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LABOUR, INEQUALITY AND REALITY.

Arguments not to perpetuate fictions about Prehistory

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Resumen

Proponemos una reflexión crítica sobre los conceptos de Origen y Desarrollo (vinculados a ideas de Progreso y Proceso) y de Desigualdad Social (aproximación formal sin contenido real). Igualmente revisamos diversos conceptos derivados de los anteriores y de amplio uso en arqueología, evaluando sus problemas y limitaciones. Finalmente, intentamos aportar argumentos para una sociología histórica desde la arqueología, que contemple las condiciones objetivas de la vida social. Consideramos la producción y el trabajo social como el punto de partida imprescindible para valorar la realidad de las mujeres y los hombres. Porque creemos que el objetivo prioritario de una Arqueología Social es conocer en cada situación histórica, si los colectivos sexuales y sociales mantienen relaciones simétricas o disimétricas, si prima la reciprocidad o si se impone la explotación del trabajo.

Key words

Inequality; Origins; Development; History; Labour; Production; Social Archaeology.

Introduction.

Marx said, "*right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal*" (Marx 1875). An affirmation that moves away of the currently dominant ideology. The main principle of dominant liberalism evaluates all types of inequality of rights (but not in fact) in a negative light. Vindicating inequality, even discrimination, can be qualified as immoral and is always discredited, if it is not sanctioned. However, recuperating the old affirmation could be the only way to open the way for rooting out the privileges of social reality. Privileges that are hidden behind a veil of formal equality, social dissymmetry that the homogeneity of rights not only doesn't resolve but also actually favours.

Reflections that are based on the equality-inequality dichotomy are not yet on the political agendas nor do they form part of the majority of social theories that have translated into the realms of Archaeology. However, it is our intention, in this paper, to put forward the argument that we must stop talking about Social Inequalities. More often than not, it is a concept that falls short of what we really want to communicate. While, at other times, we have to stop and think if it really means something when we use it. It would be much more relevant to talk about social and material realities, and to abandon this formal euphemistic terminology that is only good for maintaining fictitious sociological knowledge.

A theory such as this requires concepts such as Origin and Development. These are terms that undoubtedly contribute to relativist and subjective perspectives of historical-cultural roots. Nevertheless, they can whittle away a correct approximation to the knowledge of the societies of the past, whilst restricting the focus to paths of unidirectional historical change.

Perhaps a great deal of what we are saying here may seem obvious, but we believe that the obvious is the first thing that should be remembered, as to pass something into the realms of the obvious often entails forgetting it. The next step is to think and act without being aware of it. The result is that the fruit of

social theorisation or of social interpretations translates into fiction that is a far cry from reality, past or present.

Origins, Developments and Processes.

Origins and Developments are concepts that are directly related to a dominant line of thought that give priority to the principles of Evolution, Progress or Process. Origins are understood singular, and once they become, whatever it is, its continuity to the present day is set in motion. Developments are, without exception, processes that head towards the establishment of a phenomenon, whatever that phenomenon it may be, from these origins.

In Prehistoric Archaeology, some of the “Origins” that have become referential milestones are those of the human species today (**Hominisation**), agricultural production (the **Neolithic Revolution**), Civilisation, State and Social Classes (the **Urban Revolution** of Childe) or the Society today (the **Industrial Revolution**).

The background of an Evolutionist idea of Origins can be found in the acceptance of a path of no return, the start of something that heads right on. Its development, in terms of Progress or Process, follows the appropriate path in the appropriate direction (these days, it is often said, towards complexity). The appropriate final destination is our own society, taking for granted the fact that we have arrived at the end of a path of Progress - at the “end of history itself” in the words of Fukuyama. “There once was history, but not any longer”, because the dominant class today, that understands Progress to be “economic history”, revokes the threat of any other irreversible employment of time (Debord 1967:143).

With this unilateral and univocal vision of historical paths, the concept of the Origins turns into unquestionable landmarks in pushing out the boundaries. Going beyond the Origins involves an apathetic contemplation of all what have

not reached similar breakthroughs. The collectives or societies that have not managed to overcome one barrier or another no longer form part of the “History of Their Time”. They remain “Backward” or from “Other Periods in Time”. We frequently hear talk of one community or other as being “prehistoric” or “medieval”, as if its reality did not form part of a common present or of a determined historical situation. The consequence is that they are silenced or hidden away.

