

Tentative Epistemologies of Dividuation

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Abstract: Thanks to increased postcolonial awareness, current philosophers such as myself seek to question the extent to which philosophy has contributed, epistemologically and ethically, to the subjugation, discrimination, and even enslavement of people from the global South. In this regard, I strive to listen to criticisms from non-European philosophers, anthropologists, and epistemologists. Additionally, contemporary philosophers propose to deconstruct some of the central philosophical concepts, for example, the *individual*, which they replace with the concept of *dividuum* or, like myself, *dividuation*. They intended to suggest a (non-un)dividedness and participation of the person in different epistemological fields. Interestingly, the concept of dividuation shares several similarities with African philosophical concepts such as Ubuntu and Ujamaa and the Antillean concept of des-individuation.

Keywords: individuality, epistemic imperialism, critical humanism, non-European philosophies, dividuation

Introduction

Thanks to increased postcolonial awareness, European philosophies of arts and aesthetics now recognize themselves as having been conditioned by specific historical anthropologies of the person, by academic elaborations of human individuality, and by some core assumptions such as Hegel's conviction of the inevitability of individual self-appropriation or Kant's thesis of everyone's spontaneous aesthetic judgment of taste, regarding the reception of works of art considered as isolated entities.

One of the main goals of the postcolonial¹ critique is initiating an endeavour to incorporate non-European perspectives. The intent here is not only to enrich the range of philosophical ideas and understandings but to question the inherent violence in historical European philosophical concepts and, ultimately, to replace them with modified ones in light of different views and understandings. The first step is to seek recognition of the fact that the academic discipline of philosophy of aesthetics was developed during the 18th-Century European Enlightenment as a result of specific cultural parameters. These included the establishment of public universities and of philosophy as an academic discipline in which assumptions regarding the autonomy of the human person and its distributable capacities were taught, for example, by Immanuel Kant. The second step of the postcolonial critique is to uncover prejudicial differentiations between persons of different cultures, as will be explained along with some of Kant's philosophical statements. Strangely enough, his *Critique of Pure Reason* was accompanied in the same year by theories of race in which he established a hierarchy of skin colours, placing white and red at the top and black and yellow at the bottom. My general argument, therefore, is that certain conceptions should be eliminated and replaced by more encompassing ones, developed either by European philosophers reflecting on their philosophical heritage, anthropologists analysing the implicit/explicit understanding of 'persons' and 'communities' in the Global South, or philosophers from the Global South who criticise or deconstruct the European epistemological tradition.

This article is an attempt to offer alternative understandings of “the person”, as expressed in concepts such as “des-individuation” by Martinican philosopher Edouard Glissant, in the concepts of “Ubuntu” as discussed by South-African philosopher Leonhard Praeg or “Ujamaa”, which was coined by Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere in the 1960s. All these concepts emphasise the community-related and multicultural existence of contemporary human persons.

My critique of the modern understanding of the “individual” is based on some European philosophies, such as Spinoza’s or the French sociological tradition, as will be explained later. The novel concept of dividuation which I propose refers to similar concepts, such as “the dividual”, coined by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze for aesthetic enunciations and adapted by anthropologists Marshall Sahlins, Marilyn Strathern, and Viveiros de Castro. By so doing, they refer to different communities originating in the Global South and to the self-understanding of their members related to huge families and communities. My understanding of the term “dividuation” aims to highlight the “being-part-of” and “being entangled” aspects in epistemologically differentiated areas of research for the sake of a more encompassing conception of human existences in the contemporary world.

1. Postcolonial reactions to epistemic imperialism

Due to the generally increased awareness of the colonial past and the history of enslavement, it comes as no surprise that Western philosophical parameters and modes of self-understanding are now being questioned and criticized by theorists from the Global South.

