

## CHAPTER 2

# The Christian World Until the Threshold of Modernities

### 2.1 – Christianities Before the Papal Revolution

Though Philo's short treatise 'Every good man is free'<sup>186</sup> does not seem particularly original, it is a veritable compendium of Stoic and Neoplatonist ideas, which are composed<sup>187</sup> with the author's

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<sup>186</sup> The original title is Περὶ τοῦ πάντα σπουδαῖον ἐλεύθερον εἶναι [*Peri tou panta spoudaion eleutheron einai*]; in Latin, *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*. This work is properly only the second part of a larger one: Philo himself alludes to the title of the first and missing half, Περὶ τοῦ δούλον εἶναι πάντα φαῦλον [*Peri tou doulon einai panta phaulon*], *Every bad man is a slave*. In Philo, *Philo*, vol. 9, F. H. Colson trans. (London: Heinemann, 1941), 1–101.

<sup>187</sup> Here I am using the operation of composition in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari give to the French term *agencement*. By conjoining Greek philosophy and Jewish Scriptures, Philo does not simply construct a new interpretation of both of them, but he produces a new theoretical object. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille*

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#### How to cite this book chapter:

Baldissone, R 2018 *Farewell to Freedom: A Western Genealogy of Liberty*. Pp. 37–63. London: University of Westminster Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/book15.b>. License: CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

Jewish beliefs. Hence, when Philo quotes Sophocles: ‘God is my ruler, and no mortal man,’<sup>188</sup> he means the god of the Bible. Whilst after two millennia of Christianities we no longer notice this shift, Philo’s writings immediately precede early Christian texts, and subsequent Christian authors are eager<sup>189</sup> to follow Philo’s appropriation of classical culture.<sup>190</sup> For example, Eusebius makes an ample excerpt of the essay,<sup>191</sup> and Ambrose paraphrases it without quoting its author.<sup>192</sup>

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*Plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, 2 (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 10. Eng. trans. *id.*, *A Thousand Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 10.

<sup>188</sup> θεός ἐμὸς ἀρχῶν, θνητὸς δ’ οὐδείς [*theos emos arkhōn, thnētos d’ oudeis*], in Philo, ‘Every good man is free,’ 20. This line is partially quoted by Aristotle in *Eudemian Ethics* 1242a, with Ζεὺς [*Zeus*] for θεός [*theos*]. It is not known from what play it comes: Bruncck places it among the *Incerta* Fragments (n. 89). It may be not by chance that Aristobulus of Alexandria, a Jewish apologist who predates Philo’s philosophical interpretation of Jewish Scriptures, openly admits his substitution of *theos* for *Zeus* in a line by Aratus, assuming that the latter really intends *theos* for *Zeus*. In Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 13.12, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca*, (hereinafter *PG*), J. P. Migne ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857–1866), vol. 21, 1102.

<sup>189</sup> This eagerness to recover Classical thought is particularly evident from Clement of Alexandria on, though even Gregory of Nazianzus the Theologian makes use of Platonic ideas and imagery without being aware of their source. Moreover, many Fathers feel guilty for this eagerness, inasmuch as they are caught in a double bind between their interest in classical literature and their devotion to the Scriptures: consider, for example, the famous reproach that god makes in a dream to Jerome: ‘*Ciceronianus es, non Christianus!* You are a Ciceronian, not a Christian! In Jerome, *Epistola* 22.30, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, (hereinafter *PL*), J. P. Migne ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1844–1855), vol. 22, 416.

<sup>190</sup> The enthusiasm of Christian authors for Philo is to become a thorough appropriation: in the Byzantine *Catena*, quotes from the Jewish apologist are headed with the lemma Φιλῶνος ἐπισκόπου [*Philōnos episkopou*], ‘of the bishop Philo.’ In David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 3. Only Buddha fares better than Philo as an outsider in the Christian camp, when he is canonised in the double shape of the saints Barlaam and Josaphat – a rendering of ‘Bodhisattva’ through the middle Persian ‘Budāsif.’

<sup>191</sup> Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 8.12, *PG* 21 644–649. Eusebius reports the whole account of the life of the Essenes, which Philo (§§ 75–91) describes as an example of Stoic life.

<sup>192</sup> Ambrose’s letter 37 to Simplicianus is in large part a kind of paraphrase of Philo’s essay. In Ambrose, *Epistola* 37, *PL* 16 1083–1095.

Philo constructs his text on the doubling of the notions of freedom and slavery over body and soul: as bodily freedom is a matter of chance - he argues - we can only be concerned with the freedom of the soul. Sophocles' quote is thus supporting Philo's view that freedom consists of acting as διάδοχος<sup>193</sup> [*diadokhos*], that is, vicar (a representative) of god.

The condition of vicariousness to god is to be transferred by Christian authors to the pope as his prerogative,<sup>194</sup> whose exclusiveness is then to have a huge political relevance from the eleventh century onward. In the meantime, Philo, by taking further Aristobulus' philosophical interpretation of Hebrew Scriptures, opens the way to the recasting of classical thought in religious terms,<sup>195</sup> and he also gives a religious twist to the lexicon of freedom.

In particular, Philo turns *isegoria*,<sup>196</sup> which originally describes the citizens' right to speak in the assembly, into a generic intercourse on terms of equality, which becomes evidence of the freedom of the good man [sic], inasmuch as the latter speaks freely to other likewise virtuous men. And whilst the term *autopragia*,<sup>197</sup> as we saw, is a Stoic coinage that depicts the independence of individual action, Philo grounds it on the Platonic eternal order and happiness of all divine things, which he first reads as belonging to the Jewish god.

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<sup>193</sup> Philo, 'Every good man is free,' 20.

<sup>194</sup> In his 30th letter, Gelasius recalls that he is acclaimed pope in 492 with the sentence 'Vicarium Christi te videmus,' we see you as the vicar of Christ. In A. Thiel ed., *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum Genuinae*, vol. 1 (Brunsborg: E. Peter, 1868), 447.

<sup>195</sup> Reale even suggests that Philo first constructs Platonic ideas as the thoughts of god. See Giovanni Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 4, J. L. Catan trans. (New York: SUNY Press, 1990), 172.

<sup>196</sup> Philo, 'Every good man is free,' 38.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

This is why, when Philo quotes a few lines uttered by Heracles in another tragedy by Euripides, we may somewhat share the experience of Borges' prophetic spectator, who sees appearing together on stage with Aeschylus' second actor the multitude of the Hamlet, Faust and Macbeth to come.<sup>198</sup> For us, the Euripidean quotation evokes a similar, but more sinister crowd:

Roast and consume my flesh, and drink thy fill  
Of my dark blood; for sooner shall the stars  
Go 'neath the earth, and earth go up to heaven,  
Than thou shalt from my lips meet fawning word.<sup>199</sup>

Philo's paradigmatic use of Heracles' proud stubbornness lets us glimpse a spectral gathering of martyrs to come: all those who are to die, in the name not only of Christian principles, but also of their subsequent recastings, such as the modern versions of freedom.

