Introduction

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This volume has its origins in an unsolicited telemarketing call. One of us (MB) was asked for money to (purportedly) free a slave in Sudan and was intrigued enough to solicit views from a variety of human rights and international relief organizations. Struck by the near unanimous condemnation of the practice, the editors began an extended conversation with others about just what (if only under idealized circumstances) would make such a practice morally wrong. We began with a small meeting at the Center for Human Values at Princeton, where we brought together a multidisciplinary group of philosophers, anthropologists, and economists, to begin thinking about these questions. Since then we have carried our discussions further and enlarged our numbers, continuing to exchange and develop our ideas.

The results of the conversations prompted by the original practical question are represented in what follows. When we began this endeavor we thought of this as primarily a philosophical exercise. And indeed there are traditional arguments that can and have been marshaled against the practice of buying others even if it is to grant them their freedom. A UNICEF spokesperson captures the deontological cast of such arguments well in objecting that a buy-back program implicitly accepts that human beings may be bought and sold (Peter Crowley as reported by Lewis 1999). More broadly, it might be thought that, irrespective of the good consequences that might follow, buying human beings treats them as a commodity and therefore not as an end in themselves. Such arguments also figured large in some of the nineteenth-century debates (both in the African-American community and among Quakers) that Margaret Kellow takes up in chapter 9. Howard McGary assesses the philosophical merits of such arguments in chapter 11.

That said, the vast majority of objections to buy-back programs have a decidedly more consequentialist cast. And consequentialist arguments often stand or fall on the underlying facts that they ride on. In this case, what they ride on is a matter of economics. Most people have a strong intuition that to enter the market for slaves will raise demand, thereby pushing up prices, which will draw more people into the slave trade, resulting in more people being enslaved. That looks like a classic case of helping the one but hurting the many (more). And such an intuition underlies the objections of a number of organizations (including UNICEF and Human Rights Watch, as Kreuger and Karlan point out in chapter 1).

But is this intuition in fact correct? The first three papers in this volume examine this issue from different perspectives. In chapter 1, Dean Karlan and Alan Krueger use standard demand-supply market analysis to show why buying slaves would, at worst, result in their replacement on a one-for-one basis, but that with plausible assumptions about the elasticity of supply, the likely outcome would be a lower "rate" of replacement. In chapter 2, Carol Rogers and Kenneth Swinnerton argue that, to be complete, such an analysis needs to also take into account determinants of the rate of flow (or time) for people to move through the process of enslavement and redemption, as well as whether the suffering of enslavement is evenly spread over that process, as opposed to being more concentrated around the initial time of capture. In chapter 3, Arnab Basu and Nancy Chau use existing data on child trafficking and bondage to argue that market imperfections create impediments to easily achieving the simultaneous goals of granting human rights to the enslaved and decreasing the incidence of enslavement.

Suppose that, intuitions notwithstanding, buying the freedom of some slaves does not hurt the majority. Still, does it help the few? How could it fail to do so? In chapter 4, Stanley Engerman makes the argument that it can indeed, in the context of economic history, in which he discusses the falls in output that accompanied the ending of slavery and the implications for the availability of foodstuffs. In chapter 5, Jonathan Conning and Michael Kevane take up the issue in a theoretical context, arguing that the collusion of landlords to restrict the freedom of ex-slaves to enter into certain kinds of contracts with landlords (combining their labor and land use) can result in lower levels of welfare for the emancipated than they experienced under slavery.

If the philosophical argument about slave redemption rests on the facts of economics, it does not rest on these facts alone, except insofar as one poses that argument in purely hypothetical terms. To pose it with an interest in its practical import means looking at the circumstances of slavery itself, in places where redemption is an option. Here we do so from a variety of anthropological perspectives. In the case of Jok Madut Jok (chapter 6), the argument is that slave redemption by foreigners in the Sudan should be properly understood in both the context of the war and the long-standing policy of family-initiated redemption. In evaluating the economic consequences of the practice, he shows how there can be quite unanticipated consequences—in the case of Sudan, depending on who controlled the currency exchange from dollars to Sudanese dinars. Jok's contribution is followed by an account (by Ann McDougall, chapter 7) that situates such questions in the complex anthropological geography of Mauritania. McDougall's contribution shows that one cannot evaluate the significance of attempts to end slavery from the "outside" without understanding its local cultural history. In chapter 8, Lisa Cook examines whether or not there are lessons to be learned from the emancipation of serfs in Russia that might be applied to modern cases of slavery.

