

Cosmopolitanism to Come: Derrida, Mignolo, and Latin American “Border Thinking”¹

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Abstract

We live in age where diversity is increasingly accepted as a value as well as a fact. But this development is also contested by a global rise in authoritarian nationalism. To help us abet the former and resist the latter, cosmopolitanism must propose a notion of global unity that is composed of rather than imposed on difference. Jacques Derrida and Walter Mignolo offer different versions of this view of cosmopolitanism. Derrida's is based on his notion of “democracy to come.” He characterizes this idea as an “unconditional” or “quasi-transcendental” injunction. Mignolo's cosmopolitanism castigates this injunction as an “abstract universal.” He offers instead “a critical and dialogic” view of cosmopolitanism that is based more specifically on the “colonial difference” or “border thinking” of Latin American subaltern groups. I argue that Derrida's many references to “voices,” and Mignolo's to the voices of the Zapatistas in Mexico, imply that the dialogic interplay among these discourses simultaneously holds them together and keeps them apart, forming the multivoiced body that we call

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society. This agonistic interaction produces new voices and resists the "oracles" that would attempt to convert it into a homogeneous discourse. Moreover, my version of the two thinkers' use of 'voice' retains the universality of Derrida's unconditional injunction but on the basis of the worldly immanency urged by Mignolo's border thinking. The universality consists in a reworking of Derrida's idea of "unconditional hospitality" so that we can speak of ourselves, other species, and natural formations – all the inhabitants of the cosmos – as voices with wildly different "tongues." In Mignolo's turn, this vocal viewpoint allows us to stretch his ideas of "subaltern" and "border thinking" so that they refer to all marginalized inhabitants of the cosmos and to the commitment that all will be heard by all.

Keywords: Derrida, Mignolo, cosmopolitanism, democracy to come, border thinking, cosmos, voices

Alongside a forest path in northern Laos, a small mound is covered by rocks and leaves. Bamboo shoots up from its interior. My Lao friends, Thongdi and Souk, stoop over, pick up a stone and toss it on top of this swelling in the earth. I follow suit. After we have walked along the forest path for another hour, we stop to rest. Speaking in Lao, I ask Thongdi and Souk why we made this overture to the mound. They smile at my puzzlement and explain that a Vietminh soldier was ambushed and killed on that spot by French colonial troops in one of the earlier Indo China wars that were still continuing at the time of our interaction with the mound. They add that the stones are intended to hold down the *phi* or spirit that was rendered dangerous as a result of the violent death of its possessor. Although I respect the beliefs of my Lao companions, I see the mound from a different angle. I think of the remains of a farm kid sent from Vietnam to fight in a neighboring country against a Western power. In short, I want to memorialize what they wish, for their own good reasons, to cover and contain in this particular case.

This brief story contains all the elements necessary to piece together the idea of cosmopolitanism. The different ways of viewing the mound reflect the diverse voices that comprise global citizenship and suggests a desire to see them united in a manner that supports the acknowledgement and flourishing of them all.³ More specifically, this form of solidarity must affirm two other political virtues at the same time as it valorizes itself. These two others are heterogeneity and fecundity, that is, the creation of new voices through the dialogic interplay among the others. We can put this specification in an even more compact formula: we must seek "a unity *composed of difference*" rather than one imposed on the heterogeneous inhabitants of global society.

Valorizing a global unity composed of difference is only one part of the message of the mound. The body of the Vietminh soldier represents the other part.

3 This emphasis on unity and diversity as well as their problematic relation to each other is echoed throughout the literature on cosmopolitanism (and democracy). See, for example, Appiah 2006, xv, and Evans 2008

It signifies that cosmopolitanism must also resist war and other geopolitical forces that undermine world amity. The most dominant of these other forces is the market fundamentalism practiced by globalized neoliberalism.⁴ In fostering an unsustainable inequality within and between countries, it has also spawned a growing reaction to it that reminds many thinkers of the neofascist movements preceding World War II.⁵ It also has abetted climate change and thus helped create the desperate waves of world-wide migration likely to arise in its wake.⁶ These occurrences emphasize the need for a cosmopolitanism that can valorize the diversity of the world and draw upon it to counter nihilistic tendencies.

In this paper, we will respond to this need for an appropriate cosmopolitanism by concentrating on the first message of the mound in Laos, that concerning diversity and the related problem of making concrete the abstract formula of a unity composed of difference. To accomplish this concretization, we will begin by considering two versions of cosmopolitanism. The first of these is Jacques Derrida's "democracy to come," which he indicates can also be a "cosmopolitanism to come";⁷ the second is Walter Mignolo's "critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism" or Latin American "border thinking," which he also refers to as "decoloniality."⁸ These ideas represent polar positions on the topics we are discussing: Derrida characterizes his idea of democracy/cosmopolitanism to come as an "unconditional" or "quasi-transcendental" injunction; Mignolo castigates this injunction as an "abstract universal" and attempts to base cosmopolitanism on a specific condition, the "colonial difference" or border thinking of subaltern groups in Latin America and elsewhere.⁹ I will argue that the difference between these two compelling positions suggests a third alternative. This new contender keeps the universality of Derrida's unconditional injunction but on the basis of a version of the worldlier immanency urged by Mignolo.

Cosmopolitanism and Globalization

Derrida and Mignolo agree on confronting the globalization from above of corporations and their governmental allies. Derrida characterizes this form of globalization as involving the effects of "techno-science" and the "ethico-political

4 See Smith 2006, Chapter 2, "The Neoliberal Model of Globalization," for a critical exposition of global neoliberalism.

5 See, for example, Kuttner 2018.

6 See, for example, Mehta 2019.

7 Derrida 2002, 339; see also Derrida 2003, 130 and Derrida 2002, 375-76.

8 Mignolo 2000a, 741; 2018a, 223, 224-25, 227-29, *passim*.

9 Beverley defines subalterns as those "who lack the power of self-representation" (2004 27; see also 1). Lacking it officially, however, does not preclude them from struggling for it.

decisions and political-economic-military strategies" that concern the opening of borders, international law and allied legislation.¹⁰ He is particularly worried that a cultural-linguistic hegemony, identified as Anglo-American, "homogenizes" these decisions and strategies. Moreover, the necessity of taking advantage of techno-science and global networks makes it difficult for poorer countries to struggle against the hegemonic power controlling the dissemination of these benefits.¹¹

Derrida is also critical of the "Greco-Christian" cosmopolitanisms or "European heritage that presaged the homogenizing vision and efforts of the current world-wide sovereignty."¹² Mignolo shares this view against previous as well as contemporary cosmopolitanisms.¹³ He adds that no matter how otherwise well-intentioned they might be, the major historical attempts at "global design" have been driven "by the will to control and homogenize."¹⁴ For example, Kant wanted "perpetual peace" for the Enlightenment period but also thought that Indians, Africans, and Hindus were incapable of "moral maturity" and therefore should be excluded from leadership roles in any cosmopolitan order.¹⁵ Similarly, the 20th century emphasis on universal human rights has been accompanied by the "transnational colonialism" of the U.S. following World War II and the present neoliberal "transnational ideology of the market."¹⁶

These reflections on global designs lead Mignolo to draw two conclusions. The first reinforces Derrida's idea that globalization from above must be countered by one from below. But the second conclusion separates him from Derrida and concerns the form of the cosmopolitan response to globalization.

10 Derrida 2002, 272-73.

11 Ibid., 373-74.

12 Ibid.

13 Mignolo 2000a, 723. See also Mignolo 2000b, 2010, and Mignolo and Walsh 2018. For a helpful discussion of Mignolo's position, as well as of Latin American thought and cosmopolitanism generally, see Eduardo Mendieta 2007, 2009.

