite warfare aimed at internal stability as much as at external threats.³⁶ Indeed, Robert Connor compares a battle to a sacrifice. He concludes that its primary function was civic self-representation.³⁷ Several scholars argue that the hoplite ethic was a way that the class of farmers who made up the hoplites maintained their power. By limiting warfare to a type that required money for armor, but more men than the aristocracy, and which could be fought and finished during a break in the farming season, the

³¹ Pace Wheeler (1988).

³² Ober (1994) 8. This contrast is a further piece of evidence that wars between Greek cities were fought within conventional limits.

³³ Hanson (1991a) 6.

³⁴ Meier (1990a) 569. He also points out that during much of the archaic period expansion via colonization or around colonies was possible without the conquest of neighboring cities (572).

³⁵ Hanson (1989) 35. Turney-High (1971) 30 considers possession of the economic resources to supply an army as perhaps the key factor that brings a people over the "military horizon." In Thucydides, Pericles contrasts the backward Peloponnesians, whose poverty keeps them from fighting long wars, with the modern Athenians who have the wealth to fight a protracted war (Th. 1.141.3). This supports our argument that Greece was only leaving the realm of primitive warfare in the 5th century.

³⁶ Cartledge (1977) 24; Garland (1975) 31; Foxhall (1993) 143.

³⁷ Connor (1988) 17, 23.

hoplites shut out both the rich and the poor from the symbolic capital that defending the city conferred.³⁸

The hoplite ethic broke down for reasons that were no doubt complex. A summary in broad strokes will suffice for here. Economic expansion was a necessary precondition for more intense warfare. States in the classical period could afford to arm greater numbers of people for longer periods. In such a situation, the initial advantage of escalation may have proved too tempting to clever tacticians.³⁹ The extended war with Persia may have accustomed Greece to war outside of the limits of the hoplite tradition. Finally, naval warfare, which had not developed the same conventions, became more important.⁴⁰ For all these reasons fifth-century warfare differed radically from the previous hoplite battles.⁴¹ Early hoplite warfare was like a contest, an *agon*, in that it was conducted according to set rules. The decline of the hoplite *agon* led to conditions that encouraged the use of slaves in war.

In the growing Athenian economy, numerous slaves – perhaps 100,000 – were available to fight.⁴² The wealth of Athens enabled it to support numbers of sailors in excess of its citizen population for extended periods. Competition among cities transformed the ability to man large numbers of ships into the necessity for doing so; Athens was not the only wealthy, slave-owning state in Greece. The manpower demands of Greek navies were voracious compared with those of hoplite armies. Athens needed 34,000 men to man the navy that fought against the Persians at Artemisium. At this time, Athens could still only field 8,000 hoplites.⁴³ From early in the fifth century Athens could no longer man its ships with citizens alone.⁴⁴ The casualties suffered in naval warfare were also far higher than those

³⁸ Garland (1975) 127; Cartledge (1977) 24; Connor (1988) 18; Hanson (1991a) 6; Ober (1994) 4–8. See also Hunt (1994) 268 n. 1035 *contra* Holladay (1982).

³⁹ Ober (1991) 188.

⁴⁰ See Th. 1.13–14 with HCT 1.120–126 on the growth of Greek navies.

⁴¹ Connor (1988) 29; Meier (1990a) 579.

⁴² Garland (1988) 59. Some other estimates are as follows: Sargent (1924) 126: 67,000–103,000; Gomme (1933) 26: 115,000; Vogt (1975) 4: 115,000; Finley (1982a) 102: 60,000–80,000; Hansen (1991) 93: 150,000; Sallares (1991) 60: 30,000–50,000 (4th century); Cartledge (1993a) 135: 60,000–80,000.

⁴³ Vidal-Naquet (1986d) 92. Before the Persian Wars Athens manned navies of 70 ships which would require fewer than 14,000 men (H. 6.89). In the Peloponnesian War, Athens manned up to 250 triremes (Th. 3.17.1–2 with Kallet-Marx [1993] 130–134, 150–151 for bibliography and a recent discussion).

⁴⁴ Meier (1990a) 584.

in hoplite battles. If 50 ships sank in a battle, up to 10,000 men could die. More than twice that number of ships went down in the largest battles. On the other hand, hoplite casualties in the entire century from 470 to 370 may have totaled only 24,000.⁴⁵

The duration of campaigns also increased. Athenian sieges of recalcitrant allies – not to mention the Egyptian and Sicilian expeditions – could last for years. In contrast, a traditional hoplite battle took up part of one day in a campaign measured in weeks.

