Chapter 8

African Spirituality

An approach from intercultural philosophy

In the 1990s there was a hype in the production of encyclopedias on Africa, and in this context Valentin Mudimbe approached me with the question whether I would be willing to write the entry on 'African spirituality' for an encyclopaedia of Africa and the African diaspora which he was editing. Never having used the word 'spirituality' in any of my own writings on African religion so far, and bargaining for time, I asked him what I was to understand by it: time-honoured expressions of historical African religion such as prayers at the village shrine; the wider conceptual context of such expressions, including African views of causality, sorcery, witchcraft, medicine, the order of the visible and invisible world, and such concepts as the person, ancestors, gods, spirits, nature, agency, guilt, responsibility, taboo, evil, not to forget the ordering of time and space in terms of religious meaning; the expressions of world religions in Africa, especially Islam and Christianity; the accommodations between these various domains. Mudimbe's answer was: 'all of the above, and whatever else you wish to bring to the topic'. Though flattered by his request, I never came round to writing the entry: I could not overcome the fear of exposing myself as ignorant of the essence of African religion. Meanwhile that fear has been allayed somewhat, and the present Chapter is my belated response to Mudimbe's request.
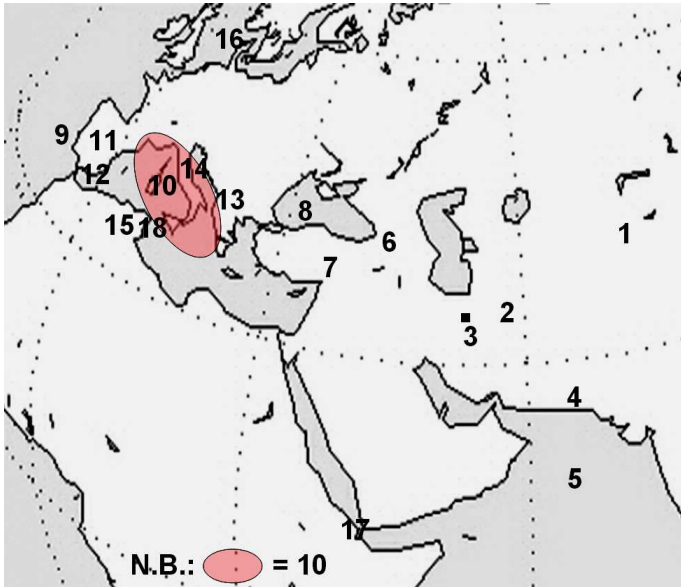
8.1. Introduction

Not before Mudimbe's request reached me, I had brought together in one website a considerable number of my papers on African religion as written over the years, also in preparation for a book (it has not yet materialised) largely to consist of the same material.[292] This has made me reflect on the very topic Mudimbe invited me in vain to write on.

The readily available material from the website contains only some fifteen of the myriad writings on African spirituality which are in existence, and in that respect there is no special reason to take these specific writings as our point of departure. Yet I will do so, for the following reason: as far as these writings are concerned, I have first-hand knowledge of the specific empirical and existential conditions under which the statements they contain came into being, and of the personal evolution of the author who made these statements. Implicitly this means that I appeal to introspection as one of my sources of knowledge. While a time-honoured tool in the history of philosophy (think *e.g.* of Socrates' δαίμόνιον *daimonion* and Descartes' *'cogito ergo sum'*), we are only too well aware of the dangers of introspection (Dalmiya 1993; Shoemaker 1986). The public representation of self in what may be alleged to be pure introspection inevitably contains elements of performativity, selection, structuring, and is likely to be imbued with elements of transference reflecting the introspecting author's subconscious conflicts and desires. Incidentally, the same criticism (capability of being warped by transference) applies, in varying degrees which have hardly been investigated, to all other philosophical and social scientific statements. Be this as it may, I rely on introspection only implicitly in the present argument: mainly I will acknowledge my personal recollection of the specific social processes of my own gaining knowledge, or ignorance, of African spirituality.

What I wish to do is pose a number of obvious and straightforward questions, and attempt to give very provisional answers to them, in order to initiate further discussion on these points:

- Is there a specifically African spirituality?
- Can we know African spirituality?
- What specific themes may be discerned in African spirituality?
- To what extent is African spirituality a process of boundary production and boundary crossing at the same time?
- Within these boundaries, what is being produced: group sociability, the individual self, or both?
- How can we negotiate the tension between local practice and global description of African spirituality?

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[292] http://www.shikanda.net/african_religion/index.htm .

1. Perke = Turan
2. Phrygia Magna = Iberia I (Eastern Iberia)
3. *Afrikya*, Median metropole
4. Abhira / Abhiria = Ophir = *Africa*
5. Indian Punt Sea = Indian Ocean
6. Hesperia I = Iberia II = Western Iberia
7. Phrygia / Phrygians / Briges (Verḫana, Verḫ, Virḫ, < *Ivirk) = Ascania, Ascanians, Askanioi = Aškenaz
8. Axinus Pontus = Black Sea

9. Hesperia II = Iberia III (west-ernmost of Hesperian Iberia) = Lusitania = Ophiussa
10. (shaded field) Tyrrhenians
11. Iberi people
12. Perkes river = Baetis = Guadalquivir
13. Perke = Thracia
14. Aborigines
15. *Afri / Africani / Africa (Africa Minor)*
16. Perke / Aperka / *Aphrika* (North Sea and Baltic Lands)

17. Havila/Hevila = Ḥaver = *Africa = Iphrika* = Ophiussa (NB: Havila, Libya, Punt more extensively treated elsewhere in Karst 1931 / van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: *passim*; van Binsbergen in press (e))
18. Erythia / Thetis/ Elissa / Ophiussa *etc.*

Once Karst (1931) has brought all these elements together, it is not difficult for us to spell out the phonological structure: [optional vowel]+[p/b/f/v/Ϝ]+[r/l]+[i/e] + [k/g], which underlies both *Africa* (also as italicised in the above list), *Phrygia* and *Perke*, and is close to *Hiberia* and even to *Havila* (<*Havirḫa ?), *Pelasgi* (Pelasgians), *Belgae* (Belgians) and *Frisii* (Frisians). Re-markably, this phonological structure is reminiscent of the root *-prg / prg / prd*, 'scatter, leop-ard-skin' with nearly global distribution (van Binsbergen 2003k, 2004d, 2009a, in press (h)), and the Afroasiatic root *p-l-k* / *f-l-k* (Hebrew: 'weaving'; Arabic: 'distaff'); both roots also have cosmological connotations: 'star-spangled sky', and 'celestial axis'; they may go back to the proto-Semitic 1788 *ḵʷVlḵʷVl*, 'spin', without clear *proto-Afroasiatic let alone *Borean antecedent (Starostin & Starostin 1998-2008, 'Semitic etymology').

Fig. 8.1. The name Africa among multiple geographical locations bearing identical or cognate place names in ancient geographies.

8.2. Is there a specifically African spirituality?

It is almost impossible to separate this question from the next one, concerning the epistemology of African spirituality. However, we have to start somewhere, and it may be best to start where the controversies and the politics of intercultural knowledge production are most in evidence. The existence of a massive body of writing specifically on African religion, and the institutionalisation of this field in terms of academic journals, professorial chairs, scholarly institutions, at least one world-wide scholarly association, has helped to make the existence of specifically African spirituality (or religion, I will not engage in terminological debate here; *cf*. Chapter 7, above) into at least a globally recognised *social fact*. But to recognise the nature of social facts as being socially produced, at the same time raises the question of unreality, virtuality, performativity, existence by appearance only. If we argue that ethnicity is socially produced, we argue at the same time for the deconstruction of ethnic identity claims even if social actors (including we ourselves as social actors – we make identity claims all the time, too) present their claims as inescapable, historically determined, absolute, unequivocal.[293] Something similar has been argued for culture.[294] Is it now the turn for African spirituality to undergo the same deconstructive treatment?

African spirituality features prominently in the increasingly vocal expressions by intellectuals, political and ethnic leaders, and opinion-makers who identify as African and / or who can claim recent[295] African descent. Of late such discussions have concentrated around the Afrocentrist movement[296] for which I have

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[293] van Binsbergen 1992a, 1999a / 2002 / 2003b: ch. 15.

[294] van Binsbergen 1992b, 1994b, 1995a, 2003b. Davidson (1986) even made a similar claim for languages, which is relevant in this context since language is among the main indicators of cultural and ethnic identity:.

[295] 'Recent' is here taken to mean: 'having ancestors who lived in the African continent during historical times, and specifically during the second millennium of the common era'. There is no doubt whatsoever that the entire human species emerged in the African continent a few million years ago. There is moreover increasing consensus among geneticists and palaeoanthropologists, based on massive and ever accumulating evidence, that Anatomically Modern Humans (the subspecies *Homo sapiens sapiens*) emerged in the African continent about 200,000 years ago, and from there brought language, symbolic thought, representational art, the use of paint *etc*. to the other continents in the course of an Exodus which started c. 80 ka BP. *Cf*. Roebroeks 1995: 175; Gamble 1993.

[296] On Afrocentrism, *cf*. the most influential and vocal statement: Asante 1990; and the (largely critical) secondary literature with extensive bibliographies: Berlinerblau 1999; Howe 1999 / 1998; Fauvelle-Aymar *et al*. 2000; and the discussion on Afrocentrism in *Politique africaine*, November 2000, to which I contributed a critique of Howe (van Binsbergen 2000b; now in a much expanded final version van Binsbergen 2011c, while I am also a contributor (rather to my regret because the book turned out to be onsidedly against Afrocentrism; *cf*. Obenga 2001 to

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great sympathy. Here dilemmas arise. One could either stress[297]

1. as an antidote to common but pernicious essentialisation, the fact that the concept of 'Africa' is a fairly recent geopolitical construct[298] and therefore is unlikely to correspond to any ontological reality informing, and mediated through, spiritual expressions some of which (like royal cults, ancestral cults, cults of the land) can be demonstrated (*cf.* van Binsbergen 1981b) to have existed for centuries if not millennia on the soil of the African continent. By taking this view one may have long-term historical reality on one's side, but at the same time one gives the impression of seeking to rob those who identify with 'Africa' from their most cherished possession, their most central identity.

Or, alternatively, one may

2. affirm that there is something uniquely African, not just in sheer terms of geographical location or provenance but also in substance, thus playing into the cards of the Afrocentrists and similar con-sciousness-raising forms of intellectual mobilisation. But then one must be prepared to run the risk of oversimplification, seeing one 'African spirituality' where in fact there are myriad different African spiritual expressions, some as far apart as:

3. the cult of royal ancestors in West Africa under the Akan cultural orientation, and

4. the ecstatic veneration of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal Southern African churches;

or

5. the veneration of land spirits in the somewhat thin Islamic trapping of local saints in North Africa, and

6. the ecstatic cults of affliction associated with misfortune, a unique personal spiritual quest, and the circulation of persons and com-modities across vast distances of space, as in the South Central and Southern African *Ngoma* complex;

Fauvelle-Aymar *et al.* 2000.

[297] As I, for one, did in: van Binsbergen 1997c – now reprinted in my *Black Athena Comes of Age* (van Binsbergen 2011e).

[298] Duplicated in use like many such placenames (Libya, Havila *etc.*; *cf.* Karst 1931; Woudhuizen 2005; van Binsbergen, in press (e); van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: ch. 2; and Fig. 8.1 above, based on these references) *Afrik- / Ifrik-* was a place name applied to parts of both South and West Asia, and North Africa. In Graeco-Roman Antiquity, when larger parts of the continent were known as Libya or Ethiopia, Africa was primarily the name of modern Tunisia. The extension of the name Africa to the entire continent, and the recognition that there was such a continent, derived from Late Medieval and Early Modern times, 15-16th century CE, and is well documented on the numerous geographical maps from that period.

or

7. the meticulous cultivation of female domesticity and sexuality in South Central African girl's initiation cults, and

8. the annual cult of the descent (from heaven to earth) of the Cassara demiurge, revenger and cleanser of witchcraft, in westernmost West Africa.

These examples, all within the range of my own African religious research in over three decades, may be multiplied *ad libidum*.

If many colleagues clamour to subsume these varieties of spiritual expression under a common label, as 'African', it is not so much because these expressions are situated in the African continental land mass, or manifestly pertain to a recognisable shared tradition, but largely because all of them may be cited to represent forms of local identity and symbolic production on the part of people whose image of dignity, whose image of spiritual and intellectual capability and autonomy, has been eroded in recent centuries of a North Atlantic mercantile, colonial and post colonial hegemonic assault. 'African' in my opinion primarily invokes, not a common origin not shared with 'non-African' or 'non-Africans', nor a common structure, form or content, but the communality residing in the determination to confront and overcome such hegemonic subordination.

It is especially important to realise that 'African', when applied to elements of cultural production, usually denotes items which are neither originally African, nor exclusively confined to the African continent. Elsewhere I have extensively argued how many cultural traits which today are considered the central characteristics and achievements of African cultures, have demonstrably a non-African origin, and a global distribution pattern which extends far beyond Africa.[299] This is not in the least a disqualification of Africa, for exactly the same argument, and even more so, may be made for so-called European characteristics and achievements, including Christianity and modern science. It is only a reminder that broad continental categories are part of geopolitics, of ideology and identity construction, rather than of detached analytic thought. There is a famous passage in Linton's (1936) *Study of Man* in which he describes the morning ritual of the average modern inhabitant of the North Atlantic region: from the slippers he puts on his feet to the god to whom he prays, the cultural items involved in that process have a heterogeneous and global provenance, most of them hailing from outside Europe.

The cultural and intellectual achievements commonly claimed as exclusive to the European continent, are a concoction of transcultural intercontinental borrowings such as one may only expect in a small peninsula attached to the Asian land mass and due east of the African land mass, thrice the size of Europe.

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[299] van Binsbergen 1999c, van Binsbergen 1997 / 2011e.

What makes things European to be European, and things African to be African, for that matter, is the *transformative localisation* after diffusion.[300] Transformative localisation gave rise to unmistakably, uniquely and genially Greek myths, philosophy, mathematics, politics, although virtually all the ingredients of these domains of Greek achievement had been borrowed from Phoenicia, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Thracia, and the Danube lands – while some had even much wider distribution in the Upper Palaeolithic and Bronze Age (van Binsbergen 2012d. And a similar argument could be made for many splendid kingdoms and cultures of Africa. If we accept that 'African' today is primarily a political category reflecting the desire to assert self-identity and dignity in the face of subjugation and humiliation under North Atlantic hegemony, then 'African spirituality' can no longer be defined, naïvely, as a particular way in which the inhabitants of the African continent go about their time-honoured religion, today, and in presumed continuity, to a greater or lesser extent, with the religious patterns such as these existed before European colonial conquest. We know that 'African' is a meaningless category except in contrast with the 'non-African' implied in the term, and implicated in a particular political history of hegemony *vis-à-vis* what is so-called 'African'. As befits the place of origin of mankind, in the African continent the range of variation in somatic, cultural and religious traits is one of the widest in the world. We cannot define Africans by reference to that variety. What makes Africans Africans is not that they tend to have heavily pigmented skins and woolly curly hair covering their heads (this does not apply to all people residing in the African continent, and moreover it does apply to many people outside the African continent, including many not of recent African descent, such as the original – but still Anatomically Modern Humans – inhabitants of Southern India, Melanesia, New Guinea and Australia), but that they have shared in the experience of exclusion and subjugation under the conditions of recent intercontinental political, military and economic history. In asking the question as to the nature of African spirituality, we are no longer primarily interested in the ways in which 'Africans', of all people, use the concepts of spirit, and the actions of prayer, sacrifice, and ritual, to endow their world with meaning, order, and intent, as if things African constitute their entire world. African spirituality can only be a political category, which seeks to define a local spirituality (better probably: a locality of the spirit) in the face of the threats, lures and inroads of global processes beyond the local.

> *'African spirituality', then, is a scenario of tension between local and outside, utilising spiritual means (the production, social enactment, and ritual transformation, of symbols by a group which constitutes itself in that very process) in order to try and resolve that tension.*

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[300] On this key concept for present-day 'modified' (to adopt Martin Bernal's term) diffusionist approaches, *cf.* van Binsbergen 1997c / 2011e: 35 *f.*, and *passim*.

In the last analysis, African spirituality is not a fixed collection of such spiritual means ('spiritual technologies') which might be labelled specifically 'African' if that epithet is to denote geographical provenance. These means are extremely varied, as we have seen. And in many cases they have been imported intercontinentally from outside Africa. These cases probably include some varieties of spirit possession,[301] and certainly such world religions as Islam and Christianity, -- these three forms of African spirituality together already sum up by far the major religious expressions on the African continent today.

The latter does not mean that these three forms of African spirituality are inherently un-African and alien to the *longue durée* of African cultural history. Spirit possession is increasingly agreed to constitute a transformation, in the lasts few millennia, of the religion of Palaeolithic hunters whose religious expression has been world-wide mediated (often in shamanistic forms iconographically marked by deer motifs[302] and circle-dot motives (Segy 1953), which passed through Mesopotamia and the Eastern Mediterranean basin in the second millennium BCE) in the particular form it took in the northern half of Eurasia by the onset of the Neolithic. It is likely that this North and Central Eurasian spiritual expression was considerably indebted to the emergence of art, symbolic thought, and language among Anatomically Modern Humans in Africa from 200,000 BP onwards.[303] Yet African cults of possession and mediumship seem to have derived primarily from a common Old World stock emanating from North and Central Eurasia, and not so much from the directly intra-African descendent forms of the Later Palaeolithic. Less than 2 ka BP, both Islam and Christianity emerged in a Semitic-speaking cultural environment which was not only geographically close to Africa, but towards whose genesis African influences have been highly important:[304] Mesopotamian influ-

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[301] Eliade 1968 / 1951; Lommel 1967; Lewis-Williams 1992; Halifax 1980; Bourgignon 1968; Winkelman 1986; Goodman 1990; Ginzburg 1992 / 1991 / 1989; Campbell 1990; van Binsbergen 1981; Alpers 1984. There scholars tend to agree that spirit possession did not originate in Africa but entered the continent in recent millennia. Frobenius 1954: 295 *f.* even presents a map (redrawn here as Fig. 8.2, a few pages down) where a handful of varieties of spirit possession make inroads from Asia into Africa. It is only after I have explored exctatic cults on the eastern shores of the Indian Ocean (Sri Lanka and Indonesia) that I have begun to entertain the possibility that, with the forced maritime migration of Africans in the context of the Asian and European slave trade, the cults found in South and South East Asia (as well as, for instance, the boardgames there, especially mankala) could have been modelled on African prototypes, after all.

[302] Rostovtsev 1929; Bunker *et al.* 197; Cammann 1958.

[303] Anati 1999 / 1995; Anati 1986: fig. 5-51; Wendt 1976; Gamble 1993, with very extensive bibliography.

[304] To the factors adduced in the remainder of this paragraph, may be added less conspicuous traits reminiscent of sub-Saharan Africa: the attestation of proto-Bantu lexical items (such as

ences on ancient Judaism have been stressed by scholarship from the late nine-teenth century CE,[305] but it is only in recent decades that the great influence of Ancient Egypt on that seminal world religion is widely admitted and studied in detail;[306] by the same token, it is increasingly clear that the cradle of the Semitic languages is to be sought (*cf.* Militarev 1996) in North-East Africa (where even today the wider linguistic super-family of Afroasiatic has its greatest typological variety), and that many of the basic orientations of the Semitic civilisations of Western Asia may have parallels if not origins in the African continent.

To try and define the conditions under which the process of the creation of locality in the face of a confusing and identity-destroying outside world takes place, is the main challenge of cultural globalisation studies today.[307] Also in some of my own writings, typically including those not emphatically appearing under the heading of African religious studies, this process has been ex-plored.[308] Invariably, the process hinges on the creation of a sense of commu-nity which involves the installation, both conceptually (in shared language) and actionally (through control of the flow of people and commodities) of bounda-ries defining 'us' (a 'we' into which the acting and reasoning 'I' inserts herself / himself) as against 'them'. Without such boundaries, no spirituality, yet, as we shall see, the very working of spirituality is to both affirm and transgress these boundaries at the same time -- so that *ultimately, African spirituality is about both the affirmation of a South identity based on a particular historical experi-ence, and the dissolution of that identity into an even wider, global world*.


Jabbok and *Canaan*) in Bronze-Age West Asia, the parcelling-up of the landscape in spirit prov-inces and river provinces (*cf.* Jacob's wrestling with the Jabbok's stream god / angel / God in *Genesis* 32:22 *f.*) with both in the Ancient Near East, Egypt and in sub-Saharan Africa in historic times, *etc.* Under my Pelasgian Hypothesis, and by analogy with the global distribution patterns of the spiked-wheel trap, the mytheme of the unilateral mythical figure, mankala and geoman-tic divination, I am inclined to consider these surprising data concerning 'uninvited guests' as indications, not so much of African intrusion into West Asia, but the other way around, of 'proto-African' spread from West Asia into sub-Saharan Africa at the end of the Bronze Age.

[305] *E.g.* Rogers 1912; Pinches 1893 (of course totally obsolete now, but that is not the point). More recent standard works on this topic include: Heidel 1963 / 1949; Pritchard 1950 (many times reprinted); Kitchen 1966; Craigie 1983.

[306] Redford 1992; Williams 1971; Assmann 1996; and especially the comprehensive project un-dertaken by M. Görg, editor of the series *Fontes Atque Pontes*: *Reihe Ägypten und Altes Testa-ment* (Wiesbaden), *e.g.* Görg 1977, *cf.* 1997.

[307] Appadurai 1995; Meyer & Geschiere 1998; Fardon *et al.* 1999; de Jong 2001; van Binsbergen 1996, reprinted here as Chapter 1.

[308] van Binsbergen 1991b (now being reprinted in in the press (a)), van Binsbergen 1997d (re-printed in the present volume as Chapter 1), 1998a, 2001c, van Binsbergen 2000d, 1994b.
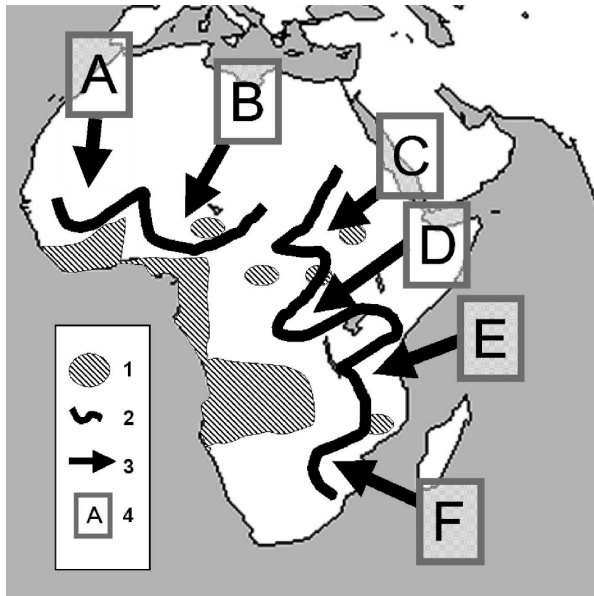
A. Jegu   B. Bori   C. Zar   D. Mandva   E. Pepo   F. Shave

1. Main areas of figurative and plastic arts in Africa (these arts thus appear as alternatives to the inroads of shamanism)
2. Frontier of advance of ecstatic cults
3. Inroads of shamanism
4. specific ecstatic cults in historical times (the Shave cult (the main cult of affliction in Zimbabwe) and the (M)Pepo cult are also found in Western Zambia)

Fig. 8.2. Map rendering Frobenius' ideas (1954 / 1933, Fig. 43, pp. 295 *f.*) concerning the inroads of named shamanistic cults.

8.3. Epistemology: Can we know African spirituality?

The above positioning of African spirituality has deliberately deprived the concept from most of its entrenchedly parochial and mystical implications. If the creation of community through symbols is a social process aiming at selective and situational inclusion and exclusion through conceptual and actional means, and if the process is not limited to a specific selection of cultural materials supposed to intrinsically constitute 'African spirituality', then the vast majority of people identifying as 'Africans' would at most times be excluded from the creation of community undertaken by other 'Africans' in a specific context of space, time and organisation.

K. Spirituality among the Zambian Nkoya. For instance, a number of spiritual complexes, including one revolving on the veneration of dead kings, another on girl's initiation and the spirit of menstruation and maturation named Kanga, another on commoner villagers' ancestral spirits, yet another on spirits of the wild as venerated in cults of affliction and in the guilds of hunters and healers, together make up the spiritual life world of the present-day Nkoya people.[309] This statement needs to be qualified in view of the fact that many who today identify as Nkoya, including the group's dominant ethnic brokers and elite, have undergone considerable Christian influence and would primarily identify as Christians of various denominations notably the Evangelical Church of Zambia, Roman Catholicism, and recent varieties of Pentecostalism. Moreover, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE, Islamic Swahili long-distance traders penetrated into the land of Nkoya and left some slight cultural traces there.[310]

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[309] van Binsbergen 1981; 1992, 2011a, and in press (a), 1992b; van Binsbergen & Geschiere 1985a, with a long section specifically on religion.

[310]   KK. Cultural impact of 18-19ᵀʰ-c. CE Swahili traders among the Nkoya. In the labyrinth of transregional influences upon which Nkoya culture turns out to be build, specifically Swahili mercantile traces are not easy to identify. These traders spoke a Bantu language with considerable Arabic admixture in the lexicon, dressed in Arabian style, possessed fire-arms and swords, moved in heavily armed caravans, and confessed a fairly unadulterated version of Islam. Their impact on dress style, language, and Islamic spirituality must have been minimal, for nothing of it remains in material culture, speech and oral traditions – whereas South Asian elements are still abundantly manifest among the Nkoya (van Binsbergen 2012g, 2012e, 2012c, in press (a)) although they hail from a far remoter past. The occasional dislike of pig meat might have to do with these Islamic traders, but it is (like circumcision) a trait widely found among Bantu speakers, and is probably very much older than the 18ᵗʰ c. CE. As slavers the Swahili traders did not particularly come to represent a local reference group or cultural ideal, yet they created a context in which the close kin ties among the Nkoya (which strongly discourage verbal and physical violence within families and breed a fascination and reliance on occult violence), obtained an alternative in the sense that, with this opening to the world market, close kinsmen (especially mother's brothers) could now callously trick and sell their kin (especially sister's daughters) into slavery – bribing the bereft mothers (female royals, often) with otherwise unattainable luxury goods. The proceeds from such sales are still remembered and, to a limited extent, still in circulation: cast iron cooking pots, antiquarian guns, very large beads, calico. The beads and textiles installed themselves as indispensable items in female puberty rites, during which a large bead is inserted into the girl's vagina to test its enduring muscular strength, and the girl's hips are lavishly adorned with thick layers of cloth in order to imitate a mature womanly appearance. Meanwhile the shocking commercialisation of kin ties enhanced the important contradiction between commoners and their productive villagers, and royals with their parasitic capital villages (van Binsbergen 1993c / 2003 j, 1992b, 2012a). There must have been contacts with the Indian Ocean coast prior to the advent of the Swahili traders sometime in the 18ᵗʰ century CE; *Conus* shell bottom (*mpande*) worn as regalia testify to this. Not among the Nkoya proper, but among the Barotse (whose capital attracted much trade in the 19ᵗʰ c. CE, as well as missionary activity), the geomantic four-tablet oracle (for attestation see van Binsbergen 2012d: Fig. 8.4, p. 269) may have appeared in about the same period as the Swahili – and since this form of divination was invented and introduced to Africa in an Islamic context, it is possible that the traders were responsible for its regional introduction; Arabs at the court of Monomotapa, Zimbabwe, in the 16ᵗʰ c. CE, are reported to have wielded such tablets there (dos Santos 1901). Round about the same time as the Swahili traders amng the Nkoya, cults of affliction appeared as a new, morally neutral discourse on illness and misfortune; and since these cults were reputed to have come from the Indian Ocean coast (where they are well attested; *cf.* Alpers 1984; Lam-

> *All these complexes define insiders and outsiders in their own right, to such an extent that most Nkoya people today could be said to be outsiders to most of what in some collective dream of Nkoyaness would be summed up as the basic constituent features of the Nkoya spiritual world!* All Nkoya men are in principle excluded from participation in, and knowledge of, the world of female initiation; women and all male non-initiate hunters are excluded from the hunters' guild's cults except from the most public performances of its dances and songs, and so on. Over the past decades, my research on identity, culture and globalisation in Zambia has concentrated on the annual Kazanga festival,[311] the main rural outcome of a process of ethnicisation by elite urban-based Nkoya in the 1980s. The central feature of this festival is that elements from all these spiritual domains (with the exception of Christianity, which however contributes the festival's opening prayer and the canons of decency governing dancers' clothing and bodily movements) are pressed into service in the two-day's repertoire of the festival. The effect is that thus all people attending the festival

>> (whose globally-derived format (including a formal programme of events, the participation of more than one royal chiefs seated together (in a terrible infringement of traditional cosmology), the (obviously merely performative) re-enactment of girl's initiation dances by young women who have already been initiated, the use of a public address system, the opening prayer and national anthem, the careful orchestration of dancing movements by dancers who are uniformly dressed and who receive payment for their activities, *etc. etc.*) is entirely *non-loca*l,)

> are forced into a performative, vicarious insidership, by partaking of a recycled form of spirituality devoid of its localising exclusivity. Here boundaries are crossed and dissolved, and the most amazing thing is that -- as I argued at greater length elsewhere -- the Nkoya people involved do not seem to notice the difference between the original spiritual dynamics, and its transformation and routinisation in the Kazanga context. Or rather, if they notice the difference they appreciate the modern, virtualised form even more than the original village forms. However, one might also argue that it is only by sleight-of-hand that the illusion of a more extensive insidership is created here whereas in fact the essence of the virtualisation at hand is that all people involved, also the original insiders, are turned into outsiders, banned from the domain where the original spiritual scenario[312] could be seen to be effective.

When such transformations of inside participation and outside contemplation and exclusion exist, already within one cultural an linguistic community with a small window on the wider, ultimately global world, we should be very careful with claims as to the sharing or not sharing of the spirituality involved. *Central to my argument is that African spirituality consists in a political scenario, and that in that context the minutiae of contents of a specific cultural repertoire, and a specific bio-*

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bek 1981), and are well attunbed to the world of long-distance trade (van Binsbergen 1981b), they might have been brought by the traders. Yet the contacts between the villagers and the traders were superficial and single-stranded, and I cannot see how under such circumstances a totally new cosmological conception can be successfully mediated.

[311] van Binsbergen 1992a, 1999f. Further discussions of the Kazanga festival in my argument on *virtuality* (reprinted in the present volume as Chapter 1), and in van Binsbergen 2000d.

[312] Such as was fully accessible to me during prolonged field-work in the 1970s, when the Nkoya pre-festival, pre-virtualised musical and dancing repertoire was still in place and informed rituals and celebrations often on a weekly basis.

logically or socially underpinned birth-right, are largely or even totally irrelevant.