14 Mignolo 2000a, 721; see Walter Mignolo 2018b, 365. In the more recent of these two publications, Mignolo claims that "decoloniality (or decolonization as decoloniality) . . . drives us (engaged practitioners) to delink from the narrow history and praxis of Western (i.e., west of Jerusalem) knowledge and brings to the foreground the coexistence (denied by the rhetoric of modernity) of stories, arguments, and doxa ignored by Eurocentered languages. The linear concept of time (e.g. modernity and traditions) creates mirages in which colonial differences transform differential coexistences into being behind in time (e.g., China and Islam are behind and have to modernize according to the rhetoric of modernity)." Mignolo adds that "coloniality" is a "decolonial concept" born in the Third World and that founded decoloniality, which originated in the South American Andes at the end of the Cold War (365-67; see also 372-82).

15 Mignolo 2000^a, 734.

16 Ibid., 721.

To understand the specific charges that Mignolo levels against the French philosopher, we must first clarify the latter's idea of democracy to come, that is, his basis for any acceptable cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism: Derrida's "Democracy to Come"

According to Derrida, the European heritage of democracy and the idea of "democracy to come" share a symbiotic relation. Because of this heritage, we can talk about democracy; but because democracy is always and only "to come," we can never cease discussing or questioning it. Indeed, Derrida indicates that democracy to come functions as a "call" to us. More specifically, he appropriates the Platonic notion of "khora" and says that the latter is the "place" of the heritage of Europe and of "the call for a thinking of the event *to come*, of the democracy *to come*."¹⁷ khora "comes before everything" and permits this heritage and this call to take place, existing for them rather than "for itself," yet not as "part" of the democracy or anything else for which it makes a place.¹⁸ khora is so "heterogeneous" to what actually takes place that it is better to accept it as an "irreplaceable and unplaceable" receptacle and understand it primarily through its two progenies, heritage and the call for what is always to come.¹⁹

Democracy to come: as an unconditional injunction and a promise. Derrida complicates his idea of this call when he makes the startling statement that democracy to come is an "im-possible" polity.²⁰ It is impossible because it "must remain" outside of the realm of "the theoretical, the descriptive, the constative, and the performative" – of anything that we could possibly achieve in theory or in practice.²¹ In other words, democracy to come is conceptually formal, a "formalism," one that is "indifferent to any content" and thus does not present us with a description of any possible democracy.²² However, we shall see that this "to come" formulation of democracy's temporality is an absolutely necessary condition for being able to speak of democracy at all. That is the force of the qualifying "–" in "im-possible."

17 Derrida 2005a, xv, 28; for Derrida's use of the notion of a "call" with respect to deconstruction, see Derrida 1994a, 27; with respect to a "call" to a "duty" to European democracy, see Derrida 1992a, 77-78; and as constituting a "hermeneutic circle," Derrida 2005a, 9, 18.

18 Derrida 2005a, xiv.

19 See Derrida, 1995, 111, 125-26.), 111; for a helpful discussion of Derrida's sense of khora, see Lawlor 2007, 41-44.

20 Derrida 2005a, 84, 144.

21 Ibid., 84.

22 Derrida 1994b, 59; for more on this emphasis on purity, see also 73, Derrida 2005a, 84, 105, 149-50, and Derrida 2007, 242.

Even though Derrida refers to democracy to come as formal, he also holds that it is "real" and "sensible." But its reality and sensibility are those of a "pure event" rather than a physical object. As a pure event, it is both "unforeseeable" and "irruptive." Thus Derrida says democracy to come is an "unforeseeable coming of the other," of a law, responsibility, and decision of the other, of "an other in me, an other greater and older than I am."²³ More exactly, this "other" is an "unconditional injunction"²⁴ and has "the structure of a promise."²⁵ As an injunction, it is a "summons" to make pure democracy present and to accept nothing less than it as the final form of democracy – even though this final form is impossible and has no conditional content. Moreover, this demand is unrelenting: it "never leaves me in peace and never lets me put it off until later," it "comes upon me from on high, swoops down upon me and seizes me *here and now* in a nonvirtualizable way, in actuality and not potentiality."²⁶ Because it is real as an "urgent" demand, it cannot be thought of as a "(regulative) *Idea* or *ideal*" let alone one that would be possible even "at the end of an infinite history."²⁷

As a promise, this democracy to come is "*the memory of that which carries the future, the to-come, here and now.*"²⁸ This memory opens onto the future here and now, but like no other promise; for what it promises, pure democracy, is in principle "unpresentable." Therefore "to come" does not mean "a future democracy that one day will be present," nor the memory of a past democracy that was once here; instead, "to come" means "exposure" to a demand that "opens itself, that opens us to time, to what comes upon us, . . . to the event" or "unforeseeable [and impossible] coming [of pure democracy]."²⁹ This demand, therefore, "does not wait for," is even "beyond," the future.³⁰ The very impossibility of fulfilling the promise of democracy's to come structure ensures that the unconditional demand for this pure polity is ineffaceable and thus transcends the possible.

Democracy to come as "spacing" (différance). Derrida refers to the notion of "spacing" or "*différance*" as the structural grounds for the undecidability of democracy's identity as well as for a number of other concepts he deconstructs. More specifically, spacing is at once the "becoming-space of time" (an "outside")

23 Derrida 2005a, 84.

24 Ibid., 90.

25 Ibid., 85.

26 Ibid., 84.

27 Ibid., 83–84.

28 Ibid., 85–86; Derrida's italics.

29 Derrida 2003, 97, 120.

30 Derrida 2005a, 87.

and the “becoming-time of space” (temporal “deferral”).³¹ The moment in which we reflect on the meaning of democracy would disappear as a present, would lose its thickness or duration, its status as a becoming, if we stripped away its necessary reference to the (absent) past and to the (absent) future. However, this intrinsic reference to the future implies that the moment and the meaning of its content (here, democracy) are inherently undecidable, always deferred to the future still and only to come. The idea of spacing therefore guarantees that democracy or any other fundamental concept is undecidable.

The relation between unconditional and conditional democracy. Despite the universality and purity of its status as a transcendent call or voice, Derrida’s democracy to come is the opposite of an absolute truth claim or a sovereign power: it acts as an injunction against any idea of democracy that claims finality as to what democracy is. In other words, it works as a counter-voice against totalizations and proposes only an impossible voice of its own, one designed to interrupt any want-to-be usurper of democracy to come’s necessarily empty throne. Derrida thereby ensures that democracy to come must always be descending from the heaven of the unconditional to the earth of the conditional, from the impossible to the possible. In particular, these two realms are “absolutely heterogeneous” and yet “indissociable” from each other.³²

This combination of heterogeneity and indissociableness has two sides. On the one hand, possible democracies require unconditional democracy to come for their “guidance” and “inspiration”.³³ On the other, pure democracy needs to engage in “conditions of all kinds” in order to “arrive” and be more than “nothing at all.” Only in the gap between these two irreconcilable and indissociable poles, only between an unconditional summons and earthly voices, are decisions and responsibilities to be taken.³⁴ Because Derrida combines the unconditional with the conditional, the transcendental status of the unconditional is properly referred to as “quasi-transcendental.”³⁵

Democracy to come as “freedom” and interminable self-criticizability. Derrida seems to have bridged the gap between unconditional and conditional democracy. But if unconditional democracy is going to guide possible democracies in whatever way, it must at least have enough content that it can be linked to them in thought or

31 Derrida 2005a, 35, 38-39, 45, 142.

32 Ibid., 88, 92.

33 Derrida and Duformantelle 2000, 79, 2005b, 104, 106.

34 Derrida 2001, 44-45; 2005a, 74, 91-92.

35 Derrida 1999, 254. Cf. Gasché 1986, 217; see also 274, 276, 295-96, 316, and 317, as well as Letich 2007, 9. Because these quasi-transcendentals or unconditionals involve the spacing of time – the present’s necessary and continuous divisibility into past and future – Martin Hägglund refers to them as “ultratranscendentals” (2008, 10).

practice. Perhaps that is the reason why Derrida proclaims "[i]t is on the basis of freedom that we will have conceived of the concept of democracy."³⁶ He proceeds to qualify this freedom as one of "play, an opening of indetermination and undecidability *in the very concept* of democracy," and holds that this distinguishes the "constitutional paradigm" of democracy from all other political rationalities. He then further specifies this freedom as "an interminable self-criticizability," the "right [in principle] to criticize everything publically, including the idea of democracy."³⁷