Using the terms “cognitive empire” or “epistemic imperialism”, Zimbabwean epistemologist Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (*Epistemic freedom in Africa*) calls for a “decolonization of the mind” and “the inclusion of the contribution of Others” into epistemology. Argentinean anthropologist Walter Mignolo underlines the opportunity for “unlearning” offered by “postcolonial” criticism:

The postcolonial (...) is not just a new field of study or a gold mine for extracting new riches but the condition of possibility for constructing new loci of enunciation as well as for reflecting that academic knowledge and understanding should be complemented with ‘learning from’ those who are living in and thinking from colonial and postcolonial legacies (...). Otherwise, we run the risk of promoting mimicry, exportation of theories, and internal (cultural) colonialism rather than promoting new forms of cultural critique and intellectual and political emancipations — of making colonial and postcolonial studies a field of study instead of a liminal and critical locus of enunciation (Mignolo 5).

Both theorists call for a fundamental epistemic reorientation and a commitment to a discussion of how we understand human persons and their artistic productions that are not Western in their orientation. My proposal to similarly “decolonize” the philosophy of aesthetics does not only refer to the West-European colonization in the late 19th century and the “Scramble for Africa”. It also encompasses the philosophical self-understanding of the Global North and its epistemic foundations.

When it comes to Kant’s philosophical assessment in his *Critique of Judgment*, it becomes obvious that his philosophy of aesthetics does not only rest on normative assumptions relating to time-specific graphical beauty and technical mastery based on the historical development of aesthetic proportions in Western Europe and on established bourgeois ideas of their optimal presentation and reception forms. The fact that artworks in Europe are usually separated from ordinary life and displayed in sacred or secular protected areas where they can assert a spiritual character and an intangible autonomy is part of Kant’s compartmentalization of zones of rationality and sensitivity, of an artwork’s contemplation by detached persons and its resultant commodification. Nigerian anthropologist Abiodun Akande (‘Art and life at Ìsàlẹ̀-Òyọ̀ community’) and Senegalese philosopher Babacar Mbaye Diop (‘La question de la restitution

du patrimoine africain...') criticized this aesthetic understanding and refuted the commodification of African art objects in European museums.

It is no surprise that the central concept of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, namely the *sensus communis* or "common sense", has become open to criticism today. After all, his critique is based upon the assumption of a self-evident experience of beauty that excludes the possibility of other ways of perceiving and judging aesthetic parameters. Kant's judgment reveals itself to be a racial and racist statement since it assumes that certain people of non-European descent, such as Iroquois people, are incapable of making judgments of taste. This enunciation refers to his earlier writing *Von den verschiedenen Rassen der Menschen* ('Of the different human races') of 1775, in which he established a hierarchy of races, placing white and red men above black and olive-yellow persons.

For these reasons, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze criticizes the Kantian model for being a mode of simple "recognition" rather than a challenge to cognition, relating human capacities to geometrical and agrarian laws of distribution, and other such stereotyping assumptions of sensitive experience:

Recognition makes a claim for a subjective principle of the working together of capacities for 'everyone', a community spirit as *concordia facultatum*; and, at the same time, the identity form of the object makes a claim to be (...) a ground of the unity of a thinking subject (Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* 174. Translated by Alison Kirkland).

Nigerian philosopher Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, for his part, criticizes Kant because his ethics, based on the "moral law within" (within a human being), is unconsciously related to Newtonian physics and its deterministic laws of nature. While striving to determine "a specifically human, inner *nature*" (Eze, 'The Color of Reason' 108. Original emphasis), Kant nevertheless arrives at the aforementioned hierarchical assessment of races according to skin colour. As one can argue, aesthetic judgment *à la* Kant does not reflect upon itself and its prejudices but transitions into not wanting to know.

