

# (Mis)Identifying the Phenomenological-Semiotic Locus of Human Sexual (In)Difference

by  
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## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to critique the validity of selecting specific material features of human embodiment (such as sex or skin colour) as stable sources of identity. Insofar as such identities are generalised into rigid “types” of people using a feature of embodiment as an indicator of set membership (such as “male” and “female” within “sex”), I argue that such typologies necessarily misrepresent and subsequently mistreat people, since it is impossible to reduce human identity to either a single embodied feature or a small group of features, and therefore impossible to produce enduring descriptions of embodiment as a means of representing that identity. I hypothesise that such typologies are always descriptively distorted in attempting to describe human identity, despite being treated as universally applicable by their proponents, and consequently that attempts at deriving normative prescriptions from such typologies (such as racial segregation or heterosexual marriage) are bound to be unjustifiably exclusionary, since they differentiate and distribute moral treatment along an arbitrary and artificial axis of contingent and incomplete bodily sameness/difference.

In critiquing the logic of appealing to embodied identity, I will focus on sexual embodiment and take the French feminist Luce Irigaray’s theory of sexual difference as an exemplar. Irigaray’s theory is a good example of an attempt at both deriving a universal typology of stable, unified human identities from specifically-selected bodily features, and at organising this typology into a social order. Irigaray’s theory assumes the existence of two and only two coherent sexual categories into which all persons naturally fall: male and female. It further assumes that the characteristics of each sex are not interchangeable between the sexes, and that these embodied features produce not only entirely different bodies but also entirely different subjectivities, capabilities, and worldviews. In contrast to the historical privilege accorded the male subject as the supposedly “universal” subject, Irigaray envisions a new society that breaks this hegemony of sameness with sexual difference, ordering society between two and only two *different* sexes.

Part 1 of the thesis provides an exposition of Irigaray’s thought. Within Part 1, Chapter 1 explores Irigaray’s diagnostic critique of the patriarchal order. Chapter 2 explores the alternative to patriarchy presented in her own system of sexual difference. Part 2 of the thesis engages in a critical analysis of Irigaray’s theory. In Chapter 3 I argue that the most recent scientific evidence disproves the existence of two and only two sexes with distinct subjectivities, that the heteronormative and cisgender typology upon which Irigaray’s social vision rests unethically excludes non-binary persons and non-heterosexuals, that the sameness/difference binary is a pseudo-problem insofar as it still universalises “same” and “different” descriptions using the same contingent and arbitrarily-selected referent, and that both the patriarchal and Irigarayan definitions of “male” are distorted. With these findings I suggest that Irigaray’s notions of both “sex” and “difference” are untenable, problematizing her theory of “sexual difference” in general. Lastly, in Chapter 4 I briefly sketch the outline of an alternative theory of identity without embodied specificity, based instead upon the universally humanly shared characteristic of vulnerability.

## Abstrak

Die doel van hierdie tesis is om die geldigheid daarvan te beoordeel om spesifieke materiële kenmerke van menslike vergestaltung (soos geslag of velkleur) as stabiele bronne van identiteit te kies. In soverre sodanige identiteite as rigiede “soorte” mense veralgemeen word deur ’n kenmerk van vergestaltung as aanduiding van groeplidmaatskap (soos “manlik” en “vroulik” onder “geslag”) te gebruik, voer ek aan dat sodanige tipologieë noodwendig mense vals voorstel en vervolgens verkeerd behandel, aangesien dit onmoontlik is om die menslike identiteit tot óf ’n enkele vergestalte kenmerk óf ’n groepie kenmerke te vereenvoudig, en dit dus onmoontlik is om blywende beskrywings van vergestaltung te skep as ’n manier om daardie identiteit te verteenwoordig. Ek hipotetiseer dat sodanige tipologieë altyd onvoldoende beskrywend is in die poging om die menslike identiteit te beskryf, ondanks die feit dat die voorstanders daarvan dit as universeel toepasbaar bestempel, en dat pogings om normatiewe voorskrifte (soos rassese segregasie of heteroseksuele huwelike) vanuit sodanige tipologieë af te lei gevolglik uit die aard van die saak ongeregverdig uitsluitend sal wees, aangesien hulle op grond van ’n arbitrêre en kunsmatige spel van kontingente en onvolledige liggaamlike eendersheid/verskillendheid onderskei en op morele behandeling besluit.

In die beoordeling van die logika daarvan om jou op vergestalte identiteit te beroep, sal ek op geslagsvergestaltung fokus en die Franse feminis Luce Irigaray se teorie van geslagsverskil as ’n voorbeeld behandel. Irigaray se teorie is ’n goeie voorbeeld van ’n poging om sowel ’n universele tipologie van stabiele, saamgebonde menslike identiteite van spesifiek uitgesoekte liggaamlike kenmerke af te lei, as om hierdie tipologie as ’n maatskaplike bestel te organiseer. Irigaray se teorie maak die aanname dat daar twee en slegs twee koherente geslagskategorieë is waarin alle mense van nature val: manlik en vroulik. Dit maak voorts ook die aanname dat eienskappe van elke geslag nie uitruilbaar tussen die geslagte is nie, en dat hierdie vergestalte kenmerke nie slegs geheel en al verskillende liggame tot gevolg het nie, maar ook geheel en al verskillende subjektiwiteite, vermoëns en wêreldbeskouings. In teenstelling met die historiese bevoorregting van die manlike onderwerp as die kwansuis “universele” onderwerp, stel Irigaray ’n nuwe samelewing voor wat hierdie hegemonie van eendersheid met geslagsverskille verbreek, en wat die samelewing in twee en slegs twee *verskillende* geslagte verdeel.

Deel 1 van die tesis bied ’n uiteensetting van Irigaray se denke. In hoofstuk 1 word Irigaray se diagnostiese beoordeling van die patriargale orde ondersoek. Hoofstuk 2 ondersoek die alternatief tot patriargie wat in haar eie stelsel van geslagsverskil aangebied word. Deel 2 van die tesis behels ’n kritiese analise van Irigaray se teorie. In hoofstuk 3 voer ek aan dat die nuutste wetenskaplike getuienis die bestaan van twee en slegs twee geslagte met afsonderlike subjektiwiteite weerlê, dat die heteronormatiewe en cisgender tipologie waarop Irigaray se maatskaplike visie berus nie-binêre persone en nie-heteroseksueles heel oneties uitsluit, dat die eendersheid/verskillendheid-binêr ’n pseudo-probleem is in soverre dit steeds beskrywings van “eenders” en “verskillend” universaliseer deur dieselfde voorwaardelike en arbitrêre uitgesoekte referent te gebruik, en dat sowel die patriargale en Irigarayaanse definisies van “manlik” te eng is. Met hierdie bevindinge stel ek voor dat Irigaray se begrip van sowel “geslag” as “verskil” onhoudbaar is, wat haar teorie van “geslagsverskil” oor die algemeen problematies maak. Laastens, in hoofstuk 4, skets ek kortliks die buitelyne van ’n alternatiewe teorie van identiteit sonder vergestalte spesifisiteit, wat eerder op die universeel-menslike eienskap van kwesbaarheid gegrond is.

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## 0. CHAPTER 0: INTRODUCTION

### 0.1. DEMARCATION: TOPIC AND MOTIVATION

The limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear, circumscribe the domain in which political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable actors (Butler, 2006:xvii).

*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world (Wittgenstein, 2001:68).

[I]t seems equally urgent to question the *seduction function of law itself*. And its role in producing fantasies. When it suspends the realisation of a seduced desire, law organises and arranges the world of fantasy at least as much as it forbids, interprets, and symbolises it (Irigaray, 1985a:38).

Two pieces of sleight of hand that are never unveiled compete in the process of representation. A split tears open the arche of presence. And because that division is irreconcilable, it undermines from time immemorial the serenity of wisdom, of philosophy (Irigaray, 1985a:274).

A social and political order which is not founded on the real is precarious, and even dangerous. All the imaginary disturbances, all the authoritarian deviations, all the cultural regressions are possible here (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:149).

The topic of this thesis is the ethics of corporeal embodiment, and the validity of the logic underlying appeals to such embodiment. It may thus be described as an exploration of the epistemic question of the relationship between representation and reality, through the lens of the ethics of embodiment. For the purposes of this thesis, I will claim that politics can be described as the distribution of identity; and given that such identity is typically a representation produced by the legal or cultural hegemony, it is worth asking, for both epistemic and ethical reasons, what role the “reality” of corporeal embodiment plays in resisting or generating such abstract representations, and whether there is an “ethics of space” in the distance between the self-determined reality generated by bodily experience, and the representation identified and recognised by others. The appeal to an apodictically-experienced body capable of generating its own truths unmediated by social norms, may be seen as both simplistic and controversial. Regardless, for the sake of advancing an argument in this thesis I will assume the following: that there exists a distinction between “unmediated bodies” and “mediated bodies”. Unmediated bodies are bodies whose experiences are meaningful *without* the categories of social identity such as “black” or “gay”. These bodies can be considered analogous to the sort of bodies we might find in a Hobbesian state of nature, or a Rawlsian original position. The experiences and desires of these bodies are not primarily *identified* or *given meaning* by cultural norms; examples would be stubbing one’s toe, or the experience of desire for something *not identified* by social categories; such as sexual desire.<sup>1</sup> The claim is therefore that there exist unmediated instances of corporeality *between* the cracks of social identification, suggesting the presence of a subjective ground that not only resists categorisation, but, in such resistance, can exist *outside* social identification. This is in contrast to “mediated bodies” and their experiences, which acquire meaning through arbitrary and artificial categories, such as “teacher” and the subsequent culture surrounding the vocation of “teaching”.

In exploring the space between reality and representation, I<sup>2</sup> will focus more specifically on the il/legitimacy of appeals to embodied specificity (through physical markers such as sex) as empirically sound, epistemologically coherent, and ethically useful indicators of identity, especially where such markers are used to distribute and order identity in, for example, hierarchies and other systems of sameness/difference; in other words, where such markers exceed their descriptive capacities and become prescriptive. In brief then, starting with the broad topic of “representation and reality”, our focus

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<sup>1</sup> No doubt *this* will be considered controversial, yet my point here is simply that, for instance, homosexual desire has always existed, regardless of whether it was identified and conceptualised with a label (“homosexual”) or not.

<sup>2</sup> See point 1 under “Further textual notes” below on page 21 for the use of personal pronouns in this thesis.

will be on the “representation” half, specifically on the logic of embodiment as a marker of identity (or *representation of a person*), and the way this may *misrepresent* a person<sup>3</sup> and thus cause an unfair structuring and distribution of rights and goods according to that representation. We will take sex as a specific example of embodiment under representation, and explore the way embodiment is usually represented along the same/different axis, which, in turn, presupposes the essentialist/social constructed dichotomy as a means of defining said embodiment.

This topic was prompted by several related observations, which together form the background motivation for the ensuing discussion. The first two observations are conceptual: firstly that different kinds of embodiment (such as racial, sexual, or abled) are given different moral treatments, and secondly that appeals to embodiment serve the function of oppression as well as liberation using the self-same embodiments (for instance Black Power against segregation, or difference feminism against patriarchy). On the first point, different types of embodiment are understood differently under the rightfulness of a same/different dichotomy. For instance, we no longer assume there is anything *naturally* different about “races” and the movement for desegregation and reintegration in countries such as the United States of America and South Africa have centred upon the *erasure* of race as a morally significant category – we consider it justified to say that we are all *the same* (racially). On the other hand, difference feminists argue that we are fundamentally *naturally different* (sexually), and that arguing for the same rights would be to misunderstand the requirements of our different bodies and different subjectivities. On the second observation, this reversibility centring upon the same body<sup>4</sup> led me to wonder whether the embodiments in question are, in reality, stable as natural kinds or whether they are produced, represented, and misrepresented in successive appeals to embodiment, and therefore whether emancipatory corrections such as difference feminism are in fact *more* accurate representations of the reality of embodiment than their predecessors, or whether they, too, are prone to reversal and correction pending the insights of yet another new movement. Is embodiment a valuable category of identity if it is a reversible double-edged sword that can cut sameness as *both* bad and good, and cut difference as *both* bad and good, using the same body? This in turn led me to wonder whether descriptions such as racial sameness or sexual difference have any non-reversible<sup>5</sup> concrete basis in reality as representations whatsoever, regardless of whether the sameness/difference upon which those representations are based is figured on the basis of essentialism or social constructionism.<sup>6</sup> Thus taken together, these questions made me ask: does the fact that such representations present contradictory, oft-reversed descriptions and prescriptions of the body not perhaps indicate the *absence* of any stable, coherently identifiable body beneath it all? Is the sameness/difference debate therefore not a pseudo-problem?

These conceptual observations led to the topic of the thesis, but the observation of several other social and cultural developments, in rapid and well-documented succession, provided the motivation for a potential answer. In 2011 “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” was repealed in the United States of America allowing non-heterosexuals to serve openly in the military; in 2013 Uganda introduced the notorious “Kill the gays Bill”, in the same year both England and France legalised same-sex marriage; in 2015, same-sex marriage was legalised by the Supreme Court across the USA, in the context of the “Bathroom Bill” crisis surrounding transgender rights; in 2015 same-sex marriage became legal in the Republic of Ireland, the first in the world by public referendum; in 2016 the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa backtracked on its openness towards non-heterosexual members; in the beginning of 2017 Chechnya

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<sup>3</sup> On the assumption that whatever “truths” may exist about the unmediated “brute” body are reliably misidentified or overextended in attempts at creating categories of embodiment, such as “race” or “sex”.

<sup>4</sup> For instance: for slave owners, black bodies are different from the humanity of white bodies and can therefore be treated as slaves; for abolitionists, the same black bodies are the same as the humanity of white bodies and should be granted the same freedoms. These different treatments stem from different contextual reasons *about the same bodies*.

<sup>5</sup> That is, that they cannot be *contradicted*.

<sup>6</sup> Social constructionism and essentialism are very much opposing views, and so it may seem a contradiction to suggest the same critique of both. My point is not to assume that they are the same, but to point out that *any* generalised proposition along the lines of “type of person X exists, and all types of people X have property Y”, if maintained dogmatically and universalised (as a description that applies in all places at all times) is problematic.

began a roundup persecution of non-heterosexuals, in July 2017 Scotland announced the introduction of gender neutral bathrooms in its schools, and on 26 July Donald Trump announced a ban on transgender persons in the United States military. Discussions surrounding embodiment, in these cases sexual identity, are fraught with conflict and inspire great social change, and discussions about *post-embodiment*, such as post-race, transhumanism, or post-humanism, are even more controversial, especially in post-conflict post-colonial transition societies such as South Africa which has a history of oppression and liberation, both premised precisely on the (mis)representation and subsequent (mis)use of embodiment.<sup>7</sup> Today one need only open a newspaper to see evidence of this anxiety in everything from #RhodesMustFall and #ScienceMustFall, to the refugee influx and xenophobia in Europe. Specific to the discipline of philosophy, this is evidenced in the controversy over a recent article comparing transgenderism with transracialism (Tuvel, 2017), and the upheaval within the Philosophical Society of South Africa in 2017 over the question of which race has the epistemic and moral authority to speak about race (Winkler, 2017).

The list is diverse and long, but what these instances all have in common, I would like to suggest, is a logic that identifies embodiment first as a supposedly immutable or at least enduring fact and then acts upon it morally/socially/politically, using sameness/difference as a measure of justice based on the initially identified “fact” of embodiment. Maré (2014:28), drawing on Appiah’s term “racialism”, refers to these two stages in the context of race as “racialisation” and “racism”. The first stage in this “ideology of embodiment”<sup>8</sup> is a metaphysical or ontological description (and implicit acceptance) of the *existence* of human types; the second stage is a cultural prescription of how those types ought to *relate* to one another and what they are entitled to within a structure, such as a nation. On this view, one can be a racist without being a racialist; but one cannot be a racist without being a racialist. One can firmly believe in the *existence* of races as “natural” types, but believe that they should be treated equally *without* moral differentiation. *Racialism, then, is always and necessarily the latent foundation for racism.* We can translate this into the language of sexed embodiment as “sexualism” or “sexualisation” in the first stage, and “sexism” in the second. The product of these two stages is a typology of human beings, coherently defined on their own as elements in a particular social *pattern*, and coherently organised among other types according to normative prescriptions, such as the law. In Butler’s language, “[o]ntology is, thus, not a foundation, but a normative injunction that operates insidiously by installing itself into political discourse as its necessary ground” (2007:203). Put differently, the assumption that there *are* types (racialism/sexualism), or the *ontological* assumption about the existence of certain categories of being, provides the foundation for a “normative injunction” that discriminates on the basis of these types (racism/sexism). Indeed, Butler seems to suggest here that the initial ontological assumption is, in fact, *not* neutral, but normatively charged from the outset. Umberto Eco, writing on the production of (“infinite”) lists and typologies, makes a similar remark:

A semantic representation by essence presupposes as a background a tree of the genealogical type, a series of embedded classes and subclasses so that the creation of the supporting structure precedes the identification of individuals, genera and species, and all of them can obtain an identity solely thanks to that structure (2012:231).

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<sup>7</sup> It is possible to view anxieties surrounding *post-embodiment* as symptoms of privilege. For example, in reaction to patriarchal oppression on the basis of the *same*, the position of *difference* feminism does indeed offer some respite and helps liberate the female body from descriptions and prescriptions set by the male subject. This is not only true, but useful. Yet the attempt to cement and defend difference feminism and resist responses and alternatives that propose moving *beyond* sameness and difference, “male” and “female”, or the assumption of “sex” existing at all, likely betrays the presence of a clearly-sexed, cisgender, heterosexual female subject who *benefits* from difference feminism in much the same way that the attempt to defend patriarchy betrays the presence of clearly-sexed, cisgender, heterosexual *male* subject limited by those “embodied” horizons epistemically, and benefitting from those physical markers socially (accessing certain privileges by virtue of *being* a man).

<sup>8</sup> My own phrase. It is worth noting that when I use “ideology” I do not mean something like “problematic hegemony”. Rather, I intend to use “ideology” in a neutral sense to mean “system of ideas”, which may of course turn out to be exclusionary and hegemonic, or not.

Eco's point, and mine, is that the identification of even ostensibly neutral or natural types, such as sex or race, depends upon the existence of a *prior vocabulary*, and such a vocabulary is always, by definition, a contingent and fallible project. Concepts do not spring from things-themselves, fully formed and armoured like Athena from Zeus' head. Concepts are cobbled together in order to draw a circle around a particular experience and express subjective beliefs about that experience; and moreover, they only acquire meaning when embedded into a vocabulary that recognises them.

Drawing on the observations above, I would like to suggest as the background assumption of this thesis that the logic of embodiment functions in a certain way. The logic of embodiment functions by attempting to represent reality (the body) with a particular identity (such as "male" or "black") that is always either the same as or different from others, so as to *distribute* that identity and its rights to persons according to whether they are "x" or "not-x". Whether this identity is given in essentialist or social constructionist language does not have much effect once it is encoded within the law. The diagram below (Diagram 1) offers a simple summary of this view, with some examples. This forms the basis of my initial background response to the question of embodiment, and the ethics of representation.

Diagram 1:

| <b>INTERNAL: the mechanism of ideological development</b>   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>First stage</b>  | <b>Second stage</b>   | <b>Third stage</b>   |
| <b>Universalised Descriptive (is)</b><br>Person (already identified as potential actor)                     | <b>+ Normative (ought)</b><br>+ script  | <b>= Hegemonic typology</b><br>= performance   |
| Self/Other is established as 1. existing and 2. universalised into types that are same/diff for all persons | Descriptive (is) taken as morally significant marker of identity and subjectivity, and therefore treatment (ought)                  | Universalised types (ises) structured into patterned, coherent system of sameness and difference codified in culture, law (oughts)<br><br>Tracks of original descriptive assumption are erased |
| <b>Examples:</b>  |   |  |
| <b>Racialism/racialisation</b><br>"Racialised bodies exist"   | <b>+ racism</b><br>"These <i>ought</i> to be treated in particular ways as morally significant"                                     | <b>= colonialism/segregation</b><br>"Public spaces must be segregated"   |
| Racialism/racialisation   | + racism  | = xenophobia   |
| <b>Sexualism/sexualisation</b><br>"Your <i>body</i> is sexed <i>male</i> , or <i>female</i> "               | <b>+ sexism</b><br>"Your <i>behaviour</i> should accordingly be gendered <i>masculine</i> or <i>feminine</i> in relation to others" | <b>= hetero-patriarchy</b><br>"There exists a relation of desire between M and F that orders society, with no blending"  |
| Sexualism/sexualisation   | + sexism  | = homo/transphobia   |

Bearing in mind Maré's comments earlier, Diagram 1 above illustrates what I conjecture to be the three-stage development involved in the creation of any theory of embodiment. The first stage involves the descriptive *identification* of "types" according to properties, usually physical markers such as skin colour or sex. The second stage applies a normative prescription to the identified types by selecting those physical features *as morally significant*, and introducing a *relation* between subjects on the basis of that feature; such as racial segregation. The third stage refers to the normalisation of the descriptive and normative typology, usually when codified into law. Typically such a "third stage product" becomes hegemonic insofar as it conceals its own origin (the arbitrary selection of physical features) beneath a well-established social order that considers the physical features in question, and the moral treatment of them, as *naturally ordained*, rather than socially constructed. This three stage process covers the "internal" workings of a theory of embodiment.

But what the list of earlier observations suggested to me was not merely the contingency of embodiment and the *internal* mechanism of appeals to embodiment, outlined above, but also the *external* way the logic of embodiment manifests as a "third stage product" which then plays out dialectically in society in competition with other logics of embodiment (such as patriarchy and feminism, or Jim Crow and Civil Rights). This is my second suggestion regarding the logic of embodiment, outlined in Diagram 2 below:

Diagram 2:

| EXTERNAL: the dialectic role of third stage ideological products in society |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| Examples:   | Function:                                    |   |  |
|   | "x"  | "Not-x"   | Post "x and not-x"   |
| Generic   | Hegemonic typology<br>"same"<br>binary/unity | Hegemonic typology<br>"different"<br>duality        | Erasure of typology<br>Post-"same vs diff"<br>multiplicity |
| Civil Rights  | Jim Crow<br>"White"<br>"Same"                | Black Power/Consciousness<br>"Black"<br>"Different" | Integration<br>Post-race                                   |
| Sex   | Patriarchy<br>"Man"<br>"Same"                | Difference feminism<br>"Woman"<br>"Different"       | Third-Wave<br>"Queer"<br>Post same vs diff                 |
| Homosexuality   | Straight denial<br>"Heterosexual"<br>"Same"  | Queer Pride<br>"Homosexual"<br>"Different"          | "Love is Love"<br>"Anything goes"<br>Post same vs diff     |

The legalisation of same-sex marriage and the desegregation of races seem to me the most exemplary instances here. These examples are generally considered to constitute both a more accurate description of embodiment (non-heterosexual desire is not a mental illness, for instance) *as well* as moral progress.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> I am running on the assumption here that developments such as racial desegregation, universal suffrage, and same-sex marriage are in fact morally desirable and constitute moral progress in the face of historical discrimination on the basis of embodiment, and that the reader will presumably agree with this. Of course there exist non-conservative arguments against these. For instance, several queer authors in the collection *Against Equality: Queer Revolution not Mere Inclusion* (Conrad, 2014) make the argument that same-sex marriage is undesirable not because homosexuals are undeserving, but because the notion of marriage itself is outdated and restrictive. Similar arguments are made against military inclusion. Although I consider such critiques potentially useful, I will not entertain them here as they represent a radical utopian order of thinking

Yet, and this seems to me to be the crux, they say *as little about embodiment as possible*. Consider again Diagram 2 above. After going through racialism and racism, and entering society as “x”, the third stage product “segregation” (or take heteronormativity as a sexed parallel), it quickly (and rightly) receives resistance from “not-x”, that is, an entirely opposing view of embodiment, such as Black Power. Here then we have two typologies or “logics of embodiment” which have both gone through first stage universalised descriptions and second stage normative prescriptions, to provide conflicting accounts of embodied identity that *assume* from the outset the actual, material existence of a stable and *accurately represented* human body beneath their separate ideologies. Both rely on the sameness/difference duality, whether in essentialist terms or not. Both ideologies expend energy and time maintaining, enforcing, and communicating their particular coherent description of embodiment, and society oscillates increasingly between the two views, causing massive wastages such as riots and crackdowns. Finally, both are dissolved into a third ideology that rejects the basic premises of each and assumes a minimal description of human embodiment; it is post-(x and not-x) and essentially states: “that you are black or white should make no difference since you are both the same in being human”. Hence, integration, or same-sex marriage, or universal suffrage, or ramp access to a building.<sup>10</sup> Importantly, this “sameness” is not the sameness of patriarchy which, for example, assumes women are either inferior versions of men or do not need care during pregnancy, since this “sameness” does not reduce subjectivity to one pole (for example, the male or white universal).

This, then, is the background motivation and approach to the logic of embodiment I have adopted in claiming that embodied identities constitute a problematic attempt at over-extending representations onto an inherently unstable reality. In exploring the ethics of embodiment as an appeal to either sameness or difference or both, I will implicitly be considering such appeals as functioning according to the internal logic in Diagram 1, and as either following or resisting the external dialectic in Diagram 2. These are my starting axioms on embodiment, and I will be investigating their validity by applying them to a specific example of embodiment to be outlined shortly below. Summarised: I shall take as suspicious the attempts of theories to *generalise* embodied identities under a particular description as either coherently same or different (first stage, Diagram 1), as well as the move to introduce these described types into a normative pattern of relations (second-order, Diagram 1). I shall then take it that the products of such descriptions and prescriptions enter society as hegemonic typologies in social practices, but that they can always be contested by an opposing view (“x” and “not-x” in Diagram 2) which is based on a more or less reversed view of the *same body*, no less, and that the progress towards a more accurate and morally acceptable description of embodiment comes from a third view, being a negation of *both* contrasting views, with a minimal, negative, and non-specific definition of embodiment. This may very broadly be described as a quasi-Hegelian dialectic, although I will not be drawing on Hegel in this thesis, and technically the third view in my dialectic is not a synthesis but perhaps a “meta-synthesis” that negates both rather than assimilating them. Out of this background view, which this thesis seeks to elaborate, we can perhaps develop a heuristic template to aid in the easy identification of problematic reasoning about essentialism, embodiment, identity, and difference. This, if it could realistically be done at all, would certainly be useful given the continued tension in South African (and indeed global) discourse surrounding embodied identity, such as race relations.

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that is incompatible with small, practically attainable changes within the current cultural order. For the purposes of my argument in this thesis, I will therefore not focus on such radical alternatives, and will instead assume that the aforementioned developments constitute moral progress insofar as they extend the rights of dignity, self-determination, and equal participation to more individuals.

<sup>10</sup> It may be objected that, in the case of wheelchair access for example, it is a *difference* in embodiment that is behind the move to greater inclusion. But this is to misidentify the goal. The reason for constructing ramp access, is after all, because we believe those in wheelchairs are entitled *to the same facilities and services*. Any difference in embodiment here is incidental; which is *not* to say *aberrant* or *not* important for whatever identity people may choose for themselves. It *is* to say that whether we are black, gay, or paraplegic makes no difference to *what* we are entitled to, and whether we *should* have access to marriage, maternity/paternity leave, or public facilities.

In summary, my aim in analysing appeals to embodiment (using sexed embodiment as an example) is not primarily to make claims about the *content* or lived phenomenological experience of embodiment (such as “having external genitalia has no effect/a large effect on men’s movement and posture), or to make comparative claims about ostensibly different types of embodiment (such as “having dark skin induces a different relation with the environment than having breasts”), but rather to problematize the *logic* or conceptual validity of selecting arbitrary anatomical markers as allegedly stable and ethically useful markers of an individual’s identity, generalising that feature so as to reduce their identity to a function of it, and generalising this pattern across many individuals to form an ordered typology of human “sets” with clear properties, such as “man” and “woman”, or “black” and “white”.

In doing so, I will assume that the problematic *act* of identification follows roughly three stages, as outlined in Diagram 1. The resulting *product* of identification, a highly descriptive and prescriptive hegemony we are socially-conditioned into accepting at an early age, enters society in a dance of dialectic with opposing products as outlined in Diagram 2, such as slavery and emancipation, segregation/apartheid and civil rights, patriarchy and feminism, difference feminism and queer feminism, heterosexual marriage and same-sex marriage, until both collapse into a *minimal* identification that, on the basis of describing and prescribing very little, allows a *maximum* (or at least enlarged) distribution of goods and rights. In doing so, the resulting minimal state no longer appeals in any strong sense to *generalizable* traits such as “men are always X” or “black people are always Y”. To use the example again, the minimally-descriptive and maximally-permissive result looks something like: “*all* people can marry” or “*all* people should be able to physically access buildings”.

Having introduced the topic and the background assumptions informing my approach, let us meet the thinker whose thought we will take under consideration, having narrowed embodiment down to “sex”. In addressing the topic of human corporeal embodiment, I plan to take as an exemplar the theory of sexually dual embodiment developed in the work of French psychoanalyst, linguist, and philosopher Luce Irigaray. The choice of Irigaray is not arbitrary. Of the three waves of feminism, Irigaray is arguably the most prominent theorist of second wave (difference) feminism, although she has received less mainstream attention than other thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir (end of first wave/equality into second) or Judith Butler (third wave and later). Writing her best-known works in the 1970s and 1980s,<sup>11</sup> her work is historically and thematically situated in the context of responding to both traditional patriarchy (the *de facto* Western tradition until the rise of feminism at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and first wave feminism; both, Irigaray contends, commit the same error of reducing human subjectivity to only one pole, that of the masculine subject, rather than acknowledging the natural subjective duality between the male and female sexes. The result, even in the appeal to neutral equality or “universality” within equality feminism, has been a denial of feminine specificities and the absence of these in cultural and legal representations, causing the Western tradition to be based upon a *lack*. Irigaray develops this idea of the *lack* into a substantial critique in her early work, and takes this lack or denial of subjective feminine space as the basis for a solution that *enforces* space between subjects,<sup>12</sup> creating two equal subjectivities.<sup>13</sup> Her work in this regard could thus be called a study in meontology or the *not*. We will deal extensively with Irigaray’s critical diagnosis in Chapter 1; an explanatory chapter outline will be given shortly hereunder, before commencing with Part 1 and Chapter 1. In response to the regression to masculine uniformity, Irigaray imagines a society in her later work where subjectivity is *doubled* between two (and only two) subjects – man and woman – maintained in a non-hierarchical, horizontal relationship with the specific gendered needs of each, such as pregnancy, enshrined in the law and equally represented in culture. These two subjects are also given various sex-specific attributes in Irigaray’s solution, *not* merely restricted to obvious examples such as pregnancy or the ability to grow facial hair. Irigaray’s solution to the patriarchal oppression of the female subject will be covered in Chapter 2. For

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<sup>11</sup> Such as *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974), *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977), and *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1984).

<sup>12</sup> As we will see, for Irigaray the difference, or negative, between differently sexed subjects is both insuperable, and desirable for the sake of maintaining a (heterosexual) couple in which both subjects *must* be differently sexed.

<sup>13</sup> I will take up a similar idea relating to such an “ethics of space” in critiquing Irigaray in Part 2.

her suggestions that the prime condition of subjectivity is sex (over, say, race), that this sexed subjectivity is insurmountably split between men and women (and not between anyone else, such as transgender persons), and that the recognition of this requires an overhaul of language, science, rationality, and culture, Irigaray has been the source of much criticism and inspiration. Alison Stone, in her book *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference*, finds a workable philosophy of nature and human ontology in Irigaray's sexed cosmology. Other accounts of sexed embodiment, such as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, problematize the possibility of appealing to necessarily gendered human types. An evaluation of Irigaray's system, presenting mainly my own independent criticism, will be taken up in Chapter 3.

Irigaray is important given our choice of topic, since her work (especially her later, constructive work) represents a good example of a case for embodied identity, in which material features of the body are identified, selected, grouped together, and presented in a unified *representation* as either "male" or "female", where being male or female is furthermore taken as the cause of a masculine or feminine *subjectivity* closely tied to those *bodily* roots. Her theory gives us a logic of embodiment that presupposes a same/different dichotomy and espouses strong or "thick" representations (representations with positive content, descriptive or prescriptive, as opposed to minimal or negative content) as a means of representing reality. Harking back to the very first points raised at the beginning of this introduction, Irigaray's theory thus gives us cause to ask whether her descriptions might overextend their limits into the insuperable gap between representation and reality by assuming knowledge of not only the existence of two, and only two sexuate subjects, but also the content of their experience as necessarily sexed in particular ways. Since these subjects are further codified into a specific social pattern in Irigaray's ideal society, a pattern that maintains a dual male-female subjectivity, it also raises the question of whether her typology, as a third stage product consisting of descriptions (sexualisation) and prescriptions (sexism),<sup>14</sup> stalls the process of the ideological dialectic I hypothesise to be behind more accurate and morally permissible descriptions.<sup>15</sup>

What I would like to propose in this thesis is that Irigaray, and more specifically the *later* Irigaray, halts this dialectic process without sufficient reason. She disrupts the denial of sexual difference and the hegemony of the male universal with the feminine, and rightly so; yet she does not recognise that this very logic requires a further disruption of her own new male-female hegemony by that which is neither male nor female, ambiguously sexed, or non-sexed. Put again for ease of understanding in quasi-Hegelian terms, Irigaray uses the critical distance (difference) offered by her own oppressed, female embodiment as an antithesis to disrupt the reigning male thesis, yet she does not fully acknowledge that the new synthesis of this rethought union is but another thesis to be disrupted by a further antithesis supplied outside her thought by a different set of embodied horizons, such as the queer or even post-human perspective. In halting what I hypothesise to be a pattern of moral progress, Irigaray attempts to stabilise and maintain an admittedly improved yet still incomplete set of representations (the new synthesis, or her "ethics of sexual difference") over an inherently unstable reality which contains elements that are not merely sexually dual, but sexually blended and in some cases, entirely asexual, problematizing her claim that any and all human questions must be thought in terms which are not only sexed, but doubly sexed (between men and women). By interrupting this process through the creation of a revised set of ontological descriptions and subsequent ethical prescriptions in which "men are men" and "women are women", Irigaray establishes a new foundation that, in some but not all respects, is unstable. The attempt to maintain this system against the grain (or, to maintain questionable representations against reality) causes tensions that fracture her theory, causing notable empirical, epistemic, and ethical issues to arise.

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<sup>14</sup> Recall Diagram 1.

<sup>15</sup> Recall Diagram 2.

In other words, I would like to explore the ways in which Irigaray's theory of sexed embodiment (or indeed any "strong" theory of embodiment) attempts to appropriate the necessary *disjuncture between representation and reality* by describing a human body and human experience that is always in excess of such attempts at representation, and the way such over-representations result in the *misrepresentation* and exclusion of those whose embodiment is not recognised under the new description. It is this disjuncture or *space* between representation and reality, the essential and constructed, the symbolic and real, the word and referent, the lived experience and semiotic codification, the same and different, anticipated in our selection of opening quotes in the introduction, that Bergoffen (2012:108-109) situates at the centre of ethics and human rights discourse when she suggests that appeals to human dignity in the face of injustice require us to paradoxically articulate "a linguistic response to the unspeakable [...] forces that assault us". By this, Bergoffen seems to suggest, again, that there is a representational inadequacy in expressing *what* it is that harms us, and how we are to devise a conceptualised response to it (recall, the disjuncture between *representation* and *reality*, and the injustice of *misrepresenting* the body). Irigaray herself refers to this disjuncture as "a flaw in the relation between the state of nature and civil identity" (2000a:46), suggesting an incompatibility (flaw, not merely misrepresentation) between current systems of representation and the bodies within it; specifically, the female body and the lack of terms for its expression in the patriarchal order. Writing of homophobia, Sullivan points out that:

[t]here is, in short, a space within any oppressive social structure where human beings can operate from their own will [...] its resilience suggests the existence of a human individual separate and independent from the culture in which he operates [...] between the gesture and the space, there is the possibility for human freedom (1996:73).

This, along with the preceding notion of a *disjuncture* between body and representation, or self and identification, ties in with my assumption of an "unmediated body". The fact that the body *can* be misrepresented at all, and that we *can* resist unjust prescriptions, implies that there does in fact exist a body *beneath* those prescriptions with at least a bare minimum set of properties *outside* conceptualisation, hence their misrepresentation or denial in the first place. Lastly, writing together, Butler, Laclau, and Žižek make a similar point and remind us that:

new social movements often rely on identity-claims, but 'identity' itself is never fully constituted; in fact, since identification is not reducible to identity, it is important to consider the incommensurability or gap between them. [...] No social movement can, in fact, enjoy its status as an open-ended, democratic political articulation without presuming and operationalizing the negativity at the heart of identity (2000:1-2).

Our attention is drawn here, again, to not only the difference between identity (especially self-determined identity) and the act of identification (especially socially-ordained identities),<sup>16</sup> but also to the importance of a *negative*, or horizon of difference that can never be apprehended, which I would like to suggest is parallel to what I have called the disjuncture between representation and reality, insofar as both describe a disruptive force that resists identification. The mysterious and perhaps unknowable "reality" of the body and its subjective experience, firmly and necessarily on *the other side* of the possibility of representation, represents the space for as-yet *unmediated* and *unrepresentable* facts of human experience to emerge, and is therefore the source of ethical outrage and resistance at misrepresentation under a typology of descriptions and prescriptions. Indeed, could we not suggest that all injustices throughout history have been the result of a *misrepresentation* of reality? This points to the possibility that injustice boils down to nothing more than a statement about reality being false, which returns us to Diagram 1 and the first step in ideological development: a first stage universalised description of the human body, which, as a *description*, can of course be false so long as it attempts to *universalise* the attribution of a property, such as skin colour. This leads us to two insights, if our hypothesis is true: firstly, that any theory with an empirically false starting premise will not only require *empirical* adjustment later on in order to account for anomalies in its descriptions and predictions, but it

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<sup>16</sup> And of course, regardless of "who" does the identifying, the act of creating an identity is necessarily limited since no single concept or category, or even list of categories, can fully capture the various dimensions of one person's body or experience, and will therefore fall short of being a comprehensive "identity" for that person.

will also lead to an *ethical* failure if its descriptions are applied to human subjects; and secondly, that since it is commonly accepted that human subjectivity cannot be exhaustively described, any attempt to produce a *positive*, specific, and generalizable account of human subjectivity (or of differentiated *types* of subjects) will necessarily start from incomplete or inaccurate premises and cause an ethical dilemma further down the line.

Since all this pivots on the disjuncture between representation and reality, I am also interested in locating (or at least, reframing) that elusive space of apodictically-experienced human reality that is the source of resistance already discussed above (the disjuncture between reality and representation); in other words, I am interested in finding between the cracks of symbolisation, if anything, the minimum necessary and sufficient source of that which we call “human”, that which continues to drive our descriptions of personhood towards greater syntheses of inclusion. I do not make any claim here towards a truly final definition of “humanity” and I acknowledge that perhaps the power of this disjuncture lies not in some “essential” source but precisely in its contingency (its shifting meaning) as the arbitrary (being selectively identified by a fallible human language) product of the relationship between description and indescribable experience. Either way, I hope to pursue a new metaphor for basic personhood and humanity towards the end of this thesis.

Throughout this thesis, we will be talking about sexual embodiment as synonymous and interchangeable with other forms of embodiment, such as race. Of course, this is a highly contentious assumption and could be used to unseat the whole argument, since our aim is simply to discuss sexual embodiment *as an example* and draw conclusions for embodiment *in general*, and not just in reference to Irigaray’s own view. Suffice it to say the following in response: my claim here is not necessarily that the lived experience of different embodiments is the same, but rather that there lies a problem in our *beliefs about* embodiment, the common logic underlying those beliefs, and the way this logic manifests first as a descriptive typology of bodily types and subsequently as a normative hierarchy of treatment. I will thus not be arguing against the value of *embodiment itself* by rejecting its materiality or its history in social struggles. Similarly, in arguing against typologies of *difference* I will not be arguing for a simplistic return to sameness, since sameness is simply another limited typology. An argument against difference is not an argument for sameness. Nor, again, will I be arguing that all forms of embodiment are materially equivalent. My aim is simply to explore the ways in which the common logic of identifying, framing, and utilising embodiment might necessarily result in exclusionary practices on the basis of maintaining a misrepresentation against the grain of reality.

## 0.2. METHOD: STRUCTURE AND APPROACH

[Philosophical] discourse sets forth the law for all others, inasmuch as it constitutes the discourse on discourse (Irigaray, 1985b:74).

Philosophy has three parts, physics, ethics, and dialectic or logic. Physics is the part concerned with the universe and all that it contains; ethics is that concerned with life and all that has to do with us; while the processes of reasoning employed by both form the province of dialectic (Diogenes Laertius, 1972:19).

Ancient philosophy was divided into three sciences: *physics*, *ethics*, and *logic*. This division fits the nature of the subject perfectly, and there is no need to improve on it (Kant, 2005:55).

I have demarcated the topic, main interlocutor, and background assumptions. It is now worth turning to how I will structure the material, and which method I will use in approaching it. Firstly, I shall define philosophy for the purposes of this thesis as having three main branches, which I will call the empirical, epistemological, and ethical. These three map very broadly over the three standard branches: metaphysics/ontology, epistemology/logic, and axiology/ethics/aesthetics; the world, the way we think about our representations of the world, and lastly the value of our experience as human beings. More specifically, I will use “empirical” in a broad sense as an investigation of the properties of reality; that is, which objects exist, what their properties are, and how they stand in relation to other objects – thus, the related fields of metaphysics and ontology, as *descriptive*. Our methodological position in approaching the empirically delineated aspects of the material will be a roughly positivist one. Without regressing into scientism, naïve realism, or polemic appeals to the authority of “facts”, we will take in good faith recent consensus in the scientific community (see section 3.1. Empirical Facts) on the non/existence of sex and race. We will also treat appeals to essentialism and natural types with suspicion and adopt an eliminativist, social constructionist position. “Epistemology” will be taken here to refer not only to the theory of knowledge, but also to the nature and structure of knowledge as *descriptively* encoded in a system; hence general questions about the way ideas hang together in a system, such as questions surrounding language, coherence, validity, truth, and logical fallacies. “Ethics” will be here taken as the study not of objects (as in the empirical and epistemological sections), but of conscious subjects in relation to one another, how their existential, social, political, and moral ties do and should function, *prescriptively* rather than descriptively as in the previous two branches. Accordingly, I will organise and introduce Irigaray’s material along these three lines, and will pursue an analysis thereafter using the same three-pronged fork. This three-part division will be repeated throughout the thesis for the sake of consistency, and to ensure that all areas of analysis supplied under philosophy are covered.

This explains the *structure* of the work to follow. The critical *method* I will apply to the material thus arranged will consist of the following three strands of argument: Firstly, a general critique across all three areas, empirical, epistemic, and ethical, of whatever standard issues may arise, such as factual inaccuracies or logical fallacies. Secondly, the related notions of “space” and “coherence”, deriving from Irigaray’s own investigation of patriarchy, will be applied to her work to see if they might reveal problems similar to those she identifies in the Western tradition. Thirdly, the notion that ideology potentially misrepresents the body when using *universalised* descriptions and prescriptions will be explored with regards to Irigaray’s own solution to patriarchy. This plan will be made clearer with a brief chapter outline:

Chapters 1 and 2 will present a largely sympathetic exposition of Irigaray’s work. In Chapter 1, we will begin by following Irigaray’s *own* reading of the Western tradition, from Plato to Freud, and the particular logic of embodiment she identifies as the underlying mechanism of patriarchy. In her view, the systematic writing-out of the feminine has created a *lack or negated space* that is coherently overwritten with a male symbolic order. Following Irigaray’s historical diagnosis will necessitate a romp through the history of philosophy; or as she puts it, “having a fling with the philosopher[s]” (1985b:151). In section 1.1., under the “empirical” branch, we will follow her reading of Western metaphysics as a metaphysics of solids and mechanics. In 1.2., under the “epistemic” branch, we will explore the patriarchal logic of self-identity and self-perpetuation, called the logic-of-the-one. In 1.3., under the “ethical” branch, Irigaray will show us the ways in which the patriarchal metaphysics and logic results in a social order

limited to only one kind of subjectivity, the *male* subjectivity, and therefore to *sameness*, which we will see Irigaray oppose with radical *difference* in Chapter 2. The supposed opposition between sameness and difference which fundamentally underpins Irigaray's reading of and solution to the patriarchal tradition (by appealing to difference as a solution to masculine sameness) is important here since Part 2 will challenge this opposition, and therefore Irigaray's own solution. All three sections within Chapter 1 will show that patriarchy operates according to a *lack* or *denial* of space, bodily and ethical, between subjects by reducing them to the same.

Chapter 2 of Part 1 will introduce Irigaray's solution to her diagnosis in the previous chapter. Section 2.1. will introduce the empirics of Irigaray's "metaphysics of fluids" by exploring her definition of a processual cosmology and the sexually dual subjects – men and women – produced within that cosmology. Her essentialist approach – assuming the existence of sexed types, and two and only two types – is especially important since it will provide the material for much of the critique to follow in Part 2. Section 2.2., the epistemological section, will articulate her views of a language and rationality still to come, and section 2.3. will expound her ethical alternative to patriarchy in the form of the "ontological negative" – an insuperable *space* or negative between subjects that ensures reciprocity and communication by providing a fertile ground between them that cannot be subsumed under the identity of one subject only. Irigaray's ontological negative, as a *sexed* negative between sexually *different* subjects that attempts to situate ethics *only* between cisgender men and women in heterosexual relationships, will also provide important material for critique in Part 2. In concluding Chapter 2, we will carry over both Irigaray's notion of space as central to ethics, and an awareness of the covert functioning of the logic-of-the-one.

Beginning with Chapter 3, Part 2 will initiate the critical analysis of Irigaray after the exposition of Part 1. The impetus for this critical turn stems from an understanding of Irigaray's solution as both heavily cisgender-heteronormative and essentialist insofar as it retains the male patriarchal subject and merely pairs this subject with an equally essentialist female, without questioning the appeal to "sex" or bodily types in the first place as an arbitrary and limited act of identification and ultimately exclusion (excluding among others intersex and transgender individuals). This descriptive (essentialist) and prescriptive (heteronormative) bias in Irigaray's work arises mainly out of her insistence that there *exist* sexual types, only *two* such types, and that they are necessarily *the same or different* (male/female) in relation to each other all the time. This essentialist same/different duality results from Irigaray's critique and solution in Part 1, insofar as she believes a clear "female" subject is needed to break the "sameness" of the "male" through "difference". It is this underlying assumption that is critiqued throughout Part 2. The critique will thus treat Irigaray's solution as simply another hegemonic typology utilising mediated bodies (alongside those hegemonies outlined in Diagram 1, such as patriarchy) requiring disruption with a minimally descriptive alternative utilising unmediated bodies (following the dialectic outlined in Diagram 2). Beginning the critique, section 3.1. of Chapter 3 will provide a presentation of the empirical data on the prevalence of non-heterosexuality and the question of "separate" male and female brains. Section 3.2. will examine the logical validity of her system, with reference to her concept of space and the notion of ordering space into coherent patterns. It will also consider the conceptual validity of sameness/difference as a supposed binary, and the way in which Irigaray's solution, by its own logic, requires disruption by a new solution that assumes the existence of more than two sexes. In rejecting the sameness/difference dichotomy (and therefore in rejecting Irigaray's solution of sexual "difference" in opposition to patriarchal "sameness"), the concept of "multiplicity" as a negatively non-specific (rather than positively descriptive) means of describing unmediated bodies will be introduced. Section 3.3. will consider the ethical consequences of Irigaray's system of difference. It will begin with an overview of her comments on homosexuality, before again picking up the concept of space to explore the ways in which her male/female duality might suppress the space for a queer body. Lastly, the possibility that both patriarchy and Irigaray's own theory misrepresent men will be investigated.

Following the various critiques in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 will briefly sketch the possibility of an alternative minimum description of human embodiment using the concept of “vulnerability” as a starting point. Carrying over Irigaray’s warnings about the logic-of-the-one (insofar as such as logic takes a single subject, such as the male, as its ethical reference point), and her suggested solution of the ontological negative (insofar as it suggests an ethics of reciprocity using a space of unknowability), Chapter 4 will explore which possible properties can be ascribed to the human subject *without* resorting to essentialist claims and arbitrary over-descriptions (such as those in Diagram 1) based on specific physical traits (such as “sex” in Irigaray’s theory). The concept of vulnerability as a general capacity to suffer will be discussed as a possible property that does not rely on specific traits. It will be suggested that vulnerability is a possible solution compatible with Irigaray’s warnings about the logic-of-the-one, her ontological negative, the notion of multiplicity introduced in Chapter 3, and the critique of hegemonic typologies relying on mediated bodies within a same/different helix, as outlined in Diagram 1. Finally, Chapter 5 will summarise and conclude.

Before beginning Part 1 and Chapter 1 below, I would like to briefly comment on Irigaray’s style, and raise some further textual notes about the format of the thesis.

### A note on Irigaray's style

The largeness and speculative character of Irigaray's claims have always put me on edge, and I confess in advance that although I can think of no feminist who has read and reread the history of philosophy with the kind of detailed and critical attention she has, her terms tend to mime the grandiosity of the philosophical errors that she underscores (Butler, 2011:11).

And if anyone objects that the question, put this way, relies too heavily on metaphors, it is easy to reply that the question in fact impugns the privilege granted to metaphor (a quasi solid) over metonymy (which is much more closely allied to fluids). Or [...] to reply that in any event that all language is (also) metaphorical (Irigaray, 1985b:109-110).

Irigaray is a notoriously difficult writer (Deutscher, 2002:8). Her project is a continental feminist one, situated at the busy intersection of philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics, phenomenology, and ethics. The difficulty of her work is not merely to be attributed to the range of topics she aspires to analyse, but also to her style of writing. When engaging with her texts the reader is struck by a number of things: her work is filled with contradictions and paradoxes (Caldwell, 2002:31), and these present substantial first obstacles to her thought. Whitford, arguably the best-known commentator on Irigaray's work, describes Irigaray as "associative rather than systematic in her reasoning" (1991:4), Stone describes her style as "inspirational rather than precise" (2009:9), and Grosz refers to her writing as "elliptical" (1994:103). The associative nature of her reasoning, the range of traditions covered, and the fact that her use of concepts is very often a covert revision (mimesis)<sup>17</sup> of those concepts, leaves us with a vast corpus of work that does not follow an axiomatic "premise 1 + premise 2 = conclusion" structure with inferences clearly indicated, and whose language is moreover ambiguous from the outset. Her style and diction are frequently emotive and polemic to the point of interfering with the content of her message, and her work is interspersed with graphic purple passages,<sup>18</sup> heavy italicisation, capitalisation, ellipses, and dramatic exclamations (?!). This "poetic" approach, much like Nietzsche's, draws either ardent supporters or disgruntled decriers (Bordo, 2000:36). Even though it is academically reasonable to raise objections to any style that relies as much on rhetoric as argument, and although I will occasionally reference this, I will not concern myself with accounting for her style in the process of explaining and critiquing her thought. Readers unfamiliar with Irigaray should simply be aware that her aphoristic and poetic style presents a further challenge to understanding her thought, in addition to her atypical lack of traditional evidence-based premise-conclusion structure.