Derrida adds more qualifications to the freedom he has in mind. The first concerns its transcendental status: unconditional freedom is what makes possible the conditional sort of freedom that involves the "I can" or individual initiative of "liberty and license."³⁸ This unconditional freedom also absolutely renounces "sovereignty" and its inherent "abuse of power"³⁹ as well as its subordination of free "decision" and "responsibility" to the "*determinative* knowledge" of a norm or law.⁴⁰ Derrida also posits an "incalculable" form of equality – the equality of the unconditionally free as opposed to the calculable sort – as "an integral" and "unconditional" part of "[pure] freedom."⁴¹ We are equal as unconditionally free beings. This equality is also linked to unconditional hospitality: Derrida thinks we have an absolute obligation to expose ourselves to "the coming of the others, beyond rights and law," especially those who are absolutely unlike us.⁴²

Democracy as autoimmune. These pure notions of freedom and justice, then, permit Derrida to link the unconditional injunction of democracy to come with conditional democracies: the in principle commitment to critique, especially

36 Derrida 2005a, 22.

37 Ibid., 24–25, 87; see also Ibid., 48, 72, 90 and Derrida 2003, 121. Indeed, he even equates democracy with a particular mode of such criticism: "there is no deconstruction without democracy, no democracy without deconstruction" Derrida 2005a, 90. One might want to claim that Derrida does not mean 'democracy to come' to be so "heterogeneous" to possible/conditional democracies as he seems to make out; and that therefore the unconditional and conditional democracies require no mediating link. But then we would have a view of heritage closer to Merleau-Ponty's movement of transcendence in which the true or more developed democracy to come would already be implicitly contained within the past and present version, albeit as a suggestive rather than fully determinate pattern. See, for example, his long, footnoted exposition of historical materialism in existential phenomenological (or hermeneutical) terms in Merleau-Ponty 2012, 74–78, 467–76. But Merleau-Ponty's idea clearly does not allow for the absolute undecidability that Derrida champions.

38 Derrida 2005a, 25: Conditional liberty is "the right and power of each to do what he or she pleases" (decision and self-determination) and license is "to play with various possibilities," both presupposing unconditional freedom.

39 Ibid., xiv, 102.

40 Ibid., 84–85, 158; Derrida's italics; see also Derrida 2002, 298.

41 Derrida 2005a, 48–49, 53–54.

42 Ibid., 60, 86, 149. For a scholarly and comprehensive treatment of the many meanings that "equality" has taken on in the modern era, see Rosanvallon 2013.

self-critique, is an identifiable aspect of each of the two. Because of this linkage, Derrida says that the undecidability of the idea of democracy is not directly due to the interminable “deferral” of the becoming-time of spacing but to something much stronger – “autoimmunity” – which itself now becomes the basis for the deferral pertinent to democracy to come.⁴³ More specifically, unconditional freedom and equality imply what I stated earlier, that democracy to come’s universal injunction must include an unconditional hospitality to strangers. These foreign voices encompass those that are absolutely unlike us; the injunction must be an expression of a “pure ethics” that recognizes the “respectable dignity” of the “unrecognizable” and “exposes itself without limit to the coming of the others, beyond rights and laws.”⁴⁴

Derrida uses the term “vertical” to capture further the idea of these strangers. Their verticality refers not to one who is “simply a worker, or a citizen, or someone easily identifiable,” but to “that which in the other . . . exceeds precisely the horizontality of expectation.”⁴⁵ Given this unconditional hospitality, democracy to come is an invitation even to those who would argue against democracy, vote it out of existence, or attempt to violently overthrow it. The only way to immunize democracy against this constant threat is to restrict it to those who uphold that form of polity. But that, Derrida believes, would destroy democracy’s call for universal inclusivity and thus immunize democracy against itself, making it suffer a fatal autoimmunity.⁴⁶ Thus pure democracy is impossible, possible only as impossible.⁴⁷

Derrida cites the Islamists in Algeria and the fascist and Nazi regimes in Europe as illustrations of his claim that the “general form” of autoimmunity has to do “with . . . the freedom at play in the concept of democracy.” This freedom permits “the worst enemies” of democracy to “put an end to democratic freedom *in the name of democracy*” by achieving a “numerical majority” in a popular election. The intrinsic autoimmunity of democracy, derived from democracy’s demand

43 Derrida 2005a, 86; 35–36. “The ‘to come’ not only points to the promise but suggests that democracy will never exist, in the sense of a present existence: not because it will be deferred but because it will always remain aporetic in its structure” (Ibid., 86; my italics), that is, autoimmune (Ibid., 86–87).

44 Derrida 2005a, 60; 149; see also 86. The relation of hospitality to “pure ethics” is also indicated in Derrida 1999a, 35: “this possible hospitality to the worst is necessary so that good hospitality can have a chance, the chance of letting the other come.” Wanting “good hospitality” to “have a chance” is an ethical as well as a political concern, thus apparently contradicting Häggglund’s use of this quotation (Häggglund 2008, 222n25) as support for the claim that unconditional hospitality “is not an ethical ideal” for Derrida (Ibid. 2008, 103).

45 Derrida 2007, 243. See also Derrida and Duformantelle 2000, 53, 54, 57, 65, 79–81, 124–25, 147–48, 149, and Derrida 1994b, 65.

46 Derrida 2005a, 40–41, 63, 86–87, 101–102; Derrida 2003, 128–129.

47 Derrida 2002, 344, 2007, 235–36.

for both unconditional freedom and equality, therefore ensures that democracy can never make itself present and will always be lacking a "proper meaning," will always be possible only as impossible.⁴⁸

Despite this autoimmunology, we must still follow the injunction of democracy and, in its name, never mistake any of our possible democracies and their degree of hospitality as final.⁴⁹ Only when our ears are open to the injunction and promise of democracy to come can the voices of the social body engage in democratic dialogue and have the appropriate safeguard against accepting anything less than pure democracy as ultimate. In other words, democracy to come, its unconditionality and its character as a guiding injunction, is the necessary and universal condition for the aporia or autoimmunity at the heart of any possible democracy.⁵⁰ For without democracy to come's relation to conditional democracy, the latter could always be defined in a way that restricted its otherwise unlimited membership.

Democracy to come and the three political virtues/unity composed of difference. Given Derrida's description of democracy to come, whether national or cosmopolitan, we can see how we might construe it to be compatible with the notion of a unity composed of difference and the three political virtues of cosmopolitanism. Specifically, this pure democracy provides for solidarity by way of its European heritage and that which is an indissociable part of it: the injunction and promise concerning an impossible democracy that is more inclusive than any possible democracy. This voice is universal in that its summons holds for all times and all peoples who speak of democracy. Similarly, heterogeneity is secured by the prescription of universal hospitality – every "who" or "what" is included, all the voices that could possibly come. Finally, fecundity is indirectly favored by democracy to come's undecidability, its refusal to accept any possible democracy as complete. This refusal always carries the possibility of inciting the production of new, more inclusive if still necessarily limited democracies. Indeed, the affirmation of these last two, heterogeneity and fecundity, ensure that the unity of this pure democracy is of the special sort that always already undermines any homogenizing form of unity.

Cosmopolitanism: Mignolo's "Border Thinking"

Despite the promise of Derrida's "cosmopolitanism to come," Mignolo draws conclusions from the history of "global designs" that question the ability of a quasi-transcendental injunction to provide the sort of unity composed of difference that I have proposed for a global society. The first of these conclusions

48 Derrida 2005a, 33-34, my italics; see also 30, 30-31, 34-35.

49 Ibid., 86.

50 Cf. Derrida 2005b, 159; 165, 232; 1999b, 253.

concerns the status of Europe as the source of democracy and cosmopolitanism. As we have seen, Derrida links these two ideas to the heritage of Europe. He is, however, very careful to claim that this Europe is shot through with “other headings” or non-European voices.⁵¹ More specifically, Derrida says that we must “make ourselves the guardians of an idea of Europe, of a difference of Europe, *but* of a Europe that consists precisely in not closing itself off in its identity and . . . assign[s] itself identity from alterity, from the other heading and the other of the heading, from a completely other shore.”⁵² In other words, the voice of Europe, its heritage, is so shot through with other voices that we cannot assign it a teleological or other form of strict identity, cannot legitimately make of Europe any of the voices that have historically claimed to speak for it or would do such.

