

## Introduction

The reflection that follows was first conceived some decades ago when I was working with displaced peasants in the southwest of Brazil. The peasants were once small scale farmers who could fend for themselves in the little hectares of land they had for family farming. During the radical change in the agrarian policies of the military regime in the country (1964-1985), with subsidies diverted to and incentives created for large monoculture export-oriented farming, they ended up in debt and were driven off their land due to fiscal obligations to money lenders, becoming landless peasants, drifting from region to region in search for seasonable work when available. Among the displaced peasants were also those who were forcefully relocated to other places due to the construction of a mega-dam (Itaipú at the border of Brazil and Paraguay). Relocated, they were often not able to make ends meet and were finally also displaced to join the millions of peasants without land of their own to cultivate.

This issue intersects with class theory in sociology as it was developed in the last century and displays a complex relationship to main streams of class analysis. Unlike most of class theory, in the case of the peasants I am presenting, there are distinct factors to be considered in the making up of “class” than has been analyzed in normative literature. It has not only to do with the political realm of inter-subjective relations or human relationship to nature in the shaping of it and transforming it. To use Marxist lingo: it is not only about relations and forces of production, politics and economy, but other factors as well. These other—and complicating—factors have to do with displacement, with migration, both domestic and international, and the correlation between class consciousness and spatial issues, places and geographies.

My main concern is to find a way to frame this social and spatial problem in *theological* terms instead of remitting it to morality and ethics, which may only give it a theological hue. However, the very language of such a framing of these displaced people is of a theological and religious nature. For them a socio-political and economic analysis bears a deficit that religious language alone can approach. Class struggle, and indeed at times violent and brutal ones, was part of the everyday life, of the quotidian existence of these people whose lives were hanging by a thread that not seldom broke. This thread and the trial it represents cannot be accounted for in the language of the secular sciences for which, methodologically, God is a superfluous hypothesis. The language that employs God-talk must at best be decoded and re-inscribed anew in the secular order of things. But there is a resilience of the God-talk when the experience of class location is not only of socio-political and economic relevance but also of the sense of an organic relation and interdependence with place and all the factors that determine one's belonging. There is, after all, something puzzling about one's attachment to a place one belongs to in the immeasurable vastness of the universe, and being acknowledged in this place, not by others alone, but by the place itself, as Job's lament attests: "those who go down to Sheol do not come up; they return no more to their houses, nor do their places know them any more." (Job 7:9f.) Such experience is one of being condemned due to some transgression committed.

## Capital and Sin

At the beginning of chapter 24 of the first volume of *Capital*, Karl Marx offers the following comparison: "The original accumulation [of capital] plays in political economy about the same role as original sin in theology."<sup>1</sup> In fact, as Marx further suggests, this is more than an

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, I (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 741.

approximate or rough (*ungefähr*) analogy. The doctrine of original sin is a religious and mythological rendition of the origin of inequality in human society. Civilization after civilization all that has changed is the mode of distribution and classification of inequalities. The formation of classes is a particular way in which social inequality is configured in modern societies, and indeed there are other forms of social inequalities. Inequalities can be “natural,” as in gender differences or mental and physical abilities, even though these can and normally do play a significant social role in a class society, becoming thus a factor in its organization and regimentation. Class society is also to be distinguished from other forms of inequality that are socially endowed by birth, as we have it in the *corpus christianum*<sup>2</sup> (in medieval Europe’s doctrine of the “estates”), in the Hindu caste system, and also differences created by ethnic and racial factors. Within the feudal “estates,” the caste system, or ethnic profiling, one is born into a given position in the social order. In medieval times a son of a peasant would as certainly be a peasant as one who is born into nobility would be a noble by birth-right. Class society, theoretically demarcated, implies the possibility of socio-economic mobility. In this stricter sense class society, in the classic Marxist definition, comes into existence only with the emergence of the bourgeoisie in the modern western world that broke the spine of the entitlement system as the guarantor of the social order. The novelty in this is the introduction of social mobility as a defining characteristic of modernity.

