



The conceptions of reality in Nietzschean ‘will to power’ and Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology: Implications for cross-cultural philosophising

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Abstract

This study x-rays Nietzsche’s conceptualisation of reality as ‘will to power’ (WTP) and Ramose’s re-construction of reality as Ubuntu to show how convergence and divergence of thoughts in the Nietzschean and Ramosean philosophy contexts can inform cross-cultural philosophising. Nietzsche describes the WTP as the essence of reality and as a dynamic principle which is deeply rooted in endless becoming, while Ramose interprets Ubuntu ontology as the basic principle of reality, which is also firmly embedded in the notion of becoming. In this study, attempts are made to highlight the dynamics of Nietzsche’s WTP and to articulate the basic ingredients of Ramose’s Ubuntu ontology in a constructive engagement of the European thought tradition to which Nietzsche belongs and the African tradition of thought to which Ramose belongs. These two traditions of thought will be critically examined to show their implications for cross-cultural philosophising, ranging from their socio-ontological, intellectual, cultural, metaphysical, and gender-complementarity implications.

Keywords: will to power (WTP), Ubuntu ontology, becoming, be-ing becoming, substance metaphysics, cross-culturality, dialogue.

Introduction

This study explores Nietzsche's conceptualisation of reality as 'will to power' (WTP) and Ramose's re-construction of reality within the framework of *Ubuntu* as 'be-ing becoming' to show the degree the convergence and divergence of thoughts in the European and African traditions can advance intercultural philosophising. We chose to compare Ramose's view with Nietzsche's to show how a constructive engagement of the two thinkers from the African and Western philosophic traditions can promote cross-cultural philosophising.

Nietzsche sees the WTP as the basic principle of reality and as deeply rooted in endless becoming, whereas Ramose posits that *Ubuntu* is the fundamental principle of being, which is firmly embedded in the notion of becoming, as captured in his idea of "be-ing becoming." The views of the above authors and their common emphases on the idea of becoming or change as constitutive of the basic nature of reality underscore the point that both are against the substance-based metaphysical interpretation of reality as a fixed entity in that they believe it is comprised of endless motion. This idea of reality or existence as embedded in endless motion is not a novel concept in the history of thought. While this idea can be identified with Nietzsche in the Western tradition of thought and, by extension, to Ramose in the African tradition of thought, it can be traced back to the ancient metaphysics of becoming

or change as posited by Heraclitus (Freeman, 1984). This suggests why Nietzsche traces his intellectual ancestry to the Heraclitean philosophy of becoming (see Shrift, 1990).

Nietzsche interprets his concept of the WTP as the essence or fundamental character of reality. This is why he posits that "reality viewed from its innermost essence is will to power and nothing else" (Nietzsche, 1966, p. 48). He avers that everything that exists at the bottom and, in its very essence and totality, is WTP. Nietzsche argues that the essence of the world and life is WTP (Nietzsche, 1967; cf. Lingis, 1985). This indicates that there are no ultimate things in themselves but only formations of the WTP (Lingis, 1985). In other words, he believes that the most fundamental explanatory principle of everything is WTP. In his view, this WTP is deeply rooted in the notion of becoming (Nietzsche, 1967; cf. Ojimba et al., 2015). Thus, describing reality as WTP, Nietzsche means that reality is deeply embedded in the idea of change. This indicates that reality has no fixed essence but consists in endless motion. In simple terms, when Nietzsche describes the essence of reality as WTP, he is simply saying that reality is deeply rooted in the notion of change. He discards any notion of reality as a fixed entity but favours the idea of becoming in his interpretation of the basic character of existence, and this is actualised in his idea of the WTP. Thus, Nietzsche's WTP as the essence of reality has the character of change as its fundamental nature. This is why

he posits that "to impose upon being the character of becoming is the highest will to power" (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 330). Furthermore, it is important to clarify at this juncture that Nietzsche does not interpret the will to power as having a political connotation. Fundamentally, the will to power has a metaphysical connotation as Nietzsche describes it as the essence or fundamental nature of reality and as consisting in endless becoming, even though he sees his entire philosophic enterprise as an attack on metaphysics (Nietzsche, 1967).

Just like Nietzsche, Ramose also projects his *Ubuntu* ontology as symbolised in his concept of "be-ing becoming" as the fundamental nature of reality and as deeply entrenched in the notion of change. This is why he maintains that motion and ceaseless becoming define the basic principle of reality (Ramose, 1999, p. 51). This Ramosean conception of reality postulates a process view of reality which dates back to the traditional worldview of African societies. In his *Ubuntu* ontology, Ramose intends to bridge the gap between being and becoming by postulating the concept of "be-ing becoming" but ultimately essentializing becoming. He sees "be-ing becoming" as a concatenation of the elements of being and becoming. He postulated this concept to reconcile the tension or opposition that exists between being and becoming in traditional or substance-based metaphysics. However, in our own opinion, Ramose failed in this attempt to reconcile this tension that exists

between being and becoming in traditional metaphysics as he ended up endorsing the concept of becoming, given his postulation that change or motion ultimately constitutes the essence of reality (see Ramose, 1999). This is the point where his view converges with that of Nietzsche. However, Ramose does not radicalise the concept of becoming as Nietzsche does, and this is the difference between the two philosophers.

