Unholy Alliance – Africa and Marxism

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Abstract

There have been many ways in which progressive, liberal, populist or socially sensitive ideologies have been described, to link these ideologies with a humanist and humane approaches to socio-economic organization of society. Some of these tortuously fangled nomenclatures are communism, socialism, Marxism, welfarism, secularism, communalism, democracy, communitarianism or leftism. But what I have found is that many of these labels are misnomers and incongruous appellations clouding transparency of understanding, cloaking hubris, purveying carefully disguised oppression and transferring ideas from disparate socio-cultural historiographic circumstances to confound proper annotation of understanding in Global African (Africana) traditions of governance and social engineering. In this essay, I suggest that the search by “leftist” Africana intellectuals for levers for founding discourses that will be sensitive to the welfare of the masses of the African peoples and societies have floundered on the altar of intellectual laziness reminiscent of intellectual smuggling which was engaged by African theologian scholars in the search for equivalences for Abrahamic disoriented and emotionally unstable desert deities. The laziness has engendered the unholy alliance between Africa and Marxism, such that the historicity of human struggles which led Marx to Das Kapital (1867) and The Communist Manifesto (1848) have been uniformized, homogenized, pasteurized, universalized and transfixed on Africana societies without sensitivity to the incommensurabilities of European and Africana traditions that the scholars have sought to understand. To show these weaknesses in the theory and practice of leftism in global Africa, I examine two critical elements of any socio-economic and cultural analysis of the ontologies of being in indigenous Africa before the misadventure of Europe on the continent in the modern times: land and labour. I conclude that the unholy alliance between Africa and Marxism has been responsible for the inevitable failure of communist/socialist/Marxist ideologies, orientations, and intellectualisms in Africana societies. I suggest that the path to progress in Africa will have to be forged from endogenous tools, using indigenous cultural traditions and values.
Background

Sometime around 1983, a highly respected Marxist colleague of mine, lecturing at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) wrote a paper entitled, “Why should I sell my labour power?” (Fashina 1983). The paper was predicated on the doctrine of Marxist concept of disempowerment of the worker derived from the alienation of the worker from his labour, with worker defined in terms of someone hired to another in unequal relationships between the employer and the employed, a relationship built on distrust. This was the typical trope of bourgeoisie/proletariat relationship of exploitation of the latter by the former to create unpaid-for value called profit at the expense of the latter. But it also played on the Christocentric capitalistic and proverbial narrative of the Great Fall on the one hand (Genesis 1-3), and the parable of the workmen (Matthew 20) on the other hand, both in the Bible, whereby humans were destined to labour because of disobedience, as the workers were supposed to be diligent to ensure profit for the employer, in order to remain in the good books of the employer, which was later concretized in the Parable of Talents (Matthew 25) in the New Testament.

I was constrained to respond in a very short paper, on three counts. In the first instance, I pointed out that what the myth of Great Fall was doing was accounting for why humans have to labour, using a mythological narrative of original sin, which had nothing to do with reality; for if labour was so abhorrent and a product of a curse for disobedience against an Almighty’s injunction not to eat a particular fruit from the tree of knowledge, then humans would not have needed to pick Manna in the first instance, nor would they have had to go through the hassle of putting it in their mouths, not to mention the torture of boucal mastication and digestion. All these would have been programmed, so that there would be no need for nutrition from external sources, nor would there be any need for expenditure of energy to excrete waste.

More significantly, I argued that regarding labour as a curse was like invoking the myth of Sisyphus, and the endless task of working tirelessly in the circuitous manner, which is the lamentable human existential predicament not uncommon to Western understanding of meaninglessness packaged as existentialism; this is condemned as the fact that humans must always toil to feed as the eternal demand for survival and preservation of life becomes not just boring for the obtuse ego of the privileged, but also is described as destructive of human capacity for self-realization. It is a task which may have to be contracted out to an expropriated group – colonials in Africa, chattel enslaved blacks in the Americas and contemporary chattel French States in Africa – as would happen in heaven when angels become the new chattel slaves, which then forms a basis for lamentation of the lot of the dispossessed in Marxian dialectical materialism. I find this incredibly great enough that my Christian and Muslim brethren and sistren never wonder how the angels would have reacted, the same way a Donald Trump does not see anything wrong in robbing his workers of their wages by declaring fictitious bankruptcy or the World Bank empowering the global financial system to lend stolen money back to Africa on crippling usury interest rates.

The final count was to wit: the assumption that all human societies are unjust, greedy and insensitive to the humanity of others, which is celebrated in European intellectual
traditions in various ways, such as state of nature theories, Darwinism, democracy and capitalism – David Ricardo and Adam Smith, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau – only show the primitivity that consumes the soul of the European man in his efforts to become human many millennia after human beings in other climes had been building cities, taming rivers and traversing long expanses of the seas. In labouring heavily under the yoke of his being virtually the last to attain human civilization, even not knowing the way to India, which was just right next door, and misnaming the Caribbean as West Indies out of ignorance, the European male treated his own mother like vermin and raped his ancestry in the effort to assert his bogus humanity.

