



Later Marxist morality – Its relevance for Africa’s post-colonial situation

Pieter Coetzee
Department of Philosophy
University of South Africa
PRETORIA
E-mail: coetzph@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

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Marx’s polemic against exploitation focuses centrally on the idea that capitalism not only betrays the inviolability of the human individual, but also prevents the realization of man’s true nature as “species-being” and the realization of the kind of community appropriate to this nature, thus preventing the freeing of human potential from the structural force of capital. I examine this polemic with reference to the views of African philosophers (Hountondji and others) on Africa’s exposure to neo-colonial exploitation, extracting from it a view of morality as a plea for a “humanly human life”. I advance some considerations for acceptance of this plea as a basis for dealing with European domination.

1. Understanding exploitation

The concept of exploitation is central to later Marxist accounts of how neo-colonialism maintains the gap between oppressors and oppressed in Africa. A true description of the face of contemporary Africa, says Hountondji (1996:170), must include mentioning “the bare hands of men and women so exploited and mystified that they make themselves active accomplices of their executioners”. And since the concept of exploitation is central to their condemnation of neo-colonialism, I propose to examine it with a view to understanding its moral implications.

1.1 The structural force thesis

Holmstrom (1997) offers a good starting point. Holmstrom (1997:22), accepting the labour theory of value as a given, argues that the worker sells her capacity of labour power to the capitalist. Labour power generates two kinds of value, the value of labour power for the worker

and surplus value for the capitalist. The former is produced in satisfying the subsistence needs of the worker and her dependents; the latter is produced in that portion of the workday after subsistence needs have been satisfied, and is the source of profit (exchange value). The worker is paid only for the labour value she produces; her time spent producing surplus value is unpaid, but this fact “is concealed by the wage relationship” (Holmstrom, 1997:79). The relationship between worker and capitalist is hardly one of free exchange between equals; indeed “the exchange is an unfree one, because it is based on force” (Holmstrom, 1997:79).

Reiman's (1997:154) “force-inclusive definition” of exploitation includes the idea of structural force. “A society is exploitive when its social structure is organized so that unpaid labour is systematically forced out of one class and put at the disposal of another” (Reiman, 1997:154). Force is structural, internal to the workings of the capitalist system, and not external support to a distribution which benefits one class at the expense of another. Reiman (1997:158) defends the notion of “labour time” – what workers give in production is their time and energy – as the appropriate measure of the value that produced things have as a result of being produced, a notion he calls the “general labour theory of value” (Reiman, 1997:158) and which he contrasts with the “special” theory (Reiman, 1997:158) which assumes that the market value of produced things is a function of the time spent on their production. The general theory, claims Reiman (1997:158), is the minimum necessary to make the concept of surplus value imply unpaid labour (if we grant the assumption that it does not presuppose the validity of any system of ownership). Unpaid time is given in production in the sense that it is “used up”, is “life itself spent” (Reiman, 1997:158). This category of unpaid labour is extracted by force that is “‘structural’, both in its effects and origins” (Reiman, 1997:160). The workers, nonowners of the means of production, are forced to work *for* the small class of owners (though not forced by them) “in order to get a crack at living at all” (Reiman, 1997:160). The force at issue here is generated by the structure of the institution of private ownership, which is to say the crucial category of unpaid labour is forced from them by the class system itself, and this force affects individuals “by imposing an array of fates on ... [them]” (Reiman, 1997:160), in particular the inability to use the surplus of their labour to improve their condition. As a leverage over them to which they are vulnerable in virtue of their position in the structure, structural force determines “a *range* of things they can do, with options outside this range ... [being] prohibitively costly” (Reiman, 1997:162). Force, apparently, works through “*predictable* free choices” (Reiman, 1997:164), and that is why the way force works in capitalism remains unseen. It is,

however, as a class that unpaid labour is forcibly extracted from the workers and transferred as surplus value to the capitalist class.

The “force”-thesis divides into two claims. First, the synchronic claim is that the structure of capitalism – specifically the institution of private ownership – forces nonowners to sell their labour to owners of the means of production (Reiman, 1997:177). The synchronic claim places selling in a time-frame –

... something like the time it takes from satiation to the onset of the pains of starvation (or some other pressing need), since that is the time by which, deprived of means of production (and of savings produced by them), ... [a worker] will be compelled to sell his labour power (Reiman, 1997:177).