As already hinted above, Ramose posits that becoming describes the essence or basic principle of reality (Ramose, 1999). He replaces the static notion of being with a dynamic view of reality. This is implicated in his critique of the ordinary language. He argues that ordinary language fragments being and creates an erroneous impression that reality is fixed, whereas reality is embedded in the notion of becoming. In clear terms, the common ground between the Nietzschean WTP and the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology is their common emphasis on the idea of becoming as constituting the fundamental nature of reality. Unarguably, this common ground or convergence of thoughts in the Nietzschean WTP and the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology provides us with the basis for cross-cultural philosophising. In the context of this enquiry, this study raises the following questions: Are Nietzsche and Ramose successful in their essentialisation of becoming as constitutive of reality and dispelling the categories of being, such as permanence and fixity, using their notions of the WTP and *Ubuntu* ontology? Can the

constructive engagement of the Nietzschean WTP and the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology provide us with the basis for cross-cultural philosophising?

The idea of cross-cultural philosophy, as employed in this study, represents a style of philosophising that extends beyond a particular cultural boundary to dialogue with other cultures. It is a cross-tradition approach to doing philosophy—a constructive engagement or conversation between one philosophic tradition and another (Ojimba, 2022). It is an approach to philosophising that transcends ethnocentric reductionism and reclusivism. It advocates for dialogue between diverse philosophic traditions or cultural perspectives and encourages equal treatment and recognition of all philosophic traditions and cultures (Ojimba, 2022). It recommends dialogue, mutual learning and a joint approach of diverse philosophic and cultural traditions towards the understanding of reality.

Within the context of cross-cultural philosophising, our purpose is to enquire or investigate the precise manner of being rational and the precise way in which people meaningfully relate to one another in different cultures (Ranly, 1991). The need, therefore, to philosophise from one's own culture does not rule out the idea of interaction with other cultures or contact with other minds. Such interaction or contact opens up other perspectives and broadens a thinker's epistemic horizons. This would have

been impossible if such thinkers were restricted or limited only to their world, which would ultimately impoverish their thought and genuine approach to reality (Ojimba & Agada, 2020). Unarguably, Nietzsche represents one of the philosophers who have shown great interest in cross-cultural philosophising. This interest can be seen from his assertion that "we ought to be learning from our neighbours, precisely as the Greeks learned theirs, not for the sake of learned pedantry, but rather using everything we learned as a foothold, which will take us up as high – and higher than our neighbour" (Nietzsche, 1987, p. 30). Hence, the Nietzschean and Ramosean philosophical insights and initiatives can provide us with the guideline or basis upon which a genuine philosophy can be established.

Although a cross-cultural dialogue does not necessarily presuppose that two different thinkers – Nietzsche and Ramose – share the same thought or hold a common view on a specific philosophical issue, it clearly shows that there should be a basis upon which they establish their exchange (cf. Ojimba & Agada, 2020; Chukwuelobe, 2012). The WTP and *Ubuntu* ontology provide such a basis for Nietzsche and Ramose to enter into a cross-cultural conversation. Philosophising does not only presuppose that we reflect only on our personal experience but also includes our reflection on how we relate with other cultures and the global world at large (Mall, 2014). As a result, genuine philosophising can only be meaningfully carried out with a

cross-culturally-oriented conviction that philosophy, as such, is not the sole possession of anyone's tradition, whether Western or African (Mall, 2014). Therefore, a cross-cultural orientation offers us a forum or a common space of discourse where philosophers of all traditions can come together and converse with one another with full dedication to the truth (Mall, 2014). Therefore, our exploration and interpretation of the innovative concepts of the will to power and *Ubuntu* ontology, as well as our cross-cultural exercise of engagement of the two thinkers from the Western and African philosophical traditions, will contribute, in no small measure, to cross-cultural philosophising.

Certainly, while Nietzsche's idea of the WTP has attracted reasonable attention from scholars (see Shrift, 1990; Chukwuelobe, 2012; Heidegger, 1979; Jaspers, 1969; Lingis, 1985; Nehamas, 1985; Ojimba & Agada, 2020; Oluwagbemi-Jacob & Ojimba, 2017), the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology has barely received any significant attention both from the African and Western authors. Therefore, our enquiry into the Ramosean articulation of the African view of reality as *Ubuntu* will certainly open new avenues for researchers who are interested in exploring the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology. Furthermore, our cross-cultural philosophic and constructive engagement of these two thinkers – Ramose and Nietzsche – from the African and Western philosophic traditions respectively

will advance, in no small measure, the cause of cross-cultural philosophising. To accomplish this task, the study is divided into three sections. Section one explores Nietzsche's idea of the WTP, while section two articulates the basic ingredients of the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology. Section three examines the areas of convergence and divergence in the Nietzschean WTP and the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology, as well as the implications of this for cross-cultural philosophising. This section also contains the conclusion.