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<sup>198</sup> Here is Borges' analysis of the Aristotelian passage on Aeschylus' novel use of a second actor: '*Con el segundo actor entraron el diálogo y las indefinidas posibilidades de la reacción de unos caracteres sobre otros. Un espectador profético hubiera visto que multitudes de apariencias futuras lo acompañaban: Hamlet y Fausto y Segismundo y Macbeth y Peer Gynt, y otros que, todavía, no pueden discernir nuestros ojos.*' With the second actor, dialogue and the undefined possibilities of the reaction of one character to the other came in. A prophetic spectator would have seen that multitudes of future appearances accompanied him: Hamlet and Faust and Segismundo and Macbeth and Peer Gynt and others our eyes cannot yet discern. In Jorge Luis Borges, 'El pudor de la historia,' in *id.*, *Obras Completas 1923–1972* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974), vol. 1, 755. Eng. trans. 'The Modesty of History,' in *id.*, *Other Inquisitions*, Ruth L. C. Simms trans. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 168.

<sup>199</sup> πίμπρη, κάταιθε σάρκας, ἐμπλήσθητί μου / πίνων κελαινὸν αἶμα· πρόσθε γὰρ κάτω / γῆς εἶσιν ἄστρα, γῆ δ' ἄνεις ἐς αἰθέρα, / πρὶν ἐξ ἐμοῦ σοι θῶπ' ἀπαντήσαι λόγον. [*pimpṛē, kataithe sarkas, emplēsthēti mou / pinōn kelainon haima· prosthe gar katō / gēs eisin astrā, gē d' aneis es aithera, / prin ex emou soi thōp' apantēsai logon*]. Euripides, Fragment 2 from the *Syleus*, translated by F. H. Colson, in Philo, 'Every good man is free,' 24–25 (modified Greek text).

However, in the first version of Christianity, which Paul puts in writing, there is neither space for pride nor for change, because ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν<sup>200</sup> [*ho kairos synestalmenos estin*], the opportunity is shrunk. The creature, whilst waiting to be shortly 'freed from the slavery of death into the freedom of the splendour of the children of God,'<sup>201</sup> is better to remain as she is: the free person, as a free person; the slave, as a slave.<sup>202</sup>

For Paul, as for Philo, freedom is no longer grounded on a contextual relation, but elsewhere. However, as Paul is unconcerned with Philo's theoretical subtleties, this grounding takes the shape of a simple association: οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία [*hou de to pneuma kyriou, eleutheria*], where the spirit of the lord (is, there is) liberty.<sup>203</sup>

Even more than Paul's doubtful theoretical proficiency, this immediate conflation of freedom and god renders him not too sensitive to the problematic cohabitation of individual free will and omnipotence. In Paul's letter to the Romans, which is the veritable Christian foundational text, he even allows himself a double

<sup>200</sup> 'Time is short,' recites a more conventional and less literal translation of this passage in Paul, *1 Corinthians* 7.29 (Nestle-Aland).

<sup>201</sup> ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ [*hoti kai autē hē ktisis eleutherōthēsetai apo tēs douleias tēs phthoras eis tēn eleutherian tēs doxēs tōn teknon tou theou*], in Paul, *Romans* 8.21 (Nestle-Aland).

<sup>202</sup> Slaves are kindly invited to obey their masters μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου [*meta phobou kai tromou*], with fear and trembling, in *Ephesians* 6.5 (Nestle-Aland). However, while waiting for eternal freedom, even the visionary Paul has to concede something to pragmatism, and accept the more modest opportunity of emancipation from slavery: ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι [*all' ei kai dynasai eleutheros genesthai, mallon khresai*], but if there is the possibility to become free, it is better to use it. In *1 Corinthians* 7.21 (Nestle-Aland).

<sup>203</sup> Paul, *2 Corinthians* 3.17 (Nestle-Aland).

quip in (unintentional) Platonic fashion: he reminds his fellow Christians that before their conversion they were slaves to sin, but ἐλεύθεροι (...) τῇ δικαιοσύνη [*eleutheroi (...) tē dikaiosynē*] free from righteousness.<sup>204</sup> By playing again with language, Paul intimates: ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνη<sup>205</sup> [*eleutherōthentes de apo tēs hamartias edoulōthēte tē dikaiosyne*], by having been freed from sin, you have been enslaved to righteousness.

Moreover, after having warmly encouraged his fellow πνευματικοί<sup>206</sup> [*pneumatikoi*], that is, spirituals, to duly comply with their various bodily duties – as slaves, to their masters, as wives, to their husbands, and as sons and daughters, to their parents – Paul is happy to inform them that ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’<sup>207</sup>

As we all know, Paul’s prognostication of the impending παρουσία<sup>208</sup> [*parousia*], the (second) coming of Jesus, fails to actualize: it takes instead two centuries to have Origen push Paul’s ultimate vision of

<sup>204</sup> ὅτε γὰρ δούλοι ἦτε τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ἐλεύθεροι ἦτε τῇ δικαιοσύνη [*hote gar douloi ēte tēs hamartias, eleutheroi ēte tē dikaiosynē*], when you were slaves to sin, you were free from righteousness, in Paul, *Romans* 6.20 (Nestle-Aland).

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.18.

<sup>206</sup> Paul, *Galatians* 6.1 (Nestle-Aland). Paul does not use the word ‘Christians.’ After its success among the Gnostics, the term *pneumatikoi* will know a renewed fame in its Italian medieval translation ‘*spirituali*,’ which will define the Franciscan followers of the original rule of Francis.

<sup>207</sup> οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγ, οὐκ ἔνι δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν και θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἐστὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ [*ouk eni Ioudaios oude Hellēn, ouk eni doulos oude eleutheros, ouk eni arsen kai thēly: pantes gar hymeis heis este en Khristō Iēsou*]. In *Galatians* 3.28 (Nestle-Aland). In a similar sense, the Gospel will promise: ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς [*hē alētheia eleutherōsei hymas*], truth will free you. In *John* 8.32 (Nestle-Aland).

<sup>208</sup> See Paul, *1 Corinthians* 15.23 (Nestle-Aland); *1 Thessalonians* 2.19, 3.13, 4.15, 5.23 (Nestle-Aland); *2 Thessalonians* 2.1, 2.8, 2.9 (Nestle-Aland).

ὁ θεὸς [τὰ] πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν<sup>209</sup> [*ho theos (ta) panta en pasin*], god all in all, to its logical consequences. Origen radically undermines the Gnostic doctrine of the predestination of the *pneumatikoi*<sup>210</sup> by emphasising, rather than god's omnipotence, god's presence in all as the necessity for ἀποκατάστασις<sup>211</sup> [*apokatastasis*], the restitution or salvation for all. Of course, Origen's notion of *apokatastasis* also paradoxically undermines the Christian rationale for granting freedom of choice, namely, eternal punishment.<sup>212</sup>

Origen studies in Alexandria under the guidance of the philosopher Ammonius Saccas. Though we have no work by Saccas, his influence on Western thought is also witnessed by another of his students, whose teachings originate a major wave of speculation in Western thought: Plotinus.