However, even if class societies theoretically purports social mobility, in practice, remnants of feudal estates entitlements and caste practices and discriminations coexist with it as relics in antiquarian shops. This muddles the picture and brings to the fore of discussion racial, gender, ethnic, issues pertaining to sexual orientation and other issues that have for good reasons

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (New York: Columbia UP, 1933), 330.

taken over the agenda of theological discussions as far as inequality is concerned, and the pleas, the “causes,” the agendas have thus been fragmented and multiplied. We have often gotten to formulate and defend inequalities of inequalities, i.e, we create inequalities by leveling other differences. Class analysis, insofar as it offers criteria to assess disturbances, tensions, and identify conflictive arenas in our relationship to others, to self, and to the environment might point to the task theology is convoked to address, namely, the plea of the supplicant, the one living in trial, oppression, and captive of a law that always accuses and convicts.<sup>3</sup> But if inequalities is a symptom of what theology renders as the sinful condition we all share, how can its root-cause be identified or diagnosed? Is there a universal theology of inequality, as in a doctrine of original sin that laces together all the multifarious expressions it embodies?<sup>4</sup>

The issue at stake is aggravated by the western rendition of original sin since Augustine as a fall etiologically traceable to our primordial ancestors. As it is evident from the two first books of *The City of God*, Augustine’s framing of the doctrine of sin as an original fall was predicated on the experience of Rome being sacked (410 C.E.), profoundly humiliating the center of an imperial power, unmatched in extension, which (and here lies the embarrassment) had adopted Christianity as the state religion. While bad things are unavoidable, there is obviously something that bears its Janus face. Namely, in the midst of all decay and misery, there is “blessedness,” there is prosperity implying the doctrine of election and predestination. Hence what we really have is both a fall “downwards” *and* a fall “upwards” that is simultaneous,

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<sup>3</sup> The fifth century theologian Prosper of Aquitaine defined the task of theology as the one of addressing the plea of the supplicant: *ut legem credenda lex statuat supplicandi*. See Michael Church, “The Law of Begging: Prosper at the End of the Day,” *Worship* 73 (1999), 442-53.

<sup>4</sup> For the discussion of this issue see Vitor Westhelle, “Is there a Universal Theology of the Oppressed?” *Gurukul Journal of Theological Studies* XVI/1&2, (January & July 2005): 92-108.

yet bifurcated from its inception. This is magnificently expressed in the in Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Of Paradise, so late thir happie seat,  
They looking back, all th' Eastern side beheld  
...  
Som natural tears they drop'd, but wip'd them soon;  
The World was all before them, where to choose  
Thir place of rest, and Providence their guide.<sup>5</sup>

The notions of providence, prosperity, and progress have been enshrined in the western canon with a single theological justification, namely that progress and damnation are twin siblings of the narrative of the fall as developed mostly in the West. And the candor with the ancient narrative about God's "election" of Abel's offering over Cain is as close as close can get to a theological justification of inequality. Inequality, which in the ancient biblical narrative is rendered as divine recognition, leads to murder in a bizarre play in which the perpetrator is the victim. In other words, we are Cain, the one exiled to no-where, to the land of *Nod*, the no-place, the *u-topia*, and yet he is the one who built a city, who created *for himself* and his own a space of belonging. (Genesis 4:17)

We, the children of this story, as much as we are devoted or rebel against it, are bound to this one single mantra: the Fall is providence's game of dice that divide the elect from the damned and that can only be known by one's fate. It was not any insignificant reason that measured the doctrine of election, in its most secular form, by property, prosperity, and progress. This could only and ultimately be justified theologically with a transcendent leap, which in

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<sup>5</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 12, lines 642-47, 1674.

philosophy is called a *petitio principii*: the fallacy of begging for grounds that accounts for and justifies the origin of inequality without having to demonstrate it. God becomes the grounds for justifying inequality. The flabbergasting accumulation of variations of inequality, and the surrendering of a criterion by which to assess them, is the result of modernity's awareness of the *petitio principii* fallacy. This awareness caves in to the urge to abandon therefore all theological discourse that still claims a root-cause of inequality. The proclaimed end of master narratives is only a symptom of its fallacious significance in justifying the concept of progress as normative of western modernity.<sup>6</sup> And to this we shall return later.