The diachronic claim maintains that the structure of capitalism compels nonowners to remain members of their class and therefore, given that their position is unchangeable, they remain subject to structural force.

Diachronic force, like synchronic force, however, *is* structural force. According to Reiman (1997:179-180) the synchronic claim is the important one. It is by itself sufficient to support the Marxist charge that capitalism is a form of slavery. Selling labour power involves giving away an uncompensated amount of it, and this is true irrespective of the period for which they are compelled to sell. (How severely they are enslaved is obviously influenced by the truth of the diachronic claim). By itself the synchronic claim is also sufficient to support the Marxist claim about how capitalism works economically. The diachronic claim is sociologically interesting, understood as a claim about how the working class reproduces itself. But it depends on the synchronic claim for its sense and coherence. The falsity of the synchronic claim would destroy Marxist analyses of the capitalist mode of production, and by implication, the truth of the diachronic claim. The moral significance of the diachronic claim also depends on the truth of the synchronic claim, but the synchronic claim has moral significance in its own right independently of the diachronic claim. (More of this below.)

1.2 Primary and secondary exploitation

Dymski and Elliott (1997:203) support Reiman’s force-thesis but they note that in Marx the issue of exploitation is raised in two contexts, one in which capitalist mastery over a working class is effected through productive use of resources, which Marx calls “primary exploitation” (Dymski & Elliott, 1997:203), and another in which mastery is posited without productive use of resources, the latter being “secondary exploitation”, a “purely distributive phenomenon” (Dymski & Elliott, 1997:

203). They point out that Reiman errs in that his “force-inclusive” concept is too narrow. Primary exploitation involves “class monopoly over the physical means of production and a regime of alienated labour and domination *both inside and outside the enterprise*” (Dymski & Elliott, 1997:203, my emphasis). Exploitation, in the sense Reiman does not sufficiently emphasize is human and social exploitation, involving alienation and domination in a wider, extra-economic context. The wider concept of exploitation (as I shall argue below) takes in Hountondji’s concept of “culturalism” as vehicle of exploitation on a scale Dymski and Elliott (1997:203) argue is in place “both inside and outside” the physical means of production.

1.2.1 Primary exploitation

Casal (1998:143) explains the global reproduction of class structures as a coincidence of neo-colonialism. The global structure of international relations, claims Casal, is organised in such a way that the interests of the colonial powers are protected at the expense of “productive progress” (Casal, 1998:143) in Africa and other Third World societies. Casal (1998:143) identifies two ways in which the exploitive practices of international capital work. The neo-colonial powers maintain their position, first of all, by transmitting to the exploited societies the infrastructure (the functional prerequisite) required to enter a more advanced stage. But this transmission has “undesirable consequences” (Casal, 1998:144) for the less developed societies. The higher technology imports supplant the lower technology on the home front, thus at once destroying home-grown technology (of an appropriate level of development for the home society) and increasing the dominance of the alien powers in the sense that the supporting technologies convert home economies into supplier economies whose productive units are controlled by international capital (Casal, 1998:145).

Alternatively, the neo-colonial powers transplant “an economic structure, which generates the previously absent tendency to productive progress [in the host country], but – in effect – this transplant exploits the resources of the host country” (Casal, 1998:247). In this process “colonists strip the conquered territories of their resources, and use them for their own development” (Casal, 1998:147). This is effected through control over “authoritarian regimes which supplant nationalist movements or alliances with elites concerned with their own short-term, class-interests rather than with their country’s long-term prospects of development” (Casal, 1998:147). Dominance over the host country of the kind described here places it in a position in the world market “from which it is very difficult to develop and successfully compete” (Casal, 1998:147). A pattern of “undesirable consequences” (Casal, 1998:144) is repeated in

the one-way direction of surplus value: from periphery to the metropolis (Casal, 1998:147), which translates to “from exploited class to exploiting class” (the latter including the native elites in the host countries).

Internationalization binds various indigenous or domestic bourgeoisies in Third World countries to capital “they do not control” (Resch, 1992:353), creating an international division of labour and rendering terms like foreign and indigenous capital irrelevant. The bourgeoisie in the Third World do not achieve a degree of autonomy comparable to its counterpart in the First World, the main reason being that the Third World economic base cannot grow beyond the limits imposed by its position within the international division of labour (Resch, 1992:354). The predominance of multinational capital, removed from national identifications and constraints, pursues labour-exploitive policies with the assistance of representative governments that sanction and legitimize the process.