This may be a difficult position to accept for cultural essentialists including many Afrocentrists. Yet it is a position which I have extensively elaborated and which subsumes my intellectual career (van Binsbergen 1999a / 2003b). It is the position in which I claim to be a Dutchman, a professor of intercultural philosophy, a Southern African *sangoma*, and an adoptive member of a Nkoya royal family, all at the same time.

In the light of the *constructed* nature of any domain surrounded by *the boundaries that spirituality both creates and transgresses*, any spiritual domain, African or otherwise, is by definition porous and penetrable -- in fact, it *invites* being entered, but *at a cost* defined by the spiritual boundaries surrounding it.

That cost is both interactional and conceptual. An exploration of this cost amounts to defining the place and structure of anthropological field-work as a technique of intercultural knowledge production – such as we have somewhat explored in the first Part of this book; it is here that the introspection mentioned in the introductory Section of the Chapter comes in. Without engaging with the insiders along the locally defined lines of etiquette, implied meanings, shared local secrets, it is impossible to attain and to claim insidership. Without engaging with the linguistic and conceptual bases of such communality as the insiders create by means of their spirituality, it is impossible to achieve insidership in their midst. Such insidership is a social process also in this sense that it cannot just be claimed by the person aspiring it; quite to the contrary, it has to be extended, recognised and affirmed by those who are already insiders, and who as such are the rightful owners of the spiritual domain in question. These are complex communicaticve and interactional processes indeed. Not only the original outsider such as the anthropologist seeking to enter from a background which was initially far removed from that of the earlier insiders, but also these insiders themselves in their process of affirming themselves as insiders, have to struggle with massive problems of acquisition of cognitive knowledge, language skills, details of organisational, mythical, theological and ritual nature. Their credentials as insiders are socially and perceptively mediated, and as such contain a considerable element of performativity, which in principle stands in tension *vis-à-vis* actual spiritual knowledge and attitudes, for in the public production and perception of the latter a non-performative existential authenticity tends to be taken for granted. Also the initial outsider seeking to become insider must perform in order to affirm her or his eligibility as insider, and this adds a layer of potential insincerity to all claims of intimate spiritual knowledge of secluded local domains. At the same time it adds an indispensable test of the field-worker's capability of participation, and of learning through participation – the principal sanctions being ridicule and exclusion.

Yet, despite all these qualifications, I can only affirm that, yes, the very many distinct domains of locality created by African spiritualities are as knowable to

the initial outsider as they are to the established insiders.[313] The difference is one of degree and not of kind. Paramount is the political scenario of insertion, not the immutable facts of an allegedly fixed cultural repertoire or birth-right; least of all a congenital predisposition to acquire and appreciate a specific, reified cultural repertoire – as essentialising racists, including racist variants of Afrocentrism, would affirm.

Meanwhile knowing is not the same as revealing, and an entirely new problematic arises when one considers the problem of how much or how little the outsider having become insider in a specific domain of African spirituality, ijn other words, to what extent the outsider turned insider is capable of revealing (notably in ethnographic texts and films) the knowledge she has gained, to the outside world, globally, and in principle in a globally understood international language. Here at least three problems loom large:

- Can everything, especially everything spiritual, be expressed in language? The answer is inevitably: no, of course not (Quine 1960).

- Can everything, especially everything spiritual, be transferred from the specific domain of one language to that of another language? Here the answer is: yes, to a considerable extent, but not totally, *cf*. Quine's principle of the indeterminacy of translation).[314]

- Can one mediate inside knowledge to outsiders without betraying the trust of fellow-insiders? Here the answer is: that depends on the extent to which one allows the process of reporting to be governed by the agency of these fellow-insiders -- if that extent is minimal one's reporting is downright betrayal and intellectual raiding in the worst tradition of hegemonic anthropology; but it is not impossible to mobilise the earlier insiders' agency, for many insiders today welcome global mediation of their identity, and therefore may help to define the forms in which they wish to see their own spiritual insidership mediated.[315]

8.4. Themes in African spirituality

I have claimed that in principle African spirituality is a political scenario devoid

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[313] Even born members of a society are not born insiders in their culture, but spend most of their youth to *become* insiders, while there remain domains to which very few become insiders at all, often aften a life-long preparatory process.

[314] Hookway 1993 / 1992; Wright 1999; Quine 1970, 1960.

[315] *Cf*. van Binsbergen 1984, reprinted in 2003b: ch. 2. An extensive attempt to create intercultural intersubjectivity in the rendering of ethnographic knowledge is described in: van Binsbergen 1992: chs 2 and 3.

of specific cultural contents. In actual fact, however, the range of variation in the cultural material that has gone into the myriad specific constructions of African spirituality, although wide, is not entirely unlimited.

Let me give an example. In 1981, when visiting the Catío region, Southern Guinea-Bissau, for the first time in my life, I was guided by a hospitable new roadside acquaintance into his village, where I could blindly point out the village shrine and improvise meaningfully on its social and spiritual significance, without having acquired any specific local knowledge (at the time I did not yet even speak the local *lingua franca*, Creole) but merely on the basis of having extensively participated in village shrine ritual in South Central Africa, at a distance of 5,000 km across the continent, and having written comparative accounts of shrines in South Central and Northern Africa.[316] The same applies to spirit possession, to whose South Central African forms (and even, as I found in recent years, on whose South Asian and South East Asian forms in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia) I could relate on the basis of my earlier research into similar phenomena in North Africa and South Central Africa.[317] The forms of kinship ritual and royal ritual in West Africa and South Central Africa are amazingly reminiscent of each other, and I am gradually beginning to understand the historical reasons for this, especially the diffusion (taken for granted in the first half of the twentieth century CE, and ridiculed in the second half) of royal themes from Ancient Egypt – in addition to mediation of Mesopotamian and South Asian traits mediated (like many Egyptian elements) via Ethiopia.[318] The same similarity exists in the field of divination methods, albeit that here the underlying common source is not Ancient Egypt but late first-millennium CE Middle-Eastern Islam in whose magical sciences the cosmology of a transformative cycle of elements breaks through, which was once widespread throughout the Old World (*e.g.* in the form of Chinese *I Ching*), also reached the New World, [319] and ultimately produced, as an mutative offshoots, the worldview of the Presocratic philosophers.[320] It would be easy to spell out these themes and communalities more fully and trace their transcontinental connections, but (however much my own empirical research since 2000 CE ha been in this direction, for our present intercultural-philosophical argument they are not essential; what is more, they would only detract us.

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[316] van Binsbergen 1976a, 1979a, 1981b: ch. 3, pp. 100-134.

[317] van Binsbergen 1981b; van Binsbergen 1985, 1980a, forthcoming, and 1988b (a novel I wrote on the original field-work in North Africa).

[318] *Cf.* van Binsbergen 2011c, in press (a), in press (b).

[319] The latter applies *e.g.* to cat's cradles (games consisting of the manual manipulation of a tied string), certain board-games, and the form of the Southern African divination tablets, which have amazingly close parallels among the North American indigenous population; *cf.* Culin 1975.

[320] van Binsbergen, 1997c / 2011e, 1994a, van Binsbergen 1996b (reprinted in the rpesent volume as Chapter 14), 1995c, 1996c, 1996a; van Binsbergen 1999c, 2012d.

8.5. African spirituality as boundary production and boundary crossing at the same time – in other words as intercultural philosophy

Adopting a formal perspective that takes the greatest possible (or should I say: an impossibly and suspiciously great) distance from cultural specificities, I have suggested that African spirituality is a political scenario of community generation through spiritual means. *In other words, African spirituality is a machine to generate boundaries.*[321] However, a boundary which is entirely sealed is no longer negotiable and amounts to the end of the world. The very nature of a boundary in the human domain is that it is negotiable, albeit only under certain conditions, and at a certain cost. I have attempted to spell out some of these conditions and costs.

The argument, if found not to be totally devoid of sense, has implications for intercultural philosophy beyond the mere analytical study of African spirituality. For also intercultural philosophy itself could be very well defined in the very same terms I have now employed for African spirituality. While forging a specialist inside language amongst ourselves as intercultural philosophers, *we intend the boundary* which we thus erect around ourselves *to be porous*, and to be capable of being crossed by those we seek to understand, and by whom we seek to be understood. Both within, and across, that boundary there will be considerable limitations to the extent to which we can know, understand, represent and mediate; but the possibilities are certainly there.

There is an unmistakable kinship between my approach to African spirituality as a content-unspecific boundary strategy towards community, and Derrida's approach to *différance* as a strategy to both affirm, and postpone the affirmation of, difference; little wonder that the above argument was written shortly after I attempted to critically reflect on Derrida's 1996 argument on religion.[322]

Besides my reluctance to spell out, at this point, whatever would appear to be the specific contents of African spirituality after all, another set of questions continue to bother me, leaving me rather dissatisfied with the above argument

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[321] Partly on the basis of earlier work by Jaspers and Bataille among others, in the final quarter of the twentieth century CE the nature and production of boundaries attracted a considerable amount of research in philosophy and the social sciences. For philosophy, *cf*., for instance, van de Burg & Meyers 1987; Cornell 1992; Centre Culturel / Mallet 1994; Kimmerle 1983; Kimmerle 1985a; Procée 1991; Oosterling 1996: 138 *f*. and *passim*. And for the social sciences: Barth 1969; Devisch 1981; Devisch 1986; Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992; Turner 1969; Schlee & Werner 1996. In a proposed follow-up to the Research Group on Spirituality, the Nederlands-Vlaamse Vereniging voor Interculturele Filosofie [Dutch-Flemish Association for Intercultural Philosophy] intended to investigate the nature of cultural boundaries in the context of the multicultural society, taking as point of departure the common observation that such boundaries are often produced, in public and performative situations, to be deliberately and emphatically non-pourous; however, this follow-up never materialised.

[322] van Binsbergen 2000c, reprinted in the present volume as Chapter 6.

while upholding its general thrust, which would ultimately point to *a definition of religion beyond ontology, beyond metaphysics, as mainly a (necessarily contentless) vector of sociability*.

8.6. The politics of sociability versus the construction of the individual self in African spirituality

The following new dilemma arises at this point. Such boundary creation and boundary crossing as goes on in the context of African spirituality, does not only create situational and contextual communities to which one may or may not be co-opted -- *it also articulates an I who by having the experiences engendered by these various spiritual technologies, involves herself or himself in these domains of community, and in the very process c o n s t i t u t e s itself.* Therefore my emphasis, above, on the implied political dimension of African spirituality, is one-sided. In the last analysis, what we are dealing with here is not the *ad hoc* community created within spirituality-based boundaries, *but the I who is the locus of these experiences, because it is only the individual who possesses the corporality indispensable as the seat of experience at the interface between self and outside world.* As Henk Oosterling aptly pointed out at the session where this Chapter was first presented, spirituality necessarily amounts to an embodied project. *African spirituality then is not only a social technology but also a technology of individuality, of self.* Is this reason to distinguish between, let us say, *social* spirituality (the technology of community) and *religious* spirituality (the technology of self)? Is such a distinction at all possible? Or is spirituality best understood as the *nexus* between self and community, as the technology which (in the classic Durkheimian sense) renders the social possible despite the centrifugal fragmentation of the myriad individual conscious bodies out of which humanity consists.

This is not the first, nor the last time in this book that we should speak of Durkheim's seminal theory of religion. There is no doubt that Durkheim's theory is sociologistic, and shows the effects of a Rabbinical, logocentric upbringing in a century saturated with Kantian thought and conservative corporatist politics. Yet I believe there is a lasting truth in that theory, and I flatter myself that the preceding Sections of this Chapter may help to bring it out in a way transcending Durkheim's limitations.

8.7. Spirituality between local practice and global ethnographic / intercultural-philosophical description

A final and related point addresses my own positioning within the above dilemma of self-constitution through (African) spirituality. I came to intercultural

philosophy in the late 1990s out of dissatisfaction with the objectifying, condescending and hegemonic stance of mainstream religious anthropology; before reaching that point and starting on a new career in a new discipline, this dissatisfaction had brought me to suspend professional anthropological distance: I joined (1990-1991) the ranks of those whom I was supposed to merely study, and became a Southern African diviner-priest (*sangoma*), in ways described in several of my publications.[323] The present argument goes a long way towards explaining how I can be a *sangoma*, a North Atlantic professor, etc., at the same time: if the essence of African spirituality (and any other spirituality) is contentless, then the affirmation of specific belief is absolutely secondary to the action of participation.[324] The problem of actually believing in the central tenets of the *sangoma* world-view (ancestral intervention, reincarnation, sorcery, mediumship) then scarcely arises, and largely amounts to a sham problem.

But not quite. For at the existential level one can only practice *sangoma*hood, and bestow its spiritual and therapeutic benefits onto others as clients and adepts, if and when these beliefs take on – not only for the clients but also for the officiant, the sagoma himself or herself – a considerable measure of validity, not to say absolute validity, at least within the specific ritual situation within which these practices are engaged in. The community which this form of African spirituality (and other forms of African and non-African spirituality) generates, clearly extends beyond the level of sociability, and has distinct implications for experience and cognition. It is a political, anti-hegemonic stance to insist (not merely performatively and tongue-in-cheek, but on the basis of often repeated personal experience with veridical *sangoma* divination)[325] on the validity of these *sangoma* beliefs and to engage in the practices they stipulate, and thus not to submit one-sidedly to the sociability pressures exerted by another reference group (North Atlantic academic) and the belief system (in terms of a secular, rational, scientific world-view) they uphold; yet the latter belief system (the dominant North Atlantic one, in other words) is worthy of at least the same respect and the same kind of politically motivated sociability, as the *sangoma* system.

The dilemma is unmistakable, and amounts to an *aporia*. I solve it in practice, day after day, by negotiating the dilemma situationally and being, serially in subsequent situations I engage in within the same day, both a *sangoma* and a philosopher / Africanist. But when this Chapter was first conceived (1999) I did not manage to argue the satisfactory nature of this solution in discursive language.[326] And I suspect that this is largely because the kind of practical negotia-

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[323] van Binsbergen 1991a, 1998c, both reprinted and augmented in van Binsbergen 2003b.

[324] A point elaborated in: van Binsbergen 1981a, now being reprinted in: in press (a) . See also the final footnote of Chapter 12 below, on Mudimbe.

[325] van Binsbergen 2003: Chapter 7, and below, Chapter 15.

[326] I am still working on it, made some progress in *Intercultural Encounters*, and hope to take

tions that produce a sense of solution and that alleviate the tension around which the dilemma revolves, defy the consistency, boundedness and linearity of discursive conceptual thought, -- in other words, the dilemma itself seems a rather artificial by-product of rational theoretical verbalising on intercultural and spiritual matters. As I argued elsewhere,[327] discursive language is probably the worst, instead of the most appropriate, vehicle for the expression and negotiation of interculturality. And this renders all academic writing on African spirituality of limited validity and relevance. But why confine ourselves to writing and reading, if the real thing is available at our very doorstep, inviting us to dance and sing along?

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more decisive steps in my forthcoming *Sangoma Science*.

[327] van Binsbergen 1999b, English version in 2003b.

Part III. Names-dropping: How n o t to crush Africa under North Atlantic thought

Chapter 9

Aristotle in Africa

Towards a comparative Africanist reading of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The present Chapter was originally conceived as a Postscript to the collection Truth in Politics: Rhetorical Approaches to Democratic Deliberation in Africa and beyond – *a special issue that marked, in 2004 (formally the volume number was for 2002), the restoration of* Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy / Revue Africaine de Philosophie *under a new Editorship, and in a changed (primarily Web-based) format. In this text, I, as a co-editor of the collection and as the new Editor-in-Chief, argue that that collection's project, while at first, superficial glance appearing to deal with abstruse topics of limited applicability (a reading of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in terms of Aristotelian rhetoric in the technical, philosophical sense), in fact addresses points that are of the greatest significance for the African continent as a whole, and that have thus informed major debates in* Quest *over the years. These points include: the reflection on the philosophical canon (in this case: Aristotle and rhetoric); the development of an African philosophy that is relevant to major current transformations on the African continent (in this case the viability of the state, democracy, reconciliation and freedom) that is critically and radically aware of the global hegemonic context in which it is being produced; and that yet situates itself, globally, in the field of tension between the universal and the particular. In this way, my Postscript took a distance from, and vindicated, the 2004 collection, and offered a manifesto for the future of* Quest *as a specifically African journal of philosophy. My text was written as an afterthought, when the bulk of the collection had already been fixed and edited, mainly by the French philosopher Philippe-Joseph Salazar (based at Cape Town since the 1980s). Salazar took considerable offence at my argument which he thought exploded the entire collection; yet, in my overriding opinion as Editor-in-Chief, the collection risked to explode* Quest *unless properly encapsulated in an Africanist argument.*

9.1. Introduction: Why did we need a postscript to the collection Truth in Politics, *as published in* Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy?

I whole-heartedly share the conviction of my fellow-editors (Philippe-Joseph Salazar and Sanya Osha), as to the quality and the relevance of the collection here under review (Salazar *et al.* 2002; *cf.* Salazar 2002c). Its project, *i.e.* seeking to elucidate modern African politics (and particularly the epoch-making 1994-1998 Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa) in the light of Aristotelian rhetoric, directly addresses the *raison d'être* of *Quest* as an African journal of philosophy. Especially in the first issue of *Quest* under my responsibility, for which the present Chapter was originally written, I felt it was not out of character for me to examine, as Postscript, that collection as a whole, and to highlight its dilemmas and solutions. I thus build on the shorter overview presented, as Foreword, by Philippe-Joseph Salazar (2002a), who was the main intellectual and organising force behind the conference on which the present collection is based. Far from disqualifying the various contributions to the collection here under review for the specific disciplinary and geographical and temporal focus they each take, my aim is to bring out their potential to contribute to what, through major debates featuring some of the great names in African philosophy, have been the leading themes in *Quest* over the years:

1. the reflection on the philosophical canon, both in the North Atlantic and in Africa (with possible extensions towards the world's other philosophical traditions, in Islam, Judaism, India, China, the New World, Oceania, *etc.*);

2. the conceptual and theoretical effort to develop African philosophy into a tool that illuminates, by comparison and contrast, current socio-political developments on the African continent;

3. the critical reflection on the North-Atlantic-dominated, hegemonic context in which African knowledge production takes place today, and the formulation of radical anti-hegemonic alternatives; and finally

4. the exploration of the possibilities for an intercultural production of knowledge that, while affirming its specific (*e.g.* African) roots in space and time, yet situates itself in the field of tension between the universal and the particular.

Applying these themes to the collection here under review implies assessment, and therefore deviation from the editorial pretence of neutrality. Considering the seriousness of the matters we are dealing with, such may be inevitable. Even in a book centring on rhetoric, elegance cannot always take precedence over what is perceived (albeit from an individual standpoint) as relevance.

While most authors in the collection here under review turn out to prefer the Aristotle of *Rhetorica*,[328] exploring (by Aristotle's own definition)[329] the possibilities of *persuasive truth*, others feel more comfortable with the Aristotle of *Organon*,[330] exploring the possibilities of arriving at a *literal truth* through formal procedures. The latter approach implies a more compelling, less malleable and less performative conception of truth than the former, even (van Binsbergen 2003b) in intercultural matters like those at stake in the collection here under review. The four objectives outlined above are full of contradictions, each in themselves and the four of them in their combination; so is present-day Africa, South Africa, the relation between South Africa and the rest of the African continent; so is my own personal and professional positioning in all these issues. It would be a miracle, indeed a rare feat of rhetoric, if we had managed to keep all these contradictions nicely tucked under the blanket of polite but superficial editorial apotropaeic formulae (or of silence, which appears even more polite).

Avoidance of critical elements would also have been counter-productive, considering the fact that from its inception *Quest* has boasted to be a context of *philosophical discussions* – which necessitates bringing out contradictions into the open, not in order to force them in a particular direction that happens to suit a particular author's personal, political and disciplinary outlook, but so that they can be further addressed by regular and respectful debate. Therefore, this *Postscript* is not intended to overrule the contributions to the collection here under review with a last word of editorial power, but to honour these contributions by initiating the discussion which they, and the major issues they deal with, deserve.

Indeed, considering the robust foundation of the collection here under review in a well-established philosophical tradition (that of *rhetoric*) which is gaining more and more in recognition and popularity in recent years, and in profound and unmistakable, responsible scholarly grappling with the democratic transformation of South Africa as one of the most significant processes affecting the African continent in recent decades, there is no reason why the debate to which the collection here under review seeks to contribute, should not already begin within its own pages, through this Postscript. In fact, that debate already

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[328] The *locus classicus* of rhetoric is, of course, Aristotle's book of that name, available in a number of modern editions and translations, including: Aristotle 1926b, 2001, 1991, 1831: II, 1354-1420. In the collection here under review (Salazar *et al* 2002), the contributions particularly by Salazar (2002b), Cassin (2002) and Garver (2002) contain essential pointers to the main issues, and important writings both classic and modern, in the field of rhetoric. For the application of rhetoric as an analytical tool in the South African context today, see the brilliant Salazar 2002a, 2002b. For an excellent collection also *cf.* Bernard-Donals & Glejzer 1998.

[329] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 1, 1355^{b}26.

[330] *Cf.* Aristotle, *Organon*, numerous editions *e.g.* Aristotle 1938, 1960.

started during the original conference upon which the collection here under review, is based. I was not there, but if I had been there, my own argument and my contribution to the discussions would have been along the following, mainly constructive lines. Part of what I have to say, serves to bring across my own professional views of Africa to philosophical rhetoricians; but much of what I have to say is rather intended to elucidate, and vindicate to the extent possible, the rhetoric deployed in the present collection, to Africanists from other disciplines.

9.2. Aristotle

The rhetorical tradition emerged nearly two and a half millennia ago in Ancient Greece, founded by the Sophists (foremost Protagoras), developed and formalised by Aristotle of Stagira, and further taken up by, among others, Cicero in Rome two centuries later. After a chequered existence in subsequent centuries it received a new lease of life in the context of Nietzsche-inspired relativism and anti-foundationalism, post-modernism, globalisation, and the proliferation of intercultural and transcultural communication settings. The arguments in the collection here under review are inspired, not by the Aristotle of formal logical procedures (as in *Organon*) but by the Aristotle with a keen sense of the practical negotiation of truth in concrete political deliberation – a practice he got to know inside-out as a courtier at the court of Philip of Macedonia (where Aristotle was Alexander's tutor), and as a relatively insecure and unwelcome Macedonian migrant spending much of his working life in Athens. Little surprisingly, Aristotle, like Plato,[331] was rather critical of the *dēmokratia* of his time.[332] Having participated in that city's intellectual life for decades (the last twelve years as head of the *Lukeion* School), Aristotle finally became more or less democracy's victim himself when, after his former pupil Alexander the Great's death in 323, and, 'lest Athens sin twice against philosophy'[333] (the first time being the judicial murder of Socrates in 399 BCE), our philosopher had to flee that glorious city for the Aegean island of Euboea, where he died within a year (McKeon 2001).

The Stagirite's ghost may rest in peace: given Alexander's short life the above time table forensically exonerates Aristotle from the Afrocentrist allegations to the effect that he stole the contents of his books from 'Africa', *i.e.* from the Ancient Egyptian temple academies (🏛𓆰𓄿𓏤𓏏𓉐 *prwt ꜥnḫ*, 'houses of life') subju-

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[331] Plato, *De Re Publica*, 1975.

[332] *Cf.* Aristotle *Politica* (1932 / 4th c. BCE) IV (VI) 1, VI (VII) 1-8; Bierens de Haan 1943.

[333] This one-liner attributed to Aristotle is frequently cited by popularising modern commentators, but I have failed to identify its classical source, and it is probably apocryphal – springing from an assumed but undocumented parallel with Socrates' political fate (Dörrie 1979).

gated through Alexander's conquest of Egypt. Such allegations were initiated by the great USA Black emancipationalist Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), subsequently elaborated by G.G.M. James (1973 / 1954) under the tendentious title *Stolen Legacy*, and since enshrined in the Afrocentric canon (or at least, in the latter's *strong* version). Lefkowitz and Howe have convincingly refuted them. However, the well-informed and irascible initiator of the *Black Athena* debate, the late lamented Martin Bernal (1937-2013), yet treats James' allegations with amazing patience. And he may have a point:[334] although a concrete Egyptian-Aristotelian connection are so improbable that they may safely be dismissed off-hand, yet it is with the present state of scholarship simply undeniable that already before the Hellenistic amalgamation of West and East in the aftermath of Alexander's conquests, the Ancient Near East including Egypt was the major source for the emerging Greek mythology, philosophy, science, technology, and aesthetics.[335] The extent to which Ancient Egypt can count as an integral part of 'Black', sub-Saharan Africa is a different question, and one so complex and so highly politicised that we cannot treat it extensively within the present scope.[336]

Yet, whatever (*pace* Nethersole 2002[337]) the considerable merits of the Afrocentrist position in general, Africa cannot appropriate Aristotelian thought as if the latter could only be fully understood against an African background.[338]

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[334] Lefkowitz 1994, 1996; Howe 1999. For the opposite view, see Bernal 1987-1991; *cf.* van Binsbergen 1996d, 1997a, 2000a, 2000b, 2011f, where I identify as a moderate Afrocentrist myself; seeking to refute Lefkowitz, and 2011c, where I refute Howe.

[335] For instance, in my discussion of the Presocratics and their long-range global antecedents (van Binsbergen 2012d), I adduce evidence that the four-element systems attributed to the Greek philosopher Empedocles, was already firmly established in Ancient Egypt (and eelsewhere).

[336] But see van Binsbergen 2011f and extensive references there, where despite my general and vocal sympathy for Afrocentrism I yet have to maintain that Ancient Egypt can be considered a child of sub-Saharan Africa *only to a limited extent*, stressing the impact of West Asian continuities that, rather than originating in sub-Saharan Africa, were only *b e i n g   m e d i a t e d   t o* sub-Saharan Africa via Egypt in the Late Bronze Age. In that connection I even venture to suggest (reviving an ancient theory by the great Italian linguist Trombetti) that the Bantu linguistic family (a major branch of the Niger-Congo macrophylum, now exclusively found in Africa) has conspicuous *Borean elements and (also considering its Austric and Amerind affinities) may have an Asian, rather than African, origin. Also *cf.* van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011, on 'uninvited guests' (ranging from Niger-Congo to Sinocaucasian) in the Mediterranean Bronze Age, and on the penetration of the so-called Sea Peoples, via the Maghreb, into the Sahara and West Africa from the Late Bronze Age on.

[337] Throughout this Chapter, I mark, with the year '2002', the constitutive contributions within the collection here under review.

[338] This does not rule out that the Ancient Greek democratic structures, and their rhetoric, as described by Aristotle, originally may have sprung from a very wide-spread and ancient complex of pre-statal local democracy, in which local communities largely run their own affairs on the basis of the peer deliberations of local men in frequent assemblies from which women in reproductive age, children, and strangers, are excluded. Traces of this complex which may still found in rural communities all over the Mediterranean including North Africa. But in fact its

However, much of the collection here under review would appear (if only at first and superficial glance) to revive the opposite, *Euro*centric dream: the view according to which processes in present-day Africa may be uniquely under-stood by the application of models of democracy, politics, rhetoric and public truth evolved (perhaps even initiated) in Ancient Greece, – the very same Ancient Greece that was alleged by Eurocentric identity construction from the 18th to the 20th century CE (and even in some passages in the present collection – as if the *Black Athena* debate never took place) to be the unique cradle of European civilisation, two and a half millennia ago.

With its reliance on rhetoric as a philosophical sub-discipline, the intellectual genealogy of the collection here under review goes back directly to the origins of the Western philosophical tradition. This suffices to indicate the *philosophical* relevance of *Truth in Politics*. Given the orientation of *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*, it is the *African* relevance that may still need to be argued, beyond the over-obvious point that South Africa (whose 1994-1998 Truth and Reconciliation Commission – TRC – features centrally here) is a part of Africa and that therefore such developments in that country as the release from prison of Nelson Mandela, the dismantling of the apartheid state, and the advent of democratic rule, are African issues. Beyond the wider issues enumerated in the four points above, the more specific, and especially *comparative*, Africanist relevance of the collection here under review can be argued on at least two counts:

1. the need for socio-political reconstruction throughout the African post-colony[339] from the 1990s onward, and

2. the possibility that, despite the glorious transition to majority rule, and despite whatever healing and morale-boosting effects the TRC, President Mbeki's idea of the African Renaissance, and the pro-claimedly South African time-honoured philosophy of *ubuntu* may have had, South Africa since the advent of democratic majority rule in 1994 may yet have proceeded, in significant respects, in the direc-tion of becoming another African post-colony.

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distribution is much wider and includes much of rural Asia and rural Africa. In the latter conti-nent (but in close parallel with, for instance, Ancient Germania) the man's assembly – often included in a small local sacred forest area – is a common feature in many village environments, and the community process largely hinges on village moots. The complex is even found in the New World. Therefore it is likely to go back to the Upper Palaeolithic, like most cultural and linguistic Old-World communalities that are not due to modern globalisation. From the bird's eye perspective of the several millions of years of human cultural history, Ancient Athens and village Africa far from belong to totally different worlds. Bernal (1993a) suggests specific Phoenician influence on the de-mocratic patterns of Greek city states, but while this is in line with the general Asian and African formative influence on emerging Ancient Greek culture and society, it is – as usual with Bernal – too narrow an explanation in that it misses the point that Ancient Greece shared a common linguistic and cultural origin with many Asian and African societies even before the three components in this equation started to specifically influence each other.

[339] *Cf.* Mbembe 1992, 2001; Osha 2000; Werbner 1997; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999.

Let me elaborate each of these points, of which especially the second one is undoubtedly controversial and provocative.

9.3. The TRC and Africa (a): Reconstruction in the African post-colony?

In the first place, myriad threads of demographic, linguistic, cultural and historical continuity link South Africa with the rest of Africa, and since the establishment of majority rule, even South Africa's social exclusion from that continent has been lifted. However, the wider comparative African applicability of the TRC case, and of a rhetorical approach to the TRC, as advocated in the collection here under review, goes further than this nominal point. Considering the global flow of information and political aspirations, it cannot have been by accident that the beginning of the end of *apartheid* in South Africa (Nelson Mandela's release from long-term imprisonment in 1990) followed shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and more or less coincided with massive national democratisation movements elsewhere in Africa. These movements (to which Kouvouama contribution 2002 refers) clamoured against the devastation of African post-colonial polities as a result of such national ills as constitutional unaccountability, large-scale corruption and embezzlement, illegal use of violence, capturing of the state by a minority defined in ethnic, region or class terms, *etc*.