### Defining Class and its Theological Significance

The modern discussion of class owes its salient significance to Marx's analysis of capitalism, even if his "chief work breaks off as he is about to embark on the definition of class," as Georg Lukács laments in his celebrated (yet disowned by the author himself) book on *History and Class Consciousness*.<sup>7</sup> Apart from Marx, only Max Weber, half a century later, left a definite imprint on the discussion and definition of what class means. The two approaches to class have some traits in common and yet also bear significant distinctions. For Weber, class is defined by the relationship of amalgamate social stratas to the market and thus tends to be a statistical category of social trends, wealth, prestige, and power.<sup>8</sup>

For Marx classes are to be defined by two predominant factors— one's relation to the "forces of production" (labor, raw material, tools, technology, power energy, etc.) and the status

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<sup>6</sup> See Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, Rodney Livingston, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1971), 46.

<sup>8</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich ; translators, Ephraim Fischhoff ... [et al.]. eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 927.

one acquires in the “relations of production” (status, social and political activity, education, market accessibility, community relations, etc.) These two elements suggest that for Marx a definition of class is that which, unlike Weber’s, is not only conditioned by social strata’s positioning and relation to the market, but also to the concrete forces and relations of production. Marx’s suggestive and underdeveloped concept of class is particularly important due to the following reason. Weber could ubiquitously relate class formation to market mechanisms of assigning a certain power to a status group. But Marx’s approach to the realm of production has to do with the human relationship to the “thing” or, simply put, to nature (from the making of things, writing a text, or of conceiving a child, and the mediations, or tools, therein involved). It is distinct from its political relations of production, namely, how society organizes itself on the basis of that relationship with the “thing.” In making this distinction between the two factors that make for the constitution of a class, Marx is saying that humans are not restricted or framed by their relationship with nature alone, but also on how this intersects with the political organization of a society. It does not automatically mirror the economy, but will find its final expression in the broader relationship *between* economy and politics, the connection between the relationship of humans with nature and with each other.

This is the crux of the matter. Class matters in the interconnection or nexus between economy and politics; simply put, between the human relationship with the raw material (the rest of creation) and their interaction with other human beings in the creation of a social order. These two dimensions intersect, while remaining distinct. And this distinction is vital in the theological reading of class and especially in its analysis of framing the relationship to God. This was a question evaded by Marx and is regarded at most as a relic of times past. However the emergence of the concept of class has indeed an enduring place in the history of theology. This is

so because in the distinction between forces of production and relations of production something cannot be accounted for; something remains as a non-decipherable code, as Dutch biologist and philosopher F.J.J. Buytendijk rendered it with poetic wit: “the birds are singing much more than Darwin allows.”<sup>9</sup> Conversely, religion seems so much more invigorated than Marx would admit after declaring that “the criticism of religion has been essentially completed.”<sup>10</sup>

In a theological perspective, the question of class and its emergence as a modern social category cannot be dissociated from the Reformation’s indictment of the notion of the *corpus christianum*, that is, the belief in an organic whole in which each and every member was assigned a particular function and performed it to the extent, and only to the extent, of the attributed function of its particular membership into the organism. A foot can do things that a hand is not adroit to, and vice-versa. The Reformation’s understanding of the priesthood of all believers brought an end to the seclusion of the most protected of all the “estates” of medieval Christendom, the clergy.<sup>11</sup> In sharp contrast to the norms of the day and the entitlement society, Luther wrote in his 1520 “Open Letter to the Christian Nobility”:

If a little group of pious Christian laymen were taken captive and set down in a wilderness, and had among them no priest consecrated by a bishop, and if there in the wilderness they were to agree in choosing one of themselves, married or unmarried, and were to charge him with the office of baptizing, saying mass, absolving and preaching, such a man would be as truly a priest as though all bishops and popes had consecrated him.<sup>12</sup>

This is in itself an amazing statement for the time in which it was pronounced. Two points are to be remarked upon. First, Luther did not appeal to church and political polity to

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<sup>9</sup> Cited by Jürgen Moltmann, *Die Ersten Freigelassenen der Schöpfung* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Marx, ‘Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,’

<sup>11</sup> Mohl, *Three Estates*, 330.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate (1520),” Luther’s Works vol. 44 *The Christian in Society I*, ed. and rev. James Atkinson, trans. Charles M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 128.