Wars became more important to cities.⁴⁶ No longer matters of borderlands, wars often determined the political independence, if not the physical survival of a city. Athens itself was usually in the position of dictating terms. At the end of the Peloponnesian War, however, Athens' enemies considered enslaving its whole population.⁴⁷

The combination of wealth and risky wars fought by huge navies led to a situation in which all possible sources of manpower including slaves were used. Slave involvement in the intensification of warfare could work also to the detriment of their masters. As war grew more economic both in its ends and its means, slaves became a particularly vulnerable type of property. In times of war slaves had far greater opportunities to run away – an option they seem to have pursued often enough even in peace. A common tactic was to offer freedom to the fugitive slaves of an enemy city. This could induce mass desertion and cripple an opponent's economy. For instance, Thucydides reports that more than 20,000 slaves, most of them skilled, fled to Decelea. This many slaves could have contributed – as a rough guess – 200 talents per year to the Athenian economy.⁴⁸ Such a sum was more than a third of the total tribute paid by the empire.⁴⁹ The effort Sparta went to for every defection among Athens' allies points out how relatively effective the tactic of inciting slave desertion was. The Helots of Sparta, especially those in Messenia, were rebellious on their own account. Their discontent

⁴⁵ Hanson (1995) 308.

⁴⁶ Meier (1990a) 583.

⁴⁷ *HG* 2.2.19–20; Plut. *Lys.* 15.

⁴⁸ Based on an obol of profit per slave per day as in *Vect.* 4.14: the lowest daily pay for a laborer in the Erechtheum work records was 5 obols per day, of which no more than 3 would be needed for subsistence (Randall [1953] 208; cf. Pritchett [1956] 277). As the population of Athens was living largely on the income of the empire during the Peloponnesian War, the comparison of public and private finances is not inappropriate.

⁴⁹ Th. 2.13.3 gives 600 talents as the total tribute. Scholars question whether this number may be too large (cf. Kallet-Marx [1993] 99); this would only make our argument stronger.

compounded the effectiveness of an appeal to them by the Athenians. When war rose in ferocity to the level of inciting slaves to revolt, it was far from serving the integrative and stabilizing purposes of the hoplite *agon*.

Historians generally acknowledge that the expansion of warfare led to a breakdown of the citizen-soldier link. Their tendency, however, is to locate this break in the late-fifth or fourth century, to point mainly to the use of mercenary soldiers, and to consider this change a sign of decline.⁵⁰ As we shall see, trends in fourth-century land warfare do suggest this pattern. The Athenian navy, however, one of the dominant forces in the Greek world through the fifth century, was manned only in part by citizens. Scholars' elision of the fifth century may derive from a preconception that the citizen-soldier is an ideal not only in some moral sense, but in terms of power. According to this logic it is only in the decadence of the fourth century that the breakdown of the citizen-soldier can be located.

One can make the opposite argument: the most powerful states are those in which the citizens no longer have to do all of their fighting and which have the ability to recruit others for this dangerous work. For example, when Athens mounted its most ambitious campaigns – or showed the depth of its resiliency – its navy probably included the greatest proportion of non-citizens. Similarly, it was during the zenith of Spartan power in the 390s that Sparta sent out armies of Neodamodeis. Citizen armies may dominate the 20th century world, but this has not always been the case. It ceased to be the case in Greece by the mid-fifth century at the latest.

HELOTS

Throughout this book our attention will alternate between the chattel slaves of cities such as Athens, Chios, and Syracuse and the Helots of Sparta. Since the Helots were considered slaves by many Greeks and played a conspicuous part in warfare, both as soldiers and as rebels, their inclusion is unavoidable. They require separate treatment, because their actual status was not that of slaves. Additionally, the justice of their subjugation was contested to a far greater extent than that of chattel slaves. This issue will figure

⁵⁰ Garlan (1975) 91–93; Mossé (1985) 223, 229; Loraux (1986) 98.

prominently when we consider attempts to instigate revolution among the Helots. Here we need to show that in Spartan and pro-Spartan ideology, the Helots figured as arch-slaves. Their recruitment was favored by practical advantages rather than a lack of ideological difficulties.