I gave my short paper response to my senior colleague for him to see possible ways of dealing with the issues raised in his essay, other than the Marxist way of materialist master/slave dialectic. But I did not quite get a satisfactory response from him, either to address the issues I have raised or to further show that selling labour is just one of the ways of socio-economic engineering, so that humans in any/all clime(s) may access the best chances of attaining sustainable survival and meeting the existential requirements of our humanity. Even so-called primitives understood the need for exchange of goods and services, either by barter or by some other means, and their system seemed more just, equitable and fair, given that parties must see that they get value for whatever they traded in this way. I do not recollect getting a proper response back from my esteemed colleague, nor do I remember retrieving the short rejoinder back from him either, and because it was not the age of easy information and file storage and retrieval, I have not been able to find the original rejoinder. But the issues he raised and to which I responded have not left my subconscious since then, hence when this opportunity of Keynote Address arose and I was invited, it was with some trepidation and joy that I revisited the issues I raised.

**Economic History and Political Economy of the World**

It was not by accident that the historical epochs of agrarian and industrial revolutions overlapped in Europe, but often not mentioned is what gave impetus to the emergence of both as a novel phenomenon in Europe, whereas in other climes, notably in Africa and Asia Minor, the use of various technological tools and the development of urbanization had always been a feature of civilized human existence. What led to the development of industrial and agrarian revolutions was the foraging in typical primitive hunter gatherer manner of backward Europe into other climes for the first time in its history. This going beyond the borders of Europe by Europeans was not just “exploration” events as such, but more of necessity to find places where there were abundance of resources to pillage and plunder the resources of other societies and peoples, to derive excess material disposable resources and unearned income and to contrive the dispossesson of poor peoples of their own societies of their inheritance in land and natural resources to create a new parasitic, totally greedy, heartless and inhumane group of feudal, powerful and immoral scavengers, otherwise called the bourgeoisie by Marx.

In my contribution to UNESCO Courier (Bewaji 2017), I had argued the obvious truism that the historian sees and tells the world history from his own perspective, hence the
need for Africana peoples to tell their own homegrown stories. In any case, if the lion were able to tell the story of the chase and how he escaped the hunter, the hunter will be the villain while he would be the victim. Let me illustrate.

Whenever an idea, science, technology, innovation, invention or creative effort enters into Europe from other climes, by whatever means, it becomes a European invention, gratuitously developed without the input of any other group of people, for the benefit of the rest of humanity, and for which humanity is eternally held to ransom by Europe to pay property rights. Whether it is science, technology, engineering, mathematics or medicine, the moment Europeans gains a whiff of it, even if they have no clue about the true meaning of such an idea, they become the ones civilizing the rest of humanity. Does anyone remember that the Civilization along the Nile Valley had tamed, dammed, and used the Nile to irrigate, generate power and fed cities? Does anyone remember that before Adam and Eve (if one goes by the genealogy of Jesus the Christ, as indicated in the Gospel according to St. John – maximum 5600 years BC, giving a generous 100 years to a generation of four fourteen generations), the people of Nubia, Ethiopia or Egypt had built Pyramids? Does anyone remember that the Jews (Israel’s twelve sons of Jacob) met thriving cities, with technology to preserve food for FOURTEEN (14) years, if Joseph – of the dreaming talent fame, one with beautiful tunic fame – was to be believed? Does anyone remember that when Europeans reached West Africa, they found democracies way superior to the Greek Agora that impoverishes the poor to enrich the rich? Does anyone remember that even the Pyramids in the Americas were the exact replicas of the ones in the Nile Valley and also of similar pyramids found all over Africa? Does anyone remember that there were no cranes and contemporary scaffolds when these Pyramids were constructed? Does anyone remember that these Pyramids had been there before Joseph (the dreaming one, with the coat of many colours) was “sold” by his brethren to Egypt? One could multiply these questions *ad infinitum*.

The essence of raising these questions is to ensure faithfulness to the history of humanity, and to prevent it from being treated as the only one-sided human history that is told by European male. Eurocentric historiography is simply no more than a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing which it has become for the rest of the world. For, when we examine the trajectories of European history, and how disease, inclement weather and abject ignorance prevented the development of great civilizations till about after the Dark Ages, when Europeans finally foraged out of Europe, or were civilized by the Moors, then we would see the importance of what led to the twin forces which transformed Europe: Agrarian Revolution and Industrial Revolution. This signal corrective to historiography of human civilizations is what now leads to calls for a replacement of “History” with “Ourstory”, where every group is empowered to own, narrate and validate their own peculiar stories – ontologically, epistemically and culturally (Bewaji, 2017).

Mark you, we are not trying to dilute the achievements of Europe. That would be totally intellectually dishonest and foolhardy. How can any region surpass Europe for wickedness? As a student of epistemology that would be turning truth on its head. Even in the era of alternative facts, Trumism and post-Trumpism, there is still a limit to the extent our collective epistemic (ir)responsibility will allow for the total destruction of notions, versions
and ontologies of truth. All we are saying is that what is called the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions in post-Dark Ages Europe was par for the course in other civilized older climes and were only made possible for Europe because of the existence of these fecund circumstances gleaned and resources stolen from other climes.

