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ANALYZING INEQUALITY

Resources and chances: exploitation and discrimination

Mariano F. Enguita

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ABSTRACT

Discrimination and exploitation have been systematically confused by reducing the causes of the former to the later, something quite common in Marxist sociology, or by considering the former as a variant of the later and both, in fact, as forms of domination, as in neo-Weberian authors such as Giddens and Parkin. This paper proposes a sharp distinction between discrimination, considered as inequality of chances of access to economic resources, and exploitation, considered as 'surplus' transfer. Then, exploitation is decomposed in two varieties: asymmetric transactions, of which unequal exchange in the market is just a particular case, and unequitable (non proportional) appropriation of cooperative produce, of which surplus extraction is only one possibility among others. Discrimination, on the other side, is classified as absolute, i.e. caste or state-like, and relative, this one only corresponding to the common concept of discrimination. Even so, discrimination and exploitation do not cover the full range of socioeconomic relations of inequality, which should also include inequality in initial endowments as determined by inheritance (family) and citizenship (nation-state).

Inequality is, as the Bible and folk wisdom point out, as old as life itself. Nothing or almost nothing would frighten us about it if we could consider it merely as a natural phenomenon, detached from our actions or else the result of each person's individual responsibility and, therefore, not connected to the actions of others. It causes us to reject it insofar as and only insofar as we accept three presuppositions: first, that people have rights, or at least some minimum rights, which are equal merely by being rights, whatever social form they may have, and any other idea is intuitively repugnant to our idea of justice, fairness and the viability of coexistence; secondly, that the advantages of some and the disadvantages of others are not discreet and independent of each other, but rather mutually conditioned: they depend upon each other for their existence, so that the advantages of one have as a corollary, in the best of cases, and as their cause in the worst of cases, the disadvantages of the other, and vice versa. Thus the concept of inequality is rather poor and insufficient. It is not inequality in itself that concerns us, but socially produced inequality, hence we need stronger, more precise and more significant concepts.

Moreover, there are different forms of inequality. Naturally, in potential there are as many as the patterns of measurement we wish to adopt, or as the different types of resources, assets, rights or opportunities we decide to consider. We can, however, differentiate two major forms, quite heterogeneous among themselves and internally homogeneous enough for the difference to be useful: inequality in the final access to resources (to the so-called "scarce" or "economic assets") and inequality in the initial access to the chances of pursuing these resources (employment, citizenship, the possibility of ownership...). The former can be more or less conceived as equivalent to inequality of wealth, understanding wealth in the broadest sense; the latter must be understood as inequality of rights or as inequality in the possibility of making them effective.

Social concern for inequality of initial chances does not, at present, seem to need justification. From the moment that it causally precedes any individual act that a person may be responsible for, it does not blend well with our idea that, in principle, all human beings are equal and should be treated as such. It is not therefore strange that, no matter what the reality of our society is, it likes to see itself, present itself and represent itself as free from all kinds of inequality, as an "open", "meritocratic" society, whose members are all "equal by birth", etc., as they take care to harp on in constitutional texts and all kinds of legitimations in use. A different question is the inequality in access to resources with economic value, which we can summarise in inequalities of wealth. There would be nothing to object if this could be attributed in

a non-problematic way to inequality in the efforts devoted to obtaining it, or to different preferences, inclinations, ambitions, needs, etc. Among a wide sector of economists, for example, the idea of "preference for leisure", a rudimentary concept, suitably wrung out and squeezed to an improbable extent, has been a great success, and can even be presented as justification of any type of inequality: some prefer to get rich and others to rest - or their ancestors did and now the snowball effect cannot be stopped. Nevertheless, and even when we allow some leeway for any kind of preferences, it is difficult to avoid the impression, even the conviction, that, more often than not, inequality in access to resources is produced as a result of equal or comparable, and even unequal efforts but in a different sense from what, from the greatest ingenuousness, could be supposed.

"Inequality", whether referring to resources or chances, is, in any case, a purely comparative concept. Any attempt to explain the reasons for inequalities requires going on to concepts of relationships. As regards inequalities of wealth, this step is usually taken with the concept of exploitation; with respect to inequality of opportunities, the most widely accepted concept is usually that of discrimination. This study is part of a broader undertaking which comprises, on the one hand, showing that exploitation is not a unitary phenomenon, as Marxism in particular supposed, but instead it is clearly multidimensional, whereas, on the other hand, the phenomena that we normally consider to be discrimination, typically ethnic inequality and inequality of the sexes, and others which we usually contemplate from afar, such as inequality of a generational nature or the dividing line between citizens and foreigners, have quite a lot more in common than is supposed. The former requires an analytical breakdown of the concept of exploitation, while maintaining the principal theme which connects all its forms; the latter requires the unification of initially dispersed concepts, such as gender and race, within a more general concept which can be made general to other phenomena, specifically to generational and community inequalities. First I shall argue that exploitation is really only one of the two possible great forms of injustice in the distribution of chances.

However, above all, I intend to show that exploitation and discrimination, as we usually understand them - or as they are understood by sociological theory or by important sectors of it - are radically different forms of inequality, which obey different mechanisms, something that intuitively could be accepted quite easily, but which is often forgotten or at least left in the background, when, for example, the inequalities "of class and gender", and even "of class, gender and race" are placed side by side, without greater specification. In fact, when appositions of this type are

practised, not only the heterogeneity which separates some phenomena, such as class or gender, is erased, but also the homogeneity which unites others, such as gender and race.

Exploitation and Discrimination, Two Forms of Inequality.

The Marxist and Weberian sociological traditions have maintained and fostered very different approaches to inequality, each of them sufficiently enclosed in itself to allow the elaboration of a broad and dense conceptual apparatus, but not enough to ignore the problems posed by the other, except at the price of clearly revealing its own insufficiencies.

For Marx and for orthodox Marxist tradition, which on this point is almost the whole of it, the problem of inequality is the problem of exploitation. Resources, or wealth, are the result of human labour, and exploitation consists of appropriating the labour of another, or the product of his/her labour, without sufficient compensation. Since the labour capacity of the other must always be reproduced - nobody kills the goose that lays the golden eggs - the exploited worker, whether slave, serf or paid worker, must have his/her subsistence needs covered - including historically and culturally determined needs, that is, different from and above natural needs for survival. Exploitation can then be contemplated as excess extraction, whatever form this may take: slave labour, *corvée*, taxation in kind, etc., in the pre-capitalist forms, or surplus value in capitalism, no matter whether we prefer to call it such or capital gain, surplus labour, unpaid labour, surplus product or simply surplus.

Presently we shall have the opportunity to question this limiting definition of exploitation. At the moment let it suffice to point out that it was and is, or is reluctant to stop being, the Marxist conception in use. Marx always pointed to production itself as the scene of exploitation in capitalism, probably for two reasons: first, because he firmly believed in the non-exploiting nature of the market, the same as "bourgeois" economists, and this made even more surprising his own theory that the workforce was exploited in production despite not being exploited in the market; secondly, because it was thus possible to draw a simple and clear map of the social classes which otherwise would have become enormously complicated. Some neomarxists, however, now admit, gradually and against their will, the possibility of exploitation in other spheres, such as the market or the domestic sphere.

Weber, for his part, placed the vital opportunities (*Lebenchancen*) and economic opportunities (*ökonomische Chancen*) at the centre of his analysis of the

classes and other forms of inequality , and considered that one of the main mechanisms of inequality was the exclusion of certain groups from the competition for particular economic opportunities.¹ Incidentally, he avoided like the plague the term “exploitation”, as well as any other term with Marxist reminiscences. Weber, unlike Marx, took great care to present his typology of the forms of social closure outside of any moral evaluation, in contrast with the clear indignation of Marx with regard to capitalist exploitation. In any case it should be noted that the concept of social closure, or the inequality of vital opportunities, which later Weberians would consider exploitation, is merely the sociological representation of the only credible form of exploitation for neoclassical economic theory:² exploitation exists when someone is denied free access to the opportunities which the market would otherwise offer them.

Nevertheless, and despite the master’s reluctance, neoweberians have not been able to stay away for long from a term with such a strong normative, political and moral charge as the term “exploitation”. Far from operating as the liberal economic theory, for which the possibility of competitive balanced prices is the same as the impossibility of exploitation, neoweberian sociological theory has attempted to merge the extraction of surplus and the inequality of vital opportunities into a single, but broad, concept. This is what sociologists such as Giddens do, by directly defining exploitation as inequality of chances in life, or Parkin, by trying to subsume it with sexual or racial discrimination within the more general chapter of “social closure”. In other words, neoweberians have neither been able nor wanted to skirt around exploitation, as the master did, but neither have they wanted to give it a predominant or determining place together with other forms of social inequality.

¹ A frequent form of economic conditionality found in all the classes of the community is created by competition for economic probabilities (opportunities, MFE) (*Chancen*), such as those attributed to public offices, clientèle, jobs, etc. The growing number of those competing in comparison with acquisitive possibilities increases the interest of the participants in limiting their number somehow. The way in which this usually occurs is that an externally verifiable characteristic of the competitors (either real or potential) , for example race, religion, language, place of birth, social class, address, etc., is taken and used as a basis for exclusion. (...) This ‘closing’ process of a community, as we shall call it (...) . (...) In all these cases we find as the driving force the tendency to monopolise certain probabilities (opportunities), generally of an economic nature. (...). The object is to in some extent close to those from outside the probabilities (opportunities) (both social and economic) concerned.(Weber, 1922: 276)

² Walt (1984), Steiner (1987).

Giddens tries to reconcile the generality of the Weberian idea of vital opportunities, not with the Marxian theory of surplus value, or of exploitation of labour by capital, but rather with his earlier theory of alienation, since, when this is understood in the more general way as separation between the worker and the product of his work, it becomes a radical representation of the first. Indeed, social opportunities are a product of social work, so that one can take Weber to complete the object of Marx's theory of alienation or Marx to complete the subject of the concept of vital opportunities dealt with by Weber. Consequently, exploitation can be defined as "any socially conditioned form of asymmetric production of vital opportunities"³ (Giddens, 1973: 150).

