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Irigaray: the “a-destiny” of woman (and philosophy’s misappropriation of the Real)

What is the *real* feminine or female voice and does it truly constitute an Other in excess of (masculine) subjectivity and philosophical discourse about subjectivity? Luce Irigaray sets herself the task of showing that even in the texts of those philosophers who are critical of traditional constructions of Western subjectivity, such as Nietzsche or Heidegger, a veiled Other is present in the text, which underpins and supports the possibility of subjecthood itself, precisely by remaining occluded and unconscious. This Other acts out the part of the object, the realm of mute “things” upon which the consciousness of the subject can exercise himself, a consciousness at a basic level carved out of negative spaces occupied by a repressed, “shadow” term which ‘contradicts’ him: in order to confer meaning to concepts such as rational, active, delimited/defined, she “gives herself out to be”¹ emotional, passive, fluid/amorphous. Irigaray argues, notably in *Speculum of The Other Woman*, that the voice of (female) Other has been silenced in order to perpetuate the ‘closed’ economy of (masculine) identity, in which the subject’s representations of himself are perpetually reflected back by the (female) Other, subverted as a mirror-prop whose function is to hold the space within which these representations circulate. Insofar as the “voice” of the Other and the Other herself is “robbed, robed, raped”², the (male) subject remains a prisoner of the circularity of his own conceptions of self. Irigaray, in speaking out, as feminine Other, from the interpretational ambiguities of the Nietzschean and Heideggerian text, therefore claims to simultaneously release both the suppressed potential of the feminine as consciousness of alterity/alternate consciousness

¹ Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Columbia University Press, 1991, p.183

² Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, 1985

and the hitherto self-limited potential of the (masculine) subject by inviting him to share in the newly liberated chorus of the Other. In the process of this stepping out of the Other from her echoing/mirroring condition, the subject will experience the disappearance of his 'prop' and subsequently find himself in the same state of un-definition, un-identity, uncertainty as the Other herself.

This project is only possible, however, if Irigaray succeeds in finding the Other's "authentic" voice. The danger in this quest is not so much that Irigaray, by taking on the historically masculine task of producing philosophical discourse, will fall back into the voice of (masculine) subjectivity – a danger she seems well guarded against ³– but that, in attending to the 'role' historically played by the feminine Other as 'anti-subject', so to speak, she risks confusing the voice of the Other with the tropes assigned to the "feminine", tropes imposed on woman so she could play her part as object more convincingly. In *Marine Lover*, Irigaray notably parodies the traditional stereotype, reiterated by Nietzsche and other Western thinkers (e.g. Freud), of woman as "emotional", as destined to love but incapable of producing *logos* (particularly philosophical discourse). By means of an idiosyncratic, poetical style, she poses as a 'typical' woman, whose attempt to generate a serious argument 'ends up' "mimicking" a masculine (Nietzsche's) argument in "hysterical" terms. Although her act as 'hysteric' and 'mimic' is integral to the demonstration, through her writing, of a female voice trying to break out' from her role as a mirror to the masculine, doesn't Irigaray, however, in remaining within the boundaries of this 'act', lend herself too much to the (masculine) game and unwittingly grants a measure of truth to these tropes? The fact is that to make an argument for the significance of an alternative female voice, Irigaray has to take feminine tropes into account, not in order to rationalize them, but in order to unpick the logic which created

³ *ibid*, p.133: "Re-objectivizing her own self whenever she claims to identify herself "as" a masculine subject. A "subject" that would re-search itself as lost (maternal-feminine) "object"?"

them in the first place. Only then can Irigaray hope to uncover what has been occluded by the mask, by the dissemblance act of the feminine: woman, without her tropes, is as yet an a-sex⁴. In entering into a dialogue with herself/ her sex, Irigaray sets out for uncharted philosophical territory: “Since no one was answering “me”, I felt free of obligation to anyone and found myself alone in strange country.”⁵ This country is the territory of the ‘Real’, the ultimate materialness of the material which has persistently guarded itself against any kind of collusion with the symbolic. In exploring this (female)Real, Irigaray brings to light Nietzsche’s, and in general Western philosophy’s repeated failure to successfully appropriate the Real, a failure whose roots lie in the logic of (masculine) subjectivity itself as necessarily alienated from the pure material. Irigaray, as the female voice which speaks in excess/outside the subject, will produce a narrative that rehabilitates this realm and attempts to re-integrate into a conception of the self.