And if merely indicating the above was the sole purpose of this discussion, then it would not have been a significant contribution, we would not be saying anything new or interesting. What is important is that what made these epochs possible in the 18th and 19th Century Europe was the dispossession of indigenous American peoples of their lands, wiping out of the indigenous populations of the Americas through the imposition of yokes of labour hitherto unknown to these peoples and the vectoring of European diseases into these communities for which the indigenous peoples had no knowledge or preparation for, the importation and enslavement of African agricultural engineers and scientists under conditions of alienation from their labour power in Americas – otherwise called the New World to Europe, because Europe did not know that such a continent existed and had been trading with Africa for millennia (the situation of European ignorance was so bad that when they landed in the Americas they thought they were in India, hence West Indies). So, it was the stolen wealth created by the enforced genocide on the indigenous American populations, combined with the wealth created by enslaved Africans in the Americas, as well as the pillaged resources of the colonies all over the world – the British Empire on which the Sun did not set – which ensured that Britain, for one, had the resources to develop the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions. It was the intellectual capacity and capital of the enslaved Africans, enshrined in the knowledge of the various processes of crop planting, harvesting, securing and distribution, which made both revolutions possible, thereby further consolidating the British supremacy in Europe and around the world.

Where does Karl Marx enter the picture? Remember Adam Smith (1778) and The Wealth of Nations? Recently it was suggested that Adam Smith had actually copied the work of a 14th Century Islamic scholar, Ibn Khaldun. This is not an unusual thing for Europeans, either from the Greek period, to European modern or contemporary period. He (Adam Smith) was the advocate of laissez faire economy, with the invisible hand of supply and demand determining all economic activity, thereby leading to the efficient creation and distribution of resources – land, labour and capital. And, at a later date, entrepreneurship was added to the equation to further the dispossession of the victims of this warped arrangement, otherwise known as capitalism – the best “invention” by humanity after sliced bread. Adam Smith is a bundle of contradiction, as his economics is totally dissonant with his ethics, which seems to cement the charge of plagiarism against his economic theory. His The Theory Of Moral Sentiments (1759, Section 1) uses social psychology to explain human morality in the form of human natural ‘sympathy’ for others, based on what can be described as enlightened self-interest or sophisticated egoism.

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it.
On the other hand, *The Wealth Of Nations* is about economic greed, ensuring that primitive Darwinian self-interest drives the economy, just like John Rawls’ (1971) apology for democracy and capitalism in the *Theory of Justice*, by the effect of some invisible hand, self-interest becomes a force for the common good, through the veil of ignorance, it is presumed falsely that it is the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable that economic and social freedom benefits most. This contravenes every element of Western existence, where the poor and the vulnerable are left to suck the proverbial salt, as Jamaican parlance would have it.

What Adam Smith did not factor into his equation is the bestiality of European humanity, which is the basis of the philosophy of Sartre, Camus, Nietzsche and other existentialists on the one hand, and Marx and Engels communism on the other hand. The worst of Europe is now the great grandchild of Europe in Trump; feckless, totally amoral, dishuman and narcissistic. But more on that later. For now, it is also important to mention David Ricardo, the father of comparative advantage, diminishing returns, diminishing marginal productivity and the whole gamut of competitive economics. He was against the manipulative mechanisms of the state and the organs of the state, which skews the market to determine who gets what, where and when. When you combine the effect of Smith and Ricardo with Malthus and Keynes, then it becomes clear why Karl Marx was incensed about the double whammy that the poor faces in the hands of the apologetics of greed, capitalism and the consequences for discord and disorderliness in human affairs. Take the case of (Dis)United Kingdom and the four tribes dominating the isle: in the hands of the Anglo Saxons, the Irish, the Scots and the Welsh suffered intolerable degradation, which accounts for why they continue to have four different parliaments. It explains more than that though: the English even tried to expatriate the Irish into the New World as slaves, except their survival capacity was near zero.

**Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions in Europe**

The agrarian and industrial revolutions of Europe were both products of the outsourcing of wealth creation through a rentier system of global pillage, much like USA and American companies do today in sweatshops globally, to fuel their insatiable appetite for luxury and indolence, as well as through the building of an industrial complex of Pentagon around warmongering and destruction of societies far and wide. The two conditions utilized in Europe to attain this were economic and legal instruments. On the economic side, the wealth derived from various colonies and plantations around the world were, and continue to be, used to compel the poor to vacate their lands or sell off, making themselves into serfs and hostages in their own countries or on plantations. On the second, legal side, the newly minted wealthy, feudal lords, counts or bourgeoisie, conspired with the rulers temporal and religious as well as with a cohort of compromised lumpen intellectuals like Locke, to pass and theorize laws which validated the new cruel and in humane economic arrangements. More incredibly, and to the chagrin of discerning minds, as noted above, they succeeded in conscripting their philosophers and scientists into creating bogus theoretical constructs justifying the destruction of the globe and humanity through pernicious rentier systems of relationships.
with subaltern societies, especially where the upstart leaderships were only too ready to ape the mannerisms and become parodies of their masters.

In Britain the “Enclosure Acts” (1549) legitimized the titling of land away from communal ownership to individuals, who then was able to employ the poor, driven away from the land to cities now controlled by the newly minted wealthy criminal families. When carefully examined, this new development marked the beginning of urbanization in Europe, but it also marked the beginning of destitution of the urban poor, who were, more or less, conscripted to a life of subhuman neighbourhood congestion, ghettoization, crime and violence, and very high mortality rates, as life was more or less in the Hobbesian (1651) state of nature – solitary, poor, nasty, brutish (British) and short – as the poor now take their anxieties and frustrations out on each other, rather than on the oppressors who were insulated from the direct access of the urban dispossessed. It was this condition that bred existentialism and Marxism as philosophies.