Nietzsche's idea of the will to power

Friedrich Nietzsche, the 19th-century German philosopher, captures the fundamental explanatory principle of reality as 'will to power' (WTP). According to him, the essence of reality is WTP and the world, viewed and determined according to its intelligible character, is WTP and nothing else (Nietzsche, 1966, p. 48). The above thought implies that there are no ultimate things in themselves but only structures of the WTP. He believes that the WTP is deeply rooted in the notion of becoming. It is a flexible and dynamic principle which captures reality as processual or transitory. He contends that "there are no eternally enduring substances" (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 110), and this implies that the categories of unity that guarantee the security of the eternally enduring substances are mere illusions. For him, only WTP, which has the element of becoming, constitutes reality. Before Nietzsche, Heraclitus had attempted to conceptualise

the basic principle of reality from the perspective of becoming. His chief doctrine states that everything is in a state of flux, undergoing constant change. This Heraclitean assertion implies that permanent, immutable substance is non-existent, as ultimate reality is essentially a mutable substance, always developing and constantly in a state of flux (Freeman, 1984). Heraclitus fundamentally argues that reality consists of torrents of change. Nietzsche traces his intellectual ancestry to the Heraclitean philosophy of becoming. Against the principle of fixity, immutability and substance, he posits that the will to power is the basic principle of reality, and this implies that becoming is being. This is because Nietzsche believes that the WTP incorporates becoming as its basic principle.

In addition, Nietzsche projects the WTP as an attack on the fixed notion of being. This is evident in his statement: "to impose upon becoming the character of being – that is the supreme will to power...; that everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being..." (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 330; cf. Oluwagbemil-Jacob & Ojimba, 2017, pp. 78-82).

Nietzsche's estimation implies that the highest WTP is to strip being of its features of permanency and fixity and replace them with the character of becoming. This presupposes that a static being is inconceivable; being, for him, is an illusion which is grounded in becoming. Interestingly, this Nietzschean re-construction of reality as

becoming ties in with Ramose's re-conceptualisation of the same as be-ing becoming, as captured in his *Ubuntu* ontology, which will be discussed later in this study. However, there is a contradiction at the heart of Nietzsche's notion of the WTP. This contradiction stems from Nietzsche's claim at one point that the WTP is the most intimate essence of being, and, at another, that the WTP is an attack on fixed essence. Furthermore, his description of the same as the most intimate nature of reality that instantiates itself in every aspect of reality points to the idea of an enduring substance amidst the multiplicity of things. This gives the impression of the idea of "one" in "many," which portrays Nietzsche's tendency to substance metaphysics. It appears contradictory and portrays Nietzsche as accepting from the back door what he rejected at the front door. It also indicates that despite Nietzsche's prioritisation of becoming over being, as enunciated in his WTP, the category of being, given what persists in permanence, still flourishes. This reveals Nietzsche's failure to entirely dispel the category of being despite his deification of becoming through his idea of the WTP.

Nietzsche's WTP is intimately linked to his idea of eternal return. This is because the WTP and eternal return share in common the element of becoming (cf. Chukwuelobe, 2012). Eternal return was used by Nietzsche to mean that all aspects of reality return unceasingly in an identical fashion (cf. Ojimba & Agada 2020, pp. 36-7). The WTP, as

the essence of all things, returns endlessly in the form of eternal return. The idea of endless return shows Nietzsche's emphasis on the notion of becoming. For him, the wheel of being rolls eternally as everything recurs endlessly:

Everything goes, everything comes back; the wheel of being rolls eternally. Everything dies, everything blossoms again, the year of being runs eternally. Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; the same house of being builds itself eternally. Everything parts, everything greets itself again; the ring of being remains loyal to itself eternally (Nietzsche, 2006, p.175).

The above quotation shows Nietzsche's position that the idea of an immutable, stable reality is inconceivable. It is the WTP that makes eternal return possible. To that extent, one can argue that eternal return is the WTP. According to Chukwuelobe (2012, p. 43), "we move in a circle of eternal return and the will to power which provides the condition for the possibility of becoming." Thus, "as an important element in the eternal return, the WTP is grounded in becoming and does not require any being to guarantee its permanence" (Chukwuelobe, 2012, p. 43). For Nietzsche, it is not proper to accept that anything just is. To do so, according to him, would amount to an "illusion which by

purporting to offer something permanent and superior, depreciates the incessant becoming that alone constitutes true being" (see Jaspers, 1969, p. 350; cf. Ojimba et al., 2015, pp. 27-50). Thus, Nietzsche's WTP has an intimate connection with his doctrine of the eternal return regarding the notion of becoming.

