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Body Modification as the Right of Body in the light of Cosmopolitanism – Appiah's perspective

Abstract

The assumption of the paper is a liquidity between sacrum and profanum.. The work done on the body makes bodily practices and rituals the art of body. The body is an altar of our identity, manifestation of Self. The great visibility of this tendency is illustrated in the frame of popular culture, especially in the stream called the culture of transparency. The examples of body modifications' practices, referred to the Western culture, are recognized as the contemporary neo-primitivism (neo-primitive perspective) – the Modern Primitive Movement. The wide cult of the body is commonly known and practiced and its official name is corporeism. There are a various platforms of trainings to relax and strengthen the body, "the work on our body" in lighter form, express body. Probably the most opposite trends and cultural phenomenon can verify our level of tolerance and ability to understand significantly other people. The case of body modification can be the first one. The reason of it can be that the body can be perceived as the most visible open-text of ourselves. A variety of its manifestations can really provoke a huge cosmopolitan debate towards a more aesthetically-directed approach on those forms of practices which are not met too often in one specific culture and which argue with its standard of normality.

Key words: body modifications, cosmopolitanism, pop culture, transparency

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this paper is to introduce the concept of body modification to better understand especially the most extreme forms of body-centered rituals. This paper only provides a possible interpretation given by anthropological research oriented towards spirituality and body dramatization developed mostly by anthropological sociologists. However, the major issue addressed in this paper is about Appiah's reflections about cosmopolitanism. Consequently, the emphasis will be put on the central points such as: preserving culture as preserving art, in this context – body art; a cosmopolitan view as making the importance of body modification more relative and less perverse, and searching for authenticity and integration in social dimension.

The paper contains a general overview of popular culture, especially in the face of its transparency, which reveals and advertises all potential forms of body modifications. Moreover, an introduction on the approaches in the field of body modifi-

cations with examples, case studies on the contemporary, probably the most challenging institutionalized forms of body modification, and issues founded will be mentioned in Appiah's thesis. All signalized issues are presented problematically and they don't pretend to fulfil sufficiently this rich area of study. The given interpretations are rooted mainly in the heritage of the Western civilization.

THE GENERAL PROBLEM: BODY IN THE CULTURE OF TRANSPARENCY

One of the most distinctive feature of the consumption society is its cult of gadgets, attributes making significant differences between various performances. Attributes of identity are constituted in the dimension of glocalization. The notion of glocalization is a mixture of two popular terms: globalization and localization. Glocalization refers to a combination of it what belongs to locality, specific regions, particular traditions and histories and what is characteristic of global trends¹. In the context of this paper, all body modifications use unique gadgets to maintain rituals and perform the effect of dramatization.

To recall the popular statements provided by Michel Foucault² and Zygmunt Bauman³, the knowledge of transparency implies the power over the body. In other words, the more we know about our bodies the more power we have to make more advanced practices upon them. Probably one of the most famous philosophy which developed a holistic approach towards the body is the philosophy of the New Age. In that perspective both the body and its sexuality are positively valued. They are treated as spiritual vehicles, instruments through which it is possible to recognize a real natural power, reach creative force and meet God⁴. Anthony Giddens also highlights a dominant importance of radical democratization of sexuality of personal life which strongly corresponds with reflexive project of individual identity⁵.

This broad stream is known as humanistic psychology and transpersonal psychology. The main purposes are identified with the improvement of both physical and psychological health and well-being. One of the means to achieve them is holistic medicine which offers a wide range of techniques of non-conventional methods (mystical oriental techniques, psychosynthesis, forms of massages, Taoism, re-birthing trainings, shamanistic rituals)⁶.

Considering the above reflections, the pop culture is also known as the culture of gift⁷. Everyone is able to find almost everything that is necessary to re-con-

1 P. Żabicki, *Technologiczna codzienność*. Internet – Bank – Telewizja, Warszawa 2007, p. 200; N. Etoiff, *Przetwarzają najpiękniejsi*. Wszystko, co nauka mówi o ludzkim pięknie, Warszawa 2002, p. 300; E. Nowicka, *Świat człowieka – świat kultury: systematyczny wykład problemów antropologii kulturowej*, Warszawa 1997, p. 433.