Parkin proposes a very similar definition, although now using to the utmost Weber's concept of social closure, which he develops himself in an interesting and problematic way at the same time, and on which, unfortunately, we cannot dwell here.⁴ According to him, the collective efforts of one social group directed against another in order to deprive it of access to certain compensation and opportunities (...) can be interpreted as essentially exploiting even when it is not a question of extraction of surplus value derived from the use of property. (Parkin, 1979: 79)⁵ Consequently, all possible forms of discrimination can potentially be included here. In fact, the only one which would have some difficulty in fitting in is precisely the extraction of surplus value. However, Parkin considers this redefinition as an extension of the Marxian concept of exploitation. In any case, his approach has the virtue of arguing strongly that being a worker is not the only economic misfortune, much less social misfortune, that can happen in this world, and that it is not even

³ He adds that "vital opportunities " can be understood here as the opportunities that an individual has to participate in the socially created cultural or economic "assets" which exist typically in any given society. (Giddens, 1973: 150)

⁴ I would like to point out, at least, that the development of the idea of social closure made by Parkin, and in particular his distinction between closure and exclusion, dual and of usurpation, does not seem very sound to me as a conceptual framework for the analysis of class, gender and race, since the brilliant observations to this respect and his critical defense of Marxism should not hide the fact that, with such a theory, all cats are grey in the night. However, they seem to be suitable concepts for the case of occupations, and specifically those with an organizational basis, which is why I have used them elsewhere for analysing the teaching profession and its relationships with the institution and its public. (Enguita, 1993a, b).

⁵ And he specifies that among these efforts are those of one group of workers against another. In general, relationships of authority and subordination between the middle class and the proletariat, Protestants and Catholics, whites and blacks, men and women, etc., can be considered as exploitation in a neoweberian sense. (Parkin, 1979: 79).

necessarily so - workers are not the only ones "exploited", and nor are they as such exempt from being "exploiters".

Marxism, for its part, has always felt as uncomfortable as possible with all forms of inequality other than exploitation. The traditional way out consisted of ignoring them completely, as occurred in Poulantzas' work or in Wright's first work,⁶ two cases where the attempt to expand the theory of classes to account for the whole of society, forcing the theory to indescribable limits for this purpose, is combined with the absence of even the slightest reference to discrimination of gender or race. Marx himself is known to have not been very fortunate in his way of dealing with these forms of inequality: he trivialised the women's liberation movement, had little sympathy - if not hostility - for national liberation movements, and saw in ethnic divisions, above all, a form of division of the working class. This latter approach has been the other predominant option in Marxism: ethnic and gender divisions are interpreted and merit attention, above all, as forms of division of the workers, obstacles to their unity, often as the product of a deliberate strategy to *divide and conquer* on the part of capital.⁷

On the other hand, however, Marxism has been led to accept the issues of inequality of opportunities, and has even done so willingly, as a corollary of the division of society into classes which would strengthen the relevance and centrality of these: it is no more and no less than the question of "social reproduction", that is, of the inheriting of position or belonging to a class, the Marxist counterpoint to the functionalist belief in social mobility. The classes, naturally, appear as a clearer and more reproachable reality if, instead of being constructed from scratch in each generation, they are reproduced and perpetuated through the generations, that is, if they are considered as stable groups in a closed society rather than contemplated as transitory aggregates in an open society. This has led Marxism to the paradox of giving great importance to ascription in the class structure, which is really a secondary aspect of this, whereas it was denied or merely ignored in the structure of gender relationships or ethnic relationships, that is, where it constitutes a primary and essential aspect.

⁶ I refer to Poulantzas (1974) and Wright (1978), although of the latter it must be said that he subsequently attempted to give an account of these forms of inequality, albeit in a way which, to me, does not seem very satisfactory .

⁷ Two examples, and very interesting ones, are Stone (1974) on ethnic relations, Saffiotti (1978) on gender relations, as well as Gordon, Edwards and Reich (1982) on both.

In my opinion, a theory on inequalities should include two objectives, without sacrificing either one of them to the other: on the one hand, it should include each and every one of the different forms of inequality, at least those generally considered as most important, without them casting a shadow over each other; on the other hand, it should comprise each of them in its specificity. It must, therefore, be comprehensive and specific at the same time. In this sense, Marxism, which has given strength to the idea of exploitation, has been clearly incapable of offering a theoretical treatment, not only adequate, but even merely fitting, of the inequalities of sex and race, always ignored or conceptually subordinated to the inequalities of class. The most typical commonplace affirms, in diverse ways, that inequalities of sex and race are nothing but the remains of previous social forms or an epiphenomenon of exploitation relationships between classes. On the other hand, new Weberians propose concepts which, although they rescue from oblivion forms of inequality that can be as serious as exploitation or more so, place them all in a pot pourri which is not at all precise from the point of view of theory and probably not very useful with regard to political practice.

In our societies, in a general way, in the bureaucratic, capitalist, tributary or mercantile spheres, there is no production relationship whatsoever which links, as such, men with women, individuals from a dominated race with those from a dominant race, foreigners with nationals or young people and old people with middle-aged adults. In fact, it does not even exist now, formally, in the domestic sphere, although we shall return to this point in greater detail. Consequently, between them, on the mere basis of these characteristics, there cannot be a relationship of exploitation in the strict sense. What defines the situation of the discriminated groups in each of these relationships - gender, ethnic, community or generational - is, in the extra-domestic sphere, the fact of being, to a different extent, excluded or passed over in access to ownership, qualification and authority, that is, to the necessary "possessions" for not belonging to one or other of the exploited classes, or for being part of one or other of the exploiting classes. And, in the domestic sphere, for women, being excluded or passed over in access to employment or business, that is, to economic activity outside the home. In brief, it is a matter of groups with different economic opportunities.

The relations mentioned, then, are not in themselves relationships of exploitation. To be exact, my argument is that they are not relationships of exploitation in the context of open economic relations, that is, in organizations and markets, or in the modern state; or, what is the same, in the tributary, mercantile,

capitalist and bureaucratic modes of production. Let us add that they are not even so in the home, nor therefore in the domestic mode of production, although I fear that at this point, with this paragraph and the previous one, I may have already managed, without it being my intention, to annoy some feminists - but we shall return to this. It does not necessarily mean that they cannot have been so or have not been so in other contexts, for example, the relationships of gender under traditional family legislation or ethnic relationships in a form of production based on slavery, in a society organized in castes, etc. But this, rather than a possibility, is today a stage which has fundamentally been passed, although it is not inconsistent with the position of some of the groups defined in relationships of discrimination in present day society.

I believe that this set of relationships can, at present, be adequately designated as relationships of discrimination. I only intend to distinguish from other forms and group together under one same heading those forms of inequality which are based on, or associated with, characteristics of the individuals on which these cannot act, which they cannot modify; linked, in other words, to what sociology usually calls ascriptive characteristics. These, however, as we are considering them at present, act not by giving rise to a closed system of equally assigned class positions, estate, or functions, but only by strongly affecting the opportunities of the different individuals to acquire or gain access to one or another estate, class position or function within an open system. In short, these characteristics give rise to claims and probabilities with respect to the available positions. It is worthwhile, now, to recall Weber's definitions of "estate situation" and "estate":

We call *estate situation* a claim, typically effective, for positive or negative privileges in social *consideration* (...).

Estate is used for a group of men who, in an association, effectively claim a) exclusive estate consideration - and eventually also b) an exclusive monopoly of an estate nature.⁸

People are born with different sexes, belong to different races, speak different languages, come from different nations, practise different religions and go through successive stages of the life cycle, but what makes the differences around each of these variables somewhat more than natural or purely cultural differences is the fact that different claims, typically effective, are based on them (or perhaps we should soften

⁸ Weber (1922: I., 245, 246).

even this and say, more Weberian than Weber himself: probably - but not inevitably - effective), for access to both social consideration and, especially, to exclusiveness, to systematic priority or, at least, preference when filling positions and carrying out the most desirable functions. This is precisely what we shall call, for the moment, "discrimination".

Table 1

Exploitation and Discrimination

	EXPLOITATION	DISCRIMINATION
Concept of exploitation	Marxian	(Neo)Weberian
Consisting of	Appropriation of surplus or unequal exchange	Inequality of life chances
Visibility of the relationship	Low	High
Related elements	Positions	Individuals
Groups originated	Classes	Categories
Visibility of the groups	Low	High
Base and sphere	Strictly economic	Economic & extraeconomic
Inequality	Conditional, segmentary	Exhaustive, ubiquitous
Hierarchy	Semigradual	Discreet
Predominant action	Instrumental, economic	Expressive, cultural
Fundamental element	Interest	Identity
Frontiers	Closed	Open
Belonging to the group	Acquired	Assigned
Mobility	Present	Absent

As regards the term "estate", we have another somewhat more restrictive use reserved for it. Instead of this, we shall call the human groups defined around relationships of discrimination categories. The essential thing here is the associated idea of hierarchy, which, however, does not refer to any concrete structure. It could be said that it is a hierarchy prior to the person's incorporation into society. If social class is a result, social category is a starting point. The term also suits our purpose because of its ambiguity, since it refers at the same time to real groups or aggregates and to prior constructions of understanding; it thus fits the dual reality of gender, race or generation, which on the one hand designate social, material or biological

differences, let us say of unquestionable existence, whereas on the other hand they evoke ideological constructs which may lack any foundation at all.⁹ Furthermore, the usual meaning of the term “category” when it is applied to individuals (“moral category” or “personal”, etc.) emphasizes an expressive meaning, of individual identity, which it would be desirable to keep, since it is the belief which usually accompanies stereotypes on adscriptive characteristics.

Of course, this is not the first attempt to gather together the groups defined by ethnic characteristics, age or sex under a common heading, common only to them, which differentiates them from the classes of any other social collectives. Americans have spread the concept of “minority” -- originally used only for minority ethnic groups -- to women (who make up half of the population), to the elderly (who are a minority, but a huge minority, to which virtually everybody ends up belonging) and to homosexual groups and others.¹⁰

Table I gives an outline of the differences between the concepts of exploitation and discrimination. In the first place, as has already been said, they correspond, respectively, to the Marxian and (neo)Weberian concepts of “exploitation”. Marx identified this with the extraction or compulsory transfer of economic surplus, whereas Weber identified it rather with the systematic inequality of chances in life. One essential difference between both relationships, very aptly pointed out by authors such as Parkin¹¹ and Hartmann¹², is that exploitation is a relationship between social positions, regardless of who occupies them, whereas discrimination is a relationship between individuals of flesh and bone, regardless of what position they occupy and

⁹ According to the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy (D.R.A.E.), category is the “social condition of some people with respect to others”. According to J. Corominas’ etymological dictionary, the word comes from the Greek *kategoria*, which, in turn, came from *kategoreo*, ‘I affirm, I attribute’, or more exactly ‘I accuse’. This fits the role that stereotypes and prejudices play in the construction of social categories.

