

## Parasite: Capitalism and Survival

### *Parazit: Kapitalizm ve Ayakta Kalmak*

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**Abstract:** South Korean director Bong Joon-ho's film Parasite (2019) which is very strong visually, also stands at a quite important place intellectually. The film problematizes the "concept of class" in a wealthy country where the income distribution between classes is increasing. It focuses the camera on the lives of social classes, and the relations with other classes. It sheds light to the unknown sides of social class; inter class and intra class relations that were analyzed by the Marxist theory several times. By presenting the "class" concept with images, Bong Joon-ho provides the intersection of philosophy and cinema. "Is it possible to talk about a class that always remains the same?", "Are there other issues to consider other than class now?" The director deals with this very general and much discussed issue in a different way and again. The class problem in a post-industrial world is presented via the power of images rather than philosophical concepts and discussions. The questions "what is a class?" and "how is the relation between classes?" are not questions that can be passed off by a single answer and at the same time they cannot be handled through a single aspect. In this paper, it will be focused on thinking about the new form that interclass and interclass relations have received today.

**Keywords:** Parasite, class, upper class, lower class, Marxist theory, Bong Joon-ho, survival.



## Introduction

The South Korean director Bong Joon-ho, who is best known for his *Snowpiercer* (2013) film, describes a train that moves permanently in a world that is covered by glaciers in that film. In the forefront of the train, of which each compartment sheds light to different faces of life, there is a great welfare and wealth whereas in the back part there is slavery and poverty. The tension and conflict between these two compartments go on along the whole train and present the audience a panorama of life. Ecological disasters do not only abolish the structure of class society in the old world but it also penetrates into the train that is the only place where life is protected. Bong Joon-ho handles wealth and poverty issues which existed throughout history in his film *Parasite* (Gisaengchung, 2019) from a different perspective; wealth and poverty dispute of which the boundaries are sharpened even more today. In fact, Bong Joon-ho's films have the tendency to attach impoverished, otherized, exploited and repressed people to the circumstances they are in, beyond their personal world. The films usually present conviction and gives assurance to the audience that there is a way out of a bad situation. *Parasite* is Bong Joon-ho's first film that has no hope of a release. In a sense, *Parasite* is close to the ending of *Okja* (2017) which starts as a fascinating tale about a young girl who goes on a journey to save a giant pig (Taubin, 2019). In *Okja* the audience relaxes through a



personal salvation. However, *Okja* is the only pig that can get out of the slaughterhouse but the system that creates and eradicates its species goes on in full course. In *Parasite*, Bong Joon-ho, goes a step further and heads towards *capitalism* as a system and asks the following question: As long as capitalism continues to exist, how do people behave or should behave?

Bong Joon-ho, who has a different place with his style and language, can be understood in the unique identity of South Korean cinema. It can be said that all the remaining directors share certain characteristics except for the two names that can be seen as pioneers in the cinema industry. One of these two pioneers is Korean veteran Im Kwon-taek, and the other is Kim Ki-duk, who has never been trained in cinema, but stands out for their striking and original works. It is that they have somehow derived from the political gloom of Modern South Korean history, benefiting from a diverse transformational cultural diversity, and they do not need to discuss politics, labor, class, or liberation in the usual sense (Ji-youn, 2019, p.17). The most prominent features of these filmmakers are that they deal with social problems from a new perspective outside the familiar boundaries. Women-men, wealth-poverty, boss-worker, human-animal, nature-human relationships are handled from a different perspective. Bong Joon-ho uses Hollywood's frames in starter films (*The Host*, 2006; *Okja*; *Snowpiercer*). Thanks to these frameworks, his films reveal emotional contradictions between America and South Korea. His relationship with Hollywood is not a direct imitation, rather he uses Hollywood frameworks to investigate and criticize South Korea's social and political issues (Klein, 2008, p.872). Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* brings a new perspective to the contradiction of wealth and poverty, which becomes more evident in South Korea. The contradiction is in reality felt everywhere rather than needing a Hollywood frame.