Nietzsche describes all grounds and foundations as WTP, and by affirming that the foundation or ground is WTP, Nietzsche presents reality as a dynamic force (Lingis, 1985). In the words of Williams, "the will to power is a distinct kind of force comprising an inner dynamic for the force to initiate movement or change" (Williams, 1996, p. 457). This presents the WTP as the foundation of becoming or change. The Nietzschean description of the WTP as a dynamic force can be engaged with the Ramosean conceptualisation of *Ubuntu* as a universal force due to the latter's quest for constructing a holistic and dynamic ontological system that replaces the being of the substance-based metaphysics with the being of the process-based metaphysical system.

Nietzsche posits that identity or unity does not constitute being, but difference and motion do. This suggests why he maintains that "a being, as [a] sequence of appearances, is not founded on their reiteration of unity and of identity; [the] difference is original – unity, identity, is something become" [something grounded in

becoming] (Lingis, 1985, p. 42). That is to say, reality is not a fixed, single and univocal essence but is made up of multiple interpretations and ceaseless becoming (cf. Ojimba 2022). For Nietzsche, becoming and difference constitute the basic character of the WTP.

Because of its emphasis on becoming, Nietzsche's WTP has been criticised by different authors. Heidegger, for instance, is of the view that Nietzsche's postulation of his WTP as constituting the essence of reality ties him back to the metaphysics of substance, which he intends to overcome (Heidegger 1977; cf. Heidegger 1979). Contrary to Heidegger, Nehamas (1985, p. 95) posits that "we may give the WTP a different interpretation as constituting a challenge to the concepts of substance and attribute and not as an alternative to the metaphysics of substance and accidents." However, it is our considered opinion that Nietzsche's WTP, as the essence and fundamental explanatory principle of reality (see Nietzsche, 1966, p. 48), remains within the confines of the substance-based metaphysics which he attacks. His rejection of being in favour of becoming portrays him as going back to the same metaphysical tradition of essence and substance. This is because becoming or change as the fundamental element of the WTP, overthrows being and becomes fixed, permanent and absolute itself. This presupposes a new absolute metaphysics: the metaphysics of becoming. In the next section, we will engage

Ramose's representation of the fundamental nature of reality as *Ubuntu*, which, like Nietzsche's WTP, is grounded in constant motion.

The Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology

Mogobo Ramose is a South African contemporary philosopher who, in his book *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu* (1999), conceives reality from the perspective of becoming, and this is embodied in his concept of "be-ing becoming." This Ramosean conception of reality represents a processual view of reality, and this has an intimate connection with the African traditional worldview. Our interest in focusing on the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology is because of its affinity and its most legitimate representation of the African traditional conception of reality, which construes being within the framework of dynamism, holism and interconnectedness (cf. Asouzu, 2007; Ojimba, 2023). The authenticity of the Ramosean *Ubuntu* intimate ontological connection with the African traditional worldview has been corroborated by Maris (2020, p. 308), who posited that *Ubuntu* ontology "demonstrates African rationality, and thus confirms an authentic African identity that was systematically suppressed during the colonial past and apartheid." Ramose's *Ubuntu* ontology represents reality as a whole with different parts, which calls to mind the complementary, dynamic and interconnected nature of the universe (cf. Asouzu, 2007).

Agada (2021, pp. 4-6) posits that "in this interconnected universe, where rigid borders are not set between entities and states of affairs, the features of unity and permanence, attributed to being in substance-based metaphysics, are always open to interrogation." This confirms that Ramose's *Ubuntu* ontology represents a dislodgement of the categories of unity, permanence, fixity and constancy with reference to being. Instead, it conceives reality from the perspective of endless flux and ceaseless becoming.

Before the Ramosean conception of reality, as deeply rooted in motion and endless becoming, Placid Tempels, in his popular work, *Bantu Philosophy* written in 1959, had already articulated the *Bantu* conception of being as embedded in the principle of dynamism or motion and vital force. For Tempels, the idea of force and motion constitute the authentic *Bantu* African conception of reality (see Tempels, 1959; cf. Ojimba, 2023; Ojimba, 2022). Our objection to the Tempelsean articulation of the *Bantu* view of reality stems from the fact that Tempels was stuck within cultural anthropology and was unable to justify this cultural anthropological view of the *Bantu* worldview. Nevertheless, the Tempelsean representation of the authentic African view of reality as grounded in the principle of force and dynamism remains tenable. Innocent Onyewuenyi adopted the Tempelsean African view of reality, as

embedded in the notion of force and dynamism, by postulating that "African ontology can be designated without further qualification as force or dynamic ontology" (Onyewuenyi, 1966, p.33). While Tempels and Onyewuenyi agree that African ontology can be designated from the perspective of force and dynamism (though Onyewuenyi does not radicalise the concept of force like Tempels), Ramose (though different from Tempels and Onyewuenyi in the sense that he does not give reasonable attention to the concept of force) confidently asserts that the African view of reality can essentially be grasped from the idea of motion and becoming, which is succinctly articulated in his *Ubuntu* ontology.

