

Cambridge University Press  
 978-0-521-76876-4 - Class in Archaic Greece  
 Peter W. Rose  
 Excerpt  
[More information](#)

## *Introduction: theoretical considerations*

### CLASSICISTS AND CLASS

To discuss *class* in any period of classical antiquity – but perhaps especially in the Archaic Period – is to encounter a paradox: virtually no account of the period seems able to dispense with the concept of class – even if it only appears in references to “aristocrats,” “nobles,” “ruling class,” or “slaves” or the undifferentiated “*dêmos*”; yet very few scholars, especially in the English-speaking world, offer any theoretical account of what such a concept implies about the nature of the society they are analyzing.<sup>1</sup>

Latacz, for example, in a popular recent account of Homer, posits a fully formed class system in the Mycenaean (he prefers “Akhaian” 1996: 37) period, a dominant class that survives – albeit initially depressed by—the devastations of the Sea Peoples (or whoever destroyed all the Mycenaean centers except Athens). The no longer “Dark” Ages see their reassertion of leadership in trade and Ionian colonizations laying the foundations of the prosperity of Ionia, which culminates in the eighth century, during which

<sup>1</sup> I was in the process of correcting an embarrassing number of typos in my “final” read-through of my chapter on Sparta when a bibliographic note in A. Powell (2001: 256), which I happened to be using as a text in a course on the Age of Pericles, warmly recommended Cartledge’s *Agesilaos* for a “full-scale analysis of Sparta’s political, social and educational workings.” I have owned a copy of Cartledge’s book for several years but never read it: “judging the book by its cover,” I assumed it was confined to fourth-century developments. Reading the chapter “Agesilaos and the Spartan Class Struggle,” I encountered the sentence I now quote in Chapter Six note 73. This cites Cartledge 1975, which as a Marxist and *Arethusa* subscriber I had of course read when it appeared but completely forgotten. Reading it over was a strange experience: so many of the issues I address in the following introduction were dealt with there with admirable concision. At the same time I felt a certain sadness: the implicit promise of classical historians explicitly engaging with Marx’s texts has alas not been fulfilled – with the great exception of de Ste. Croix’s work (1981), which, amazingly, Cartledge cites as “forthcoming” (1975: 79 n. 35) six years before its actual appearance. In a prefatory note (76) he thanks de Ste. Croix for inspiration and “devastating criticism” – a blessing indeed. In a more recent work (2002: 3) Cartledge decries how “my historical interests and researches had opportunely shifted away from the material (social and economic) and the political (broadly interpreted) to the intellectual or social-psychological . . . I had become especially concerned to interpret and understand the mindset or the mentality of the Greeks.”

these “aristocrats” virtually “commission” (he uses but also balks at the word 1996: 66) Homer to “reflect” their self-conscious self-congratulation. He traces a purely aristocratic audience back to Mycenae, but sees only the prosperity of the late eighth century as the appropriate context in which the fully self-conscious and optimistic aristocracy wants to embrace its glorious past heritage (1996: 63 and *passim*). The only other class he alludes to is the class of “merchants,” called into being – he argues—by the very success of what he posits as aristocrat-led colonial and trade adventures (Latacz 1996: 57). So too Ian Morris (e.g., 1986a, 1987) among others finds “class” and class ideology, and clear evidence of class struggle in burials, but devotes relatively little attention to theorizing the phenomenon of class that plays so key a role in his analysis. His influential opposition of “ruling class” and “middling” ideologies (1996) is posited initially as exclusively within the aristocracy while the rest of society is subsumed in a vaguely hypostatized “*polis*,” but he subsequently moves to straightforward declarations that “*Most Athenians imagined themselves as middling men*” (2000: 153, my emphasis).<sup>2</sup>

Beyond a general tendency of classicists to eschew theory, I believe that the more than century-and-a-half-long anxiety (“a specter is haunting Europe”; *MECW* 6: 482), culminating in the half-century-long Cold War, associated in people’s minds with Marx’s dynamic theorization of class in 1847 (*Communist Manifesto*) and with the turmoils and tragedies led by self-proclaimed followers of Marx explains more fully the general reluctance to engage theoretically with a concept that classicists seem so often to find as indispensable as it is troublesome.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Starr, for example,

