

## INTRODUCTION

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The essays in this volume explore the opportunity and task opened up by Luce Irigaray's thought on the irreducibility of sexual difference. Each essay follows Irigaray in engaging the world, deploying the resources of her work toward a rethinking of philosophical concepts and commitments to expose new possibilities of vitality in new forms of relationship to nature, to others, and to oneself.

Irigaray's writings reinterpret the history of philosophy in light of sexual difference, rethinking philosophy's basic concepts under the figure of an indelible twoness or multiplicity that cannot be absorbed by the logic of the same. At the same time, her work addresses the most pressing social and political issues of our time: the threat of nuclear catastrophe, environmental degradation and climate change, AIDS and other health crises, war, domestic violence, racial and ethnic violence, social and economic inequity, the failure of democratic processes, and the commodification of the body and human relationships under the "unconditional power of money" (Irigaray 1993a, 76). Addressing these crises, Irigaray argues, will require more than the redistribution of goods or changes in law and public policy. She links these ills directly to the philosophical repression of sexual difference and to the hegemony of Man as the figure of the human. "It has always been men who spoke and, above all, wrote: in science, philosophy, religion, politics" (Irigaray 1993c, 121). Currently, the discourse of the universal belongs to a "masculine imaginary" authorizing the laws of property and sexual propriety, the mastery of nature, war, and the regularized violence of sovereign power. These narratives have erased sexual difference, subjected the generativity of women to the interests of property and capital, and denied women a voice in the councils that determine the future. In Irigaray's analysis, our current crises originate here.

Engaging the world to promote life will require “changing the laws of language and the conceptions of truths and values structuring the social order” (Ibid., 22). Justice depends on remaking the ideas and narratives in which identity is constituted. It depends on changing the laws governing who can speak and what can be said. For Irigaray, achieving justice is as much a philosophical as a political task. As “guardians of the universal,” philosophers must undertake “work for the universal that has an individual and collective utility” (Irigaray 1993b, 146–47). Rethinking the universal as multiple—recognizing the experiences of women and other silenced and marginalized groups as sources of the universal in human experience—opens up the possibility of discovering new figures of agency and identity more adequate to address the urgent threats to vitality in our time.

The essays in the first section rethink the fundamental philosophical concepts of time, space, and universality in light of Irigaray’s analysis of the irreducibility of sexual difference. Each essay demonstrates how undertaking this philosophical task can provide new possibilities of identity and new ways of being together to promote life.

In her essay “In Search for the Mother Through the Looking Glass: On Time, Origins, and Beginnings in Plato and Irigaray,” Fanny Söderbäck explicates Irigaray’s account of woman as “homeless.” Cut off from her beginnings through the lack of any relation to the mother, she has no origin of her own. Through a close reading of Irigaray’s reading of Plato’s myth of the cave, Söderbäck demonstrates that this homelessness or lack of place also constitutes a *timelessness*. Following Irigaray, Söderbäck shows how a return to beginnings might overcome a repetitive logic of the same in order to restore the vitality of becoming and sexual difference. Söderbäck develops her own idea of “revolutionary time” based on maternal regeneration as a figure of immortality embodied in the flesh.

Reading Irigaray in relation to Avital Ronell, Rebecca Hill’s essay, “Place, Interval: Irigaray and Ronell,” develops a critique of the concept of spatial propriety or proper place. Hill’s argument undermines both the domination of woman by man as his place of procreation and the hegemony of the modern nation state as the proper spatialization of politics. In a close reading of Irigaray’s reading of Aristotle’s analysis of space, Hill shows how Aristotle’s definition of space as a static container is subverted by the openness, porosity, and fluidity of a woman’s body. A woman’s body is mobile, without fixed borders, and able to accept multiple other bodies within. Rethinking place as “interval” or “threshold” privileges the *between* over fixed positions or separate beings. The mobility of the interval forestalls any attempt to master place and time. In doing so, it subverts the aggression associated with the possession of the maternal body or the policing of borders.

Anne van Leeuwen's essay, "Further Speculations: Time and Difference in *Speculum de l'autre femme*," situates Irigaray's project in a return to Lacan. Van Leeuwen argues that the future anterior provides the temporal strategy through which Irigaray intervenes in the history of philosophy. In van Leeuwen's reading, Irigaray's project is not to rescue difference from a logic of representation, but to show how difference will always have been appropriated by a logic of presence, at that same time that this appropriation can never be fully achieved. It will always have been misrepresented as identity, even as it remains "inviolable." Van Leeuwen's reading provides both a critique of the phallogentrism of Lacanian psychoanalysis and a demonstration of the absolute difference of Irigaray's project from any essentialist or utopian effort to elaborate a "feminine" imaginary.