She first turns to the felt, concrete experience of the female body as the ‘dark continent’ which, because it embodies a reality impermeable to the (masculine) subject, has been systematically excluded from philosophical discourse. As such, it displays certain elemental characteristics which, according to Irigaray, defy any attempt at comprehension through a logical approach. According to *The Mechanics of Fluids*, the inclination of female bodily fluids (milk, mucous, menstrual blood) to mix themselves, to produce a dynamic whereby “coefficients of viscosity” or friction replace definable relations between bodies, generates a gut sensation of uncontainable, unmanageable formlessness and diffusion which explodes the normative (masculine) conception of physicality. The spatiality of fluids introduces the possibility of an extension whose experience, whose reality is incompatible with points of reference, of a phenomenon completely resistant to *any* form of mathematical-conceptual mapping, revealing, as it were, an unconditional

⁴ *ibid*, p.62

⁵ *Marine Lover*, p.5

“there-ness” which the subject cannot wrap his mind around. By challenging the subject’s way of apprehending the body as a definite form or solid, (female) fluidity undermines the subject’s intuition that the self is a distinct unit, an identity which exhibits a minimum of continuity. Fluids in this sense are an element of the Real which cannot be gotten around, and yet which are always in excess of the subject’s system of representations because they contradicts those necessary postulates which found the very psychological conditions for subjectivity in the first place: “The fact that different systems regulating the hierarchy of truths (about the subject) are possible does not contradict the principle according to which there does exist a syntactical equivalent between those different systems. All of which will have excluded from symbolization *certain properties of the real fluids.*”⁶

Of course, the fact that the (female) Real escapes the (masculine) subject’s capacity for representation destabilizes the subject’s security in his own power. Consequently, he tries to redefine a rapport with her that enables him to re-assert his mastery, one which reduces her specificity to an actual feature of his own mode of existence. By grounding the subject in “the meaning of the earth”, by representing him as a natural phenomenon, Nietzsche in fact *forgets* that the (female) Real exists independently from his subjectivity, as a permanent “there-ness”, a “that” which in profound sense cannot be included either as object or subject but only as an ellipsis, as the “a” in a-sex, a-woman. In fact, Zarathustra’s life-affirmation means recognizing the potency of Life/the (female) Real only insofar he is in a position, as subject, to embody that potency. His manifestation as “life-force” is invariably contingent on the destruction of life. As a “will” perpetually desirous of actualizing itself, the Nietzschean subject is compelled to assert himself as his own value against the ‘good’ of other subjects: paradoxically, he celebrates Life by pitting his own vital force *against* the

⁶ Luce Irigaray, *Ce Sexe Qui N'en Est Pas Un*, Les Editions de Minuit, 1977, p.107. My own translation.

vitality of Life in its totality and embracing the vicissitudes of this perpetual struggle. In effect, the Nietzschean subject can only survive by “taking a whip to Life”, by forcing her to align herself with his will⁷, even to the extreme of abolishing that which it escapes the power of the will to affect – the past. In the circle of eternal return, the past is welded to the future in a ring of (fictitious) time whereby, in declaring “thus I willed it!” the subject is in fact saying “I will it again”, therefore ensuring, according to Irigaray, the (fictitious) eternal self-sameness of the subject. As she points out in *Marine Lover*, this marriage of the self with himself is essentially sterile: Zarathustra’s repeated call to “give birth”, to produce children can only translate as a call to produce copies of a (masculine) subject. Despite his attempts to distance himself from these “neighbors” – as Irigaray snidely calls them – Zarathustra is doomed to their company, as long as he neglects to realize the promiscuity involved in the very logic of the subject as eternal recurrence. His failure to engender a truly Other is a consequence of his failure to recognize this Other as the very source of fertility which engendered him, namely, the body, the material basis that continues to exist apart from the will, apart from any already abstract, symbolic ‘vital force’ or drive.