However, her choice of style is deliberate, and it should not necessarily be taken as a disadvantage all the time. The reasons behind Irigaray's style will be placed more fully in context below when we examine the stages of her thought. At this point, suffice it to briefly say that Irigaray considers the present linguistic system inadequate to the task of authentically describing both the female body and equal relations between two differently sexed subjects. This issue is neither limited to sex nor isolated. On Irigaray's view, the entirety of human thought, from science and ontology to culture and aesthetics, is corrupted by a one-sided logic that is both binary and hierarchical. This limited set of concepts and their negations has obscured access to certain ways of being and thinking. As Irigaray puts it, "[i]t's a matter of questioning the foundations of Western rationality and asking yourself why a syllogism is thought to be more rational than respect for nature" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:73). For these reasons Irigaray writes in a deliberately disruptive style using puns, mimesis, and apparent contradictions, in an attempt at imagining a new language and a new epistemology which is *not-yet-thought* (Whitford, 1991:5). In Irigaray's own

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<sup>17</sup> "To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it" (Irigaray, 1985b:76). See also her justification of mimesis during her doctoral defence (1985b:151). For Irigaray, mimesis provides a means of *disrupting* the traditional meaning of concepts in a particularly subversive manner: since the patriarchal language contains no concepts for the female subject *on her own terms* (as we will see in Chapter 1), Irigaray appropriates the (male) vocabulary and "mimes" or "performs" it in a way that reveals the ambiguities and shortcomings of the patriarchal logic.

<sup>18</sup> For an extreme example see the chapter "La Mysterique" in *Speculum*, with such turns of phrase as "[s]he bathes in a blood that flows over her, hot and purifying" (Irigaray, 1985a:200).

words, “[p]oetry and philosophy don’t have to be separate. When philosophy is no longer poetry, it’s often just scholarly commentary rather than thought. Personally, I’m looking for a way to write philosophy that doesn’t split abstract logic on the one hand, and poetry on the other” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:134). We will get a better sense of this style when we encounter her work in Part 1.

Further textual notes

1. Throughout the thesis, I will use both first personal singular and first person plural pronouns. When using “we” or “us”, I am not referring to myself in the double, but rather to myself and the reader.
2. I will begin each section with a generous selection of quotes. The purpose is not to covertly pad the text (or the reference list), or appeal to authority with a “laundry list”. The former is unnecessary given the final length of the thesis, and the latter, I am well aware, is a fallacy.

Rather, the purpose of these quotes is as follows:

- 2.1. Since Irigaray is the main interlocutor in this thesis, I intend the practice as a mimetic reference to her own quotational style (the chapters “On the Index of Plato’s Works: Woman” and “Une Mere de Glace” in her book *Speculum of the Other Woman*, her doctoral dissertation, are nothing but a compilation of quotes from Plato and Plotinus respectively).
- 2.2. In reference again to Irigaray, I intend it as a psychoanalytic exercise in free association, since Irigaray is a trained psychoanalyst (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:29; Irigaray, 2007:3).
- 2.3. To set up a conversation between thinkers, sometimes opposing thinkers.
- 2.4. To engage the philosophical literature at a wider level than the limits of the main text allows, and therefore to situate the relevance of this thesis within a broader context than the main argument. Related to the idea of free association, I will try throughout the text to draw my examples as broadly as possible to illustrate something of the synaesthetic web of associations the main argument seems, to me, to be related to.
- 2.5. To establish the mood and trajectory of each section by introducing a relevant idea.
- 2.6. See point 4 below: Especially regarding the exposition in Part 1, the purpose of these quotes is to find evidence in support of Irigaray’s *own* reading of the Western canon.
3. To save space, since many of the quotes used in this thesis feature italics in the original, especially those by Irigaray, I will leave out the customary disclaimer “emphasis in the original” and only append such comments when altering quotes myself. Otherwise, all quotes are faithfully reproduced. And as always, round brackets within quotes indicate use by the authors themselves, and square brackets indicate my own insertions.
4. All quotes supplied from primary texts by other canonical philosophers such as Aristotle will *not* be the same as those used by Irigaray in her own texts during her survey of Western thought. For the sake of thoroughness, I have tried to find evidence in the philosophical canon for Irigaray’s interpretation, independently of her own close readings. This is especially true for Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 1.
5. Apart from primary sources by historical thinkers such as Aristotle and Irigaray, I have otherwise attempted to use only the most recent secondary sources throughout this thesis (mostly from the 2000s and 2010s), and certainly the most recent scientific evidence on the nature of sex, in order to ensure both accuracy and relevancy.
6. I will be using “LGBT+” and “queer” relatively interchangeably throughout, insofar as both refer to “non-heterosexual, non-cisgender, or non-heteroromantic”.
7. I will also assume that the reader is at least familiar with the terms of gender theory, such as the difference between “sex” and “gender”, and the difference between “sexual orientation” and “romantic orientation”; and of course the many different types within each of those. However, it is crucial to understand that Irigaray does *not* draw a neat distinction between sex and gender, or therefore between “female” and “feminine”. Textual evidence and a discussion will be

provided in section 2.1., but it is vital to note here that these can be used without rigid distinction when describing Irigaray's own thought.

8. Of the eleven primary sources by Irigaray surveyed for this thesis,<sup>19</sup> only three are supplied with indexes. Frustratingly, her most important books, *This Sex*, *An Ethics*, and *Speculum*, are among those without indexes in their standard, and best, English translations. Consequently I have undertaken the additional project of indexing her work, at least for the purposes of this thesis. To that end, I have included an index of Irigaray's concepts and partial quotes from their appearances across her oeuvre in the Appendix (page 116). I will occasionally refer the reader to this compendium, where a larger range of references and therefore a larger range of evidence can be found, than in the main text. This is not out of a lazy avoidance of engaging and integrating Irigaray's work but rather, on the contrary, out of an attempt at thoroughness. Firstly, Irigaray's style is aphoristic, scattered, associative, and not systematic. For this reason it is likely impossible to gain an understanding of her thought by reading one or two standalone primary texts with conclusive arguments, since she does not give us that luxury. Secondly, the central point of Irigaray's argument, as we shall see below, is precisely that women have been "written out" of the Western tradition and denied a voice as rational beings on their own terms. Answering that challenge requires more than the usual approach and space of a strictly academic analysis, hence the appendix where I hope to give Irigaray space to speak beyond the standard citations within the main text. And thirdly, as a queer person reading Irigaray, I have been perturbed by the lack of attention in secondary texts to the heteronormativity in her work. Just as Irigaray has taken it upon herself to present the material of historical thinkers in order to highlight certain themes, I hope the compendium will give some insight into her own views on sexuality.<sup>20</sup>

At this point, I *strongly* recommend that readers not intimately familiar with Irigaray's own literature briefly scan the index *before* proceeding to the exposition below in Part 1, in order to gain an idea of the range of topics she covers, her views on those topics, and her idiosyncratic manner of articulation.

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<sup>19</sup> Thirteen primary sources are listed in the reference list. Two of those, however, are simply alternative translations of book chapters; thus I have left them out when speaking of "eleven" primary texts here.

<sup>20</sup> The phrases "man and woman", or "man or woman", or occasionally "only men and women/only male or female" appear on virtually every page of every book by Irigaray. This most likely goes unnoticed by a cisgender, heterosexual audience, and surely Irigaray herself. But in the shadow of those illuminating words, in every single repeated instance, one should read an eclipsed question: What if I am transgender? What if I am homosexual? What if I am intersex? What if I am asexual? In much the same way as "black and white, and only black and white" rhetoric should raise the questions: What if I am Chinese? What if I am of mixed heritage? What if I am adopted? What if I am albino?

**PART 1:**  
**EXPOSITION**

## **PART 1: EXPOSITION**

### **1. CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM: IRIGARAY'S DIAGNOSIS**

By her own account, Irigaray's work is split very broadly into two phases. The first (as found in *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *This Sex Which is Not One*) is a diagnosis and critique of patriarchy's oppressive logic and metaphysics, the second (starting with *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* and exemplified in her more recent work) is a creative reconstruction of ethical subjective and intersubjective relations as a solution to the problems identified in the first phase (Irigaray, 1995:12; Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:37,63,66-67; Stone, 2009:39; Hirsh, Olson & Brulotte, 1995:95,97). This distinction may then be briefly described as concerned firstly with the symbolic order, and secondly with the liberation of subjectivity from that order (Caldwell, 2002:23). In providing a sympathetic exposition of Irigaray's work here in Part 1 and highlighting those aspects important for the analysis in Part 2, we will follow the structure of this dual division, since it is conveniently both chronological and thematic. Additionally, we will apply the structure of our three-pronged approach to each of these phases in turn, following Irigaray in what she identifies as the main empirical, epistemological, and ethical trends in the Western tradition, before exploring her own responses to each of these three in the second phase. I should add as well that as far as this exposition goes, I aim to not only provide a brief outline of both phases of Irigaray's work, but additionally to identify and extract, as an attempt at identifying an underlying theme, a common necessary and sufficient denominator or concept that gives cohesion to her overarching method. What I hope to demonstrate beyond simply preparing the work for analysis later on, is that the notion of *space*, variously defined but always as the notion of an "interval" or intermediary for *potentiality* and communication, is covertly central to Irigaray's system, both in her initial deconstructive<sup>21</sup> phase and in her later constructive phase.<sup>22</sup> For now, let us begin by exploring the early phase of Irigaray's work.

To briefly anticipate the content of the exposition below, both Irigaray's critique of the Western intellectual tradition and her defence of embodied sexuality are (diverse) variations on a single theme. Her project is premised on the identification of a pernicious and covert *lack* or *negation* in the Western worldview, one that begins with the denial of the human body and its materiality in general, and the female body and its fluid, maternal connotations in particular (Ainley, 1997:22). Both phases of Irigaray's work aim to identify and challenge this lack by tracing its effects across the three areas where it is most manifest in the traditional worldview: the metaphysics of solid substance, the logic-of-the-one, and the social institution of patriarchy. This triad represents a comprehensive overview of the Western cosmology: firstly, a descriptive empirical metaphysics or ontology, secondly a descriptive epistemological account of reason and logic, and thirdly, a normative cultural template. Of these three, the logic-of-the-one is arguably the most important, since it represents the generalised mechanism by which all three operate.

Both the force of Irigaray's numerous diagnostic conclusions and her subsequent solution rest entirely upon her discovery of what she calls the "logic of the one" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:146), which must surely rank as her most important investigative discovery, whatever may be said of her later constructive philosophy. Following Lacan's focus<sup>23</sup> on the linguistic aspect of the symbolic order (Irigaray, 1985b:87),<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Not a reference to the "deconstruction" movement; I mean "diagnostic" here.

<sup>22</sup> Covert insofar as Irigaray herself does not explicitly use the term "space" in the sense I hope to show, and central insofar as it underpins, I will argue, both her critique of patriarchal sameness (as a suppression of both subjective and intersubjective space) and her subsequent solution (as an insuperable divide or space between subjects of different sexes). This will become clearer once we begin our exposition.

<sup>23</sup> For Lacan, entry into subjectivity and the social order begins with entry into the symbolic order; that is, into language (Pick, 2015:57), almost invariably a language created and spoken by male subjects. Drawing also on Saussure's distinction between "signifiers" and "signifieds" (between the word or symbols and its referents), and the fact that a single word can have many deferred meanings, Lacan places human desire in a similar state of deferred lack in an endless chain of reference (2015:89-90).

<sup>24</sup> "But the truth of the truth about female sexuality is restated even more rigorously when psychoanalysis takes *discourse itself* as the object of its investigations. Here, anatomy is no longer able to serve, to however limited an extent, as proof-alibi for the real difference between the sexes. The sexes are now defined only as they are determined in and through language" (Irigaray, 1985b:87).

Irigaray too acknowledges the way in which the father figure (or any authority figure) not only interrupts the Oedipal triangle by imposing his name upon the child and enforcing a “no” upon incest, but also the way in which this “no” manifests (itself) as a *symbolic* negation (Irigaray, 1985b:61; Pick, 2015:57). This symbolic negation becomes generalised as the very foundation for the entire symbolic order, whether in law, language, or mathematics, covertly establishing an epistemology of hierarchical binaries and a metaphysics of rigid, singular presence in which secondary values are always defined as the conceptual negation or physical absence of the first rather than values on their own terms; for example true/not-true, male/not-male, white/not-white, here/not-here, rational/irrational (Irigaray, 1985a:22; 1989:196). Furthermore, crucial to understanding Irigaray’s project here is not only her discovery of this universalised binary *logos*, but also the fact that all categories within this *logos* are *sexed* (male/female) in an attempt at aligning only one sex, the male, with the universal, and at sacrificing, negating, and excluding the body, language, and reasons of the other sex, the female. Thus, the central binary of male/not-male maps over all others, setting up not only a conceptual hierarchy but also a sexed *social* and *ethical* hierarchy (which manifested itself historically as patriarchy) ensuring the continuation of the logic-of-the-one in practice (Irigaray, 1994:55; Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:72; Stone, 2009:5).

Of course in a certain sense abstract binary values are purely formal; there is no prescriptive judgement attached to them, only a descriptive one. The logic-of-the-one, however, breaks this neutrality by insisting that the negated values are inferior, by setting up a systematic hierarchy which denies them a voice, presence, or definition on their own terms. This is where what has been an abstract epistemological mode of thought up to now, gains its force in practice. By *sexing* the binary epistemology of x/not-x, and universally mapping this binary onto the moral binary of superior/inferior, the logic-of-the-one is able to deny certain ways of thinking and being in their entirety. The *male* is that which has a voice, has validity, has a presence, has rationality; those concepts which are gendered masculine or aligned with the phallic traits of singularity, self-reference, and solidity, are the only concepts appropriate for rational, coherent discourse. Thus, Irigaray demonstrates how the rationality of Western metaphysics and epistemology is not only binary (favouring one value), but also sexed (favouring the male), and lastly normative as applied to all aspects of the metaphysics (establishing the single-value presence of the masculine in all categories as the dominant one). To repeat: this underlying male-good-singular/female-bad-ambiguous binary (shall we call it the ‘master signifier’?) permeates all levels of the Western conceptual vocabulary. It is the sexed, normative mechanism underlying the traditional *logos*, metaphysics, and ethics. The binary of “[s]exual difference could now be thought of as a term substituting for the thinking of the universe [...] an envelope into which Irigaray enfolds reflections on the universe, its dimensions and physics, and our capacity to think these things” (Deutscher, 2002:118). Its effects, as it maps over language, include equating women with materiality and men with abstract reason, women with irrationality and men with rationality, women with darkness and men with light, women with nature and men with culture; the pattern, I think, is obvious. In addition to the internal content of the logic-of-the-one, whether it devalues materiality or not, its very structure as a representation removed from reality (a *logos* or symbolic), suggests on what we might call a “meta” level the large scale privileging of abstract reason over bodily materiality.<sup>25</sup> This then is the problem Irigaray identifies: the tyranny of the symbolic order over corporeal embodiment,<sup>26</sup> the way in which this tyranny functions as a hierarchical binary, and the effect it has had in systematically writing the feminine out of the Western tradition. We will now begin section 1.1. Metaphysics of Solids and follow Irigaray in identifying this pattern in the philosophical literature of the Western canon.

“The philosopher is now invited to this erasure of the beginning” (Irigaray, 1985a:312).

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<sup>25</sup> This is perhaps paradoxically epitomised in the separation between symbolic phallus and material penis. I call this a paradox because appeals to the material physicality, size, responsiveness, visibility, and presence of the actual penis are central to the (arbitrary, socially mediated) construction of male culture beyond simply being appeals to an abstract phallic notion of power.

<sup>26</sup> Which is very similar to the argument I will raise against Irigaray herself much later in Part 2, insofar as her own solution to the patriarchal logic-of-the-one, the logic-of-the-two also functions as an exclusionary tool. For now, we still have yet to define the logic-of-the-one, and Irigaray’s own dual logic or logic-of-the-two in the course of this exposition.

### 1.1. METAPHYSICS OF SOLIDS (EMPIRICAL)

Whereas at the beginning of epistemology, the philosopher was still marvelling at such things as air, fire, and water, now they must be submitted to a rigorous scientific analysis so that their excessive power can be checked. They must be put in their place, within a general theory of being so as to lessen our fascination with them (Irigaray, 1985a:160).

For these notions have made me see that it is possible to attain knowledge which is very useful in life, and that unlike the speculative philosophy that is taught in the schools, it can be turned into a practice by which, knowing the power and action of fire, water, air, stars, the heavens, and all other bodies that are around us as distinctly as we know the different trades of our craftsmen, we could put them to all the uses for which they are suited and thus make ourselves as it were the masters and possessors of nature (Descartes, 2006:51).

It is the *Understanding* that sets Man above the rest of sensible Beings, and gives him all the Advantage and Dominion, which he has over them (Locke, 2008:13).

Representation comes naturally to human beings from childhood, and so does the universal pleasure in representations (Aristotle, 2013:20).

But what division is being perpetuated here between a language that is always subject to the postulates of ideality and an empirics that has forfeited all symbolisation? (Irigaray, 1985b:107).

Western logic calls for and relies on a mechanics of solids (Irigaray, 1989:199).

The self-referential phallic singularity and logic-of-the-one (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:159) with which Irigaray is concerned is not a recent phenomenon. Turning to the history of the West and Irigaray's early canonical critiques, it has its roots in the ancient Graeco-Roman world, most notably in the ethics of sexual practices and identities. Starting with the ancient Greeks, the old model of bodily sex was conceived of within a *one-sex model*: the identification of sex was not primarily based on the possession of "male" or "female" anatomy, since all bodies were regarded as inherently unstable, fluid, and feeble (Irigaray, 1993:88; Mottier, 2008:6-7). Rather, a person's sex was determined by whatever *acts* they performed, narrowly limited to sexual penetration (Mottier, 2008:5). Thus women could risk becoming too masculine, or men could risk becoming too feminine as they engaged in *acts* which either heated, cooled, depleted, or excited the various fluids of which the body was thought to be comprised. For example, the passive partner in male-male sex was, on this account, therefore considered thoroughly *feminine*, and not merely a male *acting* feminine, since the *act* was constitutive of identity, rather than the body. The instability of this fluid one-sex model gave rise to the need for the constant assertion and policing of masculinity, and initiated the devaluing of the fluid, the feminine, and the corporeal. The subsequent emergence of aggressive one-way penetrative sex by a self-identical unified penis (symbolically the phallus) set the stage for the valorising of the *one* and the hierarchy of binary values that underpin Western rationality and persist to this day in the form of patriarchy and sexism. Additionally it must be noted that this type of one-way sexuality left no room for *relationality* between equal subjects, not only because it denied the existence of two equal subjects, but also because it reduced all possible interactions between them to a single, one-way act.

Nonetheless, the notions of fluidity, change, and materiality remained important to the early Greeks, and it is useful to stress this here since, on Irigaray's reading, it represents a style of thinking that would slowly be eroded by the logic-of-the-one and replaced with a metaphysics of solids.<sup>27</sup> The Pre-Socratic philosophers, whose interest was primarily in the natural world rather than (wo)man's place in it (Ehrenberg, 2011:86), attempted to answer the questions of identity and change not by denying decay or change and conceptualising identity as self-referential presence opposed to absence (which would later become the logocentric phallus), but by emphasising rhythm and process (Stone, 2009:101). For example, we know that Thales, the first scientist-philosopher recorded in the Western tradition, held that the

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<sup>27</sup> Irigaray sometimes employs the phrase "mechanics of solids" (1985b:107), although the metaphor of "mechanics" will only become clearer once we reach the post-Renaissance revolution in science.

unifying principle of reality was water (Aristotle, 2004:13; Ehrenberg, 2011:85), and that change was due to water being animated with a soul (Diogenes Laertius, 1972:27), rather than mechanically lifeless. Anaximenes held that everything was comprised of unlimited or boundless air (Diogenes Laertius, 1972:133; Aristotle, 2004:13), and Heraclitus claimed that the *cosmos* was comprised of fire (Aristotle, 2004:13-14) which resulted in a perpetual ontological *becoming* (rather than static ontic *being*) through a continuous union of opposites (Ehrenberg, 2011:86). Heraclitus' position is especially interesting for purposes of contrast since he attempted to solve the problem of identity and change by rejecting ontic types altogether and positing *change as identity*. As Popper puts it, Heraclitus found a simple solution by claiming that "[t]here are no things that change: it is wrong to conceive the world as consisting of a collection of *things* – even of *changing things*. The world does not consist of things but of *processes*" (Popper, 2012:247). This position epitomised the Pre-Socratic stance towards the metaphysics of cosmology, one that was reluctant to partition nature into rigid, ontic categories according to an abstract *logos* and instead embraced elemental, tactile, ontological *becoming*.<sup>28</sup> The representations utilised in understanding reality by the Pre-Socratics were, in large part, imagined *in terms of the body as appreciable by the senses* and not merely to abstract reason. Importantly, in this *cosmos* filled only with becoming, negation was not possible to the extent it acquired in later thought, since negation requires classification, separation, stability, and typology. Aristotle summarises the early thought well: "The first thinkers [Pre-Socratics] assumed that the principle was bodily (for water and fire and such things are bodies), and they divided into those that thought there was a single body, and those that thought there were several, but both groups treated them as causes in the form of matter" (2004:22).

This focus on the *cosmos* and the idea that everything is constituted of diverse and changing, yet *contiguous* parts, often expressed in natural elements such as water or fire, changed with the anthropomorphic shift initiated by Socrates and Plato. Similarly, the one-sex model not restricted to anatomy and sexual identity, viewed as fluctuating between "male" and "not-male", lost its performative fluidity and became attached to bodies rather than acts. It is here that Irigaray begins her diagnostic analysis of the Western tradition. Chronologically, Irigaray starts with a reinterpretation of Plato's Cave Myth (Irigaray, 1985a:243), however since our structure here is also thematic, we will examine Plato in the following section as her rereading is more relevant to understanding the logic-of-the-one and the rejection of the maternal body than it is to understanding the metaphysics of solids. Still, as far as ontology and metaphysics go, it is worth pointing out for the sake of consistency here that Plato broke with the Pre-Socratics by introducing a radical metaphysical dualism with his well-known Realm of Forms/Ideas. Put simply, Plato claimed that the sensible material world subject to difference and flux had to be an inadequate vessel for the essence of reality; since such an essence must be universal, unchanging, and incorruptible. The material world, then, is an imperfect copy of an *ideal* world of "forms" from which all entities derive their essence. This intangible realm of perfect ideas is accessible only through the mind's use of reason, and knowledge of it constitutes knowledge of what is truly "real" (Aristotle, 2004:24-25; Diogenes Laertius, 1972:289-291; Popper, 2012:92). Plato's idealistic account, which would become enormously influential alongside Aristotle's empiricism, thus began the tradition of denying becoming, change, and materiality, and instead situating being, essence, and reason *outside* embodied corporeality; meaning that henceforth change (or becoming) would be viewed as an illusion. Let us turn our attention now to those Irigarayan rereadings subsequent to Plato that demonstrate the way in which Western metaphysics rejected the fluid and potential *dunamis*<sup>29</sup> of the Pre-Socratics and

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<sup>28</sup> Of course this does not mean all the Pre-Socratics favoured such a fluid ontology. Anaxagoras claimed that *nous* (mind) governed matter (Aristotle, 2004:15; Ehrenberg, 2011:195,300), and that this *nous* gave "order" to all matter: "All things were together; then came Mind and set them in order" (Diogenes Laertius, 1972:137). Similarly, Pythagoras believed that "that the principles of mathematical entities were the principles of all entities" (Aristotle, 2004:19).

<sup>29</sup> Also *dynamis*. Greek for "dynamism". The word refers not just to power or ability, but moreover to potential or capacity, rather than static actuality.

developed instead in the direction of mechanisation, representation, division, and solidity, epitomised eventually by Classical Mechanics during the Enlightenment.<sup>30</sup>

Plato's negational binary and occlusion of the body has predecessors in the anti-sensualist theory of Parmenides,<sup>31</sup> and more pertinently in the philosophy of Atomism, developed by Leucippus and Democritus, which coincided with the development of (Greek) mathematics and the rise of humanist thought (Ehrenberg, 2011:269). The Atomist theory not only proposed that the problem of change could be explained by appealing to tiny, indivisible parts that constitute all matter, but that there existed a fundamental duality between being and nothingness, or "atoms and the void" (Popper, 2012:102). The result was the establishment of a duality between presence and absence, fullness and emptiness, and situating that which is *real* only within that which is present and full (comprised of atoms).<sup>32</sup> Thus, for instance, "*light* may be real: there may be light atoms; it is *night* that is unreal; night is simply the absence of light" (Popper, 2012:103). What we see here is not only the origins of a particular worldview that is binary and negates one value, but also one which establishes "solid presence" as reality and thus gives normative preference to that which is *present*, solid, capable of division and analysis; in short, a strict hierarchy. To quote Aristotle again: "Leucippus, however, and his companion Democritus said that the elements were the full and the empty, and that of these the full and the solid were what is and the empty was what is not [...] and he says that these things are the causes of entities as matter" (Aristotle, 2004:17-18). This description of a binary logic that establishes a dichotomy between static, present "solidity" and emptiness, and privileges the former as the source of not only pure *existence* ("what is") but also of all forms and shapes of matter arising within existence ("entities as matter"), could very well be in Irigaray's own critically diagnostic voice, albeit without Irigaray's important insight that this logic is also sexed and normative; the equation of "female = matter" functions centrally in the establishment of a phallogocentric, patriarchal hegemony premised on this binary logic (Stone, 2009:31).

We know that Plato would take such duality to its extreme and declare even present, solid matter to be "unreal"; the essence of being is to be found in the abstract Realm of Forms. His student, Aristotle, had a slightly different account, but something of the subjection of materiality to an abstract principle remains. Reading Aristotle, Irigaray finds the extension of this tendency to mechanisation, representation, division, prediction, and solidity within his theory of actuality and potentiality governed by *telos*:

The *physis* is always already being appropriated by a *telos*. This is true of the *plant*, or even of its *flower*, 'for example'. Even so, isn't a *logos* still necessary before the genus and species of the plant can be decided? Etc. The plant may indeed conform to her own purpose, but an other has to certify this. [...] The substance of the plant, like that of any (female) being, cannot move, or move beyond, the ontological status assigned to it. [...] Matter-potency is

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<sup>30</sup> All the same, we should not be too quick in dismissing Plato. His *Timaeus* contains a description of the human body saturated with images of pores, fluids, and flesh that drew admiration from early rhetoricians not for being an accurate description of something *foul*, but rather for their *excess* (Longinus, 1991:43).

<sup>31</sup> Parmenides, who established the tradition of systematically distinguishing between reality/illusion, truth/opinion, being/seeming, claimed before Plato that all that exists is "One", accessible only to reason and not the senses, since the senses can only grasp change and decay (Ehrenberg, 2011:90). For this reason, Karl Popper calls him "anti-sensualist" (Popper, 2012:183). This anti-sensualist position would become, with the possible exception of Aristotle's empiricism, entrenched in the Western metaphysics Irigaray seeks to expose, feeding into the binary of masculine-reason-good/feminine-body-bad. (Yet even Aristotle's account ultimately gives preference to explanation and understanding over sensation. His *Metaphysics* opens with an empiricist claim but goes on to modify it: "By nature all men long to know. An indication is their delight in the senses [...] we do not think that any of the senses is wisdom, even those that are the most important forms of cognition at the level of particulars. They do not, though, give the reason for anything" (Aristotle, 2004:4-5).) As we will see later in 1.3. Historical Patriarchy and 2.3. Ontological Negative, Irigaray will attempt to redeem the notion of sensual, tactile knowledge and relationality over abstract reason or the detached "gaze".

<sup>32</sup> Absence is non-being and therefore non-truth, or in sexed Irigarayan terms in reference to the vagina: "That is to say, *no sex/organ* that can be seen in a *form* capable of founding its reality, reproducing its truth. *Nothing to be seen is equivalent to having no thing. No being and no truth*" (Irigaray, 1985a:48).

duly corseted in/by rigid categories that are laid down [...] The meanings and directions of Being are always impervious to change (Irigaray, 1985a:162-163).

Notice how Irigaray genders the plant with the feminine pronoun halfway through the quote. What Irigaray show us, on the Aristotelian (but also Platonic) understanding of matter, is that the essence of being lies outside matter in an abstract ideal; whether as a perfect, unchanging, disembodied form, or as an overseeing *telos* (Lehtinen, 2014:5). Phrased differently, representation is privileged over corporeal reality, favouring categorisation, analysis, and prediction, and, in this rigid categorisation, a metaphorical “hardening” of substance. In Plato, this writes matter as a *lack*, or imperfect space to be transcended, and in Aristotle this writes (female) matter not necessarily as a lack, but as a substance that only achieves its essence or purpose under the language of a guiding (masculine) principle.<sup>33</sup> Teleology then, which always aims toward a particular end, represents a restrictive pattern of coherence. Teleology begins with a sacrifice, foreclosure, or death of possibility, since change and ambiguity are always *limited* to a particular overarching goal, whether a Platonic form or an object’s actuality, or in Irigaray’s view, the male universal, meaning that anything (or any subject) under a teleology cannot pursue a “life of its own”. In the language of our specific interpretive frame, we can call this coherence the suppression of *conceptual space* (insofar as “space” is a concept or metaphor, but also corporeal, bodily space insofar as the teleology limits the differentiation of bodies) and therefore possibility, both by limiting the definition of the concepts at hand to a particular end, and by negating the possibility of any space for growth outside the given set of concepts. In contrast to the Pre-Socratics, for whom the essence of matter was constituted by its fluid, *rhythmic*, becoming, Plato and Aristotle link and therefore reduce being to the expression of abstract ideals. Furthermore, where rhythm does occur in Plato and Aristotle, it is redefined in strict relation to human endeavours such as dance, music, and representation (Aristotle, 2013:20; Stone, 2009:101), regimenting the natural process into discernible temporal steps of stasis and release. Importantly this metaphysical, ontological description establishes normative parameters that Irigaray reads as *sexed*; music and rhythm can “go wrong”, therefore reality must be *one* particular way:

Thus, her [the flower’s] development is subject to definitions coming from another. And if, in the unforeseeable future, she happened to unleash some nameless potency, it would not be up to her to judge whether or not this unpredictable event had occurred. She would not condemn the sudden unchecked appearance of the *physis* as a monstrosity, an aberration in the essence of plant life (Irigaray, 1985a:163).

Much later, Kant, too (echoing Isaac Newton) tells us that “[e]very change in matter has an external cause” (2004:82). The feminine, or *matter*, is thus the bodily, the material, the natural, surging up with potential between the conceptual borders of a specific masculine discourse that treats it as absent or otherwise present as an *unrepresentable* aberration. Therefore, “[w]oman, for her part, remains in unrealised potentiality – unrealised, at least, for/by herself [...] Ontological status makes her incomplete and uncompletable” (Irigaray, 1985a:165).

This tendency to cut being off from its material ground, subject that materiality to representation, establish a binary between mind and matter (and consequently between reason and unreason or corporeality), theorise matter as solid, present, and full, and “maintain a complicity of long standing between rationality and a mechanics of solids alone” (Irigaray, 1985b:107) finds extension in the development of Classical Mechanics in the Enlightenment, with the rise of the modern scientific method at the end of the Renaissance. Descartes and Kant, for instance, reinforce the dualism presented by Plato between reason and matter:

I thereby concluded that I was a *substance* whose whole *essence* or nature resides only in thinking, and which, in order to exist, has no need of place and is not dependent on any material thing (Descartes, 2006:29).

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<sup>33</sup> Rather similar to the Lacanian notion that one only becomes a subject upon entering into the (masculine) language of the symbolic order.

And although perhaps [...] I have a body, which is very closely conjoined to me, yet because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am a thinking and not an extended thing, and, on the other, a distinct idea of the body, in so far as it is only an extended and not a thinking thing, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it (Descartes, 2008:55).

In this meaning, therefore, a twofold doctrine of nature is possible, the *doctrine of the body* and the *doctrine of the mind*, where the first considers *extended* nature, the second *thinking* nature (Kant, 2004:3).

Therefore, again, “[a]s the Cartesian cogito makes apparent, a rejection of the body, *res extensa*, is the condition for man’s existence and ultimate transcendence” (Ingram, 2008:72). Knowledge takes as its reference point *reason* over the *body* enacting a somewhat paradoxical divide between knowing *about* the “matter” of something, and being also comprised *of* matter *as* a body that “knows”, yet denying this material root. Moreover, not only does this repeat the binary between reason and body/matter, but it also repeats the rejection of multiplicity and fluidity; Irigaray supplies the bridge to solidified Classical Mechanics and a rejection of the fluid:

Nonetheless, the “I” thinks. Or so he thinks. This is the “fixed point” amid the uncontrollable vertices. The “I” thinks, therefore it is. A verb, a verbal process/trial serve as premises for existence, re-create “being” just as it was about to succumb, drowning in deep water, with nothing and no one to hold on to [...] Withdrawn into a strict deprivation of all exercises of the sensibility and the imagination, the subject will observe the world like the pilot of a ship taking to the open sea where nothing determines his perspective but the limitless *nothing to be seen* (Irigaray, 1985a:184-185).

And, as if to confirm Irigaray’s diagnosis, Descartes appropriates the movement of fluids as mechanically predictable:

Finally, so that those who do not know the force of mathematical proof and are not used to distinguish true reasoning from *plausible* reasoning, should not venture to deny all this without examining it, I would like to point out to them that the movement [of the heart and blood] I have just explained follows necessarily from the mere disposition of organs that one can see with the naked eye in the heart, [...] in the same way as the movement of a clock follows from the force, position, and shape of its counterweights and wheels (Descartes, 2006:41-42).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> More recently, Klaus Theweleit has explored the same rejection of “feminine” fluidity and supposed disorder in favour of “masculine” geometrized, technized, and hardened bodies in the rise of Nazism in his two-volume *Male Fantasies*. Apart from the mechanised scientific worldview and the rejection of soft organic bodies, one can trace this general tendency towards a metaphysics of solids elsewhere in humanity’s relationship of representation and control with the physical reality around it. For instance Irigaray would no doubt agree that evidence of it can be found in the Industrial Revolution, or the attempt to subject nature to rational order that culminated in the fashionably geometrical formal gardens of the Enlightenment. Theweleit gives the interesting examples of increasingly cumbersome suits of armour in warfare (1989:202), and a ballet performed by King Henry III of France and his court (2010:315-316). The former example is useful for our purposes because it stands in opposition to the notion of inherent human vulnerability, which I offer as a solution to Irigaray’s diagnosis and general questions of embodiment in Chapter 4 below. The latter example by Theweleit is useful for elucidating Irigaray’s argument. The theme of the ballet was the domination of the enchantress Circe by the forces of reason. The dancers moved in geometrical patterns and grouped into shapes such as squares, and at the end of every dance they directed their gaze at Henry III (Jupiter). (We will briefly deal with the notion of the gaze in section 1.3.) The stage consisted of streams canalised into a fountain where desire was restrained, Theweleit notes, “to please man in his own garden” (2010:316) and irrigate the newly subdued land. A similar passage occurs in Irigaray’s *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Irigaray 1993:52). The feminine thus became a negated and sterilised commodity; mechanised production replaced organic, sensual, and bodily reproduction.

Inferior matter, and all its properties of motion, change, and potential, are figured in terms of time and space, and thus rigidified into an analysis. Importantly, this space-time analysis is *linear* (Classical Euclidean space is not curved) and thus suggests *progression* or improvement (Irigaray, 1985a:284,305) in motion towards some end, unwittingly echoing the idea of teleology. Thus, matter, space, and “[t]ime [are] cut up, over and over again, and lost in all kinds of caesuras and scansions that will be forced to toe the party line by deceptive plays of relationships” (Irigaray, 1985a:290).

In short, Irigaray shows us how the Western rationalist tradition has systematically denied that reason is *bodily* reason; or as Schmitt (2002:43) puts it: “The European conception of reason constantly and insistently denies that it is the reason of a sexual being”.<sup>35</sup> This denial of sex, the body, the ambiguous, the void, and the fluid in favour of disembodied reason, the present, the rigid, the divisible and extendable, constitutes the historical construction of the universal subject (the covertly *male* subject)<sup>36</sup> and the representation of the *cosmos* as a measurable reality with no dark corners beyond the mechanised reach of reason. This metaphysics of presence and solidity, which is built upon the negated *lack* of the body and its attributes, plugs very well into the epistemology of the logic-of-the-one, which functions according to precisely such binary negation.

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<sup>35</sup> In 2.1. Metaphysics of Fluids, we will see how Irigaray derives a gendered subjectivity and rationality from a sexed body.

<sup>36</sup> It is certainly interesting to note that since the negation is not only of the *female* body, but of the bodily messiness of *sex* in general, there exists a paradox in the male subject’s “disembodied” status as sexless or universal, and yet the identification of a metaphysics and rationality that corresponds to certain features of its sexual anatomy, such as rigidity and self-identity. I do not intend to explore this here, since it can be taken up on its own as an entirely separate critique of patriarchy.

## 1.2. VERTICAL LOGIC-OF-THE-ONE (EPISTEMOLOGICAL)

In the beginning, the Word already existed, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to humanity (John 1:1).

Far too little attention has been paid to the fact that our age, for all its irreligiousness, is hereditarily burdened with the specific achievement of the Christian epoch: the supremacy of the word, the Logos [...] the moment the word, as a result of centuries of education, attains universal validity, it severs its original link with the divine person (Jung, 2014:54-55).

Required by every figure in the ontology, the a priorism of the same was able to maintain itself only through an expatriation, an extrapolation, an expropriation of a quasi-theological nature. Under the direction of man, but not directly attributable to him. Referred back to some transcendence (Irigaray, 1985a:27).

[I]t is indeed precisely philosophical discourse that we have to challenge, and *disrupt*, inasmuch as this discourse sets forth the law for all others [...] One way is to interrogate *the conditions under which systematicity itself is possible*: what the coherence of the discursive utterance conceals (Irigaray, 1985b:74).

Irigaray is investigating the passional foundations of reason (Whitford, 1991:1).

According to the traditional logic, identity refers to self-identity, to identity to the same. It designates a reality which is if possible fixed, not subject to change, not modifiable by the event nor by the other. In this way it has something in common with the Platonic idea. Relational identity goes counter to this solipsistic, neuter, auto-logical ideal (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:159).

Passing from the fluid darkness, from the shimmering imprecision of reflections, from the phantasmagorias of the doxa to the neat, clear-cut, immutable, unambiguous categories that characterise, divide up, classify, and order everything [...] For the passages through which he might have been introduced or inserted have been eliminated, obliterated, stopped up, in order to ensure the domination of the Truth (Irigaray, 1985a:281).

Despite the alignment of the feminine with space, and with the fallible matter extended into space, this alignment only exists in the Western *logos* in order to establish the feminine as *the ground to be transcended*. Starting here with the work of Plato, Irigaray explores how Western rationality creates a subjectivity of *negation* starting with self/not-self (or male/not-male) (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:116) in which “the subject identifie[d] with the universal by disavowing any relation to the material or particular, and by projecting this rejected detritus onto others who become the limit” (Caldwell, 2002:19). The fact that this binary, vertical<sup>37</sup> hierarchy maintains at its head the distinction between male/not-male and reason/body means that, firstly, feminine identity is *devalued* in relation to men, secondly, feminine identity is only defined *in relation* to men, and thirdly, this negation results in a lack of feminine subjectivity developing on its *own terms* (Stone, 2009:26-27). It might be suggested Irigaray’s diagnosis here shares some common ground with Beauvoir’s own earlier investigations in *The Second Sex*. Both agree “it is male activity that in creating values has made of existence itself a value” in a positive, singular sense (Walters, 2005:98), since as we saw earlier, *presence* (or positive *existence*, as opposed to the void or *absence*) is given preference as a distinctly *masculine* value. Feminine embodiment is negated and seen only as important with regards to what it negatively represents – the not-male, the messy, natural world – and not with regards to what it itself positively *is*. Beginning with Plato’s vaunted Allegory of the Cave, Irigaray notes how this allegory is premised upon not only an overcoming and negation of the original material/maternal cave/womb in favour of the rational/paternal external world of ideal forms,

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<sup>37</sup> “Vertical” here refers to the fact that the binary function of the logic-of-the-one *suppresses* or “places underneath” itself negated values. It also refers to the privileging of abstract, transcendent reason (recalling Plato’s forms), and representation over bodily matter “down here”.

but more importantly upon a denial of the uterine *passage (space, intermediary) between the two*, the medium which connects both realms yet cannot clearly be expressed in the vocabulary of either (Irigaray, 1985a:247,266,319-320; Caldwell, 2002:24). In other words, we see again how the denial of intermediate *space* results in the rigidity of a binary maintained on either side of that “dead” (negated) space (Irigaray, 1985a:283,285). In a similar fashion, this denial is also visited upon the middle stage: the external, material sensible world (the second of the three stages in the Allegory) exists as a condition of denial (“*forgetting you have forgotten*” (Irigaray, 1985a:296)) that prevents communication between the Ideal (third stage) and the Cave (first stage) (Irigaray, 1985a:284), and also loses its own value despite being the condition of possibility for apprehending the Ideal (Whitford, 1991:108-109), since you must stand outside to see the sun. Moreover, in denying value or even existence to the maternal and mediating stages (that is, the Cave itself, the passage to the entrance, and the outside world excluding the sun), the Allegory of the Cave replicates the self/not-self logic of identity which we have come to know as the logic-of-the-one: the Ideal is the Self, the World is the other of the Self, and the Cave is the other of the other (Whitford, 1991:104), where the latter (and most feminine) is utterly devoid of the possibility of representation as it does not even exist in relation to the Self (the originator of meaning), not even as a negation. In a sense, the exit from the cave thus represents the death of the mother (Irigaray, 1985a:355), insofar as Plato’s myth requires the *rejection* of that womb or space from which the “prisoner” emerged, in favour of the sun, thereby leaving traces of the erasure with this rejection.

The central negation enacted by the logic-of-the-one, which is the core mechanism of traditional Western *logos*, manifests itself in different ways; whether as the sacrifice of the maternal body, the universal valorisation of the masculine sex, the rejection of alternative rationalities and concepts, or the metaphysics of solid singularity. Drawing on the work of Rene Girard, Irigaray notes that the function of the logic-of-the-one can also be described as violently sacrificial (Caldwell, 2002:18; Du Toit, 2015:15). By establishing a logocentric system of binaries, not only does the logic-of-the-one *exile* or *sacrifice* and devalue the negated value and draw a symbolic boundary, but it also creates an acceptable and highly localised space for the concentration of violence, policing, and oppression in the process. That is, because the feminine has no terms of its own, and indeed no existence of its own, there is no moral limitation to what can be done to the female body. It represents the space in which in/justice can “never” occur, and thus can be acted upon with impunity. Moreover, this (non)space must be *continually* policed to ensure that the oppressed subject does not produce resistance (Ainley, 1997:23). This is made especially clear by Irigaray’s observation that, since the male order signifies *presence*, being (Irigaray, 1985a:165), and its own self-referential replication/reproduction, and since it denies and negates anything *outside* this order, the space inhabited by the feminine represents *non-being*, or *death* (Irigaray, 1985a:27).<sup>38</sup> In a certain sense, we might say that for Irigaray this denial of female subjectivity and relationality results from a conceptual suppression of *space*, whether ethical, ontological, or symbolic, and subsequently a suppression of the possibility of change and “becoming”: space for women to extend their own bodies and not simply *be* bodies, space free of descriptive representations, space free of normative prescriptions, the disjunctive space between representation and reality, symbolic and real, for them to have a life of their own.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Recall here also the “void” of the Atomists discussed earlier.

<sup>39</sup> I would like to briefly make the independent suggestion that insofar as the Western *logos* enacts a sacrifice or negation of the fluid, dark, material ground in order to transcend to an abstract, self-referential ideal, the image and act of male circumcision might prove useful. This act of “transcendence”, performed through the mechanism of the logic-of-the-one and manifested in the metaphysics of solids and social practice of patriarchy, relies as we have seen on the negation of the maternal body. Perhaps, then, the act of circumcision represents a final attempt at severing *excess* corporeality and exposing the dark, masculine *womb of the foreskin* to the light of uniformity. Perhaps this is the act of “castration” the male performs in order to avoid being Castrated; a dilemma of his own making.

Irigaray traces the way in which sacrifice of the Platonic Cave Myth is enacted over and over in canonical philosophical texts, in response to anxieties about the female/maternal body. The resulting contradictions and gaps identified by Irigaray<sup>40</sup> suggest that there are inadequacies in the phallogocentric language beneath these positions. One could, for instance, tentatively suggest that something like the Sorites Paradox is a direct symptom of monological, binary rigidity, one which denies intermediate spaces or third values “outside” the binary negation, and subsequently unwittingly sets up the conditions for paradoxes existing in the first place. Irigaray references this issue in the following:

If the prime mover didn't install a brake on the wheel of infinite regression, for instance, might not all substance risk hurtling into some formlessness of prime matter? It might be seduced into returning to the womb of the mother-earth [...] Therefore access to the earth must be barred by developing an onto-theology at the very outset. [...] all must share the place that has been marked out and keep each other in place (Irigaray 1985a:164).

As discussed earlier, Irigaray demonstrates how Aristotle's teleology of actualities and potentialities acts as a restriction upon growth that not only specifies clear ends (determined by a universal philosophy) but also prevents deviations from these ends. In addition, the fear of fluidity or messiness manifests itself as a denial of an infinite regression with the introduction of a first cause, rather than letting thought and substance regress to the “prime matter” of the maternal body. In other words, development-through-teleology or “[t]he same re-marking itself – more or less – would thus produce the other, whose function in the differentiation would be neglected, forgotten. Or else carried back into mere extrapolation, into the infinity” (Irigaray, 1985a:21).

Many of these most important points are drawn together in a massively dense yet short one-page essay in *Speculum*, titled *The Cards Turned Over*, almost all of which is quoted here:

Thus Freud discovers – in a sort of blind reversal of repressions – certain variously disguised cards that are kept preserved or stored away and that lie beneath the hierarchy of values of the game, of all the games: the desire for the same, for the self-identical, the self (as) same, and again of the similar, the alter ego and, to put it in a nutshell, the desire for the auto...the homo...the male, dominates the representational economy.<sup>41</sup> “Sexual difference” is a derivation of the problematics of sameness, it is, now and forever, determined within the project, the projection, the sphere of representation, of the same. The “differentiation” into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same, since the little man that the little girl is, must become a man minus certain attributes whose paradigm is morphological – attributes capable of determining, of assuring, the reproduction-specularisation of the same. A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman. In this proliferating desire of the same, death will be the only representative of an outside, of a heterogeneity, of an other: woman will assume the function of representing death (Irigaray, 1985a:26-27).

In Freud, Irigaray discovers the function of the origin as a *void* or *lack* – the exit from the maternal womb and the break from maternal mucous, membranes, and darkness (1985a:40). Since a lack cannot suffice in the traditional order as an *origin*, the notion of “lack” must represent a *fault* in representation (1985a:42), that must be filled and replaced with the masculine *phallus*. The phallus, the symbol of male law and language since it represents self-identity, self-reference, and by extension conceptual coherence, thus appropriates the very idea of “origin” and replicates itself there. Women cannot desire a return to

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<sup>40</sup> Resulting from the patriarchal assertion of binaries without “spaces” or “intermediaries”; consider the Law of Non-contradiction or the Excluded Middle.

<sup>41</sup> I will reserve comments on Irigaray's treatment of homosexuality for section 3.1. Ethical Implications. Suffice it to say here that Irigaray does not draw a distinction in her own writings between homosexuality as a sexual and romantic orientation, and homosexuality in the sense of patriarchal homosociality, or monosexuality. The only comment I could find by Irigaray on this distinction appears, revealingly I think, outside her work in an *interview* when asked about the matter. Here Irigaray does in fact distinguish between homosexuality and homosociality as defined above, and she states the use of “hom(m)osexuality” as her preferred term for homosociality or monosexuality (Hirsh *et al.*, 1995:112).

the mother or origin because they themselves are the space where such reproduction and return happens, at the disposal of men; and moreover, since to desire is to desire the *phallus*, women can have no relation with their mothers because their mothers are *castrated* or inferior men (on the male model) (1985a:68).

Irigaray thus finds binary differentiation and the expression of female sexuality in terms of the masculine, in the Western tradition. For instance, the notion that sperm actively seeks out the egg, and that men actively penetrate women in *mimetic* reference to this biological event (Irigaray, 1985a:15), that any aggressive activity on the part of the female is always limited to the facilitation of procreation, or else by permission of the male (1985a:17-18), that valorised female traits such as breastfeeding and motherhood are *in service* of “restoring the man” or caring for his child, and that girls therefore have no value before sexual maturity (1985a:25), and that women are men without penises (1985a:26). The conclusion Irigaray identifies and critiques in the Freudian theory is that any “unfeminine” active behaviour on the part of women is relegated to masochism and hysteria without receiving such negative treatment when it is displayed by men (1985a:20). In other words, sexual differentiation (and the notion of differentiation in general) is covertly premised on the value of *sameness*, of *one*; or as Irigaray so succinctly puts it, “the other is always the other of the same” (1995:10). The male, then, is at once both the *one* (the masculine universal) and the bisexual, or indeed *everything*, since all other values are subsumed under it.<sup>42</sup>

The singular at one point, at this point, has become necessary in reconstructing the whole, and lays down the general grounds whereby the universal may be reaffirmed within a system [...] But the singular, it must be admitted, is of a particular kind here: it is the thinking substance that, moreover, turns back upon itself and fastens up the circle of its subjectivity (Irigaray, 1985a:180).

Reading Descartes in the extract above, Irigaray finds, again, the self-referential logic-of-the-one which seeks to reaffirm universal truth through a circular appeal to itself as the originator of meaning. Yet she also finds an apparent contradiction in this case of *petitio principii* insofar as the masculine subject attempts to speak in universal terms when it can only speak from the perspective of a corporeally *particular* subject, and one that moreover tries to deny its own particularity.