In practice, social interpretations of Prehistory also tend to follow the same lead. All the attention is fixed preferentially on the “advanced” societies and there is a certain admiration for the accomplishments of the Civilisations, in detriment to the “backwardness” of other societies. Who could not but admire the Pyramids as a masterpiece of humanity (forgetting, of course, the toil and misery that accompanied their construction)?

The notion of Origins leaves historical reality waiting in the wings, which demonstrates, through its dogged presence, how that which “started” came to “end”. Moreover, it offers the information necessary to avoid overlooking the fact that, oftentimes, the beginnings of something cannot be extrapolated from one historical situation to another.

The concept of Origins also is part of conceptual foundations of the Historical-Cultural issues. Peoples, Ethnic groups and Nations also have Origins, those *Roots* that are submerged in the past and from which emerges the 'being' in search of his/her Destiny. A Destiny that, moving away from the foci of Evolution and Process, will not be eternal but, in contrast, will suffer a life and a series of cycles that take on the assumption its finiteness.

The concepts of Development, for their part, also concur with the idea of Progress. The very same conception of Economic Development takes the technological dimension and growth of production into account, but to the detriment of an appropriate evaluation of the quality of life that accompanies it. As such, the notion of Underdevelopment displaces the communities subjected to expropriation, looting and colonial extortion from History itself. Those who

have fallen from the train of Progress are placed in the realms of the "Ahistoric", and even those that tread their own path by their own means.

Situations of Advanced Development or Underdevelopment are conceived as Social Inequalities, and are explained more as fruits of chance and History rather than of the reality of colonial, imperial or capitalist globalisation relations. Of course, it is some time now since the dependence of the Underdevelopment and the existence of "Advanced Countries" has been demonstrated. Not to mention the fallacy that the Undeveloped would attain more advanced "Levels" of development. This, especially as this Development depends on the transfer of wealth from the areas of Underdevelopment.

The nostalgia for historical laws, without doubt, often lead us to search for necessary, adequate emergency conditions for the phenomena, but social practices have been able to obfuscate the process and sketch out unsuspected paths.

In the light of these implications, it would be better to abandon notions of the Origin and for each individual situation, to pay particular attention to the real conditions of the social relationships and to the paths that each community has followed. The contrary would be to accept that the way has already been written and that we already know how things have been and will turn out.

The Fallacy of Equality: Identity and its consequences.

The values of equality that dominate current Western political thought and that lay the foundations for the ideology of the so-called democratic societies acquiesce the political principle that the rights of the individual must be identical, the same and equal.

The basic principle is that each subject, whether they form part of one collective or another, should have exactly the same rights so that they may participate in

political and social life. In our society, this assumes the right to compete for or attain certain determined objectives that will only differ depending on merit and ability. A useful metaphor in this case is sport, where all competitors are behind the same starting line, each with the same right as the next to obtain his/her personal goal. The philosophy of winning and losing, of the winner and the loser, will ascribe both their breakthroughs and frustrations to each subject.

This sporting metaphor, with its equalitarian principles does not take into account, however, the social or objective conditions under which each subject or collective has arrived at the starting line. The past, the context and the circumstances are avoided and only the principle of equality prevails.

For this very reason, the explanations are always isolated or shifted into psychological spheres (in social archaeology, the foundations of 'the prestige' support the majority of the social interpretations). However these explanations tend to overlook the conditions in which an individual/collective has lived socially-speaking, and to which benefits of material production of a society he/it has access.

These explanations even have recourse to a sectorialised historicism, which explains unequal situations in historical roots, dismissing social relations. Therefore, when we talk about Social Inequality, it is never clear whether we are making reference to Unequal Histories, to Historical Contingency (Chance and Luck) or to Dissymmetric Social Relations of Exploitation and Domination.

