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Touch and Caress in the Work of Luce Irigaray

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Abstract: Luce Irigaray is a French philosopher known for her work on the political, cultural, and existential importance of sexual difference. This dissertation focuses on the distinctive role that the gesture of touching between human beings plays in Irigaray's philosophy, and how touch and caress can create a bridge between persons, between sexes, and toward a more suitable and lasting future for humanity. The dissertation addresses touch in Irigaray's work in four chapters. The first chapter deals with the themes of touch, subjectivity, and the body in the work of four prominent thinkers of the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Levinas. The chapter explores in various of Irigaray's works her commentary on these philosophers' approaches to touch, and her further discussion of the essential significance of touch for philosophy, especially for thinking about the subject and intersubjectivity. The chapter also introduces the crucial importance of sexual difference and recognizing feminine subjectivity. The second chapter investigates Irigaray's work concerning rethinking the foundations of the family on the basis of touch and caress. The chapter traces conclusions Irigaray draws about the importance of providing a cultural context in which touch between generations, especially between mothers and children, is given a privileged and protected place. The cultural and civil means for developing such a context depends upon the emancipation of women from the patriarchal family, upon the creation of two autonomous civil identities for men and women, as well as the conscious cultivation of a physical economy for mother and child. The third chapter considers the crucial importance of touch in establishing a repose or dwelling within oneself and returning to oneself, what Irigaray calls *self-affection*. This chapter also deals with Irigaray's work concerning the possibility of meeting with another subject who is radically different through touch. The carnal relationship between two radically different subjects involves the global being of each subject, as well as a radical respect for the alterity and transcendence of the other. In order to maintain the possibility of contact with an other who is radically different, what Irigaray calls *hetero-affection*, each subject must be capable of a radical openness to the other, as well as letting them be. Each must also be capable

of retaining their own identity and be able to return to themselves in self-affection. The fourth chapter presents the work of Jacob Rogozinski and Paul Ricoeur as well as other contemporary thinkers in comparisons with Irigaray's approach to touch and eros. These comparisons highlight the singularity of Irigaray's thinking on touch, and suggest how to approach these and potentially other contemporary philosophers' work in the context of Irigaray's thought.

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Introduction

Luce Irigaray is a French philosopher known for her work on the political, cultural, and existential importance of sexual difference. This dissertation focuses on the distinctive role that the gesture of touching between human beings plays in Irigaray's philosophy, and how touch and caress can create a bridge between persons, between sexes, and toward a more suitable and lasting future for humanity. The dissertation addresses touch in Irigaray's work in four chapters. The first chapter deals with the themes of touch, subjectivity, and the body in the work of four prominent thinkers from the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Levinas. The chapter explores in various of Irigaray's works her commentary on these philosophers' approaches to touch, and her further discussion of the essential significance of touch for philosophy, especially for thinking about the subject and intersubjectivity. The chapter also introduces the crucial importance of sexual difference and recognizing feminine subjectivity. The second chapter investigates some of Irigaray's work concerning rethinking the foundations of the family on the basis of touch and caress. The chapter traces conclusions Irigaray draws about the importance of providing a cultural context in which touch between generations, especially between mothers and children, is given a privileged and protected place. The cultural and civil means for developing such a context depends upon the emancipation of women from the patriarchal family, upon the creation of two autonomous civil identities for men and for women, as well as the conscious cultivation of a physical economy for mother and child. The third chapter considers the crucial importance of touch in establishing a repose or dwelling within oneself and returning to oneself, what Irigaray calls *self-affection*. This chapter also deals with Irigaray's work concerning the possibility of meeting with another

subject who is radically different through touch. The carnal relationship between two radically different subjects involves the global being of each subject, as well as a radical respect for the alterity and transcendence of the other. In order to maintain the possibility of contact with an other who is radically different, what Irigaray calls *hetero-affection*, each subject must be capable of a radical openness to the other, as well as letting them be. Each must also be capable of retaining their own identity and be able to return to themselves in self-affection. The fourth chapter presents the work of Jacob Rogozinski and Paul Ricoeur as well as other philosophers in comparisons with Irigaray's approach to touch and eros. These comparisons highlight the singularity of Irigaray's thinking on touch, and suggest how to approach these and potentially other contemporary philosophers' work in the context of Irigaray's thought.

Touch has became a prominent theme in the twentieth and twenty-first century, especially in the movements of phenomenology and existentialism. The first chapter of the dissertation addresses some of these recent discussions of touch from prominent philosophers from the continental tradition, in particular, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Heidegger, and considers Irigaray's responses to them. Irigaray thinks of touch as being grounded in subjective relations and difference. Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas each in various ways comment on tactility, being with others, and erotic relations, but do not in most cases realize a philosophy of touch that specifically emphasizes horizontal subjective relations with other(s) grounded in difference. Though each thinks seriously about touch in important ways, in many instances these philosophers privilege consciousness over materiality, vision over tactility, or subject-object relations over subject-subject relations. Martin Heidegger thinks abstractly about being with

others, but does not meaningfully consider the possibility of relating with others through touch, and in particular takes no notice of sexual difference.

Irigaray thinks about touch and the caress in a wholly new way, re-imagining the caress to take into account relations between subjects that are non-hierarchical, and revolutionizing the thought of relations between sexes as carnal subjects. One of the most far-reaching analyses of intimate relations and the role of touch occurs in her criticisms of the patriarchal family, which is considered in the second chapter. Her critique of the law of the father and the related lack of recognition of the desire of women in the Western tradition begins in her 1974 book, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, and occurs throughout her oeuvre. She argues that without a culture of two sexually different subjects, the family cannot support either the autonomy of its members, especially women and girls, nor can it be a place where persons can intimately relate to one another without dominating or being dominated. Irigaray's project in re-founding the family is to designate a context within which the relations of the family, and the identity of women, come out from under the dominance of the patriarchal tradition. To create two autonomous civil identities —an identity for men, and importantly, an identity for women, who traditionally lack such a civil identity—could allow the intimate sphere to become a place of creativity, as opposed to it being primarily a zone of the consolidation of wealth and power. The cultivation of intimate relations that emphasize difference and autonomy, grounded in the gesture of touch and caress in the intimate and private zones of the domestic sphere, makes it possible to produce novelty and to preserve the difference of its members, rather than reproducing sameness in the form of patriarchal lineage.

Irigaray also elaborates the importance of what she terms "self-affection," which is, among other things, a way of relating to oneself that allows not only the possibility of self-understanding, self-contact, and growth, but also of maintaining one's identity when interacting with others. Self-affection is in great part accomplished or experienced on the basis of touch. Moreover, a robust understanding of and cultural context for touch is necessary for the possibility of relating in a direct way with oneself and with others. This is part of the basis for the argument, in connection with Irigaray's thinking, that without a thoroughly considered culture of touch, the means for meeting the other(s) in the world remains obscure and indefinite.

Irigaray, when compared to other contemporary philosophers of touch, is the only major figure to think deeply the implications of touch and caress between subjects, and especially to think of this area in terms of sexuate subjectivity and sexuate difference. We encounter others, she argues, through language, gesture, and touch, in ways that depend deeply on our identities and relations as sexuate subjects. Some other contemporary theorists have taken up topics of touch and sexuality in different ways, notably, Paul Ricoeur in terms of his thoughts on tenderness, and Jacob Rogozinski, who understands the ego as a tactile synthesis whose primary existence is as an immanent being residing in and also existing as my own flesh. These two philosophers contribute in important ways to the philosophy of touch, and their work shares some general themes with Irigaray's. Nevertheless, Irigaray's work is different in that it is able to bring to light the deep significance of sexual difference in the philosophy of touch, as well as offer a radical understanding of the basis of preserving difference and individuality, but also intimacy, in encountering others through touch. The difficult task of bringing about a culture of sexual difference in which genuinely, deeply, and consistently ethical relations thrive between

men and women, and among all human beings, depends in a significant way on the success of creating a sophisticated philosophy of touch.

Irigaray has been engaged with the thinking of touch since the publication of *Speculum of the Other Woman* ([1974] 1985a). A now-classic essay appears in her volume *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* ([1984] 1993a), "The Fecundity of the Caress," (185-217) whose title quotes a phrase that appears in Emmanuel Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* ([1961] 2013), a work that she comments on expansively in the chapter. In her book, *To Be Two* (2001), in "The Wedding Between the Body and Language," Irigaray comments upon Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, who each have made touch, and even caress, a theme in their works (17-29). In order to understand Irigaray's approach to touch and the caress, it is useful to read the approaches of these figures critically, because their work demonstrates strong contrasts with Irigaray's thought.

The figure of the caress makes an appearance in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, in which he writes, "In caressing the Other, I cause her flesh to be born beneath my caress, under my fingers" (506-7). We note here that Sartre views the caress as certainly more than a form of touching, in that it is his generative act. In writing, "I cause her flesh to be born beneath my caress," (507), Sartre suggests that his very act of caressing itself generates the flesh of another. Nevertheless, in the act as Sartre describes it, the person being caressed, always figured as feminine, is passive. She is the object of his caresses, only becoming subject briefly beneath his touch. "The Caress," for Sartre, follows the structure of "The Look," a classic theme in *Being and Nothingness* (1956, 340-400), wherein the caress of the other, like the look of the other, serves to objectify the subject. Relatedly, Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity* (2013), views the caress as a debased and debasing form of relating, which turns the other into a mere object of

sexual desire, an "ultramateriality" (256), and above all a feminine "profanation" of the other (260).

Both of these views are negative conceptions of the caress, conceptions that associate it with a denigrated form of female corporeality that serves in Sartre's case, to elevate the masculine, and in Levinas' case, to corrupt it. In each case, however, the masculine is central and privileged. Irigaray, in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993a), reverses the negative view of the caress. She valorizes the caress itself, and brings it to the center. She praises touch not only as a paradigm of human intersubjectivity, a move often absent in phenomenology, but Irigaray also privileges it as an activity of relating, with the potential for emancipating human beings from the abstraction and desolation that comes from suppressing generative relations between sexed beings.

Other forms of relating that belong to this paradigm of carnal relations are the embrace, and the touching of the two lips, as a privileged place of self-affection (Irigaray 2008b, 227). Each manner of relating, each figure, has its own potential and its very own character, in particular, the caress and the embrace. These two are not simply forms of touching between embodied subjects to be categorized among others. They designate particular modes of relating that center on the sensual interaction between two sexuate subjects, and a mutual recognition through feeling and sensation and perception that has implications for ethics, politics, spirituality and nature.

Other thinkers, Merleau-Ponty, for instance, were able to think about touching more positively. Nevertheless, touch for Irigaray is a special kind of embodied relating. It relies on specifically sexuate subjects, on the possibility of a relation inclusive of sexual difference, and

on an embodied sense of temporality that is fluid rather than discrete. Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Emmanual Levinas could not think about the caress thoroughly because they adhered rigidly to implicit notions of masculine subjects, hindering full access to a spiritual or natural embodied transcendence. Merleau-Ponty was better able to understand the caress through his emphasis on embodiment and incorporated intersubjectivity, yet he remained trapped within the tradition of the singular masculine subject. Irigaray thinks about touch and the caress in a wholly new way, rescuing these figures from the debased context of masculine projections of a distorted femininity (found especially in Levinas' work), and re-appropriating touch to a sexuately aware paradigm that revolutionizes relations between sexes and embodied subjects. Touch is one aspect of a fecund ethical relationship among sexed embodied subjects, and relationships between the natural, the political, and the spiritual worlds.

Whereas Irigaray is the only major figure to think deeply about the implications of the caress as an aspect of sexuate subjectivity, other contemporary theorists have taken up topics of touch and sexuality in different ways, notably, Jean-Luc Nancy (2013), who has written extensively on "the sexual relation" and touch, Paul Ricoeur (1964) in his thoughts on tenderness, and Jacob Rogozinski (2010) who discusses touch in the tactile synthesis of the ego. These latter philosophers contribute important insights to the philosophy of the caress, and deserve to be considered in the context of a work on the philosophy of touch. Drawing comparisons with Irigaray's work in other thinkers' discussions of touch is helpful. Irigaray's approach is unlike that of any other recent thinker. It is part of the argument of this dissertation that her work is urgently necessary, and must be the subject of immediate and sustained attention.

Irigaray has been able to bring out the deep significance of sexual difference in ethics and in the ethically significant relation of touch. Examples of the emergence and necessity of the caress as a figure of a sexuately generative ethical paradigm can be found in global medicine, environmental ethics, art, and law. Yet the difficult but rewarding task of bringing about a culture of sexual difference in which genuinely, deeply, and consistently ethical relations thrive between men and women, human beings and environment, and between nature and spirituality, is still largely yet to be realized.

What modern philosophy (and culture more generally) is hesitant to acknowledge, and what in many cases prevents a true consideration of the subject touch and the caress, is that subjective identities are sexuately different. Women's identities have often been suppressed, and this suppression blinds us, in many cases, to the radical potential that thinking differently about phenomenology and ethics could generate. Sexual differences are not merely anatomical or biological differences, and they are not simply a neutral multiplicity of differences. In other words, they are not merely sexual differences (plural), but rather differences that are shared among sexuate subjects. We each participate in sexuate universals, or more precisely, we are ourselves universals of our own sex. This does not mean that we are all the same as other sexed beings, but that as sexed beings we universalize ourselves (Irigaray 1993c). Irigaray's thinking of the caress uncovers the obscured sense of place and temporality that go unremarked and unseen in a patriarchal culture. The singularity and simultaneous universality of sexed beings is uniquely recognizable in embodied intersubjective relations such as the caress. The caress is a special, reflexive, sensible relation that includes the recognition of difference and identity, of sensibility, transcendence, and the transcendental.

To develop an ethics of the caress is to engender relationships, both political and intimate, between men and women, that respect the threshold between us but also recognize that we share a world. The caress does not define a normative ethics. Nevertheless, caressing, relating in the spirit of a caress, does make tangible boundaries, limits and possibilities in my relating with another. “The caress does not seek to dominate a hostile freedom,” Irigaray writes (1993a, 188). The caress is a revealing and veiling gesture: it makes sensible, discloses the world through its act of unveiling (disrobing), revealing with tactility, but also with sight, taste and touch smell and sound, and also leaves mystery and invisibility intact, covering as it moves. At the edge of the caress we encounter the contact between the sacred and the natural, the threshold of body and spirit, human being and the spiritual. Caress involves access to memory residing on the surface, traversing the past with a gesture of opening, soothing, intimately containing secrets, while exposing other communications that matter to those engaged in it.

What we must address is that when we fail to recognize the importance of physical touching, we fail to valorize life and spirit, and we thus continue to reproduce a culture that values only what can be obtained through abstract means. The caress gives an idea for a non-utopian, non-teleological, yet still bounded, textured, figure for ethics. It contains or implies its own boundaries, limits, forms, even laws, that respond to the needs and desires of embodied subjects, subjects that live their identities through their bodies, not through the abstractions of capitalism and patriarchy. The caress realizes a movement, a zone of becoming that indefinitely circulates body and flesh, human and divine, a community of women and other women, of women and men, of adults and children, humans and nature, the natural and the spiritual.

What opens to us when we begin to liberate the caress from its obscurity in certain male philosopher's metaphysics? Irigaray writes, "Metaphysics seems to have been elaborated in order to allow us to escape an immediate nearness with another living being. It has not arrived at the point of constituting a dialectics of the relations with the other(s) in which touch itself would be the mediation" (2008c, 129).

Thoughts on the Touch

> These enclaves of the neuter which seek to be ethical outside the war of the sexes, are, for as long as the tragedy of the differences of the sexes and its fecundity remains unsolved, linked historically to the rule of technocracy, whether these be logocratic or the effects of the drives or the results of tools or machines. (Irigaray 1993c, 117)

Touch is a means of generating alliances among women and men. What gets in the way of our sharing our world(s) together is above all, the abstraction of our selves from our nature. The fabricated world of goods and products causes everything to emerge from a manufactured and unnatural non-place. The pathology of an exclusively masculine world takes over language and culture, depriving women of places for their own self-development and self-fulfillment, and precluding the possibility that women and men might come together in their desire as natural beings with one another. The world, when dominated by one sex, by man, becomes paralyzed in mono-time and mono-place, unrelenting, and unable to pass from one epoch to another. The world becomes frozen and inert, and women and men find themselves trapped without access to the transcendental that the other is; they are trapped in a single transcendence. The single transcendence, is, on the one hand, for man, an illusory place, replacing nature, mother, and spirit with fabrications, abstract values, monotheistic beliefs, which themselves founder in isolation

from nature and the divine. On the other hand, woman is relegated to an increasingly unrecognizable, alien, and hostile wasteland of unnatural and unfamiliar things to which she has no relation—she is trapped in her immanence and her home. Others are caught in nothingness, and are forced to choose between the desolation of one identity or another, each one appropriated by the logic of a narrowly defined Same. Embodied and polymorphous pleasures, such as caressing, are ignored in favor of quantifiable pleasures that suit the productive and economic bias of a singularly masculine culture. For instance, Irigaray writes, ". . . since religion has been represented as male monotheism for centuries, the rights of women not only to life but also to sexual pleasure are given little specification by religious thinkers" (1993c, 141).

The caress is a specific form of relating, discouraged or made unavailable to women and men in a culture of the Same, a culture that recognizes only one supposedly all-applicable mode of subjectivity. Touch is a form of sensible interaction between sexed bodies that is also a form of loving. Irigaray writes, "Between the one and the other, a micro-culture is set up. It can become the leaven for a universal culture that keeps alive the energy of each one as well as that of the relation between the one and the other" (2008c, 57). Thus, in a relation between two, the caress is a starting point for bringing about a culture of genuine sharing and love, and even to eventually compose a culture of many such smaller relations. At this point in the current milieu, especially relating to Western thought and modes of behaving and thinking, the caress is recognized mostly and primarily as a form of sexualized eroticism, but Irigaray's notion of the caress is an expanded sense that includes more than just the (usually eroticized) caress between lovers.

The scope of the notion of the caress is a topic that is discussed throughout the dissertation. In terms of the politics and thought of touch, Irigaray argues that the caress should be available to human beings as their mode of interaction on the level of approaching one another while paying attention to their natures as subjects. Not only this, but the caress should be available to parents and children, especially to women and daughters, as their mode of interacting between generations (between mother and daughter, and father and son, etc.), not just to men and women with one another.

In bringing together mind and body through touching we can overcome a numbness that we have developed, which shields us artificially from embodied relationships with nature and with each other. We bring about a collaborative means of growth and becoming. With greater appreciation of touch, we can develop more sensitivity to others and to ourselves, with the aim of overcoming our dependence on violent conflicts and destruction, in order to cope with an artificial division between mind and body and between subject and world.

The recognition of a right to touch, the establishment of sexed rights that allow women a chance to speak, a chance to live, and a chance to live in a shared world, is a component of sexed rights that reaches every domain of living. When couples are allowed to caress each other, they ought to do so without the expectation of abstaining from desire (abstaining from caressing) in order to adhere to a moralism that demands that pleasure and desire be eschewed in favor of reproduction and capital. Then, they could enjoy a freedom to create together a sensual and sensitive relation of material loving that is not delimited by a binary of procreation or non-touching. When pleasure becomes generative, open-ended, and non-teleological in the relation of the caress, lovers begin to create new ways of living together.

Children growing in an environment that values caress can develop in a more suitable way. If they are taught to understand themselves and others in the context of communication through touch, in short if they are touched in a thoughtful and loving way that promotes their own individuation and growth, they are less likely to seek violent means of self individuation; instead, they are bolstered by a variety of beneficial results of living a culture that promotes sensitivity to desire and belonging. Respecting the transcendence of the other through a relationship of touch creates a between that protects subjects and opens them to new possibilities.

This is not just an indication of the need for "better," "more advanced" techniques, better prophylaxes and solutions that promote a contextless culture of "simply" touching, although some alterations in institutions are certainly warranted by the need for a culture of touch. Rather, the desire to receive caress and to caress are an outcry the reveals the need for a more sensibly oriented culture, a culture that valorizes sexed bodies and the rights of humans to live through their sexed subjectivities. These sexuate beings engage in embodied resistance against a culture of disembodiment.

As we lose our experience of touch, we tend to at the same time lose our sense of the natural and the divine as forms of embodied transcendence. As we become accustomed to driving, shopping, and unwrapping our goods, as opposed to working the earth, cooking and building with our hands, we lose our sense of nature, which orients us towards fecundity and engendering life. When we no longer cook, and especially, no longer share food with each other, we become isolated. Our senses dull; we slide into a culture that only recognizes a scientific epistemology, that lacks understanding of human beings as fleshly. We become "lifeless" without the possibility of the caress.

As we become more enmeshed in a technological world, we rely less on face-to-face interaction: on the possibility of putting my hand into your hand, of encountering one another. As we demand more speed, more instantaneous proximity, we piece by piece replace the human interaction in our lives with technological prostheses. Images become a replacement for touch. As this illusion more thoroughly ramifies, sensations that were formerly part of our tactile lives we now access through a confused relationship to technological media. We watch videos of one another rather than being with one another in person. We speak more to distant friends than to our neighbors. As we become more ocular and less tactile in our interactions with the world, or we interact tactilely with machines, we sacrifice our right to sensation and sensibility. We settle for poor substitutes for touch not out of a conscious choice, but as a result of currents and drift that move us away from the transcendence of the other—from the desire that brings us close to an other who holds mystery for us—and the transcendent in ourselves, our incarnate unfolding. We allow (or are coerced into allowing) our sense of flesh and communion with the other be co-opted by our single-subject culture.

Our own sexed flesh is what provides the site of resistance against forces that remove our senses from their place in fleshly subjectivity. It is not that we ought to revert to some nostalgia for an imaginary past, but that we must build a future that integrates our bodily being into our lives. This can be achieved in practical ways, for instance in the way we set up our living and working environments. Our re-envisioned lives can also take narrative forms, such as how we portray relationships in the stories we share with each other. But above all, we require a revolution in our manner of thinking and relating, and a conscious effort to recognize the multifaceted texture of human being.

Irigaray's Philosophy: Past, Present, and Future

Irigaray's "The Fecundity of the Caress" in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993a) is, in part, an analysis and response to Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* (1991), the whole work, and its philosophical position, and specifically, a response directly to the section entitled "The Phenomenology of Eros" (202-35). This section, part of the appendix of *Totality and Infinity*, is devoted to describing what, according to Levinas, the proper relation to the "Other" is not an erotic relation to the other's flesh, a relation of fecundity, a relation, in particular, to the other's carnality—to their subjective being-as-flesh, their material subjectivity (202-35). Levinas is not thought of as a philosopher of the body because he renounces carnality as a seducing and ultimately confounding illusion that tears us away from the transcendental and ethical face of the "Other" (Levinas 1991).

Irigaray's chapter, "The Fecundity of the Caress" (1993a, 185-217), is a trenchant critique of Levinas' phenomenology of eros. Whereas Levinas thinks that eros and carnal desire are the enemy of a truly ethical relation with the other, Irigaray shows how eros, and in particular, the caress, is essential to it. Indeed,"The Fecundity of the Caress," is more than a response to Levinas. It is a philosophical meditation and exploration of the essential significance of caressing among humans, of the significance of erotic feeling between lovers, and the fecundity of the carnal relation of the two, including the relation between human beings and the divine—a divinity proper to human incarnation itself, as opposed to a vertical transcendence, as in Levinas' sense of the "Other."

It is important to note that, for Irigaray, the caress is anything but metaphorical: human

beings caress one another, and caressing is an essential feature of the relation to the other which establishes and develops human becoming. Yet, the caress must not be taken too narrowly. The caress is a figure of a relation that can occur linguistically, or even imaginatively. We might even conceive of intermediaries of the caress, including written correspondence. This analysis can be extended even further, but for the moment let us focus on the qualities of the caress as they are figured here. The caress occurs between two: parent and child, two lovers, friends, or even strangers.

The language Irigaray uses in “The Fecundity of the Caress” is multivalent, often signifying on many levels at once, and radically open-ended. Yet it is anything but vague. Take for instance, this passage: “Lovers’ faces live not only in the face but in the whole body. A form that is expressed in and through their entire stature. In its appearance, its touch. A *morphé* in continual gestation...Like sculptors who are going to introduce themselves, entrust themselves to one another for a new delivery into the world ...the hand serving, in its way, as the most intimate means of approach" (193). Or this passage, "For the woman who is so protected, what future remains? Inside his male territory, even if she plays at disguising herself in various showy and coquettish poses which he ‘strips away’ in the act of love, she still lacks both the identity and passport she needs to traverse or transgress the male lover’s language. Is she some more or less domesticated child or animal that clothes itself in or takes on a semblance of humanity?" (196). Or this, "For her, a living mirror. Tuned differently to the rhythm of the earth and the stars...Continual and patient engendering of an obscure labor" (195).

Without committing her thought to a trajectory that would circumscribe the possibilities of the lovers, she nevertheless describes in concrete terms real relations that could transpire

between two in a caress. Here we can also sense an important, overriding theme in her phenomenology of the caress: sexuate difference. Women and men bring different capacities, transcendental elements, to an encounter with one another. In order for life to flourish, both have to be present. Part of her critique of Levinas is that only the masculine is given an identity; both men and women suffer at the absence of the missing or artificially enclosed life of the woman. In Irigaray's thinking, in an encounter between two persons, whatever their sex, the element of sexuate difference plays a role, and must be attended to in the right kinds of ways in order for the encounter, any encounter, to be engendering of life and becoming as opposed to being confining or degradin. To flourish with other human beings one must engage in a relation that is appropriate to each of them, that does not subordinate one's desires and needs to an other's, and that takes into account each one's humanity, nature, and the possibility of transcendence. We might derive from this that feminism, for it to be successful, must attend to both men and women (and others), and to attend to the carnal life of each and every human being. Undoing sexism requires a deep reworking of the culture of differences among persons and a (re-)turn towards the carnal and the carnal relations between human beings. Irigaray provides both a diagnosis of the problems of patriarchy as well as a philosophy of becoming that aims to bring about a fecund future within which human becoming can more fully take place. Central to this radical re-imagining of relations between human beings is Irigaray's focus on the gesture of touch, particularly the caress, as well as the sense of touch, the concrete relation of touch between two people, and of human beings and their environment, with nature.

Irigaray's notion of the flesh contrasts with Merleau-Ponty's early and late understandings of flesh, and with Husserl's. In Merleau-Ponty's earlier work, *Phenomenology of*

Perception ([1949] 2012), flesh consists of two parts, *Leib* and *Körper,* a distinction he adapted from Husserl (see Husserl 2002). Merleau-Ponty eventually moved beyond this to his notion of the flesh of the world, in *Visible and the Invisible* ([1964] 1968), a revision of the notion of the carnal chiasm (originally introduced by Husserl). What he did was to begin to fuse the two, *Leib*, the lived-body, and *Körper*, the material body, into one roughly combined notion of embodiment, incorporating both. With this loose fusion he was able to generate a philosophy of embodied perception and inter-corporeality that destabilized the subject/object and material/intellectual distinctions. In so doing, Merleau-Ponty significantly upset the Cartesian dualism between mind and body, and demonstrated their inextricability. Thus, the relation of the touching and the touched between two embodied subjects, in which the sensation of touching and the sensation of being touched oscillate and overlap, synthesized into a new relation between the two.

Husserl's notion of the flesh also included the carnal chiasm, but for him, flesh was not tied to the particularities of embodied subjects' transcendence, but to their worldly particulars. For Husserl, flesh encompassed the lived set of sensations and affects belonging to the consciousness of the subject, absent the material or bodily concreteness. This notion of the flesh is extended by Jacob Rogozinski in *The Ego and the Flesh* when he introduces the notion of the transcendent other within the affective flesh, e.g., belonging to the flesh, but also alien to it (2010, 188-210). Thirdly, we have Merleau-Ponty's later notion of the flesh, described in his *Flesh of the World.* For Merleau-Ponty, flesh does not limit itself to the carnality of the human being; it is distributed throughout the, material world, making up a network of fleshly characteristics that humans, nature, and all matter share, perhaps more intensely in the human being.

Irigaray's notion of the flesh shares elements with all three of these philosophers, but most significantly, Irigaray introduces the additional dimensions of desire, nature, sexual difference, and incarnate subjectivity. The result is a notion of the flesh as an expression of a human being becoming, relating with itself and with others in an ongoing activity of mutual fecundity. Irigaray's flesh is cultural as well as natural, but it is limited, mainly, to the being of humans, and perhaps in an expanded way, living beings. Her notion of the flesh shares with early Merleau-Ponty a deep sense of inter-corporeality, inter-subjectivity, embodied perception, and interaction with the lived environment. Irigaray's conception *also* recognizes a sense of affect, which is not as deeply present in Merleau-Ponty's early notion of flesh as lived body. Irigaray's phenomenology of intersubjectivity includes, as well, an extensive exploration of the phenomenon of sexual difference as it functions and creates meaning and worlds shared between human beings.

I. How Has the Philosophical Question of Touch Historically Been Re-Approached?

In Plato's *Symposium*, near the beginning of the dialogue, Agathon, who has the end couch to himself, invites Socrates to sit with him, saying, "It'll do me good to get close to you—I'll come into contact with whatever piece of wisdom occurred to you..." (175c). Socrates sits down and says, "Wouldn't it be nice if wisdom was like that, Agathon? Imagine if it could flow by contact from someone who had more of it into someone who had less of it!" (175d) We laugh along with Socrates, but at the same time, we see that Plato means us to notice that there is some kernel of truth: that wisdom, like love, or even in the form of love, does pass through contact.

We ought to take note, too, in Diotima's speech, presented in the voice of Socrates, that the goal of love is happiness through the permanent possession of goodness. Diotima says that love's purpose "is physical and mental procreation in an attractive medium" (206b). The procreation, and even birth-giving that Socrates is describing is not merely the physical, biological kind, but also the products of the mind, a type of creativity and generativity, or *poiesis*. Readers of Plato are familiar with Socrates referring to himself as a midwife (148e-151e). We can recognize the wisdom here without ignoring the irony that there were almost no women involved in Socrates' intellectual birth-giving. And we remain cognizant of Irigaray's admonition occurring throughout her work that we not continue to cast women in the role of mother only and to allow them to become themselves (Irigaray 1993c, 18). While remembering that, let us at the same time take note of Irigaray's point, from a piece prepared for a conference on madness, that women "are always mothers just by being women. [Women] bring many things into the world apart from children: love, desire, language, art, social things, political things, religious things…

[They] must take back this maternal creative dimension that is [their] birthright as women" (1993c, 18).

When we think of caressing, we may each think of a different caress. One might picture the caress of a mother of her child, or of two lovers. When we discuss caressing in the *Symposium*, we think of the caress of lovers, but these lovers are two men: not gay men in the contemporary sense, but rather society men, men who have civil lives with each other that involve making love. These men caress each other for reproduction, not of the biological kind, but instead, of the social, intellectual, and artistic variety. Caress then becomes an expression of love, a moment in which two men, of differing statuses, or equals, exchange carnally, often in order to cultivate an intellectual friendship between student and teacher. Only Socrates is immune (somewhat) to the charms of young and attractive boys. He resists his young friends' advances, and yet he is the symbol of love in the dialogue. We learn from Socrates' recounting of Diotima's speech that this is because carnal love in Socrates' view is not the highest form of love, because it does not produce a lasting good. Why? Because carnal love depends on physical beauty and physical beauty does not last. Yet what position does the caress hold? Why is it not considered that to caress one another could be beautiful on its own?

Indeed, perhaps caress is not considered because no women were allowed at the symposium. Because of the debased position of women in the Greek context, women and men might not have caressed as equals, and women certainly, notwithstanding the exception of the mute presence of slaves, would not have taken part in a symposium together with men. Women and men would not have sat next to each other on the couches arranged for the symposium, and would not have eaten this particular intellectual meal together. Women were for the most part

segregated into their homes within the sphere of the *oikos*. Were women to become emancipated in their society, where their style of touching, particular to their bodies, became part of the social intercourse of love (which is much broader than sexual intercourse), life could have been different. Our task, it might be suggested, is to more and more create a social world that introduces the possibility of different levels of touch between men and women. We can and should introduce it at the semi-public level of the city, the level at which the *Symposium* takes place, but also in the home, and more broadly than that, in the world.

1.1 What is Human Existence without Sexes?: Irigaray and Heidegger

Being-with

From whence comes the recognition that touch is crucial to human life? Touch was scarcely discussed before the twentieth century, and even then, was often subjected to vision as its master. Do we now or have we in the past had a way of understanding our touch relations with other human beings and its importance? Can we understand how such relations can be achieved or come about? Can it remain a purely intellectual "meeting" where two minds come together and sometimes recognize each other as being the "same kind of thing"? Or is some other form of intersubjective contact necessary?

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, identifies "being-with" as an "existential attribute that belongs to Dasein of itself on the basis of its kind of being" (2010, 117). For Heidegger, human existence is a form of being unlike any other form of being. The "being" of human existence—Dasein—is unlike anything else. Moreover, Dasein's being, its ontological-existential nature,

arises in how it exists, for whom it exists, how the world exists (for/as) it, the meaning of it existing—for whom and for what it exists—and lastly, the meaning of it existing for others. Most of the character of this existing-with and for the sake of, all in all termed "being-with," is understood first through the mutual caring about and for things that human beings do and encounter together, in Heiddeger's word, Dasein. Only in certain moments, and to varying degrees, do human beings themselves appreciate the significance of being-with: that it is essential to their nature as human beings. We care about the world, and we care about and for each other, but the meaning of this caring, the meaning of our living in the world with others, is what it is because we essentially share living *with* others. Human existence, "Dasein itself," he writes, "is essentially being-with" (117).

Heidegger also recognizes that the being-with that Dasein is can be threatened, in essence, by treating being-with as if it does not exist. In other words, it is possible to misunderstand the meaning of human life by remaining ignorant of or leaving in obscurity what it essentially is. Such obscurity compounds and is further compounded by a human manner of behaving that remains oblivious to its nature. These manners of acting and thinking do not change the essential characteristics of human being, but they serve to dampen or pervert them, leaving us lost in a world lacking any "who"s, and leaving only an empty and anonymous "they" or "them." Furthermore, at the extreme, we could lose the capacity even to recognize this distinction (114).

It is crucial to note, however, that in all Heidegger's acute analyses, he denies the importance of the body. Dasein, human existence, remains un-embodied. But how could an understanding of human existence, human living, benefit from the appreciation of a natural

body?

One can approach this question in different ways, for instance, from within Heidegger's analysis, or from the outside. We might ask how can I be with you without being with you in your body? The essential being-with that Heidegger identifies as belonging to Dasein is not without the implication that being-with must, to remain faithful to this essence of human being, be cultivated (114, 117). For after all, the incarnation of human life has to do with our capacity to be with one another, which is perhaps essential to being with one another. Does recognizing this accord with a correct understanding of the ontological character of human existence and human subjectivity? Even though it is counter to what Heidegger himself says, the idea that incarnation is essential to human life might have been anticipated, if not suggested by some of his analyses as well.

The question of the essentiality of incarnation is taken up by Irigaray in a holistic manner. But in particular, the issue of whether real being-with-others necessitates their embodied presence is one of the subjects of her essay, "How Can I Touch You If You Are Not There?" (2001, 94-102). In it, she recounts experiencing others through the use of some technological devices, and contrasts this with time spent in person with an other in the woods under the midday sun. What is at stake in this lively anecdote is what it is for two human beings to encounter each other in their own flesh, and contrastingly, what happens to our ability to be with one another through deceptively enticing modes of technological mediation. In the essay appear the fax, the telephone, the radio, the answering machine, and the airplane. Without the bodily presence of another in a place near to me, what is lost, is the possibility for an intersubjective encounter that unfolds in a naturally human time and space. Irigaray comments,

"what we receive through telecommunications often amounts to information which has already been selected, concentrated, focused in time, and is alien to the unfolding of everyday time" (94). And here:

> placing the accent upon information, the language of telecommunications does not favor communication with who[m]ever is watching or listening: there is not, or only in an exceptional manner, a dialogue between the person who sends the message, the one who speaks and the person who receives it, the one who listens to it. The exchange between the two is interrupted. (94)

Her chapter is in part addressed to an other whom she, or one, might encounter, for instance through the television. Though the dialogue, and we can ponder its immediacy, she brings into words the more or less implicit experience of being in the midst of technological mediation. What has led to this point has been a long time in the making. As Irigaray puts it, "Here an entire history must be examined: not only yours and mine, our small misunderstandings and differences, but also that of a culture which for centuries, and still today, does not allow us to be two, as two, with each other" (98). The sometimes subtle, sometimes glaring, intervention of technology into the lives of humans is connected not only to the development of techniques communicating with the another (as Irigaray puts it, "Today, contact means a telephone number, not touching each other through or senses, our skin") (97), but also to a history and tradition of valuing the intellect above all. Through a long series of displacements that occur with every new attempt to accelerate communication, we become accustomed to technological interventions. They mediate by seductiveness the game that can be made of attracting the attention and labor which previously would have been given to one another in appreciation of each other's natural and sensible participation with other living beings that grow by themselves. But what happens just as subtly, and for which we do not calculate a cost, is the numbing of our senses to the

awakening of each other by sensing of one another's flesh, and of the fruits engendered by living nature: when the scintillating of the television replaces the several ways at once of sensing one another's skin. Irigaray comments: "Your presence on television has taken you away from our embraces. What it has added—perhaps?—to the excitement of our senses, is stolen from the alchemy of the between-us. Much time will be necessary to return to it" (95).

Irigaray traces a history of this drift away from the senses, pushed as we are, as if from the outside, away from our tactile contact with the natural world and with one another. "It all began," she writes, "with a culture imposing on us an ideal which is unearthly and alien to our perceptions. Such an ideal separates us, as does an abstract model, in theory valid for both of us but, in fact, impeding our coming into presence with each other" (98). Perhaps, as she suggests, our looking beyond what is present—here and now to us, in our immediate environment to our senses—to the possibility of touching, of feeling, and even sensing in all of our embodied specificity, volume, tangibility, and bloom, is taking us away from our natural belonging. "And have we not," she asks,

> at last, returned love to the beyond? Loving what we could not touch with our hands, see with our eyes, hear with our ears. Desiring what was outside the reach of our senses without bothering to train our perceptions for desire: learning to look, to listen, to touch. The other here present has become an inanimate object, an artificial presence, a cause and an accomplice of decline: a loss of aspirations, ideals, energy. At most we have made an *alter ego* of him. (99)

Irigaray here shows with another in the midst of nature how it is that bodily presence is necessary to what Heidegger, if he had begun examining human existence differently, might think of as authentic being-with. For Heidegger, being-with, and also being-in-the-world happens

first in the mode of inauthenticity. We are with others first as being among a "they." Human being, or more precisely, Dasein, does not normally in the course of daily life experience true or authentic being-with. Usually, according to Heidegger, Dasein is concerned with taking care of all of what comes up in the everyday. Authenticity requires Dasein to step away from or outside the everyday. Is it not the case that technology serves to plunge human beings, or the being-in-the-world of human beings further into everydayness and inauthenticity?

Technology and Being-with

This is a question posed with regard to Heidegger and not Irigaray. For Irigaray, there is not a distinct emphasis on authenticity. But it is interesting that for Heidegger, we also find him making an important critique of technology that could also in certain regards hint at a criticism for his own lack of regard for the body. In Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology," (1993, 307-41) he confronts the question of what had become of humanity in the modern age of technology and techniques (*technē*). In having developed modern technology, especially the techniques of scientific epistemology, the world is rendered to us in terms of a precise quantitative logic that fixes the physical world in terms of a set of laws. Insofar as these laws are systematically derived, modern technology can cause the world—our world—to be revealed to us in an increasingly alien way. The world becomes revealed less and less as a place in which human beings live (dwell) and create things from obvious origins, and more and more as a resource for a certain kind of harnessing: ordered, and always at-the-ready, what Heidegger calls a "standing reserve" (322-41) The techniques associated with modern science, the *technē* of

modern human life gather their own momentum, so much so that they appear to impose themselves on us as if from the outside. They become their own kind of logic, a way of continuously asking of us to increase their reach, and to think in their terms, what Heidegger calls a "challenging forth" (326-41). This challenging forth asks of human life, through human beings, to order the environment epistemically and actually. The river becomes a dammed power source. Challenging forth is gathered by the increase in the technical way of approaching and revealing the world. This manner of harnessing the powers of nature as a resource for a particular scientific *epistemē*, this specific *technē* also becomes a revealing: a revealing of the world in a certain regard as a resource for this scientific vision. The techniques of modern physics and modern technology, the mathematical, engineered and manufactured, alter the way the world is revealed to us, but do so covertly. Increasingly, the world as a natural environment is revealed to us as a resource, a standing reserve, including, and especially, human life. The way modern *technē*, not only reveals the world to us in a certain way, but also elicits from us the increase of the epistemic practices, this "challenging forth" of us, is called by Heidegger, "*Gestell*," or "enframing" (326-41).