Subaltern response to European “inclusion.” In response, Mignolo argues that even this view of European hybridity and openness could not constitute a sufficient cosmopolitanism for our time. Europe would still be the one doing the “including,” hence it would itself be “beyond inclusion.” Subalterns would have only the status of “the included” – they would “be participated” rather than “participating.”⁵³ In other words, Mignolo feels that any cosmopolitanism starting from a Europe of whatever sort overlooks what he calls “coloniality” or “the logic of oppression and exploitation hidden under the rhetoric of modernity, the rhetoric of salvation, progress, civilization, development, etc.”⁵⁴ The politics of the cosmos must therefore begin from the perspective of “colonial difference,” that is, “the irreducible difference of the exteriority of the modern/colonial world,” of subaltern populations, and must detach itself from the political and epistemological legacy of Europe.⁵⁵ Indeed, Mignolo proclaims that today “silenced and marginalized voices are bringing themselves into the conversation of cosmopolitan projects, rather than waiting to be included.”⁵⁶

Democracy to come as an “abstract universal.” Mignolo continues this line of criticism by taking exception to another of Derrida’s comments: that “all culture is originally colonial.” He feels that this view of culture is an “abstract universal” and

51 The heritage of Europe, therefore, has built into itself a principle of self-critique and recognition of the alterity that helps to constitute its social body. See Derrida 1992a, 10, 15, and Gasché 2009, esp. 265–70, 284–286, 298, 299–300, and 301.

52 Derrida 2002, 27–30.

53 Mignolo 2000a, 736, 743.

54 Mignolo 2010, xlix. For a later statement of the same point, see Mignolo’s ideas of the “colonial matrix of power” and its inclusion of “the double face of modernity/coloniality” (2018a, 196–98) and how decoloniality is not just to “resist” the former (which is “dewesternization”) but to “re-exist” and “transform subjectivities” (Ibid., 146; see also 227–239).

55 Mignolo 2000a, 733, 743.

56 Ibid., 736–37.

overlooks the history of coloniality.⁵⁷ All cultures may be "colonial" in an egalitarian, postmodern sense of the term, but in actuality subalterns pay a higher price for their hybrid status than do members of dominant groups. As a result, they are more likely to take the idea of colonial difference seriously and have an attitude that is very different than that of those who benefit from the current global order. Mignolo therefore concludes that "the internal variability of [Derrida's] 'differe/ance' cannot transcend the colonial difference" and that "deconstruction has to be subsumed and transformed by decolonization."⁵⁸ He demands, in short, that cosmopolitanism be based in the immanent sphere or history of "the modern/colonial world" rather than on unconditional alterity and quasi-transcendentals.⁵⁹

The immunity of democracy to autoimmunity. Before turning toward the "critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism" that Mignolo offers in exchange for Derrida's democracy to come, we can reinforce the "abstraction" charge that Mignolo hurls against his European counterpart.⁶⁰ In particular, we can note that democracy, as democracy, can never imply the form of unconditionality and consequent autoimmunity that Derrida attributes to it. We can agree with Derrida's earlier claim that freedom as unlimited critique is a primary meaning of democracy. But contrary to what he may think, this claim implies that for any electoral process to qualify as democratic it must be done in the name of such endless critique – in other words, unconditional freedom and equality. It must therefore preserve an *open space* for always further critical and public commentary.⁶¹ This implies that if a "numerical majority" (a merely "calculable" form of equality) votes out democracy and eliminates dialogic practice, we then can say that it is not acting as part of a democracy. The majority would merely be using a formal voting procedure and not one that meets the Derridian requirement of operating "*in the name of democracy*," that is, in the name of the freedom and equality that implies "interminable criticizability."⁶² The triumph of the majority would be due to an external factor: susceptibility of its members to demagoguery, fear, or some other foible, but, contrary to Derrida, not because of a factor intrinsic or a priori to democracy itself.

57 Ibid., 742, 743

58 Mignolo 2000b, 44-45.

59 Mignolo 2000a, 733. In light of his later work, Mignolo presumably would mean "decoloniality" rather than decolonialization, the former focusing on "epistemological decolonialization" rather than just the undoing of territorial or state colonialization (Mignolo 2018a, 121).

60 The criticism of Derrida to follow, as well as the earlier exposition of his democracy to come, is elaborated further in Evans 2019, 66-80, and Evans 2016.

61 The notion of "open space" that I am using here is similar to the "empty place" that Claude Lefort (1986, 279) holds to be at the core of the notion of democracy: "the image of an empty place, impossible to occupy, such that those who exercise public authority can never claim to appropriate it."

62 See the above section on Derrida for the documentation of these repeated quotations.

Even if the idea of an “open space” is subject to Derrida’s structure of spacing (*différance*), questioning its meaning would require that it always remain open for a rejoinder to any of the proposed interpretations of it: the open space mandate would automatically reassert itself. Its reassertion could not be disrupted by the claim (deconstructive or otherwise) that we cannot distinguish absolutely between an open and a closed space; for if this claim is made in the name of democracy, it simply invites the open space stipulation to continue as the basis for public forums considering the validity of the claim against it. The debate may be interminable and thus call for temporary and always revisable decisions on the meaning of democracy and its dialogic space in the present moment, but this would not be due to an autoimmunity of the polity in question. For Derrida to say otherwise would be inconsistent with his claim that critical questioning is at the heart of democracy. Democracy, then, is susceptible (not immune) to overthrow from fascist or other non-democratic forces through a procedural vote; but it is not autoimmune, not destructible in its own name.

This argument against autoimmunity affects Derrida’s construal of the unconditionality of democracy to come in several ways. To begin with, it places a condition on democracy to come and thus revokes Derrida’s earlier stipulation that his unconditional injunction is “indifferent to content.” The conditional content is that only those committed to the open space of unlimited dialogue and critique – what Derrida referred to as unconditional “freedom” and “equality” – can count as legitimate policy-making voices in a democratic polity. Those who would overturn democracy intentionally, for example, white supremacists, must, like all other voices, be heard but cannot self-consistently be allowed to establish anti-democratic policy in society, at least not in the name of democracy.⁶³ Hospitality is necessarily extended to all voices, to hearing them, but not to accepting all their political policies. Because the open space requirement for democracy assumes that there is no final definition for the latter, this conditional democracy promotes positive caution and humility as strongly as does Derrida’s appeal to autoimmunity. It also avoids the negative connotation of autoimmunity that might lead some people to shun democracy if they believed it to be impossible.

Mignolo’s critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism. Having launched these criticisms at Derrida’s democracy to come and the unconditional or quasi-transcendental basis it is supposed to provide for solidarity and the other two political virtues, we now must now look carefully at Mignolo’s “critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism,” his brand of “decoloniality” or “re-existence” and thus his alternative to Derrida’s emphasis on unconditionality. Mignolo’s global view involves “border thinking,” that is, “the recognition and transformation of the [Eurocentric] hegemonic

63 This claim will be revisited in the last section of this article.

imaginary from the perspective of people in subaltern positions."⁶⁴ These transformations include the "new mestiza consciousness," a "Marxism modified by Amerindian languages and cosmology," and similar hybrid identities. Through their hybrid consciousness, these subaltern groups attempt to offer new ways of understanding justice, democracy, rights, knowledge and other important political and epistemological concepts. That is, they champion "*thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in [such] dichotomies* [as European versus non-European]." Border thinking, then, is "*logically*" a "dichotomous locus of enunciation" and "*historically*" an activity "located at the borders (interiors or exteriors) of the modern/colonial world system."⁶⁵ It aims, therefore, at the sort of dichotomous thinking that would be encouraged everywhere in a world without the ordered walls that stand between peoples today.