Britain is celebrated as having advanced more rapidly in terms of agricultural and industrial output. Some of the grounds for this are increased availability of stolen farmlands, favourable climate, more livestock and improved crop yield derived from other societies either colonized, totally stolen and expropriated or occupied as absentee plantation owners with enslaved peoples working without recompense. How suddenly there could have accrued increased land on an island is unclear, except because of the land grabbing techniques made possible through the Enclosure Acts, and the wealth generated offshore through seizure of peoples of other lands who are then conscripted into slavery plantations where they provided unpaid labour to produce feeder products into the rapacious covens of English novo riches.

The agrarian revolution of Europe was closely followed by the industrial revolution, but both were made possible through the deadly event of plantation slavery in the Americas and the colonization of various parts of the world by Europeans, especially Africa and Asia. All the hallmarks of both agrarian and industrial revolutions were well articulated, but new dimensions of human inhumanity to other human beings became even more pronounced.

The agrarian and industrial revolutions brought about a greater volume and variety of goods and raised the standard of living for the complicit middle and idle upper classes. However, life for the poor and working classes continued to be filled with abject misery and despondency. Wages were low and working conditions were both dangerous and monotonous. Children were forced to labour on the farms and in the factories for inhumanly long hours and were used for such highly hazardous tasks on the farms and in the factories, leading to serious accidents and innumerable fatalities.

Unplanned urbanization followed unplanned industrialization, with workers arriving from the countryside, living in overcrowded housing and polluted, unsanitary conditions in which disease was rampant. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau had developed the state of nature theories before the sweeping agrarian and industrial revolutions in Europe, based on their presumptions of what would have led to statecraft and society. What they did not factor in was the reality of the conditions of societies on the plantations or even those which followed in agrarian and industrial Europe in the 18th and 19th Centuries. It was these conditions which so agitated Karl Marx and his collaborator, Engels, to write Das Kapital.
Let us highlight some the features of Europe in the period which Marx was compelled to take up as theoretical trope to ameliorate Hobbesian state of nature, where life reality is regarded as living human conditions which were solitary, poor, nasty, brutish (British) and short and which existentialist philosophers such as Sartre, Camus and Nietzsche regarded as forlorn, despondent and filled with angst:

a) Poor people lost their lands to marauding feudal lords and surrogates of the newly created rich and powerful in the society;

b) This led to the idea of the landed and the landless dichotomy in England;

c) Movement of people who have lost their lands from the country areas/sides to the industrial towns to live in newly created squalid inner cities or ghettos;

d) Men became statistics and labour became commodified;

e) Women and children were exploited, because they could be paid less and were easier to control;

f) In order to derive profit, labour was not properly rewarded, and labourers were conscripted to work just to maintain the body to survive to another day for working for the rich and powerful;

g) The environment of those cities was really dejected, poor, air and water were polluted by smoke and filth;

h) The living conditions were really appalling, human beings lived in disease, engaging in adult and children heavy drinking and ultimately alienation of self;

i) The laws (social contract, common law, democracy, etc.) were (still are, if you are familiar with the English Common Law) purely the instruments for the control, stabilization and maintenance of status quo and suppressing the majority poor in Europe;

j) Niccolo Machiavelli and The Prince was to document the perfection of the typical system of ruling over the poor, so that they may be kept in check and perpetual subjection;

k) The Church was complicit in the dispossession of the poor and the enslavement of Europeans, indigenous peoples of the Americas (who were totally decimated) and the importation of Africans into enforced slavery in the Americas, as designated non-humans, chattel and soulless sub-humans.

The place of the philosophies of libertarianism, social contract, democracy, etc., in the determination of the blacks of Haiti, to successfully struggle for freedom and defeat of all the armies of Europeans and America of the day cannot be overemphasized. Apart from the fact that as a people who were free in Africa, civilized and well bred, they found the conditions of the plantation intolerable and antagonistic, they also could not imagine that the same people who were preaching liberty, freedom, democracy in Europe (Locke was invested in Slavery in the New World) were the same doing these horrible things in the Americas to other human beings categorized as property.
Karl Marx

Karl Marx was the son of a middle-class family who studied law and he also studied the works of Hegel. His family background, opportunities for education and personal scholarship led him to various ideas, which had profound effect on his generation and subsequent generations. Being of the middle-class parentage, he had access to all the elements and privileges that such chance could bring, but his unorthodox views conspired to make him a pariah among his peers, to the extent that he became stateless and had to be in exile in Britain. What is clear is that he was a product of his circumstances, and his views reflected his appreciation of this intellectual heritage, the economic circumstances, and historical events of his time.

Even while in exile in the UK, he continued to collaborate with Fredrich Engels, and both authored together Das Kapital and The Communist Manifesto. The elements of Das Kapital are the;

a) Theories about society, economics and politics which holds that human societies develop through eternal class struggle between the have and the have-nots;

b) Societies are made of two opposing groups – the rich and the poor, the bourgeoisies and the proletariat;

c) Through the evolution of society, the interests of the two groups are always diametrically opposed to each other, leading to the rich being the owners of the three critical components of production: land, capital and entrepreneurship;

d) This leads to capitalism, which is built on immutable Darwinian principle of survival of the fittest;

e) Capitalism breeds disaffection between the owners of capital, land and entrepreneurship, known as the bourgeoisie and labour that is used to generate wealth;

f) The working classes, known as the proletariat, are compelled to sell their labour at a discounted rate for merely survival wages;