The enframing is imposed upon us as if from the outside, and in a way, increases as if by itself. But it originates in humanity. Heidegger writes, "Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged to exploit the energies of nature can this revealing that orders happen. If man is challenged, ordered, to do this, then does not man himself belong even more originally within the standing reserve?" (323). Heidegger speaks of the creeping power of enframing as a danger to humanity, in particular, a danger that can alter the human capacity for knowing the truth, and will come ultimately to cut humanity off from its own nature. As he writes, "The essence of

modern technology starts man upon the way of that revealing through which the actual everywhere, more or less distinctly, becomes standing-reserve" (329). Not only is everything revealed as ordered according to its necessity for being at the ready for exploitation by an essence of technique—scientific and technological—that conspires to order and transform nature, this essence severs the relation between "man" and "himself:" *In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence*. Man stands so decisively in subservience to the challenging-forth of enframing that he does not grasp enframing as a claim, that he fails to see himself as the one spoken to, and hence also fails in every way to hear in what respect he ek-sists, in terms of his essence, in a realm where he is addressed, so that he *can never* encounter only himself. (332)

If it is indeed that the epistemic "worldview" of modern science and technology, acting, having enlisted our total being (with actions belonging to what still appears to be our own will) serves to cut us off from encountering ourselves, what can this mean and what could be the remedy? Is it not the case that what is at stake is our natural being and our natural belonging? If as Heidegger says, "Enframing means the gathering together of the setting upon that sets upon man, i. e., challenges him forth, to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve" (325), is it not the case that this "setting upon" imposes itself only to the extent that we remain in its service enthralled in its power and entranced by this structuring of a "world-view"? Are not its powers of reveling our world and one another to us in a certain way dependent on a certain relation to this "setting upon," to this revealing of nature in a certain way, according to Heidegger?

Heidegger's proposal of an antidote to the power of enframing is for him equally

powerful to another type of *technē*, another mode of bringing forth, of reveling: that of the poetical. But in his questioning of technology, we also see revealed a premise that could have suggested, even as early as his discussion of being-with in *Being and Time*, another path back towards a human being's "encountering only himself." What cuts us off from ourselves in the presence of technology is a revealing/concealing, yes, but it is not only an epistemic one. If the essence of modern technology as *technē* is to revel the world and ourselves as standing reserve, it also, as technology, severs our relations to ourselves and each other. In "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger comes closer to realizing the essential necessity of the body in his refusal to imagine its essential and original nature as a dwelling-in for human life. Had he thought the essential power of the body, in particular of carnality—the embodied and fleshly nature of human existence as such—he might have seen (but this is exactly what he could not see) that the alienation of "man" from himself traces radically back to an alienation from our fleshly being. What a certain epistemic and metaphysical logic has lead Heidegger to miss, is that it is our very natural human bodies that technological enframing prevents us from encountering them as what they are. But he, in ascertaining his solution to this seemingly intractable problem of modern technology's enframing, does not hit upon what could possibly be the simplest and most important one.

What he does not consider is that the power and meaning which have nothing to do with exploiting or harnessing the power of nature, belong most intensely to our natural bodies, within our own natural flesh. Conceiving of our bodily existence as subservient to a technical power acting upon us through our own will but seemingly from the outside, is an effect as much from the god-like enframing we impose on ourselves through the use of modern science, as it is an

effect of the technological mediation we subject ourselves to as a product of this science.

If, as Heidegger says, "[T]he essential unfolding of technology harbors in itself what we least suspect, the possible rise of the saving power" (337), should we not then attend to interventions that have become this technology's presence in the everyday? The answer, moreover, to the gradual shift away from nature through the employing of technology does not lie solely in art, as Heidegger argues, but also in nature, and especially, the natural flesh that we are ourselves. As Irigaray has argued, as in the case of a constructed culture, of which enframing is a part, "Once more the question which must be asked is how we can both distinguish and articulate what comes from a natural origin with its properties on the one hand and what comes from a culture suitable for human beings on the other hand" (2017, 28). Because Heidegger's logic prevents him from considering the body as a bountiful source of communing with our own nature, he is prevented from considering this possibility. He similarly does not consider the beauty and generativity of the vegetal environment within which we could return to a natural belonging and return, moreover, to ourselves and each other. Could it not be this simple—and yet so sublime? As Irigaray writes, "We have located the cause of enchantment beyond the other, outside of him, reducing him to an object of attraction, to a cause of sensation, to a seductive image, to a fascinating representation, without imagining him as a mystery to be examined, contemplated, embraced, and not sought in the beyond" (2001, 99). If we are to find an "ecstasy" from taking care of things in the everyday that is not a flight from the truth of human existence, or from the claim upon our very capacity of conceiving of or returning to ourselves, but a moving toward it, could it not lie in the beauty, the mystery, the tranquility of our own flesh and one another's transcendence? Would not the appropriate setting for the encounter be in nature,

among plants in a wood or a garden? Yet we must also take care not to position the flesh and the body as the next immutable horizon upon which to project our sense of the "beyond" that not only God, but technology has come to represent for us.

Our task, according to Irigaray, is to bring human life back into a living temporality and a living identity that supports a human becoming that allows us to return to our singularity as (individual) human subjects. Irigaray writes, "In reality, we have to open a clearing in a space filled with beings and their interrelations so that light can come into it again and enlighten us on the world to which we are handed over in order that we can interpret and transform it to make it more authentically ours" (2017, 28). This involves not only a reverence for nature and the flesh as flesh, but also a respect for the carnal transcendence of the other, and ourselves, that does not reify the historical tendency to specularize bodies as the beyond of the male imaginary (See Irigaray 1995a; 1995b; 1993a; 1993b). We must also learn to affirm and cultivate sexual difference and subjective individuation in a way that both creates the conditions for differentiation, but that also institutes the framework of sexual difference as a limit that fosters growth. In short, the body needs to become a material and spiritual condition for not only the objective sense of human existence, but also the subjective through cultivating the lived experience of the body as realized through materiality and space within the real sensible embodied relations of humans as material and spiritual beings (See Irigaray 2017, 27).

Mit-sein and Sexual Difference

Heidegger, in his analysis of *Mit-sein* recognizes a crucial point that being with others is essential to the human manner of being. He appreciates the fundamental structure with respect to

human subjectivity, but does he realize the *extent* to which the subjective relation with another is responsible for bringing about the world as such? To what extent does he realize that what brings into being, what occasions bringing into being, is not only the relation between subject and world, but the relation between subject and subject? For Heidegger, being-in, in the sense of Dasein's being-in-the-world, and being-with are "existentially equiprimordial" (2010, 155). The "primordial being of Dasein itself" as "care" can be understood as having "a multiplicity of characteristics being constitutive for it" (128).

In understanding Dasein's "basic constitution" as "being-in-the-world" (127), Heidegger defines this structuring of Dasein's being as "the essential relations of being together with the world (taking care of things), being-with (concern), and being one's self (who)" (127). Dasein is "being-in" not in the sense of "something objectively present 'in' an other" (128); Dasein is "being-in not as an attribute of an objectively present subject effected or even initiated by the objective presence of the 'world;' rather, being-in [is] essentially as the kind of this being itself" (128). Dasein, for Heidegger, is not an objectively present "thing" that finds its place among objectively present things. This is established not only in understanding Dasein as the being-in of being in the world, but also as the being-with of being-with-others. Dasein is not objectively a thing but an unfolding of what has been translated in English as "Being." To more properly explain this being-in, Heidegger elaborates, "But then what else presents itself with this phenomenon [being-in] other than the objectively present *commercium between* an objectively present subject and an objectively present object? This interpretation would come closer to the phenomenal content if it stated that Dasein *is the being* of this 'between.'" (128)

Thus Dasein can be thought of as this "between" of this being-in-the-world, but not as the "between" of an "objectively present subject" and an "objectively present object,"—the being of "being-in" of being-in-the-world itself, or the "between" of subject and world. But, he clarifies,

> Nonetheless, the orientation toward the 'between' would still be misleading. It colludes unawares with the ontologically indefinite approach that there are beings between which this between as such 'is.' The between is already understood as the result of the *convenientia* of two objectively present things. But this kind of approach always already *splits* the phenomenon beforehand, and there is no prospect of ever again putting it back together from the fragments. (128)

Heidegger's aversion in the face of this hypothetical "splitting" of subject and world that would be the result of a misunderstanding of the kind of "between" that Dasein necessarily is, is telling. Heidegger argues his crucial point that the being-in of Dasein and the being-with of Dasein involves relations that are radically specialized as relations pertaining to Dasein. Dasein and Dasein's being-in and being-with are not like any other relations of objects. And, importantly, the "between" of the between of Dasein and the world is unlike any other "between." But Heidegger is unable to see the other crucial "between:" being between subjects. Emma Jones (2012) argues in her article, "The Future of Sexuate Difference: Irigaray, Heidegger, Ontology, and Ethics," the potential misunderstanding of Dasein's being-in as the objective presence of a subject "in" an objectively present world is akin to the misunderstanding that sexuate difference represents an objectively present relation and set of identities rather than an unfolding or an arriving of meaning and differentiation between sexuate subjects, and a dialectical relation of becoming (Jones 2012).

The positing of an objectively present human "existence" in a static relation to an objectively present world, a splitting between world and human being, resembles a common

misunderstanding of the "two" of sexuate difference. The "two" of sexuate difference is often seen as a reification of two supposedly objectively present and supposedly unchangeable identities "man" and "woman" and a between that *splits* the "two" of sexual difference into a mutual exclusivity, a binary pair of opposites or complementaries, destined to reproduce themselves as normative and inflexible identities. The reification that commentators fear parallels the hypothetical reification that would result from an artificial conceptual splitting of being-in into the between of two objectively present "things," analogous to, what for Heidegger, would be "subject" and "world." For Irigaray, what we most importantly should not "split" into two objectively present things are "man" and "woman" (Jones 2012).[1]

But Heidegger does not want to assert or appeal to a being-in-the-world that does not arise from an unfolding of difference. For Heidegger, a way of understanding the difference out of which arises the unfolding of the human to-be ("Being") is "ontological difference" or what is sometimes called the difference between Being and beings: the difference between the objectively present things, "*onta*," and being itself, "*ousia*," or, as it is also understood, the event or arrival of being.

A notable and useful aspect of Heidegger's analysis is the extent to which he thinks of the relation between subject and the world as unfinished, as continually arriving and as a relation that is imbricated in the constitution of human existence itself. Irigaray writes in *To Be Born* (2017):

> Heidegger's thought can supply us with elements to rethink our relation to and with the world, especially when he invites us to re-appropriate the world so that we experience it

[1] See also Jones "Finding/Founding Our Place: Thinking Luce Irigaray's Ontology and Ethics of Sexual Difference as a Relational Limit," in Irigaray 2015, 15-30.

> in a more genuine manner and when he tells us to return to a *phusis* from which our tradition has wandered so far that we forget what it means to be living. (27)

Thus, to put this re-appropriation in terms of Dasein, the subject finds him or herself already caught up in a world where his or her possibilities are to some extent pre-conditioned by the world of being that he or she is/is in. Heidegger's Dasein is neither purely subject nor purely object, but rather consists in being that the subject finds him or herself already "thrown," being already caught up in the world. Dasein, in its universal aspect is "the" singular ontological-existential "attunement" that gives rise to every human existence.

Thus, importantly and crucially for the discussion at hand, Heidegger's Dasein is existentially and phenomenologically neutral when it comes to sex. Both the senses of the being-with that is Dasein and Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as being-in portrays Dasein as neutral or perhaps as Irigaray has put it, "neutralized" with respect to sexual difference (Irigaray 2017, 29). What Heidegger has not countenanced is how one's possibilities, especially one's ontological situation, depends upon sexual difference. If we trace further Heidegger's own logic by which one finds oneself already in a world which does not already conform to our own being, and which in various ways calls to us to conform to it, it becomes apparent that what could characterize the particular sort of being that is being-in-the-world or being-with could also be, or be better understood as the relational being that is sexuate subjectivity. The sexuate nature of the body is important and highly pertinent to the notion that human beings encounter the world through the mediation of the body and perceive the world with their bodies. To deprive subjects of the use of their sexuate bodies to give meaning to the world around them amounts to leaving them abandoned to an impersonal world not conforming to themselves and not of their own

making, and without a natural basis on which to begin to open the world and make it their own (Irigaray 2017, 27-30). Irigaray writes, "To consider a human being to be dependent on a *Dasein* in the neuter, that is asexuate, amounts to abandoning it to a world in which Being—and consequently, our being in such a conception of the world—can only wander, death defining the limit of its horizon" (2017, 29).

Nevertheless, let us think for a moment about the relation between Dasein and sexuate subjectivity. In *To Be Born* (2017), Irigaray writes, "Heidegger speaks about coming into the world of a human being as that of 'a being deprived of itself and handed over by the world' (…), a world that we must re-appropriate in order to make it suitable for ourselves" (27). Being abandoned to the world means living one's own being in accordance with beings which surround us and which constitute the world of the other(s). Heidegger's concept, or ontological construct, of Dasein would seem to provide a helpful framework within which to understand the difficulty a subject could meet with in coming into a world in which its relations in the world are already to some extent constrained, and why this subject could benefit not only from being educated about how the sort of "being" it is exists, but also about how to adapt to the sort of world surrounding it, and to the sort of beings a human subject finds themselves to be with. Irigaray realizes in and through her thought the sexuate nature of the subject's being-in and being-with. The artificial splitting of a "between" that does not sufficiently take into account the fundamentally ontological and therefore non-objective character of being-in or being-with is, in a way, the ontological double of an artificial fusion of man and woman into one Dasein. In reality, the relationality that Heidegger aims to preserve between being-in and being-in-the-world, the relation between what

one might say is interior to a subject, and what is exterior, as Irigaray suggests, primarily arises in the relation of sexual difference.

Heidegger cannot realize fully the understanding of being-with, nor can he complete his analysis of the effects of technology because he is unable to account for the subject's "thrown-ness"—the experience of already being involved in a time and place—with respect to his or her own body. Not only are being-in or being-with matters of world and others, but they are undergone on the basis of embodied being. To ignore or displace this fact is no better than freezing the world, or the "between" of Dasein, into the relation between objectively present subjects and objects. Even worse still would be to mistake the openness of the body, even within the constraints and limits arising from sex, as a form of either dichotomous objective or subjective presence. The sex of a person is much more than a set of bodily characteristics, and the relations between sexed (sexuate) beings, has more to it than mere conceptual or material interactions between anatomical body parts and their functions. In a sense, sex, or sexuation, amounts to a style, a more global understanding of a way of life that is conditioned upon and by, but never determined by belonging to a sex. A sex neither amounts to a stably-defined category, nor a class of people determined by identity in any conventional sense. Sex is, interestingly, as Irigaray argues in *To Be Born* (2017), more like a frame—in a similar sense to the *Gestell* of Heidegger's enframing (Irigaray 2017, 3; Heidegger 1993, 303-341). But this frame gathers and reveals human being and human life on the basis of sex, not *technē*. Were Heidegger to involve an understanding of the body in his analysis of being-in and being-with, or in his understanding of the issues arising and proposing their own answers via *technē* and modern technology, the thought could have occurred that sex already offers some of these answers, as well as elicits

some different questions. Irigaray poses these questions of the child and the possibility of transcending itself, which also apply to the adult:

> Now is this not the meaning of [the child's] explorations? Does it not try to exceed itself towards the world, to transcend itself by opening up to what surrounds it, including to the other? And is it not the structure of its body, especially its sexuation, which supplies to it a frame which allows an access to a transcendental perception of the world and of the other that is capable of corresponding to its desire and of giving sense to its movements? Lacking this, will the sense not be other than a mere restlessness, a need to move without making any contribution to the development of the child, which, at this stage, represents for it the means of transcending itself? (2017, 30)

Even Heidegger's discussions of proximity and nearness ("It is true that the possible 'fulfillment' of the act of touching requires a distinctive nearness of what is touchable" Heidegger 2010, 95) appear to suggest the invocation, or at least the need for a robust understanding of the body as the mediation of the between of subject and world. We can take this one step further, to appreciate that the body, and more specifically, sex, offers the resource of another between: that of the between of the two sexes—which are not "objectively present" reified identities, as Jones (2012) argues. To live such a between, and moreover, to understand it requires us to think through the relation of living subjects to each other and their world—not as objective presences, but nevertheless as fleshly beings. One significant part of this analysis involves the thinking of human existence on the basis of the living relation of fleshly subjects with one another, and of the enfleshed subject with him or herself—with his or her ability to self-affect (See Irigaray 2008c; 2012; 2015; 2017), as Irigaray terms coming into contact with oneself on the basis of one's flesh, embodied possibilities, boundaries, and limits. These relations are accomplished in an embodied way—we live as flesh, and we relate as flesh; we experience ourselves not only as fleshly, but through our flesh. This living requires the actualization of our

relations to ourselves, our world and one another through touching as well as language and thinking. Yet these are related: I come into being myself through making real my own possibilities as they meaningfully relate to me as a fleshly being. My being is not "objectively present," but my my transcending myself, and my means of not only adapting to the world, but adapting the world to me occur as actualizations in flesh: of language, also through and of relations with others, that all participate in tactility.

1.2 To Touch without Possessing: Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas

Sartre

How can we understand the significance of the caress? In the context of the Western philosophical tradition, touch could be seen as unimportant compared to vision, the caress, a matter of "mere" carnality. However, Irigaray thinks that touch and the caress are essential—to humanity and human relations, but also to philosophy. How can we understand the significance she places on touch and the carnal relation between two subjects? And how can we understand the reasons that Western philosophy has rejected or ignored the importance not only of touch, but of loving relations between two subjects? In order to answer these questions, we can turn to Irigaray's essay appearing in *To Be Two* ([1994] 2001), entitled "The Wedding Between the Body and Language" (17-29; also in Irigaray 2004, 13-22). In this essay, Irigaray comments upon three male philosophers who, in the twentieth century, have attempted to think about the caress. Irigaray shows with each one, not only how each has exposed an important facet of the carnal relation between two subjects, but also how each has encountered a limit within their own ability

to completely think through not only the nature of the caress, but also its status as being of the one of the most important undertakings of humanity, and in each human life.

This limitation is due, she observes, not only to a tendency in the Western philosophical tradition of being unwilling to or incapable of understanding the role of perception , but also manifests in the outlooks of philosophers themselves (Irigaray 2001, 17-25). Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas, have in certain ways, a notably masculine way of understanding carnal relations, erotic desire, and matters of perception (Irigaray 2001, 17-25). For example, for Sartre, the body and consciousness are radically separate. In terms of lovers, the male lover, in particular, desires to "touch the other's free subjectivity" (Irigaray 2001, 18; quoting Sartre 1956). Irigaray explains that for Sartre, the only way to enter into a carnal relation with any other —for him, comprised by the conscious being of the other that is in-itself for-itself—is to "enchant the other, making his consciousness descend into his body (…) paralyzing his liberty in the factuality of a body" (Irigaray 2001, 18). This position allows Sartre to think only of the other as a purely conscious, immaterial freedom in conflict with the body. What prevents Sartre from thinking of carnal love as a free and even liberating relation between two subjects is his particular view of transcendence. Sartre views transcendence as consciousness's radical transcendence with respect to the body. The transcendence of the other exists precisely in its pure transcendence of the other's body itself. In other words, it is a radically dis-embodied transcendence as pure consciousness.

What Irigaray proposes it that there is instead a transcendence, not of the body by consciousness, but a transcendence that consists in a transcendence with respect to the other, especially the other of sexual difference. This amounts, in the case of lovers, to a horizontal

transcendence between the two with respect to one another. For Irigaray, there is privileging the relation between subjects as the horizon of transcendence. On the other hand, for Sartre, subjects are perpetually at odds with one another and with their own existential situation given the radical objectivity of the body, and the inability to meet the other through the body, and as anything other than pure immaterial subjectivity. For Sartre we desire the body "only on the ground of the presence of the whole body as an organic totality"(1956, 385). Nevertheless, for him, we ultimately desire the other's consciousness and can but come into contact with the other's consciousness in order to descend into our own body as a lover (384-5). Our consciousness, moreover, is in Sartre's view so trapped in our bodies in the act of love, our freedom is paralyzed (382-7).

Sartre views consciousness and the body as two total, distinct beings in perpetual conflict. The other(s), too, therefore become a source of conflict. For Sartre, when I encounter any other, in order to be in relation with him or her, generally, I put at risk either my or their own freedom. In Sartre's analysis, my only chance to escape such a risk is to found my freedom on another's freedom. But even this proves elusive because of the antagonism between the body and consciousness (385). As soon as I have succeeded in touching the other's conscious being I have either transformed this into an object or instrument to serve my desire, or I have sacrificed my own freedom by transforming myself into an object for their desire (385).

The conflict that Sartre analyses is predicated on his view of consciousness and the body as being separate spheres at odds with one another. It is no wonder that such a conflict would present an insurmountable difficulty for two subjects to come together in a mutually enjoyable or beneficial carnal relation. For Sartre, encountering another, especially through touching, and

even to caress an other, amounts to an act of possession. Sartre is aware that we should not "want" explicitly to possess the other (340-400). However, given his analysis of each one's freedom being contingent on their consciousness's dis-identification and transcendence to the body, it is not surprising that Sartre cannot imagine an encounter that engages the subject as a specifically fleshly being without possession. Sartre writes, "Shall we say that desire is the desire of a body?" (1956, 385). It is the body that we desire, but this desiring is thwarted by the insufficiency of the body to convey the consciousness of the other, and for the lover to preserve his conscious transcendence when "he" attempts to be in bodily relation to the other.

Irigaray's thinking of the subject as carnal and sexuate is an absolute contrast to Sartre's view of the subject as necessarily and radically disincarnate. Sartre's model for the encounter with the other depends on the structure of objectification as is elaborated, for instance in his famous analysis in "The Look" (1956, 340-400), in other words, on the capacity to "objectify" or possess or be "objectified" by another. For Sartre, we try to be with the other, but above all see a person's body as an object. When the other fixes us with his gaze, we then become trapped in our own body as object. A similar process takes place in Sartre's view, with touch. We try to touch the other, but are obstructed, in various ways failing ultimately to be able to be in contact with the other-as-themselves. Yet, in Irigaray's view, this conflict is only imaginary, since the flesh for her is neither pure object nor pure consciousness. To touch the other, for Irigaray, is the very essence of contact with the other's subjectivity. This is the case because for her, the subject is essentially carnal, thus the conflict between the materiality of the body versus the immateriality of consciousness that arises for Sartre is, as she argues, a fundamentally artificial one brought about by Sartre's participation in and reproduction of metaphysical prejudices that assign

consciousness to a radically immaterial status. It is the case for her that touch is not exclusively physical; it involves all levels of human contact, including language. Crucially, however, physical contact with others, for Irigaray, as opposed to for Sartre, is not to possess them, or to fix them as an objects for us. Physical touch may and should reveal them as in some regard as beyond our reach, as radically transcendent, but intimately so. Whereas the body in Sartre's view can be pure object, for Irigaray, the flesh combines the objectivity of the body as materially sexuate along with our co-arising carnal subjectivity. She writes of Sartre, "This male philosopher represents the impossible ideal of desire in the following way: the transcendence of the other is to be possessed as pure transcendence inaccessible to sensible experience, but nevertheless as a body" (2001, 18). The alternative Irigaray presents is that a human subject's transcendence is not tied to the radical separation between a transcended body and a transcending consciousness, but rather arises in a relation to one's natural identity as a sexed (sexuate) subjectivity. Furthermore, one's identity as a carnal subject is grounded in the aspects of one's natural being, thus is both material, concrete, and subjective at the same time, since she sees subjectivity as part of the concretely natural living being.

In this sense, when I sense or touch the other's body, I truly am in contact with their subjectivity. Thus carnal love is not only possible for Irigaray, but is itself a mode of being incarnated for both subjects. It is an encounter between two subjects grounded in their real desire for touching each other's flesh—not as Sartre would have it, grasping for an other's immaterial conscious subjectivity.

In Sartre's case, the male lover aims to take possession of the female beloved, in part, as Irigaray comments, because of the specific relation between the mind and body elaborated within

Sartre's work. For Sartre, consciousness, inevitably seeks to dominate the body. The relation is comparable to that between the master and the slave, for instance, as discussed in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* ([1807] 1977), in which the mind dominates the body. This relation is multiplied in the relation between the lover and the beloved, since the lover, in attempting to possess the beloved must seek to captivate the mind of the beloved, but nevertheless finds the only route to the beloved to be through the body, though caressing the other. This presents a conflict for the lover insofar as he or she must approach the beloved through the body, but, as Sartre insists, the truth of each's transcendence lies in the mind. Thus there is a double possession involved, the lover possessing the beloved through their body and the mind of each possessing their own body. For Sartre, says Irigaray, in making the other's consciousness "descend" into their body "in such a way that the for-itself of the other can surface in his skin, his consciousness can extend itself throughout the entire surface of his body so that touching this body 'I (…) finally touch the other's free subjectivity.'" (Irigaray 2001, 18; Irigaray quoting Sartre 1956, 394). To possess the other in this way is the aim of erotic desire in Sartre's view, but this male desire, as Irigaray puts it, represents "an impossible ideal of desire" (2001,18). She writes,

> Thus I can 'possess' the other and, according to Sartre, the fulfillment of desire does not exist without such possession: the fact that the other is already a body possessed of a consciousness determines the desire to possess it. This male philosopher represents the impossible ideal of desire in the following way: the transcendence of the other is to be possessed as pure transcendence inaccessible to sensible experience, but nevertheless as body (18)

Indeed for Sartre, it is not only the transcendence of the other's consciousness and its inaccessibility to the lover's touch that involve the impossibility of the fulfilling of desire, but, as

Irigaray points out, his view of the fact of desiring the body as a mere "facticity, a fact a present objective reality, which is beside me" (17). The body, for Sartre is an object to be possessed, or contended with as the enemy of consciousness, an obstacle to my own transcendence, my own freedom, and as a barrier between me and the other. Irigaray turns the standard view of the body on its head, valorizing the materialization of the subject itself as carnal and fleshly. This is not to say that she identifies the body with consciousness, but that subjectivity is a synthesis of material and spiritual aspects of the flesh.

Merleau-Ponty

Thinking of the body of the other as a "fact, a present objective reality," is also found in some of Merleau-Ponty's writings, for instance in his discussion of the "The Body in Its Sexual Being" (178-201) in *The Phenomenology of Perception* ([1945] 2002). He writes, "Shame and immodesty, then take their place in a dialectic of the self and the other which is that of master and slave: insofar as I have a body, I may be reduced to the status of an object beneath the gaze of another person, and no longer count as a person for him [them][2] or else I may become his [their] master, and in turn, look at him [them]" (Merleau-Ponty [1945] [1962] 2002, 193, quoted by Irigaray 2001, 20). Merleau-Ponty thinks of sexuality as a manifestation of the ambiguity that, according to him, characterizes human existence as a whole, and prevents in his view, a clear determination and limit to be placed on any thing, any person, or any meaning.

Irigaray addresses the two obstacles met by the masculine philosophers: that of the subject being a pure mind seeking to dominate the body of the other as a master seeks to

[2] In this passage, the use of "him" in the translation of Merleau-Ponty is confusing. Thus substituting "them" is suggested when reading the passage.

dominate a slave, and that sexuality mired in ambiguity does not allow it to enter into an intersubjective relation. First she notes, "insofar as I belong to a gender, my body already represents an objectivity for me" (2001, 21). She continues, "Therefore, I am not a simple subjectivity which seeks an object in the other. Belonging to a gender allows me to realize, in me, for me—and equally towards the other—a dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity which escapes the dichotomy between subject and object" (21). Thus, in belonging to a gender, I already am an objectivity for myself: an objectivity that is an instance of a universal, my gender. Belonging to a universal without needing to dominate the other, one is thus able to encounter another subject in a horizontal relation, without seeking to dominate them as an object or reducing themselves to an object.

As far as the difficulty Merleau-Ponty imagines in the sexual relation concerns sexuality's being immersed in ambiguity and indeterminacy to the world as well as to the other subject(s), Irigaray's response involves the subject's relation to his or her senses. Merleau-Ponty thinks that sexuality can be "co-extensive with life" as "an ambiguous atmosphere" in which "everything we live or think always has several meanings," (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 193; quoted by Irigaray 2001, 20) including any relation, sexual or otherwise, with an other. In Irigaray's view, this presents a problem for the emergence of subjectivity and intersubjectivity because it "maintains a duplicity in subjectivity itself in such a way that all of its actions, its sentiments, its sensations are ambiguous, murky, and incapable of being turned towards an other as such" (21). Her analysis of Merleau-Ponty's inattention to intersubjectivity, particularly in reference to his phenomenology of sexuality, is that he forgets "the function of sexuality as a relationship-to" and overlooks "the role of perception as a means of acceding to the other as other" (22).

But the inability for Merleau-Ponty and Sartre to conceive of the sexual relation as a horizontal relation between two subjects may also lie in male philosophers' tendency in the Western tradition to confuse their thinking of touch—and what touch!—with qualities of vision. As Irigaray writes, "Thus, like their hand, their gaze grasps, denudes and captures." What they are missing is that "the transcendence of the other (…) requires that the invisible in [them] be respected, including when [he or she] is perceived with senses." Moreover, "male thinkers dodge this irreducible invisible, choosing not to appeal to language as a path towards sharing the mystery of the other" (20).

This tendency to attribute qualities of vision to touch is not extraneous to an inability to or an unwillingness to conceive of an other subjectivity different from that of the exclusively male. In Merleau-Ponty's case, his way of meeting the world is such that he approaches perception alone, as a single subjectivity. It operates inside a relatively predetermined logos, encountering the world from a self-enclosed subjective totality, in his own words, in an "ambiguous" or "indeterminate" manner, but without any limit in relating to another horizon. As Irigaray in the interview with Helen Fielding, "The Invisible Interlacing between Fleshes," (2008a) "It seems to me that the chiasm to which Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers takes place between him and himself. It ensures the continuity between the inside and the outside of the subject. It corresponds to the link between an outward and an inward movement that exists thanks to the world taken as a medium or a sort of mediation between self and self" (Irigaray and Fielding 2008a, 111). Merleau-Ponty seeks to reach, perhaps as a way of mastering something relating to a "prenatal sojourn" (Irigaray 1993a, 156; See 152-5). Irigaray suggests that he is referring to a sort of "carnal look, which becomes that which gives perspective to 'things:'

shelters them, gives birth to them, wraps them in the touch of a visibility that is one with them" and, moreover, "keeps them from ever being naked, envelops them in a conjunctive tissue of visibility, an exterior-interior horizon in which, henceforth, they appear without being able to be distinguished, separated or torn away from it" (1993a, 153-4).

In the following quotation, Merleau-Ponty alludes to a "talisman of color," which "imposes my vision upon me" (quoted by Irigaray in her *Ethics of Sexual Difference* from *The Visible and the Invisible* by Merleau-Ponty). Irigaray writes of his remarks: "Color? That by which I (male or female) am moreover affronted as if by a genealogical hermitage that I cannot change (. . .) That it pours itself out, extends itself, escapes, imposes itself upon me as the remainder of what is most archaic in me, the *fluid*" (1993a, 155-6). Color would recall to the subject something of the invisible present within and intertwined within the visible. When one encounters a landscape painting, for instance, the differences between the various forms involved including the mountain, say, but also the differences between the painter and the viewer, come into play. To think of the painting as a reproduction is to deny the real exchanges that take place among those living and sharing their worlds with one another. Irigaray suggests that the freezing of the visible into a mirror image (See 1985a, 133-240) could be an unconscious denial of the invisible on the part of the male philosophers, to further seal themselves in a protective "tissue" that melds seer and seen, toucher and touched in an effort to isolate themselves from an other who they cannot master or fix with their gaze or language. This very difference in perspective could open one's perception to meeting with an other. Yet the meeting between two fleshes remains invisible. Irigaray writes, "Certainly, some allusions to color could suggest something beyond any form or word (…) His attempt to interlace eyes and touch amounts to an endeavor to

submit touch to eyes by seeking how to make touching visible. What color could have a touching between two fleshes? Is not such a touching invisible when it happens?" (2008a, 116).

Touch, like the meeting between one and the other involves two separate beings whose worlds and flesh come into contact, not just their bodies, and certainly not just in a chiasmic relation between myself and an ambiguous world-flesh which cannot perceive the delimitations between beings living together in the world, or between myself and another subjectivity, another human life. Though Merleau-Ponty offers a stimulating discourse on flesh, Irigaray notes, "you could observe that Maurice Merleau-Ponty's aim, conscious or not, is to interlace touch and vision in order to enclose himself in a world of his own" (116).

We note here, even in Merleau-Ponty's later text, *The Visible and the Invisible* ([1964] 1968), about which Irigaray's above comments are made, a similar tendency to the one made explicit in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, to view the carnal relations with an other as being governed by a relation similar to that of the master-slave. Interestingly, this echoes a tendency in Sartre's analysis discussed above that pits the mental against the material in an unequal struggle, privileging "consciousness" against "materiality." Without being able to be open to the actuality of another subjectivity—alternatively, a maternal other, or a sexually different other, in the sexual relation, or more globally, Merleau-Ponty is at a loss to think the carnal relation of one subjectivity to another in the form of an intersubjective meeting of one flesh to another. Irigaray writes,

> Even when he talks about flesh, Maurice Merleau-Ponty converts the real of the flesh into a metaphysical reality, at least partly, because what happens in touching between two different living fleshes seems strange to his perception. But what is touch outside the overflowing contact between two fleshes? Our tradition apprehends with difficulty such a phenomenon because it escapes our

> eyes, even if touch itself takes part in our capacity for seeing. But Western philosophers, even phenomenologists, do not care very much about that. Maurice Merleau-Ponty himself talks about carnal love as a sort of master-slave struggle regarding the domination of the nakedness of the other through our eyes. (2008, 116)

The analyses Irigaray presents of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty demonstrate the extent of the tendency to think in terms of a dichotomous separation between "transcendental" mind and "purely objective" body even among phenomenological and existential philosophers who emphasize touch and thematize perception as well as, in certain cases, intersubjective relations. Merleau-Ponty, who employs an opposing, but mirroring approach in his later work, demonstrates a tendency theorize an ambiguous relation between subject and world such that the subject's encounters with the world and with others become an extension of his own perceptual horizon, not a genuine encounter with difference.

Levinas

In Irigaray's chapter in *To Be Two*, "The Wedding Between the Body and Language" (2001), Levinas is the third male philosopher examined. Irigaray addresses parts of his book, *Totality and Infinity* ([1962] 2013), in particular the chapter entitled, "Phenomenology of Eros" (256-266). Here she responds to Levinas' discussion of the caress and describes her own philosophy of the caress as a "gesture-word" (2001, 26). Later in *To Be Two* (2001), in a chapter called " A Mystery which Illuminates," (103-112) she comments on Levinas' thought on ethics and truth and their relation to sexual difference. Irigaray's chapter, "The Fecundity of the Caress" in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* is a meditation of the possibility of erotic relations between

sexually different lovers in the "Phenomenology of Eros" in *Totality and Infinity*. Her article, "What Other Are We Talking About?" in *Yale French Studies* (2004) addresses Levinas' work, *Time and the Other*, a series of lectures he gave in 1946 and 1947.

In the essay "The Wedding Between the Body and Language," Irigaray (2001) notes that Levinas has a similarly masculine conception of the relation between the mind and the flesh as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. As Irigaray puts it, Levinas thinks of the caress as encountering "an equivocation between the body's materiality and a more or less aroused consciousness" (2001, 28). Similarly for Sartre, Levinas takes this other as reinforcing or as a reflection of the (in this case male) subject. The other, for Levinas, appears alternately as the face of God, as a feminine that is a reflection of the (male) subject's own "animality" or "infancy," as a category of "alterity," or as a son (Irigaray 2001, 17-29; Levinas 2013). It is not apparently considered by Levinas that the other could be an other subjectivity, equivalently real, and radically different from one's own, as in the case of a sexually different other. Nor does he consider that the other could be (in this case, also a sexually different) maternal other. It must be emphasized that Levinas does not conceive of his "Other"[3] as a carnally embodied other subject dwelling in their own world, capable of their own desire.

When Levinas speaks of a feminine other in his discourse on eros, he is describing a feminine which only amounts to another version of the subject himself (as Irigaray and other commentators have noted), aspects of himself that he either wishes to repudiate or rediscover (See Irigaray 2001, 24-5; Chanter 2001). There is thus no difference preserved between the subject and his double, no place for any genuine other to occupy and from which to meet the

[3] Levinas generally refers to the "Other" with a capital "O" denoting its verticality. Irigaray, contrastingly prefers a lower-case "o" to signal the horizontality between the subject and the other. See Irigaray 2001.

subject. In fact, as Irigaray points out, Levinas himself seems to observe, this, his Other, is not any other at all (2004d, 78-79). Even the "mystery" that Levinas attributes to his "Other" is, as Irigaray says, "still from the point of view of the masculine universe" (2004d, 76). She continues, "What is missing here is this: the feminine is a 'mystery' for me (man), as and otherwise than I am a mystery for the feminine if I exist or am what I am. Each sex or gender is a mystery for the other provided this other is not imprisoned in a category of one's own logic—alterity for example." (2004d, 76) Thus Levinas' phenomenology of the Other is fundamentally different from Irigaray's thinking of the other as a concrete human sexuate subject.

Levinas invokes the feminine as a characteristic of the other: "the absolute contrary contrary (…), the contrariety that permits its term to remain absolutely other, is the feminine" (Irigaray 2004d, 71; quoting Levinas 1987, 85). Thus it could appear that Levinas has in mind the other as a sexuate subjectivity, absolutely different from his own. However, this way of defining the other has more to do with Levinas' own identification as a male subject and thinking of his abstraction of "the feminine"—not a female subject—as its opposite. As Irigaray puts it: "This way of defining it bears witness to the masculine egocentrism of the culture in which such a statement is expressed. If the feminine is other for the masculine subject, the masculine is, or should be, also an other for the feminine subject" (2004d, 71).

Levinas attributes qualities supposedly "essential" to femininity to the "Other." For instance, he says of the other that it "hides from the light" (Irigaray 2004d, 71; Levinas 1987, 87) and that, "hiding from the light is the way of the feminine" (Irigaray 2004d, 71). However, we might suspect that these only appear to Levinas to be attributes of the feminine because of his position as a male subject in a male-centric and male-dominated subjective economy. The

feminine (and even more so, woman), is not essentially an alterity. It only appears that way from a radially male-centric point of view. If, as Levinas says, the other "hides from the light" (2004d, 71), it is not essentially an attribute of the other as such, but only appears that way in so far as Levinas imagines that alterity itself is an attribute of femininity and not a function of the difference between himself as a man, and the feminine other as a woman. Rather the other's alterity is not essential to the feminine, but, as Irigaray observes, is natural to a pre-existing difference wherein alterity is concretely manifest as the difference *between* a man and a woman, for instance, and between any two who each differ from the other. This is distinctly different from the idea Levinas developed as a conceptual relation of alterity in his thought: as one essentially differing from the other in a one-way relation—as woman essentially differing from man—as his "other," but he not as hers. Other characteristics of Levinas' "Other" that appear to be essential in his conceptual economy, such as the feminine other "hiding from the light" occur as a function of his male-centric conception of alterity, and belong to it only as a corollary within this arrangement placing man at the center. As Irigaray writes, it is not "in itself that the other remains invisible. It is invisible for me insofar as I cannot perceive the world in which it stands, or lives" (2004d, 73). For instance, in Levinas' case, the feminine other is imagined to be outside the subject's world, a world exclusively belonging to the masculine, and therefore appears, so-to-speak, to "hide from the light," the light which is characteristic of the domain of the masculine.

It is in the context of Levinas' relegation of the other to an altogether logical, abstract sense of being other, and the feminine to a mere genre of relativity to a predefined masculine subject that Levinas consistently criticizes the caress as an erotic debasement of the subject. If the feminine other is a not a genuine partner, and his Other for the most part functions as an

alterity primarily on a conceptual, and not material level, Levinas' Other could not within his understanding be a carnal companion. Levinas' Other's materiality is a hindrance to the relation between the subject and other because, for Levinas, the highest possible relation between the one and the "Other" is transcendental. We can understand this aspect of his project also in relation to his subsequent discussions of the Other in *Totality and Infinity* ([1969] 2013), and also, again, differently in *Otherwise than Being* ([1974] 1988). A great deal more could be discussed in regard to Levinas' work on the Other and how it fits in to the metaphysical tradition that centers the masculine subject, and how it imagines the feminine as essentially an alterity that either serves or subverts masculine subjectivity. Crucially the convergence of femininity with a "dangerous" (feminine) eroticism and materiality is largely consistent with a metaphysical tradition that repudiates the feminine. A project of recovery that investigates alternatives to this paradigm ought to immediately pinpoint the bias against not only the feminine but the philosophical implications of this orientation as well.

One question that may be posed regarding Levinas' metaphysics of transcendence is whether his Other is genuinely other to the subject, or if it lacks robust and genuine alterity. Fundamentally, Levinas seems to address an interchangeable other. As Irigaray writes, "To say that it is a question of a 'category'—'alterity'—and not of this—in particular this feminine—other present here next to me amounts to integrating this other into one's own world" (2004d, 77). She argues thus that Levinas' Other, in being integrated into the subject's own world amounts to leaving the other without a world of his or her own. If the feminine is a "category" of alterity, then she is not singular, and exists only as a foil or contrast to the masculine—not as a self-standing autonomous transcendence of her own.

The relevance of this theoretical situation for the question of touch lies in Levinas' rejection of materiality and his attendant emphasis on preternaturally abstract transcendence, as well as a relation to the other that must not be mediated by eroticism or fecundity, which could confuse or contaminate the other's transcendence. In contrast, Irigaray invites her readers to view physicality, materiality and eroticism as central to the possibility of a genuinely dialogical and non-hierarchical meeting between two radically different others. Rather than being an obstacle to be overcome, physical touching, the physical body, and the carnality of the flesh as a material and spiritual manifestation of subjectivity are necessary to relating to the other, and importantly to protecting and revering the other's transcendence (Irigaray 2004d, 2001, 1993a).