¹⁰ There have been diverse attempts to rank equally and combine several stratification criteria in a not purely enumerative way, and the trinomial class-gender-race is now a commonplace, but, among all the others, the works of Lenski and Parkin should be highlighted because of their greater scope.

¹¹ Criticizing Poulantzas, Parkin writes that notions such as, for example, that of the mode of production base their explanatory power precisely on their indifference towards the nature of that human material whose activities are structurally determined. (...) Questions such as the ethnic composition of the workforce imply (for Marxism) a hindrance to analysis by diverting attention towards the qualities of the social actors, which means a diametrically opposed conception to the notion of human agents as *Träger* or incarnation of the forces of the system. (Parkin, 1979: 61)

¹² Hartmann (1979).

before they occupy it. In accordance with this we shall also designate differently the aggregates of people defined within each of these relationships: classes in the case of exploitation and categories in the case of discrimination. The relationship between category and class consists of the fact that belonging to one category or another, regardless of the will of the individual and linked to birth and to the inexorable course of life, determines or restricts opportunities to gain access to (or remain in) one social class or another.

Discrimination can be much more damaging than exploitation, both due to the way in which it entails unequal chances in life and due to the way in which it affects personal dignity, either by being linked to the intrinsic traits of the person, such as sex and age, or by being linked to culture, such as race.¹³ In principle, at least, exploitation is a purely economic, eminently segmentary phenomenon, which has as a condition incorporation to production or exchange; hence it directly concerns only a limited number of people (although also indirectly, but not less effectively, it concerns all those who depend on them), and in limited aspects of their lives. On the other hand, discrimination is an exhaustive phenomenon, for which it suffices to have the good or bad luck to have been born with a given characteristic in a given society, or to have acquired it due to the mere passage of time, so that for better or for worse it directly affects everyone, and is an invasive, ubiquitous, phenomenon in the sense that it reaches all spheres of social life and all the facets of the person. Although economic success may be taken as an indicator of personal worth, and although it may be thought that the tendency to do so is on the increase, it is true that a person can always protect him or herself, or rather protect his or her external image and self-esteem, by orienting others and themselves towards other criteria of evaluation which are more in their favour, even by making poverty and economic disinterest their arms. There is no escape, however, from the label of gender, race or age, much as its meaning can, obviously, be ignored or inverted, and those who form part of the sector negatively discriminated in any of these divisions can scarcely avoid their condition being considered as a stigma. It has, therefore, rightly been said that class fundamentally involves interest, whereas ethnic group basically affects identity, and the objectives and corresponding ways of action mainly run along these two lines.¹⁴

In this sense, individual visibility of belonging to a social category is very high,

¹³ Gerth and Mills pointed out not long ago that most of the disturbances in the history of humanity have had more to do with injured dignity than with material need.

¹⁴ Bell (1973), also Cohen (1974).

if not absolute, whereas that of belonging to a class is comparatively very low. Anyone can easily hide, with a certain amount of success, their social class, but it is not possible to hide most ethnic characteristics, or of course sex or age. Paradoxically, however, the collective visibility, presence and weight of classes have usually been greater, inasmuch as social effect is concerned, than those of categories, at least if we take as our sphere of observation this century which is now at its close (although everything indicates that this is changing, and rapidly).

Moreover, in exploitation relationships one can, naturally, be the exploiter or the exploited, but one can also be neither one nor the other, or be moderately so (a hierarchy which is, let us say, quasigradual), whereas in discrimination relationships one can only be part of the positively discriminated group or of the negatively discriminated group, without any type of intermediate possibilities (in this sense it is a hierarchy which is limited, discreet, somewhat dichotomous: once discrimination exists one is either at an advantage or at a disadvantage, although there may be many degrees of each, and one belongs to either the advantaged party or the disadvantaged party). In almost any system of classes, middle classes can be seen, but it is very difficult, even impossible, according to each case, to find intermediate categories or estates in systems of discrimination.

Finally, class boundaries are, in principle, open. Without quite being able to say, as Schumpeter does, that they are like buses or hotels, always full but of different people, it is true that there is no physical, military, political or legal obstacle which prevents gaining access to a class or leaving it. They are, in this sense, open human aggregates - belonging to them is acquired and there is mobility across their boundaries. Categories, however, are closed, adscriptive and without individual mobility. In this sense categories are therefore also more convenient and secure for those who belong to the positively discriminated ones, since they do not need to do anything in order to form part of them, neither do they have to worry about remaining in their ranks; categories are also more damaging for those who belong to the negatively discriminated ones, who are neither responsible for this in any way nor able to do anything to avoid it.

Exploitation: Transaction and Appropriation

Exploitation has usually been defined, in the broadest terms, in two ways: as appropriation of surplus or as unequal exchange, according to whether it takes place in production or in circulation. We could generally define it as the relationship by which an individual or group appropriates the resources or wealth possessed or

produced by another individual or group without equivalent compensation. Its usual mechanisms today are exchange and associated production, although it has taken millennia for them to replace the system's most notorious mechanism - violence - which is still present on the periphery (geographic, and especially economic, social and cultural). The idea of exploitation depends strictly on value, since to be able to say that it exists in one sense or in another, that this or that individual is an exploiter, is exploited or is neither one nor the other, we must be able to affirm that he or she receives more, less, or the same as he or she gives. This is simple when what is given and what is received are of the same nature, but both exchange and production exist and are in general use simply because one wants to receive something different than what one gives or else to elaborate a product of a different nature than that of the factors (only when the sole difference between the products exchanged or between the factor and the product is time -for example in financial loans, or in agricultural reproduction- can one speak of a common nature, and even this case would be questionable). In fact, passing from primary production to secondary, tertiary, etc. can be seen as a massive process of differentiation of the product with respect to the factors. Thus, in order to examine the existence of exploitation it is necessary to refer to a common, objective, criterion of value which allows one to "add apples to pears".¹⁵ But this goes beyond the purpose of this study.

On the other hand, it should be noted that exploitation is somewhat different from oppression, although it may coexist with it and has done so throughout the greater part of history; it simply means that it is not linked to the formal or strictly voluntary nature of the relationships. An economic relationship can be voluntary and exploiting, as usually (only usually) occurs in the market sphere, or involuntary and non-exploiting, as may (only may) occur in the sphere of the state. Insofar as it is visible to the exploited, it is probable that exploitation requires in the long run, in order to be maintained, some kind of oppression of the exploited on the part of the exploiters, but there the connection ends. Not only may exploitation relationships be voluntary (for the exploited party, since for the other party it can almost be taken for granted that they are), but relationships that are not of exploitation may be involuntary (especially if one of the parties prefers or would prefer to exploit). The

¹⁵ "An objective conception of value is one which determines the value of an object according and in proportion to the amount of some natural and empirical variable present in it. If two objects are of the same or different value it can then be decided independently of whether they themselves (or other similar objects) are exchanged and, if they are, independently of the ratio in which they are exchanged." (Steiner, 1987: 135).

voluntary nature of an exploiting relationship for the exploited party may exist both in a weak sense, with regard to the form (the relationship is not desired in those terms, but is accepted due to a lack of options, for example, when something is sold for a price that is considered low, because the money is needed), and in a strong sense, with regard to the content (the exploiting nature of the relationship is not known, for example, in the market when it is not clear as such, or is accepted in exchange for possible compensations of an extra-economic nature, for example, in the home when it is covered by affective components).¹⁶

Oppression is simply another kind of relationship, concretely a relationship of power, inside or outside the economic sphere. Economic oppression would thus be no more than oppression in the economic sphere, a particular form of oppression. There can, however, be economic oppression without exploitation, for example, in the home, when someone is obliged to perform an economic activity - housework, for example - although this does not mean that they are exploited. Some authors, who would prefer to reserve the term exploitation for relationships in which the exploited party works, rate as economic oppression the existence of a causal relationship between wealth and poverty which is not the exploitation of work, within which both unequal exchange and exclusion from economic opportunities must be supposed to lie. However, if we defend a minimum frugality consisting in that words, even when sociologists use them, should keep some of their original meaning, it is difficult to justify the application of the term "oppression" either to an unemployed person with whom no direct relationship is maintained, or to a moneychanger with whom a voluntary exchange is made. On the other hand, it could and should be kept for those cases in which someone is directly forced to perform an economic activity or expressly prevented from doing so.¹⁷

¹⁶ If we take heed of Cohen (1978: 333), in feudalism exploitation is evident, but is assumed to be part of a common, non-utilitary relationship; in capitalism the relationship is supposed to be egoistical, but the exploitation is invisible. The twofold visibility of exploitation and of the utilitary nature of the relationship would be explosive.

¹⁷ Wright (1989: 8) writes that we shall say that the rich exploit the poor when two cases can be established: that the welfare of the rich depends causally on the hardships of the poor - the rich are rich because the poor are poor - and that the welfare of the rich depends on the *effort* of the poor. The first of these criteria defines in itself *economic oppression*, but not exploitation. Unemployed workers are, in these terms, economically oppressed but not exploited. This complicates statement, certainly, in principle leaves out the losers in unequal exchange. Wright would probably reply that this is not so, on the other hand - that is, outside of exchange itself - they work, since for that reason they have accepted the formulas of

Unequal exchange is not a very common definition, but it is the simplest.¹⁸ It is the only definition that would be assumed by conventional economy, which contemplates organizations as mere exceptions or responses to “market failures”, if it were thought that it is also really possible and perhaps probable, that is, that it will not be made to disappear by the competition whenever it attempts to appear. It is ironic that neither classical nor Marxist economy have ever tired of affirming that the market is a pure exchange of “equivalents”. Classical economy always tries to avoid the question of unequal attributes prior to the exchange and argues time and again, against all evidence, that competition works, if not in the same way, at least with the same effects as in the handbooks of the subject. Marxist economy is anxious to free itself from the “veil” of circulation to go into the secrets of production and also firmly believes, ultimately, in the irresistible strength of competition, although it pompously calls it the mechanism by which “the socially necessary labour” for the production of the merchandise is determined and of which the movement of prices would be no more than a superficial epiphenomenon.