Scholars have described the Helots as state slaves, collective slaves, undeveloped or even private slaves, serfs, villeins, or peasant serfs of the state.⁵¹ Helots were different from chattel slaves in several respects. Although some served the Spartans personally either as shield-bearers on campaign or in their houses in Sparta, most Helots lived separately from their masters whose political and military duties kept them in Sparta.⁵² Helots were not cut off from their families and homes; they were not, as in Orlando Patterson's well-known definition of slavery, "naturally alienated."⁵³

The gap between Helots and Spartiates was not as great either socially or legally as that between Athenians and slaves: the children of Helot mothers and Spartiate fathers were given a partial citizenship and were allowed to go through the Spartan education.⁵⁴ There does not even seem to have been much prejudice against such offspring: both Gylippus and Lysander were perhaps such half-caste children; yet they rose as high as any non-royal Spartan.⁵⁵

More significant, the amount of produce that the Helots' Spartiate masters could appropriate was limited.⁵⁶ Detleff Lotze correctly deduces from this that the Helots had property rights to the remnant

⁵¹ M. I. Finley (1982b) emphasizes that Spartan society consisted of a spectrum of statuses whose interpretation in terms of the slave/free dichotomy hinders our understanding. Detleff Lotze (1959) argues that Helots were not serfs since their personal service for the Spartans was identical to slavery; he calls them collective slaves. Older and especially continental scholarship is concisely reviewed in Oliva (1971) 38–43, who eventually opts for "undeveloped slavery." Since then G. E. M. de Ste. Croix ([1981] 149–150, [1988]) has argued for state-serfs. Cartledge ([1985] 40–41, [1979], 161ff.) agrees with Ste. Croix that legally the Helots were state-serfs, but emphasizes that they were slaves in terms of being exploited involuntary producers and were so called by the Greeks. Garlan (1988) 87 sees the difference between Helots and slaves in the fact that the Helots were subjugated as a community rather than as individuals and prefers the expression communal servitude. Ducat (1990) 29, 46–48, 50, 140, 151 tends to emphasize similarities between Helots and slaves, but admits that it was the relative independence of Helots that required the extremely oppressive measures that made some Greeks consider Helotage an extreme form of slavery (182).

⁵² Lotze (1959) 35 collects the references. ⁵³ Patterson (1982) 5ff.

⁵⁴ Hooker (1980) 119 on Ath. 6.271 e–f. ⁵⁵ Kagan (1987) 298.

⁵⁶ Cartledge (1979) 164; Figueira (1984) 108 n. 63.

of their harvest: they could accumulate wealth and leave it to their heirs.⁵⁷ Although most Helots were poor, there is even evidence of affluent Helots.⁵⁸ At the very least many Helots were in the position of those favored slaves at Athens, "those living separately," who had primarily an economic relationship with their masters.

Since Helots lived with their families in their home country rather than as outsiders in a foreign land, their slavery was collective rather than individual.⁵⁹ Some scholars, however, have overemphasized the collective nature of the Helots' subjugation.⁶⁰ The evidence concerning the question of whether the Helots were private property is ambiguous. Jean Ducat points out that the references to the punishment of Helots in Myron and pseudo-Xenophon imply that, although the state or the Spartiates in general had broad rights vis-à-vis the Helots, Helots had specific masters.⁶¹ In need Spartans could use each other's slaves, but no more than each other's horses and dogs, certainly private possessions.⁶² Helots were freed by state decree, but even at Athens it was the state that freed the slaves who rowed at Arginusae.⁶³ The link between the possession of Helots and of land is strong. Nevertheless, since the nature of Spartan land tenure is obscure, even this connection provides no firm ground from which to elucidate the ownership of Helots.⁶⁴

Sparta was a society which idealized equality and communality, but permitted individual differences. Accordingly the position of the Helots was a compromise. The view that the Helots were "really" privately owned, but in a state that in general showed little respect for individual rights, and the contrary perspective according to which they were "essentially" state slaves, but lent rather freely to individual Spartans, both describe the same situation. Either description is different from that of chattel slaves. One illustrative difference was that Helots could not be sold individually. For all these reasons no social historian would classify the Helots simply as slaves.

⁵⁷ Lotze (1959) 32. ⁵⁸ Th. 4.26.6; Plut. *Cleom.* 23.

⁵⁹ The question of whether the Helots kept their pre-conquest villages is discussed in Cartledge (1979) 163–164.