To build this construction [a scientific representation of nature], man was, of course, obliged to draw on reserves still in the realm of nature [...] But this initial period of cooperative creation is forgotten in an arrogant claim to sovereign discretion over everything (Irigaray, 1985a:204).

Turning her attention to Kant in the above quote, Irigaray notes how the categories of mind imposed upon the world as an appeal to human/male/universal order over nature, must themselves, paradoxically, come from nature and ultimately represent a rejection of the natural/maternal at the hands of the classifying philosopher; yet again there is an erasure of the corporeal origin of “purely” intellectual categories. This is in keeping with her reading of the “forgetting of origins” we encountered with Plato’s Cave.

Elsewhere, Irigaray also identifies, and strongly resists, the logic-of-the-one in the work of Lacan, where it manifests as the negation or sacrifice of materiality and difference in favour of organised discourse (Caldwell, 2002:22). For Lacan, chaotic differences in materiality must be subjected to a single “master signifier” (the symbolic, or law of the father) in order for intersubjective spaces of signification to arise. This “castration” amounts to not only a denial of valuable corporeal differences, but also to the dominance of masculine speech, a situation which is clearly not conducive to the expression and development of female subjectivity Irigaray desires. This is a prime example of the manner in which the psychoanalytic and linguistic nature of the symbolic order as theorised by Freud and Lacan, and as instantiated in the history of Western politics, denies the possibility of being a woman and rationally

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<sup>42</sup> With the exception, Irigaray notes, of masochism and passive homosexuality (1985a:23) since these too closely resemble the function of the female.

speaking subject at the same time.<sup>43</sup> Importantly, Irigaray does not claim that the woman is unrepresentable or unspeakable here out of constructionist or eliminativist concerns (that is, because the referent does not exist, as is the eventual argument of this thesis), but rather for the opposite reasons. She claims that the referent *does* exist within the fluid “specificity of unspecificity” of the liminal and negated. The woman remains unrepresentable in the original phallogocentric *logos* because there she is a mere negation of the male universal and a means of exchange; she occupies a position that cannot be spoken in current language (Irigaray, 1985a:140) because she has no terms of her own, to adapt Virginia Woolf’s phrase. We cannot speak *about* women with any accuracy in our present language, and women themselves cannot speak or attain positions of cultural authority (Irigaray, 1985a:43; 1993:107; 2007:98) without sacrificing their feminine subjectivity. In short, there are no symbolic spaces (and therefore linguistic, legal, cultural spaces) where women<sup>44</sup> can grow to the full extent required by their processual, rhythmic nature (embodiment). Psychoanalytically, we might say that unlike Lacan, Irigaray does not view symbolic categories as inherently limiting and repressive, and sexual identity as necessarily problematic and inconsistent (Stone, 2009:12); hence she sees no problem in principle with the need for and use of symbolic categories as means of developing and expressing sexual identity.

Perhaps most fundamentally, Irigaray identifies the fact that the logic-of-the-one destroys the difference between being and thinking, being and talking: “Our culture is grounded entirely on logic, where being and thinking coincide and there is no room for a knowledge of life and of the relation” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:137), where “relation” refers to an intersubjective exchange not limited to the patriarchal subject(male)-object(female) model. By treating abstract representations as synonymous with (or at least as truer than) phenomenological embodied experience, the logic of the one (best typified as the male universal, or the singular self-identity of the penis) destroys the space between word and referent necessary for critical distance. In other words, the traditional logic does not draw a neat distinction between representation and reality (that critical distance necessary for any representation or proposition to be falsifiable or verifiable) since it sets up phallic appropriation as the very condition under which truth is enacted, by equating specific phallic attributes with the truth and validity of concepts and denying the variable materiality beneath those concepts.<sup>45</sup> Language is thus phallic. In some ways then, patriarchal logic directly denies the possibility of being wrong. Discussing the Ancient Greek mind-set, Siedentop concurs with our reading of Irigaray and arrives at a very similar conclusion in near identical language to Irigaray’s, although for slightly different reasons. As Siedentop puts it: “Hence there was no ontological gap between thought and action” (2015:36). But “[o]f course, the faculty of speech and reason – logos – carried with it another possibility: disagreement [...] men could disagree about how words were to be used” (2015:38). By its very nature representation (in whatever form, whether images, letters, or mathematical symbols) constantly challenges us with the possibility of being wrong or incomplete, and therefore threatens to shatter the illusion of a total isomorphism between *logos/nomos* and *physis*, and thus also to shatter the power of phallogocentric rationality. Yet starting in Ancient Greece, Siedentop notes how such a threat was construed not necessarily as a matter of truth or of the *logos* indeed being incorrect, but rather as one of character and virtue: “When such things happened, the polis had become corrupt. The domestic sphere had come to overwhelm the public sphere, alone the sphere of nobility” (2015:38). Historically, the *nomos* of the Western tradition thus protected *logos* by branding

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<sup>43</sup> As seeming proof of her claim, Irigaray was ostracised from the Lacanian community for her (feminine) views and relieved of her university post by committee members named by none other than Jacques Lacan himself (Irigaray, 1985b: 158,167; Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:187).

<sup>44</sup> Or any sexuate being, I would like to argue. I will make the point in section 3.2. that the patriarchal ideal of masculinity does not grant men the possibility of fully realising their subjectivity either, by limiting it to clichés of aggression and competition, and moreover *cisgender*, *heterosexual* stereotypes.

<sup>45</sup> Let us remember the privilege accorded to concepts that denote *presence*, *rigidity*, and *self-identity*, drawing, in both the patriarchal model and Irigaray’s own view (as we will see in section 2.1.), on the phenomenology of the penis, which displays similar traits. That is, a language and logic *derived from* bodily specificity. Irigaray identifies this feature within the patriarchal logic, but as we will see, she *retains* it in developing her own theory of two sexed subjects, where each has a language and subjectivity derived from the features of their body.

“misappropriations” of language, norms, and reason as an isolated failure on the part of the individual who lacked virtue rather than an indication of a larger problem with the standard of reason itself.

This is not only an epistemic and empirical problem, but also an ethical one. Irigaray also finds evidence of this solipsistic isomorphism<sup>46</sup> in Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am”, which as we saw in 1.1. traces its origins to Plato, and in this section, follows Plato and Aristotle in denying the return to a darkened, mysterious, maternal body, represented in Plato as the rejection of the Cave (womb) and in Aristotle as the rejection of infinite regress (disruptive fluidity).

If the premises of reasoning are *necessary* in the work of Aristotle, if the infinite has to be cancelled in favour of the prior status of a substance that ensures that the relation of subjectum to predicate is applied *across the board*, with no space left for indeterminacy, it is the conclusion that emerges as irrefutable in Descartes (Irigaray, 1985a:180).

Irigaray argues that Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” is the denial of distance and difference between thinking and being, representation and reality, that establishes the singular male subject as the thinking subject and, by means of that relation, *as that which exists*. Being, thinking, and (masculine) self-identity are thus tied together at a single point:

Everything can be put in doubt, (it is) I (who) doubt(s), therefore (it is) I (who) am. The relation to the universality of being of the thinking subject and speaking “I” is then assured. [...] Representation here is auto-affective, auto-affecting solipsism. It embroiders its dream of potentiality alone in its chamber, indifferent, at least for a while, to the rest of (its) history that is still being woven. All alone with an ever cautious *negativism*, it cuts up and reworks the *subject’s links to his archives* (Irigaray, 1985a:181-182).

Meaning that, on Irigaray’s reading, the logic-of-the-one achieves such a level of singularity, folded in upon itself, that it erases the origin of its own mechanism (the maternal body), the *other* value on its own terms, through its binary negation thereof. In other words, it conceals the *act of negation* which allows it to function, by assuming the existence of the disembodied, rational, male subject, and *only* that subject. This erasure is more profound than simply keeping the other *as a negation* within the binary. In his *Meditations* Descartes writes the following:

Nor should I think that I perceive the infinite not by a true idea but only by negation of the finite, as I perceive rest and darkness by the negation of motion and light; for on the contrary, I manifestly understand that there is more reality in infinite than in finite substance, and that therefore the perception of the infinite in me must be in some way prior to that of the finite (Descartes, 2008:32-33).

And Kant after him concludes his definition of matter in *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* with a rejection of the notion of empty space or vacuum:

And so ends the metaphysical doctrine of body with the *empty*, and therefore the inconceivable, wherein it shares the same fate as all other attempts of reason, when it strives after the first grounds of things in a retreat to principles – where, since its very nature entails that it can never conceive anything, except insofar as it is determined under given conditions, and since it can therefore neither come to a halt at the conditioned nor make the unconditioned comprehensible, nothing is left to it (Kant, 2004:104).

Kant ends his discussion on the possibility of “empty space” in any absolute sense existing with a negative indication.<sup>47</sup> For Kant, empty space in any absolute sense is something reason cannot grasp; note too his use of “first grounds” being inaccessible, which should remind us again of Irigaray’s reading of Plato’s Cave and the rejection of the “first grounds” of the Cave/maternal womb. In Irigaray’s words, “[e]verything has to be (re)invented to avoid the vacuum” (Irigaray, 1985a:228), where the “vacuum” can be taken to refer to the notion of the interval or “space between” subjects who are *different*. The logic-

<sup>46</sup> Again, “solipsistic” referring to self-identity and self-reference within the logic of the patriarchal language (and the male subjectivity), and “isomorphism” referring to the conflation of being and thinking.

<sup>47</sup> Pun intended.

of-the-one erases any authentic origin (such as the maternal/womb/space/vacuum) and replaces it immediately (since there can be no gaps or vacuums) with itself, replicated over and over (the “I” of pure reason who perceives himself thinking and thus, by knowing rather than experiencing a body, exists). This then is perhaps Irigaray’s most important point and the key to understanding her diagnosis in this exposition: matter or corporeality is not merely represented as the *opposite* of masculine reason, nor for that matter (pun intended) is it merely represented as the absence or *lack* of masculine solidity; it is erased entirely as a point of reference to the extent that the Western *logos* need only ever refer to itself. In the Western binary tradition then, values sometimes exist as hierarchical opposites (for example reason/body), more often as negations (reason/not-reason), and most cruelly as unrepresentable *absences* (reason/the void), figured as feminine. Irigaray describes this leap away from material ground toward abstracted self-referential universality in evocative language, highlighting the old question of representation and reality, and the neglected position of the other:

And even as man seeks to rise higher and higher – in his knowledge too – so the ground fractures more and more beneath his feet. “Nature” is forever dodging his projects of representation, of reproduction. [...] Where will the other spring up again? Where will the risk be situated which sublates the subject’s passion for remaining ever and again the same, for affirming himself ever and again the same? (Irigaray, 1985a:134-135).

In summary, the traditional Western worldview consists of a representational order of binaries in which negated terms are (de)valued by being presented *in terms of sameness*. The traditional *logos* is thus premised upon an overlooked *lack*, and as we have seen this lack is figured as the *feminine*. But it is not simply a lack of the feminine, but an insistence that lack itself *is* the feminine; and since the metaphysics of solids “abhors a vacuum” and therefore the feminine, the ambiguous, the unrepresentable, figured as the negated *lack* (or other) of the masculine, the “other of the same”, such a lack must be written out and replaced with repetitive self-identity. The order thus perpetuates itself, and erases its genesis, which for all men is nonetheless the maternal womb. Furthermore, these binary categories of reality are sexed and thus appropriate the feminine body and experience, the female *subjectivity*, as a variation of the masculine universal. We might then say that the traditional Western logic is based on the *suppression of space* – vacuum or space between matter in Classical Mechanics, space between human bodies necessary for them to be *different* rather than the same, ethical space between presuming to know the other *as other* and speaking for them instead, space between the possibility of anything outside the bivalence of x and not-x, and space between word and object.

For ease of reference, from now on we will call the traditional Western epistemology (and the language it is encoded in), which is only capable of self-reference, can describe the rules of its own consistency,<sup>48</sup> and operates according to the logic-of-the-one, “Epistemology W” (“W” for “Western”). We shall use this term to refer to Irigaray’s notion of binary, self-identical, phallogocentric, and negational rationality; and we shall also use it to refer to the particular metaphysical worldview generated and accessed by this logic. That is to say, “Epistemology W” refers not simply to the epistemic method of representation, but also to the list of representations and their content as well; the conception of the *cosmos* (“reality”) as much as the conception of *logos* producing it (“representation”).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> We shall leave aside Gödel’s mathematical proofs of inherent incompleteness and Tarski’s introduction of disquotation and metalanguages to deal with truth predicates.

<sup>49</sup> Rather than insert this very long note into the main text, I decided to keep it as a footnote (at least ceremonially if not practically) since the purpose of Chapter 1 is to provide a sympathetic exposition of Irigaray rather than raise objections. Yet the points raised in this note are immediately relevant to her historical treatment of Western philosophers and therefore do not belong elsewhere in the thesis. Here, then, these supplementary points must be placed.

Not all thinkers were consistent or unwitting performers of the patriarchal logic-of-the-one, and it would be unfair to paint them entirely with the same brush. Locke was at least aware of the solipsistic, self-referentialism and erasure of the origin of the hegemonic *logos* as an object of its own critique. Locke opens his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* with the following: “[I]t is the Understanding that sets Man above

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the rest of sensible Beings [...] The Understanding, like the Eye, whilst it makes us see, and perceive all other Things, takes no notice of itself: And it requires Art and Pains to set it at a distance, and make it its own Object" (2008:13). This is not to say Locke identified the logic-of-the-one, but he was certainly aware of the circularity involved in cognition reflecting upon itself; Irigaray simply takes this circularity further for us by identifying it as the basis of a social order. The imagery used by Locke in this quote is also important, since we will be exploring the role of *sight* in the next section.

Similarly, returning to the Cartesian *cogito* and arguably the crux of Irigaray's diagnosis, Descartes' *Meditations* was the target of several objections by such luminaries as Hobbes and Gassendi. Hobbes objected, on what we might now recognise as surprisingly Irigarayan terms, that "the thinking thing is something bodily; for it seems that the subject of any act can be understood only in bodily or material terms. [...] For 'I am thinking' is not inferred from another thought [...] Since, therefore, the knowledge of this proposition 'I exist' depends on the knowledge of this one, 'I am thinking'; and the knowledge of the latter on the fact that we cannot separate the act of thought from the matter that thinks, it seems that the inference should be that a thinking thing is material rather than immaterial" (Hobbes, in Descartes, 2008:108-109). Hobbes here not only insists that the thinking being is first a thinking *body*, but also objects to precisely the same circular, solipsistic self-referentialism as Irigaray does ("I am thinking' is not inferred from another thought"). For Hobbes, existence is not demonstrated by an endless ratiocination ("how do you know that you know that you know that you are knowing?" (2008:108)), but rather from the apodictic experience of the act itself. Of course, Hobbes' "body" is not Irigaray's "body"; he was a deterministic materialist and his objections to the logic-of-the-one still fall prey to the metaphysics of solids. But it would be worth Irigaray's time to consider the possibility that the Western tradition cannot be treated as entirely uniform and phallogocentric at all points, and that some of her objections may have been raised by earlier thinkers (men, no less) despite this not being sufficiently acknowledged in her work.

Lastly, we should certainly remember that in more recent times the Munchhausen Trilemma has also raised the problem of epistemology being self-referential and universal truth unattainable (among other issues). For an early treatment of the Trilemma, see Popper (2002:86-87). Indeed, canonical work published decades before Irigaray by analytic logicians such as Gödel (incompleteness and inconsistency of mathematics), Tarski (undefinability of truth), and Quine (inscrutability of reference), unsettled the formalism of Epistemology W from within and unseated the dream of coherence. (These dramatic changes have received no acknowledgement from Irigaray, however.)

### 1.3. HISTORICAL PATRIARCHY (ETHICAL)

Woman, for her part, remains in unrealised potentiality – unrealised, at least, for/by herself. *Is she, by nature, a being that exists for/by another?* (Irigaray, 1985a:165).

I remember four women of my boyhood: my mother, my cousin Inez, Emma, and Ide Fuller. They represented the problem of the widow, the wife, the maiden, and the outcast. [...] They existed not for themselves, but for men: they were named after the men to whom they were related and not after the fashion of their own souls. They were not beings, they were relations and these relations were enfilmed with mystery and secrecy (Du Bois, 2016:95).

As we have seen, Irigaray demonstrates how the phallogocentric universalism of self-identical, positive presence, expressed in the metaphysics of “solids” and the logic of the “one”, permeates the Western tradition and systematically writes an entire set of values epitomised by the female body, such as nature, darkness, ambiguity, and fluidity, out of the symbolic order and ultimately out of legitimate lived expression. The creation of this lack, then, is really the creation of an attempt to negate the female.<sup>50</sup> Irigaray thus shows us how that which starts off as a seemingly innocuous system of neutral descriptions ranging from language, reason, and culture to ontology, physics, and nature evolves into a set of normative prescriptions, since its supposed neutrality is premised on the selective and arbitrary negation of certain embodied values and the creation of a devalued lack or *non-space*. These empirical and epistemological assumptions invade the last and most human of categories, the ethical; and so we arrive at the institution of patriarchy.

We have already seen how the elemental, changing cosmology of the Pre-Socratic philosophers was superseded by the rationalist discourse of Plato, with an emphasis on mind over matter and reason over sensation, and the way this manifested in Classical Mechanics. In those discussions, we followed Irigaray in exploring the Western treatment of both the concrete and the abstract, but only as pertaining to *objects*; in other words the *cosmos*, and the mind, language, and reason capable of describing the reality of the *cosmos*; respectively, the metaphysics of solids and the logic-of-the-one. Yet we must remember that for Irigaray this tradition is *sexed* and enacts the disembodiment of human *subjects*.<sup>51</sup> The binary logic-of-the-one treats the (feminine) negated value as a relation of the first, original, “One”, and establishes (masculine) solidity and presence as the essence of being, as opposed to ambiguity, fluidity, and becoming (as the lack of masculine order and reason).<sup>52</sup> It is now time to turn from objects to subjects and identify the ways in which this phallogocentric tradition treats a different kind of matter, the matter of the human body, and the way “[t]elos, finally, [is] inscribed in the *psyche*” (Irigaray, 1985a:320).

The advent of the Christian tradition, no doubt drawing on Plato’s metaphysical dualism, shifted discourse away from the matter of the *cosmos* towards the matter of the human body, and with the introduction of a new normative concept, established the body as *the site of sin*, and thus as something solely to be transcended<sup>53</sup> (Mottier, 2008:19), usually through abstinence or finally through *death*.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> We will see in Chapter 2 that Irigaray aims to overcome the issue of negation by introducing a female subject. Though she does not merely repeat the desire of the (male) metaphysics of solids in constructing a present, self-identical female, she nonetheless attempts to define the female subject according to specific set properties.

<sup>51</sup> Sexed insofar as the logic-of-the-one aligns certain concepts with the male or female, and moreover derives its valued concepts from a predominantly male body. “Enacts disembodiment” insofar as it uses these concepts, or the *negation* of the concepts, to deny a voice and lived expression of certain bodies, especially the female body.

<sup>52</sup> All the while, paradoxically, denying that the male reason and language is tied to the messiness of the male body.

<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, in line with Irigaray’s thought it could be argued that all eschatological modes of religious reasoning presuppose metaphysical dualism of some sort, starting perhaps with the expendability and sacrifice of the “inferior” material body. This binary division is after all necessary for setting up one realm as preferable to another, and for bringing about a fundamental cosmological change or attainment of something else. Change and possibility here are dependent on the divine (masculine?) prerogative (the apocalypse), and the

Nonetheless Foucault points out that the passage between paganism and Christianity is not simplistically marked by a change from excess to asceticism (Foucault, 1992:15-16). Even so, in the Christian tradition there was indeed “a codification of sexual acts that would become more and more specific, and the development of a hermeneutics of desire” (1992:92).

Tying in with the death of the body over the course of Western philosophy, so to speak, we can now answer an urgent question that has only received brief mention in the previous two sections with such words as “sacrifice” and “death”: since the two main trends Irigaray identifies (solid metaphysics and binary logic of sameness) are merely *descriptive*,<sup>55</sup> how do these translate into *normative* practices? We would after all not be justified in condemning the Western tradition unless we could demonstrate that its outlook is ethically problematic and not just empirically incomplete. One answer has already been discussed, and it is the fact that the “neutral” descriptions of Epistemology W are *sexed*. Thus by classifying reality and hierarchizing those types (bodies),<sup>56</sup> it implicitly devalues certain bodies, such as the female body, meaning that ostensibly neutral descriptions of reality are often coded prescriptions about human subjects, since the language is *sexed* and *devalues* the female sex. But there is a more compelling answer, and we must briefly state it explicitly. The answer lies in the fact that Epistemology W aligns itself with *presence* (consider the erect penis), *being, and life*; and sets up the female as *absence* (consider the vagina as a ‘hole’ (Irigaray, 1985a:71)), *non-being, and death* (1985a:26-27,141). Therefore, because woman is the “No Thing” and occupies a space on the *other* side of being – death, or simply a *non* space – anything can be done to her firstly because she is already “dead”, and secondly, since the reigning representational order cannot describe her body, her desires, or any injustice that may be done towards her.<sup>57</sup> As Irigaray puts it, “[t]he death of consciousness (and) of sex is necessary to achieve a dialectical progression through phallic sublimation” (1985a:111). Irigaray suggests that the death or removal of any means of being able to *think* or be *conscious* about one’s own body in its sexual specificity (achieved by devaluing, negating, and “forgetting” the concepts and language capable of describing such a body), is necessary for the phallic order, or patriarchal logic-of-the-one, to complete its appropriation of the subject *as only a male subject*. The concept of man as being, life, and ontology itself, and woman as death, therefore supplies the bridge of conceptual architecture that links the abstract descriptive to the socially prescriptive and gives the phallic tradition its force *in practice*.

The anthropological question now is: how do men and women relate to one another within the patriarchal confines of Epistemology W that not only describes but prescribes and proscribes? How does Epistemology W map over subjects in practice? Irigaray notes how, from the outset, society is organised according to phallic self-referentialism in a way that excludes women *except as commodities*. Classic contract theory, which describes an escape from “the anarchy (?) of the natural world, the randomness (?) of the animal kingdom [requires] passage into the social order, into the symbolic order” (Irigaray,

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ascending redemption of the disembodied soul from the sinful body. Eschatology is based on the end of the body.

<sup>54</sup> As a contrary study, it would be interesting to investigate the role of the body in religious ecstasy. It has been recorded that women (and men) who displayed “ecstatic visions, mystical lactations [and] stigmata” were revered by the Church in Medieval times (Shilling, 2016:30). Here then we have a convergence of the female, the flesh, the fluid, the (masculine?) divine, and respect, in contrast to the traditional devaluing of the body as read by Irigaray. Modern day accounts of weeping and bleeding statues are no less common. Certainly, sensuality occurs in famous examples such as Bernini’s sculpture *Ecstasy of St Teresa* (which depicts divine revelation as, essentially, orgasmic; Irigaray herself mentions and contests this (1985b:90-91)), and Caravaggio’s painting *St Francis in Ecstasy* (which depicts homoeroticism respectably coded in vulnerability and tenderness). The rigid logic and metaphysics of the Western tradition (masculine) sometimes viewed (ambiguously sexed) excesses of the body (feminine) as the surest indicators of, paradoxically, the presence of the male god. One Irigarayan way to dismiss this counter-reading would be to describe such instances as the fetishisation of bodily experiences (the commodification of pleasure) or the employment of the female orgasm *in service* of the masculine.

<sup>55</sup> One being a cosmology (reality) and the other an account of reason (representation).

<sup>56</sup> And all other concepts as well.

<sup>57</sup> One could argue that this mechanism sheds some light on the epistemology of rape. However I do not think it can account for male-male rape.

1985b:170), which, as we have already seen at length, is sexed *male* in its concepts and so responds only to *male* desires.<sup>58</sup> The unpredictability, fluidity, and corporeal animality of the “state of nature” represents the feminine that is negated in favour of the ordered, rational, and disembodied masculine state, under the binary logic-of-the-one. “[T]he passage from nature to culture thus amounts to the institution of the reign of hom(m)o-sexuality” (Irigaray, 1985b:171). Within this representational order, in which women have no symbolic position, no acknowledged lived experience, and ultimately no voice, they are reduced to the *functions* of male desire and the male template of sexuality; since they cannot be subjects on their own terms, the prevailing discourse *begins* by setting up an economy in which they can only be objects. In such a homo/monosexual “society of men among themselves” (1985b:161), women become nothing more than “the matter used for the imprint of forms” (Irigaray, 1985a:141)<sup>59</sup> and thus the self-perpetuation of the male genealogy. Consider, for instance, the tradition of marking the wife with the *male* name, passing on only the *male* name to children, and passing privileges such as inheritance and titles to only *male* children. Hence also the unspoken desire for “the male heir” to continue this *ad infinitum*. The mechanised, industrialised, capitalist society (metaphysics of solids) established by the linear, univalent patriarchal order (logic-of-the-one) means that man “will mark the product of copulation with his own name. Thereby woman [...] becomes the anonymous worker, the machine in the service of a master-proprietor who will put his trademark upon the finished product” (Irigaray, 1985a:23).<sup>60</sup> In such a system, the most important role accorded to women, marriage, becomes (firstly) an exchange of *commodities in an Economics* that takes place (secondly) between men (thirdly) for a price, the dowry (1985a:121-122). When women are thus “exchanged” between men, they must be further reduced to the male paradigm by being *abstracted* as values in order to be commodified. As Irigaray states,

[t]he exchange operation cannot take place in terms of some intrinsic, immanent value of the commodity. It can only come about when two objects – two women – are in a relation of equality with a third term that is neither the one nor the other. It is thus not as ‘women’ that they are exchanged, but as women reduced to some common feature – their current price in gold or phalluses (Irigaray, 1985b:175).

The erasure of subjectivity is complete. Women become objects or numbers within an already mathematised social schema in which the terms are set by men, denying the possibility of agency for women. Moreover, this “*abstract and universal value preserves them from use and exchange among themselves*” (1985b:181), because they are given value by *men*, and otherwise-valueless commodities cannot form between themselves a community. Notably, this denies the possibility of relating *among themselves*, which would no doubt be particularly problematic for, say, female homosexuals. In the face of all this, Irigaray dryly notes that “[p]enis-envy’ would represent, would be the only effective representation of woman’s desire to enter into symbolic exchange as a ‘subject’ and raise woman from her status as a mere ‘commodity’” (1985a:56), since this would grant her some agency and desire of her “own”. Yet it means, again, that she is engaging in a masculine discourse that (incorrectly) describes her desire only as a *lack* of the masculine. Here then, is Irigaray’s diagnosis of the way the Western worldview manifests in a patriarchal society: “This type of social system can be interpreted as *the practical*

<sup>58</sup> “[D]esire will henceforth pass through the discourse-desire-law of men’s desire. “You will be my woman-mother, my wife [...] You will be for me the possibility of repeating-representing-appropriating the/my relation to the origin”” (Irigaray, 1985a:42).

<sup>59</sup> The procreative imprint of *male* forms; that is, bearing children. “Forms” here also echoes Plato. The “matter” (earth) of the female body is merely a shadow or space where the superior “forms” (functions of the male order) can find expression.

<sup>60</sup> This should remind us of our discussion of the logic-of-the-one, especially with regards to Plato and Descartes. It represents the erasure of the *origin* – the earth, womb, cave, or mother – in favour of self-replication by the (masculine) subject. Theweleit (1989:160) gives a description of this mechanised, replicating economy in very similar terms: “The ‘new man’ sired in the drill [...] owes allegiance only to the machine that bore him. He is a true child of the drill-machine, created without the help of a woman, parentless. His associations and relationships bind him instead to other specimens of the new man, with whom he allows himself to be united to form the macromachine troop. All others belong only ‘under’ him – never alongside, behind, or in front”.

*realisation of the meta-physical*" (1985b:189). But there also exist other exchanges and relations between subjects where Irigaray traces the function of Epistemology W, for instance in the act of the *gaze*, which we will deal with after the following quotes on the importance of the gaze in the (male) philosophical tradition:

By nature, all men long to know. An indication is their delight in the senses. For these, quite apart from their utility, are intrinsically delightful, and that through the eyes more than the others. For it is not only with a view to action but also when we have no intention to do anything that we choose, so to speak, sight rather than all the others. And the reason for this is that sight is the sense that especially produces cognition in us and reveals many distinguishing features of things (Aristotle, 2004:4).

Lastly, to leave where Love beginneth, who discerneth not that the eye is the most affecting sense? (Bacon, 2008:33).

Because Sight, the most comprehensive of all our senses, conveying to our Minds the *Ideas* of Light and Colours, which are peculiar only to that Sense; and also the far different Ideas of Space, Figure, and Motion (Locke, 2008:85).

First – The Other *looks* at me and as such he holds the secret of my being, he knows what I *am*. Thus the profound meaning of my being is outside of me, imprisoned in an absence (Sartre, 2003:385).

In tracing the universalised logic of negation within the ethical context of bodily inter/subjectivity, Irigaray finds further examples of the lack (or negation and denial of space, ambiguity, change) within the *visual* field (Grosz, 1994:106; Whitford, 1991:108). The gaze epitomises, for Irigaray, the phallogentric relation between subjects and bodies resulting from the metaphysics and epistemology outlined in the previous two sections.

In Freud for example, Irigaray traces the relationship between subjectivity and negation/lack to the gaze in penis envy. The young girl's awareness of herself and of sexual (in)difference begins with the visual realisation of an *absence* in her body and a *presence* in the other (the male). In return, for both herself and others, "[s]he exposes, exhibits the possibility of a *nothing to see*" (Irigaray, 1985a:47), importantly, *because she is not like man* (1985a:48); sight paradoxically exposes her as the *absence* of anything worth gazing upon (in male, patriarchal eyes at least), and thus the gaze (un)makes her. It should be clear how this ties in again with the functioning of the metaphysics of solid presence and the binary, negational logic-of-the-one. It should also emphasise again the fact that, being an unrepresentable *absence* in the traditional order, Irigaray demonstrates how women have both no medium in which to represent themselves (no language, concepts, or law) and no/thing to represent to begin with (since they represent a vacancy).<sup>61</sup> "Thus woman's lack of penis and her envy of the penis *ensure the function of the negative*, serve as representations of the negative, in what could be called a *phallogentric* – or phallogentric – dialectic" (1985a:52), ultimately exposing a "defect in this systematics of representation and desire" (Irigaray, 1985b:26).<sup>62</sup> The result is an erasure of female sexuality, desire, and agency.

Tying in with Irigaray's claim about male insularity and autoeroticism, I would like to ask: does man not make love to himself if "he will mark the product of copulation *with his own name*" (Irigaray, 1985a:23)? This tendency also demonstrates the functioning of the logic-of-the-one and the erasure of any *authentic* or *diverse* origin engendered by female motherhood, and the circular self-determination and linear self-perpetuation of a "new" masculine origin into the future. Moreover, it also suggests that a woman "will not masturbate "herself", but rather a penis equivalent" (Irigaray, 1985a:30), since the clitoris is regarded as an inferior penis in the prevailing male (Freudian) paradigm. On Irigaray's view then, women cannot speak or touch themselves *as women*, and men make love *to variations of themselves*.

<sup>61</sup> For example, the very idea of penis *envy* already "describe[s] female sexuality as merely the *other side* or even the *wrong side* of a male sexualism" (Irigaray, 1985a:51).

<sup>62</sup> Irigaray also points out that Oedipus *put out his eyes* in the myth after sleeping with his own mother. "Because it has neither 'truth' nor 'copies', nothing of its 'own', this (so-called) female sexuality, this woman's sex/organ will blind anyone taken up in its question" (1985a:80).

To return to the power relation of the gaze between subjects, Irigaray does not, as far as I am aware, anywhere explicitly develop her critique with reference to Jeremy Bentham, but it seems to me, as a supplementary contribution to her analysis then, that Bentham's Enlightenment Panopticon exemplifies not one but several of Irigaray's key diagnoses: the dominance of the visual, of the objectifying impersonal, of non-reciprocity, of rationality over irrationality, of self-referentialism, of sanitising and omniscient light,<sup>63</sup> of uniformity, and of the solipsistic erasure of the hegemony's working mechanism. Here, then, are several key things to note about both the gaze in general, and the gaze as applied to Bentham's famous prison: firstly, the gaze cannot locate or see *itself*; secondly, the gaze is always directed *at* something rather than *with* something and cannot be reciprocated in any simple, immediate sense (as in, for instance, the caress) (Grosz, 1994:105); thirdly, by acknowledging its own power the solipsistic gaze is by definition threatened by the *other* gaze, or the interiority such a gaze implies, and thus denies or avoids other gazes;<sup>64</sup> and lastly and perhaps most crucially, the gaze does *not require contact* (Irigaray, 1985a:148). It does not require intimacy with that bodily messiness to which the masculine is allegedly so averse, sustaining a (binary) distance between the bodily, fluid, and feminine, and the disembodied, analytical, and masculine.

The essence of it consists, then, in the *centrality* of the inspector's situation, combined with the well-known and most effectual contrivances for *seeing without being seen* [...] a spot from which, without any change of situation, a man may survey, in the same perfection, the whole number, and without so much as a change of posture (Bentham, 1995:41).<sup>65</sup>

By excluding the gaze of the other, or others, this extrapolated point of view organises and projects the world into a paralysed empire. Formalisations of laws laid down in perpetuity, logos of the Father (Irigaray, 1985a:339).

The design of the Panopticon, a circular building containing rows of cells, a central guard post, and a light illuminating the cells from the centre, is well-known. By way of explanation then, the Panopticon represents a neat physical manifestation of the various mechanised "design principles" of Epistemology W identified by Irigaray, perhaps most tellingly the central, phallic point from which all lines of perspective are drawn, yet which erases or denies itself as the one point not subject to scrutiny in much the same way as the solipsistic author in Wittgenstein's thought experiment cannot write himself into the book of the world – he is the very condition of possibility and therefore does not exist in the category "world" itself (Wittgenstein, 2001:69); which, as we saw earlier, was the defining feature of the anti-genesis enacted by the logic-of-the-one. The Panopticon is thus the consummate manifestation of detached and sanitised *oversight*,<sup>66</sup> and a useful summary of Irigaray's diagnostic analysis: the regulation of bodies and relations through the gaze of surveillance and the structuring of space.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Both as light within the prison, and an allusion to Enlightenment "light of reason".

<sup>64</sup> "[T]he relationship to the others of the other [...] to the other of the other, anyone who ventures near it will be threatened with loss of self (as same) [...] the other is the reverse, the negative of the properties of sameness; it overflows the unit of self-identity" (Irigaray, 1985a:335). The other as an authentic subject *on their own terms* thus represents a blind spot, and the threat of unknowingness. The (masculine) gaze must therefore reject the other and project only itself.

<sup>65</sup> I refer the reader to Bentham's *Panopticon Writings* (1995). The descriptions of the Panopticon are too lengthy, and too scattered across his many letters, to quote here. Concluding with Bentham here is at any rate intended only as an additional illustration, not as a central exposition.

<sup>66</sup> "Oversight" intended as a pun here: both to "overlook", "ignore", or "forget" its messy material origins, and to "oversee", "maintain", or "supervise" this detachment as a reigning descriptive and normative order.

<sup>67</sup> Theweleit, quoting Rudolf zur Lippe's account of the aforementioned historical Henry III ballet, refers to the increasing regulation of sight as the "geometricization of perception" (2010:317), which should in turn remind us of the modern "mechanisation" of the gaze by the sets, tracks, zooms, and cameras of cinematography.

In summation, Irigaray's investigation of the Western tradition demonstrates how its concept of reason is covertly self-referential and intolerant of absence or ambiguity, logocentric in its denial of the body, monological in its denial of "other" logics, and ultimately monosexual; and how this binary logic of negation operates in practice as the underlying logic of discrimination in the metaphysics of positive, solid substance and the ethics of male universalism. Her diagnosis thus identifies the pervasive and covert structuring of society on the basis of the *logic-of-the-one*, resulting in a monosubjective (Irigaray, 1995:12) world of men-amongst-themselves, in which the feminine is sacrificed as a subject with speaking terms, the maternal origin is erased in favour of self-identity and self-replication, and women only exist as commodities within a masculine economy of exchange. This concludes the first chapter, which served to contextualise and introduce her work both by grounding it historically and by providing the diagnostic reasons for her solution to be discussed in Chapter 2 below. We will again apply our three-pronged method in organising the material ahead. For ease of reference, we shall call Irigaray's solution, still to be defined, "Epistemology I" ("I" for "Irigaray") in contrast to Epistemology W.

## 2. CHAPTER 2: A SOLUTION: IRIGARAY'S SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

Deconstructing the patriarchal tradition is certainly indispensable, but it is hardly enough. It is necessary to define new values directly or indirectly suitable to feminine subjectivity and to feminine identity (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:10).

Social justice, and especially sexual justice, cannot be achieved without changing the laws of language and the conceptions of truths and values structuring the social order (Irigaray, 2007:14).

First the level that requires both a long-term perspective and an immediate response: changing the forms of symbolic mediation. This means, for example, changing not only the rules of speech and language [...] but also the habitual use of images that tend to portray men as respectable citizens [...] and consider women to be sexual property at the disposal of men (Irigaray, 1994:xvi).

In the second phase comprising her later work, Irigaray develops an alternative cosmology or theory of nature as a response to the ontological shortcomings in the metaphysics of solids found from Plato onwards, and as a response to the additional tendency to favour abstract rationality and representation over the corporeal substance of lived experience under the logic-of-the-one, both of which favoured a world of masculine mono-subjectivity. Her aim is to rehabilitate and redeem the negated, devalued feminine attributes written out as a *lack* under patriarchy, and positively reassert them not as replacements for men's own values, but as revalued attributed for women on equal footing in a duality, rather than a binary<sup>68</sup> – “A and B” rather than “A and not-A” (Deutscher, 2002:31-32). In doing so, she finds some common ground with the Pre-Socratics and, Alison Stone has argued, with German Romantic thinkers such as Hölderlin (Stone, 2009:8,41), the former of which is understandable given their emphasis on change and tactility, and the latter given the Post-Enlightenment emphasis on sentiment, the sublime, nature, and holism. Through Irigaray's diagnostic critique of Epistemology W, we have seen that the various social injustices women have been subjected to are the result of a symbolic (and consequently practical, lived) denial of intermediate and potentialising *space*. Since the potential presence of a disruptive, insurmountable “space” or *negative* between subjects in turn directly denies the possibility of oppressive binaries and sameness, and since the most direct way to realise space is through an assertion of *different* subjectivities, Irigaray's solution is to set up a system of *absolute difference* where such difference is non-hierarchical (non-vertical) and non-binary, and thus horizontal and dual instead – a negative between subjects that cannot be collapsed into one in a Hegelian synthesis. This would overcome the binary sameness of the logic-of-the-one, open a second space for ontologies and metaphysics that are not limited to solids, and of course provide a dual subjectivity that can account for the feminine experience as well.

However, in order for Irigaray to seriously maintain such a claim to subjective difference and duality, instituted as a symbolic and consequently cultural, social, political, ethical, and aesthetic system, she requires an appeal to bodily specificity<sup>69</sup> and duality, and as we shall see shortly, Irigaray believes this “bodily” specificity is best grounded in the “natural” difference of sex. Irigaray maintains that the natural and irreducible difference between men and women provides the most prevalent and primal example of that pure difference which is lacking in all current linguistic and socio-political systems, and is therefore the most suitable tool for rethinking social difference as a whole. Yet Irigaray is not interested in conventional understandings of “difference” which, for the most part, have functioned in a binary fashion; instead she requires radical alterity. The standard method of thinking difference is simply to say “I am different from you”, yet this is a problem precisely because it assumes a point of comparison (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:86; Irigaray, 2007:4) and that point of comparison has, historically, always been the male universal. For Irigaray, “I am different *from* you” is simply the first stage of rethinking

<sup>68</sup> Irigaray's duality, in opposition to the binary of the patriarchal logic-of-the-one, supports the existence of *two* subjects *on their own terms*, as opposed to one subject (historically, the male subject) taken as a point of reference, with the other as the negated *not*-male. In a duality, each subject has his and her own set of attributes not reducible to the other.

<sup>69</sup> Including the paradoxical “specificity” of fluid feminine *unspecificity*.

difference, and not a very satisfactory one. What is therefore sorely needed, Irigaray thinks, is a new language and system of symbolic-cultural exchange that allows us to firstly *recognise* the other as different *qua other* on their *own* terms (and thus ourselves authentically as well), and secondly, that allows us to *engage* the other in a respectful and productive manner. Furthermore, this proposed change in subjectivity and intersubjectivity needs to happen beyond mere negation, meaning it cannot simply offer the *opposite* or *negated* terms of that which it seeks to replace. In considering the transition towards her solution, Irigaray repeatedly reminds us that we cannot move from one system of cultural-symbolic exchange to another simply by negating or inverting the old one (Irigaray, 1985b:68,129-130,159; 2007:15; Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:11,64; Whitford 1991:12). Any such negation is dangerous because it resembles too closely that which we are trying to remove: the patriarchal logic-of-the-one which constructs binary values through negation. Put differently, a simple negation denies the intermediate space necessary for change and communication in Irigaray's new system. It runs the risk of nihilism, or cynical inaction under a lack of meaning-giving ideas, by not providing an adequate replacement (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:147) and thus leading to a vacuum of values. Moreover, any system without a new, productive *two-way* dialectic has the potential to produce only solipsistic subjects (2000b:156); one could easily read such a warning as a critique of Descartes. In light of this, Irigaray hopes that a restatement of the value of *sex*, being the primary source of radical difference, will provide an adequate solution.

For such an appeal to *sexual* bodily specificity, Irigaray's later constructive work is considered more problematic than her initial diagnostic work (Stone, 2009:2), following her shift towards what seems to be naïve realism and biological determinism, in contrast to her earlier more metaphorical disruptions which seemed to operate symbolically and mimetically. Indeed, her later work is the source of much criticism, especially with the accusation of essentialism levelled against her (Butler, 2007:41; Lehtinen, 2014:7-8; Stone, 2009:24-25; Whitford, 1991:14). The question of essentialism will be taken up after the exposition of Irigaray's subjects, towards the end of 2.1. Metaphysics of Fluids. The gulf between both the style and conclusions of Irigaray's earlier diagnostic work and her later constructive work is so marked that readers only familiar with the earlier *Speculum*, *This Sex*, and, to an extent, *Ethics*, will likely find it difficult to imagine why questions of essentialism, homo/transphobia, and polemicism can be raised.<sup>70</sup> However, in her later work Irigaray exchanges her initial poetic, disruptive style for language that is direct, free of metaphors, and often polemic in its insistence upon the truth of certain sweeping statements.<sup>71</sup> Irigaray also foregoes the habit of providing extensive quotes, close readings, and mimetic imitations of previous philosophers in her later work. Consequently, texts such as *Je, Tu, Nous* and *Democracy Begins Between Two* resemble manifestos rather than investigations, as a series of "increasingly blunt" (Stone, 2009:43), punctuated conclusions to her earlier work, presented in universalising conclusions without the context or substantiation of prior premises. This is unfortunate since it means that her later work, read on its own, can easily be misunderstood without the disruptive context of her earlier texts. Yet such "misunderstanding" is not entirely without reason, since her later work sets about providing new, specific generalised<sup>72</sup> definitions of "male" and "female", and *only* male and female, in heterosexual and *only* heterosexual terms, in the face of whatever scientific evidence may exist to the contrary, and in the face of homosexuality, transgenderism, and intersexuality.

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<sup>70</sup> Note that arguably the most influential introduction to Irigaray's work, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* by Margaret Whitford, was published in 1991 and only uses sources from the 1960s to 1980s. Of the thirty-seven odd primary sources used in that introduction, only four are from 1990 and 1991 together.

<sup>71</sup> The difference is so extreme that I initially considered ordering the indexed compendium (Appendix, page 116) according to these two chronological periods rather than concept, but I ultimately chose the latter. For those interested in exploring the dramatic contrast themselves, I recommend reading *Speculum* first and then *Je, Tu, Nous*. The latter sometimes reads like a defamatory diatribe against post-sex and transgenderism: "men engendering futuristically (in their intestines?): what next?" (Irigaray, 2007:127).

<sup>72</sup> This may seem to be a contradiction, but it is not. "Specific" refers to the selection of a *specific* property as an attribute of a "set" or individual, such as "women" having vaginas. "Generalisation" refers to the extension of this property to *all* individuals identified as "women". Written differently: "As a generalised rule, all women have the *specific* property X".

Nonetheless, before we explore the troubles and virtues of essentialism, let us first offer an account of how Irigaray defines her solution of “sexual difference”; that is, what she understands to be sexed and different between “men” and “women”. We will begin by briefly following Stone’s introduction to Irigaray’s sexed cosmology, before giving an account of men and women as manifestations of that cosmology. Thereafter, once the material has been introduced, I will provide a justification for my reading of Irigaray’s solution, in her *later works*, as realist and essentialist, insofar as her solution assumes the existence of two, and only two, types of sexed bodies with specific bodily (material) traits, and specific psychological or subjective traits derived causally from those bodies. This is important, since the greater portion of Part 2 (following the end of this chapter) will be dedicated to critiquing both Irigaray’s definition of sexed men and women, and the heteronormative consequences of such a definition. For now, suffice it to say that the account that follows will be treating Irigaray’s ontology as essentialist.

## 2.1. METAPHYSICS OF FLUIDS (EMPIRICAL)

[I]t seems to us, in fact, that we know all there is to be known about Classical knowledge if we understand that it is rationalistic, that, since Galileo and Descartes, it has accorded an absolute privilege to Mechanism, that it presupposes a general ordering of nature, that it accepts the possibility of an analysis sufficiently radical to discover elements or origins, but that it already has a presentiment, beyond and despite all these concepts of understanding, of the movement of life, of the density of history, and of the disorder, so difficult to master, in nature (Foucault, 2002:330).

Now if we examine the properties of fluids, we note that this “real” may well include, and in large measure, *a physical reality* that continues to resist adequate symbolisation and/or that signifies the powerlessness of logic to incorporate in its writing all the characteristic features of nature (Irigaray, 1985b:106-107).

How can we work out a problematic of place that would involve not cutting or annihilation but a rhythmic becoming in relation to place? (Irigaray, 1993:42).

Solid mechanics [metaphysics of solids] and rationality [logic-of-the-one] have maintained a relationship of very long standing [Epistemology W], one against which fluids [Epistemology I] have never stopped arguing (Irigaray, 1985b:113).

As we saw in 1.1. above, the Pre-Socratic philosophers favoured descriptions of ontological fluidity and tactile sensation in their cosmologies. For them, matter is comprised of “bodies” that are “hot”, or “moist”, and constantly in flux. Change therefore indicates not a failure on the part of material, earthly bodies (as in Plato), but rather indicate the processual nature of reality itself. It could be argued that Irigaray derives inspiration from this tradition (Lehtinen 2014:100; Stone, 2009:41) in developing her own processual cosmology. Stone reads the later Irigaray as presenting a theory of nature and the cosmos that relies on *rhythm* and an alternation between double poles; resulting in an *ontology of process* rather than a collection of static, ontic substances. For instance, consider the following direct allusions by Irigaray:

[T]here is a rhythmic pulse which beats between going out towards the other and returning to the self, between extending oneself as far as the other and returning to dwell within the self, between coming out into the light and going back into the darkness, into the invisibility of interiority, into the mystery of alterity. This movement resembles that of the heart, of the circulation of blood, but also that of the cosmos itself which exists between expansion and concentration. It is true of the entire universe, but can already be seen in the sap of the plant world, in the behaviour of animals, just as in the movement of the sea, in the alternating of the seasons, in the respective intensities of the light and of the heat of the sun, in the cycles of humidity and dryness, of the winds, of the cyclones (Irigaray, 2000a:111-112).

We live in a different world in which the relation with oneself, with the other, with the universe is not the same (Irigaray, 2002a:84).

[W]omen cannot submit to the same rhythms as men (Irigaray, 1994:62).

The result of this constant bipolarity, which, importantly, pervades all of nature in Irigaray’s view, is a state of constant *fluidity* and *exchange* between the two poles, where neither pole engulfs the other, yet constantly creates new shapes between them. Consequently, “[i]nsofar as this rhythmic bipolarity inherent in all natural processes and phenomena makes them “sexuate”, this is because this bipolarity approximates in structure to human sexual difference” (Stone, 2009:90); that is, “[h]umans must naturally be sexually dual, then, because nature’s overall organisation requires this” (2009:89). The “natural” difference between poles is thus expressed in the “natural”, and most productive, difference between the two poles of human sexuality, male and female, in sexual difference. In humans, Irigaray refers to this as “rhythmic becoming in relation to place” (Irigaray, 1993:42), citing the “rhythms of the flesh” (1993:162), and especially “[woman’s] relation to the cyclical” (1993:64). The result of this processual cosmology in which a natural, universal rhythm ensures the exchange of substances such as

air and water between two irreducible poles, is a view of bipolar, dimorphic human bodies and sexuality as causally determined by the cosmos at large, being a small-scale manifestation of larger rhythms and processes (Stone, 2009:91). The cosmos then is a cyclical ontology of returns and exchanges, and because of this constant *development* it can sustain life – it is not *inert* or reducible to “one”. The preference for double poles, and the necessity of *both* for the cosmos to function, provides a solution to the binary logic-of-the-one in which certain values were negated or denied.<sup>73</sup> With the notion of the “process”, however, those values can be redeemed and reinstated, as in, for example, night, darkness, and fluidity: day follows night, again followed by day, and so on; *both* are necessary and exist equally. This processual becoming also allows Irigaray to situate *growth* (necessarily the product of a *process*) in the interactive space between two different poles, or in humans, between men and women, since, again, nothing can emerge from the domination of any one element, or from a lack of process or *becoming*. Out of this cosmology, Irigaray develops a theory of human subjectivity as split between men and women.

At this point I *strongly* urge the reader to scan through the “Definition of ‘Man’” and “Definition of ‘Woman’” sections in the appended Irigaray index (Appendix, pages 117-119), before proceeding.

[M]an and woman: we are two. How is this two to be articulated in the relationship with these natural rhythms? (Irigaray, 2000a:112).

I start from reality, from a universal reality: sexual difference (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:146).

[I]n humanity at large, there are only men and women of different ages (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:181).

In the entire world, there exists only men and women (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:167).

[H]e means *he*, *she* means *she*. *He* and *she* cannot be reduced to complementary functions but correspond to different identities (Irigaray, 2007:42).