<sup>2</sup> Morris (2000) seems to me to blur this distinction between a ruling class ideology and what everyone in the *polis* believes. Kurke, whose enterprise in *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold* (1999) is explicitly dependent on Morris’s ruling class–middling opposition (19–22), has the great virtue of acknowledging directly her own hypostasis of “the city,” but justifies it by “our very limited real knowledge about who exactly is doing what in this period” (17 n. 46), a genuine problem to be sure, but one which seems to constitute no barrier to her own very elaborate explorations of ideological struggles in this same period. In fairness to Morris, whose ongoing quest for new theoretical paradigms is awesome, I should note that his essay on “Hard Surfaces” (2002) is strikingly sympathetic to a number of loosely defined Marxist approaches and even critiques Kurke’s approach as “unable to find an external grounding for economic categories in humanity’s ability to appropriate nature or the equity of the distribution of its fruits” (2002: 18). See below further on Kurke and Morris.

<sup>3</sup> Anton Powell offers a more “delicate” explanation (he is presumably thinking primarily of British scholars): “Aversion from thoughts of social differences has traditionally been common among classical scholars, inspired partly by a delicate reluctance (which the Spartan oligarchs might well have understood) to introduce divisive conversation into their own group” (1989a: 180–1). In another text he offers a more explicitly political account: “The internal conflict which most threatened Greek communities was one between rich and poor, and many scholars of recent times have found analysis in those terms uncongenial because it recalls modern social tensions” (2001: 272). Finley (1967: 201)

whose celebration of the aristocracy of the Archaic Period has much in common with that of Latacz, goes out of his way to dismiss scornfully any relevance of “Klassenkampf” (1977: 19). His use of the German term, in a sense, lets the ideological cat out of the bag: he wants to evoke, without naming Marx.<sup>4</sup> Another strategy that reveals the same anxiety is the use of scare quotes around the word “class” (e.g., J. Hall 2007: 127; Foxhall 1997: 120). One of the subordinate goals of the following study is to highlight on the one hand, the ways in which classical scholars’ fear of being dubbed “Marxists” or – the usual derogatory substitution – “economic determinists” (e.g., Kurke 1999: 12 n. 27) has often mystified the role of class in the history of this period and, on the other, to emphasize how the analyses of many non-Marxist classicists both presuppose and confirm some fundamental Marxist propositions about the nature and functioning of human societies.

This is not to suggest that self-proclaimed Marxists have either ignored classical antiquity or failed to offer theoretical accounts of the nature and meaning of class in particular periods of that era. On the contrary, Marxists such as George Thomson (1946, 1955, 1961) and Margaret Wason (1947) must share a considerable part of the responsibility for non-Marxist analysts’ reluctance to engage in a potentially endless and potentially fruitless ideological debate about the nature of class and its implications for understanding any specific society in any specific historical period.<sup>5</sup> G. E. M. de Ste. Croix devotes a minimum<sup>6</sup> of ninety-one very large, painstaking pages (1981: 19–111) to defending the appropriateness of applying Marxist notions of class and class struggle to the analysis of the ancient Greek world. In the process he offers not only a detailed exploration of Marx’s own texts but also his detailed critique of what he considers both misguided Marxist approaches (e.g., Thomson, Wason, Vernant 1988a [1974], cf. Ste. Croix 1981: 41 and 63) and the alternative Weberian focus on statuses advocated

put it more bluntly: “There is effectively a thick wall of silence and contempt which in our world cuts off Marxist thinking from ‘respectable’ thinking, at least in the one field which I know well, and that is the study of ancient civilization.” How much the situation has improved since 1967 remains to be seen.

<sup>4</sup> His footnotes (1977: 200–1) do specify Marx. Cf. Donlan, “We must be careful above all not to import the modern concept of *Klassenkampf* into the picture. The Greek tyrant was no popular revolutionary leading his people against an oppressive aristocracy” (1999 [1980]:189–90, n. 7). For the context of Donlan’s comment see on tyranny below in text.

<sup>5</sup> Yvon Garlan (1988: 8–14) summarizes some of the debate over slavery between East and West German scholars. McKeown (1999: 118–21) treats Eastern European classical scholarship somewhat more sympathetically.