⁶⁰ Garlan (1988) 87.

⁶¹ Ducat (1990) 27–29 on Myron, *FGH* 106 F 2 and [Xen.] 1.11.

⁶² Lotze (1959) 42. ⁶³ Th. 4.26.5, 5.34.1.

⁶⁴ See Hodkinson (1986) and Cartledge (1979) 165ff. for a skeptical view of the tradition that the Spartan *kleroi* were inalienable.

Despite these evident differences, many Greek literary sources including Xenophon, Plato, and Isocrates refer to the Helots as *douloi*, "slaves."⁶⁵ Official treaties between Sparta and Athens also use this term.⁶⁶ This may well reflect Spartan usage: a scholiast to Thucydides claims that the Spartans called the Helots *douloi* to dishonor and humiliate them.⁶⁷ Thucydides himself equates the Helots with the *oiketai* in Chios, who were certainly chattel slaves.⁶⁸ Critias goes so far as to assert that in Sparta the free are most free and the slaves most slavish.⁶⁹ Insofar as Greeks thought of the Helots as *douloi*, their participation in war would conjure up the same difficulties as that of chattel slaves.

The Greeks commonly derived the word Helot from *helein*, to capture; the Helots were the captured ones.⁷⁰ The Helots may have seemed particularly pure slaves since they had lost their freedom because of defeat in war. As we shall see, military inferiority was often considered the ultimate basis of slavery. The Spartan warriors were conversely the ideal master class. So in terms of the distinction between the fighters of wars, the citizens, and the losers in them, the slaves, the Helots appeared perfect slaves and consequently unsuited for fighting.⁷¹

The use of Helots in war was also contrary to the related idea, found in many slave societies, of slaves as the enemy within.⁷² Slaves were incorporated into a society, but always remained outsiders. Thus they were barred from arms. That the Helots fit into this category is explicit in the Ephors' annual declaration of war against

⁶⁵ *H.G.* 7.1.13; *Ages.* 2.24, *Lac.* 12.4; *Isoc. Archidamus* 28; *Pl. Leg.* 6,776d considers Helots as a subset of *douloi*. In *[Pl.] Alc.* 1.122d, Helots are even assimilated to *andrapodon*, a word which emphasizes that slaves were property like livestock.

⁶⁶ *Th.* 4.118.7, 5.23.3. This official usage guarantees that the use of slave words for Helots was not metaphorical, but that Helots were considered a subset of slaves.

⁶⁷ Scholia to *Th.* 1.101.2 in Hude (1927). ⁶⁸ *Th.* 8.40.2.

⁶⁹ Critias, fr. 37 Diels. Cartledge (1979) 162 generalizes that Spartans and most others called the Helots slaves. A little noted exception is [Xenophon] 3.10–11 who implies that the Messenians are *ἰσοῖοι* to the Athenian demos. This is an example of the oligarchic tendency to lump everyone below the elite together.

⁷⁰ Toynbee (1969) 197. Other ancient authors derived the name from the city Helos in Laconia which the Spartans conquered. Ducat (1990) 8ff. contains a full discussion of the naming of the Helots.

⁷¹ The Messenians owed their position to defeat in war. The Laconian Helots may have been the victims of early conquests or of social differentiation.

⁷² Patterson (1982) 39.

them.⁷³ The Helots should always have been enemies rather than fellow soldiers.

As occupants of the bottom rung in the Spartan social hierarchy, the Helots were in a position analogous to that of chattel slaves at Athens. For Athenians to equate the two may have been as natural as for Herodotus to equate the god Amun in Egypt with Zeus.⁷⁴ This was especially true since the Helots at Sparta were treated with more pronounced and deliberate disrespect than even chattel slaves at Athens.⁷⁵ Greeks may well have been more conscious of the dishonor shared by slaves and Helots than of differences in their economic position, legal relationship to their owners, and the collective or individual nature of their subjection. In this book we are largely concerned with the views of non-Spartans. Even at Sparta, Helots were hardly appropriate material for soldiers.