The experiences of the 'African post-colony' in the 1980s very clearly demonstrate that *apartheid* may be a *sufficient* condition to corrupt and destroy a state, but that it was, and is, not a *necessary* condition for such corruption and destruction: other African states have collapsed, since they gained Independence, due to the factors listed above, even regardless of racialism and apartheid. These processes have often acerbated in the 1990s, have combined with global pressures wrecking African national economies and facilitating (through the arms trade and the competition over diamonds and other mineral resources) civil war, and as a result in nearly a dozen African countries (out of just over fifty) the state only exists on paper.[340] There, the socio-political fabric is destroyed by internal strife and absence of consensus, and a national reconstruction comparable to what was envisaged in the TRC would be called for.

In the collection here under review, the contributions by Osha (Nigeria) and Kouvouama (Congo-Brazzaville) briefly explore the parallel between these two African countries, and South Africa under the TRC; but also other countries come to mind, *e.g.* Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Congo-Kinshasa, Angola,

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[340] This was first written in 2004. Since, the situation has somewhat improved at the national level, but the intercontinental competition over African resources and markets has greatly acerbated, ushering in a period of renewed neo-imperialism.

Guinea-Bissau, Burundi, while a reconstruction process actually is going on in Rwanda and Uganda. Both authors go about their analysis in an Impeccable but strikingly un-rhetorical fashion: they identify as African actors, and they parade, in their argument, other such actors who, in the democratisation wave of the early 1990s and in Nigeria's return to democracy, insist on *the literal, metaphysical and moral truth in politics* (rather than the 'rhetorical truth'…), and who likewise insist on seeing such truth brought out and lived by in everyday political life. Somewhat regrettably, both our authors forego the chance of comparatively assessing, reversely, what the Nigerian and Congolese experiences could mean for our understanding of South Africa.

The very rhetoric explored in the collection here under review, in itself aptly brings out (in its dissociation of politics and ethics, in its view of truth as primarily the outcome of the skilful situational management of words, of dextrous self-presentation) some of the main perversions of politics in the African post-colony – the kind of perversions the democratisation wave of the early 1990s battled against throughout Africa. These perversions also seem to indicate some of the possible steps in what racialist opponents of African democratic majority rule in South Africa have always invoked as an doom scenario, notably that country's possible transformation into a (special type of) post-colony:

> 'The key to Protagoras' paradox[341] here ("everyone has justice, and those who do no have it must be killed") is the following: *Everyone is just, even those who are not*. They must pretend to be just and that is all they need to be just "in a certain way". In affirming that they are just, they recognize justice as constitutive of the human community and by so doing justice itself is integrated in the city – in a way, it is the praise of virtue by vice that universalizes virtue' (Cassin 2002).

Plato failed, practically (in the Syracuse episodes, 367 and 361-360 BCE) to install philosophers at the head of the state, just as he fails to convince, theoretically (in his *De Re Publica*),[342] that such would be a desirable arrangement. However, when philosophers / rhetoricians begin to articulate, as established socio-political practice and perhaps even as a form of social virtue, the very sleight-of-hand in the public negotiation of truth for which politicians have been notorious for millennia (and including modern African politicians), then we have a very different proposition from Plato's, notably: philosophers who 'tell it like it is' and who thereby may well deserve their seats next to the actual rulers:

> 'Protagoras' analysis goes beyond being applicable to the TRC's practice and the TRC as a model for deliberation within reconciliatory politics. It shows two things: Firstly, that repenting, the apology or the request of pardon, is that much less necessary since *"the one who does not infringe justice is a fool"*.' (Cassin 2002; italics added – WvB)

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[341] *Cf.* Plato, *Theaetetus*, 1975.

[342] Plato 1975. Popper 1957 is a major and passionate critique of Plato's position on this point.

African philosophers, including Hountondji, Gyekye and Osha,[343] have spoken out vehemently against African politicians' unconstitutional and, in general, unlawful use of power, and against the high levels of corruption that are encountered in that context. *While the rhetoric-based approach is undeniably realistic and illuminating as a description of practice*, does it merely identify an evil to be *exposed*? Or can we say that it amounts to offering a model for the *emulation* of such evil?

In the words of Philippe-Joseph Salazar (2002a), the emphasis on rhetoric in the collection here under review has the explicit aim of contributing to the instruments that may enable South Africa to become and remain a viable democracy. Can we extend such application of rhetoric to post-colonial Africa as a whole? Let us realise that many Africans, including South Africans, and especially those outside the circle of elites controlling or at least exploiting the state and the economy, have a less cynical understanding of democratic politics than the one advocated by Protagoras. This is in fact a contrapuntal theme running through the entire collection, in complement to the element of a-moral verbal manipulation studied by rhetoric. In Garver's words (2002, reversing in a way Spinoza's 1979 / 1677 stance on rationality and ethics):

> 'On the other hand, and this seems to me the more interesting conclusion, the ultimate criterion for what counts as rational is an ethical criterion.'

And the same dilemma of moral truth that is capable of being transmuted, in the hands of politicians, into a usable, manipulative truth that no longer unites but divides and excludes, informs Nethersole's contribution (2002), where (critically continuing the debate on the African Renaissance), she concludes that

> 'In the retrieval of the forgotten, hidden, masked and obscured stories, historical truth, as uncovered by the TRC for instance, can, imbued with *moral justice*, speak the truth to political power in relation to the excluded. In as much as the African Renaissance seeks to build an image of the African as one constructed by himself / herself and not by others for the purpose of building with his / her own development with his / her own hands, the project is concerned, like the TRC, with historical truth. However, where the African Renaissance turns into identity politics in order to achieve political power, the historical truth is jettisoned for the sake of exclusivity. For truth as seen to be residing in identity is no longer plural, relational, and deliberative. Instead of being a "sensuous force" of exchange between diverse and distinct people who have to share the same country and the same, increasingly globalizing world, an undue emphasis upon the

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[343] Hountondji 1991; Gyekye 1997; Osha 2004. It is important to note that these African philosophers (although not unfamiliar with African historic traditions) condemn corruption and the abuse of power, not so much by reference to any traditional, precolonial African value or philosophical thought, *but by cosmopolitan reference to such modern principles implied to be more or less universal: constitutional order, justice, and human rights*. In Kouvouama's words (2002):

> 'But the Sovereign National Convention has also been a place of violent expression, where violent words condemned armed violence. In Paulin Hountondji's opinion, speech, which is part of parliamentary culture, needs to be found not only within African cultures, *i.e.* palaver culture, but also within the French parliamentary culture of 1789, where speech was radical, exigent and rebellious.'

> claim to ethnic, authentic identity is in danger of rendering the "coin" of truth into useless "metal".' (Nethersole 2002)

Rhetoric helps us to pinpoint some of the defects of the political situation in the African post-colony, and (when rhetoric is applied to a process of national reconstruction like the South African TRC) it clearly offers us perceptive insights into some of the remedying mechanisms.

9.4. The TRC and Africa (b): The model of the African post-colony as a sword of Damocles hanging over democratic South Africa

Meanwhile, in the second place, in addition to the possible application of the TRC model to other African countries, the new South Africa has been up against cynical, anti-democratic and racialist critics who have hung the threatening model of the African post-colony over South Africa, and who cannot wait to see this sword of Damocles drop and destroy all that hope, heroism, generosity and hard work have built and are still building. So far they have been proven wrong, yet it is generally admitted that there are worrying tendencies in post-apartheid South Africa, in such respects as the eroding national consensus; the widening gap between generations, classes, and genders; the excessive crime rate; the oligarchisation and primitive accumulation attending the partial Africanisation of the elite; the progressive installation of a politics of make-believe (as in state pronouncements on HIV / AIDS); and the rigid (although inevitable, and democratically supported) control over the South African state by the ruling African National Congress (ANC).[344]

Osha in his contribution (2002) explains why the equivalent of South Africa's TRC could not work in a post-colony like Nigeria today, despite a return to democracy: the new regime is too closely associated with the ancient regime than that it could afford 'full disclosure' on TRC lines. But was the South African situation with the TRC really fundamentally different? *Did South Africa ever have a true societal revolution in the sense that inveterate class relations where radically confronted and transformed?* In fact, the speed and smoothness of the democratisation process 1990-1994 suggest the opposite: an attempt to safeguard the industrial and logistic infrastructure of the economy by all means, even at the cost of

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[344] This was originally written in 2004. More than a decade has passed since, and while there is much to rejoice in and to be thankful for, the truth is that the spectre of the decaying post-colony is still hovering over South Africa – with the capricious personal conduct of President Zuma as a reminder that the notorious mix of identity politics and monopoly of state power has proved explosive anywhere in modern history, and especially in Africa. But South Africa no longer seems to thrive primarily on post-apart cultural politics – its eagerly-sought admission to the ranks of the BRIC countries (Brazil, India, Russia and China) suggests other priorities and growth points.

dismantling some of the social and cultural privileges of the formerly ruling White social caste – but essentially leaving the inveterate class structure of the country[345] unaltered although clad in new constitutional and rhetorical trappings. Which brings us to a central question: *in the absence of a true class-centred revolution, what is the catharsis which the TRC was hoped to bring about?*

9.5. When does disclosure bring catharsis?

Did the TRC's 'full disclosure' bring the catharsis that was hoped for and that – many would deem – was indispensable for the country's future? The fact that, traded off against 'full disclosure', the perpetrators of *apartheid* got away with amnesty without further incrimination or punishment, might lead one to suggest that, as compared to Nigeria in Osha's argument, also in the South African case there was – under comparable conditions of successfully established post-conflict democracy – a comparable kind of continuity with the evil past, a comparable impossibility of making a clean break. This is a crucial point to consider in relation to the TRC. If the TRC (rather than demonstrably constituting a cathartic break with the past) would be found to be primarily a manipulative cover-up of the past, then not only our image of the new South Africa would be tarnished, but also many of the rhetoric-inspired contributions in the collection here under review would have to be faulted for being over-optimistic and idealistic, to say the least. We therefore will let the argument have its full contradictory course, before finally coming to a conclusion that confirms the TRC to be a fundamental and historic transformation of South African society – in fact (or so I will argue) the very birth of the South African nation – and, through such a conclusion, the value of the rhetoric approach will be highlighted.

First then, as from the devil's advocate, some of the doubts which too positive a reading of the TRC would have to accommodate.

As stressed by Barbara Cassin (2002), in the TRC there was the nominal equivalent of the Ancient Greek ἰσηγορία *isēgoria*,[346] the fundamental democratic right to speak in the *agora*, the community's political assembly; but what is the benefit of such speaking, when it only lifts the burden of not having spoken out from one's pained heart, while one's words – one's *disclosures* and *accusations* –

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[345] Analyses of the South African class structure have been many, they were among the main contributions intellectuals could make to the dismantling of apartheid, and still constitute a major product of South-Africa watchers; *cf*. Comaroff & Comaroff 1991; Johnstone 1976; Magubane 2004; Marks & Trapido 1988; Seekings & Nattrass 2005; Simons & Simons 1969; van Kessel 2008.

[346] Albeit that, in ways that could have been acknowledged more explicitly in the collection here under review, such a right was reserved to male free citizens, excluding women, slaves and foreigners (*metoikoi*), who together formed the great bulk of the Athenian population, and the heart of the economy.

carry no effect in the sense of justified and recognisable legal action being taken against the perpetrators? Does not such a right to speak amount, after the lifting of *apartheid*, to a new subordination, this time justified not by reference to alleged 'racial'[347] inferiority but by reference to the common good of living together peacefully? Is that common good consciously perceived by all South Africans, and by all in the same terms, and do they all suffer the same amount of pain for it?

These are some of the questions I will consider in the following pages. For answers, it is simply not good enough to appeal (as the contributions to the collection under review frequently do) to Hannah Arendt's notion of politics as 'story-telling', if we wish to bring out all the layers of power, agency and pain that are involved. Was the TRC's 'full (but repercussion-less) disclosure' perhaps a case of *repressive tolerance*,[348] so that peaceful transition to democratic rule could be forced down the throat of the majority of the population, despite its long years of suffering and its pent-up indignation – *thus leaving the country's infrastructure and basic class structure largely intact, at the price of a substantial replacement of White by Black elites*? For clarity's sake: we are still letting the devil's advocate speak, still in the process of setting up our argument's props so that the final, positive conclusion can be reached (in the Section on *The nation's birth pangs*, below). I am not advocating that South Africa's coming to terms with the perpetrators of *apartheid* should have been more revengeful and bloody. But if the frame of reference for such coming-to-terms appears to be one-sidedly set by the political desire to placate Christian,[349] up-

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[347] Contrary to such concepts as 'class', 'caste', 'ethnic identity' *etc.*, 'race' is not a scientific concept but, instead, a local collective representation, explicitly and consciously (in anthropological parlance, 'emically') used by members of specific societies in the past and at present in order to articulate and explain, among themselves, socially constructed difference, and usually subordination. South Africa and the USA are among the few societies today where 'race' functions as such a collective representation at the emic level, in the sense that it can still be used in polite conversation and in official bureaucratic expressions. Unfortunately, Afrocentrists have often copied this usage, even though it lies at the root of the very oppression they are battling against.

[348] The Marcuse-inspired notion of *repressive tolerance*, today rather obsolete, was central in the (sociologically somewhat unsophisticated) discourse with which in the late 1960s revolting university students all over the North Atlantic region sought to understand and confront the educational formal organisations (and behind them, the state) whose oppressive and cynical nature they resented. Repressive tolerance is repression though politically-motivated permissiveness (*e.g. vis-à-vis* promiscuity and use of narcotics), instead of through downright prohibition and violence.

[349] As Doxtader (2002) quotes Tutu (1994: 223):

'The victims of injustice and oppression must be ready to forgive. *That is a gospel imperative*' (italics added – WvB)

But what does the gospel say about the perpetrators? It displays a remarkable tolerance (*Luke* 23:43; *Matthew* 8:5 *f.*). But what other legal authority could one have invoked, in a Southern Africa where law and law courts have existed for millennia but Christianity was only introduced less than 500 years ago? Despite the presence of historic African and Asian expressions and the local growth of Islam, there is no denying that, in the course of the last two centuries, Christi-

per-class and White[350] concerns, and to ignore the historic African traditions of law and law-enforcement except by pressing into service the nice, forgiving aspects of *ubuntu*,[351] then how can one expect true cleansing and liberation from the past, genuine catharsis to have taken place? How can such a move be conceptualised? This is the central question I shall try to answer in this Chapter. The rhetoric-inspired analyses in the collection here under review will help us greatly in finding the answer, but in the process we will have to add to them – at least, that was my impression – a conceptual analysis in terms of the varieties of transcendentalism and immanentalism, which help pinpoint the specific frame of thought, and the specific context of political organisation (appreciably different from that of Ancient Greece and Rome), in which *apartheid*, as well as the TRC, can be more precisely situated.

Doubt whether the TRC was effectively, and exclusively, about a catharsis of forgiving that was inevitably to take place, is not entirely absent in the collection under review here. Thus Samarbakhsh-Liberge (2002) points out the aporia that arises when, like in the case of the TRC, excessive emphasis on national consensus thwarts the formulation of profoundly unwelcome home truths – of which, of course, *apartheid* offered one interminable series. From Villa-Vicencio's (2002) sensitive contribution we glean:

> 'I would rather offer the comment of a young woman named Kalu; it highlights the internalized emotions inherent to the transition from the old to the new: (...)
>
> > "What really makes me angry about the TRC and Tutu is that they are putting pressure on me to forgive (...). I don't know if I will ever be able to forgive. I

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anity has established itself as the dominant public expression of spirituality in South Africa throughout all segments of the population. Considering that it was also invoked to justify *apartheid*, an appeal to Christian imperatives is not exactly without irony. But an important point, and I will repeat it throughout this Chapter, is that Christianity never was the only spiritual expression in South Africa, especially not in the uncaptured recesses of private life, among people of African descent (among Blacks, in other words) in rural areas and informal urban communities, and among Asian-derived segments of the population.

[350] As Osha (2002) quotes Tutu (1996: 43):

> 'in the matter of amnesty, no moral distinction is going to be made between acts perpetrated by liberation movements and acts perpetrated by the *apartheid* dispensation.'

[351] While ignoring a major Southern African historic value, very much implied in *ubuntu*: *the adamant refusal to give quarter to sorcerers* – as the perpetrators of *apartheid* are from a traditional perspective, having indulged in a cult of power that transgresses the codes of humanity. *Cf.* van Binsbergen 2001c. This argument, critically tracing the wider African and cosmopolitan antecedents of this popular *shibboleth* in post-apartheid South Africa, provoked my dear friends and colleagues Bewaji & Ramose (2003) to a passionate reaction in the *South African Journal of Philosophy*, In 1999, Mogobe Ramose, our mutual friend and colleague Vernie February (of the Leiden African Studies Centre and the University of the Western Cape), and I myself, found ourselves in a Tswana village in South Africa's Gauteng Province, formerly Transvaal, conducting interviews on local conceptions of *ubuntu / botho*. Although the conference on *ubuntu* we then sought to organise in South Africa, never materialised, there was, and is, no fundamental disagreement between us in this matter – only a complementary difference in perspective.

> carry this ball of anger within me and I don't know where to begin dealing with it. *The oppression was bad, but what is much worse, what makes me even angrier, is that they are trying to dictate my forgiveness.*"
>
> Her words capture the pathos involved in the long and fragile journey towards reconciliation. No one has the right to prevail on Kalu to forgive.' (Villa-Vicencio 2002; italics added – WvB).'

9.6. *'Pain is not an argument'*

This passage from Villa-Vicencio just quoted is one of the few instances in the collection under review where disloyalty is shown *vis-à-vis* an otherwise carefully maintained consensus among the contributors: the remarkably callous view that *a person's pain and sorrow do not constitute grounds for political, legal or historical consideration*.

In the more technically rhetorical pieces, the position is advocated that such consideration would rent the fabric of the political community – like the Athenians' argument on amnesia and amnesty in 403 BCE, elegantly and illuminatingly analysed in this collection by Barbara Cassin (2002), in the footsteps of Nicole Loraux. Such a position *does not preclude even, apparently, a measure of technical admiration for the craftsmanship invested in the instruments through which pain and sorrow were inflicted*:

> 'When Philippe-Joseph Salazar evokes the South African *apartheid* legislation, the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950, he rightly pitches his analysis at the level of language itself:
>
> > One could admire the linguistic feats of the Lycurgus[352] of Southern Africa (Salazar 1998: 27).
>
> The South African Act is well and truly that of a "nomothete" which transforms the meaning of words...' (Cassin 2002).

Aristotle provides extensive discussions of emotions, and the political implications of his views[353] have been receiving renewed attention recently.[354] It is not he who rules out emotions from the political domain. That they are yet largely absent from the collection under review,[355] may be due to the fact that there Aristotelian rhetoric is often filtered through a remarkable combination of French rationalist thought (which ever since Descartes has had no room for

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[352] Lykourgos was the legendary law-giver of the Greek city state of Sparta, around 1000 BCE.

[353] Notably in his *Ethica Nicomachea*, and *Ars Rhetorica*; Aristotle 1926a, 1926b.

[354] *Cf.* Sokolon 2002, and extensive references cited there.

[355] *Cf.* 'but we still have to answer the political question of which feelings of pain deserve our attention.' (Garver (2002).

But his answer, however sympathetic, is in terms of a rationality away from pain.

emotions), and the more general North Atlantic tradition of positive law, where the impassionate and the objective represent lofty ideals, and contain the promise of a solution, a way out. Hence the paucity of references to the existential dimension of pain and suffering even in Hajjar's (2002) excellent and passionate socio-legal piece on torture as an aspect of, particularly, the suffering of the Palestinian people. We are reminded, and could not be reminded enough, that at the time of writing, and even though torture has been a wide-spread practice in many or most countries throughout history (including, of course, South Africa under apartheid), there were only two countries in the world where torture was considered to be *legally permissible* in the interest of the state or of the people whom that state claims to represent: the USA and Israel.

The same view ('pain is not an argument') is also manifest in Samarbakhsh-Liberge's (2002) piece on the representation of history in the South African situation. Inspired by the millennia of suffering of the Jewish people, Gitay's (2002) contribution comes perhaps closest to articulating the alternative view. He typically does so by reference to a long-ago situation (the Assyrians' destruction of the Temple of Solomon in Palestine in 587 BCE), at a time when, and in a place where, politics and law had not yet completely fissioned into domains of their own to such an extent that they could already be thought of as (semi-)autonomous *vis-à-vis* religion (*cf*. Falk-Moore 1973), nor *vis-à-vis* the everyday life of production and reproduction. For only when such complete fission is a fact, when the state has completely dissociated from human and bodily basis of power and authority and has assumed total virtuality and total transcendence, can the political domain pretend to be impervious to pain.

What, then, are the preconditions for such impermeability? Still slowly proceeding towards the promised, positive conclusion concerning the TRC's significance, I will try to identify these preconditions in the following discussion of transcendence in the statal domain.

9.7. The transcendent state as a precondition for apartheid

One of *apartheid*'s main justification strategies was its painstaking legalism, which added the pretence of utter legality to everything done in the name of *apartheid*, and to the format in which it was done. This has further enhanced tendencies already excessively developed in North Atlantic modern society: the reliance on the written word as an immensely powerful source of legal authority;[356] on the constitutionally empowered institutions to create, maintain and legitimate (through words) such legal authority; and on formal, bureaucratically-

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[356] Weber 1969, 1985/ 1919.

structured organisations in which this word is carried out to become practice. Like its cousin, Nazism, *apartheid*, with its illusory legalism, is *not* just a form of barbaric atavism and nothing more. *Both forms of political perversion could only be a product of a modern, rationally organised, highly literate society,* where the power of the written word carries the *transcendence* needed to be able to think and act beyond the here and now of personal relationships, beyond personal identification and beyond charity based on face-to-face contact, in which the recognition of shared humanity is usually inevitable. *Apartheid* did not preclude condescending friendly relations between bosses and workers, between nannies and their charges; but neither did such relations preclude *apartheid*.

Transcendence is not a universal capability of human thought – on the contrary, it is a very specific mental stance which, although universally implied in the capacity of words to refer beyond the here and now, only comes to full fruition in concrete historical settings that are informed by writing, the state, an organised priesthood, and science. These institutions are achievements that, in human history, only emerged (in highly productive combinations) in the Ancient Near East c. 5 ka BP. These institutions have informed the thought and action of selected (especially literate) minorities of specialists in all continents including Africa in the subsequent millennia, endowing them with the capability of controlling (even vicariously and virtually, in their own absence or after their death) socio-political situations, and of freely experimenting with thought, science and religion through the power of the abstract word. In the most literal sense the word, and especially the written word, is mightier than the sword, for it is only the word that enables people to exercise command across vast expanses of space and time, whereas sheer violence is confined to the here and the now of the bodies upon which it is being inflicted. Therefore, it is the word, not physical violence, that creates the transcendence of states, although violence is an almost indispensable factor in *maintaining* such transcendence. However, outside such specialist minority contexts, human thought and action have remained, in great majority, geared to the immanence of immediacy, personal experience, and the human scale. Only under relatively exceptional circumstances, notably through generalised literacy, extensive involvement in formal organisations (of the state, private enterprise, and religious, professional and recreational self-organisation), and extensive conversion to formalistic, abstract participation in world religions, could this immanence significantly give way to transcendent stances among the majority of local populations. Cities, the formal organisation, and the formal sector of the economy as dominated by that organisational format, are the world's seats of transcendence. Villages and kin groups tend to remain the seats of immanence. Since human reproduction usually takes place in the intimate circle of kin groups, humans almost invariably start life as immanentalists,[357] only

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[357] There is nothing more immanentalist than the infant engulfed by its mother's total presence. By

gradually learning language, which although usually limited to everyday immanentalist contexts, does open the door towards writing, the state, the law, science, and God – in short, towards transcendence. By implication, the dissociation of the political sphere from the productive and reproductive sphere is very far from a universal given, but occurs only in contexts where transcendence (notably, in the form of the state) is firmly established as a historical achievement.[358]

The *apartheid* state (with its abstract denial of the common, *violence-shunning* humanity on which life in villages and kin groups tends to be based) is, even more than most other states, based on transcendence. Only under conditions of extremely entrenched transcendence is it possible to arrive at such a dissociation of the legal sphere and of the political sphere, that these spheres become totally impervious for the charitable and communicative values that usually inform the intimate spheres of production and reproduction.[359]

9.8. The Ancient World's limited relevance for an understanding of today's issues

Still on our way towards a conclusion on the TRC, and having made substantial progress, we will now make a slight diversion to argue a point that seems to counter some[360] of the implications of the rhetoric-based contributions in the

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the same token, there is nothing more transcendentalist than male attempts to conceal, through the power of their word, the fact that they lack the essential organs (uterus and breasts) of visible, undeniable reproduction. This suggests that a gender contradiction may often attend the contradiction between immanentalism and transcendentalism. Such a contradiction is very conspicuous in the creation stories of the Ancient Near East, which belong to the initial period of the emergence of writing, the state, organised priesthood, and science. In these stories' most sophisticated recensions, male gods (such as Marduk, and יהוה YHWH) establish their right to rule through an act of creation (typically of a garment, a female product), not from their own body or from that of the earth, but *by the power of their word*. Note that the immanently reproducing female (Tiāmat, the earth, the snake, Leviathān) is such gods' moral enemy, even if in the *Genesis* account of the creation of man an older, female dispensation still shimmers through. *Cf.* Fromm 1976: 231 *f.*; Pritchard 1969. Female reproduction may have been the most obvious source of power throughout human history except for the last few millennia, and it is Sierksma's (1979) logocentricc failure to appreciate this which makes him overestimate the amount of power women derived from the invention of agriculture, c. 12 ka BP.

[358] *Pace* Cassin (2002), who in her paper repeatedly assumes 'the autonomy of the political' to be a universal given that may be invoked with the same confidence in the case of modern South Africa (on good grounds) as in the case of Ancient Athens (on far more dubious grounds) – or, for that matter, in historic socio-political contexts in sub-Saharan Africa, where such autonomy does scarcely exist.

[359] In principle, the transcendent (and violent) dissociation of the political sphere from the sphere of production and reproduction is typical of statehood in general, and has nothing to do with *apartheid* as such. For a detailed analysis of a precolonial South Central African state along such lines, *cf.* van Binsbergen 1992 and especially 2003d.

[360] By no means all, as is indicated by Garver's sobering opening remark (2002):

'Aristotle does not give solutions to contemporary political problems. He could not have imagined them, and so does not speak to them.'

collection here under review: I wish to stress, by contrast, the Ancient world's *limited* relevance for an understanding of today's issues.

As stressed in Garver's (2002) thoughtful contribution to the collection under review, Aristotle uses the concept of 'friendship' to denote, with a term derived from the *informal* domestic sphere, a fundamental prerequisite which he attributes to the political sphere. Clearly, therefore, the dissociation between these spheres was considerably less developed in Aristotle's time than it came to be in post-Renaissance Europe, when the absolutist state's Machiavellian rationality beyond the morality of good and evil made a claim to total transcendence, thus paving the way for such aberrations as early concentration camps during the Boer War, colonial wars of conquest and anti-Independence, the Nazi and the *apartheid* state.

The incomplete dissociation of the legal and the political spheres in Aristotle's time – the basis of his political 'friendship' – informs his rhetoric. It is the rhetoric of the assembly, before the same free males who only hours earlier found each other on the market-place, and who only hours later will re-adjourn in the gymnasium and the bathhouse, in the public spaces of leisurely philosophical discussion, or in the seedy mature male comforts of banquets spiced up with willing boys and girls – banquets immortalised by Plato (*Symposium*) but served and paid for by slave labour. Only by taking Aristotle's rhetoric out of that historic context, translating it into a modern Western Indo-European language, appropriating it by formalised, discipline-based ('transcendent') scholarship, assuming that it addressed political conditions comparable to those of modern statehood, and endowing it with a post-modern reservation *vis-à-vis* truth and institutional order in general, can we make Aristotelian rhetoric at home in the modern, transcendent state contexts of today. In a comparable way, Herodotos and Thucydides may be called the first historians yet no modern historian would academically survive if her or his methods and concepts were not fundamentally different from those of these two illustrious 'founding fathers' of history; by the same token, the present-day Olympic Games only in name, only nostalgically, revive an Archaic Greek custom going back to the eighth century BCE. By innovatingly applying Aristotelian rhetoric in a political context that is mainly in name ('democracy') comparable with Aristotle's elitist city-state ran on slave power, regional hegemony, and extreme violence and treachery abroad, modern rhetoricians create (as is perfectly justifiable, especially for rhetoricians of all people) an essentially new conceptual framework in order to illuminate (as the collection here under review beautifully demonstrates) the political aporias of today – while endowing that framework with the illustrious genealogy that its rootedness in Aristotle's writings can provide. But as every kinship anthropologist can tell you, most genealogies are false and manipulated, including the present one.

Inherent in this intellectual trajectory is the difficulty modern rhetoric will have

to appreciate that the transcendent power of the modern state cannot be relegated, for the full one hundred percent, to the dextrous performance of political oratory and other strategies illuminated by rhetoric. Such strategies continue to play a major role (as modern media research indicates, referred to, in the collection under review, by Rossouw's piece, 2002), but instead of being responsible for creating, praxeologically, the entire political space an actor may have, they only serve to assert and actualise such political space as that actor already, transcendentally, derives from the letter of the law, from political and legal institutions. The praxeology, the dramaturgy and the aesthetics of verbal contests of rhetoric, and the generation of power in such contexts as a mere dextrous display of individual *agency* (as analysed, in the collection here under review, by the Nigerian scholar Ige for Cicero's Catilinarian orations, 2002) tends to be only one side of the medal – the other, necessarily complementary side being established, institutionalised legal authority in the Weberian sense.[361]

In the wake of new Ciceronian scholarship which he cites, Ige presents the famous case of Cicero's four orations against Catiline as a mere verbal contest along rhetorical lines between two individuals, Cicero and Catiline, who are alleged to be essentially each other's exact match. Bringing only Cicero's own text to support this reading (and Cicero is one of the founders of rhetoric; however, there is also Sallust's contemporaneous account of this episode) leads Ige to depart from the traditional reading of the case. That reading has largely been in terms of the challenge of

- a recognised social and political misfit who made a mess of his military commission, had a sex scandal involving a most sacred Vestal virgin, and otherwise was involved in such unsavoury court cases as to be even ineligible to put himself up as a *candidate* for the exalted state office of *consul* (Catiline), by

- one of the two recognised supreme officers of the state (Cicero, who was one of the consuls) deploying – not only his oratorical skill but especially his formal legal powers as constitutionally invested in his exalted office.

Rhetoric does help us understand the taxonomics and the dramatics, the deployment of words and gestures, in such a contest, in other words to see how the letter of the legal word is turned into actually exercised socio-political power. But despite these helpful pointers, the question remains: *Do the praxeological dynamics captured by rhetoric need an indispensable basis of institutionalised legal authority, or can they create power fully at their own impetus?* Perhaps rhetoric was actually more autonomously effective in Cicero's time

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[361] Weber 1969, 1985 / 1919. For an argument on the limitations of agency and the remaining need for a structural and institutional analysis, in the context of African national states and traditional leaders today, see van Binsbergen 2003c.