<sup>6</sup> One could reasonably argue that a great deal more of his text is an ongoing polemic for his methodology.

by Moses Finley (1973, cf. Ste. Croix 1981: 58 and 85–96) and followed by most classicists.<sup>7</sup>

In the following introduction I will try to explore as many of the overlapping lines of argument that dismiss a Marxist approach as seems practicable. While these arguments will gradually contribute to clarifying my alternative approach, I will then set forth more directly the key theoretical assumptions of the following chapters.

#### MOSES FINLEY AND THE DISMISSAL OF CLASS

Given the enormous influence of Finley's approach in the general dismissal of class among classicists, it may be useful to explore it in some detail, even if on some points I necessarily echo de Ste. Croix. I. Morris, in his foreword to the reissue of Finley's *Ancient Economy*, declares, "No book this century has had such a great influence on the study of Greek and Roman economic history" (1999: ix). Earlier Finley was dubbed by Arnaldo Momigliano "the best living social historian of Greece" and "the most influential ancient historian of our time" (Momigliano 1980: 313, cf. Nafissi 2005: 235–6 and, more cautiously, J. Hall, who calls him "one of the most influential economic historians of the twentieth century" 2007: 235). At the same time the complex problem of Finley's ambiguous relationship to Marx, though

<sup>7</sup> Ober (1989: 38) is unusual in that he actually attributes his own usage of the term ideology to Finley (1982b: 17, 1983a: 122–41) and offers his own version of a transcendence of class (see Rose 2006: 106–11). I. Morris cites the Marxists E. P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm for what he calls a "heuristic and analytical" use of "class" but does not elaborate (1987: 177). Of texts I have read recently Manville (1990) is perhaps the most adroit in skirting the concept of class and substituting *status* and *privilege* despite the heavy emphasis in his major sources ([Aristotle] *Ath. Pol.* and Plutarch) on open conflict between rich and poor (cf., for example, 71, 76–7, 159–60, 190–1). Stein-Hölkeskamp also implicitly endorses Finley, who is the only authority she cites for distinguishing between "'Schicht,' 'Klasse,' 'Stand,' und 'Status'" (1989: 8 n. 3). Keith Hopkins, in a volume dedicated "To Moses," emphatically endorses Finley's "elevation of status . . . at the expense of class," which has "drawn the fire of those Marxists [he names none] who are still trying to milk the rhetoric of class struggle and the dominant mode of production." He argues that the great virtue of Finley's approach is that it was a *rare* attempt to assimilate cultural value into economic analysis" (Hopkins 1983: xiii my emphasis), a comment that suggests to me that he had read neither Marx nor any serious Marxists. Van Wees's very title, *Status Warriors* (1992), accurately reflects the emphasis of his entire analysis of Homeric poetry. For his part, Finley got his revenge by referring to Ste. Croix's book as "an eccentric, Procrustean definition of the essential Marxist categories" in his contribution on "ancient society" to *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Finley 1983b: 22). Most recently J. Hall, though he does occasionally offer useful insights on class, seems far more comfortable with a focus on "status": he even sums up his view of the sixth-century emergence of an aggressively self-conscious merchant class by declaring, "While earlier, landed wealth had – at least in part – *derived from status*, there was now an increasing demand that the acquisition of wealth from other sources should be recognized with a concomitant *status* . . ." (2007: 284, my emphasis).