g) Deriving from Hegel’s Dialectical Idealism, which depicts historical determinism, Marx deployed his adaptation of this to form historical materialism, a form of materialistic determinism;

h) Marx predicted that the internally generated frictions inherent in the unfair, inhumane, and exploitative system of capitalism will lead to the self-destruction of capitalism;

i) With this self-destruction of capitalism, its replacement will take place by enthronement of a new system of communism or socialism;

j) The persistent expropriation of the poor through exploitative labour relations will lead to class consciousness and the changing of the power base to be controlled by the poor masses will be the logical consequence;

k) This will lead to the establishment of a classless society of equals and justice for all of humanity; and

l) The masses will organise revolutions to overthrow their oppressors, to bring about the new society of fairness and justice.
There is no doubt that there are various highly sophisticated ways of presenting these issues, and that the Marxian intellectual heritage is rich and diverse. Also important is the fact that Marxist scholars are not in agreement about the whole goal of Marxism. In Africana context, there are various brands of Marxism; these range from Communism to Socialism, African Socialism to Communitarianism, etc. The key figures in the Africana traditions are Nkrumah, Nyerere, Cabral, Awolowo and Lumumba. Of these lot, it was only Nkrumah and Nyerere who attained political power over a sustained period of time. Their chequered histories are testaments to the acceptance or rejection they suffered from Western metropoles, as centres of power, economics, and technology. The vicissitudes of their governments and successes and failures attendant are well documented; capitalism does everything to prevent any other system of government from being successful. It is intrinsic to the nature of beneficiaries of decadence and injustice to inveigle on the system they prey on, to ensure that all are ensnared, lured, and inebriated by false consciousness into thinking they are party to the gravy train while it is only the privileged few and their cronies who benefit from rot. The many African leaders who have ever tried to break the yoke of Western imperialism have been assassinated and their societies ruined: from Haiti to Congo, to Tanzania to Libya, the story has always been the same.

African Marxist scholarship has been significant and profound, reflecting honest efforts at confronting colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, and all forms of exploitation of the masses by the capitalists. But in many respects, I suggest that they have failed, as is often the case when one needs a serious totally new and different tradition to tether one’s ontological and epistemological ideas from those fabricated by descendants of your oppressors. For this reason, in my considered view, they have suffered great misplacement of intellectual capital, which has vitiated the value of their contributions to Marxist intellectual traditions, as well as limiting the usefulness, applicability and relevance of their contributions to this scholarship and practice.

Claude Ake (2009), in Social Science as Imperialism, has lamented how Africana social scientists have failed to appreciate the nature of the beast that is called Western education – western curriculum masquerading as education, western Christian religious traditions (and their sibling Arabic Islamic traditions), western intellectual heritage and western democratic traditions. To this extent, Africana intellectuals join a tradition that is culturally alien, and by so doing they have unknowingly contributed to the systemic disempowerment and control of their destinies. Lewis R. Gordon (2006) has described this process as Disciplinary Decadence.

Okot P’Bitek (1976) analogously described this within the context of understanding African religions as intellectual smuggling; this is a process in which African religious traditions are interpreted in Eurocentric, Judeo-Christian, Abrahamic-Arabic traditions. The danger of clothing African deities in borrowed robes is the alienation of these deities from the peoples whose interests they are supposed to serve, by making it difficult for the indigenous peoples to relate again to their own gods except through the mediation agency of the foreign gods. And when you try to translate an unforgiving desolate desert deity, which sees everything in polarities and bifurcations, to peoples who live in tropically rich and fecund environment, then you have serious problems which require imaginative intellectual
smuggling greater that those of the first African theologian scholars. Curing African humanity of the disease of epistemicide and epistemic deficit has been a challenge most difficult to accomplish; it is worse that the ravages of COVID, Ebola, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters and sundry problems Africa has had to confront.

A third instance stares us in the face in the way in which Rastafari are enamoured with the tools, traditions, metaphors, symbolisms, and mythologies deployed to perfect and sustain their enslavement even after emancipation and independence. Thus, while wailing and railing against Babylon, they continue to sing the praise of Zion, as if Hebrewism has anything positive to say about African descended blacks, except the trope of Hamitic Hypothesis which consigns blacks into subhuman racist and deformed category of the wretched of the earth. In the false consciousness cloaked in protest insurgent literary diction, the Rastafari would speak of overstanding rather than understanding, soon forward instead of coming back soon and various other fatuous neologisms which does not help in any way to defeat the forces which continue to hold themselves and Jamaica in abject subjection. To watch a Rastafari meditation is not any different from watching an African Marxist read out tropes of dialectical materialism, even when such does not redound to any positive appreciation of how the world works, nor assist in the process of securing for posterity the climes of their abode.

To avoid the problems which African Marxists have failed to separate themselves from, perceptive Africana feminists have stridently rejected the projection of Western feminism to Africana societies (Oyewumi, 1997; Nzegwu, 2006). This was done on the ground that what was needed was not the importation of Euro-American misanthropy and patriarchal intellectual terrorism into Africana contexts, but the development of a culturally sensitive apprehension and appreciation of indigenous African gender constructions, relationalities and wholesome moralities. While there are critical issues of gender inequalities in Africana societies, these are of a different variety and require totally different tools, otherwise the good elements of Africana femininity will be lost on the altar of Euro-American feminism.