To compensate for their actual status as Greeks living in their own houses and land, whose economic exploitation was limited, the Spartans pursued a deliberate policy of humiliating the Helots.⁷⁶ If the Helots were neither natively alienated nor quite socially dead in Patterson's terms, the Spartans made sure that they were generally dishonored. Ducat's article on Spartan contempt for the Helots brings this out well. The Helots were dressed in hides to distinguish them from the free and to assimilate them to the subhuman realm of animals. Forcing the Helots to do vulgar dances and to get drunk taught Spartan youths to despise the Helots.⁷⁷ The story that Helots were beaten once each year regardless of whether they had committed a wrong clearly evokes their status as slaves. This ritual – perhaps a caricature of the heroic beatings endured by Spartan boys at the temple of Artemis Orthia – affirmed the Helots' place in Spartan society.⁷⁸

Especially apropos to our investigation is the report that Helots who became too strong were killed. Ducat explains this on the ideological level: Helots were figured as the weak nourishing part of

⁷³ *Plut. Lyc.* 28. ⁷⁴ *H.* 2.42.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Dem.* 9.3. The aspect of dishonor is emphasized by Patterson as one of the three distinguishing marks of slavery (Patterson [1982] 10).

⁷⁶ Cf. Cartledge (1979) 162–165; Cartledge (1985) 40; *contra* Figueira (1984) 108–109.

⁷⁷ Ducat (1974) 1456–1458 on Myron in *Ath.* 14.657d; David (1989) 9. The *diphthera*, however, may have rustic rather than bestial connotations. See M. Jameson (1992) 139 n. 22 *contra* Ducat (1990) 111–114.

⁷⁸ Ducat (1974) 1458. Ducat underrates the mundane effect of producing terror and submission in his enthusiasm for the symbolic aspect of this ritual.

the state in contrast to the Spartan warriors.⁷⁹ For a Helot to be too strong threatened the boundaries that demarcated Helots and Spartans. The same explanation goes for the 2,000 Helots whose death is reported by Thucydides.⁸⁰ These Helots had proven their loyalty to the Spartans at the risk of their lives, but they presented a threat in showing the traits of loyalty and courage that were associated with the Spartans.⁸¹ Just as the recruitment of slaves threatened the boundary between citizen and slave, so too the use of Helots undermined the Spartiates' position as the warrior elite.

The recruitment of Helots, as of Greek slaves in general, was antithetical to this whole system of thought. Sparta's recruitment of Helots posed fewer practical difficulties than the employment of Athenian slaves. Helots were a much larger pool of manpower relative to the number of Spartans. The economic effects of the loss or enfranchisement of some Helots was relatively minor. Since all Spartiates had an allotment of land with Helots, the burden of providing slaves for the state could be spread more evenly; at Athens, the freeing of slaves for Arginusae was a heavy tax on the rich; the use of more paid slaves in the navy could displace *thetes* who may have needed the pay. Most significantly, the Spartan state was particularly invasive and controlling of individuals. A government that could dictate where grown men could eat or sleep could easily recruit or free Helots in the common interest.⁸²

Helots had homes and families under Spartan control. Although this constraint may have remained implicit, relatives, friends, and communities could serve as hostages for the good behavior of Helot soldiers. Thus, Helots were tied to their Spartan masters in a way that many chattel slaves were not. The same solidarity that enabled the Helots to rebel against the Spartans could force their cooperation while away on campaign.⁸³

The number of Helots is no better known than that of Athenian

⁷⁹ Ducat (1974) 1459. ⁸⁰ Th. 4.80.3–4. ⁸¹ Ducat (1974) 1460.

⁸² If we formulate the ownership of Helots as collective with individual Spartans exercising some sort of usufruct, then the Spartan state was merely reclaiming its own when it decided to employ Helots for military duties.

⁸³ An ideological consideration, unrelated to the difference between slaves and Helots, did make it easier for the latter to be recruited. The Spartan army was particularly hierarchical. Thus it could incorporate different classes without disrupting the social structure. Helots could fight as light-armed, in the rear ranks, or in separate brigades of Neodamodeis without establishing a claim to equality with the professional Spartiate hoplites. We shall explore this Spartan or aristocratic conception of the army below pp. 185–189.

slaves, but relative to the much smaller population of Spartiates – numbered in the low thousands – their military potential is undeniable. Some of the lowest estimates of Helot numbers maintain that there were seven Helots for each Spartiate.⁸⁴ Grundy even claims that a ratio of fifteen to one is a minimum ratio.⁸⁵ The considerations that prompt such estimates are the following: the Spartiates were all men of leisure supported by the work of Helots; the size and fertility of Laconia and Messenia could support a large population, but Spartiates were few; Herodotus finds a total of 35,000 Helots at Plataea plausible; Thucydides implies that the Spartans had the greatest number of slaves of any Greek state.⁸⁶ Even partial mobilization of the Helots could – and sometimes did – double Sparta's army.