Insofar as sexed humans are simply sexed expressions of a larger sexed *cosmos*, and therefore must conform to this sexed and dynamic dual ontology as microcosmic manifestations of macrocosmic processes, Irigaray’s thought here might remind us, with brief irony, of Plato’s forms in which earthly copies “participate” in ideal forms. Of course the comparison is not entirely accurate since Irigaray’s thought does not make use of Plato’s metaphysical dualism and rationalism. Instead Irigaray’s *cosmos* is one of physical process rather than abstract order, harking back to our earlier discussion of Heraclitus in which there are no separate ontic beings, but only ontological becoming. In Irigaray’s theory then, we might imagine the sexed “becomings” of humans as spinoffs of natural processes in much the same manner as smaller, secondary turbulent vortices form in the wake of fluids as an object passes through them. She does not however present us with a clear step-by-step schema for understanding the derivation of sexed subjects from this conception of nature (Stone, 2009:89), but I would like to suggest that it is reasonable to assume that it follows roughly three steps: the first is the existence of a processual, rhythmic (and in that sense, *sexed*) cosmos, from which we may derive, secondly, sexed bodies that imitate this reality, which in turn, thirdly, directly cause sexually-dual subjectivities, behaviours, and relations to the world, as we will see below. The symbolic order exists at the end of this corporeal chain as a representational order established by one or both of the subjects so as to encode and enforce their particular subjectivity in culture and society. For Irigaray, the presence of such a cultural order is of great importance since, unlike the rest of nature, it is here that *humans*, as creatures

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<sup>73</sup> Since, as we saw in Chapter 1, the logic-of-the-one, which privileged self-identity, self-reference, and the male subject(ivity) did not allow for such exchange and development, perpetuating only itself; similar to Plato’s “forms” which sought to establish a *single*, immutable, self-identical “master-copy” of a multiplicity of imperfect earthly forms. Irigaray’s duality not only disrupts the privilege accorded to the model of *singularity*, but also institutes a more fluid understanding of change as a *relational interplay* rather than the striving toward a single, abstractly defined goal.

that can actively shape their environment, are able to express and therefore preserve their sexually-dual identities (Stone, 2009:89,91). For instance, as we saw previously in Chapter 1, this bipolar process went awry when sexed men with subsequent masculine subjectivities produced the logic-of-the-one as a result of, and as a reflection of their *own* embodiment;<sup>74</sup> denying the same process for women and their feminine subjectivities, and thus enshrining in the dominant (patriarchal) culture only one half of the sexed, processual, dual cosmos, ostensibly resulting in stasis and death. We have already briefly outlined the first stage, the cosmos of *objects*. Of the last two stages for *subjects*, the second consists simply of human subjects being *bodily dimorphic*, leaving the third stage to be outlined.

Irigaray's move from the second to third stage, from bodily shape to subjectivity (or shall we say from sex to gender), is again causal, insofar as it generalises a set of different subjective tendencies (certain types of relations, such as caring subject-subject relations, or behavioural patterns and preferences) as the result of a particular anatomy (being, for instance *sexed* as "woman"); Butler (2007:41) describes it as an "effort to derive a specific female sexuality from a specific female anatomy", and Stone (2009:95) also points out that "although Irigaray claims that these differences in 'relational identity' fundamentally comprise a sexual difference and, therefore, that this difference is not biological, she always traces differences in relational identity back to differences between men's and women's bodies". In contrast to most modern understandings of sexual identity, Irigaray does not draw a neat distinction between sex and gender here (the biological anatomy of the body, and the behavioural, social, relational roles expected of that specific body), instead calling openly for "a *theory of gender as sexed* and a rewriting of [...] rights" (Irigaray, 2007:5). In calling for gender to be *sexed*, rather than the other way about, Irigaray is calling for the return of categories of subjectivity to their material roots, or for the materiality of a particular set of bodily features to be the determining factor in defining subjective relations with the world and other subjects.<sup>75</sup> Here Irigaray also tells us that "the brain is sexed" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:44), and that "[i]t is interesting to note that the manifestation of gender is assured by particular chromosomes, different in women and in men, whose effect is not exclusively somatic. The safeguarding of life would be in some way dependent on chromosomes" (2000b:153).<sup>76</sup> As the most direct proof, Irigaray informs us that "[m]en and women are corporeally different. This biological difference leads to others: in constructing subjectivity, in connecting to the world, in relating" (2000b:95), tying psychology to the body in a deterministic fashion. In other words then, following the move from a bipolar cosmos to dimorphic bodies, Irigaray draws a directly causal and deterministic link between bodily anatomy and subjectivity, which can be seen most clearly where such subjectivity manifests itself in a particular symbolic, or *representation of reality*.

For instance, Irigaray tells us that "[o]ur culture is entirely grounded on logic, where being and thinking coincide" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:137), establishing a direct link between the patriarchal order, and the body of the patriarchal *subject*, the man, in which they stand in a direct relation to one another. For men, the anatomical penis, since it is rigid, linear (unidirectional), and self-identical (unlike the labia, which are *two* despite being considered one feature), translates symbolically into the phallus, and mediates relations through its binary logic. This self-identity, taking the subject-penis as the only point of reference, means that the penis, by determining the shape of experience to be self-referential and rigid, causally determines that the subsequent relations and behaviour men have towards the world will necessarily be of the unequal subject-object type, with the man-penis as the subject and everything else, including the woman, as the object. Thus the male world, determined by the penis or lack thereof and then mediated through the binary, self-identical phallus derived from the penis, is everywhere tainted by this particular bias. In classical logic, the principle of identity is taken as problematic by Irigaray, since it is

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<sup>74</sup> Irigaray does not consider the possibility that men may have been *disadvantaged* by their own patriarchal logic-of-the-one, as women have been. This is a topic I will briefly address in Chapter 3.3. Ethical Implications of Part 2, in the critique of Irigaray.

<sup>75</sup> Importantly, this means that the sexed term "woman" (or "female") and gendered term "feminine" are relatively interchangeable for Irigaray, since gendered subjectivity is tied to a sexed body in a close relationship.

<sup>76</sup> Immediately invalidating Stone's claim (2009:107) that "[a]fter all, for her, being (say) female does not require having XX chromosomes, ovaries, and female genitalia".

a metaphor of man's flight from his mother (that which is *other* than the self) (Irigaray, 1989:194), and similarly the principle of non-contradiction ostensibly maintains the suppression of the other by insisting that nothing exists outside the "man or not-man" binary (1989:196). Drawing subjective relations again from the penis, since "man needs an instrument to touch himself with: a hand, a woman" (Irigaray, 1985a:232), it follows that "*contact between 'things' is of very little importance to the [...] man*" (1985a:349), resulting, again, necessarily in the fact that "[m]en [...] prefer the subject-object relation, the production of pieces of work rather than respect for the world as it already exists, the use of instruments, the relationships between one and an imprecisely defined multiple" (Irigaray, 2000a:15). Since this representational order is one of binaries, objects, and production, it also follows that "what they are interested in above all is money, competition for power" (Irigaray, 2007:51) since they naturally have "war instincts, the desire to possess and capitalise in order to assert their power" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:65). In short, "[m]ost of them are only finally satisfied once they can play about with noisy machines" (Irigaray, 2007:57). By virtue of their relation to their own self-identical, protruding, rigid anatomy, which determines their view of the world and subsequently their relation to others, these "warlike" (Irigaray, 1994:5) men, and *all* such men, and *only* men, are thus interested solely through their "war instincts" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:65) in objects, money, power, aggression, noise, and domination. In Irigaray's view, the male is a subject "[w]ho never grows up" (1993:145). Irigaray's view of men, presented here entirely in her *later* work, is crude enough to make even the insensitive reader clench their jaw, and I must take pains here to add that her definition is not simply due to the possibility that the *old patriarchal order itself* paints an incomplete picture of men, or that Irigaray reads men sympathetically as *equally misrepresented* under the traditional logic. Irigaray takes these definitions seriously and uncritically, and makes it clear throughout her oeuvre that Epistemology W represents men *well*; it is *women* who are misrepresented under it. Most tellingly, she also retains the above description of men through Epistemology W across the entirety of her later work in which she presents a *new* social order. The men defined in her own post-patriarchal society are still those from the logic-of-the-one; they have simply been presented with a balancing counterpart in the form of a separate female subject under Epistemology I; they have not been replaced or problematized.

This female counterpart receives a more favourable treatment given the rehabilitation of those values suppressed under patriarchy. Even though male and female represent the two natural poles of sexual difference, Irigaray believes that women represent the processual nature of the cosmos more accurately than men (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:149). For Irigaray, the feminine "moves in harmony with the fecundity of nature [...] Tuned differently to the rhythm of the earth and the stars. Intimately tied to universal circulation and vibration" (1993:195), in a way that ensures she "experiences menstruation, her periods, as continuously related to cosmic time, to the moon, the sun, the tides" (Irigaray, 2007:108). In other words, woman's "becoming has its own specific often cyclical, temporality linked to cosmic rhythms" (Irigaray, 1994:25). Therefore, "time in a woman's life is particularly irreversible, and [...] compared to men's time, it is less suited to the repetitive, entropic" (Irigaray, 2007:108). Seeing as women's vaginas represent a sex organ that is *not* self-identical like the penis, but instead a set of *differential* lips in constant contact, the female body therefore "does not have the same relation to exteriority as the male" (Irigaray, 1993:63), which again in turn determines a particular relational *subjectivity*. For one, "[w]oman takes more pleasure from touching than from looking" (Irigaray, 1985b:26), and this tactile relationship means that "[h]er sexuality, always at least double, goes even further: it is plural [...] woman has sex organs more or less everywhere. She finds pleasure almost anywhere" (Irigaray, 1985a:28), the result of "the *multiplicity of genital erogenous zones* (assuming that the qualifier 'genital' is still required) in female sexuality" (Irigaray, 1985b:64). This non-self-identical *diffusion* translates into intersubjective relations as well. Unlike men, "[w]omen, in fact, privilege intersubjectivity, relationship with the other gender, the relationship of being-two, the physical, and, particularly, the natural environment" (Irigaray, 2000a:15); they prefer dialogue (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:37) and are more interested in the other sex, in place, in qualities of people (Irigaray, 1994:49), rather than hierarchical competitions between people in contrast to "man [who] defines himself in relation to his house or his neighbour's, his car or any other means of transport, the number of miles he's covered, the number of matches he's played [...] Man doesn't concern himself with improving the quality of man" (Irigaray, 2007:77). Women are thus inherently relational in the sense of being reciprocally

social, and relational towards *subjects* rather than objects (Irigaray, 2002b:147). And lastly, given the fact that “for women, dichotomous oppositions didn’t make sense as they did for men, at least not without a radical submission to the phallic” (Irigaray, 1989:197), we can deduce that women are not suited to classical logic or mathematics as standardly practiced; instead “[i]nterior decorating [...] should meet with their approval” (Irigaray, 2000a:148), or else “if [woman] did not have to feed herself and procreate [...] woman could live in love indefinitely” (Irigaray, 1993:64).

The result of this Irigarayan dimorphism is a culture of two (and only two) subjects who are radically different and represent complementary properties in a bipolar cosmos: women prefer cycles, change, care, intersubjectivity, and nature; men prefer linear explosive (ejaculative) time, culture, the subjection of nature to industrialised production, exchanging goods, and war. It is of vital importance to note here, both to understand Irigaray’s insistence on *difference* and for our critique later on, that Irigaray maintains that crossover or gender-blending between the sexes is both impossible and undesirable since it would disrupt the bipolarity of absolute difference (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:91; 2004:70-71). For Irigaray, *all* persons are cisgender and *only* cisgender. It should be clear how these subjects fit into a processual cosmology as opposite poles, necessary for “safeguarding the universal relation between two singularities, as is that between man and woman” (Irigaray, 2000a:9). As a result of their “irreducible” (Irigaray, 1985a:139; 1993:13; Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:58) strangeness to one another, there exists an “insurmountable difference” (Irigaray, 2000a:7; Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:106), interval, space, or *ontological negative* between men and women (and only men and women, on account of their privileged difference). The “ontological” here refers to the subjective dimension of *becoming* through the possession of a (specifically sexed) body. “Negative” indicates that the horizons of the two sexually different ontologies do not significantly overlap or dominate each other, but that the other sex represents a mystery *on their own terms*. This negative is not merely bodily, material, or *descriptive*, but also relational, ethical, and *prescriptive*. In being two, neither can overpower the other, and both are necessary for the cyclical, processual exchange to be fecund and (pro)creative; consequently, “this couple can represent the first stone in a ‘renewal of the democratic and moral foundations’” (Irigaray, 2000a:25), and “[t]his couple embodies the ultimate concrete reality of the community” (2000a:26), since it is between men and women that desire exists (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:114); that is, for Irigaray desire exists between *difference* and not sameness.

Having expounded Irigaray’s cosmology and her subjects within it, I would now like to stand apart for a moment (beginning the trend of largely independent critique to be taken up later in Part 2), as indicated in the introduction to this section, and justify my reading of Irigaray as essentialist here.

Claims are frequently made by advocates of Irigaray’s theory that her “sexual difference” is not *sex* difference (biologically defined) or *gender* difference (socially/behaviourally defined), but a reference to positions defined within the *symbolic* order (or presently *not* defined), or that her sexual difference refers to an *ontological* rather than a material, ontic difference, and that Irigaray thus does not fall into essentialism (Du Toit, 2015:12,17; Stone, 2009:4; Whitford, 1991:14). For instance, Caldwell (2002:17) suggests that “the fundamental premise that concepts must reduce materiality to function”, and thus to biological determinism, does not necessarily apply to Irigaray’s fluid use of sexed concepts. Deutscher (2002:111) proposes that Irigaray’s work does not essentialise biological sexual difference but rather identifies a lack of sex in the Western tradition and thus demonstrates how it is, in fact, the traditional *logos* that has enacted essentialism with its concept of the “lack” or *absence*. Irigaray’s use of “sex” and “difference” in sex is thus held to be either an abstract *representational* issue, or, insofar as it refers to the *real*, an existential and phenomenological rather than biological issue. This defence is certainly true of the early Irigaray in *Speculum* and *This Sex*, who is interested in (mis)representations of feminine subjectivity in the history of Western thought, and the hierarchical negation maintained by the logic-of-the-one underpinning Western rationality.<sup>77</sup> But the Irigaray of *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* and recent

<sup>77</sup> From Irigaray’s early work, consider: “What I want, in fact, is not to create a theory of woman, but to secure a place for the feminine within sexual difference” (Irigaray, 1985b:159), and:

“I refuse to let myself be locked into a single ‘group’ within the women’s liberation movement Especially if such a group [...] purports to determine the ‘truth’ of the feminine, to legislate what it means to ‘be a woman’” (1985b:166).

works such as *Why Different?* and *Je, Tu, Nous* moves away from a purely symbolic position into a position that seeks to provide a corporeal basis for sexual difference through an appeal to concepts such as the “real”, “nature”, and the “cosmos” (Stone, 2009:5,39).<sup>78</sup> This shift follows from her realisation that simply rehabilitating feminine identity within the symbolic order does nothing to challenge the phallogentrism of the order *itself*, nor does it overcome the covert culture-over-nature (reason-over-body) hierarchy implicit in such an order regardless of its oppressive or liberated content, since the very idea of the symbolic, or recourse to it, always privileges language and representation over ontology and becoming.

We may therefore read Irigaray’s theory of “men” and “women” in one of three ways: firstly, as concerned purely with symbolic representation rather than factual claims about corporeal experience; secondly, as concerned not merely with representations but mainly with the facts of lived experience in an essentialist sense (ontic, material); and thirdly, as concerned with the facts of lived experience in a non-essentialist *phenomenological* sense (ontological, existential). Let me respond briefly to these readings.

Regarding symbolic representation, as a deconstructive *critique* Irigaray’s work can certainly be defended as concerned purely with symbolic representation rather than biological determinism. As Irigaray (1985b:162) reminds us, “from a feminine locus nothing can be articulated without a questioning of the symbolic itself”. Yet as a constructive *solution* to that critique, Irigaray can no longer be concerned merely with symbolic rehabilitation and thus it is likely that her theory steps out of the purely representational realm and enters into pronouncement on bodily facts. Irigaray would likely reject a language of abstract hypotheticals (a “gappy” language of absent or variable referents where “male” and “female” are interchangeable<sup>79</sup> or simply conjectural, or where a third term exists to replace them) since such a language echoes the disembodied abstractions of Epistemology W and the logic-of-the-one, and it privileges sign over referent. Indeed, Irigaray warns us that “[a] social and political order which is not founded on the real is precarious, and even dangerous. All the imaginary disturbances, all the authoritarian deviations, all the cultural regressions are possible here” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:149).<sup>80</sup> Take for instance, the following direct comment by Irigaray on essentialism/social construction in a chapter titled “Feminine Identity: Biology or Social Conditioning?”, from her *later* work *Democracy Begins Between Two*:

The question as to whether belonging to a gender is the effect of a biological destiny or of social conditioning fails to take into account the fact that being or becoming a woman means acquiring a civil dimension which is appropriate to ‘feminine identity’, a culture which corresponds to one’s own body and specific genealogy, one’s own way of loving and of procreating (Irigaray, 2000a:36).

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<sup>78</sup> From her later work, consider the change to: “The sameness of women, among women” (Irigaray, 1993:115);

“Insofar as they are citizens, women are in some sense equivalent” (Irigaray, 2000a:11); and “Differences between women [are] linked to different stories but not to a different relationship with being or identity” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:84), and are thus existential but not contingent. For Irigaray, the bodily phenomenology of women is uniform among themselves.

<sup>79</sup> “The most irreducible space is between woman and man [...] the impossibility of their reciprocal substitution” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:58); “man’s and woman’s subjectivity are both inexchangeable” (2000b:118). Note also the use of the word “most” in the first quote. This directly implies that spaces between men and men or women and women (in homosexual relations, for example) are *less* irreducible, and thus more unstable and open to domination, or regression to domineering “sameness”, than heterosexual “difference”, on Irigaray’s view. This is clearly heteronormative, and we will discuss this more in Chapter 3.

<sup>80</sup> Irigaray’s concern is reasonable. Similar concerns about representations not being grounded in reality arise elsewhere with propositions that are unverifiable, unfalsifiable, or contradictory (*ex falso quodlibet*). Given her views on not only the *existence* of sexual types, but also those types having stable *properties*, by “real” Irigaray means the reality of physicality of a body *as sexed*, either male or female. In other words, a social order premised upon the recognition of sexed features.

Irigaray here suggests again that a social order and the recognition of a sexed identity (male/female) is necessary to cultivate the full expression of a *sexed* subjectivity tied to (“appropriate to”) a particular sexed body. This however does not solve the essentialism/constructionism problem posed above, nor does she explain *why* she considers it a pseudo-problem by dismissing it as a “failure” which does not take her own position (the need for sexed social identities reflecting sexed bodies) into account.<sup>81</sup> In fact, it seems as though Irigaray merely reverts to the original problematic concepts. In explaining why it is neither nature nor nurture, she simply appeals to a “civil dimension” (nurture) appropriate to “feminine identity” (nature), in a way that respects the body and procreation (nature). In short, she suggests that feminine identity is shaped by nature *and this requires full expression in culture*; a form of essentialism seems to be the answer in her *later* work. We may therefore assume that Irigaray’s definition of sexed subjects is not simply a symbolic project aware of its own socially constructed limits<sup>82</sup> - indeed elsewhere she explicitly rejects the possibility that the subject can be constructed through discourse (Irigaray, 1985b:89; 1993:216; 2007:42-43; Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:11,75).

Irigaray does not always speak of subjects only as *becoming*, processually, through rhythms that require certain symbolic representations in order to fully develop and express themselves. Certainly Irigaray never speaks of men as becoming, but only as static entities restricted to aggressive release and stasis, implying a tension or contradiction in her proposal of fluid becoming. Throughout her work, Irigaray instead speaks of men and women *already as men and women acting according to certain roles*. If we are to take the claim seriously that she is not an essentialist and that she does not prescribe set roles for men and women based on biological “facts”, then we should not be able to find references to “male” or “female” as nouns in her language at all, but only references to various subjectivities that are continually in flux and *not* determined by bodily types. Her duality would have to relinquish terms such as “male” and “female” which seek to designate sexually specific bodies. Yet even if we assume for a moment that her essentialist appeals to biological materiality are, in fact, metaphorical and strategic, the negative parameters (if not the positive content) are such that bodies in her system still organise themselves into two groups which exclude one another. We are still left with “metaphorical” men and women, and *only* those two. And these, conveniently for Irigaray, still have the same anatomy as their non-metaphorical biological versions. In other words, whether she starts with the material body or not, and whether she is a biological essentialist or not, Irigaray still ends up with exactly the same categories as before, reliably linked to certain anatomical features, and moreover she *enforces* these categories and denies the possibility of crossover.<sup>83</sup> There is no-one in Irigaray’s category “woman” who has a penis, and there is no-one in her category “man” who is not aggressive. And there is no-one outside these two. How, then, are her categories *not* the original stereotypes, and how are they *not* corporeally marked? One can demonstrate the fact that her categories are materially specific in another manner by begging the contrary question: what could Irigaray mean if *not* “male” and “female” as physically sexed subjects with penises and vaginas, respectively? If Irigaray intended her subjects to be sexually “disembodied” (that is, if she is *not* essentialist and intended the terms “female” and “male” to refer to *rhythms* open to anyone and not sexually specific *bodies*) then by definition she could not have a system of sexual “difference”, let alone “two” subjects to begin with, as there are no fixed referents nor any that are different. If “woman/female” does not contain specific markers of identity, such as the lips of the vagina, that is, if

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<sup>81</sup> Tellingly, we will encounter several dismissals by Irigaray of contrary readings as “failures”, most notably in the section 3.3. Ethical Implications.

<sup>82</sup> To clarify – she certainly acknowledges that this social construction *can* and *has* created identities under power relations within the patriarchal order; that, after all, is the point of her entire diagnostic project, identifying the misrepresentation of women under the masculine symbolic. But those were limited and *inauthentic* identities. They excluded the feminine body by not drawing their source from the material Real. On Irigaray’s view then, the material/corporeal facts of embodiment supply the only accurate and ethically significant markers of identity. Social construction is thus not the origin of identity, although socially enshrined identities can still exist “after the fact” within an Irigarayan society in, for instance, the law.

<sup>83</sup> That is, she uses sweeping qualifiers such as “all” and “only” to create generalisations that state *all* persons are either male or female, and *only* male or female; and she uses this cisgender assumption as the basis for subjects coupled in a *heterosexual* relation (since *different* poles are necessary for exchange, development, and becoming, as we have already discussed).

the category has no limited definition or connotation, then Irigaray is essentially contradicting herself since this means “anything goes” and any denotation will be true. If no constraint is applied to the concept “woman”, then this means by (lack of) definition that auto-affective men with penises can be women in Irigaray’s new system. Yet this is clearly not what Irigaray is arguing.

This conclusion by negation as it were, along with the positive ontological content given to definitions of “male” and “female” by Irigaray herself, strongly suggests that Irigaray’s definition of sexed human embodiment is deterministically essentialist in its approach and heteronormative in its content. In formal terms, the traditional and Irigarayan concepts of “sex” might not be *intensionally equivalent*, but they are still *extensionally equivalent*.<sup>84</sup> Whether or not we define “female” as “not-male”, “not-(not-male)”, or “ontologically processual and ambiguous human”, Irigaray’s system still yields “human being with female reproductive organs” as the referent; since the defining features of “femininity” are, for her, linked to menstruation, birth, and mothering. Therefore, regardless of whether the connotations of Irigaray’s notion of “sex” are the same or different from traditional “sex”, the denotation remains the same. This casts into doubt the radicalism of her theory, and lends support to the reading of her (later) work as essentialist. It also implies that arguments which defend Irigaray’s categories of sex as “open” follow the same problematic format as the following example:

“There are two and only two separate cities in South Africa that comprise the executive and legislative centres respectively; one is called the ‘City of Jacarandas’ and the other is where the Parliament is located, but we cannot say that they are Pretoria and Cape Town”.

Irigaray explicitly tells us that not only do two (and *only* two) “cities” exist, but that these cities have different and specific properties. To insist that ‘Jacaranda City’ is not ‘Pretoria’ is akin to insisting that ‘subject with womb, breasts, labia, and menstrual or lactating potential’ is not ‘female’, and clearly something is awry in such an insistence.<sup>85</sup> For these reasons, it is safer to assume that when Irigaray uses words such as “sex”, “male”, “female”, and “body”, she is referring to something stable, tangible, coherent, and non-substitutable. We can assume, then, that Irigaray’s representational model of reality aims at tying word to object by saying something (ostensibly) true about the material existence of sexed embodiment, and the way that embodiment in turn defines subjectivity, which in turn, defines a particular relation to the symbolic, to language, culture, and representations. The result is a definition of (double) subjectivity that is generalizable and *positively specific*, rather than generalizable yet minimally, negatively non-specific. In order for such a definition to be applicable to *all* men and women in *all* situations (and again, *only* men and women), it must have in its connotation some stable, coherent, and generalizable property for universal application; that much is entailed in the requirements of making truth claims about “*all x*”.

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<sup>84</sup> Please note the technical use of “intension” without a “t”, referring to “connotation”, paired with “extension” referring to “denotation”.

<sup>85</sup> Except, of course, for transgender, intersex, and transsexual persons. But Irigaray does not acknowledge the existence of such bodies, and, given her own appeal to the “standard” properties of “women”, we may assume for her “female” means “sexed female”, and that the word is not a variable placeholder.

## 2.2. HORIZONTAL LOGIC-OF-THE-TWO (EPISTEMOLOGICAL)

I want to think and I don't want simply to submit myself to the traditional categories of logic (Irigaray quoted in Hirsh *et al.*, 1995:100).

In order to question the universal subject, it is necessary to approach another logic. The only logic that can guarantee a rational and universal foundation is that which starts from the reality of two genders, masculine and feminine (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:146).

It's a matter of questioning the foundations of Western rationality and asking yourself why a syllogism is thought to be more rational than respect for nature [...] why is our rationality historically based on abstract logical categories rather than on a culture of experience (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:73).

It is unfortunate to note that Irigaray does not provide us with a fleshed-out account of a horizontal<sup>86</sup> logic-of-the-two as a formal language, logic, or representational system in response to the old logic-of-the-one, and consequently our investigation here, meant to mirror that in section 1.2., will be very short. Yet this should not be taken as a disadvantage. As with her poetic style (at least in her earlier works), the choice of not supplying us with a new language is deliberate, and is aimed at highlighting both the constraints of working within the conception of reason given by Epistemology W, and the gap this rationality creates in the possibility of producing new work. If we may appeal to metaphor for a moment here, Irigaray has given us a ladder with which to see that, in fact, the maze of Western language in which we roam has walls and a final boundary, beyond which the rest of the countryside still sprawls. We are currently still so used to the binary imperatives of the maze – left, right, no, dead-end, start again – that we would be ill-suited to defining a *new* logic from within its walls. Such a language must come from beyond the horizons of our current symbolic order, and since that Order defines everything from our culture to rationality, a new language requires a complete Kuhnian paradigm shift. It is therefore a language *of the possible*, “a language that we still don't know, that is yet to be created” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:131).

However, hints as to the shape of this new language can nonetheless be found in Irigaray's work. To begin with, it must start from, and represent, the doubling of subjectivity. We know that under the masculine categories and binary logic of the previous order, woman was interpreted as a lack, a commodity, a sexual hole, or a space for the use of men – in childbirth or intercourse. Male subjectivity, in other words, *causally determined* the content and structure of the language by reflecting men's bodily corporeality and relational attitudes: the self-identity of the phallus (Irigaray, 1985a:42,44), the rigidity of the penis (Irigaray, 1985b:113), the preference for unequal subject-object relations (Irigaray, 2000a:152-153), autoeroticism (Irigaray, 1985a:32); in short, “representation designated as presence” (1985a:247).<sup>87</sup> This masculine representational order could neither represent women, nor allow them to represent themselves, since the existence of their feminine subjectivity was denied, and they were given no means of expressing this lack.

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<sup>86</sup> In opposition to the “vertical” logic-of-the-one. The patriarchal logic, as we saw, operated according to binary hierarchies, which may be described as “vertical” insofar as they privileged one value and suppressed others. A “horizontal” logic-of-the-two, on the other hand, places each subject *beside the other*, so to speak, by maintaining an insuperable difference between them in order to prevent suppression of one by the other.

<sup>87</sup> Recall the notions of “solidity”, “positive presence”, and horror of the vacuum explored in section 1.1. *Metaphysics of Solids*.

On the other hand:

Doubling, which corresponds to a reality, implies a different way of speaking, a *dialogical* way which takes into consideration both man's way and woman's way of speaking. Such a language doesn't conform to traditional Western logic, with its complement: poetry. It unfolds between two modes of speaking, two languages, man's and woman's. The exchange between these two subjects creates a third language (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:131).

A new Irigarayan language, then, would require feminine subjectivity to receive equal representation *on its own terms*. Examples of this would include encouraging women to speak *among themselves* without the use of masculine grammar (especially in Romance languages such as Irigaray's native French),<sup>88</sup> reintroducing feminine corporeal events such as menstruation and lactation into discourse, since these are what mothers and daughters need to speak to each other about as they share the same bodies (2000b:32), returning meaning to material things rather than abstract ideals, since "[f]or us women, meaning remains concrete, close, related to what is natural, to perceptible forms" (Irigaray, 2007:104), relinquishing binary either/or categories (Irigaray, 1989:197), and having the opportunity to talk *with* subjects rather than *about* subjects as *objects*, since women prefer relationality over domination (Irigaray, 2000a:152). A good example of the last suggestion in practice is Irigaray's interesting use of "I love to you" instead of "I love you":

'I Love to You' means: I don't take you as an object of my love or desire. I love you as irreducibly other. I keep a 'to' as an inalienable space between us, a guarantor of your freedom and mine [...] in order to avoid any amorous possession of consumption [...] I will never entirely know you and that to love you implies respecting the mystery that you will always be for me (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:81).

The *to* is the place where the intention of the one and the other can meet (2000b:90).

Especially as regards the "to", "space between", "mystery", and "meet", this new language both creates and inhabits, without oppression but as a mediator, a *space between* the current limits of both masculine and feminine subjectivity: it is the liminal meeting place of two horizons, and as such represents an interval, or a negative, that cannot be overcome since it secures difference between the two subjects. This "space" between is therefore the condition of possibility for the Irigarayan language. Such a language would closely resemble poetry, introducing "a new age of thought, art, poetry, and language: the creation of a new *poetics*" (Irigaray, 1993:5), and she does state (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:134) that her method refuses to "split abstract logic on the one hand, and poetry on the other".

Finally, one last insight comes in the form of the following: "sensible representation is our primary method of figuration and communication" (Irigaray, 2007:104). By "our", Irigaray is referring to women of course, but I think that is unfair given the potential of "sensible representation" and the fact that all humans can sense and represent. This phrase represents something of a paradox: "material abstraction" would be a similar phrase, or "physical language". But paradoxes are fruitful since they reveal the limits of reason. Indeed, those of us who are synaesthetes, author included, should recognise that "sensible representation" is only a paradox if we assume that there is a difference between black and white markings on a page and, for instance, the movement of limbs or the apprehension of colour when reading symbols. For some, there is no difference between colour tones and sound tones since they reliably trigger one another, or between "abstract" words on a page and the perception of movement triggered by those. For those of us with blended senses, language always already "appears" to us outside the merely abstract or conceptual (beyond the intension of words or symbols), as we may experience a text as a rainbow of colour and personalities,<sup>89</sup> and consequently the meaning of words is always diffuse and not limited to their actual connotations and denotations. "Sensible representation" suggests that a new language, again not restricted merely to women in this sense, could be something like *dance*, or

<sup>88</sup> A language of I-she / you-he and I-he / you-she, such that masculine pronouns do not dominate subjectivity and there is a clear separation between male and female (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:37;86-87).

<sup>89</sup> I can personally vouch that "B" is an exceptionally kind and approachable letter. B is typically seated indoors near a large glass window on a sunny and quiet day, mostly early morning.

gesture, or music *through colour* or through some other physical sense not in the same category as sound.<sup>90</sup> Communication can be “figured” in any number of ways. This blending of categories and appeal to the body would tie in very well with Irigaray’s own attempt to move beyond binary categories and redeem corporeality. Unfortunately Irigaray does not pursue the idea beyond the given phrase, and we are left to imagine for ourselves what the epistemology and language of her new society would look like.

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<sup>90</sup> Other examples that come to mind include Braille (communication solely through a *texture* accessed by *contact*, unlike the distance of the gaze covered earlier in section 1.3.), or Egyptian hieroglyphics and the picture-poems of Guillaume Apollinaire (both of which blur the boundary between picture and word). Linked to this, we will touch upon the concept and ethics of “contact” in the following section, 2.3. Ontological Negative.

### 2.3. ONTOLOGICAL NEGATIVE (ETHICAL)

To love purely is to consent to distance, it is to adore the distance between ourselves and that which we love (Weil, 2007:65).

We're amazed at thought, but sensation is just as magical. A divine power is just as manifest in the sensation of the lowest form of insect as it is in the brain of Isaac Newton (Voltaire, 2011:235).

Irigaray envisions a 'horizontal transcendence' between two *mature* but irreducibly different subjects, man and woman (Hirsh *et al.*, 1995:95).

If I may return to the parallel I have been drawing between the issue of place and the issue of sexual difference [...] How can we work out a problematic of place that would involve not cutting or annihilation but a rhythmic becoming in relation to place? (Irigaray, 1993:39,42).

Alongside her diagnostic uncovering of the logic-of-the-one in Part 1, which stands as possibly her most important investigative discovery, Irigaray's creation of the ontological negative, or *space between subjects*, is arguably her most important constructive contribution in response to patriarchal negation.<sup>91</sup> We encountered the ontological negative as a descriptive function in the outline of sexed subjectivities in section 2.1. above, but it also serves a normative function as we will see in this section. The idea of the ontological negative does not appear explicitly in her early works *Speculum* and *This Sex*, though it could be read implicitly as a consequence of her critique of the *lack* there, and it first appears in the second phase of her work in *An Ethics* – at least such is its appearance in the oeuvre surveyed for this thesis. We can thus trace the ontological negative as a solution that emerges with the development of her thought.

In the context of responding to the *sameness* of the logic-of-the-one with radical alterity, the question of how two radically different subjects can talk to, relate to, or love one another is both the central question and a non-question for Irigaray, because she situates desire precisely within the space of difference.<sup>92</sup> Alterity is the very condition which makes such a relation possible. The *space* of the ontological negative is therefore the answer to the question of intersubjective relations. Several parts of Irigaray's book *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* present an investigation of the creative potential of *space* that prevents two subjectivities collapsing into *one* under, for example, the old logic-of-the-one. For instance, we find the following reading of the *interval* as "place" in Aristotle:

Place cannot simply be matter *or* form, on one side or the other side of growth and becoming. Thus matter *and* form cannot be separated from the thing; place can. In fact place reveals itself as a result of that separability. Without being reduced to either a part or a state of either matter or form [...] Place is thus not the thing but that which permits the thing to be (Irigaray, 1993:39-38).

More importantly, Irigaray also speaks positively of the figure of the *angel* in Western history, as an *intermediary* that moves *between* spaces, communicating, and thus drawing them together without superimposition and therefore oppression (Irigaray, 1993:16-17), and she also speaks of the need for a "third term" between men and women to prevent a one-to-one comparative relation (1993:12). Probably her most exemplary exposition of the *mediating interval* can be found in her analysis of Diotima's discussion in Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima being a rare female interlocutor no less. Irigaray identifies the unusual status of Diotima's dialectic as one which never uses the Hegelian synthesis of *one* between two opposites:

<sup>91</sup> At any rate, as we saw in Part 1 the logic-of-the-one is nothing more than the suppression or negation of conceptual space between subjects. Later in this thesis, I aim to suggest extending this space between *more* subjects who are different, rather than only two (male/female).

<sup>92</sup> Therefore it is a non-question since difference is the very *condition* of communication, but it is also a central question because "different" subjects require a *new* language to speak to one another.

In effect it [Diotima's logic] doesn't use oppositions to make the first term pass into the second in order to achieve a synthesis of the two, as Hegel does. From the outset, she establishes an *intermediary* that will never be abandoned as a means or a path. Her method, then, is not a propaedeutic of the *destruction* or the *destruction* of two terms in order to establish a synthesis that is neither one nor the other. She presents, uncovers, unveils, the insistence of a third term that is already there (Irigaray, 1993:20).

This passage should remind us of the logic-of-the-one, a self-reflective logic that transforms all values into a relation to the first, and likewise the intermediary, space, third term, or "path" should remind us of the erasure of the "vagina" as the way out of Plato's cave. Irigaray also shows how Diotima uses this method to oppose the standard view that love (or the god Eros) can *possess* an object of love, for then desire would disappear: "He must be lacking in order to desire more [...] He is therefore an *intermediary* [...] He is between the one and the other, in a state that can be qualified as daimonic: love is a *daimon*" (1993:22-23). This, of course, is in contrast to the traditional conception of love as a relationship of power or ownership split between the lover and the beloved<sup>93</sup> (Irigaray, 1993:24), or in Ancient Greek homosexuality, between the older more knowledgeable man and the younger learner.<sup>94</sup> This new, reinterpreted *interspacing* of the *interval* means that for Irigaray "[l]ove is thus an intermediary *between* pairs of opposites" (1993:24),<sup>95</sup> "[a] being of middle nature" (1993:23) whose "aim is to realise the immortal in the mortal between lovers" (1993:26). Space implies potential for change, development, and communication between subjects; as well as maintaining as relationship of respect by refusing to devolve one party into the other. The result of this space between persons is a *fecundity* that "is *mediumlike*, *daimonic*, the guarantee for all, male and female, of the immortal becoming of the living" (1993:26). Then, after the dense richness of these few pages, Irigaray returns to critique and demonstrates how the voice of Socrates/Plato interferes with Diotima's message.

I must stress that this ontological negative is vital to understanding Irigaray's solution to patriarchy, in the context of the devaluing *lack* created and then excluded within the Western tradition. Irigaray not only overcomes the (supposed) lack by rehabilitating traits attributed to the feminine (such as motherhood, fluidity, corporeality) into a *positive presence*,<sup>96</sup> but she also places this *mediating space* between men and women, as a *distance of ethicity*,<sup>97</sup> or the space for communication and respect that prevents one sex from incorporating the other, and she shows how this space allows for growth, change, and potential (becoming), therefore creating life in opposition to the category of death in the old patriarchal logic. Perhaps most importantly, the ontological negative is not Hegelian, it exists "in a manner different from that of Hegel. The negative will remain insurmountable, and it will serve to maintain the singularity of the subjectivity of the one and the other as well as the inalienability of the relation between the one and the other" (Irigaray, 2004:70). In this way, it cannot be *overcome* and subsumed into a new synthesis, and thus it remains a constant horizon, limit, and mystery. The ontological negative, in various forms as the

<sup>93</sup> Note how "beloved" denotes something *in relation* to the lover, as "that which is loved". Again, the binary negation of the logic-of-the-one.

<sup>94</sup> Which served the social function of perpetuating *masculine* knowledge through socially accepted pederasty, or mentoring (Mottier, 2008:12).

<sup>95</sup> Again, notice how love is restricted here to a particular set of subjects, *heterosexual* subjects; a parallel and equally problematic claim would be something to the effect of: "love is an intermediary between pairs of white persons". An objection to this, in defence of Irigaray, cannot be that whites are the "same" yet heterosexual couples are "different", since my point is that both propositions follow the same form: "x is applicable to persons displaying property y", where "x" is love and "y" can refer to *either* difference (in Irigaray's heterosexual model) or sameness (in racial segregation), and *still* be problematic. The issue here is not sameness/difference, but the logic of the statement, which can discriminate using *both* sameness and difference. This equally problematic use of both sameness and difference suggests that they are capable of the *same* tendency to discriminate, and might in fact not be "opposites". This problem of being "double-edged" will be discussed in section 3.1. Epistemic Coherence below.

<sup>96</sup> "For me, the way to overcome such a hierarchy is through recourse to the right to civil identity: a positive, affirmative right" (Irigaray, 2000a:58).

<sup>97</sup> "Ethicity" is something of a neologism, though not mine. As far as I know, it exists in general usage but has not been officially coined. Using "ethicity" would be too cumbersome, but the meaning is the same.

*space of difference*, is therefore the central piece of conceptual apparatus that underlies Irigaray's own system, from the bodily difference between men and women, to the cultural order that respects this difference as an ethical imperative.

Of course, the ontological negative, being a space or interval of difference, represents in a certain sense the *empty* or the *liminal*. Yet it must be noted that this space is neither hostile nor inert, it is an emptiness that is not the dreaded *lack*: "the negative at work is not equivalent to a nothingness: it is that which accounts for the alterity of the other and which protects it" (Irigaray, 2004:72). For Irigaray its intermediary, daimonic value means that it is a *pregnant* space that can hold difference and ambiguity, and therefore generate new meanings between persons, rather than a *dead* space. It is in this sense the prime source of ethnicity.

Examples of the ontological negative in practice include the *caress* and the act of *listening*. On Irigaray's view, corporeal intersubjectivity requires more than simply the gaze. As we saw in section 1.3. above, the tyranny of the gaze represented the manifestation of patriarchal domination within intersubjective relations, for a number of reasons. In contrast, for Irigaray, the most phenomenologically immediate and profound expression of respectful intersubjectivity (and thus also an expression of the ontological negative) is the *caress* (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:164).

Reading Levinas, Irigaray finds inspiration for a number of phenomenologically and ethically important observations about the *caress*. Firstly, unlike the gaze, the caress can be intimately *returned* and reciprocated (Irigaray, 1993:187). The gaze, recall, is imperiously unidirectional. Secondly, as a result of the caress's bodily proximity, "all the senses share in the nature of the caress, the hand serving, in its way, as the most intimate" (1993:193). The gaze, on the other hand must by definition *distance* itself from the texture of materiality and corporeality. Since the stretch of an arm requires greater *nearness*, other senses such as the sound of breathing or the scent of the beloved become intertwined with the encounter. And thirdly, the caress, more than the gaze, accords the self a *limit* and acknowledges the shape and space of the other without appropriation. In Irigaray's words: "Touching can also place a limit on the reabsorption of the other in the same. Giving the other her contours, calling her to them, amounts to inviting her to live where she is without becoming other" (1993:204). This forces a self-recognition of our own limits in more than one way: firstly, the resistance, suppleness, or welcome of the other to our touch reminds us that *we are not them*, and thus prevents appropriation. It also reminds us that our ability is limited – we can only extend our arm or hand so far before we reach a limit, a limit where the other may or may not be. The gaze knows virtually no limits and can sweep an entire landscape; it *penetrates*, as we say, without actual intimacy. And lastly, the touch also brings the other to a sensual awareness of *their own* shape, and an awareness of *our* awareness of that shape; it thus requires the phenomenology of a reciprocated double consciousness of our intention and the other's intention. Nobody can gauge the intention of a gaze, it is the privilege of the voyeur. But the caress traces the outline of the other's shape in close contact and thus brings awareness to the limit of our hold over the other, even as it connects us in inescapable reciprocity; I cannot touch without being touched.

It should be noted, however, that Irigaray draws a distinction between sensation and perception. Merely delighting in the sensation or feeling of the other reduces them to a different kind of commodity, an *emotional* commodity, to consume (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:105). Irigaray believes that Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas commit this error of sensation by trying to *capture* the other through a caress or gaze that reduces them to an object whose mystery we can easily grasp (Irigaray, 1993:159; Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:106,115,165) in much the same way as the gaze; that is, "all these philosophers imagine a complicity between the eyes and the hand" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:123). On the other hand, *perception* means acknowledging the interiority of the other as a subject on their own terms, and not merely their exteriority as sensibly accessible to us (2000b:114). The caress, then, is intended not merely as a sensation of the other as an object, but a perception of the other as a subject, all the while expressing the interplay of difference or a tactile limit that creates a space between the two subjects.

What are the other ways, the other methods to reach a culture of two subjects? I have already talked about negativity as a manner of respecting the other as other. I can also speak about the necessity of *listening to* and of being capable of *keeping silent*. There are two manners of being attentive to the other as such (Irigaray, 2002a:85).

Similarly, the act of listening expresses the space of the ontological negative in intersubjective relations as well. Firstly, there exists an epistemic limit (and therefore interval) to what can be known, represented, and spoken about the other on their own terms, since the two sexes cannot know what it is to experience the materiality of the other's body or the subjectivity of their being:

The necessity of silence, of what is impossible to say in relation to the other gender, signifies above all the respect of a limit in terms of what can be said of one of the two genders. This is a way of making sure that each gender will not have the right to speak for the other, to speak in their place, to impose norms thought to be adapted to these necessities (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:78-79).

Secondly:

The relation to the mystery of the other demands, rather, a withdrawal that allows it to manifest itself, a listening to its alterity (Irigaray, 2004:73).

Listening to the other is repeating him/her as such and simultaneously creating a place for exchange between them. Listening to the other is a way of coming out of possession (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:109).

Listening thus represents a parallel to the caress. The caress also encouraged "a withdrawal" (touching reaches a limit upon the surface of the other) that reminds the person caressing of their *own* limits while letting the mystery of the other manifest itself. Moreover, something of the reciprocated consciousness remains, since listening is in a sense to *recreate*, repeat, or echo the other. The Irigarayan concept underlying a new society of two individuals who are different, is therefore the interval, or "ontological negative". The interval acts to overcome the *lack* enforced by the traditional patriarchal order by maintaining a space of difference between *two* subjects, rather than only one, where the other is excluded. In the process, the interval also establishes a space for communication and reciprocity.

We have now reached the end of Part 1. The two chapters which explored the two phases of Irigaray's work can be summarised as follows:

- 1) There has been an historical injustice (*A diagnosis of the problem: historical, contingent*)
  - 1.1) Including the fact that this injustice arose out of an epistemological and symbolic misrepresentation of female embodied subjectivity, and consequently a repression of certain ways of being; (descriptive / is)
  - 1.2) We *should* attempt to address this historical injustice (prescriptive / ought)
- 2) There exist men and women, and *only* men and women (*The construction of a solution: ahistorical, necessary*)
  - 2.1) There *are* men and women
  - 2.2) There are *only* men and women
  - 2.3) These two categories are fundamentally different (psychically, relationally, bodily, etc)
  - 2.4) These two categories cannot be expressed in terms of each other

(These are all instances of "sexualism": material *descriptions / ises* – recall the first stage in Diagram 1.)

THEREFORE:

2.5) They *should* be treated differently, and a culture of “sexual difference” ought to be established.

(This is an instance of “*sexism*”: normative *prescriptions* / *oughts* – recall the second and third stages in Diagram 1.)

Chapter 1 followed the earlier work of Irigaray in a diachronic survey and diagnosis of the Western tradition. The material was structured into three parts according to our starting definition of philosophy and the method of its application. We saw that Irigaray’s main contribution in her early work was the identification of the logic-of-the-one, and the way this self-identical, binary logic of negation established a social and representational order that privileged masculine subjectivity, and both sacrificed and replaced the body in general<sup>98</sup> and feminine subjectivity in particular with a self-repeating pattern of “male” preferences such as reason (over the body), culture (over nature), and solidity (over fluidity). Chapter 2 introduced Irigaray’s later work by focusing on her solution to this patriarchal order, again following the three-part structure. First, we explored her processual cosmology and the two (and only two) subjects, male and female, who exist on equal terms in radical alterity as manifestations of this natural order. Second, we briefly touched on Irigaray’s language and epistemology not-yet-thought, and saw that it favoured multivalent logic over binary classical logic, and would take the form of poetry or some other means of expression, even physical expression, that would blur the rigid boundaries between traditionally rational and intimately expressive. Lastly, we encountered arguably the most important contribution in Irigaray’s later work, the ontological negative. This negative established not only a physical or objective difference between the materiality of the two subjects (and again, only two subjects, male and female), but also a subjective and therefore relational or existential difference between the two subjects. Given the radical alterity of the two subjects, each not describable or knowable on the *other’s* terms, this negative remains insurmountable and thus maintains a constant *space* between them allowing respectful, equal communication to occur. Unlike the old logic-of-the-one, which *suppressed* the space and difference between subjects, and thus the potential for speech, listening, silence, meeting, and reciprocity, the ontological negative establishes the conditions for reciprocity, maintained explicitly across the distance or interval of *sexual* difference, thus establishing the two subjects as the *male* and the *female*. Of Irigaray’s various insights in Part 1, we shall carry over into Part 2 a diagnostic awareness of the logic-of-the-one and the interval of the ontological negative as useful conceptual tools gleaned from Irigaray. However, we will be critical of her use of sex as the prime category of being, her attempt to provide specific attributes to sexed subjectivity, her insistence that there are two and only two sexes, her description of ethics, reciprocity, and relationality being maintained between *two different sexes* across the ontological negative in a matrix that is both cisgender and heteronormative, and her opposition, in setting up an ethics of *difference*, to all forms of sameness and neutrality (asexuality).

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<sup>98</sup> Although Irigaray does not acknowledge the extent to which this may have disadvantaged *men*, as well as women.

**PART 2:**  
**DEVELOPMENT**

**PART 2: DEVELOPMENT****3. CHAPTER 3: CRITIQUE OF IRIGARAY'S SOLUTION**

Having completed our exposition of Irigaray in Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 1, we are now ready to commence with a critique of Irigaray's theory of sexual difference here in Part 2, drawing mainly on those ideas outlined in Chapter 2. The impetus for this sharp turn towards critique comes from an understanding that Irigaray's solution takes as unquestioned universal subjects "men" and "women", and is directed solely at such "men" and "women", thus being cisgender-heteronormative and perpetuating gender stereotypes. The impetus also comes from an understanding of Irigaray's solution as largely essentialist insofar as it utilises "mediated" or arbitrarily constructed bodies (such as "male") without acknowledging their non-essential character, and so her solution does not escape from the problematic logic of hegemonic typologies described in Diagram 1. The critique in Chapter 3 will again follow the familiar empirical/epistemological/ethical structure:

Section 3.1. Empirical Facts will consider the current biological data on sexual types to explore whether Irigaray's strict male/female duality, which forms the first premise of her system of *difference*, is correct. Section 3.2. Epistemic Coherence will take up conceptual concerns. There, the concept of "coherence" will be discussed with reference to Irigaray's "typology" of two sexual types, in order to demonstrate that "coherent" systems serve a limiting and exclusionary function by suppressing the ethics of space between subjects. We will also examine the "same/different" binary, which underpins Irigaray's appeal to types and especially to *difference*, to understand whether the binary does in fact denote two entirely separate referents, or whether the sameness/difference dichotomy is instead an ambiguous double-edged sword that cannot be used to create *generalised* (or positively specific and "thick") descriptions. We will also consider the possibility that Irigaray's method of disrupting the logic-of-the-*one* with the logic-of-the-*two* logically implies disrupting the new logic-of-the-*two* with a logic-of-the-*three*, or *four*, and eventually the queer and post-sexual logic, in keeping with one of our starting assumptions about the dialectic of ideological systems (recall Diagram 2). Having rejected the sameness/difference dichotomy and seen how Irigaray's logic requires a move to greater inclusion, the notion of "multiplicity" as a negatively non-specific capacity will be briefly introduced as an alternative to describing individuals as "same" or "different" according to positive, specific traits (such as sex). Section 3.3. Ethical Implications, the final section in Chapter 3, will consider the moral consequences of Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference. We will begin with her scant remarks on homosexuality, and reveal the way she interprets non-heterosexuality solely through a lens that is both cisgender and heterosexual. We will then pick up the concept of "ethical space" as a conceptual tool for exploring exclusion, and consider the way Irigaray excludes the queer body from her own male/female duality. The section will conclude by remarking on the possibility that men have also been misrepresented and mistreated under patriarchy, and indeed under Irigaray's own system.

