UBUNTU AND THE CONCEPT OF COSMOPOLITANISM

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Abstract: Based on the ideas of two main representatives of the academic discourse on Ubuntu, Michael O. Eze and Mogobe B. Ramose, the paper shows how the concept of Ubuntu can contribute to transcending conventional concepts of cosmopolitanism. Referring to the concept of Ubuntu, Ramose and Eze criticize 'Western' concepts of cosmopolitanism because they always seem to start from binary oppositions ('I' and 'other'), which must be reconciled. 'Western' cosmopolitanism continues to build on boundaries (nations, cultures, etc.) that constitute communities and exclude the 'other'. Here the boundary remains a place of exclusion. Therefore, it is necessary to conceptualize categories such as 'boundary' and the 'Other' in a different way. Ubuntu as a concept where the human being is essentially a relational being (one who exists in and through relationships) seems to offer an alternative in the sense of a 'critical' (Mignolo, 2002a) or 'emancipatory' cosmopolitanism. (Pieterse, 2006; Ngcoya, 2015).

Key words: cosmopolitanism; ubuntu; emancipatory cosmopolitanism; Mogobe B. Ramose; Michael O. Eze

Cosmopolitanism is an inclusive normative theory that denotes a way of thinking in which all human beings are considered to belong to a single human community, where the same moral standards apply to all humans, and not merely to compatriots or fellow citizens. Boundaries between nations as well as between religious, ethnic, or cultural groups are therefore considered to be morally irrelevant. Thomas Pogge, an influential representative of a cosmopolitan approach to global justice, claims that all cosmopolitan positions are marked by three features: *individualism* (individual human beings are what ultimately matters); *universality* (they matter equally, and nobody is exempted by distance or lack of a shared community from potential demands arising out of the counting of everybody equally); and *generality* (every human being is the ultimate unit of concern for everyone) (Pogge, 1994, p. 89).

The concept is usually traced back to Diogenes of Sinope (c. 412 B.C.) who is said to have answered when asked where he came from, 'I am a citizen of the world (kosmopolitês)'[1], and thus, defined the whole globe—not merely his own birthplace, city,

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[1] Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Book VI, passage 63.

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region, or nation—as his home. This was a ground-breaking concept in his time, when social identity was based on belonging to a certain city-state (*polis*), and it was by no means a mainstream position. For Plato and Aristotle for example, a man has to identify first and foremost as a citizen of a particular *polis* or city. Here cosmopolitanism is regarded as a kind of estrangement from one's own community, culture, and history (cf. Aristotle, *Politics,* book 1; Plato, *Protagoras*). Aristotle even claims that somebody who does not belong to a certain *polis* is not a real or trustworthy citizen. The view that a cosmopolitan is a nomad without a home; someone who regards the *polis* or nation and its norms from a distance; for whom individualism is more important than group membership; for whom collective identities such as the nation, religion, or culture are not pivotal, is still widespread. To date, cosmopolitanism is a contested concept (particularly with regard to issues of social justice), as communitarian theory (Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer) or concepts of liberal thinkers like John Rawls, David Miller or Thomas Nagel clearly show.

The relationship between the individual and the community is also the central point of African authors' criticism of Western cosmopolitan theories. Here the indigenous concept ubuntu is often the basis for a search for an alternative approach to think cosmopolitanism.

In this paper I want to explore the potential of the South African indigenous concept of *ubuntu* for cosmopolitanism. In a first step, the concept of *ubuntu* will be introduced. Based on the ideas of two main representatives of the academic discourse on *ubuntu*, Michael O. Eze and Mogobe B. Ramose, the paper shows how *ubuntu*–as a concept where the human being is essentially a relational being (one who exists in and through relationships)—can contribute to transcending conventional concepts of cosmopolitanism. In a third step, I will discuss *ubuntu* as a cosmopolitan concept with regard to alternative cosmopolitan theories like the 'critical' (Mignolo, 2002a) or 'emancipatory' cosmopolitanism (Pieterse, 2006; Ngcoya, 2015).