And yet Zarathustra retains a “*nostalgia*” for the “the gift” of existence/reality that the (female) body is capable of offering, a nostalgia at the source of his desire to conceive of the (male) subject as a ‘vital force’, as an element of the Real. This desire remains futile, however, as long as the subject perceives himself as the “crust” or “shell”, as the “hardness”⁸ which gives shape and consistency to the fluidity of the Real, to the amorphous dynamics of becoming. Zarathustra in the end never submerges himself in this “marine” element, he instead attempts to steer a course on it by building for himself a solid surface which will keep him afloat, namely the construct of the (masculine) subject himself – he seeks to survive the flux, to overcome those currents that pull at

⁷ “The Other Dance Song”, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Oxford University Press, 2005

⁸ “Burning Lava You Carry Within You”, *Marine Lover*.

him regardless of the direction of his will, by affirming this subject as his supreme value, as the reiteration of an “I” which maintains itself in spite of its contradiction with the Real-fluid: “many a chance event came to me imperiously, but even more imperiously did my *will* speak back to it – then it went down imploringly on its knees.”⁹ The Nietzschean subject, in spite of his unprecedented willingness to confront the sea’s dissolving powers by embracing the ultimately “perspectival”¹⁰ or relative character of all valuation, remains still only a navigator, an adventurer whose boldness hides a persistent fear of the truth of the sea, of a Reality that can neither be ignored – “dried up” – nor comprehended in the context of a universal “will to power” – that is, enfolded within the “sails” of a Nietzschean subject¹¹.

Zarathustra, by embracing “becoming” only insofar as it is regimented and referenced by the grid of values through which the (male) subject represents the world, in this sense perpetuates what *The Mechanics of Fluids* calls the “(phallic) teleology according to which all fluid must be absorbed/contained in a solid form.”¹² Irigaray unveils a tension between the reassuring self-containedness and continuity of the (masculine) subject – an interior *gestalt* mapped on the exterior unity of the bodily form – and the ‘movement’ or ‘energy’ that “animates” the subject, a ‘vitality’ that overflows the boundaries of the body and spills out, merges into the whole complex of Life, the greater Real. In the light of this tension, the subject appears not so much to be a movement of the will, a projection of the vital, but rather a vessel leaking out, in spite of itself, a fluid force animated by its own, independent movement: “Indeed a lake is within me, solitary and self-contained; but the river of my love draws it off – down to the sea!”¹³ The Nietzschean subject, while subsisting off this fluid Reality, is always compelled to re-absorb its excess of energy in order to preserve the fragile

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 148

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.35

¹¹ Metaphors gleaned from the section « Immemorial Waters » in *Marine Lover*

¹² *Ce Sexe Qui N’en Est Pas Un*, p.108. My own translation.

¹³ *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, p. 72

equilibrium of his form, as that which provides ‘shape’, a ‘direction’, ‘constancy’ to the Real. In doing so, however, he inevitably petrifies or “mortifies”¹⁴ the vital forces that feed him; by cutting himself off from the possibility of freely intermingling with them, he also renounces “what sustained [his] passion”.