### 1. Story of Two Families

In the social life of an individual's categorization is determined by many factors. As Marx pointed out, when we accept the economic formation of society as a natural process, it is difficult to understand human beings without returning to the economic relations to which it owes its social existence. No matter how many different categories we divide the human being as a subject (Marx, 1906, p.15). In this case, man is first categorized in social life according to his economic position. The economic categorization of man actually enables him to be categorized ideologically. Including an individual of a class according to the economic conditions, he / she also makes it necessary to lead a life accordingly. In this respect, mankind in economic and social being can be and is divided into two sharp classes without needing any other relationship: poor or rich. This classification is made according to the economic power of the personal independence from other relations in social life. This classification in which emerged as a necessary result of economic life has taken in different forms of every period of history and has reached present day. Today the economic conditions experienced in Bertell Ollman have taken a different form in "the city called capitalism". Ollman states in his book *Dance of The Dialectics* that Marxism offers us the stories of two cities. The first of these is the "city of capitalism" determined by the economic relations in which everyone lives and tries to survive. It is generally thought that there is freedom in this city, but this is not the case at all. The second is the "city of communism" which has not yet been realized but must be fought for in order to be recognized (Ollman, B, 2003, p.1). Bong Joon-ho's parasite film, which is the subject of this article takes place in the city of capitalism with the expression of Ollman. According to Ollman in the city of Capitalism,

Everything costs, and most things cost more than those who need them can afford. For most of its citizens, what is called "freedom" is having the right to compete for things that remain just outside their grasp. But no one keeps them from competing or from thinking that one day they (or their children) may succeed (Ollman, B, 2003, p.1).

Two dominant classes are clearly visible in the city of capitalism: The lower class (poor) and the upper class (rich). Of these two classes the upper class rises above the labour of the lower class. With the conditions and



possibilities of the lower class it can be said that lower class is always tied to the upper class' apron string to move on to the upper class. Jumping from the lower class to the upper class can only happen if people of the lower class overthrow their ruler. This abolishes the existing rules which govern the relations between the two classes. The rulers of the lower class are capitalists, which is those who own and control the means of production, distribution, and trade. They manage everything to their own interests according to the principle of highest profit (Ollman, B, 2003, p.1). However, if the relationship between the two classes has become more complicated. What will it be done or can it be done? In a way, the *Parasite* film becomes apparent as the imaginary experience of this thought.

Where do the boundaries begin of the lower class and the upper class, where do they end? How far can a class that exhausts itself both mentally and materially while struggling to climb up from their social status, climb up? How can ordinary people who do not have their own plans but have all kinds of plan to damage others, rise? What happens when human action stops being a value in itself, and becomes a game or trick towards other people? What kind of a world do we encounter when human's relationship with other humans turns into an instrument or an object? How far can individuals who conduct their own lives and interest, intervene the world of people who are not from theirs? This is the main theme of *Parasite*. Bong Joon-ho presents the *actual* and *virtual* image of this thought. In this sense, it is possible to say that the *Parasite* film makes an innovative and independent contribution to the philosophy in its own unique way. (Livingston, 2009, p.20)

The center point of the film is two families. Families differ from many aspects, foremost of all, with respect to the places they live in. In the film, the low class, common people are identified with a smelly semi-basement where there is no privacy and no sunlight. The semi-basement, half of which is underground and the other half is above ground, is used as a metaphor. While people who live there try to preserve their belief that they are over the ground, are also afraid of falling down completely (Sims, 2019). In the film, this is represented by the Kim's family. The family members are Kim Ki-taek the father who could not succeed in any job; Choong-sook the mother; purposeless, without any agendas and unsuccessful Ki-woo



(the son) and Ki-jeong (the daughter). In order to survive they work at various jobs like folding pizza boxes. The upper class portrayed in the film by the family of Mr. Park, can be perceived differently from all over the world supporting the ideology “wealth does not have a unique form.” The house of the Park family is designed by the famous architect Namgoong Hyeonja, gets sun light, has a large garden, is secure, coordinated, big and consists of restrained colors and materials. Most importantly, it is away from all “parasites” of the city (O’Falt, 2019). The Park family has a different taste from ordinary people, they do not like vanity and they do not want to come into contact with the external world. Similarly, they do not have any fear of falling as a class. They have drawn a line between themselves and the external world; and they do not let anyone cross this line. The external world exists only with its *malodour* for them.