The formal equality of Law at the level of the individual is the basis for real dissymmetric relations, exploitation at a social level, in the same way that legal equality for collective businesses plays the same role. Since the acceptance of the Declaration of Human Rights, reality has exposed an accumulation of wealth and unrecognised misery in any other moment in History. The declaration of the UN, which proclaims the equality of the nation-states, established the juridical framework for a new form of Empire (Hardt & Negri 2000).

The notion of Equality also implies assimilation. That is to say, the assimilation of a common identity, a homogenizing normative. Commonly this homogenisation is carried out using reference points emanating from hegemonic power which establishes the examples of the “normal”. The state, the institutionalisation of coercive forms of power for the benefit of one social group, among their usual practices includes the establishment of identity models (global or sector-orientated). However, homogenizing identities is commonplace as long as the political-ideological practices impose standard patterns, even in stateless societies but with dominant groups. The resulting assimilation entails a tendency to eliminate heterogeneities and differences. Later we will discuss the sexual difference, which, in any case, is affected in the same way as differences of whatever nature. And, of course, it can even affect situations of dissymmetry, which prejudice certain collectives to the benefit of others, even in those cases under the guise of avoiding and standardising these differences as a fictitious unit. A fictitious unit that can be understood in the form of family, tribe, ethnic group or state.

These validations derived from the fallacy of equality occupy a counter position in politics, which validates them as inequalities. The inequalities (differences) between collectives exist, but the hegemonic power and the exploiting classes use them to justify realities that have nothing to do with these differences. Exploitation of labour certainly does take place, but there are also prevailing arguments that talk about natural differences between the sexes or Race (housewives and passive women, indigenous layabouts) or of unquestionable (religious) truisms, which defend the privileges of a sector or class. As such, we should point out that Social Differences/Inequalities do exist, but only when there is exploitation between groups with “unequal” attributes, this very difference is used to (ideologically) legitimise imposition. It is even possible to invent “ethnic” differences with this aim in mind. When Social Inequalities come to the fore, the most important thing is to pinpoint exactly which elements compose these inequalities and not just describe the differences.

Keeping this in mind, we believe that it would be better to cast adrift the concept of equality (and therefore inequality). We prefer (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja

2003) to extend the definition of symmetrical to societies that are based on reciprocity and the non-existence of coercive powers. Given that symmetry does not imply equality between parties, it does, however, represent the equilibrium between social subjects which make up these parties. Reciprocity demands, therefore, the inexistence of relationships based on the imposition of a hegemonic power and it is only possible when agreed-upon compensations are offered among the subjects. In another order of things, the only possibility to compensate the existence of unequal social conditions would be to establish unequal rights, in other words to establish discriminations that re-establish the symmetry. Everything else passes into the realms of the fictitious ground rules and of the Fallacy of Equality.

Inequality, Difference and Diversity: Rhetoric and Reality.

The notions of Diversity and Difference lack of conceptual correctness and a theory that backs them up. They are far from any form of reality and we can only hope that the use of adjectives is useful in creating a reference context. Diversity, with respect to what? What terms of difference? Where can we establish the relevance of the concept 'difference'?

Nonetheless, nuances derived from the Fallacy of Equality have been introduced in the context of its usage. When we use the term Unequal we are also making reference to egalitarian values which imply negative connotations. In contrast, when we use terms such as Difference and Diversity, these assimilate values of particular wealth or individual varieties that appear to portray a positive meaning. Yet here again, we are flirting with ambiguity. It seems that it is pure rhetoric that takes priority, and that unsubstantiated suggestions fall into the realms of semantics, while that which is left unsaid becomes so prominent that debates are denied as their meanings are taken for granted.

The idea of the negative in terms of Inequality/Difference faces off against the positive in terms of Diversity/Difference is hanging in the air. But this doesn't tell us exactly what we are talking about, nor can we even be sure that we are talking about the same criteria or opposing criteria. Although apparently this doesn't seem to matter. The vindication of private/individual diversities/differences appears a more attractive concept, under a formal homogeneity/equality cover, than clarifying exactly what is intended. The directions in which the arguments attempt to follow seem to be headed towards establishing an outline of topics to be discussed. The conditions of the differences are not mentioned and, at best, only formal inequalities or specific diversities are identified, which lack relevance due to the lack of objective content.