Ubuntu

The South African concept of *ubuntu* is currently one of the most popular African indigenous concepts. A fuller understanding of the concept has benefited from increasing discussion and awareness, even outside the African continent, since the 1990s. As is widely known by now, the term *ubuntu* belongs to the Nguni language family in South Africa, but has equivalents in many other African languages, like *utu* in Swahili (for the etymology of *ubuntu* see e.g. Ramose, 1999). However, there is no consensus on precisely what *ubuntu* means. The translations range from 'humanity' and 'charity' to 'common sense' and 'generosity.' Regarding definitions of the concept of *ubuntu*, we find at least three different approaches: *ubuntu* as a human quality, as an ethics or world view, and as a postcolonial ideology.[2] However, all different attempts to reconstruct and conceptualize *ubuntu* agree that it is basically a relational concept. Interdependence and interconnectedness are considered to be the main features of this conception of the world. *Ubuntu* emphasizes that every human being is integrated into a comprehensive network of mutual dependencies and that

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[2] Leonhard Praeg introduces the useful differentiation between ubuntu (a traditional worldview and way of life) and Ubuntu (a postcolonial concept) (Praeg, 2014, p. 11).

the human self exists only in relationship to its surroundings: these relationships are what constitutes the human self. A person can exist only in relation to other persons; the human self can exist only in relationship to its surroundings and these relationships are what the human being is. (Shutte, 2001, p. 23) Or as it is expressed in the often-quoted Zulu-Xhosa aphorism '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'—'A person is a person through other people.' This aphorism points to the fact that each single person is always part of a larger whole, a community, a comprehensive network of mutual dependencies into which he or she is born— starting with the mother–child relationship. This network is considered to be comprehensive because it connects all human beings in one way or another. *Ubuntu* emphasizes exactly this interdependence of human beings. The aphorism underlines the relational character of the concept. Moreover, it points to the fact that human beings (*umuntu*) are always in a process of becoming–'being becoming', as the South African philosopher Mogobe B. Ramose, who explored the concept of *ubuntu* intensively, emphasizes (Ramose, 1999, pp. 36-37). Thus, each single human being is an organic part of the community, and the community is a necessary precondition for every human being.

Or as the Nigerian philosopher Michael O. Eze expresses it concisely:

'A person is a person through other people' strikes an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an 'other' in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the 'other' becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. … humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The 'I am' is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance (Eze, 2010, pp. 190-91).

Thus, *ubuntu* entails a very specific ontological approach to what it means to be human. Here, relations between humans are constitutive, the human being is a relational being.

But the concept goes beyond interpersonal connections. It also points to the close connection of human beings with all other modes of being in the universe. It recognizes 'the interconnection between the natural and supernatural, physical and metaphysical, visible and invisible dimensions of the world. Currently living human and nonhuman beings, ancestors, the yet unborn, and the natural world are interconnected' (Kelbessa, 2011, pp. 569-70).

Taken as an ethical concept, characteristic features of *ubuntu* are toleration and sharing; charity and respect; recognition of the humanity of the other; dignity; concern for the welfare of the other; respect for the rights of minorities; compassion for the other springing from a desire to produce consensus and mutual understanding; a spirit of mutual support and cooperation; hospitality; generosity; and selflessness. According to this view, to be human is to 'affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish relations with them' (Ramose, 1999, pp. 52, 194).

Ubuntu and the concept of cosmopolitanism

In his article 'Transcending cosmopolitanism' (2014) Mogobe B. Ramose discusses *ubuntu* with regard to the concept of cosmopolitanism.[3] First, he starts to point out the following difficulties in concepts of cosmopolitanism:

> The assumption of community in many discussions of cosmopolitanism rests firmly on the ontological presupposition that being is the plenum of opposing entities. The opposing entities would tend towards either mutual aversion or attraction. In the latter case, they would culminate in a synthesis to endure for a while before reversion to the original state of opposition (Ramose, 2014, p. 30).