Nothing can revive this dried-up husk, “this stalk of a stalk” drained of sap except a genuine alliance with that source of life/reality; only then could the economy of self-same representations of the subject from which she is now excluded start to unravel. Zarathustra, however, remains under the illusion that instead he can force the (female) Real to surrender to the subject, to give him the blood he needs in order to ground in “life” that conceptual ghost, the abstract system of his valuing: “I *must will* with all my will; where I want to love and go under, that an image might not remain mere image.”¹⁵ This “solar love” which affirms life only in order to affirm himself is in fact a vampiric obsession, a craving to fill the hole, the tearing that is always fraying away at his certainty in the power of his will. “Between the will and your body, the river no longer circulates”¹⁶. However, how can one reestablish a connection between the subject and his body, between his representations of himself and Reality/“Life”, except by *immersing* the subject in the flux, by returning the subject to his (female) body? In recognizing her as that Other which supports and sustains him prior to his affirmation of himself, he could enter into a dialogue with an underwater voice that speaks from his own body and yet which has been occluded by his habit of listening only to his own: “taste that saliva in your mouth also – notice her familiar presence during your silence, how she is forgotten when you speak...The fluids softly mark the time...just listen to hear the music. With very small ears”¹⁷. Harkening to her voice calling him from a realm in which only the dynamic of the liquid operates, would he not be tempted to lose all anchoring points of

¹⁴ *Ce Sexe Qui N'en Est Pas Un* p. 113

¹⁵ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.106

¹⁶ *Marine Lover*, p. 62

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 37

reference, all poles of evaluation, and dissolve in the (female) all – “toute” – of this Other, partaking in her *jouissance* which, beyond the self-contained desire of an “I”, stretches, infinite, in all directions? What threatens him in the marine element is both the unrestrained force of this (female) desire, which washes away all pretense of control, all possibility of recurrent identity, and the loss of perspective that ensues, the disappearance of foreground and background, the sudden incapacity to arrange virtues or values in any *order*, as watery layers mingle with each other. Peering through the medium of the Real, the subject is confounded not only by his inability to separate the depths one from the other, his inability to apply to them his habit of analysis – “the blade leaves not a trace”¹⁸ – but by the fact that all parts, all “sparkling surfaces” call to his attention equally, so that he can find no point towards which to direct his reason or will. Terrified by the Real, which takes away from him all his usual tools for coping with her – when he can study her from a safe distance – the subject prefers to recoil within himself, to shut out her voice. Like Zarathustra, he chooses to play the navigator instead, to pretend that it is in the nature of the Real to *consent* to be domesticated by his willfulness, by his evaluating, by his wisdom/understanding: “Living – isn’t that wanting specifically to be something other than nature? Isn’t living assessing, preferring, being unfair, being limited, wanting to be different?”¹⁹ Even while acknowledging, from a philosophical standpoint, that “it is not man who is the measure of things”²⁰, he continues to conceive of himself, the subject, as free of the liquid element, as the free-flying “mirage of his power” over the Real, a ghostly representation of himself un-tethered in her depths which have given birth to him. And yet, Irigaray argues, the (masculine) subject stays the prisoner of both his longing for and fear of the Real, the longing for the unlimited desire that animates her and which he would have animate him, as well as the fear of losing himself, his circular, self-contained world, if he should give himself up to her

¹⁸ *ibid*, p.46

¹⁹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.10

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 7

embrace. This ambivalence towards the Real is the source of his secret *ressentiment* towards her, towards the (female) Other who speaks with her voice.

Even while resenting her, however, he suffers from it – as a result his happiness is always temporary, spoiled. He remains disarticulated between a logic of transcendence, which propels him to overcome the Real, to become (subject) such that he can exist beyond from her/different from her, and his desire for a union with the Real, a thirst to drink from the fountains of life. Having rejected the belief in God, in a transcendent realm beyond him/the natural, he yet aspires to create himself, to metamorphose into *a* god, into a being both totally at one with the natural and yet capable, as subject, of standing above the Real, of looking down on it from a distance. Still, the Nietzschean subject has a presentiment that such a condition is impossible, which is why he identifies, in his darkest ‘midnight’ hour – when the power of his will, the light of his mid-day seems dim – with the mangled god Dionysus. Like him, Dionysus is snatched from the womb of a (female) Other²¹, severed from the ‘there-ness’ of his body and thrown into the solitude of subjectivity. However, the infant god tries to resist individuation at all cost: he recoils before the self-same form, he dissolves from skin to skin, and yet his appearance/presentation is already the flash of an ‘I’; already it prefigures re-presentation, repetition, identity. He is a god of desire, but his desire is the desire of a subject, not a feminine *jouissance*. It no longer stems from an overflowing of “abundance”; rather, it perpetuates itself as a hunger, as the maddening sensation of a void opened up within him, which is none other but the abyss created by the absence of the (female) Other, the absence of a passage between him/self and his own body, the Real which he craves but which he cannot possess because he cannot understand. His desire is not dissociable from the rage of his *ressentiment*; his