While some parts of the city live in a luxurious life, the other parts are in great poverty. While this contradiction takes place concretely before the eyes of the city dwellers, no one is seen fighting to put it to an end. The city is not only divided into classes mainly rich or poor, but also by location. It is possible to see this throughout the film. Against the glamor of the neighborhood where the Park family lives, the neighborhood where the Kim family lives seems to be a garbage dump in every aspect. As the lives of individuals socially diverged, they become organized publicly. The Kim’s family is poor, but is not out of step with the Park family in terms of clothing and technology. This dialectic shows that the public cycle in itself is likely to disappear in a brutal vulgarity like the individual world.

The paths of the Kim and the Park family, which are complete opposites in all respects, intersect when Ki-woo enters the family’s life by pretending to be an English teacher. This intersection gets more complicated as Ki-woo introduces his whole family with different roles to the Park family-his sister Ki-jeong as a painting teacher, Kim ki-taek as a chauffeur and Choong-sook as the housemaid. In spite of the Park family’s paranoid security precaution, the family is invaded by the Kim family; just like parasites that invade the body of living beings through which they feed themselves. In other words, the Kim family does not occupy the Park family ideologically and politically. On the contrary, the Kim family does not share their poverty with a class struggle. They devise a cunning tactic and



are using the opportunity to survive (Ki woo's asking him to teach instead of his friend Min).

Bong Joon-ho expertly succeeds in presenting the point that the relationship between classes has reached within the new capitalist world, by blending the feelings of irony and humor. The film is full of metaphors in an environment that is dominated by the capitalist style of production and its consequences. The name of the film is *Parasite*, that is, an organism the life of which is dependent on another living being and that can harm the living being that it lives on. A living being that lives dependently on others, is only a living being that should be annihilated for others. And we can immediately see this metaphor at the beginning of the film. The family members, who live in hard conditions and in a semi-basement where they can see the street from a small window, see the fumigator. The mother Chung-sook asks "What? Fumigation?"<sup>1</sup>

Kim the father "They still do that kind of thing?"

Ki-woo: "Guess so." Ki-jung: "Shut the window."

Kim: "Leave it open; we will get free extermination."

Chung-sook: Right too many sting bugs these days".

These words of Kim and his wife are the foundation of Bong Joon-ho's social criticism. Yes, nowadays stink bugs have increased. But a sink bug is not just mentioned literally, it also represents the lower layers of social life which increases every day. Kim's family is also a stink bug. As the ones who are downstairs, as soon as those stink bugs harm the body, that is, at the moment they harm the mechanism and development of the capitalist society, they will also be fumigated. We listen the unavoidable end of those who are downstairs from Kim Ki-taek: "Fumigation to sink bugs!"

An individual that becomes a sink bug, just like other insects, does not have a way out other than *surviving*. We can immediately understand the first sign of family members' transformation into sink bugs, from the conversation between Ki-woo, his sister Ki-jeong and the girl who comes to take the pizza boxes. The main direction of the film is determined by the

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<sup>1</sup> Fumigation is a kind of protection method from harmful insects. Pests, insects and bacteria that are thought to be harmful are killed by giving chemical substances in gaseous form in a closed environment.



sister's remarks that the staff, who works part-time in the pizza company, has a bad reputation since he disappeared suddenly, and also by her words "fire him!" so that her brother could get that job. The only worry of the family we encounter who has turned into a sink bug, is "to survive", "to keep up" and to resort to any kind of game or trick to ensure their survival. A type of family that has no other goal than daily survival, can exist only by hiding, just like insects. We can understand the situation of the family by looking at the scene in the basement where the Kim family is dining after receiving the money in exchange of the pizza boxes. Literally speaking, the house is not a house anymore, but an insect hole used to hide to survive. When they get out of this hole, the behaviors and reactions of Kim family do not change. The fact that the Kim family disperses around when they are discovered by the Park family who returned home early due to rain, proves this situation.