Having reached the end of our critical analysis, Chapter 4 will briefly sketch the outlines for an alternative theory of embodiment, drawing on the concepts of vulnerability and trust. Bearing in mind the hegemonic typologies outlined in Diagram 1, and having seen Irigaray's solution to be another such problematic typology in Chapter 3, the question of how to define "unmediated" bodies that are as inclusionary as possible will become crucial. Instead of appealing to ostensibly essential and enduring physical traits such as race or sex (as in Irigaray's theory and in the patriarchal system she responds to), the concept of vulnerability as a general *capacity to suffer* will be suggested as a defining property of the unmediated human body, thus avoiding the pitfalls outlined in Diagram 1. This will be explored by linking vulnerability to Irigaray's ontological negative, non-specificity, and multiplicity instead of the sameness/difference dichotomy.

### 3.1. EMPIRICAL FACTS

Whenever we talk about embodiment, such as sexed embodiment, we are engaging in truth claims about matters-of-fact (whether about bodies, beliefs about bodies, the historical treatment of bodily groups, or symbolic representations) as much as value judgements about normative prescriptions. Therefore it is necessary to examine what the scientific evidence has to say about the existence and properties of sexual types, in contrast to Irigaray's highly ordered typology of sexual categories. This section will firstly concern itself with the data surrounding the prevalence of LGBT+ persons and three-gender societies, in order to disrupt the male/female duality of Irigaray's model, and secondly outline the problem with Irigaray's attempt at deriving essentialist bodies from metaphorical readings of texts.

#### Some facts about "difference"

Our model of sex and physical relations is culturally (not biologically) defined and can be redefined – *or undefined* (Shere Hite quoted in Mottier, 2008:63, own emphasis).

Why should we laugh if we were to see a parcel of men sitting around a drawing-room table in the morning and think it alright if they were women? (Florence Nightingale quoted in Walters, 2005:49-50).

The injunction to become sexed in the ways prescribed by the Symbolic always leads to failure and, in some cases, to the exposure of the phantasmatic nature of sexual identity itself (Butler, 2007:76).

I believe that all men, black and brown and white, are brothers, varying through time and opportunity, in form and gift and feature, but differing in no essential particular, and alike in soul and the possibility of infinite development (Du Bois, 2016:1).

Let me be clear at this early stage of my argument: I do not accept that there are biologically differentiated human social groups to be called races – biological groups, seen as 'natural', to which we can and should and do attach any generalizable and unchanging attributes of culture, physical ability, intelligence or whatever else (Maré, 2014:27).

Difference exists. Difference in race [...] difference in gender...How can we refuse or deny that? (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:26).

Recalling that Irigaray (problematically) draws no distinction at all between sex (anatomy, such as female) and gender (social role, meaning behaviour and relation to others, such as feminine), that for her there *exist* clearly identifiable sexes, and that there exist *two* and *only* two sexes (male and female) into which *all* persons can be grouped, let us begin with some data and counter-examples to problematize the accuracy and relevancy of Irigaray's claim about not only the existence of "sexes", but also the claim that they are essentially and insuperably "different", and that a couple both cisgender and heterosexual in this way, since it exemplifies *difference* in contrast to the patriarchal *sameness* of the male subject alone, represents the ideal couple in society (as in Irigaray's ontological negative). Our statistics will be drawn mainly from the United States of America, given the availability of data and fairly unrestricted sample size and sample access there.

Estimates of the number of persons who enduringly identify as LGBT+ in the USA begin at 3,5% of the adult population (over 8 million) (Gates, 2013:2). Surveys report the prevalence of adult same-sex encounters, whether or not the respondents coherently *identify* as non-heterosexual or not, to range from 4% to 16,8% of the population across the 1990s and 2000s (Twenge, Sherman & Wells, 2016:3), suggesting that on average 8,2% of the population (19 million) have engaged in same-sex sexual behaviour, and 11% of the population (25 million) have at least acknowledged some form of same-sex attraction (Gates, 2011:7). This blended view of sexual attraction and sexual identity extends into the so-called "sex" of the brain as well, which was considered in the previous century to be clearly male or female on the classic "Martian/Venusian" model, a time when, importantly, Irigaray did most of her writing and homosexuality was still classified as a mental disorder. Recent evidence suggests that the situation is far less clear-cut than that. Using the metaphor of a mosaic, a 2015 article spearheaded by

Daphna Joel demonstrates a lack of sexual dimorphism across comparative Magnetic Resonance Imaging scans of male and female brains. The study, covering both white and gray matter, reveals both considerable overlap *between* male and female subjects, and a lack of internal consistency “as” male or “as” female *within* groups, suggesting a *spectrum* or *mosaic* of traits without clearly identifiable sets (Joel *et al.*, 2015:15471-15472). A similar article, also from 2015, appeared in *Nature* with the heading “Sex Redefined”, extending the discussion of sex blending to intersex and transgender persons. The article makes clear the way in which having XY or XX chromosomes (or any other variation) does not ensure being anatomically “male” (sex) or even psychologically “masculine” (gender) (Ainsworth, 2015:288-289). “Sex” cannot be reduced to a single element such as anatomy (genitalia), chromosomes, or hormones, since these may clash to produce, say, an XY female. (chromosomally male, anatomically female). The article cites the example of a pregnant woman who discovered the existence of two entirely different sets of cells in her body – one half carrying XY chromosomes and the other XX. Therefore, sexual identity sits along a *spectrum* comprised of many elements, from chromosomes, gonads, and hormones, to psychological gender identity and the choice to be identified at all. Yet compare this with Irigaray’s claims that “the manifestation of gender is assured by particular chromosomes, different in women and in men [...] The safeguarding of life would be in some way dependent on chromosomes” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:153), and that “[w]e have no problem accepting that the brain is sexed [...] Aren’t those who deny or refuse the sexuation of discourse *de facto* accomplices in the repression of sexuality?” (2000b:44-45). Both statements make different empirical observations (chromosomes ensuring sex; differently sexed brains) about the nature of alleged sex differences, and both sets of observations are demonstrably incorrect. This is important since her subsequent division of society into two sexed subjects *relies* on these (incorrect) observations about there *being* two sexes at all, and that these two sexes are *different*. Furthermore, her first claim also ties the “safeguarding of life” to sexual difference – an *ethical* imperative is thus introduced in the form of *heterosexuality* as the best “preserver” of life, which I need not point out is problematically exclusionary. Her second comment goes on to accuse anyone who speaks against such differences as “accomplices” (a strong word implying criminal guilt) in the patriarchal repression of sexuality, which, as we saw with the logic-of-the-one, is a repression supposedly premised on appeals to “sameness”.

Nonetheless, if we accept the claim that there are no “male” or “female” brains, and that instead each brain is a mosaic of different traits along a spectrum, then the result is rather interesting: by extension, we cannot say that there are male or female brain types *at all*, since the original point of reference has been erased. We cannot speak of specifically male and female mosaics because the “original” male or female archetype from which this mosaic draws its different parts, is non-existent – we have no only-male or only-female reference points from which to disentangle the “male” or “female” bits of the mosaic. As allegedly “sexed” beings, humans are simply variations of the same, linked not by one common denominator nor by two denominators in two distinct groups, but rather by a chain of family resemblances where such resemblances are not shared by the entire spectrum or any one “set”, but varied between individuals. Grosz (1994:209-210) uses the metaphor of the *Mobius Strip* to describe such a spectrum, although her use of the Mobius Strip is more general by relating it to the ontology and phenomenology of the mind/body dualism, and not only to sexual difference. Thus, if “male” and “female” are not binary bookends on a spectrum, if the difference between “types” merely depends upon various degrees of ambiguity in (contingent) anatomy, and if part of the spectrum includes entirely *asexual* and *aromantic* individuals, then it becomes unclear what *particular* content can be given to the word “sex”. As it loses its intension, “sex” loses its extension as well, since it no longer refers to anything. Importantly, it thus becomes increasingly difficult to speak of individuals as being “the same as” or “different from” others.

Along the lines of the Mobius Strip, we might be here reminded of Plato’s sexual theory in the *Symposium*. Speaking through Aristophanes, Plato suggests that all human individuals were originally created with two heads, two sets of limbs, genitalia, and so forth, before being split into two separate persons – resulting in the human bodies we recognise today (Plato, 2008:25-26). Love, Plato contends, is simply the yearning for one’s “other half” (2008:27). Importantly, Plato’s account both acknowledges the existence of, and tacitly approves of, same-sex relations as well (2008:28). While we might not accept the myth, it resonates with the Mobius Strip/spectrum metaphor insofar as both assume an ontological state

that is primarily *undivided* along a spectrum, without the assumption of clear “differences” and “types”, and both thus have the advantage over the Irigarayan sexual model which only acknowledges the existence of men and women, and further orders these into heterosexual pairs. Grozs’ Mobius Strip is both more accurate and evocative, but it is incomplete. Mobius Strips have edges or boundaries. A more complete metaphor would be a Klein Bottle, which is the extension of a Mobius Strip such that it has a surface area but without edges, internal volume, or a clear beginning.

Unfortunately, Irigaray would likely reject the Mobius Strip or Klein Bottle metaphor, since her premises force her to conclude that the mere presence of masculinity along the *same* continuum as femininity always means that maleness is appropriating femaleness as a variation of itself by negation.<sup>99</sup> Irigaray believes this to be true not only of the old symbolic order (where it certainly did function in such a manner), but also of any new rehabilitated order that may arise post-patriarchy, an order which requires instead absolute *difference*. In her view, male and female, masculine and feminine, cannot exist on the same spectrum, within the same existential dimension, within the same phenomenological *space* of embodiment, because they are fundamentally different ways of apprehending and creating the world (recall our exposition of her sexed subjects in section 2.1.). They must inhabit different ontologies and separate epistemologies. She would also reject the notion of a spectrum since the conditions of her ideal society *require* two and only two subjects, since “insuperable difference” (what Irigaray (2002a:84) calls an “insuperable negativity”) is necessary for the ethical relation she envisions. If by chance there are Mobius Strips for Irigaray, then there are two, and only two; one with gradations of femininity, and one with gradations of masculinity, yet the two never feed into one another. This view, as we have just discussed, is both descriptively incorrect (or at absolute best, incomplete) and normatively narrow.

To return to the spectrum of “types” and the way in which sex is comprised of many different combinations of features which do not always “match up” (such as chromosomes and genitalia), we can demonstrate the point using some numbers. If, for argument’s sake, we adopt a *minimally conservative* view such as Irigaray’s, and accept the presence of nothing more than, firstly, sexed men and sexed women, secondly feminine and masculine “gendered” behaviours which can be attributed to *either* of these, and thirdly the presence of both heterosexuality and homosexuality, then the minimum number of sexed and gendered combinations we can expect to find is  $2^3$  which is 8. Already, we can derive *eight* sexual identities from a typically Irigarayan model of two sexes, something Irigaray never acknowledges. If we step outside a conservative reading and admit the existence of at least five chromosomal sexes (XY, XX, XO, XXX, XXY), our initial tally would be 20. But we must also add intersex and transgender persons, as well as the other romantic orientations (heteroromantic, homoromantic, aromantic, panromantic, biromantic), and the other sexual orientations (bisexuality, asexuality, pansexuality, queer). Our final count is 1250 sexual variations. This number is still within the limits of what is readily identifiable and easily countable; we accept that there *are* in fact bisexuals and XOs, and we have words for them in our language.<sup>100</sup> In other words, there are 1250 combinations which would currently be easily recognised.<sup>101</sup> This is without including those who only *partially* identify with any of the above and not including those who refuse to be identified at all (those who “queer”, as a verb, their identities). Were we to blur the boundaries between these 1250 types, since none of them can ever entail a full description of a person’s

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<sup>99</sup> Recall Chapter 1: her historical analysis of Epistemology W under the logic-of-the-one demonstrated the ways in which the presence of the masculine depended upon the negation of the feminine. Where any semblance of the female did exist, it was only to serve the reproductive ends of the male. In fact, Irigaray does speak disapprovingly of the Mobius Strip metaphor since it only moves within itself and closes off the cycle to others (Irigaray, 1993:105). This however refers to intersubjective relations and not to the spectrum of bodily difference.

<sup>100</sup> We might call this analogous to countable infinity in mathematics.

<sup>101</sup> (5) Male, female, transgender, intersex, asexual

(5) Heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual

(5) Heteroromantic, homoromantic, biromantic, aromantic, panromantic

(5) XY; XX; XXY; XYY; XO

(2) Masculine, feminine

=  $2 \times 5^4 = 1250$

experience, then the number of possible sexed and gendered variations would become infinite.<sup>102</sup> It would refer to a state of *personhood* rather than a specific state of *sexual* identity, since the common denominator, sex, has been erased and shown to be contingent. In light of this, it is no longer feasible to talk about “sex” or “gender” because those terms no longer mean anything specific at all; attempts at specificity will not only result in an infinite list of particulars, but will also be prescriptive about what each category *should* entail, both of which are untenable. And if we do *not* try to be specific, while still speaking about “sex”, then we will not say anything interesting at all given the lack of intension or connotation, and that is not acceptable either. In this way, the appeal to “sex” thus becomes linguistically empty.

Yet despite the prevalence of same-sex relations among even non-LGBT+ persons, the placement of sexual anatomical “types” along a more accurate spectrum, and, consequently, the *de facto* erasure of clear “types” to begin with, stereotypes and discrimination remain. In the US, suicide is (alarming) the *second* most common cause of death for young adults between 15 and 24, and of those who survived and reported suicide attempts in 2015, a disproportionately large 29% were LGBT+ (Raifman, Moscoe, Austin & McConnell, 2017:351) – a horrifying but unsurprising statistic considering the degree of discrimination faced by LGBT+ individuals. Consider the recent “Bathroom Bill” crisis<sup>103</sup>, the fact that nearly 30% of adult transgender persons surveyed in 2015 reported losing a job or a promotion as a result of their gender identity (GLAAD Transgender Media Program 2017:6), or, in South Africa, the fact that an average of ten cases of “corrective rape” are committed against lesbians *per week* (Spira, Chad & Schneeweis, 2015:8), and that a mere 32% of South Africans think homosexuality ought to be accepted in society (Spira *et al.*, 2015:11). Returning to adolescent suicide in the USA, given the social and political climate at the time of the survey (the 2000s and 2010s saw the rise of state-by-state struggles for same-sex marriage, the end of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”, and eventually the June 2015 Supreme Court ruling in favour of same-sex marriage), further research notes a 7% decrease in suicide attempts among LGBT+ youth after the implementation of same-sex marriage, equivalent to about 134 000 fewer young adults attempting suicide every year (Raifman *et al.*, 2017:354-355). Clearly, the identification and social normalisation of sexual types (such as “gay” or “straight” in institutions such as marriage) is an important factor in mental health, and in turn, is an ethical issue. We are left wondering, conversely, what an Irigarayan society, which insists upon the universal existence of two and only two sexes coupled in a heterosexual union, would do to a gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, intersex, or asexual adolescent’s developing sense of self.

Nonetheless, the situation is slowly improving. The USA General Social Survey indicates that, from 1973 to 1991, the majority of people surveyed considered same-sex relations “always wrong”, peaking at 77% in 1988 (Gates, 2015:68). However, more recent polling suggests that support for same-sex marriage, which we may read as support for same-sex relations and therefore homosexuality, rose in the US from 27% in 1996 to 60% in 2010 (Twenge *et al.*, 2016:1714). In the United States, roughly 6 million children have at least one LGBT parent (Gates, 2013:2). The 2010 US census indicates the existence of more than 640 000 same-sex couples, of which about 125 000 are raising almost 220 000 children (Gates, 2013:2-3); further research puts the number of couples higher at 690 000 (Bos, Knox, Van Rijn-Van Gelderen & Gartrell, 2016:179). Regarding the parenting capacity of same-sex couples, the American Academy of Paediatrics issued a policy statement in 2013 reporting wide consensus on there being no difference in development between children raised by opposite- or same-sex couples (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013:828), and urging the government to extend full marriage and adoption rights to non-heterosexual persons (2013:829). Reports by the American Sociological Association and American Psychological Association argue the same (Gates, 2015:75). 2016 research, again, indicates the same consensus, suggesting that any differences in social development which may result in the children of same-sex couples are not due to the parents’ ability, but to the social stigmatisation the family may face

<sup>102</sup> We might call this analogous to *uncountable* infinity in mathematics.

<sup>103</sup> The “Bathroom Bill” crisis in America refers to the attempt by state legislature to restrict access to public bathroom facilities, either inclusively or exclusively, by using the sex an individual was assigned at birth. An exclusive “bathroom bill” would thus make it impossible for a transgender person to use the bathroom matching their own gender identity.

from outsiders (Bos *et al.*, 2016:182). It is not being raised by two men that causes mental distress; it is being stigmatised for it by others who hold the incorrect belief that “men” and “women” should be “masculine” and “feminine” and should exist in a certain relation with one another. If the children of same-sex couples display the same healthy development as those of opposite-sex couples, then this demonstrates a lack of sexual *specificity* or sexual *difference* as an allegedly important factor in development: two men can raise a daughter (difference, between male parent and female child), two women can raise a son (difference), a man and woman can raise either as well (same, at least one parent will share gender with a child). Both cases defined as families of either difference *or* sameness result in the *same* developmentally healthy children. This is in stark contrast to Irigaray’s view of clear, essential differences and the privilege accorded the heterosexual couple. In fact, tying in with parenting, Irigaray explicitly states that “[t]oday, only a mother can see to it that her daughter, her daughters, form(s) a girl’s identity” (Irigaray, 2007:44). Note the use of the sweeping qualifier “only”, and the appeal to “a girl’s identity”. The latter, as we have seen, is for Irigaray tied to the possession of a cisgender, *female* body, and this insistence that someone of sex X must *ensure* that others of sex X develop according to (sexed) gender X amounts to a command along the lines of “be a real woman” or “be a real man”.<sup>104</sup> The direct and unveiled, though unstated, implication of this view is that a man *cannot* (and not merely *should not*) raise a daughter on his own (as, say, a heterosexual single parent) or with another man (in a homosexual couple). In view of the lack of evidence for Irigaray’s claim, and certainly in view of its function as a heteronormative, cisgender tool of exclusion and discrimination, I think it is fair if we soundly reject it.

In addition to the statistics and empirical evidence presented above, there exist examples in practice of successful societies not based on the strictly heterosexual, cisgender, male/female duality which Irigaray considers to be the only alternative to patriarchy. The Zapotec Oaxaca region of Juchitan in Mexico, for instance, has a three-gender model comprising men, women, and *muxe*. *Muxe* are sexed as males, comprising about 6% of men in one estimate (Stephen, 2002:46), but are considered different from most men insofar as they adopt the characteristics and behaviour of *both* men and women, engaging in “women’s work” such as embroidery, and taking either men or women as romantic and sexual partners (2002:43). They form an entirely separate category from men and women, not dependent on sexual orientation; being homosexual does not mean being *muxe* and vice versa. While being *muxe* but not homosexual is perfectly accepted, being homosexual and not *muxe* is generally frowned upon (2002:44) suggesting, again, that *muxe* forms a larger, distinct class of which homosexuality may or may not be a part, yet homosexuality itself is not expected to exist independently. Elsewhere among Native Americans, similar three-gender traditions have long histories. In 1591, European observers in what is now Florida noted the presence of what they called “hermaphrodites” among the Timucu people, whose role seemed to involve caring for the sick; and among the Zuni, the “half-men/half-women” *Ihamana* occupied important spiritual roles as symbols of cosmic harmony (Stephen, 2002:50). While all these examples demonstrate the possibility of social orders beyond the duality of *two* sexed subjects, they go further and call into question the importance of *difference* between subjects as well: the third gender individual is not clearly masculine *or* feminine, and their identity is not *relationally* constituted by the way their sexual orientation takes the same sex (homosexuality) or the opposite sex (heterosexuality) as its preference. This point about the blurring of difference is important for our consideration of Irigaray, since she takes both the existence and maintenance of difference as the centrepiece of her theory. Irigaray’s assumption is that there exist two sexes who are entirely different and must remain so on either side of the ontological negative (to prevent domination by reducing either to the “same”), and in this way the ethic of respecting the other *as other* is upheld through sexual *difference*; sexual difference is her route to a harmonious ethics with two equal subjects. Yet why reduce difference to two poles and two subjects in this way? Does not the *Ihamana* demonstrate the possibility of a “balance of difference” *as both sexes in one subject*, without a regression to “sameness”? Does androgyny in one subject, and perhaps *all* subjects, not exemplify the balance of the two poles Irigaray describes the cosmos as possessing? Is this not akin to the blended queer identity we find more and more in today’s society, with everything from

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<sup>104</sup> This is to say nothing at all about transgender or intersex parents and their transgender or intersex children, since Irigaray does not even acknowledge the *existence* of ambiguous, transitioned, or “blended” sexes and genders.

same-sex marriage and pride parades, to intersex/transgender rights and LGBT+ organisations on university campuses?

Sadly Irigaray does not discuss the way in which such societies (which do not follow a strict division of *difference* as in the Irigarayan heterosexual, cisgender duality) present valid alternatives to both patriarchal oppression, and to her *own* male/female duality. Instead, her theory of *difference* is developed entirely on its own as a response to (perceived) masculine *sameness*, trapping her in a duality, with “difference” *between* rather than *within* subjects taken as the only solution to “sameness”, and “men” and “women” as the only subjects capable of such difference/sameness. The existence of multi-gender societies, as well as the existence of transgender, intersex, or non-heterosexual persons everywhere, is enough to unseat the descriptive power of an Irigarayan view premised solely on “men and women, *all* men and women, and *only* men and women” insofar as such a view attempts to give an empirical description of an actual state of affairs, and it is enough to unseat the prescriptive power of such a view insofar as it attempts to order society along an axis that is sexed (and *only* sexed and not “raced”, post-sex, or post-human), and sexed *between* only men and women. In other words, proving that the base elements of Irigaray’s “sexual difference” (“men” and “women”) do not exist in any essential or enduring sense, and that the very identification of these types, *regardless* of whether they are enduring or not, is both arbitrary and contingent, is sufficient to render her conclusions (when expressed in *sexed* terms) unworkable, since it means that all propositions containing “man” or “woman” in her work, essentially the entirety of her oeuvre, are devoid of stable referents, meaning, in turn, that Irigaray cannot say anything true or verifiable about men, women, or sex, since those words do not refer to any states-of-affairs.<sup>105</sup> It is analogous to demonstrating that the first premise (or any premise) of a syllogism is false; the result is that the conclusion is necessarily false. By means of demonstration, we can replace every “gappy” word such as “man”, “woman”, or “sexed” with a substitute that has equally unverifiable and arbitrary connotations and therefore no clear denotation, such as “satyr”, “nymph”, or “blessed”. The point need not be belaboured, and it is surely with this sense of bemused irony that those of us who are queer readers (especially intersex, asexual, or transgender), look upon texts which purport to speak not only about the presumed *existence* of sex, but identifiable *types* of sex,<sup>106</sup> since we need look no further than our own embodiment to see clear proof of the contrary.<sup>107</sup>

It would be an understatement to say that all the statistics discussed so far in this chapter merely “problematize” Irigaray’s model of both sex and difference. They do more than that, since they demonstrate that the very first assumption of the Irigarayan view, that there *exist* clearly identifiable sexes (again, *two* and *only* two) and that these are *different*, is empirically false; and moreover that the insistence upon such types is not only inconsistent with the progress of morality (same-sex marriage, intersex and transgender rights, gender neutral pronouns), but also has serious ramifications for mental health, in everything from adolescent suicide to workplace discrimination.

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<sup>105</sup> This “empirical” point about the existence of types is of course in addition to ethical considerations about how the application of such classificatory schemes limits individuals. We will discuss such ethical points in sections 3.2. and 3.3. below.

<sup>106</sup> Or a text on race; consider an albino or mixed-descent reader.

<sup>107</sup> For instance, as an aside on the method and psychology of preparing the literature for this thesis, I read all of Irigaray’s thirteen books and articles as works of fiction in a state of (*unsuspended*) disbelief, given how entirely alien they are to both my own embodiment (and subsequently my phenomenological horizons) and contemporary societies in which gender is rightly blurred with same-sex marriage, the introduction of gender neutral terms, and well-populated and visible queer communities. I imagine however that someone both cisgender and heterosexual, especially someone female who would ostensibly *benefit* (*cui bono?*) from Irigaray’s re-reading and re-valorisation of women in contrast to their historical patriarchal oppression, would read her works differently when they were written almost half a century ago in the 1970s and 80s as she gained prominence, or even nowadays too (since her works are clearly written for an audience both heterosexual and cisgender, and no-one else), and part of my aim throughout this critical chapter is to show how worrying such heteronormative readings are, even for women, being both descriptively incomplete and prescriptively oppressive.

### The problem with deriving “reals” from “representations”

Let us recall that the initial phase of Irigaray’s work (covered in Chapter 1) is an exercise in examining the *texts* of past (male) philosophers, and that her subsequent solution to the patriarchal bias identified there (covered in Chapter 2) is an exercise in constructing well-defined and essentialist “types” of sex with different and enduring properties. I would argue that it is problematic to draw universalising conclusions (especially conclusions about the *materiality* of what constitutes a “sexed” *body*) on the basis of contingent textual interpretations. Put differently, nothing necessary can be inferred about the nature of reality by reference to *representations* alone; to assume otherwise is to commit a category error and misidentify the object of one’s search.<sup>108</sup> We would be mistaken, for example, if we tried to deduce anything necessary and universalisable about the essential nature of trees through the examination of the treatment and depiction of trees in Renaissance art. An examination of this kind, which approaches once-removed *representations* as the object of inquiry, can only tell us about the *beliefs* surrounding trees at any particular point, beliefs which manifest themselves as descriptions and prescriptions coded in representational systems such as language, art, architecture, and medical treatises. This is history or sociology. Something similar can be said of Irigaray’s attempt, on the basis of poetic and textual interpretation alone, to deduce necessary, essential truths (at least in her later work) about the *material* properties of not only human bodies but the order of the cosmos as well. It is an attempt that conflates representation with reality.

Identifying masculine biases and historical trends within the imagery of certain languages does not constitute a theory of embodiment. Irigaray’s admirable critique of patriarchy, logocentrism, and one-sided symbolism does not constitute a theory of “men” and “women” as embodied subjects. By this I mean that it does not offer substantial reasons for her claim of the material, ontological status of men and women as subjects, but rather it offers a deconstructive analysis of the language and epistemology employed in describing men and women in the past. Providing textual interpretations of the metaphors at play in contingent historical responses to embodiment may be interesting and linguistically useful, but it does not tell us anything necessary about embodiment *itself*, nor about how we should respond, ethically and politically, to such embodiment in the present day given new facts about, for example, the fluidity of gender and sex.

Importantly, tying in with one of our primary themes, the relationship between representation and reality, it could be argued that Irigaray stretches the project of textual interpretation too far and commits a category error by blurring the boundary between word and referent. Irigaray’s entire prescriptive project, the redemption of actual sexual types, is based on a textual reading of a descriptive lack of sex in the (male) historical tradition. The reading of a conceptual and metaphorical lack in historical texts (a hermeneutic exercise in *representation*) does not constitute evidence of actual material types which those metaphors mis/represent (an exercise in ontological *realism*). We cannot infer the existence or nature of sex itself (already an impossible ideal) from historical attitudes towards sex, any more than we can infer the existence of a supernatural realm from the persistent and universal presence of mythology in all cultures. As all good exercises in hermeneutic interpretation should do, the reading of historical texts and the tradition of erasing the body (sex, femininity, and fluidity included) should certainly be taken, as Irigaray rightly does, as a project in *the history and sociology of contingent, contextual attitudes towards the body*, but it cannot offer us proof of the existence of embodied specificity or the phenomenological nature of embodiment itself. Irigaray’s project more than exceeds our expectations by identifying not only a disturbing lack in the Western tradition, but also the problematic patterns of the logic-of-the-one and the metaphysics of solids, and the way these manifest in the injustice of patriarchy; yet she commits a logical error, I would argue, by treating this reading *as evidence* of the (negated) body (rather than simply evidence of *attitudes towards “the body”*), and moreover, the body *defined* in a particular, sexually-dual way. Firstly then, Irigaray commits something of a category error, secondly, she offers no text-independent evidence for the existence of the material body, and thirdly her account of

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<sup>108</sup> The move to new categories or representations does of course open up new and liberating spaces, for instance in freeing women’s subjectivities from the patriarchal male universal. These new categories, however, are still limited.

the nature of embodiment is developed solely in opposite terms to the misrepresentation of the body in texts by male philosophers.

Stone (2009:43) concurs with my point here that “Irigaray cannot rightly infer from patriarchal culture that there are naturally *only* two kinds of human body, male and female”, and that at best “it entitles her to conclude, more weakly, that male and female bodies exist with distinct characters and, perhaps, that most humans are either”; although as I just stated, I would take this further and argue that Irigaray cannot rightly infer from patriarchal culture that there *are* certain kinds of human bodies *at all*, especially if we treat patriarchy as suspiciously as Irigaray does;<sup>109</sup> there is very little at all, I think, that can be said about the “unmediated” body. This point about the error of deriving the “real” from the “representation” (or in the words of the thesis title, the “phenomenological” from the “semiotic”)<sup>110</sup> can be demonstrated another way, by imagining the opposite starting point of Irigaray’s project: suppose we found ourselves in a situation *without* a prior system of representations identifying and regulating bodies (such as patriarchy) to react to, similar to Rawls’ “original position”. Without a sedimented history of descriptions and prescriptions, how would we represent sex if we could view all its forms and start from a blank slate? Given the pervasive fact of human bisexuality, our marked lack of dimorphism in comparison to other animals, and the lack of prescriptions or incentives to form highly ordered (and artificial) “couples” of two, paired off between only “different” sexes, it is exceedingly unlikely that we would end up with a representational and social system of “men” and “women” (and *only* men and women, *only* cisgender) who are “masculine” and “feminine” respectively (and *all* gendered accordingly, without crossover), and *heterosexual* to boot, as Irigaray problematically envisions. I speculate that the result would be rather more “diffuse” than that, and thus more accurate in its distribution of desires and identities across *all* persons regardless of anatomy, than a male-female heterosexual matrix permits. This implies that despite Irigaray’s appeals to universality in her definitions, there is something reactionary, and therefore dependent, arbitrary, and constructed, about her theory of “difference” and her selection of “sexes”. In a thought experiment without a monosexual patriarchal antecedent, we would *not* have to assert a specific kind of “difference” (such as Irigarayan sexual difference) in response to specific historical “sameness” (patriarchy, the male subject as universal standard), which in turn suggests that an appeal to difference is as arbitrary and incomplete as the oppressive sameness it responds to.<sup>111</sup> There might then exist alternatives beyond the co-dependency of sameness and difference, and insofar as sameness and difference depend upon and respond only to one another as “opposites”, they might in fact represent two sides of the same problem rather than solutions to each other, or in fact, be the same thing. This is a conceptual point we will discuss with other epistemological concerns in the following major section, 3.2. Epistemic Coherence; for now, let us briefly consider some empirical points against Irigaray’s cyclical, processual cosmology.

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<sup>109</sup> Which might suggest something of a contradiction in her treatment of patriarchy. She correctly rejects patriarchy’s unjust treatment of women, yet she still carries over its identification of “men” and “women” as *existing* types (which is surprising since it is, after all, the basis of its oppressive function: it requires these first to discriminate) and she also carries over its heterosexual bias in her formulation of the male/female couple as the most “fecund” and desirable alternative to the old male/not-male “couple”.

<sup>110</sup> “Phenomenological” refers to the apodictic and unmediated experience of one’s own embodiment, with social descriptions and prescriptions bracketed out – as far as possible, since it must be conceded there is no *entirely* unmediated body. “Semiotic” refers to the opposite – the application of representations or *signs*, that is, coded descriptions and prescriptions, to produce a *mediated* body that draws meaning from a socially constructed environment. “Pilot” would be an example.

<sup>111</sup> Which is, in a sense, what I am doing in this thesis as well, by *opposing* Irigaray. I am not arguing for the kind of *dual* “difference” she is, however, and my point in using disruptive “difference” is precisely to reveal the problems with difference.

### A note on Irigaray's processual cosmology

Let us quickly remind ourselves (section 2.1.) that Irigaray's theory describes the cosmos (that is, the physical universe) as comprised of *processes* and *cycles*, alternating between poles of *difference* in perpetuity, in everything from the seasons to subjective relations and experiences – the bodies of women (*all* women, and *only* women), for example, are held by Irigaray to be “cyclical, temporality linked to cosmic rhythms” (Irigaray, 1994:25), and thus governed by those cosmic rhythms insofar as they are “[t]uned [...] to the rhythm of the earth and the stars”, “[i]ntimately tied to universal circulation and vibration” (Irigaray, 1993:195), in keeping with “the light cycle, the seasons” (Irigaray, 2007:83); unlike men (*all* men, and *only* men) (Irigaray, 1993:144-145), who invariably “care little about living matter” (Irigaray, 1994:16) and always prefer “the representation of the universe as made up of abstractions” (Irigaray, 2000a:15). This purported evidence of cosmic cycles between states of *difference* is taken as support for the need to cultivate such difference between human subjects as well in the form of a society that recognises sexual types (two subjects, men and women), the difference between them, and the possibility of growth and healthy relations *resulting* from the interplay of this difference (as in, for example, the growth of plants in the cycling of the seasons). Unfortunately for Irigaray, this conception of the cosmos does not hold up to empirical scrutiny at all.

Under entropy it is both commonly known and easily demonstrable with a simple cup of tea that the universe is not comprised merely of cycles between differences and poles, but rather is tending toward a state of maximum entropy and therefore stasis.<sup>112</sup> The process of the universe is, contrary to Irigaray's claims, a tendency to *end* cycles and disperse energy into a state of “sameness”. Moreover, the sun which is for all humans and most animals the sole source of light and therefore sight, and thus represents for Irigaray a masculine value favouring oculo-centrism and “upward” or “intangible” abstraction over the (downward, tangible) earth and darkness (recall the issues of the gaze and the sun as the highest good after the womb of Plato's Cave in Chapter 1), is in fact the very cause of those bipolar processes Irigaray chooses to valorise. The cycle of the seasons is dependent not merely on our planet's axial tilt but also on the constancy and warming effect of the sun, and, most importantly, all energy stored and transformed by life on earth is obtained primarily from the sun,<sup>113</sup> resulting in a chain of energy beginning with cyanobacteria and vegetation, and ending with animals and apex predators such as humans. Whatever role other celestial bodies may play, such as the earth's own aforementioned tilt and the moon's influence on ocean tides, is also subject to entropy. We know that the moon is drifting away from our planet and eventually our tides will no longer “cycle”. The earth's rotation, too, is slowing and eventually there will be no seasons. Lastly, as the sun dies it will expand dramatically and destroy life on this planet with its heat. Whatever processual cycles manifesting in differences and poles Irigaray may have in mind, these are relative and local both spatially and temporally – spatially we only recognise them in a format extreme enough to be called “sexed” here on *our own* planet, where, we must remember, the emergence of the human race resulted in such sexed terminology in the first place,<sup>114</sup> and temporally we recognise too that these cycles did not exist in the past on our planet and will cease to exist in the future. Contrary then to Irigaray's insistence that these processes are both universal and essential (both pervasive and fundamental to all areas of the cosmos at all times), we do not find them in this form anywhere else, and we know that under entropy they are short-lived. Indeed, we might say the bipolar processes Irigaray has in mind actually represent exceptions: highly *localised* and *ordered clumps of coherence* constantly dispersing energy and slowly falling silent, ending their processes and cycles, like a stirred cup of tea ceasing its movement, and losing its temperature.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>112</sup> We must remember from section 2.1. that Irigaray approvingly attributes constant cycles and changes to *women*, and disparagingly attributes homeostasis and a lack of rhythm to *men* (Irigaray, 1993:144-145).

<sup>113</sup> With the very small exception of extremophiles found in places such as volcanic vents.

<sup>114</sup> It is only through our construction of “sex” and types of sex within that category, that we are able to identify sex as a significant feature of the world. We ought to remember that within the parts of matter we call “life”, sections of the animal and plant kingdoms are *asexual*; and outside “life”, matter is not “sexed” or reproductive. Of the totality of matter in the cosmos, very little is “sexed” indeed.

<sup>115</sup> We might, simply for interest's sake, draw an analogy here and say that the collapse of ordered and localised clumps of energy into a “spread out” minimal state is very similar to my earlier suggestion (recall

As for human subjects, the non-metaphorical claim that “women do not have the same relationship to entropy” (Irigaray, 1994:25), or again that “female sexuality would perhaps fit better [...] with a procedure that corresponds to going beyond disorder or entropy” (Irigaray, 1993:124) cannot be treated as empirically true; it is analogous to the claim “black people do not share the same relationship with gravity”. Women are comprised of the same matter as men and subject to the same physical laws. To argue otherwise without evidence other than textual metaphors is to argue against the weight of empirical evidence, and surely this point cannot be branded scientism or dismissed as a dogmatic misreading of Irigaray, especially since Irigaray does not supply us with a *metaphorical* interpretation of established physical concepts such as entropy,<sup>116</sup> and therefore we cannot read this as a purely *symbolic* project, nor as a metaphorical reinterpretation of the definition or process of “entropy” as generally understood. In addition, given Irigaray’s *own* attempt at describing physical processes literally (non-metaphorically) as sexed, we must assume that her use of “entropy” is literal; let us recall this is all to be found in her *later* work, which discards textual readings of historical texts and mimetic subversions of established concepts with metaphorical language. Similarly, the claim tying women’s bodies to “cosmic rhythms” and “vibrations” through their relation to *bodily fluids* (Irigaray, 1985a:207; 1985b:109; 1993:156) makes little sense since men have a greater net volume of blood (being larger on average) with the addition of semen; indeed anyone who has had a litre of water to drink ought to be susceptible to lunar influences if Irigaray’s view were true, yet Irigaray expressly ties menstrual cycles to the moon and tides (Irigaray, 2007:108). Insofar as it might be objected that Irigaray’s cosmological claims could be metaphorical (and I have already argued that they are not in section 2.1., since her *earlier* work tends to metaphor more than her later covered here), it is not clear exactly what the content of those metaphors would be, or how metaphorical claims about women and the cosmos could say anything sound about the actuality of women’s bodies and their relation to physical processes without being merely poetic. Indeed, given this last point, it seems that her claims are *non*-metaphorical since they purport to make truth claims about causality and physical properties such as temporal relations and rhythms in humans governed by cosmic events. Yet if they are non-metaphorical, then they describe properties which are either soundly disproven (such as the supposed link between menstruation and lunar cycles) or else unverifiable and unfalsifiable (such as the link between vaguely-defined cosmic cycles and feminine ontology), and thus drift into astrology more than astronomy.

The evidence presented in this empirical section demonstrates that human subjects are neither “sexed” nor “different” in the way Irigaray claims they are, and therefore that claims about “sex” or the opposition of “sameness” and “difference” cannot be made in a way that readily refers (denotes) since the definitions (connotations) are lacking, or at best temporary and contingent rather than necessary, sufficient, and generalizable. Since Irigaray’s theory *begins* with the unquestioned assumption that sex is a universal human trait, and that there are two and only two sexes who are similar within each sex and insuperably different between the two, and since her theory moreover *requires* this narrow starting definition for the sake of her idealised male/female duality, it follows that any social prescriptions or models for relationality drawn from this incorrect starting description will *also* necessarily be incorrect at worst, or sorely lacking at best. This is simply true of inferences drawn from either incorrect or incomplete premises. Put differently, Irigaray’s highly specific and restricted universe of “men and women, and only men and women, where men are men and women are women” only makes sense at all under the following conditions: the rejection of asexuality and aromanticism as a possible dimension of human subjectivity, the assumption that sex *exists* from the outset in a mind-independent and therefore essential, enduring way that can be readily identified (given her rejection of the social construction of sex

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Diagram 2) not only that minimal, negative descriptions are generally to be ethically preferred, but also that under the “dialectic” mentioned earlier, over-descriptive and over-prescriptive systems are likely to collapse under their own weight when challenged by an opposing system into a negated state of “not-(x and not-x)”. Being similar to the notion of Ockham’s Razor, I’d like to tentatively term this process “Epistemic Entropy”, as a possible point for future research.

<sup>116</sup> Similarly, we find the following: “Before Chernobyl, it was possible to hope that the general chaos or entropy of our time might at least be regulated somehow in nature. This was a serious scientific hypothesis” (Irigaray, 1994:3). It is not clear what to make of this, since the Chernobyl disaster does not disprove the function of entropy as Irigaray claims but, as with virtually everything else in the universe, demonstrates it.

and her alignment of sex with non-human cosmic order), the assumption that there are two and *only* two sexes, the assumption that sex and gender are tied so as to permit no distinction (that females are *feminine*, for instance), the assumption that no crossover between men and women is allowed, the assumption that everyone is cisgender, and the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. Purely conceptually, we should note that the number of assumptions underlying Irigaray's work is very large. Unpick any one of these and, since Irigaray's theory *depends* upon them being true, her conclusions will become unstable. Given the evidence presented so far, it is perfectly reasonable to assert that all these assumptions are incorrect,<sup>117</sup> and thus it follows from an empirical point of view that Irigaray's theory of "sex" and "difference" has very little ground to stand on.

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<sup>117</sup> It is obviously true that many people are asexual and aromantic. Sex does not exist in an easily-identifiable cosmologically essential sense. There are not two and only two sexes. Sex and gender are not the same. Crossover, or gender-blending/bending does exist. Not everyone is cisgender. Not everyone is heterosexual.

### 3.2. EPISTEMIC COHERENCE

Language always proceeds from a beginning to an end, from a past to a future, but as it necessarily has recourse to writing, this progression is always liable to turn around on itself. It is an artefact (Irigaray, 1985a:296).

Whenever we talk about embodiment, or indeed anything at all from physics to art, we must necessarily code our information in a representational system, most likely natural language. It is therefore essential, regardless of what reality the language refers to empirically or what it incites us to do ethically, to examine the language *formally* or *structurally* to see whether the ideas it conveys stand in a coherent relation to each other. We may well speak about the history, art, social function, and value of the Hagia Sophia, but we may also speak, independently, of whether the geology of the area can support its foundations and whether its walls can support its dome. Both methods of description are equally important, but they are not reducible to one another and therefore can be pursued on their own terms. In this section, we will explore the conceptual structure of Irigaray's thought by applying the notion of "coherence" to it, and by examining whether "sameness" and "difference" are in fact opposing terms.

#### Interval contra lack; coherence contra interval

As we saw in Part 1, Irigaray's diagnosis identified a negative lack which maintained sameness (the masculine, Chapter 1), and her solution proposed a positive presence (the feminine, Chapter 2) to counter this by inaugurating and maintaining difference. We also saw how the former depends on a system of strict ideological coherence that denies change, and enforces a one-way relation between subjects (subject-object between male-female); and the latter depends on the introduction of conceptual space (the interval) in order to ensure a respectful two-way relationality, a *distance of difference*, between two subjects. However, the situation is not so neat. There appears to be a contradiction or conceptual tension present in the way Irigaray's own solution also employs coherence and limits space, although Irigaray herself does not outright introduce "coherence" as a theme.

The notion of "coherence" could serve as a very useful conceptual tool or summary of the anti-dialectic and anti-entropic structure<sup>118</sup> of ideological systems such as patriarchy, hetero- and cisgender-normativity, and racism. In brief, it could summarise and describe the tendency of such systems to form *coherent patterns* through the repetition of certain elements (bodies) with certain properties (physical markers such as skin colour), maintained in a stable, predictable relation (such as heterosexual marriage, slavery, or segregation). Let us define "coherence" as the mechanism underlying the ideological processes summarised in Diagrams 1 and 2 insofar as it spends energy *identifying* (describing) and *maintaining* (prescribing) patterns of elements/types/bodies (as in marriage or segregation), in order to avoid collapsing into a minimal state of multiplicity where no single feature is taken as a reference point for identity. On this definition, coherence ensures that social descriptions can move from first stage descriptions to second stage prescriptions to final products as third stage hegemonic typologies (Diagram 1). Third stage typologies themselves then occupy a role of either "x" or "not-x" in society, oscillating between oppressive sameness and resistant difference (Diagram 2), before a major event, such as a slave revolt or constitutional battle over same-sex marriage (caused by the dissonance of both coherent systems inadequately describing lived embodiment), causes *both* x and not-x to collapse into a minimal state of maximum allowance, post-(x and not-x): *everyone* can marry, *all* persons may use public facilities without segregation, *no-one* should be a slave, *all* persons should receive equal pay for the same work, *all* individuals should have physical access to buildings.

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<sup>118</sup> Remember the dialectic outlined in Diagram 2. Ideological systems which attempt to maintain thick, positive, over-extended descriptions of embodiment are "anti-entropic" since they *necessarily* distort or fabricate at least part of a subject's identity, and any false description maintained against correction, resists being transformed into a minimal or more accurate description, rather like heating a cup of tea resists entropy.

It can be suggested that the idea of coherence in the sense employed here *begins with an end*, and thus a certain kind of death.<sup>119</sup> Coherence can be defined as the maintenance of a specific pattern, and a pattern is self-repeating and can only be identified at its *end*. A pattern may be misidentified and misrepresented if cut off too soon; as in the series “XXXXXXXXXXYYYYYYYYY” being identified as a series of Xs only after consulting the first 10 objects.<sup>120</sup> Infinite sequences in mathematics can, of course, not be known to their end, but their properties can be exhaustively described and their values predicted by a given series equation, correctly identifying them as a particular type of pattern. Patterns, or coherence, can thus be known either by abstracting their nature without infinite observation,<sup>121</sup> or by continuous observation until a termination event. Both instances rely on observation and prediction, and regardless of whether the sequence itself is finite or infinite, complex or simple, and regardless of the manner in which this is determined, both are exercises in *finitude*: that is, both cannot approach a pattern as something “in infinity” but as something limited in conceptual space to a particular spatio-temporal frame. Coherence, then, relies on a limitation (finitude) of both space and time. This ties in very well with Irigaray’s identification of the logic-of-the-one as a tool for limiting the space for *knowing* and *expressing* the (female) subject, and our independent interpretation of her system as requiring the interval manifested variously as “distance”, “space”, or the “ontological negative”. Thus, Irigaray seems to agree with us on the instability and ethical inappropriateness of appeals to *coherence*, usually as normative morphologies, and instead on the need for the ambiguity and distance of *space*, disrupting patterns or logics that enforce coherence.

However, this leads us directly to an objection against Irigaray’s system. Irigaray’s theory, despite rightly identifying an historical lack and proposing space as the solution to the logic-of-the-one and the metaphysics of the solids (instances of descriptive and normative coherence), nonetheless covertly relies upon coherence itself. If we define coherence as the maintenance of patterns (first descriptively *in abstracto* and then normatively and practically *in re* through for example the law, dress code, gender division), then Irigaray’s notion of clearly divided and identifiable body types and ontological *processes* is an example of such patterned coherence. Whatever internal ambiguity and fluidity Irigaray might attribute to these processes, they exist as patterns of schemas for human existence that reliably produce, on her account, humans differentiated into two, and only two, groups. This is not to suggest an outright teleology on Irigaray’s part (she resists such limitations), but rather the presence of what she considers a natural order that inevitably manifests itself in the structure of dualistic sexual difference. Processes, then, are *patterns*, for if they were truly unpredictable (recall Irigaray’s image of turbulent fluids) and ambiguous then they would not result in clearly differentiated sexes, let alone the idea of sex itself.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, if we accept the definition of patterned coherence given above, then the following epistemic questions arise: how is Irigaray able to identify the existence or abstract the nature of this sexual pattern within the limited finitude of her own experience? How is she able to know that it applies to others when, on the basis of her own ontological negative, the other (especially the *male* other) is unknowable to her?

The maintenance of coherence requires a limitation and control of space (potential) and the way energy (work) and matter (bodies, resources) are distributed within that space. Despite the centrality of space in Irigaray’s thought, her system of duality actually requires the regulation of space, insofar as it designates space *only* for those who are either male *or* female. We can also suggest that the notion of

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<sup>119</sup> Not to be confused with the death and sacrifice Irigaray identifies in the traditional Epistemology W. That death refers to the negation and non-being of anything *outside* the representational system whereas the death referred to here, as we shall soon see, presupposes the end of the system itself as its own beginning by assuming knowledge of all elements without *encountering* them all. Both are nonetheless relevant and can coexist within the same representational pattern: a pattern that denies anything outside itself, and then proceeds to repeat itself by assuming it knows its own end and therefore the full extent of its nature/definition.

<sup>120</sup> Which reminds us of the Problem of Induction.

<sup>121</sup> Which is something we do all the time since we are finite beings and must make decisions.

<sup>122</sup> That is, they could not be relied upon to reliably select “sex”, whatever sexual types may exist, as a single category from the range of embodied experiences.