For Irigaray, transcendence does not imply a radically vertical relation between subjects. She offers the provocative and challenging position that transcendence can and must be cultivated in, primarily, a horizontal relation between autonomous subjects. This is one possible articulation of her concept of the sensible transcendental in which the material and transcendental levels of human existence occur not just concurrently, but are integrated in a unity, a whole. In order to conceive of a relation between two subjects, the various levels of existence, material and immaterial come into play as a synthesis, culminating not just in the linguistic, abstract, or symbolic meeting of two "immaterial subjectivities." They rather must meet in the concrete singularity of *this here* relation between two singular subjects, who, among other means of relating, relate through physical touch. The (potential) material presence and proximity of the other is essential to not only the possibility of my meeting—here and now—with him or her, but also to the mediating role of touch which affords the meeting of two different subjects, provides the context for their concrete differentiation from each other, and

maintains their individuation and identity within their relation.

In order for subjects who meet genuinely to meet one another in difference and to preserve their difference, their subjective identities must be materialized as carnal embodiments. Contrary to the fear that materiality anonymizes the subject by turning "him" into a "mere" carnality (a fear derived, probably, from a fear of the feminine), the materiality of the body preserves the singularity of the subject. The subject is instantiated as a concrete particularity for which there can be no substitute. Rather, obstructing the immediacy of the encounter of the "pure" subject with the other's "pure alterity," the materiality of the body is, itself, the mediation of the subjective encounter. Eros, relatedly, can provide both the mediation and the immediacy of an intimate encounter with an other (Irigaray 1989). Eros supports the various mediations taking place in the ethical encounter by continuously circulating and modulating them through sensitivity and communication. Its role does not undermine them as Levinas fears.

The other in Levinas' philosophy is intended to be a figure of the ethical, and as Irigaray argues in her chapter, "A Mystery which Illuminates," (2001), and also a figure of truth. But without understanding how to open up one's own subjective world to another radically different subjective universe, to meet the other in their alterity but also in their subjectivity, what is lacking for his subject is the ability to be in their own place, to have their own transcendence. In Levinas' discussion of eros, although he is concerned "to avoid 'fusion' or 'possession,'" as Irigaray points out (2004d, 78), in so doing he avoids being *with* the other. The result is an inability not only of conceiving of an other truly distinct from the One, in fact a projection, but also of being able to actually reach out to the other in being with them. This is made clear in his discussion of the caress, as Irigaray quotes him: "what is caressed is not touched properly

speaking" (Levinas, 1987, 89; Irigaray 2004d, 77). Even though Levinas' concern is to avoid fusion or possession in eros, Irigaray writes, "the use that he makes of the other, including in the caress, seems to be a very subtle, I would say spiritual, even transcendental, appropriation of the other" (2004d, 78).

The sublimity that Levinas aims at in *Time and the Other*, and as well in "Phenomenology of Eros," Irigaray says is "not as sublime as it seems" (2004d, 79). This is because for Levinas' subject to reach his sublime aspirations he must subsist in a closed moral universe. While Levinas' subject yearns for the openness of a future, to "new perspectives on to the ungraspable" (Irigaray 2004d, 79; quoting Levinas 1987, 89), his subject remains enclosed within itself. The other remains other in the service of the subject. Irigaray writes that in order to support the ascendence of the masculine One, the "caress can bring back the other, woman, to 'childhood' or 'animality'—therefore outside of human space-time—while man will have used it in order to continue his search for transcendence be it philosophical or religious" (Irigaray 2004d,79). Thus, as promising as it sounds that Levinas proposes that the other is *feminine* because it suggests that he might be beginning to recognize the existence of a sexually different other, he falls back into the tradition of the singular male subjectivity that has characterized the Western tradition in his portrayal of the feminine other. Furthermore, his subject is terribly patriarchal in that it conceives of the other as "the weak, the poor, 'the widow and the orphan'" (Irigaray 2004d, 70; quoting Levinas 1987, 83). A problem with thinking of the other as destitute is that the subject is then cast as savior and subtly employs the other in a project of the subject's own spiritual aspirations.

What is lacking is a genuine and horizontally organized relation with another subjectivity,

who is capable of transcendence without enslaving the other and the other's desire for their own use. In fact, what is missing is the sublimity that belongs to eros, a sublimity that lies, as put by Irigaray, in a "between-two" (2004d, 70, 79, 81). Rather than taking part in a strictly vertical relation with the other, Irigaray argues that to keep a temporal horizon open from which a novel future might unfold, we must construct a passage to the other that respects him or her in a horizontal relation between us. Our vertical relation to a transcendental consists not of a relation with a sublime or destitute other, but rather a vertical transcendental relation with the frame of our particular sexuate identity. A relation with with an other organized horizontally and qualitatively does not depend on the use or deprecation of an other to something less-than-human (animal or child) or to a vertical transcendence, such as a god. As she suggests in "The Wedding Between the Body and Language," (2001, 17-29), a subjectivity should only be in a vertical relation with his or her own sexuate identity. The objective relation with a sexuate identity provides a transcendental frame for the subject, and thus the subject does not need to look toward the other to provide a transcendental framework and boundary. The subject does not depend on the other for their own identity and limits. The other is allowed to remain, and not be banished from, his or her own world, and to remain within his or her own time, properly belonging to his or her own subjective becoming, while also preserving the possibility of communication and the being-with of two radically different subjects.

"The Fecundity of the Caress"[4]

In the chapter, "The Fecundity of the Caress" in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993a, 185-217) Irigaray explains the pathology of thinking of woman as an object of desire and its implications for a philosophy of transcendence. She begins this investigation from an interrogation of the phenomenology of the subject and the other in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* ([1961] 1991). The term "fecundity" occurs in a section of *Totality and Infinity* called "Beyond the Face," (254-307) within which Levinas addresses the subject and the relation to the other in Eros. In this chapter, Irigaray explores what the caress is for the subject if, as in Levinas' philosophy, the other is perpetually in a vertical relation to the subject: either at the greatest height, as when the subject is conceived of as a manifestation in God's image, or when the other appears as a woman, as a beloved, whose return to childhood or animality reduces them to a subordinate position with respect to the (male) subject, and secures the initial subject's vertical ascent to divinity. In "The Fecundity of the Caress," (1993a) Irigaray traces a distinction between the man-lover and woman-beloved of Levinas' text on Eros, and the alternative possibility of a horizontal relation of the male lover with an other, radically different subjectivity, the female lover. In Levinas' text, the female beloved remains a passive territory within which the active male lover seeks his own access to divinity and future possibilities. The female beloved is banished from place: as Irigaray writes, the male lover uproots the "female lover from her fundamental habitat" (1993a, 195). In contrast, according to Irigaray, the female lover is not the

[4] Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 185-217.

subordinate in a vertical pairing, but the transcendent other in a horizontal coupling in which the two relate to one another as qualitatively different, yet nevertheless as partners.

When eros is conceived of as a vertical relation in a male-centric conception of the subject-other relation, the thinking of the erotic relation achieves neither the sublimity to which it aspires nor the actuality of a relation from autonomous subject to autonomous subject. When the other, and in this case, an erotic other, is conceived exclusively as a *beloved woman*, she is denied the agency of a subject capable of her own desire. As Irigaray writes, "When the male lover loses himself in the depths of the beloved woman's sensual pleasure, he dwells within her as in an abyss, an unfathomable depth. Both of them are lost, each in the other, on the wrong side, or the other side, of transcendence" (1993a, 194). The male lover, in his searching in abyssal depths, or ascending higher, fails to meet the touch of any genuine lover: "The beloved woman falls back into infancy or beyond, while the male lover rises up to the greatest heights. Impossible match. Chain of links connecting, from one end to the other, a movement of ascent in which neither is wed, except in the inversion the their reflections" (194).

A caress, on the other hand, between two lovers, not a lover and a beloved, engenders true reciprocity, a sharing between lovers of two worlds that mutually, as Irigaray says, "fertilize" (See Irigaray 2017, 22, 95-6) one another to allow each to grow, and to form something new both, together, and separately. This kind of sharing is difficult because it requires of each the willingness to embark on what can sometimes be a difficult passage between subjects that are radically different and transcendent to one another.

1.3 Some Necessary Considerations for Intersubjectivity: The Carnal Chiasm

The chiasm that Merleau-Ponty describes is a crossing or an interlacing between flesh and flesh. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, "The Intertwining—the Chiasm" ([1964] 1968, 130-155), Merleau-Ponty describes the phenomenon of vision as an enfleshed relation between the seeing and the seen, the touching and the touched, that resembles the interleaving of two hands which not only touch one another, but perceive or sense one another as belonging to a single flesh. For Merleau-Ponty, the things in the world comprise an extended world-flesh that is part of a relation between what is doing the seeing and what is being seen. Moreover, the subject perceives the world in the moment that the "two leaves" (1968, 137) of the body organize themselves into touching and touched when, for instance, one hand touches the other. Similarly, the seeing and the seen are arranged as if to be flesh upon flesh. The body, for Merleau-Ponty here "belongs to the order of the things as the world is universal flesh," which he terms: "Visibility sometimes wandering and sometimes reassembled" (137-138).

Because Merleau-Ponty thinks of the world and the subject as organized into the same totality, all vision and touch is an interacting of the subject with itself such that the world is thought by him to take on qualities of flesh as flesh, not metaphorically, but actually. Meaning, arises in the intertwining of the flesh "of the world," that is, in this sense, also by the intertwining of the flesh of the subject and the world, or the flesh of the subject and subject, in that they are the same. This equivalence between subject and world, between flesh and things is, according to Merleau-Ponty, a form of "reversibility" (142) between subject and world, between flesh, and another side of the same flesh. The chiasm, for Merleau-Ponty consists in an interleaving

between the seer and the seen, between the sensible and the sentient. But Merleau-Ponty is careful to point out that the leaves of flesh make meaning "appear" in their relations and interaction with one another, "this magical relation, this pact between them and me" (146).

There is a moment within his text when the possibility of another person within the system of visibility and invisibility intervenes. When this other is made present to me, according to Merleau-Ponty, I am made aware of myself and my relation to the world in a new way, among them what Merleau-Ponty terms "the reversibility of the visible and the tangible" (142-3). What is also made to appear in the interaction with an other person is the "fundamental fission or segregation of the sentient and the sensible which, laterally, makes the organs of my body communicate and founds transitivity from one body to another" (143).

Some of these realizations play a role in "my" being able to be conscious of the character of thinking, of the ideas behind or interior to the things in the world, that "I" am the "central vision that joins the scattered visions (…) that [I am the] *I think* that must be able to accompany all our experiences" (145). But this intervention by the other leaves the subject, if we are to follow Merleau-Ponty, with little experience of the other. One is left, rather, with an experience of oneself as "completely turned inside out under my own eyes" (145), and "my movements no longer proceed unto the things to be seen, to be touched or unto my own body occupied in seeing and touching them, but they address themselves to the body in general and for itself" (143). Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the "flesh we are speaking of is not matter," but the "coiling over of the visible on the seeing body" (146). The sensible/sentient flesh could be anything: somebody, or the world of things in its reversibility and its transitivity. The flesh is not matter but rather within it resides a "center" (145), a locus of thinking, of idea, but that the sense belongs to

the visible as to a "man." Merleau-Ponty writes, "I believe that I have a man's sense, a human body" and moreover that these sensations, these "confrontations [do] not notably differ from that of others" and provide evidence of the "typical dimension of visibility" (146). Merleau-Ponty, here, in this chapter maintains thus that his encounters with others confirm that his being and theirs remain of a generic type. Furthermore, the contact he comes into with others is not distinct from the contact he has in general with things, except insofar as others present him with "another seer," which subsequently turns him back upon himself as seer and seen, sensible and sentient. It makes him realize the general reversibility of the flesh, of vision and touch, and the transitivity of one human body to another. The most radical assertion that comes with his account of an encounter with an other is that, "thought is a relationship with oneself and with the world as well as a relationship with the other" (145).

What we observe here is that Merleau-Ponty does not, in the relation of the chiasm, deal with contact with another's subjectivity. Even when he encounters another, it is as a generic, "another seer," in fact, a double of the subject's own self, and the other serves merely to alert us to the "typical dimensions of visibility" (146). Merleau-Ponty's subject may see the body of another "coupling with the flesh of the world" (144), but the other at no point in Merleau-Ponty's text encounters me, or for that matter, touches or speaks with me.

Because Merleau-Ponty's view of the flesh of the body and the flesh of the world is an interleaving of that which is neither exclusively body nor exclusively world. Moreover, continuity, the capability of touching and being touched, rests on a "propagation of these exchanges to all the bodies of the same type and of the same style" (143). Thus touching and being touched takes place between the subject and himself or between the world and the subject.

But, importantly, for Merleau-Ponty, these are both, the world and the subject, flesh, and also, importantly, of the same type, reversible. This leads to the question, can Merleau-Ponty in fact touch the world if the world is constituted not only by, but as, the same "type" even the same flesh, as himself?

For him, "the presence of other seers" serves to confirm his "visible as an exemplar of a universal visibility" (145). This confirmation happens, tellingly, "at the frontier of the mute and solipsistic world (…) which will be (…) a sublimation of the flesh" (145). This is the encounter with an other, who is presumed to make me believe in our interchangeability, and the present of an "idea" which is, according to Merleau-Ponty, the sublimation of the flesh. At the edge of the subject's world, for Merleau-Ponty, the flesh that composes his world and himself, terminates into thin air.

Perhaps we must ask what Merleau-Ponty does not ask: what happens when we encounter another person? Merleau-Ponty's chiasm is an encounter of one subject with itself, and even the arrival of an other is as merely "another seer," not, for instance, another subject, a "seer" who serves primarily to prove some universal things about the subject. If however, the subject were able to encounter an other as other, and not just another "like me," perhaps the subject could begin to experience what it is to touch another human being and to, in turn, be touched by an other, not just as a thing in the world but as another subjectivity. To be able to touch an other person, instead of only touching myself-as-the-world, the subject could begin to understand the difference between himself and another, to differentiate himself from another to begin to understand them as not an other seer, but as a concrete subjectivity distinct from his own. To be touched by, and not only to touch, an other could be important for this because it

could make real the other's perceptions, not just of the world of things, but, in this case, the other person's perceptions in the subject's world, to make actually present to him the interleaving not just of subject and world, himself and himself, but two distinct subjectivities and two autonomous identities.

As it is, the latent possibility of being touched by another is present in Merleau-Ponty's discourse, but in the diaphanous "tissue of the things" (135). The body and its senses are so interwoven into, or so intimate with, the flesh that they are both a part of and in community with, that, according to Merleau-Ponty, the body, comes almost to touch itself, or to be in contact with, to see itself through a "paradox" of self-seeing and self-touching (135). The body "communicates to the things (…) that divergence between within and without that is its natal secret" (135-6). He continues:

> The body unites us directly with the things through its own ontogenesis, by welding to one another the two outlines of which it is made, its two laps [*sic*]: the sensible mass it is and the mass of the sensible where it is born by segregation and upon which, as seer, it remains open. (136)

The body, in this understanding, is thus not only within and among the things but intimately tied to them, suspended within their tissue which the body not only touches but which seems to touch it. Could this be a subtle hearkening to a contact with the maternal body that surrounds and touches the fetal body in utero? To think of the world as a flesh that touches, or that even sees, a seeing and a seen, what Merleau-Ponty calls the "Visible," even a touching and a touched, a world that is reversible with the subject, the "two systems," applied to one another "as the two halves of an orange" (133) seems to suggest this. Irigaray makes this point in her chapter, "The Invisible of the Flesh: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 'The

Intertwining—The Chiasm'" (1993a, 151-184) that the allusions Merleau-Ponty makes in this section variously recall an intimacy with the world, even a sense of sentience of the world and of things within in it that suggest that Merleau-Ponty is attributing to it certain qualities of the maternal, for instance, subject's is suspension in the "tissue" of the world, in between, as it were, the seeing and the seen, the touching and the touched.

One could imagine that it is as if Merleau-Ponty were beginning to awaken to, as he even put it, his subject's "solipsism," (145) and perhaps the need—for the sake of perception, for the sake of sensibility, and for the sake of entering a more open relation with the world and its possibilities—to meet an other. If Merleau-Ponty's subject met with an other, not only could he experience the intertwining of his flesh with another in a carnal relation: not just the crossing of two bodies, but a chiasm of two different perceivers, two, we might say different perspectives which could illuminate not just the relation between the touching and the touched, but between one subjectivity and an other. It would be to achieve something that the crossing with and within oneself does not achieve: a moment of intersubjectivity where two different worlds meet one another.

We can understand that while the worlds themselves may be visible as well as invisible, or be intermingled with visible things, their meeting is invisible. When two subjects touch, their touching is invisible, their seeing one another is invisible. Rather than being cloaked in visibility as Merleau-Ponty imagines the world, a meeting with the other could bring about an experience of invisibility—a genuine alternative to ubiquitous visibility.

The possibility of physical contact with another subject brings about a multiplicity of possibilities that are not present in the relation of the subject with themselves or with the world

of things. When I come into contact with another person I sense my flesh, the flesh of the other, but I also sense the other as sensing. I am able to, in being in contact with another living being, especially an other living human being—to perceive not only myself as a sensing, perceiving flesh, but also the other. And what can happen if the other that I encounter is radically different from me, as in the case of someone of another sex?

In meeting another who is sexually different from me, I meet another who dwells in a flesh that is unlike mine on a physical, perceptual, and one could say, spiritual, level. A sexually different other challenges me to create, step by step, a way to meet someone who does not completely have an idea or a language to comprehend my existence or my way of relating to the world. A first moment in meeting with an other of a different sex, which is perhaps especially dramatic in the case of a man, and a philosopher at that, is to recognize the basic point that subjects, not merely bodies, can be sexually different. And that this difference is *carnal*, not merely physical, or superficial, is not an insight so far characteristic of the male-dominated Western tradition. To meet a sexually different other is to meet one who is mysterious to me on a fundamental level, who escapes me but who can also touch me and be touched by me as a singular flesh who is transcendent to me. Without a relation to one who is as different from me as possible, but also human, I could be trapped within, as Merleau-Ponty thinks of it, a "universal visibility," (145) unable to truly differentiate my own subjectivity from that of another. An encounter with a radically different subjectivity—radically different because radically carnally different—becomes an opening for me to differentiate myself. I can begin to detach myself from these "adhesions" through a carnal experience with a sexually different other. Merleau-Ponty describes between my flesh and the visible, between myself and the world, and especially

between my own subjectivity and a contiguity between the subject and a maternal body—either the maternal history of the subject's own past, or the maternal quality that becomes the model for a male-subject's world, as Irigaray argues (1993a, 151-84). Henceforth, the subject could begin to gain some independent existence from the uterine experience of the world, and thus begin to differentiate itself from its world, to be able to touch the world as different from it, to perceive the world and the things in the world as different from his or her flesh and his or her body. It could be the beginning of being able to be—through having experienced being in relation with a sexually different other—in relation with others, an opening in the so far aptly characterized "frontier of the mute or solipsistic world" (1968, 145), through which the subject might be able to construct through meaning and experience, a passage to an other. This other, might in turn be able to freely begin to communicate with an other, who now finds themselves open to perceiving.

II. Recomposing How to Think About the Family Starting from the Importance of Touch in Sexual Difference

2.1 The Patriarchal Family

Irigaray's critique of the patriarchal family occurs throughout her oeuvre. An important and overarching discussion of the family's significance occurs in her book, *Speculum of the Other Woman,* in a chapter entitled, "The Eternal Irony of the Community" (1985a, 214-226). In it she traces the dawning of a patriarchal power that seeks to oppose the law and blood relations that, through a complex of significations, express the natural lives and desires of women, a transition that serves the interest and the power of men. Within the patriarchal family, women retain but a shred of their desire and autonomy, their lives, their individuality, their blood, and find themselves increasingly subjected to the mastery of the husbands. Within the patriarchal family there survives but one genealogy, that of the man, all of the other relations between woman and man, woman and children, subservient to the lineage of the father. The woman is merely the reproductive ground behind the man, and the producer of "his" children, who retain the patronymic identity of the father. The wife is denied her identity as a woman, and comes to function only as mother—mother to her children, and as a replacement for the husband's own mother, who he/the Law aims to incorporate into his own identity in order to close the genealogical loop that is threatened to be opened by an autonomous association between two differently sexed subjects.

The enclosed circular relation between Father-Son-(Mother) always risks being disrupted by the emergence of an autonomous identity and subjectivity for woman. This risk has to be

consistently thwarted by patriarchal violence that must repeatedly sever the relations of women: woman and man, women and children, especially women and daughters, brothers and sisters, and woman with herself. Women are not able to be themselves freely, to assume their own identity; their identity, if they have one, must perpetually be mediated through the role of wife/mother. Women are relegated to their "place" within the family "unit." But this becomes both prison, eliminating her freedom, and exile from her natural belonging and true self.

The "sacredness" of the family union is turned over to a religious authority that operates in and through a mode of paternal law-giving that eventually tries to intervene among what could be the most private and intimate relations, including, or especially, reproduction. In her chapter, "The Family Begins with Two" in *Between East and West*, Irigaray describes the crisis of this old family order that has been thrown into disarray by recent transitions and changes to the foundation of the family in the West. If the State or religion seeks to apply a set of socio-cultural imperatives that are intended to remediate a return to nature of the family, this attempt is fraught with difficulties (2002a,107-8). If repressions from an outside authority are brought to bear on a socio-cultural order of the family that is seen to be unsustainable on its own;. It amounts not to a future-looking path, or to the remaking of families that better suit, for instance, women who have gained some measure independence from the patriarchal family. Rather, as Irigaray writes, "Such a socio-cultural organization supposes a human immaturity, framed by habits and rites related to those of the animal world" (107) aiming to turn over the family paradoxically, to the realm of the instinctual, while it is subjected to complete control by an external authority. The more the authority of the patriarchy is threatened by measures of resistance achieved through civil means, the more control is sought by external agencies and institutions under an authoritarian rubric.

These socio-cultural norms either try to return the family to the tradition of being "that undifferentiated unity described by Hegel, a unity in which the man, the woman and the child or children lose or alienate their own identity in a whole cemented by naturalness" (106), or: "the legislative and executive powers of the State, and, in a different way, of Churches, take the liberty of decreeing and sanctioning even in the most intimate aspects of the carnal relation, preventing this relation from being lived between the two [autonomous subjects of a man-woman couple]. The relation between two would be forbidden without the intervention of a third: of a natural, religious, or civil nature" (108). Irigaray asks of the authority that seeks to intervene in the family:

> And why appeal to human or divine law of obligation or of prohibition where this relation is trying to find itself or is coming about? To remind humans that they are humans? Why, in this case, in the name of the most physical aspect of the flesh: reproduction? In the name of what is also going to confuse the two with the one, reducing to a single flesh—already abstract unless it is that of the child—the bodies and the desires of those who love each other: man and woman? (108)

Irigaray, in her references to "confusing the two with the one" and "reducing to a single flesh" emphasizes the embodied nature of the differentiation and between man and woman in a sexually different coupling. The irreducibility of the one to the other, particularly the woman to the man depends as much on their numerical dis-identity: that there are two of them, as to their differentiation. They are not one flesh both because they are two and because they are not the same. The tenacity of the interventions she describes grows proportionately with the many attempts at the intervention's rejection, particularly on the part of women who begin to demand to take charge of their own lives, and moreover not be subjected to an external authority, whether it be the State or religion or the authority of a man, a father, or a husband.

Women who want to be emancipated from the confines of a role, but also to be free from being subjected to being used as material for the reproduction of society, want to inhabit a different role in the creativity belonging to the family. “This does not mean, “ Irigaray writes, “that they no longer want children, but that they want to be able to say ‘yes’ to engendering in themselves, that they want children born of flesh and speech, and not in the traditional modality where the mother remains the body impregnated by the spirit of the father” (109). She says, “The time of the father’s sacred authority seems to be past” (110). Even if this authority, once held to be sacred, seems to be passing out of supremacy, this does not guarantee that there will not be attempts to replace the authority with an authority that is more absolute, with more repressive measures, particularly aimed at women’s reproduction. But these measures may also take the form of attempts at limiting relations between men and women to the strictly reproductive. We have seen these interventions take the form of legal and religious attempts to limit women’s autonomy and to relegate, usually on pain of social ostracism or worse, the sexual encounter to a purely reproductive one. This serves to paradoxically redefine eroticism ideally as reproductive sexual intercourse, but also to prohibit its exercise except under strictly controlled and erotically sterile conditions.

Liberation of Women

As can be imagined, the appropriate answer to the increasing strictness by which patriarchal institutions attempt to gain greater control of the family is not to attempt direct reciprocal counter-control. Freedom from the interventions of the patriarchal organization of family in the intimate sphere, depends rather on the liberation from these forms of patriarchal

domination in the family and without. Nevertheless the liberation from patriarchy does include some direct response in Irigaray's view, in particular, to establish rights that are focused on providing for the liberation and emancipation of each sex within the cultural, political, religious, and family sphere. Rights specifically focused on men may be in order, but what is really urgently necessary are rights that can provide for the liberation of women—especially from their subjugation by and within the family, an institution that becomes the intersecting point of the powers extending from nature, culture, politics, economics, and religion (2002a, 131-145).

Irigaray does not advocate for the abolition of the family, or if she does, it is of the patriarchal family per se. She insists instead on the re-foundation of the family. She argues for the rebuilding of families not by the imposition of an abstract and quantitative measure of adherence to a single standard, which Irigaray sometimes associates with certain forms of egalitarianism that she finds to be lacking content. The family, or families, according to Irigaray must be re-founded on a culture of two subjects. Our current culture in the West is founded, and the patriarchal family is founded, on a one-subject culture, the culture of the masculine. The historical patriarchal family consists of a father and the subjects belonging to him within the intimate sphere of the family. This dynamic appears to be breaking down, especially as an institution designed to preserve a status quo of wealth and property ownership. Especially in the context of globalization, families are increasingly formed from a multiplying variety of bases. But there is not currently, or not yet, a new form of thinking being brought to bear on families to help find a way toward establishing a mutually respectful and supportive relation between men and women within them (2002a, 131-145).

While there are a multitude of factors to be concerned with regarding the family, for Irigaray, one stands out as salient and global in its significance: the status of women. As Irigaray argues in several places (See Irigaray 1985a; 2012; 2000a), the consignment of women to the sphere of the home has an effect that touches almost all areas of living and thinking. It is a global influence affecting cultures globally. Not only does the confining of women's bodies to the home have empirical effect, but it affects the way subjectivity and subjects themselves are understood, and the ability of subjects to conceive of themselves and the world (2002a, 131-145).

Women are subjected to paternal hierarchy in the family and within the structure of relations with others, both inside and outside of their places as daughters and mothers inside of the family structure. Horizontal relations within the family, such as those between husband and wife, and sister and brother, are subordinated to the paternal authority that is supposed to structure all of the relations among subjects, Irigaray argues that we can observe this structure playing out in the myth of Antigone who is caught, Irigaray suggests, between the Law of the Father, and the Desire of the Mother, and also is denied her horizontal relation with her brother (1985a, 225-235). Being confined, or fused within a singular family "unit," subject to hierarchical relations and paternal power, women are exiled from the public but are also confined within the family to the roles of wife and mother. Women, Irigaray notes, have lacked access to a public sphere in a robust way (2002a, 105-130). Women's recent incursions into the public sphere and recent successes breaking into life in politics, economy and other aspects of the broader public culture occur despite their relative lack of access with respect to men.

If women have been allowed to function as anything, it has been not only in service of the material reproduction of the family including the preparation of food, the reproduction of human

life through the maternal function, but also as the medium through which the paternal seed is carried. In addition, women have also been tasked with the maintenance of the affective life within the family. Within the family, women are the main repository of daily desire. They serve to reflect and maintain the desire of the father, but also act as a substitute for the father's own mother, and are expected to continue to provide all the material nourishment, in the form of food, but also to nurture the of both the father and the children. Woman is expected to do this in her role as mother exclusively, and not as an independent subject with an independent identity—as woman. Rather she is mother first and only—the ground of intimacy, its home—and that becomes her identity: the home of the family. She is a dwelling, but she herself does not dwell. She is not a true subject of the household, but rather its *prima materia* (2002a, 105-120).

According to Irigaray, what women generally in the Western, modern tradition lack is an independent civil identity, an identity that would allow the passage between the public and the private, and the establishment of a true intimate sphere that goes beyond the simple reproduction of the father, but instead allows for true fertilization by two different subjects (105-120). In the patriarchal family, the aim is the continuance of the possession and consolidation of property, of which the family name, the family wealth, and the family lineage all participate. They form a single hierarchical genealogy. What Irigaray intends is for the family's impetus and expression to be radically different from what it has traditionally been. The family, as she envision it, would no longer be an organizing principle that counteracts the engendering of and by difference, but rather could become a nexus of difference (106).

Thus, without losing contact with history, the family could become a domain in which the future becomes radically opened to the engendering of new possibilities and new relations. A

radical mixing can take place within the family between cultures, as well as between the worlds of its members, beginning with the free and autonomous interaction between subjects of different sexes (132-35). The couple that forms the basis and the origin of the family no longer would do so as primarily the father and the mother, but as a couple formed by differently sexed subjects, each maintaining their own independent civil identity from which they participate in the mutual sharing of their lives culture, and worlds. This could support the establishment of an intimate sphere free from, or at least more resistant to the external intervention of various repressive agencies. A family not ruled by either parental figure, but by differently by both subjects, resists the influence of the patriarchal forces by privileging relationality, especially, horizontal relations, and autonomy (137-139). When two different subjects, of different sexes and/or cultures, or inhabiting other differences, come together to build an intimate sphere, originating from themselves and their own natural diversity, the influence by any single culture, style, politics, sex or institution becomes less dominant. A family founded on difference, especially in a culture supporting the difference between autonomous sexuate identities, can develop a culture, open a horizon, and become an influence on the wider culture without subordination to an ultimate, ungrounded parental authority, either from the outside, or within (2002a, 131-145).

Relations between Women

It must be emphasized that such a revolution in the foundation of the family is necessary to the cultivation of an intimate sphere in which the participants have a place from which to enter into relation with one another, that in particular, does not end in the types of domination and

possession that for instance, Irigaray criticized, as being the standard of sexual relations imagined by Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and to some extent, Levinas (Irigaray 2001, 17-29). For women to come out of their confinement, the establishment of an autonomous civil identity, which allows women to relate freely and autonomously with others, especially in terms of their bodies and desires, is essential. But first, they must first begin to develop autonomous and legally supported capacities to establish families as partners and not as subordinates. Thus the democratic lives of women who participate in the public sphere through the establishment of a civil identity in conjunction with the necessary establishment of sexed rights that Irigaray has argued for, would not be disconnected from, and is in fact continuous with how and whether women are able to be liberated as co-creators of families. In order for women to be liberated in public, they must be liberated in the family; in order for women to be liberated in the family, they must be liberated in public (Irigaray 2002a, 105-145).

It is important also to note that in Irigaray's philosophy, neither the public nor the private domain is superior to the other. One of her focuses has remained the contiguity of the public and private, as well as the contiguity of nature and culture. The creation of an artificial division between public and private, especially insofar as the family/women/property have been exclusive inhabiters of the private domain serves to reinforce patriarchal hierarchies. If it appears surprising or counter-intuitive that women's public emancipation is necessary for them to participate in carnal relations with others without being understood as animals, children, slaves, or mothers, it is because of this artificial division of human life into public and private by the tradition of patriarchy. For the schism to be transformed into a passage between nature and culture, public and private, man and women, the matters traditionally kept secret within the

private domain, like touch and desire between lovers, or the intimacy between generations, between parents and children must be considered with the same sensitivity and perspicacity that is more readily devoted to women's visible and public emancipation in terms of being able to gain some economic and social independence.

The reaction of members of each sex to their position with respect to nature and culture, to public and private, and to feeling and affect is different. In her essay, "Teaching How to Meet in Difference" (2008b, 203-218), Irigaray addresses some of the challenges that each sex faces when passing from the current position within the current cultural context to one which supports and recognizes two different sexuate identities. In the essay she focuses on children and their development into beings with fully realized sexuate identities that do not remain the prescribed roles of patriarchal culture, but begin to emerge as subjectivities that have been cultivated. She discusses here the educational system which she says is focused on and tailored to a masculine subjective identity insofar as it reinforces hierarchical relations rather than horizontal, individuality over relationality, and sameness rather than difference. In this way, it remains a reflection of the culture at large, and particularly, maintains the traditional position of children as patriarchal subordinates within the family structure. It keeps their intimate lives away from school and confined within the family.

Irigaray writes that, in a particular instance when working with children on a project involving language and sexual difference, she intended to "invite [the children] to speak freely, notably about things that teachers do not want to listen to, things that children would thus have to leave outside school, even to forget in order to go to school, to join in language, in culture and civic relationships" (203). The difficulty in passing between the intimate and the public is

underscored in the institution of education, and this also becomes one of the many sites of their reproduction and reinforcement. Irigaray continues:

> to leave these things outside school, language and social relations amounts to having oneself outside school, to abandoning oneself in order to be subjected to models that are strange and abstract with respect to our real being.… We become confused in world of somebodies from which we try to rise up through competitiveness and violence (…) In fact, the models imposed on boys and girls in school render them uncivil although they aim to teach them public-spiritedness. In reality, they split children—as all of us—into two parts: one so-called cultivated part and one so-called natural part which ought to remain at home, possibly in darkness, perhaps only in bed, in any case lacking words or education concerning desire and love. (203)

It is in this way that institutions interpose themselves into family life and have a counterpart in schools, where the part of human life deemed to be exclusively natural, the affective, the intimate, are to be left outside, and education is expected not to address them. The civic education Irigaray imagines for students would include these aspects. The identities she advocates being developed for women and for men involve a dimension concerning desire. She attributes the West's exclusion of a discussion of desire in eduction and in public to a kind of puritanism that eschews desire. She nevertheless thinks that incorporating desire into education would have other effects as well. She says, "the aim of [her] project was not only a sexual education—even if this is critical—but a civic education in difference" (205). In order to accomplish this, in a particular instance in which she is working with children is school, she begins one of her discussions with children on the topic of sexual difference, but then moves on to a discussion of *sexuate* difference: "From the beginning of each encounter with the children, I helped them to discuss that the difference between boys and girls is not only sexual in a limited sense, but sexuate, that is to say that this difference concerns not only their sex and a few bodily characteristics, but also their whole subjectivity" (205). These are certainly crucial discussions to

have with boys and girls, discussions that have traditionally been presumed to be under the family's purview. Even more specifically, these topics are in a complicated way assumed to be of a delicate nature, one which is carefully guarded amongst religious authorities from a secular, but also an anti-hierarchical influence. Yet this careful guarding of the domain of desire, love and intimacy by the State and Religion, results in the domain being largely untouched by a thinking of its own, or by a discourse proper to it. We do normally philosophically not enter into a discussion of sexual subjectivity, as opposed to domain of sexuality. "To reach the stage," of a discussion of sexual subjectivity, Irigaray writes, "it is useful to begin with sexual difference strictly speaking. If you repress or ignore this dimension, you will never teach anything about sexuate difference. In fact, this is what happens in our culture, and particularly in our education. Paradoxically it is puritanism that has maintained our subjection to instinct rather than allowing the way for entry into human relationships" (205). By not discussing in public or outside of the intimate sphere of the home, if even there, the topics of desire and love, we have produced, rather than a sexually and intimately cultivated society, instead a culture that is not only intimately impoverished but is also stuck at the level of animal instinct.

The issue of building a path from nature to culture, from the interior to he exterior of the home, of the body, and of "the soul" is complicated for women by the fact that they have so thoroughly been relegated this very domain. As Irigaray explains, "Now the capability of girls for entering into communication for, horizontal relations in difference must be cultivated in order that they could pass from an almost natural and affective state to a civil and cultural state" (217). Boys and eventually men, meet with challenges specific to them as well: "the subjectivity of each boy requires a training for him to become able to relate in difference" (216). The boy and

the girl and the man and the woman who must overcome something in order to achieve an identity other than the one imposed by culture, face almost opposing challenges: “If the boy has to learn to consider and respect the ‘you’ and not only the ‘I,’ the girl has to learn how to preserve the ‘I’ when relating with a ‘you’” (217). Irigaray notes that, “In order to meet this other, the girl must learn how to acquire a certain objectivity even in love, without leaving her own subjective, affective and bodily belonging. It is the recognition of the transcendence of the other that can permit her to reach this objectivity, which does not amount to the preference for objects that we observe in the boys world” (217). In the same essay regarding the teaching of children (“Teaching How to Meet In Difference”), Irigaray gives five points regarding the reasons for working towards a civil identity for both sexes, which she thinks up until now has only been accomplished on a superficial level. Of the five points, the first two are particularly relevant:

> 1. Such changes will allow us to make progress in human development, thanks to a better differentiation with respect to natural immediacy, both for women and for men, and thanks to a recognition of the other as other, as well as relations to him, or her, that do not remain subjected to any sort of instinct—thus to domination, possession, or appropriation of one by the other, even regarding sexual relations and procreation.
>
> 2. Change must also be realized towards a mutation in the way of speaking. The masculine subject has until now privileged, in language and in communication, speaking-of; but it is now necessary to cultivate speaking-with. This requires passing from a preference for mental or material objects to a preference for exchange between subjects. (217)

The establishing of two civil identities is a crucial step in conjunction with developing an education for children that allows and encourages thinking about difference as well as relating to others who are different. It is important, moreover, to conduct on a cultural level and at an

educational level a thorough exploration of the relation between language, intersubjective relationships, and the relation between the intimate and public spheres. This is especially important to make the educational context more hospitable for girls and women.

2.2 The Generations and Touch

This section focuses on the relationship between the generations and touch, both the act of touching and the sense of touch. The state we find our (Western) culture in with regard to touch and the generations is a relatively impoverished one. We feel disconnected from our ancestry, from our progeny and from our families. It is not merely that we live in a modern capitalist economy that prevents us from taking part in embodied (carnal) relations with our intimates, though that is partly it. The primary reason is that we are culturally disconnected from the initial relation with the the mother, and due to this are disconnected from all carnal relations. We lack the resources to touch ourselves as well as to touch each other. In a certain sense we all live out King Midas' fate. Our father, the figure of the Father, has intervened between our bodies and our senses, turning tactility into a curse: we attempt to get back in touch with ourselves, with our lives and our being by touching. Motherhood and infancy already involve all the generational relations. As Irigaray writes, for the "father doctors," (not just the male doctors, but the profession) their "intervention and censure" is "a matter of good sense, good health, or even of virtue and holiness!" (1993c, 11). And yet because of some modest gains by women, especially in becoming doctors and midwives, the process of birth has become more guided by desire and by love. Women are encouraged (permitted) to exercise their own bodies in labor, to move, to speak, and to be in charge of their births and their babies. Consider the nursing infant:

what is the relation of the infant to the mothers breast? What nourishment is the baby getting from the breast? Is the nourishment first in the form of sustenance, of nutrition of the spiritual kind or of the material kind? Irigaray asks "Is this characterization [in psychoanalysis] of the infant's mouth—or the woman's sex—as a bottomless pit not a thought or a phantasy derived from oedipal hatred? There is no real reason to believe that an infant's thirst or a women's sexuality is insatiable" (15). Indeed we observe that the infant as much needs the touch and the caress of the mother as he or she needs the milk. Here is a microcosm of generational relations: "The maternal function underlies the social order as well as the order of desire, but it is always restricted to the dimension of need," Irigaray writes. "Our society and our culture operate on the basis of an original matricide" (10-1).

The flourishing of one's life begins there, in the relation with the mother, and extends to one's relation with others in general. If children are in a social order founded on matricide and are deprived in varying degrees of both the symbolic and embodied relation with the mother, this deprivation persists into adulthood. Adults have difficulty in connecting with not only their own children but other intimates, and other citizens. We suffer a generalized inability to relate to others, and this inability stems from a deprivation of our sensual being, beginning with our deprivation in touch. As we attempt to heal from this originary deprivation, it is crucial that we attend to the sense of touch. Women and men, if they become parents, must not be treated instrumentally, first, and women must be allowed to recover the role, as Irigaray says, as the "guardians of the flesh" (1993c, 16). Furthermore, we must attend to the genealogy of women. "Because we have been exiled into the houses of our husbands, it is easy to forget the special quality of the female genealogy," writes Irigaray, "each of us has a female family tree: we have a

mother, a maternal grandmother and great-grandmothers...Let us try to situate ourselves within that female genealogy so that we can win and hold on to our identity" (16).

Similarly, we must attend to our progeny. "We need to be careful...not again to kill the mother who was immolated at the birth of our culture." "We," Irigaray writes, "need to find, rediscover, invent the words, the sentences that speak of the most ancient and most current relationship we know—the relationship to the mother's body, to our body—sentences that translate the bond between our body, her body, the body of our daughter" (18-9). When we become parents (if we do), the infant needs touch to provide him or her with another language, a language from one generation to another. Through touch, the infant learns her relational language with the mother, with the father, with the siblings and grandparents.

Parents enact a part of our sexuate becoming through having children. We connect with our parents, particularly our mothers, through our relationship with our daughters and sons. The children mediate our relationship to each other. Touch plays a special role in connecting us to our children. It connects us to the invisible in our children, to the spiritual in our children and in ourselves. Children are comforted by touch, the touch, especially of a parent, helps them return to themselves and helps them grow by creating a between and returning them to themselves allowing them to gather energy. The infant has a special need for the gesture of the caress to experience touch as a way of perceiving the other. The infant perceives the other first through the touch of the mother, through hearing the voices of the mother and others. The infant needs touch to provide him or her with another language, a language from one generation to another. Through touch the infant learns her relational language with the mother, with the father, with the siblings

and grandparents. Touch and caress is a way for the infant to learn about communication and love through the bodies of the others around them.