As Boon Joon-ho expresses in an interview: "we all live in the same country, called capitalism" (Jones, 2020). Even though people are living in different countries spatially, they are the members of the same country with respect to economic and social relations. Life is, first of all, founded on satisfying practical needs. These practical needs are the foundations of the continuation of human existence. Satisfying practical needs is possible with "production." As Marx specifies, social production is not a simple technical process; on the contrary, it is the reproduction of social relations as a flow and procession (Marx and Engels, 1906, p.620). Therefore, social relations are not separate from the world of practical needs. As the tendency of the capitalist system to render the strong even stronger and the weak even weaker pervades, it is unavoidable that the relationship between classes will transform into a new shape. In the film *Parasite*, since the strength of individuals who comply with the system is limited and survival is hard as a result of post-industrial production forces, it is unavoidable that the person sets off with a different "weapon." Even though in capitalism, people live in different countries, cities and towns, they are between the wheels of the same system. The wheels of this system naturally condemn each person to a specific class. Class directly arises from the individual's economic conditions. While the upper class needs the workforce of those who are beneath, the low class needs to sell its labor to the upper



class in order to survive. Although, they do not want to see and bear with each other, there is and there has to be a relationship between them. The continuity of this economic system depends upon the relationship between people from all classes. As Boon Joon- ho specifies:

I think all creators, all artists, and even just everyone, we are always interested in class, 24/7. I think it would actually be strange if we're not. You know, when we're seeing people on the subway, on the streets, complete strangers, we wonder, how rich are they? Or you know, people we encounter in the airports, did they ride economy class, business class? We always wonder about this, because we live in the era of capitalism. I think we all have very sensitive antennae to class, in general (Paiella, 2019).

The capitalist world exists through the presence of classes. In the film *Parasite*, the director directs the camera on how two different classes perceive each other. The minds of both classes are so tainted that they do not recognize each other even when they look. Those who are from the low class are objects that facilitate the life of those who are from the upper class. Similarly, those from the upper class are objects to be benefited from for people from the low class. The boundaries between classes come to light not with the eye but rather with the nose. Even though the sense of smell is valued less than the sense of vision and audition, it has a different resistance. When the sense of vision and audition are insufficient, a person – the Kim family that disperses and hides with the Park family's unexpected return from holiday- exists through its smell. This, actually, indicates the fact that smell is the sense organ that is least effected from biological evolution. This is why in the past, this smell could be the justification of why blacks were not accepted to high society in America and similarly why Germans and Jews did not embrace each other. But today these boundaries changed shape. The most important reason why the barriers between upper classes and lower classes are not annihilated is the sense of smell (Simmel, 1997, p.117). This is why "the social problem is not merely an ethical problem; it is also a problem of smell" (Simmel, 1997, p.117). Smell that gets ahead of vision in the film, is at the same time a metaphor that enables class consciousness to become evident. Therefore, in the film, imaginations provided not only by vision but also by smell. It is not class consciousness that is reached from the sense of smell, but rather the image of



class. If there were no smell, it would be difficult for the image of class to come to light. While the father Kim does not get out of control when his daughter dies in his arms at the birthday party of Mr. Park's son, Mr. Park's reaction to the smell of the ex-housemaid's husband ends up with a murder as the point that Mr. Kim cannot endure his own class and the amount of humiliation. Even though the murder that Kim committed seems to be a personal act, it can actually be read as a "class murder."

## 2. The Motive for Survival Versus Class Consciousness

In the dialectic of production relations-social relations in a capitalist system, the effect of the latter on the former is always highlighted by the Marxist theory. However, the appearance of the change and transformations in social life arises much later than production relations (Benjamin, 2008, p.2). Therefore, it would be a mistake to focus on one of them and render the other worthless. In the film Bong Joon-ho reveals the fact that human relations in the new capitalist system are shaped through "the motive for survival" rather than an apparent class consciousness. As the necessary consequence of the motive of survival, the intellectual and sensory world of the individual also changes. The film shows us that today, the poor is at a lower state than class consciousness. Actually class consciousness is the way that class evaluates itself in the world (Williams, 1997, p.76). The decrease in the need of workforce and unsecured short term jobs in forms of post-industrial production (the replacement of labor with automation), have obstructed the conditions to survive. In that respect, the behavior pattern of the Kim's family indicates that the transformation and change within the capitalist system have transformed into an inhumane quality and that classes have waned more and more or that it has become difficult to behave with class consciousness. As Jameson's specifies,

The reason lies in the identity and difference between the stages of capitalism, each one remaining true to the latter's essence and structure (the profit motive, accumulation, expansion, exploitation of wage labor) at the same time that it marks a mutation in culture and everyday life, in social institutions and human relationships (Jameson, 2011, p. 9).