“performance” requires a “script” of some sort. That is, the material body of the individual requires the interposition of a script or *code of imperatives* before unmediated gesture, desire, sensation, and appearance are transformed into an identifiable social role or *performance*.<sup>123</sup> Recalling Diagram 1, this script begins by identifying, describing, and thus unifying or grouping specific bodily features into an identity (“you are x”), before applying regulations, expectations, and norms to the constructed identity (“as x, you belong *here* and should do a, b, and c”) and placing it in a structure of relations with other identities; rather like signs or words in semiotics. The script turns the performer into a cultural *letter* that can be grouped and regrouped coherently with others into sentences. This should be fairly easy to identity as a forward linear progression: in order for me to place you in a particular social role, I must first have identified you as x. Therefore, first comes descriptive identity, followed by prescriptive relation, culminating in a system, which, of course, existed from the very beginning with the first act of identification. Indeed, is the word “script” not in both “pre-script-ion” and “de-script-ion”, whether such descriptions and prescriptions are biologically essentialist, *or not*? The script thus comes to stand for the body, to mask it, or occupy the *space* of the body, and the *interval* between the body-as-apodictically-experienced and the body-as-performed-socially. In some sense then, the script unfairly demands of the individual a degree of schizophrenia, which is what Bordo (2000:242) has in mind when she refers to “the double bind of masculinity” requiring men to be both paragons of intelligence and reason, and at the same time virile, rough, athletes and beasts. The very word “masculine” has come to mean “aggressive” in common culture, regardless of whether the overwritten bodies and temperaments of men (and women?) are in fact suited to such scripts. Sometimes the script expects such contradictions, but there is always a more fundamental contradiction between the constructions of the script and the reality of the body.<sup>124</sup>

It is also very important to remember that performances of any kind, by definition, require *suspension of disbelief*: not just schizophrenia then, but amnesia as well. In order for us to take a performance seriously, we must *forget* that there are individuals beneath the roles they have been cast in, who are participating in the collective reading of a script. The normative typology, whether it be racial segregation, patriarchy, or heteronormativity, takes for granted and forgets that the “types” it relies on are, in fact, descriptive *identifications* (as opposed to self-determined *identities*) in a prior, arbitrary, and contingent vocabulary, which then receives codification in normative structures such as the law. By “forgetting” that the categories of humans are to a large extent fictions, *actors*, and that the real individuals beneath are only partially described by the fiction, such identificatory typologies become hegemonic since they conceal their own mechanism, or the fact that there *is* a script. Like varnished wood or painted walls, the performance, which is nothing more than a *patterned coherence*, builds up a patina of more and more de-scriptions, justifications, and pro-/pre-scriptions until the point of departure, an arbitrary selection of named anatomical features, is erased. For instance, implicit racialisation/racism becomes subsumed under the overt and visible actions of *racism*, meaning that the real problem – the identification of types that makes racism possible at all – is concealed, and instead the debate turns upon how to *treat* those types, whether in oppressive or emancipatory situations, such as apartheid or affirmative action.

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<sup>123</sup> I acknowledge that similarities can perhaps be drawn here with Butler’s work on performativity in *Gender Trouble* (2007), but I will not be providing an account of Butler in this thesis.

<sup>124</sup> An appeal such as mine here to a “real” body beneath social roles and representations is problematic and perhaps naïve. But recall here that I drew a distinction at the beginning of this thesis between unmediated (ostensibly “real”) and mediated bodies (socially constructed). My distinction does not fall into essentialism or over-description since I ascribe very little to such bodies beyond the experience of pleasure and pain, or being physically limited or enabled by a body; such as being too tall for a doorway or stubbing one’s toe. To argue that *everything* is socially constructed is to undermine one’s own argument since this removes the body that *can* be constructed or misrepresented in the first place; moreover it removes incentives for acting against injustice since an absent body cannot be misrepresented or mistreated. A bare minimum, rather like Moore’s hand, seems necessary. It is this bare minimum that I am appealing to.

But I would like to suggest here as well that the notion of “script” is also useful as a tool for conceptual *reverse* engineering.<sup>125</sup> From the presence of a heavily-articulated system of values, we can reliably infer the existence of a *prior* script, and from that, the existence of a *prior* body that has been effaced to some degree; put differently, we can infer the presence of an over-extended, thick, positively specific *representation* at the expense of a *real* body beneath it. This, I think, is what Irigaray had in mind with the logic-of-the-one (and, of course, the system of Epistemology W extrapolated from it). From the logic-of-the-one’s performance, the ritual sacrifice and negation of a *lack* (being the maternal, the feminine, the fluid and ambiguous), she was able to infer, rightly, the presence of an unjustly overwritten body beneath, and hence able to redeem the muted values associated with femininity such as motherhood, touch, and intimacy under a new script, Epistemology I.

This, however, leads us to conclude that there are three issues with Irigaray’s own logic-of-the-two. The first is that Irigaray does not entertain the possibility that the patriarchal script of Epistemology W misrepresents *men* as much as women. The second is that she does not explore the ways in which her own dual-logic, Epistemology I, represents yet another script and therefore another possibility for denying certain features of the body. The third is that the male/female duality presented as a solution does not entertain the existence of *other* bodies or subjectivities outside that script and thus establishes the performance of a new hegemonic typology, albeit a typology of *two* (difference)<sup>126</sup> rather than *one* (sameness). This move from one to two subjects might suggest the possibility of moving toward “the many”. This will be taken up shortly. For now, it is worth considering the issue of sameness/difference in order to see whether “difference” does in fact represent the opposite of “sameness”, and therefore whether difference is a *solution* to sameness as Irigaray envisions.

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<sup>125</sup> Similar to “code switching” in sociology. A speaker’s introduction of a new vocabulary, or *code*, or even manner of speaking, can be taken to reliably indicate that the speaking subject is switching “roles” or identities in response to the context; for instance, the sudden difference in vocabulary and tone when having to answer a call from one’s employer while with a group of friends.

<sup>126</sup> Although as will be stressed below, this is not true difference, since “difference” can be rewritten as a “*sameness* of difference” that still represents *one* new solution (the hegemony of a duality).

Difference is a sameness of difference, but multiplicity and neutrality are not samenesses

[I]t is not possible to rediscover this path back to the self in any other way that brings both vitality and happiness. Anything else falls back into the opposition of the one and the many, into subjection (Irigaray, 2000a:173).

[A]t a certain level equality corresponds to the sacrifice of difference, ultimately to its erasure (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:139).

Not all subjects are the same, nor equal, and it wouldn't be right for them to be so. That's particularly true for the sexes (Irigaray, 2007:14).

Instead of pursuing cultural development, the world is retreating to the minimum grounds for human definition [...] what appears to be the reasonable way is utopian or misguided. Why? Women and men are not equal. And the strategy of equality, when there is one, should always aim to get differences recognised (Irigaray, 2007:76-77).

The multiple goes well with the logic of the one – or the One – and even postulates it (Irigaray, 2004:72).

How can the double demand – for both equality and difference – be articulated? (Irigaray, 1985b:81).

How can we get out of these false dilemmas: difference equals hierarchy[?] (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:11).

The claim that women *are* different, that they possess difference, is often used to justify gender inequality when in fact it is not justification at all. Difference is not a property but a term of comparison or relationship. That women are perceived to be different in relation to a male-defined norm is not a reason for gender inequality but a reflection of it (Disch, 1992:15).

We have already mentioned the idea that Irigaray's invariably unfavourable treatment of the concept of *sameness* (whether in male *homosociality* or mathematical *self-reference*) and her invariably positive assertion of *difference* in response to sameness (whether in revaluing the female body on its own terms or in the ontological negative), is both a reactionary and insular enterprise insofar as it sweepingly generalises the application of one concept (difference) as the only solution to another (sameness) on the basis of a historical contingency – there *having been* the use of sameness under patriarchy as a means of oppression. My suggestion here is that this reaction, and Irigaray's further insistence that anything *outside* either sameness or difference is necessarily, in some way, still a regression to *sameness*, sets up a false dichotomy in which, if "sameness" is unethical, its opposite "difference" must logically be ethical, and given the exclusion of other alternatives, must also be the only alternative. Moreover, I contend that the use of the sameness/difference divide, where sameness manifests as oppression and difference as liberation, does nothing to solve the problem of arbitrarily selecting physical features such as skin colour or genitalia and the subsequent ordering of human subjects according to those features, and the assumption underlying the argument of this thesis is precisely that such typologies of identification always misrepresent (and subsequently mistreat) some or other excluded aspect of human identity. In this sense, arguing between "sameness" and "difference" is a pseudo-problem insofar as both lead to precisely the *same* issues of assuming the *existence* of "types" of subjects at all (recall Diagram 1, stage one), attributing moral *properties* to those types (stage two), and ultimately misrepresenting and mistreating those types (on the basis of a necessarily incomplete representation or type) when the typology becomes an enforced or policed template for organising society (stage three); especially if the representations or "types" are *generalised*, as Irigaray does with "men" and "women".

Both sameness and difference are problematically *patterned* as both require a coherent repetition and (re)production of the same general descriptive and prescriptive structure (whether universalising monism or duality as particular examples) into the future.<sup>127</sup> Multiplicity, however, since it takes as its only starting axiom the negative non-specific sameness of allowing *all difference*, steps outside the very condition of patterned coherence and hierarchy by assuming virtually no descriptive or prescriptive function, and thus I oppose Irigaray's reading of multiplicity as a regression to the "same" or the "one". Multiplicity may be defined instead as the refusal to take a single reference point, such as sex (and subsequently either male or female or both) or race, as the starting point for defining a subject's identity.

Difference, however defined, is simply another appeal to sameness. "We are all different in manner x" or "we are all different in sharing property x" is a statement that 1) says the same thing about all the people it refers to, and 2) generalises the same category of experience. A typically Irigarayan statement such as "there exist only men and women, and men and women are different"<sup>128</sup> can be rewritten without losing its truth value as "there exists nothing that is different outside the sameness of being either male or female". The attempt to argue the opposition of sameness and difference essentially boils down to arguing semantics and creating a pseudo-problem. Put simply, we can rewrite all propositions in Irigaray's oeuvre which contain the word "different" as statements expressed in terms of "sameness",<sup>129</sup> *while still saying what Irigaray herself wishes to say*.<sup>130</sup> Once this is done, it becomes clear not only that the appeal to difference in any simple sense does not solve the problem of oppressive sameness (since it is sameness), but also that objections to sameness can be levelled against difference as well. In other words, the words "sameness" and "difference" can both truthfully denote injustice at the same time, in much the same way as "I am where I am" and "I am not where I am not" can both truthfully denote where I am, at the same time. Technically, "I am not where I am not" is *not* the negation of "I am where I am"; but that is irrelevant since our point here is that p and not-p both denote the same thing and by Euclid's Law are equivalent. Furthermore, the contingent, material conditions of difference are so subjective and relational that one cannot *a priori* state, in totalising terms, that sameness and difference are opposites. One person's sameness is another's difference.

Put differently,<sup>131</sup> the fact that both p and not-p denote the same thing means that either there is a contradiction, or the statement is trivial and not-p is, in fact, *not* not-p. Sameness and difference are two ostensibly opposing words which refer to the same thing; they are logically parasitic upon one another. In order to avoid presenting trivialities then, a theory of equality using these categories must justify *what* is the same or different, *how* it is so, and *why* this matters. It must also demonstrate that what we consider the "same" or "different" stays that way across time for all people and does not revert to the opposite, otherwise it risks a contradiction. Clearly such a typology is not only empirically impossible but also ethically undesirable. Talking about sameness/difference, whether in sex, race, or dis/ability, does not

<sup>127</sup> A good example is Irigaray's call for new female genealogies in Epistemology I in response to the male-centred lineages of Epistemology W. Such a pattern would no doubt exclude those who are *not* clearly male or female. The place of an intersex or transgender parent is uncertain, I would say *denied*, in an Irigarayan society.

<sup>128</sup> This is a formulation of my own. See the following by Irigaray:

"[I]n humanity at large, there are only men and women" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:181), (note "only");

"In the entire world, there exists only men and women" (2000b:167), (again, note "only");

"[T]he insurmountable difference between man and woman" (2000b:106);

"[W]oma(e)n and ma(e)n represent two different worlds, two visions of the world which remain irreducibly distinct" (Irigaray, 2000a:151).

<sup>129</sup> In much the same way as a mathematical equation can have any of its variables shuffled to express the others *in terms of whichever one we choose*, without losing the truth value.

<sup>130</sup> The possible objection that "difference" refers to different *connotations* for "men" and "women" is irrelevant and misses the point here. The point is that the *logic of using the word "difference"*, not the *content* of that difference, can be rewritten using the word "sameness". That the truth value of the resulting propositions is still the same only demonstrates, again, that the *content* was not affected and is not of concern here. This is a semantic issue conceptually independent of whatever "properties" or "variations" of difference we may wish to ascribe to "men" and "women".

<sup>131</sup> No pun intended this time.

help since it does not get us beyond the discussion of the same physical markers. Nor does it clearly state *what* is different/same *for whom*, since what *x* considers to be their defining “difference” is to person *y* an indication of *x*’s sameness. Sameness and difference, by definition, require comparison; yet any such comparison is relative to the observer is thus not stable enough to generalise.<sup>132</sup> Equality needs to be radically rethought so as to *not* apply to essentialised bodily markers, since these are open to any number of contradictory interpretations, even for the same individual. Something similar is pointed out by Disch (1992:15), who argues that arguing for difference *from difference* might be a category error. Difference is a comparative *relation* derived *a posteriori*, it is not a *property* known *a priori*. Using a form of essential difference to argue *for* difference is therefore to employ “difference” in two inconsistent ways, and moreover to use it in arguing for itself, resulting in circularity.

This false division between sameness and difference, and the universalising insistence that anything other than difference is necessarily a covert regression to masculine sameness, reaches a pitch that any non-heterosexual or non-cisgender person will easily recognise in the following exchange between Irigaray and an interviewer:

[Interlocutor]: I’m saying that beyond a certain point I simply fail to understand the masculine-feminine oppositions. I don’t understand what “masculine discourse” means.

[Irigaray]: Of course not, since there is no other. The problem is that of a possible alterity in masculine discourse – or in relation to masculine discourse (Irigaray, 1985b:140).

Irigaray has here failed to grasp the question. The appeal to something *beyond* “the masculine-feminine oppositions” should be both very familiar and important to any LGBT+ person and the question, in suggesting a horizon beyond the point of a male/female duality, seeks to evaluate the validity of Irigarayan dualism in a context or space *outside* itself, “beyond the point” at which it no longer applies; we may imagine such a question being asked at a pride parade, for instance, although the context here is not non-heterosexual, it is automatically implied in inquiring after the validity of sexually dual language “beyond” the point of masculine-feminine oppositions. Beyond a certain point, the use of two to combat the tyranny of one, or beyond the incorrect belief that there are only two at all, the Irigarayan duality makes no further sense. Yet Irigaray does not answer the question, but instead dismisses it out of hand and reframes it as a failure on the interlocutor’s part (or that of their language) to realise that their own question is “actually” a symptom of the masculine order; an order that would make them fail to understand the masculine-feminine oppositions because it does not produce them in language, it acknowledges no real other (the feminine). In other words, Irigaray’s (problematic) starting axioms, that there are only men and women, and anything outside this is a regression to the masculine order, necessarily and unknowingly *commit* her to a position in which she can only understand questions about anything *beyond* sexual duality as failures on the *questioner’s* part to acknowledge the universality of those, and *only* those, dualisms. There is nothing outside the male/female duo for Irigaray; consequently the question “what about anything beyond the two?” must *necessarily*, for her, seem meaningless. This means that Irigaray’s assumption of a two-sex model and her treatment of *everything* other than doubled “difference” as a problematic regression to “sameness”, causes her to reliably misunderstand post- or trans-sex questions about anything other than a male/female duality, and to treat such questions as unwitting regressions to the masculine order. In the language of our introductory remarks on Diagram 1, Irigaray’s insistence on specific “male” and “female” bodies as first stage universalised descriptions, or unquestioned starting premises, commits her, after these are socially patterned using second stage prescriptions, to a third stage product (a male-female duality) that cannot question its own starting axioms and denies anything outside itself (outside a duality of *only* men and women). We will consider a number of such exchanges between Irigaray and interviewers on the topic of non-heterosexuality in 3.3. Ethical Implications below.

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<sup>132</sup> We must bear in mind, of course, the power of social institutions in generalising and establishing “objective” identities, into which we are born and raised. This however is not an argument for their validity insofar as such identities may insufficiently or incorrectly classify and police a person’s body (consider intersex persons and sex reassignment surgery at birth).

We saw in Part 1 how Irigaray opposes the logic-of-the-one and binary systems, and instead hopes for a *duality* of radical alterity; and we have agreed that these are justified aims. But a further problem is that in order for her to make any such claims, they have to be made in binary form, despite Irigaray’s objections. Her own duality has to stand in a logical relationship of direct denial with the other alternatives in the form below, or else she cannot deny them and assert her own position:

|              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| Duality<br>x | Everything else<br>Not-x |
|--------------|--------------------------|

This looks suspiciously like the logic-of-the-one Irigaray (rightly) aims to avoid. Let me pause here and clarify one point to refute a potential objection. I am well aware of the liberating fluidity, (alleged) lack of binary terms, and new expressive space Irigaray hopes to establish *within* her system of “duality”, and I am not denying the usefulness of those. What I am saying instead is that the external epistemological structure in which this hope is embedded must organise itself *externally* in the logic-of-the-one so as to deny (or negate) the legitimacy of other forms (such as binarity or neutrality). This is made even clearer by the observation that Irigaray cannot claim that her duality and (all) other systems *cannot* be placed in a binary of x and not-x, for then she would have no reason to *deny* the others, and her own claim could not stand. Furthermore, picking up on the totalising notion of “all”, Irigaray’s rejection of *all* other modes of relationality (on the basis of them being regressions to the same male universal) is also problematic as it seems to rely on mis-definitions of those alternatives. It seems unlikely and too convenient that everything *other* than Irigaray’s duality is necessarily a regression to sameness. This seems even less likely since some of these alternatives are the opposite of one another (take “multiplicity/plurality” and “neutrality”).<sup>133</sup> If the set contains antithetical terms and labels *all* of them problematic, then it follows that either this is a contradiction or one of the contradictory terms is, in fact, *not* problematic. Put in the (binary) terms of sameness/difference which Irigaray herself utilises, it cannot be true that difference is only to be found in duality, and things as *different* as multiplicity and neutrality are not only semantically the “same” but also regressions to the same injustice.

For several reasons then, I propose that the “dual” sexual difference in Epistemology I is too easily a false dichotomy, and moreover relies covertly on the logic-of-the-one. Therefore, instead of Irigaray’s own binary represented below:

|              |                          |        |                |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Duality<br>x | Everything else<br>Not-x |        |                |
|              | multiplicity             | binary | neutrality etc |

The situation might more accurately be described as a complex spectrum:<sup>134</sup>

|              |         |        |            |
|--------------|---------|--------|------------|
| Multiplicity | Duality | Binary | Neutrality |
|--------------|---------|--------|------------|

<sup>133</sup> Where multiplicity and plurality, which I shall treat as synonymous here, refer to any range of accepted sexual identities that refuses countability, such as queer identity (in opposition to Irigaray’s duality), and neutrality refers to the preference *not* to be identified according to sex (or any feature, the term neutrality stands in relation to whatever embodied identity is in question), such as asexuality or aromanticism. Insofar as multiplicity is *sexed* here, neutrality is *not-sexed*, meaning they are opposite terms.

<sup>134</sup> The order is, of course, debatable. Neutrality would better stand *off* the spectrum entirely. The point is simply to demonstrate gradations and variations, with the possibility of those *not* even on the spectrum (asexuals, aromantics) further calling into question the universality of appeals to sex, even *within* the spectrum, as a universalisable category of experience.

Merely from a logical point of view then, to speak of difference is always, by necessity, to speak of binaries and boundaries, and as we discussed earlier, to speak of a *sameness* of difference. In a set comprised of as many elements as the English alphabet, to claim to be p and *only* p is to claim to be different from a *and* b *and* c, and so forth. In other words, it is always p and *everyone* else, which is a cleverly disguised binary. The impossibility of insisting that one can talk without “x and not-x” becomes clear when Irigaray herself is forced to state that in her own system “[t]o be a woman means not to be a man and to be a man means not to be a woman” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:91). For the sake of conceptual clarity then, we can assert that any discourse based on difference, no matter how numerous the elements in the set, is always necessarily a discourse based on binaries when any single element (or union of two elements such as “male” and “female”) is taken as a point of reference, and from this “ontological” distinction between elements follows a normative distinction; that is, to treat the elements differently.

An elaborated version of the internal content of Irigaray’s binary can be depicted as follows. The first binary set up by Irigaray (within her duality) is an “either/or” between “male/female”, where “male = x” and “female = p”, and p is *not* “not-x”:

| EITHER          | OR                              |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>x (male)</i> | <i>p [NOT “not-x”] (female)</i> |

Irigaray then takes the first binary and inserts it as one element into a second binary:

| EITHER                                |          | OR                                  |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| EITHER                                | OR       | (Something terrible) <sup>135</sup> |
| <i>x</i>                              | <i>p</i> |                                     |
| (Irigaray’s initial binary worldview) |          |                                     |

She does not, however, consider rewriting her binary as follows:

| EITHER                  |                           | OR                               |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>x</i>                | <i>p (NOT “not-x”)</i>    | <i>Neither x nor p</i>           |
| You are totally like me | You are totally unlike me | We both belong to a common third |

In other words, Irigaray cuts short the progress of the logic and tries to sell the false dichotomy fallacy, by insisting that we must *either* accept a world of “difference” and duality between men and women (and *only* men and women) in response to the “sameness” of patriarchy, or we must accept a world of “genocide” where gender is blurred and sex is *not* taken as the centrepiece for ethical relations (in, for instance, the ontological negative). It is strange, considering her poetically liberating project, to realise that Irigaray is ultimately constructing a taxonomy of relations: relations of x to p, x to x, and p to p. This sort of typology ought to be precisely the sort of thing Irigaray is pitted *against*. In her own words, Irigaray states that “[e]ach subject is indexed to a gender and addresses another subject which is equally

<sup>135</sup> This overarching “either/or” where “or” refers to a non-Irigarayan world where gender is blended (transgender, intersex, drag) or even transcended by some individuals (asexuals, aromantics, gender-fluid persons) is considered unacceptable by Irigaray. “Something terrible” is a mild adjective in comparison to her own apocalyptic choice of words. Across her work, Irigaray uses “end of the human species” and “genocide” (Irigaray, 2007:4), “vehicle of death” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:152), and “holocaust” (Irigaray, 2000a:37). These self-same quotes will be repeated in their full form with others, and briefly remarked upon later in 3.3. Ethical Implications.

so” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:163). For someone as careful with her critique and choice of diction as Irigaray, the use of “indexed” reveals something of a Freudian slip.<sup>136</sup> It is a rather clinical word, especially when applied to living, human subjects, and it implies the reduction of those subjects to symbols or elements within an ordered list or typology, much the same as an alphabet, and the limitation of the subject *to that position*: the subject is indexed *to a gender*.<sup>137</sup> It also betrays the arbitrary act of identification and selection required by an index: we can order letters or concepts alphabetically *because we have constructed them*. We need only look at foreign alphabets, or analogously the queer body, to realise the inherent limitations of our own index.

We can see this pattern of setting up binaries without carrying the logic through to its conclusion in her definition of subjects as well, again starting with the male universal from Chapter 1:

|              |
|--------------|
| Male         |
| <b>SEXED</b> |

Before countering it with the female:

|              |        |
|--------------|--------|
| Male         | Female |
| <b>SEXED</b> |        |

Yet Irigaray stops here. She openly states that gender-blending, crossing the sex line, is both impossible and unacceptable (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:91; Irigaray, 2004:70-71). We have already seen in our exposition of Irigaray that she thinks infinite individual variations on their own are unacceptable (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:77-78), and that such variations can only exist in the duality *between* men and women (2000b:83). In her own words, Irigaray “refuses [...] the fact that the plural of the one would be the multiple before being the two” (2000b:159-160). This is understandable in light of her fear of the logic-of-the-one (the multiple being seen as a disguised singularity), and a reduction to what Irigaray calls “today’s greyness” (2000b:126) or “the dullness of the neuter” (Irigaray, 2007:103).<sup>138</sup> This is short-sighted insofar as it cannot see, or outright denies, that her own logic commits her to a gradual progression that moves away from singularity and duality into multiplicity, and ultimately away from sex in favour of a broader post-sex “common third”, starting with an acknowledgement of the existence of transgender, intersex, and non-heterosexual individuals:

|              |   |            |
|--------------|---|------------|
| M            | F | Queer/LGBT |
| <b>SEXED</b> |   |            |

<sup>136</sup> The phrase “the infinity of lists” by Umberto Eco (2012) comes to mind.

<sup>137</sup> This ties in with our earlier discussion in this section on “scripted” typologies.

<sup>138</sup> Consider the following remarks by Irigaray: “[W]e can abandon the model of a single and singular subject altogether [But] this does not mean that the one of the subject can become many” (Irigaray, 2000a:6); “The argument of the plurality of citizens is not valid, either. Society is made up of two sexes” (Irigaray, 1994:59);

“And it is not possible that a common third still exists between us, man and woman. This is true between different cultures or traditions, but first of all it is true between us, between our masculine and feminine subjectivities” (Irigaray, 2002a:82).

For Irigaray, the possibility of moving into the multiple or plural means moving into sameness, since it ignores the (privileged) difference between men and women (and only men and women), and thus does not grant an historical moment to recover the female body from the negation it experienced under the patriarchal logic-of-the-one.

The dialectic pattern should be clear by now, but the types above still attribute positive content to sex, which means that they need to be adjusted for asexuality and aromanticism as below:

|              |   |   |         |
|--------------|---|---|---------|
| M            | F | Q | Asexual |
| <b>SEXED</b> |   |   |         |

Finally, just as the feminist critique displaced oppressive masculine discourse, so too does the authentically non-sexed, ambiguously sexed, or queer body displace universalising talk of necessarily-sexed embodiment.

|  |
|--|
| M / F / LGBT / Asexual / anything goes |
| <b>POST-SEX</b>                        |

Apart from the *internal* content of this process, that is, the content pertaining to sexed subjects as male, female, intersex, and so on, the *external* typologies into which they group, such as dualities or singularities, must also follow this dialectic process:

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Singularity (binary)<br>(S) |       |
| x                           | Not-x |
| <b>PHYSICALLY MARKED</b>    |       |

This binary singularity in the diagram above represents the masculine universal diagnosed by Irigaray and outlined in Chapter 1, with women as not-men, or not-x. Irigaray’s solution to this singularity, the duality described in Chapter 2, can be represented in the diagram below. Note that so far, both instances (singularity and duality) have still maintained the same property – being *sexed*, or physically marked. The notion of there *being* men (and only men and not-men) in the patriarchal model (the singularity, or negational binary), and of there *being* men and women in Irigaray’s duality, has gone unquestioned. The subjects have simply been rearranged using nothing more than their genitalia. Even though the problematic singularity has been negated and opposed with Irigaray’s duality, the issue of being *physically marked* and identified accorded to that mark, has not.

|                          |       |                 |   |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------------|---|
| Singularity<br>(S)       |       | Duality<br>(~S) |   |
| x                        | Not-x | x               | p |
| <b>PHYSICALLY MARKED</b> |       |                 |   |

Both of these can be opposed with a third position, (not quite the “common third” or “common humanity” yet) illustrated below, that of infinite individuation, in which *all* forms of difference and identity are retracted into the individual quite *absolutely*, such that no physical trait can be said to hold for all persons universally, or for any group of people (such as “femininity” for women in the latter case, or “sexuality” for all persons regardless of sex in the former). In such a position, difference itself becomes the common denominator and an absolute category of experience, such that the *having* of a difference is more fundamental than the having of a *specific* difference, the latter of which might simply be called “sameness”. This has the advantage of maintaining difference without being exclusionary, a type of “commonality of plurality”.

|                          |      |                        |
|--------------------------|------|------------------------|
| S                        | D    | Infinite Individuation |
| (S)                      | (~S) | (~[S.~S])              |
| x/not-x                  | x/p  | a, b, ...p, x... z...  |
| <b>PHYSICALLY MARKED</b> |      |                        |

Yet this position, despite presenting a chain of difference and opposition from singular to duality to infinite individuation, has still carried over the same physical property – the assumed existence, and assumed normative importance, of sex as a bodily marker. Therefore, for the dialectic process to complete itself, the assumption of sex, either as something which is different *or* the same between individuals, must also be opposed. Hence:

|                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| Common Third                          |
| ~(~[S.~S]) or “none of the above”.    |
| Anything goes.                        |
| <b>POST PHYSICAL/EMBODIED MARKERS</b> |

In such a state of multiplicity, difference is not a determining constituent element of people, nor is it an end goal; rather, difference is the initial and varying means by which the same equality is achieved. Difference is simply the route by which we construct physical access to all buildings for all persons, or achieve equal pay. It is the contingent means, not the essential identity.

If we polarise difference into two subjects and make it absolutely irreducible, as Irigaray does, then we become oppressively exclusionary. If we collapse difference into a single sameness, then we again become similarly oppressive. What is needed is an entirely new vocabulary of embodiment (one that takes fluid materiality seriously) and subsequently moral vocabulary, that can navigate beyond the Scylla and Charybdis of difference and sameness. We saw previously that the old patriarchal definition of difference was in fact disguised sameness; in this regard Irigaray showed that “I am different *from* you” requires a point of comparison, and generally a problematic one at that. We also saw that Irigaray proposed a new solution along the lines of “I am different”, where that difference is so radical and outside our present conceptual vocabulary that “from you” is almost meaningless. Yet we demonstrated that Irigaray’s solution, the most prominent one, is inadequate. Instead of the standard “I am different *from* you”, what is needed is a new understanding, with a new language. I am drawn here to an unassuming phrase in Dan Savage’s introduction to Miller’s ground-breaking 1971 essay *On Being Different*. Part of Savage’s story is worth quoting here:

I was with my mom and dad and siblings at Water Tower Palace, an upscale shopping mall near downtown Chicago. We were going to the movies [...] and in front of us in line were two young gay men. They were holding hands. I was maybe eleven years old – old enough to be aware, painfully so, of being different from other boys. [...] While my parents could only see perverted weirdos [...] I saw a future for myself. I was different like them; they were different like me. I was going to grow up to be like them. And they didn’t look unhappy. They looked like they were in love. They looked free (Savage in Miller, 2012:xiii-xiv).

“Different *like*.” What this oxymoron suggests is not so much a contradiction as part of a solution. It suggests, again, that “sameness” and “difference” are not diametrically opposed concepts, but ones which intertwine and can be expressed in the same language, meaning that a solution cannot be expressed using *only* sameness or *only* difference. Note Savage’s observation that he was *both* “different from” and “different like” members of the same sex. Trivially, it is true that he was “essentially” the same as all men by virtue of his sex; and likewise he was “merely” different from some by virtue of his orientation, but that is missing the point here. The point is that “male” slowly becomes an empty

category as its necessary properties (such as orientation and chromosomal count) are proven contingent and shared by others of the opposite category (women, for instance). It no longer becomes meaningful to talk of oneself as being “different” or “like” another, precisely because *that point of reference has been erased*. Moreover, Savage’s poignant childhood recollection reminds us that in some very important instances, sameness is often a necessary and life-saving (if strategic and temporary) means of escaping the oppressive logic of the one – if x is oppressive then it makes sense to identify as *the same as y*, which is different from x. In Irigaray, such a community of sameness *which is different* can be found between women, despite her resistance “sameness”. Once again, we see the lines between “same” and “different” become fuzzy as the same words are employed in contradictory senses at the same time or employed in outright conjunction, an important point since Irigaray’s central premise is the alleged opposition of “sameness” and “difference”, and the space for ethics between the two. Since the majority of Irigaray’s oeuvre, certainly her *later oeuvre*, is comprised mainly of propositions expressing not only the existence and properties of “men”, “women”, and “sex”, but also the “difference” and “sameness” of these “sexes”, we may now do what we did in the previous critical section: treat “sameness/difference” as “gappy” words and substitute them in the text with equally unverifiable alternatives, or empty variables such as “X”. If we take a typically Irigarayan statement from her later work such as “In sexual difference, the fact that men and women belong to two different worlds” (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:85), the following is obtained when words “referring” to sex and sameness/difference are replaced, bearing in mind the substitutes suggested in the previous section as well: “In blessed X, the fact that satyrs and nymphs belong to two X worlds”. This statement makes about as much sense to a queer person as the original Irigarayan version would. In a way then, the oxymoronic “I am different *like* you” speaks to the absurdity of using both difference *and* sameness, typically through essentialist bodily markers, as a point of reference. We are similar to others precisely in being different; if authentic pluralism is the aim, then the contents of difference need not be specified, *since “difference” no longer refers*.

This is what I intend when I use the words “plurality” or “multiplicity”. They do not denote an undifferentiated grey monism, for that would require a *single sameness* as the reference point for the group’s connotation, and that would be to miss Irigaray’s warning about regressing to the logic-of-the-one, whether the “one” is taken as “male”, “white”, “heterosexual”, or any other unquestioned universal based on a contingent physical trait. Rather, multiplicity in this sense takes as its reference point “the allowance of all reference points”, and what follows is a “set of all sets” conceptual anomaly that undercuts the very possibility of both sameness and difference, since unlike the logic-of-the-one (sameness) and unlike Irigaray’s *own* logic-of-the-two (difference), multiplicity does not presume to know anything enduring about the properties of its members (such as sex in Irigaray) and thus does not create arbitrarily “mediated” or scripted bodies according to those traits, with lines of division drawn between different types of bodies (such as the male/female divide across Irigaray’s ontological negative).

Instead of drawing the various circles of its inclusion around specific, positive, disparate properties within humans, such as sex or ethnic origin, and thus running the risk of exclusion, multiplicity casts its circle as wide as the human race by taking something negative and absolutely minimal and universal, such as the right to life, or the dignity of free self-determination, or the ability to be injured, and says “anything goes”. I have argued against Irigaray’s deployment of “difference” in opposition to “sameness”, yet an objection may arise since the notion of multiplicity suggested here *requires* difference of a radical kind. This suggests a contradiction, or at least an inconsistency. I would like to suggest that it does not. I am opposed to Irigaray’s use of difference solely as a *duality* of difference, and I am also opposed to any difference, no matter the number of types involved, so long as that difference arbitrarily selects and enforces a *universalised* or *generalised* identity using a specific trait, such as skin pigmentation. In contrast, as already pointed out, multiplicity does not do this. This is vital to grasp, as it represents, at least I hope, the possibility of a solution to the sameness/difference (pseudo) dichotomy without presupposing and policing a single definition of personhood. This possibility will be taken up again later and explored in Chapter 4.

### 3.3. ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the entire world, there exists only men and women (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:167).

[H]e means *he*, she means *she* (Irigaray, 2007:42).

I start from reality, from a universal reality: sexual difference (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:146).

I start from the love between a man and woman (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:162).

[N]ormally [...] “I love you” is said to an enigma: an “other”. An other body, an other sex (Irigaray, 1980:70).

Yes, there’s an irreducible mystery between man and woman. It’s not at all the same kind of mystery that exists between woman and woman or between man and man (Irigaray quoted in Hirsh *et al.*, 1995:110).

It has been my observation, and I have done considerable looking into the matter, that relationships are very much the same, no matter what the sex of the people involved (Miller, 2012:34).

For every news

Means pairing off in twos and twos

Another I, another You

Each knowing what to do,

But of no use.

[...]

For fear

Is over there

And the centre of anger

Is out of danger

(Auden, 2013:43).

Our ensuing discussion on the ethical aspects of Irigaray’s theory will be based primarily on her problematic placement of *sexual* difference as the condition of morality between subjects (remember her stereotyped definitions of men and women in 2.1. Metaphysics of Fluids and her placement of the ethical relation as one *between different sexes* on either side of the ontological negative in 2.3. Ontological Negative), where such a difference on her view requires subjects who are not only sexed (as a first assumption) but also of the *opposite* sex (a second assumption), and exist in a relation of paired desire that matches this opposition (a third assumption, heterosexuality). By definition, this view wrongly excludes same-sex relations from the same degree of ethicity Irigaray ascribes to the heterosexual couple (since morality is maintained via *difference*) and it incorrectly assumes that all subjects are both *clearly* and *identifiably* sexed (two unspecified or ambiguously sexed subjects cannot easily be called “different”), and are all sexed either male or female (a cisgender assumption excluding intersex and transgender persons). In exploring the ethics of her appeal to heterosexual difference, we will first consider her rare remarks directed at homosexuality, and her tendency to read homosexuality through a heterosexual bias. Thereafter, we will again take up the concept of “space” as a point of reference for ethics, and consider the ways in which Irigaray’s male/female duality, or logic-of-the-two, *suppresses* or *negates* space (as the patriarchal logic-of-the-one did to the female body) by denying the existence of the queer body outside the duality of the male/female society. The chapter will conclude with remarks about the possibility of the misrepresentation of men in Irigaray’s theory.

### Unhappily, some very Gay interviews

It is telling to note that Irigaray does not engage anywhere in her work with any counter-readings or alternatives which are contrary to her own reading of both patriarchy and her construction of “sexual difference”; her works are either limited to her own close readings of historical texts without recourse to secondary sources (mainly her early work), or polemics elaborating her own theory of “sexual difference” in short manifestos (mainly her later work, see for instance *Democracy Begins Between Two* and *Je, Tu, Nous*), again without recourse to secondary sources. In this sense her work is solely reactionary insofar as it exists in response to a prior tradition (patriarchy) and insular insofar as it ignores other contemporary readings (such as queer theory) – a point we have already briefly raised in 3.1. Empirical Facts. This is especially true regarding the lack of LGBT+ perspectives in her work, and indeed, under her generalisation that *all* persons are *always* either male *or* female, and *only* male or female, it is enormously problematic since she denies the very *existence* of queer people, a flaw serious enough to destabilise any conclusions she may wish to draw on universal terms. Irigaray’s only remarks on non-heterosexuality, apart from the usual disparaging remarks about male homosociality and “men-among-themselves”, appear outside the writings of her oeuvre in the form of interviews when she is pressed on the matter, and even there the discussions are notably short and quickly dismissed by her. Let us begin our discussion of the ethical dimensions of Irigaray’s work with that which is most obviously, and most painfully, excluded from her theory, the LGBT+ individual, and her remarks in interviews.

R Rossanda: Your questioning “how” to communicate between the sexes, in *I Love to You*, starts with a thesis of the irreducibility of one sex to the other, the radical mistake of attempting to appropriate the other or to belong to the other. But isn’t this just as true in a relationship between two people of the same sex? No-one belongs to another person, because of each person’s singularity, in body and mind, as an inviolable entity that one cannot possess without damaging oneself.

L Irigaray: Of course, each person is different. But this infinite differentiation of individuals does not allow one to structure relationships in twos or collectively. It remains on the horizon of the opposition between the One and the multiple [...] To think in terms of difference between men and women at once means pursuing the constitution of human identity, the construction of History (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:77-78).

“Of course...but”, or a quick dismissal. Irigaray’s response here reveals not only a bias that is both cisgender and heteronormative, but one trapped within the problematic pseudo-problem, or false dichotomy, of sameness/difference that we already discussed in the previous two sections of Chapter 3. Her assumption that there *are* two and only two types, and that the only way to counter historical “sameness” is through new “difference”, *necessarily commits* her to the rejection of anything other than “the two”. Notice how she does not approach same-sex relations at all; her response immediately states that homosexuality, confusingly called “this infinite differentiation” since *everything* other than male/female, whether infinite multiplicity, neutrality, or queer gender-blending is a regression to a problematic “One” in her view (recall, again, 3.2. Epistemic Coherence), “does not allow one to structure relationships in twos”. Why should we want to? Her “two”, after all, *is male/female*. In other words, Irigaray’s response to the question “what about homosexual relations?” is simply “yes, but they don’t allow a heterosexual structure”; not only is this a total evasion of the question, but it is also exclusionary. Note, on this ethical point, that Irigaray goes on to state precisely this exclusion: thinking in terms of the difference *between men and women* “at once means pursuing the constitution of human identity”, alarmingly eclipsing the possibility of a human identity *outside* being either male *or* female, meaning transgender or intersex persons. Even if we are generous and suppose that for Irigaray “human identity” (a very broad and sweeping term in the first place) is not *limited* to the male or female subject (although I am arguing that Irigaray thinks it is), she still supposes it *begins* with male and female subjects, which is not much better since it is clearly empirically false (there are not only male and female subjects) and, again, ethically exclusionary. Why, for instance, should we say that race *begins* with “white”, and all else is a derivative? This trend is typical of Irigaray’s comments on non-heterosexuality.

E. Weber: In *I Love to You* you focus on heterosexual relationships in search of sexual identity. Why couldn't women or men define their sexual identity with someone of the same sex?

L. Irigaray: We are begotten by woman and man, we live in a society of women and men. Whatever our sexual choice may be, we have to resolve the question of the two human genders' cohabitation [...] they belong to only one gender. To be a woman means not to be a man and to be a man means not to be a woman (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:91).

Again, Irigaray avoids the question. She does not approach the notion of same-sex desire *on its own terms*, but answers only by remarking on the value of *heterosexuality*. To begin, two very necessary reminders that should be familiar: The description of homosexuality (or any sexuality) as a "choice" is one of the iconic homophobic objections to same-sex relations; the usual language is "lifestyle choice". Sexuality is not a choice, and such language occupies an intensely familiar and defamatory place as hate speech in LGBT+ memory. (This is a controversial reading of Irigaray, and more will be said shortly on whether we can fairly equate offensive speech with her comment, and whether she *intends* it as such.) Secondly, "to be a man means not to be a woman" is simply a (presumably unintentional) rewriting of the standard "be a man!" (Irigaray herself emphatically states "*he means he*" (2007:42)), or its equivalents "homosexual men are not men", "gays are women", or "'n man is nie 'n moffie nie", since "man" or "he" is assumed in standard language (and in Irigaray's model of sex) to mean both *heterosexual* and *not-feminine*. It may of course be objected in Irigaray's defence that she does not herself extend "be a man" into "homosexual men are not men", but the point is that the logical implication, or the *capacity* to derive such a statement legitimately, is openly there. This is because Irigaray's phrase "to be a man means not to be a woman" is *exactly* analogous to "to be a man means not to be *feminine*" (recall, Irigaray draws no distinction whatsoever between sex and gender and considers gender causally produced by sex). What Irigaray means when she says men are men, is that men are *cisgender* with penises, *heterosexual*, and *not feminine*. What homophobic objectors mean when they say men are men, is also that men are *cisgender* with penises, *heterosexual*, and *not feminine*. Furthermore, both examples imply *prescriptions* as much as descriptions in order to *maintain* the "manly man" definition; that is, the Irigarayan description "to be a man means not to be a woman" contains the further moral injunction to "*be a man*", especially since the man/woman dichotomy is vital to her ideal society, which *requires* the enforcement of "difference" between sexed subjects. Thus a little linguistic digging reveals both cases, Irigarayan and homophobic, to be identical, whatever the difference in their histories. Whether Irigaray intends it as such or not, and it is possible that she does not, the language is nonetheless identical, and identical conclusions can be drawn from them; moreover Irigaray herself goes on to describe a culture between men and women as a culture of "natural attraction [...] of love and attraction between a man and a woman" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:103), which, if anything, supports the reading of her remarks as homophobic, and thus we may now call them blatantly so. Note what is left out, negated - "*unnatural*", which of course, is one of the other classic objections to homosexuality. It is also worth pointing out, thirdly, that regardless of whether Irigaray's language can be read as homophobic or not, the statement "to be a woman means not to be a man and to be a man means not to be a woman" is without question transphobic;<sup>139</sup> not only to transgender individuals, but also to intersex and queer individuals. The statement quite simply means "women are feminine and have only vaginas, men are masculine and have only penises". There is no other "metaphorical" context in which to redeem and reinterpret a statement that outright denies, firstly, the existence of other bodies, and secondly, the possibility of crossover or gender-blending ("they belong to only one gender").

<sup>139</sup> In its guidelines for accurate journalism, the American LGBT+ organisation GLAAD dedicates several pages to correct queer terminology. Under the section "Terms to Avoid", phrases such as "biologically male" and "born a woman" are designated inappropriate (note Irigaray's frequent use of precisely such phrases) and the following is added: "Problematic phrases like those above are reductive and overly-simplify a very complex subject [...] Finally, people are born babies: they are not 'born a man' or 'born a woman'" (GLAAD, 2017:15).

Fortunately, some respite is to be found. The following remark constitutes the sole act of potentially *positive* recognition of non-heterosexuality I could find in Irigaray's work:

The love relation is always the most difficult [...] The difficulty however is not limited exclusively to heterosexual relations, but to homosexual ones as well (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:140-141).

While not obviously positive, this comment by Irigaray has the advantage of not denying the existence of non-heterosexuality or reinterpreting it along cisgender or heterosexual lines (*yet*, as we will see). Moreover, it suggests a *similarity* between same- and opposite-sex relations by at least including homosexuality within the scope of "the love relation" (which is still nonetheless assumed to be heterosexual, note "not limited exclusively to heterosexual relations") and implying the difficulties faced by both types of couples are similar. However, in the next sentence our hopes are dashed as Irigaray again proceeds to reframe the specificities of homosexuality *in terms of heterosexuality*:

Without knowing how to deal with the problem of relating to others which the culture of difference demands, even the love relation between members of the same sex is bound to fail (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:141).

Why should homosexuals learn how to relate to each other by observing how the sexually-different others of the "culture of difference" (the Irigarayan male/female duality) relate? Irigaray makes it clear throughout her oeuvre that "other" only ever refers to the other *sex*,<sup>140</sup> and the "culture of difference" is not *general* difference but *sexed* difference. In essence, Irigaray is therefore, unwittingly or not, doing here what she accused the patriarchal Epistemology W of doing: interpreting the other in terms of the same. In the old representational order this was the interpretation of women (other) according to a masculine template (same), here it is the interpretation of non-heterosexuality (other) according to the new Irigarayan heterosexual dual of Epistemology I (same). Ironically then for a theorist of *difference*, Irigaray is treating non-heterosexual couples as the *same* as her vaunted heterosexual couple. Beginning her statement with heterosexuality ("others", "the culture of difference") and rhetorically parenthesising same-sex desire beyond the comma as an afterthought *in terms of the initial heterosexuality*, (note the emphasis of "even", as though homosexual desire is an *exception*) only further supports the reading of "others" and "culture of difference" as referring specifically to heterosexuality rather than difference in general. This extract provides a particularly clear and disturbing example of the shortcomings of Irigaray's "ethics" of sexual difference. Note also the approving use of the verb "demands" – again, for Irigaray the solution, and the *only* solution to be *demande*d, is one of difference. By substitution we can yield an equally problematic example for clarification: "Without knowing how to deal with the problem of relating to our own members of our own white race, which the culture of racial endogamy demands, even the love relation between members of different races is bound to fail".<sup>141</sup> As with the biased heterosexual, cisgender starting point of her remarks in the previous exchange, the current extract shows how Irigaray's conflation of the concept "sameness" with patriarchal oppression, especially in the logic-of-the-one we discussed in Chapter 1, and her subsequent insistence (demand) for difference, and *only* difference as the condition of ethics, traps her in a position in which she cannot conceptualise legitimate "relations of sameness", such as homosexuality *on their own terms*. Instead, she must resort to treating them as unnatural subsections or special cases *derived from a heterosexual reading of difference*, which is assumed by her to not only be descriptively correct (that there *are* two sexes, and *only* two sexes with specific properties), but also prescriptively justified (that there *should* be two sexes, a relation of desire between them, and that ethnicity *should* be based on that difference). It is safe to assert as strongly as possible that Irigaray's view here is wholly unjustified.

<sup>140</sup> "[N]ormally [...] "I love you" is said to an enigma: an "other". An other body, an other sex" (Irigaray, 1980:70). Note the use of "normally" as an adjective privileging heterosexuality. The implication is thus *abnormality* for non-heterosexuality.

<sup>141</sup> I have already dealt at length with the reasons why it does not matter which way around sameness and difference are used in the logic of such propositions. See especially footnote 95 on page 61, and the section "Difference is a sameness of difference" in 3.2. Epistemic Coherence.

Finally, Irigaray responds directly to the question of homophobia, albeit in her familiarly evasive way:

Q: In the United States your work is sometimes misunderstood as homophobic, has been perceived as homophobic by certain writers. That's what inspires the later question.

A [Irigaray]: I think this isn't fair, because I believe that when *Speculum* was understood as simply *homophile*, in part because of an error of translation, and when it became clear that I wasn't simply a homophile, then they said I was a homophobe, because people didn't know how to think the difference fairly. Then, either one is a homophile or a homophobe? (Irigaray quoted in Hirsh *et al.*, 1995:105).

Observe, again, that Irigaray has not answered the question. Certainly it is valid to point out that "homophile vs homophobe" may be a false dichotomy (though how is not made clear), but pointing this out does not answer the question by clarifying her position on many of her own statements, which as I have already shown, are identical to the usual defamatory comments encountered by many LGBT+ persons on a daily basis. One can answer the question *without* submitting to the dichotomy, it is simply a matter of affirming or denying whether certain propositions denigrate the value of same-sex relations. Notice also that Irigaray's response reframes the question as a failure on the part of *interlocutors or critics* to understand her own model of sexual difference, shifting the burden of proof. Lastly, note how it *denies* or *ignores* the possibility of homophobia existing at all in her thought: since her thought purports to exist beyond the possibility of simple binaries, the question "is it homophobic or not", as a *binary*, is not applicable, to her mind. This is an instance of side-stepping the issue, or else of setting up the conditions of her own work so as to avoid the possibility of being critiqued. As a parallel, when asked "Is your work racist?" it is insufficient to reply "Must I be either racist or not?", when one's work is filled with comments that deny the existence of other races beyond a duality of black/white, and establish a strict social relationship between black and white people.

Irigaray's comments on non-heterosexuality are not encouraging. Far from it, many of her statements are unquestionably transphobic, and all display a cisgender, heteronormative bias that forces any consideration of non-heterosexuality in her thought to be bent through a lens that invariably reinterprets all instances of the "same" (for instance, a male/male couple) according to the Irigarayan model of "difference" (the male/female couple), since as we saw in Chapter 1, for her the "same" *necessarily* represents a regression to the logic-of-the-one, requiring disruption by the "two". At no point can her language regarding the non-existence of asexual, intersex, and transgender persons be considered strategic. It does not represent a stepping-stone to greater diversity further down the path; it is dogmatic to the point of caricature. It generalises descriptions (*all* persons are either male or female, and *only* male or female) and denies that there will *ever* be anything other than "male and female", and presents this in an allegedly "ethical" system to which the only alternative is an apocalyptic collapse of civilisation. Hyperboles and adjectives, to be sure, but they are hyperboles in Irigaray's own language and in no way misrepresented or taken out of context; consider the extracts from Irigaray in the following footnote.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Consider the following eight quotes:

1. "This neutralisation, if it were possible, would mean the end of the human species. The human species is divided into *two genders* which ensure its production and reproduction. To wish to get rid of sexual difference is to call for a genocide more radical than any form of destruction there has ever been in History" (Irigaray, 2007:4).
2. "The world changes. Nowadays, its development seems to threaten life and the creation of values" (Irigaray, 2007:29). Without explanation, we are left to wonder whether this is a reference to (the justified and welcome) trends of same-sex marriage and neutralising bathroom access, which go against the notion of desire and relationality as something between only *men* and *women*, and which erase the need for such differences in the first place. Unfortunately Irigaray confirms our fears:
3. "What will result from the blurring of identities? Whom and what does this serve today? To surpass a still unaccomplished human destiny? Why this immoderation? Is it not, once again, a vehicle of death more so than of life?" (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000b:152).
4. "[G]ender neutrality puts us, individually and collectively, in danger of death" (Irigaray, 2007:73).