In rereading the most renowned German philosopher, Emmanuel Eze discovers that Hegel did more than just accuse the African person of having no historical understanding. He even declared colonialism "a benefit to Africa because Europe inseminated it with reason, ethic, culture and mores, and thereby historicized it" (Eze, 'Introduction' 8–9). "Hegel does not raise any ethical questions or moral considerations because (...) he declared the African subhuman. It is for good reasons then that 'the critique of Eurocentrism' has become a significant, if 'negative' moment in the practice of African philosophy" (10). Eze questions, once again, "the relationship between the European claim to universality (...) and the fact that the 'ideals' of European modernity have been separated, up to now, from their associated historical implementation" (12). He analyses Africa's experience of the 'Age of Europe'

as the *cost* of Occidental modernity. This idea of the 'cost' (...) has to be understood literally, as that which had to be sacrificed in order to purchase, or pursue, European modernity's 'order'. (...) By dialectically negating Africa, Europe was able to posit and represent itself and its contingent history as the (...) ideal humanity (13).

By this token, the term 'cost' refers to the sacrifice of differing African knowledge and convictions and the victory of a complacent Western attitude to the detriment of the whole earth in the long run. Since "Europeans originally introduced the notion of a *difference in kind* between themselves and Africans as a way of justifying unspeakable exploitation and denigration of Africans" (13. Eze's emphasis), the question of the *Anthropos* must today be reconnected with new epistemological insights and ethical parameters.

Expanding on this, Eze ('The Color of Reason' 103–140) and others underline the fact that liberal European philosophers, from John Locke to Hegel, connect their conceptions of the hu-

man individual with bourgeois culture and legitimize the right to vote through land ownership. Especially in his late *Philosophy of Law*, Hegel argues that the assumption of a free man per se is one-sided since freedom must always be appropriated and mediated. A free spirit would be one who gains a free existence thanks to “a process of self-appropriation” (§57). A person, therefore, is constituted by the “absolute right of appropriation of all things” (§44). This statement is followed by the strange remark that “nothing is end in itself—no living being; not blood, Jews—not India, Egypt”. Since the human will can extend to and appropriate all things, it may also appropriate human beings. Therefore, the bourgeois society is “driven” to colonialism in order to provide for its labour and industry requirements. Consequently, it appears that the moral law associated with the domain of freedom is restricted to the ratio of “possessive individualism”, to echo a criticism by C. B. Macpherson (*The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*).

I call these philosophical reassessments of German philosophers epistemic imperialism since they provide the philosophical basis and justification for political imperialism, racism and colonialism. Along with political oppressors, they despise epistemic contributions to the construction of knowledge from people they do not even know but want to “appropriate”. The philosophers are not interested in getting to know the categories by which people they consider inferior understand themselves, forcing them to think of themselves in foreign and humiliating terms. Epistemic imperialism is therefore the continuation of political imperialism in the realm of knowledge. Postcolonial philosophers oppose epistemic imperialism and thus radicalise their critique.

2. Problematizing the individual

Since the philosophy of Enlightenment is based on the assumption that the human – mainly male – agents have to understand themselves as autonomous and necessarily appropriating individuals, my philosophical research is directed at the de-construction of the term ‘individual’ as the figure responsible for historical and contemporary acts of imperialistic appropriation, of cultural discrimination, and, last but not least, planetary destruction. I therefore refer to different philosophers who already criticised this notion as misleading while not abandoning the term “individual”.

Historically, the concept of the individual reveals the attempt to define a basic and undivided unit within an early physical worldview. Greek atomists formulated the concept of *atomon* as the smallest undivided entity in the universe. The Latin term *individuum* is the translation of this Greek notion made by Cicero in the first century of the current era. The concept initiated a 2000-year history of philosophical interpretation of the individual as a substantial and independent entity. However, it is interesting, and quite contrary to our expectations, that throughout the history of philosophy, the “individual” has nevertheless – and for good reasons – been expounded in terms of inner multiplicity and dividedness. For example, Spinoza explains

that the human body requires for its preservation many other bodies by which it is continually regenerated. Its solid, fluid, and gaseous (segment) individuals appear to be affected by other bodies and to affect other bodies. Affection is useful to man; the more useful, the more capable it renders the body of being affected in many ways and so affecting other bodies (Spinoza, *Postulata* 4, 139).