We can see this mediation in the very language employed to describe generational relations. The name, "reproduction," as Irigaray points out, serves "to confuse the two with one, reducing to a single flesh—already abstract unless it is that of the child—the bodies of those who love each other: man and woman…" (2002a, 108). This is a confusion of the nature of the family brought about by the introduction and institutionalization of the term, "reproduction." Yet, Irigaray observes, "...a family is born when two persons, most generally a man and a woman, decide to live together…" (105). Rather than getting caught in the byways announced and enforced by the law of the father, "there exists a third way that is newer and more in accordance with human becoming: to refound the family, not on parental authority, paternal or maternal, but on the love between woman and man, man and woman" (110). She writes, "In order to be and to remain two in love, including carnal love, it is necessary, in fact, that the body become flesh awakened by consciousness. It is necessary that the man and the woman enjoy an equivalent dignity and that they discover together how to combine nature and spirituality across their differences of body and subjectivity… Such a loving journey will also lead the man and the woman to acquire a possible parental identity. The horizontal coexistence between the sexes, the most necessary coexistence, the most desirable but also the most difficult to realize, leads naturally and spiritually to the respect of ancestors and to hospitality toward future generations" (2002a, 118-9). In rethinking, and refounding the family and thereby generational relations, it is important that we take notice of not only that we relate to the other, that we touch him or her, but that we also think about how we accomplish these relations, this touching.

When thinking about the infant, for example, it is as important how we touch the infant as it how we touch between adults. We cannot treat the infant as an instrument, even for its own growing, any more than we can treat another adult as an instrument. Infants are capable of all of the sensing, though different, that an adult is capable of, more perhaps, because the infant has not yet been taught and discouraged by the culture. We need not only communicate, to talk with adults, but also with children, even, or especially, infants. “Thus,” Irigaray writes, “it is desirable that we should speak as we are making love. We should also speak as we feed a baby so that the child does not feel that the milk is being stuffed down his or her throat, in a kind of rape. It is equally important for us to speak as we caress another body. Silence is all the more alive when words exist” (1993c, 19).

We ought to think also regarding the infant, and especially when feeding or otherwise caring for the infant that he or she has needs and desires. It is easy to fall into thinking that the infant is a proto-something or someone, or is always in the state of not-yet-being. But the infant is already him or herself. When we care for the infant, we must be hospitable to him or her.

When we refound the family on a horizontal relation between man and woman, writes Irigaray, “it becomes the place not of a repression or of an exploitation of the flesh but of a poetic, even mystical, progression of love…” (2002a, 116). What's more, “everything thus finds itself modified: the mode of perceiving, of touching, of speaking… Caressing loses its sense of capturing, bewitching, appropriating… The caress becomes a tactile word… The caress becomes a means of growing together toward a human maturity that is not confused with an intellectual competence, with the possession of property—among them the bodies of the beloved and of the

children—nor with the domination of the world, beginning with the little world of the house, of the family" (116-7).

This change in the way we love and the way we live, of our world and our family does not simply change the meaning of touching or of sensing. When the sexes create a horizontal coexistence, a coexistence that must be created by an ongoing awakening of desire and flesh to the other and to oneself, this, writes Irigaray, "leads naturally and spiritually to the respect of ancestors and to hospitality towards future generations" (2002a, 119). Generational love begins, thus, by realizing a carnal relation between man and woman.

This is not to say that the beginning of love, and the beginning of the caress does not occur for the infant when he or she is first awakened to her own sensation of touching the mother. The feeling of caressing the infant, or one's beloved. This is also an awakening of the flesh to its desire and sensibility, an awakening that also participates in the growth and joy in oneself, and in the other (2017, 69-73).

What one can learn from touching, and from the relation of generations is that in order to refound the family, in order to refound culture on an ethical, sensible and spiritual relation, the value of relations between persons, family members, must be emphasized (2017, 35). We need to become conscious in our desiring and in our sensible and material bodily relations, to become acquainted with the language of touch, which is the language of love and desire. We we must learn to become educated not in the means of production and reproduction but in relating to one another, and in this we find our world. In this sense we return to ourselves, and we are capable of relating to the other. We learn, moreover, the meaning of caressing rather than simply touching the other. As Irigaray writes of the caress, "Your body does not resemble an object for me, as

subject, and the same is true for my body. For me, an incarnate subject, you are an incarnate subject. We are two woven of bodies and words, beings and to-bes, and not merely beings under the spell of a master who vanish in imagined virginity. An invitation to peacefulness instead of to passivity, the caress unfolds as an intersubjective act, as a communication between two, a call to an in-stasy in us and between us and not an ecstasy outside of us" (2001, 27-8).

Irigaray calls this, among other things, the sexuate nature of human life. It is our task to listen to her and to allow ourselves to engender new life, as well as to repair our generational relationships, beginning with our relationships with our mothers, to respect the symbol of the mother, and especially the figure of the mother and daughter (1993c, 55-72), as well as to address and to rectify the suppression of female genealogies (159-60). One of the ways to do this is also to allow our children to be a new generation in both senses: to allow them freedom to grow and to become something new as a generation, and not just to be the "next" generation of the same social order, but give them the freedom, the opportunity, to become themselves. When we think of relating to children through touch, we must understand that in that relation, we are also relating to ourselves, that the touch we provide to children changes us as well, and has the potential to change the entire social order.

One way of responding to the call for a culture of touching that is more in tune with desiring and with loving is to increase our awareness and our sensitivity. A relationship with nature is as important as a relationship with the mother, and one cannot occur without the other. It is not that we need simply to touch one another more, to increase our touching. Rather it is that we must become attentive to each other and to each other's flesh, to touch differently, and to think and live attending to difference.

The Flower Sermon

In a famous story, the Buddha holds a wordless sermon in which he holds aloft a white lotus flower. Only one of his disciples understands the sermon, and gives the Buddha a slight smile. We can recognize in this wordless language between the Buddha and the disciple the understanding that comes about in a child, a wisdom that can pass between teacher and student, mother and child, from a flower to a little human. What sort of wordless wisdom did the disciple receive from the Buddha's invitation to contemplate the flower? As Irigaray writes, "If we linger a little on contemplating the cherry tree in flower, such contemplation will bring about in us a unification of the various perceptions that have been involved, and will thus constitute us into a whole in connection with another whole, that of the tree" (2017, 67). In appreciating the tree in bloom, or a lotus flower, the child appreciates what it means to be in bloom: that the whole of the being (the plant or the child) blossoms. Blossoming brings about a growth in its being that becomes something new, while also maintaining a connection with its origin. Thus we see one way of expressing the meaning of blossoming in a child: to become and grow as a whole being while maintaining a connection with his or her origin.

The encounter with the flower communicates something else as well: the child's relation with another being. If we linger on our contemplation, especially of a whole tree or flower rooted in the ground, as Irigaray writes, we see that, "the particularity and singularity of each, be it a human or a tree, is now preserved as that of the relationship which links them together" (67). The wisdom that one receives in contemplating the tree is not only that the tree and the one

contemplating are each whole beings. We also perceive that each is a particular and singular being, and that the two, the tree and child, have a relationship which links them together. What has the child learned in contemplating the cherry tree? That she and the blossoming cherry tree each whole beings that grow and intermittently become something new in relation to one another.

Irigaray's book traces the child's development through all of its stages of growth, from newly born to adolescence. An insight that arises in Irigaray's book is that a child is a transcendental being who naturally grows both on a physical level and an ontological level at the same time. This means that the child is becoming something different while it grows, while at the same time realizing his or her potential that was already present at her birth. This growth we might call "flowering." Flowering in a child is not simply a metaphor. Flowering is what the child accomplishes when he or she gives birth to something or someone new, even if that something new is herself. The book not only elaborates on the arrival of the new child, but the arrival, both in thought and in our actions, of a new way of being human.

This section pays specific attention to the part of thinking a new human way of life which depends on understanding how a child grows, and also how we might think and act differently in respect to the growth of a child. In discussing the Buddha's flower sermon, I have just introduced the first point: the child grows through its relationship with nature. The second point is about the child and its capacity to grow: how, in particular, a child is able to gather energy in itself and use that energy for growing. The third point is that child grows by her relations with others.

Flowering in Nature

A plant's blossoming is a specific kind of growth, not the twisted growth of a vine, not the growth of the roots, or the spreading of leaves, but the emergence of a delicate beckoning at the edge of the plant, the culmination of a certain process of a plants' internal growing, and also a reaching out for the subtle fertilization of another being. The flower is able to touch while staying rooted, to emerge when it is ready and withdraw when the light or season transitions into a different phase. A flower is the realization of the potential of the plant already present when it was a seed. Blossoming is the stage of the plant that occurs before a fruit grows and the seed of another being is created. And a kind of blossoming occurs in the child. We might say that we have achieved something in leading a child to grow if we have lead led it blossom. But not just once. Blossoming in a child happens continuously, as the child is born, as the child opens up its possibilities anew, and as the child gives birth to itself as a creative force, as a creative "to be" (2017, vii). And the blossoming happens intermittently. Irigaray uses the image of a flower that opens in the day and closes at night (43-4)—a morning glory, for instance, that opens to the world, and withdraws as is appropriate to his or her energy, whether she is exploring her world, reaching out in a gesture to the other, or drawing inward and gathering herself.

Though it is an essential truth about human being, that there is such a thing as the blossoming of a new human being is not yet recognized by our human culture. What Irigaray has urged us to do is to think about what it means to live appropriately to our essential human nature. She has suggested that we must begin thinking in a new way about the coming to be of a new life. First, we must recognize that we have not yet understood how the child is able to grow on its own. And second, we have not yet found a way to promote that growing in our culture (13-7).

One obstacle to blossoming in ourselves, and an obstacle for our children, is the lack of contact with beings which are appropriate to our becoming. Living in a society dominated by technology, we do not often enough encounter living beings. Instead we encounter a world which presents us with a landscape of artificial things. Technologically produced objects do not respond to our being, do not instill in us a sense of belonging or a sense of desire (Irigaray 2017, 13-17). We find little spiritual nourishment in artificial things, no matter what use they may be for us in meeting our needs. Irigaray points out,

> Being in nature is enough for it as well as playing with what nature offers to it —being filled with it through breathing, through its skin and all its senses. It delights in communing totally with it by touching grass, smelling a flower, sheltering under a tree or climbing it, marveling at a ray of sunshine. It stands in this whole that the garden, or some other natural place, is, without intending to structure it into a whole. It finds in nature a sort of home where it enjoys being and would like to stay. Unfortunately, its human vulnerability prevents such wanting from being fulfilled and brings it once more back to its needs: for a shelter during the night, against bad weather or eventual attacks from other living beings, especially from certain animals. (2017, 31-2)

One reason that we tend not to bring children, and especially babies, into nature is that we perceive them as fundamentally vulnerable and requiring of our constant help. Babies are totally dependent on us for providing the means for their survival. But this approach has leads in many cases, however, to our perceiving them in terms of their physical necessities exclusively. What can be missed is that the child's most important concern is their desire: their desire to grow, to explore, to engender new growth. The child's primary concern is with its own becoming. Children depend on us for their survival, but even more so, they depend on us for providing the conditions necessary for their spiritual blossoming.

Even though the child is vulnerable and requiring of our protection, he or she must first be considered a human being requiring of spiritual nourishment. As in the case of the contemplation of the lotus blossom as well as the flowering tree, the child begins to see him or herself as a whole being, and a being in relation to other beings when they experience other living beings (Irigaray 2017, 67). And they begin to draw energy from nature when they immerse themselves in a natural world to which they intuitively realize they belong. Thus in order to lead a child to its flowering, one thing we must do is put them in the presence of living things and in contact with nature. We must expose them to the vegetal, and allow them to play and explore. This conflicts, in many cases, with our conditioned habit of protecting and controlling children, of imposing on them rules and imperatives. We ought instead to let them sometimes learn for themselves, to be allowed to contemplate nature. This is true of the adult, too. But it is especially true in the child's case, since the child is more sensitive, is changing more rapidly, and has had less of a chance to encounter his or her world. Giving the child the opportunity to encounter nature provides the child with an unending source of spiritual nourishment.

Gathering in Oneself

A child is able to gather energy within herself in order to grow. For instance, one source is the energy the child draws from the presence of other living beings. The second way is really an elaboration of the first. The child grows by drawing spiritual energy from a particular type of living being: other humans. The third is by gathering within his or herself, eventually developing as the child matures into what Irigaray calls "self-affection" (Irigaray 2017, 17, 50). One way of

understanding what is at stake for a child in its growing could be, again, to contemplate a comparison between a child and a tree. Irigaray writes,

> A tree grows by metabolizing the minerals on which it feeds through its earthly roots, thanks to the water of the rain, and the warmth and the light of the sun which reaches it through air in which they spread. The newborn also needs to metabolize the elements which lie in nature, but the fact that it does not take root in soil, as a tree, means that most of these elements must be brought to it, yet partly metabolized, in food form; hence it depends on people around it to obtain this food. Moreover, apart from breast milk, the food that will be given to it suits more or less its natural needs. We little by little discover what corresponds to the necessities of a human body and, more often than not, with a cultural a priori which continues concealing its true nature from us (2017, 13).

What this relationship of dependency ultimately conceals is that the child is dependent on us in a way that is utterly different from what we imagine. The child, in fact, is the one who enacts her own becoming on an ontological as well as a physical level. The human beings around her provide the context in which that becoming can take place, but do not actually cause the child to grow. The growth is originated entirely in the child. "Few adults," writes Irigaray,

> perceive the struggle, in a way the ontological struggle, which goes on within this little being: between the transcendental aspect of life and its inescapable empirical requirements; between air which is now the atmosphere in which the body is and the air it must breathe, which is both internal and external to it, thus not favoring the perception of its own limits; between who it, itself, is, and who others are, those who sometimes come into it through food, but also move it in space and give rhythm to its time; these others without whom it could not be even though it already is. (2017, 8)

One aspect of the child's world Irigaray has suggested we can improve, is to attend more to their experience of nature (2017, 31). Besides a fuller and more varied experience of living beings, especially vegetal beings, what else in nature could we also offer to the child? Perhaps being comforted by the parents or other human relations? The living bodily being of the parents

is a source of nourishment for the children, one that is especially necessary in infancy before the child has learned many of its first lessons in contending with gravity and breath (2017, 14-16, 60). The parents can help the child learn to breathe by breathing with them. By holding the child close to the parents' body, even by wearing the child in a cloth, the parents may be able to take the child into a world, to protect them from some of the overstimulation of our technological culture. This is a suggestion I am deriving from Irigaray's points about how those who care for the child could think differently. As Irigaray writes of the first efforts of a little child to grow,

> All that is really difficult to imagine and so, like Zarathustra who is in search of a way of building a new world in the high mountains, the newborn sleeps a lot. While sleeping, sometimes it smiles as if it suddenly discovered the solution of an enigma, or it is radiant with wisdom as a little Buddha; but, sometimes, it screams with distress too, perhaps because it meets with difficulty in being, and not merely because it is hungry or has a stomach ache, as adults generally interpret its cries. They thus deprive it so of its ontological belonging, reducing it to a universe of needs from which it already freed itself by taking the risk of coming into the world. (9)

The sweet caresses of those who care for the child, provide a safe enclosure in which the child is able to dwell, a transition from the womb to the world, upon which they can rest or press, and feel their own limits and boundaries. Not only do the adults keep the child safe in the sense of keeping the child from pushing too far his or her boundaries, but they keep the child safe in the sense of their emotional being by keeping them within a secure but open envelope of touch. It is not so much that the baby must securely "attach" to the parents, but rather that the child feels securely held, feels embraced, which is not an attachment but a gesture that at first resembles a womb. But as the child grows the embrace begins to become at once a means for expression and an occasion of turning back to oneself. The other's body becomes a source of renewal for the child, a way of allowing the child to begin to become what it was to be at its origin. In a way, it

means returning to the origin again and again in order to be able to grow into its potential. The root of the flower becomes the loving world surrounding the child, and the child is able to take root there and grow, little by little, from that source. It is thus that the loving touch, the caresses of the parents and other loving relations both spark the creativity of the child as well as become a place for the child to rest and withdraw.

The child is inspired to explore, but also requires time to gather into herself and build up the energy she needs. In order to accomplish this, the child needs both to explore and to withdraw by turns. This cannot be accomplished if the child is always restrained and forced to interact with the world only visually. Nor would it be appropriate to allow the child limitless exploration. As Irigaray puts it in chapter four of *To Be Born,* "To Inhabit the World," (2017),

> Now the relations that the child bears with its environment are not only dependent on the visible. It is even likely that it does not favour this sense, except for satisfying other sensory appetites, for example touching, tasting and even listening to even smelling. To feel, with the sense of experiencing a sensation or a perception, is probably what inspires its tireless moving. And what it searches for is proximity, not to say intimacy, with the surroundings. (20)

Another source of spiritual nourishment that the child draws from other humans comes from the child's experience of being attended to and nourished by the parents and others, especially the literal nourishment that comes from the breast, both in the sense of providing a sweet food for the baby, but also by directly providing the child the nourishment of a special kind of touch that in one gesture gives the child with a source of affection and physical nourishment. The child does not only desire the food of the breast. She is not simply fulfilling a drive on the level of biological survival. She experiences a deep yearning for the divine gesture of the mother's touch,

the feel of the mothers living flesh that momentarily corresponds to the child's desires. Is there a sense of the vegetal in nursing a baby? Indeed, what more resembles taking root than the baby's latching on to the breast? The sweet nectar of the mother's milk is drawn into the baby's mouth to become the source of its growing. The sunlight of the baby's desire shines from its inner being, becoming a source of its beginning to mature. It is as if the infant's skin respires like a leaf to the special air of the loving caresses, growing into itself, becoming who she is in the experience of being-with the flesh of the mother. The period of nursing is like a beautiful dream for the child where she can experience renewal and communion in a setting of peace from which she gradually emerges into waking and blossoming.

And this dreaming, this peace is very important for the baby. For one reason, the baby is boundless in her desire for exploration, and needs the shelter of a loving parent to keep her from straying too far. And another is that she is in touch with a deep yearning for another. She is vulnerable, not just in terms of her needs but in terms of her desire for the other. The baby needs the deep level of communion with the mother that touch and caress can provide. Nursing is the natural answer to the infant's cry for the other. The milk feeds the baby's needs, and the flesh of caresses nourishes the baby's being.

However, once the child has found this security, this literal enclosure in the touch of loving relations, the child must be allowed to explore and to find its own limits and possibilities in its world, and also to withdraw and return to him or herself in order to begin to establish self-affection, and his or her own autonomous identity. Not only ought this exploration and return take place visually, as most infants are allowed to see the world, it must take place bodily. As Irigaray writes,

> To this end, it is probably essential that the child experiences its own potential for moving so as to discover the manner in which it can dwell. Unlike a tree, human being does not at once live in the space and the time which suit it; it comes into the world by separating off from its first vital roots, and it is little by little that it will have to find, to elaborate and to construct a place which takes into account its natural potentialities and permits it to cultivate them towards a human blooming which corresponds to them (2017, 9-10).

Indeed the child wants to begin to realize the promise of the desire awakened in him or her beginning upon arrival in the world. He or she already has within herself, and within relations with others, the spark, the desire to commune with the mystery, the gathered and held-in-reserve part of the other and herself, in part because this can return her to herself, and in part because she wants to fulfill the promise of loving relations already latent in her that she senses in the ontological difference between her and other living beings.

Irigaray says, "The one who really desires us gives us to us, offers us a chance of existing —and, perhaps, a feeling desire for him or for her, if this corresponds to their own growth" (69-70). To become a subjective being, thus, is not necessarily to be conscious, or to be in control, but rather to grow from a source of opening, of generativity, from ecstasis of intimacy. One grows, most often in ways that one without one's own conscious choosing. But nevertheless it is necessary to think about the conditions that most encourage the proper situation for the growth of becoming and communicating between subjects. In order to lead a child to its flowering, one first must recognize the independence of that child's becoming, that it must be allowed a place and time to become on its own, preserving a dwelling within her, away from the direct interventions of others. But one must also recognize that others will become the inspiration, even in the form of inspiring breath, for the little one to emerge and withdraw alternately as a part of her natural being.

Irigaray points out that the symbol of generativity in many cultures is the erotic couple: she writes,

> In the encountering of one another of the couple a space is opened up between the two, and within each of the two, each who are being awakened to their own selves and remaking themselves by the mystery of the difference between the two of them, between the difference between the whole flesh of the one and the flesh of the other, but especially if the two are sexuately different, are being awakened again to the difference between the one and the other arising out of nature. If we live in the culture of the one and the same we lose our connection with the natural source of our difference with a living human other, and risk the desolation of a neutral relation with an abstract other, a desolation which takes us away from our natural blossoming human life and the context of the relations between ourselves as living and the other living beings. To bring up the child in a culture of the neutral, casting out the thought of the sexually different, imposing a masculine structure upon women and girls, eliminates the opening of the differences arising from nature of the one and the other, and of the child's possibility of being-with that emerges from her recognition of her own sexuate being and belonging. (2017, 72-3)

No child is fully responsible for her own becoming, and neither is any adult. We always remain open to the sparking of desire of the other. And moreover, we depend on the other to return us to ourselves. We are never fully independent of the other for our own becoming, our own growing, and our own subjective development. But the flowering is always the child's.

Further Steps

In this previous section, the steps to take to engender and cultivate a child's growth, were discussed, particularly with respect to a newborn, or a very young child. I discussed the role that plants play in a child's growing, and how this relates to the child's understanding of its own being. Often the adults around a child focus more on his or her physical needs, ignoring or forgetting about his or her metaphysical and spiritual needs. We do yet not live in a culture that

cultivates human being and human growth generally and we are prone to misunderstanding children as such. We tend to think of the child as without desire, as disposed to needs only. We especially tend to do this with the very young child, but this approach comes to set the tone for our understanding of the older child as well. Lastly, we live in a culture that prefers to forget sexuate subjectivity, and in the child's case to deny its existence. But the child is sexuate, and from its first moments engenders itself and grows according to its carnality.

It is important in keeping with Irigaray's claims, in particular in *To Be Born,* "Genesis of a New Human Being," (2017) that the child be taught to cultivate its being from a very early age, even before they are able to speak. From the very first moment of life, and even before, we should begin to treat the nascent life with kindness and sensitivity. This need to teach the child is balanced with the idea that the child, in most ways, is in charge of its own life and its own growing. What Irigaray emphasizes is that even though the child is deeply dependent for survival on those around her, she or he engenders herself. There is nothing inherent to the child's growth that can be accomplished from the outside. Rather, the others surrounding the child must provide him or her with the teaching, and the comfort, the affection, the direction that the child needs in order to accomplish growing in him or herself. The child's self-engendering, what Irigaray terms "giving-birth-to-oneself," begins with the first moment of life, with the child's birth. The child, on some level, decides for itself that it will be born, despite the great risk at that moment, and many moments afterwards. Already at this early stage the child's humanity is hers to bring into being, even though we would not say that this decision is entirely, or even mostly conscious. The child, in taking his or her first breath, decides to breath the air outside his or her mother's body. No one can do this for the child.

The child is ultimately responsible for his or her own growing, both physically and spiritually as he or she grows up. It is the caretakers' task to facilitate the child's own growing. This is a very different charge than simply providing for the child's needs. Many caretakers these days, and the other specialists in children, busy themselves with providing for the child's necessities, whatever they deem these to be, disregarding the child's desires. It denies the level of the child's being that is metaphysical or spiritual in nature, whereas this is truly the most important aspect. Faced with limited resources, cultural and otherwise, the child is thus reduced to the most basic level of survival, with the addition of whatever tools used to try to form the child into a well-behaved citizen in the pre-established culture. For lack of imagination or lack of understanding, the child is viewed as something less than a desiring subject, and instead, more like the bundle of needs and sensations.

What goes unconsidered is what to do in order to create an environment which best supports the child's own ability to grow on his or her own. The child depends on the caregiver to teach him or her, to lead her in the proper way to the proper places, to introduce her living ontological beings, plants, animals and humans, and to allow her to explore. The caregiver, in nurturing the child, might attune her to her breathing, and teach her philosophy. But amid this, it is the child who will blossom.

What is it to blossom? We human beings do not stop growing even when we have reached what is called "maturity." Indeed, being human is about growing; what distinguishes human being is the capacity, even the necessity, to continue growing and blossoming again and again. It is not simply getting older, or even becoming more mature. Blossoming is human becoming that engenders new life, new being, and that reaches out to the other, especially to a sexually different

other in the cultivation of its mutual desire. Blossoming is also Eros, as a form of spiritual development, a facet of blooming. Thinking philosophically, communing with nature: these are all examples of how we blossom, even as we have stopped "growing" in the exclusively physical sense. This is why Irigaray says that the human being is different from animal being in part by growing even after physical growth has ceased, and thus resembles vegetal being in this way. To engender something new is what it is to bloom. To lead a child to his or her flowering is to provide the child with a context that allows him or her to cultivate his or her own subjectivity, to give her the opportunity to become more human.

In today's societies, in our cultures, speaking rather universally and globally, there are myriad obstacles for both carers and children in forming the kinds of relationships, encounters, identities and thoughts that engender meaningful becoming, especially becoming that develops something new. If we listen to the subtitle of Irigaray's book, *Genesis of a New Human Being* (2017), we hear the double meaning. It refers to the new human being, the child, who brings about her life in the act of giving birth to herself. We also hear the other meaning, the reference to the genesis of a new epoch of human being, and of human becoming, an epoch that can only be realized through the emancipation of human beings to begin to live in a way that cultivates the power to enact true novelty, that escapes on multiple levels the reproduction of the Same. This involves the ability to allow children the time and the appropriate milieu to grow into themselves, to cultivate their subjectivities, and to discover who they are and who they are to be, free to break to some extent with the past to create something new, free to be something or someone new. Here in Irigaray's work we see realized a vision that responds to what Nietzsche hoped: that human beings might be able to escape from an oppressive culture, and move beyond

it. Yet Irigaray corrects that this is not, as Nietzsche had conceived of it, to build a bridge to beyond humanity, but rather to build a passage into humanity itself: true humanity that lies beyond our current culture. Human beings will learn to find their identity when they learn to cultivate their carnal being, to find who they are in their being-natural and being with nature, and in their sexuation as an expression of their natural or ontological essence, the source, or framework, from within which difference flows, and where creativity is born (2017, 69-73).

Irigaray writes that it is the search for our origin that most inspires our aims (2017, 1-5). For human beings, our individual origin remains for our lives, obscure. We test a variety of means for getting back to it, including delving into our cultural and ethnic identities, but this is not really where our origin is. Much more important to my essence as human is my very capacity to grow, to become myself, to be someone new, different. But also to relate to other beings, especially sexuately different human beings. Children are barely prepared, or taught to understand the meaning or importance of this moment. Children are aware that relating to an other is of great significance to them, but they need to be provided the understanding of the true potential existing in the other's desire. The child could begin to cultivate and learn how to interact with an other. The child could be taught the capacity to touch the other in appropriate ways. In a variety of ways, the child could learn what it means to caress and to be caressed in a way that affirms both intimacy and proximity but also difference, and self-affection. The child must learn how to let the other be, to cultivate their own return to themselves, but also to reach out to communicate with the other, both in language and through touch. At this stage, in our current epoch, there is little to help the child to learn these essential things (See Irigaray 2015, 272-83).

Another way for children to learn is through an experience of nature, which is not yet sufficiently valued in school or in most aspects of children's upbringing. Communing with nature is essential to a child's growth, in particular vegetal nature. An experience of nature not only helps a child reflect on her own being, but it can in turn help a child to be prepared to encounter a human other, to participate in mutually relating with another, and to become in relation to another. One way that nature teaches children is how it encourages children to use their own bodies to explore, to open up their senses, to interact with the other living beings in nature. But nature also teaches by presenting from itself living beings themselves, and other beings that give birth to themselves. In particular, the tree shows the little human what it is to be a whole being, in touch with its origin, in the tree's case, the earth, where it is rooted in the ground (2017, 13). Of course there is also the approach of teaching children directly to understand their metaphysical being through an understanding of philosophy. But most philosophy, and this applies to traditions around the world, suffers from a variety of confusions and projections, which are in turn reinforced by an impoverished culture. In order to produce what one might consider to be interesting and worthwhile thinking, we at the same time must strive to develop a culture within which thinking can blossom. This refers to an epoch of creativity, learning to think in a new way, to express a new sense of being and becoming, that could be possible were we to begin to grow into our subjectivities, to begin living according to our carnal desire and our transcendental nature (2017, 13-18).

It is no coincidence that the bringing up of children is not a subject of much discussion in past philosophy. The lives of children are treated as precursors to the more prodigious lives of adults, who are thought to be primarily to be impressive as producers: of money, or knowledge,

or products. Nevertheless, children, like adults, are human beings first and foremost. In particular, they are human beings with desires, and yearnings, with sensitivities, and sensibilities, which are every bit as complex and important as adults' (See Irigaray 2017). But children are also special because of their state of wonder, because they are poised at their beginning, changing rapidly, and beginning to shape not only their new life as each precious day passes, but are shaped by the lives of the others they encounter as they grow. They are special and important, and the possibility of a future that consists in building a world together. If a child is led to his or her flowering *as a child* he or she begins to be led, or begins to lead herself, to flowering in adulthood.

Even more important than knowledge, for instance almost all of the knowledge currently transmitted in schools, children need to learn to relate to themselves and to others, to learn ethics. Ethics is both living, and building an ethos which is conducive to developing mature desire. It is of no use to worry so much about the way certain ideas are expressed, but rather what ideas are expressed. Traditions of meditation begin to address this human need, the necessity of desire, but generally, we have not yet begun to think the human in any consistent or sustained way. Irigaray is providing teachings, and importantly, has already succeeded in thinking in a new way to lead us towards a new culture of becoming. We must continue providing the next generation with an appropriate context, and teachings that allow our descendants to create for themselves a new culture of sharing and engendering (Irigaray 2017, 93-98).

Viewed from a certain angle, Irigaray's call is not merely feminist, or humanist, since these categories function mostly within a paradigm of the liberal individual. Irigaray looks toward a more radical emancipation, calling upon the activation of a human essence that goes beyond an

empirical calculation. What it is to flower as an adult could be demonstrated in the capacity to care for children, not just as parents, but as an entire culture, supporting what it is to flower, and helping another human being in its capacity to achieve their own flowering. Reorganizing our relations between subject and object, cultivating a culture of subject to subject, even in language, and engendering relations between subjects, may sound too complex to ground taking care of children, but considering what is at stake—the very being of humans—both now, and as the hope for a better future, there is no better choice.

Breath, Touch and Language: Communicating as Two with Children

Our current culture's way of relating to children denies, to varying extents, children's transcendence, their full being—their irreducible mystery (every bit as complex as an adult), their inner lives, and the possibilities of their desire, their blossoming. Our culture of bringing up children does not address children except externally. To varying extents it ignores them as human subjects, denies their inner lives, their singular possibilities. To change the culture, and perhaps to provide a context for future generations growth in a more conscious way, we could learn to foster a culture of touch, which would allow us to escape from an over-emphasis on abstractions resulting from a culture of visuality. We could begin to value silence:

> As our world is above all built with the help of language, silence must be the speaking of the threshold. It is thanks to silence that we can leave our own world and meet the other as other. The relations between two different subjectivities, between two different worlds, cannot be set up starting from sharing a common language. Silence is the first sign of recognition that we have to address the other as a wave of acceptance of his, or her, otherness. (2015, 258)

In general, a child is subjected to a hierarchical relation with adults in which imperatives are passed down to children as if from on high. The adults seemingly are never silent, or if they meet the child with silence, it is not in an effort to listen.

However, we might think rather of creating a dialogue with children within which there is the space for novelty and creativity, where both the child and the adult is allowed to be, and there is a space between them that does not predetermine their relation. The child and the adult may also begin to communicate with one another through touch. If the words begin to be in rhythm not set by a single one or the other, where voice, and tone, proximity all become part of the relation, with touch leading the way and making a context for relating to one another as both different, but sharing with each a part of their world, then the hierarchical relation takes on a new horizontality. The adult and child can then begin to relate to one another as two subjects who each come to the relation from their own self-affection, from their own world and their own desire, not as a reflection of the other.

This is the beginning of a kind of embodied listening. As Irigaray writes,

> Listening to the other is not only to hear some information from him or her. Rather it is to listen to the words of the other as to something unique, especially irreducible to my own world, as to something new and still unknown. In genealogical or hierarchical relations, the elder is supposed to know the younger and only listens to this younger within the horizon of an existing language and truth. It is not yet to listen to the other as other. Such a listening requires me to listen to the other as to the revelation of a truth that has yet to manifest itself, this of the other and of their world. Instead of hearing this truth as something which already belongs to my past, the question is of opening myself to a future that has not yet happened, and that I venture to welcome. (2015, 260)

In order to clear a way to listening to the other, we are in the position that we ought to remain open to hearing something different from what we imagine the other saying, to welcome a

different way of thinking and of being from our own. If we are ready for that, then perhaps we might be able to create something genuinely new. To accomplish this, it would be helpful to be educated from a young age to understand not only the meaning of words, but what it means to be in relation to another human being, one who is different, especially one who is of a different sex.

But what will also help is if the child has a deeper awareness of herself. To teach the child to attend to her senses, to her breath, and to nature, we can give a child access not only to her skill in relating to others, but also in relating to herself with self-affection. In order to meet with the other, not only is it necessary that I remain open to her singular gestures, but that I maintain a repose within myself that persists even in my relation with the other. What is necessary for self affection is to be, first, allowed to be with oneself. The current culture (and this has been true for some time) has the tendency to interdict the relation with the self, to drive a wedge between me and myself by an insistence on claiming me for its own purposes. I am perpetually on the outside of myself, always aiming to fulfill some abstract imperative that is more or less alien to me. This is especially true for women who are expected to fulfill the goals and plans of others, who are entrusted to care for others, or otherwise provide materially for the humans surrounding them. But it is also true for men and boys in that they find that they must always search outside themselves for a means to relate to themselves. Women and girls, and men and boys, ought to be allowed to be with themselves, and in particular to sense themselves, especially through touch. There should be a calm moment for children to gather themselves, away from the demands of others, to feel with themselves, their own being. Then we might be able to approach the other while maintaining our relation with ourselves. This can remake the possibility of communicating with the other in a language that is not predetermined. As Irigaray writes,

> Language, then, reaches another status and it needs other properties. It must respect the life of each one, paying attention to silence and breath which make this possible. Generally, language has been uprooted from its generation in the present, from its connection with the energy of my own and the other's body, and from that of the surrounding world. This prevents our flesh from becoming words, words that respect each other and are mindful of silence and breath that render a living and sharing in difference possible. Such words remain tactile and do not stop with designating a reality, a truth, the objects or things outside the body, or with being subservient to possession, or the acquisition of a property exterior to it. (2015*,* 262-263)

If we are capable of doing this, we open the possibility of change itself within ourselves, develop our ability to transcend ourselves in an intersubjective relation with another, to be really in community with another. If we are able to develop our ways of relating to children by teaching them the capacity for attending to touch while communicating with another, we engender the possibility that future generations will be more capable of being in relation with one another, maintaining a relation with themselves, and their origins. What Luce Irigaray enjoins us to do is to address children, and also all human beings, in a new way, to build together a new world, to construct together a new way of being human together:

> In communicating, then, touching intervenes, a touching which respects the other, paying to him, or her, a careful attentiveness, including a carnal attentiveness. Such a touching calls for us to take care of the sensible qualities of speech, of the tone of voice, the modulations and rhythm of discourse, the semantic and phonic choice of words. It also requires a syntax which prefers the question to the imperative, chooses predicates manifesting an intentionality compatible with that of the other, privileges verbs favoring dialoguing or doing together, avoids transitive forms that might reduce the other to an object, etc. The words try to draw the other to the place of communication with, to the site of the heart and still sensible words. With this sort of speech, there is no longer a division between sensibility and intelligence, and the opposition between activity and passivity, in each one and between one another, no longer subsists—two things that did not contribute to the reciprocity between the speaking subjects. (2015, 262-263)

It is not only a matter of changing the way we speak to children, but how we relate them on a global level. The way we, ourselves, speak and listen is also essential to developing our capacity

for relating to children and teaching them. Both by example and explicitly, we need to show them how to speak in a way that is dialogical, that respects the two subjects who are being with each other, and the relation between the two. If we can succeed a little bit in doing this—beginning with the small relation between adult and child—we create hope that a community can be formed, for us in the present, and for our children in the future.

2.3 Interactions between Family, and Politics

The State, according to Irigaray, intends to reduce the community in which all are equal, but also homogeneous: few are permitted to maintain the difference and singularity that invited the intervention by authority in the first place (2002a, 131-145). The institutions that attempt to address the social changes that result from migration and globalization follow along only after radical alterations have already occurred at the level of the family. Men and women from different cultures fall in love and begin to form homes together. Children are born or are brought into families within which are already a mixing of cultures. Children attend school with those who are different from them: culturally, racially, in capabilities, and otherwise. In her book, *Between East and West*, in the chapter entitled "Mixing: a Principle for Refounding Community," Irigaray writes, "Looking closely at this, do we not find ourselves faced with laboratories where, in miniature, the historical becoming of humanity is worked out? Cultural elements that children would have learned with difficulty all year long at school are offered to them at home with friends, as bits of daily life" (2002a, 134). Rather than looking to an external source for the imposition of an order with an abstract model for the integration of society and the structuring of

a community where "I" becomes a mere instance in a homogeneous multiplicity of a "we," that does not take into consideration difference, Irigaray asks instead, that the resources already inherent to the situation be called upon instead. But, she warns, "Recognition cannot mean reducing the two to the same" (136). Moreover, the evolving nature of the empirical family in recent times is already unsanctioned by any external authority, leaving behind many of the requirements and expectations of reproducing a culture of "us." By that I mean: keeping property between a "we" that aims to maintain dominion by a paternal authority, with rights and ownership that remain in a state of equilibrium (2002a, 93-104). This is achieved by the State keeping members of a community in a condition of undifferentiated nature, especially on the level of sexuate difference (105-111). This, among many things in the context of mixing in the family, leads Irigaray to ask, for instance, "Thus, a couple formed by a white woman and a black man can, from the fact of its being multiracial, become a site of civic education for the surpassing of instinct, be it innate or acquired (…) If difference has nourished desire, why not respect it?" (136). Irigaray suggests that the respect for difference must occur not merely at the level of sentiments alone, but it must be enacted at the level of civil law, encoding as a matter of objective right not a neutral, abstractly universal law based on the presumption of the global applicability of masculine rights to a natural subject, but specific rights defined explicitly in relation to each sex. Irigaray points out that conferring only neutral rights to all would mean that neither the man nor the woman could enjoy a civil identity either in politics or in law (2002a, 117-119)

The construction of laws of civil identity is not an exercise founded upon a morality derived from a neutral rationality. It begins, rather with a recognition of existence, and co-

existence with an other whose being, whose identity, and whose transcendence is irreducible to my own. In short, laws of civil identity should begin with an affirmation of sexuate difference. But the insight that leads to the institution of, and especially the impetus for these laws, can have a sensible source that takes on a symbolic as well as a cosmic significance, one that allows for the communication between domains which have for a long time remained in a dichotomous rather than a dialectical relation, such as: the domestic and the political, the concrete and the universal, the sensible and the transcendental, the natural and the cultural. One of Irigaray's insights about the carnal could be related to her observation that, ". . . all attraction is founded upon a difference, an 'unknown' of the desiring subject, beginning with what pushes the boy and the girl, the man and woman toward each other. Would not conviviality between citizens improve if it involved discussing our taste for what differs from the self? Why exclude from the composition of society this leavening agent of connection?" (136).

Founding Myth of the Patriarchal Family

To increase the depth of our understanding the importance of this cultural possibility and to better appreciate the significance of re-founding civil society upon an affirmation and a rethinking of the identities and reactions of man to woman, let us turn to the myth of the patriarchal family. The family functions as both the locus of the degeneration of the relations between a man and a woman as well as a privileged place where those relations can be repaired, rethought and reborn. In a similar way that the return to the self after an encounter with radical transcendence is a return to a changed self, returning to a family, but a family founded upon a

different basis could (re-)kindle the generative fire of a hearth that respects both man and woman. Something has been undertaken with the expectation of discovering in the interiority of the family something new, a springing-forth of possibilities, an opening which had been closed by an absolute that decreed submission to a single masculine will or law. This absolute could be represented by the dominion of the law of a single God, or by the law of the State, or the father, as creator and master of the family, enclosing within his domain the subjects of the family, namely the women and children.

In her essay, "Between Myth and History: the Tragedy of Antigone," in *In the Beginning, She Was* (2012) Irigaray discusses how the ancient foundation of the family under matriarchy, based on natural right is challenged in Sophocles' tragic play, by the character of Creon, who imposes a patriarchal decree which has nothing to do with natural generation. It is an artificial construction upon the family in which woman and children are enclosed, and which enacts a separation between the public and the private. Antigone, "in no way wills the perturbation of the order of the city," notes Irigaray. On the contrary, "[s]he has to obey a higher order unwritten law, which the new order embodied by Creon intended to abolish" (118). We observe the entrance of this higher, natural order Antigone's insistence upon the burial of her brother Polynices, against the word of Creon, her uncle, brother of her father, Oedipus, before she marries Haemon, Creon's son. This resistance leads, significantly, to her imprisonment and eventual death. Antigone's brother, Irigaray observes,"represents a singular concrete sexuate identity that must be respected as such: 'as the son of her mother'" (118) Polynices is the "son of her mother" because as the younger son, he does not inherit the father's property, and, he was the son that Polynices' mother, Jocasta, Oedipus' wife desired (128). When the play begins, Creon

decrees that because Polynices is a traitor; his body must be left to decay outside of the city (Sophocles 1949). It is Antigone's respect for Polynices' identity as a brother that obligates her on a spiritual and ethical level to protect him "from the derision and decay of being eaten away, from the regression to animality through being devoured by birds of prey or other carnivores, from endless wandering as a ghost deprived of burial." Antigone dusts Polynices' body with dirt, giving him a symbolic burial, and securing for him, "the memory of a valid sexual identity, and not just of an anonymous and neutralized bodily matter" (Irigaray 2012, 119).