ascertain his defense of the priesthood of any person (that he would exclude women, children and demented persons, is another issue). Second, he does not ground his argument on formal training and sanctioned special skills to fulfill the responsibility, but on being asked and chosen to perform the task. What Luther evokes is an element that disturbs the nicely organized two dimensional order of things: the voice of the people (*vox populi*), which is neither flesh (tradition) nor intellect (dogma), but spirit (breath). Much of this has been used to fatal and abusive conclusions, yet they are not to be denied. For this very reason the same element that disturbs the order of things against traditions (*politia*) and skillful productive competence (*oeconomia*) has shown its liberating promises as much as its abusive overtures. There is something in this third space between politics and economics, or succinctly put, between communication and communion, that defies an orderly discourse that accommodates the theological discussion of class to either economic or political relations alone.

If such a process of calling and electing a person to be a proper “apostle” can happen in the most regimented of the medieval estates—the church—not much would take for the debunking of the other states and the subsequent democratization of the political and economic order. This is what it means to say that with the Reformation the medieval idea of the *corpus christianum* collapsed. Thus, strictly speaking, we can talk about class society as a new form of perpetrating and justifying inequality with the emergence of the bourgeoisie that ended with the entitlement of the nobility and the corresponding rise of the working class, the proletariat. This is underscored by the theological development of the notion of vocation as any person’s response to *divine calling*, independent of one’s position in the estate one has been born into.<sup>13</sup> This then means that the definition of class has to do with a social ensemble’s relation to the forces of

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<sup>13</sup> See Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik* (München: Siebenstern, 1969), 66-77.

production. Plainly said, it is about who has to sell their labor in order to survive and who has an accumulated capital to begin with to buy this labor, the value of which is determined not intrinsically on the *economic* front but by the *political* configuration of the relations of production. And this from the start is grounded on an asymmetric relationship between labor and capital, between the bourgeoisie and the working force insofar as the terms of the contract are held in check. But this is where the insightful remark of Marx about primitive accumulation as corresponding to the Christian doctrine of original sin hits the mark. The original accumulation of capital, like the notion of original sin, reworked skillfully by Augustine, that is transmitted from generation to generation, sets the inheritors of the bourgeoisie in a privileged position to start with. And thus the illusions of class mobility—the great trump card of liberal capitalism—lives on this belief that class mobility is accessible to all if only you work hard enough to achieve it, the American dream, so to speak. The genius of Weber was to show that if prosperity is a sign of God’s election, prosperity becomes the proof, in and for itself, of the conviction of election. This is how the Reformation would end up producing a robust doctrine of double predestination.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed class mobility has been an exceptional possibility in present capitalist societies, but as much as this possibility is actual, actual are also the systematic exclusions of the masses whose work force is sold at meager price of what allows for their day to day survival, only to live the same dilemma day after day. However this is not what any basic book of sociology would not be able to teach an inquisitive student, though its connection with original sin might not come so immediately to mind. But this should be stressed: class divisions are of decisive theological significance insofar as the Judeo-Christian narrative of the fall is concerned. The theological

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<sup>14</sup> Although this may not be applied to Luther. See Agnes Heller, *Renaissance Man* Richard Allen, trans. (New York: Schocken, 1981), 203: “... the notion of election had no part in his [Luther’s] ideology and practice.”

notion of providence was transfigured into progress, blessedness into prosperity, election into success. However, the same presupposition of being self-evidently justified whether by God or by an “invisible hand” was equally potent and ubiquitous. Missing here is the human connection with place and environment. And, it is accentuated by the Reformation in its deterritorialization of the communion of saints (notwithstanding the Augsburg peace treaty of 1555). The Reformation helped capitalism in the eroding of the sense of human rootedness in place that had been evoked in religious imagery. This is mythically expressed by the notion of paradise from which human beings feel expelled, but simultaneously carry it into every place they dwell in and call home.

### Class and the Displaced

If Max Weber was able to define class, as a social stratum and by a social group’s interface with the market, Karl Marx was insightful in distinguishing the economic and the political implications of the class struggle. Neither, however, got to the point of really considering the geographical implications or spatial impact of what in the biblical narrative would be rendered as being “out of Eden,” being in exile, displaced or in diaspora. This means, being a migrant in lands, cities, or fields not of their own acquaintance and most often not of their liking.