The Helots were a disenfranchised and utterly despised class. They should have had no part in war, the activity around which the whole of Spartiate life revolved: in fact, it was the Spartans who had the stated policy of keeping the *douloi* from arms.⁸⁷ Helots and slaves are considered in parallel in this thesis not because of the likeness of their social positions, but rather because both presented similar threats to the ideology of the citizen-soldier. Although practical factors helped the Spartans to use their vast pool of Helots in war, ideological considerations similar to those that operated at Athens would seem to have forbade the use of Helots as warriors.

IDEOLOGY

Since so much of this book treats Greek ideology, a brief outline of my approach is necessary. I hope merely to situate within different schools of thought a model of ideology that is far from startling and whose justification will mainly consist of the persuasiveness of my arguments about classical Greek authors and practices. Nevertheless, although I have tried to give examples, the following discussion is necessarily somewhat difficult and theoretical. Some readers may prefer to skip ahead and then return to this section: these theories of ideology will be easier to understand after having first seen their application to specific cases.

An ideology, like a world view, is a system of intellectual beliefs

⁸⁴ M. Jameson (1992) 136.

⁸⁵ Grundy (1908) 81.

⁸⁶ H. 9.10, 9.28–29; Th. 8.40.2.

⁸⁷ *Lac.* 12.4.

and emotional judgments that make up a model of the world according to which raw experience is interpreted.⁸⁸ As a symbolic system, an ideology has its own internal dynamic; as an account of the social world, it depends on the reality that it seeks to interpret as well as on the interests of social classes. Since ideology is a function of, at least, these three factors – internal structure, social reality, social interests – it cannot be determined by any one of them. Since ideology is neither fully determined nor completely independent of structure, reality, and interest, its relation to these concepts can be described as semi-autonomous.⁸⁹

The challenge of a sufficient theory of ideology is to indicate more precisely the nature of this semi-autonomy. A theory of ideology can incorporate its internal dynamic by considering it as a system of categories, judgments, and metaphors. This symbolic system provides a framework according to which the social world is arranged and given meaning. Social class participates in ideology in that class interests may determine adherence to one of a variety of competing symbolic models of the world.

In a classic article Clifford Geertz details the sense in which an ideology is a symbolic system. He argues that ideologies can be best understood in terms of their cognitive function:

The drive to make sense out of experience, to give it form and order, is evidently as real and as pressing as the more familiar biological needs. And, this being so, it seems unnecessary to continue to interpret symbolic activities – religion, art, ideology – as nothing but thinly disguised expressions of something other than what they seem to be: attempts to provide orientation for an organism which cannot live in a world it is unable to understand.⁹⁰

All people need to understand the world within some sort of conceptual and evaluative framework with its own categories and metaphors. This conceptual framework is not only internal to the mind, but makes up the public language that renders communication possible.⁹¹ All cultural activity including ideology can be seen as utterances within the languages of different symbolic systems. We

⁸⁸ Although a strict distinction between world view and ideology probably cannot be made, the objects of ideology are usually society and politics whereas a world view can encompass subjects such as time, death, or happiness. For the sake of variety I here use world view and ideology interchangeably.

⁸⁹ F. Jameson (1981) 38 uses the expression semi-autonomy in a slightly different context.

⁹⁰ Geertz (1973a) 140. ⁹¹ Geertz (1973b) 214–216.

shall see below that many Greeks both thought and communicated about a large variety of unequal relations using the metaphor of slavery. For example, they likened the way despots treated their subjects to the way masters treated slaves. In this case, the comparison with slavery provides a model according to which to understand – and to condemn – arbitrary governments.

Geertz's formulation is most useful in that the idea of an ideology as a model through which to understand the world seems to catch the way that ideology works on the level of the individual. Ideology does not consist of false statements that people are either duped into believing or impose on others. Rather people both understand the world and communicate by using value-laden symbolic systems. Adherence to one system is not being duped nor is expression through another one cynical manipulation.