But the idea of mutual aversion or attraction presupposes–Ramose argues–that in their original state entities are not necessarily related, but exist independently of one another. Historical examples of such an approach reach from Heraclitus to Hobbes to Hegel.[4] For Ramose, such an ontological perspective raises some important questions, e.g. how does being (Dasein) in the state of aversion and separateness survive at all? Or to put it differently, how can the individual survive without being integrated into a community.

Ramose thus problematizes the thesis, implicit in classical cosmopolitanism, that human beings are not necessarily connected to one another. He strongly opposes such a perspective and prefers an ontological point of departure that "recognises motion as the principle of 'being' and conceives of beings as originally interrelated albeit to different degrees" (Ramose, 2014, p. 30).[5] He states:

> According to our preferred ontological perspective, the boundary is not the point of the exclusion of 'the other'. Instead, it is contemporaneously the moment of the reaffirmation of the 'I' and the coupling point of 'the other' and the 'I'. The boundary then underlines the originary relationship of complementarity subsisting between the 'I' and 'the other'. In this way, 'be-ing' constitutes boundary as the recognition of the ineradicable network of complex

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[3] For further attempts to link *ubuntu* and cosmopolitanism, see Davids (2018). On the basis of a field study (for example in Fietas (Pageview, Guateng Province) or District Six (Cape Town), Davids defines 'cosmubuntu' communities as communities (emerging from pre-colonial Ubuntu communities) which comprised different cultural and ethnic groups who shared a common neighbourhood and community before the implementation of the Group Areas Act (1950). They share the following characteristics: heterogeneous in terms of their population; display cultural diversity; operate on the basis of respect, human dignity, and tolerance; show generosity, caring, and compassion; foster a sense of belonging; and are in a state of ever-changing and becoming. He claims that 'cosmubuntu' goes beyond Eurocentric cosmopolitanism (Davids, 2018, p. 28). And see Chielozona Eze (2017) who suggests an 'empathetic cosmopolitanism' on the basis of the concept of *ubuntu*.

[4] I have strong reservations about including Hegel in this list, since Hegel conceptualizes being as becoming and boundaries as separating and connecting at the same time. See *Science of Logic* (1812-1816), where Hegel argues that even though a boundary first gives a static aspect to a being, and that a being thus limited has a definite destiny to be a specific thing, a boundary is also the place where what is to be and what is not to be are shown at the same time. According to this argument, the boundary separates and connects at the same time, and always holds the potential for crossing the boundary (Hegel, 1979, pp. 131-39).

[5] More recently, Ramose's criticism seems to meet also the concept of cosmopolitanism of Benhabib (2006) and Habermas (2001).

relationships between and among beings; the 'I' and 'the other' as the human being and other beings as well (Ramose, 2014, p. 30).

As in the concept of *ubuntu*, Ramose conceptualizes 'be-ing' as a ceaseless state of becoming and fluidity, a permanent and multi-directional movement (Ramose, 2014, p. 33). 'Be-ing' must be thought of as a whole.

For Ramose, African concepts like *ubuntu* of the Nguni people or *uwa* of the Igbo people have the potential to transcend the limits or pitfalls of 'Western' concepts of cosmopolitanism. Here, '[t]he boundary is conceived as a seamless, complex network of entities. It is the ontological moment of conscious recognition of relatedness in the complex, unfolding network of be-ing' (Ramose, 2014, p. 33). Ramose refers to Benezet-Bujo's argument that the ontological meaning of be-ing is interrelatedness, which is often expressed in a statement such as 'I am related, therefore, we are'–a statement which corresponds to John Mbiti's famous and widely quoted statement 'I am because WE are and, since we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti, 1969, p. 108ff.). Mbiti's statement is also the starting point of Ifeanyi Menkiti's well-known article 'Person and Community in African Traditional Thought' (1984), where he describes the 'African'[6] understanding of the relationship between individual and community as organic and the 'Western' understanding as un-organic. In the 'Western view', Menkiti argues, a human being is a single individual, and that singleness is what makes an entity a human being. On the contrary, in the 'African view', a human being is defined only in reference to his or her community, and not by any of his or her physical or psychological characteristics. 'In the African view it is the community which defines the person as person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will, or memory' (Menkiti, 1984, p. 172). In addition, one becomes a person only after a process of incorporation into a community. In African society, this incorporation is a long process of 'social and ritual transformation' to acquire qualities sufficient for personhood (Menkiti, 1984, p. 172). Thus, while in the 'Western' understanding atomic, isolated individuals try to form a community or union, in the 'African' understanding, the pre-existence of a community is the condition of possibility for the single individual (Menkiti, 1984, p. 180).