significant for my project, would entail a *very* long digression.<sup>8</sup> In 1967, for example, after a correspondent accused a review he had published of “ill-applied Marxism” he offered a terse but eloquent – even courageous at that historical moment – defense, e.g., (1967: 202): “Properly understood, Marxism is not a dogma. For an ancient historian, it is a way of looking at men [*sic*] and events which helps to pose fruitful and significant questions.” I. Morris in his Foreword (1999: xvii–xviii) essentially finesses the problem: “As a serious student of Weberian sociology, Finley would have made a strange communist.” Momigliano (1987) addresses the problem briefly (see below) as do Shaw and Saller (1981). My own sense, to be very brief, is that Marx’s own writings deeply impressed Finley, but that the stigma of Marxism arising from Cold War hysteria and the sheer stupidity of some Marxist and anti-Marxist polemics – not to mention his own painful experience with the Internal Security Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate aka the McCarran Committee (Tompkins 2006: 95) – led him to distance himself as far as possible from the label and to seek in Weber an acceptable theoretical framework for addressing questions raised by Marx such as the necessity of a proper *theory* in the writing of history (1981: 3–23, 1985a [1987] and *passim*), the role of slavery in ancient society (Finley 1936, 1981: 97–198, 1983b, 1987, 1998 [1980]), the relationship of political to economic structures (e.g., 1973a, 1981: 24–40, 1983a, 1985a), the nature of imperialism (1981: 41–61 [= 1978], 1985a: 67–87), etc. While more than half of Weber’s *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations* (1976 = *Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum*, 1909) is devoted to ancient Greece and Rome, Marx’s more sustained discussion of precapitalist forms in the *Grundrisse* was first published in Moscow in 1939 and only became available in the west in 1953 (Marx 1973: 7). Though Weber categorically dismissed any comprehensive theory of history – Marxist or Hegelian (cf. Giddens 1971: 163, 194, F. Jameson 1988: vol. 2: 10) – the temptation to separate Weber too radically from Marx must also be resisted: as Finley himself pointed out, “Marx was the specter haunting Weber” (1981: 18). Moreover, as Giddens repeatedly stresses, the Marxism against which Weber reacted most rigorously was Engels’s pseudo-scientific transference of the dialectic to nature, which “thus obscures the most essential element of Marx’s conception” (Giddens 1971: 189, cf. xiv–xv). Giddens is then at pains to stress the fundamental harmony between much of Weber’s analysis of religion and ideology with Marx’s dialectic of subject and object (Giddens 1971: 210–12). Finally,

<sup>8</sup> In thinking about this problem of Finley’s relation to Marxism, however, I would like to acknowledge again the great help offered by Daniel Tompkins in sharing with me his ongoing work on Finley, some of which has appeared in print (2006 and 2008).

Finley himself had some serious criticisms of Weber (1985a: 88–103). Jameson (1988c vol. II: 4), I think, hits the nail on the head in terms that apply perfectly to Giddens as well as Foucault – and I would even add Polanyi: “In reality, Weber’s most influential legacy to the anti-Marxist arsenal lay not in some idealistic reaction against a materialism he himself clearly shared with Marx but rather in the strategic substitution, in his own research and theorization, of the political for the economic realm as the principal object of study, and thus, implicitly, as the ultimate determining reality of history.” More specifically, the focus on “power,” which Giddens (1981: 3) claims Marx undertheorized, is part of this heritage.

To focus on what is most relevant to my project, I quote in full Finley’s initial discussion in *Ancient Economy* of Marx’s conception of class:

There is little agreement among historians and sociologists about the definition of ‘class’ or the canons by which to assign anyone to a class. Not even the apparently clear-cut, unequivocal Marxist concept of class turns out to be without difficulties. Men are classed according to their relation to the means of production, first between those who do and those who do not own the means of production; second, among the former, between those who work themselves and those who live off the labor of others. Whatever the applicability of that classification in present-day society, for the ancient historian there is an obvious difficulty: the slave and the free wage labourer would then be members of the same class, on a mechanical interpretation, as would the richest senator and the non-working owner of a small pottery. That does not seem a very sensible way to analyse ancient society. (Finley 1973a: 49)

I resist the temptation to italicize, as does Ste. Croix, “on a mechanical interpretation.” I am struck earlier in the passage by the rhetorical antithesis between the confusion of (ordinary? real?) historians and sociologists and “even the apparently *clearcut, unequivocal* Marxist concept of class.” While any reader of Marx would agree that the “relation to the means of production” is a decisive component of Marx’s concept, among people who take Marx seriously very few indeed would call his concept of class “clearcut and unequivocal.”<sup>9</sup> The fact is he used the term *class* in more than one sense, and his concept of class developed over many years. Most serious accounts of his concept tend to begin with a lament over the fact that the third volume of *Capital* breaks off after a page and a half of introductory matter in a chapter entitled “Classes” (1967: 885–6).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Finley (1985c: 183–4), without acknowledging how misleading and purely rhetorical his earlier characterization of Marx’s view of class was, focuses on the different senses in which Marx, in the course of his long career, uses the term as further grounds for dismissing it.