2 M. Foucault, *Historia seksualności*, Warszawa 2000, p. 475.

3 Z. Bauman, *Ciało i przemoc w obliczu ponowoczesności*, Toruń 1995, p. 95-96.

4 B. Dobroczyński, *New Age*, Kraków 1997, p. 129.

5 A. Giddens, *Przemiany intymności. Seksualność, miłość i erotyzm we współczesnych społeczeństwach*, Warszawa 2006, p. 209-229.

6 I. Hobert, *Zdrowie 2000. Naturalne sposoby uzyskania sił życiowych, radości życia i harmonii*. Filozofia życia na przełom tysiąclecia, Warszawa 1999; A. Zamojski, *New Age – filozofia, religia i paranauka*, Kraków 2002.

7 M. Castells, *Galaktyka Internetu. Refleksje nad Internetem, biznesem i społeczeństwem*, Poznań 2003.

ceptualize and cultivate a chosen identity. The pop culture is a culture available to everyone. Everyone is given direct access to resources of the pop culture. The “Body” is a desired cultural capacity which expresses personal identity. The body is an objective aspect of what is subjectively experienced as an identity. The confirmation of our identity is founded in relations with others, their reactions in the face of body decorations and manifestations. Our identity is a processual, dynamic stream mediated by our public meetings with others, especially the significant others and oriented towards body relations with ourselves⁸.

Body modifications can be considered as a project of identities, which means that people transform accessible symbolic capacities to construct their identities⁹. It gives a feeling of possessing control over their bodies, identities and individual life scenarios. A person becomes authentic when their choices are not extorted but when they are able to make a personal understanding of his/her self-being¹⁰.

BODY MODIFICATION – A FEW KEY ISSUES

There are some significant perspectives related to body-centered modifications which are developed by scholars. It is rather an artificial distinction. The first one is defined as “tribal”, collective rituals, basing on the community and system of magic spheres. All rituals are cultivated among members of some groups. Those rituals mean a higher position in the system of social hierarchy and are associated with Uran, Solar, Lunar, fertile gods. The second approach is oriented towards a more modern experience and is known as the more “European” one. In this context there is a strong emphasis put on being an individual, outsider, being against something (state, other people) and consequently being punished, stigmatized¹¹.

A very noticeable influence of pop culture on every dimension of taboo connected with body is being observed. The ideology of liberalization and democratization of public life is changing our attitude towards *practicing and cultivating body*¹².

There are the most important motives considering all practices which disturb the body such as: awareness achievement of a higher level, being closer or united with the sacrum, deepening spirituality, being in a relationship with gods, the ability to feel some sacral spheres, becoming beyond, and to develop being transcendent, mystical state achievement¹³.

All kinds of body modifications considered in the sacral context are the results of increasing institutionalization of religious spheres of life. A body modification is

8 A. Kępiński, Lęk, Kraków 2005, s. 28-29; E. Goffman, Człowiek w teatrze życia codziennego, Warszawa 2000, p. 47; E. Goffman, Rytuał interakcyjny, Warszawa 2006, p. 5; W. Welsch, Estetyka poza estetyką. O nową postać estetyki, Kraków 2005.

9 Z. Bokszański, Tożsamości zbiorowe, Warszawa 2005, p. 39.

10 H. Marcuse, Eros i cywilizacja, Warszawa 1998, p. 117.

11 I. Hobert, Zdrowie 2000. Naturalne sposoby uzyskania sił życiowych, radości życia i harmonii. Filozofia życia na przełom tysiąclecia, Warszawa 1999; M. Eliade, Szamanizm i archaiczne techniki ekstazy, Warszawa 1994; M. Eliade, Traktat o historii religii, Warszawa 1966; A. Szyjewski, Szamanizm, Kraków 2005a.