**Unholy Alliance**

The above instances also apply to Africana Marxist scholarship. It is this same uncritical and unbridled transposition of tropes of Marxism, economic, social, and political scholarship onto African realities that vitiate the validity of such scholarship in Africana societies. It is my view that 25 years is long wait to see the kinds of corrective that I expect from my illustrious Africana Marxists. That this has not happened means that they may not have apprehended the reason why it seemed their efforts were like whistling in the dark, with no proper means of relating their thoughts to the lives of Africana peoples globally beyond the purely academic curiosity of understanding Marxism. If they continue to persist in the unholy alliance they have created between Marxism and Africana societies, they will continue to remain irrelevant oddities, orphans without acceptance, and vagabonds without defence in the rituals of scholarship domiciliary accounts.
Let me illustrate what I mean. And I will do this using three basic divergencies between Western and Africana realities. After this, it is my hope that colleagues who are true scholars of Marxism will understand the pariah status of their efforts, and in so realizing, make amends to see how best to domesticate the ubiquitous Marx.

**Land**

Until Europe invaded Africa, most African societies did not see the need for personalized ownership of land. How on earth does an individual begin the “Enclosure Acts” process of claiming property rights to something to which he/she never contributed to making, something which his/her ancestors met, and which they have left to posterity; by the same token, he/she will be separated from this fundamental necessity for human existence at the fulness of time, either naturally or otherwise. Most civilizations, until the arrival of agrarian and industrial revolutions of Europeans, respected land as common property, and treated it as such, preserving it for those descendants of our future common humanity and posterity.

When Jack Goody (1977), the English anthropologist and historian, looked at this phenomenon of communal ownership of land, he concluded, using newly arrived European demented landed property rights paradigms as recently codified in the “Enclosure Acts” approach to everything, that Africans civilizations were primitive. Further, he averred that since African communities could not assign ownership of land to individuals, it meant they were no better than hunter gatherers, making it right for Europeans to steal the lands of Africans in the Eastern and Southern Africa.

If we apprehend the full implications of this group, community, and communal ownership of land, it will be obvious that the possibility of buying or selling land becomes anomalous. You cannot sell what belongs to the group, nor can you pay for what does not belong to an individual without the consent of everyone who jointly has ownership to the item. This way of viewing land and other resources is cultural: it is not civilized or uncivilized.

Any close observer will understand that part of the reason why many African societies have remained peaceful, even in spite of the mis-governance by the depraved political directorate which has been foisted on these societies through the misadventures called democratic systems of electing leaders through political party divisive infrastructures has been because the poor, even while being civil servants and teachers and doctors, etc, still had access to ancestral lands to grow basic necessities for their families. In other words, the tragedy that befell urban migrants in Europe – landlessness and destitution – has not happened in Africana countries, thereby making the class struggle that Marx predicted a far dream in these Africana countries. And this is what has made the efforts by migrant Fulbe/Bororo/Fulani primitive hunter-gatherers threatening the Yoruba civilization in the 21st Century very dangerous for West Africa. On another note, it is not strange to have colleagues at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, all going back to their cattle post religiously every weak, because for them, it is this connection to ancestral land and the ways of cattle ranching
connected to it, which gave live meaning – including the payment of lobola (bride price) with heads of cattle at the appropriate.

The whole thing about land is very interesting on another plane: the climate, the environment and even more the cultures that evolve as a result of living within a particular region determines largely the framed humanities emanating. The destruction wreaked on Amerindians, Tainos and Arawaks and other indigenous peoples of Australia, New Zealand and other places continue to haunt humanity till present, as so much indigenous knowledge systems were destroyed in the process, while we now lament the poverty of environmental protection which would have helped in solving a lot of the global challenges relating to pandemics and even economic problems. Using tropes of dialectical idealism or materialism would not solve any of these challenges as the incompetence of these tropes is stark either in comprehending or propounding resolution mechanisms for challenges in these far reaches of the earth away from Europe.

Labour

I started this discussion with my effort to respond to my colleague’s essay on “Why should I sell my labour power”. It is my considered view that modern society, in which virtually everything, from intellectual capacity to sex, from skill to time and from age to youth are commodified, bearing pecuniary values, albeit in very funny ways, selling labour power is a necessity for survival. Most African civilizations did not place any unit of value on labour as a result of the socio-economic and cultural traditions determining access and success, and as such, human labour was not to be bought or sold, in the forms in which hours and minutes are measured relative to effort and sold now.

There is a closeness between the individual and the competencies that emanate from his/her humanity. These are exchanged in a process that recognizes that even while we may be trained in the same vocation, sharing in the successful accomplishment of a task does not warrant the payment of equal or unequal sums. To this extent, the kinds of exchanges that take place regarding labour and the performance of tasks in African cultural environment is through cooperative partnership. This is the arrangement in which labour is pooled in bands, groups or gangs, and the rotation of who gets the benefit of service, means that everyone within the group gets the job done in rotation. For this reason, even though it is not the case that every member can accomplish the same number of units of a particular task over a given time, yet there is respect for whatever each member of the group can bring to the table as just recompense for the group pooling of efforts. In any case, it is through the success of everyone in a civilized society that group success is measured, compared with an environment of Darwinian European survival of the fittest, which even lower animals and so-called primitives would never have contemplated for individual, collective or group survival (Bewaji, 1998).