My own essay argues that philosophy cannot be the same after Irigaray, in that it is no longer possible to figure the human as a generic undifferentiated subject or to think human experience under the logic of the same. Indeed, as Irigaray argues, that supposedly generic subject has always been marked male, and its installation has always been linked to the erasure of sexual difference and the silencing of the female voice. The repression of female generativity and identity, I argue, has produced the most urgent ethical and material ills of our time. Addressing these crises will require more than changes in public policy. It will require new philosophical narratives of identity and human experience.

The second set of essays focuses on Irigaray's rethinking of the nature of language, art, and writing. Each essay explores Irigaray's insistence that social justice and an ethical relation to the other depends in part on "changing the laws of language" (Irigaray 1993c, 22).

In her essay "Irigaray and Kristeva on Anguish in Art," Elaine Miller mobilizes Irigarayan resources to read Irigaray's conception of art against itself, while supplementing it with Kristeva's alternative account. Miller shows how Irigaray's emphasis on serenity and harmony in art undermines the radical implications of Irigaray's own analysis of sexual difference. Miller demonstrates how this limits Irigaray's account of the power of art to productively disturb conventionally fixed identities. By valorizing in art the qualities of beauty, repose, and happiness against ugliness, distress, and suffering, Irigaray seems to place a limiting expectation on female artists that stifles the transgressive and transformative powers of their art. In her negative analysis of the art of Unica Zürn, whose works often present the female body inhabited by others, turned inside out, or turned back on itself, Irigaray seems to forget her own account of the female body in terms of the openness of its lips or the transmission of fluids. She seems to forget that "*The/a woman never closes up into a volume*" (Irigaray 1985, 239; italics in original). Moreover, Irigaray's critique of Zürn seems to deny the possibility

that women artists might creatively destroy the symbolic order in which they themselves are constituted in order to open up new possibilities of vitality. Miller's essay retrieves Irigaray's own early emphasis on the relationality of the female body as a site of the passage between inner and outer, as well as her account of the possibilities of self-transformation through the creation of works of art.

Reading Irigaray against Lacan, Claire Potter exposes not only the impossibility of Lacan's attempt to write *La femme n'existe pas*—for, as Freud argued, only that which has existed and has been thought can be negated—but also the phrase's profoundly unethical “grammatology.” Potter's essay, “A Love Letter from beyond the Grave: Irigaray, Nothingness, and *La femme n'existe pas*,” exposes Lacan's duplicity. In attempting to erase an essentialist idea of woman, Lacan actually reinscribes the nonexistence of women—not, of course, their literal nonexistence, but their existence only as the other of male desire. Women exist, but, as Irigaray remarks, only as man's “prop,” without anything proper to them. Thus, in Potter's reading, Lacan reinstalls the hegemony of the transhistorical male subject over the (inessential) female object. In “barring” or crossing out the *La*, the pronoun that would suggest a universal feminine, Lacan bars women from any relation to their own bodies, to pleasure, or to *jouissance*, while displacing them indefinitely from the possibility of being the one who speaks, rather than the object spoken about. Against this displacement of woman, Potter invokes Irigaray's call for a “new poetics.” In a meditation on Thomas Hardy's poem *The Torn Letter*, Potter shows how the poet refuses to turn the living woman into an idea or representation. The poem addresses itself to her without objectifying her. Against the Lacanian style, the poem exemplifies a kind of writing that provides a “path” to the other and that preserves and nourishes the interval between.

In his essay “Wonder and *Écriture*: Descartes and Irigaray, Writing at Intervals,” Perry Zurn complicates Irigaray's thought of sexual difference. Unlike Descartes, for whom the value of wonder is its stimulation of curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge, or Irigaray, for whom wonder belongs to sexual difference and the encounter of the other who is not the same, Zurn thinks of the passion of wonder in relation to writing as an adventure of the body. Wonder, in his account, suspends the differences at hand, to open up the creative possibilities of unheard of characters and narratives. As a site of adventures, the body exceeds the categories of sexual difference, not only making space within sexual difference for queer and transgender identities, but yielding wholly unanticipated identities and modes of relation.