Diversity and the Zapatistas. Mignolo clarifies this notion of dichotomous or "border thinking" by linking it to the allied idea that he calls "diversality" or "diversity as a universal project . . . from subaltern perspectives."⁶⁶ This sort of diversity, he continues, is the "relentless practice" of "critical and dialogical cosmopolitanism rather than a blueprint of a future and ideal society projected from a single point of view (or abstract universal) that will return us (again!) to the Greek paradigm and to European legacies."⁶⁷ Mignolo's reference to "abstract universal" here covers Hegel's and other teleological ideas of society as well as Derrida's ideas of *différance* and democracy to come. He graphically brings home his meaning by asking us to imagine Western civilization as a large circle, the periphery of which is intersected by a series of smaller circles, each otherwise disconnected from the others. Diversity or border thinking, then, "will be the project that connects the diverse subaltern satellites, appropriating and transforming Western global designs" and building itself on their "ruins,"⁶⁸ that is, re-existing. It will therefore differ from the Christian, Kantian, neo-liberal and other oppressive globalizations that start from the center of the large circle before falling into collapse.

To further illustrate this idea of border thinking, Mignolo appeals to the contemporary Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico. He points out that the political hegemony of the Western oriented Mexican government means that the Zapatistas are forced to use the term "democracy" in their political negotiations. But they do not define it in the individualistic and contractual meanings favored by European political philosophy. Instead, they appeal to "reciprocity,"

64 2000a, 736-37.

65 2000b, 85; see also 45. My italics.

66 2000a, 743.

67 Ibid., 744.

68 Ibid., 745.

“communal living,” the value of “wisdom” or accumulated experience, and other ideas and practices that come from the “Maya social organization.” This does not imply that the Zapatistas have the correct interpretation of democracy. But it does signify that democracy is what Mignolo calls a “connector term” and that the Zapatistas must continually attempt to come up with a new interpretation of democracy that at least for a time will serve their needs and possibly those of Mexico – “for a time” because Mignolo holds that ‘democracy’ as a connector term, and, by extension, cosmopolitanism, are intrinsically unfinalizable.⁶⁹

We can further see the importance of Mignolo’s idea of “diversality” by connecting it to Nietzsche’s idea of *ressentiment*. If the subaltern struggle were merely to resist or overthrow global designs that originated in Europe, it would amount only to a reactive form of existence, subsisting solely as the negation of something else. The only motivation for cosmopolitanism under these circumstances would be a temporary unity or solidarity among subalterns based on having a common enemy. Once that adversary, Eurocentrism or neoliberalism, disappears, there would be no other bond holding the subalterns together. But Mignolo suggests that the subaltern resistance to adversary is in the name of diversality throughout the globe.⁷⁰

To the degree that Mignolo’s dialogic cosmopolitanism valorizes diversality, it shares Derrida’s emphasis upon the undecidability of this or any other important term. More fully stated, the two thinkers are inclined toward the idea of a unity composed of difference and its political virtues of solidarity, heterogeneity, and fecundity. However, Mignolo thinks these values are based in the subalterns’ zeal for changing the status quo, for challenging rather than continuing the heritage of Europe, for sustaining diversality as both an end in itself as well as a means for the dialogic interpretation of major political or epistemological terms. In other words, Mignolo thinks that cosmopolitanism has a basis that is immanent to the dialogic body of society and, more specifically, to the border thinking initiated by subaltern voices and their resistance to European and neoliberal doctrines. For him this immanency implies that we do not need to appeal to the unconditional or quasi-transcendental voice of Derrida’s democracy to come.

69 Ibid., 744-45.

70 On the other hand, he also says that “liberation is not something to be obtained: it is a process of letting something go, namely the flows of energy that keep you attached to the colonial matrix of power, whether you are in the camp of those who sanction or the camp of those sanctioned” (Mignolo 2018, 148). It is certainly that, but we must also be able to say what the liberation is for and not just what it is escaping. His notions of diversality and “projects toward planetary conviviality” (Mignolo 2000a, 720) come close to the positive goal.

Cosmopolitanism and the Dialogic Body of Society

Voices and diversality. Although Mignolo has brought the notions of calls and voices down to earth, his idea of diversality by itself does not provide a firm basis for solidarity. He cannot follow Derrida and treat it as an "abstract universal" or "quasi-transcendent" injunction for a global form of unconditional hospitality or self-critique. But he seems to offer no basis for diversality unless we already happen to have a penchant for it. There is, however, a firmer support for diversality and the form of solidarity it can permit. It is tucked away in the many underexploited remarks that Derrida and Mignolo make about "voices" and "hybridity." By declaring diversality, and thus cosmopolitanism, to be a connector term, Mignolo invites us to elaborate our own version of them – so long as our political ontology does not repeat the self-aggrandizing epistemology of the West. Can there be an ontology that supports a non-Westernized epistemology such as Mignolo believes diversality to be?⁷¹

In the case of Derrida, some of the remarks concerning voice and hybridity are contained in his response to a question from the French feminist, Hélène Cixous. Derrida says that for himself "a monologism, univocity, a single voice . . . is impossible, and plurivocity is a non-fictional necessity." He adds that in writing a text he often has "to change voices . . . to make several persons speak . . . and that the essential thing comes from another voice in some manner, from another voice in me . . . which is the same and not the same."⁷² In another text, he says that what inspired him to start writing was "the adolescent dream of keeping a trace of all the voices which were traversing [him]," and that "deep down this is still my most naïve desire."⁷³ Part of this tracing takes place when he alludes to his roots in French Algeria and refers to himself as an "over-colonized European hybrid."⁷⁴

There are still two further ways in which he reinforces his allegiance to the idea of hybrid voices. First, his work on Husserl provides compelling arguments for the impossibility of the very idea of a univocal voice, of one that is not immediately open to its other.⁷⁵ Second, we have already reviewed his claim that we can't make sense of a European identity without seeing how it is dependent on and shot through with all the "other headings" or voices internal and external to it.

71 Mignolo believes that the very idea of ontology is Western because it is based on seeing "entities, things" and not "relations" as primary (Mignolo 2018:147-48). But as we will see, the political ontology we will be proposing is primarily relational. Indeed, one of the reasons for proposing an ontology is to free one as much as possible from our penchants, for example, accepting liberal values just because we were raised in a culture favoring it.

72 Hélène Cixous 2009, 50.

73 Derrida 2000b, 35; cited in Häggglund 2008, 156, see also 157.

74 Derrida 1992a, 7.

75 Derrida 1973, 85-89.

Mignolo too accepts this notion of dialogically hybrid voices. He usually limits himself to the type of identity that he thinks characterizes subaltern groups – a mixture of traditional and modern or Eurocentric discourses. But Mignolo sometimes alludes to a richer idea of hybridity, one that can provide better support for solidarity within the framework of his immanent and emancipatory cosmopolitanism. This idea of hybridity has its strongest roots in two sources that Mignolo praises: the Zapatistas and the idea of “*mestizaje*” championed by Gloria Anzaldúa, María Lugones, and other Chicanas and Chicanos as well as many Latin American scholars.⁷⁶ Restricting *mestizaje* to its cultural as opposed to biological meaning, Lugones portrays it as “something in the middle of either/ or . . . simultaneously asserting [an] impure, curdled multiple state and rejecting fragmentation into parts.” She adds that by maintaining this hybrid status the mestizo or mestiza defies the “categorical eye” that would “split everything impure . . . into pure elements . . . for the purpose of control.”⁷⁷

This characterization of *mestizaje* also captures the sense in which the Zapatistas think of themselves and of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas. In their official communiqués, the Zapatistas frequently mention that their movement is composed of a number of different ethnic groups, each speaking a distinct language. Because of this diversity of languages and the different viewpoints they embody, the Zapatistas use the term “voice.” They state, for example, that their “voice began its journey centuries ago” (and that it is a “wind from below” which “whispers of a new world, so new that it is but an intuition in the collective heart”).⁷⁸ They think of this “collective heart” as consisting of voices that respond to one another rather than existing in isolation. Most importantly, they speak of their own voice as shot through with the different social languages of the other groups – that there are many worlds, each echoing in the rest, each of which must be heard. For example, they state that “[t]he men and women of tender fury speak with a voice filled with the voices

76 Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) and María Lugones (1994). For some of Mignolo's references to hybridity and *mestizaje*, see especially Mignolo 2000b, 14–16, 129, 320–21. See also Mignolo 2010, xlv. In an endnote to the last mentioned text, Mignolo says that mestizo thinking differs from the “diversity” and “heterogeneity” present in Europe because the latter “are all based on the assumed universality of Western Christianity and Western secular philosophy and sciences. The rest of the world is either absent, or behind in time, or someplace else waiting for the civilizers” (2010, 175n33). Would he say this of Deleuze and Guattari's *Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987)?