²¹ c.f Irigaray’s telling, in *Marine Lover*, of how Dionysus was torn by his father, Zeus, from the womb of Semele, after he had killed her with a stroke of lightning.

drunkenness is a panicked mimicry of *jouissance*. In his fury to escape from the confining skin of subjectivity, he hurls himself towards the Real, hoping for an ecstatic reunion with the Other/the mother. But the Real remains unfathomable still despite his attempts at penetration. His violence is the mark of his impotence: despite his regular infusions of “milk and blood” from women, he cannot recover the sensation of *being* (female) fluid.

According to Irigaray, Apollo represents the next stage in this development of (masculine) subjectivity. In order to escape the torment he endures as a result of his severance from the (female) Real, the god will seek to suppress his desire for her by robbing her of her potency, by hiding her intrusive “there-ness” under a veil. In effect, the new god “magicks...a blind of intelligible categories”²², a web of concepts to endow her with (his) sense, so that, master of her image, he can possess her by proxy. Far from fortuitously, Apollo is both the “god who speaks”²³ and the god of the gaze, who “looks more than he is looked upon”: as such, he signifies the co-emergence of (philosophical?) discourse and the objectification of the Real. Having thus secured her as object to serve as prop for his subjecthood – to reflect back his gaze, to echo his voice – Apollo is the first god to truly embrace individuation. In the enjoyment of his re-presentation of the Real, he forgets that his first desire was to join in union with her.

Is it not then that a ‘metaphysical’ inversion takes place, the one which, according to *Speculum of the Other Woman*, characterizes the Platonic universe? As the subject’s representations of the (female) Real increasingly come to constitute the reality/the world of references in which the subject situates himself, the (female) Real herself is increasingly perceived as “utterly foreign”²⁴ – as a lie. Her “there-ness”, which can nevertheless not be gotten around, is reduced to “mere” appearance, while “truth” becomes a property/predicate in the representational system which circles

²² *Marine Lover*, p.99

²³ *Marine Lover*, p. 144

²⁴ “Nothing is so utterly foreign for women than truth – their great art is in lying.” *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.

the subject, therefore ensuring that reality is in the end understood only as a product of the syntactic structure of (male) subjectivity. Denatured, cut off from herself, from her own bodily *presence*, the Real/the female is only perceived as a beauty pageant, a dream or mirage enticing the subject, “a veil interwoven with gold, sparkling with promise, resistance...seduction.”²⁵ Nietzsche, according to Irigaray, only affirms this philosophical status quo by proposing the hypothesis: “suppose that truth is a woman”. In this case “truth” is revealed as simply a fictitious (though necessary) property of the subject’s system of representations, but the Real/woman/women is still maintained in her role as “mere” appearance. Excluded from the subject’s syntax and yet not herself the source of her own discourse or truth, she is compelled to ceaselessly switch from one mask to mask, to be “the other without being one or the other”: she offers no authentic “femaleness”, no reality, to oppose the (masculine) subject, she is the “blank”²⁶ screen upon which he projects his narrative about himself, a narrative which includes his fantasy of an Eternal Feminine, an other. Isn’t Nietzsche giving in to the ultimate (masculine) solipsism, in unmasking the subject’s (self-serving, fictitious) narrative, to assume therefore that this narrative is all the “reality” there is, a reality generated from within his own will (to power)? He forgets that the (masculine) subject’s fantasy/representation of the (female) other is but the veil he covered the Other with because her *presence*, her too great visibility testified to the fact he could not, after all, attain true god-status: a (female) Real always “sub-sists” in excess of himself. She intrudes as the material grounding, as the stage in his “theater of representations” which always retains a measure of conspicuousness. Because she persists beyond the circle of his syntactical system, she cannot be genuinely predicated in terms of truth/false, essence/appearance – dressed up as a representation, she can not actually be represented.²⁷ She remains the wholly, unspeakably Other: “a”-truth, “a”-appearance.