In general, we can say that exploitation occurs, through an unequal exchange relationship, whenever an individual receives more or less than he gives and supposing that the relationship is limited, as an economic relationship, to this giving and receiving (and we are not interested here in its other dimensions: moral, expressive, affective, aesthetic, etc.). It is not necessary to argue that all this small conceptual

exploitation through the markets of capital or of credit proposed by Roemer, but it remains to explain whether things would be different if the product unequally exchanged, with loss, proceeded not from present work but, for example, from previous or outside work. In short, it is not explained why it is necessary that there should be work or effort in order for there to be exploitation and, to fill the gap, the concept of economic oppression is forced too much.

¹⁸ The theory of unequal exchange has its origin in the study of international trade, where it goes back to the problem of comparative costs pointed out by Ricardo y Torrens. According to Bettelheim (1969: 306), this expression is used to say that, in the world market, poor nations are obliged to sell the product of a relatively large number of hours of work in order to obtain in exchange from rich nations the product of a smaller number of hours of work. Emmanuel (1969: 104), the most evident representative of the theory, offers an unnecessarily complicated definition which states that outside all alteration of prices which may result from an imperfect concurrence of merchandise in the market, unequal exchange is the relationship of balanced prices established by virtue of the pereguation of earnings between regions with ‘institutionally’ unequal rates of added value - giving the term ‘institutionally’ the meaning that these rates, for whatever the reason may be, are subtracted from the pereguation concurrence in the market of factors and independent of relative prices.

and symbolic apparatus can be applied, the same as it has been to exchange in the market, to the allocation of resources by the state, specifically in the sphere of the tributary mode of production. In a more general way, it is applied to all the transactions where, without anything new occurring in them, it is possible to compare what is given to what is received, for each participant. Formally it could also be applied to the case of donations, although this would lack substantive sense, since in the circuit of donations no equivalence is intended among them, but rather, at most, similarity in the disposition assumed to be behind them (to help others to the extent needed, to cooperate with all the means one has available, to respect the ritual of the gift without stopping to calculate, etc.: as is usually said on the occasion, "it's not the gift but the thought that counts").¹⁹

One major difference between the state and the market as a mechanism of distribution is that in the latter each and every one of the transactions can be singularized, and their nature as exchanges questioned (purchases, sales, including of course credit, renting, etc.), but in the former only the relationships of each individual can be singularized overall. However, we should not give this difference greater importance than it has, since the relationship with the individual could break down in some cases, for example, for long periods of time or for some functional segments (e.g., services received in exchange for specific fees), but the singularization of commercial transactions is only of interest when it is a matter of goods of high value, such as housing, or production factors, to wit: land, work, or capital, whereas in other markets it would only make sense to singularize for the individual (ask ourselves, for example, whether the total of the goods purchased by the consumer has the same value as the money paid for them, or whether the total price that the producer receives has the same value as the product transferred).

Thus, the definition of this type of exploitation as "unequal exchange" is not sufficient - although, because of its popularity, we have used this concept to introduce it- since the exploiting allocation through taxation must be situated together with it. In the absence of a better term, we shall use the concept of asymmetric transaction, understanding as transaction both exchange in the market and allocation by the

¹⁹ Really, in the ambit of donations the idea of reciprocity is clearly present, but tempered by the consideration of the possible asymmetry between those involved (father and son, rich friend and poor friend, the person who is in need at a certain moment and the one who is not, etc.).

state²⁰ and by asymmetry, obviously, advantage for one of the parties.

It must be emphasized that, in any case, until now we have not made production intervene to any extent. This means that, on the one hand, the total sum of values, as that of material goods, is always the same, although they constantly change hands and in doing so may make the proportions in which they are found in the hands of some individuals or others vary, which is the same as saying that some individuals exploit others. On the other hand it also means that relationships of equivalence must necessarily be established in value, not in physical terms, since exchange can only occur and become general when individuals possess different goods, which they do not necessarily need to consume themselves; they need those owned by others and can establish a relationship of equivalence between them.

The fact of unequal exchange can and must be entirely isolated from the circumstance of whether each participant works or not. Marx's insistence on the fact that in the mode of capitalist production exploitation is the exploitation of labour should not prevent those who accept this idea from accepting that, outside this production mode, even in societies which are dominated - whatever this may mean - but not exhausted by it, this does not have to be so. Nevertheless, the great majority tend not to accept it. For a sophisticated neomarxist such as Wright (1989: 8), for example - as we have just seen - there can only be exploitation if the welfare of the rich depends on the *effort* of the poor. For Van Parijs (1987: 113), another specialist on the problem, part of the very definition of exploitation is that only workers can be the object of it.²¹ For Cohen (1978:82), exploitation means that "the producer is

²⁰ The use of the term "transaction" to refer to both commercial and organizational exchanges, that is, to embrace a greater sphere than that of exchange, has already been suggested by Commons and some of his followers, particularly Williamson, in the attempt to generalise the application of market logic inside organizations (see Williamson, 1975). However, here we are not referring to any type of economic relationship, but rather to those which enter the sphere of circulation, as part of distribution, as is defined in the previous chapter. It does not, therefore, either include or directly imply production.

²¹ For a start, the requirement that only workers can be exploited dictates that contributions must be measured in terms of labour, or at least in terms of a variable in which a score above zero cannot be made unless work is performed (work effort, the sweat of the worker, etc.). If another measurement of value is chosen, it could be conceived that someone who did not work at all could present a surplus balance and, therefore, be exploited. This suggests the following general formulation: individual A is an exploiter if the contribution in labour of A (measured in some way) is less than proportional to the income of A (measured in some way). (Van Parijs, 1987:116). Another complicated statement. On the one hand, it is admitted that the work exploited no longer needs to be paid labour, and comparison seems to be posed,

forced to make surplus labour". *E cosi via*. The generalisation of what is basically and typically valid for the capitalist production mode to any society of those that we call in shorthand "capitalist" is no more than an enormous metonymy, that is, an abusive projection of the qualities of the part over the whole. Marx postulated and argued that capital exploits labour in the process of production.²² It is true that, in this view of historical dynamics, the capitalist production mode is presented as capable of absorbing almost the whole of society, or of economy, or at least public economy (non domestic). However, Marx had no objection to considering the exploitation of the producer through the market, although he believed it secondary to the exploitation of the paid worker, which was destined to be substituted by it. Of course, in the case of home industry, a transitional figure between small commercial production and large capitalist production,²³ but also in that of small peasant production.²⁴ Post-Marx Marxism, unlike the founder, has needed a century to come to recognise that small producers can be exploited through the market (and has not yet reached taxation).

Really, the requirement that the exploited person be a worker is no more than

adequately although in a confused way, in proportional, not absolute, terms (the correct thing would be to say that A is exploited if his proportion in the factors is smaller than his proportion in the product). It is argued incidentally that if value or something similar were not chosen as a measurement, non-workers could be exploited. Two different things are mixed here: the choice of labour as a counting unit and exploitation. However, it is not argued why workers could not be exploited using another unit nor why they could only be exploited using that one. Let it suffice for the moment to point out this deficiency in Van Parijs, without yet trying to demonstrate that the contrary is true, since it is part of the central argument of this chapter and the next.

²² A first weakness in this statement is that it is theoretically possible for labour to exploit capital, and a few cases can be pointed out empirically. Nevertheless, they are not equally probable options and it can be taken as correct that, generally, it is capital that exploits labour. We shall return to this issue.

²³ As an example, to give an idea: This exploitation is more blatant in the so-called home industry than in manufacturing, (...). (Marx, 1867: II, 2, 562). I now go on to the so-called *home industry*. To get an idea of this *capitalist sphere of exploitation* (...). (Marx, 1867: II, 2, 567)

²⁴ Thus, for example, when referring to the struggle between secondary forms of capitalist exploitation - the struggle of the peasant against usury and mortgages, of the lower middle class against the wholesaler, the banker and the factory owner (...) (Marx, 1850: 46) Or, once again referring to the French peasants; that the position of the French peasants, after the Republic has added new burdens to the old, is understandable. It is evident that their exploitation only differs in *form* from that of the industrial proletariat. The exploiter is the same: *capital*. Individual capitalists exploit individual peasants through mortgage and usury; the capitalist class exploits the peasant class through state taxes. (Marx, 1850: 117).

the ⁿth step in a long resistance to separate from a narrower interpretation of Marxism than the orthodox one... and from a progressive failure in insistence. Thus formulated, the restriction assumes, for example, that an heir, even a modest heir, cannot be exploited if he is not at the same time a worker, no matter how badly the market, for example, may treat him.²⁵ However, when it is affirmed that only the workers can be exploited what is meant, on most occasions, is that only workers outside the home can be exploited, in a *quid pro quo* that denies the condition of labour to housework and overlooks the often obvious inequality of individual efforts in families. Much insistence and much patience have been needed on the part of the feminists in social sciences for it to be finally admitted, and then not by everyone, that housework can also be exploited.²⁶ But this is not all, naturally. Until very recently, the major part of Marxist sociology only admitted the possibility of paid workers being exploited, that is, those who sell their workforce, and until not long ago something else was required: that they sell it to capital, thus leaving out civil servants and public employees. Shortly before it was also required that they be employed in "production", understanding this as different from "circulation", which would include commerce (the circulation of merchandise) and finance (the circulation of money). And, going only a little further back, one could find the requirement that production should be "material production", by which was really meant the production of goods, thus excluding services. If we take a rapid return trip through the tunnel of time, returning conceptually to the past and then coming back empirically to the future, paradoxically we would find that there would now be hardly any exploited people, since these increasingly restrictive definitions are applied to decreasing sectors of the population. Functional requirements could be added to this, such as being situated on

²⁵The trouble is that the market not only does not care - fortunately and as Milton Friedman affirms - whether the merchandise has been manufactured by a black or a by communist, but nor does it care - unfortunately - whether the money is earned with the sweat of one's brow or at the casino tables. If it can exploit it, it does.