Ubuntu represents a compound word and a philosophic hyphenated concept – *ubu-ntu* – which comprises two words *ubu* and *ntu*. According to Ramose, *ubu* designates reality in its universal mode prior to its manifestation in particular entities, which is *ntu*. For him, "there is no strict and literal ontological separation between *ubu* and *ntu*" (Ramose, 1999, 50; cf. Ojimba 2023, p.103). In his estimation, *ubu* is always oriented towards *ntu*, and both are two aspects of the same reality. In other words, "both *ubu* and *ntu* are mutually founding, interpenetrating and two aspects of be-ing as one-ness and indivisible whole-ness" (Ramose, 1999, p.50; cf. Ramose 2015, pp. 551-558 and Ramose 2003, pp. 379-387; Ojimba 2023, p.102).

Ramose's representation of reality, as deeply rooted in the notion of becoming, is implicated in his critique of the ordinary language, which in his estimation, cannot capture the essence of reality as motion. He frowns upon the idea of ordinary language because it creates a false impression of fixed and separate entities existing independently in relation to the subject-verb-object polarity. In his estimation, "the subject-verb-object polarities, introduced by ordinary language, "function as fixations to ideas and practices, which are somewhat dogmatic and hence unchangeable" (Ramose, 1999, p. 50; Cf. Ojimba, 2023, p. 103). Ramose argues that such dogmatic and immutable notions constitute the foundation of "fragmentative thinking," which launches tension in "be-ing becoming," and fragments it into bits of reality that makes it independent (Ramose, 1999, pp.51-52; Ojimba, 2023, p. 103). He attacks the traditional concept of being, which construes being from the perspective of fixity, immutability and substance. He also institutes a new understanding of being, which conceives being as a process and as grounded in the principle of motion. The hyphenated "be-ing" in the Ramosean concept of "be-ing becoming" represents reality as "a continuous flow of the stream of being or as a kind of fluidity in existence" (Ojimba 2023, p. 102; cf. Agada, 2021). Furthermore, Ramose's preference for hyphenated "be-ing" was informed by his belief that the unhyphenated being in the traditional or classical conception of be-ing

dogmatically attributes the features of fixity, permanency, constancy and immutability as constitutive of the elemental nature of being.

As already hinted above, Ramose criticises ordinary language (everyday language) because of his claim that it creates an erroneous impression that reality is fixed (Ramose, 1999). In his estimation, ordinary language is foundational to the conception of reality as fixity or substance-based because it creates an erroneous view that reality is constant and unchanging. In the place of ordinary language, he proposes the *rheomodic* language of *Ubuntu*, which locates reality within the confines of motion. *Rheomode* is coined from the Greek word *rheo*, which designates the idea of constant flow or motion. It also describes a new language different from the ordinary language, which does not recognise polarity (Ramose, 1999; cf. Bohm, 1980). For Ramose, the *rheomodic* language of *Ubuntu* represents "a critique of thought and language structure that assumes and imposes a strict divide and a necessary sequence in terms of subject-verb-object" (Ramose, 1999, p. 56). It construes reality from the angle of simultaneity and multi-directionality. In Ramose's view, "this understanding speaks to be-ing rather than be! It sustains and, at the same time, preserves the whole-ness and not the whole of be-ing" (Ramose, 1999, p. 56). In his estimation, the idea of "whole" does not measure up to the level of adequacy in view of capturing the original nature of being

because it creates a false impression that "be-ing" is "being" (constant and fixed), whereas, in reality, being constitutes itself in the notion of becoming. From Ramose's perspective, understanding reality from this angle removes the classical or traditional conflict between motion and rest as the principles of being (Ramose, 1999). Consequently, the *rheomodic* language of *Ubuntu* conceives of being as "be-ing becoming" and adopts the verb as its point of departure (cf. Ojimba, 2023). This critical role assigned to the verb, in the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology, is as a result of the verb's function in de-emphasising the subject while emphasising the action (cf. Ojimba, 2023). Thus, in *Ubuntu* ontology, "the verb assumes the function of a verbal noun that feeds the -ing and -ness which efficiently capture the world of becoming. The *rheomodic* language, here, becomes instrumental in demolishing the rigid borders set between the subject and the object by the ordinary language through the principle of the gerund. The gerund, then, is the ontological foundation of *rheomode*" (Ojimba, 2023, p.103).