<sup>10</sup> Beyond Ste. Croix’s fairly elaborate efforts at extricating a definition of class from Marx, see (for an almost random sampling) Giddens (1971: 36–38), Bettelheim (1985), Resnick and Wolff (1987:

Finley's second distinction, between those owners of capital who work themselves and those who live off the labor of others, is rather ambiguous. If Finley is referring to capitalists who also work at their own factories beside their workers, Marx dismisses their claims to be "workers" as pure mystification (e.g., Marx 1976: 300). Presumably Finley is referring to independent and individual producers, who have no one else working for them. For Marx this is essentially a precapitalist phenomenon, although of course he was aware that such individuals continued to exist in the margins of capitalist society. His whole concept of "alienated" or "estranged" labor is based on the assumption that under fully developed capitalism "the distinction between the capitalist and the land rentier, like that between the tiller of the soil and the factory worker, disappears and . . . the whole of society must fall apart into the two classes – the *property owners* and the propertyless *workers*" (MECW 3: 270, his emphasis). Finley's phrase, "those who live off the labour of others," is as close as he comes to the decisive concept of exploitation. While earlier, in discussing the distinction between the Greek words *ploutos* and *penia*, he cites with apparent approval Veblen's distinction between "exploit and drudgery" (Finley 1973a: 41; Veblen 1934: 15), yet the rest of his discussion of Marx completely ignores the category of exploitation (cf. Ste. Croix 1981: 91).<sup>11</sup>

Ste. Croix also attacks Finley's *reductio ad absurdum* in accusing Marx of implicitly offering no basis for distinguishing "the slave and the free wage labourer." In a special appendix on the matter (1981: 504–5) Ste. Croix initially has recourse to a highly technical distinction in Marx between "constant capital," according to which the slave is simply and literally a "tool,"<sup>12</sup> and "variable capital," the category to which the free wage-earner belongs.<sup>13</sup>

109–63), Bendix and Lipset (1966), Wright (1985 and 1989), Poulantzas (1973: 58–98; 1978: 13–35), Bottomore (1983 s.v.), Carver (1987 s.v.). Chilcote (2000: 89–132) offers a particularly full romp through the whole range of theories of class, starting with Adam Smith and David Ricardo. As Eric Roll observes in his history of economic thought, "As . . . these doctrines [the theory of classes and the class-struggle, etc.] have become parts of fiercely-held and as fiercely-attacked, political dogma, it is not easy without becoming involved in doctrinal battles to formulate them in a manner which is understandable and makes some sense" (Roll 1992: 231). Thus even the most "neutral" of scholars would never call Marx's theory of classes "apparently clearcut, unequivocal."

<sup>11</sup> As Kyratas (2002) emphasizes, the very concept of economic exploitation was alien to the Greeks, but that does not mean that the phenomenon did not exist.

<sup>12</sup> The image, of course, comes from Aristotle, *Pol.* 1253b32–33, "the slave is a living [soul-possessing *empsychon*] possession, even as every servant is an instrument taking precedence over [inanimate] instruments."

<sup>13</sup> Applying a term like "variable capital" to antiquity strikes me as hopelessly misleading. Throughout his varying analyses of capitalism Marx is constantly at pains to historicize the specific preconditions of the capitalist mode of production by repeated specific contrasts to earlier modes, most commonly

Despite the enormous ideological enforcement of the notion of “freedom” in Classical Athens (e.g., Raaflaub 2004: 227–35, 243; Cartledge 1993), I suspect that the “free” laborers working alongside slaves, though receiving perhaps twice the pay of a slave (Jones 1956: 190),<sup>14</sup> might nonetheless feel great bitterness at their own lot. Though the phrase “wage-slavery” is a modern coinage, we cannot assume that the ideological distinction for these workers between “free” and “slave” was always a sufficient consolation for sharing with slaves a similar relation to the process of production. Moreover, if they worked full-time, they would have no leisure to participate in the political life of the city, a major component of their “freedom.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that ancient aristocratic attitudes viewed those who worked for others as little different from slaves – as Finley himself spelled out (1973: 40–41). To the extent that free workers did have a sharply different sense of themselves from slaves – and we have no direct evidence from such workers – it attests to the success of an ideological offensive surrounding the category of slavery.