²⁶ Wright, for example, admits this possibility when he defines exploitation in terms of transfer of labour, but immediately shows himself willing to reach the opposite conclusion by making use of Roemer's alternative definition in terms of game theory. The trick lies in asking oneself if women would be better off if domestic and extra-domestic tasks were shared equally *within the family*, instead of asking if they would be better off if it was done throughout society. (Wright, 1985: 128-9). If I take this author as an example it is precisely because of his present inclination to admit many forms of exploitation, his willingness to tackle the problem of the attribution of demographic aggregates to any class categories whatsoever and his proven capacity to autocratically revise his own work.

the manual side in the division between manual and intellectual work or being the object and not the subject of power and dominion in the labour process.²⁷

Table 2

Restrictions on the Concept of Exploitation

REQUIREMENT FOR BEING CONSIDERED EXPLOITED	INCLUDES (EXCLUSIVELY)	EXCLUDES (ACCUMULATIVELY)
Possess something of economic value (including workforce)	Any capable person	Children, the disabled...
Be a worker	All workers	Non-worker owners (of means of production and/or of subsistence)
Be a worker outside the home	Economically active population	Inactive population
Actually be working	Active employed population	Unemployed population
Sell one's own workforce	Paid workers	Those who work for themselves, employers who work
Sell it to capital	Paid workers in the private sector	Public employees
Production	Paid workers priv. sect. agriculture, industry & services	Paid workers (private sector) commerce and finance
"Material" production	Paid workers priv. sect agriculture & industry	Paid workers (private sector) services
Do subordinate work, without authority	Subordinated paid workers priv. sect. agric. & industry	Directors, executives, supervisors
Do manual, "physical" labour	Subordinated paid workers priv. sect. agric. & industry, of production	"White collar" workers

Table 2 gives these restrictions in increasing order. Some of them could be approached in a different order (for example, be a worker outside the home and be an effective worker), or be considered as overlapping (such as participate in material production or do manual labour), but it seems unnecessary to go into a detailed discussion to this respect. To a large extent, the intramarxism discussion on who is an exploited worker has been formulated in other terms: who is a productive worker, which would be the equivalent to asking who produces surplus, which was supposed to

²⁷ The respectively "ideological" and "political" dimensions of the definition of working class in Poulantzas (1974).

be another expression for the same (in the capitalist mode of production and, by extension, in capitalism or in capitalist society).²⁸ It is sufficient that the magnitude of the consequences of the restrictive conceptions of exploitation be appreciated (remember that, when there are no exploited, it can only be that there is no economic relationship, that there is perfect equality - or equity - or that we find ourselves in the presence of the exploiters).

That there may be exploitation outside the labour process as well as inside it, and even outside labour in general, should not be considered at all unusual, and even less so after Marx. It was precisely he who, taking up and developing Hegel, insisted over and over again on the separation of the labour product with respect to the process and the agent.²⁹ Precisely because the product of labour becomes independent of the worker (as a product it does not belong to him) and, where appropriate, of the labour process (as goods, unlike the service), the moment of exploitation can be separated from both or be divided between the two.

Appropriation of surplus, for its part, is a fairly frequent definition of exploitation, although in spite of this it is not generally accepted. It is more comprehensive than "extraction of surplus", since, it can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to paid labour in the public sector, to coercive forms of extraction of surplus prior to and parallel to capitalism, and to subsistence economy (including domestic economy as such), as well as to capitalism. However, this expression is not really very fitting either, the same as occurs with others which at times replace it, such as "extraction" or "expropriation of surplus", "transfer" or "compulsory transfer of surplus", etc. In any case, the term "appropriation" is much more suited to the case than the term "transfer", since, before being "transferred", the surplus or whatever it is (including replaced value or the mere physical replacement of the factors), has to be produced. Once production intervenes, when it is a matter of creating something which did not exist before, it can no longer be considered as a game with an obligatory zero sum. Even in a basically stationary economy, as could be, for example, a self-sufficient rural family or a farm with a stable population

²⁸ See a detailed treatment of this issue and its theoretical consequences in Enguita (1985b).

²⁹ The negative relationship with the object becomes the *form* of the latter and something permanent, precisely because the object is independent with regard to the worker. (Hegel, 1807:120). The product of labour is the labour which has become fixed in an object, which has become a thing; the product is the objectivization of labour. (Marx, 1844: 105).

controlled by an owner with invariable needs, mere chance would suffice for the product not to be the same in amount (material or of value) to the factors, thus giving a positive or negative surplus, even against the wishes of the producers. Nevertheless, here the surplus is accidental, and what is really at stake is the appropriation of the product in more general terms, whether it be surplus, stationary or in deficit. And it is possible - not only in self-sufficient economies, of production and consumption, but also in open economies, of production, circulation and consumption, in which each unit neither produces what it consumes nor consumes what it produces - that the surplus may have a contingent nature and play a secondary role, for example, when tradition counts as a more or less strict limitation of consumer habits and disposition to labour, probably as part of a broader "moral economy".³⁰

However, in the commercial and tributary modes of production, under the pressure of the market or taxation moderated by the resistance of the individual or the home, as well as and above all in the capitalist and bureaucratic production modes, where such resistance must be exercised and can be vanquished in the context of organization, the production of surplus goes beyond being an epiphenomenon and becomes the very purpose of the process. Because of this, and only because of this, the capitalist invests his capital to mobilise the means of production and the scattered workforce. So, the appropriation of this surplus, or the more than proportional appropriation of this surplus, by one or some of the parties - and less than proportional by another or others - is exploitation.³¹ Hence it makes some sense to define it as such, as appropriation of surplus, although it would be more correct to speak of "differential", "non-proportional appropriation", or, to say it with only one adjective. "disproportional", since it is in no way necessary that the exploiting party

³⁰ The expression "moral economy" - a deliberate *contradictio in adjecto* - was coined by E.P. Thompson (1971) to refer to criteria and values that are extra-economic, or at least not economic in the usual sense of the term today (utilitarian), applied by English craftsmen and by the people in general, before industrialisation, to labour and consumption, among other aspects of economic life.

³¹ It does not, then suffice that the two parties improve, a modest condition with which neoclassical economy usually conforms, nor that the principle of Rawlsian difference be fulfilled : that social and economic inequalities related to offices and positions have to be structured in such a way that, whatever the level of these inequalities, great or small, they have to be given in greater benefit of the less advantaged members of society. (Rawls, 1993: 36) A century and a half later, Bray (1839: 48) warned that strict justice requires not only that all exchanges be mutually beneficial, but also that they be equally beneficial.

appropriate all the surplus and the exploited party none. (Marxism can speak of plain “appropriation of surplus” because it assumes that, at least tendentially, labour force is bought and sold “at its value”, in a system of perfect competition, so that such value is simply “replaced”, like that of machinery, and all the surplus is appropriated by one of the parties, capital, but we shall show that both can appropriate surplus, or no surplus may be produced to therefore be the object of appropriation, and this does not prevent one from exploiting the other).

In the bureaucratic production mode also the production of surplus is usually assumed to be the objective of production (see the development discourse of socialist politicians - I am referring to “real” socialism of course), although, paradoxically, the result has often been the opposite.³² But exploitation can then consist not so much in absorbing the surplus as in not paying the deficit, which takes us back again to the obviousness that what is at stake is the sharing of the product without more ado, whether it be surplus or in deficit in relation to the factors. It is, then, a matter of the product in general and not of the surplus in particular, nor much less in the strict sense, unless we affirm that the latter always exists because it can consist indifferently of a positive amount a negative amount or an amount equal to zero. It is, therefore, purely and simply a matter of the appropriation of the product, or of plain appropriation, in the sense that we have already given elsewhere,³³ when defining forms of distribution. It thus seems more correct to speak simply of appropriation of the product, and define exploitation as a case of disproportionate appropriation. The logic of these changes of terms is given synthetically in Table 3:

³² Capitalism usually grows because the organization can affect ignorance of the luck of the workers, making them work beyond their needs or forgetting them when it does not need them; in socialism, however, it is the individual who can ignore the luck of the organization, by producing less than he consumes individually and consuming the means of production unproductively; in small community production neither one nor the other is possible, but at the present level of economic development, what normally is no longer possible is small production itself. Real socialism, particularly in recent years, could be considered as a process of systematic production of deficit (“the planned organization of underdevelopment” someone, Hans Magnus Enzensberger I believe, once called it), but this does not mean that we should stop considering exploitation the hugely unequal appropriation of the product by bureaucrats and workers, or by different types of workers.

³³ See Enguita (1997)

Table 3

The Two Forms of Exploitation

Typical formula	UNEQUAL EXCHANGE	EXTRACTION OF SURPLUS
Setting reduced to	Market	Capitalist enterprise
Also applicable to	Allocation through other networks	Stationary or deficit product
Potential setting in other networks	State as distribution network (taxation), home as distribution	Non-capitalist organization (public agency), estate, home as producer
Thus generalising to	All circulation (except donations)	Every form of cooperative production
Alternative denomination	ASYMMETRIC TRANSACTION	DISPROPORTIONAL APPROPRIATION

Everything said is regardless of whether we measure the product, and thus its distribution, in physical amounts or in value (if we measure one product in physical amounts of another, it means that we measure it in value, since we have established an equivalence between two types of material in principle incommensurable). Even in a natural economy, the product would only be commensurable with the factors in the case of a strict monoculture, of an economy with a single product that was at the same time the only factor, for example the production of livestock by means of livestock. The product could then be measured in relation to the factors in physical terms and it could be posed, for example, that the one who provided half of the sheep of one generation should keep half of the sheep of the next generation. However, in a somewhat less elementary natural economy, in which two or more factors cooperate, or in which a product different than the factor is obtained, or both, the problem of incommensurability is posed in physical terms, a problem which can only be solved by having recourse to commensurability in terms of value: thus, for example, if the sheep do not breed themselves, but also require a dam and a sire, pasture in which to graze and a shepherd to pasture them, the question is posed as to which part of the new generation of sheep corresponds to the previous generation, to the pasture and to the shepherd, hence some kind of equivalence must be established between these factors. The problem posed here in a simplified way is, when all is said and done, that of sharing the product among capital, land and labour in their most trivial sense. If the owner of the lands and the sheep is the same person as the shepherd, as has been the case in most sheep-herding societies, the problem will be merely technical (how much

pasture is needed for how many sheep, etc.); if they are different people, *ipso facto* a social problem is presented.

Finally, given the multiplicity of meanings with which the term "exploitation" is normally used, clearly determining what we do not consider as such can be as important as positively defining what we understand here by exploitation. Indeed, alongside the tendency to define or localise exploitation in a highly restrictive way, for example, in the buying and selling of workforce or in usury, generally in accordance with some orthodoxy, there is always the temptation to define it very slackly, or to see it everywhere, as if any form of social inequality or of injustice should be described as exploitation, or as if everything that were not such was destined to be, therefore, condemned to theoretical and practical irrelevance.