12 B. McNair, Seks, demokracjażądania i media, czyli kultura obnażania, Warszawa: 2004.

13 K. Leszczyńska, Z. Pasek (red.), Nowa duchowość w społeczeństwach monokulturowych i pluralistycznych, Kraków 2008, p. 4-5; P. Socha, Na tropach duchowości – czym jest i czym może być duchowość, „Kwartalnik Religioznawczy” 2003, 43/44.

a kind of response on an over-organized sphere related to religion, institution of the church. People who practice body modification want to come back to *their roots*, be more spontaneous in cultivating their bodies, there are against tabooization of social life, they are free when they can create their own, strongly individualistic meaning of spirituality to obtain a higher dimension in their religious, spiritual development.

The great challenge to practice body modification is about controlling pain of various types. Those who cultivate such forms of experience can use different methods, also surgical ones, in order to reduce or minimize a pain performance. Ronald Melzack and Patrick D. Wall refer to a complex system of techniques which aim to modulate some sensory activity (nerves removal, neuro-surgical methods of nerves destroying, electrical therapy, electrical nerves stimulation, massages, hyper-stimulation, psychological techniques of pain toleration, acupuncture, somatization, hypnosis, relaxation, imaginary technique of reducing attention, pain reshaping). An experience of pain is understood both individually and collectively. Pain tolerance is conditioned culturally¹⁴.

The next key problem refers to the body transgression, identity and spirituality. It is included in the wide notion of transpersonal psychology. As Józef Koziński wrote, every human has a double form of internal motivation. The first one, homeostatic motivation, is identified with individual growth and second one, heterostatic motivation, strictly corresponds to the acceptance of the present form of being, a current situation¹⁵. Transgressions are connected with the process of enlarging, exploring, enriching and they are in opposition to regresses.

The existential philosophy gives us a suggestion on how to interpret the forms of body modifications as a kind of experience beyond historical time, although some historical moments can play an important role for settings of body modifications rituals. It means that sacral dimensions, sacral moments are significant. Factual time is "removed" only to emphasize the meaning, symbolical sphere of each practice. Sacralization is related to purification, authenticity, rebirth, creative energy. Consequently, the boundary between sacrum and profanum is minimized. It is an alternative form against scientism, reductionism and exclusion. It is a re-back to origins, discovery of individual, hidden roots of spiritual identity¹⁶. In this context sacralization is treated multi-dimensionally because the interpretations have touched an axiological, phenomenological, ontical, cultural, social dimensions both from individual, personal and collective perspective¹⁷. There are more liquid boundaries between primordiality and the present day. Both streams take inspirations from each other. The most recognizable and popular cases are of New Religious Movements¹⁸ and neotribalism¹⁹. They constitute a response to the increasing need of searching for cultural identity, spirituality, being rooted in developing hubris motivation, transparent re-discovery of self.

14 R. Melzack, P. D. Wall, *Tajemnica bólu*, Kraków 2006, s. 271-330.

15 J. Koziński, *Koncepcja transgresyjna człowieka: analiza psychologiczna*, Warszawa 1987; J. Koziński, *Transgresja i kultura*, Warszawa 1997.

16 M. Elser, S. Ewald, G. Murrer (red.), *Leksykon religii od a do ż*, Warszawa 1994, p. 89.

17 J. Szmyd, *Religijność i transcendencja*, Bydgoszcz-Kraków 2002, p. 353.

18 A. Szyjewski, *Etnologia religii*, Kraków 2001, p. 537-619.

19 M. Maffesoli, *Czas plemien. Schyłek indywidualizmu w społeczeństwach ponowoczesnych*, Warszawa 2008.

BODY MODIFICATION – BETWEEN PRIMORDIALITY AND THE PRESENT DAY

Body Modifications (or Body Alterations) are conscious and long-lasting changes making through reasons different than medical ones. Of course, medical consequences occur and they are an integral part of body modifications practices²⁰. As has been mentioned above, people who are experienced by body modifications must pay their attention to pain regulation trainings in order to maintain a proper mental attitude. The way, through pain, can be interpreted also as a source of pleasure, taken from inspirations of tribal practices. All forms of body modifications must lead to the meeting with sacrum and self-development.