The positive values bestowed upon the Diversity/Difference concept (which are incorporated in arguments on "Multiculturalism") claim that a variety of perspectives enriches the debate. But the 'why' and the 'with what objective' are not explained, nor is it stated whether a Difference of the same nature and product of the same conditions, or if we are quite simply talking in aesthetic terms (multicoloured as opposed to black and white). If we follow the aesthetic path when we refer to the Diversity/Difference concept, we would be looking for a multicoloured spectacle, a colourful theatrical play, no more. The reality of life disappears behind the colouring of a fictitious spectacle (Debord 1967).

An ideal position of these foci could lead us to the conclusion that the "unsaid" includes diversities in terms of sexes, age, disability, personality, habits, tastes and hopes. We could even believe that we are talking about description criteria of private individuals and not collectives, of psychological profiles and not social collectives. If it is really like this, then we should consider the irrelevance of diversity, and propose social mechanisms for compensation, applying the long arm of the law to Social Inequality, for the positive. The inevitable reality of female labour in basic production, and biological reproduction of our species (Castro *et al* 1998) means that not intervening with social compensation will sacralise (in favour of equality) a reality that will benefit the masculine collective. Be that as it may, when Diversity is linked to situations involving domination or

material exploitation, if we maintain the vindication of the particularities as a mere aesthetic/spectacular exercise, the consequence is the legitimisation of dissymmetry.

A second perspective envisages Diversity in terms of explicitly self-defining collectives. Although this occurs in the area of naturalisation of diversity, backed-up in biological-demographic criteria: Sexes or, in many cases, Race categories (still being used) are used to define various (unequal and different) groups. These groups are understood to be essential, and immanent, for each individual (for their biology). So much so that the consequence is that diversity, yet again, is used to hide possible exploitation situations or dominion.

From the point of view of these two types of rhetoric, the diversity/difference is accepted as a universal phenomenon that can be recognised, described and measured. Nevertheless, the idea that the Diversities/Differences can be the fruit of social efforts, of formulated ideologies, of forms of social domination or labour conditions and material lifestyles. If there exist material realities capable of re-dimensioning the diversities, which are the product of social conditions (and not individual differences), then the need for the transparency of these conditions becomes a must for understanding the concept of diversity.

As such, before being able to deal with the phenomenology of characterisation, we would need to know the conditions that produced the diversity. If these conditions incorporate domination/exploitation, the diversities will have to be explained in this light.

Formal Inequality, Materiality and Social Explanation.

A basic principle for any archaeological approach is the analysis of the similarities and differences in documented social materiality. From this starting point we construct typologies and classify the evidence. Moreover, looking at inequality is always a good starting point for any study.

We will not ponder the question further here, but it cannot be forgotten that it is some time since the impossibility of establishing identifying taxonomic classifications came to the fore a valid theory, in other words, where all the elements ascribed to a single type were identical, and equal (Clarke 1978). Reality has shown that taxonomic classification brings together different objects under the umbrella of certain classifying criteria, but when we bring other criteria into the equation the organisation of the group types varies. The intractability in looking for types based on attributes set out in a closed list usually involves using reference models that are put into action through empirical generalisations (description of a typical object for example). And, without exception, fractures start to appear in the model. But the creation of Polythetic Classifications has not a successful venture especially when we observe how the typologies are being constructed.

However, once the taxons/types have been established, the problem lies in what to do with the normal guidelines and the heterogeneous tendencies. At this point the criteria that extrapolate equalities (proximities) – inequalities (distances) in the social materiality in the field of social inequalities enter into the fray. It seems to follow that if the products of society are unequal, social reality will also be so. The main problem will be to establish exactly what inequality (material and social) consists of.

It is common that, especially in the case of tools, typological approaches attempt to explain typological (and social) inequality in terms of the different functionalities of the products, confirming it through independent tests or recurring associations (microwear studies, associated residues etc.). Nevertheless the moment always arrives when the typological varieties don't have a functioning explanation. Therefore, certain tools or building types or

(why not?) sepulchres have the same functional meaning, but they are unequal. So what happens then?