Henry Lefebvre<sup>15</sup> has been one to draw attention to Marx’s failure to develop the question of spatial dimensions that his economic theory is in fact calling for. Toward the end of the third volume of *Capital*, Marx even recognizes that capitalism is determined not by two factors alone (forces and relations of production), but three: capital, labor, and the land or space

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith trans. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 324f.

(which with wit he entitled the chapter: “The Trinitarian Formula”).<sup>16</sup> But, alas, this recognition is at the end of a book that was never quite finished and was only published posthumously by Friedrich Engels. It was left to the interpreters to take on possible implications for a class theory that, to start with, Marx never got to fully lay out.

Migrants within their own countries (displaced peasants, seasonal workers, etc.) or international immigrants looking for work or political asylum seekers are of such a staggering number<sup>17</sup> that it is not frivolous to regard it as one of the most, if not the main social problem in the beginning of the twentieth first century.<sup>18</sup> Unlike it has been assumed in Marxian interpretations of class theory,<sup>19</sup> it is not only the antagonist relationship of capital and labor that provides the equation for class formation, but also the migrant factor that intersects and modifies both *politics* and *economy*. Political legislation and corporate policies, from the government to corporations and trade unions, create legal mechanisms whereby various segments of the working population with different rights and duties are distinguished. In the economic front it changes the layout of the division of labor both in the composition of the working force but also in the way jobs are farmed out to other countries combining high technology with menial labor in sweatshops. In a spatial grid migration works in both directions —as labor that physically migrates to where it can be sold or as capital that moves in the opposite direction in search of cheaper labor and profit.

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<sup>16</sup> Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, third volume (Berlin: Dietz, 1971), 822-39.

<sup>17</sup> In the United States today, there are an estimated 11.1 million unauthorized immigrants.

<sup>18</sup> See Gioacchino Campese, *A Promised Land: A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration* (Indiana: University of Notre dame Press, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., the entry on “Class” in *Dicionário de Política*, Norbert Bobbio, et al, eds., João Ferreira, et al. trans (Brasília: Universidade de Brasília, 1991) 1:169-75 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 59, goes even further: “Bourgeoisie and proletariat are the only pure classes in bourgeois society. ... The outlook of other classes (petty bourgeois or peasants) is ambiguous or sterile because their existence is not based exclusively on their role in the capitalist system of production but is indissolubly linked with the vestiges of feudal society.”

The point in all this is that capitalism has not only been able to profit by alienating human labor from its source, the worker, but also maximize its earnings because of both, capital's own mobility as well as spatial mobility of labor itself. And this is not to be confused with class mobility that while theoretically possible is most often a social mirage. The turnover therefore is not only doubled, but raised to the square factor. It is so because not only is the profit increased but the potential liability of capital investment is also circumvented by having both local migrant labor with little or no civil rights of the general population and having investment in places where the overhead operating costs is minimal or even nonexistent.

In summary, the relation of class to socio-spatial realities is in inverse proportion to a sense of belonging. The creature of the earth (*adam*) essentially is linked to the ground on which it stands (*adamah*). The severance of such bond as well as the accumulation of space is as much an indication of the disproportion of wealth, prestige, and power as it is a symptom of the brokenness of the human relation to the creator.

#### Fetish and Ideology, or the Idol and the Demonic

But why is this awareness of the spatial dimension for the comprehension of class imperceptible to us even as it is part of our everyday life, our quotidian existence? What is it that makes the difference, to use Marx's terminology borrowed from Hegel, between a class-in-itself (*an sich*), not yet aware of its own condition as a subaltern class, and a class-for-itself (*für sich*) aware of its own condition, power and capabilities insofar as class location (and dislocation) is concerned. Here, again, theology can be of help as it was for Marx's description of primitive accumulation and its significance to political economy by comparing it to the doctrine of original

sin. But what is it that prevents us from the awareness of our own condition and the sin we have been perpetrators, victims, or accomplices of?