Ramose's postulation that ordinary language cannot capture the essence of reality has a close affinity with Nietzsche's position that language or linguistic expression is inadequate to capture the basic principle of reality. This is because, according to Nietzsche, "it accords with our inevitable need to preserve ourselves to posit a crude world of stability of things" (Nietzsche 1968,

p. 380). Thus, Nietzsche and Ramose both maintain the position that language creates an erroneous impression of fixity and constancy with reference to reality. In other words, both maintain that reality is firmly grounded in the principle of motion. However, Ramose's assertion that ordinary language cannot capture the essence of reality is highly objectionable. This is because it raises the question of whether Ramose has analysed all the languages in the world to justify his assertion that ordinary language is incapable of capturing the elemental nature of being. In addition, there is also the question of whether *rheomode*, as the philosophic language of *Ubuntu*, can capture the essence of reality without the mediation of the ordinary language (cf. Ojimba, 2023). Also, the Ramosean assertion that the *rheomodic* language of *Ubuntu* is a mere possibility, experiment and speculation (see Ramose, 1999) lends credence to the above critique. Thus, it will appear patronising for Ramose to advocate an overhauling and strengthening of the ordinary language to improve or make it better in understanding reality rather than his speculative and experimental advocacy of a new language, which is somewhat private and may not be easily understood by the global audience (cf. Ojimba, 2015). In the next section, we will examine Ramose's *Ubuntu* ontology and Nietzsche's WTP to find the areas of convergence and divergence in both thought systems, as well as their implications for cross-cultural philosophising.

The 'will to power' and *Ubuntu* ontology: Implications for cross-cultural philosophising

This section articulates the areas of convergence and divergence in the Nietzschean WTP and Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology and examines their implications for cross-cultural philosophising [a style of philosophising that extends beyond particular cultural boundaries to dialogue with other cultures—a constructive engagement or dialogue between one philosophic tradition and another]. First, we will begin with the articulation of the areas of convergence and divergence in the Nietzschean WTP and the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology before delving into their implications for cross-cultural philosophising.

One may be wondering what core claims underlie the Nietzschean concept of the WTP and the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology. It is important to note that both authors embrace the processual view of reality. For instance, the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology, as conceptualised in his idea of "be-ing becoming", captures a dynamic and flexible reality, which rejects the idea of fixity and permanency of being and favours the Heraclitean endless flux. In a related manner, the Nietzschean concept of the WTP also favours flexibility and dynamism, as Nietzsche believes that reality is embedded in endless flux. This Nietzschean flexible and dynamic view of reality, just like the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology, appears to uproot the Parmenidean idea of fixed,

permanent and changeless being. However, in our own opinion, the above Nietzschean and Ramosean conceptions of reality, as dynamic or transitory, do not demolish the Parmenidean view of permanence, as permanence also constitutes an essential aspect of our everyday experience.

Ramose recognises one basic whole or principle called *ubu*, which is instantiated in various elements (Ramose, 1999). Similarly, Nietzsche acknowledges a basic principle, the WTP, which manifests itself in various ways, including life, world, society, individual etc. (Nietzsche, 1968). However, Nietzsche posits that there is a multiplicity of WTP, and these WTP involve themselves in an assiduous play of overcoming and endless struggle. This implies that both philosophers acknowledge a fundamental principle that is instantiated in various forms. Additionally, while Ramose attempts to subvert substance-based metaphysics through a process view of reality, Nietzsche tries to do the same through a model based on the WTP. In this way, it could be argued that both the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology and the Nietzschean WTP constitute an attempt to overcome the metaphysics of substance. Ramose tries to accomplish this using the concept of "be-ing becoming", while Nietzsche does the same through the idea of becoming. This effort is further reflected in Nietzsche's declaration of the "death of God" (Nietzsche, 2001, pp. 119-120), which advocates the total collapse of the metaphysical world of substance. However,

neither Nietzsche nor Ramose succeeded in overcoming the traditional idea of being an enduring substance. Rather, what they have succeeded in doing is only transferring the attributes of being, such as fixity and permanence, to becoming. This is the case because when Nietzsche asserts that the essence of reality is WTP (Nietzsche, 1966), he indirectly states that becoming is the enduring substance of being. This describes the metaphysics of becoming – becoming as a permanent, fixed-flow state of being. It establishes that permanence is the fundamental nature of becoming in both Ramose and Nietzsche.

For Nietzsche, the WTP is groundless chaos and a brute force (Lingis, 1985). Similarly, Ramose avers that be-ing becoming, which is grounded in *Ubuntu* ontology, is conceived within the framework of chaos. Furthermore, from Nietzsche's perspective, language creates an erroneous impression of permanence and fixity of being, which should be totally repudiated and completely rejected. This same line of thought fuels Ramose's thinking. He believes that the fragmentation of reality, in relation to the opposition between being and becoming, is perpetuated using the instrumentality of language (Ramose, 1999). Just like Nietzsche, Ramose argues that ordinary language is incapable of breaking the silence of reality (capturing reality as basically constitutive of becoming) and gives a false impression that things are fixed, changeless and immutable. This is unacceptable for Ramose because,

according to him, motion is the principle of reality (Ramose, 1999). This indicates that both Nietzsche and Ramose see ordinary language as incapable of capturing the essence of reality. However, Ramose makes an exception for the *rheomodic* philosophic language of *Ubuntu*, which, in his view, is capable of breaking this silence of reality. This study argues that the Ramosean *rheomodic* language is too speculative and imaginative and that Ramose should be more realistic and pragmatic with reference to this. Furthermore, both authors acknowledge life as an important element in their conceptions of reality. For instance, Nietzsche subscribes to an understanding of the WTP as life. This affirms his assertion that "life is will to power" (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 148). In a similar vein, Ramose (1999, pp. 51–52) projects an interpretation of reality based on *Ubuntu* ontology as "the perpetual and universal movement of sharing and exchange of the forces of life."