Relativist historical-cultural approaches attribute differences to specific "Cultures" or "Traditions" and the typological classification is replaced by the "cultural" classification. The documenting of this course of action (which substitutes explanation with essences) does not resolve the question, as it confuses social traditions with beings socially immanents. It remains to be clarified which social differences/inequalities explain cultures/traditions.

In contrast, approaches from a Social Archaeological point of view provide the taxonomic differences of materiality with a specific meaning. Be it large or small, central or peripheral, standardised or heterogeneous, the approaches have to go as far as to refer to the guidelines in order to understand that inequalities have an explanation elsewhere. This principle carries the possibility of explaining material inequalities. The formal and descriptive approaches that aim to detect inequality cannot be the end of the road. Inequality in materiality can be explained in sociological terms (social traditions, diverse functionalities, readily available techniques, imposed politics of standardisation, etc).

The aim of our pointing all this out is precisely in order to recapture the question of Social Inequalities. Archaeology also allows us to detect Social Inequalities, at a descriptive level in formal analysis, or in other words, collectives that are not equal. In the same fashion as in social materiality, its explanation cannot be found in the description itself of Inequality. In order to root this out, we have to refer to certain key points in the reading. These key points should set forth which material or social objective conditions and which economic or political relations are behind these social inequalities/differences.

We are, therefore, confronted with the necessity of abandoning a course of action that would place the approaches to Inequality in society in a formal, descriptive category which is badly lacking in substantial content. If we input the content, we should call things by their proper name. If the social inequalities involve exploitation between classes or oppression of one sex by another, then

we won't beat about the bush in identifying it. If they involve autonomous environments of social organisation, then that is what we will unveil. If they entail traditions of socialisation within the framework of certain working environments, then this will be the explanation.

If we don't move in this direction, and we will continue to talk in aseptic terms (aesthetics?) about Social Inequalities, we will not be offering relevant sociological content and will be allowing our social interpretation to dwell in the limbo of imprecision.

Labour and Inequality

Faced with formal formulas or formulas led by the linearity of procedure, we feel that it is imperative to get as close to the social realities of the past (and present) as possible. We consider that the key factor to this is Labour and the objective living conditions of the subjects and collectives.

Labour, as well as the action of transforming material and social conditions, qualify reality and create social life. As social subjects, we work in such a way that we socialise matter and generate social life in objects and other members of society with whom we interact, as well as in economic or political-ideological activities (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2002). Labour, as well as spending time and energy on material production and on social reproduction represents the contribution of all subjects, women and men, which is carried out for the benefit of the continuity of any social reality. Without labour, the society falls apart at the seams.

However, labour is also an individual / collective effort, that although it results in materiality and a social reality, it is only truly compensated if the contributing subjects share in the produce. Although labour, in terms of production/reproduction, is always social, consumption/use of the produce, at the end of the day, always benefits the individual (Castro *et al* 1998). If we do

not establish this principle, and we only look towards the benefits that work yields for the functioning of a society, we would not have one criterion available for discovering if material privileges exist socially or not. In short, if labour always goes in favour of a dominant group, which benefits from the exploitation of work carried out by other collectives, and our focus is on the social benefit, we should conclude that the dissymmetric appropriation on the part of the privileged collective is beneficial for the society as a whole. In other words, relationships based on domination and exploitation allows a fine functioning of society.

We have already put forward the argument elsewhere that to dismiss the existence of relationships based on exploitation, we need to ratify the existence of some sort of compensation or a social reality based on reciprocity. According to Marx, exploitation can be identified when the consumption, use, enjoyment or benefit of a product is affected, either entirely or in part, by outside agents who take charge of its production and/or maintenance, without offering counterparts (Castro *et al* 1998). It is important to point out the appropriation of work by a dominant group and the absence of reciprocal compensation are not always established with the same intensity and scope, and it is therefore important to distinguish between relative, partial or extensive exploitation (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2003). In this way, we can find situations in which an “egalitarian” consumption hides (relative) exploitation, where one collective works to a lower degree than another, something which is very common in dissymmetry between the sexes. We can also identify situations where there is an inverse participation in the work and in the access to the produce, in such a way exploitation is based around lower work loads and greater material benefits for the dominant, privileged group (partial exploitation). Finally, the level of exploitation is increased when the dominant class imposes its dominion on the collectives that take on most of the work loads (and receive less of the produce) thanks to the support offered by associated social sectors. This is an example of extensive exploitation, where one sector benefits from one part of the appropriated product (for example, via its employment in state institutions or thanks to political privileges) instead of upholding the overall benefits that the dominant class receives.