There is a theological significance to this. As mentioned earlier, our imperviousness is indeed connected to the human sinful condition. Under the modern capitalist system it is sin that alienates humans from their production, which turns itself against the laborer in the form of a fetish. In biblical imagery, this is called idolatry, the devotion to the *eidō*, that which seizes the gaze and relinquishes the right to the laborer's own production. And it does so by a modern capitalist phenomenon called Taylorism, or in the USA as Fordism, a technical calculation to optimize mass production while compensating the working force with higher wages to turn the worker into a consumer of the product (in the classic case, a car) that the workers produce, but that in an assembly line is no longer recognizable as their own creation.

In the story of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32), as the exemplary story of idolatry, the adoration of the idol was done with the suspension of the awareness of a person who contributed with a ring, another with a bracelet, yet another with earrings. When all the amulets were melted and molded into a calf the multitude of donors of the gold saw only the idol. Their investment in the labor and their role as the sole source of means and ends were long forgotten. That is a millennia old version of modern Fordism. Unlike the Robinson Crusoe type of narrative abstracted from social and collective context, as ingeniously presented in Hegel famous dialectics between the lord and the bondman, Marx understood "Fordism" before Fordism and thus one of the mechanisms through which class consciousness is impaired: fetishism. And that is what the Jewish-Christian tradition, way before Marx, has called idolatry.

Meanwhile the bourgeoisie is at work with the surplus capital to devise a scheme to promulgate that this class division is the regular and normal way of social existence. This is a

crucial strategy to dissuade opposition against the order of things and thus prevent the class struggle that could ensue. This ideological mechanism functions in a way that corresponds to the religious concept of demonic possession. In the case of the demoniacs Jesus encountered and healed, one common feature is that they were unable to utter an authentic word, to have a language to name themselves for what they really were. The possessed were either speechless, they stuttered, or else the demon spoke through them. Roland Barthes asks with pertinence: “And how to exorcise a demon (old problem)?” And he offers this answer: “Demons, above all if they are of language (and could they be anything else, but of language?), must be fought through language.”<sup>20</sup> Barthes was not making any commentary on New Testament narratives of exorcism (he was actually commenting on Goethe’s *Werther*’s amorous ruses), but he hit the nail on the head and was precise in his articulation of how the demonic works: through language, creating pretense and deception.

When these two phenomena— fetishism and ideology, or, in religious language, idolatry and demonry—function together they create (in the expression of Antonio Gramsci after Georges Sorel) a “historical bloc” in which power of the governing and consent of the governed are in consonance.<sup>21</sup> Through such “historical bloc” hegemony is ascertained and domination is exercised with little or no resistance.

Now, if we add the question of spatial displacement to this picture the problem becomes more complex. If the bourgeoisie does not suffer displacement because by definition its function as a class is to conquer space and so displace others, the working class, or the proletariat is the

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<sup>20</sup> Roland Barthes, *Fragmentos de um Dircurso Amoroso*, Hortência dos Santos, trans. (Rio: Francisco Alves, 1986), 71.

<sup>21</sup> *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, David Forgacs, ed. (New York: NYU, 2000), 193-95.

one social group whose space is constantly under threat.<sup>22</sup> This is why fetishism, religiously speaking, idolatry, becomes a peculiar temptation of the working class deterring the emergence of a class consciousness. Such is the case not only because of the fetish effect of the idol but also because mechanisms of persuasion such as higher than starving wages, some social benefits that when combined with the subtle but pervasive ideological propaganda creates and justifies displacement and accumulation of space. This is a phenomenon that “orthodox” Marxism (in Gramsci’s lingo “economism”) has not been able to acknowledge. But it has been criticized by Gramsci and the Frankfurt School and its Institute for Social Research. Writing under fascist regimes in Italy and Germany respectively (though most of the latter would migrate to the USA in the mid-1930s, as the former spent most of his life as a political prisoner under Mussolini) these Marxian authors were flabbergasted by the fact that the working class in a relatively stable economic condition and reasonable secure placement (even as their labor is exploited and their political power curtailed) would support fascist political dominance, ultimately against their own class interests as long as mere life is maintained. Their lack of class consciousness hinges on the reliance of a place that becomes the idol that veils the fact that this place is not a concession granted by the oppressor, but is God’s endowment to the creature (Psalm 24; Leviticus 25).