(when the Roman Republic was collapsing after half a millennium) than (under conditions of far more developed transcendentalisation of the state) in the England of Margaret Thatcher (*pace* Calder 2002), and perhaps (as Ige perceptively suggests, and as can be further articulated in terms of my notion of immanentalism) there is, in this respect, a parallel between Cicero's Rome and a modern African post-colonial state threatened by a military *coup d'état*.

It is time, however, to terminate our excursion into the Ancient world, and to return to our analysis of the TRC's significance in transcendentalist terms.

9.9. *What the immanentalist domain brought to the TRC*

In this connection, let us first pose an utterly, but (see below) understandably forbidden question in the South African context: 'To what extent did the population of South Africa constitute 'one nation' under *apartheid*, and to what extent was it really *one nation* that came to the TRC to be healed (and to be healed by whom, by what, and from what)?'

Drawing on parallels in Greek Antiquity when, in the late 5th c. BCE (long before Aristotle flourished!) the Athenian nation was divided over the differential response (collaboration or patriotism) to the attacking foreign force from Sparta, or proclaiming that the TRC was really about 'how to heal a nation', *etc.* – all this begs the question as to whether South Africa was arguably already one nation under *apartheid*. The aporias of the *apartheid* state play us tricks here and prevent us from giving an unequivocal answer to this question. Apartheid legislation, pass laws, the creation of Bantustans, were all based on the malicious, paper-thin ('transcendent') fiction that only Whites were the lawful citizens of South Africa, and that all others belonged to other nations. The rhetoric (in the vulgar sense) of 'Two Nations' or of a multiplicity of nations was the stock-in-trade of White minority discourse in South Africa and South Central Africa throughout the twentieth century CE, replicated in book titles, journalistic products, administrative divisions, bureaucratic procedures *etc*. Unintentionally, the designation 'rainbow nation' for the democratic, new South Africa (evocative of a plurality of colours, castes, 'races', somatic appearances) still appears to carry a distant echo of such usage. Against this background, admitting that South Africa was *not* one nation under *apartheid* would imply siding with the very forces of *apartheid*. But alternatively, affirming that it *was* a nation even under *apartheid*, would amount to a somewhat unrealistic denial of the gross constitutional and socio-economic inequalities, and of the resulting exclusion, humiliation and resentment to which the vast majority of that alleged 'nation' was reduced.

At any rate, clearly the main purpose of the TRC was *to make South Africa*

much more of a nation. Provided we define what we mean, the idiom of healing is not inappropriate here. Healing may well be defined as the process of cata-lytically facilitating the transition from a defective state to a state of greater completeness: thus, in this connection, from not-yet-a-nation to more-of-a-nation, or to nationhood, *tout court*. Much like a *sangoma* (Southern African diviner-priest) may be said to 'heal a person' spiritually by bringing a human being who is too damaged to count as a full person, into contact with powerful symbols, words, arguments, images for identity and emulation, and by inducing her (or him) to engage in such rituals and concrete practical acts, that she can finally become the person she could not yet be before.[362]

Let us now try to cast some more light on what, outside the transcendental state, would be the informal, immanentalist sphere of everyday life of produc-tion and reproduction – where pain *is* very much an argument, the pain with which babies are born, mothers assume dignity, children grow up, workers and farmers earn their keep, and warriors fight for a good cause –, a sphere which some victims and survivors cannot have failed to bring to the TRC.

In the comparative Africanist perspective we have become aware, since the late 1970s, of the differential degrees in which the modern, transcendentalist central state has actually been able to capture the lives and the minds of its citizens in African contexts. Empirical studies of *state penetration* have shown that, especially in rural areas and in informal urban communities, state penetration is usually the case to a limited extent only.[363]

These findings carry an important message for South Africa as, primarily, an-other African country. One of the most conspicuous, and deceptive, features of the South African situation is that the state, and modern formal organisations in government, services, industry, religion, sports, *etc.*, are so well established and have such a grip on public life, that (for risk of ridicule and anger, and also for the more internalised sanctions that attend collective representations, *i.e.* a community's socially-constructed self-evidences) it is difficult to think of South Africa in other terms than as a fully-fledged modern country, – a country that happens to be in Africa but that should really be counted in the ranks of the North Atlantic region, or of Australia and New Zealand (where, however, som-atically conspicuous descendants of the pre-conquest population, and their cultures, are – already for sheer numbers – much less visible in the public life than is the case in South Africa). South Africa's approchement *vis-à-vis* the sig-

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[362] Archbishop Tutu presided over the first ever meeting TRC hearing under a huge banner whose central text read 'HEALING OUR PAST'. The choice of words is remarkable: one may attempt to heal people, even a nation, from the undesirable effects of the past, but healing something as virtual as *the past* itself can only amount to the attempt to *change* the past, which is not in the nature of things; or to change whatever is painful in the *representation* of the past, which is where rhetoric comes in. Picture at: http://www.megastories.com/safrica/rainbow/finals/truth.htm.

[363] Bratton 1980; Cliffe *et al.* 1977; Geschiere 1984; Hyden 1980; Hyden & Bratton 1992; van Bins-bergen *et al.* 1986; Doornbos & van Binsbergen, in press.

nificant new players in the global economy (Brazil, Russia, India, and China, not necessarily in that standard order informing the acronym BRIC) also points in the direction of an overwhelmingly modern state. It appears to be almost impossible (also for those reflecting in writing on the South African socio-political order, as Southern African intellectuals – perhaps with the exception of left-wing anthropologists) to see through the illusion of the transcendent, self-evident order which this state of affairs engenders, and to entertain, instead, an awareness of immanentalist alternatives: of people who (despite the usual – but manifestly failed – insistence on the part of the *apartheid* state on having pene-trated into, and controlling, all aspects of human life within its territory) do not consciously pattern their life and their self-identity in terms of that transcen-dent order. Here I am referring to the many people (drop-out youths, criminals, the extreme poor in urban and rural contexts) who do not see themselves pri-marily as citizens of the state and participants in the national economy, who are largely strangers to that order and its highly specific procedures,[364] but who instead define themselves in much more idiosyncratic and local terms; and who primarily pursue the symbolic projects proper to their own idiosyncratic / eth-nic local horizons rather than the symbolic projects of the state, national poli-tics, industry, and mass consumption.

Treating the whole of South Africa as effectively one nation has the advantage of avoiding the trap of fragmenting divisiveness which the *apartheid* state has dug, but has the disadvantage of denying and muting of these centrifugal idio-syncrasies.

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[364] The collection here under review offers an interesting case (in the contribution by Collier & Hicks, 2002) of what happens when, taking for granted the utter transcendence of the modern state, procedures of deliberation are introduced there that have no roots in immanent, everyday local experience. When after the lifting of fascism in Portugal in 1974 CE municipal assemblies adopted *Robert's Rules* to structure their internal deliberations, this disadvantaged many of the local delegates because these formal procedures, which USA Army General Roberts had derived from USA Congress procedure in the late 19th century CE, were bewilderingly alien to them. The case is doubly instructive, because, as affirmed USA intellectuals of the late 20th century CE, the two authors Collier & Hicks, from whom this example is derived do themselves not even seem to realise the element of cultural alienness involved here: planting an Anglophone nineteenth-century North American ruling-class set of procedures into a Lusitophone twenti-eth-century popular Southern European environment. Those bewildered in this case became disadvantaged strangers to the political culture they were supposed to carry. We must not assume that the rules and the stakes of the democratic process are the same everywhere and at all times, and immediately obvious to all participants. In most North Atlantic countries democ-racy as representative government through universal franchise is a relatively recent phenome-non, less than a hundred years old – when my grandmothers were born, as citizens of a modern West European state, their access to the franchise was out of the question, and even when my mother was born the same situation obtained although it was to be remedied in a few years' time. Democracy had to be learned from scratch, in ways that differed only slightly, in scope and in time scale, from the ways in which very similar democratic procedures had to be learned by most Africans in the main wave of Independence around 1960, or by South Africans other than Whites in the early 1990s (van Binsbergen 1995).

In my cultural analyses of modern Southern African societies, especially their urban sectors, I have often found it illuminating to depict the situation of historic local culture as one of 'having gone underground' – an imagery akin to that of uncapturedness (Hyden 1980; *cf.* Geschiere 1989). It is not that time-honoured 'traditional' cultural knowledge, and the related practices, have been completely eclipsed by the onslaught of the modern state, education, world religions, the capitalist economy, urbanisation, globalisation, consumerism *etc.* It is rather that the latter complex of forces has created a context in which expressions of historic local culture (such as the allegiance to puberty rites, ancestral cults, High God cults, beliefs and practices relating to sinister aspects attributed to the unseen – witches, familiars, ghosts –, traditional healing, traditional leadership, clan structures – in short, all the things I have been interested in and have engaged in for nearly half a century, both as a researcher and as an adoptive African) *are no longer socially permissible, can no longer be negotiated to the public domain* (except perhaps in some highly fragmented, folklorised, commodified form), without serious negative sanctions for the social actors involved, in terms of ridicule, shame, suspicion, allegations of backwardness, of tribalism, of satanism, *etc.*[365]

The same factors that caused these centrifugal expressions to go underground and to be banned from the public space, have led to their conspicuous absence from mainstream scholarship in South Africa, including that addressing the TRC.

9.10. The TRC as a nation's birth pangs

On the other hand, if one does acknowledge these centrifugal, immanentalist elements (of a linguistic, cultural, ethnic, religious, and lifestyle nature), and if one accepts that they are especially to be found among the South African people of African and Asian background who were the principal victims of *apartheid*, then one must inevitably acknowledge[366] *that different people brought very different things to the TRC.*

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[365] *Cf.* van Binsbergen 1993, 2001, 2003b espec. chs 5 and 6.

[366] As implied, albeit not with specific reference to the TRC, by Collier & Hick (2002):

'Many political disagreements now seem to be rooted in much 'deeper' differences than conflicts of interest. As the cultural and religious diversity of the citizenry grows, through both migration and enfranchisement, the diversity of collective aims, moral outlooks, received knowledges, and worldviews grows. It is no longer reasonable to assume that a shared moral and political framework exists to guide public deliberation and debate. As the new social movements have demonstrated, the political vocabularies used to frame issues and propose solutions as well as the legitimacy of extant procedures for resolving political conflicts, are often the source, rather than the cure, of political disagreement.'

The TRC was, therefore, *not* a well-defined arena where (in ways open to transparent rhetorical analysis) some already established ritual of 'healing the nation through full disclosure and amnesty' could be effectively staged along lines that were clear to all participants, and on which they all agreed. It was primarily (but also that seems to be something rhetoric can handle) a place of utter confusion, staged by people who (as literates, as citizens conscious of their constitutional responsibilities, as academics, as adherents of world religions) identified with the idea of the transcendent state after the imported North Atlantic model, and who saw it as their main task to usher in – though an impromptu bricolage of theater and rhetorics – to greater allegiance to that model, those for whom the transcendent state was far less self-evident: those who were entertaining the centrifugal, idiosyncratic, implicitly African and Asian, orientations indicated above, and whose main life experience with the state had almost destroyed them, to boot, being *apartheid*'s designated targets and victims.

It now finally becomes possible to state what, beyond the content-less, truthless game of rhetoric (but in a formulation that owes a lot to the rhetorical analyses in the collection under review – including the occasional remarks on sacrifice scattered there), and beyond the preservation of White, Christian and elite interests (but in a formulation that also owes a lot to Christianity), may have constituted the true stakes and the true heroism of the TRC:

Of course, the past was not healed. Neither was the nation healed, certainly not in the way Tutu suggested (notably, by freely speaking out without negative consequences for the perpetrators). No, the nation was *born*. Speaking out was no longer the issue. Pain resides, and is domesticated and healed, at a profound inner level where words scarcely penetrate.[367] People who had no reason at all to trust the state, in whatever trappings, yet showed themselves generous and courageous enough to prefer the perpetrators' undeserved amnesty to civil war. The victims and survivors thus sacrificed such revenge as they were entitled to. They could only hope to heal themselves through the act of such generosity – but also, in this very act, *they effectively created the nation of South Africa for the first time*. In doing so, they extended to the perpetrators of *apartheid* once more the humanity which the latter had lost by denying it to their victims. And thus the victims and survivors who spoke during the TRC, affirmed their own humanity (= *ubuntu*, literally), which is the moral hub of any nation, any political system worth considering.

What a huge moral and constitutional responsibility this generates for South Africa's current majority government! What a package for Aristotelian rhetoric yet to accommodate in its attempts to make itself relevant to the world today!

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[367] Here we touch upon a major shortcoming of current, main-stream political analyses: their lack of appreciation of the deeper, subconscious or unconscious levels of the political actors' personality as a determinant of political behaviour. For attempts at remedy, *cf.* Gay 1985; Fromm 1973; Adorno 1950.

9.11. Counter-hegemonic challenge as a principal task for African intellectuals

The rhetoric-inspired reading of the TRC around which the collection here under review revolves, seems to be based on the assumption that the Aristotelian rhetorical perspective, increasingly popular again in recent years, is so *universal* and so *perennial* that applying it to present-day South Africa *is neither an anachronism, nor a distortion, nor an act of naïvety, nor a hegemonic imposition.* Depending upon one's epistemological and political position in the intercontinental construction of knowledge, however, the project of analysing modern South Africa through the spectacles of Aristotelian and Ciceronian rhetoric would not be entirely impervious to such allegations, however much the integrity and the scholarship of the authors involved are beyond doubt – and however much, as we will see below, such allegations can be countered by an higher-order intercultural philosophical argument.

We have already touched on *historical* reasons (specific differences in political structure), for taking a somewhat more relative view of the relevance of Ancient Greek and Roman models for present-day issues. But there are also important *epistemological and knowledge-political* reasons which – far more than the historical ones – relate to the very *raison d'être* of *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy.*

In the course of the twentieth century CE, main-stream North Atlantic philosophy has largely given up the idea of the possibility of a privileged vantage point[368] from where to overlook the world and mankind objectively, dispassionately, and authoritatively.[369] Aristotelian rhetoric, or main-stream Western philosophy in general, cannot be claimed to be such a vantage point any more, – but neither can, of course, any other intellectual perspective, including African philosophy, African political science, African Studies in general, that is brought to bear on the issues at hand. The point is not to deny the validity of any particular perspective, including Aristotelian rhetoric, but to deny any per-

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[368] Popularly referred to as 'the Archimedean point', although this was meant, by Archimedes, as a mathematico-physical, not as an ontological, construct.

[369] For a Foucaultian critique of this illusion, based on the concept of genealogy (which is ultimately Nietzschean), see: Rabinow 1984; Foucault 1977. *Cf.* also Kimmerle 1985b; and: Nietzsche 1968 / 1887. The impossibility of an epistemological Archimedean point is also argued in: Rorty 1979; and from a totally different point of view in: Putnam 1978, 1981. Such impossibility, in other words, is a received idea in modern philosophy. In the Introduction to the present book, however, I point out that, as primarily an empirical social scientist, I have great difficulty entertaining the extreme relativism implied in the impossibility of a privileged vantage point – for me social science theory and method inevitably constitute such a point, and when I take it as my point of departure to consider the attempts at social description and analysis by humanities scholars, literary scientists, philosophers, such attempts can only turn out to be unsatisfactory, leading to invalid and unreliable conclusions. Two decades of philosophical practice have not been sufficient, alas, to make me solve this blatant contradiction.

spective's claim to a monopoly of validity.

Meanwhile, especially with regard to Africa, universalist claims emanating from the North Atlantic tradition cannot fail to arouse deep-seated sensitivities. It is only two centuries ago that Hegel – still considered a giant of the Western philosophical tradition, usually without further questions being asked – denied Africa a proper place in the history of mankind.[370] And it is less than half a century since the prominent British historian Trevor-Roper *appears* to have expressed himself in similar fashion.[371] Ever since the Renaissance, Europe has constructed its own exalted image of itself by contrasting it with a correspondingly negative image of Africa and its inhabitants – the *Invention of Africa* (Mudimbe) has amounted to the construction of North Atlantic identity, culture, history, science, philosophy, religion, and statehood, by denying these same achievements to Africans (Mudimbe 1988, *cf.* 1994a; Bernal 1987). The denial and the suppression of African knowledge, initiative, dignity, language, culture and identity were ubiquitous aspects of the colonial experience in Africa, including post-conquest South Africa, and of White racialism *vis-à-vis* persons of African descent in Europe and the New World. Needless to say, the inhabitants of the other continents received very much the same treatment at the hands of Europeans and of the latter's descendants in the Americas. Complementing

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[370] *Cf.* Hegel 1992 / 1986 / 1822-1831 : 120 *f.*:

> 'Jenes eigentliche Afrika ist, soweit die Geschichte zurückgeht, für den Zusammenhang mit der übrigen Welt verschlossen geblieben; es ist das in sich gedrungene Goldland, das Kinderland, das jenseits des Tages der selbtsbewusten Geschichte in die schwarze Farbe der Nacht gehüllt ist. Seine Verschlossenheid liegt nicht nur in seiner tropischen Natur, sondern wesentlich in seiner geographischen Beschaffenheit. (...) Der eigentümlich afrikanische Charakter ist darum schwer zu fassen, weil wir dabei ganz auf das Verzicht leisten mussen, was bei uns in jeder Vorstellung mit unterläuft, die Kategorie der Allgemeinheit. Bei den Negern ist namlich das Charakterische gerade, das ihr Bewußtsein noch nicht zur Anschauung irgendeiner festen Objektivität gekommen ist'.

For a critical distance from the perspective of modern intercultural philosophy, *cf.* Keita 1974; Kimmerle 1993; Verharen 1997; also Eze 1997a, 1997b; Homann 2001.

[371] Appears, for I will qualify such an allegation. H.R. Trevor-Roper, then Regius Professor of History at Oxford, United Kingdom, and about to be knighted Baron Dacre of Glanton, said in a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television broadcast in 1963:

> 'Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But, at present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness, like the history of pre-Columbian America, and darkness is not a subject for history' (published in Trevor-Roper 1965).

Trevor-Roper has often been paraded as the arch-colonialist and racist who (like Hegel) denied Africa its history. However, in vindication we may plead, firstly, that Trevor-Roper here expressed himself – in the best tradition of British empiricist scholarship – on the then undeniable *unavailability of high-quality African historiography* rather than (like Hegel did) on the *ontological impossibility for Africans to have history or histories*; and, secondly, that one of his students has been Terence Ranger, who became a great historian of Africa, contributing to the creation of precisely what Trevor-Roper claimed did not yet exist but might exist in future.

Mudimbe and parallel to his work, South Asia particularly has produced its own highly illuminating and highly indignant reflection on these processes, in the form of Post-colonial Theory, where 'hegemony' and 'the subaltern' are key concepts.[372] In the collection here under review, only Nethersole (2002) makes reference, dismissively, to this set of ideas, however much they form the obvious context to look at formerly colonised societies. And even[373] Africanist anthropology, which through its elaborate methodologies of field-work would tend to claim that it has avoided the violence of representation that is otherwise inherent to North-South knowledge construction, could be (and has been) argued to have fallen into the same hegemonic subordination of Africans and their life worlds.

9.12. Intercultural knowledge between universalism and particularism

Without elaborate preparation and protection, one cannot simply send Aristotle into such a global mine field, and trust that he will escape unscathed.

The present Chapter provides, *inter alia*, such preparation and protection. For there is at least one attractive perspective under which the rhetoricians' appeal to Aristotle in order to illuminate current South African conditions need not be hegemonic nor suspect, – even though Europe has constructed itself by monopolising the Ancient Greek heritage, and by dissimulating the fact that this heritage in itself was greatly indebted to Asia and Africa.

Philosopher of science Sandra Harding[374] has cogently argued that the claim of modern, North-Atlantic-dominated, science of being objective, rational, and universal, is *largely* a myth springing from the fact of North Atlantic actual (or rather, yesterday's) hegemony in the economic, political and military field. *Largely – but not entirely*, and after elaborate attempts to argue the opposite, she has to admit that, especially in the natural sciences, the truth claimed by science is at least *partly* justified, *i.e.* is at least *partly* underpinned by the validity of its epistemological procedures, independently from such power as the North Atlantic region is capable (or used to be capable) of investing in its science, or is capable of deriving from its science. Identifying with women in science, and with workers in science other than from the North Atlantic region, Harding sees her qualified conclusion as a reason for hope and as empowerment for these long excluded groups. By contrast, yielding to the post-modern tendency towards complete fragmentation and relativism (as if anything else

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[372] *Cf.* Bhabha 1986, 1995; Rattansi 1994; Spivak 1987, 1988, 1990.

[373] This is the *Leitmotiv* in: van Binsbergen 2003b.

[374] Harding 1997; *cf.* van Binsbergen 2002b, reprinted in the present book as Chapter 13.

were a suspiciously 'pre-post-modern' Grand Narrative in Lyotard's 1979 sense) she sees as unacceptable disempowerment: as if global scientific knowledge, long wielded by North Atlantic males as their main source of power, all of a sudden has to be declared useless and merely local, as merely an *ethnoscience* among myriad others, *at the very moment that previously excluded groups* (women, Blacks, representatives of the South, and of the working classes) *begin to gain access to such knowledge*.[375]

Harding's argument exemplifies the tension of universalism ('Aristotle is universally applicable and universally illuminating') versus particularism ('Aristotle applies only with regard to Ancient Greece and not to Africa today'), between which intercultural scholarship situates itself.[376] Many centuries of scholarly transcendentalism have made it utterly uncomfortable for us as globally-orientated modern intellectuals to live (at least, to live *professionally*) with what yet makes up the standard experience of social life and what is practically accommodated as such in the immanentalism of informality: *contradiction*. In the quest for *consistency at the level of words* (which is the main compelling constraint attending our scholarly texts), we are inclined to try and lift the contradiction by destroying either of the two poles between which it is stretched and creates tension. However, when seeking to make textual sense of the complex phenomena of our global life world by bringing to bear upon these phenomena points of view and modes of thought from a plurality of life worlds belonging to different locations in space and time, our very difficult task is not to destroy the contradiction, but to make the best of it, indeed to thrive by it, in an act of balancing and negotiation. In this specific case this means both qualifying Aristotle's alleged universality, and yet identifying the specific conditions under which his thought would be illuminating beyond Ancient Greece, and could even be applied to Africa today. Lest North Atlantic scholars be suspected that what they have cherished for centuries while they could still monopolise it, loses its attraction for them now that they have to share it transcontinentally, let them *not* throw Aristotle out at the very moment in history when African and Asians have gained the scholarly access to expertly read, criticise and apply Aristotle.

And let African and Asian scholars act in the same spirit. If 'The master of those who know'[377] can be seen as part of mankind's shared, global heritage of thought, then there is no reason why he should not be applied to African conditions. But then, of course, it can also be admitted that the great gap that separates Athens and the TRC in time and space, realistically requires major adapta-

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[375] The argument appeals to me, for although all my other loyalties (as an adoptive African, perhaps a feminist) may have been optional, *Wahlverwandtschaften* acquired in the course of my conscious life, my class position was determined when I was born in an Amsterdam slum, and it has formed the unmistakable basis on which to develop these other loyalties.

[376] *Cf.* van Binsbergen 2003b.

[377] Dante, *La Divina Commedia, Inferno* IV: 131, referring to Aristotle as:

'...'l maestro di color che sanno'.

tions, as well as an awareness of genuine differences – and such adaptations and such awareness are missing from the collection here under review. In an inclusive, global perspective Aristotle's thought could not remain un-adapted, let alone that it could be thought of as sacrosanct and all-explaining. Therefore, the application of Aristotle in a modern African context could never be a one-way process, conducted by scholars who know all about Aristotle, nearly all about formal legal texts as produced in formal, bureaucratic legal settings under the aegis of the transcendent state – and virtually nothing about the life worlds, the cosmologies, the languages, kinship systems, political and legal institutions, day-to-day struggles, pastimes, religious, artistic, culinary, sexual expressions, *etc.*, of the African people whose life is *considerably* affected by such formal settings (but far from *completely* determined – my refrain of centrifugal immanentalism again: state penetration, in South Africa and throughout the African continent, has its limits). Considering the sensitivities attending the situation, the suggestion of another hegemonic assault, this time in the name of Aristotle and rhetoric, must be avoided at all cost. Hence this Postscript to the collection under review.

In other words, from the same inclusive, global perspective, we need also to admit and explore in concrete terms (as a complement to Aristotle, and perhaps as an antidote to his thought) the continued relevance of African models for African life, and the potential relevance of comparative Africanist models, not only to other parts of Africa but also to the rest of the world.

9.13. Learning from the rest of Africa in order to better understand South Africa

The point is, therefore, *not* that the contributors to the collection under review (which, as is relevant at this point, contains a strikingly subtle analysis of intercultural communications and deliberations, in the contribution by Collier & Hicks 2002) should be faulted for advocating a rhetoric-based perspective; *the point is that they have just left it to others to sort out how that perspective could be combined with other valuable perspectives such as the anti-hegemonic and comparative Africanist one.* Considering the great investments of expertise and experience already needed to cover one field of scholarship, such an academic division of labour is perfectly acceptable, provided that other disciplines, other perspectives, other political commitments, other identities, move in, in order to complement and complete what rhetoricians on the strength of their own disciplinary impetus cannot adequately cover or represent – probably can not even know, or imagine.

What could we learn then, finally, if we complemented a rhetorical perspective with a comparative Africanist one?

1. It would bring us to explore the specifically *African* forms of rhetoric, such as employed in traditional African polities and in African traditional courts of law (also, albeit in modified form, in South Africa), and would throw additional light on the modalities of story-telling and of public construction of truths that constituted the TRC exercise.[378]

2. It would allow us to identify and study, in addition to the Christian models informing Archbishop Tutu's TRC frame of reference, and the Athenian models informing Salazar's, Cassin's and Garver's rhetorical analyses of reconciliation in the present collection, specifically *African* forms of reconciliation, and appreciate that these have constituted, for centuries, 'African technologies of sociability' of great and proven effectiveness.[379] If such models were not explicitly mobilised in the TRC exercise, they may yet have been implied in what some of the victims and survivors brought to its sessions – implied, but unwelcome, and swept under the carpet.

3. It would have made us realise that the widely attested failure of the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy throughout postcolonial Africa suggests deep-seated structural incompatibilities. In view of our argument so far, we can now suggest that these incompatibilities have to do with the impossibility of planting a modern state in a local context so saturated with immanentalism that the transcendence of the state finds insufficient support there (mainly, but not exclusively, because of a difference in mode of thought, but also for historical reasons: because of the pain inflicted by earlier experiences with the state). This would make us think twice before arguing, as a matter of course and as an automatism, the obvious applicability of the original, Athenian model of democracy, or of the modern Westminster model, to South Africa, as another part of Africa. In particular (since evidently, these incompatibilities exist at the level of socio-political structure, not of individual innate ability) it would force us to reflect on the *structural preconditions for transcendence* (through effective and prolonged participation in a viable state and in viable formal organisations – in such fields as health services, education, religious life, sports and other recreations –, high

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[378] African rhetoric: *cf.* Bloch 1975; Knowles-Borishade 1991; Finnegan 1970. Also *cf.* Comaroff 1975, for traditional oratory in the South African context; van Binsbergen *c.s.* 2003a, with extensive bibliography, for studies of traditional leadership and customary law in Africa; Oomen 2003 for an insightful study of South African rural local courts.

[379] van Binsbergen 1999e – delivered as an address at, of all places (and meeting with a lot of opposition there!), the Human Sciences Research Council at Pretoria, South Africa (once the think-tank of apartheid, now the neural centre of designing South Africa's democratic future), revised version incorporated in van Binsbergen 2003b: 349-374; *cf.* van Binsbergen 2003b: Introduction, pp. 32 *f.*

and sustained levels of literacy (including, under modern conditions, digitial literacy), effective divulgation of modern cosmopolitan science), and to redirect citizenship training accordingly.

4. It would have made us explore – in addition to the Athenian democratic model which has been effectively (albeit at the price of considerable misrepresentation) appropriated by the North Atlantic tradition (and which, therefore, is difficult to detach from Eurocentrism) – *historic African ways of going about democracy, popular participation, social and political justice, constitutional law, dating from before the imposition of the transcendental colonial state, and in part surviving* (in more or less adulterated, neo-traditionally encapsulated, and perverted, forms) *in the niches of the colonial and the post-colonial state*. Africanist political anthropology (some of whose finest classic products[380] happen to deal with Southern Africa) and African philosophy (including the *ubuntu* variant) have done much to put these African political forms and conventions on the map. We cannot simply ignore their existence. Neither can we be so naïve as to take for granted that in the national reconstruction of post-*apartheid* South Africa such African elements are necessarily without the slightest relevance, and are completely absent from the minds and the feelings of especially the survivors and victims of *apartheid* – many of whom have retained (within the local horizons that are the home of immanentalism) a modicum of knowledge of and of allegiance to time-honoured Southern African cultural traditions. (Again we must add: 'in whatever selected, newly-invented, or perverted way' – of course, the point is very sensitive since a major strategy of the *apartheid* state was to justify the spatial, social and constitutional distinctiveness not only between Whites and Blacks but also between Blacks, by artificially furthering the ethnic distinctions between Black Africans of various designations, in a policy of *divide and rule* that, in retrospect, has made any expression of historic local or regional cultural identity in South Africa today, suspect as a possible product of the *apartheid* state, however belated). Characteristically, *sangomas*, although specialists in the dynamics of collective healing and reconciliation at the level of the kin group and the local community in Southern Africa, were virtually absent from the TRC process, while also the concept of *ubuntu* was used only very sparingly in that context.

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[380] *E.g.* Gluckman 1958, 1969; Krige & Krige 1943; Kuper 1969; Schapera 1938, 1943, 1963, 1970.

9.14. Conclusion

I have attempted to show how the project of the collection *Truth in Politics* (Salazar *et al.* 2002), while at first superficial glance appearing to deal with abstruse topics of limited applicability (a reading of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in terms of Aristotelian rhetoric), in fact addresses phenomena of the greatest significance for the African continent as a whole, thus taking up major debates in *Quest* over the years:

- the reflection on the philosophical canon (in this case: Aristotle and rhetoric);

- the development of an African philosophy

    - that is relevant to major current transformations on the African continent – in this case the viability of the state, democracy, reconciliation and freedom;

    - that is critically and radically aware of its hegemonic context;

    - and that yet situates itself globally, in the field of tension between the universal and the particular.

In this way, this Chapter's argument has both situated, and vindicated, the collection under review, and has offered a manifesto that could inspire the future volumes of *Quest*.

And it did!