As far as social symmetry and reciprocity is concerned, we must not forget that equality can never take place. Exact, calculated compensation for the work invested to obtain products of equal value (more precisely, of similar labour value, in terms of duration and intensity, according to Marx (1875)) can never form the basis of a symmetrical society, due to the fact that the actively working subjects will always have to compensate for the pluslabour caused by subjects who, for whatever reason (accidents, illnesses or invalidities) cannot offer similar contributions, in terms of quantity, to social production and reproduction. This being the case, by rights, there will always be inconsistencies in the quantity of labour invested with regards to the value of the produce. Another symmetrical constant is deferred reciprocity, in which the work carried out by one generation that for the benefit of the next will only be fully compensated when the sons and daughters of that particular period invest similar work into the subsequent period. And only it will only be partially re-manifested, in relative terms, if close attention and care is paid to situations of old age or invalidity.

None of this has anything to do with the existence of collective exploitation and appropriation of one part of the labour value of one group or another, whose contribution to social production and reproduction is lower than the value of the products that benefit them. But we could apply the concept of inequality to each and every case. Therefore, if, by social inequality we mean social exploitation, it is important to employ this term to avoid provoking confusions.

Specialisation of labour and Inequality.

To wait until work is carried out in conditions of equality is, without doubt, an unrealistic expectation, due to the fact that the training conditions of each subject as well as the abilities, qualities and limitations are not identical. Thus, at the level of the individual, we can already perceive marked differences.

In fact, the crucial difference can be found in the biological make-up of our species, in such a way that sex determines different capabilities in the production of social life (Castro *et al* 1998). The capacity that women have to manage and give life, to carry out the most basic production, which is the production of our bodies, entails work that men cannot participate in. This is a universal reality, fruit of sexuation itself of our species and which means that in all societies, there is at least this specialisation of tasks, and the balance of work would need to be redressed in order to maintain the symmetry.

Therefore, as a universal characteristic, all human societies have specialised tasks to perform, at the very least in basic production or biological reproduction. It follows then, that in accordance with this universal principle, labour is unequal within human society. To maintain reciprocity based on a reality that consists of unequal productive labour, we must consider that this is possible and even that it is indispensable. We cannot rest on our laurels and assume that this was not possible in societies in the past, even when specialisation of labour was extended to diverse productive activities, even to the extent that it encompassed wide social collectives (Castro *et al* 2003).

Sexual differences and unequal labour with regards to basic production, as well as the division of tasks in other areas, can be compensated for if politics that favour reciprocity come into the fray. Obviously the male collective will have to compensate for the work carried out by the female section of society in biological reproduction through work in other areas. Undoubtedly, if we take reproduction for granted and we exclude it from the economic sphere, we are starting off on the wrong foot in attempting to attain a situation of symmetry between collectives. In matter of fact, if we exclude any other type of work from the economy, the result will also be a dissymmetry that will prejudice those who carry out the work, as is the case for many tasks such as the care and upkeep of individuals, ranging from looking after infants to the care of ill people, victims of accidents or the aged. In order to ensure a symmetrical, balanced and reciprocal situation, the material evaluation of each task and its compensation in terms of the level of access to the produce will always be imperative.

The arguments put forward with regards to the basic sexual division of labour and other unequal sharing of duties are extended to any specialised labour activity. Whatever the specialisation, its extent, intensity or area, politics of compensation for work carried out will always be necessary through balanced access to the produce. It is only when this is not the case that we should start to make references to exploitation (Castro *et al* 2003).