Spinoza’s ethic thus amounts to the call to increase (non-in)dividuation thanks to multidirectional (self)affections – and thereby proposes a model diametrically opposed to the one propagated by liberal philosophers such as John Locke. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, John Locke, writing in 1690, formulated the first liberal-democratic theory of the state, in which political power concerns itself exclusively with the preservation of every citizen’s property. This fatal connection of bourgeois rights with land ownership was reinforced by Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, where he explicitly endorses this theory, declaring the economic striving of the individual to be a beneficial virtue because it generates prosperity for the whole nation.

In their anti-idealistic text, *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels emphasise that they are taking “real individuals” as their starting point. They assert that, under the rule of exchange value, “human individuation is transformed into des-individuation, subsumed to relations independent of them”. They stress that consciousness is a “social product” (Marx and Engels 44), at best comprehending the necessity of associating with other individuals. Interestingly, they already point at the commodification of individual forces becoming either private property or being sold to capitalist owners within industrial production. Since the workers lose their capacities under these desalienating conditions and become “abstract” individuals (87), they should set aside their self-interest and connect with others to form a “totality” of abilities in order to become “complete individuals” (88) without class.

Because it oscillates between an analysis of the single person and social facts, 19th-century French sociology often underlines the inconsistency of the ‘individual’ and therefore proposes more encompassing terms. Gabriel Tarde, for example, sees individuals as embedded in “trans-individual” physical and psychic values. Because he understands human beings as the crossroads of non-individual affects and ideas, he characterises them as all-encompassing and generic values, as “a universal medium, a universe in itself” (Tarde 57). His idea of an initially differentiated psychological state anticipates Freud’s, Simondon’s and Deleuze’s assumptions concerning the unconscious, pre-individual, dividual, and socially embedded differentiability of the single person, which is realised according to different and often divergent cultural actualisations.

Actual critiques of the concept of the individual are mainly articulated by postcolonial thinkers such as Stuart Hall, who claims that the Western concept does not correspond to the hybrid identities of vast parts of the world’s population, who are forced to migrate and adapt to foreign cultures and to become dis-individuated in the quest for survival. In his turn, philosopher Jacques Nanema from Burkina Faso (see Nanema, ‘L’éducation selon Mounier’) criticises African disciples of the cult of the European conception of the individual since, in following it, they leave behind all the constraints of solidarity. Cameroonian economist Francis B. Nyamnjoh (29) maintains that pieces of research in Cameroun and Botswana “suggest that Africans are not only interested in rights and freedoms as individuals, but also in rights and recognition as communal and cultural solidarities”.

The Western understanding of the individual, misleadingly considered the general constitution of the person, is rejected as a new form of colonisation by Cameroonian philosopher Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, who also criticises this understanding of human identity:

Individualism – not just methodologically, but also ideologically and supposedly ontologically – is the vaunted fixed point of all social, political, moral, and religious sciences. It is postulate, method, object, and result, all in one. From this point, the individual is (...) a normative subject of institutions, moral, independent, autonomous and (significantly) non-social being. Thus, one is dealing with an ideal notion, a concept that reproduces the self-definition of a detached, boundary-drawing identity that understands itself, in relation to scientific determination of reality, as producer and product. (...) Anything founded upon this out-of-proportion or ‘hyper-natural’ individual refutes itself and becomes its opposite (Eboussi Boulaga 201. Translated by Alison Kirkland).

Eboussi Boulaga goes on to say that, because the individual is “nothing”, the individual inevitably competes with others to regard itself as valued, “thus abandoning the most individual thing about itself to subjugate itself to the inescapable necessity of economic growth and the accumulation of power, outside of which no well-being can be found” (208). He points to the actual connectedness of the (empty) person to the capitalist economy.

Therefore, a different understanding of the person is required, which does not only refer to its possible economic valorisation but to its important position within various epistemic fields. The person has to be portrayed as a constituted and constituting entity placed within different epistemological fields and between different responsibilities, having to decide on their forms of participation and, by so doing, necessarily dividuating themselves.