The most common body modifications, short- and long-lasting, are: piercing, scarifications, tattoos, bones deformations, skin paintings and body paintings, including internal organs, eyeball tattoos, ear shaping, genital interference, body perforations, BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Sadism, Masochism) etc. Body Modifications are strictly connected with human history and they are found in every culture and every historical period. Various techniques and advanced levels of modifications depend on available tools. Body modifications are not related to some primary cultures but they are even becoming more spread and sophisticated through technological development (for instance body changes done by a plastic surgery development) and are inspired by cultural and historical contexts of their origins. The contemporary concept of human being is defined by a category of homo transgressivus which appears in a new identity – a hybrid identity, a complex and sophisticated identity²¹.

To recall some examples based on non-Western cultures and to formulate functions associated with body modifications met there, the first case comes from the tribes: Kaduweo in Brazil and Toba and Pilaga in Paraguay researched by Claude Lévi-Strauss. People from tribal communities identified body paintings, especially face paintings, with social prestigious functions and higher social status. There were symbolic manifestations of an animal status rejection to achieve the possession of human status. The variety of social positions was obtained by diversity of patterns, compositions and styles of face paintings²².

According to Bruno Bettelheim, body modifications fulfill the functions described by Arnold van Gennep²³ as “rites de passage”. In his research body modifications were largely related to initiation rituals in the frame of Magna Mater cult and female gods. Their roles were identified with a sexual desire development, making a copy of female body and especially its genital organs by men, to modify male organs to follow female sexual ones. Communities which cultivate the cult of Magna Mater are recognized among African and Australian tribes. Their rituals are against a gender binary based treatment which is characteristic of the Western cultural heritage²⁴.

20 K. Hebda, Modyfikacje ciała – powrót do korzeni?, w: *Kultura czy tortura...? Obrzędy, praktyki, rytuały, które ranią, kaleczą, przynoszą cierpienie... Materiały z interdyscyplinarnej, ogólnopolskiej studenckiej konferencji naukowej*, red. M. Jarosik, K. Kozieł, Kraków 2007, p. 50.

21 E. Schildkrout, *Inscribing the Body*, „Annual Review of Anthropology”, 2004, vol. 33.

22 C. Lévi-Strauss, *Malowanie ciała*, w: *Antropologia widowisk. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów. Część III*, wybór A. Chałupnik, W. Dudzik, M. Kanabrodzki, L. Kolankiewicz, Warszawa 2005, p. 556.

23 A. Gennep van, *Obrzędy przejścia. Systematyczne studium ceremonii: o bramie i proggu, o gościnności i adopcji*, Warszawa 2006.

24 B. Bettelheim, *Rany symboliczne*, w: *Antropologia widowisk. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów. Część III*, Choice by A. Chałupnik, W. Dudzik, M. Kanabrodzki, L. Kolankiewicz, Warszawa 2005, p. 565 – 578; A. Szyjewski, *Religie Australii*, Kraków 1998, ps. 119-158; A. Szyjewski, *Religie Czarnej Afryki*, Kraków 2005.

Another source of body modifications comes from shamanistic rituals and wide traditions that spread to various corners of the world. The main aim of almost all shamanic rituals is to initiate a deeply relaxed state of mind called a trance. The most famous practices include: sensory deprivation, stimulus rejection, meditation, sensory overload, body movements (including dance techniques) in the rhythm of special sounds and music, hyperventilation, using some psychoactive substances, fed for instance by Native Indians, a stimulation of brain for self-production of psychoactive substances, etc.²⁵.

The examples of the most extreme cases, referred to the Western culture, are recognized as the contemporary neo-primitivism (neo-primitive perspective) – the Modern Primitive Movement. This scope of view was founded by Fakir Musafar who introduced the conceptions of “body play”, “fun with body” and “body first”. Musafar was inspired by tribal pagan practices. The most significant neo-primitive experiences are: body modelling (body spreading, body increasing, yoga), tightlacing, scarification, suspension, body burning, body crucifying, body piercing²⁶. Some pictures of the above mentioned forms of body modifications are presented below.