77 Lugones 1994, 460. The notion of *mestizaje* has had a vexed history in Latin America. The Mexican statesman and scholar, José Vasconcelos, and other figures originally associated this idea with its biological meaning and the idea that a mixed race is superior to “pure” races. But most contemporary Latinx scholars take *mestizaje* strictly in the sense of cultural hybridity, that is, the many strands of different cultures that help compose and still lie awake in any one culture. See, for example, Mignolo on the Mexican ideological use of *mestizaje* (2000b, 320) and also Grijalva 2004.

78 CCRI-CG 1995, 62.

of everyone."⁷⁹ And in a communiqué they proclaim: "Your voices, brothers and sisters, and that of all displaced peoples, will speak through our voice."⁸⁰ This notion of intersecting voices is articulated with particular eloquence by a former leading spokesperson for the Zapatistas, Subcomandante Marcos. He describes the type of political organization he foresees as "[a]n echo that converts itself into many voices, into a network of voices that, in the face of the deafness of Power, chooses to speak to itself, knowing itself to be one and many, knowing itself to be equal in its aspiration to listen and make itself heard, recognizing itself to be different in the tonalities and levels of the voices which form it."⁸¹

A multivoiced body. These references to dialogic interaction among voices and to the hybridity of each of them carry two major implications. The first is much stronger than that we sometimes enter into communication with each other. It is the ontological claim that we *are* dialogic creatures and exist as participants in an interplay among voices that is always there ahead of us.⁸² This interminable interplay simultaneously holds the voices together and keeps them separate, forming the multivoiced body that we call society. In the political sphere, these voices contest each other for audibility concerning cosmopolitanism – the political ethics of a global polity – as well as the governance of their particular nations. The dialogue is therefore agonistic though not necessarily antagonistic.⁸³ More generally, dialogic interaction converts the world into the subject matter of the participants' discursive exchanges. If the further elaboration of this view of voices is compelling, then it will serve as an ontological basis for, and fuller characterization of, Mignolo's notion of diversality as well as an immanent version of Derrida's democracy to come.

Before discussing the second of the two implications, the hybrid aspect of voices, we should note a number of characteristics of society as a multivoiced body:

79 Ibid., 47; 165, 170, 181.

80 Ibid., 147; 176.

81 Subcomandante Marcos 1996, 112; quoted in and translated by John Holloway 1996, 171.

82 What I say here about voices, discourse, dialogue, and society as a multivoiced body is elaborated extensively in Evans 2008, 2013, and 2019. The major influences on my treatment of it are Mikhail Bakhtin, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Nietzsche and Marx have had their effect on it as well.

83 The twentieth century Russian linguist, Mikhail Bakhtin, has had a strong influence on my work. For the current point about "agonistic dialogue," he views dialogue as "a struggle among socio-linguistic points of view" and states that "a dialogue of languages is a dialogue of social forces" rather than an exchange guided by a transcendent truth (Bakhtin 1981, 273 and 365 respectively). For an extensive treatment of Bakhtin's view of dialogue, as well as its relation to Nietzsche, Gadamer, Habermas, and other thinkers on language, see Evans 2008, 62–89, 190–91. For the canonical characterization of "agonistic," see Mouffe 2000, 101–02.

The trifold structure of voices. Each voice is animated and enunciated by one or more subjects, expresses a social discourse, and is always explicitly or implicitly responding to or addressing the other voices. The enunciators are the bodily basis for articulating the expressive signs of voices. They also are partly responsible for the individuality of voices: they are what make the voices yours, mine, or those of other animate or inanimate agencies, especially the devices we have created to stand in for us.⁸⁴ The voices, however, are more than us because of the social discourses they express and their mutual responsiveness. The social discourses can be either overt utterances or what Foucault calls the “positive unconscious of knowledge,” that is, the discursive formations that tacitly guide the inhabitants of society.⁸⁵ More specifically, a discourse specifies the identity of its enunciators, constitutes the objects of the domain in which it operates, and states the values it prizes. For example, a cosmopolitan discourse will stipulate who or what is a global citizen, the objects of interest or relevance in its domain of operation, and the values its polity is to uphold as their political ethics. In the case of Derrida and Mignolo, each promotes a cosmopolitan discourse, the two we discussed earlier, and the one we are offering and that draws on theirs.

The third constituent concerns the mutual responsiveness of voices, which provides discourse with its dynamic meaning. A voice always stands in a relation of responsiveness to other voices. It does not first exist and then act; from the very beginning it addresses or responds to other voices in an effort to maintain or augment its audibility in the social arena. Even its address to another voice is part of a dialogic exchange that has preceded it and carved out a place for its enunciation. Phenomenologically, we wake up in the morning already thinking, that is, talking to ourselves or to actual or imaginary others; and this continues until we sleep, often pressing on with new variations in our dreams. We may think that we initiate and direct these dialogues; but it is equally true that they make us their accomplices and carry us along in the exchanges among their constituent voices. If we end one dialogue, we are immediately part of another. We are therefore dialogic creatures and the society we inhabit is the dialogic interplay among the voices we enunciate.

Our relation as enunciators to the voices in this dialogic interplay is one of an elliptical rather than a strict identity. The voices are not just persons talking to each other. We are the voices whose discourses we utter, but they are always more than us, throwing us headlong into the trajectory set by their momentum

84 In the full theory of the multivoiced body, other animate beings and inanimate ones count as the enunciators of voices. Cosmopolitanism must include the globe and the rest of its inhabitants, though I cannot address this concern in the current paper. See Evans 2010.

85 Foucault 1970, xi; see also Foucault 1972, 38, 48, 72-73, 91-91 for many of the points I make on discourse.

toward audibility and interaction with each other. We therefore always have more to say, see and feel than we immediately know. For the same reason, these dialogic exchanges are both personal and anonymous, both our efforts and those of the vocal forces constituting us as participants in their exchanges.⁸⁶

This elliptical identity indicates a break with Derrida on the source of the temporality of cosmopolitanism to come. Rather than time constituting a formal dimension of subjectivity, it is the interminable interplay among voices that creates their future and their past and thus appears as their temporal setting. The agonistic dialogue, the throwing of the vocal enunciators ahead of themselves, is prior to though inseparable from its participating enunciators. It sets the trajectory for which they are the vehicles. Because each voice is a demand for a response to the one it has already made to the others, there is no intrinsic termination to the dialogic structure that prevails and motivates its own continuation. The "to come" only and always of cosmopolitanism is one of the results of this ontologically prior multivoiced body and its dialogic momentum.⁸⁷ Moreover, this ontology preserves the open space requirement of democracy and now the one for cosmopolitanism; it replaces Derrida's unconditional injunction with the immanency of Mignolo's critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism, but now reinforced by the ontology of voices that is unfolding here.⁸⁸

86 If we have the feeling that this relation between ourselves and voices is paradoxical, it perhaps is due to a prominent structure of many languages, the binary relation between the active and passive grammatical voice: we can say either that we are doing something or that something is done to us, but have no similar grammatical device for capturing the in-between way we actually exist. We need a new vocabulary to escape this binary logic of the passive and the active and to express the way we continually "become" rather than "are" our voices, as well as the way we find ourselves departing from our previous voices and becoming the enunciators of new ones. Whatever the details of this new vocabulary, cosmopolitanism makes little sense unless we have some degree of agency in forming our destiny.