By doing this, Antigone respects the natural order not yet neutralized by Creon's law, both patriarchal and artificial. The natural law respects the distinctly natural aspects of humanity connected by blood, engendering differentiation and fertilization. The law of the father expresses his traditional right to a neutralizing reproduction of the same: the right of property. As Irigaray says, "The law or the duty Antigone defends at the risk of her life includes three aspects that are linked together: respect for the universe and living beings, respect for the order of generation and not only genealogy, and respect for the order of sexuate difference" (118). Polynices' specifically sexuate identity is at issue for Antigone in a way that is repeated as figured in her relation to her fiancé. It is not the sublimation of an explicit or even restrained sexual relation to her fiancé. Rather her duty exists as a natural and genealogical inheritance, not just from the father or the relation to the father as engendering in woman, but as a relation and inheritance from the desire of the mother as re-symbolized in the generation of Antigone's mother's son. To deny Polynices a spiritual burial in the relation proper to his genealogical relation, especially to his mother, amounts to reducing and neutralizing his identity: he is "one" of the neutered, not the "he" and "him" of his sexuate identity and relations, especially to those to whom he is related by blood

(119).

For Antigone, Irigaray writes, “humanity is still two: man and woman, and this duality, already existent in the natural order, must be respected, as sort of frame, before the fulfillment of sexual attraction or desire” (119). Whereas in the relation of husband and wife, the patriarchal order can take over to dominate rather than create an alliance between matriarchal and patriarchal traditions; the wife is conscripted into the role as mother: as a replacement for the husband’s mother, a respite in nature to which man retreats from his role as representative of the universal (119), and as a natural resource for the reproduction of the man’s blood and immortality. The relation between brother and sister is one that concerns the singular, balanced horizontal relation arising directly from generation and that concerns in particular the singularity of blood relations: “Between sister and brother, genealogy becomes the generation of two different horizontal identities: appearance of the transcendence of sexuate identity with respect to the body” (133).

For Antigone, “[…] without placing herself in relation to the different sexuate identity of her brother, she cannot marry another man, and while she could not substitute any one for her brother, this brother being unique for her, she could marry another man” (119). By insisting upon imprisonment on the burial of her brother, Antigone is respecting a cosmic order belonging to the tradition of matriarchy that respects an ordered, differentiated nature: “a comprehensive order that includes nature and living beings, the gods and humans” (119). It is not how the term “nature” is referred to in modern Western culture, which has repudiated the cosmic order to “an undifferentiated natural world” (119). Antigone’s task in particular is to maintain a “delicate balance between two gods and two worlds,” (120) that of the god of light and heaven, Zeus, and

the god of the dark and the underworld, Hades. In doing so, she attempts to sustain a natural order which bonds all beings and keeps in harmony the relation between man and the gods, as well as the gods with one another. This state preserves a suitable environment for all living beings. To favor a burial of her brother, Antigone privileges her respect for the cosmic order (the natural law) over Creon's neutral and artificial abstract decree which insists on hierarchy and indifference. Her task is "to endeavor not to break the possible passage between two worlds, a passage that not only a dead brother needs, but also, more generally, is needed to uphold the harmony of the whole cosmos" (120). Antigone cannot achieve this respect for life because her desire to do so is thwarted. In short, she is denied a divine in the feminine, denied "accomplishing life and making it blossom" (124). As Irigaray writes,

> Antigone cannot reach the stage of divine fulfillment because the law concerning life is not respected: with regard to the cosmic order, with regard to the generational order, with regard to the sexuate order. She was waiting for the divine blossoming of her life, her love. But this could only happen after a respect for a cultivation of her living surroundings, after giving thanks to those who brought her into the world, after securing a valid memory for her brother. Without taking into the unwritten laws regarding these dimensions of our existence, she cannot attain another level in becoming divine. (124).

Antigone's love for "life and the living world, living beings" is why she insists on a proper burial for Polynices, not because she nihilistically elevates death above life: in fact, death above life is a value of patriarchy: patriarchy imposes an artificial and abstract order which, in its reified form, demands the total submission of life. Sometimes this is under the State, or before one God who is expected to rule the totality of all beings. In contrast, according to Irigaray, the cosmic order respects horizontality, to which Antigone appeals, preserving, as it does, "living

beings and their dwellings" (124). To recognize this is to begin to comprehend the world's need for the reestablishment of a respect for the natural order: for an enactment of laws in the present which openly supports the preservation of a natural order and a place for life, in particular, but not limited to, human life.

As Irigaray convincingly argues, "All of our Western patriarchal system amounts [to] killing without openly committing murder: that is to say, little by little depriving us of the surroundings that allow us to live" (125). She suggests that the institution of a legal right to maintain values originally belonging to the matriarchal cosmos would serve not only to help establish a different harmonious relation between sexes and generations, but with the natural world as well. The establishment of a right to sexuate identity and to a civil identity belongs to each man and woman. Genealogical relations allow an appropriate perspective on the whole, beginning with a meditation on the cosmic order and the identity of each sex within their relation to the cosmos. The rights of each person is based on their own natural generation within the cosmos, first within the maternal world, followed by their own engendering of life.

To respect this generational order on the cosmic as well as individual level, requires a respect for generational order but a different one than what has come to be known under patriarchy. Such a respect for maternal genealogical order demands a concern for life and for relationships, beginning, not with property, but with life itself. Irigaray argues, "To be a living being needs a certain surrounding world: it is not possible without air, but also the light and warmth of the sun, and the fertility of the earth. To be someone really living also calls for limits. Limits are provided by the necessities of life itself, among other things its surroundings, but also

by relations with other living beings, in particular those of ones' species. Relational limits between humans are provided through genealogy and sexuate difference" (2012, 127).

If "the lack of a burial for Polynices harms life for all living beings, breaking the economy of relations between earth and sky, air and sun" (122), then the lack of a limit for each sexuate subject harms life for all humans because it disrupts the relational limits that provide a context for living. Without defining a limit for each human being on the basis of a living identity and a transcendental for each one, based on his or her sensible being, we then lack the means for preserving the limit between self and other, between myself and an other human being, between myself and other beings, and myself and what is not myself.

The limits that life provides are tied to what limits us in terms of what is necessary for living, including, but crucially not limited to that which we require for survival. Our relational limits exist in terms of how we can engender with respect to our own bodies, our bodily style, given our specific morphology, especially depending on our sex. These relate to our capacities for both self-affection, our own abilities to remain ourselves and return to ourselves, and also our capacities for hetero-affection, our abilities to relate to an other. Without limits understood as belonging differently and specifically to men as men, and women as women, Irigaray argues, human beings lack the capacity to relate to themselves as singular subjects. They also lack the capacity to relate to the other as someone distinctly different, embodying characteristics which do not pertain to me, which concretely and sensibly exceed my capacities, or lack traits which I embody, or belong to or embody a universal to which I do not have access, except as relating to the other in difference. To deny these differences, especially as they relate to generation in the

family, amounts to a reduction to a neutrality that does not amount to fullness and living being of either one.

A family construction that emphasizes cohesiveness over singularity, that follows abstract moral rules emphasizing conformity as opposed to ethics that emphasize difference, subjects all those within its boundaries to a homogeneity suitable to no one. “To relate to things,” writes Irigaray, “what is more to others in not favored by the family background, and the other as other does not really exist in the family community (…) their being-with then is defined by this belonging, including with regard to feelings, rights and the obligations which follow from it” (2017, 32-33).

What is particularly lacking in the patriarchal family and for which the figure of Antigone signifies, is the balance between and passage between nature and culture, and that of the individual life to an other. What is lacking, therefore, as well is the possibility of being and remaining in two: of maintaining a separation and a difference between the one and the other. This happens at the level of the individuals within the family who are neutralized with respect to one another, partly immediately through the homogeneity produced by their collective subjection to the abstract law of the father, but also by their reduction to the immediacy of the natural materiality comprised of carrying out of the work necessary to merely survive as opposed to blossoming in each one’s singularity and relational life. After all, as Irigaray writes in *Building a New World* (2015), “human energy cannot be of use only to grow as is, or at least seems to be, the case for the plant world. It is also a relational energy that needs to be learned, to be educated in a human way” (273).

Thus our approach to the family and the family structure must evolve, and not only at an institution level. The "human values" that inform the foundation of the family need to be more than a set of supposedly natural and abstractly "universal" rights that concern only the most basic needs securing the survival. If we really examine them, that pertains above all to animality, and to survival at the level of a presumedly "human" species, within which the family and ultimately each individual is only a means to a reproductive end. The morality that is applied within this structure serves only to repress the instincts that are the only remaining elements of life subjects to this sort of de-humanization. What is needed is rather the cultivation of ethical sensibilities that can account for the singularity and transcendence of each one in the their peculiarity, as well as to a rich relational life with another outside of the confines of a homogeneous communal order.

Some thinkers, Marx, for instance, recognized the division of labor between the sexes, but then devoted little thought to address it (1996, 19). Hegel perceived a lack of cultivation of the approach to relations between the sexes but resorted to a logic of simple opposition between the sexes to resolve this lack (20-1). Irigaray emphasis that "it is not a matter of changing this or that with a horizon already defined as human culture. It is a question of changing the horizon itself—of understanding that our interpretation of human identity is both theoretically and practically wrong" (20). For Hegel, the sexes relate as a pair of opposites, with each ones' strengths and capacities being contrary to the other one, but these identities only exist within the family context, thus leaving the sexed identity completely to the natural, that is, in this case, within the family domain. "This is still the case for us," claims Irigaray: "There are still no rights proper to women and men" (21). She continues, "The rights of these abstract citizens are to

varying degrees, modeled upon or derived from religious rights and duties, in particular patriarchal ones (…). We do not as yet have civil laws pertaining to real persons concerning women and men" (21).

If our failing with respect to culture concerns "the lack of ethical relations between the sexes" and as Irigaray says, "in our failure to address this we lapse into an infinite number of ethical tasks" (20), then in order to remedy this state of affairs, it is necessary that we return to what could be considered the more practical wisdom of the embodied relations between individual, irreducible members of the family recognized in their singularity. Recognition should be based first on their sexuate identity, that is their identity not just as a member of a class of similarly endowed individuals from a biological standpoint, but as individuals who in themselves universalize the carnal relationships that are the intimate and public qualities and relational possibilities specific to each sex. This entails a particular way of engendering, a relation of difference or sameness with respect to the mother, and a distinct style of self-affection and hetero-affection corresponding to being a man or a woman. Secondly, we must recognize these individuals and their rights and duties respecting these relations in difference (and sameness) with ethics and civil laws, starting with recognizing a civil identity for each sex.

Only then can we begin to work out the basis for culture that is appropriate not only to our survival but to our blossoming, in particular, in love. The elaboration of a cultural context in which education, family life and political life all contribute (rather than detract from) the blossoming of each person, leads to the construction of relational spiritual identities that could collectively and individually bring to fruition the possibilities lying dormant in a culture that remains in natural immediacy and/or abstract neutrality. So doing would provide for the potential

to build a world culture based on the universality, not of human kind as neutral, but recognizing the universality of each sex, not forgetting the solitude that each one faces as the singular embodiment of their own sexuate identity and their own becoming in relation to the opening of their horizon to meeting with the other(s).

Irigaray uses the figures of Dionysus and Apollo to understand the forces at work culturally that serve to polarize us between abstraction and natural immediacy in her essay, "Perhaps Cultivating Touch Can Still Save Us" (2015, 272-283). Dionysus embodies the protein flux of a natural materiality and immanence that constantly transforms in the ever-changing wilderness of a diffuse and formless immediacy. He is a constant fermentation of living matter without end. Apollo, Irigaray sees as a stone-like-fixed form without growth or movement, bloodless and immobile without generation, a cold statue fixed in eternal ideality.

Irigaray recognizes a way to overcome an unconscious oscillation between animality and an anonymous and indifferent objectivity. For Irigaray, "it is a matter of abandoning a path of knowledge that is anarchical and abstract" and discovering instead, "nature as human nature is *two*: masculine and feminine and that it requires a double subjectivity, a double 'being I,' in order to be cultivated" (2002a, 98). It is true that a dialectic involving an insurmountable difference is required to sustain a moment that is not exhausted by an eventual reconciliation that moves into an inert repetitiveness. But the "being-I" and "being-we" of "a" Western subjectivity founded on artificiality—an artificial culture and an artificial division between mind and nature—ultimately serves to alienate us from life and an accomplished humanity. Becoming conscious, rather, through a dialectic founded upon an "insurmountable difference" between the one and an other,

between two subjects who come to be and who engender differently, who relate differently, could occasion such a becoming. Irigaray explains,

> Such a path for the becoming of consciousness is without doubt the most civilized and the most spiritual that presents itself to us today. It joins together the empirical necessities and transcendental necessities. It binds in fact, in a new dialectical relation, nature and culture, making of the difference of nature—of gender, of age, of race, for example—a difference surmountable by an absolute consciousness. In this way, the objectivity of an unsurpassable difference will always be opposed to the domination of a consciousness. This consciousness will remain tied to nature, to concrete singularity, that is to say it will remain incarnated, escaping abstract universality. (2002a, 98)

The difference between sexes is, from the point of view of human subjectivity, a natural and cultural relation and individuation based upon what is genuinely appropriate to human consciousness as it is a living becoming of carnal beings—"the most universal and irreducible difference" (98). And as Irigaray argues, "It [the difference between the sexes] appears as the empirical as well as transcendental condition for guaranteeing the possibility of a new epoch of history" or, as she says, "more simply, for assuring for humanity a becoming" (99). Venerating a privileged difference proper to consciousness itself, a difference with not only a basis in nature, but one that inspires a moving toward a transcendence that exists as immanently human, offers the hope of a future that allows humanity to form a relation to itself, which supports both our human identity(s) and our transformation. "Indeed," writes Irigaray, "it imposes a difference on consciousness, and one that is insurmountable, thus a becoming without end" (99). Rather than having "as a partner in the dialectical movement a process more or less inanimate (…) the dialectic becomes, or becomes again, dialogue between two consciousnesses" (99).

This leads to the definition of "the other as irreducible to oneself and the horizon of subjectivity with the other as its condition, rather than a horizon defined only by its relation to death, the limit of consciousness being found in that it, 'is two'" (101).

This observation leads also to the recognition of a new objectivity, one that does not consist of a fundamentally mechanical materiality or exteriority with respect to consciousness, not "science, nor religion, nor even art objectivities, which according to Hegel can testify to an accomplished subjectivity, but rather the mediation of a law that guarantees the identity of persons in their singularity. Such a legislation will have for its task protecting, thanks to an objective guardianship, the difference between subjects, particularly the difference of gender" (102). Such a set of laws would provide not only for the protection of a relation of "being I" and "being we;" it would maintain a conscious relation that allows humanity and human consciousness to become in a human relation. This human relation would be based on a carnal subject, a sexuate subject whose limits are recognized as belonging to their difference, as opposed to a universal. It would offer to consciousness(es) and human subject(s) a way for being with others, especially within the family that respects their singularity by first respecting its members' identity as sexuate subjects, an identity that is shared by other subjects of the same sex, but not by all of humanity. This respect for subjective difference would prevent an assumption of totality by any identity, or by a supposedly natural identity as has been the case for the masculine subject projected onto all of humanity in its own presumed neutrality and universality.

Sexuate identity places each singular subject in a frame that allows each to enact a relational becoming with respect both to subjects who share a transcendental subjective identity

and to subjects who embody a radically different subjective transcendental, e. g. to others of the same and of a different sex. It respects subjects in their carnal specificity by recognizing their bodily difference(s), but also by recognizing their specific relational milieu, especially with their mother. "Community," Irigaray writes, "is then composed of autonomous individuals in conscious relation to one another. It does not come down to an undifferentiated whole of citizens organized by an instinct, a will, an idea. It does not rely on a "leader who resembles the patriarch who assures the unity of a family founded on an already artificial naturalness" in which "each member, the man, the woman, or the children, alienates his or her own singularity into order to form a whole of which the side called natural will remain 'private,' subtracted from the civil community, and the side called 'cultural' or conceptual will become public, visible and will be governed by a male citizen or, in the best of cases, a so-called neuter citizen" (103).

Community would thus be founded on the differences between citizens and the relations between them rather than submission to "one truth, only one subjectivity, only one leader" (180). Community could be then comprised by couples who embody horizontal relations with each other who can take responsibility for ensuring the passage "from instinct to culture" (100). Such a set of laws and rights can ensure that no one subject's cultivation is accomplished at the expense of any other. It would "allow each citizen to become and to cultivate himself or herself, on the condition of respecting the cultivation of the other sex" (102). In particular, this would require re-founding the family on a joint contract between two different subjects, a man and a woman, who decide with regard to themselves and the community, to assure this unit of transition between the 'being I' and the 'being we' that we call the couple" (103).

This re-founding of the family is essential to the development of a new culture that respects citizen in their singularity. To approach politics from the understanding that citizens need objective limits not only with respect to an abstract freedom or an abstract right founded simply on a concept of a too-universal human identity, leaves each citizen bereft of a basis upon which to demand to occupy a position in relation to other citizens. Rather to demand an objective recognition of sexuate rights governing not only their heretofore exclusively public interactions (for instance, guaranteeing that female citizens have the right to vote, hold office, etc. and lead others), but also that the family itself be founded on a partnership that receives support from the culture. This support would be in the form of objective laws guaranteeing not only citizenship for all, but a civil identity enshrined in law, going beyond the universal neuter subject, and defining rights proper to the differing needs of each civilly-protected sexuate identity.

Not only would this reorganization of the civil culture and the family culture respect the needs and capacities of each individual, it would also provide the basis for building social relations and individual being-in-relation. These kinds of relations could lead to the building of a meaningful existence that transcends the everyday labor without abandoning it to the domain of inarticulate natural immediacy. What could be then accomplished is a conscious taking care of the exigencies of daily life. This would also be a spiritual project, realizing the transcendental dimension of desire in the here and now, and would respect the past in the future. Irigaray writes, "The relations will remain concrete, at the empirical and transcendental level, and they will unite the necessities of the moment and those of eternity, without sacrificing any singularity, and while repeating the exigencies of temporal constitution" (104).

This would be the first step in ensuring that each citizen, especially when it comes to the mixing of citizens embodying not only sexuate difference but cultural, racial, generational and other differences, would have an objective basis upon which to found their relations with others. The universality of sexuate difference both unites the fragmentary cultures suffering under capitalism and patriarchy, and at the same time supports an articulation through the multiplicity of horizontal relations among different citizens. Crucially it does this at a collective level, but also at an individual level, allowing for the radical appreciation of an insurmountable difference that we can recognize as the first difference we experience, that of self and other, but taken to the most radical level, the difference between ourselves and a sexuately different other, an other for whom we have no model or plan, who awakens in ourselves a wonder and a desire for transcendence, but also at whose ungraspable difference we pause, ideally at a conscious level, returning to a contemplation of our own singularity, our solitude and singularity as a unified flesh. Irigaray writes, "Such would be one of the mysteries of a love respectful of difference: to intuit or to glimpse an absolute ideal without claiming to realize it objectively or alone" (104).

The possibility of a love awakened by difference is the hope of a culture that lets each one, by providing a frame, preserve their difference, approach others in difference without assimilating them into our own horizon, and without fear of being appropriated by them into theirs. Not only could this be a political appropriation or a political possession, it could happen at the level of the person, the other. These relations participate on the collective level as a microcosm of cultural relations, and as an instance that contributes to the organization of the whole. They also operate at the individual level by realizing the potential or lack of potential within a given cultural context for meeting with other beings open to their difference, to letting

them be, to not appropriating them into our horizon or expelling them because of their unassimilable quality.

This letting-be in difference is possible with the condition that the potential for a mystery and a strangeness that cannot be reduced to anything that belongs to me, strictly speaking, be preserved. Irigaray observes, " (…) if we precisely grasped all that makes the springtime, we would without doubt lose the wondrous contemplation in the face of the mystery of the springtime growth, we would lose the life, the vitality, in which this universal has us participate in without our being able to know or to control where the joy, the force, the desire that animates us comes from. If we could analyze each element of energy that reaches us in the explosion of the spring, we would lose the global state that we experience by bathing in it through all our senses, or whole body our whole soul" (122). Allowing the other to be and to become in their specificity, involves a renunciation of the impulse to appropriate the other, to make them proper in the sense of corresponding to any expectations, to our style of intelligibility, our understanding, our habits, and customs. It amounts to recognizing them in a singularity that cannot at the same time be part of a totality belonging to us or to a homogeneity that we also belong to.

To preserve this privileged place but also a horizontal position for the other demands a different understanding of property. In the patriarchal family, the family was headed by a father who established his identity in the culture by his ownership of property, especially, in a significant way, those proper to him: his wife and children. In order to change this state of affairs we must not succumb to the dichotomous oscillations between an undifferentiated natural immediacy and a technocratic scientific plutocracy based abstraction. We must re-imagine

property as that which is proper to us as subjects, beginning with recognizing our sexuate specificity and our specific relational belonging, especially as they emerge in family relations. Who we are is more important to our development as citizens, as subjects, and to the development of our culture. Preserving the possibility to relate to others in difference amounts to preserving the very possibility of our humanity as such. Irigaray argues, "The state that springtime, certain landscapes, and certain cosmic phenomena provoke in us, sometimes takes place at the beginning of an encounter with the other" (123).

> It is the first moments of drawing near to one another that the other moves us the most, touching us in a global unknowable, uncontrollable manner. Then too often, we make the other our own—through knowledge, sensibility, culture. Entering our horizon, our world, the other loses the strangeness of his or her appeal. (…) Awakening us, by their very alterity, their mystery, by the infinite they still represent for us. It is when we do not know the other, or when we accept that the other remains unknowable to us that the other illuminates us in some way (…) The totality of the other, like that of springtime, like that of the surrounding world sometimes, touches us beyond all knowledge, all judgement, all reduction to ourselves, to our own, to what is in some manner proper to us. (2002a, 123-4)

Concerning our age, an age that more than any past one is characterized by migrations and mixing cultures, Irigaray comments, "never without doubt has an age spoken so much of the other as ours does" (124). Along with the responsibility to recognize this other, to reserve a space for him or her to inhabit in their difference, but also to build a passage to meet them while providing for own own dwelling, it is necessary to limit, and to recognize the natural conditions giving rise to natural and cultural subjective limits. Irigaray cautions, "(…) too often, this other is reduced to an object of study, to what is at stake in diverse socio-political strategies aiming in some manner to integrate the other into us, into our world. (…) The transcendence of the you as other is not yet, really, part of our culture" (125).

The tendency toward appropriation is enhanced by the patriarchal history of ownership, including, as we well see now, the all-to-common situation that the family is seen to be the property of the father, that he alone has a right to a relation with “his” children, the mother being subsumed under his civil identity. An important part of the substance of sexuate rights could be the establishment of laws guaranteeing the right of a relation of the children to each the mother and the father.

To compose or recompose the family would clearly have significant effects on relations among its members. And it would certainly have political effects. Rethinking the foundation of the family would also depend on changing and recomposing the culture to support a different way of family life, in particular, by changing the status of women by developing two civil identities: one for man and one for woman; and beginning the family with two, not insisting on a third, either a child or some authority, to bring a family into being. This recomposition of the family would have effects on all the relations between pairs of its members by reorganizing their relations: liberating women to freely relate with one another, promoting the value of horizontal order against hierarchical relations, creating a supportive and sustainable context for intimate relations.

III. Self-Affection and Hetero-Affection

The family composition and environment is deeply tied to the possibility of all sorts of relations and relationships that are necessary to developing a form of co-belonging with others in a way that promotes the blossoming of each member. This co-belonging is in a significant way formed on the basis of the possibility of mutually enjoying touch without domination or possession, a possibility that both engenders and depends on the existence, first and foremost, of a horizontal relation between the sexuate couple.

But to what extent and in what ways the composition of the family informs the ways of perceiving, the ways of touching others, and the ways of relating to ourselves is also crucial. Once we begin to establish some context for relating in a horizontal way, intimate relations can come to manifest themselves differently, and it is a necessary task to think through the meaning of these differently occurring relational levels. We might begin to ask: What can we expect of ourselves in relations with others who are different from us? And how can we maintain the capability of relating to others not only in an externally non-hierarchical way, but also in a way that, whether with family or not, does not lead to our losing a sense of boundaries? And relatedly, how can it be possible to relate to an other or to others without turning them into a fixed object for me, a reflection, or a projection that feeds a narcissistic vision? It is important to explicitly understand on a philosophical level how it can instead be possible to maintain a distinction, a difference, and separation between one and an other, especially a sexually different other, and especially for women, who traditionally have been caught up within images or specular projections of male subjects while still maintaining the possibility of appropriate relations with

the other. It is important to think through how subjects, especially sexuately different subjects, can remain two when meeting together, when living together, and when sharing a world together.

Irigaray answers these questions in a wide variety of ways, but a critically important beginning or source of relations flows from how the relations of the family are organized. Indeed relations involving touch between human beings have a history in family life on both an individual and collective level. A person's capacity to relate through touch has a history within everyone's own life, dating back to their infancy, and all of our touch-full relations have a background within the cultural tradition in which we live. Part of the struggle one faces as a subject is to deal with these conditions and to find ways of meeting others given one's immersion in families, in their world, and in their own particular subjective conditions, especially sexuate ones. But these are also the basis upon which we encounter other living beings, especially other humans. To understand how one is able to relate with an other who is different, it is helpful to start with thinking through the caress by a mother of her child. Within the patriarchal family, the caress between a mother and child is not valued or allowed to function autonomously. For reasons discussed in the previous chapter, the relations under patriarchy between mother and child take place under the salient authority of the father. They fall prey to being conditioned by their functioning within an undifferentiated natural immediacy, or they occur only with the mediation of the paternal (or institutional) authority. In principle, with the context of patriarchal familial relations, a caress or touch from mother to child is not an autonomous act initiated freely by a woman. For the caress between mother and child to exist in its fullness, the two, and each one to the other, must be able to meet together in an autonomous way, and in particular, a woman must have the authority and the right to her own parental relation with her child. Within the

tradition of patriarchal family, this relation could be interrupted by the assumption that the mother's identity is her whole subjective self. In effect, she has no autonomous subjective identity or position from which to meet the child since she is supposed to serve as the ground of the man, and of man's material reproduction. She is supposed to touch the child as mother only, not as autonomous woman, and is prevented from encountering the child except as mediated by the father's will and desire. She has no permitted desire of her own. She touches the child as a producer. If the mother and children are bound up into the fathers identity, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to live autonomously at all, let alone for the mother to touch the child as an independent subject.

Another difficulty facing the mother and child and their ability to relate stems from the Western tradition's own erasure of the mother and the maternal from individual and collective history, nature, and the poetical sphere. The Western tradition of man has not emancipated mothers and the maternal as active-originators and autonomous creators of life and the world. Nor has it emancipated women as desiring subjects who are themselves subjects independently and distinct from being mothers. Women, and women who are mothers, are forgotten as creators, as others, and as subjects. Thus the first other that each and every human encounters, a woman who touches the life inside her womb and holds the infant when it is born is considered a non-entity, or is transformed and translated into every other exteriority that has either no existence, exists in abstraction, or subsists and is subsumed under a generalized matrix of nature. For an important discussion how these relations between the male subject and an exterior "beyond" or *korē* function, see Irigaray's essay "Plato's Hysteria," (1985a) in which the cave in *The Republic* functions as replacement womb for the lost maternal relation, a relation that was sacrificed in

order to maintain a sense of ascendancy of the male subject over nature and to ensure his place in a vertical hierarchy and communication with the divine. But this founding act of Western culture, mirrored in the founding act of the family, this original matricide and simultaneous erasure of women, operates on many levels at once. It manifests in intimate relations with the denial of touch, and as a way of forgetting that first intimate touch with the mother, elevating instead vision, which helps to privilege distance, abstraction, and verticality, which are all necessary to the preservation of the ascendency of the One, and the immortality, a-temporality, and a-materiality of a masculine subject.

The Caress by a Mother of a Child

Because the patriarchal economy demands that woman and children be incorporated as belonging the general material of the property of the home, relations of touch between mother and children are caught in a fusional unity. Mother and child become one in their role as property of the patriarchal household, and they take their place within the general category of the identity of the father. Not only the father's name combines them together into a subset of his identity, but their identities are made to support the father's as reproducing his identity in the next generation and preserving the sameness of his lineage. Mothers, because they are forced to remain exclusively in the identity of motherhood and do not have their independent identities as women, are not autonomous and independent within the fusional unity of the household. But neither are they then independent with respect to the man within "his" house. Crucially, for the question of

this chapter, for the achievement of some relation that allows the self to return to the self, or that allows one to pass from a relation to the self to a relation with another, the first relation between the self and an other, the relation between the mother and child, is prevented, not by removing the child from the mother, but by fusing the one with the other, under the identity of the father.

If the mother and child remain identified with the father as his property or lineage, even though they may be physically together, and may touch one another, first prenatally, then later as mother and infant, there is a lack of autonomous subjective identity on the part of the mother that stems from her subjection to the man-father. This lack of identity prevents her relation to the children from being autonomous. She touches the children both physically, and through her emotional relation with the other family members, as "his" maternal support, as a member of his unity, charged with carrying out his reproductive destiny. It might be said that this state of affairs is changing with women who gain some civil autonomy, for instance entering the work-force and acquiring some economic and material independence. But women, both on a subjective level, from within the relation in the home with the father and children, and from the perspective of the broader culture, are still identified with motherhood and maternity. To fully change this state of affairs, it would be necessary to rebuild the culture as founded on the horizontal relations between men and women. So doing would allow us to consider an economy, including a physical economy, between the mother and child. Without an independent identity, women, women who are mothers, and children, cannot occupy independent subjective positions from which to touch one another.

To establish the possibility of an autonomous economy between mother and child, the value of the physical interaction between a woman and her child must begin to be valued on its

own. It must be valued independently of whatever healthful effects are supposed to result from the mother's touch, or from the virtuousness imagined to belong to a woman "sacrificing" for her children, which usually amounts to a sacrifice for the father, and of herself, to a patriarchal economy of reproduction. Rather, the caressing by a woman of her children must be revealed to be of value on its own, and as the crucial relational activity between two subjects whose right and wish it is to relate to one another.

For a radical change in the culture to be accomplished, more than the caress between the mother and child needs to be made possible. The caress between the mother and child is one step in the re-founding of a culture on relations between two, and the mother-child couple is not only one sort of couple. But nevertheless, the relation between mother and child is the first relation experienced by a subject and a stage in the life every human being. As long as the relation between mother and child is lived as fusional, caressing of the child by the mother cannot fully amount to her free relation, either to her son or her daughter. This undifferentiated fusional state of affairs can manifest in the quality of the touch, as well as the felt experience of the touch, for both mother and child, and the memory of that touch. The capability to touch as an independent subject, from occupying an autonomous place as subject, is made manifest in the relation to one's self, and in the relation to an other. To recognize the autonomy of the mother-child couple and to provide a context and protection for an autonomous physical economy between mother and child is a step in breaking free from a patriarchal economy. When a mother is able to touch her child as an autonomous human subject with a subjective identity that can be lived as part of an independent sexuate identity with a corresponding autonomous civil identity, then a part of this lived subjective identity is to freely touch others. To be autonomous, in part, for a woman, is

also to be able to touch her children as a free-flowing and human expression of her lived subjective being. This means that she is able to touch, not as a part of the natural immediacy of the home, but as wholly integrated subject whose will and bodily expression compose themselves in the unity that reaches out to an other, in this case her child, through touch and other felt expressions, though language, and more generally, through affective expression.

If we imagine a culture within which these expressions of affection are allowed unimpeded from mother to child without mediation by an outsider, such as any of the specters of the patriarchy—by the father's identity, the projection on the woman of a limited maternal identity, or she and the child's subsumption into a unity in a reduction to animality—this would be a step in building a new culture with conditions that benefit each: the mother, and the child. This culture would allow the mother to take charge of her own subjective identity and creative relation to her children, and to express and share through her emotional wisdom with her own children. And it would allow children to benefit from this sharing, creating a foundation and example for their own subjective relations with others throughout their lives.

This relation with the mother occurs differently whether the child is a boy or a girl, beginning not only with the difference or similarity in bodily morphology, but also the relation to the mode of engendering, according to Irigaray, either by engendering within, as in the case of a woman, or engendering without in the case of a man. Irigaray discusses these relations at length in various places, for instance, in her chapter "The Return" that appears in *Teaching* (2008b) and *In the Beginning She Was* (2012). However, in the cases of both the girl and the boy, Irigaray notes, the perception of a fusional unity between mother and child manifests in the empirical and scientific, wherein the patriarchy invents the idea that there is an empirical fusion between the

mother and the child the form of the placenta. This patriarchal perception of the fusing role of the placenta is mistaken. She writes, “These relations, which the patriarchal imagination often presents (for example, in psychoanalysis) as in a state of fusion, are in fact strangely organized and respectful of the life of both” (1993b, 38). The placental economy is the first (in the case of the infant) and a somewhat unique instance, in the case of the both the mother and child, of recognition and differentiation between a self and an other.

As Irigaray writes in *Je Tous Nous* (1993b), “The placental economy is therefore an organized economy, one not in a state of fusion, which respects the one and the other. Unfortunately, our culture, split off from the natural order—and the scientific methods used to get back to it more often than not accentuate that distance—neglect or fail to recognize the almost ethical character to the fetal relation” (36). In her chapter “On the Maternal Order” (31-38) Irigaray discusses in an interview with Helene Rouch, a biology teacher at the *Lycée Colbert* in Paris, the mediating role that the placenta plays between mother and child, both maintaining their difference and negotiating their relation in such a way that their contact remains beneficial and suitable to each of the two. The placenta itself, formed by the embryo, and of the tissue belonging entirely to the fetus, not of the mother, recognizes, responds, and provides necessary elements to the other in the form of hormones that take over for her own body’s hormones at a certain point in the pregnancy, as well as providing the necessary factors to block, in a localized way, the mother’s immune reaction to the placenta as part of an other, but only after the mother’s initial recognition of the fetus as other (1993b, 41).

In the interview with Rouch, Irigaray asks about the effects that are produced by “the general ignorance of the placental economy on the male cultural imaginary, in particular

regarding the relationship to the so called mother tongue" (1993b, 36). Rouch's answer, which is quoted below, provides another necessary comment on the recognition of, and the value that must be placed on the already intricately-negotiated relation between the mother and child, supposed in our male cultural imaginary to be fusional both before and after birth until the intervention of a third factor. The factor that intervenes between the mother and child is supposed to come, in Rouch's view, according to elements of the male tradition, in the form of language. Helene Rouch's answer:

> First of all, I'll digress to look at psychoanalysis, which justifies the imaginary fusion between a child and its mother by the undeveloped state of the child at birth and by its absolute need of the other, its mother. It's this fusion, implicitly presented as an extension of the organic fusion during pregnancy, which, it would seem, simply has to be broken in order for the child to be constituted as subject. The rupture of this fusion by a third term —whether it's called the father, law, Name of the Father, or something else—should facilitate entry into the symbolic and access to language. This third term supposedly avoids the fusion that would lead into the chaos of psychosis, and is said to guarantee order. But surely all that's needed is to reiterate and mark, on another level, a differentiation that already exists during pregnancy thanks to the placenta and at the moment of birth, as a result of the exit from the uterine cavity? It seems to me that the differentiation between the mother's self and the other of the child, and vice versa, is in place well before it's given meaning in and by language, and the forms it takes don't necessarily accord with those our cultural imaginary relays: loss of paradise, traumatizing expulsion or exclusion, etc. I'm not accusing these forms of the imaginary of being wrong, but of being the only ways of theorizing what exists before language. It makes one wonder about this remarkable blindness to the processes of pregnancy, and especially to the particular role of the placenta, even though nowadays they're quite familiar. (1993b, Helene Rouch, 37)

Thus as Rouch suggests, supporting the point Irigaray is making, the mother is never fused with the child, but the two touch one another not only through contact through the membranes of the sack surrounding the fetus, but also at the site of contact between the placenta and the womb, where nourishment passes. Air (from the blood), as well as hormones factor in providing for the

wellbeing of the fetus, and for the mother. The misunderstanding and misapprehension of this physical but also almost intersubjective relational economy between mother and fetus is one part of the supposition of a fusional unity between mother and child.

Understanding the mediating roles of the placenta and the caress, and providing for the latter's cultivation is an important step in occasioning the potential for creating a culture in which human beings can live together and relate to one another in ways that recognize and encourage the growing of each person and the possibility a political, ethical, and spiritual sharing among different others. Without such a recognition and understanding, we find ourselves foundering in a somewhat unconscious and undifferentiated state of affairs on an intellectual, cultural, and ontological level. The lack of understanding and lack of a practical lived, acknowledged, and cultivated carnal relation between parent and child (especially between mother and child), results in a confused process of maturation for children who may experience their mother's affection inconsistently, or receive it without proper mediation not only on the part of the mother, but also in terms of the broader culture.

The current cultural climate does not recognize the radical gift that the mother bestows upon the child in his or her specificity as a changing, budding human life and carnal subject. The child receives its gestation as a gift from an other, from a woman who happens to be giving this gift of gestation in her role as mother. The distinction and very special relational economy already exists between the two before birth. Once the child is born, the mother gives the special gift of her flesh, her subjectivity, though caressing of the child which the child receives as another kind of nourishment which he or she puts to use, but also as a language, a framework of meaning, that takes on significance, and plays a pivotal role in the child's own growing. By

misunderstanding, and in many cases interfering with, this donation on the part of a woman to her child, those in our culture search in vain for the source of that initial touch—material, emotional, and spiritual—without realizing the original gift that was received through contact with the mother both before and after birth.

Our culture's lack of recognition of this involved and intricate relation between mother and child, and the forgetting of the source of that initial maternal relation lead to a strange sort of ignorance that manifests in myriad ways, notably in our relations with our own selves and with one another. As adults we try to understand and live our relations with the other. Because we do not experience or cannot remember this initial complex relation between (especially) mother and child, including between our own mother and ourselves, we search for the relation. In searching for the meaning that we should be finding in this initial relation, play out the relation, or some version of it, in our relations with others and ourselves, but do so in an unconscious, and ultimately inadequate way.

3.1 Activity and Passivity

One aspect of our relations with others that is affected by this collective and individual forgetting of the maternal touch, is that of activity and passivity. As in the placental relation, there are many dimension already in play, in terms of the activity and passivity between mother and child. When in a patriarchal culture, we consider the relation of mother and child as necessarily undifferentiated, we lose our understanding of certain basic features of relations between subjects.

For instance, many people seek satisfaction in playing with activity and passivity in erotic relationships. In an effort to mediate between activity and passivity, the culture, including psychoanalysis, appear to perceive a split between activity and passivity. This split is acted out, it is thought, by inhabiting roles in a relation of sado-masochism. The supposedly active role is taken by one, and the supposedly passive, by the other. As, as we observe in the texts of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and many other (usually male) thinkers, in erotic relations, the "activity" of the (male) lover is contrasted with the "passivity" of the (female) beloved.[5] This partition and distribution of activity and passivity is displaced between man and woman in the so-called sado-masochistic relation. This apparent split exists precisely because we have not as a culture nor on an individual level understood the subtle relation, especially of touch, between the mother and child, or between two sexuately different others. Without understanding, appreciating, and without living the meaning of the caress between the mother and the child, we develop an artificial manifestation of the split between active and passive in order to provide the mediation that we that could and to some extent already exists in the caress of the mother of her child.

To develop an understanding and a culture of sensitivity, it should be one that could appreciate the sensitivity it requires for the mother to carry another human being in her body, the sensitivity already growing within the child as the child develops within and outside the mother, without appreciating the sensitivity the mother necessarily exercises in the care of this little being. The child is, by necessity, passive, and receptive to a maternal activity practiced creatively by a woman for the benefit of another. To develop such a culture would mean the recognition of

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[5] See discussions of this dynamic in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

a subtle form of activity and passivity surpassing any that is mediated by the artifice of sado-masochism. Thus we can appreciate Irigaray's position that until and unless we, as a culture and as individuals, can comprehend and enact the autonomous access of the mother to her child, we may confusedly play out what could be complex and subtle relations where both men and women take on qualities of artificial activity and passivity, both in public, and in intimacy, with respect to children. But in the subtle, and ideally conscious working-out of the caress by the mother for her children, the way is paved for the child to receive the activity, especially of the mother, and even later, for being conscious of having received it, through education by a culture that values such a relation. The child might then be prepared to enter in a relation with another that is neither exclusively active nor passive, but a complex mixing between the two. The possibility of this rests, according to Irigaray, on an individual level, in the erotic relation with another, and on a political level, insofar as political relations also depend on mediating between activity and passivity and providing a supportive cultural framework to preserve differences that allow for qualitative non-hierarchical relations that do not depend on there being a strict division between active and passive agents. The possibility of achieving an equilibrium between activity and passivity between men and women would be supported by cultivation of the living relation between mother and child, and especially through the caress by the mother of her child.