In her essay “Creating Inter-Sexuate Inter-Subjectivity in the Classroom? Luce Irigaray's Linguistic Research in Its Latest Iteration,” Gail Schwab reports on empirical research on language, both her own and Iri-

garay's, that makes evident the reality of sexual difference. Girls tend to use language to express relations, and in particular relations to the other sex, while boys tend to focus on their own actions or the possession of things. Schwab's essay, however, goes beyond these empirical analyses to take up the possibility of cultural change through language, an aim that some commentators, as Schwab notes, have deemed impossible. Schwab boldly poses a challenge to herself and to all educators to change language in the classroom in ways that would promote an inter-sexuate inter-subjectivity.

The third section of this volume presents essays that demonstrate the implications of Irigaray's thought of sexual difference for science, culture, and technology. Each essay shows how Irigaray engages with science and technology to challenge the conventional distinction between nature and culture and to open up new ways of situating the human in nature, to promote life, rather than master it.

In her essay, "Irigaray and Darwin on Sexual Difference: Some Reflections," Elizabeth Grosz reads against the conventional grain, interpreting Darwin in light of Irigaray rather than Mill, and Irigaray in light of Darwin rather than Hegel. In this way, Grosz opens Darwin's analysis of sexual selection to a "non-reductive politics of (racial, sexual, ethnic, class) difference," making it relevant to a "political analysis of cultural relations." At the same time, linking Irigaray's thought of sexual difference to Darwin's account of sexual selection demonstrates that sexual difference is "not just one social difference among many, but that form of difference that makes all other lived differences possible, the engine of all lived differences." Thus, Grosz's analysis reveals the integration of nature and culture in the inseparability of sexual selection and sexual difference. Together they produce ever more highly differentiated forms of life, capable of new natural, cultural, and political relations.

Margherita Long's "What Kind of Science? Reading Irigaray with Stengers," challenges the misreading of Irigaray as antiscience or antitechnology. Irigaray's question, she argues, concerns the kind of relationship with nature that science should instantiate. Following Irigaray, Long argues that no univocal Nature exists: sexual difference cuts across the whole of nature. Differentiation and negation are intrinsic to nature itself, not merely to the human. Thus, Long argues, Irigaray writes not against science, but against the totalizing, "mortifying-annihilating" science that treats nature as a commodity rather than as the domain and condition of life. Against this version of science and the degradation of nature that it effects, Irigaray poses, in Long's reading, a science dedicated to the "cultivation of the flesh." Reading her in relation to scientists such as Isabelle Stengers, Ilya Prigogine, and Barbara McClintock, Long allies Irigaray with science practiced as a "two-partner game," in which the other partner is not a mute,

passive substance, but an active and spontaneous materiality that provokes thought and generates culture. Long argues after Irigaray that the destiny of culture is not to supersede nature, but to cultivate nature in the diversity of its material possibilities to promote the flourishing of life in all its forms.

Tara Rodgers's essay, "Toward a Feminist Epistemology of Sound: Refiguring Waves in Audio-Technical Discourse," explores a specific theme in the narrative of mastering nature: the mastery of sound. Rodgers explores the metaphors that have informed the science of sound in order to expose the gendered and racialized features of its subject. Sound, figured as a sea of unruly waves, must be mastered by the explorer/observer who remains undisturbed by them. The navigation and technical control of sound waves in early audio-technical discourse reflected colonialist narratives of exploration, domination, and return. Against these narratives and drawing on Irigaray, Rodgers proposes to resituate the subject of sound studies "within the waves." Rather than voyages of conquest, Rodgers invokes diasporic journeys that transform, as well as inform, the researcher. Informed by Irigaray, Rodgers's analysis reveals the essential relationality of sound as a materialization of forms of life. Sounds set us in relation to other humans, other species, and other environments. They demand an ethical attentiveness to these relations, rather than a continued investment in domination and control.

In her essay, "Luce Irigaray and Anthropological Thought," Mary Beth Mader notes that Irigaray frequently employs terms from anthropology, while she rarely engages with this literature directly. Mader's essay addresses this lack by exploring the affinities and differences between Irigaray's analysis of sexual difference and, on the one hand, Levi-Strauss's analysis of the structures of kinship, and on the other, Deleuze's account of rhizomatous affiliations. In Mader's reading, Levi-Strauss at once diagnoses and demonstrates the erasure of sexual difference and female genealogy in the "monosexuate genealogical homogeneity" of patrilineal systems. In these systems, Mader argues, women are twice subjected: first, as commodities exchanged among men to establish fraternal relations, and second, in the elision of any maternal genealogy. In relation to Deleuze's analysis of cross-species filiations, however, Mader argues that Irigaray's focus on the dimorphism of sexual difference yields "artificially restricted or strangely privileged forms of relation" by precluding "radically heterogeneous and unpredictable couplings and co-generations." Thus, Mader calls into question Irigaray's ethical privileging of the dimorphism of sexual difference among other human differences.