Ramose's critique of 'Western' concepts of cosmopolitanism seems to be, on the one hand, directed to the basic understanding of the relationship between individual and community, as for example in liberal theories (in particular the social contract theory developed by such thinkers as Thomas Hobbes and John Rawls), where rational individuals in a hypothetical (apolitical and asocial) state come together to found, on the basis of a social contract, a (hopefully just) society—regardless of the fact that each human being is always already born into a certain historically determined community. On the other hand, Ramose's critique also seems to be directed at current forms of cosmopolitanism which reflect attempts to reconcile cosmopolitan ideas with a new form of nationalism. Here, Appiah's 'partial' cosmopolitanism seems to be an example (see Appiah, 2006, pp. xvii and 165). Ramose has strong doubts that such a synthesis between particularistic and universal motivations will be possible.

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[6] Since 'African' and 'Western' are vague terms which are reductive of the inner plurality of Africa and the West (whatever these terms might actually mean), I enclose them in inverted commas.

Michael O. Eze also identifies deficiencies in prevailing concepts of cosmopolitanism. In his article, 'I Am Because You Are: Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Xenophobia' (2017) Eze argues that, while the dominant discourses on cosmopolitanism address such issues as the necessity of inclusive human community and the eradication of geopolitical boundaries, these discussions nevertheless remain elitist (Eze, 2017, p. 86). The dominant forms of cosmopolitanism are elitist because they favour only select groups of our world communities, such as world travellers, or certain lifestyles characterized by the partial integration of different cultural practices, languages or even religions (like Buddhism) into one's life. This concept of cosmopolitanism excludes all those unable to live such a lifestyle and brands them as primitive, ethnocentric, biased, or uninformed (see Eze, 2017, p. 87).

It is precisely the figure of the world traveller that shows the limits of the group of people included in this definition of cosmopolitanism, namely, the citizens of those few industrialized countries who enjoy the freedom to travel unencumbered by the strict visa conditions that limit the movements of eighty percent of the world's citizens. Such cosmopolitanism excludes all who lack access to global capital.[7]

Moreover, such conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism fail to reconcile the relationship between the individual's role as an embedded member of a cultural community and his or her role as a potential global citizen. For this reason, such concepts remain fragmented. Here Eze makes the same point as Ramose, namely that 'Western' conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism lack the insight that human community is the precondition for the existence of an individual human being. In addition, Eze characterizes such concepts as reductive because they rest on the assumption that transcending boundaries is the only acceptable epistemological position. Local knowledge and positions are ignored. As Eze argues, the '[e]radication of boundaries is a persuasive regulative ideal, yet, a claim that falsely assumes equality of opportunity for everyone and ignores practical politics of history and economy of privileges' (Eze, 2017, p. 96). On the opposite end of the spectrum, diametrically opposed to such elitist concepts is the reality of the Third-World migrant, who transcends all borders and adapts to all cultures and languages, as the unseen cosmopolitan. 'Accordingly, where exposure to cultural pluralism and/or traveling becomes a criterion for cosmopolitan citizenship, it is the migrant that possesses that credential' (Eze, 2017, p. 97).