Plotinus is unusually conscious of the limits of language and he distrusts its written form. It is his pupil Porphyry who reorganises Plotinus' notes into the structure of the six books of the *Enneads*.

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<sup>209</sup> Paul, *1 Corinthians* 15.28 (Nestle-Aland).

<sup>210</sup> Gnostic authors use the Pauline term *pneumatikoi* to denote a specific set of people who are predestined to salvation: also Tertullian comes to use the word in a similarly discriminatory sense.

<sup>211</sup> Whilst the term *apokatastasis* is attested in *Acts* 3.21, the notion of universal salvation is possibly anticipated by Paul, then openly claimed by Origen (for example, in *De Principiis* 3.1.15), and by Gregory of Nyssa in *Oratio Catechetica* XXVI.

<sup>212</sup> I anticipate here a poignant comment by Nietzsche: '*Wir haben heute kein Mitleid mehr mit dem Begriff "freier Wille": wir wissen nur zu gut, was er ist – das anrühligste Theologen-Kunststück, das es giebt, zum Zweck, die Menschheit in ihrem Sinne "verantwortlich" zu machen, das heisst sie von sich abhängig zu machen. . .*' 'We no longer have any sympathy nowadays for the concept of "free will": we know all too well what it is - the shadiest trick theologians have up their sleeves for making humanity "responsible" in their sense of the term, which is to say *dependent on them*. . .' In Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist: Die vier grossen Irrthümer § 7*; Digital Critical Edition at <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/GD-Irrthuemer-7>; Eng. trans. *id.*, *The Antichrist, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, A. Ridley and J. Norman eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 181, modified translation.

Having acknowledged this crucial intervention, we may say that Plotinus' *Enneads* culminate in the treatise on the Good, or the supreme entity. This unrelated First principle cannot be properly defined by expressions such as τὸ ἐλεύθερον καὶ τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ<sup>213</sup> [to *eleutheron kai to ep' autō*], freedom and self-disposal, which imply 'an action towards something else.'<sup>214</sup>

We may notice that Plotinus does not denote the ability to act without constraints with the term *eleutheria*, but with technical expressions such as τὸ αὐτεξούσιον<sup>215</sup> [to *autexousion*], ἀνεμποδίστως<sup>216</sup> [*anempodistōs*], and ἀκωλύτως<sup>217</sup> [*akōlytōs*]. By underscoring that even philosophical terms are unable to grasp the One, Plotinus breaks<sup>218</sup> with the philosophical tradition that privileges φάσις [*phasis*], affirmation, over ἀπόφασις [*apophasis*], negation, to put it in Platonic terms.<sup>219</sup> In doing so, despite being anything but sympathetic to Christian beliefs, Plotinus also opens the way to the apophatic,<sup>220</sup> that is, negative speculation on the Christian god.

<sup>213</sup> Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.8.4.

<sup>214</sup> εἰς ἄλλο ἐνέργειαν [*eis allo energeian*], *ibid.*, 6.8.8.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.8.5. The term is allegedly introduced by Chrysippus: see note 156.

<sup>216</sup> [A]nempodistōs (*ibid.*, 6.8.8) is the adverbial form of the Aristotelian term *anempodistos*, that is, unimpeded.

<sup>217</sup> [A]kōlytōs (*ibid.*, 6.8.8) is the adverbial form of the expression ἀκώλυτος [*akōlytos*], unhindered, which is probably another Platonic coinage, in *Cra.* 415d.

<sup>218</sup> A previous and different break is the Sceptic notion of ἀφασία [*aphasia*], which introduces a third possibility between affirmation and negation. See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.20.

<sup>219</sup> In Plato, *Soph.* 263e, the Guest defines the two possible kind of discourses as φάσις [*phasis*], affirmation, and ἀπόφασις [*apophasis*], negation.

<sup>220</sup> ἀποφατικός [*apophatikos*], negative, as opposed to καταφατικός [*kataphatikos*], affirmative, appears in Aristotle, *Cat.* 12b. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite is probably the first Christian author who associates the two terms with θεολογίαι, [*theologiai*] the discourses about god, in *De mystica theologia* 3: Τίνας αἰ καταφατικαὶ θεολογίαι, τίνας αἰ ἀποφατικαὶ [*Tines hai kataphatikai theologiai, tines hai apophatikai*], Concerning the affirmative and the negative discourses about god. In Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Mystica Theologia*, PG 3, 1032.

After two more centuries, when the Christians are no longer persecuted, Augustine of Hippo is far more cautious than Origen in dealing with the notion of human freedom, as he is aware of both the doctrinal and political implications of the debate on the role of divine grace. The African bishop is thus contented with stating that 'our wills themselves are included in that order of causes which is certain to God, and is embraced by His foreknowledge.'<sup>221</sup>

Augustine also predicts that *libertas*, freedom, 'which is never true if not blessed,'<sup>222</sup> will replace *liberum arbitrium*, free will: 'therefore the first freedom of will was to be able not to sin; the newer will be much greater, not to be able to sin.'<sup>223</sup> As to the present, for Augustine free will is just one of the *bona media*, medium goods, 'because we can also make a bad use of it'<sup>224</sup>: only the good use of free will is a virtue, and thus one of *bona magna*, the great goods, of which 'no one can make a bad use.'<sup>225</sup>

One century later, with Christianity as the state church of the Roman empire, the Byzantine emperor Justinian repeals Origen's truly charitable notion of *apokatastasis*, which gains the Alexandrian Father (retrospectively) and his later followers suspicion and condemnations.<sup>226</sup> At the same time, Justinian has a pool of

<sup>221</sup> 'Et ipsae quippe nostrae voluntates in causarum ordine sunt, qui certus est Deo ejusque praescientia continetur,' in Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 5.9, PL 41, 150.

<sup>222</sup> '[L]ibertas, quae quidem nulla vera est, nisi beatorum.' In Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 1.15.32, PL 32, 1238.

<sup>223</sup> 'Prima ergo libertas voluntatis erat, posse non peccare; novissima erit multo major non posse peccare.' In Augustine, *De Correctione et Gratia* 1.12, PL 44, 936.

<sup>224</sup> '[Q]uia et male illo uti possumus.' In Augustine, *Retractationes* 1.9, PL 32, 598.

<sup>225</sup> '[M]ale uti nullus potest.' *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> The Byzantine emperor Justinian manages to have the doctrine of *apokatastasis* anathematized by the Synod of Constantinople of 543. Ten years later, he obtains that the bishops gathered for the Fifth Ecumenical Council restate the anathema, though in a slightly limited form. See *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of*

jurists compile a body of work that collates Roman legal materials, so that he commits the Latin terms *liber* and *libertas* to the care of the parchment of the codices, and to the medieval imagination to come.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, the last Western copies of the Justinianic codes disappear into the depths of monastic archives, together with the knowledge of the Greek language: from the Visigoth *Romania*<sup>227</sup> of the Iberian south, Isidore of Seville takes charge of collecting the relics of classical culture in his *Etymologies*. This compendium prefigures medieval miscellanies, and it also keeps memory of *omnium una libertas*,<sup>228</sup> the freedom common to all. But it is another phrase from Isidore's *Sententiae*, '*gemina est praedestinatio*,'<sup>229</sup> predestination is twin, that is to be used - nearly three centuries later - as a contentious reference in a renewed debate on free will.