In essence, our culture privileges sameness over difference, and in that way prefers to attribute the relation of maternity to a father. The mother remains a mere support, benefitting the patriarchal economy, aiding in the reproduction of the father's law or his lineage and the consolidation of "his" property. The relation of mother and child is repressed, meaning that children, for lack of a conscious relation, and thus a conscious independence from their mothers,

never truly become autonomous. But what is the autonomy that children strive to achieve in the process of maturation and from what or whom do they become autonomous? One answer has already been given: the mother's autonomous love and affection, especially as a caress of the child, plays a key role in achieving this autonomy. Understood accurately, the love by a mother for her child already acknowledges on a subtle level this child's quest for autonomy, and its ontological "need" for the mother's touch—affection that nourishes and allows them to take charge of their own growth (See Irigaray 2017). But it is also true that the child must on some level internalize this affection and transform it for its own power to grow.

By what means does the child convert its affection from the mother into the basis for its maturation on the level of subjectivity? Ultimately, the mother and caregivers can only provide the framework, the context for the child to use and make their own way in the world. This is accomplished by, first, not dominating the child, nor allowing the child's activity to dominate them, but also through real affection through the subtle communicative gesture of the caress that both is different from spoken language but, is, as Irigaray argues in "Ethical Gestures Toward the Other" in *Building a New World* (2015), at the same time, a gesture and a word. The end of the caress by the mother is one which does not result in a reciprocity from the other, but must rather be freely given; once the child no longer requires the mother's caress as a matter of ontological need, the child can depart from her with the means and the capacity to achieve their own self-affection. This will be discussed in the next section.

On a cultural level, again, partly due to a lack of value placed on the relation between mother and child, we remain trapped within an unconscious mother-child relation that we live and play out with one another. Remaining trapped in a mother-child relation, is in a sense,

another way of expressing the situation of patriarchy. Patriarchy unconsciously plays out the mother-child relation by denying it. It first denies the relation by looking for origins far and near, but never in the intimate relation between child and parents, and especially between child and mother. Patriarchy also denies the mother-child relation by fashioning women as the material support for the patriarchal economy as reproducer and domestic servant. It determines the mother-child relation by oppressing women and negating the importance of the initial gift given by women in maternity. Acknowledging and venerating mother-child relations would mean giving a privileged place to everything involved with them: intersubjectivity, generosity, affection, touch and caress, growth, transcendence, difference, sexuate being, carnality, life. But, on the surface perhaps appearing like a paradox, valuing the mother-child relation also allows for the possibility of going outside it. If we understand that our growth, and our capacity to give birth to ourselves and to blossom owes much to our initial relation to an other who gives freely without expecting a return, we can begin to appreciate the difference that makes the relation possible. This is not enough, however: for a human being to become autonomous, he or she must perceive, from the way that the mother bestows affection, especially the way she caresses without asking for reciprocity from the child, that the child is a different human being, not fused, but independent. To do this, first the mother's caress must be acknowledged on a cultural level, and on an individual level, to make sure that education and cultivation, generally speaking, also help pave the way.

But human beings, in order to grow and become autonomous enough to venture beyond the relation between mother and child on a personal level, must also learn to touch themselves. This is what Irigaray calls "self-affection" (See Irigaray 2012; 2015; 2017) It is neither the literal

self-stroking of auto-eroticism, nor the self-love of narcissism. Self-affection is the conscious and sensuous being-in-contact with one's self on every level. Sometimes Irigaray calls it "dwelling within one's self" (2012, 139-162). To dwell within oneself in the mode of self-affection is also a way of honoring the dwelling-within of that first-relation with another of the prenatal sojourn (2001, 17-29). In order to venture outside the relation with the mother, it is necessary for human beings to learn how to be with themselves without needing to consume or possess the other, either consciously or unconsciously. A human being must learn to provide for themselves what they could not already provide when their mother first caressed them.

Self-affection, however, is not the same thing as a maternal caress. The mother's caress, along with, eventually, explicit teaching, helps to provide the child with the context for learning self-affection. Self-affection is something the child must eventually be able do for itself. Self-affection, insofar as it is returning-to oneself, demands that the subject be able to initiate contact from itself to itself. It is the returning-to oneself that occurs when a human being is truly in solitude, is not in relation with another, when there is no mediation by an other. The achievement of self-affection takes place through the act itself of touch. To touch oneself directly, and especially where there is an internal and external threshold of the body at lips, eyes, and mouth (2017, 17, 50). The thresholds of the body, where mucous membranes meet skin are concrete flexion points between the internal and external not just of the body, but of the subject. This is why self-affection is the actual meeting of the subject with themselves involving the perception, but also the maintenance, of the boundaries between the inside and the outside, between the self and the world. Thus it makes the perception of self possible. It is the simultaneous creation of and returning to a home in oneself, a dwelling prior to all other dwellings (See Irigaray 2008c).

But this dwelling can be reached only by a subject who begins to separate from the maternal dwelling. This separation is difficult, and it is one of the reasons that children need to be soothed or stimulated by caresses and embraces. These, initially, at least, help the child to find their way back to themselves to begin to learn their own way of self-affecting. Self-affection involves the human's whole being. But it is important to note that this being is a carnal being, not an abstract one. Thus self-affection involves self-touching-self and means contact of self to self: lip to lip, eyelid to eyelid, palm to palm, in folds of skin, and limbs, organs, but also on all the other levels of what variously might be called spirit, mind, soul. Irigaray calls the touching of self-affection, "re-touch," to allude to the sense of the returning and self-touchings-self we must engage in, in the process of self-affection (2017, 17).

The mother, though caressing, can help the child achieve self affection, but this happens in a subtle way: if the mother is able to caress the child, or embrace the child, respecting their autonomy, their growth, and she does this without appropriating, then the child can begin to build a foundation for its own autonomy. A second way caressing can help a child find its own self-affection is indirectly. If the parents allow the child to witness the difference between touch between members of a couple and that between parent and child. Contrary to what is usually expected of parents in a culture that does not value touch, rather than hiding all physical touching, the parents could caress, and show some physical affection, in the presence of the child. The child can eventually perceive the difference from the caress that is meant for the child and the caress that is meant for the lover.

3.2 Sexuate Difference and the Caress

Gaining autonomy and separation from the mother happens in different ways from the subjective relation between men and women. The process of self-affection, returning to oneself, happens through coming into contact with oneself: a meeting, a touching of self-to-self. The maternal caress relates to the possibility, following that crucial stage of childhood, of self-affecting on the part of the adult. Understanding the separation between the child and mother, in particular, for avoiding fusing with the mother, the caress is the lived practice of beginning to delineate the difference between the child and the mother—through the living recognition of the relation and the difference between the child's flesh and the mother's. This recognition supports the lived ability not to collapse into a fusion with the mother, and eventually provides the basis for avoiding a fusion between the self and any other. This also means developing an autonomous self that can breath and live independently of the mother (2017, 13). This does not happen only at the moment of birth, but throughout life. Just like growing does not stop at adulthood, gaining autonomy through self-affection is a life-long pursuit, and is necessary for being capable of meeting the other. This is why understanding and separating the maternal caress as its own sphere of interaction, recognizing it as crucial and valuable, a stage of touch necessary in each human life is so important.

In Irigaray's text, "The Return" (2012, 139-162), Irigaray discusses the differences in self-affection for a man and a woman. These both have to do not only with the bodily types that correspond to men and women, but also, especially with the different ways that men and women relate to the other. The relation to the first other, to the mother, is crucial. Irigaray notes that because she is not a man, it is difficult for her to think what self-affection might be for a man, but

she comments upon “a culture in the masculine” (148). In this text, she enumerates the many effects that a lack of a clear separation from the maternal has had on the culture. What is crucial is to cultivate this differentiation that has up to this point not yet occurred either on a cultural level, or for each man. Irigaray writes, “For man, self-affecting is linked more with oneness, with the constitution of a world of his own, with the cultivation of this world to the point it its idealization” (148). Adding to the important effects of this lack of differentiation, is the fact that the “total relation that the male child has with his mother—the first other for him—has not been cultivated as such” and “has not been submitted to a dialectical process” (148). This has lead to a vast set of consequences. One could say that it has lead to such defining characteristics of Western culture as, for instance, the separation between mind and body, and intellect and sensibility, “a logic of coupling opposites that masculine subjectivity seemingly separated off from its natural and affective origin” (149). Affect, or emotion, Irigaray says, dislocated from its natural context in relational life for men due to a lack of self-affection, appears in a masculine culture as “imposed on the subject from the outside and that it is more a source of imbalance than of harmony, or of enriching becoming,” and thus has “to be reduced by a turning back to homeostasis” (149). This results, she says, in the “closed mental world” associated with Western metaphysics, characterizing most of the tradition, that is generated and reinforced “to protect oneself from affects” (140).

In order to maintain the illusion of the separation of a mental world from the ostensibly feminine aberrance of the intrusion of affects, induces man to construct a “dream world” to increase the illusion, rather than clarifying these subjective differences, which are the reality man finds himself in need of covering up—to prolong the dream. As Irigaray writes: “the absence of

subjective difference, first of all of subjective sexuate difference; this has not been recognized and cultivated as such with regard to the mother, and, thus, difference has become in some way only quantitative and, for example, referred to God as the absolute other, the absolutely higher other" (150).

In place of a real differentiation from the mother, man constructs a system of logos, of habits and customs, but none of these are truly "at home" (151). What is rejected is exactly that which is lacking: familiarity, intimacy, and sensibility, which he substitutes, in one substitution after another, for an unconsciously maternal surrounding world: "Self-affection has been confused with a dependence on the surrounding world, through which man believes he touches himself again" (151). "But," she continues, "the world that surrounds him is, in part, a substitute for a relation with the mother—a kind of placenta or construction for mastering the beginning of his life in the mother, employing an energy and a world common to the two. Culture, which intends to separate man from the maternal world, uses for its elaboration the relation with the mother herself" (151-52).

Without a conscious and lived carnal self-affection, which is also to remain undifferentiated from another, especially, and basically, from the first other, contact with the other(s) also becomes undifferentiated. Without returning to oneself, man constructs a world—including Western culture and metaphysics—to protect himself because he cannot find a way back to himself, and this leaves him lost, vulnerable, and seeking comfort in sameness which he projects and searches for outside. To self-affect is to locate and touch—actually in oneself—this bona fide sameness, the crucial sameness which amounts to one's identity, one's self, one's flesh, one's subjectivity, and singularity. It is this positive and necessary sameness of singular identity

with oneself that is also a differentiation, first from the mother, but also from each other that one encounters. And it is this self-affection, a unity within one's self, that is lacking in a masculine culture that tries to neutralize the subject, and to look for that sameness, which only truly belongs within the self to self, in a self-affection mediated through the world or the other. For the masculine subject, and within a culture in the masculine, what should be conscious self-affection initiated by the subject himself, can only be found outside of the male subject, so that he does not have to face himself alone.

But without this returning to himself and especially as recognizing himself as different from the other, he loses his way back to himself in neutralization, generality, and lack of differentiation between himself and an other, and between himself and the world. This especially true of his relationship with the feminine other, initially the mother, but also each woman that he meets, whom he unconsciously tries to possess so as not to let go of the mother. The male subject is thus left to try to merge with or possess (especially the feminine) other. Rather than finding in himself a repose that at once differentiates himself from and allows a relation to the other, he his lost outside himself looking for a way to return. The male subject and the male imaginary, as exemplified, for instance, in the analysis of the male philosophers in Chapter 1, find that touch itself is alien to their mode of being, or that it does not present for them the objective reality of the other, or of difference. Instead, it would be important to rediscover or to reinvent a culture which allows the caress of the other to take place in a way that protects the identity and difference of both. She sometimes refers to this integrity and self-identity of the subject as their *virginity*. In her work, this term refers not simply to the innocence before sexual relationships, but rather to a relation to the self that could be created by self-affection each time one returns to a

genuine relation with the self not using or being intruded upon by the other. The caress, nevertheless, can be an invitation to return to the self—if it is initiated out of a recognition and respect for the natural differentiation between subjects, the first being the differentiation from the mother. Irigaray writes,

> The caress is a gift of safety, a call to return to yourself through the rediscovery of your virginity, here and now, thanks to me and us: your virginity understood not as a simply physical or phantasmic thing which is lost or preserved, violable or inviolable, and thus always beyond, never present but still and yet future (…) I think of virginity, instead, as your repose with yourself, in yourself, you as irreducible to me, irreducible to what is common in community. Rather than violating or penetrating the mystery of the other, rather than reducing his or her consciousness or freedom to passivity, objectuality, animality or infancy, the caress makes a gesture which gives the other to himself, to herself, thanks to an attentive witness, thanks to a guardian of incarnate subjectivity. (2001, 27)

Thus the activity and passivity that is assumed to be there between two lovers, and the subjectivity or objectivity that is assumed to exist between two *poles* of flesh is revealed to be an illusion resulting from the lack of definition between self and other. The need to constantly mediate between activity and passivity, between self and world, or between objectivity and subjectivity, is really the lack of positive recognition of the differentiation from self and other, in particular, from the self and the mother, and then later between the self and each of the others that one meets in the world. “The caress” on the other hand, Irigaray writes, “is an awakening to intersubjectivity, to a touching between us which is neither passive nor active; it is an awakening of gestures, of perceptions which are at the same time acts, intentions, emotions” (2001, 25). Thus the caress is the continuing mediation between subjects, enlightening them to one another and their separateness, thus providing the basis for recognizing others as other, and as autonomous.

3.3 Hetero-Affection and World

The danger of desire is that it asks us to reach outside of our own world horizon to another world, that which belongs to an other and cannot be comprehended or fixed by any imagination or projection by the one on behalf of the other. The other is present to us as an opening of possibilities that fall beyond our reach, beyond our imagination, and without an analogous model in our inhabitance. The other is to us an infinite source of novelty beyond the limits of our world. But the entrance of the other also presents something inherently perturbing to our milieu. Irigaray writes, "The other is always a stranger who crosses the limits of my territory and upsets my habits. My first gesture will thus be a gesture of refusal, of rejection, at best of integration" (2008c, 97). The other presents an irreducible transcendence that nothing in my horizon can prepare me for and who cannot be reduced to an element with my horizon. Yet this risk and what calls me to overcome it is the most important and also the most intimate destiny to which our being might be called. Irigaray writes: "There is, in me, someone who is longing for the other as a condition for the appropriation of a familiarity more familiar than that of the world already known as a condition for discovering an intimacy that I have not yet experienced" (97). The impulse to evade this desire, to avoid its apparent troublesomeness, the way it disorients our bearings, and disrupts our habits, is so strong that we would go as far as to sacrifice our very humanity as such to keep from having to follow it (97). But it is also this desire that draws us to the horizon, invites us to leave an opening for the arrival of the other whose radical transcendence can upset my world and "appealing to a relation still to be built (…) demands that we be able to suspend the relational world that was ours—to open this world to the call of

another world" (98). The call of this other world—the world external to mine and belonging to another—draws us to the edge of our own being, but suggests a recomposition of ourselves with ourselves. The intensity of the other's transcendence, the radicality of their difference, their irreducibility to my own sense of spatiality, especially as an enclosed horizon, strongly compels the wish to renounce difference. Irigaray puts it thus: "The privilege of the same with respect to the other, the fact that most of the time the other is considered as an other-same or an other-of-the-same can be explained by the difficulty of calling into question the familiarity of the space in which I dwell" (99). The complexity of the relation with the other demands from us our full participation and the full participation of our world, including our perception of time and space. The other occupies a different space from me, one which I cannot reduce to my own and which reorganizes space around two subjectivities. In reaching out to the transcendence of another, or being open to the other on the edge of a horizon, the alchemy of the between-two gives rise to a third as-yet-unforeseen world that is a shared horizon between both. I must rebuild spatiality for myself and build in relation to the other a space between us that is a passage that not only is a way through my world to an opening to theirs, but that also allows a return to myself and my own spatiality. Irigaray writes,

> The relation to the other as other opens and animates a place different from the space to which the familiarity within a single world had accustomed me. Such a place is uncovered only if I am capable of going beyond belonging to a single world without, for all that, cutting myself off from myself, from my culture, from my own world. I enter another space in which the field of attraction and orientation no longer obeys a single focus. I am no longer, in some way, the centre of the world or the centre of a unique world, even if this world has been inhabited before me. (2008c, 100)

If my impulse is to try to arrest this process, it is because it calls upon and awakens every part of my being to be animated in motion and emotions. This upheaval of our world, of our internal feeling, but also external orientation, as well as imagination, explains partially the expression of the sense of weightlessness often associated with attraction, the sense of a ground shifting, or a falling sensation, as in the phrase, "falling in love." In order to avoid this, I might, especially as the male cultures have done, try to confine the other to fixed space to try to prevent or circumvent a sense of disorientation and even vertigo that the other and myself create between, as Irigaray says, "[our] two wills, two desires, two intentions (…) which makes the field of attractions and orientations complex" (2008c, 100). If I try to contain this almost ontological disorientation that engages every part of my being by containing the other within my own time and space, this amounts to reducing the other's horizon to my own. "Then," as Irigaray writes, "the epochē of the perception of space—but also of the imagination—that the other imposes on me as other becomes groundless (…) which suspends the transcendental dimension needed in meeting with the other—including at the level of imagination" (99). This need to confine the other is part of the reason, notes Irigaray, for the confining of women within the domestic sphere, within the fixed spatiality of the home.

Instead of stopping this process, instead of fleeing from desire into a seemingly orientated, grounded, and free, but ultimately fictitious world, what is required is a way of remaining within one's horizon and time while reaching out to another. To touch the other is a way of creating a path to the other by opening my horizon without really leaving it. To caress is a way of orienting myself with them in time and space without presuming to know or experience time and space the way they do. It is a way of sharing sensations without reducing sensations to

belonging in the same enclosed world. It is a way of sharing in the invisibility of the subjective interplay of intimacy together while also returning and remaining within one's own self. Irigaray writes, "The caress is a gesture-word which goes beyond the horizon or the distance of intimacy with the self. This is true for the one who is caressed and touched, for the one who is approached within the sphere of his or her incarnation, but it is also true for the one who caresses, for the one who accepts distancing the self from the self through this gesture. (…) The caress is a gesture-word which penetrates into the realm of intimacy with the self in a privileged space-time" (2001, 26). The caress transforms the fascination that transfixes us in desire to an awakening of the flesh which calls upon us to transform our being and which allows us to remain ourselves even though we are transformed. Irigaray writes,

> The caress leads each person back to the *I* and to the *you*. I give you to yourself because you are a *you* for me. You remain you thanks to the you which you are for me, which you are 'to' me—to recall the 'to' of *I Love to You*, which has nothing to do with possession. (…) In this double desire, 'you' and 'I' always remain active and passive, perceiving and experiencing, awake and welcoming. In us, sensible nature and the spirit become in-stance by remaining within their own singularity and grow through the risk of an exchange with what is irreducible to oneself. (2001, 27-29)

The caress is steadying and at the same time a spark igniting desire, illuminating an interiority that we could not access and a possibility that was heretofore beyond our reach.

3.4 Self-Affection

What allows us to accept and even overcome this risk of exchanging with another world and transforming our own, the risk of being re-born, transcending oneself and becoming ourselves, transcending oneself and becoming ourselves, or even being reborn into a new self, a

changed world, is self-affection. Each one of us has to overcome obstacles to returning to ourselves and to assume the risks in a way that corresponds to our own self-affection. These challenges are met differently for men and women. For men, the challenge is the very task of returning given a reliance on that which is external to him, which makes leaving the maternal difficult. This difficulty is not helped when, in depending on the maternal world for self-affection, the masculine subject substitutes women for his mother, thus preventing himself from entering into a relation with the feminine subject as woman and genuine other as opposed to as (a substitute for his) mother. Irigaray explains the state of affairs for the masculine subject thus:

> The masculine subject makes use of the world in which he dwells for self-affecting more than the feminine subject does. This world is no doubt substituted for his first placental dwelling, whose role in his initial affects he as barely considered, no more than he has considered the role of the mother as first human relation, particularly with regard to sexual difference. Another motive explaining masculine behavior is that the male sex is in some way outside of his body and internal self-affection thus cannot exist for the masculine subject, as is possible for a woman thanks to the self-touching of her lips. (2008c, 101-2)

Women, for their part, encounter difficulty mostly in relation to the intervention of another in her self-affection. If women are in a position to more easily access their own self-affection owing to a bodily morphology that already offers a relation to herself through a given morphological self touching of her genital lips, she experiences difficulty when an other interposes within her relational world. Or women can have difficulty achieving self-affection if they remain in sameness with a maternal other or other women. In order to self-affect, the feminine subject also, like the male, must overcome fusion with the mother, otherwise she is prevented a relation with her self, but for the female subject, this happens in different ways. Because the masculine subject is up to the present moment in our culture mostly allowed to

remain unaware of the use of an other's subjectivity as a means for his own self-affection, he is prone to the blind use of her subjectivity as a means. Irigaray writes, "The dependence of the masculine subject on the surrounding world in order to define his 'here' comes, at least in part from his dependence on the maternal world, a dependence of which he has not yet become aware, has not yet explored, nor whose impact on the constitution of his own horizon has he assessed," (2008c, 102). "Most of the time, the baseline subject blindly uses the feminine, confused with the maternal, both to constitute a world for himself immediately" (104). Thus the feminine subject is apt to be at risk for being used as an instrument for the masculine subject. As a man continues to arrange his world as if he is the sole subject, centering himself and his identity, a woman has difficulty protecting her own identity and her own space from being caught within his own subjective self-enclosure. The male arrangement is not a true self-affection because it remains unaware of his difference from another subject, his maternal world, his placental dwelling as a mediating place, and his surroundings.

The risk for the feminine subject is to become fused with his subjectivity, not by unconsciousness of intersubjectivity, as he is subject to, but rather owing to a lack of remaining with her own self and losing her own self for an other. She becomes thereby trapped in the male-subject's experience of caressing her as animality, infancy, perversity. In order to confront this tendency, and make a path towards becoming in two, Irigaray says, "woman can be a guide for man because born of one similar to herself, she is more capable of a relationship between subjects, and the subject-object duality is not as much a part of her subjectivity as it is part of a man's" (2001, 57). The difficulty for women in being the leader in this process of differentiation between man and woman involves not only maintaining a relation with herself but also creating a

space between the two within which the interplay of the two different subjects can unfold, is to "remain two" with man and to "renounce fusion, submission possession" (57).

Irigaray suggests, that to do this, one possibility is that women can re-assume the spiritualization of skin, which in patriarchal culture has been supplanted by the figure of the garment—a shell that serves to conceal women's natural access to interiority and to signify her status as an empty vessel to be filled with man's subjective projections. In demanding that "women be clothed and that man remains nude," Irigaray observes in the context of Western representations of women and men, "(…) it seems that a women's garment becomes more important than her skin" (58). "Women," Irigaray writes, "are more spiritual than men, beginning from this corporeal fabric which is genetically tied to the mental" (58), the skin. To privilege the garment is to remove from women a spiritual inheritance that could open up a world of thinking emanating from their ability to remain in self-affection while approaching the other. The intersubjective task would be to create through gesture and words a space within which to encounter an other, to touch the other without an instrument or tool, and to welcome the other without determining in advance who or what the other will be.

The possibility for open ended interactions with the other also opens the possibility for a new a progression from the current stage of what Irigaray has characterized as a culture of stagnating sameness to, perhaps, the hope of an evolution toward a new becoming for humanity, which cannot be planned or foreseen. The energy of the contact between two different subjects, and the multiplication of forces between two centers of gravity can lead a sensation of disarray. It can be experienced as a loss of balance and could result in a wish for a return to a more stable framework, including a predictable temporality. To overcome this apprehension over

disorientation, concrete practice, not only mental activity or escaping into abstraction, is necessary. The mental of the skin, even as proprioception, and the physical contact between two can help build a ground between us, toward a world that is still our own, but touched by the difference in styles, in orientations, not just bodily, but also cultural, linguistic, sensory, and imaginative.

To train each other and ourselves in a tradition of attentiveness; to breathe, to learn about gravity, to continue an ongoing exchange with the yogic tradition, beginning but also returning to a first breath, to first steps could all be part of the cultivation of a context for meeting the other. Practice could also mean building step-by-step, the basis for erotic relations that makes of each a partner able to approach the other from a place of freedom, to affirm his or her own identity and the relation between the two. This could begin with thinking that involves the skin: Irigaray alludes to a Buddhistic teaching that "it would be better if each man attempted awaken his own skin" (59). As an example to men, "Renouncing possession and all forms of ownership which fragment becoming in a relationship with the object, Buddha breathes and even laughs with all of his skin" (59). If we find ecstasy in the touch of the other, we also find an intimacy with ourselves closer than what we knew before caressing and being caressed. "The caress," Irigaray writes, "is a gesture word which penetrates into the realm of intimacy with the self in a privileged space-time" (26).

The temporality that is experienced in hetero-affection is in a way an ecstasy from the every day, but also stems from a past tradition that holds us in stasis, subjecting ourselves to a fixed temporalization within the *common* era. To enter an epoch of difference is to affirm a rebirth through approaching, but also preserving a transcendence by remaining with our own

desire. The time that belongs to this meeting in difference cannot be the eternal of the One that extends to the total and fixes all in immovability. It ought to be the return of a passion that begins a revolution of the soul, a breathing and exchange between an internality and externality that circulates with each and every between, at first the two, remaining in hetero-affection and self-affection, to become the threshold of a new world. The tension between the past and the future and the one and the other is a conscious bridge built in the sharing of two carnalities, two fleshly dwellings which are different, and irreducible to the same. Irigaray writes,

> The space around the other cannot be the result of a mere foresight with respect to this other, at least not of a foresight about anything that I could imagine starting from my own world. If it is a question of foresight, this cannot concern a need that the other would, in my opinion, experience. It can only be a matter of caring about the preservation of Being as such—that of the other and mine through preserving that of the other.
>
> Such a care requires a letting go of foresight itself. In the foreseeing that I practice within my own world, the other has no place for Being. The world of the other takes place outside in, except as a possibility, an opening maintained in my horizon. It is through this opening that the other can appear to me, thanks to my relinquishing a purpose and foresight that would only be mine (2008c, 104-105).

If the caress is an opening to an unknown future, it is not a reaching beyond a temporization in the human context, nor does the caress search for a forever or a perpetual future, grasping for "what is not yet" (Irigaray quotes Levinas in *To Be Two*, 24). It is rather the inauguration of a realizable future, a rebirth and a renewal, and simultaneously a return to the here and now, to the between us. Quite apart from an eternity that lies in the beyond, a fluid eternity of circulation of energy is born. An earthly time becomes both necessary and possible in the context of which we two can both place ourselves and orient ourselves, one with respect to the other, and the changes

that our contact brings when the cloak of a past tradition is shrugged off to meet with the other in "the eternity of moving rediscovery of each other" (2001, 96).

IV. Irigaray and the Discourse of Contemporaries on Touch

When We Touch, What Is Touching?

The thesis concerns itself with the kind of touching that occurs between two human persons. This involves the sense of touch, perception, and a confrontation with the history of the relationship between sensation and representation. If we in the philosophical tradition of the West have at times confused representation with sensation, in particular, if frozen images have come to stand for the sensations of colors passing through the invisible medium of the air to touch the eyes, there can be no such confusion with touch. We know that what we touch is the real thing, not a representation—even if we are at this moment about to find ourselves threatened with confusion there, too, as certain techniques of representation begin to encroach on touch through haptic manipulations. Nevertheless we can still distinguish between touching a living being and a fabricated product, a device, or an artifact. Can we still do so with sight or sound? The conquest of the senses by representation may continue to evade attempts to overcome it, but there is always hope to resist forces that aim to put to use and to dull the human capacity for perception and to undermine the power of sensation to create bridges between living creatures, especially between human beings. Touch and sensation are politically, culturally and intimately powerful. As much as they can be enlisted in the service of institutions and cultural forms that seek to make a game or a tool of perception, I propose that sensitivity has its own liberating power, in particular when it is situated in the context of human life.

I choose to focus specifically on Irigaray's philosophy when exploring this topic because her work is aimed at bringing about a new cultural context for living together. Her philosophy is always connected to life in a radical way, drawing upon and generating resources for living. It has become almost a mantra that sexual difference is not about cultural identities, but rather about differences that cut across and re-organize the traditional division of human beings into two distinct sexes. Irigaray invites us to re-examine these widely-accepted views in order to question deeply the patriarchal and androcentric tradition that has been handed down through the millennia. What she offers is a way of thinking about subjectivity as belonging not to all human beings generically and abstractly, but to each one on the basis of his or her living flesh. Some recent philosophical movements have dealt with human beings as existential, with impingements from the here and now, such as existentialism. Others have dealt with the flesh as an embodied manifestation of consciousness as human subjectivity, notably phenomenology. Psychoanalysis, for instance, has begun to sort through the affective life of human subjects in order to understand humans as feeling beings. Irigaray originates a comprehensive philosophy that undertakes to provide a trenchant critique of a philosophical tradition and culture that by design or accident privileges the masculine and holds it up as the singular model of existence. Not only has this tendency in our tradition led to the massive exclusion of women's voices and presence from public life, from the academy, from politics, and from philosophy, but it has also had an almost unfathomable influence on the thinking and behaving accessible to everyone, and in particular to philosophers generating ontology.

Sources for answers to the call for a more suitable and sustainable philosophy that is appropriate to our lives and that emanates from our own natural way of being will come, Irigaray

argues, from the development of a two-subject culture within which men and women enjoy their own autonomous civil identities that are proper to them as sexed, or as Irigaray puts it, sexuate beings. This culture that Irigaray imagines and in various ways puts into action and words is radically different from our current cultural situation in the West and globally. There has never been, or at least we cannot remember there being, an identity for women that was not predominately a support for and a reflection of the male subject. Such a culture of difference that opens up the space between men and women would entail liberating women and at the same time liberating our senses and our thinking from control by a patriarchal economy. Such a revolution in being and thought would be no superficial change but rather a total upending of our current values and institutions. It involves new ways of relating, of living, and of speaking with one another. It involves the possibility for an intimacy that is radically different from that which is authorized under patriarchy. In a single-subject, male-dominated culture, intimacy is permitted within a limited domestic sphere, and is to be overseen or undercut by some sort of paternal authority, and cannot transgress the hierarchical relation between man and not-man. The woman-other is present only as the supporting element to the man, usually as nature-mother. In so doing she is returned to animality, to infancy or fixed as the material support of the reproduction of the social order in order to ensure the continued dominance of the man-father-God. In order to begin to challenge this organization of relations, political changes are necessary, but changes to the cultural and political sphere also produce and depend on changes at the intersubjective and intimate level. The question for our age, according to Irigaray, can be phrased thus: how can man and woman learn to touch one another without domination or possession? What is required to do this is learning, on an individual and collective scale, how to approach the other as other without

turning him or her into a representation, or reducing him or her to something less than human. As Irigaray writes,

> Perception must assist in the construction of intersubjectivity. (…) perception must care about maintaining duality; what is more, it must be at the service of the preservation of duality in relations with the other. Cultivated as such, perception is part of entering into presence and becoming together. The appearance of each one never being separated from his or her material embodiment for appropriation through the reduction to an image or representation, or through a fusion or confusion between two subjects. (2015, 264-5)

The significance of sexual difference in intersubjective encounters can be understood as the basis upon which all other horizontal relations between person can occur. As Irigaray writes, "The other of sexual, or better sexuate, difference is the other towards whom it is possible to go as towards a transcendence while remaining in oneself. (…) Neither simple nature nor common spirit beyond nature, this transcendence lies in the difference of body and culture that exists between us and nourishes our energy, its movement, and its creation" (2015, 266-7).

For Irigaray, if we can manage, on the individual and collective level, to figure out how to meet the sexually different other in a dignified and loving way that nevertheless preserves difference and autonomy, then we can begin to solve all the various issues of the horizontal ethical and political relations with the other(s). If we can respect the transcendence of the other(s) on the level of sexual difference, if we can approach the sexually different other without dominating or possessing them, then it may be possible to work through some of the problems arising from compulsory hierarchical relations between men and women in political life and within the family. And in turn, when horizontal relations become more culturally and individually encouraged, other issues of horizontal transcendence, such as those arising from cultural differences could be addressed in a similar way. Irigaray writes, "Sexuate difference

represents the most basic and universal place of otherness, and it has to be respected in order to respect other kinds of otherness becoming possible. If we are able to take into account the horizontal transcendence between sexes or genders, then we can deal with the transcendence of any other—be they a companion, a child, a foreigner, etc" (267).

Encountering an other is as much about preserving the duality between one and an other as it is about mutual sharing together in meaningful way. We must learn to relate in a way that surpasses instinct, aggressive impulses, and attain a more ethical approach to the other. Approaching the other with a respect for her transcendence involves leaving open a space for her, and a place for her to be in her difference. "I will never be capable of receiving the other completely," writes Irigaray,

> To leave the other be, not to possess the other in any way, needs this other to be contemplated as an irreducible presence whose core will always remain invisible to me (…) To approach the other requires us to open a path that is not first inspired by a showing or making appear (…) Our eyes are not capable of seeing the intimate core of the other, at least not directly. We can perceive something of this intimacy only through the light, the gestures, the words, the presence of the other to radiate. (…) Intimacy is first a matter of touch. But this touch cannot be approached directly. Respect for the other, as for ourselves, requires a way of touching—and of seeing for understanding—that relinquishes any grasp, appropriation, possession. For example, caressing—contrary to the discourses of Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and even Levinas about the caress—must be an awakening, and not an annihilation of intersubjectivity (2015, 265).

To caress the other demands not only an approach that respects the other as other, but also respects the transcendence of myself to the other. For this to be maintained, I must find a way of being in relation to myself that allows me to approach the other without losing myself. To do this is to self-affect, to return to the self. Self-affection can also be thought of as touching, what Irigaray calls *re-touch*, a way of touching, or allowing oneself to be in touch with oneself, of attending to the flesh, especially where the flesh is naturally in contact as one lip to another. Men

and women in virtue of their respective bodily morphology have different ways of self-affecting, of relating in particular tactile ways to his or her own flesh. To attend to this is the essence of self-affection which prepares a person for meeting with the other in a way that preserves the difference between them. If we can achieve a harmonious relation within ourselves it is only on that basis that we can achieve a harmonious relation with the other, that we can move in a respectful way toward a transcendent other—toward hetero-affection.

In Irigaray's work on self-affection is the necessity of feeling oneself, or more generally, a return to oneself. She comments in her essay, "The Return," that it is often hypothesized that the home from which we get displaced in the twists and turns of life and history, is a cultural, political, or geographic one. Largely because of the specific metaphysical tradition that attempts to fix man in a certain relation to the cosmos, banishing to a beyond that which could serve as his limit, and enshrining the singular masculine subject as the center, we imagine that home must consist in a localizing of humankind within a certain history and a certain genealogy that establishes a vertical order among beings, a hierarchical relation that guarantees man's perpetual ascendency.

In the essay, "The Return," Irigaray asks, when discussing Ulysses: "The hero goes back home, but does he return to his self?" (141). She notes that "The journey of Ulysses and his return home happen before the construction of Western metaphysics and announce it, " but she continues, "After the end or accomplishment of metaphysics, the theme of the return is insistent again. I could cite Hölderlin and Nietzsche, for example, " she writes, "and comment on their feeling of nostalgia for an impossible return" (142). In all their searching philosophical and poetic efforts, she writes, "They have both an intuition of the fact that the solution to their ill-

being, or the failure in making their way, cannot be found in their cultural background or surroundings as they are, and that something or someone else has to arrive in order to go beyond such a horizon" (142-43).

If the return to the self through self affection is a sort of homecoming, to what or to whom do we return? Irigaray suggests that rather than lending our sense of dwelling to an external source such as a culture or geographic situation, or sending our sense of home to an even more remote beyond, the specifically human sense of dwelling for which we search is actually already intimately present to us in the form of our carnality, or material belonging in own bodies. Yet we encounter an enormous difficulty in recognizing and reaching it because we lack the education and cultural context to accomplish a return to our selves. In the endless attempts to achieve such a meeting with ourselves we must contend with the aspects of our own culture, in particular, in the Western tradition that tend to look for or project a beyond as an end to the endless externalizing. To take Irigaray's examples of Nietzsche and Hölderlin, she says, "The two are in search of an access to a beyond of metaphysics, but if they announce the necessity of exceeding metaphysics, they do not succeed in such a surpassing of their path, of their history, of their self." (142). Another path back to the self some hope might come in the form of a cultural or geographic horizon, perhaps by going abroad in order to bring long-repressed values back or by a commitment to nomadism to try to deny the need to return to a self or an origin (2017, v). Irigaray's comments are timely: "In the era of globalization that is ours, we can observe two trends: that of the stay-at-homes who try to preserve at all costs their home, culture or country as they are, and that of the nomadic people who denigrate any home. Both of them disregard the relation with the other, which requires an ability to dwell with the possibility

of opening oneself to the other, of leaving home to meet with the other while remaining able to return home, to oneself, within oneself in order to keep the two, the one and the other" (2015, 143). The is an accurate description of some of the political strife we encounter. But at another level from a philosophical context, such a searching for oneself outside of oneself and not, as Irigaray puts it, "making [one's] way in [one's] own self" also takes the form, especially in philosophy, of man having "searched for his becoming in objects, things, and the representation or reduplications…[of man having] searched for himself outside the self while intending to appropriate this outside…through representations. (…)," she continues, "this does not represent an interiority but an exile in an external world that he intends to appropriate by means of a technique which reduplicates the real, of a logic through which he makes the world his own, the logos" (2015,144). In order to reach self-affection, which can be thought of as a being-in-contact, a being in relation with the self through a material affective touching: sensing, the sense of touch, needs to be integrated, not just not a field of sensing that which is external to the body, or the body as object, as we often understand the touched bodying in phenomenology and existentialism, but a carnal body that integrates both what we have thought of as lived body and object-body. This is why Irigaray sometimes refers to self-affection as "re-touch" (2017, 17). Self-affection is not auto-eroticism, or narcissism since it involves the global relation of the self to the self through sensing oneself. It is touching self to self, not merely body to body.

Self-affection is also a necessary condition of the the capacity to meet with an other. Irigaray's diagnosis of the tendency of various in the mostly male Western tradition to view the feminine other primarily as either a means or an obstacle to access to transcendence, for instance in the philosophies of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, is an example that demonstrates this.

In order to meet the other it is necessary to be able to return to dwell in oneself. It no coincidence that a tradition that excludes female subjects from its discourse and civil institutions has difficulty in cultivating relations both with the self and the other, since women not only have been tasked with the upkeep of the domestic sphere that is the up-until-now exclusive domain of intimate relations, thus confining them and intimacy to a drastically delimited region. But women themselves, through their morphology and embodied relations with others, for instance through the maternal relation, engender thinking and action that has been lacking in the Western and global traditions. In addition to the mother-daughter relation, Irigaray suggests "the morphology of the two lips as a privileged place for women to maintain a process of self-affection" (2015, 156).

For instance, Irigaray argues that the mother-daughter couple, because of the experience of separation that results from the duality and similarity present between them have an ability to relate to themselves through self affection because they, under certain circumstances, can achieve a separation from one another so as not to project themselves onto other subjects, or to be unable to return to themselves through self-affection. Women meet challenges in the process of self-affection in a different way than men. They could find difficulty separating in the maternal relation if they do not achieve independence, especially if the natural dimension is only emphasized as in the demand for women to be devoted to reproduction merely, they can be barred from self-affection by the perpetual interposition of the male subject interior thinking or relating. If women are continually subjected to being instruments for masculine subjectivity, they will find it difficult to return to themselves. What could be available to them, and what could be brought out into the opening a culture where women were more emancipated, especially in

political and family life. Irigaray gives the example of a certain progression of the formation of the lips in sculptures of Kore who was taken from her mother and held prisoner by the god of the underworld: “The most ancient [sculptures],” Irigaray writes, “have closed lips, which touch one another and could be a good illustration of self affection in the feminine. In later sculptures, the mouth is open and the lines no longer touch one another. The progressive distortion of Kore’s lips parallels the ongoing intrusions upon women’s lives and subjectivities that prevent them from exercising their full capacities for living, relating and thinking, both in the intimate and public spheres. The philosophical ration we inherit bears witness to this mostly in the negative, especially in its treatment of the negatives that which must be expelled rather than taken on as the limit between the internal and the external of the subject, as the limit of each sex, and as the difference between one’s self and the different other, as the other’s transcendence. To respect the difference of the other while remaining in touch with oneself, able to come back to oneself, and able to leave the other intact without projecting ones own self onto an other as the West has done by projecting an image of the other of masculine subjectivity onto women.

To ultimately be able to meet an other and relate to them in a dialectical way requires that my whole sensible self be able to encounter the whole self the other not through representations, either literal or imaginary. This means encountering their carnal presence including thoughts, words, and emotions, and in particular, especially insofar as our tradition has banished the intimate the invisible, to a beyond, and has relegated materiality to the status of a mere “*hyle*”, a formless matter scattered throughout the cosmos. To gather up the human subject into a unified body-soul-mind as a carnal being can allow human beings a way of relating that can offer the possibility of meeting another in genuine difference on many levels. It can also offer to thought,

and this is particularly relevant to us as philosophers, not only the language, but the expire e of eating between subjects that can begin to restore the means for thinking about intersubjectivity to a tradition that has historically lacked this.