As Jameson also states, the new form that capitalism has is not unrepresentable; on the contrary, it gives a new form to the individual and its



way of thinking. Actually, in one respect, the film focuses on the revelation of several tendencies in social life that exist virtually in capitalism. Due to the fact that in capitalism, life or existence develops as a supplement of the production processes, it is impossible to talk about the individual's autonomy. In this system, it is quite difficult to talk about a truth. If we are to talk about a truth, this can at most be the individuals' emergence with different forms of existence continuously and their acts in accordance with it. Therefore, instead of focusing on commodities produced or created by people, it is necessary to focus on their identities that are transformed into "commodities". Talking about workers' labor that is depreciated in the system day after day as if it was still a class and being insistent on that do not solve the problem. The world of people's life that are molded by this system, does not have a reference point anymore. It is rather exhibiting change from place to place or from hand to hand, just like commodities. The individuals, like commodities, keep up with new and changing sectors and environments every day. Therefore, the individual cannot reach an identity that will exhibit continuity. Avoiding an unchanging identity is a more useful position to facilitate the survival of the individual. In his film, Bong Joon-ho reflects all these aspects. Existing by maintaining a particular identity in the new system, makes things more difficult. Existing is just like short-term and temporary jobs. Just as working in short-term and temporary jobs requires having a different role and identity, existing also suffers the same fate. The enforcement of the new form of capitalism on individuals, is condemning them to different forms of existence of which differs each month, each week, each day and even each hour.

Even though the film expands around the topic of class criticism, the criticism is not understood as an opposition or as a resistance of the low class to the upper class in a familiar sense. On the contrary, the act of parasites or stink bugs is not founded on shaking the position of strong ones, but rather on taking advantage of them. It is not quite possible to talk about a resistance. During the preparation for the show in the birthday party in the Park family's garden, Mr. Kim behaves as if he is resisting, but as soon as he does that, Mr. Park breaks his resistance by reminding him the "over time pay" and the fact that what he does is also "a part of his job." Mr. Kim, then, returns to playing his hidden identity. If we are to talk



about such a resistance, its possible to say that it does not arise from being unable to get a reward in return of labor, but that it is rather easier to take advantage of the upper class as much as possible without anyone realizing. It is possible to say that this situation originates from the extinction of the belief in class salvation. The belief in the impossibility of a class salvation encourages poor people to enter the world of rich people where everything works on behalf of the latter and to profit from them as much as possible. It is possible to see this situation wholly in the Kim family. Because the relations that the Kim Family has with others are based on profit, it gets quite difficult to distinguish the real from the fake. There is no reason to consider the fake as real; it only ensures survival. And this shows that there is a transition from the moral to the immoral. The Kim family clearly shows that the moral and the immoral tendencies are intertwined. In an economic world where existing autonomously gets more difficult for individuals, human relations comply with this tendency. People try everything to ensure survival; as a last resort, they do not refrain from “playing” “the values of that world” even though they do not believe in them. Because it is less dangerous to pretend that they are adapting to the world of a system against which they are not strong enough and which they cannot face. The members of the Kim family see the living conditions and the economic politics that give rise to them as a given condition. In that respect, the film presents a sign about the invincible universality of capitalism. As a matter of fact, as Jameson specifies;

What is crippling is not the presence of an enemy but rather the universal belief, not only that this tendency is irreversible, but that the historic alternatives to capitalism have been proven unviable and impossible, and that no other socioeconomic system is conceivable, let alone practically available (Jameson, 2005, p. xii).

This belief indicates that class contradictions have evolved into a different dimension because even though in social relations there is a radical diversity and otherness, they are established upon an acquiescence, namely, an adoption of the system’s contradictions as they are. Gains that a social change will bring, are out of the agenda. They are replaced by the individual’s achieving the condition of being or pretending to be an object that a system can accept or value; not as an individual in the system. The form of



struggle that arises out of the contradiction between classes in a familiar sense, gives its place to a more surreptitious form. This form is to play roles that conform the discourse of the upper class, by hiding their own identity. Because of the fact that individuals act in compliance with such a tendency, they give up their class demands and attach themselves only to the tendency to survive. Individuals who act only according to their motivation to survive, hold on to the system with an identity that is not theirs, namely, as someone else. Actually, in a sense, they exist by erasing their identity, just like *parasites*; a being that exists in another's body, but that does not have its own identity. But it is questionable if this can be called as existence. In that respect, the Kim family erases its "identity" voluntarily. What the individual encounters in a capitalist world is not alienation; it is the evanescence of identity. Adorno and Horkheimer had foreseen this problem: "In class society, the self's hostility to sacrifice included a sacrifice of the self, since it was paid for by a denial of nature in the human being for the sake of mastery over extrahuman nature and over other human beings" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002, p.42). Kim's family's behavior in the film is well suited to this denial.