Mandaza (1999:82) sees Africa in its neo-colonial condition as an “extension of Europe”, without any significant autonomy. The emergent black “*petit and compradorian bourgeoisie*” (Mandaza, 1999:83) in the African nation states are the outcome of external factors integral to the transition from white to black rule and the “politics of reconciliation” between the former white rulers and the current black ones. Their post-colonial state in Africa is thus a “hostage state” (Mandaza, 1999:83) caught between white settlers who have economic power (and thus wield political influence disproportionate to their numbers), and economic globalization driven by the former colonial powers. Within this context of “incomplete decolonization” (Mandaza, 1999:79), a difference-blind, liberal paradigm, emphasizing human rights and democracy resists “fundamental transformation” (Mandaza, 1999:79) for instance, in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The politics of reconciliation explain “the failure to see through the agenda of the nationalist struggle ... [and its emphasis on] the ideology of reconciliation” (Mandaza, 1999:79). If we look at the agenda of the nationalist struggle, we see the class question. We see that reconciliation represents “the class fulfilment of those who make it immediately in the new dispensation” (Mandaza, 1999:81). Their immorality is reflected in their willingness to forgive their oppressors in exchange for state power “without the fulfilment of social justice for the majority” (Mandaza, 1999:81). Acceptance of state power without economic control merely reinforces “old relations of production as well as the unequal structures of ownership” (Mandaza, 1999:85), thus exposing black people to the structural coercion inherent in capitalism.

Samir (1997:306) echoes this line of thought. Independence brought no change to the exploitive mode of integration of Africa into the world

capitalist system. Samir (1997:307-308) argues that the agricultural revolution in Africa has been derailed by the “super-exploitation of the African peasants’ labour” by the “local classes who act as ... [world capitalism’s] relay”. Interference by capital in the organization of production compels farmers to specialize in crops capital requires, bought at prices which undersell the peasant’s labour power. Formal ownership of the land is thereby “emptied of its genuine content” (Samir, 1997:308). Worse still, the “green revolution” (Samir, 1997:310) strengthened capitalist control over the farmers by first integrating production in the “upstream” (Samir, 1997:311) monopolies, and then subjecting farming to industry – “downstream” (Samir, 1997:311) food processing monopolies. The effect of “agro-industrial integration” (Samir, 1997:311) was simply one of “transforming the benefit of peasant surplus labour to the monopolies” (Samir, 1997:311), and foreign capital that controls the monopolies.

1.2.2 Secondary exploitation

1.2.2.1 Exploitation and knowledge production in Africa

In “The Second Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola Distinguished Lecture”, Hountondji (1995) offers argument in support of the idea that scientific activity in Africa is just as “externally oriented” (Hountondji, 1995:2) as economic activity, serving Europe rather than Africa. The integration of traditional knowledge into the world system of knowledge has set Africa in a position of underdevelopment and backwardness in relation to Europe. We should, argues Hountondji (1995:3), view underdevelopment as an effect of domination and exploitation, in the context of a historical approach, entailing the integration of subsistence economies into world capital. And we should allow for a parallel in the field of scientific and technological endeavour, i. e. we should view weakness in the field of knowledge as the result of “peripherization” (Hountondji, 1995:3) due to a knowledge market controlled by the metropolitan worlds. If we grant this, the following indices of “scientific extroversion” (Hountondji, 1995:4) are apparent.

- Because of the lack of specific theory-building procedures and infrastructures, which are needed to interpret raw information and process raw data, Africa has inherited from the metropolitan worlds only centres for applied research, and these are concerned only with the gathering and exportation of knowledge and information useful to Europe. The result? In the field of knowledge, a dependency on Europe has developed. Centres for applied research became “immense data banks, storehouses of bare facts and information reserved for exportation to the ruling country” (Hountondji, 1995:2-3).