We might think about the act of contact when we speak of touching between strangers, friends, within the family, and between lovers. We might ask: when we touch, what is touching? And what in our culture can enable us to understand this? Is it touch between two bodies? But what about the sensations, the thoughts, desires, the feelings that occur within each through self affection and pass between the two in hetero-affection? What touches? As Irigaray says in her interview related to her text "To paint the invisible" on Merleau-Ponty's essay "Eye and Mind,"

> In my opinion, only a relation with a different other could help us to emerge both from a past culture and from our own present world, because we then re-open our horizon in order to meet with someone who dwells in another world. Furthermore, I think that the relation with the other has to be animated by desire between the two to escape as much as possible the mechanical aspects of our bodily belonging. Another way could be to transform our elementary bodily energy into an energy more subtle and fluent. But I'm not sure this would be sufficient. In any case, to criticize "scientific thinking that does not take situation and embodied relations into account" seems to remain a behavior too mental and negative for succeeding in reaching an other way of relating with our body. And it its not true that sciences "do not take situation and embodied relation into account," but it takes these into consideration in a manner irrelevant to the economy of our flesh. (2004c, 393)

The answer to the question, "when we touch, what is touching?" is not "two bodies," or at least, not just bodies, but two selves, worlds, subjectivities, transcendences, carnalities, two distinct fleshly beings with different belongings, dwellings, and destinies. They cannot be summed up in a single stroke or representation, characterization or genre. But there is a commonality and a sharing of horizons, a fertilization with one another, a shared future that can be built together beginning with sharing in touch.

4.1 Irigaray and Rogozinski

An Introduction to Rogozinski's Egoanalysis

What could be more traditional in modern philosophy than a belief in the cogito? What single insight has been more gripping and inspiring than the Cartesian observation that the mental is an existing thing that thinks, distinct from the body? Indeed, much of the twentieth century saw the emergence of thinkers devoting themselves to explorations of this very insight and all of the rich questions it engenders. Yet what we have observed in the twentieth century, on either side of the Atlantic and elsewhere, is a shift, or gradual unearthing, of the opposing view, that there is no mental substance, that the cogito is a construct that emerges out of some other prior process: the body, or a multiplicity of wills or drives whose connection to one another occurs after the fact, and is never complete. Perhaps what we believe is that the ego always depends on that prior agency, an external and prior Other. Contrary to ours being a philosophical culture that reveres a contemporary Cartesian dualism, perhaps the pendulum has long since swung the other way, beginning at the peak, as early as Descartes himself, traversing Hume and Kant, certainly gaining momentum at Nietzsche, to wind up on the opposing side, that of the anti-Cartesian, the anti-cogito. Perhaps we, rather unknowingly, but certainly with a hint of rebelliousness, have adopted an attitude, that far from accepting the ego-cogito as the obvious given, we, instead, begin with the opposite view, that the ego is the false inheritance of a fanciful meditation, an illusory construct, no less comforting than it is deceptive, allowing us to believe (wrongly) that we ourselves are in control, and possess transparent access to our inner lives. In

short, perhaps rather than having been naive ego-worshipers as we often seem to fear, we late moderns have instead been *ego-cides*, opposers of the ego (Rogozinski 2010, 5). This is the starting point from which Jacob Rogozinski begins in his book, *The Ego and the Flesh: An Introduction to Egoanalysis* (2010).

In Part 1 of the book, Rogozinski takes up conversations with three thinkers of the ego, two of whom he sees as among the most formidable and important *egocides*, Heidegger and Lacan (10). The third thinker, Descartes, Rogozinski regards as the greatest ego thinker, though even Descartes himself, suggests Rogozinski, does not go quite far enough in his radical thinking of the ego. The greatest dangers to the ego, addressed in different ways by Rogozinski in the chapters on Heidegger and Lacan, are, first, the possibility of its radical submission to the Other and, second, the possibility of its radical alienation from the Other. Rogozinski observes that Heidegger identifies the first great threat to the ego accurately, subjection to a great impersonal ego or Subject. That Dasein is responsible for resisting falling into the impersonal One (*Das Man*) is evidence of Heidegger's consciousness of the danger for the ego of yielding to the force of an Other. Yet, ironically, it is this very tendency towards submission to an impersonal ego, to which Heidegger falls victim in his analysis of Dasein, Rogozinski points out. This early error, restricting Dasein to a general impersonal structure, removing from it the possibility of radical singularity, lies at the roots, suggests Rogozinski, of Heidegger's drift away from the possibility of radical resistance to deception and coercion and towards his terrible capitulations to fascism and anti-Semitism.

We learn in through his analysis of Heidegger that Rogozinski's is not a philosophy of the impersonal ego, but rather the living singular *me*. The ego is not a structure or construct of the

psyche, nor is it an impersonal Self. It finds its life in one's own singular existence. Thus the question for Rogozinski is not limited to the general, "What is the ego?" but is better expressed as "Who am I?" His second chapter on Lacan uncovers the ego's necessary relationship to itself as a living ego. For Lacan, the ego identifies itself in the mirror stage, when "I" recognize my dead image in the mirror. I then become aware of myself only as an illusory ego, Lacan argues, one that is still derived from more originary agencies, the Id and Super Ego. However, Rogozinski points out, I must already have been an ego in order to recognize myself in the mirror. Rogozinski invites us to read the mirror stage as less a first opening into the ego's existence, but instead another in a vast series of encounters of the living ego with itself that begins even before birth.

While Rogozinski is critical of Heidegger and Lacan, his engagement with them is not solely critical. In Heidegger's case, we can see the limitations of the concept of Dasein in that it is too impersonal, and that even though Heidegger recognized that the impersonal subject was a danger, he did not go far enough in his own philosophy in avoiding Dasein's generality. Lacan, Rogozinski observes, in his stated attempt at going back to Freud, actually went further from him, imagining that the ego depends on a reflection, external and dead, in order to achieve the alterity it needs in order to recognize itself. In the third chapter, "Return to Descartes," Rogozinski undertakes to uncover the source of the ego in the living flesh. Descartes describes the existence of the ego as the "I think" that resists the force of deception of the Evil Deceiver. But in this very resistance, the ego finds its being. The ego is constitutionally vulnerable to deception. But, in a sense, that is its essence: to be deceivable, and also to know the truth. The ego's life, its "to be," is to resist the very deception it finds itself vulnerable to.

What Descartes does not recognize, according to Rogozinski, is that the deceiver who attacks the ego is none other than another facet of the ego itself, an evading, deceiving gap in the flesh, a double within the immanence of the ego, who torments and persecutes it, but is nothing other than its very own ego-flesh, recognizing and mis-recognizing itself. This other in *me* becomes the blueprint for all the others I eventually encounter.

Rogozinski argues that nevertheless I remain captive and fugitive within my own flesh, alternately terrorized and attracted by my own shadow, my own (alter-) ego. It is Descartes who first recognizes this, but in attributing the role of Deceiver to a demi-god, he overlooks that the first deceiver I encounter is none other than myself. Thus we human subjects both are and are not dependent on an "Other" for our existence, as so many recent theorists have variously observed. Levinas, Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Freud, Nietzsche to name but a few, including those who credit sub-personas with the existence of the ego, have recognized the dependence of the ego on an Other.

Yet each misses the other-in-the-flesh, according to Rogozinski, the first other encountered before any external other. "I" am the ground for myself, not in the straightforward way of self-presence, but rather in the form of an evading and deceiving fugitive within my own flesh, an affective plurality that neither experiences nor knows, a unity with me, yet nonetheless differentiated, a "community of others" within and identified as my immanent flesh, existing before and apart from any experience, or genuine worldliness. Within this *solipsistic* ego I already undergo all of the affectivity in a *proto* form that I will experience in the world. The solipsistic ego is not the one that plans, projects and interacts with others outside my flesh. It is the ego that lives immanently, away from all worldly encounters, is singularly me, the ego of the

phenomenological *epokhe*—an ego that is the core of a human being, not constituted by experiences, but remains when all else is bracketed and set aside. This elusive part of the ego Rogozinski terms the "remainder" (*restant*) (88).

Having confronted Heidegger and Lacan, and engaged with Descartes, Rogozinski, in Part 2 of the *The Ego and the Flesh,* develops his philosophy of the ego, what he calls *egoanalysis*. He proceeds to explore the affective struggle that the ego undergoes, prior to and apart from any relation with an other not immanent to the flesh. The ego, though singular, forms of itself an affective "community" of immanent "others" that attract, repel, alienate and captivate one another. In this sense, Rogozinski picks up a thick thread from the past two hundred years in philosophy, that the ego-self is not a "simple substance," that it is made of members that contribute to the overall gestalt of ego. What is different about Rogozinski's approach from that of virtually all others who question the ego, as well as those who affirm it (such as Husserl and Michel Henry) is that Rogozinski affirms both the life, singularity and self-givenness of the ego, as well as the ego's "transcendence in immanence." He affirms an Otherness belonging to the flesh, while nevertheless maintaining its self-sufficiency as ego. Contra Sartre, the ego is not an absence or emptiness. Nor is it a total self-presence. It provides its own basis in otherness—only for Rogozinski, this other belongs to the ego itself. Thus Rogozinski overcomes both the problem of the contradictions endemic to depending on another for the existence of my own ego (how I can be myself if my existence originates in another?), and the question of how the ego might give rise to itself, how a living being can give herself to herself. The answer, in short, is that my relation of myself to myself occurs through touch.

Touch and Ego

The theme of touching runs throughout Rogozinski's *The Ego and the Flesh*. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty have already provided the idea of the chiasm, the syntheses of touch that allows the ego to identify itself and sense itself. Touch is the means through which I am able to experience myself as a living being. It is not only a sense that allows me to navigate the world, but it gives rise to my own self awareness, awareness that allows me to undergo the trials of living and to discern truth from falsity. The living ego is an ego-flesh that gives rise to itself through touch.

The second half of Rogozinski's book is an original theory of the immanent ego and of consciousness that demonstrates the value and weaknesses of the Cartesian position. It accounts for its gaps as well as highlighting its strengths. We encounter at the outset, another analysis of a great egocide, Derrida. Rogozinski is at once sympathetic and critical. He observes that for Derrida "the *heteron* in fact takes precedence over the *auton*" (167), leading Derrida to the position that "hetero-affection inevitably interrupts the chiasm" (168). Since this position cannot find in the tactile field the alterity needed for the chiasm to take place, it posits it elsewhere, forever deferring the success of the chiasm, and placing the origin of the flesh perpetually outside itself. Rogozinski argues that "by rejecting outside of the flesh the heterogenous element haunting it, Derrida bars us from reconciling with it and from freeing ourselves of the phantom assailing us" (169). The solution for Rogozinski is that we must be "more Derridian than Derrida himself: instead of attributing it to vision, we must try to locate the birthplace of the Untouchable in touch" (169). The analysis pushes us beyond Derrida's own thinking and illuminates aspects

of the essential character of his thought in light of the phenomenon of the ego and the analysis of touch. Rogozinski achieves similar success in his analyses of Merleau-Ponty, Husserl, Levinas and Deleuze.

One thing readily observed about *The Ego and the Flesh* is that it is as much a work of analysis as it is an exploration of a single topic, the living ego. Not only does the thread of phenomenology remain consistently at issue, a variety of other sources take prominence. It is striking that Rogozinski is able to so adeptly expand the discourse of phenomenology, to not only incorporate psychoanalysis, but also literature and history. Rogozinski demonstrates that egoanalysis is as technically rigorous as it is humanistically tied to affects and life. Understanding the ego requires more than a scientific, cold, logical stance. It requires inhabiting the life of the ego, the affects involved in the chiasm, a task that is better accomplished through the literary than the strictly analytical. An effect of this is that we come to view the literary works that Rogozinski references, including the story of incarnation, resurrection and deliverance, as markedly egological. We begin to see how the affirmation of the ego has been a current of philosophical thought, though largely unacknowledged, or even unconscious. It emerges above the surface at various points in history, and Rogozinski illuminates the emergences. For instance, we can spot it in one of Rogozinski's influences, Michel Henry, throughout his work in his emphasis on the flesh. And we cannot ignore the pervasive and striking presence of psychoanalysis that is treated by Rogozinski as not only a foundation but a bellwether of where phenomenology is headed: into the affective, the psychological, the murky, unconscious depths of the reduction, giving it character, movement, drama. The lesson in these references is that we can no longer stand coldly back and peer into consciousness from afar; we must dive headlong

into it, not therapeutically, but analytically, philosophically, and literarily, much in the spirit of Freud, but with a greater element of awareness. We cannot ignore, likewise, the entrance of the theater of the absurd into philosophy, which we can see in its encroachment into *The Ego and the Flesh*, in the form of the work of Antonin Artaud, who can be said to be the poet of the ego. Artaud, the subject of one of Rogozinski's previous books (2005, 2011) is the exemplar of the story of the ego. Artaud's literary narrator is his ego, and his ego falls apart, disintegrates, dissolves into madness and comes back together, the way, Rogozinski observes, all egos must do over and over. In Artaud's case, the magic of the disintegration and resurrection of the ego is captured in his poetry, the drama laid out for everyone to witness, a drama that is at almost all other times invisible, private.

Amid the literary facet in Rogozinski's work emerges almost a narrative arc in the course of Part 2. The story of Part 2 opens with the carnal synthesis, an introduction to the carnal chiasm. Rogozinski first sets the stage outlining the scene in which the drama of the chiasm is to unfold in none other than Husserl's field of immanence, but it is also Deleuze's plane of immanence (142). We are introduced to the three carnal syntheses, and the purported impossibility of the chiasm, the impossibility of touching touching itself. It is here that Rogozinski further distinguishes his egoanalysis from classical phenomenology. He asserts that we must be "more Husserlian than Husserl himself" (162) and insist on a more radical *epokhē* that brackets the body. The touching and the touched are not so obviously identified with one another in the touching-touched relation. If we abstract from the body, Rogozinski reminds us, it is then not so obvious that that which touches can at the same time feel itself being touched (to touch myself touching). Nor does Rogozinski accept the sheer impossibility of the chiasm as

suggested by Sartre and Derrida. Merleau-Ponty's solution that the chiasm is possible but only asynchronously is not satisfactory either. This is because the chiasm, in order to be successful, must be able to happen simultaneously, or else it does not achieve synthesis. Rogozinski's solution is that the chiasm is achievable, but only precariously, always involving some foreign yet internal element, the remainder (*restant*). The increased purity and radicality of the *epokhē*, as well as the introduction of the remainder (this foreign yet always immanent element), are what define and distinguish Rogozinski's phenomenology from the others. He invokes the thinking of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida and his other influences as the scaffolding of his thought.

In the last section, the last six chapters of Part 2, Rogozinski sets about his own radical direction. Rogozinski takes his analysis of the chiasm, and the introduction of the remainder, and proceeds to draw conclusions and make descriptions of the character of the immanent ego, the ego-flesh. As he has taught us in the previous section on the chiasm, the radicality of the *epokhē* encourages us to think of the flesh abstractly, to think of it prior to its incorporation as a body, as a necessary but always preliminary precursor to embodiment. Thus we conceive of the flesh as consisting of abstract poles rather than members (hands, or limbs). These poles comprise the seething community of the flesh, replete with projections, phantasms, affects, identifications, attractions, and repulsions, all existing prior to any embodiment. This community of flesh contains the precursors to all the affects that will be experienced in life by the living ego encountering other egos. If an affect is to occur in life it will first have to be possible in the immanent ego. Rogozinski, in this last section of the book, sets about analyzing the qualities of these affects. These ego-poles, this multiplicity which already belongs to a unity, is what incorporates itself as a body, an embodied ego-flesh. This incorporation can be variably

successful, gathering itself within one ego-skin that does not always define a clear outside and inside, a set of conditions and vulnerabilities that coincide with various *pathologies of the envelope* that were identified by Freud, such as masochism and psychosis (Rogozinski 2014b).

What is the process by which these little parts of the body become incorporated into the whole? The agonies that this community of little parts endure in their encounters with the other parts of the ego-flesh, with the flesh's own remainder, make up the drama of incorporation, and the conflict internal to the flesh itself. The flesh undergoes its own dramatic movements within itself before ever coming into contact with an "other" other, an other not native to its own community. This drama is replayed in life: all the little conflicts, loves, hatreds, prejudices of life with others, are first played out within the immanent solipsistic flesh. Indeed the journey to meeting the Other outside the immanence of the flesh is already epic and full of conflict. The action of the traditional story is inverted in Rogozinski's analysis of the flesh. We imagine that the real action takes place in the formation of the ego from a prior agency (or we imagine that the action all happens once this fusion has already successfully and permanently taken place). Freud and Lacan devoted much of their work to deriving this story of the initial formation of the ego. Yet Rogozinski suggests that this action never takes place. He suggests instead that the community of the flesh is equipped with its own internal phantom/other that provides the necessary internal difference that the *precursor Other* would in the old story have provided. The real action for Rogozinski occurs in the encounter of the flesh with itself, its own projected versions of itself onto itself, its own horror or madness at meeting its internal otherness. The real question then is not how the ego emerges out of the other, but how the ego is able to overcome its solipsism and fantastic projection onto its internal other and come to experience a bona fide

external other that is not merely a projection of its own phantasmic creation. Poles of flesh project partial identifications onto the other poles of flesh (217), identifications which either cause the first pole to under-identify with the second pole, and to recoil in hatred and horror, or to over-identify and to meld with the second pole, to collapse into the second pole in the "madness of love" and to annihilate the difference holding the two poles in respect of one another.

In order to pass through this stage of over- or under-identifications, the one pole must recognize the other as constituting a part of itself that is neither horrifying nor irresistible, that is distinct, but still part of *me* (294). It must recognize the remainder for what it is: another vanishing part of itself that is constantly slipping from its grasp. This struggle within the flesh itself mirrors the struggle in life to keep oneself separate but not alienated from others that one encounters. The root, theorizes Rogozinski, of worldly struggles among groups of subjects is the incessant repetition and outward projection of this internal struggle between poles of the ego. I either abject a part of myself and under-identify with another, not recognizing that we are of the same-though-not-identical flesh, resulting in hatred and persecution; or I over-identify, falling madly in love, or, for instance, nationalistically, racially, religiously, sexually joining into a political struggle with others that involves persecution. In either case I have over- or under-identified with the other. I have mistaken the remainder for either a radically alien force outside my own flesh, persecuting me, in the case of hatred, or I have denied the difference between me and the other altogether, resulting in the madness of love or allegiance. These are all what Rogozinski terms *disfigurations* of the remainder (247). The mistaken and projected identifications within my own flesh become the mistaken identifications in my life. The goal,

then, of egoanalysis, and ultimately, in life, suggests Rogozinski, is to find the truth within these identifications and thus to transfigure the remainder, leaving behind the disfiguration of the remainder to reveal the truth, in other words, to be able to distinguish myself from the other within me, and thus also outside of me, without abjecting it, to be able to identify with the other within and outside me, without fusing with it. This Rogozinski calls *instasy* (288-307). This state of instasy would be the accomplishment of creating peace with the other outside and within myself, ending the persecution of the other, or the race to meld with the other, creating the possibility of becoming simply friends. This state is not easily achievable, and is radically unstable and not necessarily recognizable. It represents the deliverance of the ego from its tendency towards persecution, paranoia, madness. "Instasy," writes Rogozinski, "saves the truth of love" (295). Thus the path to deliverance, to ending persecution, to dispelling madness and evil is through the ego itself, an internal path, but one that is about the relation with others. The path for each person is highly individual. We might designate it as an instant or an event that is endlessly deferred or has already taken place, but is scarcely if at all recognizable, for it must have taken place, or else we each would be incessantly caught in the cycle of madness and abjection.

Rogozinski has discovered the split within consciousness itself, the elusive rupture that allows the flesh to be both different from itself enough to sense itself as well as to identify itself. He has demonstrated that the split within the ego-flesh is a rift in consciousness, not a break between consciousness and a prior substance which mysteriously becomes the ego. He discovers that the first other encountered is none other than ego, not the whole self, but in fact a gap in the ego that nevertheless is a part of it. Up until the publication of *The Ego and the Flesh*,

there was no explanation of Husserl's understanding of the ego as a transcendence-in-immanence (Rogozinski 2010, 132; see also, for instance, Husserl 2006, §28, 59-61). What this bit of worldliness could possibly be was truly a mystery. Rogozinski has solved that mystery in his way. He presents us with a deep set of new questions regarding the nature of the flesh that we may tackle with the sophistication that comes with the knowledge of one of the basic truths of the ego. He has exposed some of the political dimensions of the flesh, its influence on our everyday struggles. We now have a tremendous amount to explore in terms of the envelope of the flesh, its pathologies and sexualities, its interactions with others and with itself.

Other Philosophers of the Flesh

Merleau-Ponty seems to follow Sartre faithfully in *Phenomenology of Perception* when he states, "I can, of course, see my eyes in a three-faced mirror, but these are the eyes of someone who is observing, and I can barely catch a glimpse of my living gaze when a mirror on the street unexpectedly reflects my own image back at me" ([1945] 2012, 94). Merleau-Ponty appears to preserve the strict dichotomy between the in-itself and the for-itself, the seeing and the seen, reversing any easy assent to the possibility of the touching touching the touched. This serves his thesis here: "the permanence of my body is not a particular case of the general case of the general permanence of external objects in the world" (94). But does he need to preserve this strict dichotomy between the touching and the touched, the seeing and the seen, the immanent and the transcendent, the in itself and the for itself in order to preserve this difference between my body and the bodies of objects?

At first it would seem so, because otherwise how would I distinguish my *object body* from the body that perceives? Yet in excluding this object body, do I not then exclude too rigidly a part of me? The same body, in fact, that does the perceiving? Indeed, the resolution, when strictly dividing the living flesh and the object body, seems only to be that the body can touch and the body can be touched, but never at the same time. He writes, "the two hands are never simultaneously both touched and touching" (95). Thus rendering the so-called "double sensations" of the psychologists a pure illusion. Sensations can never occur at the same time, but only in succession.

Can we simply discard the prejudice that the two must be kept apart, the touching and the touched, and replace it with the faith that there is no contradiction in touching and being touched at the same time? But that leaves the question of how we are to account for this strange double presence of the immanent and the transcendent, the subjective and the objective. It is difficult to try to catch a glimpse of myself seeing myself. One seems to be thrown back to the sense of myself as an object when looking at my eyes, or when feeling my flesh. Merleau-Ponty suggests that even though there is a distinct difference in the living sensation of my body from the inside and the feeling of my perhaps all-but-inert flesh from the outside, there is little difference between the feeling of another's hand and my own from the perspective of the hand doing the touching. Yet when I touch my hand, it is distinctly and simultaneously me.

We find to some extent the resolution to this ostensive quandary in Rogozinski's radical re-thinking of the ego. I do indeed recognize my flesh as my own, I perceive the touching of my flesh, but there is a gap, a fissure, in the traversing of the one hand to the other, an absence that

can even appear as alien *presence*, a *remainder* that is never quite captured by the sensation of touching the touched. This strangeness, this foreign presence is nevertheless necessary; it protects me from a total collapse, he argues, to allow me the distance to perceive my own flesh as my own, but also as multiple. Within this synthesis, there is a part that can never be assimilated, a part of me, not an arm, or a hand, or an eye, but truly an abstract *remainder*, or other, that is at once excluded and included in my flesh.

But this solution only addresses a small part of the issue with respect to Husserl's and later Sartre's, Merleau-Ponty's, and Levinas' tendencies to divide the flesh into the traditional roles of body and soul, or body and mind. What becomes of these players when we introduce a level of the flesh that encompasses both? How can we approach the flesh when we recognize its different manifestations in the bodies of differently sexed subjects, in men and women? And what is the result of beginning to think through the approach to an other as fleshly being as opposed to either body or disembodied subject? We can introduce the notion of touch as the mediator not only between embodied subjects, but also between one's flesh and one's own flesh.

An Ethics of the Flesh

Rogozinski argues that before my relation to an other, even before my relation to my mother, I encounter my relation to myself (Rogozinski 43). My own becoming is an "always-having-been-what-I-will-be," a self givenness. This "before" and this "always" does not take place in worldly time, but rather in the time of the *epoche*, the time of the radical doubt of Descartes, of the immanence of my flesh, which only "later" synchronizes itself with the time of my body and

others' bodies. Nevertheless, this "before" and this "always" refer to me and to my own time and space in which my flesh which is in some sense not yet my body temporalizes itself with itself. Surprisingly, in this time "before," this always already, one also encounter the not-oneself. The not-myself is not anybody else (we are still in the time "before" anyone else).Yet, paradoxically, the not-me is part of me, too. The not-me is part of my immanent ego, a transcendence in immanence, the object-body within the subject-body of my flesh. It is the small distance between me and myself that allows me to recognize myself, to give myself to myself. It is that dis-identity that provides enough space and time within which my flesh reaches across the abyss of time and space to touch itself, grasp itself, to identify itself, and to make itself known to itself, to become a unity, though not whole or complete, rather a multiplicity in identity. I am that "not-me," I am that remainder of foreignness that is ever present within my flesh. I am that First Stranger that I encounter, that other that is not an Other, still a part of me, but escaping me. I am me and not-me, yet it is all me (43).

This is Rogozinski's ego-flesh (133, 147, 163, 178). Within this universe of myself, within this immanence of flesh and self identification, I find all the relations that will eventually become my relations to others. The first stranger, the first foreigner, is within my own immanent flesh. I touch myself, I identify myself across the gap that allows me to hold that other part of myself in respect, and it is in this gap that I first experience foreignness. For Rogozinski, I am three: the pole of flesh that touches, the pole that is touched, and the gap between the poles that allows them to remain distinct and protects them from total fusion and collapse. The gap in the flesh maintains its difference even in its identity. This gap also alienates me, distances me from the other side of my flesh, the other lip, or leaf in the tactile chiasm. I react to this gap and the other

pole. I oscillate between love and hate, between fusion and isolation. I long for the other pole, or for the remainder which I mistake for the radically other, but I also hate the other pole (because I forget it is mine), as well as the gap that separates me from myself. This causes me to want to devour the Other, and to want to abject the Other. These relations of touching, of grasping, of rejecting, of not-quite successful, not-quite permanent, coupling and de-coupling become my relations with others. They animate all my projections onto others. These projections, introjections, and transitions from hatred and agonies to loves and madness are disfigurations and transfigurations of the other within me, of the remainder.

From within this field of immanence I enact the drama of my relations with other human beings. I first encounter the other within me as the stranger within me. I experience this stranger as the others I later encounter, but I experience them as disfigured versions of the foreigner within my own flesh. Mediating these two encounters are my affectively charged projections onto the screen of the ego which obscures the truth of the other. My biggest affliction is my adulterated perception, my experience tinged with projection, with the other in me who I project as the image of the alter-ego, the second other whom I attempt to address. The truly other, the other who is not merely a projection for me, the genuinely other person, is almost always my double, constantly eluding me from behind the screen of my relatively solipsistic, relatively pathological self.

Yet the pathologies of projection, of paranoia, parapraxis, madness, obsession, of persecution, are not unique to me, nor are they unique among my phantasms. My most prevalent mode is that of fantastic projection onto the Other; I am subject to a persistent self-deluding affliction of solipsism, of non-knowledge. The Socrates of the *Theatetus* has already warned me

not to hope for absolute knowledge, but rather to expect to be limited to knowing that I don't know. What I can now offer to myself is knowing what I do not know: how the Other would appear to me without projection. My predominant mode is, as Heidegger warned, that of inauthenticity. But it is not the inauthenticity of falling prey, nor is it strictly speaking the inauthenticity of Freud's style of projective fantasy that reaches back to childhood fantasies. Rather it reaches back to a more ancient, and yet more contemporary *present-past*, a mode of living and feeling that operates not merely in the mode of repression or hysterical depression, but as a real, mysterious, and enigmatic *Thing* that must be grappled with and groped around for in the deeply dark immanent self. What one continually searches for is that alienating, obsessing, *other* part of oneself that one must learn to name. Yet this non-knowing and counter-knowing, this paranoid, confusing, haunting of the other in me, can hope to be cured for a time by a revelation or truth, paradoxically, the truth of the other in me. One is looking for a respect for otherness, suspended between total collapse and un-traversable distance, a passage between love and hatred, a threshold held open for me, between me and the other. One is pathological and perverse, but only in comparison to a potential self, to a "me" not beset with pathology or one's own unconscious drives towards or against otherness. In this way, I am not more or less pathological than any other in my very being, yet I am more or less pathological in relation to a potential being able to respect the other, in particular, the other in *me*, Rogozinski argues.

I must learn to caress the other in me: to touch without grasping, be in contact with the other without recoiling or fusing with him or her. I must be able to diverge and return, to touch, but possibly without looking or knowing who or what it is, that flaw or disunity of flesh, that little caesura within the flesh, that darkness, that mucus that clings to my flesh, that maintains my

perpetual contact, my expandable and contractable connection with the flesh of the other within me. Rogozinski writes,

> … if the caress was already defined there [in *Otherwise than Being,* 2011] as a 'beyond contact'—a 'hunger' ever unappeased, an experience of the 'ungraspable'—these analyses took into account the non-coincidence, the ceaseless 'evasion' of the caressed flesh by invoking the vulnerability of the Other, the 'extreme fragility' of the feminine which brings him to shy away, to avoid all bodily contact as a 'profanation' of his reserve. (Rogozinski 2009, 46)

In order for me to maintain contact with the other, without persecuting or forsaking the other, to remain hospitable and open, but also not servile to the other, I must learn to remain myself in the presence of the *not-myself*. I am always vulnerable to the gravitational pull of the other. The *first* other becomes like a wound that makes me feel perpetually vulnerable to the other(s). What one needs is to be able to contact the other without excessiveness. If the caress in Levinas becomes like an open wound, the caress in Irigaray is a healing touch. Both take the same form, but Irigaray re-appropriates the figure of the caress in order to provide a form of touching that leaves intact and respects the other. Rogozinski argues that this process is dependent on my ability to tolerate the remainder within me, and also attempts to come into real contact with the other without violence. The figure of the caress grounds the relation with the other in corporeal reality, whereas Levinas' Other remains abstract. Irigaray's caress is not the radically subjected caress from Levinas that leaves the self open to an onslaught by the Other. Rather, the caress in Irigaray attempts to maintain the integrity of both the caresser and the caressed. In one sense it does this by remaining open horizontality between the caresser and the caressed. Similarly, the caress seeks to maintain the communication, but also respect the difference, of each actor in the relationship. In particular this is important in the relation between men and women because it

provides a place for the identities of the two or more selves to retain their singularity and their immanence. Rogozinski's *flesh* can be used to further enhance this analysis. In order to cultivate an identity for the ego-flesh, one must first cultivate my identity with my own internal other. Paradoxically only then can one truly perceive the other, truly touch the other as other. For Rogozinski, there is no alternative way to gain access to the other except by addressing myself to the projections within myself. One relate to oneself as flesh, and one can only relate to oneself. The emphasis on being at home with oneself, to neither rejecting nor assimilating to the other within me is in keeping with Irigaray's notion of self-affection. In order to be able to self affect, one must be touching self-to-self with conscious recognition of the self-self relation, grounded in touch. To recognize the self, one must be free of the extreme projections onto the self that arise, as Rogozinski argues, when the remainder, or the originary difference that allows the flesh to fold back against itself, and perceive itself.

I touch myself from within myself; I exist in a tactile field, comprised of fleshly interactions. This flesh is the lived body of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, the *Leib* of the *Leibkorper*. When I respond to it, I decide what it will be, the decision that happens is mine, and it is me. When I attempt to contact another, it is from within the immanence of my flesh. I am able to anticipate being with another because of the transcendence, the worldliness that comes from within my flesh itself, but it is not a worldliness that I will ever recognize in the world. It is what allows the saying of the "I" that I say to myself in the "I think" or the "I feel." I am also prepared for the other by my flesh itself. I can never truly share my flesh with another. It will always be a distinct flesh from me. Yet what allows me to encounter the other at all *is that we are both flesh*. Perhaps the other will present an ethical face to me, a face that I must respond to, but first I will

encounter the other as being of the same substance as me, of being tactile, as being a self given, self sustaining immanence, similarly mortified by its own foreignness, its own incomprehensible self-sundering. This is one of the ways that I relate to the other "erotically"—I relate to the other analogically, as one flesh to another. I am able to encounter the other because I know what the other is; the other is a flesh like me. Thus Irigaray is correct in her critique of Levinas' misogynistic rejection of the phenomenology of eros, of the fecundity in caressing: I do relate to the other in her bodily comportment, her fleshly being (1993a, 185-217). The face can only be presented to me insofar as I recognize in the other the same ability to say, "I" (Derrida 1996). What I must learn is how to touch myself properly, as Irigaray says, without grasping, without rejecting, without violence. I must also learn to touch myself without needing the mediation of another. But since I cannot meet the other without coming into contact with the other in myself, I thus cannot meet the other through the other in me.

When I encounter the racially, sexually, or otherwise different other in my world I have a tendency towards strong affect, either of hatred or love according to Rogozinski. I tend to relate violently, either psychologically, or physically. Sometimes my hatred can be summoned up to such greatness as to turn into a prosecutorial siege, joining forces with the State or church in order to rid myself of this persistent terrorizing figure of the other that takes hold of me. I become caught in a deathly conflict with the other in me which is projected out into the realm of the body-politic. The politics of my flesh becomes the politics of my society. I become a member of sinful mass attempting to rid itself of a trait, a mark, or stain that takes the form of an other belonging to a race (or sex, or class) that become my target. This can take place on the individual

level, or it can amplify and ramify all the way up to the level of the state. That is how my individual pathologies can become an ailment not just of me but of my very State.

The look of the other or the call of the other may aid in returning me to myself, the zone of immanence in which I may decide to undo my transfiguration, my knot of self hatred or self love that threatens to destroy me either by dispersal (in hatred) or terrible fusion (in love). What I must learn is the capacity to caress myself, and in that self-caress be able to caress another, without hatred, without fusion. Caress implies the tolerance, acceptance and identification with the object that I formerly hated, was disgusted by and had abjected. Yet in that caress I am able to diverge, finally, from the terrifying tyranny of the other. I do not become one with the other, we do not fuse, nor do I become a complete One, but rather I make an incomplete unity with the other, an incomplete unity with myself. I become able to tolerate that mark of ethnicity, that sexual characteristic that formerly sent me into paroxysms of anxiety. Through tolerating the other, I become able to tolerate myself. It is not that I am able to see myself through the other's eyes, but I am able, moreover, to see the other through my own eyes. I become a unity in difference with the other in me and with the other. "The 'political body' is grounded, like my own body, on the exclusion of the remainder," writes Rogozinski (2010, 305). I must learn to embrace, to in effect, caress this remainder, and in so doing, be able to caress the other, this abhorrent and attractive other that demands my attention in every case.

If the political community tends to take the shape of a body, it is because these communities repeat the immanent syntheses of the flesh (305). My relations to others are therefore fleshly relations. Yet we are each of our own flesh and not of each other's flesh. When I relate to another, it is as flesh first, as immanence to immanence that cannot cross. Rather than oneself as

another, it is another as oneself. I become the other in my relating to them. I address myself to them. I caress them. That is why the ethical relation is still one of caress no matter how proximate or physically distant I am from another. And that is why I relate to the other not as belonging to a particular identity, not as belonging to a group, but as a self, an immanence. I should be able to see myself in them, see that they are different from me, but of the same flesh, that they do not belong to a group that is other. To base law and community on flesh and caress rather than Right and violence is what opens to us in the ethics of the flesh.

Hetero-Affection and Mourning

In 2005, soon after Derrida's death on October 9th, 2004, Jacob Rogozinski published a sustained engagement with Derrida's thought, particularly his thought on mourning, entitled *Cryptes de Derrida* (2014a). In the work, Rogozinski asks: how—or how not—to mourn? And in particular, how to mourn Derrida, a thinker who himself was at times preoccupied with mourning. In *Le Moi et la chair*, first published one year later (in 2005), Rogozinski discusses a range of approaches to the ego-cogito, most of them in one way or another antagonistic to it. As might be anticipated, Derrida himself is one of the strongest critics of the ego as a self-enclosed, "pure" auto-affectivity. The ego, if not deeply flawed, is at least one of those transcendentals that must be forever "quasi"—never resolving into a fixed concept. In *Cryptes de Derrida*, we are presented with the dilemma that was Derrida's and becomes our own: that we must mourn, but we can never fully mourn to the point where mourning is exhausted. We cannot, in that sense, mourn mourning. To properly mourn, our mourning must remain incomplete in order to do

justice to the person we mourn, lest we be finished with them. We must never finish in order to remember not to forget the very one we are mourning. And also, importantly, we, as Rogozinski puts it, "can only mourn a singularity" (Rogozinski 2014a). We must mourn *this* friend, this relation. Thus we are never prepared: as Derrida says our mourning becomes, "each time, the end of the world" (Derrida 2003, 9).

Throughout *Cryptes de Derrida*, Rogozinski uncovers a range of questions that present themselves when Derrida's thought on mourning is approached on its own terms. What he discovers is a rather elusive fidelity in Derrida to truth and living, even while Derrida seeks to critique the demarcation between truth and non-truth, between life and death. Later, in *The Ego and the Flesh*, Rogozinski addresses Derrida from within a discussion of temporality. In particular, he summarizes Derrida's take on the basic conflict that Merleau-Ponty raises, that the flesh can never be the touching and the touched at the same time. This conflict, Rogozinski tells us, Derrida attempts to solve in *On Touching* (Derrida 2005), in one of his characteristic ways: that the touching and the touched never do resolve into one side or the other, that they remain ever indecidable, in a state of superposition, forever between the two states, or rather, forever both possible and impossible at once. Nevertheless, Rogozinski offers this alternative, and this rather important critique: "these 'undecidable' formulations that Derrida so cherishes have only a purely rhetorical value here: they allow him to maintain an apparent equilibrium between the possible and the impossible and between coincidence and divergence, whereas the balance always tips to the same side, namely that of the impossible" (Rogozinski 2010, 167).

What we observe in Derrida's analysis is the assertion that touching the touched, or touching that which is doing the touching, will always be forever *indecidable* because

simultaneously being touched and touching is only possible as—that which remains impossible. In an analysis that begins with Merleau-Ponty, Derrida maintains that one cannot touch the touching of my hand or body to itself because to do so would be to transform in that moment from the touched part to the *touch*ing part, and thereby destroy the relation that one was attempting to create. For Merleau-Ponty the problem of the simultaneity of the touching and the touched is irresolvable because of the impossibility of touching and being touched at the same time. For Derrida, the problem is resolved only by deferring it, or rather endlessly interrupting it by the intervention of an unknown entity, by some external agency: a something-else which each and every time cuts the temporality of the relation and sends it back again to itself. Here the intervention is characterized by Derrida as another perpetual possibility: the possibility of being seen. The unseen Other, in this case vision itself, operates on the so-called chiasmic relation from the outside, cutting it at the very moment the relation begins to complete itself.

Rogozinski took another tack, proposing, what if the unseen other that operates within the relation is a different one: not the unseen of the unseeable, but rather the un-touched of the Untouchable? The alterity that grounds the relation and its apparently impossible simultaneity isn't that of the exteriority of vision, an otherness that intervenes from the outside. Rather the alterity that grounds the chiasmic relation is something else, an alterity that is present inside, immanently, to the already invisible relations of the touching and the touched: the "Untouchable *in touch*" (Rogozinski 169). Thus the difficulty that we confront with an "auto-hetero-affection in which an irreducible alterity … always comes to trouble the closure of the Same, prohibiting it from closing in on itself" (167)—is transformed. We are not dealing, as we thought we were, with a relation that is troubled and grounded from without. Rather the relation is maintained by

the unseen and destabilizing force from within, Rogozinski called the "remainder." The remainder, for Rogozinski, is the unseen other, or double, immanent to the flesh itself, which at once disrupts and founds the flesh as its self-given hetero-affective agency.

Rogozinski attributes Derrida's stance, that the chiasmic relation's undecidability stems from its foundation in difference, to Derrida's abiding commitment to alterity. But because Derrida insists that the indecision must be originating from the outside, the balance between the alterity and auto-affection is not equal: "in this knotting of the same and the other, the *heteron* in fact takes precedence over the *auton*" (167), and thus ever collapses over onto the side of hero-affection. Rogozinski, proposes as an alternative the following reversal: "inverting the primacy that Derrida confers on the *heteron*," to take as primary the "auton" instead. "By considering carnal auto-affection," he writes, "as the originary condition of the alterity haunting it… I am certainly affected by myself *as an other*, but this alterity is purely apparent, and it is still me who affects me in this way" (168). He continues, "If this is indeed the case, the Derridian objection falls away, and nothing prohibits the flesh from embracing itself in a chiasm" (168). If we consider the possibility of an internal other, the "remainder," then the carnal chiasm is no longer impossible.

What we gain here in the course of this analysis is not only a way of understanding the carnal chiasm, but also a perspective on Derrida. It allows us to see his philosophy, the *indecidable* nature of possibility/impossibility, of truth and non-truth, as well as the Same and other, and immanence and exteriority, especially of flesh, as something more in-play even within its own internal logic. In the intervening time between Rogozinski's writing of the *Cryptes de Derrida* and of *The Ego and the Flesh*, Rogozinski has deepened his inquiry into the nature of

truth and ego, and is building upon his insight into Derrida, especially of the instabilities of death and mourning and their relationship to truth and life.

By the time *The Ego and the Flesh* came out, Rogozinski had invented egoanalysis, a way of reading and thinking that elicits the underlying ego-structure held undisclosed within recent philosophy that has consistently repressed, for a variety of reasons, its fundamental reliance on a founding operation of the ego-cogito. In doing so, Rogozinski engenders what we might think of as another layer of his critique taking place in *Cryptes de Derrida*. What we confront when we confront death, and crucially, not just our own death, but the death of another, is that which is singular and auto-affective about the ego, what we might call the loneliness of the ego. What we take on in the death of the other isn't simply our own death, but the real loss of our own auto-affective activity, a decomposition of ourselves, which perhaps we undergo as a result of the true loss of a singular outside other.