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, in *Marine Lover*, p.92

²⁶ *ibid*, p.82

²⁷ “Veiled Lips”, *Marine Lover*

More than any threat of “castration” the (male) subject could assign to her as “femininity”, as the “anti-masculine”, her un-predicated otherness provokes a fear that the whole conceptual economy in which his subjectivity, his sense of self circulates could collapse. The question mark of the “what” that animates, that enlivens him perplexes the subject who finds his representational and discursive capacities stopping short before the amorphous, fluid totality of extensionality/movement which he experiences within his own body. Confronted with the possibility of the (female) Other, the (male) subject is confronted with a beyond-him which sends him back to a sense of his own finitude, to the precariousness and incompleteness of his representations – “one still has to articulate the [subject’s] link to the “(female) not-all”: *God or female jouissance*”²⁸. The (female) Real would then constitute an antithesis to the god-state of the Nietzschean subject, as a divine which can never be channeled by the will, but instead signifies the complete submersion of oneself by an enjoyment in the saturation, surfeit of existence, by mad, hysterical or “mysterical” vitality that *feels no need for* an affirmation of the self, for a self-contained ‘yea’. The woman/the Real would rather *give* herself over to her pleasure, give herself up to that “abyss opening down into the self”²⁹. That her pleasure in herself thus suffices her is the reason why the (masculine) subject feels compelled to bring her under his control: her free gift of *jouissance* to herself undermines the very concept of his closed economy, of his logic which can only generate identity as self-sameness. Could the Nietzschean subject feel *ressentiment* towards a (female) divine whom he senses is free from the limits he imposes on himself by identify-ing as “a” god, and who therefore, unlike him, attains to the infinite, to Godhead? Towards a (female) Real/a (female) Heaven who is not a “*dance-floor for god-like accidents*”³⁰?

²⁸ *Ce Sexe Qui N'en Est Pas Un*, p.107. My own translation.

²⁹ *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p.200

³⁰ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 143

Most of all, the (masculine) subject feels the absence of that fulfilling joy which comes from being able to merge with that divine beyond-himself, the outside-himself which is the material element that sustains him and grounds the world he inhabits. This impassable divide between himself and the “basis” of himself persists even when he pushes his language so far as to represent his state-of-being before his emergence as subject. Even Heidegger’s Dasein still functions according to the logic that Being/consciousness necessarily implies a movement of distancing from the Real – a logic clearly recorded in the concept of thrownness. Dasein is *thrown* into the world, into the locality constituted by the network of signs which he maps onto the Real, but from which locality has he been thrown out of? Dasein in fact emerges into Being only by parting from his physicality/his Realness, from that womb of pre-signification which he can no longer remember and which he yet repeatedly forgets in the process of coping with his new locale. Even before he contemplates the Real as an object, he is appropriating her – “caring” for her – as a tool, as raw material in the construction of his world. Certainly he is more comfortable with the Real when he is laying his hands on her than when he steps back to consider her as (unfathomable) Other. And yet Dasein is also constantly being returned to a moment in which he remembers “he is not a home”, when he becomes aware of the fact that his signifying world, his theater of representations is not the Real, that the Real is Other. Dasein is always threatened with this abyss that effectively splits him in two, that alienates his thinking, conscious, waking Being from his “there-ness” in fleshiness, in the ontic. Irigaray asks us, in this case, how can Dasein “be”, how can Being for him exclude the natural element from which “he” is born? Heidegger seems to suffer from a solipsism similar to Nietzsche’s insofar as for him too reality is reproduced by himself within his own cycle of self-birth: Being *es gibt*, by Being – in other words, his capacity to attend to a signifying world is given to Dasein in the exercise of attending to his signifying world. But if Being is a gift, is not first of all given to Dasein