Despite these areas of convergence of thought in the Nietzschean and Ramosean conceptions of reality, there are also areas of divergence. For instance, while Nietzsche's view of reality designates a conceptualisation of being within the confines of the WTP, that of Ramose describes a reconstruction of reality within the framework of *Ubuntu*. Furthermore, *Ubuntu* ontology recognises the African philosophic worldview as holistic (Ramose, 1999). This is unlike Nietzsche's WTP, which projects a multiplicity and

infinite perspectivity of reality. This represents an affirmation of metaphysical or ontological pluralism. Furthermore, the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology understands the cosmos as a continued striving for harmony and unity, which authenticates and legitimises it. He believes that this is one of the outstanding features of *Ubuntu* as a *philopraxis* (Ramose, 1999). Nietzsche's WTP takes exception for the Ramosean *Ubuntu* search for harmony or unity. In Nietzsche's view, the idea of any search for unity or harmony is a misplaced priority and an exercise in futility. For him, it is a metaphysical error to engage in any quest for cosmic unity or harmony. He rather argues that the fundamental nature of reality is that of endless becoming, and this defines an authentic and legitimate understanding of reality.

The Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology attempts to bridge the gap or tension between being and becoming, which characterises substance-based metaphysics. In this connection, he postulates the concept of "be-ing becoming", which, in his view, portrays being as wholeness, one-ness or unity as against the substance-based metaphysical tension between being and becoming. On the contrary, Nietzsche does not intend to bridge the gap between being and becoming but tries to eradicate this divide entirely by emphasising becoming as the only reality, as captured in his WTP. Nietzsche's main objective, therefore, is the total abolition of

the idea of being, unlike Ramose's attempt at a reconciliation of the tension between being and becoming. Thus, while Ramose intends to bridge the gap between being and becoming, Nietzsche intends to eradicate being entirely and replace it with becoming, and this he describes as the ultimate aim of the WTP. Furthermore, Ramose's *Ubuntu* ontology acknowledges the idea of the highest or greatest being, which is expressed in the notion of the *u-nkulu-nkulu*, which makes itself unknowable (Ramose, 1999, p. 63). However, Nietzsche's concept of the WTP has as its main and fundamental objective the affirmation of the total collapse of the idea of the highest being. This is what exactly Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God advocates. Additionally, the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology creates the impression that the tension between the diverse regions of being is momentary. On the contrary, Nietzsche posits that the opposition within the regions of the WTP is endless and eternal. This is exactly what his idea of the Eternal Return expresses (Nietzsche, 2006, 6; cf. Ojimba & Agada, 2020). He believes that eternal return implies endless return and tension of the WTP.

Certainly, the Nietzschean-Ramosean dialogue, with reference to the fundamental principle of reality as articulated above, will have some implications for cross-cultural philosophising [a style of philosophising that extends beyond particular cultural boundaries to dialogue with other cultures—a constructive engagement or dialogue

between one philosophic tradition with another]. Interestingly, one positive thing about this Nietzschean-Ramosean dialogue, as articulated in this study, is that they call our attention to the fact that no one view or cultural tradition has an absolute understanding of reality. This underscores the importance of cross-cultural philosophising, where these views or traditions can come together to dialogue with each other in order to engage with each other, learn from each other, complement each other, understand each other and make joint contributions to the development of philosophy and comprehensive understanding of reality. To illustrate, the Nietzschean radical emphasis and absolute repudiation of the world of the spirit, as well as the idea of God (Nietzsche, 2001) through his concept of the WTP, can be balanced and complemented with the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontological recognition of the idea of God and the world of the ancestors. Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, declared the death of God which, for him, amounted to the collapse of the metaphysical and supersensory world (cf. Heidegger, 1977). For him, the concept of God is a metaphysical error and amounts to the deception of the intellect (Nietzsche, 2001; cf. Ojimba et al., 2015). This further ignited his assertion in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where he urges people to be faithful to the earth and ignore any talk about the supersensory or spirit world (Nietzsche, 2001). This demonstrates, in Nietzsche's view, that the supersensory world is non-existent and amounts to the