Let me here present an extended quotation from *Cryptes de Derrida* that speaks to this very question, that of the meaning of another's death. As Rogozinski asks,

> In any event, that which I just evoked - the impossibility of anticipating death "as such", the hypothesis of an originary "mourning of self", the difficulty of differentiating *faire la part* between a mourning of self and the mourning of an other, the "aporia of mourning" and the inevitable effacement of a singularity which it entails - all that we get from him. " "This is because he dreamt of a parade sans parade, absolutely unstoppable; that he put in the effort to calculate everything, in order to become impregnable *imprenable*. But he also knew that the phantasm of an "infinite calculation" - which would be the dream of God itself - inevitably fails: that he exposed himself to a certain blindness, the "vertigo of a non-mastery" (cf. *Éperons*, 80) always stumbling upon something incalculable, a rest that escapes its grip. One or several crypts." (Rogozinski 2014a, 15-16. Trans. Ernesto Blanes and Jennifer Carter)

What, then is the crypt to which Derrida has exposed himself in his analysis of the carnal chiasm, of the intertwining of the flesh, in which touching itself attempts to touch touching? Perhaps the crypt that has befallen Derrida is the crypt of deconstruction itself: that what deconstructs itself has a tendency to resurrect itself, to come back to life to demand its own deconstruction again. After all, is not that deconstruction a small sort of death: death of one truth in favor of another, the death of one past in favor of another? Always superposed: always on the edge of collapse. But again, what is this counter-motion that always seems to bring to life a new meaning?

For Derrida, it is often the iterability, the trace, the play of differences that perpetuates, and defers the ultimate closure, the ending which could be death, or which could simply be a repetitive sameness that ceases to produce something new. Rogozinski, in *Cryptes de Derrida*, identifies the qualities in Derrida's philosophy that give it its radicality, but taken to an extreme, can at the same time produce an undesirable paroxysm of indifference: a form of instability that threatens always to fall to the same side of impossibility, of unknowability, of undefinability. Rogozinski, continues with a nuanced reading of Derrida's texts including *Glas*, *The Post Card*, etc., and finds, on some level, a deeper Derrida, different from the avowed Derrida who sought to respond consistently to attacks from his critics by putting out a united-front of difference. What Rogozinski finds in its midst is a more nuanced respect for the others of impossibility and indecidability, the others of the "phantasm of truth," and of mourning. These, for Rogozinski amount to a small set of un-deconstructables: the ego, truth, and life. While this may seem like an un-Derridian thesis, Derrida's work itself is what teaches us to look for limits and boundaries. In Derrida's case, or rather in a caricatured version of his philosophy that he sometimes was complicit in perpetuating, it is deconstruction, iterability—the play of differences itself—which

sometimes ran away without sufficient limits. What we observe is necessary is something, neither to ground deconstruction, nor to contain or foreclose it, but rather to bind it.

Thus the singularity of the ego, the essential life immanent to the ego, and the truth, in particular the truth of deconstruction, the truth of mourning, the truth of life, could be, ironically or not so ironically, the legacy of Derrida. Whether this does justice to Derrida is a discussion that deserves to be had, again and again, in a manner proper to Derrida's philosophy. But certainly Rogozinski has given a challenge to what we might call, if such a thing were possible, dogmatic Derridianism. He also provides, at the same time, an important response, if even a somewhat deeper and challenging one, to those who accuse Derrida of advocating an endless play of meaningless signifiers. Rather than suggesting that meaning ultimately dissolves into chaos or worse, nihilism, through Rogozinski's radical reading, we can unearth an implicit set of values. These might just be, not the solution to some Derridian riddle, but the means to sustain a more in-depth engagement with Derrida's thought than was ever possible (or impossible) before.

Envelopes of Flesh

I would like to propose that we consider some of Irigaray's work in light of Rogozinski's. Irigaray's work often seems to spring from both the psychoanalytic and phenomenological tradition. She frequently employs imagery associated with the self that would appear to specify a singular psychoanalytic self with specific sexual and psychological characteristics, such as the "two lips" or a womb, and thus appears to be describing the psychoanalytic or psychological ego, an ego in history, with identifiable traits. On the other hand, she interrogates Freud's analysis of the Oedipal complex, and at times seems to be alluding to a deeper immanence and

transcendence of the subject, a subject that is outside of history but is nevertheless still marked in a hetero-givenness with another transcendence whom she defines as the sexually different other.

The irreducible difference between me and the other is our sexual difference. One's ego-givenness arises as the joining of one to another in a pairing of heterogenous sexuate identities. This would seem to be incompatible with egoanalysis because for egoanalysis, the original givenness of the ego 1) is a self-givenness of the ego to itself, and 2) comes about in a carnal synthesis in which two heterogeneous poles of flesh become incompletely identified with each other, and the poles themselves have no independent identity other than their synthesis in the ego. Thus the givenness of the ego comes about prior to the contact with the other. This structure in some ways resembles Irigaray's notion of self-affection. However, Irigaray is optimistic that through touch the self can be present and identical with itself.

The First Stranger, according to Rogozinski, for the ego, is not the Other, sexually different, or neuter, but the ego itself. It would be easy, then, for us to consign Irigaray's notion of identity or self to what Rogozinski has defined as the psychological ego, an ego that has a robust sense of immanent existence within a history. Yet Irigaray is seeking a more ontological sense of sexual difference. This kind of foundational essentialism has been objected to on the grounds that it supposedly forecloses the possibility of solidarity between women and men, confines both men and women to deterministic roles, and ultimately threatens to re-inscribe a sexual hierarchy that feminism seeks to escape, though I would argue this is a misinterpretation of Irigaray's sense of ontological: this misinterpretation treats sexual difference as objective presence. Another objection that has been raised is that the ontological sense of sexual difference blocks the possibility of a plurality of genders from arising in anything other than a derivative

sense.

In the context of Rogozinski's work, sexual difference, to be ontological in the sense of being at play in the originary givenness of the subject, would have to be already at play in the carnal synthesis. Yet the poles of the carnal synthesis get their identity from the ego itself (they are identified with each other). And there is no hetero-egological givenness. Thus egoanalysis is not gender-essentialist when it comes to the constitution of the ego. Since the ego is constituted in its own self-givenness, it resists the sexually different because it cannot come into originary contact with a sexually different other. This is true in virtue of the fact that the ego is self-constituting, and thus cannot in principle contact another until and unless it is already identified with and to itself. The ego, for Rogozinski, in its original carnal synthesis does not have any sexuate identity of its own because it doesn't have any internal organization except for the poles of flesh.

Nevertheless, I would like to press the question of sexual difference and the ego further. This question is necessary not only because of the importance of gender, and of the idea of irreducible difference, but also because of the issue of trans—transsexuality and transgender. Irigaray writes that sexual difference (sexuate difference) is "the irreducible difference" (Irigaray 1996, 62). But perhaps from the work Rogozinski presents, we can now see that it may be irreducible on a plane other than that of the undifferentiated primordial surface. This would be simpler to those who, like me, are attempting to make sense of sexual difference without positing sexual difference as being an "eternal," determinate feature of consciousness, but one that changes and fluctuates. After all, it would be a challenge to prove that sexual difference was more irreducible than the difference between immanence and transcendence. And in fact, it does

seem in Irigaray's work that the difference between immanence and transcendence is irreducible as well. Considering what, for Irigaray, the irreducible difference, the essential difference, and primary difference represent, it seems clear, in consideration of Rogozinski's work, that she means something more like sexual difference in the psychoanalytic ego than in the phenomenological one.

Rogozinski writes in *The Ego and the Flesh,* "for sexuation to take place, a sectioning is necessary, an originary tearing distributed over the entire surface of the ego-skin in a series of local openings and differentiated orifices, thus making contact possible with different zones, on which desire is fixated…" (2010, 194). In other words, sexuation happens in incorporation when the ego-skin becomes organized, in particular, with sexual characteristics. This process happens much later than this originary tearing of the primordial surface. The "irreducibility" Irigaray is referring to must, thus, take place within the zone of incorporation, desire, and otherness, and not within the immanence of the ego-flesh itself.

Rogozinski's work on the immanence of the ego-flesh isolates the ego, in a certain sense, from sexual difference. This is a function of the radical *epoche* of the carnal synthesis, and the even more radical *epoche* of the primordial surface. This satisfyingly resolves a conflict that many have perceived between the irreducibility of sexual difference and the need to understand the ego as having preexisted sexual difference. We seem to have in view here a resolution of the apparent conflict if we view the ego in these distinct stages of *epoche*.

Some questions regarding sexual difference and ego remain, even having resolved this apparent conflict. One experience of sexuation we ought to be able to account for is the experience of trans, transgender, and transexuality. Trans, for the most part, refers to a crossing

of the psychological experience of sexuation and gender with the appearance and structure of the body's incorporation. This free play between the tactile experience of bodily incorporation and the felt experience of sexuation seems to need explanation. One can experience oneself as a woman, but nevertheless have a penis. If the experience of trans persons includes, for the most part, an experience of a difference between the incorporation of the body and the bodily felt experience of sexuation, what is it that allows the free play of this experience of sex from the bodily characteristics, and what accounts for the persistence of the experience of trans over a long period, over a lifetime? Perhaps the free play of sex/gender is such that it can be projected back even into the moment of incorporation, though in a refracted way that at once preserves the experience of having a sex/gender identity, but allows it to be different from my incorporated gender from the beginning. Thus "my" gender would have been my gender from the start. But what could account for this free play?

I would like to suggest that perhaps the free play is not only present in incorporation, but is also revealed in the *epoche* of these stages of the ego. When we perform the *epoche*, and especially as the *epoche* becomes more radical, we test the limits of physical incorporation. We transgress a boundary between the natural attitude and the *epoche* itself. Therefore, perhaps in our performance of the *epoche*, there is also a remainder, similar to that of the carnal chiasm. The *epoche* is meant to establish the conditions of existence independent of worldly facts, such as gender, and other specific embodied characteristics, like race, and relations, such as intersubjectivity. At these limits of intelligibility the *epoche* takes us to, we find a reflection of the natural attitude in which categories that we had intended to bracket, for instance spatiality, temporality, gender, religion, etc., are reflected back to us. In effect, we are also responsible for

confronting the linguistic and conceptual remnants or remainders of these categories within our *epoche*. This is not to suggest that the *epoche* is impossible, just as the remainder does not make the ego impossible, but rather possible. When performing the *epoche*, it might be necessary to perform some analysis within it. For instance, we quite usefully speak of poles of flesh—two monadic poles, but does this phrasing import an implicit masculinity?

Similarly, we might analyze the chiasm, as Irigaray begins to do in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* in the chapter, "The Invisible of the Flesh." The encounter of the chiasm is between the two poles of flesh, in which one pole of flesh contacts the other, and achieves a synthesis, and the ego thus recognizes itself as being the two poles. This is reminiscent of Irigaray's two lips. Irigaray's analysis of these two poles enhances the Merleau-Pontian account by suggesting that the sheer reversibility of the two poles is to be questioned. The Irigarian account would have it that the poles are not reversible in the sense of active and passive; they are also not reversible in the sense that they are non-gendered, or gender neutral. For Irigaray, the poles may be sexuate even though they do not have sex organs. In fact, for her, the woman and the man are not defined by sex organs per se. In her account, the sex organs (along with the maternal and paternal, etc) are part of the self-self relation. Feminine embodiment in a certain sense, is the self-touching, many lipped body, the body that is an envelope for the other. The male-body is different. Here, then, there may be another level at which gender (or even a certain sense of sexuation) might operate within the chiasm. Indeed sexuation may only occur at the level of incorporation (I become Man or Woman when I incorporate into a self-body—an ego-flesh—with organs). But perhaps we might adapt Irigaray's point to the carnal chiasm in explaining this free play of gender which crosses the barrier between carnality and incorporation.

Perhaps, in the duality of the poles, in the duality of activity and passivity, there is already gender at play, in the two poles coming into contact, in recognizing each other, and also in the differentiation between the two poles (one being masculine and the other being feminine), a proto-identification of male and female that presages the remainder. Again, this would not determine the sex of the ego who was this synthesis; this would happen at the level of incorporation. But it would put the issue of sex/gender at play already in the two carnal syntheses as a reflection or refraction of the natural attitude. Surprisingly, the *epoche* itself would be what produces this proto-identification. Thus on my reading, perhaps gender is already in play in the carnal synthesis, but in a suspended mode that does not determine the ego's gender but already produces some proto-gender relations.

4.2 "Wonder, Eroticism, and Enigma:" Reading Ricoeur and Irigaray on Love and Eros

Ricoeur in his 1964 article "Wonder, Eroticism, and Enigma," writes, "The difference between sexes cuts across humanity in another way from a difference between species, or a social or spiritual difference. What does that suggest?" (133). This sounds strikingly like some of what Luce Irigaray's philosophical work is about in her *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* some twenty years later. Irigaray has focused on sexual difference as "the primary difference," as expressing the essential self-other relation. Ricoeur's position in his essay seems to presage her sweeping critique of the anti-sexual bias of modern Western philosophy when he introduces the opposing terms, in his view, of eroticism and tenderness. He argues that were we to adopt an ethic of tenderness as opposed to eroticism, we might be able to "reconstruct a symbol of

innocence, to ritualize our dream of innocence, to restore the integrity and integrality of the flesh" (136). Irigaray echoes this sentiment in her essay, "The Fecundity of the Caress," when she calls for "eros prior to any eros defined or framed as such" (186), an eros that can "arrive at the innocence which has never taken place with the other as other" (187). It is difficult to know whether Ricoeur had in mind Levinas' 1961 essay "The Phenomenology of Eros" when he refers to the tenderness in the ethical relation to the other, but all three figures (Ricoeur, Irigaray, and Levinas) appear at times to be particularly concerned with the enigmatic relationship of sexed existence to the ethical.

Ricoeur and Irigaray are not often thought of as having so similar an understanding of the ethical as appears in these two essays, but the connection is there. Both think that a refiguring of the sexual relationship could bring about a reintegration of self in the reciprocal relation of self and other. Irigaray is more consistently explicit throughout her work about the role of sexual difference in the ethical relation, but one can see in Ricoeur work along the same lines, though differently focused. In his *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur, like Irigaray, argues that the relation between the self and other cannot lead to a total dissolution of one person into another. Both call for a re-sacralization of the sexual in order to restore the loving aspect of eroticism. Perhaps the significance of the sexual relation is more pervasive in Ricoeur than one might at first think. This prompts us to look to some of Irigaray's work to shed light on Ricoeur's notion of self and other.

Some of the differences between Irigaray and Ricoeur can be found in their respective approaches to sexuality and sex in their ethical frame works. Ricoeur tends to eschew eroticism/ sexuality in favor of what he thinks of as more spiritual, sacred relationships. His ethic of tenderness in "Wonder, Eroticism, Enigma" eliminates vulgar techniques of sex in favor of

tenderness. But this takes the relation out of the grounding sexual dimension. Irigaray's ethical relation is decidedly not about being spiritual to the exclusion of carnality. Friendship is certainly part of the self-other relationship, but for her the relationships are about love, which includes sexual love. The interesting crux of their differences hinges on Ricoeur's still subtly sensuous "tenderness" from which the vulgarly erotic is removed.

Irigaray, Ricoeur and Levinas

Early in his work, in *Time and Other* (1987), Levinas thinks of love as being a good basis for ethical action. Later, in *Totality and Infinity (*[1961] 2013), Levinas sours on the idea of love because of what he perceives to be its vulgar context within aesthetics and politics. He is too suspicious of its association with the aesthetically beautiful. The vulgarity of depictions of love are one of Levinas' main reasons for rejecting corporeal self-other relationships as fraught with lust and superficiality. Women themselves become tangled in the mess of Levinas' rejection of love and eroticism, leading him to associate women with the body, and painting them as the opposite of "face." It is in exactly what Levinas has rejected, the fecundity of the caress, that Irigaray finds rich resources for a self-other bond and self-other difference. Ricoeur, like Irigaray, in this early article on wonder, sides more with the early Levinas' acceptance and reverence for eroticism. But Ricoeur emphasizes the erotic intersubjective aspects of corporeal relationships more, though still less so than Irigaray.

An unexpected coincidence between Irigaray and Ricoeur is their mutual regard for wonder as a motivating and primary force. Irigaray notices that Freud has not thought of this Cartesian

"passion" (or drive) as primary. Freud's preferred passion is desire. She avers it is wonder itself that occurs before the "vectorization of desire." Wonder prompts us to move before even we have begun to know how we are moving. It readies us for love before we even know "to" whom we are loving. Ricoeur's notion of wonder comes from an later source than Descartes' "Treatise on the Passions." Like for Irigaray, for Ricoeur, Freud is the touchstone between a modern attitude towards eroticism, and the old. However, for Ricoeur, wonder is lost when we no longer view eroticism as aligned with the sacred in the ancient Greek sense. He writes, "Imagination constantly surrounded everything 'then' with sexual symbols in exchange for symbols that it received from the great rhythms of vegetable life—which in turn was symbolic of the life and death of the gods, according to an unending interplay of mutual correspondences" (Ricoeur 1964, 134). The collapse of this reverent and wonderful awe of the gods is what has led to the technologization and vulgarization of erotic desire, redeployed as an instrument. Ricoeur, instead of lamenting this collapse of the old notion of eroticism into what he calls "the great disjointed puppet of our desire, our vision and our speech," valorizes our new understanding of the erotic and the sacred. The sacred, he says, "had to collapse, at least in its immediate and naive form" (134). What we are left with is an Eros that lacks the sacred dimension, and a sacred that lacks a strictly erotic dimension. In his view, this frees the sacred up for more dedicated pursuits. "Now," he writes, "the transcendent dimension of the sacred is much more capable of sustaining a political ethic, centered on justice than a lyricism of life" (134).

Ricoeur, like Irigaray, advocates a return to wonder as an orienting category of the sensuous. For Irigaray, it is wonder towards the other in their very otherness that she thinks in part grounds the ethical relation. For Ricoeur it is the sacralizing dimension of otherness found in

the sensuous wonder of tenderness that focuses our relation to the other.

Sacralizing the other, de-objectifying the other, by regarding them before the division of "subject" from "object" in the diffuse motion of wonder, for both Irigaray and Ricoeur, accomplishes a similar recasting of the self-other relationship. Ricoeur, in "Wonder, Eroticism, Enigma" offers tenderness as the re-sacralizing relation between self and other to aim towards. Interestingly, here he presents the ultimate practical and metaphorical expression of tenderness as that experienced in the conjugal bond. "The contemporary ethic of marriage," he writes, "represents a limited but partially successful effort to reconstruct a new sense of the sacred, based on the fragile alliance of spiritual and carnal in the person" (135). In Ricoeur's description, he references "expression" as particular to the modern ethic symbolized in marriage. He writes, "The essential conquest of this ethic is to have put into the forefront the value of sexuality as a language without words, as an organ of mutual recognition and personalization—in brief, as expression" (135). Thus the ethic he constructs is both sacred and carnal, a combination of spirit and corporeality which provide for the possibility of "the reconquest of Eros by Agape" (135).

In "The Fecundity of the Caress," Irigaray offers a different but related description of the relation between two "others." She also alludes to "nuptials" as a productive symbol for the ethical bond. Irigaray introduces a symbol into the figure of the marriage, an active and productive gesture between two lovers. "This gesture," she writes, "which is always and still preliminary to and in all nuptials, which weds without consum(mat)ing, which perfects while abiding by the outlines of the other, this gesture may be called: the touch of the caress" (Irigaray 1993a, 186).

For Ricoeur, a new idea of the sacred is expressed after the development of methods of control of procreation in modern marriage. In so doing, "reproduction ceases to be a destiny, while at the same time there is a liberation of the dimension of tenderness in which the new idea of the sacred is expressed" (Ricoeur 1964, 135). Irigaray thinks that an ethics based on love is possible when procreation as a product of love is deferred. A love whose most basic element is the caress is a love which "has a future none can control," covering and uncovering the flesh, the caress is an "ever prolonged quest for a birth that will never take place" (186). For both, the intrinsic importance and strength of what we might call Eros (which incorporates both eroticism and tenderness) is its mystery and irreducibility. Ricoeur writes, "Ultimately, when two people embrace, they don't know what they are doing, they don't know what they want, they don't know what they are looking for, they don't know what they are finding" (140). Irigaray thinks that in "the vertigo of getting in over their heads," in the immersion of eroticism, "every subject loses its mastery and method," but that the birth of the "son does not resolve the enigma of the most irreducible otherness" (Irigaray 1993a, 189). Ricoeur, moreover, refers to tenderness as "non-instrumental immediacy" (Ricoeur 1964, 141).

In the active moments of tenderness and caress, there is a futural productivity recognized by both Ricoeur and Irigaray. Both at times name this deferred production and/or reproduction "enigma" and "wonder." There is an openness, that remains productive as long as the possibilities unfolding between two fleshly bodies are not foreclosed. Irigaray and Ricoeur both contrast this enigma and wonder with the consumptive sides of an eroticism that seek closure, telos, and dominance, an eroticism that has been produced by the modern technological appropriation of sexuality. The affinity of Ricoeur and Irigaray in their approaches to the ethical

relation reveals rich resources to draw upon in understanding how to approach the unique problems of sexuality in an age in which pre-determined eroticism threatens to overtake sensuality. Ricoeur's discussion of contemporary sexuality and an ethic of tenderness contextualize Irigaray's notion of the caress in an almost Foucauldian network of institutional power relations which when unwound lead us in the direction of the self-other relationship as a union without a unification, one in which one self does not overtake, engulf, or freeze the other into a projection of oneself. At times, one paradoxically needs a dive into the sensual such as is offered by Irigaray in order to more immediately understand such things as the self-other relation that Ricoeur so carefully organizes in, for instance, *Oneself as Another* (1992). Similarly, Ricoeur's analysis also helps in the creative activity of reading figural prose such as that which we find in Irigaray.

In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur says that it is "necessary that the irruption of the other, breaking through the enclosure of the same, meet with the complicity of this moment of effacement by which the self makes itself available to others. For the effect of the 'crisis' of selfhood must not be the substitution of self-hatred for self-esteem" (1992, 168). This much later formulation of Ricoeur's from 1992 seems far from what he says about tenderness and enigma in his 1964 article. Yet when we view its relationship to Irigaray's work, new aspects appear. In particular, Irigaray emphasizes the maintenance of two distinct identities among related parties such that one is never merely or primarily the narcissistic projection of the other. This is accomplished in the ethic of tenderness and in the fecundity of the caress because the other is respected in their mystery. The integrity and relation of the two are also maintained indirectly by the returning to solitude of each one in the process of self-affection. In the case of tenderness, the

other is sensuously regarded without being turned into an object for my strictly erotic desire. I wonder at him or her, but I do not project my own needs or my own identity towards her in order to capture, or "grasp" her being.

Respecting the difference in the other also preserves my self-integrity. My own identity does not become subject to the other's desire. In tenderness, as in the caress, I preserve my own identity in difference. I am not wholly subjectified in the other's desire. I remain separate from them insofar as they wonder about me. I am a mystery to the other, and do not become an object for them. I can respond to their demands, but I do not become a mere resource for them. Instead I set aside the exclusive binaries of self-other, subject-object in favor of coupled relations in which subjects mutually regard one another. Our ethical relations may not be altogether reciprocal, because reciprocity is an expectation of structural equivalences. But our relationship is mutual. This is a departure from Levinas' ethics which both Ricoeur and Irigaray share. Levinas says we substitute ourselves for the other. Irigaray's figure of the caress sanctifies neither self nor other at the other's expense, but maintains instead the relatedness between the two. When we compare Ricoeur's early "Wonder, Eroticism, and Enigma" and his later *Oneself as Another* to Irigaray's "The Fecundity of the Caress," we see a relationship that otherwise might be hidden. Ricoeur's ethic of tenderness foretells the direction that he would take in *Oneself as Another*, a validation of the self and the other in the self-other relation that supports each in his or her own status as an other for an other, and as a self for oneself.

Thus, here is a connection between the early Ricoeur and the later Ricoeur that we can see through his comparison with Irigaray. Their shared milieu provides the backdrop for their shared way of thinking about the issues of self and other and erotic relationships. Irigaray is younger

than Ricoeur, but she, like Ricoeur, is influenced by Freud and Lacan. Ricoeur, interestingly, does not speak about love as it can be figured differently by masculine and feminine symbols as Irigaray does, but the thought is nevertheless suggested when he speaks about sexuality and tenderness. We see this also in his very illuminating discussion of gender in *Symbolism of Evil* when he writes, "the story of Genesis points to an 'eternal feminine' which is more than sex and which might be called the mediation of the weakness, the frailty of man" (1986, 254). He goes on, "Eve, then, does not stand for woman in the sense of 'second sex.' Every woman and every man are Adam; every man and every woman are Eve; every woman sins 'in' Adam, every man is seduced 'in' Eve" (255). Here we see a theory of sexual difference developing within Ricoeur's thought. The questions arising in gender do not take center stage as they do in Irigaray's thought, nevertheless, they function as a hermeneutic figure which reaches beyond the issues of the political position of women to the very essence of human existence. In *Freedom and Nature*, sexuality attends to the uniqueness of the individual in their death, "giving the species a virtual immortality which the individual lacks" (2007, 459). Though in the same book Ricoeur writes, "love plays no part in our analysis of willing" because "love of beings among themselves appears to us too much a part of the love of beings toward Being to play a role outside the bounds of the poetic" (31). The other, too he says only affects our "decision," thus is not for him strictly a part of the spiritual analysis of willing. However, later he would return to the question of the other in *Oneself as Another*. In that book, Ricoeur views the other through extensive analysis of the predicative relationship between self and other, leaving aside questions of willing and carnality. We bridge the divide between the early Ricoeur and the late Ricoeur in looking at his emphasis on an ethic of tenderness and love in "Wonder, Eroticism, Enigma," and we can see

how the early and late Ricoeur can be drawn into a conversation about love between self and other.

In the beginning of his text Ricoeur asks, “Why sexuality rather than love?” His answer: “sexuality is the domain of all the difficulties, all the gropings, the dangers and dilemmas, the failure and the joy” therefore, he says, “a serious examination of sexuality is preferable to a eulogy of love.” He wants instead to emphasize a “feeling of astonishment at the wonder and enigma of sex” (1992, 133). Irigaray shows us the bridge between love and tenderness. For Ricoeur, tenderness is not strictly a part of love, precisely because of its sexual dimension. Love for Ricoeur is too spiritual to be a part of carnality. Irigaray shows us through her analysis of the caress that carnality and love are related in the flesh and can be a part of our analysis of self and other as well. Ricoeur shows us a dimension of knowing accessed through human history by way of the route of sexuality. His analysis is at once existential and spiritual, synthesizing both through the historical domain of the sacred and its spiritual implications.

In Irigaray’s work, we can see hints of how to refigure the sacred dimension of carnality lost in the rise of modern sexuality, and confined somewhat by the development of the contemporary matrimonial bond. She helps move beyond some of the problems of sexuality recognized by Ricoeur, and to read his work as in fact about a kind of love: an erotic love which captures both tenderness and eroticism through the caress. Ricoeur introduced the special issues of marriage, and explains why tenderness is located there. Ricoeur’s affection for the marital symbol helps to give meaning to the self-other relation, and meaning to its gendered aspects. An ethic of tenderness can be an understanding of the self-other relation, and such a relation can be a way of understanding sexuate subjectivity.

Conclusion

Up to the present, touch has often been accorded a tertiary role within the whole of sensation, on the one hand, symbolizing for various cultures an inarticulate materiality whose invisibility, darkness and lack of representability led to it being buried away from all of the blinding luminosity that lights up a the domain of knowing, but also dulls our other senses, and leaves dormant some of our other faculties, particularly those that involve the appreciation of difference, carnality, and otherness. Without becoming conscious of the intersubjective dimensions to human existence, beginning, crucially with the first intersubjective relation that we have with respect to the mother, and importantly, without acknowledging or understanding the sexuate dimension of our relationship to the mother as well as to others, our culture has subjected itself to an abstraction from all of the meaningful ways that we can become ourselves, to grow and become in relation to others. Touch brings all of these relations together into an intimate microcosm, but also opens our global being to meeting the being of an other. Sustaining the realization of new horizons to which we can be open, requires a return to the sensible recognition of both empirical relations, and ontological aspects of human life, which we perhaps have ignored and could begin attending to, or might begin anew.

The Western tradition, dominated as it has been by male philosophers, having created and participated in a patriarchal culture, has at best thought of touch as a way of relating to objects, or in a more religious way, of contacting a beyond exceeding the reach of human intellect, and a God beyond language (Irigaray 2001, 94-102). For a tradition based on a culture of male subjectivity, which rejects or forgets the mother so as to position his subjective identity at the

center, touch is relegated to the domain of that which remains inert with respect to the active male intellect. Touch is reserved for that domain of bare materiality required for the reproduction of himself to preserve his immortality, or to distinguish the mind as pure consciousness, separate from all that passive and formless physical substance.

Even in the recent interest in touch and flesh appearing in its first wave of existentialism and phenomenology, for instance in the work of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, these philosophers, when they opened the door to a discussion of an intersubjective dimension to touch, at times described touch as a grasping possessiveness. These philosophers succumbed to an ethos of imagining the other as a support for the loftiness of the male subject, a worldly foil to a male idealized intellect. The female subject becomes envisioned as existing in a vertical relation to the male subject as his Other, and thus assumes a god-like inaccessibility, animality, or infancy. In this wave of philosophy of the flesh, touching the other oscillates between an activity of dominating the other's transcendence in an effort to fix it as the material support for purely immaterial consciousness, or as a womb-like fusion with the world, where the world becomes a pseudo-maternal adhesion, confusing subject and world. This is the case, for instance, in some of the discussions of touch in Merleau-Ponty's work discussed in the first chapter. These philosophers have been some of the few to thematize touch—more common being philosophers, such as Martin Heidegger, who do not thematize touch at all. The subject of touch may indeed have demanded a woman to consider the extent to which our very humanity hinges on our approach to touch. Irigaray suggests this very point in more than one of her works: that a woman philosopher may be necessary to think some of the crucial and necessary insights exigent in our current age (for instance, see Irigaray 1993a, 5-19).

There is a more recent, second wave of (male) thinkers thematizing touch. They have adopted some of the tendencies present in the earlier phase. In most cases, they remain pessimists with respect to the possibility of a return to the self within the same flesh, in other words, to the possibility of self affection. Similarly, these second-generation philosophers who thematize touch, echo earlier philosophers' pessimism with respect to communion with the other through touch. Some, like Ricoeur, prefer to deny the role of touch and physicality in eros. Others, for instance, Rogozinski, hesitate to affirm the possibility of a genuinely hetero-affective meeting in difference with an other. This genuine meeting can only occur, in his view, under the rare condition when the ego is not in the midst of projections onto the remainder. These and other members of the recent wave of phenomenologists of touch, some having commendably considered the issue of meeting the other in difference, are still hesitant to pursue the thinking of self-affection and hetero-affection as functioning in respect to difference and touch, and specifically in respect to radical difference grounded in sexuate difference, as Irigaray has.

Re-founding the Family

Up until now, the family has generally been a domain in which intimate life was vertically dominated by hierarchical generational relations, or hierarchies of men over women. Perhaps the most important step in overcoming oppositions imposed by Western cultures dominated by masculine subjectivity is re-founding the two-parent family on the basis of two subjectivities and two civil identities. Basing the family on two subjects, with neither one the sole leader of the family, could support building a foundation of horizontality. To bring culture into a more conscious relation with nature and cosmos in the ancient sense could occasion the

possibility of a conscious revolution in relational life. It could make a path from a patriarchal culture to change the character of the family domain. To re-found the family without the intervention of a third party, either the State, or religious authorities, to establish a family based on a balanced relation between two different human subjects, supported by a culture that recognizes each subject as having their own civil identity could supply the culture and the individuals within the family with a new source of energy. This energy could be used for the creativity demanded to transcend the past culture and identity in order to truly grow. The establishment of two subjects with distinct and independent sexuate identities as the foundation of the family could change the typical patriarchal paradigm that uses the family as a way of staying the same, of preserving wealth, of keeping within the same community of bloodlines, and of maintaining a singular law and a singular logos governing all.

The patriarchal family has defined an inside and an outside of the family: the interior containing a community of conforming and homogeneous members, and the outside consisting of the polis, a society still generally led by men who conduct public life and work toward gathering all—all thinking, all behavior, all beings—under one law, embodied in the law of the father, or of the Father-as-God. The rest of life is left to sensible immediacy as Creon decrees Polynices' body must decay outside the city in Sophocles' (1949) play.

In contrast, to found the family on two subjects would begin to establish recognition and a framework to develop the singularity of each individual within the family, both in their sexuate specificity in their own bodily style, their style of self-affection and hetero-affection as carnal subjects, and as subjects living in relation to other subjects differently, depending on their sexuate identity. Laws supporting women in developing a civil identity of their own are crucial.

Women, traditionally abandoned to a regressively animalistic or infantilized domesticity, could help to lead humanity toward a new human becoming, rooted in a balanced approach to nature and culture, one that could re-introduce elements of the matriarchal cosmos that were sensitive to a balancing between between duties, and would recognize limits among individuals in society and within the family, natural limits that men, such as Creon in Sophocles' play, did not.[6]

To found the family based on limits natural to subjects whose coupling forms the basis for the family, could demonstrate to the larger culture how the singularity of each man and each woman could be recognized, and call attention to the need for each sex to recognize their limits to be respected, particularly in regard to the other's becoming. Respecting these boundaries could mean that each individual would be able to engender new possibilities within themselves without any person finding themselves subjected, arbitrarily, to the will of another.

The introduction of objective limits through laws and rights that correspond to the natural limits arising from sexuate difference opens the possibility for freely consenting to touching relations, including erotic ones, and the potential for genuine partnership in love that also finds its basis and support in a culture conducive to being open to the other without possession or domination, and without compulsion.

Irigaray also conveys the insight that the liberation of women cannot be accomplished at the level of neutrality. She argues that women's emancipation is not just freeing women from the confines of the family, just to be expelled outside domesticity to a masculine culture that respects women at best as a perpetuators of an originally masculine or neutral program. Nor is it what

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[6] For instance, Irigaray relates this to Oedipus' "double blindness" in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 213.

more commonly happens, for women to be reproducers within the family, subjected to masculine culture outside as well (2002a).

What is necessary, Irigaray argues, is a civil identity for women that is enshrined in laws that preserve within culture the right to cultivate singularity as a sexuate subject and the possibility of a horizontal dialectical relation with a masculine subject. This is no trivial undertaking since masculine culture is built on an edifice idealizing principles of hierarchy and male genealogy. Building an identity for women to be autonomous, in and from their role as mothers—both in the family and in the culture—involves a revolution that touches virtually all cultural values, beginning with a changed relation between nature and culture, and the relation of human subjectivity to nature. The changed relation amounts to privileging carnal subjectivity as the new paradigm of human consciousness. A new relation between men and women could become realized when it is made explicit not only in philosophy, but also in the law, that the becoming of the subject is rooted in the relation between two equivalently autonomous subjects who form for one another a horizon of infinite difference, and who together build a between, a third horizon that can be shared, a world that belongs to both but exceeds our respective horizons (see, for instance, Irigaray 2008c).

Bringing Up Children

What is necessary to prepare a way for the future of humanity is creating a new way of relating to each other and to ourselves. In addition to defining rights proper to both sexes, and to thinking through the means of relating to ourselves and one another, we must also provide a

context within which to build together a new way of being, a new future for human being and human existence. The definition of sexuate rights is aimed, among many things, toward establishing a framework within which to respect the singularity of each member of the family. This singularity also enables members of the family to relate to one another in their difference, and to achieve their autonomous being-with, a being-we that does not collapse into an undifferentiated community, but rather sustains a community that respects singularity and difference. Within such a framework, in which the family is founded on the relation of two autonomous subjects, each of whom as an autonomous sexuate subject preserves the autonomy to relate to children in the culture, without intervention issuing from a law-giving father, the State, or the church, each will have his or her own autonomy to parent in a way that can promote the consciousness of the children in ways that are not possible within a family dominated by patriarchy. The development of a culture that supports a real physical economy between mother and child could be possible in such a context since mother and child would not be perpetually subjected to the authority of an outside influence. The initiation of a sensitive and thoughtful culture of the caress of children could help children to take charge of their own life and to "breath on their own" by teaching them about relating to themselves and others (2017, 20). This ability would help children progress toward their own individuation and autonomous life, and to help them ultimately to learn who they are in their singularity as a subject, and in their universality as sexuate beings. This culture could help children accomplish their solitude, allowing them the possibility of self-affection and the capacity to appropriate and make their own an alienating culture, one that they find themselves entering, but which was constructed before their birth, and which demands they adapt to it, they must learn to appropriate the culture

to themselves, as Irigaray argues (2017, 20). Caressing the child, especially by the mother, who alone undertook to welcome the child within her being and to share the dwelling of herself within her flesh with the co-dwelling of the child within itself and within her, can prepare the child for the possibility of opening a horizon in the world, in the fullness of their being, upon a future that is truly new, truly the child's own.

To educate children not by the paternal logos—which appears as alien, especially for girls, and demands of them to forget their carnality and assume a language that leaves no room for them—but rather to educate children through gesture-words is the first step in helping new generations to build their own culture and to move toward a creative relationship to the future. To educate through words that carry with them elements of touch, along with instructing children in ways of breathing, specific ways they may encounter themselves and other subjects, and the world—which may come about differently depending whether they are a boy or a girl—can help to prepare children for a future they must meet by themselves, and help build a future with the other(s) (see Chapter 2). Teaching children about their breathing allows them to begin to experience the difference between their interior and their exterior. This can contribute to the consciousness that will eventually allow them to cultivate an interior life. Caressing them in a way that lets them *be* can be the beginning of helping to teach them to assume their autonomy. Cultivating solitude and self-affection can allow them to meet any different other: a foreign other, an other of a different age, and above all, a sexually different other. By cultivating a culture of touch between, especially, mothers and children, the children's capacity for sensitivity, their willingness to address themselves to their own desire and the other's appeal, their appreciation for the sublimity of the transcendence of the other, and their capacity to meet with a

culture that is not their own, could begin to make a future, a genuinely human future, possible. To help children deal with an artificial culture that up until this moment is built only by and for a masculine neutral subject, and to prepare them to join with another in love, awakening every part of their being in the presence of the other could provide a foundation upon which together they could build a culture suitable for both men and women. Together human beings could make this future possible for each one, individually and collectively, by preserving a singularity both within the family and outside of it (see Chapter 2).

By conserving an autonomous civil identity, especially for women, but also by building a sexuate civil identity for men so that the two can partner in love, human beings can build families comprised of two subjects, in cultures that respect the unique identity, the irreducible difference of one with respect to the other, and the radical singularity and originality of each one —while respecting the hospitality of the one(s) who welcomed and prepared a place for them— this could be the basis for a rebirth of humanity in love.

To help prepare the world and prepare children to take on the task of this radical transformation (the infinite of this becoming), we need to create for them a civil education, an education in love, in meeting with the other, especially the sexually different other. By developing, even at the level of their education in school, insights in words and in gestures, with particular attention to involving, respecting, and cultivating touch and breath, intimacy will not be left completely to the wilderness, or the domestic realm. By showing children a natural way to approach thinking by meeting with other living beings, and by our teaching them to value silence as well as language, children could begin to awaken and prepare themselves for life, for maturity, and beauty as well as sublimity, illuminated and sustained in the presence of the other.

Self-Affection and Hetero-Affection

The work of women, and particularly the deep and radical work of Irigaray for whom there is no comparable philosopher, is necessary to stimulate the cultural imagination and transform the thinking needed to create together a genuinely new world. Hence I have here emphasized the deep importance and fundamental necessity of Irigaray's work. Irigaray argues convincingly that women are poised to lead the way to a new era of thought and humanity, and this is also a reason this dissertation foregrounds sexual difference, especially the importance of founding a context in which women are given dignity, presence and voice equivalent to that of men. Irigaray's creation of a radical philosophy of sexuate difference, a philosophy that emphasizes two subjects as the source of dialectic and difference, nourishes an infinite becoming in difference. Irigaray's philosophy envisions a blossoming of a real hope for future of humanity, that involves changes without which, she argues, a future for humanity is uncertain. For reasons very pertinent to the radical re-imagining of the being of humanity, it is crucially necessary for women philosophers to lead the thinking of new and also irreducibly, and radically differentiated, conceptions of becoming through engendering in difference.

To become awakened to the potential that human beings could bring about different styles of thinking from traditional masculine culture is supported by the insight that some thinking is contextual, and arises within and among the different forms of embodiment and relational lives that particular human beings live. Women may be accustomed to waiting for an unfolding to take

place in time in different ways from men, both because of their cultural position, as well as from their lived experiences of their own bodies. And of because of this, different relational and bodily ontologies are positioned to be to be attuned to their own self-affection and to subject-subject relations in ways that could inspire new ways of thinking if those subjects' thinking is encouraged by the culture. The capacity to conceive of a future that is the conscious creation of two subjects building together willingly and intentionally, could arise more readily if the differences between subjects are affirmed. Women may be in a special position from which to convey the idea that difference, not sameness, is the key insight of our era, in particular, a specifically human sexuate difference that becomes the path to the renewal of human life and the possibility for living together in a sustainable way. This future would include a specifically human approach to the arrival of the new as something proper to human being and human life, not the byproduct of an artificial culture or a negative beyond projected outside human consciousness. Rather, the becoming of something new is an arrival between two radically different human subjects whose horizons do not encompass one another, and whose shared horizon(s) consist of a future resulting from the mutual creation by both, a two whose future does not center on one or the other, but on a between that infinitely engenders, and draws each toward a transcendence that is both familiar and strange, a transcendence that is human but also mysterious, and a recognition of a sensible transcendental, the perception of a difference that at once occasions novelty but also returns to what is most intimately ourselves.

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