In essence, what this prevents is the agony of alienation of the labourer from the labour. Because each person performs the segment of the task to the best of their abilities, it follows that there is dignity in labour, and the hatred which will drive the proletariat to the life and death struggle for the reclamation of his/her humanity does not arise within the
Africana socio-economic and cultural context. For this reason, majority Africana peoples fail to comprehend what is called class warfare or class struggle between the capitalist, the bourgeoisie and the masses of the people, otherwise termed proletariat. It simply never occurs, as the little rabbit will continue to live next to the majestic elephant (*eku a maa je legbe erin*). The contrivance of capitalistic ideology is a bogey devised to justify crass individualism, greedy immoral accumulation at the expense of others, as well as dishonest understanding of the relations of human interaction with one another in the productive process. This is then structured in the form of what is called factors of production: land, labour, and capital. And in recent times, entrepreneurship has been added in order to further distance the human being from their intellectual capacity: intellectual capital is separated from labour and management.

It may be retorted that things have changed now. Modernity and the invasion of Africa by vagrants from Europe have transformed perception and practices of labour relations, relative to other factors of production; hence, it would be conjectured that what we now have is class society, marking the division of peoples into the wealthy and the poor – the haves and the have-nots. We would even be harangued that land is traded in rural and urban communities in Africa today, which would seem to suggest that Africa has joined the bandwagon of class society, where capitalism now destroys the humanity of the poor, the wretched and the destitute of the cities. This is shifting the argument to another terrain, which cannot be fully responded to here without taking us further afield than what we narrowly will wish to accomplish in this discussion: simply showing that the current engagement of Africa with Marxism suffocates under the yoke of an unholy alliance, which if not purged, will make the benefit of Marxist insight useless within the African economic and social relations. So, while there is an element of validity to this fact that labour and land are now being bought and sold in contemporary Africa, it should be tempered with the situation on the ground, where there are still traditional exchanges of labour efforts through *Esusu* in Yoruba land or “partner” in Jamaica. Consider for example what happens in a typical vocational environment in USA or Europe, where workmen/women (handyman/woman) charge for doing tasks by the hour and how the same jobs are performed in Nigeria, Botswana, or Jamaica. You are charged what the workman/woman considers fair for the job on hand, not based on how many hours that is expended byclocking on arrival and departure from your premises to fix your appliance, including transportation to and from your domicile to do the job for you.

It may be further argued that the Western Euro-American practice of economic development in the form of capitalism is more advanced, more modern, clearly more sophisticated and in tune with the need of all human beings to gain equal respectability and acceptance without any forms of prejudices and devaluation on account of gender and race; but this only glosses the insidious cultural components of the skewed relationship between labour and the pay structure in Western societies, as well as the validation of imposed kleptocratic addiction of the rich to rob the poor as well as the empowerment of parasitic traditions of extortions which the New Testament validated in the Parable of Talents. For the Marxist to present the issue in such simplistic stark antagonistic terms, as if the poor have done wrong by trying to change the narrative which makes them into tools in the hands of the bourgeoisie will only show some level of insensitivity to the environment of the effort of the
poor toward justified self-liberation; why would it be offensive to any system to want to continue life in simple way, which by the way has now been hijacked and described as organic agriculture which only the capitalist is now permitted to undertake? Hence, what I am arguing is that it could/should not be a one size fits all analysis of relations between human beings that will determine what type of socio-cultural arrangements work for members of society.

Urbanity and Poverty

One of the major tropes of Marxism is the fact that the twin forces that brought about world domination for Europe and America – agrarian and industrial revolutions – created in their tow the terrible existential circumstances of reducing human beings to lower than animal status in the ghettos and inner cities and squalid conditions they endure in urban areas. It is arguable that what breeds the mutual antagonisms between the rich and the poor in Western societies in proto/post agrarian and post-industrial revolution societies was the dubiousness of the sources of the wealth of the rich. Where this is not the case, it may be that the wealthy become rich through the manipulation of the system, not either by dint of physical or intellectual effort, but through devious dispossessions and false treaties which empower the crafty to take possession of the resources of the unsuspecting indigenous peoples of the world. Knowing that this is what has happened is what then leads to the kinds of envy, disdain, hatred, and violence that leads within the context of Marxian class struggle to a life and/or death contest between the rich and the poor. This may be contrasted with what happens in many African communities where the rich and the poor live side by side and benefit each other in the process, compared with the deliberate disdain that consigns the poor into inner cities in capitalist societies – a separatism which creates disparities and skewing of resources further to reinforce the class and race fault-lines in society. It is not anything serious to understand why most of the European style GRAs in various towns in Nigeria have given way to accommodation of even the low classes, thereby integrating members of all social strata, as indigenous Africa cultural practices have always favoured from time immemorial.

Of course, what has happened is that capitalism has perfected the art of domestication of the poor. Through the provision of varieties of drugs to keep the poor from resurrecting from the stupor of drunkenness, opium or religion, crave for luxury items which only the indolent kleptocratic few can muster, the poor are kept subject and controlled, bidding the own turn to loot and steal from the commonwealth. When the so-called Marxists are placed in positions of authority in many societies, the fact that they revert to the ways of the greedy Western individualistic capitalist is not difficult to understand in such circumstances. At the end of the day, in the West, to prevent the implosion of society that was bound to occur, both the poor and rich endure an incestuous relationship, fed through the Dole, welfare and handouts occasionally to ensure the sanitization of the conscience of the greedy thieves that the rich truly are. The poor have access to fast foods which compound their mental and health conditions, making them even more vulnerable; and they are induced to such lifestyles which give semblances of success, while, in actual fact, the poverties which they manifest continue
to replicate in their consumption inclinations and patterns. By mimicking the filthy minority kleptocrats in society, they further entrench the system that expropriates their humanity and distorts their values.