The inequality of tasks that the specialisation of labour entails, which in itself, should not enter into an equation that implies other inequalities, for example in the problem of access to the produce. In other words, the specialisation of labour is not at all the same thing as exploitation of labour. Although, when examining the other side of the coin, social exploitation cannot survive without a division of labour that facilitates dissymmetry. If we were to establish as a general rule that the division of labour between collectives entails the inexorable existence of social dissymmetry and exploitation we would reconfirming the universal character of male exploitation of women.

Inequality and Sexual Difference

As we see it, it is necessary for us to reflect on the concept of Inequality when we attempt to explain the relationships between the gender collectives of the past. For that, we would have to agree on its significance in relation to the material evidence collected, using the points dealt with above. In playing with the idea of equality, we are entering into a minefield of ambiguity and are running the risk of compromising meaning of the explanations, not to mention the cloaking of unfairness.

It is therefore necessary to focus attention on the circumstances that have generally passed unnoticed or on those that have not been explored sufficiently. Firstly, it is necessary to distinguish between inequality and sexual difference (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2002). Secondly, there is no reason why social inequality should be interpreted exclusively with regards to the exploitation that

takes place between men and women if there are no mechanisms in place with this aim in mind. Finally, the conviction of that which we have referred to as “the Fallacy of Equality” has its more obvious merits in the existence of a fundamental material difference between the sexes. It is here that we insist that the sexualisation of the past becomes a crucial question in archaeological studies (Escoriza & Sanahuja 2001).

We have already stressed the obvious of the biological differences between the sexes and the implications on the labour involved in social production. Now then, the existence/recognition of sexual difference has no reason to lead into situations of domination, coercion, subordination and exploitation between men and women, as generally happens nowadays. The “idea of sexual difference” meaningfully advocates the necessity for new “rules of the game” (Irigaray 1995). We are actually dealing with an idea that leads to definitive knowledge and not negation (Bocchetti 1996: 62).

The legitimisation of the exploitation of women and of patriarchal dominion has reached the difference in nature of the two sexes. Of course, if this was the explanation, the patriarchy would be, in itself, “natural”. Wherefore, the concept of “difference” cannot be considered synonymous with domination or exploitation, nor can it be confused inequality by any means. It is actually the current dominant patriarchal ideology that tends to oppress, propose and organise precise content, to generate hierarchies, to nullify, suppress and even degrade that which is different and to homogenise for the sake of a chimerical common social good. Defining and categorising rules are imposed in which that which does not encompass “the exclusive norms” of the dominant social group, the concept of the ‘different’, is marginalised, silenced and devalued. If this occurs in the activities carried out by women, and they are no longer considered to be socially necessary, it then that sexual difference is converted, at the hands of the patriarchy, in a vehicle of discrimination, insolidarity and the seed of exploitation between sexes.

On many occasions, the female difference has been portrayed as a threat to “democratic equality” (Castro, Escoriza & Sanahuja 2003), despite the fact that

it is impossible, as we have already pointed out, to obtain reciprocal relations without taking into account the difference between sexes. The only viable purport of the equality between sexes can be found in the elimination of privilege, although with this comes the introduction of (positive) discrimination. To oppose and confront difference in an irreconcilable manner, vindicating the equality of mankind, is a fundamental theoretical inconsistency in which the female collective is the aggrieved party.

On the contrary, it is necessary to re-evaluate the differences. If this is not the case, impositions and colonisations that homogenise everything are produced, which appear to equal everything out, but what they do not manage is to legitimise the norms that normality reinforce. Symmetry between sexes has to be a necessary condition in the political arena; this is a good starting point, but it is not the be-all and end-all (Sendón 2002). In short, the comparison between men and women is permissible, but not equality between sexes. If this is the case, it would be a triumph for the male paradigm.

In its employment, the concept of equality has been distorted, and has been distanced from the comparison between sexual collectives without privileges. Attention has been focused on one segment of society, in accordance with an androcentric vision which only deals with male adults, and where the world only seems to be a projection of the male subject. Let us not forget that in Anglo-Saxon Anthropology, with many examples in Social Archaeology, those societies in which any adult male is capable of obtaining a determined leadership thanks to his own abilities have been labelled as “equalitarian”, despite the fact that in many of these societies exploitation between sexes is evident (Meillassoux 1975).