87 As addicts of tales of origin, we also can assume that there was an earlier community, one in which bodies were intrinsically joined together by non-linguistic gestures. This group underwent a Deleuzian "deterritorialization," transforming the pre-linguistic community into a body of intersecting voices and their enunciators into linguistic beings. For the notion of "deterritorialization," see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 56, 508–510.

88 One might find this immanent view of temporality closer to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea that "time is someone," a "thrust that is subjectivity itself," and simultaneously is that within which we are "situated," "already engaged in it" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 445, 447); or Gilles Deleuze's idea that "univocal Being is the pure form of [Aeonic time]" suggesting that both it and "the Aeon" are joined at the hip as "the unique cast [of the dice] from which all throws are qualitatively distinguished" and that those "throws" are "the qualitative forms of [that] single cast which is ontologically one," that is, Being (Deleuze 1990, 180, see also 64, 590) and Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 187, for a description of Being equivalent to the one given for Aeon. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 254. For an astute and knowledgeable argument that Derrida is a philosopher of immanence rather than of transcendence, see Lawlor 2003, 123–141. I think that one would have to agree, however, that Derrida's idea of unconditionality makes him a philosopher of transcendence at least relative to Mignolo and his idea of diversity or to ours here.

Three advantages of voice. Part of the compellingness of this ontology of voice are three advantages that it may have over other political ontologies.⁸⁹ Its first advantage is voice itself. Politics simply is about which voices get heard and which don't. Voice and society as a multivoiced body is therefore the appropriate political ontology and basis of political ethics for addressing cosmopolitanism. The second advantage is the specificity donated to voices through the discourses they express. Voices can be made intelligible in terms of what they articulate even though they are always in excess of those particular utterances: the discourse of a voice can always be modulated by its enunciators in an indefinite number of manners and nuances, to the point sometimes of serendipitously transforming themselves into enunciators of another voice or even a novel one created in the process of dialogical exchange. The third advantage of voice is its flexibility. We can speak of the voice of individuals, nations, politics, art genres, nature, the beyond, or whatever else we can imagine enunciating a verbal or non-verbal discourse. Even the way we arrange chairs in a classroom is a discourse. In counter distinction to the term 'identity,' voice captures the agency of its enunciators, of what they do and say in discursive form, rather than being the label, often a prejudicial one, for a general type. The advantages of voice for articulating the political ethics of cosmopolitanism are, then, its political relevance, specifiability, and flexibility.

The second implication. I said that we would emphasize two implications of dialogic interaction and the hybridity of voices. The first accented the creative interplay among voices and drew from it that an ontology of voices which we can soon use to support the three political virtues of solidarity, heterogeneity, and fecundity as well as the favor Derrida and Mignolo appear to bestow on these virtues. The second implication emphasizes the hybridity of voices introduced at the beginning of this section via Derrida's "identity from alterity"⁹⁰ and his many voices, as well as by Mignolo's embrace of *mestizaje* and by the Zapatistas and the many voices they said were expressed in that of their subaltern revolution.

It will still help to illustrate phenomenologically this hybridity once more and then from it draw the ontological implications we are seeking. Each enunciator's mind consists in the many social voices that establish it as a particular node in the cultural network of a society. Though we can encounter many illustrations and affirmations of this in world literature, art, syncretic religions, and other productions of feeling and thought, as well as those presented by Derrida and Mignolo, a particularly revealing example is the litany of voices competing at once for audibility in relation to the dominant but challenged voice of James Joyce's protagonist, Stephan Dedalus, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

89 I sometimes think of the multivoiced body view of society as a political ontology that can be fit into the universal ontology of process cosmology – Henri Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and especially the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1987.

90 Derrida 2002, 27-30. This Derridian term was introduced earlier.

While his mind had been pursuing its intangible phantoms and turning in irresolution from such pursuit he had heard about him the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things. These voices had now come to be hollow sounding in his ears. When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and healthy and when the movement toward national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him be true to his country and help to raise up her fallen language and tradition. In the profane world, as he foresaw, a worldly voice would bid him raise up his father's fallen state by his labours and, meanwhile, the voice of his school comrades urged him to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school. And it was the din of all these hollow sounding voices that made him halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms. He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades.⁹¹

Stephen, like the rest of us, lives with, indeed is composed of, a multitude of voices – those of one's parents, country, school, and, most satisfying for Stephen, "phantasmal comrades" who provide an escape from the "hollow sounding voices" of the other figures that dominate his existence. The experience we have of these voices resounding within our own provides further evidence for the intersection of voices or dialogic hybridity we witnessed in Derrida's and Mignolo's examples. They are the residue of our different dialogic histories, and the relative saliency of any of them depends on our current context. We can refer to them and experience them as inner voices but they are originally outer voices that have inculcated or "colonized" us during our living within the multivoiced body of society and increasingly that of the world. Sometimes we converse with them in our inner world and other times meet them in the world surrounding us.

We can now reveal the ontological implication of this hybridity of voices. Moreover, this feat will also allow us to specify how the multivoiced body view fulfills the political virtues required for an acceptable version of cosmopolitanism as the "connector" term for that polity.

The spatial axes of the multivoiced body. The dialogic hybridity of these voices, their being shot through with one another, resounding within one another, suggests that they are linked in the diacritical manner that Ferdinand Saussure stipulates for linguistic signs: each is established by its difference from the rest in the same way that the English phoneme "a" is what it is through its difference from the other forty-four in English.⁹² Their differences permit the formation of distinct words in

91 Joyce 1946, 332–33. For many other examples of this internal interplay of voices, see Evans 2008, 60–62 and *passim*.

92 Saussure 1986, 111, 119–20.

English. In the same way, the voices of the globe, each with its associated discourse, compose a diacritical form of unity. For example, the voice of democracy implies its difference from the voice of autocracy and vice-versa whether or not we are noting it. The same holds for the difference between masculine and feminine as well as all the newly acknowledged many other voices in the gender domain complicating the claim that the first two form an exclusive binary couple.

The ontological and profound implication of this diacritical unity is that each voice is part of the identity and, at the same time, the other or alterity of the rest. This non-hierarchical or horizontal unity means that the self- or non-self-valorization of any voice is the immediate affirmation of all the others (each is part of the identity of the others). This paradoxical internal relation therefore provides an ontological basis for solidarity. Because the affirmation of these voices also includes them as an “other” (each is the alterity of the rest), it also counts as the ontological basis for the valorization of heterogeneity. Thus heterogeneity is affirmed in the same moment as social unity, rather than the one canceling out the other.

The temporal axis of the multivoiced body of society. For enunciators, the spatial axis and its diacritical relations exist as immediately temporalized. The diacritical relations persist but now as converted into dialogic relations among voices. This conversion means that the spontaneous affirmation of these voices is also the valorization of the third political virtue, fecundity, or the production of new voices through the creative interplay among the others. For example, the forced colonialization of the Maya by the Spanish gave rise to the mestizo culture of Mexico. The dialogic hybridity involved in that case is not a closed synthesis of the other two, for the originators still contest each other for audibility within the voice of their mestizo progeny. Moreover, it is possible today that the conflict between the Zapatistas (including their Mayan supporters) and the dominant mestizos may eventually produce the voice of a new political and cultural force, perhaps a non-lineal history of “unending and innumerable arborescent histories.”⁹³ Most importantly, the claim that each voice is part of the identity of the rest means that the production of a new voice produces a change in the others and hence the metamorphous of the multivoiced body of society. Indeed, the very being of the dialogic body is its metamorphoses, a body that remains the same but as always differing from itself.