In Europe and America, what the rich does is to move away to distant areas of the cities, to avoid direct interaction with the poor on a daily, hourly, and regular basis. This creates rich zones of various degrees of opulence and equally consolidating stark contrasts of poverty in inner cities and ghettos. The school system is structured to further reinforce this situation, thereby entrenching intergenerational dislocations and poverty replicability in Western societies. These are things that need to be seriously and carefully examined in the African context, to checkmate the embers of elitism which may arise from social engineering imported through both capitalism and Marxism.

During the colonial era, Europe attempted to recreate its divisions in many Africana countries. They built Government Reservation Areas (GRA), University Residential Areas (URA) and other communities of separatism for the top echelons of the civil service. The District Officer (DO) in each community lived virtually on the higher locale in the community. This may be because of the need to know what is going on in the surrounding community in case of insurgency, but it was also more a mark of superiority to live literally and symbolically above everyone, including the local/indigenous/traditional rulers. In comparison, in traditional Yoruba society, the King lived in the centre (Aafin Oba) of the city, and is accessible to everyone, being subject to the same conditions that the members of society endure on a daily basis.

Some of the relics of separatism of these years are still visible in many Africana societies even today, but the normal fare in indigenous African societies in the precolonial era is that there were no such separations of the abodes of the rich from those of the poor. In Yoruba land, if you do so for yourself and your family, because you have now become wealthy, it may actually be suspected that you did not wish to live among other human beings because you have some strange and serious infectious disease which you did not wish to transmit to others, or probably your source of income is shady and you did not want members of the larger society to understand this. The moment you begin to carry yourself with such haughty, silly arrogance, or in some suspiciously reclusive manner, members of your immediate and extended family will caution you. If they either did not notice the sick transformation that was taking place in your life or could not say much to you because you perceive yourself as superior and/or untouchable, then the community will make sure you understand that your behaviour is unacceptable and intolerable. As a result, through various subtle and overt mechanisms of social communication, you will be alerted to your repugnant nuisance value, because such will have consequences for your own survival and those of your progeny; even more significantly, it will have severe implications for the overall wellbeing of the community of humans at large.

This last point is very significant. The reason for this is that changes are now taking place, whereby individuals, communities and societies are becoming tolerant of shady characters, shady sources of wealth and unexplained means. This started with the advent of Europe in Africa (Nigeria), which bred upstarts in various communities who used their access to government resources to embellish their own wealth. With the advent of military
adventurism, the accountability and responsibility which used to be part of the social, cultural, and economic terrain have given way to emergency millionaires. The bastardization of the agencies of government and the unbridled corruption which came with the first feckless civilian regime in Nigeria, which led to coups and counter coups, have meant that simple Marxist analysis will be unavailing to understand socio-economic relations. And the fact that, in spite of all, Nigeria and many African countries which have suffered from indigenous misgovernance for decades have not imploded, is testimony to the weakness of either capitalism or Marxism as explanatory tropes for socio-economic engineering. To continue to force such imported tropes on the appreciation of the challenges facing Africa would undermine the need to utilize indigenous cultural ideas of governance, templates of metaphysical sustenance and axiologies which validate African humanity, instead of the continue dependence on external disempowering ideologies of expropriation.

Conclusion

What we have tried to do in this discussion is to show that, more often than not, Africana intellectuals can be said to be missing in action, if not lazy, indolent and docile, suffering from a combination of disciplinary decadence, epistemic deficit and learned helplessness. While engaging in discourses within the tropes and narratives that exist in other climes, they fail to apprehend and appreciate the nuances, differences, and variations of the issues within their own peculiar circumstances. Unless Africana thinkers begin to do what Julius Nyerere (1962) did, locating the ideas of governance within the traditions of his culture, by way of *Uhuru na Ujama*, then there will be no way of carrying the people along with the development process.

It is remarkable that much as many of the so-called Marxists are able to pontificate, while ensconced in the citadels of higher learning, so-called ivory towers of laziness, where their ideas are mere intellectual expostulatory masturbations, the moment they are confronted with real life situations of exercise of power, or being made responsible for leadership in certain areas, then you find them failing woefully in the discharge of their responsibilities. They often are worse than the people the criticize daily as oppressors or bourgeoisie. This often happens because they neither understand the traditions of their own ancestors, which prohibit certain unacceptable abuse of office or use of power, nor are they equally apprised of the internal dynamics of European traditions of the rich ganging up to protect the interest of the rich through what they contrive to call the rule of law. In essence, the rule of law is a product of enlightened self-interest of the rulers, whereby there is understanding that thieves shall not steal from thieves, rather than the intrinsic wrongness of theft. The essence of their reasoning is predicated on primitive greed which crass individualism characterizes as Darwinism.

When Africana thinkers pay attention to these issues, then the kinds of alliances which misplace the priorities of the leadership to mere intellectual and academic effort, with little or no relevance to praxis, will be discontinued. For now, out of absence of awareness, Africana Marxists may be doing more injury to their cause than they realize; they need to
purge themselves of the unholy alliance between Marxism and their own ideological inadequacies.

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*bible* – Genesis 1-3
*bible* – Matthew 20, 25

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