Chapter 10

The eclectic scientism of Félix Guattari

Africanist anthropology as both critic and potential beneficiary of his thought

Looking at Guattari's work (often in combination with Deleuze's) from the cross-roads of philosophy and cultural anthropology, this Chapter sets out by situating Guattari within the modern awareness that the subject as a construct is specific in time and place. The subject produced by late-capitalist technocratic society faces specific predicaments which Guattari's work helps us to identify and partly remedy. Guattari favours an aestheticising over a scientific knowledge paradigm, in a bid to deprogram such schizogenic effects as modern subjectivity entails. This renders his use of language and concepts kaleidoscopic and brings it close to that of New Age. *His eclectic, and playfully superficial, poetic appropriation of domains of knowledge in the first place addresses the natural sciences and mathematics, but also extends to anthropology, and there it turns out to be remarkably alterising and dated. Yet, despite these negative points, his work is of great positive significance for anthropology today. It offers us a rich and liberating perspective on identity and globalisation, virtuality and the culture of capitalism; it helps us to develop an anthropology of n o n - meaning, of violence, and of the subconscious. It points the way to a post-hegemonic aesthetics of anthropological field-work. In general, its insistence on deprogramming leads to a re-evaluation of art as a crucial factor for the future, but – besides art – also stresses the intercultural nature of anthropological knowledge production. Even so, the argument situates itself in a field of tension between the ludic liberation advocated by Guattari, and the intersubjective, collectively managed formats, procedures, and methodologies of knowledge production, on which scientific truth claims depend, also in anthropology – and to which Guattari fails to live up.*

10.1. Introduction: The historicity of subjectivity[381]

Since the 1960s post-structuralism has constituted the main form of Continental philosophy, and after the initial success of Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard, we have seen the rise to fame of Giles Deleuze (1925-1995) and the psychiatrist-philosopher Félix Guattari (1930-1992)– who published several major books together.[382] Guattari, on whom we shall concentrate in this Chapter, may be situated in a fairly unique field of tension defined by:

- therapy
- Marxist-orientated political engagement and activism
- theory (notably the theory and analysis of symbols), and finally
- art

In this way Guattari has taken very seriously the common dream of Marxist intellectuals in the 1960s-1980s, – a dream aspiring to the responsible and relevant union of theory and praxis, of theoretical social analysis and a concrete research praxis which would be a political praxis at the same time, and in which the reductionist shortcomings of the Marxist approach to symbols would be overcome.

What most inspired Guattari to the elaboration of his ideas on these points was the therapeutic environment of La Borde near Paris, France. Largely a creation of Guattari in the first place, La Borde was a laboratory for the exploration of freedom, deprogramming, for breaking out of schizoid compulsive repetition –hope-inspiring achievements which Guattari also recognises more in general in art and in other creative forms of what he calls 'reterritorialisation'. Therefore, an extensive description of what Guattari considered essential in La Borde provides us with a key to his thinking on the meaning of creativity in the present era:

> 'Social ecology and mental ecology have found privileged sites of exploration in the experiences of institutional psychotherapy. I am obviously thinking of the clinic at La Borde, where I have worked for a long time; everything there is set up so that psychotic patients live in a climate of activity and assume responsibility, not only with the goal of developing an ambience of communication, but also in order to create local centres for collective subjectivation. Thus it's not simply a matter of remodelling a patient's subjectivity – as it existed before a psychotic crisis – but of a production *sui generis*. For example, certain psychotic patients, coming from poor agricultural backgrounds, will be invited to take up plastic arts, drama, video, music, *etc*., whereas until then, these universes had been unknown to them. On the other hand, bureaucrats and intellectuals will find themselves attracted to material work, in the kitchen, garden, pottery, horse riding club. The important thing here is not only the confrontation with a new

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[381] Many of the themes discussed in the present argument have been more extensively treated in my Rotterdam inaugural address: van Binsbergen 1999a / 2003b: ch. 15; and in van Binsbergen 2007b, reprinted in the present volume as Chapter 13.

[382] Deleuze & Guattari 1972 / 1977; Deleuze & Guattari 1980 / 1987; and, written earlier but published much later: Deleuze & Guattari 1991.

material of expression, but the constitution of complexes of subjectivation: multiple exchanges between individual-group-machine. These complexes actually offer people diverse possibilities for recomposing their existential corporeality, to get out of their repetitive impasses and, in a certain way, to re-singularise themselves. Grafts of trans-ference[383] operate in this way, not issuing from ready-made dimensions of subjectivity crystallised into structural complexes, but from a creation which itself indicates a kind of aesthetic paradigm. One creates new modalities of subjectivity in the same way that an artist creates new forms from the palette. In such a context, the most heterogeneous components may work towards a patient's positive evolution: relations with architectural space; economic relations; the co-management by patient and carer of the different vectors of treatment; taking advantage of all occasions opening onto the outside world; a processual exploitation of event-centred 'singularities' – everything which can contribute to the creation of an authentic relation with the other. To each of these components of the caring institution there corresponds a necessary practice. We are not confronted with a subjectivity given as in itself, but with processes of the realisation of autonomy, or of autopoiesis...' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 6 *f*.)

Central in Guattari's work is the reflection on subjectivity, and on the historical processes that produce, contest and subjugate subjectivity. He defines subjectivity as:

'The ensemble of conditions which render possible the emergence of individual and / or collective instances as self-referential existential Territories, adjacent, or in a delimiting relation, to an alterity that is itself subjective.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 9)

With Deleuze, with Foucault (who *vis-à-vis* Guattari combines both unmistakable distance, and considerable kinship of thought)[384] – and incidentally also with Lyotard even though the latter is not mentioned by Guattari in this connection,[385] – Guattari demands attention for the *non*-human ('machinic') side of subjectivity. The latter lies, among other things, in language and in the mass media. Guattari's emphasis on this point contains an obvious lesson for cultural anthropology, which (on the basis of a philosophically under-analysed conception of man as is endemic in that branch of social science) tends to overemphasise the constructability, the nature of being constructed, of culture, and the volitional dimension of the formation of patterns in individual behaviour.[386] However, beyond language and mass media, Guattari identifies capitalism as the main force working on subjectivity – for capitalism produces a highly specific form of subjectivation subservient to capitalism; we shall come back to this below.

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[383] As a psychiatrist, Guattari here specifically refers to transference between client and therapist as a central tool, but also a main stumbling-block, of psychoanalysis. In transference, the inner conflicts of the client deceptively appear as if embodied by the person of the therapist, and those of the therapist as if embodied in the client.

[384] *Cf*. Guattari 1992: 207 *f*.; Guattari in interview, as quoted in: Stivale 1993.

[385] Elsewhere Guattari does mention Lyotard, notably where the former takes a distance from the latter's characterisation of the post-modern condition; *cf*. Guattari 1989: 56; *cf*. Lyotard 1979. On the many parallels between Lyotard's and Guattari's work especially in the period of the latter's collaboration with Deleuze, see: Oosterling 1996: 562, 586.

[386] Guattari 1995 / 1992: 9.

Typical of Guattari's work as a post-structuralist, post-modern philosopher is the awareness that *there can be no privileged position from which the philosopher (or the empirical researcher, for that matter) surveys the world and constructs authority for his or her pronouncements*. The opposite position is implied in systematic philosophies and in dominant paradigms within mainstream disciplines of empirical research – their edifices of theory, method and consistency are in fact meant to constitute such privileged positions, as a basis for scientific truth claims. Much of the charm of Guattari's work resides in his essentially unpretentious, yet egotistic and pedestrian positioning, in which he poetically uses the results of scientific work while making light with all method and paradigmatic control. For a critic this has worrying implications, for whereas the critic's field of expertise and erudition would implicitly appear, to himself, as a privileged position from which to pass a devastating judgement on Guattari, a more congenial reading of the latter's work would tend to evaporate such authority, and reduce the critical encounter to a strictly personal, idiosyncratic duel between antagonists who have no other claim to validity than the ephemeral paper tigers of their verbal constructs; as if they were divine tricksters in combat in African or Native American folktales. This would be an adequate definition of the critical encounter that constitutes the present Chapter, if only the choice of weapons and the definition of the rules of criticism were entirely left to one of the two combatants, to Guattari. At the same time impressed and irritated by Guattari's work, and with considerable sympathy for the overall post-modern philosophical position he represents, I have attempted to steer a middle course, in which my own professional experience as an anthropologist and an intercultural philosopher is not so much taken as a privileged position, but as a more or less arbitrary vantage point from which to interrogate Guattari's work, without the pretension that in this way I could arrive at some valid final judgment. It is in line with this self-positioning that I will find much that is wrong with Guattari's treatment of anthropology, yet will conclude my discussion by pointing out the several ways in which anthropology could benefit from Guattari. Even so, the entire argument situates itself in a field of tension between the ludic liberation advocated by Guattari, and the collectively managed formats and methodologies of knowledge production, on which scientific truth claims depend, also in anthropology.

10.2. Between natural science and the poetics of magic: Guattari's 'scientistic' style of writing and thinking

For Guattari (and in this respect he is an exponent of modern Freud criticism) the psychoanalytical schemas as presented by Freud are merely human inventions, and not the revelation of objective scientific facts. These schemas introduce new ways of generating experiences (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 10.). Guattari

also sees his own psychiatric explorations, his own 'schizo-analytical mappings', not as scientific theory but rather as essays indicative of the interaction between the human creative mind and the surrounding world:

> 'Just as an artist borrows from his precursors and contemporaries the traits which suit him, I invite those who read me to take or reject my concepts freely.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 12)

source: http://www.langlab.wayne.edu/CStivale/D-G/D%26G.gif, with thanks

Fig. 10.1. Giles Deleuze (left) and Félix Guattari.

This means that the main thrust of Guattari's writings is not primarily scientific, but in his own words *ethico-aesthetic*, for which I propose to substitute the term *'scientistic'*.[387]

> 'My perspective involves shifting the human and social sciences from scientific paradigms towards ethico-aesthetic paradigms. It's no longer a question of determining

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[387] The suffix '-istic' is often used as an intensity marker, indicating that the entity in question displays to an excessive degree the usual characteristics indicated by the adjective, *e.g.* 'sociologistic', *i.e.* 'not allowing any other explanation but a sociological one'. In my own usage here, however, the suffix conveys an aestheticising, decontextualised caricature of original meaning.

whether the Freudian Unconscious or the Lacanian Unconscious provide scientific answers to the problems of the psyche. From now on these models, along with the others, will only be considered in terms of the production of subjectivity – inseparable as much from the technical and institutional apparatuses which promote it as from their impact on psychiatry, university teaching or the mass media … In a more general way, one has to admit that every individual and social group conveys its own system of modelising subjectivity: that is, a certain cartography – composed of cognitive references as well as mythical, ritual and symptomatological references – with which it positions itself in relation to its affects and anguishes, and attempts to manage its inhibitions and drives.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 10 f.)

Guattari goes very far in choosing an aestheticising instead of a mainstream scientific paradigm. For in the pursuit of his essayist type of intellectual production, he employs, of all possible literary material, a genre of scientising writing, full of formulas, diagrams, schemas, matrixes *etc*. The result is disconcertingly hard to distinguish from the language of *New Age*. For Guattari the elementary particles of physics, the remotest galaxies and the Big Bang, constitute just as obvious subject matter for his nervous, compelling, kaleidoscopic, incessantly argumentative style of discourse, as the violent events at the 天安門廣場 Tiananmen Square, 北京 Beijing 1989, or the East-Block politics of the sometime American President Ronald Reagan. As we see, Guattari philosophises for topicality rather than for eternity – and topicality rapidly gets stale. His scientism consists in that he employs the language and imagery of science, not because these are supposed to represent some impersonal and lasting truth, but because, aesthetically, they produce seductive language that is, at the same time, inspiring to action. *The point of knowledge, for Guattari, is not that it coincides with truth but that it indicates the road to freedom.*

Personally I have a considerable problem with such language use full of natural scientific, philosophical and political *names-dropping*, with incessant kaleidoscopic effects. Such language use has for me the same combination of on the one hand forbidden, almost libidinous fascination, and on the other hand overt rejection and disgust, as the language of astrology – whose history and worldwide distribution I have studied intensely over the last two decades in the context of a large comparative and historical research project intended to help me situate globally major African forms of divination. Both forms of language use constitute some sort of *pornography of science*.

Nonetheless we must be conscious of a huge difference, which limits the comparability of today's astrology and today's natural science to the extent to which the latter is being appropriated by Guattari. The surprisingly massive[388] production of astrology in the North Atlantic region today is rightly called 'pseudo-science', because – even though astrology once started, in the Ancient Near East four

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[388] In early 2009, the Google Internet search machine returned, under the search term 'astrology' (in English alone) 40,000,000 pages, the more specific 'Western astrology' (likewise just in English) still returned 489,000 pages (retrieved 5-1-2009).

thousand years ago, as the spearhead of *proto-science* at the time, and even though astrology was still taught as a university subject in the 18th century CE – already a few centuries ago astrology as a branch of systematic knowledge production detached itself, as a self-contained and self-referential system, entirely from the collective, critical and academically managed, disciplinary canons of the theory and method of science. In Barthes' characterisation of astrology today:

> 'Elle sert à exorciser le réel en le nommant. (...) L'astrologie est la litérature du monde petit-bourgeois.'[389]

Astrology thus could be (but is not...) a good example of what in Guattari's terminology would be called *de*territorialisation (perhaps to be translated as 'uprootedness'?): *a closed system that does not, or does no longer, produce knowledge for freedom*.

> L. MODERN ASTROLOGY AS DETERRITORIALISED IN GUATTARI'S SENSE? In my book *Intercultural encounters* (van Binsbergen 2003: ch. 7), I cast doubt upon such an argument. I do this, not by attributing any direct veridicity to the proclaimedly professional procedures of modern astrology *per se*, but by describing how a professional astrologist in practice seems to arrive at his or her pronouncements. Under the appearance of astronomical, unequivocal exactitude, a plethora of astrological 'planets' including Sun, Moon, Earth, and merely mathematically defined points such as Lunar Nodes and Midheaven, activate a network of extremely complex and usually massively contradictory correspondences. This produces such a 'superabundance of understanding' (*cf.* Werbner 1973) that, in the absence of any consistent and unequivocal result, the astrologist, making creative use of the many degrees of freedom which the astrological system allows for (so much for deterritorialisation!), actively designs a selective compromise of contradictions, in which that astrologer's own knowledge and intuition about the client and the latter's situation prevail in such a way that the final pronouncement strikes that client as revealing and relevant, positively inspiring further action. (This does sound as Guattari!) There also, on the basis of my practice of 25 years as an effective and successful African diviner, I have initiated an argument that in subsequent years has gradually taken more definite shape (*cf.* Chapter 14 of the present volume; and van Binsbergen, *Sangoma Science, in preparation*): a central implication of modern quantum mechanics is that there is an inextricable threesome consisting of (1) our measurement results, (2) ourselves as experimenters, and (3) the world, therefore our thought is actively and in the most literal sense *world-creating – the world (which is protean beyond human understanding anyway) may, to a considerable extent, turn to us the face that corresponds with the mindset in which we approach it*; if our mindset is that of nineteenth-century CE (*i.e.* Newtonian, pre-quantum and pre-relativity) natural science, astrology can only return results that appear to us illusory and meaningless, but if we approach the world with the mindset of astrologers of the Ancient Near East or the European Renaissance, the world may turn to us that particular face that is more or less in line with the assumptions of astrology. And, as I found in my own divinatory practice over the years, the same can be said of African geomantic divination, where much to my surprise and contrary to all my expectations as a highly trained social scientist and expert statistician, my divination usually turned out to be veridical.

In the course of the last three centuries, science and technology have totally transformed the world (especially North Atlantic society and its worldwide socio-

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[389] Barthes 1957: 168; *cf.* van Binsbergen 2003b: 244.

cultural satellites), in such a way that science and technology have (in a way cogently argued by Foucault) supplanted religion as the central legitimating, truth-producing and hence world-creating factor. For Guattari this implies that science and technology, too, are *deterritorialised* fortresses of unfreedom *par excellence*.[390] His playful, essentially artistic, superficial and nominal appropriation of today's science must then be seen, I suggest, primarily as an attempt of *reterritorialising* (towards the service of freedom) this recently emerged omnipotence – Guattari's own freedom in the first place. In other words, in an attempt to break open what he experiences as the suffocating framework of our time and age, Guattari turns, courageously and deliberately, science that is disciplinarily valid to begin with, into a form of pseudo-science, into pornography of thought.

In *Chaosmosis*, Guattari's main book that was not co-authored, Guattari states that his worldview has four dimensions, which he defines as follows:

> 'En raison d'une segmentation des axes de deterritorialisation et de discursivité, sur laquelle je reviendrai plus loin, le Plan de Consistance se trouve divisé en quatre domaines de consistances:
>
> - les Flux energetico-signalétiques (F.), dont les entités sont disposées en Complexions;
> - les Phylum machiniques abstraits (P.), dont les entités sont disposées en Rhizomes;
> - les Territoires existentiels (T.), dont les entités sont disposées en Decoupes;
> - les Univers incorporels (U.), dont les entités sont disposées en Constellations.'
> (Guattari 1989: 80)

Here appears the following intriguing figure which would be just as much in place in a magical handbook (it is reminiscent of the ubiquitous, Hermetic Ourobouros snake biting its rear end):

The relationships which Guattari claims to exist between these dimensions and their various manifestations are described in a language that is strongly reminiscent of electronics and the mechanics of fluids (as branches of physics). In my opinion, Guattari, a psychiatrist by training, uses such a scientistic terminology, not because they constitute a discourse about the world that he eminently understands and endorses, and that comes to him automatically (as it would to a professional physicist); nor primarily for the economy of expression through the use of compact but highly significant scientific notation; nor in the hope of sharing in the powers of persuasion which any manifestations of the scientific may claim in public opinion today, on the grounds identified by Fou-

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[390] Thus, although he does cite the great theoretician of prehistoric technology Leroi-Gourhan (whose works include Leroi-Gourhan 1943, 1945, 1958, 1961 / 1964, 1964), Guattari ignores the common argument that *technology in itself* is primarily liberating, since it progressively reduces humankind's vulnerability in the face of the body's dependence on food and shelter, dramatically increases the distance over which human beings can be effective as communicators, food producers *etc.*, and over which they can exert force, even violence, far exceeding the muscle power of their own bodies.

cault; but primarily as a form of poetical emulation.
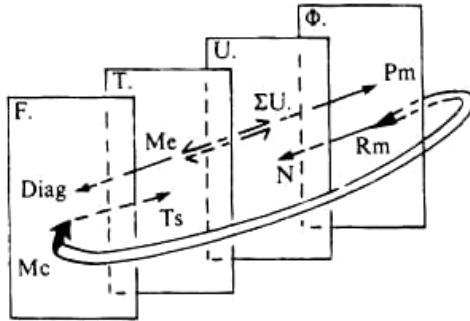
'Feuilletage des quatre niveaux de quantification intensive' (Guattari 1989: 80)

Fig. 10.2. The four dimensions of Guattari's reality.

Guattari's case does not stand alone. Much figurative use, and unmistakable misuse, has been made in the twentieth century CE by philosophers, social and literary scientists, and poets, of natural science and mathematical concepts and theories such as Gödel's theorem, Planck's constant (concerning the discontinuous, stepwise transitions between quanta), Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, the laws of large numbers such as formulated first by Bernouilli and later Poisson, entropy as indicated by the Second Law of Thermodynamics, 'the principle of least effort', chaos theory, *etc.*[391] Some of the most characteristic literary expressions of our time have been engendered by the desire to appropriate, and to aesthetically exorcise into poetic images, the cold formulas – however poorly understood – of the most prestigious, best financed, and most threatening branches of academic, industrial and military knowledge production. To this trend we owe, for instance, some of the finest poems of the Dutch poet Gerrit Achterberg:

'...Wat eenmaal plaats gehad heeft kan niet meer ontkomen aan 't verbruikte kwantum tijd dat het gebonden houdt als water zuurstof.	'...What once took place can never more escape the quantum of time it has used up remaining locked in it like oxygen in water
Maar als de stroom van het gedicht zijn vuurslag door de verbinding slaat wordt gij bevrijd van 't eeuwig onherroepelijk weleer.'[392]	But when the poem's current strikes its flint right through the bond, then Thou art liberated from the eternal past that cannot be revoked.'

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[391] This is not the place for an extensive discussion, but the examples are there for the taking, including: Teilhard de Chardin 1955; Zipf 1965; Jung & Pauli 1971 / 1952 – this contains Jung's famous, or notorious, discussion of his concept of *synchronicity*; Mendes 1997; Best 1991.

[392] The two tercines of the poem 'Electrolyse' from the collection *Doornroosje*, in: Achterberg 1963: 617; my English translation.

As the physicists Sokal and Bricmont[393] have demonstrated with a literalist lack of humour and of imagination that makes a caricature of their profession, this trend has yielded us some of the most cryptic pages of the most prominent French philosophers, including Lacan, Kristeva, Irigaray, Latour, Baudrillard, Virilio, and... Deleuze & Guattari. It can hardly come as a surprise that the latter have received an entire chapter in Sokal & Bricmont's book *Impostures intellectuelles*.[394]

It is remarkable that Sokal & Bricmont (naïvely celebrating what they think is their privileged position as professional scientists)[395] could do no better than mechanically check the philosophical use of terms against the conventional meaning of these terms in their original context of physics and mathematics. The reader who lacks a natural science background and hopes that Sokal & Bricmont will enlighten him on the conceptual implications of the scientistic philosophical language use, is in for considerable disappointment. To drive home his devastating criticism of such language use, Sokal wrote a parody of it under the *turbo* title 'Transgressing the boundaries: Toward a transformative hermeneutics of quantum gravity' and – oh triumph –succeeded in having this parody accepted as a serious article in the prominent philosophical journal *Social Text*.[396] However, in the best of cases he merely demonstrated that, precisely because of the impersonal, inhuman, nature of language and science, it is quite possible to produce specific texts in that genre, texts that can be recognised as meaningful within that genre, even though the author himself does not believe in what he wrote. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* – eminently applicable here in more than one sense – is *both* a parody of romances of chivalry, *and* a great book in its own right. Or another example: personally, I not believe in the spiritual beings I conjure up as a practising *sangoma* – but they do their work for me.

Two points escape the awareness of our two disciplinarian physicists, and make their lampoon ridiculous in its lack of hermeneutical humour. In the first place we must realise that, in general, *philosophy is primarily the creation of a language*, notably the kind of language that does not just mediate another language already in existence (for instance, the language of today's natural science), but to mediate the aporetic aspects of the philosopher's modern ex-

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[393] Sokal & Bricmont 1997. In the same vein: Koertge 1997; Clark 2001.

[394] Sokal & Bricmont 1997: ch. 8, pp. 141-152.

[395] In line with my footnote above on the prefeix '-istic', Sokal & Bricmont's approach could also be called 'scientistic', but then in the first sense, of uncritically taking the perspective of one's own branch of knowledge production as self-evident and exhaustive. In that sense, also my own insistence on the continued validity of the social sciences' theoretical and methodological achievements in the face of a post-modern shrug of the shoulders, could be exposed as sociologistic. However, in order to avoid confusion, in the present argument I will exclusively use the term 'scientistic' in the second, performative and aestheticising sense.

[396] Sokal 1996, incorporated in French translation as appendix in Sokal & Bricmont 1997: 211-252.

perience in a novel language that strikes a precarious balance between, on the one hand, innovative originality, and, on the other hand, intersubjectivity ensuring that the resulting philosophical text remains, to a considerable extent, understandable and recognisable. Formally the term 'pseudo-scientific' may be applicable to the philosophical genre produced by Guattari *etc*.,[397] yet such a label makes us forget too easily that *the aim of philosophy today*[398] *is not the empirical description of reality, but the tentative development of a language of expression*. It is quite possible to incorporate natural science and mathematical elements in such a language, but then precisely because such elements can be used figuratively.[399] In the second place, for Deleuze and Guattari the quasi-scientific appropriation and re-creation of natural science and mathematical elements in philosophical and literary language is a means to an end rather than an end in itself: it reflects an active positioning *vis-à-vis* the natural-science and technological encroachment typical of our time; it can only be understood – as stressed above – as a deliberate attempt at liberating poetical *reterritorialisation*.

Also Guattari's term 'chaosmosis', extremely effective though it is, reflects a scientist strategy.[400] At first sight it would merely look as the topical philosophical application of one of the major mathematical innovations of the last half century – the development of the mathematics of non-linear systems, better known as chaos theory.[401] We must not underestimate the considerable influence of chaos theory upon Guattari's thought. Chaos theory promises a way out of mechanicism in the sense that processes which, considered at micro level, appear to be fully stochastic, determined by chance alone, yet under narrowly

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[397] The term pseudo-science is especially well-known from Popper's negative assessment of *e.g.* astrology by the criterion of empirical falsifiability; Popper 1959 / 1935. Sokal & Bricmont 1997: 152, n. 190, speak of 'pseudo-scientifique' specifically in connection with Deleuze & Guattari. Sokal & Bricmont refer to Canning 1994, and to Rosenberg 1993, who discuss authors who have applied and elaborated Deleuze's & Guattari's scientistic vocabulary. Also *cf.* Alliez 1993.

[398] The Introduction, above, makes clear that this is no longer in full accordance with my current views.

[399] Perhaps too predictably, I thus attribute to Guattari a language strategy similar to that which I believed to detect for the leading African philosopher Valentin Mudimbe, whose closeness to Foucault and Lacan would also put him in the post-structuralist camp: concepts are employed as part, not of a rigorous and consistent edifice of systematic philosophising, but as part of an eclectic enunciative poetics, whose touchstone is performative (notably, literary effectiveness) rather than formal (the truth-affirming procedures of logic, *etc*.). *Cf.* van Binsbergen 2005, reprinted in the present volume as Chapter 12.

[400] Albeit via: Deleuze 1968, where the concept of *chaos* appears to be introduced in modern philosophy for the first time. For the conventional philosophical approach to chaos, from Antiquity to Early Modern thought including Kantianism, *cf.* Dierse & Kuhlen 2001.

[401] For an excellent, albeit non-mathematical, introduction, see: Gleick 1988 / 1987. Guattari has extensively moved in circles where the wider possibilities of chaos theory for biology and human sciences were being explored: Guattari 1988. *Cf.* Prigogine & Stengers 1084, 1988.

defined mathematical conditions may yield recognisable *patterns* at the macro level. However, the term 'chaosmosis' has a much older genealogy, which reveals a remarkable tautology. Osmosis is the diffusion of molecules across a semi-permeable boundary, *e.g.* a pig's bladder; it is caused by the Brownian, 'chaotic' movement of molecules in liquids and gasses which was discovered by Robert Brown in 1827, and in the course of the nineteenth century CE was explained by kinetic gas theory. The phenomenon of osmosis itself (although, no doubt, at the pragmatic level known to artisans and food producers for millennia) was scientifically discovered and described by Abbé J.-A. Nollet in the middle of the 18th century CE, and subsequently subjected to detailed research in the beginning of the 19th century by G.-F. Parrot and R.J.H. Dutrochet, likewise French (Wiggers *et al.* 1975). 'Chaos' / χάος is in the first place the Ancient Greek expression for primal confusion out of which the world emerged (in itself not without predecessors and examples in the Ancient Near East, *cf. Genesis* 1:2, and in Ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and African representations on the origin of the world out of the primal waters). However, more in particular the ancient concept of chaos constituted the inspiration prompting the Early Modern chemist van Helmont (1579-1644) to formulate his seminal concept of 'gas' – as a Dutch variant of the Greek word *chaos*.[402] More than two centuries later it turned out that one of the principal characteristics of gas was the Brownian movement and hence the possibility of osmosis. Guattari's conceptual toolbox for the understanding of subject, society and art is highly mechanistic and scientistic – which makes it all the more impressive what he achieves with the aid of that one-sided lexical material.

Guattari's surprising language often reminds us, not only of his teacher Lacan, and via the latter of that great materialist scientist Freud himself, but also of *Le Matin des Magiciens* (Pauwels & Berger 1960). That book has internationally met with devastating criticism ever since it was published in 1960.[403] I believe that we are in the presence here of a more than superficial (and probably not unintentional, considering Guattari's emphasis on creativity and art) parallel between Guattari and the last magicians of the West European tradition,[404] with whom his concept of chaosmosis (even regardless of modern chaos the-

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[402] Sarton 1927-1947; Dampier 1966 / 1929 / 1948; Störig 1965: 50.

[403] *Cf.* Ostoya 1962; Gault n.d. [ca. 1994-2004]. In the Netherlands, Rudy Kousbroek wrote (1970) a very apt and funny critique of the book under the ironic title *Het Avondrood der Magiërs* ('The Twilight of the Magicians'). Kousbroek (born 1929) studied natural sciences and Japanese (which gave him an excellent position to both appreciate and debunk pseudo-science), became one of the Netherlands' principal essayists, and in 1994 received a honorary doctorate in philosophy from Groningen University out of the hands of the late lamented Lolle Nauta, who until his death on 11 September 2006 was a member of the *Quest* Advisory Board.

[404] I pass over modern, cramped attempts, with low levels of credibility, to revive that magical tradition, as for instance in Aleister Crowley's British obscurantist and sex-obsessed cultic community of the Golden Dawn around 1900 CE, and the *New Age* movement.

ory) is continuous. Van Helmont was a major successor of Paracelsus, whose contemporary Cornelius Agrippa was, among other qualities, a prominent geomancer.[405] The versality, volatility, inventiveness and unbounded communicability implied in Guattari's concept of chaosmosis, are the characteristics *par excellence* of Mercury, *i.e.* Hermes – as Hermes Trismegistus / Thoth the magicians' patron under the Hermetic tradition, and the legendary inventor of cleromancy (the lot oracle by means of detached elements, lots) one of whose most flourishing post-Antiquity branches has been geomancy – about which already much has been said in the various Chapters of this book.

Although this may be an uncongenial connection for post-modern philosophers, it is in this connection that we may situate some of the important characteristics of Guattari's style. For it is typical of magical rhetoric to try and representatively grasp in a microcosmic context (*e.g.* a book, an interpretational schema, a talisman, a rite) the totality of the universe – not as von Leibniz's (1875-1890) monad which combines external impenetrability with an internal depiction of the universe, but as the expression of an harmony which constantly penetrates everything and brings it to vocal expression – the Hermetic principle of 'as above, so below'. This conception of the world order is not limited to the magical tradition which, via Late Antiquity, the Arabian high culture and the European Renaissance reaches right into today's *New Age* in the North Atlantic region. It has many parallels with the Chinese worldview as mediated within Taoism, with its complex pharmacopoeia from the animal, vegetal and mineral kingdom;[406] following in the steps of Needham with Wang (in Volume I of *Science and Civilization in China*), we may suspect on this point massive early East-West interactions and continuities. In yet another part of the world again (with, however, demonstrable transcontinental influences from East and South East Asia as well as from West Asia and the Mediterranean) the surgery of Doctor Smarts Gumede (1927-1992), a modern traditional healer (a practitioner of African geomancy; and in that capacity one of my principal teachers of geomantic divination) in Francistown, Botswana, Southern Africa, may illustrate how wide the global distribution of this model of thought is (Fig. 10.3).