SOURCE: <http://www.fakir.org/aboutfakir/index.html> (access: 27.09.2014)

25 A. Szyjewski, *Etnologia religii*, Kraków 2001, p. 294-321; M. Eliade, *Szamanizm i archaiczne techniki ekstazy*, Warszawa 1994.

26 Source: <http://www.fakir.org> (access: 27.09.2014)



SOURCE: <http://www.fakir.org/aboutfakir/index.html> (access: 27.09.2014)

Another example gives an illustration of the Church of Body Modifications founded in 2008 in the US. According to its members, the crucial issue is to develop a harmony between body, soul and mind. These extreme trainings are guided by masters who have their own classes of participants. The statement of faith is:

We will always respect our bodies. We believe it is our right to explore our world, both physical and supernatural, through spiritual body modification. We

promise to always grow as individuals through body modification and what it can teach us about who we are and what we can do. We vow to share our experiences openly and honestly in order to promote growth in mind, body, and soul. We honor all forms of body modification and those who choose to practice in safe and consensual ways. We also promise to respect those who do not choose body modification. We support all that join us in our mission and help those seeking us in need of spiritual guidance. We strive to share a positive message with everyone we encounter, in order to act as positive role models for future generations in the body modification community. We always uphold basic codes of ethics and encourage others to do the same²⁷.



SOURCE: <http://alikonainamerica.blogspot.com/2010/10/church-of-body-modification.html> (access: 27.09.2014)

The next case provides visualizations of cat and lizard men – people who want to be similar to reptiles through a proper body stylizations (see next page).

There is a case of voluntarily crucifixion worth recalling as well. Those examples are met in Philippines during Easter. This show is also a tourist attraction and has a strong commercial dimension (see next page).

Above the mentioned examples there are probably the most challenging experiences. But the cult of body is commonly known and practiced and its professional name is corporeism.

There is a variety of platforms of trainings to relax and strengthen body, “work with our body” in a lighter form, express the body (also during workshops, team games, animation, bioenergy, yoga, psychodrama, improvisation), ac-

²⁷ <http://uscobm.com/statement-of-faith> (access: 27.09.2014)

tivate our senses, accept the body etc. The main goal has a therapeutic and pro-developmental background²⁸.



SOURCE: Internet (Google Pictures)



SOURCE: Internet (Google Pictures)



SOURCE: Internet (Google Pictures)

28 J. Maisonneuve, *Rytuały dawne i współczesne*, Gdańsk 1995, p. 44-45.

APPIAH'S THESIS UPON COSMOPOLITANISM

From the perspective of cosmopolitanism there are several points worth stressing and re-considering. Following the thought of Appiah, there is a set of statements which provide a spirit of cosmopolitanism into the general overview about body modifications.

First of all, we do not need to agree with each other in order to live peacefully together.

Understanding one another may be hard; it can certainly be interesting. But it doesn't require that we come to agreement²⁹ (...) Cosmopolitanism is about intelligence and curiosity as well as engagement³⁰ (...) One distinctively cosmopolitan commitment is to pluralism. Cosmopolitans think that there are many values worth living by and that you cannot live by all of them. So we hope and expect that different people and different societies will embody different values. (But they have to be values worth living by) (...) Our understanding of toleration means interacting on terms of respect with those who see the world differently. We cosmopolitans think we might learn something even from those we disagree with. We think people have a right to their own lives³¹.