In the ninth century, the Saxon monk Gottschalk relies on Isidore's twin predestination to claim that god has already sealed the destiny of both the damned and the saved. Eriugena reacts by denying the possibility of applying to god the categories of the finite world, such as the time-bound notion of prefiguration.<sup>230</sup>

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553: *With Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, Richard Price ed. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

<sup>227</sup> Pirenne recalls that the term 'Romania' appears in the fourth century to denote all the countries conquered by Rome. In Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris: Alcan, 1937). Eng. trans. *id.*, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, Bernard Miall trans. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1939).

<sup>228</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 5.4.1, *PL* 82, 199.

<sup>229</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae* 2.6, *PL* 83, 606. Isidore means that there is predestination of both the saved and the damned.

<sup>230</sup> See John Scotus Eriugena, *Iohannis Scotti de divina praedestinatione*, Goulven Madec ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978).

Eriugena thus revives in Christian terms Plotinus' reluctance to define the One, through the mediation of the late Christian Neoplatonist Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,<sup>231</sup> whose work he translates into Latin.<sup>232</sup>

When Gottschalk dies in the late 860s, he is denied the sacraments, because until the end he continues to uphold his doctrine of predestination, a version of which will later split Western Christianity. In 871, another Saxon, Alfred, is crowned king of Wessex. Shortly after, he requests the Bishop Wærferð of Worcester to translate into his vernacular language the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great: the Bishop renders the Latin word *libertas* with the local term 'freodome',<sup>233</sup> which inaugurates the literal path of freedom.

## 2.2 – The Papal Revolution and its Aftermath

Eriugena's application of syllogistic reasoning to religious disputes is revived two centuries later by Anselm, who also engages again with the notion of *libertas*, liberty. By this time, namely, the eleventh century, this term is inextricably associated with another

<sup>231</sup> The sixth-century author of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* or *Corpus Dionysiacum* pseudonymously identifies himself as 'Dionysios,' probably in order to attribute the work to Dionysius the Areopagite, Paul's Athenian convert mentioned in *Acts* 17.34.

<sup>232</sup> Eriugena epitomises even better than Alcuin the ninth-century renaissance, and, together with Hilduin, he is a rare example of a Greek-conversant early medieval Northern European scholar.

<sup>233</sup> '*Qui cum magnis virtutibus cresceret, a praedicto domino suo libertate donatus est,*' because he [Honoratus] grew in great virtue, he was granted freedom by his aforesaid Lord, in Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi* 1.1, PL 77, 156. Old English translation: 'ða se Honoratus weox 7 þeah mid mycclum mægnum, oþ þæt æt nyxstan he wæs gearad mid freodome fram his hlaforde þam forecwedenan,' in Bischofs Wærferth von Worcester, *Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen*, Hans Hecht ed. (Leipzig: Wigand, 1900), 11–12.

word: Pope Gregory VII proudly invokes *libertas ecclesiae*,<sup>234</sup> the liberty of the church. Gregory thunders: ‘We hold it to be far nobler to fight on for a long time for the freedom of the holy Church than to be subjected to a miserable and diabolical servitude.’<sup>235</sup>

The pope does not simply demand for the church freedom from the intervention of the emperor, who is traditionally used to appoint bishops: the claimed liberty entails also a far more proactive stance for the church and its head, the pope.<sup>236</sup> Papal claims are expressed in a series of juridical declarations, which state new rules for the election of the pope,<sup>237</sup> reorganise the church as a hierarchical structure, and even excommunicate the emperor: these juridico-theological proclamations set the institutional lines of the Gregorian Reform, which is more appropriately defined by Rosenstock-Huessy as Papal Revolution.<sup>238</sup>

The papal revolutionaries immediately appeal to god to justify the newly claimed authority of the pope, both within and without

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<sup>234</sup> Gregory VII is not claiming religious freedom: this notion, which was probably invented by Tertullian (*Apologeticum* 24.6, *PL* 1 418), will be rather deployed later on, against the new centralised church.

<sup>235</sup> ‘*Nobilius tamen esse dignoscitur multo tempore pro libertate sanctae Ecclesiae decertare, quam miserae ac diabolicae servituti subjacere.*’ In Gregory VII, *Epistola* 3, 1081 to Bishop Altmann of Passau, in *Registrum*, *PL* 148, 607.

<sup>236</sup> Tellenbach underlines that the notion of *libertas ecclesiae* not only implies for the Church the freedom from alien interference, ‘but also freedom to carry out its mission, the conversion of the world – and this last necessarily [my italics] involves the leadership of the world.’ In Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest*, R. F. Bennett trans. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 184.

<sup>237</sup> Bull *In nomine Domini*, in the name of the Lord, promulgated by Pope Nicholas II in 1059. In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Legum, sectio IV; Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum*, vol. 1, Ludwig Weiland ed. (Hanover: Hahn, 1893), 539–541.

<sup>238</sup> See Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* (Providence: Berg, 1993).

the church.<sup>239</sup> The freedom they demand for the church is thus grounded on a transcendent terrain, similarly to the freedom that Christian authors grant to the individual faithful. However, here the subject of freedom is a collective, which is construed as a single subject with the pope as its head.

The construction of the church as *corpus Christi*, that is, the body of Christ, has been a common trope at least since Augustine<sup>240</sup>: in the twelfth century, the church first becomes by the pen of Peter Lombard *caro mystica*,<sup>241</sup> mystical flesh, and then, with a significant metonymical shift, *corpus mysticum*, mystical body. Hence, the proactive freedom of the church, as affirmed by Gregory VII, finds soon a juridico-theological embodied form: the mystical body of the church, which predates by five centuries Hobbes' Leviathan.

On the one hand, this juridico-theological body inherits the ethical freedom of the individual Christian subject: on the other hand, the entitlement of the pope, as head of the mystical body of the church, to unlimited sovereignty,<sup>242</sup> returns to the notion of freedom an immediately political dimension. More than that, the new church also produces a transformation of the political dimension itself.

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<sup>239</sup> As the new papal power is exclusively grounded on a (religious) doctrine, the Papal Revolution may be understood as the first Western attempt to put into practice Plato's intimation to found the polity on principles. In this case, we may well say that Gregory VII and his fellows not only invent revolution, but also Western politics as we know it.

<sup>240</sup> '[I]n societatem corporis Christi, id est, in Ecclesiam stabilem et sempiternam.' In Augustine, *Contra Adimantum Manichaei discipulum* 14.3, PL 42, 152.