Mary Douglas's *tour de force* in explaining the Jewish dietary prohibitions shows just how seriously we need to take the desire to keep categories straight: no explanation of the dietary laws in terms of either their objects – lobsters, pigs, rock badgers – or in terms of early Jewish society is sufficient without considering the internal necessities of the Jewish classification system.⁹² Similarly, we shall see that the desire to keep slaves out of war is largely motivated by the need to keep the categories of slave and citizen pure.

Geertz's model, however, tends to pay little attention to the connection of an ideology both to the world it interprets and to the groups who adhere to it. In both cases he points out problems with deterministic connections, but does not succeed in severing the links between ideology, truth, and class.⁹³

The view that ideologies reflect the interests of social classes can supplement Geertz's view of ideology as a symbolic system, since there are usually several competing ways to see the social world.⁹⁴

⁹² Douglas (1966) 41–58; *contra* Harris (1979) 190–197. Bernal invokes a similar concern for purity in his controversial *Black Athena* I: “a racist distaste for mixed populations explains the underestimation of Egyptian and Semitic influence on Greece in the Bronze age. There was a desire to keep Greece as the “racially pure childhood and quintessence of Europe” (Bernal [1987] 396, 293, *et passim*).

⁹³ Geertz (1973b) 202.

⁹⁴ In “Ideology as a Cultural System” (Geertz [1973b] originally published in 1964) Geertz proposed an essentially cognitive theory of ideology. However, in “After the Revolution: The Fate of Nationalism in the New States” (Geertz [1973c] originally published in 1971) he emphasizes the power implications of choosing one way of seeing the world rather than another.

Class interest can determine the particular model that a person selects for purposes both of understanding and communication.⁹⁵ For example, when would-be oligarchs in Athens went against the predominant slave/citizen dichotomy and put slaves and the free poor in the same category, their elitist, anti-democratic agenda was manifest.

Geertz makes the criticism that Marxist sociology is "too muscular." Ideology is not always a weapon against another class.⁹⁶ The interest that motivates the choice of a model through which to understand the world may be the social harmony rather than class war. For example, ideologies in classical Athens can be divided into those that favored the peaceful coexistence of mass and elite and those that tended towards class warfare among the citizens.⁹⁷

Ideology works by presenting a view of the world that justifies certain actions, behaviors or social relations. Such a model of the world often unifies opinion within a class and thus greatly enhances its power. A certain view of the world may also have a persuasive power among those whose interests are either unclear or ambivalent. This, too, is significant since ruling classes often offer perquisites to some of their inferiors. An ideology may convince such inferiors whose interests are mixed: the usually rebellious Helots fought loyally for the Spartans at the battle of Plataea. They may have expected rewards, perhaps even freedom; their interests were mixed. They may also have subscribed to a view of the world that distinguished sharply between Greeks and barbarians. Thus they thought of themselves as essentially Greeks – their subjection to the

⁹⁵ One problem is that interests should be defined in terms of the ways that actors see that world and thus in terms of ideologies. But, according to this formulation, interest is a result of ideology and could not be the basis of the choice between different ideologies. I suspect that solid social interests and a purely symbolic system of ideology are both simplifications whose justification lies in their analytical power.

I use class here in a somewhat watered-down sense to take into account lifestyle and legal status in addition to the Marxist criteria of relationship to the mode of production. Thus the interests that influence ideology are those of Moses Finley's "statuses" more than those of G. E. M. de Ste. Croix's "classes" (Finley [1985] 35–61 *contra* Ste. Croix [1981] 91 ff). Within the field of Classics, Finley and Ste. Croix are more allied in their rooting of thought and culture in social reality than their mutual polemics would suggest.

⁹⁶ Geertz (1973b) 202.

⁹⁷ Since the harmony of mass and elite depended upon chattel slavery, even the first of these alternatives is not as innocuous as its similarity to functionalist theories of culture would suggest.

Spartans notwithstanding – who ought to unite with other Greeks to fight the Persians invaders.