To support his dismissal of Marx’s relevance to antiquity Finley has recourse to a further rhetorical gesture: to cite a Marxist against Marx:

Half a century ago Georg Lukács, a most orthodox Marxist, made the correct observation that in pre-capitalist societies, ‘status-consciousness . . . masks class consciousness’. By that he meant, in his own words, that ‘the structuring of society

slave labor and serfdom. The following is perhaps the most concise of many formulations: “This transformation [into capital] can itself only take place under particular circumstances, which meet together at this point: the confrontation of, and the contact between, two very different kinds of commodity owners; on the one hand, the owners of money, means of production, means of subsistence, who are eager to valorize the sum of values they have appropriated by buying the labour-power of others; on the other hand, free workers, the sellers of their own labour-power, and therefore the sellers of labour. Free workers, in the double sense that they neither form part of the means of production themselves, as would be the case with slaves, serfs, etc., nor do they own the means of production, as would be the case with self-employed peasant proprietors” (Marx 1976: 874, cf. Marx 1973: 463 and 471–72). It is only within this specific market and production relation between capitalist and worker that the latter can be viewed as “variable capital.” What the capitalist spends on raw materials and instruments of production remains a constant, whereas “that part of capital which is turned into labour-power does undergo an alteration of value in the process of production. It both reproduces the equivalent of its own value and produces an excess, a surplus-value, which may itself vary, and be more or less according to circumstances” (Marx 1976: 317). See below for Marx on Greek slavery.

<sup>14</sup> This refers to the end of the fifth century. Elsewhere (189) he suggests that free laborers in mines might have received a bit more than twice the wage of a slave. However, the inscription for the building of the Erechtheum for this same period indicates slaves and free workers received *exactly the same pay for the same work* (Finley 1982a: 100–1).

<sup>15</sup> In another context Finley quotes with apparent approval Sir Keith Hancock: “The Boers very soon convinced themselves that the artisans’ work and slaves’ work were the same thing” (Finley 1982a: 194). Kyrtatas (2002: 143) states of the Greeks themselves (especially Aristotle): “whenever human beings worked in a way that the product of their labour belonged to another human being, they were regarded, for all practical purposes, as slaves.” The issue in my view, however, is not ancient attitudes but the actual relations of production.



*Moses Finley and the dismissal of class*

9

into castes and estates means that economic elements are *inextricably* joined to political and religious factors; that economic and legal categories are objectively and *substantively so interwoven as to be inseparable*. In short, from neither a Marxist nor a non-Marxist standpoint is class a sufficiently demarcated category for our purposes. (Finley 1973a: 50; Lukács 1971: 55–59, Finley’s emphasis)

In his footnote Finley cites the opening essay of Lukács’s text as support for his hyperbolic description of him as “a most orthodox Marxist.” The title of that essay is indeed “What is Orthodox Marxism?” What Finley does not indicate is that at the time of its publication (1922, see the 1967 preface reprinted in Lukács 1971: xvi) it was a radical defense of the Hegelian element in Marx, a daring attempt to counter what became the dominant Stalinist orthodoxy of Marxism as “science,” an attempt that led to the book’s condemnation by Bukharin, Zinoviev, and others (Bottomore 1983: 291).<sup>16</sup> But a more relevant omission by Finley is the fact that the primary goal of the essay from which Finley takes his quote is precisely an analysis of *class consciousness*. The chief point of Lukács’s discussion of precapitalist societies is to stress the reasons why class consciousness did not arise in the past but *can* arise under capitalism and must arise if real human liberation is to be achieved. Lukács is, however, far from suggesting the irrelevance of Marx to the analysis of these societies:

Status-consciousness – a real historical factor – masks class consciousness; in fact it prevents it from emerging at all. . . . Thus class consciousness has quite a different relation to history in pre-capitalist and capitalist periods. In the former case the classes could only be deduced from the immediately given historical reality *by the methods of historical materialism*. In capitalism they themselves constitute this immediately given historical *reality*. (Lukács 1971: 58, his emphasis)