Eze's critique can also be applied to the new concept of Afropolitanism.[8] The Afropolitan—as characterized for example by Selasi and Mbembe—is still a member of

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[7] Pieterse criticises such forms of cosmopolitanism rightly as capitalist or corporate cosmopolitanism of tax havens and free trade zones on the one hand, and consumer cosmopolitanism as the desire to style (see the magazine *Cosmopolitan*) or eat (see Coca Cola) beyond the local on the other hand (Pieterse, 2006, p. 1250).

[8] The concept 'Afropolitanism' was developed in 2005 by the Ghanian/Nigerian writer Taiye Selasi in her article 'Bye-Bye, Babar (Or: What is an Afropolitan?)' as a kind of African counter-concept to 'Western' concepts of cosmopolitanism. Here, she describes a new African diaspora; a broad mix that accepts its diversity: "You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic or two, we understand some indigenous

a particular class, namely the urban African middle class. Not included in this concept are the rural population and the poor people in African mega-cities. Thus, the concept of Afropolitanism is also elitist and reductive.

Eze calls for a new understanding of cosmopolitanism as a concept that is both universal and provincial, that reconciles global citizenship with being rooted in our respective cultural communities. Or as he describes it:

> It is an understanding that reconciles our attachment to the global community in a way that is mobile, discursive and free from subjective entrapment, i.e., we do not have the dilemma of choosing *our own kind over the stranger for even the stranger is a potential relative* (Eze, 2017, p. 98; emphasis in original).

According to Eze, the concept of *ubuntu* can help us conceptualize this type of cosmopolitanism, for *ubuntu* includes the following characteristics: '(i) a duty to recognize others in their unique differences, histories and subjective equations; (ii) unlike the cosmopolitan ethics evolving out of the age of reason, the sense of humanism embodied in *ubuntu* is not only a *recognition of our kind*' (Eze, 2017, p. 100; emphasis original).

While Ramose remarks especially upon the fragmented and static understanding of 'be-ing'[9] reflected in contemporary 'Western' concepts of cosmopolitanism[10], Eze focuses his critique on the universalization of European reason—from the Stoics to the Enlightenment—which was taken as an epistemic yardstick for what constitutes a human being. *Ubuntu* allows the opposite approach, namely to experience and understand that 'the other constitutes an inexhaustible source of our *reason* to be. … Through the human interactive procedures, we become divine beings, that is, self-creating agents of one another' (Eze, 2017, 101). And thus, the 'other' is taken 'as an embedded gift that enriches my humanity' (Eze, 2017, 101). At this point, Eze also refers to John Mbiti's critique, pointing out that it 'indicates an epistemic holism that reconciles the relationship between the individual and the community in a manner of ontological equality.' It means that '*I am* [human] *because you are human (not because you are rational)*' (Eze, 2017, p. 102; emphasis in original). Eze continues:

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tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars…" (Selasi, 2005). Cameroonian historian and philosopher Achille Mbembe (2005) considers the multilingualism of contemporary Africans as one of the signs of a new 'transnational culture', for which he also uses the term 'Afropolitanism'. According to Mbembe, this Afropolitanism finds its expression most clearly in African metropolises such as Johannesburg or Dakar, and is characterized by a culture of mobility, in which tradition and modernity exist parallel to each other, a culture which is open to new things and thus able to thaw frozen African nationalism and nativism.

[9] "The fragmentation of be-ing carries with it the danger of sinking into the ocean of dogmatism and thus blocking the channels for the much needed polylogue among cultures aimed at transcending cosmopolitanism" (Ramose, 2014, p. 34).

[10] And not only concepts of cosmopolitanism, with respect to human rights concepts Ramose argues: 'Western human rights philosophy also departs from the point that the individual human being is a touchstone of value. … The Western human rights philosophy emphasises the idea of the human being as fragmented entity upon whom rights may be pasted on the basis of contingency, whereas the African conception underlines the idea of a human being as a wholeness acquiring rights as such" (Ramose, 1999, p. 151).