> 'The room is an apparently bizarre compilation of numerous heterogeneous objects: just as much from the animal, vegetal and mineral kingdoms as may be compressed onto a few square metres – like in the 18th-century CE curiosities' cabinets which were the predecessors of West European modern museums. It is a microcosm in which, by means of selection and concentration, the entire macrocosm has been meaningfully represented. In the same way the geomantic interpretational schema underlying Dr Gumede's divination rites constitutes a cosmology. In fact it re-creates a timeless mi-

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[405] Hartmann 1913; Agrippa 1993 / 1531 / 1651.

[406] Girardot 1983; Kaltenmark 1965; Legge 1993; Maspero 1950, 1971; Needham with Wang Ling, 1956, *Science and civilization in China, II. History of scientific thought*; Pai Wen P'ien 1976; *Texts of Taoism* 1900-1910 / 1988; Waley 1934. The Taoist pharmacopoeia has been extensively published by B. Read in collaboration with Li Yu-Thien 1934-1939, and separate volumes, 1924-1939.

crocosm in which the client seeking medical and social advice does not necessarily feel at home but which all the same offers him clues for identification and revelation. By the same token, many of the objects in the surgery are menacing and repulsive, and many clients of traditional doctors in today's Southern Africa are more at home in town, with wage labour, formal organisations, mass consumption and electronic media than in the historic symbolism and worldview of their distant home village.' (van Binsbergen 1994a: 88 *f*.; and *Intercultural encounters*, 2003b: chs. 5-8)

Fig. 10.3. Dr. Smarts Gumede's surgery, Francistown, Botswana, 1989.

In view of all this it is far from strange that Guattari himself felt at home in the intellectual company of Paul Virilio (*cf*. Virilio 1990, 1995a). The latter, in an interview about Guattari, was prompted to make the following fairly naïve statement (naïve, because the separation of natural science and philosophy was effected several centuries ago; to that separation we owe the two pillars of Early Modern thought: both Newton's physics, and Kant's critical philosophy):

'Philosophy has a shortcoming for me, and that lies not so much in its origin. (Hegel said:

> "It is the sin of philosophy to have an origin.") [407]

> No, I would say, while I take this up in yet another way, 'The sin of philosophy is not so much that it has an origin, but that it has broken with physics. I personally join it with physics again.' [408]

Therefore, I believe that for the kaleidoscopic, scientistic language use of Guattari (and of Deleuze, in the period of their collaboration) different, and fundamentally artistic, factors may be identified, in addition to what Oosterling explains as a writing strategy connected with the insistence, in these post-structuralist philosophers,[409] on thinking beyond:

> '...Kant's unending regressus of the imagination, or Hegel's evil infinity' (Oosterling 1966: 465 n. 320).

Guattari's scientism denies, and seeks to reterritorialise, the deterministic mechanicism that is the hall-mark of natural science in the Enlightenment and the 19th century CE.[410]

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[407] Did Hegel now? I have not been able to locate this quote in the original, and it appears possible that it was garbled in the process of translation and re-translation between French and German. However, the general idea behind this statement is unmistakably Hegelian, *cf.*

> '...der Geschichte des *Sündenfalls*. Der Mensch, nach dem Ebenbilde Gottes geschaffen, wird erzählt, habe sein absolutes Befriedigtsein dadurch verloren, daß er von dem Baume der Erkenntnis des Guten und Bösen gegessen habe. [*Cf. Genesis* 2: 17 *f.* – WvB.] Die Sünde besteht hier nur in der Erkenntnis: diese ist das Sündhafte, und durch sie hat der Mensch sein natürliches Glück verscherzt. Es ist dieses eine tiefe Wahrheit, daß das Böse im Bewußtsein liegt, denn die Tiere sind weder böse noch gut, ebensowenig der bloß natürliche Mensch. Erst das Bewußtsein gibt die Trennung des Ich, nach seiner unendlichen Freiheit als Willkür, und des reinen Inhalts des Willens, des Guten. Das Erkennen als Aufhebung der natürlichen Einheit ist der Sündenfall, der keine zufällige, sondern die ewige Geschichte des Geistes ist.' (Hegel 1992 / 1986 / 1822-1831: 389).

Hegel's idea of philosophy as the Fall of Man has been extensively treated in Ringleben 1977: 62 *f.*, where that author indicates influences from Fichte and Schiller on this point. Reflection on sin and history was found not only in Hegel's discussion of the Fall of Man (where, following *Genesis* 2:17, he identified the 'original sin' with the knowledge of good and evil in itself – contrary to a Christian and Talmudic exegetic and iconographic tradition which – like many Flood stories all over the world – sees the Fall in the discovery of sexuality), but also in Hegel's pupil Kierkegaard, who argued that sin could have no history: *Begrebet Angest* ('*The Concept of Anxiety*') published in 1844 under the pseudonym of Vigilius Haufniensis, *cf.* Kierkegaard 1902: 273 *f.*

[408] Original text (Virilio 1995a, *cf.* 1989, 1990, 1995b):

> 'Die Philosophie hat für mich einen Makel, und das ist nicht so sehr ihr Ursprung. (Hegel sagte:

>> "Die Sünde der Philosophie ist es, einen Ursprung zu haben."

> Nein, ich würde sagen, indem ich das in einer anderer Weise wiederaufnehme: Die Sünde der Philosophie ist nicht so sehr, einen Ursprung zu haben, sondern mit der Physik gebrochen zu haben. Ich persönlich verbinde sie wieder mit der Physik.'

[409] Oosterling sees the same tendency not only with Guattari & Deleuze, but also with Lyotard, and Foucault.

[410] Of such mechanicism, the 'Spirit of Laplace' is an apt expression. Laplace wrote (1814):

In the case of natural science, with its enormous hold on the world today, Guattari's strategy of reterritorialisation through scientistic appropriation is illuminating and rewarding. But what about the other fields of science today – fields that cannot be said to be legitimating, truth-producing and world-creating to the same extent that natural science and technology have become. For instance, how does Guattari's aestheticising scientism behave within the framework of cultural anthropology, where the central place is occupied not by the North Atlantic experience implied to be obvious and self-evident, but by the encounter between cultural and linguistic others? In such an othering framework, is Guattari still capable of liberating reterritorialisation, or does he simply slide back into the dominant, hegemonic collective representations of the North Atlantic region today?

The question is important for its disenchanting answer will allow us to identify both the potential and the limitations of a courageous but contentious form of modern philosophising.

10.3. Guattari's social scientism: The cultural, historical and archaeological other: Guattari's selective and superficial appropriation of cultural anthropology

Anthropology was one of the great scientific adventures of the 20th c. CE, and it is no wonder that it has exerted a certain influence upon psychiatry and philosophy. Oosterling's monumental study of modern continental philosophy features the anthropologists Mauss, Bateson, Lévi-Strauss and Bourdieu as inspirers of philosophers, Paul Rabinow (well-known by a book on field-work in Morocco) as Foucault interpreter, and in the background – just like in anthropology itself – the founding fathers of sociology Weber, Durkheim, Pareto, and Marx.

10.3.1. 'How Natives Think'

The exotic other, and anthropology as the (apparently neutral, self-evident and unproblematic) study of the exotic other, are amply present in Guattari's work, and predictably they serve as anchorage for unsubstantiated theses concerning Guattari's own North Atlantic culture and art. Let us take one characteristic quote from Guattari's work:

> 'Moreover, anthropologists, since the era of Lévy-Bruhl, Priezluski, *etc.*, have shown
> that in archaic societies, there was what they call 'participation', a collective subjectiv-

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'Une intelligence qui pour un instant donné connaîtrait toutes les forces dont la nature est animée et la situation respective des êtres qui la composent, si d'ailleurs elle était assez vaste pour soumettre ces données à l'analyse, embrasserait dans la même formule les mouvements des plus grands corps de l'univers et ceux du plus léger atome: Rien ne serait incertain pour elle et l'avenir comme le passé serait présent à ses yeux'.

> ity investing a certain type of object, and putting itself in the position of an existential group nucleus.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 25)

Instead of stopping to critically consider this alleged, but highly contentious, 'scientific fact', Guattari rushes on to Deleuze's views concerning new art forms such as the cinema, in which moving images (in other words, a play with space and time) constitute the seeds of subjectivation. Referring to Lévy-Bruhl, Guattari presents as well established an anthropological position which, however, has always been highly disputed.[411] In the concept of participation as attributed to Lévy-Bruhl, and also in Guattari's own views concerning a 'refrain' that – as some sort of group-binding *mantra* – produces group solidarity, we hear Durkheim's thesis of *Les Formes Élémentaires de la Vie Religieuse* (1912): group ritual brings about a collective state of *effervescence* (psycho-social 'glowing', 'burning'), in which individualities melt down so that in the heat of the ritual moment not only the group emerges, but also its objects of veneration (which are arbitrary symbols directly reflecting the group), and finally all collectively sustained (in other words, culturally supported) categories of thought. But whereas, in a bid to avoid the racialism then rife in the young social sciences and in North Atlantic society at large, Durkheim decided to develop his universal theory – meant to apply to the whole of humankind, and indeed still one of the major components of the cultural anthropology of religion – exclusively on the basis of the ethnography of the Australian Aboriginals, Lévy-Bruhl's version of a decade later was to be a testimony of particularist difference. For, according to the apt English title of one of his main works, Lévy-Bruhl's argument sought, to establish *How Natives Think* – published in the heyday of North Atlantic colonialism, when the distinction between *native* on the one hand, and *civilised European / White* on the other hand, was constitutive for socio-political relations in a large part of the world. An important advocate of Lévy-Bruhl's work was the British anthropologist E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973), who was destined to become the leading European anthropologist of his generation, and whose field-work took place largely in close association with the colonial authorities.[412]

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[411] Lévy-Bruhl 1910, 1922, 1927, 1931, 1947, 1963. I have treated Lévy-Bruhl here implicitly as an anthropologist, but he was really a philosopher, publishing – in addition to his works on archaic thought – books on ethics, and on what was in his time modern French philosophy: Descartes, Comte, Jaurès, and Jacobi. He had no first-hand field experience, and his writings on South cultures and though processes were exclusively based on library research.

[412] *Cf.* Evans-Pritchard's positive introduction to the English translation of *L'ame primitive: The 'soul' of the primitive* (1965 / 1928). In the next decade (the 1930s) Evans-Pritchard would develop into one of the great British anthropologists of the classic paradigm, and specifically would gain world-wide recognition with his book *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, (1937). In his *Theories of Primitive Religion* (1965b), Evans-Pritchard comes back to Lévy-Bruhl, shows himself far more critical, and explicitly admits that the latter made human subjects outside Europe appear as far more superstititious than in fact they are; the same criticism is repeated in Evans-Pritchard 1965a, but there again the latter's great admiration for the French philosopher is very manifest.

However, Evans-Pritchard's praise for Lévy-Bruhl was shared by only few fellow anthropologists. Lévy-Bruhl's ideas were subject to a devastatingly critical discussion by the anthropologist Fahrenfort (1933), who exerted a considerable influence on Dutch anthropology especially through his student Köbben – my own principal teacher of anthropology in the 1960s. Flatly dismissive of Lévy-Bruhl was also Paul Radin, who stressed that traditions of thought, world-wide, display forms of rationality, distancing and reflection that are comparable with the North Atlantic philosophical standard.[413] Guattari's uncritical mention of Lévy-Bruhl once more underlines the importance of the following reminder of Bernasconi in a philosophical context:

> 'Continental philosophers in Europe and North America have shown little interest in African thought, except perhaps for what they culled from the works of Lévy-Bruhl without submitting them to the appropriate level of scrutiny.'(Bernasconi 1997)

Fahrenfort's and Radin's type of emphasis on logical competence and on the capability of practical, sober distancing as a characteristic of humanity as a whole became the hallmark of modern anthropology. Imagine the hardships of survival as hunter-gatherers under the environmental conditions of the Palaeolithic with no more material aids than stone tools, and the paramount importance of rationality thoughout the long history of humankind is immediately manifest. Nowadays most anthropologists are of the strong opinion – contrary to Lévy-Bruhl – that the patterns of thought and the structures of experience of Africans and Asians today are not fundamentally different from those of the inhabitants of the North Atlantic region. Modern anthropology has come to consider 'nostalgia' and 'essentialising' as a terms of abuse, and insists on radically exposing as myth any projection of North Atlantic popular representations concerning 'noble savages' and concerning 'innocent', 'pristine', 'virgin', 'exotic' cultures 'closed onto themselves'. Within anthropology, this is a knowledge-political rather than an epistemological positioning. Its extensive advantages are obvious, in terms of thinking human equality and affirming the universal birth right of every human being regardless of culture, language, creed and somatic appearance.

However, this lofty insistence on universal traits has also one disadvantage. For it usually means that anthropologists, for reasons of political correctness, can no longer afford to ask themselves whether all cultures today[414] – from those in which writing, the state, and formal organisations dominate the intergenera-

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[413] *Cf.* Radin 1949; and his main work: Radin 1957 / 1927. For an inspiring assessment and re-interpretation of Lévy-Bruhl, *cf.* Horton 1973. Also for C.G. Jung, Lévy-Bruhl was the most important source of anthropological inspiration and (second-hand) information, likewise with painful and regrettable consequences; *cf.* Segal 2007.

[414] Or, for that matter, all cultures of Anatomically Modern Humans – the specific variety of *Homo sapiens* that emerged c. 200,000 years ago in Africa and to which all humans of the last 20,000 years have belonged.

tional transmission of culture and the sanctioning of cultural conformity, to those in which myths, rites and the resulting internalised cosmological and normative structures govern the cultural largely face-to-face community – are all 'culture in exactly the same way', deep-programming their members in fundamentally identical ways (regardless of overt surface behaviour, which evidently is programmed marginally differently from culture to culture). *Is cultural transmission exclusively through a learning process embedded in cultural communication, or are there (as, for instance, in Jung's concept of a collective unconscious, as an* innate *(cf. Rensma 2009) attribute of humanity as a whole but also of its myriad constitutive sub-groups) implicit, collective orientations and representations that may be so deeply programmed as to be practically beyond volition, beyond conscious communication, and that are perhaps even genetically transmitted?* The question (although not Jung's affirmative answer) appeals to me ever since my work on comparative mythology has suggested the amazing persistence of mythical themes (accessible to us through the mists of time through painstaking linguistic reconstruction and more or less obvious iconographies in rock art and other artefacts) across millennia, even dozens of millennia.[415] The dominant disciplinary paradigm[416] in modern anthropology does not allow even the overt articulation of such questions – alternative answers deviating from the disciplinary consensus ('culture is per definition *learned*') are simply unthinkable, and the (racialist and divisive) 'yes' of nearly a century ago – affirming genetically hereditary difference between present-day humans also on the cultural level – has been, understandably but perhaps somewhat too simply, replaced by today's 'no'. In modern anthropology (especially since the Manchester School and transactionalism in general – approaches concentrating on the micro-politics of social institutions and of ritual),[417] the continuing emphasis on the historic specificity of other societies

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[415] *Cf.* Witzel 2001, 2012; van Binsbergen 2004d, 2006a, 2006b, 2010a, in press (h); van Binsbergen & Venbrux 2010.

[416] Despite the accumulated historiographic and epistemological criticism of his model, in the present connection Kuhn's notion of the history of science as the history of the rise and fall of successive, mutually exclusive, consensus-generating and truth-creating paradigms remains essentially valid and illuminating; Kuhn 1970. Needless to add that Kuhn's is essentially a market model.

[417] The term 'transactionalism' refers to an anthropological approach, which emerged in the 1960s and which, from a methodological individualistic perspective, stressed no longer social institutions and culture but the micro-politics of social behaviour; major texts are: Bailey 1969; Boissevain 1974; Barth 1966, 1969. The Manchester School is an anthropological movement which emerged c. 1950 around H. Max Gluckman – with illustrous members such as Elizabeth Colson (although she was not truly a product of that school, having been trained in the USA with first research on Native Americans), J. Clyde Mitchell, John Barnes, Ian Cunnison, Bill Epstein, Victor Turner, Jaap van Velsen, Bruce Kapferer, Emmanuel Marx, Ronald Frankenburg, F.G. Bailey, Normal Long, and Richard Werbner; this School displays the same characteristics as transactionalism, but avoided the latter's superficiality especially because of the Manchester School's groundedness in a strong Marxist and liberation-orientated inspiration, and in painstaking ethnographic research in rural and urban societies in South Central and Southern Africa; *cf.* Gluck-

has been combined with a fascination with the manipulative, strategic, constructed and negotiable aspects, in the anthropologist's own society but especially in other societies.

Thus in certain respects modern North Atlantic anthropologists' perspective on other societies is as saturated with the principle of the market as is the case for these anthropologists' own social and political experience within their home society; it would seem to fall under Guattari's *deterritorialisation* – an unheeded product of capitalism. Whenever, in the context of globalisation, other societies link up with North Atlantic society, what anthropologies study of such an encounter has included the processes of market and commoditisation.[418] Today, the South / the Third World is hardly a place any more where anthropologists expect to encounter some Lévybruhlian participation.

So far so good – Lévy-Bruhl can no longer be cited without extensive disqualification. But were his inklings concerning *participation* (which reflected the intuitions and impressions of some of the best ethnographers of his time) merely colonialist and racialist impostions from North onto South? While revising this text for final publication (2015) I feel inclined to point out that something else is at stake here. Human's capability of the kind of merging between the observing and knowing subject, and something immensely captivating in the world outside that subject, cannot be questioned: this capability lies at the heart of mysticism and spirituality, but also of love, loyalty, faithfulness, trust, art, immanentalism. It is not *'How Natives Think'*, pace Lévy-Bruhl, but how *all* humans think in certain vital aspects of their existence. I suggest this capability owes much to the initial existential and even bodily merging between the unborn child, and the infant, on the one hand, and the mother, on the other hand – which Lacan has identified as the root cause of the Oedipal problematic emerging when subsequently the inevitable separation is effected. I have never found it difficult to follow my African research hosts and subsequently relatives (another manifestation of such merging participation – in both the Lévybruhlian and the anthropological methodological sense) in their engagement with such merging, and I believe I have greatly benefited from it, existentially as well as scientifically. Although the price I had to pay for that was that I was often the almost helpless victim of the same anxieties of pollution and sorcery that dominate their own lives.

All this suggests that Lévy-Bruhl and Guattari might yet have a point after all, but, even if they had, modern anthropologists would by and large (for lack of training in philosophy, epistemology and the history of ideas) be insufficiently equipped to notice, while intradisciplinary social control and a more general striving towards political correctness would scarcely afford such anthropologists

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man 1942, 1958, 1955, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1971; Epstein 1965; Werbner 1984; van Binsbergen 2007.

[418] See for instance: Meyer & Geschiere 1999; Fardon *et al.* 1999; van Binsbergen & van Dijk 2003; van Binsbergen & Geschiere 2005; and the extensive international literature cited in these works.

the opportunity to publicly articulate their counter-paradigmatic findings (like I did in the previous paragraph). I repeat: modern anthropology may be said to have reached a point that can surprisingly well be described with Guattari's term deterritorialisation. However, I will come back to this point below, arguing that what may appear as deterritorialisation, is better understood as an indispensable collective safeguarding of the formats and methodologies upon which the truth claims of scientific pronouncements largely rest. (Although behind these words an ulterior and (in the light of a post-modern skepticism in regard of theories and methods) more solid ground for truth claims in intercultural knowledge production becomes visible: existential participation with the very people on whose social and cultural life one does research – also as a basis for critical feedback on the text products emerging from such an intercultural encounter.)

10.3.2. The West African *legba*

Surprisingly, then, Guattari uncritically proffers the image of the archaic, exotic or archaeological other. He does so also in the following example, developing a theme that is obvious to anthropologists: the multi-layeredness and multidimensionality of the religious symbol. Guattari applies his typical conceptual apparatus to the *legba* or *elegba*, a well-known West African cultic object (*cf.* Westcott 1962; Aguessy 1970) that represents the ambivalent divine trickster of the same name. The object usually consist of an earthen cone, sometime topped by an earthen semi-sphere for a head, in which cowry shells (*Cypraeidae* family) indicate two eyes and a mouth.[419] Because it is difficult for the reader to visualise the *legba* as object merely on the basis of this schematic description, I add with Fig. 10.3 a depiction from a West African source (Anonymous, 'legba'), being unwilling and unauthorised to include a picture of the *legba* that is part of my own collection of shrines at home.

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[419] The word which Guattari uses in this connection, 'fetish', – derives from the Portuguese word *feitiço* 'man-made object', in other words a graven image (*cf.* the *Bible*: *Exodus* 20:4) or idol, and given academic currency by des Brosses 1760 (who incidentally already claimed continuity between Ancient Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa) – is scarcely used any more among religious anthropologists because of its connotations of Western appropriation and of reduction of the cultural other to superstitious barbarism; this stereotype applies in the first place to the Portuguese, as the first European nation to sail the coasts of sub-Saharan Africa in Early Modern times. The word 'fetish' however, whose philosophical history is surprising complex and involves many great names of Early Modern thought (Seidel 2001), has taken its place among the conceptual apparatus of modern cultural studies and commodification in a usage derived from Marx (*e.g.* Marx 1975a-1983a; Taussig 1980), and (in a form loosely grafted upon the original Portuguese usage) has been a permanent part of the psychoanalytic conceptual apparatus ever since Freud.

Fig. 10.4. A West African legba *shrine.*

Guattari writes about this cultic object in the following way:

'Archaic societies are better equipped than White, male, capitalistic subjectivities to produce a cartography of this multivalence of alterity. With regard to this, we could re-fer to Marc Augé's account of the heterogeneous registers relating to the fetish object *Legba* in African societies of the Fon. The *Legba* comes to being transversally,[420] in: a dimension of destiny; a universe of vital principle; an ancestral filiation; a materialised god; a sign of appropriation; an entity of individuation; a fetish at the entrance to the village, another at the portal of the house and. after initiation, at the entrance to the bedroom... The *Legba* is a handful of sand, a receptacle, but it's also the expression of a relation to others. One finds it at the door, at the market, in the village square, at cross-roads. It can transmit messages, questions. answers. It is also a way of relating to the dead and to ancestors. It is both an individual and a class of individuals; a name and a noun.

> "Its existence corresponds to the obvious fact that the social is not simply of a relational order but of the order of being."

'Marc Augé stresses the impossible transparency and translatability of symbolic sys-

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[420] 'Transversality' is a central concept in Guattari's thought; it stands for transversal connec-tions between the four basic dimensions as distinguished by Guattari.

tems.

> "The *Legba* apparatus (...) is constructed on two axes. One is viewed from the exterior to the interior, the other from identity to alterity. Thus being, identity and the relation to the other are constructed, through fetishistic practice, not only on a symbolic basis but also in an openly ontological way."[421] (...)

'Modern machinic assemblages have even less standard univocal referent than the subjectivity of archaic societies.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 45-46)

Incidentally, the *legba* is closely associated with a divination cult, notably one of the many African branches of geomancy. This specific branch is based on the manipulation of sixteen cowries, as a transformation of the foursome which is at the basis of all geomancy. Extensive descriptions of *legba* the attending forms of divination may be found with, among others, Bascom, Ilésanmí, Kassibo, Maupoil, and Traoré.[422]

The point here is not that there is anything factually wrong with Guattari's treatment of the *legba*,[423] but that – just like in the case of physics and mathematical expressions discussed above – his treatment is a form of second-hand appropriation, out of context, forced onto the Procrustes bed of an imposed, alien conceptual toolbox (Guattari's – not to speak of Augé's as that of a leading mainstream anthropologist), and hence at variance with much that modern professional anthropology stands for. Guattari's acquaintance with the *legba* and with Augé's work was brought about – and the same applies to most anthropological references in Guattari's work – not in a context where anthropology is at home, but by means of an article written by Augé as guest contributor to a psychoanalytical collection. Quite differently than was the case with Freud, who read plenty of anthropology and made – for better or worse – a profound impact on the anthropological field,[424] for Guattari anthropology is only a (quite limited) aspect of his erudition, and not a field of special interest by virtue of which he peruses professional anthropological works in search of food for thought.

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[421] Original reference to: Augé 1986.

[422] Maupoil 1943b: 177 *f.*, 265 *f.*; Bascom 1980; Abimbola 1975; Akiwowo 1983; Mákanjúolá Ilésanmí 1991; Kassibo 1992; Traoré 1979; Aromolaran 1992. Also see the several other treatments of geomantic divination throughout the present book.

[423] Meanwhile Guattari's 'machinisme' has inspired an interesting analysis of African traditional material: Peixoto Ferreira 2001.

[424] Freud's explicit interest in anthropology led not only to the anthropological science fiction of *Totem und Tabu* (1918 / 1913), but also to psychoanalytical anthropology and to the *Culture and Personality* studies of the 1930s-1950s, with the pioneer Róheim (1945, 1950) and also *e.g.* Kardiner (1939; Kardiner *et al.* 1945) and Margaret Mead. As a practising psychiatrist, Guattari is considerably removed from that tradition, but made some contact with it through the work of Gregory Bateson, who was for many years the husband and co-field-worker of Mead, but who over the years became more and more critical of the *Culture and Personality* approach.

10.3.3. Primitives and barbarians: The exotic and archaeological other as a literary *topos*

In a next passage Guattari – on the spur of the leading French prehistorian of a previous generation, Leroi-Gourhan, already mentioned above[425] – evokes the exotic other, in this case the archaeological other of the Early Iron Age: as the early blacksmith, as the toiler in iron mines, as the farmer with an iron band around his cartwheel – and this other turns out to be nothing but a literary cliché.

> 'If we take a hammer apart by removing its handle, it is still a hammer but in a 'mutilated' state. The 'head' of the hammer (...) can be reduced by fusion. It will then cross a threshold of formal consistency where it will lose its form (...). We are simply in the presence of metallic mass returned to smoothness, to the deterritorialisation which precedes its appearance in a machinic form. To go beyond this type of experiment (...)[426] let us attempt the inverse, to associate the hammer with the arm, the nail with the anvil. Between them they maintain relations of syntagmatic linkage. And their 'collective dance' can bring to life the defunct guild of blacksmiths, the sinister epoch of ancient iron mines, the ancestral use of metal-rimmed wheels... Leroi-Gourhan emphasised [with exclusive reference to prehistoric technologies – WvB] that the technical object was nothing outside of the technical ensemble to which it belonged. It is the same for sophisticated machines such as robots, which will soon be engendered by other robots.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 37.)

With 'this experiment' Guattari refers to Descartes' famous passage on the immutability of wax as a substance (*Seconde Méditation*, §§ 10-18; Descartes 1641 / 1901). Guattari remains close to Descartes' example. Incidentally, Descartes is echoing here a passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XV, 165 *f.*) which by Descartes' time had already been famous for over one and a half millennium, and which I render here in the 1812 English translation, p. III, 181):

Omnia mutantur, nihil interit: errat et illinc	Thus all things are but alter'd, nothing dies;
huc venit, hinc illuc, et quoslibet occupat artus	And here, and there th' unbody'd spirit flies.
spiritus eque feris humana in corpora transit	By time, or force, or sickness dispossest,
inque feras noster, nec tempore deperit ullo,	And lodges, where it lights, in man or beast;
utque novis facilis signatur cera figuris	Or hunts without, 'till ready limbs it find,
nec manet ut fuerat nec formam servat eandem,	And actuates those according to their kind;
sed tamen ipsa eadem est, animam sic semper eandem	From tenement to tenement is toss'd,
esse, sed in varias doceo migrare figuras.	The soul is still the same, the figure only lost:
	And, as the soften'd wax new seals receives,
	This face assumes, and that impression leaves;
	Now call'd by one, now by another name;
	The form is only chang'd, the wax is still the same:
	So death, so call'd, can but the form deface;
	Th' immortal soul flies out in empty space,
	To seek her fortune in some other place.

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[425] Guattari's implicit reference is to: Leroi-Gourhan 1961.

[426] Guattari would not be French if he did not cite Descartes!

With Guattari, incorporation of the anthropological and archaeological other in his text usually remains limited to a literary embellishment and nothing more:

> 'Artistic cartographies have always been an essential element of the framework of every society. But since becoming the work of specialised corporate bodies, they may have appeared to be side issues, a supplement of the soul, a fragile superstructure whose death is regularly announced. And yet from the grottoes of Lascaux to Soho taking in the dawn of the cathedrals, they have never stopped being a vital element in the crystallisation of individual and collective subjectivities.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 130)

Besides, it may be extremely confusing, and amounting to ethnocentric imposition, to apply the concept of 'art' to the rock paintings of Lascaux which are so pleasing to the North Atlantic modern eye, or the products of African and Oceanian pictorial and sculptural techniques which are likewise so sublime to the inhabitants of the North Atlantic region. For there is little reason to assume that these products have been intended, by their makers, towards the boundary-crossing celebration of freedom which, ever since the Renaissance, has been so characteristic for North Atlantic art production. How can we usher in such production forms into the Guattarian discourse without the risk of becoming irresponsible – *i.e.* with a minimum of ethnocentric projection on our part?

The cultural other is also present in Guattari's quote from the masterpiece (strongly influenced by Durkheim) which the French Sinologist Granet wrote in the early 1930s, and that soon, and deservedly, established itself as a classic in the general education of the French intellectual: *La Pensée Chinoise*.[427] Also with Granet we see again an evocation of the Durkheimian *effervescence* as the source of social order, and cited approvingly by Guattari:[428]

> 'In *La Pensée chinoise* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1980), Marcel Granet shows the complementarity between the *ritornellos*[429] [*i.e.* 'refrains' – WvB] of social demarcation in ancient China and the affects, or virtues as he calls them, borne along by vocables, graphisms, emblems, *etc*.

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[427] Granet 1934; Guattari refers to the 1980 *ed.*

[428] Guattari 1989 (English edition): 268, n. 19; my italics.

[429] French: *ritournelles*, which the inventive American translators of Guattari have rendered by the neologism *ritornellos*. I suppose such translator's liberties should be called *peccadilloes*... The consequence of English readers being unable or unwilling to read French post-structuralist philosophical texts in the original French is the production of unreadable, but best-selling, pseudo-English translations full of non-existing neologisms and awkward Gallicisms. For similar reasons, in most scenes of mainstream, Hollywood motion pictures, actors (regardless of their own native origin) representing non-Americans speaking their native language among themselves, are compelled to emphatically publicise their otherness, not by competently speaking the appropriate language in question, but by speaking American English distorted into poor imitations of a fat German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Indian, Chinese *etc*. accent. In the context of the present book, this is not just a trivial oddity. It drives home one of the principal problems of modern global culture and politics – and *a fortiori* in philosophy: *the hegemonic tendency to blindly and uncritically assume that one's own habitual discourse is automatically the global lingua franca; and that one's own position in the world is self-evidently the obvious one.*

> "the specific virtue of a lordly race' was expressed by a song and dance (with either an animal or a vegetable motif). Without a doubt, it is appropriate to recognize for the old family names the value of a kind of musical motto – which translates graphically into a kind of coat of arms – the entire efficacy of the dance and the chants lying just as much in the graphic emblem as in the vocal emblem" ([Granet 1980:] pp. 50-51).'