Thus, in particular, we hear talk of exploitation "of nature", of "sexual exploitation" of women by men, of ethnic minorities by the majorities, etc., or that every relationship in which the other is used as a means and not an end is exploitation, or every kind of asymmetry in the socially produced chances in life. Some uses of the term "exploitation" are more justified than others, and those cited as an example have unequal value, but all of them represent something different from exploitation as we have defined it here, and not due to a subtlety of the definition but because it is a matter of substantively and substantially different realities.

It is perfectly reasonable to extend the term "exploitation" to any relationship in which one party gives more than it receives, and vice versa, especially if the relationship is a transaction of considerable importance from any point of view, or if, when this is not the case, it occurs with certain regularity. Consequently, it makes complete sense to refer to the exploitation of nature, and not in a purely technical tone, as is implicitly revealed in the fact that we speak specially of agricultural, mining, fishery "exploitations", etc., that is to refer to primary extraction. It is also likely that through the use of the term we may reach a better understanding of the relationship of mankind with nature, and hence of global economy, than if we imagine economic activity as a closed and self-sufficient cycle.³⁴ Nevertheless, the analogy should not be taken to the point of blurring the exploitation of man by man, since the morally different attitude that we adopt before one and the other is precisely part of

³⁴ See Georgescu-Roegen (1978), although this author does not expressly use the term "exploitation". "A non-orthodox economist, such as I am- will say that what goes into the economic process represents *valuable natural resources* and what comes out is *worthless waste*." (1978:184). Can more radical exploitation be imagined? The issue, however, is that values cannot be the same from the material and social point of view, that is, from the perspective of the balance of nature and from that of social justice.

what distinguishes mankind from the rest of nature:³⁵ exploiting nature may be unwise, but it is not immoral; exploiting humanity is immoral, although from some point of view it may even be wise. (If the criterion of value were that all human beings, present or future, have the same right to natural resources and to what can be produced with them, it might be said that exploiting nature is, at the same time, exploiting the generations to come, either born or unborn. However, keeping the basic criterion that exploitation always refers to unequal exchange or to the appropriation of surplus, I believe that it would be more correct to say that we increase our chances at the expense of theirs and see it, perhaps, as a form of discrimination, rather than as true exploitation).

Discrimination: Absolute and Relative

Societies can be classified, in an elementary way, as egalitarian or non-egalitarian, according to whether or not their members occupy equal positions in the dimension that we consider pertinent in each case. According to a distinction conventionally accepted in sociology, they can also be classified as closed or open, according to whether the positions in them are ascribed or achieved, that is, whether or not they are determined by birth (including here sex, race, caste, class, etc.) or by the unchangeable course of life (age). Egalitarian and closed societies are, for example, the primitive horde (in fact, egalitarian inside each group of gender, although not egalitarian between the two, and closed for all) or a theoretical communism with no differences in wealth (without private ownership of means of production) or power (without a state).³⁶ Caste systems, slavery and feudalism, for example are non-egalitarian and closed. Undoubtedly capitalism is non-egalitarian and

³⁵ "Only man, and with him all rational creatures, is an end in himself" . (Kant, 1788:152).

³⁶ Although at this stage of history it is ironic to recall it, that was what was foreseen by K. Marx, F. Engels and V.I. Lenin. The communist revolution, by ending the division of labour, ultimately eliminates political institutions. (Marx and Engels, 1845:452). The reduction of the political government of men to the administration of things and the management of the process of production - that is, the 'abolition of State' around which there has recently been so much ado. (Engels, 1894:283) Marxism has always taught that along with the suppression of classes a suppression of the State will occur. (Lenin, 1918: 340). Although I am not interested here in political power as such, it is to the point because, with the collectivisation of the means of production, most luxury goods also become public property and, therefore, access is gained to them according to the place in the distribution of political power, which in *real socialism* means the access of a minority.

open, and probably this is the best that could be said of *real socialism*. A pristine meritocracy, perhaps based on a market without prior concentration of ownership, in a state accessible to everyone and/or in an exquisitely neutral school system, would be egalitarian and open. Unfortunately, reality is never as simple as schemata, and most societies have been open and closed at the same time for a long time, and particularly in recent history. A society can be open in one sphere and closed in another (a market economy with a dictatorial regime, for example), or open for one group and closed for others (for example the Athenian democracy). Historical experience seems to indicate, however, that societies tend to be either closed as a whole or open as a whole; in particular that the discord between different spheres of social life or different groups of society cannot be maintained for long. Our problem, fortunately, does not embrace all this complexity, since, on the one hand, it is reduced to the distribution of economic resources, and on the other hand, it arises precisely from this tendency to reduce discord. Schematically we can combine the open or closed nature of a society with its egalitarian or non-egalitarian condition and imagine four types of society, as given in Table 4.

Table 4

Social Opening and Equality

		Distribution of resources	
		EGALITARIAN	NON-EGALITARIAN
Distribution of chances	CLOSED	Primitive communism, theoretical communism	Feudalism, slavery, caste system
	OPEN	Diverse meritocracies: market, education	Capitalism, bureaucratic socialism

The social forms given as examples of the four possible combinations are only intended as illustrations, not as an exhaustive list or exact and unequivocal typology. Non-egalitarian societies have covered the greater part of the history of humanity: first the closed ones and then the open ones, including in the latter both capitalism and "real" socialism - which, of course, neither was nor is egalitarian, but we can suppose it to be open, in any case no less open than capitalism. The viability of egalitarian societies, however, is called into question in the light of historical experience. Primitive communism, apart from being primitive, was egalitarian, if it was so, for men not for women. Fortunately or unfortunately, it did not withstand

the slightest attack of the development of the productive forces, that is, the appearance of economic surplus. Theoretical communism has never existed in practice, and when it has been closest to doing so it was in the form of a nightmare (consider the Asian experiments, particularly the Chinese cultural revolution, and the Cambodian regime of the Khmer Rouge). As regards forms that are egalitarian and open, the market seems to rapidly and inexorably lead to capitalism, school equality to cultural reproduction, political democracy to partisan oligarchy, etc. - in other words, openness seems to lead to inequality. One can speculate on the possible effects of the abolition of inheritance, of compensating education or of electronic democracy, but, at present, this would be mere intellectual exercise without much foundation.

What occurs is that, strictly speaking, an open society cannot be egalitarian, and an egalitarian society cannot be open. If it is open, if each person is to receive a reward according in some way to his/her merits or to other competitive (or random) criteria, it will inevitably stop being egalitarian. And, if it is egalitarian, it will have nothing to offer in function of merit or other competitive (or random) criteria and will not therefore be able to be open. The question, then, is to what extent equality and openness can be combined, or what degree of openness and what degree of equality a society wishes to attain. If society wishes to be open, the idea of equality must necessarily be played down, for example to be conceived as a limiting of the range or sphere of inequality. If it wishes to be egalitarian, the idea of openness will have to be subjected to some restrictions, those among which it can move without endangering the requirement of equality. The search for this combination has been tormenting political philosophy, and particularly social contractalism, for some centuries.³⁷

However, it should now be pointed out that in any non-egalitarian society there will be, by definition, some positions which are more desirable than others, both in positions to be occupied from the start of life and throughout it and in those to be achieved throughout life, and the most desirable will be, because of their condition as such, few in relation to the possible occupants. It is then possible and likely that individuals and groups will struggle for a distribution of the positions and/or of the opportunities which favour them, that is, to exclude other individuals and groups

³⁷ Rousseau (1762:60) stated that as regards wealth, no citizen should be opulent enough to be able to buy another, and no one should be poor enough to need to sell himself. For Rawls (1981:32), as is well-known, the inequalities of wealth and authority are only just if they produce compensatory benefits for all and, in particular, for the less advantaged members of society.

from the *tout court* possibility of occupying the best positions or to hinder their participation in the competition for them. In a closed society (or in any closed order of society), where positions are occupied for life, to say positions is the same as saying chances, since there is no difference between one and the other. In an open society, the chances are the possibilities, either conditional or random, of access to the positions. Weber referred somewhat imprecisely to all this as chances, and to the exclusion of other groups or the placing of obstacles in their way as *social closure*.³⁸ We can assume that, for Weber, closure exists inasmuch as not all individuals have the same formal chances to participate. However, here we have defined a closed society or a closed order such as those in which the positions (the participation or non-participation or the way of participating) are distributed beforehand, without leaving anything to competition or to chance; in contrast, an open society or order is the one in which chance and/or competition entirely rule access to positions or which is partially limited, either to a great or small extent. This is not a simple option between a crudely realistic term and a euphemistic one, that is between the half empty bottle of the pessimist and the half full one of the optimist. I prefer to call *open* any society not entirely *closed* because, in fact, this is the usual concept in sociology, for example, when it is affirmed that capitalist society is such even when its most fervent defenders have to admit that there are some types of obstacles for, let us say, women and ethnic minorities. On the other hand, the term *discrimination* seems more fitting to me and also more widely accepted for referring to any form of exclusion or limiting of participation than the term *closure*. Finally, Weber included property³⁹, for example, within social closure, whereas I shall refer to the inequalities in

³⁸ A social relationship (...) is called 'open' to the outside when and inasmuch as participation in the reciprocal social action which, according to its sense, constitutes it, is not, by the rules governing this relationship, denied to anyone who claims it and is in a real situation of being able to participate in it. On the other hand, it is called 'closed' to the outside when and inasmuch as such participation is excluded, limited or subjected to conditions by the sense of the action or by the rules governing it. (Weber, 1922:I, 35).

³⁹ Thus, when explaining types of closure it is said that the set of probabilities hereditarily appropriated by an individual or a community or society is called property; it being *free property* when it is alienable. (Weber, 1922: I, 35) But, when the probabilities (monopolistic) appropriated (that is, object of closure) can be alienated towards the exterior, that is that they have become totally 'free' *property*, in this case the old monopolising community has been broken, and its remains are now in the hands of individuals, in goods traffic, as disposal powers appropriated as 'acquired rights'. (Weber, 1922: I, 277). However, if the property can be freely sold, then it can also be freely purchased and there is no longer social closure.

treatment *ad hominem* , that is, to those who refer to or associate certain characteristics of people prior to their participation or to their claim to participate in the relationship in question.