<sup>241</sup> Peter Lombard, in *Commentarius in Epistolam I ad Corinthios*, PL 191, 1642; *Sententiarum libri quatuor* 4.8, PL 192, 857.

<sup>242</sup> This entitlement clearly appears in Innocent III's political use of the expression *plenitud(o) potestatis*, fullness of power, which Innocent claims for himself as pope, together with the juridical role of *iudex (. . .) ordinarius singulorum*, ordinary judge of all, in *Epistola* 277, PL 214, 843.

It is worth recalling that the Papal Revolution begins in the eleventh century. At that time, the political space is no longer the mere play of power, which allows the exercise of the unlimited *eleutheria* of the tyrant, or the *demos*, as well as the republican *libertas* of the Roman *populus*, and then of Roman emperors: from Constantine onwards,<sup>243</sup> it is the backing of divine authority that provides Christian rulers with their *a posteriori* legitimation.

The gist of the papal revolutionaries is to extend the temporal reach of this legitimating device: if the divine investiture blesses powers that are already in place, why can't god bestow its confirmation on a power that is yet to be?<sup>244</sup> Of course, this very confirmation is not understood as prefiguring a novel settlement, but as claiming the restitution of the divinely prescribed order: the papal revolutionaries are confident that they are following a preordained path rather than anticipating a new order of things.

The action of such a powerful retrospective anticipation, as it were, is not limited to god's representatives, who, in turn, can also invest third parties with the same authority: a notably early example is the 1066 Norman invasion of England, which is duly achieved under the auspices of the new church.

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<sup>243</sup> The emperor Constantine I both legalises Christianity and promotes the 325 Council of Nicaea, which promulgates the first uniform Christian doctrine.

<sup>244</sup> The possible influence of the experience of religion-based Islamic political entities on the Papal Revolution is yet to be explored. I attempted to suggest some links between Islamic and Christian medieval juridical theology in my essay 'Mystical Bodies and Bodies of Law: On Juridical Theology and the (Re)Foundations of the West,' in *Fables of the Law*, Daniela Carpi and Marett Leiboff eds. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 111–134.

This papal endorsement is later to be indirectly witnessed by the *Magna Carta* (also later defined as *libertatum*, of freedoms), which twice states, in its first and last articles, ‘*quod Anglicana ecclesia libera sit*,’<sup>245</sup> that the English church shall be free. Here the condition of freedom acknowledges at once the autonomy of the English church from royal authority, and its subordination to the pope.

Back in the 1070s, as a side effect of the Papal Revolution, the text of the Justinianic compilations of Roman law reappears in the course of archival researches. The recovered codes quickly become the object of a new legal discipline, and they have a notable impact upon the reorganisation of canon law too.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, a few decades after the rescue of Roman law codes, also the bulk of the extant texts of the Aristotelian corpus that were lost to the Christian West begins to be translated into Latin from Arabic and Greek sources: the work of translation will span nearly a century.

In the meantime, Abelard, who is the veritable *maître à penser* of the twelfth-century renaissance, spearheads a new understanding of theology as a theoretical discipline.<sup>247</sup> Under the scrutiny of

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<sup>245</sup> *Magna Carta*, in Charles Bémont, *Chartes des libertés anglaises (1100–1305)* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1892), 27 and 39.

<sup>246</sup> The rearranging of both Roman and canon law follows a new systematic pattern: as Berman recalls, ‘in contrast to the earlier Roman jurists and the earlier Greek philosophers, they [medieval Roman and canon law scholars] supposed that they could prove by reason the universal truth and universal justice of authoritative legal texts.’ In Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), 140.

<sup>247</sup> As Abelard invents theology as we know it, we do not easily detect the radical novelty of his approach, which instead gains him the implacable hostility of Bernard of Clairvaux: Bernard even sarcastically defines Abelard’s theology as *stultologia*, that is, stupidology. See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 190, *PL* 182, 1054. For the notion

the irrepressibly inquisitive Abelard, the theoretical construction of the new freedom of god's representatives on earth ends up affecting its bestower: following Augustine's suggestion of the superior freedom of the blessed, even god's freedom is made the object of inquiry.<sup>248</sup>

The inquiry is then to be structured around the two poles of *potentia absoluta*, absolute power, and *potentia ordinata*, ordered power. Whilst this distinction comes from the juridico-theological debate over papal injunctions, it acquires a specific theological sense in the discussion of the possible limitations to god's freedom to act. In particular, in the thirteenth century Aquinas defines as absolute power '*quod attribuitur potentiae secundum se consideratae*,'<sup>249</sup> that which is attributed to power as considered according to itself; he calls instead ordered power that which is attributed to divine power '*secundum quod exequitur imperium voluntatis iustae*,'<sup>250</sup> according to what is put into act under the command of a just will. At any rate, Aquinas accepts that even god is under the double constraint of logical contradiction<sup>251</sup> and of the irreversibility of past events.<sup>252</sup>

However, freedom is a renewed object of inquiry not only as an attribute of god, but also as its reverberation in the creature. On the one hand, in his *Commedia* Dante puts into verse Aquinas'

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of a medieval renaissance, see Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).

<sup>248</sup> Abelard, *Sic et non, Quaestio XXXIV: Quod Deus non habeat liberum arbitrium, et contra* (Yes and No, Question 34: That God has no free will and against), *PL* 178, 1394–1395.

<sup>249</sup> Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* 1.25.5 ad 1.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.7.2 ad 1, 1.25.3 co.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.25.4.

notion of *libero arbitrio*, that is, free will; on the other hand, he describes his own attachment to freedom as a civic virtue, just like in Classical times. Here is how, in the *Commedia*, the fictionalised Vergil introduces the lifelong political exile Dante to Cato the Younger, who commits suicide because of the fall of the Roman Republic: *libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara, / come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta*.<sup>253</sup> Liberty he goes searching, that's so dear / as who renounces life for it well knows.

In 1323, just a few years after Dante's visit to the Afterlife,<sup>254</sup> in the text of William of Ockham the participle *conceptus*<sup>255</sup> shifts from its usual adjectival to a nominal function, so that its meaning likewise shifts from 'conceived' to 'concept.' Since then, it is possible – at least hypothetically – to consider freedom as a concept, without producing an anachronism.<sup>256</sup>

Shortly after, god's freedom is involved in a conflict of faculties, which results from the problematic conflation of absolute will and absolute reason. This difficulty is first expressed in

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<sup>253</sup> Dante, *Purgatorio* 1.71–72.

<sup>254</sup> Dante sets his travel to Hell, Purgatory and Paradise in the year 1300.

<sup>255</sup> William of Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, 1.1.