- Scholars in Africa have done a kind of “mental extroversion” (Hountondji, 1995:4), choosing research programmes answering only to the expectations of the metropolitan worlds. So the theoretical work done in Africa has become bound to “a kind of insularity” (Hountondji, 1995:4) in the sense that the research done by Africans in Africa do not answer to the needs and concerns of Africans. The result? African scholars do no “basic research” (Hountondji, 1995:4), and scientific projects in Africa are utilized in the service of “economic extroversion” (Hountondji, 1995:4).
- The kind of relationship that developed between modern science and ethno-science is one in which the latter is “eaten by the former” (Hountondji, 1995:4).
- Scientific researchers in Africa now engage only in “vertical exchange” (Hountondji, 1995:9) with researchers in Europe and do not engage in “horizontal exchange” (Hountondji, 1995:9) with fellow researchers in Africa.

1.2.2.2 Exploitation in Hountondji’s “culturalism”

“Culturalism” (Hountondji, 1996:160) is the term Hountondji employs to denote a peculiar form of neo-colonialism, driven by complicity between African nationalists and Western ethnologists, and emphasizing the cultural aspect of foreign domination at the expense of other aspects, the economic and political in particular. Culturalism is in fact an ideological system because “it produces an indirect political effect. It eclipses, first, the problem of effective national liberation and, second, the problem of class struggle” (Hountondji, 1996:162). This “indirect political effect” is achieved in two ways. In the guise of cultural nationalism, culturalism drastically simplifies the national culture, “schematizes and flattens it in order to contrast it with the colonizer’s culture, and then gives this imaginary opposition *precedence* over real political and economic conflicts” (Hountondji, 1996:162). In the independent African countries culturalism takes the form of a backward-looking cultural nationalism, “flattening the national culture and denying its internal pluralism and historical depth”(Hountondji, 1996:162), in order to divert the attention of the exploited classes from the real political and economic conflicts which divide them from the ruling classes under the fallacious pretext of their common participation in “‘the’ national culture” (Hountondji, 1996:162).

The cultural nationalism of independent African countries are presented, falsely, as “deceptive singular”, closed, homogeneous and monolithic – “flat ... strongly simple and univocal”, “petrified in a synchronic picture”, which strips it of “the fruitful tensions by which is it animated” (Houn-

tondji, 1996:160), and which neglects its most significant characteristic, its status as “the unfinished history of a ... contradictory debate” (Hountondji, 1996:161). Thus schematized African cultures are exploited, in essentialist comparisons with European cultures which reveal that “the moment of colonization” (Hountondji, 1996:161) was the only important division in the history of the continent. The net effect of culturalism has been a retreat by the cultural nationalists to a *false pluralism*, an escape from the “psychological and political rape perpetrated upon them by Western imperialism” (Hountondji, 1996:164) into imaginary cultural origins, the so-called traditional (pre-colonial) political organization of pre-colonial African society. This is a retreat into a state of psychological arrest, perpetuated by the myth that non-Western societies are “simple” at the level of ideology and belief, as well as into false sociology: “pluralism does not come to any society from outside but is inherent in every society” (Hountondji, 1996:165). This retreat blinds Africa to the fact that the “decisive encounter” is not between Africa and Europe, but between “Africa and itself” (Hountondji, 1996:165). False pluralism has bequeathed a legacy amounting to an artificial choice between “cultural ‘alienation’” (which is supposedly connected with political betrayal) and “cultural nationalism” (the obverse of political nationalism and often a pathetic substitute for it) (Hountondji, 1996:166). True political nationalism requires important conditions: “African culture must return to itself, to its internal pluralism and to its essential openness” (Hountondji, 1996:166). But this homecoming has to be fought for on political grounds, on grounds of class pluralism – the tension between an exploiting and an exploited class – a class struggle which “knows no frontiers” and takes precedence over the conflicts between nations or ethnic groups (Hountondji, 1996:167).

The later Nkrumah – of the 1970 edition of *Consciencism* – says Hountondji, correctly identified the class struggle in Africa as the central cause of its depressed economic and political condition, but fell victim to the fallacy of unanimism, the false ideology of cultural nationalism – the belief that cultural nationalism “aims at restoring the lost unity of African consciousness” (Hountondji, 1996:149). The 1970 edition, unlike the earlier one, boldly proclaimed “the universality of the class struggle (previously denied)” (Hountondji, 1996:146), manifesting as neo-colonial exploitation, a “class struggle on an international scale” (Hountondji, 1996:135 citing Nkrumah). Nkrumah erred in thinking that this class struggle had been “introduced into Africa from the outside” (Hountondji, 1996:137), that it is a feature only of contemporary African society and was not also a feature of the traditional structures (Hountondji, 1996:142-143). “Culturalism” is the cause of the error. Nkrumah’s acceptance of the “classic ethnological ideology” (Hountondji, 1996:148), that pre-