### 3. Instrumental Reason: Disappearance of Class Identity

The transition from the early capitalist period to the monopoly capitalist period has led to greater changes in social life. The idea that capitalism will continually develop the productive forces and that they will provide a prosperous life for all has lost its significance. This new process dominated by monopoly capitalist production has put the idea of improving the material life of people through the rational organization of society to an end which is the dominant ideology by capitalism. Material development that will come with a reason and science has passed into the monopoly of only the upper class. Marxism, which strongly opposes these ideas that the capitalist forces of production that are freed from capitalist production relations will lead to a free society remaining only as a "hope." Marxism's view that the capital has such an inherent antagonistic power is overly optimistic. The historical process has shown that the capital does not have such direct power. The tendency that is implicit in the capital is not towards freedom, but towards more domination. In a place where capitalist condi-



tions prevail, the reason has become an aid of this consolidation and domination (Adorno, 2004, p.322/323) In this new situation, one cannot speak of the individual's independence in terms of ideology. "The individual no longer has any ideas of his own" (Horkheimer, 2002, p.237). Therefore, the individual's thoughts about the class to which he / she belong quickly disappears. The precise boundaries between classes do not seem to be overcome ideologically and economically. The fact that monopolistic dominated companies to control everything which has destroyed the beliefs of individuals about an increasingly better life. This has spread to everyone as a mass belief. Atomized individuals with this belief only pursue their own interests. Thus, economic conditions consume the individual's independence. The individual also loses his relative independence in the early capitalist period (Horkheimer, 2002, p.237). The basis of the loss of this independence is that reason seeing everything as exchangeable under the command of the capital. In this respect, Adorno and Horkheimer perceive early that liberal capitalism gave way to a more reified dictated social order under the instrumental reason (Adorno, 1991, p.4).

Horkheimer and Adorno describe the dominant reason of advanced capitalism as the *Instrumental Reason* (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002, p.28). They find the new form of society and the leading idea of the relationship between individuals that constitute the society, in this notion. Instrumental Reason lends itself to find ways for reaching a contemporarily predefined goal. This is its essence. Instrumental reason is to emphasize the calculative aspect of the reason (empirical ego), not the aspect that has the idea that those individuals will live together (transcendental ego). This is to isolate objects from all their properties and subjugate them as purely sensory material. After all, it's in the interest of the industrial society that the mind operates as a scheme that suits the needs of the system. Everything that appears to be the benefit of individuals is actually in the interest of the system. Being reasonable, in this situation, lies in the individual's obeying the rules of the society's mechanism. Capitalism declared personal interest as the foundation of social mechanism and this, in all conditions, contradicts "the idea of a common life" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002). In the origin of the political formation of this society, reason was seen as a



means for concrete needs; things like justice, equality, happiness, democracy and property were seen as existing outside of the individual and as realities which were almost impossible for the individual to intervene with. Thus, the individual surrendered to the mechanism of the dominant system and reason became “an instrument”. As Horkheimer states;

If reason is declared incapable of determining the ultimate aims of life and must content itself with reducing everything it encounters to a mere tool, its sole remaining goal is simply the perpetuation of its co-ordinating activity. This activity was once ascribed to the autonomous 'subject.' However, the process of subjectivization has affected all philosophical categories: it has not relativized and preserved them in a better-structured unity of thought, but has reduced them to the status of facts to be catalogued (Horkheimer, 2004, p.63).