<sup>256</sup> Despite philosophy textbooks generally ascribe to Socrates the invention – or even, alas, the discovery – of the concept, neither the Platonic Socrates, nor Plato, nor Aristotle have terms that correspond to what we now call concept (for sure, they deploy the Homeric term νόημα [*noēma*] – sometimes translated as 'concept' – to describe a generic object of thought as opposed to an object of sensation). In Classical Latin, the term *conceptus* (from the verb *concipere*, to take hold, to become pregnant, and then, to comprehend) in its nominal masculine form defines a collection, a pregnancy, and a sprouting; it is also attested in the plural neuter form *concepta*, with the meaning of 'conceived things': see, for example, '*mente concepta*,' things apprehended with the mind, in Quintilian 8.5.2; '*corpora et concepta*,' material objects and objects of thought, in Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos* 4.1. In 1323, Ockham appears to recover the latter meaning in a more technical sense, when he emancipates the word *conceptus* from its attributive role.

juridico-grammatical terms, when, in the fourteenth century, Gregory of Rimini makes a distinction between *lex indicativa*, (a law stated in the indicative mode as an objective statement of fact that only implies an injunction), and *lex imperativa* (a law that enjoins a direct command in the imperative mode).<sup>257</sup> Gregory relies on the authority of Hugh of St Victor for maintaining that natural law is *indicativa*, because even if god did not exist, the injunctions of natural law would be in place anyway. This argument is to become famous - and even infamous - in its seventeenth-century appropriation by Grotius.<sup>258</sup>

Gregory's juridico-grammatical nomenclature stands as a rare and precious manifestation of the grammatical underpinning of theoretical categories. However, contemporary innovative notions of freedom are less the effect of the speculation on absolute divine faculties, than of the double recovery of Aristotelian and Roman law texts: the legal reconsiderations of the word *liber*, free, open new juridico-political perspectives.

Aquinas strives to recast Aristotelian theories in Christian terms; Marsilius of Padua seeks instead to revive Aristotle's political thought. In particular, Marsilius reads the contemporary condition of Italian city-states through the Aristotelian reflection on the *polis*: '*civitas est communitas liberorum*,'<sup>259</sup> the city is the

<sup>257</sup> Gregory of Rimini, dist. 34, q. 1, a. 2, in *responsione ad obiectionem 2 corollarii in id., Super Primo et Secundo Sententiarum*, Augusto Montefalco ed., 2 vols (Venezia: Lucantonio Giunti, 1522), vol.2, fol. 118v (J).

<sup>258</sup> Grotius' sentence '*etiamsi daremus (. . .) non esse deum*,' even if we would concede that there is no god, grants him the accusation of atheism in disguise. In Hugo Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (Paris: Nicolaus Buon, 1625), *Prolegomena xi*.

<sup>259</sup> Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*, Richard Scholz ed., 2 vols, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Fontes Iuris Germanici Antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi* (Hannover: Hansche Buchandlung, 1933), 67 (1.12.6).

community of free men [sic]. Marsilius reiterates Aristotle's exclusion from the deliberative community of slaves, women, immigrants, and children: however, his recovery of the classical notion of ascending political rule reverses the juridico-theological constructions of the descending nature of power.

In the same context, namely, fourteenth-century Italy, the jurist Bartolus derives from the Roman notion of popular self-determination the legal acknowledgement that a free city '*sibi princeps est*,<sup>260</sup> is its own prince. In turn, probably with an eye to his own place, Bartolus' Perugian pupil Baldus follows his master in recovering the notion of *populus liber*, free people, which in the Justinianic *Corpus* describes an independent population living outside of the boundaries of the Roman Empire: Baldus deliberately applies the definition of free people to contemporary Italian cities that lie instead within imperial jurisdiction, in order to grant them legal standing.<sup>261</sup> In doing so, Baldus keeps shifting the notion of communal freedoms (which Imperial-leaning jurists recast as *regalia et consuetudines*,<sup>262</sup> that is, regal prerogatives and customs) from autonomy towards independence.

Moreover, the lay Baldus not only collaborates in Bartolus' juridical construction of the people as collective subject of freedom, but he

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<sup>260</sup> Bartolus of Sassoferrato, *Commentaria ad Digestum Vetus* (Venezia: Battista Torti, 1520), fol. 133r (4.4.3, n.1).

<sup>261</sup> This creative manipulation of Roman legal material is not unusual: for example, thirteenth-century jurists first apply the term *persona*, person, to the corporation via a creative interpretation of three passages of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, D.46.1.22, D.4.2.9 and D.35.1.56.

<sup>262</sup> See the conditions of the 1183 peace of Constance, in which the militarily defeated emperor Frederick I presents the prerogatives of *de facto* free Italian communes as his magnificent dispensations. In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Legum sectio IV*, vol. 1, 411–418, 412.

also recasts this very people in the hegemonic language of juridical theology: following the appropriation of the juridico-theological notion of mystical body by emperors and kings, he endows the body of the citizenry with a mystical double too: ‘properly speaking, the people is not [a plurality of] men [sic], but a collection of men [sic] into a single mystical and abstract body.’<sup>263</sup>

Both Bartolus and Baldus search Roman law for a juridical expression of the practice of Italian self-governing cities, just as Machiavelli is then to look at Roman historiography to give this practice a political expression.<sup>264</sup> Nevertheless, following the Byzantine compilations, for Baldus, after the Roman *lex regia*,<sup>265</sup> the people is no longer invested with *suprema potestas*, the highest power, and cities only ‘fill in their territory the place of the emperor.’<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> ‘*Nec obstat quod Glossa dicit in [D.3.4.7] quod populus non est aliud quam homines, quia debet intelligi de hominibus collective assumptis, unde homines separate non faciunt populum, unde populus proprie non est homines, sed hominum collectio in unum corpus mysticum et abstractivum sumptum, cuius significatio est inventa per intellectum,*’ and it does not matter that the gloss on [D.3.4.7] says that the people is nothing other than men, because that should be understood as meaning men taken collectively, so that separate individuals do not make a people and thus properly speaking the people is not men, but a collection of men into a single mystical and abstract body, whose meaning has been discovered by the intellect. In Baldus de Ubaldis, *Lectura in VI–IX libros Codicis* (Lyon: Johannes Siber, 1498), fol. 236r (7.53.5), quoted in Joseph Canning, *Ideas of Power in the Late Middle Ages, 1296–1417* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 154, modified translation.

<sup>264</sup> See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi di Nicolo Machiavelli cittadino, et segretario fiorentino, sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* [Discourses on the first decade of Livy] (Roma: Alberto Blado, 1531).

<sup>265</sup> *Lex regia* is a definition in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* that accounts for a series of acts, which legally justify the transfer of power from the Roman people to the emperor: the most relevant one is the *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani* (law regulating Vespasian’s authority), which is officially ratified by the Roman Senate on 22 December 69.

<sup>266</sup> Baldus de Ubaldis, *Super Decretalibus* (Lyon, Pierre Fradin, 1551), fol. 28v (1.2.13, n.3) quoted in Joseph Canning, *The Political Thought of Baldus de Ubaldis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 116.