deception of humanity. It also shows the Nietzschean conception of the one-sided view of reality because of his assertion that life begins here on earth and ends here on earth. This Nietzschean belief implicates the non-existence of the supernatural, spirit or ancestral world. Just like Ramose, Nietzsche believes that the human person does not continue to exist in the spirit world (see Ramose, 1999) after his departure from the world of humans. This is due to Nietzsche's materialistic conception of man, whom he describes as having no soul or any spiritual dimension (Nietzsche, 1968). However, the above Nietzschean view can be complemented and balanced with the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontological conception of reality that lends recognition to the ancestral, supersensory, spirit and metaphysical world, as well as to the concept of the soul and of God (see Ramose, 1999), whom he believes created man, unlike the Nietzschean conception of man as being created by himself. Ramose believes in the world of the beyond, and this is exemplified in his notion of the *nkulunkulu* (Ramose, 1999, p. 63) and his postulation of the harmonious relationship that exists between the world of the human and spirit or the ancestral world. He believes that the living-dead or the ancestors are in constant complementary relations with their descendants (the living) by keeping and protecting them, while the living complements this gesture by reverencing the ancestors and being in continuous

communion with them (Ramose, 1999, p. 64). These different conceptions of reality – the Nietzschean and Ramosean conceptions – can complement and learn from each other, as pointed out above, for a fuller and better understanding of reality, and this is the essence of cross-cultural philosophising. At this juncture, the role of the agency (the philosopher) in bringing about the exercise of cross-culturality in philosophy becomes very relevant. Philosophers (African philosophers and other philosophers across the globe) should open up their ideas, complement and learn from other philosophical traditions across the globe and widen their cultural, epistemic, intellectual and conceptual horizons. This is the aim of cross-cultural philosophising as the joint and complementary approach of these different philosophical traditions can help us have a better and fuller view of the world, as well as contribute to the contemporary development of philosophy. This study intends to acquaint the Europeans with the philosophic ingredients and cultural principles of the Ramosean African *Ubuntu* ontology, while the African scholar will, in the same manner, be exposed to the Western philosophic tradition, as articulated in the Nietzschean WTP. As such, both cultural and philosophic traditions can learn from each other and widen their cultural and intellectual horizons. In this way, the goal of cross-cultural philosophising will be achieved.

At the social ontological, cultural and gender-complementaristic level, the

Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology and the Nietzschean WTP will also have some implications. For instance, the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology will help us realise ourselves as united under the one umbrella of humanity. As such, the tendency for discrimination on the basis of culture, language or skin colour will be reduced to the barest minimum (cf. Nwaocha, 2021). Ramose sees *ubu* and *ntu* as two aspects of the same reality. He believes that there is no strict and separate ontological relationship between *ubu* and *ntu* as *ubu* is always oriented towards *ntu*, and both are complementary aspects of the same reality. Drawing from this complementary relationship between *ubu* and *ntu*, all humans, notwithstanding their linguistic, racial or cultural background, will be seen as complementary to one another and united under one universal humanism. This will encourage the attitude of love, care and fairness in the perception and treatment of the other. Furthermore, from the perspective of gender, the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology will help institute gender sensitivity and balance between the male and the female genders. Just as Ramose posits that *ubu* and *ntu* are complementary aspects of the same reality, the male and female genders can, as well, see themselves as complementary aspects of the same humanity as against the discrimination and antagonistic tendencies that accompany the idea of gender in the contemporary society, especially in the African continent. The idea of perceiving one

gender as superior to the other gender will be relegated to the background in order to make way for the emergence of true and pure gender complementarity. Similarly, the Nietzschean WTP will also help us to understand that there are no fixed stereotypes with regard to culture, as cultures are dynamic. Recall that Nietzsche proposes a critique of the ideas of fixed essence and, in this case, fixed stereotypes. Borrowing from the Nietzschean WTP, human society will come to the understanding that there is no fixed perception/stereotypes with regard to different cultures. Not only this, Nietzsche's WTP, as a critical and deconstructive tool/principle, will equip us with the courage to challenge some of the stereotypes and discrimination going on in society, even at the global level, with reference to culture, language, skin colour and even the concept of gender as already hinted above.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the Nietzschean conceptualisation of reality as WTP and the Ramosean re-construction of the same as *Ubuntu* to show the areas of convergence and divergence in both authors and to what degree the constructive engagement of the two key thinkers from the African and Western traditions can provide us with a common ground for cross-cultural philosophising. To accomplish this task, the study has highlighted Nietzsche's idea of the WTP, articulated the basic ingredients of the Ramosean *Ubuntu* ontology and attempted to show their areas of similarities and differences, as well as their implications for cross-cultural philosophising. The study holds that the engagement of both thinkers can help, to a great extent, in a meaningful and constructive understanding of the two forms of thought – the WTP and *Ubuntu* ontology – including their influence on each other within their respective philosophic and cultural traditions which will, ultimately, widen their intellectual and cultural horizons and advance the cause of cross-culturality in philosophising.

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