Reason is not an autonomous faculty of the subject anymore; it is completely included in the social process. The effectiveness of instrumental reason is not to flag the ideology of the upper class but the exact opposite. It is constantly operating the belief that there is no alternative to the current situation. Individuals who believe that something about their own life will not change use their most invaluable ability that is thinking in a tendency to benefit from another class; hence, the thought of infiltrating the world of others means constantly “running away from the thought of resistance”. The emancipation that the promise of being in another role is to forget about your own class. “...The telos of instrumental rationality, the rationality first licensed by the drive for self-preservation, is the silencing of reflection in the name of the illusory universality pervaded by the culture industry (Adorno, 1991, p.11). Kim's family's behavior is well suited to this. It is just to maintain your own life and act accordingly. It is impossible to find a Universalist principle for all the poor or subclass in this family.

As the transition from monopoly capitalism to post-industrial production to capitalism takes a hit on the autonomy of the individual, we witness the erosion of the class identity of the individual. Concepts that are the creations of reason have now turned into commercial commodities. As reason, concepts and ideas become instruments; they lose their capacity to seek their meaning in themselves. They transform completely into a thing or a machine. The only place where reason is seen as an autonomous faculty



in the film is the conversation Mr. Kim has with his son about the driver's situation.

The father Kim: Hey Ki-woo

Kim: "You know that driver, Yoon? was it Yoon? The driver before me..

Ki-woo: Yeah Yoon.

Kim: He must be working somewhere else now, right?"

Ki-woo: Sure he must be,

Ki-woo: he is young, got a nice physique

Kim: "He must have found a better job.

But his daughter Ki-jeong gets up furiously and blocks an ethical judgment by telling his father.

Ki-jeong "fucking hell!" "We are the ones who need help, Worry about us okay Dad! Come on Dad! Just focus on us okay? On Us. Not driver Yoon, but me please.

Legitimizing your own position like that, namely the tendency to ground the meaning of everything just by thinking about yourself, - to totally abstract what has happened or will happen to you from what may happen to others; to relate yourself to the other's life only through your own interest- leads the ethical action to fall of the agenda, more correctly, annihilates forming a judgment about "good" and "bad." This is why, *Parasite* differs from Bong Joon-ho's other films. In his other films, while we witness the struggle of characters against monsters or evils, in *Parasite* a struggle against an apparent evil is not seen. Given that characters, like insects, concentrate on instinctive actions, "good" and "bad" do not exist in their world. Misunderstanding arises constantly out of sudden and reactional behaviors that arise from irrational and instinctive tendencies of characters. And from those misunderstandings, blues and comedy arise. As a matter of fact, as Bong Joon-ho expresses, "In *Parasite* we do not have a bad man, but at the end they harm each other by all those misunderstandings" (Sims, 2019).

The irrational position that the post-industrial form of production imposes on classes that are dependent on it, occurs at the cost of a continuous



regress of the world of values. As a matter of fact, the fact that social relations are constructed not by reason but by the motive of survival, is clearly seen in the film. The Kim family's invasion of the Park family and their behaviors towards other employees, are not accompanied with a disturbing conscience. As economic conditions change and as the form of existence of humans gets difficult, inter-personal relations and concepts that arise from these relations are eroded and get dirty. Life that is constructed according to concepts that are accepted as rational once, gives place to a world that is the opposite of these concepts today. The bourgeois value system that exists dependently on economic balance has become an empty frame that only the rich hides behind. The dominancy of the motive to survive leads the poor to resign itself to a secret anger: the anger of not being able to design a different, a better world (Adorno, 2005, p.34). We witness this in the conversation that takes place between the father Kim and his son Ki-Woo in the gym.

Ki woo: Dad?

Kim: Yes.

Ki-woo: What was your plan?

Kim: What are you talking about?

Ki-woo: Before you said you had a plan.

Ki-woo: what will you do? About the basement.

Kim: You know what kind of plan never fails?

Kim: No plan at all. No plan, You know why. If you make a plan, never works out that way. Look around us. Did these people think, Let's all spend the night in a gym? But look now. Everyone's sleeping on the floor, us included. That's why people shouldn't make plans. With no plan, nothing can go wrong. And If something spins out of control, it doesn't matter. Whether you kill someone or betray your country. None of it fucking matters, got it.