colonial Africa had a single ideology, led him to identify the pluralism of creeds, ideologies and cultural currents in the traditional, the Euro-Christian and the Muslim regions of Africa as the cause of a crisis of identity (Hountondji, 1996:149), one to be remedied by a unifying ideology, a “philosophy of consciousness” (Hountondji, 1996:149) called “Consciencism”. Ideological falsity of this kind is *the cause of the phenomenon of culturalism* used so effectively to eclipse the problem of class struggle (Hountondji, 1996:162). In the *Postscript to African Philosophy: myth and reality*, Hountondji laments that Africa has “failed to develop ... [the Marxist] heritage” and notes that intellectuals are powerless to prevent it from being taken over shamelessly by completely “cynical and reactionary political groups ... for whom dialectics is a subtle way of justifying their own impatience and thirst of power” (Hountondji, 1996:183).

A second but no less serious error was Nkrumah’s blindness, introduced by his culturalism, to the intensity of the class struggle in Africa. Nkrumah acknowledged that colonization created an indigenous class “associated with social power and authority” (Hountondji, 1996:150, citing Nkrumah), but his focus was on its function as a “conveyor belt of European civilisation” (Hountondji, 1996:150) rather than its “exploitive role” (Hountondji, 1996:150) in economic and political affairs. The cultural conflict which preoccupied Nkrumah, however, was nothing less than a “sublimate form of a class struggle” (Hountondji, 1996:150). But even Nkrumah, argues Hountondji (1996:151), steeped in the fallacy of culturalism, cannot hide his awareness of the real issues – “[t]he real order (economical and political) can ... be detected behind his cultural discourse”.

2. Exploitation – the moral paradigm

Marxism, says Hountondji (1984: 113), was discovered at a particular point in the anti-colonial struggle, and served as a theoretical and ideological foundation for resistance precisely because it provided Africa with a better understanding of colonialism as a historical process. Even in Nkrumah “Marxism is but a theoretical tool, a means towards understanding and explanation” (Hountondji, 1984:114). Viewed in this way, Marxism served the black peoples, not the black peoples’ Marxism, and it served them by bringing them as “exploited classes to a clear awareness of this fact” (Hountondji, 1984:117).

How did Marxism bring on an informed awareness of colonialism as a historical process?

My thesis is that later Marxist morality is relevant to our understanding of the exploitation phenomenon. As I judge there are two aspects to the moral implications of exploitation that need to be highlighted: the moral struggle for recognition, and the moral struggle for flourishing, which is the struggle to realize the conditions needed for a *humanly* human life to be possible. In the next section I touch on some points of later Marxist morality which aid me in demonstrating the thesis.

2.1 Superseding the morality of the downtrodden

Marx's notion of "species-being" encapsulates the ideal person in whom personal and communal life merges into a "perfect unity" (Femia, 1999: 42) described by Femia (1999:42) as the "internalized identity of each person with the social totality". The human personality, dependent as it is "on the material conditions which determine their production" (Femia, 1999:43, citing Marx), is wholly constituted by the "ensemble of social relationships" (Femia, 1999:44), by which is meant that agency is selfless, other-regarding, indifferent to sectional ties and private interests, and disposed to endorsing communal solidarity.

According to Churchich (1994:34) the Marxist picture of a truly human morality is prefigured by the morality of the "toiling classes" (Churchich, 1994:37), and will be the morality of the future classless society. This picture gives prominence to "collective morality" (Churchich, 1994:65), implicitly contains premisses that argue for "the primacy and supremacy of collectivism", and treats the community "as the principal moral and social agency" (Churchich, 1994:165). Churchich identifies two themes in Marx's collective morality. The first, called the "ethics of social structure" (Churchich, 1994:34) treats morality as grounded in socio-economic structures and as generated by "material causes" – "the economic relations in which men live and work" (Churchich, 1994:63). The content of morality is a function of "the totality of common interests and the sum total of social and economic relations" (Churchich, 1994: 35). The second is in Marx's scheme a "second-best" morality, and consists of Marx's critique of the "negatively individualistic" (Churchich, 1994:34) morality of the ruling class which subjects morality to class interests, treating it as "an object of commerce" (Churchich, 1994:36 citing Marx). Bourgeois morality has alienating consequences – "man feels outside himself" (Churchich, 1994:65, citing Marx) – a condition Marx believes will be overcome only once capital's position as mediator between workers and their needs is challenged and overthrown. Then "the moral standard determined by the given stage of social evolution will become the 'individual's very own standard'" (Churchich, 1994:138) and then the "ethics of social structure" can come into play. In Churchich's (1994:138)

view, Marx's charge of exploitation, understood as a moral concept, is rooted in this vision of human emancipation.