On the other hand, it is necessary to reflect on the veracity of many perspectives which are based on a recent rational logic which deploys universal models of relationships between the sexes in societies gone-by. We are evermore conscious of the fact that the female difference has suffered a very narrow interpretation, which has meant the breaking and fragmentation of the overall image of the female. This fragmentation has led to the bestowing of

specific functions on women throughout history (and from prehistory), and it has also meant assuming the impossibility of realising other tasks due exclusively to their sex. The existence of sexual difference where a duality of sexes should not be excluded is the patriarchy that conferred this nuance. It has been the patriarchy that has insistently sought to hide/diminish the sexual difference, both in a symbolic and material sense. In the material sense, presenting the production of new individuals as something natural. In the symbolic sense, through political-ideological practices that structure the content of that which is represented and the forms of representation that are employed. In the light of this, to affirm the existence of sexual difference, means breaking with the universal stereotype of the human being, as neutral and we dare to sexuation of the past (Sanahuja 2002). A universal stereotype that considers all human beings as being equal.

All in all, in analysing the concepts of Difference and Inequality we are led to evaluate under which premises the history of social groups of the past has been constructed together with the relationships that took place between the sexes. We should also stop for a moment to consider the consequences of falling into the trap of using universal models to explain societies from the past and of using concepts of substantial material in concrete historical situations. If we overcome these perspectives, we would also be favouring arguments of notable essentialist character which embrace the invariability of historical evolution and postulate concepts such as that of the patriarchy throughout history as nonchalant (Guerra 1994:157). This can only come into effect when dealing with the material conditions of the different groups and the social and gender collectives. This also would entail tackling the true conditions of production and of social reproduction. Conditions that are although particular in nature, and are subject to specific historical situations.

Equality is an ideological attempt at the validation of subjects, difference is an existential principle which is not necessarily essentialist in nature, and which views women as social and sexual subjects allowing them to express the true meaning of their existence and the reality that surrounds them (material conditions and social subjects). The dissymmetry between the two sexes

(patriarchal dominion, exploitation of labour) needs to be backed-up with evidence beyond that of the actual biological difference and/or the carrying out of different activities. It is at this level that we talk about the exploitation of the female collective when highlighting one or more of the following three situations: when the major part of the work-loads fall on the shoulders of women, while the produce benefits the group as a whole. When the amount of time invested into working is unequal or burdensome for the female collective and beneficial for the men, who hold a privileged position in terms of access to the produce. In situations such as this, the consequence is the denial of the work carried out by women, which is cemented in the systematic omission (invisibilisation) of the participation of women in the production of social life and in the maintenance of life, or which subtracts importance from the work carried out, considering it to be irrelevant.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, then, we feel it is necessary to consolidate our arguments with some clarifying points. Our intention is to highlight the reality of social inequality, both due to individual and social differences and for the necessity for unequal politics in order to afford the dignity of social conditions for unequal collectives. This can only happen if the main objective consists of eradicating dissymmetry. Therefore, the only relevant interpretation of the notion of Inequality lies in the reality of dissymmetry (exploitation and dominion). As a consequence, in place of ambiguous, formal, empty terminologies (Inequality), we prefer to call things by their proper name and speak frankly of oppression and exploitation. If the need arises to tackle other diversities, it will also be necessary to turn to clear content (formal variability, stylistic divergence, diversified production, specialisation of labour, functional segmentation, sexual difference and so on).

In order to offer a definitive meaning to a vindication of reality that, from the point of view of Inequality, must be understood materially and that, as such, we must explain in terms of objective labour conditions and access to the end

produce, another quotation from Marx comes to mind - ***From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!*** (Marx 1875). If this vindication of Inequality is not put into effect, social relationships can only be submitted to conditions of appropriation of labour, or they can only be the result of agreements between equals that calculate the benefits of their actions, to the exclusion of those who cannot fall in line with the rules of the game, even when this is with the aegis of a defence of equality.

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