The final section of the volume explores the transformations in psychoanalysis after Irigaray. Informed by both theory and practice, each essay explores the transformative possibilities in relationality, both to oneself and to others, that are opened up by Irigaray's thought. These essays articulate new ways of being together that may answer to the urgent crises of our time.

Cheryl Lawler's essay, "Desire at the Threshold: 'Vulvar Logic' and Intimacy between Two," demonstrates the power of Irigaray's thought to transform the psychoanalytic encounter. Calling on her own experience as a practicing analyst, Lawler follows Irigaray in developing a "non-sacrificial" economy of desire. In the sacrificial economy of classical psychoanalysis, Lawler argues, a subject is "mutilated" and requires an other as a "prosthesis" to achieve integration and identity. Taking off from Irigaray's notion of a "double desire," Lawler redraws the relation to the other as occurring across a threshold or interval that leaves the other his or her own place, a relation that can never be reduced to possession or reductive identification. Lawler's clinical vignettes reveal how the language of sexual difference and the "thirdness" of the interval or threshold can open up a space for the fluid transition from materiality to the symbolic, thereby generating new possibilities for the rebirth of a subject who is neither severed nor mutilated, but able to enjoy the possibilities of the flesh in relation to and with the flesh of others.

In her essay, "Gendering Drives: *Amae*, *Philotes*, and the Forgotten Mystery of Female Ancestry," Britt-Marie Schiller extends the revalorization of sexual difference to psychoanalytic drive theory. Following Irigaray, Schiller's aim is nothing less than to restore the female libido or instinctual drive that Freud denied. Also a practicing psychoanalyst, Schiller draws on her clinical experience to illustrate the disastrous consequences of the neglect or repression of the female drive. Whereas male libido is organized around Oedipal jealousy and aggression, the female libido is rooted in the experience of primary love in the affection of the mother-daughter bond. Schiller develops the Greek notion of *philotes*, or tenderness, and the Japanese concept of *amae*, or cherishing, to characterize the primary needs of the infant in relation to the mother. In the adult, she argues, anaclitic love and eroticism constitute not an infantile regression, but a successful transition to the receptivity to love that sustains the ego and promotes its flourishing.

The final essay, Sara Beardsworth's "Psychoanalysis and Yoga: The Feminine and the Unconscious between East and West," explores the affinities between the becoming spirit of the body through the practice of yoga and the transformations of psychic life aimed at in psychoanalysis. Following Irigaray, Beardsworth emphasizes the dyadic, pedagogical relation present in both yoga and psychoanalysis, where growth and transformation occur with and through another across a threshold of difference. At the same time, she joins Irigaray in criticizing both classical psychoanalysis and classical yoga for a tendency to equate the transition to spirit with a negation of the body or an overcoming of nature. Beardsworth identifies a practice of yoga and a psychoanalytic practice whose transformations depend on a "cultivation of nature through nature's own growth." By remembering air and cultivating

breath, the practitioner does not so much discipline or master the body-nature, as open it to new possibilities of thought, speech, and relationship. In these practices, it is not that the mind has mastered the body, but that the fluid passage of the breath has “awakened the heart center.” This awakening informs the relationship to the teacher or guru, which is not one of authority, but of compassion. Beardsworth notes the analogy between this transformative compassion and the transference love that is central to the transformative power of psychoanalysis in Julia Kristeva’s work.

Just as Beardsworth invokes Irigaray’s hope that, through the work called for by her thought of sexual difference, “love [may] come to pass between two freedoms,” each of the essays in this volume explores and extends Irigaray’s efforts to describe a way out of the dichotomies that limit and bind us. Each essay seeks a way forward toward a fluid passage between nature and culture, self and other, male and female. Like Irigaray, these essays put philosophical analysis to work in the service of the creation of a more livable future, a new narrative of how we might live on the earth together to promote the vitality of each and all.

#### REFERENCES

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