In this sense, South African philosopher Leonhard Praeg highlights that some African philosophers criticise the assumption of autonomous individuals. It is revealed to be a specific ethnophilosophical – better described as Eurocentric – self-understanding that does not correspond to other conceptions, such as Ubuntu, which theorizes different relations between persons and society. He translates Ubuntu as “We are interdependent” or “I am because we are” (Praeg 9), which does not define whom precisely this “we” comprises. He also points out the important fact that the Western discourse does not problematise the tension between the juridical concept of the person and the philosophical assumptions of human subjectivation as a processual entity co-constituted by other entities. The terms ‘individual’ or ‘undivided’ cannot represent this tension and are therefore inadequate. He calls for a return to a “critical humanism” (10) as a “glocal phenomenon” (11) that underlines the entanglement of local and global imaginaries.

Since critical humanism does not aim to improve or better exploit capacities and knowledge, the human should be conceived of as a “secondary concept” (12) that does not strive for relations of domination and does not concede the ascription of humanity to only specific persons. Since Africans are populations injured by the slave trade, colonialism, and ongoing capitalist exploitation, it would be indispensable to recognise and treat them as persons of equal grade by referring, for example, to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. “We do not struggle to get Ubuntu recognized; the struggle for recognition also determines how we come to think about Ubuntu. (...) we speak of it *because we need to make a point* about being black in a white world and African in a Western-dominated world” (14. Original emphasis). Praeg recognises that the “shared humanity” (18) he wishes for is untimely in an era that is all about fights for material resources and global participation and attention. Therefore, human practices should also be evaluated in terms of their effects on sustainability: “I take this to mean that there is no *humanism*, but only the sustained praxis of humanising” (20). This new understanding ought to assist us in figuring out a politics of the future and the common, where the question of belonging would be decisive: “*to be a person and (...) to belong to a community*” (35. Original emphasis). The task of this critical humanism would be to analyse the different contemporaneities in their multidirectional (non)participations – and not only in communities – and to repair deficient “belongings”. The single persons would have to recognise themselves as co-constituted by different others and accept this situation in its contextual conditionality in order to counter-act, enlarge, and modify it.

3. The counter-concept of dividuation

Today, further insights into single persons’ voluntary and involuntary participation in biotic masses and ecological ensembles in world societies and technological practices have created a need to redefine human subjectivations beyond the political realm. Current insights underline that human beings have always existed in relationships of interpenetration – with languages, images, technologies, other organisms, and social structures – that question all ideas of indivisibility in biological, social, cultural, and artistic realms alike. We recognise that our self-identity as undivided entities expresses a misleading negation of necessary, life-constituting participation, and we thus find ourselves faced with the task of considering, affirming, and moderating our possibly contradictory participations. We learn to recognise that the idea of undividedness – or subdividedness – depends on the choice and scale of our observation modes. Contrary to the term ‘individual’, the concept of dividuation is intended to focus on the person’s processual and self-reflective dividuation both through voluntary participation and involuntary subdivisions.

Today, for many reasons, among others, the technologically, economically and politically induced interferences of cultures in the globalised world, a critique and replacement of the Western concept of the individual seems inevitable. It must be replaced by a term that does not indicate separation, privilege, lack of inclusion or epistemological dualism but instead indicates

mobile relationships, forms of participation or even mutual constitutions of persons, cultures, societies, artworks, ecological assemblages, and so forth.

The terms 'dividual' or 'dividuation' intend to bring to the fore insights into the relatedness of existences with bio- and socio(techno)logical and with cultural, ecological, or aesthetic entities. The new perspective raises awareness of economic and digitalised capture, highlights ecological interdependencies, and fosters increased awareness of all sorts of voluntary and involuntary modes of participation, their possible tensions and contradictoriness and the need to decide on their quantity and quality.

The term 'dividual' is used by Gilles Deleuze in several texts with different affective values. In *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, published in 1986, Deleuze outlines a positive understanding of the dividual. Referring to films, he states that the temporal mobility of audiovisual framings permanently modifies the captured aesthetic 'ensemble', which, therefore, cannot be identified as an individual expression. He reads the time-dependent filmic – and musical – articulations as transitions between varying aesthetic combinations, not "divisible or indivisible, but dividual" (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 14).