> Our contexts may be dissimilar; our history different and our culture antagonistic, yet it is this distinctive, unique and peculiar historicity that constitutes our creative cultural energy. Culture for its part becomes a location of self-transcendence and inclusive admission of the foreigner, including the barbarian. Everyone is equal by nature and not only by law, reason, custom, tradition or convention. The human person and his dignity thereof is what defines the character of our social and political lives (Eze, 2017, p. 102).

Moreover, the human person and his or her dignity do not only define the character of our social and political life, dignity and equality of human persons precede any discussions of rights. Or as Ngcoya puts it, 'Equality, fairness, and justice do not spring from rights, they precede them' (Ngcoya, 2015, p. 254).

Eze and Ramose call for a new understanding of cosmopolitanism that recognizes the different forms of being human, avoids any kind of essentialist reading of culture or community, and underlines our similarities as human beings. Or as Eze puts it: 'It is a view that taps into difference as a source of our shared humanity' (Eze, 2017, p. 86), placing the individual embedded in his or her sociocultural world and the global community. Or to put it differently:

> *Ubuntu* as a cosmopolitan ethics demands fidelity to all humanity; a universal duty to recognize the humanity of others irrespective of culture, tradition or religion. *I am because you are*, is not an advocacy for a homogenous humanity. What *ubuntu* does offer us is a context of intersubjective discovery. It is only when we get to know the other that empathy becomes a possibility; that humanism can be legitimately evoked (Eze, 2017, 105).

Thus, Eze tries to solve the tension between a communitarian understanding of the human being (the belonging to a resp. sociocultural world) and a cosmopolitan or global understanding of the human being (being part of the humanity as such) by suggesting a human image that underlines the plurality and connectedness of human beings as the two sides of a coin that cannot exist independently of each other.

Emancipatory cosmopolitanism

Ramose's and Eze's approach to a new cosmopolitanism based on the concept of *ubuntu* can be thought of as a kind of 'critical' (Mignolo, 2002a) or 'emancipatory' cosmopolitanism (Pieterse, 2006; Ngcoya, 2015). Such an approach overcomes on the one hand the conventional Eurocentrism of dominant forms of cosmopolitanism by including non-European approaches to the concept. Pieterse, for example, criticises 'The strange double life of conventional cosmopolitanism … that while claiming universality it reflects a regional parochial order' (Pieterse, 2006, p. 1252), and demands a new form of cosmopolitanism, an emancipatory cosmopolitanism, which engages with 'alternative cosmovisions beyond Eurocentrism' (Pieterse, 2006, p. 1255)—as an act of epistemic justice in which the contributions of oppressed or marginalised communities to humanity and culture should be resuscitated.

The Argentinian literary scholar and director of the *Center for Global Studies* at Duke University Walter Mignolo, one of the main representatives of the Latin American concept of '*Decoloniality*', underlines even more strongly the need for alternative concepts of

cosmopolitanism, since dominant concepts are inextricably linked to a modern/colonial world system (signifying the interdependence of modernity and coloniality, which have always been simultaneously at play). He coined the term 'critical cosmopolitanism' and defines it as a project 'located in the exteriority[11] and issuing forth from the colonial difference' (Mignolo, 2002a, p. 160). Today, he argues, cosmopolitanism can no longer be articulated form one point of view or within a mono-logic discourse, and certainly not from a view which considers cosmopolitanism as a benevolent form of control. (Mignolo, 2002a, p. 179). Critical cosmopolitanism–as an alternative to globalization or 'cosmopolitanism managed from above' (hegemonic, abstract universal cosmopolitanism)–has to emerge from the various spatial and historical locations of the colonial difference (and not of cultural differences). The racially grounded colonial difference leads to the representation of the 'Other' as inferior and radically different, and hence incorrigibly inferior. Or as Mignolo puts it, colonial difference is first,

> … a consequence of the coloniality of power (in the making of it) and second … an epistemic location beyond right and left as articulated in the second modernity (i.e., liberal, neoliberal; socialism, neosocialism). The world became unthinkable beyond European (and, later, North Atlantic) epistemology. The colonial difference marked the limits of thinking and theorizing, unless modern epistemology (philosophy, social sciences, natural sciences) was exported/ imported to those places where thinking was impossible (because it was folklore, magic, wisdom, and the like) (Mignolo, 2002b, p. 90).