What Finley ignores is that status consciousness is precisely *conscious* and subjective: the relationship of individuals to the mode of production is objective whether they are conscious of it or not. Thus, as de Ste. Croix (1981: 58) points out, when it comes to discussing class struggle, Finley can

<sup>16</sup> In his deathbed interviews Lukács was asked why he thought *History and Class Consciousness* still had an international impact. He replied, “The book has a certain value because in it *questions are raised which Marxism evaded at the time*” (1983: 77, my emphasis). Martin Jay also cites the following from Lukács’s Preface to the reissue of the text in 1967: “It is undoubtedly one of the great achievements of *History and Class Consciousness* to have reinstated the category of totality in the central position it had occupied throughout Marx’s works and from which it had been ousted by the ‘scientism’ of the social-democratic opportunists” (Jay 1984: 85; Lukács 1971: xx). In explaining why he was not eliminated during the Stalinist purges, he notes among other reasons, “In addition – and this is perhaps a cynical observation – I had very inferior living quarters that were less attractive to the NKVD” (1983: 97). This speaks volumes about the mentality of many of the prime movers of those purges.

see only conscious, *political* struggles.<sup>17</sup> The slave who does the minimum amount of work that will evade punishment or who runs away is, in Marxist terms, engaging in class struggle – albeit without class consciousness in the strong sense of the term, a struggle which in certain circumstances (e.g., during the Peloponnesian War, cf. Thucydides 7.27.2) may have political consequences, but by no stretch of the imagination could be termed a specifically political struggle.

It is also striking that Finley's use of Lukács aims at supporting his own version of Polanyi's focus on the "embedded" economy:<sup>18</sup> he seems to be arguing that if the economy is inextricably conjoined with political, religious, and legal categories, this somehow invalidates a Marxist approach. This is a particularly odd use of Lukács, who is especially concerned to use Marxism to elucidate the "social totality," i.e., "the concrete totality of the historical world, the concrete and total historical process" (Lukács 1971: 145, cf. Jay 1984: 81–127).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Polanyi himself credits Marx with an important role in the development of the distinction between embedded and disembedded economies: "Its [the distinction's] sociological background was first mooted by Hegel in the 1820s and developed by Karl Marx in the 1840s" (1968: 82). Reading over Polanyi's broad-view essay "Societies and Economic Systems" (1968: 3–25), I was struck by how little of it – though based on a great deal of anthropological research of the twentieth century – Marx would disagree with. Both Marx and Polanyi are concerned in a major way (see further below) to attack the ahistoricism of capitalist economists who either project capitalist views of human nature into the past or simply dismiss the past. Both stress that

<sup>17</sup> In a later work Finley returns to class, and class conflict, and alludes scornfully to "the current bad habit of pinning the Marxist label on any and every political analysis that employs a concept of class" (1983a: 9–10). A footnote (to n. 29) alludes to his earlier case for "status" and assures us, "My return in the present work to 'class' (in the sense intended in ordinary discourse, not in a technical sense, Marxist or other) does not imply a change of view." The fact is, however, that the kind of class conflict he discusses (loosely that of "the rich and the poor") has nothing to do with any sort of status conflict, which operates primarily *within* a given class.

<sup>18</sup> "To employ a metaphor, the facts of the economy were originally embedded in situations that were not in themselves of an economic nature, neither the ends nor the means being primarily material. The crystallization of the concept of the economy was a matter of time and history. But neither time nor history have provided us with those conceptual tools required to penetrate the maze of social relationships in which the economy was embedded" (Polanyi et al. 1957: 242). This seemingly utterly despairing view of the fruits of "time and history" are then triumphantly answered by the following: "This is the task of what we will here call institutional analysis" (ibid.)

<sup>19</sup> F. Jameson's chapter (2009: 201–22) on Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* is particularly eloquent in sorting out the distortions involved in the postmodern "war on totality" and emphasizing that in Lukács "totality" is not . . . a form of knowledge, but rather a framework in which various kinds of knowledge are positioned, pursued, and evaluated. This is clearly the implication of the phrase 'aspiration to totality'" (210–11).