In his late writing on 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', Deleuze assigns a historical date to this becoming-dividual, equating its emergence with the transition from analogue to digital technology, from the disciplinary system to the control system of a capital-occasioned continuum of inseparable modulations. As he writes, the society of control imposes unending self-modellings of single persons "in a state of constant metastability" ('Postscript' 6). Therefore, he speaks of new subjectivation modes and new sociological distinctions: "We're no longer dealing with a duality of mass and individual. Individuals become 'dividuals' and masses become samples, data, markets, or 'banks'" (6. Original emphasis). The person appears as a computable information potential, whose future development is quantitatively predicted and whose financial profitability is estimated.

As today's perspective even of natural sciences teaches us, the contemporary becoming-world needs to be understood as an expanded principle of relativity that no longer corresponds to atomist physics. This new principle constrains us to adopt perspectives informed by various lenses and to train them on multi-scale levels. Advancing into the realm of the infinitely small, microscopic observation reveals that living microorganisms far below our perception threshold contribute to our psycho-physical constitution. The new biotechnologies demonstrate that we share a large portion of our genetic dispositions with non-human others as viruses and bacteria are co-responsible for the temporal unfolding of the human genome.

On the macroscopic level, the technological promise of increased information prompts us to insert ourselves into mediatised forms of social existence. We vitalise ourselves by means of imaginary and aesthetic participation in mediated activities in distant parts of the world and by communicating via social media with enormous quantities of persons unknown to us.

Recently, we have become aware of how technological devices are one of the things that condition us and help to subjectivate us. The technological apparatus coalesces with our neuronal structure and determines how we manage our time and affects. In the interest of capitalisable bio-politics, a single address is registered, personal capacities are quantified and financialised, and the person is voluntarily and involuntarily assigned to digital masses and forms of pre-emption. That which was once characterised as individual today appears to be multiply subdivided – partaking, both passively and actively, on different levels. Given this, how can we still think of ourselves as autonomous individuals? Participation reveals itself to be a highly precarious value, one that can mean an increased transfer of knowledge and affective alliances. It can also mean harsh separations, involuntary appropriations, and the undesired presence of others in 'our' place.

Several anthropologists and ethnologists share the conviction that cultures originating in the global South cannot be analysed within the Western conceptual framework of family, society, or the individual. Marilyn Strathern (13) together with Marshall Sahlins (*What Kinship Is—And is Not*), Viveiros de Castro (*Die Unbeständigkeit der wilden Seele*) and Abiodun Akande ('Art and life at Isàlè-Òyó community'), all use the term "dividual" to characterise not only gift economies but also general non-dualistic relationships between persons and their extended families in specific societies within the Global South. Others point to our increasing involvement in digital technologies, which force us to recognise that there is no longer an unambiguous boundary between the single person and their chat group or social medium.

Antillean philosopher Edouard Glissant (211) has already argued in the 1990s for an aesthetic "des-individualisation" and for the necessary abolishing of unified cultural understandings. Composite culture does not mean dilution or dispersion of aesthetic signs but instead means "their affirmed and not imposed partition" (211).

Very much like the concept of dividuation, Glissant's concept does not suggest division and loss of coherence. Instead, it conveys the conviction that persons and cultural products should des-individualise canonised forms by exposing their inherent and unnoticed multiplicity and entanglement with others of all sorts by subverting their universalised norm and by nevertheless synthesising their heterogeneity into a complex particular expression.

In my understanding, monocultural assignments should be replaced by ways of thinking and enacting art that are closer to Glissant's *Poétique de la relation*. Thanks to his Caribbean background, Glissant insists on the necessity of understanding artistic practices as necessarily "relational" or "composite-cultural" statements. They should reflect and connect with their historically inflicted legacies in terms of indigenous, Black, and colonially imposed expressions and should build up complex subterranean networks similar to the Caribbean archipelago. By doing this, they should provide an aesthetic model of relationality and pluriversality for the whole-world – le "Tout-Monde" – exposing their conflictual cultural layers, performing their political tensions and accentuating their aesthetic heterogeneity.