To politely use veiled language and call such statements “worrisome” or “problematic” is dishonestly euphemistic and inconsistently light in comparison to the statements’ own weight; and especially (but not solely) for those of us who are LGBT+ it is difficult, I would say inappropriate, to refrain from expressing outrage at such statements even in academic settings. This section of Chapter 3, after all, concerns itself with ethics, and as a queer person I would say that the justified response of any transgender, non-heterosexual, intersex, homosexual, or asexual person reading Irigaray’s views on non-heterosexuality *should* be outrage.<sup>143</sup>

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5. “[N]eutralising grammatical gender amounts to an abolition of the difference between sexed subjectivities and to an increasing exclusion of a culture’s sexuality. We would be taking a huge step backwards if we abolished grammatical gender, a step our civilisation can ill afford” (Irigaray, 2007:61).

6. “Justice in the right to life cannot be exercised without a culture of humankind comprising men and women” (Irigaray, 2007:73).

7. “*Sexual difference is necessary for the continuation of our species* [...] it’s here that life is regenerated” (Irigaray, 2007:7).

8. “[I]n refusing the challenge [of instituting sexual difference] we run the risk of conflict, war and regression in human civilisation” (Irigaray, 2000a:12).

<sup>143</sup> It is ironic to note that Irigaray’s polemic insistence in her later work, in the face of whatever evidence might exist to the contrary, that there *are* men and women and *only* men and women defined in a particular manner, goes against a very prescient psychoanalytic remark made by her in her early work: “In fact, anything that is repeated so emphatically must be suspected of being a kind of denial or refusal of awareness [...] Somewhere it forgets or denies that its subject has already been disguised and travestied by a certain speculation” (Irigaray, 1985a:162). Has not the intersex body, the transgender body, and the non-sexed body (race, etc) “already been disguised and travestied by a certain speculation” on Irigaray’s part, namely the prior and unquestioned assumption of the existence of sex, and the subsequent insistence on “male and female” as the only possible alternative to the old patriarchal order? Has she not, by virtue of this unquestioned starting assumption, foreclosed on the possibility of *other bodies*?

### The ethics of space with(out?) the sameness/difference dichotomy

We can relate these comments on non-heterosexuality back to Irigaray's ontological negative and our singling out of "space" within Irigaray's theory as a point of reference for ethics. Let us recall for a moment Irigaray's diagnosis of a pervasive lack and suppression of space within Epistemology W, and also her warning that a descriptive order which treats itself as *the* self-perpetuating origin and negates all possibilities (spaces) outside itself (traditionally the feminine and maternal) becomes a *prescriptive* order that figures the lack outside itself as the space of *death* or non-being (Irigaray, 1985a:26-27), since it itself is being, and thus sanctions "conceptual" sacrifice, and very often real violence. This, if we remember, is a very important insight by Irigaray we carried over from Chapter 1, since it demonstrates how an ostensibly abstract and merely *descriptive* metaphysics of solids and binary logic-of-the-one can become violently *prescriptive*, since it ties existential and ethical concepts such as being and life to its own "neutral" vocabulary of positive, solid, mechanised *presence* (in the classic metaphysics of solids), and to the self (re)producing binary of x/not-x (in the logic-of-the-one). Thus it grants itself the power to declare dead or expendable that which falls outside its own values.

Yet I would like to argue that Irigaray falls prey to using this sacrificial logic herself in her subsequent solution, causing a hidden ethical dilemma. Even though she rightly wishes to overcome such sacrificial negation and rehabilitate that lack into a fecund space between subjects, the fact that her solution, firstly, privileges one type of embodiment (sex) and, secondly, creates a system of two and only two subjects implies that, by her own diagnostic logic, her system merely transfers this same "void of death" to *anything outside* the new male/female duality. Indeed, evidence of this can be found in her later works. Irigaray frequently ties death, both biological and cultural, to the absence of two genders.<sup>144</sup> Consider the following line of "post-sex = death" reasoning, presented in a staggered concatenation:

Yet the prospect of a neutral, asexual community is disturbing. [...] Although life, obviously, is always sexed, death on the contrary no longer makes this distinction. [...] A society which eliminates the dividing line between life and death is capable of all forms of holocaust. [...] This is the point we have reached today (Irigaray, 2000a:37).

Apart from the perfectly valid observation that calling asexuality<sup>145</sup> "disturbing" is offensive to asexuals (and possibly aromantics), we also find the totalising assertion that life "obviously"<sup>146</sup> is "always" sexed; the sweeping "obvious" means sex and its effects both are and should be clear to everyone, and the qualifier "always" means there is no other alternative, other than death of course. Not merely death, but an apocalyptic *holocaust*. In other words, the desire not to participate in a particular *sexed representational order*, by those of us who are neither male nor female through no fault of our own, means death. This should remind us of Irigaray's observation that the masculine representational order meant death for women. In defence of asexuality, it should also be pointed out that there is a logical gap between "death no longer makes this [sexual] distinction" and the inference Irigaray makes that "asexuality is therefore death". We cannot infer, as Irigaray frequently does, that gender-blending, asexuality, or aromanticism means "death" simply because "death", by definition, is not-sexed. "Not-sexed" is not the same as "a-sexual" – they are *sexually different*, we can note with semantic irony, and therefore such a line of reasoning represents a category error. All the same, returning to Irigaray's point, her new man-woman representational order, by her own logic then, implies death for asexuals, aromantics, and perhaps demisexuals. Again, she has simply transferred the negation to a new group,

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<sup>144</sup> I refer the reader to the appended Irigaray index (Appendix page 116) and the entries under the heading "Death (post-sex, gender-blending...)"

<sup>145</sup> Irigaray draws no distinction between asexuality as a sexual orientation, and asexuality as a society that does not recognise sex, which is already a highly problematic conflation. In fact, since Irigaray does not even recognise the existence or possibility of asexuality (or aromanticism) as an orientation (given her description of the entire cosmos and creation of life as sexed, and *only death* as unsexed), it might be said that she commits precisely the erasure or negation of a sexed dimension of being that she accuses "today's" society of committing against sexual difference (or in the past, which the patriarchal logic-of-the-one of committed against women).

<sup>146</sup> "Obviously" to sexually mature adults? To all *non*-asexuals?

without realising (or admitting) this. There can thus be read a certain irony (or perhaps “tragedy” would be a better word) in the focus on space exclusively *within* the sameness/difference debate, or within Irigaray’s focus on space *within* (between) difference(s), because this focus is premised on the denial of any space *outside* the sameness/difference dichotomy.

What can be seen here is not only a suppression of *space* (the denial of being or expressing that being outside being either male or female), but also the way in which the conditions of possibility of Irigaray’s system are its limits. The condition of possibility for Irigaray’s solution is the introduction of the feminine on equal footing, but in radical alterity, to the masculine universal. Yet maintained against anything outside that solution, such as the queer body, this male/female duality has solidified into a new limit that either negates anything *outside* itself (such as the very *possibility* or *existence* of a queer body), or reinterprets and subsumes it *through* the lens of (hetero, cisgender) difference (recall the interviews on homosexuality covered earlier). In this way, the non-space created (through negation or denial) by Irigaray presents us with several problems. We have already seen the first: placing anyone queer outside being either male or female in Irigaray’s logic-of-the-two means equating them with death. The second problem is the voicelessness placed upon those in the “non-space” outside the male/female duality, since the sphere of being and life, inhabited by *only* men and women, is equipped with culture, language, and the means of *recognition*. The third can be derived as a logical extension of her thought, although she never states it explicitly but only elliptically. Let us quickly recall here that the ontological negative, the interval (space) of respect placed 1) *between* (space) the ontology of persons who are 2) *different* (space), is the source of ethics and the premise of Irigaray’s new, (pro)creative social order outlined in Epistemology I. This means that those who fall outside the narrow male/female helix and the small ontological negative between *men and women*, cannot treat others or be treated ethically. They exist outside the possibility of difference and therefore ethics. Thus there is a double denial of space: within the 1) non-space of non-being and death inhabited by all non-men and non-women, there is 2) the additional denial of any space *between members of that set*. All non-binary persons exist outside the recognised duality of male/female, and all non-binary persons exist without the possibility of an ontological negative *between themselves*. The ontological negative exists between difference, and difference cannot exist in “death”; it exists between men and women, and therefore cannot exist between transgender, non-binary, or intersex persons. By simple extension of Irigaray’s thought we find that non-binary persons exist outside the possibility of lived being, cultural expression of their being, and ethical treatment. They are “creatures”, so to speak, without cultural, linguistic, or moral dimensions. Here then, to invert<sup>147</sup> Irigaray’s earlier comment (2000a:37), is the possibility of a real holocaust.

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<sup>147</sup> Sexed pun intended.

### The misrepresentation of men

In addition to the ethical ramifications of Irigaray's views on non-heterosexuality, there are points to be made about her treatment of "standard" cisgender, heterosexual men *within* her own male/female duality. Several thinkers (Badinter, 1995:1,3,32; Mottier, 2008:121) have disrupted the black-and-white myth that patriarchy is a monolithic institution from which men can only derive benefit and women can only derive misery as victims, by suggesting, provocatively, that men are in fact "the weaker sex" and have the harder time (in contrast to the prevailing Freudian view that the passage from girlhood to womanhood is worse (Irigaray, 1985b:64-65; Pick 2015:60-61)).<sup>148</sup> This move has not been made to subtract from feminist attempts at rethinking feminine identity or lessen the claim that women have been historically subjugated, but rather to broaden the feminist critique by showing that *bodies* have been misrepresented, and not just the body-as-female. Indeed, if it is true as Irigaray suggests that the body has been written out of the Western tradition, especially the female body, and the male body has either been replaced with the abstract ideal of reason or the geometrized materialistic machine, then it follows that the "male body" is in dire need of reinventing as much as the "female body" (assuming for argument's sake here that such differences and bodies exist).

If women have suffered a "negative" oppression of sorts, based on absence, muteness, and the *denial* of identity, then we might say men have similarly suffered a "positive" oppression, based on active policing and the *enforcement* of a particular identity. Irigaray would likely reject this not only as male appropriation of suffering, but also on the basis of her claim that *all* men are *necessarily* violent, non-fluid, object-orientated, and so on, as we already saw in 2.1. Metaphysics of Fluids; for her the very existence of patriarchy as an oppressive institute is proof of that. In Irigaray's view, patriarchy, as a monolithic unified cultural manifestation, exists because men are a certain way ontologically speaking, and have lived out their subjectivities so as to construct the present oppressive, hegemonic symbolic.<sup>149</sup> But this seems to be tying the cart before the horse and begging the question; this is an interpretation of men solely *through patriarchy*. Therefore to deny the generalisation that men are a certain way (which is, I contend, a reasonable denial), is to deny both men and patriarchy as the sole victors and thus the sole targets for a new theory. Let me be clear: I am not defending patriarchy or chauvinistic men. Rather, I am pointing out that Irigaray's definition of men and women is too neat and constrained, and disrupting these categories (as we must since they overlap considerably, and indeed, there are not only two) destabilises the effectiveness of her appeals to sexual types and sexual metaphors (such as the phallus and set of vaginal lips), which, in turn, destabilises not only her original diagnostic critique but also her subsequent solution.<sup>150</sup> Put differently, if the patriarchal Epistemology W is not an adequate description of the male psyche, if those with penises have also suffered certain losses under patriarchy, and if the sexed, phallic metaphor is not the only symbol of injustice, then this leaves Irigaray's account incomplete and opens the space for other embodiments (such as race) and more diverse understandings of both the male and the female (such as gay men, transgender individuals, and asexuals).

Arguably, however, there is a much larger critique behind the insight that male bodies have suffered under patriarchy as well, and it is a methodological rather than an ethical critique. Thinkers such as Irigaray are justified in their exploration of rethought feminine identities and embodiments on the assumption that it is not the appeal to embodiment in general, or bodily types and specificities in particular, that is at fault. Their projects, after all, depend on a revitalisation of embodiment, whether through new phenomenological analyses or the opening of new symbolic and legal spaces for expression. In turn, this assumption is supported by the fairly accurate observation that appeals to embodiment have

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<sup>148</sup> Irigaray also questions why *girls* should have the harder time, although she does not do this out of sympathy for men, but rather for the sake of critiquing the Freudian model of masculine desire to which girls must conform in sexual development.

<sup>149</sup> Even if this male symbolic is, paradoxically, premised on the *denial* of such a processual, bodily ontology (one which even men must have), by privileging abstract representation (logic, language, mathematics) and disembodied reason.

<sup>150</sup> Of course, the phallus is likely to remain as an abstract concept within the symbolic; it is after all premised on the separation between material penis and abstract representation. But it is still interesting to ask: what will the phallus become without a population of penises within it?

*benefitted* men and *disadvantaged* women historically. That is to say, on the basis that men have been “well represented” by appeals to embodied identity (being a “man” guarantees entry into the privileges of patriarchy), it is assumed that women, who have been *misrepresented* (or not at all) have at least the opportunity to rectify this now by constructing new systems of representation that properly reflect the reality of their embodiments. It is the historical *use* of embodiment rather than the concept itself that has been at fault. Yet the realisation that appeals to embodied identity have not benefitted men either in any simplistic sense problematizes the possibility that embodiment is a useful and ethical marker of personhood at all.

The original argument would look something like this, where proposition 4 refers to the attempt at reimagining feminine embodiment:

- 1: Men have been well-represented by appeals to embodiment
- 2: Women have been misrepresented by appeals to embodiment
- 3: Individuals can be well-represented by appeals to embodiment (see 1)
- 4: Therefore we can ethically appeal to embodiment

Ironically then, it seems that feminist justifications for body-specific identity covertly rely on the success of that which they oppose. Yet, adjusted for accuracy in proposition 1, the argument no longer makes complete sense:

- 1: Men have been misrepresented by appeals to embodiment
- 2: Women have been misrepresented by appeals to embodiment
- 3: Therefore we can ethically appeal to embodiment

Returning again to the metaphor of embodiment as a double-edged sword, if the application of appeals to embodiment has always been shadowed by some or other *misrepresentation* and subsequent mistreatment, then it is very likely that the notion of embodiment *itself* is faulty rather than the mere application thereof. This point is interesting for its apparent potential, as it reveals both a gap and a stereotype in Irigaray’s treatment of the male sex, insofar as she makes no attempt at offering a more complete understanding of men beyond the old trappings of Epistemology W. It also reveals a degree of conceptual tension Irigaray does not resolve: the male sex is anachronistically retained in her own system for a new society, presumably sincerely, as an unacceptable and infantilised stereotype, yet the female sex is rethought entirely and valorised in Epistemology I. It is worth adding that this is not merely an oversight or temporary strategy, since her new system of “sexual difference” *requires* two such radically different (sexed) subjects as we have seen, and there is likely no greater difference than men who never grow up (Irigaray, 1993:144-145) and are only satisfied when playing with loud machines (Irigaray, 2007:57), whether in construction or warfare, and women who “live in love indefinitely” (Irigaray, 1993:64), unsuited to standard logic and mathematics (Irigaray, 1989:197). And again, this stereotyped difference is perfect for an Irigarayan society of two subjects, since it is coherently maintained by the frequent sweeping qualifications that there *exist* men and women, *only* men and women, and crossover is both impossible and impermissible between them. Therefore it can be concluded that Irigaray’s highly problematic treatment of men is deliberate and central to the “difference” at the heart of her new sexual ethics; it is not an omission or even a by-product, it is a *requirement*.<sup>151</sup>

However, seeing this gap as a space for potential, as mentioned earlier, is in fact to miss my point about the *logic* of using embodiment (whether in sex or race) – that both the identification and ordering of a physical marker as the key to a person’s identity (especially by an *external* party such as Irigaray, the powers-that-be in her sexed society, apartheid, or the “expert” medical diagnosis of non-heterosexuality as a mental disorder), is both arbitrary (since it ignores or subordinates other markers, as Irigaray does to

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<sup>151</sup> It is interesting to note that we would not conscience (and rightly so) the attribution of either such differences or such stereotypes to people under “racial” or “abled” categories; again the point in saying this refers to the *logic* of using embodiment, not the allegedly variable *content* of “different types” of embodiment.

race) and insufficient (since no single physical fact can encompass the entirety of an individual's identity), and therefore always runs the risk of *misrepresenting* (descriptively) and ultimately *injuring* (normatively) individuals as they find themselves ordered and distributed within a coherent social typology that inevitably omits, denies, or fabricates large aspects of their own lived experience. In other words, to see Irigaray's misrepresentation of men as an opportunity to do for men what Irigaray did for women, that is to rethink men *as men*, albeit *new* men in a supposedly more positive light, is to fall into the trap of repeating the old categories with seemingly new content. Rethinking men to match Irigaray's women still leaves us with "men" and "women", the incorrect assumption that everyone is one and *only* one of those two, and most alarmingly, the belief that these categories represent actual, identifiable natural types that *exist* in an enduring sense. It is therefore to only think *within* sex, and to miss the point that the constantly recurring possibility of misrepresentation and injustice through appeals to embodiment calls into question the very usefulness of *sex itself* as a category of identification; it is to try and fix the symptom rather than the cause.

In summation, the absence (read: negation by Irigarayan logic-of-the-two) of the queer individual in Irigaray's thought is not an exception or special case, and cannot be dismissed as a quaint thought-experiment or hypothetical and polite "problematization" of her thought. It is neither an exception, nor if taken seriously, an extension of her thought. Irigaray's negative omission, or sometimes outright denial, of LGBT+ bodies and relations fundamentally undermines the ethical integrity and descriptive accuracy of her thought, since her project claims to describe "*sexual* difference" *as a whole*, on "cosmic", "real", and "universal" terms. In truth, hers is a theory not of *sexual* difference, but of selectively-picked *cisgender* "sex" and *hetero* "difference", and *only* cisgender-heterosexual difference, which is a very narrow definition indeed to claim as a basis for "universal" generalisations about the types of sexed bodies that "exist" and the range of relations permitted between those bodies; and moreover, within the scope of her thought, her own definitions of "men" and "women" are outdated insofar as they perpetuate a "Martian/Venusian" stereotype that, for instance, reduces men to Stanley Kowalskis. This is to say nothing about the equally problematic assumption that there *are* clear "types" to begin with, as discussed earlier in 3.1. Empirical Facts. Considering that the previous findings of section 3.1. removed any stable content from sexual "types" such as Irigaray's "men" and "women", that section 3.2. problematized the possibility of using "sameness" and "difference" in generalisable and diametrically opposed ways, and that section 3.3. showed how Irigaray's theory, which *does* use specific sexual types along generalised axes of sameness and difference, results in a system of unethical exclusion, it can be concluded that Irigaray's theory of sexual difference does not have sufficient support on either the empirical, epistemic, or ethical fronts. However, aspects of Irigaray's theory, when reworked so as to remove their sexual assumptions and heteronormative tendencies, may still prove very useful. Firstly, her identification of the logic-of-the-one can be used outside the realm of sex as a diagnostic tool to reveal instances in which subjects are "negated" and ultimately oppressed by being reduced to the horizons of a *single* subject; here racism might be a good example. Secondly, her notion of the ontological negative, or more broadly of the *space* or interval for ethics between subjects, can also be maintained, albeit without the instruction that this space is situated only between *sexed* individuals, and moreover *opposite-sex* individuals.

With this in mind, it is time to turn our attention to the possibility of an alternative in Chapter 4. In response to the problems with Irigaray's theory outlined above, it is worth exploring the ways in which the *unmediated* body can be described without falling into essentialism or diametric sameness/difference, and thus without falling into potential traps such as racism, homophobia, or ableism. In order to avoid misrepresenting and misidentifying the diverse reality of the human body, what possible reference point can we use to define the human subject?

#### 4. CHAPTER 4: TOWARD A NEW SOLUTION

It seems clear that any effort to order the subject through a performative capture whereby the subject becomes synonymous with the name it is called is bound to fail. Why it is bound to fail remains an open question. We could say that every subject has a complexity that no single name can capture, and so refute a certain form of nominalism (Butler *et al.*, 2000:157).

Once we situate the experience of the trauma of violated dignity within the Lacanian frame of the Real, we discover that the problem lying at the heart of human rights talk is that, in being asked to say what must be said to protect our humanity, human rights discourses are being asked to provide a linguistic response to the unspeakable inhuman but not unhuman forces that assault us (Bergoffen, 2012:108-109).

Between empirical and transcendental *a suspense will still remain inviolate* (Irigaray, 1985a:145).

It is within neither the primary aim nor the permitted length of this thesis to provide a fully developed solution here. However, since the attempt to derive identity from an individual's body is a moral issue and not merely an ivory tower consideration for academics, since this moral issue is especially urgent in the context of present politics, and since an opportunity is presented here by this thesis, I think we would be justified in very briefly discussing a tentative outline for a solution. Bearing in mind our criticisms, and carrying over from Irigaray both the notion of communicating and potentialising space and a diagnostic awareness of the logic-of-the-one, I will sketch in brief terms here the outline of a possible trajectory for a new ethics of relationality that does not rely on a coherent set of arbitrarily selected physical traits. Given our limited space, this response will be something of a fugue *allegro*. We will reach far into the collective conceptual toolbox and utilise several independent yet compatible concepts in an attempt at constructing a tentative solution to the issues raised earlier in the thesis.

The aim throughout this thesis has been to demonstrate that all *thick* or positively specific representational attempts (which can be universalised) at selecting and defining the features of the human body, and consequently a coherent identity according to those features, no matter how metaphorical, fluid, and strategic or otherwise rigid and essentialist, are flawed insofar as they produce third stage typologies through first stage description (racialisation/sexualisation) and second stage prescription (racism/sexism). This has been explored with reference to Irigaray's descriptive typologies of "men" and "women", and her normative prescriptions tying men and women together in a (cisgender, heterosexual) relationship. In such theories, the starting axiom "types x and y exist", however defined, contains the latent potential for subsequent prescription and exclusion, since the existence claim can never adequately cover all relevant aspects of the human experience. In the words of the title, such attempts *misidentify* the phenomenological-semiotic locus of human (dis)embodiment, whether understood as sex, race, nationality, difference, or sameness; that is, they conflate or over-describe selected physical features (the phenomenological) at the expense of others (since no single feature can be exhaustive) according to a semiotics (or series of representations), potentially misidentifying authentic expressions of embodiment. Consider for instance the exclusion of homosexual, intersex, asexual, and transgender individuals from Irigaray's theory, as a result of her theory starting with the identification of a *specific* physical trait (such as genitalia) and deriving all else (in the form of "mediated" or constructed identities, such as "masculine") from that trait.

The results of this inevitable mismatch between representation and reality (or mediated and unmediated bodies), which is mistakenly considered a solvable problem, can be seen in the oscillation between essentialism/constructionism and sameness/difference. The conceptual dichotomies eventually form the basis for flawed social and ethical theories in an attempt at enforcing a stable and coherent relation between concept and being, in the typologies of "patterned coherence" discussed earlier, and I contend in Irigaray's theory. In other words, this thesis has focused most fundamentally yet only implicitly on the relation between representation and reality: the way in which (un)ethical premises arise out of empirical observations couched in the logic of a particular epistemology (such as Irigaray deriving "male" and "female" from the unquestioned assumption that sexes "exist" and are necessarily "same" or

“different”), and the way in which human embodiment (and indeed all material reality) seems to resist representation to find authentic expression in the disjuncture between word and object. Given the fact that this disjuncture is the source of resistance,<sup>152</sup> of better and more inclusive legal descriptions, and has been the reason for moral progress in everything from the abolition of slavery to same-sex marriage and universal suffrage (at least such is my hypothesis for the sake of this argument), we might call it the only nexus point or locus (or perhaps lacuna?) for providing us with an accurate and ethically workable conception of the human condition, embodiment included. It is this ground, those embodied experiences which remain *outside* the possibility of positive, universalisable representation, that should be the focus of all ethical studies, for it provides the ground for knowing what we ourselves are and what we owe one another. Having critiqued Irigaray’s solution (constructing mediated bodies according to specific physical traits against the evidence for sexual fluidity and ambiguity) and shown the concepts “sex”, “male”, “female”, “same” and “different” to be largely empty of necessary properties (and thus also referents), we are now left wondering whether the unmediated body has any properties at all that we can use to minimally define a new subject within a new ethics of relationality, since we have seen that the unmediated body appears to be a more suitable departure point for ethics. But how are we to approach and conceptualise the elusive body in the space between representation and reality, and would doing so not be going against everything we have just said, and undercutting the very condition of its possibility as the unrepresentable?

It would seem that the way to do this is to find some minimally universalisable human *capability* or *potential*, rather than an essentialist physical marker, which moves away from an ethics of actuality and embodiment, towards an ethics of potentiality and relationality, without entirely discarding materiality. But where are we to find this mysterious unrepresented (and perhaps fundamentally *unrepresentable*) “real” human ground beneath our metaphor? And how are we to approach it without falling into valorising or reductive essentialism that relies on generalising thick descriptions? How, in short, are we to accurately describe what is minimally *essential* to the individual without being naïve essentialists, conservative moralists, or scientific reductionists? Here, I think, we must put our hands deep into the philosophical toolbox and find a few concepts that describe something minimally essential without the over-generalisations of, say, a description based on skin colour.

Bearing in mind the trouble with creating thick generalised descriptions based on specific, arbitrary physical traits, let us begin here with an extract from Simone Weil’s essay *Human Personality*, and search for a minimal “negative capacity” rather than a “positive trait”:

I see a passer-by in the street. He has long arms, blue eyes, and a mind whose thoughts I do not know, but perhaps they are commonplace. It is neither his person, nor the human personality in him, which is sacred to me. It is he. The whole of him. The arms, the eyes, the thoughts, everything. Not without infinite scruple would I touch anything of his. If it were the human personality in him that was sacred to me, I could easily put out his eyes. As a blind man, he would be exactly as much a human personality as before. I should not have touched the person in him at all. [...] What is it, exactly, that prevents me from putting that man’s eyes out if I am allowed to do so and if it takes my fancy? Although it is the whole of him that is sacred to me, he is not sacred in all respects and from every point of view. He is not sacred in as much as he happens to have long arms, blue eyes, or possibly commonplace thoughts. Nor as a duke, if he is one; nor as a dustman, if that is what he is. Nothing of all this would stay my hand.

What would stay it is the knowledge that if someone were to put out his eyes, his soul would be lacerated by the thought that harm was being done to him. At the bottom of the heart of every human being, from earliest infancy until the tomb, there is something that goes on indomitably expecting, in the teeth of all experience of crimes committed, suffered, and witnessed, that good and not evil will be done to him. It is this above all that is sacred in every human being. This profound and childlike and unchanging expectation of good in the heart is not what is involved when we agitate for our rights (Weil, 2014:58-59).

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<sup>152</sup> Recall the difference between self-identity and identification by others in the introduction.

The key concept to extract here is that of *injurability* or *vulnerability*, and the trusting expectation we all have on a daily basis that our vulnerability will *not* be injured by others. Neither Irigaray nor Weil find justification for justice in the appeal to abstract rights, but rather in the intimacy of embodied experience. For Irigaray, we saw this embodied experience took the form of sexual specificity. Weil adopts a wider and perhaps more universal approach in appealing to embodied vulnerability both as a feature of our own private relation to the world, and others' relations to us. Butler, too, explores the concept of vulnerability, tying the vulnerability of *others* closely to notions of our own loss and grief since we are always tied to others in any number of important bonds, both intimate and general, meaning that a loss of the other is a loss larger than any *one* person, since *we* are implicated as well in the other (Butler, 2006:22). For Butler, the grief at such a loss therefore "contains the possibility of apprehending a mode of dispossession that is fundamental to who I am", which in turn could lead to a "normative reorientation for politics" (2006:28), insofar as it introduces vulnerability and grief as new concepts or reference points for analysing social relations. How does this help us with regard to our discussion of embodiment and the differential logic of discrimination? It alleviates the situation by firstly rewriting ethical (and therefore social, political, legal) responsibility as a response to vulnerability (and therefore *grievability*) rather than the demand for abstract rights; and secondly, vulnerability is not specific to any particular embodiment (or "represented" and mediated body, such as "male"), but is as it were the underlying condition of possibility for *all* possible embodiment; vulnerability is the horrifying potential *not to be*, or for *any* material embodiment to be injured, violated, or ended, which is a universally human concern independent of embodiment,<sup>153</sup> yet often expressed through embodiment.<sup>154</sup> Vulnerability exists on this side of being (as opposed to not being, or negation) as *becoming* (rather than static being or the metaphysics of solids, reminding us of the fluid ontologies of the Pre-Socratics); it is a product of consciously existing, and not only or simply a product of consciously existing as/through/with a body that may or may not be sexed in a particular way as Irigaray believes, again casting doubt on the validity of rigid appeals to sameness/difference. Vulnerability then is both negatively non-specific *and* generalizable as a feature shared by all humans (and animals), since it represents the condition of possibility for being harmed; ethics in turn is nothing more than a system of values to *prevent* injury and promote wellbeing, thus vulnerability stands at the centre of any ethical relation. Being non-specific in this way by not appealing to supposedly essential traits (such as sex or race), and by not ordering these traits into stable categories of "same" and "different" (such as "all women and only women do x, whereas all men do y"), the notion of vulnerability as a universal capacity to suffer also meets the requirements of my earlier definition of *multiplicity* as a "set of all sets" that negates *both* sameness and difference and tries to define "human" minimally according to some shared fact about the unmediated body (such as vulnerability). Thus, the notion of vulnerability appears to be a viable solution to the critique of Irigaray presented in Chapter 3, and indeed to most theories that rely on over-descriptions and mediation, as outlined in Diagram 1.

Furthermore, being a shared dimension of existence, vulnerability can enter communication *reciprocally* – we can speak to one another *as vulnerable*, and not with a gulf of logic and language between us, as in the two (ostensibly) epistemically distinct sexed subjects in Irigaray's system. Vulnerability thus returns us to the ground of our being,<sup>155</sup> which always elusively evades description between representation and reality, and yet springs up in resistance whenever a representation is exclusionary and oppressive (recall

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<sup>153</sup> There are, of course, *degrees* of vulnerability given to us by our embodiments, or our materiality, or even simply our location (for instance, disaster or war zones). But vulnerability *always* exists as a constant *horizon*, regardless of bodily or geographical circumstance, since *any* human being can be injured by another at any time. We may either exist or cease to exist regardless of how stable or unstable our health, bodies, and environments may be, therefore the *possibility* of injury and the vulnerable *fear* of not existing, (or what we might call the existential dimension of vulnerability), is not always identical to having a vulnerable *body*.

<sup>154</sup> As in, for example, illness or physical disability. During a bout of the 'flu, we have all experienced the ways in which our existence becomes precarious and our bodies present themselves as obstacles or *limits* rather than conditions for *accessing* reality. In these "bodily" moments, as when our abstract identities (gay, black, blind) also become limits to our freedom (in societies, for instance, where homosexuality is criminalised or women are not allowed to drive), we find ourselves vulnerable and reliant upon others.

<sup>155</sup> By making the precarity of our existence apparent to us.

the distinction between mediated and unmediated bodies, and the role mediated/represented bodies play in the oppressive typologies of Diagram 1). Perhaps in returning us to that *ground*, vulnerability could be described as *the apprehension of the horror of the real*.<sup>156</sup> Irigaray calls the denial and lack within Epistemology W “the ‘horror’ of being close to the ‘earth’” (1985a:352), and if we recall Chapter 1, the “earth” figured as materiality, corporeality, and messiness – the *body*. Echoing our starting definition of politics and ethics as *the distribution (and treatment) of identity* in the Introduction, if we redefine justice and rights on the basis of an identity of embodied vulnerability and relation of trust rather than an abstract rational ideal, then we have at our disposal a new lens for exploring geopolitics and bio-politics through what Butler calls the *distribution* of vulnerability (2006:32); “geo” and “bio” insofar as such a lens takes the *body* rather than an abstract “citizen”, as a means of exploring the ways in which bodies (biologies) are dis/placed geographically according to the infliction of injury upon them (consider refugees). This in turn might assist us in cutting through the red tape in refugee and race discourse, since vulnerability (and thus the identity of an individual deserving of protection and the authority to demand this) is not limited to geographic origin or the possession of specific embodied markers (such as skin colour, sex, or ethnic origin).

Having identified vulnerability, what is its *ontology*, that is, what are its constitutive elements, as a dimension of human experience? I am drawn here to a description offered by Baudrillard:

Another promise of fragments is that they alone will survive the catastrophe, the destruction of meaning and language [...] Like the flotsam in Poe’s maelstrom: the lightest items sink the most slowly into the abyss. It is these one must hang on to (Baudrillard, 2007:8).

And Irigaray:

[T]he striking makeup, the motherly role she plays, cover up the fact that she is torn to pieces. Fragments: of women, of discourse, of silences (Irigaray, 1985a:228).

We may extract from both of these excerpts the concept of the “fragment” as something that escapes complete linguistic *construction* and therefore also *destruction*; that is, it exists outside complete representation as a persistent unit of human experience – rather like vulnerability – and it therefore, in part, escapes the problem of *patterned coherence* (introduced earlier as a shortcoming in Irigaray’s solution) since it does not rely on specific bodily markers in any enduring sense; or if it does utilise markers, it does not *generalise* them. We are all broken by language, by categorisation, despite being treated as “whole” or legible, and therefore *knowable*, by virtue of those very categories and names. This in turn means that we are constantly *fragmented*, being reconstituted and reframed. The performances and names by which we are known, recognised, and identified by others are shifting and incomplete, and therefore we are essentially *ambiguous* in our fragmented presentation to others, and ourselves. Our ontology, not always known to ourselves and certainly not to others, is in a state of constant flux, and given this change and the representational gaps between our social roles and our embodied reality, we are *vulnerable*. This notion of “fragments” should remind us of the Pre-Socratic Atomists and their notion of solid matter as “atoms” extended and divisible within the absolute void of space. If we could “fragment” our definitions of embodied types, then we could discover other dimensions along the spectrum of experience besides those of, for example, race, sex, and age. In turn, those dimensions would also have to be fragmented to avoid over-representation and coherence: sex would have to be fragmented into more than simply two or three types. Along the spectrum of embodied experience, sex itself would also become a spectrum. And then, as a third fragmentation, those “types” of sex identified, such as male, female, intersex, transgender, would *themselves* have to be fragmented since no two female bodies are alike, or indeed, are guaranteed the same functions, such as childbirth. The *vulnerable*

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<sup>156</sup> Since the “real”, at least in psychoanalytic terms, “refers to something potentially terrifying and outside comprehension” (Pick, 2015:92), because it falls *outside* language and representation, creating a moment of trauma when apprehended without the mediation of abstract laws and concepts. This does not mean that the “real” is *itself* somehow objectively traumatic or “bad”, but rather that the lack of representation forces an unmediated encounter, which may be traumatic. Žižek and Laclau agree, for instance, that the real refers to the incompleteness of the human subject as one who does not know the full extent of their own history (Butler *et al.*, 2000:12).

human is thus the incoherently *fragmented* human. To return here quickly to the notion of the spectrum introduced in 3.1. Empirical Facts, this fragmentation is, I think, compatible with a spectrum of being insofar as neither take a *single* category of embodiment (such as race or sex) or any number of *types* within that category (such as white, female, with specific properties) as the definition of a subject's identity. The notion of humans as ontologically fragmented or ambiguous thus helps us move away from Irigaray's positively descriptive attempt to group and define *all* women as humans with specific and enduring (bodily sexual) properties. The same can be said for other attempts to define "race". Together, the notions of fragmentation and physical vulnerability present an alternative to the attempt to categorise people *coherently* (as unfragmented) using a *specific* physical trait (that is not vulnerable to change and ambiguity).

Furthermore, where these categories of experience no longer exist with self-identical rigid definitions, and are no longer limited to specific one-to-one relations with other experiences – in other words, where they are no longer binaries under Irigaray's diagnosis of the logic-of-the-one – they can overlap with others and so extend the horizons of experience. Fragments suggest space, difference, mobility, potentiality. They suggest the ability of a larger whole to be reduced to an interplay of smaller factors and contexts, but they also suggest the ability to come together and construct a greater whole without yet committing to a *rigid structure*, tying in with Irigaray's diagnostic warnings about the metaphysics of solids and the logic-of-the-one. They represent unity as much as difference, construction as much as deconstruction, the space of an interval as much as the ability to reorganise that space into something more coherent; and perhaps they therefore represent vulnerability, ambiguity, and the horror (or joy?) of collapse as well. In this way, the individual conceived as a Humean "bundle" of fragmentary, processual, and ambiguous identities is able to maximise the potential for interaction and relationality with others. The points of contact from person to person are variable, fluctuating, receptive to contact and further development (on account of being incomplete and ambiguous), and thus not limited for example to contact between *two* (and only two) *different* (and only different) sexes, as Irigaray claims, suggesting a solution to her cisgender heteronormativity. Ontological *ambiguity*, therefore, is conducive to relationality; suggesting that relationality need not be limited to bodies which are both unambiguously defined and unambiguously different (male/female) as in Irigaray's ontological negative, which she considers the paradigm for reciprocal ethical relations. As long as this relationality is underpinned by the appropriate response to vulnerability (to be discussed soon), ambiguity is conducive to ethics.

In addition to being *ontologically* fragmented and ambiguous in this way, we are also *epistemologically* fragmented. We are not fully known to ourselves, and certainly not fully knowable to another. And how we know and speak about states-of-affairs in the world is also limited by our fragmentary horizons. The link between vulnerability, relationality, representation, and the unrepresentably ambiguous real, can be approached in this manner. It could be argued that anything which exceeds our capacity for representation throws us back upon ourselves in a position of vulnerability, perhaps back upon those "real", unmediated (unrepresented) bodies I mentioned in the Introduction, in contrast to the safer, mediated bodies produced through scripts and representations (such as the scripted "males" and "females" of Irigaray). After all we can only understand, predict, or communicate that which is representable, and in the absence of this our position becomes precarious. Encountering the ambiguous other face-to-face challenges us with something that is fundamentally unknowable in just this manner. Therefore, we are fragmented both ontologically and epistemically; and our fragmented natures give rise to our constant mutual exposure and vulnerability.

Having identified and elaborated two conceptual tools so far, namely vulnerability and fragmentation, the question now becomes: what is the appropriate *response* to the fragmented, vulnerable human? If it is true that apprehending both ourselves and others as vulnerable fragments is an experience that throws us back upon ourselves in a realisation of our own precariousness, and if this existential dimension of experience indeed describes a generalizable, non-specific part of that ground of embodied reality we can temporarily glimpse through the tear between representation and reality, then it follows that recognising the vulnerability and essential indescribability of another human being (or our own) is an immensely transformative experience. The closest analogies would be the religious epiphany, or the experience of the sublime; I shall take the latter here because the sublime often refers to a humbling experience in the face of nature's enormity, and after all, glimpsing the ground of human reality, such as the relation of our

vulnerability, is glimpsing our “human condition”, whereas the religious epiphany entails a metaphysical assumption. The unsayable sublime, perhaps rather like the *uncanny*, and the unrepresentable *limit-experiences* of thinkers such as Bataille and Foucault (Gutting, 2005:15-16), is a visceral and unmediated encounter with the “horror of the real”, that is, with the disjunction between real and represented.

The classic treatment of “the sublime”, a concept which emerged with the rise of Romantic sensualism in response to the rationalism of the neoclassical Enlightenment, is of course Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas on the Beautiful and the Sublime*.<sup>157</sup> In his treatise, Burke tells us “whatever is in any sort terrible [...] is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (Burke, 2015:33-34), and he adds that “the sublime is an idea belonging to self-preservation” (2015:71). The sublime, then, is an encounter with an aspect of reality (often undisturbed nature) that is vast beyond our ability to represent or describe. This encounter leaves us faced with our own precariousness and vulnerability. This is exactly parallel to what we have derived so far on our own, regarding unmediated bodies and the disjuncture between representation and reality. But Burke goes on to state that this terror need not be displeasing: “The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended” (2015:47); “suspended” here referring to the uncertainty or motionlessness introduced by surprise, the *interruption* by an/other. This astonishment is useful for our purposes because, returning to our main interlocutor, Irigaray in fact provides us with her own interpretation of what we might call the sublime, in reading Descartes’ conception of *wonder* – we shall treat “wonder” here as synonymous with “astonishment”.<sup>158</sup> For Irigaray, wonder exists outside binary definition, escaping the possibility of negation under, for instance, the old logic-of-the-one: “This passion has no opposite or contradiction and exists always as though for the first time” (Irigaray, 1993:12). Consequently, in an encounter between two subjects, wonder cannot be subsumed under one, but exists in a constant oscillation of suspension and recognition: “[T]hat wonder which beholds what it sees always as if for the first time, never taking hold of the other as its object. It does not try to seize, possess, or reduce this object, but leaves it subjective, still free” (Irigaray, 1993:13). In other words, for Irigaray wonder *acts* as a negation of sorts by existing as the product of the other’s unknowability to us, the other is *on the other side of wonder*: “Who or what the other is, I never know. [...] This feeling of surprise, astonishment, and wonder in the face of the unknowable” (1993:13). Irigaray refers to it as an “interval between himself and the other [...] to wonder” (1993:73) and an “intermediary” (1993:82), returning us to the useful notion of the ontological negative (section 2.3.) we carried over from Irigaray. Crucially, wonder at the sublime of our unknowability and vulnerability is therefore a potential manifestation of Irigaray’s ontological negative situated centrally within ethical human relations. Or, as Irigaray asks us: “Wonder is the motivating force behind mobility in all its dimensions. [...] The ground or inner secret of genesis, of creation?” (1993:73). This “ground” of creation links up immediately with the notion of the disjuncture between representation and reality, the evasive grounding source of authentic, unmediated experience and

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<sup>157</sup> Interestingly, extending our scope for a moment back to Classical Antiquity again, an earlier treatment of the sublime can be found in Longinus’ *On the Sublime* (3<sup>rd</sup> century CE). In his treatment of greatness in rhetoric, Longinus foreshadows the appeal to nature and sudden emotional surrender of the Romantics in his own diction, against the formalism of other rhetoricians. Of fine writing he says “greatness appears suddenly; like a thunderbolt it carries all before it” (Longinus, 1991:4). Cicero is compared to both a vast fire and a flood (1991:21). Quoting an ode, he also praises the contrariness of the poetess Sappho: “Do you not marvel how she seeks to make her mind, body, ears, tongue, eyes, and complexion, as if they were scattered elements strange to her, join together in the same moment of experience? In contradictory phrases she describes herself as hot and cold at once, rational and irrational” (1991:18). Note the accepting presence of “body”, “elements”, “contradictory”, and “irrational” in describing the sublime in the writing of a lesbian, female poetess. Considering the restrictions of the logic-of-the-one (recall the devaluing of such values, outlined in Chapter 1), Irigaray would probably approve of such a charitable reading by a man, which again problematizes her interpretation of the Western tradition as solely and monolithically patriarchal.

<sup>158</sup> I did not introduce Irigaray’s treatment of the concept “wonder” previously in Part 1, since it was not relevant to her diagnostic or constructive work there, nor to the framing of that work for our analysis in Chapter 3.

ethicity, that we have been alluding to and pursuing throughout this thesis. Might it finally be that vulnerability in our fragmented state and wonder at the equally vulnerable other across the *space* of the ontological negative together form a minimally generalizable and negatively non-specific definition of personhood without exclusion?<sup>159</sup> Perhaps then, all we can say of the fragmented, *unmediated*, unrepresentable body is that it is *vulnerable*, and this thesis began after all with the assumption that such a minimally unmediated body is the most morally significant.

This explains how we respond to the sublime of vulnerability, but it does not offer us an ethical account of how to approach the vulnerable other. As the final voice in our fugue, I would like to very briefly introduce the concept of *trust*. I shall follow Hawley in defining trust as something that pertains interpersonally to subjects rather than objects (we cannot *trust* chairs, though we may *rely* on them), something that is not the equivalent of truthfulness (should Kant tell the murderer where to find us, we would still call Kant *honest*, but not *trustworthy*), and finally, trust as *reciprocal commitment*: trust can only be broken if the other knew, and agreed, that they were being trusted to do “x” (Hawley, 2012:5-6,111). The last point of reciprocity is the most important, it means that we expect the other not to *injure* or *betray* us or something we asked them to do, returning us to Weil’s remark that the source of ethics is the inherent hopefulness that the other will not harm us, and returning us thus to our main notion of *vulnerability*. When we reveal ourselves to another in vulnerability, we also, by definition, reveal what it is that can be most painful and most destructive to us, yet we *trust* that the other will cherish us in our fragmented incompleteness rather than exploit it, and they likewise expect the same commitment of us. If vulnerability is the prime condition of our existence, then trust is its most appropriate response as mutual agreement to *preserve* the other across the ontological negative, in their *becoming* and not merely in static being. Together these two form the most basic reciprocal function of ethics. And so perhaps it is right that Dante condemned betrayers of trust to the very deepest level of hell.

In summation then, we have: the human being as ontologically and epistemically *fragmented*, resulting in a constant state of *vulnerability*. This vulnerability, the prime existential and phenomenological dimension of *being* and *becoming*, since it exists as the constant possibility of *not-being* or being limited through injury in whatever definition, resists representation and throws us back upon the reality of our own limits, meaning that the most we can say about the *unmediated* body is that it is fragmented and vulnerable. This encounter with *unrepresentable incompleteness and precariousness*, both in ourselves and others, induces a state of *wonder* similar to that of the *sublime*. Finally, this draws us into a relationship of ethical reciprocity with others under the notion of *trust*, since, in existing precariously and recognising this in others, and in recognising that *others* see the same in us and themselves as well, we exist in the hope that this constantly fragile state of being – the ground of our desires, sensations – will not be injured or ended.

This definition helps us in several ways, given the criticism raised throughout the thesis. Firstly, it avoids deterministic realist essentialism, as well as extreme nominalist social constructionism, by grounding being in existential yet bodily vulnerability and ambiguity. It avoids sameness/difference, since it does not positively specify *what* may constitute vulnerability; unlike a theory of race or sex which specifies that personhood requires membership of “race x” or “sex y”. Vulnerability and trust also avoid the logic-of-the-one by resisting binary definition and maintaining a commitment between at least *two* subjects,<sup>160</sup> in which both are expected to *reciprocate* an act of care that does not injure the other’s vulnerability. Thus, this definition also keeps in mind Irigaray’s own ontological negative as a useful measure of ethicity, and her warnings about the logic-of-the-one. Vulnerability does not specify bodily markers, but rather stands as a general capacity for suffering, which may be expressed in different ways. Not only for ethical and ontological reasons then, but also for purely conceptual reasons, we may suggest that vulnerability offers a fair alternative for rethinking embodiment on terms not limited to single categories of experience, such as sex or race.

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<sup>159</sup> Perhaps this can be extended to animals, since they too are vulnerable after all.

<sup>160</sup> Who need not be two sexually *different* subjects as in Irigaray’s model.

## 5. CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This thesis concerned itself with the use of embodiment as a category of identity. In particular, it set out to explore the ways in which appeals to embodied identity, which rely on the selection of certain physical features as easily-identifiable and enduring markers of identity, might in fact misrepresent the body and experience of the person being identified, by creating a *generalised* description of the person with a potentially *incomplete* or *inaccurate* representation of their embodiment, ultimately resulting in that person being unable to express or experience the excluded dimensions of their body under the description imposed. In turn, this problem itself indicates the possibility of a disjuncture between the “real” material body, and what is arbitrarily and contingently noticed and “represented” about that body, or, similarly, a disjuncture between identity and the act of identification. The possibility of the *disethics* of misrepresentation, or in the language of the title, the misidentification of the lived, phenomenological experience and the abstract semiotic label, raises a host of problems which this thesis set out to explore, among them the empirical underpinnings of the “real” material or *unmediated* body, the epistemic coherence of the act of identification, and the ethical implications of such “represented” or *mediated* identities forming ordered typologies of human subjects. Selecting the theory of sexually-dual embodiment developed by Irigaray as an example, this thesis set out to explore these problems.

Beginning with the observation that moral theories of embodiment have generally tended towards a state of *minimum* description and prescription (everyone can marry, all facilities are desegregated), my argument proposed that ideologies of embodiment tend to group into binary pairs that negate one another in a quasi-Hegelian dialectic, resulting in a *minimal* state (recall Diagram 2). These ideologies, or systems describing and prescribing embodiments, are formed in three stages. The first stage *creates* a “type” or “set” of embodiment (such as “sex”, and subsequently “female”) by identifying not only the category, but ascribing properties to it in a *descriptive* fashion, creating a coherent “unity”. In the introduction this was described as racialism or sexualism. The second stage imposes a moral imperative upon the category and its properties by saying, for example, not only that there *are* two sexes, but that there *should* be two sexes; and if the concept of sexual or romantic desire is included as a property of the set, then a moral prescription such as “desire *should* be maintained between type A and type B” may follow. In the third stage, the descriptive typology of categories and prescriptive script of how those categories should act, enters society, usually through socialisation from an early age, as a coherent performance in which the original, and arbitrary, artificial construction of the categories is forgotten, resulting in an unquestioned and unnoticed hegemony. Having established the topic of our investigation and the background assumptions, the method of analysis was introduced as the three-pronged empirical/epistemic/ethical approach.

We then began with an exposition of Irigaray in Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 1. Chapter 1 explored Irigaray’s early work, consisting of her diagnostic critique of the patriarchal Western tradition. We followed Irigaray in reading canonical texts, and in her identification of the logic-of-the-one as the primary tool of patriarchal oppression. The logic-of-the-one, which imposes a vertical hierarchy of binaries, operates by negating the value of concepts, or the subjectivity of the other in practice, by using “x/not-x” binaries rather than “x/y” dualities, where “y” exists *on its own terms*. The point of reference for the logic-of-the-one is the male subject, the negated other is the female subject. In reducing one term, such as “y”, or the subject denoted by it, the female, to a *negation of the other*, the logic-of-the-one operates by enforcing *sameness*. We noted also that this binary negation can be described as a suppression of *intersubjective space*. Chapter 2 outlined Irigaray’s solution to the patriarchal society, using a horizontal logic-of-the-two, or logic-of-the-dual. For Irigaray, the only solution to the patriarchal sameness is a society of absolute *difference*, where neither term, and neither subject, can be expressed in terms of *the other*, and therefore stand “horizontally” *beside* each other rather than *above* each other in a vertical hierarchized power relation. We saw that, for Irigaray, this difference can only be realised as *sexual* difference between two, and only two, *differently sexed* subjects, since the sexed dimension of experience, and not only the female dimension of experience, has been largely ignored in the male patriarchal tradition. As we saw, Irigaray’s sexed subjects are cisgender, heterosexual men and women, unable to transition from one sex to the other, and possessing sex-specific traits such as an aptitude for aggression in men, and an aptitude for interpersonal relations in women. No distinction between sex and gender is drawn by

Irigaray, and instead the subjectivity of individuals is causally determined by whether they have a male or female body. For Irigaray, these two insuperably different subjects form complementary poles on either side of an “ontological negative” or interval that responds directly to the *lack* of such intersubjective space enforced by the negation and sameness of the logic-of-the-one. Irigaray’s solution is thus premised on the distinction between stable categories of sameness and difference, upon the assumption that sexes exist in an essential sense (sexualism, recall Diagram 1), that sexes exist in a way that is clearly identifiable as same/different from other sexes, and that they exist in two and only two forms – male and female (cisgender). We also saw that within Irigaray’s theory, this relation of *difference* (posited in opposition to the *sameness* outlined in Chapter 1) takes the form of a *heterosexual* couple.