The crucial thing is about an engagement to understand an anthropological Other, to discuss moral aspects which differentiate societal communities through providing a unique code of styles, languages, views about body treatment. Appiah distinguishes the notions which are thin and thick. For instance, the general thin point can be: we should respect our bodies, but the thick one can specify what are the ways to respect the body. The thick conceptions is always rooted in a particular philosophy of daily life which provokes a *moral disagreement*, in this case it is on how to respect the body. As we read:

If we are to encourage cosmopolitan engagement, moral conversation between people across societies, we must expect such disagreements (...) When notions of right and wrong are actually at work, they are thickly enmeshed in the complications of particular social contexts (...) when you're trying to find points of agreement with others, say that you start to abstract out the thin concepts that may underlie the thick ones. Thin concepts seem to be universal; we aren't the only people who have the concepts of right and wrong, good and bad; every society, it seems, has terms that correspond to these thin concepts too (...) But there are thicker concepts still that really are peculiar to particular societies. And the most fundamental level of disagreement occurs when one party to a discussion invokes a concept that the other simply doesn't have. This is the kind of disagreement where the struggle is not to agree but just to understand³².

What is very remarkable, it is reflected in a cosmopolitan approach to others that we should keep developing conversations even without agreement.

29 A. K. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York 2006, p. 78.

30 *Ibidem*, p. 168.

31 *Ibidem*, p. 145-146.

32 *Ibidem*, p. 45-47.

*Cosmopolitans suppose that all cultures have enough overlap to their vocabulary of values to begin a conversation. But they don't suppose, like some universalists, that we could all come to agreement in only we had the same vocabulary*³³.

Other fragment says:

*It suggests that we learn about other people's situations and then use our imagination to walk a while in their moccasins. These are aims we cosmopolitans endorse. It's just that we can't claim that the way is easy*³⁴.

When we start treating the body as a text (similarly to post-structuralist discourse theory), then the body can appear as an *open-textured* and *essentially contestable*. Therefore, the body can embody a *moral vocabulary* which we can use to communicate with ourselves.

*It is only to say that when we disagree, it won't always be because one of us just doesn't understand the value that's at stake. It is because applying value terms to new cases requires judgment and discretion. Indeed, it is often part of our understanding of these terms that their applications are meant to be argued about (...) we are shaping what people think and feel about what was done – and shaping our understanding of our moral language as well. Because that language is open-textured and essentially contestable, even people who share a moral vocabulary have plenty to fight about*³⁵.

Consequently, Appiah reveals three kinds of disagreement:

*We have identified three kinds of disagreement about values: we can fail to share a vocabulary of evaluation; we can give the same vocabulary different interpretations and we can the same values different weights. Each of these problems seems more likely to arise if the discussion involves people from different societies. Mostly we share evaluate language with our neighbors, you might think. And while evaluation is essentially contestable, the range of disagreement will usually be wider – will it not? – when people from different places are trying to come to shared evaluation (...) an extra level of difference will arise from the fact that this thick vocabulary of evaluation is embedded in different ways of life. And finally, we know that one way in which societies differ is in the relative weight they put on different values*³⁶.

Hence the open question about body-value weigh appears. In this context the concept of the Golden Rule can deliver plenty of controversies considering many forms of body modifications.

*What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others or in positive terms What you wish done to yourself, do to others (...) you should identify a universal principle on which to act (he called it a "maxim"), and then ask, roughly, whether you would be happy if everyone had to act on that maxim (...) This is called universalizing the maxim. But it can be very hard to identify what maxim you are acting on, especially, given that (...) it is often much clearer to us what we should do than why*³⁷.

33 Ibidem, p. 57.

34 Ibidem, p. 60.

35 Ibidem, p. 60.

36 Ibidem, p. 66-67.

37 Ibidem, p. 60-63.

The second issue, as a result of the first one, can be discussed in relation to the meaning of perversion, especially medical perversion as a potential kind of searching for authenticity. This is also a question about boundaries of identity, expression and public confirmation and recognition by our social audience. Appiah does not provide any particular reasoning into this matter but his following words can be interpreted as an inspiration for t body modifications:

*... to make the major medical choices about [their] own bodies ... medical autonomy*³⁸.

So making medical choices, medical decisions about the body, especially long-lasting ones that are hardly removable, can arise ethical doubts.

It is, in part, because we have shared horizons of meaning, because these are debates between people who share so many other values and so much else in the way of belief and of habit, that they are as sharp and as painful as they are³⁹.