In the domain of art, art curators and theorists Okwui Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu, writing in 2009, also highlight cross-cultural orientations in the art practices of the Global South and a critical decentralization of the artmaking and art-exhibiting processes. In his introduction to *Contemporary African Art since 1980*, Enwezor (11) accentuates the diversity of African artistic practices, calling them "a series of shifting grounds composed of fragments, of composite identities, and micro-narratives". Primarily due to the digital communication of artistic brands and their hype in art biennials worldwide, no single work of art could any longer be considered a totally independent creation. In particular, non-Western art practices, situated somewhere between local traditions and global standards, would be constrained to bring about hybrid manifestations and to incorporate the "destiny" of contemporary art in processes of acculturation and deculturation: "Consequently, what emerges as contemporary is an art of the supplement and citation, set between different archives, between and among traditions, set in its own invented traditions: colonial and postcolonial, local and global, regional and transnational, diasporic and cosmopolitan spaces" (26).

Enwezor emphasizes the circulations in which African artistic practices are involved, within Africa as well as on the global stage. Together with Congolese philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe, he seeks to encapsulate this specific tension in the concept of "reprendre" (15), which designates the simultaneous appropriation of African and Western traditions, the referencing of (post)colonial social contexts and the resulting formal amalgamation by African art practices. The term "reprendre" thus calls for potentiated (des-in)dividuated aesthetic processes.

Today, calls for "dis-othering as a method" are being made to counter this threat of cultural-epistemic division and fixation. Philosopher Paulin Hountondji from Benin even asks us to

deconstruct the “myth of Africanity” and to abandon the program of Negritude and all other ethnocentric and separatist ways of conceiving identity: “It was necessary to begin by demythifying the concept of Africanity (...) *to rid it* of all its ethical, religious, philosophical, political connotations” (Hountondji 52. Original emphasis. Translated by Alison Kirkland).

Taking this further, I intend to emphasise that the processual term “dividuation”, while highlighting our multidirectional entanglements, does more than merely help us to bring to the fore insights into our inevitably shared planetary existence; it also reveals ambiguities or even involuntary captures of our capacities and affects. To achieve a more adequate recording of our entanglements with all the plural, often unknown agents and their intersections, it would appear indispensable to reveal their character of participation-occasioned dividuation that we will have to acknowledge and counter-act.

Conclusion

The valorisation of the ever-specific ‘dividual’ is also associated with the sociopolitical endeavour to transform our cultural and historical dividuatedness into inclusive participation care on all sorts of levels. This suggests that European, African, and other potentials should be put together in ‘condividual’ ensembles that combat capitalised appropriations and eco(techno)logical over-exploitation. Despite the associated fear of difference loss, one can still assert that every dividuation is different from every other owing to its peculiar participation mode and the way it represents a particular cohesion – which is also true for the cultural sphere.

Dividuation, to stress this once again, does not mean division or uniformisation. On the contrary, when persons become aware of their multidirectional participations, they recognise themselves as particular forms of participations whose coherence must be managed repeatedly. It remains desirable to accentuate composite cultural differences and to note from which perspective, with what framing, and according to which evaluation a given cultural statement can be recognised as specifically dividual and thus different.

More than any individual, persons who understand themselves as *dividuated* must decide on their particular shape, form, and quantity of participation while partially losing control over their manifold interferences with others. But precisely for this reason, there are no two identical human dividuums. Recognising oneself as a processual entity of dividuation is an immense task that becomes less frightening as we increasingly recognise it as a creative work. After all, dividual consciousness ultimately demands that we understand lateral ties as an opportunity for a becoming-world through affirmed ‘condividuums’ with others of different epistemological fields.

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Notes

¹ The term “(post)colonial” does not mean that colonialism is over, but that it continues in a different form without being named as such.

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