Kamolnick (1998:345) underscores Churchich's picture of an emancipating morality. The "species-essence thesis" (Kamolnick, 1998:345), which is Marx's vision of the social arrangements needed to effect a fit between person and community, states Marx's "*most fundamental and distinctly Marxian*" (Kamolnick, 1998:346) reasons for rejecting bourgeois norms as incompatible with man's special-essence, viz., "their utter *dehumanizing* consequences for and on *humanly* human life" (Kamolnick, 1998:146). Marx's commitment to the overthrow of capitalist society cannot be grounded, argues Kamolnick (1998:347), on the basis of "a separation of private conscience from ... the ... normative, prescriptive dimensions of a disalienated, *humanly* human life". Collective morality is based on this disalienated condition of human life. And the overriding condition is the non-alienability of labour, understood as the intrinsic absolute value of human life, as opposed to alienated labour which is the "labour-power"-commodity generated by capitalist exploitation. The "exclusively human" (Kamolnick, 1998:352) form of labour liberates in the sense that it enables the worker to realize "a purpose of his own that gives the law to his *modus operandi*" (Kamolnick, 1998:352 citing Marx), and in realizing his own purpose he realizes "the true realm of freedom ... [which then] can blossom forth" (Kamolnick, 1998:352 citing Marx).

The "ethics of social structure" is an evolutionary stage superceding the stage of "second-best" morality. The transition is marked by the appearance of the phenomenon of disalienated labour. If all this is correct, we may say, with Bidet (1998:417) that the core of *class* morality is a universalizable viewpoint – the viewpoint "*of those below, that of the exploited and dominated*". The possibility of offering this viewpoint as the core moral concept of class morality depends on making explicit assumptions about the appropriate conditions for a human being to tolerate. In so far as those conditions require for their realization the negation of alienated labour, they negate the force of the core moral concept of class morality. In its place Marx sets up a morality for a distinct "*humanly human life*" (Kamolnick, 1998:346), one in which two strains are dominant. The first focuses on "*the concept of intrinsic human dignity or worth*" (Churchich, 1994:139) actuated in a class-independent communist community; the second encapsulates the values of a certain kind of community, viz. *communism*.

2.2 The moral struggle for recognition and flourishing

Assume, as I have suggested thus far, that neo-colonialism in Africa manifests as the condition of “second-best” morality. And assume further that Africa aspires to the “ethics of social structure” – the point of emancipation. Now, allow that the time frame between the “second-best” condition and the realization of the “ethics of social structure”, is the time needed for Africa to escape or end exploitation, and that the failure thus far to do so repeats the cycle of the synchronic interpretation of exploitation. Since the truth of the diachronic interpretation depends on the truth of the synchronic interpretation, it follows that the diachronic interpretation is also applicable to Africa in its neo-colonial situation, which is to say that under neo-colonialism Africa reproduces the conditions under which it remains entrapped in exploitation. What are the moral significance of these interpretations?

The synchronic and the diachronic claims invoke the idea of a universalizable moral viewpoint – the viewpoint of “those below”. Consider that the universalizable viewpoint claims universality for the moral wrongness of exploitation. Under this viewpoint the relevant moral property of exploitive practices is the suffering of patients. If adopting the moral point of view is consistent with extending recognition to Africans as suffering patients, and if this description is also consistent with their self-recognition, we can say that the mass African, in her *class* morality, judges herself – and is judged by others – in terms of the universalizable ethic encapsulated in the moral viewpoint of “those below”. The viewpoint of “those below” drives the moral struggle for emancipation, and this is the precursor struggle which serves the ends of the final struggle, the creation of the conditions needed for a *humanly* human life to flourish. Endorsing the viewpoint of “those below” as a moral truth fits the synchronic and the diachronic interpretations of exploitation. To simplify matters I shall refer to the two respective interpretations as claims which require moral responses. The diachronic claim is that the structure of capitalism compels the exploited to remain entrapped in exploitation. It depends for its truth on the truth of the synchronic claim – the claim that the exploited have no choice but to remain entrapped in a cycle of structural force. What are the essentials of the imputed moral awareness?