On the contrary, Machiavelli shows no concern for old and new imperial powers: his ethical and political model is the Roman Republic. Moreover, Machiavelli not only follows Livy and his late celebration of republican virtues: he also revives Polybius' systematization of Thucydides' cyclical construction of history.<sup>267</sup> However, whilst both Thucydides and Polybius seem to leave almost no room for accidental or voluntary change, Machiavelli equally distributes the causes of historical transformations between necessity and chance.<sup>268</sup> The space of chance allows human *elettione*,<sup>269</sup> a choice that more often than not implies a departing from the virtuous path: yet, the freedom of choice is also the opportunity to imitate the examples of classical virtue.

Machiavelli's appeal to antiquity is a common trait of humanist<sup>270</sup> scholarship, which in his times bifurcates into the evocation of the classics and the construction of the narrative of primitive Christianity by religious reformers: a third way is to be opened in the second half of the sixteenth century by Justus Lipsius, who will attempt to reconcile Stoicism with Christian doctrine. In the meantime, in 1532 the French friar François Rabelais devises a

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<sup>267</sup> Machiavelli recovers Polybius' notion of ἀνακύκλωσις [*anakyklōsis*], cycle (of political constitutions). See Polybius 6.9.

<sup>268</sup> '*Non di manco per che il nostro libero arbitrio non sia spento, iudico potere essere vero che la Fortuna sia arbitra della metà delle attioni nostre, ma che ancora ella ne lasci governare l'altra metà o, poco meno a noi.*' Nonetheless, so that our free will is not extinguished, I deem it may be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one half of our actions, but it also allows us to govern the other half, or nearly so. In Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (Roma: Alberto Blado, 1532), 33 (XXV).

<sup>269</sup> Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, fol. 2r (1.1).

<sup>270</sup> Of course, the very term 'humanist' may be problematic, inasmuch as it hides local and temporal specificities: for example, the label of humanist scholar may be stretched so as to apply to a tenth-century French scientist such as Gerbert of Aurillac, a fourteenth-century Italian poet such as Dante, a fifteenth-century German thinker such as Cusanus, and a sixteenth-century French writer such as La Boétie.

sneering version of monastic reformation that propounds a peculiar notion of unlimited freedom.

Rabelais tells us that the life of the hosts of the newly-founded Abbey of Thélème<sup>271</sup> is not spent following laws, statutes, or regulations, ‘*mais selon leur vouloir et franc arbitier*,<sup>272</sup> but according to their own wish and free will. The whole monastic rule of Thélème consists in just one clause: ‘*Faictz ce que Vouldras*,<sup>273</sup> do what you want.

Rabelais is confident that people who are free, well-born, and well-bred are *naturally* driven towards virtue and away from vice.<sup>274</sup> Only when they are subjected to tyranny, do they turn aside from their good disposition in order to shake off the yoke of servitude.<sup>275</sup> Not only is Rabelais’ representation of the good nature of a selected human group to attain in time anthropological breadth: just a few decades later, his considerations on the effects of tyranny are given political expression by Étienne de La Boétie.

In the mid-sixteenth century, right before the deflagration of the religious conflict in France, and similarly to Machiavelli,

<sup>271</sup> The noun ‘Thélème’ is the French version of the Greek word θέλημα [*thelēma*], with which the Seventy traditional translators of the Hebrew Bible into Greek render as ἡδονή [*chephets*], pleasure, in *Ecclesiastes* 12.1.

<sup>272</sup> François Rabelais, *La vie tres horrificque du grand Gargantua, pere de Pantagruel iadis composee par M. Alcofribas abstracteur de quinte essence* (Lyon: François Juste, 1534), sig. N1v-N2r (194–195).

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. N2r (195).

<sup>274</sup> ‘[G]ens libres/ bien nez & bien instructz, conversans en compaignies honestes, ont par nature un instinct & aguillon: qui tousjours les pousse a faictz vertueux, & retire de vice: lequel ilz nommoient honneur.’ *Ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> *Iceulx quand par vile subiection & contraincte sont deprimez & asserviz: detournent la noble affection, par laquelle a vertuz franchement tendoient, a deposer & enfreindre ce joug de servitude.* *Ibid.*

La Boétie completely bypasses the juridico-theological approaches to freedom<sup>276</sup> by immediately reconnecting with the Classical tradition of ethico-political thought.<sup>277</sup> In particular, La Boétie grounds on the Plutarchian exaltation of virtue his vindication of freedom, which he presents under the paradoxical issue of ‘*servitude volontaire*,’<sup>278</sup> voluntary servitude.

According to La Boétie, freedom needs not to be learned, as it is an original condition that even transcends the boundaries of the human species. It is rather the rule of the French monarch that results from a ‘*monstre de vice*,’<sup>279</sup> a monstrous vice, namely the voluntary renunciation by French subjects of their freedom: hence, they could dissolve the power of the king by simply ceasing to obey him.<sup>280</sup>

After La Boétie’s untimely death, Calvinist pamphleteers appropriate his argument in their attacks on the Catholic king. They also probably exploit the familiarity of their readers with the notion of voluntary servitude to sin, which Calvin derives from Paul.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> This approach is all the more extraordinary, considering that La Boétie is a jurist and a Christian.

<sup>277</sup> La Boétie has a first-hand knowledge of Greek and Latin texts: for example, he publishes his French translation of Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*.

<sup>278</sup> Étienne de La Boétie, *De la servitude volontaire ou Contr’un*, Malcolm Smith ed. (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1987).

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> I explored the connections between La Boétie’s classical sources and his extraordinary political proposal in my essay ‘With Teeth and Nails: The Embodied Inservitude of Étienne de La Boétie,’ in *Performing the Renaissance Body*, Sidia Fiorato and John Drakakis eds. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

<sup>281</sup> In the last edition of the *Institutio*, Calvin recovers the Pauline image of *Romans* 6.17 through the mediation of Bernard of Clairvaux. However, the notion of voluntary slavery to sin is already in Philo.

Arguably, the failure of the conciliarist<sup>282</sup> attempt to challenge the absolutely hierarchical structure of papal power from within the church clears the way for a different confrontation, which is staged as the clash of diverging doctrinal interpretations. As previously recalled, the Reformation is presented as a restoration of the original Christian message, which – Calvin complains – ‘was detained in the cloisters of monks for almost a thousand years.’<sup>283</sup> In particular, Luther appeals to Augustine in order to support his notion of *servo arbitrio*,<sup>284</sup> slave will, which he pits against *libero arbitrio*, free will. And just to be sure, he admonishes rebel peasants that ‘baptism does not make men free in body and property, but in soul.’<sup>285</sup>

Luther recasts a Pauline line<sup>286</sup> as two contradictory statements: ‘The Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none. The Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone.’<sup>287</sup> Luther then proceeds to solve in good Scholastic fashion<sup>288</sup> the apparent contradiction by claiming the

<sup>282</sup> Between the fourteenth and the sixteenth century, the conciliarist reform movement within the church claims the supreme authority of an Ecumenical council.

<sup>283</sup> ‘[M]ille fere annis postea in claustris monachorum retentum fuit,’ in Jean Calvin, *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (Geneve: Robert Estienne, 1559), 96 (2.3.5).