But in the frame of a cosmopolitan debate leading to an agreement, it is not theoretically the most important problem, the problem which make efforts really meaningful is a desire to understand and being understood.

The third subsequent issue is about seeing differences in our familiar background, community, in our locality. Global changes are becoming our neighbors, our friends as well. We are observing that global trends and fashions have names, they are not some abstract theories because of the fact that abstract theories are starting to have some particular biographies among those who we know, appreciate, love. In other words, strangers have names, they are parts of our families. We should try to understand them if we want to live in a peaceful world. We do not need to absorb the same identity, it will be enough to understand an anthropological strangeness tolerably.

*Conversations across boundaries of identity – whether national, religious, or something else – begin with the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from some place other than your own. So I am using the word “conversation” not only for literal talk but also as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others. And I stress the role of the imagination here because the encounters, properly conducted, are valuable in themselves. Conversation doesn’t have to lead to consensus about anything, especially not values; it is enough that it helps people get used to one another*⁴⁰.

The cosmopolitan attitude can be viewed, as the fourth issue, especially in the sphere of recognition of multiplication of meanings, as a colorful parade of different interpretations and the lack of possibility to live in a unified *global village*.

... they are constantly inventing new forms of difference: new hairstyles, new slang, even, from time to time, new religions. No one could say that the world’s villagers are – or are about to become – anything like the same. So why do peo-

38 Ibidem, p. 80.

39 Ibidem, p. 81.

40 Ibidem, p. 85.

ple in these places sometimes feel that their identity is threatened? Because the world, their world, is changing, and some of them don't like it. The pull of the global economy (...) created some of the life they live now (...) But we cannot force (...) to stay in the name of protecting their authentic culture (...) Cosmopolitans think human variety matters because people are entitled to the options they need to shape their lives in partnership with others (...) diversity within a society serves just as well as an argument for variety across the globe⁴¹.

In one part the citation from John Stuart Mill "On Liberty" is recalled in order to stress a variety of different conditions which people expect, need or require to keep living and develop satisfactorily.

People have diversities of taste, that is reason enough for not attempting to shape them all after one model. But different persons also require different conditions for their spiritual development; and can no more exist healthily in the same moral, than all the variety of plants can exist in the same physical, atmosphere and climate. (...) Unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable⁴².

Appiah continues this view by mentioning about preservation of cultures, which can constitute the fifth issue. To make cultures preserved is to allow them to shape their values without limitation to any singular form of expression.

If we want to preserve a wide range of human conditions because it allows free people the best chance to make their own lives, there is no place for the enforcement of diversity by trapping people within a kind of difference they long to escape. There simply is no decent way to sustain those communities of difference that will not survive without the free allegiance of their members⁴³.

Significantly, from the perspective of body modifications, it is:

to provide people with help to sustain arts they want to sustain (...) all these are a valuable part of our human heritage⁴⁴.

Body modifications can be recognized as a form of art, form of human heritage, artistic pain, a more challenging form of human expression. Continuing the above thought:

We do not need, have never needed, settled community, a homogeneous system of values, in order to have a home. Cultural purity is an oxymoron. The odds are that, culturally speaking, you already live a cosmopolitan life, enriched my literature, art and film that come from many places, and that contains influences from many more (...) A tenable respect for difference with a respect for actual human beings⁴⁵.

41 Ibidem, p. 103.

42 Ibidem, p. 104-105.

43 Ibidem, p. 105.

44 Ibidem, p. 106-107.

45 Ibidem, p. 113.

CONCLUSIONS

Probably the most opposite trends and cultural phenomenon can verify our level of tolerance and ability to understand significantly other people. The case of body modification can be the first one. The reason for it can be that body can be perceived as the most visible *open-text* of ourselves. A variety of its manifestations can really provoke a huge cosmopolitan debate towards a more aesthetically-directed approach on those forms of practices which are not met too often in one specific culture and which argue with its standard of normality.

The end of this short and selective essay can be the next open question on the level and possibility of integration. The problem of understanding cannot clearly imply the step towards integration which requires a more cosmopolitan engagement.

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