The colonial difference is produced, reproduced, and maintained by global design and determines until today our conception of modernity–as well as of cosmopolitanism. However, the colonial difference is not only the space where the coloniality of power is enacted. It is also the space where subaltern knowledge and where 'border thinking', that is 'the recognition and transformation of the hegemonic imaginary from the perspective of people in subaltern positions' (Mignolo, 2002a, p. 174), takes place, where global designs (globalization) meet local histories and are adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. 'Border thinking'–and the concept of *ubuntu* might well be an example of it–can become a 'tool' of critical cosmopolitanism.

On the other hand, emancipatory cosmopolitanism '… contributes to *rebalancing corporate, political and social globalization* and enables legitimate political institutions and social forces to act as countervailing power and re-regulate corporate globalization and thus transform overall globalization' (Pieterse, 2006, p. 1248; emphasis original).

Emancipatory cosmopolitanism—in the sense of ubuntu—seems to offer some interesting opportunities to re-conceptualize cosmopolitanism. First, it underlines the relational character of human beings and conceptualises the individual human being as transcending cultural traditions, symbolic classifications and identifications, and the structuration of belonging and exclusion particular to the community in which an individual is born. Moreover, it embraces both individuality and universality: while being conscious

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[11] Mignolo understands by exteriority not something "untouched beyond capitalism and modernity, but the outside that is needed by the inside … the borderland seen from the perspective of those 'to be included', as they have no other option" (Mignolo, 2002a, p. 160).

about one's own contextuality or positionality in the world, a cosmopolitan approach based on *ubuntu* looks beyond superficial differences to the essential sameness of human beings. Such cosmopolitanism identifies culture as a rhetorical practice for the provision of common symbolic forms (Geertz, 1973) and not as a thing in itself. Taken in this way, cosmopolitanism is a kind of emancipation that liberates the individual to freely explore the space between what he/she is or could become, on the one hand, and how he/she might wish to join collectivities and lifeworlds on the other. A cosmopolitanism of this kind would not negate differentiation into discrete parts such as nations, ethnicities, religions, castes, or classes, but handle them as secondary, formal, and superficial distinctions.

Second, Ramose's suggestion to conceptualizing 'I' and 'be-ing' as fluid, complex, and undetermined entities, leads to a new understanding of boundaries–namely as places of complementation. Ramose criticizes 'Western' concepts of cosmopolitanism because they always seem to start from binary oppositions ('I' and 'other'), which must be reconciled. Thus, 'Western' cosmopolitanism continues to build on boundaries (nations, cultures, etc.) that constitute communities and exclude the 'Other'. In 'Western' conceptions of cosmopolitanism, the boundary remains a place of exclusion. Therefore, it is necessary to conceptualize 'boundary' differently, namely as a point of connection for complementary relationships. A new conceptualization of such (formal and superficial) boundaries as a link and not as something divisive can be achieved if boundaries are conceptualized as places of complementation, as suggested by Ramose (2014, p. 30) and Eze (2017, p. 99).

And as a third argument, particularly the approach of Eze points to the importance of class differences as well as the colonial difference (in Mignolo's sense) for the re-conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism.

With regard to the definition of cosmopolitanism by Thomas Pogge at the beginning of this paper, the concept of *ubuntu* seems to suggest that a fourth feature of cosmopolitanism has to be added, namely the relational character and essential sameness of human beings. Thus, individual human beings are what ultimately matter; they matter equally; and every human being is the ultimate unit of concern for everyone–because, ultimately, we affirm our humanity by recognizing the humanity of others.

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