Notwithstanding these complexities, historically, opposition to slave redemption, even when held as a matter of principle, runs up against the contingencies of practice. This tension is discussed in chapter 9 by Margaret Kellow in her account of debates about redemption in both the nineteenth-century African-American and Quaker communities. Even where redemption was practiced, just under what description it was to be understood turned out to be crucial, as John Stauffer points out (in chapter 10) in his treatment of Frederick Douglass's view of the purchase of his freedom by British Quakers.

Suppose redeeming a slave helps the one and does not hurt the many. And suppose we answer objections to the implicit commodification of human life involved in such transactions. Still, ought we not to consider if we could do greater good by helping others instead—say the starving? But as Martin Bunzl argues (in chapter 12), such interests ought to be tempered by attention to just how likely it is that such prescriptive advice will actually be followed, even if doing so would produce a greater good than freeing a slave.

The last chapter contains reflections by Anthony Appiah on the moral significance of slavery. He argues that once we understand what is wrong with slavery we will see that legal emancipation is only the beginning of a process of freeing the enslaved from the consequences of the combination of low status and minimal autonomy that are at the heart of the evil of enslavement.

Despite its breadth of scope, this volume was conceived during and prompted by consideration of the conflict in southern Sudan. Whether the recent end of this conflict represents a permanent cessation of hostilities remains to be seen. But as Jok Madut Jok points out in his poignant summaries of his interviews with Sudanese abductees in the appendix, even if the conflict is over (although perhaps just relocated to the Darfur region), the formerly enslaved will continue to pay the cost of slavery for the remainder of their lives.

In this volume, we take ourselves to be addressing the question of the ethics of buying the freedom of an enslaved person. Just how many slaves there are in the world today is a function of how narrowly or broadly one construes the term. We tend to think of slavery as a relationship in which ownership is involved because of the centrality of ownership to the history of slavery in the United States. But as Kevin Bales points out, historically, many forms of slavery lacked such a component. Bales estimates there are 27 million slaves in the world today, using a conception of slavery that makes the control of a person through violence central.[1] The numbers go up (to perhaps 200 million) on more expansive definitions.[2] To treat this as a book about slavery is to construe the term more widely than the ownership conception would allow, since some of the topics (like child trafficking taken up in chapter 3) don't fit that narrow view. That said, we are largely indifferent to this (semantic) issue—what concerns us here are questions about people in the world that lack freedom. Despite the fact that their lack of freedom may be different in origin, circumstance, or degree, what they have in common is that in each case we can ask the same set of questions: What can one do about it? What ought one to do about? In helping the one does one hurt the many? In helping the one, does one actually render the one better off?

One thing we hope this book demonstrates is that, in thinking about the moral issues we face when we consider intervening in other societies through the market, we must rely on many kinds of expertise. Faced with a straightforward question—should I send money to redeem a slave?—it turns out we must seek guidance from many fields. Making a final

[1] "Slavery is a social and economic relationship in which a person is controlled through violence or its threat, paid nothing, and economically exploited" (Bales 2000, 3). Such a conception is designed to encompass chattel slavery, debt bondage, and contract slavery (in which workers are tricked by the promise of a contract and then enslaved) (Bales 2000, 12–13). Of these, only the first involves an assertion of ownership.

[2] For example, the 1956 United Nations Declaration on Slavery asserts a much wider view:

> (a) Debt bondage, that is to say, the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or of those of a person under his control as security for a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined; (b) Serfdom, that is to say, the condition or status of a tenant who is by law, custom or agreement bound to live and labour on land belonging to another person and to render some determinate service to such other person, whether for reward or not, and is not free to change his status; (c) Any institution or practice whereby: (i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family or any other person or group; or (ii) The husband of a woman, his family, or his clan, has the right to transfer her to another person for value received or otherwise; or (iii) A woman on the death of her husband is liable to be inherited by another person; (d) Any institution or practice whereby a child or young person under the age of 18 years, is delivered by either or both of his natural parents or by his guardian to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the child or young person or of his labour. [Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, 226 U.N.T.S. 3, *entered into force* April 30, 1957, cited in http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/f3scas.htm.]

The 200 million figure is from Bales 1999, 3.

decision, once we have the advice in hand, involves balancing a wide variety of considerations. And in the real world that balancing can be very difficult.

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