Beginning with Part 2, we turned our attention to critiquing Irigaray’s theory of embodiment in Chapter 3, in response to the problematic essentialist and cisgender-heteronormative underpinnings of her work, and in response to the view that her theory represents a hegemonic typology (as outlined in Diagram 1 and the related discussion) not much better than the patriarchy it attempted to oppose, since both still order *mediated* or constructed bodies into exclusionary social relations. We began section 3.1. of Chapter 3 by considering the empirical data surrounding the existence of sexual types and differences, and found the evidence insufficient to maintain that there are differences between men and women, or, given the resulting blended spectrum, that such types can be identified at all in the first place. We also remarked upon the impossibility of deriving the existence or properties of types of embodiment in any essential or material sense from hermeneutic exercises in textual interpretation, in contrast to Irigaray’s attempt to do so for men (in Chapter 1) and for women (in Chapter 2), recalling the theme of “reality versus representation” and the distribution of (over-described or mediated) identification with which this thesis began. In considering the epistemic branch of our critique in 3.2., we problematized the notion of separating clearly between sameness and difference as stable concepts which are diametrically opposed, by arguing that statements about difference can easily be rewritten as statements about sameness with the same truth value. This destabilised Irigaray’s solution to patriarchy since her theory as outlined in Part 1 is *premised* upon the conceptual distinction between “same” and “different” as categories of language and reason (recall the logic-of-the-one and the metaphysics of solids), and upon same and different as categories of sex *necessary* for an ethical solution to patriarchy (where patriarchy was a regression to the sexual “same” and required disruption with feminine sexual “difference”). In rejecting the divide between same and different, the notion of *multiplicity* was introduced as a negative or non-specific category that does not rely on specific, over-described, and arbitrarily selected physical traits in order to define individuals, thus providing a possible alternative to Irigaray’s diagnosis and solution in Chapters 1 and 2. Thereafter, as part of our ethical critique in 3.3., we explored Irigaray’s negative comments on non-heterosexuality and her tendency to interpret homosexuality only through a heterosexual lens. Again this tendency was shown to be the result of her insistence on the essential existence of two and only two sexes (clearly tied to two genders and two roles), and the result of her claim that anything other than “difference”, or the logic-of-the-two, is always a regression to the “same” – these two claims were explored earlier throughout the exposition of Part 1. This in turn reminded us of the way the pseudo same/different dichotomy frequently results in moral exclusion. Returning to Irigaray’s idea of space, or the interval of the ontological negative carried over from Chapter 2, we explored the way in which her own logic-of-the-two *also* enacts a negation or suppression of space by denying the existence of the queer body outside her male/female duality, just as the logic-of-the-one denied the existence of the female body outside the male hegemony in Chapter 1. We ended Chapter 3 by mentioning the fact that men have also been misrepresented by patriarchy, and that Irigaray’s decision to retain men as stereotyped aggressors does nothing to advance the cause of either women or men, but only perpetuates a crystallised same/different divide on the basis of arbitrary physical markers, such as genitalia.

Having explored in Chapter 3 the shortcomings of Irigaray's theory outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, Chapter 4 considered the possibility of an alternative theory of embodiment without recourse to specific embodied markers, but rather to general existential traits such as vulnerability and trust – in contrast to theories of sexual or racial specificity such as Irigaray's (especially as outlined in Chapter 2). Carrying over Irigaray's useful notion of the ontological negative (or reciprocal space), her warning about the logic-of-the-one as a regression to one pole of subjectivity, and suggesting that vulnerability is a trait *everyone* can experience and is a trait compatible with the ontological negative's "ethics of space", it was argued that vulnerability might provide an alternative basis for developing a non-specific theory of embodiment that does not rely solely on the selection and grouping of contingent physical markers, such as skin colour or genitalia. Such an alternative would avoid the same/different pseudo-problem and its exclusionary tendency, as well as avoid misidentifying the unmediated body with an over-described mediated body – problems we noticed in Irigaray's solution to patriarchy during the critique of Chapter 3.

Moreover, an alternative based on vulnerability would satisfy the requirements of *multiplicity* (introduced in Chapter 3 to replace Irigaray's same/different duality from Chapters 1 and 2), and would also satisfy Irigaray's insight that ethics requires *reciprocity*. Reciprocity in vulnerability is provided by a relation of *mutual trust* at the wonder of the other *as other*, and care for the other across the space or interval or wonder (recalling and modifying Irigaray's ontological negative from Chapter 2), without the need for such a space to be sexed or for the individuals to be sexually *different*. Returning to the overarching theme of representation versus reality, vulnerability and the reciprocal ethics of trust thus provide us with a *minimal* description of *unmediated* human bodies, without the injustice of over-extending that description into a exclusionary typologies which use categories of sameness and difference to arbitrarily construct, identify, and order human "types" into social patterns.

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## 7. APPENDIX: IRIGARAY INDEX

This appendix contains an index of important concepts and their related phrases in Luce Irigaray's work, which I gathered from the thirteen primary sources (by Irigaray) surveyed for this thesis. The quotes compiled below thus refer only to Irigaray. To save space and ink, and to make reference to titles easier, I have forgone Harvard referencing here. Each entry is still placed in quotation marks and referenced, but I have simply indicated the name of the book and the page numbers beside each quote, rather than Irigaray's surname (since that should be obvious) and the year of publication (since that requires cumbersome reference to the bibliography in order to ascertain *which* book the year refers to). Full references for all texts cited here still appear in the bibliography.

Abbreviations for titles of primary texts by Luce Irigaray in this index:

1. Speculum of the Other Woman: "SW"
2. This Sex Which is Not One: "TS"
3. An Ethics of Sexual Difference: "ESD"
4. Je, Tu, Nous: "JTN"
5. Why Different? A Culture of Two Subjects: "WD"
6. Thinking the Difference For a Peaceful Revolution: "TD"
7. Democracy Begins Between Two: "DB"
8. The Question of the Other: "QO"
9. What Other Are We Talking About?: "WOT"
10. Being Two, How Many Eyes Have We?: "BT"
11. The Language of Man: "LM"
12. Why Cultivate Difference? Towards a Culture of Two Subjects: "WCD"
13. When Our Lips Speak Together: "WLS"

### **DEATH (post-sex, gender-blending, transgender, asexuality, neuter all as death in new Irigarayan society)**

- "Yet the prospect of a neutral, asexual community is disturbing. [...] Although life, obviously, is always sexed, death on the contrary no longer makes this distinction. [...] A society which eliminates the dividing line between life and death is capable of all forms of holocaust. [...] This is the point we have reached today" (*DB p37*)
- "This neutralisation, if it were possible, would mean the end of the human species. The human species is divided into two genders which ensure its production and reproduction. To wish to get rid of sexual difference is to call for a genocide more radical than any form of destruction there has ever been in History" (*JTN p4*)
- "The world changes. Nowadays, its development seems to threaten life and the creation of values" (*JTN p29*)
- "What will result from the blurring of identities? Whom and what does this serve today? To surpass a still unaccomplished human destiny? Why this immoderation? Is it not, once again, a vehicle of death more so than of life?" (*WD p152*)
- "[G]ender neutrality puts us, individually and collectively, in danger of death" (*JTN p73*)
- "Abolishing the reality of the genders to resolve the domination of one by the other does not make much sense, and brings danger for humanity itself" (*DB p150*)
- "it is better, too, to remain living persons: men and women, than to become neutral, abstract, artificial individuals" (*DB p155*)
- "the risk of producing monosexed, neutralised crowds, and this is one of the dangers of our time" (*WD p45*)

## DEATH (woman as death in old patriarchal Epistemology W)

- "They represent the total reduction of instinctual arousal. Therefore, the re-assurance of death" (SW p94)
- "woman will assume the function of representing death" (SW pp26-27)
- "The death of consciousness (and) of sex is necessary to achieve a dialectical progression through phallic sublimation" (SW p111)
- "she is [...] the representative representing negativity (death)" (SW p141)
- "Man's only 'passion', therefore, is being" (SW p165) [male being opposed to female death]
- "The mother is in this *death therefore*" (SW p318)
- "*guardianship of the dead*" (ESD p146)

## DEFINITION OF "MAN"

- "*he seems to get more sexual satisfaction from making laws than love*" (SW p39)
- "For man needs an instrument to touch himself with: a hand, a woman, or some substitute. This mechanism is sublated in and by language. Man produces language for self-arousal" (SW p232)
- "In order to touch himself, man needs an instrument [...] And this self-caressing requires at least a minimum of activity" (TS p24)
- TS p132 [as above on masculine autoeroticism]
- "contraphobic" (SW p53)
- "the desire for the same that man has" (SW p103)
- "his passion for sameness" (SW p224)
- "masculine self-affection" (SW p230)
- "The love of sameness among men [...] represents the love of a production by assimilation" (ESD p100)
- "Man's identity in the homologous, his reason in homosexuality" (SW p197)
- "For the most part, this [male] sexuality offers nothing but imperative dictated by male rivalry" (SW pp24-25)
- Masculine economy is one of "aggressive jealousy" (TS p32)
- "*the 'masculine' is not prepared to share in the initiative of discourse. It prefers to experiment with speaking, writing, enjoying 'woman'*" (TS p157)
- "Does pleasure, for masculine sexuality, consist in anything other than the appropriation of nature, in the desire to make it (re)produce" (TS p184)
- "For the masculine has to constitute itself as a *vessel* to receive and welcome. And the masculine's morphology, existence, and essence do not really fit it for such an architecture of place" (ESD p39)
- "Insofar as man or men are concerned, it seems that auto-affection is possible only through a search for the first home. Man's self-affect depends on the woman [...] Love of self, for man, seems to oscillate among three poles: nostalgia for the mother-womb entity, quest for God through the father, love of one part of the self (conforming principally to the dominant sexual model) (ESD pp60-61)
- "Because he is almost always in a state of narcissistic insecurity in sexual relations, man projects his insecurity onto others" (ESD p63)
- "Their love is teleological. It aims for a target outside them" (ESD p101)
- "man seems to cling ever tighter to that semblance of familiarity he finds in both his everyday and his scientific discourse" (ESD p113)
- "man would like to equal the machine. Consciously or unconsciously, he thinks of himself as a machine" (ESD p143)
- "the great rhythms of incarnation, respiration, circulation of the blood, have never been taken on by man. Who never grows up" (ESD p144-145)
- "Men, in contrast, prefer the subject-object relation, the production of pieces of work rather than respect for the world as it already exists, the use of instruments, the relationships between one and an imprecisely defined multiple: people, others, nations, etc, the representation of the universe as made up of abstractions" (DB p15); ALSO (DB pp152-153)

- “transcending the subject-object split, which is a more masculine ideal” (DB p116)
- “Half of humanity: the men. It privileges their values: their genealogy [...] war instincts, the desire to possess and capitalise in order to assert their power” (WD p65)
- “This warlike method of organising society is not self-evident. It has its origin in patriarchy. It has a sex” (TD p5)
- “Mankind is traditionally carnivorous, sometimes cannibalistic. So men must kill to eat, must increase their domination of nature in order to live or to survive, must seek on the most distant stars what no longer exists here” (TD p5)
- “Men’s science helps destroy” (TD p7)
- “Men care little about living matter or its cultural economy. Men’s society is built upon ownership of property” (TD p16)
- “what they are interested in above all is money, competition for power” (JTN p51)
- “Take the right to make noise [...] which is a man’s privilege. Most of them are only finally satisfied once they can play about with noisy machines in front of others, particularly women. Their social discontent fades away at the wheel of a vehicle” (JTN p57)
- “A man defines himself in relation to his house or his neighbour’s, his car or any other means of transport, the number of miles he’s covered, the number of matches he’s played [...] Man doesn’t concern himself with improving the quality of man” (JTN p77)

#### DEFINITION OF “WOMAN” (new, redeemed Epistemology I)

- Valorising of female homosexuality: “the special nature of desire *between women*” (SW p101)
- “Woman is not to be related to any simple designatable being, subject, or entity. Nor is the whole group (called) women. One woman + one woman + one woman will never add up to some generic entity: woman. (The/a) woman refers to what cannot be defined, enumerated, formulated or *formalised*. Woman is a common noun for which no identity can be defined. (The/a) woman does not obey the principle of self-identity” (SW p230)
- “*She is neither one nor two*. [...] She resists all adequate definition” (TS p26)
- TS pp122-124 [Cannot define the feminine in current discourse]
- “The feminine cannot signify itself in any proper meaning, proper name, or concept, not even that of woman” (TS p156)
- “woman is always already in a state of anamorphosis [...] A state of cyclic discontinuity closing in a slit whose lips merge into one another” (SW p230)
- “the/a woman who doesn’t have *one* sex organ, or a unified sexuality” (SW p233)
- “the sex of woman is not one” (SW p239)
- “woman’s autoeroticism is very different from man’s” (TS p24)
- “Woman takes more pleasure from touching than from looking” (TS p26)
- “Her sexuality, always at least double, goes even further: it is *plural* [...] *woman has sex organs more or less everywhere*. She finds pleasure almost anywhere” (SW p28)
- “What might have been, ought to have been, astonishing is the *multiplicity of genital erogenous zones* (assuming that the qualifier ‘genital’ is still required) in female sexuality” (TS p64)
- “her ‘fluid’ character, which has deprived her of all possibility of identity with herself within such a [masculine, phallic, rigid] logic” (TS p109)
- “What I want, in fact, is not to create a theory of woman, but to secure a place for the feminine within sexual difference” (TS p159)
- “I refuse to let myself be locked into a single ‘group’ within the women’s liberation movement Especially if such a group [...] purports to determine the ‘truth’ of the feminine, to legislate what is means to ‘be a woman’” (TS p166)
- “this way of reducing the other to feelings is a more feminine way” (WD p105)
- “morphologically, she has two mouths and two pairs of lips” (ESD p11)
- “there is also the fact that the female does not have the same relation to exteriority as the male” (ESD p63)
- “if she did not have to feed herself and procreate [...] woman could live in love indefinitely” (ESD p64)

- "that porousness and mucous that they are" (ESD p69)
- "Any thinking of or about the female has to think through the mucous" (ESD p110)
- "The sameness of women, among women" (ESD p115)
- "she moves in harmony with the fecundity of nature [...] Tuned differently to the rhythm of the earth and the stars. Intimately tied to universal circulation and vibration" (ESD p195)
- "she, the one who is unique" (ESD p215)
- "Women, in fact, privilege intersubjectivity, relationship with the other gender, the relationship of being-two, the physical, and, particularly, the natural environment" (DB p15); ALSO (DB p152)
- "because I am a woman, the goal of my path is to cultivate the relation between two subjects" (DB p116)
- "I am a little doubtful as to whether women enjoy manufacturing arms" (DB p147)
- "Interior decorating [...] should meet with their approval" (DB p148)
- "For women, however, private and public struggles are indissociable" (WD p23)
- "the fact that daughters and mothers have the same body: they talk about the corporeal events that mark their life: puberty, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, mothering, children" (WD p32)
- "The little girl has the greatest aptitude for dialogue; she wants to talk *with*" (WD p37)
- "Differences between women in the horizontal dimension are more existential. They're linked to different stories but not to a different relationship with being or identity" (WD p84)
- "What harms her is to be subjected to a science which is not appropriate for her" (WD p151)
- "Generally, man uses his breath on the outside: to make objects, to build his world. Man keeps little breath *in himself*. Women, on the other hand, keep breath in themselves in order to share it with the other" (WD p180)
- "This is even truer of women, who are more sensitive from this point of view [hearing]" (TD p22)
- "...woman lives in greater continuity with the cosmos..." (WD p149)
- "this becoming has its own specific often cyclical, temporality linked to cosmic rhythms" (TD p25)
- "If women have felt so threatened by the Chernobyl accident, it is because their bodies have this irreducible relationship to the universe" (TD p25)
- "Women are affected more fatally by the break with cosmic equilibria" (TD p26)
- Women are more interested in the other sex, in place, in qualities of people (TD p49)
- "female law was characterised by [...] temporality that respects the rhythms of life, the light cycle, the seasons" (JTN p83)
- "she is never completed in a single form. She is ceaselessly becoming, she 'flowers' again and again, if she stays close to herself and the living world" (JTN p103)
- "For us women, meaning remains concrete, close, related to what is natural, to perceptible forms" (JTN p104)
- "sensible representation is our primary method of figuration and communication" (JTN p104)
- "time in a woman's life is particularly irreversible, and that, compared to men's time, it is less suited to the repetitive, entropic" (JTN p108)
- "During all this time, a woman experiences menstruation, her periods, as continuously related to cosmic time, to the moon, the sun, the tides" (JTN p108)
- "little girls are more aware and creative than little boys, particularly because they have a more developed aptitude for relational life" (WCD p81)
- "the superiority of feminine subjectivity in relational life" (WCD p85)
- "what if, for women, dichotomous oppositions didn't make sense as they did for men, at least not without a radical submission to the phallic" (LM p197) [in discussion on Classical Logic, law of non-contradiction, principle of identity]
- "The unique character of feminine spirit" (QO p14)

## DEFINITION OF WOMAN AND MAN AS IRREDUCIBLY DIFFERENT

- "Irreducible in their strangeness and eccentricity one to the other. Coming out of different times, places, logics, 'representations', and economies" (SW p139)
- "*crisis of ontico-ontological difference*" (SW p145)
- "that great design that nature has inscribed in the difference between the sexes: *procreation*" (SW p207)
- "Woman's desire would not be expected to speak the same language as man's" (TS p25)
- "Thus man and woman, woman and man are always meeting as though for the first time because they cannot be substituted one for the other. I will never be in a man's place, never will a man be in mine. [...] they are irreducible to one another" (ESD p13)
- "Man sets the infinite in a *transcendence* that is always deferred [...] Woman sets it in an *expansive* of *jouissance* here and now [...] Body-expansive that tries to *give itself to exteriority*" (ESD p64)
- "Time is not measured in the same way for her as for man" (ESD p65)
- "the *living symbol* of sexual difference" (ESD p113)
- Woman has "an ability to perceive the divine (*daimon*) to which man in his shell, his various shells, remains a stranger [...] unless he is initiated into it by women" (ESD p115)
- "what I hear is sexually differentiated. Voice is differentiated" (ESD p168)
- "the male lover ignores the irreducible strangeness of the one and the other" (ESD p210-211)
- "an other which is irreducible to it: the other gender" (DB p6)
- "the insurmountable difference that separates us" (DB p7)
- "the insurmountable difference between man and woman" (WD p106)
- "the other [...] remains incomprehensible to us" (DB p7)
- "safeguarding the universal relation between two singularities, as is that between man and woman" (DB p9)
- "in faithfulness to their bodily and spiritual differences, maintain the ideal of their own gender" (DB p26)
- "the nakedness of my own nature, which is not the same as man's" (DB p27)
- "woma(e)n and ma(e)n represent two different worlds, two visions of the world which remain irreducibly distinct" (DB 151)
- "In sexual difference, the fact that men and women belong to two different worlds" (WD p85)
- "women cannot submit to the same rhythms as men" (TD p62)
- "in order to communicate with this other – be it a he or a she – new means of communication are called for: communicating with the other is impossible within a single logic" (WOT pp76-77)
- "We live in a different world in which the relation with oneself, with the other, with the universe is not the same" (WCD p84)
- "[N]ormally [...] "I love you" is said to an enigma: an "other". An other body, an other sex" (WLS p70)

## DRAFT CODE OF CITIZENSHIP BY IRIGARAY FOR EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- "The draft code of citizenship which follows embraces this intention. It takes into account: the necessary restructuring of the family, and, therefore, of life as a couple also; the rights of the two sexes or genders" (DB p68)
- "the relationships between individuals as male and female citizens" (DB 69)
- "Many factors moreover make it necessary in our times to define positive rights which guarantee a specific civil identity to male and female citizens" (DB p69)
- "A relative destructuring of family unity, which requires that each man and woman should enjoy specific civil identity [...] which confirms the need for a new civil relationship between woman and man, women and men" (DB p70)
- "rights and responsibilities appropriate to real civil individuals: women and men" (DB p71)
- "One can only deplore the fact that the Commission for Women's Rights, in its own proposal for amendment, replaced the words 'respect for the difference between men and women' with the words 'respect for individual choices' [...] this Commission tried to eradicate [...] the man-woman difference, preferring the definition of a neutral individual" (DB p80)

## EASTERN PHILOSOPHY

- "I have learnt another way from my own experience and from the traditions of the Far East, in particular from the most primitive Indian cultures [...] ... return to the heat in herself" (*DB p113*)
- "the culture of the Far East has helped me [...] This culture has taught me to perceive rather than simply to experience through the senses..." (*DB p115*)
- "opening up to the Far-Eastern traditions, namely the Indian tradition, also she another light, another breath" (*WD p30*)
- "the culture of perception as such is very important in Far Eastern cultures" (*WD p73*)
- "in the Far Eastern tradition, there was a preoccupation with an education of perception" (*WD p114*)
- "In the East, there is less of a separation between thought and poetry" (*WD p133*)
- "Far-East culture teaches us that in order to be in charge of our own life we have to cultivate breathing" (*WD p179*)
- "In India, for example [...] sexuality was cultural, sacred" (*TD p11*)
- "Some of those philosophers have turned to the culture of the Near or the Far East" (*BT p148*)

## EPISTEMOLOGY I

- "a new age of thought, art, poetry, and language: the creation of a new *poetics*" (*ESD p5*)
- "In theory, [traditional] philosophy wants to be literature or rhetoric, wishing either to break with ontology or to regress to the ontological" (*ESD p6*)
- "Poetry and philosophy don't have to be separate. When philosophy is no longer poetry, it's often just scholarly commentary rather than thought. Personally, I'm looking for a way to write philosophy that doesn't split abstract logic on the one hand, and poetry on the other" (*WD p134*)
- "It's a matter of questioning the foundations of Western rationality and asking yourself why a syllogism is thought to be more rational than respect for nature" (*WD p73*)
- "No thinking about sexual difference that would not be traditionally hierarchical is possible without thinking through the mucous" (*ESD p110*)
- "an education in citizenship requires [...] both respect for, and the development of, the specific characteristics of man and woman [...] with each gender retaining its own tendencies" (*DB p16*)
- "How can we get out of these false dilemmas: difference equals hierarchy" (*WD p11*)
- "'I Love to You' means: I don't take you as an object of my love or desire. I love you as irreducibly other. I keep a 'to' as an inalienable space between us, a guarantor of your freedom and mine [...] in order to avoid any amorous possession of consumption [...] I will never entirely know you and that to love you implies respecting the mystery that you will always be for me" (*WD p81*)
- "The *to* is the place where the intention of the one and the other can meet" (*WD p90*)
- "rebuild democracy on an infinite number of relationships between women and men" (*WD p83*)
- "Such a language doesn't conform to traditional Western logic, with its complement: poetry. It unfolds between two modes of speaking, two languages [...] creates a third language, so to speak, a language that we still don't know, that is yet to be created" (*WD p131*)
- "The *one* no longer remains here the visible or invisible, conscious or unconscious paradigm" (*WD p146*)

## FLUIDS / TURBULENCE

- "prohibition on bleeding" (*SW p126*)
- "the capacity of matter herself, at her most *fluid* [...] to produce beautiful forms" (*SW p207*)
- "the characteristics of fluids that are difficult to idealise" (*TS p79*)
- *TS pp106-107*
- "historically the properties of fluids have been abandoned to the feminine" (*TS p116*)
- "she is habitually devalued in relation to the fluid" (*ESD p52*)
- "what is most archaic in me, the *fluid*" (*ESD p156*)
- "The fluid will always spill over reason, *ratio*, go beyond measure, plunge back into the undifferentiated" (*LM p199*)

### HORIZONTALITY vs VERTICALITY

- "a horizontal coexistence between us all, male and female" (DB p55)
- "The title *To Be Two* also means to be two in a horizontal, not a hierarchical, relationship" (WD p116)
- "one task for our time is to establish a horizontal civic society and not an exclusively genealogical and vertical one" (WD p58)

### LACK / SACRIFICE / DENIAL

- See "Freud is still party [...] *lack, absence, default*" under METAPHYSICS OF SOLIDS/SUBSTANCE
- "She exposes, exhibits the possibility of *a nothing to see* [...] In her having nothing penile, in seeing that she has No Thing. Nothing like man" (SW pp47-48)
- "woman cannot mime, pretend, any relation to *her own sex organ(s)* because she has been cut off from any access to idea, ideality, specula(riza)tion, and indeed a certain organic 'reality'" (SW p114)
- "Being is never made flesh" (SW p312)
- TD p12
- "destruction of the sensible world" (TD p29)

### LANGUAGE / LAW / LAW OF THE FATHER

- "the *seduction function of law itself*. And its role in producing fantasies. When it suspends the realisation of a seduced desire, law organises and arranges the world of fantasy at least as much as it forbids, interprets, and symbolises it" (SW p38)
- "desire that must be seduced to the discourse and law of the father. *In place of the desire for the sexual body of the father* [...] we find a law proposed and imposed" (SW p38)
- "desire will henceforth pass through the discourse-desire-law of men's desire. "You will be my woman-mother, my wife [...] You will be for me the possibility of repeating-representing-appropriating the/my relation to the origin"" (SW p42)
- "the law of the *same desire, of the desire for the same*" (SW p55) [See also LOGIC-OF-THE-ONE and MEN-AMONGST-THEMSELVES]
- "Language leaves men amongst themselves and deprives women of women-amongst-themselves" (TD p45)

### LAW NON-CONTRADICTION / EXCLUDED MIDDLE / CLASSICAL LOGIC / MATHEMATICS

- "...the text will have surreptitiously broken the thread of its reasoning, its logic. [...] defies all resumption of a linear discourse and all forms of rigour as measured in terms of the law of excluded middle. Here the unconscious is speaking. And how could it be otherwise? Above all when it speaks of sexual difference." (SW p17)
- "The language system, or system of languages, doubled or accompanied by epistemological formalism and formal logic, takes from women and excludes them from the threshold of living in their world" (ESD p107)
- Principle of identity is problematic because it is a metaphor of man's flight from the mother (LM p194)
- Principle of non-contradiction maintains man's power (LM p196)

### LIGHT vs DARK (see also LOOK)

- On Freud's views of the "feminine riddle": "So psychology does not offer us the key to the mystery of femininity - that black box, strongbox, earth-abbyss that remains outside the sphere of its investigations: *light* must no doubt come from elsewhere" (SW p20)

## LOGOS

- "It would seem that the idea – or Idea – of sex or at any rate sexual function shapes Freudian "discourse" [...] this must obviously entail both modifying the economy of the Idea and trapping sex in a logos, a logic" (SW pp36-37)
- "Even so isn't a *logos* necessary before the genus and species of the plant can be decided? Etc. The plant may indeed conform to her own purpose, but an order has to certify this" (SW p162)
- "Western philosophy is accompanied by the constitution of a *logos*, a language obeying rules such as those of self-identity, of non-contradiction, etc., which distinguish it from a simple empirical language. These logical rules have been defined in order to ensnare the totality of the real in the nets of language" (WD p154)

## LOGIC-OF-THE-ONE / AUTOLOGIC / SELF-REFERENTIALISM

- "The same re-marking itself – more or less – would thus produce the other, whose function in the differentiation would be neglected, forgotten. Or else carried back into mere extrapolation, into the infinity" (SW p21)
- "the other is always the other of the same and not an actual other" (QO p10)
- "the Other, who is always to some extent *his* Other" (SW p135)
- "*others of the same*" (SW p335)
- "The *like* prefiguring itself there as that *other of the same*" (TS p118)
- "This is again a question that arises out of an economy – and again an economy of representation – to which Freud has recourse without criticism, without sufficient questioning: this is an organised system whose meaning is regulated by paradigms and units of value that are in turn determined by male subjects" (SW p22)
- Giving children surname of father: "the desire than men here displays to determine for himself what is constituted by "origin", and thereby eternally and ever to reproduce him (as) self" (SW p23)
- "projected, reflected *auto-representations*" (SW p51)
- "the automatism of repetition, the reestablishment of an earlier economy, the infinite regression of pleasure" (SW p53)
- "Certainly, it is *one*. For this race of signifiers spells out again the solipsism of him who summons them" (SW p135)
- "Representation here is auto-affective, auto-affecting solipsism" (SW p181)
- "when the 'I' thinks about something, the object of its thought is in fact itself [...] *This is the basis for (its) representation*" (SW p182)
- "the horizon line is already drawn, and drawn, in fact, by the 'subject' who defines himself at the same time, in a circularity that knows no end except the return, over and over again" (SW p192)
- "logos of sameness" (SW p232)
- "autoerotic, auto-positional, auto-reflexive economy...of the subject" (TS p101)
- "discourse is *monosexual*" (ESD p177)
- "monosubjective, monosexualised, patriarchal, and phallocratic philosophy" (QO p12)

## LOOK / GAZE / SIGHT / EYE / OCULOCENTRISM

- "He will be able to see that I don't have one [...] She exposes, exhibits the possibility of *a nothing to see*" (SW p47)
- "Better than the gaze of the other, which is necessarily threatening [...] is the subject's self-observation" (SW p81)
- SW, p95
- "man's eye – understood as a substitute for the penis" (SW p145)

- “apparatus that stands between man and light prevents light from *touching* him at all” (SW p148)
- “By excluding the gaze of the other, or others, this extrapolated point of view organises and projects the world into a paralysed empire. Formalisations of laws laid down in perpetuity, logos of the Father” (SW p339)
- “Vision is effectively a sense that can totalise, enclose, in its own way. more than the other sense, it is likely to construct a landscape, a horizon” (ESD p175)
- Vision is “A way of talking about the flesh that already cancels its most powerful components” (ESD p175)
- “Gazing at the beloved, the lover reduces her to less than nothing if this gaze is seduces by an image, if her nudity [...] becomes the site of a disguise rather than the astonishment at something that moves [...] The beloved’s vulnerability is this unguarded quality of the living” (ESD p192)

#### **MECHANICS (see also FLUIDS and METAPHYSICS OF SOLIDS)**

- “mechanics of solids” (TS p107)
- “All of which have excluded from their mode of symbolisation *certain properties of real fluids*” (TS p109)
- “Western logic calls for and relies on a mechanics of solids” (LM p199)

#### **MEMBRANES / MUCOUS / CONTACT / CARESS / POROUS / LIPS**

- “Just like the lips, any of the lips, and the vulva, though all of these are so perfectly accessible that the little girl cannot fail to have discovered their sensitivity [...] The pleasure gained from touching, caressing, parting the lips and vulva simply does not exist for Freud” (SW p29)
- “the child’s manifest resistance to weaning as a symptom of the trauma occasioned by the *final break in material contact with the inside of the mother’s body*: rupture of the foetal membranes” (SW p40)
- “*contact between ‘things’ is of very little importance to the wise man* [...] He would prefer to get rid of it in order to concentrate upon the ‘types’, and their chain of organisation” (SW p349)
- “In this approach, where the borders of the body are wed in an embrace that transcends all limits – without, however, risking engulfment, thanks to the fecundity of the porous” (ESD p18)
- ESD pp44-51
- “the mucous has no permanence, even though it is the ‘tissue’ for the development of duration” (ESD p109)
- “Touch makes it possible to wait, to gather strength, so that the other will return to caress” (ESD p187)
- “all the senses share in the nature of the caress, the hand serving, in its way, as the most intimate” (ESD p193)
- “Touching can also place a limit on the reabsorption of the other in the same. Giving the other her contours, calling her to them, amounts to inviting her to live where she is without becoming other” (ESD p204)
- “The caress is no longer a gesture that aims to grab hold of the other in his/her freedom, mystery, ‘virginity’ or ‘integrity’ (as is still the case with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas)” (WD p115)

#### **MEN-AMONGST-THEMSELVES / AUTOEROTICISM**

- “So it would be a case of you men speaking among yourselves about woman” (SW p13)
- “the autoeroticism more or less deferred or differentiated into the autological or homologous representations of a (masculine) subject [...] The pleasure man can take therein becomes apparent” (SW p28)
- “Or, again, will desire ever break away from mere repetitive automatism?” (SW p31)

- “Doesn’t he reduce all these specific modalities of libido to the desire [...] that the man feels for the man? More exactly that the phallus feels for the phallus” (SW p32)
- “auto-erotic, homosexual, or indeed fetishistic character of the relationship of man to woman” (SW p32)
- “he seems to get more sexual satisfaction from making laws than love” (SW p39)
- “Auto-eroticism has been permitted, authorised, encouraged insofar as it is deferred, exhibited in sublated ways” (SW p50) [For instance, in language and law]
- SW p95
- “the society of men among themselves” (TS p161)
- “they communicate only among themselves, the ‘brothers’ who share the same language, the same subjectivity” (WD p129)
- “the society of men-amongst-themselves” (TD pXIV)
- “We live in a society of men-amongst-themselves” (TD p7)
- TD p29
- “The written law is a law established for a society of men-amongst-themselves” (TD p59)
- “the laws of the world of men-amongst-themselves” (TD p99)

### **METAPHYSICS OF SOLIDS/SUBSTANCE AND POSITIVE PRESENCE**

- “this crisis point in metaphysics where we find exposed that sexual “indifference” that had assured metaphysical coherence and “closure”” (SW p28)
- “Freud is still party to a certain logos and therefore to a certain economy of ‘presence’, a certain representation of ‘presence’, and he will be able to picture the little girl becoming a woman only in terms of *lack, absence, default*” (SW pp41-42)
- Absence is considered not-being and therefore not-true: On the traditional view having no penis: “That is to say, *no sex/organ* that can be seen in a *form* capable of founding its reality, reproducing its truth. *Nothing to be seen is equivalent to having no thing. No being and no truth*” (SW p48)
- [On Descartes’ view], “Reality is formally and objectively demonstrable as thinking substance” (SW p184)
- “[e]verything has to be (re)invented to avoid the vacuum” (SW p228)
- “if there were really a vacuum, ‘nature’ of her own volition would closer over, sealing the two lips of that slit” (SW p188)
- “The ‘subject’ identifies himself with/in an almost material consistency that find everything flowing abhorrent” (SW 237)
- “representation designated as presence” (SW p247)
- “The paradigm of all proper names/nouns is Being, or else Truth. The being of Truth or the truth of Being.” (SW p272)
- “a symbolisation that grants *precedence to solids*” (TS p110)
- “a masculine subject that erects itself out of the mucous. And which believes it is based on substances, on something solid” (ESD p109)
- “starting from an undifferentiated *subjectum*, he erect[s] himself as a *solid* entity” (LM p199)

### **NEGATIVE (see also LACK)**

- “woman’s lack of penis and her envy of the penis ensure the function of the negative, serve as representations of the negative, in what could be called a phallogocentric – or phallogotropic – dialectic” (SW p52)
- SW pp208-209
- “the relationship to *the others of the other* [...] to *the other of the other*, anyone who ventures near it will be threatened with loss of self (as same) [...] the other is *the reverse, the negative* of the properties of sameness; it *overflows* the unit of self-identity” (SW p335)

## NEUTRALITY / SAMENESS / PLURALITY / MULTIPLICITY

- “polymorphous perversity” only if not regression to masculine sameness (*TS pp139-140*)
- “so that we can abandon the model of a single and singular subject altogether. This does not mean that the one of the subject can become many” (*DB p6*)
- “The argument of the plurality of citizens is not valid, either. Society is made up of two sexes, not of ‘men’: youth, workers, the disabled, immigrants, the unemployed, women, etc” (*TD p59*)
- “And it is not possible that a common third still exists between us, man and woman. This is true between different cultures or traditions, but first of all it is true between us, between our masculine and feminine subjectivities” (*WCD p82*)
- “the exploitation of woman takes place in the difference between the genders and therefore must be resolved within difference rather than by abolishing it” (*QO p10*)
- *QO p11*

## NON-HETEROSEXUALITY (within sex)

Bisexuality:

- *SW p14*
- *SW p15*
- *SW p17*
- *SW p20*
- *SW p22*
- *SW p23*
- *SW p35*
- *SW p111*
- *SW p217*
- *WD p84* “the divine also ought to be spoken in two genders or bisexually”

Homosexuality, female:

- *SW pp98-104* [traces the problematic assumption that lesbianism on the Freudian view is a regression to the male universal]
- *TS p43* [same conclusion as above]
- *TS p65* [same conclusion as above]
- *TS p69* [same conclusion as above]
- *TS pp194-195* [same conclusion as above]
- *SW p128-129*
- *SW p141* [female hom(m)osexuality unfair interpretation as male sameness]
- *TS p32* [as alternative to male, heterosexual economy]

Ho(m)osexuality, male:

- *SW p20*
- *SW p23*
- *SW p26*
- *SW p32* “reduce all modalities of libido to the desire [...] that the man feels for the man”
- *SW p32*
- *SW p33* female: “has put away her auto-erotic, homosexual pleasure, sublimated her partial drives”
- *SW p35*
- “So there will be no female homosexuality, just a hommo-sexuality in which women will be involved in the process of specularising the phallus” (*SW p103*)
- “the dominant ideology – that is of hom(m)osexuality and its struggles with the maternal” (*SW p142*)
- “the prescriptions of a hommosexual imaginary and to its relationship to the origin, to a logos that claims to lead the potency of the maternal back into the same” (*SW p229*)

- On Greek homosexuality: “Thus he is in love. But with what? With his image? That would be a comedown for love, truly” (*SW p323*)
- “The only men who love each other are, in truth, those who are impatient to find the same over and over again” (*SW p327*)
- “that homosexual a-musement is not about to give out” (*TS p99*) [referring to masculine denial of an actual *other* pleasure/sexuality/femininity]
- “the masculine homosexual ideology” (*TS p145*)
- “ho(m)mo-sexual monopoly” and “reign of hom(m)o-sexuality” (*TS p171*)
- “reign of masculine hom(m)o-sexuality” (*TS p172*)
- “heterosexuality has been up to now just an alibi for the smooth workings of man’s relations with himself, of relations among men” [homosexuality, in other words] (*TS p172*)
- “This means that the *very possibility of a sociocultural order requires homosexuality* as its organising principle. Heterosexuality is nothing but the assignment of economic roles” (*TS p192*)
- Rare favourable interpretation of erotic male homosexuality as subversive: (*TS p193*)
- “all economic organisation is homosexual” (*TS p193*)
- Homosexuality is love of self (*ESD p61*)
- “It often constitutes a kind of ontology of the anal or else a triumph of the absorption of the other into the self in the intestine” (*ESD p101*)
- *WD p140-141*
- “these religions are more social, monosexual and homosexual, built in the interest of only one sex” (*WD p174*)

Transsexuality:

- *SW p275* “trans-sexuate”

#### **NON-SEXUALITY / ASEXUALITY / POST-SEX (outside sex)**

- “the neuter” (*SW p48-49*). Only dealt with by Irigaray as woman-with-no-penis on Freudian view.
- *SW p237*
- *SW p275*
- *TS p149* [phallogentric representational order means that one can either speak as a man, or as asexed]
- Neutral or neuter is hostile to wonder and interval between difference (*ESD p82*)
- “the world is not undifferentiated, not neuter, particularly insofar as the sexes are concerned” (*ESD p126*)
- “Feminism’s blindest alley is to force women into a deconditioning which strips them of their feminine identity in order to attain an undifferentiated state of universality to be shared in a masculine or neutral world” (*DB p37*)
- “the prospect of a neutral, asexual community is disturbing” (*DB p37*)
- “Nor does neutralising the difference serve any purpose, other than a loss of human identity” (*DB p54*)
- “a neutral identity, which signifies a partial loss of identity” (*DB p66*)
- “Gender alienation occurs as a result of the reduction of the two to the one: the human gender, so-called universal and neutral” (*DB p150*)
- “the neutering of the sexual element which goes together with the imperialism of monocratic discourse and the technological age, its ultimate achievement” (*WD p44*)
- “denying that women and men are different in the name of some hypothetical social equality is a delusion, a bias in favour of a split – an impossible split – between private life and social identity. Out of bed or away from home, we somehow mysteriously become unisexual or asexual” (*TD pVIII*)
- “...non-existent neutral individuals...” (*TD pXV*)
- “the neutral individual is nothing but a cultural fiction” (*TD p75*)
- “Indeed, life is not neuter” (*JTN p70*)

## ONTIC / ESSENTIALIST

- “ontic-ontological difference” (*ESD p86*)

## ONTOLOGICAL NEGATIVE

- “In the end, every ‘war’ machine turns against the one who made it [...] Unless, at every opportunity, we ourselves take the negative upon ourselves. Which would amount to allowing the other his/her liberty, and sex” (*ESD p120*)
- “the importance of the boundary, the negative which is necessary for conceiving and practicing difference” (*WD p77*)
- “using a negative that’s open to the existence of two genders, two subjects” (*WD p87*)
- “the negative of an irreducible alterity” (*WD p130*)
- “in a manner different from that of Hegel. The negative will remain insurmountable, and it will serve to maintain the singularity of the subjectivity of the one and the other as well as the inalienability of the relation between the one and the other” (*WOT p70*)
- “the negative at work is not equivalent to a nothingness: it is that which accounts for the alterity of the other and which protects it” (*WOT p72*)
- *WCD p84*

## PHALLUS / PENIS IS SELF-IDENTICAL / RIGID / SOLID

- “[the phallus] would not be the privileged signifier of the penis or even of power and sexual pleasure were it not to be interpreted as *an appropriation of the relation to origin and of the desire for and as origin*” (*SW p33*)
- “The penis – or better still the phallus! *Emblem of man’s appropriative relation to the origin*” (*SW p42*)
- “the Same is being postulated again in this “new” signifying economy, organised under the control of the said Phallus” (*SW p44*)
- “the phallus – that *master signifier* whose law of functioning erases, rejects, denies the surging up, the recall of a *heterogeneity*” (*SW p50*)
- “his [Freud’s] wish to perpetuate sexual homogeneity: a non-sex-organ, a castrated sex-organ, or ‘penis-envy’, does not constitute a sexual heterogene but rather represents a type of negativity that sustains and confirms the homogeneity of masculine desire” (*SW p63*)
- “that solid that the penis represents” (*TS p113*)

## PROCESSUAL COSMOLOGY

- “the capacity of matter herself, at her most *fluid* [...] to produce beautiful forms” (*SW p207*)
- “the jouissance of women exceeds all this. It is indefinite flood in which all manner of developments can be inscribed [...] extension swelling outward without discernible limits. Without telos or arche.” (*SW p229*)
- “woman is always already in a state of anamorphosis [...] A state of cyclic discontinuity closing in a slit whose lips merge into one another” (*SW p230*)
- “How can we work out a problematic of place that would involve not cutting or annihilation but a rhythmic becoming in relation to place?” (*ESD p42*)
- “her [woman’s] relation to the cyclical” (*ESD p64*)
- “the great rhythms of incarnation, respiration, circulation of the blood” (*ESD p144-145*)
- “rhythms of the flesh” (*ESD p162*)

- “there is a rhythmic pulse which beats between going out towards the other and returning to the self [...] between coming out into the light and going back into the darkness, into the invisibility of interiority, into the mystery of alterity [...] ...of the cyclones” (DB pp111-112)

### REASON over MATTER (in patriarchal order)

- “an organ of sight that has forfeited the body” [Descartes’ thinking subject] (SW p184)
- “‘I think’ therefore I have being” (SW p185)
- “the sexual indifference that underlies the truth of any science, the logic of every discourse” (TS p69)

### SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

- “The other cannot be transformed into discourse, fantasies” (ESD p216)
- “If I consider some of the differences between woma(e)n and ma(e)n, differences which form part of their subjectivity and are not related to variations which reduce one and the other (male and female) to objects of scientific scrutiny (sociology, psychology, biology, etc) [...] I cannot avoid the conclusion that woma(e)n and ma(e)n represent two different worlds” (DB pp150-151)
- “naturally or ontologically, to my belonging to a gendered body, and therefore to a gender. I do not produce the split through my thought: it already exists. I either recognise it or I don’t” (WD p75)
- “Social and cultural sexualisation for the two sexes is far from finished, and women’s liberation can have no other issue” (TD p14)

### SPACE / ENVELOPE

- Of Freud: “Woman is nothing but the receptacle that passively receives his *product*” (SW p18)
- The woman is “A reserve supply of *negativity* sustaining the articulation of their [men’s] moves, or refusals to move” (SW p 22)
- “She function as a hole – that is where we would place it at its point of greatest efficiency [...] in the elaboration of imaginary and symbolic processes” (SW p71)
- “The vagina in fact is ‘now valued as a place of shelter for the penis’” (SW p93)
- “she is the matter used for the imprint of forms” (SW p141)
- “She is merely a receptacle” (SW p166)
- “she is never anything but the still undifferentiated opaqueness of sensible matter; the store (of) substance for the sublation of self, or being as what is, or what he is” (SW p224)
- “Woman is still the place, the whole of the place in which she cannot take possession of herself” (SW p227)
- “Woman is neither open nor closed. She is indefinite, in-finite, *form is never complete in her*. [...] This incompleteness in her form, her morphology, allows her continually to become something else” (SW p229)
- “the maternal-feminine also serves as an *envelope*, a *container*, the starting point from which man limits his things” (ESD p10)
- “As for woman, she is place [in patriarchy]” (ESD p35)

### SPACE / INTERVAL / INTERMEDIARY / DAIMON

- Of traditional logos’ denial of space: “using the self-identity of that assertion to define its equal spatial distinctness from others, but also and at the same time, decisively cutting up the whole matter of language, the whole of speculation, and, moreover, of the ‘blanks’ in discourse” (SW p235)
- Daimon: SW p324

- “the ‘intermediary’ soul’s store of fire and ardour must be devoted to the quest for divine light. Without those flames, no *daimon* can do anything” (SW p326)
- “Obliteration of the passage between [...] Whatever intermediaries have been produced to make up for this lack of relationships, they are always slaves to (the) one, to the same” (SW p344)
- “to put the accent back on space was – perhaps – to restore some chance for the sexual pleasure of the other – woman” (TS p98)
- “The transition to a new age [...] entails an evolution or a transformation of forms, of the relations of *matter* and *form* and of the interval *between*” (ESD 8)
- “*Desire* occupies or designates the place of the *interval*” (ESD p8)
- “A sexual or carnal ethics would require that both angel [intermediary] and body be found together” (ESD p17)
- ESD pp20-33 [Diotima on love as daimon, interval of fecundity]
- “often the one and the other destroy the place of the other [...] they possess or construct only an illusory whole and destroy the meeting and the interval (of attraction) between the two” (ESD p54)
- “What we need is to discover how *two* can be made which one day could become *one* in that third which is love” (ESD p66)
- “interval between himself and the other [...] *to wonder*” (ESD p73)
- “Wonder would be the passion of the encounter [...] A third dimension. An intermediary” (ESD p82)
- “interval of exchange” (ESD p104)
- “spacing or interval for the freedom of questioning between two” (ESD p183)

#### SPEECH / VOICE

- “the zone of silence that lies outside the volume defined by the place from which discourse is projected [...] Outside of this volume already circumscribed by the signification articulated in (the father’s) discourse nothing is: *awoman*.” (TS pp112-113)

#### TIME

- “The theory is that this is all a matter of *time*. Of transition, and *progressive* transition” (SW p284) [link to linearity, improvement, and rigidity]
- “Time is cut up, over and over again, and lost in all kinds of caesuras and scansion that will be forced to toe the party line by deceptive plays of relationships” (SW p290)
- “how could that analysis be possible, except as a simple mechanical repetition, since man knows only one time? The time that flies (here, now)” (SW p354)
- “In the beginning there was space [...] This world is then peopled, and a rhythm is established among its inhabitants. God would be time itself [...] Time becomes the *interiority* of the subject itself, and space, its *exteriority*. [...] The subject, master of time, becomes the axis of the world’s ordering” (ESD p7)

#### WOMEN ONLY IN RELATION TO MEN, NO VOICE OF OWN

##### (AS COMMODITIES / PRODUCTS / MEANS TO A MASCULINE END)

- “in the case of these women, it must be a question of activism exerting itself by gracious permission of the submissive docility of the male.” (SW p17)
- Speaking of Freud: “passivity is required of woman at the moment of intercourse by reason of its usefulness in sexual functioning [...] [activity] may be recognised in woman insofar as that activity prepares for sexual functioning and is rigorously regulated” (SW p18)
- “...he will mark the product of copulation *with his own name*. Thereby woman [...] becomes the anonymous worker, the machine in the service of a master-proprietor who will put his trademark upon the finished product” (SW p23)
- “the vagina becoming the indispensable instrument of male pleasure” (SW p30)

- "Woman would thus find no possible way to represent or tell *the story of the economy of her libido*" (SW p43)
- "Here again no economy would be possible whereby sexual reality can be represented by/for woman. She remains forsaken and abandoned in her lack" (SW p49)
- "'Penis-envy' would represent, would be the only effective representation of woman's desire to enter into symbolic exchange as a 'subject' and raise woman from her status as a mere 'commodity'" (SW p56)
- "this fault, this deficiency, this 'hole' inevitably affords women too few figurations [...] Which all surely keeps her deficient" (SW p71)
- SW pp73-74
- "She is included in the exchange market only as a commodity" (SW p118)
- Marriage as 1) an exchange of commodities 2) between men who determine dowry (SW pp121-122)
- Women have no voice of their own and cannot express the concerns specific to their embodiment (SW p140)
- "For (the) woman neither is able to give herself some meaning by speech nor means to be able to speak..." (SW p229)
- TS pp84-85
- "Because women have no language sexed as female [...] they are deprived of speech. And this makes it hard for a woman to achieve a *for-itself*, and to construct a place between the *in-itself* and the *for-itself*" (ESD p107)
- Women's entry into masculine order is through a trial of *suffering*: childbirth (JTN pp95-96)
- "They [women] are deprived of a subjective order by which they can unify their corporeal vitality" (JTN p98)