The principal characteristic of this quote is that it adopts the term *'lordly race'*, *i.e. Herrenvolk* (the German Nazist expression, which although coined by other 19th-c. CE thinkers such as de Gobineau and Schopenhauer, yet was also adopted by Nietzsche) without explicitly taking a distance from it – and this is regrettably in line with the evocation, elsewhere in Guattari's work, of 'barbarians' and 'primitives', a use of terms to which we will turn shortly.

But let us first concentrate on the selective appropriation of Chinese elements. Elsewhere in Guattari's co-authored work with Deleuze the 'Eastern eroticism' of Taoism is being evoked.[430] This sort of terminology regrettably reinforces Guattari's essentially nostalgic construction of *the 'exotic' other who in the process is being reduced to an object*. Although the worldview of 道 Tao, over the three millennia of its existence, has been so comprehensive as to embrace, not only a cosmology, state theory, divination, a correlative system and symbolism covering the whole of reality, but inevitably also human corporal practices, sexuality, breathing, and the desire for longevity, and in this connection a richly textured approach to (especially male) sexuality has evolved (*cf.* van Gulik 1961), it is simply ludicrous to designate Taoism as a form of eroticism; neither could Christianity and Judaism, which both contain sexual prescriptions and prohibitions, be designated eroticisms of Western Eurasia. In Guattari's world there does not seem to be much place for the exotic other as a person, a woman, an equal, as someone who speaks back. Guattari's exotic other is, regrettably, someone whose very exotism is merely based on the intellectual observer's perspectival distortion (indeed, this is again the delusion of looking at the world from a privileged standpoint), for that observer (the anthropologist) is just as exotic, or as little exotic, as the people whose collectively structured lives are being observed.

Another passage from the co-authored work by Deleuze & Guattari demonstrates that the innovating subtleties which these authors develop in their approach to their own North Atlantic modern society, go hand in hand with nothing less than a bluntly stereotypical conservative construct when it comes to statements concerning societies outside the North Atlantic region. The passage in question deals with zombies and capitalism. Of course, modern anthropologists realise that the people in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Australia and the Americas – with the exclusion, in other words, of the North Atlantic region – do not have a monopoly on the kind of phantasms which ancient travelogues and classic anthropologists attributed to them – rightly or wrongly. More and more

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[430] Deleuze & Guattari 1980; Oosterling 1996: 511.

modern anthropologists study the specific myths which are being produced and spread by modern culture (primarily North Atlantic, but in fact already world-wide, dominated as it is by effectively globalising information and communication technology): *horror*, *science fiction*, *New Age*.[431] The anthropological and historical study of *witchcraft* has obtained a new dimension when we discovered that, in many places in the world today, increasing modernity did not lead to a decrease but, on the contrary, to an increase of witchcraft discourses.[432] Also *zombies* can now flatter themselves with a certain attention from the part of modern anthropologists: zombie representations are part of the imagery of witchcraft (a human being is made into a zombie because of someone else's witchcraft inspired by the latter's desire for riches and power), but zombie beliefs are *also* an example of the unbounded, global, mass-media based collective fantasies which has become placeless and are no longer (as those collective fantasies described by classic anthropology mainly during colonial times) bound to a specific society localised in time and place.[433] In the face of these apparently unbounded and placeless phenomena, which in themselves are admittedly interesting enough, Guattari & Deleuze suddenly become strangely unable to discern any more modern myths than just the zombie one. Light-heartedly relapsing into a terminology which in anthropology has already been unacceptable for over half a century, they distinguish between 'primitives', 'barbarians', and 'modern humans' – the latter not in the palaeoanthropological, accepted sense of Anatomically Modern Humans, but as a synonym for 'inhabitants of North Atlantic society and its global offshoots'. And probably their lapse is justified in their own eyes for, after all, far from being deliberately racialist at the expense of people from other continents than their own, they are trying to explain that these modern humans are even worse than the other two categories. Thus Guattari & Deleuze have the following to say about zombies:

> '*The o n l y modern myth i*s the myth of zombies – mortified schizos, good for work, brought back to reason. In this sense the primitive and the barbarian, with their ways of coding death, are children in comparison to modern man and his axiomatic ([']so many unemployed are needed, so many deaths, the Algerian War doesn't kill more people than weekend automobile accidents, planned death in Bengal ['], *etc*.). (...) Once it is said that capitalism works on the basis of decoded flows as such, how is it that it is infinitely further removed from desiring production than were the primitive or even the barbarian systems, which nonetheless code and overcode the flows? Once it is said that desiring production is itself a decoded and deterritorialized production, how do we explain that capitalism, with its axiomatic, its statistics, performs an infinitely

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[431] *Cf.* Verrips 2001, and the extensive literature cited there.

[432] *Cf.* Geschiere with Fisiy 1995 / 1997; for a critical reaction on this path-breaking and influential book, *cf.* van Binsbergen 1997d – reprinted in the present volume as Chapter 1; and 2001c; in those studies I seek to counterbalance Geschiere's one-sidedly modernist view by stressing the non-modern element in African witchcraft beliefs and of the practices based on those beliefs. In a recent book (Geschiere 2013) briefly touches on these criticisms.

[433] *Cf.* Migerel 1987; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999a, 1999b; Geschiere 2013.

vaster repression of this production than do the preceding regimes, which nonetheless did not lack the necessary repressive means? (...) The answer is the death instinct,[434] if we call instinct in general the conditions of life that are historically and socially determined by the relations of production and antiproduction in a system. (...) If we examine the primitive or the barbarian constellations, we see that the subjective essence of desire as production is referred to large objectivities, to the territorial or the despotic body, which act as natural or divine preconditions that thus ensure the coding or the overcoding of the flows of desire by introducing them into systems of representation that are themselves objective. (...) Things are very different in capitalism.'[435]

I have a problem here, not with the fact that the death drive is situated by Deleuze and Guattari at the very heart of capitalism[436] (vocally articulating as a Marxist in the 1970s and 1980s, I have remained enough of a Marxist to consider such a position as understood), but with the terms employed for the characterisation of non-capitalist societies.

In general we may say that, whenever Guattari occupies himself with phenomena which fall within the orbit of – often obsolescent – anthropological concepts (witchcraft, fetish, magical object,[437] totem (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 105), then this springs not from any acquaintance with the anthropological literature, but from the often stereotypical, even fossilised way in which such concepts have, ever since Freud, been fed into the domain of psychoanalysis, where Guattari is at home. Such domesticated and appropriated concepts bereft of their original analytical context, are very well comparable, not only with deterritorialised objects', but also and especially with the 'part objects' which play such a big role in Guattari's own psychoanalytical arguments: the breast, the nipple, the anus, the penis, which are being thought of, and about, in a state of contemplative intoxication, in isolation from the totality of the body and of the person who exists through that body – and which are thus being reduced to a libidinous 'fetish'. Or – to employ a typically Guattarian concept – should we rather consider these anthropological *topoi* as 'refrains', around which the relatively small professional

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[434] A late Freudian concept, revived and innovated by Lacan – WvB.

[435] Guattari with Deleuze, 1977; my italics.

[436] See below, notably the Section 10.4, devoted to my positive assessment of the potential of Guattari's work for anthropology. The theoretical gain to be derived from of his concrete historical positioning of general Freudian concepts, becomes apparent when we compare the insights of Guattari & Deleuze with a seminal psychoanalysing texts from the field of literary criticism: Brown's (1970 / 1959) *Life against death: The psychoanalytical meaning of history*. Brown's book was highly acclaimed and has contributed enormously to the spread of Freudian ideas in the humanities, yet it did not manage to expose and critique the spurious universalist pretensions of these ideas, which Deleuze and Guattari help us to understand as being highly specific in place and time, *i.e.* as springing from the very structure of North Atlantic Early Modern, and Modern, society.

[437] *Cf.* Guattari with Deleuze (1977) refer to: Bonnafé 1970. Rather like in the case of the Augé article discussed above, Bonnafé's is an anthropological piece published in a psychoanalytical context – Bonnafé conducted anthropological field-work in Congo-Brazzaville (*cf.* Bonnafé 1987); however, contrary to Augé he is also known as a psychiatrist.

community of psychoanalysts rallies, in a group subjectivity which no longer seeks to understand the interconnections between on the one hand that group and its refrains, on the other hand the rest of the world?

This kind of appropriative and fossilising use to which the social scientific inspiration is put, says a lot, I am afraid, about the signature of Guattari's spiritual adventure: it is an adventure, all right, poetical and inspiring, and no doubt boundary-effacing, but it is at the same time a journey which only leads across boundaries of a very specific type: that what can be thought within a narrowly defined, French intellectual tradition, which is felt, and serves, as home or as nest), whereas Guattari at the same time carefully, even painfully, avoids and ignores the negotiation of other, globally more relevant, types of boundaries: boundaries in space, in time, between cultures, between disciplines. In this respect, and despite the grand vistas of his arguments, Guattari's adventure is, after all, and regrettably, a retreat to inside the home, and it must be for profound and systematic, although hidden, reasons that the cultural other, and to a certain extent also the historic other, place scarcely a role in his work. It is an unintentional exercise in deterritorialisation – but at least we have Guattari's conceptual apparatus in which to make this point.

10.3.4. Bateson and Castaneda

Although of very limited scope, the anthropological side of Guattari's erudition does include the work of Gregory Bateson, whom I already mentioned above. Bateson, for many years the husband of his even more popular and famous colleague Margaret Mead, is an anthropologist who is shunned by many of his fellow anthropologists but venerated as a cult figure by some;[438] his work operates, recognisably, at the borderline between ethnography, schizophrenia, cybernetics, and ecology, and its influence on Guattari has been much greater than on modern anthropology in general. Bateson describes how his own theory of schizophrenia (similar to Guattari's) came into being: after formulating a particular theory, he wished to refine it empirically and for that purpose proceeded to do ethological[439] observations in the local zoo, and there he hit on something for which his theory had not prepared him (simple, humble pet ownership would have, instead, I am tempted to add), *notably the playing behaviour of monkeys – cf.* Guattari's description of La Borde as a therapeutic environment for deprogramming, ludic liberation.[440] Guattari & Deleuze derived

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[438] Bateson 1978 / 1972, with Adam Kuper's introduction; also: Simonse 1998.

[439] It should hardly be necessary to point out the differences between 'ethological' (= relating to the empirical study of animal behaviour); ethnological (= an obsolete synonym of cultural anthropological); ethical (= relating to the philosopy of proper human conduct); and ethnic(-al) (relating to sub-national forms of identity in a wider socio-political framework).

[440] Incidentally, the discovery and interpretation of the playing animal was an important and enriching theme in ethology ever since its inception in the 1930s. *Cf.* Fagen 1981; Hassenstein

from Bateson the concept of 'plateau', the key concept of their second book on the relation between capitalism and schizophrenia;[441] by the same token, other psychiatrists (Laing and his fellow partisans for an antipsychiatry) derived from Bateson the concept of the *double bind*, where a close affective relationship sends two entirely contradictory messages or expectations between the two people involved.

However, besides Bateson, Guattari (like most cosmopolitan intellectuals in the 1970s) has read at least one other anthropologist, and one that is an entire class in himself: Castaneda. This again is a most contested figures in anthropology. His works consist of the records of the inner transformations which he went through as a pupil of the Native American ('Indian') magician Don Juan. Initially these records were welcomed as expressions of the deepest wisdom, as the seed for a radical reorientation of anthropology towards intersubjectivity between the researcher and the people under study, for a re-evaluation of the mystical encounter between cultures in field-work, and as a reminder of what other cultures, with their differently structured fantasy space, have yet to offer not only to anthropology but even to modern North Atlantic culture at large.[442] However, soon serious doubts arose, and at present a fairly general feeling among anthropologists is that Castaneda's work was heavily overestimated and that it is not even certain that he ever actually experienced the mystical, initiatory experiences he describes. By now many anthropologists consider him a charlatan. Personally I wish to defer my judgment, for like several other modern anthropologists such as Jaulin, Stoller, and Janzen,[443] I too claim to have undergone, in the context of my field-work, an esoteric initiation which appears to be similar to Castaneda's, even though our respective descriptions of the experience are miles apart (van Binsbergen 1991a, 2003b). Even if Castaneda had actually, personally and materially, experienced what he is describing, mainstream anthropology would simply not have the means to understand him and accommodate him. However, the question as to ethnographic validity has nothing to do with the – in principle irreproachable – way in which Guattari utilised the thought experiments of Castaneda and Don Juan in order to illustrate certain forms of what Guattari calls 'ecosophic cartography' – a term perhaps to be interpreted as 'strategically reclaiming and responsibly reclaiming the space of

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1976 / 1970; Buytendijk 1932.

[441] Deleuze & Guattari 1980; *cf*. Guattari in: Stivale 1993.

[442] Castaneda 1968, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1977. One can hardly ignore the similarity between Castaneda's title *Tales of Power* (1974), and Mudimbe's title *Tales of Faith* (1997, the subject of Chapter 12 of the present volume). On Castaneda's reception, *cf*. De Mille 1976, 1980; Murray 1979. Although Castaneda is now dismissed by most anthropologists, very positive reactions came from the leading British anthropologist Mary Douglas (1984 / 1975); Schroll & Schwartz 2005; Marton 1994.

[443] Jaulin 1971; Stoller & Olkes 1987; Janzen 1992. *Cf*. also Hall 1994.

singularisation (or, in a more established idiom, of *difference*)'.[444]

It is of some importance to remark that Guattari's fascination with the work of Bateson and Castaneda does not revolve on the ethnographic representation of other cultures, but on the idiosyncratic intellectual production of two peripheral anthropologists, *triggered* only in part – and considering the free flight of these two authors' language and imagery, certainly no longer *determined* – by what they, as anthropologists, once acquired during field-work, in the way of methodologically grounded knowledge about a different culture. This is typical of the kind of appropriation in which Guattari engages. Admittedly, it is far from self-evident how we should define and problematise other cultures, but few would doubt that acknowledgement of the historic specificity of other cultures should be a major aspect of our approach to them. However, for Guattari other cultures scarcely seem to exist, unless as subjects of archaeology, or of a thought experiment. Other cultures as such have left only a faint echo in the politics of the multicultural society of France in the course of the last few decades: the debate is fuelled *by the clash of politico-cultural positions within France today*, rather than by the historic specificity of the immigrants' cultures of remote origin that make up the multicultural society of Western Europe. The

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[444]   '[*Stivale:*] "...in the plateau 6 of (...) [*A thousand plateaux* – Deleuze & Guattari 1980 / 1987], (...) you compare the relationship between the organism and the body without organs to the relationship between two key terms suggested to Carlos Castaneda by Don Juan in *Tales of Power*, the 'Tonal' (the organism, significance, the subject, all that is organised and organizing in / for these elements), and the 'Nagual' (the whole of the Tonal in conditions of experimentation, of flow, of becomings, but without destruction of the Tonal).(...) This correspondence between your terms and the Tonal / Nagual couple created some problems for me to the extent that the Nagual seems to correspond to the general 'plane of consistency,' to the bodies without organs which you pluralize in this plateau. Could you explain the difference between the various forms of bodies without organs (for example, you designate a particular body without organs for junkies and some other very specific forms of bodies without organs) and the more general Body without Organs?"

(...) *G[uattari]:* (...) to make oneself a body without organs, starting with drugs, with a love experience, with poetry, with any creation, is essentially to produce a cartography, that has this particular characteristic: that one cannot distinguish it [the cartography – WvB] from the existential territory which [the cartography] represents. (...) That means that there is no transposition, that there is no translatability, and therefore no possible taxonomy. The modelization here is a producer of existence. (...) [O]ne must distinguish between what I call a speculative cartography, concepts of trans-modelization, and then the instruments of direct modelization, *i.e.* a concrete cartography. To push the paradox to its limit, I'd say that the interest of a speculative cartography is that it be as far away as possible, that it have no pretension of accounting for concrete *cartographies*. This is its difference from a scientific activity. Science is conceived to propose the semiotization which accounts for practical experience. For us, it's just the opposite! The less we'll account for things, the farther we'll be from these concrete *cartographies*, those of Castaneda or psychotics (which are more or less the same in this case), and the more we can hope to profit from this activity of speculative cartography.' (Stivale 1993):

world from outside the North Atlantic region only vaguely enters Guattari's horizon – or it should be as selectively imported and domesticated within the France of the 1980s, with the xenophobic agitator Le Pen as key figure.

Meanwhile the *historically other* (provided he or she belongs to the North Atlantic region) is, admittedly, present in Guattari's work, but even that other is being eclipsed by very schematic summaries of human history in a handful of very large eras, reduced, Hegelian fashion, to a few core themes rendered in a few lines: the era of European Christianity; the era of capitalist deterritorialisation of modes of knowing and of technology; and the era of global computerisation (Guattari 1995 / 1992).

10.3.5. The price of the superficial appropriation of a field of study

Above I critically discussed how the physicists Sokal & Bricmont opposed the appropriation of originally natural-science terms and mathematical terms within modern French philosophical prose including that of Guattari. For me, originally trained as an anthropologist, and until scarcely a decade ago holding a succession of professorial chairs in that discipline, the temptation is great to follow their example and to direct the same kind of criticism against the anthropological side of Guattari's work. Admittedly, anthropologists often fiercely oppose the appropriation of their intellectual products by others, both within their discipline and across disciplinary boundaries. One factor in this attitude is that anthropologists mainly acquire their data by a long, painful and tedious process of personal, usually strictly individual, field-work, which makes it difficult to take a distance, and to develop intersubjectivity about such data *vis-à-vis* fellow anthropologists, let alone *vis-à-vis* outsiders. It can easily be demonstrated that Guattari did not know how to situate his meagre anthropological data in their original culture-specific context, and only used them instrumentally, in order to embellish, by facile contrast, an already pre-set argument almost exclusively inspired by modern North Atlantic society.

However, not without reason did I temporarily give up anthropology for intercultural philosophy.[445] Self-congratulatory thriving in a context of taken-for-granted othering and hegemony (hence 'development-relevant'); unwilling or unable to face economic and power relations inherent in the production of anthropological knowledge itself, through field-work; often reluctant to involve local populations, actively, with full rights of initiative, feedback, and veto, in that production; increasingly retreating into the use of *linguae francae* – often the researchers' own native tongues – rather than spending years on learning local languages; and risking that individual, qualitative field-work becomes saturated with utterly personal transference (to mention but a few of the leading themes of my book *Intercultural Encounters* (van Binsbergen 2003), – much

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[445] Opinions differ as to the extent to which my attempt was justified, and was successfully executed; *cf.* Boele van Hensbroek 2003; Devisch 2004; Osha 2003, 2005, 2011-2013.

of modern anthropology can hardly claim to be a convincing pursuit of valid intercultural knowledge; even though, as I argue in the Introduction, it is at the same time the best approach we have to such intercultural knowledge production. To the extent to which disciplinary organisation and methodology help to substantiate the claim of a privileged, authoritative scientific viewpoint, I do appreciate the post-structuralist insistence on the illusory nature of any privileged standpoint; yet this cannot be the last word – the intersubjectivity created by the social organisation and the communication strategies (conferences, journals, peer review) of a scientific discipline, and the painstaking and critical application of usually quite tedious and time-consuming methodologies, are not *merely* intended to protect and maintain strategy, but they also serve to distinguish homespun, lazy, performative pseudo-science (science fiction in the literal sense) from the best guidance we have on our arduous road to slightly more valid intercultural knowledge. But even so, the reader need not fear that I will limit my argument to merely a predictable, mainstream anthropological critique of Guattari: I wish to conclude with a positive assessment of Guattari's potential for anthropology.

Meanwhile, it is not just humourless, mainstream scientific-disciplinary chauvinism (like I think was involved in the case of Sokal & Bricmont) which makes me revolt against Guattari's superficial appropriation of cultural anthropology. He uses a meagre selection of largely obsolete anthropology, ripped out of context, in order to idiosyncratically mark an intellectual trajectory, and develop an intellectual style, to which anthropology and its professionals are not invited to contribute any more. In this way he completely ignores the struggle of modern anthropologists to arrive at an intercultural knowledge that combines, hopefully, ethical and political integrity with empirical and epistemological validity.[446] This struggle casts, in retrospect, serious doubt on all apparently established elements of anthropological knowledge (including the elements which Guattari himself uses: the ethnography of *legba* and of African geomantic divination in general, the esoteric knowledge of Meso America, the collective representations of zombies and witchcraft). This struggle deprives these elements of anthropological knowledge of their alleged objectivity, and situates them at long last within *the aporetic problematics of the intercultural encounter* – in many respects the central dilemma of our time. But Guattari's appropriation could not care less – perhaps because any such concerns would thwart his pro-

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[446] *Cf.* Salamone 1979; Poewe 1996; Wolf 1996; Funder 2005; Nelson 1988; Tehindrazanarivelo 1997; Michrina & Richards 1996; Clifford 1997; van Binsbergen 2003b. Perhaps more than any of these articles and collections, the work of Michael Jackson and René Devisch offers excellent examples of an anthrology aiming at transcultural encounter, empathy and intersubjectivity; *cf.* Jackson 1989; Devisch & Nyamnjoh 2011: a extensive discussion in the pages of *CODESRIA Bulletin* 2008 of his views on the meaning and future of anthropology for Africa in connection to his receipt of a honorary doctorate from the University of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, 2007 – with extensive commentaries by Mudimbe, Keita, van Binsbergen, and others.

claimed desire (sympathetic and commendable, but also slightly irresponsible and juvenile) for *freedom*. It is therefore imperative that both anthropology and intercultural philosophy explicitly take their distance from such a form of intellectual autism disguised as erudition. Guattari's strategy of appropriation is far from being a convincing testimony of the liberation which he yet champions so endearingly. In the last analysis his attitude is not so much pseudo-scientific but anti-scientific. For his attitude expects that humankind will progress, not on the basis of the methodical dedication to empirical description as the principal inspiration for theoretical insight (not, in other words, on wings reinforced by rationality) but merely on the basis of poetical intuition expressed in an evocative language which, performatively, shares only the vocabulary, but not the empirical nexus nor the method, nor, therefore, a researcher's very hard and essentially humble work (the sweat, blood and tears) over many years, with the sciences of man and of nature.

It is now time to see how positive, after all, the relation between Guattari and cultural anthropology could yet be, as long as we only take our distance from the specific defective references to anthropology in his work.

10.4. And yet: Guattari's potential for anthropology

10.4.1. Identity and globalisation

A major point of convergence between Guattari and modern anthropology lies in the study of globalisation and identity.

Guattari keenly perceives how the construction of identities especially in politico-ethnic national and international globalised spaces is one of the most important phenomena in the modern world, as an expression of the increasing desire, all over the world, of subjective points of identification in the face of crumbling boundaries. Guattari is generous enough to see this as a striving for national liberation, but fortunately he is also alive to the fact that such ethnic processes are often forms of politically *conservative* reterritorialisation of the subjectivity. This most important, global development shows the bankruptcy of the universalist conception of subjectivity as embodied in capitalism (whose major characteristics are universalism and deterritorialisation anyway):

> 'Generally, one can say that contemporary history is increasingly dominated by rising demands for subjective singularity – quarrels over language, autonomist demands, issues of nationalism and of the nation. (...) Today, as everyone knows, the growth of nationalism and fundamentalism in Arab and Muslim countries may have incalculable consequences not only on international relations, but on the subjective economies of hundreds of millions of individuals. It's the whole problematic of disarray as well as the mounting demands of the Third World, the countries of the South, which are thus

stamped with an agonising question mark.'[447]

Guattari manifests a profound awareness of the underlying dynamics permeating and connecting all these movements, however different they may be:

> 'There is at present a very profound upheaval of subjectivity in France developing around the questions of immigrants and of the emergence of new cultures, of migrant cultures connected to the second generations of immigrants. This is something that is manifested in paradoxical ways, such as the most reactionary racism we see developing in France around the movement of Jean-Marie Le Pen, (...) but also, quite the contrary, manifested through styles, through young people opening up to another sensitivity, another relationship with the body, particularly in dance and music. These also belong to molecular revolutions. There is also a considerable development, which, in my opinion, has an important future, around the Green, alternative, ecological, pacifist movements. This is very evident in Germany, but these movements are developing now in France, Belgium, Spain, *etc*.
> So, you'll say to me: but really, what is this catch-all, the huge washtub in which you are putting these very different and often violent movements, for example the movements of nationalistic struggles (the Basques, the Irish, the Corsicans), and then women's, pacifist movements, non-violent movements? Isn't all that a bit incoherent? Well, I don't think so because, once again, the molecular revolution is not something that will constitute a program. It's something that develops precisely in the direction of diversity, of a multiplicity of perspectives, of creating the conditions for the maximum impetus of processes of singularization. It's not a question of creating agreement; on the contrary, the less we agree, the more we create an area, a field of vitality in different branches of this phylum of molecular revolution, and the more we reinforce this area. It's a completely different logic from the organizational, arborescent[448] logic that we know in political or union movements.' (Guattari in: Stivale 1993)

However, it is a pity that Guattari himself did not yet take any clear steps to let sprout the seeds which his work contains towards the framing and dynamising of ethnic studies. Nonetheless his suggestions concerning the multicultural society of Western Europe today have been picked up by others. As Oosterling remarks:

> '...in the works of Derrida and Lyotard the problem of justice [becomes] more and more prominent from 1980 on. Although books like *L'Anti-Oedipe* [by Deleuze & Guattari] likewise imply an ethical appeal, Deleuze is perhaps the only one [from among these post-structuralist philosophers] to refrain from specifying an 'ethical' aspect within his nomadic thought. However, from the applications of the work which he wrote together with Guattari it turns out that this dimension is yet there – at least according to his commentators.' (Oosterling 1996: 594; my translation)

Oosterling continues in a footnote:

> 'With regard to the position of minorities their theories have furnished a critical apparatus for the diagnosis of, for instance, the positions of Aboriginals in Australia or of subcultural groups in Western culture.' (Oosterling 1996: 594, n. 441; my translation)

Apparently, despite his glaringly superficial appropriation of anthropology,

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[447] Guattari 1995 / 1992: 3. Guattari wrote this more than a decade before the various instances of massive violence on the USA eastern seaboard on 11 September 2001, to which also Chapter 5 of the present book is devoted.

[448] *I.e.* ramifying like trees, in the familiar, formalised shape of dendrograms and organograms.

Guattari has a discourse on ethnicity and (despite his own lapses into implicit racialism) on race, which many have recognised as important. One of these echoes is to be found in the work of the historian of science Robert Young; only with Guattari & Deleuze he found a suitable expression for the fact that in the modern world, race has become not so much a category of exclusion, of pure categorical boundaries, but on the contrary a category of *hybridisation*:

> 'In recent years a whole range of disciplines has been concerned with the question of the exclusion and representation of 'the Other', of inside / outside notions of Other-ness, or of the difficulties, so painful for anthropology, of self-Other relations. Brown's finely gradated table[449] by contrast, suggests that racism, and therefore perhaps coloni-alism, also worked according to a different paradigm than ours (still in fact present to-day, but hidden), of diversity and inequality. Deleuze and Guattari get it right in the course of a discussion of Christ's face in a scene from Giotto's *The Life of St Francis*:
>
>> If the face is in fact Christ, in other words, your average ordinary White Man, then the first deviances, the first divergence-types are racial: yellow man, black man... European racism as the white man's claim has never operated by exclu-sion, or by the designation of someone as Other. . . Racism operates by the de-termination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face, which endeavours to integrate non-conforming traits into increasingly eccentric and backward waves . . . From the viewpoint of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside. There are only people who should be like us and whose crime is not to be." (Deleuze and Guattari [1980 / 1987 /] 1988: 178).
>
> Nineteenth-century CE racism was constructed through the 'computation of normal-ities' and 'degrees of deviance': "a race", Deleuze & Guattari observe,
>
>> "is defined not by its purity but rather by the impurity conferred upon it by a system of domination. Bastard and mixed-blood are the true names of race" (p. 379).'[450]

Still within the field of anthropological studies of globalisation, it is remarkable that for Guattari deterritorialised capitalism, as a source of dislocation, is op-posed to what we could call (albeit in terms that are totally alien to Guattari's vocabulary) 'the liberating powers generated within the local horizon of organic signification'. On this point Guattari's work converges with a trend in modern anthropology – most vocally expressed in the work of the Indian-American researcher Arjun Appadurai –, according to which it is not the diffuse, world-wide, globalising aspect of the social experience, but on the contrary the fo-cused, the local, the home, is an active construct that needs to be researched and explained, notably by ethnicity research; the latter often concentrates on the geopolitical illusions attending the ideological construction of a 'home':

> '...I hope to extend my thoughts about local subjects and localized contexts to sketch the outlines of an argument about the special problems that beset the production of lo-cality in a world that has become deterritoralized, diasporic and transnational'.[451]

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[449] Reference is made here to: Brown, *The races of mankind*, I-IV, 1873-1879, II, p. 6 [WvB].

[450] Young 1994: 167; Young's reference is to: Deleuze & Guattari 1980 / 1987 /] 1988: 178, 379.

[451] Appadurai 1995: 213. *Cf*. Appadurai 1990, 1997; and van Binsbergen 1997, reprinted in the present volume as Chapter 1.

On this point Appadurai refers explicitly to Deleuze & Guattari (1980 / 1987 / 1988), but he does not admit in so many words that for him (as an Indian with a leading position in the USA social science balancing between two continents, in the context of a global pursuit of an – implicitly universalist – scientific discipline) the construction of the home is far more problematic and artificial than it is for these two French philosophers.

10.4.2. Virtuality

One of the concepts which anthropology has used in its approach to modern globalisation processes has been *virtuality*.[452] It now so happens that Guattari has much of value to contribute to this concept – conceived no longer in the Aristotelian or Scholastic sense of δύναμις *dunamis* / *potentialitas*; nor in the modern but very specific sense ('materially unreal, but real in its effects') of electronics and automatisation; but conceived as a reference to unprecedented new worlds evoked by creativity:

> 'Expressive, linguistic and non-linguistic substances install themselves at the junction of discursive chains (belonging to a finite, preformed world, the world of the Lacanian Other) and incorporeal registers with infinite, creationist virtualities (which have nothing to do with Lacanian 'mathemes'). It is in this zone of intersection that subject and object fuse and establish their foundations. .'[453]

Even despite Guattari's scientific use of language, one of the most inspiring aspects of his work revolves around the poetic evocation of these forms of virtuality especially in the context of art:

> 'Strange contraptions, you will tell me, these machines of virtuality [*i.e.* these forms of art – WvB], these blocks of mutant percepts[454] and affects, half-object half-subject, already there in sensation and outside themselves in fields of the possible. They are not easily found at the usual marketplace for subjectivity and maybe even less at that for art; yet they haunt everything concerned with creation, the desire for becoming-other. as well as mental disorder or the passion for power. Let us try, for the moment, to give an outline of them starting with some of their principal characteristics.
>
> The assemblages of aesthetic desire and the operators of virtual ecology are not entities which can easily be circumscribed within the logic of discursive sets. They have neither inside nor outside. They are limitless interfaces which secrete interiority and exteriority and constitute themselves at the root of every system of discursivity. They are becomings – understood as nuclei of differentiation – anchored at the heart of each domain, but also between the different domains in order to accentuate their heterogeneity. A becoming child (for example in the music of Schumann) extracts childhood memories so as to embody a perpetual present which

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[452] Rheingold 1993; Woolley 1992; Heim 1993; Jones 1997; Carrier & Miller 1999; Poster 1995. My own contributions to this debateare sufficiently indicated thoughout the present volume.