The extent to which ideology wins over those who are simply oppressed tends to be exaggerated. Abercrombie, Hill and Turner in the *Dominant Ideology Thesis* and Scott in *Weapons of the Weak* present valuable correctives to such totalizing theories of ideology as those of Althusser and Foucault.⁹⁸ The ideology of the upper class does not convince lower orders of society to acquiesce in their oppression. Even in modern societies with their superior networks of communications, no unitary dominant ideology penetrates the entire society. The lower classes have their own, very different, interpretations of the way the world works. The impression of unanimity is often merely the result of the ruling class's coercive domination of the public sphere. Scott's private interviews in Malaysia made it clear that, although they were hardly closet Marxists, the poorer peasants' views were different from what their public behavior seemed to indicate.⁹⁹

When a "dominant ideology" is accepted, it is often because it can be used against the class in whose interest it has been created. Since an ideology often idealizes social relations, it can be used to criticize the way these relations are actually practiced:¹⁰⁰ the classical Greek notion that citizens deserve their status by virtue of military service to the state tended to bolster the distinction between citizens and non-citizens. This ideology could threaten its creators when they allowed slaves to fight or depended on mercenaries.

Although Eagleton rightly questions Abercrombie, Hill and Turner's conclusion that the ideology of the ruling class plays no part at all in dampening revolt,¹⁰¹ an overestimation of the importance of ideology lies behind one of the most common and erroneous beliefs about the use of slaves in warfare. Slaves did not fight because of any acceptance of their oppression, but because of practical inducements and constraints.

It is essential for the historian not only to compare one model of the world with another, but to judge their accuracy. For example, the view that war was a matter for citizens was common in ancient Greece. The escalation of the level of warfare in the classical period rendered it false. Arguments of this sort, that social interests can

⁹⁸ Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1980); Scott (1985) 304–351.

¹⁰⁰ Scott (1985) 336.

¹⁰¹ Eagleton (1991) 36.

⁹⁹ Scott (1985) 321.

contribute to a image of the world that is somehow distorted or false, lead to the dilemma known as Mannheim's paradox.¹⁰² We can only discuss an ideology if we know the truth that it either suppresses, omits, or accurately represents. Since all access to truth is indirect, we may end up comparing two ideologies and merely calling our own the truth.¹⁰³ There may be no absolute answer to this question, but neither ideologies nor our arguments about them are such free-floating entities as this view seems to imply.

Symbolic systems need not only to fulfill social and political needs, but also to provide an accurate "road map" with which to understand and act in the world.¹⁰⁴ This requirement ensures that much of the interested work of ideologies is performed through categorizations, emphases, omissions, and metaphors which are not false to social reality in any simple sense. Even when an ideology makes a false claim, this claim often coexists with the useful knowledge which it contradicts: the stereotype of slaves as cringing cowards rarely prevented their use in war.

False ideologies cannot be ruled out altogether. There are many examples of ideological beliefs that were counterproductive, but nevertheless did determine action. To continue the metaphor, people sometimes do use road maps that are faulty or, at least, out of date. Geertz believes he can evade Mannheim's paradox through his concentration on the internal workings of ideology rather than its relation to truth: whether the "road map" is accurate is "a separate question."¹⁰⁵ Geertz's approach may perhaps avoid this dilemma, but it also lames one's historical insight without so great an addition of scientific certainty as to justify the sacrifice.

For, notwithstanding Mannheim's paradox, the relation of an ideological model to social reality is essential to its study. A study of the internal structure of the ideology of American Vietnam War movies, for example, might well be fascinating. Historians, at least, would feel the investigation was missing something if no mention

¹⁰² Geertz (1973b) 194.

¹⁰³ Michel Foucault distrusts the word ideology because it evokes this – to him – false contrast between ideology and truth. Foucault ends up by attributing to truth most of the partial and subjective qualities that are usually associated with the concept of ideology (Foucault [1980] 118).

¹⁰⁴ Geertz (1973b) 216 uses the road map metaphor. Gay (1974) 198–199 conceives of the forces that tend towards and away from distortion in terms of Freud's Reality and Pleasure Principles.

¹⁰⁵ Geertz (1973b) 220.

was made of the fact that the United States was on the losing side in the Vietnam War. This background might be the well-spring of the most interesting insights that could accrue from such a study. Similarly the ideologically motivated omission of slave involvement that I find in Thucydides only exists insofar as I can argue that slaves were, in fact, important to the Peloponnesian War.

Any short treatment of the broad interpretive issues covered in this section is bound to be somewhat simplistic and thin. My main concern is that by trying to accommodate the view of ideology as an interested interpretation of the world and as a symbolic system, my approach may lose the coherence that belongs to either view. I hope rather to use the analytic power of both views while filling in the gaps of each.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Compare the approaches of Gay (1974) 198–199; Bourdieu (1977) 43; F. Jameson (1981) 82–83; Scott (1985) 321.