by the matter, by the flesh that *is* him even before he is himself? This first “is” rather than Being constitutes the possibility of a passage between Dasein and the (female) Real, whose opening up would perhaps even mean the impossible reconciliation of the ontic-ontological difference.

The substance of this “is”, however, the “is” of the copula between Dasein and the Real, must be such that it facilitates the passage, the reconciliation between the two. Irigaray proposes that this copula is in fact an element whose properties of fluidity and transparency make it an ideal *conductor*, a medium suited to the propagation, notably, of sound, of voice/discourse: air. Its ethereality suggests a predisposition, at any moment, to evaporate into thought; however, as natural element, it remains indisputably (female) Real. As such, air is the translucent background of Being that prefigures any clearing of sense illuminated, sparked by Dasein. Its volatile movement, in fact, falls under the dynamics of the (female) fluid – dynamics whose Being/being (the terms fade in with each other when referring to the fluid) is fundamentally different from Dasein’s Being. The female (fluid, airy) element “is” by generating herself, by “giving herself forth and melding with what is given from her”³¹; as such, she experiences time in a mode that does not mark the differentiation and the distancing at work in Dasein’s temporality. Rather than projecting herself into her future self, she melts I into it as a matter of course/current; for her, there is no temporal rupture, no interval or “interspace” between her and herself. As such, she precedes any logic of cause and effect, any (masculine) rationale of a subject over-coming or willing beyond himself. Hers instead is a pure venturing into the *pleasure* of existing without “where”, and without “why”: she “flowers”.

An organism blooming into flesh and consciousness at the same time, without the movement of one obscuring or even being really distinct from the other – thus who gives herself out to the Real as a natural element: isn’t that what Zarathustra means by “bestowing virtue” and “bestowing love”, in other words, the generosity that spills over from one who is overfull of joy?

³¹ Luce Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, University of Texas Press, 1999, p.102

This uncalculated largess, this high and yet *easy* bliss testifies to the possibility of a mode of being/Being that could be exemplary, in the sense that it opposes the logic of a “Spirit of Heaviness”, of a self-absorption, an exclusive preoccupation with one’s thinking and willing that causes the subject to strive against life, against the fleshy truth/pleasure of his “there-ness”. Nietzsche argues that (masculine) subjectivity as it known in the West has entirely fallen prey to this “Spirit of Heaviness”, which now characterizes all major aspects of modern life – the scientific quest for abstract truth, aesthetic disinterestedness, rational/Kantian morality, ‘transcendentalist’ theology, the cult of the State, and finally, philosophy as metaphysics, all exhibit a doctrinal fear of the experience of the visceral, *unmediated* Real, a fear that justifies itself by sidelining or even despising human goals of happiness and pleasure. It would then be plausible that “woman”, by virtue of her traditional exclusion from all these spheres of activity, could then emerge as the bearer of the “secret” to living one’s subjectivity otherwise, as blissful immersion in the natural – thereby fulfilling Nietzsche’s prophecy, “the overman is born from the sea”. Taking on this role of “*ubermensch*”, however, would prevent woman from pursuing her own destiny, or rather her “*a-destiny*”, as Irigaray envisions it: a fearless walking into the unforeseeable, “a departure that runs counter to nothing...[of] one who leaves behind home and all forms of properties to enter a boundless open.”³² To try to fit her in as an element of man’s fate – even as Over-man – would be once again to forget that she “is” beyond the limit of his circle of recurrence: beyond any specific trope of “woman”. She lives in the undetermined, which means necessarily un-unique, plural – she “is” in short, “women”.

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³² *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, p. 172

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