[453] Guattari 1995 / 1992: 24 *f. Cf.* Deleuze & Guattari 1991: 111 *f.*, where science as knowledge of the real is being contrasted with philosophy as knowledge of the virtual.

[454] 'Percept', 'concept' and 'affect' are (in critical reflection upon Kant) the three key concepts of Deleuze's thought from the 1970s onward, with which Guattari's ideas converge on this point; *cf.* Oosterling 1996: 543 *f.*, 560 *f.*

installs itself like a branching, a play of bifurcations between becoming woman, becoming plant, becoming cosmos, becoming melodic...' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 92)

10.4.3. The culture of capitalism

All this suggests that, despite the blemishes in Guattari's handling of concrete anthropological materials, anthropology yet could benefit from Guattari just as he could benefit from anthropology.

What we specially encounter in Guattari is the struggle in order to liberate language and thought from the frameworks whose pathogenic and paralysing effects turn out to be directly connected with structures of economic and political domination. Marxist Africanist anthropologists a few decades ago simply identified these frameworks as 'capitalism'. What eventually made many of them (of us!) relinquish the Marxist perspective, was what we perceived as the practical impossibility to arrive, from a Marxist point of departure, at a non-reductionist theory of the symbol and of symbolic production, including art and religion.[455] Perhaps such a theory could be constructed (my 1981 own book *Religious Change in Zambia* was one among several attempts in that direction at the time, and so was the collection I published with Peter Geschiere *Old Modes of Production and Capitalist Encroachment*, 1985 / 1982), but in this connection we were more and more incapacitated by the dogmatic materialism that adhered to brands of Marxism then *en vogue*. And after years of enthusiastic work on Marxist interpretations of African data, we largely called it a day.

For Guattari, however (as for Deleuze and many members of their generation, *e.g.* Baudrillard), the continued preoccupation with the problematic of the culture of capitalism remained self-evident, and on this point they made considerable advances which however, because of disciplinary and geographical boundaries, fell short of fertilising the later work of neo-Marxist anthropologists outside France:

> 'The other operation of this capitalism is an operation of integration, *i.e.* its objective is not an immediate profit, a direct power, but rather to capture subjectivities from within, if I can use this term. (...) And to do so, what better technique is there to capture subjectivities than to produce them oneself? It's like those old science fiction films with invader themes, the body snatchers; integrated world capitalism takes the place of the subjectivity, it doesn't have to mess around with class struggles, with conflicts: it expropriates the subjectivity directly because it produces subjectivity itself. It's quite relaxed about it; let's say that this is an ideal which this capitalism partially attains. How does it do it? By producing subjectivity, *i.e.* it produces quite precisely the semi-

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[455] I somewhat distanced myself from my earlier, neo-Marxist approaches to African religion in: van Binsbergen 1988a Nonetheless I have continued to attach much value to a Marxist perspective. French and Dutch neo-Marxist anthropologists in the 1960s-1980s developed and routinised the concepts of 'mode of production' and 'articulation of modes of production'; *cf.* van Binsbergen & Geschiere 1985 and extensive references there. These I consider a lasting enrichment of the cultural anthropological conceptual apparatus, which I have continued to use to this very day; *cf.* van Binsbergen 1992b, 2006a, 2012a.

otic chains, the ways of representing the world to oneself, the forms of sensitivity, the forms of curriculum, of evolution; it furnishes different age groups, categories of the population, with a mode of functioning in the same way that it would put computer chips in cars, to guarantee their semiotic functioning.' (Guattari in: Stivale 1993.)

It was particularly Guattari's combination of psychiatrist and political activist which brought him to make significant progress in this field. What enables him to escape from the straitjacket of reductionist Marxist dogmatics and thus to show the way towards a theoretical innovation beyond Marxism? That is especially the insight, as mediated in *L'Anti-Oedipe*, to the effect that, *instead of the contradiction between interests and desires which both Marx and Freud took for granted, in fact there exists an intimate contamination between these two poles of the human condition* (*cf.* Oosterling 1996: 601, 604). Deleuze & Guattari began to perceive that Freud's Oedipus complex is not a universal of human culture (as it was for early psychoanalysis, and later for many members of the Culture and Personality School),[456] but a specific product of the subjectivation of high capitalism in Central and Western Europe. This makes us aware of an important aspect of the symbolic production of capitalism, but also presents a revealing distorting mirror to anthropology itself. For if Deleuze & Guattari's hypothesis concerning the capitalist background of the Oedipus complex is correct, then this would mean that capitalism produced not only the Oedipus complex, but also a specific form of universalism in psychoanalysing anthropology. That might have been the reason why, for *Culture and Personality* anthropologists from early 20th c. CE onward, it was self-evident that the Oedipus complex *had* to be universal[457] – just as deterritorialised as the economic structures that had produced it; it was literally unthinkable to these researchers that the Oedipus complex as a form of subjectivation could be limited to the spatial and temporal horizon of modern North Atlantic culture – which was their very own. Thus the position of hegemonic ethnocentrism appears to be built into the very science, anthropology, which was to enable us to formulate the concept of ethnocentrism in the first place, as well as, in the hands of Melville Herskovits (Herskovits & Herskovits 1973), its counterpart, notably *cultural relativism*.[458]

But are we speaking here of the same capitalism whose twentieth-century CE expansion we sought to study in Africa as Marxist anthropologists in the 1970s? Guattari has raised the intellectual strategy of poetic, conceptual kaleidoscopics to a virtue and a fine art, so that for him capitalism is not *per se* the historic social formation of modern Europe; on the contrary, capitalism can occur in

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[456] *Cf.* Kardiner 1939; Kardiner *et al.* 1945.

[457] *Cf.* the following studies referring to many different parts of the world and historical periods: Cohen 1977; Dupire & Gertler 1977; Fortes 1959; Karpati 1984; Lidz 1989; Mitchell 1968; Oosterling 1989; Ortigues & Ortigues 1966.

[458] For an incisive critique of cultural relativism, see: Aya 1996.

many eras, usually in the company of technologies of domination such as writing, bureaucracy, and the state.

> 'Capitalistic deterritorialised Assemblages do not constitute well defined historical periods – any more than do emergent territorialised Assemblages. (Capitalistic drives are found at the heart of the Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Chinese empires, then throughout the whole of classical Antiquity.)' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 105)

It is not by accident that such apparatuses of subjectivation strike us as echoes of the concept of 'ideological state apparatuses' with which Althusserian Marxism, inspired by Gramsci, sought to understand the nexus between human subject, the state, and capital, in terms of the subjugation of the former to the latter by means of the middle term, the state. At the same time we cannot close our eyes to the language games that Guattari is playing here: at such a formidable level of aggregation, what does capitalism as a concept of historical analysis still mean, if it can be claimed to apply to the slavery-based mode of production in Pericles' Athens, just as well as to the temple-based economies of Old Kingdom Egypt and of Sumer, and to the patrimonial bureaucracy (Weber) of China under the 唐朝 T'ang dynasty? Again, the desire to conjure up the subjective experience of a poetical understanding at minimum personal costs propels Guattari on a trajectory away from creative intellectual freedom, and towards deterritorialisation.

10.4.4. Towards an anthropology of non-meaning, of violence, and of the subconscious

However, another point on which Guattari may have a fertilising effect on modern anthropology is in taking a relative position *vis-à-vis meaning* (*cf.* Section 1.4 of this book). One of the major developments in anthropology in the course of the twentieth century CE was the popularisation of the concept of symbol, especially via Susanne Langer's going beyond Cassirer.[459] According to a common definition the symbol stands for, but is detached from, its referent; this led to a shift in anthropology, from the study of material objects, customs and institutions, to the study of how meanings are being generated from recognisable cross-linkages within culture. Although it had a rather different background, the structuralist method helped to bring that new ideal within reach.[460] However, in this connection one ran into considerable embarrassment whenever (within the local cultural horizon in time and place) the ethnographer encountered phenomena which for the participants themselves appeared to have no explicit, recognised, explicable meaning – and as all field-workers know this is a common occurrence.

Theoretically, a possible way out is then to appeal to the hypothesis of a collective unconscious, in which latent meanings can be surmised to be stored which

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[459] Langer 1942; Cassirer 1944, 1946 / 1925, 1953-7 / 1923-1929.

[460] Leach 1976; Lévi-Strauss 1958-1973.

are too painful, too destructive, or too central to the construction of social or-der, than that they could be allowed to penetrate to the surface of conscious-ness. But often such an appeal is unjustified, even regardless of the problematic nature of the concept of 'collective unconscious' in itself, and of the empirical and methodological problems attending its systematic study.

What to think of cultural objects and practices which in the past, and else-where, did have an explicit meaning, but this meaning became detached from these objects and practices in their peregrinations through space and time – *e.g.* what anthropologists were to call 'survivals' (a term no longer permissible to-day) around the turn of the twentieth century CE: fragments of tradition which are no longer understood by the participants and which are enshrined in 'folk-lore'. There is a large class of explicitly formal cultural systems which are char-acterised by a high degree of accumulated, strict distinctions within a systematic framework: language, writing, divination systems, astronomies, cults and their formal organisations. Such systems have the capability of maintaining themselves with improbable tenaciousness and considerable immutability across many boundaries in both space and time, and thus to end up in local contexts where they cannot derive their meaning from an overarching local culture – because their meaning already lies with the distant time and place of their origin. Modern anthropologists came to be obsessed with the structural-functional integration of cultural elements *within* a very narrow horizon of space and time (once the 'tribe', now the community, the ethnic group, the people) – the dominant paradigm in anthropology from the 1930s especially with the rise of intensive and prolonged field-work (which inevitably imposes local horizons as a practical, logistic constraint). Because of this orientation, modern anthropologists have found it immensely difficult to deal with this kind of meaninglessness, even though it is common. This is a serious handicap, not only for the understanding of diffusion of cultural elements in the geographical space, and of successful cultural transmission over longer periods of time (which tends to go hand in hand with the erosion of the original meaning of such elements – often but far from invariably compensated by the attribution of new meaning in the context of localising transformation within the local cul-ture of destination), but also for an understanding of cultural globalisation in the modern world. For in the latter case *a very conspicuous phenomenon is the constant local arrival (via globalising mechanisms such as electronic media and trade) of cultural elements which initially have no meaning whatsoever within the local cultural horizon*. On this point Guattari can contribute to our theory for-mation, for he takes the idea of a meaningless semiotics for granted – with this proviso that he does not situate such meaninglessness in the lost history and the distant trajectories of collective representations or artefacts, but in the indi-vidual creation of new cultural forms of imagination.[461]

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[461]   '...S[tivale]: I'm still trying to situate the idea of an a-signifying semiotic.

Forced by circumstances, one of the growth points of anthropology today lies in the study of *violence*.[462] Also this is implicitly in line with Guattari, applying a perspective that has been widely accepted among Marxist anthropologists for a long time: the view according to which the principal task of a society's ideological institutions (religion, myths, political ideology) is to block, from the consciousness of the members of society, the violence that is at the root of the society and of the state.

> 'In a subsequent reference to Klossowski's commentary[463] to Nietzsche's Eternal Return,[464] the contamination of desire and interests is brought into relation with signification: the attribution of purpose and meaning takes away the meaninglessness and absurdity of such violence as is implied in the institution of laws and – in terms of the Nietzschean problematic of *appearance* – is being 'masked' *"de convertir ainsi l'absurdité en spiritualité"*.[465] Fascism reveals its true face, as soon as this unthinkable, constituting violence becomes manifest (it is the violence that, in my opinion, Derrida in *Force de loi* analyses as the "mystical foundation of authority"). Until that moment, fascism hides its true face in the lap of democracy.'[466]

Finally, Guattari's work can serve to strengthen the psychoanalytical reflection within modern anthropology. For the time being, psychoanalysing anthropologists such as

> ....G[uattari]: OK, here it is. What is important in this a-signifying character, in this a-signifying vacillation of chains that elsewhere could be meaningful? It's the following: first, a spectrum of a-signifying, discreet signs in limited number gives a power of representation, *i.e.* on a spectrum that I master, that I articulate, I can pretend to take account of a signified description (*tableau signifié*), on an initial level. But obviously, this doesn't stop here. This subjectivation that I lose starting from this a-signifying spectrum, gives me an extraordinary surplus-value of power; *i.e.*, it opens fields of the possible that aren't at all in a bi-univocal relationship with the description presented. When Debussy invented a pentatonic scale, he wrote his own music; perhaps he felt it at a level we might call "his inspiration", but he engendered abstract machinic relationships, a new musical logic that has implications, that represents trees of implication or, we really must say, rhizomes of implication, completely unforeseen in all sorts of other levels, including levels that aren't, strictly speaking, musical. It is precisely on the condition that this constitution, that this semiotic arbitrarization occurs, to generalize Saussure's notion of "arbitrary" in regard to signifier and signified, that there also will be the creation of these coefficients of the possible. If the representation of coding codes too much on the signified description, the signifier is like a cybernetic "feedback" and, in the long run, does not carry an important coefficient of creativity, of transversality. On the other hand, as soon as there is this arbitrarization and this creation of a spectrum that plays on its own register as an abstract machine, then there are possibilities of unheard-of connections, there is a possible crossover from one order to another, and then, moreover, there is a considerable multiplication of what I call these spectrums of the possible.' (Stivale 1993).

[462] *E.g.* Nordstrom & Robben 1995; Gewald 2004; Vidal 2004; Bagalwa-Mapatano 2004; Becker 2003.

[463] *Cf*. Klossowski 1969, 2009 / 1973.

[464] Throughout Nietzsche's work (*e.g. Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, and *Also sprach Zarathustra*; 1973b / 1882, 1973a / 1885) we find references to the idea of an 'ewige Wiederkehr' ('eternal return or recurrence'), which he greatly abhors yet appears to find irresistibly attractive.

[465] Original reference to: Deleuze & Guattari 1972.

[466] Oosterling 1996: 604 (my translation; italics added), also i*bidem, p.* 421.

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Bonno Thoden van Velzen[467] in the Netherlands, and René Devisch[468] (founder of the Louvain School of anthropology) in Belgium, have remained somewhat isolated, which hampers the rich fertilisation which potentially can come from a psychoanalytical approach. It would be especially interesting to test Guattari's ideas in the context of modern cultures outside Europe: not only his ideas on art and capitalism, but also those on schizophrenia – the field of his primary professional expertise.

10.4.5. Towards a liberating aesthetics of anthropological field-work?

Besides a further thinking through of the culture of capitalism, Guattari's work has still other promises for modern cultural anthropology. His emphasis on art within the total of a society's symbolic production, and his scientistically aetheticising, instead of scientific, approach to his own knowledge production, bring to Guattari's work an enchanting flicker of form, beauty, seduction and freedom, which stands in beneficial contrast with the sometimes cramped attempts at a scientific *habitus* characteristic of much ready-made prose from the hands of anthropologists. Admittedly, Guattari's own handling of anthropology is defective, but implicitly he calls on anthropologists to reconsider the orientation, both in form and in contents, of anthropological knowledge production: *should not they, too, follow his example of scientistic aetheticising, which in principle (and despite the defects of Guattari's own work) might avoid the objectification of the cultural and / or somatic Other so that the latter is not deprived of his or her humanity and real political progress can be made?*

Guattari's work holds up a mirror, not only to the psychoanalysing anthropologist, but also to the ethnographer. When in this connection Guattari describes his experiences with certain forms of *video-assisted* group therapy at the level of the family, he does so in terms which are familiar to the anthropologist. For the latter primarily derives her or his data and inspiration from very long and very intensive participation in pre-existing social groups of which she or he was originally not a member. If in the passage below we replace 'video' by 'participant observation', Guattari's description evokes such field-work, including the increasing powers of perception and self-reflexivity which ideally should be a component of such field-work:

> 'Family therapy produces subjectivity in the most artificial way imaginable. This can be observed during training sessions, when the therapists improvise psychodramatic scenes. Here, the scene implies a layering of enunciation: a vision of oneself as concrete embodiment; a subject of enunciation which doubles the subject of the statement and

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[467] Thoden van Velzen 1984, 1995; Thoden van Velzen & van Wetering 1988. In Africa, we have had for decades the impressive group around the Dakar-based journal *Psychopathologie Africaine*, but although this has often touched in anthropological topics, it usually did so as ancillary to more central psychiatric concerns – not unlike Guattari's work.

[468] Devisch 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1989, 1990b, 1993, 1995b; Devisch & Vervaeck 1985; Devisch & Brodeur, 1996.

the distribution of roles; a collective management of the game; an interlocution with observers commenting on the scene; and finally, video which through feedback restores the totality of these superposed levels. This type of performance favours the relinquishment of a 'realist' attitude which would apprehend the lived scenes as actually embodied in family structures. This multi-faceted theatrical aspect allows us to grasp the artificial and creative character of the production of subjectivity. It should be emphasised that the video is always within sight of the therapists. Even when the camera is switched off, they develop the habit of observing certain semiotic manifestations which would escape normal observation. The ludic face-to-face encounter with patients and the acceptance of singularities developed in this sort of therapy distinguishes it from the attitude of the traditional psychoanalyst with an averted gaze, and even from classical psychodrama.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 8; my italics)

For the anthropologist, it is as distressing as it is illuminating to see how Guattari's characterisation – intended as just very general – of value formation and communication according to the consumptive logic of capitalism, also applies to the practice of 'scientific' ethnography of 'other cultures', as became customary in cultural anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century CE and has largely persisted ever since.

'This sectorisation and bipolarisation of values can be defined as capitalistic due to the neutralisation, the systematic dequalification, of the materials of expression from which they proceed – which puts them into the orbit of the economic valorisation of Capital, treating as formally equal the values of desire, use values, exchange values, and which puts differential qualities and non-discursive intensities under the exclusive control of binary and linear relations. Subjectivity is standardised through a communication which evacuates as much as possible trans-semiotic and amodal enunciative compositions. Thus it slips towards the progressive effacement of polysemy, prosody, gesture. mimicry and posture, to the profit of a language rigorously subjected to scriptural machines and their mass media avatars. (...) Modular individuation thus breaks up the complex overdeterminations between the old existential Territories in order to remodel the mental Faculties, a self, organs, personological, sexual and familial modalities of alterity, as so many pieces compatible with the mechanics of social domination. In this type of deterritorialised assemblage, the capitalist Signifier, as simulacrum of the imaginary of power, has the job of overcoding all the other Universes of value. Thus it extends to those who inhabit the domain of percept and aesthetic affect, who nevertheless remain (...) nuclei of resistance of resingularisation and heterogenesis.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 104 *f.*; my italics)

Is it at all possible to develop an ethnographic practice which effectively liberates itself (as well as the research hosts!) from capitalist subjectivation, and which therefore refuses to be one of the instruments of North Atlantic hegemony? This question was very vocally posed in the 1970s, in the debates on anthropology and imperialism, and entered a new phase with Said's devastating critique of orientalism by the end of that decade.[469] Today anthropology, in addition to the mainstream of predictable scientific ready-made prose, allows for a rich variety of 'meta-ethnographic' experiments in the search to a valid answer to this question – experiments not only according to textual genre (novel, poem, biogra-

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[469] Copans 1974, 1975; Buijtenhuijs 1972, 1992; Said 1978; van Binsbergen 1984; English version also in: van Binsbergen 2003b: ch. 2; van der Veer 1995; Konings *et al.*, 2000.

phy, autobiography, historiography, photo essay, movie, multimedia production, website) but also in terms of the choice of perspective, in terms of the choice of the subject (not only the research but also the population under study, or a group of people investigating themselves), and in terms of product (not necessarily as test, but possibly also hypertext, a project, a data base, a network, a political process of taking consciousness and of effecting change).

This type of experiment however, although in principle possible like never before, yet continues to meet with very strong limitations imposed by the relations of production within anthropology itself: limitations in terms of time, funding, and recognition by fellow professsionals. This is, however, not simply a case of professional conformism being enforced in exchange for institutional and career security. If the scientific pursuit of intercultural knowledge is to be more than a relatively well-paid, cynical pastime, one has to collectively define, manage and protect – and only in the last resort *change* – the formats and methodologies for that pursuit, because there reside the only epistemological bases for the truth claims (however relative and ephemeral) scientists are making.

10.5. Conclusion: The future role of art and anthropology from a Guattarian perspective

In conclusion, let me consider, from an anthropological perspective, Guattari's optimist vision of the responsibility of art in the present time.

Strikingly, Guattari practically ignores a few concepts with which others have sought to characterise North Atlantic modernity: rationality (Weber), capitalist exploitation and alienation (Marx), anomie (Durkheim), and discipline (Foucault). Implicitly, however, these themes may be found back in Guattari's analysis of capitalism as the producer of specific forms of deterritorialised subjectivity. Guattari applies himself to the liberation of this specific form of subjectivity, and he sees such liberation primarily in art and in other forms of originality and creativity. Apart from Guattari's inimitable use of language, this idea is far from new: it goes back, in part, to German Romanticism around 1800 CE, and was widely established in literary circles throughout the North Atlantic region in the twentieth century CE (*cf.* Atz 1982; Guyer 2003).

It is a moot point whether, with this conviction, Guattari is not much too optimistic. Is it not true that the heterogeneous subjectivation, the exploration of virtualities hitherto unknown, such as art puts before us, are yet very strongly tied to capitalist relations of production, which make them possible and to which they are attracted like moths to a light at night?

Under post-modern conditions of hyper-individualisation, the image of the human in interaction with other humans is more and more replaced – or, in the

best of cases, is more and more mediated, in highly structured manner) by the interaction between human and machine: computer, Internet, CD-ROM, DVD, cell phone, tablet, cloud, *etc*. Especially under such conditions, one is tempted to bring another objection against Guattari's euphoric expectations as far as art is concerned. For it seems to be true that artistic production and participation (it would already be disfiguring to speak of 'consumption' here) mainly addresses the private level, and has no real public implication in the direction of collective liberation (apart from the role of applied art in the creation and preservation of hegemony and civil subjugation). However, Guattari (and Deleuze) primarily refer to *avant garde* art milieus, which tend to operate in groupings and movements. Therefore this objection may be little convincing; it stresses the individual powerlessness of art, and that is precisely the pattern of thought (the capitalist subjectivation) which Guattari seeks to breach through art.[470]

However, in order to do just that, art must be in a position to liberate itself from capitalist subjectivation. Guattari's vision on art as deprogramming – as liberation from the strictly defined framework and the subjugation of socio-political life today – seems to turn a blind eye to processes of capitalist production and expropriation which also dominate the world of art. As has been remarked by Bourriaud (1995: 54), except in his arguments on the 'plural-subjectivating refrain' Guattari in fact is scarcely interested in *reception* aesthetics, – his interest is exclusively in the production side of art. Hence he has no specific argument on the commoditification (*cf.* van Binsbergen & Geschiere 2005) and consumption of art – even though in general he does very clearly perceive the force of capitalist subjugation in the symbolic domain, and the role of media and machines in that connection (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 104 *f*). Conversely, on the production side he only sees the liberating creative moment, and turns a blind eye to the material, financial, ethnic and political conditions under which that moment is realised – and to the compromises which such conditions tend to make necessary.

Moreover, for Guattari art is in the first place North Atlantic modern art. Some attention for modern African art might have served to considerable dampen his optimism.[471] In Africanist research of African art forms, including music and dance, what comes to the fore is not the mediation of some timeless, homebound 'participation' (*i.e.* Guattari on the authority of Lévy-Bruhl), but[472]

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[470] Also see Oosterling, *Door schijn bewogen*, p. 569, n. 423, who juxtaposes, on this point, Guattari's approach and the neo-pragmatist one of Rorty, in which the contradiction private / public plays a major role; *cf.* Rorty 1989b.

[471] For a useful overview, *cf.* Preston Blier 1993. For our specific problematic, see especially the works of Johannes Fabian and Bogumil Jewsiewicki from Preston Bliers bibliography. Relevant is also: Kaarsholm 1991.

[472] van Binsbergen 1992a, 2000d, 1997d (reprinted in the present book as Chapter 1).

- unmitigated commodification, turning Africans' own production of modern art into the production of merchandise for the (primarily North Atlantic, and itinerant tourist) market

- the imitation of geometrical, strictly disciplined forms derived from the North Atlantic practices of the media, bureaucracy and other formal organisation

- the appropriation of the products of art production by elite groups imposing themselves (often through the Internet) as brokers between the local group and the outside world, especially the state and mass media.

- This is the reality of modern Africa, with its enormous increase of local and regional cultural festivals, and with the state co-opting (neo-)traditional and modern artistic expressions of music and dance in the context of state rituals such as the celebration of Independence Day and the state visits of foreign politicians. One wonders whether Guattari does have an answer to the question as to how to bend such processes in the direction of creative liberation? How to discharge Guattari's instructions so as to arrive at an 'ecosophic cartography' capable of producing

    'assemblages of enunciation capable of capturing the points of singularity of a situation'? (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 128.)

How, in particular, should intellectuals (artists and writers as well as critics, philosophers and scientists), in Africa, Asia and Latin America, formulate their own historical mission in this connection? How can the North Atlantic region help them in this respect, in a more positive sense than merely by avoiding crowding them, and buying their products?

We should not take too one-sided a view of Guattari's emphasis on art. With Deleuze, he himself admits that essentially the same promising future as he sees for art, lies in store for philosophy. For philosophy and art have

'en commun [la mission at la capabilité] de resister, resister à la mort, à la servitude, à l'intolerable, à la honte, au present'.[473]

We may conclude that also anthropology has a contribution to make to the future as sketched by Guattari. That contribution can hardly be limited to cleansing Guattari's work from the many blemishes resulting from his appropriation of an obsolescent and second-hand anthropology. His 'ecology of the virtual' (in very liberal translation: the responsible care, not only for the natural environment but also for the cultural and artistic environment) contains not only the symbolic innovations by individual artists and by artistic movements (as well as other North Atlantic forms of creativity), but, in principle, also the

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[473] Deleuze & Guattari 1991: 105; *cf*. Oosterling 1996: 640 *f*.

alternative cultural and social forms such as have presented themselves at other times and in other places.

> 'In our era, aesthetic machines offer us the most advanced models – relatively speaking – for these blocks of sensation capable of extracting full meaning from all the empty signal systems that invest us from every side. It is in underground art that we find some of the most important cells of resistance against the steamroller of capitalistic subjectivity – the subjectivity of one-dimensionality, generalised equivalence, segregation, and deafness to true alterity. This is not about making artists the new heroes of the revolution, the new levers of History! Art is not just the activity of established artists but of a whole subjective creativity which traverses the generations and oppressed peoples, ghettoes, minorities... I simply want to stress that the aesthetic paradigm – the creation and composition of mutant percepts and affects – has become the paradigm for every possible form of liberation, expropriating the old scientific paradigms to which, for example, historical materialism or Freudianism were referred. The modern world – tied up in its ecological, demographic and urban impasses – is incapable of absorbing, in a way that is compatible with the interests of humanity, the extraordinary technico-scientific mutations which shake it. (...) An ecology [*i.e.* an ethics of care and respect in the awareness of the finitude of resources – WvB] of the virtual is thus just as pressing as ecologies of the visible world.' (Guattari 1995 / 1992: 90 *f.*)

In principle, this has implications for the preservation of the cultural heritage of other cultures – in the same way as we should also preserve biodiversity. However, Guattari scarcely has any direct perception of other cultures as such – he can only deal with them through the filter of the national French multicultural society of the last few decades, the filter of psychoanalysts dabbling in other cultures in the context of their specialist professional journals, a few peripheral anthropologists that happened to become cult figures in general intellectual culture such as Bateson, Castaneda and in fact also Lévy-Bruhl. Hence Guattari does not stop to elaborate on the global contribution of anthropology towards the future of humankind.

Defining that contribution, and the terms under which it can be made, is the specific field of activity of intercultural philosophy in conjunction with anthropology. In the immensely important task of developing a new language so as to address the aporia of our time and age (the task, in other words, of developing a relevant philosophy of today) nothing of the entire bandwidth of the diversity of human culture can be missed out, but all needs to be mediated, preferably in a way that is controlled by the respective owners and bearers of these cultures. Such mediation cannot be left to the market, since this is saturated with capitalist subjectivation, even though this market includes commercial Internet sites offering South products, even Fair Trade shops, and African music labels.

However, if anthropology is to mediate the full range of diversity and meaning of humankind's cultural forms, in their specific individuality and in the sense advocated by Guattari – as a contribution to liberating reterritorialisation – then a primary requirement is that the dilemmas of ethnographic (and historiographic) method are being confronted and overcome. If the mediation of other cultures takes place in a format that is inspired, or even dictated, by the

symbolic technologies of global hegemonic domination, then no liberation whatsoever is to be expected from such a process. Luckily the bearers of cultures outside the North Atlantic region more and more take such mediation into their own hands – but that offers no guarantee that they will avoid the imitation of hegemonic and capitalist models, as is clearly demonstrated by modern African art and by much work in the field of indigenous knowledge systems. Another danger, which Guattari did recognise, is that of ethnic entrenchment, which replaces the unboundedness of the capitalist project (including its symbolic and value components) for a different kind of oppressive subjectivation: that of the closed horizon of ethnic or religious particularism. Rwanda 1994, Bosnia 1992-1995, Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic State, Christian and Hindu anti-Islamic fundamentalism – these catchwords demonstrate that here we are dealing with one of the major problems of our time. Moreover, above we spoke of creative experiments in 'meta-ethnography' seeking to break through the rigid (and potentially hegemonic) disciplinary framework of mainstream anthropology; but however liberating, necessary and timely, such experiments will inevitably give rise to new problems in the nature of appropriation, projection, transference, egotism, on the part of authors-researchers as well as on the part of the cultural groups they deal with, and as long as these problems are not confronted, the validity of the ensuing global intercultural mediation will remain very limited.

It is an important responsibility for intercultural philosophy to explore these problems and propose solutions, in conjunction with its sister discipline cultural anthropology. Not the letter, but the spirit of Guattari's writings can inspire us profoundly in the process.