Now that an ontological basis for the three political virtues has been elucidated, we can claim a meaning for it that is closer to the idea of a political ethics for agonistic cosmopolitanism. We can borrow the notion of *parrhesia* from the ancient Greeks and claim that the immediate affirmation of the three political virtues implies that we speak to and hear each other courageously and truthfully. “Speaking truth to power” is a familiar meme, but courageous hearing

93 Gilly, Adolfo 1998, 327; see also Evans 2008, 194-97.

less so. It means that hearing cannot be a mere registering or dismissing of what others have to say. It must involve the sort of encounter wherein the enunciators of the voices are prepared to risk modification of their own discourses in light of what the others have to say. Indeed, the exemplary expression of cosmopolitan solidarity is this commitment to parrhesiastic speaking to and hearing one another. This ethico-political ideal corresponds to Derrida's exhortation for all of us "to hear each other [*nous devons nous entendre*]" in "[each other's] languages."⁹⁴

Oracles. We should not be surprised that this dialogic body has a more sinister side: the resounding of voices within ourselves and society creates a low level of anxiety of being overwhelmed by them. That natural anxiety can become exacerbated in times of economic collapse, invasion, plague, or other calamities. When such threats occur, the tendency is often and unfortunately to raise a voice to the level of the one true God, the pure race, patriarchy, market fundamentalism, homophobia, or some similar version of the nihilistic global designs shunned by Derrida and Mignolo. Because of their dogmatic foretelling of what they think our future should be, we can refer to these non-revisable discourses as "oracles."⁹⁵ When such totalizing discourses do occur, the valorization of the three political virtues means more than just the parrhesiastic speaking to and hearing of each other during good times; it also must spur the cosmopolitan polity to resist these oracles by revitalizing the counter-memory of the creative interplay among voices that the oracles wish to foreclose by such heinous methods as ethnic cleansing or the relatively more subtle ones of plutocracy and blanket censorship.⁹⁶

The notion of oracles invites the question of whether the multivoiced body version of agonistic cosmopolitanism we are advocating is itself a totalizing discourse. In particular, doesn't "excluding the excluders," that is, rejecting oracles, amount to a form of oracularity? But we have already answered this charge in two ways. First, we claimed that the interminable interplay among the voices of a global society indicated that its open dialogic space always invites new versions of cosmopolitanism – that in such a context cosmopolitanism is an example of Mignolo's "connector" terms, which I articulate as a term acting always as a lure for diverging or converging articulations of itself; as an interrupter of any articulation that would declare itself the final word about, in this case, what cosmopolitanism is; and, lastly, as an inspiration to support cosmopolitanism,

94 Derrida 1992a, 60–61.

95 For the Greek roots of my use of "oracle," see Evans 2019, 48. For my exposition of the origin of such oracles in society and my use of the Foucauldian idea of "counter-memory" immediately below, see Evans 2008, 206–11, 223–25, 270–72.

96 A fuller discussion of how to deal with anti-democracy forces should include the idea of "militant democracy"; see Loewenstein 1937. I have argued (Evans 2008, 159–68) that this multivoiced or dialogic version of democracy and society implies democratization of the workplace and ultimately democratic socialism with commercial but not labor or financial markets.

its three political virtues of solidarity, heterogeneity, and fecundity, and its multivoiced body concretization of the idea of a unity composed of difference.⁹⁷ Thus our agonistic version of cosmopolitanism is not an oracle; it functions as an anti-oracle.

Second, we did admit that the open space of cosmopolitanism could be closed by oracular voices if we did not resist them. We saw that possibility particularly in our discussion of the difficulties proposed by Derrida's ideas of unconditional hospitality and the autoimmunity of democracy. In response, we held that our affirmation of all voices extended to *hearing* all of them parrhesiastically, but also to resisting oracles as *policy-making* voices, that is, any voices threatening to foreclose the creative interplay among the others by political manipulation or coercive means.⁹⁸ This ensures once more that the multivoiced body ontology for agonistic cosmopolitanism is not itself an oracle.

A dialogic a priori notion of truth?

But if it is not an oracle, does that raise the problem that the characterization of agonistic cosmopolitanism is fatally relativistic – that any definition of it would be no more or less worthy than any other? We cannot live politically without seeking an answer to this question. The undecidability of the answer to this question indicates both the promise and the fragility of cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, acknowledging its undecidability, its intrinsic deferability, helps us to resist the oracles that would declare an absolute definition for cosmopolitanism and thus paradoxically de-democratize the term and eliminate a creative interplay among voices in its case. It would allow us to explore the different possibilities that cosmopolitanism may present about its meaning and governmental contours. On

97 In other words, the cosmopolitanism polity and the term itself are both what Derrida, Deleuze, and many other contemporary philosophers call an “event.” As an event, the idea of agonistic cosmopolitanism can function as an interrupter of any oracle that would claim a finalized order of society’s multivoiced body or a definition of its name, thereby attempting to bring an end to the endogenous invitation to hear other voices parrhesiastically – voices that are each other’s alterity and at the same time part of each other’s identity.

98 Hate speech, which is violence rather than communication, counts as an exception to this demand for listening. However, determining the distinction between it and legitimate criticism can sometimes present difficult problems. The structural necessity of hearing all the voices resonating within our own and society also has a pragmatic consequence. For example, it is always possible that we have not correctly understood the discourse of, say, white supremacists, or that we have mistakenly taken other discourses to be advocating that doctrine when they were not. It is also possible that through dialogue some of the enunciators of this form of racism might come to reject it and find themselves adopting a new and more democratic-minded discourse about race. Furthermore, a refusal to hear other voices, even the discourse of the white supremacists, would convert the idea of society as a dialogic body into an oracle rather than letting it remain the constantly metamorphosing reality it is when exclusionary discourses are not ascendant. Thus there are pragmatic reasons as well as a structural necessity for hearing other voices.

the other hand, the intrinsic inconclusiveness of the interplay among our voices, the undecidability of exactly what our cosmopolitan polity would be, may also seem discouraging and to leave us with nothing more than endless squabbles. It might seem no more desirable to us than global fragmentation.

But we can distinguish between historical time and the formal temporality of cosmopolitanism always and only to come. The formal temporality serves to remind us that we can never be absolutely certain of what we have decided in historical time. But we live in historical time and its demand for at least provisional answers. In that worldly duration, we can appeal to what I call "dialogic a priori truths." Not an a priori that provides absolute truth, but not one that admits sheer relativism either. Rather, the answers that the dialogic a priori seeks are ones that fulfill two requests: the first ask for answers that temporarily win out – that seem the most compelling – in the open contest among the many voices that occupy our present epoch; the second request goes a step further and asks for these answers to appear as holding true for as far as we can imagine into the future even though we are inescapably still lodged in our present moment. Thus, the notion of the dialogic a priori offers just enough to keep us going, to proposing versions of cosmopolitanism in historical if not formal time.⁹⁹ A final definition of cosmopolitanism is undecidable for all formal futures and yet worth our effort for the ones we can formulate and act on in the historical here and now.

We have passed from cosmopolitanism as a quasi-transcendental, a democracy forever to come, to cosmopolitanism as the border thinking of diversity. By incorporating diversity into the political ontology of a dialogic body and its three political virtues, we have preserved the immanent status it assigns to Derrida's "unity from alterity" and granted it a motivation and universality as strong as that given to us by Derrida's unconditional "other." We have, for the same reason, also agreed to Mignolo's emphasis on the equal and special audibility of subaltern voices in the composition of any new world orientation. But even if our cosmopolitanism should adopt this multivoiced, dialogic form of an ontology, it deserves this commendation only because it shares with its two other protagonists the desire to hear myriad voices and to resist the global exploitation that they and we have condemned in the name of two superlative ideas, "democracy to come" and "border thinking."

99 For discontent with Derrida's formal time, see Dews 1987, 30; Eagleton 1983, 146-47; and Evans 1993, 185-87.

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