<sup>284</sup> See Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio* [1525], in *id.*, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimarer Ausgabe, hereinafter WA), 120 Bänden (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2009), Band 18, 600–787.

<sup>285</sup> ‘[D]ie tauffe macht nicht leyb und gut frey, sondern die seelen.’ In Luther [1525], *Wider die stürmenden bawren* (Against the storming peasants), which is best known as *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern* (Against the murderous, thieving hordes of peasants), WA 18, 357–361, 359. Eng. trans. in E.G. Rupp and Benjamin Drewery eds., *Martin Luther, Documents of Modern History* (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), 121–126, 123.

<sup>286</sup> See Paul, *1 Corinthians* 9.19.

<sup>287</sup> ‘Christianus homo omnium dominus est liberrimus, nulli subiectus. Christianus homo omnium servus est officiosissimus, omnibus subiectus.’ Luther, *De Libertate Christiana* [1520], WA 7, 49–73, 49.

<sup>288</sup> The systematic method of composing apparent contradictions in the Scriptures can actually be traced to Abelard’s *Sic et non*.

dichotomy between the ‘spiritual, inward, new man [sic]’<sup>289</sup> and ‘the fleshly, outward, old man [sic],’<sup>290</sup> as the effects of the human twofold nature, namely, spiritual and bodily.

Following a long-standing claim that we already found in Sophocles,<sup>291</sup> Luther relies on Paul<sup>292</sup> to re-enact in Christian terms the construction of two absolutely severed spheres of human action, which allow inner freedom to coexist with absolute external obedience. According to Luther, works are ‘*res insensatae*,’<sup>293</sup> that is, literally, thing without senses, and thus dead,<sup>294</sup> and they do not belong to the inner sphere of the soul, which is only governed by faith and words: as in the inner Christian ‘*operibus non habet opus*,’<sup>295</sup> there is no work for works, he is released from commandments and laws, and he is therefore free.

Conversely, the Christian is free to obey without compromising his inner freedom. Nevertheless, whilst Paul invites his fellows to obey as a merely temporary acceptance of a condition that

<sup>289</sup> ‘[S]piritualis, interior, novus homo,’ in Luther, *De Libertate Christiana*, WA 7, 50.

<sup>290</sup> ‘[C]arnalis, exterior, vetus homo,’ *ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> Of course, whilst the Sophoclean claim for the liberty of the spirit despite the enslavement of the body expresses an emerging sense of human solidarity, its Lutheran recasting, to echo Marcuse, captures instead the real unfreedom within the concept of freedom. See Herbert Marcuse, ‘Ideengeschichtlicher Teil’ in M. Horkheimer ed., *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Paris: Alcan, 1936). Eng. trans. *id.*, ‘A Study on Authority,’ in *id.*, *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, Joris De Bres trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

<sup>292</sup> ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα [all’ ei kai ho exō hēmōn anthrōpos diaphtheiretai, all’ hō esō hēmōn anakainoutai hēmera kai hēmera]. Though the outer part of us is wasting away, the inner part of us is being renewed day by day. In *2 Corinthians* 4.16 (Nestle-Aland).

<sup>293</sup> Luther, *De Libertate Christiana*, WA 7, 56.

<sup>294</sup> In the contemporary German version of the treatise, Luther writes ‘*totde ding*,’ a dead thing. In Luther, *Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*, WA 7, 20–38, 26.

<sup>295</sup> Luther, *De Libertate Christiana*, WA 7, 53. In my translation, I attempted to render in English the iteration in the Latin expression, which is nearly a pun: here, Luther follows Augustine’s usage to say that ‘[the Christian] does not need works.’

is soon to be overcome, Luther makes a distinction of Gnostic flavour between a minority of true Christians and a majority of crooked ones.<sup>296</sup> For Luther, the inevitably limited number of good Christians justifies the need for a policing force,<sup>297</sup> and it motivates his allegiance to authority *qua* authority: and this allegiance is to have dire effects in German history. In a similar way, Calvin rhetorically asks why Paul at once exalts freedom<sup>298</sup> and invites slaves not to pursue emancipation,<sup>299</sup> if not because ‘*spiritualis libertas cum politica servitute optime stare potest*,<sup>300</sup> spiritual liberty is perfectly compatible with political slavery.

Nonetheless, the very notion of *servo arbitrio*, slave will, may appear to undermine human responsibility, which is required to justify the Christian doctrine of sin and guilt, as well as secular punishment. This is why Calvin embraces the notion of *voluntaria servitus*,<sup>301</sup> voluntary servitude (to sin), which underscores the natural depravity of human beings, but which also makes them accountable for choosing to follow their evil inclination.

Among its evil tendencies, the human spirit ‘*aegre se subiici sustinet*,<sup>302</sup> hardly allows itself to be subject. Calvin praises the subjection of children to parents because it is most easily endured, and it makes humans later accept every kind of legitimate

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<sup>296</sup> ‘[U]nter tausent kaum ein recht Christ ist,’ among thousands there is scarcely one true Christian. In Luther [1523], *Von weltlicher uberkeytt wie weytt man yhr gehorsam schuldig sey* (On mundane authority to what extent it should be obeyed), WA 11, 245–281, 251.

<sup>297</sup> Luther bluntly defines the prince as ‘*Gottis stockmeister und henker*,’ god’s jailer and hangman, *ibid.*, 268.

<sup>298</sup> Paul, *Gal.* 5.1.

<sup>299</sup> Paul, *1 Cor.* 7.21.

<sup>300</sup> Calvin, *Institutio* 4.20.1.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.3.5.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.8.35.

subjugation, as the same principle regulates all.<sup>303</sup> Here Calvin not only insightfully describes authoritarian family relations as the apparatus of production of individual unfreedom,<sup>304</sup> but, similarly to La Boétie, he acknowledges human resistance to subjection as a natural – albeit, in his view, negative – propensity.

It will fall to Hobbes to set this original freedom beyond good and evil, as it were: ‘all men<sup>305</sup> equally, are by Nature Free.’<sup>306</sup> Though such Hobbesian affirmation bears a strong resemblance to traditional appeals to natural law, it is already part of a new theoretical framework, where nature is no longer an ethical and ontological grounding, but a mere factual arrangement.

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<sup>303</sup> ‘*Ad omnem ergo legitimam subiectionem ab ea quae facillima est toleratu, nos paulatim assuefacit Dominus: quando est omnium eadem ratio.*’ From that subjection which is most easily endured, the Lord gradually accustoms us to every kind of legitimate subjection, the same principle regulating all, *ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> Already in the 1380s, Wycliffe writes: ‘*þe moste vnfredom is vnfredom of synne.*’ In John Wycliffe, *Of Dominion*, in *id.*, *The English Works of Wyclif*, F. D. Matthew ed. (London: Trubner & Co., 1880), 282–293, 286.

<sup>305</sup> Here the masculine declination of humanity owes more to grammatical convention than prejudice: as surprising as it may seem, Hobbes points out that historically determined social practices are the source of gender arrangements. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme, & Power of A Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651), 102–103 (2.20).

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 111 (2.21).