

What have the Romans Ever Done for Us?

The Applicability of Roman Law to
Intelligent Agents

Andrew Katz – Moorcrofts LLP

RAMPANT ROMAN ROBOTS

Intelligent Agents

- Are things
- Autonomous
- Can enter into transactions/create rights and obligations
- Unpredictable
- Useful

Roman Slaves

- Are things
- Autonomous
- Can enter into transactions/create rights and obligations
- Unpredictable
- Useful

Roman Slaves

- Ran the ancient Roman economy
- Were shippers, merchants, land agents, shopkeepers...
- They had no rights and no obligations
 - Couldn't go to court
 - Couldn't be sued
- Agency?
 - On a contract with a slave, the master took the benefit, but not the burden

Why contract with a Slave?

- The *Peculium*
- Treated as a slave's property, but technically belonged to the master
- Could frequently buy his freedom with it
- Transactions with slaves could be enforced up to the value of the Peculium under the *actio de peculia*.

How would this work with intelligent agents?

- Each agent is granted an identity by an existing trust provider
- Agent's owner purchases a "peculium bond" from a financial institution
- Each transaction debits an agreed liability from the peculium, until the transaction is satisfied.
- Liability is limited to the Peculium

Aspects

- Limited liability a privilege, not a right
- Granted per agent, and per identity.
- Less red tape than a limited liability company
- Encourages use of intelligent agents.