## Conclusion

For people who still have to live in a system/order/world/era that has lost its humanly qualities, relation with other people is nothing more than "a trick to survive." While two accomplices are actually living together in a rancid swamp, they direct the responsibility of the evil they do to each



other outside (Adorno, 2005, p.32). A group of people who cannot not see themselves as the source of any evil, continue their lives only as a *parasite*. Capitalism as a partnership of interest, means that each side does everything for its own interest. This is such a partnership that, it is not governed by good and evil or concepts that are created within the framework of any ideal. The only way is to win, to protect its own benefit and to survive regardless of what happens. Therefore, morality is a possibility that is peculiar only to those who follow their private interests. Even though this possibility is a formal and empty possibility, it distinguishes the rich from the poor. And even though both sides follow their interests, there is a difference between those interests. While the poor acts with the motivation to survive, the rich passes beyond that degree and is worried about adapting to some concepts-happiness and unhappiness, good and evil, solecism and politeness - that it fills in itself. Kim's family does not hesitate for a moment for doing harm to the young chauffeur or the ex-housekeeper. The dialog about the previous chauffeur that takes place between Kim and his son is blocked by his daughter Ki-jeong who highlights the fact that surviving is prior to a moral tendency. It is possible to see this tendency in the ex-housekeeper and his wife. Their individual worlds are shaped by their interests and can change direction any moment according to their benefits. In a system that is dominated by such living conditions the concepts "good" and "evil" do not have any meaning on their own. Those concepts are instrumental terms that are completely oriented by individuals' interests. They are commodities that are used to save the day and that are thrown.

With *Parasite* thought undergoes a transformation: "Life become an inquiry Life stop being the world of those who exhibit good and bad actions, and becomes the world of "who plays well." This becoming is open to questioning as a theoretical/practical field which is beyond representation. The moral dimension which is the world of the good and the evil, gives the place of substantive approaches to non-substantive games and intrigues. Thus, just like the war between forces, gains become temporal too. The only problem is to save the day and to win. What the rules for saving the day are and where they come from is unimportant. This is why, the film



improves on an ethical-political plane rather than a moral one. This ethical/political plane proceeds in a Spinozean manner. Each character strives to maintain their own existence. The exact equivalent of this effort is Spinoza's concept of "conatus". Conatus can be seen throughout the movie. Each character strives to exist in proportion to his power. This effort can be seen individually as well as in class. Each class fictionalizes its game and puts up a power struggle on the basis of powers and opportunities it has. In other words, this is a game that everyone participates in proportion to their power and class. If she/he is powerless she/he hides. Even though the place is the same, interclass relations take shape as different field of games. The game that the Kim family will play against the Park family and the game that they will play against the ex-housemaid and her husband differ. Similarly, the game that the ex-housemaid and her husband will play against the Kim family and the Park family also differ. But in the upper class, there is always the same game: the game of money, the game that is played as long as it is given to whom needs it.

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**Öz:** Güney Koreli yönetmen Bong Joon-ho'nun Parazit filmi (2019), hem görsel ve hem de düşünsel olarak oldukça önemli bir yerde durmaktadır. Film, sınıflar arası gelir dağılımının gittikçe arttığı zengin bir ülkede sınıf kavramını sorunsallaştırır. Sosyal sınıfların yaşamlarına ve onların diğer sınıflarla ilişkilerine kamera-sını çevirir. Marksist teorinin sayısız kez analiz ettiği sınıf, sınıf içi veya sınıflar arası ilişkinin bilinmeyen yönlerine ışık tutar. Bong Joon -ho "sınıf" kavramını imgeler ile sunarak felsefe ile sinemanın kesişmesini sağlar. "Her zaman aynı kalan bir sınıftan bahsedilebilir mi?" "Sınıfın yerine artık başka bir durumla mı karşı karşıyayız?" gibi sorular ile kesişmesini somutlaştırır. Çok genel ve çok tartışılan bu meseleyi yönetmen, daha farklı bir biçimde ve yeniden ele alır. Post endüstriyel bir dünyada sınıf sorunu, felsefi kavramların ve tartışmaların yerine imgelerin gücü ile sunulur. "Sınıf nedir?" Ve "sınıflar arası ilişki nasıldır?" Sadece bir cevap ile geçiştirilecek sorular olmadığı gibi sadece bir yön ile ele alınacak sorunlar da değildir. Bu makalede, Parazit filmi aracılığıyla günümüzde sınıf içi ve sınıflar arası ilişkinin nasıl bir biçim aldığı üzerine odaklanılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Parazit, sınıf, alt sınıf, üst sınıf, Marksist teori, Bong Joon-ho, ayakta kalmak.