First, Reiman (1997:183) treats the synchronic claim as sufficient, by itself, to support the Marxist charge that capitalism is a form of slavery. How severely the exploited are enslaved obviously depends on the truth of the diachronic claim. Reiman qualifies the implied compulsion by adding that “capitalist slavery is freer than classical slavery” and that “capitalist slavery is less awful than classical slavery”. Now, if the picture

of primary exploitation sketched by Casal (1998), Mandaza (1999), and Samir (1997) is correct, the exploited have no choice but to remain enslaved. The structural force of capital in its synchronic sense is simply too great. Yet the argument does not stop there. It is significant that being exploited, in line with the structural force of the synchronic claim, leaves the exploited with only so much choice “as is compatible with their deploying themselves among the fates before them in roughly the same way their forcer wants” (Reiman, 1997:183). So there is choice, but having so little means it is not irrational for the exploited to give it up (Reiman, 1997:183). They give it up because they are vulnerable in virtue of their position in the global picture which determines “a *range* of things they can do, with options outside this range ... prohibitively costly” (Reiman, 1997:162).

Second, the structural force of the synchronic claim is fuelled by capital's ideological dominance (the very dominance that ensures the truth of the diachronic claim). To see what is involved here consider again Hountondji's view that the domination of the African populace by the neo-colonial African elite is necessary for the coercive extraction of surplus value and for the maintenance of their power, but that the extraction on which power depends is driven by the false ideology of “culturalism”.

Ideology functions as “a socially structured symbolic system constituting or ‘interpellating’ human individuals as social subjects”, a function it performs from “its social basis in specific institutions or ‘ideological apparatuses’” (Resch, 1992:159). Resch (1992:215) explains ideology as the way in which men and women are formed in order to participate in a “process of which they are not the makers”. The process is “interpellation”, the making of the subject. The individual is “always already subject” (Resch, 1992:210) in the sense that she is enmeshed in the practices of “ideological recognition” (Resch, 1992:210). The dominant ideology, the ideology of the ruling class, inscribed in concrete social practicals and institutions, effectively guarantees that individuals are interpellated in such a way that they “will reproduce the existing relations of production” (Resch, 1992:211). The “material existence” of an ideological apparatus (Resch, 1992:213) is the maker of working class “experiences of exploitation” (Resch, 1992:226) as distinct from the “theory of the exploitation” (Resch, 1992:226 citing Althusser). As Resch makes Althusser's point, “it is not by Marxism that the proletariat discovers that it is exploited”; however, it is by “Marxism that it learns the mechanism and the modalities of its exploitation” (Resch, 1992:226).

The existence of ideological hegemony of the kind under consideration, and its “mechanisms” and “modalities”, is the cause of the phenomenon of “culturalism” used so effectively to eclipse the problem of class

struggle (Hountondji, 1996:162). The eclipse, notes Hountondji (1996: 164), brings on the false pluralism of the neo-colonial elite, and an exploitable state of psychological arrest which blinds Africans to the fact that the decisive encounter is not between Africa and Europe, but between “Africa and itself” (Hountondji, 1996:165). The failure to see through the deception reinforces the “classic ethnological ideology” (Hountondji, 1996:148) which Western ethnographers in alliance with the neo-colonial African elite have fostered onto Africa, thus bending Africa’s cultural life to the requirements of synchronic exploitation, causing “economic extroversion”, as much as “mental extroversion” (Hountondji, 1996:4). It is this “extroversion” into which the African subject is “interpellated”, making self-recognition in terms other than that of the “classic ethnological ideology” difficult to escape. So economic enslavement is completed by enslavement of the soul. Africans, says Hountondji (1983:47), have learnt “how dangerous it can be for one man to wait for another to provide him with a certificate of humanity”. And it is this lesson that must now not be unlearned. Africa should not measure itself against Europe in areas Europe has created historically. Africans are aware that in the fields of scientific and technological endeavour “historic Europe ... is today, and until further notice, almost unbeatable” (Hountondji, 1985:47). Even in the social and human sciences there are no researchers of significance – “contemporary Africa could offer but very little, and even nothing” (Hountondji, 1985:47). Africa, however, does not “wish to catch up with anyone. But we want to walk always, night and day, in the company of man, of every man” (Hountondji, 1985:48, citing Fanon).