I shall call the allocation, to an individual or group, of positions (in a closed society) or opportunities (in an open society) different than those of other individuals or groups, discrimination. This use of the term is very similar to that of regular language,⁴⁰ but requires some further specifications. In the first place, discrimination can be positive or negative. The very fact of negatively discriminating one or some groups, by allocating them the worst positions or reducing their chances, leads to the positive discrimination of others to whom the best positions are allocated or whose chances are increased. Secondly, although the object of discrimination may be individuals or groups, I shall hereafter refer exclusively to groups, or to individuals as part of groups, whose discrimination is the really relevant social phenomenon that interests us, and not to individuals as such.⁴¹ Furthermore, I shall stop speaking of "groups", given the ambivalence of the term (which designates both a mere aggregate and a collective agent or a conglomeration in interaction), to speak of categories,⁴² a term that, in my opinion, happily combines four dimensions which are equally appropriate: epistemological (category as a prior concept), classifying (category as an

⁴⁰ According to the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy (DRAE), to discriminate is to give treatment of inferiority to a person or collectivity for racial, religious, political motives, etc.

⁴¹ The negative discrimination of an individual as such can be and is a frequent occurrence, for example, that of the person who "doesn't get on with" the one distributing the opportunities or with influence in their distribution, but it is irrelevant when the individual can change the context. Its positive equivalent would be in the "favourite". The only ubiquitous case of purely individual discrimination that occurs to me is a case of positive discrimination (for the discriminated person): the monarch.

⁴² The essential thing here is the idea associated to hierarchy, which, however, does not refer to any concrete structure. It can be said to be a hierarchy prior to the incorporation of the person to the society, or at least to the economic networks crossing it. If social class is a result, social category is a starting point. The term also suits our purpose because of its ambiguity, since it refers at the same time to real groups or aggregates and to prior constructions of understanding; it thus fits the dual reality of gender, race or generation, which on the one hand designate social, material or biological differences, which are, let us say, unquestionable, whereas on the other hand they evoke ideological constructs which may lack any fundament. Moreover, the usual meaning of the term "category" when it is applied to individuals ("moral" or "personal category", etc.) emphasises an expressive sense of individual identity, which we would like to conserve.

aggregate), hierarchic or ordinal (category as a place in an ordered scale) and evaluative (category as individual value). Thirdly, I shall stop referring doubly to competition and luck, to opportunities and probabilities. Certainly, both luck in access to positions and competition for them make a society, or an order within it, open to a greater or lesser degree,⁴³ but luck as such is beyond the range of justice (what is not beyond its range are its possible effects, but these belong here to the degree of inequality between the positions, not to the role of luck in its opening).

Discrimination has very different characteristics in a closed society and in an open society, as is shown in Table 5. Indeed, in the former it comprises relationships that we could designate as such - as discrimination - but for which we also usually employ stronger terms. In the first case, discrimination means the direct allocation (by law, by custom or by the one who has the power to do so) of positions to individuals, according to whether they belong to one category or another; it would be simply a euphemism, in this case, to say that "opportunities" are allocated. When this occurs we shall say that we are faced with a form of absolute discrimination, since belonging to a given category necessarily entails the allocation of a particular position. In the second case, discriminating means reducing or increasing - in short, modifying - the opportunities of gaining access to this or that position within the society or order in question, including, if such is the case, remaining completely outside. When this occurs we shall say that we are in the face of a form of relative discrimination, since belonging to one category or another is only one more factor intervening in the competition for the positions in question. We can say that absolute discrimination allocates positions to individuals whatever the other circumstances, whereas relative discrimination does so with the other circumstances remaining equal; or, in other words, absolute discrimination is based on the allocation of positions or values in a single dimension or variable, precisely the one serving as a basis, whereas relative discrimination is grounded on allocation on the basis of one of several dimensions or variables.

⁴³ In general, I believe that the role of chance in the distribution of social positions and economic goods is underestimated, although not always. According to Jencks (1972: 228), given that we suspect that luck has at least as much effect on income as capacity, we have also given some thought to strategies for reducing its effects. The usual method for reducing the effects of luck is insurance.

Table 5

Social Opening and Type of Discrimination

Society or order	CLOSED	OPEN
Allocates	The positions competed for, directly	The opportunities of gaining access to the positions
TYPE OF DISCRIMINATION	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE
The discriminating variable	It determines by itself access to the positions	Together with others it determines access to the positions
Proper to economic network	Communitary	Associative
Groups formed	Classes	Segments
Bases its strength on	Law	Culture
Typical mechanism	Privilege	Stereotype

If we heed the fact that within one same society open and closed orders can be found coexisting, it immediately becomes obvious that absolute discrimination is the form proper to the community networks and relative discrimination is proper to associative networks. We could even add that relative discrimination is the projection on the associative networks of forms of absolute discrimination proceeding from the community networks (thus, for example, race or citizenship from the state and gender and generation from the home), although to explain it would surpass the limits of this study.

The typical historical forms of absolute discrimination have been castes and classes. The term "caste" has been used for social groups of quite different characteristics, but generally closed, adscriptive, endogamous, in a hierarchical relationship and with a religious dimension and/or legitimation.⁴⁴ Obviously, the better known use is the one referring to Indian society, where really two types of groups exist: the *varna*, which we usually call castes (*Brahmans*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*, besides the "casteless" or *Pariahs*) or the *Jats* where they are subdivided, which are the socially effective groups. Apart from this, the term has also been used to designate hereditary occupations in the Byzantine Empire and in other contexts or,

⁴⁴ According to Mitchell and Hewitt (1979: 85). a hierarchy of hereditary, endogamous and professional groups, which have established positions and mobility limited by ritual distances (...)

less precisely, to refer to groups of more or less segregated existence or "pariahs", or "scapegoats", such as Jews and Gipsies, and even to refer to racial segregation between Blacks and Whites in the United States. The religious legitimation of the separate existence of this type of group is usually pointed out as a typical feature, and with it, or perhaps more so, rituals of purity and non-pollution which separate each group from the others.

The term "estate", on the other hand, designates groups which have a legally (and politically and militarily) allocated and protected place in society. They are also closed, adscriptive and endogamous, although to a somewhat lesser degree than castes. The typical figure is, of course, that of the estates, ranks or orders in mediaeval Europe.⁴⁵ However, it does not seem very exact to say that castes have religious legitimation whereas estate has legal expression. It is true that in the caste system emphasis is placed on religious legitimation and in the estate system on legal legitimation, but it is no less true that castes have political expression (normally the monopoly of military and government functions, to name a few) and estate has religious expression (the church itself is an estate, the mediaeval monarch was usually considered to be appointed by his god, and nobility, to a certain extent, believes itself chosen; in any case, the status order is, as such, judged to have been established or preferred by the gods). Neither is the existence of a proscribed or pariah group a strictly elementary differentiator, as is often affirmed; the estates system has always had groups simply excluded, such as the badly named "fourth estate", and even its pariah groups, such as Jews and Gipsies in the Middle Ages and later.

However, if an estate (or caste) is a group which is absolutely denied certain opportunities, then we must include under that heading groups whose nature as such we did not even suspect. I am referring particularly to the groups delimited by divisions of race and gender in closed orders and societies and inasmuch as, as such, they form part of them (that is, inasmuch as they are excluded or included in a certain position as groups). Let us take the case of women, until yesterday as one might say: forbidden to exercise certain trades or to have any occupation at all without the permission of father or husband, forbidden to own and/or handle real estate without permission of father or husband, subject to the father's or husband's authority (residence, etc.), deprived from political participation (ability to elect and be

⁴⁵ According to Shoek (1973: 280) estate should only be understood as a fairly numerous category of people (its economic or political importance in the respective society is very great) which has a fixed place in the society or think they have it, since on most occasions it is also legally protected.

elected or hold a public office), coming of age later, excluded from the priesthood, strictly relegated to the private sphere, prerogatives on the use of her body by her husband, etc. What can this be called except absolute discrimination and what can the group which is object of it be called except estate? Are we not in the face of "a fairly numerous category", with "a fixed place in society" and "legally protected"? We are aware that it would be a unisex estate, unable to reproduce itself alone, exogamous, etc. but, what does this matter? Naturally, if endogamy or the presence of both sexes are included in the definition of estates, gender groups would remain outside, but what would this be apart from a semantic convention?

Naturally, the same could be said of diverse ethnic groups in the past. Given that the dominant ethnic groups do not need to maintain the same degree of proximity with the dominated ethnic groups as the dominating gender with the dominated gender, since the relationship with them is not centred on reproduction but on production, the category to which they can be and have most frequently been assimilated to is that of caste. The American Black minority, for example, was described as "caste" in the main studies devoted to it in the time of the *Jim Crow laws*,⁴⁶ since it would only be described as a "minority" at a later period. Moreover, there is no reason not to generalise the term "caste" to the time of slavery, simply understanding that this - in the typical massive form, imposed on an ethnically differentiated group - is a particular variant of the caste system in which the dominated caste necessarily works for the dominant caste and is its property, just as servitude is a variant of the estate system in which the dominated estate necessarily works for the dominant estate without being object of property (but being, let us say, object of usufruct); other subordinated estates cannot be subjected to this obligation, for example the "third" estate. The term "caste" has also been used, as we have seen, to refer to the position of Jews and Gipsies in Europe.

If the application of the term "estate" to gender and ethnic groups seems to grate, this can only be attributed to the persistent androcentrism and ethnocentrism of social thought, for most of which the inequalities to be considered begin and end among the men of the dominant race. If an estate is a social group to which culture and/or the law allocate, because of its birth, a specific place for life in the economic,

⁴⁶ By authors as diverse as Dollard (1937), Myrdal (1944) or Cox (1959). Dollard (1937: 62) says that caste has replaced slavery as a means of maintaining the essence of the old status order in the South (...) Caste is often considered as a barrier to social contact or, at least, to some forms of social contact. It defines a superior group and an inferior group and controls the conduct of the members of each group. In essence, the idea of caste seems to be an obstacle to legitimate descendants.

social and political order simultaneously, then women and the minorities - and consequently, men and the dominant ethnic groups - have been estates until recently, much more recently than mediaeval orders. Thus, as the estates in the traditional sense gave way to classes, thus other estates have given way to minorities. It is obvious that each of the estates mentioned has its specificities, which can be said of the differences between the mediaeval orders and those that I have considered as ethnic or generic estates as well as of those which can easily be found in each of these three sections; for example, between West European and East European *second servitude*, between corvée and manor rents, between the chattel slavery of the Blacks in America in the 19th century and that of the Mamelukes in Egypt in the 13th century, or between the situation of women in Spain under the previous civil code and "organic democracy" and their situation in Afghanistan under the *taliban* regime. Nevertheless, there is still a common element: absolute discrimination - greater or lesser, but of an absolute nature.