Different is the case with the bourgeoisie. As Lukács finely observed, their class consciousness is a contradictory phenomenon. Consciousness for the bourgeoisie is occluded insofar as they don’t even want to realize their share in the class conflict and thus of their role in it. For the bourgeoisie class consciousness produces a contradiction between its interest and the awareness of its role in in it. The result of this contradiction, if it emerges, is self-annihilation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall, trans. (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 34-39.

<sup>23</sup> Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 61.

In other words, as Hegel's remarks about the "master" (in the master and bondman dialectic in the *Phenomenology*) points out, their recognition of the self is contingent only on the recognition by the bondsman and thus do not create an independent awareness of the self.<sup>24</sup> To render it in religious or theological terms, they are frequented by the demons that they themselves have convoked to aid their ideological case and hide the truth about themselves. They believe their own deception because that is what will keep them in the hegemonic position they hold. Demonry is the lot assigned to the dominant class from which it can only be exorcised by the surrender of its domineering rule and the language that is their idiom: ideology.

Other classes in society—as the petty bourgeoisie, or the subdivisions among the financial, the commercial, the industrial bourgeoisie, and the peasants, seasonal workers, the unemployed, sub employed and so forth—can be regarded as hybrid cases owing their formation to either a mismatch of the basic classes (as in the case of the petty bourgeoisie or the small family farmer) or to vestiges of non-capitalist modes of production that still lingers on in globalizing capitalism (as in enduring pockets of non-capitalist modes of production).

The uniqueness in taking spatial considerations into this dualistic opposition of classes is that it allows us to discern the lot of those who don't belong because they have been exiled from the house they knew as theirs, the land they cultivated, the neighborhood they grew up in. This exile, forced or by necessity, breaks down the code of decency by which the bourgeoisie rules. It is a trespassing that brings one simultaneously to another linguistic code and to a territory that has not been mapped before. There the idolatry looms large with the promises of consumerism, and the demon is waiting in the wings of cultural assimilation or acculturation. Migrants are always "guest" workers. And since the industrial revolution moved the space of production from

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<sup>24</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 111-119.

the household to the factory, the working class is, by definition, migrant. As guests they have to comply with the rules of the “house” (*oeconomia*) they have come to, and yet they don’t have the full code to decipher the house rules. While brutally exposed to idolatry, they have an innate skill (due to their unfamiliarity with language and mores of the new environment) to deter the demonic appeal.

## Conclusion

Salman Rushdie, commenting on the question of borders and migration offers insightful remarks about marginality.

The migrant severed from his roots, often transplanted into a new language, always obliged to learn the ways of a new community, is forced to confront the great question of change and adaptation; but many migrants, faced with the sheer existential difficulty of making such changes, and also, often, with the sheer alienness and defensive hostility of the peoples among whom they find themselves, retreat from such questions behind the walls of the old culture that they have both brought along and left behind.<sup>25</sup>

Those caught in the bourgeois ideological net will not move, will not trespass, yet those who do, being still under the spell of the idol, will have exorcised the demon. And this is for a very simple reason: the demon requires monolingual grammar. Trespassers, migrant workers for instance, insofar as they retain and dissimulate their identity “behind the wall of the old culture” and language, are protected from the demonic spell. This is why Rushdie can say: “To cross into another language, another way of being, is to take a step toward beatitude, the worldly blessedness to which all dharma burns aspire.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Step Across This Line: Collected Non-Fiction* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 356.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

Class struggle is most often not an open conflict under the ruling class hegemony, but it can be what Gramsci called a “war of position.”<sup>27</sup> As opposed to the “war of maneuver”—an open conflict on the fronts—a “war of position” is a tactical act of resistance, resilience, and often dissimulation in face of a more powerful opposition. Migrants are particularly adept in practicing it. Yet it is the responsibility of the “organic intellectuals,” to expose these mechanisms through which class domination happen, bring them out of dissimulation and thus open venues of resistance, resilience, and refusal in order to restore the damaged life that so many endure, and bring about life in its plenitude, away from mere life enslaved to sin and the law that condemns to disgrace vast majorities.

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<sup>27</sup> *Gramsci Reader*, 225-30.