Third, in the neo-colonial context Africa has a problem to salvage its ancient heritage. The success of ethnographers’ exploitation of ethnophilosophy as tool of “mystification”, says Hountondji (1996:171), is “the secret of our defeat by the West” (Hountondji, 1996:172). Since it is no longer possible for the tradition of Ur-African philosophies to serve purposes of demystification, having lost its “critical charge, its *truth*” (Hountondji, 1996:171), to “the weight and concrete methods of ... oppressive and repressive [neo-colonial state] apparatuses” (Hountondji, 1996:181), Africa must for the sake of its own real liberation “take up European science and technology” (Hountondji, 1996:172) which means putting to work “the European concept of philosophy that goes hand in hand with science and technology” (Hountondji, 1996:172). The prime task of philosophy in Africa is to “contribute to the development of science” (Hountondji, 1996:175). Hountondji (1996:97) approvingly cites Althusser: “[T]he great philosophical revolutions are always the sequel of great scientific revolutions, so that philosophy is originally linked, in its

growth and evolution, with the birth and development of the sciences” (Hountondji, 1996:97).

Emancipation is, in Hountondji’s view, driven by the progress of science in Africa as much as by the need to organize society along lines that recognizes the tradition yet improves on it in ways capable of coping with the pressures of modernization. Yet in this endeavour reappropriating Africa’s own ancestral heritage becomes problematic. The risk of over-valuing the cultural and technological products of Africa’s erstwhile masters endangers the possibility of achieving an appropriate balance between the conservation of a heritage and the adoption of an alien one. How much tradition will the progress of science erode? In the exploitive position Africa currently lies entrapped in, the balance is in favour of the rapid erosion of tradition. Breaking the fetters of exploitation presents a view of a possible world in which Africans gain greater control over the conservation of their traditions, on terms appropriate to Africa’s needs for modernization. Africans, thinks Hountondji (1995:9), must marry their desire to save their ancestral heritage with their desire to appropriate the international heritage, including the processes of scientific and technological innovation. But the marriage, it seems, must be effected on terms acceptable to Africans, for otherwise how could the moral norm encapsulated in the idea of a *humanly* human life be grounded and take root? This spectre is, if Hountondji is right, the ideal that Marxist theory has enabled Africans to see and pursue.

Fourth, the precursor struggle, the struggle for recognition, establishes the groundwork for a settling of accounts with Africa’s former masters. If we allow that the universalizable moral viewpoint of “those below” morally binds patient and agent, then the former colonial powers, now operating in Africa under a neo-colonial guise, have a moral responsibility to compensate Africa for centuries of exploitation. How might a justifying argument be mounted? The synchronic and diachronic claims suggest such arguments. The synchronic argument looks like this.

- Africa has no choice about being entrapped in exploitation.
- A condition of “no choice” is obtained because the synchronic force is too great.
- Synchronic force places Africa in the service of Europe.
- This, however, is unpaid service.
- Therefore, to escape the injustice of nonpayment, Africa must be compensated.

The diachronic argument may be stated thus:

- Africa reproduces the conditions under which it renders unpaid service.
- Ending those conditions is impossible (because the diachronic force is too great).
- Therefore, to escape the injustice of nonpayment, Africa must be compensated.

Compensation for a history of exploitation is a very complex undertaking. The African Reparations Movement (ARM)¹ appeals to a variant of the diachronic argument. The voices of ARM, in Africa and the African Diaspora, are voices making moral claims taking as their point of departure the conditions needed for the realization of the ideal of a *humanly* human life for the exploited peoples of Africa. The variant argument runs like this:

- Since the onset of colonialism, Africa has reproduced the conditions under which it renders unpaid service to Europe.
- Ending those conditions is impossible (because of synchronic and diachronic force).
- Over centuries Africa has accumulated much overdue payment.
- Therefore, to escape the injustice of past and present nonpayment, Africa must be compensated for all unpaid service.

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1 Visit the web site address of ARM: www.arm.arc.co.uk

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Key concepts:

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