On the other hand, relative discrimination corresponds to what is commonly called discrimination, or at least to the only type of discrimination we expect to find in our societies, which we proclaim as open. It means, for example, that if education, experience and labour morals are the qualities we consider relevant, let us say, for good performance at job, when there is equality of education, experience and labour morals women will have fewer possibilities of obtaining it than men. Or, more generally, if the probabilities of occupying a position P (for example as an employee) in order O (for example the job structure) of society S (for example Spain) depend on a series of variables $V_1...V_n$ (for example the three just mentioned), all of which are considered relevant in relation to this position, there is a variable V_{n+1} (for example gender), which is unequal and not randomly distributed among the population, and which the individual cannot alter for himself or for others, which also affects the result. The variables of the type V_{n+1} are usually discrete and nominal (white, black, Asian...; young, adults, elderly...); often, but not necessarily, they are dichotomous (men-women; Gipsy-non Gipsy; nationals-foreigners; adults-non-adults).

I shall call the groups formed around these variables segments. The term is not exactly brilliant, much less inspiring, but it approaches what we want to say with it, since we are dealing with the aggregates into which society is divided (sectioned or segmented) as a whole or to certain effects, and to which individuals are assigned. It also has in its favour the now habitual use of another term based on it: segmentation, to refer to discontinuity of the labour markets, a phenomenon largely revealed as segmentation of the workers, that is, as the distribution of the workers in different

labour market segments. Furthermore, the formal analysis of discrimination can be largely conceived as what in statistics is known as analysis of segmentation. The more usual term to refer to groups defined on the basis of discrimination is, as is well-known, *minority*, but it is full of drawbacks. First, it is used to describe situations of groups that may be a majority, whether it be each one of them (for example women here and there, albeit by a percentual point, or native peoples in many ex-colonial countries in South Africa or Central and South America) or all of them together (for example the whole of the minorities in the United States, at least with a permissive concept of them). Secondly, it reduces to quantitative a relationship which is essentially qualitative, although it may often have this quantitative dimension also (the incapability of the minority to attain its objectives through electoral or military channels). Thirdly, it asymmetrically designs only one of the groups, or one of the types of group, which are formed in discrimination relationships, since versus any "minority" there is necessarily a "majority" (to which, *mutatis mutandis*, the above arguments are applied).

Absolute discrimination is based on the arrangement of society in law, understood in the broad sense, that is, including custom *with force of law*. This means that discriminating behaviour is imposed on discriminated and discriminators, particularly on the latter, on penalty of sanction. Normally this means its acquiring the shape of formal law (a known, proclaimed rule, of compulsory fulfilment), but it is not strictly precise that it be so. Probably some systems of castes in small societies, for example African (the frequent stigmatisation of blacksmiths, we might say), have no need whatsoever for what we understand strictly as law, but an even clearer example can be found in the not so remote segregation of Blacks in the south of the United States, imposed on them by illegal and paralegal violence and on reticent Whites by the informal, but often irresistible, pressure of their own racial segment. In this sense, it is based on a law which was not universal but particularised for different categories of society, that is, on privilege.⁴⁷

Relative discrimination is based on the individual behaviour of the members of

⁴⁷ Privilege is the "exemption from an obligation or exclusive or special advantage which someone enjoys through the concession of a superior or through a certain circumstance", according to the DRAE; the "exception from an obligation, or possibility of doing or having something that is forbidden or banned to others, that a person has because of a certain circumstance of his own or by concession of a superior" according to the María Moliner, Diccionario de uso del español. The word comes from the Latin *privilegium*, formed from *privatum* and *lex*; that is private law, not universal.

society, inspired by culture. More specifically, its usual basis is in prejudice and/or stereotype.⁴⁸ In practice - and only in practice - it is unthinkable that relative discrimination should be based directly on the law or on an express ordering (it can be based indirectly on it, for example if a minimum height, reached by fewer women than men, or an educational level possessed to a lesser degree in an ethnic minority, etc., is required for a certain job, and such requisites are not really relevant).⁴⁹ Stereotypes are forms of perception which allow us to move economically through reality, reducing the time and expense of information, and anticipating the conduct of people we do not know. The problem is that they consist of applying to individuals categorial perceptions which, in their particular case, have no reason to correspond to reality. Stereotypes can totally or partially lack fundament or have a purely statistical fundament. They usually respond to elements of reality, but extrapolate them beyond their real sphere of relevance, thus exaggerating the characteristics of one category of people, generalising the differential characteristics of a few of its members to the whole category or attributing causal relationships where there is nothing more than a mere association.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The canonical definition of stereotype is that of Allport (1954) "an exaggerated belief associated to a category. Its function is to justify (rationalise) our conduct in relation to this category."

⁴⁹ Theoretically anything is possible: for example, it could be legislated that public offices be distributed by a draw in two stages: in the first a blind choice would be made between two blue pacifiers and a pink one. In the first case the post would be for a man and in the second for a woman. In the second stage a choice would be made among numbered balls corresponding to each of the members of the sex previously selected. I believe, however, that it would be more correct to call this statistic privilege.

⁵⁰ An example of the first two cases would be the limiting of women to some jobs because they have less strength than men: of the first one because the level of strength that the typical man attains above that of the typical woman is unnecessary in most jobs, including manual work; of the second because it does not prevent "masculine" jobs being given to weak men and being denied to strong women. An example of the third case would be the supposition that women are absent from work more often because they have less sense of a work ethic, when the explanation lies in the fact that they assume the domestic load asymmetrically, including care of children and sick people (some specialists on this subject would add that they are not absent from work more often).

Table 6

Types of Inequality and Discrimination

Type of inequality	Type of discrimination	
	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE
EXCLUSION	Untouchables, pariahs Hosewives	Unemployed
SEGGREGATION	Jews, middleman minorities, "structural pluralism" Sexual division of work	Ethnic markets, occupational niches Jobs for women
SUBMISSION	Servitude, slavery Traditional patriarchy	Paid labour Becker family model

If the opportunities at stake are those of gaining access or not gaining access to the order of economic opportunities, we are facing a process of exclusion. Since exclusion in the strict sense can only be achieved by expelling the category in question from society or exterminating it,⁵¹ here we shall only consider it in its weakest sense, as the reduction of subsistence to the minimum. It is, then, normally a matter of exclusion from a partial social order (for example, from the labour market, or from land ownership, or from a certain type of trade or production). The objective or the result can also be not exclusion, either in the strong sense or the weak sense, but the relegation of the category in question to the worst positions; positions, however, that are not in a relationship of direct production with the best ones, but rather not related to them or only related through exchange, in which case we can speak of segregation. Finally, the result may be the compulsory allocation to, or voluntary opting for - in view of the worse nature of the other options present - positions in a relationship of subordination to the most desirable, that is, integration in hierarchical

⁵¹ None of which has been lacking in history. It is full of the former (in Spain, for example, the expulsion of the Jews and Moorish people), and, of the latter, one can recall the recurrent massacres of peoples such as Armenians and Kurds, or more recently, the Watusi (Tutsis) and other examples of *ethnic purity*... The case par excellence is, of course, that of the Jews. The racial, religious fanaticism etc. which accompanies these episodes should not make us forget their economic dimension. In agricultural societies, expulsion and genocide are quick ways of appropriating land, houses, probably cattle and goods. In the case of the Jews, the stereotype around the moneylender, the banker, hidden treasure, etc. has this function. The other aspect of the holocaust was *Aryanisation*, the appropriation of all the Jews' belongings by their killers.

relationships of cooperative production: let us call this submission.

We can combine these three variants of economic inequality - exclusion, segregation and submission - with the two already familiar variants of discrimination: absolute and relative. Table 6 gives a list of examples which is not intended to be exhaustive and cannot be excessively rigorous, but aims at illustrating the varied range of possibilities in the spheres of race and gender. Examples of absolute discrimination with the result of exclusion are, in the ethnic sphere, those of the diverse untouchable peoples or pariahs: the Indian casteless, the Japanese *Etas*, etc., and, in the gender sphere, the confinement of women to the domestic scene. With the result of segregation we could consider, in the ethnic sphere, the case of the minority groups related to the majority only in the market, for which some anthropologists use the euphemism "structural pluralism" that includes from more or less prosperous trading minorities to races concentrating on a more or less stigmatised occupation; in the gender sphere, the social division of tasks in the strict sense, for example, when men deal with trade and livestock raising and women with agriculture, etc. Finally, with the result of submission, in the ethnic sphere there would be all the collective variants of servitude and slavery; and in the gender sphere, the submission of women to men in household and family.⁵²

⁵² Aristoteles said that woman is the only slave of the poor man.

If we now go to relative discrimination, an obvious example of economic exclusion would be, in any sphere, becoming unemployed. As regards segregation, the tendency to the forming of ethnic markets (large and small businesses whose exclusive public is an ethnic minority), ethnic occupational niches (able to be seen by any observer in a multiracial society: from the once famous Galician night watchmen in Madrid to the present day Pakistani taxi drivers in Berkeley) or women's occupations. As an example of submission, the greater relative frequency of women and ethnic minorities in paid and subordinate occupations (as opposed to positions as employers and directors, in comparison with the dominant race or men), or, in the domestic sphere, the maximising self-sacrifice of women which makes such an impression on the so-called *new economy of the family*.

Here a clear difference can be seen between absolute and relative discrimination: whereas exclusion, segregation and submission of estates are presented as discreet situations -a group may be excluded, segregated or subjected, but not all three, or two of them, at the same time, within the same order of opportunities, in the case of relative discrimination, segmentary exclusion, segregation and submission appear as a continuum in which the first is only the extreme form of the other two, and the second and the third appear as options for those affected. This is due to the fact that, as we have been insisting, the two forms of discrimination correspond to two types of society: closed and open, or two types of network: community and associative. In the former coercion is always present, whether to submit, segregate or exclude; in the latter, the voluntary nature of incorporation entails the risk of being excluded in an equally non-coercive way.

It should also be noted that although relative discrimination does not in itself, in any way, entail exploitation, as we have repeatedly pointed out - even if the possibilities of some to be exploited or exploiters are increased and, correlatively, the probabilities of others reduced -, absolute discrimination may. It does not necessarily do so - but it may do so - when it leads to the exclusion or segregation of the negatively discriminated group, but it does when it leads to its submission. This has been the case, dominant in the history of humanity, of the diverse forms of servitude and slavery.

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